

Conservation news

Opportunity: assess programme impact by testing an adaptation of the IUCN Green Status of Species

Launched in 2021, the IUCN Green Status of Species is a complementary part of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, assessing how close a species is to being fully recovered (Grace et al., 2021, *Conservation Biology*, 35, 1833–1849; 2021, *Oryx*, 55, 651–652). This information, alongside the Red List classification of a species' risk of extinction in the wild, provides a more complete picture of the status of species and the impact of conservation.

The Green Status of Species defines Fully Recovered as 'a species that is viable and ecologically functional in every part of its range'. It thus incentivizes conservation to go beyond the first steps of preventing extinction and maintaining species' viability, addressing the goal of restoring the functions of species within ecosystems. In addition to assessing a species' current state relative to being fully recovered, the [Green Status of Species](#) uses hypothetical scenarios to estimate past and potential future impact of conservation action through four conservation impact metrics.

Like the Red List, the Green Status of Species is global, recognizing the combined impact of all past conservation actions on species status, highlighting species dependent on continued actions and forecasting expected gains from further conservation interventions. Nonetheless, it is common for conservation practitioners to seek to understand how their sub-global scale programmes contribute to global recovery, and to date there is no standardized method to assess the impact of a programme in this way. To address this, we have adapted the Green Status of Species for application at the programme level, providing a standardized way to understand the past and future impact of programmes in relation to the global recovery of species.

Based on a completed IUCN Green Status of Species assessment, a Programme Green Status of Species assessment estimates the contribution of past programme actions to global species recovery and what could be achieved by continuation of the programme and its actions. Working with colleagues across five international conservation organizations, members of the Green Status of Species–Species Survival Commission Integration Task Force have developed the method and guidelines for applying the Green Status of Species at the programme level. We are now looking for participants to (1) ensure the adaptations work for a range of different programmes and species, and (2) provide feedback on the framework and accompanying documentation.

If you are interested in assessing the contribution of your programmes to the global recovery of species, whilst contributing to the testing of the Programme Green Status of Species framework, we want to hear from you. Please

contact Rebecca Young to register your interest in participating and to learn more about the programme assessment process.

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Online publications for responsible primate-watching for tourists and for tourism professionals

Many people enjoy watching primates, whether free-ranging or in zoos or sanctuaries. This activity can have positive impacts on primate conservation and contribute to local livelihoods when conducted responsibly.



In October 2023, the IUCN Species Survival Commission Primate Specialist Group Section on Human–Primate Interactions, in collaboration with the Section on Small Apes, published place-based and primate-specific recommendations for responsible primate-watching (excluding large apes, for which there are already guidelines: Macfie & Williamson, 2010, *Best Practice Guidelines for Great Ape Tourism*, IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group). *Responsible Primate-Watching for Tourists* aims to provide accessible information about how to watch primates and is designed to ensure minimal impact on them.

The recommendations include information on how to behave around primates either in a planned tour or during unplanned encounters. Recommendations are also available for nocturnal primates and primates in zoos and sanctuaries. Responsible primate-watching means considering primate welfare, their conservation and that of the ecosystems they inhabit, and the wellbeing and livelihoods of people living with or close to primates. The recommendations are available by region and for particular primate groups. Many of the chapters have been translated into

range country languages, including Bengali and Malagasy. We are developing a mobile phone app to facilitate access to the recommendations.

In February 2024, we published *Responsible Primate Watching for Tourism Professionals*. Our audience includes, but is not restricted to, researchers, managers, government officials, tour operators and site managers. We examine the benefits and costs of primate-watching and discuss the issues around habituating primates for this activity. Along with general recommendations, we provide specific recommendations for primate tourism site management and for the development of new primate-watching initiatives.

Both documents are available from human-primate-interactions.org/resources1. We hope everyone either primate-watching or managing it in some way will read these documents to learn more about primate-watching in different contexts, and that these recommendations will ensure the coexistence of people and primates while benefiting the people who live alongside them.

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IUCN Species Survival Commission Aquatic Fungi Specialist Group

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) launched a new Specialist Group in October 2023: the Aquatic Fungi Specialist Group, focusing on both freshwater and marine fungi. This group developed from FUNACTION, which was funded through Biodiversa+ (funaction.eu). The new Specialist Group will develop the scientific and coordination basis for conservation assessment, planning and action for aquatic fungi, and disseminate appropriate monitoring and assessment methods to practitioners, researchers and conservationists. Aquatic fungi are a polyphyletic group defined by their ecology (growing and reproducing mainly in the sea or freshwater). They belong mainly to the phyla Ascomycota, Basidiomycota, Chytridiomycota and Microsporidia, but include representatives of 13 phyla.

There is limited knowledge of the diversity and distribution of aquatic fungi and of any threats to them. Threats in aquatic environments in general are habitat decline, pollution, eutrophication, invasive species, ocean acidification, freshwater salinization, river regulation and climate change.

These are also likely to be threats to aquatic fungi, but few researchers are working on the ecology and conservation of this polyphyletic group.

There are more than 5,700 known species of aquatic fungi, with > 3,800 freshwater species and c. 1,900 marine species, but these numbers are likely to be underestimates. Existing taxonomic and distribution data are in non-integrated databases and, unlike terrestrial fungi, no aquatic fungus has yet received a conservation assessment.

The Aquatic Fungi Specialist Group will collaborate with other fungi Specialist Groups and the IUCN SSC Fungal Conservation Committee to adapt and develop conservation assessment methods and coordinate assessments of both freshwater and marine aquatic fungi. The Group will also collaborate with the IUCN SSC Freshwater and Marine Conservation Committees to focus on conservation planning for aquatic fungi, and undertake and inspire actions to conserve these species in the face of the multitude of threats affecting aquatic ecosystems. If you are an expert on aquatic fungi, please join us in this venture.

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Launching of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Spain Species Specialist Group

National Species Specialist Groups are a new type of group promoted by the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) for the development of national species expert networks to help reverse biodiversity loss and tackle new nature-related sustainability challenges. The Spain Species Specialist Group was established in February 2024. It is the first National Species Specialist Group in Europe and the eighth globally.

The new Species Specialist Group will coordinate expertise across taxonomic groups and disciplines to support governments and other stakeholders and facilitate evidence-based decision-making and the development of policies for reversing species decline. The participatory establishment process in 2023 involved wide representation of stakeholders. The resulting group will be the nexus of diverse national scientific societies, conservation organizations, NGOs, other SSC regional specialist groups, the SSC