

Conservation news

Conservation Leadership Programme celebrates landmark USD 10 million in project funding awarded

Since 1985, the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) has been helping early-career conservationists around the world gain experience, confidence and a support network in the conservation sector. To achieve its capacity-building objectives, CLP offers training, mentorship and networking opportunities to these rising stars in conservation, along with project funding to support their vital work to save globally threatened species. This year CLP is delighted to have reached a cumulative total of over USD 10 million of project funding awarded since 1985, representing a significant landmark for the programme since it was first established 35 years ago.

The landmark funding amount has supported a total of 819 vital conservation projects across the world, mainly based in developing countries in Africa, Asia & Pacific, Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East. Most of these projects have received grants through the annual CLP Team Awards, totalling c. USD 8.3 million to date. Other supported projects are CLP internships, in which young conservationists are placed within a CLP partner organization where they can gain valuable training and work experience to help advance their careers in conservation. Other projects have been funded through the Kate Stokes Memorial Award (an additional award specifically for CLP alumni) and past Research Fellowship Programmes.

These CLP-funded projects have made key contributions to conservation worldwide, including new research findings to inform conservation efforts, the discovery of new species, the designation of protected sites, and the establishment of new NGOs. Many CLP alumni have gone on to lead successful careers in conservation. Current positions include the Head of Science at IUCN, Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Oxford, and Director of the Conservation Leadership and Education for Nature Program at WWF.

This year, the CLP Team Awards is funding 19 projects with grants worth a combined total of USD 342,830, thanks to support from Arcadia—a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. The funding will support critical projects across the world focused on saving a range of threatened species across various taxa.

Additionally, the 2020 Kate Stokes Memorial Award is supporting a project in Madagascar focused on educating and training local people to adopt sustainable forest management in Mangabe Reserve, an important refuge for threatened wildlife such as the Critically Endangered golden mantilla frog *Mantella aurantiaca* and indri lemur *Indri indri*. CLP has also supported three internships with Fauna & Flora International this year, including community forestry

of mangroves in Myanmar, conservation of fruit-and-nut forests in Tajikistan, and marine protected area development and monitoring in Cambodia.

CLP is already planning to add to this landmark in project funding when it announces the winners of the 2021 Team Awards in April 2021. To view a full list of the projects supported by CLP since it was established, visit conservationleadershipprogramme.org/our-projects/supported-projects. CLP is a partnership between BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora International, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

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A new action plan developed for the Cape parrot and its habitat

The Cape parrot *Poicephalus robustus* is endemic to South Africa, with c. 1,800 individuals patchily distributed across Southern Mistbelt forests in three provinces (Downs et al., 2019, *22nd Annual Parrot Count*, cpwg.ukzn.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CPBBD-report-2019.pdf). A taxonomic review in 2017 led to the Cape parrot being recognized as a distinct species by IUCN (Collar & Fishpool, 2017, *Bulletin of the African Bird Club*, 24, 156–170). It was subsequently categorized as Vulnerable globally and Endangered nationally (Downs, 2015, *Eskom Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*). Threats to Cape parrots are diverse, including habitat loss and degradation, disease and illegal trade (Downs et al., 2014, *Ostrich*, 85, 273–875).

A 10-year conservation action plan for the species was first developed in 2002 (Warburton et al., 2002, *Cape Parrot Action Plan*, academia.edu/2820649/Cape_Parrot_Poicephalus_robustus_Action_Plan). However, given substantial developments in knowledge, threats, and conservation practice, an updated plan was needed. Consequently, local and international stakeholders, in partnership with the IUCN Species Survival Commission Conservation Planning Specialist Group, convened for a 2-day workshop in September 2019. Forty-eight participants took part from 23 academic institutions, governmental departments, parastatal and non-governmental organizations, and private enterprises from within the species' range. The workshop process was guided by a hybrid Conservation Planning Specialist Group/open standards approach (cmp-openstandards.org).

On the first day, participants reviewed the status of the species, defined conservation aims, identified threats and pro-

posed priority conservation strategies surrounding: (1) species and research, (2) habitat and landscape, (3) community engagement and (4) law enforcement and policy development. On the second day, working groups prioritized and outlined activities needed to achieve each strategy, including the delineation of timeframes, responsible organizations, outputs, and methods to monitor success. Subsequently, an updated action plan was published in March 2020 (Carstens et al., 2020, *Cape Parrot and Mistbelt Forest Conservation Action Plan*, cpsg.org/sites/cbsg.org/files/documents/Cape%20Parrot%20and%20Mistbelt%20Forest%20Action%20Plan%20202003.pdf), defining the vision, scope, goals and targets to conserve the Cape parrot, and identifying 90 actions needed to achieve this. In recognition of the central role of habitat protection, the plan focuses jointly on the conservation of the species and its associated forests, including the ambitious target of doubling the area of Southern Mistbelt forest under formal protection in 10 years.

With the updated action plan published, and an Action Group formed, stakeholders are working collaboratively towards the vision of a thriving population of Cape parrots acting as a flagship species for the protection and recovery of indigenous forests in South Africa, for the shared benefit of people and nature.

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Last chance to prevent the extinction of the Chinese pangolin

The Chinese pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* occurs from Nepal eastwards and across southern China. It is believed to be one of the most heavily poached and trafficked mammals in Asia (Challender, 2011, *Traffic Bulletin*, 23, 92–93). The species is categorized as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, with a decline of more than 80% suspected over three generations because of hunting and poaching for local and international use, with extirpation of the species in some areas (Challender et al., 2019, [dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019-3.RLTS.T12764A168392151.en](https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019-3.RLTS.T12764A168392151.en)).

Public and government awareness of the need to protect the Chinese pangolin is improving, and the species has recently been receiving increased attention in both traditional and online media. In June 2020 the Chinese government upgraded all pangolins to the first-class level of protection for species in China, and removed them from the Chinese Pharmacopoeia. Six national parks have been established since 2014 to protect biodiversity cover 34,585 km² of the pangolin's distribution range in China (China Green Times, 2019, forestry.gov.cn/main/72/20191018/100213014982208.html).

The Pangolin Conservation and Research Centre of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration was established in July 2020 by the Chinese government. It is responsible for rescuing injured or seized live pangolins, conservation biology research, and developing new breeding techniques for ex situ conservation and restoration of the species to the wild. In this context, staff of the Centre rescued a Chinese pangolin and released it into the wild in July (*China Global Television Network*, 2020, news.cgtn.com/news/2020-07-08/Rescued-Chinese-pangolin-released-back-into-wild-RVSeoz3etG/index.html).

Additional measures are required for the protection of all pangolin species in China, including environmental education, anti-poaching mechanisms, and a conservation action plan for the Chinese pangolin. Any action plan for the species will need to include improved habitat connectivity, reforestation (it is a forest specialist), and study of its biology and ecology, which are poorly known.

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