IUCN Frequently asked questions

What is The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™?

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ is the world's most comprehensive information source on the extinction risk of animals, fungi and plants. Assessors place species into one of the IUCN Red List Categories, based on a series of assessment criteria. For each species, The IUCN Red List provides information about its range, population size, habitat and ecology, use and/or trade, threats and conservation actions. For a summary of the number of species on the current Red List, see the [Summary Statistics page](https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/summary-statistics) or use the [Advanced Search](https://www.iucnredlist.org/search).

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How often does IUCN update the Red List?

The Red List is updated a few times per year. You can find a list of scheduled updates [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/assessment/updates).

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Who uses The IUCN Red List?

A variety of people, governments and organisations use The IUCN Red List. International policy makers, government agencies, wildlife departments, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) use the data to support and plan conservation actions and priorities. Businesses and natural resource planners rely on the Red List to better understand their environmental impact and how minimise this. The IUCN Red List is also an important resource for educators, students and scientists. You can find more information about the uses of the Red List [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/about/uses).

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What are The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria?

The IUCN Red List Categories indicate how close a species is to becoming extinct. The nine Red List Categories are shown below: A diagram of a data flow

Description automatically generated

Species are assessed against five criteria (see below) based on geographic range, population size and population decline/increase, in addition to extinction probability analyses. These criteria determine which category is most appropriate for the species. You can find a useful summary of the criteria [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/summary-sheet).

A diagram of a threat and threat category

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Species in the Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered categories are collectively described as 'threatened'. The IUCN Red List does not include Not Evaluated species. Critically Endangered species may also be tagged as Possibly Extinct or Possibly Extinct in the Wild. For regional assessments, two additional categories are also available: 'Not Applicable' and 'Regionally Extinct'. You can find out more about regional assessments [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/about/regional).

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What taxa are included on The IUCN Red List?

Animals, plant and fungi species, subspecies, varieties (plants only) and subpopulations can be assessed on the Red List. However, an assessment of the animal, plant or fungi at the species level is required before subspecies, varieties and subpopulations can be assessed. The listing of undescribed species is discouraged, but can be included in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear conservation benefit. Hybrids of species, domesticated taxa and micro-organisms are not included on the Red List.

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Who assesses species for The IUCN Red List?

The IUCN Red List relies on Assessors (trained individuals, usually species experts) to assess species based on the currently available data and information. This comes from a range of sources, including published scientific papers, books, reports, expert knowledge, indigenous knowledge and citizen science. Red List Authorities review the assessments, and then the IUCN Red List Unit checks the assessments before publishing them on The IUCN Red List website. You can learn about the assessment process in more detail [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/assessment/process).

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What data are available on The IUCN Red List?

The IUCN Red List provides information about the geographic range, population size, habitat and ecology, use and trade, threats and conservation actions for species. For a full explanation of all the information available, see the [Supporting Information](https://www.iucnredlist.org/assessment/supporting-information) page. It is easy to find and download data using the [Advanced Search](https://www.iucnredlist.org/search) function on the website.

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Why does a species change category on The IUCN Red List?

This can happen for a number of reasons. Changes in category can be either 'genuine' or 'non-genuine'. You can learn about the reasons for category changes in more detail [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/assessment/reasons-changing-category).

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Why are Least Concern species included on The IUCN Red List?

Although Least Concern species have a lower risk of extinction, they are still important in terms of global biodiversity. Some Least Concern species are undergoing slow declines. It is important to monitor these species and to develop appropriate conservation actions to prevent them from becoming threatened in the future. The inclusion of Least Concern species on the Red List allows us to track the changing status of biodiversity.

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Are national Red List assessments available on The IUCN Red List?

Many countries develop their own national Red Lists to help them monitor the status of biodiversity within their borders and to help them to develop appropriate conservation policies and actions. Each country is responsible for managing and publishing their own national Red List data. Some of the national Red Lists are available on the [National Red List](https://www.nationalredlist.org/) and [BGCI ThreatSearch](https://tools.bgci.org/threat_search.php) websites.  
  
The primary aim of The IUCN Red List is to provide global extinction risk assessments for species. IUCN also coordinates some regional assessment projects (e.g. for [Europe](https://www.iucnredlist.org/regions/europe) and the [Mediterranean](https://www.iucnredlist.org/regions/mediterranean)), which are made available on the IUCN Red List website.

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Is a printed version of The IUCN Red List available?

The IUCN Red List is no longer available as a printed publication. Since the 1990s, the Red List has grown in size and complexity and it now includes assessments for more than 163,000 species, more than 3,600 subspecies and plant varieties, and more than 27,800 regional assessments. The number of assessments continues to increase with each Red List update. It also includes images for many species, distribution maps, supporting information for the assessments, and historic Red List assessments. (see the [Supporting Information](https://www.iucnredlist.org/assessment/supporting-information) page for a full explanation of what information is included in the assessments) This wealth of information means it is no longer possible to publish The IUCN Red List as a book.

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How do I search for a species on The Red List website?

You can search for species that you are interested in using the search field and the [Advanced Search](https://www.iucnredlist.org/search), both of which are accessible from any page on the website.

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Why is the species I am looking for not on The IUCN Red List website?

Currently, there are estimated to be more than 2 million described species living on Earth, of which less than 10% have been assessed for the Red List. If a species is not on the website, it is treated as Not Evaluated. For any further information, please [contact the Red List Unit](https://www.iucnredlist.org/support/contact).

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Why does the Catalogue of Life sometimes appear in the Red List search field?

The Catalogue of Life is a global index of names for currently described species.  
  
The IUCN Red List website does not include Not Evaluated species. When you search the Red List website, the name will be used to automatically search both The IUCN Red List and the Catalogue of Life websites. If the species is not on the Red List website, but appears in the search field under the title "CATALOGUE OF LIFE", this usually means that the species has not yet been assessed for The IUCN Red List and is therefore considered Not Evaluated.

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How do I create a user account for The IUCN Red List website?

The data on The IUCN Red List are freely available for non-commercial use. To sign up for an account, click 'Login/Register' at the top right of any page on the website. You will receive a confirmation email and you will need to click on its link to activate your account. You can also sign in to the website using your Facebook, Google or Twitter accounts. Creating an account will allow you to save searches and download information from the Red List. To access your account page, log in and click your name at the top of the screen.

To update or change the information received when downloading search results from the Red List website, you can update your download preferences from your user account. To do this, go to your account page and click 'Edit Profile'. Select the relevant boxes at the bottom of the screen and save these changes. The next time you download search results, you will receive additional information which corresponds to the options you previously selected.

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I have an account in the IUCN Red List website. Why am I unable to log in or reset my password?

In most cases this problem is related to accounts that were not confirmed. Please check your email inbox for a message with the subject "Confirmation instructions" from [redlist@iucn.org](mailto:redlist@iucn.org). You can also ["Resend confirmation email"](https://www.iucnredlist.org/users/confirmation/new)

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Which species have gone extinct most recently?

This is a very difficult question to answer because we cannot be certain of a species' date of extinction. It is particularly difficult to determine exactly when a species becomes extinct because it is extremely rare for anyone to witness the death of the last individual. The IUCN Red List records 'last seen' dates for species assessed as Extinct (EX), Extinct in the Wild (EW), and for Critically Endangered species flagged as Possibly Extinct (CR(PE)) or Possibly Extinct in the Wild (CR(PEW)). The 'last seen' date means the species became extinct sometime between that date and the date it was first listed as EX, EW, CR(PE) or CR(PEW) on The IUCN Red List.

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When will a particular species become extinct?

The IUCN Red List provides a measure of current extinction risk and not an estimated timing of when extinction will occur. The main purpose of The IUCN Red List is to provide information to help catalyse and inform conservation action in order to prevent species extinctions, rather than to document extinctions as they happen.

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How can a species come back from being extinct?

There have been cases where a species that was previously listed as Extinct on The IUCN Red List moves into another Red List Category after living individuals are found. These are so-called 'Lazarus' species. Situations such as these can occur as the result of the 'Romeo' error: when a species is declared extinct, while it is still alive. This sort of mistake can result in a species actually becoming extinct after protection and conservation efforts are withdrawn. Therefore, it is important to consider all the evidence before listing a species as Extinct to avoid erroneously recording a species as extinct.

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How can I support The IUCN Red List?

The future of The IUCN Red List relies on donors. As a result, we greatly appreciate all donations, which help us to continue assessing the extinction risk of species and monitoring the changing status of the planet's biodiversity. You can find more information about making a donation [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/support/donate).   
  
Please note: we are currently only able to accept donations in US dollars.

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How do I submit my photos of species to The IUCN Red List website?

We welcome high-quality, verified photographs of wild animals, fungi and plants, ideally in their natural habitats. If you have an image you would like to donate, please [contact us](https://www.iucnredlist.org/support/contact).

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May I use images of species from The IUCN Red List website in my work?

As many of the species images displayed on our website are kindly donated, IUCN does not hold the copyright to these images and cannot grant permission for their use. We recommend that you contact the copyright holder directly to ask permission.

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May I use information from The Red List website in my work?

You can download and use information from the Red List in accordance with our [Terms of Use](https://www.iucnredlist.org/terms/terms-of-use) policy. A summary of this policy is also available [here](https://www.iucnredlist.org/summary-terms/summary-terms-of-use). Please [contact the Red List Unit](https://www.iucnredlist.org/support/contact)with any questions that you have regarding our Terms of Use.

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How do I get a copy of The IUCN Red List media release?

If you are a journalist, please contact the [IUCN press team](https://www.iucn.org/press) to request media releases and to be added to our press list. Media releases are also published online on the [IUCN website](https://www.iucn.org/press-releases?ptype=international) and can be found on the Red List website [home page](https://www.iucnredlist.org/).

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