

ENDANGERED SPECIES

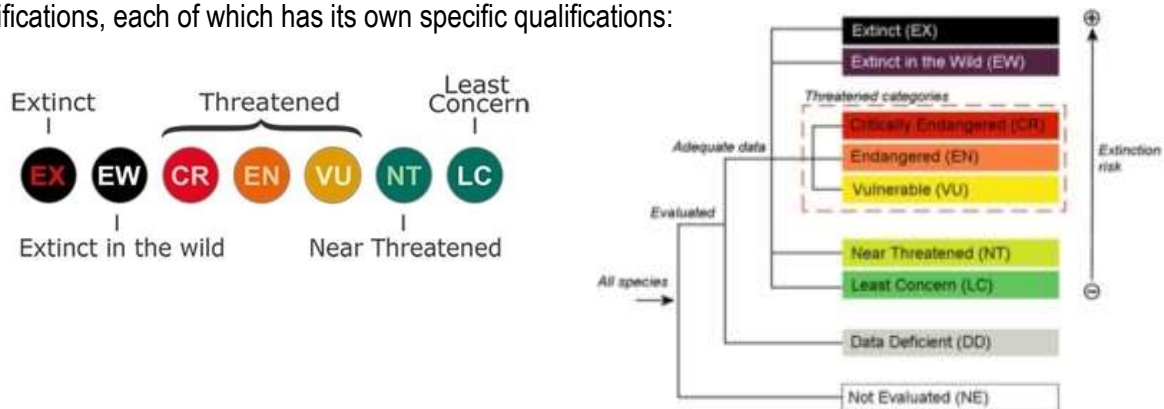
INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN)

The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** is an organization working in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. The IUCN was established in 1948, and has gone through several incarnations, name changes, and has expanded its mission statement to reflect issues in the changing environment. It is involved in data gathering and analysis, research, field projects, advocacy, and education. IUCN's mission is to "influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable".

Over the past decades, IUCN has widened its focus beyond conservation ecology and now incorporates issues related to sustainable development in its projects. Unlike many other international environmental organizations, IUCN does not itself aim to mobilize the public in support of nature conservation. It tries to influence the actions of governments, business and other stakeholders by providing information and advice, and through building partnerships. The organization is best known to the wider public for compiling and publishing the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, which assesses the conservation status of species worldwide.

While different governments and local organizations often have their own way of deciding for species that are close to home, the IUCN maintains the most-comprehensive list of endangered species around the world. The Red List of Threatened Species, as it's called, judges each species on five different standards for an in-depth scientific approach. According to the IUCN, an endangered species is one that meets any one of the following criteria: a 50–70% population decrease over 10 years, a total geographic area less than 5,000 km² (or local population area less than 500 km²), a population size less than 2,500 adults, a restricted population of 250 adults, or a statistical prediction that it will go extinct within the next 20 years.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species consists of the following classifications, each of which has its own specific qualifications:



There are now 41,415 species on the IUCN Red List, and 16,306 of them are endangered species threatened with extinction. This is up from 16,118 last year. This includes both endangered animals and endangered plants.

The species endangered include one in four mammals, one in eight birds, one third of all amphibians and 70% of the world's assessed plants on the 2007 IUCN Red List are in jeopardy of extinction. The total number of extinct species has reached 785 and a further 65 are only found in captivity or in cultivation. In the last 500 years, human activity has forced over 800 species into extinction.

CITES

The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** is an international treaty to prevent species from becoming endangered or extinct because of international trade. Under this treaty, countries work together to regulate the international trade of animal and plant species and ensure that this trade is not detrimental to the survival of wild populations. Any trade in protected plant and animal species should be sustainable, based on sound biological understanding and principles.

In the early 1960s, international discussion began focusing on the rate at which the world's wild animals and plants were being threatened by unregulated international trade. The Convention was drafted as the result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Today, 182 countries and the European Union implement CITES, which accords varying degrees of protection to over 35,000 species of animals and plants.

THE UNITED STATES ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Overview

In the United States, the **Endangered Species Act (ESA, 1973)** requires that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) maintain a federal list of endangered or threatened species. "Endangered" means a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. The ESA categorizes species using four different categories:



All species of plants and animals, except pest insects, are eligible for listing as endangered or threatened. Listing an animal species provides that species' population with federal protection. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) may designate a species as endangered or threatened based on the following five factors:

- (A) the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range
- (B) overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes
- (C) disease or predation
- (D) the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms
- (E) other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence.