



INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Once-abundant ash tree and antelope species face extinction – IUCN Red List

Gland, Switzerland, 14 September 2017 (IUCN) – North America's most widespread and valuable ash tree species are on the brink of extinction due to an invasive beetle decimating their populations, while the loss of wilderness areas and poaching are contributing to the declining numbers of five African antelope species, according to the latest update of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™.

Today's IUCN Red List update also reveals a dramatic decline of grasshoppers and millipedes endemic to Madagascar, and the extinction of the Christmas Island Pipistrelle bat.

The IUCN Red List now includes 87,967 species of which 25,062 are threatened with extinction.

"Our activities as humans are pushing species to the brink so fast that it's impossible for conservationists to assess the declines in real time," says Inger Andersen IUCN Director General. "Even those species that we thought were abundant and safe – such as antelopes in Africa or ash trees in the U.S. – now face an imminent threat of extinction.

"And while conservation action does work, conserving the forests, savannas and other biomes that we depend on for our survival and development is simply not a high-enough funding priority. Our planet needs urgent, global action, guided by the Red List data, to ensure species' survival and our own sustainable future."

North America's ash trees on the brink

Five of the six most prominent ash tree species in North America enter The IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered – only one step from going extinct – with the sixth species assessed as Endangered. These species are being decimated by the invasive Emerald Ash Borer beetle (*Agrilus planipennis*). Three of them – Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and Black Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) – are the country's most dominant ash trees, comprising nearly nine billion trees in the forested lands of the contiguous U.S. The once-plentiful White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) is one of the most valuable timber trees of North America used for making furniture, baseball bats, hockey sticks and tennis racquets.

Ash trees are a key component of North American forests. They provide habitat and food for birds, squirrels, and insects, and support important pollinator species such as butterflies and moths.

"Ash trees are essential to plant communities of the United States and have been a popular horticultural species, planted by the millions along our streets and in gardens," says Murphy Westwood, member of the IUCN Global Tree Specialist Group who led the assessment. "Their decline, which is likely to affect over 80 percent of the trees, will dramatically change the composition of both wild and urban forests. Due to the great ecological and economic value of ash trees, and because removing dead ash trees is extremely costly, much research is currently underway across sectors to halt their devastating decline. This brings hope for the survival of the species."

The fast-moving Emerald Ash Borer beetle arrived in Michigan from Asia in the late 1990s via infested shipping pallets, and has already destroyed tens of millions of trees throughout the U.S. and Canada. It has the potential to destroy over eight billion ash trees as it spreads rapidly and can kill nearly an entire forest stand of ash within six years of infestation.

Due to a warming climate, areas which were previously too cold for the beetle are becoming more suitable for it to thrive, making it impossible to know how far it could spread in future.

Five antelope species in decline

Although the status of most antelope species remains unchanged, five species of African antelopes – of which four were previously assessed as Least Concern – are declining drastically as a result of poaching, habitat degradation and competition with domestic livestock. This decline reflects a broader downward trend for large African mammals as they compete with the growing human population for space and resources.

“Antelopes have been declining as human populations continue to grow, clearing land for agriculture, unsustainably harvesting bushmeat, expanding their settlements, extracting resources and building new roads,” says **David Mallon, Co-Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission’s Antelope Specialist Group**. *“To reverse this dangerous trend, conserving biodiversity must be given much higher priority as part of efforts to achieve sustainable national economic development. Existing laws protecting wildlife must also be much more effectively enforced.”*

The world’s largest antelope, the **Giant Eland (*Tragelaphus derbianus*)** – previously assessed as Least Concern – is now **Vulnerable**. Its estimated global population is between 12,000 and 14,000 at most, with fewer than 10,000 mature animals. This species is declining due to poaching for bushmeat, encroachment into protected areas and expansion of agriculture and livestock grazing. Political instability and armed conflict in Central African Republic are major barriers to protecting this species.

Also previously listed as Least Concern, the **Mountain Reedbuck (*Redunca fulvorufula*)** has seen an approximate 55% decline in its South African population over the last 15 years. It is now listed as **Endangered** as similar declines throughout the rest of the range are probable. Expansion of human settlements leading to increases in poaching and sport hunting with dogs are thought to be the main reasons for its decline. Other threats may include widespread disturbance by cattle herders and their livestock and increased frequency and duration of droughts associated with climate change. Further monitoring data, especially from outside protected areas, are needed to fully quantify the population decline in this species.

Other species are also under threat, including the **Heuglin’s Gazelle (*Eudorcas tilonura*)** – now **Endangered** due to competition with domestic livestock and habitat degradation; **Southern Lechwe (*Kobus leche*)**, now listed as **Near Threatened** due to poaching, agricultural expansion, livestock grazing and droughts; and the **Grey Rhebok (*Pelea capreolus*)** – the origin of the Reebok sports brand – now in the **Near Threatened** category. Reasons for the decline of this species are poorly understood, and may include increases in illegal sport hunting with dogs, and poaching for bushmeat.

Madagascan grasshoppers and millipedes facing extinction

While the conservation status of the majority of invertebrate species is still unknown, recent assessments are beginning to reveal the impact of deforestation on Madagascar’s invertebrates. An assessment of all 71 species of endemic Madagascan pygmy grasshoppers shows that almost 40% of them are threatened with extinction. Seven of these species enter The IUCN Red List as **Critically Endangered**, including the **Rumplestiltskin Pygmy Grasshopper (*Agkistropleuron simplex*)**. This flightless species is only known to occur in Manakambahiny forest in eastern Madagascar. The only recent record of the species dates back to 1995. Its decline is due to the loss of its forest habitat.

More than 40% of 145 endemic Madagascan millipedes are also threatened with extinction, with 27 of them assessed as **Critically Endangered**. These include the **Shiny Giant Pill Millipede (*Sphaeromimus splendidus*)**, which requires a very specific sandy soil habitat in coastal rainforest areas. Its only habitat – the littoral rainforest of Sainte Luce – is now partly degraded due to wood removal and grazing. However, a planned strip-mining project, which will likely cause the destruction of most of its remaining habitat, poses the greatest threat to its survival.

New Snow Leopard data

Thanks to new available data, the **Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*)** has moved from the Endangered to **Vulnerable** category. However, its population continues to decline and it still faces a high risk of extinction

through habitat loss and degradation, declines in prey, competition with livestock, persecution, and poaching for illegal wildlife trade.

Thanks to significant investments in conservation for this species, including anti-poaching efforts, initiatives to reduce conflict with livestock, and awareness-raising programmes, conditions in parts of the Snow Leopard's range have improved. It is essential to continue and expand conservation efforts to reverse its declining trend and prevent this iconic cat from moving even closer to extinction.

Christmas Island Pipistrelle goes extinct

Today's update declares the **Christmas Island Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus murrayi*)** – a bat species endemic to Australia's Christmas Island – as **Extinct**. The population of this species rapidly declined from being common and widespread in the 1980s to between four and 20 animals in January 2009. Only one individual remained in August 2009, and it disappeared later that month. There has been no trace of this bat since then, despite extensive searches of the island. The reasons for the decline are not clear, but may have been a combination of increased predation by introduced species, impacts of invasive Yellow Crazy Ant (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*) on its habitat and on its invertebrate prey species, or possibly an unknown disease.

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Editor's notes

More information on the invasive **Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*)**, which threatens the survival of North American ash trees, can be found in the [IUCN Global Invasive Species Database](#) (GISD). The database contains over 850 invasive alien species, as well as information on their distribution, impacts, pathways of introduction, and measures to eradicate or manage them.

Examples of other species that have been added to the IUCN Red List

- **Thongaree's Disc-nosed Bat (*Eudiscoderma thongareeae*)**. This false vampire bat species is known only from a very small area of Bala Forest, south Thailand. Although it is a recently described species, it is believed to be rare as it is known from only a few collections in spite of intensive repeated surveys in the area over the last 15 years. With a highly restricted range and ongoing habitat loss as lowland forest in the area is being converted to agricultural land, this species enters The IUCN Red List as **Critically Endangered**.
- **Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*)** enters The IUCN Red List as **Vulnerable**. This long-lived, perennial plant occurs only in North America (USA and Canada), where it has undergone a decline in its distribution and the quality of its habitat. Goldenseal is threatened by collection for trade in the medicinal market. Its rhizomes have the highest concentration of medicinally-active alkaloids (berberine, hydrastine and canadine) used for the common cold and other upper respiratory tract infections. It can also be used to cure digestive disorders including stomach pain and swelling, diarrhoea, constipation, haemorrhoids, and intestinal gas.

Examples of other species whose conservation status has declined

- **Nancy Ma's Night Monkey (*Aotus nancymae*)** has moved from Least Concern to **Vulnerable**. The main threat to this Amazon forest primate is the illegal trade of wild-caught animals from Peru to Brazil, where they are used for malaria research. Conversion of habitat to agriculture (rice, palm oil, and soya bean cultivation, and pastureland) is also affecting this species.
- **Rennell Flying Fox (*Pteropus rennelli*)** has moved from Vulnerable to **Endangered**. This little-known flying fox is endemic to Rennell Island in the Solomon Islands, where it is restricted to an area of around 515 km². Commercial logging and bauxite mining are rapidly disturbing large areas of Rennell Island and are likely to be major threats to this fruit bat. The species is likely to also be threatened by hunting for food. Although not threatened by large-scale agriculture, subsistence agriculture could significantly impact this species due to its highly restricted distribution.

- **Gold-spotted Marsupial Frog (*Gastrotheca aureomaculata*)** has moved from Near Threatened to **Endangered**. This species is endemic to Colombia where it is known from only a few localities in the Departments of Cauca and Huila on the eastern slopes of the Cordillera Central. Formerly it was reported to be common, but the population is suspected to be decreasing due to ongoing decline in the extent and quality of its habitat. It has not been recorded since at least the 1960s. Although there have been some surveys in the area where the species was originally found, the region has not been intensively explored. A major threat to this frog is the destruction of its habitat for timber extraction and agriculture, including the cultivation of illegal crops. Water pollution is also considered a threat to this species.

Species whose conservation status has improved

- The **Rodrigues Flying Fox (*Pteropus rodricensis*)**, has moved from the Critically Endangered to the **Endangered** category thanks to improved habitat protection, reforestation programmes, better legal protection and enforcement against hunting, greater awareness and appreciation of the species through an education programme run by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation. Lower incidence of cyclones, possibly the result of climate change, has also helped the population to increase.

Quotes from Red List partners

Botanic Gardens Conservation International

“This latest release of the IUCN Red List highlights the fact that even some of the most common species around us, such as the American Ash, are at risk of going extinct,” says **Dr Malin Rivers, Red List Manager and Secretary to the IUCN/SSC Global Tree Specialist Group, of Botanic Gardens Conservation International**. “In addition, to looking after these threatened species in the wild, it is essential that we ensure these species as well as their genetic diversity are backed up in ex situ collections, such as botanic gardens, arboreta and seed banks for the future.”

NatureServe

“Goldenseal, a widespread herb native to eastern North American forests, has long been prized for its medicinal use,” says **Leah Oliver, Senior Research Botanist with NatureServe who led the assessment**. “The main causes of decline are wild collection combined with habitat loss and degradation. Yet, we are encouraged by a growing international market for cultivated goldenseal, along with a focus on sustainable wild-collection. These activities may slow the decline of the species.”

The IUCN Red List

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ contributes to the achievement of Target 12 of the 2011 to 2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. *Target 12: By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.*

Global figures for the 2017-2 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species:

TOTAL SPECIES ASSESSED = 87,967

(Total threatened species = 25,062)

Extinct = 859

Extinct in the Wild = 68

Critically Endangered = 5,403

Endangered = 8,152

Vulnerable = 11,507

Near Threatened = 5,691

Lower Risk/conservation dependent = 231 (this is an old category that is gradually being phased out of the IUCN Red List)

Least Concern = 41,992

Data Deficient = 14,064

The figures presented above are only for those species that have been assessed for the IUCN Red List to date. Although not all of the world's species have been assessed, The IUCN Red List provides a useful snapshot of what is happening to species today and highlights the urgent need for conservation action. Relative percentages for threatened species cannot be provided for many taxonomic groups on The IUCN Red List because they have not been comprehensively assessed. For many of these groups, assessment efforts have focussed on threatened species; therefore, the percentage of threatened species for these groups would be heavily biased.

For those groups that have been comprehensively assessed, the percentage of threatened species can be calculated, but the actual number of threatened species is often uncertain because it is not known whether Data Deficient (DD) species are actually threatened or not. Therefore, the percentages presented above provide the best estimate of extinction risk for those groups that have been comprehensively assessed (excluding Extinct species), based on the assumption that Data Deficient species are equally threatened as data sufficient species. In other words, this is a mid-point figure within a range from x% threatened species (if all DD species are not threatened) to y% threatened species (if all DD species are threatened). Available evidence indicates that this is a best estimate.

The IUCN Red List threat categories are as follows, in descending order of threat:

Extinct or Extinct in the Wild

Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable: species threatened with global extinction.

Near Threatened: species close to the threatened thresholds or that would be threatened without ongoing conservation measures.

Least Concern: species evaluated with a lower risk of extinction.

Data Deficient: no assessment because of insufficient data.

Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct): this is not a new IUCN Red List category, but is a flag developed to identify those Critically Endangered species that are in all probability already extinct but for which confirmation is required; for example, through more extensive surveys being carried out and failing to find any individuals.

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About The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™

[The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™](#) (or The IUCN Red List) is an invaluable resource to guide conservation action and policy decisions. It is a health check for our planet – a Barometer of Life. It is the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of plant, animal and fungi species. It is based on an objective system for assessing the risk of extinction of a species should no conservation action be taken.

Species are assigned to one of eight categories of threat based on whether they meet criteria linked to population trend, population size and structure and geographic range. Species listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable are collectively described as 'threatened'.

The IUCN Red List is not just a register of names and associated threat categories. It is a rich compendium of information on the threats to the species, their ecological requirements, where they live, and information on conservation actions that can be used to reduce or prevent extinctions. The IUCN Red List is a joint effort between IUCN and its Species Survival Commission, working with its IUCN Red List partners – Arizona State University; BirdLife International; Botanic Gardens Conservation International; Conservation International; NatureServe; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Sapienza University of Rome; Texas A&M University; and the Zoological Society of London.

Follow the IUCN Red List on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

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About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together. Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,300 Member organisations and some 16,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, Indigenous peoples' organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development. Working with many partners and supporters, IUCN implements a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects worldwide. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being. www.iucn.org <https://twitter.com/IUCN/>

About the Species Survival Commission

[The Species Survival Commission](#) (SSC) is the largest of IUCN's six volunteer commissions with a global membership of around 7,500 experts. SSC advises IUCN and its members on the wide range of technical and scientific aspects of species conservation, and is dedicated to securing a future for biodiversity. SSC has significant input into the international agreements dealing with biodiversity conservation.

About Arizona State University (ASU)

Ranked #1 in the U.S. for innovation, Arizona State University (ASU) is a new model for American higher education, combining academic excellence, entrepreneurial energy and broad access. It serves more than 70,000 students in metropolitan Phoenix, AZ. ASU champions intellectual and cultural diversity, and welcomes students from all fifty states and more than one hundred nations across the globe. ASU's Center for Biodiversity Outcomes (CBO) is a partnership between the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability (GIOS) and the School of Life Sciences (SoLS) via partnerships with NGOs, companies, and governmental organizations. Follow CBO's work on Twitter.

About BirdLife

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership. Together we are 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide – one per country – and growing, with almost 11 million supporters, 7000 local conservation groups and 7400 staff. As the official Red List Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List, BirdLife coordinates the process of evaluating all of the world's bird species against the Red List categories and criteria, in order to assess their extinction risk. Find out more about BirdLife and its Preventing Extinctions Programme at: www.birdlife.org / www.facebook.com/BirdLifeInternational

About Botanic Gardens Conservation International

BGCI is an international organization that exists to ensure the world-wide conservation of threatened plants, the continued existence of which are intrinsically linked to global issues including poverty, human well-being and climate change. BGCI represents over 700 members - mostly botanic gardens - in 118 countries. We aim to support and empower our members and the wider conservation community so that their knowledge and expertise can be applied to reversing the threat of extinction crisis facing one third of all plants. <http://www.bgci.org>

About Conservation International (CI)

Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, CI empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature, our global biodiversity, for the long term well-being of people. Founded in 1987 and marking its 25th anniversary in 2012, CI has headquarters in the Washington DC area, and 900 employees working in nearly 30 countries on four continents, plus 1,000+

partners around the world. For more information, please visit at www.conservation.org , or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.

About NatureServe

NatureServe is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to providing the scientific basis for effective conservation action. Through its network of 82 natural heritage programs and conservation data centres in the United States, Canada, and Latin America, NatureServe provides a unique body of detailed scientific information and conservation biodiversity expertise about the plants, animals, and ecosystems of the Americas. www.natureserve.org

About the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is a world famous scientific organisation, internationally respected for its outstanding living collection of plants and world-class Herbarium as well as its scientific expertise in plant diversity, conservation and sustainable development in the UK and around the world. Kew Gardens is a major international visitor attraction. Its landscaped 132 hectares and RBG Kew's country estate, Wakehurst Place, attract nearly 2 million visitors every year. Kew was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2003 and celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2009. Wakehurst Place is home to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank, the largest wild plant seed bank in the world. RBG Kew and its partners have collected and conserved seed from 10 per cent of the world's wild flowering plant species (c.30, 000 species). The aim is to conserve 25 per cent by 2020, and its enormous potential for future conservation can only be fulfilled with the support of the public and other funders. www.kew.org

About Sapienza University of Rome

With over 700 years of history and 110,000 students, Sapienza is the largest University in Europe, the second in the world after El Cairo: a city within the city. The University includes 11 faculties and 67 departments. In Sapienza there are over 4,500 professors, and 5,000 administrative and technical staff. Sapienza offers a wide choice of courses including 300 degree programs and 200 specialized qualifications. Students coming from other regions are over 30,000 and the foreign students are over 7,000. Sapienza plans and carries out important scientific investigations in almost all disciplines, achieving high-standard results both on a national and on an international level. Eugenio Gaudio has been the Rector of Sapienza University since November 2014. <http://www.uniroma1.it/>

About Texas A&M University

From humble beginnings in 1876 as Texas' first public institution of higher learning, to a bustling 5,200-acre campus with a nationally recognized faculty, Texas A&M University is one of a select few universities with land-grant, sea-grant and space-grant designations. With an enrolment of about half men and half women, 25 percent of the freshman class are the first in their family to attend college. Here, 39,000-plus undergraduates and more than 9,400 graduate students have access to world-class research programs and award-winning faculty. Texas A&M has two branch campuses, one in Galveston, Texas, and one in the Middle Eastern country of Qatar. This research-intensive flagship university with 10 colleges was recently ranked first in the nation by Smart Money magazine for "pay-back ratio" (what graduates earn compared to the cost of their education). The 2011 U.S. News and World Report ranked Texas A&M second nationally in their "Great Schools, Great Prices" category among public universities and 22nd overall. Many degree programs are ranked among the top 10 in the country. www.tamu.edu

About the Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

Founded in 1826, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is an international scientific, conservation and educational charity: the key role is the conservation of animals and their habitats. The Society runs ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, carries out scientific research at the Institute of Zoology and is actively involved in field conservation in over 50 countries worldwide. www.zsl.org