



INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Embargoed until: 14:00 CET 14 November 2018

Fin Whale, Mountain Gorilla recovering thanks to conservation action – IUCN Red List

Gland, Switzerland, 14 November 2018 (IUCN) – Conservation action has brought renewed hope for the Fin Whale and the Mountain Gorilla, according to today's update of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The Fin Whale has improved in status from Endangered to Vulnerable following bans on whaling, while the Mountain Gorilla subspecies has moved from Critically Endangered to Endangered thanks to collaborative conservation efforts.

Today's IUCN Red List update also reveals that overfishing is causing fish species in parts of the developing world to decline, with 13% of the world's grouper species and 9% of Lake Malawi fish now threatened with extinction. Overexploitation also threatens the Vene tree (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) – an important source of timber – which enters The IUCN Red List as Endangered.

The IUCN Red List now includes 96,951 species of which 26,840 are threatened with extinction.

“Today's update to The IUCN Red List illustrates the power of conservation action, with the recoveries we are seeing of the Fin Whale and the Mountain Gorilla,” says Inger Andersen, IUCN Director General. “These conservation successes are proof that the ambitious, collaborative efforts of governments, business and civil society could turn back the tide of species loss. Unfortunately, the latest update also underlines how threats to biodiversity continue to undermine some of society's most important goals, including food security. We urgently need to see effective conservation action strengthened and sustained. The ongoing UN biodiversity summit in Egypt provides a valuable opportunity for decisive action to protect the diversity of life on our planet.”

Whale populations on the rise

Previously listed as Endangered, the Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) is now listed as Vulnerable as the global population of the species has roughly doubled since the 1970s. The recovery follows international bans on commercial whaling in the North Pacific and in the Southern Hemisphere, in place since 1976, and significant reductions in catches in the North Atlantic since 1990. The status of the western subpopulation of the Gray Whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) has also improved, moving from Critically Endangered to

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Endangered. Both of these whale species were historically threatened by overexploitation for their blubber, oil and meat.

“Fin Whales and Western Gray Whales were severely depleted by hunting, and it is a relief to finally see their populations on the rise. These whales are recovering largely thanks to bans on commercial hunting, international agreements and various protection measures. Conservation efforts must continue until the populations are no longer threatened,” says **Randall Reeves, Chair of the IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group**. *“These examples of governments, industry and civil society acting together for conservation should provide inspiration for Parties gathering in Egypt this week at the Convention on Biological Diversity conference.”*

The nearly complete protection of Fin Whales throughout their range has allowed the global population to reach around 100,000 mature individuals. Western Gray Whales have been protected from commercial whaling in almost all range state since 1980, but only recently has there been clear evidence of increasing numbers in the western Pacific, particularly off Sakhalin Island, Russia. The delay between conservation measures taking effect and the detection of whale recovery is due, in part, to these animals' slow rate of reproduction. Five Gray Whale range states – Japan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Korea, the USA and Mexico – have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation Concerning Conservation Measures for the Western Gray Whale Population. Industrial activity including oil and gas development and commercial fisheries also represent a potential threat to Gray Whales. Since 2004, an IUCN-led independent panel of scientists has been advising Sakhalin Energy, one of the largest companies operating offshore in the Russian Far East, on how to manage the potential impacts of its activities on the whales.

Hope for the Mountain Gorilla

This update of The IUCN Red List also brings hope for the Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*), which has improved in status from Critically Endangered to Endangered thanks to collaborative conservation efforts across country boundaries and positive engagement from communities living around the Mountain Gorilla habitat. The Mountain Gorilla is one of two subspecies of the Eastern Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*); the Eastern Gorilla species remains Critically Endangered.

Intensive conservation action, including anti-poaching patrols and in-situ veterinary interventions – such as the removal of snares – has contributed to the growth of Mountain Gorilla populations since the previous IUCN Red List assessment, published in 2008. The 2008 Mountain Gorilla population was estimated to be around 680 individuals, but 2018 estimates show that it has increased to over 1,000 individuals, the highest figure ever recorded for the subspecies. The population growth has been confirmed through coordinated and improved survey methods.

Mountain Gorilla habitat is restricted to protected areas covering approximately 792 km² in two locations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda – the Virunga Massif and Bwindi-Sarambwe. Both locations are bordered by land intensively cultivated for agriculture by a growing human population. Threats to this subspecies remain high, including poaching, recurring civil unrest and human-introduced diseases, ranging from respiratory infections to Ebola.

“Whilst it is fantastic news that Mountain Gorillas are increasing in number, this subspecies is still Endangered and therefore conservation action must continue,” says **Dr Liz Williamson of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group**. *“Coordinated efforts through a regional action plan and fully implementing IUCN Best Practice guidelines for great ape tourism and disease prevention, which recommend limiting numbers of tourists and preventing any close contact with humans, are critical to ensuring a future for the Mountain Gorilla.”*

Fish species threatened by overfishing

Fifty-four fish species from two important fisheries are threatened by unsustainable fishing, according to The IUCN Red List update.

Nine per cent of the 458 fish species assessed in Lake Malawi are at high risk of extinction, causing concern for regional food security. Three out of the four species of Chambo (*Oreochromis karongae*, *Oreochromis squamipinnis*, *Oreochromis lidole*) – Malawi's most economically valuable fish – are Critically Endangered. Chambo fisheries are now on the brink of collapse. Over one-third of Malawians depend on Lake Malawi, Africa's third largest lake, for their food and livelihoods. Similar findings were highlighted in a recent [report](#) from the Lake Victoria Basin, where three quarters of all endemic freshwater species are threatened. Local livelihoods in several East African countries dependent on resources from these lakes are threatened by unsustainable fishing.

The first reassessment of all 167 species of grouper – an economically valuable iconic type of sea bass occurring widely in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Indo-Pacific regions – confirms that 13% are threatened by overfishing. Local communities in developing tropical and sub-tropical countries are particularly impacted. Species on The IUCN Red List are periodically reassessed and consequently their conservation status is redefined based on newly available data. Improved information on population trends confirmed that the Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*) is more threatened than previously thought, moving it from Endangered to Critically Endangered. This species is highly valued throughout the Caribbean, but overfishing has caused local declines of over 80% since the 1980s. Evaluations also highlighted that the now Vulnerable Camouflage (*Epinephelus polyphekadion*) and Gag (*Mycteroperca microlepis*) Groupers are of more concern than previously recognised.

“Depleting fish stocks are a serious concern for food security, particularly for coastal communities in developing countries,” says **Yvonne Sadovy, Co-Chair of IUCN SSC Grouper and Wrasse Specialist Group**. *“While some commercial marine fisheries are sustainably managed, there are few such examples for groupers anywhere. Human population growth places excess demand on fish species important to subsistence livelihoods and niche markets, and pressures to export are exacerbating the situation. Species decline significantly affects the affordability of fish species around the world and reduces food security for the millions of people who depend on subsistence and small-scale fisheries for survival.”*

Illegal logging threatens the Vene timber tree

Vene (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*), a globally important timber tree, enters The IUCN Red List as Endangered, threatened by felling to supply booming demand for household products. Native to West and Central Africa, the dark pink-brown timber from this tree is used globally for affordable furniture, flooring, household utensils and in construction. Between 2009 and 2014, there was a 15-fold increase in the trade of timber from the Vene tree, a type of African Rosewood, to meet high demand from China.

“As demand outweighs the legal supply of Vene timber, illegal trade networks are becoming increasingly lucrative,” says **Sara Oldfield, Co-Chair of IUCN SSC Plant Specialist Group**. *“Less than 2% of the tree's native forest is protected and much of its habitat lies within conflict zones, where conservation is not a priority. Protected areas need to be expanded to conserve this species.”*

Illegal trade in Vene timber is widespread. Most range countries have legislation in place to protect the species, but this is often not enforced owing to a lack of resources and funding to control illegal trade. In Togo, a quarter of African Rosewood harvest was sourced illegally in 2008. A lack of awareness throughout the supply chain perpetuates the situation, threatening local livelihoods dependent on the tree for animal forage, fuel, clothes dye and medicinal use. Uses of the rosewood in Alzheimer's disease and dementia treatments are also being researched.

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Other species:

Agarwood

All 20 *Aquilaria* Agarwood species have now been assessed for The IUCN Red List, and 13 are threatened with extinction. The wounded wood from the tree is used to produce perfume and fragrances and is one of the most expensive woods in the world. Due to their high economic value, Agarwood species are threatened with illegal harvesting in some areas. The Vulnerable Chinese Agarwood (*Aquilaria sinensis*) has suffered a 30% population decline over the past ten years. Between 2006 and 2011, customs in China's Guangdong province reported 211 cases of illegal smuggling.

Titan Arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*) – Nicknamed the 'Corpse Flower' for its infamous stench, the Titan Arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*) – the world's largest inflorescence – has been assessed for The IUCN Red List for the first time. The species, endemic to the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, is listed as Endangered, following an estimated population decline of 50% over the past 150 years. The main reasons for the decline are logging and the conversion of the plant's native forest habitat to oil palm plantations; fewer than 1,000 individuals remain in the wild. By protecting the habitat of the Titan Arum, recovery is possible. A public education programme to highlight the threats to this iconic species will also help engage and encourage local stakeholders to help protect it.

Bolson Tortoise (*Gopherus flavomarginatus*) – The largest North American tortoise species, the Bolson Tortoise (*Gopherus flavomarginatus*), has changed status from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered on The IUCN Red List due to exploitation for subsistence consumption as well as widespread habitat loss. The population of the tortoise – found in isolated areas in Mexico's Bolsón de Mapimí basin – has plummeted by over 64% in the past 30 years. The species is endangered under Mexican federal wildlife laws and captive breeding programmes aiming to reintroduce the species to New Mexico and Texas, USA, are being evaluated.

Notes: The IUCN Red List has launched a new [website](#), which has an improved user interface, enhanced search capabilities, and displays information on the threat status of species in engaging formats. This will enable users to quickly and efficiently find the information they are seeking, and thus enable important steps that need to be taken to protect global biodiversity. With special thanks to Toyota Motor Corporation and Synchronicity Earth for the funding of the new web-based platform for The IUCN Red List.

Supporting quotes:

"At least two billion people depend directly on inland freshwater fisheries such as Lake Malawi for their survival," says William Darwall, Head of IUCN's Freshwater Species Unit. "Almost 80% of catch from freshwater fisheries comes from food-deficit countries - where the general population does not have sufficient food to meet recommended daily calorie intake - yet freshwater resources are not prioritised on national or international agendas. Target 6 of the UN Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, focused on avoidance of overfishing, will therefore be missed. This omission puts local livelihoods at risk and increases the risk of food insecurity across the world."

"Conservation successes such as the Mountain Gorilla demonstrate that science-based, targeted conservation action works. This is why we continue to support The IUCN Red List," says Keiji Nemoto, General Manager, Environmental Affairs Division from Toyota Motor Corporation. "The IUCN Red List provides invaluable data, informing conservation policy and action that prevents species from slipping towards extinction."

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Notes to editors

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.*

IUCN–Toyota Partnership: The five-year partnership between IUCN and Toyota Motor Corporation announced in May 2016 will significantly increase knowledge on the extinction risk of more than 28,000 species, including many that are key food sources for a significant portion of the global population. This partnership has enabled the addition of 1,986 species of plants and animals to this update of The IUCN Red List. This partnership is driven by the Toyota Environmental Challenge 2050, which aims to reduce the negative impacts associated with automobiles to zero and beyond, whilst simultaneously making positive impacts on society.

Quotes from Red List partners

Botanical Gardens Conservation International: "New assessments of several iconic plant species, such as Titan Arum, agarwoods and timber trees, many of them threatened with extinction, emphasise the urgency to produce conservation assessments to better prioritise the need for conservation action, both in situ and ex situ, to ensure the future survival of plants."

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: "As a Red List Partner, the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew has been contributing assessments to the Red List for many years. Having a dedicated Plant Assessment Unit for the past two years has enabled us to increase the rate at which we are Red Listing plant species, especially from the tropics, and is now averaging over 1,000 submissions per year. This work is vitally important to ensuring that the Red List is representative of life on earth. Only by understanding the threats to which species are exposed can we plan effective action to address them," says **Dr Serene Hargreaves, of Kew's Conservation Science Department.**

ZSL: "The recovery of species like Mountain Gorilla, Fin Whale and Rothschild's Giraffe demonstrates once again that with sustained, long-term conservation action, we can not only prevent extinctions, but also achieve considerable population recoveries", says **Dominic Jermy, CVO, OBE Director General of ZSL (Zoological Society of London).** "As the world's governments convene in Egypt to continue discussions around forging a new and ambitious strategic plan for biodiversity, we hope that these examples will embolden countries to make strong commitments that will put the world's wildlife on a path to recovery".

The IUCN Red List

Global figures for the 2018-2 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species:

TOTAL SPECIES ASSESSED = 96,951

(Total threatened species = 26,840)

Extinct = 872

Extinct in the Wild = 69

Critically Endangered = 5,826

Endangered = 9,032

Vulnerable = 11,982

Near Threatened = 6,153

Lower Risk/conservation dependent = 209 (this is an old category that is gradually being phased out of The IUCN Red List)

Least Concern = 47,753

Data Deficient = 15,055

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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 focused 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.

Highlights from the 2018-2 update

Below are a few other examples from this update to The IUCN Red List.

Examples of other species that have been added in this update

Cyanea konahuanuiensis - *Cyanea konahuanuiensis* is a plant endemic to Hawai'i, where it is known only from the Kōnāhuanui summit area in the Ko'olau Mountains on O'ahu. Approximately 20 mature plants have been found, but seedlings are scarce, suggesting that the population is in decline. Its small known population size and restricted range make this species susceptible to threats from introduced invasive species (rats, slugs, feral pigs, invasive plants), and to stochastic events such as landslides, hurricanes or flash floods. It is also likely that most (or possibly all) of its native bird pollinators and dispersers have been lost. This plant enters the IUCN Red List as **Critically Endangered**.

Na`o Hau Hele (*Hibiscus brackenridgei*) – This species is the official flower of the State of Hawai'i. This is a rare plant, occurring in only nine small subpopulations on the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Lana'i and Hawai'i. It was reported to be planted for ornamental purposes by early Hawaiians and is still popular in the commercial nursery trade today. In the wild, it is threatened by invasive non-native plants which compete with this species (for moisture, nutrients, light and space), alter the native habitat, an increase the frequency of fires. The species is also eaten by non-native animals (rats, pigs, deer, and goats), some of which also degrade its habitat. It is also at risk from landslides, fire and drought. *Hibiscus brackenridgei* enters the IUCN Red List as **Critically Endangered**.

Mexican Orange Beauty (*Brachypelma baumgarteni*) – This species of tarantula spider is endemic to Mexico where it is found only in the coastal region of Sierra Madre del Sur in southeastern Michoacán State. Until five years ago, this spider was commonly found in the wild. However, it has become difficult to find. It appears to be a forest-dependent species and human pressure (such as urbanisation and agriculture) could be the main cause of its disappearance. Local information indicates that some subpopulations were devastated by hurricanes. Captive breeding supplies the pet trade for this species, but this is inadequate to meet market demands, causing increased harvest pressure on wild populations. The Mexican Orange Beauty (*Brachypelma baumgarteni*) enters the IUCN Red List as **Endangered** in 2018.

Durrell's Night Gecko (*Nactus durrellorum*) - Durrell's Night Gecko (*Nactus durrellorum*) is endemic to Mauritius, currently restricted to Round Island, which has an area of only 2 km². The species has undergone a severe past decline that led to its extinction across most of its historical range. Its one remaining location was heavily degraded by invasive mammalian grazers, but since the 1980s conservation measures to eradicate several invasive species, restore habitat, and actively manage this species have led to a rapid population increase. By 2018 the global population was estimated to contain over 27,000 individuals and to be increasing. Nevertheless, invasive species regularly invade islands within the Mauritian archipelago and require active control efforts. Other potential threats come from extreme weather, intense cyclones and fire. The species enters the IUCN Red List as **Vulnerable** in 2018.

Examples of other species whose conservation status has declined

Banded Rockcod (*Hyporthodus ergastularius*) - Found off the Australian coast, the species has moved from Least Concern to Near Threatened. Over the last eight years, overfishing has caused this species to decline by over 69% in New South Wales and by 80% in Queensland, with financial implications for fishers and local and national export markets.

Beisa Oryx (*Oryx beisa*) – This species formerly occurred widely in the semi-arid and arid bushland and grasslands of North-East Africa, but its distribution and population have declined markedly. In the mid-1990s the population was estimated to be around 26,000; the most recent population estimate is 12,000, a decline of 54%. This species is traditionally hunted for its meat, its very tough hide, and in many cultures, its horns are sought after as charms. Overexploitation and encroachment by settlement and livestock are the main threats that have driven this species from Near Threatened into Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Paramo Toad (*Nannophryne cophotis*) - Assessed as Least Concern in 2004, the Paramo Toad (*Nannophryne cophotis*) moved into the Critically Endangered category. This species is endemic to Peru where it was formerly common and abundant, but its population has declined so drastically that it may already be extinct. This toad was last seen in 2005. Its precipitous decline is thought to be due to habitat loss and contamination of freshwater by mining activities, agricultural expansion and pine plantations, although threats from chytridiomycosis and climate change cannot be ruled out.

Boswellia pirottae – *Boswellia pirottae* is rare species of tree found only in Ethiopia and used locally for incense. Flooding due to the planned construction of the Gibe IV dam is likely to directly affect a small part of the population occurring at lower altitudes. Local microclimate may change after this dam is constructed, which could affect the remaining population or change the natural fire regime. This species moves from Near Threatened to Vulnerable in this Red List update.

Examples of other species whose conservation status has improved

Salt Marsh Gecko (*Cryptactites peringueyi*) – Endemic to the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, the Salt Marsh Gecko (*Cryptactites peringueyi*) formerly occurred only near or within the coastal marshes. However, in recent years it has expanded several kilometres inland and is now using man-made structures as shelter. The population is now considered stable but its primary habitat (coastal marshes) could still be at risk from stochastic events such as increasing storm sea flooding and sea level rise associated with climatic change. It has moved from Critically Endangered to Near Threatened on The IUCN Red List.

Banahao Forest Frog (*Platymantis banahao*) – The Banahao Forest Frog is only known from Luzon Island in the Philippines. Previously this amphibian was assessed as Vulnerable because of its restricted range and damage to montane habitat by visitors to the area. However, thanks to the establishment of the Protected Landscape in 2009, ongoing habitat loss now affects only a minority of the population. The species is now listed as Near Threatened.

Rothschild's Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis rothschildi*) – Rothschild's Giraffe is currently confined to small areas in Kenya and Uganda. Historically, this subspecies had a much wider range in East Africa, but illegal hunting, agricultural expansion, human encroachment, and habitat degradation and fragmentation, led to its extirpation across most of its former range. Rothschild's Giraffe was listed as Endangered in 2010. Since then, conservation actions, such as reintroductions, improved legal protection including a ban on hunting, and the development of National Giraffe Strategy and Action Plans, have resulted in a population increase. There are currently an estimated 1,468 mature individuals in the wild and populations are increasing, however, there is little potential for dispersal between the remaining sites, and limited capacity for their expansion. The future of the subspecies depends on ongoing conservation efforts. The subspecies moves into the Near Threatened category in 2018.

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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 Zoological Society of London. www.iucnredlist.org <https://www.facebook.com/iucn.red.list> <https://twitter.com/IUCNRedList> <http://support.iucnredlist.org/>

About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources

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and reach of its more than 1,300 Member organisations and the input of more than 10,000 experts. This year, IUCN celebrates its 70th anniversary. Since its establishment in 1948 in the French town of Fontainebleau, IUCN has become the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. www.iucn.org

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 NGO's, 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. Find out more 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 collections 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. Kew's 132 hectares of landscaped gardens, and Wakehurst (Kew's wild botanic garden), attract over two million visitors every year. Kew was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2003 and celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2009. Wakehurst is home to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank, the largest wild plant seed bank in the world. Kew's scientific work spans more than 100 countries and involves over 400 collaborating institutions worldwide. 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 ZSL

ZSL (Zoological Society of London) is an international conservation charity working to create a world where wildlife thrives. From investigating the health threats facing animals to helping people and wildlife live alongside each other, ZSL is committed to bringing wildlife back from the brink of extinction. Our work is realised through our ground-breaking science, our field conservation around the world and engaging millions of people through our two zoos, ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo. For more information, visit www.zsl.org

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