

SOURCE: <http://wwf.org.au/news/wwf-on-iucns-red-list-of-threatened-species-2007/>

## **WWF on IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species, 2007**

13 Sep 2007

Gland, Switzerland - The planet is being pushed to its limits as indicated by the increasing number of threatened species across the globe, according to the latest trends in the World Conservation Union's (IUCN's) Red List.

The IUCN's Red List is a barometer that shows the effects that habitat loss and degradation, over-exploitation, pollutants, the introduction of invasive plants and species, and climate change are having on our planet.

"We're at code red," said Dr Susan Lieberman, Director of WWF's Global Species Programme. "It's about time people stopped talking and realized this is not a game. The very future of our planet - and the environment we leave to our children - hangs in the balance. Do we really want to be remembered as the generation that got it so wrong?" she added.

According to WWF, the loss of species is a clear warning for humans. Sound ecosystems which include clean fresh water, safe seas and healthy forests with robust species populations, are critical to the livelihoods and survival of people.

WWF applauds IUCN for drawing attention to this situation and calls on governments to take immediate, concrete, action to address some of the root causes of species extinction.

WWF believes the IUCN's Red List classifications should be used as a tool to assist in prioritizing focus for limited resources. For example, the Western Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) has moved from Endangered to Critically Endangered. The upgrade in status should highlight the plight of western gorillas, whose population numbers prove the need for urgent attention to combat commercial hunting and further understand and prevent ebola outbreaks.

Orang-utans are also under extreme threat, primarily due to destruction of their habitat for activities such as the creation of oil palm plantations. WWF and its partners have issued new guidelines to ensure that oil palm plantations are better situated and managed more effectively to prevent conflict between the animals and humans. It is critical that oil palm companies in orang-utan range states take these on board.

Freshwater dolphins are suffering a dismal fate globally due to dam-building, entanglement in fishing nets, boat traffic and pollution. In 2005, WWF launched a new

River Dolphin Initiative with governments, other non-governmental organizations, industry, fishermen, and local communities to reduce or eliminate the threats to river dolphins and porpoises.

Overexploitation of species for food, medicine, pets and other human uses is a direct driver of species loss. The impact of international trade on wildlife is tremendous, and when it is not properly regulated it causes rapid declines, as seen for some of the species highlighted by the IUCN's Red List, particularly reptiles from North America.

Corals are also on the list for the very first time.

"The fact that corals are now present on the IUCN's Red List should sound warning bells to the world that the oceans are in trouble", said Dr Simon Cripps, Director of WWF's Global Marine Programme.

Coral reefs are crucial as nursery grounds for thousands of species of fish and invertebrates and provide revenue and livelihoods from fishing and tourism for a large proportion of the world's growing coastal population. Corals across the world are being decimated by unsustainable and destructive fishing and by the effects of climate change. WWF believes that unless the world acts urgently, the corals now listed will soon be accompanied by yet more species - and a loss of revenue for dependent communities.

Five species of vultures, according to IUCN, are more threatened because of the use of diclofenac, a chemical used to treat livestock. *Gyps Bengalensis*, the oriental white-back vulture, has long been classified as Critically Endangered for the same reason. WWF-Pakistan has successfully lobbied to prevent the use of diclofenac in Pakistan and to establish a captive-breeding facility to provide a pool of birds that can be released into the wild once the drug is out of the environmental system.

"World leaders have made various commitments to halt biodiversity loss, but this crisis has largely fallen off political agendas. Attention and funding have shifted to economic development and long-term security - without adequate attention to the link between these issues, a healthy environment, and truly sustainable development. It's time to make the connections," said Dr Lieberman.

## **More information**

Joanna Benn, Communications Manager, WWF Global Species Programme

Phone: +39 06 84 497 212

Email: [jbenn@wwfspecies.org](mailto:jbenn@wwfspecies.org)

## **Notes**

WWF works in close cooperation with IUCN across the globe in many ways, including through field interventions and cooperation with the various Species Specialist Groups of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, which WWF supports. IUCN has highlighted a number of species WWF works on.

The IUCN's Red List is developed by a voluntary network of Species Specialist groups. Across the globe, WWF staffs are part of many of these specialist groups, providing financial and technical support.

## **For more information**

Contact the WWF-Australia Press Office by [email](#) or phone on 1800 032 551, or 0410 220 608 after hours.