

IUCN - WORLD CONSERVATION UNION

The World Conservation Union (IUCN after its original name – International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) promotes the wise use of natural resources throughout the world. IUCN world headquarters are in Gland (northeast of Geneva). The IUCN Director General is Achim Steiner of Germany.

IUCN was founded in 1948 as an independent scientific organization devoted to the conservation of nature and natural resources, and is among the oldest organizations in this field. The world's largest professional conservation organization, IUCN brings together governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals to help nations make the best use of their natural resources in a way that can be sustained for the benefit of future generations.



The Florida Everglades – The designation and management of protected areas is a key theme of IUCN's work.

The core of IUCN's program is its work on systems such as forests, wetlands, coastlands and seas, and the dynamics of the species that compose ecosystems. However, these systems cannot be protected unless human impacts upon them are also analyzed. For this reason, IUCN also has programs in the social sciences dealing with the ecological impact of human populations.

In addition to bringing together governments and non-governmental organizations, IUCN works with an international network of over 10,000 volunteer experts grouped together in six global commissions: the Species Survival Commission; the World Commission on Protected Areas; the Commission on Education and Communication; the Commission on Environmental Law; the Commission on Ecosystem Management; the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy.

The members of IUCN and the commissions gather once every three or four years for the World Conservation Congress to vote on the future direction of the work of the Union. The next Congress will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2004.

IUCN compiles the annual Red List of Threatened Species, the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species. The 2002 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species lists 11,167 as threatened with extinction at the global level.

IUCN has helped prepare major international environmental treaties including the

IUCN SPECIES PROFILES

Wild bactrian camel

Critically Endangered

A native of China and Mongolia, the wild Bactrian camel is fast disappearing. Since 1985, the Mongolian subpopulation has declined by 46% and if current trends continue, the population will decline by 84% by 2033.

Saiga

Critically Endangered

Found mainly in Central Asia, this antelope has seen its numbers decline from over one million in 1993 to less than 50,000 in the wild today, a decline of 90% in the last 10 years.

Iberian lynx

Critically Endangered

With a population – now fragmented on the Iberian peninsula – that has declined to less than half of the 1,200 that existed in the early 1990s, the Iberian lynx is close to becoming the first wild cat species to go extinct in nearly 2,000 years.

Titicaca flightless grebe

Endangered

Found in freshwater lakes in Peru and Bolivia, this species has seen its population decline by some 75% in the last 10 years. Today, very few remain.

Black-browed albatross

Vulnerable

Found in the Southern Hemisphere, this species has seen its global population decline by around 30% over the last 30 years. Although there are a few sights where its numbers are increasing, this decline is nonetheless set to continue at current rates.

Blue duck

Endangered

Endemic to New Zealand, the Blue duck has seen its numbers decline very rapidly. Today, the population is severely fragmented with no groups exceeding 250 birds.

1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (see separate chapter on the Ramsar Convention); the 1972 World Heritage Convention (which designates natural and cultural sites as part of the world heritage that should be preserved); the 1975 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES – see separate CITES chapter); the 1979 Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the 1982 World Charter for Nature, and the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity.

The IUCN Environmental Law Center in Bonn (Germany) is a key source of data on laws and administrative instruments relating to the environment.

In 1991, IUCN, in a joint endeavor with UNEP and WWF, launched a follow-on to the World Conservation Strategy: *Caring for the Earth - A Strategy for Sustainable Living*. The strategy provides a new action plan for living sustainably, from the top levels of government to the individual level, by listing 132 things communities can do to safeguard or improve their environments, while improving their quality of life.

IUCN has worked with governments to develop national conservation strategies, and has directed environmental rehabilitation and conservation projects. It has been looking in particular at the ecological rehabilitation of drought-affected areas in Africa, focusing on the long-term issues of desertification and other forms of environmental degradation. Through a program of regionalization, IUCN seeks to ensure that concepts it has developed are applied on the ground.

Since 1998, the Reuters Foundation and IUCN jointly present The Awards for Excellence in Environmental Reporting to journalists whose reporting enhances public awareness of environmental issues and understanding of sustainable development.

U.S. POLICY

The United States joined IUCN as a state member in 1990 and is a strong supporter of the organization. U.S. government agencies active in IUCN include the Department of the Interior (the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service, both members since 1966), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Agency for International Development (USAID).

MEMBERSHIP

In late 2003, IUCN had nearly 1,000 members from some 140 countries, including 75 member states, 108 government agencies and over 750 non-government conservation organizations.

INTERNET

www.iucn.org
www.redlist.org

Description of IUCN and its programs, press releases, searchable index of the IUCN library, list of IUCN publications.

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