

Red List of endangered species - wildlife disappearing as never before

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Life on earth is disappearing with species hurtling towards extinction at an unprecedented rate.

Your view: What can be done to halt the extinction rate of life on earth?

Species highlighted in the Red List

In pictures: the Red List of endangered species

One in four mammals, one in eight birds, one third of all amphibians and 70 per cent of the world's assessed plants now appear on the Red List of endangered plants and animals.

According to the World Conservation Union, (IUCN) which draws up the annual List, the extinction rate is up to 10,000 higher than expected.

Human activity causing loss of habitat through urbanisation, agriculture and deforestation combined with climate change is revealed to be the biggest threat to plants and animals.

There are now 41,415 species on the Red List and 16,306 are threatened with extinction, up from 16,118 last year. The total number of extinct species has reached 785 and a further 65 are only found in captivity or in cultivation.

The Red List is recognised as the most reliable evaluation of the world's species which it classifies according to their extinction risk. Its publication is the latest wake-up call to the pressures facing the earth's fragile ecosystems and its consequences for mankind.

The one small success story on the 2007 Red List is the Mauritius Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula eques*), which 15 years ago was one of the world's rarest parrots. Following successful conservation efforts it has been moved from Critically Endangered to merely Endangered.

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of the IUCN said: "This year's IUCN Red List shows that the invaluable efforts made so far to protect species are not enough.
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"The rate of biodiversity loss is increasing and we need to act now to significantly reduce it and stave off this global extinction crisis. This can be done, but only with a concerted effort by all levels of society."

Jane Smart, Head of IUCN's Species Programme, said: "We need to know the precise status of species in order to take the appropriate action. The Red List does this by measuring the overall status of biodiversity, the rate at which it is being lost and the causes of decline.

"Our lives are inextricably linked with biodiversity and ultimately its protection is essential for our very survival. As the world begins to respond to the current crisis of