

The IUCN Red List process, and how you can help

Title

The IUCN Red List is widely recognised as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species. As the official Red List Authority for birds, BirdLife International coordinates a partial annual update and a full four-yearly reassessment of the status of all bird species. Information is collated from the published and grey literature and from a worldwide network of experts.

This is used to evaluate the status of each species using the IUCN Red List categories and criteria. In 2009, of 9,998 recognised bird species 1,227 (12%) were placed in one of the threatened categories, with 192 (2%) placed in the highest threat category (Critically Endangered). Among seabirds, the proportion of threatened species is higher, at 28%, with 18 (5%) of seabirds classified as Critically Endangered, reflecting the perilous state of many albatross, petrel and penguin populations.

New information on a species, or the threats impacting it, may indicate that it warrants uplisting or downlisting to higher or lower categories of threat. In such cases, BirdLife's web-based Globally Threatened Bird Forums are used to advertise the proposed change and to solicit relevant information or comment from a wide network of experts and organisations.

The forums are open to all and provide an opportunity for both professional and amateur birdwatchers and conservationists to contribute information relevant to the assessment of threat status and conservation. Contributions to the discussions, at www.birdlifeforums.org or by email to science@birdlife.org, are welcomed.

This is the abstract of a poster by Andy Symes (BirdLife International) and Orea Anderson (RSPB; BirdLife in the UK). Image credit: ©BenLascelles