

List of threatened species still growing

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A major Swiss conservation organization says an increasing number of species are being threatened by extinction.

Among the species recently classified as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources are the hippopotamus, polar bear, many sharks and European and African freshwater fish.

The IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species includes more than 16,000 at-risk species, the BBC reported Tuesday. The organization's director-general, Achim Steiner, said, "The 2006 Red List shows a clear trend; biodiversity loss is increasing, not slowing down."

IUCN, with headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, blames human activities for threatening 99 percent of all Red List species. Habitat loss and degradation coupled with climate change are said to affect more than 80 percent of listed birds, mammals and amphibians, the BBC said. Other negative human activity includes over-exploitation and pollution.

Overall, the latest list of 16,119 species is said to represent the most detailed regular survey of the health of the plant and animal kingdoms.

The BBC said the list includes 1-in-3 amphibians, a quarter of all coniferous trees and 1-in-4 mammals.

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