

# World's most extraordinary species mapped for the first time

May 15 2013

---

Scientists pinpointed areas of the world where Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) mammals and amphibians occur. Regions containing the highest concentrations of these species are highlighted as global conservation priorities.

The research paper is published today in *PLOS ONE*.

The map reveals that high priority conservation areas for mammals and amphibians are different, reflecting the varied evolutionary histories and threats facing the two groups. For mammals, management efforts are best focused in Southeast Asia, southern Africa and Madagascar. For amphibians, Central and southern America are highlighted as priorities.

Professor Jonathan Baillie, ZSL's Director of Conservation says: "The results of the mapping exercise are alarming. Currently only five percent of the areas we've identified as priorities for EDGE mammals and 15 percent of the EDGE amphibian areas are protected.

"These areas highlighted should all be [global conservation](#) priorities because they contain [species](#) that are not only highly threatened but also unique in the way they look, live and behave. These new maps will inform the development of larger-scale work to help secure the future of some of the most remarkable species on Earth," Professor Baillie added.

Madagascar's black-and-white ruffed lemur is the largest lemur in the world and is threatened by hunting and the loss of its [forest habitat](#) to

logging, mining and cutting and burning for agriculture. The Sunda pangolin, also known as the scaly anteater, occurs in Southeast Asia and is threatened by illegal poaching for its meat which is a culinary delicacy, as well as its scales which are thought to have high medicinal value. Other [mammal species](#) occurring in priority areas include the black rhino and western lowland gorilla.

Amphibians are facing a terrifying rate of extinction making them the most threatened vertebrates in the world. The Mexican salamander, or axolotl, is critically endangered due to urbanization, polluted waters, and the introduction of non-native fish which eat the axolotl's young. With the aid of the global map of EDGE amphibians, it will now be possible to concentrate efforts in countries such as, Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala where the most distinct and threatened species are found.

Dr. Kamran Safi, lead author of the paper from the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology says: "This is the first global map to take into account species' uniqueness as well as threat. Now that we've identified EDGE priority areas for mammals and amphibians we can more effectively continue to ensure their protection.↵"

It is critical that conservationists prioritise the allocation of limited resources for the best conservation outcomes. ZSL's EDGE of Existence programme has already launched targeted [conservation](#) projects for more than 40 EDGE species around the world.

**More information:** Interactive EDGE Map available here:  
[www.edgeofexistence.org/species/map.php](http://www.edgeofexistence.org/species/map.php)

Provided by Zoological Society of London

Citation: World's most extraordinary species mapped for the first time (2013, May 15) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-05-world-extraordinary-species.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.