

Manmade ruin adds 7,000 species to endangered 'Red List'

July 18 2019, by Patrick Galey



The Roloway Monkey of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana has fewer than 2,000 left in the wild

Mankind's destruction of nature is driving species to the brink of extinction at an "unprecedented" rate, the leading wildlife conservation

body warned Thursday as it added more than 7,000 animals, fish and plants to its endangered "Red List".

From the canopies of tropical forests to the [ocean floor](#), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said iconic species of primates, rays, [fish](#) and trees were now classified as critically endangered.

The group has now assessed more than 105,000 species worldwide, around 28,000 of which risk extinction.

While each group of organisms face specific threats, [human behaviour](#), including overfishing and deforestation, was the biggest driver of plummeting populations.

"Nature is declining at rates unprecedented in [human history](#)," said IUCN acting director general, Grethel Aguilar. "We must wake up to the fact that conserving nature's diversity is in our interest."

In May the United Nations released its generational assessment of the state of the environment. It made for grim reading.

The report warned that as many as one million species were now at risk of extinction, many within decades, as human consumption of freshwater, fossil fuels and other natural resources skyrockets.

It found that more than 90 percent of [marine fish stocks](#) are now either overfished or fished to the limit of sustainability.

The IUCN singled out a number of sea and [freshwater fish](#) that now occupy its highest threat category of "critically endangered"—the next step on the Red List is extinction.

Wedgefishes and giant guitarfishes, known collectively as Rhino Rays due to their elongated snouts, are now the most imperilled marine families on Earth.

The False Shark Ray is on the brink of extinction after overfishing in the waters off of Mauritania saw its population collapse 80 percent in the last 45 years.

Seven species of primate are closer to extinction on the new list, including the Roloway Monkey of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, with fewer than 2,000 individuals left in the wild.

Prime culprits are humans hunting the animals for bushmeat and "severe habitat loss" as forest is converted to land to grow food.

40 percent of all primates in West and Central Africa are now threatened with extinction, according to the IUCN.

"Species targeted by humans for food tend to become endangered much more quickly," Craig Hilton-Taylor, head of the IUCN Red List Unit, told AFP.

"Species in environments with lots of deforestation for agriculture end up being impacted."

'Millions of years of evolution'

The updated list shows that over half of Japan's freshwater fish and more than a third of Mexico's are threatened with [extinction](#) due to the loss of free-flowing rivers and increasing pollution.

More than 500 deep-sea bony fish and molluscs have been added to the list for the first time posing something of a conservation conundrum as

the space they inhabit—1,000 metres (3,280 feet) beneath the surface—is often beyond national boundaries.

"The alarm bell has been sounding again and again concerning the unravelling crisis in freshwater and marine wildlife," said Andrew Terry, director of conservation and policy at the Zoological Society of London.

"Many of these ancient marine species have been around since the age of the dinosaurs and losing just one of these [species](#) would represent a loss of millions of years of evolutionary history."

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