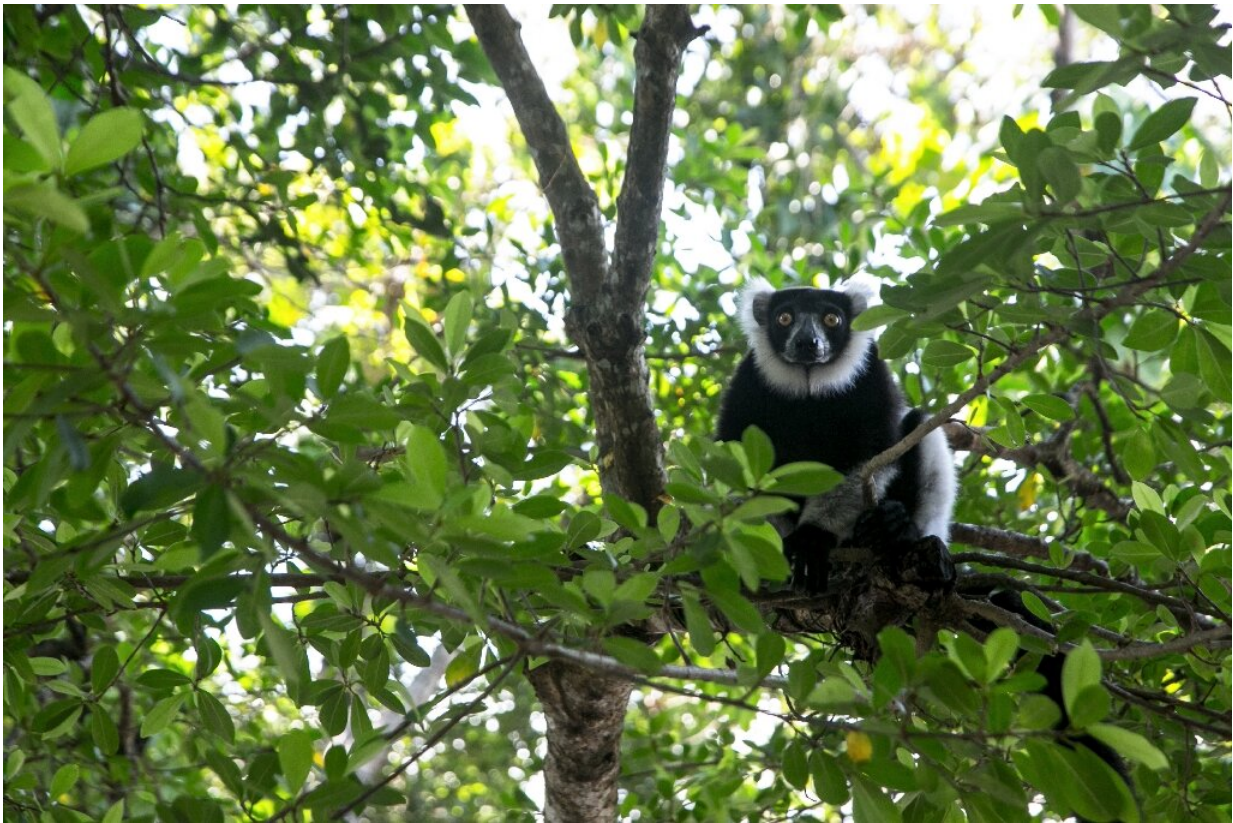


# Nearly all Madagascar's lemur species 'face extinction'

July 9 2020, by Kelly MacNamara

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Lemurs are hunted for food and the illegal pet trade, while their forests are destroyed

Almost all species of lemur, the small saucer-eyed primates native to Madagascar, face extinction, an international conservation body warned

on Thursday, adding to its growing list of animals and plants under threat.

Of the 107 surviving lemur species on the island, some 103 are threatened, including 33 that are critically endangered—the last stop before "extinct in the wild", the International Union for the Conservation of Nature said.

The organisation called for a fundamental reimagining of the way humanity interacts with the natural world, in an update to its "Red List of Threatened Species".

The list assesses 120,372 species and classifies more than 30,000 species as at risk of disappearing.

The report comes amid growing alarm that the planet may have already entered a period of so-called mass extinction, only the sixth in 500 million years.

The United Nations' biodiversity panel IPBES last year warned that up to one million species faced the risk of extinction as a result of humanity's insatiable desire for land and materials.

Grethel Aguilar, the IUCN's acting director general, said the updated list showed "Homo sapiens needs to drastically change its relationship to other primates, and to nature as a whole".

Lemurs, Madagascar's "treasure", are among the many precious species unique to the Indian Ocean island.

## Lemurs facing extinction

103 of Madagascar's 107 surviving lemur species are under threat, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Examples



**Ring-tailed**  
*Lemur catta*

Length (head and body): 45 cm

Diet: **Fruit, leaves, flowers, bark, sap**

**Endangered**



**Red-ruffed**  
*Varecia rubra*

50 cm

**Leaves, seeds, nectar**

**Critically endangered**



**Indri**  
*Indri indri*

76 cm

**Leaves, twigs, nuts, fruit**

**Critically endangered**



**Crowned**  
*Eulemur coronatus*

33 - 38 cm

**Fruits, insects**

**Endangered**



**Marohita mouse lemur**  
*Microcebus marohita*

14 cm

**Leaves, insects**

**Critically endangered**



**White-belted-ruffed**  
*Varecia variegata*

60 cm

**Fruit, leaves, seeds nectar**

**Critically endangered**



**Greater bamboo**  
*Prolemur simus*

39 - 45 cm

**Bamboo**

**Critically endangered**



**Crowned sifaka**  
*Propithecus coronatus*

47 cm

**Seeds, fruit, bark termite soil**

**Endangered**



**Black**  
*Eulemur macaco*

50 cm

**Fruit, leaves, seed pods flowers, nectar**

**Endangered**

Factfile on Lemurs. Out of a total of 107 remaining lemur species and subspecies, 103 are under threat, according to the IUCN's new Red List published July 9.

But the impoverished country is struggling to combat deforestation, poaching for food and the illegal pet trade.

More than 40 percent of Madagascar's original forest cover was lost between the 1950s and 2000.

### **'Substantial declines'**

Among the lemurs newly listed as critically endangered are the Madame Berthe's Mouse Lemur, the smallest primate in the world, and the Verreaux's Sifaka, part of the "leaping lemur" family.

Both have seen "substantial declines" because their habitats have been destroyed by slash-and-burn agriculture and logging.

Verreaux's Sifaka, which is known in one region as "sifaka of the cooking pot", is also threatened by hunting.

"If you destroy or drastically modify their forest habitats, they cannot survive," said Russ Mittermeier, of IUCN's Species Survival Commission Primate Specialist Group.



Conservationists want local communities to be more involved in preservation efforts, including as forest rangers

Across other parts of Africa, 53 percent of primate species—54 of 103—are now threatened with extinction, driven by bushmeat hunting and habitat loss, the IUCN report said.

Remco Van Merm, from its Global Species and Key Biodiversity Areas Programme, said the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic was leaving some poor communities with "no choice but to resort to using natural resources to meet their daily needs".

"We are already seeing increasing levels of resource use, and not only in Madagascar," he said, calling for communities to be involved in

conservation efforts.

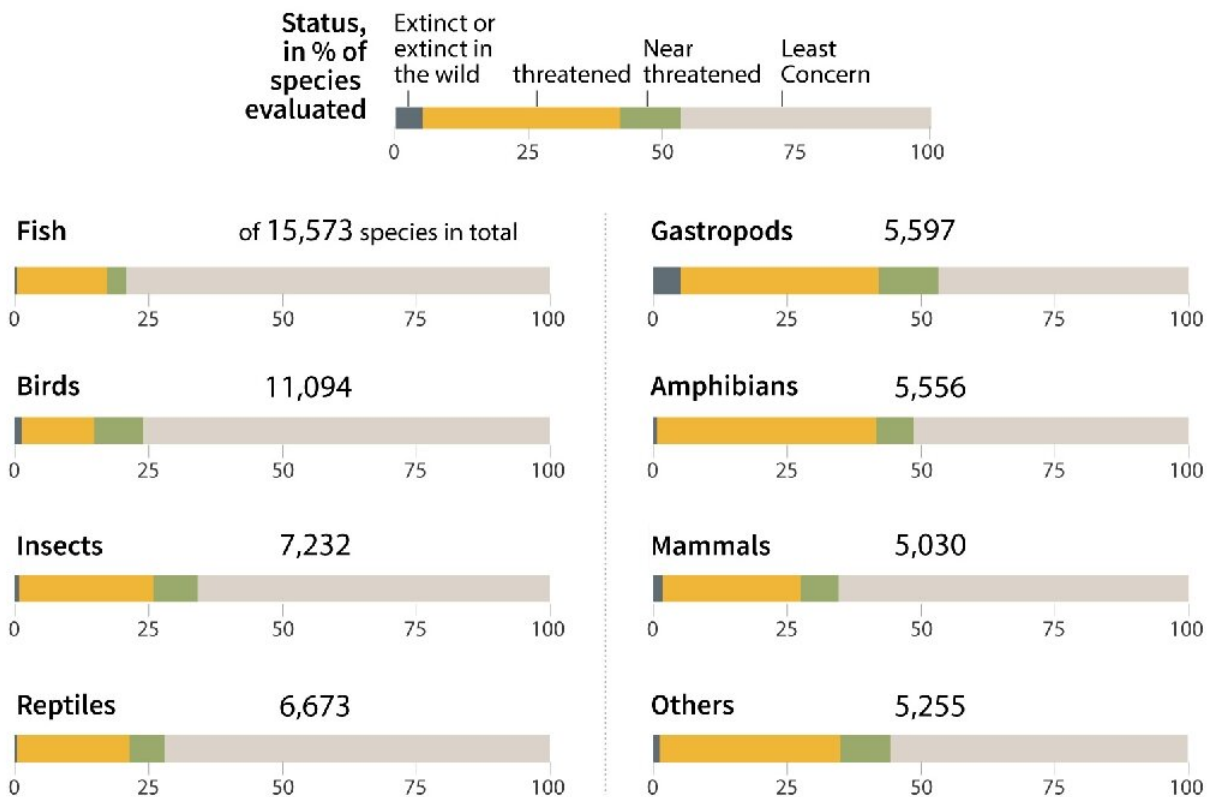
Mittermeier said more lemurs may have already gone extinct if it was not for an initiative that helped fund local projects like ecotourism, reforestation and education.

While he expressed concern over the suspension of tourism due to the pandemic, he stressed that it "remains perhaps the best tool available" to ensure the survival of wild lemur populations.

## 762 animals species extinct, 14,735 others threatened

Division of species by conservation status for major animal groups

These figures do not include the 62,010 species for which there is insufficient data to evaluate their status



Source: IUCN



Percentage of species extinct or threatened among the major animal groups assessed by the IUCN's red list.

## **Human threats**

Among the other animals added to the IUCN's critically endangered list was the North Atlantic Right Whale, estimating that there were fewer than 250 adults at the end of 2018—some 15 percent lower than 2011.

Climate change appeared to be pushing the whales further north during summer into the Gulf of St Lawrence off Canada, where they are more likely to be struck by boats or become entangled in crab pot ropes.

Their reproductive rates were found to have dropped, which was also a factor in driving the European Hamster on to the critically endangered list.

While a female hamster had an average of over 20 offspring a year during the last century, today they give birth to only five or six.

It has now disappeared from three quarters of its original habitat in the eastern French region of Alsace, and more than 75 percent of its territory in Eastern Europe.

## Species on the brink

More than 32,000 species on the IUCN Red List are threatened with extinction, here we introduce five of the lesser-known

**Titicaca water frog**  
*Telmatobius culeus*



**ENDANGERED**

Location:  
*Titicaca lake, Bolivia and Peru*

Known to weigh as much as 1 kg and sought by people as an aphrodisiac when mixed with honey and roots of a local plant

Also threatened by non-native trout introduced to the lake, which feed on tadpoles

**Yangtze finless porpoise**  
*Neophocaena asiaeorientalis*



**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

*China, Yangtze river*

One of the few porpoises that live in fresh water, and China's last river-dwelling cetacean after the extinction of the baiji dolphin

Known by locals as the 'river pig', some populations are growing under the protection of a management plan

**Bali myna**  
*Leucopsar rothschildi*



**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

*Bali Island, Indonesia*

Less than 50 adults survive in the wild on Bali island and at a conservation program on Nusu Penida, Indonesia

The fall of the population is mostly due to illegal trapping for the caged-bird trade, compounded by habitat loss

**Grand Cayman Blue Iguana**  
*Cyclura lewisi*



**ENDANGERED**

*Cayman Islands*

In 2002 the population was estimated to be at 25 adults. A breeding programme has helped the population grow back to over 440

The largest native animal in the Caymans, it grows to 1.5 m long. Hatchlings spend their first year hiding in trees, avoiding snakes

**Black crested macaque**  
*Macaca nigra*



**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

*Sulawesi and Pulau Bacan islands, Indonesia*

Depleted population after years of being hunted by humans for the bushmeat trade

Gained notoriety after an individual called Naruto reportedly stole a camera and took a selfie, triggering a copyright row in the US

© AFP Source : IUCN/WWF/Nationalgeographic/Primate Info Net

Graphic introducing some of the lesser-known endangered species, as the UN issued stark warnings this week on the state of our planet.





Vessel strikes, getting caught in fishing equipment and a low birthrate have all contributed to the decline of the North Atlantic Right Whale



The European hamster has disappeared from around 70 percent of its habitat

Researchers are not sure what is driving the trend, but studies are focused on monoculture plantations, industrial development and global warming.

In 2017, the Research Centre for Environmental Protection in Alsace warned that with vast swathes of land turned over to maize and corn

crops, the hamsters' diets had become so depleted of nutrients that they were eating their offspring.

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