

Over half of threatened species require targeted recovery actions

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A staggering 57% of threatened species need targeted recovery actions to ensure their survival, new research has shown.

The world's governments are presently negotiating a Global Biodiversity Framework, containing goals and targets for saving nature, which is due to be adopted at the end of 2022. Conservation experts explored how the suggested targets in the Framework, could contribute to reducing extinction risk of threatened vertebrates, invertebrates and plants. Their findings show that while targets to expand protected areas or reduce pollution will benefit many species, 57% would still need targeted recovery actions. These actions include [captive breeding](#) in zoos, reintroduction into the wild, moving individuals between locations, vaccination against disease, and other species-specific interventions.

Led by Newcastle University, the study was published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. The project brought together leading ecology and conservation experts, including scientists from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), BirdLife International and a global network of universities.

Study corresponding author, Professor Philip McGowan, Professor of Conservation Science and Policy at Newcastle University's School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, said: "57% of the world's [threatened species](#) will remain threatened without targeted recovery actions. Many will benefit from policies and actions designed to reduce threats from land- and sea-use change, overexploitation, pollution, [invasive species](#) and climate, but these alone will not remove the risk of extinction that these species face. Now, we can identify the species that need such action, and we can monitor what is being done and what the impact of action is on those threatened species".

Tackling the risk of extinction

The research was based on 7,784 species listed as 'Vulnerable', 'Endangered', and 'Critically Endangered' in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The team considered the targets in the first draft of

the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's Global Biodiversity Framework.

The scientists assessed the [potential benefits](#) to each threatened species of implementing each target. They found that Target 1 (on implementing [spatial planning](#) to retain existing intact ecosystems), Target 2 (on restoring degraded ecosystems and ensure connectivity among them), and Target 3 (on protecting important areas for biodiversity) will be particularly important, as 95% of threatened species would benefit from their implementation.

The data also show, however, that these actions, and those for targets 5-8 on reducing pressures from unsustainable use, invasive species, pollution and climate change would still leave at least 57% of threatened species (4,428 species) at risk of going extinct. For example, the Black Stilt, a threatened waterbird from New Zealand, requires captive-rearing and release and control of hybrids with Black-winged Stilts to prevent genetic swamping, in addition to predator control and habitat management.

Study co-author Dr. Stuart Butchart, Chief Scientist at BirdLife International, noted: "This research shows that we can't stop species from going extinct just by protecting particular areas and addressing key threats: some species needed dedicated efforts to help them recover. It is critical therefore that governments adopt specific and measurable goals on [species](#) conservation, and a clear commitment to implement the actions needed to achieve these."

More information: Over half of threatened species require targeted recovery actions to avert human-induced extinction, *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/fee.2537](https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.2537)

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