



The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is recognized as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species. Although it has many problems when applied to invertebrates (a few papers by myself clearly demonstrate it), it still is a powerful tool for lobbying and widely accepted by conservation authorities and stakeholders worldwide.

The goals of The IUCN Red List are to:

- Provide information and analyses on the status, trends and threats to species in order to inform and catalyse action for biodiversity conservation.
- Establish a baseline from which to monitor the change in status of species;
- Provide a global context for the establishment of conservation priorities at the local level;
- Monitor, on a continuing basis, the status of a representative selection of species (as biodiversity indicators) that cover all the major ecosystems of the world.

For further information about The IUCN Red List see www.iucn.org/redlist. Red List assessments are made by volunteers enrolled in the Species Survival Commission. This is made up by multiple Specialist Groups, usually focusing on certain taxa. The data cover non-threatened as well as threatened species, and certain taxonomic groups have been completely, or almost completely assessed (e.g. mammals, birds, amphibians, freshwater crabs, warm-water reef building corals, sharks and rays, groupers, wrasses, lobsters, conifers and cycads). Unfortunately, most invertebrates and arachnids in particular have been so far neglected.

I have been approached by the IUCN Species Survival Commission to start a Spider Specialist Group (SSG). This will involve not only spiders but all arachnids except Acari (for obvious reasons). The SSG was proposed and is in process of approval, which should take 6-8 months more. In fact, it has already started working with a limited number of members in a very restricted region, Macaronesia (Azores, Madeira, Selvagens, Canary Islands and Cape Verde). This option was to test a number of tools with a limited number of assessors and species. But to justify its existence we must go global.

The future plans will be discussed among all members, but for now the plan is to (among others):

1. In well-defined and selected areas of high endemism (e.g. oceanic islands, cave systems):
 - 1.1. If comprehensive knowledge on the distribution and threats to species is available, assessments for all endemics will be made.
 - 1.2. Otherwise, a random selection of species will be evaluated, allowing to achieve an unbiased picture the status of the spider fauna as a whole.

2. Globally:

- 2.1. Regularly update the assessments for all species (Ideally every 10 years).
- 2.2. Assess species listed by CITES.
- 2.3. If experts know some threatened species particularly well these will be prioritized, so that their information is available as soon as possible.
- 2.4. Very common species, often cosmopolitan, can be easily assessed, with lots of available info, these will also be targeted.
- 2.5. As above, a random selection of species worldwide will be evaluated.
- 2.6. Collaborate with other Specialist Groups in the red-listing of respective taxa (Cave Invertebrates SG, South Asia SG).

As you probably already realized, this is a call for volunteers. We need both taxon specialists (families, genera, whatever) and regional specialists (country, biogeographical region, etc). There is a lot of work involved but certainly lots of opportunities for much needed conservation of arachnids. If interested and with time to spare (ok, not even I have time to spare, but you get the point), please contact me at pedro.cardoso@helsinki.fi. If you accept to be part of this I'll have much more to say, but I guess this is enough for now!

All the best,

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