

A new global standard
to assess risks to
ecosystems

Clown fish and corals, Rangiroa atoll © Catherine Gras

The Status of our Planet

Everyone knows that coral reefs are in danger, and rainforests are disappearing – or do we? What do we actually know in scientific terms? How much of these ecosystems are left, how are their functions changing and how likely are they to disappear?

The IUCN Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) is a new tool that provides answers to these and other questions. By 2025, IUCN aims to document the status and measure the risks to the world's terrestrial, freshwater, marine and subterranean ecosystems.

Assessing the status of
ecosystems to inform where
and how we can act to
secure our future

What is the Red List of Ecosystems?

The RLE provides a unified standard for assessing the status of all ecosystems, applicable from sub-national to global levels. It is based on criteria for performing evidence-based assessments of the risk of ecosystem collapse, as measured by reductions in geographical distribution or degradation of key processes and components.

RLE assessments will inform better management of the finite resources of our planet. Sound environmental management is imperative to maintain functional ecosystems, their biological diversity and the ecosystem services upon which our economies and social well-being ultimately depend.

How is the Red List of Ecosystems important for you?

Conservation

To help prioritise investments in ecosystem management and restoration, reform resource use practices, and reward good ecosystem management.

Natural resource management and macro-economic planning

To illustrate ecosystem risks under different land use/development scenarios; offer insights into ecosystems that provide services such as clean water, soil productivity and the availability of natural products; and highlight the economic costs of reduced ecosystem services and potential economic benefits of improved ecosystem management.

Improvement of governance and livelihoods

To inform development of governance systems that improve ecosystem management, livelihood security and social outcomes.

Global environmental reporting

To inform governments and the global community on progress towards achieving international environmental targets.

Private sector

To assess potential environmental and social benefits and costs of alternative designs of future development projects, as well as monitor/report on environmental impacts.

THE IUCN RED LIST OF ECOSYSTEMS IS:

- A scientifically robust method to compare ecosystem status between regions and over time
- Able to inform conservation, land use and investment priorities
- Defined by quantitative criteria that identify varying levels of risk
- Easily understood by policy-makers and the public
- Complementary to species-based approaches
- Transparent, objective and repeatable
- Applicable to terrestrial, marine, freshwater and subterranean systems
- A methodology applicable from sub-national to global scales
- Able to use historic and present day data as well as future projections



Canaima National Park, Venezuela © Rebecca Miller

www.iucnredlistofecosystems.org