

Biodiversity news

INTERNATIONAL TARGETS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – INCLUDING ONES IN THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) AND THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY – ARE DESIGNED TO GUIDE EVERYONE’S DECISIONS AND REDUCE THE RATE OF LOSS OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY.

BUT HOW DO WE KNOW WHETHER WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TARGETS OR WHAT EFFECT OUR DECISIONS HAVE? HOW CAN WE MEASURE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND HOW IT IS CHANGING?

Scientists believe they have found a new species of mammal deep in the heart of one of the richest, least studied and most endangered wildlife areas on Earth.

The animal – which looks like a cross between a cat and a fox – appears to be a carnivore. Caught on an automatic infrared camera set up by WWF researchers in the forest of the Kayam Menterong National Park in Borneo, the creature is foxy red with a long, bushy tail.

Discoveries of mammals are extremely rare: there have been only a handful worldwide over the past 70 years. Six were found in the 1990s in remote forests in Viet Nam – a rhino, a rabbit, three deer and a primate – but they were the first since the discovery of the kouprey in that area in 1937. New carnivores are even rarer. The last to be found on the island was the Borneo ferret-badger in 1895.



wwf/bbc.org

Over the past decade, the same team has found 361 other new species in Borneo – 260 insects, 50 plants, 30 freshwater fish, seven frogs, six lizards, five crabs, two snakes and a toad – a rate of three a month. But many are endangered: conservationists fear that newly discovered mammals may become extinct before they can be studied.

Biological diversity is complex and far too difficult to measure in its entirety. Instead, we measure parts of it and use indicators to summarize what we know.

Some combine the bits of data into overall trends, rather like economic and stock market indicators. WWF’s Living Planet Index (LPI) – which combines trends in species populations to give an overall view of the state of all biodiversity – is one example. It is a useful approach, but it depends on having good data. Other indicators focus on particular components of biodiversity – such as the fish population of a lake or sea.

Only a few, like the LPI, are widely accepted, and even these cannot be universally applied, because:

- Different parts of biodiversity matter to different people. Some depend on wildlife species for food; others value

the beauty of nature; still others primarily value the freshwater delivered by intact ecosystems.

- Data on components of biodiversity are scarce and variable; there have not yet been systematic surveys and routine monitoring of many of its most important aspects.

Things are improving as more data are generated and our priorities become clearer. A project called Biodiversity Indicators for National Use – involving Ecuador, Kenya, the Philippines and Ukraine – showed that many countries already have information that can provide useful indicators. But much needs to be done to find the best use for such information and to establish meaningful and repeatable measures.

VAL KAPOS



Message to all young people from Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity is about life on Earth, and you are the epitome of life. By protecting the biodiversity of the planet, you will protect your future and preserve life on Earth. You cannot afford to adopt an observer’s stance on such a vital issue for your future and the future of our planet. Indeed you have a tremendous potential as catalysts for change – the leaders of tomorrow as well as major stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

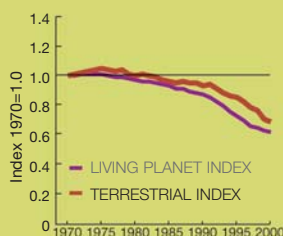
Because the Convention on Biological Diversity is your convention and your passport for tomorrow’s healthy environment, I call on you to be fully engaged in its implementation at a time when the Parties are actively embarked in a new and exciting phase aimed at translating its objective into the day-to-day reality of our global village. The battle to protect life on Earth is yours, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity that I am honoured to head in the years to come will always be on your side as your partner and your faithful ally. Let’s join forces to win this battle – that no one can afford to lose – and every living human being on planet Earth will be the winner.

The Living Planet Index

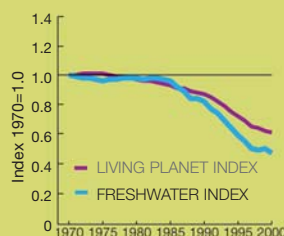
incorporates data population trends for more than 1,100 species from around the world. Its terrestrial index measures changes in the abundance of 562 forest, grassland, savannah, desert and tundra species; the freshwater index is drawn from populations of 323 species from lakes, rivers and wetland ecosystems; and the marine index tracks 267 species from marine and coastal ecosystems worldwide.

Source: WWF/UNEP-WCMC

TERRESTRIAL SPECIES POPULATION INDEX, 1970-2000



FRESHWATER SPECIES POPULATION INDEX, 1970-2000



MARINE SPECIES POPULATION INDEX, 1970-2000

