

Conservation news

New populations of threatened trees found in China and Vietnam

Surveys supported by the Global Trees Campaign have discovered populations of four threatened trees in new areas of south-west China and northern Vietnam, marking important range expansions or population increases for each species. In China the Endangered Ziyuan fir *Abies ziyuanensis* is known from just three areas in Jiangxi, Hunan and Guangxi Provinces and is thought to number <600 individuals. With only 50 individuals known to remain in Yinzhulaoshan Provincial Nature Reserve in North Guangxi, field surveys were carried out throughout the 5000 ha Reserve as part of a Global Trees Campaign project (co-funded by Save Our Species) to improve management of the species. Twenty-one *A. ziyuanensis* individuals, including small seedlings and adult trees, were discovered in three separate areas, increasing the tree's known population in the Reserve from 50 to 71. The discovery of seedlings is particularly significant as it was not known whether natural regeneration was occurring.

In another nature reserve in China surveys have identified new individuals of a species once thought to be confined to Vietnam. The Vietnamese golden cypress *Xanthocyparis vietnamensis* was first discovered by scientists working in Bat Dai Son Nature Reserve, Quan Ba District, Vietnam, in 1999 and it was not until 2013 that one individual tree was discovered in a limestone area of Mulun National Natural Reserve, northern Guangxi, China. The 2013 discovery was the first record for this species and genus of Cupressaceae in China (Meng et al., 2013, *Guihaia*, 33, 388–391).

Surveys conducted in 2014 in the 10,829 ha Mulun National Natural Reserve, supported by a small grant from the Global Trees Campaign, found 17 new individuals on two separate limestone mountains at altitudes of 730–826 m, at least 6 km from the tree found in 2013. The population consisted of 15 adult trees (diameter at breast height, DBH, 2.7–25.8 cm) and two seedlings (c. 25 cm tall), confirming the population is capable of natural regeneration. This increased the tree's known population in China from one to 18 individuals. Surveys of the adjacent Maolan National Natural Reserve in Guizhou province, however, which has similar habitats, were unsuccessful.

Across the border in northern Vietnam, 15 mature *X. vietnamensis* trees (mean DBH 70 cm) were discovered on the border between Ha Giang and Tuyen Quang Provinces, c. 70 km south-west of the original population. These trees were found in similar habitat to the newly discovered population in China, on a limestone outcrop at 1,200 m.

Elsewhere in North Vietnam, as part of a Global Trees Campaign programme to support nature reserves and

communities in protecting threatened trees, the Centre for Plant Conservation has made exciting discoveries of highly threatened magnolia species. Once thought to be confined to south-west China, <20 of the Critically Endangered *Magnolia grandis* were discovered in Ha Giang Province, Vietnam, in 2011. In 2014 a further 15 *M. grandis* (mean DBH 40 cm) were found in the same area, on a ridge of limestone forest at 1,183 m. At the same time as this discovery, five *Magnolia coriacea* saplings were discovered at the same location. This indicates a range expansion for this Endangered species, which has a scattered distribution across south-west China and northern Vietnam.

These recent findings of new, discrete populations of threatened trees in southern China and northern Vietnam are promising news for conservationists and for the four species involved. For all four species the Global Trees Campaign is working with local communities and nature reserves to improve management and protection of the wild populations in China and Vietnam.

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Indigenous peoples' and local community conserved territories and areas

At the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in October 2014 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, launched *ICCAs and Aichi Targets: The Contribution of Indigenous Peoples' and Local Community Conserved Territories and Areas to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–20* (<http://www.iccaconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/ICCA-Briefing-Note-1-200-dpi.pdf>). This publication describes, with examples, how community conservation is helping to implement the Convention's Strategic Plan, and how this could be enhanced with appropriate recognition and support.

Indigenous peoples' and local community conserved territories and areas (ICCAs) are found around the globe, and include many indigenous (including mobile) peoples' territories, community forests, sacred natural sites, community-managed coastal and marine areas, wildlife roosting and

feeding sites, pasturelands and others. They may cover as much or more of the world than official protected areas. ICCAs are embedded in territorial, resource, cultural and human rights, are the basis of survival and livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people, and help sustain ecosystems, species, and ecosystem functions. Their primary motivations and objectives are ethical, economic, political, cultural, material, and/or spiritual; often they are simply a people's or community's way of life. They are recognized in international policy, including in the CBD, and by global organizations such as IUCN. The term ICCA is used as a convenient umbrella (much like the term indigenous people or local community), and is not meant to displace the diversity of local terms.

ICCAs contribute to the CBD Strategic Plan of Action (and specifically the Aichi targets, <http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>) in many ways: they embody and help spread awareness of the values of biodiversity (Target 1), contribute to national development, sustainability, poverty reduction and biodiversity plans (Targets 2, 4, 17), involve systems of rules that combine incentives and disincentives for sustaining biodiversity (Target 3), contribute significantly to reducing natural habitat loss, sustaining fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, including coral reefs, and conserving threatened species (Targets 5, 6, 10, 12), are the world's best chance of achieving an increase in conservation coverage in ways that are equitable and effective (Target 11), encompass sustainably managed production ecosystems, including agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, and the domesticated and related wild diversity contained in them (Targets 7, 13), use innovative strategies to help restore and safeguard ecosystem functions, including through reducing or eliminating pollution and tackling invasive species (Targets 8, 9, 14), provide climate resilience through connectivity, migration corridors, mitigation and adaptation of various kinds (Target 15), are a powerful means of achieving equitable access and secure benefits for communities (Target 16), embody sophisticated and diverse forms of knowledge, including traditional and modern science and technology (Targets 18, 19), and present innovative means of financing and provisioning (including through non-financial, voluntary means) biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of biological resources.

Yet ICCAs face multiple threats from lack of tenurial security, the extractive industry and inappropriate development, imposition of inappropriate land uses, including government protected areas and industrial agriculture, internal inequalities and injustices relating to gender, class, caste, ethnicity, race and others, demographic and cultural changes eroding traditional cultural values, and incursion of external markets. These problems are often exacerbated, or occur, because of the lack of recognition of ICCAs, especially at national and sub-national levels. Despite 10 years of the existence of the CBD's Programme of Work on Protected Areas, which requires countries to provide

recognition to ICCAs, most countries are yet to provide adequate and appropriate recognition to ICCAs. More recently, ICCAs are facing the threat of commodification from programmes such as REDD, particularly when these are implemented in the absence of tenurial security and recognition of community governance.

The contribution of ICCAs to conservation could be significantly enhanced through recognition of collective territorial and resource rights, customary governance institutions, and local/traditional knowledge and practices. They also need facilitation in documentation, assessment, outreach, capacity enhancement and public awareness, help in resisting threats, and support for appropriate livelihood activities, skills and new knowledge, in particular for the younger generation. In many situations the empowerment of women, landless people, minorities and other weaker sections of peoples or communities is required to allow them to play an equitable part in decision-making.

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China renews its vertebrate Red List

Eleven years have elapsed since the last evaluation of the status of vertebrates in China. Now, however, a project launched in March 2013 under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Chinese Academy of Sciences has completed an evaluation of the status of the vertebrates of China, using the *IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria, Version 3.1*, and the *Guidelines for Application of Red List Criteria at Regional and National Levels, Version 4.0*.

The evaluation involved more than 200 zoologists, an advisory panel, workshops and the IUCN Species Survival Commission. Working groups were established for fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, and each group consulted zoologists nationwide, revising checklists and removing out-of-date species records. In total, the evaluation confirmed the existence of 1,499 fish species, 408 amphibian species, 471 reptile species, 1,372 bird species and 656 species of mammals. Each working group then sought comments from specialists on a draft Red List. Following consideration of the feedback, a revised Red List was discussed at two review meetings, followed by a final evaluation panel in June 2014. The summary Red List report was finalized in September 2014.

A comparison with China's 1998 Red Book of Endangered Species and the Species Red List of 2003 indicates that the status of vertebrates has worsened. Of the freshwater fish three species are now categorized as Extinct, one as Regionally Extinct and 292 as threatened (Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable); of the amphibians one species is categorized as Extinct, one as