North Africa, a biodiversity hotspot in urgent need of protection

So far 3613 species assessed, between 9-18%* threatened, but there are many more!

WHO

Threatened species in North Africa: the current situation

As of 2024, 3613 species have been assessed for their conservation status across North Africa, and approximately 1 in every 10** are threatened (CR, EN, VU). Out of the 340 species that have been classified as threatened, 80% are animals and 20% are plants and fungi. The highest percentage of threatened animals are marine species, including 79 sharks and rays, 31 corals and 22 fishes. On the other hand, of the 566 plant species that have been assessed, approximately 11%** have been classified as threatened, including 49 terrestrial plants and 8 freshwater plants.

Additionally, 4 North African species are known to be globally Extinct (EX), all of which are freshwater fishes.

Of the 200 species that are endemic to one of the North African countries, approximately 58%** are threatened.

WHERE

How many threatened species are there in your country?

From East to West, when it comes to threatened species, each country has its share. In terms of distribution, the highest proportions of threatened species can be found in Morocco, Egypt and Algeria. This is true both for endemic species and for all species found in the region that have been assessed.

* This is the range of values between the lower bound, which assumes that none of the Data Deficient (DD) species are threatened, and the upper bound, which assumes that all DD species are threatened (IUCN 2016).

** This percentage is the mid-point value. It assumes that a similar relative proportion of the DD species are likely to be threatened, and provides the best estimation of the proportion of threatened species (IUCN 2016).

*** This category includes cephalopods and gastropods (snails, clams and mussels) and other marine invertebrates.

**This is the midpoint value. It assumes that a similar relative proportion of the DD species are likely to be threatened, and provides the best estimation of the proportion of threatened species (IUCN 2016).
As a mostly semi-arid and arid environment, North Africa is one of the regions that is historically most vulnerable to natural stresses, and currently to climate change. Over the past two decades, major changes such as population growth, economic development and accelerated urbanisation have further exacerbated the most pressing drivers of biodiversity loss throughout the region - especially in coastal areas. In particular, the increased demand for freshwater, as a result of these major socioeconomic developments, is putting increased pressure on freshwater ecosystems.

According to the most recent data, the most significant threats to North African biodiversity are biological resource use, unsustainable agriculture and pollution – which are all being exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

### HOW

#### How can we address this decline?

**Priority actions for biodiversity conservation**

Protected and conserved areas are one of the cornerstones of biodiversity conservation. These area-based conservation measures, when effectively and equitably managed, are one of the key ways in which we can minimise biodiversity loss and reduce threats. Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are an important tool for guiding conservation and management decisions by ensuring that conservation efforts are focused in the places that matter the most. They identify where actions need to be taken to save species from extinction, helping to halt the decline in biodiversity and safeguard ecosystems. Moreover, recognizing Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) is a key mechanism for maximizing the coverage of conserved areas whilst also helping to mainstream biodiversity conservation on a national level.

**1. Support the establishment and expansion of protected areas, including marine protected areas, and the inclusion of KBAs within their boundaries.**

**2. Improve the management plans of protected areas to include species at risk of extinction.**

**3. Enhance the identification of OECMs.**

**4. Promote transboundary collaboration in the assessment, conservation and management of transboundary ecosystems and migratory species.**

**5. Promote ecological connectivity through the establishment and effective management of ecological networks and corridors, which interconnect protected and conserved areas.**

**References:**


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### TAKE ACTION

Core support to the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation is provided by:

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