

Alliance for Zero Extinction

Mission

The Alliance for Zero Extinction is a global initiative led by biodiversity conservation organizations to identify and protect the last remaining habitats for the world's most threatened species as a front line defense against species extinctions.

Strategy

The Alliance has begun by tackling terrestrial vertebrates whose populations and distributions are best known, and will include other species as soon as sufficient information becomes available to assess their threat level systematically.

The Alliance aims to protect critical populations until broader scale conservation efforts can restore sufficient habitat to enable these populations to rebound.

The Alliance acts by identifying the places where Critically Endangered and Endangered species are effectively restricted to a single remaining site, and is working collaboratively to gain effective protection for these sites and the species that depend on them.

Pinpointing and conserving epicenters of imminent extinctions



Alliance for Zero Extinction



American Bird Conservancy, Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos, BirdLife International, Conservation International, Guyra Paraguay, Island Conservation and Ecology Group, NatureServe, ProAves Colombia, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Trust, World Parks, World Pheasant Association, World Wildlife Fund.

www.zeroextinction.org

Extinction: Impoverishing Our World

HUMAN-INDUCED SPECIES EXTINCTION IS A THREAT TO BIODIVERSITY THAT WILL ONLY GET WORSE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. While many species have come and gone naturally throughout the Earth's long history, compelling evidence shows that, because of human activities, current global extinction rates are over a thousand times greater than natural background rates. As human populations continue to expand, leading to more habitat destruction, over-harvesting of forest products, exotic species introductions, and other impacts, extinction rates will continue to rise unless action is taken. Already, such notable species as the Atitlán Grebe, the Tasmanian Wolf, the Golden Toad, and the Rodrigues Giant Tortoise have disappeared. If we choose not to stem this ongoing tide of extinctions, future generations will inherit a world far poorer in biodiversity and wonder why their ancestors failed to act before species were lost forever.

Stemming the Tide: The Alliance for Zero Extinction

Many of the world's most threatened species now depend for their survival on a single fragment of natural habitat. The Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE), an initiative led by a coalition of biodiversity conservation organizations, is dedicated to protecting these habitat fragments in order to avert imminent extinctions. Our aim is to create a frontline of defense against extinctions that will hold until broader-scale conservation efforts restore sufficient habitat to enable populations to rebound. To fulfill this aim, we are working to:

- Identify priority sites and species in immediate danger of extinction;
- Prepare portfolios of conservation actions needed at these sites;
- Identify and empower local and international groups to carry out these actions; and
- Raise funds that contribute to the establishment of new protected areas and to projects relevant to our overarching goal of stemming imminent species extinctions.

Currently we are focused on terrestrial vertebrates because their populations, distributions, and threats are best known. Over time our efforts will expand to include fish, plants, and invertebrates.

Site Selection Criteria

To ensure that investments aimed at averting extinctions are as effective as possible, we are careful about how we identify target sites for conservation action. Specifically, we work to identify sites that provide suitable habitat for those birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians whose status and global distribution meet three strict criteria:

1. **Endangerment.** AZE sites must contain at least one Critically Endangered (CR) or Endangered (EN) species, as assessed in the most recent version of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
2. **Irreplaceability.** An AZE site must represent the only area where a CR or EN species occurs, or hold the overwhelmingly significant known population of the species, either year-round or during one part of the species' life-history (e.g., the non-breeding season).
3. **Discreteness.** An AZE site must have a definable boundary within which the character of its habitats, biological communities, and/or management issues have more in common with each other than with adjacent areas. This allows the site to be treated as a single management and planning unit.

The species in AZE-targeted sites represent the crest of the ongoing wave of extinctions. Put simply, these are the sites that need immediate attention.

Starting with What We Know: Terrestrial Vertebrates

AZE has chosen to focus on terrestrial vertebrate species first because, compared to other species groups, the knowledge available about them is much more complete. Like many threatened terrestrial vertebrates, many threatened species from other groups are restricted to single sites. However, most of them have not yet been systematically and comprehensively assessed using IUCN Red List criteria. Because time is running out for several important sites, we must start with those species (mostly terrestrial vertebrates) that have already been assessed and then expand our conservation targets as new assessments are completed. Once enough is known about fish, plant, and invertebrate species to assess them accurately using the criteria described above, we will begin to identify critical sites for their protection. We expect that many of these sites will coincide with sites already selected for the protection of threatened terrestrial vertebrate species.



Complementing Large-scale Approaches

Our approach, which targets the habitats of at-risk species within larger conservation priority areas, is compatible with the increasingly dominant landscape-level approach to conservation that has emerged in recent years. More and more, conservation organizations are identifying broad areas of priority where large-scale sustained efforts will help ensure the conservation of the full range of biodiversity over the long term. AZE complements these broad-scale initiatives by targeting specific locales within priority areas where extinctions will first occur if no action is taken. For instance, many AZE sites occur within the World Wildlife Fund's "Global 200 Ecoregions," within Conservation International's "Biodiversity Hotspots," and within BirdLife International's 218 "Endemic Bird Areas." Moreover, many AZE sites are "Important Bird Areas," as defined by BirdLife International.

While long-term visionary efforts are definitely needed to protect the Earth's biodiversity over time, AZE sites are an important part of any geographic conservation framework because quick and decisive action is required now to save certain species from impending extinction. To let these species and their habitats fall through the cracks by focusing exclusively on long-range conservation goals would be a serious failure.

Learn More about AZE

With a combination of clear objectives, motivated partners, and sufficient funds, the Alliance for Zero Extinction can play a significant role in conserving the Earth's biological resources by preventing imminent extinctions. To learn more about AZE, visit us on the Web at

www.zeroextinction.org



Photograph captions and credits: Cover (clockwise from top left): Antigua Racer by Jenny Daltry (FFI); Colorful Puffleg by Luis A. Mazariegos H.; Pygmy Hog by Goutam Narayan; Corroboree Frog by D. Hunter, Copyright NPWS. Inside (from left): Golden-crowned Sifaka by Haroldo Castro (CI); oceanic island by Haroldo Castro (CI); Inca family by Constantino Acca Chutas (ECOAN); Paghman Mountain Salamander by Max Sparreboom; Okinawa Rail by T. Hanashiro/BirdLife International. Remaining panel: forest at Murici, Brazil, by Mike Parr (ABC).