



Global Tree Specialist Group Newsletter

May 2023

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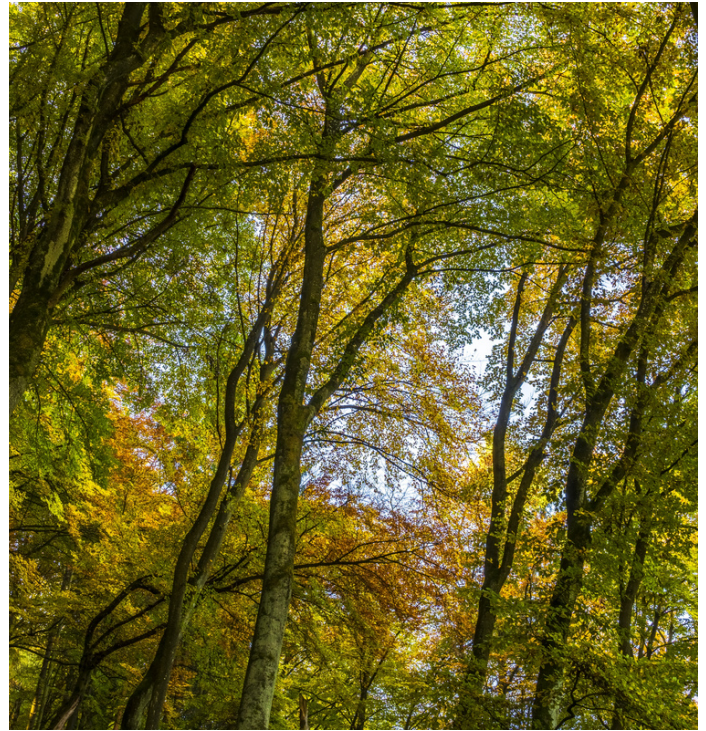
Recent Publications



**BOTANIC
GARDENS**
CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL



GTA
Global Tree
Assessment



The pressure is on to ensure that all tree species have an assessment for the IUCN Red List by the end of this year!

So far this year, more than 1,700 tree species have been submitted to the IUCN Red List. As ever a huge thank you to all GTSG members who are helping to achieve our mammoth task.

It has been a very busy year so far. In January, we held a joint workshop in Tanzania with the East African Plants Red List Authority. In February, we held a very successful Red List meeting in Singapore to focus on Southeast Asian tree assessments (see below). In the next months we will be progressing plans for GTSG development as described briefly below and we will also work increasingly to promote and undertake conservation action for threatened tree species. We are engaged in an exciting project with the IUCN SSC Colombia Plant Specialist Group focussing on tree conservation planning in Colombia (see below).

In this newsletter we feature the work of one member of the Group, Roy Erkens, and we look forward to promoting the important work of other Group members around the world.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the GTSG.

With very best wishes,

Sara Oldfield & Adrian Newton

Co-Chairs GTSG

Singapore Workshop

From 27th February to 3rd March 2023 a GTA Workshop was hosted at Singapore Botanic Gardens to complete assessments for species native to Indonesia and Malaysia. The workshop was attended by thirty specialists, including 10 staff members from Singapore Botanic Garden, who were red listing for the first time, and 20 GTA assessors from several organisations in the region. This includes Sabah Forestry Department, Forestry Department Sarawak, BRIN (Indonesia), Forest Research Institute Malaysia, Universitas Samudra, and Forever Sabah.

The goal of the workshop was ambitious - to assess over 200 trees that had no assessment on the IUCN Red List. Working in small groups, attendees produced assessments and maps from data they had prepared in advance of the meeting. And we are pleased that over the course of the workshop assessments were completed for 210 species, and a further 40 assessments were reviewed.

Attendees were also treated to a tour of Singapore Botanic Gardens and its National Orchid Garden. This was the first in-person GTA workshop for Southeast Asia since 2019, and brought together GTA assessors, colleagues and friends who had not met in person for many years due to the pandemic. It was a pleasure to be with everyone again, to be learning from one another, and to be working hard to reach the goal of the Global Tree Assessment.



Planning for tree conservation in Colombia

Earlier this year we were delighted to learn that a joint project between GTSG and the Colombia Plant SG was awarded funding by the Indianapolis Zoo. The project entitled "Conservation prioritisation, planning and action for Colombian Trees" is now underway. More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of all Colombian trees have already been published (or submitted to) the IUCN Red List as part of the Global Tree Assessment. These assessments show that at least 600 tree species in Colombia are threatened with extinction, the majority of these endemic to the country. This new project will use information from the IUCN Red List assessments, together with a survey of existing conservation action for trees in Colombia to inform and prioritise conservation planning. We are using the [BGCI Conservation Action Tracker](#) to record information at species level.

As part of the project, we will also be building on the expertise, experience and existing efforts of other SSC Groups, the zoo community, national Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) initiatives and other conservation bodies to ensure synergies and complementary approaches can be found. A workshop will be held in January 2024 to bring together and review the various project findings and to finalise the action plan.

If you have knowledge of threatened tree species in Colombia, or any suggestions for the project, we would love to hear from you. We are especially looking for expertise in Fabaceae and Melastomataceae.

CITES & Trees – Work on NDFs

Over 1,000 tree species are now included in the Appendices of CITES the majority of which are traded as timber. One component of the effective implementation of CITES, is the development of Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs) to verify the sustainability of species in trade. A comprehensive process is now underway to strengthen CITES NDF guidance with IUCN coordinating expert input. One of the planned working groups is considering "Species-specific NDF guidance for high-value timbers, with focus on forest inventory protocols, and sustainable quotas". If any members of the GTSG have examples of successful inventory protocols for tree species, particularly high value timber species that have a scattered distribution and/or examples of successful development of harvesting or trade quotas we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact sara@sara.oldfield.net.

It is important for the GTSG to retain and strengthen its engagement with CITES. The next Plants Committee meeting will be held in Geneva in June 2023. The agenda and documents for this meeting can be found at [Agenda and working documents | CITES](#). The GTSG will not form part of the IUCN Delegation for this meeting but if there are particularly noteworthy outcomes, we will share these with you.



Center for Species Survival for trees

The Morton Arboretum has received a three-year grant from the Walder Foundation to create a Center for Species Survival focused on threatened trees.

This is an exciting opportunity to expand Morton's already strong collaboration with the GTSG. The Center creates an important new link with the IUCN SSC Chair's office giving greater prominence to tree conservation within the broad SSC network. Species Survival Centers act as catalysts, working in a coordinated manner with the SSC Chair's Office, specialist groups, NGOs, government agencies, academia, and others. Each center has a defined primary focus on either taxonomic, geographic, or disciplinary priorities for species conservation. Currently there are ten IUCN Centers for Species Survival and one Global Center for Species Survival, all based at zoos and aquaria – except for The Morton Arboretum. Activities at the Center for Species Survival for Trees aim to improve data and knowledge about the biodiversity crisis through assessments of threats to trees, building conservation capacity in biodiverse regions such as Mesoamerica and southeast Asia. Conservation action will build on the Morton's on-the-ground projects with partners in the U.S., Mesoamerica (Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica), and southeast Asia (Malaysia and Indonesia) that benefit tree ecosystems and local communities. For more information, please contact Silvia Alvarez-Clare Director of Global Tree Conservation at The Morton Arboretum: salvarezclare@mortonarb.org



Planning for the future of the GTSG

The GTSG was established 20 years ago and has been remarkably successful in promoting and implementing IUCN Red Listing for trees – one of its original main aims. With the Global Tree Assessment drawing to an end, we need a broader mission statement to reflect the ambitious scope of our work.

Here we propose a new mission statement:

To enable global conservation of tree species, preventing extinction, through conservation assessment, planning and action.

Please give us any feedback on this proposed mission statement – your comments and suggestions are of fundamental importance.

Based on our previous discussions, we propose to broaden participation and support for the GTSG initially through the development of an executive committee for the Group. We envisage this including Regional Leads together with focal points for planning, sustainable use and ex situ conservation. More details will be provided in the next newsletter.

We are starting to design a new GTSG website which will be hosted by BGCI. The home page will show who we are and what we do with the new mission statement. We will include an updated directory of group members. Please expect a request for portraits and permission to include contact details. The website will highlight the three broad components of the work of our group: Assess, Plan, Act.

Assess – providing information on ongoing Red List assessment efforts of the Global Tree Assessment and resources and links to the GlobalTreePortal which shows the conservation status of tree species and monitoring of conservation action. There will also be links to the Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) processes for tree species which assess priority sites of importance for conservation. Red List assessments, KBA and AZE assessments link directly into conservation planning and action.

Plan – here we will highlight planning for tree conservation at a national level and species level. We will highlight gap analysis activities linking for the work of the [Global Conservation Consortia](#).

Act – we will highlight major conservation projects including those of individual Group members and also important policy initiatives in relation to tree conservation.

Awareness raising is a crucial component of our work. We will use the website to record publications and resources that highlight the threats to trees and the need for enhanced action.

As with comments on the proposed mission statement, any suggestions on the plans for an executive committee or ideas for the website will be greatly welcomed.

Please do get in touch.



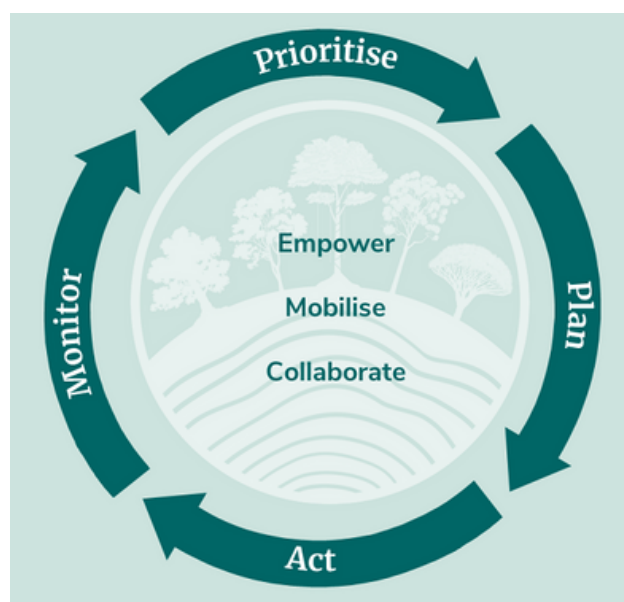
Spotlight on a GTA Resource: Conservation Action Tracker

A tool to help optimise conservation of trees

As we highlighted in the previous GTSG Newsletter, BGCi makes tree conservation information available via the [GlobalTree Portal](#). The Portal gives access to information on the almost 60,000 tree species, their distribution, conservation status, and conservation actions. This is thanks to the contributions of individuals, botanic gardens, and other plant conservation organizations from all over the world.

The Conservation Action Tracker is displayed in the GlobalTree Portal and presents known information on conservation actions for tree species, such as ex situ collections, propagation protocol, *in situ* management, policy and education. This information is crucial to **guide and prioritise** conservation actions for the world's most threatened trees, through the identification of gaps in tree conservation.

We again call for your collaboration to share information for the Conservation Action Tracker. With your support, we aim to obtain information for all known Critically Endangered trees, and most of the threatened species on the IUCN Red List.



To contribute your conservation action information for tree species, access the following link:

<https://www.bgci.org/resources/bgci-databases/globaltree-portal/conservation-action-tracker/>

For more information about BGCi's Conservation Action Tracker, please read:

<https://www.bgci.org/news-events/conservation-action-tracker-a-tool-to-help-optimise-conservation-of-tree-species/>

Global Botanic Garden Fund 2023

We are pleased to announce that [BGCi's Global Botanic Garden Fund \(GBGF\)](#) is now open for applications. The GBGF is made up of a number of grants which aim to drive plant conservation, sustainability efforts, and global partnerships with a focus on smaller botanic gardens and arboreta in developing countries and biodiversity hotspots.

In 2022, BGCi received 90 applications for the Global Botanic Garden Fund. Through the GBGF, BGCi and partner organisations distributed 33 grants worth \$72,400 to 20 different institutions, across 24 different countries. Take a look at the results of some of these projects [here](#).

Call for applications is open until 30 June 2023.



BGCI
Global Botanic
Garden Fund

Spotlight on a GTSG Member: Roy Erkens

I started to work on trees when I started my PhD trajectory in 2000 at the Herbarium and Systematics group of Utrecht University. Before that, I studied biology at the same university but was mainly focused on evolutionary and behavioural biology in animals. I switched to plant research because of the exciting questions that surrounded the genus *Guatteria*, one of the larger genera of tropical trees. This group in the Soursop family (Annonaceae) was one of the last Neotropical genera of Annonaceae that had not been taxonomically revised.

Guatteria consisted at that moment of about 285 tree species (and one liana), distributed from Southern Mexico to South-Eastern Brazil. By the time I finished my PhD trajectory in 2007 I summarized the status of knowledge on this genus (with now over 300 species) in my thesis title: "From taxonomic nightmare to molecular conundrum". I acquired four more years of funding in 2009. I was hoping that full plastid-sequences would elucidate phylogenetic relationships, so that the outcome could inform taxonomic circumscription. However, in 2012 I moved to Maastricht University and started to teach for most of my time. On the side, I worked with Prof. Paul Maas (my former promotor) on the revision of *Guatteria* at Naturalis Biodiversity Centre. In 2015, we published the work under the title: "Confronting a morphological nightmare", synonymizing many names and adding some new ones (number of species left: c. 185).



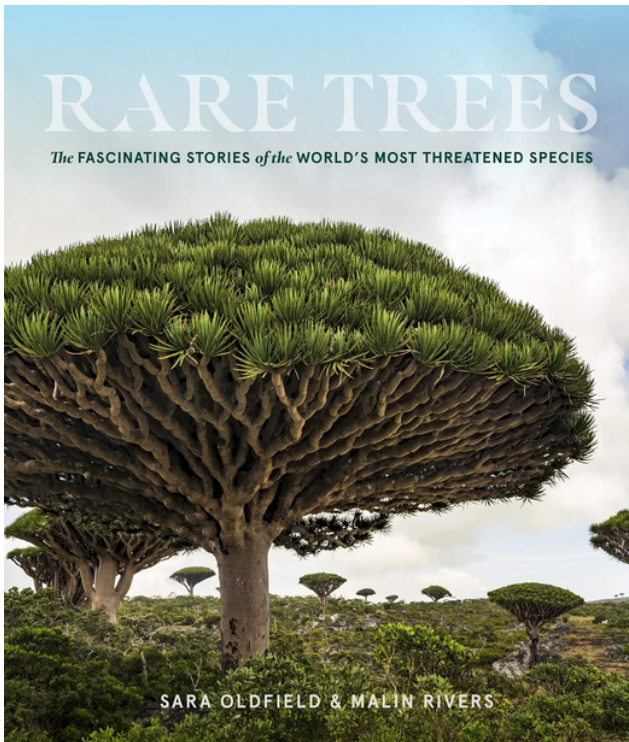
Around that time, I taught a Tropical Ecology course at the Maastricht Science Programme. As a guest lecture, I invited Sara Oldfield to my class. I thought it would be nice to do something with 'conservation' and 'the IUCN Red List' seemed like a good topic. The students responded very enthusiastically and one of them, Nadja Verspagen, decided to undertake her Bachelor Thesis Research project on the topic of Redlisting *Guatteria*.

As a result of this work, BGCI and I decided that Nadja and I could contribute to the GTA for Annonaceae as a whole. Via a project on Annonaceae Red Listing funded by BGCI we managed to assess the large majority of Annonaceae tree species (around 1500).

Since Sara's visit, the IUCN Red List lecture and attached assignment have become very popular. Many some students have worked with Red List data and some did their thesis on Annonaceae. In a joint collaboration with Laetitia Blanpain, Kathia Runge, and Inma Carrascosa Jara, we managed to publish their Bachelor Thesis Research work as well.

Since I was introduced to the work of the GTA and GTSG, this work had become a more important part of my research and education. For the revisions, flora's and other taxonomic works I am involved in, we now always include preliminary assessments or refer to published ones. In my education, it is a great tool to have students understand the biology of Annonaceae, the intricacies of conservation practice and the hard truth about politics and economics. Although *Guatteria* remains my main point of interest within Annonaceae (a new data set of 300 nuclear genes is waiting to be analysed), I have diverged into other projects with Annonaceae trees as well. Trees are great, and I hope to work on them for many years to come.

Recent Publications



Rare Trees: The Fascinating Stories of the World's Most Threatened Species written by Sara and Malin with the help of many members of the GTSG is now published!

It is dedicated to members of the GTSG and all involved in the Global Trees Campaign over the past 20 years.

We are delighted that this book is being stocked by many botanic garden shops.

We hope it will help to draw attention to the plight of trees around the world and the action being taken to save them.



The Red List of Dipterocarpaceae, was published 3 March, following the efforts of over 50 individuals, from over 15 organisations, from across the global range of dipterocarps. The Red List of Dipterocarpaceae contains analysis of all 535 species of Dipterocarpaceae and builds on national and regional red list publications.

Gallagher, R.V., Allen, S.P., Govaerts, R., Rivers, M.C., Allen, A.P., Keith, D.A., Merow, C., Maitner, B., Butt, N., Auld, T.D. and Enquist, B.J., 2023. Global shortfalls in threat assessments for endemic flora by country. Plants, People, Planet.

Keep in Touch

Please let us know what you have been up to and share news with the Group!

Drop us an email (redlist@bgci.org)

Follow Global Tree Assessment Progress on twitter [@GTA_GTSG](https://twitter.com/GTA_GTSG)

Check out the [GTA website](https://www.gta.org) for updates

Find out about our practical conservation efforts on twitter [@globaltrees](https://twitter.com/globaltrees)

Visit the [GTC Website](https://www.gtc.org), and [BGCI's Tree Conservation](https://www.bgci.org) pages.

