

Global Tree Assessment: IUCN Red List Reassessment Guidance

Created by the Global Tree Specialist Group

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Introduction

IUCN Red List assessments are recommended to be updated every 5–10 years. There are some differences between doing an assessment for the first time and carrying out a reassessment of a species that have been assessed previously. The following document summarises the process of reassessing a species for the IUCN Red List.

In this guidance, we outline the steps needed to complete a reassessment, whether you are reassessing a single taxon or coordinating a larger reassessment initiative.

This guidance is for anyone undertaking a global reassessment for a tree species for the IUCN Red List. It is meant to complement other IUCN Red List guidelines, training materials etc. available on the IUCN Red List, such as:

- [IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria](#)
- [IUCN Red List Guidelines](#)
- [IUCN Red List Mapping Standards](#)
- [Supporting Information Guidelines](#)
- [Classification Schemes](#)
- [Rules of Procedure](#)
- [Translations of IUCN Red List guidance documents](#)



Why Reassess?

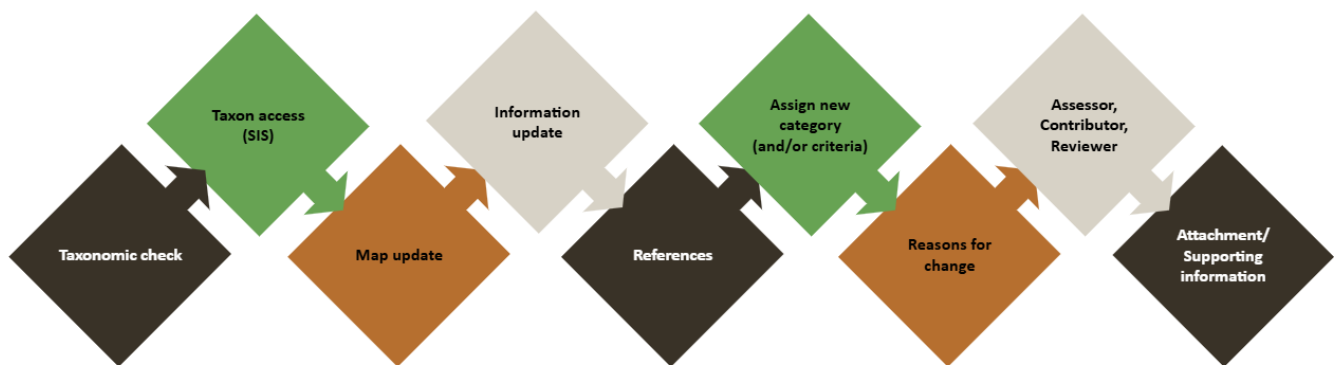
An IUCN Red List assessment is a publication of the extinction risk as it was at the date of the assessment. However, the status can change, both for the better and for the worse, over time, or important new information may become available that means the assessment needs to be updated. Additionally, in order to track how the conservation status of species changes over time, we need repeated assessments of the same species.

There are several reasons why a reassessment might be undertaken, for example:

- Previous assessment is more than 5–10 years old
- There is new information about the species which changes the category and criteria it is assessed under
- There has been a change in taxonomy
- To correct significant (resulting in change in status or substantially changing the content) errors in the published assessment, that cannot be rectified with errata to the existing assessment.

Reassessments of a single taxon

When starting the reassessment process, it is important that all information used is checked and updated. Please note that a reassessment should build on the previous assessment(s) and consider all the information used in the previous assessment.



Note: All reassessments need to be reviewed again, even if there is no change to the category and criteria.



1) Taxonomic check

Do a taxonomy check to find out whether the taxonomic concept that was assessed previously has changed in any way (i.e., a taxonomic revision since the previous assessment was published has split species out or merged other species into the concept).

Check if there is any information in the Taxonomic Notes (published section found on Taxon page in SIS), as well as any information in the Notes (unpublished section on the Taxon page in SIS).

Check and edit any common names and synonyms used.

If there has been a change to the taxonomic concept, inform the Red List Unit (with published proof of the taxonomic change) to allow them to update the taxonomy in SIS.

Make sure the Taxonomic Notes in SIS reflects any changes.

Note: If a new taxonomic concept is applied, then it is likely that both the new concept and other taxa affected by the change need to be updated.

2) Taxon access (SIS)

Confirm that no-one else is working on the reassessment of this species and obtain access to this assessment in SIS (via the relevant Red List Authority or the IUCN Red List Unit).

3) Map update

- a. If there is no map for the previous assessment, make a new map
- b. If the old map is still accurate, you do not need to make a new map.
- c. If the map needs to be updated, create a new point or polygon map to represent the distribution of the species. You could use the previous map as a starting point for this.
- d. If the previous map is marked as data sensitive, contact the IUCN Red List Unit if access is needed.

If a new map has been made, update countries of occurrence section in SIS, recalculate extent of occurrence (EOO) and area of occupancy (AOO), if applicable.

Note: Remember, if reusing the old map, to also check the presence, origin and seasonality codes are correct.



Note: If any updates are made to an old map (including deleting records, or updating any of the fields) then update the Compiler and Year Compiled (yr_compiled) fields for all the records to new reassessment year and new compiler name.

4) Information update

All reassessments need to build on previous information, so assessors are advised to start with all the information from the old assessment and then check if any additional information is available or corrections are needed and edit the assessment accordingly. (See section below for suggested **Sources of Information.**)

Make sure the following sections are checked and corrected or updated:

- All the text boxes
- Specific data fields – check and update (if necessary) information for EOO, AOO, locations, continuing decline, population size and trend, reduction, etc.
- Classification Schemes - Check the codes for habitats, use and trade and threats, conservation actions to make sure they are correct.

Note: Check the information on ex situ collections and protected areas, as new information may have become available.

Note: Check the Threat codes as these may have changed since the previous assessment (e.g., threats that were relevant at the time of the previous assessment may no longer be affecting the species, plausible future threats from the previous assessment may now be current threats, new threats may be an issue for the species, etc.).

5) References

Check if any references need to be replaced with an updated version. References that are no longer relevant should be removed and new references added if applicable.



6) Assign a Red List category and criteria (if needed)

Based on the checked map and information in the assessment, assign an updated Red List category and criteria.

Note: Remember to update the date of the assessment.

7) Reason(s) for Change in Red List Category from the Previous Assessment

Once an updated category (and criteria) has been assigned, the reasons for change (or no change) need to be marked up. The options are:

- No change
 - Same category and criteria
 - Same category, but change in criteria
- Genuine change
 - Recent - since the previous assessment
 - Since first assessment - only apply if there are three or more assessments of a taxon
- Non-genuine change
 - New information
 - Knowledge of criteria - Misinterpretation of the criteria in the Guidelines
 - Incorrect data used previously
 - Taxonomy
 - Criteria revision
 - Other

Note: It is good practise to fill in the “Reason for change justification”, it is a required field for those with a genuine change.

More information is available in the IUCN Red List Guidelines (page 13 in version 16) and further guidance is being developed.

8) Assessors, Reviewers and Contributors

a. Assessors

- i. If possible, the previous Assessor should be contacted to find out whether they want to be involved in the reassessment as an Assessor.

1. If they want to be involved, their names need to be retained in the Assessor field.



2. If they do not want to be involved as an Assessor for the reassessment, their names should be moved to the Contributors field (as an acknowledgement of their past involvement).
3. If an effort has been made to contact the previous Assessor and there is no response, the previous Assessor should be moved to Contributors.
4. If the previous Assessor requests their name to be removed entirely, remove their name from the assessment.

b. Reviewers

- i. All reassessments need to be reviewed again; therefore, previous Reviewers are removed automatically from new drafts.
- ii. The previous Reviewers could be used again to review the new assessment.

c. Contributors

- i. All previous Contributors remain as Contributors where reasonable (unless old contributors are now doing the reassessments, when they will be moved to the Assessors field)
- ii. Old Assessors may be put as Contributors (see section above)

Institutional credits should only involve institutions involved in reassessment.

Acknowledgements are at the discretion of the new assessor(s) and should be relevant to the reassessment. Contact information for assessors is sometimes stored in SIS. If you are unable to see it, contact the relevant Red List Authority or the IUCN Red List Unit.

9) Attachments (including Supplementary Information)

If the previous assessment included attachments such as a separate Supporting Information document (PDF), this will be attached to the previous published assessment in SIS. Check and update Supporting Information documents.

Reassessments for a group of species

Coordinating the reassessments for a group of species involves the same key steps as listed above, but some aspects you may want to carry out (for the full set) before starting reassessments, to speed up the process of reassessments, and avoid a lot of separate emails.

- Verify taxonomy for the group
- (Bulk) contacting assessors
- (Bulk) updating maps



- (Bulk) gathering new information for some of the fields (for example, conservation action in place and needed)

Note – To help track progress throughout this process, a dedicated Reassessment Tracking spreadsheet is available for download:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WbcudouZvNaBaNQwYqU8LWFoJ8k5kQoFM7sXNFWXy6w/edit?usp=sharing>

Sources of information

This is a non-exhaustive list of sources that could be used to find information for reassessments, including information for specific fields as well as general sources.

Taxonomy and Distribution section

Plants of the World Online <https://powo.science.kew.org/>

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew's database Plants of the World Online displays information on taxonomic status of a species and list homotypic and heterotypic synonyms. It also contains links to the International Plant Names Index and other references. It also provides links to specimens in Kew herbarium.

World Flora Online <https://www.worldfloraonline.org/>

The World Flora Online collates information from the world's floras, including taxonomic information as well as images, descriptions, distributions and references.

Tropicos <https://tropicos.org/home>

A database hosted by Missouri Botanical Garden which links plant names with specimens, distributions and images. It also includes several regional or taxonomic specific projects (i.e.. Flora Mesoamericana) which can provide more information that can be used in a reassessment.

Global Biodiversity Information Facility <https://www.gbif.org/>

GBIF is a database of occurrence records (specimens, observations etc.) from institutions across the world. It can be used for mapping, as well as collating information about a species from digitised specimen labels.

Conservation Section

Conservation Action Tracker <https://www.bgci.org/resources/bgci-databases/globaltree-portal/>

BGCI collates information about conservation action for tree species in the Conservation Action Tracker, displayed in the GlobalTree Portal. Check the Conservation Action Tracker for information that could be included in the Red List assessment. There may be information about conservation actions that is not yet in the Tracker, this can be fed back to BGCI using the following form:

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



PlantSearch <https://plantsearch.bgci.org/>

BGCI collates information on *ex situ* collections from botanic gardens, arboreta and seedbanks across the world. This information can be included in the Conservation section of the assessment

ProtectedPlanet <https://www.protectedplanet.net>

ProtectedPlanet provides maps of protected areas around the world. Their maps can be accessed directly through their website or through GeoCAT <https://geocat.iucnredlist.org/>

ThreatSearch https://tools.bgci.org/threat_search.php

ThreatSearch is a database of conservation assessments of plants. It includes assessments conducted on global, regional, national or subnational levels. Reference to other assessments conducted for this species can be included in the conservation text of the IUCN Red List assessments, and may also be a source of extra information for the IUCN Red List assessment.

General information sources

NatureServe Explorer <https://explorer.natureserve.org/>

For those species native to North America, NatureServe Explorer collates information on species and ecosystems that could be useful to add to the assessments, including global or national assessments.

Google Scholar, Biodiversity Heritage Library or other reference database

Use the search tools to look for recently published information.

Frequently Asked Questions

- *When checking the map I am finding lots of additional records in GBIF (or other sources), shall we add them all to the new updated map?*

Be careful when adding “new” points from GBIF as they may have been excluded for a reason in previous assessment. It is good practise to check any additional points (especially those with collection dates prior to previous assessment) for their accuracy, including identification and georeferencing.

- *What if a species was previously assessed in a different language to the one I want to use for the reassessment?*

Ideally, the reassessments should be written in the same language as the previous assessment. If the language will change, then it will still need to build on the previous assessment (translated). Only IUCN official languages are currently allowed, i.e. English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.



- *I am reassessing a taxon that was previously assessed with a specialised model or other “complicated methodology”?*

Wherever possible, assess the species using a similar methodology. When reaching out to the previous assessor, ask for help to rerun this model/methodology. If a repeat of this methodology cannot be carried out, then explain the reasons for that and make sure you clearly discuss/explain how the reassessment is impacted by this.

- *I would like to reassess species using SIS Connect, how do I ensure I build on the previous assessment?*

It is advised to download the previous information and include the relevant information in the reupload to SIS Connect. Other options include using the partial uploads, again to avoid the previous information being lost.

- *My reassessment means that a species is moving to a lower threat category, does the five-year rule apply?*

Firstly, the five-year rule only applies to genuine changes. If the move is to a lower threat category (for example, Vulnerable to Near Threatened), then the five-year rule states: “A taxon may be moved from a category of higher threat to a category of lower threat if and when none of the criteria of the higher category has been met for five years or more (i.e., if the taxon has qualified for a lower threat category for at least five years, regardless of when the previous assessment was published).”

Therefore, it is important to know when the taxon qualified to the lower category. This may not be the date of the reassessment. If it is not possible to identify the year in which the taxon qualified for the lower threat category, then the reassessment date is used as the start of the 5-year period.

- *How do I know if an assessment can be corrected or need to be reassessed?*

If there is only a minor error in the assessment, then a correction can be made to an assessment. This would only be used for minor errors (for example, where the text and the classification scheme boxes don’t align).

For more significant errors, where the changes lead to a change in category or substantially changing the content, a reassessment is needed (for example, the species is undergoing continuing decline in mature individuals that were previously not listed in assessment).



- *My reassessed species has undergone some taxonomic changes, do I need to reassess all the subspecies/varieties too?*

When reassessing a species, all other taxa affected by the change need to be updated. If the infraspecific taxa are affected then they will need to be reassessed. However, if the infraspecific taxa are not impacted by the taxonomic change then they do not need to be reassessed.

- *I am working on a manuscript but it is not published yet, do taxonomic changes need to be based on published information?*

The taxonomic changes need to be supported by a published source, or proof that the publication has been accepted for publication.

- *I want to do an IUCN Red List regional /national reassessment (i.e. European endemic), do these guidelines still apply?*

Yes, much of the information in this document will also apply to national and regional reassessments. However, please approach IUCN Red List Unit for contact with regional and national assessment teams for further guidelines.

For further advice, please contact redlist@bgci.org.

