

Global Tree Specialist Group Newsletter

February 2026

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We are now in the new quadrennium, and I am pleased to share that we are already beginning to implement our strategy with the newly published reassessment guidelines.

Building on the strong momentum and successes of the past quadrennium, we are also looking to expand and diversify our membership. If you know colleagues who would strengthen our expertise and regional representation, please encourage them to join us.

Finally, I also warmly invite you to contribute to our newsletter — whether by sharing project updates, recent publications, field stories or emerging challenges. Your contributions help showcase the incredible work happening across our network and keep our community connected.

Thank you again for your continued commitment and collaboration. Together, we will ensure that trees remain central to the global conservation agenda 🌍🌳

Best wishes,

Malin Rivers

Chair of the Global Tree Specialist Group



Update from the IUCN World Conservation Congress

The IUCN World Conservation Congress took place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 9–15 October 2025, including adopting a 20-year vision and urgent conservation motions.

A major outcome for the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) was the election of Vivek Menon as the new SSC Chair for 2025–2029.

Several GTSG members were attending the congress and the work of GTSG was showcased. For example, the Centre for Species Survival Tree co-sponsored an event “Towards Integrated Conservation Actions for Freshwater and Tree Species” and in the Americas Pavillion there was a panel discussion on “Global Tree Assessment – identification of conservation priorities of trees in the Americas” .

Importantly, the GTSG-backed IUCN Motion “Improving tree planting practices – Planting the right tree in the right place for the right purpose” was adopted <https://iucncongress2025.org/assembly/motions/motion/001>

GTSG Webinars 2026

We are planning for two GTSG webinars in early 2026 to mark the start of the new quadrennium. We will present and discuss our new programme of work for 2026–2029. These sessions will provide an opportunity to:

- Share priorities and targets for the new quadrennium
- Highlight opportunities for member engagement
- Hear from GTSG leadership and partners on planned activities



The link to the new strategy can be found here: <https://portals.iucn.org/union/node/33486> and <https://www.bgci.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/IUCN-SSC-Global-Tree-Specialist-Group-Strategic-Plan-2026-29-Final-Version.pdf>

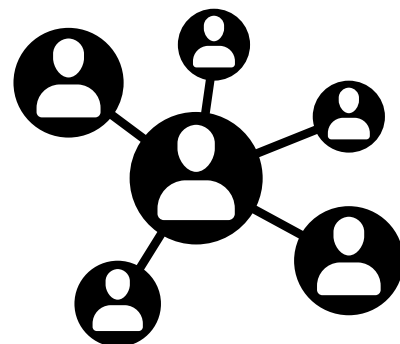
Sadly, we have had to postpone the GTSG webinars (that were scheduled for 3 March) due to delays in reappointments and reopening of the membership portal. We will be in touch as soon as we have a new date.

Seeking new GTSG Members

Due to the IUCN Membership System being closed during the SSC transition and reappointments, we have not been able to invite and accept any new members to the group.

However, we are actively looking to expand membership going forward and we are particularly looking for specialist in in situ tree conservation work.

If you know of any tree specialists that could be a great addition to the group to take our strategy forward, please send Malin Rivers (malin.rivers@bgci.org) a message with their name and contact details.



CITES update for trees

Discussions at the CITES Conference of the Parties (CITES CoP 20) held in Uzbekistan (24 November to 5 December) included 50 proposals to amend species listings in the CITES Appendices I and II. A number of these related to trees. Successful proposals included the addition of the Endangered Chilean palm *Jubaea chilensis* to Appendix I and the addition of the Critically Endangered *Commiphora wightii* to Appendix II. Commonly known as guggul, *C. wightii* is a small tree or shrub that occurs in India, Pakistan and Oman. Gum is harvested from wild plants, mainly in Pakistan, for trade around the world mainly as medicinal products. These two species should now receive stronger international conservation attention as a result of the CITES listings.

Central African countries proposed the removal from Appendix II of their populations of two valuable timber species *Azela bipindensis* and *Pterocarpus soyauxii*, species that were added to the Appendix at CoP19. These proposals were not approved. Perhaps the most contentious issue, debated mainly in a working group with no observers, was the control in trade in the valuable timber of the Brazilwood *Caesalpinia echinata*. The wood is considered the only suitable material to make high quality violin bows and much of the international trade is considered to be illegal. Brazil proposed uplisting the species from Appendix II to Appendix I. A compromise position was agreed with the species remaining in Appendix II with a zero export quota for wild-harvested specimens and a range of supplementary measures to improve conservation and trade controls.

The CITES Convention came into force 50 years ago and now the Appendices include over 800 timber species and many trees traded for medicinal products. As highlighted at a side event at CITES CoP20, the IUCN Red List continues to play a critical role in informing CITES decisions by providing robust, science-based assessments of species status and trends. It remains very important for the GTSG to help update species assessments for timber and medicinal tree species so that international CITES protection can be enhanced.

For more information contact:
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Global Tree Assessment Reassessment Guidelines

The Global Tree Assessment work continues for species that remain unassessed, as well as carrying out reassessments, when assessments become out of date or need updating.

As part of the GTSG strategy we have developed some guidelines for anyone undertaking a IUCN Red List reassessment.

This guidance was developed with input from several GTSG members that have been undertaking IUCN Red List reassessments for trees.

It can be accessed here: <https://www.bgci.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/GTA-Reassessment-Guidelines.pdf>

If you have any questions please get in touch with Emily Beech, Red List Authority Coordinator (emily.beech@bgci.org).



GTA
Global Tree
Assessment

ASSESS: Update from the latest IUCN Red List update 2025.2

The IUCN Red List update 2025.2 was launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress (10th October 2025). The update includes more than 1,000 assessments for tree species, furthering the work of the Global Tree Assessment with many new assessments from tropical regions across the world, including Brazil and the Philippines. Over 400 assessments for Brazil have been published, providing a clearer picture of the status of tree species in the world's most tree diverse country.



GTA
Global Tree Assessment

This update also sees the completion of the 8th comprehensive assessment of all bird species. Bird and tree species are often ecologically intertwined, and one example of the strong link between birds and trees is *Ocotea monteverdensis*, a large canopy tree endemic to Costa Rica. The seeds are naturally dispersed by numerous frugivorous birds, including the Resplendent Quetzal and the threatened Three-wattled Bellbird (*Procnias tricarunculatus* – Vulnerable). The species population has declined drastically over the past 75 years, with forest clearance and harvesting of individuals for timber posing ongoing threats.



Conservation action is underway for this species through the protection of existing forests and individual trees, planting of seedlings, and a public education programme on the importance of the species, implemented by the Monteverde Institute. Although this latest assessment retains the species' status as Critically Endangered it is hoped these actions will improve the long-term survival of this species.



MI OCOTEA
monteverdensis

Ocotea monteverdensis

Símbolo de Monteverde

Esta especie de aguacatillo es endémica de la zona de Monteverde. Con su población de individuos maduros de menos de 1000, se considera en Peligro Crítico de Extinción.

DETALLES

Familia: Lauraceae (Aguacate) Crecen hasta 35 m de altura y más de un metro de diámetro. Se desconoce su vida útil máxima, pero se cree que viven cientos de años.

Los frutos tienen de 3 a 5 cm de largo y son ricos en lípidos. Un nombre común es Quizarrá blanco.



ECOLOGÍA

Sus frutos son el alimento predilecto de las aves ilustradas aquí. Dos de estos (pájaro campana y quetzal) son especies amenazadas.

Guácharo



Pava Negra



Pájaro Campana



Quetzal Mesoamericano



Ilustraciones no son a escala. Ilustración y diseño por Marco Molina.

Estado de conservación IUCN
Peligro crítico de extinción

Ex EW CR EN VU NT LC

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species







© f @mi_ocotea www.monteverde-institute.org

Community poster on the importance of *Ocotea monteverdensis* (Credit: Monteverde Institute)

Spotlight on a GTSG Member Project: The tallest tropical trees in the world

S.K. Ganesan, Singapore Botanic Gardens, National Parks Board, s_k_ganesan@nparks.gov.sg

In a recent paper, I reviewed the geographic and taxonomic distribution of the tallest tropical trees in Sabah, Malaysia, and placed this in a global context by discussing tall-tree distributions in other regions. My paper summarised the state of knowledge of the important topic of tall trees, including methodological approaches and criteria, as well as current gaps in knowledge. In addition to their iconic and record-breaking attributes, tall trees and, by extension, large trees, are important from a climatic and ecological perspective. Large trees play a disproportionate role as carbon sinks, as habitats for other species, in regulating microclimates, and in forest regeneration. The data compiled in my paper demonstrated, for the first time, that species with extreme stature were concentrated within a single clade of dipterocarps. Another finding was that Sabah was the centre of tropical forest giants, with much potential for further discoveries of record-breaking trees.

The full reference to this paper is: Ganesan, S.K. (2025). The tallest tropical trees in the world are restricted to Sabah biogeographically and phylogenetically to a clade within Dipterocarpaceae. *Sandakania* 27: 285–301

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hSY2Mzd9_xJBGtVVT2ADWbVX-dWFAOV/view



The crown of 'Menara', a yellow meranti (*Richetia faquetiana*) at 100.8 m tall now considered the tallest tropical tree in the world, Danum Valley Conservation Area (DVCA), Sabah, Malaysia. Photo credit: Unding Jami

Fondation Frankinia - Trees of the Mediterranean Basin

Fondation Frankinia has recently opened a call for project proposals for threatened trees of the Mediterranean basin. Project proposals must focus on in situ conservation of globally threatened trees.

The deadline for submission is midnight CET on March 25th, 2026.

For more information and how to apply:
<https://fondationfrankinia.org/en/call-for-proposals-open/>



IUCN Species Survival Commission Report 2024-2025

You should all have received the message from the Species Survival Commission at the end of last year regarding the publication of the [2024-2025 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat](#).

With over 800 pages, it was the last report for the quadrennium showing the achievements of the SSC Network and Secretariat, with stand-alone reports of 183 SSC groups and 16 Centers for Species Survival.

It is worth taking a look at (especially the Plant report), and is showcasing the collaborative work of the Global Tree Specialist Group, across many other SSC groups and Stand-Alone Red List Authorities.



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)

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Check out the [GTSG website](#) for updates

