

European Eel could be more promising than implementing a new listing on Appendix I with unforeseen consequences.

A genus-level listing of *Anguilla* in Appendix II would aim to enhance the transparency of the global eel trade through mandatory reporting to the CITES database. Listing the genus rather than individual species is required as species identification is problematic both at the glass eel stage and as consumer products (e.g. grilled eel fillets). For trade to then continue, strict monitoring and control in compliance with CITES requirements would be needed. Following its listing on Appendix II, control measures were significantly improved for the European eel, helped by introduction of the *EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking* and Europol's lead on this from 2016 onwards. To maximize the positive impact of a genus-level listing, similar actions would be needed for the other 18 *Anguilla* species, many of which occur in countries with poor governance that lack control capacity. Listing of the European eel in Appendix II led to an increase in trafficking of the American eel (for example in the Caribbean, the USA and Canada), and further expansion and intensification of the illegal glass eel trade could be expected.

Before any changes to the CITES listings, a comprehensive assessment is needed to evaluate the expected impacts on stocks, eel aquaculture, legal trade and smuggling relative to conservation targets and risk analyses.

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New surveys reveal high biodiversity of Lake Télé, Congo

Lake Télé is an ovoid, endoreic 23 km² lake in northern Republic of the Congo. Surrounded by vast areas of swamp forest, Lake Télé is famous for its rounded shape (long thought to be the result of a meteorite, a theory now abandoned; Masters, 2010, *Journal of African Earth Sciences*, 58, 667–679) and the reputed presence of a dinosaur-like creature, the Mokele-Mbembe. The lake lies within the eponymous Lac Télé Community Reserve. This, in turn, is part of the largest peatland complex known in the tropics: the swamp forests of the Cuvette Centrale of the Congo Basin, which are of global importance for biodiversity and carbon stocks (Dargie et al., 2017, *Nature*, 542, 86–90).

Because of its remoteness, Lake Télé has been the subject of few scientific studies, the last one dating back to 1992

(Laraque et al., 1998, *Journal of Hydrology*, 207, 236–253). As a financial and technical partner of the Reserve since 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Society, together with the Ministère de l'Economie Forestiere, organized two biodiversity surveys of the lake in July and August 2024. The first focused on the amphibians and reptiles of the swamp forests surrounding the lake, and the second on the fish community of the lake itself. A total of 37 amphibian and 38 reptile taxa were found, of which 26 (15 amphibians and 11 reptiles) were unidentified and could be new to science. Thirty-two fish species were recorded, including eight taxa that could not be identified to species. Water samples were collected from the lake for subsequent eDNA analysis. The fish community is dominated by the family Cichlidae, unlike that of the nearby river Likouala-aux-herbes, where Mormiridae is the most common family (Bilola et al., 2024, *Sustainability*, 16, 3353). Our findings confirm the high biodiversity of the lake and its conservation significance. Further surveys are scheduled in 2025, for insects and ungulates.

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New records of the clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* in the Qomolangma National Nature Reserve, Tibet

The clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* is categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and has experienced significant population declines over the past decade, driven by habitat loss and overexploitation. Historically, the species was widely distributed across China (Smith & Xie, 2008, *Journal of Mammalogy*, 90, 520–521), but its estimated range in the country (calculated using the geographical range data published by IUCN) declined substantially during 2000–2020, from 1,211,284 km² (Grassman et al., 2016, *IUCN Red List*) to 62,199 km² (Gray et al., 2021, *IUCN Red List*). Petersen et al. (2020, *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 24, e01354) estimated that key habitat for the species in China has diminished by c. 97% during this period. Recent surveys indicate that the clouded leopard occurs in only four counties in China: Medog County in Tibet, and Gongshan, Yingjiang and Mengla Counties in Yunnan (Li et al., 2021, *Oryx*, 55, 177–180; Ma et al., 2022, *Biodiversity Science*, 30, 22349).

To study felid species in Qomolangma National Nature Reserve in Jilong County, a region characterized by a temperate semi-monsoon climate and located in the core region of the Himalayas, we deployed 200 infrared camera traps that operated continuously during August 2023–April



A clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* captured by a camera trap in Qomolangma National Nature Reserve, Jilong County, China, on 16 September 2023.

2024. Two camera traps within the core zone of the Reserve each captured an image of the clouded leopard, on 9 and 16 September 2023, respectively. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first documentation of the clouded leopard in Jilong County, c. 1,000 km from the species' previously recognized habitat in Medog County.

This discovery suggests there may be other potential clouded leopard habitats in China beyond the four currently recognized sites. Additionally, the new record is close to two locations in Nepal where the clouded leopard has been recorded: Langtang National Park (c. 50 km away) and Annapurna Conservation Area (c. 300 km away; Ghimire & Acharya, 2017, *Oryx*, 52, 166–170). This region may serve as a migration corridor for clouded leopards. Further research in this region will promote international collaboration for the conservation of this species.

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Fungi gaining ground at recent CBD and IUCN meetings

Increasing interest in fungal conservation was evident at two recent global conservation events: the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Leaders meeting in Abu Dhabi,

UAE (October 2024) and CoP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cali, Colombia (October 2024). In Abu Dhabi, the Fungal Conservation Committee, comprising the chairs of fungal specialist groups and other key contributors, met to review existing quadrennium targets with regards to accomplishments and challenges, to plan for the upcoming year, and to brainstorm emerging opportunities. Two sessions were held for the broader SSC community, which were well attended by members of several plant groups and other related specialist groups. Fungal specialist groups received two awards in honour of increased activities.

In its first 4 years the Fungal Conservation Committee has met many of its initial targets, including major advances in global fungi Red List assessments (from three in 2003 to nearly 1,000 in 2024), the creation of national specialist groups and conservation networks (e.g. the Brazil and Colombia Fungal Specialist Groups; Drechsler-Santos et al., *Oryx*, 57, 421–422; Motato-Vásquez et al., *Oryx*, 57, 691), and establishing productive engagement with the Global Centre for Species Survival based at the Indianapolis Zoo, USA. Thematic specialist groups have been formed on Aquatic Fungi (Fernandes et al., *Oryx*, 58, 282) and on Fungal Use, in partnership with the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group. This rise in activities has increased scientific output and public interest in fungal conservation, which we hope to build on with increased outreach and educational opportunities. For example, in 2025, with financial support from the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group, we plan to host a workshop on fungal conservation and gender in Cotonou, Benin, in conjunction with the fourth meeting of the International Society for Fungal Conservation and a special issue of *Current Conservation* dedicated to fungal conservation.

At CoP16, the newly formed Fungal Conservation Network, comprising members of the Fungal Conservation Committee plus other mycologists, presented initial plans for a Global Strategy for Fungal Conservation. The Strategy will provide tools and resources for countries to include fungi in their conservation efforts and identify a fungal conservation research agenda. Additionally, the UK and Chile presented the Pledge for Fungal Conservation. Efforts to develop the Pledge were led by the Fungi Foundation and 3Fs Initiative, and it received additional support from Colombia, Benin, Spain, Mexico, Italy, Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Cambodia and Guinea. Although the Pledge did not make it onto the latest agenda, Chile made a statement in the final plenary, inviting parties within the context of decision CBD/CoP/15/28 on Biodiversity and Agriculture to submit detailed information on the conservation of fungi within the framework of the Soil Biodiversity Action Plan. This could lead to the inclusion of fungi in national and international legislation, policies and agreements.

I thank members of the Fungal Conservation Committee for review of this piece. Any mistakes are my responsibility.