

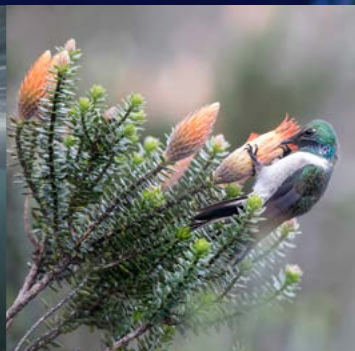


صندوق محمد بن زايد  
للمحافظة على  
الكائنات الحية

The Mohamed bin Zayed  
SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND

# FROM THE GROUND UP

15 years of global species conservation



“

We each have a part  
to play in **protecting**  
**our planet.**

**His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**  
President of the United Arab Emirates

# Foreword



As we share this impact report with you, we mark a significant juncture in the journey of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund—a journey of dedication and significant contributions to global conservation efforts.

Fifteen years ago, our journey began against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, with a vision to establish a robust global conservation funder. By the end of our inaugural year, we had committed nearly \$2 million across over 130 projects. Since then, our efforts have only grown, culminating in \$25.7 million allocated, aiding 2,742 grantees across 174 countries and establishing partnerships with 1,516 conservation allies.

This report celebrates our achievements, which are not just in numbers but in real impact: 1,709 species and subspecies have been brought back from the brink of extinction, with

many new populations and habitats discovered. These accomplishments are a testament to our unique focus on supporting threatened species—making the Fund a global leader in species conservation.

We prioritize support for critically endangered, endangered, and lesser-known species, with an average grant size of \$9,000, significantly contributing to "reversing the red" on the IUCN Red List. Beyond funding, we are deeply committed to nurturing early career conservationists, with 63% of our grantees in this period receiving their first grant, representing the next generation of conservation leaders. We also ensure project continuity, as evidenced by the 1,011 repeat grants awarded, underscoring our sustained impact.

In our commitment to inclusivity, we recognize the pivotal role of indigenous communities, youth, and particularly women in conservation. Women, often the most affected by environmental challenges, are also potent agents of change. Over the past two years, we have supported over 80 women leading projects, investing approximately \$800,000 in their efforts in developing countries.

This report is a reflection of what we have achieved together with our global partners and supporters like you. Your steadfast support has been crucial in our shared mission. As we look forward to the future, we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead and the continued path towards a sustainable future for all species and the communities they sustain. After 15 years, our journey is far from over; it is, in fact, just beginning.

We thank you for your unwavering support and look forward to achieving even more milestones together.

**H.E. Razan Al Mubarak**

Managing Director, Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund



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# Our Story



Since the early 1930s, Sheikh Zayed's quest for knowledge led him into the desert alongside Bedouin tribesmen, where he immersed himself in their way of life and the surrounding environment. Over generations, this deep understanding and reliance on nature culminated in the establishment of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.

Today, the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund stands as a significant philanthropic endowment dedicated to providing targeted grants for individual species conservation initiatives. The Fund recognises and honours leaders in the field of species conservation while elevating the importance of species within the broader conservation dialogue.



# Our vision

An elevated place for species in the global conservation debate and a thriving global community of well-resourced species conservationists.

# Our mission

Elevate the importance of species in the conservation debate by:

- ▶ Providing timely support for grass-roots initiatives which make a real difference to species survival.
- ▶ Supporting those whose passion, dedication and knowledge is the key to saving species.
- ▶ Assisting the conservation of species in their natural habitats.
- ▶ Heightening awareness of species conservation.
- ▶ Stimulating renewed interest among young people in natural sciences.
- ▶ Attracting further contributions to species conservation from across the globe



Chapman's pygmy chameleon in Malawi ©Ruben Foquet





Fatu hiva monarch in French Polynesia © Benjamin Ignace

## Our mandate

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund seeks to empower species conservation efforts and programmes globally, embodying the deep-rooted commitment of both the government and the people of Abu Dhabi to preserve our natural heritage.



**1516**  
conservation  
organisations  
supported



**2742**  
grants  
successfully  
awarded



**\$25,761,849**  
million  
allocated to conservation globally

\* updated as of 31 December 2023



**174**  
countries  
covered as part of our  
conservation reach



**1794**  
species  
rediscovered, reintroduced  
and protected from  
extinction

# Our approach

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (MBZF) firmly believes that every species holds conservation significance. The Fund also acknowledges the essential role that small grants play in sustaining conservation efforts for species that are often overlooked by mainstream initiatives. While charismatic species, such as top predators, receive significant attention, many other species also require support for their survival.

The Fund has made substantial contributions to these lesser-known species, recognising that generalist species cannot always serve as umbrella species for their more specialised counterparts. By supporting projects that focus on threatened specialist species, the Fund elevates effective conservation initiatives that might otherwise struggle to secure funding in the absence of charismatic species.

Through a pragmatic and flexible funding ethos of small grants, the Fund is able to support grassroots conservation initiatives, at a local level, where species conservation efforts are most impactful.

With a pragmatic and flexible funding ethos centred on small grants, the Fund is uniquely positioned to support grassroots conservation initiatives at the local level, where efforts can have the most significant impact.

The allocation of funding is highly competitive, with all applications subject to review by an independent advisory committee.

Originating as a private philanthropic endeavour through a generous gift from His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, the Fund places its trust in grant recipients who share its core values: the conservation of species in their natural habitats, in harmony with nature, and in collaboration with local communities.

Understanding the need for sustained, targeted, and focused project funding, the MBZF does not restrict grantees to one-time grants. Instead, the Fund encourages and supports multiple grants, including joint funding initiatives with other donors, to ensure impactful and continuous support for conservation projects.

While the MBZF provides numerous small grants, it also recognises the importance of partnerships between funding agencies to bolster support for threatened species. By fostering collaboration and integration, the Fund aims to amplify its impact and ensure sustained funding for multiyear conservation programs. This cooperative approach facilitates the development of robust initiatives that demonstrate measurable success in species conservation.



Emirati leaf-toed gecko in Fujairah, UAE © Salvador Garranza

# Theory of change



# Logic model

Committed to the goal of zero extinction of species, the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund recognises that the grants it provides are part of a broader funding framework supporting species conservation initiatives. These grants are intended to serve as vital inputs into systems, programs, and projects that focus on specific activities undertaken by conservation organisations and dedicated individuals, all working toward tangible outcomes that advance species conservation.

By implementing these activities and generating collective outputs at the grassroots level, we believe that we can achieve greater results in landscape, habitat, and species conservation, ultimately leading to significant impacts for species at risk of extinction.

The Fund understands that successful implementation is best carried out by experienced and passionate individuals on the ground, often coordinated by grassroots organisations that operate at appropriate scales. These organisations employ socially and culturally relevant methodologies that are deeply rooted in local knowledge and indigenous value systems.

The results of these efforts resonate on regional and international levels, enhancing the understanding and appreciation of threatened, endangered, or data-deficient species—often overlooked and undervalued. By highlighting their significance within key ecosystems and habitats, we aim to foster a deeper recognition of their roles and the necessity of their conservation.



Welwitschia in Namib desert in Africa © Pterluigi Bombi

# Premises and logical progression

Against this backdrop, our Theory of Change is:

**If** sustainable funding is available, and if passionate and knowledgeable individuals with well-designed, field-based species conservation projects can be identified, then it becomes feasible to support species conservation activities.

**If** we support field-based species conservation activities, then we can optimise existing capacities and develop further expertise to expand our knowledge.

**If** we expand our knowledge, then we can raise awareness and improve methodologies.

**If** we raise awareness and improve methodologies, then we can drive behavioural changes and better position species within the global conservation debate.

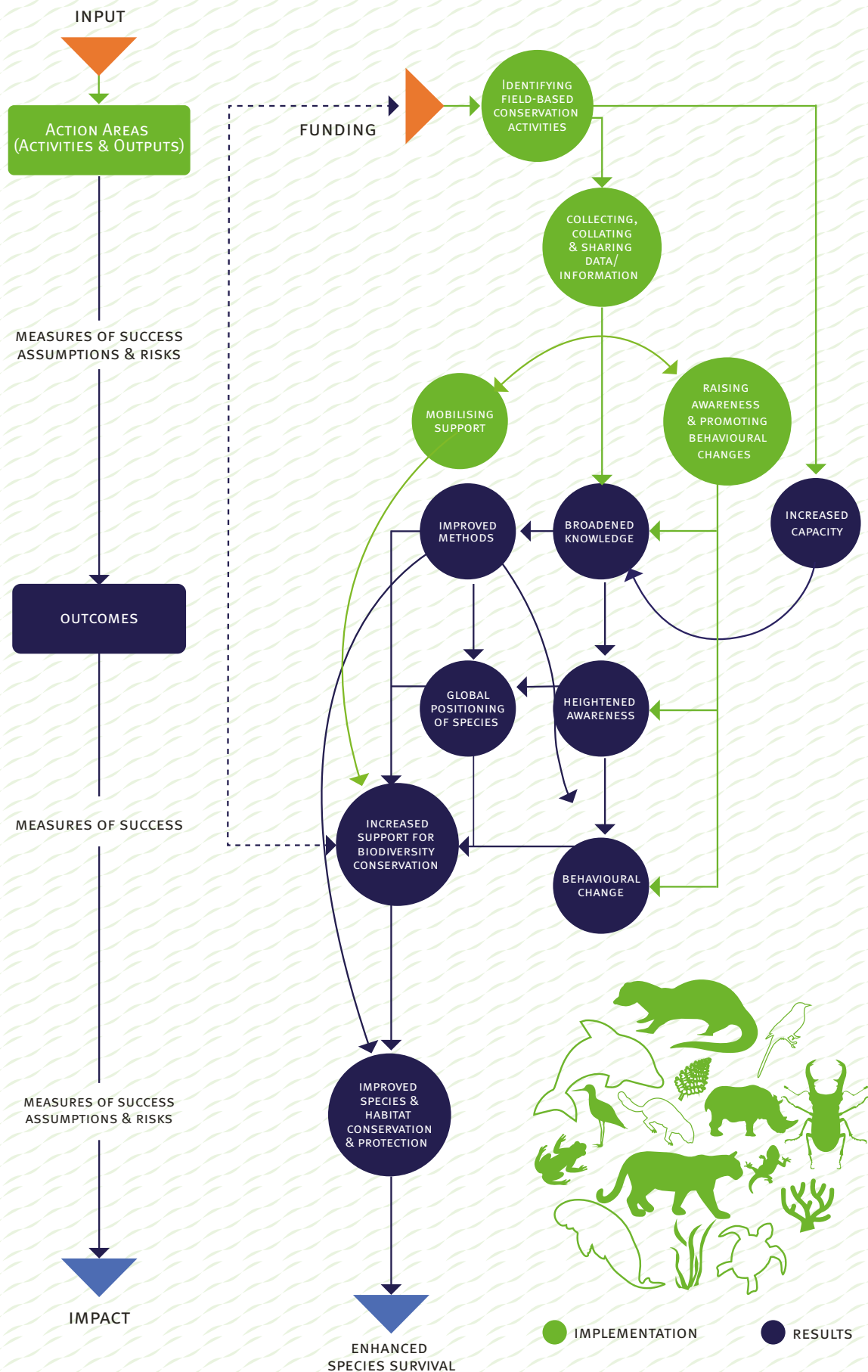
**If** we drive behavioural changes and enhance the position of species in the global debate, then we can increase support for biodiversity conservation.

**If** we increase support for biodiversity conservation, then we can mobilise additional funding to enhance the Fund's small grants programme, expand networks, and support larger projects as necessary. This effort will contribute to global ecosystem and biodiversity conservation across all taxonomic groups, ultimately enhancing species survival.



Gardel's sand-dune lizard in Argentina © Laura Verrastro

# Theory of change



# Critically endangered

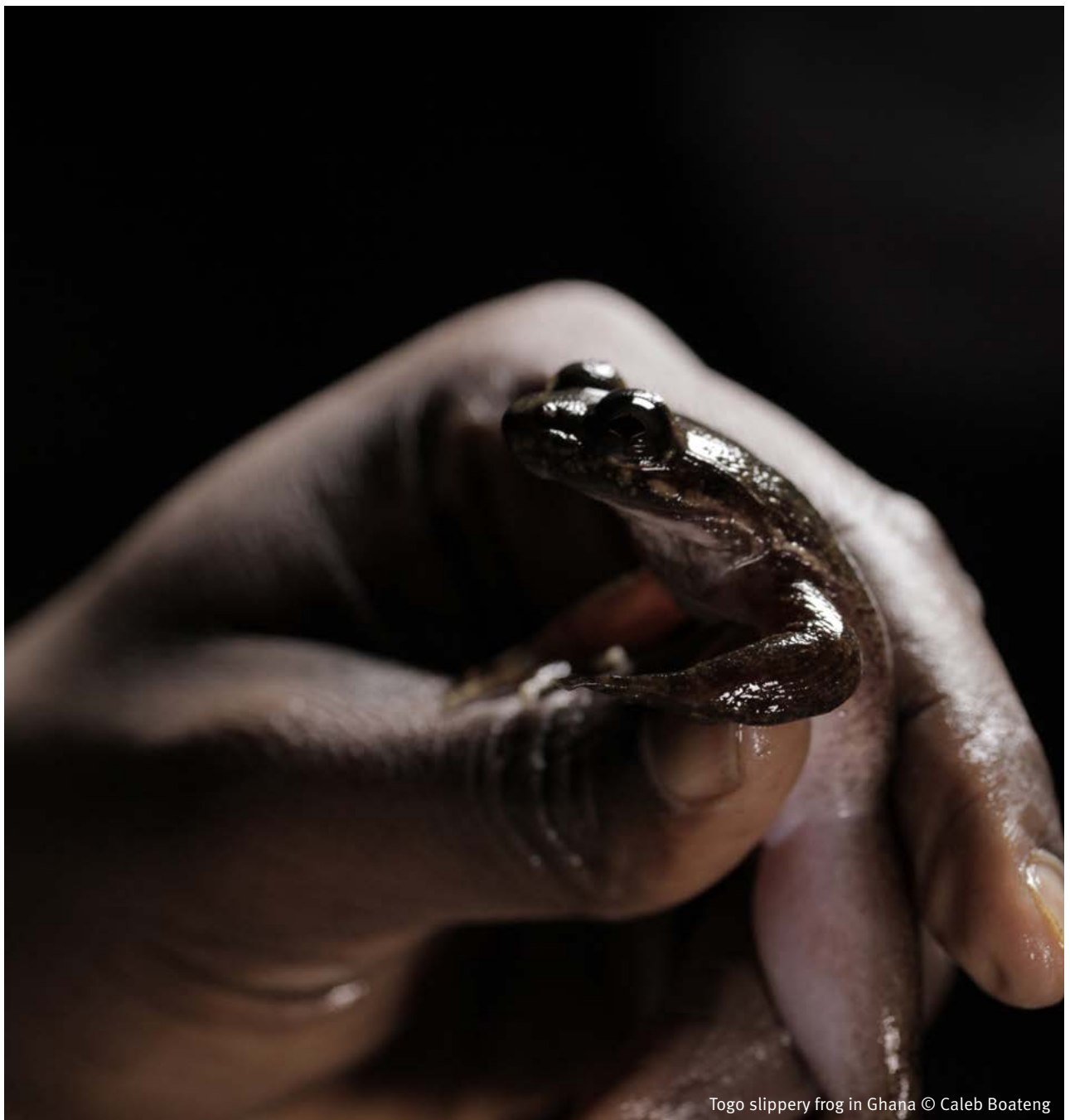




Many groundbreaking discoveries stem from the tireless dedication of committed scientists. They invest countless hours in hands-on fieldwork, often in challenging and remote environments, far from traditional academic settings and online platforms. Collaborating closely with local communities, who possess invaluable indigenous knowledge of local conditions, species behavior, and habitat use, these scientists navigate rugged terrain and adverse conditions to uncover vital insights.

Despite the abundance of literature on species loss and extinction, there are numerous instances of newly discovered species or the rediscovery of those once thought extinct. These remarkable findings often emerge from camera trap surveys or are reported by individuals fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time.

For this reason, the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (MBZF) does not concentrate on any specific species or taxonomic category. Instead, it primarily focuses on species that are threatened and critically endangered, where targeted action can have a meaningful impact on conservation efforts. When appropriate, support is also extended to initiatives that enhance the knowledge base regarding specific interventions, even when the target species is thought to be extinct or when the threats to a species are not fully understood.



Togo slippery frog in Ghana © Caleb Boateng

As our understanding of ecosystem health and function grows, conservation efforts have expanded beyond a sole focus on charismatic species. There is now a broader recognition of the critical roles played by multiple species, including reptiles, amphibians, plants, and fungi, in maintaining ecological balance and vitality.

A recent study indicates that 19% of European species are threatened with extinction, with particularly high risks for plants (27%) and invertebrates (24%) compared to vertebrates (18%). These figures surpass recent estimates by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Major threats to biodiversity include changes in agricultural practices, habitat loss, overharvesting, pollution, and development.<sup>1</sup>

Recognising the significance of all species within the intricate web of biodiversity and noting the comparatively limited conservation attention afforded to many smaller and less visible species, the Fund is committed to supporting the conservation of any threatened species, whether animal, plant, or fungus.

The Fund has long prioritised the conservation of fungal species, an important yet often overlooked area. Since 2009, it has awarded 54 grants in this domain. Initially, many of these grants focused on mycology, support for specialist groups, and taxonomy. However, over time, the emphasis has shifted toward more conservation-oriented projects.



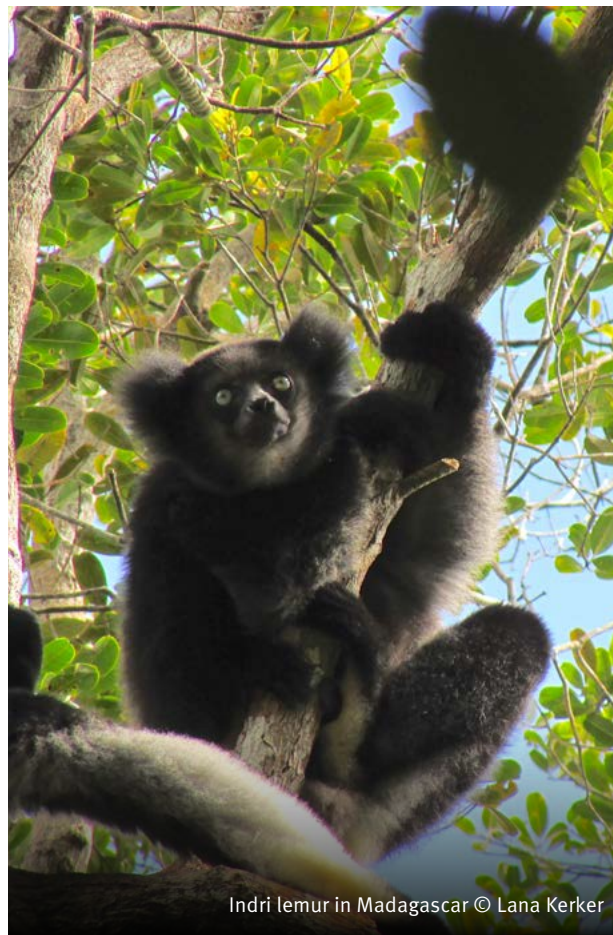
Big puma fungus in Chile © Daniela Torres

On the forefront of conservation knowledge, the order Primates represents one of the most extensively documented groups of species within the IUCN Red List. As of November 2023, the IUCN Red List includes 249 primate species categorised under the threat levels addressed by the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (MBZF). At this level, the Fund has successfully supported significant conservation initiatives that build upon previous efforts while fostering new talent in the field.

Primates are one subgroup of mammals supported by the MBZF. In total, the mammal species supported by the Fund include:

**Mammal species supported:**

- 251 projects
- Covering 118 species
- 41 genera
- 7 families
- Funding amount \$2,666,177



The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ serves as the world’s most comprehensive resource for information regarding the global extinction risk status of animal, fungus, and plant species. Accessible to all, it is utilised by governmental bodies, non-profit organisations, businesses, and individuals alike.

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund employs the IUCN Red List as a critical reference tool in determining which species require support when evaluating grant applications.

Additionally, the MBZF provides assistance to data-deficient (DD) species, which the IUCN has classified as lacking sufficient information for a proper assessment of their conservation status.



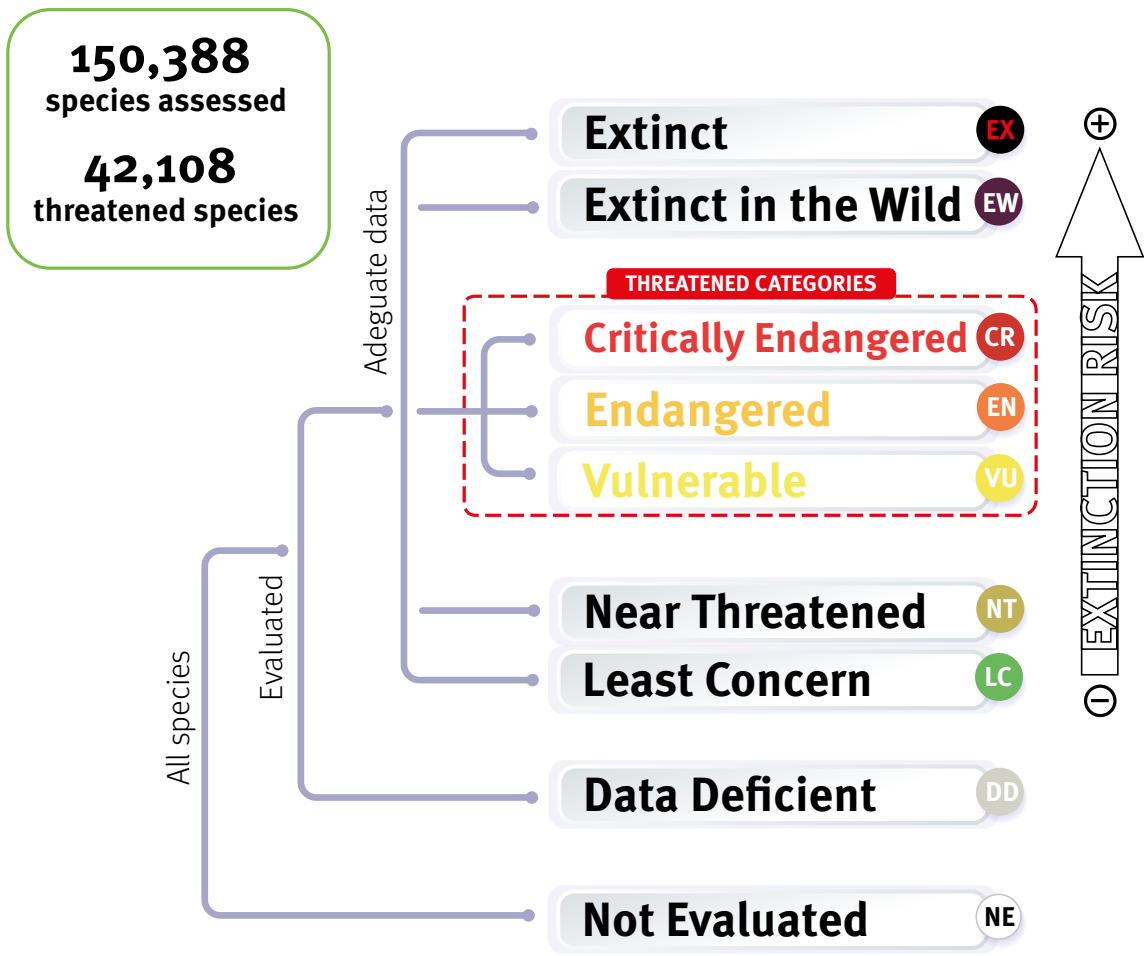
Maui forest bird in Hawaii © Hanna Mounce



Campbells Alligator lizard in Guatemala © Brad Lock



Tlalocohyla frog in Costa Rica © Marco Molina



# THE RED LIST CATEGORIES

Extinct		Threatened			Least Concern		
<b>EX</b>	<b>EW</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>EN</b>	<b>VU</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>LC</b>	<b>DD</b>
<b>Extinct (EX):</b> no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died	<b>Extinct in the Wild (EW):</b> Known only to survive in captivity, cultivation or well outside its natural range	<b>Critically Endangered (CR):</b> facing extremely high risk of extinction in the wild	<b>Endangered (EN):</b> facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild	<b>Vulnerable (VU):</b> facing a high risk of extinction in the wild	<b>Near Threatened (NT):</b> close to qualifying, or likely to qualify for a threatened category in the near future	<b>Least Concern (LC):</b> population is stable enough that it is unlikely to face extinction in the near future	<b>Data Deficient (DD):</b> not enough information on abundance or distribution to estimate its risk of extinction

# Funding support by IUCN category



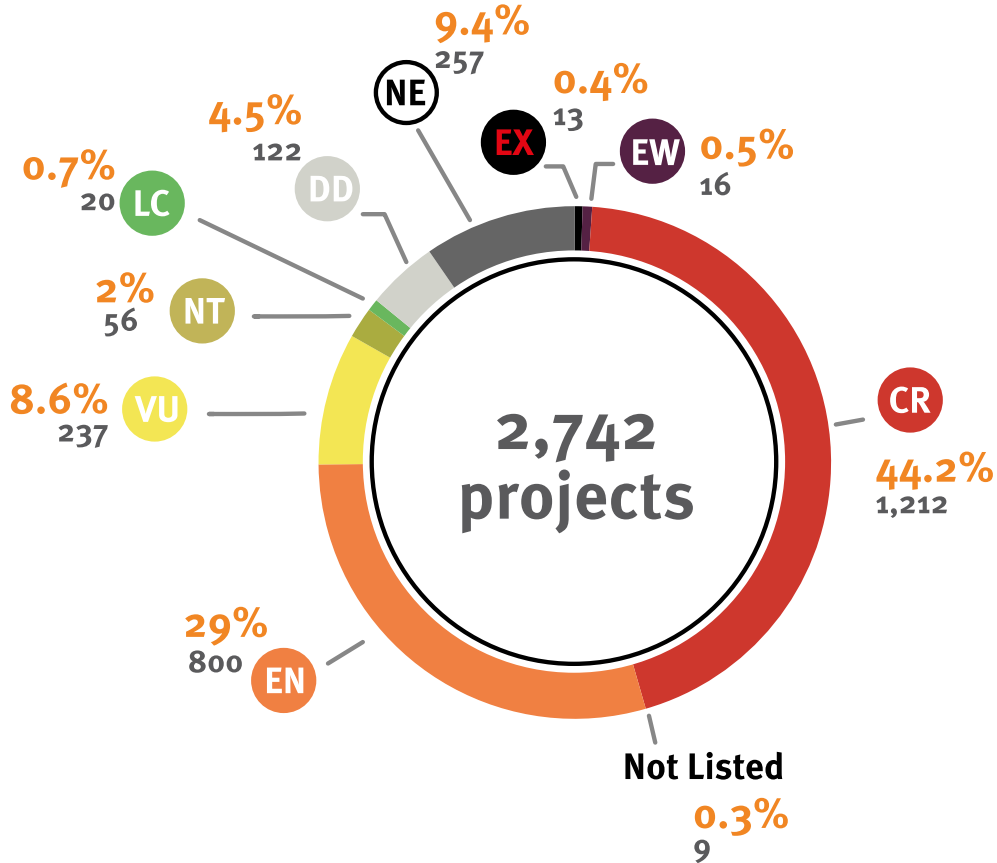
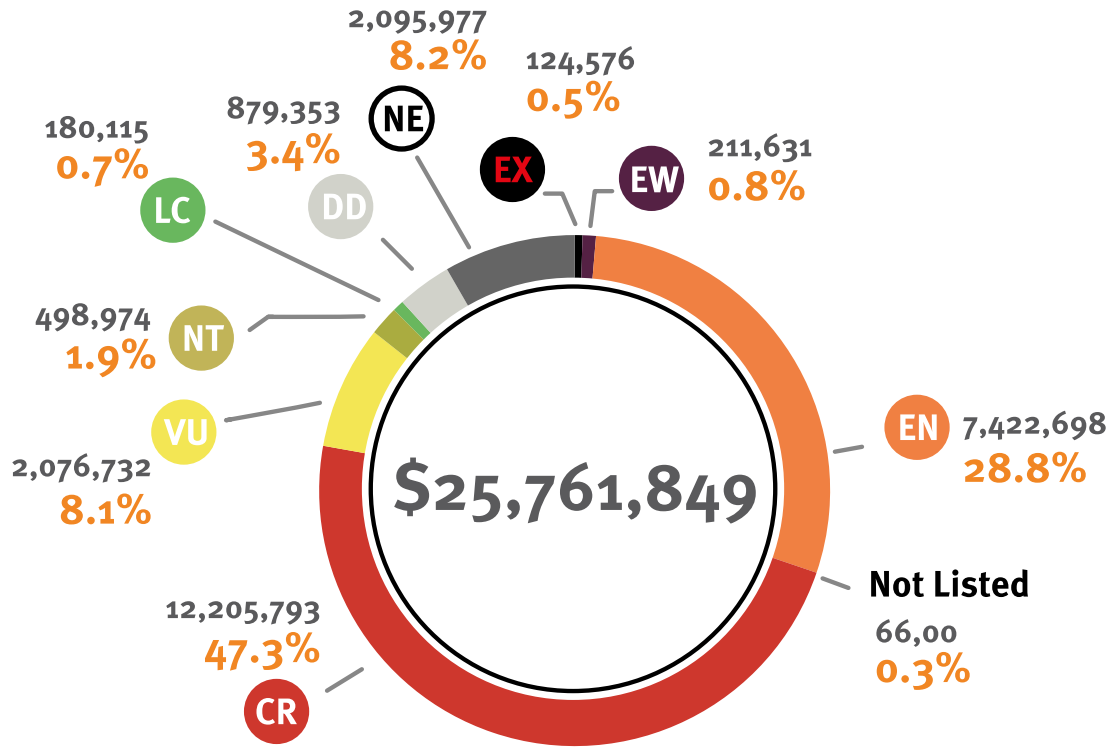


# % Critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable taxa supported





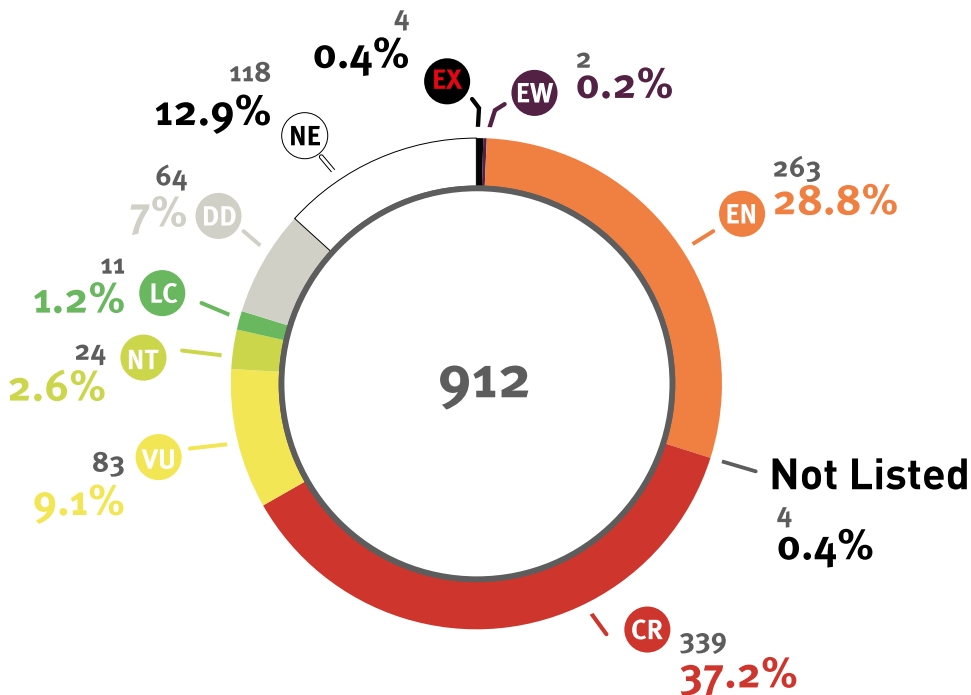
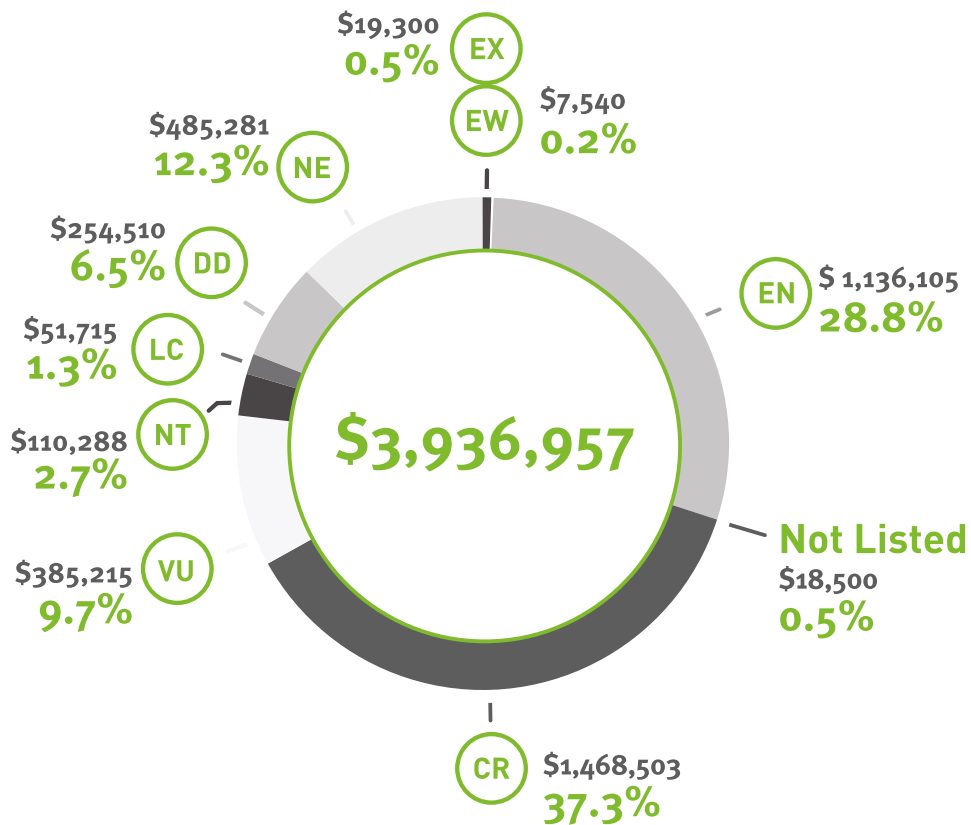
## Support based on IUCN categories



### Distribution by IUCN Red List

EX=Extinct | EW=Extinct in the Wild | CR=Critically Endangered | EN=Endangered | VU=Vulnerable  
 NT=Near Threatened | LC=Least Concern | DD=Data Deficient | NE=Not Evaluated

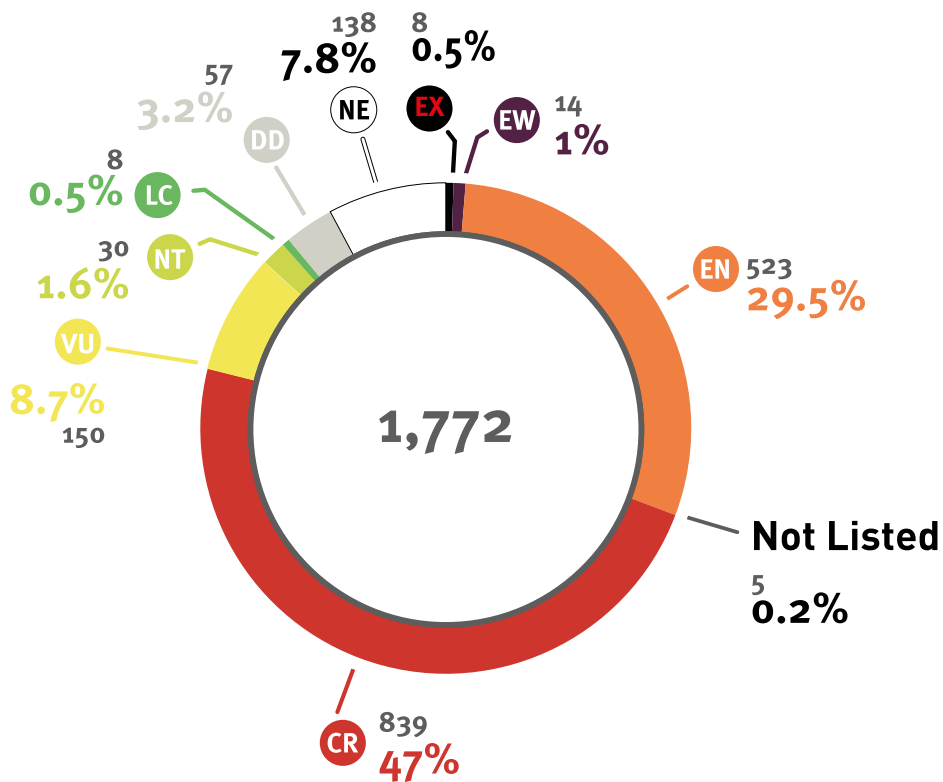
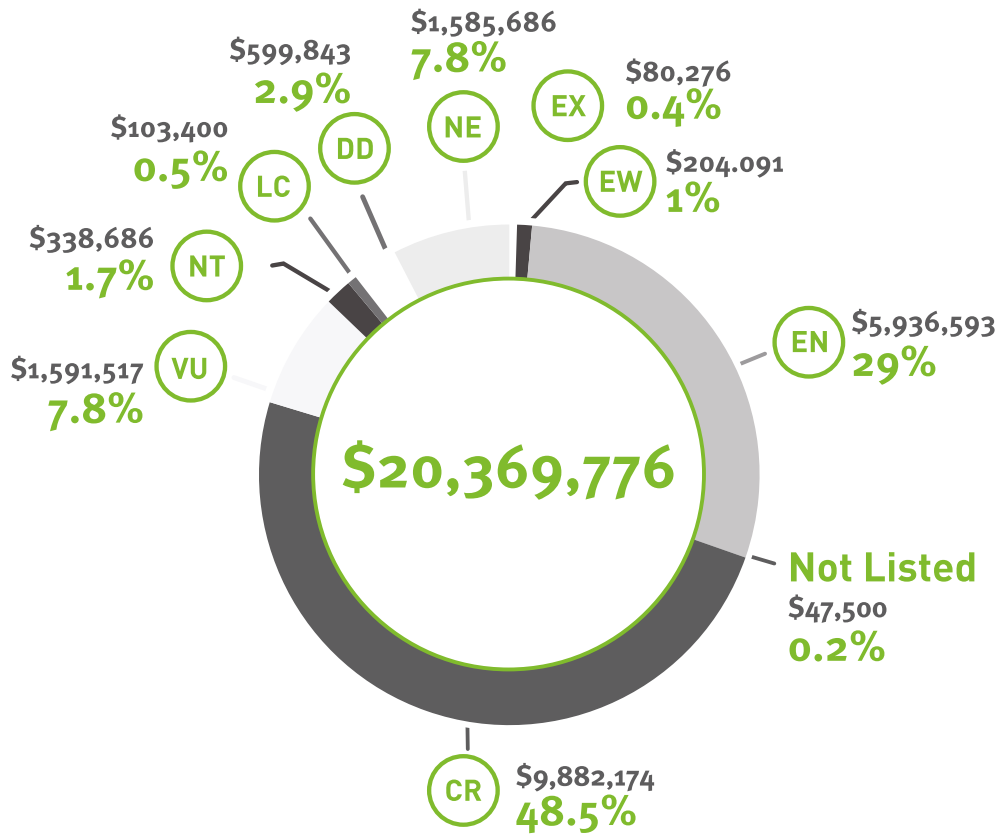
## Redlist category funding and species (0 - \$5,000)



### Distribution by IUCN Red List

EX=Extinct | EW=Extinct in the Wild | CR=Critically Endangered | EN=Endangered | VU=Vulnerable  
 NT=Near Threatened | LC=Least Concern | DD=Data Deficient | NE=Not Evaluated

## Funding up to 5,000 by RedList Category



### Distribution by IUCN Red List

EX=Extinct | EW=Extinct in the Wild | CR=Critically Endangered | EN=Endangered | VU=Vulnerable  
 NT=Near Threatened | LC=Least Concern | DD=Data Deficient | NE=Not Evaluated

# Global significance



Poaching, illegal wildlife trade, human-wildlife conflict, climate change, and geopolitical instability are just a few of the pressing threats facing global biodiversity. These challenges are pervasive, affecting every continent, country, and region.

In response to these realities, the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund adopts an unrestricted geographical approach to funding species conservation initiatives.



Snapdragon plant in Morocco © Elena Carrió González



Arabian staghorn coral in the UAE © John Burt



Pasteur's desert-racer © Andacksaad Sow

- ▶ The IUCN Global Species Action Plan, 2023, states that "biodiversity is declining across the planet." The 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services revealed that vertebrate populations have declined by an average of 68% since 1970. Additionally, 75% of the Earth's land surface has been significantly altered, and 66% of the oceans are degraded. Notably, over a third of inland wetlands experienced decline from 1970 to 2015, at a rate three times that of forest loss.
- ▶ Approximately 25% of all species assessed on the IUCN Red List are currently threatened, indicating that around 1 million species may already face extinction. The global rate of species extinction is now up to 100 times higher than the average background rate observed over the past 10 million years, suggesting we are confronting a potential "sixth mass extinction."
- ▶ "Urgent action is essential to mitigate the drivers of biodiversity loss and to restore populations and ecosystems."<sup>2</sup>



Spiny butterfly ray in the Mediterranean © Emina Karalic

Aligned with Target 4 of the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Abu Dhabi Call for Species Conservation Action, the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund aims to provide funding for species conservation efforts.

This call to action arises from the alarming revelation that "a quarter of all species face a high risk of extinction." Human activities have severely altered more than 75% of the Earth's land and freshwater areas, alongside 66% of the oceans. Climate change and political instability further exacerbate this crisis at all levels.

The ongoing loss of species at current rates jeopardises the vital ecological, economic, and cultural functions they provide. The ramifications extend beyond species loss; human pressures have led to dramatic and often irreversible population declines in a vast array of species, threatening their future and our resource base. It is clear that the current way of life is unsustainable, and transformational change is imperative.

The intent of the Abu Dhabi Call for Global Species Conservation Action is unequivocal: “We, the more than 300 species conservation experts gathered at the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Species Survival Commission Leaders’ Meeting in Abu Dhabi from October 6-9, 2019, call for urgent and effective action to address the unprecedented, unsustainable, and growing impacts on wild species resulting from human activities.”<sup>3</sup>

The inclusion of Target 4 (Urgent Action for Species) in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of 2022 is particularly significant, as it emphasises the need for conservation actions that may not be adequately addressed by other targets.<sup>4</sup>

For over 15 years, the MBZF has provided critical support for the conservation of species that may not directly benefit from broader conservation initiatives. This targeted and focused approach is essential for addressing the specific needs of these vulnerable species.



3. [https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/content/documents/the\\_abu\\_dhabi\\_call\\_for\\_global\\_species\\_conservation\\_action\\_28042020.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/content/documents/the_abu_dhabi_call_for_global_species_conservation_action_28042020.pdf)

4. Understanding and achieving species elements in the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biae065>

In response to increased threats, particularly from development pressures, Asia and Africa have received the majority of funding support. This support is consistently directed toward critical ecosystems, areas of high biodiversity significance, and habitats essential for the survival of targeted species.

The Fund also acknowledges the importance of conservation efforts beyond protected areas, where many highly threatened yet underfunded species reside.

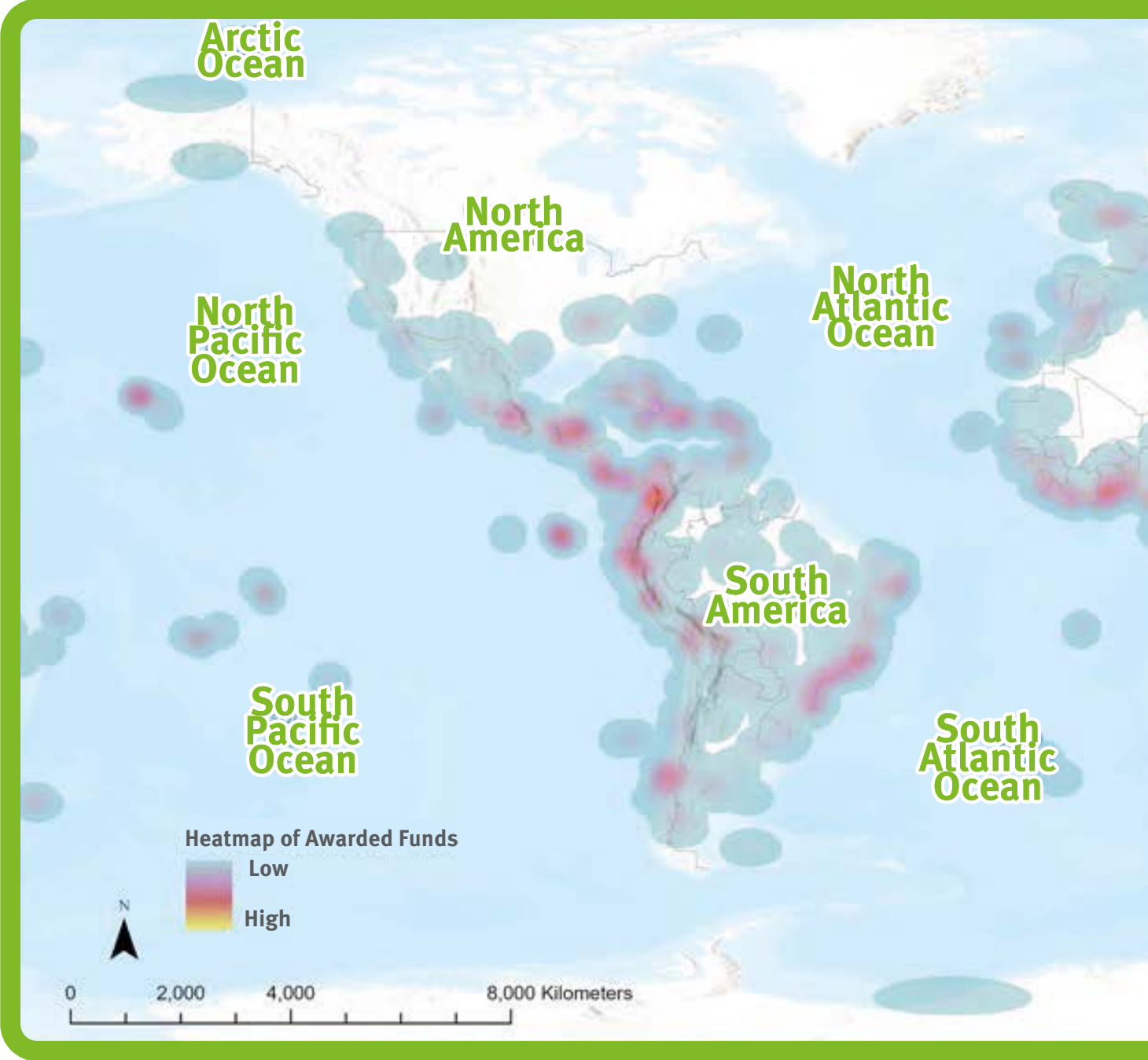


Sandfish in South Africa © Jeremy Shelton





# Project hotspots





**c bio**

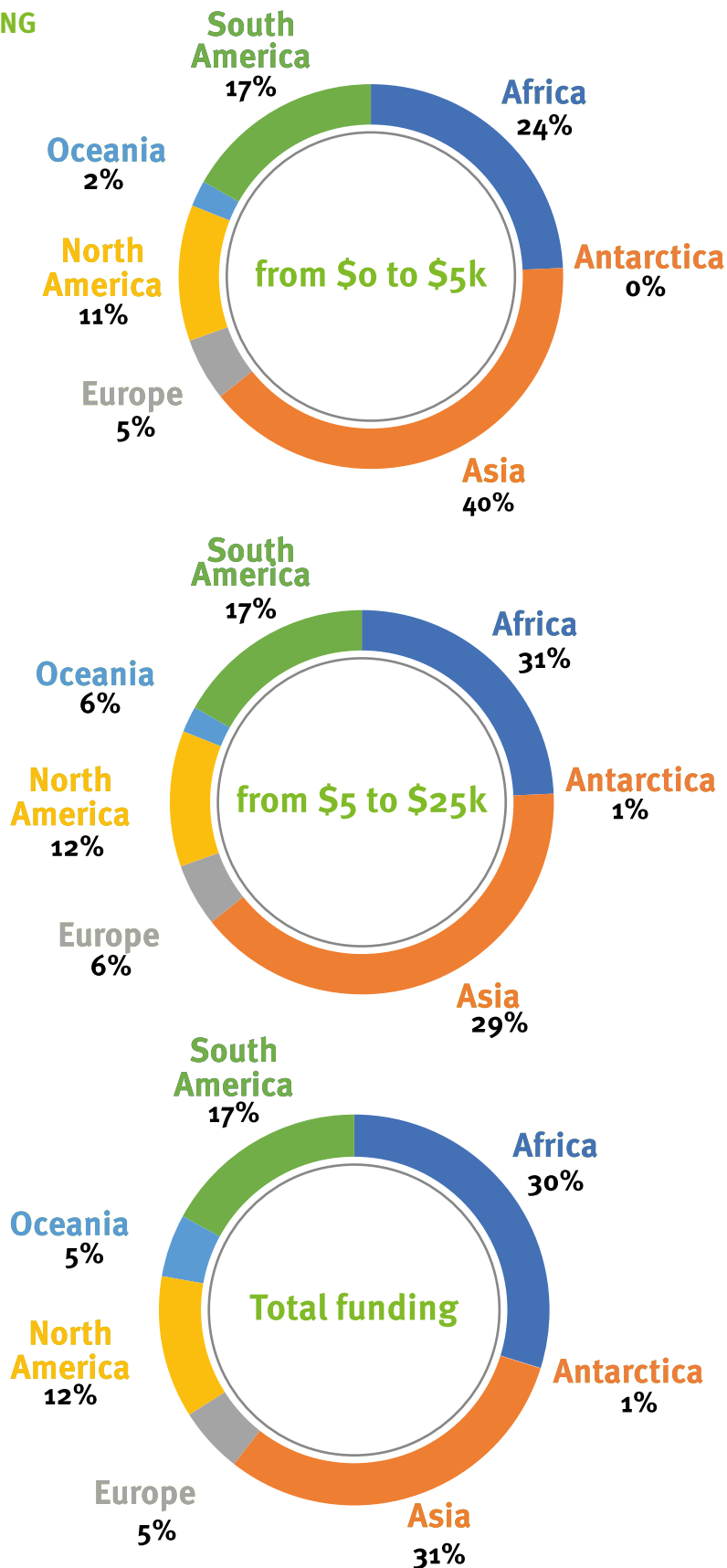
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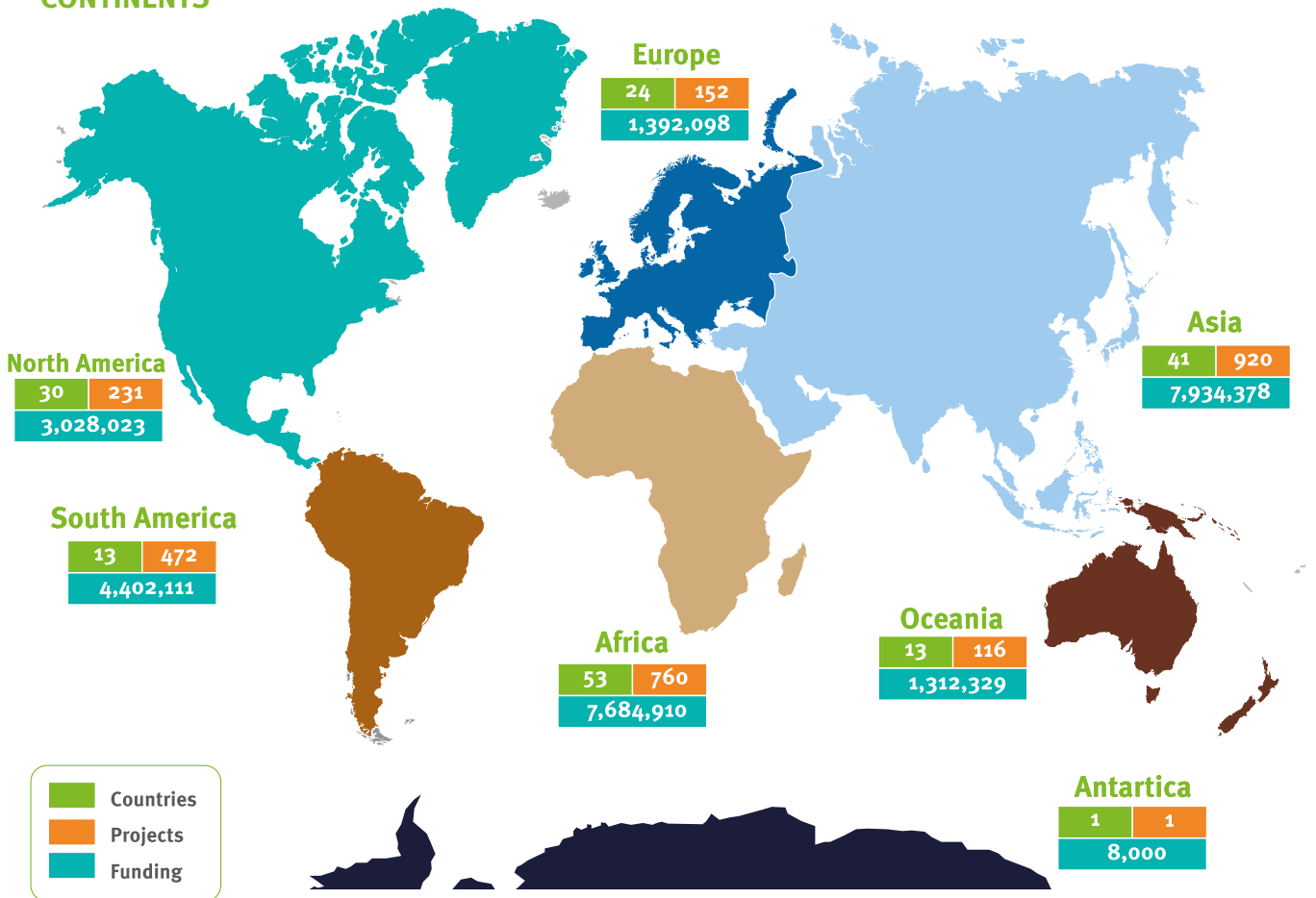


# Project per continent

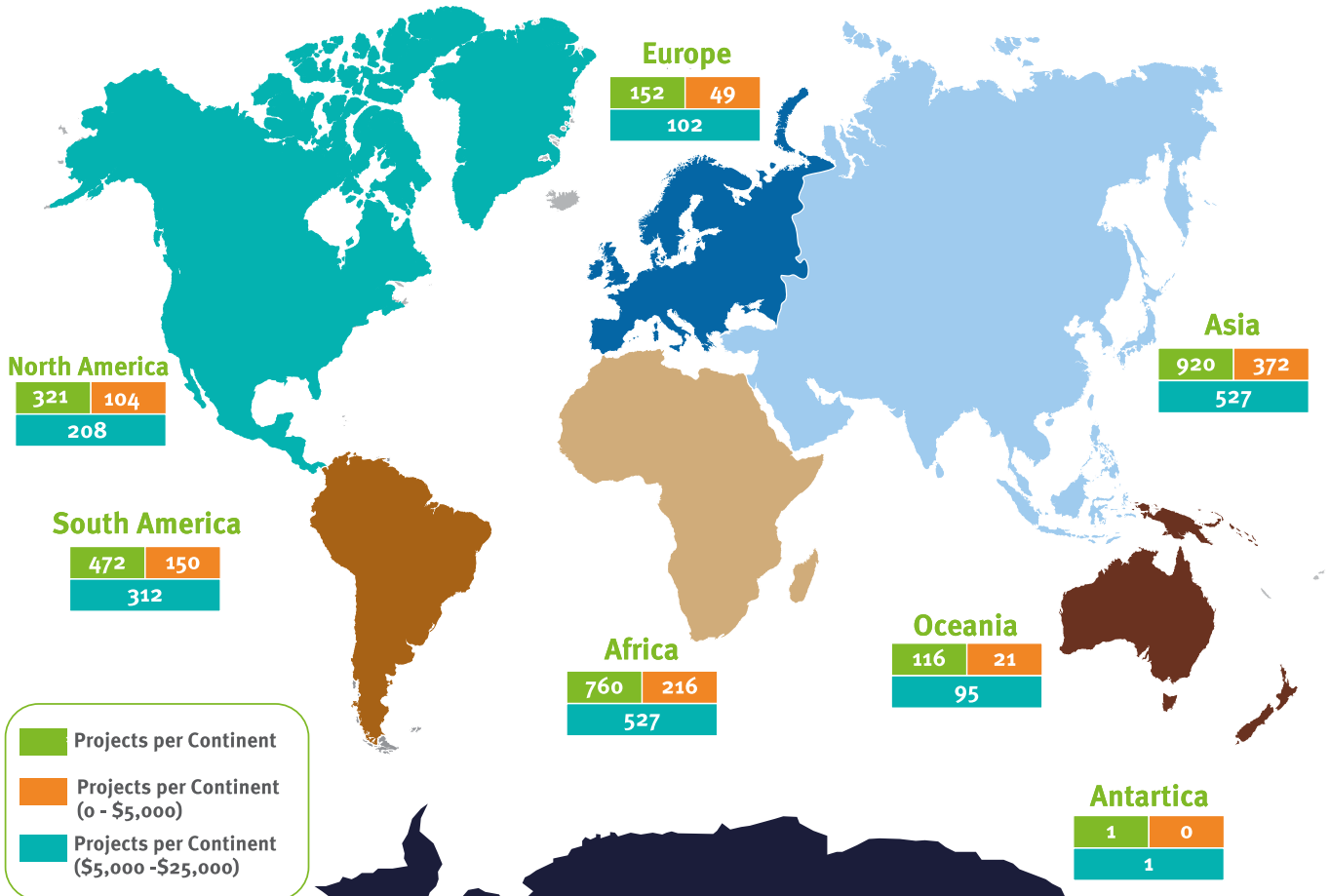
## PERCENTAGE FUNDING



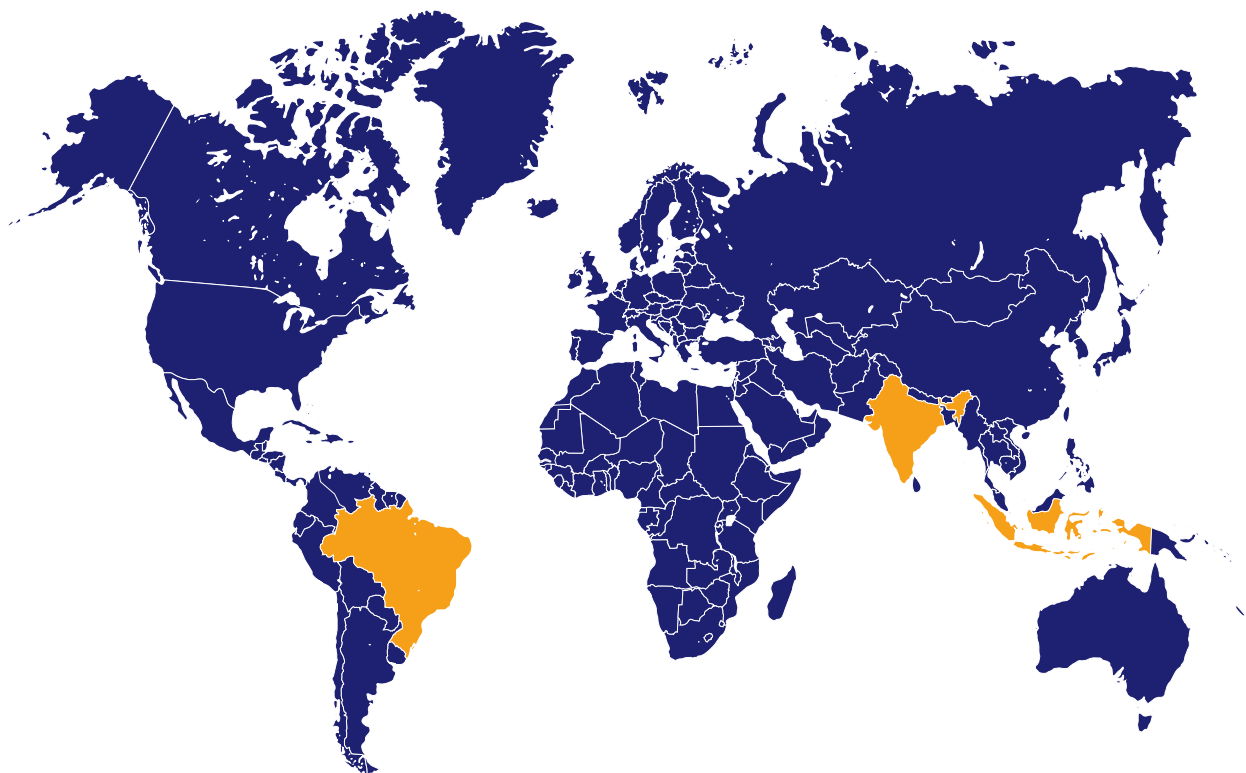
## CONTINENTS



## PROJECTS PER CONTINENTS



# Top 20 countries by funding



## Top 20 countries by total funding

Country	Total Funding	Percentage
India	\$1,557,308	6%
Brazil	\$1,419,524	6%
Indonesia	\$1,319,823	5%
Kenya	\$1,037,283	4%
Madagascar	\$1,002,388	4%
South Africa	\$751,089	3%
Colombia	\$730,957	3%
Vietnam	\$657,101	3%
Mexico	\$628,436	2%
Malaysia	\$539,695	2%
Peru	\$515,000	2%
Ecuador	\$510,075	2%
Australia	\$499,506	2%
Chile	\$480,007	2%
United States	\$469,060	2%
Nepal	\$464,167	2%
Tanzania	\$419,167	2%
Uganda	\$396,738	2%
Cameroon	\$381,086	1%
Ethiopia	\$342,875	1%

## Top 20 countries by funding (0-\$5,000)

Country	Total Funding	Percentage
Indonesia	\$312,924	8%
India	\$307,088	8%
Brazil	\$227,774	6%
Madagascar	\$189,350	5%
Nepal	\$183,605	5%
Cuba	\$139,166	4%
Kenya	\$131,642	3%
Colombia	\$103,793	3%
Peru	\$100,710	3%
Vietnam	\$98,751	3%
Ethiopia	\$91,875	2%
Mexico	\$81,602	2%
Malaysia	\$73,350	2%
Cameroon	\$72,452	2%
Sri Lanka	\$71,468	2%
Pakistan	\$70,050	2%
Argentina	\$64,800	2%
Chile	\$54,450	1%
Uganda	\$53,160	1%
Turkey	\$50,155	1%

## Top 20 countries by funding (\$5,000-\$25,000)

Country	Total Funding	Percentage
India	\$1,125,178	6%
Brazil	\$1,091,750	5%
Indonesia	\$956,359	5%
Kenya	\$830,641	4%
Madagascar	\$758,038	4%
South Africa	\$707,589	3%
Colombia	\$602,164	3%
Tanzania	\$568,202	2%
Mexico	\$564,834	3%
Vietnam	\$483,350	2%
Australia	\$467,296	2%
Ecuador	\$437,075	2%
Chile	\$400,557	2%
Malaysia	\$391,345	2%
Peru	\$364,290	2%
United States	\$360,585	2%
Uganda	\$343,578	2%
Cambodia	\$288,575	1%
Cameroon	\$283,634	1%
Nepal	\$280,562	1%

# Every species matters





The Fund encourages proposals and supports grantees across eight taxonomic groups, aiming to broaden knowledge and enhance activities focused on the meaningful and impactful protection of species. While initial support was predominantly directed toward mammals and birds, the approach has since evolved to equitably benefit all taxonomic groups.

With over 2,700 individual projects supported, the Fund is committed to contributing to the survival of Key species.



Cilento plant in Chile © Pablo Guerrero



Western Leopard Toad © Nature Connect\_1



African penguin in South Africa © Craig Harding



Mary river turtle ©Marilyn Connell



Beluga sturgeon in Romania © Jutha Jahrl

# Funding/Taxa 2009-2023



**Amphibian**

FUNDING \$2,150,981 - 8%


SPECIES 227	PROJECTS 274 - 10%
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**Bird**

FUNDING \$3,878,776 - 15%


SPECIES 236	PROJECTS 389 - 14%
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**Invertebrate**

FUNDING \$1,824,876 - 7%


SPECIES 215	PROJECTS 241 - 9%
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**Mammal**

FUNDING \$9,376,790 - 36%


SPECIES 440	PROJECTS 946 - 35%
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**Fish**

FUNDING \$1,944,305 - 8%

SPECIES 147	PROJECTS 194 - 7%
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**Fungi**

FUNDING \$629,918 - 2%


SPECIES 49	PROJECTS 54 - 2%
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**Plant**

FUNDING \$2,761,748 - 11%

SPECIES 282	PROJECTS 298 - 11%
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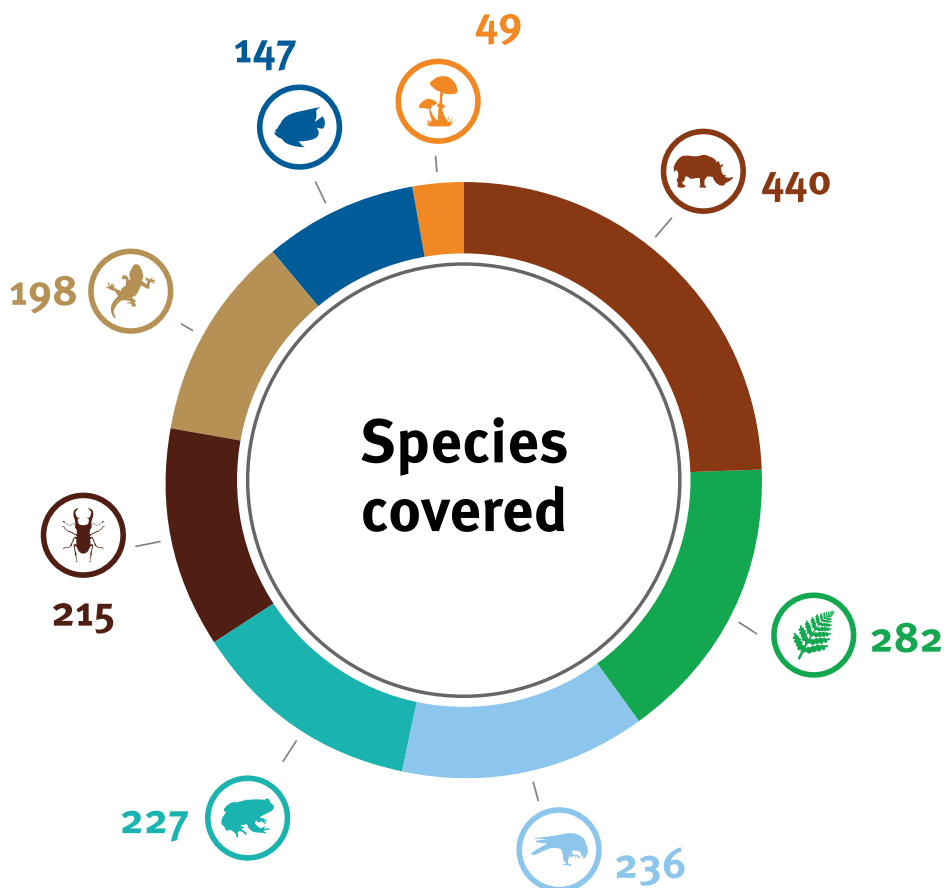
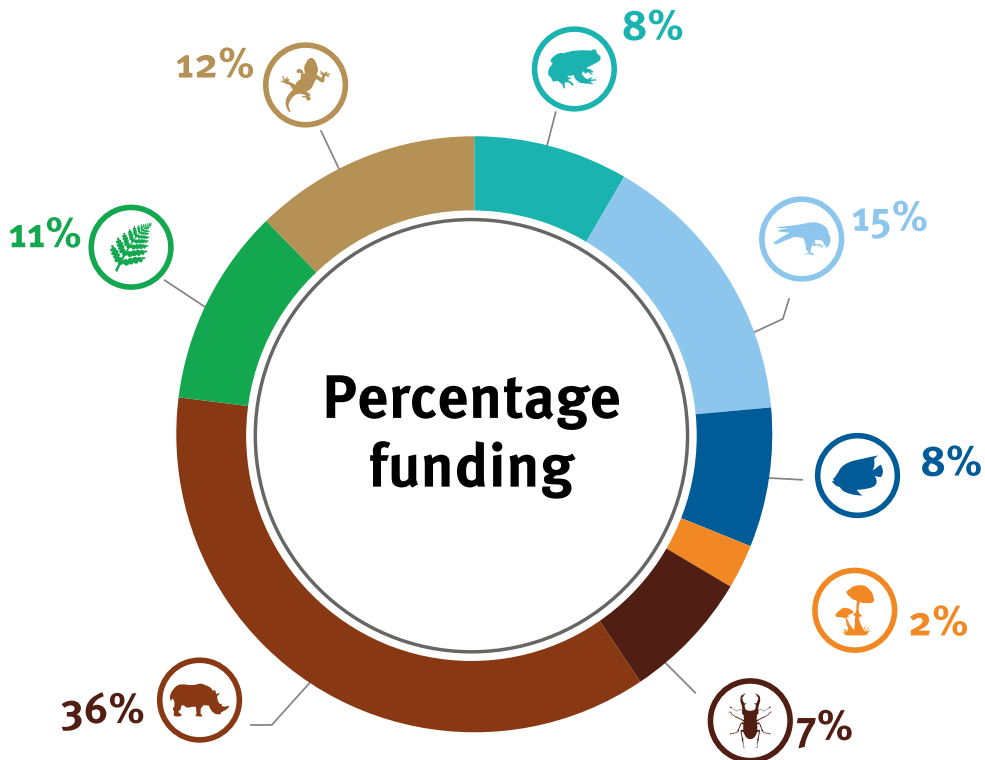


**Reptile**

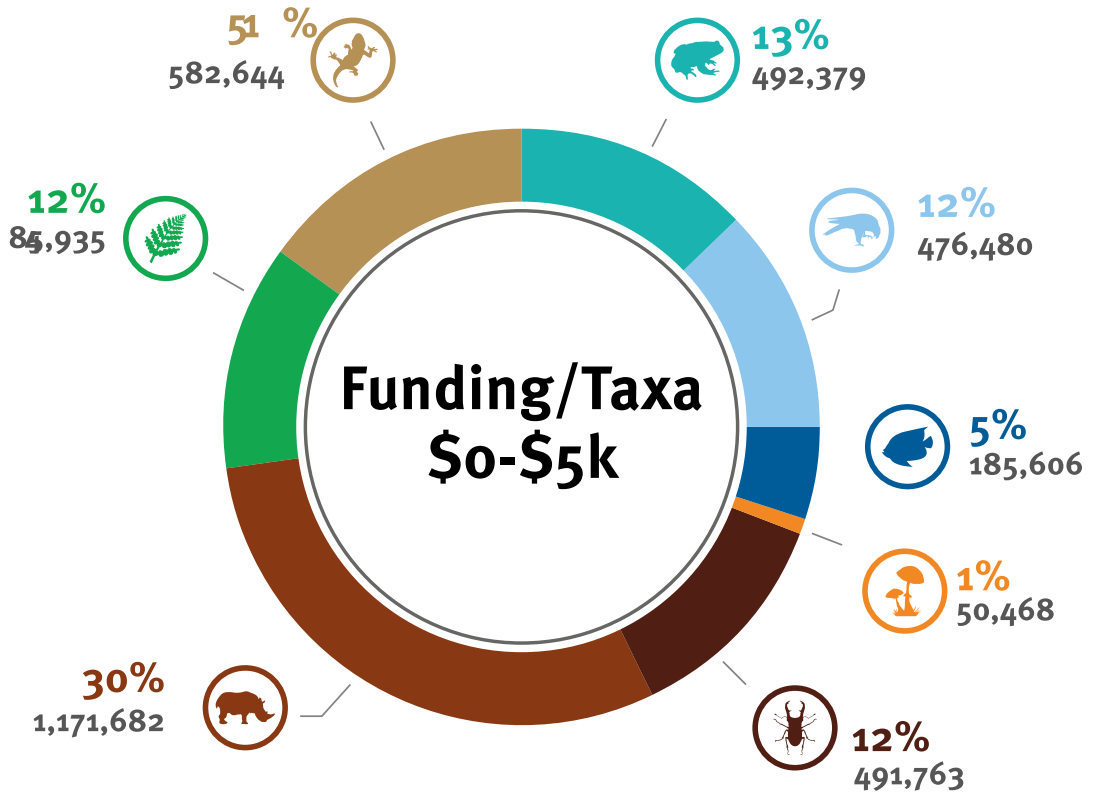
FUNDING \$3,194,455 - 12%

SPECIES 198	PROJECTS 346 - 13%
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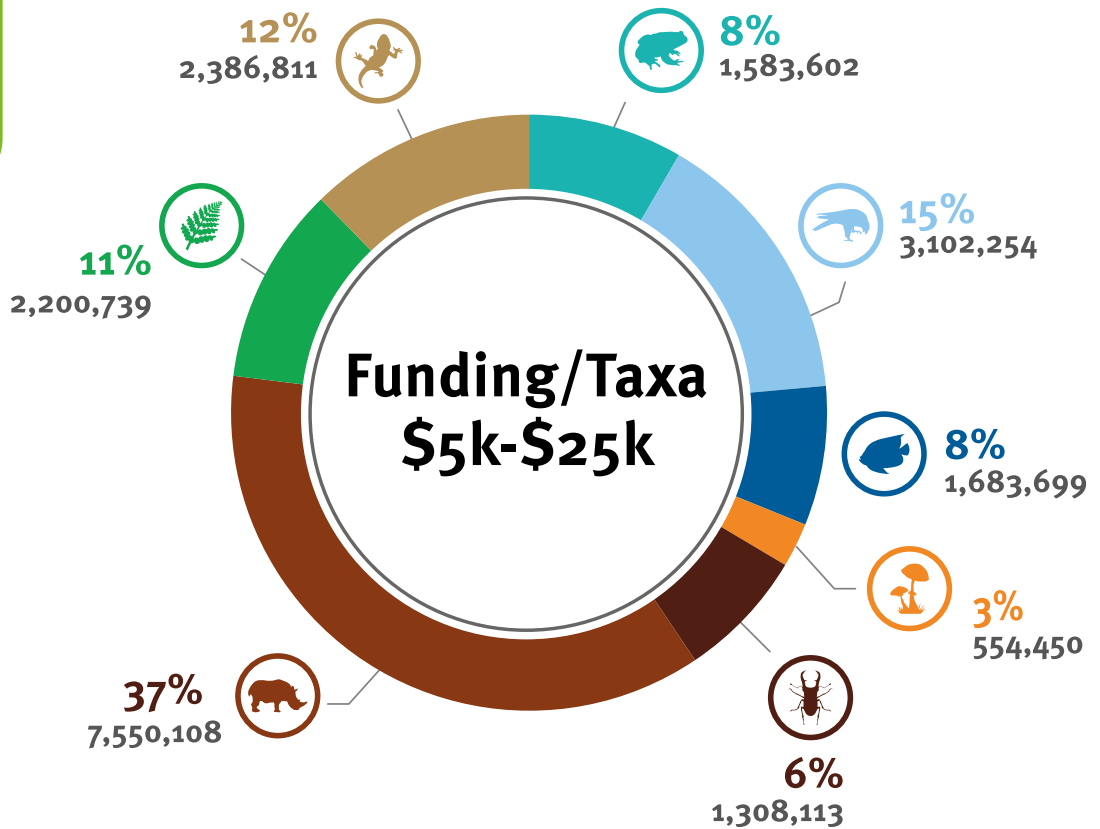
# Volume of funding per species



# Funding & Species by grant



-  Amphibian
-  Bird
-  Fish
-  Fungi
-  Invertebrate
-  Mammal
-  Plant
-  Reptile



## Projects supported and species impacted

	\$0-\$5k		\$5K-\$25k	
	Projects	Species	Project	Species
<b>Amphibian</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Bird</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Fish</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Fungi</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Invertebrate</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>351</b>
<b>Mammal</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>Plant</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>Reptile</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>1772</b>	<b>1294</b>



# Chairman's Awards



In each funding round, the Advisory Board will collectively identify two projects to receive Chairman's Award status.

Projects selected by our Advisory Board are evaluated based on their impact, scalability, contributions to species programs, and opportunities for career development. We place a strong emphasis on essential conservation skills, including community engagement and stakeholder collaboration.



**\$1,056,814**  
of funding support



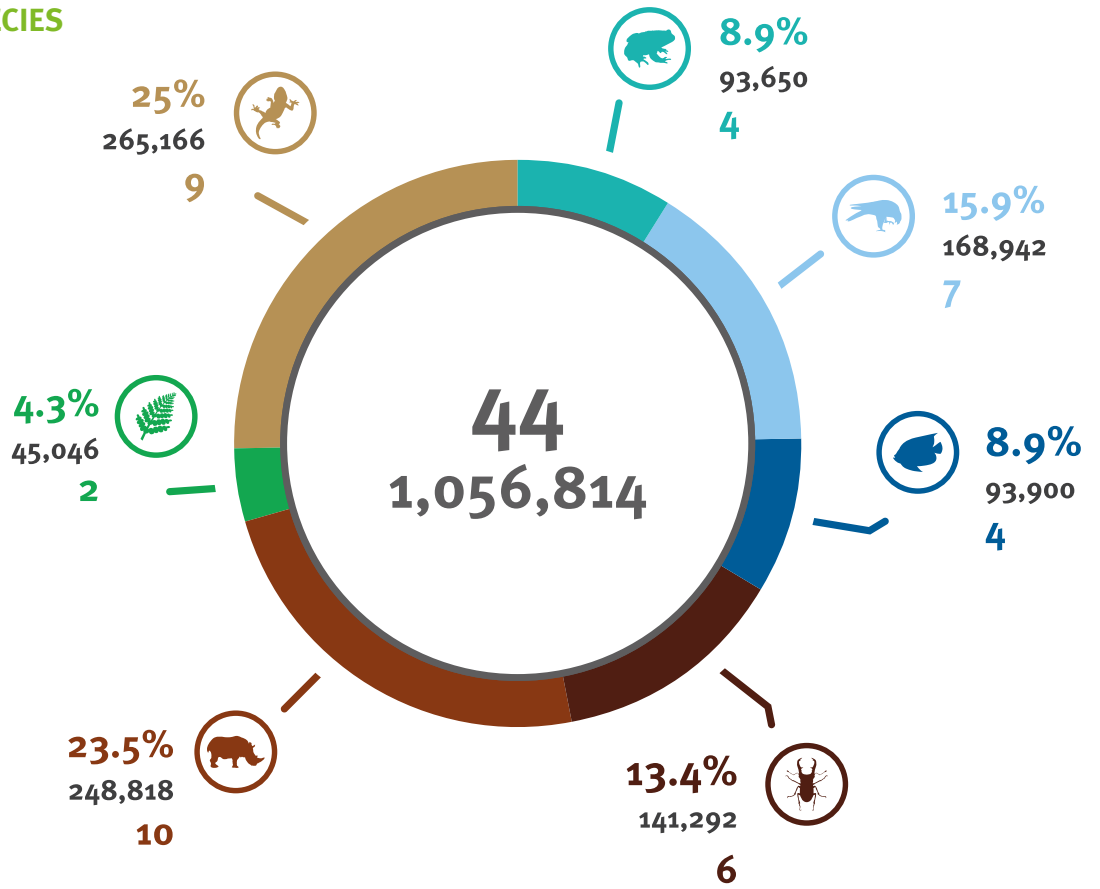
**44**  
Chairman's Awards



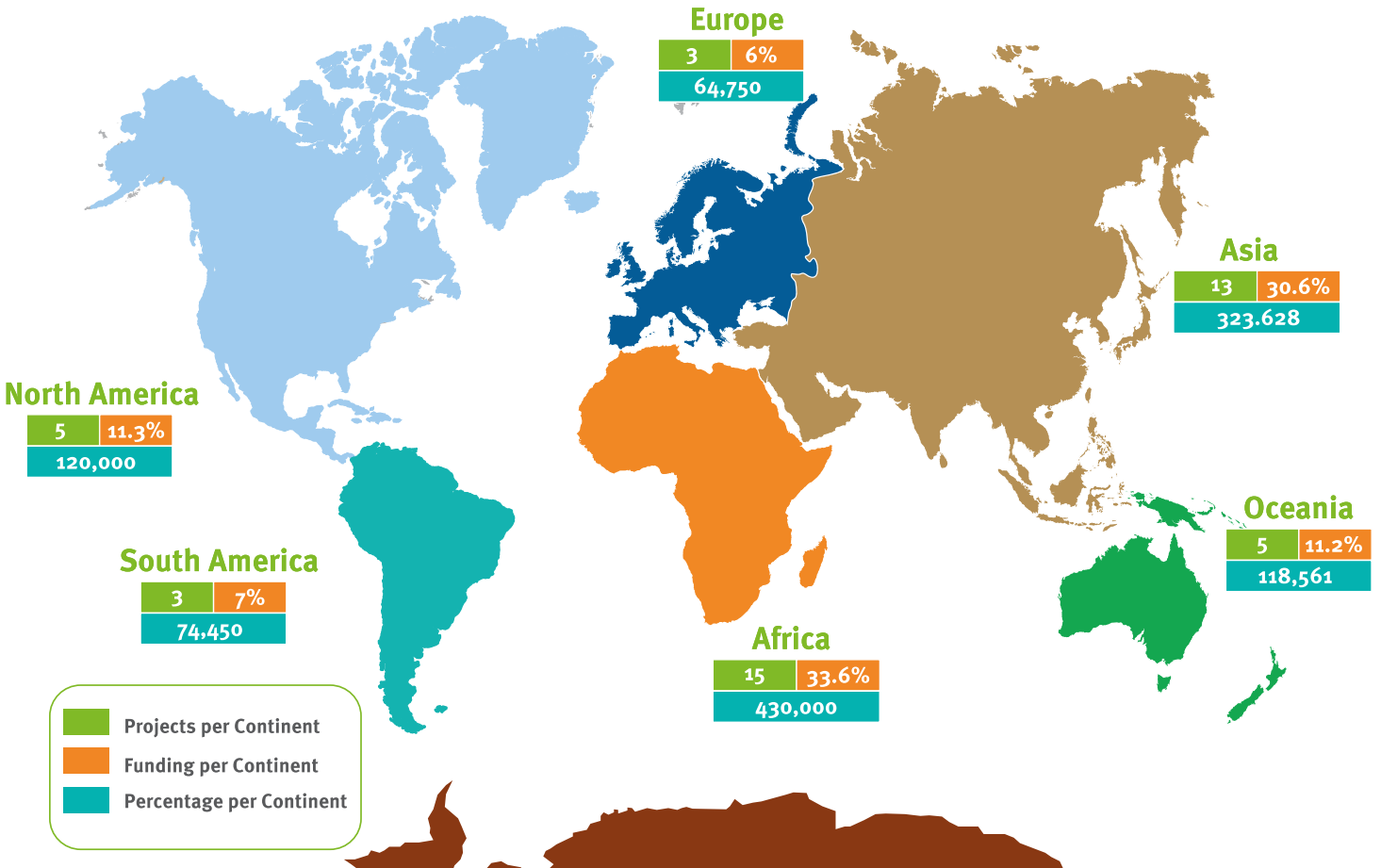
**28**  
Countries

# Chairman's Award

## FUNDING PER SPECIES



## FUNDING PER CONTINENT





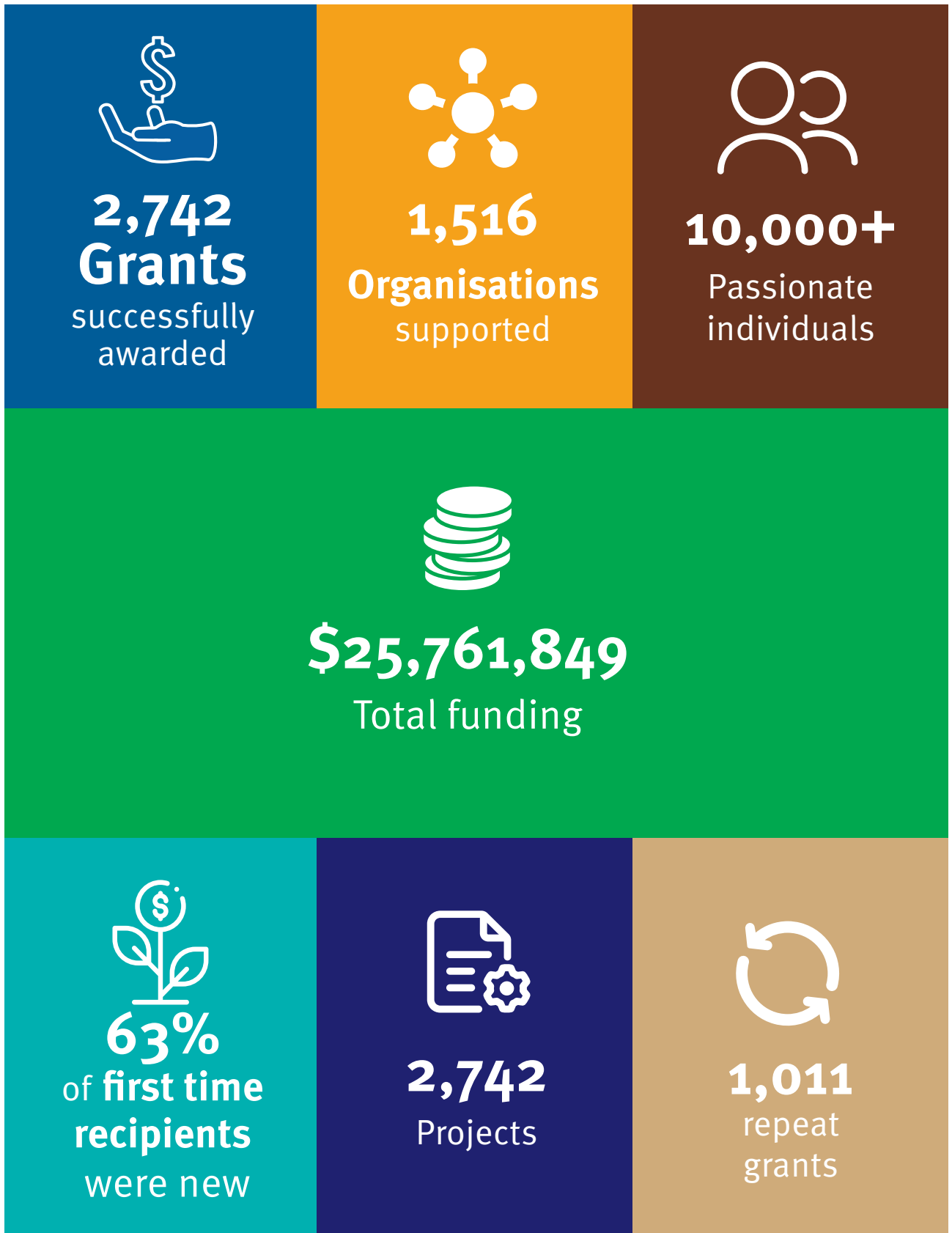


# People Power



Over the past 15 years, the MBZF has expanded its network to include over 10,000 dedicated individuals, including conservationists, biologists, ecologists, field workers, and volunteers, who have implemented more than 2,700 projects supported by the Fund.

The Fund believes that effective species conservation is best achieved locally, in harmony with nature and in collaboration with local communities. The grants are designed to empower conservationists to mitigate extinction threats to species at a manageable funding level.



Behind every successful conservation project is a dedicated individual driving its success. People are the force behind research and the implementation of projects. Impactful conservation often arises from innovative ideas proposed by emerging conservation practitioners.

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund actively supports capacity building and encourages new applicants to foster fresh approaches to conservation, while also funding repeat projects to ensure continuity.

Numbers below represents the Funds impact on people to date.

## New vs repeat grant recipients

DESCRIPTION	2009-2011	2012-2014	2015-2017
Total Grants awarded	527	674	535
Repeat grantees	146	267	234
New/single grant recipients	381	407	301
New as a percentage % of total	72%	60%	56%
Repeat as a percentage % of total	28%	40%	44%

DESCRIPTION	2018-2020	2018-2020	Total
Total Grants awarded	503	503	2742
Repeat grantees	190	174	1011
New/single grant recipients	313	329	1731
New as a percentage % of total	62%	65%	63%
Repeat as a percentage % of total	38%	35%	37%



The Advisory Board of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund



# The Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund inspired Me

“I recently started my doctoral studies and got to know the generous



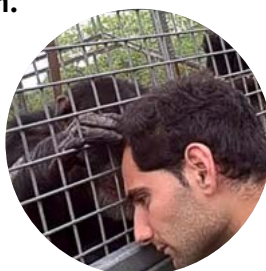
funding programs of Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, to which I owe great recognition and gratitude, as this was a watershed in my career, with the fund I was able to carry out several expeditions throughout Brazil. I was certainly able to stand out among many botanists in Brazil because the Fund gave me freedom and subsidy to work in conservation effort. I wish to continue the Species Conservation submissions, and that my story serves as an inspiration for researchers around the world in their efforts to conserve endangered species, especially young people who are pledging for the future of species.”

**Fábio Vieira**  
*Brazil*

“On one of my first visits to Mali I heard testimonies about chimpanzee parents being murdered for their

infants for the illegal trade in endangered species, and I even met hunters to hear what had happened and why. I traveled across the country and saw the horrific ecological devastation of deforestation and goldmining. I felt drained and spiritually weak. I visited the National Zoo of Mali where I met my soon-to-be wonderful ally and great friend Samba chimpanzee (photos attached). Samba lived for several decades in his cage enclosure with two other adult orphan females Fifi & Fatim. Upon seeing his situation and thinking about his species I felt very tearful and sad. I sat next to him on the other side of the bar. He approached me, looked deep into my eyes and gestured very seriously for me to look up, sit up straight and smile. It took me a couple of hours to interpret his very important message for me, it was: “smile, don’t cry, if you breakdown we all vanish”.

**Itai Roffman explains his introduction into conservation.**  
*Mali*



“My journey through the world of books has never been a smooth one, it is a testimonial of continuous pursuit, tenacity, passion, and a quest for academic achievement. The Mohamed Bin Zayed fund is my true tribute to a transformational power and the bridge into realizing this desire, sparking a ray of optimism that has illuminated the route to my goals, where financial barriers among other hurdles were holding me back.”

**Rose Abae**  
*Kenya*



“Earlier in my career, I helped Save Valley Conservancy (ZVC) in Zimbabwe apply for funding from the MBZCF to conserve black rhinos. That application was successful and played an important role in helping the conservancy protect the rhinos that occur there during a period of significant duress. Funding is a critical element of conservation efforts. As my career has progressed, I have switched roles from applying



for funding to being in the privileged position of helping to decide how conservation funding is allocated. Since working with SVC, my focus has shifted to conserving Africa’s large carnivores. Now, 11 years after applying to MBZCF, I am working as the Director of the Lion Recovery Fund (LRF, an initiative of the Wildlife Conservation Network). This position has involved helping to channel approximately \$35 million of conservation funding to the best ideas for conserving lions, their habitats and their prey. This funding has supported 86 conservation organisations in 25 different African countries.”

**Peter Lindsey**  
*Zimbabwe*



“The support from the MBZ Fund has been a game-changer for our conservation efforts. Leading a dedicated team and volunteers, including scouting over 220km at night in search of the elusive Omani Owl, the funding enabled us to acquire essential equipment. Currently, we’re conducting crucial acoustic and camera surveys within Wadi Wurayah National Park, Fujairah. Beyond the tangible tools, this grant has rekindled my passion for these incredible creatures and solidified my commitment to their well-being. The impact of the funding reaches far beyond the equipment; it has given me the means to amplify my efforts, and words cannot express how meaningful that is to me.”

**Sami Majeed**  
*Fujairah, UAE*



“I am sincerely grateful for the invaluable support provided by the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund. Receiving the grant has been a transformative experience, enabling us to pursue critical research and initiatives, and bridge knowledge gaps that would have otherwise been beyond our reach when it comes to Fishing cat

*Prionailurus viverrinus* in Pakistan, the western-most limit of its global range. We knew virtually nothing about the species in terms of distribution, status and threats of the species in the country less than 3 years ago and all that has changed now. The funding not only has served as a financial boost but also signifies the belief and trust that we can continue in our vision and mission. My grant not only facilitated our immediate projects but has laid a foundation for long-term impact and progress in our field with benefits trickling over a multitude of local wildlife species. Thank you MBZSCF for empowering us to make a meaningful difference and for being a catalyst in our journey toward positive change in the field of Wildlife conservation and research in Pakistan.”

**Zafeer Ahmed Shaikh**  
*Pakistan*





## From hunter to conservationist

**Bieu** from Vietnam, as member of an ethnic minority from the Nghe An province, he used to hunt the wildlife he aims to protect today. Growing up in the mountains near the border with Laos, an epiphany made the former hunter see the importance of wildlife conservation and its impact on human lives. Today as a conservation researcher for ***Saving Vietnam's Wildlife***, he works actively to identify and mitigate human/elephant conflict to ensure a harmonious coexistence. His knowledge and familiarity about the forest is unparalleled and comes in handy as he navigates the environment to educate local tribes about elephant threats.



## Indigenous People the missing link

As Research Assistant for ***D'ABOVILLE Foundation*** and ***Demo Farm Inc.*** and a member of the ***Taobuid*** ethno-linguistic group who now personally reside in the lowlands, ***Diego*** acts as the link between customary and mainstream conservation methods. Modern technology as part of conservation evolution is a supplementary tool, but in remote areas in

the highlands, indigenous peoples rely on traditional methods passed down from their ancestors to sustain natural resources to survive. For example, their belief in spirit guardians whom they require permission from to extract natural resources is one key practice that prevents the overexploitation of natural resources. To better understand and document these practices, Diego regularly meets with elders, but to gain their acceptance, often wears nothing but a loincloth as he gathers information. Young people like Diego, who have a foot in both modernity and tradition, play a pivotal role in identifying ways of working collaboratively with upland communities to understand, value and preserve cultural practices that have sustained indigenous communities for generations. In a modern, fast-paced environment, it's also important to look back to our roots to get ahead.





## Women defying the odds

Traditionally, Indonesian women, especially from small rural towns, are expected to be housewives and it's frowned upon to pursue a higher education. But **Meidina Fitriana** challenged society and in 2017 got involved in conservation as an intern with the **Soraya Research Station**. It was love at first sight and she was desperate to pursue a career in conservation, but after numerous rejections she thought she was simply not destined too. All because she was upsetting stereotypes in a male dominated society. Finally, the **SINTAS Indonesia Foundation** gave her a chance as a liaison officer which involved project management with key partners. Although



office bound, she insisted on joining the ranger team on field trips. She changed attitudes the day she joined a lengthy, challenging trek and not only carried all her own gear but also hauled extra bags of additional equipment. She not only proved her worth as a team player, but also altered perceptions when she successfully installed effective camera traps. Since then, she is one of them.

## Passion, dedication and commitment

**Christyline Matthews** was brought up in an impoverished abusive household in South Africa on the Cape Flats, an area



described as apartheid's 'dumping ground' and rife with gangsterism. Sadly, she fell victim to this way of life and was eventually imprisoned for 5 years. Her motivation to change was driven by her son- she wanted to give him more and guide him on a different life path. After completing her prison sentence, she received an opportunity with a skills development programme run by **Nature Connect** where she fell in love with the environment. Nature Connect saw the sparkle and she became an eland monitor before enrolling into their **River Ambassador** program in 2021. Here she completed a NQF level 2 & 4 qualification in **Nature Conservation Resource Guardianship**. It's been more than a decade, but Christyline managed to turn her life around. Today she works on youth programmes as well as species conservation activities, such as the MBZ Fund supported **Western Leopard Toad Underpass Project**.

# People Power Healing Nature: Who we work with



# Looking forward



# The value of species focused networks

Aligned with the Theory of Change, the Fund envisions a future where species worldwide can be saved from extinction through collaborative efforts among conservation practitioners operating within both formal and informal communities of practice, supported by impactful interventions.

The Fund will continue to streamline funding support between the MBZ Fund and other donors, ensuring optimal backing for programmes and projects. There will be a strong emphasis on integrating landscape-level approaches into conservation initiatives, complemented by standardized reporting methods to assess the cumulative impact of these interventions.

The effectiveness of alliances and working groups in coordinating species conservation initiatives has been evidenced by notable successes. These include collaborative efforts in the conservation of small cats, primates, and turtles, as well as partnerships within the plant, fish, and amphibian sectors of the conservation community.

Options to expand the Fund are currently being explored to enhance its reach, depth, and support across all taxonomic groups and geographic regions, particularly in areas of high biodiversity value.



# Conclusion



As we look to the future, we must focus on empowering those who will carry this work forward—youth, women, and indigenous peoples. These groups hold the key to unlocking innovative solutions and fostering a deep connection to nature. The MBZ Fund is committed to supporting the next generation of conservationists, ensuring they have the tools and resources to lead the charge in preserving biodiversity for future generations. Their contributions will be central to ensuring the continuity of species and the ecosystems that sustain them.

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund was built from the ground up, and its success is a testament to the collective efforts of all who have contributed. Over the past 15 years, we have made significant strides, but our journey is far from over. I invite each of you to continue this journey with us, to support the Fund’s mission, and to help secure a sustainable future for species and ecosystems.

**H.E. Razan Al Mubarak**  
Managing Director, Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund



Nile crocodile in Egypt © Ashraf Salem

This impact report was prepared and verified by independent third parties, Eco Tourism Afrika and cbio. Special thanks go to everyone involved in making this impact report a reality.

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Podcast: Conservation Calls, the podcast



The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund seeks to empower species conservation efforts and programmes globally, embodying the deep-rooted commitment of both the government and the people of Abu Dhabi to preserve our natural heritage.



**A healthy environment,  
including its climate  
and biodiversity is  
central to everyone's  
well-being.**

**H.E. Razan Al Mubarak**

Managing Director

Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund



صندوق محمد بن زايد  
للمحافظة على  
الكائنات الحية

The Mohamed bin Zayed  
SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND