

IUCN

Activities' Report - Year 2024

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1. Introduction

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) is a membership union comprising governmental and civil society organizations. It leverages the expertise and resources of over 1,400 member organizations and the contributions of more than 17,000 experts. This diversity and extensive experience make IUCN the global authority on the status of nature and biodiversity, as well as on the measures needed to safeguard them.

Founded in 1948, since the 1960s IUCN has implemented a program aimed at identifying globally threatened taxa and documenting their conservation status. Its primary objective is to encourage and assist organizations worldwide in preserving the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and environmentally sustainable. This is achieved through effective management and the pursuit of integrated solutions to address global challenges, including climate change and sustainable development.

IUCN has established objective criteria to assess species' conservation status at both global and local levels, based on the categories and criteria of the Red List version 3.1 (2001), which assigns species to specific risk categories.

IUCN's activities are carried out through six expert commissions:

- IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC): Comprises experts in marine and terrestrial plant and animal species, organized into numerous specialist groups focusing on various taxonomic units, individual species, or species in specific habitats.
- IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA): Focuses primarily on protected area issues and is also organized into thematic specialist groups.
- IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL): Includes experts in environmental legislation and law, providing specialized knowledge and support to strengthen the legal foundations of nature conservation and sustainable development through the conceptual advancement of principles, standards, and environmental laws, while also building community capacity to benefit from them.
- IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP): Through its members, promotes practical and informative actions to harmonize nature conservation with key social, cultural, environmental, and economic challenges.
- IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC): Comprises experts in environmental education and communication, promoting the design and implementation of sustainable solutions through strategic communication, learning, and knowledge management within IUCN.
- IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM): Promotes ecosystem-based approaches to the management of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, providing assistance for ecosystem-based management and supporting the development of resilient socio-ecological systems to address global challenges.

2. Main activities carried on by IUCN during 2024 relevant for Italy and for CNR

In 2024, IUCN and the Italian Committee promoted high-profile initiatives to strengthen biodiversity conservation strategies, aligning with the Global Biodiversity Framework and national priorities. Key international activities included:

- Europe-North Asia Regional Forum (Bruges, 30 Sept – 3 Oct): A preparatory event for the 2025 World Conservation Congress, focusing on biodiversity, climate crisis, and social justice through 58 thematic and strategic plenary sessions.
- COP29 (Baku, 11–22 Nov): Active participation by IUCN emphasizing the role of nature-based solutions in climate change mitigation/adaptation and highlighting the crucial climate-biodiversity nexus.
- SSC Meeting (Abu Dhabi, 31 Oct): Over 300 international experts issued the “Saving Species Sustains Life” declaration, reaffirming the importance of species protection for human well-being and ecosystem functionality.

At the national level, the Italian IUCN Committee focused on:

- Green List of Protected Areas: Establishment of the Expert Assessment Group for the Green List (EAGL), operational since spring 2024, for evaluating the effective management of Italian protected areas.
- OECMs: Launch of a collaborative process with MASE and ISPRA to define national criteria for Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures, critical to achieving the 30x30 target of the National Biodiversity Strategy.
- National Red Lists: Publication of new SSC guidelines (10 Oct 2024), serving as a methodological benchmark for future work by Italian institutions, including CNR.
- Updated Study on Threatened Species in National Parks: Revision of the 2016 report to better guide targeted conservation actions.
- Awareness-Raising Activities: Celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May) with local events and launch of a regular column in *La Nuova Ecologia*, aimed at informing and engaging the public on environmental issues.

3. Activities carried on by the Delegate within the Union during 2024 and impact on the Italian scientific community

In 2024, CNR representatives actively participated in meetings of the Italian IUCN Committee, serving as a liaison between the Committee and the scientific community. Key actions included:

- Information Exchange: With other Italian IUCN members, particularly the SSC, to harmonize approaches and identify synergies between CNR projects and IUCN priorities.
- Internal Evaluation: To establish CNR working groups on priority topics (threatened species, OECMs, protected areas), aligned with the Italian Committee’s needs.
- Collaboration with the DSSTTA Biodiversity Working Group: To enhance CNR’s structured and qualified participation in IUCN commissions and to develop projects aligned with global strategies.

These actions aim to strengthen CNR’s role in biodiversity conservation and bridge IUCN’s needs with CNR’s scientific expertise, directly benefiting PNRR projects (e.g., NBFC), research infrastructures (LifeWatch, Itineris), and Italy’s capacity to contribute to conservation goals.

4. Evaluation of the participation in terms of benefits and membership cost

IUCN is the global benchmark for nature and biodiversity conservation. Italy, being a biodiversity hotspot, has a vested interest in engaging with international bodies like IUCN that shape conservation strategies. Through its involvement, CNR can highlight its in-house expertise and influence environmental policy decisions with national relevance.

CNR’s presence within IUCN remains strategic, especially following the launch of the National Biodiversity Centre under the PNRR. Many NBFC activities focus on assessing and conserving species and ecosystems,

with outputs feeding directly into IUCN initiatives. Additionally, IUCN activities are relevant to other infrastructures such as LifeWatch and Itineris, in which CNR is actively involved.

5. Evaluation of Italians' attendance and how to improve interest and involvement

Italy participates in IUCN with three governmental institutions (CNR, ISPRA, PNCVD) and 18 other members including national members, international NGOs, and affiliate members. Participation takes place through involvement in national/international IUCN initiatives and through individual researchers and experts in various commissions. Many Italian researchers, technologists, and experts contribute in different capacities to IUCN activities. Strengthening Italian (and CNR) presence in the six IUCN Commissions (SSC, WCPA, WCEL, CEESP, CEC, CEM) is desirable.

Within CNR, the DSSTTA Biodiversity Working Group (<https://dta.cnr.it/biodiversity/>) could play a pivotal role in encouraging CNR researchers and technologists to engage in IUCN activities. Strengthening synergies between the Working Group and CNR IUCN representatives will be crucial in the coming years.

6. Italian experts with important roles within the Union or within related Commissions and Programs (if known)

Notable Italian experts include:

- Prof. Luigi Boitani – Chair of the IUCN SSC Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe and member of the SSC Steering Committee (2021–2025).
- Dr. Piero Genovesi – Chair of the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG), also a member of the SSC Steering Committee.
- Prof. Anna Loy – Chair of the IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group.
- Prof. Luigi Boitani – Also serves as Chair of the Red List Committee.

7. Conclusions

IUCN is a global reference point for biodiversity conservation. CNR's participation enables it to help shape conservation strategies for ecosystems and species, in coordination with other member institutions.

CNR's involvement is especially relevant as new European strategies on environment and sustainability take shape. This is crucial given CNR's leading role in coordinating strategic initiatives such as the National Biodiversity Centre.

Signature

Place and date

Montelibretti 10/06/2024

