

ALLIANCE FOR **Zero Extinction**

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Contacts: Mike Parr, Secretary, Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE), 202 234-7181 x204, U.S.
Tom Lalley, AZE Media Group, 202-778-9544, U.S.
Tom Cohen, AZE Media Group, 202-257-9954, U.S.
Ed Parnell, AZE Media Group, +44 1223-277318, U.K.

New Study Pinpoints Epicenters of Earth's Imminent Extinctions

Groups Rally to Safeguard Hundreds of Imperiled Species

Washington, D.C. (EMBARGOED UNTIL 5 p.m. EST, DECEMBER 12, 2005) – Safeguarding 595 sites around the world would help stave off an imminent global extinction crisis, according to new research published today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (www.pnas.org).

Conducted by scientists working with the 52 member organizations of the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE — www.zeroextinction.org), the study identifies 794 species threatened with imminent extinction, each of which is in need of urgent conservation action at a single remaining site on Earth.

The study found that just one-third of the sites are known to have legal protection, and most are surrounded by human population densities that are approximately three times the global average. Conserving these 595 sites should be an urgent global priority involving everyone from national governments to local communities, the study's authors state.

The United States ranks among the ten countries with the most sites. These include Torrey Pines in California, a cave in West Virginia, a pond in Mississippi, and six sites in Hawaii. The whooping crane and the recently rediscovered ivory-billed woodpecker are two spectacular American species that qualify for inclusion. Particular concentrations of sites are also found in the Andes of South America, in Brazil's Atlantic Forests, throughout the Caribbean, and in Madagascar.

“Although saving sites and species is vitally important in itself, this is about much more,” said Mike Parr, Secretary of AZE. “At stake are the future genetic diversity of Earth's ecosystems, the global ecotourism economy worth billions of dollars per year, and the incalculable benefit of clean water from hundreds of key watersheds. This is a one-shot deal for the human race,” he added. “We have a moral obligation to act. The science is in, and we are almost out of time.”

“We now know where the emergencies are: the species that will be tomorrow’s dodos unless we act quickly,” said Taylor Ricketts, lead author of the study. “The good news is we still have time to protect them.”

Among the 794 imperiled mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and conifers are monkey-faced bats, cloud rats, golden moles, poison frogs, exotic parrots and hummingbirds, a hamster and a dormouse, a penguin, crocodiles, iguanas, monkeys, and a rhinoceros. Among the most intriguingly-named are: the Bloody Bay poison frog, the volcano rabbit, the Ruo River screeching frog, the Bramble Cay mosaic-tailed rat, the marvelous spatuletail (a hummingbird), and the Sulu bleeding-heart (a dove).

While extinction is a natural process, the authors note that current human-caused rates of species loss are 100-1,000 times greater than natural rates. In recent history, most species extinctions have occurred on isolated islands following the introduction of invasive predators such as cats and rats. This study shows that the extinction crisis has now expanded to become a full-blown assault on Earth’s major land masses, with the majority of at-risk sites and species now found on continental mountains and in lowland areas.

Also published today are a site map and a report that details the actions required to save these sites and species. These items, along with a searchable database of sites, web links and media contacts for the Alliance’s 52 member organizations, and photos of AZE sites and species for media use, can be found at: <http://www.zeroextinction.org/press.htm>.

Current AZE Members

American Bird Conservancy	Island Endemics Foundation
American Museum of Natural History	IUCN/SSC Iguana Specialist Group
American Zoo and Aquarium Association	Loro Parque Fundación
Asociación Armonía	Lubee Bat Conservancy
Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos	Missouri Botanical Garden
Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux"	National Audubon Society
Asociación Naymlap	Mindo Cloudforest Foundation
BirdLife International	Nature Protection Trust of the Seychelles
Charles Darwin Foundation	NatureServe
CIPAMEX	NOË Conservation
Conservation Breeding Specialist Group	North of England Zoological Society – Chester Zoo
Conservation and Research for Endangered Species	Rare
Conservation International	Sahara Conservation Fund
Doga Dernegi	Saint Louis Zoo’s WildCare Institute
Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust	Société Audubon Haiti
EcoSystems-India	The Nature Conservancy
Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden	Vermont Institute of Natural Science
Fauna and Flora International	Wildlife Conservation and Environmental Development Association of Ethiopia
Forest Partners International	Wildlife Conservation Society
Friends of the Osa	Wildlife Trust
Fundación Jocotoco	World Parks
Fundación ProAves	World Parrot Trust
Guyra Paraguay	World Pheasant Association
Hawai`i Endangered Bird Conservation Program	WWF
International Iguana Foundation	Zoo Outreach Organization
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