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COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THREAT ASSESSMENTS OF PLANT SPECIES AT THE GLOBAL AND SUB-GLOBAL LEVEL

Ross Mounce, Malin Rivers, Suzanne Sharrock, Paul Smith and Samuel Brockington

Keywords: IUCN, Regional Red Lists, Biodiversity, Threatened Species, Convention of Biological Diversity, GSPC

ABSTRACT

Evidence-based assessments of extinction risk are established tools used to inform the conservation of plant species, and form the basis of key targets within the framework of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). An overall picture of plants threat assessments is challenging due to the use of a variety of methodologies and range in scope from global to subnational. In this study, we quantify the state of progress in assessing the extinction risk of all land plants, determine the key geographic and taxonomic gaps with respect to our understanding of plant extinction risk, and evaluate the impact of different sources and methodologies on the utility of plant assessments. To this end, we have analyzed a cleaned dataset compiled from IUCN Red List of threatened Species and Regional Red Lists. We reveal that there are assessments available for 89,810 distinct species or 25% of all accepted land plant species. However unlike with other major organismal lineages the bulk of the plant species assessments are derived from Regional Red Lists, and not the global IUCN Red List. We demonstrate that

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Comparing and contrasting threat assessments of plant species at the global and sub-global level

Ross Mounce¹ · Malin Rivers² · Suzanne Sharrock² · Paul Smith² · Samuel Brockington¹

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Abstract Evidence-based assessments of extinction risk are established tools used to inform the conservation of plant species, and form the basis of key targets within the framework of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). An overall picture of plants threat assessments is challenging due to the use of a variety of methodologies and range in scope from global to subnational. In this study, we quantify the state of progress in assessing the extinction risk of all land plants, determine the key geographic and taxonomic gaps with respect to our understanding of plant extinction risk, and evaluate the impact of different sources and methodologies on the utility of plant assessments. To this end, we have analyzed a cleaned dataset compiled from IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and Regional Red Lists. We reveal that there are assessments available for 89,810 distinct species or 25% of all accepted land plant species. However unlike with other major organisational lineages the bulk of the plant species assessments are derived from Regional Red Lists, and not the Global IUCN Red List. We demonstrate that this bias towards regional assessments results in distinct taxonomic and geographic strengths and weaknesses, and we identify substantial taxonomic and geographic gaps in the assessment coverage. With species that have been assessed in common at both global and regional levels, we explore the implications of combining threat assessments from different sources. We find that half of global and regional assessments do not agree on the exact category of extinction risk for a species. Regional assessments assign a higher risk of extinction; or underestimate extinction risk with almost equal frequency. We conclude with recommended interventions, but support

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✉ Samuel Brockington
sb771@cam.ac.uk

¹ University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

² Botanic Gardens Conservation International, Descanso House, 199 Kew Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3BW, UK

References & thanks

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Ross Mounce

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