

together with the Red List training course. Prior completion of the latter, or at least familiarity with the Red List categories and criteria, is encouraged before beginning the Green Status training course. Since its inception, more than 12,530 learners have enrolled in the Red List training course (C. Pollock, pers. comm., 2022).

The new course covers all key information needed to undertake a Green Status assessment. Future planned development includes modules on mapping and supporting information, and a final exam. After successfully passing the exam, learners will be awarded a certificate of achievement to prove they have completed the course and have a good understanding of the IUCN Green Status of Species and the assessment process. The course will soon be available in Spanish and French.

We look forward to hearing from the experiences of learners. Lyda Hill Philanthropies is gratefully acknowledged for supporting the development of the course.

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More is not enough: Central Africa and the proposed 30% protected and conserved areas by 2030

In December 2022, governments will decide on the new global biodiversity framework, which aims to conserve 30% of the world's surface by 2030, the so-called 30 × 30 target (cbd.int/article/draft-1-global-biodiversity-framework). The Congo Basin Forest Partnership convened in Gabon during 4–8 July 2022 and in its final communiqué invited the member countries of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) 'To align the size of conservation areas with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) target of 30% conservation areas by 2030 by (i) increasing funding, (ii) improving management, (iii) identifying other effective conservation measures (OECM), and (iv) focusing scarce resources on smaller areas to improve the management effectiveness of protected areas' (pfb-cbfp.org/meetings-news/RDP19-Programme-fina-len.html).

The 30 × 30 target was also the central theme at the subsequent African Protected Areas Congress in Rwanda during 18–24 July 2022, where we were panellists and speakers.

Here we summarize the discussions regarding how Central African countries could achieve the 30 × 30 target by addressing the following four matters. (1) Several financing mechanisms centred on forest carbon sequestration have started. Yet despite awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the fight against climate change, funding remains cruelly short of the required 10-fold scaling up. (2) Public–private partnerships, in which governments delegate the management of protected areas to private partners, have shown increased management efficiency and financing. Governments should actively prepare and oversee these partnerships, and private partners should make themselves dispensable by improving the capacities of national management staff and actively involving local communities (Scholte, 2022, *Oryx*, doi.org/10.1017/S0030605321000752). (3) Eight Central African countries have reached the 2020 CBD target of 17% of land surface conserved, and seven countries have > 25% and three > 40% of their land conserved (Doumenge et al., 2021, *State of Protected Areas–2020*, observatoire-comifac.net/publications/edap/2020?lang=en). This includes trophy hunting zones that, unlike those in southern African countries, are not internationally recognized but could be considered OECMs because of their conservation importance. This is also true for certified forestry concessions with elaborate quality controls (Eba'ata Atyi et al., 2021, *State of the Forests–2021*, observatoire-comifac.net/publications/edf/2021?lang=en). Once certified hunting and forest concessions are recognized as OECMs, 30% of Central Africa will be protected and conserved. The real challenge is, however, to effectively manage the vast trophy hunting and certified forestry concessions that are under pressures that jeopardize their economic viability. Congress participants also stressed that the opportunity should be taken to integrate local communities and Indigenous people in the equitable governance of OECMs. (4) Where these measures are not feasible, a strategic retreat, concentrating scarce financial and human resources on smaller areas, should be pursued. From these well-protected nuclei, a viable conservation network may ultimately be rebuilt (Scholte et al., 2022, *Conservation Biology*, 36, e13860).

Addressing these four matters, Central Africa may seize the 30 × 30 target not only to respond to international expectations, but above all to transform its protected and conserved areas to ensure they are effectively managed, equitably governed and provide the required economic benefits.

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Rediscovery of the Critically Endangered *Rhododendron auritum* in Tibet

With the support of the Second Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau Integrated Scientific Expedition Project (2017QZKK0502), field investigations were conducted in June 2021 and June 2022 for *Rhododendron auritum* Tagg, which is categorized as Critically Endangered on *The Red List of Rhododendrons* (Gibbs et al., 2011, Botanic Gardens Conservation International). The type specimen of *R. auritum* was collected by Frank Kingdon-Ward in 1924 in Pemako Chung in Milin County, south-east Tibet, and was deposited in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in 1932. Since then, no more information on this species had been recorded in the wild. Although we were unable to explore the type location because Pemako Chung was seriously damaged during an earthquake that occurred in 1950, we have discovered two additional sites with the species, in Medog County, Tibet.

In June 2022, we discovered a previously unknown population of *R. auritum*, comprising < 100 individuals, in Gedang, at the edge of a fir forest. This population is exposed to disturbance from anthropogenic activities, including road construction. With a population comprising 29 individuals discovered in Lage in 2021, there are now two known populations of *R. auritum* in Medog county, 43 and 62 km from the type location.

Local authorities need to take action to conserve these two small populations. We have collected seedlings from Lage and planted them in the Kunming Botanical Garden, for ex situ conservation. We have also collected DNA material from both populations, for investigation of the species'



Flowers of *Rhododendron auritum* Tagg. Photo: Zi Wang.

conservation genetics. Further investigations are needed to locate any other potential wild populations. In addition, we will perform propagation experiments once seeds are mature in the autumn, and some seeds will be preserved in the Germplasm Bank of Wild Species in Kunming Institute of Botany.

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In vitro conservation of *Paphiopedilum wenshanense* at Kunming Botanical Garden, China

The orchid *Paphiopedilum wenshanense* Z. J. Liu & J. Yong Zhang is categorized as a Plant Species with Extremely Small Populations and a grade I national key protected plant. As a result of overexploitation for its beautiful flowers, *P. wenshanense* has extremely small populations, and its natural distribution range is limited. Additionally, its habitat is fragmented by urbanization. Only 431 wild individuals of *P. wenshanense*, in three populations, are known, in Shiping and Yanshan Counties in Yunnan Province, China. The three populations are not located within a protected area.

Many threatened plants, including *P. wenshanense*, have weak reproductive capacity in the wild. Tissue culture is an efficient way to multiply such threatened orchid species for conservation purposes. In June 2022, with the support of a conservation programme (grant number: 2021SJ14X-09) of Yunnan Forestry and Grassland Bureau, aseptic seed germination protocols for *P. wenshanense* were successfully developed in Kunming Botanical Garden, Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Germination began after 30 days, with a germination rate of 70%, and root development after an additional 30 days. Seedlings could be planted after a further 2 months of growth, and survival rate was c. 95%.

Following this success, population reintroduction or reinforcement measures can be used to assist the recovery of this threatened species in the wild. We are planning to establish a near situ conservation population of *P. wenshanense* within the Wenshan Laojun Mountains National Nature Reserve through working with the local forestry and grassland bureau. In addition, conservation of the remaining wild