

For immediate release

96% of chimpanzees could be saved by African action plan

Gland, Switzerland, 21 June 2010 (IUCN) – 96 per cent of known populations of eastern chimpanzees, that's an estimated 50,000 individuals, could be protected with a new action plan, which puts stamping out illegal hunting and trafficking as key to saving one of man's closest relatives. The nations of East and Central Africa have developed a 10-year plan to save the eastern chimpanzee from hunting, habitat loss, disease, the capture of infants for the pet trade and other threats, IUCN and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) announced today.

The eastern chimpanzee is currently classified as Endangered on IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species™, and lives in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Zambia. Eastern chimpanzees share an estimated 98 percent of genes with *Homo sapiens* and are among the best studied of the great apes.

*"Eastern Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*): Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan: 2010-2020"*, calls for the conservation of 16 areas, which if protected would conserve 96% of the known populations of eastern chimpanzees, estimated to be around 50,000. However, the total number could be as high as 200,000, almost double the estimates that have been made previously.

"We know about the distribution and abundance of only a quarter of the world population of the eastern chimpanzee", says **Dr Liz Williamson, IUCN's Species Survival Commission Great Ape Coordinator**. *"There are large areas of the Congo basin where we know very little about this ape. The plan identifies key areas for future surveys that are likely to be of importance for chimpanzees."*

"This effort to assess the status of eastern chimpanzees will help us to focus our conservation actions more effectively," says **Dr. Andrew Plumptre, director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Albertine Rift Program and the plan's lead author**. *"In the next decade, we hope to minimize the threats to these populations and the ecological and cultural diversity they support."*

In addition to targeting two of the greatest threats to the species, illegal hunting and trafficking, other objectives include reducing the rate of forest loss in chimpanzee habitats; increasing knowledge of chimpanzee distribution, status, and threats; improving the understanding of health risks to chimpanzee populations, including human-transmitted diseases; increasing community support for chimpanzee conservation; and, securing sustainable financing for chimpanzee conservation units.

"The plan will require considerable support from the global community but will ensure the continued survival of eastern chimpanzees in their natural habitats," says **Dr. James Deutsch of the WCS's Africa Program**. *"The conservation of wild populations is important not only for conservation, but also for the survival of chimpanzee cultures in the region that are invaluable to helping us define our own place within the natural realm."*

Editor's notes:

The development of the *Eastern Chimpanzee (Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii): Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan: 2010-2020* was funded by WCS, the ARCUS Foundation and the Daniel K. Thorne Foundation.

For the full report: www.iucn.org/?5486

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About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges.

IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

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About the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ (or the IUCN Red List) is the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of plant and animal species. It is based on an objective system for assessing the risk of extinction of a species should no conservation action be taken.

Species are assigned to one of eight categories of threat based on whether they meet criteria linked to population trend, population size and structure and geographic range. Species listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable are collectively described as 'Threatened'.

The IUCN Red List is not just a register of names and associated threat categories. It is a rich compendium of information on the threats to the species, their ecological requirements, where they live, and information on conservation actions that can be used to reduce or prevent extinctions.

www.iucnredlist.org

About Wildlife Conservation Society

The Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild places worldwide. We do so through science, global conservation, education and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the flagship Bronx Zoo. Together these activities change attitudes towards nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in harmony. WCS is committed to this mission because it is essential to the integrity of life on Earth.

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