Conservation news

Mainstreaming behaviour change in biodiversity conservation—a new Global Needs Assessment Report

Conservation of biodiversity is fundamentally an exercise in human persuasion, as human behaviour drives all substantive threats to biodiversity and therefore influencing it is the only path for mitigating the current extinction crisis. To understand the landscape of behavioural sciences in nature conservation, one of the key foundational goals of the IUCN Species Survival Comission (SSC) and Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) Behaviour Change Task Force (conservationbehaviourchange.org) was to conduct a consultation across the SSC, CEC and other relevant stakeholders to identify barriers to the use of behavioural change science in conservation. For this survey, 71 participants from the conservation community were interviewed, with the interview transcripts undergoing thematic analysis that allowed key themes to be categorized, ensuring that both findings and recommendations are well-informed. From this exercise a new IUCN publication emerged: *Mainstreaming Behaviour Change in Biodiversity Conservation: Needs, Barriers and Ways Forward* (doi.org/10.64234/CBCNA2025).

This report revealed significant gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation of behaviour change strategies in conservation. Major barriers include resource constraints, institutional resistance to social sciences within conservation organizations, and predominance of informal rather than formal training amongst practitioners. Critical issues identified include the mislabelling of interventions as behaviour change when they lack proper behavioural foundations, insufficient access to expertise, and resistance to adopting social science methodologies within traditional conservation frameworks. Limited access to behavioural science expertise further compounds these challenges, and social, economic and political complexities continue to impede progress, particularly in under-resourced and marginalized regions.

Despite these obstacles, participants in the study acknowledged the growing importance of conservation behaviour change in conservation practice. The research identified critical needs for advancing the field, including sustainable financial support, strategic partnerships and development of practical, accessible implementation tools. Participants emphasized the need for enhanced capacity-building opportunities, expert support systems, and centralized, multilingual information hubs providing curated, accessible resources. Respondents underscored the need for tailored resources that balance theoretical rigour with practical applicability, alongside long-term mentorship and collaborative learning opportunities.

The findings highlight clear opportunities for advancing behaviour change adoption through actionable pathways. These include capacity-building programmes, enhanced partnerships and expert networks, and development of robust tools for planning, implementing and evaluating behaviour change interventions. Although some challenges extend beyond the immediate scope of the Task Force, they underscore broader systemic issues requiring collective action from funders, policymakers and conservation organizations. The assessment serves as both a diagnostic tool and a call to action, providing the foundation for a more strategic, evidence-based approach to integrating behavioural sciences into biodiversity conservation.

The IUCN SSC–CEC Behaviour Change Task Force will leverage its unique position within the conservation community to address these identified needs through strategic resource development, capacity building and collaborative initiatives that bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in biodiversity conservation.

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The wild François's langur population in China now exceeds 2,000

The Endangered François's langur *Trachypithecus francoisi* lives in limestone forests of Viet Nam and China. During the Qing Dynasty it was widely distributed in China, and in the early 1880s the population numbered c. 15,000. This decreased markedly, however, during the 20th century, and by 2010 the wild population numbered only 1,660–1,700, in 203–208 groups. Of these, 27 groups with a total 200 individuals were in Chongqing (Han et al., 2013, *Oryx*, 47, 128–133).

To evaluate the current status of François's langur, during May–December 2024 we carried out line transect surveys of populations identified within the previous 2 years, and verified the latest reports on the population size of langurs in nature reserves, through on-site interviews, with the support of the Wildlife Conservation

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