

dung samples to confirm the presence of the species following our transect surveys.

For the 2008 Red List assessment six forests in the Udzungwa Mountains were known or strongly suspected to still contain Abbott's duiker: Mwanihana, Luhomero-Ndudulu and Ukami (where the species was locally common); Nyumbanitu (where the species was scarce); Uzungwa Scarp and Matundu (where the species was rare). We have confirmed all of these records, including extensions of the species' known range in the large Luhomero-Ndudulu (221 km²) and Matundu (522 km²) forests, and also obtained photographic or molecular evidence of the continued presence of the species in New Dabaga Ulang'ambi and Kising'a-Rugaro Forest Reserves and Iwonde forest within the Udzungwa Mountains National Park.

Camera-trapping and identification of dung to species through analysis of DNA are now vital tools for surveying and monitoring low-density, secretive forest animals, particularly those species that cannot be reliably identified in the field from dung. We are using our results to develop a reliable protocol for monitoring Abbott's duiker at its remaining Tanzanian sites. All the nine Udzungwa forests now known to harbour the species are discrete, separated from each other by either montane grassland or farmland, with little prospect of connecting these forest patches. Further research will be necessary to obtain population estimates and assess the viability of each of these populations.

This revised distribution information alone does not, however, warrant a reassessment of the species' Red List status. Several of the nine forest patches are under increasing pressure, with the western forest reserves of Kising'a-Rugaro, New Dabaga-Ulang'ambi and Uzungwa Scarp having already lost many large mammal species because of hunting (T. Jones, unpubl. data). Uzungwa Scarp is of particular concern: a report published earlier this year highlighted declines and potential extinctions of species of monkey and antelope linked to unsustainable hunting for bushmeat (<http://www.conservation.org/newsroom/pressreleases/Pages/CEPF-Report-Bushmeat-Hunting-Tanzanian-Crisis.aspx>). Nevertheless the new records of Abbott's duiker, together with the discovery in 2006 of a small population in the Rubeho Mountains just north of the Udzungwas (*Oryx*, 42, 4–5), provide renewed optimism for the future of this beautiful antelope and reaffirm the importance of the Udzungwa Mountains for its survival.

These surveys, camera traps and molecular analysis were funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society Tanzania Programme, the Zoological Society of London's Erasmus Darwin Barlow Conservation Expeditions Programme, Anglia Ruskin University and the Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust. We are especially grateful to

Athumani Mndeme, Richard Laizzer and Amani Mahundu for help in the field. Francesco Rovero and Martin Nielsen helped us access additional samples.

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The 10th meeting of Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification—recent green shoots

The 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP10, <http://www.unccd.int>) convened on 10–21 October 2011 in Changwon, Republic of Korea. The UNCCD is one of the three Rio Conventions, with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, considered together as the framework for cooperation on international sustainable development. The UNCCD aims to reverse and prevent desertification and land degradation, and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas—primarily dry and sub-humid regions—to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability worldwide. More than 6,000 participants attended the COP and its associated events, including a Rio Conventions Pavilion.

Delegates remarked it was a smooth and productive COP, and that the UNCCD has made some notable strides since adopting its 10-year strategy in 2007 (<http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop8/pdf/16add1eng.pdf>). Where the Convention now shines among its peers is in evidence-based management, including attempts to streamline national reporting based on common metrics. With this strategy UNCCD has developed a comprehensive framework to monitor and assess the impact and performance of its work, enabling policy- and decision-makers to better understand how desertification, land degradation and drought affect ecosystem function and livelihoods, and how desertification is affected by national implementation efforts.

Two indicators will become mandatory for national reporting from 2012: rural poverty and land cover/land productivity. These are considered the minimum impact indicators required for reporting by affected countries but form part of a set of 11 ecosystem and human well-being indicators trialled by countries and demonstrated to be feasible for reporting (<http://impact-pilot.unccd.int>). Information on impacts is

complemented by 18 performance indicators on responses such as financing, science, education and capacity. These were trialled by all Parties (193 countries and the European Union) in 2010 within the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System project (<http://www.unccd.int/prais>). COP10 established an ad hoc working group to continue developing and refining the indicators.

The COP expressed clear intentions to continue strengthening its scientific engagement. Although conscious of the unfavourable economic climate numerous Parties voiced support to establish a new intergovernmental scientific panel on desertification, land degradation and drought, or land and soils more broadly. The G-77/China, the African Group, Central and Eastern European States, and other numerous developing and emerging economies were behind the calls. The United States and EU, however, shared the view that the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) could integrate these issues. It is clear there is still scope for better definition of the UNCCD's scientific needs and the gaps in existing mechanisms. An ad hoc working group on scientific advice was established.

The Korean hosts announced the Changwon Initiative, which could lead to an agreement on a global target towards zero net land degradation. In the manner of the 2010 biodiversity target it would aim to generate commitment for a 'land-degradation neutral world' by 2030 (<http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop10/pdf/inf8eng.pdf>). The UNCCD COP10 also saw progress towards a long-called-for initiative on land economics. The Economics of Land Degradation initiative kicked off with major support from Germany. This study intends to do for land degradation what The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity has for biodiversity and ecosystem services (and the Stern Report for climate change)—support better understanding of the cost of inaction versus the cost of action on the issue.

Despite ongoing challenges to the Convention, the focus on scientific engagement, the progress made in evidence-based management and the extensive efforts to move beyond process and into implementation are all positive signs. The challenge now is for the UNCCD to deliver on this promise.

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A new Strategic Plan for the conservation of the Andean cat

The Andean cat *Leopardus jacobita* is the most threatened felid in the Americas. It occurs only in the high Andes

of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru and the northern Patagonian steppe in Argentina, and there are none in captivity. The Andean Cat Alliance (AGA, from its Spanish name Alianza Gato Andino; <http://www.gatoandino.org>) is an international and interdisciplinary network that aspires to achieve the conservation and long-term maintenance of Andean cat populations and its habitat, in harmony with local communities.

Although this species is considered one of the lesser known cats, the research carried out by AGA since its creation, in 1999, thanks to the support of the Wildlife Conservation Network (<http://www.wildnet.org>), has considerably increased the understanding of the natural history and conservation status of the Andean cat. We now know that even in high-quality Andean cat habitat the isolated and highly fragmented populations of this species have very low densities, harbour extremely reduced genetic diversity, and appear to be strictly associated with rocky areas and cliffs, the habitat of the cat's main prey the mountain vizcacha *Lagidium viscacia*. A distribution model of suitable habitat for the Andean cat has been developed. This highlights the most important regions for its conservation and the areas where survey efforts are still needed. Additionally, AGA's awareness programme has produced a number of conservation education tools that have been delivered to over 2,000 students and hundreds of adults in 139 villages, promoting environmental education in the most remote areas of the high Andes.

The newly-released Strategic Plan for the species (<http://www.gatoandino.org/en/publicaciones.asp>), developed following an assessment of the conservation actions taken by AGA members over the last 10 years and the collective knowledge they produced, launches a new phase for AGA and consolidates all conservation efforts under one Plan. Habitat loss and degradation have been identified as primary conservation threats, followed by hunting of the cats and their prey. For each of the threats the Strategic Plan provides a list of indicators that permit the recognition of the studies required to understand how the threat is affecting Andean cat populations, and the actions required for mitigation.

To guide conservation actions AGA's primary goals include completing the identification of the distribution and genetic structure of Andean cat populations and increasing ecological understanding, especially of habitat and spatial requirements. Simultaneously, AGA plans to continue environmental education and community participation activities, focusing on the creation of a favourable environment for developing conservation actions, and will strengthen its cross-border efforts to promote environmental management actions that protect critical populations of Andean cats and their role in ecological processes in natural ecosystems.