



A clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* captured by a camera trap in Qomolangma National Nature Reserve, Jilong County, China, on 16 September 2023.

2024. Two camera traps within the core zone of the Reserve each captured an image of the clouded leopard, on 9 and 16 September 2023, respectively. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first documentation of the clouded leopard in Jilong County, c. 1,000 km from the species' previously recognized habitat in Medog County.

This discovery suggests there may be other potential clouded leopard habitats in China beyond the four currently recognized sites. Additionally, the new record is close to two locations in Nepal where the clouded leopard has been recorded: Langtang National Park (c. 50 km away) and Annapurna Conservation Area (c. 300 km away; Ghimirey & Acharya, 2017, *Oryx*, 52, 166–170). This region may serve as a migration corridor for clouded leopards. Further research in this region will promote international collaboration for the conservation of this species.

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## Fungi gaining ground at recent CBD and IUCN meetings

Increasing interest in fungal conservation was evident at two recent global conservation events: the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Leaders meeting in Abu Dhabi,

UAE (October 2024) and CoP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cali, Colombia (October 2024). In Abu Dhabi, the Fungal Conservation Committee, comprising the chairs of fungal specialist groups and other key contributors, met to review existing quadrennium targets with regards to accomplishments and challenges, to plan for the upcoming year, and to brainstorm emerging opportunities. Two sessions were held for the broader SSC community, which were well attended by members of several plant groups and other related specialist groups. Fungal specialist groups received two awards in honour of increased activities.

In its first 4 years the Fungal Conservation Committee has met many of its initial targets, including major advances in global fungi Red List assessments (from three in 2003 to nearly 1,000 in 2024), the creation of national specialist groups and conservation networks (e.g. the Brazil and Colombia Fungal Specialist Groups; Drechsler-Santos et al., *Oryx*, 57, 421–422; Motato-Vásquez et al., *Oryx*, 57, 691), and establishing productive engagement with the Global Centre for Species Survival based at the Indianapolis Zoo, USA. Thematic specialist groups have been formed on Aquatic Fungi (Fernandes et al., *Oryx*, 58, 282) and on Fungal Use, in partnership with the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group. This rise in activities has increased scientific output and public interest in fungal conservation, which we hope to build on with increased outreach and educational opportunities. For example, in 2025, with financial support from the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group, we plan to host a workshop on fungal conservation and gender in Cotonou, Benin, in conjunction with the fourth meeting of the International Society for Fungal Conservation and a special issue of *Current Conservation* dedicated to fungal conservation.

At CoP16, the newly formed Fungal Conservation Network, comprising members of the Fungal Conservation Committee plus other mycologists, presented initial plans for a Global Strategy for Fungal Conservation. The Strategy will provide tools and resources for countries to include fungi in their conservation efforts and identify a fungal conservation research agenda. Additionally, the UK and Chile presented the Pledge for Fungal Conservation. Efforts to develop the Pledge were led by the Fungi Foundation and 3Fs Initiative, and it received additional support from Colombia, Benin, Spain, Mexico, Italy, Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Cambodia and Guinea. Although the Pledge did not make it onto the latest agenda, Chile made a statement in the final plenary, inviting parties within the context of decision CBD/CoP/15/28 on Biodiversity and Agriculture to submit detailed information on the conservation of fungi within the framework of the Soil Biodiversity Action Plan. This could lead to the inclusion of fungi in national and international legislation, policies and agreements.

I thank members of the Fungal Conservation Committee for review of this piece. Any mistakes are my responsibility.

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## New record of the Endangered *Nymphaea candida* discovered in Xinjiang, China

*Nymphaea candida* J. Presl & C. Presl is a perennial aquatic plant of the Nymphaeaceae family. It is predominantly found in still or slow-flowing freshwater across Eurasia, including Central and Eastern Europe, north-west Asia, and Central Asia. Although it is widely distributed and categorized as Least Concern in Europe on the IUCN Red List, it faces significant threats in China, where it is classified as a wild plant under second-class state protection and is categorized as Endangered on the China Biodiversity Red List–Higher Plants. In China it is currently only recorded in the wild in Bosten Lake, Ili Valley Wetland and Irtysh River. The species is threatened by climate change, intensified eutrophication and habitat fragmentation. The wild population of *N. candida* in Gongliu County has decreased by 50% in the past 5 years.

With the support of the third Xinjiang comprehensive scientific expedition project, we surveyed for *N. candida* in August 2023 and August 2024, and identified a new population in Yining County, Xinjiang. We recorded the new population in the reeds of Kashgar Town in August 2024. It consists of c. 150 plants, distributed sparsely across the area. The main accompanying species include *Phragmites australis* and *Typha orientalis*. *Phragmites australis* is the dominant species in this community, with a coverage of > 75%, negatively affecting the growth and reproduction of *N. candida*. Additionally, human activities have caused significant damage to native plants in the area. The seed-set rate of this *N. candida* population is extremely low, and there is a risk of local extinction.

Given the conservation status of this species in China, we collected DNA samples to protect its genetic diversity. We collected tubers from 20 plants for ex situ conservation at the Yili Botanical Garden, and fruits for breeding experiments in the laboratory. Local authorities also need to develop in situ conservation strategies for the species. We will continue to investigate the wild distribution of *N. candida*, explore its conservation status and propose appropriate protection strategies.

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## Saving *Ulmus elongata*: an Endangered tree endemic to China

*Ulmus elongata* is a deciduous tree in the family Ulmaceae. It is classified as a second-level National Key Protected Wild Plant and is one of the 120 species of Plant Species with Extremely Small Populations in China. The species is endemic to China, growing in broadleaf forests at 700–900 m, in valleys, along stream banks or on lower slopes. Because of its fragmented population, the harsh growing environment and small winged seeds that are wind dispersed and eaten by birds, seed collection can be difficult. Furthermore, moth larvae feed on its young leaves, leading to significant consumption of seedlings after germination, hindering survival. The combination of these factors contributes to the poor reproductive capability of *U. elongata* in the wild, with < 100 mature trees remaining. It is categorized as Endangered on the China Biodiversity Red List, necessitating artificial propagation efforts to increase the number of seedlings and improve its conservation status.

During March 2022–November 2024 we successfully bred > 2,000 seedlings, developing a seed propagation and seedling cultivation plan that includes the optimal timings for harvesting and sowing. We collected mature fruits from Zhenping County and Ankang City, Shaanxi Province, and conducted sowing experiments in the seedling nursery of the Qinling National Botanical Garden. The successfully propagated seedlings are preserved in semi-natural habitats for reintroduction into the wild.

We determined the optimal harvesting period for *U. elongata* seeds to be early April, and timely sowing after collection is needed to ensure seed vitality. We selected well-drained, loose and fertile sandy loam as the seedbed, maintaining a temperature of 18–25 °C. Germination occurs c. 15 days after sowing, and when the average plant height reaches c. 150 cm, the seedlings can be transplanted. During 2022–2024 we introduced 400 seedlings to four locations with conditions similar