Monitoring Center of the State Forestry and Grassland Administration. To estimate the current population of this langur in China, we combined the findings of these surveys and interviews with our monitoring of other populations with line transects and camera traps during 2016–2020.

We estimate that the population of François's langur in China is now 2,026–2,044, in 263–265 groups, in Guizhou (1,231–1,238 individuals in 154–155 groups), Chongqing (255 individuals in 31 groups) and Guangxi (540–551 in 78–79 groups). The main threats to the species are habitat disturbance, climate change and its low genetic diversity. However, through continued management and research, the population of this Endangered primate is expected to continue to recover and expand its range.

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Camera-trap survey confirms the melanistic leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis* in the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve

The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove delta, is home not only to the Royal Bengal tiger *Panthera tigris tigris* but also to other felids. Every year, camera traps are installed throughout the Indian Sundarbans to estimate the tiger population following the standard protocol of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. In the most recent survey, infrared and visible range cameras were installed during November 2024–January 2025, the period that offers the best conditions for fieldwork because of the comparatively lower tidal range at this time. Felids such as the leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*, fishing cat *Prionailurus viverrinus* and jungle cat *Felis chaus* were also captured by the cameras. Here we report the discovery of the rare melanistic morph of the leopard cat from the Indian Sundarbans (the non-melanistic form of the leopard cat has been recorded from both the Indian and Bangladeshi Sundarbans).

Although the leopard cat is threatened by habitat loss, its adaptability helps it persist and it is categorized as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List. It is protected under Schedule 1 of the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. In analysis of the camera-trap data, images of melanistic leopard cats were recorded from six locations in the Dhulibhasani, Herobhanga and Ajmalmari compartments of the Raidighi Range in 24 Parganas (South) division. Herobhanga is 250 m from the inhabited mainland, Ajmalmari 8 km and Dhulibhasani 11 km, suggesting a wide distribution of the melanistic form. The times of the photographs (19.00–3.00) indicate nocturnal activity, aligning with the known behavior of leopard cats, which are typically solitary, nocturnal hunters. This is the first photographic documentation of melanistic leopard cats in the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve, and we hope further research will enrich knowledge of their ecology, range and behavioural patterns in the Sundarbans.

Melanistic leopard cat captured by camera trap in the Indian Sundarbans.

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Confirmed presence of a population of the Critically Endangered shrub *Scalesia retroflexa* after 29 years

Scalesia retroflexa is a shrub, up to 5 m tall, with hairy stems and leaves, endemic to the Galápagos Islands. It is one of the 15 species of *Scalesia*, endemic to 11 islands. It shows intermediate morphological traits with *Scalesia affinis*, suggesting potential hybrid ancestry. *Scalesia*

Photograph of *Scalesia retroflexa* showing characteristic capitula and leaves. Photo: Paúl Mayorga/Charles Darwin Foundation, 2024.

retroflexa is restricted to the rocky south-east coast of Santa Cruz Island. It was assessed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List in 1998, but was categorized as Critically Endangered in Ecuador's Red Book of Endemic Plants in 2011 because of its small population and habitat degradation by invasive goats.

The first collections were in 1868, and there were 20th-century herbarium records, mostly from the south-east coast. After a collection in 1998, no new specimens were collected until 2022. In 1999, 29 individuals were fenced at Punta Núñez, but no collections were made and their status remained unmonitored for over 2 decades. In May 2022, we confirmed this population persists, documenting 23 adults and seedlings. Goat activity was observed in the area, and the original fence had collapsed. In 2023, a fence was installed around an area of 2,500 m². Tetrazolium viability tests showed low germination (6.7% in 2023 and 3.5% in 2024), indicating major restoration challenges as a result of limited seed viability.

In November 2024, we confirmed a second population at El Garrapatero Beach, a site known to have harboured *S. retroflexa* historically, but where no individuals had been recorded for 29 years. We tagged 16 individuals, collected seeds and deposited herbarium specimens at the Charles Darwin Research Station. Goat scat confirmed ongoing threats to this population.

Both sites are characterized by proximity to the shoreline, low elevation and rocky terrain, often in association with species such as *Opuntia echios, Lantana peduncularis, Castela galapageia, Scutia spicata, Croton scouleri, Maytenus orbicularis, Lycium minimum* and *Bursera graveolens*. Historical records describe other populations in locations with similar ecological conditions. The total number of individuals remains unknown, and a broader survey of the south-east coast of Santa Cruz is planned for 2025, to clarify the species' current distribution and status. Conservation efforts include propagation and habitat restoration to support species survival.

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New record of *Catasetum arietinum* reveals humid forest refuges in Brazilian semi-arid region

We report the first confirmed records of *Catasetum arietinum* F.E.L. Miranda & K.G. Lacerda in the state of Paraíba, north-east Brazil. According to the *Flora e Funga do Brasil* project, this species, of the Orchidaceae family, is endemic to Brazil, and was previously recorded only in the north-east, in the state of Pernambuco. Despite its restricted geographical distribution, the conservation status of this species has not been assessed. The new records are from the municipality of Lagoa Seca, c. 120 km from the state capital, João Pessoa.

The first record was in June 2015 in a fragment of humid Atlantic Forest on a large private cattle ranch. In the interior of north-east Brazil such forest remnants are known as *Brejos de Altitude*, montane humid forests occurring on plateaus, highlands and escarpments within the semi-arid region. These are fragments of mesophytic and hydrophytic diversity surrounded by a dry vegetation matrix, and are of high conservation value. However, they