The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (also known as the IUCN Red List or Red Data List) was created in 1963. This is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species.

The IUCN Red List is set upon precise criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species and subspecies. These criteria are relevant to all species and all regions of the world. The aim is to convey the urgency of conservation issues to the public and policy makers, as well as help the international community to try to reduce species extinction.

Species are classified in nine groups, set through criteria such as rate of decline, population size, area of geographic distribution, and degree of population and distribution fragmentation.

1. Extinct (EX) 6. Near Threatened (NT)
2. Extinct in the Wild (EW) 7. Least Concern (LC)
3. Critically Endangered (CR) 8. Data Deficient (DD)
4. Endangered (EN) 9. Not Evaluated (NE)
5. Vulnerable (VU)

When discussing the IUCN Red List, the official term "threatened" is a grouping of three categories: Critically Endangered, Endangered, and Vulnerable.

The older 1994 criteria had eight categories. The "Lower Risk" category contained three subcategories: Near Threatened, Least Concern, and Conservation Dependent (now merged into Near Threatened).

Summary of 2006 IUCN Red List categories

* IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (also known as the World Conservation Union).