

Conservation news

New BGCI report on the importance of botanic gardens in tackling the illegal plant trade

In August 2024, Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) published a Technical Review: The Importance of Botanic Gardens in Tackling the Illegal Plant Trade (bgci.org/news-events/bgci-2024-technical-review-published). Plant poaching is on the rise, resulting in the loss of many species, both in the form of functional extinction in the wild and complete extinction. Tackling this issue has spurred both this 2024 Technical Review and also a new public awareness campaign (bgci.org/our-work/inspiring-and-leading-people/policy-and-advocacy/illegal-plant-trade) that uses the international reach of botanic gardens to work with a range of strategic partners to tackle the illegal trade in wild plants. Examples of actions being taken by the botanical community are given across 16 case studies responding to five themes of work: (1) propagation and maintaining collections, (2) visitors and education, (3) research and technology, (4) engagement with law enforcement, and (5) collaboration and networks. The threat to plants from trafficking is pervasive, occurring in many biodiversity hotspots and affecting many botanical and horticultural favourites, including cycads, orchids and cacti and other succulents. The global reach of botanic gardens through their visitors is an opportunity to raise awareness of the damage caused by buying plants from unsustainable sources, including through social media platforms. Botanic gardens also provide a refuge for confiscated specimens, and house world-leading expertise on the conservation and management of threatened plants.

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Conservation Leadership Programme 2024 Team Awards announced

In July, the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) announced the winners of its 2024 Team Awards, which will provide support for 13 exceptional teams of early-career conservationists leading projects on globally threatened species (eight teams are male-led and five female-led). These local biodiversity champions will receive project funding worth a combined total of USD 212,704, thanks to support from the Hempel Foundation, the March Conservation Fund, and Arcadia—a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin.

One member from each winning team will be invited to participate in CLP's international conservation leadership and management course, which will bolster trainees' future careers by building their professional skills and peer-to-peer networks. The Programme will bring the trainees together at one location for over a week, where they will participate in practical interactive sessions focused on a variety of subjects, including leadership, project planning and fundraising, behaviour change, and gender and conservation. Upon returning home, trainees will pass on what they have learnt to their team members and other stakeholders, to extend the reach of the training. The awardees will also benefit from long-term mentoring from experts working within conservation and will join CLP's extensive global alumni network, with access to learning resources, grants and other information to sustain their future as conservation leaders.

The award-winning projects are in 11 countries in three regions: five in Asia and the Pacific, four in Latin America, and four in Africa. The successful projects will undertake research and practical conservation action to protect a range of threatened species categorized as Data Deficient, Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. These include Wolffsohn's viscacha *Lagidium wolffsohni* in Argentina and the guinea *Leopardus guigna* in Chile, the Satara gecko *Hemidactylus sataraisensis* and Malabar grey hornbill *Ocyrceros griseus* in India, the Sokoke scops-owl *Otus ireneae* in Tanzania, the lowland tapir *Tapirus terrestris* in Colombia, the ornate paradisefish *Malpulutta kretseri* in Sri Lanka, and black corals (Antipatharia) in Indonesia.

The 13 awards granted this year include two Follow-Up Awards (worth USD 25,000 each). These 2-year projects will support CLP alumni to build on their previous work and create enduring systems that ensure long-term conservation outcomes. One of these projects will expand conservation of the intermediate puddle frog *Phrynobatrachus intermedius* in Ghana, and the other will continue improving biodiversity conservation and management of marine protected areas in Uruguay. To view a full list of the funded projects, visit conservationleadershipprogramme.org/our-projects/latest-projects-2024.

CLP was initiated in 1985 and is a partnership between BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

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