

WHEN SHOULD AN ENDEMIC SPECIES ON A SMALL ISLAND BE CONSIDERED ENDANGERED AND WHEN SHOULD IT NOT? CRITERIA FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ON THE CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN)

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A classic wildlife conservation strategy consists of establishing lists of legally protected species, some of which can also be considered endangered. Endangered species are always a subset of protected species, to the extent that all endangered species are protected, but not all protected species should necessarily be considered endangered. Conservation priorities are determined by this classification and are higher for endangered species than for those that are not endangered, especially when there is a higher risk of extinction. A specie's conservation status, therefore, makes it possible to prioritize conservation urgency.

For this reason, IUCN have set criteria to help evaluate the endangered status with the least ambiguity possible. Although these criteria have been extensively applied throughout the world at the regional level, this has not occurred in the case of small-sized oceanic islands. In this study, two thousand insular endemisms were studied to ascertain whether the endangered parameters used by IUCN are applicable in isolated territories with a surface of less than 2000 km². The conclusion is that the IUCN classification is not enough consistent to prioritize conservation urgency, at least concerning its reference criteria regarding spatial distribution of the species, because these are based on very elevated thresholds inherent to extended habitats.