

Saving species on the EDGE of Existence

ZSL's EDGE of Existence programme is the only global conservation initiative to focus specifically on threatened species that represent a significant amount of unique evolutionary history.

Using a scientific framework to identify the world's most Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) species, the EDGE of Existence programme highlights and protects some of the most unique and most wonderful species on the planet. EDGE species have few close relatives on the tree of life and are often extremely unusual in the way they look, live and behave, as well as in their genetic make-up. They represent a unique and irreplaceable part of the world's natural heritage, yet an alarming proportion are on the verge of extinction. ~70% of priority EDGE species receive little or no conservation attention - until now. Our activities include:

- ◆ Identifying priority EDGE species and mapping priority EDGE zones for conservation
- ◆ Training the next generation of conservation leaders through our EDGE Fellowships and specialist online learning courses
- ◆ Establishing effective targeted conservation activities for overlooked EDGE species
- ◆ Raising global awareness of conservation and EDGE species through our online platforms and open online courses

How we identify priority EDGE species

We score every species in a particular taxonomic group (e.g. mammals or amphibians) according to the amount of **unique evolutionary history** it represents (Evolutionary Distinctiveness, or ED - a measure of value), and its **conservation status** (Global Endangerment, or GE—a measure of urgency). We then combine these scores to give each species an **EDGE score**, which produces a priority list of endangered EDGE species that represent the diversity of their taxonomic group.

Current EDGE lists include:



Mammals



Birds



Amphibians



Corals



Reptiles

(featuring the famous #punkturtle)



Sharks

The EDGE Fellowships

One of the most effective ways in which we work to secure the future of EDGE species is by building conservation capacity where these species occur.

We award two-year Fellowships to future conservation leaders (EDGE Fellows) working on priority EDGE species. Each fellow receives training on two courses, ongoing supervision throughout their fellowship and a £10,000 grant for conservation action underpinned by scientific research.

We currently work in collaboration with **Fondation Segré** and **National Geographic Society** to offer the Segré EDGE Fellowships and the Nat Geo Photo Ark EDGE Fellowships.

Shoebill
(*Balaeniceps rex*)

EDGE birds rank #34





EDGE Fellows - a case study

Diorene Cabellos, Panama



EDGE species: Pygmy three-toed sloth

Diorene's EDGE Fellowship focused on the pygmy three-toed sloth, the smallest and most Critically Endangered of all sloths that lives exclusively in mangrove habitats.

Through her Fellowship Diorene:

- ◆ Obtained the first official record of the pygmy three-toed sloth in forest habitats.
- ◆ Joined the IUCN Xenarthan Specialist Group, and helped to establish a collaborative 'Committee for the Protection of the Pygmy Sloth'.
- ◆ Hosted 5 stakeholder workshops attended by 250 people.
- ◆ Involved over 7000 children in environmental education activities.



Conservation online

To inspire a global audience to care about conservation and scale up our reach in training more early-career conservationists, ZSL has led the development of the **an online learning project** which is hosted on the National Geographic platform.

There are 6 courses on the platform available and >13,500 learners from almost every country in the world. Explore www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/exploring-conservation/ to find out more. As a direct result of taking the courses, our learners said:

97% of our learners are currently undertaking conservation action.

77% of learners said that their conservation interest has increased.

79% of respondents feel they can now make a difference in conservation.



EDGE Alumni & Affiliates

On completion of their EDGE Fellowship, all EDGE Fellows become EDGE Alumni, part of the global EDGE Alumni network. 84% of EDGE Alumni still work on their EDGE species and 100% still work in conservation*.

Alumni who continue to scale up work on their EDGE species and maintain close links with ZSL and the EDGE team are invited to become EDGE Affiliates.

This year we have been very pleased to announce the first **EDGE Affiliate Awards**. Grants of £30,000 will be given to the most outstanding EDGE affiliates to implement large scale critical conservation actions for their species.



EDGE Affiliate awardee Alfredo Hernández Díaz championed amphibian conservation in Mexico. He set up the first protected area to save Taylor's Salamander, an axolotl only known from one incredibly salty lake.

He is now embarking on a large scale community led habitat restoration programme.



*Based on 44 survey responses



Professionalising conservation

Unlike other front-line services, conservation activities on the ground do not adhere to any global professional standards, depending wholly on the resources and capacity at each site. In partnership with National Geographic we aim to rapidly scale up global conservation capacity by establishing rigorous professional standards along with the content and materials needed to train staff in protected areas.



Developed by leading experts, training will be delivered through a dedicated online learning platform combined with practical courses at Regional Training Centres, and endorsed by key bodies such as the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and the IUCN Green List for Protected Areas.