THE IUCN RED LISTING PROCESS
HOW IT WORKS & WHAT IT MEANS

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FRIENDS of the ENVIRONMENT *ABACO, BAHAMAS*

WHAT IS THE IUCN RED LIST?

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List was established in 1964 to assess the global extinction risk of species and recommend actions for their protection and conservation. Over the last 50 decades, **the conservation status of 128,918 species have been assessed** by the IUCN Global Species Programme, Species Survival Commission (SSC) and IUCN Red List partners. These species include a broad range of taxa (e.g., birds, plants, amphibians, terrestrial and marine mammals, corals, elasmobranchs, and fish) from various geographic regions and habitats throughout the world (Fig. 2). Of the species that have been assessed, **>35,500 are at risk of becoming extinct**.
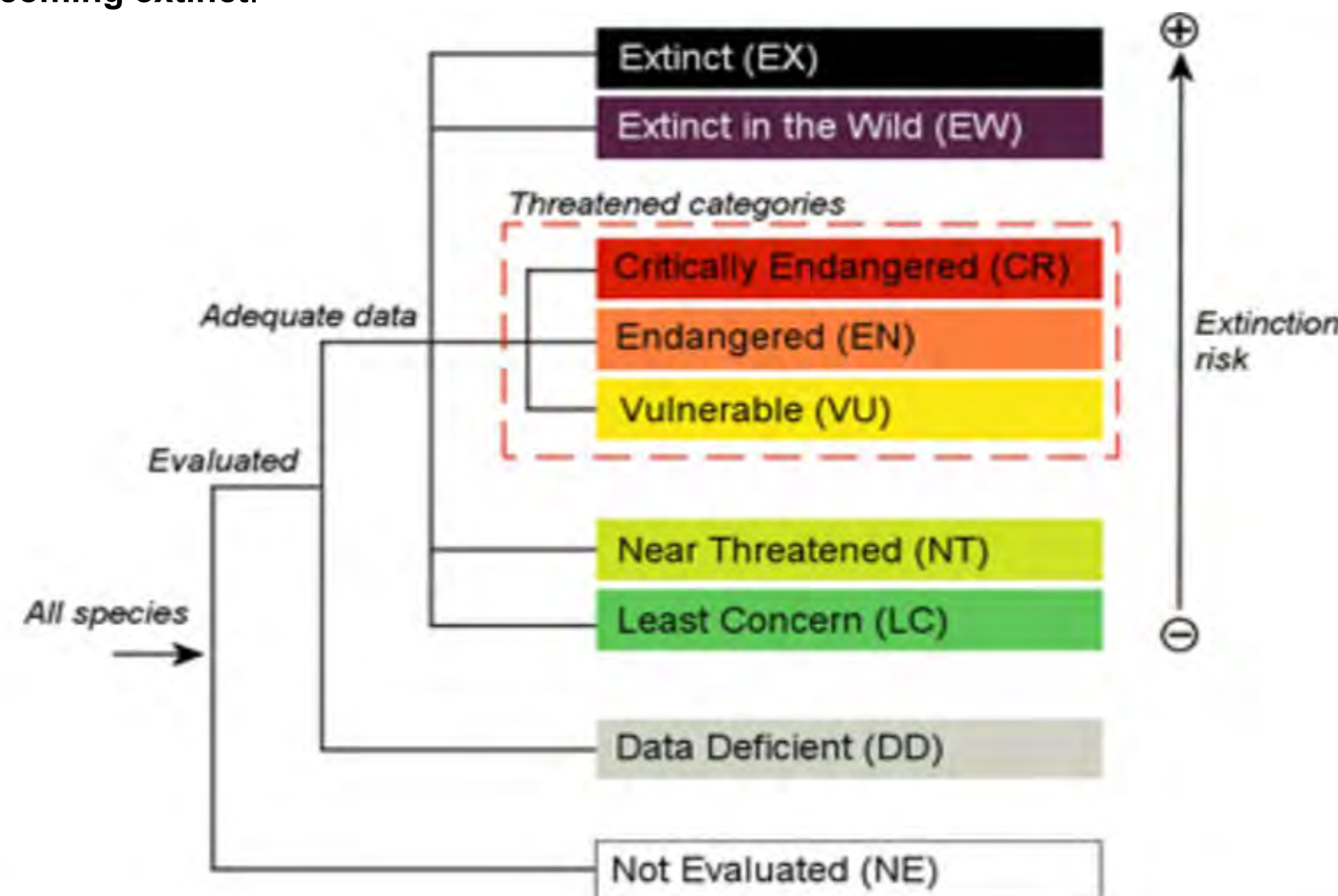

Figure 1. IUCN Red List Categories

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT IUCN CATEGORIES?

For species that have been evaluated, **there are eight (8) IUCN categories or designations** (Fig. 1):

1. Data Deficient (DD) – Not enough information to estimate extinction risk
2. Least Concern (LC) – Unlikely to face extinction in the near future
3. Near Threatened (NT) – Likely to be threatened in the near future
4. Vulnerable (VU) – Faces a *high* risk of extinction in the near future
5. Endangered (EN) – Faces a VERY HIGH risk of extinction in the near future
6. Critically Endangered (CR) – Faces an EXTREMELY HIGH risk of extinction in the near future
7. Extinct in the Wild (EW)– Only survives in captivity, cultivation or outside natural range
8. Extinct (EX) – Last individual has died.

Figure 2. The proportion of extant (i.e., excluding Extinct) species in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2020-3 assessed in each category for the more comprehensively assessed (i.e., at least 80% of the group has been assessed) groups containing ≥150 species (https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/summary-statistics).

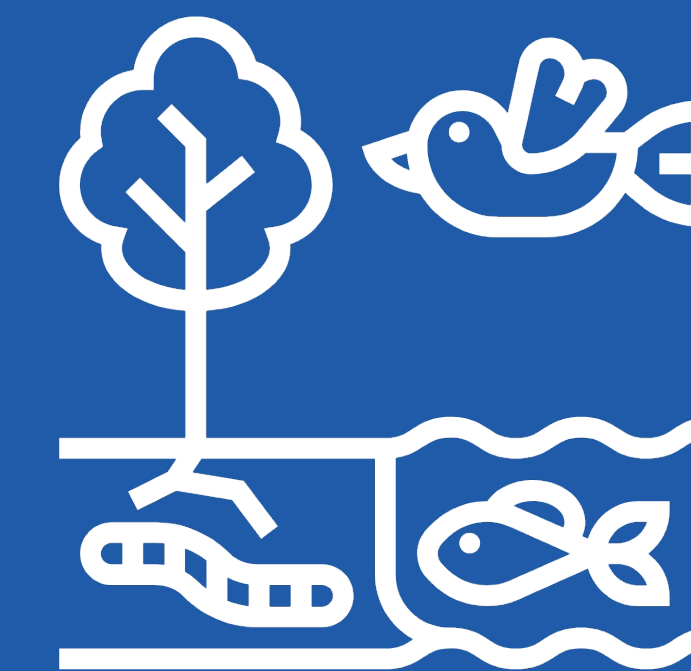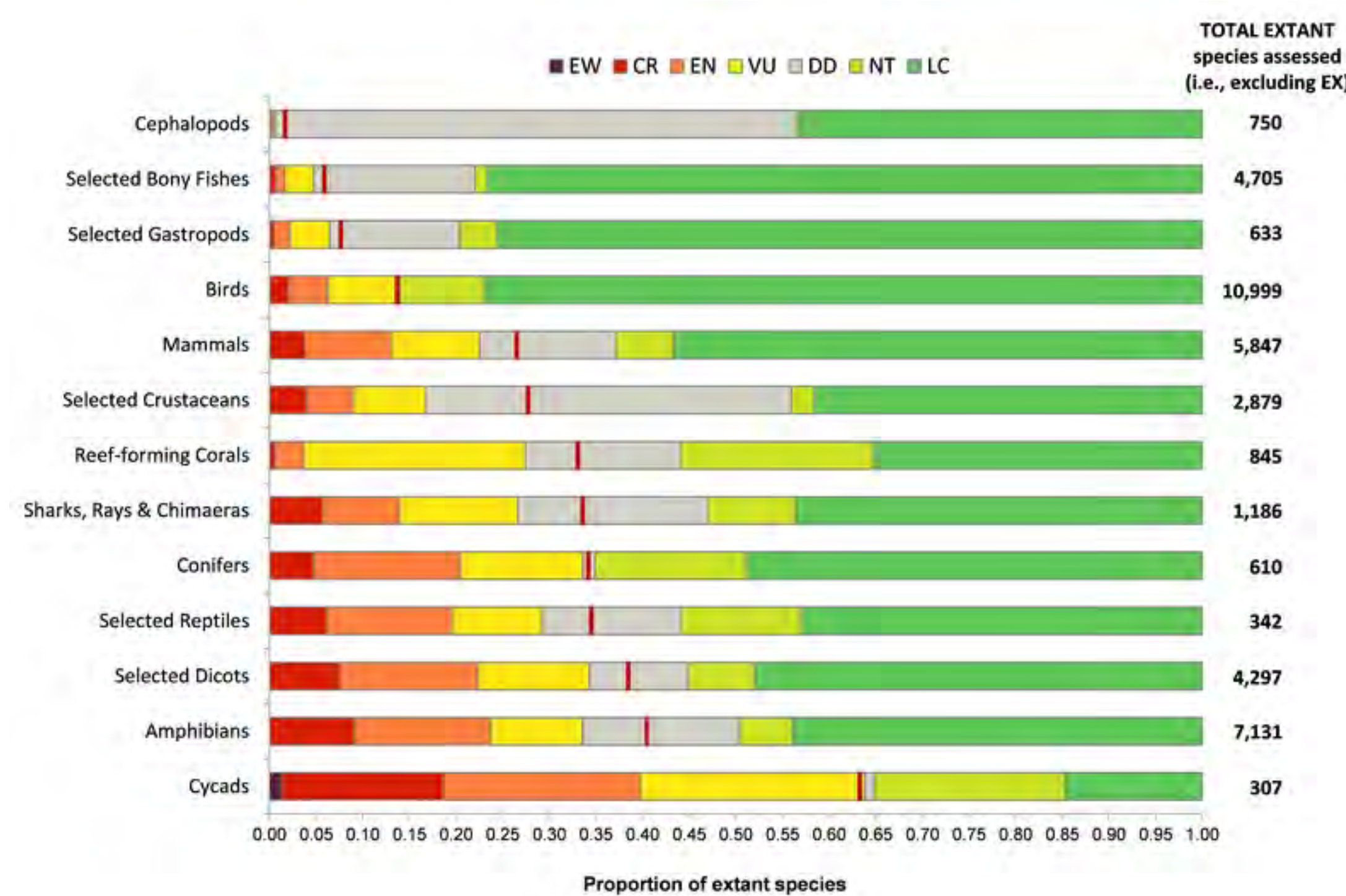## HOW DO SPECIES GET THEIR DESIGNATIONS?

The IUCN Red List applies a rigorous yet simple framework to evaluate data (historic, current and projected/modeled) in relation to threats (past, present, and potential) and assign species to a category based on a set of standardized criteria:

(A) Reduction in population size
(B) Geographic range in the form of either extent of occurrence or area of occupancy OR both
(C-D) Population size estimates (of mature individuals) below a specified threshold
(E) Quantitative analysis showing the probability of extinction in the wild.

Data used for these assessments are collated from range of sources including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, scientists and local communities. A panel of experts or specialists reviews and evaluates data for quality control and applies the criteria above with specifications outlined for each IUCN Red List Category to determine how each species should be classified. In short, becoming listed on the IUCN Red List is a **multi-step process supported by research, which is overseen by multiple stakeholders**.

IUCN SPECIALIST GROUPS

There are **more than 160 IUCN specialist groups** working collaboratively with Red List Authorities and task force groups as part of the IUCN Species Survival Commission. The work they undertake may be taxa or species-specific and/or aimed to tackle ecosystem-based approaches to conservation issues e.g., climate change, invasive species, sustainability and conserving genetic diversity.

THREATENED SPECIES IN THE BAHAMAS

"Threatened" species are those at risk of becoming extinct – i.e. VU, EN and CR species (Fig. 1). **Within The Bahamas, several marine and terrestrial species are facing extinction** including reef-building **corals**, commercially, ecologically and culturally important **marine resources, plants, endemic birds, bats** and **iguanas**.

Photo 1: (a) VU - Pillar coral (*Dendrogyra cylindrus*) © Krista Sherman, (b) CR - Bahama oriole (*Icterus northropi*) © Melinda Riger, (c) CR - Allens Cay Rock Iguana (*Cyclura cychlura* ssp. *inornata*) © Charles Knapp, (d) CR-Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*) © J.P. Zegarra, (e) EN - Lignum vitae (*Guaiacum officinale*) © unknown and (f) VU - Minor red bat (*Lasiurus minor*) © unknown.

CONSERVATION AT WORK: CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY & LIVELIHOODS

Information from the IUCN Red List is useful for advancing research, sustainable resource management and conservation for both marine and terrestrial species and their habitats. The Bahamian archipelago is home to diverse terrestrial and marine ecosystems, which provide important goods and services or benefits to its inhabitants. Accordingly, **protecting species,** their **habitats** and **reducing threats** are all necessary not only for **effective biodiversity conservation**, but for the **maintenance of livelihoods** and other **ecosystem services**.

There are several organizations working throughout the Bahamian archipelago to conserve marine and terrestrial ecosystems and species. Focal areas include:
- Natural resource/protected area management
- Scientific research and monitoring
- Education and outreach
- National legislations and policies.

Photo 2: (a) Abaco students help with building a coral nursery trees for the Reef Rescue Network (RRN), (b) RRN partner, Rachel Miller surveying coral nurseries populated with critically endangered staghorn coral (*Acropora cervicornis*), (c) Dr. Craig Dahlgren conducting a fish survey in the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park (d) sustainable tourism model development workshop in Staniel Cay, Exuma Cays, (e) field assistants help Dr. Charles Knapp with iguana research, (f) staff from the Bahamas National Trust conduction bird surveys and terrestrial assessments in the Abaco National Park.

RESOURCES

1. IUCN (2012) IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria: Version 3.1. Second edition. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: IUCN. iv + 32pp
2. https://www.iucnredlist.org/
3. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species | IUCN