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## Palm Conservation Action Plan Completed

More than a decade of collaborative work to assess the conservation status and utilization patterns of the world's palms has culminated in the publication of the IUCN, Species Survival Commission, Palm Specialist Group's action plan. The Action Plan itself is the result of the collective efforts of 30 palm specialists from around the globe.

The objectives of the Palm Action Plan are to identify the most threatened palm species, to present recommendations for conservation that satisfy their specific requirements, and to provide strategic guidelines for the conservation and sustainable utilization of the many palms that provide food, construction materials, and so on, as well as an important source of income for many people.

The increasing demands on the world's natural resources pose a serious threat to palm biodiversity. The two main threats are habitat destruction and overexploitation. Habitat destruction poses the most permanent and widespread threat to palms throughout the world, but particularly in tropical cloud and rain forests. Species whose habitat range is limited to a small area are most at risk. The situation is particularly alarming for those species restricted to islands. Of the 224 Endangered palm species identified, 141 are restricted to islands (including 69 species from Madagascar and 19 from Borneo). Eleven of these palms represent monotypic genera and therefore are of special concern.

Overexploitation is nearly as serious in some instances. The population decline of commercial wild rattan palms used in furniture making has had severe impacts on local and international markets, not to mention local biodiversity. Species used for edible palm hearts, timber and fiber, and ornamental plants are others whose populations are in serious decline. The Action Plan identifies where extraction is sustainable and where, on the contrary, overexploitation may be contributing to extinction.

Chapters 1 through 5 of the Action Plan give background information on the Palmae including the taxonomy, distribution patterns, and references to the significant literature on the family. The importance of taxonomic knowledge, habitat protection, and *ex situ* conservation is discussed in the context of the overall conservation of palms.

Regional overviews with specific country accounts are presented in chapters 6 through 11. These accounts highlight the most endangered species, provide specific recommendations for conservation action, and indicate where more research is urgently needed before even remedial action can be taken. Chapter 12 is a summary and assignment of priorities of the conservation actions discussed earlier. Among the top priorities are:

- Compilation of palm conservation checklists for the Atlantic Forest of Brazil and the forests of Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea, followed by the establishment of appropriate conservation management plans.
- Implementation of management plans for Endangered palms in Madagascar and the Mascarenes, as well as on the islands of Vanuatu, Fiji, and Hawaii.
- Carry out rescue actions for other palms on the verge of extinction in Cuba, Egypt, India, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia.
- Conduct field studies to assess conservation status and requirements of a large number of palms with unknown or Indeterminate status.
- Establish a secretariat for the Palm Specialist Group to serve as a source of technical data and information, carry out fund raising, disseminate information about palms to the general public and to educational institutions, and to coordinate global palm conservation efforts.

The Palm Action Plan is intended for use by conservationists in all sectors of society including scientists, policy makers, government officials, educators, planners, and grant-awarding organizations. Scientists are encouraged to use this Action Plan in direct consultation with policy makers, government officials, and grant-awarding organizations when developing their research projects. Government officials and policy makers in turn may use the project ideas to develop plans for broad-based conservation initiatives to include a number of threatened plant and animal groups.

Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan

# Palms

Their Conservation and Sustained Utilization

Edited by Dennis Johnson



IUCN/SSC Palm Specialist Group

**IUCN**  
The World Conservation Union

Members of the Palm Specialist Group will endeavor to stimulate the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Plan. The various palm societies, commercial nurseries, and individuals are encouraged to join the efforts to protect and preserve the biodiversity of this important plant family.

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