

PIPS Opportunity

Host organisation	Sector	Project location
BirdLife International	Conservation NGO	David Attenborough Building, Cambridge

Project title
Which 'lost' bird species are Critically Endangered, Possibly Extinct or Extinct?

Project description including specific activities and outcomes
<p>Preventing species from going extinct due to human activities is one of the ultimate objectives of nature conservation, so documenting extinctions accurately is important. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species contains the most comprehensive audit of species extinctions since 1500. Species are classified as Extinct if there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died, but determining whether this is true is rarely straightforward, requiring exhaustive surveys in known and/or expected habitat, at appropriate times (diurnal, seasonal, annual), throughout its historical range and over appropriate time frames (IUCN 2001).</p> <p>In 2018, BirdLife International (the official Red List Authority for all 11,000 bird species globally) applied a new quantitative framework to determine whether 61 'lost' birds (species with no recent records) should be classified as Critically Endangered, Possibly Extinct or Extinct (Butchart <i>et al.</i> 2018). Three factors require consideration: (1) timing and reliability of records; (2) timing and adequacy of surveys; and (3) timing, extent and intensity of threats. This novel approach resulted in an 80% match with the current IUCN Red List classification of these species, but led to nine of them being reclassified, including three as Extinct.</p> <p>This project will involve collating the relevant data on records, surveys and threats and applying the same method to another 10–20 bird species that have been identified as 'lost' since 2018. The results will be used to reclassify species in the 2024 Red List update, and help to determine which species no longer warrant investment of conservation resources, as well as ensuring that bird extinction rates are not underestimated. The successful candidate will also have the opportunity to learn about and contribute to other aspects of the Red List update.</p>

Time frame and any other special considerations
2024 is the final year of the current Red List update cycle for birds. To allow sufficient time for the relevant species to be reclassified in 2024, this project should ideally be completed before the end of 2023.

Candidate requirements
Degree in a biological or environmental subject. Experience of collating, verifying, analysing and interpreting biological data. Good concentration and attention to detail. Ability to undertake repetitive tasks accurately and consistently. Knowledge of the world's birds and biodiversity conservation issues is desirable but not essential.

Website/link for further details
BirdLife's Red List work: https://www.birdlife.org/projects/iucn-red-list/ IUCN (2001) Red List categories and criteria: https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/categories-and-criteria Butchart <i>et al.</i> (2018): https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2018.08.014

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