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## Rediscovery of *Barleria maclaudii* (Acanthaceae) in Guinea after 86 years

*Barleria maclaudii* Benoist (Family Acanthaceae) grows in savannah and woodland mosaics on lateritic slopes at 150–700 m altitude. Described by Raymond Benoist in 1911, it was initially discovered in Fouta-Djalon (Guinea) in 1898. Formerly, the most recent observation in Guinea was in 1936, near Dinguiraye. Additionally, it has been recorded in Senegal and Mali, with a total of 4–5 localities across these three countries. The extent of these localities is poorly understood, as they are only known from seven herbarium specimens. For these reasons, and because of known threats at some of these localities, the species is categorized as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.




However, in October 2021, after 86 years without records, *B. maclaudii* was rediscovered in Guinea, around the village of Kokoun Thimbohé (sub-prefecture of Kollet), within the Moyon-Bafing National Park in Fouta-Djalon. During November 2022–June 2023, the species was recorded in c. 20 more localities in the Park, with half of these in the core protected area and high conservation value zones. The localities cover a total extent of occurrence c. 1,460 km<sup>2</sup>, and we estimate that the total known area of occupancy is at least 7 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population size of c. 8,000 individuals. The altitude range of the localities is 417–772 m, slightly exceeding the previously known upper limit.



*Barleria maclaudii* Benoist in Kokoun Thimbohé (Moyon-Bafing National Park): (a) habitat and (b) inflorescence with a flower. Photos: Camille Rieder.

These new observations facilitated photographic documentation and seed and herbarium specimen collection. The species' perennial nature was confirmed: despite annual bushfires, the woody bases persist and appear to be fire-tolerant. Flowering is September–November, and the species grows on skeletal laterite soil in the understory of woodland dominated by *Terminalia macroptera* Guill. & Perr.

This discovery of several localities in Moyon-Bafing National Park greatly improves our knowledge of this species in Guinea. However, populations in Senegal and Mali have not been surveyed recently and the species' known minimal area of occupancy remains less than the 500 km<sup>2</sup> threshold for categorization as Endangered. As there is an ongoing threat from slash-and-burn agriculture within the Park, and a population increase has not been documented, categorization as Endangered under criterion B2ab(ii,iii) remains appropriate pending further study.

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## A new-born Arabian leopard cub at the Wild Mammal Breeding Centre in Oman


The Arabian leopard *Panthera pardus nimr* is a Critically Endangered subspecies that roamed in both the northern and the southern mountains of Oman until the 1970s. Today, however, it occurs only in the Dhofar Mountains in the south, where a population of c. 50 remains (Al Hikmani & Spalton, 2023, *Oryx*, 57, 283–284). In 1985, in an early effort to prevent the Arabian leopard from becoming extinct in the wild, a captive breeding group was established at the Wild Mammal Breeding Centre in Muscat, Oman. This was the first breeding programme for this species. The programme started with four wild-caught Arabian leopards from Jabal Samhan in southern Oman, and the first captive bred Arabian leopard was born in the Centre on 16 May 1989. Between 1989 and 1997 the programme successfully bred and received 10 cubs. However, with an ageing captive group the last cub to be born in the Centre was on 12 February 1997.

The programme was given new impetus in 2015 with the arrival of a wild-caught male from Yemen, joined



Female Arabian leopard *Panthera pardus nimr* cub born at the Wild Mammal Breeding Centre, Muscat, Oman on 15 February 2023. Photo: Royal Court Affairs.

in 2022 by a female from the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. On 15 February 2023 she gave birth to the centre's first cub in 26 years. The female cub provides new hope for the survival of this Critically Endangered leopard in Oman and across Arabia, as both the wild and captive populations of this subspecies are very small. In addition, as the sire of the cub is a wild-caught Arabian leopard, she may contain some valuable genetic material that can be used to increase the genetic diversity of the captive Arabian leopard population across the region.

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## 22nd Sharjah International Conservation Forum for Arabia's Biodiversity

The 22nd Annual Sharjah International Conservation Forum for Arabia's Biodiversity was held at Sharjah Safari, United Arab Emirates, during 6–9 February 2023. The Forum brought together over 200 participants regionally from Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, and internationally from Australia, France, Germany, Greece, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, the UK and the USA. The Sharjah workshops are hosted by the Environment and Protected Areas Authority, Government of Sharjah, under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah. Following on from the inclusion of the genetic diversity

of wild species in Target 4 of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the Conference of the Parties 15 meeting in Montreal in December 2022, the 22nd meeting had a single theme: conservation genetics.

The forum was aimed at conservation practitioners who may need to commission or interpret conservation genetics research in their projects and was led by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's WildGenes laboratory. The sessions covered: (1) an introduction to major concepts in conservation genetics, highlighting regional case studies, (2) use of genetic data to support reintroduction, including a practical session on founder selection, (3) genetics and taxonomy, including a gap analysis of outstanding taxonomic questions in the region, and (4) use of genetic data to support monitoring and management of threatened species in the wild, including the use of dietary metabarcoding, conducting a population census, and the management of hybridization. A technical session provided an overview of animal biobanking and the work of the Sharjah National Barcode of Life Programme, with advice for veterinarians taking samples, and a practical session on sample prioritization.

The final day brought together lessons learnt during the first 3 days in a practical session on the evaluation of genetic risk to threatened populations using the Genetic Score Card method, which has been proposed as an indicator for the evaluation of progress against Global Biodiversity Framework Target 4. Workshop participants tested the scorecard process on 18 Arabian species of conservation concern, as a means of exploring the different elements of genetic risk.

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## *Manglietia ventii* blooms for the first time in Kunming Botanical Garden

The evergreen tree *Manglietia ventii* (with the synonyms *Manglietia hebecarpa*, *Magnolia hebecarpa* and *Magnolia ventii*) of the family Magnoliaceae was described in 1980