

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH'S INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR THE CPSG WEBSITE

Carnivorous plants fascinate a wide public. And understandably so. They seem to defy all conventional preconceptions about plants in the way they move, the organs they develop, and the way they sustain themselves. One consequence, however, is that many of the species are now seriously threatened by poaching. A number have such localised distribution that a single unscrupulous collector could exterminate them in the wild. Some species inhabit only the most fragile of ecosystems, such as a single mossy ridge or a mountain summit. So ongoing degradation of habitat is also a major threat.

The cumulative result of all these factors has been an alarming decline in populations of many carnivorous plants. Some species are at risk of extinction, even as they are being recorded for the very first time. Yet there is much still to learn about them – about how many species exist, the physiological processes on which they depend, and the relationships they have with animals – not only their insect prey but even mammals, with which they sometimes have unique relationships.

It is thus excellent news that the IUCN Species Survival Commission has now set up a Specialist Group to study and help preserve these amazing plants, not only in the wild but also in cultivation. The work of this new Specialist Group in providing accurate and up-to-date IUCN Red List conservation assessments for all carnivorous plants will be an invaluable tool for research scientists and conservationists around the globe. It will also co-ordinate ongoing conservation initiatives and facilitate partnerships between *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation projects. This will even include investigating such exciting possibilities as taking *ex-situ* stock of species that have become extinct in the wild and reintroducing them into their original habitat. It will also aim to encourage everyone to understand and enjoy these unique plants.

The Carnivorous Plant Specialist Group consists of a worldwide group of experts who volunteer their time and knowledge to attain these goals. I am proud indeed to become its Patron.

David Attenborough

Broadcaster and Naturalist

