

# *What Value Do Species Have?*

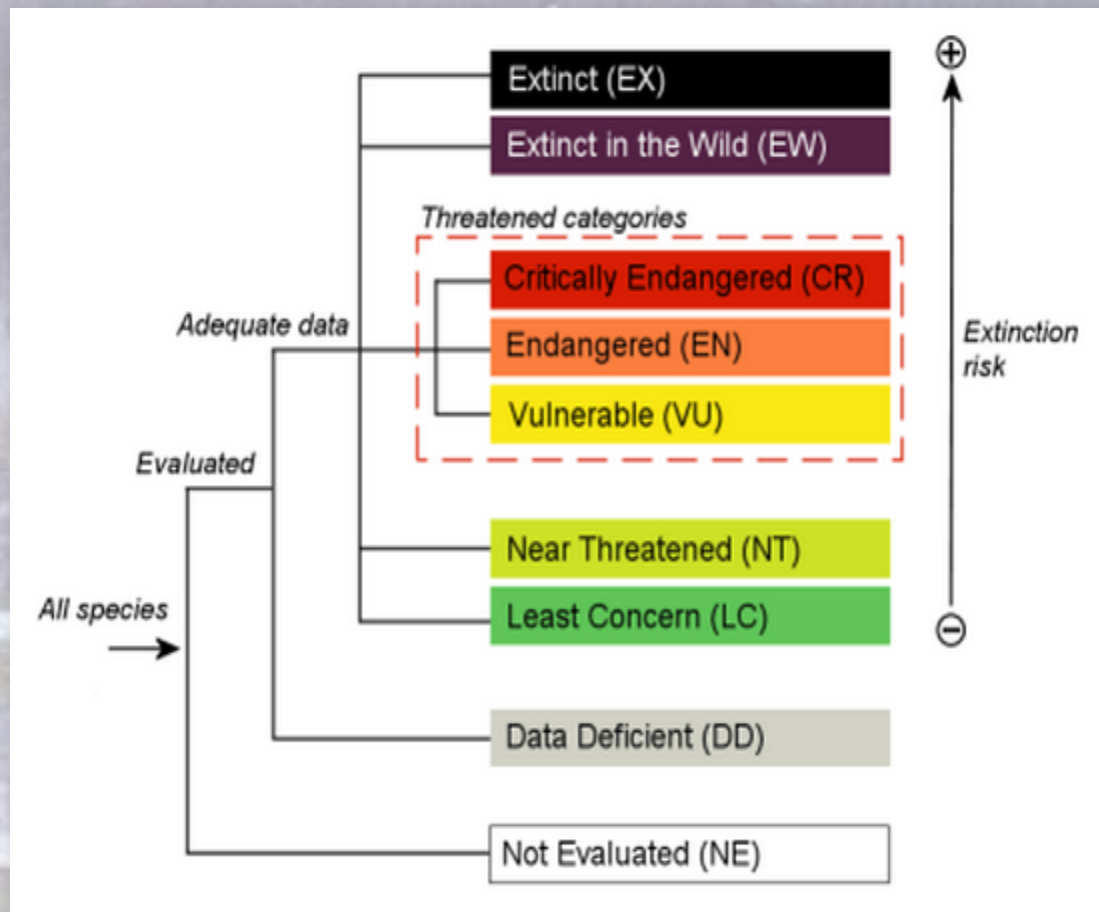
Ethics: The Environment  
Summer 2012, Laura Guidry-Grimes

# Biodiversity: What's at Stake

- "Critical Biodiversity" by Nature ([video](#))
- UN Decade of Biodiversity ([video](#))



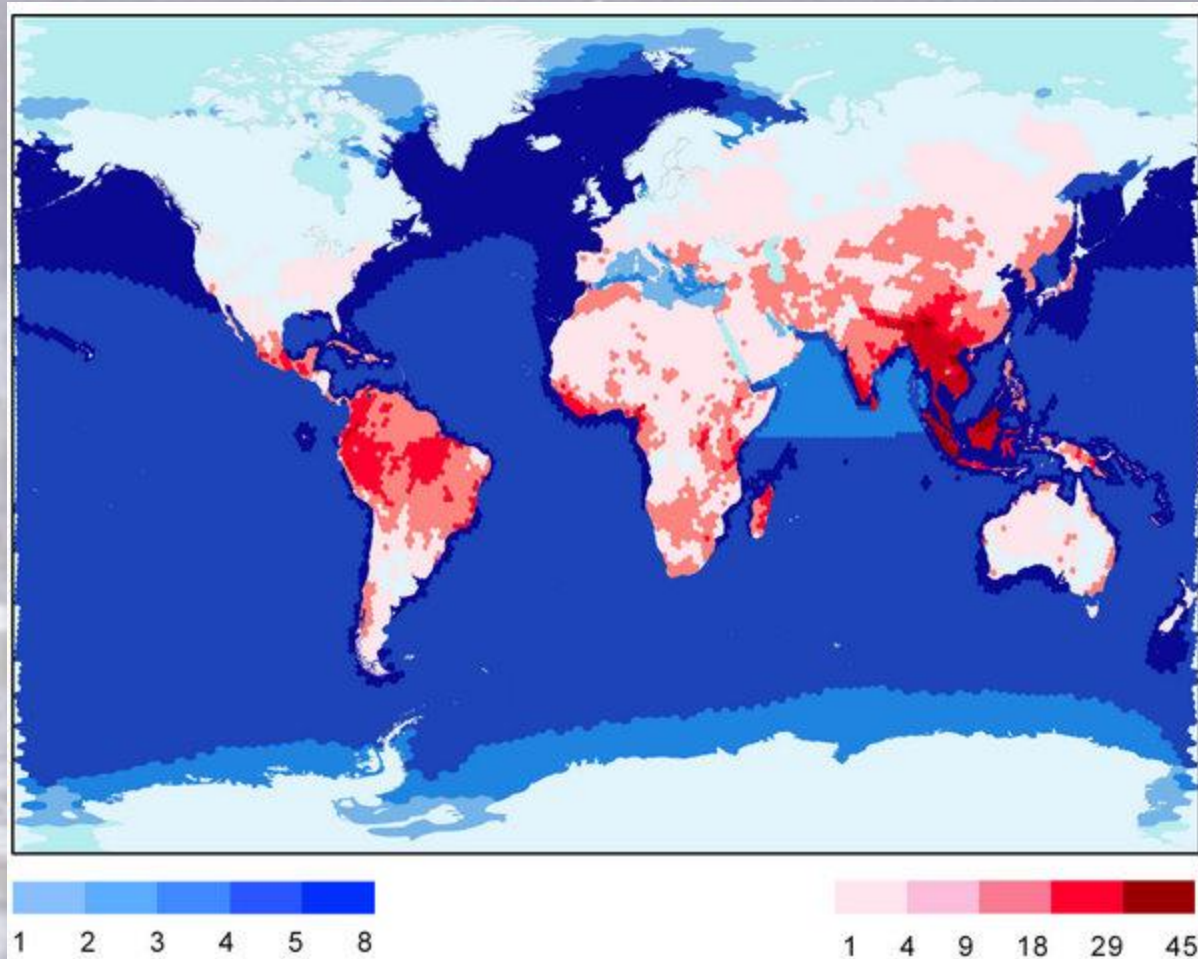
# Biodiversity: What's at Stake



International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources: Classifications

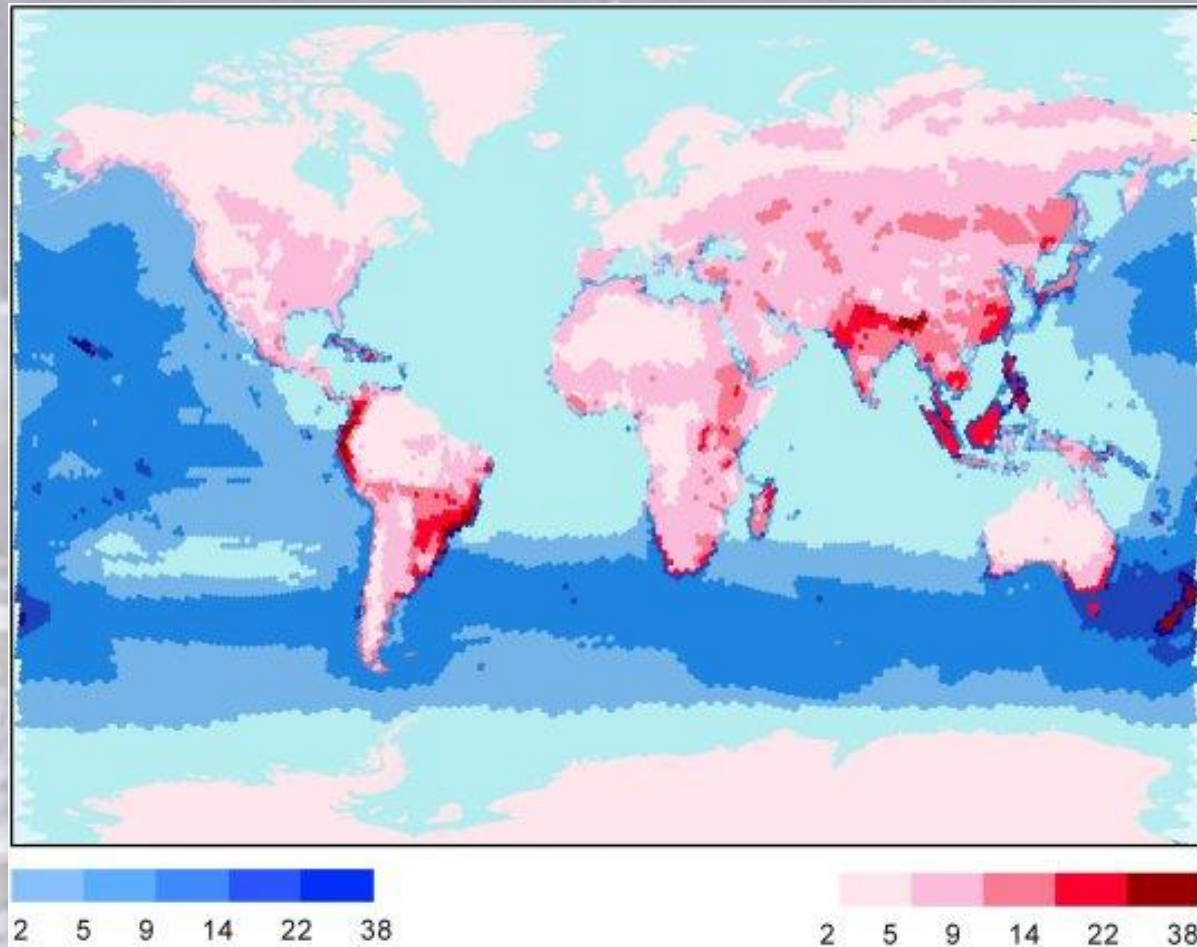


# *Biodiversity: What's at Stake*



Threatened Mammal Richness (number of species)

# *Biodiversity: What's at Stake*



Threatened Bird Richness (number of species)



# Biodiversity: What's at Stake

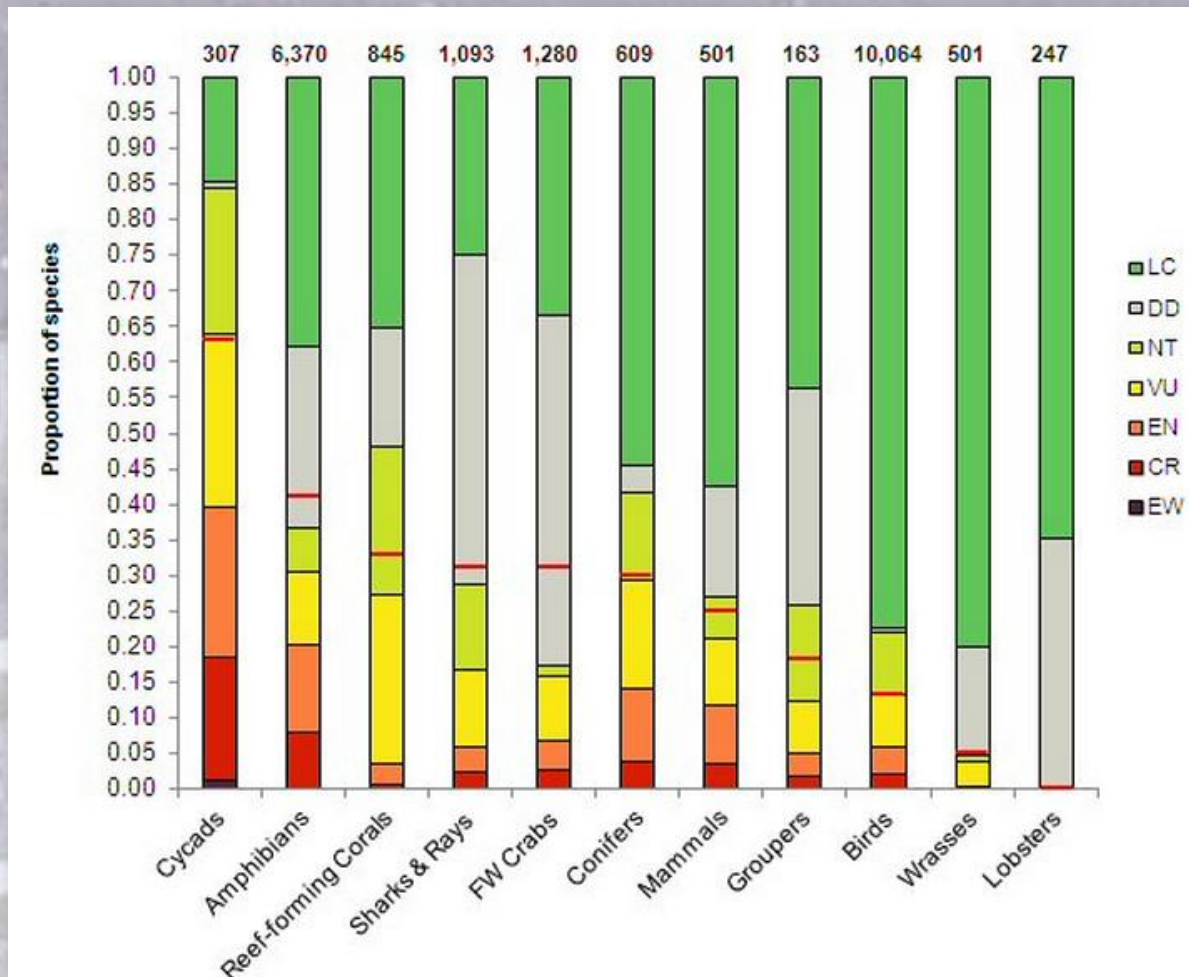
Critically Endangered (CR)												
Group	1996/98	2000	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Mammals	169	180	181	184	162	162	163	188	188	188	194	196
Birds	168	182	182	182	179	181	189	190	192	190	189	197
Reptiles	41	56	55	57	64	73	79	86	93	106	137	145
Amphibians	18	25	30	30	413	442	441	475	484	486	498	507
Fishes	157	156	157	162	171	253	254	289	306	376	414	414
Insects	44	45	46	46	47	68	69	70	89	89	91	103
Molluscs	257	222	222	250	265	265	268	268	291	373	487	495
Plants	909	1,014	1,046	1,276	1,490	1,541	1,569	1,575	1,577	1,619	1,731	1,752

Endangered (EN)												
Group	1996/98	2000	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Mammals	315	340	339	337	352	348	349	448	449	450	447	447
Birds	235	321	326	331	345	351	356	361	362	372	382	389
Reptiles	59	74	79	78	79	101	139	134	150	200	284	293
Amphibians	31	38	37	37	729	738	737	755	754	758	764	767
Fishes	134	144	143	144	160	237	254	269	298	400	477	767
Insects	116	118	118	118	120	129	129	132	151	166	169	190
Molluscs	212	237	236	243	221	222	224	224	245	328	417	437
Plants	1,197	1,266	1,291	1,634	2,239	2,258	2,278	2,280	2,316	2,397	2,564	2,572

1996-2012:

Changes in numbers of species that are critically endangered or endangered

# Biodiversity: What's at Stake



•LC: least concern

•DD: data deficient

•NT: near threatened

•VU: vulnerable

•EN: endangered

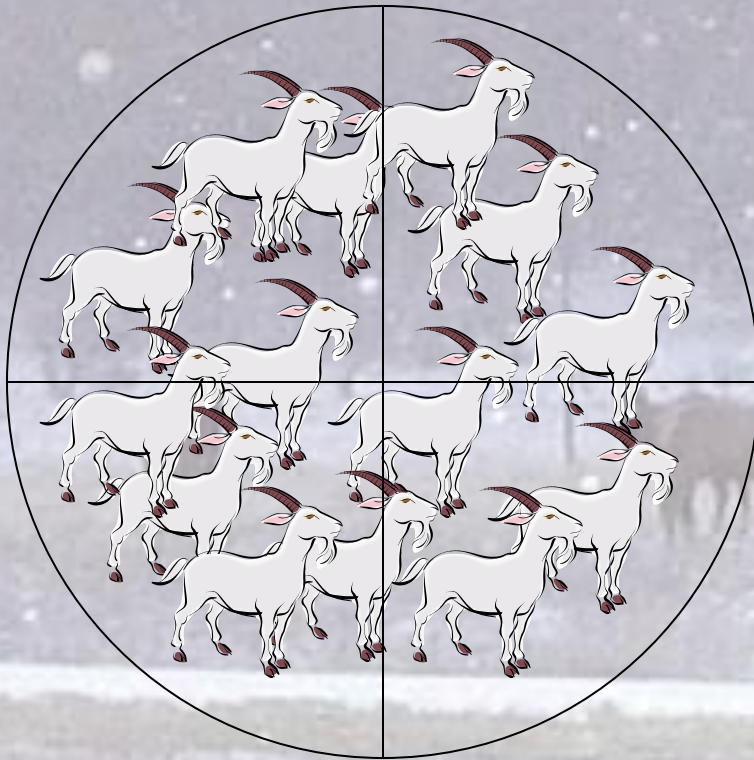
•CR: critically endangered

•EW: extinct in the wild

Proportion of threatened species



# *Same intuitions?*



Common  
goat

or



Endangered

Endangered

Endangered



# *Species or Individuals?*



- Test ethical dilemma: putting endangered species in zoos
  - Removed from ecosystem
  - Might not be a preferable life for the individuals
  - Issue of zoos' limited resources

*New York Times: "Zoos' Bitter Choice" ([video](#))*

# *The Rights Approach*

- Regan: "the reason we ought to save the members of endangered species is not because the species is endangered but because the individual animals have valid claims and thus right" (106)
- Not everything with intrinsic value has rights?
  - E.g., collections or systems (see Regan, pg. 107)
- If we respect individual members, species and communities will ultimately be preserved.



# *Philosophical Difficulties for Species Protection*

- Rights view?
  - “let it be” as inadequate response
- Ecocentrism?
  - Not all species have ecological function; even if they do, we do not always want to save them.
- Intrinsic value?
  - Why, and how much?
  - “any genetic variation within a species that results in distinctive characteristics would need separate protection” (Russow 142)
- Virtue of diversity?
  - So required to create species?





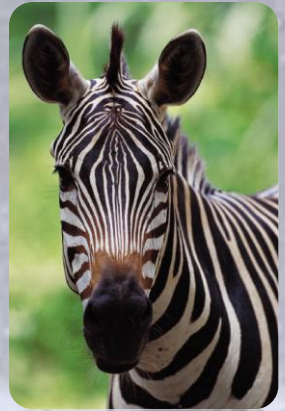
## *Philosophical Difficulties for Species Protection*

- What counts as a respect-worthy species, subspecies, diversity?
  - Not all genetic mutations?
  - Blended species?
  - Same species, but without certain traits?
  - What about created (artificial?) species?
  - Taxonomic "fads"



# *Aesthetic Argument*

- Russow: aesthetic appreciation for *individuals*—not species per se
- Can be ranked and overridden
- “the fact that there are very few members of a species—the fact that we rarely encounter one—itself increases the value of those encounters” (143)
- “because I value possible future encounters, I will also want to do what is needed to ensure the possibility of such encounters” (143)





# Objections, problems?

- Does Schmidtz fairly characterize Singer's position re: speciesism?
- Are you convinced by Schmidtz's arguments for why we should *respect* nature, even if we only value it instrumentally?
- Do you think a rights approach gives us sufficient reasons to protect endangered species? Can a rights theorist respond to Russow's criticism?
- If disease-carrying mosquitoes became endangered, do they deserve protection at all? Is it contradictory to a nonanthropocentric ethic to deny them protection?
- What are some problems with aesthetic arguments?





*Questions? Comments?*