Conservation of the redwoods: lessons from a Red Listed species

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Proposals to conserve species and biodiversity have ranged from local to global, and one of the most far-reaching global efforts has been conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an organization that has been compiling the Red List of Threatened Species (Red List) since 1964. The Red List informs conservation policies and planning by functioning as “a clarion call to action” and has become regarded as a tool that provides consistency in labeling species in need of conservation investment (Vie et al. 2008).

The 2013 listing of coast redwood (Sequoia sempervirens) as Endangered under the IUCN categorization system offers an opportunity to examine both the IUCN listing process and the state of redwood conservation. This presentation provides an overview of IUCN and its Red List, and traces the rationale of listing redwood. It ends by highlighting ways that the listing has served to obscure, rather than illuminate, conservation needs of the species, and questions the utility of a species-by-species (vs. ecosystem) approach when addressing redwood conservation.

This presentation is intended to follow Emily Burns’ presentation, which will provide an overview of the conservation history and future of the species.