

## **Assessing the conservation status of Cactaceae**

*Bárbara Goettsch & Kevin Gaston*

*Dept. Animal and Plant Sciences, University of Sheffield, Sheffield (UK)*

We are undergoing a new era in assessment of the conservation status of species. This has been triggered on the one hand by the extent and intensity of the current biodiversity crisis, and on the other hand by improvements in the availability and means of storing and analysing data. Indeed, recent years have witnessed the successful completion of global projects that have evaluated the conservation status of all extant species of some major taxonomic groups. However, plants remain underrepresented in this process with only a few groups, and approximately 4% of known species, having as yet been fully assessed. Despite significant concerns as to the pressures they are experiencing, only 11% of Cactaceae species are currently on the IUCN Red List. The documentation of these past assessments no longer meets the minimum standards required. The Global Cactus Assessment, with the help of many partners and advisors, is gathering information on the distribution, abundance, population trends, habitat associations and threats for all cactus species. With this information the species will then be fully evaluated. Such a project holds tremendous challenges and opportunities, both for understanding of the species group and for the community of naturalists and scientists who study them.