



The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

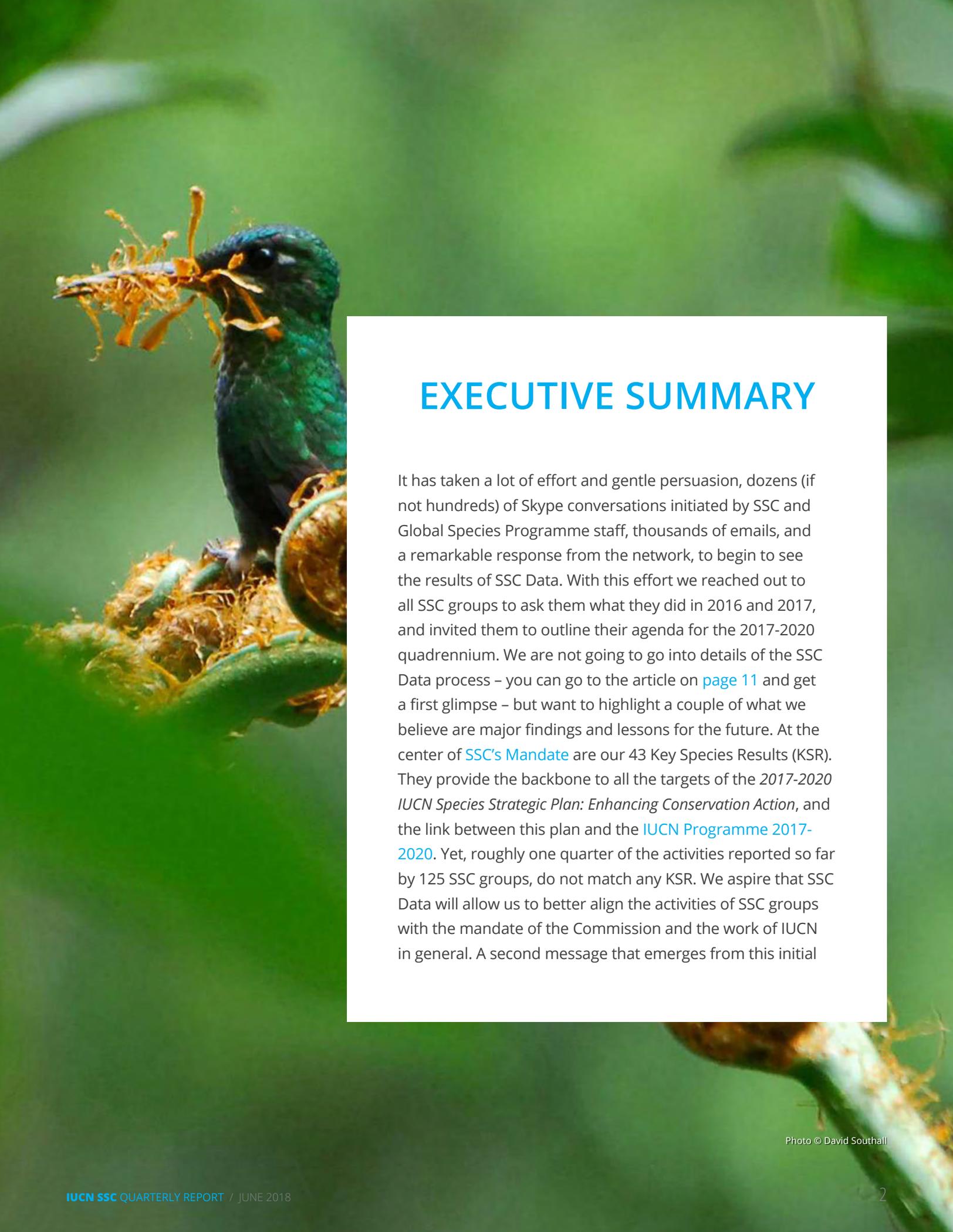
QUARTERLY REPORT
JUNE 2018

Przewalski's Horse, *Equus ferus przewalskii*, EN
Photo © Kira Mileham



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has taken a lot of effort and gentle persuasion, dozens (if not hundreds) of Skype conversations initiated by SSC and Global Species Programme staff, thousands of emails, and a remarkable response from the network, to begin to see the results of SSC Data. With this effort we reached out to all SSC groups to ask them what they did in 2016 and 2017, and invited them to outline their agenda for the 2017-2020 quadrennium. We are not going to go into details of the SSC Data process – you can go to the article on [page 11](#) and get a first glimpse – but want to highlight a couple of what we believe are major findings and lessons for the future. At the center of [SSC's Mandate](#) are our 43 Key Species Results (KSR). They provide the backbone to all the targets of the *2017-2020 IUCN Species Strategic Plan: Enhancing Conservation Action*, and the link between this plan and the [IUCN Programme 2017-2020](#). Yet, roughly one quarter of the activities reported so far by 125 SSC groups, do not match any KSR. We aspire that SSC Data will allow us to better align the activities of SSC groups with the mandate of the Commission and the work of IUCN in general. A second message that emerges from this initial

Photo © David Southall

analysis is the identification of partnerships, training and improving core capacities as primary needs of SSC groups – activities that we certainly aim to strengthen in the near future.

Red Listing, conservation planning and fundraising are indicated as the top three picks in training priorities, and the following two articles of the *Quarterly Report* address these. First, on [page 17](#), we read that achieving the Barometer of Life (i.e. 160,000 species assessed for the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species by 2020*) is becoming more likely, while increasing capacity in red listing is clearly achievable, by actively engaging with our growing body of strategic partners. In collaboration with The Deep Aquarium, Georgia Aquarium, Ocenário de Lisboa and Albuquerque BioPark, we count with five red list assessors that support the Marine and Freshwater Biodiversity Units, and the Shark and Medicinal Plant Specialist Groups. The number of partners and assessors is expected to increase in the coming months, with the potential of consolidating a team able to assess thousands of species and facilitating dozens of training workshops each year, as well as substantially expanding their engagement with Specialist Groups.

Although [National Geographic Society's Species Recovery on the Brink of Extinction](#) grant program is not technically a training opportunity, anyone that has raised funds knows that the best way to learn is by doing ([page 19](#)). More importantly, grants are focused on implementing action plans developed by Specialist Groups, so they provide incentives for creating or updating action plans and systematically identifying priority actions. This is the first year of what is expected to be a multiyear request for proposals, so keep your eyes on the [quarterly due dates](#) (January 4, April 4, July 10 and October 3), and keep the proposals coming!

In *Who shapes the SSC?* ([page 21](#)), we go one step further than the general analysis of SSC Data and take a closer look at the Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) and the work of its Chair, Vivek Menon. He focused his efforts on reaching out to the membership, listening to them, aligning the work of the Specialist Group to the priorities of SSC, delegating leadership, seeking geographic and disciplinary representation, gender and age balance, and encouraging active involvement of range country governments in the activities of the group. The AsESG is now thriving and we believe that it is an approach worth examining and learning from.

The final article by Dan Ashe, President and CEO of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), leaves us thinking ([page 24](#)). It reminds us that the ultimate purpose of all that we do is to save species from extinction, and that extinction is forever. By focusing on the recent (and possibly last) attempt to capture the remaining wild vaquitas (*Phocoena sinus*) in the gulf of California and bring them into human care for population recovery, he argues that *ex situ* and *in situ* tools should all be part of our conservation portfolio, and that we should not be shy about deploying them before it is too late. He also highlights that “if we continue acting as a weak confederacy of environmentalist, animal protection, conservation, education, academic and zoological interests, then extinction will certainly and repeatedly defeat us. And it doesn't need to be so. We must stand united.” He does not say it with these words, but it surely sounds like an invitation to IUCN to lead the way in our role as the global convener of conservation NGOs, governments and governmental agencies, widely distributed networks of experts, and hundreds of staff deployed around the world.

Resumen ejecutivo

Ha tomado múltiples esfuerzos y amable persuasión, docenas (si no cientos) de conversaciones vía Skype llevadas a cabo por el equipo de CSE y el Programa Global de Especies, miles de correos electrónicos y una respuesta notable de la red, para empezar a ver los resultados de CSE Data. Con este esfuerzo nos acercamos a todos los grupos de CSE a fin de conocer sus actividades de 2016 y 2017, así como invitarlos a presentar sus agendas para el cuatrienio 2017-2020. No entraremos en los detalles del proceso de CSE Data –pueden buscar el artículo de la [página 11](#) y echar un primer vistazo– pero sí queremos resaltar algunos de los principales hallazgos y lecciones para el futuro. En el centro del [Mandato de CSE](#) están nuestros 43 Resultados Clave de Especies (RCE). Ellos constituyen la médula de todas las metas del *Plan Estratégico de Especies UICN 2017-2020: Fortaleciendo la Acción en Conservación*, y la relación entre este plan y el [Programa UICN 2017-2020](#). Sin embargo, cerca de una cuarta parte de las actividades reportadas hasta ahora por 125 grupos de CSE, no encajan con ningún RCE. Aspiramos que CSE Data nos ayude a alinear mejor las actividades de los grupos de CSE con el mandato de la Comisión y el trabajo de UICN en general. Un segundo mensaje que emerge de este primer análisis es la identificación de alianzas, capacitación y el fortalecimiento de capacidades centrales como las necesidades fundamentales de los grupos de CSE –actividades que ciertamente buscamos fortalecer en el futuro cercano.

Las evaluaciones de lista roja, la planificación en conservación y el levantamiento de fondos fueron señalados como las tres mayores prioridades de capacitación, y los siguientes dos artículos de este reporte trimestral abordan estos temas. Primero, en la [página 17](#), encontramos que alcanzar el Barómetro de la Vida (es decir, 160,000 especies evaluadas en la *Lista Roja de Especies Amenazadas de UICN* para 2020) se ha vuelto más factible, a la vez que incrementar las capacidades en evaluaciones de lista roja es claramente realizable, al interactuar con nuestro creciente conjunto de aliados estratégicos. En colaboración con *The Deep Aquarium, Georgia Aquarium, Oceanário de Lisboa y Albuquerque BioPark*, contamos con cinco evaluadores de lista roja que apoyan las Unidades de Biodiversidad Marina y Dulceacuícola, así como a los Grupos de Especialistas de Tiburones y de Plantas Medicinales. Esperamos que el número de aliados y evaluadores incremente en los próximos meses, con el potencial de consolidar un equipo capaz de evaluar miles de especies y facilitar docenas de talleres de entrenamiento cada año, así como expandir sustancialmente su interacción con Grupos de Especialistas.

Aunque el programa de financiamiento de [National Geographic Society, Species Recovery on the Brink of Extinction](#) no es técnicamente una oportunidad de capacitación, todo el que ha levantado fondos sabe que la mejor manera de aprender es haciendo ([página 19](#)). Más importante aún, los financiamientos se enfocan en implementar planes de acción desarrollados por Grupos de Especialistas, así que representan un incentivo para crear o actualizar planes de acción e identificar de manera sistemática acciones prioritarias. Este es el primer año de lo que esperamos sean varios años de convocatorias de propuestas, así que mantengan la vista en las [fechas límite trimestrales](#) (4 de enero, 4 de abril, 10 de julio y 3 de octubre), y ¡sigan enviando sus propuestas!

En la sección *Who shapes the SSC?* ([página 21](#)) vamos un paso más allá del análisis general que obtenemos con CSE Data y damos una mirada más cercana al Grupo de Especialistas de Elefante Asiático (GEEAs) y el trabajo de su Presidente, Vivek Menon. Él ha enfocado sus esfuerzos en acercarse a sus miembros, escucharlos, alinear el trabajo del Grupo de Especialistas con las prioridades de CSE, delegar el liderazgo, buscar representatividad geográfica y disciplinaria, así como el balance en edades y género, además de motivar la participación activa de los gobiernos

donde se encuentra la especie, en las actividades del grupo. El GEEAs está prosperando y creemos que esta es una aproximación de la que vale la pena examinar y aprender.

El artículo final, preparado por Dan Ashe, Presidente y CEO de la *Association of Zoos and Aquariums* (AZA) nos deja pensativos ([página 24](#)). Nos recuerda que el propósito final de todo lo que hacemos es salvar especies de la extinción, y que la extinción es para siempre. Al enfocarse en el reciente (y probablemente último) intento de capturar las vaquitas (*Phocoena sinus*) que quedan en vida silvestre en el golfo de California y colocarlas bajo cuidado humano para recuperar su población, Dan argumenta que las herramientas de conservación *ex situ* e *in situ* deben ser parte de nuestro portafolio y que no debemos ser tímidos en emplearlas antes de que sea demasiado tarde. También resalta que “si continuamos actuando como una débil confederación de intereses ambientales, de protección animal, conservación, educación, academia y zoológicos, entonces la extinción nos derrotará con certeza y repetidas veces. Y no tiene que ser así. Debemos actuar unidos.” Aunque él no lo expresa así, sus palabras suenan a una invitación a UICN a liderar el camino en nuestro rol como el integrador global de ONG de conservación, gobiernos y agencias gubernamentales, amplias redes de expertos y cientos de trabajadores alrededor del mundo.

Résumé

Il a fallu beaucoup d'efforts et de persuasion passive, de douzaines (voire certaines) de conversations sur Skype initiées par le personnel du CSE et du Programme Mondial des Espèces, des milliers de emails et une réponse remarquable du réseau pour que les résultats des CSE Data commencent à être perçus. Cet effort nous a permis de contacter les différents groupes CSE pour en savoir davantage sur leurs actions entre 2016-2017 et nous les avons également invités à présenter leur programme quadriennal de 2017-2020. Nous n'entrerons pas dans les détails du processus des CSE Data, vous pouvez consulter l'article de la [page 11](#) pour un aperçu - mais soulignons ici quelques résultats et leçons qui nous paraissent importants pour l'avenir. Nos 43 Résultats Clés en matière d'Espèces sont au centre du [Mandat de CSE](#). Ils constituent l'ossature de tous les objectifs du *Plan Stratégique de Espèces de l'UICN 2017-2020 : Renforcer l'action de conservation* et le lien entre ce plan et le [Programme de l'UICN 2017-2020](#). Jusqu'à lors, près du quart des activités signalées à ce jour par 125 groupes de la CSE ne correspondent à aucun Résultat Clé. Nous espérons que CSE Data nous permettrons de mieux aligner les activités des groupes CSE avec le mandat de la Commission et le travail de l'UICN en général. Un second message qui se dégage de cette analyse initiale est l'identification des partenariats, la formation et amélioration des capacités de base comme principaux besoins des groupes CSE- activités que nous souhaitons certainement renforcer dans un avenir proche.

Liste rouge, la planification de la conservation et la collecte des fonds sont considérés comme les trois choix primordiaux dans les formations prioritaires, et les deux articles suivants du *Rapport Trimestriel* les traitent. Tout d'abord, à la [page 17](#), la réalisation du Baromètre de la Vie (160 000 espèces évaluées pour la *Liste Rouge des Espèces Menacées de l'UICN d'ici 2020*) devient de plus en plus probable, en collaborant activement avec notre groupe croissant de partenaires stratégiques. En collaboration avec «The Deep Aquarium», «Georgia Aquarium», «Ocenário de Lisboa» et «Albuquerque BioPark», nous comptons cinq évaluateurs de la liste rouge qui soutiennent les Unités de Biodiversité Marin et d'Eau Douce et les Groupes de Spécialistes des Requins et des Plantes Médicinales. Le nombre de partenaires et évaluateurs va probablement augmenté au cours des prochains mois, avec la possibilité

de mettre sur pied une équipe capable d'évaluer des milliers d'espèces et d'organiser des douzaines d'ateliers de formation chaque année, tout en s'ouvrant substantiellement dans l'échange d'idées avec les Groupes de Spécialistes.

Bien que le programme de subventions «[Récupération des Espèces au Bord de l'Extinction](#)» de la «[National Geographic Society](#)» ne soit pas techniquement une opportunité de formation, toute personne ayant collecté des fonds sait que la meilleure façon d'apprendre est la pratique ([page 19](#)). Il est capital que les allocations financières soient orientées vers la mise en œuvre de plans d'action élaborés par des Groupes de Spécialistes, favorable ainsi à créer ou à mettre à jour des plans d'action et à identifier systématiquement les actions prioritaires. Il s'agit là de la première année de ce qui devrait être une demande pluriannuelle de propositions, alors gardez un œil sur les [dates d'échéance trimestrielles](#) (4 Janvier, 4 Avril, 10 Juillet et 3 Octobre) et maintenez les propositions à venir !

Dans *Qui façonne la SSC?* ([page 21](#)), nous allons plus loin que l'analyse générale des CSE Data et examinons de plus près le Groupe de Spécialistes des Éléphants d'Asie (GSEAs) et les travaux de son président, Vivek Menon. Il a concentré ses efforts à rejoindre les membres, à les écouter, à cadrer le travail du groupe de spécialistes avec les priorités de CSE, déléguer le pouvoir, rechercher une représentation géographique et disciplinaire, favorisé l'équilibre entre les sexes et l'âge, et encourager la participation active des gouvernements des pays concernés aux activités du groupe. Le GSEAs est en plein essor et nous pensons qu'il s'agit d'une approche qui mérite d'être examinée et d'y tirer des leçons.

Le dernier article de Dan Ashe, Président et Directeur Général de l'Association des Zoos et Aquariums (AZA), nous laisse pensifs ([page 24](#)). Cela nous rappelle que le but ultime de tout ce que nous faisons est de sauver des espèces de l'extinction, et cette extinction est sans fin. En s'appuyant sur la récente (probablement la dernière) tentative de cerner le reste des vaquitas sauvages (*Phocoena sinus*) dans le golfe de Californie et de les prendre en charge pour le rétablissement de la population, il soutient que les outils *ex situ* et *in situ* devrait faire partis de tous notre agenda de conservation, et que nous ne devons pas hésiter à les déployer avant qu'il ne soit trop tard. Il souligne également que «si nous continuons à agir comme de faible confédération environnementaliste, de protection des animaux, de conservation, d'éducation, d'intérêts académiques et zoologiques, alors l'extinction va certainement et à plusieurs reprises nous vaincre. Et ce n'est pas nécessaire. Nous devons rester unis." Il ne le dit pas avec ces mots, mais cela semble être une invitation à l'UICN à montrer la voie en tant que rassembleur mondial d'ONG de conservation, de gouvernements et d'agences gouvernementales, des réseaux d'experts largement distribués et des centaines de personnes déployées dans le monde entier.

RECENT ACTIVITIES



CONFERENCES

WHERE THE SSC CHAIR'S OFFICE ATTENDED OR OFFERED A LECTURE



MEETINGS

WHERE THE SSC CHAIR'S OFFICE PARTICIPATED



INTERVENTIONS

LETTERS SENT TO GOVERNMENTS OR COMPANIES TO PROPOSE ACTIONS FOR SPECIES AND HABITATS UNDER THREAT



Conferences and meetings

(Jon Paul Rodríguez, JPR; Domitilla Raimondo, DR; Rachel Hoffmann, RH; Kira Mileham, KM; Bibiana Sucre, BS; Orlando Salamanca, OS; Simeon Bezeng, SB; Robert Bullock, RB; Brahim Haddane, in representation of SSC, BH)

Meetings

- *GBIF biodiversity information for development (BID) workshop*, 9-13 April, Cape Town, South Africa. (DR, SB)
- *IUCN Synthetic Biology Task Force Meeting*, 13 April, Cambridge, United Kingdom. (RH, BS)
- *World Association of Zoos and Aquariums Midyear Council Meeting*, 16-17 April, Antwerp, Belgium. (KM)
- *IUCN Southern Africa regional Biopama II inception workshop*, 19-20 April, Johannesburg, South Africa. (SB)
- *IUCN Secretariat visit*, 25-26 April, Gland, Switzerland. (RH, JPR)
- *IUCN Commission Chairs Meeting*, 27 April, Gland, Switzerland. (RH, JPR)
- *94th Meeting of the IUCN Council*, 29 April - 2 May, Gland, Switzerland. (JPR)
- *Joint Taxan Advisory Group Meeting*, 30 April - 4 May, Budapest, Hungary. (KM)
- *25th Working Meeting of the IUCN SSC Crocodile Specialist Group*, 7-10 May, Santa Fe, Argentina. (JPR)
- *24th Meeting of the IUCN Red List Committee (RLC24)*, 16-18 May, Kew Gardens, London, UK. (DR, JPR, SB)
- *Country scoping visits to further assess the receiving environment for BASPA implementation*, Kenya: 22-26 May, Gabon: 26-30 May and Cameroon: 31 May - 1 June. (SB)
- *IUCN Eastern Africa regional Biopama II inception workshop*, 24-25 May, Nairobi, Kenya. (SB)
- *Hay Festival, promotion of "Red Alert" (a children's book about threatened species and the Red List)*, 30 May, Hay-on-Wye, United Kingdom. (RH)
- *Species Survival Meeting with Taronga Conservation Society Australia*, 13 June, Sydney, Australia. (KM)
- *Species Survival Meeting with Australian Federal Threatened Species Commissioner*, 14 June, Canberra, Australia. (KM)
- *IUCN US National Committee Meeting*, 18 June, Washington DC, United States of America. (KM)
- *IUCN Oil Palm Task Force Meeting*, 20-21 June, London, United Kingdom. (RH)
- *15th National Biodiversity Planning Forum meeting*, 19-22 June, South African Biodiversity Institute, Cape St Francis, South Africa. (DR, SB)

Conferences

- *Swedish Association of Zoos and Aquariums Annual Conference*, 9-14 April, Eskilstuna, Sweden. (KM)
- *The role of the IUCN Species Survival Commission in saving the world's species*, 8 May, 25th Working Meeting of the IUCN SSC Crocodile Specialist Group, Santa Fe, Argentina. (JPR)
- *La Comisión para la Supervivencia de las Especies de UICN*, 10 May, Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano, Meeting with Members of the Argentinian IUCN National Committee, Buenos Aires, Argentina. (JPR)
- *Retos para la conservación de especies amenazadas: perspectiva de la Comisión para la Supervivencia de las Especies de UICN*, 10 May, Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Pensamiento Latinoamericano, Buenos Aires, Argentina. (JPR)
- *European Association of Zoos and Aquaria Directors' Day Conference*, 18-20 April, Antwerp, Belgium. (KM)
- *Zoo and Aquarium Association of Australasia Annual Conference*, 21-24 May, Wellington, New Zealand. (KM)
- *Community Traditional Knowledge for Conservation Case Study: Berber Community in the High Atlas Mountains-Morocco*, 28-30 May 2018, International Conference Communities, Conservation and Livelihood, Saint's Mary University Halifax Nova Scotia, Canada. (BH)

Interventions

High-level interventions address conservation issues of serious concern, through letters to governments or companies which highlight species and habitats under threat, and propose actions on their behalf. Each letter provides the necessary background and technical information, and a thorough review process led by Rachel Hoffmann, engaging the appropriate Specialist Groups, experts across the network, the IUCN regional offices and IUCN programmes.

- ***Inclusion of the Atewa Forest at Kyebi in current plans to develop an integrated bauxite industry in Ghana.*** On 30 April 2018, Inger Andersen (IUCN Director General) and Jon Paul Rodríguez, sent a letter to His Excellency President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, to express their concern for the loss of a natural asset of enormous national importance and great global significance that could result from the development of bauxite in the Atewa Forest at Kyebi. Atewa was designated by the Ghanaian government as a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area, and it is now also recognized internationally as a Key Biodiversity Area, as it is home to many thousands of species of which over 100 are at some risk of global extinction. Among them are the Endangered White-naped Mangabey (*Cercocebus lunulatus*), a primate whose global range is almost entirely within Ghana; the Critically Endangered (CR) Togo Slippery Frog (*Conraua derooi*), found only in Atewa Forest and in the Togo-Volta hills, and the plant *Aubregria taiensis* (also CR).

Two species of butterfly, *Mylothris atewa* and *Anthene helpsi*, a frog *Phrynobatrachus afiibirago* and a plant *Monanthotaxis atewensis* are found in Atewa Forest and nowhere else in the world (and are very likely also to be assessed as CR due to their severely limited geographical range). Recent work undertaken by IUCN members in Ghana has reinforced the significance of Atewa Forest for the livelihoods and welfare of many millions of Ghanaians living downstream of the forest, which is vital for providing water to the citizens of Accra. Analysis of a range of development scenarios has shown that effective protection of the forest yields the greatest economic value over a 30-year period - an estimated US\$1, 157 million - to local communities, downstream residents and the national treasury when compared to scenarios that include mining. These benefits will be severely compromised if bauxite is exploited in Atewa Forest. The letter respectfully requests the government to consider extending the current level of protection in perpetuity, for the benefit of all Ghana, by upgrading the forest to a National Park.

- **Proposed guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*) commercial harvest in Santa Cruz Province, Argentina.** On 14 May 2018, Ana Di Pangracio (Executive Director of Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, and Chair of Argentinian National Committee and South American Regional Committee of IUCN), Jon Paul Rodríguez, Benito A. González (Chair, South American Camelids Specialist Group) and Javier Pereira (President, Argentinian Society for the Study of Mammals), sent a letter to Rabino Sergio Bergman (Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development), Diego Moreno (Secretary of Environmental Policy for Natural Resources), Carlos Merenson (National Biodiversity Director), Guillermo Bernaudo (Ministry of Agroindustry), Mariano Mayer (Ministry of Production), Jorge Aguado and Fernando Javier Ocampo (Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation), Carlos Ospital (National Council for Scientific and Technical Investigations), Nicolás Quintana (Jefatura de Gabinete de Ministros), Mariano Ortega (National Institute of Industrial Technology), Gustavo Adolfo Soto Kruse and Anabel Soulés (National Service of Health and Agricultural Product Quality), and Javier de Urquiza (Agrarian Council of Santa Cruz), to express their concern for news of expansion of a commercial harvest of guanacos to initiate within the next few days. The proposal was to increase the harvest from 200 authorized exceptionally in October 2017, to 6,000 in 2018. Historically, guanacos have declined by more than 90% in population size and 70% in geographical distribution. The letter called for better documentation and monitoring of guanaco abundance, clear and transparent traceability rules for guanaco products, engagement with all stakeholders, better understanding of the interaction between sheep farming and guanaco wild populations, and explicit agreement between the different provinces where guanacos live under different conditions and use policies. Although no formal response has been received yet, unofficial news indicated that the harvest had been postponed at least until September because of poor weather conditions.



Richard Lansdown explaining the monitoring protocol for Malabar River-lily (*Crinum malabaricum*) to students from the Government College, Kasaragod, Kerala 2017. Photo © Shijith Raghavan

SSC DATA at a glance

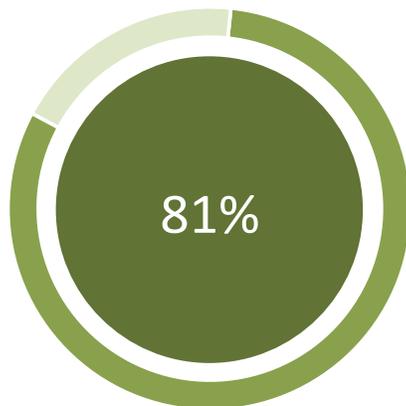
Towards a better understanding of SSC's impact on species conservation

SSC DATA is a tool designed to collect information related to past, current and projected activities and products of IUCN SSC groups. It will help us describe and monitor the impact of the SSC network, identify needs, design strategies to address them, and generate Species Annual Reports.

After the SSC DATA process was launched on December 2017, IUCN SSC groups progressively became familiar with the new way to report their targets, activities and results. Soon, we started receiving the first SSC DATA files and initiated data processing and analysis, which will allow us to evaluate the achievements of the SSC network during 2016-2017 and track its dynamics for the rest of the 2017-2020 quadrennium, and beyond.

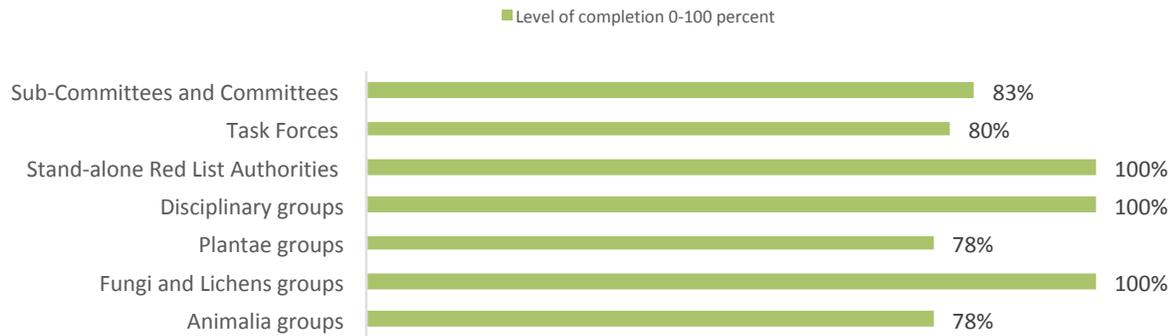
To date, 81% of all IUCN SSC groups have created their SSC DATA profiles, this means 125 of a total of 154 groups.

Percentage of SSC groups with SSC DATA profiles created



Stand-alone Red List Authorities, Fungi and Lichens, and Disciplinary Specialist Groups have reached 100% of completion, while 78-83% of Animalia and Plantae Specialist Groups, Task Forces and Sub-Committees and Committees have completed and submitted their information.

Completion level of SSC DATA profiles per type of SSC group

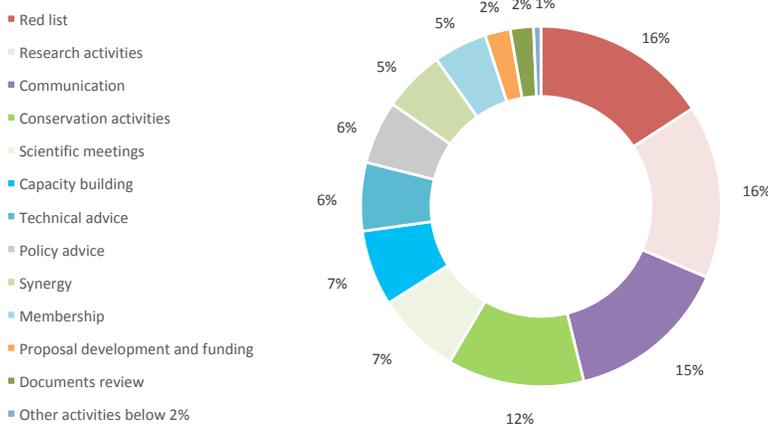


In this advance report, we provide the main findings and general conclusions derived from our first analysis of the SSC DATA profiles available to date.

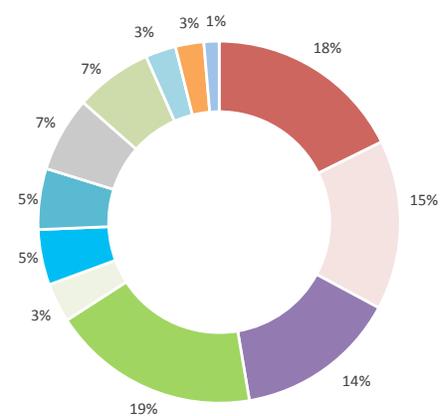
Wide range of SSC activities

We identified 13 general categories of activities reported by SSC groups during 2016 and 2017. Activities most frequently reported were *Red List* (16%), *Research* (16%), *Communication* (15%) and *Conservation* (including conservation planning, 12%). This means that about 60% of all activities conducted were related to species assessments and reassessments, scientific research on a wide variety of topics (e.g., taxonomy, ecology, conservation biology and population genetics), communication through a broad spectrum of media, scientific publications and scientific meetings, and conservation planning and actions conducted on animal and plant populations, species, ecosystems and human communities.

Activities performed by SSC groups during the 2016-2017 period



Targets to be addressed by SSC groups during the 2017-2020 quadrennium



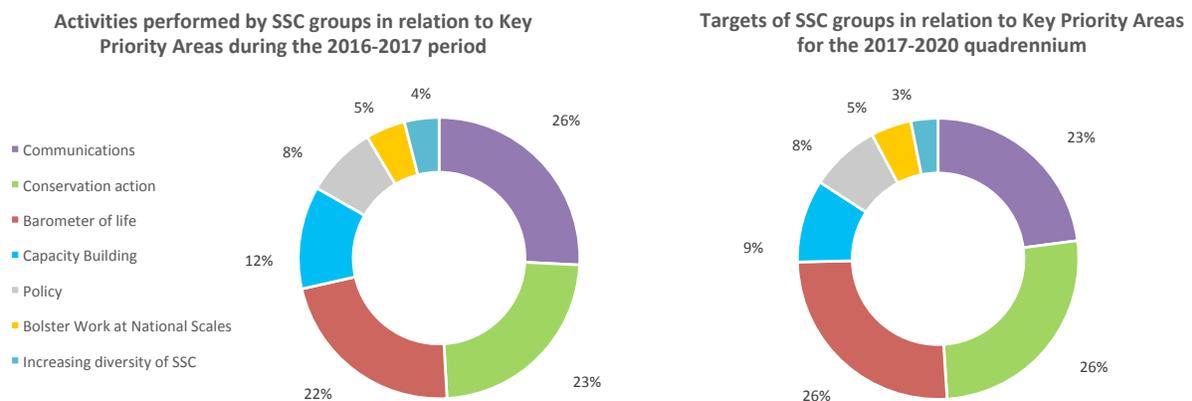
In relation to the targets set for the 2017-2020 quadrennium, we found that the proposed activities more frequently mentioned were the same as those reported for 2016-2017: *Conservation* (including conservation planning, 19%), *Red List* (18%), *Research* (15%) and *Communications* (14%). This indicates that the majority of groups plan to continue giving priority to the type of actions they have carried out in the past two years.



Activities and targets poorly addressed included *Proposal development and funding*, *Documents reviews*, and *Agreements*, which were reported at a rate between 0 and 3% of all the activities registered

Key Priority Areas (KPAs). What is SSC's focus?

The SSC Chair's Office established several Key Priority Areas (KPAs) for the 2017-2020 quadrennium, in alignment with the Species Strategic Plan. We analyzed the distribution of past and future activities reported by all our SSC groups in relation to these areas.

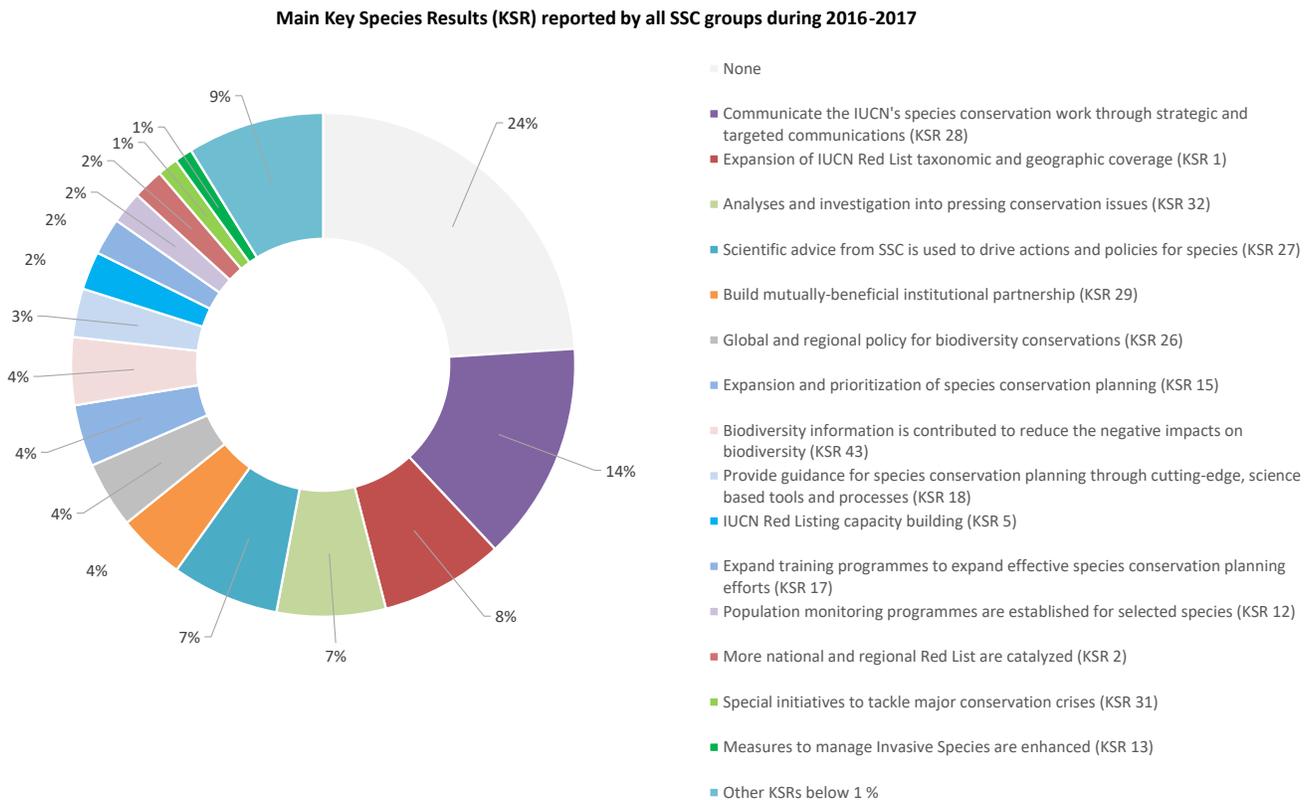


Most of the activities reported by SSC groups for 2016-2017 corresponded to three KPAs: *Communications* (26%), *Conservation action* (including conservation planning, 23%) and *Barometer of life* (22%). The majority of targets proposed for the 2017-2020 quadrennium are also circumscribed to the same KPAs: *Conservation action* (including conservation planning, 26%), *Barometer of life* (26%), and *Communications* (23%).

Other KPAs such as *Increasing diversity of SSC* and *Bolstering work at national scales* were less frequently included in both activities reported and targets defined for the quadrennium.

Key Species Results (KSR), enhancing conservation action

Key Species Results (KSRs) are the core of the 2017-2020 Species Strategic Plan. In this sense, it is considered of great value to analyze these first results under the KSR framework.



KSRs most frequently reported were referred to *Communication* (KSR 28), with 14% of all activities, *Red List coverage* (KSR 1), with 8%, and *Analyses and investigation into pressing conservation issues* (KSR 32) with 7%.

A considerable number of activities reported by SSC groups for the 2016-2017 period do not match any of the KSRs of the Strategic Plan. This result suggests that the current KSR framework does not represent well the wide variety of results obtained by SSC groups.

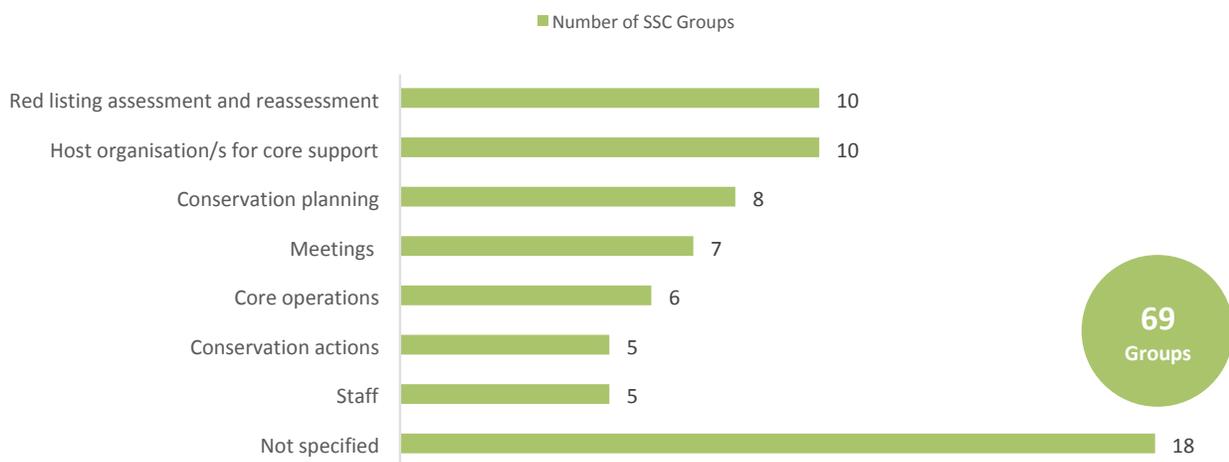
It is important to note that the present KSR framework is composed of targets that vary greatly in their specificity, some being quite broad, while others are very narrow. For this reason, we cannot expect an equal coverage of the activities and targets of SSC groups through the different KSRs. There is much more to be explored, and we continue to move forward to achieve a better representation of the work of SSC groups. This might include the creation of additional KSRs and reconsideration of several ones rarely reported by the groups. It will probably also mean the need to completely revamp the KSR framework for the next quadrennium, as KSR's are part of the Commission Mandate that is approved at the World Conservation Congress.

Needs of the SSC network

The primary needs of SSC groups can be summarized in three categories: (1) partnerships or funding, (2) workshops and training, and (3) increase group's core capacities.

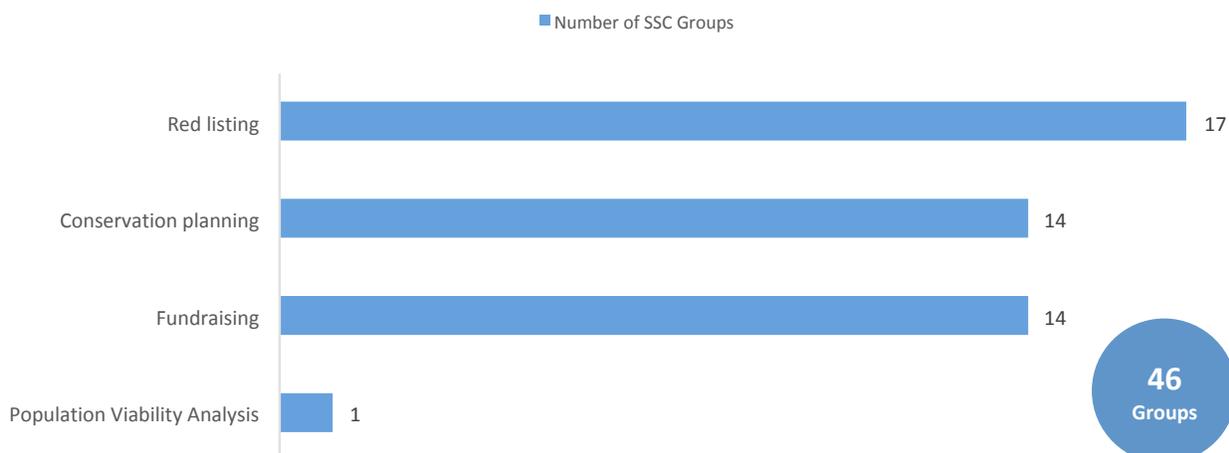
A considerably large number of groups (69) ask for *partnerships or funding*, mainly to cover their most frequent activities: red list assessments and reassessments (10) and conservation planning (8), while some of them request a host organization/s for core support (10). However, it is important to highlight that the largest proportion of funding needs (18 groups) were not specified.

Partnerships or Funding needs

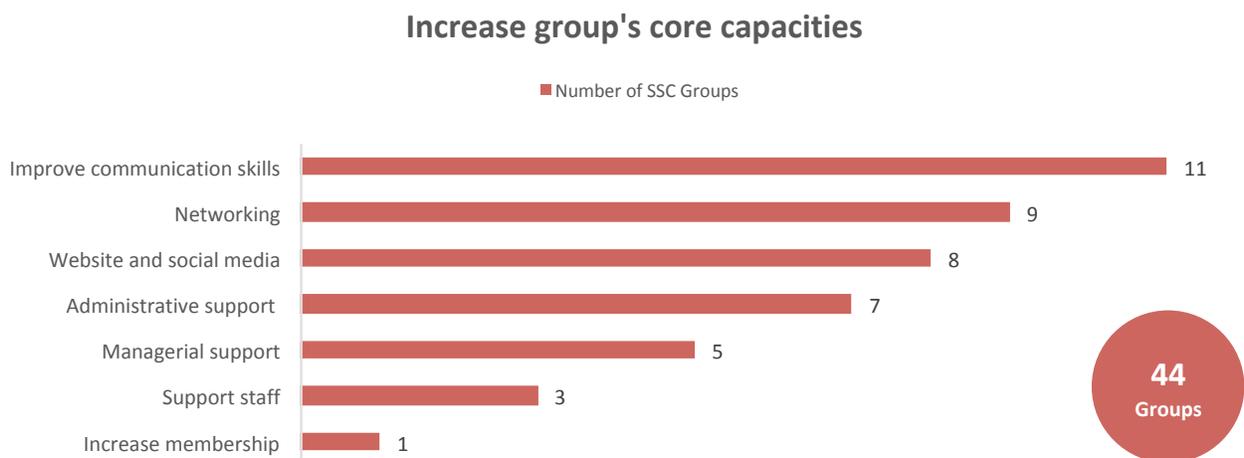


Regarding *workshops and training needs*, there is a special interest in our groups for being trained in red listing (17), followed by conservation planning (14) and fundraising (14) as the main training requests within the network.

Workshops and Training needs



We also see an interest for increasing *Group's core capacities* (44 groups). Some SGs want to enhance their communication across the network or to develop a formal communication strategy (11), as well as increase networking opportunities (9). Others expressed interest in enhancing their social media presence through the development, rebuilding or maintenance of their websites and social media platforms (8). Administrative support is also required (7).



More details are still needed, however, as 44% of targets collected do not provide information on what would be needed to achieve them. On the other hand, approximately 5% of targets already have the support required, and in other cases the groups have already identified the organization/s that they need to work with in order to achieve their goals.

SSC in numbers

The SSC Chair's Office continues to analyze the information collected through SSC DATA to improve the strategy as well as to find innovative ways of supporting SGs to accomplish all their targets in a timely manner and according to best practices.

By the end of the year, we expect to release a special edition of the SSC Quarterly Report "SSC in numbers", where we aim to show all descriptive statistics of a broad range of activities and targets set by the SSC network, as well as their support needs. Through SSC DATA we expect to help the network track and monitor if the activities developed by SGs are genuinely contributing to a positive impact on species survival.

We also would like to hear from our community of IUCN SSC groups what additional information and statistics could be of interest for a more comprehensive understanding of the SSC network dynamics, impacts and needs in its quest for species conservation.



Rob Bullock during a Red List workshop
Photo © The Deep Hull

Zoos, aquariums and botanic gardens helping to deliver the IUCN 'Barometer of Life'

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is a crucial tool for informing species conservation. But the investment of time and expertise required to assess species for inclusion weighs heavily on many voluntary IUCN SSC Specialist Groups; sometimes limiting their ability to move beyond assessments into planning and driving conservation actions.

A new team of strategic partners is joining SSC to help overcome this challenge. The SSC Chair's Office has now partnered with four leading zoos, aquariums and botanic gardens who are stepping forward to be the first of ten planned IUCN SSC Red List Hubs. Each organization is employing full-time staff committed to working with Specialist Groups to assess species for inclusion on the Red List. In the future these assessors are intended to also become trainers focused on schooling even more partner-based Red List Officers.

In 2016 The Deep Aquarium employed Rob Bullock as a full-time Red List Officer on their staff to work with the Marine Biodiversity Unit. Within his first year Rob helped to assess over 600 species and supported the facilitation of three red listing expert workshops. His role has now evolved to work with the SSC Chair's Office team to grow, train and mentor similar partnerships with other zoo and aquarium staff around the world.

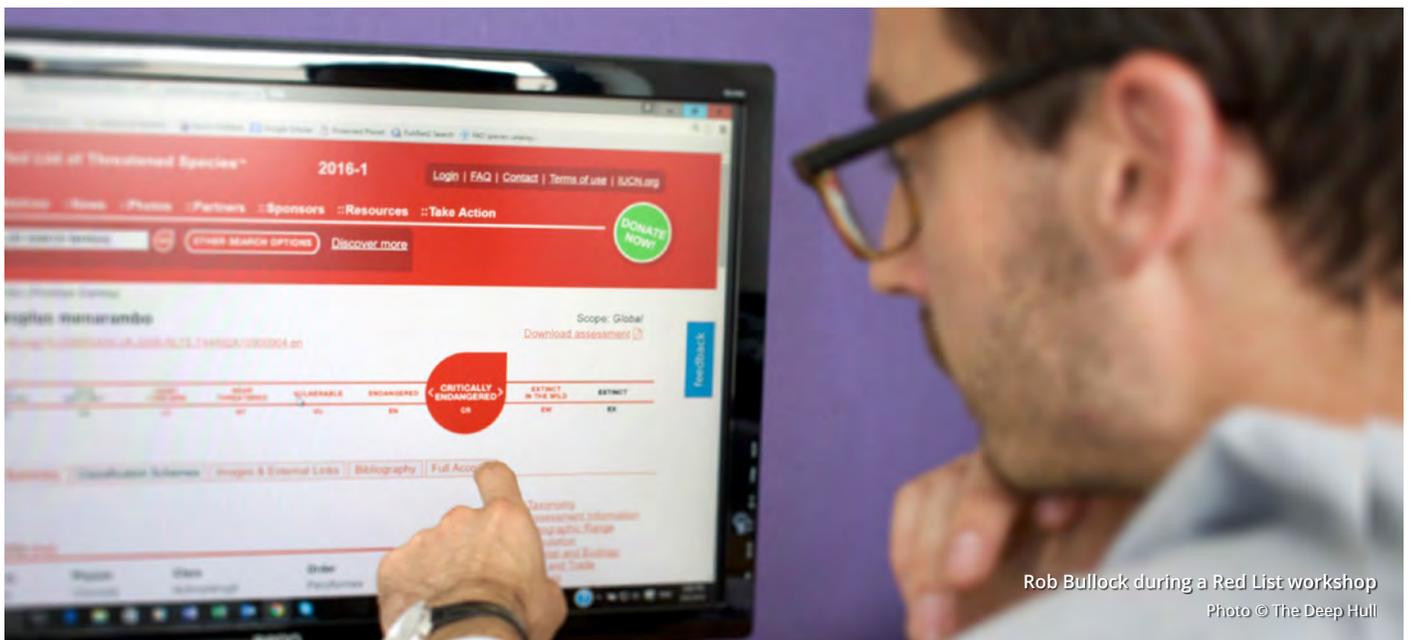
The Georgia Aquarium joined the initiative in 2017 through allocating time of their staff member, Katelyn Herman, to work with the Shark Specialist Group. She is supporting priority assessments for the Global Shark Trends project which aims to assess all the world's shark species by 2020.

In July this year Ocenario de Lisboa, Portugal, appointed Ana Catarina Fonseca to work with the Marine Biodiversity Unit on assessing marine species, with an initial focus on species held in aquariums across Europe. In the same month Albuquerque BioPark in New Mexico, USA, employed two full-time Red List Officers, Tim Lyons working with the Freshwater Biodiversity Unit and Clayton Meredith supporting the Medicinal Plant Specialist Group. BioPark's plan is to soon increase this partnership to three Red List Officers.

The aim is that once ten hubs have been established by 2019, these partnerships will help contribute around 5,000 species assessments for the Red List per year. This will contribute to the ambitious 'Barometer of Life' target IUCN has set to have 160,000 species assessed by 2020, and to improve the sustainability of the Red List well beyond this.

Executive Director of the Albuquerque BioPark Society, Julie Miller Rugg, is excited about the partnership and its ability to amplify their conservation efforts. "For Albuquerque to be partnered with a global organization that is making a difference in the world was an excellent opportunity. BioPark is not just about holding animals and plants; we also need to be about making a difference in the world and having a conservation impact. It's pretty exciting to be helping lead this initiative," Miller Rugg said.

The motivation behind these partnerships is to better connect the expertise and conservation efforts of leading zoos, aquariums and botanic gardens with that of SSC. While the partnerships are starting with red listing as their focus, it is hoped they will evolve into working collaboratively on planning and implementing priority conservation actions to ultimately increase our collective ability to save species.



Rob Bullock during a Red List workshop
Photo © The Deep Hull



Plitvice National Park, Croatia
Photo © Kira Mileham

Boosting SSC's conservation actions through the Species Recovery request for proposals

Driving high priority actions to save species is now more achievable for IUCN SSC Specialist Groups thanks to new funding support from National Geographic Society's (NGS) Species Recovery grant program.

Earlier this year SSC partnered with NGS to add a request for proposals to their quarterly grant portfolio – a grant focused exclusively on funding species conservation action priorities as identified by SSC action plans or Specialist Group endorsement.

Each quarter the grant will award \$30,000 - \$50,000 to around 20 projects seeking to implement on-the-ground actions outlined as priorities in published SSC species conservation action plans. If no plan yet exists for a species the applicant can contact the Chair(s) of the relevant Specialist Group for a letter of endorsement attesting that the project is a high priority for the taxa.

As well as aligning with SSC identified priorities, the NGS Species Recovery grant also relies on a reviewer team of eight SSC Specialist Group chairs. They provide expert feedback on the quality of the proposals ahead of final selection by the NGS team.

“One of the most exciting aspects of this grant is that funds are not restricted by taxa or geography, meaning the program is available to support the priority conservation actions of any SSC Specialist Group; whether their work is on animals, plants or fungi”, commented Kira Mileham, Director of Strategic Partnerships for SSC.

It is hoped that this initiative will not only support more tangible conservation actions to reverse species declines, but that it will also serve to incentivize more strategic conservation planning by Specialist Groups. Additionally, the attention this program puts on SSC action plans will hopefully see an increase in conservation agents globally referring to these plans, and collaborating with Specialist Groups to identify conservation priorities.

SSC Chair, Jon Paul Rodríguez sees this partnership as an important step in the strategic direction of SSC. “I have asked Specialist Groups chairs what they see as their role, their major activities. They totally understand the importance of the Red List and are happy to continue supporting species risk assessments, but they have often said to me that they do not want to stop there, that what they really would like to do is to save species. This grant program with NGS is a great opportunity to do just that.”

The first round of proposals closed on April 4 and drew 161 high quality applications, of which 20 were recommended for funding. A high portion of the projects submitted to date are focused on mammals and birds. While these projects are worthy and often urgent themselves, we are hoping to also encourage more aquatic, plant, fungi and invertebrate submissions in the future, to ensure the benefits of this program reach the diverse taxa that SSC represents.

The current round of applications closes on October 3, 2018. However, the NGS grant cycle is continuous with applications opening again shortly after each deadline and funding selections made every three months. You can find out more about the grants and how to apply on [NGS' website](#).

We want to encourage our Specialist Groups, as well as IUCN's worldwide conservation network to participate and submit proposals seeking to halt biodiversity decline by implementing species conservation plans. If you need assistance or have questions about this call, please write to speciesrecovery@ssc.iucn.org.

GROUP



WHO SHAPES THE SSC?

Leadership and management changes in SSC: the experience of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group

Chairing an IUCN SSC Specialist Group is no easy task. It requires mobilizing a network of volunteers across the globe to develop strategies and plans, and to implement them. On top of this, there can often be changes in leadership, which can naturally be challenging. However, changes in leadership can be good moments to reconsider the operation of a group and to implement new practices to boost its activities and impacts. This article shares the experience of a recent change in leadership and management: the Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG).

Soon after his appointment as Chair of the AsESG on October 2015, Vivek Menon felt the need to establish a more direct contact with the membership of his group. He held regional meetings to approach part of the members on a more one-on-one manner and together formulate plans to strengthen the functioning of the group to help achieve its goals.

A first set of four Working Groups inside the SG were established in 2016 to:

1. develop the mandate of the group,
2. develop the mandate of the journal *Gajah*,
3. boost the membership, and
4. organize the 8th meeting of the AsESG.

The mandate developed for AsESG derived from the four objectives outlined by SSC:

1. assess and monitor Asian elephants in all 13 range states,
2. analyze the threats to wild populations and set forth guidelines for wild and captive management,
3. facilitate and undertake conservation action and welfare issues along governments, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, and
4. convene expertise for Asian elephant conservation.

Work on the membership had a focus on building rapport among members and with the new leadership. All members were asked to introduce themselves and their work with Asian elephants to the rest of the

group. It was also considered important to diversify the geographic representation and skill diversity, as well as the age and gender balance of the members. A Membership Advisor Committee of four people is now in charge of receiving applications and recommending membership; one of these four people rotates out annually.

Involving the government of the 13 range countries is fundamental for the work of AsESG. Therefore, a new role of the group was created, where range countries may nominate one of their officers as *ex-officio* members of AsESG. These roles are based on a governmental post on each country, and not on the person. So far 12 range countries have an *ex-officio* member of the SG.

Holding an in-person meeting of AsESG had not been possible in nearly 14 years. Meeting was considered key, as more dynamic discussions were needed to develop new plans and strategies for the group. The main challenge was securing the resources for the meeting and this required active fundraising by the Chair, reaching support from Elephant Family and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.



During the 8th meeting of the AsESG, the first four Working Groups presented their results, and their deliverables were further discussed and finalized. Also, new Working Groups were created, to address different topics:

- assist countries in preparation and implementation of action plans,
- address emergency issues, like the decline of elephant population in Vietnam,
- develop guidelines for issues such as rehabilitation, habitat management, welfare, and human-elephant conflict, and
- monitor elephant distribution, populations and threats.

Each Working Group is led by a convener and has around five members, which might include people external to AsESG, according to the needs of the task. Working Groups deliver progress reports to the Chair about every two months and present their outcomes at AsESG meetings. Working Groups are finalized as their outcomes are completed, while others continue to work and new Working Groups are created.

To support the planning, progress tracking, delivery of results and fundraising, AsESG hired a Program Manager, with high technical expertise, but also managerial experience. The terms of reference for this position were also discussed and agreed on the 8th meeting of the AsESG.

This distribution of responsibilities among the members of AsESG has been a key trait of its new leadership and management. Different members perform the roles of Chair, Red List Authority Coordinator, Conveners of Working Groups, Membership Advisor Committee, *Gajah* Editorial Board, and Program Manager. By sharing responsibilities, they have achieved both a balanced distribution of the load and the development of a team of leaders able to take the group forward into the future.



Elephant herd at Kaziranga National Park,
Elephas maximus indicus, EN
Photo © Dr Sandeep Kr Tiwari



Black footed ferret, *Mustela nigripes*, EN
Photo © Kira Mileham

The immeasurable distance between late and too late

learning from the ex situ attempt for the Vaquita

Dan Ashe

President and CEO, Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)

*We all know many axioms of life and literature that warn about the consequences of **too little, too late**. William Shakespeare wrote, “Better three hours too soon than a minute too late” and Ralph Waldo Emerson penned, “You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.” And despite the broad consensus within the scientific and environmental community that we are living amid climate and extinction crises, we continue to wait, and watch, as species after species withers toward the permanence of extinction.*

Sometimes, it is unavoidable. Sometimes it is not, but we continue our traditions of failing to act until it is too late.

Today, we are again on extinction watch, witnessing the world’s smallest cetacean – the Vaquita porpoise – succumb to the inexorable pressures of illegal fishing and trafficking in totoaba swim bladders. Last reports have the population at no more than 15. Last November, we watched hopefully (critics said, *hopelessly!*) as a last minute and heroic rescue was undertaken to bring as

many as possible of the then-30 remaining individuals into human care (I'll avoid the polarizing term "captivity"). It was a desperate effort, but desperation was all we had left. That effort failed, and once again, we have failed to understand what author Og Mandino calls, "the immeasurable distance between late and too late."

We could have saved the Vaquita. We have the technology and talent to capture and to learn to care for them. Had we deployed those assets when there were 1000 or 500 or perhaps even 100 Vaquita remaining, there is no doubt we would have succeeded. So, why didn't we?

My theory is that there is a continuing and debilitating bias within and among environmental and academic communities regarding the practice of conservation breeding. I am not going to fully explore the origins of, or remedies for, this bias in a 750-word editorial, but that exploration must be undertaken. Nature is a diminishing resource; we are consuming it voraciously. We cannot save every species, but we can save many. The Vaquita is one that could have been saved.

Certainly, one bias is that bringing a species into human care will discourage or distract efforts to deal with the causes of its decline, like illegal or unsustainable fishing. In the case of Vaquita, I asked this question of a long-time friend and colleague in the environmental community: Can you give me a single example of where that has actually happened? They could not, although I offered no less than a dozen examples of where the opposite has happened, including California condors and lead poisoning; black-footed ferrets and sylvatic plague; wolves and social stigmas about wolves; Guam kingfisher and brown tree snakes; and on and on and on.

It is time for us to come together. Human society cannot support a world population of 7.5 billion, let alone 10 billion, and stop extinction. But if we continue acting as a weak confederacy of environmentalist, animal protection, conservation, education, academic and zoological interests, then extinction will certainly and repeatedly defeat us. And it doesn't need to be so. We must stand united. We must build conservation strategies that carefully and strategically integrate *in situ* and *ex situ* strategies, and reject the notions that one is ethically or intentionally superior, or pursuing one will make the other subservient or unnecessary.

The distance between late and too late is immeasurable, but we continue to act as if we can measure it, and determine the precise moment at which *ex situ* means can be deployed. The Vaquita experience, once again, reminds us of the hubris in that position. We will lose the Vaquita because we were too timid, too divided, and too vested in solving the root-problems to bother with stopping to save the species itself.

Hopefully, this time, we have learned.

I propose an immediate, determined and purposeful dialogue among our confederation of interests, aiming to inspire unification and avoid the next Vaquita experience. Let's examine our history of successes and failures, and let's set ourselves onto a new course of integrated conservation planning. The AZA community is dedicating itself to Saving Animals From Extinction, applying awareness, education, inspiration, government relations, political savvy, communication, fund raising, friend raising, arm twisting, and yes, both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation as essential ingredients to success.

Let's begin anew, and create a better future.

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Henri Pittier National Park, Venezuela

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