



The IUCN Species Survival Commission

QUARTERLY REPORT
JUNE 2020



Glossy Ibis, *Plegadis falcinellus*, LC
Photo © Gopi Sundar

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we continue to adapt to being away from our offices, laboratories and field sites, working remotely further expands. By now, we are all experts on various on-line meeting tools, electronic breakout rooms and virtual backgrounds. Although the frequency and geographical coverage of our conferences, meetings and interventions have clearly declined, we continue to respond to invitations from our colleagues around the world. We would be happy to participate in SSC group meetings and discussions, so please let us know if we can get together and talk.

Two conservation interventions were pursued this quarter. Thanks to efforts from Equid Specialist Group members and other stakeholders, in May 2020, the Mongolian government announced the creation of the 4,100-km² Khomyn Tal National Park to ensure viability of the Przewalski's horse population, as well as contribute to ecosystem restoration and sustainable development for the local community. A second intervention focused on the risks associated to the Snowy 2.0 Pumped Hydro Scheme Main Works, urging the

Plumeria sp. and Tabebuia chrysanth
Photo © David Southall

Minister for the Environment to reconsider the measures proposed as mitigation for the biosecurity risks posed by this development. On 30 June, despite the effort of conservationists, the Snowy scheme was approved with no external review. SSC will continue to monitor how the situation develops.

A major activity of the SSC network these last few months has been finalizing the draft 2021-2024 IUCN Species Strategic Plan. The week of 22-26 June dozens of SSC Leaders, Secretariat Staff and Chair Office team members participated in 10 virtual sessions, two for each of the five components of the Species Conservation Cycle: Network, Assess, Plan, Act and Communicate. In parallel, we have been working on renewing the leadership of all SSC leaders, and learning how to take advantage of the IUCN Commission System for the next quadrennium. Thanks to new tools developed by the Secretariat, we expect the reappointment of SSC members in 2021 to proceed much more quickly and efficiently than in the past.

Gopi Sundar and Luis Santiago Cano, co-chairs of the Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group, present their major achievement of launching an annual peer-reviewed publication [SIS Conservation](#), accessible online at no cost. Many congratulations and sincere wishes of seeing it grow and succeed!

A lot has been written about the link between the consumption of animal-sourced food by humans and the climatic and biodiversity crises. Luis Fernando Marin da Fonte and Ariadne Angulo of the Amphibian Specialist Group, argue that the issue continues to receive insufficient attention, especially within SSC and IUCN. They invite our members to re-imagine more equitable and environmentally respectful agro-economic systems, as well as the implementation of structural changes to achieve IUCN's vision of *"A just world that values and conserves nature."*

Jointly with our partners of the Sumatran Rhino Survival Alliance, we continue advancing with the Sumatran Rhino Breeding Program. All rhinos at the sanctuaries are under the care of a dedicated group of scientists, veterinarians and animal caretakers who ensure that each animal is healthy. The female rhinos' reproductive cycles are monitored closely to assure that breeding with one of the males may take place at the best possible time in order to maximize breeding success. Dr. Jeff Holland recently joined the SSC Chair's Office team as Senior Advisor for Training, Husbandry and Capture of Sumatran Rhinos. His duties include ensuring capacity, procedures, and plans are in place for rhino captures including establishing national Sumatran rhino capture standard operating procedures.

We close our *Quarterly Report* with an interview of Christine and Urs Breitenmoser, co-chairs of the Cat Specialist Group. For more than 30 years, Christine and Urs have worked in carnivore conservation and, since 2001, lead the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group. The activities of the Cat Specialist Group are designed using a framework to ensure they are truly making a difference to the survival of cat species: they assess species for inclusion on the Red List, use these assessments to convene multi-stakeholder planning and then leverage these plans to mobilize action. Thus, they built the foundation for the Species Conservation Cycle now adopted throughout the SSC: Network, Assess, Plan, Act and Communicate.

Resumen ejecutivo

Mientras seguimos adaptándonos a estar lejos de nuestras oficinas, laboratorios y trabajos de campo, el teletrabajo se expande aún más. Para este momento, todos somos expertos utilizando herramientas para reuniones en línea, salas electrónicas de discusión y diversos entornos virtuales. Aunque la frecuencia y la cobertura geográfica de nuestras conferencias, reuniones e intervenciones han disminuido claramente, seguimos respondiendo a las invitaciones de nuestros colegas de todo el mundo. Estaremos encantados de participar en reuniones y discusiones grupales de la CSE, hágannos saber si podemos reunirnos y hablar.

Dos intervenciones de conservación se llevaron a cabo este trimestre. Gracias a los esfuerzos de los miembros del Grupo de Especialistas en Equinos y otras partes interesadas, en mayo de 2020, el gobierno de Mongolia anunció la creación del Parque Nacional Khomyn Tal, 4.100 km² dedicados a garantizar la viabilidad de la población de caballos de Przewalski, así como contribuir a la restauración del ecosistema y el desarrollo sostenible de la comunidad local. Una segunda intervención se centró en los riesgos asociados en las obras de instalación del esquema hidráulico de bombeo Snowy 2.0, instando al Ministro de Medio Ambiente a reconsiderar las medidas propuestas como mitigación de los riesgos de bioseguridad que plantea este desarrollo. El 30 de junio, a pesar del esfuerzo de los conservacionistas, el esquema Snowy fue aprobado sin revisión externa. La CSE continuará monitoreando el desarrollo de esta situación.

Una de las principales actividades de la red CSE en estos últimos meses ha sido finalizar el borrador del Plan Estratégico de Especies 2021-2024. La semana del 22 al 26 de junio, docenas de líderes CSE, personal de la Secretaría UICN y miembros del equipo de la Oficina CSE participaron en 10 sesiones virtuales, dos para cada uno de los cinco componentes del Ciclo de Conservación de Especies: Conectar, Evaluar, Planificar, Actuar y Comunicar. Paralelamente, hemos estado trabajando para renovar el liderazgo de todos los líderes de la CSE y aprendiendo cómo aprovechar el Commission System de la UICN para el próximo cuatrienio. Gracias a las nuevas herramientas desarrolladas por la Secretaría, esperamos que la renovación de los miembros del CSE en 2021 se realice de manera mucho más rápida y eficiente que en el pasado.

Gopi Sundar y Luis Santiago Cano, copresidentes del Grupo de Especialistas en Cigüeña, Ibis y Platalea, presentan un gran logro al lanzar una publicación anual revisada por pares llamada [SIS Conservation](#), accesible en línea sin costo alguno. ¡Muchas felicidades y nuestros sinceros deseos por ver esta publicación crecer y tener éxito!

Mucho se ha escrito en relación al vínculo entre el consumo de alimentos de origen animal y las crisis climáticas y de biodiversidad. Luis Fernando Marin da Fonte y Ariadne Angulo, del Grupo de Especialistas en Anfibios, sostienen que el tema sigue recibiendo una atención insuficiente, especialmente dentro de la CSE y la UICN. Invitan a nuestros miembros a reimaginar sistemas agroeconómicos más equitativos y respetuosos con el medio ambiente, así como a la implementación de cambios estructurales para lograr la visión de la UICN de "*Un mundo justo que valore y conserve la naturaleza*".

Junto a nuestros socios en la Alianza para la Supervivencia del Rinoceronte de Sumatra, continuamos avanzando con el programa de cría de rinocerontes de Sumatra. Todos los rinocerontes en los santuarios están bajo el cuidado de un grupo dedicado de científicos, veterinarios y cuidadores que se aseguran de que cada animal esté sano. Los

ciclos reproductivos de las rinocerontes hembras se monitorean muy de cerca para asegurar que la reproducción con uno de los machos pueda realizarse en el mejor momento posible y maximizar el éxito reproductivo. El Dr. Jeff Holland se unió recientemente al equipo de la Oficina de la CSE como Asesor Principal para Capacitación, Manejo y Captura de Rinocerontes de Sumatra. Sus deberes incluyen asegurar la capacidad, los procedimientos y planes para las capturas de éstos, incluyendo, el establecimiento de procedimientos operativos nacionales de captura de rinocerontes de Sumatra.

Cerramos este Informe trimestral con una entrevista a Christine y Urs Breitenmoser, copresidentes del Grupo de Especialistas en Felinos. Durante más de 30 años, Christine y Urs han trabajado en la conservación de felinos y, desde 2001, lideran este grupo de especialistas en la CSE. Las actividades del Grupo de Especialistas en Felinos están diseñadas utilizando un marco para garantizar que realmente haya una diferencia en la supervivencia de las especies: evalúan las especies para su inclusión en la Lista Roja, utilizan estas evaluaciones para acordar la planificación junto a múltiples partes interesadas y luego movilizan para la implementación de esas acciones. En resumen, construyeron las bases para el Ciclo de Conservación de Especies ahora adoptado en toda la CSE: Conectar, Evaluar, Planificar, Actuar y Comunicar.

Résumé

Alors que nous continuons à nous adapter à l'éloignement de nos bureaux, laboratoires et sites de terrain, le travail à distance se développe d'avantage. À ce jour, nous sommes tous experts en matière d'utilisation d'outils de réunion en ligne, de salles de réunion électroniques et d'arrière-plans virtuels. Bien que la fréquence et la couverture géographique de nos conférences, réunions et interventions aient clairement diminué, nous continuons à répondre aux invitations de nos collègues du monde entier. Nous serions heureux de participer aux réunions et aux discussions des groupes de la CSE, alors faites-nous savoir si nous pouvons nous réunir et en discuter.

Deux interventions de conservation ont été menées ce trimestre. Grâce aux efforts des membres du Groupe de Spécialistes des Equidés et d'autres parties prenantes. En mai 2020, le gouvernement Mongol a annoncé la création du parc national de Khomyn Tal, d'une superficie de 4 100 km², afin d'assurer la viabilité de la population de chevaux de Przewalski, ainsi que de contribuer à la restauration de l'écosystème et au développement durable de la communauté locale. Une deuxième intervention s'est concentrée sur les risques associés aux principaux ouvrages du projet « Snowy 2.0 Pumped Hydro Scheme », exhortant le Ministre de l'Environnement à reconsidérer les mesures proposées pour atténuer les risques de biosécurité posés par ce développement. Le 30 juin, malgré les efforts des écologistes, le projet Snowy a été approuvé sans examen externe. La CSE continuera à suivre l'évolution de la situation.

Une activité majeure du réseau de la CSE ces derniers mois a été la finalisation du projet de Plan Stratégique de l'UICN pour les espèces 2021-2014. La semaine du 22 au 26 juin, des dizaines de dirigeants de la CSE, des membres du personnel du secrétariat et ceux de l'équipe du bureau du Président ont participé à 10 sessions virtuelles, deux pour chacun des cinq composantes du Cycle de Conservation des Espèces : Réseauter, Evaluer, Planifier, Agir et

Communiquer. En parallèle, nous avons travaillé au renouvellement du leadership de tous les dirigeants de la CSE, et appris à activer le système des Commissions de l'UICN pour le prochain quadriennal. Grâce aux nouveaux outils développés par le secrétariat, nous espérons que la reconduction des membres de la CSE en 2021 se fera déroulera plus rapidement et efficacement que par le passé.

Gopi Sundar et Luis Santiago Cano, co-présidents du groupe de spécialistes sur les Cigognes, les Ibis et les Spatules (oiseaux), ont présentés leur principale réalisation, à savoir le lancement d'une publication annuelle évaluée par des évaluateurs internes du journal « [SIS Conservation](#) », accessible en ligne gratuitement. Toutes nos félicitations et tous nos vœux de succès pour cette réalisation !

On a beaucoup écrit sur le lien entre la consommation d'aliments d'origine animale par l'homme, les crises du climat et de la biodiversité. Luis Fernando Marin da Fonte et Ariadne Angulo, du Groupe de spécialistes des Amphibiens, affirment que la question continue de recevoir une attention insuffisante, notamment au sein de la CSE et de l'UICN. Ils invitent nos membres à ré-imaginer des systèmes agro-économiques plus équitables et respectueux de l'environnement, ainsi que la mise en œuvre de changements structurels pour réaliser la vision de l'UICN à savoir « *Un monde juste qui valorise et conserve la nature* ».

Conjointement avec nos partenaires de l'Alliance pour la survie du rhinocéros de Sumatra, nous continuons de progresser avec le Programme d'élevage du rhinocéros de Sumatra. Tous les rhinocéros présents dans les sanctuaires sont pris en charge par un groupe de scientifiques, de vétérinaires et de gardiens d'animaux dévoués qui veillent à ce que chaque animal soit en bonne santé. Les cycles de reproduction des femelles rhinocéros sont suivis de près pour s'assurer que la reproduction avec un des mâles puisse avoir lieu au meilleur moment possible afin de maximiser le succès de la reproduction. Dr Jeff Holland a récemment rejoint l'équipe du bureau du président du CSE en tant que conseiller principal pour la formation, l'élevage et la capture des rhinocéros de Sumatra. Ses fonctions consistent à s'assurer que les capacités, les procédures et les plans sont en place pour la capture des rhinocéros, notamment en établissant des procédures opérationnelles standard nationales pour la capture des rhinocéros de Sumatra.

Nous clôturons notre rapport trimestriel par une interview de Christine et Urs Breitenmoser, co-présidents du groupe des spécialistes des félins. Depuis plus de 30 ans, Christine et Urs travaillent dans le domaine de la conservation des carnivores et depuis 2001, ils dirigent le groupe des spécialistes des chats de la CSE de l'UICN. Les activités du Groupe de spécialistes des félins sont conçues selon un cadre permettant de s'assurer qu'elles font réellement une différence pour la survie des espèces de félins : ils évaluent les espèces en vue de leur inscription sur la Liste rouge, utilisent ces évaluations pour organiser une planification multipartite et exploitent ensuite ces plans pour mobiliser l'action. Ainsi, ils ont formulé les bases du Cycle de Conservation des Espèces adopté par la CSE à savoir : Réseauter, Evaluer, Planifier, Agir et Communiquer.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

April - June 2020



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





Przewalski's horses in what is now Khomyn Tal National Park. Photo © KTT

Conferences and meetings

(Jon Paul Rodríguez, JPR; Domitilla Raimondo, DR; Kira Mileham, KM; Bibiana Sucre, BS; Orlando Salamanca, OS; Jafet Nassar, JN; Edgard Yerena, EY; Arizaith Rodríguez, AR; Nahomy De Andrade, ND; Mayerlin Ramos, MR; Simeon Bezeng, SB; Robert Bullock, RB)

CONFERENCES

- *La Supervivencia de las Especies (The Survival of Species)*. 21 April, *Jornada Digital por la Tierra, Va por la Tierra*, México City, Mexico, online presentation. (JPR)
- *Earth Optimism Summit*. 24 April, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, USA, online interview. (JPR)
- *La Conservación Funciona (Conservation Works)*. 28 April, Grupo de Especialistas en Cocodrilos de UICN, Oficina Regional América Latina y Caribe, Santa Fe, Argentina, online presentation. (JPR)
- *La Conservación Funciona (Conservation Works)*. 7 June, Hora del Planeta, Ciudad Tarija, Tarija, Bolivia, online presentation. (JPR)

MEETINGS

- *IUCN Motions Working Group*. 30 March - 1 April, and 8 April, IUCN Headquarters, Gland, Switzerland, online meeting. (JPR)

- *IUCN Commission Chairs' meeting*. 3 April and 8 May, Washington, DC, USA, online meeting. (JPR)
- *Science Panel for the Amazon, Scientific Steering Committee Meeting*. 9 April, 15 May and 12 June, Washington, DC and Sao Paulo, Brazil, online meeting. (JPR)
- *Science Panel for the Amazon, Lead Author meetings*. Several dates between 15 April and 28 May, Washington, DC and Sao Paulo, Brazil, online meeting. (JPR)
- *IUCN Red List Committee meeting*. 11-14 May, virtual meeting. (JPR, DR, KM, OS, SB)

INTERVENTIONS

High-level interventions address conservation issues of serious concern, through letters to governments or companies, which highlight the threat(s) to species and /or habitats and, using expert advice, proposing suitable action to influence decision-making and help to avoid or reduce any adverse impacts on biodiversity. Each letter provides the background and technical information, and a thorough review process led by the SSC Chair's Office, engaging the appropriate Specialist Groups, experts across the network, the IUCN regional offices and IUCN programmes.

- **Letter in support of creation of Khomyn Tal National Park, Mongolia**
Staff of the French NGO Association Takh and its Mongolian counterpart Khomyn Talin Takhi (KTT) have been long-term members of the IUCN SSC Equid Specialist Group. They have worked for decades to conserve the Przewalski's horse (*Equus ferus przewalskii*). This species was Extinct in the Wild; due to successful reintroductions in Mongolia its current status is Endangered with a current wild population of about 700 individuals. Between 2004-2005, 22 Przewalski's horses were transported from a reserve in southern France to Khomyn Tal, one of three reintroduction sites in Mongolia. The horse social structure established in the French reserve was carefully maintained for transport and reintroduction. This population has since grown to 91 horses in the 140 km² reintroduction area. Thanks to efforts from IUCN SSC Equid Specialist Group members and others, especially KTT, in May 2020 the Mongolian government announced creation of a 4,100 km² Khomyn Tal National Park to ensure long-term protection of the reintroduction site at a national level. National Park status will help ensure viability of the Przewalski's horse population, as well as contribute to ecosystem restoration and sustainable development for the local community. This is an excellent example of fruitful cooperation among SSC members networking among them and with government institutions.
- **Australia: Risks of the "Snowy 2.0 Pumped Hydro Scheme Main Works"**
In June 12th 2020 Richard Sneider, Global Chair of the IUCN SSC Freshwater Fish Specialist Group (FFSG) sent a letter to Hon. Sussan Ley MP, Minister for the Environment of Australia, expressing serious concerns about the environmental impacts of the "Snowy 2.0 Pumped Hydro Scheme Main Works" a development recently approved by Australia's New South Wales Government. This letter is co-signed and backed by Jon Paul Rodríguez (Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission), Topiltzin Contreras MacBeath and Ian Harrison (Co-Chairs of the IUCN SSC Freshwater Conservation Committee), Piero Genovesi (Chair of the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group), Gerry Closs and Nicholas Ling (Regional Co-Chairs Australia and New Zealand of the IUCN SSC's FFSG). They urge the Minister for the Environment to reconsider the measures

proposed as mitigation for the biosecurity risks posed by this development. This “Snowy 2.0” proposal will likely transfer alien fish from the Tumut River catchment (Talbingo Reservoir) to the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment (Tantangara Reservoir) with severe consequences for two threatened freshwater fish species: the Stocky Galaxias, *Galaxias tantangara*, assessed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>) and the Macquarie Perch, *Macquaria australasica*, (assessed as Endangered). The two alien fish species of most concern are the Climbing Galaxias, *Galaxias brevipinnis*, and the Redfin Perch, *Perca fluviatilis*, both of which are currently not present in the upper Murrumbidgee catchment. There is well-researched evidence that confirms the ability of these two species to survive passage through hydroelectricity generation infrastructure and colonise new systems. Additionally the Redfin Perch is a major host to the Epizootic Haematopoietic Necrosis Virus (EHN) which can be transmitted to other fish species. The virus can be spread on fishing gear and with “Snowy Hydro” proposing to enhance trout populations and recreational fishing facilities in Tantangara, it is considered almost certain that the virus will become established. The SSC experts learnt that primary mitigation measures (to prevent fish transfer from the Tumut to Upper Murrumbidgee catchments) have been ruled out largely on cost and that, instead, secondary mitigation measures (to contain the invasive fish within Tantangara reservoir) are proposed. The universally-accepted best-practice to prevent impacts from invasive species is to prevent their transfer and establishment. Trying to contain invasive species after they are introduced is high risk, and likely to fail at some point in the 100-year lifespan of the “Snowy 2.0” proposed works. Secondary screens will not prevent the spread of the EHN virus. The “Snowy 2.0” proposal to build a barrier to prevent the invasion of the sole remaining Stocky Galaxias population by the Climbing Galaxias is fraught with risk; there is currently no design available for scrutiny and similar barriers in New Zealand have had mixed success in excluding Climbing Galaxias. Even if successful, the barrier’s location will severely compromise future conservation efforts for Stocky Galaxias. Unfortunately, there has been no independent scrutiny of the threats or likely success of the proposed mitigation measures. Knowing that there is now a relatively short timeframe for the Australian Government to announce a final decision it is recommended that careful, independent scrutiny and review of the “Snowy 2.0” threats and mitigation proposals are undertaken, and that the final approval deadline be extended to allow this to occur. If primary mitigation is excluded, it should be publicly acknowledged that there is no mitigation possible for the eventual establishment of EHN and the subsequent impacts on the Macquarie perch population. The SSC’s FFSG emphasizes the need to discuss this urgent topic further and provide additional advice or assistance. On 30 June, the Snowy scheme was approved with no external review. SSC will continue to monitor how the situation develops.



IUCN Species Strategic Plan Virtual sessions
Photo © Topiltzin Contreras MacBeath

Getting ready for the upcoming IUCN quadrennium

Looking forward to start a new IUCN quadrennium, the SSC Chairs' Office is working jointly with the SSC leadership and IUCN Secretariat to shape the new IUCN Species Strategic Plan, renew our leadership, membership and governing documents, and meet in Marseille ready to boost our conservation work during 2021-2024.

IUCN Species Strategic Plan

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan encompasses the joint work of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, the IUCN Global Species Programme, as well as a number of partners and is part of the overall IUCN work programme.

Building our IUCN Species Strategic Plan has been an inclusive process, sharing the various drafts with SSC and GSP leaders for over a year. As a final round of consultations, during the last week of June 2020, the SSC Chairs' Office ran ten virtual sessions, two per each Assess, Plan, Act, Network and Communicate component. We expect to receive final comments from the SSC Leaders by the end of July 2020, so that we can continue with the following steps, mainly getting Steering Committee approval in September and then engaging with all SSC groups to establish their specific targets in line with the KSRs and indicators established for the 2021-2024 quadrennium.

Developing the 2021-2024 Species Strategic Plan Timeline

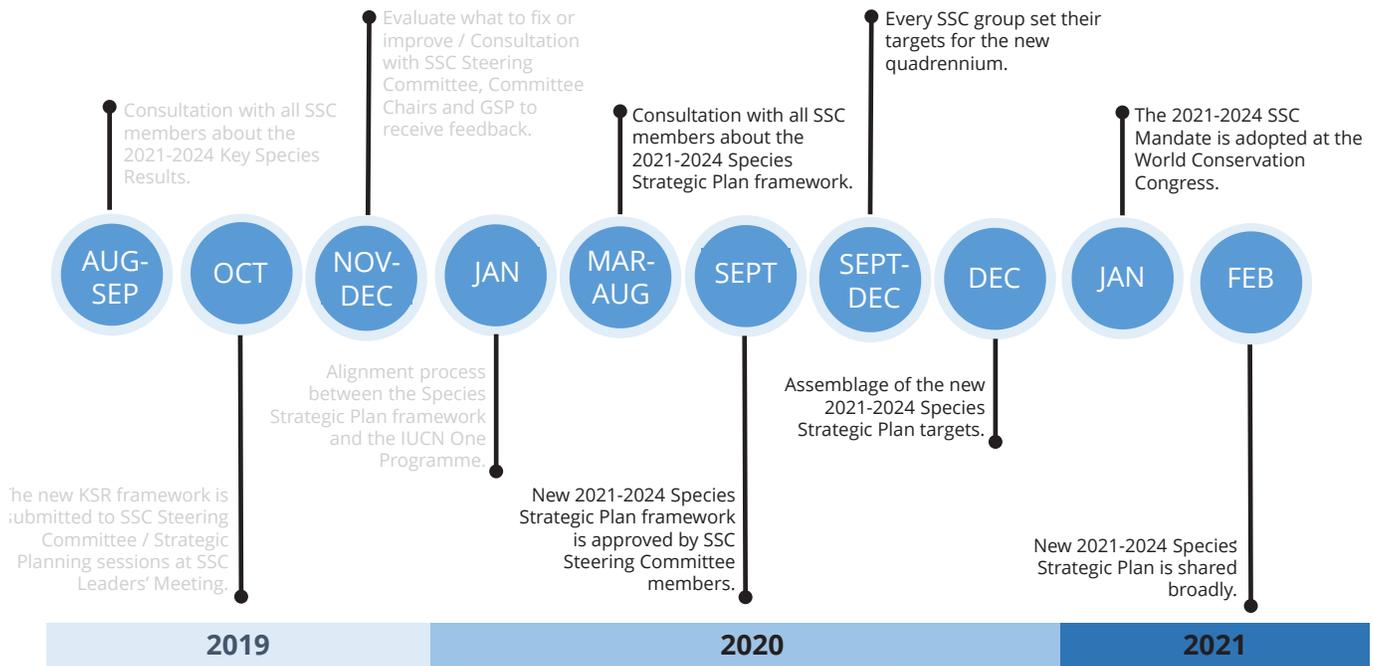


Figure 1 - Species Strategic Plan timeline

Renewing SSC Leaders

At the same time, the SSC leadership needs to be renewed with every change of quadrennium. SSC Committee, Specialist Group and Task Force Chairs as well as Red List Authority Coordinators have been asked whether they are willing to continue in these roles and the SSC Steering Committee will be making the decisions about their reappointments during a virtual meeting in early September. The decision will be based on these considerations:

- Contributions implementing the IUCN Species Strategic Plan 2017-2020.
- Progress demonstrated on targets as shown in annual reports.
- Timely delivery of annual reports during the quadrennium.
- Demonstration of a leadership succession plan.
- Responsiveness and engagement with our Steering Committee, GSP and SSC Chair's Office.

"I feel privileged to have been nominated again to continue chairing the Commission for the 2021-2024 quadrennium, as working with the SSC leaders is deeply inspiring and rewarding".

Jon Paul Rodríguez, Species Survival Commission Chair

Renewing SSC group members

SSC Leaders are the heart driving SSC membership. After appointed or reappointed, SSC Group Leaders will be asked in turn to renew their group’s membership through the new Commission System, following the timeline below.

- The Commission System will remain open permanently for creation and editing of personal profiles.
- The Commission System will be closed for applications from 31 December 2020 to 1 March 2021.
- From 15 January to 1 March 2021 all SSC Group Leaders will be asked to:
 - Accept the conditions for the new quadrennium.
 - Accept their Terms of Reference.
 - Review their membership and indicate which individual members will be invited for renewal.
 - Monitor the renewal progress (see accepted, resigned, not actioned against names in the invitee list for their Group).
- On 1 March 2021 the Commission System will open for members’ renewals and new applications. At this point all SSC Members will be asked to:
 - Sign into the IUCN Commission System,
 - Renew or resign their membership,
 - Accept the 2021-2024 membership conditions
 - 2017-2020 members not invited to renew will be sent a thanks message.

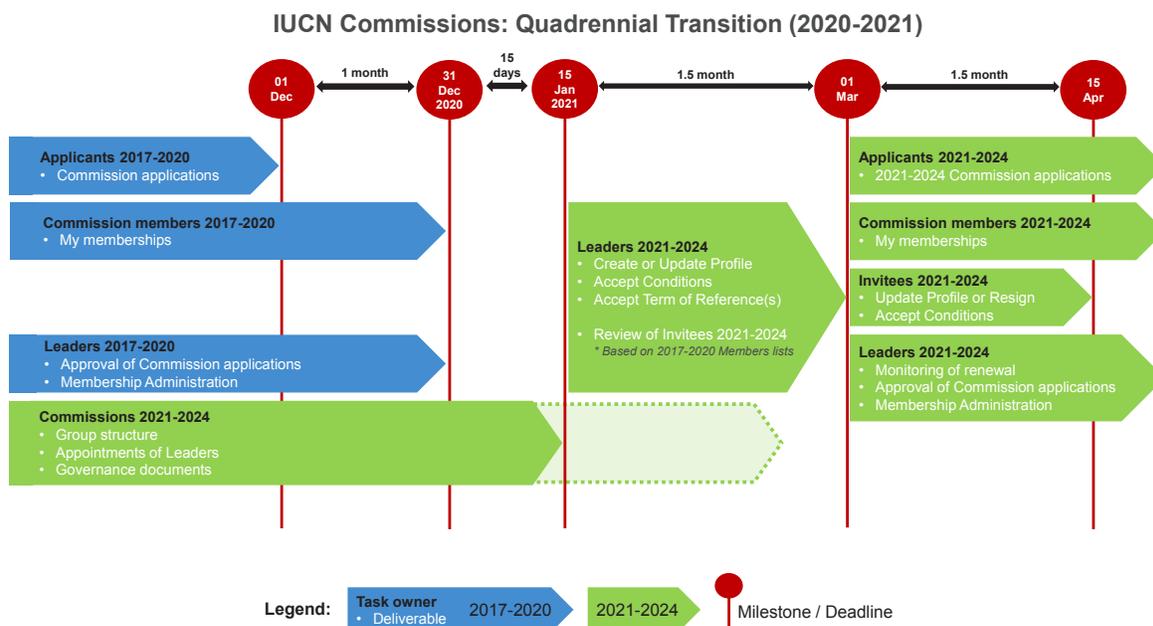


Figure 2 - IUCN Commissions Quadrennial Transition

Read the instructive to use IUCN Commission System [here](#).



Glossy Ibis, *Plegadis falcinellus*, LC
Photo © Gopi Sundar



Figure 3 - Glossy Ibis, *Plegadis falcinellus*, LC, a cosmopolitan ibis which was the subject of the first issue of SIS Conservation
Photo © Gopi Sundar

SIS Conservation, the annual peer-reviewed publication of the IUCN SSC Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group

Dr KS Gopi Sundar and Dr Luis Santiago Cano
IUCN SSC Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group Co-Chairs

In 2016 the IUCN SSC Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group adopted the Key Species Results (KSR) 28 of the Strategic Plan 2017-2020, “Communicating species conservation. The effectiveness of IUCN’s species conservation work is enhanced through strategic and targeted communications” as a key action in the Species Conservation Cycle Components of this Specialist Group during this quadrennium.

We designed a communication road map for the Specialist Group regarding the KSR 28. It was started with a [website](#) with different resources about the target species (e.g. news, networking, bibliography, historical literature), which has become a popular site where general people, specialist members and researchers access the information of the website.

The website has 20,821 page views since its inception on 5th March 2017 from almost across the entire world, with 3,509 visits in 2020 until 22nd June 2020, which is an average of more than 20 visits a day. (Figure 1).

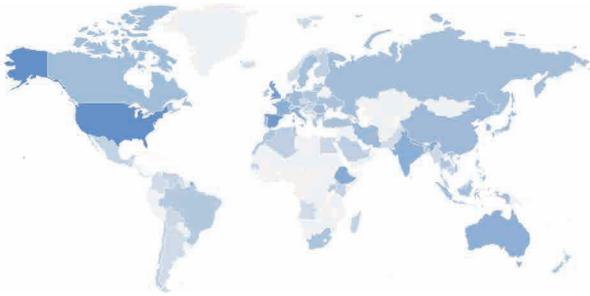


Figure 1 - Audience Geolocation Heatmap of the IUCN SSC Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group in 2020

We expanded this communication plan with the Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill “[Special Publications Series](#)” that we initiated in 2018 to help collate and make available key literature (e.g. conference abstracts) that traditionally have short shelf times, becoming difficult to access over time. The Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group has published two Special Publications that are open access, and is open to new proposals for future issues.

Finally, the Specialist Group reached a milestone of the communication road map at the end of 2019 when we were pleased to start the annual peer-reviewed publication “[SIS Conservation](#)”, or SISC for short that is accessible online for free. Without sacrificing rigour, this publication aims to present scientific work documented in the now familiar academic and attractive format, and also invite contributions that are less science-y.

Our intention with this publication is to showcase ongoing work and efforts, and to try and inspire new work, while making all of this easily available via our website for free. At the very least, we hope that having this publication will inspire people to write up information that they already have, and have not been able to publish anywhere else. We will attempt to focus equally on species that are globally threatened or endangered, and on species that are common. Another fond hope is that the SISC helps attract additional membership of people who are as fascinated as we are with SIS species everywhere.

Anyone can submit manuscripts for publication in SISC and a membership in the SIS-SG is not a prerequisite. SISC has been able to fill some gaps for SIS species with its first edition (Figure 2). This issue was a Special Issue dedicated to the most cosmopolitan ibis globally, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (Figure 3), where SISC brought together 75 researchers and “glossy experts” who provided 25 original papers on this Ibis species.



Figure 2 - Cover of the first issue of the SIS Conservation

SISC is therefore on its way to becoming a publication with high quality information on SIS species that may not be available elsewhere thereby contributing to the improvement of knowledge of SIS species. The communication road map is almost successfully accomplished for this quadrennium, but we are working on a few additional key issues to ensure that SISC will have sustained credibility. We are focussing on obtaining an ISSN number to the publication which will allow indexing on online directories thereby increasing our ability to reach out to researchers and conservationists who use global searches for information. We will additionally seek long-term agreement with interested institutions and zoos to obtain sustained support that will enable the Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group to continue ongoing work and initiate new partnerships.

To submit an original paper to *SIS Conservation*, authors should send the manuscript to sis.conservation@gmail.com, and the editors-in-chiefs will start the submission process with the editorial board.



Cattle in the Brazilian Amazonia
Photo © Luis Fernando Marin da Fonte

Animal-sourced food and conservation in the age of COVID-19

Luis Fernando Marin da Fonte and Ariadne Angulo
IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group

The current COVID-19 pandemic has shed a harsh light on the world's socio-economic systems and laid bare the cracks that permeate everything in human activity. Conservation is not exempt and although we are still in the midst of the pandemic and cannot fully gauge the extent, scope and depth of consequences we know that there are many facets that have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. The compulsory retreat that has been thrust upon most of us offers us the space that we needed to reflect and imagine more just, equitable and environmentally respectful ways of doing things. This piece seeks to offer some previously published data and thoughts on one particular facet of human activity and its relation to conservation: animal-sourced food.

While it has received limited conservation attention, there is compelling evidence showing that the consumption of animal-sourced food by humans is a major driver of both the climatic and the biodiversity crises, and is likely a leading cause of modern species extinctions ([Machovina et al. 2015](#)). Animal agriculture in particular plays a pivotal role in environmental degradation, being the single largest driver of habitat loss and deforestation through land-use change, soil loss and erosion,

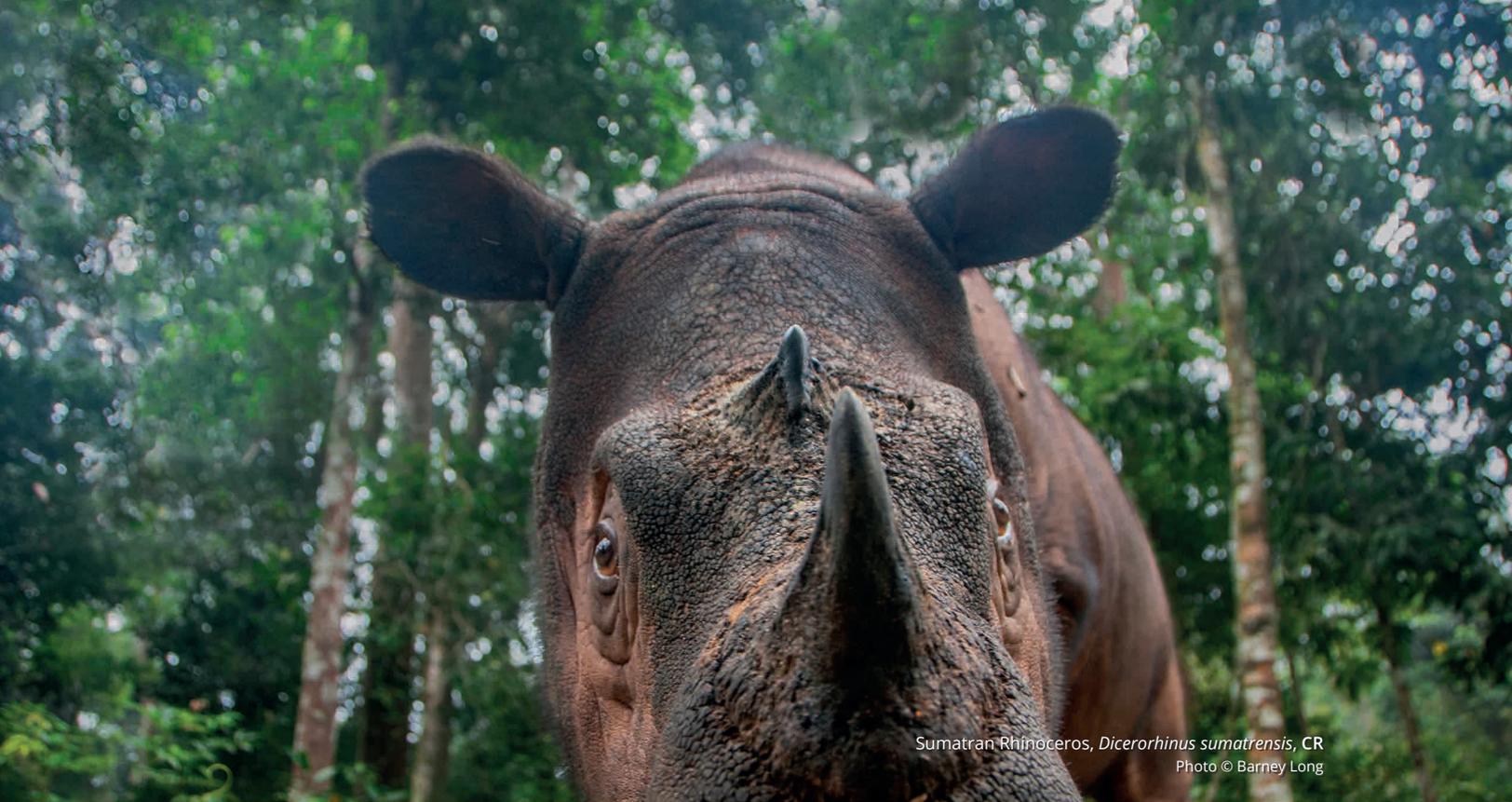
water and nutrient pollution and climate change, as well as facilitating expansion of alien species and loss of wildlife (Godfray et al. 2018, Poore and Nemeck 2018, Springmann et al. 2018, Machovina et al. 2015, Ripple et al. 2014, Steinfeld et al. 2006). According to the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#), agriculture, aquaculture, hunting and fishing impact roughly half of all species threatened with extinction.

Animal agriculture uses ~83% of the Earth's farmland, with livestock production alone, including feed production, accounting for ~75% of all agricultural land (Poore and Nemeck 2018, Machovina et al. 2015, Steinfeld et al. 2006). Up to 26% of the Earth's ice-free terrestrial surface is used for grazing and ~33% of global arable land is used to produce food for farmed animals (FAO 2018). Globally, a significant portion of global crop production is used to feed animals (Alexandratos and Bruinsma 2012), and ~67% of deforestation for agriculture is related to animal feed (Poore and Nemeck 2018). In South America, ~75% of rainforest conversion has been for cattle ranching and ~14% for commercial crops, including soy to feed animals (De Sy et al. 2015). The production of animal-sourced food generates ~75% of total agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with domestic ruminant livestock alone contributing to ~15% of all anthropogenic GHG emissions (Springmann et al. 2018, Ripple et al. 2014, Gerber et al. 2013). Excluding animal-sourced food, especially red meat, has the potential to reduce the global food land use by >75%, food's GHG emissions by 49%, acidification by 50%, eutrophication by 49% and scarcity-weighted freshwater withdrawals by 19% (Poore and Nemeck 2018).

Farming, hunting and trading animals for food also increase the risk of zoonoses. Around 60% of all human diseases and circa 75% of emerging infectious diseases have vertebrate animal origins, with one or two new diseases emerging every year (Woolhouse and Gowtage-Sequeria 2005, Taylor et al. 2001). The past worst epidemics and pandemics of zoonotic infectious diseases such as SARS coronavirus diseases, and influenza swine and bird flus (e.g. H1N1, H5N1, H7N9) were transferred to humans by direct contact with infected animals in restaurants, farms and food markets (Huang et al. 2020, Andersen et al. 2020, Hu et al. 2017, Lindahl and Grace 2015, Smith et al. 2009, Gray and Kayali 2009, Gray et al. 2007, Greger 2007, Webster 2004, Li et al. 2004, Guan et al. 2003). And while the precise details of the emergence of COVID-19 are still unclear, it is possible that it originated from a wild mammal (current candidates are pangolins, Zhang et al. 2020, and bats, Andersen et al. 2020).

IUCN's vision is "A just world that values and conserves nature". Given its bicameral and global nature it is ideally positioned to take a leadership role in re-imagining more equitable and environmentally respectful systems and helping implement the structural changes that need to happen to achieve this vision. Based on what we presented here, what will we, as IUCN and SSC, do to help achieve these changes?





Sumatran Rhinoceros, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, CR
Photo © Barney Long

The Sumatran Rhino Breeding Program

With fewer than 80 Sumatran rhinos surviving on Earth, the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuaries (SRS) are home to the only reproductively viable captive Sumatran rhinos in the world. There are two SRS in Indonesia, one located in the heart of Way Kambas National Park in Lampung on the island of Sumatra and the other in the Kelian Lestari Protected Forest in East Kalimantan on the island of Borneo.

There are seven resident rhinos – adult males Andalus, Harapan and Andatu (born at the Way Kambas SRS in 2012), and females Rosa, Bina, Ratu and her calf Delilah (also born at the Way Kambas SRS in 2016) in Way Kambas; and Pahu in Kelian. All are part of a single conservation breeding program that uses state-of-the-art veterinary and husbandry care to maximize the population growth rate.

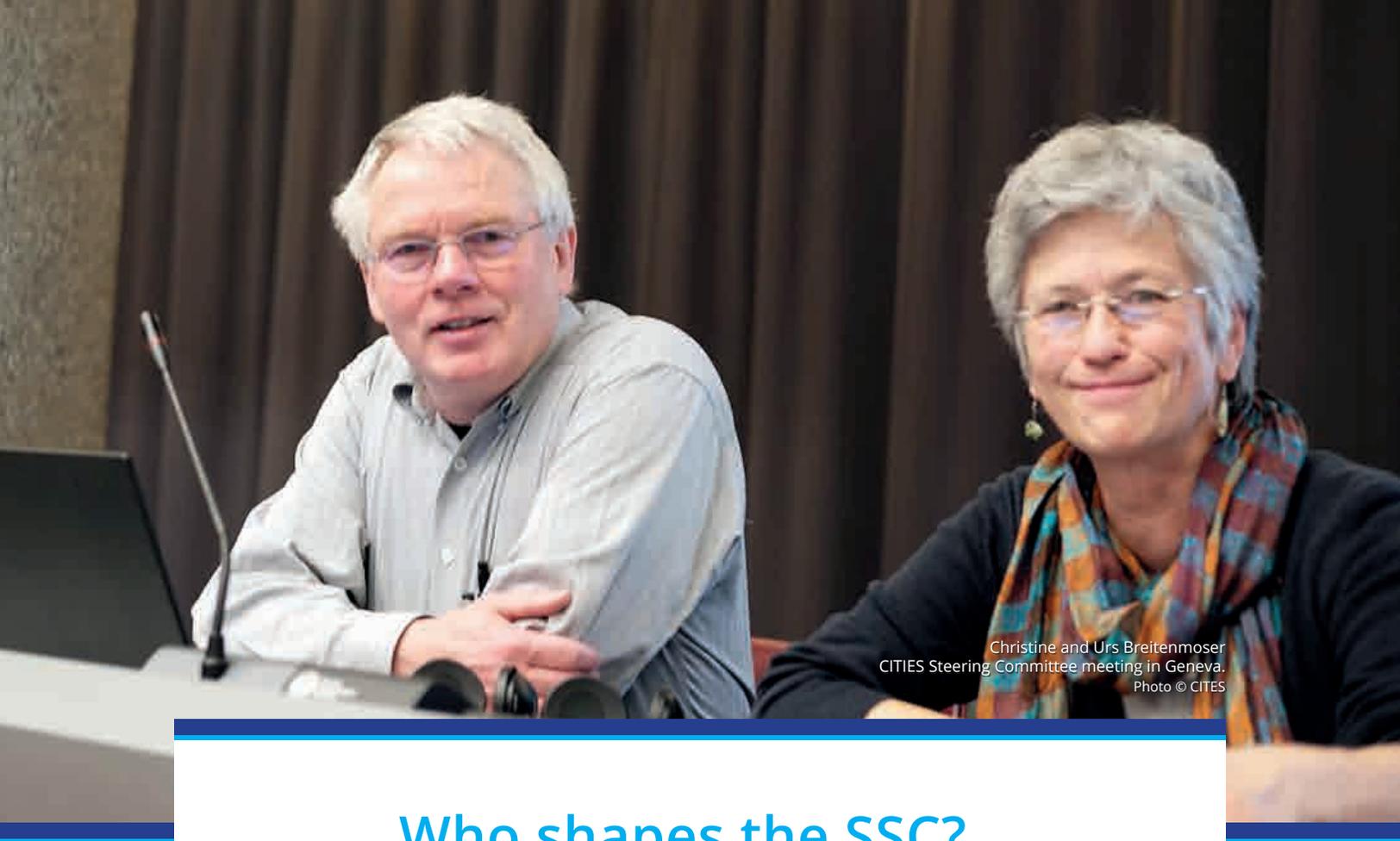
All the rhinos at the sanctuaries are under the care of a dedicated group of scientists, veterinarians and animal caretakers who ensure that each animal is healthy. The female rhinos' reproductive cycles are monitored closely to assure that breeding with one of the males takes place at the best possible time in order to maximize breeding success.

In addition to natural breeding, the SRS along with the Government of Indonesia are also working to further Sumatran rhino reproduction by way of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). ART includes strategies such as artificial insemination and gamete rescue. Many of these techniques have yet to be proven in Sumatran Rhinos, however experts from around the world have dedicated their work to finding the most efficient methods as quickly as possible to assist in saving the Sumatran Rhino from extinction.

Recently, the IUCN Species Survival Commission added Jeff Holland to the team, as Senior Advisor for Training, Husbandry and Capture of Sumatran Rhino's. His duties will include ensuring capacity, procedures, and plans are in place for rhino captures, including establishing national Sumatran rhino capture standard operating procedures.

We are doing all we can to bring them back from the brink of extinction. You can support [Sumatran Rhino Rescue](#), disseminating these actions for the conservation and also by [donating](#) to fund relocation efforts and the construction of rhino sanctuaries to ensure a future for this species.





Christine and Urs Breitenmoser
CITIES Steering Committee meeting in Geneva.
Photo © CITES

Who shapes the SSC?

Interview with Christine and Urs Breitenmoser, IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group Co-Chairs

For more than 30 years Christine and Urs have worked in carnivore conservation and, since 2001, have led the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group. Under their leadership, the activities of the Cat Specialist Group are designed using a framework to ensure they are truly making a difference to the survival of cat species: they assess species for inclusion on the Red List, use these assessments as a foundation to convene multi-stakeholder planning and then leverage these plans to mobilize action. They built the foundation of the framework which has now been adopted across the SSC and become known as the Species Conservation Cycle: Network – Assess – Plan – Act – Communicate.

How did you develop the Assess-Plan-Act (APA) framework?

When we started to get involved in conservation planning, we quickly felt that we needed a powerful communication concept explaining in a comprehensive way what we were doing. It was important to be able to explain that APA is a process and each step contributes to a successful conservation project. For instance, a transparent and participatory planning process does not only prevent the

loss of time and funding, it furthermore helps building partnership and cooperation and fosters buy-in from stakeholders and local people. So far, the planning process is an integral part of the conservation itself!

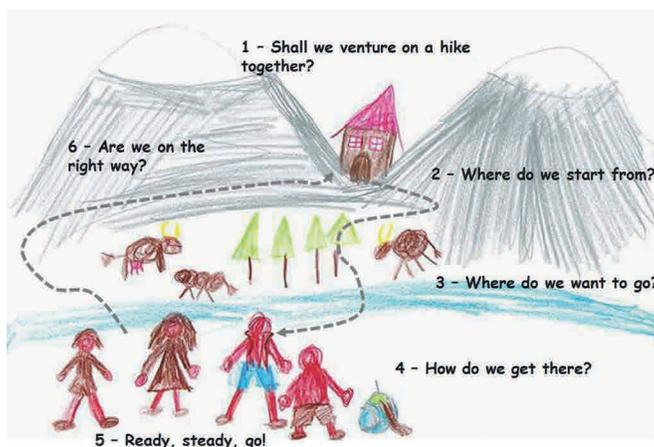


Figure 1 - project-process, It's a very simple way to explain the project cycle.
© Drawing by their son when he was 5 years-old.

What is your experience going from assessment to planning and conservation action?

Being involved with different species in various parts of the world, it became very clear that preparing the ground is absolutely key. If you do not select the appropriate taxonomic unit, scale and partners, it will be very difficult to move forward. Sometimes you have to be very patient and take some intermediate steps until all partners are ready to enter the collaborative planning step. The project cycle allows you to identify gaps in capacity and to stay involved and revisit any of the six steps if there is a need, e.g. new emerging threat, or if the status of a species changes. Updating conservation strategies allows you to revisit progress on the ground and strengthen the partnerships as needed based on the demonstrated effectiveness and progress. Conservation needs to be an adaptive process!

How do you distribute responsibilities and structure the cat SG to mobilise activities under the Assess-Plan-Act framework?

We do not need a special structure here. From the beginning, we involve all members working in the region and with different knowledge on the species of that area. We pay a lot of attention to including representation from the assessor team for the Red List and ensure acknowledgement of contributions. These stakeholders are then involved in the planning process and carrying out activities on the ground or on the conceptual level. A good example here are the [Guidelines for the Conservation of the Lion in Africa](#) that we produced to fulfil a CITES Decision together with over 50 authors, many of them members of the Cat SG and involved in work on the ground across Africa.

What would you recommend for other SSC Specialist Groups to boost activities under the Assess-Plan-Act framework?

It is very helpful to have a conscious project cycle in place with well-defined and organised steps. Having the right partners from the beginning allows boosting activities in the frame of the project cycle. It helped us a lot to develop our [Cat conservation compendium — a practical guideline for strategic and project planning in cat conservation](#). This tool guides users through all the steps and provides a tick-list for each stage of the process. SSC also has

extensive guidelines for the Red List and for conservation planning that can be translated to the specific needs of a Specialist Group. If gaps in capacity are detected, it is very worthwhile to organise a capacity development programme to fill these gaps. We have developed a curriculum specifically for cat conservation and have repeatedly carried out a three week course where we have trained promising individuals. We have stayed in touch with many of them through their projects and some have become members of the Cat SG.

We also recommend — where possible — to use the Red List to formulate conservation goals. We used it, for example, with the Iberian lynx. We identified what it would take to down-list this species from Critically Endangered to Endangered: How many animals, over what area are needed? This allowed us to know the number of releases needed, how much habitat needed to be recovered and where. We developed a metapopulation approach, identifying areas suitable for recovery, and then we set a timeline to it. The goal was to reach it within 10 years. This has successfully been reached. As a next step we have formulated the goal to down-list the Iberian lynx to Vulnerable, and again defined how many animals over what area.



Figure 2 - 6 steps in cat conservation © Cat SG.

What is your vision for the Cat Specialist Group ten years from now, in terms of activities, membership and governance?

We will have (1) a well established and advanced Red List and Green Status process for cats, (2) well managed project cycles for large and small felids, (3) our capacity building programme by recruiting and training young people focused on largely ignored regions and species (e.g. our Small Cat Agenda), (3) established and facilitated regional cat-specific networks, and (4) the “Cat Action Plan” from 1996 will have been reviewed and updated as a long-term conservation programme for all Felidae.

For the membership we will work to incorporate the next generation of cat experts into the group, with targeted recruitment and capacity building in cat regions that are underrepresented, paying attention to gender and ethnic balance. We will have a more consistent group of RL assessors per species/regions and facilitate the regional/continental cooperation among Cat SG members. We will have species-specific networks (including non-members) affiliated to the Cat Specialist Group through MoUs.

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