



Species

ISSUE 62

2022 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat



The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together toward achieving the vision of “a just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to both prevent the loss and aid recovery of the diversity of life on earth.”

Members of SSC belong to one or more of near 200 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities, Action Partnerships, Task Forces, and Conservation Committees that make up the Network, each focusing on a taxonomic group (plants, fungi, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and invertebrates), national species, or a disciplinary issue, such as sustainable use and livelihoods, translocation of species, wildlife health, climate change, and conservation planning.

Framed by the Species Conservation Cycle, SSC’s major role is to provide information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services, and their support to human livelihoods. This information is fed into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan encompasses the joint work of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and a number of partnerships to achieve more than 2,700 targets proposed by the Network during the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

To accomplish those targets, the Species Conservation Cycle was established, which is the conceptual framework for the Network activities. The Species Conservation Cycle’s main purpose is to guide efforts for valuing and conserving biodiversity through three essential components that are linked to each other:

ASSESS: Understand and inform the world about the status and trends of biodiversity.

PLAN: Develop collaborative, inclusive and science-based conservation strategies, plans and policies.

ACT: Convene and mobilise conservation actions to improve the status of biodiversity.



Their implementation requires two transversal components:

NETWORK: Enhance and support our immediate network and alliances to achieve our biodiversity targets.

COMMUNICATE: Drive strategic and targeted communications to enhance our conservation impact.

SSC Species Report

Annual progress in the implementation of the 2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan is documented in the SSC *Species Report*, which consists of a comprehensive description and analysis of the activities and results generated by the members of the SSC Network each year. Each SSC Group contributes to this document by providing a yearly summarised description of their achievements, which is presented in stand-alone reports.

Structure of the IUCN SSC Stand-alone Report

Stand-alone reports summarize the activities conducted and results generated by each group member of the SSC. Following, is the structure of the stand-alone report and the contents under each session.

Title of the SSC Group

Photograph(s) of the Chair / Co-Chairs

Group information

Includes names of Chair / Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Red List Authority Coordinators and Program Officers, their institutional affiliations, number of members and social networks currently active.

Logo of the SSC Group

Mission statement

Includes the mission of the group.

Projected impact for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the description of the impact on species conservation resulting from the implementation of the targets formulated by the group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

Targets for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the targets planned by the SSC Group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium ordered alphabetically by component of the Species Conservation Cycle. Each target is labeled with a numerical code (e.g., T-001, T-012) that identifies it in the SSC DATA database and its status for the reported year is indicated (Not initiated, On track or Achieved).

Activities and results

Includes the targets for which activities were conducted and results were generated during the reported year, ordered alphabetically, first by component of the Species Conservation Cycle, and second by Activity Category. Description of activities and results includes the indicator that best describes progress, its associated quantitative or qualitative result, and the narrative description of the activity conducted or result obtained. Each activity or result reported is linked to the Key Species Result to which it is mainly associated (e.g., KSR#1, KSR#5).

Acknowledgements

Includes the acknowledgements to funding agencies, partners, and persons who contributed to the progress of the targets of the group.

Summary of achievements

Summarises information of the group's strategic plan for the quadrennium and progress achieved implementing targets for all the components of the Species Conservation Cycle during the reported year.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

Example for the recommended citation:

Morrison, K. 2023. 2022 Report of the Crane Specialist Group. In: Nassar, JM, García, L, Mendoza, L, Andrade, ND, Bezeng, S, Birkhoff, J, Bohm, M, Canteiro, C, Geschke, J, Henriques, S, Ivande, S, Mileham, K, Ramos, M, Rodríguez, A, Rodríguez, JP, Street, B, and Yerena, E (Eds.). 2022 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat. International Union for Conservation of Nature. 8 pp.

2022 Report

IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group



CHAIR
Kerry Morrison
International Crane
Foundation/
Endangered Wildlife
Trust, Johannesburg,
Gauteng, South Africa

**RED LIST AUTHORITY
COORDINATOR**
BirdLife International

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
65

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE
Website: <https://savingcranes.org/crane-specialist-group>

Mission statement
The mission of the IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group is to promote the study of cranes and their threats, develop and disseminate solutions to those threats, and enhance conservation of cranes and their habitats worldwide.

Projected impact 2021–2025
Secure all 15 of the world’s cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways on which they depend. Reduce or halt the decline of the 10 threatened species and maintain stable to growing populations of the other five.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-003 Estimate the impact of poisoning on threatened crane species and advocate for reduced poisoning at hot spots by 2025.
Status: On track

T-010 Understand the status, distribution, and threats to Black Crowned Cranes (*Balearica pavonina*) across their range by 2023.
Status: On track

T-011 Update and complete Red List and Green Status assessments for at least two crane species by 2023.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-006 Develop and implement integrated flyway level Conservation Action Plans for Siberian Crane (*Leucogeranus leucogeranus*), Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*), White-naped Crane (*Grus vipio*), Hooded Crane (*Grus monacha*) and Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) by 2025.
Status: On track

T-007 Develop a user-friendly resource for *Cranes and Agriculture: A Global Guide for Sharing the Landscape* by 2022.
Status: On track

T-012 Develop at least two National Action Plans for cranes in Africa by 2025.
Status: On track

T-015 Review and revise the Crane Conservation Strategy in 2024 for the period 2025–2030.
Status: Not initiated

ACT

T-001 Implement the Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes (*Balearica regulorum*) by 2025.
Status: On track

T-002 Implement the Conservation Plan for the Eastern Population of the Siberian Crane by 2025.
Status: On track

T-004 Identify and mitigate factors contributing to the decline of the western populations of Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes by 2025.
Status: On track

T-008 Secure or upgrade the level of legal protection for three or more crane sites by 2025.
Status: On track

T-014 Implement the Crane Conservation Strategy published in 2019.
Status: On track

NETWORK

T-005 Complete four field training courses by 2025.
Status: On track

T-009 Form the Middle East Crane Working Group and develop strategies for reducing threats including hunting by 2022.
Status: On track

T-013 Establish working groups within the Crane Specialist Group to increase the collaboration between members around hunting, poisoning, powerline collisions, wildlife health and research by 2021.
Status: On track



Rice fields protected to help cranes during natural food shortage at Poyang Lake
Photo: Jin Jiefeng

T-017 Establish a formal partnership that will provide financial support to the Specialist Group by 2025.
Status: Not initiated

COMMUNICATE

T-016 Distribute a newsletter to the Crane Specialist Group membership every second year, updating the membership on the progress made towards achieving the Crane Conservation Strategy.
Status: On track.

Activities and results 2022

ASSESS

Research activities

T-003 Estimate the impact of poisoning on threatened crane species and advocate for reduced poisoning at hot spots by 2025. (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 4

Result description: Valuable data continue to be logged to record incidences of crane poisoning, particularly in the key East African hotspots of Kenya and Uganda, where the perceived risk of crop depredation may be driving increasing occurrence of Grey Crowned Crane poisoning on agricultural lands. Funding is being actively sought to conduct research projects to better

understand the scale of the problem and its causes (how much is targeted/deliberate vs. accidental), to help potentially identify solutions.

T-010 Understand the status, distribution, and threats to Black Crowned Cranes (*Balearica pavonina*) across their range by 2023. (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 4

Result description: Surveys have been completed in the cross-border ranges of Black Crowned Crane, and the threats they face (including international legal and illegal trade), in the transboundary regions of Senegal and Guinea (Conakry), Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Mauritania. These surveys have identified key sites for breeding and flocking and confirmed the continued presence of active Black Crowned Crane trade networks (both legal and illegal) across the region surveyed. Research projects are continuing in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad, and Senegal, to quantify Black Crowned Crane distribution, threat, and population size.

T-011 Update and complete Red List and Green Status assessments for at least two crane species by 2023. (KSR 6)

Number of species that have been assessed through the different tools: 0

Result description: In 2022, Birdlife South Africa began the process of revising the national Red List for birds. Assessments will be completed in 2023/2024 and will include Blue, Grey Crowned, and Wattled Cranes.

PLAN

Planning

T-006 Develop and implement integrated flyway level Conservation Action Plans for Siberian Crane (*Leucogeranus leucogeranus*), Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*), White-naped Crane (*Grus vipio*), Hooded Crane (*Grus monacha*) and Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) by 2025. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 4

Result description: Work with Siberian Cranes is being expanded to cover other threatened cranes in Asia and link countries. A project links breeding, stopover, and wintering areas of the declining western population of White-naped Cranes, broadly coinciding geographically with the Siberian Crane stopover and wintering areas. The National Forest and Grassland Administration (NFGA) is developing a Red-crowned Crane Action Plan for China that will cover the breeding-stopover areas. The International Crane Foundation will work

with NFGA and the National Bird Banding Center to support this plan and potentially expand beyond China in the future. A Meeting was held for the International Black-necked Crane Network and the 2019 Action Plan and is being implemented and updated.

Policy

T-007 Develop a user-friendly resource for Cranes and Agriculture: A Global Guide for Sharing the Landscape by 2022. (KSR 9)

Number of documents provided to support/guide policy-making: 1

Result description: A shorter, more user-friendly version of *Cranes and Agriculture* is in preparation.

T-012 Develop at least two National Action Plans for cranes in Africa by 2025. (KSR 9)

Number of policies where SSC members provided technical input: 3

Result description: The development of a revised conservation plan for South Africa's Blue Cranes has been initiated and will culminate in an IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group workshop facilitated in the second half of 2023. At this workshop stakeholders will be brought together to update the population model and conservation plan for the species, drawing from the latest research on the species. A conservation plan for South Africa's Wattled Cranes is also in preparation for 2023; this process is also being facilitated by the IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group. The Grey Crowned Crane National Action Plan for Kenya is in preparation and is with Kenya Wildlife Service for formal formatting before they organize for validation by county government and local communities as required by law under public participation. After validation, the action plan will be launched and adopted formally as a government document.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-001 Implement the Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes (*Balearica regulorum*) by 2025. (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 10

Result description: Efforts continue across all the critical range states for Grey Crowned Cranes to address the threats faced by these cranes through a targeted blend of integrated community-based conservation efforts and direct threat mitigation. Of particular focus has been attention on increasing uptake by rural communities of climate-smart and regenerative agriculture, to reduce the amount of land (wetlands) communities need to farm on. Valuable data continue to be gathered from satellite tracking and ringing studies, and on-the-ground monitoring by expert staff and trained volunteer Crane Custodians. There is strong collaboration within the network of colleagues taking forward the implementation of the African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Assessment's International Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes.

T-002 Implement the Conservation Plan for the Eastern Population of the Siberian Crane by 2025. (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: In year 8 of a 10-year Saving Wildlife grant from the Disney Conservation Fund, we continue to make significant progress toward conservation goals for Siberian Cranes. Adaptive management is practised using Miradi software

developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership. Synchronized surveys were completed in spring, fall, and winter with a revised population estimate of 6,000 Siberian Cranes counted, indicating a population increase. Changes in habitat use and foraging behaviour continue with increased use of agricultural lands, with corresponding changes made in protection and management strategies. The proposal to build an outlet dam on Poyang Lake is closer to being approved, raising serious concerns about changes to the ecosystem of one of the most important wintering areas for birds in East Asia. To ensure migratory connectivity, we are working hard to promote the necessary conditions so that enough wetlands are available yearly to support Siberian Cranes. Borders of protected areas are being expanded to protect habitats important to cranes.

T-004 Identify and mitigate factors contributing to the decline of the western populations of Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes by 2025. (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: Flyway-level strategies are being implemented for the western population of White-naped Cranes. Extensive research and enhanced protected area management are underway on the breeding grounds in Mongolia with a focus on the Khurkh-Khuiten Nature Reserve. Surveys are being conducted at both breeding areas and staging and stopover sites in Inner Mongolia in north-eastern China. A team of local volunteers was trained in survey methods including bird identification, with older farmers taking pride and becoming crane custodians. Local governments are considering protection options. Surveys

193,593 hectares now under the Mongolian government protection



Khurkh-Khuiten Valley designated as Nature Reserve
Photo: Nyambayar Batbayar



Capacity building for White-naped Crane project in Mongolia
Photo: Nyambayar Batbayar

and research on changes in food availability and habitat use are being conducted on the wintering areas at Poyang Lake. Representatives along the flyway are in regular communication planning reciprocal visits. The Government of China is developing an action plan for the conservation of the declining western population of Red-crowned Cranes.

T-008 Secure or upgrade the level of legal protection for three or more crane sites by 2025. (KSR 10)

Number of areas under management for the species or group of species: 8

Result description: In the last year, the area that has been granted improved protection in South Africa has increased by 39,208 ha. Advanced discussions are in progress with the Government of Rwanda to improve the protected area status of the 6,735 ha wetland at Rugezi Marsh. In China, the Liao River and Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserves are being upgraded to National Parks with additional habitat being added.

T-014 Implement the Crane Conservation Strategy published in 2019. (KSR 10)

Number of intervention letters addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: Several of the objectives and activities to address threats as outlined in the Crane Conservation Strategy are being implemented. Many of these are reported in this annual report under each specific target. In addition, the following progress was made: (1) Comments were provided. A Decision Paper was submitted to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership to re-establish an Avian Disease Working Group in response to

outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza; (2) In 2022 the Endangered Wildlife Trust secured a two-year contract extension with the national South African utility, Eskom, for wildlife management services including investigating bird collisions with infrastructure and the relevant recommendations for mitigation. In the 2022 calendar year, four powerline spans were marked with nocturnal bird flight diverters (overhead warning lights, the OWL device) to prevent Blue Crane collisions near roosting sites. A further 55 spans were marked with diurnal bird flight diverters in Blue Crane habitat (Western Cape, Eastern Cape), and six spans were marked in KwaZulu-Natal across Blue, Grey Crowned, and Wattled Crane habitats. In KwaZulu-Natal, seven terminating structures were insulated to reduce the electrocution risk to perching species such as the Grey Crowned Crane. During all mitigation product installation, the utility will cut a Basic Insulation Level (BIL) gap in the earth strap (if present), to ensure that metal components at the top of the structure will not be earthed and pose a threat to perching birds. This is done in accordance with the infrastructure maintenance instruction at Eskom, developed in partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust; (3) A toolbox of solutions to address the encroachment of agriculture into wetlands has been developed for East Africa. This includes the use of climate-smart, regenerative, and agroecological farming practices, the development of enhanced riparian buffer zones that both improve the ecology of the area and provide food

for communities, and taking an integrated approach that includes conservation, livelihood improvement, health, and removing barriers to voluntary family planning.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-005 Complete four field training courses by 2025. (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 10

Result description: The number of Crane Custodians has increased and now stands at a total of 162, as follows: Uganda 91 (43 in Lwengo, 43 in Rukiga and 5 in Ntungamo); Kenya 31; Rwanda 40 (known there as Community Crane Ambassadors). Crane Custodians are community members who are trained to safeguard breeding cranes and crane feeding and breeding sites. They record the cranes' distribution and breeding success on an online app (Survey123). Uganda field staff have also been trained in conducting surveys to monitor incidences of crane deaths caused by collisions with, and electrocutions from, powerline infrastructure. In Mongolia, training was held for 30 participants from NGOs, nature reserves, and universities on working with stakeholders living inside protected areas. Questionnaires were designed and in-person surveys were conducted with 400 herding families in the recently designated Khurkh - Khuiten Nature Reserve. A 3-day social science data analysis training was held in Ulaanbaatar. Ten participants learned ways to collect and analyse social data. Topics covered procedures for data entry, cleaning, and analysis using

Microsoft Excel and CRAN's R statistical software. A Crane Enterprise Program was created and eight local women from herding families were trained to produce high-quality felt handicrafts to improve livelihoods. In Inner Mongolia, China local volunteers were trained in crane survey techniques.

Synergy

T-009 Form the Middle East Crane Working Group and develop strategies for reducing threats including hunting by 2022. (KSR 1)

Number of in-kind partnerships established and maintained: 2

Result description: The Middle East Crane Working Group now includes 138 members from 27 countries. Issues to be addressed by the group include illegal hunting and intentional and unintentional poisoning along the flyways. An inaugural meeting is planned as part of the International Crane Conference to be held in Estonia in September 2023. This meeting was delayed several times due to concerns about COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine restricting travel. A newsletter is in preparation to provide background information on current conservation activities in the range countries.

T-013 Establish working groups within the Crane Specialist Group to increase the collaboration between members around hunting, poisoning, powerline collisions, wildlife health and research by 2021. (KSR 1)

Number of in-kind partnerships established and maintained: 4

Result description: Focal working groups around hunting, poisoning, powerline collisions, wildlife health, and research have been initiated. In 2023, the broader IUCN

Artificial wheat feeding for Common Crane (*Grus grus*) with a fertilizer spreader on grassland NE Germany
 Photo: Gunter Nowald



Crane Specialist Group’s membership will be invited to join these groups to increase collaboration, provide the opportunity for shared learning, and provide a platform where responses and assistance can be given to anyone with questions or actual cases where help is needed.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-016 Distribute a newsletter to the Crane Specialist Group membership every second year, updating the membership on the progress made towards achieving the Crane Conservation Strategy. (KSR 12)

Number of Species e-bulletin, Save Our Species newsletter, SSC Groups’ newsletter editions produced: 1

Result description: An annual newsletter is produced and widely distributed by the Crane Working Group of Eurasia.

Acknowledgements

We thank the International Crane Foundation for hosting the IUCN Crane Specialist Group; the International Crane Foundation/Endangered Wildlife Trust Partnership for supporting Kerryn Morrison’s involvement as the Chair, and the European Crane Working Group, North American Crane Working Group, Crane Working Group of Eurasia, International Red-crowned Crane Network, Black-necked Crane Network, and East Asian Crane Network, for leading species or geographic subgroups for cranes.

Summary of achievements

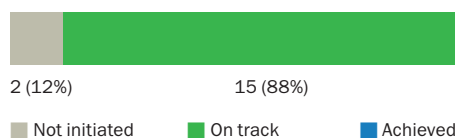
Total number of targets 2021–2025: 17

Geographic regions: 11 Global, 3 Africa, 3 Asia

Actions during 2021:

- Assess: 3 (KSR 5, 6)
- Plan: 3 (KSR 8, 9)
- Act: 5 (KSR 10)
- Network: 3 (KSR 1, 2)
- Communicate: 1 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:



Legend: ■ Not initiated ■ On track ■ Achieved