

# IUCN SSC Monitor Lizard Specialist Group

2016-2017 Report



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## Co-Chairs

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## Number of members

37

## Social networks

Website:  
<http://varanus.org/>



## Mission statement

Knowledge of the conservation status of monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp.) is essential for the formulation of appropriate conservation measures that would also support the protection of demarcated ecosystems. In gaining this knowledge, it is elementary to work hand in hand with national authorities and local communities.

## Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

### Barometer of life

#### ■ Red List

i. Global and regional assessments for 13 species conducted by Monitor Lizard SG (MLSG) members. (KSR #2)

### Communications

#### ■ Communication

i. A comprehensive catalogue of monitor lizard scales containing several hundred pictures of more than 40 different species (Bucklitsch et al. 2016, *Zootaxa* 4153: 1–192), including all nine recognized subgenera, was published using scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Together with a recently published identification key for Southeast Asian monitor lizards based on macroscopic phenotypic characters (Koch et al. 2013), the SEM-pictures of the present publication may serve as additional references for the microscopic identification of CITES-relevant monitor lizard skins and products.

ii. A website (<http://varanus.org/>) has been created with relevant information about the specialist group and all currently recognized monitor lizard species. (KSR #28)

iii. *BIAWAK* journal (<http://varanidae.org/biawak>) is used as substitute to convey MLSG relevant information. (KSR #28)

#### ■ Synergy

i. Creation of a logo for MLSG.

### Policy

#### ■ Scientific meetings

i. Workshop on the trade with monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp.) in Germany, held in April 2016 (results published in November 2017, Schepp et al. 2017, *Naturschutz und Biologische Vielfalt*, 159: 1-182), financed and sponsored through the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation. Both Co-Chairs and two members attended this workshop and gave presentations. (KSR #28)

## Acknowledgements

We thank Phil Bowles (Coordinator IUCN Red List Authority for Snakes & Lizards, IUCN-CI Biodiversity Assessment Unit, Global Species Programme) for his efficient communication, networking with regional groups within the Global Species Programme and promoting Red List assessments of *Varanus* spp. Furthermore, we thank the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation for financing and organising a workshop on the trade with *Varanus* spp. in April 2016.

## Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020

### Barometer of life

Red List: Completion of all assessments and updating earlier assessments (e.g., *Varanus komodoensis*).

### Communications

Communication: production of an ID guide for customs and authorities of all monitor lizard species involved in the pet and leather trade.  
Scientific meetings: organisation of the Second MLSG Meeting.



#### **Projected impact for the quadrennium 2017-2020**

By the end of 2020, we wish to have greatly improved networking with MLSG members to reach the following goals as a baseline for impacts that want to be achieved:

Goal 1: to compile a species reference and image database including information on the distribution of natural history traits, population statuses and threats of single species. Impact 1: development of a more efficient and accurate communication and sharing of current data on the species among group members.

Goal 2: nomination of new members to the group particularly from range states in Africa and Asia. Impact 2: enrichment of knowledge and refinement of e.g., national assessments.

Goal 3: the continuation to investigate the taxonomic status of several species/species groups with unresolved diversity. Impact 3: establishment of regional species management plans, e.g., based on Evolutionary Significant Units (ESU's).

Goal 4: initiation of field studies particularly on species from insular Southeast Asia and New Guinea due to uncertainties regarding population densities and conservation status of wild populations in cooperation with local students and scientists. Impact 4: rising public awareness for the species group, and reduce current uncertainties to improve assessments of the conservation status of *Varanus* spp.

Goal 5: establishment of collaborations with scientific/management authorities to improve current management schemes to maintain the viability of species/populations. Impact 5: improvement and implementation of conservation measures together with authorities of range states that harbour *Varanus* spp.

Goal 6: based on collaborative projects, the inclusion of non-detriment findings (NDFs) and evaluation of other mechanism tools to assess the threat status of a species, e.g., environmental vulnerability scores and refining PVAs.

Impact 6: see impact 4 (reduction of uncertainties).

#### **Summary of activities (2016-2017)**

Key Priority Area ratio: 3/7

Key Priority Areas addressed:

- Barometer of life (1 activity)
- Communications (4 activities)
- Policy (1 activity)

Main KSRs addressed: 2, 28

KSR: Key Species Result