

IUCN SSC Freshwater Conservation Committee

2018 Report



Topiltzin Contreras MacBeath



Ian Harrison

Co-Chairs

Topiltzin Contreras MacBeath ⁽¹⁾
Ian Harrison ⁽²⁾

Red List Authority Coordinator

Jörg Freyhof ⁽³⁾

Location/Affiliation

- ⁽¹⁾ Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, Cuernavaca, Mexico
- ⁽²⁾ Conservation International, Moore Center for Science, Arlington, Virginia, US
- ⁽³⁾ Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB), Berlin, Germany

Number of members

16



Mission statement

To raise the profile of freshwater biodiversity through: (1) coordinating freshwater species conservation activities through the SSC, highlighting emerging patterns and ensuring that increasing attention is given to issues concerning freshwater biodiversity conservation; (2) making freshwater recommendations to the SSC based on the work of the Freshwater Conservation Committee, and ensuring that freshwater species conservation issues are well represented within the SSC and the wider IUCN; (3) assisting the SSC by providing authority and credibility in its engagement with policy processes and major freshwater related events.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By 2020, we envision that the Freshwater Conservation Committee can provide stronger recommendations for freshwater conservation priorities, in terms of which species and regions require most urgent action, and how to link conservation action between regions through habitat connectivity. We can achieve this through mobilising the newly assimilated Red List assessment data for application to management and policy. Conservation action will be directed at selected, leading threats to freshwater ecosystems, in particular, invasive species and fragmentation of habitats by dams. By working with partners such as the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Freshwater Specialist Group, we can provide guidance for better conservation of freshwater ecosystems in protected areas. By facilitating

communication and collaboration between SSC Specialist Groups with a freshwater interest, and by linking this to the work of other IUCN Commissions and the Secretariat, as well as contributing to other major freshwater initiatives beyond IUCN, we will ensure that future freshwater conservation planning is more fully integrated across IUCN's programmes. Conservation of freshwater species and habitats will be given a higher profile as a core component in wider landscape management, conservation and policy making. Freshwater conservation initiatives will be better coordinated to complement each other, rather than operating in parallel.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: complete Red List assessments of all freshwater species targeted by IUCN for global coverage (ca. 38,300 species).

Research activities: (1) develop a programme of Conservation Evidence, documenting conservation success (e.g. what is the relationship between conservation success and protected areas, and links between biodiversity and ecosystem services/human health); (2) Ramsar site review; (3) meta-data analysis of freshwater biodiversity and dams/other infrastructure.

Plan

Planning: (1) promote the inclusion and effective management of freshwater ecosystems in protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).

Policy: (1) publish a paper on review of threats to freshwater wetlands; (2) ensure that freshwater ecosystems are better integrated into the post-2020 global biodiversity outlook.



Freshwater Conservation Committee at their group meeting in London, January 2018
Photo: Merlin Veron

Act

Conservation activities: develop projects and collaborations focused on freshwater invasive species.

Network

Capacity building: (1) plan and run a workshop, focused on challenges, opportunities and priorities for freshwater biodiversity conservation, at the 2019 SSC Leaders' Meeting; (2) following the freshwater workshop at the 2019 SSC Leaders' Meeting, plan and run a cross-linked series of freshwater themed events at the 2020 World Conservation Congress, focused on challenges, opportunities, and priorities for freshwater biodiversity conservation.

Proposal development and funding: fundraising for projects/Programme Officer.

Synergy: (1) be a key partner in developing the IUCN One Programme for Freshwater Biodiversity (as defined by a white paper describing the objectives of the strategy); (2) develop and help coordinate an IUCN Freshwater Network, for sharing information and freshwater objectives, with an online mechanism for sharing information; (3) review freshwater targets and objectives of other Specialist Groups to identify

areas of shared or supporting interest; (4) be a key partner in developing the new initiative, the Alliance for Freshwater Life (AFL); (5) be a key partner in a new initiative/NGO focused on fundraising for freshwater biodiversity conservation; (6) the Committee will be seen as a source of advice and coordination on freshwater activities in SSC and partners.

Communicate

Communication: (1) create a list of '25 top species' – representative across taxonomic groups and regions – that highlight some of the main issues associated with freshwater ecosystem conservation; (2) establish effective outreach and communications.

Activities and results 2018

Assess

Red List

i. In 2018, the IUCN Freshwater Biodiversity Unit coordinated the following Red List assessment programmes: (1) Lake Malawi/Nyasa/Niassa Catchment – published reassessments of all freshwater decapods, fishes and molluscs, and of selected freshwater plants, plus delineated Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) for freshwater species; (2) Lake Tanganyika – delineated KBAs for freshwater species (Nsumbu Tang-

anyika Conservation Project); (3) Malili Lakes – completed assessments of all freshwater decapods, fishes and molluscs, to be published in 2019 (plus odonates were published in 2017); (4) West Africa – started assessments of all freshwater decapods, fishes, molluscs and freshwater plants; (5) Japan – completed assessments of all endemic freshwater fishes (ca. 60), to be published in 2019; (6) Mexico – completed assessments of all native freshwater fishes (ca. 520), to be published in 2019; (7) Sunda – started assessments of all native freshwater fishes (ca. 1,000), to be published in 2019; (8) Australia – started assessments of all native freshwater fishes (ca. 250), to be published in 2019; (9) Pakistan – started assessments of all native freshwater fishes (ca. 170), to be published in 2019. (KSR #1)

Plan

Policy

i. The Committee worked with several other NGOs and initiatives to prepare a one-page informational document that was submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 14: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/8814/39c2/5ba8281033b6423ea5fdb77e/cop-14-inf-45-en.pdf>. That document complements a similar



Pseudothelphusa dugesi
Photo: Topiltzin Contreras MacBeath

statement made by the 'Partners for Wetlands' (International Organization Partners of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands): <https://www.wwf.org.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/IOP-statement-post-COP13-FINAL.pdf>. Subsequently, a few members of the Committee also provided feedback to IUCN on a review of the Aichi targets, and how they might be refined to better include freshwater issues. Some Committee members also prepared a letter to Science in response to the latest Living Planet Index, noting the need to integrate freshwater more fully into the post-2020 CBD targets and have clear links to the Sustainable Development Goals (that letter was published in 2019). Further input was provided to IUCN in 2019 for its response to CBD's Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework discussion paper and several of our recommendations have been included in IUCN's response document: https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn_response_cbd_post_2020_part_2_target_formulations_and_topics_12_april_2019_final.pdf. Members of the Committee are also engaged with the initiative being led by WWF-UK on 'Bending the Curve for Freshwater Biodiversity Loss', which is also considering how global policy targets can be improved to better represent freshwater ecosystems. (KSR #7, 26)

Network

Capacity building

i. Co-Chairs of the Committee have been engaged in the SSC Leaders' Meeting planning process and have recommended the inclusion of freshwater-focused sessions in the agenda. (KSR #18)

Synergy

i. In September 2017, Committee Co-Chair Ian Harrison helped organise a workshop to create a plan for developing the IUCN One Programme Strategy for Freshwater Biodiversity Conservation. The meeting was hosted by the IUCN Water Programme at IUCN Headquarters in Switzerland and was attended by 19 people from 15 different organisations (or different units within their organisations), including two members of the Freshwater Conservation Committee. Our plan was to assimilate the information from the workshop and turn this into a Framework Strategy for the IUCN One Programme for Freshwater Biodiversity, which would: (i) be presented as a summary document to IUCN's Council meeting in November 2017, to alert the council to the overall plan for the IUCN One Programme for Freshwater Biodiversity; (ii) subsequently be developed into a more detailed document to be presented at the World Water Forum in March 2018; and (iii) then be proposed for adoption at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2020. The logistics of this process are being managed by the IUCN Water Programme. However, administrative changes within the Water Programme in 2018 have slowed the process down, and the Strategy document has not been prepared thus far. Nonetheless, the Water Programme have stated their continued interest in advancing this agenda prior to 2020. Some of the messaging from this meeting was incorporated into a document, submitted to the CBD COP 14 in November 2018, recommending that more targeted actions for the conservation of inland waters should be included in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. (KSR #29)

ii. Committee members assimilated a list of Specialist Groups, Committees and Task Forces within the IUCN Commissions that have an interest in freshwater. We have focused initially on SSC groups, but have also contacted groups from one or two other Commissions, such as the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM). CEM's Wetlands Ecosystems Group are involved in a process of classifying and mapping freshwater ecosystems globally, so they can be assessed following the Red List of Ecosystems criteria. Claudio Baigun (leader of the CEM Wetlands Group) has been recruited as a member of the Freshwater Conservation Committee. (KSR #29)

iii. Both Co-Chairs and some other members of the Freshwater Conservation Committee have been closely involved with the development of the Alliance for Freshwater Life (AFL), following an initial planning meeting held at Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Berlin, in October 2017. Subsequently, some Committee members helped plan the official launch of the AFL at Stockholm World Water Week in August 2018 (<https://programme.worldwaterweek.org/event/8124-a-new-global-initiative-the-alliance-for-freshwater-life>). We have also co-authored a manuscript describing the AFL: Darwall, W., et al. (2018). The Alliance for Freshwater Life: A global call to unite efforts for freshwater biodiversity science and conservation. *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems* 28(4):1015–1022. Some Committee members submitted a proposal (accepted) for a session on 'The Alliance for Freshwater Life – fostering multidisciplinary freshwater research on local to global scales' for the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Society for Freshwater Science. (KSR #29)

iv. This initiative is not yet an official NGO, but it is officially formed, under the name Shoal (<https://shoalconservation.org>), and has a small Secretariat run by Mike Baltzer. The mission of Shoal is to engage a wide range of organisations to accelerate and escalate actions to save the most threatened fish and other freshwater species. Committee members Ian Harrison and Harmony Patricio attended the initial planning meeting of Shoal in January 2018, hosted by the Fishmongers Company. Subsequently, the Committee Co-Chair and some other Committee members have liaised with Mike Baltzer as he has further developed the concept for Shoal. (KSR #29)

Communicate
Communication

i. Outreach has been achieved through email. The Committee still needs to develop its own website and Facebook page. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Synchronicity Earth and Conservation International for providing support for Co-Chair Ian Harrison to work on Committee activities. Synchronicity Earth and Aurum Funds/Aurum Research kindly assisted in planning and logistics in 2018 for the Committee's meeting in London. We are grateful to the ongoing assistance and advice from Rachel Hoffmann, SSC Director of Conservation Outcomes.

Summary of activities 2018

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 4/5

Assess	1	
Plan	1	
Network	5	
Communicate	1	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 7, 18, 26, 28, 29

KSR: Key Species Result