

IUCN SSC Medicinal Plant Specialist Group

2019 Report



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Co-Chairs

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Number of members

140

Social networks

Twitter: @PlantSsc

Website:

<https://www.iucn.org/ssc-groups/plants-fungi/plants/plants-h-z/medicinal-plant>

Medicinal
Plant
Specialist
Group



Mission statement

The Medicinal Plant Specialist Group (MPSG) is a global network of specialists contributing within our own institutions and in our own regions, as well as worldwide, to the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants. The MPSG was founded in 1994 to increase global awareness of conservation threats to medicinal plants, and to promote sustainable use and conservation action.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, we envision a significant increase in knowledge of the conservation status of priority species of medicinal and aromatic plants, planning and actions to conserve and sustainably use these species, and broader industry and consumer awareness and participation in the conservation of threatened species.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: complete IUCN Red List assessment of 1,500 priority species of medicinal and aromatic plants.

Plan

Policy: promote the recognition of the sustainable use, trade and conservation of medicinal and aromatic plants in policy and action at the global, regional and national levels (action via Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CITES, World Health Organization (WHO), International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources (ITPGR), and other policy fora).

Act

Conservation actions: (1) develop and implement Plants for People initiatives for medicinal plants in at least three regions; (2) contribute to the implementation of the FairWild Standard and certification scheme for sustainable use of wild plants for at least 50 species, 50 companies and 20 countries.

Communicate

Communication: increase the visibility and recognition of the contribution of medicinal and aromatic plant conservation and sustainable use to livelihoods, health, food security and biodiversity.

Activities and results 2019

Assess

Red List

i. Fifty-nine global species assessments were submitted in 2019; 13 global assessments have been drafted; approximately 60 national/regional assessments were reported by MPSG members as completed in 2019. MPSG made significant progress on assessment of North American medicinal plant species, contributing to a regional Plants for People Initiative. Supported through partnership with the New Mexico BioPark Society/Albuquerque BioPark, and working with NatureServe (IUCN Red List Partner/Red List Authority for North American Plants), regional partners, and indigenous communities, we held a workshop in Albuquerque, USA, in July 2019 to complete Global Red List assessments of 17 medicinal plants and close relatives endemic to the South-western US/Northern Mexico 'Borderlands' region, and to review additional draft assessments for this region. A workshop hosted by Mt. Cuba Center, Delaware, USA, in partner-



Trillium erectum, the most widely harvested *Trillium* species in North America on medicinal markets, is one of over forty *Trillium* species assessed by the Medicinal Plant Specialist Group in 2019
Photo: Tara Littlefield

ship with NatureServe and supported by New Mexico BioPark Society, resulted in completed Global Red List assessments of 42 *Trillium* species native to North America, a significant genus among the priorities for North American assessments identified in 2018. Drafts for additional North American priority species were prepared and sent for expert review. In all, 59 completed assessments were submitted to the IUCN Red List Unit in 2019. Preparatory work and partner consultations to publish a comprehensive list of 3,200 North American medicinal plants were undertaken and plans for additional regional workshops in 2020–2021 developed. Remaining assessment priorities for North America include 15 WHO monographed species, nine CITES Appendix II-listed species, 41 species included as herbs in trade by the American Herbal Products Association, and 92 medicinal plant species and close relatives considered conservation priorities by the United Plant Savers. Assessments for these species have been drafted and will be submitted for review in 2020. Some ad hoc progress was made on medicinal plant assessments via other regional projects. None of these is included, however, in the 1,500 species identified as MPSG global priorities for Red List assessment. (KSR #1)

Plan

Policy

i. Application of CITES non-detriment findings (NDF) guidance for perennial plants is ongoing. Guidance itself has been referenced in the 18th

meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP18) documents linked to the implementation of the Convention (conducting NDFs). Review of the applicability of the Fair-Wild Standard and certification scheme for CITES-listed medicinal plants: this project was completed, and a key output of the project was delivered to the primary audience – the Parties to CITES – as an information document to CoP18, submitted by Germany and Mexico. The project findings were also summarised in a TRAFFIC Bulletin article. MPSG engagement in CITES processes: MPSG was represented at CITES CoP18 (August 2019), making several key interventions (which influenced the language of the CoP18 Decisions) on behalf of the IUCN Medicinal Plant Specialist Group. A number of MPSG members participated on the government delegations. A key new CITES Decision on medicinal and aromatic plants was supported at CITES CoP18, and MPSG remains engaged on the issues of implementation of the decisions. Publication of the revised WHO/IUCN/WWF/TRAFFIC Guidance on Conservation of Medicinal Plants did not advance. The IUCN MPSG Co-Chair has, however, produced a paper reviewing the linkages between COVID-19 and the use of wild medicinal plants, hoping this would trigger further discussions in the nexus of health, biodiversity and wild plants' use (despite this happening in early 2020, it is included in this report). Recognition of the value of wild plants to sustainable development and their sustainable management was higher on the agenda of the World Forum on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (Duijiangyan, October 2019). The TRAFFIC/IUCN MPSG Co-Chair delivered a keynote presentation summarising progress with delivering Global Strategy for Plant Conservation Targets on international trade and sustainable sourcing (Targets 11 and 12).

The final Forum Declaration makes clear links between the importance of wild species, plant conservation and the Sustainable Development Goals. An MPSG member in India as Chairman of a Regional level Committee constituted by the Government of Karnataka, India, guided and assisted the Government in streamlining the laws and regulations in the Medicinal Plants sector and helped the Industries in resolving several impediments in the lawful sustainable use of the medicinal plants. (KSR #26)

Act

Conservation actions

- i.** Partnership with New Mexico BioPark Society included training of MPSG members in conservation planning, development and implementation of undergraduate-level training in Red List assessment (North American region) with a focus on incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge; some progress was made on development of a regional Plants for People initiative in South America, and Red List training and assessments in Central America. (KSR #1, 15, 31)
- ii.** An MPSG member in Iran has been developing a national strategy/policy for environmental education that encourages and enables society and government to actively become involved in biodiversity conservation and other related efforts. This included organising annual biodiversity related festivals, and exhibitions in the National Botanical Garden of Iran; implementation of educational programmes for students on biodiversity and teaching them the values of biodiversity and the natural environment, and diversity of plant species in the natural environment in the National Botanical garden of Iran; enrichment of the medicinal plant collection in the National Botanical Garden of Iran and using the plant materials for research purposes. (KSR #15, 31)

iii. Member initiatives in India, China, and the Southern Cone of South America may contribute to the development of Plants for People (Medicinal Plants) initiatives. (KSR #31)

iv. IUCN MPSG contributed to the overall uptake of the FairWild Standard and certification scheme. Two new companies registered to trade in FairWild-certified materials and a new collection operation for Frankincense was certified, bringing the total number of participating businesses at the end of 2019 to 34 (13 wild collection operations, 13 traders, and eight licensees – an increase from 30 at the end of 2018). Work to bring the first FairWild-certified products from China to market took several important steps forward, with a pre-audit of *Schisandra* berry harvest practices in Sichuan and an interested buyer identified in France. Approximately 60 different products containing FairWild-certified ingredients are now on the market, with the newly formed beverage company Baobabes set to launch a Baobab drink product in 2020. (KSR #36)

v. MPSG actively contributed to the technical implementation of FairWild, including through several MPSG members being on the Board, Advisory Board or in partner organisations to the FairWild Foundation. MPSG contributed technically to the FairWild Forum, held in April 2019, which discussed the Standard revision issues. (KSR #36)

vi. Risk analyses were completed for two species wild-harvested in the country Georgia: *Tillia dasystyla* subsp. *caucasica* and *Sambucus nigra* (Elder). (KSR #36)

vii. MPSG is a partner to TRAFFIC, Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB) and others in a conservation project in Nepal, focusing on sustainable management of Jatamansi (*Nardostachys jatamansi/grandiflora*), with the focus on two districts in Nepal. (KSR #36)

viii. In the North Western Ghats of India, an MPSG member reported on Applied Environment Research Foundation (AERF)/Nature Connect successfully accomplishing the FairWild certification of two species – *Terminalia bellirica* and *Terminalia chebula* – for the fifth successive year in 2019 at two different locations in the northern Western Ghats. Nature Connect, in collaboration with certified /registered collectors, collected and processed 11.5 tonnes of FairWild-certified fruits of *T. chebula* and 12.5 tonnes of FairWild-certified fruits of *T. bellirica* in 2019. All the processed material was exported to Pukka Herbs (UK) in part directly by Nature Connect and in part through Phalada Agro Pvt. Ltd. In addition to this existing project, AERF field teams mapped wild populations of *T. chebula*, *Asparagus racemosus* and *Pterocarpus marsupium* for sustainable utilisation and value chain development in Junnar, Velhe and Sangameshwar block, Northern Western Ghats of India. (KSR #36)

Network

Synergy

i. Ongoing collaboration with other IUCN SSC Specialist Groups: with Global Trees, Orchids, Carnivorous Plants, and Crop Wild Relatives, on overlapping priorities for assessment; with Fungi Specialist Groups on development of appropriate indicators of vulnerability to unsustainable wild harvest, in partnership with the FairWild Foundation. Collaboration is developed with the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods

Specialist Group (SULI) on developing a possible sub-group of experts interested in plant sustainable use and trade issues. The MPSG Co-Chair is also representing the group on the IUCN Plant Conservation Committee. (KSR #29)

Communicate

Communication

i. IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 Forum event proposals were developed, along with contributions to planned pavilion/booth events (United Plant Savers and TRAFFIC booths; North American pavilion). (KSR #28)

ii. MPSG Newsletter: a new partnership with United Plant Savers (IUCN member, US) was created to link MPSG's Medicinal Plant Conservation newsletter with United Plant Savers' *Journal of Medicinal Plant Conservation*; the first combined edition is expected in mid-2020. (KSR #28)

iii. Website: the IUCN platform website was updated; some work to develop a stand-alone website on another platform advanced. (KSR #28)

iv. Presentations: (1) making CITES work through the application of voluntary certification standards (VCSs) (January 2019, Cambridge, UK); (2) human health and biodiversity conservation through sustainable trade in wild plants presentation to participants of an India sustainable use workshop (February 2019, Kotagiri, India); (3) sustainability issues in the context of wild collection, FairWild Forum (April 2019, Budapest, Hungary); (4) Latin American Zoo and Aquarium Association 2019 (April 2019, Santiago, Chile), on progress and ABQ BioPark partnership; Red List Hub Model; (5) Global Trade in Medicinal Plants: Threats and Opportu-

Danna Leaman and Anastasiya (Nastya) Timoshyna at the SSC Leaders' Meeting in Abu Dhabi, 2019
Photo: MPSG archives



Participants at the New Mexico Rare Plant Assessment Workshop at ABQ BioPark
Photo: ABQ BioPark



Participants in a 2019 workshop to assess the Red List status of all 42 *Trillium* and *Pseudotrillium* species — both genera endemic to North America. Many of these species are used medicinally
Photo: MPSG archives



nities, presentation to China Wild Plant Conservation Association (June 2019, Cambridge, UK); (6) Red List Workshop for Rare Plant Species in New Mexico hosted at the Albuquerque BioPark (July 2019, Albuquerque, New Mexico); (7) Red List Workshop for North American *Trillium* Species hosted at Mt. Cuba Center (October 2019, Hockessin, Delaware); (8) plants use and trade presentation for the IUCN Plant Conservation Committee and IUCN SSC Plant Specialist Groups (October 2019, Abu Dhabi, UAE); (9) global progress in the delivery against Target 12 (sustainable use of wild plants) of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation presented at the Global Summit on Plant Conservation (November 2019, China); (10) results of New Mexico rare species assessments, MPSG collaboration with Botanic Gardens presented to the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (November 2019, Santa Fe, US). (KSR #28)

v. MPSG participated in FairWild Week 2019, including by providing data on the conservation status of medicinal and aromatic plants. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

We thank the following donors and organisations for support in 2019: New Mexico BioPark Society / Albuquerque BioPark for Red List Assessment and conservation planning contributing to our People and Plants Initiative for North American medicinal plants, in particular, we thank Clayton Meredith for his amazing work in this capacity; NatureServe US for contributions to species assessments, to Mt. Cuba Centre for hosting our *Trillium* workshop, and to the many resource management agencies, botanic gardens, and individuals who provided expertise; TRAFFIC International for ongoing support to the Co-Chair of MPSG, and ongoing implementation of projects supporting sustainable trade in medicinal and aromatic plants, including those supported through the UK Defra Darwin Initiative, Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund, and Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN); and Dr Uwe Schippmann for ongoing development and deployment of the MAPROW database to support the efforts of our Specialist Group.

Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 5/5

Assess	1	
Plan	1	
Act	8	
Network	1	
Communicate	5	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 15, 26, 28, 29, 31, 36

KSR: Key Species Result