

IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group



2018 Report



Richard Kock



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Co-Chairs

Richard Kock (1)
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Location/Affiliation

(1) Royal Veterinary College, London, UK
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Number of members

262

Social networks

Facebook:
IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group
Twitter:
@IUCNWildHealth
Website:
www.iucn-whsg.org



Mission statement

The group is commissioned to serve as a first response for wildlife health concerns relevant to conservation around the world. The focus of the group is on health impacts that relate to the conservation of species, some of which are negative to wildlife population persistence and a threat to endangered species.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, we envision wildlife health will be recognised as a critically important dimension of species survival, enabling the SSC to more proactively and effectively manage wildlife disease threats and threats to wildlife health from human activities, spill over of domestic animals and human diseases or inappropriate reactions to wildlife disease events. We will focus our efforts on policies that support prevention and management of disease, including disease-specific recommendations (e.g. to governments), as well as simplified processes to facilitate timely international movement of emergency diagnostic specimens for conservation purposes under CITES and in terms of growing restrictions to timely diagnosis under Nagoya Protocols and similar initiatives. We apply the IUCN-OIE Guidelines for Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis as well as embed wildlife health considerations in future IUCN and United Nations (Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Global Environment Outlook (GEO), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), etc.) knowledge products to help proactively reduce disease risks and impacts of human activities on wildlife health. Through our regionally-diverse expert membership, we will aggregate information on wildlife disease events and adverse impacts on wildlife health as well as provide technical support on investigations of key wildlife morbidity and mortality events for enhanced understanding of

disease pathways and drivers to inform conservation action. Through our ongoing work with international and regional partners (e.g. UN CBD, World Health Organization (WHO), Wildlife Disease Association, World Organisation for Animal Health, UNEP GEO, UNEP CMS), we will continue to highlight and raise awareness of the links between the health of humans, animals and the environment and showcase how 'One Health' approaches can help mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: ten technical assessments delivered to SSC taxonomic groups.
Research activities: five wildlife mass morbidity/mortality events investigated.

Plan

Policy: policy for simplified process for international movement of emergency diagnostic specimens of conservation species adopted.

Act

Technical advice: ten technical recommendations delivered.

Network

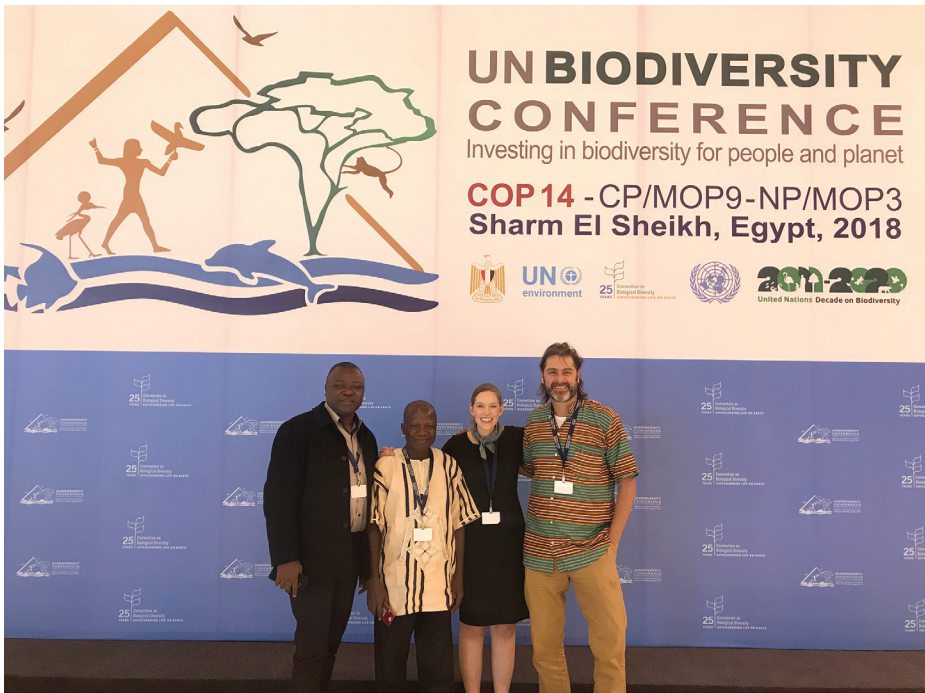
Documents review: ten SSC documents reviewed.
Membership: expand WHSG membership representation to 100 countries.
Synergy: ten external outreach events/materials/forums (e.g. policy conventions, social media) delivered showcasing relevance of wildlife health to One Health.

Activities and results 2018

Assess

Research activities

i. Role of two different diseases (Haemorrhagic septicaemia and Peste des petits ruminants)



WHSG Programme officer Catherine Machalaba and member Jim Desmond with biodiversity and health partners at the 14th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in 2018
Photo: EcoHealth Alliance 2018

in impacting conservation of sensitive species investigated: for Saiga (*Saiga tatarica*) mortalities in Central Asia, population mortality data is available as a direct result of disease (Kock, R.A., et al. (2018). Saigas on the brink: Multidisciplinary analysis of the factors influencing mass mortality events. *Science Advances* 4:eao2314. [DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aao2314]; Pruvot, M., et al. (2019). Outbreak of Peste des Petits Ruminants in Critically Endangered Mongolian Saiga and Other Wild Ungulates. *Emerging Infectious Diseases* [https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2601.181998]). Antelope Specialist Group informed. (KSR # 7, 23, 32)

ii. WHSG members reported morbidity and mortality events in over 100 species or taxonomic groups over the past four years. Information is currently being reviewed for categorisation of events (e.g. isolated, ongoing; scale of event) and will be disseminated to relevant Specialist Groups in 2019 to inform threat assessments. A significant number of reports are lacking precise information on cause of death, highlighting a systemic issue in wildlife health capacity. (KSR #7, 23, 32)

iii. Implemented process of annual (at least) member-sourced information collection on mass mortality events in wildlife. This is being paired with policy outreach to facilitate effective wildlife disease investigation, including a CITES resolution that would help promote timely movement of diagnostic specimens, and awareness raising in WHO and CBD about relevance of wildlife health for biodiversity and health. The WHSG also worked with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) to report on wildlife disease events and is in the process of reviewing reports of wildlife disease events submitted to OIE in 2018 and the previous decade. (KSR #23)

Plan

Policy

i. Policy for simplified process for international movement of emergency diagnostic specimens

of conservation species has involved lobbying at Conferences of the Parties (CoPs) and related CITES committee meetings, with help from member states and a range of other conservation groups (e.g. marine), and from membership to provide evidence to justify a change in CITES rules. The WHSG served on the working group assembled by the CITES Secretariat to produce the draft resolution voted on and ultimately approved at CoP17 in 2019. Adopted CoP 18 documents available: CITES COP 18 Decision 18.717 on simplified procedures for permits and certificates. (KSR #23, 26)

Act

Technical advice

i. WHSG provided input to the Canid Specialist Group on wildlife vaccination for media inquiry; input in progress on wildlife mortality events informing threat assessments. (KSR #23)

Network

Documents review

i. WHSG provided feedback on IUCN’s “Synthetic Biology and Biodiversity Conservation” document; also provided input on IUCN position papers for CBD. (KSR #23)

Membership

i. We now have 85 countries represented in our membership, with strengthened channels for engagement of regional coordinators for regional activity and ongoing qualified member recruitment from under-represented countries.

Synergy

i. Cooperation and technical advice: (1) ‘National wildlife disease surveillance informing One Health’, UK Animal and Plant Health Agency DoWS 20 Years of National Wildlife Disease Surveillance conference, APHA Weybridge, UK, 5 December 2018; (2) ‘One Health Tropical - Temperate Cline and disease. Will climate change merge these ecosystemic distinctions?’

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Namur, Belgium, December 2018; (3) ‘Saiga on the Brink - Where next on mass mortality events in large terrestrial mammals?’, The Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, Trondheim, Norway, 10 April 2018; (4) ‘People and Wildlife: Health and Security’, Second Wildlife Forum, Sustainable Use for Conservation and Livelihoods, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, November 2018; (5) ‘One Health Approaches for healthy humans, animals and environment’, CBD CoP14, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, November 2018; (6) Serve on IUCN Post-2020 biodiversity Task Force (IUCN position papers for CBD); (7) European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) restriction on use of lead shot in wetlands – comment from WHSG; (8) ‘Rabies as a Threat to Wildlife’ published in the *OIE Scientific and Technical Review* (2018). (KSR #23, 29)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2018

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 4/5

Assess	3	
Plan	1	
Act	1	
Network	1	

Main KSRs addressed: 7, 23, 26, 29, 32

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-014 and WCC-2016-Res-064