



Species

ISSUE 64

2023 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 trans-versal 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 and Centers for Species Survival (CSS) each year. Each SSC and CSS 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 and CSS Stand-alone Reports

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

Title of the group

Photograph(s) of the Chair/Co-Chairs

Group information

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

Logo of the 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 or CSS 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:

Okita-Ouma, B. and Slotov, R. 2024. 2023 Report of the African Elephant Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 10 pp.

IUCN SSC African Elephant Specialist Group



CO-CHAIR
Benson Okita-Ouma
Save The Elephants,
Nairobi, Kenya



CO-CHAIR
Rob Slotow
University of KwaZulu-
Natal, KwaZulu-Natal,
South Africa

**RED LIST AUTHORITY
COORDINATOR**
Kathleen Gobush
University of
Washington, US

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
98

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE
X: @IUCN_AfESG

Mission statement

The mission of the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) is to promote the long-term conservation of Africa's Elephants throughout their range.

Projected impact 2021–2025

To promote the long-term conservation of African Elephants throughout their range.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Compile, review and synthesise information on African Elephant numbers and distribution across all range states, with a special emphasis on forest populations, within the African Elephant Database.
Status: On track

T-002 Participate in the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE)-Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)-Technical Advisory Group (TAG) processes.
Status: On track

T-003 Publish the Red List assessments for African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) and African Savanna Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) in 2021.
Status: Achieved

T-004 Conduct Green Status assessments for both elephant species in priority regions.
Status: On track

T-005 Update AfESG's position statement on the removal of African Elephants from the wild for captive use out of their natural range.
Status: On track

T-006 Revise the 'IUCN/SSC AfESG Guidelines for the *in situ* Translocation of the African Elephant for Conservation Purposes' in line with the broader IUCN conservation translocation guidelines.
Status: On track

T-007 Develop guidelines/criteria for prioritising sites for survey support.
Status: On track

T-008 Continue to determine the genetic identity of taxonomically undefined elephant populations.
Status: On track

T-009 Fulfil the AfESG's obligations to CITES.
Status: On track

T-032 Update guidelines on population survey methods by incorporating newly emerging techniques for Savanna and Forest Elephants.
Status: On track

T-036 Provide a better understanding of the context and conceptualisation of sustainable use of African Elephants through the consumptive and the non-consumptive uses continuum.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-012 Enhance the functionality and capacity of the African Elephant Database and form a consortium for its technical and financial support.
Status: On track

T-013 Re-invigorate the African Elephant Library, build the capacity to curate historical survey information and investigate gaps.
Status: On track

T-015 Continue with the provision of technical input into the revision of the African Elephant Action Plan when called upon by the range states.
Status: On track

T-016 Support strategic and action planning processes at national, regional and continental levels, including assisting with the production of National Elephant Action Plans.
Status: On track

T-017 Develop updated AfESG guidelines on human-elephant co-existence (HEC), innovative new approaches based on landscape-level spatial planning, known elephant behaviours and community-based conservation approaches.
Status: On track

ACT

T-025 Release a statement on the AfESG's position on the two species issue.
Status: Achieved



A group photo taken during the International Conference on Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence in Oxford, UK
 Photo: <https://www.hwctf.org/conference>

T-030 Provide technical guidance for management of elephants as requested.
 Status: On track

T-031 Advise on the conservation and management of elephant range and critical habitats.
 Status: On track

NETWORK

T-026 Promote and – where appropriate – establish collaborations with relevant IUCN SSC Specialist Groups.
 Status: On track

T-027 Establish relevant working groups to engage with key issues that have been identified.
 Status: Achieved

T-028 Respond to emerging issues and changing priorities.
 Status: On track

T-029 Hold AfESG members meeting sessions in 2022 and 2024/2025 and – where appropriate or necessary – also hold brief inter-session online meetings.
 Status: On track

T-033 Fundraise for the running of the AfESG secretariat and for AfESG activities.
 Status: On track

T-034 Develop a community of practitioners through the HEC Working Group, exchanging information on best practice and successes and failures of appropriate tools in different contexts in Africa and in Asia.
 Status: On track

T-035 Create a community of young innovative local people to participate in Elephant management and conservation issues.
 Status: On track

COMMUNICATE

T-021 Enhance communication within and outside of the AfESG membership on key issues about African Elephants, through the establishment of a task force on communication.
 Status: On track

T-022 Publish in 2023/2024 an update of the 2016 African Elephant Status Report (AESR) and publish a numbers and range only AESR in 2024.
 Status: On track

T-023 Promote the creation and maintenance of linkages/connectivity between elephant habitats.
 Status: On track

T-024 Promote the *Pachyderm* biannual international peer-reviewed journal on Elephants and Rhinos.
 Status: Achieved

Activities and results 2023

ASSESS

Green List

T-004 Conduct Green Status assessments for both elephant species in priority regions. (KSR 6)

Number of new Green Status of Species assessments completed: 0

Result description: The IUCN Green Status of Species complements the Red List by providing a tool for assessing the recovery of species' populations and measuring their conservation success. In 2020, Green Status of Species assessments became an optional part of Red List assessments. The assessment of the Green Status for the African Forest elephant species is scheduled to commence in 2024, with data compilation and the organization of a new status report planned to be finalized in 2025.

Red List

T-003 Publish the Red List assessments for African Forest Elephant (*L. cyclotis*) and African Savanna Elephant (*L. africana*) in 2021. (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 0

Result description: The Red List Assessment for African Forest and African Savanna elephants was released in 2021. Currently, plans are underway to conduct a reassessment of the African Forest Elephant following the publication of individual status reports for each of the two elephant species in 2024. The initiation of this reassessment is expected in mid-2024, with the publication slated for 2026.

A group photo taken during the 77th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee held in Geneva, Switzerland
Photo: Oliver Tallowin



IUCN/SSC AfESG delegation to CITES SC77, November 2023 (from L-R: M. Yahya, K. Gobush and B. Okita).
Photo: Ben Okita



Research activities

T-001 Compile, review and synthesise information on African Elephant numbers and distribution across all range states, with a special emphasis on forest populations, within the African Elephant Database. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 0

Result description: The African Forest Elephant Status Report has been successfully finalized and DRWG is going through it and harmonising the write-up. The publication date for this report is set for March 2024. Simultaneously, the savanna subgroup has commenced its activities, having received results from the KAZA survey. Currently, AfESG is actively entering this data into the African Elephant Database (AED). Substantial data from savannah countries has already been collected and integrated into the system, with the ongoing data review process. We anticipate publishing the African Savannah Elephant Status Report (ASESR) in May 2024.

T-007 Develop guidelines/criteria for prioritising sites for survey support. (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 1

Result description: Future African Forest Elephant surveys should give priority to West Africa and, specifically, Eastern Africa, as well as regions with smaller African Forest Elephant populations. Many of the current population figures in these areas are labelled as guesses rather than

estimates, making it crucial to gather more accurate data. Despite their smaller size, these populations hold significant importance from a species conservation perspective. Some regions have seen an expansion of known elephant ranges, attributed to improved field information. To enhance our understanding, it is essential to allocate more resources for systematic surveys in these areas. The upcoming 2023/2024 African elephant status reports will offer comprehensive insights into the specific survey requirements for all range states, aiding in targeted conservation efforts.

T-008 Continue to determine the genetic identity of taxonomically undefined elephant populations. (KSR 6)

Number of species that have been assessed through the different tools: 0
Result description: Kathleen Gobush collaborated closely with the Nomenclature Specialist for the CITES to understand the requirements for establishing a standard nomenclature reference. Crucial criteria encompass sourcing the reference from a book or a peer-reviewed article outlining the fundamental taxonomy of the species. This should include a taxon description and a list of countries where the species is present. Ideally, the reference would also feature a map illustrating the taxon's range. Kathleen Gobush engaged in discussions on this matter with AfESG Co-Chairs, and ongoing considerations are in place to commence an article.

Synergy

T-009 Fulfil the AfESG's obligations to CITES. (KSR 5)

Number of reports to CITES: 1

Result description: The AfESG relies on data from the African Elephant Database (AED) to fulfil its IUCN mandate, particularly in the red listing process. The AED serves as the primary data source for AfESG's reporting to CITES on the conservation status of the African elephant. The CITES, through Resolutions and Decisions, has tasked the AfESG with providing technical input on various aspects of elephant conservation. In alignment with IUCN guidelines for SSC members engaging with CITES, the AfESG has appointed a focal point (FP) for CITES. The FP will collaborate closely with the Global Species Programme and adhere to IUCN guidelines, ensuring proper consultation with AfESG members when communicating with the IUCN GSP on CITES matters. Additionally, the FP will play a mentoring role for several young AfESG members on CITES-related issues throughout the quadrennial period, leading up to CITES CoP20 in 2025.

PLAN

Planning

T-012 Enhance the functionality and capacity of the African Elephant Database and form a consortium for its technical and financial support. (KSR 9)

Proportion of partners onboard to support information system: 0%

Result description Ruby's Lab was entrusted with the redevelopment of the African Elephant Database (AED), employing a modern technology stack that maximises the utilization of cloud technologies for hosting and the development of standard application modules. We are pleased to report that this initiative has



Meeting with Sec General of CITES Ivonne Higuero, MIKES officials and AfESG Secretariat at UNE Gigiri
Photo: Mohammed Yahya

been successfully completed, and the recently upgraded application is currently undergoing user acceptance testing. Concurrently, the AfESG has taken a proactive step by submitting a funding proposal to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This proposal seeks support for the second phase of the AED revamping. We eagerly await the outcome and potential support for the continued enhancement of the AED.

T-013 Re-invigorate the African Elephant Library, build the capacity to curate historical survey information and investigate gaps. (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/strategies: 1

Result description: The AfESG Administrative Assistant has been tasked with curating historical survey information, focusing on email correspondences dating back to 2016. Additionally, they are responsible for incorporating references from the recently updated African Elephant Forest and Savannah reports for the years 2023/2024.

T-016 Support strategic and action planning processes at national, regional and continental levels, including assisting with the production of National Elephant Action Plans. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies updated: 0

Result description: AfESG actively supported the review of the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA-TFCA) report, which detailed recent surveys conducted in the five KAZA countries: Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and

Zimbabwe. This survey aimed to establish baseline data regarding the numbers and distribution of elephants in the KAZA region, serving as a crucial resource to guide the development of collective policies and practices among the KAZA partner countries. The ultimate goal is the long-term conservation, protection, and effective management of Africa's largest contiguous elephant population. Additionally, the results of this survey contributed to updating the African Elephant Database, further enhancing our understanding of elephant populations and their dynamics in the region.

T-017 Develop updated AfESG guidelines on human-elephant co-existence (HEC), innovative new approaches based on landscape-level spatial planning, known Elephant behaviours and community-based conservation approaches. (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/strategies: 0

Result description: The IUCN's 2023 report on study guidelines for human-wildlife conflict and coexistence primarily focuses on wildlife in general, highlighting the necessity for a more specific emphasis on elephants. In response, the IUCN SSC African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) is collaborating with the Human-Elephant Conflict Working Group (HEC WG) and the IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Specialist Group (HWCCSG). Their collective effort aims to produce a comprehensive and authoritative guiding document addressing human-elfphant conflict.

Policy

T-015 Continue with the provision of technical input into the revision of the African Elephant Action Plan when called upon by the range states. (KSR 9)

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

Result description: The AEAP (2023) serves as an update to the AEAP (2010), incorporating insights gained from the initial 12 years of AEAP implementation. This revision leverages the collective expertise of the African Elephant Range States (AERS) and receives technical support from members of the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG). Contributions from these entities were primarily compiled during two workshop sessions in 2019. Progress on the revision was temporarily halted in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, revisions resumed in the latter half of 2021 and continued throughout 2022, culminating in the formal adoption of the revised AEAP in March 2023. The AfESG has commenced work on specific objectives, including the reduction of human-elephant conflict and the preservation of African elephant habitats. This involves the development of guidelines applicable to elephant range countries, aimed at restoring connectivity in these habitats.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-030 Provide technical guidance for management of Elephants as requested. (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 0

Meeting between AfESG Secretariat and Mr Kumara Wakjira, Director General for Ethiopia Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA)
Photo: Rachel Sharon



Meeting between AfESG secretariat and Mr Andrew Chomba, Director General for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) in Zambia
Photo: Rachel Sharon



Meeting between AfESG Secretariat and staff members for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) in Lilongwe, Malawi
Photo: Rachel Sharon



Meeting between AfESG Secretariat and Chair of the IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group, Mr Vivek Menon (Left)
Photo: Vivek Menon

Result description: The AfESG is poised to embark on a collaborative initiative with the Human-Elephant Conflict Working Group (HEC WG) and the IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Specialist Group (HWCCSG). Their collective goal is to craft an insightful and authoritative guiding document that addresses the issue of human-elephant conflict. This endeavour is designed to complement and align with the existing IUCN SSC Guidelines on Human-wildlife Conflict and Coexistence. The AfESG is set to play a pivotal role by providing crucial technical support for the development of this essential guideline.

T-031 Advise on the conservation and management of elephant range and critical habitats. (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 0

Result description: A significant insight gained from our recent participation in CITES meetings is the ongoing and substantial demand for the expertise of the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG). Notably, Decisions 19.167, 19.168, and 19.276 underscore the unique and crucial consultative role that AfESG plays in matters related to the taxonomy and nomenclature of the African elephant. Additionally, AfESG has been invited to serve as technical experts in the upcoming African Range State Dialogue Meeting (ARSDM), where they will formally present the status of both the African Forest and Savannah Elephant populations and distributions based on the recent reports scheduled for publication in 2024.

Policy

T-025 Release a statement on the AfESG's position on the two species issue. (KSR 10)

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 0

Result description: The Working Group (WG), under the guidance of the CITES Nomenclature Specialist, has convened

and issued the following accepted recommendations: “[the AC] acknowledges the scientific merit of recognizing the two species of African elephants, recognizing that hybrids and mixed-species groupings occur, and notes that a relevant nomenclature standard reference for these animals be further deliberated interessionally, with the outcomes of deliberations reported back to AC33.” The Nomenclature Specialist will establish the intersessional WG through email and virtual meetings, with ongoing involvement from the AfESG Focal Point. During the 77th Standing Committee (SC) meeting, a preference for changing *L. africana* to *Loxodonta* spp. was expressed; however, a decision on the standard nomenclature reference was deferred to AC33. The Secretariat has been assigned the task of preparing proposals for amendments to relevant Resolutions and guidelines for SC78, contingent on AC33's recommendations. Furthermore, the AfESG Secretariat has taken on the responsibility of expediting the publication of Forest and Savanna Elephant distribution and range maps by March 2024. These materials will be presented at AC33 as a supplement to a standard nomenclature reference.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-027 Establish relevant working groups to engage with key issues that have been identified. (KSR 2)

Number of task forces and working groups established: 0

Result description: The Red List Task Force, under the leadership of Kathleen Gobush, is actively driving a project that focuses on assessing the Green Status of African forests. The primary goal of this initiative is to bolster conservation efforts specifically targeted at the African Forest Elephant. Concurrently, the Sustainable Use Task Force, led by Duan Biggs, is overseeing a study titled 'Transforming the Conversation on the Sustainable Use of Africa's Elephants', whose aim is to explore potential areas of agreement while identifying

necessary evidence to address remaining gaps and areas of disagreement. This comprehensive process incorporates evidence, attitudes, and perceptions of levels of risk and threat, as well as different moral values regarding the types of actions and use that are deemed acceptable.

T-034 Develop a community of practitioners through the HEC Working Group, exchanging information on best practice and successes and failures of appropriate tools in different contexts in Africa and in Asia. (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 1

Result description: AfESG is collaborating with IUCN SSC HWCCSG to customise the IUCN Human-Wildlife Conflict guidelines, tailoring them to the specific context of African elephants. The IUCN's 2023 report on the study guidelines for human-wildlife conflict and coexistence primarily addresses wildlife in general, necessitating a more focused approach on elephants. The forthcoming adaptation will concentrate on elephant-centric issues and propose species-specific solutions. The Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence (HECx) Task force will review and augment the guidelines, ensuring comprehensive coverage, particularly in areas not addressed by the existing report. This publication is crucial for conservation practitioners, community leaders, decision-makers, researchers, and government officers dealing with elephants.

T-035 Create a community of young innovative local people to participate in Elephant management and conservation issues. (KSR 2)

Number of members included in a community of elephant management and conservation issues: 0

Result description: We have established a community of young, innovative local individuals actively engaged in elephant management and conservation issues; and foster a network that encourages collaboration and knowledge-sharing. The Red List

32nd meeting of the CITES Animals Committee held on 19th - 23rd June 2023, in Geneva, Switzerland, Kathleen Gobush represented AfESG at the meeting
Photo: Kathleen Gobush



Authority Coordinator, Kathleen Gobush, will spearhead the management of Green Status of Species (GSS) assessments specifically for the African Forest Elephant. As part of this initiative, efforts will be directed towards recruiting and mentoring graduate students from the range countries. This approach aims to build a new generation of young experts actively contributing to the conservation and sustainable management of African Forest Elephants.

Membership

T-029 Hold AfESG members' meeting sessions in 2022 and 2024/2025 and – where appropriate or necessary – also hold brief inter-session online meetings. (KSR 2)

Number of members meetings held: 0

Result description: The AfESG convenes its meetings biennially. The 8th AfESG members meeting took place in July 2019 in Pretoria, South Africa. Unfortunately, due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 9th AfESG members meeting scheduled for 2021 had to be postponed and is now rescheduled for 2022. We are currently in the discussion stages for the next meeting, which is anticipated to be held in 2025.

Synergy

T-026 Promote and – where appropriate – establish collaborations with relevant IUCN SSC Specialist Groups. (KSR 3)

Number of IUCN groups collaborating with AfESG: 0

Result description: The AfESG is actively collaborating with the Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Specialist Group, aiming to customise the IUCN Human-Wildlife Conflict guidelines to produce a specialised document specifically

addressing African elephants. As part of our outreach efforts, AfESG plans to present to the Lion Specialist Group, highlighting the enhanced post-revamp functionality of the African Elephant Database (AED) and engaging in discussions regarding the potential adaptation of key elements of the AED by the Lion Specialist Group. In response to a request from the Ugandan Government, an assessment of the TOTAL Tilenga Oil Project by experts from the SSC Specialist Group, with a focus on its impacts on biodiversity, has been proposed. Pending approval of the proposal, AfESG intends to collaborate with other Species Survival Commission Specialist Groups for this assessment.

T-028 Respond to emerging issues and changing priorities. (KSR 4)

Number of emerging and relevant issues addressed: 0

Result description: The secretariat of the AfESG is set to actively participate as technical experts during the African Range State Dialogue Meeting (ARSDM). In recognition of its mandate, the AfESG has received an invitation to present the status updates on both African Forest and Savannah elephants. The discussions at the meeting will encompass a wide array of topics, including live trade, annotations, and a comprehensive review of the current status of elephant populations, incorporating recent assessments. This significant event is scheduled to take place in Botswana in August 2024.

T-033 Fundraise for the running of the AfESG secretariat and for AfESG activities. (KSR 1)

Number of funding partners established and maintained: 0

Result description: The AfESG secretariat, represented by Ben Okita, Rob Slotow, and Mohammed Yahya, convened a meeting with Ivonne Higuero, the Secretary-General of CITES, at UNEP on August 23, 2023, to assess ongoing AfESG initiatives. Key agenda items included the advancement of the African Elephant Database and the pursuit of enduring support from CITES for the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme. This meeting saw the participation of Tanya McGregor and Constant Ndjassi, MIKE's staff members from the Nairobi Office. During the same month, the AfESG secretariat organised a Zoom call with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Discussions primarily focused on AfESG's key programmes: AED, conservation activities, publications (status reports), policy, and capacity building. The AfESG has submitted a funding proposal in response to a call by USFWS and is currently awaiting feedback on the proposal.

COMMUNICATE Communication

T-021 Enhance communication within and outside of the AfESG membership on key issues about African elephants, through the establishment of a task force on communication. (KSR 13)

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The AfESG Secretariat is working with the Communications Task Force to revamp the AfESG website, aiming to improve communication within and beyond AfESG's membership. The



A group photo after the completion of Data Science for Conservation training in Narok town conducted by Prof Han Olff (Groningen University) and Dr Joseph Ogutu (University of Hohenheim) and Dr Michiel Veldhuis (Leiden University)
Photo: Han Olff

redesigned website will address key concerns and highlight the significance of African elephant conservation and management. In June and July 2023, the African Elephant Database manager and administrative assistant undertook a mission to Tanzania, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Zambia. The objective was to collect new data on elephant populations and ranges, intended for the update of the African Elephant Savannah Status Report. Additionally, the visit aimed to strengthen the relationship between AfESG and these range countries by facilitating the development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Letters of Agreement on data sharing and capacity building.

T-022 Publish in 2023/2024 an update of the 2016 African Elephant Status Report (AESR) and publish a numbers and range only AESR in 2024. (KSR 13)

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 0

Result description: The African Forest Elephant Status Report is set for publication in May 2024, with the African Savannah Elephant Status Report (ASESR) following in July 2024. This sequential release aims to facilitate a focused assessment of these two species separately. Beyond these individual reports, the populations of the two elephant species will be consolidated to present a comprehensive count of the total elephant population, encompassing both African Forest and Savannah elephants. This amalgamated information will be outlined in a report customised for decision-makers, offering insights at the country, regional, and continental levels.

T-024 Promote the Pachyderm biannual international peer-reviewed journal on Elephants and Rhinos. (KSR 13)

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The 2023 report from the Co-Chairs of AfESG to *Pachyderm* highlights key activities. These include the reporting of status updates for Forest and Savannah elephants, the overhaul of the African Elephant Database (AED), and efforts towards the sustainability and governance of the AED. Furthermore, the report covered AfESG’s active participation in the International Conference on Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence, presenting outcomes from the CITES CoP19 meeting and the 32nd Meeting of the Animals Committee. Additionally, it outlines AfESG’s engagement with range states on broader issues concerning the conservation of elephants.

Acknowledgements

The European Union, through the CITES MIKE project, Save the Elephants, WWF International, WWF-US and the International Fund for Animal Welfare are thanked for their financial support during this reporting period. We also thank Vulcan Inc. /the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation for their systematic and continued financial and technical support for AED and African Elephant Status Reporting. We thank IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Offices for managing finances, technical reporting, and contracts. The IUCN Global Species Programme, especially Richard Jenkins,

Oliver Tallwin, Levi Mendoza, Lila Garcia Riveiro, Mayerlin Ramos, and Jafet Nassar, are thanked for their continued support and strategic advice. Rose Mayienda, Rachel Sharon Ouma, and Mohammed Yahya of the AfESG secretariat are thanked for tirelessly supporting the running of AfESG. All the AfESG members are thanked for their continued support, commitment, and contribution to the Group’s mission. We hope to achieve more success for the period 2023-2024.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 30

Geographic regions: 15 Global, 15 Africa

Actions during 2023:

Assess: 6 (KSR 5, 6)

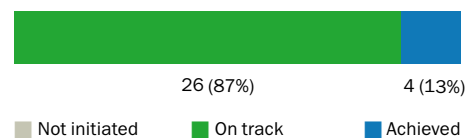
Plan: 5 (KSR 8, 9)

Act: 3 (KSR 10)

Network: 7 (KSR 1, 2, 3, 4)

Communicate: 3 (KSR 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:





Nothobranchius fuscotaeniatus
Photo: Csenge Nagy



Tetra Parnaiba
Photo: Karina Molina



Trioceros hoehnelii
Photo: Christopher V. Anderson



Sternberia lutea
Photo: Hayri Duman



Egretta rufescens
Photo: Ernesto Gómez



Lactifluus neotropicus
Photo: Aida Vasco



Mayfly nymph (*Ecdyonurus* sp.)
Photo: Astrid Schmidt-Kloiber and Wolfram Graf