



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 transversal 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:

Plumb, G., Ranglack, D.H. and Perzanowski, K. 2024. 2023 Report of the Bison Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 4 pp.

IUCN SSC Bison Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
93

Mission statement

The Bison Specialist Group (BSG) is committed to the development of comprehensive and viable strategies and management actions to enhance conservation and ecological restoration of European Bison (*Bison bonasus*) and American Bison (*Bison bison*), including Plains Bison (*Bison bison bison*) and Wood Bison (*Bison bison athabasca*) as wildlife where feasible across their original range. The BSG operates under the authority of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature to conduct comprehensive assessments, provide evidence-based advice and support, and communication and outreach activities in support of this mission.

Projected impact 2021–2025

The Bison Specialist Group will undertake collaborative analyses and produce collaborative publications intended to improve conservation planning and action for the American and European Bison species. Of special emphasis will be a new range-wide conservation action plan for the European Bison and continental meta-population management for the American Bison.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Complete a Green Status assessment for the American Bison (*Bison bison*).
Status: Achieved

T-002 Complete a Red List assessment for the American Bison (*B. bison*).
Status: On track

T-005 Reassess the historic range of the American Bison (*B. bison*).
Status: Achieved

T-006 Complete a global census of the genus *Bison* across all stewardship sectors.
Status: Achieved

PLAN

T-003 Complete a new conservation action plan for the European Bison (*Bison bonasus*).
Status: On track

ACT

T-007 Advise regionally for the American Bison (*B. bison*).
Status: On track

T-008 Advise regionally for the European Bison (*B. bonasus*).
Status: On track

T-009 Provide knowledge support for new restoration actions for the American Bison (*B. bison*).
Status: On track

T-010 Provide knowledge support for new restoration actions for the European Bison (*B. bonasus*).
Status: On track

NETWORK

T-004 Convene a new BSG Indigenous/Tribal Knowledge Working Group for the American Bison (*B. bison*).
Status: On track

Activities and results 2023

ASSESS

Red List

T-002 Complete a Red List assessment for the American Bison (*B. bison*). (KSR 6)

Number of national Red List reassessments published: 0

Result description: The BSG American Bison Red List Coordinator convened a 12-person multi-disciplinary working group and completed the development of an innovative scalar approach to determining what sub-populations should be considered as 'wild' through Red List Criteria. The IUCN Red List office reviewed this approach, and the working group is developing a final draft RLA for publication in 2024.



European Bison (*Bison bonasus*) at Bialowieza National Park, Poland. Photo: Rafał Kowalczyk

PLAN

Planning

T-003 Complete a new conservation action plan for the European Bison (*B. bonasus*). (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: A collaborative Scope of Work was updated, and fundraising was initiated to initiate Conservation Planning in 2024.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-007 Advise regionally for the American Bison (*B. bison*). (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 6

Result description: The BSG provided technical support through information sharing and presentations to the Canadian Bison Association, the US National Bison Association, and the North American Trilateral Wildlife Commission (US, MX, CA). The BSG also provided comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service upon request for the Yellowstone National Park Bison population. Members of the BSG are also assisting with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Saving Animals from Extinction (SAFE) program and the NASA funded cooperative research on American Bison conservation landscape assessment.

T-008 Advise regionally for the European Bison (*B. bonasus*). (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 2

Result description: The BSG Chair provided a keynote address on European Bison conservation at the Zoo Berlin in August 2023, and consulted with World Wildlife Fund and Azerbaijani Government

representatives about Bison restoration at Shadag National Park.

T-009 Provide knowledge support for new restoration actions for the American Bison (*B. bison*). (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: BSG members played critical roles in the planning and implementation of the restoration of the American Bison subspecies (*B. bison athabasca*) in Alaska, US.

T-010 Provide knowledge support for new restoration actions for the European Bison (*B. bonasus*). (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: At the request of the Forest District 'Lasy Janowskie' (Eastern Poland), a 'Program for the conservation and management of free-ranging European Bison herd in Lasy Janowskie' has been prepared and submitted to the Forest Service for acceptance. This herd, established there with nine individuals in 2021, is gradually growing and expanding its home range. In 2023, there were several transfers of animals for the supplementation of already existing herds or for the creation of new populations. Under the framework of European Bison Conservation Center: Animals from Poland to Făgăraș Mountains, Romania, and Encinajero, Spain; Animals from Sweden to Romania; Animals from Germany to Romania. Under the framework of European Aquaria and Zoo Association and Berlin Zoo: Animals from Germany to Azerbaijan.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-004 Convene a new BSG Indigenous/Tribal Knowledge Working Group for the American Bison (*B. bison*). (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 0

Result description: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, collaborative engagement with tribal communities and associated stakeholders has been postponed through 2023. This target remains a high priority for 2024.

Acknowledgements

We thank the European Bison Conservation Center, the European Association of Zoo and Aquaria, the World Wildlife Fund – Northern Great Plains Program, the National Bison Association (US), the Canadian Bison Association, Rewilding Europe, the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Humboldt University – Berlin, the Berlin Zoo, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the InterTribal Buffalo Council, the University of Nebraska – Kearney, South Dakota State University and the Conservation Planning Specialist Group of the IUCN SSC.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 10

Geographic regions: 7 America, 3 Europe

Actions during 2023:

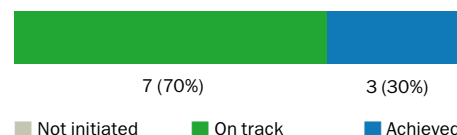
Assess: 1 (KSR 6)

Plan: 1 (KSR 8)

Act: 4 (KSR 10)

Network: 1 (KSR 2)

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