



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:

Green, C. 2024. 2023 Report of the Heron Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 4 pp.

2023 Report

IUCN SSC Heron Specialist Group



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**RED LIST AUTHORITY
COORDINATOR**
BirdLife International

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
33

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Facebook: [HeronConservation](#)

Flickr: [HeronConservation](#)

X: [@HeronCons](#)

Website: <https://www.heronconservation.org>

Mission statement

The mission of the Heron Specialist Group (HSG) is to promote the conservation of herons and their habitats worldwide by encouraging research, inventory, monitoring, and conservation action. To achieve its mission, the HSG maintains worldwide communication linkages among heron specialists, assesses the conservation status of heron populations, provides syntheses of information and action plans for the conservation of heron populations, and otherwise facilitates conservation action on behalf of herons and their habitat.

Projected impact 2021–2025

For this quadrennium, our planned and ongoing conservation targets will foster an increase in networking, exchange of ideas and attention to conservation issues concerning herons, egrets, and bitterns of the world. We will leverage virtual platforms to become better connected across the globe.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-004 Publish annual volumes of the Specialist Group's journal (*Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*).
Status: On track

T-006 Develop expertise listing to ensure all Near Threatened (NT), Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN) and Critically Endangered (CR) species are reviewed for Red List assessment.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-001 Update the Global Plan for Heron Conservation.
Status: On track

T-010 Develop the Conservation Action Plan for the Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*).
Status: Achieved

ACT

T-007 Establish Species Working Groups for Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered species.
Status: Not initiated

NETWORK

T-002 Establish Sub-Saharan Working Group.
Status: Not initiated

T-005 Complete Strategic Review of Heron Specialist Group governance and operations.
Status: Achieved

T-008 Organise and host virtual meetings of Heron Specialist Group.
Status: On track

T-009 Secure financial support for Coordinator for White-bellied Heron Working Group.
Status: Not initiated

COMMUNICATE

T-003 Organise and carry out the 2nd Herons of the World Symposium.
Status: Achieved

Activities and results 2023

ASSESS

Research activities

T-004 Publish annual volumes of the Specialist Group's journal (*Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*). (KSR 5)
Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 4
Result description: Volume 8 of the *Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation* was published in 2023, with four original peer-reviewed manuscripts published in this volume. We also received submissions for Volume 9 to be published in 2024.

T-006 Develop expertise listing to ensure all Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered species are reviewed for Red List assessment. (KSR 6)

Number of species that have been assessed through the different tools: 0
Result description: The Heron Specialist Group is seeking experts and developing

Least Concern Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*), in Kino Bay, Mexico
Photo: Mark Riegner



Least Concern Indian Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii*) in breeding plumage at Manas National Park, Assam, India
Photo: Udayan Borthakur

a database that provides experts contact information with all species listed as CR, EN, VU and NT.

PLAN

Planning

T-001 Update the Global Plan for Heron Conservation. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies updated: 0

Result description: Focus has shifted to working on continental and/or hemispheric plans and use those to build a global plan. Efforts have been initiated to revise the Waterbirds for the Americas Plan which covers North America, the Caribbean, and portions of Central and South America. Additionally, the HSG Chair has spoken with Samuel Ivande, Bird Conservation Coordinator, and we will be exploring options about working with CPSG to update the global heron plan.

T-010 Develop the Conservation Action Plan for the Reddish Egret (*E. rufescens*). (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies updated: 1

Result description: Completed and published the Conservation Action Plan for the Reddish Egret. We held a virtual workshop in July 2023 to promote and discuss plan implementation with the Reddish Egret International Working Group. Also presented the plan at the Gulf of Mexico Alliance All-Hands Meeting in Austin, Texas, in June 2023.

NETWORK

Documents review

T-005 Complete Strategic Review of Heron Specialist Group governance and operations. (KSR 2)

Review and strengthen governance and operating principles of Specialist Group. Status: Ongoing.

Result description: A completed review with HSG membership on governance and operating principles was achieved. We are using the listserv herons@freelists.org for communication as well as membership commission and IUCN Engage. Chip Weseloh and Katsutoshi Matsunaga are editors of the HSG journal, and the journal is our primary means of communication for research and species status updates.

Membership

T-008 Organise and host virtual meetings of Heron Specialist Group. (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 0

Result description: No plans in 2023 since the virtual meeting of HSG was held in 2022 in Victoria Falls as part of the Pan African Ornithological Congress. Nevertheless, we did recruit several new members through other societal meetings including Waterbird Society and BirdsCaribbean.

Synergy

T-009 Secure financial support for Coordinator for White-bellied Heron Working Group. (KSR 1)

Number of 'funding' partners established and maintained: 0

Result description: The Royal Society for the Protection of Nature Bhutan has taken the leading role on conservation of the White-bellied Heron and while they are primarily focused on the species conservation within Bhutan, the organization does work with contacts in other countries within the species range for conservation efforts. Therefore, while financial support for coordinator for working group would be very helpful, for now, the focus is on conservation efforts in Bhutan led by RSPN.

Acknowledgements

The Heron Specialist Group would like to thank the Reddish Egret International Working Group for their conservation efforts for the species and specifically for completing the Reddish Egret Conservation Action Plan. Funding for this plan was provided by the U.S. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and planning support by Texas State University, Pro Natura Noreste, Pro Natura Peninsula de Yucatán, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. We also thank the Royal Society for Protection of Nature Bhutan for their continued work on saving the critically endangered, White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) including the recently established captive breeding program in Bhutan, annual field surveys, public education, and outreach, and more. Lastly, we thank Chip Weseloh and Katutoshi Matsunaga for their continued service as Editor and Layout Editor, respectively, for the Journal of Heron Conservation and Biology.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 10

Geographic regions: 5 Global, 1 Africa, 1 America, 1 Asia

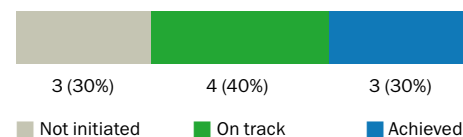
Actions during 2023:

Assess: 2 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 2 (KSR 8)

Network: 3 (KSR 1, 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