



Species

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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.

Example for the recommended citation:

Auliya, M. 2024. 2023 Report of the Monitor Lizard Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. 2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 4 pp.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

2023 Report

IUCN SSC Monitor Lizard Specialist Group



CHAIR
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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
41

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE
Website: <https://iucn-mlsg.org>

Mission statement

Knowledge of the conservation status of monitor lizards (*Varanus* spp.) is essential for the formulation of appropriate conservation measures that would also support the protection of demarcated ecosystems. In gaining this knowledge, it is crucial to work hand in hand with national authorities and local communities.

Projected impact 2021–2025

The conservation status of many species still bears multiple uncertainties; many range-restricted species are threatened, hence interdisciplinary research and multi-stakeholder efforts are crucial to halt the threatened status.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-003 Publish scientific papers on taxonomic-related and conservation issues in specific *Varanus* spp.
Status: On track

T-004 Continue field work.
Status: On track

T-006 Complete Red List assessments of relatively newly described species and Philippine species by end of 2021.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-005 Develop scientific results into conservation strategies on the science-policy interface.
Status: On track

T-008 Policies to strengthen species conservation.
Status: On track

NETWORK

T-001 Restructure the memberships within the group.
Status: On track

COMMUNICATE

T-002 Design a website.
Status: Achieved

T-007 Dissemination of information.
Status: On track

Activities and Results 2023

ASSESS

Red List

T-006 Complete Red List assessments of relatively newly described species and Philippine species by end of 2021. (KSR 6)
Number of new national Red List assessments published: 0

Result description: Assessments of six species, i.e., *Varanus tsukamotoi*, *V. bennetti*, *V. semotus*, *V. louisianensis*,

V. douarrha and *V. tanimbar* were verified by the RLA, however still need to be keyed into SIS. Once these six assessments have been added to the Red List, at least six species remain to be assessed.

Research activities

T-003 Publish scientific papers on taxonomic-related and conservation issues in specific *Varanus* spp. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 3

Result description: Our member Kumudani Gautam (India) generated a reference database of monitor lizards from Terai Arc Landscape, India and the outcomes resulted in the publication of 'Himalayan upliftment and Shiwalik succession act as a cradle for divergence in Bengal Monitor Lizard *Varanus bengalensis* (Reptilia: Varanidae) in India'. K. Gautam also co-supervised Ms Mansi Gupta, a student at National Forensic Science University, who pursued a dissertation under the Rufford project 'Leveraging community and technology to combat illegal trade of Bengal Monitor Lizard in Terai Arc, India'. Her dissertation title was 'Phyloforensics and community engagement to understand the trades of Bengal Monitor Lizards (V.



Measurement of an individual of *Varanus bengalensis* with Ms Mansi Gupta as dissertation student and QRT expert from forest department
Photo: Kumudani Gautam



Santhal women and children after the awareness workshop at the Sreechandrapur village in the Birbhum district of West Bengal, India.
Photo: Shreya Bhattacharya

bengalensis) in India'. She submitted her thesis in July 2023.

T-004 Continue field work. (KSR 5)

Continue field research on the conservation status of *Varanus* spp.: Ongoing.

Result description: Field research on the conservation status of *Varanus* spp. in West Africa is finalised; analysis is still ongoing and intends to report on a socio-economic study on the domestic use and trade of all species native to Togo. Our member Shreya Bhattacharya (India) finalised the project 'Santhal Awareness workshop' in West Bengal, India, in 2023. The Nile Monitor Research Project carried out by our member Cleo Grieve in South Africa aims to further our knowledge of the natural ecology and behaviour of wild varanids (*Varanus niloticus*). Using interdisciplinary studies, citizen science, and machine learning software to investigate the secretive lives of these mesmerising giant lizards, we can help bolster the new generation of knowledge that informs species management, care, and future conservation efforts. In 2023, as part of an independent research project and preparation of a dissertation on the topic 'Ecology of Desert Monitor in Kazakhstan', our member Yulia Zima (Kazakhstan) continued field research on *Varanus griseus*; the first scientific findings were submitted for publication. As part of the state program 'Development of the Red Book of Animals of Kazakhstan and an electronic database on rare and endangered animals', an update of the Red Book of Kazakhstan is being prepared, for which our member Yulia Zima has prepared a new essay on *V. griseus*. The new edition will take into account new information obtained on the distribution and identified threats to the species in Kazakhstan. Our member Kumudani Gautam (India) is currently working on a project entitled 'Leveraging Community and Technology to Combat Illegal Trade of Bengal Monitor Lizard in Terai Arc, India' funded by The Rufford

Foundation with the objective of community awareness regarding the ecological importance of the monitor lizard in their habitat.

PLAN

Planning

T-005 Develop scientific results into conservation strategies on the science policy interface. (KSR 8)

Number of species conservation plans/ strategies developed: 1

Result description: Creation of conservation goals and formation of action plans.

NETWORK

Membership

T-001 Restructure the memberships within the group. (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 5

Result description: In 2023, five members were recruited from South Africa, India, Togo, Canada and the UK, and one membership was renewed (Australia); additionally, one existing member was appointed as the Sustainable Use Focal Point.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-002 Design a website. (KSR 12)

Building of a website of the MLSG: Achieved

Result description: The MLSG website has been continuously developed. Currently, another member is involved in further improving the website, while information on the individual species is slowly being added; in particular, the national protection status of species is to be displayed here, but also where research is seen as necessary to refine current Red List assessments.

T-007 Dissemination of information. (KSR 13)

Number of SSC members' presentations developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The IUCN SSC Monitor Lizard Specialist Group in collaboration with the Srichandrappur Prabhat Rabi

Seba Sangha and the Green Plateau Organization conducted awareness workshops for the conservation of the widely utilised monitor lizard species (*V. bengalensis* and *V. flavescens*) in the tribal Santhal villages of the Birbhum district of West Bengal, India on June 9, 2023. The awareness workshops were the extension of the IUCN SSC Monitor Lizard Specialist Group Project 'Local Utilization of Wildlife Species, especially Monitor Lizards, in Santhal tribal villages of Birbhum, West Bengal, India' in 2021-2022. The workshops aimed to inform and educate the tribal villagers about the importance of wildlife conservation and its habitats and to make them aware of the effects of unsustainable use of biodiversity, thus highlighting the consequences for local human populations. The workshops consisted of a PowerPoint presentation followed by an interactive session with the tribal villagers; for more details refer to Bhattacharya *et al.* 2023, IUCN SSC Quarterly Report September 2023. An overall positive response and motivation for conservation was observed among the tribal villagers after the workshops, with a special highlight from a tribal hunter who publicly spoke about the importance of monitor lizards in the village ecosystems.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021-2025: 8

Geographic regions: 5 Global, 2 Africa, 1 Asia, 1 Europe

Actions during 2023:

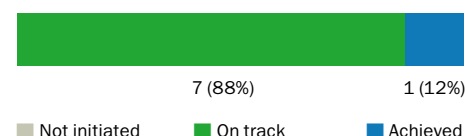
Assess: 3 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 1 (KSR 8)

Network: 1 (KSR 2)

Communicate: 2 (KSR 12, 13)

Overall achievement 2021-2025:



Lactifluus neotropicus
Photo: Aida Vasco



Sternberia lutea
Photo: Hayri Duman



Tetra Parnaiba
Photo: Karina Molina



Egretta rufescens
Photo: Ernesto Gómez



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



Nothobranchius fuscotaeniatus
Photo: Csenge Nagy



Trioceros hoehnelii
Photo: Christopher V. Anderson

