



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:

Matimele, H. and Parbhoo, S. 2024. 2023 Report of the Southern African Plant Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. 2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 6 pp.

2023 Report

IUCN SSC Southern African Plant Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
45

Mission statement

To assess the conservation status of plants endemic to Southern Africa and ensure their sustainable use and adequate protection through mainstreaming of information pertaining to threatened plants into government policies and development planning.

Projected impact 2021–2025

In the current quadrennium, the Southern African Plant Specialist Group aims to inform and enable effective conservation, reversing the red, and enable effective conservation and land use planning through the identification of critical species and ecosystems through multi-country red listing programmes and the documenting of critical sites for this important biodiversity, through identifying and promoting Key Biodiversity Areas and Important Plant Areas. We will deliver targeted *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and sustainable use programmes for species identified as at particular risk from habitat change and over-exploitation across the southern African region.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

- T-001** Complete assessments for 50 endemic and near-endemic plant taxa in Mozambique.
Status: On track
- T-002** Initiate assessments of ca. 100 endemic and near-endemic plant taxa in Malawi.
Status: Not initiated
- T-003** Initiate assessments of 180 endemic and near-endemic plant taxa in Namibia.
Status: Not initiated
- T-004** Complete assessments for 213 *Conophytum* taxa in South Africa.
Status: Achieved
- T-006** Complete assessment of Important Plant Areas for Mozambique.
Status: On track
- T-007** Complete assessment of Important Plant Areas in South Africa.
Status: On track
- T-008** Complete Red List of Ecosystems assessment and second iteration Key

Biodiversity Area (KBA) network for Mozambique.

Status: On track

T-018 Map ecosystem types for Namibia in preparation for Red List assessment.
Status: Not initiated

T-019 Initiate an inventory of Southern African *ex situ* cultivated plant collections of threatened species.
Status: Achieved

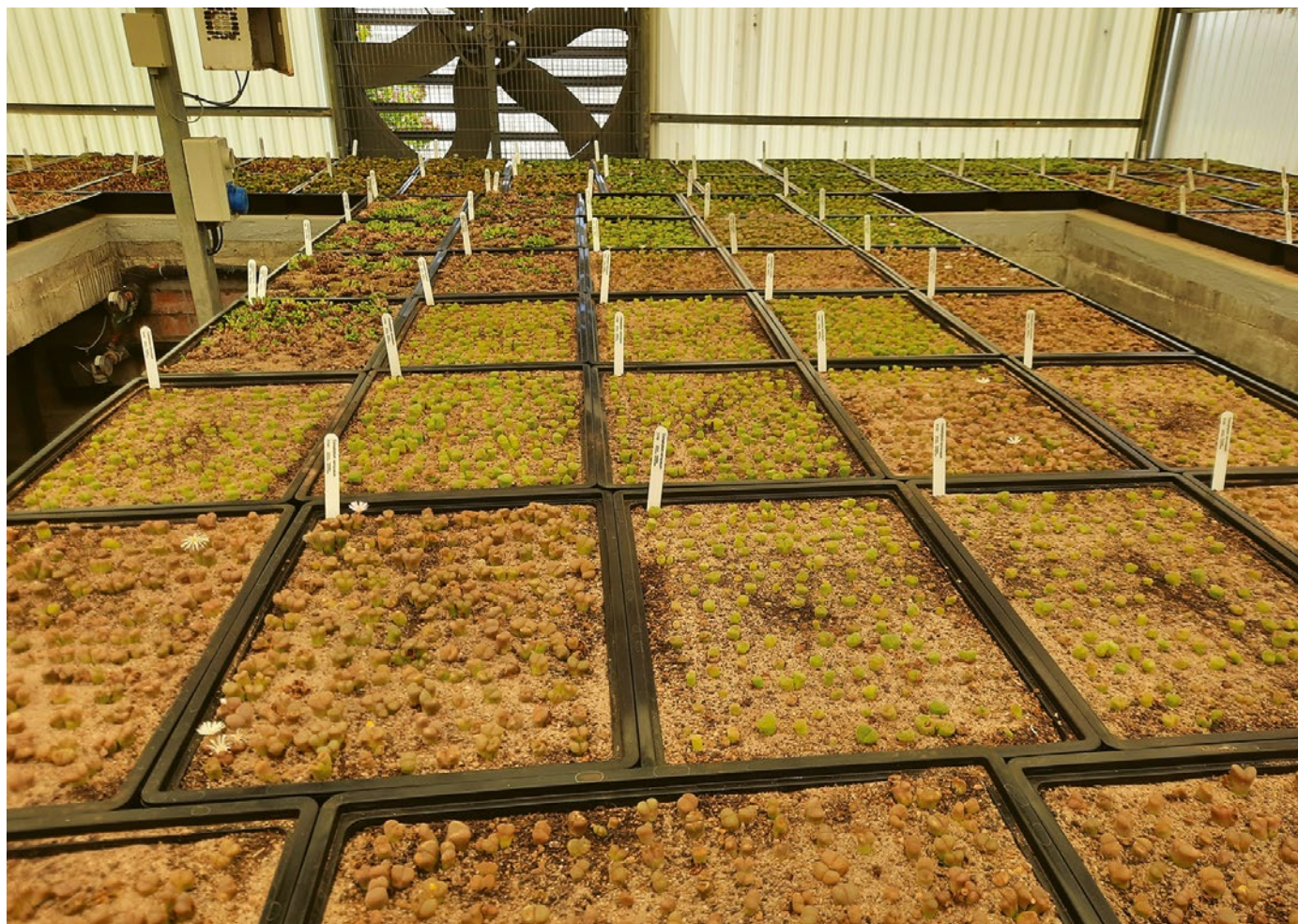
T-020 Develop a priority list of Southern African threatened species for *ex situ* cultivated plant collections of recalcitrant and priority critical habitat species that cannot be banked.
Status: On track

T-021 Complete assessments for 70 endemics and near endemics plant taxa in Eswatini.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-014 Contribute to *in situ* conservation planning in the Licuati and Chimanmani Important Plant Areas of Mozambique, to support improved protection for key habitats and their species.
Status: Not initiated

Confiscated *Conophytum* species being housed at the National Botanical Gardens in South Africa
Photo: Ismail Ebrahim



ACT

T-005 Develop a new area of work on sustainable use focusing on selected medicinal plants that are traded across borders in southern Africa.

Status: On track

T-010 South Africa seed banking programme: (1) develop priority list of South African threatened species for seed banking; (2) bank 1,000 seed collections of South African spp. of which 700 are new to the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership (MSBP); (3) seed bank illegally harvested succulent species – 45 target species. and 50 species from habitat.

Status: On track

T-011 Mozambique seed banking programme: (1) develop priority list of Mozambican threatened species for seed banking; (2) bank 700 seed collections for *ex situ* conservation of which 600 are new to the MSBP.

Status: On track

T-012 Pilot involving citizen members of the South African Botanical Society to restore priority degraded Important Plant Areas.

Status: On track

T-013 Develop an *in situ* conservation project on the *Icuria*-dominated coastal forests in Northern Mozambique.

Status: On track

T-015 Develop a species recovery programme: (1) develop a template for species recovery plans; (2) implement selected species recovery projects.

Status: On track

COMMUNICATE

T-009 Promote citizen science monitoring via the iNaturalist platform by providing training and participating in the global City Nature Challenge and Great Southern Bioblitz events.

Status: On track

Activities and results 2023

ASSESS

Planning

T-020 Develop a priority list of Southern African threatened species for *ex situ* cultivated plant collections of recalcitrant and priority critical habitat species that cannot be banked. (KSR 5)

Number of national priority lists developed: 0

Result description: Workgroup sessions have been conducted and research to determine recalcitrant plant groups is underway to prioritise species.

Policy

T-007 Complete assessment of Important Plant Areas in South Africa. (KSR 6)

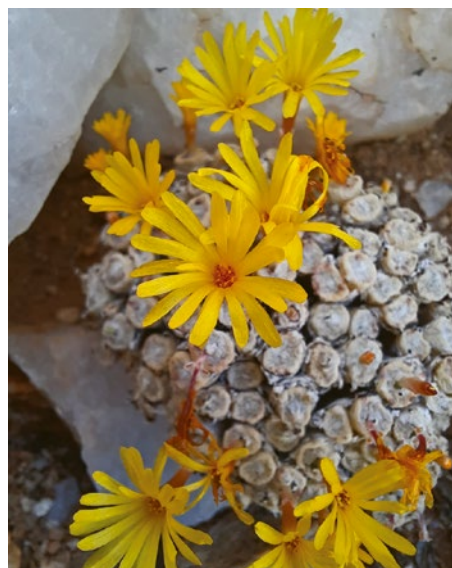
Number of national plans incorporating Key Biodiversity Areas in their spatial planning: 60

Result description: The Important Plant Areas (IPA) criteria have been applied nationally in South Africa with over 7,700 sites initially identified as having met one or more of the criteria. Prioritization of sites within this long-list to identify focal sites for monitoring and management was completed however this has not yet been published.

T-008 Complete Red List of Ecosystems assessment and second iteration Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) network for Mozambique. (KSR 6)

Number of national plans incorporating KBAs in their spatial planning: 60

Thicket vegetation type of the Licuati Forest Reserve in Southern Mozambique. This is one of the 57 Important Plant Areas in Mozambique and it is unique in terms of habitat type
Photo: John Burrows



Conophytum tantillum inexpectatum
Photo: Ismail Ebrahim



Result description: Mozambique produced a map of ecosystem types, comprising 162 vegetation units. Then, the map was used to complete the Red List of Ecosystem types and develop an additional five KBA proposals.

Red List

T-001 Complete assessments for 50 endemic and near-endemic plant taxa in Mozambique. (KSR 6)

Number of new global Red List assessments completed: 30

Result description: In 2023, a further 30 assessments have been completed.

T-002 Initiate assessments of ca. 100 endemic and near-endemic plant taxa in Malawi. (KSR 6)

Number of new global Red List assessments completed: 0

Result description: The South African Red List team provided training in late-2023. Malawians will start assessments soon.

T-003 Initiate assessments of 180 endemic and near-endemic plant taxa in Namibia. (KSR 6)

Number of new global Red List assessments completed: 0

Result description: The Namibian Red List team had received training from the South African Red List team and has started assessments for 438 species.

T-004 Complete assessments for 213 Conophytum taxa in South Africa. (KSR 6)

Number of new global Red List assessments completed: 1,657

Result description: The South African Red List team has just completed a national update which includes 1,657 updated

assessments. All *Conophytum* and other succulent species have been updated due to the impact of mining activities, the surge in succulent poaching experienced since 2020, and climate change. This impact is evident in the uplisting of 85 *Conophytum* species, initially classified in 2020 as Least Concern, Critically Rare, and Rare, now all listed under a category of threat. Overall, 96% of all *Conophytum* species are now designated as Vulnerable or higher. Many other caudiform and geophytic species are also under pressure with trends changing rapidly as different species become targeted by this growing illegal wildlife trade.

T-021 Complete assessments for 70 endemics and near endemics plant taxa in Eswatini. (KSR 6)

Number of new global Red List assessments completed: 0

Result description: Assessments for all endemic species in Eswatini are almost completed and will undergo the review process thereafter.

Research activities

T-006 Complete assessment of Important Plant Areas for Mozambique. (KSR 6)

Number of new KBAs confirmed in the World Database of KBAs: 30

Result description: A network of 57 IPAs has been identified in Mozambique, covering an area of 22,950 km² of the land area of the country.

T-018 Map ecosystem types for Namibia in preparation for Red List assessment. (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 0

Result description: Work on developing a map of ecosystem types for Namibia has been initiated.

T-019 Initiate an inventory of Southern African ex situ cultivated plant collections of threatened species. (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 262

Result description: For South Africa, 262 priority species were identified, inventory and check of priority species in collections were done, and 20% of species are in collections.

For Mozambique, there are more than five threatened species in *ex situ* cultivated collections at Eduardo Mondlane University.

PLAN

Planning

T-014 Contribute to in situ conservation planning in the Licuati and Chimanimani Important Plant Areas of Mozambique, to support improved protection for key habitats and their species. (KSR 8)

Number of species conservation plans/strategies developed: 3

Result description: In northern Mozambique, particularly Nampula, communities are working closely with the private sector to develop nurseries for more than three species including *Icuria dunensis*. Therefore, at least three conservation plans have been developed.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-005 Develop a new area of work on sustainable use focusing on selected medicinal plants that are traded across borders in southern Africa. (KSR 11)



Hlengiwe Mtshali demonstrating how to use iNaturalist during the Malawian bioblitz session
Photo: Southern African Plant SG Archives

Number of threatened species benefited directly or indirectly by sustainable use programs: 0

Result description: The Eswatini team has submitted a funding proposal to the SSC Internal Grant programme for a pilot study on incorporating indigenous knowledge into Red List assessments for medicinal plants in Eswatini. Outputs will include priority species selected by the traditional healers, with this information incorporated along with scientific records to provide the distribution data for national red list assessments, as well as the initiation of *ex situ* propagation of priority species for redistribution. If this approach proves successful, it is envisaged that it can be adapted for use within other countries in the region.

T-010 South Africa seed banking programme: (1) develop priority list of South African threatened species for seed banking; (2) bank 1,000 seed collections of South African species of which 700 are new to the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership (MSBP); (3) seed bank illegally harvested succulent species – 45 target species and 50 species from habitat. (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefited directly or indirectly by sustainable use programmes: 1,984

Result description: The priority species list for *ex situ* seed banking in South Africa was identified with 262 species listed in the red category, 371 in the orange category, and 2,241 in the yellow category. The overall target has been exceeded with a total of 1,984 species collected, 935 seed collections were new to MSBP and 181 seed collections were of threatened

species. Seed banking of Illegally harvested succulent species was under target with 39 *Conophytum* species collected and 35 species from the habitat banked.

T-011 Mozambique seed banking programme: (1) develop priority list of Mozambican threatened species for seed banking; (2) bank 700 seed collections for *ex situ* conservation of which 600 are new to the MSBP. (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefiting from *ex situ* conservation action: 0
Result description: The seed banking requires finalizing, based on the South African model. Training was received last year resulting in five network teams established of 16 people all out collecting. Furthermore, a dry room that has good conditions for seed storage has been restored. Target well below par with 289 species collected, 80 of which were new to the MSB.

T-013 Develop an *in situ* conservation project on the *Icuria*-dominated coastal forests in Northern Mozambique. (KSR 10)

Number of threatened species benefiting from *in situ* conservation action: 60
Result description: Initiatives aimed at enhancing *in situ* conservation of *Icuria dunensis* were undertaken in the Matibane Forest reserve, particularly through engaging with communities to raise awareness.

COMMUNICATE Communication

T-009 Promote citizen science monitoring via the iNaturalist platform by providing training and participating in the global City Nature Challenge and Great Southern Bioblitz events. (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 0

Result description: Thirty-three cities/regions across southern Africa participated alongside 482 cities from 46 countries globally in the City Nature Challenge 2023. Thirty-eight cities/regions across southern Africa participated, alongside 203 participants representing South America, Oceania, and Africa in the Great Southern Bioblitz 2023. Most observations for this international event were from Africa, despite it having the least number of observers. South Africa provided online training for all participants before each event as well as in-person training with eSwatini, Malawi, and Rwanda and as required across South Africa. In-person training was also conducted with most of South Africa's Higher Education institutions. Student participation is tracked over the year with the most active student being awarded a book prize at the end of the year.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 19

Geographic regions: 19 Africa

Actions during 2023:

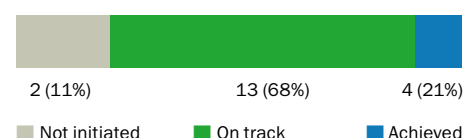
Assess: 11 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 1 (KSR 8)

Act: 4 (KSR 10, 11)

Communicate: 1 (KSR 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

