



# Species

ISSUE 64

## 2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat



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## 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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## 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.

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### Title of the group

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### Photograph(s) of the Chair/Co-Chairs

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### 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.

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### Logo of the group

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### Mission statement

Includes the mission of the group.

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### 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.

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### 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).

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### 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).

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### Acknowledgements

Includes the acknowledgements to funding agencies, partners, and persons who contributed to the progress of the targets of the group.

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### 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

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### Example for the recommended citation:

Evers, D. 2024. 2023 Report of the Loon 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 Loon Specialist Group



**CHAIR**  
David Evers  
BioDiversity Research  
Institute, Maine, US

**RED LIST AUTHORITY  
COORDINATOR**  
David Evers  
BioDiversity Research  
Institute, Maine, US

**NUMBER OF MEMBERS**  
28

### Mission statement

The mission of the Loon Specialist Group is to contribute to increasing current knowledge on the ecology of all five species across their entire geographic range of distribution and promote long-term conservation.

### Projected impact for 2021–2025

By the end of 2025, we envision that the population and distribution of all species of divers/loons will remain strong. Breeding populations are generally in protected areas – although stressors such as mercury pollution and oil drilling may have impacts in some areas – while wintering populations are potentially in conflict with stressors associated with marine ecosystems, e.g. oil spills, cyanobacteria outbreaks and degraded fisheries. A global stressor of particular concern for global loon populations is mercury. That concern will be assessed through a new initiative to better understand mercury exposure and its effects on loon populations and other IUCN SSC Groups in collaboration with the Minamata Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

### Targets for 2021–2025

#### ACT

**T-001** Understand the potential impacts of offshore wind turbines on loons/divers along the coasts of North America and Europe through tracking of transmitted individuals.

Status: On track

**T-006** Evaluate the potential for new transmitter designs for loons/divers.

Status: On track

#### NETWORK

**T-003** Identify biologists actively studying loons/divers.

Status: On track

#### COMMUNICATE

**T-002** Publish papers about mercury exposure and associated spatiotemporal patterns in loons/divers across the northern hemisphere.

Status: Achieved

### Activities and results for 2023

#### COMMUNICATE

##### Communication

**T-002** Publish papers about mercury exposure and associated spatiotemporal patterns in loons/divers across the northern hemisphere. (KSR 13)

Number of communication products using innovative tools: 3

Result description: Group members are currently contributing papers to the [Ecotoxicology Special Issue](#) where three papers have already been published; 11 others have been submitted (eight of these have been accepted) while 11 drafts have been finished but are yet to be submitted. All papers revolve around the topic of mercury in biota in the global environment and that loons/divers are an excellent bioindicator of mercury for the northern hemisphere. Loon mercury data are incorporated into multiple papers within this special issue.



A breeding adult of Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) swims towards the camera and turns its head. The bird displays its summer plumage, which can be identified by the reddish feathers on the neck, fully grey head and red eyes  
Photo: Don Faulkner (CC BY-SA 2.0)

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### Acknowledgements

We want to express our sincere gratitude to Deb McKew, Communications Director at Biodiversity Research Institute.

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### Summary of achievements

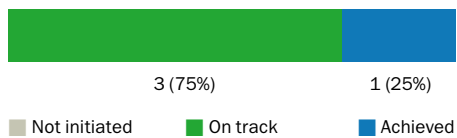
Total number of targets for 2021–2025: 4

Geographic regions: 2 Global, 2 America, 1 Europe

Actions during 2023:

Communicate: 1 (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