

Identifying Species Conservation Priorities in Africa Pre-Forum

Improving IUCN's response to the species extinction crisis.



Africa Conservation Forum
Nairobi, Kenya, 25 June 2024



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1. Setting the Scene	3
2. Presentations	3
2.1. Assess-Plan-Act Cycle	3
2.2. Past and Future: How species assessments can inform transformational changes in an ever-evolving conservation landscape	4
2.3. Conserving threatened species in the face of development	4
2.4. Role of species planning in responding to emerging conservation challenges and national prioritization	5
2.5. Conservation action impact and sustainability: Are current approaches fit for purpose?	5
2.6. Business Unusual: Perspectives on the evolution of conservation funding from aid agencies	6
2.7. Sustainable Financing Approach	6
2.8. Opportunities for enhancing species conservation action in Africa through Policy coherence.	6
2.9. Enhancing species recovery in Africa through the CBD GBF Target 4: What would success look like?	7
2.10. Opportunities for enhancing species conservation action in Africa through climate change mitigation and adaptation	7
2.11. IUCN Species Conservation Action	7
3. Breakout sessions	8
4. Key Outputs and Recommendations	11



1 Introduction

The pre-forum workshop on identifying species conservation priorities in Africa was held on the 25th of June 2024 at the Ole Sereni Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. It was held as a precursor event to the IUCN Africa Regional Forum. This workshop aimed to provide an opportunity for IUCN members to identify species conservation priorities in Africa and make recommendations on how IUCN can improve its response to the species extinction crisis. The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Assess IUCN member's needs related to species assessments, planning, and conservation action for umbrella, keystone, migratory species, and other species of concern
- Identify opportunities for enhancing species conservation action in Africa through Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the GBF Target 4 and climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity funding
- Present results and recommendations to the main regional forum regarding how IUCN can better respond to the species extinction crisis.
-

The workshop was attended by 37 IUCN members (see annex 2 for list of participants) from Governmental and Non-governmental organisations across Africa and, was characterized by a series of presentations, breakout group sessions, Q&A sessions, and discussions and recommendations.

1.1. Setting the Scene

The workshop facilitator, Dr. Philip Muruthi, Vice President of Species Conservation and Science at the African Wildlife Foundation, set the scene by recalling the workshop's purpose and guiding the discussions. He encourages participants not to look at species in isolation but broadly integrate other aspects like human well-being, human rights, climate change, wildlife economy, landscape-level conservation, etc. He called on participants to bring their experiences in species planning and assessment to advise IUCN on better addressing species issues and other global challenges while commending IUCN for their great work for species conservation in Africa. He however requested that IUCN consider the need to maintain a species-based program or integrate it into other programs considering that the biodiversity funding environment is increasingly not looking at species conservation as a hot topic. He then gave a rundown of the program for the workshop and opened the floor for the various presentations.

2 Presentations

2.1. Assess-Plan-Act Cycle

This was presented by Ms. Nahomy De Andrade, Executive Director of the IUCN Species Survival Commission. This was focused on the species conservation cycle starting with an introduction to the IUCN Species Survival Commission. The commission is divided into 190 specialist groups and has 10,072 members in 186 countries around the world with 1000 members in Africa. The assess-plan-act or species conservation cycle drives this commission's efforts through networking and communicating outcomes. The cycle normally begins with "assess" to understand the status of species, then the "plan" to set strategies for species and set recommendations, and finally "act" putting together the resources required to improve the status of the species and biodiversity. To date, 70 % of the Species Survival Commission's activities are fully dedicated to "act" activities to improve the status of species. They have achieved 80% of their 2021-2025 species' strategic plan. However, in Africa, most of their activities (40%) are in the "assess" component. More than 4,707 assessments have been completed 51 species conservation action plans developed, and 3,585 threatened species are benefiting from in-situ and ex-situ conservation actions in Africa. To expand the network, 268 members have been recruited between 2021 and 2024 while 106 presentations have been developed concerning specific taxonomic groups. To conclude her presentation, she invited participants to connect with the specialist groups in their various countries to help implement or support species projects in the region.



2.2. Past and Future: How species assessments can inform transformational changes in an ever-evolving conservation landscape

This was presented by Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, Head of Conservation at Birdlife South Africa. She showcased some examples from South Africa of how red listing assessments can inform conservation decision-making and how this links to the broader conservation agenda. The red listing assessment process is comprehensive and places species in one of nine categories of assessment and helps in understanding the extinction risk of that species. However, she emphasised that in identifying the priorities for conservation, we must look at other factors such as economic, societal, biological, etc. Starting with the African penguins currently listed as endangered, she highlighted how this species had declined by 80% over 30 years, and applying the red listing criterion of past and future decrease, the species is predicted to go extinct in the wild by 2035. Drawing on this example and with the multitude of threats usually faced by species from climate change to human pressure, an ecosystem approach to addressing conservation issues is required. The island closure experiment they started in 2008 helped secure breeding islands for the African penguin though this was not biologically meaningful. However, safe breeding habitats in areas of high fish abundance were secured. Another example was the Botha's Lark bird species which is critically endangered and at high risk of extinction. This species had suffered a 90% decline in its population in about 10 years. It equally faces many threats from habitat destruction due to agriculture to climate change, grazing, and predation. Birdlife South Africa in trying to save this species, is engaging with landowners to declare protected environments in that area and carrying out scientific research as well as monitoring to identify the most suitable interventions which will equally benefit other species in the area. Environmental education and community conservation programs are ongoing in sites where the species occur all in a bit to prevent the species from extinction. She equally gave similar examples of their work on other species in South Africa. Birdlife South Africa is now more focused on species' habitat conservation, especially on grasslands, wetlands, and rangelands restoration working closely with other organisations like IOWA, the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, Ramsar, etc. and the local communities to conserve and secure bird species habitat in South Africa. Also, the red listing process is ongoing in South Africa, and they hope to publish the list by next year.

2.3. Conserving threatened species in the face of development

This was presented by Dr Ian Little, Director of Conservation at Endangered Wildlife Trust, South Africa. He talked about the Online Environment Screening tool developed in partnership with the Department of Forestry Fisheries and Environment through the South African National Biodiversity Institute. This tool enables developers to map at any given site, what potential species could be affected by the proposed development, and this is now a magic tool that must be produced for every single Environmental Impact Assessment for every single proposed development at a national scale in South Africa. His organisation has used this tool to identify areas that are absolute priorities for species conservation perspectives and should therefore not be touched by any development agenda. This then resulted to the development of the Threatened Species No-Go Areas Mapping Tool. It's an online tool for identifying the most irreplaceable sites for species conservation in South Africa. It aims at locating and mapping areas of significant biodiversity impact. It provides an easy-to-access and user-friendly portal to identify no-go areas at the onset of the project scoping phase. The mapping process in South Africa has enabled them to come out with a list of 15 amphibians, 5 insects, 20 mammals, 2 birds, 7 reptiles, 59 butterflies, and 400 plant species that inform the spatial analysis of the No-go Area Tool. One key thing included in the tool is the buffering of sensitive species from a trade perspective. Though listed as a purely sensitive species, users of the tool can apply to the organisation for the data.



2.4. Role of species planning in responding to emerging conservation challenges and national prioritization

This was presented by Dr. Fred Omengo, Principal Research Scientist at the Wildlife Research Training Institute in Kenya. He gave a brief on species strategy development involving bringing together all the players within a country to produce transformational changes in the support process with the government being at the centre of these strategies. Taking the example of Kenya as a biodiversity hotspot with different conservation challenges, he demonstrated how the country is formulating species strategies. These strategies looked at the assessment, monitoring, and identifying threats and their impact on the species. They equally focus on scientific research, education, public awareness, and involving stakeholders which finally leads to conservation actions. They have assumed that developing and implementing strategies for flagship species such as elephants and rhinos will cover other non-flagship species, they have come to realize that this is not the case as other species do not occur in the same core areas as these flagship species. Thus, strategies should be developed for each species of conservation concern. Kenya is currently implementing at least 15 species strategies though biased towards fauna over flora. The need to involve all stakeholders including the communities in strategy development was emphasised and linking this strategy with some of the conventions like the CBD and other existing instruments like CMS. Also, government buy in is critical to ensure resources and mandate. Some of the setbacks in the species strategies in Kenya include; the lack of integration of these strategies into the national policies, inadequate inclusion of the species habitat protection and monitoring, and the lack of engagement for some species considered non-flagship species. In terms of the impacts of existing species strategies in Kenya, the milestones have not been met for most of the strategies due to other emerging issues such as climate change, resource use conflicts, inadequate involvement of all sectors (private sector) , socio-political challenges, invasive species, etc. To improve the impact of the strategies, they are now focusing on a better participatory process, equitable benefit-sharing, better reporting to the national biodiversity action plan, encouraging transboundary initiatives, providing accurate and accessible data, reflect on the role of MEAs in species conservation, addressing challenges such as data gaps, sharing of lessons and best practices across bioregions, and collectively addressing the global emerging issues.

2.5. Conservation action impact and sustainability: Are current approaches fit for purpose?

Dr Aristide Takoukam Kamla, President and Founder of the African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation in Cameroon presented the current conservation action approaches and perspectives on their impact and if they are fit for purpose. He focused on the six areas of conservation action i.e., land/water protection, land/water management, species management, education and awareness, law, and policy, and finally livelihood, economic and other incentives. Starting with land/water protection and management, he observed that current approaches based on protected and conserved areas are not people-centered enough and do not reconcile with infrastructural development. He recommends contextualizing conservation in Africa that does not rely totally on external funding but leveraging national funds for protected areas in Africa. Regarding species management, education, and awareness, he recognized that species recovery plans were great tools but recommended investing in training the future generation of conservationists through the creation of academic institutions that focus on species management and storytelling as a great tool for raising awareness. Regarding law, policy, and livelihood, he stated that most of our laws do not reflect our culture which makes it difficult to implement. Therefore, there is a need to develop true and sustainable incentives that would help local communities to improve their livelihood in a way that will benefit species conservation. He equally pointed out the importance of citizen science in assessing species, especially elusive species. To conclude, he affirmed that current approaches were fit for purpose, but a lot still needed to be done to push ahead species conservation in Africa.



2.6. Business Unusual: Perspectives on the evolution of conservation funding from aid agencies

Ms. Claire Ogali, Biodiversity and Policy Team Lead, Environment Office USAID Kenya & East Africa presented the evolution of USAID funding for biodiversity conservation in Kenya. USAID has invested tens of millions of dollars over the years in Kenya. This investment has focused on expanding and deepening the Community Conservancy Model to address challenges such as climate change, wildlife crime, and trafficking. She noted that donor funding is not enough to address these challenges and conservation funding must pay for communities for it to be sustainable. USAID is working with the government to explore and enhance other funding opportunities like the carbon markets, credit guarantees, development of special purpose funds, concession funding, etc. aiming to end the need for foreign assistance for Kenya by 2050 by getting the private sector to invest in species conservation. Therefore, strong government policy to assure the security of private-sector investment is key. Such policies could include peace and security in biodiversity hotspot areas. However, opportunities exist for private sector investments in biodiversity conservation such as the tourism sector, beef value chain enhancement, artisanry, honeycups and dressing, etc. The banking industry is also critical in providing capital for communities in these areas to boost their businesses. There is therefore a need for collaboration between governments, the private sector, and development partners to ensure sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation in Kenya and Africa.

2.7. Sustainable Financing Approach

This was presented by Ms. Tiana Andriamanana, Executive Director of the Association FANAMBY in Madagascar. To respond to the rapid loss of biodiversity in Madagascar, this organisation focuses on 4 pillars; governance, behaviour change, local development, and community enterprise creation. They provide tools for local communities working in agriculture, ecotourism, or fishery so they can establish a social enterprise owned by the local communities and the main associations in these communities. This has led to a noticeable increase in the number of individuals per square kilometre for some species like the black lemur linked to ecotourism and cashew nut value chain production. Therefore, creating such community enterprises helps increase internal income for communities and allows nature to thrive harmoniously.

2.8. Opportunities for enhancing species conservation action in Africa through Policy coherence.

Dr. Lucy Ng'ang'a, Deputy Director at the Ministry of Environment Climate Change and Forestry State Department for Environment and Climate Change Directorate of Multilateral Environmental Agreements spoke on MEAs such as UNFCCC, CBD, CITES, RAMSAR, CMS, etc, and their relationship to species conservation giving the opportunities to explore from these MEAs. An example is the CBD that has brought forth the GBF and united the review of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, encouraging African countries to develop a framework for biodiversity coordination between the government and NGOs to ensure all components of biodiversity targets are well articulated in the strategies. She equally emphasized the importance of the Assess-Plan-Act cycle for species conservation as well as the involvement of species conservation in negotiations for climate, plastics, droughts, floods, etc.

2.9. Enhancing species recovery in Africa through the CBD GBF Target 4: What would success look like?

Ms. Wendy Elliot, Deputy Leader, Wildlife Practice at WWF International, presented this. The CBD GBF was appreciated for the engagement that it has brought across all stakeholders including the government, private sector, and the donor community. With about a 69% decline in the monitored vertebrate population since the 1970s, the GBF Target 4, which focuses on urgent species recovery actions is crucial in addressing species extinction. On average, 40 to 54 species per country need the actions under Target 4 in addition to anything else in the framework.



The GBF Target 4 has helped achieve some successes in species recovery in Africa like the mountain gorilla, which has increased from 620 in 1982 to over 1,000 today. Some actions that contributed to this success include; traditional conservation activities, protected area management, strong engagement, benefit sharing with local communities around parks, and more specific additive actions like disease prevention and health management. Similar success has also been achieved for the Greater one-horned Rhino. Talking about human-wildlife coexistence, none of the current MEAs have addressed this issue which is of global concern given that 56% of our planet are areas where wildlife coexists with people. Addressing human-wildlife conflict is therefore an absolute imperative to ensure human well-being and species survival in these areas. To address this issue, 6 main actions are needed i.e. understanding the conflict, prevention, response, mitigation, policy framework, and monitoring. WWF in collaboration with the IUCN SSC human-wildlife conflict and coexistence specialist group is currently working to produce indicators for monitoring human-wildlife conflict. She concluded by pointing out other important targets in the GBF for species conservation like Target 1 on spatial planning and management to reduce biodiversity loss and Target 15 with the need to translate species data into business risk for corporate entities.

2.10. Opportunities for enhancing species conservation action in Africa through climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Ms. Charlotte Daniels, tapping from her experience with the Vanishing Treasures Project of UNEP, presented some opportunities for enhancing species conservation in Africa through climate change mitigation and adaptation. The project focuses on climate resilience in mountain ecosystems intending to generate maximum synergy between climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation with a particular focus on mountain flagship species such as the Mountain gorilla in the Virunga mountains (Uganda and Rwanda). Climate change impacts the Albertine Rift where mountain gorillas are found with an observed increase in temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and seasonal shifts. 95% of households in this area confirmed that they are already experiencing these changes. Also, 90% reported low crop yields, 81% food insecurity, and 41% human-wildlife conflict as the crucial issues in this mountain region. With agriculture being the main source of income and subsistence farming as the main form of land use for the communities, this project tries to integrate climate mitigation and adaptation into biodiversity conservation. They encourage high-level policy engagement through transboundary collaboration, climate modeling, species behavior and ecology, etc. To help communities become resilient to climate change, they train them to build and utilize domestic energy-saving stoves which reduce the amount of firewood required by half, some rainwater harvesting tanks have been constructed to help communities through the dry seasons, and also utilizing climate-smart agricultural practices like water resource management, growing crops that are resilient to climate change, etc. However, knowledge gaps exist concerning climate change impacts on mountain gorillas such as future food availability, habitat quality, and ranging patterns. Nonetheless, some studies have shown that elevated temperatures and increased rainfall cause stress to the gorillas which pushes the gorillas to seek potentially higher elevations in the mountains to get out of the increased temperatures. Also, high temperatures increase the frequency of water drinking in mountain gorillas causing them to seek out open water sources used by people which is a risk for them as this provokes human-wildlife conflict and disease transmission. climate change is going to continue to exasperate species conservation efforts, we are still lacking a lot of knowledge about how climate change affects species and communities that live alongside them, there is, therefore, a need for a multidisciplinary approach, community action, knowledge from communities and Indigenous people, research and policy engagement that integrates climate change and biodiversity conservation.

2.11. IUCN Species Conservation Action

Anne Mugo, Grants Coordinator at IUCN gave a brief presentation of IUCN's Species Conservation Action. This unit at IUCN supports the implementation of on-the-ground actions for species conservation by looking at globally recognized conservation priorities, upscaling and supporting ongoing actions at national and regional levels as well as public awareness and capacity building. The unit primarily works as a regranting mechanism supporting frontline conservation actors on the ground. They are working towards a sustainable finance



3 Breakout Sessions

Participants were divided into 3 groups to brainstorm 3 topics, 1 per group. Group 1 was chaired by Dr. Hanneline SMIT-ROBINSON and focused on species assessment, Group 2 chaired by Dr. Fred Omengo focused on species planning, and Group 3 by Dr. Aristide Kamla brainstormed on species actions. All 3 groups aimed to respond to 4 main questions as follows:

- What are the barriers to species conservation in Africa?
- What is needed to increase actions and impacts for species conservation?
- What kind of action should we prioritize, that will more positively impact species conservation?
- Recommendation for IUCN membership for actions they can take.

The main outcomes from these breakout groups are summarized in the table below: However, in Africa, most of their

ASSESS (Group 1)	PLAN (Group 2)	ACT (Group 3)
Barriers • Insufficient and uncoordinated data sharing. Need to ensure data is available and coordinated. • Lack of synergy between actors • Various sector data is required – land use, species, threats, socioeconomic, population, etc • Need for platforms that allow for data quality and sharing – national coordination platform. It is also important to consider the mandate and hosting of such a platform. • Incorporate Indigenous and local knowledge • Lack of constructive collaboration between the public and private sector	Barriers • Local communities are still not convinced about conservation approaches • Lack of cross-sector coordination and misalignment. The conflict between government – government, government – NGO. • Lack of information sharing/communication from researchers with other sectors • Protected areas not responding to community needs • Gap assessment/situation analysis is not always	Barriers • Limited resources for species actions • Difficult to compete with economic development projects • Limited incentive for stakeholders to act for species • Political instability/insecurity • Limited capacity in the form of skills, data/research, logistics • Limited coordination between government departments • Poor policy and legal frameworks • Poor governance • Donor-driven funding not aligned with local needs

ASSESS (Group 1)	PLAN (Group 2)	ACT (Group 3)
Needs • Capacity – resources, funding, and skills, for data management. • Specialised capacity for species management. • Training and capacity building for red listing. • Capacity building for communities on citizen science. • Policies on data management.collection and sharing. • National biodiversity data platform • collection – national protocol, citizen science. • Increased use of Indigenous knowledge/ traditional. • Monitoring mechanism to ascertain the source, quality, and consistency of data	Needs • Exchange platform to share successes of conservation and lessons learned • Involvement of communities in all dialogues involving species concerns • The need to link species conservation planning to poverty reduction, education, basic infrastructure, and legal and policy environment.	Needs • Financial resources • Collaborations at national, regional, and international levels • Promote a better understanding of species ecosystems by collaborating with governments, academia, and NGOs • Improve involvement of local communities so that their needs are better met • Promote community-centric approaches that enhance their ownership • Communications that work for species – media, community languages, storytelling



Priority actions (from all the groups)

- Build capacity for species assessment and management.
- Build capacity in the link between species and climate change to make it understandable and to listen to local voices and knowledge.
- Improve regulatory system that works well with communities
- Increased effectiveness of management of existing protected areas with effective inclusion of communities
- Create networks of conservationists across the continent with African country members
- Develop a sustainable financing strategy for species conservation. Include tax incentives supporting species. Address subsidies to encourage nature positive.
- Link climate and biodiversity agendas – make species a priority in the climate agenda including local community responses and the impact of climate change.

Recommendation for IUCN membership

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transboundary approaches • Continental approaches (united vision) that promote/break the barriers to sub-regional collaboration. Encourages countries to learn from each other and present continental approaches. • Global policies should be reviewed to consider the African context • Links to biodiversity and climate change – species link to the global issues and biodiversity-related conventions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing IUCN tools for completeness for broader issues – poverty reduction, climate change, plastics, local and indigenous knowledge, and species in landscapes, among others. • Review existing IUCN tools to consider the applicability of local context e.g. devolution. • Improve access to tools by local communities – capacity, language/communication. • Species planning should incorporate emerging issues such as climate change, plastic pollution, etc. • Traditional knowledge expert within IUCN on Indigenous knowledge • Representation of Indigenous knowledge within the various IUCN specialist groups. • Facilitate red listing at the country level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IUCN should lead in developing a sustainable financing strategy for species. • Move towards long-term species funding/projects • Provide support to member organisations to better engage communities. • Provide support to local actors to document traditional/local knowledge, document the value of species, and promote species conservation. |
|---|--|---|

4. Key Outputs and Recommendations

After the presentations, discussions, and breakout group sessions. The following key messages and recommendations emerged:

- Enhance the effectiveness of species management and conservation actions through better data coordination, community involvement, and capacity building.
- Link species conservation with socio-economic development goals, ensuring that conservation efforts contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable infrastructure development.
- Integrate climate change adaptation measures into species action plans, ensuring that conservation strategies are resilient to emerging climate impacts.
- Improve policy frameworks and governance systems to better support species conservation and community needs.
- Establish national platforms for comprehensive data sharing, incorporating indigenous knowledge, and develop policies for data management to support species conservation.
- Improve skills and training for species management and red listing and build community capacity for citizen science and local engagement in conservation efforts.
- Involve local communities in conservation dialogues, promote their ownership of conservation actions, and improve communication strategies using local languages and storytelling.
- Develop long-term funding strategies for species conservation, including tax incentives and subsidies, and encourage national, regional, and international collaborations to secure financial resources.
- Strengthen regulatory frameworks to align with community needs, integrate species conservation with socio-economic development goals, and address emerging issues like climate change and pollution in conservation strategies.
- Promote transboundary and continental approaches to conservation, enhancing the sharing of knowledge and best practices across regions.
- Improve access to IUCN tools for local communities – capacity, language/communication.
- Representation of Indigenous knowledge within the various IUCN specialist groups
- Facilitate the Red listing process at the country level.
- IUCN should lead in developing a sustainable financing strategy for species.

