



Species

ISSUE 65

2024-2025 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 that were generated during 2024 (full year) and 2025 (first quarter), 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:

Van Eerden, M, and Parz Gollner, R. (2025). 2024-2025 Report of the Cormorant Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *Species: Annual Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat 2024-2025*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 4 pp.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

2024-2025 Report

IUCN SSC Cormorant Specialist Group



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CO-CHAIR
**Rosemarie Parz
Gollner**
Boku University,
Vienna, Austria

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
250

Mission statement

The main purpose of the Group is to facilitate the exchange of information on both ecology and biology of the ca. 30 different species of cormorants, shags and darters worldwide and resolving possible conflicts between cormorants and human fisheries' interests. The Group was officially founded in 1993 and has always been aware that cormorants constitute an ecologically important group of species, as predators, indicative of the water system, since they are part of water either fresh or marine. Due to the continuous discussion about the perceived damage caused by the Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), most attention of our Group has been dedicated to this issue. However, rather than focusing on the management issues of this species alone, we feel the necessity to highlight the existence of other, rare and vulnerable species. By comparing the extensive knowledge that has been collected on the great cormorant we hope to apply this for a better understanding of the other species and combine the knowledge with other fish-eating birds.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Disseminate relevant information about cormorant biology in different fora and

contribute to the ongoing debate about managing assumed human-wildlife conflicts in Great Cormorants.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Write and publish scientific articles on the conservation and conflict management perspectives on cormorants.

Status: On track

ACT

T-002 Provide technical and specialist input on cormorant conservation and management issues.

Status: On track

Activities and results 2024–2025

ASSESS

Research activities

T-001 Write and publish scientific articles on the conservation and conflict management perspectives on cormorants. (KSR 5)

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

Result description: The Cormorant SG has been involved with the production of peer reviewed documentation about specific

skills and scientific standards required with respect to cormorants. These include methods of investigation, monitoring, research and conflict management as the basic requirements in our field. This material is available online and widely distributed. We also continued to update and coordinate the commonly used colour ringing scheme in Great Cormorant, European Shag and Pygmy Cormorant to avoid overlapping field-readable ring codes to be used. Our previously planned 2024 pan-European counts of Great Cormorants has now been postponed to 2027 to be in line with the country schemes of France and Spain and as such be able to constitute a complete European and North African survey. Plans are underway for another conference in early 2026. A strategic planning session is also being scheduled to discuss international ambitions and work plans for other cormorant species.

ACT

Conservation actions

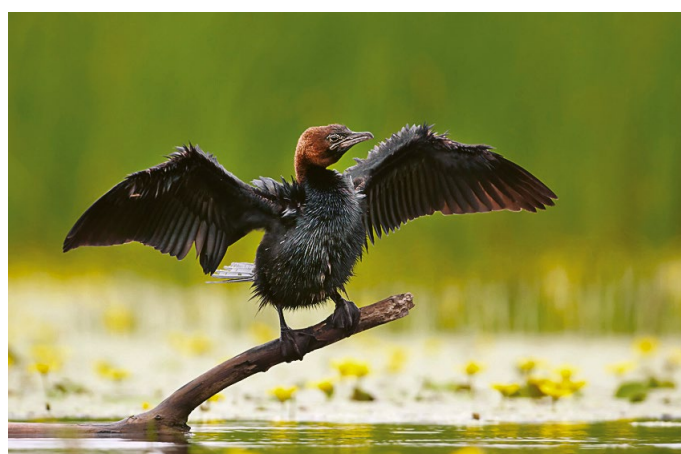
T-002 Provide technical and specialist input on cormorant conservation and management issues. (KSR 10)

Number of intervention letters addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1



Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo carbo*), adult in full breeding plumage; individual with yellow gular patch. Killingworth Lake, Northumberland
Photo: MPF (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Pygmy Cormorant (*Microcarbo pygmaeus*), Hortobágy, Hungary
Photo: Martin Mecnarowski (CC BY-SA 3.0)



Result description: In 2024, a policy document was provided for use in the renewed discussion within the European Parliament. As SSG and based on scientific investigations and long-term monitoring, we have framed the Great Cormorant as an indicator of fish populations rather than competitors with human fisheries. We contributed to the debate and provided relevant information, especially as the derogation article under the Bird Directive proved to be dealt with differently within EU countries. We have also maintained a communication group of people interested in cormorants, updating contacts with DG Environment and DG Mare of the European Commission in relation to the question of impacts to fish populations and fisheries. We have also continued to use our network to share supporting information to ca. 30 EU member states about numbers, ecology and recent developments in Great Cormorants. This has been achieved mainly through existing channels in our core group of seven people from six countries throughout Europe (Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Belgium, France and Italy). The Cormorant SG has also been involved with advising and sharing relevant information to Birdlife Europe to support evidence-based

responses to upcoming questions in the European Parliament relevant to cormorant management. By the first quarter of 2025, the work remained ongoing on obtaining baseline information about local (national) development in numbers, (changing) feeding ecology and interaction with fisheries. Through ongoing ecological studies and monitoring programmes, fact-finding missions and contribution to policy making, we have both contributed to the better understanding of the species' needs but also stressed its relationship with the wetland community, landscape and flyway characteristics. Our international counts, a major enterprise with more than 2,000 volunteers active in both winter and in the breeding colonies in summer, provide sound data for determining trends in population size and continental distribution. This specific information is a valuable tool for providing a basis for future strategies and is crucial considering that the call for an international management plan, i.e. read controlling numbers, is again being considered. All communication from members continue to stress the importance of sustainable use of fish resources, both in freshwater lakes, rivers and coastal areas. This is necessary to counter the current framing of cormorants as a pest species in need of management. Our

vision instead is to promote them as indicators of how an ecosystem thrives. This needs more synthesis and remains a key target for the next quadrennium.

Acknowledgements

The IUCN SSC Cormorant SG is grateful to all the institutions where core group members are/or were employed. This institutional support, though linked to individual members, has helped to advance the basic but core activities of the group.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 2

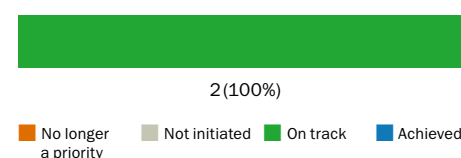
Geographic regions: 2 Europe

Actions during 2024–2025:

Assess: 1 (KSR 5)

Act: 1 (KSR 10)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:



Suweon Treefrog
(*Dryophytes suweonensis*)
Photo: Amael Borzee



Marsh Cinquefoil
(*Comarum palustre*)
Photo: Magnus Goransson



Phallus aureolatus
Photo: Juliano Baltazar



Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*)
Photo: Andre Botha



Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*)
Photo: Save The Rhino Trust Namibia



Azores Nursery Spider
(*Pisaura acoreensis*)
Photo: Paulo A.V. Borges



Black and White Snapper
(*Macolor niger*)
Photo: David B. Snyder