IUCN SSC Species Survival Commission

Species

ISSUE 65

2024-2025 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat

Stand-alone report
IUCN SSC Seagrass Species Specialist Group

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 standalone 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 Authory 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.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

Example for the recommended citation:
Sullivan, B, Van Keulen, M, and Short, FT. (2025). 2024-2025 Report of the Seagrass Species Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *Species: Annual Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat 2024-2025*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 6 pp.

2024-2025 Report

IUCN SSC Seagrass Species Specialist Group

CO-CHAIR
Brooke Sullivan
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, US

CO-CHAIR
Mike Van Keulen (since November 2024)
Murdoch University, Australia

CO-CHAIR
Frederick T. Short (until November 2024)
University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire, US

RED LIST AUTHORITY COORDINATOR
Brooke Sullivan
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, US

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
173

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITES
X: @ISeagrass

Mission statement

The Seagrass Species Specialist Group (SSSG) contributes to and encourages seagrass science and conservation, with the goal of protecting seagrass species biodiversity worldwide and preserving the functions and values of seagrass habitat, including its role in protecting threatened species that depend on seagrasses for their survival.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Ex situ research is urgently needed for seagrass in all bioregions. Systemic impacts on global seagrass communities, including negative feedback from global-isation and climate change, have been documented for over 100 years. Increased access to low-impact habitat mapping and restoration strategies – for instance, GIS and drones – has increased global access to the basic information needed to conserve and recover regional seagrass assets. Seagrass habitat mapping is also a powerful tool for recognising stochastic and chronic patterns in seagrass population size and extent. There is marked increased research on seagrass broadly, including topics of restoration and conservation in all bioregions of the world.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-004 Complete 10 global Red List seagrass species assessments each year for four years.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-007 Develop a global seagrass conser-vation plan prioritising globally threatened seagrass.
Status: On track

T-009 Developing a protocol to implement IUCN Green List assessments for seagrass species.
Status: No longer a priority

ACT

T-006 Offer an annual consultation to support conservation actions to organisa-tions and institutions globally engaged with seagrass conservation.
Status: Achieved

NETWORK

T-001 Train two group members as Red List assessors.
Status: Achieved

T-002 Establish at least one formal part-nership that will provide financial and institutional support to the Seagrass Species Specialist Group.
Status: Achieved

T-003 Reach out to 150 existing and former members to strengthen networking, par-ticipation in meetings, and engage global support and post-pandemic commitment to SSSG.
Status: Achieved

T-008 Train six bioregional team leaders in the IUCN Green Status assessment.
Status: Achieved

COMMUNICATE

T-005 Activate Twitter as a tool for commu-nicating weekly successes and recruiting members in global seagrass biodiversity and conservation.
Status: Achieved

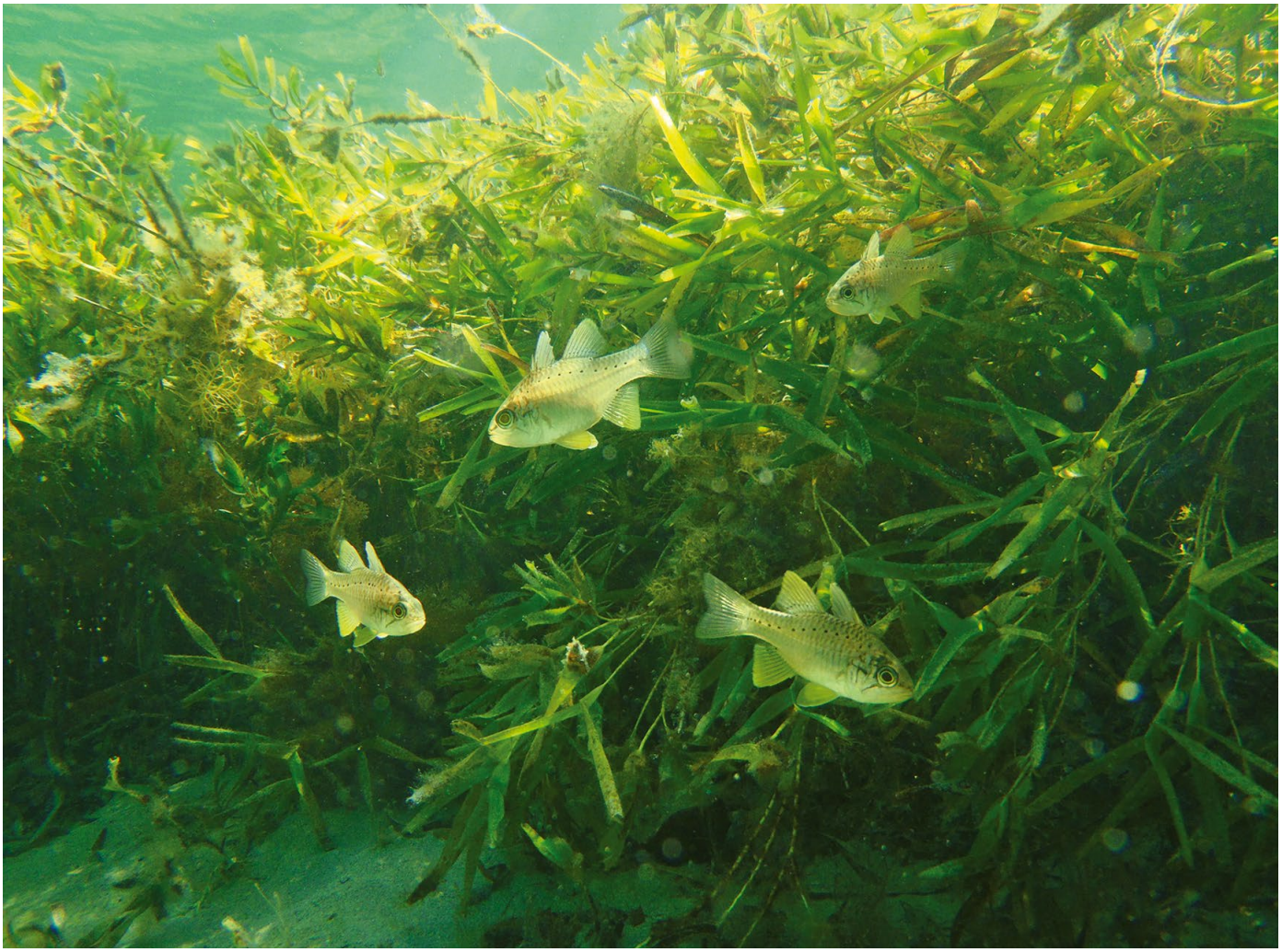
Activities and results 2024-2025

ASSESS

Red List

T-004 Complete 10 global Red List seagrass species assessments each year for four years. (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 0



Gobbleguts in *Amphibolis griffithii*, Western Australia
Photo: Mike van Keulen

Result description: While we have been able to review and update about half of the seagrass species this quadrennium, we have not been able to keep up with data entry into the SIS system. The role of the Red List Authority in completing data entry is critical. The lack of ability to access the platform created a bottleneck in the last year. To fully meet this target, we must develop a plan for more efficient and transparent method for data publishing.

PLAN

Planning

T-007 Develop a global seagrass conservation plan prioritising globally threatened seagrass. (KSR 8)

Number of species conservation plans/ strategies developed: 0

Result description: As part of our effort to develop a global seagrass species conservation plan through IUCN, the Co-Chairs and Vice Chair organised and advertised a special issue with *Frontiers in Conservation Science* to publish work on and bring awareness to rarer and high-risk seagrass populations.

ACT

Technical advice

T-006 Offer an annual consultation to support conservation actions to organisations and institutions globally engaged with seagrass conservation. (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 3

Result description: In 2024, we were able to support three groups with additional information about seagrass Red List assessment and status discussions, including China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation, the UN sponsored Seagrass Breakthrough 2030 Initiative and the Convention on Migratory Species. This is an area of networking and service that we experienced great success and interest in and that we believe will certainly raise the profile of the Seagrass Specialist Group, as well as the SSC and IUCN more broadly.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-001 Train two group members as Red List assessors. (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in assessment tools: 4

Result description: We were able to train at least eight team members in the Red List Assessment process so far in this quadrennium.

T-008 Train six bioregional team leaders in the IUCN Green Status assessment. (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in assessment tools: 3

Result description: Three members were trained in the Red List assessment process for seagrasses. All six of our Bioegional Team Leaders were trained in Red List assessment and informed about green listing and Reverse the Red campaigns in this quadrennium. As we select new Bioregional leaders for the next quadrennium, we are committed to developing another formal Red List assessment and Green Status assessment training event.

Membership

T-003 Reach out to 150 existing and former members to strengthen networking, participation in meetings, and engage global support and post-pandemic commitment to SSSG. (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 46

Result description: Seagrass Specialist Group Co-Chair Dr Brooke Sullivan attended the IUCN SSC Leader's Meeting in Abu

Enhalus acoroides leaves, Bali
Photo: Mike Van Keulen

Enhalus acoroides landscape, Bali
Photo: Mike Van Keulen

Thalassia testudinum, Green Island, Cairns
Photo: Mike Van Keulen

Halophila spinulosa, Townsville
Photo: Mike Van Keulen

Dhabi in October, 2024, actively engaging with IUCN SSC Specialist Group leaders. For the first time since the founding of our Group, we were not able to present at the International Seagrass Biology Workshop, which occurs every two years and has been the bedrock of our membership meetings and recruitment. We hope we will be able to organise a workshop when the conference is held in Abu Dhabi in 2026. The Seagrass Specialist Group coordinated opening a special issue in *Frontiers in Conservation Science* titled 'Global Conservation of Vulnerable, Threatened and Endangered Seagrass'; the aim is to raise awareness of the conservation status of seagrasses and to better focus the development of a global seagrass species conservation plan through the Seagrass Specialist Group. The IUCN SSC Seagrass Specialist Group welcomed in January 2025 a new Co-Chair, Dr Mike van Keulen, Associate Professor in Plant Sciences and Marine Biology at Murdoch University and Director of the Coral Bay Research Station. We gained over 25 new members this quadrennium. As we transition to new leadership, we are working hard to maintain our growing membership and continue to offer opportunities to educate people about IUCN and to develop pathways for inclusive partnerships in global seagrass conservation. Going forward, it will be important to encourage our members to sign up for membership through the IUCN SSC portals.

Synergy

T-002 Establish at least one formal partnership that will provide financial and institutional support to the Seagrass Species Specialist Group. (KSR 1)

Number of 'funding' partners established and maintained: 1

Result description: In 2023, we received an EDGE Grant to complete a Red List assessment for *Nanozostera capensis* and to initiate the development of a global seagrass conservation plan. Dr Katie Watson, sponsored by the grant, was able to completed the Red List assessment in 2024. Looking forward to 2025 this grant has inspired the production of a special research topic with *Frontiers in Conservation Science*, titled 'Global Conservation of Vulnerable, Threatened and Endangered Seagrass'. There our goal is to pull together a global vision for seagrass species conservation. We have not received any additional funding partners or support, but with our new Co-Chair, Mike van Keulen, we will be exploring new opportunities for sustained support with Murdoch University in Perth Australia.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-005 Activate X account as a tool for communicating weekly successes and recruiting members in global seagrass biodiversity and conservation. (KSR 12)

Number of X posts: 17

Result description: Analytics are no longer complimentary on this platform and we cannot report our tweet and impression summary with any accuracy any longer. However, we can report minimum values of 17 tweets with nearly 10,000 impressions over the course of the SSC Leadership Meeting in Abu Dhabi in 2024. Many scientific X accounts have moved to BlueSky. We have not migrated from the X platform, but do want to explore new ways of connecting to the membership through social media platforms in the new quadrennium.

Acknowledgements

The SSSG would like to thank Murdoch University, Perth Australia; Northeastern University, Boston, Massechussetts, and SSC EDGE Grants.

Summary of achievements

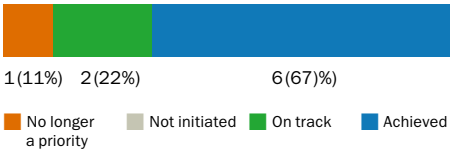
Total number of targets 2021–2025: 9

Geographic regions: 9 Global

Actions during 2024-2025:

Assess:	1 (KSR 6)
Plan:	1 (KSR 8)
Act:	1 (KSR 10)
Network:	4 (KSR 1, 2)
Communicate:	1 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:



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

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

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

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

Phallus aureolatus
Photo: Juliano Baltazar

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

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