

**SSC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING WCC 3.5
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 11 – 13 APRIL 2007
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MINUTES**

The fifth Species Survival Commission (SSC) Steering Committee meeting of the Quadrennium was held at the South African National Biodiversity Institute's (the SSC Chair's host institution) Centre for Biodiversity Conservation in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa. The SSC Steering Committee also enjoyed an informative talk on climate change issues by local climate change modelling expert, Dr G Midgley. He explained that we were now entering a period of climate instability (and warming) unprecedented in 3 million years of known climate history and showed how relatively small changes in temperature (1 – 2 degrees Celsius) can lead to 30% of species globally becoming threatened with extinction. This was shown experimentally using simple Perspex green house experimental systems on stone plants in the Karoo. The shift in species composition associated with climate change in South Africa was unequivocal.

The main decisions, discussion points and action items of the WCC3.5 meeting can be summarised as follows:

Administration, Governance and Finance

- J Belant is appointed as Chair of the Small Carnivore Specialist Group. A new Co-Chair for the Asian Rhino Specialist Group has been nominated and the appointment is being finalised. A formal invitation will be sent to the proposed Chair of the Sirenia Specialist Group. The five initial interim Chairs or Co-Chairs are to remain in their Chairmanship positions until the end of the Quadrennium.
- A George B Rabb Intern has been appointed for 2007 and is based in the SSC Chair's Office in Cape Town. A Senior Commission Officer will be appointed on a part time basis from July. A Network Support Officer will start work in the Species Programme in July, and a marketing and fundraising post is being advertised.
- The registration of SSC members is proceeding slowly, with ~4,000 SSC members having been registered on CoReg. A temporary person has been hired to finish the registration.
- The various global assessments are progressing, as is work on the Species Information Service (SIS) and the "use" component of the SIS Data Entry Module. The corporate sector is being approached to support the further development of the SIS.
- Concerns about the proposed relationship between IUCN and Holcim were expressed and will be taken to the IUCN Business and Biodiversity Programme.
- The relationship between the SSC and the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) will be clarified so as to show the reliance of AZE on SSC data. All SSC Specialist Groups that signed individual MOUs with AZE will be asked whether their names can be removed from the AZE website so that the SSC can have one presence and one defined relationship with AZE.
- Concerns remain about the Conservation Commons initiative taking on projects as this may lead quickly into institutional identity. These concerns will be raised within IUCN and at the Conservation Commons Steering Committee meeting.
- Fundraising and finances were discussed in detail, particularly with relation to how the current budgets relate to the objectives and outcomes of the SSC Strategic Plan, and how fundraising tools can benefit both the Species Programme and SSC Specialist Groups. The new Species Programme staff structure and the relationship between core-funded and non-core-funded positions were discussed.

Sub-Committee and Task Force updates

- The Marine Conservation and Invertebrate Conservation Sub-Committees continue their admirable progress with regards to their membership, strategic planning and plans for the World Conservation Congress (WCC).
- The Red List Unit (RLU) is to ensure that priority plant groups (cycads, palms, legumes, conifers, bamboos and carnivorous plants) will be given priority for processing and fund-raising by the RLU. They are also to ensure that the backlog of plants assessments currently at the RLU is dealt with more systematically, ensuring that data providers understand that there might be some delay in the processing of assessments submitted. A process was initiated to further work on how plant assessments by SSC and those carried out by key herbaria are to be captured and how preliminary plant assessments (contributing to GSPC Target 2) will be portrayed on the Red List website, including how visitors will be referred to the herbaria links.
- The Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee (BASC) is to ensure that their interim policy on withholding data on species that might be placed at risk by releases of information under the open access principle is made clear to all Red List Authorities and Sub-Committees. BASC continues to work on the Scientific Collection Guidelines, give advice on the plant assessment processes, and assist in developing the “use” classification scheme.
- Various meetings on indicators have taken place, including a Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) alien invasives species indicator workshop and a Biodiversity Indicators Sub-Committee (BISC) meeting to look at other possible indicators for the CBD 2010 target. A further meeting in Cambridge with UNEP-WCMC and an expert group of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) revealed that the IUCN Red List Index is the preferred measure for the proposed Millennium Development Goal’s new biodiversity target (MDG7, target 9bis). A further UN meeting will follow and the indicator, if accepted by the UN General Assembly, will be rolled out in 2008.
- The Species Conservation Planning Task Force (SCPTF) continues its work to overview the tools currently available to species conservation planning and to discuss how SSC can bring together the best elements of the many different approaches into a single, powerful planning process that would be a widely recognised contribution from the SSC. The SCPTF will be working closely with the leaders of the WCPA/SSC area-based conservation planning initiative to ensure that the two approaches cover all needs, and clarify which method is most appropriate in which scenario or to identify when a combination of approaches might be beneficial.
- The Restructuring Task Force is striving to ensure that definitive suggestions are put forward to the October 2007 Steering Committee meeting, after which an agreed on restructuring scenario will be taken to the Chairs’ Meeting in February 2008 for further discussion and refinement. A distinguished and experienced adviser to change processes has offered her expertise to the SSC *pro bono* and has already taken up the task of ensuring buy-in from all quarters to this challenging, and yet essential, restructuring process.
- The Veterinary, Reintroduction, Conservation Breeding and Invasive Species Specialist Groups continue their excellent cross-cutting work. The VSG persists in its vital work with the pharmaceutical industry and continues to monitor avian influenza and its direct and indirect impacts on wild birds and habitats. The RSG is producing a book of reintroduction case studies and is also beginning to examine the potential repercussions of the relocation of climate change-affected species to more favourable habitats. CBSG remains involved in the amphibian extinction crisis and 2008 is to be “The Year of the Frog”. ISSG continues to improve the Global Invasive Species Database and will be working closely with BASC on linkages to the Red List and with G Howard to improve the services ISSG provide to IUCN and the SSC network.

Strategic Planning and Policy Issues

- Strategic Planning for the SSC for the 2009-2012 Quadrennium continues, and processes are in place for the Sub-Committees and thematic Specialist Groups to discuss proposed targets with their members and feed the results back into the strategic planning. Emphasis is on the integration with IUCN’s intersessional programme and its priorities as well as a commitment for targets/outcomes that are measurable. Further discussion will take place at the October Steering Committee meeting, after which a draft will be presented at the Chairs’ Meeting.

- In the interests of providing a broader, more structured and objective assessment of the state of Specialist Groups, a consultation is being conducted via telephone with all the SSC Specialist Group Chairs. The aim of the consultation is firstly an informal chat to discuss the Chair's challenges, and secondly a means of collecting various data – such as statistics on shadow resources and gender balance, how the groups are focusing their activities according to the SSC Strategic Plan, and feedback on the various SSC communication tools. The further results of this consultation will be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting.
- Many species-specific, thematic and policy issues central to the SSC and its Specialist Groups involve work with the IUCN Regional Offices or Headquarters. SG Chairs are unfortunately often confused by, or ignorant of, the complicated IUCN policies, so plans are being initiated to work with IUCN's Policy Unit to develop ways and means to clarify the limits of the roles and responsibilities for SG Chairs. It is hoped that this will promote a more streamlined way of dealing with complex and sensitive policy matters related to species as and when they arise.

Branding, Data Issues and Publications

- A discussion of branding with regard to Red List Categories for use in zoos and botanical gardens is taking place in the hopes that the branding of species with their appropriate Red List Category will raise awareness about threatened species and the IUCN Red List.
- A second comprehensive Global Species Assessment (GSA2) will now be published in 2010, due to unfeasible deadlines for 2008. In the interim, a scaled-down version of the GSA is being designed for the WCC4.
- Data issues were discussed in detail, including the general acceptance of the principles of the Conservation Commons for open access. In addition, it was agreed that providers of data to the Data Entry Module of the SIS will be asked to read and accept a statement of the possible uses of their data by IUCN.
- Potential partnerships regarding the use of the Red List data were also discussed; including a possible linkage between WWF's Living Planet Index (LPI) and the SIS, and a development with various partners to bring species and protected area information to the private sector to assist with their planning needs.

Up-coming Events

- The Chairs' Meeting, to be hosted by the Abu Dhabi government, will take place on 11 – 14 February 2008 in Al Ain city, Abu Dhabi. The issues of SSC restructuring, the WCC and IUCN policy issues are to be given special attention in addition to responding to Chairs' requests for assistance with fund-raising and communications functions, and planned free time for general discussion and sharing.
- H Dublin will attend the Protected Areas Categories Summit with a listening brief and foster SSC participation in the revision process, while trying to encourage some editorial changes with regard to the confusing and inexact terminology.
- WCC4 was discussed in detail, with several suggestions for SSC input to the Forum being put forward by Steering Committee members. Further details about Forum contributions will be sent out to the SSC network as soon as they are publicly available.
- SSC should endeavour to establish a better relationship with the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB). Preparations for the July 2007 SCB conference in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, continue.
- The dates for WCC3.6 were set for 13–16 October 2007, with the meeting likely to take place in the People's Democratic Republic of Lao. The WCC3.7 Steering Committee meeting will take place either side of the Chairs' Meeting on 9-10 and 15 February 2008. The last Steering Committee meeting of the Quadrennium will take place tentatively on 3 – 4 October, just before the WCC.