



# IUCN SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION SPECIALIST GROUP CHAIRS' MEETING

Al Ain, United Arab Emirates  
11-14 February 2008

## MEETING REPORT

Meeting Sponsors:





*Meeting participants on the final day*

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### **Acronyms Used**

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RTF	Restructuring Task Force
SG	Specialist Group
SCPTF	Species Conservation Planning Task Force
SSC	Species Survival Commission
UAE	United Arab Emirates
WCC	World Conservation Congress

## INTRODUCTION

The first-ever meeting of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Specialist Group (SG) Chairs, generously sponsored by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, took place on 11-14 February 2008 at the Hilton Hotel in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. Co-sponsors for the meeting were the SSC, Conservation International and D. Swarovski & Co. The meeting was attended by 122 delegates: over 80 SG Chairs, key IUCN staff from Headquarters and IUCN Regional Offices, as well as colleagues from other IUCN Commissions.

The purpose of the meeting was to honour the SG Chairs who have given so much of their voluntary time and energy to the IUCN and SSC over the years, and to express gratitude and recognition for the unprecedented contributions of the Chairs and members to species conservation. The meeting provided opportunities for the Chairs to share their experiences with each other and discuss cross-cutting conservation issues, as well as a platform for learning and capacity building that will ensure the persistence of the cumulative SSC knowledge into the future. In planning the meeting, the design team identified five main objectives:

1. Create a common vision for the future of species conservation and SSC's role within it
2. Understand the role of the SSC within the strategic direction and structure of IUCN
3. Expand knowledge for increasing capacities and outputs from the SSC Network
4. Explore solutions to common problems and challenges in the SSC network
5. Create a positive and lasting experience for the Chairs

With these objectives in mind, the 60 sessions of the four day meeting agenda can be summarised into the following main sections:

1. ***The future of species conservation:***
  - Provocative presentations and discussions on whether the conservation of species does actually still matter and whether it is high enough on the global agenda.
2. ***The role of SSC in IUCN and beyond:***
  - Presentations and discussions on what IUCN, its Regional Offices and Thematic Programmes, the SSC, and the Species Programme actually do, how they link and further opportunities for collaboration.
  - Presentations, table discussions as well as question and answer sessions on setting the context for the future of SSC and the proposed "Design for the Future".
  - Question and answer sessions on species policy challenges and politics.
  - The World Conservation Congress (WCC) – Barcelona, October 2008.
3. ***Expanding and sharing knowledge:***
  - Presentations on the practicalities of Red Listing, and the priorities and uses of the IUCN Red List.
  - Presentations and discussion on future ideas for species conservation planning and implementing action.
  - Presentations and discussions on how to strengthen messages regarding the relevance of species through enhancing our internal and external communications.
4. ***Discussing our common challenges:***
  - Sharing experiences on funding and fundraising.
  - Sharing experiences on establishing and managing an effective network.
5. ***A positive and lasting experience:***

Although this objective was more general, numerous aspects of the meeting design ensured a positive, fun and memorable experience for those attending.

Within this incredibly tight agenda, it was also a privilege for delegates to meet representatives from the Environment Agency for a Gala Dinner and to take part in a session on conservation in the United Arab Emirates, including a half-day field trip to visit the nearby centres of conservation activity.

For many delegates, this meeting was the first time they had ever met one another, interacted with the Species Programme staff in person, and held conversations with the SSC Chair, Steering Committee and senior members of the IUCN Secretariat.

The aim of this meeting report is to provide those Chairs who were unable to attend a detailed overview of the meeting highlights and the follow-up actions required. It also serves as a permanent record, summarising important issues and agreed actions to assist with monitoring of progress in future.

Various techniques were used to capture the essence of the meeting, and the results of some have been used in compiling this report. These included:

- A film crew was present to interview meeting delegates for a short film about SSC to be shown at the WCC in Barcelona.
- Table Scribes captured the discussions at each table and wrote questions or comments on cards that were collected after each session.
- Two Rapporteurs were allocated to each session at the meeting – one to capture the “highlights” of the meeting (the general comments or conceptual issues that come out of the meeting), and a second to capture the actual “actionable items” of the meeting (specific goals or ideas for change that are practical and achievable).
- Various tools were used during the meeting to illustrate certain discussions and allow the delegates to become personally involved in the meeting – these included Power Point presentations, a large world map showing where delegates have worked, a timeline of SSC history from its origins to its future, and conceptual drawings of the SSC network. The results of these tools were collected, captured and, where possible, analysed after the meeting.
- Each delegate was asked to complete a Feedback Form during the last session of the meeting, and the responses were captured into a database.

In addition to this report, a post-meeting website has been created ([SSC SG Chairs' Meeting Webpage](#)), containing the presentations given at the meeting, various background reading documents, as well as a link to a discussion forum and photograph-sharing website. In future, there is the desire to establish one or more regular, interactive tools to strengthen networking within the SSC and beyond.

## MAIN MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

SSC Chair Holly Dublin introduced the meeting on Day 1 by giving a presentation of the objectives of the meeting. The meeting highlights are recorded below under the main objectives of the meeting (as described in the introduction above).

### **1. *The future of species conservation***

IUCN Chief Scientist Jeff McNeely gave a keynote address on the first day of the meeting. He put forward the following challenges:

- Species conservation does still matter and IUCN should not “triage” its species work or any species regardless of its status. It should fight to prevent all extinctions, not only those easily preventable.
- The Red List could become even more important for monitoring progress towards reducing species loss. However, it is vital to find some positive messages in the Red List to balance the constant stream of bad news it usually generates.
- Human-wildlife conflict has become an important part of species conservation and must be factored into SSC work.
- Threat issues must be addressed more – perhaps a SSC Climate Change Specialist Group could be formed; or more effort made to address invasive species issues (e.g. training of park managers introducing trout for recreational fishing, which then destroy native fish species).
- Jeff’s indicators of successful conservation included: knowledge about species constantly improving and increasing; species monitoring process in place (e.g. 2010); approaches to species conservation more comprehensive; capacity for species conservation growing; broader political support is built; supporting rural people while conserving species; international cooperation growing.

SSC Chair Holly Dublin then joined Jeff McNeely for a question and answer session on the challenges to species conservation. The following were the main points raised by delegates:

- There should be a comprehensive approach to showing how the Red List relates to other parts of IUCN.
- IUCN can play a stronger role in reducing resource consumption and mitigating the effects of overexploitation.
- We need to keep our focus on biodiversity conservation, even in the context of the climate change debate, as that is our niche.
- Telling our stories is important, particularly those of the SGs. SGs could use more information on how to communicate with different audiences.
- Need more communication paths to be established between SGs and IUCN headquarters / regions. This will strengthen the link between policy and practice (e.g. IUCN has a United Nations representative that SGs could make use of).
- We need to improve our communication about what we do. There are some problems with how we communicate the messages of the Red List.
- For IUCN and the world, we don’t need any additional arguments for saving species. They should be saved for their own intrinsic values, though we could build greater knowledge and education about these values.
- World leaders do not care about species, they care about ecosystem services and we need to communicate the links to species more clearly.

## **2. The role of SSC in IUCN and beyond**

This grouping of sessions, which basically spanned all four days of the meeting, had four main sub-sections:

### *a) What IUCN is and opportunities for collaboration between SSC and other parts of IUCN*

The meeting design team invited key senior staff from IUCN to address this issue, and then arranged for various question and answer sessions, table discussions and an opportunity for one-on-one discussions with the representatives from those Thematic Programmes, Regions and Commissions who were able to attend the meeting. Each of these representatives, and even those not present, prepared posters of their work and interests relative to species. The aim of the sessions was to illustrate the challenges of working in a complex organisation such as IUCN (which has dues-paying government and NGO institutional members, staff and volunteers all over the world), but to also give some concrete examples of how the various parts of IUCN can collaborate to enhance conservation impact – the implementation of the so-called “One Programme” approach.

The highlights of these sessions were:

- IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre noted that it is often difficult to explain what IUCN is, but that the new IUCN logo and the dropping of “World Conservation Union” and going back to using “International Union for Conservation of Nature” as a standard way of referring to IUCN will help in this regard. She said that the three pillars of IUCN (Members, Secretariat and Commissions) need to work better together. She emphasised the critical role that volunteers play in IUCN and called on the SSC members to suggest messages to be passed on to IUCN partners such as the United Nations. She noted that her main foci as Director General are communication, strategic partnerships, policy and knowledge. She concluded by inviting all SSC members to the WCC in Barcelona.
- IUCN Deputy Director General Bill Jackson said that what is most challenging for conservationists at present is that “it is going to get worse before it gets better” in terms of human population growth, energy demands and urbanisation. He highlighted the five new priority themes of the 2009-2012 IUCN Programme, and noted that one positive sign is the private sector and governments engaging more actively in conservation efforts with IUCN. He called on everyone to strive for improvement, not perfection!
- IUCN Asia Regional Director and Senior Adviser for Regionalisation Aban Kabraji noted that conservation needs more people like the SSC members who focus on the true science of conservation. She said that although the “One Programme” approach strives to make strong linkages between the IUCN Regional Offices, the Commissions and Headquarters Secretariat, this is not always easy as it is difficult to locate the expertise within the SSC (because there is currently no database of the expertise of SSC members). She used the IUCN-Dhamra Port partnership in India as a working example of the “One Programme” approach where the Business and Biodiversity Programme, the Asian Regional Office and the Marine Turtle SG are working together to influence the highest levels of government and private sector to balance development with conservation needs. She called on Nicolas Pilcher, Co-Chair of the Marine Turtle SG, to share the story of this partnership with the delegates. She then noted that the “Mangroves for the Future” project, a follow up to the tsunami of late 2004, is a new programme where SSC can become more involved.
- IUCN Business and Biodiversity Programme Head Mohammad Rafiq noted that his role is often to “sell” the work of the SSC when he works with large companies. He said that IUCN’s convening power is important, and can ensure that the SSC’s knowledge is brought to important discussions. He used the Sakhalin Energy pipeline (where a pipeline was modified through collaborative work from the SSC Cetacean SG) and the IUCN-Holcim partnership as good examples of how partnering with the private sector can benefit conservation. He welcomed more engagement with the SSC.

- Commission on Ecosystem Management Chair Hillary Masundire gave a broad overview of the other Commissions and said that they are always looking for areas of collaboration with SSC. He noted that it is vitally important to keep the three pillars of IUCN (Members, Commissions, Secretariat) in balance and ensure that all the people involved on-the-ground are collaborating, as only then can good conservation work occur. One suggestion he put forth for how Commissions could work together would be for them to collaborate on determining indicators of well-working conservation systems.
- A question and answer session was held, with most of the above presenters forming a panel. The main questions and suggestions included:
  - o How can the rest of IUCN more systematically engage with the SSC and make use of its vast knowledge?
  - o How can Regional Offices more effectively engage with SSC? We need clear guidelines on who to go to for what.
  - o SSC does not market the Red List in the most effective way. It is a great knowledge product, but needs to be 'sold' more effectively.
  - o A big appeal from SSC to IUCN – communicate with us, use our knowledge or else the network may atrophy.

In the Feedback Form Delegates were asked to complete at the end of the meeting, the SG Chairs listed the various other SGs, IUCN Regional Offices, IUCN Thematic Programmes and IUCN Commissions that they would like to collaborate with in the future. The responses were captured in a table which can be downloaded from [SSC SG Chairs' Meeting Webpage](#)

*b) The future of SSC and discussions around the proposed “Design for the Future”.*

The meeting design team afforded considerable attention to the sessions on the proposed SSC “Design for the Future”, knowing that the delegates would be particularly interested in discussing these matters. Most of the related sessions took place on the second day of the meeting, and began with a series of presentations, followed by time for discussion in small table groups, then brought the delegates together again for a panel question and answer session – which then extended into an informal group discussion during the evening session. Presentations were given as follows

- SSC Chair Holly Dublin presented the background thinking to the proposed redesign, saying the SSC Restructuring Task Force (RTF) had taken many past surveys and reviews of the SSC into account (including the Voluntarism Study of 2001, the External Review of 2004, the Chairs' Consultation of 2007) when deliberating on the redesign. She noted that SSC has evolved over its six decade long history into being an organisation producing a global gold standard – the Red List; and tools, strategies and guidelines that are well-respected and utilised. However, she explained that SSC's integration across IUCN is not what it could be, and our conservation impact is not everything we want it to be. She highlighted the increasing complexity we are faced with and the growing threats to species. In particular, she made the case for increasing our interactions with the regional and thematic programmes of IUCN to increase our conservation achievement. She also highlighted the growing profile of and reliance on the IUCN Red List, emphasising that SSC's processes may come under increasing external scrutiny as more development planning takes biodiversity considerations into account. It follows that our systems must be independent, “auditable” and defensible. She then spoke about putting the Pressure-State-Response model to work for conservation, saying that the SSC's three objectives for the next Quadrennium will be written in the proposed mandate to the WCC as follows:
  - Status of Biodiversity: **Observing and monitoring species** with the aspiration *to remain the leading global organisation monitoring the status and trends of the world's biodiversity and informing the world and its decision makers about its full range of values.*
  - Pressures on Biodiversity: **Analysing the impacts of threats to biodiversity** with the aspiration *to be a leading authority in the analysis of factors responsible for the decline of species and their relative impacts.*

- Response to Biodiversity Loss: **Facilitating and undertaking action** with the aspiration to *deliver solutions for halting biodiversity decline by convening, advising, facilitating and supporting key players in their efforts to mitigate the pressures on biodiversity and to reduce the rate of species decline.*
- Chair of the RTF Luigi Boitani explained the process that the RTF had followed to arrive at the proposals presented. He noted that these sessions at the meeting were designed to ensure that the delegates understood the proposals and so that the RTF could provide any clarification needed. He said he hoped the meeting would provide some recommendations and refinements, and then agree on leading the change into the future. He spoke about the eight tensions that SSC and others in IUCN must manage and explained how the redesign attempts to optimise these tensions. Luigi then explained the proposed redesign in detail, using a series of diagrams to illustrate the different roles of different parties in SSC processes. He then noted that all feedback that the RTF had already received since the documents were published in December 2007 has been considered and three main concerns with the proposal have been identified: 1) the separation of Red List activities from conservation activities; 2) the consolidations and hierarchy of the Red List Authority; 3) the perceived top-down process. He addressed each concern individually and offered alternative models or slight adjustments to the proposed models that would address these concerns.
- Species Programme Head Jane Smart explained who and what the Species Programme is and how it relates to the SSC. She explained that the Species Programme supports the SSC in terms of administration (for financial matters, with the Commission Registration System (CoReg), etc), policy work for international conventions, running various funding and fundraising initiatives, and through their support to the IUCN Red List (coordinating global and regional assessment processes, organizing workshops for assessments, training on application of the Red List Categories and Criteria, quality control and consistency checking, improving the Species Information Service, etc). To support the staff, the Species Programme also undertakes other activities however, because only 25% of their core money comes from IUCN – so the programme becomes involved in projects and fundraising to supplement their core income. She explained that the proposed redesign of the SSC will help to ensure that support to the SSC network from the Species Programme is more focused, that expectations levels will be more clearly defined and managed, that there will be better support for the Red List processes and that it will attract additional partners to support Red Listing.

The above presentations are available online on the [SSC SG Chairs' Meeting Webpage](#) under "Meeting Presentations".

The discussion sessions relating to the redesign were quite controversial, but extremely interesting and fruitful. The main opinions of the delegates can be summarised as follows:

- Concern was expressed by some over the process of the redesign. Regarding process, the following issues were raised: Will there be more opportunities for consultation with the membership? How will the process be rolled out? What is the timeline? Delegates were concerned that the redesign was presented as a *fait accompli*, but the RTF assured people that comments would be welcome. A small group of Chairs volunteered to represent all Chairs and comment on the next version of the redesign documentation.
- Regarding the rationale and intended outcome of the redesign, there was some confusion behind the need for a redesign and a request that the justification should be clarified and strengthened. Two reasons were provided: 1) to increase conservation impact through exploring and establishing better linkages and synergies with other regional and component programmes of IUCN; 2) to ensure that the Red List process clearly defines and articulates roles and responsibilities to ensure its continued credibility and scientific independence. As the Red List increasingly becomes a global standard, and in many cases underpins national and international policy and legislation, its independence and objectivity must be ensured. This is especially true as listing impacts on species in large-scale commercial trade or in cases where the existence of

threatened species results in mitigation costs to developers. There was discussion around the issue of credibility and accountability, and some delegates expressed their cynicism regarding the importance of this issue, saying that the current system works well and there is no need for change. The RTF agreed that the new version of the documentation would strengthen the rationale behind the redesign.

- The flexibility of the system was questioned, but the RTF assured the delegates that the redesign would be as flexible as possible to accommodate the SGs' varied needs.
- There was concern over the proposal to separate Red Listing from "other conservation activities", as many delegates stated that Red Listing must be considered a conservation activity in and of itself. The RTF assured the Chairs that the proposal was not intended to imply that Red Listing is not a conservation activity and agreed to amend the text to better reflect this. The RTF noted that the proposal was not really about splitting SGs, but more about separating two functions, each with a different set of properties and processes.
- There was a discussion on linkages and partnerships with the conclusion that the redesign does indeed offer more opportunities for new types of partnerships – e.g. perhaps new partners could be sought for big initiatives for plants and invertebrates, in the same way that there is currently support for mammals and marine species.
- The roles of the assessors and evaluators were debated and clarified, and it was suggested that they should be renamed as "authors" and "reviewers" respectively for clarity. It was agreed by all that the independence of these two roles is critical.
- There was concern that the proposed redesign would not solve some of the existing problems in the SSC, such as problems of scarcity of resources for the Red Listing of more plant species and problems about future priority setting and its potential impact on plant taxa that may not be prioritised.

At the conclusion of the redesign discussion, it was agreed that the RTF would prepare a new version of the redesign document, which it would then send to the SSC Steering Committee and the small group of Chairs who volunteered to review the next version. After the process is complete, the RTF will send out a final version to all SG Chairs for final comment. The ideal situation is that a clear vision for the future will be in place by the end of the Quadrennium to provide a firm basis for action in the next Quadrennium.

### *c) Question and answer session on policy challenges and politics*

This extremely interesting and sometimes thorny session was conducted in an informal question and answer format with the SSC Chair, Holly Dublin, and the Deputy Head of the Species Programme, Jean-Christophe Vié, providing answers to questions from the Day Host and from the delegates present. Holly began by explaining that the SSC SGs may feel far-removed from IUCN policy or the policy work of international conventions. The session was planned to "de-mystify" the area of policy and the important roles played by many Chairs and SG members. She noted that while it is necessary for IUCN to set formal institutional policy, the SGs can play an important role in providing technical knowledge to influence policy formulation. She called on the SG Chairs to make sure they understand the role so that potential problems can be dealt with in advance. The following issues were discussed:

- SGs are far-removed from the policy set by the WCC or by Council during the intersessional period. Although SSC members cannot put forward motions or resolutions to Council or Congress, SGs can become involved in the process through talking to IUCN members or those involved in policy within the Secretariat.
- When a SG would like to contribute input to international conventions (such as CITES, CBD or CMS), they can join an IUCN delegation. As all formal IUCN policy is overseen by the Director General, SG Chairs may not speak on behalf of IUCN on policy matters in such policy fora unless clearly delegated to do so. This is usually very easy to arrange and simply requires that they ensure that the head of the delegation sees and signs off on the statements they would like to make. It was explained that when making

- a statement on behalf of IUCN in such venues, it is important for SGs to do this from the IUCN delegation even though they may themselves be serving on other delegations.
- The use of the IUCN and SSC logos on SG publications is carefully overseen in order to ensure the quality of the IUCN brand. Depending on the publication, it may be necessary for it to be reviewed by the SSC Steering Committee.
  - Under the new rules governing IUCN's visual identity, a SG logo should always be used with the SSC and IUCN logos; however this should be given careful consideration as the use of these logos implies an endorsement from IUCN, which may not actually have been given. This is not always a source of concern but needs to be considered especially for documents which may carry policy implications for IUCN.
  - Giving advice to a government agency or writing a letter of intervention to a government, which contains policy implications, should be carefully considered. It helps to keep the SSC Chair and Species Programme informed and to seek their guidance as necessary or in the case of uncertainty. It is better to err on the conservative side.
  - It is important for SG Chairs to state which "hat they are wearing" when speaking at publicly at meetings or to the press. Although most often a SG Chair may simply be giving a personal opinion rather than speaking on behalf of their SG or IUCN, it is just important to make this clear as others may not be able to see the distinction.
  - SG Chairs should remember that the SGs are not legal entities and therefore some documents, such as contracts or petitions cannot be signed by SG Chairs on behalf of IUCN. Often a Chair will sign a contract under the umbrella of another organisation to bring money into their SGs or for their SGs or SG members to provide services to a third party. SG Chairs have been known to sign petitions but this is done in their personal capacity rather than their SSC capacity.

Although it was impossible to discuss all scenarios at the meeting, the SG Chairs agreed that the simple conclusion is that they should "think before they act". The discussion served to broaden the understanding of the possible implications of what SG Chairs are doing or have been asked to do or say on behalf of their SG – noting that some actions may lead to conflict (e.g. a conflict between the views of a SG and those of an IUCN Member; or a quote in the media may be attributed to IUCN rather than to them as individuals). There was agreement that if there is any doubt on these matters, the SG Chairs would contact the SSC Chair's Office for advice and should involve the Regional Directors and Heads of Programmes where appropriate. It was reiterated that it is vitally important to be aware of potential problems before they become actual problems.

*d) The World Conservation Congress – Barcelona, October 2008.*

Two sessions were held on the WCC – one to discuss the current plans for the six SSC and four Species Programme sessions and logistics, and one to discuss the resolutions process. In the first session, IUCN Deputy Director General Bill Jackson and SSC Network Support Officer Dena Cator presented an overview of the Congress. They advised the meeting delegates to register and book their accommodation as early as possible if they were planning to attend. A show of hands demonstrated the intent of over 50% of those present to attend. Dena also reminded delegates to contact the Network Support Officers if Chairs that are attending Congress (or simply want to be involved) would like to feature their work in the Biodiversity Pavilion which Species Programme is managing or one of the Species Programme / SSC forum sessions. In the second presentation, SSC Chair Holly Dublin and fellow IUCN Councillor Russell Mittermeier answered questions about the resolutions process, explaining that resolutions may only be submitted by IUCN Members and should be submitted to the Resolutions Committee by **6 June 2008**, which is 120 days prior to the opening of the Congress as specified in the Rules of Procedure. The following potential resolutions were discussed and supported:

- A resolution for IUCN to hold a Species Congress
- A resolution to encourage a 12-year cycle in WCC themes, moving between species, protected areas and ecosystems every four years.

- A resolution to request that the contribution of the Commissions be formally recognised and that full financial support be found to support various positions in the Commissions, such as that of the Chair.

For more information about the WCC in Barcelona, please see [www.iucn.org/congress](http://www.iucn.org/congress)

### **3. Expanding and sharing knowledge**

This grouping of sessions, which took place over the latter three days of the meeting, consisted of three sub-sections. In the original meeting agenda, these sessions were paired and meant to be held as smaller concurrent sessions that would be repeated should people wish to attend both streams. However, a request from the delegates during the meeting resulted in all these sessions being held in plenary, which shortened the time of each session considerably but allowed everyone to attend every session.

#### *a) The IUCN Red List: practicalities of red listing; the priorities and uses of the Red List*

In the two back-to-back sessions, the following presentations were given:

- Red List Unit Manager Craig Hilton-Taylor gave a presentation on the history of the Red List, how the Red List Unit functions, Red List Authorities and the Red List Assessment tools and process, and the plans for the 2008 Red List.
- Species Information Manager Jim Ragle gave a presentation about the Species Information Service (SIS), including the many new tools and benefits of the system. He also provided a demonstration of the new SIS capabilities to participants in a special session outside the main agenda.
- Specialist Group Chairs Domitilla Raimondo (Southern African Plant SG) and Yvonne Sadovy (Grouper and Wrasse SG) gave brief presentations on their experiences in using the Red Listing of South African plants and a speciose group of commercially valuable fish respectively.
- Senior Species Scientist and Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee Chair Simon Stuart explained IUCN/SSC's biodiversity assessments, including the rationale for, and the results of, priority-setting and a summary of the major biodiversity assessment projects currently underway.
- Biodiversity Indicators Sub-Committee Chair Georgina Mace gave a presentation about the use of IUCN Red List data to deliver biodiversity indicators.
- SSC Steering Committee members Tom Brooks and Leon Bennun presented selected spatial applications using IUCN Red List data.
- David Mallon (Antelope SG) gave the example of the Saiga antelope, where the listing of the species as Critically Endangered was a catalyst for major conservation action
- Claude Gascon (Amphibian SG) explained how the Global Amphibian Assessment revealed the nature and extent of the amphibian extinction crisis, and as a result, the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan was developed and is now being implemented.
- Gustavo Fonseca (Edentate SG) presented the GEF funding approach and explained how the IUCN Red List underpins one pillar of the current Resource Allocation Framework, which governs the distribution of GEF resources.
- Leon Bennun presented case studies on how the Red List was used to help in the conservation of vultures and albatrosses.

The above presentations are available online on the [SSC SG Chairs' Meeting Webpage](#) under "Meeting Presentations".

When the floor was opened for discussion, it became clear that the SGs use various models for Red List assessments. The Cetacean SG, for example, circulates its Red List assessments to all its members, giving a feedback period for comment. The Japanese Plant RLA makes use of true amateurs to collect some distribution information, and uses professionals to check the results. There seemed to be some misunderstanding about the need for independence in assessment (authoring) and evaluation (review) of red listing; the need being stronger for those SGs dealing with potentially controversial species. The suggestion of having people from SGs dealing with related taxa to carry out evaluations was regarded as a possibility.

*b) Species conservation planning and implementing action*

This session was designed to illustrate the thinking of the SSC Species Conservation Planning Task Force (SCPTF) and introduce the draft Species Conservation Strategic Planning Guidelines. The SCPTF has been working for over a year, using input from SSC SGs and others on what has worked in species conservation planning and where there is still a struggle to develop plans that achieve the common objective – which is to identify, stimulate and implement conservation actions that succeed. The draft guidelines do not prescribe an inflexible set of rules for all species conservation planning, but rather identify key components and considerations in a process that can help to develop effective plans and subsequent actions. The guidelines describe four main components of species conservation plans and discuss a number of additional issues that will impact how plans are developed and implemented for various taxa. The components of a species conservation plan are a Status Review of distribution, populations, habitats, and threats; a high-level Conservation Vision for the taxon; Conservation Objectives and Goals that need to be achieved to reach that vision; and specific Conservation Actions that will accomplish the objectives. Other considerations discussed in the draft guidelines include determining when to do species conservation planning, setting the taxonomic scope for planning, identifying who to involve in the planning process, planning for multi-species taxa or communities and even highly speciose groups, using the plans for fund-raising, and promoting implementation of the conservation plans.

The session consisted of presentations to highlight some of these components and considerations, using examples from various SGs. The presentations were:

- Species Conservation Strategic Planning overview (Bob Lacy – Chair of the SCPTF)
- Status review: The sloth bear experience (Dave Garshelis – Bear SG)
- Conservation visions and conservation goals (Simon Hedges – Asian Elephant SG)
- Species conservation planning for multiple species (Phil McGowan – World Pheasant Association)
- Leveraging conservation action – structuring the African Rhino SG to implement conservation plans (Martin Brooks – African Rhino SG)
- Financial support and stimulating implementation – Tapir Action Planning (Patricia Medici – Tapir SG)
- Putting the pieces together: range-wide conservation planning for cheetahs and African wild dogs (Claudio Sillero – Canid SG)

The draft guidelines will be finalised and a detailed “how-to” manual is to be developed as a companion volume and online resource to strengthen and enhance the strategic planning process. Both will be released at the WCC, but will keep evolving afterwards. The WCC sessions will include an Aliances Workshop presenting examples of successful strategic species conservation planning and a Learning Opportunity for unveiling the guidelines and manual and to take them forward. SCPTF Chair Bob Lacy noted that the Task Force envisions the strategic planning for species conservation becoming a signature process of SSC, and a framework for re-energising an approach to conservation action that will really lead to action.

SSC SG Chairs and others were encouraged to review the draft guidelines and to provide feedback to the Task Force. The SCPTF was particularly interested in knowing if the species conservation planning approach described could be implemented by SGs, or if other problems or additional issues for consideration could be identified. The SCPTF is also looking for examples, case studies and additional reference materials that can be included in the manual.

The draft guidelines are available online on the [SSC SG Chairs' Meeting Webpage](#) under “Meeting Documents” and comments should be sent to [rlacy@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rlacy@ix.netcom.com)

For a summary on the complimentary Guidelines for Systematic Conservation (area-based) Planning Approaches being jointly developed by the SSC and the World Commission on Protected Areas, please see the section under “Meeting Documents” on the [SSC SG Chairs' Meeting Webpage](#)

c) *Strengthening messages through enhanced communications*

This session was chaired by SSC Steering Committee member Claudio Campagna and was designed to highlight best practices in communication within SGs, between SGs, and with the outside world; present the findings of the SG Chairs' Consultation with regard to communications issues; and then conclude the discussion through an open plenary session. The SSC Network Support Officers, Julie Griffin and Dena Cator, compiled detailed feedback from this session and will distribute it to all SG Chairs. The sections of the session can be summarised as follows:

- Christine Breitenmoser (Cat SG) spoke about for the Cat SGs approach to within-SG communications. This concentrates on information sharing between members using various tools rather than on information sharing from the Chairs. With 217 members from 57 countries and dealing with 36 species, the SG has a major communications challenge. Within-group communication operates mainly through emails, meetings and their newsletter. The general public has access the SG website, the species conservation compendia and the Digital Cat Library (which has password protected files to prevent copyright problems).
- Danna Leaman (Medicinal Plant SG) used a cup of tea as an analogy to describe their SG's communication with other SGs, saying that the "sweet" part of the cup has been sharing information about species, priorities, assessments, and conservation action. Because this is what many people from other SGs are also passionate about, there is no problem communicating this and finding overlaps. The "stronger" part of the cup has been the challenge of doing Red List assessments and obtaining training for Red Listing which has forced the MPSG to reach out to other SGs for help, e.g. the Conservation Breeding SG and the Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) Process. The "bitter" end of the cup has been contributing to the overall SSC strategic plan, ensuring good reporting mechanisms, etc. as this requires the plant SGs to be more vocal and become more involved.
- Frits Hesselink (Commission on Education and Communication Steering Committee member) showed an excellent and evocative short film clip and offered some suggestions to the delegates on communicating with the outside world. He said that one-liners work well in communication, as long as there is no jargon. He suggested that SGs should draft one-liners about their species and SGs, and work on a core brand value that resonates with a wide audience.
- Julie Griffin and Dena Cator (SSC Network Support Officers) overviewed the tools that can be used to communicate internally within SGs, amongst SGs, and also externally to audiences like governments, the private sector and the public. Tools that many SGs are already using for communicating internally include email, listserves and SG newsletters. The SSC e-bulletin and *Species* newsletter are used primarily for between-group communication, but Julie and Dena emphasized that they can also be used to distribute messages to external networks. Communication to outside audiences is taking place through SG websites, the IUCN website, press releases, publications, position papers and television / radio. In terms of new tools, they discussed the development of the Species Contact Guide which contains the contact details of all Species Programme and SSC staff (and will be updated regularly and kept online). They also described the development of an online Species calendar of events which SGs can use to keep updated on all IUCN and SG-related upcoming events. They also discussed communicating using wikis, which are webpages that members of SGs can use to keep in contact with each other and to post information online. Julie and Dena reminded the delegates that the IUCN website is being updated to a new streamlined system where there will be more flexibility for Chairs and their members to create and manage content on their own SG websites that are hosted by IUCN. They committed to keeping in contact with SG Chairs on a regular basis about these communication tools, particularly regarding the new developments with the IUCN website. SG Chairs were asked to inform the Species Programme when releasing publications or news releases.

The session closed with short statements taken from the floor, which included:

- Establishing personal contacts with media representatives is paramount
- Face-to-face communication (such as at this meeting) is so vital that fundraising efforts should focus around more regular meetings
- Press releases should be designed as a story – setting the scene, explaining the conflict and describing the resolution of the conflict
- Stories released to the media should be captivating, have good images and be translated into relevant languages
- The SGs feel they are individually quite good at releasing their stories appropriately, so the Species Programme and SSC should focus on the bigger cross-cutting issues and related stories.
- There is a need for information put forward by SGs to adhere to a high standard of accuracy and for different SGs not to disseminate conflicting messages.

#### **4. Discussing our common challenges**

This grouping of sessions revolved around sharing experiences on fundraising and on being an effective network.

##### *a) Funding and fundraising*

The sessions began with a series of presentations, then moved into a panel discussion and concluded with a question and answer session. The highlights of the presentations were:

- IUCN Strategic Partnership Unit Head Hans Friederich said that it is the goal of IUCN to increase their unrestricted funding and to secure more large donations. He said that the Framework Donors to IUCN do allow additional proposals for projects from the IUCN Regional Office level, but not from Headquarters – it would therefore benefit the SSC SGs to link with the Regional Offices to take advantage of these possibilities. He said that although the Unit cannot provide much fundraising support to SSC or its SGs, they can supply information and advice. He challenged the delegates to think about whether establishing an endowment fund for the SSC would be a good idea, and called on the SG Chairs to think about private sector funding and co-branding of their products. He also suggested targeting organisations and institutions that use IUCN Red List data, development agencies and making use of internet giving. Diversifying funding sources is important.
- Species Programme Deputy Head Jean-Christophe Vié explained how the Species Programme successfully fundraised for the Global Assessment projects – which involve the Regional Offices and the SSC SGs in project design and implementation. He also noted that the SSC small grants programme (the Sir Peter Scott Fund for Conservation Action) received an injection of 100,000 Euro in 2007 and two rounds of calls for proposals have already been completed. He said that there are various innovative plans for fundraising which are currently in their testing stages – these include an online donation button on the Red List website, and advertising through Google AdSense on some pages of the Red List website.
- SSC Chair Holly Dublin explained that many SSC members did not understand that the SSC receives only a nominal fund from IUCN to pay for its governance, and that the Chair of the SSC is not a paid position. She noted that there are a number of large IUCN initiatives (called Leveraging Initiatives) that are linked to large-scale development programmes, and suggested that the SSC SGs need to become more involved in these and future initiatives. She explained that the *ex-situ* community is looking for ways to place money into worthy projects and asked the SG Chairs to read the document that had been supplied (under “Meeting Documents” on the [SSC SG Chairs' Meeting Webpage](#)) and take part in this effort. She challenged the delegates by asking whether it would be possible to enter into agreements with organisations that rely on information from SSC to provide constant support over longer periods of time.

Several SG Chairs then joined Hans, Jean-Christophe and Holly to form a panel – each of them representing a different model of fundraising success within the SSC. Their short presentations can be summarised as follows:

- Rod Mast (Marine Turtle SG), who works for a large international NGO, explained that he feels philanthropic giving is currently very strong as people are more aware of conservation issues. He said involving individuals in the field is usually a sure way to give them a sense of stewardship. He said wealthy individuals are a good source of funding (there are currently 300 to 400 billionaires listed in Forbes magazine). He said that donors like: 1) measurable results, 2) leverage on their investment, 3) high chances of success (not a hopeless scenario), and 4) being a part of the fun.
- Pati Medici (Tapir SG), who has had extraordinary success in fundraising as an individual, said she established a fundraising committee within their SG structure. She sends letters of request to all zoos with tapirs and has a person that attends key conferences for fundraising purposes. She noted that 62% of all zoos around the world that hold tapirs have supported the Tapir SG financially. She said it is vital to keep all donors well informed with thank you letters, newsletters and other updates.
- Grahame Webb (Crocodile SG), who is a consultant in his personal capacity, explained how the commercial industry of tanners, farmers and traders has been crucial for the survival of crocodilians. He said that when commercial organisations approach the Crocodile SG for information or advice, this is always an opportunity to ask for funding support. The SG has benefited substantially from such support over the years. He also said that from his longstanding experience with this SG and the SSC he felt one of the most critical things for an effective SG is to find constant and continuous funding to maintain a dedicated Programme Officer for the SG.
- Mick Clout (Invasive Species SG), who runs the finances of the SG through a university, said it is a challenge to communicate invasive species issues to funders, particularly as donors often feel that because the SG is part of IUCN it has plenty of money. He said tailoring fundraising proposals to topical issues (such as climate change) and making use of personal contacts are both important tools for fundraising.

The following questions were presented to the panel from the floor:

- *How do we fundraise for non-charismatic species?* Tell the story better (there is always likely to be someone somewhere who is interested in that species); sell the ecosystem services angle; become better at packaging and marketing so that species can be linked to other things that are important to people.
- *Why is IUCN not fundraising more from wealthy individuals?* IUCN has not done this historically, but there is a growing recognition of the need to fundraise from individuals and foundations, particularly in the United States. When individuals are involved as donors, stewardship is the key – have them become involved in work in the field. .
- *How can IUCN shift the paradigm so that our efforts to capture data are funded and our knowledge can be made freely available?* The Red List is providing valuable information to the world, but finding the funds to pay for carrying out the assessment and evaluation functions is hard. Charging end users for information does not seem an appropriate response, as open access to information is important in the conservation world. Many donors want co-financing, and we often forget that IUCN is adding staff time and other value into the mix that is not recognised in all co-funding discussions.
- *What are the institutional issues around fundraising?* With SGs not being legal entities in their own right, it is very difficult to fundraise for their own work. Therefore, it is often essential to find a partner organisation to pass funding through. Everyone should investigate online giving – there is huge potential in this realm.
- *The moment of ask – how do you arrive there?* Asking for funds is not begging, it is involving people in the amazing things that we are doing to conserve species. Having one convincing line which resonates with people can really help. One needs to know how and when to use this information to its best advantage with donors. A key “selling” point of the SGs and the SSC is that it is science-based and independent.

b) *Establishing and managing an effective network*

This group of sessions began with a short presentation about networking, after which three SG Chairs spoke about their experiences. This was followed by a question and answer session, with the three Chairs and SSC Chair Holly Dublin forming a small panel. The highlights were:

- SSC Change Management Advisor Pat McLagan gave a short presentation about what it means to be a network. She explained that how we envision an organisation dictates how we function – it is a way of dealing with the complexity inherent in such an organisation. The delegates were then given one large sheet of paper per table and asked to draw SSC as the global species conservation network they wanted to create, and specifically how to incorporate hierarchical structure into a network. After the drawings were completed, the delegates were asked to comment on the various design ideas they had created. The main comments included the fact that every diagram was different, but that the SGs were the key focus in each system. There was also some discussion around how the reason for the organisation determines the shape and how SGs can become more networked to one another in the bigger scheme of things.
- Brooks Childress (Flamingo SG) explained that although their SG deals with a small number of species, they are very widespread geographically. The object of the SG is to build an inclusive global network of Individuals actively involved in the study, monitoring, management and conservation of all species (wild and captive). New members are selected from authors of published scientific papers and people attending relevant conferences. The group has grown to 232 members from 57 countries. A list has been compiled of all members and their areas of expertise. He explained that the extensive growth of the group has not been problematic as he sees his role of Chair as more of a coordinator as opposed to a manager.
- Gordon Reid (Freshwater Fish SG) explained that their group was resuscitated in 2005 and now they meet annually. They deal with ~14,000 species, a number which grows all the time as new species are included (defining a truly freshwater fish can be challenging as some species live in brackish water or could be classified as marine species). He said that due to this rapid change, expertise is often hard to find. The group's links to Wetlands International, zoos, aquaria, museums and research institutions are strong – as is the link to the Freshwater Biodiversity Assessment Unit of the Species Programme. The group has 16 vice-chairs and 16 advisors, and the membership is often arranged on an eco-region or river basin basis, not taxonomically. Word-of-mouth is used to select members, and the criteria for membership include leadership potential, enthusiasm, potential to deliver, positive approach, expertise and experience, strategic thinking skills, compatibility, teamwork, flexibility, residency in the region they are responsible for, record of active involvement in conservation, availability, communication skills, connectivity to other organisations, ability to work in an organic way under uncertain conditions, and ability to challenge the *status quo*. Gordon concluded his talk by saying that meetings are absolutely essential and finding resources to do this is paramount.
- Anders Rhodin (Tortoise & Freshwater Turtle SG) explained that his group was founded in 1981 and is supported by his own NGO (the Chelonian Research Foundation) and Conservation International. The SG's focus is primarily on research and it has a small grants programme for which any research is eligible. The SG has produced an action plan, works well with the Marine Turtle SG, is usually involved in CITES Conference of the Parties, and has an annual symposium. With regards to membership, although previously there was little congruence between where the SG members are based and where the turtles occur, there has been an intentional effort to rectify this situation. Criteria for expanding the group's membership include turtle priority nations, young scientists, trade specialists, captive management experts, developing nations and also gender. Anders explained that the SG's goals have been achieved through combining Red List assessments with conservation action planning in workshops that bring all the stakeholders together.

## **5. A positive and lasting experience**

Numerous aspects of the meeting design ensured that the delegates had a positive and memorable experience. Not least of these was the fact that the delegates themselves were encouraged to be involved in the meeting as much as possible through table discussions, presentations from the SG Chairs, and question and answer sessions. The delegates were also encouraged to be as hands-on as they wished through sessions that involved capturing ideas on cards, drawing diagrams, placing dots on a world map of where they work and completing an IUCN timeline on the wall.

One of the main requests from the SG Chairs before the meeting was that there would be ample time for informal interaction. Although it was incredibly difficult with such a packed agenda, the meeting organisers did their best to ensure that the tea and lunch breaks were as long as possible. The Hilton Hotel Al Ain also contributed to an overall positive experience for the delegates by providing a private breakfast room, organising a private outdoor luncheon every day, making additional meeting rooms available for smaller, informal or impromptu group meetings (of which there were many), and generally trying to accommodate every need. They even went as far as decorating the snacks table at the final closing drinks function with garnish representing species – a seal ice sculpture, a heron made from carrot and icing, and others.

It was also a great privilege to have such an involved and considerate main meeting host. In addition to sponsoring most of the flights, all of the accommodation and catering, airport transfers and the hire of the meeting rooms, the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi provided a bag for each delegate containing a 2008 calendar, a diary and a DVD about the UAE. They also presented each delegate with a coffee-table book on the natural history of the UAE and a hardback guide to the wildflowers of the UAE, in addition to other pamphlets. The Secretary General of the agency, His Excellency Majid Al Mansouri, personally attended the afternoon session on conservation in the UAE, accompanied by colleagues who gave presentations on various conservation initiatives. The Environment Agency also arranged for a half-day field trip, taking delegates to the National Avian Research Centre (where Houbara Bustards are bred), the release site of the Arabian oryx reintroduction, or for a shopping and sight-seeing trip to Dubai. The Al Ain Zoo hosted an outdoor Gala Dinner at the zoo on the first evening of the meeting, which was attended by His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority; His Excellency Mohammed Ahmed Al Bawardi, Secretary General – Abu Dhabi Executive Council; and His Excellency Majid Al Mansouri, Secretary General of the Environment Agency.

The meeting was tied together in a particularly meaningful way by the use of a large timeline on the wall of the meeting room. One of the first sessions on Day 1 of the meeting involved the delegates being introduced to this concept and beginning to fill the timeline in. They were invited to continue adding to it during the course of the meeting. The delegates enjoyed filling in key events in their personal lives, in the world and in IUCN/SSC between 1948 (when IUCN was established) and 2008. It was felt that this was an excellent ice-breaker, and some of the comments recorded on the timeline were very pertinent. At the end of the meeting, the delegates were asked to return to the timeline and add their ideas, hopes and visions for the future, considering what they would like to accomplish working together as a network through to 2040, and how they would commit to making sure it happens (collectively and personally). See Box I for more about the Timeline.

When closing the meeting, SSC Chair Holly Dublin expressed thanks to the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi for their generous sponsorship, and thanked Fred Launay, of the SSC Steering Committee, for helping to make it all happen. She also thanked the meeting design team, the SSC Steering Committee, the Species Programme and the four meeting Day Hosts (Steering Committee members) for all their hard work before and during the meeting.

Holly then presented the following people with a few good-natured awards:

- Sara Oldfield was presented with the “Amphibian Award” for spending most of her free time in the hotel pool.
- Nick Pilcher was presented with the “Don Ho Award” for being the delegate most dressed as if he was on holiday (in honour of his colourful Hawaiian shirts).

- Grahame Webb (Crocodile SG) was presented with the “No Greater Love Award” for the various injuries he has sustained from species under his remit.
- Ehsan Dulloo (Crop Wild Relative SG) was presented with the “Sustainability Award” for consuming the most species under his remit.
- David Mallon (Antelope SG) was presented with the “Stirrer Award” for being the most outspoken person at the meeting (with Richard Kock, Wildlife Health SG and member of the SSC Steering Committee, being the runner-up).

Holly then presented Russ Mittermeier with the Sir Peter Scott Award for Conservation Merit. The Sir Peter Scott Award is the "senior" SSC award, dating back to 1984, and is presented to individuals in recognition of significant and long term service to conservation through their work with the SSC or associated institutions. The award, a medal with a likeness of the first SSC Chair Sir Peter Scott, and a certificate, was presented to Russ in recognition of his enduring commitment to the conservation of species across the globe, his leadership of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group, and his dedication to the SSC for more than three decades.

***Box 1: Some comments from the IUCN/SSC/WORLD Timeline from 1948 to now and beyond***

A large amount of history was captured on the first panel (1948 – 1995) – dates of establishment of SGs, of the IUCN and SSC, when the SSC was renamed, dates of first publication of the Red List and various other seminal conservation works.

In the middle panel (1995 – 2008) people wrote more about developments in their own SGs, dates when particular species were listed/de-listed/declared extinct, dates of Red List and action plan publications, when different committees were formed or re-formed, etc. An important event included right at the end of the period, was “GW Bush almost recognises global warming”...

In the third panel (the future) many diverse hopes and wishes were expressed – including the wishes that a “Resolution to World Conservation Congress asking Holly to marry a rich man supporting SSC work” is passed; “no more babies” from around 2010 onwards; unprecedented millions of Dollars (Zimbabwe Dollars?) are granted to IUCN for conservation work; and “Holly retires as SSC Chair in 2030?”... The overall spirit of the third panel was very optimistic, with only two or three slightly pessimistic predictions. Serious predictions or wishes included having a SSC SG Chairs’ Meeting every Quadrennium, the first Species Congress in the period 2011– 2013, the de-listing of many species, marked improvements in the trends shown by the Red List Index, many countries coming on board with conservation and contributing money and help, more representative SGs or SG membership being formed, and many more positive and innovative ideas.

(Photographs of the entire timeline are available on request from [sscchairoffice@iucn.org](mailto:sscchairoffice@iucn.org))

## ACTION ITEMS

The action items from the meeting can be divided into two broad categories: a) those to be undertaken by the SG Chairs and b) those that need further deliberation by the leadership of the SSC and the Species Programme regarding better defining the action, identifying the responsible party and giving a timeframe for delivery. The two types of action items are summarised in Tables I a and I b below.

One general request from the meeting was that the SSC leadership and the Species Programme should do their best to carry out more direct consultations with SG Chairs, particularly on any matters that could have substantial, long-term impact across the network.

Delegates also detailed personal Action Items in their Feedback Forms. The most commonly expressed categories of personal Action Items are listed in Table II.

**Table I a: Action Items from the SSC SG Chairs' Meeting to be undertaken by the SG Chairs**

<b>ACTION ITEM</b>
<b>SPECIES CONSERVATION PLANNING</b>
All SGs to give comments to the Strategic Conservation Planning Task Force on the draft guidelines.
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>
Remember to inform SP and SSC office of new publications, press releases and other communication material launched under the IUCN name/logo
SG Chairs should share positive case studies and news stories about their work with SP/SSC Communications Team for website or press releases
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>
SGs to inform Dena Cator and Julie Griffin of their resource needs to enable Dena and Julie to match funding opportunities with SGs where possible (with the understanding that not all needs will be matched)
<b>WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS</b>
Pursue the possible resolution for a Species Congress through IUCN Member organisations and try to ensure it is passed at the WCC.
Ask SSC members for additional ideas on Resolutions for possible submission by an IUCN Member organisation before 6 June 2008.

**Table I b: Draft Actions Items from the SSC SG Chairs' Meeting requiring further deliberation by SSC and Species Programme Leadership regarding refining the action, identifying the responsible party and giving a timeframe for conclusion**

<b>ACTION ITEM</b>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION</b>
Show positive examples of SGs working with IUCN Regional Offices.
Recreate a digital version of the map of where SSC SG Chairs are based and where they work, and utilise it to illustrate the diversity of SSC when communicating, fundraising or looking for partners on specific projects.
<b>SSC DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE</b>
Strengthen the rationale for redesign of SS.
Small task force of five SG Chairs to be consulted before final version of redesign document is sent to all SG Chairs.
<b>THE RED LIST</b>
Continue to investigate the pros and cons of a Scientific Journal for the Red List.

<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>
SGs should be informed immediately when new IUCN name and logo launched.
Send more and better information to Chairs (and SSC members) about the “One Programme” approach.
Encourage SGs to take part in a more unified design for SG websites (development of brand), and create standard front pages for all SGs in new IUCN website
Clarify copyright status of online libraries
Provide more explanation on the Knowledge Network and investigate access for SG Chairs
Decide on whether to proceed with SSC picture library
Improve SSC website so it is easier for SG Chairs and members to find information on structure, understand the role of the various offices and units, and know who to contact, etc.
Clarify communications channel to SG Chairs for other parts of IUCN – whether through SP or SSC Chair’s office.
Provide Species Contact Guide electronically to all SG Chairs (include contact details for Regional Offices)
Clarify what sorts of communications from SG Chairs should be addressed through SP and which through SSC Chair’s Office.
Clarify use of logos and IUCN visual identity for SGs
Make information about all SGs more easily accessible. Possibly attach the Info Sheets compiled for the meeting and possibly also funding requirements
Support the SG with the winning idea for how they will use new media for communications
Make more species information available in non-IUCN languages
Try to demonstrate to the SSC how SGs’ data is used to influence conservation policy and action (through examples in the e-bulletin or <i>Species</i> )
Investigate how to improve links with CEC experts and resources to allow SSC to use CEC expertise
Discuss whether a tag line for SSC would help (recommendation from Frits Hesselink of CEC)
Follow up on new communication tools through providing guidelines on use and support – skype-conferencing, wikis, blogs, etc
Help SP / SSC improve its media contacts
Improve communications to SG Chairs by ensuring that content is high priority and targeted to the right people
Ensure that all SG Chairs and SSC members understand about how travel paid for by IUCN money is offset through the IUCN Carbon Fund. Provide information about how IUCN selects projects to fund.
Provide SGs examples of communicating with different audiences (e.g. rural people, businesses, governments / policy, particularly in areas with businesses and people and no governance).
Revise SG communication and fundraising tools on the web and post a lessons learned section (e.g. on policy, when SGs can speak on behalf of IUCN).
Follow up on new communication tools with guides and support to use them.
Communicate that IUCN has a UN representative – give contact details.
SGs need to know how to search SG members and where they are.
<b>A MORE EFFECTIVE NETWORK</b>
Upgrade database on SSC members to include geographic and thematic areas of expertise
Joint appointments between SGs that overlap in terms of their members’ knowledge/expertise and group activities to counteract sense of territoriality between groups. Investigate how the “generalists” (people who are not necessarily members of a SG or members of only one, but have expertise that can benefit other groups) can be accommodated. E.g. A “reserve army”
Consider an Induction Pack and introductory telephone calls or meetings for new SG Chairs.
Investigate the gaps in taxonomic coverage of the SGs and look at possibly forming new SGs such as a climate change SG, or a “common species” SG
<b>POLICY</b>
Clarify, in writing (preferably as case studies of effective action rather than a series of “don’ts”), the guidelines on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- when and how SGs are to use the IUCN and SSC logos</li> <li>- whether SG Chairs can sign MOUs</li> <li>- whether it is better to respond to queries as individuals with disclaimers or as SG Chairs</li> <li>- etc</li> </ul>
Chairs want to know about how to better facilitate strategic planning at the national and regional scales, connecting ground work with policy – want to know about experience of others in this regard.

<b>FUNDRAISING</b>
Provide email responses to specific questions raised at the meeting.
Advise on legal structures for managing donor funds (e.g. Tortoise & Freshwater Turtle SG has a separate foundation as a conduit for funds – obtain information on its exact status and constitution/articles of association)
Provide list of foundations
Provide advice on how to find wealthy individuals for SGs that have not had this experience
Discuss the establishment of a rapid response small grants programme
Poll SGs and find good examples of “moment of ask” funding letters.
Circulate good examples of “moment of ask” funding letters.
<b>WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS</b>
Create specific SSC ‘journey’
Provide information about hotels
Provide more information on funding for SGs running Congress sessions
Provide for SSC meeting at the Congress by inviting all SSC members to the two “Celebrating the SSC” sessions
Inform all SSC members about the species-related events at Congress (including the lack of a dedicated SSC meeting before Congress this time)

**Table II: Most Common Personal Action Item Categories Listed**

<b>Count</b>	<b>Action type</b>
33	Communications/interactions with wider IUCN network
28	Changes to group structure/functioning
25	Work with other SGs
21	Communications within SG
21	SG work
18	Fundraising
16	Website
13	Work/communicate with SP/SSC more
12	Red List-specific work/issues
11	Meeting organising
10	Communicate with SG about AI Ain meeting

**CONCLUSIONS:  
GOOD PRACTICES / LESSONS LEARNED AND FURTHER CHALLENGES**

Overall, the first-ever meeting of the SSC Specialist Group Chairs was a great success. All the delegates learned important lessons about best practice; they took home with them a better sense of the larger SSC and IUCN network; and, most of all, they celebrated the achievements of the SSC over the last 59 years. In the comments section of the Feedback Form (where delegates could write anything that came to mind), the primary comments were ones of praise about the meeting. Almost a quarter of the respondents requested that the meeting become a regular occurrence. Other frequent comments included how beneficial it was for them to meet other SG Chairs and the representatives from the IUCN Regional Offices, how interesting it was to learn more about IUCN and how they could build synergies for greater conservation impact, and their feeling that they would become a more effective Chair as a result of this meeting.

In their Feedback Forms, the delegates were also asked to name what they felt they had learned that would help them to better manage their groups, and the main answers were fundraising, communications and networking. Many also said they had learned a lot about how to use websites, how to organise their groups better, and how the IUCN, SSC, Species Programme and other SGs work and relate to each other.

In general, the delegates thoroughly enjoyed the meeting. The 17 most common words used to describe the meeting in the Feedback Forms are listed in Table III (note: different forms of the same word were combined)

**Table III: Words most commonly used to describe the meeting**

Word	Count
Informative/information/informing	47
Inspirational/inspiration/inspiring	26
Fun	19
Useful/very useful	12
Networking/network	10
Motivating/motivational	9
Challenging/challenges/challenged	8
Energizing	7
Frustrating/frustration	7
Interesting	7
Stimulating	7
Friendly/friends	6
Constructive	5
Educational/educative	5
Encouraging	5
Engaging	5
Learning/learning experience	5

As with any meeting, hindsight is always valuable. Some things only emerged as issues requiring more discussion during the meeting, and the tight agenda prevented many topics from being covered to their fullest. Sometimes a good practice was immediately clear, while on other issues the discussions at the meeting begged further discussions!

Picking the top ten lessons and future challenges from the meeting is a controversial and tricky task, but here are some possibilities:

1. Meetings like this first-ever meeting of the SSC SG Chairs are extremely useful and everyone in the SSC and SP should do their best to make such meetings a regular occurrence (every four years).
2. Communication is KEY – if we are to conserve what we most value we must more powerfully make the argument for species and why they are relevant in today’s complex world. There are many new and diverse options for effective communication now available. SGs and their Chairs, as well as the whole of SSC, the Species Programme and IUCN need to make use of these to promote collaboration, funding, and more effective conservation work. With communications, it is vital not to only focus on bad news!
3. No SG is the same as any other, and therefore no Chair can be the same as another Chair – some groups require more direct management, some groups like to include student members... the differences are many and diverse, and it is important for all parties to understand the variety and its associated values.
4. The SSC is a truly remarkable organisation, which continues to have an important place in the world. It is unique and can never be duplicated by other NGO’s or anyone else. The SSC unites and brings to bear what may well be the largest private army driving world conservation. To be able to tap into the knowledge generated by that army, for virtually no direct cost, is a political and economic masterstroke.
5. To deliver greater conservation impact, it is vital that the SSC SGs become better connected to both IUCN staff in Regional Offices and IUCN Members.
6. SSC SGs can contribute scientific advice and expertise to many local or regional conservation issues, and contrary to some beliefs this can actually temper tensions rather than being considered as “meddling”. Examples are many and the message is that IUCN can be effective at influencing policy and the private sector at local levels, and this is a requested and needed function of IUCN SSC.
7. In terms of fundraising, diversifying sources is important. A currently under-tapped source is wealthy individuals and private foundations, particularly in the United States but the challenge is in identifying them and obtaining access.
8. There is a challenge in terms of intellectual property – is it better to charge for information provided to third parties or to make all information freely available? The open-access debate continues.
9. Policy in the IUCN context is a tricky area requiring knowledge of the system and how it works. SSC’s role is one of informing IUCN policy formulation by providing access to cutting edge, scientific knowledge from our work on monitoring trends in the status of biodiversity, analysing the threats to biodiversity, and developing the tools and actions needed to mitigate them.
10. The need to separate the two functions of doing Red List assessments (the authors) and doing evaluations (reviewing) was accepted, but more examples providing a stronger rationale to any redesign of the SSC are needed.