

Sanjay Molur presents overview of CBSG and RSG principles with emphasis on the RSG Guidelines

Sanjay Molur, Member of CBSG and Chair of the South Asian branch of the IUCN SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group gave a presentation on the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and Reintroduction Specialist Group and then another presentation on "Planning Re-introduction Programmes".

Sanjay told the group a bit about the history of CBSG in South Asia, that it started as CBSG India and conducted several PHVA and CAMP workshops for India and then helped neighboring countries with PHVAs and CAMPs of their own. For some time there were several CBSG networks, CBSG, Nepal; CBSG, Sri Lanka as well as CBSG India but as all of the activities were being planned in India, Sanjay and his colleague Sally Walker, Convenor of CBSG India decided to make one regional CBSG which was CBSG South Asia. This has worked well over last 10 years. This decision was taken some time after the founding of SAZARC.

He explained the purpose and activities of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and how it integrates almost all aspects of wildlife conservation. In South Asia, he and Sally have linked taxon based networks and other international groups with CBSG activities creating a holistic dynamic of stochastic elements or events in which one event sparks off another. This was called Network Engineering.

Sanjay introduced the Reintroduction Specialist Group by explaining the different terms relating to the evolution of reintroduction and the year they were defined, e.g., Introduction – outside historic range, (IUCN, 1987); Reintroduction (IUCN, 1995), Re-enforcement/Supplementation (IUCN, 1995) Conservation Introduction (IUCN, 1995), Substitution (Seddon & Soorae, 1999) and (Translocation: the movement of animals from one part of their range to another).

There was a lively discussion which was carried over the second presentation the following day. The following day he spoke about the importance of proper planning for reintroduction projects, describing the main stages with feasibility study, then implementation stage (release), Post-release monitoring stage, and dissemination stage. He stressed that the dissemination or "lessons learned" stage is very important whether the event was successful or not. There are immense lessons in every attempt.

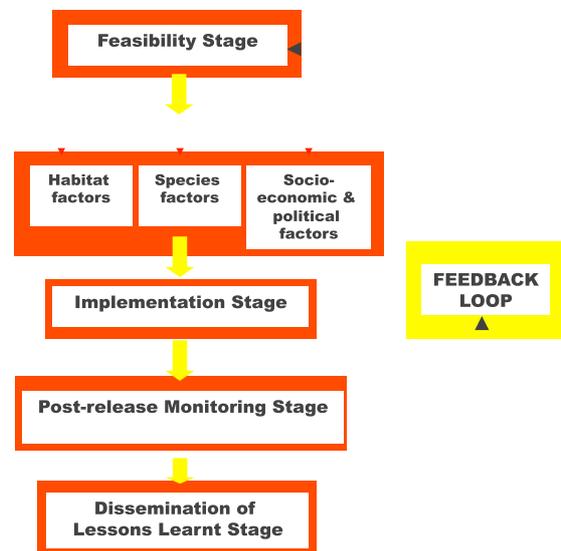
Sanjay described RSG's comprehensive approach which involves three critical factors. First is the site or habitat which should be safe with sufficient space and knowledge of why the species had declined in the first previously.

Second is the species of which wild stock is preferred or if captive it must have been genetically and demographically managed. It must meet all health requirements and have a probability of survival approximating that of its wild counterpart. Sanjay stressed that captive stock, if selected for release, must have the needed survival skills for their wild, that is, they should not be so accustomed to human presence that it threatens their chances of survival.

Sanjay also stressed one of the most important principles of reintroduction from captive stock, which is that Re-introductions should not be conducted simply because there are a great many surplus animals. Zoos and nature parks in South Asian have been noted to use this method to dispose of surplus animals, rather than implementing well-known birth control methods. There was much enthusiastic



Components of Reintroduction



discussion of this topic as it struck home with zoo directors from most of the countries. Sanjay explained all the negative effects that can occur by hasty and careless releases of surplus animals.

The third element in the comprehensive approach is the social, political and economic aspects of reintroduction. If the species is a dangerous animal there can be fear of nearby villagers or even townspeople. Different groups of people with different interests and things to gain or lose can be a threat to the released population and generate political issues among local people and even between partners in the exercise.

Since the start of contemporary reintroductions over 699 species have been reintroduced to the wild in one of the forms described. The numbers of species of vertebrates successfully reintroduced is 424, of invertebrates, 65 and plants 210.

Discussion continued fast and furious until it was announced that participants had to join the tour. Many of them felt that they were hearing and understanding the RSG Guidelines fully for the first time. Sally Walker