

2nd IUCN SSC Chairs' Meeting, 23-27 February 2012, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Report

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IUCN SSC, with the generous support of the Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi and the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, organised the second IUCN SSC Chairs' meeting at Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, UAE from 23-27 Feb 2012. The five-day event was attended by the host Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, MBZSCF Abu Dhabi, IUCN President, SSC steering committee members, subcommittees, Specialist Group Chairs, Task Force Chairs, Red List Authority Focal Points, Specialist Group Programme Officers, other IUCN Commission Chairs, IUCN Regional Office Staff, Headquarters Staff, Member Organisations, Red List Partner Organisations and UN Global Species Programme.

The purpose of the meeting was to acquaint SSC leaders to with one another for better development of collaborations, partnerships with IUCN commissions' programmes and their staff; learning about new products and tools that would help complete plans for SSC's work in 2013-2016, which include developing major new global and regional initiatives; planning the 2015 World Species Congress as well as developing policies guidelines and standards; thank SSC Chairs for their hard work and to convey gratitude and recognition as SSC Chairs dedicate their time and expertise to SSC and to advancing species conservation efforts globally.

The event began with Ashok Khosla, President IUCN, addressing multiple global crises such as poverty, population, pollution, climate change and biodiversity losses. He urged attention to the need of credible science for solutions to save environment and biodiversity.

Simon Stuart, Chair of SSC outlined the structure and working relationships of SSC within the broader IUCN family. He gave a report on progress and highlights for the 2009-2012 quadrennium and introduced the agenda. Russell Mittermeier, SSC Steering Committee member and Chair of the Primate SG, presented a detailed history of 50 years of SSC. Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, Secretary General of Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi (EAD), who hosted the meeting welcomed the gathering and reiterated that EAD is proud to support this meeting which will set the global species conservation agenda for the next four years. The biodiversity team of the EAD presented a series of field research and conservation activities in the UAE outlining some of UAE's key flora and fauna and the efforts to protect them.

Later, the new IUCN programme and the Species Strategic Plan for the next quadrennium 2013-2016 were introduced.

The conference included various parallel programmes and discussions of global conservation initiatives, e.g., Action Asia, Conservation of Island Biodiversity, A regional recovery effort for the Gulf of Mexico, Inter-tidal wetlands in East Asia, Amphibian Survival Alliance, Arctic Conservation, IUCN Red List vis-a-vis. Forestry Sector and Organizing SSC at Regional and National Levels: A Latin America focus.

The second day Simon Stuart reported initial deliberations of the Working Group on the World Species Congress. Jane Smart and Dena Cator gave a presentation on the

Communication strategy, branding overview, communicating the work of the Commission, and making the most of social media, which was very useful for all the delegates. Later the delegates worked in parallel sessions on a variety of themes such as promoting engagement in international species related conventions: CITES, World Heritage, CMS and Ramsar. Virtual planning environments, Capturing, Managing and disseminating species population and range data using online tool, Red List tools, Writing successful funding proposals and, Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis and surveillance were covered in separate workshops. SSC Sub-Committee Chairs gave brief reports with examples of their work, and to encourage further collaboration. An excursion was arranged on the third day for the delegates.

Day four began featuring existing funding mechanisms available for species conservation efforts, with emphasis on Save Our Species and the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund. The Red List assessment process was reviewed including some of the tools and resources available, and the latest developments in SIS and GIS. Commissions and disciplinary Specialist Group Chairs presented reports and encouraged collaboration. CBSG Chair Onnie Byers gave a brief report of the SG activities.

The last day featured a report from the Red List Committee on the evolving strategies to guide priorities and activities around the Red List over the next IUCN quadrennium and opportunities for building relationship between the ex situ and in situ communities. SSC Chair Simon Stuart announced the names of winners of various conservation awards such as Harry Messel Awards, George Rabb Award for conservation and Sir Peter Scott Award.

Our colleague, Robert C. Lacy, former Chair of the IUCN SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group was given the George Rabb Award for Conservation Innovation. Onnie Byers, current Chair of CBSG accepted the award on his behalf.

Sanjay Molur, Red List Authority Focal Point for invertebrates, B.A. Daniel and Md. Ather Rafi, the IUCN SSC South Asian Invertebrate Specialist Group Co-Chairs attended the event.

Following is a photo gallery of some high points and people at this seminal meeting.



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Photo Gallery of the SSC Chairs Meeting



Participants at the IUCN SSC Chairs Meeting in Abu Dhabi, UAE



Dr. Ashok Khosla founded Development Alternatives, New Delhi in 1982. It was a major step toward fulfilling his dream for sustainable development. He worked tirelessly to demonstrate the theory and practice of sustainable development. He created the Department of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi. He has worked continuously toward the development of effective environmental management systems and the design and advocacy of appropriate policies and institutions both in India and internationally. Dr. Khosla is the current President of IUCN. He was awarded the prestigious WWF Duke of Edinburgh Conservation Medal at Buckingham Palace in recognition of his outstanding, life-long service to the environment.



Dr. Simon Stuart is the Chair of the IUCN SSC for the current quadrennium. He resigned as the Head of the SSC before winning the elections for the current position in Barcelona, Spain in October 2008. Simon has spear-headed several innovations and activities in the SSC, such as the Global Amphibian Assessment in 2004 and earlier, the refinement of the quantitative criteria of the Red List Categories in 1998-1999.



The SSC established a new award in honor of Dr. George Rabb, Chair of SSC from 1989 to 1996, for outstanding innovation and creativity in species conservation. It is given to individuals in recognition of delivering transformational advances in conservation theory and practice. Recipients are decided by the SSC Steering Committee. The first two awards, with a prize of US \$5,000 each generously provided by Dr George Rabb, were presented at the closing ceremonies of the SSC Specialist Group Chairs' meeting in Abu Dhabi. The first of these was presented to our own Bob Lacy, "In recognition of his pioneering work in the development of Population and Habitat Viability Assessment as a practical conservation tool, and his exceptional leadership as Chair of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group". Bob was not present to receive the award but Onnie accepted it on his behalf. The second award was conferred on another conservation tool wizard, Dr. Resit Akcacaya of the RAMAS suite fame.

CONGRATULATIONS, Bob! Extremely well deserved!



Dr. Fred Launay wears many hats, the most relevant to the SSC IUCN is his current position as the Chair of the Reintroduction SG since 2000. He was a member of the Steering Committee of the SSC. He is currently the Director General of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, and the Senior Advisor to the Secretary General of the Environmental Agency at Abu Dhabi. He worked as the CEO of the Al Ain Wildlife Park and Resort for several years until 2010.



Simon Stuart presented Sanjay Molur, CBSG South Asia Co-convenor, with the SSC Chair's Certificate of Excellence. Sanjay was recognized for his "extraordinary commitment to promoting the work of many SSC Specialist Groups in South Asia, and to advancing the Red List process nationally, regionally and globally".