

Activities of the IUCN SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group - 2008

Dr. Miranda Stevenson, Director, British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums gave a presentation on the activities of IUCN SSC CBSG in the previous year, 2008 partly derived from a product of Chair, Robert Lacy.

She began by describing the unique role of the IUCN SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group which brings the power of the *ex situ* community to species conservation. CBSG explicitly identifies the importance of linking *ex situ* efforts to *in situ* conservation. It is a network that forges partnerships and consists of 523 volunteer members from 67 countries which is run by a Headquarters staff of just 6 people. CBSG can do this because of their 9 Regional/National Networks which are supported mostly by zoos and aquariums. CBSG partners with WAZA on the Amphibian Ark. CBSG exists to help all of us be more effective in species conservation.

Species conservation gets a boost by the CBSG workshop processes. A PHVA was conducted for the Leopard in South Africa in 2005. Results were presented to the National Department of Environmental Affairs and CITES officials who acted on the information where PHVA findings to be primary input in considering future permits

PHVAs are excellent means for addressing the needs of controversial or potentially threatened species and their protectors. Another example is the Lowland Tapir. Tapirs are becoming rare throughout their range due to habitat destruction and poaching. Tapirs have low reproductive rates, and all 4 species of tapirs are threatened. CBSG conducted PHVA Workshops on all 4 tapir species, leading to an action plan for all Tapirs. In 2007, the Lowland Tapir PHVA used the knowledge of 70 experts from all 11 lowland tapir range countries to make its recommendations.

Also, in French Guyana, the PHVA and action plan have already led to a decree prohibiting the sale of several native game species, including the lowland tapir. Work on Regional Collection Plans for captive tapir species is also underway.

Reintroduction in South Asia has been assisted by CBSG principles. When reintroduction is used inappropriately, the impact on the release area and local wildlife can be very destructive. CBSG South Asia and the IUCN/SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group work together to address misuse of reintroduction in South Asian countries. To change regional practices, CBSG South Asia and RSG South Asia hold joint annual meetings, promoting the principles of conservation breeding and implementation of the IUCN reintroduction guidelines. CBSG South Asia and RSG South Asia apply CBSG tools and processes to real problems.

The Amphibian Extinction Crisis is another project of CBSG in partnership with WAZA, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. About 3,000 species of amphibians are in danger of extinction, and 165 are believed to have become extinct since 1980. The most urgent danger is Amphibian Chytrid Fungus, but other threats include habitat loss, pollution, pesticides and climate change. CBSG has made a commitment to respond to this extinction crisis, and in partnership with the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and the IUCN/SSC Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG), has formed an organization dedicated to safeguarding amphibian species – Amphibian Ark (AArk).

CBSG and AArk staff worked together to conduct eight conservation workshops to benefit amphibians during 2007. One of the concerned Assessing Costa Rican Amphibians of which Sixty one of the 188 amphibian species native to Costa Rica are threatened. CBSG Mesoamerica conducted a Conservation Assessment and Management Plan to identify which species need intervention. As a result, a national conservation strategy for amphibians has been developed, making Costa Rica a world leader in responding to the amphibian extinction crisis.

Another is the Green Toad in Sweden. The Swedish population of the green toad is critically endangered, with only 950 adults remaining. CBSG Europe led stakeholders in creating a conservation plan addressing habitat, reintroduction, human factors, and legislation to benefit this species. Sweden's Agency for Nature Conservation is committed to implementing the plan.

And another is the Kihansi Spray toad which is likely extinct in the wild due to chytrid fungus and human impacts on its small natural range. Today, these toads only survive in two small zoo populations. CBSG Southern Africa used the experience of 60 participants from academia, government, NGOs, industry, and the private sector create a plan for the recovery and reintroduction of this species.

A brief review of some of the projects of CBSG are:

- Amphibian Crisis Response
- Field Conservation Prioritization
- Developing collaboration tools for CBSG and SSC
- Leading the SSC Species Conservation Planning Task Force
- India's Conservation Breeding Initiative
- IUCN World Conservation Congress
 - SSC Steering Committee
 - Strategic Plans for Species Conservation
 - PHVA, as a tool in Species Conservation
- Further building of regional capacity
 - Risk assessment modeling
 - Facilitation of conservation meetings
 - CBSG Australasia

- CBSG has conducted 41 workshops and meetings
 - Population & Habitat Viability Assessments
 - Organizational conservation planning
 - Training
 - Professional meetings, IUCN committees, etc.

Species conservation workshops

- Green toad (Sweden)
- Ogasawara wood pigeon (Japan)
- Aruba National Wildlife Conservation Strategy
- Green macaw (Costa Rica)
- Tasmanian devil (Australia)
- Giraffe (Niger)
- Silvery minnow (USA)
- Primates (Brazil)
- Gibbons (Indonesia)

Training

- Hoolock Gibbon Translocation
- Teacher Training, India
- Population Management in Indonesia, Japan, USA, Singapore
- Population modeling training in Belgium, Colombia, Indonesia

Zoos & Aquariums empower IUCN SSC

Many SSC Specialist Groups have little support and, thus, little activity. Zoos & aquariums can make a *huge* difference to the effectiveness of the SSC. Zoos & Aquariums can help empower IUCN SSC. It is a fantastic means for zoos and aquariums to network and form partnerships to assist conservation regionally and world wide.

One of the signature processes of CBSG is Working in groups using a systematic process points which have their origin in management, human psychology and practicality. These Working Group Groundrules are the bedrock of CBSG consensus building. These were communicated to the meeting in Sri Lanka before the participants broke up into working groups to discuss Human Animal conflict, Climate Change and Reintroduction of Small Mammals.

Working Group Ground rules

Task I: Assign Working Group Roles

Assign these roles at the start of each working group session

Facilitator

- Assures that each person wanting to speak is heard
- Keeps the group task front and center
- Keeps track of discussion using flip charts

Recorder

- Keeps track of group discussion using a computer
- Will provide the basis of the report from this workshop

Timekeeper

- Keeps the group aware of the time remaining

Presenter

- Delivers the working group report in plenary

Task II: Participant Introductions and Agenda Construction

- Please take 5 minutes to introduce yourselves to each other.
- Each participant states what they would like the group to accomplish
- If necessary revise the working group agenda to accommodate as many participant's goals as possible
- The facilitator will then propose a process for accomplishing these goals (you may or may not choose to follow the steps outlined below).

Task III: Issue Generation and Prioritization

- Brainstorm issues related to your group's topic.
- Consolidate similar issues and theme them into topic areas.
- Prioritize the issues

Task IV: Issue Elaboration and Objective Identification

- Summarize each of your group's high priority issues into a problem/issue statement. Be sure to ask yourselves *why* it is a problem or issue of concern and then include the answers in your problem statement.

- Based on the problem/issue statement, identify specific goals that you feel must be met in order to address this problem/issue (what needs to be accomplished?).

Task V: Action Identification and Prioritization

- For each of your group's top priority goals, brainstorm a range of possible actions to achieve the stated objective.
- Actions must be SMART!! (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented and Time-fixed)
- Prioritize the proposed actions.

Working Agreement

- All ideas are valid
- Everything is recorded on flip charts
- Everyone participates; no one dominates
- Listen to each other
- Treat each other with respect
- Differences and problems are acknowledged - not "worked"
- Observe time frames
- Complete draft report by end of meeting

Working group reports

- Group convenors responsible for giving hard copy and disk copy (Word) of final report to a CBSG staff member before the close of the meeting.

