



Species

ISSUE 62

2022 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat



The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together toward achieving the vision of “a just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to both prevent the loss and aid recovery of the diversity of life on earth.”

Members of SSC belong to one or more of near 200 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities, Action Partnerships, Task Forces, and Conservation Committees that make up the Network, each focusing on a taxonomic group (plants, fungi, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and invertebrates), national species, or a disciplinary issue, such as sustainable use and livelihoods, translocation of species, wildlife health, climate change, and conservation planning.

Framed by the Species Conservation Cycle, SSC’s major role is to provide information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services, and their support to human livelihoods. This information is fed into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan encompasses the joint work of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and a number of partnerships to achieve more than 2,700 targets proposed by the Network during the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

To accomplish those targets, the Species Conservation Cycle was established, which is the conceptual framework for the Network activities. The Species Conservation Cycle’s main purpose is to guide efforts for valuing and conserving biodiversity through three essential components that are linked to each other:

ASSESS: Understand and inform the world about the status and trends of biodiversity.

PLAN: Develop collaborative, inclusive and science-based conservation strategies, plans and policies.

ACT: Convene and mobilise conservation actions to improve the status of biodiversity.



Their implementation requires two transversal components:

NETWORK: Enhance and support our immediate network and alliances to achieve our biodiversity targets.

COMMUNICATE: Drive strategic and targeted communications to enhance our conservation impact.

SSC Species Report

Annual progress in the implementation of the 2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan is documented in the SSC *Species Report*, which consists of a comprehensive description and analysis of the activities and results generated by the members of the SSC Network each year. Each SSC Group contributes to this document by providing a yearly summarised description of their achievements, which is presented in stand-alone reports.

Structure of the IUCN SSC Stand-alone Report

Stand-alone reports summarize the activities conducted and results generated by each group member of the SSC. Following, is the structure of the stand-alone report and the contents under each session.

Title of the SSC Group

Photograph(s) of the Chair / Co-Chairs

Group information

Includes names of Chair / Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Red List Authority Coordinators and Program Officers, their institutional affiliations, number of members and social networks currently active.

Logo of the SSC Group

Mission statement

Includes the mission of the group.

Projected impact for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the description of the impact on species conservation resulting from the implementation of the targets formulated by the group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

Targets for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the targets planned by the SSC Group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium ordered alphabetically by component of the Species Conservation Cycle. Each target is labeled with a numerical code (e.g., T-001, T-012) that identifies it in the SSC DATA database and its status for the reported year is indicated (Not initiated, On track or Achieved).

Activities and results

Includes the targets for which activities were conducted and results were generated during the reported year, ordered alphabetically, first by component of the Species Conservation Cycle, and second by Activity Category. Description of activities and results includes the indicator that best describes progress, its associated quantitative or qualitative result, and the narrative description of the activity conducted or result obtained. Each activity or result reported is linked to the Key Species Result to which it is mainly associated (e.g., KSR#1, KSR#5).

Acknowledgements

Includes the acknowledgements to funding agencies, partners, and persons who contributed to the progress of the targets of the group.

Summary of achievements

Summarises information of the group's strategic plan for the quadrennium and progress achieved implementing targets for all the components of the Species Conservation Cycle during the reported year.

Example for the recommended citation:

Garshelis, D and Proctor, M. 2023. 2022 Report of the Bear Specialist Group. In: Nassar, JM, García, L, Mendoza, L, Andrade, ND, Bezeng, S, Birkhoff, J, Bohm, M, Canteiro, C, Geschke, J, Henriques, S, Ivande, S, Mileham, K, Ramos, M, Rodríguez, A, Rodríguez, JP, Street, B, and Yerena, E (Eds.). 2022 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat. International Union for Conservation of Nature. 6 pp.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

2022 Report

IUCN SSC Bear Specialist Group



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RED LIST AUTHORITY COORDINATORS

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Darcy, British Columbia, Canada (retired)

Karine Pigeon

British Columbia Ministry of Lands, Water & Resource Stewardship, Smithers BC, Canada

NUMBER OF MEMBERS

250

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Facebook: IUCN SSC Bear Specialist Group

Website: www.globalbearconservation.org

Mission statement

The Bear Specialist Group (BSG) strives to promote the conservation of bears living in their natural habitats across their worldwide distribution. We do this by collecting, synthesising, and disseminating information; aiding, promoting and supporting conservation initiatives; providing technical assistance and capacity building for those involved or interested in bear conservation, and becoming directly involved in issues that reduce threats and foster the conservation of any of the seven species of terrestrial bears.

Projected impact 2021–2025

We anticipate making significant gains in implementing the Sun Bear Conservation Action Plan, creating action plans and improved range maps for other bear species, disseminating information (published articles in journals and newsletters, webinars, and presentations at conferences), and increasing the breadth of our leadership through enhanced opportunities for members to partake in higher roles.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Finish bear bile situation analysis. Status: On track

T-009 Refine range map for Sloth Bears (*Melursus ursinus*). Status: On track

T-012 Assess Red List status for Sun Bears (*Helarctos malayanus*) in Viet Nam. Status: Not initiated

T-013 Create a reference database on conservation relevant *ex situ* bear research. Status: Achieved

T-014 Establish a list of bear sanctuaries worldwide. Status: Achieved

T-015 Create a catalogue on bear husbandry basics. Status: Not initiated

PLAN

T-007 Develop a conservation action plan for Asiatic Black Bears (*Ursus thibetanus*). Status: Not initiated

T-016 Create a field manual to aid in alleviating human-bear conflicts. Status: On track

T-018 Increase transnational population management and monitoring. Status: On track

ACT

T-005 Implement Sun Bear Action Plan. Status: On track

T-006 Develop monitoring protocols for Asian bears. Status: On track

T-019 Provide technical advice for situation-specific conservation issues. Status: On track

T-020 Publish papers and reports that provide recommendations for conservation actions. Status: On track

NETWORK

T-004 Secure long-term viable funding base. Status: On track

T-008 Create training modules to increase capacity in bear conservation. Status: On track



Training orphaned Asiatic Black Bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) for release, Taiwan. 2022
Photo: Mei-hsiu Hwang

T-010 Increase the breadth and diversity of the BSG.

Status: Achieved

COMMUNICATE

T-002 Finish website.

Status: On track

T-003 Ensure regular communication with the bear community.

Status: On track

T-017 Establish large communication events to convey information to large audiences and promote bear conservation.

Status: On track

Activities and results 2022

ASSESS

Red List

T-009 Refine range map for Sloth Bears (*Melursus ursinus*). (KSR 6)

Improved range map created: 0

Result description: Expanded initiative to four species in Asia, one in South America, one in Europe, and two in North America. A novel protocol was created to produce these maps, and some funding was secured to carry this out in Asia.

T-012 Assess Red List status for Sun Bears (*Helarctos malayanus*) in Viet Nam. (KSR 6)

Number of new national Red List assessments published: 0

Result description: Delayed because the workshop was called off due to COVID-19.

Research activities

T-001 Finish bear bile situation analysis. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 1

Result description: We published one paper: Hinsley, A. et al. (2022).

'Understanding why consumers in China switch between wild, farmed, and synthetic bear bile products'. *Conservation Biology* 2022;e13895. DOI: 10.1111/cobi.13895

Communication

T-013 Create a reference database on conservation relevant *ex situ* bear research. (KSR 5)

Creation of a database: 100%

Result description: The Zotero database was created and shared. This will continue to be updated as new papers are published.

T-014 Establish a list of bear sanctuaries worldwide. (KSR 5)

Creation of a list of sanctuaries that could take orphaned bears, when needed: 100%

Result description: A database was created as an Excel file, and shared.

PLAN

Planning

T-007 Develop a conservation action plan for Asiatic Black Bears (*Ursus thibetanus*). (KSR 8)

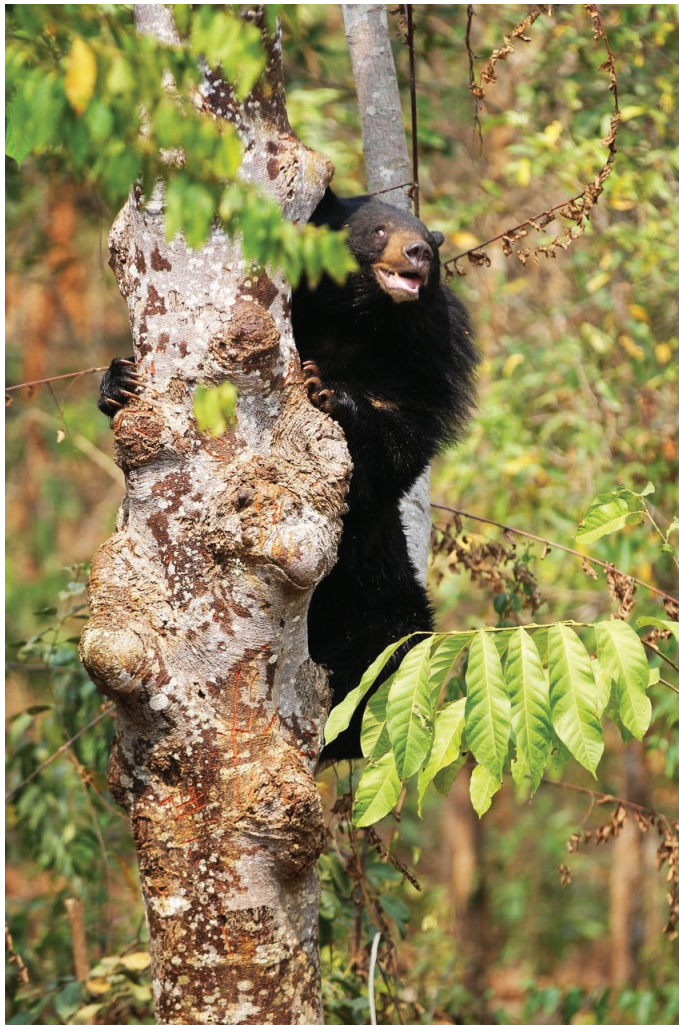
Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: We had several small meetings to discuss this matter, but we seem to be experiencing a delay due to an apparent need for a facilitator.

T-016 Create a field manual to aid in alleviating human-bear conflicts. (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/strategies: 0

Result description: The development of the manual is underway, with substantial progress made on drafting several sections.



Rescued Asiatic Black Bear,
Luang Prabang Wildlife Sanctuary, Laos
Photo: Free the Bears

Policy

T-018 Increase transnational population management and monitoring. (KSR 8)

Number of regions where transnational plans and policies are developed: 1

Result description: In collaboration with the Large Carnivore Initiative of Europe, a platform was created and MoU was signed among countries in the Dinaric-Pindos region for increased collaboration in managing and monitoring large carnivores (including bears) that range widely, across national borders.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-005 Implement Sun Bear Action Plan. (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: Significant efforts were made to confirm the presence of Sun Bears at the edges of their range. We published a paper showing that it is difficult to make such judgments using characteristics of signs and eyewitness accounts of local people, as both are commonly confused with Asiatic Black Bears: Garshelis et al. 2022. Investigating Co-occurrence among Look-alike Species: The Case of Three Bears in Northeast India. Diversity 14, 717. <https://doi.org/10.3390/d14090717>. This paper was part of the SSC Special Issue: Assessments, Planning and Action for Conservation of Species and Ecosystems at Multiple Spatial Scales. We also supported the development of several new projects on Sun Bears, including the first survey in Brunei. We are currently working on assessing the progress of actions in relation to the schedule in the Conservation Action Plan.

T-006 Develop monitoring protocols for Asian bears. (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 5

Result description: Five papers were published in a special section of the



Studying aspects of behavior of captive sloth bear to aid *in situ* research and conservation, 2022
Photo: J. Whiteman

Transporting anesthetized Andean bear, Cayambe Coca National Park, Ecuador, 2022
Photo: Mario Pillago



Global Ecology and Conservation (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/global-ecology-and-conservation/special-issue/10QDSSG9BNJ>), which was the original intent. However, we have decided to increase the breadth of this target by adding a 6th summary paper with several case studies. That paper is in its very early stages.

T-020 Publish papers and reports that provide recommendations for conservation actions. (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: Conceived several papers and started working groups to prepare at least two papers: one on effects of roads on tropical bears and one on harvest management guidelines. Published one paper that reviews current understanding of species-habitat associations for the seven species of terrestrial bears, with recommendations: Garshelis, D.L. 2022. Understanding species-habitat associations: A case study with the world's bears. *Land* 2022, 11, 180. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land11020180>.

Technical advice

T-019 Provide technical advice for situation-specific conservation issues. (KSR 10)

Freely provide technical advice when requested or a need presents itself: Ongoing.

Result description: Numerous consultations with researchers around the world. High level consultations and technical advice provided for governments (including some states in India, Italy, and others).

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-008 Create training modules to increase capacity in bear conservation. (KSR 2)

Number of training modules produced: 8

Result description: We conducted and shared eight webinars on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWH9bkrhjbXJriI4M3BTjdQ>).

Membership

T-010 Increase the breadth and diversity of the BSG. (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 5

Result description: We have successfully added members from two previously unrepresented bear range countries and introduced three new members to our Giant Panda Expert Team, replacing inactive members.

Synergy

T-004 Secure long-term viable funding base. (KSR 1)

Number of 'funding' partners established and maintained: 1

Result description: In 2022, we made progress through the solidification of a partnership with an NGO, as well as ensuring specified financial and other support, such as the maintenance of our website.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-002 Finish website. (KSR 12)

Number of web pages developed and maintained: Ongoing.

Result description: We made significant progress toward the launch of the website, which should occur in early 2023.

T-003 Ensure regular communication with the bear community. (KSR 12)

Number of published articles per year: 14

Result description: We published 14 articles in *International Bear News*. Also published eight papers in peer-reviewed journals with authors acknowledging BSG affiliation.

T-017 Establish large communication events to convey information to large audiences and promote bear conservation. (KSR 13)

Number of communication events carried out: 1

Result description: The World Sloth Bear Day was created (Oct 12). Inaugural events were held across India, with the participation of governmental and non-governmental

organizations. We achieved substantial online and local audience engagement, including schools, resulting in significant participation.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Taiwan Black Bear Conservation Association for its continued support, especially with the development of the Bear SG website.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 19

Geographic regions: 12 Global, 6 Asia, 1 Europe

Actions during 2022:

Assess: 5 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 3 (KSR 8)

Act: 4 (KSR 10)

Network: 3 (KSR 1, 2)

Communicate: 3 (KSR 12, 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

