Conservation news

Two Centers for Species Survival launch collaborative conservation programmes

In March 2023, Morton Arboretum (Lisle, USA) and Shedd Aquarium (Chicago, USA) partnered with the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) to become Centers for Species Survival. The two Centers provide opportunities to work within the SSC Assess–Plan–Act framework and collaborate on conservation projects that highlight the importance of terrestrial and aquatic linkages.

Within the IUCN SSC Center for Species Survival: Trees, the Morton Arboretum, in collaboration with the SSC Global Tree Specialist Group and 24 partner institutions in five countries, will assess priority tree species, complete conservation gap analyses for Southeast Asian and Mesoamerican threatened oaks (*Quercus* spp.), and develop conservation action plans for priority species. Under the Center umbrella, Morton will work with in-country partners on integrated conservation projects that include restoring threatened tree species, promoting sustainable livelihoods in biodiversity hotspots, and building capacity for tree conservation. Being the first Center hosted at an arboretum, it will leverage the botanic garden network to promote and support ex situ conservation collections that offer a last safeguard against extinction and ensure genetically diverse and representative plant material is available for research and restoration.

Within the IUCN SSC Center for Species Survival: Freshwater, Shedd will work with the SSC to assess the extinction risk of selected freshwater taxa, assist with identifying Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) in freshwater hotspots in Central America, and ensure international conservation efforts target these important sites. Work will also include identifying the highest conservation priorities across Red List species and KBAs while bringing various stakeholders together to create unified strategic plans. Under the Center umbrella, Shedd will work with partners to describe new freshwater taxa and clarify species boundaries in Central America, which will inform species assessments and conservation planning within and beyond the Center. Shedd will also leverage its husbandry expertise to identify appropriate opportunities for ex situ interventions.

The paired Center partnerships between these two Chicago-based institutions is accelerating collaborative efforts and advancing community-based watershed conservation programmes that underscore the links between terrestrial and aquatic health. This approach is intended to open pathways for further cross-disciplinary collaboration, while diversifying capacity-building expertise and opportunities. This initiative will also deepen partnerships with other Chicago area institutions and expand collective fieldwork opportunities and holistic training approaches to strengthen conservation efforts in biodiversity-rich regions. Together, Shedd and Morton welcome over three million guests each year, providing an exceptional opportunity for the new Centres to raise awareness about the importance of trees, freshwater ecosystems, and the services they provide regionally and globally, and ensure that forest and freshwater conservation issues are included in both local and global policy discussions.

The new Centers for Species Survival receive significant support through the Walder Foundation, a private family foundation based in Skokie, Illinois, whose interests include environmental sustainability.

Silvia Alvarez-Clare (orcid.org/0000-0002-7792-387X) Center for Species Survival: Trees, The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, USA. Kira Mileham (orcid.org/0009-0008-3376-5356) IUCN Species Survival Commission, Newcastle, Australia. Jon Paul Rodríguez* (orcid.org/0000-0001-5019-2870) Provita, Caracas, Venezuela, and Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas, Caracas, Venezuela. Charles R. Knapp* (orcid.org/0000-0003-1991-5676, cknapp@sheddaquarium.org) Center for Species Survival: Freshwater, John G. Shedd Aquarium, Chicago, USA *Also at: IUCN Species Survival Commission, Gland, Switzerland*

Ten-year update of IUCN Red List assessments for tunas, mackerels, and billfishes

The first comprehensive extinction risk assessments for the 61 species of tunas, mackerels and billfishes for the IUCN Red List (Collette et al., 2011, *Science*, 333, 291–292) have recently been updated. The IUCN recommends re-evaluation every 10 years to determine if a species' status has changed.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic we were unable to hold in-person meetings, and therefore met online with specialists to review data and population trends for species of commercial or recreational importance. Updated drafts were reviewed by participants in the 2011 assessments, many of whom are members of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Tuna and Billfish Specialist Group, and then submitted to the IUCN Red List. Assessments for seven commercial tunas (six species of *Thunnus* and *Katsuwonus pelamis*) were published in 2021, and for 10 billfishes and two small *Thunnus* species in 2022.

The remaining species were reassessed using information from *Tunas and Billfishes of the World* (Collette & Graves, 2019, Johns Hopkins University Press) and recent literature