

Conservation News

New National Species Specialist Group in Nigeria

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) recently established National Species Specialist Groups to allow both existing and new SSC members in taxonomic/thematic SSC Groups to organize geographically, including at national and sub-national levels. This facilitated the creation of the Nigeria Species Specialist Group in February 2024.

Nigeria's land area of over 920,000 km² includes a wide range of ecosystems, from coastal habitats along the Atlantic coast to Sahelian and arid habitats on the edge of the Sahara, and an accompanying rich diversity of species. However, Nigeria's growing population of over 200 million people and their dependence on its natural resources, sometimes in unsustainable ways, continues to threaten the country's biodiversity. The newly established Specialist Group provides a much-needed national platform to mobilize, develop and deploy conservation expertise to stem and reverse species declines and losses in Nigeria. It builds upon the existing framework of Nigeria's Key Biodiversity Area National Coordination Group, which is already mobilizing expertise to identify and map critical sites for biodiversity conservation.

The Specialist Group will work alongside the new Center for Species Survival Nigeria and other conservation partners to apply IUCN tools and knowledge products to assess the status of species and ecosystems and develop conservation plans. In line with the IUCN Species Strategic plan 2021–2025 and with support from the Center for Species Survival Nigeria, the Specialist Group will

conduct national Red List assessments for species and ecosystems, develop national conservation action plans for threatened and endemic species and sites, build multi-stakeholder and collaborative conservation action partnerships for the implementation of agreed actions, and integrate and mainstream outputs from its activities to strengthen Nigeria's National Biodiversity Strategy and Policies.

The Nigeria Species Specialist Group is hosted by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation. The Specialist Group will convene cross-sectoral expertise, and its founding membership includes a Chair, a 12-member steering committee and nine Species Working Groups (for amphibians, birds, freshwater species, fungi, invertebrates, mammals, marine species, reptiles and plants), each led by a coordinating team. Coordinating teams will recruit members and coordinate Species Working Group plans. The Nigeria Species Specialist Group is the second national species specialist group to be established in Africa.

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