

SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION (SSC)

Simon Stuart, United Kingdom

Personal

Name: Simon Nicolas Stuart
Nationality: British
Date of Birth: 14 July 1956

Education

Simon has undergraduate and doctoral degrees from the University of Cambridge, specializing in conservation biology. His doctoral fieldwork was on forest birds in Tanzania, and several conservation initiatives resulted of his research.

Current positions

Chair, IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)
Visiting Professor, Department of Biology and Biochemistry, University of Bath
Senior Biodiversity Advisor, Conservation International
Senior Biodiversity Advisor, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre
Conservation Fellow, Al Ain Zoo
Conservation Fellow, Zoological Society of London

Professional background

In 1983 Simon joined the International Council for Bird Preservation (now BirdLife International), working on the African Bird Red Data Book, and starting ICBP's programme in Cameroon (including fieldwork in 1983 and 1984). He joined the IUCN Secretariat in 1986. Simon was a member of the TRAFFIC Committee from 1992 to 2000, and was a trustee of A Rocha International – Christians in Conservation (2001–2009) and of Wildscreen (since 2009). He publishes widely, including 67 papers in peer-reviewed journals (plus two currently under review), and 12 books.

Experience and past involvement with IUCN

Simon has held the following IUCN staff positions:

Species Programme Officer (1986–1990)
Head, IUCN Species Programme (1991–2000)
Acting Director General (2000–2001)
Head, Biodiversity Assessment Unit (2001–2006)
Senior Species Scientist (2006–2008)

In 2008, Simon left the IUCN Secretariat after 22 years, and was elected as *Chair of the Species Survival Commission* in the same year. He is responsible for the strategic leadership of the SSC, including overseeing the implementation of the IUCN Species Strategic Plan, fostering collaboration between SSC and other partners both inside and outside IUCN, and helping to secure the funding needed for the SSC's work.

Future priorities for the Commission

Since 2000, the SSC has transformed biodiversity assessments through the IUCN Red List. The number of species included on the list has risen from around 18,000 to almost 62,000 in 2012. More importantly, the amount of data on each species has increased massively, with distribution maps now available for over 30,000 species. The Red List shows we are not succeeding in the global challenge to ensure the survival of species. There are, of course, some impressive successes, but these are the

exceptions. Extinction rates are rising, most species are decreasing, and the potential for species to provide sustainable benefits to human communities are being eroded.

However, as a result of the SSC's species assessments, we have a much more specific understanding of how to target conservation actions more effectively. Our data provide specific guidance in terms of precise places to conserve, threats to combat, species to prioritize, and policies to pursue. Unlike the situation 12 years ago, we now know what needs to be done to halt the downward slide in species.

The top priority for the SSC is, therefore, to work with a much broader set of partners than ever before to communicate the conservation needs, design effective programmes, build the political will, and increase the financial and human resources needed for conservation. We had an important success in 2010 at Nagoya when the world's governments committed to the following Aichi Target 12: *By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.* This is the strongest commitment yet made globally to combat the extinction crisis. My plan is to use the proposed IUCN World Species Congress (WSC) in 2015 to keep the focus on the species level of biodiversity, and to assess progress in the achievement of the Aichi Targets, most of which include a "species" component.

In addition to this over-arching priority, I also plan to address the following concerns:

- The SSC's species assessment work needs to be put on to a sustainable footing financially, and the IUCN Red List needs to become more broadly representative of the world's biomes and species (including marine, freshwater and dryland species, and fungi, invertebrates and plants). This is our *Barometer of Life* initiative.
- We shall continue to build our work on sustainable use, invasive species, climate change, species conservation planning, the identification of sites of significance for biodiversity, and on the importance of species in supporting human livelihoods and ecosystem services.
- We shall continue to focus on pressing challenges, including: the amphibian crisis; large animals of Asia and West and Central Africa; coral reefs; bycatch; fisheries; systemic pesticides; and others.
- The SSC will continue to develop new structures at regional and national levels, in partnership with IUCN Offices and Members, to advance the species conservation agenda.

The SSC is able to cover so many important and strategic topics because of its network of over 150 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities, Task Forces, Working Groups and Sub-Committees, which together comprise over 8,000 of the world's leading experts in almost every country of the world. I plan to continue to build this network in the 2013–2016 quadrennium.

Institutional support

A number of donors and partner organizations have generously supported Simon and his staff during the 2009–2012 quadrennium, including Conservation International, Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, Al Ain Zoo, MAVA Foundation, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Chester Zoo, Bristol Zoo and Zoological Society of London. Discussions are underway with these organizations about continued support during the 2013–2016 quadrennium, and some additional organizations have indicated their willingness to become supporters (Wildlife Conservation Society, European Association of Zoos and Aquariums and some others under discussion). The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre is generously providing employment arrangements for the SSC Chair and his staff.