

Guidelines for Proposals

to Create a potential IUCN SSC Specialist Group

September 2021

The Species Survival Commission was established by IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, in 1949. Since that time, the SSC has grown into a global, science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts, working together towards achieving the vision of “a world that values and conserves present levels of biodiversity”.

The strength behind the SSC is the organization of this network of volunteer experts, who donate their time and expertise to build a scientific and practical foundation for the effective delivery of conservation, into more than 160 Specialist Groups (SGs), stand-alone Red List Authorities (RLAs) and Task Forces (TFs) – hereafter “groups” – arranged taxonomically, thematically and/or regionally¹, and convened by the SSC in response to pressing conservation issues. These groups serve as the main working units of the Commission and provide the breadth of expertise and commitment that drives the SSC towards achieving its objectives. These groups are unique blends of individuals who operate independently, but are committed to SSC’s vision, mission, objectives and policies and to those of the IUCN.

New groups are established as the need arises. The establishment of a Specialist Group depends firstly on an identifiable conservation need and is predicated upon the premise that the group will actively pursue conservation goals on the ground. However, if the primary objective is to organize around the objective of a comprehensive conservation assessment of a particular group of species for the IUCN Red List (and for which there is no existing RLA), then we would first seek to establish a stand-alone Red List Authority. While IUCN encourages and embraces the establishment and formation of new groups, the formation of a new group is not a trivial undertaking, particularly in the case of Specialist Groups. On the one hand, it requires considerable time, effort and investment on the behalf of the proponents, especially in the initial stages of establishment; on the other, there are considerations around issues of support from IUCN (mainly its Species Programme) and from SSC.

With this in mind, IUCN and SSC have established a set of questions (listed below) to guide the development of proposals around the establishment of new Specialist Groups. These questions are intended to serve as guidelines, rather than criteria, for the establishment of new Specialist Groups. If you are interested in establishing a new one please contact ssc@iucn.org and/or send your proposal to that same address or directly to the Chair of the SSC, [Jon Paul Rodríguez](#).

¹http://iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/about_ssc/specialist_groups/directory_specialist_groups/index.cfm

Questions to be answered in a Draft Proposal for the establishment of new SSC Specialist Groups:

1. What are the key conservation issues facing the taxon, group or theme?
2. Why is this taxonomic level and/or theme considered to be the most appropriate level at which to address these conservation issues?
3. Is there a clear gap for the group to fill, and a value-added benefit that the formation of the group would deliver, rather than duplicate efforts of existing Specialist Groups or IUCN partner institutions? Explain how you will interact with other SSC groups with overlapping realms. Please visit all [SSC groups descriptions](#).
4. What are the key activities/outputs that the group would undertake/deliver to better understand and address these issues, and how will these activities/outputs contribute to the [IUCN SSC 2021-2024 Strategic Plan](#)?
5. Is there a unique/core group of relevant experts willing to dedicate energy and time towards furthering a conservation agenda around a particular taxon or group of species? See box below.
6. Is clear leadership available? See fourth point in box below.
7. Is there an institutional source for support and co-coordination? (other than IUCN). Explain what kind of institutional support will be provided, for example whether you are based at a University with a permanent position, which could be quite useful.

Key aspects to be considered in the proposal:

1. Provide a list with names, emails and affiliations, of potential members of the new group. This should be as diverse as possible (i.e. in terms of geographic representation and gender). It would be good to contact them and have their consentment on becoming members of the potential new group.
2. Consider the above list as representative of the geographic distribution of the species which are to be the focus of the group, and, if applicable, representative of the different regions of the world where this theme is studied.
3. Consider including in the list some experts with diverse skills adding to the group (e.g. Experts on *ex-situ* conservation, conservation practitioners, etc), who do not necessarily need to be species experts.
4. Explain how the group will be steered. This means, you need to name the Chair (or two Co-Chairs) and also one person who will serve as the Red List Authority focal point (if applicable, to a taxonomic focused group). Consider that you are free to organize the SG (e.g. by forming a steering committee or regional vice chairs etc.).
5. Create a list of targets for the next IUCN quadrennium (see [IUCN SSC 2021-2024 Strategic Plan](#)). Note that if you just want to focus on red-listing, a Stand-alone Red List Authority might be a more useful structure than a Specialist Group. This would require some additional joint work with the SSC Chair Office so as to adapt it to the SSC Species Strategic Plan.