

IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group



CHAIR

David Jeggo
Jersey, Chanel
Islands, British Isles

VICE CHAIR

Stuart Marsden
(Field research)
Manchester
Metropolitan
University,
Manchester, UK

VICE CHAIR

Frank Rheindt
(Genetic research)
Department of
Biological Sciences,
National University of
Singapore, Singapore

VICE CHAIR

**Andrew Owen and
Anais Tritto**
(Conservation breed-
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Chester Zoo, UK
and Mandai Nature,
Singapore

VICE CHAIR

Chris Shepherd
(Trade and legislation)
Monitor Conservation
Research Society,
Vancouver, Canada

VICE CHAIR

**Anuj Jain and Novia
Sagita** (Education
and community
engagement)
BirdLife Asia,
Singapore and Planet
Indonesia, Indonesia

**RED LIST AUTHORITY
COORDINATORS**

BirdLife International

NUMBER OF MEMBERS

79

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Facebook: @IUCN.Songbirds

Instagram: @iucn_songbirds

Twitter: @IUCN_Songbirds

Website: <https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com>

Mission statement

The IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (ASTSG) exists to prevent the imminent extinction of songbirds threatened by unsustainable trapping and the trade in wild-caught passerines. In addition, it seeks to address the impact of the trade and to find solutions through which the growing threat to an ever-increasing number of songbird species can be reversed and improve the conservation status of all species involved.

Projected impact 2021–2025

The Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group constantly reviews the growing list of songbird species whose conservation status is affected by trade. From this, it can prioritise recommending measures aimed at avoiding the extinction of those most at risk. Through monitoring the markets, including online trade, and carrying out field work it provides

data that guide the best assessment of their status. This assists BirdLife's Red List team in determining the most accurate IUCN Red List categorisations. Given the severity and complexity of the trade, it is unlikely that the level of threat for these songbirds will improve markedly during this quadrennium. For some of the most threatened species, conservation breeding programmes will act as assurances against extinction. Some restorations of free-flying populations will commence and important to the success of these will be working closely with local communities. Research into the key drivers of trade and songbird keeping will help target the most effective measures to bring about demand reduction in wild-caught songbirds. This, coupled with increased protection of wild populations, is seen as the longer-term solution to improving the status of the many affected songbird species and to stemming the flow of songbird species being include as threatened on the Red List.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-007 Continue to strengthen engagement with BirdLife as the IUCN Red List Authority to implement ASTSG's recommendations regarding the Red List.

T-063 Conduct trade research and analysis to improve effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in combating Illegal Wildlife Trade.

T-064 Produce publication on White-eye taxonomy.

T-065 Publish Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush (*Garrulax rufifrons*) conservation breeding paper.

T-066 Publish a paper on the status of trade and protection of the Crested Jayshrike (*Platylophus galericulatus*).

T-067 Publish a minimum of one paper highlighting the benefits of using CITES Appendix III.



Black-capped White-eyes (*Zosterops atricapilla*)
on sale in Sumatra, Indonesia
Photo: S. Shukhova

T-068 Publish a minimum of four market surveys in Indonesia, Viet Nam and Hong Kong.

T-069 Carry out a study and publish a paper on the number of threatened passerines that are migratory and use to engage the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS; KSR 9).

T-070 Conduct a research study on the songbird trade across Borneo.

T-071 Produce Thailand native bird trade paper.

T-072 Conduct Viet Nam songbird consumer study and pilot intervention.

T-073 Produce Malaysia Oriental Magpie-robin (*Copsychus saularis*) trade briefing paper.

T-074 Publish a paper on the status and decline of Javan White-eye (*Zosterops flavus*).

T-075 Publish a paper assessing the status of a range of key montane bird species in Java.

T-076 Publish a paper on the attitudes and perceptions of bird owners in Java.

T-077 Publish a paper identifying the best messages for campaigns for demand reductions.

T-078 Publish a paper on factors influencing montane bird distributions in West Java.

T-079 Publish a paper on supply route dynamics of birds in commercial breeding facilities in Java.

T-080 Publish a paper on results of a behaviour change campaign on songbird enthusiasts.

T-081 Develop guidelines on songbird rescue, rehab and release (RRR) facilities.

T-082 Quantify and publish turnover of songbirds in markets.

T-083 Quantify and publish mortality of songbirds along the trade supply chain for key species.

T-084 Develop and publish behaviour change/demand reduction guidelines to push for sustainable trade of songbirds.

T-085 Quantify and publish the extent of cross border trade in songbirds that can push CITES listing of victim species.

T-086 Publish clear guidance documents for governments to show decline in songbirds for key species.

T-087 Develop guidelines and encourage monitoring of key songbird species with SMART patrols in protected areas.

T-088 Develop guidelines and initiatives to encourage bird tourism for key songbird species as an alternative to trapping.

T-089 Establish clear communications or guidelines around the role of ex situ conservation (e.g. zoos) in tackling the songbird trade issue.

T-090 Publish paper on understanding the drivers behind the Singapore songbird trade.

T-096 Integrate citizen science-based knowledge through increased engagement within the membership.

T-097 Using Red List indicators, develop a Red List Index for songbirds in Indonesia and recalculate this annually to track progress.

T-101 Work with partners to monitor online trade to assess level of trade in songbirds online and changes in trends.

PLAN

T-001 Conduct action plan meeting for Javan Green Magpie (*Cissa thalassina*).

T-003 Conduct action plan meeting for the threatened endemic songbird taxa of the Barusan Islands.

T-004 Conduct National Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*) Action Plan for Singapore.

T-008 Conduct action plan meeting for Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush and publish plan.



Yellow-vented Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus goiavier*)
 Photo: S. Shukhova

T-009 Conduct range wide action plan meeting for Straw-headed Bulbul and publish plan.

T-010 Create a species management plan for Black-winged Myna (*Acridotheres melanopterus*) in Baluran National Park.

T-011 Encourage governments where songbird trade is an issue to develop national songbird action plans.

T-012 Encourage stakeholders to implement species-specific national action plans where needed.

T-013 Conduct Bali Starling (*Leucopsar rothschildi*) Conservation Action Plan meeting and publish Action Plan.

T-014 Conduct Black-winged Myna Conservation Action Plan meeting and publish Action Plan.

T-015 Conduct a Javan Pied Starling (*Gracupica jalla*) Conservation Action Plan meeting and publish Action Plan.

T-016 Conduct Sumatran endemic bird species action plan meeting and publish Action Plan.

T-017 Provide input for all songbird-related CITES proposals at the next Conference of the Parties (CoP).

T-018 Begin discussions/engagements on CMS-relevant songbirds (e.g. flycatchers; pittas; starlings; Crested Jay; Siberian Blue Robin, *Larvivora cyane*).

T-019 Support Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (BKSDA) to improve their licensing process provided to wildlife owners/traders.

T-098 Work with conservation breeding centres within Indonesia to develop overall strategic plan and linkages to longer term interventions.

T-099 Develop framework for management of confiscated songbirds through rescue centres in Indonesia.

T-100 Assess current trends of traded species and identify species to recommend and support for CITES listings for species of concern due to international trade.



Black-winged Myna (*Acridotheres m. melanopterus*)
Photo: Jonathan Beilby

ACT

- T-002** Secure assurance ex situ conservation breeding population of Sumatran Laughingthrush (*Garrulax bicolor*).
- T-005** Secure assurance conservation breeding population of Black-winged Myna.
- T-020** Identify rescued songbirds for release and develop release programmes and proposal for rescued songbirds.
- T-021** Establish secure assurance breeding population of Javan Green Magpie.
- T-022** Establish an assurance conservation breeding population of Rufous-fronted Laughingthrush.
- T-023** Establish an assurance conservation breeding population of Straw-headed Bulbul.
- T-024** Establish assurance conservation breeding population of Javan Pied Starling.
- T-025** Establish assurance conservation breeding population of Nias Hill Myna (*Gracula robusta*).
- T-026** Continue to support Bali Starling conservation in Indonesia.
- T-027** Establish an assurance conservation breeding population of Barusan Shamas (*Kittacincla malabaricus* spp./*Copsychus melanurus*).
- T-028** Establish an assurance conservation breeding population of Barusan Island Hill Mynah species.
- T-029** Secure assurance breeding population of Orange-headed Thrush (Javan subspecies, *Geokichla citrina rubecula*).
- T-030** Continue to support Blue-crowned Laughingthrush (*Pterorhinus courtoisi*) conservation.
- T-031** Conduct field surveys to establish status of Sumatran endemics (e.g. Aceh Bulbul, *Pycnonotus snouckaerti*).
- T-032** Create a 'model community' in West Java within which ecosystem services, bird populations and human well-being is improved and monitored.
- T-034** Collaborate with local stakeholders to move songbird shops to alternative sustainable livelihoods.

T-035 Develop a Position Statement from the ASTSG on improved use of CITES for songbird conservation.

T-036 Develop a Position Statement from the ASTSG supporting increased use of CITES Appendix III for songbird conservation.

T-037 Develop a Position Statement from the ASTSG endorsing the inclusion of the Sumatran Laughingthrush in CITES Appendix III.

NETWORK

T-039 Host online talks by members on their work: engagement and mentoring: invite partners, funders, SSC main office, Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), etc.

T-046 Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to support creation of interagency coordination between GAKKUM, BKSDA, POLDA, BPSPL and Customs and Quarantine in Indonesia.

T-047 Catalyse funding to support rescue, rehabilitation and release operations for confiscated songbirds.

T-048 Build and strengthen partnerships with Indonesian NGOs, academic institutions and other entities working on bird conservation issues.

T-049 Build conservation capacity and competency, both individual and organisational (e.g. using IUCN Asian Species Action Partnership framework).

T-050 Train staff of Indonesian NGOs to perform species distribution models and other relevant modelling techniques.

T-051 Train national park staff in Bali Barat to undertake monitoring, nest monitoring and other activities in support of Bali Myna (*Leucopsar rothschildi*) conservation.

T-052 Develop the capacity of BKSDA staff on species identification, handling and management of confiscated songbirds.

T-053 Increase membership of local stakeholders (birders, students, ecologists, conservationists, etc.) within the group.

T-054 Work with six communities around West Java to enhance populations of key songbirds.

T-055 Collaborate with state prosecutors, judges, POLDA and BKSDA to prepare victim statements for wildlife related crimes.

T-056 Formalise an Indonesian subgroup of ASTSG with Indonesian leadership.

T-057 Strengthen relationship with governments of countries where songbird trade is an issue.

T-058 Formalise relationship with songbird competition organisers and relevant stakeholders through ASTSG community engagement subgroup to reduce demand for wild songbirds.

T-059 Develop a habitat and enforcement working group to tackle these issues as part of ASTSG.

T-060 Increase collaboration with local universities, NGOs and governments within ASTSG.

T-061 Strengthen collaboration with IUCN SSC Asian Species Action Partnership (ASAP).

T-062 Work with Perhutani and Indonesian NGOs to provide 100 km² of additional protection for areas and key birds in West Java.

T-091 Look at engaging relevant industry partners in conservation partnerships.

T-092 Explore in-kind partnerships with carbon offsetting company to fund 'model community' initiative.

T-093 Explore engaging relevant industry partners (e.g. forestry concessions) in conservation partnerships.

T-094 Explore funding partnerships with carbon offsetting company to fund 'model community' initiative.

T-095 Ensure sustained funding is available to carry out conservation breeding activities.

COMMUNICATE

T-038 Update and maintain citations and publications list on the ASTSG website.

T-040 Set up social media for ASTSG (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and maintain regular postings.



Ruby-throated Bulbuls (*Rubigula dispar*) on sale in Indonesia
Photo: S. Shukhova



Sangkar White-eyes (*Zosterops melanurus*) on sale in Sumatra, Indonesia
Photo: S. Shukhova

T-041 Set up ASTSG newsletter (online) and publish first issue in 2021 (at least four newsletters over 4-year period).

T-042 Improve and expand the reach of the ASTSG website.

T-043 Increase communication capacity of ASTSG in English and regional languages.

T-044 Establish clear communications to distinguish between wild-caught and captive trade in songbirds.

T-045 Translate IUCN ASTSG action plan implementation at national, regional and local levels.

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Red List

T-007 (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 3

Result description: In 2021, ASTSG again worked very closely with BirdLife's Red List team on assessing species which come under its remit, discussing which species should be reviewed and encouraging its membership to participate by commenting on the forum.

Research activities

T-064 (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 0

Result description: Publication due in 2022.

T-066 (KSR 5)

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

Result description: The COVID-19 situation has had some delaying effect on completion of this target. With data collected, the preparation of the paper is underway, and publication is expected during 2022.

T-073 (KSR 5)

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

Result description: Paper published: Chng, S.C.L., et al. (2021). *Smuggled For Its Song: The Trade in Malaysia's Oriental Magpie-robins*. Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia: TRAFFIC Southeast Asia Regional Office.

PLAN

Planning

T-010 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: Planning for creating a species management plan for Black-winged Myna in Baluran National Park is in the early stages.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-002 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: This programme is developing well in the form of a European Aquarium and Zoo Association (EAZA) European Ex situ Programme (EEP), in which two breeding centres in Java participate. At the end of 2021, the programme comprised some 130 birds of which three quarters were held in Europe.

T-005 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: Cikananga Conservation Breeding Centre (CCBC) has quite a long history of working with this species and holds a reasonably large population. Taman Safari in Bogor also works with it and is conducting a trial release within the park grounds which has met with a good level of success.

T-022 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: Two breeding centres in Java are working with this species: Cikananga Conservation Breeding Centre (CCBC) and Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark (PCBA). They hold small numbers but both were successful in rearing young in 2021. This is encouraging as it is a challenging species to manage in captivity.

T-023 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: Only two institutions are working with this species: the principal one is Jurong Bird Park in Singapore and, more recently, the Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark (PCBA) in Java has started with it. Each only holds a small number of birds, less than 30 in total.

T-024 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: The Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark (PCBA), in East Java, is taking the lead in this programme and at the end of 2021 held 42 Javan Pied Starlings, of which 10 had been bred at the facility in 2021.

T-025 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: This is still a developing programme with two centres in Indonesia holding a small number of this species. The first successful breeding at one of these was recorded in 2021.

T-026 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: The situation with COVID-19 precluded visits that some of ASTSG members might have made in 2021 to assist directly in supporting the conservation of Bali Myna. However, indirect support continued including writing up research results.

T-027 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: A small breeding unit has been constructed on the Island of Simeulue; a breeding stock of some five pairs has been acquired and successful reproduction is underway. Ecosystem Impact Foundation (EI) are the on-island NGO carrying out this programme.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-039 (KSR 2)

Number of online presentations delivered: 1

Result description: ASTSG started a series of quarterly online webinars dedicated to the Asian Songbird Crisis and its tackling. This series is open to ASTSG members and partners only and aims to give a platform for knowledge-sharing and discussion between the members. It started with a webinar on Barusan Shama conservation conducted on 29 October 2021. The recordings of that and following sessions are available on the ASTSG website: <https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com/education-resources>.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-038 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The ASTSG's website (<https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com/>) was updated with the latest publications written by ASTSG members. In addition, a separate page for ASTSG publications was created (<https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com/astsg-publications>). It contains all ASTSG key publications including the newsletter and *The IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group. A brief report on its first four years: 2017-2020*. The website requires further updates and continuous maintenance to keep it active and current.

T-040 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 2

Result description: We established a presence on three social media platforms: Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/IUCN.Songbirds>), Twitter (https://twitter.com/IUCN_Songbirds) and Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/iucn_songbirds/). Social media content includes sharing articles and scientific papers related to the Asian songbird crisis and its tackling, project updates and publications by the ASTSG's members, seizure data, interesting facts and profiles of priority taxa, and art featuring Asian songbird species. On average, content is posted three times a week to keep ASTSG followers engaged. Monthly analytics allows shaping the content and adjusting posting times to reach and engage more followers.

T-041 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 2

Result description: In order to feature the ASTSG's work in a more systematic and frequent manner, the ASTSG's core team decided to publish a biannual newsletter called *Dawn Chorus*. The first issue was published in September 2021 (<https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com/astsg-publications>). The inaugural issue set the guideline, structure and design format for future issues.

T-042 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The ASTSG's website (<https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com/>) was updated with the latest publications, information on the ASTSG sub-themes, priority species list (currently priority taxa list), resources, and a new fresh look. In addition, separate pages for news and ASTSG publications, such as a conservation strategy, report and newsletters, were created. Monthly analytics conducted from February 2021 onwards helps to understand website performance and mitigate any shortcomings.

T-043 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: In January 2021, a Communications Coordinator was appointed for the IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (ASTSG). The main focus for 2021 was on establishing a social media presence, creating a strategy for outward-facing communications, refining it

and connecting with members. The current communications strategy is established and running in English. Expanding communication capacity to other regional languages will be beneficial for engaging members, various stakeholders and the general public.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge Mandai Nature (previously Wildlife Reserves Singapore) for hosting the Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group and for the financial support it provides. The chair is grateful to Koln Zoo in the way it supports him. Thanks is also due to the European Aquarium and Zoo Association (EAZA) for providing the funding from its Silent Forest Campaign which has enabled so many of its priority projects to be carried out and is grateful to the Silent Forest Group of EAZA for continuing to support projects with additional funding and in other ways. Along with the Chair and Vice-chairs, ASTSG has two Specialist Group Coordinators (Jessica Lee of Mandai Nature, Singapore and Serene Chang of TRAFFIC International – Southeast Asia, Malaysia) and a Communications Coordinator (Sofiya Shukhova); which together comprise its core group that acts as a steering committee. Special mention should be made of these three individuals due to the considerable contribution they make towards the smooth running of ASTSG, and the important communications role played, all of which enabling it to be far more productive than it otherwise would be.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 99

Geographic regions: 30 Global, 69 Asia

Actions during 2021:

Assess: 4 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 1 (KSR 8)

Act: 8 (KSR 10)

Network: 1 (KSR 2)

Communicate: 5 (KSR 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

