

# WI-IUCN SSC Heron Specialist Group



## 2016-2017 Report



James Kushlan



Clay Green

### Co-Chairs

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### Red List Authority Coordinator

BirdLife International

### Location/Affiliation

<sup>(1)</sup> Key Biscayne, Florida, US  
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### Number of members

65

### Social networks

Facebook:  
Heron Conservation  
Twitter:  
@HeronCons  
Website:  
HeronConservation.org

### Mission statement

The mission of the Heron Specialist Group (HSG) is to promote the conservation of herons and their habitats worldwide by encouraging research, inventory, monitoring, and conservation action. To achieve its mission, the HSG maintains worldwide communication linkages among heron specialists, assesses the conservation status of heron populations, provides syntheses of information and action plans for the conservation of heron populations, and otherwise facilitates conservation action on behalf of herons and their habitat.

### Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

#### Capacity building

##### ■ Capacity building

- i. In conjunction with Herons of the World Symposium, a HSG Workshop was held to update membership on the Strategic Review, Heron Action Plan, species status and updates, identify data gaps for species, a global action plan update and various discussions on capacity building, communications, future actions and fund-raising. (KSR #18)
- ii. The White-bellied Heron Working Group (WBH WG) has been building capacity to assist with e.g., surveys of the species, identification to aid sightings, exchange of information and engagement with experts for a captive breeding centre. The White-bellied Heron (WBH) is Critically Endangered and one of the world's rarest birds. (KSR #15)
- iii. A WBH WG member is undergoing a two-year Masters degree to improve knowledge and skills in the US to return to Bhutan to work on WBH (who is partially funding the position).

#### ■ Membership

- i. The Reddish Egret Working Group is supported by the HSG and a workshop was held at the 2017 Partners in Flight meeting in Costa Rica, specifically to present the Mexican Business Plan for Reddish Egret Conservation and to engage (and recruit) new members to the working group from Meso-America. New members were identified and recruited from five countries and status updates on Reddish Egrets were received from three countries.

#### Communications

##### ■ Research activities

- i. Stemming from the 2016 Herons of the World Symposium, speakers were solicited to submit manuscripts for peer-reviewed publication in a special issue of the journal *Waterbirds*. Papers received and under review with a target publication date of September 2018. (KSR #32)
- ii. From the 2016 Herons of the World Symposium, other articles not intended for the journal *Waterbirds* will be published in the HSG's journal, *Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*, in 2018. (KSR #32)

##### ■ Scientific meetings

- i. The first Herons of the World Symposium and Workshop were held, as part of the 40th Anniversary Meeting of the Waterbird Society, in New Bern, North Carolina, USA, during 21-23 September 2016. Three full days of heron sessions resulted in 46 oral or poster Ardeid presentations and an all-day Heron workshop. The symposium was organized by the Waterbird Society and the HSG. Seventeen countries and all continents except Antarctica were represented.



Agami heron (*Agamia agami*) in flight, French Guiana  
 Photo: V. Rufrey GEPOG 2013

Dark and white morph Reddish Egrets (*Egretta rufescens*)  
 in courtship display, Texas  
 Photo: M. Clay Green

## Conservation action

### ■ Conservation activities

- i. The Reddish Egret Working Group met officially in January 2017 to discuss a conservation action plan, the establishment of a range-wide monitoring program and to recruit new members to the working group. (KSR #20)
- ii. Through the WBH WG, there was successful tagging of two WBH chicks and the funding of training delivered locally (which is on-going). Some information on flight, habitat, feeding and dispersal was gathered. (KSR #12)
- iii. A captive breeding centre is being built in Bhutan for WBH - training has been designed and delivered through the WBH WG (one to two staff/year paired with European zoos for training). (KSR #29 & #31)

## Acknowledgements

We thank Chip Weseloh, John Brzorad, Sara Schweitzer and Cathy King for the concept, organization and execution of the Herons of the World Symposium and the Heron Workshop in New Bern, North Carolina in 2016. We thank Stephanie Jones, editor of *Waterbirds*, for advocating for filling of vacant Waterbird Conservation for the Americas position. We thank species and Specialist Group working group chair(s): Kelli Stone, Gemma Goodman-Hattie, Anna Stier and Cathy King. We thank Synchronicity Earth for their instrumental role in supporting the work of the White-Bellied Heron Working Group, and we thank Chip Weseloh for editing the Heron Special Issues and the Steering Committee for their leadership and guidance over these past three years.

## Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020

### Bolster work at national scales

Policy advice: restore functioning of Waterbird Conservation for the Americas.

### Capacity building

Agreements: zoo sponsorship for HSG or species working groups.

Membership: assess need and establish working groups for: (1) Rice and Heron/Bitterns, (2) Japanese herons, (3) Madagascar herons, (4) Great White Heron, 5) Pond herons and (6) Striated/Green/ Galapagos Herons.

Scientific meetings: organize next Herons of World Symposium.

Synergy: connect with Crane SG and Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill SG to facilitate communications between SGs and for capacity-building potential.

### Communications

Communication: recruit editor and establish editorial board for HSG's journal (*Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*).

### Conservation action

Conservation activities: update the Heron Action Plan.

## Projected impact for the quadrennium 2017-2020

By the end of 2020, we envision significant progress made towards range mapping and status update for all of our species, especially those species under categories VU, EN or CR. Through agreements with zoos and other SGs (e.g., Cranes & Stork, Ibis, and Spoonbill) and the 2nd Meeting of Herons of the World, the HSG will be better positioned to leverage resources to support species working groups and implementation of various aspects of the conservation action plan.

## Summary of activities (2016-2017)

Key Priority Area ratio: 3/7

Key Priority Areas addressed:

- Capacity building (2 activities)
- Communications (3 activities)
- Conservation action (1 activity)

Main KSRs addressed: 12, 15, 18, 20, 29, 31, 32

KSR: Key Species Result