

IUCN SSC Heron Specialist Group

2019 Report



James Kushlan



Clay Green

Co-Chairs

James Kushlan (1)
Clay Green (2)

Red List Authority Coordinator

BirdLife International

Location/Affiliation

(1) Key Biscayne, Florida, US
(2) Texas State University, Department
of Biology, San Marcos, Texas, US

Number of members

65

Social networks

Facebook: HeronConservation
Flickr: HeronConservation
Twitter: @HeronCons
Website: www.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.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

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 Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered. Through agreements with zoos and other Specialist Groups (e.g. Crane Specialist Group and Stork, Ibis, and Spoonbill Specialist Group) and the 2nd Herons of the World Symposium, the HSG will be better positioned to leverage resources to support species working groups and implementation of various aspects of the conservation action plan.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: update population status of *Egretta rufescens* (Reddish Egret) in Meso/Central America (Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras).

Plan

Planning: (1) update the Heron Action Plan; (2) plan for Herons of the World Symposium.
Policy: restore functioning of the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative.

Network

Agreements: zoo sponsorship for HSG or species working groups.
Capacity building: coordination of the Agami Heron Working Group.
Membership: assess need and establish Working Groups for: (1) rice cultivation and Herons/Bitterns, (2) Japanese Herons, (3) Madagascar Herons, (4) Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*), (5) Pond-Herons, (6) Striated/Green Herons (*Butorides striata* and *B. virescens*), and (7) Galapagos Herons.
Synergy: (1) connect with the Crane Specialist Group and the Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group to facilitate communications between Specialist Groups and for capacity-building potential; (2) recruit editor and establish editorial board for HSG's journal (*Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*).

Communicate

Scientific meetings: organise next Herons of the World Symposium.

Activities and results 2019

Assess

Red List

i. In conjunction with the Reddish Egret International Working Group, one rapid survey was conducted for breeding pairs of Reddish Egrets in Belize. (KSR #2, 7, 12)



Adult of Endangered Madagascar Pond Heron (*Ardeola idae*) and nest with chick and eggs
Photo: Rivo Rabarisoa



Least Concern Grey Herons (*Ardea cinerea*)
with chicks at nest
Photo: Katsutoshi Matsunaga



Plan

Planning

i. Discussions took place between the Co-Chairs (Kushlan and Green) about the process of updating the Heron Action Plan. We will pursue this in conjunction with the Heron Symposium at the Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) in 2020. This will likely be delayed with rescheduling of the Heron Symposium. (KSR #15)

ii. The Heron Symposium and PAOC have been postponed due to COVID-19; they are tentatively scheduled for November 2021. PAOC organisers have confirmed that the Heron Symposium will be part of PAOC 2021. Organisers of the Heron Symposium secured funding from IUCN SSC small grants and The Waterbird Society.

Policy

i. Clay Green communicated with Sara Schweitzer (US Fish and Wildlife Service) about the status of federal funding for the Waterbirds Chair to represent waterbirds within the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Several agencies have begun discussions to jointly fund the position. Sara Schweitzer is leading the effort to restore membership and functions of the Waterbird Council. At the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, Sara presented the need to establish the Waterbird Council and restore functioning of Waterbird Conservation for the Americas. (KSR #27)

Network

Capacity building

i. After Anna Stier's departure from GEPOG (Groupe d'Etude et de Protection des Oiseaux en Guyane) and the Agami Heron Working Group (AHWG), the working group does not currently have a chair. HSG is working with GEPOG and partners within AHWG to coordinate activities. (KSR #19, 29)

Synergy

i. Initial contact has been made with other Specialist Groups. We are working on a potential joint meeting with HSG and the Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group at the 2020 PAOC meeting (now rescheduled to 2021). (KSR #29)

ii. HSG recruited Dr. Chip Weseloh to serve as Editor for the HSG journal (*Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*). Katsutoshi Matsunaga was recruited as Layout Editor. The 2018 volume (Volume 3) was published.

Communicate

Scientific meetings

i. Doug Harebottle, Chip Weseloh and Clay Green submitted a proposal to the Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) for hosting a heron symposium at the PAOC meeting in Victoria Falls in November 2020. The proposal was accepted; however, the Symposium and PAOC have been postponed due to COVID-19, and are tentatively scheduled for November 2021. PAOC organisers have confirmed that the Heron Symposium will be part of PAOC 2021. Organisers of the Heron Symposium secured funding from IUCN SSC small grants and The Waterbird Society. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

HSG would like to thank Phil Atkinson with the British Trust for Ornithology and Doug Harebottle with Sol Plaatje University for their efforts in working with HSG in the organisation of the Herons of the World Symposium, to be held in conjunction with the Pan-African Ornithological Congress (now November 2021 due to COVID-19). HSG also thanks Katsutoshi Matsunaga for his continued efforts in serving as Layout Editor for our journal and for maintenance and update of the Heron Conservation website. Lastly, HSG would like to thank Anna Stier for her tireless efforts in the establishment and leadership of the Agami Heron Working Group. In 2019, Anna Stier stepped down as Chair of the AHWG. During her tenure as AHWG Chair, Anna coordinated the conservation efforts through the development of the Agami Heron Conservation Plan and the implementation of the Agami Heron Working Group Strategic Statement 2015–2020.

Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 2/5

Assess	1	
Plan	3	
Network	3	
Communicate	1	

Main KSRs addressed: 2, 7, 12, 15, 19, 27, 28, 29

KSR: Key Species Result