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Co-Chairs

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Location/Affiliation

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Number of members

21

Social networks

Website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/wildpigspecialist-group/>



Mission statement

We are committed to working with the global conservation network, governmental and other entities to ensure the long-term survival of the two hippo species (Common and Pygmy) and to support sustainable conservation and management of hippos across their range.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

The Hippo Specialist Group (HSG) has identified three key priorities for the current (2017–2020) quadrennial to ensure that we can achieve the desired direct impact on hippo species conservation:

- (1) Communication and outreach: to strengthen and improve awareness of hippo conservation within the general public and conservation community. Key impact activities for this priority are website re-development and launch, social media engagement, and stronger intra-group communication.
- (2) Partnerships: it is clear that to catalyse conservation and research action the HSG needs partners. We are looking for partner institutions willing to host the HSG website, help fund management, and work collaboratively with the HSG to support shared vision and activities.
- (3) Conservation projects: Common Hippos (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) need regional action plans including coordination across West, Central, and East Africa; Pygmy Hippos (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) already have action plans in place, but require a conservation network that has the ability to support key initiatives in implementing this action plan. There are eight key projects that HSG will initiate as soon as funding becomes available. We plan to work with our partners to secure resources that can support these and other conservation and research projects.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: update the Red List assessment for the Common Hippo.

Plan

Planning: organise a Common Hippo West African regional conservation strategy workshop.

Act

Conservation actions: (1) support conservation mechanism of Hippos in the Ruzizi River and Tanganyika Lake in South Kivu Province, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; (2) implement The Côte d'Ivoire Pygmy Hippo Project: Research and actions for the conservation of Pygmy Hippopotamus in Côte d'Ivoire; (3) protect Common Hippo in the Luama Landscape, Democratic Republic of the Congo; (4) implement the Pygmy Hippo community youth conservation volunteer programme of the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP), Sierra Leone; (5) protect Liberia's Pygmy Hippo with community-based conservation initiatives; (6) implement monitoring, restoration and long-term conservation of Common Hippo population in the Mbari and Chinko drainage, eastern Central African Republic.

Research activities: (1) implement the project 'Hippos as ecosystem engineers: Habitat use, ecology and behaviour of hippos in an important waterbody of Zululand'; (2) counting of Common Hippos in eight West African countries.

Network

Proposal development and funding: support hippo conservation projects through fundraising and capacity building.

Synergy: (1) strengthen HSG intra-group communication by initiating quarterly emails/informal



Vulnerable common Hippopotamus, *Hippopotamus amphibius*, South Africa
Photo: Jan Pluháček

Captive population of the Endangered pygmy Hippopotamus, *Choeropsis liberiensis*, might play a crucial role in conservation of the species
Photo: Jan Pluháček



newsletters to members; (2) strengthen HSG intra-group communication by creating an online resource site for HSG members.

Communicate

Communication: (1) update the HSG website; (2) launch Facebook account.

Scientific meetings: participate actively in the Pygmy Hippo regional conservation strategy workshop.

Activities and results 2019

Plan

Planning

i. There has been initial discussion on the necessity of organising a Common Hippo West African regional conservation strategy workshop. It is in our plan for the next quadrennium. (KSR #15)

Act

Conservation actions

i. Seven community patrol committees for the follow-up of hippopotamus families were set up in the Ruzizi plain in Kamanyola, Katogota, Kinanga1, Sango, Biboko, Kashianjana, and Kindobwe. A roadmap for the identification of the needs of local communities in the management and conservation of hippopotamus habitat has been produced. (KSR #37)

ii. In 2019, the main activities of the Tai Pygmy Hippopotamus Project consisted of exploring appropriate and effective tools for assessing the abundance of the Pygmy Hippo in Tai National Park. To this end, a study was conducted to determine the rate of degradation of the Pygmy Hippo dung in the park. (KSR #12)

iii. The conservation of hippos in Luama-Kivu Hunting Reserves has continued to monitor hippos through community members' reports and information. The irregular field visits by

rangers have been negatively affected by lack of funding and insecurity. The plan is to resume with law enforcement interventions once rangers are deployed back in the area. (KSR #37)

iv. In 2019, six community youth conservation volunteers refreshed their training in the field and six new volunteers were hired and trained. A further 37 camera traps were installed and 15 of them caught pictures or videos with Pygmy Hippos. (KSR #12)

v. In 2019, the exploring of Chinko Reserve went on with the following results: at least six (6) different breeding metapopulations of Common Hippopotamus could be actively preserved along three (3) major rivers (Chinko, Vovodo and Mbutu) and two (2) lake/pond systems (Yassa and Ngoy along the Mbari River) within the Aire de Conservation de Chinko (ACC). (KSR #12)

Research activities

i. In 2019, two scientific publications were released. In addition, the team began collecting data on aspects of hippo behaviour that contribute to their ecological role in a perennial river system on the Olifants River in Kruger National Park (KNP), South Africa, using telemetry. (KSR #12)

ii. The coordinator of the project on counting of Common Hippos in eight West African countries established links to representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Senegal and Togo. In addition, the contact with the local IUCN office and UNESCO was strengthened. No action in the field occurred due to lack of money. (KSR #12)

Network

Synergy

i. The newsletter *Suiform Soundings* involves new reports on hippo conservation activities regularly; the grant applications were submitted; the project leaders informed us regularly on progress of their work. The

members are regularly informed on current issues (e.g. hippo conservation in South Kivu) and asked for expertise; members are regularly invited to submit reports to the newsletter and informed about internal IUCN SSC grants. (KSR #18)

Communicate

Communication

i. HSG websites were regularly updated. The websites involve species accounts, a list of HSG members and the list of projects supported by HSG. (KSR #28)

Scientific meetings

i. We participated in the workshop for Pygmy Hippo conservation in Monrovia, 2–4 July. One of the Co-Chairs attended the meeting, presented the Hippo Specialist Group (HSG) and actively contributed to the workshop discussions. In addition, two other members of HSG actively participated there. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 4/5

Plan	1	
Act	7	
Network	1	
Communicate	2	

Main KSRs addressed: 12, 15, 18, 28, 37

KSR: Key Species Result