

IUCN SSC Heron Specialist Group

2020 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
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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 amongst 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 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 the population status of Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*) in Meso/Central America (Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras).

Plan

Planning: (1) update the Heron Action Plan; (2) plan for the Herons of the World Symposium.

Policy: restore functioning of the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas (WCA) initiative.

Network

Agreements: explore zoo sponsorship for HSG or species working groups.

Capacity building: coordinate 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 an editor and establish an editorial board for HSG's journal (*Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*).

Communicate

Scientific meetings: organise the next Herons of the World Symposium.

Activities and results 2020

Assess

Red List

i. Surveys were conducted in Belize to obtain the current status of Reddish Egret but were not completed in the remaining regions. (KSR #2, 7, 12)



Endangered Madagascar Pond-Heron, *Ardeola idae*, with chicks
Photo: Yverlin Pruvot

Least Concern Indian Pond Heron, *Ardeola grayii*, in non-breeding plumage at Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam, India
Photo: Udayan Borthakur

Critically Endangered White-bellied Heron, *Ardea insignis*, in Tsirang District of Bhutan along the Punatsangchhu Basin
Photo: Pema Khandu



Plan

Planning

i. The current plan and new goal for the 2021–2024 quadrennial is to develop/revise the Heron Action Plan in this quadrennial. (KSR #15)

Policy

i. Clay Green has been in contact with David Gordon with the US Fish and Wildlife Service about re-establishment of WCA. Movement continues to be slow but there is some hope that in 2021, the WCA and Waterbird Council will be restored and function again to implement the WCA Plan. (KSR #27)

Network

Agreements

i. The White-bellied Heron Working Group has working partnerships with several zoos to support their captive breeding programme in Bhutan. (KSR #29)

Capacity building

i. We have not achieved the coordination of the Agami Heron Working Group to date; since Anna Stier left her position at GEPOG (Groupe d'Etude et de Protection des Oiseaux en Guyane), there has not been a replacement to fill the void she left as Agami Heron Working Group Chair. (KSR #19, 29)

Membership

i. Since we initially established the goal of assessing needs and establishing several Working Groups in 2016, our priorities have changed in the establishment of these working groups.

Synergy

i. While there is no formal agreement (e.g. MOU) between groups, the HSG is in regular conversation with the Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Group and we have discussed plans for future symposiums between groups. (KSR #29)

ii. An editorial board has been established for HSG's journal (*Journal of Heron Biology and Conservation*): Chip Weseloh is Editor, Katsutoshi Matsunaga is Layout Editor, Clay Green is Associate Editor, and we have identified regional/continental associate editors to assist in soliciting manuscripts and reviews.

Communicate

Scientific meetings

i. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Herons of World Symposium has been further delayed but is now scheduled for November 2022 as part of the Pan-African Ornithological Congress. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2020

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 4/5

Assess	1	
Plan	2	
Network	5	
Communicate	1	

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

KSR: Key Species Result