



Richard Kock



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### Co-Chairs

Richard Kock (1)  
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### Location/Affiliation

(1) Royal Veterinary College, London, UK  
(2) EcoHealth Alliance, New York, US

### Number of members

275

### Social networks

Facebook:  
IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group  
Twitter: @IUCNWildHealth  
Website: [www.iucn-whsg.org](http://www.iucn-whsg.org)



### Mission statement

The group is commissioned to serve as a first response for wildlife health concerns relevant to conservation around the world. The focus of the group is on health impacts that relate to the conservation of species, some of which are negative to wildlife population persistence and a risk to threatened species.

### Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, we envision wildlife health will be recognised as a critically important dimension of species survival, enabling the SSC to more proactively and effectively manage wildlife disease threats and threats to wildlife health from human activities, spill over of domestic animals and human diseases or inappropriate reactions to wildlife disease events. We will focus our efforts on policies that support prevention and management of disease, including disease-specific recommendations (e.g. to governments), as well as simplified processes to facilitate timely international movement of emergency diagnostic specimens for conservation purposes under CITES and in terms of growing restrictions to timely diagnosis under Nagoya Protocols and similar initiatives. We apply the IUCN-OIE *Guidelines for Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis* as well as embed wildlife health considerations in future IUCN and United Nations (Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Global Environmental Outlook (GEO), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), etc.) knowledge products to help proactively reduce disease risks and impacts of human activities on wildlife health. Through our regionally diverse expert membership, we will aggregate information on wildlife disease events and adverse impacts on wildlife health as well

as provide technical support on investigations of key wildlife morbidity and mortality events for enhanced understanding of disease pathways and drivers to inform conservation action. Through our ongoing work with international and regional partners – e.g. UN CBD, World Health Organization (WHO), Wildlife Disease Association, World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), UN Environment Programme Global Environment Outlook (UNEP GEO), UNEP CMS – we will continue to highlight and raise awareness of the links between the health of humans, animals and the environment and showcase how 'One Health' approaches can help mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services.

### Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

#### Assess

Red List: deliver ten technical assessments to SSC taxonomic groups.

Research activities: investigate five wildlife mass morbidity/mortality events.

#### Plan

Policy: adopt policy for simplified process for international movement of emergency diagnostic specimens of conservation species.

#### Act

Technical advice: deliver ten technical recommendations.

#### Network

Documents review: review ten SSC documents.

Membership: expand Wildlife Health Specialist Group (WHSG) membership representation to 100 countries.

Synergy: deliver ten external outreach events/materials/forums (e.g. policy conventions, social media) showcasing relevance of wildlife health to One Health.



# Urgent Needs for Global Wildlife Health

## Act

### Technical advice

- i.** The WHSG Co-Chair published investigation findings and guidance via the following papers, both supporting enhanced understanding and conservation monitoring and action to protect Saiga and other antelope species in central Asia: Pruvot, M., et al. 2020. Outbreak of Peste des Petits Ruminants among Critically Endangered Mongolian Saiga and Other Wild Ungulates, Mongolia, 2016–2017. *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 26(1):51–62. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2601.181998>; Fine, A.E., et al. 2020. Eradication of Peste des Petits Ruminants Virus and the Wildlife-Livestock Interface. *Frontiers in Veterinary Sciences* 7:50. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2020.00050>. (KSR #26, 27)
- ii.** WHSG Co-Chair and South America Regional Coordinator published results from a 15-year serological study of >1,000 Magellanic Penguins (*Spheniscus magellanicus*), establishing an important baseline understanding for a key species in the Patagonian Sea. (KSR #26, 27)
- iii.** WHSG South America Regional Coordinator published key papers on whale health, including: Alzugaray, L., et al. 2020. Anthropogenic debris in the digestive tract of a southern right whale (*Eubalaena australis*) stranded in Golfo Nuevo, Argentina. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 161:111738. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2020.111738>; Fernández Ajó, A.A., et al. 2020. Retrospective analysis of the lifetime endocrine response of southern right whale calves to gull wounding and harassment: A baleen hormone approach. *General and Comparative Endocrinology* 296:113536. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ygcen.2020.113536>. (KSR #26, 27)

## Activities and results 2020

### Assess

#### Research activities

- i.** A Joint Statement of the IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group and the Primate Specialist Group was produced on 'Great apes, COVID-19 and the SARS CoV-2' (available at: <http://www.internationalprimatologicalsociety.org/docs/Final%20-%20SARS%20CoV-2%20and%20Great%20Apes%20Joint%20Communique%2016-05-20.pdf>). (KSR #7, 32)
- ii.** WHSG-OIE 'Guidelines for Working with Free-Ranging Wild Mammals in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic' were published (available at: <https://www.oie.int/app/uploads/2021/03/a-whsg-and-oie-covid-19-guidelines.pdf>). (KSR #7, 32)

- iii.** WHSG members published the paper 'Wildlife conservation status and disease trends: 10 years of reports to the Worldwide Monitoring System for Wild Animal Diseases' in the OIE *Scientific and Technical Review* (pre-print currently available at <https://www.oie.int/en/document/wildlife-conservation-status-and-disease-trends-10-years-of-reports-to-the-worldwide-monitoring-system-for-wild-animal-diseases/>). (KSR #7, 32)
- iv.** We provided technical support on an elephant mortality event in Botswana. (KSR #23)
- v.** We provided technical support on the SARS-CoV-2 threat to wildlife: identified risks (prospective) to wild animals from OIE (including mink, primates, and bat species). (KSR #23)





Curious Grey Fox, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*,  
kits playing in Vermont, US  
Photo: Catherine Machalaba

**iv.** A WHSG member published papers on turtle health and conservation, including: Mashkour, N., et al. 2020. Disease risk analysis in sea turtles: A baseline study to inform conservation efforts. *PLoS ONE* 15(10):e0230760. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230760>; Saladin, C. 2020. International Environmental Law and Sea Turtles: Anatomy of the Legal Framework and Trade of Sea Turtles in the Lesser Antilles. *Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy* 23(4):301–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13880292.2020.1872164>. (KSR #26, 27)

## Network

### Documents review

**i.** WHSG provided input to IUCN SSC documents, including: (1) IUCN website ‘Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19’; (2) IUCN situation analysis on wildlife trade; (3) paper drafts and information documents through the IUCN Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework working group; (4) IUCN World Conservation Congress planning committee proposals on health; (5) statement for the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) special session on Biodiversity, COVID-19 and One Health; (6) continued collaboration on the IUCN World Conservation Congress motion 102 – Strengthening mutual benefits of *mobile pastoralism* and wildlife in shared landscapes (now approved); (7) IUCN Global Species Action Plan. (KSR #28)

### Membership

**i.** Members were identified from countries without current coverage (especially in West and Central Africa) to be added for the new quadrennium.

## Synergy

**i.** Authored the IUCN Crossroads Blog post ‘It Is Time for a Global Wildlife Health Authority’ (available at: <https://www.iucn.org/crossroads-blog/202009/it-time-a-global-wildlife-health-authority>). (KSR #29)

**ii.** WHSG leaders published *Urgent Needs for Global Wildlife Health*, a report on key systems gaps that impact wildlife health management and protection, with key policy and action recommendations specific to international agencies and conventions: Machalaba, C., et al. 2020. *Urgent Needs for Global Wildlife Health*. Zenodo. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4105126>. (KSR #29)

**iii.** We collaborated with the IUCN Friends of Ecosystem-Based Adaptation group to promote One Health approaches and attention to wildlife health in ‘building back better and greener’ recovery efforts. (KSR #29)

## Communicate

### Communication

**i.** WHSG provided comments to CITES in the development and refinement of the Guidance on the use of the scientific exchange exemption and the simplified procedures, calling attention to the need for automatic registration (and improved linking to) OIE reference laboratories, and the barriers impeding timely movement of Appendix I species. (KSR #28)

**ii.** We submitted a statement to the European Parliament for their two votes concerning Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) as regards lead in ammunition in/around wetlands. (KSR #28)

**iii.** We organised and presented at a variety of fora on COVID-19 recovery, including the Global Health Security Agenda Ministerial Meeting event on ‘Moving Toward Best Practices

in Multisectoral Coordination: Integrating Environment and Health to Strengthen Capacities to Prevent, Detect and Respond’. (KSR #28)

**iv.** WHSG provided feedback and collaboration on pandemic prevention-related documents prepared by UNEP, WHO, OIE, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Bank. (KSR #28)

## Acknowledgements

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## Summary of activities 2020

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 4/5

Assess	5	
Act	4	
Network	5	
Communicate	4	

Main KSRs addressed: 7, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-014 and WCC-2016-Res-064

KSR: Key Species Result