IUCN

SSC
Species Survival Commission

Species

ISSUE 64

2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat

Stand-alone report
SSC/CEESP/CEM Oil Crops Task Force

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together toward achieving the vision of "a just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to both prevent the loss and aid recovery of the diversity of life on earth."

Members of SSC belong to one or more of near 200 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities, Action Partnerships, Task Forces, and Conservation Committees that make up the Network, each focusing on a taxonomic group (plants, fungi, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and invertebrates), national species, or a disciplinary issue, such as sustainable use and livelihoods, translocation of species, wildlife health, climate change, and conservation planning.

Framed by the Species Conservation Cycle, SSC's major role is to provide information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services, and their support to human livelihoods. This information is fed into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan encompasses the joint work of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and a number of partnerships to achieve more than 2,700 targets proposed by the Network during the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

To accomplish those targets, the Species Conservation Cycle was established, which is the conceptual framework for the Network activities. The Species Conservation Cycle's main purpose is to guide efforts for valuing and conserving biodiversity through three essential components that are linked to each other:

ASSESS: Understand and inform the world about the status and trends of biodiversity.

PLAN: Develop collaborative, inclusive and science-based conservation strategies, plans and policies.

ACT: Convene and mobilise conservation actions to improve the status of biodiversity.

Their implementation requires two transversal components:

NETWORK: Enhance and support our immediate network and alliances to achieve our biodiversity targets.

COMMUNICATE: Drive strategic and targeted communications to enhance our conservation impact.

SSC Species Report

Annual progress in the implementation of the 2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan is documented in the *SSC Species Report*, which consists of a comprehensive description and analysis of the activities and results generated by the members of the SSC Network and Centers for Species Survival (CSS) each year. Each SSC and CSS group contributes to this document by providing a yearly summarised description of their achievements, which is presented in standalone reports.

Structure of the IUCN SSC and CSS Stand-alone Reports

Stand-alone reports summarize the activities conducted and results generated by each group member of the SSC and CSS. Following, is the structure of the stand-alone report and the contents under each session.

Title of the group

Photograph(s) of the Chair/Co-Chairs

Group information
Includes names of Chair/Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Red List Authory Coordinators, Program Officers, Species Survival Directors, and Species Survival Officers, their institutional affiliations, number of members and social networks currently active.

Logo of the group

Mission statement
Includes the mission of the group.

Projected impact for the 2021-2025 quadrennium
Includes the description of the impact on species conservation resulting from the implementation of the targets formulated by the group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

Targets for the 2021-2025 quadrennium
Includes the targets planned by the SSC or CSS group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium ordered alphabetically by component of the Species Conservation Cycle. Each target is labeled with a numerical code (e.g., T-001, T-012) that identifies it in the SSC DATA database and its status for the reported year is indicated (Not initiated, On track or Achieved).

Activities and results
Includes the targets for which activities were conducted and results were generated during the reported year, ordered alphabetically, first by component of the Species Conservation Cycle, and second by Activity Category. Description of activities and results includes the indicator that best describes progress, its associated quantitative or qualitative result, and the narrative description of the activity conducted or result obtained. Each activity or result reported is linked to the Key Species Result to which it is mainly associated (e.g., KSR#1, KSR#5).

Acknowledgements
Includes the acknowledgements to funding agencies, partners, and persons who contributed to the progress of the targets of the group.

Summary of achievements
Summarises information of the group's strategic plan for the quadrennium and progress achieved implementing targets for all the components of the Species Conservation Cycle during the reported year.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

Example for the recommended citation:
Meijaard, E. and Virah-Sawmy, M. 2024. 2023 Report of the SSC/CEESP/CEM Oil Crops Task Force. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat.* Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 4 pp.

2023 Report

IUCN SSC/CEESP/CEM Oil Crops Task Force

CHAIR
Erik Meijaard
Borneo Futures, Brunei Darussalam

CHAIR
Malika Virah-Sawmy
Sensemakers Collective

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
26

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE
Website: https://www.iucn-optf.org

Mission statement

Our mission is to strengthen the use of different forms of knowledge on the environmental and social impacts and benefits of vegetable oils on policy decisions, whether for sustainable production, consumption, or trade. We aim to realise this through harnessing trusted messengers and accessible and evidence-based messages.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Vegetable oil crops, the main focus of the Oil Crops Task Force, cover some 425 Mha of agricultural land. Crops like oil palm are considered a threat to over 300 species listed as Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered, but all oil crops threaten species where they displace natural ecosystems. At the same time, some crops, especially perennial crops such as oil palm, coconut, and olive, can provide habitat to some species. Improved practices are needed for all crops, while their different yields require land that is optimally allocated to oil production to meet growing demand.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Conduct high-resolution global mapping study for all major oil crops.
Status: Achieved

T-003 Conduct systematic review or other study on the social and environmental impacts of vegetable oil production.
Status: On track

T-007 Conduct global mapping of coconut production areas.
Status: Achieved

PLAN

T-008 Futures Methodology for the Oil Crop Task Force.
Status: Achieved

ACT

T-009 Facilitate management of viable orangutan populations in oil palm landscapes.
Status: On track

NETWORK

T-002 Bring Co-Chair to the group and expand membership for broader expertise across all major vegetable oils.
Status: Achieved

T-004 Communicate key insights from Task Force work to global audience at IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021.
Status: Achieved

T-006 Organise Task Force planning meetings.
Status: Achieved

COMMUNICATE

T-005 Engage media attention to Task Force's key findings.
Status: On track

Activities and results 2023

ASSESS

Communication

T-001 Conduct high-resolution global mapping study for all major oil crops. (KSR 5)

Number of readings/citations per scientific paper published: 342

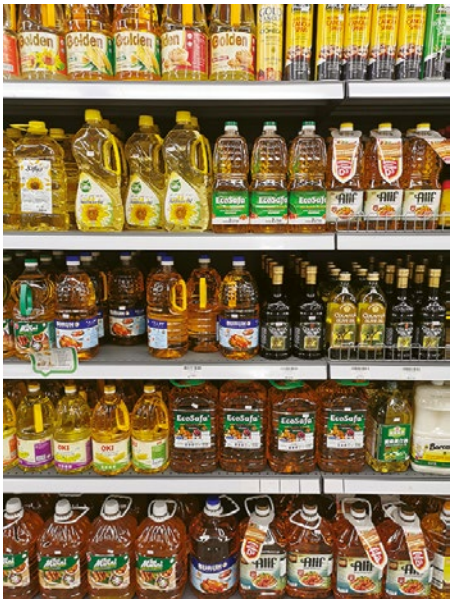
Result description: We have completed a global high-resolution map for coconut. We also received a grant from CPOPC to map soybean, rapeseed and sunflower at high resolution, but one year into the project, the funding was withdrawn, and this work remains pending, nevertheless, other groups are now working on other oil crops such as soybean, so for the Task Force it is no longer a priority.

T-003 Conduct systematic review or other study on the social and environmental impacts of vegetable oil production. (KSR 5)

Number of readings/citations per scientific paper published: 503

Result description: We received a significant grant for a collaboration with Nutella's Sustainable Nutrition Scientific Board to conduct a situation analysis on the social, environmental and nutrition/health contexts of the main vegetable oil crops. This study was conducted and completed in 2023 and has resulted in a report titled 'Exploring the future of vegetable oils – Oil crop implications – fats, forests, forecasts, and futures'. The report will be launched in 2024.

Front cover of new report by the IUCN Oil Crops Task Force, to be published in 2024
Photo: Erik Meijaard



What oil to buy? Concerned consumers face difficult choices. We need fats and oils to live, but which ones are associated with the least negative impacts on people, the environment and our health?
Photo: Erik Meijaard

Research activities

T-007 Conduct global mapping of Coconut production areas. (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 3

Result description: Our study on the global mapping of coconut was published in 2023. The surprising outcome was that while densely planted Coconut areas totalled some 12.3 million ha globally, in line with FAO statistics, there is an additional area of 24.4 million ha of sparsely planted Coconut. This indicates that the land area allocated to Coconut production might be much larger than previously assumed. This has important implications for sustainability considerations of Coconut, also because there is deforestation associated with these Coconut areas.

PLAN

Planning

T-008 Futures Methodology for the Oil Crop Task Force. (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/ strategies: 0

Result description: Through a significant grant we were able to develop a study on the future of vegetable oil crops. This included exploring 10 hypothetical future scenarios to see what their impact could be on vegetable oil production, trade and consumption. These scenarios will be included in the major study on oil crops that will be published in 2024.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-009 Facilitate management of viable Orangutan populations in Oil Palm landscapes. (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 0

Result description: We are continuing our work on facilitating Orangutan conservation in large-holder Oil Palm landscapes and have developed citizen-science-based methods for reliably assessing spatial and temporal changes in species occupancy, which can be used as an indicator for species population trends and help in adaptive management. We are currently analysing these results and are developing a scientific paper on the findings.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-004 Communicate key insights from Task Force work to global audience at IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021. (KSR 4)

Tangible perceptions change among IUCN members about oil crop sustainability: 0%

Result description: We continue the dissemination of research results to inform a more nuanced global debate about vegetable oil crops and their social, environmental, and nutritional contexts. In 2023, we developed a new study titled 'Exploring the Future of Vegetable Oils' in which we reviewed the literature on all major (and many minor) oil crops and their social, environmental, and nutritional outcomes, and explored future scenarios for these crops and growing global oil demand. We worked closely with the IUCN Secretariat, which also facilitated the double-blind peer review process. The publication of the report is scheduled for 2024 and will be accompanied by a media campaign run by the IUCN Global Communication Unit. We will monitor signs of change in perceptions about oil crops, especially regarding our main takeaway message that says that there is no such thing as a good or bad oil crop, but there is only good and bad management. Good or better management is what we should strive for.

Synergy

T-006 Organise Task Force planning meetings. (KSR 2)

Number of internal meetings conducted: 5

Result description: We conducted several online meetings with the members of the Oil Crops Task Force, using two timeslots for each meeting to cover those based in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Our June 2023 workshop in Greece for developing the draft report on the future of vegetable oil crops was also attended by several Task Force members, including the two Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs also met in Amsterdam in February 2023 to discuss the collaboration.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-005 Engage media attention to Task Force's key findings. (KSR 12)

Number of press releases: 0

Result description: No media outreach was done in 2023, but we are developing our media outreach and communications strategy for the launch of our Futures of Vegetable Oils report in 2024.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the support of Nutella's Sustainable Nutrition Scientific Board for funding a study on the future of vegetable oils and support from the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) for funding a global oil palm age mapping exercise.

Summary of achievements

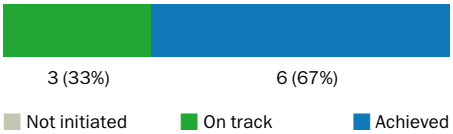
Total number of targets 2021–2025: 9

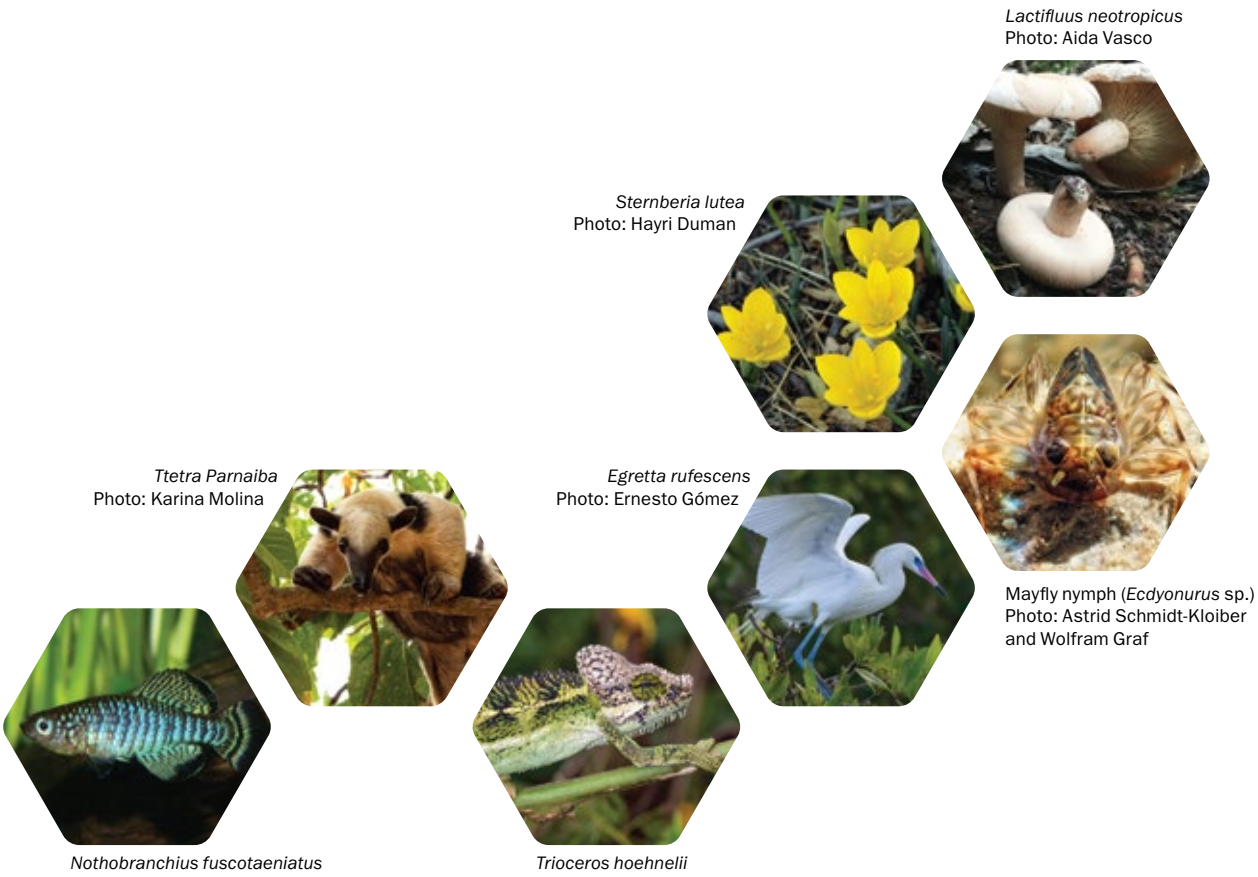
Geographic regions: 8 Global, 1 Asia

Actions during 2023:

Assess: 3 (KSR 5)
Plan: 1 (KSR 8)
Act: 1 (KSR 10)
Network: 2 (KSR 2, 4)
Communicate: 1 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:





Lactifluus neotropicus
Photo: Aida Vasco

Sternberia lutea
Photo: Hayri Duman

Ttetra Parnaiba
Photo: Karina Molina

Egretta rufescens
Photo: Ernesto Gómez

Mayfly nymph (*Ecdyonurus* sp.)
Photo: Astrid Schmidt-Kloiber and Wolfram Graf

Nothobranchius fuscotaeniatus
Photo: Csenge Nagy

Trioceros hoehnelii
Photo: Christopher V. Anderson