



Species

ISSUE 64

2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat



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 stand-alone 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 Authority 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:

Jabado, R. 2024. 2023 Report of the Shark Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *2023 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 8 pp.

2023 Report

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
237

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IUCNShark>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/iucnshark/>
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/iucnshark>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/iucnshark>
Website: <https://www.iucnssg.org>
YouTube: IUCN Shark Specialist Group

Mission statement

To secure the conservation, management and, where necessary, the recovery of the world's sharks, rays and chimaeras by mobilising global technical and scientific expertise to provide the knowledge that enables action.

Projected impact 2021–2025

In 2021, the Shark Specialist Group (SSG) completed the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species of all sharks, rays and chimaeras and now know that 37% of species are threatened with extinction. Although we will need to continue with assessments for newly described species, our aim is to ensure the most threatened species get attention by developing conservation strategies and action plans, guiding policy intervention by providing expert input into the decision making process — especially at high-level international treaty level such as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, CITES — and communicating our work and results to a broad audience. We will develop new spatial planning tools to

support delineation of Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) across the world's ocean and ensure their uptake at various national, local and global levels. Finally, with increasing changes to the trade dynamics of shark and ray products, we will work to improve our understanding of global exports and imports of fins, meat, skins, liver oil and other products, to ensure sustainable use.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Complete global Red List assessments of all newly described species and changed taxonomic concepts by 2025.
Status: On track

T-002 Complete Red List reassessments for current species assessments expiring in 2022–2024 by 2025.
Status: On track

T-003 Complete Red List assessments and reassessments for South American and Southeast Asian freshwater stingrays by 2024.
Status: On track

T-004 Publish Living Planet Index for chondrichthyans by 2024.
Status: On track

T-005 Produce Global Red List Index for chondrichthyans as the first indices of the effects of threats by 2024.
Status: On track

T-006 Publish results of the Global Shark Trends project in 2022.
Status: Achieved

T-008 Develop and publish regional status reports leading to papers on global and regional conservation priorities for chondrichthyans by 2025.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-012 Develop a global conservation strategy and action plan for oceanic sharks and rays by 2024.
Status: On track

T-013 Support the implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Concerted Actions by 2024, e.g. Rhino Rays.
Status: On track

T-014 Develop overview, situational analysis, and regional conservation strategies and action plans for Rhino Rays by 2025.
Status: On track



Reef Shark
Photo: Philip Hamilton | Ocean Image Bank

T-015 Develop a conservation strategy and action plan for the South American freshwater stingrays by 2025.
Status: Not initiated

ACT

T-022 Provide ongoing technical support and advice to the CMS Secretariat and Sharks MoU Advisory Committee.
Status: On track

T-023 Respond to requests for advice and feedback to other IUCN bodies, specialist groups and organisations, e.g. FAO, TRAFFIC, as requested.
Status: On track

T-024 Develop policy briefs/documents on existing and emerging trends in the trade of various shark and ray products for CITES Conference of the Parties by 2024.
Status: Achieved

T-025 Create a synopsis of fisheries, use, trade, and other conservation issues related to chondrichthyans for donors, policymakers and the public to support conservation actions and engagement by 2024.
Status: On track

T-026 Develop position statement on the reintroduction of sharks and rays through captive breeding programmes and disseminate to aquaria by 2025.
Status: On track

T-027 Implement Important Shark and Ray Areas project.
Status: On track

NETWORK

T-007 Generate funds to support SSG activities including assessment, conservation planning and other key targets.
Status: On track

T-016 Recruit at least 30 new members in 2021.
Status: Achieved

T-017 Review current membership status to improve geographic diversity, gender and age representation, and technical expertise of the SSG group in 2021.
Status: Achieved

T-018 Foster training of members in conservation planning by 2025.
Status: On track

T-019 Foster training of members as Red List assessors, including the use of the IUCN Species Information Service, SIS, by 2023.
Status: Achieved

T-021 Establish new formal partnerships that will provide financial and institutional support to the Specialist Group staff time by 2022.
Status: Achieved

COMMUNICATE

T-009 Organise annual SSG events linked to major international conferences to communicate activities and progress to members and other interested individuals or organisations, e.g. American Elasmobranch Society yearly meeting, European Elasmobranch Association, Sharks International 2022.
Status: On track

T-010 Publish annual Shark Specialist Group Newsletters with contributions from members.
Status: On track

T-011 Update SSG website, improve social media presence and develop a communication strategy to better disseminate updates and ongoing activities by 2022.
Status: Achieved

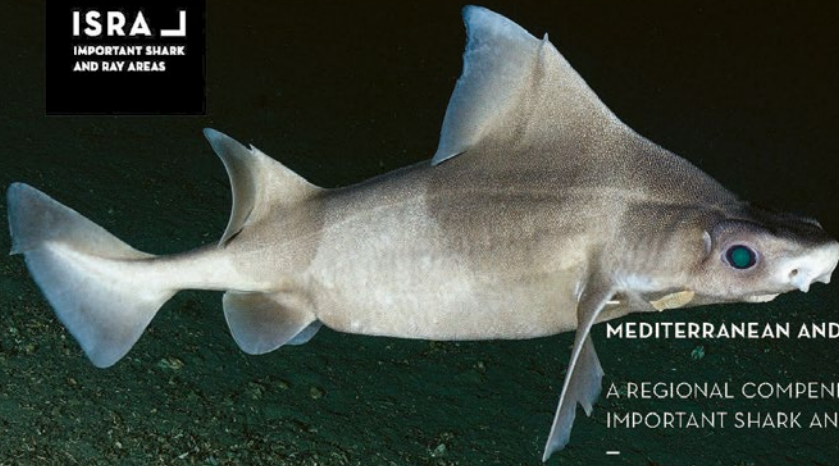
Activities and results 2023

ASSESS

Red List

T-001 Complete global Red List assessments of all newly described species and changed taxonomic concepts by 2025. (KSR 6)
Number of new global Red List assessments completed: 8

ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK
AND RAY AREAS



MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEAS

A REGIONAL COMPENDIUM OF
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS

IUCN SSC SHARK SPECIALIST GROUP

AUGUST 2023

ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK
AND RAY AREAS



CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN PACIFIC

A REGIONAL COMPENDIUM OF
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS

IUCN SSC SHARK SPECIALIST GROUP

MARCH 2023

A regional compendium of Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRA) - Central and South American Pacific
Photo: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group

Result description: A total of eight assessments were submitted in 2023 for newly described ray species.

T-002 Complete Red List reassessments for current species assessments expiring in 2022–2024 by 2025. (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 50

Result description: Fifty (21 sharks, 27 rays and two chimaera species) reassessments were submitted in 2023. This work was done through a consultative process with members of the IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group and other experts working on sharks, rays and chimaeras around the world.

T-003 Complete Red List assessments and reassessments for South American and Southeast Asian freshwater stingrays by 2022. (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 11

Result description: Eleven South American freshwater stingrays were submitted to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species list. Reassessments of the remaining South American freshwater stingray species are currently underway.

T-005 Produce Global Red List Index for chondrichthyans as the first indices of the effects of threats by 2024. (KSR 7)

Number of groups with comprehensive Red List reassessments published as a proportion of the number prioritised for the Red List Index: 0

Result description: The analysis of the Global Red List Index for chondrichthyans is underway by Prof. Nick Dulvy. Some analyses at the regional level or the species-group level have been undertaken already and results were published. The publications are: (1) Walls RHL. and Dulvy NK. (2021). 'Tracking the rising extinction risk of sharks and rays in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea'. *Scientific Reports* 11, 15397. DOI; (2) Pacoureau N, Rigby CL, Kyne PM *et al.*

(2021). 'Half a century of global decline in oceanic sharks and rays'. *Nature* 589, 567–571. DOI.

Research activities

T-004 Publish Living Planet Index for chondrichthyans by 2022. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 0

Result description: The analysis for the Living Planet Index for chondrichthyans is underway and being led by Prof. Nick Dulvy.

T-008 Develop and publish regional status reports leading to papers on global and regional conservation priorities for chondrichthyans by 2024. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 1

Result description: The global status report on chondrichthyans is currently underway. There are 352 contributors, adding 60 more than in 2022, covering 159 countries and territories working towards completing regional sections. To support the completion of this report, a writing workshop was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in March 2023, specifically focused on contributors from the Indian Ocean and Asia regions; in total, 21 participants attended. An editing workshop was also organised in Auckland, New Zealand in November 2023, on the side-lines of the Indo-Pacific Fish Conference 2023, for the editors to complete reviewing the report. In total eight editors (six in-person and two online) attended. The IUCN SSG aims to design and finalise the report to be released by mid-2024.

PLAN Planning

T-012 Develop a global conservation strategy and action plan for oceanic sharks and rays by 2024. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 1

Result description: The IUCN SSC SSG developed a draft report on the results of the workshops hosted in 2022 for the global conservation strategy and action plan for pelagic sharks and rays with support from the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). The outcomes and progress were presented at the CMS Sharks Memorandum of Understanding (Sharks MOU) Meeting of Signatories in February 2023. Further work to develop the strategy will be undertaken in 2024.

T-013 Support the implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Concerted Actions by 2024 (e.g. Rhino Rays). (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 1

Result description: Work has been underway with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat to ensure that proposed activities within the Concerted Actions document can be implemented. A report on the progress to implement the Concerted Action was submitted to the CMS Secretariat in May 2023, [Implementation Concerted Action Common Guitarfish *Rhinobatos rhinobatos*](#). Recommendations included continuing the Concerted Action with amendments to take into account objectives that have already been completed. The final decisions on whether the Concerted Action will be renewed will be made at the CMS Conference of Parties to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in February 2024.

T-014 Develop overview, situational analysis and regional conservation strategies and action plans for Rhino Rays by 2025. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 1

Result description: To understand the status of rhino rays and the impact of fisheries, a global review was undertaken on bycatch levels. This scientific publication

will serve as a basis for developing conservation strategies and action plans. The publication authors by Pytka J, Kyne PM, Carlson JK, and Jabado RW, entitled: 'A tangled web: global review of fishing interactions with rhino rays' can be downloaded [here](#).

SSC Grant awarded

ACT Policy

T-025 Create a synopsis of fisheries, use, trade, and other conservation issues related to chondrichthyans for donors, policymakers and the public to support conservation actions and engagement by 2024. (KSR 10)

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: The IUCN SSG regularly participates in donor meetings, engages with policymakers at various international forums and supports conservation actions via presentations on key issues related to fisheries, use and trade, as well as through meetings or letters. In 2023, engagement focused largely on issues with trade of CITES-listed species and bycatch of sharks and rays.

SSC Grant awarded

T-026 Develop position statement on the reintroduction of sharks and rays through captive breeding programmes and disseminate to aquaria by 2025. (KSR 10)

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 0

Result description: The IUCN SSG Aquarium Working Group, led by Paula Carlson and Lisa Hoopes, has been holding regular meetings with members to complete a draft of the guidelines and position statement.

Technical advice

T-022 Provide ongoing technical support and advice to the CMS Secretariat and Sharks MoU Advisory Committee. (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 14

Result description: The IUCN SSG continues to work closely with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Secretariat and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Sharks MoU) Advisory Committee through its members and Chair. The SSG Chair regularly attends advisory committee meetings of the Sharks MOU and as the CoP Appointed Councillor for Marine Fish attends council meetings and inter-session meetings.

T-023 Respond to requests for advice and feedback to other IUCN bodies, specialist groups and organisations (e.g. FAO, TRAFFIC) as requested. (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 5

Result description: The IUCN SSG has responded to several requests for advice and feedback from the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the IUCN Secretariat, and other NGOs and advisory bodies — e.g. Wildlife Conservation Society [WCS] and the International Fund for Animal Welfare [IFAW] concerning fisheries, trade, and conservation of sharks, rays and chimaeras. The SSG published a position statement on Shark Control Programs and Shark Culls ([Link](#)).

T-027 Implement Important Shark and Ray Areas project. (KSR 10)

Number of areas delineated for sharks, rays and chimaeras that have the potential to be managed: 190

Result description: The IUCN SSC SSG organised two regional workshops to delineate Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRA) for the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions in Thessaloniki, Greece in May 2023 and the Western Indian Ocean region in Durban, South Africa in September 2023. This resulted in the identification of ISRAs, candidate ISRAs and Areas of Interest that are now mapped and freely available on the [project eAtlas](#). To consolidate the findings of ISRA workshops, the SSG published two

regional compendiums ([Central America and South American Pacific](#); [Mediterranean and Black Seas](#)).

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-018 Foster training of members in conservation planning by 2025. (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation planning: 2

Result description: A total of two members from three of the nine IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Groups regions have participated in the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group course on 'Facilitating Species Conservation Planning Workshops'.

Synergy

T-007 Generate funds to support SSG activities including assessment, conservation planning and other key targets. (KSR 1)

Number of 'in kind' partnerships established and maintained: 2

Result description: The IUCN SSG continues to be fiscally sponsored by Re:wild, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with headquarters in Austin, TX, USA (tax ID: 26-2887967). The partnership with Atlantis - The Palm in Dubai, United Arab Emirates has been renewed. This has allowed the group to extend the position of part-time Program Officer to December 2024.

T-007 Generate funds to support SSG activities including assessment, conservation planning and other key targets. (KSR 1)

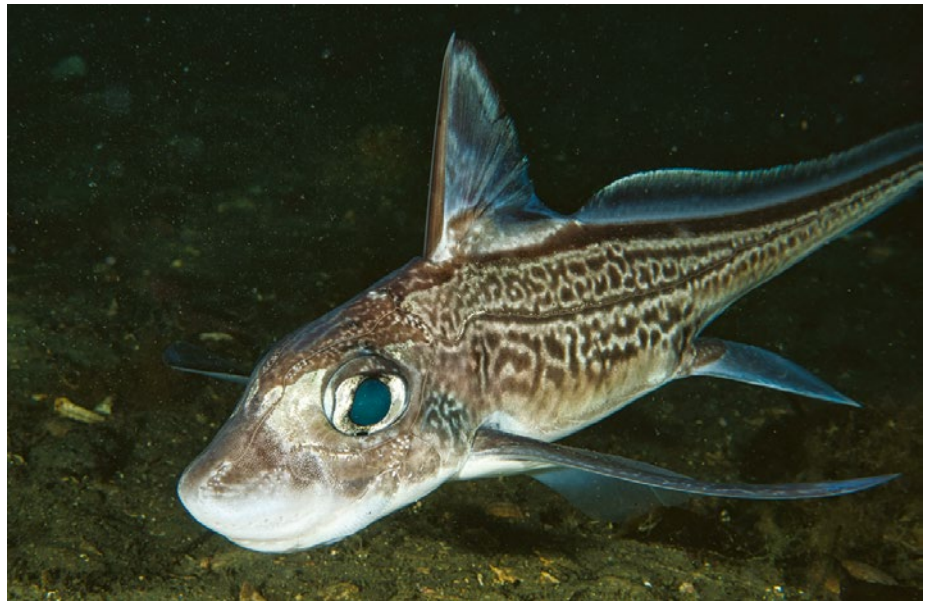
Number of 'funding' partners established and maintained: 4

Result description: The IUCN SSG has continued to generate funds from various sources, including 'White Sharks', an IUCN SSC Internal Grant, the IUCN Secretariat and the Shark Conservation Fund, to support ongoing activities related to conservation planning and capacity building. Activities are now being planned so they can be implemented in 2024 and 2025.



Shark News Issues 07 and 08
Photo: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group

Rabbitfish (*Chimaera monstrosa*)
Photo: Vebjørn Karlsen (CC BY-NC 4.0)



COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-009 Organise annual SSG events linked to major international conferences to communicate activities and progress to members and other interested individuals or organisations — e.g. American Elasmobranch Society yearly meeting, European Elasmobranch Association, Sharks International 2022. (KSR 13)

Number of SSC members' presentations developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 17

Result description: The IUCN SSG members continued to engage at the regional level through online meetings that Regional Vice-Chairs are organising quarterly for each of the nine SSG regions. Progress and outcomes of the SSG-led Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRA) project were disseminated at 17 conference or meeting presentations around the world.

T-010 Publish annual Shark Specialist Group Newsletters with contributions from members. (KSR 12)

Number of Species e-bulletin, Save Our Species newsletter, SSC Groups' newsletter editions produced: 2

Result description: The IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group (SSG) continued to develop and publish the official SSG Newsletter, *Shark News*. Two issues were published with contributions from members and non-members working on shark, ray, and chimaera conservation issues around the world. All issues can be downloaded on our website (www.iucnssg.org/sharknews.html) or viewed online (January 2023; July 2023).

Acknowledgements

The IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group would like to thank all our funders, partners, collaborators and members for their support and contributions. Special thanks are due to our institutional partners including the IUCN SSC Chair's Office, IUCN Marine Conservation Committee, IUCN Red List Unit, IUCN Freshwater Biodiversity Unit, IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group, and IUCN Green Status of Species Working Group. Funding and in-kind contributions were graciously provided by IUCN SSC Internal Grant; Re:wild; Shark Conservation Fund; Atlantis - The Palm; Save Our Seas Foundation; Convention on Migratory Species (CMS); Shark Conservation Fund; Sharks Memorandum of Understanding; White Shark; and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (Federal Republic of Germany).

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 26

Geographic regions: 24 Global, 2 America

Actions during 2023:

Assess: 6 (KSR 5, 6, 7)

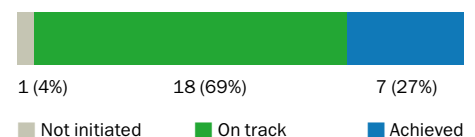
Plan: 3 (KSR 8)

Act: 5 (KSR 10)

Network: 3 (KSR 1, 2)

Communicate: 2 (KSR 12, 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:





Nothobranchius fuscotaeniatus
Photo: Csenge Nagy



Tetra Parnaiba
Photo: Karina Molina



Trioceros hoehnelii
Photo: Christopher V. Anderson



Sternberia lutea
Photo: Hayri Duman



Egretta rufescens
Photo: Ernesto Gómez



Lactifluus neotropicus
Photo: Aida Vasco



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