Mission statement

The mission of the Cuban Plant Specialist Group (CPSG) is to contribute to increase current knowledge on the taxonomy and ecology of the species across the geographic range of distribution and promote their long-term conservation.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, we envision a significant advance in plant conservation in the country. The conservation status of at least 80% of the Cuban flora will be known and appropriately documented, and the assessments will be available to the public, researchers, decision makers and policy makers. A network of plant conservationists with the support of the local communities will be conducting actions to reduce the extinction risk of native plant species and recover their populations across the country, with an emphasis in areas of high plant diversity. Species recovery plans for at least 27 species will be produced and partially or fully implemented. An updated list of Cuban native plants will be available, and the Cuban relatives of globally important plants for food, agriculture and forestry will be identified.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: (1) complete assessment of all species of palms; (2) complete assessment of all species of cacti; (3) complete assessment of all species of orchids; (4) complete assessment of endemic plant species; (5) complete assessment of bryophytes; (6) develop a conservation network aiming at conducting Red List assessments and promoting and supporting conservation initiatives in the Caribbean region, with emphasis in plant species that are shared among islands; (7) update the Checklist of vascular plants of Cuba; (8) complete assessment of all species of ferns.

Research activity: (1) identify and document natural areas with conservation needs; (2) identify Cuban wild relatives of cultivated plants important for food, agriculture and forestry.

Plan

Planning: (1) produce and partially or fully implement recovery plans for 27 species of Cuban plants; (2) revise Protected Areas Management Plans as needed by the National Centre for Protected Areas.

Act

Conservation actions: (1) implement Species Recovery plans; (2) monitor mangrove and restoration initiatives in the south of Artemisa and Mayabeque.

Network

Capacity building: build Red Listing capacities.

Activities and results 2019

Assess

Red List

i. We completed the assessments for all Cuban palms. The assessments are in the Cuban Plant Specialist Group database. Instead of entering the information manually into the IUCN SIS database, we worked on developing a module to export the assessments to SIS Connect. The module is finished, and a trial assessment was exported successfully to SIS Connect. Once the exported assessment passes the Red List Check status, we will bulk-export the palm assessments and others into the IUCN SIS database. (KSR #1)
ii. We completed the assessments for all Cuban cacti except the two recently described species *Leptocereus albillus* Areces and *L. chrysotyrius* Areces. We are working on the assessment of the two new species, which should be ready by August 2020. (KSR #1)

iii. We did not make any significant progress on orchid Red Listing in the April and August workshops or during the rest of the year. In November’s coordination meeting, we appointed a coordinator to organise the work of the different orchid groups of experts. (KSR #1)

iv. In April, we worked on the assessments of species in the families Melastomataceae, Araliaceae, Polygonaceae, Simaroubaceae, Lamiaceae, and Ebenaceae. In total, we completed assessments for 343 tree species this year. (KSR #1)

v. Our bryophytes group worked on updating the checklist of bryophyte species and updating the database, but no assessments were finished. (KSR #1)

vi. In April 2019, we organised a regional workshop with representatives from the Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico (Yucatan), and the United States (Florida and Puerto Rico) to assess the conservation situation of Caribbean endemic plants, and foster regional cooperation for plant conservation. During the workshop, we completed the assessments for 45 species. In September 2019, we co-organised a meeting in the Bahamas to assess species shared between Cuba and the Bahamas. During this meeting, 27 species were assessed. (KSR #1)

vii. In 2019, the group’s taxonomy authority commenced their work on the new edition of the checklist of vascular plants of Cuba. The new list should be completed by late 2022 or early 2023. (KSR #1)

viii. Our Ferns Group started updating old assessments and evaluating fern species that are Data Deficient or that have no previous assessment. They updated the assessments of 100 ferns and assessed five species of the genus *Alsophila* and *Cyathea*, considering the populations of the species in the Caribbean region. The fern group also worked on the assessments of eight species of the genus *Notholaena*. (KSR #1)

Plan

i. We started the recovery plans of *Juniperus lucayana*, *Roystonea violacea* and *Thespesia cubensis*. This work and the consultation process will continue through 2020. We will not be able to meet the target of 27 recovery plans, because we could not secure the necessary funds. (KSR #15)

ii. During 2019, our members from central Cuba reviewed the Management Plan of the Protected Area ‘Mogotes de Jumagua’. (KSR #15)

Act

Conservation actions

i. We continue with the implementation of the recovery plans for the following species: *Coccolithus borhidiana*, *Dendrocereus nudiflorus*, *Ekmanianthe longiflora*, *Harpalyce macrocarpa*, *Leuenbergeria zinniiflora*, *Magnolia cristalensis*, *Magnolia minor*, *Magnolia orbiculata*, *Magnolia cubensis*, *Podocarpus angustifolius*, and *Tabebuia sauvallei*. Over 7,000 plants of these species were introduced in the wild. (KSR #24)

ii. Between April and June, four expeditions were conducted to establish 21 permanent plots for monitoring swamp forest restoration in the south of Artemisa and Mayabeque. These plots aim to set a baseline for monitoring these communities in the long-term. (KSR #25)

Network

Capacity building

i. During 2019, we continued with our training programme for early-career biologists. This year we trained six graduate students on Red Listing. (KSR #5)

Acknowledgements

We thank the following donors that support our mission: Planta! - Plantlife Conservation Society, Whitley-Sagre Conservation Fund, Fondation Franklinia, Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Project: P211LH005-046 of the Programme: Sustainable use of Biological Diversity in Cuba, the National Environmental Agency (Cuba), the Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD) Project Conectando Paisajes. Moreover, we want to thank the National Botanical Garden, University of Havana for hosting our group and the Cuban Botanical Society for its organisational support. Our very special thanks and appreciation to the local conservationists and volunteers who work with us for the conservation of Cuban plants and their habitats.

Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 4/5

Assess 8

Plan 2

Act 2

Network 1

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 5, 15, 24, 25

KSR: Key Species Result