Mission statement
The Boa and Python Specialist Group (BPSG) mission is to provide expert opinion and scientific advice to IUCN and other conservation organizations, government and non-government agencies, applicable to the conservation of boas and pythons and snakes in general.

Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

Barometer of life
- Red List
  i. During 2016 and 2017, the BPSG RLA coordinator contributed with the review of several snake species accounts submitted for review by the IUCN Global Reptile Assessment unit. (KSR #1)

Capacity building
- Capacity building
  i. In 2014, under the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP), an initiative signed between IUCN-BPSG, Kering Luxury group and International Trade Center (ITC), we held a workshop on python farming in Viet Nam. The workshop disseminated information about python farming, educated farmers about CITES and national regulations and taught python farmers about humane killing methods. In early 2017, this workshop was followed up by a series of 12 workshops undertaken in Malaysia and Viet Nam. These workshops aimed at developing the capacity of farmers and processing facility owners and staff in best practices for python handling and treatment. (KSR #17)

Communications
- Communication
  i. During 2016 and 2017, we produced two Serpens BPSG newsletter issues (Vol. 4, No 2 and Vol. 5, No 1), which were distributed among membership and subscribers on a free basis. (KSR #28)
- Documents review
  i. Under the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP), the BPSG reviewed and contributed to the elaboration of two reports by the International Trade Center, which assessed the impact of the python skin trade in the livelihoods of people in Viet Nam and Malaysia. Both studies were finished in 2015 but reviewed, published and disseminated in late 2016.
- Research activities
  i. PCP collaborative study to better understand the sustainability of SE Asia python trade finished and published as an IUCN/SSC Occasional Paper. This study implied the examination of nearly 5,000 reticulated pythons caught for trade in Malaysia and Indonesia over a two years period. The data gathered suggests that the harvest of reticulated pythons is sustainable at a global scale despite initial predictions. (KSR #32)
  ii. PCP collaborative study to pilot techniques for differentiating skins of wild from captive-bred pythons completed. This research allowed us to now use either stable isotopes or elemental (trace elements) analyses to take a skin of unknown origin and determine whether it was from a wild or captive-bred python. Unfortunately, the techniques are currently too costly to employ in many contexts, except for undertaking “spotchecks”. More broadly, however, the principles learned and techniques developed may be applicable to similar problems with other traded wildlife species. (KSR #32)
The Hogg Islands Dwarf Boa (*Boa imperator*) occurs in two tiny volcanic islands offshore Honduras, an area of less than 2.5 km². Photo: Tomás Waller

First live Cropan’s Boa (*Corallus cropanii*) specimen found by a BPSG funded project after 60 years. Photo: L. Correa
The elusive Black Python (Simalia boeleni), endemic of the mid-mountain forests of Papua New Guinea, is one of the world’s least known pythons. Photo: Tomás Waller

Scientific meetings

The second meeting of the Caribbean and Latin American Boid Group was held in early August 2017 on the island of Cayos Cochinos Menor, Honduras. The meeting was sponsored by the BPSG and hosted by the Honduran Coral Reef Foundation. Throughout the meeting, we heard talks on regional research. One session was spent discussing proposed IUCN Red List Assessments for several species that need to be updated or assessed.

Conservation action

i. We provided two grants to improve the knowledge and conservation status of the Hogg Island Boa constrictor and the Cropan’s Boa in 2016. These grants preceded the establishment of a grant program as of 2017 to foster the conservation status of the most threatened species in our remit. Both studies were finished and in the case of the Cropan’s Boa, and thanks to this grant, the first living specimen of Corallus cropani (IUCN Endangered) was found after 60 years of the species description. (KSR #27)

Policy

Documents review

i. Under a CITES-IUCN collaborative work in snake trade issues, BPSG members were in charge of preparing a draft document on Non-Detriment Findings for trade in CITES-listed species in 2015. This document was reviewed and improved in the Expert Workshop on the Making of Non-Detriment Findings for Trade in CITES-listed Snakes that took place in Kuala Lumpur in 2017 and later finished and submitted by the BPSG to the CITES Secretariat for consideration at the Twenty-ninth meeting of the Animals Committee Geneva (Switzerland), 18-22 July 2017, where it was approved.

Synergy

i. In 2017, the PCP successfully completed its ambitious work program on improving the sustainability of the supply chain of SE Asian pythons into the luxury industry. BPSG was represented in the Steering Committee as well as with Daniel Natusch (BPSG member) leading the working program. Both, the research phase (2013-2015) and the implementation phase (2015-2017), produced nine publications (two IUCN/SSC occasional papers), several documents and training material that have been communicated both in media and in the appropriate fora (local workshops, CITES meetings, etc). (KSR #29)

ii. BPSG will take part in a new initiative, the Southeast Asian Reptile Conservation Alliance (SARCA), which follows on from the success of the Python Conservation Partnership, and has been established by BPSG member Dan Natusch together with the non-profit sustainability network, BSR (https://www.bsr.org/en/). The aim of SARCA is to work with the reptile skin industry to ensure maintenance of wild reptile populations, support local and national economies and promote animal welfare principles. SARCA’s direction will be governed by a steering committee made up of key parties, including representatives from CITES, national governments, industry and scientists. BPSG will be represented in SARCA steering committee. SARCA will be fully operational as of 2018. (KSR #29)

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**Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020**

**Barometer of life**
Red List: complete assessment of Boidae and Pythonidae species.

**Capacity building**
Capacity building: train two BPSG members in Red List assessments.

**Communications**
Communication: increase frequency of Serpens newsletter to twice a year.
Membership: improve communication with membership.
Scientific meetings: organisation of the first BPSG global members meeting.

**Conservation action**
Proposal development and funding: increase number of grants delivered.
Research activities: (1) develop a standard reference for BPSG species taxonomy; (2) improve knowledge and status of Cropan’s Boa; (3) develop research programs on priorities established under SARCA cooperation.

**Increasing diversity of SSC**
Membership: increase BPSG membership in species range countries.

**Policy**
Synergy: (1) keep participating at international forums (e.g. CITES); (2) attend Southeast Asian Reptile Conservation Alliance (SARCA) Steering Committee meetings.

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**Projected impact for the quadrennium 2017-2020**

By the end of 2020, we envision: (1) an improved knowledge of the trade of SE Asian reptiles; (2) a change in the supply chain of skins from SE Asian reptiles due to a better interaction with traders and local governments; (3) a substantial advance in CITES provisions related to snake trade; (4) a better knowledge on the status of several threatened species but particularly of the Endangered Cropan’s Boa (*Corallus cropani*); (5) a significant advance in Red List assessments of the species of our remit; (6) a more integrated and communicated group which will redound in more effective conservation actions worldwide.

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**Summary of activities (2016-2017)**

Key Priority Area ratio: 5/7

Key Priority Areas addressed:
- Barometer of life (1 activity)
- Capacity building (1 activity)
- Communications (5 activities)
- Conservation action (1 activity)
- Policy (6 activities)

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 17, 26, 27, 28, 29

KSR: Key Species Result