

IUCN SSC

Bat Specialist Group



2020 Report



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Co-Chairs

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Number of members

94

Social networks

Facebook: IUCN Bat Specialist Group
Website: <https://www.iucnbsg.org/>



Mission statement

(1) To contribute to the mission and goals of IUCN/SSC.
(2) To ensure the maintenance or recovery of populations of threatened bat populations.
(3) To ensure that other bat species remain at a favourable conservation status.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, we envision that having effective Red List assessments in place, informed by current taxonomy, will underpin effective conservation planning for bat species globally. The Bat Specialist Group (BSG) anticipates a sustainable resolution to the human-bat conflict in Mauritius, and an end to Government culls of Greater Mascarene Flying Fox (*Pteropus niger*, also known as the Mauritius Fruit Bat). A conservation networking initiative in Oceania is intended to promote regional capacity and conservation of threatened island bat species. The North American Bat Conservation Alliance will be solidly in place and recognised by the three federal governments of Canada, the US and Mexico, as the entity to promote bat conservation on the continent. RELCOM, the Latin American Alliance, will have the network of Important Areas for Bat Conservation (AICOMs) and Important Sites for Bat Conservation (SICOMs) articulated and integrated into a GIS platform upon which each country will enable investment in bat conservation priorities. Following the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) listing of four species of *Lasiurus*, the implementation of the associated requirements is a priority for the quadrennium; additional species are likely to be listed. A survey to

monitor the presence of *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* will have, by the end of 2020, expanded to Mexico and research for treatment and recovery of bats affected by White Nose Syndrome will continue.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: (1) complete assessment of Old and New World bats; (2) establish a global bat taxonomy database and review process.

Research activities: compile all Important Areas for Bat Conservation (AICOMs) and Important Sites for Bat Conservation (SICOMs) in one GIS platform.

Plan

Capacity building: build capacity for disease management, surveys, important areas and sites for bat conservation, etc.

Research activities: secure standardised protocols to monitor *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd) in North America.

Network

Synergy: (1) resolve human-bat conflict and secure stable populations of Greater Mascarene Flying Fox; (2) strengthen interaction with wind energy companies for bat conservation; (3) develop a network of bat conservation researchers in Oceania; (4) create a network of networks around the world for bat conservation.

Communicate

Communication: (1) improve BSG communication with all its members; (2) produce a position statement on emergent diseases and bats.



Otomops martiensseni, Rwanda
Photo: Rodrigo Medellín

Activities and results 2020

Assess

Red List

i. Two hundred and thirty-three (233) assessments from the Old World were published in 2020. (KSR #1, 2)

Research activities

i. An electronic book compiling all the information on AICOMs and SICOMs was planned, and the different parts assigned to several editors, all of them members of Red Latinoamericana del Caribe para la Conservación de los Murciélagos (RELCOM). A draft of the first three parts of the book on general topics was produced by the end of 2020. Writing of the book will continue in 2021, when a full first draft is expected. (KSR #43)

Plan

Capacity building

i. Many new materials on disease and surveys, among other topics, were developed and distributed. (KSR #18)

Research activities

i. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, and Mexican Wildlife Department have established a protocol, in place now, to monitor Pd in North America. This has quadrupled knowledge on hibernating bats in Mexico and covered a major portion of hibernacula in Canada and the US. (KSR #12)

Network

Synergy

i. In 2020, the Mauritian Government implemented a fifth cull, although the number of bats killed is uncertain. Co-Chair Kingston, with Alex Zimmerman (Chair, Human-Wildlife Conflict Task Force) and Ewan Macdonald, published an article in *The Conversation*, attempting to keep dialogue open (see <https://theconversation.com/why-mauritius-is-culling-an-endangered-fruit-bat-that-exists-nowhere-else-150567>). (KSR #29)

ii. The pandemic has affected the progress to strengthen interaction with wind energy companies for conservation. Some companies are interested but there is no movement yet. (KSR #29)

iii. The Pacific Bat Conservation Network (PacBat) was formally launched in 2020 and its leadership team includes key representatives from Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu. The Facebook membership is currently at 111 members. Leadership includes representatives from the IUCN Bat Specialist Group, IUCN Red List Authority, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Global Union of Bat Diversity Networks (GBatNet), Australasian Bat Society, Birdlife – Oceania, academics, and national non-governmental groups from within the region. (KSR #29)

iv. The Global Union of Bat Diversity Networks – GBatNet – was launched. GBatNet is a network of 14 member networks from around the world. The networks include regional conservation networks such as Red Latinoamericana del Caribe para la Conservación de los Murciélagos (RELCOM), Southeast Asian Bat Conservation Research Unit (SEABCRU), Bat Conservation Africa (BCA), North American Bat Conservation Alliance (NABCA), UNEP/EUROBATS, BatLife Europe, Western Asia Bat Research Network (WAB-Net), The Australasian Bat Society, and thematic networks such as Bat 1K, Bat One Health Research Network (BOHRN), Bat Phenotypes and Evolution Network (BPEN), Global Bat Taxonomy Working Group (GBTWG) and of course the IUCN BSG. In September 2020 funds were received from the US National Science Foundation under its AccelNet programme. This provides five years of support for conservation research on drivers of bat diversification and conservation. (KSR #29)

Communicate

Communication

i. The BSG panel on the risk of human-to-bat transmission of SARS-CoV-2 met 2–4 times per month from May 2020 onwards, drawing in members from around the world and from



Rhinolophus acuminatus, Rwanda
Photo: Rodrigo Medellín



Townsend's big-eared bat, *Corynorhinus townsendii*, Puebla, Mexico
Photo: Marco Tschapka

different domains of expertise. (KSR #28)

ii. Out of concern of the risk of human-to-bat transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the BSG recommended a temporary suspension of fieldwork in April 2020 to ascertain the level of risk. In May 2020, we convened a global panel of BSG members with expertise ranging from bat ecology to virology to assess the scientific evidence for the potential of human-to-bat transmission and efficacy of risk mitigation strategies. It was the opinion of the panel that there is a credible risk of human-to-bat transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and the resulting strategy recommended actions to reduce this risk through MAP: Minimising contact with bats, Assessing the potential risk that the researcher poses to bats and not handling or working with bats if exposure risk is high, and Protecting bats by adopting good field hygiene practices – using masks and gloves when handling bats, regularly disinfecting equipment that comes in contact with bats, and minimising time and personnel in contact/proximity with bats. Guidelines based on the MAP strategy were then developed for researchers (June 2020), those who work in bat rescue and rehabilitation (June 2020), and cavers (August 2020). Infographics for each group were developed and translated into multiple languages (French, Spanish, Indonesian and Japanese). An infographic for guano collectors was also developed and disseminated, and a decision tree developed for researchers. All materials are on the BSG Publications and COVID-19 page of the BSG website. A FAQ page was developed for the general public. The expert panel became a Working Group that met weekly or every second week throughout 2020 to develop the materials and to also work on a manuscript explaining key terms in disease research that are commonly misinterpreted, with consequences for bat conservation. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2020

Species Conservation Cycle ratio:4/5

Assess	2	
Plan	2	
Network	4	
Communicate	2	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 2, 12, 18, 28, 29, 43

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-019

KSR: Key Species Result