

IUCN SSC

Bat Specialist Group

2019 Report



Tigga Kingston



Rodrigo Medellín

Co-Chairs

Tigga Kingston ⁽¹⁾ (Old World)
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Red List Authority Coordinators

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Location/Affiliation

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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 *Pteropus niger* (Greater Mascarene Flying Fox, 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: capacity building 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 *Pteropus niger*; (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.



Near Threatened Lesser Long-nosed Bat, *Leptonycteris yerbabuena*, visiting a saguaro cactus flower in Sonora, Mexico
Photo: Jens Rydell

Activities and results 2019

Assess

Red List

- i.** The assessments of Old and New World bats were completed by local and regional experts, with the majority coming from Asia. We are in the process of updating the maps. (KSR #1, 2)
- ii.** The database 'Bats of the World: A Taxonomic and Geographic Database' (<https://www.batnames.org>) was established and made publicly available in 2018. Work continued in 2019 to update species accounts within it and develop a review process. The Global Bat Taxonomy Working Group was established including expert taxonomists from around the world, and in 2019 a process for reviewing changes was developed. In 2020, a Slack workspace will be created for this purpose. (KSR #4)

Research activities

- i.** The regional project of AICOMs and SICOMs continues progressing after two years of intensive work conducted by the Bat Conservation Programmes that form part of the RELCOM network, sponsored by CYTED (Programa Iberoamericano de Ciencia y Tecnología para el Desarrollo). Overall, over 160 AICOMs and SICOMs have been created and compiled in

a database, now available at RELCOM's official website. This database is open for public consultation and will be of key importance for conservation and management of important areas and sites for bat conservation across the Americas and the Caribbean. (KSR #43)

Plan

Capacity building

- i.** The new disease research network WABNet (Western Asia Bat Research Network) includes several IUCN members. The second annual workshop was held in Amman, Jordan, in December 2019, and included extensive capacity building. (KSR #18)
- ii.** IUCN members are also part of the Bat One Health Research Network (BOHRN) and participated in a workshop in Thailand in August 2019. (KSR #18)

Research activities

- i.** The protocol for Canada and the US to monitor Pd in North America has been finalised in the context of the White Nose Syndrome Response Team (WNS Team). The WNS Team in Mexico, led by R. Medellín, is implementing parts of the protocol and the information on hibernating bats in Mexico has grown exponentially over the past three years. A review of bat hibernation in Mexico is ready to be submitted for publication. After three years of surveys in

Mexico, all samples from Mexican caves have come back negative for Pd and there are no cases of mortality or the disease per se. All samples are processed at the US Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center by Dr Anne Ballman. (KSR #12)

Network

Synergy

- i.** Extensive discussions on strategy took place between Co-Chair Kingston and the Chair of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Task Force, Alex Zimmerman, at the Chairs' Meeting. (KSR #29)
- ii.** The Third Workshop in the mitigation series, which focused on working with the media, was held in Mauritius in November 2019, led by Dr Ewan McDonald from Said Business School, Oxford University, in collaboration with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and Mauritian Government. Despite this, there was another (4th) cull in December 2019. The target number of individuals was 10,000. There was also a census by the National Parks and Conservation Service who estimated that the current population is over 106,000 individuals. There are concerns that this figure is an overestimate. (KSR #29)

Vulnerable Banana Bat,
Musonycteris harrisoni, Mexico
Photo: Rodrigo Medellín



Endemic Malagasy Trident Bat,
Triaenops menamena, Madagascar
Photo: Rodrigo Medellín



Thomas's Fruit-eating Bat,
Artibeus watsoni, carrying a fig in Costa Rica
Photo: Angelica Menchaca



Daniela Cafaggi, Institute of Ecology, UNAM, sampling a hibernating bat in a cave in central Mexico in January 2020
Photo: Alejandro Ganesh

iii. Medellin was invited to be a member of the Energy Task Force of the Convention for Migratory Species (CMS). After his efforts, four species of *Lasiurus* were listed in the CMS Appendices via a proposal compiled by Medellin and E. Baerwald that the government of Peru submitted. This proposal was adopted by consensus. Meetings were held with Mexican wind energy companies, but in 2019 the Mexican government all but deactivated all sustainable energy initiatives. (KSR #29)

iv. Waldien coordinated with the Australasian Bat Society (ABS) leadership to develop a broader vision for the ABS to better meet their commitment to fully represent bat conservation research throughout Oceania. A special section and specific presentation on the needs and opportunities was proposed for their 2020 conference; the presentation was moved to their general assembly meeting as it provided a better forum for the meaningful discussions that are needed for lasting change. (KSR #29)

v. The Red List assessments have also been used to catalyse and engage people from across Oceania. ABS leadership assigned regional representation to their conservation officer (Dr Michael Pennay). (KSR #29)

vi. Representatives of most of the networks met at the International Bat Research Conference in Thailand in August 2019 and reaffirmed their commitment to a global network of networks. (KSR #29)

vii. We submitted to the US National Science Foundation's Accelerating Research through International Network-to-Network Collaborations (AccelNet) programme for support in February 2019. The proposal was evaluated as competitive but was not funded. It was decided to revise and resubmit in 2020. (KSR #29)

Communicate

Communication

i. Our newsletter was disseminated (see https://www.iucnbsg.org/uploads/6/5/0/9/6509077/iucn_bsg_newsletter_2019.pdf). One-way interactions took place through distribution of National Geographic Society funding opportunities and similar, but bi-directional communication was not achieved globally. (KSR #28)

ii. Given the complexity and rapidly changing nature of emergent diseases, e.g. SARS, we are thinking through the best strategy and whether a 'blanket' statement is appropriate. Many members of the BSG, including the two Co-Chairs, are fully engaged and constantly active in this context, lecturing and giving interviews to a plethora of media around the world. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 4/5

Assess	3	■■■
Plan	3	■■■
Network	7	■■■■■■■
Communicate	2	■■

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 2, 4, 12, 18, 28, 29, 43

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-019

KSR: Key Species Result