

# IUCN SSC Freshwater Conservation Committee

2018 Report



Topiltzin Contreras MacBeath



Ian Harrison

## Co-Chairs

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## Red List Authority Coordinator

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## Location/Affiliation

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## Number of members

16



## Mission Statement

To raise the profile of freshwater biodiversity through: (1) coordinating freshwater species conservation activities through the SSC, highlighting emerging patterns and ensuring that increasing attention is given to issues concerning freshwater biodiversity conservation; (2) making freshwater recommendations to the SSC based on the work of the Freshwater Conservation Committee, and ensuring that freshwater species conservation issues are well represented within the SSC and the wider IUCN; (3) assisting the SSC by providing authority and credibility in its engagement with policy processes and major freshwater related events.

## Objectives for the 2017-2020 advisory period

By 2020, we envision that the Freshwater Conservation Committee can provide stronger recommendations for freshwater conservation priorities, in terms of which species and regions require most urgent action, and how to link conservation action between regions through habitat connectivity. We can achieve this through mobilising the newly assimilated Red List assessment data for application to management and policy. Conservation action will be directed at selected, leading threats to freshwater ecosystems, in particular, invasive species and fragmentation of habitats by dams. By working with partners such as the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Freshwater Specialist Group, we can provide guidance for better conservation of freshwater ecosystems in protected areas. By facilitating

communication and collaboration between SSC Specialist Groups with a freshwater interest, and by linking this to the work of other IUCN Commissions and the Secretariat, as well as contributing to other major freshwater initiatives beyond IUCN, we will ensure that future freshwater conservation planning is more fully integrated across IUCN's programmes. Conservation of freshwater species and habitats will

## Plans

Planning: (1) promote the inclusion and effective management of freshwater ecosystems in protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).

Policy: (1) publish a paper on review of threats to freshwater wetlands; (2) ensure that freshwater ecosystems are better integrated into the post-2020 global biodiversity outlook.

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Conservation activities: develop projects and collaborations focused on freshwater invasive species.

**Network**

Capacity building: (1) plan and run a workshop, focused on challenges, opportunities and priorities for freshwater biodiversity conservation, at the 2019 SSC Leaders' Meeting; (2) following the freshwater workshop at the 2019 SSC Leaders' Meeting, plan and run a cross-linked series of freshwater themed events at the 2020 World Conservation Congress, focused on challenges, opportunities, and priorities for freshwater biodiversity conservation.

Proposal development and funding: fundraising for projects/Programme Officer.

Synergy: (1) be a key partner in developing the IUCN One Programme for Freshwater Biodiversity (as defined by a white paper describing the objectives of the strategy); (2) develop and help coordinate an IUCN Freshwater Network, for sharing information and freshwater objectives, with an online mechanism for sharing information; (3) review freshwater targets and objectives of other Specialist Groups to identify

areas of shared or supporting interest; (4) be a key partner in developing the new initiative, the Alliance for Freshwater Life (AFL); (5) be a key partner in a new initiative/NGO focused on fundraising for freshwater biodiversity conservation; (6) the Committee will be seen as a source of advice and coordination on freshwater activities in SSC and partners.

**Communication**

Communication: (1) create a list of '25 top species' – representative across taxonomic groups and regions – that highlight some of the main issues associated with freshwater ecosystem conservation; (2) establish effective outreach and communications.

**Activities and I 2018****Annex****Annex****i.**

statement made by the 'Partners for Wetlands' (International Organization Partners of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands): <https://www.wwt.org.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/IOP-statement-post-COP13-FINAL.pdf>. Subsequently, a few members of the Committee also provided feedback to IUCN on a review of the Aichi targets, and how they might be refined to better include freshwater issues. Some Committee members also prepared a letter to Science in response to the latest Living Planet Index, noting the need to integrate freshwater more fully into the post-2020 CBD targets and have clear links to the Sustainable Development Goals (that letter was published in 2019). Further input was provided to IUCN in 2019 for its response to CBD's Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework discussion paper and several of our recommendations have been included in IUCN's response document: [https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn\\_response\\_cbd\\_post\\_2020\\_part\\_2\\_target\\_formulations\\_and\\_topics\\_12\\_april\\_2019\\_final.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn_response_cbd_post_2020_part_2_target_formulations_and_topics_12_april_2019_final.pdf). Members of the Committee are also engaged with the initiative being led by WWF-UK on 'Bending the Curve for Freshwater Biodiversity Loss', which is also considering how global policy targets can be improved to better represent freshwater ecosystems. (KSR #7, 26)

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i. Co-Chairs of the Committee have been engaged in the SSC Leaders' Meeting planning process and have recommended the inclusion of freshwater

**ii.** Committee members assimilated a list of Specialist Groups, Committees and Task Forces within the IUCN Commissions that have an interest in freshwater. We have focused initially on SSC groups, but have also contacted groups from one or two other Commissions, such as the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM). CEM's Wetlands Ecosystems Group are involved in a process of classifying and mapping freshwater ecosystems globally, so they can be assessed following the Red List of Ecosystems criteria. Claudio Baigun (leader of the CEM Wetlands Group) has been recruited as a member of the Freshwater Conservation Committee. (KSR #29)

**iii.** Both Co-Chairs and some other members of the Freshwater Conservation Committee have been closely involved with the development of the Alliance for Freshwater Life (AFL), following an initial planning meeting held at Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Berlin, in October 2017. Subsequently, some Committee members helped plan the official launch of the AFL at Stockholm World Water Week in August 2018 (<https://programme.worldwaterweek.org/event/8124-a-new-global-initiative-the-alliance-for-freshwater-life>). We have also co-authored a manuscript describing the AFL: Darwall, W., et al. (2018). The Alliance for Freshwater Life: A global call to unite efforts for freshwater biodiversity science and conservation. *Alfa c C a : Mar a d F - a Ec* 28(4):1015–1022. Some Committee members submitted a proposal (accepted) for a session on 'The Alliance for Freshwater Life – fostering multidisciplinary freshwater research on local to global scales' for the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Society for Freshwater Science. (KSR #29)

**i .** This initiative is not yet an official NGO, but it is officially formed, under the name Shoal (<https://shoalconservation.org>), and has a small Secretariat run by Mike Baltzer. The mission of Shoal is to engage a wide range of organisations to accelerate and escalate actions to save the most threatened fish and other freshwater species. Committee members Ian Harrison and Harmony Patricio attended the initial plan-