



# Species



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Specialist Group  
exchange

Crocodile  
Conservation

Boto Bait

Amphibian  
Action

Seeking  
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# Specialist Group exchange

## African Elephant SG

### *Ivory flows initiative*

Over the last year, the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) has undertaken a new initiative in response to worrying losses in key elephant populations and a potentially growing demand for ivory from consumer nations. At the request of a number of CITES Parties, we have developed a process to bring together key countries along the current ivory supply chain to discuss approaches for outreach and education to reduce the illegal flow of ivory from Africa. A series of technical exchange meetings has been proposed and the first of these took place in November 2010 in Hangzhou, hosted by China and supported by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service. The meeting, facilitated by the AfESG, brought together DRC, Tanzania, Thailand, Viet Nam, China and the United States, as well as representatives from TRAFFIC and the CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme. It is the first time that countries involved all along the supply chain, from producer, through transit and to consumer, have been brought together, to share experiences on the challenges each faces. The meeting focused on how to tailor awareness-raising activities to target consumer country nationals travelling to or residing in Africa, to ensure they know about the laws governing ivory and the dire consequences for elephants of the continuing illegal trade.

As always, the AfESG continues work on a number of fronts, including the African and Asian Elephant Database, work with the IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) on human-wildlife conflict challenges in the region, publishing *Pachyderm* and responding to requests from range States to help develop and enhance elephant conservation and management strategies and actions.

Intensive work continues in our partnership with the CITES MIKE programme, as we are completing our study on the impact of the elephant meat trade in Central Africa, as well as working closely with CITES to prepare for the next phase of MIKE.

### **Diane Skinner**

Programme Officer, African Elephant Specialist Group

## African Rhino SG

### *Rhino population gains at risk*

The African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) recently held its 10th meeting at Mokala National Park in South Africa. The meeting re-assessed the status of rhinos across the continent. The latest estimate of the number of Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) in Africa (as of 31 December 2010) is 4,840 (up from 4,240 in 2007). White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) numbers have also increased to 20,150 (up from 17,500 in 2007). Although good biological management and anti-poaching efforts have led to

population gains for both species of African rhino, there is still concern about the increasing involvement of organized criminal poaching networks and the rapidly escalating poaching which, if not halted, could see continental rhino numbers once again start to decline. The meeting participants learned that more than 800 African rhinos have been illegally killed for their horns in the past three years, with the most serious poaching upsurges in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Strategies to combat the poaching crisis were amongst the issues discussed at the meeting.

Over the last year AfRSG members have assisted Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe with the process of reviewing and/or revising these countries' national strategic rhino conservation plans. Following stakeholders' workshops, draft revised plans are being prepared for Botswana and Zimbabwe. The South African revised Black Rhino plan is in the final stages of getting official approval and the revised Tanzanian Black Rhino plan has been officially approved by the Minister. Namibia is also in the process



White Rhinoceros bull (*Ceratotherium simum*). © Lucky Mavrandonis

of revising its plan and AfRSG members have, on request, commented on a draft produced by a consultant.

### Richard Emslie

Scientific Officer and Red List Authority Focal Point, African Rhino Specialist Group

## Amphibian SG

### The Search for 'Lost' Frogs

In August 2010 the Amphibian Specialist Group (ASG), in collaboration with Conservation International (CI) and Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC), launched an innovative campaign called The Search for 'Lost' Frogs. The search – the first of its kind – took place between August and December 2010 in 21 countries on five continents, and involved 126 researchers. It represented a pioneering effort to co-ordinate and track such a large number of 'lost' amphibians. The goal was to establish whether populations have survived increasing pressures such as habitat loss, climate change and disease, and to help scientists better understand what lies behind the amphibian crisis.

Of a list of 100 'lost' species identified by scientists, four were rediscovered: The Cave Splayfoot Salamander (*Chiropetrotriton mosaueri*) of Mexico (last seen in 1941); the Mount Nimba Reed Frog (*Hyperolius nimbae*) of Ivory Coast (last seen in 1967); the Omaniundu Reed Frog (*Hyperolius sankuruensis*) of the Democratic Republic of Congo (last seen in 1979); and the Rio Pescado Stubfoot Toad of Ecuador (*Atelopus balios*).

Other rediscoveries were made in India, where scientists, having been inspired by the ASG's global search, launched their own campaign to focus on rediscovering local species. The effort has resulted in five missing



Omaniundu Reed Frog (*Hyperolius sankuruensis*), DRC, last seen in 1979.  
© Jos Kielgast

amphibians being rediscovered so far, including one that was last seen in 1874 and another which was found by pure chance in a rubbish bin. To read more about the 'Lost' Frogs Campaign please visit [www.conservation.org/lostfrogs](http://www.conservation.org/lostfrogs).

Continuing on from the highly successful public awareness campaign, the ASG is currently making significant upgrades to its various communications tools. The bimonthly publication FrogLog, has been updated and can now be viewed online [here](#). In addition, the ASG is regularly using Facebook and Twitter and will soon be launching their new and improved website at [www.amphibians.org](http://www.amphibians.org).

**James P. Collins and Claude Gascon**  
Co-Chairs, Amphibian Specialist Group

## Arctic Plant SG

### Arctic Plant Portal being developed

Our group met in February 2011 in Akureyri, Iceland. We focused on three topics: candidates for the Vascular Plant Red List; monitoring of these species; and an Arctic Plant Portal. We analyzed the new Panarctic Flora (PAF) for potential species for red listing and whittled down the list of Arctic species from approximately 2,200 to 163 candidates. A final list of candidate species will be prepared in 2012. We further plan to gather all available

information on these Arctic species and make these data available in our proposed Arctic Plant Portal; a mock-up is currently being developed (see example below). Once these data are collected, we will use the Arctic Plant Portal to encourage inventory and monitoring. In the portal links will be provided to resources on monitoring activities and protocols. The Arctic poses special challenges in terms of inventory and monitoring; it is costly with large areas to cover, and many areas are poorly known botanically. There is an urgent need to collect baseline data and establish collaborative international expeditions to Arctic hotspots. Our focus will be on areas of high diversity that may contain many potential species for red listing such as Seward Peninsula (Alaska, USA) and Wrangel Island and northeast Chukotka (Russian Federation).

### Stephen Talbot

Chair, Arctic Plant Specialist Group

## Asian Wild Cattle SG

### If prizes were given for contributions to Saola conservation...

The Zoological Society of London's (ZSL) programme, [EDGE of Existence](#) (Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered), promotes conservation of 100 of the world's most biologically significant and threatened mammals.

**ARCTIC PLANT PORTAL** CAFF

Start Species Floristic Region Red List Links Language SEARCH

*Symphyotrichum pycnosum*  
(Lindl.) Brouillet & Selliah  
Common Name: Pygmy Aster

**Description:**  
Perennial 1.5–15 cm, caespitose. Stems 1–10+, decumbent to ascending (purple). Leaves firm, margins usually entire, apices obtuse to acute, blades spatulate, 5–19 × 2–4 mm. Peduncles densely villous to lanate distally; bracts 0. Involucres hemispheric-companulate, 9–12.5 mm. Phyllaries in 3–4 series (dark purple), subequal, outer ± herbaceous, bases not indurate, exserted herbaceous (outer) to narrowly scarious and erose proximally (inner), strongly purple, villous-clilate in green portion, green.

**Habitat:**  
River banks, terraces, and sand dunes

**Conservation status:**  
G3, S2, sensitive, 16 populations in Canada, 5–6 discrete populations in Alaska.

**Notes:**