CONTENTS

Executive summary 3

1. Introduction 5
   1.1. The value of SSC Action Plans 6
   1.2. SSC Strategic Plan 6
   1.3. Terms of reference 7

2. Methods 7
   2.1. Decide on three Action Plans 7
   2.2. Design a telephone interview method 8
   2.3. Carry out a series of in-depth telephone interviews 8
   2.4. Summarise findings of all three phases of the action plan evaluation and those of other SGs 8
      2.4.1. Phase 1 9
      2.4.2. Phase 2 9
      2.4.3. Phase 3 9
      2.4.4. Other SG evaluations 9

3. Results 9
   3.1. Decide on three Action Plans 9
   3.2. Design a telephone interview method 9
   3.3. Carry out a series of in-depth telephone interviews 10
   3.4. Summarise findings of all three phases of the action plan evaluation and those of other SGs 11
      3.4.1. Phase 1 11
      3.4.2. Phase 2 12
      3.4.3. Phase 3 12
         1. Specialist Group planning and process 12
         2. Management by SSC Secretariat 18
         3. Product quality and distribution 23
         4. Implementation of Action Plan priorities 29
      3.4.4. Other Specialist Group evaluations 35

4. Discussion 37
   4.1. Main conclusions 37
   4.2. Issues 40
      4.2.1. The objective(s) of the Action Planning Programme 40
      4.2.2. Target audiences: implementing the action plans 40
      4.2.3. The resources available for compilation 41
      4.2.4. The nature of the recommendations 42
   4.3. What are SSC’s options? 43
      4.3.1. Continue with the current process 44
      4.3.2. Stop publishing taxon-based Action Plans 44
      4.3.3. Change the Action Planning Programme 44

5. Acknowledgements 46

6. References 46

7. Appendixes 49
   7.1. Report on Phase 1 of assessment 49
   7.2. Report on Phase 2 of assessment 59
   7.3. Questions used to evaluate Action Plans in telephone interviews 61
   7.4. SSC Distribution planning chart 70
   7.5. Example of UK Biodiversity Action Plan: black grouse *Tetrao tetrix* 72
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Species Survival Commission has been publishing Action Plans under the auspices of IUCN since 1986 and now more than 60 plans have been published in what is now a well-established series. There are, however, questions about the amount of real conservation action that they stimulate and so SSC has commissioned an evaluation of some aspects of its Action Plan Programme. Phase 1 assessed the type of actions that were recommended in 42 Action Plans. The most significant conclusions were that 1) there was little consistency between plans in the way that recommendations were developed and presented; 2) there was a broad division between general recommendations and specific actions; and 3) research of one form or another comprised a large proportion of the recommendations.

Phase 2 assessed the implementation of recommendations in six plans, four (equids, lagomorphs, otters and crocodiles) of which were complete assessments of the status of all priority projects identified in the Action Plans. A further response (cetaceans) provided information on the status of 50 of 56 priority projects and that on a sixth plan (canids) was only partially completed. The four complete responses reported on the progress of 284 recommendations, 18% of which were considered complete, 50% ongoing and 32% not started. A lack of resources (funds and/or personnel) was the reason that nearly half had not been started and political sensitivity accounted for a further 17%. Using the artificial categorisation of actions adopted in Phase 1, nearly 70% of implemented actions were classified as either research or ecological management.

This report presents Phase 3, in which five of the action plans included in Phase 2 were evaluated with respect to: Specialist Group planning and process; SSC Secretariat management; product quality and distribution; and implementation of priority projects. It is recognised that the plans evaluated were a self-selecting group of plans that have been produced by exceptionally motivated and active Specialist Groups and should be considered as a selection of the most actively pursued plans, rather than a representative sample.

Specialist Group planning and process: When Action Planning started, the perceived need was to remedy a lack of biological information on species and their conservation in the public domain. In the intervening years, however, there has been a large increase in availability of conservation-related information, and in particular biological information, and a shift in type of information being requested from purely biological to more applied knowledge. The detailed rationale behind the compilation of plans varies between Specialist Groups because of differing perceptions of the target audiences (i.e. who will act on the recommendations). This materially affects the content of the plans. In addition, the voluntary nature of the groups means that there is a trade-off between compiling plans quickly and being inclusive. At least some groups appear committed to the process as 2nd editions have been published or being prepared. More prescriptive guidelines on the identification of priorities would enhance their effectiveness: i.e. what kind of recommendations can be made and what is the specific target audience?

Management by SSC Secretariat: The increase in the number of plans being dealt with by the Secretariat has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. This has led to a problem in processing them effectively and finding funds for their publication. The current process seems unsustainable, especially as SSC Programme Officers are required for other activities and the reliance on interns is high. Clearer guidance on how Action Plans should be compiled may help address some of these issues by providing significant guidance as to what is needed and what will be used by IUCN.

Product quality and distribution: Action Plans are only useful if they are credible. Credibility is built on confidence in the information provided and ability to access that information. Broadly speaking Action Plans are acknowledged as being sound sources of biological content. In contrast, however, the distribution of the plans is weak; both in terms of the limited list of target audiences and in terms of determining whom the key people are in each organisation/agency. Therefore, there seems little that needs amending on the product quality as far as the biological information is concerned, although some audiences perceive that other sorts of information should be included (e.g. policy,
legislation, local community issues). The distribution strategy for Action Plans should receive much more attention.

**Implementation of action plan priorities:** Action Plans are intended to focus attention on urgently needed action and then enhance the probability that this action takes place. The effectiveness of Action Plan implementation is very variable. The case studies made here appear particularly successful and the Specialist Groups have pursued the recommendations actively. Outside the Specialist Groups uptake is uneven, with little promotion within IUCN and to external audiences. This may be partly due to differing perceptions of what they are versus what they should be. However, there is no doubt that some agencies outside IUCN find them very useful indeed and this demonstrates their potential effectiveness. Implementation of Action Plan priorities will remain patchy without several changes.

**Conclusions**
1) There has been a considerable amount of activity in pursuit of Action Plan recommendations, and this has involved individuals from government research and management agencies, universities and non-governmental organisations.
2) The plans are seen as valuable resources by stakeholders as diverse as multilateral environmental agreements (CITES and International Whaling Commission), non-governmental organisations (Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF-US and the People’s Trust for Endangered Species) and other parts of IUCN (Protected Areas Programme).

It is difficult to say the degree to which conservation actions have taken place solely because of the publication of the Action Plans, and to some extent this question is not the correct one. The correct question would be “Do Action Plans play an important role in the conservation process?” The results of this evaluation would indicate that the answer is yes.

**Recommendations for the future**
There are three options facing the SSC with regards to the future of Action Planning, namely 1) continuing the current process; 2) stopping publication; and 3) adapting the current process. However, the first two are really not viable alternatives. Continuing with the current process does not appear feasible, partly because of SSC Secretariat resource constraints, but also because it is clear that a single document cannot satisfy all of the conservation information needs of all target audiences. If SSC were to stop publishing taxon-based Action Plans it may result in reduced conservation action. The combination of an Action Plan, an active Specialist Group and the IUCN and SSC ‘seal of approval’ are a strong force for conservation.

Therefore, SSC should adapt the current Action Planning Programme by addressing the issues identified in this evaluation:
- identification of, and collaboration with, target audiences. SSC needs a clearer idea of exactly who the target audiences are so that the recommendations can be framed appropriately and to ensure that the plans reach those most able to act. This evaluation has identified some audiences that believe strongly in the SSC Action Plans and it would seem desirable to build partnerships with them. This may help provide additional resources, and would bring greater clarity to the products being produced by providing input to identify practical ways to address priorities such as land use management and local community work at various levels. Implementation would not be left to voluntary Specialist Groups alone.
- Guidance on Action Plan development and content, in particular for recommendations. To date, there has been little guidance provided to the Specialist Groups on how recommendations should be developed, and whilst the Secretariat has always hoped that these would not be limited to biological recommendations, there was no clarity in how these wider recommendations could be developed realistically. The key elements to include in guidelines would be related to clarity and comprehensiveness of recommendations; and a clear support strategy for the implementation of the recommendations. There are currently available models of “Conservation Management Guides” (eg. UK Biodiversity Action Plan) to which SSC could refer for examples.
1. INTRODUCTION

Since the first SSC Action Plan (Oates 1986) was published, more than 60 plans have been compiled, edited or authored and printed in a series of publications that is now well recognised. In April 1991 a joint Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (now Fauna and Flora International, FFI) and SSC meeting was held at London Zoo on Action Plans and their implementation. This was only four years after the first plan had been published and at the time 16 had been published, and many more were in draft stages Morris (1991). A message from the SSC Chairman, George Rabb stated that “The subject of Action Plans and their implementation is at the core of the Species Survival Commission’s work.” At the time of the meeting, SSC had just received a donation of USD1 million for the preparation of Action Plans and promoting their implementation (Morris 1991).

The majority of the plans have covered mammals, especially the larger charismatic species, such as primates (e.g. Mittermeier et al. 1992, Oates 1996), Asian rhinos (Mohd. Khan 1989, Foose and van Strien 1997) and wild cats (Nowell and Jackson 1996), but there are also Action Plans for orchids (Hágsater et al. 1996), conifers (Farjon and Page 1999), dragonflies (Moore 1997) and several groups of birds (e.g. cranes: Meine and Archibald 1996; parrots: Snyder et al. 2000; and pheasants: Fuller and Garson 2000). These plans contain a wealth of information on these species and it is claimed by SSC on the back of all plans being published that this series:

“… assesses the conservation status of species and their habitats, and specifies conservation priorities. The series is one of the world’s most authoritative sources of species conservation information available to natural resources managers, conservationists, and government officials around the world.”

The SSC Action Plan guidelines (version last updated March 1999) state that simply publishing information on species is not sufficient to ensure that action results and so Action Plans should “make prioritised recommendations specifically designed for key players”. Furthermore, the guidelines state several specific purposes of Action Plans, as follows:

- **To serve the interests of the Specialist Group members**
  First and foremost, the Action Plan serves the interests of SSC members. It is a compendium of their knowledge and expertise in one package, helping to guide future activities.

- **To provide a baseline record against which to measure change**
  As the Action Plan is a “snapshot in time”, it serves as a baseline set of data and information against which to measure change and monitor progress, indicating where changes of emphasis or direction may be needed to conserve the species.

- **To expand on the IUCN Red Lists of Threatened Species**
  The Action Plan elaborates on the species information presented in the IUCN Red Lists of Threatened Species by describing the current threats to a species, what is currently being done to address these threats, what further actions need to be taken, by whom these actions should be taken, and their order of priority.

- **To provide scientifically-based recommendations for those who can promote and support species conservation**
  Action Plans provide the rationale, information, and recommendations that need to be conveyed to audiences throughout the world, particularly those who could support SSC’s work.

- **To provide a common framework and focus for a wide range of players**
  By virtue of their contents, Action Plans become an authoritative resource to guide species conservation activities. They provide a common framework and focus for a range of players from decision-makers at the governmental level, to those who will implement the conservation recommendations on the ground. Scientists, resource managers, agency officials, funding organisations, and political leaders utilise them when deciding how to allocate available resources.

- **To provide a convenient and accessible conservation resource**
  There are few resources available that provide species information in the framework of conservation action. Action Plans can provide additional guidance through references and a concise bibliography.
section. This is especially important to conservationists and researchers who work under isolated conditions.

- **To establish priorities in species conservation**
  Action Plans identify gaps in species research and policy and give direction for future endeavours through prioritised conservation activities.

- **To aid fundraising**
  Action Plans can be used as an aid to raise funds for the recommended actions.

All plans are compiled by Specialist Groups with the single exception of the Parrot Action Plan (Snyder et al. 2000), for which there was no Specialist Group in existence at the time. The effort expended by the groups in synthesising information and assessing needs is considerable, and the majority of compilation is carried out voluntarily. There is also a significant cost in editing and printing the plans.

1.1. **The value of SSC Action Plans**

[Note: This is drawn from the evaluation of three Galliformes Action Plans undertaken by the World Pheasant Association and the Megapode SG, the Partridge, Quail and Francolin SG, and the Pheasant SG: Fuller et al. (in press).]

The practical value of Action Plans has been questioned by Collar (1994) and McNeely (2000) and it is apparent that demonstrating the effectiveness of these plans in preventing species extinctions is not easy (see Gimenez-Dixon and Stuart 1993). McGowan et al. (1998) discussed the findings and opinions of Collar (1994) and Gimenez-Dixon and Stuart (1993) and felt that despite the problems of clearly demonstrating that the three 1995 Galliformes Action Plans have led to definite conservation gains on the ground, the plans had served very valuable conservation functions.

McNeely (2000) suggests that whilst Action Plans contain a wealth of information relevant to the conservation of particular species, the priorities seem removed from the practical requirements of the species being reviewed. He exemplified this by stating that of the 105 actions proposed in the Wild Cats Action Plan (Nowell and Jackson 1996), 75 (71.3%) were for surveys and other research. This, he said, implied that the greatest problem facing the cats was a lack of information on their status and distribution, which he felt was not the case.

McNeely’s similar assessment of the Asian Rhino Action Plan (Foose and van Strien 1997) revealed a rather more even distribution of effort between various conservation actions, including intensive protection and anti-poaching, habitat management research and other activities. However, McNeely, still felt that the fundamental needs of these large mammals were not being addressed, as it was development and policy issues that had to be tackled to ensure the survival of these species and implied that Action Plans failed to stimulate these actions.

1.2. **SSC Strategic Plan**

The SSC Strategic Plan for 2000-2010 (SSC 2000) states the current role of these taxonomic Action Plans as follows:

“...The Commission’s activities are based on the work of over 120 Specialist Groups. Some cover taxonomic groups of plants or animals while others focus on topical issues such as reintroduction of species into former habitats and sustainable use of species. The groups have manifold structures and pursue diverse sets of activities. All of them collect information on the status of their species, many develop action plans and formulate conservation recommendations. Some are taking their activities considerably further by initiating, and in certain cases implementing, a range of conservation projects in the field.”

It then goes on to indicate that Action Plans have a role in achieving the first of its objectives (Decisions and policies affecting biodiversity influenced by sound interdisciplinary scientific information). This is amplified as follows:

“During the past few years, SSC has already moved from the traditional species red lists towards more integrated analyses (regional studies, action plans), but this is now to be taken on to much
higher levels still. Through the development of the Species Information Service (SIS) more problem-orientated analyses and outputs will be possible in response to the increasingly complex questions being addressed by national and international biodiversity agencies. Problem-oriented integrated Action Plans (e.g. for specific regions or countries) will receive higher priority than the traditional taxonomic-based ones."

It was not, however, stated explicitly why this change in emphasis was required. In the paired-ranking exercise used to determine priorities, the importance of the ‘problem-orientated’ Action Plans compared with taxonomic Action Plans is indicated by the adoption of “Problem-oriented, interdisciplinary Action Plans addressing significant conservation issues published and delivered to relevant target audiences” as the joint fourth highest priority. The action proposed for taxonomic Action Plans is the evaluation of existing ones, which was considered the 17th most important activity of SSC during the implementation period.

1.3. Terms of reference
1. Decide on three Action Plans to involve in stage three of the evaluation.
2. Design a telephone based evaluation method for these Action Plans.
3. Undertake a series of in-depth telephone interviews with appropriate individuals, including researchers, project managers, donors, and other relevant stakeholders.
4. Produce, by 30th September, a report incorporating the specifics of the findings from the case study telephone interviews, a summary of Phases I and II of the evaluation, and an overall summary of the findings of the Action Plan evaluation. Include in this report the available findings of Action Plan evaluations conducted by Specialist Groups, such as the Pheasant SG.

SSC acknowledges that, ideally, the evaluator would have had the option of determining the most appropriate way of collecting data that could best be used to evaluate the Action Plan process. This was, however, not possible for two main reasons. First, significant budgetary constraints and second, related to this, the fact that there had been two previous stages concerned with assessing differing aspects of the Action Plan process: namely the sort of recommendations made, and the Specialist Groups’ knowledge of implementation success. Therefore, we see this exercise as a series of case studies using a selection of Specialist Groups that have been responsive in phase two.

2. METHODS

2.1. Decide on three Action Plans
The choice of Action Plans was largely contingent on their inclusion in the second phase and evidence that the Chairs and others would be responsive to further requests for information. Initially a second criterion was used, and that was the nature of the priority actions recommended. This was considered because it was felt that it would be valuable to assess what action had occurred on recommendations other than surveys and research: i.e. where recommendations had involved policy or action by governments departments, had the Action Plans made a difference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Response to Phase 2</th>
<th>Variety of project types</th>
<th>Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zebras etc</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Variety of survey and management projects</td>
<td>Dr Patricia Moehlman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cetaceans Rabbits etc</td>
<td>Near complete Complete</td>
<td>Largely survey/research and management projects</td>
<td>Dr Randall Reeves Dr Andrew Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild dogs etc Crocodiles</td>
<td>Partial Complete</td>
<td>Variety of survey and management projects</td>
<td>Chair: Dr David Macdonald Contact: Dr Claudio Sillero-Zubiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Many survey/research projects, but also management</td>
<td>Chair: Prof Harry Messel Contact: Dr James Perran Ross</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, it became evident that it would be difficult to obtain a complete set of responses from individuals in the variety of areas listed in the third term of reference (i.e. “appropriate individuals, including researchers, project managers, donors, and other relevant stakeholders”; see Section 1.3 above). Therefore, it was thought to be more realistic to consider contacting individuals involved with all five plans, as the Specialist Group personnel had clearly demonstrated a willingness to contribute to this exercise. Furthermore, different plans had stakeholders from very different areas and an overall assessment of the impact of these plans would benefit from this broader base of input.

In addition several people were contacted outside the SSC network who may represent potential target audiences for the plans. The variety of the potential audiences is considerable, and the increasing size of the community dealing with conservation issues is so large that it is clearly difficult to assess the degree to which all sectors are aware of, and use, IUCN Action Plans. Therefore, those selected represent only a small sample.

2.2. **Design a telephone interview method**

The approach for the evaluation was based on that used by the IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. This approach uses a matrix that has four column headings: performance area, rationale/relevance, effectiveness/efficiency, and long-term implications. A matrix recently compiled for the Strategic Review of the IUCN European Office identified five performance areas, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance area</th>
<th>Rationale/relevance</th>
<th>Effectiveness/efficiency</th>
<th>Long-term implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission and mandate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Programme and strategy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Constituency and governance</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial viability</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The SSC Staff Meeting in May 2001 was then used to determine which performance areas were most appropriate to the Action Plan process and four such areas were identified. These were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance area</th>
<th>Rationale/relevance</th>
<th>Effectiveness/efficiency</th>
<th>Long-term implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Group planning and process</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Management by SSC Secretariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product quality and distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation of action plan priorities</td>
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</table>

Finally, questionnaires were designed that would allow information to be collected so that each performance area could be evaluated. One additional questionnaire was designed that was targeted specifically at non-SSC users.

2.3. **Carry out a series of in-depth telephone interviews**

Once the questionnaires had been finalised, individuals were identified who were involved in the various performance areas for each of the target Action Plans. An additional small group of people were identified for evaluating the perception that external audiences had of the plans.

2.4. **Summarise findings of all three phases of the action plan evaluation and those of other SGs**

An Executive Summary is presented on pages 3 and 4 that draws on the results in Section 3 and the Discussion of the issues in Section 4. The earlier two phases of the Action plan evaluation were
obtained and assessed. The evaluation carried out on the 1995 Galliformes Action Plans (Dekker and McGowan 1995; McGowan and Garson 1995; McGowan et al. 1995) was also obtained (see Fuller et al. in press) and summarised. This was carried out by the World Pheasant Association with the Megapode Specialist Group, the Partridge, Quail and Francolin Specialist Group, and the Pheasant Specialist Group during preparation of the 2000-2004 Action Plans for these groups.

2.4.1. Phase 1
Phase 1 was concerned with assessing the type of actions that were identified as priorities in the Action Plans and determining whether these had changed over time. Forty-two Action Plans were included in this assessment (carried out by SSC intern Joshua Schachter). The full report is presented at Appendix 1.

2.4.2. Phase 2
Phase 2 was concerned with assessing the degree to which the priority actions identified in a set of Action Plans had been implemented. Twelve Action Plans were identified at the start of this assessment (carried out by SSC intern Ammy Gillesberg), although replies were received on only six. The full report is presented at Appendix 2.

2.4.3. Phase 3
The present study was the third and final stage of the evaluation and it was designed to assess whether the Action Plans had influenced the amount of conservation action that had taken place. Given the variety of problems associated with this kind of study (see Gimenez-Dixon and Stuart 1993), the approach that was adopted (see Terms of reference in Section 1.3) was to carry out case studies of three Action Plans (see Section 2.1).

2.4.4. Other SG evaluations
The World Pheasant Association (with the relevant Specialist Group) undertook an evaluation of the value of the three 1995-1999 Galliformes Action Plans when these were revised in 1999. The emphasis and approach were different from the present study, as the data were collected through a questionnaire survey of the people that had carried out each project (Principal Investigators). In this survey they were asked reasons why they had carried out the project, how the objectives related to those stated in the Action Plan, whether the Action Plan and the Specialist Group endorsement was important in securing funds and what publications and reports, and conservation action had resulted from the work.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Decide on three Action Plans
The Action Plans that have been selected for this exercise are:
1. Rabbits, hares and pikas (Lagomorphs: Chapman and Flux 1990);
2. Zebras, asses and horses (equids: Duncan 1992);
3. Dolphins, porpoises and whales (cetaceans: Reeves and Leatherwood 1994); and
4. Foxes, Wolves, Jackals and Dogs (Ginsberg and Macdonald 1990)

Some information was also collected on
5. Crocodiles (Thorbjarnarson et al. 1992)

These were the groups that provided the most complete responses to Phase 2 of the evaluation.

3.2. Design a telephone interview method
The questionnaires are appended at Appendix 3 and their content is summarised below.

• SG planning and process
The intent of this questionnaire was to determine why an action plan had been compiled, what its objectives were and the nature of the compilation process. It was targeted at compilers, authors or editors.

- **Product quality and content**
  This questionnaire was designed to assess the confidence that users had in the plan. A question in the ‘non-SSC’ questionnaire also addressed this.

- **Process management and distribution by SSC Secretariat**
  This was really designed to describe the process by which the Secretariat manages the compilation of Action Plans and then promotes them to those able to act.

- **Implementation of Action Plan recommendations**
  The intent of this questionnaire was to ask researchers, government officials and others about the degree to which they have take notice of the priorities stated in Action Plans in their work, and whether the plans guided their efforts to any great effect.

- **Utility of Action Plans for non-SSC people**
  This questionnaire was designed to ask those people not involved in SSC about their perceptions and use of the plans. The interviewees were also asked whether the plans did not cover areas that they would find useful.

### 3.3. Carry out a series of in-depth telephone interviews

Telephone interviews were carried out with:

- **SG planning and process**
  Josh Ginsberg (Canid AP co-author)
  Patrick Duncan (Equid AP editor)
  John Flux (Lagomorph AP co-compiler and co-editor)
  Randall Reeves (Cetacean AP co-compiler)

- **Process management and distribution by SSC Secretariat**
  Mariano Gimenez-Dixon (Programme Officer)
  Linette Humphrey (Publications Officer 1987-2000)
  Simon Stuart (Species Programme until 2001: also some questions on planning and process and quality and content)
  Craig Hilton-Taylor (Red List Programme Officer)

- **Product quality and content**
  Mariano Gimenez-Dixon (Programme Officer)
  See also those listed under “Utility of Action Plans for non-SSC people”, where there were two questions related to this (see Appendix 3).

- **Implementation of Action Plan recommendations**
  Ann Oakenfull (Equid AP)
  Ken Sugimura (Lagomorph AP)
  Brian Smith (Cetacean AP)
  Fernando Cervantes (Lagomorph AP)
  Gopinathan Maheshwaran (Lagomorph AP)
  Peter Novellie (Equid AP)
  Claudio Sillero-Zubiri (Canid SG)
  Perran Ross (Crocodile SG: electronic feedback only – no telephone interview)

- **Utility of Action Plans for non-SSC people**
  Greg Donovan (International Whaling Commission: Cetacean AP)
3.4. Summarise findings of all three phases of the action plan evaluation and those of other SGs

The earlier two phases of the Action plan evaluation were obtained and assessed. The evaluation carried out on the 1995 Galliformes Action Plans (Dekker and McGowan 1995; McGowan and Garson 1995; McGowan et al. 1995) was also obtained (see Fuller et al. in press) and summarised. This was carried out by the World Pheasant Association with the Megapode Specialist Group, the Partridge, Quail and Francolin Specialist Group, and the Pheasant Specialist Group during preparation of the 2000-2004 Action Plans for these groups.

3.4.1. Phase 1

The major conclusion drawn from Phase 1 is that research actions were the most common priorities proposed in Action Plans. However, the way that the actions had been split into the categories to classify ‘types of action’ adopted in Phase 1 may indicate that this conclusion is not as straightforward as it first appears. For example, Schachter states that “researching legislation affecting a species” would be listed under research, rather than under legislation.

Inspection of Schachter’s categorisation of actions that he used in his review (see his section Methodology in Appendix 1) reveals a degree of overlap between some of them. For example, ‘research into captive breeding’ would fit into both “Research” and “Ex-situ management” and the division of protected area activities between his categories for “Ecological management” and “Legislation and policy” seems somewhat arbitrary. The impression, therefore, is that the categories are artificial in places and do not fully reflect the conservation process. In other words, perhaps it does not best reflect the logical sequence of information requirements in order to underpin sensible conservation interventions: i.e. what is being aimed at and what information is needed to get there (please see scheme Fuller et al. [in press]).

Schachter states that when all actions (both general and specific; see below) are combined, 54% of actions are research. In the context of species ecology and conservation ‘research’ would more usually be restricted to field research and, therefore, the first impression of Schachter’s finding is that 54% of actions recommended involve surveys and field research and this is not the case, as it includes research into legislation, management etc. Nonetheless, there is a clear emphasis on clarification of taxonomy, baseline surveys to discover the distribution of species and their status, and research into threats and solutions.

A second important point to emerge from Schachter’s assessment is the distinction between “general” and “specific” recommendations. The latter were those recommended actions that covered single species or a small number of species, rather than general recommendations for all species in the Action Plan. Interestingly, when dealing just with specific recommendations, the proportion of “Research” actions dropped from 54% to 39%, implying that the fairly general statements he identified in the Action Plans refer more to research actions than other kinds of action. This is despite his assertion (under Section 3. Sources of bias in Appendix 1) that non-research recommendations were typically stated in more general terms and therefore often not recorded in his assessment. It is also worth noting that Schachter felt that some recommended actions were too vague to be included, such as “protect species habitat” or “improve protection of protected areas”.

Finally, Schachter did look at the type of action recommended in different Action Plans. He concluded that there was little consistency between Action Plans in the way that they identified the conservation priorities for their species or species groups. These differences included both the
presentation of actions (where in the plan they appeared and their layout) and the detail that supported each recommendation. For example, in some cases, the recommendation was simply a statement of what was required and in other cases there was more information on how the recommendation might be carried out, or even project summaries.

In summary therefore, therefore the three main issues arising from Phase 1 were:

1. the evaluation did suggest that a large number of recommendations were research orientated, although this may be overstated in this evaluation because of the way in which recommendations were classified;
2. some actions were presented in a very specific manner and others were presented as more sweeping aspirations. The relative merits of these two approaches seem likely to depend upon the audience; and
3. there was little consistency in the way that priorities for action were presented, both in terms of format and content.

3.4.2. Phase 2
Phase 2 was concerned with assessing the degree to which the priority actions identified in a set of twelve Action Plans had been implemented. The full report is presented at Appendix 2.

Information was gathered on the progress of all recommendations in four Action Plans (lagomorphs, equids, otters and crocodiles), virtually all projects in the cetacean plan and some of the actions in the canid plan. These four plans had made 284 conservation recommendations. The responses indicated that 18% were complete, 50% were ongoing and 32% were not started. Of the actions not started, lack of resources (both funding and people) was the most significant factor, although impracticality and political sensitivity were also important reasons.

Gillesberg classified the actions that been proposed into the categories used by Schacter and concluded that nearly 70% were “Research” or “Ecological management”. “Ex-situ management” and “Legislation and policy” recommendations were fairly equally represented and together accounted for a further 20% of recommendations. It is not clear which type of actions comprised the recommendations that were completed and which were ongoing, but figures were presented for the actions not yet started. These suggest that 57% were “Research” and “Ecological management”.

In summary, the four main issues arising from Phase 2 were:

1. of the four Specialist Groups that responded, 68% of the recommendations that they made in their plans had been initiated and were either ongoing or completed;
2. reasons for recommendations not being implemented were mainly concerned with lack of human and financial resources, although practicality and political sensitivity were also important;
3. it could be surmised that the only source of information on the implementation of recommendations was the (usually volunteer) Specialist Group concerned; and
4. Specialist Groups vary in their capacity to monitor and report on this.

3.4.3. Phase 3
1. Specialist Group planning and process
Rabbits, hares and pikas. The Lagomorph Action Plan was compiled because SSC requested that it be done. The final chapter, which stated what the conservation priorities were for this group of 80 species, was produced once the other chapters were written. Different people who were involved had different ideas about what the objectives of compiling the plan should be. Broadly, there was a desire to bring all information together and assess the status of species. However, there was concern that a lack of information on some species meant that there was not even a basic idea of what the conservation needs were for those species. As a result, some field visits were carried out beforehand to talk to relevant people, e.g. visiting Sumatra to collect local information to include in the plan and one SG member travelled from the UK to India to look for the hispid hare so that some comments could be made about its conservation requirements.
The plan took more than two years to compile, which the compiler felt was too long, but it was not really possible to make this time any shorter as the reliance on volunteer effort was so significant. There were 5-10 Specialist Group members heavily involved in the compilation and a further 11-20 provided a smaller amount of input. Most of the relevant people who were known to the compilers were involved, although there were some specialists who would not join groups like the Lagomorph Specialist Group. The SSC Secretariat was involved in the process right from the start and was very responsive to all matters that arose.

The plan was not written with a definite shelf-life in mind and so it was not explicitly stated that the recommendations should be implemented within a five or ten year period. There were probably two limitations to the type of action that was proposed. The first was that because there was such a lack of information for some species, it was just not possible to state what action was required with any confidence. For example, the highest priority stated for the Sumatran rabbit *Nesolagus netscheri* was to locate the species in the wild. The second limitation was that the plan was largely written by biologists and so the recommendations were largely proposed from that perspective.

There was no strategy to implement the plan once it was published and it was felt that project initiation would be opportunistic. Rather it was intended that the plan be targeted at the global conservation community, and especially at students because many of the projects proposed involved the gathering of information. Action Plans were sent to universities in countries where lagomorphs occurred. Other target audiences included the European Commission, as one recommendation was that lagomorphs should not be introduced into Europe for hunting purposes as they may bring in disease. Although the plan was sent to the EC, the movement of rabbits has now started (by hunting groups) and there are concerns about the disease implications of this. It was also hoped that IUCN would be able to provide seed money for some projects.

The Action Plan was very valuable in bringing people together, gave the Specialist Group an aim and led to new contacts being made. At the time of the publication of the Action Plan, the Chair of the Specialist Group changed and the new Chair set about implementing the projects recommended. He felt that the detailed approach in the early chapters of the plan ensured that the conservation recommendations were built on a solid conceptual framework, and he used the resulting recommendations to restructure the Specialist Group. Therefore, he started from zero members and then tried to find members in-country to carry out the recommendations, so that there would not be people from Europe or North America, for example, taking the lead on issues about a lagomorph in another country when there were capable members in that country. The interest in Mexican lagomorphs is a significant example of the success of this approach.

Mexico is the most important countries for threatened leporids (rabbits and hares). The restructuring of the Specialist Group meant that a Mexican biologist who had been active in research since 1979/80, but who had not been involved in the compilation of the Action Plan became a member. Since then he has been instrumental in pursuing many of the recommendations in the Action Plan, and there is now an active and highly competent group of lagomorph conservation biologists in Mexico. For this biologist taking on the priorities of the Action Plan was straightforward as broadly they coincided with those that he had identified. The plan reinforced his conclusions and has proved very successful in highlighting the plight of these species to the federal government, and in showing that others are concerned about Mexico’s threatened lagomorphs.

The Chair has sought to implement the recommendations exactly as they were identified in the Action Plan. For example, he wrote to the Japanese Ministry of the Environment about the plight of the Amami rabbit and, although he did not hear about this directly, some USD80,000 was subsequently released to in-country Specialist Group members for work on this species. Elsewhere, different approaches were required, such as in South Africa – where the government and NGOs appear more interested in big mammals. In this instance, a German biologist and member of the Specialist Group moved to South Africa to initiate action on behalf of the riverine rabbit.
Many of the projects have led to both unpublished conservation report and peer-reviewed papers, although there are projects that have not resulted in written reports or papers. Where reports have been produced, they have been disseminated to conservation decision-makers who were in a position to act on the results. For example, a Population and Habitat Viability Analysis was conducted on the South African riverine rabbit. Initially WWF South Africa was not interested in this species, and the PHVA was funded by the Philadelphia Zoo, Zoological Garden Berlin, and the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations. However, now WWF South Africa has set aside some money and is taking on the conservation education of land managers – one of the recommendations stemming from the PHVA.

The Action Plan has been important in releasing funds for a variety of projects in the Lagomorph Action Plan. This includes the funds for the riverine rabbit PHVA and the funds for the Amami rabbit work (both mentioned above). It also includes work such as the current assessment of the hispid hare in Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal, northern India, which is being funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the conservation work on the critically endangered Tehuantepec jackrabbit, funded by the Chicago Zoological Society and the Lincoln Park Zoo Neotropical Fund. These examples briefly illustrate the role that the Action Plan has played in affecting conservation action.

Zebras, assess and horses. The Equid Action Plan was compiled to focus action on the species group by stating how many species there were and where they were found. The objective was to state the action that was most needed for the group, but in order to do this, the various stages of information gathering and synthesis had to be undertaken. As with the Lagomorph Action Plan, the SSC Secretariat was involved in the process right from the start and was very responsive to all matters that arose. The Re-introduction and Veterinary Specialist Groups were consulted during compilation, as was the Antelope Specialist Group, but no other parts of IUCN were contacted, as there were no functioning parts that were relevant.

Altogether it took about four years to compile the plan, and this was probably not too long. This is because of the practical issues of dealing with an entire voluntary group of contributors, but also because the preparation was envisaged as a long-term and not a short-term exercise, and so it was accepted that a lengthy compilation was in the nature of the exercise. Furthermore, compilation of the plan was seen as part of the process of conserving equids, and publication did not mark an end to a discrete activity. It was envisaged that the plan would have a shelf-life of about five-years.

The recommendations were made using biological criteria only and, with hindsight, perhaps some consideration should have been made of operational criteria, such as funding levels and availability. The recommended actions were confined mainly to biological aspects, although it would have been desirable to have made more broadly based recommendations, such as those dealing with sustainable use and human community issues.

The Action Plan included the name of a Specialist Group co-ordinator for each species in the hope that they could co-ordinate the implementation of the recommended actions. However, there were no resources dedicated to these actions and the co-ordinators had no funds at their disposal to promote the implementation of action plan recommendations. IUCN had no resources to contribute and although nothing was promised in advance, there was the hope that as IUCN had pushed the compilation of the plans, there would be some resources available to carry out the recommended projects. The Chair was put in touch with at least two SSC fund-raising people, but neither of these led to significant funds begin obtained. Whilst he readily accepted that no support was promised in advance, the overall result of the lack of post-publication support was that the Chair resigned, as he and the other Specialist Group members had full-time jobs and so had no time to fund-raise for Action Plan projects. Consequently, it was in effect hoped that the global conservation community would take up the Action Plan recommendations.
Once the plan was published, the Specialist Group really left it up to each species co-ordinator to implement the actions recommended for each species. As noted above, however, there were no resources centrally available to the Specialist Group to promote this. This lack of interface between SSC and fund-raising was seen as a major obstacle to promoting species conservation priorities.

Despite the lack of resources dedicated to pursuing priorities when the Action Plan was published, there has been a considerable amount of progress towards implementing priority actions. A key factor in this appears to be way that the Specialist Group functions by effectively adopting the Action Plan as a core activity. This is exemplified by the way that several related projects have been pursued in two general areas: genetic conservation of equid populations and work on the mountain zebra in South Africa.

**Dolphins, porpoises and whales.** The plan reviewed here, the 1994-1998 version was produced as a response to perceived expectations. There was a Cetacean Action Plan published in 1988 and which was updated in 1989. Then the Chair of the Specialist Group changed and the new Chair believed that the Specialist Groups were expected by SSC to produce plans at five-yearly intervals.

Broadly speaking, the aim was to provide an authoritative but necessarily superficial review of information, especially that which was relevant to conservation. This was based on the premise that the Action Plans were seen by others, especially in areas where access to information is poor, as a global information review and statement of what action was needed. Beneath this broad objective, there were a variety of different objectives for the Action Plan: one was to produce a reference book for a conservation audience. Another was to set priorities and this involved changes in structure to the previous Action Plans (e.g. costings were dropped and project descriptions were made more substantial), and related to this was the statement of action that was most needed for the species group. These actions were not seen as the territory of the Specialist Group, and it was hoped that others would take up the challenges of carrying out these actions.

Contact with the SSC Secretariat started as soon as compilation began and all contact was very efficient. There was little contact with other Specialist Groups or other parts of IUCN, although there was some discussion of proposal implementation with the IUCN office in Sri Lanka. Compilation took nearly two years and this was thought to be too long, although with the voluntary nature of the Specialist Group it is hard to do anything about this. Five to ten Specialist Group members were heavily involved in compilation and a further 11-20 helped to a lesser degree. Most of the key people were involved, although some simply did not have the time to take part. It is important to note here that the Specialist Group is not run with the intent of being the major body of global cetacean expertise as there are too many people involved in this area of conservation activity to make this practical. Therefore, it is seen as part of the wider global cetacean conservation community.

The recommendations were made within the context of the plan having a five-year shelf life. These were limited to a natural sciences orientation and emphasised small cetaceans. The emphasis on small cetaceans was due to an understanding that the issues surrounding the larger cetaceans fell to the International Whaling Commission and that the Cetacean Specialist Group dealt with the smaller ones. It is worth noting here that the IWC has management responsibility for the larger cetaceans, but ‘only’ scientific responsibility for the small cetaceans. This responsibility is met through the Small Cetacean Sub-committee, which shares members with the Cetacean Specialist Group. This committee considers currently available science and makes recommendations to member national governments (rather than global recommendations). The Action Plan can be an important part of this process as personnel overlap. In some cases recommendations made independently of IWC (through the Specialist Group) can have more impact as the Specialist Group is seen as technically sound and independent. So the Chair tries to steer the Specialist Group towards issues not covered by IWC and so the Specialist Group and IWC cover different areas that are intended to be complementary.

At the time of publication it was envisaged that the Specialist Group and the global conservation community would take up the responsibility of implementing the recommended actions. Although the
Specialist Group did not explicitly state that the Action Plan was to become its workplan, it was soon the effective focus for activity in the group.

There were a number of difficult balancing acts that had to be managed when compiling the Action Plan and pursuing implementation. For example, promotion of some policy changes that are based on science would be valuable, but advocacy is a difficult area as there are many people and organisations in cetacean conservation pressing their points of view. Consequently, the value of the Specialist Group is that it is science-driven in a world where passions, money and personal interests have led to a great diversity of NGOs interested in cetaceans.

The Specialist Group has made significant progress on the implementation of many of the projects stated in the Action Plan. There are projects, notably those on the right whale (projects 2 and 3) that are being pursued by the United States National Marine Fisheries Service that do not involve the Specialist Group and are not influenced by the Action Plan. The issues here is that the work is being covered by the relevant US governmental agency. However, the Action Plan’s summary of the status of the stock and the problems facing it is in accordance with that of the United States National Marine Fisheries Service. There would be merit in IUCN maintaining better contact with the Service to see if there are areas where they have a mutual practical interest. Overall, these are a very small minority of projects that fall into this category, and they may even be just the right whale projects.

In contrast, many other projects have been attempted primarily because they are in the Action Plan. The most striking examples include work in Asia, where a great deal of effort has gone into implementing priority projects. One person, the Asia co-ordinator of the Specialist Group has been involved with many of these projects and first started working under the auspices of the Specialist Group in 1990. In 1996 he became the Asia Co-ordinator. The projects that were identified in the Action Plan were those that were realistic and thought to be practical at the time.

Foxes, wolves, jackals and dogs. This Action Plan was co-authored and edited by a postdoctoral research fellow (Joshua Ginsberg) working at Oxford. The SSC Secretariat had asked the Canid Specialist Group Chair to compile an Action Plan and there had been some work over the previous two years, although progress had been steady but slow. Broadly speaking the plan aimed to carry out most of the functions that have been ascribed to Action Plans, namely bring all conservation information on the species-group together, review the information that is available on the species and assess their status, set priorities, and state action most needed for the group. With hindsight, the priority-setting is seen as the weakest part and it is felt that perhaps this part should be at the front.

Contact with the SSC Secretariat started right at the beginning and was good throughout. The other parts of SSC that were contacted were the Trade Programme and the Wolf Specialist Group. The Law Centre was the only part of IUCN that was contacted. The plan took just under a year working full-time to produce, and could not have been done any faster. Text was drafted and then sent to all relevant people to comment on and suggest revisions, as this solicited more responses than asking other individuals to write sections. In total around 130 people would have commented on parts of the plan.

When considering the recommendations, it was felt that they had to be tractable. Whilst grand frameworks and objectives would have been comprehensive, the guiding principle was effectively that “Conservation is messy” and that action would more realistic at site and national levels, rather than at other scales. Once published, the Specialist Group did use the plan a lot as the group was becoming established, and also to justify the work that it was doing to donors. Implementing the plan did become a key activity for the Specialist Group as it looked for specific individuals to implement projects, but this was often opportunistic and not systematic. It had been hoped that the SSC Secretariat and the wider IUCN would use the plan, but it did not use the plans much. It was also hoped that others in the global conservation community would pick up the plan and use it.
Overall, it was (and still is) believed that Action Plans provide hard data that can be used to make decisions affecting the conservation of species. The key is making this information more accessible. If the data and recommendations were to be geo-referenced and so become spatially explicit, it would greatly enhance synthesis across Action Plans. This would allow national and regional plans to be produced. It would also allow access to information at a finer scale (i.e. point localities).

The problems facing Action Planning are the budgets for their compilation and their production. For example, he suggested that perhaps each plan may cost an average of USD50,000 to compile if the time to write/compile/edit them was paid for. As there are no more than 60 plans published these may represent more than USD3 million donated to SSC. Technically, the lack of meta-analysis across plans is a big problem, e.g. analysis of patterns of threat.

**Crocodiles.** As the terms of reference called for three plans to be evaluated in detail, there was not time to include an assessment of the planning and compilation of the Crocodile Action Plan. It is included here, however, as the value of the plan in securing resources for conservation is indicated below.

**General conclusions on Specialist Group planning and process performance area**

**Rationale/relevance.** The Specialist Groups undertake virtually all of the Action Plan compilation and, therefore, their planning of the whole process is obviously critical to the successful completion of high quality and relevant plans. Typically it appears that each Specialist Group decided how their Action Plan should be structured and compiled because the Secretariat provided only the most general of guidelines (see also under 3 Management by SSC Secretariat below). Therefore, each Specialist Group’s objective(s) and target audience(s) (i.e. those who would act on the recommendations) seem central to understanding why the plans were produced in the way that they were and how relevant they became.

Individually, it appears that the compilers working on each plan did have objectives and target audiences in mind when they were working on the plans. The varying nature of the Specialist Groups meant that they were compiled in differing ways, but the most common approach was that one or more volunteer authors would work with some of the Specialist Group members to compile the biological information and determine priorities based on that information. Consequently, each Action Plan would appear (by definition) to be very relevant within the needs that the Specialist Group perceived to be important. This was the approach deemed most appropriate by the SSC Secretariat and, therefore, the Specialist Groups’ were therefore, doing what was requested.

The relevance of the Specialist Group’s planning and process to needs perceived by others involved in conservation is less clear. It would appear that the process is designed so that only the areas of expertise covered by the Specialist Group (i.e. typically biology) are adequately treated in each plan. Whilst this was SSC’s original intention, there has been no apparent effort to reassess the validity of this approach in the intervening 15+ years.

**Effectiveness/efficiency.** This assessment has not sought to quantify the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Specialist Groups have overseen the compilation and implementation of Action Plans. At a very superficial level, it is clear, however, that the plans have been effective in bringing many people into an active role within SSC that they would otherwise not have had. They have also been effective in bringing knowledge on many species into the public domain that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to gain access to.

As the Action Plans are compiled voluntarily, it is likely that the effectiveness and efficiency of the compilation are not the ultimate drivers of this part of the process. Simply finding the time is far more of an issue for professionals that are typically very busy in their jobs. Therefore, they are not in the position where they can use their time efficiently, but rather struggle to find time to work on the plans at all. If individual compilers are not able to work on the plan for several months, it is obvious that
they will have to expend time simply refreshing themselves with the status of the plan and its contents.

The Specialist Group part of the process has proved effective in bringing together networks of biologists concerned with conservation, a clear operational objective of the plans when they were first relaunched in the mid-1980s (see under 3 Management by SSC Secretariat below). An important consequence of this is that some groups have proved more cohesive than others have, and the existence of an Action Plan to bring the group together may be one factor in this. The effectiveness and efficiency of the groups in implementing the plans is covered under 4. Implementation of Action Plan priorities below.

Long-term implications. The long-term future of the Action Plans is clearly heavily dependent upon the time that members of each Specialist Group can devote to their compilation and implementation. The plans reviewed here are virtually a self-selected sample that have been compiled for Specialist Groups whose Chairs responded to Phase 2 of the evaluation (see Section 3.4.2). The fact that most of these groups have produced (or are producing) second editions and/or single species plans would suggest that they believe that they are relevant. This means that they have found the resources (especially time) necessary to compile new editions. In contrast, there are clearly Specialist Groups that have not produced Action Plans presumably because they do not have the resources necessary or they are uncertain of their value. This would suggest that across the spread of taxonomic Specialist Groups the production of plans is likely to remain uneven.

Although the SSC Secretariat initially felt that it was important not to constrain Specialist Groups by providing detailed prescriptions of what Action Plans should contain, the result is that the plans differ widely in the way that they identify and present priorities. At one extreme (the lagomorph Action Plan), no concrete recommendations were presented in the first draft that was submitted to the Secretariat and the final chapter was written with substantial input from the Secretariat staff. Whilst there are now many plans that can be used as templates, there remains no firm guidance on recommendations. Consequently, Specialist Groups are producing Action Plans because they believe that the Secretariat requires them to do this, but without a firm strategy in place for their implementation. This seems to have led to the conservative proposal of priorities that fall within the Specialist Groups’ areas of expertise, namely biology.

2. Management by SSC Secretariat

In order to fully understand the current management of Action Plans by the SSC Secretariat, it is important to know why they were initiated and what their original purpose was, and how the process has evolved in the intervening years. This is therefore explained first. Some of the early background to the SSC Action Plan process is provided in a report of a meeting held by Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (now Fauna and Flora International) and SSC that was held at London Zoo in April 1991. This report was found in the WPA files, but it is not clear whether it was published or not: it did not appear in Oryx, although a short news piece indicated that a meeting had been held (see Oryx 25:235, October 1991). It will be referred to here as Morris (1991), as it is initialled J.M.M. at the end, which is presumably Jacqui Morris, the former editor of Oryx.

Action Plans were first produced in the 1970s (for elephants, rhinos, primates, marine turtles and crocodiles) for WWF, which was the fund-raising part of IUCN. Simon Stuart was employed with the task of promoting a rather different Action Plan programme that would be aimed at a broader target audience. Indeed the audience was seen as any organisation or government that might be in a position to implement them. In 1990, SSC had received the ‘Oman gift’, which was a USD1.5 million donation from the Sultanate of Oman that became the Sir Peter Scott Fund. This fund provided small grants to Specialist Groups for the preparation of Action Plans and for promoting their implementation. This Fund was a significant boost to the Action Plan programme. By April 1991 SSC had 3227 members.
The programme was designed to re-orientate the idea behind the plans that were compiled for WWF in the 1970s. The relaunch was seen as a way of re-invigorating Specialist Groups and encouraging them to develop a clear idea of what the priorities were for their group of species. The objectives were stated very broadly and included the bringing together of all information on the species group, especially the conservation information, a review of the information available and assessment of status, the setting of priorities and a statement of what action was needed for the species group. It was clearly stipulated from the start that each Action Plan must be comprehensive and not just deal with particular species within a species group. For example, a Cat Action Plan could not concentrate on charismatic species such as the African lion or the tiger, but must cover all species. This comprehensiveness was a new feature.

The projected shelf-life of the Action Plans was not explicitly stated, but it was deemed that about five-years was right. Different plans were able to incorporate broader actions to varying degrees. For example, the lagomorph and cetacean plans recommended that more research was required, but rhinos and crocodiles were more management orientated. The hope was that the recommendations would be able to go beyond just the research needs of species.

The SSC Secretariat felt that the whole global conservation community had the responsibility for acting on the priorities stated in the plans. There was no mechanism for ensuring that the recommendations were incorporated into the programmes of IUCN Regional Offices. Some did have success for external reasons. For example, the Primate Specialist Group virtually has a dedicated fund in the Margot Marsh Fund and so can provide some support for the pursuit of priority actions. The Asian and African rhino Action Plans were seen as blueprints for the conservation of these species and became linked to the UNEP process on rhinos.

Initially, the development of Action Plans was met with scepticism, and the SSC Secretariat had to insist that they be compiled by the Specialist Groups and it very actively promoted this. But since the mid 1990s more manuscripts of Action Plans were being produced than the SSC staff could handle in a timely fashion. Funding also became a limiting factor. Thus, SSC stopped pushing Specialist Groups to produce Action Plans. It is accepted that the success of the Action Plans relies on the Specialist Group driving their implementation. The Secretariat does not have the capacity to do this.

Technical aspects of the Action Plan process were discussed with Mariano Gimenez-Dixon, who as a Programme Officer has been involved with the compilation of many Action Plans, and the editorial side was discussed with Linette Humphrey, who as Publications Officer has overseen the production of most Action Plans.

The early plans had no guidelines and the idea was that people would not be constrained in what they were writing. The first guidelines to be produced were a couple of pages that outlined what SSC thought were good aspects of the plans that had been completed. Secretariat staff (Simon Stuart, and then Linette Humphrey and the Programme Officers) would guide people in the development of plans. Yet the need to establish guidelines soon became necessary, and so guidelines were developed that were based on previously compiled Action Plans. Even so, these guidelines were not seen as a static prescription of what was required, and they are revised continually. Currently the guidelines provide advice on content (provided by SSC) as well as guidelines for publication as an IUCN publication (liaison, style etc). Most plans adhere to the Action Plan guidelines that were in force at the time.

It is considered that the plans have helped contribute towards SSC’s targets, although the degree to which they have contributed has varied over time. Initially, Action Plans were the focus of activity for new Specialist Groups and were something tangible that they could work on. At the very least they were seen as a snapshot in time, a baseline against which to measure change in the status of species or their needs.

Overall, SSC believes that the plans have been of a high technical standard. They contain the best available information and recognise that there is often very little available. They are typically written from a biological perspective and so there is a bias towards natural science information, which means...
that areas such as socio-economics are not discussed under either issues or solutions. This means that whilst most of the relevant biologists and species-orientated organisations are involved in compilation, the coverage of the issues is patchy. Furthermore, the ability to deal with priorities and actions is impaired, as areas that the Specialist Groups have no expertise in are, inevitably, not covered.

As noted above, some plans have difficulties in setting priorities, as there is no established method for doing this. All of this means that the plans have mixed success in stating the real priorities facing the species that they cover. For example, discussion of potential solutions that involves national level policy making and management is weakened by a sensitivity towards being seen to tell governments what they should do with their resources: i.e. interfering in the internal matter of a sovereign state. An additional complication is that knowledge of national policy and legislation may be insufficient to make realistic recommendations.

The plans tend to be reviewed mainly by the Programme Officer as far as the SSC Secretariat is concerned, but if there are sections relevant to SSC programmes, then other SSC staff who have a professional interest (e.g. Red List, Wildlife Trade) or a personal interest will be circulated with the appropriate parts of the text. Review by other specialists (i.e. peer review) is not normally pursued by the Secretariat as this is usually done within the Specialist Group during the compilation of the Action Plan, but it can be done if there is a need. The amount of time that has been spent on reviewing Action Plans has probably dropped over time, as the number of plans per year has increased and the other demands on Programme Officers’ time have increased. However, there are now plenty of models for new compilers to follow and so the template is largely established.

Initially there were maybe one or two plans a year, but in the later years there have been about 12-15 in varying stages of compilation and this clearly represented a great deal of editorial and review work. The Publications Officer would estimate that it would take a month to edit the final draft of each plan, although further time would have been spent in the earlier stages (which some Specialist Groups thought was the final stages). If the draft is of a reasonable standard, the aim is that will be 3-4 months from receipt to publication. The first SSC intern to work on Action Plans was in about 1996 and since then interns have been central to the editing process.

Essentially, the process relies on the Specialist Group ensuring that the material is correct and reviewed as it considers appropriate, especially the factual details on the species concerned. The amount of work that the Secretariat has to carry out on the content varies from plan to plan: for some plans there is little to do, but for others there is a great deal. The Secretariat has always tried to be involved from the first stage of compilation so that it is active throughout the whole process. The Publication Officer would then try to lighten some of the dry academic style, if appropriate.

The way that the plans present the priorities varies in its ability to satisfy the expectations that the Secretariat had for the Action Plans. A common Secretariat reaction to early drafts was ‘nice book, but what about the action’. Many compilers had to be prompted to write actions and then often the actions did not relate to the problems that they had stated earlier in the plan. Not all Action Plans made it clear what the priorities were and how these might be achieved. For example, some would only propose actions that might be achieved over, say a five-year period, but others would be far more ambitious. Some authors were just not realistic and others were just too vague. The Secretariat response to recommendations was often “but is it feasible?”

By the time they were published, some plans presented recommendations in the way that the Secretariat had intended and of those plans being evaluated here, the Cetacean is a good example. Others partly meet SSC expectations and these cover many species and have global coverage so that, by the nature of the species groups that they deal with, they have in-built difficulties in providing a comprehensive assessment of necessary action. The lagomorph and equid plans are examples. Where possible there was a hope that single species recovery plans would be inspired, e.g. the African wild
dog and Ethiopian wolf plans that followed the Canid Action Plan and that these would detail the necessary action more specifically.

As far as the Secretariat is aware everyone who had something to offer was invited to contribute to the Action Plan compilation, although inevitably some relevant people do not become involved. This is for a variety of reasons, including lack of time, philosophical differences and personal rivalries. On average, each plans takes up a moderate amount of Secretariat time, involving both the Programme Officer and interns.

Once plans are published, the SSC Secretariat undertakes no or very little promotion of the recommendations contained with each plan. Although the plans are sent to all members of the relevant Specialist Group, and various other SSC members, as well as relevant parts of IUCN, they are pushed, if at all, only to some parts and it is perceived as a shame that the rest of the IUCN Secretariat could not be persuaded to use them. Promotion outside IUCN is considered to be opportunistic at best. Within SSC the plans are used by the Programme Officer only in responding to queries, and are used by the Wildlife Trade and Red List Programmes where relevant. The Secretariat itself has a partial idea of the target audience and believes that the plans partly reach this audience. Feedback on the use of the plans is opportunistic.

The Secretariat finds it difficult to say whether the plans have had a significant impact on the conservation status of species, and feels that this question is best addressed by the Specialist Groups. The factors affecting the impact of the Action Plans include:

1. an active Specialist Group that use the plan to sell their own activities (i.e. as a workplan).
2. identifying the correct audiences. SSC finds it difficult to identify the correct contacts in each and every case, even if it knows of the type of audience and the general target. For example, it will know a relevant government department, but knowing the person with explicit responsibility or interest in a species, area, issue etc requires more precise targeting; and
3. the ability to combine with existing instruments, such as the cetacean plan with the International Whaling Commission.

It is now harder to raise funds for Action Plans and there are more of them being compiled. Therefore, resources are more and more squeezed. The cost of printing them is increasing and staff time is decreasing, both for editorial work and also for technical review. SSC did hope to produce them on CD-ROM, but this has not happened yet. Electronic publication may also be more realistic to consider.

The Specialist Groups have put a huge amount of effort into plans, but finds it difficult to say if it is worth it. There were always lots of ideas from the publications team on how Action Plans could be improved, but limited feedback on the value of the plans to end-users inhibited these being putting into practice.

Red List Programme. The Programme consults Action Plans to obtain documentation for species included on the Red List where the Red List Authority has not provided this. In these cases, the plans would be consulted and the Specialist Groups contacted to ensure that they are happy with the information extracted for use as documentation. In most cases they are as the burden of work shifts from them to the Red List Programme. Although some of the plans are old, even these may provide valuable sources of information, such as habitat information and information on past threats. More recent interactions between the Red List Programme and the Specialist Groups that are compiling Action Plans have been interactive and fruitful, with the Red List Programme providing direct editorial comment. In some instances, the Specialist Groups have specifically said that the Red List Programme should refer to their publications for the documentation (e.g. African Antelopes Database and Microchiroptera Action Plan).
The Red List and the Species Information System have both adopted Authority Files (see <www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sis/authority.htm>) for the coding of information on Habitats, Major Threats, and Conservation Measures. When identifying conservation measures needed “assessors are asked to be realistic and not simply select everything. The selection should be for those actions which are most needed and which could realistically be achieved in approximately the next five years.” Although assessors can add more detail for each measure, it is expected that most will simply state the action needed as one or more bullet points. Therefore, there is a clear link between this part of the Red List and the function that the Action Plans are perceived to serve. It is anticipated that one of the indices that will be published every four years or so will be an index of how many of these needed actions have been carried out. This document will then be used for advocacy purposes.

**General conclusions on Management by SSC performance area**

*Rationale/relevance.* The SSC Secretariat perceived a need for taxonomic Action Plans and urged the volunteer Specialist Groups to compile them. Therefore, in 1986 the Secretariat clearly felt that there was need for these documents and they had a great relevance for SSC’s activities on behalf of species conservation. Although making the information available was a prime concern, the desire to build Specialist Groups around a common activity also became part of the rationale for urging the groups to compile them. There does not appear to have been any significant reappraisal of the role and nature of taxonomic Action Plans in the 16 years since the process was initiated. The only reported change in emphasis by SSC is that they no longer urge Specialist Groups to produce plans, but rather work with those groups that are keen to compile them.

When the Action Plans were first compiled, there were few, if any, other sources of information on species that could be of any use in conservation planning. Since that time there have been two major areas of change. First, there is now much more information available on many different aspects of natural history that can be used for conservation purposes. Second, the diversity of audiences that now require information to make conservation or environmental decisions has increased dramatically. Consequently, it seems that the relevance of the plans to this changing world is now different than it was in 1986. Furthermore, the plans were seen as a way of growing and then binding Specialist Groups together by giving them a common cause. As many Specialist Groups have now been created, and the pace of creation of new groups has slowed, the value of such a common cause is now less clear. Whilst it is clear that some groups have wholeheartedly embraced the Action Plan idea and see the priorities identified as their workplan (e.g. the Galliformes Specialist Groups [see McGowan et al. 1998] and the Cetacean Specialist Group), this is by means a universal.

**Effectiveness/efficiency.** The effectiveness of the Secretariat’s management of the Action Plan process appears top have changed in two distinct ways. First, the increase in the number of plans being received per year has led to problems in managing the process effectively. Typically, once a Specialist Group submits a plan that it feels is ready, it expects that the plan will be published swiftly. This is now more difficult, both because there are more plans to be edited and also because guaranteed funds have shrunk dramatically. Therefore, time is being spent on searching for funds that could otherwise be spent working on editing. Now, editing is very much reliant on interns and the change in interns every 6-12 months means that time is ‘lost’ whilst the new intern learns the process. The new energy that an intern brings is, however, presumably a great benefit.

The second way in which the Secretariat’s management has changed is that there are now many more models of what effective Action Plans look like available to the Specialist Groups as new ones are compiled. These, together, with the guidelines should mean that the groups are able to produce plans that the Secretariat finds structurally acceptable more easily. Surprisingly, however, Secretariat experience does not completely support this.

The Secretariat does not really promote the recommendations contained within each plan when they are published. To that end, its management of the implementation phase is not effective, as it has never seen that as its role. At least some of the Specialist Groups, in contrast, have seen implementation as a significant responsibility of the Secretariat, both SSC and the wider IUCN.
Although not clearly stated by Specialist Groups (see below), it may be that this expectation by Specialist Groups has increased as IUCN as a whole has grown and the number of paid staff has increased.

**Long-term implications.** The management of the Action Planning process by the Secretariat would appear to be unsustainable in its current form. The increasing editorial workload and the continual writing of applications for funds means that reliance on interns is now very high. The increasing demands on the time of the Programme Officers responsible for overseeing the process is also a difficulty. There also appears to be no immediate prospect of the Secretariat devising a more sustained and coherent strategy to promote the implementation of Action Plan recommendations.

### 3. Product quality and distribution

**Assessment within SSC**

SSC’s view of the quality of the plans is dealt with under 3. Management by SSC Secretariat below. The Secretariat does have a standard list of organisations and people to whom Action Plans are sent, and to some degree this is tailored for individual plans. The generic ‘Distribution planning chart’ is included at Appendix 4 as it was completed for the Partridge, Quail and Francolin Action Plan in December 2000.

**Assessment outside SSC**

Clearly the number and diversity of organisations and individuals that the plans could be said to be aimed at is huge. The demand for information on biodiversity is continuing to increase and the target audiences are now evermore broad. However, many of these audiences require information presented in a specific way: for example, the information needs of a conservation biologist will be different from those of a provincial level land manager or water engineer. As the range of relevant agencies, organisations and individuals is potentially so vast, it was decided to concentrate on those organisations that are arguably closest to the core target audiences. These were other parts of IUCN, CITES (Secretariat and the EU CITES Unit), the People’s Trust for Endangered Species, a UK-based grant-giving trust, the Wildlife Conservation Society (of New York), the International Whaling Commission and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Programme of WWF-US.

**IUCN Wetland and Water Resources Programme.** The Action Plans are not currently used by the person contacted, who is a geographer and hydrologist in this programme. The plans themselves are not known to water managers, water policy makers, scientists or non-governmental organisations concerned with water issues. If they were known the content would be alien because it is exclusively biological. He feels that the plans are supply-driven and not demand driven: i.e. they contain what species specialists want to say and not what those who can act require. In their current form the plans are not the best tool to achieve what he needs to achieve. If they were re-orientated towards derived products (e.g. short concise ‘Action Pages’) with concrete actions, then he may be able to use them. They should emphasise that responsibility for biodiversity is not limited to biologists.

The plans would be much more valuable to the sectors he works with if they contained discussion of national, regional and international level policy and management issues, community level socio-economic issues, and especially large-scale development issues. The Specialist Groups, as presently constituted are largely made up of biologists and this is reflected in the content of the plans. In order to produce the ‘demand-driven’ documents that this respondent desires, he suggests that the Specialist Groups should be more multi-disciplinary and should contain multi-stakeholders (for example, possibly include poachers) so that Action Planning becomes a process. At the very least this would broaden feedback on the plans and their implementation. The Wetland and Water Resources Programme could help with identifying regional people who would be able to comment on draft material, and they may be prepared to help draft some material. Elsewhere within IUCN, the Secretariat could help identify people involved in ecosystem management and economic incentives for example.
A key consideration here is how to communicate the recommendations that the plans identify. This is not being effectively done at present, but then IUCN as a whole has no overall communication strategy to assist in this. The Wetland and Water Resources Programme has a fledgling communication strategy of its own.

The brand of the Action Plans is recognised by biologists but not more widely amongst those who make decisions affecting biodiversity. They have much potential, but require simplification (or consolidation). There are increasing demands on many managers as, for example, the Convention on Biological Diversity is placing more and more demands on them. Therefore, the Action Plan would be seen by these managers as just one more set of actions to try and implement. This means that serious thought should be given to how plans can consolidate all these requirements so that they can replace some of these other demands by providing the means to deliver several things at once. In other words, if the Action Plan recommendations are carried out, what else is achieved: can they help deliver Convention on Biological Diversity requirements?

It may be appropriate to combine some species plans together. A dryland conservation strategy, for example, would appeal to a Ministry of Planning, whereas a species plan would not. Hence the target audience would change and so the plans should be repositioned in terms of target audiences and, therefore, content. Hence the current product, which may be considered the “Armani suit” (highly technical and detailed biological consideration of what the issues are and potential solutions), would be replaced by a product which is less biologically specialised but which more people can buy into, such as agricultural engineers for example. These plans would be much shorter.

Action Plans have plenty of potential, especially if linked to the Red List, which is gaining more attention from non-biologists and is a widely recognised brand. In contrast Action Plans are currently trapped in limited options, and so they may just discuss protected areas for example, but not participatory riparian farm management, involving set aside and compensation.

In essence, he feels that the approach adopted by marketing people should be consulted. This would involve:

1. taking the brand of the Action Plans;
2. simplifying the brand;
3. repositioning the brand; and
4. addressing replenishment – i.e. a help desk for people to contact and get answers to queries on Action Plans, recommendations, issues etc.

**IUCN Programme on Protected Areas.** Action Plans are useful to the work of the programme, particularly in relation to wildlife/species management. The most useful sections are those dealing with the assessment of potential solutions and the setting of priorities. The technical standard is perceived to be high, although there is a need to ensure that recommendations are proposed which can be practically achieved. This requires close interaction between those who prepare the plans and those who are responsible for protected area management. The implication here is that this link could be strengthened.

The plans would benefit from stronger linkages between species issues and protected area management policies and strategies, as well as better linkages between individual species action plans. In order to achieve this, the Programme on Protected Areas could help facilitate greater consultation with protected area managers. The Programme could also help ensure that action plan recommendations are directly incorporated/reflected in individual management plans for protected areas, as well as systems plans under article 8(a) and 8(b) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The programme could help disseminate information about the plans through the World Commission on Protected Areas network, which contains 1,400 of the world’s leading protected area specialists/managers. It would also be happy to include any material in the World Commission on Protected Areas newsletter. SSC should consider having a strong presence at the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa in September 2003. Effective networks of protected areas are
fundamental to effective species conservation and the Programme on Protected Areas feel this link needs to be developed in a more effective way. As many Action Plan recommendations concern protected area management (see Section 3.4.1 and Appendix 1) this would clearly be appropriate.

**European Commission CITES Office.** The Scientific Expert of the CITES Office said that Action Plans are used by the office to a moderate degree. He believes that he does not see all of the plans and is not aware which ones have been published and which are near to publication. Those that have proved useful include the orchid, crocodile and caprinid plans. As the Office is not systematically informed of publication (or near publication), there are almost certainly decisions that have been taken that may have been different if the office and the constituents they serve had been aware of the plans. The most useful part of the plan is the review of information on species and he has a high degree of confidence in the technical standard of the plans. There is probably sufficient biological information in the plans for his purposes, but additional discussion on national and international level management and policy issues would be useful, as would discussion of community level socio-economic issues. Of most interest would be an assessment of whether local communities value species as a resource. It was, however, acknowledged that the Specialist Groups are comprised of volunteers and that it is difficult for them to address these needs as they would require a lot of additional work.

The EU CITES Office would not feel able to offer anything that could broaden the usefulness of the plans but could probably assist with making the recommendations more widely known. The Office is re-designing its website and the new sites is intended to provide a resource for the Parties. It could either include a complete list of Action Plans on its site, or a hyperlink to the SSC site where the Action Plans are listed.

**CITES Secretariat.** There is a great deal of variation in the degree to which the Secretariat uses Action Plans and this depends upon the species group covered and its comprehensiveness and date of publication. For example, the Sturgeon Action Plan was extensively used by the Parties when drafting resolutions, and the caprinid, bear and cat plans have all proved very useful and have had wide audiences. Where they have been used, all sections of the plans have proved valuable (review of information on species, assessment of key issues, assessment of potential solutions and the setting of priorities). The least useful is the specific ‘down-to-earth’ project proposals.

The CITES Secretariat does not tend to go through the plans to pull out the recommended actions, as it simply does have the time to do this. It would, therefore, be interesting to compare the recommendations made by the Parties with those made the “scientific experts” (i.e. the Specialist Groups). The degree of confidence in the technical standard of the plan is considered to be moderate overall. The standard depends upon the Specialist Group and the overall assessment is influence by a poor opinion of one or two plans where greater research for a listing proposal had revealed that the relevant Action Plan was not of the desired standard. Typically, however, they provide a good up-to-date synthesis and a valuable bibliography. If references were provided electronically, this would be very useful.

The degree to which the biological discussions of status and issues meet the CITES Secretariat’s demands varies from plan to plan. The main issues that would benefit from greater coverage are the national and international level management and policy issues, and the discussion of community level socio-economic issues. Where these have been provided they have been widely used. For example, the Caprinid Action Plan contained a hunting policy for rare sheep and this was taken as the basis for EU policy on the importation of trophies. An up-to-date discussion of the by-catch issue for cetacean conservation would be valuable for CITES. It was acknowledged that Specialist Groups are volunteers and so providing this variety of detailed discussion would be difficult.

The Secretariat itself could bring its experience of CITES to the Action Planning process. For example, its experience with the Significant Trade Review, and the information gathered through that process. It could help with discussions of the importance of CITES issues to general conservation issues, and these are basically concerned with the management of species. For example, has CITES
listing worked? The Secretariat could help with dissemination to relevant CITES Parties, such as to range States of the taxon concerned and by making them available at appropriate meetings.

Overall, it was accepted that there is a need for a balance between generic recommendations and the specific description of action that can address particular issues and that this can be difficult. The more specific recommendations are also those that are more tangible. The plans themselves do not have a standardised presentation and that can be an obstacle to an audience that has an interest in more than one plan. The Secretariat would like CITES to be an audience for the Action Plans: there are some heavily traded groups that are not covered by any plans and they would clearly benefit from such a synthesis, such as reptiles.

In general terms, the Specialist Groups devoted to charismatic species and which have charismatic leaders and which can gain access to funds are those that have produced Action Plans. These are not necessarily the Specialist Groups that are dealing with conservation priorities. For example, as well as reptiles, the rodents are of concern. They are widely hunted and so how should they be managed as a food resource? Also, the Parties could do with more information on cryptic species that would help them to manage them better.

Perhaps, a better approach would be to produce a “Conservation Management Guide” rather than an Action Plan. The choice is really whether the plans are designed to be “low key” and are available to those that can track them down, or whether they are designed to be comprehensive statements of what action is required. The more standardised the approach and presentation the better it would be, and the last five or six years has seen an improvement in this. The specific target audiences must be considered critically and identified.

**People’s Trust for Endangered Species.** The Trust uses Action Plans when it receives applications that concern relevant species. When consulted, the Action Plans are a very valuable resource and they play a significant role in the funding decisions that the Trust makes. As important is the link with Specialist Groups, especially the Canid Specialist Group and the Chair is used as a referee for relevant project proposals. The Trust does not believe that it has all Action Plans and so does not think that it is on the normal distribution list. This is unfortunate, as it has provided support in the past (GBP5000 per year) for Action Plans to be distributed to those who were thought best able to implement the recommendations. Indeed, of the selected case study Action Plans, the 1994 Cetacean Action Plan carries the logo of the Peoples’ Trust for Endangered Species. The Trust is also a member of IUCN.

The most useful parts of the plans are the assessment of key issues and the setting of priorities, and it is these sections that are used for determining the suitability for support from the Trust when relevant proposals are received. When considering the sections that it would be desirable to have, the most relevant is the assessment of community-level socio-economic issues. This is because the Trust is keen to work at the local level so that communities can see benefits accrue. In addition, some discussion of national and international level policy would be useful to ensure that the Trust is not supporting projects that are not in accord with the policies of sovereign governments.

As currently prepared, the Action Plans are fine for the Trust’s uses. The non-biological sections (policy, management and local community socio-economic issues) really require local knowledge to be valuable and so input would have to be at that scale if these sections were to be included and be practical. Prioritisation of recommendations within each species would be useful so that there is a clear statement of what the most important action is for each species. When Action Plans are reviewed, progress on these recommendations should be stated. A valuable extension of this would be a searchable database so that donors could see what action is taking place and whether an application really does address a priority. They could then add to this when they fund new projects. Guidance on what are the over-riding global priorities would also be useful (i.e. not for each species).

**Wildlife Conservation Society.** This interview was carried out with one of the regional directors, who has also been involved in producing Action Plans (Joshua Ginsberg). He found the Action Plans
very useful in his work, but the difficulty in obtaining some of them was a significant disadvantage. All parts of the plans were useful, with the review of information on species of most value, followed by the assessment of key issues and the setting of priorities. Overall, the assessment of potential solutions was perceived as the weakest part. The degree of confidence in the technical standard of the plan was generally high, but in some cases it fell short of this. The critical factor is the scientific training of the author or compilers which influences their ability to reliably assess information. The extent of peer-reviewing is also important and there is perhaps a need for guidelines on this.

Considering the content of the plans, the discussion of all of the biological aspects (knowledge of the species, assessment of the issues and the biological recommendations) tends to be satisfactory, but there is always scope for improvement. Dealing with national or international level policy and management issues is problematic in plans that cover many species that inhabit several countries. It may be possible to cover these in single species plans in sufficient detail to be useful. Discussion of community-level socio-economic issues is not really appropriate to SSC plans that should be biologically driven.

Overall, there is trade off between scale and grain: the bigger the scale (i.e. the more species), the coarser the grain (i.e. the less detail). In the late 1980s Action Plans were seen as an amplification of the Red List process, but this does not seem to be the case now.

The Cetacean Action Plan has proved very valuable to at least three important other international organizations concerned with cetaceans: the International Whaling Commission, the WWF-US Whale and Dolphin Conservation Programme, and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and the first two were interviewed as part of this evaluation.

**The International Whaling Commission.** The Head of Science has found the Dolphin, Porpoise and Whale Action Plan very useful in his work and is now joining the Specialist Group and is involved in the consultation on the new Action Plan. He has had high regard for the technical standard of the plan and has found the assessment of key issues the most valuable component. The Action Plan gave useful pointers to action and in the past has been research orientated, as was required, but now there is sufficient knowledge to base policy upon it. The difficulty is translating biological knowledge into action. This is not simply a question of making recommendations based on science, but if the recommendations are to be practical and therefore useful, knowledge of local issues is critical. This is vital if the recommendations are to have local ownership.

As noted above (see under Specialist Group planning and process), the work of the International Whaling Commission and the activities of the Cetacean Specialist Group are complementary in many ways. The independence of the Specialist Group is important as it allows issues to be debated on scientific grounds, rather than emotional ones. Therefore, the Commission may be able to help with policy recommendations, because the scientific integrity of the Specialist Group is widely regarded. Because of this the Commission can promote Action Plan recommendations to member governments. As noted above, an additional factor here is the overlap of both personnel and recommendations between the Specialist Group and the Small Cetacean Sub-committee of the Commission. The Action Plan could also be put on the Commission’s website.

More direct co-operation between SSC and the International Whaling Commission would help in promoting the actions recommended in the plans, but this is slowly developing (e.g. the Head of Science has accepted an invitation to join the Specialist Group). It was emphasised that the critical step is turning science into realistic recommendations and the Head of Science feels that they are moving towards this. The Action Plan is really developed for small cetaceans and the conservation problems facing these species are in areas that are difficult to address. This is because the International Whaling Commission’s responsibility for small cetaceans is only scientific, although it can make recommendations to governments (this is the level at which action for small cetaceans is required). These recommendations must be realistic and use local knowledge to ensure that recommendations stand a chance of working. Finally, it was felt that if IUCN promoted the Cetacean
Action Plan to its members it might make a big difference to the action carried out on behalf of cetaceans.

**WWF-US Whale and Dolphin Conservation Programme.** The head of this programme has found the Cetacean Action Plan very useful indeed, although the age of the plan means that it is now used less and a new plan is eagerly awaited. This is because although the broad needs are similar, different activities are now required to address them. The Action Plan proved a very valuable overview of issues and a good introduction to the Specialist Group and it is this contact with the Specialist Group that is now more important. All parts of the plan were valuable, but the assessment of key issues was most important initially. The indication of priorities was also very important as this provided a guide as to where resources should be spent. The final part of the plan that was very often used was the listing of taxonomy and conservation status.

The head of the programme had a very high opinion of the technical content of the plan and this is now bolstered by respect for many of the authors that she has now dealt with. The plan was a great resource in creating the programme as she was determined not to overlap needlessly with other work, but to find a discrete and valuable niche. In considering what areas might be useful, it was felt that more material on the Red List would be useful, such as the biological data that were used to determine which criteria were met.

It would be possible to promote an Action Plan to other members of the WWF family and it has already been important in highlighting the importance of by-catch to cetacean conservation. The Action Plan was used in justifying this to WWF-US and now WWF-US is building this initiative up and hopes that other offices will help and take this on. There is to be a meeting on the by-catch issue in January 2002 to be attended by both cetacean conservationists and fisheries personnel. The Head of the WWF-US Whale and Dolphin Conservation Programme also co-ordinates action on threatened whales, dolphins and porpoises for the whole WWF family and so keeps track of all WWF projects.

In concluding, she was very aware of the immense amount of work that the Specialist Group members put into running the group and Action Planning. Therefore, despite a very tight budget, she indicated that if some intern support or similar was required to help finalise the new Action Plan she would endeavour to see what could be found in her budget and ‘chip-in’.

**General conclusions on Product quality and distribution performance area**

*Rationale/relevance.* The quality of the Action Plans and the ability to distribute them to people who can act on the recommendations that they contain are central to the chances of implementing action on the recommendations. The audiences interviewed here all agreed that the product was of high think that the plans are typically of high quality in terms of the biological information that they contain. One interviewee in particular, however, felt that the plans were less useful for non-biological audiences, such as national or regional level policy makers. Broadly-speaking, however, the plans were considered of high standard by the audiences involved and they had great faith in the biological information placed in them.

*Effectiveness/efficiency.* It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of the current process that leads to plans being considered of typically high quality. This is because the quality of the plans relies on the voluntary (to SSC) contributions of the Specialist Groups members. Consequently, they are almost always compiled at no cost to the SSC Secretariat (see under *Specialist Group planning and process* above), and it is the effort or output per unit of resource that is usually used to determine efficiency. There is a balance between compiling the plans very quickly and ensuring that there is plenty of opportunity for the specialists in each group to take part in the process. Overall the Specialist Groups interviewed here seem to think that the process manages to strike that balance and the outside agencies involved believe that they are effective in producing quality documents.

The effectiveness of the current Action Plan distribution process was not really examined here, but from the comments made by interviewees, two general comments seem valid. First, is that it is very
difficult to target the plans effectively outside the SSC network. For example, if a plan contains many species in a particular country, it is very difficult to know the designation, let alone name, of the person responsible for its conservation management. As a result, if a plan is sent to a named agency within the government of that country, it might not actually filter down to the person who could make the most use of it.

The second distribution issue relates to the changes in the audiences since the plans were first published discussed above. There are now many more people concerned with managing land or other aspects of the environment, who would benefit from natural history information, especially on the need of threatened species, in some form. Getting such information to these people is obviously much more difficult, as their diversity makes them all the more difficult to target. Furthermore, these people may require information in a different form, such as a more distilled series of recommendations detailing how the biological recommendations feed into community, policy or legislative needs.

*Long-term implications.* The current system would appear to be capable of continuing products that are considered of high quality as long as there are Specialist Groups prepared to compile them. As the Secretariat has stopped actively promoting the compilation of Action Plans amongst its Specialist Groups (see under *Management by IUCN Secretariat* above), however, it is possible that there will be a gradual decrease in the number of plans being prepared. This is because many plans have been prepared because they believe that the Secretariat requires them to do so. However, the targeting of the plans does require attention if the available information and recommendations are to reach the most relevant audiences. Identifying a series of audiences who can best use the plans that the Specialist Groups are capable of compiling would seem to be a logical start. Some of the organisations interviewed here are clearly potential partners with SSC in this.

Related to the targeting of information is the current inability of the Action Plans to service the needs of those who require the information presented in them but in a very different form. Currently this is seen as a failing of the plans, whereas in fact it is probably a case of differing expectations, or of new audiences emerging in the last 16 years without the Action Plan process noticeably changing to satisfy these audiences.

4. **Implementation of Action Plan priorities**

*Implementation of threatened recommendations for threatened lagomorphs in Mexico.* As noted above, the conservation priorities outlined in the Lagomorph Action Plan reflected those that Mexican researchers had identified. The Action Plan was, therefore, only partly responsible for stimulating the researcher contacted to carry out this work. The other reasons were his long-standing interest in the species group and the fact that conservation work on two or three species was of national importance.

The Action Plan is cited in proposals and there is a belief that this helps. Funds have been attracted from the Mexican government and from US zoological societies (with the Lagomorph Specialist Group Chair’s support). As far as the Mexican government is concerned, this shows that there is international interest in these species and this is important: the Action Plan is written by specialists and provides more information upon which the government can make a decision.

Most of the objectives stated in the Action Plan have been achieved and many reports on the projects have been sent to funding organisations (whether Mexican government or abroad), state governments and local people where relevant. The appropriate part of government is the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, which is the conservation part of government and which also provided funds for some of the projects.

Direct conservation gains have followed. For example, as a result of a big project on the status and abundance of *Lepus* carried out in the mid-1990s, he suggested to the Mexican government that they should not allow the most threatened species to be hunted when they were writing the regulations that determined the hunting season. The government agreed and omitted the species. However, there is illegal hunting.
Implementation of Amami rabbit recommendations in Japan. Work on the Amami rabbit began in 1985 with funding from the US based East-West Centre and subsequently WWF-Japan, and then a private Japanese insurance company. This work is being carried out by the Research Head of the Environmental Planning Laboratory of the Forest Management Division in the Japanese Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute. In 1985 clear felling was a problem for this and other Amami species. Introduced species were seen as a problem in 1992. The Japanese governmental researcher is involved in this work only partly because it is in the Action Plan, the other main reasons being that it is a national priority for non-governmental organisations in Japan, and through his interest in Amami. He began this work when he was asked by WWF-Japan to go to Amami. Amami, Okinawa and Iriomote Islands are perhaps the most special area in Japan with various endemics (the rabbit plus bird species) and the Action Plan reflects that work and is important because of that.

Having been involved in the compilation of the Action Plan recommendations, he is seeking to carry out the project as it is written in the plan. The objectives have been partly completed and the project is ongoing. Reports have been written, but only in English and sent only to scientists, the implication being that managers do not read English. Nonetheless, action has resulted as the control of invasive species is being tried following a large-scale government funded project that was conducted between 1992 and 1995. The introduced mongoose is now a big problem for Amami species and the financial situation is not good for this work because the agencies in charge have a small budget.

Implementation of the hispid hare recommendations. Current work on the hispid hare seeks to implement Action Plan recommendations on this species. This work is being carried out only because it is in the Action Plan. The researcher had previously worked in the grasslands of northern India and was keen to carry out conservation research on the hispid hare and was soon in contact with the Chair of the Lagomorph Specialist Group. The current project is seeking to carry out the project as written in the Action Plan, with more detail in some areas and expansion in others.

The project’s inclusion in the Action Plan was a key factor in obtaining funds (from the Wildlife Conservation Society). New proposals for further work have gone to the Department of Science and Technology and to the Ministry of Environment (both in Delhi) and these both cite the Action Plan. The researcher believes that citing the Action Plan in these proposals is important, as it shows that there is international interest in this work. So far, all objectives have been achieved, although the investigation of breeding biology requires the use of radio-transmitters and the applications to the Department of Science and Technology and to the Ministry of Environment are for this work. Permission has already been granted to catch a small number of animals for this purpose.

Implementation of genetic conservation recommendation. Work on this problem started in the early 1980s at San Diego Zoo and so it predated the publication of the Action Plan. It has continued since then, but is heavily dependent upon both funding and the availability of samples from wild animals, over which there is no control. This work is still being pursued, partly because it is in the Action Plan, but also because the investigator is interested in the conservation of the species group. As the techniques are not scientifically novel, there is no purely scientific reason to carry out this work and so it is the conservation application that is the main motivating factor.

So far some of the objectives have been achieved, but as the project is ongoing not all have been achieved yet. The investigator’s employment now makes it more difficult to pursue this technically demanding project unless dedicated funds are available and so that is a constraint on progress. It does appear that the recognition of the importance of this work through its publication in the Action Plan has been important in attracting funds. The investigator does believe that disseminating information arising from this project is their responsibility and once work is at a stage where it can be communicated to those able to act on the results, they will do so. To date, outlets like *Species* have been seen as important places for updates to appear.
This project clearly relies on the interest and support of other equid researchers and so a degree of awareness amongst other Specialist group members is important. The co-ordination amongst these people that has resulted from the compilation and publication of the Action Plan is good. For example, the Specialist Group tries to meet annually.

**Implementation of mountain zebra recommendations in South Africa.** Mountain zebra conservation efforts began in South Africa with the proclamation of the Mountain Zebra National Park in 1937 and the programme has been run by South African National Parks. By the late 1970s the population inhabiting the park had become large enough to consider using these animals to repopulate other areas, and this began in the early 1980s. So the project is not a direct response to the compilation and publication of the Action Plan. Information on the project fed into the Action Plan, which was seen as a vehicle for exposure and comments on the programme. Publication in the Action Plan has been useful because it has served as a focus for looking at the data and analysing results. The implication is that this would not have taken place had the Action Plan not been published.

The programme is part of the national programme of South African National Parks and is ongoing (for example a PhD is looking at the genetics of the zebra). It is therefore, a national priority as the species is considered rare. As the project is a national priority, the inclusion of the project in the Action Plan has been not been instrumental in securing funds, presumably as the programme is a core activity of a federal government agency. However, the project is being carried out as specified in the plan, presumably because the species co-ordinator was involved in the identification of Equid Action Plan priorities. Furthermore, the Action Plan has been important for at least two reasons.

First, as noted above, it has concentrated attention on an assessment of the project progress to date and what action would be necessary in the future (the analysis of data and the interpretation of results). Second, it has stimulated co-operation between responsible management agencies that were previously not working together. This is because the mountain zebra is the responsibility of several agencies: the federal South African National Parks and the provincial protected area agencies in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and the Northern Cape. In addition, the species occurs in Namibia. The distribution of the two subspecies, (including introduced populations) further complicates the proposal of an overall management plan. The Action Plan has stimulated co-operation between these various agencies. Most Action Plan objectives have been achieved, and the closer co-operation between agencies that is now evident should ensure that additional recommendations are achieved. A meeting of the Equid Specialist Group resulted in a publication in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Acta Oecologica* and the dissemination of information arising from the projects is ongoing.

Wherever possible both information and animals from the programme are disseminated to those who can act on them and take the conservation efforts further. For example, South Africa National Parks is about to take part in a meeting on Game Capture and Population Re-establishment in mid-October. This will involve game managers, and South Africa National Parks’ work with the Western Cape will be presented. The difficulties of managing small populations are not widely understood in the private sector in South Africa (e.g. founder population size) and so they will present on this. As efforts to build up numbers of mountain zebras have proved successful, animals are being dispersed to other areas, including private game ranches where appropriate and there is a big demand for the zebras.

Additional action has included assistance towards land acquisition in the Mountain Zebra National Park and also the Karoo National Park. Funding for this came from the private sector and the data collected on the mountain zebra as part of this programme helped focus attention.

In summary, the value of the Action Plan is that although Equid Specialist Group and SSC have not played a strong role in the project, they have acted as a focus and stimulation for thinking about it: e.g. influencing direction. The plan has stimulated co-operation between agencies. The mountain zebra is an uncomplicated situation because although numbers are low, habitat is available (if fragmented). Therefore, building up numbers has been straightforward and there has also been an economic incentive to do this amongst private game-ranch owners.
**Implementation of Asian cetacean projects.** The 1994 plan (and his increased involvement with the Specialist Group) was an inspiration and catalyst for the Asia co-ordinator and has shaped the activities that he has pursued since then. It has been a good framework for him to work within. As such his emphasis since 1996 has been implementing Action plan projects in Asia. He believes that the Action Plan has helped in obtaining funds for priority projects as it highlights the global needs of projects. This has certainly been the case with some work supported by WWF-US and by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

Although the emphasis was on trying to carry out projects as described in the Action Plan, the ability to carry out projects developed over time as new knowledge was gained and new contacts were made. The Action Plan was not seen as the complete description of what is required to solve all cetacean problems because of the massive issues that exist. Also, other issues arise as the Action Plan projects were being implemented and some difficulties are encountered. For example, philosophical differences with international colleagues over baiji in the Yangtze meant that action there is limited.

The findings of the Action Plan projects have been disseminated to those who can act on the information obtained. However, whether or not action has resulted depends on these conservation managers and it requires a different approach to ensure that the findings are acted upon. Certainly in some cases action can be demonstrated, such as the designation of a protected area, but whether this park is adequately resourced is a different matter again. For example, a sanctuary has been designated for the Asian river dolphin, but this does not necessarily mean that it has been established effectively. Also, management plans have been written, but they have not necessarily been implemented. Hence, this again indicates that Action Plan projects and their recommendations are part of a long-term on going process involving many different people and organisations.

The Asian Co-ordinator does see it as his responsibility to disseminate results and promote conservation action, but it is not possible to force recommendations on national governments or local communities. He believes that it has to be their own will once they have been apprised of the facts and the potential solutions. Therefore, his responsibility is to disseminate the biology to managers etc. and in some areas biologists have done all that they can. An example from outside Asia is that there are social issues that need to be addressed, such as finding alternative employment for gill-netters in the Gulf of California, and biologists have done all that they can on the cetacean conservation issues there. He did indicate that he felt that the emphasis of the Action Plans was biological. In the new Action Plan (currently being compiled), non-biological areas of action such as community awareness were considered, but it was felt that SSC (i.e. the Cetacean Specialist Group) should play a support role in these areas and that they were not a formal part of the Cetacean Specialist Group mandate. The Specialist Group fully supports these activities, however, and recognise their importance.

All of this means is that he sees the Cetacean Specialist Group as the Scientific Advisory Group for the conservation of species in the process. If IUCN fostered greater links between its constituent parts this would help establish mutual support between SSC and, for example, the Regional Programmes and these links should be strengthened. These links could also be designed to help stimulate national governments and local communities in some cases, and it these constituencies that need to take action if there are to be long-lasting conservation benefits.

**Implementation of Canid Action Plan projects.** Viewed now, it is seen that there was little concerted push to implement the recommendations in the Canid Action Plan. There has been a great deal of work on canids since 1990, but the perception of the Group’s Deputy Chair is that the plan has been seen more as a blueprint of what is desirable, rather than a detailed statement of all the urgent actions that are necessary. Subsequently, he felt that the two single species plans that have been published (on the African Wild Dog [Woodroffe et al.1997] and the Ethiopian Wolf [Sillero-Zubiri and Macdonald 1997]) were concerned with urgent action.
He considers that the new Action Plan, which is currently being compiled, is a “multi-authored consensual document”. It will treat all threatened canids and will list actions for each species, ranked for importance. The compilation of the new Action Plan has been used to bring in more people who are from the range States of threatened canids and the group now has just over 100 members from 32 countries, with much better representation of Asia, South America and African biologists than before. The SSC name is a big draw for many of these “developing country” biologists and he believes that being involved with SSC and working on Action Plan recommendations may enhance their ability to obtain small amounts of money for action on some of the lesser known species. It is planned that the new Action Plan will be a significant influence on the activities of the Canid Specialist Group.

The Deputy Chair has concentrated more on promoting certain projects rather than all of those in the Action Plan. This is because as a research biologist working on contracts he has a difficult job to balance the needs of all canids with his need to earn a living, which he does working on the Ethiopian wolf. To this end, he believes that the Ethiopian Wolf Action Plan has helped with raising funds, but that the Canid Action Plan has not.

When it comes to implementing the 1990 Canid Action Plan, the Canid Specialist Group Deputy Chair is very explicit that he does not believe that the Canid Specialist Group is an implementing organisation. If it is expected that the Specialist Group should implement the Action Plan recommendations, then SSC changes from a network of volunteers to an implementation organisation and there are no resources to support this. Where possible, however, the Specialist Group will help to facilitate the carrying out of recommendations. The responsibility should lie with governments and those involved in specific programmes.

Overall, he feels that many of the actions in the Canid Action Plan were vague and that the recommendations that stand the best chance of being implemented are those that are manageable. For example, ‘reduce habitat loss’ is simply too big an issue, and how would it be tackled? Within the bounds of a five-year plan, any recommendations must be realistic and specific. He feels that there is no direct evidence that the plan has influenced decision-makers or conservation managers. In contrast there is some evidence that the two single species plans have achieved this.

The two single species plans were collaboratively written by those working on the relevant species programmes and therefore the Canid Specialist Group Deputy Chair feels that there is clearer guidance in those plans on what action is required than in the plan for all canid species. This clarity extends to the type of project, its duration and cost and in the case of the Ethiopian wolf, the plan has been cited in all applications made since 1996 (e.g. to the Born Free Foundation, Fauna and Flora International and St. Louis Zoo.). Whilst generally dismissive of the support provided by IUCN for any activities, he did concede that the names and logos of both IUCN and SSC were useful when making these applications. Indeed, he felt that this was the only advantage provided by the Action Plan process and suggested that the same content without the IUCN and SSC authority would have less impact.

**Donors.** Comments below under “People’s Trust for Endangered Species” seem likely to be especially relevant to this Action Plan and the Canid Specialist Group. This is because the Trust has a good relationship with the Chair and has funded Ethiopian Wolf work amongst its projects.

**The Crocodile Specialist Group** has secured a core group operational budget of about USD65,000 per year, largely from private sources and so is able employ a Programme Officer to pursue the implementation of Action Plan priorities (both editions), amongst other activities. As part of this role, nearly USD130,000 has been secured to address Action Plan priorities as follows:

- **Tomistoma surveys**
- Chicago Board of Trade USD7,000
- Global Guardian Trust (Japan) and Japan Reptile Trade Association, matching funds for Chicago Board of Trade at 10:1 USD70,000
- Private donor USD1,000
Fauna and Flora International USD3,000

**Chinese alligator**
Chicago Board of Trade USD5,000
Wildlife Conservation Society (partnership funding- not transfer of funds from them to us) USD20,000
Private donors (about 20 donating to special Chinese Alligator Fund- see our website) USD10,000
Australia-China Council USD5,000
American Zoo and Aquarium Association USD4,000 (pending/pledged)

**Siamese crocodile (Cambodia surveys)**
Private donor USD7,000
(Note FFI and WCS have independently funded extensive survey work on this species in SE Asia.)

**Orinoco crocodile (workshop)**
Private donor USD1,500
Japan leather Industry Association USD2,000
WWF-US USD2000

**Cuban Crocodile (production of meeting proceedings)**
Japan Bekko Association USD5,000

**Philippine crocodile national recovery plan**
Receiving substantial technical and financial support from Melbourne Zoo through Crocodile Specialist Group member Chris Banks, but the exact figure is not available.

Gharial and *C. cataphractus* - none applied for or received.

**General conclusions of Implementation of Action Plan priorities performance area**

*Rationale/relevance.* The overriding rationale of Action Plans is that they stimulate conservation action on the ground. Action Plans were designed to do this by bringing information on the status of the world’s species and their conservation needs into the public domain. Once in the public domain this information could be used by decision makers, policy formulators, other conservation biologists, fund managers etc. This rationale remains the same as 16 years ago. However, as noted in previous sections, there is now a greater array of audiences requiring information on activities that affect species, especially threatened ones, and ways that these effects can be mitigated. As these audiences are made of a diversity of people, many of whom are geographers, administrators, civil servants, development agencies etc, the biological detail that the plans currently contain is not as easy for them to understand. Furthermore, because of the constraints of many peoples’ time, the obvious messages for them to extract are not always obvious. As noted above, whether or not the plans are really intended for these audiences is not clear, but differing perceptions of exactly whom the plans are targeted at have led to differing perceptions about their scope.

*Effectiveness/efficiency.* It is virtually impossible to quantitatively determine how effective or efficient Action Plans at stimulating conservation action. This is because it is not possible to state what the situation would be if there were no Action Plans. Furthermore, because the Action Plans are written by people who are more or less active in the field, many of them would be promoting conservation activities anyway. However, at their best, the implementation of the plans and the functioning of the Specialist Groups are intimately bound up with each other and act synergistically (see Fuller *et al.* [in press]). Broadly-speaking the potential Action Plan implementers interviewed here fell into three groups with regard to IUCN: the Specialist Groups themselves; the rest of IUCN; other organisations.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the Specialist Groups in implementing the priorities identified in the plans is uneven, with some groups believing that others (e.g. IUCN, other conservation
professionals) had the responsibility for executing priority projects. From the case studies made here, it would appear that the plans that were most effectively implemented by the groups were those that had a significant research element and where communication between the Chair and those active in the field was established and maintained. Where this does happen, there case studies made here show that there can be a very significant up-take of priority projects by Specialist Groups where they feel they have the competence to implement the recommended actions. However, even in these cases, the voluntary nature of the groups and the fact that they have no dedicated funding was a significant constraint on their ability to implement priorities identified in each plan efficiently.

The promotion of the Action Plans themselves, let alone, the implementation of the priorities, by the SSC Secretariat, is admitted to be weak. This is partly because of the problems identified in distributing them the right person within large governmental and non-governmental agencies. It is also partly because the Secretariat feels that it has been unable to persuade other parts of IUCN to use the plans. Although plans are sent to relevant Regional Co-ordination Offices, SSC personnel and other IUCN staff, there persists a feeling that they are not being widely used. With the increasing emphasis on synthesised scientific data as the critical underpinning of environmental policies it seems unfortunate that these sources of raw scientific data on the biological needs of some of the most threatened and/or charismatic species are not being fully utilised within the Union.

Outside IUCN there appears to be a great regard for Action Plans amongst those who are concerned with the conservation of species. Of the case studies made here, the Cetacean Action Plan (intimately bound up as it is with the Specialist Group function) is clearly highly regarded by influential agencies. The value of the plans to various CITES agencies is also evident, and to non-governmental organisations at the boundary between science and policy or which are concerned with species-related funding.

**Long-term implications.** There is need to state much more clearly who the priorities are aimed at, and then to make those audiences aware of the status of the species and is being recommended. At present, it would appear that there is some degree of confusion or misunderstanding about exactly who the Action Plan priorities are aimed at. This does affect both the perception of how important the recommendations are (see McNeely’s comments in Section 1.1) and who actually tries to implement them. One solution would be to make this part of the Action Plans more prescriptive, by stating that the Specialist Groups should make recommendations for various and clearly stated audiences. There is then a need to identify named recipients of the Action Plans in these target audiences so that they are aware of the plans and the context in which they are produced.

If no changes are made to the ad hoc framework within which priorities are proposed and then pursued, then the implementation of recommendations will remain patchy. This will still result in Action Plan-orientated conservation activities taking place (see for example, Fuller et al. [in press]), but the scale of such activities taking place is less than would otherwise be the case.

### 3.4.4. Other Specialist Group evaluations

The World Pheasant Association (with the relevant Specialist Group) undertook an evaluation of the three 1995-1999 Action Plans (Megapodes; Partridges, Quails and Francolins; and Pheasants) when these were revised in 1999. This is now in press in the journal *Biological Conservation* (Fuller et al. in press). The emphasis and approach were different, as the data were collected through a questionnaire survey of the people that had carried out each project (Principal Investigators). In this survey they were asked: reasons why they had carried out the project; how the objectives related to those stated in the Action Plan; whether the Action Plan and the Specialist Group endorsement was important in securing funds; what publications and reports had been produced; and what conservation action had resulted from the work.

The conclusion is that a substantial amount of conservation-relevant output was achieved from Action Plan-based projects. The results also show close involvement by the relevant Specialist Group in funding applications (bearing in mind that the Specialist Groups themselves have no funding
directives) and that Principal Investigators were making the link between the profile of an Action Plan project and the chances of securing funding. Perhaps, however, there is room for this link to be strengthened even more.

After breaking down the projects into individual objectives, the picture was slightly different, with fewer of the original objectives being achieved. This was interpreting as showing that projects necessarily evolved as they were carried out, and suggested that it would be unrealistic to expect every specific objective mentioned in the original Action Plan project description to be carried out to the letter. This implies that species-specific project proposals should be written in a way that allows (and even encourages) this evolution, but within a specific framework ensuring that the information collected is useful in directing conservation action.

The concrete conservation actions that arose from Action Plan-based projects represent actual change on the ground in the cause of Galliformes conservation. The results also demonstrated that work carried out in the name of the Action Plans has led to significant conservation-orientated outputs. The number and variety of outputs from the research activity reveal a healthy level of communication of research findings, something the Galliformes SGs have always been keen to promote.

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**From information to action in species conservation**

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<th>Determine species limits</th>
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<td>(taxonomy)</td>
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<td>Surveys</td>
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<td>(distribution and status)</td>
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<td>Ecological research</td>
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<td>(pressures and threats)</td>
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<td>Applied research</td>
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<td>Legislation and policy</td>
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<td>Ex-situ breeding</td>
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<td>Socio-economic projects</td>
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<td>Habitat management</td>
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<td>(Examples of types of interventions)</td>
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<td>Monitoring impact of implementation</td>
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The over-riding conclusion of the evaluation was that the function of species-based synthesis (i.e. IUCN Action Plans) has to be seen as part of the conservation process from the collection of basic information, through the gaining of more sophisticated understanding of issues and solutions to direct intervention and the monitoring of its impact (see Box). The synthesis itself cannot be expected to lead to major policy changes at governmental levels simply by virtue of being published. Its essential function is to provide and referee good quality conservation-relevant information and recommendations and so to form of the continual process leading from information gathering to action. Others must play their part if the Action Plans are to be successful in helping to stem the loss of biodiversity.
4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Main conclusions

The main conclusions concerning the rationale/relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and the long-term implications of each of the four performance areas described in Section 2.2 are given in Table 4.1 below. These derive from the summaries given at the end of each performance area subsection in Section 3.4.3, where further detail can be found.

The Action Plans evaluated here have clearly resulted in conservation action, whether they have stimulated it directly, served to prompt the rigorous assessment of the direction of a conservation programme, or inspired people to tackle the issues that they raise. However, the big question that is often asked is “Have the Action Plan led to real conservation gains on the ground?” Almost without exception, the Specialist Groups covered here see the plans as part of a continual process of seeking to understand conservation needs and prompt action accordingly. To view the Action Plans as the complete statement of what is required to ensure the survival of the species groups is simplistic.

Whilst the title of the plans may suggest that they claim to be complete recipes for species survival, the variety of purposes that SSC acknowledges the plans can fulfil imply an acceptance of the breadth of fronts on which conservation makes progress. Furthermore, the lack of a clear framework to assist Specialist Groups in setting targets so that all possible avenues of conservation action (policy, site actions, awareness etc) are considered must hinder the production of concise and tightly focussed Action Plans.

The comments of McNeely (2000) in stating that the real needs of the cats were not addressed in the Wild Cat Action Plan indicate a lack of understanding of the way that SSC has managed its Action Plan Programmes. Whilst knowledge of the distribution and ecology of cats may well be adequate for conservation decisions to be made, and indeed the problems facing them require considerable interventions, the absence of any context within which to realistically address these needs must make it difficult for the Specialist Group to know who recommendations are being aimed at. Such a context would require clear guidance on the kind of recommendations that SSC wishes to see, and an explicit strategy for their implementation. The reason Action Plan recommendations take the form that they do is because they suggest actions that Specialist Groups are familiar with and that they can endeavour to carry out.

When the current Action Planning programme began in 1986 it comprised a significant part of SSC’s activities and was seen as a key activity both in consolidating Specialist Groups and in making information on the conservation status and needs of species available to the conservation community. In the first few years, the number of Action Plans produced each year was small and there was one staff member dedicated to working with Specialist Groups to compile Action Plans, as well as a Publications Officer, whose job included editing Action Plans. Soon after this, SSC secured a major donation for the compilation and implementation of Action Plans. As noted in the Introduction, by 1991, the SSC Chair, George Rabb stated that “The subject of Action Plans and their implementation is at the core of the Species Survival Commission’s work.” (Report of FFPS/SSC Meeting: Morris 1991).

A second, originally seemingly unwritten, objective was to provide a focus of activity that would create and bind Specialist Groups. The evidence of the plans assessed here is that this has been successful and a common goal for the groups has proved to be a great stimulus to them. However, this seems to have suffered a significant blow in some cases when Specialist Groups were left, as they saw it, to implement the plans as well, and with no resources. Having been prompted by SSC to spend many hours voluntarily compiling Action Plans, several groups have felt frustrated if not aggrieved that they have not been helped by SSC or the rest of IUCN to put the recommendations into practice (i.e. the resignation of the Equid Specialist Group Chair and the views of the Canid Specialist Group Deputy Chair).
Table 4.1: Summary of findings in each of the four performance areas evaluated (see Section 2.2.).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance area</th>
<th>Rationale/relevance</th>
<th>Effectiveness/efficiency</th>
<th>Long-term implications</th>
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<tr>
<td>Specialist Group planning and process</td>
<td>The detailed rationale for the plans seems to vary between groups because of differing perceptions of who the target audiences are (i.e. who will act on the recommendations). This materially affects the content of the plans.</td>
<td>Difficult to assess, but Action Plans have brought many people into an active role within SSC and considerable coherence to some Specialist Groups. The Specialist Groups appear effective in bringing relevant biological information into the public domain, but the efficiency of this approach is less clear. The voluntary nature of the groups means that there is a trade-off between compiling plans quickly and being inclusive.</td>
<td>The compilation of Action Plans is clearly heavily dependent upon the time that the Specialist Groups can devote to their compilation. At least some groups appear committed to the process as 2nd editions have been published or being prepared. There is a need for more prescriptive guidelines on identification or priorities: i.e. what kind of recommendations can be made and what is the specific target audience?</td>
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<td>Management by SSC Secretariat</td>
<td>When Action Planning started, the perceived need seems to have been a lack of biological information on species in the public domain. Management then concentrated on stimulating Specialist Groups to prepare plans and the kind of recommendations made was left to each group. There is no demonstrable change in this rationale in the intervening years despite more conservation-related information being available in the world and a large increase in the diversity of audiences for biological information</td>
<td>The increase in the number of plans being dealt with by the Secretariat has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. This has led to a problem in processing them effectively. Much of this work is now carried out by interns with attendant loss of time whilst each new intern learns the process. Funding is now much less secure and so more time is spent chasing money for publication. There are more examples now of Action Plans published in the series but Secretariat experience does not seem to suggest that this means good practice is being followed by the compilers of new plans automatically.</td>
<td>The current process seems unsustainable, especially as SSC Programme Officers are required for other activities. This is probably reflected in the Secretariat not pushing the compilation of plans as actively as it has done in the past. The reliance on interns is too high. A clearer prescription on how Action Plans should be compiled may help address some of these issues by providing more significant guidance as to what is needed and therefore what will be used by IUCN.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Product quality and distribution</strong></td>
<td>Action Plans are only useful if they are of high quality and there is confidence in them. Broadly speaking this does seem to be the case. Making sure that the plans reaches audiences who are able to act on the recommendations, and who are receptive to the plans is critical. This appears to be weak.</td>
<td>The quality of the plans is effective in gaining the confidence of the recipients interviewed here. There is overall appreciation of the biological quality of the Action Plan series. The distribution, however, seems very poor; both in terms of the limited list of target audiences and in terms of determining who the key people are in each organisation/agency.</td>
<td>There seems little that needs amending on the product quality as far as the biological information is concerned. However, there are differing perceptions about the need for other kinds of recommendation (e.g. policy, socio-economic) and this, therefore, affects the overall perception of the product. The distribution of the plans, and ensuring that they are sympathetically received appears one of the major weaknesses in the process. At best distribution is ad hoc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation of action plan priorities</strong></td>
<td>The over-riding rationale for the Action Plans is that they focus attention on urgently needed action and that this action takes place. This rationale seems unchanged since the series started.</td>
<td>The effectiveness of Action Plan implementation is very variable. The case studies made here appear particularly successful and the Specialist Groups have pursued the recommendations actively. Outside the Specialist Groups, uptake is variable, with lack of promotion within IUCN and to external audiences apparent. This may be partly due to differing perceptions of what they are versus what they should be. There is no doubt that some agencies outside IUCN find them very useful indeed and this demonstrates their potential effectiveness.</td>
<td>Implementation of Action Plan priorities will remain patchy without several changes. First is a clearer idea of exactly who the target audiences are so that the recommendations can be framed appropriately (i.e. just biological so that the Specialist Groups can implement them, or include policy, community-level work etc for others to take-up). Second is work with the target audiences to ensure that the plans reach those most able to act and that these people are receptive to them.</td>
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4.2. Issues

4.2.1. The objective(s) of the Action Planning Programme
Fifteen years ago the objective was stated very broadly and, were to have been simply to make information on the conservation status and needs of species available to governments and anyone else able to act on the recommendations that were made. The objectives that individual Action Plans seem to have been a mixture of: the compilation of biological information (usually especially that relating to conservation); assessment of issues facing the species; proposal of potential solutions; the assessment of priorities; and statements of action considered necessary to mitigate threats. Whilst all of these are seen as essential to sound conservation planning, it is now arguable that all of these objectives cannot be met equally in one volume. The precise objective(s) that should be set for the Action Planning process must be unequivocally stated and agreed by all parties. The exact objective(s) are likely to be influenced by the target audience(s) of the plans.

4.2.2. Target audiences: implementing the action plans
This is one of the most difficult issues of all, and one that it appears has never really been addressed adequately. Originally, the target audiences were seen as anyone that could act on the recommendations. However, was this diversity of audiences ever really sensible? Without any form of promotion to governments and other organisations was it really feasible to expect that any action would follow? In practice it was left to the Specialist Groups to drive the implementation of the Action Plan recommendations, and so the target audiences were effectively the Specialist Groups themselves and those that they came into contact with and promoted the plans to.

Despite the lack of a strategy for the implementation of the Action Plan Programme as a whole, individual plans and their recommendations have reached a great variety of governments, inter-governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, individual researchers and donors. There can be little doubt that there are successes that almost certainly would not have occurred otherwise (i.e. without Action Plan publication), such as action on the Amami rabbit (undertaken by the Japanese Forest and Forestry Research Institute), the hispid hare (carried out by an NGO researcher in India) and Mexican lagomorphs (part of a research programme at the National Autonomous University of Mexico), as well as the work that the Cetacean Action Plan has stimulated in Asia, the influence that it has had in the formation of the WWF-US Whale and Dolphin Conservation Programme, and the esteem that it is held in within the International Whaling Commission. Amongst the Galliformes plans evaluated, the audiences are primarily biologists, but they are widely encouraged to discuss their work with conservation managers wherever this is relevant, and this does happen.

CITES, at various levels, finds the plans a great source of information and the role that the Caprinid Action Plan has played in the framing of the European Commission policy on the importation of trophies of rare sheep is a clear success story. These are but a few examples. Whilst there are likely to be nominal target audiences that have not found the plans useful at all, the fact remains that there are audiences that will act on the plans, especially if they are able to develop a relationship with those individuals who have the created them.

When the Action Planning Programme was relaunched in 1986 it was probably realistic to say that the conservation of species and habitats was widely seen as the domain of the biologist and natural historian. The Specialist Groups were comprised of such people and had little knowledge of policy, management and community-level issues compared with today. Now, the potential audiences for the plans, although they can be identified by similar words (i.e. “natural resources managers, conservationists, and government officials around the world”) to the audience perceived 10 or 15 years ago, are arguably more demanding in the information that they require and the way that it is presented to them.

This is because biodiversity conservation has been ‘mainstreamed’ in many significant ways since Action Planning started, and the variety of multilateral environmental agreements is one such example of this. Therefore, many potential audiences are not biological specialists and whilst these audiences
did exist, albeit much reduced 10 years ago, their hunger for information is now much greater. The many different audiences now actively seeking biological information inevitably means that this information and the way it is presented are now receiving very critical scrutiny. This should not be seen as a failing of the original targeting of Action Plans, but rather reflect the great demand that now exists.

There is little doubt that the plans evaluated have played important roles at the very least in stimulating a great deal of conservation-orientated research and its dissemination. There is also little doubt that the non-SSC audiences interviewed also found the plans useful (with one single exception and that was the IUCN Wetlands and Water Resources Programme.

The plans selected for the current evaluation were effectively self-selected, as these were produced by the Specialist Groups that had been most communicative during Phase 2 of the Action Plan evaluation. Whilst this is a source of bias in an evaluation of the entire Action Plan Programme, it can also be viewed as indicating what the Action Plans can achieve if the conditions are right, and so it is worth examining what these conditions are. The audiences interviewed were also selected largely through the author’s personal experience or were recommendations from others involved in SSC Action Plans. Therefore, they are for the most part a sympathetic audience. Again, this is biased, but it does indicate what the potential impact of the plans could be.

It is clear that there is a great many potential audiences for Action Plans. The smallest audience is that which is the most specialised (in terms of biological understanding and the biological detail that it seeks). In contrast, the largest variety of audiences is that which requires least biological detail, but perhaps information in other areas, such as appropriate land-use or appropriate policy changes. These audiences might include planners and hydrological engineers, development agencies, agricultural and forestry agencies etc, none of which require detailed biological information. Is it realistic to aim a single document at all of these audiences? Given that almost every single potential audience will have too much paper on their desks and too many targets to meet, the answer is almost certainly no. A broadly targeted document will not satisfy the demands of the conservation biologist and a document that is biologically highly technical will be incomprehensible to a non-specialist.

Which target audience Action Plans should be aimed at will be affected by the abilities of the compilers to provide relevant information (and the resources available to do so), and the likelihood that these audiences will act on the recommendations. A clearly defined target audience is arguably the single most important factor in determining the success or otherwise of any future Action Plans. The successes illustrated in this evaluation have all been drawn from audiences that might be considered closer to the specialist end of the spectrum, rather than the more generalist audiences. Perhaps, therefore, the sensible approach is to consolidate these successes rather than to continue trying to provide one product to satisfy the needs of a great many audiences, which in reality bear little resemblance to each other.

4.2.3. The resources available for compilation

Action Plans are written almost entirely voluntarily, although some groups have Programme Officers that drive the process. The SSC Secretariat has decreased the resources that it devotes to Action Plans since the mid-1980s, as other demands are made on staff time. This means that it is not realistic to propose any objectives for the plans that will mean that more resources (time or personnel) are required for them to achieve these objectives, unless resources are available for this additional work. As such, it is difficult to envisage how the plans can be more broadly written to include significant discussion of socio-economic issues for example, as the personnel capable of providing this input (e.g. elsewhere within IUCN) are unlikely to have the time to do this. Therefore, it would seem inevitable that the plans would remain biologically based, although this does, of course, not mean that derived documents cannot address other audiences, if dedicated resources become available.

Currently the only resources specifically allocated to Action Plan production are apparently a small budget at IUCN that is sufficient for three Action Plans to be published each year and some element
of SSC Secretariat staff time. With the larger number of plans that now may be in varying stages of production during a year, this amount will clearly not go very far. Therefore, additional funds have to be raised and whilst there are some regular donors, some applications have unexpectedly failed recently and this has meant that SSC has not been able to print Action Plans. Indeed, two Galliformes Action Plans (Megapodes and Partridge, Quail and Francolins) were only published in 2000 after the intervention of the World Pheasant Association, which committed some funds, and the Chair of the Megapode Specialist Group who raised the rest.

In the current economic climate, it is probably unacceptable to simply say that IUCN should provide more resources. However, it does appear anomalous that SSC has urged many Specialist Groups to undertake a significant amount of voluntary work and then is not prepared financially for the logical consequence of that encouragement: i.e. the resources to edit and print the plans. Therefore, the resourcing of this stage of Action Plan production is likely to have an impact on the Specialist Groups’ relationships with SSC. Given these considerations, it would seem desirable to form a partnership with organisations and other bodies that may have an interest in the publication of Action Plans. As so much work is done voluntarily, in real terms the amount of money that is spent on publication is a small proportion of the real cost of Action Plan production, if the time spent writing plans was costed in. Such partners should be those who have most interest in the final products and promoting their recommendations.

4.2.4. The nature of the recommendations

As Phase 1 of this evaluation concluded, there is little consistency between plans in the way that recommendations are formulated. This appears to partly due to a lack of any kind of guidance of how to determine what action is needed (i.e. formulate recommendations), but also because of a desire by the Secretariat not to inhibit the Specialist Groups by being too prescriptive. The first of these can surely now be overcome and the second is now arguably of dubious value as there is little reason why plans cannot have a consistent approach to determining what action is required. The lack of consistency was highlighted as an issue in this evaluation, although there were not enough opinions on this to be sure what all of the audiences would find most valuable.

The fundamental dichotomy is between the very detailed statement of what action is needed, right down to costed project outlines, and the much more general recommendations that are almost aspirational in nature. Both approaches have their advocates and which is most appropriate almost certainly depends upon who is expected to act on them.

A second fundamental difference of opinion is the degree to which Action Plans can and should go beyond the biological recommendations. Whilst many potential audiences feel that this is desirable, the resources to provide the necessary extra input are likely to remain in short supply. For example, the IUCN Wetland and Water Resources Programme feel that broader input would make the plans much more useful to their constituents and this would obviously be good news. However, when the plans are compiled largely voluntarily, there is unlikely to be a positive response to such a suggestion unless there are resources (either people or funds) to allow appropriate text to be drafted. Consequently, however desirable it may be to discuss broader issues of policy and local communities for example, it is likely that these will remain difficult to address within current resource constraints.

Since the IUCN Action Planning Programme started several other action plan programmes have been launched and it may be useful to see what lessons can be learnt from these programmes. In addition, as mentioned under Red List Programme in Section 3.4.3, both the Red List and the Species Information System have developed an ‘Authority File’ for Conservation Measures, and this is relevant here.

As part of its response to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Kingdom has identified species and habitats that are in the most urgent need of conservation attention. For these, Biodiversity Action Plans have been produced. Each of these plans has a standard set of headings and summarise the available information under these headings. For action required, there is a broad statement of what
is required and which agency or organisations has the lead responsibility for achieving targets. This standardised approach may be suitable for concentrating attention on what needs to be done for each species that is of concern. The headings used for each UK Biodiversity Action Plan are:

1. Current status
2. Current factors causing loss or decline
3. Current action
4. Action plan objectives and targets
5. Proposed actions with lead agencies
   5.1. Policy and legislation
   5.2. Site safeguard and management
   5.3. Species management and protection
   5.4. Advisory
   5.5. Future research and monitoring
   5.6. Communications and publicity
   5.7. Links with other plans

An example of a UK Species Action Plan is given at Appendix 5; the black grouse *Tetrao tetrix*.

The first level headings of the Red List and Species Information System Authority Files seem logical headings for such a standardised assessment of the detailed needs of species covered by Action Plans. As such, the Action Plans would provide more detail on recommendations than either the Red List or Species Information System would seem likely to contain, at least initially, and would be valuable documents for promoting the implementation of actions. The first level headings in the Conservation Measures Authority File are:

1. policy-based actions
2. communication and education
3. research actions
4. habitat and site-based actions
5. species-based actions
6. other

With the creation of the Conservation Measure Authority File, the first step has been taken towards providing very specific guidelines on how to recommend what action is necessary: i.e. construct a recovery programme. This whole target-setting is a difficult area and the Action Planning Programme will benefit from learning lessons from the Red List and Species Information System as they develop the Conservation Measures components of their programmes.

A second important consideration here is the target audience. If the Action Plan Programme were to become a partnership, as suggested under Section 4.1.2: Resources available for compilation above, then there would be greater involvement in the implementation of the recommendations. Therefore, the nature of the actions would become clearer, as the areas that relevant partners could address would become evident.

### 4.3. What are SSC’s options?

SSC has several options on how it manages the Action Plan Programme in the future. In broad terms these can be summarised as follows:

1. Continue with the current process;
2. Stop publishing taxon-based Action Plans; and

The current squeeze on resources and the increasing number of plans that have been through the SSC Secretariat in recent years mean that maintaining the publication flow is very difficult practically. Furthermore, the significant expansion of the Red List Programme and the priority accorded to the Species Information System within SSC mean that some of the functions of the Action Plans have been subsumed into these other programmes. Nonetheless, the changing world does make it
imperative that SSC husbands its resources, including the goodwill of the Specialist Groups, as carefully as it can. Therefore, all of these three options should be considered.

4.3.1. Continue with the current process
Whilst the plans evaluated here can be said to have played a significant role in some aspect of the conservation of the species that they cover, there are probably plans that have had little impact. The broad objectives set for the plans are almost certainly now outdated as the products can easily try to achieve too many objectives and address too many target audiences that have widely different demands. As a result they may fail on many fronts.

The increasing demands placed on the Specialist Group members both in their day jobs, as well as by SSC may well have resulted in reluctance to produce the kind of Action Plan that SSC anticipates. Nonetheless, they have a great deal of information and expertise that can be better utilised to help conserve the world’s threatened species. Even in the self-selected sample of plans evaluated here, there are cases of expectations of assistance and impact upon completion of Action Plans being dashed and so unless there is a clear implementation strategy, it is likely that these unfulfilled expectations will be repeated as new groups produce plans.

As far as SSC’s Strategic Plan is concerned, some of the earlier purposes ascribed to the Action Plans are now probably better achieved through the Red List Programme, and should the Species Information System become operational and sufficient information be provided to its modules, then this will also take over some of the purposes of the Action Plans. Over recent years it appears that the Action Plans have become increasingly central to SSC’s core programmes, and with the effective institutionalisation of the Red List Programme and the concerted effort to ensure that the Species Information System follows suit, it is not likely that there will be strong leadership for the current Action Plan process that will maximise the impact of the efforts put in by the Specialist Groups. All of these factors mean continuation with the Action Plan Programme as it currently operates does not seem practical.

4.3.2. Stop publishing taxon-based Action Plans
The sample of plans evaluated here have clearly been effective to some degree and demonstrate that some Specialist Groups are determined to publish them and to pursue the implementation of recommendations. To prevent these Specialist Groups from producing Action Plans, especially when they have been specifically asked by SSC to compile them, would probably provoke a negative reaction, as well as reduce the conservation efforts on behalf of the species concerned.

There are several significant audiences that are concerned with species conservation that find these plans very useful. CITES and parts of the Wildlife Conservation Society are obvious examples, but there are also small grant-giving foundations that deem IUCN Action Plans as a mark of quality and integrity. There are also specific programmes and commissions that have a special interest in single Action Plans, such as the Cetacean Plan. Apparently the rhino plans have enjoyed similar standing with appropriate parts of the UNEP. This means that there is likely to be an adverse reaction from some of the people, both inside and outside SSC that find the plans most valuable for species conservation if the publication of Action Plans was stopped. Whilst some plans may well not be missed if they are never compiled, there are clearly some that will.

4.3.3. Change the Action Planning Programme
The interviews conducted as part of this evaluation have been concerned with some of the people who are most closely associated with Action Plans and who use them the most. Whilst there is broad support for what they try to do, some significant shortcomings have been indicated. Some of these shortcomings may simply be the lack of any significant appraisal of the Action Planning Programme recently, as the world around has changed fundamentally in the way it views biodiversity information over the last 10 years.
Action Planning must clearly be discrete from Red Listing and the functions performed by the Species Information System, if it is to have value. However, the links between these Programmes are clear, as they are all concerned with providing sound information on the status of species and the action necessary to ensure their survival. As one of the Red List indices to be published every few years will be an assessment of the implementation of the Conservation Measures Needed, the Action Plans have a clear role in promoting the implementation of these recommendations for some species or species groups. As this Red List index will be a key advocacy tool, the Action Plans could be a valuable back-up document providing detailed justification and description of the measures that should be implemented.

Given these other information products that SSC is proving, it may be time to re-orientate (and re-brand) the Action Plan Programme. The suggestion made by the CITES Secretariat that what is really needed are “Conservation Management Guides” is definitely worth serious thought. Such guides could be compiled by Specialist Groups and would have a clear focus. These could be more thorough consideration of the key issues (such as hunting or by-catch) and then contain a series of standardised ‘Action Plans’ for the species most in need of attention. These documents would then be clearly management orientated and accessible to a variety of potential implementers.

The key issue remains of the target audiences. At present it seems that far too much of the implementation is left up to the voluntary Specialist Groups and this is probably not sustainable. Therefore, the solution may be to spread the responsibility by drawing in a wider constituency by forming a partnership that represents some of the most enthusiastic users of existing Action Plans. This could include the CITES Secretariat, the EU CITES Office, the Wildlife Conservation Society, as well as other parts of IUCN, such as the Protected Areas Programme and an appropriate body concerned with sustainable use. If each of these bodies would be prepared to help with resources (either funds or access to appropriate expertise), then there would be a broad partnership of organisations that not only help facilitate the compilation of the plans, but would also be key to the implementation of the recommendations.

A rebranded and tightly focussed Action Plan Partnership would potentially be a powerful tool for implementing action on behalf of the world’s most threatened species. Species that should be included in such a programme would include those covered by Specialist Groups that pursue Action Plans in the most enthusiastic manner. These are often the species for which demand is greatest. An alternative approach would be to address the needs of the most threatened species according to Red List. This may, therefore, start with all Critically Endangered species and this would also mean that the Specialist Groups would not need address all species in their species group at once. Instead they would be contributing towards Action Planning for the world’s most threatened species.

The overall monitoring of the status of species would be delivered, as now, through the Red List Programme. The important addition of this Action Plan Partnership would be the detailed statement of what is required to save the world’s most threatened species. If all information, especially the necessary actions, were spatially explicit and geo-referenced, then analysis of where action is most urgently required would be relatively straightforward. It would even be possible to determine what actions would benefit then largest number of threatened species, such as specific policy change in one country, or site based actions in another. These analyses would greatly enhance the advocacy potential of the Conservation Measures Index to be derived every few years from the Red List.

An alternative model would see Action Plans (using Conservation Measures Authority Files in a UK Biodiversity Action Plan format) being compiled for certain species, and the Conservation Management Guides effectively filling the role proposed for issues based Action Plans in the 2000-2010 SSC Strategic Plans. This would show that SSC is moving along the ‘conservation gradient’ indicated in the box in Section 3.4.4 from assessment to research into issues and potential solutions.

The essence of this proposal is that there is recognition that the expertise that the Action Plans represent is very important to SSC’s information provision role, and that assistance is vital in ensuring
that this expertise achieves its full potential. This assistance includes clear guidance on the information that an audience that will act on the recommendations will use, providing help in ensuring that plans (or Species Conservation Management Guides) are compiled as efficiently as possible, and then creating the right context with implementers so that the recommendations will be acted upon.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Neville Ash for preparing some of the groundwork for this assessment, especially in starting the design of the evaluation method. Various SSC staff assisted in highlighting the key components to address. SSC Intern Ammy Gillesberg answered questions on Phase 2.

The enthusiasm of virtually all interviewees was remarkable and I am very appreciative of the often considerable time that they spent answering my questions. A complete list of interviewees is given in Section 3.3. Nancy MacPherson and Charles Lusthaus (IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation Unit) and provided very constructive comments on an earlier draft.

6. REFERENCES


7. APPENDIXES

7.1. Report on Phase 1 of assessment

DRAFT

Review of Action Distribution in 42 Action Plans
Joshua Schachter

1. Background
This review was undertaken during March and April 1998 to identify trends in the types of actions recommended in Action Plans. Hopefully the understanding gained from this study can serve as the first step in a larger process to evaluate the role and effectiveness of Action Plans.

2. Methodology
All Action Plans published as of March 1998 were included in this study. The actions in 42 Action Plans were identified and categorized according to the following criteria:

Research
Status Surveys; Distribution Studies; Behavioral, Ecological, Biological and Taxonomic Research; Population Monitoring; Research on Management Techniques, Threats, Captive Breeding, Legislation, etc.

Ecological Management
Management of Species Populations; Management and Restoration of Habitat; Invasive and Introduced Species Management; Development of Future Action Plans; Ecological Management of Protected Areas; Production of Protected Areas Management Plans; Ecosystem/Multi-Species Management Planning; Establishment of Private Reserves; Land Acquisition

Ex-situ Management
Captive Breeding; Reintroduction; Introduction; Plant Nurseries; Cultivation; Hatcheries; Translocation; Rehabilitation

Use Issues and People
Exploitation; Law Enforcement; Trade; Ethnobotanical Use; People-Species Conflict Management; Community-Based Projects, Income Schemes for Local People/Sustainable Use Alternatives (e.g. Captive Ranching); Ecotourism; Work with Private Landowners; People and Protected Areas; Dams, Mining and Related Use Activities

Education & Communication
Public Awareness Raising Activities; Public Workshops; School Programs; Publications

Legislation and Policy
Legislation; Policy-making; International Agreements; Designation of a Protected Area/Corridor; Change Official Status of a Protected Area or Species; Land-Use Planning; Legal/Political Actions Related to Trade and Law Enforcement

Capacity Building:
Technical Training Programs and Workshops; Financial, Technical, Infrastructural, and Staff Support; Institutional Establishment; Building Cooperation and Improving Communication between Individuals, Institutions, Countries and Governments; Establishment and Maintenance of Information Management Systems; Expand Capacity of Specialist Groups

In addition to classifying actions according to the above themes, actions were categorized according to scope. Actions which applied to all species in an Action Plan (referred to as general actions) were separated out from actions that applied to specific species, groups of species, or geographical locations.
An action was only recorded if it truly involved action, rather than purely a statement about existing information or activities.

If surveys (or any other type of action) were recommended for several species, each survey for each species was recorded as a separate action, unless it was stated or implied that the surveys could overlap across species. For example, if the following was stated: “Surveys are needed for the Harris’s and bushy-tailed olingos, the white-nosed coati and the cacomistle,” this was counted as four separate actions. Similarly, if a list of areas in need of protected area designation was provided, the designation of each area was recorded as a separate action.

If the same action was recommended for one species but in different locations, then each action in each location was recorded separately. For example, if the following was stated: “Survey for the Least Grebe in Arizona, California, the Virgin Islands, western Ecuador, Panama and Brazil,” this was recorded as six separate actions.

On occasion an action fit the criteria of two action categories, in which case the action was recorded in both categories.

If an action was too general to categorize, then it was not recorded. Examples of overly generic actions include such statements as: protect species habitat; or improve protection of protected areas.

3. Potential Sources of Bias:

Due to the fact that non-research actions were often more general than research actions, and at times too general to categorize (and therefore not recorded), the number of research actions in relation to other types of actions would be inflated.

Often the locations of research actions were more clearly defined than for non-research actions. For example, an Action Plan might recommend conducting surveys for a species in five separate national parks in a range country, which would be recorded as five separate actions. Meanwhile, it might recommend establishing a general public awareness campaign for the same species in its range country, which would count as only one action. This would increase the ratio of research to non-research actions.

Within each Action Plan, there were often several different sets of actions, some of which were summaries of actions mentioned elsewhere in the Action Plan. For example, regional actions often repeated actions mentioned in a species-specific action section. Depending on which sets of actions (e.g. Species-Specific, Regional, Global Actions) were counted, the number and type of actions recorded would be affected. To minimize this bias, parallel sets of actions were recorded across all Action Plans. However, due to the inconsistent format of Action Plans, it was sometimes difficult to find parallel actions.

4. Conclusions:

The majority of actions in the 42 Action Plans were research actions, as they comprised 54% of the total actions recorded (Fig. 2). One reason behind the high percentage of research actions may be that many actions involving management, policy, or use issues were often addressed with a research focus. For example, an action would recommend researching current legislation affecting a species, rather than recommending actual actions to change legislation. Legislation & policy actions accounted for the second largest percentage of total actions at 15%. This relatively high number of legislation and policy actions most likely can be attributed to the large number of recommendations calling for the designation of new protected areas.
Figure 2. Type of actions recommended in Action Plans (including general actions)

When general actions were separated out from the total actions in an Action Plan, the distribution of actions became more even (Fig. 3). Most notably, research actions dropped from 54% to 39% and capacity building actions rose from 6% to 14%.

Figure 3. Types of action recommended in Action Plans (excluding general actions)
Figures 4 & 5 illustrate changes in the distribution of actions in Action Plans from 1987 to 1997. Research, followed by legislation and policy, were the predominant actions during all three time periods (see Figs. 4 & 5) between 1987 and 1997.

Figure 4. Type of action recommended in Action Plans in three time periods

![Figure 4](image)

Figure 5. Type of action recommended in Action Plans in three time periods

![Figure 5](image)

When comparing plant Action Plans with all 42 Action Plans, there were for the most part minimal differences in the distribution of actions (Fig. 6). The percentage of research actions was slightly lower and legislation and policy actions slightly higher in plant action plans compared to all Action Plans. Only 5% of actions addressed ex-situ management in all Action Plans compared to 10% in
plant Action Plans. It should be noted that because there were only four plant Action Plans it is difficult to make any definitive conclusions.

Figure 7. Type of actions recommended in plant compared with all Action Plans

Figure 7 revealed a higher percentage of general actions in plant Action Plans (14%) compared to all 42 Action Plans (4%). This is most likely due to the generally larger number of species within plant taxa compared to animal taxa (maybe with the exception of invertebrates).

Figure 7. Percentage of general actions recommended in plant Action Plans and all Action Plans
There appeared to be little difference in action distribution when comparing flagship species Action Plans with all Action Plans (Fig. 8). There was a slightly lower percentage (48% vs 54%) of research actions and slightly higher percentages of ecological management, legislation and policy, and capacity building actions in Flagship species Action Plans.

Figure 8. Type of actions recommended in flagship species action plans compared with all Action Plans. Note: The Flagship Species Action Plans used in this figure were: Asian Rhinos (1st Edition), African Elephants & Rhinos, Asian Elephant, Dolphins, Porpoises & Whales (2nd Edition), Wild Cats, African Primates (1st Edition), and Asian Primates

5. General Comments on Action Plans:

There is little consistency across Action Plans:

Many Action Plans have global and regional recommendations, while others only have species-specific recommendations.

Some Action Plans have actions at the end of chapters, while others have all the actions at the end of the Plan. In other cases specific actions are recommended throughout the Action Plan, and a summary of those actions in the form of budgeted projects is provided at the end of the Plan. In this case, I found it particularly useful when the actions in the body of the text were cross referenced with the projects listed at the end of the Action Plan.

In some cases, recommended actions were more statements than actions. Moreover, Action Plans sometimes recommended an action but did not explain how it was going to be undertaken. For example, an action might call for reducing poaching, but it did not explain whether to do this through sustainable use projects, legislation, increased anti-poaching staff, education, etc.

6. Recommended Future Projects on Action Plans

- Evaluate the types of actions that have been implemented as a result of Action Plans.
- Investigate how Action Plans have been used by their authors and others following publication.
- Evaluate if the information in Action Plans could be disseminated in an alternative format which is more audience-specific and cost-effective.
• Establish a central tracking system to determine who is requesting and receiving Action Plans.
• Consider producing a card to insert into Action Plans that would be sent by Action Plan readers to SSC. This card could include a brief series of questions to get readers input on the usefulness and role of Action Plans.
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### Evaluation of SSC Action Plans

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<td>Seals, Fur Seals, Sea Lions, and</td>
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**SSC: May 2002**
### Evaluation of SSC Action Plans

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<tr>
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<th>86</th>
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<td>67, 6(G)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>pp.82</td>
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<td>pp.81,91</td>
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<td><strong>Total Actions in Each Category</strong></td>
<td><strong>3759</strong></td>
<td><strong>501</strong></td>
<td><strong>358</strong></td>
<td><strong>515</strong></td>
<td><strong>383</strong></td>
<td><strong>1011</strong></td>
<td><strong>392</strong></td>
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<td><strong>% of Total Actions (6919)</strong></td>
<td><strong>54%</strong></td>
<td><strong>7%</strong></td>
<td><strong>5%</strong></td>
<td><strong>7%</strong></td>
<td><strong>6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>15%</strong></td>
<td><strong>6%</strong></td>
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</table>

**Footnote:**

G= General Action. A general action is one which applies to all species in an Action Plan.
All other actions apply to specific species, groups of species, or specific geographical locations.
The first number in each cell indicates the total number of actions (specific + general actions), while the second number refers to the number of general actions.
For example: 61, 13(G). This would indicate 61 total actions and 13 general actions.
The page numbers below the number of actions indicate the range of pages where the actions can be found in the Action Plan.
7.2. Report on Phase 2 of assessment

Anne-Marie Gillesberg

A great deal of time and effort (not to mention money) goes into producing species Action Plans (APs), both on the part of the Specialist Groups and SSC staff. Thus, determining whether or not they result in on-the-ground conservation is an important and worthwhile activity, and one currently called for in the SSC Strategic Plan. Earlier efforts by Gimenez-Dixon and Stuart (1993) and Schacter (1998 unpubl.) set the stage for the latest attempt to assess the utility of APs.

Gimenez-Dixon and Stuart (1993) found the following five factors to have a major impact in promoting Action Plan implementation:
1. **Receptive audience.** APs are far more likely to be effective if they are directed towards an aware and responsive audience.
2. **Prominence of the species involved.** Donors tend to respond with more enthusiasm and more monetary support when the species in question are of great economic importance or emotional concern.
3. **Persistence with which the Specialist Group promotes implementation.** A determined approach toward implementation pays in the long term, despite the inevitable short-term frustrations.
4. **Types of projects recommended.** In general, implementation is much easier if the recommended actions/projects are very clear, specific, and limited in scope.
5. **Random opportunity.** Some AP recommendations were simply implemented incidentally and opportunistically.

Results of their investigation also indicated that it is important to explore mechanisms that will allow more effective channelling of AP recommendations to broader audiences that have the ability (and responsibility) to manage natural resources. These conclusions are still relevant today as SSC is constantly seeking to enhance the effectiveness of APs and develop efficient means to evaluate and monitor their success.

Schacter (1998 unpubl.) reviewed the entire collection of APs (n=42) to determine what types of actions were recommended. Actions were divided into seven general categories: research; ecological management; ex-situ management; use issue and people; education and communication; legislation and policy; and capacity building (see draft report for descriptions of categories). The majority (54%) of recommended actions were “research” actions, although when general actions were separated out, this figure dropped to 39%. The “legislation and policy” category accounted for the second largest percentage of the total at 15%. Schacter (1998 unpubl.) attributed this finding to the large number of recommendations calling for the designation of new protected areas.

Schacter (1998 unpubl.) found little consistency between APs in their presentation of recommended actions/projects in the text. In some cases, recommendations resembled statements with little explanation as to how these “actions” were going to be accomplished (i.e., reduce poaching). Such general treatment of conservation recommendations in APs is still prevalent and could hamper their overall effectiveness.

The current effort seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of APs by determining what influence they had on the implementation of recommendations (e.g., types of actions being implemented as a result). Are APs needed for implementation or would conservation action happen anyway, regardless of their existence? If deemed necessary, then what improvements should be made to increase the overall effectiveness of APs? Schacter (1998 unpubl.) suggested, for example, investigating alternative formats that could be made more audience-specific and cost-effective.
The general approach taken in the 2001 investigation builds on the previous evaluation efforts (considered Phase 1) and involves a preliminary review of a subset of APs (Phase 2), followed by an in-depth analysis of a smaller subset of APs (Phase 3).

Data collection and analysis for Phase 2:
- Twelve APs published between 1990 and 1995/96 were chosen for taxonomic and geographic representation, and in consideration of the responsiveness of compilers. The date of publication was specified to allow sufficient time for implementation to have occurred and to include plant APs in the review.
- Compilers of selected APs (and/or Chairs of the associated Specialist Groups) were contacted by phone or email and asked to respond to a brief questionnaire to determine what had happened with respect to conservation action since publication of the AP (see letter to compilers and response form).
- Responses were collected and tabulated, indicating whether actions/projects were “completed”, “ongoing”, or “not started”. Reasons given for those “not started” were also recorded. Only six responses were received after repeated requests for information from compilers/Chairs. Results should, therefore, be treated as inconclusive.

Results of Phase 2
- Of the 12 APs selected for review and compilers/Chairs contacted, only six (Lagomorphs, Crocodiles, Canids, Cetaceans, Otters, and Equids) responded and, of these, two (Canids and Cetaceans) remain incomplete (Note: the Pheasants AP was considered well in hand and would represent another response).
- The four “complete” responses received (Lagomorphs, Crocodiles, Otters, and Equids) listed a total of 284 recommended conservation actions/projects. Of these, nearly 50% were listed as ongoing, about 18% were considered completed, and approximately 32% had not been started. Of the reasons given for those not started, a lack of funding accounted for about 25%, a lack of funding and personnel for 19%, and not practical or politically inadvisable for just over 17%. Other reasons cited included: 1) low priority (6.4%), 2) inactive or cancelled (6.4%), 3) no personnel (4.5%), 4) prior survey work needed, etc. (3.6%), 5) resolution of species questions required (3.6%), 6) formulation of ideas/clear plan of action needed (2.7%), 7) lack of leadership (2.7%), 8) lack of information (1.8%), and 9) changed objectives (0.9%). No reasons were cited for the additional 5.5% of conservation actions/projects listed as “not started”.
- Recommended conservation actions/projects were typed according to the categories used by Schacter (1998 unpubl.). Nearly 70% could be considered either “research” or “ecological management” activities. “Ex-situ management” and “legislation and policy” activities were fairly equally represented and accounted for approximately 20% of the recommendations, while “capacity-building” exercises made up only 1% of the conservation actions/projects. These findings were reflected somewhat in the distribution of those actions/projects that had not been started. This time, however, about 57% of fell into the “research” and “ecological management” categories, with the remaining percentage split almost evenly between “ex-situ management”, “legislation and policy”, and “use issues”. “Education and communication” activities accounted for less than 2% of these recommendations.

Phase 3 of the Evaluation will involve selecting three (or more) of the 12 APs sampled in Phase 2 for in-depth review; those responsible for implementation of conservation actions/projects (e.g., government agencies, NGOs, donors) will be contacted and asked to respond to a set of questions aimed at determining AP effectiveness. It is hoped that those contacted during Phase 3 will be responsive and help to elucidate the above findings.

(**Other ideas for Phase 3: case study approach, looking at one Specialist Group (i.e., Otter SG) and its efforts at producing and implementing its Action Plan; policy analysis of SSC Action Planning process.)
7.3. Questions used to evaluate Action Plans in telephone interviews

**Questions for SG planning and process**

1) Why did you compile an Action Plan?

2) What was (were) the objective(s) of the Action Plan?
   i) Bring all information on the group together
   ii) Bring all conservation information together
   iii) Review the information available on species and assess status
   iv) Set priorities
   v) State action most needed for the group
   vi) Other ...

3) At what stage did you first contact the SSC Secretariat?
   i) Straight away, before compilation began
   ii) In the early stages of compilation
   iii) In the later stages of compilation
   iv) Just before the draft was completed
   v) When we sent the draft to the Secretariat for editing and printing

4) How effective were links with the Secretariat?
   i) Very good – all correspondence dealt with quickly and efficiently
   ii) Acceptable – some prompting required
   iii) Not very good – required chasing to get responses
   iv) Poor – difficult to get satisfactory comments/answers

5) Did you consult the Action Plan guidelines?
   i) Yes, purpose of plan
   ii) Yes, content of plan
   iii) Yes, manuscript style and formatting
   iv) No

6) Did you find the Action Plan guidelines useful?
   i) Very
   ii) Moderately
   iii) Not
   iv) Did not consult

7) Did you contact other parts of SSC or IUCN in compiling the plan?
   i) Disciplinary SGs
   ii) Other taxon SGs
   iii) Other IUCN Commissions
   iv) Regional Offices of IUCN
   v) Other

8) How long did it take to compile the plan?
   i) <6 months
   ii) 6-12 months
   iii) 12-18 months
   iv) 18-24 months
   v) >24 months

9) Was this too long?
   i) Yes
   ii) No
10) How many SG members played a significant role in compilation (including identifying priorities)?
   i) <5
   ii) 5-10
   iii) 11-20
   iv) 21-50

11) How many SG members played a lesser role in compilation (including identifying priorities)?
   i) <5
   ii) 5-10
   iii) 11-20
   iv) 21-50

12) Are there key people that did not contribute to the plan?
   i) Yes, within SG
   ii) Yes, outside SG
   iii) No, everyone relevant contributed

13) What was the intended shelf-life of the plan?
   i) <5 years
   ii) 5-10 years
   iii) >10 years

14) Did you feel that there were limitations to the scope of the priorities that you felt able to propose?
   i) Yes
   ii) No

15) Who did you intend to act on the priorities in the plan?
   i) The SG
   ii) The SSC Secretariat
   iii) IUCN
   iv) The global conservation community

16) Did you have a strategy to implement the Action Plan once it was published?
   i) Yes, it became the SG workplan
   ii) Opportunistic, we pushed project if the opportunity arose
   iii) No

17) Do you have any thoughts on ensuring that Action Plans have greater conservation impact)?
   (e.g. rapid assessment of priorities every couple of years, broader range of areas covered for action [legislation, policy etc], greater assistance in advocacy)
Questions for process management and distribution by SSC Secretariat

1) How well does the AP fit the AP guidelines?
   i) Very
   ii) Partially
   iii) Not

2) Does it contribute to SSC targets?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No

3) What is the scientific standard of the plan?
   i) High
   ii) Acceptable
   iii) Poor

4) To what extent was the technical content of the plan reviewed?
   i) Not at all
   ii) By Program Officer at HQ
   iii) By other SSC staff
   iv) By other specialists

5) Did the draft require much editorial work to make it suitable for publication by IUCN?
   i) No
   ii) Yes - on content
   iii) Yes - on style

6) Did the plan contain a clear expression of priorities as envisaged by the Secretariat?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No

7) As far as you know were any relevant people not involved in its compilation?
   i) I am sure everyone relevant was
   ii) As far as I know everyone relevant was
   iii) I believe that one or more key person/organisation was not
   iv) I am sure that one or more key person/organisation was not

8) How much work was required to make the content suitable for publication by IUCN?
   i) A considerable amount
   ii) Moderate amount
   iii) Little
   iv) None

9) Did SSC ‘promote’ the plans within IUCN?
   i) Yes to every part of IUCN
   ii) To some parts of IUCN
   iii) No
10) Did SSC ‘promote’ the plans outside IUCN?
   i) Yes widely
   ii) In some areas
   iii) Opportunistically
   iv) No

11) Which SSC staff use the plan?
   i) HQ
   ii) Wildlife Trade
   iii) SIS
   iv) Red List

12) Did the Secretariat have a clear idea of the target audience?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No

13) Did the plan reach this target audience?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No

14) Did the Secretariat seek feedback from its standard list of recipients?
   i) Yes, all of them
   ii) Yes, some of them
   iii) No
Questions for product quality and content
1) Overall, is the plan a high quality document? (Do you have confidence in it?)
   i) Yes
   ii) Moderate
   iii) No

2) What is the scientific standard of the plan?
   i) High
   ii) Acceptable
   iii) Poor

3) Does the plan cover all necessary areas that are relevant to the conservation of the species group?
   i) Status reviews
   ii) Key issues
   iii) Potential solutions

4) What are important omissions?
   i) Input from key people/organisations
   ii) Coverage of some issues
   iii) Dealing with priorities and actions adequately

5) Do the priorities reflect the real needs of the species? (does the plan go far enough)
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No

6) What are the areas that are not being addressed?
   i) Biological knowledge of species/species group
   ii) Information on threats/issues
   iii) Potential solutions – biological knowledge
   iv) Potential solutions – site-based issues
   v) Potential solutions - national level policy/management etc
   vi) Potential solutions - international policy/management etc

7) Do you consult the plan?
   i) Yes often
   ii) Yes occasionally
   iii) Yes previously, but it is now out-of-date
   iv) No, I have never really consulted the plan

8) What could be improved about the plan?
   i) Accuracy of information
   ii) Interpretation of information
   iii) Priorities
   iv) Layout
9) Do you think that the plan has played a role in the conservation of the species group?
   i) Significant
   ii) Large
   iii) Minor
   iv) None

10) Why?
Questions for implementation of AP recommendations

1) When did the project start?

2) When is it due to finish?

3) Are you carrying out/funding the project because it is in the Action Plan?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No

4) If not because of the Action Plan, why did you carry out this project?
   i) For scientific reasons
   ii) The funding was available
   iii) It is a national research priority
   iv) The Specialist Group suggested the work
   v) I am interested in the species group

5) Was the project’s inclusion in the Action Plan a key factor in attracting funds?
   i) Yes
   ii) No
   iii) (evidence)

6) Have you sought to carry out the project exactly as identified in the Action Plan?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partial overlap with our own project priorities
   iii) No, Action Plan is not important for my research

7) How successful has the project been in achieving its objectives?
   i) All achieved
   ii) Partly achieved (project ongoing)
   iii) Partly achieved (project completed)
   iv) None achieved

8) Has the project led to any unpublished conservation reports?
   i) Yes
   ii) Being drafted
   iii) No
   iv) Intended

9) Have any completed reports been disseminated to conservation managers able to act on results?
   i) Yes
   ii) No
   iii) Intended

10) Do you know if any conservation action has taken place because of the project?
    i) Yes it has
    ii) It is too early for results to be applicable
    iii) No
11) Do you think that it is your responsibility to promote conservation action arising from your work?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No

12) If not (or partly), whose responsibility is it?
   i) Specialist Group
   ii) SSC
   iii) IUCN
   iv) Others (please specify)
   v) Don’t know

13) Has the project led to any peer-reviewed papers?
   i) Yes
   ii) In press
   iii) Being drafted
   iv) No

14) Have you given any talks to conservation audiences on this work?
   i) Yes
   ii) No
   iii) Planned

15) Have you given any talks to scientific audiences on this work?
   i) Yes
   ii) No
   iii) Planned

16) Are you in regular touch with the Specialist Group on the progress of the project?
   i) Yes
   ii) No

17) Do you see the project as a conservation project?
   i) Yes
   ii) Partly
   iii) No
Questions on utility of AP for non-SSC people
1) Is the Action Plan/(Are the Action Plans) useful in your work?
   i) Yes, significantly
   ii) Yes, a little bit
   iii) No

2) If question 1 is yes, which parts of the plan are of most value?
   i) Review of information on species
   ii) Assessment of key issues
   iii) Assessment of potential solutions
   iv) Setting of priorities

3) If question 2, is no, why not?

4) Is your level of confidence in the technical standard of the Action Plan(s)?
   i) High
   ii) Moderate
   iii) Low

5) What are areas that are not being addressed that you would find useful?
   i) Biological knowledge of species/species group
   ii) Biological discussion of threats/issues
   iii) Biological discussion of potential solutions
   iv) Discussion of national level policy and management issues
   v) Discussion of international level policy and management issues
   vi) Discussion of community level socio-economic issues
   vii) Discussion of large-scale development issues
   viii) Other ....

6) The SGs are typically made of up biologists and this is reflected in the plans produced so far. What can you offer that will broaden their usefulness?

7) Can you assist in promoting them to people who will act on the plans? If so, who would you promote the plans to?

8) Do you have any other thoughts?
7.4. SSC Distribution planning chart

For use by compiler/SG Chair & SSC staff:
* as early as possible in publication process to aid financial planning, obtaining print and distribution quotations
* to aid communications planning - for promotion and implementation of recommendations
* front covers with executive summary on the reverse may complement or replace full copies for some audiences who may not need or use the full version
* covering letters should be sent out to some recipients, signed as appropriate by, for example: IUCN DG,

**DISTRIBUTION LIST: PARTRIDGES, QUAILS, FRANCOLINS, SNOWCOCKS, GUINEAFOWL AND TURKEYS**

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## Miscellaneous others:
Tom Moritz (Natural History Museum of New York)

## Newsletters or Journals:
- (requesting announcements or reviews)
  - World Conservation, Nikki Meith
  - Species, Michael Klemens
  - Nature Herald, Wendy Goldstein
  - Wetlands Prog. Newsrl, M Rubin
  - Cat News, Peter Jackson
  - WCPA Newsletter, Pedro Rosabal
  - SSC Web Page, Anna Knee
  - Risala Newsletter, People & the Planet
  - Oryx, Camilla Erskine, Fauna & Flora Int'l (FFI)
  - Mammalia, E. Bremond-Hoslet (Mammals only)

## Press (see note 3)
- Others, to be agreed with Species Program

### Notes
- The sections relating to PSU distribution need updating

1. **PSU (IUCN Publications Service Unit)** receives from the printer the balance of stock left after the distribution undertaken by the printer for SSC. This stock includes:
   a) copies for SSC partners in the Cambridge area, which PSU distribute on SSC's behalf
   b) copies to distribute later, as requested by SSC
   c) copies to sell via the IUCN Publications Catalogue & Web Bookstore (min 200 copies needed to cover this service)
   d) copies for their “Automatic” distribution (applies to all IUCN publications) namely:
      - IUCN Regional Offices (2 ea);
      - selected IUCN country offices (18 offices);
      - Natural History Museum, London (1);
      - WWF-UK (1);
      - Glasgow Zoo (D. Hughes) (1);
      - British Library (1);
      - Depository Libraries of India, Costa Rica, Mexico, W. Samoa, France (1 ea);
      - Library of Congress (1); Bibliothèque Cantonale, Switzerland (1);
      - Island Press, USA (distributor) (2);
      - IIED, London (1); English Nature, UK (1); WRI, USA (1); NHBS, UK (?)

   **Adds up to Max 45 copies**

   PSU also sends SSC publications to journals for review - lists available.

2. **Extra copies (over and above normal SSC print run):** SSC is not normally able to cover the cost of printing and distributing copies for IUCN members, or for other IUCN purposes. IUCN Communications Division, or other Programmes desiring copies, are sometimes able to cover these costs, by prior arrangement.

3. **Press coverage (press releases and or press conferences)** is only considered for a publication that has wide application, as a public service (for example the IUCN Red Lists), or interest (a high-profile or widespread species). Press coverage can serve to enhance SSC/IUCN's profile, and as a public-educational, motivational tool too. Often press coverage may serve to give good publicity to a co-publisher or organisation that has supported the production of the publication. It may have extra impact if linked with a conference or other event - again bringing mutual benefits, and sharing costs and labour associated with press coverage. As press coverage entails costs and time, its relative costs and benefits need to be carefully assessed.

### From PSU memo of 18 April 1998 - needs updating and amalgamating with info on PSU above
- 10 copies to copyright libraries, England, USA, Switzerland, France
- 6 copies to IUCN Library exchanges
- 7 copies to IUCN HQ Publications Div
- 1 copy to Conservation International
- 1 copy to World Conservation Land Trust

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**TOTAL DISTRIBUTION** 576  
**NUMBER PRINTED** 1000  
**Balance to PSU: MINIMUM 300** 424
7.5. Example of UK Biodiversity Action Plan: black grouse *Tetrao tetrix*

From UK Biodiversity Group (1999)

**Current status**
1.1 Black grouse are largely dependent upon the suitable management of moorland/woodland edge in Scotland and Wales, and the moorland/farmland fringe in northern England. The black grouse also utilises young conifer plantations and clear-felled areas with well-developed field and shrub layers that include rushes, cotton-grass, heather and bilberry. Mature plantations with widely-spaced trees also support suitable ground vegetation and can be important for the species.
1.2 The black grouse declined in range by 28% between 1968-72 and 1988-91, and the most recent UK population estimate (1996) is 6510 lekking males compared with an estimate of 25,000 in 1990.
1.3 The black grouse is protected under the Game Acts (close season: 11 December-19 August), Annex II/2 of EC Habitats Directive, and Appendix III of the Berne Convention.

**2. Current factors causing loss or decline**
2.1 Over-grazing and agricultural improvement have removed key food plants such as bilberry, heather and birch scrub in many areas. These plants also support invertebrate prey items important for chicks, and provide nest sites. Sheep grazing in woodland can reduce the shrub understorey which is utilised by the species.
2.2 The shading out of the understorey in maturing conifer plantations.
2.3 Drainage and overgrazing of mires destroy two important black grouse food sources - the flowers of cotton grass and invertebrates. Rushes, which provide nesting cover and sources of insect food, are also affected adversely. Loss of wet flushes and riparian vegetation in afforested areas also leads to loss of food plants and invertebrates.
2.4 The re-seeding of traditional hay meadows or enclosed rough grazings destroys plants such as sedges, rushes, sorrel, buttercups and clover, which are important food plants.
2.5 Over-frequent moorland burning can lead to the formation of impoverished acidic grasslands.
2.6 Fragmentation of black grouse habitat often leads to small populations which are unlikely to persist.
2.7 Considerable numbers of black grouse are killed by collisions with deer fences. Overhead power and telephone cables may also be a problem.
2.8 Predation may be a limiting factor in some regions. Studies have shown the main predators to be foxes and crows.
2.9 Disturbance of lekking birds has been identified as a severe problem at some isolated sites.

**3. Current action**
3.1 Management measures to regenerate woodland, reduce grazing and control predators, based on research by the Forestry Commission, Game Conservancy Trust (GCT) and RSPB, have been shown to increase black grouse populations.
3.2 Guidelines for conifer forest management were published by the FC in 1993 and are incorporated into FC Forest Design Plans and Native Woodland Management Plans. Guidelines are being given a broader policy context through the UK Forestry Standard. The Forestry Authority has issued a guidance note on deer, forest regeneration and fencing.
3.3 Research by GCT is intended to lead to the production of a management handbook detailing practical work to encourage black grouse through the improvement of its different habitats.
3.4 A variety of grant aid mechanisms, including the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS), ESAs, Tir Gofal, the Countryside Premium Scheme, and the Moorland Scheme, have the potential to improve much black grouse habitat through funding habitat management and fence removal. Individual 'challenge funds' under WGS/Woodland Improvement Grant Scheme target: management of existing native woodland in the Cairngorms; expansion of native woodland in Deeside and the Forest of Spey; and enhancement of upland oak woods in Wales and Argyll. A challenge fund targets new native woodland in national parks in England and Wales.
3.5 Collaborative recovery projects for black grouse are being developed and implemented by a range of organisations in different parts of the UK, including: the North Pennines (RSPB/EN/GCT and...
MoD); Tayside (RSPB/SNH/GCT); Dumfries & Galloway (FC/FWAG/RSPB/SNH); and Wales (RSPB/CCW).

4. Action plan objectives and targets
4.1 Stem or reverse the decline in numbers and range of the black grouse in the UK, in order to hold or restore the population to its 1996 size and range by 2005.
4.2 In the long term (20 years), increase the range and abundance of the black grouse in the UK.
4.3 Prevent further fragmentation of populations within the range of the black grouse.
4.4 Promote re-colonisation of formerly occupied areas between currently isolated populations by 2005.

5. Proposed action with lead agencies
5.1 Policy and legislation
5.1.1 Seek EU and UK livestock support policies which will help reduce sheep over-grazing in the uplands, especially the moorland fringe. (ACTION: MAFF, NAW, SE)
5.1.2 Where appropriate, include the requirements of the black grouse when preparing or revising prescriptions for agri-environment schemes. (ACTION: CCW, EN, MAFF, NAW, SE, SNH)
5.1.3 Seek policies which ensure protection of key black grouse habitats, and identify and target positive opportunities for expanding such habitats (eg through Indicative Forestry Strategies). (ACTION: CCW, EN, FC, LAs, MAFF, National Park Authorities, NAW, SE, SNH)
5.1.4 Encourage and support habitat management for black grouse in woodland and open land in public and private ownership, including relevant species and habitat action plans, native woodland management plans and forest design plans (the latter to be extended to the private sector as long-term forest plans). (ACTION: FC)
5.1.5 Develop the Woodland Grant Scheme to encourage the favourable management of black grouse habitat in key areas, notably the North Pennines. (ACTION: FC)
5.1.6 Seek to reduce over-grazing by red deer in Scotland by exercising powers under the Deer (Amendment)(Scotland) Act 1996 to conserve the natural heritage. (ACTION: Deer Commission for Scotland, FC, SE, SNH)
5.1.7 Encourage the use of Objective 1/5b and Leader funding, and subsequent European grant schemes, to support low-intensity mixed farming systems suitable for the black grouse. (ACTION: CCW, EN, MAFF, National Park Authorities, NAW, SE, SNH)

5.2 Site safeguard and management
5.2.1 Consider notifying areas with high densities of breeding black grouse and with important lek sites as SSSIs, and negotiate positive management agreements to secure favourable site management where necessary. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)
5.2.2 Safeguard important black grouse habitat from inappropriate development, through the development control and planning process. (ACTION: CCW, EN, LAs, SNH)
5.2.3 Where possible, ensure favourable management of moorland and native woodland for the benefit of the black grouse. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FC, MAFF, MoD, NAW, SE, SNH)
5.3 Species management and protection
5.3.1 Promote and support the wise use of black grouse populations. (ACTION: CCW, EN, Home Office, SE, SNH)
5.3.2 Ensure the protection of important or isolated lek sites from human disturbance. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FE, MoD, SNH)

5.4 Advisory
5.4.1 Review guidance on management for the black grouse in Great Britain, and develop the UK Forestry Standard and associated guidelines, to take into account the FC (Scotland) Advice Note, Deer, natural regeneration and fences. (ACTION: FC)
5.4.2 Advise landowners and managers of the presence and importance of the black grouse, and specific management for its conservation, and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FC, MAFF, NAW, Regional Forestry Initiatives, SE, SNH)
5.4.3 As far as possible, ensure that all agri-environment and forestry advisers are advised of locations of this species, management requirements and potential threats. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FC, MAFF, NAW, SE, SNH)

5.5 Future research and monitoring
5.5.1 Ensure the continuation of a collaborative population monitoring programme. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)
5.5.2 Continue to investigate black grouse demography to understand the factors limiting populations. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)
5.5.3 Continue research into black grouse ecology, with particular reference to diet, habitat and spatial requirements. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)
5.5.4 Monitor the effectiveness of measures introduced to increase or restore black grouse populations, including agri-environment prescriptions and forest management by FE. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FE, MAFF, NAW, SE, SNH)
5.5.5 Continue research to minimise or eliminate the problem of grouse colliding with forest fences and overhead lines, for example by developing new methods of marking, new materials, and new fence designs. (ACTION: EN, FC, SNH)

5.6 Communications and publicity
5.6.1 As appropriate, use the black grouse to illustrate the issue of sustainable agricultural management in the uplands. (ACTION: CCW, EN, MAFF, NAW, SE, SNH)
5.6.2 Promote literature and other information sources detailing management measures to enhance black grouse populations, as further information from research work becomes available. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FC, SNH)

5.7 Links with other action plans
5.7.1 This action plan should be considered in conjunction with those for blanket bogs, native pine woodland, purple moor-grass and rush pastures, upland oakwoods and upland heathland.