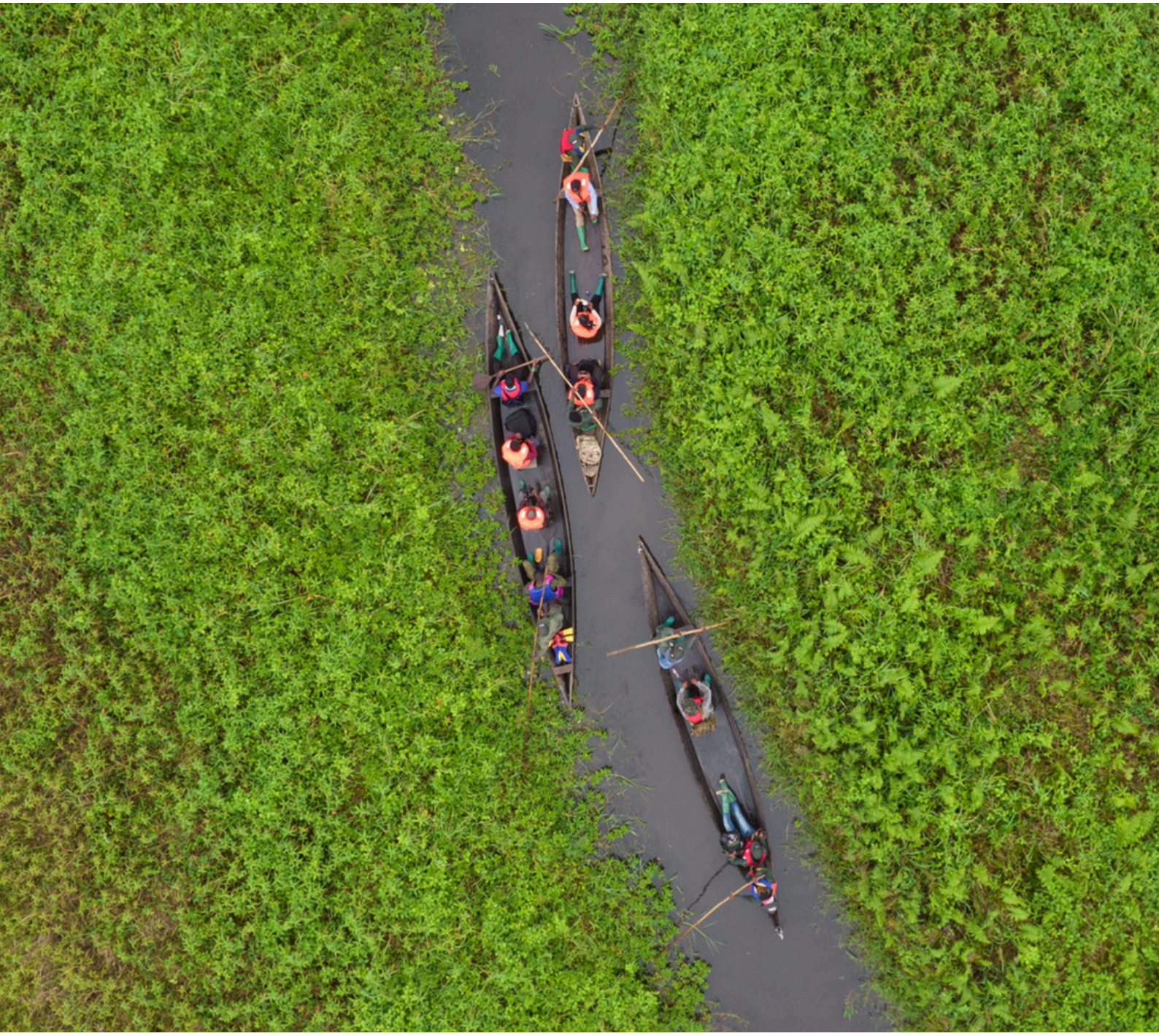
# Centre for Species Survival Human Dimensions



IUCN SSC Species Survival Commission

Wilder Institute

IUCN SSC HUMAN DIMENSIONS Centre for Species Survival Wilder Institute

Global biodiversity – complex, interdependent, and irreplaceable – underpins the systems that support all life.



Human health and well-being is inseparable from thriving ecosystems, and by supporting both together, we strengthen the foundations of life on Earth.

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# Who We Are

## Linking the health and livelihoods of local communities with the conservation and sustainable use of wild species:

Developed in close collaboration with the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)—particularly the CEESP-SSC Sustainable Use & Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi) and the CEESP-SSC Biodiversity & Family Planning Task Force (B&FPTF), the Wilder Institute has led the establishment of a new Centre for Species Survival (CSS) specifically focused on the human dimensions of conservation.

CSS Human Dimensions works globally, but is physically based at the Wilder Institute in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Our vision is a world where conservation practice and policy fully integrate human dimensions at its core —supporting the rights of all communities to use and benefit from wild species in a way that maintains healthy wildlife populations, to sustain human livelihoods, and to exercise their fundamental right to health.

Humans are inextricably linked to the survival of wildlife. The meaningful integration of human health, gender equality, effective rights-based conservation, and sustainable use of wild species lays the foundation for more effective and sustainable outcomes for nature and for people.

Our CSS will address some of the critical—but often overlooked—social and cultural aspects of conservation. Serving as a global hub for sharing resources in inclusive and multi-sectorial conservation approaches, our Centre is **linking the health and livelihoods of local communities with the conservation and sustainable use of wild species.**



# Our Logo


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# We are part of the IUCN

**What is the IUCN?**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organizations. It harnesses the experience, resources, and reach of its more than 1,400 member organizations and the input of more than 17,000 experts.

This diversity and vast expertise make IUCN the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

**+ 1,400 Members**

**Active in + 160 countries**

**+ 17,000 Experts**

**Mission:** Influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

**Vision:** A just world that values and conserves nature.

**For more information:**

## What is the IUCN Species Survival Commission?

The Species Survival Commission (SSC) was established by IUCN in 1949, the year after the Union was founded. The SSC, as one of the IUCN's six Commissions, works together with the Secretariat and Members to deliver the IUCN Programme and Species Strategic Plan.

Since that time, SSC has grown into a global, science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts. The Commission delivers and promotes this technical knowledge, advice and policy guidance to those who can influence the implementation of conservation action across the world. These experts are organized into different groups arranged by taxonomy, geography or disciplines, convened by the SSC in response to pressing conservation issues.

**Mission:** In the intersessional period of 2021-2024, the Species Survival Commission (SSC) enables IUCN to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity of biodiversity, and to ensure that the use of species is both equitable and sustainable through:

- the provision of knowledge on status and trends of species;
- developing policies and guidelines;
- facilitating conservation planning; and
- catalysing action on the ground and in the water.

**Vision:** The work of SSC is guided by the Vision of: *A just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to both prevent the loss and aid recovery of diversity of life on earth.*

**For more information:**

# We are hosted by the Wilder Institute

The need to protect wildlife and restore biodiversity has never been greater. But to safeguard the world's most endangered species, conservation efforts must evolve. At the Wilder Institute, we understand that preserving biodiversity means addressing the needs of all living things—including the one species with the power to drive meaningful change: humans.

We act for wildlife; saving species and inspiring people to join us. As wildlife conservationists, we are dedicated to safeguarding the planet's future. With every step, we deepen our impact through our conservation work across Canada and beyond. Our passionate team of staff and volunteers is committed to building a future where people and wildlife thrive, together.

Our inclusive approach to conservation ensures that both wildlife and the communities who share their ecosystems benefit. We achieve this through evidence-based solutions, strengthened by partnerships at local, national, and global levels. We specialize in community-based conservation, conservation translocations, capacity strengthening, and knowledge sharing—all aimed at restoring wild populations and creating lasting benefits for both nature and people.

Our organization is proud to partner with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and has been actively involved in conservation work within Canada and internationally since the 1990s.

In 2025, the Wilder Institute leads 12 Priority Programmes with over 75 collaborators across five countries, and these numbers continue to grow as we expand our impact. It also operates the Archibald Biodiversity Centre, Canada's largest conservation breeding and research facility. Our approach drives real-world results—safeguarding species, restoring habitats, and inspiring action for wildlife everywhere.




*Photo Credit: Margaret Pyke Trust*

## About the Biodiversity and Family Planning Task Force (B&FPTF)

The Biodiversity and Family Planning Task Force (B&FPTF) was created in 2021 because of the overwhelming desire, and need, for biodiversity conservation policy and practice to change to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. Human and environmental health are inextricably linked, conservation organizations are aware of the need to integrate community health actions within programming but need to do so more often, and successful conservation requires genuine and substantive action to further human health and associated gender equality outcomes.

## About the IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi)

The Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi) was established in 2012 and has grown into a global network of over 300 wildlife management professionals. Unsustainable use of wild species is one of the key drivers of biodiversity loss. However sustainable use can be a powerful incentive for conservation as well as a source of livelihood. SULi's primary goals are thus to build knowledge and understanding on sustainable use and how to achieve it, raise awareness of sustainable use issues, and boost community voice.




*Photo Credit: Payun Matru Cooperative, Mendoza, Argentina*



# Why human dimensions?

To date, most Centres for Species Survival have been taxonomic or geographic in scope. Recognizing that human activities shape ecosystems and that wild species provide critical contributions to people[1], it is essential to engage communities as partners in solutions to conserve nature and sustain livelihoods. Our CSS is underpinned by the necessity to create co-benefits for both people and wildlife through human-centred and holistic conservation actions. This approach ensures the long-term sustainability of conservation initiatives while respecting local communities' rights to access natural resources. As a result, our CSS supports actions that improve species conservation and benefit human health, wellbeing, and socio-economic outcomes.

Built on a foundation of inclusive conservation and cross-sectoral knowledge sharing, we aim to:

- Interweave Indigenous, local and western knowledge;
- Shift power dynamics through local actors;
- Integrate all relevant voices from idea creation and design through implementation and evaluation;
- Promote culturally-centred systems that empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

1 Chaplin-Kramer, R., Miller, C. R., Dee, L. E., Bennett, N. J., Echeverri, A., Gould, R. K., ... & Zhao, J. (2025). Wildlife's contributions to people. Nature Reviews Biodiversity, 1(1), 68-81.

The initial focus of our CSS is:

1) sustainable use of wild species and the associated livelihood benefits derived by local communities, and;

2) the full range of human health services for conservation co-benefits.

**1. Sustainable Use and Livelihoods —** The sustainable use of wild species and how this supports both conservation and local livelihoods, particularly for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Sustainable use refers to the use of species at levels that maintain their viability to meet present and future human needs, while avoiding or minimising negative impacts on ecosystems and species.

Livelihoods are the means through which people secure life's essentials, drawing on various assets such as natural resources, social networks, and physical infrastructure. They are especially vital for rural communities living alongside wildlife.

Achieving sustainable use requires interdisciplinary collaboration to balance human needs and ecological preservation.





*Photo Credit: Mark Baron*

**2. Integration of Human Health —** How rights-based approaches to integrate reproductive health interventions with other conservation actions lead to greater conservation, health, and gender outcomes.

While conservation organizations recognize the need to integrate community health actions into programming, collaborations with public health professionals are still limited. Successful conservation requires genuine and substantive action to advance human health and associated gender equality outcomes.

The conservation sector requires a greater understanding as to why barriers to family planning are relevant to conservation, climate adaptation and resilience.

This knowledge fosters supportive policy environments and encourages conservation programmes to include the removal of such barriers, however only when relevant, desired by local communities, and implemented in culturally and socially appropriate ways in the local context.

# Our shared goals:

1. Sharing and strengthening capacity within the conservation community through training, communication materials and accessible versions of published resources and subsequent dissemination

2. Empowering diverse and underrepresented conservation actors particularly Indigenous Peoples and local communities with the tools needed to have a positive impact for wildlife and people

3. Increasing the number of supportive references and accessible resources available to conservation practitioners as well as for use within IUCN policies, processes and frameworks

4. Elevating and sharing knowledge and understanding among the conservation community

5. Building and communicating the evidence base for the effectiveness of more inclusive and integrated approaches to biodiversity conservation

# How we work

To fulfill our unique human-centred mandate, we have applied the five essential components of the Species Conservation Cycle - Assess, Plan, Act, Network, Communicate, and Mobilize Resources:

1) Assess and identify gaps in conservation practice in our focal areas where knowledge sharing, or capacity-strengthening is needed;

2) Strengthen human dimensions themes within species conservation planning for effective conservation action;

3) Work directly with local organizations and leaders (internal and external) so they can act with greater agency and knowledge;

4) Network and build bridges among conservation organizations, governments, communities and researchers to facilitate and increase access to practical tools, evidence, training and guidance;

5) Communicate global expertise, best practices and resources to maximize local conservation impacts;

6) Mobilize and leverage financial, technical and human resources to implement sustainable conservation strategies through partnerships.

Our work will be guided by insights from locally based conservation organizations and conservation practitioners globally. This will help ensure we are fulfilling genuine needs, addressing barriers to access, identifying priority groups and highlighting emerging topics and opportunities within the human dimensions space that require further support.



# Our principles and values:

**1** Human rights and ethics are at the forefront of all our actions.

**2** Community-led conservation is a fundamental priority. Collaborators each work in their own capacity to champion community-led approaches for biodiversity conservation and this collaboration will continue to prioritise this objective.

**3** The strength of our collaboration comes from the complementary nature of our collective skills. Greater outcomes result from multi-sectoral working and genuine collaboration and thus, we commit to remaining open to adapting traditional sectoral ways of working.

**4** Collaborative approaches to biodiversity conservation, human health and sustainable livelihoods must be developed inclusively and equitably in response to local situations and the expressed needs of the people most closely linked to biodiversity conservation. Any contribution to programme design must be informed by community self-identified needs with communities deeply and meaningfully involved in solutions and responses.

**5** Holistic and inclusive conservation approaches are not only the right thing to do in relation to human rights and gender equality, they also lead to more significant and longer-lasting conservation and health outcomes.

# Meet our team



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## Carina Hirsch

**Co-Chair**, IUCN Biodiversity & Family Planning Task Force
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## Dilys Roe

**Chair**, IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group
**Principal Researcher**, International Institute for Environment and Development

# Contact us

We invite you to share your insights, experience, and knowledge to shape the future of this initiative. Your contributions will help strengthen conservation practitioner capacity, expand access and awareness of knowledge resources. Fulfilling these genuine needs will ultimately increase meaningful conservation outcomes for both people and nature.


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