

Crocodile Specialist Group Steering Committee Meeting
Double Tree Hilton, Darwin, Australia
(15 April 2024)

Minutes

The meeting opened at 0930 h.

SC members present in person: Charlie Manolis, Alejandro Larriera, Christine Lippai, Allan Woodward, Alvaro Velasco, Cathy Shilton, Christopher Brochu, Christy Plott, Colette Adams, Curt Harbsmeier, Enrico Chiesa, Eric Langelet, Fabian Schmidt, John Caldwell, Kent Vliet, Lonnie McCaskill, Luis Bassetti, Matthew Brien, Matthew Shirley, Paolo Martelli, Rainier Manalo, Rosanna Mangione, Simone Comparini, Thomas Rainwater, Valentine Lance, Yoichi Takehara, Yusuke Fukuda, Sally Isberg

SC members present by Zoom: Emmanuel Amoah, Pablo Siroski, Marisa Tellez, Gowri Mallapur, Nathalie Kpera, Howard Kelly, Carlos Piña

Observers present in person: Alice Langelet, Ambra Dolfi, Amy Spragge, Annabelle Olsson, Branden Darlison-Hoskin, Charlotte Leyshon, Clare Pearce, Csaba Geczy, Daksh Pandhi, Danie Mulhall, Dave Woods, Deirdre Slawski, Dinouk Perera, Emily Moyes, Erin O'Brien, Garry Lindner, Hallie Cowan, Harada Koki, Irene Chipo Mvere, Jailabdeen Ajji M, James Perran Ross, Juergen Arnold, Katie Sherar, Lauren Lim, Marco Costagli, Maysayanan Thungsen, Noboru Ishii, Pablo Sinovas, Paul Beri, Payton Prosser, Prem Kunwar, Robby McLeod, Savannah Boan, Sebastian Brackhane, Shawn Heflick, Simon Booth, Stefano Pieroni, Steven Leeder, Sukenao Iida, Surathin Wannawatanapong, Somkiat Wannawatanapong, Tim Clancy, Tyson Francis, Mitsuko Takehara, Terry Cullen

SC member apologies: Sen Rith, Xiaobing Wu, Xander Combrink, Hesiquio Benítez, Laura Porras.

Other apologies: Bruce Shwedick

1. Agenda

The agenda papers for the 27th Steering Committee meeting can be found at [here](#).

The Chairs opened the meeting by observing a minute's silence for the 14 members/colleagues who have passed since the Chetumal meeting in July 2022, being: Wayne King, Angel Alcalá, James Aparicio, Juana Pena Flores, Pedro Vasquez Ruesta, Hank Jenkins, Toby Ramos, George Saputra, Tran Van Nga, Goff Letts, Alistair Graham, Luon Nam, Paul Weldon and Chen Bihui.

1.1. Chairs' Report

Alejandro Larriera mentioned that this is the first time that the CSG has been co-chaired, adding that both he and co-Chair Charlie Manolis have been involved in the Executive Committee (EC) for a very long time and have a long institutional memory. Charlie Manolis noted that Grahame Webb stepped down as chair in October 2023 and, at the same time, Perran Ross stepped down from the CSG; the Chairs expressed their thanks for their efforts over the years and looked forward to continuing to access their extensive institutional knowledge.

The Chairs highlighted the following:

- The Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy for CSG-endorsed Events and associated Resolution Procedures documents had been distributed to SC members for their review, and all

comments received were assessed and integrated into the versions that are now available on the [CSG website](#).

- The Future Leaders Working Group that was formed in 2014 was morphed into the Future Leaders Program (FLP) in 2018. Whilst the initiative has continued to build the capacity of CSG members (eg sending members to CITES CoPs), the funding required to achieve its goals has not been easy to raise.
- The EC has decided to establish an “Executive Advisory Group” (EAG), to sit between the EC and the SC, and which it hopes will achieve some of the FLP’s goals, but also act as a group that can work more closely with the EC at a more strategic level. A tentative list of people has been decided and this will be discussed with those individuals over the coming days. The Chairs stressed that the EAG will not diminish the role of the SC but, as it will address specific issues, the EAG will be expected to draw on the relevant skills and expertise from within the SC as well as the broader CSG membership.
- Changes to the SC are being made where members have asked to step down. Some regions, such as SAI and ESEAsia have country representatives (focal points) on the SC to assist the Regional Chairs. However, other regions (eg WCA, ESAfrica) have very little representation at the country level. Matt Shirley responded that for the WCA, there are difficulties in identifying and retaining people due to issues of funding, programs, etc. This will be discussed throughout the Working Meeting to determine if there is any other way to encourage individual country involvement.
- Terms of Reference for Regional and Thematic Group Chairs will be drafted, to clarify roles and responsibilities with regard to communication, not only with their members, but also with the EC. Similarly, a revised CSG Membership Nomination Form is being drafted. A few Regional Chairs and Vice-chairs have expressed frustration at the lack of communication or responses to e-mail requests from their regional members. Whilst the IUCN operates on a quadrennium cycle, we appreciate that not all CSG members remain currently active, nor wish to remain active, in the crocodilian space. This revised nomination form will obtain current contact information, particularly for long-term members, but also try to capture an effective membership that is actively contributing in the crocodilian space. These documents will be forthcoming.
- Alejandro Larriera clarified the misunderstanding within the CSG membership regarding how the new Chairs were selected. The selection of Grahame Webb in 2004 through an election process within the SC was a one-off situation sought by the CSG and approved by the then SSC Chair. The “normal” process is for the SSC Chair (SSC Executive) to select and appoint Chairs of all specialist groups.

Action 1: EO/EC to finalise and distribute: Terms of Reference for Regional and Thematic Group Chairs; and Revised CSG Membership Nomination Form

Revised CSG Membership Nomination Form sent to membership in May 2024.

The Terms of Reference for Regional and Thematic Group chairs was finalized in January 2025 but distribution was withheld until the beginning of the new quadrennium. These were distributed in early 2026.

1.2. Minutes from SC Meeting, Chetumal

Sally Isberg introduced the item. As there were no action items to report against, the report was noted.

1.3. Executive Officer Report

Sally Isberg introduced the item.

SI thanked Tom Dacey for his work as the previous Executive Officer (EO), as well as the EC and wider CSG membership for their support since she took over the EO role.

SI confirmed that under the current arrangement, her annual remuneration is \$AUD25,000 which includes all statutory on-costs including superannuation, workers compensation and other insurances, as well as office equipment. A timesheet is maintained and submitted with invoices.

With regard to CSG membership, SI noted that, as of 15 April 2024, there are 732 CSG members from 82 countries listed in the CSG database, comprising a net increase of 22 members and 12 countries since the last SC report. The current SC is composed of 71 members. A Zoom link has been provided to enable those who are not able to attend this meeting in person, and a recording will be distributed at a later date.

SI informed the meeting that she continues to maintain the CSG database, adding that when e-mails are returned as undelivered, efforts are made to contact members via alternate means, generally through the regional chair. However, as instances occur where alternative contact details are not available, SI requested all members to inform the EO whenever member contact details change.

Other highlights in the report include:

- Since the last SC meeting, a review of the “Modelling population dynamics of estuarine crocodiles on Queensland’s northern populated east coast” was conducted and CSG members were attendees at CITES CoP19 held in Panama in November 2022. There have been two successful SSC grants secured, both in 2023, to Marisa Tellez and Matt Shirley. It should be noted that while the CSG is supportive of its members applying for these funds, it is the responsibility of those individuals to fulfill the reporting requirements and the CSG will assume no liability or responsibility for the agreed deliverables. She stressed that CSG members who obtain such grants must be diligent in their acquittal and report to the IUCN/SSC in order that other CSG members are not precluded from applying for further funding rounds.
- the Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy for CSG-endorsed Events and associated Resolution Procedures, as mentioned in the Chairs report. Considerable time and negotiation were required to develop these and ensure alignment with other IUCN policies.
- continuing to develop a communications strategy. The social media team (see 1.3.1 below) has been trialling different ways to increase our engagement of the crocodilian and wider community. The review and redesign of the website is being discussed.
- innovative ways to increase engagement and inclusiveness, as well as deliver the messaging of crocodile conservation and CSG mission. For example, an e-mail list of SRAS recipients will be developed to receive CSG correspondence for the duration of their project. A strategy to create a “interested persons” e-mail list is also underway for people who may not meet the criteria for CSG membership but their interest and involvement in crocodilians may assist us on many levels and is an inclusiveness strategy.
- developing crocodilian conservation priorities.
- The CSG Newsletter is still the primary source of communication.
- The Student Research Assistance Scheme supported 12 projects in 2022, 15 in 2023 and there have been 6 applications so far in 2024. CSG members who are aware of students working with crocodilians are encouraged to let these students know about this scheme so that the CSG can continue to encourage people working with crocodilians.

The report was noted.

1.3.1. Social media

Jen Bruggen gave an update on developments within the social media space, noting the following:

- Most of the social media has been around member awareness, project awareness and increasing the profile of crocodilian conservation. Newsletter items are also now being shared.
- Facebook following is 6.8K and Instagram is 1.8K. The CSG also has LinkedIn and YouTube accounts but needs to better define its goals for the different platforms, which have different reaches for different demographics, etc. For example, do we want to share IUCN best practice guidelines, better awareness of crocodilian conservation issues, etc.

Matt Shirley noted that the CSG's social media strategy should consider integration with other groups such as the International Crocodile Farmers Association (ICFA), People for Wildlife, Louisiana Alligators, etc.

The report was noted.

Action 2: EC to ensure Communication Strategy considers: review and re-design of the CSG website; better defined goals for social media platforms; inclusion of SRAS students in CSG communications; and, development of a list of interested people to receive CSG communications.

Venetia Briggs-Gonzalez lead the development of the Communications Strategy which was disseminated to SC members in March 2025 for comment. The final Strategy was endorsed by the EC in April 2025 after incorporating SC feedback. An action plan was developed in October 2025. Terms of Reference for the Communications Working Group were endorsed in October 2025 and Venetia Briggs-Gonzalez was appointed Chair of the Working Group. A Website Committee was formed in November 2025 and is currently developing the framework for the new CSG website.

Goals for the social media platforms are under consideration by the Communications Working Group. SRAS recipients and interested people are included in all CSG correspondence. Inclusion of a subscribe option on the new website will be included to expand on existing distribution lists.

1.4. CSG/IACS Financial Reports

Reports were noted and accepted.

1.5. IUCN Membership 2021-2025

Reports were accepted and noted.

Charlie Manolis clarified that the nomination process for CSG members ultimately lies with the Chairs, but the preference is that members are nominated through their Regional Chairs and Vice-chairs.

2. Regional Reports

2.1. East and Southern Africa

Christine Lippai introduced the item, highlighting:

- South Africa:
 - has been developing a biodiversity management plan (BMP) for crocodiles.
 - Non-detriment finding (NDF) has been developed for trade in skins that could impact on the survival of the species in the wild yet there is no wild offtake as the skin industry in ZA is all closed cycle.
 - genetic admixture is a concern regarding potential reintroduction with facilities housing crocodiles from different drainage basins within the same pens. A study has been initiated to determine this.
 - interest has been expressed for a regional meeting in South Africa and could be integrated with the proposed 28th Working Meeting discussed in item 7.
- Networking within the region continues to be an issue.

Matt Shirley noted that there were parties looking for *Mecistops leptorhynchus* in Zambia. It is unlikely they are present but there are rumours that this is being followed up.

The report was noted.

2.2. West and Central Africa

Matt Shirley introduced the item, highlighting:

- Christine Lippai stepped down as Regional Vice-chair and thanked her for her efforts.
- Engagement of regional members has been a major priority along with capacity building. Emmanuel Amoah has a program (THRESCOAL) dedicated to this purpose.
- Red List assessments are progressing slower than desired. A *C. suchus* Red List assessment team has been formed.
- *Osteolaemus* likely has the largest wild meat offtake in the wild and is under no management plan. A SSC Internal Edge grant has been obtained to hold a workshop to develop the Red List and Action Plans for *Osteolaemus*. Taxonomic divisions of *Osteolaemus* are progressing.
- No *Mecistops* were found in a recent reconnaissance trip to Eastern Senegal.

The report was noted.

2.3. East and Southeast Asia

Lonnie McCaskill introduced the item, highlighting:

- Laos (*C. siamensis*):
 - World Conservation Society (WCS) headstarting program operates in two villages - Tan Soum (10 years) and Dogyanong Villages (recent construction) - and there are currently 152 crocodiles in the program. 37 were released in March 2024 adding to the previously released 78 individuals from 2022-2023.
 - Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife, previously the Laos Zoo, has identified pure Siamese crocodiles within their stock and the main goal is to support *in-situ* conservation through captive breeding. 10 captive-bred individuals have been donated to the WCS Tan Soum village project for release.
- Cambodia (*C. siamensis*):
 - WCS - since 2021, nests have been found but they have been infertile.
 - Rising Phoenix has released 19 animals since March 2022. In 223, six nests located but none were fertile.
 - Fauna & Flora (FF) has found stable population numbers in the Cardamom Mountains but infertility and embryo death from flooding mean juvenile recruitment is negligible to poor. Ten crocodiles were released in late 2022, totalling 146 in total since 2012 with more planned in the near future.
 - FF work closely with 26 crocodile community wardens that patrol areas in the Cardamom Mountains. Wardens use the SMART patrol system within their sites to monitor, evaluate and respond to threats. Staff have been provided intensive two-day training courses on using the SMART Mobile App for field and photo-based patrol data collection.
 - Captive breeding at Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre continues producing 60 hatchlings in 2022 and 78 in 2023. DNA analysis is identifying purebred versus hybrid individuals.
 - Surveys within the Virachey National Park have revealed unsuitable habitat for releasing crocodiles.
- Thailand (*C. siamensis*):
 - There have been 3 release programs implemented since 2000 but have had little contribution to the wild stock regarding the number of viable populations. The main obstacles are suitable habitats and multi-agency cooperation. Each government agency (Department of Fisheries and Department of National Parks (DNP)) has its own master plan to manage the habitat and the species. Still, the capability has been built up within these agencies to successfully restock the species in the future.
 - WCS Thailand published a survey report on the status of wild populations in Kaeng Krachan National Park (KKNP) and plans to secure funding for the first reintroduction program soon.
 - A nationwide survey ended in 2020, with an estimated number of wild populations of less than 100 individuals. No additional surveys were conducted in 2023, except that of KKNP and another

in Bueng Borapet Reservoir. Officials and tourists often observed a few guarding mothers and their hatchlings.

- Thai Crocodile Farm Association (TCFA) is actively involved in the ongoing reintroduction and monitoring programs in six protected areas in Thailand, which requires permission.
- Indonesia (*Tomistoma schlegelii*):
 - Masters project in Berbak National Park has defined adult home range size using satellite tracking.
- China (*Alligator sinensis*):
 - Suitable habitats have been expanded and existing habitats have been restored including reconstruction of *A. sinensis*' food chain.
 - 1300 of the planned 1500 have been reintroduced with an 80% survival rate one-year post-release. In 2023, 400 eggs were found in 17 nests, with 250 resulting hatchlings.

Rainier Manalo provided the Philippine item, highlighting:

- The Palawan population of *C. porosus* has been downlisted to Appendix II, with a zero export quota, at the last CITES CoP.
- Three *C. mindorensis* were repatriated from Cologne Zoo for reintroduction.
- Recent surveys have indicated approximate 300 wild *C. mindorensis*.

Charlie Manolis provided information on Malaysia, highlighting:

- In Sarawak and Sabah, and neighbouring Brunei, human-crocodile conflict (HCC) has increased in frequency, creating anti-crocodile sentiments.
- For states such as Sabah, crocodiles are returning to areas where they have not been seen for decades, and the human population has lost all links to crocodile cohabitation.
- State Governments are looking for removal processes and resolutions with a workshop to be held in Sabah next month.

The reports were noted.

2.4. Latin America and the Caribbean

Alejandro Larriera introduced the item, highlighting:

- Commercial programs are declining in Latin America, with the exception of Brazil, and the long-term outcomes of this could be detrimental to crocodile conservation as the livelihood benefits of sustainable use are lost.
- Despite this, there are more people working on research and a representative in Cuba (Gustavo Sosa Rodriguez) has recently been identified.

Alvaro Velasco delivered a further report on behalf of Pablo Siroski, highlighting:

- Recently, updated information has been received about the caiman populations in Suriname and Guyana.
- There has been a report about a drastic decline in crocodiles and caiman captive breeding initiatives in Colombia.
- Student groups are working in Colombia, along with the development of a strong science-based reintroduction program for *Crocodylus intermedius* at the Roberto Franco Station.
- The El Salvador Government has shown interest in hosting an event either in late-2024 or early-2025, with the participation of NGOs and the National University, aimed at fostering collaboration among government representatives, NGOs and universities involved in crocodylian projects across the region.
- Discussions have begun regarding the formation of a working group, or task force, comprising representatives and researchers from countries conducting studies on *Melanosuchus niger*. The goal is to broaden the pool of stakeholders with updated information across the species' distribution range.

The reports were noted.

2.5. South Asia and Iran

The report was noted.

2.6. Australia and Oceania

Matt Brien introduced the item, highlighting:

- Australia:
 - Review of “Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles” is currently underway.
 - Genetic studies are ongoing in both the Northern Territory (NT) and Queensland (QLD).
 - Both QLD and NT are currently updating their management programs. The NT continues to harvest wild eggs and QLD changed its legislation in 2018 to allow wild harvest and there is currently one operator.
- Palau - small, stable population with HCC rare
- Papua New Guinea - Crocodile Trade Act is being updated to reflect changes within the industry, particularly around licencing, to ensure the conservation and management of the two crocodilian species.
- Timor-Leste - increasing HCC, particularly in the number of fatalities.
- Solomon Islands - country wide surveys in 2019 to develop the national crocodile management plan, although this has not yet been released.

The report was noted.

2.7. Europe

Fabian Schmidt introduced the item, highlighting:

- Thomas Ziegler has stepped down as Chair since the last working meeting; Fabian Schmidt and Rosanna Mangione as Regional Chair and Vice-chair, respectively, have added diversity to the European region in terms of both captive and wild crocodilian work.
- Regional collection plan has been developed for crocodiles held in Europe. Little has changed, with the same species included and no change in staffing overseeing these.

Rosanna Mangione highlighted:

- In collaboration with the EO, the membership list has been updated to increase the communication within the region.
- Even though Europe is not a range state for crocodilians, there are many people working in zoos, in welfare as well as in the field in non-European countries.

The reports were noted.

2.8. North America

Allan Woodward introduced the item, highlighting:

- *C. acutus* continue to recover with increased nesting and survival. However, HCC issues are increasing with about 200 complaints in Florida each year. The majority are resolved easily but 20-30 require translocation annually.

- *A. mississippiensis* is expanding its range into northern states. Most states have developed a harvest program (commercial and/or hunting).
- Wild harvest skin prices have declined over the last decade placing pressure on the solvency of the businesses that harvest from the wild. The wild harvest contractors also aid in problem alligator removal but with less income from skin sales, the price paid to the contracts has had to increase, placing financial strain on the governmental agencies who administer these.
- Wild egg harvest price has remained quite stable with the quality of the skin determining the viability of the ranching program.

The report was noted.

3. Thematic Group Reports

3.1. Industry

Christy Plott introduced the item, highlighting:

- Industry and crocodile conservation are intricately linked. However, the overproduction of crocodilian skins, along with a shrinking consumer base, has reduced demand leading to reduced prices.
- Californian law 6530 has been found to be unconstitutional but is still creating some confusion. Caiman lawsuit has also been successful and is now legal for trade again.
- Attacks on industry, even when unsuccessful, have long-standing effects. For example, when Chanel removed its support of reptile skins, this was a household name that had a reputational damage on exotic leathers. Retailers, such as Nordstrom, then followed suit.
- The combination of oversupply and demand reduction has seen prices fall, and it is especially challenging for smaller farms. Measures are underway to try to regain consumer confidence. One example of this is the International Crocodile Farmers Association (ICFA), which was established by farmers to initiate research into science-based welfare items (eg darkness, density) and to ensure traceability and transparency in the supply chain.
- In early 2023, Mexico had a trade ban imposed based on its failure to produce a satisfactory management plan for the Totoaba. Whilst unrelated to crocodilian programs it is an example of how conservation programs can be vulnerable to the impacts from non-related species. Mexico produces a lot of different products, including boots, from *Caiman* species.

A brief discussion was held between the SC participants about how sustainable use is no longer working as a stand-alone story. Consumers want to know more details around the functioning of habitat protection, carbon sequestering, etc.

The report was noted.

3.2. Trade Monitoring

John Caldwell introduced the item, highlighting:

- The International Alligator and Crocodile Trade Studies (IACTS) continues to be produced annually and latest report can be found on the CSG website.
- CITES reports from Parties are still lagging for some key countries. If a country fails to produce an annual report for three years, they can face a trade ban.

Alvaro Velasco commented that the CITES report is based on international trade and not necessarily representative of the number of skins traded within countries.

The report was noted.

3.3. Veterinary Science

Paolo Martelli thanked the Mexican CSG Working Meeting hosts for holding the veterinary workshop at the last meeting in the absence of the Veterinary Chairs. He informed the meeting that a workshop had been held the day prior to the current SC meeting with wild crocodiles available for necropsy, which allowed real life applications of veterinary science to be discussed.

PM introduced the item, highlighting:

- Communications with members continues to be an issue and perhaps can be resolved through communication with the CSG Executive Officer.
- Still a number of regions without good representation (eg West and Central Africa).

The report was noted.

3.4. Zoos

Kent Vliet introduced the item, highlighting:

- Collette Adams was appointed as a Vice-chair of the zoo group since the last meeting.
- Report is focused on American zoos as European zoos were covered within the Europe regional report.
- AZA is moving away from the Species Survival Plans (SSP) programs towards a SAFE model. Earlier this year, the eight crocodylian species listed under SSP have been re-evaluated and six have been reduced to studbook programs. *A. sinensis* and *Tomistoma* are still SSP programs. There is concern because the emphasis is now placed on ex situ conservation (ie just keeping enough diverse genetic stock in zoos) rather than *in situ*. This may create fundraising issues and import permit issues without SSP labels.
- CrocFEST continues to be a great initiative now having raised over \$US900,000 for *in-situ* conservation efforts.
- Croc School continues to be successful after 20 years and over 400 graduates but is now being run by the St Augustine Alligator Farm Croc School.
- Cologne Zoo repatriated three Philippine crocodiles in early 2023.
- Zoos Victoria (Australia) has continued to support the Mabuwaya Foundation's conservation program for *Crocodylus mindorensis*. This is primarily financial, with \$AUD40,000 provided in the 2022-23 financial year and \$AUD30,000 provided in the 2023-24 financial year to date. Advice has also been provided on captive management of Philippine Crocs at the Philippine Crocodile Conservation Centre in San Mariano, Isabella Province in northeast Philippines. Education supplies, which the Foundation uses for various elements of their community engagement program, benefits wild crocodiles as the more engaged the local people are, the greater the likelihood of them protecting crocodiles and reporting infringements of local and municipal ordinances.

The report was noted.

3.5. Taxonomy

Kent Vliet introduced the item, highlighting:

- About 40 people are involved in developing a consensus list of crocodylian taxonomy.
- 26 species, recognising *Osteolaemus osborni*, but not others until final assessments have been published in peer-reviewed literature. This list will be published in the next CSG Newsletter and website. This will be a live document that will be updated as required.
- There has been a large amount of research done on *C. rhombifer/C. acutus* hybridisation as well as *Caiman* throughout their range. There appears to be remarkable population structure within these species.

- While efforts have been placed around anatomy and genetics for speciation, developing tools for customs and trade issues has been a more complex problem.

Discussion items included:

- Chris Brochu noted that sample availability and disproportionate sampling are two major issues when trying to dissociate some of these complexes based on zoo and museum records. For example, there are numerous samples from East Africa but limited specimens from West Africa.
- Paolo Martelli proposed to have a laboratory where tissue samples could be submitted to genetically speciate animals. Kent Vliet would like to have both genetic tools as well as dichotomous keys to speciate animals.
- Discussion was held about obtaining further genetic samples from the *C. novaeguineae* distributed within the south of Papua New Guinea to determine if the addition of *C. halli* is appropriate.

The report was noted.

3.6. Legal Affairs

Curt Harbsmeier introduced the item, highlighting:

- CSG members continue to provide advice to governmental agencies as required.
- Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is reviewing the “Code of Practice on the Humane Treatment of Wild and Farmed Australian Crocodiles”.
- Northern Territory and Queensland crocodile management plans are currently being finalised.
- HCC is increasing (eg Timor-Leste, Jamaica, Cuba, Guatemala). CrocFEST is working with Valerie Garcia (Guatemala) to develop a management plan to help mitigate this and we need to keep working with Governments in all range states.
- South Africa is working on the non-detriment finding for Nile crocodiles and CSG members have been providing evidence and recommendations to the Scientific Authority by the end of the year (as noted in the East & Southern Africa report).
- As reported in the industry-trade report, Californian law 6530 was found to be unconstitutional. The State of California have not contested this ruling which is now final. Christy Plott should be congratulated for her dedication and commitment to this cause and commended on the outcome.
- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission approved changes to the current alligator hunt (15 August -1 November; ~7000 permits and ~14,000 alligators) by adding a “special hunt”. This includes issuing another 100 permits (200 alligators) and extending the season to these permit holders until 31 December. These permits will be allocated by a random drawing of applicants in May. Approximately 6,000 alligators permitted by the current harvest go unharvested, so the special hunt is not expected to have any measurable impact on the Florida alligator population.

The report was noted.

3.7. IUCN Red List Authority (RLA)

Sally Isberg introduced the item, highlighting:

- Three Red List assessments have been published since the last meeting. These were for *C. rhombifer* (Critically Endangered), *C. moreletii* (Least Concern) and *Tomistoma schlegelii*, which was upgraded from Vulnerable to Endangered. Thank you to all the assessor/authors and the numerous other CSG members who contributed to, or reviewed, these publications.
- The Red List team consists of Sally Isberg, Sergio Balaguera-Reina (GIS), Brandon Sideleau (GIS), Colin Stevenson and Clare Wilkie, with Perran Ross as mentor. Caroline Pollock from the IUCN Red List team also provides support and mentoring as required.
- Processes are now very well-established, using existing Action Plans if they exist as the baseline assessment text. Assessment teams are then assigned by the RLA to update the existing knowledge. Excel and Word-based templates have now been created to assist these assessment teams and provide support throughout the assessment process. Maps are created using survey data provided

and, if none is provided, publicly available information is used, including CrocAttack data. The RLA assessment team then refines this map based on expert knowledge. Once the assessment and RLA teams are happy with the assessment draft, the CSG Chairs provide their review, at which point further experts are often identified, and further items are refined. After these are addressed, the assessments are submitted. A request was made for people to follow this process and not assign their own teams or start their own assessment without conferring with the RLA first.

- There are currently six assessments underway (*C. palustris*, *C. suchus*, *Melanosuchus niger*, *Mecistops cataphractus*, *Mecistops leptorhynchus* and *Osteolaemus*) at various stages.
- The next priorities will be the re-assessment of *C. siamensis* and *C. mindorensis*.
- Indigenous and local knowledge remain a conscious part of all Red List assessments. All assessment teams are encouraged to include references showing communications with locals to empower their voice in the formulation of these assessments.
- Better promoting the publication of Red List assessments is being trialled with a presentation-style YouTube with the assessment team. The first, *Tomistoma* with Kyle Shaney, received good reviews and can be seen as another engagement strategy on the CSG's social media platforms.

The report was noted.

4. Task Force/Working Groups

4.1. Future Leaders Program

Alejandro Larriera introduced the item on behalf of Pablo Siroski, highlighting that the FLP has evolved with many of these members now on the SC and in senior CSG roles. As a result, the FLP model will be dissolved, but activities will continue informally as opportunities arise.

The report was noted.

4.2. Drone Working Group

Lonnie McCaskill introduced the item, highlighting that while the technology was new, there was a lot of interest and enthusiasm around the working group and workshop, but with the ready integration of this technology into the crocodylian survey, conservation and other needs, it is questioned whether a working group was still appropriate.

Charlie Manolis suggested that the working group has met its original terms of reference. Discussions should be held to determine the utility of continuing the working group or whether it should be reframed and, if so, in what form.

Action 3: Discussions to be held to determine the utility of continuing the Drone working group or whether it should be reframed and, if so, in what form.

After discussions with one of the Drone Working Group Chair, Lonnie McCaskill, it was decided to keep the group active as there are field trips planned for upcoming meetings. Reassess at the next SC meeting.

5. General Business

5.1. CITES (CoP19 and NDF)

Alejandro Larriera introduced the CoP item, highlighting:

- Items from CoP19 (Panama, 2022) have been published in the CSG Newsletter. *C. porosus* (Philippines) and *C. latirostris* (Brazil) were transferred to Appendix II with zero quotas, but the proposal to downlist *C. siamensis* (Thailand) from Appendix I to Appendix II with zero quota was unsuccessful.

Charlie Manolis asked Daniel Natusch to address the item on non-detriment findings (NDFs) and the workshop and NDF guidance recently produced by the CITES Secretariat.

- Dr. Natusch was commissioned by the CITES Secretariat to coordinate the consultants and production of the guidance. This involved 6-months of online meetings to create draft guidance, which then fed into a 160-person workshop in Nairobi in December 2023. At the workshop, finalised guidance was produced that will then be field tested by specific Parties. Working Groups, and hence chapters for which guidance was produced, concerned several thematic and taxon-specific topics. Those related most closely to crocodylians were the generic NDF guidance, the guidance on incorporating the knowledge of Indigenous People and Local Communities into NDF-making, and the guidance on reptiles. For crocodylian NDFs, little has changed with regard to how Parties should undertake NDFs. Dr. Natusch's intervention also touched upon the broader CITES and wildlife trade landscape, especially in relation to Stricter Domestic Measures imposed by some Parties - which, in some cases, relate more to politics and public sentiment (largely driven by Animal Rights NGOs opposed to wildlife trade) than to science. It is anticipated that such measures will become more strict without concerted efforts to reverse this trend.

The reports were noted.

5.2. Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

Charlie Manolis introduced the item, highlighting:

- At CMS CoP14 (Samarkand, Uzbekistan, February 2024), a Resolution was adopted that the CMS Scientific Council would consult with the CSG to determine if crocodylians meet the criteria for CMS inclusion. The definition used by the CMS is “the entire population or any geographically separate part of the population of any species or lower taxon of wild animals, a significant proportion of whose members cyclically and predictably cross one or more national jurisdictional boundaries”. There are currently two crocodylian species listed on the CMS (*Crocodylus porosus* and *Gavialis gangeticus*). As yet, CSG has not been contacted by the CMS.

The report was noted.

6. Other business

- 6.1. Charlie Manolis introduced the item of reinstating the HCC Working Group as proposed by Brandon Sideleau (by e-mail). The original HCC working group was formed in 2002 and had very specific goals that were achieved, and the group was disbanded. If the HCC group were to reform, the goals of the group should be defined and terms of reference developed.

Action 4: Discussions to be held to determine the utility of forming a working group, including the development of a draft terms of reference and the outputs to be developed.

HCC Working Group, renamed the Living with Crocodylians working group, was formed naming Simon Pooley as Chair. A Terms of Reference was developed and accepted by the EC.

- 6.2. Terry Cullen raised concerns around the current membership nomination process and structure of the CSG. Charlie Manolis clarified that the current nomination process through the Regional Chairs and Vice-chairs was working quite well and that the CSG operates on a platform of “tolerance, respect and understanding”.

7. 28th CSG Working Meeting

Charlie Manolis informed the Committee that two proposals had been received to host the 28th CSG Working Meeting - from Morocco (Crocoparc, Agadir) and Brazil (Caimasul, Corumba). The EC decided that, pending further information, Morocco will host the 28th Working Meeting in 2026. However, as a meeting in Brazil would comprise a different representation of participants, there may be merit in Brazil hosting the 29th Working Meeting in 2027; this would be discussed with the relevant agencies in Brazil.

The meeting closed at 1513 h.