

Proceedings of the 2025 CPSG Annual Meeting





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This event was hosted by the Cali Zoological Foundation together with the Cali Zoo and Cali Botanical Garden.

The CPSG–Cali Zoological Foundation Annual Meeting coordination and liaison team was led by Elizabeth Townsend (IUCN SSC CPSG) and Adolfo Castro (Cali Zoological Foundation). CPSG’s 2025 Annual Meeting visual identity was designed by Eugenia Cordero-Schmidt. The 2025 Annual Meeting Proceedings were compiled and edited by María Braeuner.

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The 2025 CPSG Annual Meeting

was hosted by the Cali Zoological Foundation in Cali, Colombia from October 23 - 26, 2025.

This year's meeting was marked by many firsts for CPSG: my first Annual Meeting as CPSG Chair; our first Annual Meeting in Colombia; and, notably, the first integration of a species conservation planning workshop into the program—conducted entirely in Spanish (another first!). We welcomed 85 participants from 19 countries—our largest meeting for almost a decade—and for 60 delegates this was their first CPSG Annual Meeting. Hopefully the first of many!

The opening reception at the Cali Botanical Gardens welcomed us with a “fruit banquet”, celebrating Cali’s extraordinary botanical diversity, a memorable way to set the stage for the days that followed.

During the four-day meeting, supported by facilitators, delegates engaged in lively, innovative and productive conversations focused on topical conservation challenges.

This year, these included: biobanking, Extinct in the Wild species, plant conservation, setting national priorities for species conservation, tropical cyclones and their implications for conservation planning, modernizing conservation software, and capacity development in conservation planning. The dedicated planning workshop for the conservation of *Atelopus* species in Colombia provided a focused space for those directly involved in the planning process, while also giving them insight into the structure and dynamics of CPSG’s planning approach.

We were honored to hear from two keynote speakers from Colombia and Brazil: Dr. Cristina Lopez-Gallego and Dr. Yara Barros. Cristina provided an overview of conservation planning in Colombia and the work underway to develop a coordinated National Strategy for Species Conservation. Yara shared powerful lessons from jaguar-human

coexistence initiatives in the Iguacu region and the transformative role of perception change, trust-building, and community-centered conservation.

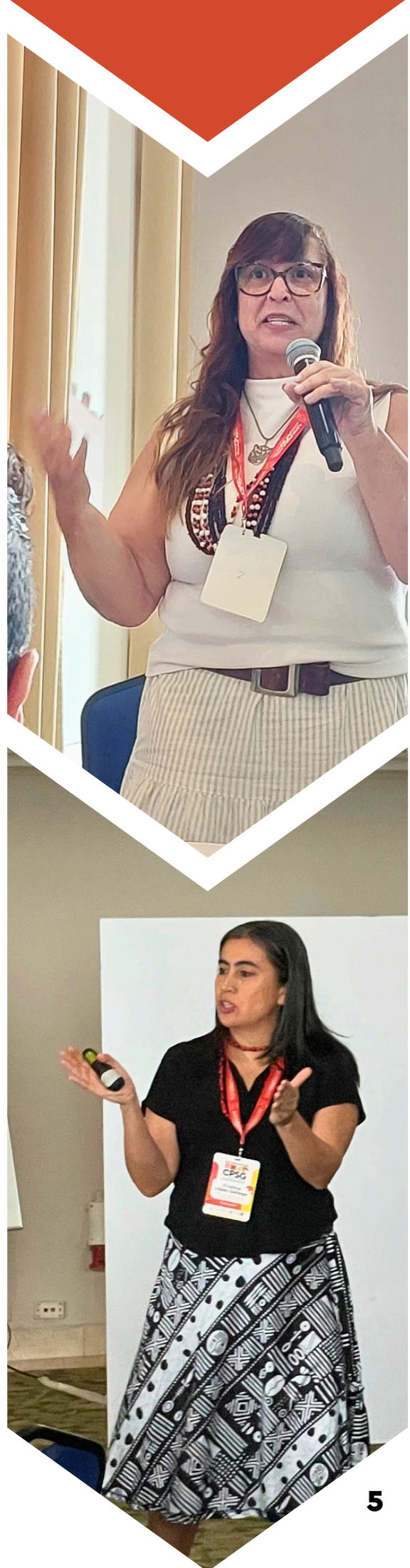
Thanks to the Cali Zoological Foundation, both keynote sessions were recorded and are available on [CPSG's YouTube channel](#).

On the final afternoon we were all treated to a tour of Cali Zoo and the institution's impressive conservation work—including *ex situ* efforts for the stunning but threatened Lehmann's Poison Frog, *Oophaga lehmanni*. Our closing ceremony, also at the Zoo, was marked by the presentation of the Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation to Dr. Valerie C. Pence for her pioneering work in plant conservation and exceptional plants. You can read more about Dr. Pence's work [here](#).

We extend our sincere thanks to all participants for joining us this year at our Annual Meeting and sharing their experience and insights throughout the week. We are especially grateful to our hosts at the Cali Zoological Foundation, Cali Zoo, and the Cali Botanical Gardens for their exceptional hospitality and for helping make CPSG's 2025 Annual Meeting such a memorable event.



Caroline Lees
Chair, IUCN SSC CPSG



World Café Activity

What does collaboration mean to you?

To set the stage for the days ahead, we opened Day 1 with a World Café activity. In small groups, each supported by a facilitator, participants explored two questions:

- What undermines our collaborative spirit?
- How can we, individually and collectively, work to maintain it?

Across tables, similar themes emerged around power imbalance, competitive dynamics, unequal remuneration or credit for work done, poor communication, poorly aligned or unclear goals, and issues of trust. But participants also generated potential solutions to avoid this: from clearer written agreements, formalised communication channels and neutral facilitation, to personal commitments such as pausing assumptions and approaching one another with curiosity. You can read more [here](#).

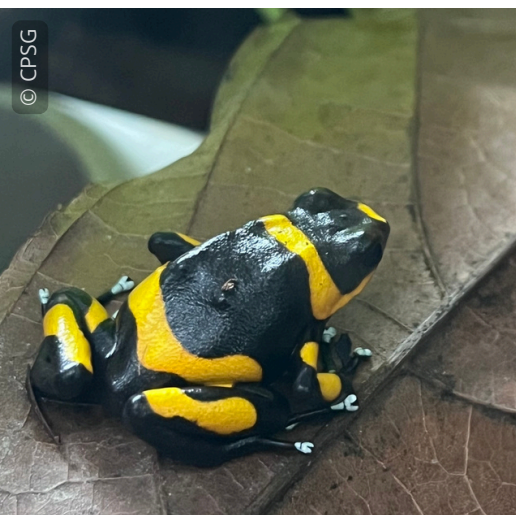




2025 CPSG
**ANNUAL
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23-26 October
Cali, Colombia









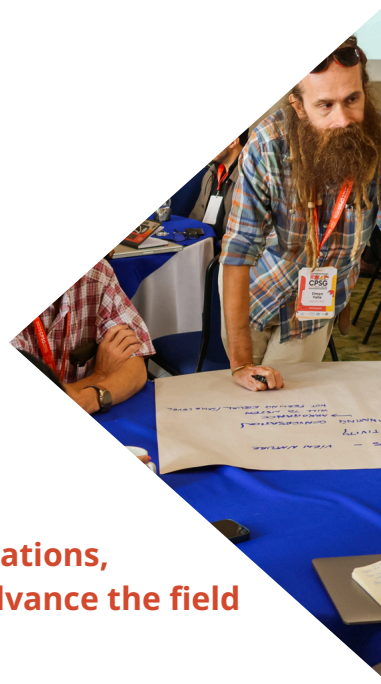
Working Groups

Working groups focus on specific conservation topics and through presentations, group discussions, and brainstorming, advance the field of endangered species conservation.

Eight different working groups were convened during this CPSG Annual Meeting. Within this document, you will find the working group summaries, including specific recommendations for each working group's next steps.

If you want to dive deeper into each topic, you will find a link to the full report on each page.

1. Implementing the ASI Harlequin Toad Conservation Action Plan in Colombia
2. Conservation Planning for Plants in Latin America
3. Latin America Regional Biobanking
4. Heightened Extinction Risk Due to Tropical Cyclones in Insular Biodiversity Hotspots
5. South America's Extinct in the Wild Species: Collaborative Pathways Forward for Species Lost from Nature
6. Charting a Course for the Future of the PVA Software Vortex
7. Prioritizing Species and Conservation Planning for Target 4 of the Global Biodiversity Framework
8. Facilitating Meetings and Workshops



WORKSHOP

Implementing the ASI Harlequin Toad Conservation Action Plan in Colombia

CONVENORS



Jonathan Wilcken
Amphibian Ark



Luis Carrillo
Amphibian Ark



Luis Marín
Atelopos Survival Initiative

PARTICIPANTS

Aldemar Acevedo, Alexander Franco, Andrés Rocha, Beatriz Velasquez, Carlos Galvis, Carlos Ríos, Cristian Rincon, David Angulo, David Velasquez Trujillo, Diego Gomez, Elson Meneses, Gina Dela Togna, Giovanni Chaves, Guido Medina, Gustavo González, Gustavo Pisso, Gustavo Rodriguez, Jose Barros, Juan Camilo Bonilla, Luis Alberto Rueda Solano, Luis Kamil Bitrago, Luis Marin Fonte, Mauricio Rivera, Mileydi Betancurt, Monica Gómez, Pedro Camargo, Sandra Galeano, Vicky Flechas, Wilmar Bolivar



SUMMARY

This workshop brought together 30 participants from 19 institutions to adapt and refine the already published Harlequin Toad (*Atelopus*) Conservation Action Plan (HarleCAP) for Colombia's 41 *Atelopus* species. Participants reviewed its goals, analyzed relevance and urgency for Colombia, identified gaps, and developed four national implementation projects focused on threat identification and mitigation, rediscovery of lost species, *ex situ* reproduction, and data policy and network strengthening. A volunteer group committed to leading the consolidation and publication of the national plan. The session was conducted entirely in Spanish, the first non-English working group in CPSG Annual Meeting history.

Next steps and/or recommendations:

- Re-establish and strengthen the Red de Conservación de Ranas Arlequín de Colombia (ReCRAC), Colombia's national *Atelopus* conservation network.
- Consolidate the national *Atelopus* action plan, led by a volunteer drafting team.
- Produce the first draft of the plan by February 2026, followed by full workshop-wide review.
- Publish the final plan, then coordinate national implementation.
- Mobilize funding and institutional support to activate priority actions over the next 5 years.

Access the workshop's Annual Meeting report [here](#) (a separate action plan will be published in 2026).

WORKING GROUP

Conservation Planning for Plants in Latin America

CONVENORS



Jean Linsky
Atlanta Botanical
Garden



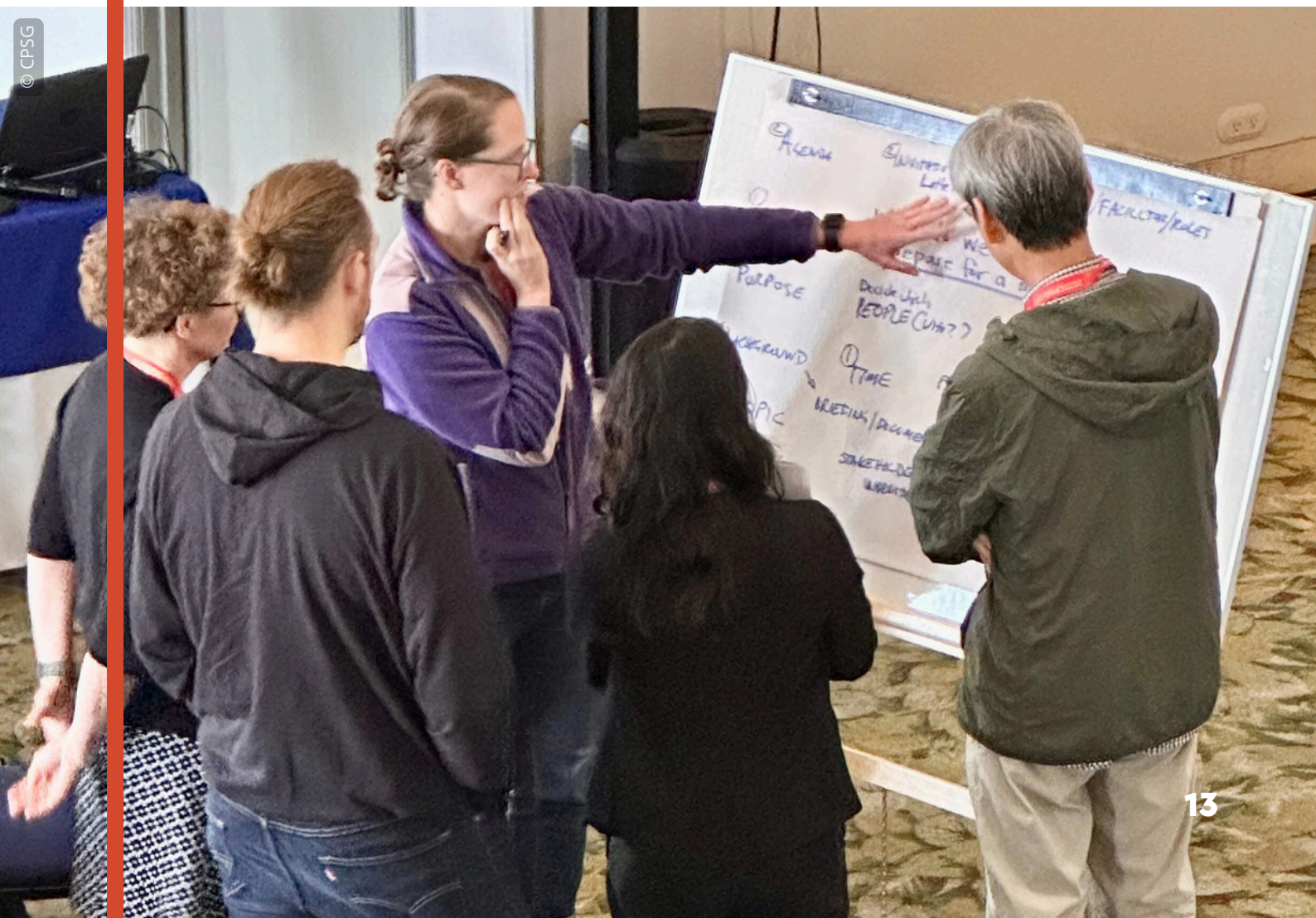
Amy Byrne
The Morton
Arboretum



Yvette Harvey-Brown
Botanic Gardens
Conservation
International

PARTICIPANTS

Jean Linsky, Jose Leon, Eve Wang, Frank Cipriano, Fabio Vannucchi, Omar Monzon-Carmona, Andrew Davies, Lucy Kemp, Stephanie Winton, Kim Rainwater, Carolina Castellanos, Cristina Lopez-Gallego, Phil Miller, Fabiana Lopes Rocha, Kristin Leus, Jamie Copsey



SUMMARY

The session began with a set of presentations to provide context for the session and present case studies of conservation planning for plants in Latin America. Jean Linsky presented an introduction to the working group and recent progress in conservation planning for plants; Cristina Lopez-Gallego and Carolina Castellanos presented on examples of published plant plans in Colombia (e.g. palms, cycads, and timber species); and Jose Leon presented on progress in the development of a conservation action plan for the magnolias of Ecuador. The participants then discussed challenges, questions, and tips/resources related to each of the pre-planning, planning, and implementation phases. They were able to document issues and share experiences in the conservation planning process. The working group's outputs will contribute to discussions of the ongoing virtual 'Conservation Planning for Plants' working group.

Next steps and/or recommendations:

- Convenors will summarize the working group outputs and share them with the in-person participants as well as the ongoing virtual Conservation Planning for Plants Working Group participants.
- There is a need and great opportunity to provide more training opportunities to the plant conservation community (including in Latin America) in planning facilitation as well as *ex situ* conservation assessment. The Working Group will continue to emphasize training opportunities, supporting additional 'plant cohorts' for future CPSG training.
- There is an opportunity for the Working Group participants to contribute to plant-specific guidance and resources, particularly for the *ex situ* conservation assessment process.

Access the full working group report [here](#).

WORKING GROUP

Latin America Regional Biobanking

CONVENORS



Oliver Ryder
Animal
Biobanking for
Conservation
Specialist Group,
SDZWA



Dave Wehdeking
Fundación
Zoológica de
Cali



Daniel Chavez
Pontificia
Universidad
Católica del
Ecuador



Boripat Siriaronrat
Animal
Biobanking for
Conservation
Specialist Group



Matteo Duque
Regenevet Biotech

PARTICIPANTS

Gina Della Togna, Dave Wehdeking, Cesar Rojano, Sanna Hellström, Thyara Deco-Souza, Kazu Takami, Andrew Davies, Boripat Siriaronrat, Cara Martel, Robert Arango Lopez, Jose Leon, Matteo Duque Rodriguez, Adrien Sestelo, Daniel Chavez, Kim Rainwater, Brad Andrews



SUMMARY

This working group, convened under the IUCN SSC Animal Biobanking for Conservation Specialist Group (ABC SG), brought together experts in biotechnology, wildlife conservation, and genomics to explore strategies for developing a collaborative biobanking framework in Latin America. Participants highlighted the region's vast biodiversity and the significant, yet under-connected, genetic collections already housed across institutions, thus limiting conservation potential. Institutions in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil already lead efforts combining Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs), cryopreservation, and genomics. Collaboration among zoos and universities highlights regional creativity and scientific capacity. The group identified common barriers like limited funding, bureaucratic permitting processes, and a lack of shared definitions that hinder progress, and the low public awareness and government recognition of biodiversity biobanks. Participants endorsed the creation of a Latin American Biobank Association as a cooperative mechanism for capacity building, standardization, and equitable benefit-sharing.

Key follow-up actions:

- Drafting the Latin American alliance framework and governance charter.
- Mapping existing collections and identifying capacity gaps.
- Planning regional training and communication campaigns.
- Preparing a concept note for funding proposals under the IUCN SSC ABC SG umbrella.

Access the full working group report [here](#).

WORKING GROUP

Heightened Extinction Risk Due to Tropical Cyclones: Implications for Conservation Planning and *Ex Situ* Effort

CONVENOR



Simon Valle
CPSG

PARTICIPANTS

Brad Andrews, Bo Dalsgaard, Christie Craig, Caroline Lees, José Leon, Kristin Leus, Lucy Kemp, Phil Miller, Omar Monsovi, Josh Noseworthy, Oliver Ryder, Simon Valle, Fabio Vannucchi, Lauren Waller, Jonathan Wilken, Stephanie Winton



SUMMARY

This working group gathered experts from research, conservation, and policy to address the urgent threat that increasingly severe tropical cyclones pose to island biodiversity. Drawing on Valle et al. (2025), discussions revealed that many insular species—already vulnerable due to isolation, habitat loss, and small populations—could be driven to extinction by a single storm event. Participants highlighted the importance of the study’s proposed global ‘watchlist’ of storm-threatened species as a critical tool for prioritization, coordination, and action. Group discussions focused on developing proactive strategies, including scenario-based planning, biobanking, and integrated *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation approaches. The session concluded with a strong consensus that cyclone-related extinction risk demands immediate, coordinated global attention to prevent irreversible biodiversity loss in the world’s most fragile island ecosystems.

Key follow-up actions:

- Promote the establishment of an IUCN-led Task Force on cyclone-related extinction risk.
- Integrate cyclone impacts into species recovery and site management plans.
- Promote the development of coordinated emergency and resilience strategies for high-risk islands.
- Support the maintenance and expansion of a global, regularly updated ‘storm-risk watchlist.’
- Strengthen collaboration between local authorities, *in situ*, and *ex situ* conservation networks.

Access the full working group report [here](#).

WORKING GROUP

South America's Extinct in the Wild Species: Collaborative Pathways Forward for Species Lost from Nature

CONVENORS



Fiona Sach

Zoological Society of London, IUCN SSC
Extinct in the Wild Co-Chair



Cara Martel

Re:wild, IUCN SSC Extinct in the
Wild Steering Group member

PARTICIPANTS

Jamie Copsey, Phil Miller, Christie Craig, Matteo Duque Rodriguez, Adolfo Castro, Kim Rainwater, Yara Barros, Sanna Hellström, Jean Linsky, Jonathan Wicken, Boripat Siriaronrat, Daniel Chavez, Thyara de Deco Souza e Araujo, Simon Valle, Adrian Sestelo, Andrew Davies, Brad Andrews



SUMMARY

The working group aims to advance the conservation of Extinct in the Wild (EW) and Critically Endangered (CR) species in South America. Recognizing the region's exceptional biodiversity and growing number of species at risk, the group focused on designing integrated *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation frameworks. Using a World Café format supported by Mentimeter, participants discussed motivations for EW species recovery, challenges, solutions, and ways the IUCN SSC EWAP (Extinct in the Wild Action Partnership) could provide support. Key themes included fragmented governance, limited resources, and the need for stronger collaboration across borders and disciplines. We generated actionable insights and fostered partnerships to guide future conservation strategies. Data from this and related workshops will inform EWAP's ongoing efforts to strengthen recovery pathways for South America's EW species.

Next steps and/or recommendations:

- Strengthen collaboration and communication: Through the IUCN SSC EWAP, establish a regional network to connect practitioners, researchers, and policymakers working on EW species recovery, facilitating knowledge exchange, joint planning, and resource sharing.
- Identify and prioritize species for immediate action: Compile and assess a list of high-risk species to guide targeted recovery programs and focus funding and technical support where most urgently needed.
- Address barriers to implementation: Develop solutions to overcome key challenges such as limited funding, fragmented governance, and collaboration.
- Enhance capacity building and support from EWAP and CPSG: Provide training, technical assistance, and collaborative planning opportunities to strengthen local and regional capacity for EW species recovery initiatives.

Access the full working group report [here](#).

WORKING GROUP

Charting a Course for the Future of the PVA Software Vortex

CONVENORS



Katelyn Mucha
Species360



Sara Sullivan
Species360



Phil Miller
CPSG

PARTICIPANTS

In-person: Frank Cipriano, Christie Craig, Isaac Goldstein, Caroline Lees, Kristin Leus, Cristina Lopez-Gallego, Phil Miller, Cesar Rojano Bolaño, Fiona Sach, Simon Valle, Fabio S. Vannucchi, Jonathan Wilcken

Online: Nora Casale, Amy Chabot, Lisa Faust, Gina Ferrie, Philippe Helsen, Jamie Ivy, Katelyn Mucha, Andrea Putnam, Kathryn Rodriguez-Clark, Drew Sauve, Kristine Schad, Sara Sullivan, Anne Wignall



SUMMARY

Vortex, a simulation modeling software package, is a critical planning tool for CPSG and the wider conservation community. The Species Conservation Toolkit Initiative (SCTI), now part of Species360, is committed to working with the community to ensure Vortex's longevity, to enhance its functionality, and to establish a sustainable support model for its future. Goals of this session were to brainstorm suggestions for key characteristics and functionalities of a new and improved Vortex tool, and to identify the user groups that should be consulted for their input in the process. Working group participants identified several categories of critical users and stakeholders to provide comprehensive feedback on the software's evolving design, ensuring the continued relevance of the tool on the conservation science landscape. Several key philosophical and strategic points were raised regarding the current challenges and comparative advantages of Vortex that should guide future modernization and outreach efforts.

Next steps and/or recommendations:

- Species360 will incorporate the information from this working group into their ongoing discussions on Vortex software design and engineering.
- Develop a more structured team, composed of interested participants in the Cali discussion, to expand on the working group conversations. This team may be divided into two sub-groups focusing on the two main questions (user engagement/funding and functionality/characteristics). This structure would allow Species360 to share progress updates and for members to share fundraising/grant ideas.

Access the full working group report [here](#).

WORKING GROUP

Prioritizing Species and Conservation Planning for Target 4 of the Global Biodiversity Framework

CONVENORS



Cristina López-Gallego
Colombian Species Specialist Group

PARTICIPANTS

Camilo Londoño, Carolina Castellanos, Caroline Lees, Christina Dembiec, Fabiana Lopes Rocha, Frank Cipriano, Jean Linsky, Jose Leon, Joshua Noseworthy, Robert Marquez, Stephanie Winton



SUMMARY

The goal of this working group was to explore approaches for species prioritization for conservation planning, particularly for addressing the need of countries to identify species that require urgent recovery action under Target 4 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The theoretical foundations of Target 4 were discussed. We examined the protocol that the IUCN Species Survival Commission, in collaboration with the Reverse the Red coalition, is proposing for prioritizing species for Target 4, especially the first step that used four criteria for prioritizing species for conservation action.

We further discuss how the participants and their institutions carry out prioritization for conservation planning, in terms of criteria or methodologies. An example from the analysis to formulate the conservation action plan for the threatened trees of Colombia was used to examine criteria to prioritize species based on conservation needs (Red List category, endemism, etc.) and conservation opportunities (e.g. socio-cultural importance, institutional interest). Finally, we discussed the type of species that could be prioritized by stakeholders differing in the interests/motivations for species conservation: environmental authorities, local communities, and the private sector.

Key follow-up actions:

- Further discussion about how to prioritize species for conservation planning (before the actual planning begins) is important, so we can broaden the taxonomic and ecological coverage of conservation actions, especially facing the challenge of Target 4 of the GBF that calls for urgent recovery actions for the species not sufficiently covered by habitat protection/restoration or the other targets.
- The results from the discussion of this working group will be presented in meetings from the Reverse the Red coalition, where species prioritization protocols are being discussed to help countries be more strategic in delivering conservation impacts for Target 4 species.

Full working group report coming soon!

WORKING GROUP

Facilitating Meetings and Workshops

CONVENORS



Jamie Copsey
CPSG



Christina Dembiec
CPSG

PARTICIPANTS

Jean Linsky, Andrew Davies, Tom Leiden, Frank Cipriano, Jim Goetz, Kim Rainwater, Eve Wang, Kazu Takami, Sanna Hellström



SUMMARY

Paraphrasing a quote received in CPSG's 2024 annual survey of past trainees, 'CPSG is more than a Specialist Group; it is a community of practice.' This working group was more of a training session, providing foundational learning in the role of the facilitator within the design and delivery of species conservation planning processes. The focus of the session was on equipping participants with core tips and tools as to how to improve their own facilitation practice through presentations, open discussions and small working group exercises. An added rationale for running the session was to test content for the first of a series of short courses to ultimately be run online.

Participants were provided with a suite of content on meeting process design and interpersonal skills interspersed with practical activities in which they could practice the use of specific decision-making and consensus-building tools.

Next steps and/or recommendations:

- Although this was a training session more than a working group with defined outputs, by the end of the working group, it was hoped that participants would be better-equipped to:
 - Demonstrate the role of the facilitator in managing group decision-making processes
 - Select between divergent and convergent thinking tools to support groups in generating information and making decisions
 - Design and run more effective meetings.
- One action that was outlined at the end of the training session was to convert the content from this training session into the first of a series of introductory online courses to complement CPSG's existing, more in-depth training provision.

Access the full working group report [here](#).

CPSG Development Path

We celebrated this year's graduates from the CPSG Facilitator Development Path mentorship program. This is an 18-month program in which a select group of individuals is trained in CPSG's conservation planning processes and tools and then mentored in real-world applications of these skills.

Congratulations to Anne, Yvette, Stephanie, and Katharina!



Anne Wignall
Auckland Zoo



Yvette Harvey-Brown
Botanic Gardens
Conservation International



Stephanie Winton
Wildlife Preservation
Canada



Katharina Herrmann
Zoologischen Gärten und
Tierpark Berlin



2025 Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation

Every two years, since 2003, we recognize outstanding contributions to the field of conservation to honor our founder, Dr. Ulysses S. Seal. The Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation goes to an individual who exemplifies innovation in the application of science to conservation.

This year, the honor goes to **Dr. Valerie C. Pence**, Director of Plant Research at the Center for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW) at Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden.

Dr. Pence is a plant biologist, pioneer, and icon in plant cryopreservation and propagation who, since 1986, has been the Director of Plant Research at the Cincinnati Zoo's CREW. Under her leadership, CREW and its Frozen Garden have become an internationally recognized and highly respected program for advancing the fields of endangered plant tissue culture and cryopreservation.

As a result of her work, CREW's Frozen Garden is one of the oldest and most diverse wild plant cryobanks in the world. Her programs focus on the conservation of rare, wild, exceptional plant species—a term that she coined for plants that cannot be saved by conventional seed banking and so were being overlooked during conventional plant seed conservation efforts. The term is now recognized by conservationists and botanical gardens worldwide and is included in IUCN plant conservation strategies.

“

This year's award selection committee summarized their selection of Dr. Pence as follows:

Dr. Pence's work for plant conservation over decades is truly impressive, focusing on cells, seeds, cryopreservation, ex situ conservation and out-planting in the wild. As such, Dr. Pence has impacted all three layers of biodiversity conservation: genetic diversity, species diversity, and habitats, much aligned with the concepts of the One Plan Approach of working across this broad spectrum. Her work for 'exceptional plants' in particular was highly innovative and important to helping prevent extinctions for this group of plant species.

Read more [here](#).



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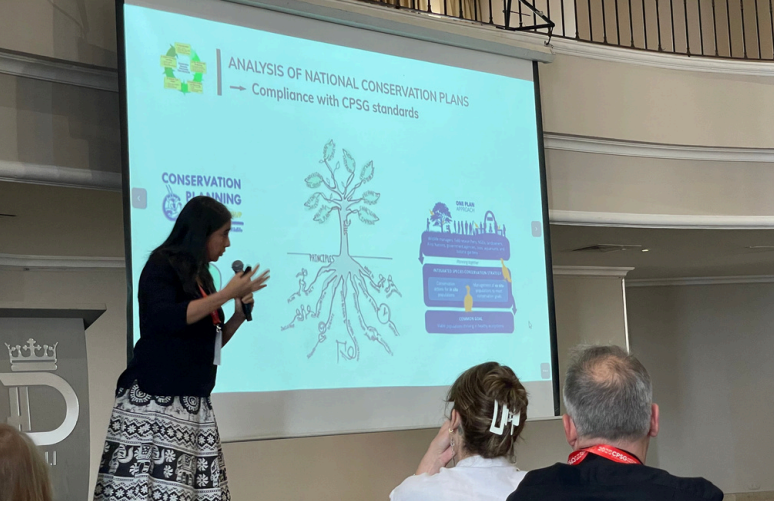
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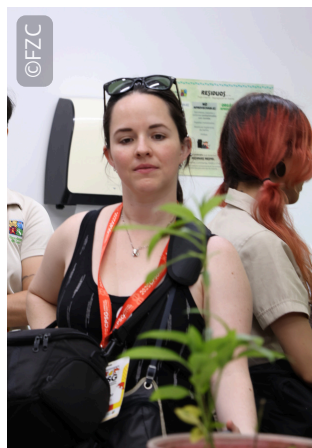
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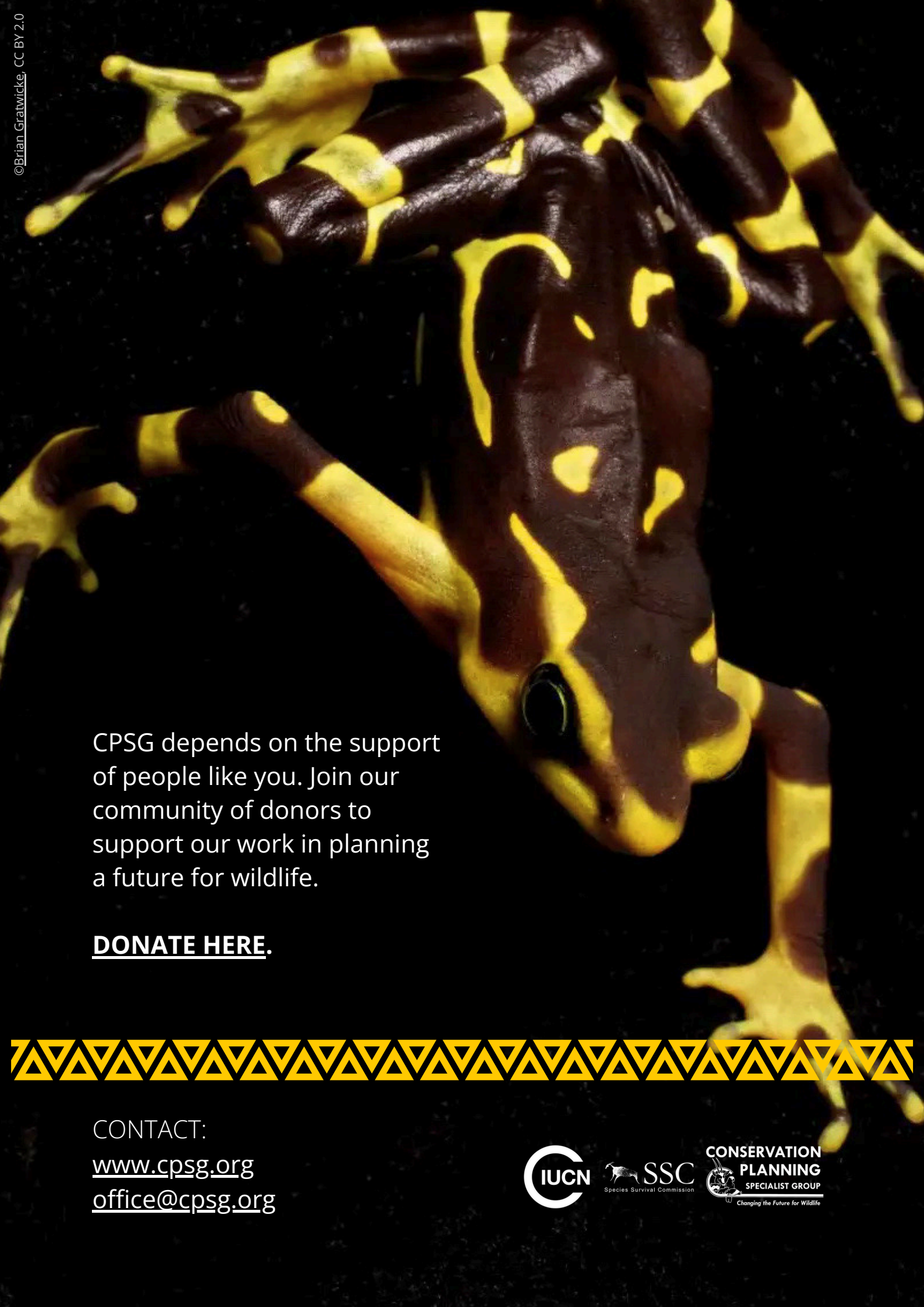
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CPSG

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23-26 October | Cali, Colombia

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