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Knowledge for Our Planet

Foreword to the Special Issue of S.A.P.I.EN.S Journal
on IUCN Commissions

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Foreword to the Special Issue of S.A.P.I.E.N.S Journal on IUCN Commissions:

Knowledge for Our Planet

We are proud to present this special issue of *S.A.P.I.E.N.S* dedicated to the work of IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and its Commissions. IUCN is often referred to as the oldest and largest global environmental network dedicated to the vision of ‘a just world that values and conserves nature’.



Set up as “networks of expert volunteers entrusted to develop and advance the institutional knowledge, experience and objectives of IUCN”, the Commissions enable IUCN to link to cutting-edge science to advance knowledge and learning.

Today, the six IUCN Commissions – Commission on Education and Communication (CEC); Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP); Commission on Environmental Law (CEL); Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM); Species Survival Commission (SSC); and World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) – bring together approximately 11,000 scientists and experts from all over the world who give their expertise and knowledge to IUCN free of charge.

The IUCN mission “to 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” could not be achieved without the Commissions. IUCN’s influence and knowledge base truly reaches out from local community-led initiatives through to international policy.

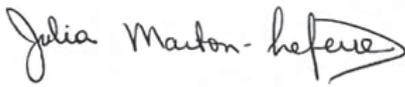
IUCN’s best-known knowledge products, such as the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*, the *World Database of Protected Areas*, and the emerging ones such as the *IUCN Red List of Ecosystems*, would not be possible without the rigour and dedication of our Commission scientists and experts.

IUCN greatly benefits from this significant voluntary contribution from its Commission members. If we were to reflect this contribution in monetary terms, it would outstrip the total annual budget of the entire Union.

Knowledge drives action. In this special issue, we explore how the knowledge generated by the SSC is helping fight the global biodiversity crisis – via the examples of Amphibians worldwide and Mammals in South-East Asia; how the debate in the CEL on the so-called “non-regression principle” is pushing the boundaries of law and policy; and how the CEM is tackling the existing knowledge gaps on the status of the world’s ecosystems. For its part, the WCPA presents its work on defining and applying the new concept of “nature-based solutions”; while CEESP focuses on an emerging framework for sustainable rural development. Last but not least, the CEC looks at pathways to resilient people and a resilient planet.

There is no question that the need for up-to-the-minute, user-friendly and comprehensive knowledge about biodiversity is greater now than it was fifty years ago when the first IUCN Commission, the SSC, was born. What we also need more than ever today is to reach out beyond the conservation community, to other scientific and academic networks – and this is precisely what we are hoping to achieve through this joint publication between IUCN and the Institut Veolia Environnement.

By introducing IUCN's Commissions to the *S.A.P.I.EN.S* readership, we look forward to greater collaboration between our vast networks, for the benefit of millions of species that share our planet and ultimately our own, *Homo sapiens*.



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