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Sawfish Network Newsletter: Project update, photo request, and more!

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Sawfish Network Newsletter

October 2011

Dear Lucy,

Welcome to the first edition of the Sawfish Network Newsletter! The main goal of this newsletter as we move forward is to keep you updated on the status of the project, highlighting project milestones and sending out requests for further information.

First of all we would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the online Sawfish Survey. We realise that you are all very busy, but your input and involvement in this project is vital to its success and we thank you for your participation. Without your input it would not be a thorough and true representation of the status of sawfishes around the globe. Secondly, we would like to thank John Waters for putting together the template for this Newsletter in his free time and to Bryan Clark (www.adeeperblue.com) for letting us use his beautiful image of a sawfish in the Newsletter header.

To ensure that this newsletter is easy to navigate we will be providing clickable links at the top of each newsletter. This edition of the Sawfish Network Newsletter will be quite detailed because we would like to give you more detail on the background of the project, but we envision future editions to be more succinct.

In This Newsletter

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Project Goals

There is a very real risk that sawfishes will continue to decline without urgent conservation action to complement the ongoing activities in Florida and northern Australia. Therefore, the overall goal of this project (coordinated by the [IUCN Shark Specialist Group](#)) is to produce a Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy, which will provide a roadmap for future sawfish conservation activities, through four main tasks:

1. Create and Mobilise a Sawfish Network

This is you! We hope that you will want to be key participants in this process of data collection for the Status Review but also during Phase Two of this project which will be implementation of the key conservation activities highlighted by the Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy.

2. Carry out a Status Review

Lucy Harrison is currently collating all of the available information on status, conservation, threats, current conservation and protection activities and current and historic distribution through literature review and the online survey of Sawfish Network members that you have all carried out. This status review will be the most comprehensive review of the global status of sawfishes and will bring together information from a wide range of sources.

3. Coordinate an international sawfish workshop

This unique 5-day workshop will be held at the Zoological Society, London and will bring together 22 global sawfish experts from around the world, including Brazil, Senegal, USA, Australia and the Persian Gulf. The experts will be asked to agree upon the text of the Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy. However, most importantly, the workshop participants will be guided to generate clear, global-scale prioritized recommendations for meaningful research, education and conservation action and a roadmap for the development of regional conservation programmes.

4. Communicate and Publicise the Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy

The Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy (report and open access journal article) will be distributed to a wide audience targeting all interested parties and range states of sawfishes so that it has the largest possible impact. The findings and recommendations will be used to initiate funding applications, assist with sawfish conservation programs and target key regions,

collaborators and conservation activities.

As we have indicated, this is Phase 1 of the project - Phase 2 is implementation of the recommended activities, as well as the coordination of regional Sawfish Conservation Strategies to be spearheaded by you, the Sawfish Network!

Project Status: Momentum is building

We are excited to report that momentum for the Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy is building in so many ways. Here are some numbers for you:

Sawfish Network Members: 82 with interests in aquariums, sawfish biology, genetics and conservation, local fisheries, education and outreach, conservation policy

Sawfish range states represented: 50 out of 101 possible countries

Sawfish Surveys submitted: 73

Sawfish related documents submitted: 100+

Sawfish images submitted: 28

Historical images compiled: 50+

Participants invited to Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy Workshop: 22 from a variety of backgrounds

Days until Sawfish Workshop: 207

The Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy will be also be highlighted as a flagship for Marine Conservation Planning by the IUCN SSC Sub-Committee for Species Conservation Planning at an IUCN SSC Specialist Group Chairs meeting in Abu Dhabi (February 2012) and the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Korea (September 2012).



Project Funding and Support - Can you help?

The Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy project is funded by the [Save Our Seas Foundation](#) and [Flying Sharks](#). Lucy Harrison (Shark Specialist Group Program Officer) and Alec Moore (SSG Indian Ocean and Sawfish Network member) will also be giving a double bill of talks at [Chester Zoo](#) in the UK (hosted by the zoo and the Northern Chapter of [Fauna and Flora International](#)) in November to raise additional funds. We have also kindly received in-kind contributions from the Zoological Society of London to host the workshop in May 2012 and from workshop participants for partial or full funding for their travel for which we are particularly grateful. We still have some way to go with our fundraising efforts so if you have any suggestions for funding sources please do not hesitate to contact Lucy Harrison (iucnshark@gmail.com) with your suggestions!



Recent Sawfish Images? Do you have any that we can use for publicity materials and the

website?

As we move forward with this project, we would welcome any images that we can use for publicity materials and for the website - full acknowledgments and copyright will be given of course! Highlighting sawfishes in their natural environment, as well as in interactions with humans (with researchers or fishers), is a vital part of raising awareness for this project. If you have any images that we may use for these different purposes please contact Lucy Harrison (iucnshark@gmail.com) - we can also organise for you to be contacted each time we wish to use an image so that you are able to control the extent to which your image is used.

Historic Sawfish Image Request

As a small part of the status review process, we're attempting to compile information related to the history of exploitation of these species. Historical photographs have emerged as a potential source of information that could help us document changes in sawfish population structure and characterize fisheries in different locations. Lucy Harrison and Loren McClenahan (NSF Postdoc based in the [Earth2Ocean Group](#) at Simon Fraser University) have compiled a good number (>50) of these from various sources and are interested in finding missing information such as date & location, as well as collecting a wider variety of images.

We envision making these photographs and their meta-data available to the public (if permission is obtained) and potentially conducting a more quantitative historical ecological analysis if sufficient data exist. We are not certain of the exact output yet, but would certainly be willing to discuss co-authorship with those folks who are willing to contribute photographs in their collection, or to assist in with locating photographs in public collections.

If you have access to historical sawfish images and are willing to share them, please forward them (along with any relevant info on date, location, and photo ownership) to Lucy Harrison (iucnshark@gmail.com).

Thank you again for your participation in this project. As this Global Sawfish Conservation Strategy evolves we will realise that we require additional information from survey participants and hope that you will be able to help. If you come across any new information, please feel free to submit it through the [online survey](#) again or by [email](#). We also welcome feedback on the information that we are sending to you via this newsletter, suggestions and comments on how we might improve the status review and Conservation Strategy, as well as questions on our methodology and project goals.

Best wishes,

Sawfish Network Team

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