

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group Communications Strategy

1. Introduction

The IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group (SSG) was established by the IUCN Species Survival Commission in 1991. Our 165 members from 51 countries and territories are distributed among 12 regional sub-groups and provide leadership for the conservation of threatened populations and species of all 1250+ chondrichthyan fishes.

The overall Communication Strategy is intended to be a dynamic document to be updated to reflect the continually evolving nature of our work and to take advantage of new events and evolving project plans.

The vision of this communications strategy is to:

‘Ensure that SSG work is appropriately communicated such that the group is both high-profile and is considered to be the trusted source regarding the science-based conservation of chondrichthyans globally.’

The objectives of this communication strategy are to:

- Provide guidance to current SSG Co-Chairs, Executive Committee members, Regional Vice-Chairs, and programme staff to maintain engagement of members. This strategy is time-bound to the 2016-2020 quadrennium.
- Outline an action plan and timeline for SSG internal and external communications, particularly our various newsletters.

2. Audiences

A broad range of potential audience groups are to be targeted, each with differing communication activities and approaches, to achieve the objectives of the SSG. To be effective, however, each target audience requires a different communication strategy and approach. The following priority audience groups have been identified for communication activities:

Internal audiences	External audiences
SSG members	Policy-makers
Sawfish, Wedgefish & Guitarfish network	Managers
Angelshark network	Scientists
Mobula network	Journalists
IUCN Species Survival Commission Members	Public

3. Channels

The table below outlines the key stakeholders/audience and the channels used to disseminate communication messages:

Audience	Channels
SSG members	SSG member newsletter
Sawfish network members	Sawfish/Wedgefish newsletter
Angelshark network members	Angelshark newsletter
Mobula network members	Mobula newsletter
Wedgefish network members	Sawfish/Wedgefish newsletter
IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)	SSC E-Bulletin
Scientists	Peer-reviewed publications
Policy-makers, scientists	Conservation strategies
Scientists, policy-makers, managers	Conference talks
Public	Press releases
Public, scientists, journalists	Twitter
Public	Facebook
Public	Website
Public	YouTube

4. Communication objectives for each audience

Objective	Audience
Growing engagement of SSG members in vision and mission	SSG members
Growing engagement of network members in sawfish conservation	Sawfish network members
Growing engagement of network members in Mobula conservation	Mobula network members
Growing engagement of network members in wedgefish conservation	Wedgefish network members
Growing engagement of network members in angelshark conservation	Angelshark network members
Consistent SSG presence in SSC e-bulletin	IUCN Species Survival Commission
Communicate scientific knowledge	Scientists, policy-makers, managers
Translate knowledge into action	Policy-makers, scientists
Communicate events, outputs, and updates	Public, scientists, journalists
Communicate events, outputs, and updates	Public

Update regional papers; create wedgefish page within Conservation Planning; update GST project pages	Public
Communicate all SSG video products	Public
Make science newsworthy	Public

5. Key messages

The key messages to be delivered through the SSG are:

- *Sharks, rays and chimaeras have ecological, economic, and cultural value;*
- *Many sharks, rays, and chimaeras are overfished and face an elevated risk of extinction*
- *Policies regarding these species should be founded on sound science;*
- *Fishing and other forms of exploitation should be managed for sustainability;*
- *Minimizing waste is important, particularly given declining food security;*
- *Communicating the outcomes of SSG initiatives to policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, and the public can lead to improvements in the population status of sharks, rays and chimaeras.*

6. Action Plan

Channels	Audience	Objective	Priority	Action/Verifiable Indicator
SSG member newsletter	SSG members	Growing engagement of SSG members in vision and mission	H	Produce three SSG newsletters per year
Sawfish newsletter	Sawfish network	Growing engagement of network members in sawfish, wedgefish & guitarfish conservation	H	Produce three combined sawfish, wedgefish, and guitarfish newsletters per year
Mobula newsletter	Mobula network	Growing engagement of network members in Mobula conservation	L	Find funding or discontinue
Angel shark newsletter	Angel shark network	Growing engagement of network members in angelshark conservation	M	Contribute SSG material to angelshark project newsletter
SSC E-Bulletin	IUCN SSC	Consistent SSG presence in newsletter	H	Produce 12 200-word submissions per year
Peer-reviewed publications	Scientists	Communicate scientific knowledge	H	Publish SSG papers
Conference talks	Scientists, policy-makers, managers	Communicate scientific knowledge	H	Have a presence at international meetings (~2 per year)
Conservation strategies	Policy-makers, scientists	Translate knowledge into action	H	Create conservation strategies for priority species/groups
Twitter	Public, scientists, journalists	Communicate events, outputs, and updates	H	Minimum one tweet per week
Facebook	Public	Communicate events, outputs, and updates	H	One Facebook update per week (mirror tweets)
Website	Public	Update regional papers; create wedgefish page within Conservation Planning; update GST project pages	H	Review website twice per month
YouTube	Public	Communicate all SSG video products	L	Post SSG videos as needed
Press releases	Public	Make science newsworthy	H	Work with Comms Inc. to produce two PRs and two infographics per year for GST project; PRs for other newsworthy items that the SSG is part of (eg. CITES, etc.)