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THE SONG WILL GO ON

HOW A DEDICATED NEW
GROUP IS CONTINUING
THE FIGHT TO SAVE OUR
SONGBIRDS



ACTION FOR OWLS

ANNOUNCING THE FIRST EVER RCP FOR THESE PRECIOUS BIRDS

WELCOME TO ARALANDIA

A VISIT TO WUPPERTAL'S STUNNING FREE-FLIGHT AVIARY



Ending the silence



ALTHOUGH THE EAZA SONGBIRD CAMPAIGN HAS OFFICIALLY ENDED, THE NEWLY NAMED SILENT FOREST GROUP WILL ENSURE THAT THIS VITAL WORK WILL GO ON

David Jeggo, Chair, and Simon Bruslund, Vice-Chair, EAZA Songbird TAG

The EAZA Silent Forest Group (SFG) is the new name for the subgroup of the Songbird TAG that is working on the trade-related conservation issues that gave rise to the Silent Forest Campaign. Using the momentum created by this EAZA conservation campaign, which ran from 2017–2019, it is continuing the urgent work to save songbird species.

It is also building on the achievements of the campaign by putting songbirds firmly onto the EAZA conservation agenda and engaging closely with the IUCN-SSC (Species Survival Commission) Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (ASTSG). It is currently strengthening links with further strategic partners who share the objectives, and will continue developing close relationships with project partners.

The Silent Forest Group vision of ‘a world where people live in appreciation and respect of songbirds with awareness not to engage in unsustainable practices’ is achieved through three pillars:

PROJECTS – consistent and high-quality long-term technical and financial support for in-range conservation breeding, research and *in situ* conservation, welfare and education projects

PROGRAMMES – enhanced cooperation between EEPs, enabling networking and communication with other regions, research, relevant conservation entities and the public

ACTIVITIES – jointly carried-out supportive activities on education, advocacy, awareness, fundraising and publications on songbirds

PROJECTS

In addition to the six preselected projects funded during the campaign, funds have been secured for eight additional projects, which were externally vetted by the ASTSG before approval. These projects cover a wide range of endeavours to address the conservation needs of some of Asia’s most threatened songbirds.

Overall, three major conservation

breeding centres are now being supported through funding, and smaller breeding facilities are also integrated in other projects, allowing usage of the strongest expertise within the SFG.

Field projects surveying wild songbird populations have been completed or are underway in more remote areas such as mountain ranges on isolated islands. Follow-up projects are related to these results in the form of more integrated work involving local community engagement; for example, support for the Javan green magpie (*Cissa thalassina*) is among the new projects.

SFG helps facilitate expert discussion, work contribution and third-party funding. One example is supporting our project partner Ecosystems Impact to carry out urgent conservation activities in the Simeulue Islands off Sumatra. These seek to avert the risk of the imminent extinction due to trapping of their endemic shama (*Kittacincla spp.*) and hill myna (*Gracula spp.*) taxa.

Covid-19 has not been without effect, causing severe delays for some of the projects, in particular around the planned community engagement in support of Bali mynas (*Leucopsar rothschildi*) in the fringes of the Bali Barat National Park.

PROGRAMMES

Since the campaign, several new EEPs for relevant species have been approved and have started work. Applications for more, including the Javan pied starling (*Gracupica jalla*) and the white-rumped shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*), are due to be submitted soon. In all, 14 active EEPs are currently linked to the SFG.

Several EEPs have direct links or even practical involvement with the projects. For example, the orange-headed thrush EEP approved in 2020 is in close communication with the Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark, which recently had the first breeding success of the threatened subspecies (*Geokichla citrina rubecula*) from Java and Bali.

Another effect of the campaign is that

EAZA institutions have become more interested in and prepared to participate in EEPs for Asian songbirds, particularly the long-established EEPs for Bali myna and blue-crowned laughingthrush (*Garrulax courtoisi*), which have come a big step closer to achieving the population goals, and for which the new Best Practice Guidelines have been well received.

ACTIVITIES

The activities in many ways overlap with both projects and programmes; and recent research in cooperation with the Species360 Conservation Science Alliance, the University of Southern Denmark, and the Monitor Conservation Research Society, in which the SFG have been involved, have even pushed the scope beyond just Asian species. The research has resulted in comprehensive information resources on global songbird trade, primarily aiming to support CITES.

A further boost to conservation funding was the selection of the hill myna as ‘Zoo Animal of the Year’ in 2020. This annual conservation campaign in German-speaking zoos ensured much-needed additional funding for some projects also supported by the SFG, despite the current pandemic.

To learn more and to follow the updates of individual projects, programmes and activities, we encourage everyone to follow the regular updates on the SFG website www.silentforest.eu and on social media.

The projects require continued funding and engagement, and SFG will continue fundraising, with contributions from EAZA institutions being the strongest asset. The SFG management is on a zero-budget, allowing 100% of financial contributions to go to the project partners.

If your institution is considering adopting individual projects or is interested in using our extensive education resources for fundraising and advocacy to keep the birdsong going, please get in touch.