
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CAMP PROCESS

Adapted from a paper by S. Ellis, O. Byers & U.S. Seal and an interview of Dr. Seal with additions by S. Walker

The question of how to prioritise species for conservation and for captive propagation particularly for zoos, was part of the mandate given to Dr. U.S. Seal by Sir Peter Scott when he requested him to be Chairman of CBSG. In approximately 1979 Dr. Seal began thinking about how large groups could be assessed.

The first exercises were for parrots and later for primates. Dr. Christine Shepherd, now of San Antonio Zoo and Dr. Don Brunning of New York Zoological Society in the very early days and later Dr. Tom Foose worked with Dr. Seal in developing the methodology and designing the spreadsheets and charts which eventually became the Data Summary Charts and Taxon Data Sheets used today. From the beginning they used population and habitat parameters -- population decline, habitat fragmentation -- and "best possible" guesstimates in order to force people to start thinking about actual numbers.

The first exercises were conducted even before the Mace-Lande criteria came out but when it did, CBSG started using it in the workshops, applying the principles of human psychology and group dynamics in workshop processes which had developed by then. It was a process of "tool development" ... tools for conservation assessment.

The CAMP Workshop is not just about numbers. In order to help groups of specialists work more productively and efficiently, ... to avoid energy and time drain through conflict, Dr. Seal developed a set of Guidelines for Group interaction and a methodology for working together from his background in psychology and work with therapy groups. When so many people from far away places come together for a few days with a large number of species to assess, there is no time to waste. As the CAMPs progressed more management tools and innovations to make the process more acceptable were added, and are still being added.

Ownership of information is a big issue with scientists. At CAMP workshops they are being asked to part with information that is often not yet published. The process of publication is so long a drawn out and field biologists are so busy, a species could be extinct before the information required to recover it is available. Therefore in CAMP (and PHVA workshops as well), participants are asked to put their fears aside and contribute whatever they know which would aid in the assessment and recovery of the species. In every Taxon Data Sheet, that is for every species, at the end of the sheet there is a section to list compilers. In that space specialists can be credited either singly or as a group for the information they have contributed.

A CAMP workshop intensively reviews and assesses the wild and captive status of groups of taxa in collaboration with local members of Taxon Specialist Groups from SSC, IUCN when available, local wildlife managers, zoo biologists, and others with an interest and knowledge which might be helpful in assessing the future strategy for a taxon

or region.

CAMPs have been recommended as the first step in developing Action Plans by Specialist Groups within the SSC and Bird Life International. This process has laid the foundation for Action Plans for hornbills, Caprimidae, Galliformes (Dekker *et al.*, 1995; McGowan *et al.*, 1995; Garson & McGowan, in press), Cracids (Strahl, in prep), pigeons and doves, and Procyonids (Glatston, 1994).

The CAMP program as such has existed since 1991 and was developed to assist the IUCN in gathering species information, testing and applying the newly re-defined Red List categories (Mace & Lande, 1991), and in assisting in the development of holistic and achievable species management plans. The first CAMP workshop was developed and coordinated by Drs. Thomas Foose and Ulysses Seal in collaboration with the SSC Primate Specialist Group in June 1991. That workshop was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota and reviewed 512 primate taxa. The second CAMP in August that same year (in Slimbridge, United Kingdom) reviewed 234 waterfowl taxa. At the time, these workshops were called "Global Captive Action Planning" meetings, reflecting that the process largely was based on input, support, and participation from the zoo community. The workshops themselves were attended both by captive managers and field biologists who worked together to assess wild status, determine levels of threat, research needs and captive breeding programs for threatened taxa. Early workshop participants recorded copious amount of data by hand, laboriously entering data into computers and compiling huge documents in the months following the workshops.

Early in the evolution of these workshops, it became apparent that the term "Global Captive Action Plan" was a misnomer: the process focused equally or more so on the wild status of taxa under review. The process was to christened Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) in late 1991, prior to publication of the first workshop reports. Further, early experiences revealed that the CBSG staff must take responsibility for generating the final workshops report, so completion and distribution would be done quickly. CAMP report drafts now are produced on site at workshops, reviewed and refined in a few weeks by participants, and Reports distributed within 3 to 6 months. The CAMP process continues to evolve as a result of dynamic discussions at each workshop and from input we constantly receive from wildlife experts worldwide. Almost every workshop produces changes in format and assessment details which reflects the interest of CBSG in improving the process to make it more useful for the conservation community who use it.

To date, nearly 40 taxon-based CAMPs have been conducted, including CAMPs on Partulidae, Boidae, Pythonidae, Varanidae, Iguanidae, Falconiformes, Galliformes, Bucerotidae, small carnivores, felids, equids,

tapirs, rhinos, antelope, and wild cattle. Although the majority of CAMPs have focused on vertebrates evolution and change in the process has facilitated its successful application to invertebrates and plants.

As the review of major vertebrate groups globally neared completion, the CAMP process changed from being a taxon-based approach to focus on a wider range of endemic taxa in geographic regions. In addition to taxon-based CAMPs, more than one dozen regional CAMPs have been held: selected Medicinal Plants of India (4 - 3 for southern India and 1 for N, NE and central India; selected Soil Invertebrates of southern India; St. Helena Island (including endemic plants, invertebrates, and vertebrates); Costa Rican endemic vertebrates and butterflies; Hawaiian forest birds, endemic birds of Panama; Mexican primates; South American felids; Mexican felids; and endemic mammals of Panama. This approach to the CAMP process, conducted in the region, takes advantage of the broad base of information held in the experience of local biologists and managers. The information also is more readily formulated on a habitat and ecosystem basis with more explicit identification and assessment of threats and needed research and management activities. One significant by product of the regional CAMP is increased communication and networking among local conservationists, frequently people with similar overall goals but who otherwise never had opportunity to meet or interact.

Several of the CAMPs for large groups of vertebrates first were approached on a global basis and then followed by regional assessments. The felid CAMP, for example, was first conducted in 1992 in the U.S. Since that time, regional felid CAMPs have been held for South America and Mexico with plans for additional regional CAMPs in southern Africa, Venezuela, and southeast Asia. The Falconiformes are undergoing a similar review process. For that group, a global CAMP was written (Ellis, 1995b) based on a recent published review (del Hoyo *et al*, 1994). The Falconiformes CAMP is now undergoing a series of regional review sessions by avian biologists in the neotropics, Africa, North America, Europe and Australasia.

In India the same process is taking place on a national rather than a global level. A series of all-India CAMPs are being held under the Biodiversity Support Programme, locally implemented as the Biodiversity Conservation Prioritisation Project. In 1997 CAMPs for Amphibians, Reptiles, Fresh Water Fishes, Mammals, and Mangrove species will be held. Undoubtedly follow-up will be required as the number of species for each of these groups is in the hundreds and the probability of getting all relevant experts together at one place and time even nationally is small. It is anticipated that a series of Indian regional CAMPs focusing on a smaller number of species will be held from time to time.

This process has already begun in a sense. A special CAMP for Reduviid bugs will be held this year as adjunct to the Southern India Soil Invertebrate CAMP. The Mangrove species CAMP will be followed after a few months by a Corals CAMP.

At the international office of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, data refined by local experts in the regional reviews for all countries then ostensibly will be incorporated into a revised CAMP document, providing a broad-based, current information source. CAMP Reports have been requested by the Officer in charge of the IUCN Publications Division at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre who also suggested that they be sent to the IUCN Library.

In India, a question of ownership of the information has been raised and is still being discussed. In planning CAMP workshops Directors of national institutes hosting the workshops inquired about some of the information required for the Taxon Data Sheet which is used in assigning the species to a category. When they saw how general the information is, they were satisfied. For example "Location" does not mean to place the species so exactly that a person with bad intentions could go and find it. It is a very general area-wise query.

CBSG, India likes to follow the example of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and make information useful for conservation management easily available at no cost or at least an affordable cost. The primary "owners" of the document are considered to be all the participants who contributed information with the host of the workshop, the facilitators and organisers (CBSG, India) all coordinators and activators (SACON and WWF, India) all collaborators in the process. CBSG, India - like CBSG, SSC - takes responsibility for distribution of the Reports and Summaries so that the principle that "anyone who needs it can have it" is carried out. It is primarily meant for the field biologists, researchers, managers and policy makers of the country or region but others involved in conservation can also find the output useful.

The CAMP Review Process. The review process of draft CAMP documents entails comment by the original meeting participants and then distribution to interested parties including wildlife managers in the range countries academics, researchers, and to regional captive programs and institutions worldwide. CAMP documents often are reviewed at regional review sessions conducted at other CBSG meetings and workshops, are at specially organised review sessions. CAMP documents are considered 'living' and never final; therefore, CBSG invites comments and suggestions in all venues on a continuing basis. These reviews often turn up valuable, usually unpublished, information from experts worldwide. The CAMP process has changed a great deal from the first exercise and is still evolving as a dynamic tool for conservation action.

CAMP workshops are all about the "Three C's of Conservation - Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration". In India the opening presentation normally includes a discussion of the "Three C's" as opposed to the "Three E's of Extinction - Envy, Ego and Elitism".

CAMP workshops and all CBSG processes could be described as an attempt to democratise conservation.