

5th IUCN Mangrove Specialist Group meeting

17th September 2017, 1000-1600

ZMT, Bremen, Germany

Minuted by DF, DW, MZ. Checked by JL

In attendance: Joe Lee (JL) Chair, Amir Aldrie (AA), Thorsten Balke (TB), Ben Brown (BB), Marillia Cunha-Lignon (MC), Clare Duncan (CD), Sara Fratini (SF), Dan Friess (DF), Olivier Hasinger (OH), Dorothy Herr (DH), K. Kathiresan (KK), Nico Koedam (NK), Heather Koldewey (HK), Ong Jin Eong (JO), Mwita Mangora (MM), Dominic Wodehouse (DW), Martin Zimmer (MZ)

1. Report over the last 12 months (JL)

- Last MSG meeting at MMM4 (July 2016)
- Conducted symposium in Bremen (September 2017)
- We published the Marine Pollution Bulletin Special Issue, composed of 13 papers from the 2014 and 2015 symposia (JL, DF, Jurgenne Primavera)
- Dr. Jurgenne Primavera has stepped down as co-chair of the MSG late last year
- In the next month ZSL will have someone supporting the group for two days per week. This could include the website, administrative support etc (HK)
- JL has money for a Research Assistant, who can also contribute to the MSG (website etc)

Actions:

- JL and HK to discuss the roles of these two support staff to maximize resources

2. Reappointment of members (JL)

- We currently have 55 members of the MSG
- New members have to be nominated by 2 members, then forwarded to the Steering Group for endorsement. Several members may consider nominating new members in the next few months
- MSG members have to be reappointed every 4 years
- We are currently 2-3 months behind doing this
- We should review and rationalize membership, including the removal of members where appropriate. Steering committee has given some advice on how to deal with 'silent' members
- But let's identify barriers (i.e. language, geography) why people haven't been participating before removing them (HK)
- What are the criteria for membership, and what are they expected to do and contribute? Perhaps could be circulated to members when doing renewal (MC)
- The composition of the steering committee may also need some review (JL)
- Africa is underrepresented, especially West Africa (NK), and Indonesia (BB). We currently have 1 member from West Africa (JL). Network diversity is a key priority of the new Director General of the IUCN, and the MSG is considered one of the more diverse of the Specialist Groups (OH)

- Could we do an analysis of diversity in the group and see gaps? Diversity also means gender, ethnicity, specialism etc. (BB). CD volunteered to undertake. The IUCN portal has this info already (OH)
- Do we want to set an appointment window, or all year round? A window may be more transparent (BB). Maybe we shouldn't be so rigid, or expand too much (JL).
- We should consider corporate and government members too (AA), though there are challenges to having them involved (JL) and some government members may not be able to have a personal affiliation with an international organization such as the IUCN (DF).

Actions:

- JL to send the latest version of the membership spreadsheet to MSG members
- JL will be contacting members about renewal, asking members if they wish to renew, and expectations of their contribution if they do renew, and identifying barriers to participation.
- Clare Saunters (?) will get in touch with JL in the next few weeks (OH)
- CD to run a quick analysis of diversity and gaps of the membership. MC has made some steps towards this too. Also include specialism gaps.

3. Review of 2017 symposium and thoughts on future symposia

- JL and MSG attendees thank MZ for a great symposium! Very diverse in terms of geographic region, topics, age structure etc.
- We should have the policy of sponsoring early career researchers (JL)
- Good media coverage of the 2017 Symposium in the German media, with more to come.
- For future meetings (and this meeting) we could do with a formal evaluation of the meeting (BB)
- Should we continue the symposia? (JL). General feeling is yes. MSG symposia are a nice counterpoint to the larger MMM conferences, gives a smaller, lower pressure environment (DF), especially for younger researchers and new researchers into our field (JL). We also have momentum now.
- When thinking about future locations, we should think about where we want to raise attention, where we are not currently active, etc, e.g., Africa (NK)
- Should we limit participation to MSG symposia? (MC). Not everyone was convinced.
- Consider future themes, including conservation and protection of current mangroves, as well as locations (AA)
- We have had an offer from Colombia to host the 2020 symposium (JL). JL also offered Hong Kong in 2018, but this would be geographically very close to MMM5 in Singapore in 2019 and China in 2015.
- We discussed and agreed at the China MSG meeting to keep the MSG and the MMM separate. We should consider that locations of both of these events don't overlap too much (DF)
- How can we link the MSG symposia to other ongoing events e.g., WIOMSA, ASEAN Mangrove Congress? (NK). What about linking to other larger events e.g., IUCN, UNFCCC COPs etc? Good chance to have influence (DF)

Actions:

- MZ will create and send round a formal evaluation for the Bremen meeting
- All MSG members to collate a list of meetings that we can link small MSG sessions to etc
- JL to email all MSG members to see if anyone wants to host the 2018 symposium (and future symposia)
- HK and DH to inform the group about other mangrove events around the world, which might provide the opportunity for another MSG meeting.
- MZ/DW to liaise about the proposed Colombia meeting, 2020.

3. Position statements

- Should these positions be represented by papers, policy briefs, blogs? Multi-pronged approaches.
- OH can be a focal point for these. OH also suggested DH (to link with GMA, Marine Programme and Forest Programme of the IUCN). JL to liaise with OH.
- In addition to the two positions described below, we shouldn't lose focus on conservation too (BB)

3a. Restoration techniques and targets (JL)

- Big emphasis on real restoration targets, but often ends up being large areas of afforestation in sub-optimal locations. Low success rates etc. See DW's presentation at the symposium
- Authoritative statement is needed (JL). IUCN guidelines for rehabilitation in multiple languages? (DW)
- The science is there. Knowledge in governments is there. How does the MSG communicate it to decision makers? (JL). Example sites and training courses are helpful. Need champions in local government, top-down and bottom-up approaches, getting guidelines accepted by national governments (HK)
- US Forest Service are organizing a workshop in Bangkok in early 2018, this is an opportunity for the MSG to be engaged in this topic and roadtest any position statement (BB).
- List of people interested in creating this position statement: DW, DF, BB, CD, TB, KK, NK (for James Kairo), MM, HK/Jurgenne Primavera, MZ (happy to step back). BB/DW/JL/DF to start coordinating and exploring the potential use of more mainstream media, including Youtube videos and leaflets.

Actions:

- BB/DW/JL/DF to start coordinating.

3b. Deforestation rates (DF)

- Deforestation data underpins a large part of the MSG's activities and conservation decision making more broadly e.g., GMA, red list of species, red list of ecosystems, restoration targets etc. But people still using old figures or wrong figures.
- We have the science and the numbers. But a blockage to getting it out into the community and beyond those who read journals.
- Hard for decision makers to read journals and critically evaluate sources due to lack of time (DH)

- 1 pager of figures, ranges, further research to be done. Acts as a simple reference point for users of this information who are under time constraints (HK).
- Everyone asks for the figures, having an authoritative statement with the MSG logo would make it easier for other users (DH, OH)
- GMA as a good platform to disseminate this 1 pager (JL)

Actions:

- DF to start coordinating. AA/KK/MM/MC to assist and lend regional expertise.

4. Global Mangrove Alliance (DH)

- Mission: a commitment from the international donor community to reverse the loss of critically important mangrove habitats worldwide
- Goal: to increase global mangrove cover by 20% of current extent by 2030. Only 13 years remaining.
- Tasks so far: how can we coordinate better between all the international mangrove activities that are taking place? Stock take of main mangrove efforts. The IUCN is currently drafting an IUCN global mangrove strategy. Some outreach has already been conducted e.g., at the UN World Oceans Summit
- Next steps: increasing member partners, strategic development of priorities
- Next 5 years: financing, proof of concept, knowledge sharing
- The GMA would be interested in having the MSG in the capacity of a scientific advisory body. There is already top-level endorsement from the IUCN leadership to engage in the GMA process.
- The GMA would like our advice on particular topics as they come up. E.g., views on the pros and cons of carbon credits as a method to achieve this target, for example (DH)
- Can the GMA help fundraise for some MSG activities e.g., red listing?
- MSG steering committee members have already commented on the IUCN Global Mangrove Strategy, and other MSG members have had the strategy circulated to them in the last few days (JL)
- It's a late start, but the MSG should be involved in advising the GMA, to put our knowledge to good use (JL)
- MSG and GMA need to talk to each other about what the target means, how it was derived, what issues are behind it (DH)
- Trying to link with the Bonn Challenge (DH), though the implementation of this Challenge has had issues

Questions to DH and OH:

1. Communication

- Surprise that there wasn't coordination with the MSG before the launch, challenges with retrofitting the MSG to the GMA after launching. Working out how to fit the MSG into the GMA will be key (HK)
- Are we already signed up to this since the IUCN has signed up and we are the IUCN? (AA)
- MSG was also invited to comment on the IUCN Global Mangrove Strategy very late (JL)

- Will we get access to the log frames, objectives and indicators etc? (BB) Personally, happy to share (DH)
2. *Setting the 20% target*
- Has it officially begun? (BB). Yes! (DH). 13 years remaining
 - Good that we can have an honest, critical but constructive discussion and contribution to this (DF)
 - Aspirational or fixed? The wording of the statement (benchmarking against *current extent*) suggests a more fixed goal. A conservative ‘back of the envelope’ estimate puts this at 3.5 million ha by 2030, and this is probably practically unachievable due to lack of suitable rehabilitation space etc. (DF). Needs to be scientifically defensible (JL)
 - There are ways of keeping aspirational targets while working towards more concrete measures (BB). Aspirational targets are set for particular reasons and serve a particular use (BB)
 - Immediate task – we need some additional words around the target, that it won’t threaten other habitats, e.g. planting in seagrass beds. (HK)
 - We need a global mapping exercise of mangrove restoration potential to aid meeting this target (KK). There is an ongoing IUCN-backed project to do this managed by Mark Spalding (JL, DF)
3. *Potential perverse outcomes of the 20% target*
- Important that the target isn’t misused (MZ, DW)
 - Some MSG members are worried that the 20% target will encourage the poor practice of large-scale (re)plantings to meet targets. MSG members have already voiced concerns about this (e.g., Jurgenne Primavera) (HK). Yes, can be dangerous if misused, hence the importance of the MSG as a scientific advisory body (DH)
 - Worried that the figure will get set in stone soon. And what happens when you give a government that target and the resulting perverse incentive. So can we come up with targets that are measurable but more achievable? (DW)
 - Number targets are useful politically, but difficult to achieve. Also a focus on area numbers misses a lot of other important things e.g., restoring ecosystem services and ignores key stakeholders in the mangrove landscape e.g., local communities/fisher people. Don’t just focus on impossible area numbers, we don’t just want mono-specific *Rhizophora* plantations (MC)
 - BB is already being asked to set the GMA context/targets for Indonesia (BB). Country engagement – ‘low-hanging fruit’ countries have already been identified, sometimes because particular, next need to see how it filters down to strategies and targets in individual countries (DH) In summary, we are a bit nervous to get behind the target figure with some of these uncertainties, but we are fully behind the sentiment of the GMA and wish to support it as much as we can. Still some things to be ironed out. Hard for us to support if we don’t have much input into setting some of the objectives and if we disagree with some aspects (JL)
4. *Priority setting*
- Can the GMA support capacity building in country? (KK) Yes! (DH)
 - Priorities need to be identified sooner rather than later (BB)

- If the MSG is to be involved, what are the logistics, how do we move ahead? (HK)
- Are there some concrete tasks that are being done to start achieving this? (TB) There is a draft strategy, not sure what the latest stage is. Once there's an overall positive willingness to engage they will welcome the advice of the MSG (DH)
- Can we still comment on the IUCN Global Mangrove Strategy? (HK) Should still be possible for MSG members to comment (OH)
- Mangroves will be lower priority in policy, their conservation is secondary, so we need to mainstream them into other societal issues (e.g., fisheries, land use planning), horizontal integration of nature conservation. Things also work differently in different countries. We lack political insight in the MSG (and research field more broadly) about how to mainstream mangroves (NK)
- Are the objectives/deliverables of the IUCN Global Mangrove Strategy part of the MSG objectives? E.g., the red listing assessment (HK)? Not the impression that JL got, but better for the MSG to be involved at an earlier stage next time (JL), though some of the tasks in the Strategy are part of the MSG's remit (HK, OH)

Actions:

- DH will do a general follow up email to this, Kate Blackwood will get in touch with the MSG
- DH showed willingness to share log frames etc
- MSG members to provide any comments on the IUCN Global Mangrove Strategy ASAP

5. Representing the IUCN MSG

- How do we represent the IUCN MSG in our work? (NK). Can put the MSG affiliation on papers that are aligned to the goals of the MSG (JL)
- We can also submit info/news etc. to the Species e-bulletin (once per month, >20000 people) (OH)

6. Future tasks

6a. Reassessment of Species Red List

- Last (only) assessment was initiated in 2007 at a meeting in the Philippines. Followed up by another workshop in the neotropics. 70 species assessed, 11 species assessed as threatened. Resulted in the Polidoro et al. 2010 paper (KK, JO)
- It is up to the MSG to inform the IUCN how we wish to proceed with the next assessment (JL). KK suggested that the previous meeting's format worked well and should be repeated
- Much interest in this task from the IUCN perspective. They can also provide support (OH)
- Could the red listing task be a focus for the Hong Kong meeting? (HK)
- Important for Gap analysis and to guide conservation actions in threat hotspots and key biodiversity areas (OH) and highlighting mangrove biodiversity hotspots (KK)
- We've already identified the threatened species. But what are we doing with this information? What are we doing to bring them back? (JO)
- What to do with *Bruguiera hainesii*? (JL) What do we do if we have info on distribution of specific species? (BB) Send to the Red List Authority Jean Yong and cc the other MSG members (JL)

- Mangroves have lots of hybrid species, not included in the last assessment. What to do with them? (KK)
- At the China MSG meeting we had a long discussion about 'what is a mangrove'? Need to follow this up and define the components (true mangroves, associates, epiphytes etc.) before assessing them (DF).
- We should not authoritatively define what species are mangroves since people have different opinions on what is a mangrove species or not (JO) Maybe we can take the broadest definition to include them all (DF) Associates may be very important because they are often at the back of the mangrove where the threats are highest (JL)

Actions:

- JL to coordinate with Jean Yong. JL will contact specific MSG members (and non-members) where appropriate
- KK to send JL a recent paper from India on mangrove hybrids
- MSG members with info on species distribution to send to Jean Yong, cc'ing the other MSG members

b. Joint paper on mangrove conservation status (MZ)

c. Special issue in Diversity (MZ)

- 15 manuscripts will pay no fees
- Others get 50% discount
- Full price according to the website is 850 CHF (DF)

d. Standardized methods (MZ)

- Standardized protocols exist for many research methods, e.g., there is a CDM blue carbon protocol too (OH) in addition to other protocols from CIFOR and the Blue Carbon Initiative (DF)
- What about coming up with standardized methods for social sciences in mangroves too (MZ). But different research questions, different stakeholders, different locations may need different methods and approaches, so standardization may be impossible or not required. Perhaps we can offer a list of suggested methods, but not advocate or standardize? (DF).
- During this conversation it was noted that the MSG lacked members with social science skills.
- Perhaps a better focus is to suggest particular ethics of social science research in mangroves and ethical considerations of interacting with mangrove stakeholders. Groups have already done these ethical checklists for carbon credit schemes etc. (DF). This is something the MSG can quite easily endorse (JL). To what extent should the MSG do this/can do this? Perhaps a job for others, and then we can then propagate it (JL)
- Training and capacity building too (KK)

e. Red list of Ecosystems (CD)

- Instead of looking at species extinction, it looks at risk of ecosystem collapse, using biotic and abiotic indicators

- End point is a quantitative risk assessment
- Currently there is a PhD student looking at doing this for Australia. Looking for funding to look at it for a more global scale.
- Why Australia? Not too threatened (JL). Because of where the originators are based, but looking to do workshops etc. to expand the methods to different regions where mangroves are more threatened (CD)
- How do we take into account the unique characteristics and feedbacks of mangroves into the risk assessment? (TB) Will need to incorporate these things into an assessment, instead of just looking at changes in areal distribution (CD)
- Interesting and important to incorporate connectivity between ecosystems (MZ). Coral researchers have tried to incorporate this (CD)
- A useful approach, because the biggest contribution by the MSG is more likely to be on an ecosystem scale, as opposed to a species scale (JL)
- Would be good to let us know what data etc you need and how we can help (DF)
- A global mangrove typology (deltaic vs fringe etc) would be useful (CD). This is being produced at the moment and will be due in a few months (DF)

Actions:

- CD to send further info, including what data are required and how MSG members can help
- DF to follow up with CD about the global mangrove typology
- JL to explore adding member(s) to the MSG with social science research skills.

AOB

- For future online meetings we could consider using Zoom, as it's a good communication software especially for low bandwidth locations, and you can share documents etc. (BB)
- Outreach/visibility is important – we need a website (AA)
- The MY Mangrove Network is becoming established to represent Malaysia's mangroves and can interface with the MSG (AA)