

SUME development

The Sustainable Use and Management of the Environment Thematic Group was established by Piet Wit, during his tenure as the Chair of the Commission for Environmental Management (CEM), in 2014. The first meeting of SUME was held in Vienna in 2015. By October 2015 the membership of the Group had grown to 33. The second meeting was held in Honolulu in September, 2016, with a membership of 62 from 37 countries. By May 2017 (Lima Meeting) there were 380 members linked to this Group from 90 countries and the current membership of this Thematic Group stands at some 550 members. Clearly, not all members are active but they are included in communications and are evidence of the interest in the work of this Group. Similarly, the IUCN has recognised the significance of the Group with the past Chair of CEM attending 2 of the SUME Meetings and the current chair attending the 2 most recent meetings.

We see devastating environmental changes at the start of the Anthropocene, resulting from unsustainable and ill-advised use of global resources, which are leading to potentially catastrophic climate change and a mass-extinction of biodiversity. It is appreciated that sustainable users of elements of biodiversity within the environment are more affected by early environmental changes because species have to have healthy populations to be used sustainably. Thus, these users have a value as sentinels of change and also have a vested interest in driving efforts to address such change. This is clearly understood by the IUCN and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The challenge for the IUCN is how to enrol these sustainable users and direct their efforts to address environmental problems. This has been to goal of SUME, under the leadership of Prof. Robert Kenward who has driven the concept of developing internet portals which engage with user-groups within the environment and provide them the tools to effect change or to ensure that their practices are sustainable. These portals can provide local communication links and are referred to as Systems for Community Liaison or SYCL. At the same time these user groups can provide data through the portal which can influence and direct conservation efforts. This then encourages a bottom-up approach to conservation where ordinary people can influence large resource users and governments to the benefit of conservation. The portals can address local communities providing content in their home language while linking them with other similar communities through regions or, indeed, around the World. This addresses a Global to Local or GLOCAL approach. These portals can be referred to as Multilingual Online Research/Restoration Project Hosting or MORPHs.

The International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) represents one such sustainable use group – the falconers. Falconers are notable among sustainable users in that the nature of their activity requires that they interact with nature and the environment both very intimately and frequently; with an active falconer hunting his hawk on about 100 days per year. The IAF represent small communities of falconers in about 90 countries around the world and so is very suitable for the GLOCAL concept. The IAF recognized the MORPH concept as a means of addressing the conservation concerns of their constituents who are noting environmental changes with loss of both numbers of raptors and of quarry species. Thus, cooperative ventures between SUME and IAF were a logical step.

The first cooperative project was developed to meet the proposals for the Saker Falcon Global Action Plan and was developed in collaboration with CMS/UNEP and BirdLife International. This SYCL portal – www.sakernet.org – was developed to initiate contact with falconers, falcon trappers and falcon hospitals across the Asiatic range of the Saker falcon. The SYCL sites were developed in local languages (Arabic, Russian, Pashtu and Persian) where information could be provided to users of Sakers and information could be obtained through a voluntary questionnaire. This Portal has

proved remarkably successful and there are plans to increase the number of languages (Urdu, Mongolian and Mandarin) and the potential exists to develop this site to manage sustainable use of the Saker.

European member organizations of the IAF have serious concerns regarding loss of quarry species as well as broad biodiversity loss, resulting from industrialized agriculture across Europe. These concerns provided another opportunity for collaboration between IAF and SUME as well as with members of the ESUG - specifically the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust based in the United Kingdom. A portal has been established to provide information for biodiversity restoration and to link local efforts to restore and monitor biodiversity. This is now available as www.perdixnet.org with translations into 24 European languages and with the establishment of the first national sites.

The concept has now been extended to the Americas where there is a need to link falconers across 2 continents and to provide information and support. This new portal "AmFalCon" is about to go live.

Following the successful projects resulting from the collaboration between SUME, the IAF and other partners, the practical value of MORPH using SYCL has been established. Based on the original portal – www.naturalliance.eu established in 2011, these projects have resulted in the development by SUME of the Naturalliance II project which will link multiple different sustainable use groups, through multiple languages across the globe. This provides a forum to encourage sustainable use with benefits to conservation and to collate a massive body of data that can inform conservation decisions. This project could truly demonstrate the power of the GLOCAL as well as the "bottom-to-top" approach in driving the conservation effort.