ESUG & SUME Discussion Session, 9.00-12.30 on Wednesday 24 June

The morning discussions started with a continuation of the editing for SUME of the paper on "The role ecosystem management plays in sustaining the benefits obtained from uses of species", of which the resulting draft is appended to this report.

After coffee, attention turned to considering Naturalliance and SYCL as a funding stream for ESUG; which fed to items 7 and 8 of the afternoon ESUG agenda. The discussion also ranged across the structure of ESUG and its future role overall.

Chair: Naturalliance has not proved to be a useful funding stream for ESUG, perhaps because it was launched before crowd-funding became established and therefore did not use the best approach, such as having a prominent "Donate" button followed by an explanation of precisely how funds would be used. The upgrade has rectified this. As a partner, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust has been particularly patient running a bank account for which income did not cover costs.

Julie Ewald: GWCT has been pleased to support this as it will become a really important way of getting best management practice for wildlife out across the world

Chair: Tero too has helped hugely, partly by funding some travel costs to relevant conferences, but also above all by preparing bids that could support further development of both the Naturalliance and SYCL portals. The very important role of ESUG's country coordinators and Anatrack's software development must also be recognised. An over-riding practice is translation for local people. As Naturalliance is also potentially useful for managing projects and eventually for distributing automated decision support (from other sources even if the system conceived in TESS is not to be funded by current bids to European Commission), it is being continued and enhanced to serve as a signpost for the System for Community Liaison (SYCL), which can in turn signpost Naturalliance.

A non-profit status has been assured for Naturalliance by a licensing agreement between GWCT, as a non-profit organisation, and Anatrack Ltd, naming ESUSG and Tero also as management partners. The contract has also recognised an Advisory Group including European Landowners Organisation, the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU, World Wildlife Fund and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation.

Although bids to European Commission funding have not succeeded, the Naturalliance concept of translation for local people has been important for attracting UNEP funding to establish similar portals in the Saker projects. SYCL is trying a new funding model, in which subscriptions benefit country coordinators and ESUG directly. It is therefore proposed by Anatrack that the contract to ensure non-profit status for SYCL is with ESUG. As ESUG is no longer a component of IUCN, as it was when Naturalliance was created, IUCN too needs to be involved through SUME and SULi.

Robin Sharp: There are commonalities in ESUGs activities of potential benefit for both SSC and CEESP, and now CEM. Rules stated that you had to be in one commission or the other, which hindered this in the past. ESUG has agreed to support SULi, operating across SSC and CEESP but perhaps should also have included CEM. The policy of working with local people for sustainable use is good, but there is still much to do to persuade European Commission of this.

Chair: As ESUG cannot become a part of IUCN again, the best we can do is aim to work across these three IUCN Commissions as a support group, organising meetings and gaining some support for this but otherwise finding our own finance. CEM also wants us to run the portals globally.

Robin Sharp: Can we afford to do all these things?

Chair: Of the ESUG organs other than General Meetings, Committee functions well by email on a voluntary basis. Working groups with adequate leadership should work on as small resources.

Robin Sharp: Commission and secretariat level have never really fully recognised the work done here. Becoming financially independent has strengthened ESUG, but the 4-year chairing cycle of IUCN Commissions is a disadvantage for long term plans with ecosystems. To keep going in Europe on a voluntary basis may be practical, even if only with income from small reports, but new regional groups would take years to get going.

Chair: Even if SYCL is only successful in a few countries, this would probably produce enough income stream for us to remain effective as a voluntary group.

Pranas Mierauskas agreed.

Paul Goriup: lack of IUCN support probably stem from those members who are anti -hunting etc. Until IUCN accepts businesses as members, vast global economic activity is being missed and lack of funding will maintain fraught relations with IUCN. We must hope for the best and plan for the worst!

Chair: Will return on effort be worth it? Our activity does depend on several days work a week from chair and that may not be sustainable; following the SULI decision not to include ESUSG as a regional group, Committee even examined the possibility of winding up the group. Let's go round the table.

Tetiana Gardashuk: it would have been a shame to destroy relations that have taken years to create.

Paul Goriup: independence is probably best, not only because looking for institutional setting is a distraction but also because nimbleness is really important; however, it needs a sound business plan.

Julie Ewald: We should keep IUCN and global funders involved; although funding is reducing from UK Government, European funding is also still available; organisations at national level work on bottom-up funding, and such work internationally is also a best-practise example.

Sandie Sowler: We should continue as we are but stay as close as possible to IUCN because that is the only way to bring about change within IUCN.

Sonya Zlatanova: However, attending world congresses of IUCN beyond Europe is costly. More Pan European work is required in order to develop ecosystem management more efficiently, with a ripple effect of learning from country to country.

Fritz Reimoser: Concrete projects are definitely required for funding.

Frantisek Urban: We should stay involved with IUCN even if we do not fit neatly in any of the 6 Commissions and must therefore also stay independent; however, our role for IUCN needs more discussion .

Zenon Tederko: We also need to discuss the identity of the group. Are we academics, scientists, practitioners? What are we going to deliver and how are we to be perceived by IUCN? Perhaps partly as a pragmatic discussion group and support group. Naturalliance and SYCL are ways to achieve the support mission, and are unique in IUCN although we are not adequately explaining why they are needed. We are mostly academics and need to embrace those who can do the marketing for us and open our minds generally. When I worked for the IUCN secretariat in Warsaw and it closed I couldn't imagine life without it and IUCN too isn't imaginative.

Ion Navodaru: outside IUCN, some of us belong to other organisations with similar interests, so if we just rely on contract projects as a source of funding there may be conflicts of interests.

Riccardo Simoncini: I share many points made by previous speakers. However, this group is a special family of experts with long collaboration. Having 23 languages is an impressive starting potential for the portals, but needs financing. Historically we have solved this by applying under the EU research framework, but not this time, and marketing unique products is not our strength, which is a concern for SYCL as other market products are out there. Naturalliance is unique in ability to deliver local projects and is important because EU's mainstreaming of ecosystem services misses local level.

Chair: Indeed, suitable mapping software was developed in TESS and is now available through Naturalliance in most European local languages plus, thanks to Keiya Nakajima, Japanese.

Zenon: For Poland the requirements to map the ecosystem services came in last year.

Sandor Csanyi: Product selling and marketing is something we academics are not good at. We need to think about what kind of ideas are involved, and what other projects would be of interest. The problem of large mammals; their colonising of cities (e.g. Budapest) concerns even our President and needs more data.

Chair: Ungulates would be another good local project topic; there was excellent response on deer in the UK project for TESS; wild-boar have become a problem in many countries of Europe.

Mari Ivask: Problems across Europe are a good subject for projects, with a core topic of ecosystem services.

Keiya Nakajima: Japan is in a different position socially, albeit close to European ecosystems, and people may not be interested despite the Satoyama initiative.

Eduardo Arraut: The question of whether ESUG wishes to work just in Europe or worldwide will be addressed when the proposed name is voted on later. IUCN is important as a draw for young people, who not only have digital knowledge but would also benefit from the knowledge flow from ESUG. SYCL is not a good name to market something in an embryonic stage. However, its use as a conduit for research models into local communities is powerful. Local knowledge is powerful: in my GIS work, local data often shows remote-sensed landcover (so called habitats) maps to be inaccurate.

Jennifer Ailloud: linking the portals is important, as is the mapping, networking and document storage. We need to market to national governments.

Chair: To summarise, we have moved towards the design of the TESSA and EPIC bids which followed TESS and aimed to supply projects for local mapping, including specifically work on ungulates, small game and alien species, through Naturalliance and SYCL. In the absence of funding from European Commission, which doesn't seem ready for this sort of Pan European local enablement, perhaps we can form a consortium of interested governments, with Sandor and Fritz leading for ungulates, and Riccardo, Zenon and Eduardo for ecosystem-service mapping, while I look at work on alien species.

There was too little time for consideration also of future structure of ESUG Working Groups (ESUG GM paper 4), so that would be addressed in the afternoon.

"The role ecosystem management plays in sustaining the benefits obtained from uses of species (REMISUS)":

We were asked by CEM to address the role Ecosystem Management plays in sustainable use. We did so in the Vienna meetings by going through a preliminary 2-page draft and adding comments in red from a first session (the SUME inaugural meeting) and green from a second session (a combined SUME-ESUG workshop).

In its book "The Ecosystem Approach" (Shepherd 2008), CEM defines the Ecosystem Approach to management as CBD's "strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way". The book is an important introduction to our task, both for implicitly defining an ecosystem as an assembly of "land, water and living resources" (or a "biotope with a biocenosis") and for reviewing implementation approaches with case studies.

System resilience depends on diversity of biota.
This is hard to demonstrate (especially in view of scales) but forces a holistic and long-term approach, not least for effective governance involving a variety of stakeholders.

Preserving species is often a motivation for preserving ecosystems, which then often preserves abiotic components [more from Amman 2000 position statement on sustainable use to be added here].

Two main questions arise:

1.   How does this role operate?

Ecosystems are dynamic; they result from the interaction of species, including humans, with geology, topography and hydrology under prevalent climatic conditions.
Humans obtain services from ecosystems, to which values can be attached; the provisioning, cultural, maintaining and regulating services mostly depend on wild and cultivated species.

Perhaps add more from AAPG and EA (appended) here.

Socio-economic values of the services vary, which provides motivations to manage the services. Humans also change ecosystems unwittingly through poor management, pollution, etc.
Wild species depend on ecosystems and change them too, e.g. through succession processes.
Reduction of unwanted change also motivates management of ecosystems and their services.

Sustainability is about modifying human use of biodiversity as ecosystem services; as noted in Malawi Principles, ecosystems change anyway.

2.   How can the management role be made most effective?

Considering the tenure of components of ecosystems is important.
Provisioning and recreational cultural services can be valued explicitly as tenure-based goods: governments can encourage market-based incentives (e.g. certification) for good management.
Other cultural benefits, with maintenance and regulating services of ecosystems, can be treated as public goods, with governments motivating good management through public PES and leveraging private PES as positive incentives. Regulatory instruments can act in a negative way (Kenward et al 2011), and sometimes as very perverse incentives, so they need to be used cautiously.

Where ecosystems gain rarity value, protection from all except non-extractive use of species there may seem appropriate. However, provided it is sustainable for the species concerned, and especially if the species is not confined to that ecosystem, high-value extractive use may provide the strongest incentive for conservation, especially where intensive non-extractive use may itself change the ecosystem in an unwanted way. Often, the more varied the uses of species, the more funds there may be for management and the more support from local people, but also a need for sophisticated management knowledge based on modelling and complex system dynamics such as maintaining stability and increasing resilience of ecosystems.

[Add more on "high value extractive" (e.g. citing SULI on trophy hunting?]

Need for consideration of invasive species?

Knowledge is needed if managing deliberate, unwitting and natural change is to be in a desired direction.

This requires preserving existing indigenous knowledge and local practices, creating new scientific knowledge (e.g. through systematic monitoring) and applying all these at local level.

Application of knowledge for management needs to be adaptive, 'learning through doing'; a single focus for knowledge and prediction-based decision support is useful for starting in the right direction. Barriers to local knowledge acquisition and use in management need identifying and removing.

A consideration of the CBD Malawi Principles (Ecosystem Approach) seems indispensible; can the document we produce improve on that set of 12 principles?

Appendix. Malawi Principles for the Ecosystem Approach

1. Management objectives are a matter of societal choice.

2. Management should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level.

3. Ecosystem managers should consider the effects of their activities on adjacent and other ecosystems.

4. Recognising potential gains from management there is a need to understand the ecosystem in an economic context, considering e.g., mitigating market distortions, aligning incentives to promote sustainable use, and internalising costs and benefits.

5. A key feature of the ecosystem approach includes conservation of ecosystem structure and functioning.

6. Ecosystems must be managed within the limits to their functioning.

7. The ecosystem approach should be undertaken at the appropriate scale.

8. Recognising the varying temporal scales and lag effects which characterise ecosystem processes, objectives for ecosystem management should be set for the long term.

9. Management must recognise that change is inevitable.

10. The ecosystem approach should seek the appropriate balance between conservation and use of biodiversity.

11. The ecosystem approach should consider all forms of relevant information, including scientific and indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices.

12. The ecosystem approach should involve all relevant sectors of society and scientific disciplines.