



Ref: AF GR CON 21/2

Guidelines on the Formulation of Species Action Plan

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Practice Note is to provide technical guidance to the formulation of new species action plans (SAPs) and the review of existing SAPs under the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021 (BSAP).

2. Background

2.1 The BSAP is the first comprehensive document setting out the strategy and actions for conserving biodiversity and supporting sustainable development in Hong Kong. One of the actions put forward in BSAP is the implementation of conservation action plans for priority species, i.e. species of conservation concern, in particular highly threatened and important species (BSAP Action 6). There are three specific actions related to SAPs under the BSAP:

- 6a - Establish a standardised mechanism for formulating species action plans
- 6b - Formulate action plans for species that require immediate conservation actions
- 6c - Review and strengthen existing species action plans

2.2 An SAP is a strategic document that defines specific objectives and actions for conserving priority species. It is developed to conserve a single or multiple species at local, national, regional or global scale. An SAP should be achievable, time-bound, and subject to constant monitoring and reviews. This Practice Note outlines the mechanism for formulating an SAP by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), as well as the standardised format which should be followed as far as possible, to ensure consistency in the development and revision of SAPs.

3. Procedures of Preparing an SAP

3.1 The framework for formulating SAPs consists of the following five steps which are elaborated in the following sections:

- I. Identification of species that requires an SAP
- II. Identification and engagement of stakeholders
- III. Drafting
- IV. Implementation
- V. Monitoring and review

I. Identification of species that requires an SAP

3.2 SAPs would be developed for priority species (or taxa groups) which require immediate conservation actions, as identified through consideration of information such as threats, biology and ecology of the species, and other relevant information. Priority species are native species fulfilling one or many of the following criteria:

- of high conservation status, especially when Hong Kong is a stronghold for the species;
- demonstrating significant decline or being threatened with high risk of extinction;
- subject to continuing threats, and requiring concerted efforts by various stakeholders for its conservation; or
- whose conservation may have a key influence on contributing to wider ecosystem health and resilience.

3.3 It is necessary to prioritise as it would not be practical to implement SAP for all species of conservation concern. The process for selecting priority species for formulation of an SAP will be coordinated by AFCD in consultation with individuals and organisations with relevant expertise. For taxa groups with little existing information, it is sometimes more sensible to collect more data to inform further actions rather than developing an SAP, since effective management actions require a reasonable amount of knowledge and information of the species.

II. Identification and engagement of stakeholders

3.4 The preparation of an SAP should involve relevant parties. The level of involvement of various parties varies depending on their roles and expertise. This will be elaborated further in the following paragraphs.

3.5 An advisory group should be formed to provide expert opinions on the formulation of the SAP, to ensure that the actions proposed are effective and feasible. The advisory group will be led by AFCD, and may include the following members:

- representatives of government departments responsible for the implementation of actions;
- individuals/ organisations that have relevant work experience with the species concerned (or applicable experience with similar species); and/or
- individuals/ organisations that have key roles in implementing actions for the conservation of the species.

3.6 Secondary stakeholders including interested individuals or parties who have less relevant work experience with the species, but whose work may have direct or indirect impact (positive or negative) on the species, may be consulted or invited to advisory group meetings to provide their views on related issues as necessary.

III. Drafting

3.7 Prior to drafting an SAP, a review of literature including existing conservation measures and best practices, as well as the local protection status and threats, should be conducted. The list of threats should be assessed and ranked, according to their severity and irreversibility, to facilitate the setting of objectives for the SAP. Comprehensive desktop research would help identify any major knowledge gaps to be addressed in the SAP.

3.8 The SAP will be drafted by relevant officers in AFCD. Drafting of the SAP should follow the format suggested in Annex 1. Draft SAP prepared will be circulated to advisory group members for input and comments. Meetings would be convened to collect members' views if necessary, and the gist of the meetings should be recorded.

3.9 In compiling the list of actions, advisory group members should be reminded that the SAP is not a wish list of all desirable actions, but an actionable plan with actions prioritised given limited time and resources. The roles and responsibilities in relation to the proposed actions, as well as the implementation timetable, must be agreed upon by all parties responsible for implementing these actions.

3.10 The draft will be finalised by AFCD, in consultation with the advisory group and relevant government bureaux/departments. Before the launch of the SAP, the finalised SAP will be sent to all relevant parties for their information and necessary actions. The formulation process should preferably be completed within 12 months.

3.11 To enhance the transparency of conservation measures undertaken by the Government, the finalised SAP should be made available in the public domain.

IV. Implementation

3.12 Under normal circumstances, the overall implementation of the SAP should be coordinated by AFCD, who should communicate with the responsible parties to keep track of the progress of each action, and address any risks or factors that may hinder the implementation of actions. Any feedback received could be valuable for improving the SAP as well as refining it for more effective implementation in the future.

V. Monitoring and review

3.13 The formulation of SAP is an adaptive and iterative process subject to constant revisions and updates. A review mechanism is crucial to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the SAP towards achieving its goals and objectives. Appropriate indicators could be used to monitor the progress and assess the outcomes of actions, of which any unintended results should be addressed. In addition, latest information such as conservation status and newly identified threats should be taken into consideration through reviews, so that any necessary adaptation could be recommended.

3.14 Towards the end of the lifespan of an SAP, officers should decide whether there is need to update or extend the SAP, making reference to the considerations in sections 3.2-3.3. The review should also take into account contemporary conditions and milestones achieved by the current SAP, as well as any new information. A new advisory group consisting of appropriate stakeholders should be formed to advise the revision of the SAP.

4. Enquiries

4.1 Enquiries of this Practice Note should be addressed to Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity) at scono_b@afcd.gov.hk.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
March 2018

References

Barov B., Hughes B., Cranswick P., Nagy S., Crockford N. and Gallo-Orsi U. (Contributors). (2008). *Draft Revised Format for AEWA Single Species Action Plans. Agenda item 27h of Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds*. AWEA. 29pp.

IUCN – SSC Species Conservation Planning Sub-Committee (2017). *Guidelines for Species Conservation Planning. Version 1.0*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xiv + 114 pp.

Sande E., Evans S., Newbery P., Buckley P., Donald P. and Hoffmann D. (ed.) (2005). *Action plans for the conservation of globally threatened birds in Africa: Species Action Plan Development Manual*. BirdLife International, Nairobi, Kenya and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK. iv + 37 pp.

Annex 1 Format of Species Action Plan

The SAP should be simple and clear, with focused objectives and actions, as well as an action timetable. The format of an SAP as laid out below shall be adhered to.

Front Cover

Cover page should include the following information:

- Title: The target species or taxa group should be clearly stated
- Timeframe: The SAP is usually effective for a period of five years
- Date of latest version: This is for distinguishing different editions of the SAP
- Portrait of species
- Primary authors/compilers and logos

Acronyms

Table of Content

1. Introduction

The introduction provides a summary about the species, why an SAP is needed and what would be achieved within 5 years. Major threats, top priority actions and the overall timeframe should be mentioned. The length of this section should be limited to one page.

2. Background Information

This is an overview of the target species which should include but not be limited to short descriptions of the following aspects:

- Taxonomy: Taxonomic ranks; common names and synonyms; taxonomic remarks
- General description: Characteristic features; body size
- Biology and ecology: Life cycle; habits; diet and habitat requirements; behaviour; disease; genetics
- Population status: Abundance in local, regional and global context; population viability; temporal trend, if available
- Distribution: Geographic range in local, regional and global context (include maps where needed)
- Conservation: Legal protection status; local, regional and global conservation status; existing local conservation measures and policies; previous conservation efforts
- Threats: Existing and potential threats and their drivers, including enforcement challenges, presented in descending order of the magnitude of their impact on the species
- Climate change: Extent of exposure and natural adaptation to climate change; adaptation planning and implementation, if available
- Stakeholders: Individuals or organisations which are either engaged in the formulation of the SAP, or take part in the existing/future conservation actions for the species
- Links to other action plans/strategies: Other SAPs or biodiversity strategies that should be considered in conjunction with this SAP, if appropriate

Any major information gaps in any of the above aspects should be acknowledged.

3. Action Plan

Aim

This is the overall long-term goal to be accomplished by the SAP.

Objectives

The objectives are concrete targets for how the aim of the SAP could be achieved, and they should address all threats as far as possible. They should be clearly defined, specific, achievable and realistic. Subject to its nature, each objective should be connected to one or more actions. In view of the five-year lifespan, the SAP should be realistic and implementable. Over-ambitious objectives should be avoided.

Timeframe

This specifies the lifespan of the SAP, which is usually five years, as well as the exact time period of when the SAP shall take effect. The expected time of when the review and update would take place should also be stated.

Actions

Actions are identified to fulfil the objectives of the SAP. They should also address the major threats and gaps in knowledge. They should be clearly defined and are specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. Actions should be kept concise. Information on previous work done should be included in the Background section.

Each action should start with a single-line statement that depicts clearly and directly what it is about, followed by a brief description on how it is to be implemented, as well as addressing related threats and knowledge gaps, and identifying corresponding stakeholders. Each action should be attributed to at least one responsible agency.

Whenever possible and appropriate, actions should be classified and listed under the following headings:

- **Habitat protection:** This covers actions that protect the species using the habitat approach, usually through administrative means, e.g. site inspection/monitoring, habitat management plan, habitat restoration.
- **Species protection:** This covers species-specific actions e.g. captive breeding programme, *ex situ* conservation, translocation/reintroduction programme.
- **Policy and legislation:** This covers actions that protect the species through policy development or legislative means, e.g. protection under existing ordinance, enactment of other action plans.
- **Capacity building:** This covers actions that enable capacity building for the better conservation of the species, e.g. development of best practices, knowledge sharing, formation of expert groups.
- **Research and monitoring:** This covers actions that advance our understanding of the species and its conservation, e.g. conduction of studies, development of monitoring indicators.
- **Communications and publicity:** This covers actions that help raise public awareness and engagement in the species conservation, e.g. campaigns and events, media coverage.

Action timetable

The action timetable is a tabulated summary of actions identified under the SAP. It provides a concrete overview of actions with their responsible agency(-ies) and timeframe. The timetable should encompass all actions described in the text and listed under their respective headings.

The following components should be specified for each action:

- **Agency:** Each action must be taken up by at least one or more agencies, of which the leading party should be specified.
- **Timeframe:** This is the timespan of actions from commencement to completion, and is

decided based on the timescale and start date of commencement, which are subject to, amongst other things, the urgency of actions and resources available.

4. Implementation and review

This section describes the mechanism of implementation, including parties responsible for the implementation and coordination of the SAP, as well as funding sources for carrying out the actions. It should also suggest any potential interface of the SAP with other action plans or strategies. In addition, any risks or factors that may hinder the implementation of actions should be addressed.

This section should also outline the mechanism and schedule of review. For revised SAPs, the history of revisions should be presented, together with any milestones achieved by previous SAPs. The latest date of revision must be clearly stated on the front cover.

5. References

Papers, articles, journals, reports or other references that are cited in the SAP should be included.

6. Acknowledgements

A note should be included to acknowledge the contribution of advisory group members and any external stakeholders involved in the formulation of the SAP.


7. Annexes

Any additional and supplementary materials that are relevant to the SAP should be included.

Annex 2 Template of Species Action Plan

Front cover

	<p>Species' common name (<i>scientific name</i>) Species Action Plan yyyy-yyyy (e.g. 2018-2023)</p>
	<p>Photo of the species</p>
	<p>Latest version: mmmmm yyyy (e.g. March 2018) Compiled by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department</p>



Acronyms

Table of Content

1. Introduction

2. Background Information

- 2.1 Taxonomy
[short description]
- 2.2 General description
[short description]
- 2.3 Biology and ecology
[short description]
- 2.4 Population status
[short description]
- 2.5 Distribution
[short description]
- 2.6 Conservation
[short description]
- 2.7 Threats
[short description]
- 2.8 Climate Change
[short description]
- 2.9 Stakeholders
[short description]
- 2.10 Links to other actions and strategies
[short description]

3. Action Plan

- 3.1 Aim
- 3.2 Objectives [no more than six key objectives]
 - (i)
 - (ii)
 - (iii)
- 3.3 Timeframe
- 3.4 Actions [to include only appropriate actions under the SAP. Number of actions under each heading may vary]
 - HABITAT PROTECTION
 - Action 1:
 - [short description]
 - Action 2:
 - [short description]
 - SPECIES PROTECTION
 - ...
 - POLICY AND LEGISLATION
 - ...
 - CAPACITY BUILDING
 - ...
 - RESEARCH AND MONITORING

- ...
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY
...

3.5 Action timetable [all actions described in Section 3.4 shall be included]

#	Action	Agency(-ies)	Timeframe
Habitat protection			
	Action 1:		
	Action 2:		
Species protection			
	Action 3:		
	Action 4:		
Policy and legislation			
	Action 5:		
	Action 6: ...		
Capacity building			
Research and monitoring			
Communications and publicity			

4. Implementation and review
5. References
6. Acknowledgements
7. Annexes