

## A New Specialist Group -- IUCN SSC South Asia Invertebrate Specialist Group

**IUCN**  
The World Conservation Union



SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION

"Invertebrates represent the vast majority of our planet's biodiversity and comprise over 95% of all described animal species. Most of the ca. 10,000 new species discovered every year are invertebrates. In addition to their indispensable role as recyclers/pollinators and key positions on most food chains, many invertebrate groups have a vital economic, scientific and cultural value for mankind" (Invertebrate Scoping Workshop Executive Summary, 2001)

In November of 2001, the Species Survival Commission of IUCN convened a "Scoping Workshop" to determine the needs and plan of action for the monolithic task of conserving invertebrate diversity on the Earth. Sanjay Molur from ZOO/CBSG, South Asia attended the workshop for this region. Dr. Onnie Byers of CBSG, SSC IUCN designed and facilitated the workshop.

The Executive Summary of the Workshop points out that the great majority of invertebrates are as yet undiscovered and undescribed, yet it is well known that endemism for invertebrates is very high. Thousands of species are confined to small, fragmented areas. In the 2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 1,928 species of invertebrates (29% of all assessed species) were listed as threatened. Yet they are vastly under-represented in global conservation efforts. The Scoping Workshop investigated means of finding various means for SSC to carry out its role as a pivotal agency to tackle the conservation requirements for this largest group of organisms which makes up 95% of our biodiversity. The workshop aimed to develop a strategy for enhancing IUCN's input to global invertebrate conservation through the invertebrate groups of IUCN's Species Survival Commission.

Participants interacted in a well-designed workshop process and discussed various important aspects of invertebrate conservation. A statement was crafted from the output of all the working groups to describe the mission to be undertaken: "A world that researches, documents, monitors, values and conserves invertebrate diversity for the maintenance of ecosystem health and integrity into the future."

In the workshop, networking was very strongly emphasized which should be done through an IUCN SSC invertebrate officer and a steering committee as well as through current and new specialist groups. A crucial task would be to ascertain the status of existing levels of invertebrate diversity and threats obstructing invertebrate survival in the future. Such threats include alien invasives, habitat destruction, loss of pollinators and exploitation in its various forms. When asked to rank the essential tasks in order of importance, the following was considered most crucial: "to establish a broader coverage of invertebrate taxa groups through the formation of new Specialist Groups".

The Zoo Outreach Organisation/CBSG, South Asia hosts many networks, one of the largest being the Invertebrate Network. In view of the large membership and the output of the SSC Scoping Workshop, we requested SSC to permit us to initiate an IUCN SSC South Asian Invertebrate

Specialist Group to expand our activities in line with the recommendations of the SSC Scoping Workshop. David Brackett hosts a gracious letter accepting our request and ZOO is now hosting this Specialist Group.

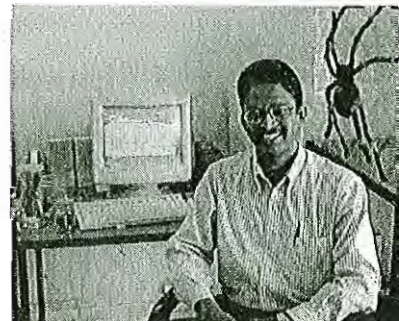
The Specialist Group has two chairs: Dr. T.N. Ananthkrishnan, a well-respected, internationally known entomologist, who chairs the South Asian Invertebrate network along with Dr. B. A. Daniel, initiator of the network.



Prof. T.N. Ananthkrishnan

Prof. T.N. Ananthkrishnan is an Emeritus Scientist. He has published more than 400 scientific articles besides over 25 books. He is the recipient of several national awards.

Dr. B.A. Daniel obtained his Ph.D. in 1992 from the University of Kerala for his thesis on Ecophysiology of filariasis vector. Dr. Daniel has worked for Zoo Outreach Organisation for most of his professional career. He initiated the invertebrate network in 1996 and has built it up to 400 members. He is also a member of CBSG and is experienced in CAMP workshops and Red Listing exercises.



Dr. B.A. Daniel

Some of the long-term plans and activities of this network will be to

- initiate Action Plans for invertebrate groups and regions, plan national / sub-regional conservation work plans and to identify contact persons for the region
- form taxonomic-group-specific specialist groups for South Asian region
- initiate interaction among existing specialist groups such as Social Insect, Orthoptera, Odonata SG
- conduct training programmes - taxonomy, field techniques, identification
- Identify priorities for invertebrate research in general
- National / Regional Red listing with CAMP workshops which use IUCN Red List Criteria and CBSG process tools
- Initiate interaction with governments, conservation institutions and agencies with respect to national conservation legislation
- form an e-group
- Develop an electronic newsletter
- organise Specialist group meetings on an annual or biannual basis

Submitted by Sally Walker