

Conservation news

Participatory evaluations reveal positive impacts for small-scale fishing communities in Indonesia and Honduras

Small-scale fishing communities are often particularly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks, as exemplified by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, extreme weather events as a result of climate change, and rising costs associated with the war in Ukraine. It is therefore essential to adopt a community-based approach to marine conservation so as to strengthen resilience. This approach is central to Fauna & Flora's marine programme, within which we support communities to strengthen their roles in the governance and management of the marine resources on which they depend, whilst seeking to improve and diversify livelihoods. On Simeulue Island in north-west Sumatra, Indonesia, Fauna & Flora has been working since 2011 to increase the legitimacy of the traditional fisheries governance system at community level, known as the *Panglima Laot*, to improve the effectiveness and equity of small-scale fisheries management (Wilson & Linkie, 2012, *Oryx*, 46, 495–500). A similar approach is taken in Honduras, where Fauna & Flora has collaborated with five Honduran NGO partners since 2015 to ensure collaborative management of the Atlántida Seascape, which comprises four marine protected areas and the waters connecting them, by supporting fishing communities to take increased responsibility for marine management (Steadman, 2021, *Oryx*, 55, 507–518). In summer 2022, Fauna & Flora project teams conducted participatory impact assessments on both Simeulue Island and in the Atlántida Seascape. These studies gathered data on the changes that communities receiving project support had experienced over the previous 3 and 2 years, respectively.

We held focus group discussions with a representative selection of communities or community groups. Participants were asked standardized questions to identify, rank and determine the well-being impacts of the main changes they had experienced, and to examine how Fauna & Flora project interventions and external factors contributed to these changes. Despite the disparate locations of the Acehnese and Honduran small-scale fishing communities, there were notable similarities in perceived changes. Both sets of respondents reported that their communities or community groups were better organized, and as a result better recognized, for example by the relevant authorities. This observed change resonates with research that highlights improved community organization as the most valued social change from community-based conservation projects (Ban et al., 2019, *Nature Sustainability*, 2, 524–532). Women participating across both projects also reported feeling more empowered and independent from their husbands.

Additionally, as a direct result of project interventions, communities across both sites reported an improved capacity to handle and process fish products, increasing sale prices. These positive impacts were experienced in vulnerable communities facing several external stressors, thus highlighting the benefits of strengthening community governance and supporting improved and diversified livelihoods to increase resilience to threats. However, the participatory impact assessments also highlighted areas requiring further support, such as the need to improve market access and reduce the incidence of illegal and unsustainable fishing in Honduras. These findings will be presented to the respective communities and used to inform ongoing project activities.

GABRIELLA CHURCH (orcid.org/0000-0003-3948-8480, gabriella.church@fauna-flora.org), HENRY DUFFY (orcid.org/0000-0002-9360-5142) and HAZEL AKESTER (orcid.org/0000-0001-5046-2826) Fauna & Flora, Cambridge, UK

This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Dung beetle conservation now on the IUCN agenda

In 2022, following a year of development, a group of experts in dung beetle research led by Camila Leandro and Fernando-Vaz-de-Mello proposed the establishment of an IUCN Species Survival Commission Specialist Group focusing on dung beetles (families Geotrupidae and Scarabaeidae), insects that rely on animal droppings for food and reproduction. In natural ecosystems, dung beetle species are threatened by habitat modification, fragmentation and loss, and potential changes in the availability of dung as a result of the modification of mammal faunas. In agro-ecosystems, populations are threatened by over-application of pesticides. In addition, climate change is a threat to the over 6,000 described species.

In August 2022, the Dung Beetle Specialist Group was officially declared by IUCN, and as co-chairs it gives us pleasure to share this news. The new Specialist Group will focus on raising awareness of the importance of dung beetles and their associated ecosystem functions (including nutrient recycling, bioturbation and seed dispersal), and creating enduring partnerships between researchers, entomologists, conservationists and agricultural scientists. We plan to begin by using social media to share our knowledge and interest in dung beetles, introduce the Group's members and hold members' workshops on topics such as citizen science and the science-policy interface, throughout 2023 and 2024.