

Criteria for evaluating reintroduction success

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The IUCN/ SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group has published guidelines for reintroduction efforts that are part of endangered species recovery programs. This talk will review approaches to measuring success for vertebrate reintroductions, focusing on those programs involving captive breeding.

The program elements I will review include the management and breeding of the captive population, pre-release preparation and training, the release technology, post-release monitoring and support, program costs, and the recovery “team’s” organization, structure and process. I will emphasize the need for designing reintroductions that are science-based and involve the testing of hypotheses, e.g. comparing soft vs. hard releases. Applying an experimental design encourages regular program evaluation, adaptive management and finding the most cost-effective approaches to recovery for the species. Finally, I will compare the specific challenges and costs of reintroduction programs for different “at risk” species.