

**Shoal is designed to identify, scale-up and effectively fund conservation projects for freshwater fish. This innovative new partnership will benefit a range of stakeholders, including non-profit and for-profit organisations, hobbyists, anglers, zoos, aquaria and beyond.**

## What is Shoal and why is it needed?

Shoal is an exciting new initiative aimed at engaging a wide range of organisations to grow and develop interest and funding for freshwater species conservation, particularly fish. This is a group of species in urgent need of more attention and action. Currently, targeted action for freshwater biodiversity conservation is limited, as is funding and capacity. A recent analysis of funding (from 2012-2015) undertaken by Synchronicity Earth found just 6.6% of trust and foundation funding went to species-focused projects and even then, there was a disproportionate representation of certain species and specific taxonomic groups. Funding, policy and action for freshwater biodiversity is minimal, yet freshwater ecosystems are undergoing some of the most significant declines of our time – with 81% declines in species abundance found between 1970 and 2012 (WWF/ZSL, 2016. Living Planet Report 2016. Risk and resilience in a new era) - more severe declines than for any other ecosystem type.

Yet an opportunity exists: there are a large number of companies and individuals involved and interested in the freshwater fish-keeping and angling sectors, as well as a large number of public aquaria. Until now, little to no emphasis has been placed on bringing all these actors

together, along with conservationists and scientists to try to tackle the freshwater biodiversity crisis.

## A true partnership


This partnership will identify and support exemplary freshwater fish conservation projects, as well as enabling the exchange of skills and knowledge and the building of capacity and awareness.

Shoal is in its early stages; it is a new partnership and one which has never been tried in this way before. It is designed to be inclusive and expansive, reaching beyond the traditional conservation community in order to tackle the freshwater fish crisis head-on. This partnership will include: zoos and aquaria, the ornamental fish trade, anglers, fish hobbyists, conservation NGOs, conservation practitioners and scientists and any other interested sectors and individuals.

Shoal will nurture mutual respect, develop joint projects and funds to enable conservation action in the most critical places for freshwater fish and their habitats.

## Why fish?

All freshwater biodiversity is in great need, yet mostly receives minimal funding and is highly threatened. A third of known freshwater species are considered to be at risk of extinction and threats continue to grow. Fishes are vital for



Shoal is designed to be a true partnership from the outset: supporting exemplary freshwater fish conservation projects as well as building capacity and awareness.



the functioning of freshwater systems: their survival impacts other vertebrates, invertebrates and plants. Fish are highly susceptible to multiple threats which manifest in freshwater ecosystems – dams, invasive species introductions, pollution, overexploitation - the list goes on. This partnership is based on and around the interest and reliance on fish of multiple sectors and individuals. Therefore, our starting point is fish, with the acknowledgment that, in protecting fish, we are inevitably protecting many other species (whilst also having positive impacts on people and the whole ecosystem). As the partnership grows and diversifies, other taxonomic groups may become focal points.

## What can be gained by being part of Shoal?

The founding partners, and employee/s of Shoal, will work together to refine the best opportunities for each sector. However, first and foremost, Shoal will be a diverse group of people and organisations working together for a common good – to contribute to the conservation of freshwater habitats and their species. Good collaboration is key if we want to bring about genuine change.

Shoal will engage and empower a diverse group of stakeholders to: help protect wild stocks of species; improve corporate and social responsibility, and best practices; contribute to meeting industry standards and global targets (like Sustainable Development Goals); enable better education and engagement of the public and beyond; provide opportunities to help, hands-on, with projects, and improve the wider understanding of the threats and mechanisms for reducing them.

## Forming Shoal

### STAGE 1: SCOPING

- A host organization, Synchronicity Earth (UK) has been identified. This will initially act as a fiscal sponsor to Shoal.
- Two workshops have been held with a diverse group of stakeholders, including freshwater scientists, NGO industry and trade representatives and hobbyists. The intention is that the network and hence participation in the partnership will continue to expand.
- Nine official scoping partners are on board and a number of others are on the cusp of signing the agreement.
- Shoal's first staff member has been identified – a highly skilled conservationist with many years of experience in engaging and working closely with a number of different sectors in conservation and with an open and collaborative working style.
- Much of the first year's initial core funds have been secured. Shoal continues to seek partners to support this effort, both financially and with in-kind donations, as well as longer-term support to increase and diversify funding to fish conservation projects.

### WHAT NEXT?

#### In the next 12 - 18 months, Shoal plans to:

- Continue to grow the Scoping Partnership to ensure engagement of a representative set of organisations and individuals.
- Establish Working Groups within the Scoping Partnership to ensure the best, yet most diverse skills and knowledge can be utilised to help develop key aspects of Shoal, such as: grant giving prioritisation methods; governance structure and marketing strategy.
- Develop bespoke marketing tools and materials.
- Create a strategic plan.
- Develop a broad partner/membership structure.
- Fundraise to enable project funding and fund initial flagship projects.

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### ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED:

