



Lake Victoria SSP: A renewed approach to saving Darwin's dreampond

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Lake Victoria is the largest tropical lake in the world with almost 2,900 miles of shoreline in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It supports over 30 million people through Africa's largest inland fishery. Since the introduction of non-native Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*) in the 1950s, approximately 50% of the lake's 500 species of haplochromine fishes have gone extinct. The lake system is in severe ecological decline due to a complex array of anthropogenic pressures and natural transformations.

The Lake Victoria Species Survival Plan (VSSP) was established in 1993 to maintain genetic diversity of only 13 haplochromine and tilapia species, aiming to reintroduce their progeny to a healthy Lake Victoria one day. In April 2012 the VSSP steering committee met with a group of conservation biologists to discuss the state of Lake Victoria, the future of haplochromine diversity, and how to direct collective conservation efforts to solve short- and long-term problems in the interest of haplochromine survival. This collaboration strengthened individual efforts, and sharing perspectives focused North American VSSP participants on real-world conditions and challenges in Africa. Periodic meetings such as this are critical in evaluating conservation programmes and adjusting goals to meet changing needs in the field.