Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment

What is wrong with current translocations? A review and a decision-making proposal

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Front Ecol Environ 2012; doi:10.1890/110175

What is wrong with current translocations? A review and a decision-making proposal

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Should a species be translocated? Uncertainty regarding the necessity and feasibility of many translocations complicates answering this question. Here, we review translocation projects, both published and unpublished. Our results indicate that most projects (1) addressed fewer than half of the basic criteria established for translocations and (2) were either unjustifiable from a conservation perspective or inadequately designed to guarantee success or preclude negative consequences. We propose a hierarchical decision-making system – an explicit method that integrates existing guidelines, thereby covering a key gap in conservation science – to reduce ambiguity when deciding whether to implement a given translocation project. This method will improve the likelihood of success in translocation projects and contribute to the efficient use of the limited resources available for these conservation efforts.

Front Ecol Environ 2012; doi:10.1890/110175

Species translocations (IUCN 1987) are increasingly used as key tools to offset the current biodiversity crisis caused by human impacts on populations and ecosystems (Panel 1; Figure 1; Griffith *et al*. 1989; Wolf *et al*. 1996; Fischer and Lindenmayer 2000; Sutherland *et al*. 2010). Although the potential of translocations to promote conservation seems straightforward, there are several reasons why implementing some projects, including assisted colonizations (Ricciardi and Simberloff 2009; Lawler and Olden 2011; Carrete and Tella 2012), is still vigorously debated. First, translocations have often been used haphazardly as a techno-fix for solving complex conservation problems without first considering the root causes of population declines (Frazer 1992; Meffe 1992). Second, an unknown proportion of projects appear to be conducted for philosophical, aesthetic, or sociopolitical reasons rather than for restoring the long-term viability of target populations (Sarrazin and Barbault 1996; Pons and Quintana 2003). Third, translocations are often unsuccessful, despite research efforts analyzing which factors will likely determine project success (Griffith *et al*. 1989, 1990; Wolf *et al*. 1998; Fischer and Lindenmayer 2000). Finally, translocation projects may be harmful in the long term as a result of unexpected associated impacts. Disease incidence, reduced population fitness caused by decreases in genetic diversity (inbreeding depression), the introduction of maladaptive alleles (outbreeding depression) in managed populations, or other unintended impacts on recipient communities may necessitate continual management of translocated populations and the supporting ecosystem, which is counterintuitive to the initial goal of restoring viable populations (Templeton 1990; Cunningham 1996; Storfer 1999; Ricciardi and Simberloff 2009).

In a nutshell:

- Translocation projects are increasingly used in attempts to reduce extinction risk, but it remains unclear which projects are necessary and which are likely to succeed
- We found that most translocation projects do not fully address criteria developed to ensure their utility
- We propose a system to evaluate the suitability of translocation projects by hierarchically assessing their necessity, associated risks, and technical and logistical design
- Application of this system by planners and wildlife managers would help in curbing species extinctions by reducing the number of inappropriate translocation projects and enabling more efficient use of scarce conservation resources

Existing guidelines for translocations (Table 1; WebPanel 1) indicate relevant issues to be considered before implementing such projects. Ideally, all translocations are expected to address these guidelines. However, according to the best available evidence, such guidelines cannot be used to decide when translocations should be undertaken because (1) scientists lack unambiguous criteria to judge whether a given project is suitable and likely to succeed and (2) guidelines do not consider differences in the relative importance of issues related to necessity and potential usefulness. For instance, resolving technical issues in the emerging field of reintroduction biology (Armstrong and Seddon 2008) would be irrelevant if translocations focused on species with adequate population sizes but that were otherwise threatened by overexploitation, habitat loss, invasive species, or loss of

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Figure 1. *Translocations are an important tool for reducing the risk of extinction of threatened species, such as (a) the California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) in the US and (b) the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) in Spain. However, translocations are also hotly debated because their success and usefulness are often doubtful.*

key mutualists (Caughley 1994). Criteria used to assess translocations should consider the main goal of each project and determine how issues related to this goal are hierarchically arranged throughout project development.

Here, we assess how recent and current translocations (including reintroductions, restocking, and assisted colonizations) address criteria designed to evaluate their necessity and potential usefulness. We first reviewed existing guidelines for translocations (WebPanel 1) and reformulated their recommendations into 10 main criteria (Table 1). Then, using two independent databases, we assessed whether ongoing translocations addressed these criteria. One database consisted of 280 studies published between 1996 and 2010 in eight major conservation biology journals (WebPanel 2), while the other database included 174 translocation projects developed for terrestrial vertebrates in Spain during the last two decades (WebPanel 3) – the latter database was chosen so as to avoid the potential effects of publication bias toward well-developed and successful projects, popular target taxa, or prominent scientific topics (Reading *et al.* 1997; Fischer and Lindenmayer 2000; Seddon *et al.* 2005; Bajomi *et al.* 2010). Spain was selected because of its high biodiversity and extensive history with nature conservation, including ex situ conservation programs (Morillo and Gómez-Campo 2000). Thorough consultation with scientists and conservation managers ensured that the Spanish database was complete, thus avoiding bias against unsuccessful projects. Compliance with criteria was assessed by selected experts through questionnaires (WebPanel 4).

Panel 1. Definition of terms

Translocation: the intentional release of organisms from one area into another, in an attempt to establish or re-establish viable, free-ranging populations of imperiled species (IUCN 1998). In general, the term translocation covers three types (IUCN 1987):

Introduction: the release by human agency of an organism outside its historically known native range. A particular type of introduction is known as assisted colonization or assisted migration (ie the translocation of species to previously unoccupied ranges predicted to be favorable for persistence under future climate scenarios); in some cases, however, assisted colonization may constitute a reintroduction (see below).

Reintroduction: the release of an organism into a part of its native range from which it has disappeared or become extirpated in historical times.

Restocking: the release of organisms to enhance the number of individuals of that species in an original habitat.

Criteria for evaluating translocation projects

A review of existing guidelines (rightmost column in Table 1) generated several recommendations (WebTable 1), which we sorted according to the following 10 main criteria, to improve translocation practices:

(1) Is the species or population under threat?

The first step is to assess the extent to which the target species or population is threatened, as well as to determine its conservation status (IUCN 1987, 1998), which must be evaluated within metapopulation and regional contexts (Palsboll *et al.* 2007).

(2) Have the threatening factors been removed or controlled, or were they absent in the release area?

Prior to translocation, it is essential to analyze the factors that threaten the target species or population. A translocation is not advisable if threatening factors are sustained or uncontrolled in the release area (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al.* 1994).

(3) Are translocations the best tool to mitigate conservation conflicts?

Before translocation is undertaken, the best available management options must be selected to eliminate threats and to assess the reason for population decline (IUCN 1987; Griffith *et al*. 1989; Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al*. 1994). If the species or population is not at risk because of small population size but is instead declining as a result of direct or indirect human impacts, solving or compensating such impacts by in situ conservation actions could be a better alternative (Caughley 1994).

(4) Are risks for the target species acceptable?

Translocations are also unadvisable if they may threaten either the source or recipient populations (Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al*. 1994; IUCN 1998; Carrete and Tella 2012). For example, translocations can promote disease spread, genetic mixing, and change in social structure or behavior, among other outcomes (IUCN 1987, 1998; Griffith *et al*. 1989; Cunningham 1996). The possibility of contemporary evolution (Pelletier *et al*. 2009), as well as behavioral and physiological changes in captive populations (Archard and Braithwaite 2010; Mason 2010), should also be considered when evaluating source populations.

(5) Are risks for other species or the ecosystem acceptable?

Translocations may impact other species (Williams *et al*. 1988; Stanley-Price 1991; Cunningham 1996) or the source or recipient ecosystem (Cunningham 1996; IUCN 1998). This is especially relevant for keystone species such as top predators, for release sites when target species have long been extirpated (Rees 2001), and for assisted colonizations where translocated species may become invasive (Ricciardi and Simberloff 2009).

(6) Are the possible effects of the translocation acceptable to local people?

An analysis of potential conflicts and risks to the socioeconomic system of release sites must be carried out (Stanley-Price 1991; Kleiman *et al*. 1994; IUCN 1998). The attitudes of people who might be affected by the translocation should be investigated and, if necessary, modified in an effort to improve local acceptance (IUCN 1987, 1998; Reading *et al*. 1991; Stanley-

Table 1. Existing criteria for translocations

Level	*Criteria*	*Guidelines*
1st Necessity of the translocation	(1) Is the species or population under threat?	IUCN (1987, 1998)
	(2) Have the threatening factors been removed or controlled, or were they absent in the release area?	IUCN (1987, 1998); Kleiman (1989); Dodd and Seigel (1991); Kleiman *et al*. (1994); Miller *et al.* (1999)
	(3) Are translocations the best tool to mitigate conservation conflicts?	IUCN (1987, 1998); Kleiman (1989); Kleiman *et al*. (1994)
2nd Risk evaluation	(4) Are risks for the target species acceptable?	IUCN (1987, 1998); Williams *et al*. (1988); Kleiman (1989); Dodd and Seigel (1991); Stanley-Price (1991); Kleiman *et al*. (1994); Cunningham *et al*. (1996); Miller *et al*. (1999)
	(5) Are risks for other species or the ecosystem acceptable?	Williams *et al*. (1988); Stanley-Price (1991); Cunningham *et al*. (1996); IUCN (1998)
	(6) Are the possible effects of the translocation acceptable to local people?	IUCN (1987, 1998); Reading *et al*. (1991); Stanley-Price (1991); Kleiman *et al.* (1994)
3rd Technical and logistical suitability	(7) Does the project maximize the likelihood of establishing a viable population?	IUCN (1987, 1998); Williams *et al.* (1988); Griffith *et al.* (1989); Kleiman (1989); Dodd and Seigel (1991); Reading *et al*. (1991); Stanley-Price (1991); Short *et al*. (1992); Kleiman *et al*. (1994); Cunningham *et al*. (1996); Wolf *et al*. (1996); Miller *et al.* (1999)
	(8) Does the project include clear goals and monitoring?	IUCN (1987, 1998); Williams *et al*. (1988); Kleiman (1989); Dodd and Seigel (1991); Short *et al*. (1992); Cunningham *et al*. (1996); Miller *et al*. (1999)
	(9) Do enough economic and human resources exist?	IUCN (1987, 1998); Kleiman (1989); Reading *et al*. (1991); Stanley-Price (1991); Kleiman *et al*. (1994); Miller *et al*. (1999)
	(10) Do scientific, governmental, and stakeholder groups support the translocation?	Kleiman (1989); Reading *et al*. (1991); Kleiman *et al*. (1994); IUCN (1998)

Notes: Criteria are grouped into three levels within the Hierarchical Decision-making System for Translocations; these are obtained from recommendations and guidelines pertaining to translocations (see also WebPanel 1).

Price 1991). Translocations are unadvisable if target species could jeopardize human lives or diminish quality of life, or if human behavior could substantially affect the survival of the released individuals (Stanley-Price 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; IUCN 1998).

(7) Does the project maximize the likelihood of establishing a viable population?

All factors that might affect the survival of the released individuals and the establishment of a viable population should be taken into account. Several aspects – including release site selection, the number and composition of individuals to be released, and the methodology used – should be considered before release at the new site (Williams *et al.* 1988; Griffith *et al.* 1989; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; Wolf *et al.* 1996). During the development phase, efforts should be focused on ensuring that animals can easily adapt to their new surroundings (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Reading *et al.* 1991).

(8) Does the project include clear goals and monitoring?

Translocation should include long-term monitoring to assess progress toward explicit objectives (Williams *et al.* 1988; Kleiman 1989; Dodd and Seigel 1991). An adaptive management approach should be pursued to provide evidence for cause–effect relationships and to find optimal strategies that will improve results (IUCN 1987, 1998; Short *et al.* 1992; Miller *et al.* 1999), which should be made readily available to scientists and managers (IUCN 1987, 1998; Williams *et al.* 1988; Miller *et al.* 1999).

(9) Do enough economic and human resources exist?

During all phases of a translocation project, sufficient economic resources (IUCN 1987; Kleiman 1989; Stanley-Price 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994) and trained staff (Reading *et al.* 1991; IUCN 1998; Miller *et al.* 1999) must be available. Detailed estimates of expenses for the duration of the project, including post-release monitoring, are key to evaluating whether a given project meets this criterion (Karesh 1993).

(10) Do scientific, governmental, and stakeholder groups support the translocation?

Participation by and interaction between the different stakeholders interested in, associated with, or affected by the translocation (eg local government, non-governmental organizations, the scientific community) are vital to ensure successful project management. To help achieve this, we argue that, among other things, all pertinent laws, treatises, and agreements – at international, national, state, and local levels – should be respected. An investment in environmental education is also highly recommended (Kleiman 1989; Reading *et al.* 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; IUCN 1998).

Compliance with criteria

Most of the examined projects, either published or unpublished, did not fully address the 10 main criteria (Figure 2b). In the absence of an unambiguous decision-making system, translocation projects will likely fail to meet conservation goals. To counteract this, we propose a decision-making system by arranging the 10 criteria according to an explicit goal – namely, restoring the long-term viability of wild populations of the species being translocated.

Published translocation projects

Most of the published studies (80%) focused on technical aspects (ie *criterion 7* – mechanisms to improve and increase the efficiency of translocation projects, to maximize their success; Figure 2a). Fifty-three percent of the studies included a long-term monitoring program or considered the importance of monitoring (*criterion 8*). Although these factors are necessary for successful translocations and to improve translocation techniques, other important aspects – such as evaluation of adverse consequences of translocations for the target species (*criterion 4*) or for other species or the ecosystem (*criterion 5*) – are barely represented in the scientific literature (26% and 7%, respectively). Although 63% of the studies involved threatened species (*criterion 1*), only 20% of the studies acknowledged the cause of declines (*criterion 2*), and 56% of the studies failed to justify the need for the project (*criterion 3*). Resources and organizational issues of translocations (*criteria 9* and *10*) were rarely represented (11% and 9%, respectively). None of the studies reviewed or mentioned all 10 criteria (median = three criteria; Figure 2b). However, some criteria may have been addressed by the translocation projects but were not mentioned in the scientific literature.

Unpublished translocation projects

According to experts, 36% of unpublished translocations in Spain were considered not to be the best option for conservation of the species (*criterion 3*; Figure 2a). The specific threat status of the targeted population was unknown in 44% of projects (*criterion 1*), and target species were listed as either Not Threatened or Least Concern (IUCN 2010) in 55% of projects (WebTable 3). The causes of species or population declines were unknown in 41% of the projects (*criterion 2*). Experts maintained that there were or could be adverse consequences for the target species (*criterion 4*) or for other species or the ecosystem (*criterion 5*) in 57%

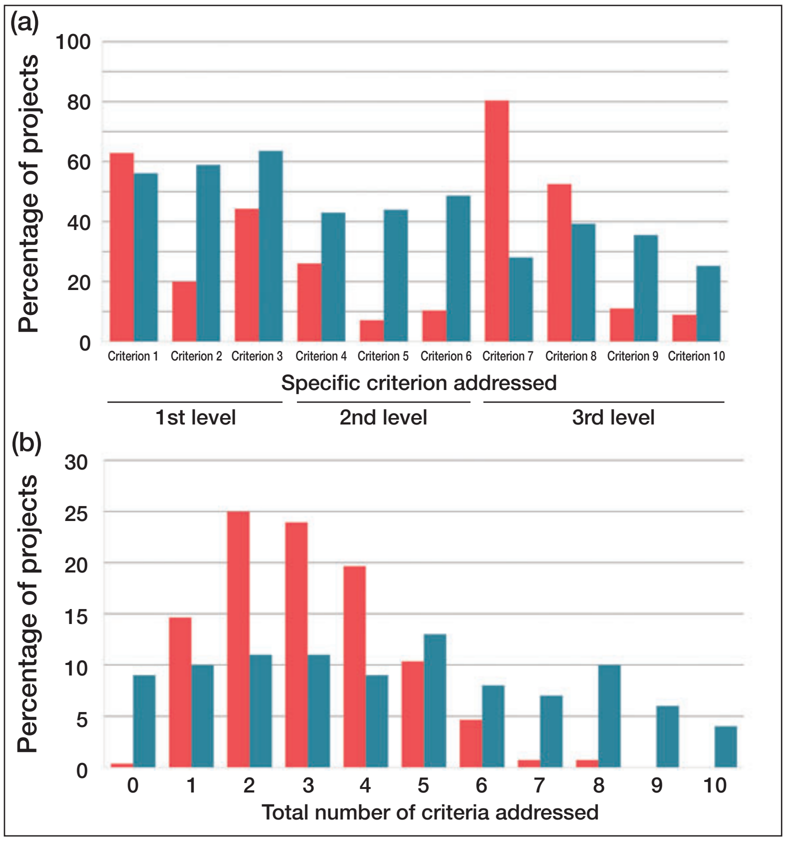

Figure 2. *Percentage of published projects worldwide (red) as well as published and unpublished projects in Spain (blue) that addressed (a) each particular criterion for translocation and (b) between 0 and 10 of the criteria altogether.*

and 56% of the projects, respectively. Almost half (49%) of the projects made allowances for possible conflicts with local human populations (*criterion 6*). Seventy-two percent of the projects neglected to consider all of the aspects that would be important for establishing a viable population (*criterion 7*), and less than half (39%) included adequate monitoring (*criterion 8*). Finally, many of the projects possessed insufficient human and economic resources (64%; *criterion 9*) and did not address the necessary implications of key stakeholder groups (75%; *criterion 10*). Only four projects (4%) fully complied with translocation criteria, whereas 10 projects (9%) did not address any (median = five criteria; Figure 2b).

Comparison between published and unpublished projects

We found a wide disparity between criteria (with the exception of *criterion 1*) achieved through both published and unpublished translocation studies (Wilcoxon test, $P < 0.001$). A greater proportion of unpublished projects addressed seven of the 10 criteria, as compared with published projects (Figure 2a). However, the technical and monitoring aspects of translocations (*criteria 7* and *8*) were more frequently represented in published than in unpublished translocations; this might also indicate that translocations with long-term monitoring plans in place are more frequently published (Fischer and Lindenmayer 2000). Technical aspects are currently promoted within the discipline of reintroduction biology as a way to improve reintroduction outcomes (Seddon *et al.* 2007), yet more than half of the unpublished projects failed to meet these criteria.

The representation of *criteria 2* and *3* (ie that causes of population declines are controlled and translocations are the best tool to mitigate conflict) was higher in unpublished than in published projects. We would expect the opposite result, given that well-executed translocations and studies of endangered species are more likely to be published (Fischer and Lindenmayer 2000; Seddon *et al.* 2005; Bajomi *et al.* 2010). However, the issues analyzed in *criteria 2* and *3* are probably more easily found in gray literature sources, and 3.5% of papers focused on translocations of non-threatened species. In addition, despite that most Spanish translocations did not fully address the criteria listed above, Spain may represent a good example of how translocations are developed. Indeed, a higher percentage of criteria was met by Spanish translocations than by projects around the world (Wilcoxon test, $P < 0.001$; Figure 2b).

Issues related to resources and support by stakeholder groups (*criteria 9* and *10*) were more frequently represented in unpublished projects. Reading *et al.* (1997) also noticed that valuation and organizational issues related to translocations were rarely discussed in the scientific literature. Translocation risks (*criteria 4–6*) were also less frequently assessed in the scientific literature and were included in fewer than half of Spanish translocations examined. This is an important deficiency. Assessing the impacts of released species on ecosystems was highlighted by Armstrong and Seddon (2008) as a key question for reintroduction biology and constitutes one of the major concerns regarding assisted colonizations (Ricciardi and Simberloff 2009). Other studies have noted that human dimensions (eg human attitudes toward translocations) are underrepresented in published translocation studies (Seddon *et al.* 2007) and in translocations in general (Reading *et al.* 1991).

Hierarchical Decision-making System for Translocations

Full compliance with the 10 criteria will imply that translocation projects are justifiable in terms of conservation and that issues that could compromise project success have been considered, based on the best available evidence. However, partial compliance cannot be used to determine whether a certain project may be valuable for conserving target species. As a solution, we propose a hierarchical assessment of criteria, which (1) is justified

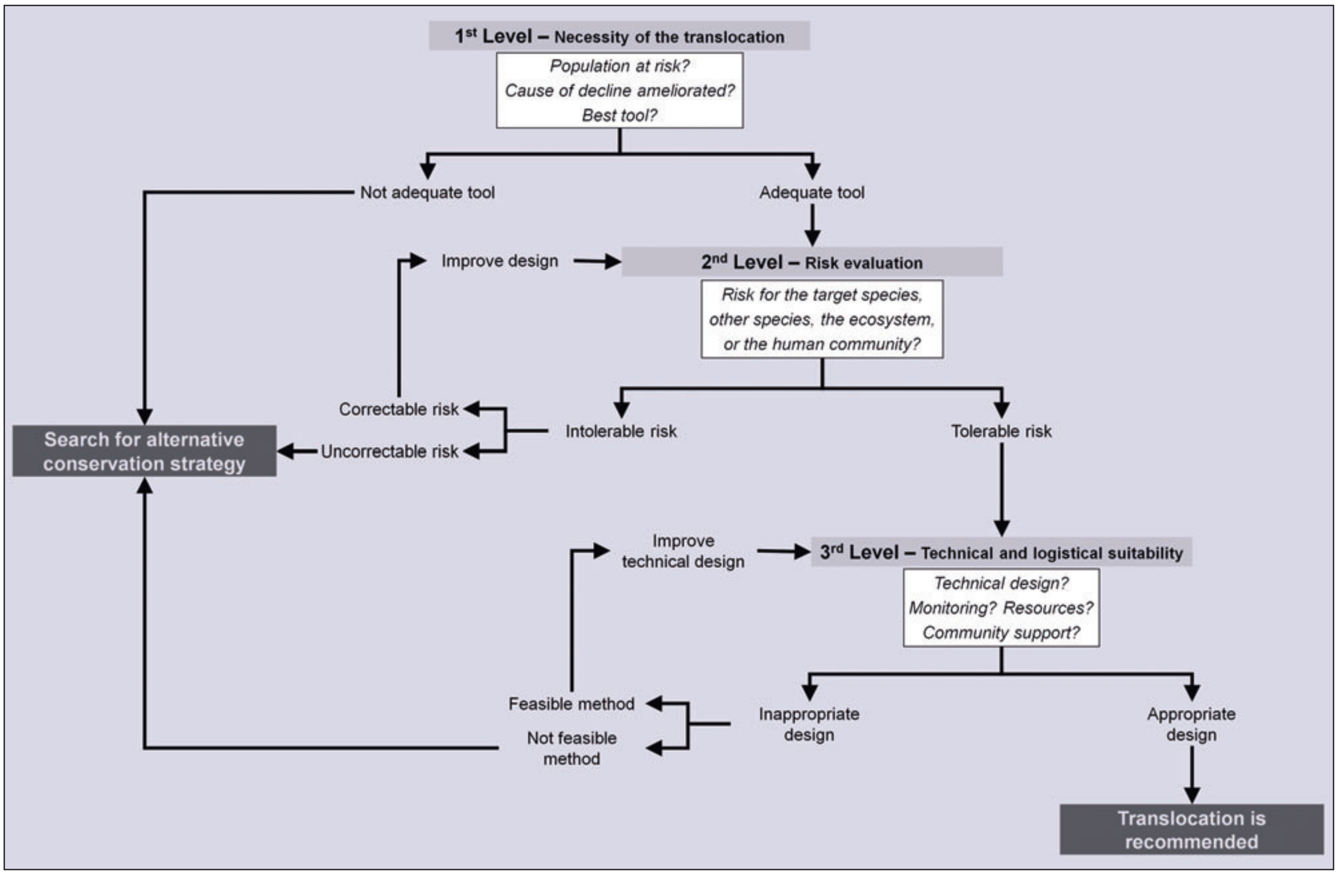

Figure 3. *Hierarchical Decision-making System for Translocations. The first step is to evaluate whether translocating individuals is necessary for the conservation of a threatened species or population (1st level). Subsequently, the inherent risks involved are assessed (2nd level) and the methodological design of the translocation is evaluated (3rd level) (see also Table 1). The negative evaluation of the first level indicates that the project should not be carried out and alternative conservation strategies should be found. Conversely, a negative evaluation of the second and third levels may be overcome if the translocation's design is improved.*

because some criteria during decision making are subordinate to others and (2) helps to avoid subjectivity at the final stage of decision making.

Our Hierarchical Decision-making System for Translocations (HDST) nests the 10 criteria for translocations into successive decision levels (Table 1). Rather than proposing new criteria, we integrated recommendations from current guidelines (WebTable 1) to obtain a step-by-step methodology for evaluating translocations in a conservation context. We grouped the 10 criteria within the HDST into three levels, considering: (1) importance in the decision-making process, (2) adverse consequences if not fulfilled, and (3) options in case of a negative evaluation.

The first level, "*Necessity of the translocation*" (*criteria 1–3*), assesses whether the project will be carried out with adequate conservation objectives and whether translocation is the most adequate tool for conserving the threatened species or population. The second level, "*Risk evaluation*" (*criteria 4–6*), aims to ensure that impacts will be mitigated. The third level, "*Technical and logistical suitability*" (*criteria 7–10*), attempts to maximize the likelihood of success in terms of establishing new viable populations.

Each criterion within the three levels should be evaluated successively (Figure 3). If a translocation proceeds without fulfilling the first level, the project would not be of much value to the intended species and could even have a negative effect if resources are spent on the translocation project instead of on more appropriate actions. If a translocation proceeds without fulfilling the second level, the project could have unintended or negative effects on other elements of the ecosystem. If a translocation proceeds without fulfilling the third level, the project could fail; in this case, however, there would be no direct negative consequences for conservation, apart from the waste of economic resources.

We acknowledge that several translocation projects may omit some criteria on the basis that doing so would not compromise project viability. For example, (1) translocations with aims other than conservation (eg restocking of exploited species or engaging in pest control, not considered in this review) do not need to fulfill criteria in the first level; (2) well-known and risk-free translocation projects may omit the necessity of long-term monitoring; and (3) specifically for assisted colonizations, once the action has been considered necessary to protect the species from climate change, the first level is considered to be fulfilled. However, other projects could have ambiguous goals that might negatively affect their feasibility and usefulness as conservation tools. For this reason, we strongly recommend that translocation projects with a conservation goal should fully comply with the proposed decision-making system.

The next step in applying the HDST is to select the most appropriate methods to assess compliance of criteria. For example, population models and population viability analysis should be used when assessing the suitability of the translocation (*criterion 3*). Expert opinion may be used in evaluating risk (*criteria 4*–*6*) or for determining threats to species or populations (*criteria 1* and *2*), although quantitative methods are strongly recommended if available.

Compliance with the HDST

According to the proposed system, of the Spanish translocations evaluated, 65% were unnecessary (1st level), 79% might have negative risks (2nd level), and 90% were not technically well designed (3rd level). Of those projects considered necessary, only 30% could guarantee that no major risks existed, and only 36% of the projects that fulfill the first and second levels had an adequate technical and logistical design. Thus, according to our proposed methodology, only 4 projects (4% of those currently underway) are recommended and adequately designed for conserving the target species.

Potential biases precluded a robust examination of how well published projects correlate with the HDST. However, a comparison between projects around the world with the unpublished Spanish projects is likely to show similarities (see also Figure 2).

Conclusions

Despite the conservation potential of translocations, the majority of projects reviewed here did not fulfill all the necessary criteria. Most projects were difficult to justify in terms of conservation or were not designed well enough to avoid negative consequences. We suggest that the use of the HDST by conservation planners and managers could improve the effectiveness of translocations and promote the efficient use of scarce monetary resources.

Scholarly journals could contribute to this goal by encouraging authors writing about translocation projects to submit their work for consideration and to explicitly justify the need for the projects. Results of translocation projects involving non-threatened species, although important in developing the discipline of reintroduction biology (Seddon *et al.* 2007), may not be applicable to translocations of endangered species (Fischer and Lindenmayer 2000; Caro 2005). Moreover, non-threatened species translocations should not be presented as "conservation" projects but should comply with risk assessment criteria. We recommend that the risks and human dimensions of translocations, both of which are underrepresented in published and unpublished projects, should be carefully addressed during project design. Assessment of techniques to improve translocation success should also continue (Armstrong and Seddon 2007; Sutherland *et al.* 2010).

Acknowledgements

We thank all of the experts involved in evaluating translocation projects in Spain. IP was partially funded by Fundación Séneca (Murcia, Spain). J Senko and J Ramos reviewed the English text.

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WebPanel 1. Guidelines for translocations

Translocation of living organisms attempts to establish or re-establish viable, free-ranging populations of threatened species (IUCN 1998). Since the first projects were conducted at the beginning of the 20th century, translocations have become a very popular tool but have yielded low rates of success (Seddon *et al.* 2007). In response to the increasing occurrence of translocations worldwide, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) developed a Position Statement on the Translocation of Living Organisms in 1987. Subsequently, the IUCN/Species Survival Commission (IUCN/SSC) established the Re-introduction Specialist Group (RSG) in 1988. The RSG updated the IUCN's 1987 Position Statement on the Translocation of Living Organisms and formulated the IUCN/SSC Guidelines for Re-introductions (IUCN 1998) in order to ensure that "reintroductions are both justifiable and likely to succeed and that the conservation world can learn from each initiative, whether successful or not." The IUCN/SSC Guidelines for Re-introductions establish several recommendations subdivided in activities that should be performed during the pre-project, planning, preparation, release, and post-release stages of a given reintroduction project. After the first statement of the IUCN was released, some authors have published recommendations that reinforce and complement the IUCN/SSC Guidelines for Re-introductions. Along with the IUCN (1987, 1998) guidelines, 11 additional publications are recognized as providing guidelines to improve the practice and results of translocations (WebTable 1). These works include reviews of case studies, translocations of a specific taxonomic group, or a specific issue associated with translocations (such as disease). These recommendations should be considered when deciding whether to translocate a particular species, as well as when assessing essential aspects in the design and development of a translocation project. We grouped these recommendations into 10 main criteria (WebTable 1).

WebPanel 2. Scientific literature

We searched for the terms "reinforcement", "reintroduction", "restocking", and "translocation" in eight major ecology and conservation journals during a consecutive 15-year period (1996–2010) using the online database ISI Web of Knowledge (www.isiwebofknowledge.com) (WebTable 2). In our analysis, we included only conservation-oriented translocations, leaving aside translocations with other aims (such as restocking of game species and translocation to solve human–animal conflicts).

WebPanel 3. Translocations in Spain

Translocation projects carried out in Spain during the past two decades (WebTable 3) were reviewed in the scientific and popular literature, Red Data Books, and web searches, as well as obtained from scientists, conservation managers, and naturalists, and our own knowledge. Preliminary lists on the conservation of different taxa were also checked by experts. Only projects with explicit conservation aims were considered, leaving aside restocking projects for game or sportfish species and translocations to solve human–animal conflicts. One expert was selected to evaluate each project. Selected experts were scientists or managers (1) with scientific backgrounds in, experience in, and knowledge of the ecology and conservation of the target species and (2) were familiar with the assigned reintroduction project but had no conflict of interest with its design or development. Contact with prospective experts was made via telephone before sending each expert a questionnaire for project evaluation via e-mail. Frequent reminders were sent, and alternative experts were selected if no response was received after two months, resulting in a fairly high participation rate (107 projects evaluated by 56 experts; WebTable 3). Refusals mostly resulted from deficiencies in the information available about the translocation project.

The questionnaire comprised 36 questions to evaluate each of the 10 criteria proposed (WebTable 4), as well as questions aimed at corroborating the expert's knowledge and his/her involvement in the conservation and translocation of the target species. Selected experts who completed the questionnaires declared a high level of knowledge on the ecology of the species (mean = 11.22 years of experience), a low link with the translocation project (range = 0–10, mean = 1.59), and a medium level of knowledge of the translocation project (range = 1–5, mean = 2.48). Respondents provided low scores regarding the public availability of information on the projects evaluated (range = 1–10, mean = 3.12).

WebPanel 4. Assessment of the level of accomplishment per criterion for Spanish translocation projects

The level of accomplishment for each criterion was evaluated according to the scores obtained in the survey (*Sc*). We scored each criterion using up to five questions from the survey (WebTable 4). Each question had up to 10 subquestions and had from 3 to 10 possible responses (WebTable 4). We scored each question (*Sq*) from 0 to 1, with "0", meaning that the topic being asked about was not considered/not accomplished in the project and "1" meaning that it was accomplished (WebTable 4). We considered that a criterion was positively evaluated when *Sc* was 0.5 or more. The following formulas and decision diagrams were used to calculate *Sc*:

– *Criterion 1:*

$$\text{For question 4's answer} \begin{cases} = No & Sc = 0 \\ else & Sc = \sum_i Sq_{4-6} \end{cases}$$

where Sq_{4-6} is the score of questions 4, 5, and 6.

– *Criterion 2:*

$$\text{For question 7's answer} \begin{cases} = Yes & Sc = 1 \\ else & Sc = \sum_i Sq_{7-9} \end{cases}$$

where Sq_{7-9} is the score of questions 7, 8, and 9.

– *Criterion 3:*

$$Sc = \left(\sum_i Sq_{11-16}\right) * Sq_{18}$$

where Sq_{11-16} is the score of questions 11, 14, 15, and 16, and Sq_{18} is the score of question 18. We used the scores shown in WebTable 5.

– *Criteria 4, 5, and 6:*

$$Sc = \frac{\sum_i Sq_{22-24.i} + Sq_{22-24.j}}{n}$$

where $Sq_{22-24.i}$ is the score of subquestions 22.1, 23.1, and 24.1 for *criterion 4*; 22.3, 23.3 and 24.3 for *criterion 5*; and 22.5, 23.5 and 24.5 for *criterion 6*; $Sq_{22-24.j}$ is the score of subquestions 22.2, 23.2, and 24.2 for *criterion 4*; 22.4, 23.4, and 24.4 for *criterion 5*; and 22.6, 23.6, and 24.6 for *criterion 6*. To score each of these subquestions, we used the following decision diagram (for example, here is the decision diagram to calculate the score of $Sq_{22-24.i}$ for *criterion 4*):

$$\text{If subquestions 22's answer} \begin{cases} = No & Sc = 1 \\ else & Sc = \sum_i Sq_{22-24} \end{cases}$$

where Sq_{22-24} is the score for the two subquestions of questions 22, 23, and 24 for each criteria (for example, 22.1, 22.2, 23.1, 23.2, 24.1, and 24.2 for *criterion 4*).

– *Criterion 7:*

$$Sc = Sq_{25} * \sum_i Sq_{26.i}$$

where Sq_{25} is the score of question 25, and $Sq_{26.i}$ is the score of subquestions 26.1 to 26.10.

– *Criteria 8, 9, and 10:*

$$Sc = \frac{\sum_i Sq_i}{n}$$

where Sq_i is the score of the different questions of the survey used in each criterion and *n* is the number of questions or subquestions used to evaluate each criterion.

WebTable 1. Criteria for translocations obtained from recommendations regarding main guidelines for translocations

Recommendations	*Criteria*
Translocations are recommended for globally or locally extinct species (IUCN 1987, 1998).	**1.** Is the species or population under threat?
Translocations should only be attempted when the factors that caused the species' decline are known and either controlled or eliminated (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Dodd and Seigel 1991; Kleiman *et al*. 1994; Miller *et al*. 1999).	**2.** Have the threatening factors been removed, or controlled or were they non-existent in the release area?
Translocations are useful tools when there is a need to augment wild population (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al.* 1994), eg a small population is becoming dangerously inbred, or a population has dropped below critical levels and recovery by natural growth will be dangerously slow, or where artificial exchange is required to maintain gene flow between small isolated populations on biogeographical islands (IUCN 1987).	**3.** Are translocations the best tool to mitigate conservation conflicts?
The survival of the wild population of an endangered species should never be jeopardized by a translocation (Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al*. 1994). It is important to consider disease transmission (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Dodd and Seigel 1991; Stanley-Price 1991; Cunningham *et al.* 1996; Miller *et al.* 1999), population genetics (Williams *et al*. 1988; Dodd and Seigel 1991; IUCN 1987, 1998; Miller *et al.* 1999), social disruption (IUCN 1998), and behavioral and morphological characteristics (Kleiman 1989). The source population should ideally be closely related genetically to the original native stock and show similar ecological characteristics to the original sub-population (IUCN 1987, 1998; Williams *et al*. 1988; Kleiman 1989; Stanley-Price 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; Miller *et al*. 1999). If captive stock is to be used, it must be from a population that has been successfully managed, both demographically and genetically (IUCN 1987, 1998; Williams *et al*. 1988; Stanley-Price 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; Miller *et al*. 1999). Removal of individuals for translocation must not endanger the captive stock population or the wild source population (Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; IUCN 1998).	**4.** Are risks for the target species acceptable?
Translocations must take into account the risks to other sympatric species (Stanley-Price 1991; Cunningham *et al*. 1996; Wolf *et al*. 1996) or the ecosystem (Cunningham *et al*. 1996; IUCN 1998), through, for example, disease transmission (Stanley-Price 1991), hybridization (Williams *et al*. 1988), and impacts on the habitat (IUCN 1998).	**5.** Are risks for other species or the ecosystem acceptable?
Care should be taken to ensure that released individuals are not dangerous to local inhabitants and their livestock (Stanley-Price 1991; Kleiman *et al*. 1994; IUCN 1998). An examination of the socioeconomic aspects is necessary to understand the values, attitudes, and perceptions held by people involved with, and potentially influenced by, a translocation. If unfavorable, measures should be taken to make it acceptable to the people in the release area (IUCN 1987, 1998; Reading *et al.* 1991; Stanley-Price 1991).	**6.** Are the possible effects of the translocation acceptable to local people?

continued

WebTable 1. – *continued*

Recommendations	*Criteria*
The habitat requirements of the species should be satisfied in the release area (IUCN 1987, 1998; Williams *et al.* 1988; Griffith *et al*. 1989; Stanley-Price 1991; Wolf *et al.* 1996). This requires detailed knowledge of both the needs of the species and the ecological dynamics of the release area (IUCN 1987; Kleiman 1989; Dodd and Seigel 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; Miller *et al.* 1999). Also, research into previous translocations of the same or similar species and experts should be contacted prior to and during development of a translocation project (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman *et al*. 1994). Important considerations include food availability, land cover, water sources, competitors, predators, and the presence of exotic species, as well as ecosystem resilience and the effects of disturbances such as fire, drought, catastrophic storms, etc. Some spatial considerations include the degree of isolation, and the size, and shape of the new location (Griffith *et al*. 1989; Reading *et al.* 1991; Miller *et al.* 1999). It is advisable that there is sufficient unsaturated habitat (ie low densities, or none, of the species in the available habitat) within the species' historical range (Williams *et al.* 1988; Griffith *et al.* 1989; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; Wolf *et al.* 1996; IUCN 1998; Miller *et al.* 1999) and that the habitat has assured long-term protection (Williams *et al*. 1988; Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; IUCN 1998). Whenever necessary, habitat should be managed (eg predators, fire reforestation) to promote translocation success (Kleiman 1989; Reading *et al.* 1991; Stanley-Price 1991; Short *et al.* 1992; IUCN 1998). Managers should also select founder individuals that will survive best with the least preparation and cost. Some considerations include physical, behavioral, and genetic normality (IUCN 1987, 1998; Williams *et al.* 1988; Dodd and Seigel 1991; Reading *et al*. 1991; Stanley-Price 1991; Miller *et al.* 1999), the absence of disease and parasites (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Dodd and Seigel 1991; Stanley-Price 1991; Cunningham *et al.* 1996; Miller *et al.* 1999), and an optimal number and composition of individuals (eg sex ratio and age classes) (IUCN 1987, 1998; Griffith *et al.* 1989; Kleiman 1989; Reading *et al*. 1991; Stanley-Price 1991; Short *et al*. 1992; Wolf *et al*. 1996; Miller *et al*. 1999). In the release strategy, it is important to consider the schedule of the translocation (Griffith *et al*. 1989; Kleiman 1989), the optimal number and composition of individuals to be released per year and the number of years that releases should occur in order to promote establishment of a viable population (IUCN 1998), the the distance between the release sites (Kleiman 1989), and the timing of releases (eg season of the year) (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Stanley-Price 1991). It is usually advisable to habituate animals to release sites and to train them prior to release (eg to avoid predators, acquire and process food, interact properly with conspecifics, find or construct shelters and nests) (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Reading *et al*. 1991; Stanley-Price 1991; Short *et al*. 1992; Miller *et al.* 1999). It is also important to develop a transport plan for delivery of stock to the translocation site (IUCN 1987, 1998; Short *et al*. 1992).	**7.** Does the project maximize the likelihood of establishing a viable population?
Goals should be defined carefully to provide accurate evaluation (Kleiman 1989; Miller *et al.* 1999). Long-term post-release monitoring is required (IUCN 1987, 1998; Williams *et al*. 1988; Kleiman 1989; Dodd and Seigel 1991; Short *et al.* 1992; Miller *et al.* 1999). It is important to monitor the health of individuals (Cunningham *et al.* 1996; IUCN 1998; Miller *et al.* 1999), survival (IUCN 1998), causes of mortality (Miller *et al*. 1999), impacts on the habitat (IUCN 1998), collection and investigation of mortalities, individual adaptation (Kleiman 1989; IUCN 1998), population dynamics, and individual behavior (IUCN 1998; Miller *et al.* 1999). Translocations must include an appropriate experimental design to identify the reasons for success or failure of the project (IUCN 1987, 1998; Short *et al.* 1992; Miller *et al*. 1999). Efforts should be made to make information on both successful and unsuccessful translocations available (IUCN 1987, 1998; Williams *et al*. 1988; Miller *et al*. 1999).	**8.** Does the project include clear goals and monitoring?

continued

WebTable 1. – *continued*

Recommendations	*Criteria*
Adequate funding must be available for all phases of the project (IUCN 1987, 1998; Kleiman 1989; Stanley-Price 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; Miller *et al.* 1999). Professional training of individuals involved in the long-term program is essential. It is also important to have an appropriate organizational structure with a multidisciplinary team of well-trained individuals involved in the long-term program (Reading *et al.* 1991; IUCN 1998; Miller *et al.* 1999).	**9.** Do enough economic and human resources exist?
Translocations require the commitment and long-term support of all relevant government agencies and coordination and involvement of national and international conservation organizations (Kleiman 1989; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; IUCN 1998). Compliance with legislation and regulations of the release country translocations and to the target species is also essential (Kleiman *et al.* 1994; IUCN 1998). It is important to develop information and educational campaigns for the long-term support of local communities (Kleiman 1989; Reading *et al.* 1991; Kleiman *et al.* 1994; IUCN 1998). The involvement of local people is recommended when possible (Kleiman 1989; IUCN 1998).	**10.** Do scientific, governmental, and stakeholder groups support the translocation?

WebTable 2. Documentation sources, time period, and number of articles considered in the literature review used to analyze how scientific literature fulfilled the proposed criteria for translocations

	Period	*Number of articles*
Animal Conservation	1998–2010	43
Biodiversity and Conservation	1997–2010	12
Biological Conservation	1996–2010	122
Conservation Biology	1996–2010	33
Ecological Applications	1996–2010	13
Journal of Applied Ecology	1998–2010	11
Oryx	1998–2010	42
Trends in Ecology and Evolution	1996–2010	4
Total		**280**

WebTable 3. Description of the translocations and evaluated projects in Spain

	Number of projects	*Number of projects evaluated (%)*	*Number of experts involved*
Total	**174**	**107 (61.49)**	**56**
Taxonomic group			
Birds	94	61 (64.89)	32
Amphibians and reptiles	39	30 (76.92)	13
Mammals	9	5 (55.56)	4
Freshwater fish	32	11 (34.38)	7
Threatened status			
Not Threatened	16	7 (43.75)	6
Least Concern	79	44 (55.70)	31
Near Threatened	31	26 (83.87)	14
Vulnerable	24	15 (62.50)	9
Endangered	13	6 (46.15)	5
Critically Endangered	11	9 (81.82)	7
Range			
Local	14	9 (8.41)	7
Regional	106	64 (59.81)	40
National	4	3 (2.80)	3
Missing information	50	31 (28.97)	21

Notes: Threatened status according to IUCN (2010).

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WebTable 4. Survey questions used to assess the level of accomplishment of the criteria for translocations in Spain, along with the score for each response

		Answer's score						
Criteria	*Survey question*	*A1*	*A2*	*A3*	*A4*	*A5*	*A6*	*A7*
1	4. Is the species or population in which the translocation project is developed in decline, threatened, or extinct?	0.6	0.4	–	0	0.2	–	NA
	5. Have studies been launched to determine the conservation status of the conservation unit?	0.2	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	6. Would it be advisable to develop studies to determine the conservation status of the conservation unit?	0	–	–	0.2	–	–	NA
2	7. Are the causes of the conservation unit decline known?	1	0.5	–	0	–	–	NA
	8. Have studies been launched to determine the causes of decline of the conservation unit?	0.125	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	9. Would it be advisable to develop studies to determine the causes of decline of the conservation unit?	0	0	–	0.125	–	–	NA
3	11. Besides translocation, what other measures are in development or proposed?**	–	–	–	–	–	–	NA
	14. Which of these measures are currently ongoing?**	–	–	–	–	–	–	NA
	15. In your opinion, is it necessary to develop other, non-manipulative measures?**	–	–	–	–	–	–	NA
	16. Do you consider it necessary to develop other manipulative measures?**	–	–	–	–	–	–	NA
	18. In your opinion, what should be the priority of the previously developed measures and your proposed measures?**	–	–	–	–	–	–	NA
4	22. In your opinion, does the translocation have or may there be a risk for:							
	22.1) the recipient population	0	–	0.5	1	NA	1	NA
	22.2) the source population	0	–	0.5	1	NA	1	NA
	23.1. Which of these risks have been considered in the translocation project?							
	23.1) the recipient population	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	23.2) the source population	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	24. Which of these risks is being controlled?							
	24.1) the recipient population	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	24.2) the source population	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
5	22. In your opinion, does the translocation have or may there be risks for:							
	22.3) other species	0	–	0.5	1	NA	1	NA
	22.4) the ecosystem	0	–	0.5	1	NA	1	NA
	23. Which of these risks have been considered in the translocation project?							
	23.3) other species	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	23.4) the ecosystem	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	24. Which of these risks is being controlled?							
	24.3) other species	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	24.4) the ecosystem	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA

continued

WebTable 4. – *continued*

		Answer's score						
Criteria	*Survey question*	*A1*	*A2*	*A3*	*A4*	*A5*	*A6*	*A7*
6	22. In your opinion, does the translocation have or may there be risks for:							
	22.5) human population	0	–	0.5	1	NA	1	NA
	22.6) conflicts with local communities	0	–	0.5	1	NA	1	NA
	23. Which of these risks have been considered in the translocation project?							
	23.5) human population	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	23.6) conflicts with local communities	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	24. Which of these risks is being controlled?							
	24.5) human population	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	24.6) conflicts with local communities	0.25	–	–	0	–	–	NA
7	25. Before intervention, was the project designed to maximize the likelihood of establishment of a viable population?							
	26. Which of these aspects were considered?	1	–	–	0	–	–-	NA
	26.1) habitat availability	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.2) habitat quality	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.3) habitat protection	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.4) availability of trophic resources	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.5) number of individuals to release	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.6) sex ratio	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.7) age class	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.8) spatial distribution of the animals	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.9) release methodology (seasonality, release frequency, etc)	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
	26.10) adaptability of released individuals	0.1	–	–	0	–	NA	NA
8	27. Does the project include measurable aims?	1	–	–	0	–	–	NA
	28. Does the project include a monitoring phase?	1	–	–	0	–	–	NA
9	29. Does the project have sufficient economic resources for the phases of:							
	29.1) planning	1	0.5	–	0	–	–	NA
	29.2) release	1	0.5	–	0	–	–	NA
	29.3) post-release	1	0.5	–	0	–	–	NA
	30. And human resources?							
	30.1) planning	1	0.5	–	0	–	–	NA
	30.2) release	1	0.5	–	0	–	–	NA
	30.3) post-release	1	0.5	–	0	–	–	NA

continued

WebTable 4. – *continued*

Criteria	Survey question	A1	A2	A3	A4 (Answer's score)	A5	A6	A7
10	31. How are these stakeholder groups involved in the project?*							
	31.1) local government	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA
	31.2) regional government	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA
	31.3) national government	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA
	31.4) European Union	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA
	31.5) international organization	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA
	31.6) NGO	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA
	31.7) scientific community	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA
	31.8) local community	1	1	–	0	–	–	NA

Notes: Answers: A1 = Yes, totally; A2 = Yes, partially; A3 = Could have; A4 = No; A5 = No information; A6 = Not relevant; A7 = Don't know/No answer; NA = Not Available. *For question 31: A1 = They develop; A2 = They know, support, and/or collaborate; and A4 = Not implicated. **For criterion 3, see score in WebTable 5.

WebTable 5. Scores of *criterion 3* as a result of the evaluation of questions 11, 14, 15, 16, and 18 of the survey (see WebTable 4). $Sq_{11–16}$ is the score of questions 11, 14, 15, and 16, and Sq_{18} is the score of question 18.

Is the translocation necessary? (Q16)	*Are other conservation actions in development? (Q11, Q14)*	*Are other conservation actions necessary? (Q15, Q16)*	$Sq_{11–16}$	*Is translocation a priority measure? (Q18)*	*Are other conservation actions a priority? (Q18)*	Sq_{18}
Yes	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	No	1
Yes	No	No	1	Yes	–	1
Yes	Yes	No	0.75	Yes	–	1
Yes	No	Yes	0.25	Yes	No	0.5
No	Yes	Yes	0.5	–	No	1
No	No	No	0.5	–	–	1
No	Yes	No	0.25	–	–	1
No	No	Yes	0	–	No	0.5
Yes	Yes	Yes	1	No	Yes	1
Yes	No	No	1	No	–	1
Yes	Yes	No	0.75	No	–	1
Yes	No	Yes	0.25	No	Yes	0.5
No	Yes	Yes	0.5	–	Yes	1
No	No	Yes	0	–	Yes	0.5