

# A long and *productive* partnership

Achim Steiner



This year the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) celebrates its 25th Anniversary.

IUCN has been closely connected to CMS throughout the Convention's existence, not just by our shared history but by our philosophy and approach to global environmental governance. Our partnership shows how conservation organizations such as ours can help gather the

political momentum for environmental conventions. At the same time, CMS has shown how synergistic relations with the larger biodiversity-related conventions and IUCN's network have enabled it to record some major achievements, despite having a small Secretariat and few traditional resources.

As far back as the 1960s, IUCN and others sounded alarm calls for threatened migratory animals. One result was that in 1972 the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm called for an international treaty to protect endangered migratory species. Three months later, the idea was endorsed as a priority by IUCN's 11th General Assembly.

None of this happened by accident. And what took place afterwards, as before, depended on the dedication of a number of individuals, most of them associated with IUCN's Environmental Law Programme.

The Federal Republic of Germany took the lead in developing the Convention, and in 1974 contracted IUCN's Law Commission (then CEPLA) and Environmental Law Centre (ELC) to develop the text and to advise and assist them throughout the subsequent drafting process. In 1979 the German government convened a Diplomatic Conference at which the new Convention was adopted.

## Visionary concepts

The Convention was drafted in the main by Françoise Burhenne-Guilmin, later Head of ELC, and the Species Survival Commission, based on a preliminary study by a long-standing and greatly respected Commission member, the late Cyrille de Klemm. The resulting text was visionary, reflecting the latest concepts of

conservation and environmental management and anticipating further expansion of its fundamental commitments. As a result, CMS is both flexible and adaptable.

## Working with the Convention

This was just the beginning of IUCN's partnership with CMS. The Union, through ELC, has continued to develop joint projects for implementing the Convention, and has helped to develop several subsequent agreements under its auspices, such as the two cetacean agreements ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS. These have benefited from the participation of IUCN Programmes, regional offices and SSC Specialist Groups as appropriate.

The IUCN Marine Programme is a particularly important example of our congruent concerns, as many of these agreements deal with marine species.

We also joined forces with CMS and others to work on a strategy for Caspian Sea sturgeon. Moreover, ELC has helped draft and negotiate the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and prepared the Interim AEWA Conservation Guideline on Legislation.

It is clear why IUCN and CMS have renewed their commitment to collaborate even more closely in the future by signing a Memorandum of Understanding on 15 September 2003 at the V<sup>th</sup> IUCN World Parks Congress.

## Partners for the future

For 25 years, endangered migratory species have found an intergovernmental champion in CMS. Their plight has come to be recognised as a cross-cutting issue fundamental to the concerns of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the other biodiversity-related global Conventions (Ramsar, World Heritage and CITES). This is a proud accomplishment, worthy of celebration on this important anniversary. We congratulate CMS and extend our best wishes to the Parties.

Achim Steiner is Director General of IUCN.



# Marine migratory s



JEREMY STAFFORD-DEITSCH

## Whale shark

The highly migratory whale shark *Rhincodon typus* is the world's largest fish. A plankton feeder, it lives in warm, tropical and temperate waters of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Valued for its high-quality meat, its numbers have declined as a result of harpoon fisheries in countries targeting localized concentrations of this species. It is also subjected to by-catch in coastal fisheries.

CMS App.II, CITES App.II, IUCN Red List: Vulnerable  
IUCN Shark Specialist Group:  
<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/organizations/ssg/ssg.htm>



FLORIAN GRANERIGSM

## Harbour porpoise

The harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* is the only porpoise of European waters. It is threatened by incidental captures, and high concentrations of pollutants have been found in porpoises in the North and Baltic Seas. ASCOBANS is supporting a recovery plan for the particularly threatened Baltic Sea population. IUCN/SSC has a Cetacean Specialist Group and has recently published an Action Plan for cetaceans.

CMS App.II, CITES App.II, Bern Convention App.II, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Red List: Vulnerable



MATTHEW GODFREY

## Marine turtles

All marine turtles are under threat from fishing, unsustainable consumption, habitat degradation and marine pollution. CMS lists six species on App.I, has two regional MoUs for their conservation, and sponsors surveys of critical nesting beaches, by-catch assessment, and capacity building.

According to surveys, nesting populations of the leatherback turtle *Dermochelys coriacea* (pictured) have declined dramatically in the Pacific Ocean. Among the threats are the prolonged harvest of eggs and the incidental capture in oceanic fisheries.

CMS App.I, CITES App.I, IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered  
IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group:<http://www.iucn-mtsg.org/>



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## Dugong

The dugong *Dugong dugon* is the only herbivorous mammal that is strictly marine. It relies on seagrasses of coastal habitats which are often under pressure from human activities. Dugongs are also impacted by pollution, disease, hunting, and incidental drowning in fishing nets. The last COP of CMS recommended the development of an MoU and an Action Plan for the conservation of dugongs throughout its range.

CMS App.II, CITES App.I, IUCN Red List: Vulnerable. IUCN/SSC has a Sirenia Specialist Group and newsletter, and dugong Action Plan.



JIAN VAN DE KAM

## Dark-bellied brent goose

The dark-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla* is a small sea goose that breeds on the high arctic coastal tundras of Siberia and winters along the coasts of western Europe. After a dramatic decline in the 1930s, the population has shown a spectacular recovery from 20,000 to 300,000 individuals, but since the 1990s numbers have dropped again to 150,000 for unknown reasons. AEWA requires the key Range States (FR, UK, NL, GE, DK and Russia) to develop an international Action Plan to conserve the population, restore its severely threatened coastal habitats (intertidal eelgrass-beds and saltmarshes), and minimize human conflicts.

Protection: CMS/AEWA, EC Birds Directive 1979

# Species: a selection

## Sperm whale

The sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* occurs mainly in deep waters where it preys on squid. Hunted since the early 1700s, sperm whales have been protected since the 1980s by the IWC's Moratorium on commercial whaling. Some populations, such as those in the Mediterranean, still experience losses from entanglement and collisions with ships.

CMS App.I and II, CITES App.I, ACCOBAMS, IUCN Red List: Vulnerable



DOUGLAS SEIFERT/UNEP/STILL PICTURES

## Albatross

Six species of albatross now face extinction, largely as a result of by-catch in longline fisheries. All 21 species are now considered globally under threat (Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable) under the 2003 IUCN Red List. The black-browed albatross *Thalassarche melanophrys* (pictured) moved up the list from Vulnerable in 2001 to Endangered in 2003 after its global population was estimated to have declined by more than 50% over the last 65 years.

CMS App.I and II, IUCN Red List: Endangered/Vulnerable



DIDIER VANGELUWE / IRSNB

## Marine otter

The Southern marine otter *Lontra felina* is patchily distributed from Peru to Tierra del Fuego. Its distribution is becoming highly fragmented, primarily from habitat destruction, water pollution, excessive hunting and competition with humans for crabs and molluscs. The species has been nearly exterminated from some regions. CMS has sponsored a project aimed at assessing the status of the species and identifying its critical habitats along Peruvian coasts. IUCN/SSC has an Action Plan for otters and an Otter Specialist Group: <http://www.otterspecialistgroup.org/>

CMS App.I, CITES App.I, IUCN Red List: Endangered



FRANK HAJEK

## Mediterranean monk seal

The Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* is the most endangered European mammal. Killing by fishers who see it as a pest competitor for increasingly scarce resources, incidental capture in fishing gear, decreased food availability, destruction of habitat, and pollution have brought it to the brink of extinction. Today it numbers only 300-500 individuals.

CMS App.I and II, CITES App.I, IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered. IUCN/SSC has a Specialist Group and Action Plan for Seals.



FDEZ. DE LARRINOA/ CBD-HABITAT

### Web sites of the marine Agreements under CMS:

- ACAP <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/species/seabirds/index.html> (scroll down to link)
- AEWA <http://www.unep-aewa.org>
- ASCOBANS <http://www.ascobans.org>
- ACCOBAMS <http://www.accobams.org/>
- Common Wadden Sea Secretariat <http://www.waddensea-secretariat.org>

For contacts of the IUCN/SCC specialist groups for these and other migratory species, see <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sgs/sgs.htm#STF>



# Challenge and Opportunity

Interview with Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht  
Executive Secretary, Convention on Migratory Species

**Q: What has been the greatest achievement of CMS in its first 25 years, particularly as it relates to marine species?**

A: Our major accomplishment is our influence on global conservation. Just look at the many sub-treaties and regional agreements CMS has inspired. Many of these cover coastal and marine species, from seals in the Wadden Sea to migratory waterbirds in Africa and Eurasia to small cetaceans of the Baltic, North, Mediterranean and Black Seas and marine turtles of the African Atlantic Coast, Indian ocean and parts of South-East Asia.

Agreements for birds are a major success, namely the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, and some soft law Agreements on endangered single species. A recent success is the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), which entered into force on 1 February 2004. If countries with long line fishing fleets take this Agreement seriously, it will mark a turning point in the fortunes of these wonderful and charismatic birds.

**Q: What is your biggest constraint?**

The sheer enormity of our task. An estimated 5000 to 10,000 known species migrate, yet we only have adequate information on the

conservation status of a tiny fraction of these. The knowledge we do have is largely unorganized and scattered.

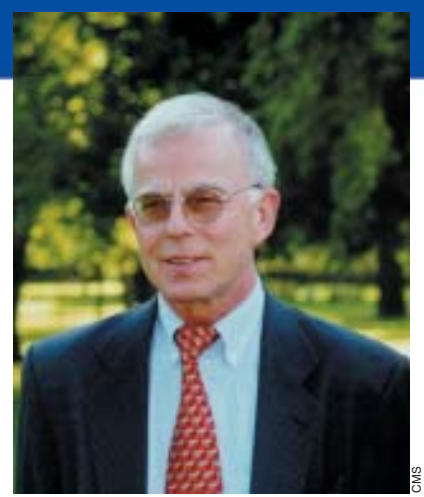
In response, CMS has launched a web-based Information Management System to bring together data gleaned from national reports, our own work and that of other biodiversity agreements, and expert organizations such as IUCN. Also, an innovative database, the Global Register of Migratory Species, collects data and provides links to other sources of scientific information.

**Q: How has the relationship between CMS and IUCN evolved over the last quarter-century?**

A: IUCN is essential to CMS on many levels. We work with the same animals and habitats as many of IUCN's Commissions and Programmes. We use the listing criteria of the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species. IUCN provides a large part of our scientific underpinning, particularly through the specialist groups of the IUCN Species Survival Commission. For example, right now we are working closely with the Shark Specialist Group on a draft MoU and Action Plan for whale sharks, and with the IUCN National Committee in France on marine turtles of the Atlantic coast.

**Q: What does CMS do for IUCN?**

A: What CMS offers to IUCN, its members and other NGOs is the opportunity to fulfil their missions and ultimately to further the survival of the species and ecosystems we all care about by means of the tailored CMS instruments. CMS Action Plans, mostly greatly influenced by IUCN experts, provide a framework for programming and cross-border cooperation under the authority of the



Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht

UN. Our regional agreements can be powerful instruments for regional conservation, our joint programmes can enhance the reputation and credibility of our partners. Moreover, CMS provides a global platform for coordination, exchange of knowledge and access to resources, and a unique capacity to establish coordinated legal measures along migration routes.

**Q: What lies ahead for CMS?**

A: We face several challenges. Among the first will be to make sure that we fill the remaining gaps in our geographical coverage by targeting the countries with migratory animal populations which are not yet CMS Parties. We need to fill the gaps in our knowledge of migratory species, working closely with IUCN programmes and SSC Specialist Groups, other NGOs, research institutions and dedicated experts. We need to pursue even greater cooperation and synergy with other conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and CITES. We all have important roles to play and the real challenge is to achieve the best possible result with a minimum of resources. We try hard to achieve, together with our partners, more sustainable activities in the High Seas.

We need to explain better to the world community that migratory animals are alarming biological indicators for insufficient conservation and unsustainable as well as uncoordinated exploitation of the world's natural resources which will ever remain the living basis for us, human-kind.

In summary, we must better present the case for migratory species to the international community for the benefit of us all.

For more information, please contact:

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