



Embargoed until: 00.01 June 24th 2010
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Interviews with speakers available on request

Climate change catastrophe for migratory species

Migratory species such as turtles and whales are exceptionally vulnerable to climate change, according to preliminary findings from a forthcoming report.

Research by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) for the United Nations Environment Programme's Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS) shows that even the subtle changes in environmental conditions that could be caused by climate change could have catastrophic consequences for animals that migrate.

CMS Executive Secretary Elizabeth Maruma Mrema said: "Migratory species are particularly threatened by climate change as they depend on different habitats to breed, feed and rest. The findings from the report will facilitate the Convention's response to assist migratory species in adapting to climate change at a global level."

Among those species that could be affected are loggerhead turtles, which frequently migrate through British waters. Risks to them include the loss of suitable beaches for nesting due to sea level rise, and a rise in temperature that could cause whole populations to be feminized, eradicating males from the species.

Green turtles, hawksbill turtles and leatherback turtles are also identified as species at high risk from climate change, along with the blue whale, West African manatee and giant catfish.

ZSL Project Manager, Aylin McNamara, who led the research for UNEP/CMS, says: "Increasing temperatures, changes in precipitation, sea level rise, ocean acidification, changes in ocean currents and extreme weather events will all affect migratory species populations."

“The need for international efforts is imperative to support species conservation across national borders and mitigate climate change.”

She added: “These vulnerability assessments show us the likely order in which these species will become extinct. This is because under the current *business as usual* emissions path it’s hard to see how any of these species will be able to survive. I’m afraid that’s how serious the situation is”

These preliminary findings and the actions that need to be taken to avert disaster for migratory species will be discussed today (June 24th) in a series of talks launching a new book by journalist, environmentalist and CMS ambassador Stanley Johnson and co-author Robert Vagg.

Survival: Saving Endangered Migratory Species, published by Stacey International, is an account of the status of the world’s migratory species and the threats faced by them.

Mr Johnson said: "I have been privileged to have been able to serve as an honorary Ambassador for the CMS for the last five years. The CMS does vital work to protect endangered migratory species. Robert Vagg, co-author, and I are donating all our authors' royalties to the UNEP-CMS to help in this important task."

They will be joined by Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, and Paul Pearce-Kelly, the senior curator at the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) leading on climate change issues for the Society.

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- Founded in 1826, the **Zoological Society of London** (ZSL) is an international scientific, conservation and educational charity: our key role is the conservation of animals and their habitats. The Society runs ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, carries out scientific research at the Institute of Zoology and is actively involved in field conservation overseas. For further information please visit www.zsl.org
- The **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species** of Wild Animals (CMS) is an intergovernmental treaty concluded under the **United Nations Environment Programme** and focusing on the conservation of a wide array of endangered migratory animals and their habitats worldwide through the negotiation and implementation of agreements and species action plans. With currently 113 member countries CMS is a fast-growing convention with special importance due to its expertise in the field of migratory species. CMS provides a framework for global adaptation and mitigation to save migratory species, and facilitates implementation in over 140 countries. Key components include identifying particularly threatened habitats and species, and initiating emergency response. www.cms.int