

REPORT TO THE 45TH CMS STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

1. SOUTH AFRICA

Information for this report was collated by South African government officials from the National Department of Environmental Affairs in collaboration with organizations such as the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and BirdLife South Africa.

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. The Convention brings together the states through which migratory animals pass, and lays the legal foundation for conservation measures throughout the species' migratory range. Measures are embedded in detailed conservation management plans. The common goal is achieved by two means: concerted actions for endangered species and co-operative agreements for migratory species that have an unfavourable conservation status.

To date, seven Agreements have been concluded under the auspices of CMS, South Africa has entered into two agreements which are: Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (01/01/2000) and Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (06/11/2003). Furthermore, South Africa has signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (07/11/2006); the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors) (4/12/2008) and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (11/05/2011). The primary function of the CMS is to encourage both Parties and non-member states to conclude daughter agreements that will protect specific migratory species or groups of migratory species. The CMS and its daughter agreements have been important in stabilizing population levels of migratory species as well as directing resources toward reducing threats and conserving habitat for a wide range of other migratory species.

Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA):

International Single Species Action Plans:

- **International Single Species Action Plan for *Glareola nordmanni* (Black-winged pratincole)**

This plan was developed in 2004. It is recommended that the document be revised as it has been developed more than 10 years ago to include country specific activities and actions. The focus has shifted since 2004. The species has been included in the Regional Red list for Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. From 2000 to 2014 the species has been categorized as Near Threatened (NT).

- **International Single Species Action Plan for *Gallinago media* (Great snipe)**

This plan was developed in 2004. It is recommended that the document be revised as it has been developed more than 10 years ago to include country specific activities and actions. The focus has shifted since 2004.

- **International Single Species Action Plan for *Oxyura maccoa* (Maccoa duck)**

South Africa participated in the development of the Single Species action plan for Maccoa duck but did not develop a National Single Species Action Plan for this species.

- **International Single Species Action Plan for *Phoeniconaias minor* (Lesser Flamingo)**

In 2010 South Africa initiated a process to develop a National Single Species for Lesser Flamingo. The challenge was the availability of key stakeholders in this regard. No national species action plan has been developed.

- **International Single Species Action Plan for *Egretta vinaceigula* (Slaty egret)**

This particular SSAP was recently developed. South Africa in 2014 nominated a South African representative to the International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) Working Group which is coordinated by Birdlife Botswana. South Africa through Birdlife SA is involved in development the status of the species although it is a vagrant to the country. No progress regarding the implementation of this SSAP since the establishment of the ISSAP Working Group.

- **International Single Species Action Plan for *Sarothrura ayresi* (White-winged Flufftail)**

South Africa has not developed a National Single Species Action Plan for this species but is implementing some aspects of the ISSAP, namely the research. SA participated in the Working group for ISSAP for the species in Ethiopia from the 10-12th August 2015. Thereafter, a National Working group was established with relevant stakeholders to implement the ISSAP.

The Department of Environmental Affairs has provided partial funding to a research project by Birdlife SA which is on-going till 2017. The research is addressing the following:

- Habitat preferences for White-winged Flufftails at Middelpunt wetland, including a description of vegetation (sedges, grasses, vegetation structure, hydrology and water depth).
- Determine a list of species that co-occur that can be used as key indicators for the potential presence of White-winged Flufftail. Densities and abundance of these species would also be determined.
- Estimation of numbers of White-winged Flufftail individuals at Middelpunt wetland. These data will allow a more accurate estimate of the population size in South Africa: current estimates are based on ad hoc sightings only.
- Disease testing and blood parasite counts (ecto- and endo-parasites) within the species, allowing determination of whether the species is susceptible to threatening diseases, which could impact on its natural potential to adapt and survive.
- Management of Middelpunt Wetland:
 - ✓ Determine whether the Carex sedges and Pycneus-Fuirena-Leersia sedge-meadows at Middelpunt are expanding, contracting or stable. What environmental factors such as flooding, soil moisture, burning, etc might be affecting the Carex? What management procedures would be best to ensure that the Carex beds and sedge-meadows are preserved (assuming those are the habitats preferred by the White-winged Flufftail).
 - ✓ Analysis of fire history data to determine a suitable burning regime.
 - ✓ Determine floristic succession, e.g. are Typha and Phragmites spreading?
 - ✓ Impact of cattle grazing on the wetland vegetation. Available literature from North America suggests that cattle grazing can impact significantly on sedge meadows.

- **International Single Species Plan for Grey Crowned-Crane**

South Africa through the (EWT has led the process to develop the ISSAP for the conservation of the Grey-crowned Crane which has been adopted at 6th Meeting of the Parties (MoP 6) to AEWA in Nov 2015 in Germany.

A South African Biodiversity Management Plan is currently being drafted for all three of South Africa's cranes (Blue and Wattled Cranes and the Grey Crowned-crane) which will draw on elements of the Single Species Action Plan.

The EWT has two full time projects, one in the Drakensberg region, straddling the KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces, and another in the Chrissiesmeer Lakes District in Mpumalanga. These two projects aim to secure key sites for cranes using the Biodiversity Stewardship Programme, conservation servitudes and other processes; improve the ecological integrity of key crane ecosystems; monitor and address key threats to cranes; and empower communities (landowners, farm workers and local communities) for conservation and improve livelihoods that incorporate a green economy and increase the value that communities place on the environment.

- **International Multi Species Plan for the Benguela Upwelling System**

South Africa through Birdlife SA has led the process to develop the Multi-species Action Plan for the Benguela Upwelling System which was approved at AEWA MoP 6 in Nov 2015 in Germany.

- **National Biodiversity Management Plan for *Spheniscus demersus* (African Penguin)**

Although there is no International Single Species Action for the African penguin, South Africa developed a National Biodiversity Management Plan, which is provided for by the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004) for this Species in consultation of all relevant stakeholders. The BMP is being implemented since its publication in 2013. Through the implementation of this BMP, new colonies of African Penguins have been re-established at Stony Point and Simon's Town as per the implementation plan of the Biodiversity Management Plan of the species.

Emergency situations (extreme cold, draught, toxic or oil spills, etc.) that have happened and affected waterbirds and/or their habitats

- **Infectious Disease:** This occurred February/March 2015 (three week period), 200 birds died. Specimens of the dead individuals have been sent to a local state veterinarian for clinical examination. Infield control measures have consisted of the regular removal of dead bodies from the waterbodies and the disposal of carcasses by burying them. Species affected are: Yellow-billed Duck, Cape Shoveller, White-backed Duck, Red-billed Teal, Fulvous Duck, Maccoa Duck, Egyptian Goose, Red-knobbed Coot, White-breasted Cormorant, Common Tern, Grey-headed Gull, Glossy Ibis and African Spoonbill.
- **Poisoning:** this has become an increasing threat to wildlife including birds. Birds such as vultures are experiencing the highest poison incidences due to poaching incidences so as to deter attention. The vultures are protected though the national legislation (Threatened or Protected Species Regulations) and they are listed as critically endangered. Therefore, any activities involving the species warrants a permit approval.

Hundreds of blue cranes died by poisoning. The blue crane (*Anthropoides paradiseus*) is currently listed as vulnerable in the Eskom Red Data Book of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, and the 2010 International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)'s Red List. This incident took place in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Investigations are underway and the outcome will be reported in due course.

New or major ongoing waterbird species re-establishment (reintroduction, supplementation) initiatives

New colonies of the African Penguins have been re-established at Stony Point and Simon's Town as per the implementation plan of the Biodiversity Management Plan of the species. See (j) under 3 above.

Activities on eradication or other type of action regarding alien species.

Research has been undertaken by the Agricultural Research Council on the identification and dissemination of biological control agents particularly for the control of aquatic plants such as water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) and water fern (*Azolla filiculoides*)

Eastern Wetland Rehabilitation (a non-profit company) has received Natural Resources Management funding for a three-year period to control alien invasive plant species in the Chrissiesmeer area. Priority is being given to farms important to cranes. This work started in mid-February 2016.

New or major ongoing activities on habitat (site) inventory, conservation or restoration and rehabilitation of waterbird habitats.

Two major sites where activities were focused are:

- **Hartebeesspruit-Colbyn Valley Wetland ecosystem**

The South African government in collaboration with key stakeholders is in a process to declare a Biodiversity Management Plan for an Ecosystem (BMP-E) for the Hartebeesspruit-Colbyn Valley Wetland ecosystem. One of the main aims of the development and subsequent implementation of the Hartebeesspruit-Colbyn Valley Wetland BMP-E is that the BMP-E will serve as a pilot for local government support to mainstreaming biodiversity at the local-government level, particularly in achieving protection of the threatened wetland and associated peatland through collaboration and buy-in between various spheres of government, stakeholders and resource users. The BMP-E will furthermore serve as a pilot to test the robustness of the Norms and Standards for BMP-Es (Government Gazette No 37302 7 February 2014). This emphasises the need for a collaborative effort to conserve Colbyn Valley Wetland as a threatened ecosystem, which plays an integral role in water quality and flood attenuation as part of the Hartebeesspruit system, which in turn supplies the Roodeplaat Dam, a source of drinking water for Pretoria.

- **Ingula Conservation Area**

Ingula is situated 55km from Ladysmith, (20km northeast of Van Reenen) within the Drakensberg range, on the border between the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. The presence of high altitude wetlands that provides the site for the upper and lower dam and the presence of a peat bed in the wetland. Furthermore, this wetland had, in recent years, been identified as one of only nine known sites in South Africa visited in summer by the White-winged Flufftail (*Sarothrura ayresi*), an enigmatic rail known only to breed in three wetlands in Ethiopia during July and August. The area is in process of being proclaimed as a nature reserve. There are many reasons for this, the most important being the large expanse of grassland, wetland and escarpment forest. The wetlands at Ingula's upper site straddle the continental watershed and serves as a continual supply to the Wilge and Tugela Rivers, with springs flowing throughout the year. The wetland system hosts a large variety of species, and is in need of protection following years of overgrazing and inappropriate burning. The area also fulfils criteria for proclamation as a Ramsar site and is of international significance. The Ingula conservation area hosts 4 of South Africa's critically endangered species (Red Data List) being White-winged Flufftail, Wattled Crane, Rudd's Lark and Eurasian Bittern.

Progress of the region in phasing out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands.

Hunting in any form, is a restricted activity in South Africa in terms of its legislation and it is regulated through a permit, through the National Environment Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 4 of 2004): Threatened or Protected Species Regulations. Provincial legislation also regulates the use of hunting at a

provincial level. However, South Africa does not experience a lot of duck hunting in wetlands hence this is not really considered. Similarly, the banning of lead shot for hunting in wetlands has also not been addressed yet, as hunting of waterbirds does not have the same significance as in Europe. Further engagements with relevant stakeholders are in place and will continue to get an understanding of the impact of lead shot.

New or major ongoing research and monitoring activities on waterbirds and waterbird habitats

A number of research is continuing, namely:

- African Crane Conservation Programme led by the EWT. Grey Crowned Crane breeding success is being monitored in the Drakensberg and Chrissiesmeer. Together with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the annual aerial surveys of cranes in KZN were conducted for the 21st consecutive year in July 2015. The second annual Chrissiesmeer aerial survey was completed in February 2016.
- White-winged Flufftail Research coordinated by Birdlife SA in collaboration with other stakeholders.
- South African Bird Atlas Project 2 is the follow-up project to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (for which the acronym was SABAP, and which is now referred to as SABAP1). This first bird atlas project took place from 1987-1991. The second bird atlas project started on 1 July 2007 and plans to run indefinitely. The current project is a partnership between the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town, BirdLife South Africa and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). The project aims to map the distribution and relative abundance of birds in southern Africa and the atlas area includes South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. SABAP2 was launched in Namibia in May 2012.

New or major ongoing education and information activities on waterbirds, waterbird habitats and the Agreement

Ongoing education and information activities include:

- World Wetlands Day
- Flufftail Festival
- Save Our Seabirds Campaign
- World Migratory Bird Day
- World Environment Day
- Chrissiesmeer Crane Festival
- Mpumalanga Twin Treasures Event
- Learning exchange workshops with farmers and community members in the Drakensberg and on the Mpumalanga Highveld to empower and increase awareness of wetland and grassland management; alien invasive clearing and alternative energies.

Problematic cases threatening waterbirds or their habitats (e.g. infrastructural developments, changes in legislation, etc.).

The extractive energy industry is a key threat to grasslands and wetlands – and includes particularly coal mining and gas extraction.

Extent of use of the Conservation Guidelines by the Parties

The EWT's Wildlife and Energy Programme (WEP) which is run in partnership with ESKOM, is ongoing and its primary focus is to prevent mortalities of birds (and wildlife in general) on electrical infrastructure through the mitigation of existing infrastructure, use of bird-friendly structures and avoiding high risk areas when building

new infrastructure. The AEWA guidelines were developed in collaboration with EWT, amongst others, and their use and implementation are ongoing.

Any other information related to AEWA implementation.

A severe regional drought (the worst in living memory) is impacting levels of water in rivers, wetlands and other waterbodies. The drought may be linked to both the El Niño Southern Oscillation and to climate change. The impacts of the drought on waterbirds have not been assessed yet, but may severely impact on breeding success and survival of many freshwater-dependent species.

Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors)

Vulture Multispecies Action Plan (MsAP) for the African Range & Old World

South Africa participated in the discussions of the 2nd Meeting of the Parties to the Raptors MoU which took place in Norway from the 5-8 October 2015. The meeting discussed the development of the African-Eurasian Vulture MsAP, which was further deliberated upon at a workshop which took place in Senegal from 18th to 21st October 2016 as part of the 2nd Pan African Vulture Summit held in conjunction with the 14th Pan-African Ornithological Congress, wherein South Africa also took part. This MsAP is drafted under the auspices of the IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group, CMS Raptors MoU of CMS and Birdlife International. The draft African-Eurasian Vulture MsAP will be discussed for adoption at 12th CMS Conference of the Parties (COP 12) October 2017 and 3rd Meeting of the Signatories (MoS 3) in 2018.

In facilitating this process, South Africa nominated Mr Andre Botha from EWT who is now the overall coordinator of the African-Eurasian Vulture MsAP.

The vulture MsAP will cover 15 species of which some are found in the African region including South Africa as indicated below.

- Hooded Vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*)
- White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*)
- White-headed Vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*)
- Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus*)
- Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*)
- Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*)

CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group

The Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS COP11, 4 – 9 November 2014, Quito, Ecuador) adopted [Resolution 11.15](#) which endorsed the [Guidelines on preventing the risk of migratory bird poisoning](#) and requested the establishment of task groups, in the context of the [CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group](#), addressing either thematic issues (e.g. for different poison types) and/or geographical regions to progress its work.

In this regard, a ‘Sub-regional Workshop on Preventing Poisoning on Migratory Birds’ was held on the 24 August 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa, in response to CMS Resolution 11.15. It was jointly organized by the

Secretariats of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS), the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (UNEP/AEWA), and the Coordinating Unit of the MOU on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU). This activity has been kindly sponsored by the European Commission through the Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) Programme Cooperation Agreements with UNEP.

The purpose of the Workshop was to develop and adopt a Sub-regional Implementation Plan for the CMS Guidelines to Prevent the Risk of Poisoning to Migratory Birds covering the Southern African sub-region. This was circulated for comments and South Africa provided inputs and is awaiting finalisation of the establishment of the Working Group. The CMS Parties are requested to report progress on the implementation of this through the national reporting system. The Challenge is that implementation or reposting processes have not been communicated to Parties. In terms of progress South Africa is considering establishing a National Committee to deal with poisoning issues regarding wildlife which will include migratory birds.

Implementation of CMS Resolution 11.32

Through Resolution 11.32 of the CMS COP11, Parties to CMS agreed to work towards the inclusion of lions in Appendix II of CMS, to be discussed at the 12th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to CMS (COP12) in 2017. In the same Resolution, CMS Parties

- Requested Range States to review the IUCN regional strategies for Western, Central, Eastern and Southern African lion populations;
- Consult with the CITES Secretariat on on-going processes related to lions under CITES; and
- Convene a meeting among Range States and experts to assess and evaluate the implementation of the IUCN regional conservation strategies.

In this regard, WildCru Oxford, in response to CMS Resolution 11.32 adopted at COP11 in November 2014 developed a questionnaire on African lion (*Panthera leo*) conservation and policy to be completed by the ranges state. The results of the questionnaire contributed to reviewing the current status of lion conservation in individual range states. Resolution 11.32 requests the Range State Parties to present a review of progress to the 44th and 45th Meetings of the Standing Committee. In this case, South Africa participated responded to the questionnaire as requested by the CMS Secretariat.

As well, South Africa participated in a The joint meeting brought together representatives of the 31 African Range States in which lions were identified as ‘native’ and ‘possibly extinct in the wild’ by IUCN in its 2015 Red List Assessment. The meeting took place from 30-31 May 2016 in Entebbe, Uganda.

From the review process, it was clear that for the overall conservation status of the species, the 2015 assessment represented technical improvement compared to previous assessments. The new approach used in this assessment showed an extreme dichotomy between regions. Lion populations increased by 12% in four southern African countries that is Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and in India, but declined by 60% in West, Central and East Africa over the last 21 years (three lion generations, the standard Red List timeframe). While this dichotomy resulted in the Red List status of lions across the continent remaining Vulnerable, across the majority of its range the Lion meets the A2 criterion for Endangered. The principal

causes for the decline were i) indiscriminate retaliatory killing of lions in defense of human life and livestock, ii) habitat loss and iii) prey base depletion. Lion populations appear to be stable where management is properly funded. However, many lion populations occur in areas where management budgets are low, leading to local decline and even extirpation, most notably in West Africa.

2. Madagascar

2.1 Conservation of dugong and its habitat

A regional GEF Dugong and seagrass project encompasses eight countries across the Indian Ocean and into the South Pacific including Mozambique, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. The Project works with partners in these countries to implement 38 locally-managed conservation initiatives between 2015 and 2016. This conservation partnership is helping to save dugong and seagrass using science and research techniques, awareness raising programs, conservation policy development, and providing incentives for communities to protect the species.

Six projects are conducted along the western coast of Madagascar. Working in concert, the partners aim to improve not only the understanding of dugong and seagrass across Madagascar, but also to improve their chances of survival well into the future.

A small population of dugongs still inhabits the northwestern coast of Madagascar; dugongs are mainly observed in the coastal waters of Marine Parks. No hunting or accidental mortalities were reported

2.2 Conservation of migratory marine turtles

To sustainably ensure the conservation of migratory marine turtle species in northern Madagascar, key stakeholders were actively involved in the project untitled “***enhancing the conservation of threatened sea turtles through integrated approaches in Nosy Hara Marine Park in the northwestern Madagascar***” funded by US Fish and Wildlife Service/Marine Turtle Conservation Fund (USFWS/MTCF). This project aimed at enhancing the conservation of sea turtles by protecting nesting and foraging habitats, reducing direct harvest of turtles and eggs. Enhancement of policy and law enforcement in the conservation of marine turtles was integrated. Monitoring was conducted for increasing the information on nesting population in Nosy Hara Marine Park. Additionally, education initiatives were simultaneously combined with these conservation initiatives in the coastal areas of the Nosy Hara Marine Park. Incentives based approaches were promoted for enhancing and encouraging local resource users to change behaviors. It enhanced the effort deployed to reduce the intentional captures of marine turtles in Nosy Hara Marine Park. The positive change of the communities’ behavior has been noticed referring to the high abundance of marine turtles inhabiting the marine park and the nonexistence of intentional capture of the species during the project period

3. Kenya

1. Sharing of CMS/AEWA guidelines on powerlines for use in EIA/SEA
2. Annual count of waterbirds planned. However delayed due to financial limitation

4. Uganda

1. Finalisation of Grey Crowned Crane National Single Species Action Plan. The grey crowned crane (*Balearica regulorum*) is Uganda's national bird. The species is however threatened largely due to habitat loss. The Action plan therefore seeks to implement activities that enhance active conservation of the species through improved habitat management, awareness creation, research, community engagement and cross-border collaboration among others.
2. Uganda signed the landmark Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) Treaty. The treaty aims at strengthening collaboration and enhancing cross-border wildlife conservation and tourism development along the Greater Virunga landscape that straddles the borders of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The Greater Virunga is one of the most bio-diverse places on the continent.