RAPTORS MOU

Memorandum of Understanding
on the Conservation of
Migratory Birds of Prey in
Africa and Eurasia

Distribution: General

UNEP/CMS/Raptors/TAG2/5

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An Initial List of Potential Emerging Issues for the Conservation and Management of African-Eurasian Migratory Raptors

Prepared by the TAG Working Group on Emerging Issues

Introduction

The Terms of Reference of Technical Advisory Group includes requirements to:

'4. The main tasks of the TAG are to:

a) Provide expert advice, information and make recommendations on the implementation of the Raptors MoU, to the Signatories and the CU, as requested;

b) Analyse, as necessary, scientific advice and assessments and to make recommendations, particularly concerning the content of Annexes I, II and III, in the Action Plan of the Raptors MoU;

c) Provide comments on any proposals to amend the MoU text which have a technical content;

d) Prepare a written report of its activities to deliver its work programme for each session of the Meeting of Signatories to be submitted to the CU at least 60 days in advance of the meeting; and,

e) Carry out any other tasks referred to it by the Meeting of Signatories (MoS).'

These tasks relate largely to the provision of advice concerning the implementation of the MOU's Action Plan. However, as discussed at TAG1, it is important that the Group has the opportunity of bring issues to the attention of Signatories which may be 'emerging' as factors likely to affect the status of migratory raptors either directly or indirectly (and which may not currently be covered within the Action Plan).

For reference, the following are the key conservation issues (essentially threats) currently identified in the Action Plan and so these are not repeated in the subsequent list of Emerging Issues:

- Protected areas and their management
- Risk analyses at sites relating to causes of mortality
- Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs), Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) etc.
- Addressing habitat loss, including habitat restoration
- Impacts of power lines (electrocution and collision) and wind farms (collisions)
- Conservation through the activities of other sectors
- Communication and raising public awareness
- Promotion of research and improved monitoring
- Impacts of toxic chemicals
- Assessing scale of harvests

This paper provides an initial list of potential emerging issues.

Action Requested from the Technical Advisory Group

The Annex presents a non-exhaustive list of issues (not in any priority order) which potentially are, or may become, of significance for raptor conservation in the geographic area covered by the Raptors MoU.

1. TAG is requested to:

    a. review the list of issues and to suggest ways forward, if needed, for each;
    b. add any new potential emerging issues, including ways forward, if needed for each; and,
    c. identify any top priorities where action is considered necessary now, so as to bring those issue to the attend of Signatories.

Annex: An initial list of potential emerging issues for the Raptors MoU

1. Emerging diseases

Emergent diseases have been identified as a major issue for birds. Some aspects of that agenda have been developed in the specific context of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus (HPAI H5N1) and responses to it (via the Scientific Task Force on avian influenza & wild birds and Resolutions 3.18 and 4.15). Recent outbreaks of H5N8 have reactivated the Task Force and it has attempted to provide public summaries of the developing situation through late 2014 e.g. http://www.ramsar.org/news/statement-on-h5n8-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-hpai-in-poultry-and-wild-birds.

In 2008, CMS Resolution 9.8 established a Task Force on Wildlife Disease to establish co-ordination between MEAs on non-HPAI issues[1].

For Ramsar's Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP), Wildlife & Wetland Trust (WWT) developed a comprehensive Wetland Disease Handbook: http://www.wwt.org.uk/conservation/saving-wetlands-and-wildlife/publications/ramsar-wetland-disease-manual/ which was launched at Ramsar COP12 in June 2012, and has since been published as *Ramsar Technical Report No.7*. This is highly relevant to issues of bird diseases more generally, not just waterbirds (e.g. it provides guidance on actions to be taken to investigate disease outbreaks).

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- Continued participation in CMS Wildlife Disease Task Force.
- Given its general applicability, actively promote recognition of the Ramsar *Wetland Disease Handbook* [at MoS2?] and subsequently encourage its dissemination.
- *[Other Actions?...]*

2. Promoting raptor conservation through 'non-traditional' sectors of society

Some sectors of society can have considerable influence on the decisions that communities take concerning environmental resource use. Women's groups in particular can be influential and BirdLife International has many examples of the importance of reaching such groups in order to gain community support for conservation actions for critically threatened species. Schools and faith groups are other examples. Should the Signatories and the Coordinating Unit be aiming to work with and communicate through such sectors of society?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any?...]*

3. Raptors in urban environments

Increasing urbanisation is bringing some raptor species into closer proximity to human settlements. Issues include:

- Disease transmission risk (to and from birds, e.g. salmonella)
- Opportunities for education and awareness

[1] CMS Res 9.08: Responding to the Challenge of Emerging and Re-Emerging Diseases in Migratory Species, including HPAI H5N1

Would guidance be valuable for urban authorities (quite a lot exists but perhaps not very accessible)?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any?...]*

4. Implications of loss of traditional knowledge about birds of prey

In many societies, birds for prey have been historically highly culturally significant. What do we know about this? Is loss of such knowledge and beliefs an issue for their conservation (rather than loss of cultural aspects for human society)?

How can we relate to and harness traditional knowledge about birds of prey (and their cultural importance) to aid the conservation of these species?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any?...]*

5. Take for traditional medicines and other such cultural uses

Some body parts of birds of prey are used in traditional medicines and for other purposes – for instance there is apparently a belief centred in Southern Africa that smoking vulture brains allows one to see into the future. Accordingly, there was concern at the time of the 2010 FIFA World Cup hosted by South Africa that this might lead to a significant increase in illegal killing of vultures linked to gambling on match outcomes.

Is this a real and present threat and to what extent should we respond?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any?...]*

6. Impacts of pollution

Do we have any sort of oversight of pollution levels (body burdens of pollutants) in raptors at international scales? National monitoring schemes exist in some countries but is this information collated, e.g. by EURAPMON? Is this a sigificant issue?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any?...]*

7. Impacts of agricultural chemicals on raptors

Historically, a cause of occasional mortality – typically through secondary poisoning impacts. Sometimes significant mortality.

Major work on this issue has been undertaken by the CMS-led Minimizing Poisoning Working Group, lead to Resolution 11.18 and associated Guidance being adopted at CMS COP11[2]. The Raptors MoU should continue to contribute to the Working Group and actively disseminate adopted guidance.

[2] http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_15_Preventing_Bird_Poisoning_of_Birds_E_0.pdf
http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/COP11_Doc_23_1_2_Bird_Poisoning_Review_%26_Guidelines_E_0.pdf

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- Highlight CMS Resolution 11.18 and associated Guidance at MoS2.
- Encourage dissemination of Guidance by Signatories and others post MoS2.
- *[Other Actions?...]*

8. Birds of prey and corporate industry

Corporations and especially Trans National Corporations (TNCs) wield substantial resources and their operations can have major impacts on the natural environment. Should raptor conservationists being engaging more closely with TNCs? How could this be achieved?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any?...]*

9. Reducing airstrike risk from raptors

Not really 'emerging' but certainly a significant issue locally. What, if any, specific actions would be useful and effective?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- [*Actions, if any?...]*

10. Conflicting renewable energy development

Major recent work undertaken jointly with CMS and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) lead to Resolution 11.27 and Guidance adopted at CMS COP11.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- Participate in Energy Task Force anticipated under CMS Resolution 11.27

11. Recreational threats, including disturbance

Examples include Kite Flying Festivals and increasing use of quadcopter drones. Likewise what are the implications of drones constructed as raptor look-alikes?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any? …]*

12. Impacts of new tracking technologies

One potential emerging threat is linked to tracking technology resulting in individualisation on the one hand involving more people in the marvels of nature, but on the other generating emotional responses, sometimes at the expense of conservation of populations.

In addition, new research is highlighting the potential negative impacts of satellite tags and other marking devices. Worryingly, some evidence has also emerged of tagged birds being deliberately selected and intentionally killed due to the tracking devices being mis-perceived as mechanism for international espionage.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any? …]*

13. Conservation in conflict zones

Not a new threat but should we not be challenging ourselves to consider developing mechanisms to address this issue and its consequences (e.g. surge in netting in North Africa, rapid rise in indiscriminate shooting of raptors due to increased widespread availability of guns in the Middle East). Note that IUCN have done post-conflict assessments, e.g. in Afghanistan[3].

There may be more general guidance from IUCN on this which might be useful in a raptor context.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MoU:

- *[Actions, if any? …]*

14. Global horizon scanning exercises and implications for raptor conservation

There are a number of international horizon scanning exercises, notable those undertaken by the (UK) Cambridge Conservation Initiative (Sutherland *et al.* 2013[4]). These exercises have been assessed for issues of potential significance for the Raptors MoU which are not already subject to consideration.

Possible future conservation issues of significance to migratory raptors in recently published global horizon scanning exercises:

Year	Issue
2014[5]	Redistribution of global temperature increases among ecosystems
2013[6]	Species loss as a driver of global environmental change
2012[7]	Increases in pharmaceutical discharges as human populations age
	Burning of arctic tundra
2011[8]	Protected area failure

[3] http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/afghanistanpcajanuary2003.pdf
[4] Sutherland et al. 2014. A horizon scan of global conservation issues for 2014. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 29: 15-22.
[5] http://www.cbsg.org/sites/cbsg.org/files/climate_change/Horizon%20Scan%20Conservation%20Issues%202014.pdf
[6] http://www.scar.org/scar_media/documents/horizonscan/Sutherland_2013_Conserve.pdf
[7] http://www.scar.org/scar_media/documents/horizonscan/Sutherland_2012_Conserve.pdf
[8] http://www.conservation.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/file-attachments/Horizon%20Scanning%20TREE%202011.pdf