



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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11th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Quito, Ecuador, 4-9 November 2014

Agenda Item 23.2.4

CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF CETACEAN CULTURE

Summary:

In response to Resolution 10.15 Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024) the CMS Scientific Council's Aquatic Mammals Working Group hosted a workshop on the conservation implications of cetacean culture.

The 18th Meeting of the Scientific Council (ScC18) considered and endorsed the recommendations coming from the Workshop. It also recommended that based on these expert recommendations, a draft resolution on the conservation implications of animal culture be developed, which is annexed to this document.

CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF CETACEAN CULTURE

(Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat)

1. Resolution 10.15 Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024) instructed the CMS Scientific Council's Aquatic Mammals Working Group to 'host a workshop to review and provide advice on the impact of the emergent science of cetacean social complexity and culture, as it relates to regional populations and to inform forward decision about CMS conservation priorities'. With technical, financial and logistical support from our partner organization, Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), the requested expert workshop was held on 15 and 16 April 2014 at the premises of The Linnean Society of London.
2. The aim of the expert workshop was to develop practical recommendations arising from the emerging science and examine how best to define the 'unit to conserve' for socially complex species. Using cetaceans as a case study, the 19 participants, who came from a variety of relevant disciplines, discussed whether the traditional approach to differentiating populations, using only genetic, morphological and geographic criteria, was suitable for species where the influence of social factors on phenotypes and interactions with humans might require more fine-scale population differentiation for effective conservation.
3. The full workshop report, which gives examples of cultural traits relevant to conservation, has been made available as UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.18.
4. The 18th Meeting of the Scientific Council (1-3 July 2014, Bonn, Germany) considered and endorsed the recommendations coming from the workshop. It also recommended that based on these expert recommendations, a draft resolution on the conservation implications of animal culture be developed.
5. The requested draft resolution, developed by the Secretariat in collaboration with members of the Scientific Council's Aquatic Mammals Working Group, is annexed to this document.

Action requested:

The Conference of the Parties is requested to:

- Adopt the draft Resolution contained in the Annex.

ANNEX

DRAFT RESOLUTION

CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF CETACEAN CULTURE

Recalling that Resolution 10.15 Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024) instructed the CMS Scientific Council's Aquatic Mammals Working Group to provide advice on the impact of the emergent science of cetacean social complexity and cultural transmission;

Recognizing that a number of socially complex mammalian species, such as several species of cetaceans, great apes and elephants, show evidence of having non-human culture (hereafter 'culture');

Concerned that highly social species face unique conservation challenges;

Aware that the social transmission of knowledge between individuals may increase population viability and provide opportunities for the rapid spread of innovations and thus adaptation to environmental change;

Aware that this transmission of knowledge may also increase the impact of anthropogenic threats or can operate synergistically with anthropogenic threats to compound their impact on a specific social group or more widely;

Recognizing that the impact of removal of individuals from populations of socially complex species may have consequences beyond simply a reduction in absolute numbers;

Also recognizing that populations of some species are better delineated by cultural behaviour than genetic diversity or geographic isolation;

Conscious that the scientific investigation of culture and social complexity in mammals is a rapidly evolving field which is increasingly important for conservation management; and

Emphasizing that the CMS Family is in a strong position to incorporate this emerging information into species-specific agreements and its other work;

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Welcomes* the report of the CMS Scientific Council expert workshop on the conservation implications on cetacean culture, contained in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.18, and *endorses* the recommendations contained therein;
2. *Strongly encourages* Parties to take into consideration the role and dynamics of culturally transmitted behaviours when determining conservation measures;

3. *Also strongly encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to assess anthropogenic threats to socially complex mammalian species on the basis of the threats' interactions with social structure and culture;
4. *Urges* Parties to apply a precautionary approach to the management of populations for which the influence of culture and social complexity may be a conservation issue;
5. *Encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to prioritize the acquisition of pertinent data for advancing the conservation management of these populations and discrete social groups;
6. *Requests* the Scientific Council to establish an intersessional expert working group dealing with the conservation implications of culture and social complexity, with a focus on, but not limited to cetaceans;
7. *Invites* relevant Councillors for taxa other than cetaceans to review the findings of the workshop and engage in this expert group; and
8. *Requests* the expert group to:
 - 8.1 Develop a list of priority species listed on CMS for a comprehensive investigation of culture and social structure and commence more detailed analysis as appropriate;
 - 8.2 Develop appropriate guidelines and provide advice for a precautionary approach to the conservation management of culturally and/or socially complex cetacean species, as well as other CMS-listed species, if feasible; and
 - 8.3 Report its findings through the Scientific Council to CMS COP12.