



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



52nd Meeting of the Standing Committee

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OCEANIA REGIONAL REPORT

REGIONAL REPORT TO THE 52ND MEETING OF THE CMS STANDING COMMITTEE - OCEANIA

Regional Activities for the implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species and its related instruments

1. CMS and its relevant instruments and other initiatives

CMS

Australia

Australia provided a range of voluntary contributions to the CMS Secretariat in 2020 and 2021 to address a number of high priority activities, including:

- \$200,000 to support completion of a comprehensive review of the eligibility of individual Appendix I, and potentially Appendix II, listed species, covering both conservation status and migratory evidence in line with Decisions 13.24-26;
- \$150,000 to be directed towards establishing an Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Hunting, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the East Asian Australasian Flyway and organizing an initial workshop designed to develop a prioritized work programme in line with Decisions 13.32-33 and Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP13);
- \$110,000 to be directed towards the implementation of high priority actions identified in the Single Species Action Plan for the Far Eastern Curlew, including supporting an evaluation of hunting pressures on shorebirds in the Russian Far East, in conjunction with BirdsRussia and in line with Decisions 13.47-49 and Resolution 2.12 (Rev.COP13);
- \$75,000 development of a single species action plan for the Christmas Island Frigatebird and implementation of high priority activities identified in the finalized plan;
- \$30,000 to facilitate a review of the causes of insect decline, the impact to migratory species and the development of a policy framework to address insect decline for the benefit of migratory species dependent on insects in line with Decision 13.129 and Resolution 13.6; and
- \$30,000 to facilitate implementation of high priority activities identified through the Pacific Cetaceans MoU.

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

Australia

Australia is a Party to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) through the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) is the lead agency in Australia for ACAP. Australia hosts the ACAP Secretariat at Hobart, Tasmania. Australia attended the 11th meeting of the Advisory Committee: Florianópolis, Brazil, 13–17 May 2019, and will attend the rescheduled 12th meeting of the Advisory Committee: virtually, 30 August – 1 September 2021 (this latter meeting was due to be held in 2020, but was deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

ACAP aims to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels by encouraging and coordinating conservation action at national, regional and global levels. In ACAP's current work program 2019–2022, particular emphasis is placed on actions to monitor levels and trends of breeding populations, and reduce threats on land (e.g. damage to and disturbance at breeding habitats) and at sea (e.g. mortality arising from interactions with fisheries).

In line with these priorities, major Australian conservation actions presently include:

- Undertaking population monitoring of Australia's main breeding sites for albatrosses and petrels (Tasmania and Macquarie Island);
- Implementing a threat abatement plan for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations;
- Developing a new recovery plan for albatrosses and petrels that breed and/or forage in Australian jurisdiction;
- Minimising through entry restrictions and biosecurity measures the risk of introduction of alien invasive pests at breeding sites for albatrosses and petrels in Australia that may have population-level effects on the species; and
- Undertaking research projects concerning improving measures to avoid or minimise seabird bycatch in fisheries, and to improve the conservation of breeding populations of albatrosses and petrels on land.

Australia shares the results of these conservation actions internationally with other ACAP Parties, as well as relevant regional and other forums.

New Zealand

New Zealand is Party to ACAP and will attend the upcoming meeting of the Advisory Committee in August 2021. Key actions New Zealand has taken in relation to ACAP species include:

- New Zealand produced a new National Plan of Action for Seabirds in May 2020. The NPOA focuses on reducing seabird mortalities resulting from fishing activity towards zero. Key objectives of the NPOA include developing and implementing bycatch mitigation, improving knowledge of seabird populations, and working internationally to raise awareness of the need for seabird mitigation;
- Active support of the work of ACAP through voluntary contributions and ACAP official roles;
- A range of seabird bycatch reduction research, education and monitoring activities were undertaken, sharing findings through ACAP meetings;
- Continued protection of a large number of breeding sites of ACAP-listed species;
- Active participation in Regional Fisheries management Organisations (RFMOs) to which New Zealand is member to understand and manage seabird bycatch, in alignment with the ACAP RFMO Engagement Strategy;
- Applying satellite tracking tags to Antipodean albatross to monitor overlap and risks with fisheries, and inform international fisheries management actions to reduce bycatch of Antipodean albatross. This work was part of the Concerted Action for this Appendix I listed species;
- Applying tracking tags to northern royal albatross and northern giant petrels at Chatham Islands and Taiaroa Head to assess movements and potential overlap with fisheries during the breeding season;
- Starting a demographic project on northern royal albatross and northern Buller's albatross at the Chatham Islands;
- Aerial photographic census of albatross colonies at Chatham Islands in September and December 2020;
- Continuing a long term demographic study on black petrels including at-sea captures to assess ratios of banded birds;
- Beginning monitoring of Westland petrels to assess impacts of land and sea based threats to this species;
- Assessment of trail camera images to determine the breeding cycle and breeding success rates of Salvin's albatross; and
- Population assessment of white-chinned petrels on Antipodes Island and also a count of northern giant petrels.

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA Marine Turtles MOU)

Australia

- The Australian Government undertakes a range of policy and on-ground activity to support the recovery of the six threatened and migratory species of marine turtle that occur in Australian waters. The *Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles in Australia* (<https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/46eedcfc-204b-43de-99c5-4d6f6e72704f/files/recovery-plan-marine-turtles-2017.pdf>) provides the National management framework for marine turtle conservation activities and is supported by various state and territory planning documents (Queensland - https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0037/89794/marine-turtle-conservation-research-monitoring-strategy.pdf; Western Australia - https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/images/documents/plants-animals/threatened-species/nwsftcp_strategic_conservation_plan_print.pdf). Marine turtles are of great cultural significance to many Indigenous communities across northern Australia and in many areas marine turtle management is undertaken through agreed community-based management plans, traditional use of marine resource agreements (TUMRAs) or as a priority in Ranger work programs.
- Much of the on-ground work is undertaken by state and territory governments, Traditional Owners and Indigenous Rangers, community groups, NGOs, and industry – often as part of offset requirements.
- Australia's National Report to IOSEA MOS8 provides a detailed update of activities against the IOSEA Conservation and Management Plan - <https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/en/document/australia-national-report-2019>
- Australia provided a \$25,000 voluntary contribution that was used to support the 20th Anniversary celebrations of the IOSEA – <https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/en/page/20-years-iosea-marine-turtle-mou>. The virtual event brought together signatory states from across the region to celebrate 20 years of the IOSEA MoU. In addition to supporting the organisation of the virtual event, Australia hosted a one hour online presentation showcasing marine turtle work from around the country - <https://www.cms.int/iosea-turtles/en/page/celebrating-world-sea-turtle-day-wstdiosea>

Philippines

- The Biodiversity Management Bureau issued two national guidelines for marine turtle conservation:
 - BMB Technical Bulletin No. 2020-04, Adopting the Philippine Aquatic Wildlife Rescue and Response Manual, Series on Marine Turtles and Marine Mammals
 - BMB Technical Bulletin Number 2020-05, Guidelines on the Protection of Marine Turtle Nesting Habitats
- Joint Memorandum Circular (Department of Tourism, Dept. of Agriculture and Dept of Environment and Natural Resources) was issued on the Rules and Regulations Governing the Conduct of Marine Wildlife (Marine turtle, dugong, whale shark, and marine mammals) Tourism Interactions in the Philippines;
- Completion of the Marine Turtle Conservation Action Plan anchored on the guidelines and activities in the IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU;
- Continuing implementation of the Bilateral Cooperation with the government of Malaysia for the transboundary management of the Turtle Island Heritage Protected Area with intensified law enforcement on both countries to avert illegal trade of marine turtle eggs. The Turtles Island within the Philippine Territory (nationally designated as Turtle islands Wildlife Sanctuary) is a Marine Turtle Network Site under the IOSEA MoU.

Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Sharks (Sharks MOU)

Australia

Australia is a range state for 24 species of sharks and rays currently listed on Annex I of the CMS Sharks MOU. The Australian Government is implementing conservation and management actions to address our national and regional priorities for these species through a range of initiatives as outlined below:

- As a signatory to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks), Australia's National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (NPOA-Sharks) was developed in 2004 and revised in 2014. As part of the implementation of Australia's NPOA-Sharks, the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment hosts a yearly stakeholder workshop, Shark-plan Representative Group. This group last met in December 2020 and is due to meet again in December 2021. Refer: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/fisheries/environment/sharks#what-are-the-key-highlights-of-the-2020-sharkplan-2-jurisdiction-reports>).
- Several of the species listed in the CMS Sharks MOU Annex I are also listed as protected threatened species in Australian waters. For these species (such as white shark, whale shark and sawfish) Australia has adopted national recovery plans and conservation advices developed to guide the research and management actions necessary to stop the decline of, and support the recovery. The implementation of the Australian National Sawfish and River Shark Multispecies Recovery Plan (2015), which covers 3 species of sawfish and 2 river shark species is currently under review. This review should be finalised by early 2022.
- There are four sawfish species (Narrow Sawfish, Dwarf Sawfish, Largetooth Sawfish and Green Sawfish) listed as migratory species under Australia national legislation; three are also listed Nationally as threatened species in the Vulnerable category (Dwarf Sawfish, Largetooth Sawfish and Green Sawfish). Due to ongoing concerns for the conservation of these species, the Narrow Sawfish was prioritised for threatened species assessment in September 2019; and the Largetooth Sawfish prioritised for reassessment in September 2020. The Scalloped Hammerhead was also prioritised for threatened species listing assessment in December 2020.
- In 2020 Australia provided a \$40,000 voluntary contribution to the CMS Sharks MOU to support the implementation of the Programme of Work 2019 -2021. In 2021 Australia provided a further \$80,000 voluntary contribution to the CMS Sharks MOU to support the development and implementation of a Regional Strategy and Conservation Plan for Sawfish and other "Rhino Rays" (Rhinopristiformis).
- With a focus on mitigating fisheries bycatch on sawfish species:
 - In 2020 \$112,221 was provided through the Australian Commonwealth Our Marine Parks Grant program to the Northern Prawn Fishery, with the aim to find innovative ways to minimise sawfish bycatch.
 - In June 2020 a collaborative project with researchers, fishery managers and threatened species managers was commenced, to collect and archive genetic samples from all sawfish species captured as bycatch in the Northern Prawn Fishery. Fishers are assisting researchers to collect and store samples to allow for a larger Close-Kin-Mark-Recapture project to be undertaken for Australian sawfish species; thereby leading to a better understanding of species populations. In 2020 the Australian Government has provided \$73,045 in funding for this project.
- Australia is the Oceania representative on the CMS Sharks MOU Advisory Committee and Dr Michelle Heupel from the Australian Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (University of Tasmania) is a member of the Sharks MoU Conservation Working Group. Two Australian non-government organisation are Cooperating Partners to the CMS Sharks MoU, the Humane Society International and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

- The 4th Meeting of the CMS Sharks MOU Advisory Committee was due to be held in Hobart, Australia, in December 2020. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions this meeting was cancelled. The Advisory Committee has continued to work through its workplan with monthly 2-hour remote meetings since December 2020. Australia has represented Oceania at these meetings.

Cook Islands

Though not currently a signatory to the Sharks MOU, the Cook Islands also affords formal legal protection to the three CMS listed migratory species of sharks present in its waters (Shortfin Mako, *Isurus oxyrinchus*; Common Thresher, *Alopias vulpinus*; and Oceanic Whitetip, *Carcharhinus longimanus*) through the Marine Resources (Shark Conservation) Regulations 2012, established under the Marine Resources Act 2005.

New Zealand

The conservation and management of sharks continues to be undertaken consistent with the MoU Sharks and our current (2013) NPOA Sharks. New Zealand is currently reviewing our NPOA Sharks, with a revised NPOA Sharks expected by early 2022. The New Zealand National Report, provided in 2018 is here: https://www.cms.int/sharks/sites/default/files/document/CMS_Sharks_MOS3_National%20Report_New%20Zealand.pdf

Philippines

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources strictly implements its no take policy for whale shark and continuously collaborate with the Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute of the Philippines (LAMAVE) for advocacy and research on Whale sharks, specifically on Population dynamics and connectivity, Sustainability of tourism, Long-term population monitoring, Construction of a national catalog through individual identification of whale sharks and Movement patterns and distribution. LAMAVE uses its research findings to lobby for further protection of the species in both the country and across the Southeast Asian region. Whale shark conservation efforts are focused in four sites across the Philippines, namely Donsol, Oslob, Southern Leyte, and Palawan.

Samoa

- Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS) 2020 – 2030 finalized and officially launched. One of the Integrated Management Solution (IMS) of the SOS is '*Establish effective protection and management of endangered marine migratory species*' under the key thematic area of Species of Special Interest in which sharks and rays are of priority. One of the Objective identified under this IMS is to develop an Integrated Management Plan for whales, dolphins, sharks, mantas, marine turtles and seabirds. SPREP has secured funding support for Samoa and are working in collaboration to implement this. https://www.mnre.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Samoa-Ocean-Strategy_2020-2030.pdf
- Conducted review of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022 – 2026 by SPREP and provided comments on the Shark and Ray Action Plan
- Promote information for wider public awareness through:
 - Development and display of CITES pull-up banners at Faleolo international airport in various language – English, Samoan, Chinese
 - construction of information holder displays stands with shark and ray artwork and narrative, for the Faleolo international airport
 - Developed and printed information posters of Samoa's shark posters both in English and Samoan
 - An article on Samoa's Shark Sanctuary for the Malaga inflight magazine

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (Dugong dugon) and their Habitats throughout their Range (Dugong MOU)

Australia

The Australian Government is implementing conservation and management actions to address our national and regional priorities identified under the CMS Dugong MoU and Conservation and Management Plan.

Key initiatives towards dugong conservation and management include:

- The Australian Government provided in-kind support to the value of approximately US\$85 million, to implement global initiatives under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project (2015 – 2018). The goal of this project was to improve the conservation effectiveness of seagrass ecosystems that support globally significant populations of dugong across the Indian and Pacific Ocean Basins.
- The Australian Government supports a range of research and management actions aimed at the conservation and management of dugongs including, large-scale aerial surveys to determine their distribution and relative abundance, genetic studies, seagrass surveys, dugong protection areas to minimise impacts of gill netting, go slow areas to minimise impacts of boat strike, and building the capacity of Indigenous people to undertake dugong monitoring and management.
- Dugong are of great cultural significance to many Indigenous communities across northern Australia and in many areas dugong management is undertaken through agreed community-based management plans, traditional use of marine resource agreements (TUMRAs) or as a priority in Ranger work programs.

Philippines

- Completion of the national Dugong Conservation Action Plan
- BMB Technical Bulletin No. 2020-04, Adopting the Philippine Aquatic Wildlife Rescue and Response Manual, Series on Marine Turtles and Marine Mammals

Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region (Pacific Islands Cetaceans MOU)

Australia

Australia will participate in the 4th Meeting of the Signatories to the Pacific Islands Cetaceans MoU, scheduled to occur on 5 – 6 August 2021.

Cook Islands

The Cook Islands intend to be present at the 4th meeting of the signatories to the Pacific Islands Cetaceans MOU (MOS4) next month (August 2021) and are currently in preparation for this meeting with cross-agency discussions.

The Cook Islands continue to strengthen the operationalization of its 1.9million km² multi-use marine park Marae Moana, which is legislated under the Marae Moana Act 2017, through continued efforts to progress marine spatial planning (MSP). Once in place, MSP will provide greater protection to Pacific Islands cetaceans and other CMS listed migratory species present in Cook Islands waters through appropriate zoning measures. Within this reporting period this has been supported by the GEF-5 funded Ridge-to-Reef project, which closed on 6th June 2021. The Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group (TAG) have met on several occasions throughout the reporting period and an updated work plan has recently been developed to continue progress in this area.

Renewed plans are also in place to formally legislate the Cook Islands waters as a Whale Sanctuary through regulations developed by the Ministry of Marine Resources, with support from the Marae Moana Coordination Office housed within the Office of the Prime Minister and NGO Cook Islands Whale Research. This would afford additional formal protection to the three CMS listed migratory species of cetaceans found within the Cook Islands (Southern Right Whale, *Eubalaena australis*; Humpback Whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*; and Blue Whale, *Balaenoptera musculus*).

New Zealand

New Zealand plans to participate in the 4th Meeting of Signatories of the Pacific Cetaceans MOU in August 2021.

Key projects New Zealand has undertaken in relation to migratory cetaceans include:

- Surveying the distribution, movements and counts of humpback whales using the seas off Fiordland; and
- Supporting an Auckland University research project on Southern Right Whales at the Auckland Islands including collecting biopsy samples for genetic research, satellite tagging of animals and determining numbers breeding at this location. See here to read about the project and see the tracks: <https://www.tohoravoyages.ac.nz/tracks-of-the-tohora/>; and
- Coordinating a trial using high definition satellite imagery to detect southern right whales at the Auckland Islands. If successful (i.e. that they can identify and count whales using satellite imagery) this will over time potentially become a useful tool for wider-scale monitoring across the vast NZ EEZ.

Samoa

- Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS) 2020 – 2030 finalized and officially launched. One of the Integrated Management Solution (IMS) of the SOS is '*Establish effective protection and management of endangered marine migratory species*' under the key thematic area of Species of Special Interest in which whales and dolphins are of priority. One of the Objective identified under this IMS is to develop an Integrated Management Plan for whales, dolphins, sharks, mantas, marine turtles and seabirds. Thus, SPREP has secured funding support for Samoa and are working in collaboration to implement the development of this Plan.
- Samoa through the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources signed an MOU with Conservation International and the Blue Prosperity Coalition to support the implementation of the SOS. Through this agreement, monitoring survey for whales and dolphins is financially supported.
- Provided comments on the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan as part of Samoa's review of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022 – 2026 by SPREP
- Working in partnership with SPREP to implement the Enforcing Environmental Treaties in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries-Phase III (ACP MEAs 3) Project with regards to the identification and establishment of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) for Samoa
- Samoa has secured funding support by IUCN to purchase research boat for marine work and in support of research and monitoring surveys of cetaceans.

Other initiatives

2. Resolutions and Decisions

Australia

Resolution 13.5 – Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife

Since CMS COP13 the Australian Government has been implementing the Australian *National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife* through:

- Raising awareness of the impacts of light pollution on wildlife and ecosystems through public events, citizen science programs, community engagement and knowledge sharing;
- Incorporating the effects of light pollution in environmental decision making through promoting best practice light management, and a risk-assessed adaptive management approach to light pollution;
- Working with peak industry bodies to find creative solutions to light pollution impacts on wildlife and ecosystems; and
- Encouraging and supporting scientific research on the impacts of artificial light on wildlife.

New Zealand

Resolution 12.21 - Climate Change and Migratory Species

New Zealand commissioned two reports to look at the risks that climate change poses to our migratory seabirds and marine mammals and to identify mitigation measures that can be undertaken to reduce the impact of climate change on these species

Resolution 13.5 – Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife

Trails were undertaken to assess the impacts of different types of lighting technology and colours on seabirds at both seabird colonies and at-sea

Philippines

Resolution 12.23 - Sustainable Tourism and Migratory Species

A National policy was issued (Joint Memorandum Circular No.01 -2020 (Department of Tourism, Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Interior and Local Government and Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources) on the “*Rules and Regulations Governing the Conduct of Marine Wildlife Tourism Interactions in the Philippines*” which includes guidance for interaction with Marine turtle, dugong, whale shark, and marine mammals);

Resolution 12.24 - Promoting Marine Protected Area Networks in the ASEAN Region

Initiatives to advance the implementation of the marine protected area network is being pursued within the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reef, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF). The Sulu-Sulawesi seascape within the jurisdiction of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines is the focus area of the CTI-CFF Plan of Action. In the 2018, Philippines convened the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape Convergence Meeting to pursue the vision of a Transboundary Marine Protected Area Network to protect marine turtles among other charismatic marine wildlife in interconnected critical habitats across Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. For 2020 to 2021, virtual meetings were undertaken to develop the road map for the establishment of Marine turtle and Whale shark Marine Protected Area network.

Resolution 12.25 - Promoting Conservation of Critical Intertidal and other Coastal Habitats for Migratory Species

The DENR under its broad programs on wetland conservation, coastal marine ecosystems management program and wildlife conservation program, and Protected Areas System continuously seek opportunities to set aside and manage critical intertidal and coastal habitat for migratory species through various ecosystem management modalities (Local Conservation Area, Critical Habitat (for threatened species) and Protected Area under the Protected Areas System Law.

COP12 Resolution 12.6 (Wildlife Disease and Migratory Species)

National policy Joint DENR-DA-and DOH Administrative Order 02-2020 on the Guidelines to Operationalize the Inter-agency Committee on Zoonoses, emphasizing the adoption of one health approach in managing the risks of zoonosis and prescribes the active disease surveillance among wildlife including migratory birds.

*COP12/Doc.25.1.12 - Proposal for the Inclusion of the Black Noddy (*Anous minutus*) Subspecies *worcesteri* on Appendix II of the Convention*

Monitoring of the Black Noddy is undertaken in Tubbataha Reef Natural Park, the only site the species is known to occur. A decreasing trend in the population of the species was noted from 4,473 in 2018 to 2,072 in 2019. Attributed to the drying up of nesting trees, the bird no longer has a place to build its nest and raise its young. The Park is currently experimenting on a sturdier structure on which they could build their nests.

*COP12/Doc.26.2.7 - Proposal for a Concerted Action for the Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*)*

See above (under whale MOU) for related activities on this resolution

Resolution 11.16 – The Prevention of Illegal Killing and Trade of Migratory Birds

National Wildlife laws (R.A. 9147) which prohibit the taking of birds is being enforced. The adoption of the Wildlife Law Enforcement and Action Plan (DAO 2020-13) aims to strengthen the collective action to address the underlying causes and drivers of illegal wildlife collection and trade.

Resolution 11.10 - Synergies and Partnerships

- The Philippines remains active as member to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) as an avenue for interaction and collaboration to promote the objective of the Convention especially, among the ASEAN Member countries. The Philippines has participated in the Regional Project, Improving Biodiversity Conservation of Wetlands and Migratory Waterbirds in the ASEAN Region Phase I being coordinated by the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity and Singapore to advance the management of flyway networks in East Asia. The first phase was completed in October 2020 that assisted seven ASEAN countries (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand) in identifying characterization of internationally important sites along the EAAF. The Second Phase of the Project to further assist the countries in the management of the identified internationally important site has been approved by the ASEAN Secretariat for implementation in 2022.
- The implementation of the Ramsar Convention address the conservation of migratory species and management of their habitats through various protected area management modalities. Currently, the Philippines has eight Ramsar sites which are important habitats of migratory species: Negros Occidental Coastal Wetlands Conservation Area, Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary; Naujan Lake National; Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary; Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park; Las Pinas-Paranaque Wetland Park; and Sasmuan Wetland Critical Habitat and Eco-tourism Area.
- The Philippines continued to exercise its role in advancing the objectives of the CMS under the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reef, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF). The Coral Triangle Initiative is a regional cooperation of six-member countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste) with shared jurisdiction over the most diverse marine eco-region in the world. CTI-CFF Regional Plan of Action (RPOA)

includes actions for conservation of threatened and charismatic species, establishment of marine protected area networks (for marine turtles and whale sharks) and transboundary seascape management. Series of virtual meetings were undertaken between 2020- June 2021 to refine/update the RPOA.

- Participation to the annual Asian Waterbird Count undertaken every January of the year.

3. Activities planned for next year

Australia

Australia will be hosting the 11th Meeting of Partners of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership in Brisbane. This meeting will bring together 18 national governments, intergovernmental organisations and the international business sector to address the most pressing threats to migratory waterbirds and their habitats. The 11th Meeting of Partners is currently tentatively scheduled to occur in March 2022.

Cook Islands

- Finalisation and launch of the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Agenda (NSDA) 2020+, following on from the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2016-2020 and its predecessors. This will guide the country's priorities and directly links to the SDGs and other MEA goals. The continued focus on the management, conservation and protection of biodiversity, including migratory species and their habitats, is included in these goals and will drive further action in this area.
- Development of a new National Environment Policy has been in progress since 2020 under the National Environment Service, which is planned to be passed by Cabinet later this year. This will inform an updated National Environment bill for enhanced management, conservation and protection of biodiversity and protected areas, including migratory species and their habitats, to respond to changing conditions and emerging pressures.
- The Cook Islands joins 13 other Pacific Island nations in the GEF Islands to Islands (I2I) regional project (recently approved at the June 2021 GEF Council meeting) to support development of sustainable blue economies (SBE). National level activities are still to be decided in consultation with key stakeholders, but may include further MSP development which would benefit CMS listed species. Total project investment across all islands is USD\$15m with co-financing provided from the Cook Islands.
- The Cook Islands recently received approval at the June 2021 GEF Council meeting for its national GEF 7 project proposal within the GEF biodiversity focal area. The project is to include the uninhabited whole-island protected areas of Takutea and Suwarow, both of which provide essential migratory habitat to the CMS listed Bristle Thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*). Total project investment is USD\$4m from GEF with USD\$26m in co-financing from the Cook Islands.
- Cook Islands based NGO Sharks Pacific founder and executive director Jessica Cramp recently completed a PhD through James Cook University on the effectiveness of large scale marine reserves on wide-ranging sharks, using the Cook Islands as a case study. In the coming year Sharks Pacific will continue deployment of satellite tags within the Cook Islands on Oceanic Whitetip Sharks from industrial and recreational vessels; work with industrial fishers to identify factors and timing of capture of Oceanic Whitetip and Shortfin Mako Sharks; expand a pilot project to develop mitigation measures for local fishers interacting with pelagic sharks at anchored FADs; continue training of locals in research methods and rationale; work alongside fishers and the Ministry of Marine Resources to develop safe release guidelines for oceanic sharks; and investigate whether the Cook Islands have important habitat for Oceanic Whitetips, due to the presence of multiple size classes present in our waters. Cramp will also be formally publishing much of the research relating to her PhD in the coming year.
- Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will continue to implement its recently revised work plan to progress national priorities in the marine space, which includes the tabling of the first Marae Moana Outlook Report to the Marae Moana Council & Prime Minister in line with S.34

of the Marae Moana Act 2017. These actions will continue to strengthen the management and operationalization of Marae Moana, which includes the conservation of migratory marine species within it.

- National Environment Service continue to participate in protected area management effectiveness training sessions led by SPREP to increase the success of PAs in achieving their management objectives, which in many cases include the protection/conservation of migratory species and their habitats.

New Zealand

- New Zealand will attend the 11th Meeting of Partners of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership in Brisbane in 2022.
- Continued implementation of New Zealand's National Plan of Action for Seabirds to continue working towards zero seabird bycatch. This includes a range of fisheries outreach and education activities, bycatch mitigation research and development, monitoring and compliance of fishing activity and international collaboration.
- Seek to develop and progress a range of bilateral and multi-lateral cooperative projects to understand and manage seabird bycatch risks across the range of vulnerable seabirds. This includes continued implementation of the seabird conservation arrangement between the governments of New Zealand and Chile.
- Continued active support of the work of ACAP including through official roles.
- A range of seabird bycatch reduction research, education and monitoring activities were undertaken, sharing findings through ACAP meetings.
- Continued protection of a large number of breeding sites of ACAP-listed and other migratory species.
- Continued active participation in RFMOs to which New Zealand is member to understand and manage seabird bycatch, in alignment with the ACAP RFMO Engagement Strategy
- There is a full programme planned for field work and satellite tracking on Antipodean albatross, southern Buller's albatross, light-mantled sooty albatross, white-capped albatross and Westland petrels. Further demographic monitoring of northern royal albatross and northern Buller's albatross, black petrels and flesh-footed shearwaters. Further work on white-chinned petrels at Antipodes island.

Philippines

- Continuing implementation of the above activities as part of the regular program of the Department or commitment to regional action plan;
- Development and initial implementation of the proposed national seabird action plan;
- Site specific interventions for marine turtle and dugong habitats;
- Disease surveillance on migratory birds; and
- Participation to the Phase 2 of the ASEAN Flyway Network Site project to support the management of wetlands of international importance to migratory waterbirds

Samoa

- Develop the Integrated Management Plan for whales, dolphins, sharks, mantas, marine turtles and seabirds;
- Whales and dolphins monitoring survey;
- Implement the ACP-MEAs3 project; and
- Successful procurement of marine research boat.