

# 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC5)

28 June to 9 July 2021, online

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## CHAIR'S REPORT ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE AVIAN WORKING GROUP 1<sup>st</sup> July (13:30-16:00hrs CET) and 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 (13:30-15.30hrs CET)

**Membership of the Working Group:** 27 Main and alternate members of the ScC and CAC, ten observers and nine Secretariat staff.

The Avian Working Group examined all the documents assigned to it and concluded its business. An in-session document with comments and edits, was prepared for the Programme of Work.

### 1. Programme of Work for the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council for the intersessional period between COP13 and COP14

The working group reviewed the table in document ScC-SC5/Doc.3/Annex/Part D Avian Species Conservation issues line by line.

#### 1.1. Tasks already included in the draft POW

#### Res. 11.17 (Rev. COP13) and Dec.13.35 African-Eurasian Migratory Land Birds

- The African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP) is aimed at improving the conservation status of migratory landbird species in the African-Eurasian region through the international coordination of action for these species, and catalysing action at the national level. The overall goal is to develop an initial overarching, strategic framework for action at the international level to conserve, restore and sustainably manage populations of migratory landbird species and their habitats. Mandates concerning African Eurasian Migratory Land Birds Action Plan are expected to be addressed by the ScC mainly through the AEML Working Group.
- Olivier Biber (OB), Chair of the AEML Working Group, informed the Avian Working Group that a coordination unit for the AEMLAP has recently been established at the Swiss Ornithological Institute (SOI). Some funds to support coordination activities have been made available by the Swiss Government. The AWG expressed appreciation to the SOI and the Swiss Government for their generous support. While activity of the AEML Working Group on the international level has been hampered in recent years by lack of funds, progress towards the implementation of the Action Plan has happened thanks to work by NGOs, governments, the EU and other stakeholders. Now that the AEML WG will be reactivated thanks to SOI coordination, the POW of the WG, that was valid till COP13, is expected to be revised and a new POW will be produced for the next six years. The new POW is expected to include a clear set of indicators that will be helpful for reporting in the future.
- Paragraph 14The Avian WG expressed wide ranging support for the Single-Species Action Plans for the European Roller, European Turtle Dove and Yellow-breasted Bunting. Regarding the Action Plan for the Turtle Dove, it was noted that the CMS Executive Secretary had sent a letter to all Range States in May 2021, calling for support for its implementation.
- Regarding the Membership of AEML Working Group (Dec 13.35) working on AEMLAP, Olivier Biber stressed that it is important to include experts from all the geographical scope of the Plan, but it is also crucial to have physical meetings, as technology has limitations especially for bringing on board new members. A physical meeting was foreseen for 2022 if funds became available.

- BirdLife informed the group that was undertaking an analysis of satellite tracked birds working with a PhD student from Montpellier, and the analysis was providing interesting information on various aspects of their biology and threats. BirdLife announced also that it was planning a workshop during the Pan- African Ornithological congress on research on migrants, to support networking for researchers, and the science-policy agenda, and would work with Migratory Landbird Study Group (MLSG).

#### [Res. 10.11 \(Rev. COP13\) Power lines and migratory birds](#)

- Requests the Scientific Council, specifically the Working Groups on birds and flyways, to monitor the implementation of this Resolution and to provide further guidance when relevant new developments on reducing the impact of power lines on birds become available, such as improved mitigation techniques and standardized monitoring protocols;
- Avian WG was informed that the USAID had launched a study to assess the capacity of Asian countries to deploy linear infrastructure in a friendly way, given the growth expected in the next years, and to what extent the Asian species and habitats can be safeguarded.

#### [Dec 13.107 \(a-e\) Energy Task Force](#)

- The mandate is addressed primarily to Energy Task Force, and the ScC is requested to play a supporting role. As the ScC was not represented as such on the ETF, some mechanism or channel to ensure liaison between the two bodies should be identified. A few Sessional Committee members participate in the ETF as either members or observers, and could play an active role. The Secretariat could also play a role in ensuring liaison between ScC and ETF.

#### [Res. 12.11 \(Rev.COP13\) Flyways](#)

- Recognizing that a flyways approach is necessary to ensure adequate conservation and sustainable use of migratory birds throughout their ranges.
- The Chair highlighted that in response to the Res. 12.11 request for ScC to produce Terms of Reference for a mandate to produce guidelines and/or case studies on mechanisms to enhance the conservation of migratory birds through site networks, it was important to share existing resources from the flyways network, and not only to develop Terms of Reference.
- The Flyways Working group warmly thanked outgoing Chair Taej Mundkur (TM) from Wetlands International and appointed as new Chair Rob Clay, COP Appointed Councillor
- TM had been Chair of the Group since its start and for the last three triennia. He acknowledged existing gaps and called for the need to reach out to new Councillors and bring new people and expertise to the Group. He highlighted the need for greater engagement from other Flyways, such as the Americas and the Central Asian.
- The new Chair explained that although there was no clear mandate from COP13 regarding the link between the Americas Flyways Framework Task Force and the Flyways Working Group, he hoped to invigorate collaboration and linkages, especially since he was based in the Americas.
- Regarding the Central Asian Flyway there was discussion that the Action Plan needed to be resuscitated and the site network extended. Suresh Kumar confirmed the willingness of the Government of India to proceed with activities along the Central Asian Flyway but highlighted the need for support from CMS and the WG.

#### [Dec 13.29 Illegal Bird Killing in the Mediterranean](#)

- Decision 13.29 mandates the undertaking of a scientific review on the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds, as well as illegal trade of birds across Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia to enable Parties, policy instruments and NGOs to set appropriate priorities to address the issue.
- BirdLife announced that it had been undertaking a desk review on mortality factors for birds (legal and illegal) in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- It was raised that the groups on Aquatic and Terrestrial species also had elements about illegal killing in their workplans and it would be good if they could coordinate closely with the Avian Group. This could provide better opportunities for fundraising, too.
- Fernando Spina (FS) mentioned the work being undertaken by ISPRA on the Eurasian African bird migration atlas using ringing data, and explained the analysis being done under the 'Causes of intentional killing' module. Taking into account data on killing of birds in Africa, this would contribute to a better understanding of seasonal killing patterns in Africa. The project was to be completed by February 2022. He mentioned that determining what was legal and what was illegal killing was very difficult due to the lack of information about the legislation in force at the time of the killing. The study was expected to provide interesting information about the impact of the Birds Directive, too.
- The Avian WG also took note of an issue of concern raised with potential unsustainable harvest levels of shorebirds in Martinique. However, there was no current mandate regarding this point.

#### Dec 13.30 Illegal Bird Killing in the Mediterranean (Mist nets)

- Decision 13.30 states that in order to prevent illegal trapping of birds and with funds permitting, and working with the Secretariats of other relevant multilateral environmental agreements, contribute as appropriate to a global situation analysis on production, sale, use and regulation of use of mist nets, and other sorts of nets used for bird trapping
- The Avian WG discussed that the global Terms of Reference would extend to any nets used to trap birds deliberately and the different collaborators that could aid in the analysis of such a specialised issue. The purpose would be to monitor any nets used to trap birds and regulate production and sale including coming up with the score and definition of what is meant by mist net and the scope of the review.

## **2. Action Plans for Birds (ScC-SC5/Doc.6.1.1 Action Plan for the Yellow-breasted Bunting)**

- Olivier Biber, Chair of AEML, explained the situation with the Action Plan and the reasons for the delays in adopting this plan. The main issue with the delay was that China, which was one of the most important Range States for this species was not a CMS party.
- The experience with four other action plan species, specifically the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, the Chinese Crested Tern, the Black-faced Spoonbill and the Far Eastern Curlew for which China was a very important Range State was highlighted. In all those cases China was very supportive of the Action Plans because they had been adopted through the East Asian- Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) to which China is a partner. The EAAFP however, covers only waterbirds. The fact that there is no equivalent agreement/partnership that covers passerines was discussed.
- The Avian Working Group was comfortable with the proposed way forward and timetable towards further development of the Action Plan for the Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*), with the caveat that all Range States are onboard.

### Dec. 13.51 Conservation African-Eurasian Vultures:

- Decision 13.51 states that the Scientific Council is authorized to liaise with the Vulture Working Group and the IUCN Vulture Specialist Group, via the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MoU to address key gaps in knowledge as highlighted within the Vulture Multispecies Action Plan, subject to the availability of resources.
- The Raptors MoU Secretariat informed that communication materials on NSAIDS and their impact to scavenger populations are being prepared for dissemination within parties and key stakeholders.

### **1.2 Emerging issues/new items to be included in the POW:**

#### Res 11.16 (Rev COP13), Annex 2 Illegal hunting, taking and trade of migratory birds in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway

- The request for the addition refers to the establishment of an East -Asian Australasian Task Force on Illegal hunting, taking and trade of migratory birds, similar to the one already in existence for the Mediterranean.

#### Res 12.11 (Rev COP13), Annex 1 MoU on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Birds and their Habitats (addition to the POW)

- The purpose of the addition is to express the support the implementation of the action plan of the MOU on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Birds and their Habitats

### **General comments and emerging issues from the Working Group to be considered by Plenary**

#### Illegal Killing and Mutilation of Seabirds

- The Avian WG took note and strongly encouraged any interested Parties and Members of the ScC to contribute to intersessional efforts led by the Aquatic WG regarding a very disturbing paper about mutilation of seabirds (albatrosses and petrels) in fisheries off Brazil. The issue is being followed by Seabird bycatch working group which created a sub-group on seabird mutilation and will prepare a more substantive paper for ACAP.

#### Workload and requests to ScC and reporting

- The Avian WG called for the identification before COP14 of the expectations from the COP as regards ScC activity in the next intersessional period by analysing draft resolutions and decisions submitted to COP, in order to have an overview of the expected volume of work for the ScC (and raise a flag if out the workload is of control)
- It also called for the undertaking of a review of the body of requests to the ScC arising from existing POWs, Action Plans, (e.g. Flyways, AEMLAP, ...)
- Finally, the Avian Working group also raised concern about the many different reporting obligations and asked for targeted and efficient reporting.