

REPORT FROM THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN REGION TO THE 23RD MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO THE CONVENTION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS (CMS)

It is important to address the most relevant issues before the members of this Committee, which have developed since the 22nd Standing Committee Meeting, held in this city, in September 2000.

We would first like to state that our region, the Americas and the Caribbean, still faces the problem of scarce country representation.

Being a wide geographic region with remarkable biodiversity, the accession of more members is still necessary. To date we only have six Parties (Argentina, Chile, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay). It is necessary to emphasize that such a large geographical region, running almost from the Arctic to the Antarctic, so wide and rich in fauna, containing important marine currents and renowned migratory routes, has an uneven and poor country representation, totalling less than 8% of CMS Contracting Parties.

It is important to highlight the progress achieved at the Latin-American Regional Workshop held in Lima at the end of October. The event had the important participation from the following countries in the region: Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Representatives from Agreements and treaties such as: the Cartagena Convention, the Andean Community (Comunidad Andina de Naciones) and Ramsar also participated. Likewise, more than 12 representatives from NGOs and other institutions were present.

Argentina: Referred to some of the milestones reached after almost ten years of implementation of the Convention in that country. The Franciscana project (*Pontoporia blainvillei*) approved in June 1998 in the Netherlands has not yet been implemented. The three range countries (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) are in contact regarding the developments taking place and coordinate research on this endemic dolphin of the Plata basin and adjacent waters, particularly in relation to the estimate of its abundance, stock identity and mortality rate. The increasing threats to their populations derived from anthropogenic impacts, results in the capture of more than 1200 individuals per annum (Crespo, pers. com.).

The South Andean Deer project (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*), signed in the Netherlands on July 1998, is being developed by the Fundación Vida Silvestre from Argentina and the Glaciares National Park. This seriously threatened cervid is distributed along the south Andean region of Argentina and Chile. It needs special attention aiming at the preservation and recovery of the species. Appropriate information was provided on the completion of an observatory and the installation of two telescopes to perform research on the environmental impacts that threaten this species.

The Andean Flamingo project (*Phoenicopterus jamesi*, *P. andinus* and *P. chilensis*) is being conducted successfully in the Andean Altiplano region. Countries participating in the project are: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru. In order to know the status of the population, four censuses were carried out and about 222 wetlands have been surveyed (85% are in the high Andean plateau, more than 3000 m.a.s.l.), 20 of them are key wetlands for the species' reproduction. The work performed by the Group on the Conservation of Andean Flamingos (GCFA) was described, as well as the important developments reached by each country on such a taxing task. The follow-up of individuals through radio-telemetry will be put into practice in the near future; this is an important challenge that will allow conclusions regarding the sensitive causes of decline for these species to be obtained. Unfortunately, no recovery of the flamingo populations has been detected and it has to be further stated that the predation threats caused by ostriches (*Pterocnemia pennata*) and the Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*) may be a reason for that lack of recovery (Ricalde, pers. com.). The Scientific Councillor for the Neotropics, Dr. Roberto Schlatter, stated that this project has been selected as an invaluable example to other international organizations.

The Ruddy-headed Goose project (*Chloephaga rubidiceps*) is being carried out in Argentina and Chile. Wetlands International was responsible for this research between June 1999 and July 2000, working together with the following institutions: Dirección de Fauna of Argentina, Cooperación Nacional Forestal (CONAF) and Servicio Agrícola Ganadero (SAG) of Chile. This Austral goose species nests in Patagonia and the Tierra del Fuego region. Its main breeding area is located in the southern Buenos Aires province. This is a restricted and small-sized population. The dramatic situation faced by this species is due to the threat they face from farmers, inexperienced and illegal hunters, as well as the Patagonian grey fox (*Pseudalopex griseus*). The latter species was imported to the Tierra del Fuego Island in 1950 to control a plague constituted by millions of introduced European rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*).

It is important to mention that there is a stable population of about 25,000 individuals that do not migrate based on the Malvinas/Falkland Islands. Therefore, IUCN does not consider this species to be an endangered one. Presently the population of Ruddy-headed Geese does not reach more than 1,000 individuals (Blanco, pers. com.). It has recently been declared as a "Natural Provincial Monument" by the government of the Buenos Aires province. The publication "Manual for the conservation of the ruddy-headed geese (*Chloephaga rubidiceps*) in Argentina and Chile" was printed in June with the support of the CMS Secretariat and Wetlands International.

Since 1992 Wetlands International has been working on the Buff-breasted sandpiper project (*Tryngites subruficollis*) as well as with other Charadriiformes.

Activity on the grassland passerines project began soon after COP 6, held in Cape Town in 1999. It is of utmost importance to gather more information in order to improve the knowledge about the "dragon" (*Agelaius flavus*), one of the most endangered species within this group.

Chile: Highlighted the developments attained in relation to the above mentioned projects (Ruddy-headed geese and Andean Flamingos). It also stated the interest shared with Peru on the marine otter (*Lontra felina*), the Humboldt penguin (*Spheniscus humboldti*) and the Southern river otter (*Lontra provocax*). The need to include 3 species to Appendix I was mentioned: the Peruvian diving petrel (*Pelecanoides garnotii*), the puffin (*Puffinus creatopus*) and a petrel species (Procellariidae).

Regarding the inclusion in Appendix I of the Peruvian diving petrel, with a current estimated population of 1,500 couples on Choros island, the need for concerted action was stressed to support projects.

Paraguay: Reported on the CDC database that includes 130 migratory birds and other species and about the importance of including this information in the National Biodiversity Strategy. They are currently focusing on environmental education actions and exchange of information.

Peru: Presented information about their Appendix II species proposals for a parrot species "perico macareno" (*Brotogeris pyrropterus*) shared with Ecuador and whose population is drastically decreasing, the giant squid (*Dosidicus gigas*) shared with Chile, sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) shared with Ecuador and other countries, the Amazon manatee (*Trichechus inunguis*) shared with Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, the Brazilian giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), shared with Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and other countries, the sea lion (*Otaria flavescens*) and "el lobo marino fino" (*Arctocephalus australis*) shared with Chile. Regarding the last two mentioned species, Uruguay stated that the island and Atlantic coastal populations do not perform a proper migration but instead they have regional displacements. It was stated later that field activities would commence with the Humboldt penguin (*Spheniscus humboldti*) and the southern marine otter (*Lontra felina*) with the support of the CMS.

Uruguay: Provided information about the South American workshop on Albatross and Petrel Conservation held in Punta del Este last September. This event was organized by the NGO Birds of Uruguay and BirdLife International. The following countries were represented: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Malvinas/Falklands, Paraguay, Spain and South Africa. At this meeting the delegates

discussed the following issues: By-catch of albatross and petrels -stressing what happens to these pelagic marine birds in their marine territories. Different mitigation measures implemented on fishing trawlers were described. The objective is to diminish one of the main causes of population decline in these species which results in catastrophic mortality levels (250 to 300 thousand birds/year). Twenty out of 24 albatross species have been placed on the endangered species list.

During the above-mentioned event the South American Strategy for the Preservation of Albatross and Petrels (ESCAPE) was introduced and discussed, its aim is to reduce the accidental capture of these Procellariiformes. It is important to stress this issue in South America, as the reproduction of many albatross species and petrels takes place within this territory and its surrounding areas.

Within this context we need to point out the concern of the General Directorate of Natural Renewable Resources as the CMS National focal point, that Uruguay has not yet signed the Agreement on "Albatross and Petrel conservation" (ACAP), concluded in Cape Town, in February 2001. This Agreement has already been signed by many countries, including important countries within our region such as: Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru. In Uruguay to date, the ACAP is being evaluated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they have been briefed by the Department of Fauna.

The need to take action in order to reach Agreements directed at improving the conservation status of some migratory species of special interest, was stressed. Countries included within the range should collaborate in order to achieve concerted actions that will enable the establishment of Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding that provide greater protection to some species, such as: "picazo pochard" (*Netta peposaca*), White-faced Whistling duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*), that represent ducks of hunting interest because of their annual migration between Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, Black-necked Swan (*Cygnus melanocorypha*), migratory from the southern wetlands and influenced by drought episodes within its habitat. The concern already expressed regarding some of the species that belong to its territory was underscored, species such as the Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) one of the greater migrants and the Franciscana dolphin (*Pontoporia blainvillei*).

The Carumbe project is currently under development by some biologists and students of the Science Faculty of the "Universidad de la Republica". The purpose of this project is to gather more information and increase the research on the four marine turtles, the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and Ridley Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*). These turtles are present in Uruguayan waters and are listed in Appendix I of the CMS.

With regard to migratory sea birds, it was pointed out that from 104 Procellariiformes species existing worldwide, Uruguay has 26. It was added that of these, a total of 5 species belong to the Diomedidae family and 5 of the 17 species that belong to the Procellariidae family are included in Appendix II of the Convention. The mortality rates derived by the accidental capture by fishing activities with long-lines is of great concern. It was stated that since 1998 the "National Program of on board observers" has been carried out and a series of mitigation measures from the long-line vessel fleet are taking place.

Unfortunately, the final results of the Albatross and Petrel project have not been delivered to the Secretariat by Mr. Adrian Stagi, partly due to the health problems of his director Dr. Raul Vaz-Ferreira. Nevertheless, some approximate figures were disclosed taking into account the addition of daily captures between 4 a.m. and 6 p.m. The incidental capture represented 2.3 birds/1000 hooks. Other related research provided the following figures: 0.2, 0.3 and 0.5 birds/1000 hooks on fishing held in Uruguayan waters, North Uruguayan waters and adjacent waters around the Southern Georgian islands, respectively. These figures can fluctuate and range from 7.4 - 57.2 birds/1000 hooks when related to innovative technology fishing methods (Stagi, pers. com.).

According to this research, it was found that 64% of the incidental captures were of the White-chinned Petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*) and 27% to Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea*

melonophris). The capture of Black-crowned Petrel (*Puffinus gravis*) and Southern Giant Petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*) (Stagi, pers. com.), was found to be secondary.

Many participants to the Workshop held in Lima stressed that careful analysis is required before presenting a proposal to include any species in the Appendices. It was considered necessary to make it clear that each country has a responsibility with regard to national migration. As a result of this, the Parties were requested to consider the need to adjust as much as possible to the biological concept of migration, and consider the basic criteria and the relevant concepts for incorporation, analyzing thoroughly the migratory characteristics of the species, the periods and the predictability of movements. Dr. Schlatter added that the "priority" criteria related to the endangered status that certain species face must be taken into consideration.

Uruguay stated that adding more species to the CMS would not produce any benefits as a protection framework unless other further measures are pursued. Similar to the CITES appendix where thousands of species of many Orders and entire families have been added, that might be endangered in the wild but are not necessarily subject of commerce.

It is necessary to mention that in Recommendation 4, the scarce representation of Latin American and Caribbean countries as Contracting Parties was underscored as well as the need to reach the political and technical authorities of the countries of the region. It was recommended to the Secretariat to visit non-member countries in order to promote awareness among the decision-makers and authorities.

Further, in Recommendation 5 the great importance of the region for migratory species was recognized together with the need to provide further support to the Contracting Parties. Independently to the funds provided to the Trust Fund of CMS, full support to the Parties to attend the Convention meetings was recommended, as they are developing countries.

We would like to state our region's concern on a previous agreement reached by the Standing Committee, regarding financing of the member countries to attend different CMS meetings. Presently, we already have two countries (Argentina and Chile) in the "developed" countries category and in the near future Peru will also join the list. As a result, this is seen as a discrimination against the Americas and the Caribbean.

As we know, CMS constitutes an International Treaty with a large European contingent. One of the Convention goals throughout the years is to increase membership including Latin American countries, enabling these to have greater participation. Within this context we must remember that the Strategic Plan decided as one of its objectives to increase the number of Parties to 85 for the year 2002, and requested the Standing Committee to continue with recruitment efforts. If any restrictive measure would be taken it will affect the interest of possible new members.

A major effort to finance Non-Party countries was accomplished in order to hold the Workshop in Lima to share a thorough knowledge of what is happening in the region. If a radical decision would be made, it would represent a great impact to the region and it will make it very difficult to work in a responsible and serious way. It is paradoxical to make efforts to recruit new Parties if policies of practical exclusion are taking place. If the presence of Latin America within the Convention is really desired, real possibilities of participation should be granted to the region, otherwise in future meetings nobody will attend representing this large region and some decisions could be taken without its consent. A logical thought is that if an increased participation in the Convention is desired there must exist a real support to the region.

We understand from the above-mentioned paragraph that it is imperative to review this decision and adopt an pragmatic approach as is the practice within other treaties such as Ramsar, CITES, CBD, etc. This way we can find a solution to this great concern that threatens our region.