



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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CONSERVATION ISSUES

Summary

This document is the report on progress on conservation activities, working groups and projects undertaken by the Secretariat since Standing Committee 40, as of 31 July 2013.

These various activities have been undertaken in keeping with the objectives of the CMS Strategic Plan and fulfilling the mandate from several COP Resolutions and the Future Shape process.

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number, and will not be distributed at the meeting. are kindly requested to bring their copy to the meeting and not to request additional copies.

CONSERVATION ISSUES

(Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat)

1. The present report summarizes progress made since Standing Committee 40 on conservation activities, working groups and projects undertaken by the Secretariat in cooperation with the Parties, the Scientific Council and other stakeholders, in response to the recommendations from the 17th Meeting of the Scientific Council and Resolutions adopted at COP10.

Small Grants Programme (SGP)

2. The 2012 round of the SGP received 75 projects from Governments, NGOs, communities and scientists; 12 projects with grants worth US\$200,000 were selected in close consultation with the CMS Scientific Council. These 12 projects started in 2012 and have been reporting back on progress through 2013. With a view to make the results of the projects visible to a wider audience the Secretariat launched an initiative “The Project of the Month” which unfolds progress details in articles for the CMS website or social media, like Facebook or Twitter. These articles are published in the CMS web in the beginning of each month and links are provided below.

3. Progress of the 2012 selected projects:

- a. ***Marking and monitoring system for Danube sturgeons:*** this project includes activities for the reduction of negative human impacts, improvement of protection and direct conservation measures such as captive breeding and restocking with at least 50.000 individuals of autochthonous sturgeon species;
- b. ***Empowering local fishing communities to conserve coastal dolphins in Congo:*** some activities initiated include the establishment of inshore fisheries exclusion zones, developing a compensation scheme for fishermen who release dolphins alive and establishing a fisher-led reporting and ‘reaction network’ that will also ensure the fishermen’s safety during rescue attempts. For more information see [CMS Article](#);
- c. ***Community-based monitoring of the Humpback Whale in Costa Rica:*** local communities are being engaged in activities such as identification of critical areas, behavior, distribution, photo-identification and interactions with whale watching boats;
- d. ***Enhancing stakeholder engagement with CMS MOUs: the Saiga Resource Centre:*** this project provides direct support to the implementation of the CMS MOU on the Saiga Antelope, including the publication of Saiga News;
- e. ***Conservation program "Dalmatian Pelicans and Wetlands in the Mediterranean Basin":*** An Action Plan will be elaborated for the conservation of the species in Skadar Lake National Park in Montenegro, an important ecotourism destination. This site is the single breeding place of the species in that country. For more information see CMS Article;
- f. ***South meets North – A partnership linking sooty falcon conservationists:*** lack of information on sooty falcons, particularly on the wintering grounds is being addressed

- by data exchange and training of Madagascar experts on monitoring and management of the species;
- g. ***Acoustic surveys of Humpback Whales in Southern Mozambique:*** the objective of this project is to acquire acoustic data on Humpback Whale vocalizations and ambient noise in an area where an industrial port is being developed;
 - h. ***Distribution and abundance of Andean flamingos in Peru:*** surveys are being undertaken to gather information on the flamingoes colonies in order to find potential new sites. For more information see [CMS Article](#);
 - i. ***Conservation of two bat species *Miniopterus schreibersii* and *Rhinolophus euryale* in the old mines of Slovakia:*** an inventory of mines that are important for bats is being undertaken and 150 entrances to mines hosting bat populations are being restored in order to prevent danger to human beings while allowing free access to the bats. For more information see [CMS Article](#);
 - j. ***Supporting Tajikistan to lead on transboundary cooperation on Snow Leopards:*** the project aims at promoting cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan for the protection and action planning of the transboundary population that is shared by both countries. For more information see [CMS Article](#);
 - k. ***Addressing data gaps to improve Sea Turtle monitoring in Tanzania:*** the project includes daily monitoring activities during the two peak nesting periods (April and May) and location of active nests; and
 - l. ***Conservation of the Blue Swallow, in the Eastern Highlands, Zimbabwe:*** surveys to locate breeding populations of Blue Swallow are being undertaken, as well as a species awareness programme with local schools and training of rangers. For more information see [CMS Article](#).
4. At the time of writing (July 2013), the 2013 call for applications is in preparation and envisaged to be launched later in the year. An update on the new call for proposals will be provided orally at the Standing Committee's 41st Meeting.

Scientific Council Workspace

5. The electronic, web-based communication space and working area for the CMS Scientific Council was launched in January 2013. This powerful tool reflects the work of the Scientific Council and provides an online work area for each of the topics under the Scientific Council mandate.

6. Invitations were sent to all Scientific Councilors and external experts that are part of a CMS Working Group; currently there are close to 200 members registered. The Secretariat populated the Workspace with the relevant content and documents, thus providing the basis for the ongoing discussions on issues such as Flyways, IPBES or Ecological Networks. Since it became operative the Secretariat is continuously updating the content, facilitating the discussions and uploading new documents as they become available.

Planning, Assessment and Gap Analysis (PAGA) of the Scientific Council

7. Under the Future Shape process, restructuring of the Scientific Council was identified as one of the sixteen target activities for CMS as recognized in Resolution 10.1 on Financial and Administrative Matters and Resolution 10.9 on Structure and Strategies for CMS and the CMS Family. In particular, Activity 7 on Restructuring of the Scientific Council to maximize expertise and knowledge capacity requested to: (1) Identify potential and relevant opportunities to maximize the expertise and knowledge of the Scientific Council to best support CMS; (2) Identify any gaps in knowledge and/or expertise that exists in the current membership of the Scientific Council; and (3) To expand advice and knowledge sharing across the CMS Family.

8. Pursuant to this request, and according to a previous discussion in the Standing Committee at its 40th Meeting (UNEP/CMS/StC40/11.3), the CMS Secretariat prepared a background document which will be discussed by participants at the Strategic and Planning Meeting of the Scientific Council held in Gaeta-Formia, Italy, from 9-11 October 2013. The results of this discussion will be summarized in the Gaeta meeting report.

African Eurasian Migratory Landbirds

9. The Action Plan foreseen in Resolution 10.27 on Improving the Conservation Status of Migratory Landbirds in the African Eurasian Region has already been drafted. The Action Plan has been circulated to the Scientific Council through the Council's workspace with a deadline for comments by 30 June 2013. All comments have been gathered and are being incorporated into the new version. The Plan will be submitted to the 18th Meeting of the Scientific Council in 2014 for endorsement before being submitted to COP11. BirdLife International is closely involved with this project and provides a coordinator of the Landbirds Working Group.

10. Following some alarming news on bird trapping in Egypt, the Executive Secretary of CMS has written to the Egyptian Minister of the Environment and the CMS Focal Point in order to raise awareness about this problem and request additional information. An opposite editorial (op-ed) has been made available to the media with considerable repercussion, including publication in several journals and follow up interviews.

Poisoning of migratory birds

11. As requested by Resolution 10.26 on Minimizing the Risk of Poisoning to Migratory Birds a Working Group was established under the Scientific Council to undertake a detailed assessment of the scope and severity of poisoning on migratory birds and how this varies geographically and across taxa. To undertake this task a Coordinator of the Working Group was hired in January 2013, thanks to a voluntary contribution of the United Kingdom and a contribution of the Interim Coordinating Unit of the UNEP/CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU).

12. In May 2013, a generous offer from Tunisia made it possible to organise a technical workshop that addressed the impact of poisoning on migratory birds at the global level. In order to gather the best knowledge on the subject, the workshop brought together experts from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. The experts contributed to the detailed assessment of the impact of all forms of poisoning globally and the guidelines to combat

these. This detailed assessment has been the starting point for the Guidelines requested by the Resolution, which are currently being drafted. Funding for the Meeting was provided by Switzerland and the European Science Foundation.

Saker Falcon

13. In Resolution 10.28 the COP listed the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) on Appendix I of the Convention. A Saker Falcon Task Force (SFTF) was established in the same resolution. Four working groups were established relating to objectives of the 2012-2014 Work Plan with the aim to present a Global Action Plan for the Saker Falcon (Saker GAP) to COP11. A workshop to integrate the work of the four working groups and develop the Global Action Plan is scheduled to take place in Abu Dhabi in September 2013. Meanwhile, Mongolia has announced a moratorium on Saker Falcon trade for five years and has suspended any taking of the species during this period.

14. The CMS Secretariat and the Raptors MOU Secretariat based in Abu Dhabi have been closely involved with the Saker Falcon Task Force and the preparation of the Global Action Plan. The CMS Secretariat has contributed to two of the four working groups, the Objective 4 Working Group on Policies and Legislation and the Objective 8 Working Group on Monitoring and Research.

Invasive Alien Species

15. Following a recommendation of the 17th Meeting of the Scientific Council, a review has been undertaken on the impacts of invasive alien species on migratory species and measures to mitigate that impact. Thanks to a voluntary contribution from Italy and after a public call for tenders, the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group was contracted in 2012 to do the work through the University of Auckland (New Zealand).

16. In April 2013 the review was delivered to the CMS Secretariat and was subsequently circulated to the CMS Family secretariats for comments with a deadline by 31 May 2013. Once the contractor incorporates the suggestions received, the review will be posted on the workspace for consultation with the Scientific Council. Together with the review a draft resolution has also been also produced. Both will be submitted to the Scientific Council in 2014 for a full discussion.

Flyways

17. COP10 adopted Resolution 10.10 which acknowledged the work of the Flyways Working Group over the last triennium and proposed the continuation of the Group to review relevant scientific and technical issues, international initiatives and processes, and to provide guidance and input to the conservation and management of flyways at global and flyway level during the intersessional period until COP11, as a basis for the CMS policy on flyways.

18. Renewed Terms of Reference for the Working Group have been drafted, discussed and adopted and new experts have joined the Group. The Group is currently working on a programme of work that will be discussed at a specific workshop, funds permitting.

19. The compilation of the three Flyways reviews produced and submitted to COP10 is being prepared for publication as part of the CMS Technical Series.

Ecological Networks: Ethiopia project and case study compilation

Ethiopia Project

20. In April 2013, 43 white eared kobs, four elephants and four Nile lechwe were satellite collared from a helicopter and a ground operation in Gambella National Park (Ethiopia), in the framework of a CMS project in cooperation with the Ethiopia Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA). The main objective of the project is to study the migration corridor and ecological factors that drive the migration of terrestrial mammals between Ethiopia and South Soudan. Preliminary results show that a portion of the white eared kob is resident while the rest are migratory, but a group may be migratory at one year and resident at the following year. This interesting pattern will be further clarified after additional information is collected from the recently collared individuals.

21. Based on an MOU signed between EWCA and the Horn of Africa Regional Environmental Centre-Addis Ababa University (HoAREC-AAU), the latter provided the helicopter and the collars for the elephants and the Nile lechwe, species that were not included in the initial CMS project. Besides this, a systematic aerial wildlife survey was also conducted to know the current wildlife distribution in the area. The results of this study will be the baseline for the protection of the migration corridor between Ethiopia and South Soudan and the establishment of a transboundary protected area. A workshop to discuss the data generated by the collared species is foreseen to take place in early 2014. This project is funded by Norway.

Case studies

22. In Resolution 10.3, the COP requested the Secretariat to compile existing case studies that are relevant to migratory species representative of the different taxonomic groups and/or groups related to major ecosystem types and report the results, including recommendations, to the Conference of the Parties at its 11th Meeting to illustrate the practical application of the approaches described in Resolution 10.3 and to support the sharing of experience among Parties.

23. Pursuant to this request, the Secretariat compiled case studies on ecological networks which are particularly relevant to the following species:

- a) African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*)
- b) Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*)
- c) African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) and Western Lowland Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*)
- d) Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*)
- e) Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)
- f) Mongolian Gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*)
- g) Sturgeon (*Huso huso*)
- h) Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)
- i) Dugong (*Dugong dugon*)
- j) Marine migratory fauna – e.g. Sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*)
- k) Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*)
- l) Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)
- m) Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*)

- n) Nectar Flyway: Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), bats
- o) White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)

24. The document was posted on the Scientific Council workspace for review and will be posted in the CMS website shortly.

25. The CMS Secretariat is currently seeking funding to implement other aspects of Resolution 10.3, particularly a strategic review of the extent to which and the manner in which existing major protected area systems and initiatives aimed at promoting ecological networks address the needs of migratory species. This review is of critical importance as a basis for the establishment of ecological networks on the ground and the promotion of connectivity.

Marine Debris

26. Thanks to a voluntary contribution from Australia, and following the mandate of Resolution 10.4 on Marine Debris, terms of reference for a review on marine debris were put together in May 2013 and a call for tenders was launched. The goal of this contract is to identify knowledge gaps across three major categories, namely sources and types of marine debris, impacts of marine debris on migratory species, and challenges with regard to management of marine debris and its impacts. Furthermore, recognizing existing information tools and reports provided by UNEP/Regional Seas Programme and Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based sources of pollution (GPA), this specific project is aimed at tailoring recommendations specific to the role that CMS Parties can play to address stated knowledge gaps. Selection of the consultants is foreseen to take place in August, and the outputs will be available in time for the 18th Meeting of the Scientific Council in 2014.

Underwater Noise

27. The CMS Scientific Council has been given the task of developing voluntary guidelines on underwater noise (see [Res.9.19](#)); however, it has not yet been able to address this assignment. The joint Secretariat for CMS and ASCOBANS is therefore proposing an amendment to the terms of reference for the current Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group to integrate the work required under all three organizations. New terms of reference for a Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group have been forwarded to the 20th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (27-29 August 2013) for endorsement. The ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and the CMS Scientific Council will then be asked to endorse them in turn. For practical and timing reasons, this may best be achieved through a correspondence process.

Barriers to migration

28. In 2011, the Secretariat initiated a study prepared by WWF Mongolia on the effects of infrastructure developments such as fences, roads and railroad construction on migratory ungulates in Mongolia, which was discussed at the 17th Scientific Council Meeting. Following this report, the Secretariat has been working to address this critical and emerging threat. More details on those activities, including the organization of a workshop and the development of a report on “Saiga Crossing Options”, is outlined in Document UNEP/CMS/StC41/18: CMS Instruments.

Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*)

29. As well as the Small Grants Project on snow leopards mentioned above, the Secretariat is engaged in an initiative of the Kyrgyz Government, supported by the World Bank, to adopt a Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Program among the 12 snow leopard range states. Further information on CMS involvement in this process is provided in Document UNEP/CMS/StC41/18: CMS Instruments.

Listing Proposals

30. The 17th Meeting of the Scientific Council endorsed the potential listing of the Polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) on CMS Appendix I. In May 2013 a draft proposal has been made available on the Scientific Council workspace for consultation.

31. The ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee endorsed a draft listing proposal for the Mediterranean population of Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*), which is expected to be submitted for consultation with the Scientific Council through the workspace shortly.

32. A draft proposal has also been prepared for the Tibetan antelope or Chiru (*Pantholops hodgsonii*), which is expected to be submitted for consultation with the Scientific Council through the workspace shortly.

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the above activities and provide comments and guidance, as appropriate.