
PRESS RELEASE

Countries Meet to Tackle Poisoning of Birds in Southern Africa

Bonn/Cape Town, 25 August 2015 – Representatives of countries and wildlife experts met in Cape Town, South Africa on 24 August, to address poisoning of migratory birds, a problem that also threatens important predators. The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and the CMS Memorandum of Understanding on Birds of Prey (CMS Raptors MoU), all three instruments administered by the United Nations Environment Programme, have convened the international meeting.

Government officials from ten countries in Southern Africa and experts came together to discuss how best to implement the global guidelines on poisoning of migratory birds. The guidelines were adopted by more than 100 countries at the Conference of the Parties to CMS in November 2014. They guide countries on how to prevent or control poisoning from agricultural pesticides, poison baits, veterinary pharmaceutical treatment and the use of lead for hunting and fishing. Pesticides and poison baits are particularly widespread in the southern African region.

Large numbers of birds are killed annually as a result of poisoning. In Africa, migratory raptors - and vultures in particular - are subject to steep population declines in recent years. A specialized agreement on migratory birds of prey concluded under CMS - the CMS Raptors MOU - highlights the risk for these scavengers.

Poisoning caused African vultures to decline by more than 60 per cent over the last ten years as a result of both direct and unintentional killing. They feed on carcasses that are baited with highly toxic agricultural pesticides to kill livestock predators such as lions, hyenas and jackals or to control feral dogs.

Carbofuran, a pesticide which is strictly controlled in the United States, Canada and the European Union, is still used in some rice fields of Eastern Africa as a pest control against birds and locusts. Despite high levels of contamination, birds are coveted as bushmeat by consumers as a source of protein.

Vultures are killed for traditional medicine because they are perceived to foresee the future. By consuming vulture meat, consumers hope to acquire this talent. Vultures that circle over rhinos or elephants killed by poachers help reveal their wildlife crimes to rangers. As a result, poachers poison the carcasses to kill the birds and avoid being detected.

The CMS guidelines recommend prohibiting the use of poison baits for predator control, creating legislation or improving enforcement of existing laws, and restricting access to highly toxic substances. At a national level, hunting wildlife using poison is illegal in more than 80 per cent of African countries.

Countries that are members of CMS, the Raptors MOU and AEWA have prepared an implementation plan to strengthen law enforcement and implement the poisoning guidelines in Southern Africa. The idea is to replicate the model in other parts of the world later to assist countries in their efforts to prevent poisoning of migratory birds.

For more information please see the "[Global Guidelines on Poisoning of Migratory Birds](#)".

For more information, please contact:

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