

THIRD MEETING OF SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS OF PREY IN AFRICA AND EURASIA

(Dubai, 3-6 July 2023)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc.12.5

STRENGTHENING THE MONITORING OF LISTED SPECIES

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

Summary: This document briefly presents two approaches aimed at supporting the implementation of Activity 5 (Monitor bird of prey populations, carry out conservation research and take appropriate remedial measures) of the Action Plan of the MOU.

1. Pursuant to paragraph 8(h) of Text of the Memorandum of Understanding, Signatories shall endeavour to 'encourage research into the biology and ecology of birds of prey, including the harmonization of research and monitoring methods and, where appropriate, the establishment of joint or cooperative research and monitoring programmes'.
2. Paragraph 4 Priority Actions of the Action Plan further details the Signatories' commitments under (g) as "[a]ssessing and monitoring of populations throughout the Range States to establish reliable population trends; conducting research to establish the impacts of threats on them and the measures that are needed to alleviate them; and, sharing information between Signatories and other Range States".
3. Table 2 (Activities) of the Action Plan includes several activities where monitoring of bird of prey populations is mentioned. Activity 5 (Monitor bird of prey populations, carry out conservation research and take appropriate remedial measures) includes:
 - 5.1 *Establish flyway-scale monitoring networks comprising a representative range of sites where systematic and coordinated monitoring of breeding populations, reproductive success and migration numbers (spring and autumn) can be undertaken*
with as a target:
Monitoring network established and adopted by Signatories".
 - 5.2 *Design and undertake a coordinated monitoring programme and develop monitoring protocols based on the monitoring network established under 5.1*
with as a target:
Monitoring guidelines / manual prepared for national and trans-boundary data collection; data relayed to the Secretariat and included in national reports; breeding and migratory population trends reliably established.
4. Pursuant Action 6.4 The Coordinating Unit is tasked to "[e]ncourage Signatories to improve international cooperation through organising conferences, seminars and workshops concerning monitoring, scientific research and conservation activities".
5. Most Signatories that have submitted the national reports through the National Reporting Form have reported (see document UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/MOS3/Doc.12.1) significant progress on national monitoring programmes on birds of prey.
6. The Cooperating Partners also actively contribute to monitoring migratory birds of prey and have developed programmes and initiatives aimed at assessing population size, trends and conservation status. BirdLife International as the international Red List authority for birds, undertook multiple assessments and has also completed several species-specific assessments of vultures. The IUCN Vulture Specialist Group conducted assessments of all Old World vulture populations during the development of the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan. The Peregrine Fund has compiled an assessment of raptor population declines in Africa, as well as another study focusing specifically on Kenya.
7. Further work is nevertheless required in order to establish a flyway-scale monitoring network of sites where monitoring is implemented and provides information on breeding populations, reproductive success and numbers of migrating birds.
8. The East African-Eurasian flyway is at the core of the geographic scope of the Raptors MOU and

represents one of the most important routes for migratory soaring birds in the world. Each spring and autumn, 37 species of migratory soaring birds navigate this flyway, with over a million birds passing through the larger bottlenecks. A recent paper by Jobson et al. (2021; document [UNEP/CMS/Raptors/MOS3/Inf.12](#)) offers an overview of the known bottleneck sites along this flyway and the opportunity they offer to monitor. The research identified a list of sites that would provide the opportunity to efficiently monitor a number of Annex 1-listed species and could therefore contribute to delivering on Action 5.1 of the Action Plan.

9. The Coordinating Unit in consultation with relevant Cooperating Partners and other organizations actively engaged in monitoring some of these sites has developed a concept note for the development of a network of sites. The project concept is presented in Annex 1.
10. Such an approach, which builds on ongoing initiatives and available knowledge, and focuses on few crucial sites, is cost effective because, through observations on few sites and during specific periods of time will provide estimates on the size of the population for some and trend indications on a larger set of species of migratory birds of prey.
11. The initiative will need to be complemented by the development of regional monitoring strategies that would build on existing monitoring initiatives at national and multinational level, and would guide Signatories on the development of national monitoring strategies to provide the required information on a larger number of Annex 1 species.

Action requested

12. The Meeting is invited to:
 - (a) Note the contents of this report and to seek any clarifications, if required;
 - (b) Invite the relevant countries to support the development of the Network;
 - (c) Encourage non-Signatories to join the initiative and the Raptors MOU;
 - (d) Ask the Coordinating Unit, subject to the availability of resources, to pursue the development of the network of sites; and
 - (e) Ask the Coordinating Unit, to facilitate the development of regional monitoring programmes.

ANNEX 1 **Draft Project Concept:** **Raptor monitoring, conservation and capacity building** **along the East African Eurasian Flyway**

The East African Eurasian Flyway (EAEF) is a critical route for migratory soaring birds, with at least 37 species of soaring birds, totalling several million individuals, moving between Eurasia and Africa twice a year. The EAEF is among the most important flyways within the geographic scope of the Raptors MOU, and millions of birds of prey migrate along this route every year. The flyway is characterized by several bottlenecks as birds avoid large water bodies (the Black Sea and the Caspian, the Mediterranean, and the Red Sea) and mountain ranges (e.g., Balkan, Caucasus) and concentrate along some narrow corridors.

Large concentrations (of migratory raptors and of other soaring birds) at certain sites have been known for a long time (e.g. Bosphorus) and have local cultural values. Others have been discovered and located only recently, following specific ground searches (e.g. Batumi), and more recently supported by satellite tagging (e.g Sarimazi). Some sites have been known as crucial bottlenecks for decades, but it has proven very difficult to implement any monitoring activities (e.g. Bab-el Mandeb)

Recently, a review identified the most numerous species at the top 10 sites where monitoring activities have provided well-documented migration counts. Among the top 12 species recorded at any of the several sites where migrating birds have been counted at least once, nine are raptors.

Species	Red List status	Percentage of the global population counted	Notes
Steppe Eagle	EN	>100%	Virtually all population
Egyptian Vulture	EN	2 – 8%	Does not cover West and Central European and Central Asiatic migratory populations
European Honey Buzzard	LC	>100%	Does not cover W European population, global estimate probably underestimated
Lesser Spotted Eagle	LC	>100%	Virtually all populations
Levant Sparrowhawk	LC	>100%	Virtually all population
Eurasian (Steppe) Buzzard	LC	14 – 25%	Does not cover W European population (mostly sedentary)
Black Kite	LC	9 – 22%	Does not cover W European and most Asiatic populations
Short-toed Snake-eagle	LC	4 – 8%	Does not cover W European population and eastern Asiatic populations
Booted Eagle	LC	4 – 5 %	Does not cover W European and Central and East Asiatic populations

Based on IBA inventories and other data, over 53 sites/areas have recorded significant numbers of migratory soaring birds. An analysis of published data has allowed the identification of the Top 10 sites and the key species for each country. However, only Batumi, Galala, Ras el Matn, and Sarimazi have ongoing monitoring programs.

Bulgaria	15	Jordan	1
Djibouti	1	Lebanon	7
Egypt	4	Palestinian Authority territories	1
Georgia	2	Saudi Arabia	1
Iran	1	Turkey	6
Israel	13	Yemen	1

Site name	Country	Key Raptors species	Site in Raptors MOU Table	Raptors MOU Signatory
Bourgas	Bulgaria	Lesser Spotted Eagle	Y	N
Bab-el-Mandeb	Djibouti (Yemen)	Steppe Eagle, Eurasian (Steppe) Buzzard, Egyptian Vulture, Eastern, Imperial Eagle, Greater Spotted Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, European Honey-buzzard	Y	Y (Y)
Ras Mohammed	Egypt	Steppe Eagle, Levant Sparrowhawk, Eurasian Buzzard (Steppe)	Y	Y
Suez (Galala)			Y	
Batumi	Georgia	European Honey-buzzard, Eurasian Buzzard (Steppe), Black Kite, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Levant Sparrowhawk, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Greater Spotted Eagle, Booted Eagle.	Y	N
Eilat	Israel	Lesser Spotted Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk	Y	Y
Northern Valleys			Partially	
Ras El Matn	Lebanon	Levant Sparrowhawk, Lesser Spotted Eagle	Y	Y
Bosphorus	Turkey	Egyptian Vulture, Lesser Spotted Eagle, European Honey-buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk	Y	N
Sarimazi	Turkey		N	

Monitoring migratory birds of prey and protecting internationally important sites are among the goals of the Raptors MOU, which has identified six of the ten top congregation sites occurring in the territory of its signatories. The Bulgarian bottleneck is largely covered by Natura 2000 sites protected under the EU Birds Directive.

The initiative aims to:

1) Monitoring

- a) Develop a shared methodology of data gathering, management, and analysis through a consultative process with experts from across the flyway.
- b) Identify the key sites for selected suitable migratory species, in order to obtain cost-effective, reliable data on population size, trend, and demography.
- c) Implement a standardized monitoring scheme at priority sites.

2) Address threats at sites

- a) Define threats for each site based on a standard methodology.
- b) Identify actions to abate threats at site level.
- c) Identify shared needs that can be addressed at the flyway level.

3) Build capacity

- a) Conduct a funding and need assessment for each monitoring site/scheme.
- b) Build capacity to implement monitoring and site protection measures.
- c) Build capacity among local and national governmental staff on-site protection, avitourism, and opportunities for local community engagement.

4) Raise awareness among different target groups

- a) Define an awareness-raising strategy and campaign.
- b) Implement the campaign locally and at the international level.

5) Develop income-generating activities to build sustainability

- a) Develop sustainable income-generating activities, such as avitourism, for local communities.
- b) Ensure financial sustainability of the monitoring program.