

## MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE SOUTH-WEST ASIA ILLEGAL HUNTING, TAKING AND TRADE OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

*Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 15 - 16 January 2024*

UNEP/CMS/SWAIKB/Doc.4

### **ACTION PLAN TO ERADICATE THE ILLEGAL HUNTING AND TAKING OF BIRDS IN SOUTH WEST ASIA**

*(Prepared by the CMS Secretariat)*

*(As of 5 January 2023)*

1. The draft Action Plan presented in Annex 1 is the culmination of a two-year collaborative effort involving extensive stakeholder input and iterative refinement.
2. In February 2020, an online questionnaire aiming at gathering initial information and perspectives from a broad range of stakeholders was circulated. The valuable data collected was intended to inform a stakeholder workshop planned for later that year. The Covid-19 pandemic caused the postponement of the workshop, prompting a strategic reshaping of the development process.
3. In October 2021 stakeholder met at a workshop, held on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan. This in-person gathering provided a critical platform for focused discussion, debate, and collaborative vision-building. Building upon the information gathered from the online questionnaire and the workshop, a draft Action Plan was formulated and circulated for comment in November 2021.
4. The feedback received during this consultation phase proved invaluable in further refining the Action Plan, paving the way for the second online workshop in February 2022. This online session served as a further opportunity to solicit inputs and ensure broad ownership of the Action Plan.
5. Following the workshop, the draft Action Plan was once again updated and re-circulated for comment in June 2022, incorporating the final round of feedback to produce a final draft for consideration by the proposed Task Force.
6. The robust development process outlined above testifies to the commitment to ensure the Action Plan reflects the diverse perspectives and priorities of all stakeholders involved. This collaborative approach has resulted in a comprehensive and actionable roadmap for achieving the goals outlined within the document.

Participants are requested to:

- a) Agree on the Vision, Goals and Objectives of the draft Action Plan
- b) Provide comments on the Action Framework contents and structure

# Action Plan to eradicate the illegal hunting and taking of birds in South-West Asia 2024 – 2030

**Geographic scope:** Bahrain, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

## **Milestones in the production of this action plan**

February 2020: initial information gathering by online questionnaire to inform stakeholder workshop (postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic)

October 2021: stakeholder workshop held on the shores of the Dead Sea, Jordan

November 2021: draft Action Plan was circulated for comment

February 2022: online stakeholder workshop

June 2022: updated draft Action Plan circulated for comment

## **Introduction:**

Over the past few decades, bird populations have been experiencing a dramatic and unprecedented decline. For wild birds, illegal hunting, taking and trade, is a main driver of global extinctions, and it is the most significant threat, after habitat loss, to migratory birds. The illegal hunting and taking and trade of birds occurs worldwide, e.g., poisoning of vultures in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ogada 2014), shooting of raptors in Europe (Selås *et al* 2017) and North America (Finkelstein *et al* 2014), trapping of songbirds in Asia (Kamp *et al* 2015) and capture for the bird trade in South America (Alves *et al* 2013). Illegal killing and taking poses a global threat to biodiversity and has attracted international attention. For example, in 2014, the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) adopted a Resolution later revised in COP13 [CMS/Resolution 11.16 \(Rev. COP13\)](#) The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds.

In the Middle East, high levels of illegal hunting, taking and trade of birds were reported in Mediterranean countries, such as Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, as well as in nearby Cyprus in a study by BirdLife International (Brochet *et al* 2016). This study estimated that between 11–36 million birds/year may be illegally killed or taken in the whole Mediterranean region, including 6–22 million in the Mediterranean Middle Eastern countries (i.e., Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Turkey) and Cyprus.

Global action plans for globally threatened species, such as White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (Endangered; Sheldon *et al.* 2018), Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* (Endangered; Kovács *et al.* 2014), Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (Near Threatened; Robinson & Hughes 2006) and Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (Critically Endangered; Sheldon *et al.* 2012) and the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (Botha *et al.* 2017) all highlight illegal killing and trapping as an important threat.

## **The definition of illegal hunting of birds**

To simplify the text throughout the Action Plan we refer to illegal hunting and taking of birds, however this does include trapping, trade and other types of illegality. However, when referring to illegal hunting and trapping we are following the legal definition adopted by CMS Resolution 11.13 Rev CoP13, which is as follows:

“Activities which are illegal under national or regional law/regulations and involve the deliberate pursuit, killing, injuring or catching alive of wild birds or are aimed at illegal marketing live or dead specimens of wild birds, including their parts and derivatives.

Such activities include but are not limited to: killing/trapping in closed periods, in areas with prohibitions in force, by unauthorised persons and/or protected species; use of prohibited means and substances; breach of bag limits; possession, donation, use, movement, transfer, offer for sale, advertisement, consumption, import, introduction from the sea, transit or export, of specimens.”

**How many birds are illegally killed and taken in the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq?**

Using a diverse range of data sources and incorporating expert knowledge, it has been estimated that at least 1.7–4.6 million (best estimate: 3.2 million) birds are illegally killed or taken each year across the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq (Brochet *et al.* 2019). Worryingly, it is likely that these figures are underestimates, as data were not available for some parts of the region. A wide range of birds are likely to be affected with evidence suggesting that at least 413 different species are illegally killed and/or trapped, many of them during their perilous migratory journeys from breeding to wintering grounds and back. Several species of global conservation concern were reported as illegally killed or taken, including Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* and European Turtle-dove *Streptopelia turtur* (all classified as Vulnerable on the global IUCN Red List). Of even greater concern, the Critically Endangered Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* was reported to be known or likely to be killed illegally each year. This is particularly worrying given the small population size and recent rapid decline of the species (Sheldon *et al.* 2013). Birds were reported to be illegally killed or taken primarily for sport, but also for food, sold mainly as a delicacy. In most countries, a much stronger focus on monitoring, effective legislation, enforcement, justice and prevention, particularly through awareness raising should be key priorities to tackle the illegal killing and taking of birds.

**International obligations and flyway context**

[Introductory text to be inserted]

Table 1. Summary of applicability of major international conservation instruments by country within the geographic scope of this Action Plan.

Country	Party to CMS	Party to AEWA	Signatory to Raptors MoU	Party to CBD	Party to Ramsar
Bahrain	✓			✓	✓
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	✓		✓	✓	✓
Iraq	✓			✓	✓
Jordan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kuwait				✓	✓
Oman				✓	✓
Qatar				✓	
Saudi Arabia	✓	✓	✓	✓	
United Arab Emirates	✓		✓	✓	✓
Yemen	✓		✓	✓	✓

**Long-term vision:**

South-West Asia will be a safe haven for all wild birds and their illegal killing and taking are eradicated.

**Overarching long-term goal:**

To eliminate the illegal killing and taking of wild birds in South-West Asia, through international cooperation and effective national action.

**High-level objective of this action plan (up to 2030):**

By 2030 there will be a significant reduction in the numbers of birds illegally killed and taken in all countries.

**Objectives**

Objective 1: Each range state to develop, endorse and implement a National IKB Action Plan, or equivalent, where necessary, and in line with this regional plan.

Objective 2: Enhance our understanding of the importance, scope, scale and motivations behind illegal hunting and taking of birds at the regional level.

Objective 3: To ensure that the illegal hunting and taking of birds is addressed effectively and efficiently in national legislation that follows common principles across the region.

Objective 4: To ensure effective and efficient enforcement of relevant legislation is undertaken, through the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.

Objective 5: To undertake education and outreach programmes to improve awareness on the prevention of illegal hunting and taking of wild birds.

Objective 6: To enhance capacity building in the region, including through sharing experience and best practice within and beyond the region to eliminate illegal hunting and taking of wild birds.

**Action Framework<sup>1,2</sup>**

Objective 1: Each range state to develop, endorse and implement a National IKB Action Plan, or equivalent, where necessary			
Activity	Priority	Timescale	Responsibility
Provide regional guidelines for the development and implementation of National IKB Action Plans and relevant policies			
Develop the guidelines for the development and implementation of National IKB Action Plans			
Organise Regional Workshops to promote the guidelines on National IKB Action Plans and encourage and support development of National IKB plans			
Need for National IKB Action Plan identified			
National IKB Action Plan developed through a consultative process			

Objective 2: Enhance our understanding of the importance, scope, scale and motivations behind illegal hunting, trapping, taking and trade of birds at the regional level			
Activity	Priority	Timescale	Responsibility
Carry out a gap analysis on the understanding of types, scale and drivers of IKB at regional level			
Develop a baseline estimate of the scale of IKB in the region so that progress towards the Action Plan vision and goals can be quantified and measured			
Develop guidelines for undertaking national socio-economic assessments to understand motivations behind IKB			
Carry out socio-economic studies and assessments of the IKB situations in each country describing IKB forms, and distribution and impact.			

<sup>1</sup> Column headings and additional columns need to be considered in light of the implementation process the group wish to follow. For example using the terminology: 'Result' or 'Target'; 'Indicators/means of verification' etc.)

<sup>2</sup> Activities need further development and agreement at a future workshop)

Objective 3: To ensure that the illegal killing of birds is addressed effectively and efficiently in national legislation, that follow common principles across the region			
Activity	Priority	Timescale	Responsibility
Organize Regional workshop on hunting legislation.			
Develop common standards for national hunting legislation.			

Objective 4: To ensure effective and efficient enforcement of relevant legislation is undertaken, through the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary			
Activity	Priority	Timescale	Responsibility
Conduct situation analysis of the enforcement of relevant legislation (based on existing tools (e. g. ICCWC Analytic Toolkit <sup>3</sup> ))			
Build technical capacity of law enforcement agencies through training courses and exchange visits.			
Allocate to law enforcement agencies sufficient resources to properly enforce legislation.			

Objective 5: To undertake education and outreach programmes to improve awareness on the prevention of illegal killing, trapping, taking and trade of wild birds			
Activity	Priority	Timescale	Responsibility
Promote the wonder of migration to a wide audience			

Objective 6: To enhance capacity building in the region, including through sharing experience and best practice within and beyond the region to eliminate the prevention of illegal killing, trapping, taking and trade of wild birds			
Activity	Priority	Timescale	Responsibility
Contribute to international flyway initiatives (Central Asian Flyway Initiative/AEWA)			

<sup>3</sup> [https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/resources/pub/ICCWC\\_Toolkit\\_v2\\_english.pdf](https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/resources/pub/ICCWC_Toolkit_v2_english.pdf)

## Annex: Country profiles for each country

[Feedback is that this would be useful and should include an outline on which species are illegally killed (not numbers) and the key types of illegal killing. It could also include information on bird species present, protected areas, current legislation etc]

## Annex: Examples of best practice in tackling IKB?

[Use MIKT as an example and provide links to the relevant documentation]

## References

- Alves RNN, JR Lima & HFP Araujo. 2013. The live bird trade in Brazil and its conservation implications: an overview. *Bird Conservation International* 23: 53–65.
- Brochet, A.L., Jbour, S., Sheldon, R.D., Porter, R.F., Jones, V.R., Al Fazari, W., Al Saghier, O., Alkhuzai, S., Al-Obeidi, L.A., Angwin, R., Ararat, K., Pope, M., Shobrak, M.Y., Willson, M.S., Zadegan, S.S. & Butchart, S.H.M. (2019). A preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq. *Sandgrouse*, 41: 154-175
- Brochet, A.-L., W Van Den Bossche, S Jbour, PK Ndong'ang'a, VR Jones, WALI Abdou, AR Al-Hmoud, NG Asswad, JC Atienza, I Atrash, N Barbara, K Bensusan, T Bino, C Celada, SI Cherkaoui, J Costa, BDeceuninck, KS Etayeb, C Feltrup-Azafzaf, J Figelj, M Gustin, P Kmecl, V Kocevski, M Korbeti, D Kotrošan, J Mula Laguna, M Lattuada, D Leitão, P Lopes, N López-Jiménez, V Lucić, T Micol, A Moali, Y Perlman, N Piludu, D Portolou, K Putilin, G Quaintenne, G Ramadan-Jaradi, M Ružić, A Sandor, N Sarajlic, D Saveljić, RD Sheldon, T Shialis, N Tsiopelas, F Vargas, C Thompson, A Brunner, R Grimmett & SHM Butchart. 2016. Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean. *Bird Conservation International* 26: 1–28
- Finkelstein, ME, ZE Kuspa, A Welch, C Eng, M Clark, J Burnett & DR Smith. 2014. Linking cases of illegal shootings of the endangered California Condor using stable lead isotope analysis. *Environmental Research* 134: 270–279
- Kamp, J, S Oppel, AA Ananin, YA Durnev, SN Gashev, N Hölzel, AL Mishchenko, J Pessa, SM Smirenski, EG Strelnikov, S Timonen, K Wolanska & S Chan. 2015. Global population collapse in a superabundant migratory bird and illegal trapping in China. *Conservation Biology* 29: 1684–1694.
- Kovács, A, NP Williams & CA Galbraith. 2014. Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* Global Action Plan (SakerGAP), including a management and monitoring system, to conserve the species. Raptors MOU Technical Publication 2, CMS Technical Series 31, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- Ogada, DL. 2014. Power of poison: pesticide poisoning of Africa's wildlife. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1322: 1–20
- Robinson, JA & B Hughes (eds). 2006. International single species action plan for the conservation of the Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*. CMS Technical Series 12 & AEWA Technical Series 7, Bonn.
- Selås V, O Kleven & OF Steen. 2017. Female turnover rate differs between two Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* nesting areas, as revealed by DNA analysis of moulted feathers. *Ibis* 159: 554–566.
- Sheldon, RD, MA Koshkin, J Kamp, S Dereliev, PF Donald & S Jbour (eds). 2012. International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*). CMS Technical Series 28 & AEWA Technical Series 47. Bonn.

Sheldon R, N Mikander & J Fernández Orueta, J. (eds). 2018. International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*). CMS Technical Series, AEWA Technical Series. Bonn.