

**2nd CMS Workshop on Conservation Implications
of Animal Culture and Social Complexity – Part II**

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Reports of the Concerted Action Sub-Groups: Chimpanzees¹

Activities to Address the CMS Concerted Action for Nut-Cracking Chimpanzees

Progress on the CMS Concerted Action for Nut-Cracking Chimpanzees

Following the online meeting of the CMS Animal Culture Expert's Group in October 2022, and in lieu of the formal establishment of a concerted committee for the implementation of the CMS CA for Nut-Cracking Chimpanzees (**CA for NCC**), the IUCN SSC PSG SGA Working Group on Chimpanzee Cultures (**WGCC**) led by Dr. Erin Wessling and Dr. Crickette Sanz, agreed to oversee intersessional activities related to the CA for NCC. The IUCN SSC PSG Section on Great Apes (**SGA**) acts as a major vehicle for the coordination of ape conservation across all range countries, with the WGCC comprising a subsection of experts of the SGA specialized in chimpanzee conservation and the study of chimpanzee (cultural) behavior. Therefore, the WGCC was designated as the ideal group to bridge the goals of the CA for NCC and relevant aspirations of both the WGCC and the SGA. During the intersessional period, the WGCC has held two online meetings to coordinate activities, deriving in the undertaking of a number of tasks related to the CA for NCC. These tasks largely relate to the definition and integration of chimpanzee conservation needs by a broad regional stakeholder network, which can then facilitate activities related to the CA for NCC to proceed in directly addressing these needs.

The following points outline the tasks accomplished to address the CMS Concerted Action for Nut-Cracking Chimpanzees:

- 1) The first task identified by the WGCC was to **define conservation targets of the use of culture in chimpanzee conservation and to evaluate the role of nut-cracking as an exemplar behavior within this framework**. It was established that the use of a specific chimpanzee culture (e.g., nut-cracking behaviors or populations) is an effective conservation target in certain applications. However, it was also recognized that nut-cracking behavior represents but one of many cultural components of chimpanzee cultural or behavioral diversity, which itself also represents an effective conservation target. These two conservation targets are used interchangeably in the following tasks and proposed activities, in that the preservation of cultural diversity is largely regarded as the main conservation target for western chimpanzees, however, when the employment of an exemplar adds value to an activity, that nut-cracking and nut-cracking populations can be invoked as the primary conduit or exemplar.
- 2) The second task undertaken by the WGCC was to **delineate practical avenues for the use of chimpanzee cultures in conservation** both within contexts specific to West Africa (where

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chimpanzee nut-cracking behaviors are expressed) as well as more broadly across the species' range. This involves evaluating the efficacy of nut-cracking or cultural diversity as a conservation tool within West Africa. However, the main consensus reached by the group was that nut-cracking best serves as an advocacy tool for chimpanzee conservation rather than as a standalone or supplementary metric of population health or population prioritization. A manuscript reviewing this process has been drafted for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

- 3) Concurrent to these activities, the SGA, with support from the USAID program WABiLED, held a workshop in Monrovia, Liberia in October 2022 on the **establishment of a regional framework for western chimpanzee biomonitoring and coordination**, which was attended by over 70 individuals of all eight range nations. Representatives from major NGO, scientific, and governmental organizations attended, including consultants and representatives of private industry, including also the CMS Focal Point for Liberia. During the workshop, an assessment of the status of western chimpanzee populations was presented for the region, and biomonitoring gaps were identified and prioritized. Major chimpanzee population monitoring methodologies were discussed in detail, and survey design frameworks identified. Participants were introduced to the advantages of centralized and standardized databases for ape biomonitoring information, specifically the IUCN SSC SGA A.P.E.S. Database, as a major component of regional conservation assessment and planning.
- 4) In addition to traditional information on the abundance and distribution of apes, auxiliary data were prioritized and relevant methodologies for collecting these data were outlined by participants of the workshop convened by the SGA in Monrovia. This included an extensive discussion of the **necessity to consider diversity metrics (i.e., cultural and genetic) in population assessment and prioritization**. Dr. Serge SOIRET (WGCC member and vice-chair for chimpanzee cultural diversity on the Western Chimpanzee Action Plan's Implementation Committee) presented on the extent of chimpanzee cultures in West Africa, methodologies for monitoring cultural behaviors, and potential avenues for incorporating metrics of culture and behavioral diversity in chimpanzee conservation. Nut-cracking by chimpanzees served as an example of a cultural behavior that could be used in conservation, and information on the nut-cracking chimpanzee populations of Djouroutou and Tai National Park in Ivory Coast were presented as case studies. Subsequent to attending the workshop, participants expressed an enhanced understanding of the value of cultural behaviors for chimpanzee survival as well as the necessity and feasibility of implementing auxiliary variables to monitor behavioral diversity alongside traditional metrics in future surveys of chimpanzee populations. When assessing biomonitoring gaps, participants confirmed the need to recognize culture as a critical component of chimpanzee conservation. A framework for how to better integrate chimpanzee culture and behavioral diversity into current monitoring schemes was defined during the workshop, including the need to establish best practice guidelines that could be systematically implemented by stakeholders across the range nations of chimpanzees.
- 5) Additionally, the WGCC and the A.P.E.S. Database and Wiki Groups have engaged in ongoing discussions about the **fortification of existing databases to better integrate information on chimpanzee culture and behavioral diversity into monitoring and reporting frameworks**. Such databases can be used to highlight opportunities where culture and behavioral diversity may enhance conservation strategies, or conversely to indicate potential shortcomings of existing protection efforts with regard to the preservation of chimpanzee cultures. Such data repositories could also inform the planning and assessment of applications of the culture concept in conservation. While pilot efforts are currently focused

on West Africa, intensification of efforts to database information on chimpanzee cultures has much broader implications from both geographic and taxonomic perspectives.

- 6) Lastly, the Western Chimpanzee Action Plan's Implementation Committee **identified and prioritized areas of greatest conservation concern for western chimpanzee populations, which includes several nut-cracking chimpanzee populations.** In addition, they have outlined key actions to address remaining gaps in implementation of the action plan for western chimpanzee conservation, multiple of which overlap with the current needs of nut-cracking populations specifically, or which explicitly contribute to the stated goals and approaches of the CMS CA for NCC. The proposed approaches and priority actions have been summarized in a series of concept notes that will be circulated to a network of potential funders to garner support for their implementation.

Next Steps for the CMS Concerted Action for Nut-Cracking Chimpanzees

Collectively, these accomplishments have provided a foundation to outline the next steps to successfully advance the CA for NCC. Drs. Wessling and Sanz have developed a funding pre-proposal that describes these activities which will be circulated to key donors in the coming months. They have also taken steps to establish a steering committee to oversee their implementation of these next steps, which include:

- Support of self-contained PhD projects by range country students to eliminate gaps in key biomonitoring and chimpanzee nut-cracking data;
- Development of 'Best Practice Guidelines for Cultural Monitoring' as an addendum to ongoing monitoring methodologies, with evaluation for the efficacy of their integration into ongoing monitoring structures;
- Training opportunities for key regional stakeholders in best practices for cultural monitoring;
- Integration of behavioral diversity into centralized databases, with nut-cracking highlighted as an example of how the culture concept has been used in conservation;
- Broader efforts to raise awareness and involve local stakeholders in defining the role of culture in conservation, especially in the nut-cracking range countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Liberia.