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Agenda Item 32.2

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCERTED ACTION  
FOR THE NUT-CRACKING POPULATIONS OF THE CHIMPANZEES (*Pan troglodytes verus*)  
OF WEST AFRICA\***

Summary:

The IUCN SSC PSG SGA Working Group on Chimpanzee Cultures (WGCC) has submitted the attached report on the implementation of the Concerted Action for the Nut-Cracking Populations of the Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) of West Africa, UNEP/CMS/Concerted Action 13.1.

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## REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCERTED ACTION FOR THE NUT-CRACKING POPULATIONS OF THE CHIMPANZEES (*Pan troglodytes verus*) OF WEST AFRICA

UNEP/CMS/ CONCERTED ACTION 13.7

### 1. CONCERTED ACTION

Title: Concerted Action for the Nut-Cracking Populations of the Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) of West Africa

Document number: Concerted Action 13.1

### 2. REPORTING ORGANIZATION

On behalf of the CMS Expert Working Group on Culture and Social Complexity and the IUCN SSC PSG SGA Working Group for Chimpanzee Cultures:

#### **Dr. Erin Wessling**

Member of the CMS Expert Working Group on Culture and Social Complexity and the IUCN SSC PSG Section on Great Apes

Co-lead of the IUCN SSC PSG SGA Working Group on Chimpanzee Cultures

Regional Coordinator of the IUCN SSC PSG SGA Western Chimpanzee Action Plan and Committee

Co-director of the Moyen Bafing Chimpanzee Project and the BonDiv Project

Research Affiliations at the University of St. Andrews, Harvard University, Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung, and the German Primate Center

#### **Prof. Crickette Sanz**

Member of the CMS Expert Working Group on Culture and Social Complexity and the IUCN SSC PSG Section on Great Apes

Co-lead of the IUCN SSC PSG SGA Working Group on Chimpanzee Cultures

Professor of Anthropology at Washington University of St. Louis

Co-director of the Goualougo Triangle Ape and Mondika Ape Projects

Co-director of the Living Earth Collaborative 2.0

Research Affiliations with the Wildlife Conservation Society and Lincoln Park Zoo

### 3. TARGET SPECIES/POPULATION

Class: Mammalia

Family: Hominidae

Order: Primates

Species: *Pan troglodytes*

Subspecies: *verus*

### 4. PROGRESS IN ACTIVITIES

The following sections summarize activities undertaken to address the Concerted Action for the Nut-cracking Populations of Western Chimpanzees (CA for NCC). A more comprehensive review of activities is included in the intersessional report of the 2nd CMS Workshop on Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity.

## Planning Meeting

After COP13, the CMS Expert Working Group on Culture and Social Complexity determined that many of the aims of the CA for NCC were shared with the IUCN SSC PSG Section on Great Apes (SGA), that acts as a major vehicle for the coordination of ape conservation across all ape range countries, with the SGA's Working Group on Chimpanzee Cultures (WGCC) specializing in chimpanzee conservation and the study of chimpanzee (cultural) behavior. The WGCC aims to bring together expertise on chimpanzee cultural behavior, conservation science, and policy to drive multidisciplinary approaches to chimpanzee conservation. In lieu of the formal establishment of a concerted committee for the implementation of the CA for NCC, the WGCC, led by Dr. Erin Wessling and Dr. Crickette Sanz, oversaw activities related to this CA for NCC.

Activities of the CA for NCC were previously integrated into subspecies-wide conservation initiatives, largely through the conduit of the IUCN Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of Western Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) 2020-2030 ('WCAP'; IUCN 2020) and its committees.

In the framework of evaluating the efficacy of using animal cultures as a conduit for impactful conservation, the CA for NCC was proposed as a pilot project. Consequently, the efficacy of using NCC for chimpanzee conservation must be directly evaluated. To this effect, the WGCC convened multiple meetings in 2021 and 2022 to address the efficacy of NCC as a conservation tool. Several stakeholders were invited to present at these meetings, including representatives from NGOs and conservation policy makers.

In October 2022, in a joint initiative by the SGA, the Arcus Foundation, Re:wild, and USAID's West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABiLED) program, a regional workshop was held and attended by national and international stakeholders in western chimpanzee conservation and monitoring. While the primary goal of the meeting was the establishment of a regional framework for western chimpanzee biomonitoring and coordination, the incorporation of auxiliary variables like chimpanzee cultural diversity were extensively discussed. Practicalities of incorporating behavioral monitoring methods were considered and advocated as a priority aspect of future biomonitoring efforts. It was agreed that such auxiliary variables should be included in regional conservation assessment and planning, and subgroups were formed to implement such initiatives. This activity of the CA for NCC was completed.

## Further Data Collection

The WGCC and the IUCN SSC A.P.E.S. Database Working Group have engaged in ongoing discussions about avenues to incorporate behavioral data into the centralized A.P.E.S. Wiki and Database ([https://wiki.iucnapesportal.org/index.php/The\\_A.P.E.S.\\_Wiki](https://wiki.iucnapesportal.org/index.php/The_A.P.E.S._Wiki)). While pilot efforts have been focused on West Africa, intensification of efforts to database information on chimpanzee cultures across their entire geographic range has much broader implications from a taxonomic perspective. While progress has been made in gathering and collating information on indicators of chimpanzee culture, the fortification of existing databases to better integrate information on chimpanzee culture and behavioral diversity into monitoring and reporting frameworks is a key focus of the new Concerted Action for Chimpanzee Behavioral Diversity and Cultures.

## Public Engagement with Science and Conservation

For this activity, we evaluated the efficacy of using nut-cracking as a singular example of chimpanzee culture in academic discussions, field surveys, conservation policy and educational outreach. The WGCC has reached consensus 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. As a means of facilitating broader engagement with the culture concept in conservation, the WCAP Implementation Committee developed a pamphlet on

“Protecting Chimpanzee Diversity in All its Forms” which is broadly available in the range of western chimpanzees. A manuscript reviewing the use of single-behaviors as conservation conduits is being drafted for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal. This manuscript will elaborate upon the effectiveness of the CA for NCC as a useful pilot project for the expansion of animal cultures for conservation, and therefore directly addresses the exploratory purpose of the CA for NCC. The aim of the proposed activity for the CA on NCC was accomplished. However, the proposed Concerted Action for Chimpanzee Behavioral Diversity and Cultures will extend public engagement more broadly across the species’ range.

### **Direct Conservation Actions**

As a result of the CA for NCC, it was established that the use of a specific indicator of 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 components of chimpanzee cultural or behavioral diversity, which itself also represents an effective conservation target. These two conservation targets are often used interchangeably, in that the preservation of cultural diversity is largely regarded as the main conservation target for chimpanzees, however, when the employment of an exemplar adds value to an activity, that a particular cultural indicator can be invoked as the primary conduit or exemplar.

The WCAP Implementation Committee has outlined key actions to address remaining gaps in the WCAP, multiple of which overlap with the CA for NCC. These conservation activities will continue and be expanded in the new Concerted Action.

### **5. CHANGES TO THE CONCERTED ACTION (IF ANY)**

There are no proposed changes to the plan of activities to the latest version of the Concerted Action for the Nut-Cracking Populations of the Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) of West Africa. As a result of the initiatives and conclusions of the WGCC, it can be concluded that this Concerted Action was effective in demonstrating avenues through which a particular cultural indicator (in this case, nut-cracking) can be useful in conservation. However, the most significant outcome is the identification of a broader initiative on chimpanzee cultures and behavioral diversity that applies new approaches to conserving remaining chimpanzee populations across more than 20 parties of the CMS.

### **6. REFERENCES**

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- IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group (2020). Regional action plan for the conservation of western chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes verus*) 2020–2030. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.
- IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group Section on Great Apes. The Working Group on Chimpanzee Cultures. Website: <https://www.iucngreatapes.org/chimpanzee-cultures>
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- Western Chimpanzee Action Plan Implementation Committee. 2021. Pamphlet on Protecting Chimpanzee Diversity in All its Forms. Permalink (website): [https://www.westernchimp.org/files/ugd/9db650\\_3c9d84810d974613b7857f9282d5ee87.pdf](https://www.westernchimp.org/files/ugd/9db650_3c9d84810d974613b7857f9282d5ee87.pdf)

## **7. ACTION**

It is recommended that the Concerted Action is completed and can be closed. For the following triennium, we propose a new Concerted Action for Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) Behavioral Diversity and Cultures [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.3.1](#).