

WCASN Brief Report for 2007-2009

1. Site nominations

During the CMS MoU6 meeting in Kazakhstan in May 2007, the first ten sites were designated within the Site Network included five sites from Kazakhstan, two from Iran and one each from India, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Other Range States (Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Russia and Pakistan) also proposed their sites and are working on the preparation of nomination documents.

During the site nomination ceremony in Kazakhstan representatives from the five countries were handed provisional certificates. After the meeting, a logo and certificate for the WCASN were developed. The final certificates signed by CMS Secretariat and ICF were handed to representatives of Kazakhstan, India and Iran in Rome, Italy, during the CMS COP9 meeting with short introductions of the designated WCASN sites. Certificates for Turkmenistan site «Durnaly» were passed to the technical focal points. In these countries, meetings with representatives of local administrations were organized during Crane Celebration events and the certificates were presented to them. In Uzbekistan, certificate was handed to a representative of Termez local administration during Round Table «Presentation of Termez as a wintering site of the Western/Central Asian Site Network».

2. Status of nomination of new WCASN sites

Before the CMS MoU7 meeting, possibilities for the nomination of new sites were investigated. During the CMS MoU6 meeting, Azerbaijan and Pakistan proposed two sites each for nomination. However Azerbaijan did not submit a Letter of Endorsement to the CMS Secretariat, and Pakistan provided insufficient information on the proposed sites. Pakistan has since submitted a Letter of Endorsement for the two nominated sites and Site Information Sheets with updated information to the CMS Secretariat. These documents are being reviewed by the WCASN Review Working Group which will make recommendations to the WCASN Committee on the nomination of these sites. Turkmenistan planned to nominate one more site – Tallymerjen & Kelif-Zeyit, however the local administration in that region has changed, therefore the process of endorsement has to be started again. The same situation has occurred for the Russian site “Kunovat” located in Yamalo-Nenetskiy Autonomous Region, where the Governor was recently replaced. Kazakhstan has prepared proposals for three new sites, Sarykopa, Turgai-Irgiz and Tengiz-Kurgaljino Lake Systems, which can be considered for

future nomination. Uzbekistan proposed additional site Talimarjan for nomination to WCASN.

3. Increasing the protection level of WCASN sites

Since the last MoU meeting in 2007 progress was made on improving the protection level of a number of WCASN sites with support from the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (UNEP/GEF SCWP). All 5 WCASN sites in Kazakhstan were included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention). In addition, Naurzum Lake System was included as part of a World Heritage Site called “The Saryarka—Steppe and Lakes of Northern Kazakhstan”. In Zharsor-Urkash Lake System, the Zharsor-Urkash State Wildlife Refuge at the republic level was established, under the management responsibility of Naurzum State Nature Reserve. Since June 2001, Fereydoon Kenar in Mazandaran Province in Iran has been a “Non-Shooting Area”, covering Fereydoon Kenar, Ezbaran, Eastern & Western Sorkh Rud Damgahs and Fereydoon Kenar Wildlife Refuge, including a buffer zone around each of these areas. The Ramsar site at Bujagh has been extended (500 ha) to cover the whole national park which consists of the whole of the lagoon area, its associated marshes and the marshes and sand flats at the mouth of the Sefid Rud river to the west. Management plans for Naurzum Lake System and Zharsor-Urkash Lake System were completed. The management plan for the site of Fereydoon Kenar, Ezbaran & Sorkh Rud Ab-Bandans was finalized through a significant community participation process, and input was provided to the draft management plan for Bujagh National Park.

4. Atlas of Key Sites for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds in Western/Central Asia

The Atlas has been prepared for presentation during the CMS MoU7 meeting with the active participation of country representatives. For the preparation of this publication, Site Information Sheets for designated and proposed sites were used as well as information from the Siberian Crane database, which was created and managed within the framework of the UNEP/GEF SCWP, and data from the literature.

For each country, a brief overview of wetlands used by the Siberian Crane and detailed descriptions of historical and recent sightings of the Siberian Crane along the Western and Central Asian flyways has been prepared. The most important Siberian Crane sites (green

squares) and known Siberian Crane sightings are presented in the map for each country (or its part). Each sighting is described in detail in the legend with reference to information sources. Despite the quite comprehensive overview of Siberian Crane sightings, it is possible that some sightings have been missed, especially those described in local publications. Please provide information on any omissions to Elena Ilyashenko (eilyashenko@savingcranes.org).

For the most important Siberian Crane sites, experts from the Siberian Crane Range States presented information including maps of the sites, a brief overview of physiographic features, importance for the Siberian Crane with detailed description of all sightings, importance for other crane species and other waterbirds; negative factors for the wetlands, current and proposed conservation measures and the sites' international importance.

5. Information exchange

A section on the WCASN has been created in the merged UNEP/GEF SCWP – Siberian Crane Flyway Coordination website: <http://sibeflyway.org/flyway-conservation/wcsan>. Guidelines for Site Nomination have been uploaded here and can be used for the preparation of nomination documents for new sites. Information about each site has been included on a separate page with links to photos, maps and other documents.

Information on the launch of the WCASN was published in various newsletters, including the CWGE Newsletter. Presentations including WCASN activities were made during the CMS COP9 in Rome (Dec 2008), SCWP Project Completion Workshop in Harbin (Oct 2009), UNEP General Council Meeting in Bali (Press Conference Feb 2010) and others

6. Education activities at WCASN sites

Education activities were conducted at WCASN sites in Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with support from the UNEP/GEF SCWP. As Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were not involved in project implementation, agreements were signed between ICF and the related organizations in these countries.

Booklets with information about the sites were published in all four countries. In Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Crane Celebrations were organized where education and information materials provided by the Crane Working Group of Eurasia and published with the support of UNEP/GEF SCWP and CMS Secretariat were shared. Turkmenistan also published the poster "Protect Cranes and their Habitats" in Turkmen Language which was shared widely. In the framework of the Crane Celebration, a meeting with the local administration was organized at Durnaly site and the certificate of designation of this site signed by CMS Secretariat and ICF was handed to the Head of Administration. In Uzbekistan a Round Table on «Presentation of Termez as a wintering site of the Western/Central Asian Site Network» was organized for different target groups: decision makers (regional and local administration, regional branch of State Committee for Nature Protection), stakeholders (frontier guards), hunters, scientific workers of the neighboring protected area (Surhanskiy State Nature Reserve), lecturer of Termez state university and local mass media. In Kazakhstan, a Siberian Crane Festival was organized at Naurzum involving nearly three thousand students, teachers, stakeholders and different groups of local people from Karamendy (where the administrative office of Naurzum State Nature Reserve is located) as well as from adjacent regions of Kazakhstan and Russia.

7. Future support for the development of the WCASN

Recognizing that the WCASN was developed as an initial step towards the development of a wider waterbird site network under the CMS Central Asian Flyway initiative, ICF and Wetlands International are working with CMS and UNEP to develop a regional proposal covering part of the Central Asian Flyway which would provide support for the sustainable management of key WCASN sites, the extension of the site network and for addressing the important threat that unsustainable hunting practices pose to the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds. ICF is also seeking funds to support hunter education including some WCASN sites.