



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



PRESS RELEASE

International Experts Meet in Edinburgh to Plan the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey

Edinburgh, 20 January 2014 – International experts on birds of prey will convene today in Edinburgh, Scotland, to review conservation priorities within the framework of a UN agreement on migratory raptors in Africa and Eurasia. It is the First Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU) and will be held over four days.

Raptors are a critically important part of the ecosystem and act as sentinels to the health of the environment, including for human well-being. The Raptors MOU was concluded in 2008 under the auspices of the UNEP Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). The meeting brings together a group of raptor specialists to support the 46 countries and territories that have signed the Raptors MOU. Members will review and prioritize the list of tasks assigned to the Group by the Signatories. Approaches on how best to address each task also need to be agreed. The goal is to develop a two-year Work Plan (2014-15) and to create a firm basis on which to facilitate the exchange of information in advance of the next Meeting of Signatories, scheduled to take place in late 2015.

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, will host an evening Dinner Reception for delegates at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. He said:

"It is very encouraging to see such widespread support and interest in the conservation of migratory raptors.

"Scotland hosts a significant population of raptors, and birds of prey form a vital element of Scotland's ecosystems. Every year, many thousands of residents and tourists alike enjoy the sight of these majestic creatures. Some raptor species are coping better than others, and there are a number of factors impacting on trends for different species, not least the impact of habitat loss and in some cases illegal raptor persecution or egg theft.

"While we have seen many successes in conservation in Scotland, such as with regard to Ospreys, the Scottish Government is acutely aware of continuing pressures on other raptors. We have a responsibility to ourselves, the rest of the world, and to future generations, to protect these wonderful birds regardless of whether they are resident to Scotland or visiting our shores."

"We hope the work of the Technical Advisory Group can support the efforts of others in the global community to do likewise."

The Group offers an excellent opportunity to work collaboratively to address specific threats, such as electrocution and poisoning, that affect other species of migratory birds, as well as birds of prey. Putting conservation issues within the broader context of the Convention should also promote enhanced collaboration among these key international conservation instruments.

Nick Williams, who leads the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU said:

“Many migratory raptors travel huge distances, from here in bonny Scotland all the way to Africa and back, twice a year throughout their lifetimes. This exposes them to a huge range of threats as they journey through so many different countries. The Raptors MOU has a critically important role in bringing together Governments, scientists and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive and internationally agreed solutions to combat these threats and to enhance the conservation status of this spectacular group of birds”.

Scottish Natural Heritage, in collaboration with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Scotland), has arranged a field trip to Loch Leven National Nature Reserve and Argaty Red Kite Feeding Station near Doune, Perthshire. This will be a chance for the group of international scientists to see first-hand a range of conservation actions being carried out in Scotland to support the implementation of the Raptors MOU.

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