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Agenda Item 30.2

PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE HUDSONIAN WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION*

Summary:

The Governments of Brazil and Chile have jointly submitted the attached proposal for the inclusion of the Hudsonian whimbrel *(Numenius* (*phaeopus*) *hudsonicus)* on Appendix I of CMS.

*The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CMS Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE HUDSONIAN WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION

A. PROPOSAL

The proposed amendment here presented to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) aims to provide support for the inclusion of the Hudsonian whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* as a migratory (sub)species threatened with extinction to be listed on Appendix I of the Convention. The Hudsonian whimbrel is currently considered a subspecies by the Handbook of the Birds of the World and BirdLife International (2024), but other sources have recognized it as a separate species (more details in section C 1.5 of this proposal). This proposal concerns all populations of the Hudsonian whimbrel, whose range encompasses North, Central and South America.

The Hudsonian whimbrel has not been assessed by the IUCN Red List up to this date, but there is strong scientific evidence of a ~70% population decline for this (sub)species (see more details in section C 4.2 and 5.1 of this proposal), which would be consistent with the listing as globally Endangered. While treated as a full species, the whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) was assessed in 2024 (BirdLife International, 2024) and, despite the current population trend being suspected as “decreasing”, it was listed as Least Concern due to the Eurasian subspecies and populations being reportedly stable and much larger in number – with the decreasing Hudsonian subspecies being represented only a small fractions of the global population.

Although the family Scolopacidae is listed in Appendix II of the Convention, this (sub)species would benefit from the internationally coordinated conservation effort arising from its inclusion on Appendix I of the Convention. The Hudsonian whimbrel is reliant on habitats across more than 30 countries, including 11 contracting parties of the Convention. CMS could provide justification and establish obligations for these countries to work towards halting the population decline of this (sub)species and conserving its habitats throughout its annual cycle.

B. PROPONENT

Brazil, Chile.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class: Aves

1.2 Order: Charadriiformes

1.3 Family: Scolopacidae

1.4 Genus, species or subspecies, including author and year: *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* Latham, 1790.

1.5 Scientific synonyms: The IOC World Bird List (Gill et al., 2023), the Avilist (Avilist Core Team, 2025) as well as the Brazilian Ornithological Records Committee (Pacheco et al., 2021) have recognized the Hudsonian whimbrel as a full species, named *Numenius hudsonicus*. BirdLife International is committed to adopting the Avilist taxonomy for the global Red List of birds (see https://www.birdlife.org/news/2025/06/11/avilist-unites-the-worlds-bird-species/).

1.6 Common name(s): Hudsonian whimbrel, Hudsonian curlew (English), Courlis corlieu (French), Zarapito trinador (Spanish), Maçarico-de-bico-torto (Portuguese).

2. Overview

The Hudsonian whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* Latham, 1790) is a long-distance migratory shorebird of the family Scolopacidae. Historically, it was treated as a separate species ("Hudsonian Curlew"). Although it is still treated as a subspecies by some sources, more recently, some taxonomic authorities have been treating the Americas populations as a separate species (*N. hudsonicus*), including the Avilist (Avilist Core Team, 2025). BirdLife International currently treats Hudsonian whimbrel as a subspecies, and as such it has not been assessed by the IUCN Red List separately from the *Numenius phaeopus* species. However, it is expected that it will soon be evaluated, as BirdLife will gradually be adopting the Avilist taxonomy. The Hudsonian whimbrel has a small population size (~80,000 individuals) and performs a cyclic migration between Arctic breeding grounds and South American non-breeding grounds every year, facing several threats. Consequently, Hudsonian whimbrel has experienced an estimated ~70% population decline in the last three generations (*c*. 19 years), which would be consistent with the listing of the species as Endangered under the IUCN Red List criteria.

3 Migrations

3.1 Kinds of movement, distance, the cyclical and predicable nature of the migration

Hudsonian whimbrel is a long-distance migratory shorebird that performs a cyclic migration between breeding and non-breeding grounds every year. In the boreal spring (from March through May), it migrates from the non-breeding grounds in South America to their breeding grounds in the Arctic (Ruthrauff et al., 2021; Skeel & Mallory, 2020). After the boreal summer (late June to October), they migrate back to non-breeding grounds in South America, where they spend about 60% of the annual cycle (Watts et al., 2021), to then return to the Arctic in the next boreal spring. They also rely on several sites along the coast of the United States, Mexico and Central America during migration. Hudsonian whimbrel migrate along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of the Americas, therefore being present in over 30 countries. More recently, it has been discovered that they also use inland habitats through the midcontinental United States during migration.

3.2 Proportion of the population migrating, and why that is a significant proportion

The entire Hudsonian whimbrel population undertake long-distance migration (Skeel & Mallory, 2020).

4 Biological data (other than migration)

4.1 Distribution (current and historical)

The current breeding range of the Hudsonian whimbrel in the Arctic and subarctic comprises coastal and south-central Alaska, north-western Canada, as well as west and south of Hudson Bay (Skeel & Mallory, 2020). There is evidence of three distinct breeding sub-populations of this (sub)species: one that breeds in central and western Alaska and migrates along the Pacific coast from the United States to Chile; a second that breeds in north-western Canada and eastern Alaska and migrates along the Atlantic coast of the Americas to northern South America; and a third sub-population that breeds in the west and south of Hudson Bay, also migrating through the Atlantic Flyway and sharing non-breeding grounds with the north-western Canada/eastern Alaska sub-population (Skeel & Mallory, 2020; Watts et al., 2021). In addition, all populations that spend the non-breeding season on the north coast of South America migrate north across the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico to stage primarily in the southeast and gulf coast of the United States (Sanders et al., 2021; Watts et al., 2021; Watts & Truitt, 2011), as well as Laguna Madre in Mexico. Most of these individuals are from the

western Canadian and Alaskan breeding areas (Manomet Conservation Sciences, unpublished data). Pacific Flyway migrants concentrate in coastal Peru and Chile during the non-breeding season (Figure 1). The current non-breeding range of the two Atlantic Flyway sub-populations encompasses the northern coast of South America: Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and northern Brazil.

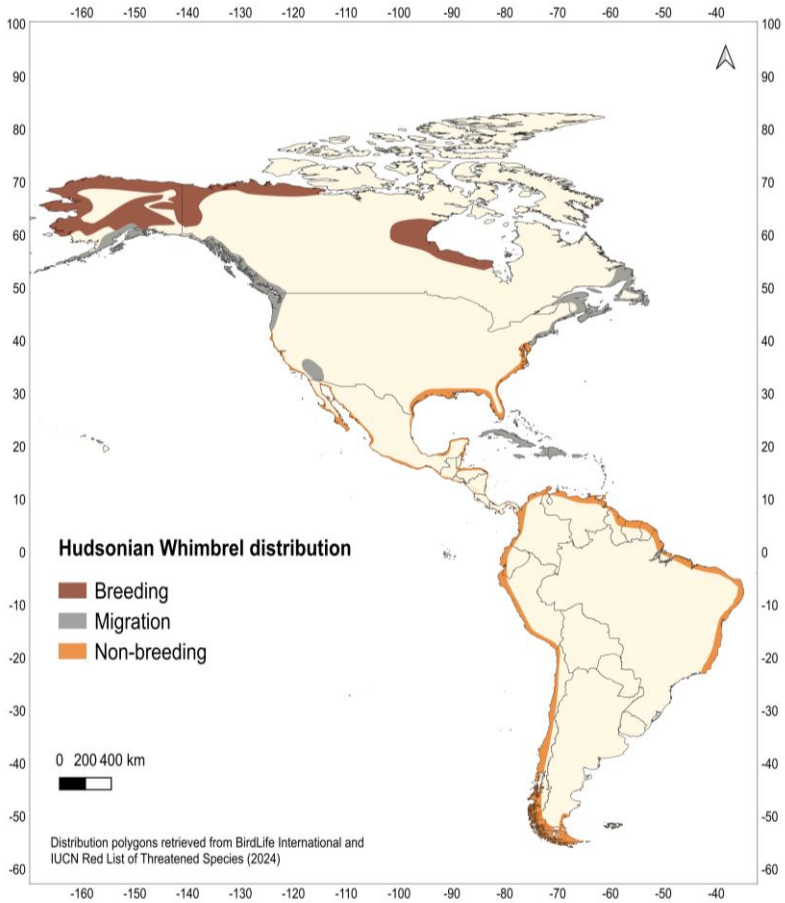

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of the Hudsonian whimbrel.

There is, however, evidence of a reduction of the breeding distribution of this (sub)species along Hudson Bay. Nesting density has declined in a historically important nesting area, where some of the highest nesting densities of Hudsonian whimbrel were reported in the mid-1970s, coinciding with a warming climate trend and significant habitat changes (Ballantyne & Nol, 2015).

4.2 Population (estimates and trends)

The most recent estimate for the whole (sub)species is 40,000 individuals in the Pacific Flyway sub-population and 40,000 individuals in the Atlantic Flyway sub-populations; therefore, the total population size of Hudsonian whimbrel is estimated to be 80,000 individuals (Andres et al., 2012). In addition to this small population size, the population of Hudsonian whimbrel has been estimated to decline by ~70% in the most recent three generation period (Smith et al., 2023). Compared to the previous three-generation period, the rate of the decline has become more substantial.

Smith et al. (2023) obtained the generation length - the mean age of parents of the current cohort - for whimbrel (6.46 years) from Bird et al. (2020), resulting in a period of three generations equal to 19.38 years. Smith et al. (2023) estimated the trend using count data from the International Shorebird Survey (ISS), the Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey (ACSS),

and the Ontario Shorebird Survey (OSS). Although these surveys cover both the Pacific and Atlantic Flyways in the Americas, the survey effort is greater in north-eastern United States and Atlantic Canada, because these are the regions where these volunteer survey programs were initiated. Therefore, this trend estimate can be considered as more representative of the two Atlantic Flyway Hudsonian whimbrel populations. However, a recent analysis of 10-years of non-breeding shorebird surveys in the Pacific Flyway also indicated a significant population decline (Reiter et al. in press).

In accordance with the update estimate provided by Smith et al. (2023), an earlier population-wise assessment had already revealed a decline of Hudsonian whimbrel tracing back to the 1970s-1980s (Howe et al., 1989). Moreover, a previous study also showed a decrease in one of the Hudsonian whimbrel populations across time at the Delmarva Peninsula, a migration stopover site, where the number of individuals staging declined by 50% from 1994 to 2009 (Watts & Truitt, 2011).

4.3 Habitat (short description and trends)

Hudsonian whimbrel breed in moorlands and tundra near treeline, in sites with high lichen cover, especially in hummocks or lichen ridges (Ballantyne & Nol, 2011). They also breed in sites with high graminoid and standing water cover, although less frequently. In general, this (sub)species prefers habitats with low shrub and tree cover or tundra, with very few individuals nesting in areas with higher tree density (Ballantyne & Nol, 2011).

During migration or in the non-breeding season, Hudsonian whimbrels use tidal flats, salt marshes and grasslands. They show a preference to forage on muddy habitats, usually transitioning to sandy or grassy areas when the high tide is covering the exposed mud (Skeel & Mallory, 2020). During the non-breeding season, they are also associated with mangrove ecosystems – where they forage on exposed mudflats and roost in the mangrove trees during high tide (Johnston-González & Abril, 2019; Skeel & Mallory, 2020).

Ballantyne & Nol (2015) showed that over a 33-year period there were significant changes on Hudsonian whimbrel breeding habitats with an increase in shrubs and trees, while lichen cover decreased. These changes in habitat extent and quality could potentially be associated with the decreasing trend in Hudsonian whimbrel population size, considering that these have already been linked to nesting density decrease (Ballantyne & Nol, 2015). Moreover, one of their non-breeding habitats is also facing a severe decline: mangroves are the type of wetland that has suffered the greatest reduction in its area worldwide (Ballut-Dajud et al., 2022).

4.4 Biological characteristics

Hudsonian whimbrel are long-lived (³ 11 years), monogamous and territorial, and males usually establish a breeding territory and sometimes perform aerial displays. During the breeding season, they feed on insects and berries (Skeel & Mallory, 2020). Both sexes participate in egg incubation, and there are usually four eggs. Hatching success has been reported to vary in two different years at one breeding site from 26% to 14% (Ballantyne & Nol, 2011). A few different species of raptors, foxes and wolves act as nest predators of Hudsonian whimbrel. Chicks usually leave the nest just a few hours after hatching to feed nearby, as they are not fed by the parents. Juveniles migrate about 1 month after the adults, and they spend a full year at the non-breeding grounds before returning to the breeding grounds – the age of the first breeding is usually 2 years old (Skeel & Mallory, 2020). There is evidence that females depart the breeding grounds before the males (Ausems, MacKellar, Brown, & Nol, 2025), so it is unknown whether pairs spend the non-breeding season together. However, they have high site fidelity regarding their breeding grounds and marked pairs have been observed to reunite in subsequent years (Skeel & Mallory, 2020). During migration or

non-breeding season, Hudsonian whimbrels feed especially on crabs, and they maintain individual feeding territories (Handmaker et al., 2024; Skeel & Mallory, 2020).

4.5 Role of the taxon in its ecosystem

Hudsonian whimbrel play vital roles in the ecosystems the (sub)species is connected to, first as a control agent of prey abundance both in the breeding season (insects) and non-breeding (intertidal macrofauna) seasons, causing significant top-down effects on mudflat ecosystem functioning (Booty, Underwood, Parris, Davies, & Tolhurst, 2020; Sekercioglu, 2006). Moreover, as a long-distance migratory shorebird that breeds in the Arctic and sub-Arctic and relies on several other ecosystems throughout its annual cycle, including mangroves, Hudsonian whimbrel also perform a role in nutrient cycling and biological connectivity (Buelow & Sheaves, 2015).

5. Conservation status and threats

5.1 IUCN Red List Assessment (if available)

No IUCN Red List assessment has been conducted for the Hudsonian whimbrel up to this date, while the full species of whimbrel (*Numenius phaeophus*) is listed as Least Concern due to the Eurasian subspecies and populations being reportedly stable and much larger in number – with the decreasing Hudsonian representing only a small portion of the whole species population size.

5.2 Equivalent information relevant to conservation status assessment

Populations of Hudsonian whimbrel have declined by ~70% in the last three-generation period (see more details in section C 4.2; Smith et al. 2023), which is consistent with the listing of the species as globally Endangered under the IUCN Red List criteria A.

Because of the small population size and declining trend, this (sub)species is already considered nationally Vulnerable, under IUCN Red List criteria A2b in the Brazilian list of threatened species (MMA, 2022; Telino Jr. et al., 2023). It is also considered of high conservation concern both in the United States (U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Partnership, 2016) and Canada (Hope et al., 2019).

5.3 Threats to the population (factors, intensity)

Habitat loss and degradation are likely to be the most pressing threat to Hudsonian whimbrel populations (Wilke & Johnston-González, 2010). This (sub)species has been facing habitat loss throughout its breeding and non-breeding ranges, mostly due to urban development, shrimp farming and salt production. Disturbances caused by recreational activities and vehicle traffic on some beaches have also been reported (Telino Jr. et al., 2023). Climate change is also linked to breeding habitat degradation for Hudsonian whimbrel (Ballantyne & Nol, 2015), along with a series of other complex threats ranging from coastal habitat loss due to sea-level rise, higher costs and mortality during migration due to changing wind patterns, and reduced reproduction and survival due to lack of synchronicity between migration and peak resource availability (Wilke & Johnston-González, 2010). Hunting during the non-breeding season is also thought to be an important threat to this (sub)species, especially in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Barbados, Suriname and French Guyana (Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative Harvest Working Group, 2017). Moreover, Hudsonian whimbrels suffer the consequences of oil spills and are exposed to heavy metal contamination (Wilke & Johnston-González, 2010).

5.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

All threats to the populations of Hudsonian whimbrel can affect their migratory behaviour: habitat loss and degradation can reduce the availability of stopover sites and compromise individual survival during migration, and changes in wind patterns, extreme weather events, hunting and oil spills can cause elevated mortality during migration.

5.5 National and international utilization

This (sub)species is hunted both for sport and food in some countries (Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative Harvest Working Group, 2017), although there are no precise estimates of the number of individuals hunted per year. The Hudsonian whimbrel is also used in the context of birdwatching tourism.

6. Protection status and species management

6.1 National protection status

In the breeding grounds, this (sub)species is protected in Canada under the Canadian Shorebird Conservation Plan and the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and in the United States. through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Therefore, hunting this (sub)species is illegal in these two countries. In the United States, the Shorebird Conservation Plan provides a conservation strategy for declining shorebirds, but it does not grant these species any additional legal protection status in the country.

In Brazil, one of the countries that hosts the largest concentrations of non-breeding Hudsonian whimbrel, all wildlife species are protected according to the Law No. 5.197, which forbids the hunting of wild animals in the country. Because this (sub)species is also listed as Vulnerable in the Brazilian national threatened species list and is one of the species included in the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Conservation of Migratory Shorebirds (ICMBio, 2023), it is also granted additional protection on Brazilian territory. Moreover, all wetlands (including all habitats used by this (sub)species), are protected by the Brazilian national decree No. 1.905, which enacts the Ramsar Convention in the country.

However, Suriname and French Guiana also host significant numbers of Hudsonian whimbrel in the Atlantic Flyway during the non-breeding season, and hunting of this (sub)species is allowed in these countries.

In the Pacific Flyway, both Chile and Peru have a National Action Plan for the Conservation of Shorebirds.

6.2 International protection status

Currently, the Hudsonian whimbrel is internationally protected only under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). This Treaty was enacted in 1918 as a U.S. Federal Law to protect migratory birds in international cooperation with Canada, and lately was expanded including Mexico, Japan and Russian Federation. Therefore, hunting of Hudsonian whimbrel is prohibited in the three MBTA countries within its range (Canada, United States and Mexico).

6.3 Management measures

Because it was recognized as a (sub)species of conservation concern in various national conservation plans (see section 6.1), over a decade ago (2009), a Conservation Plan was developed for the Hudsonian whimbrel (Wilke & Johnston-González, 2010). The purpose of this plan was to identify important sites for the conservation of this (sub)species at the

international level, as well as identify main threats and establish conservation measures. However, given the 15-year interval since its publication and the recent estimates of severe population decline, this plan needs to be updated. No programmes are currently in place for captive breeding or reintroduction of this (sub)species, nor has the potential need for such programs been assessed.

6.4 Habitat conservation

Important habitats used by Hudsonian whimbrel during all parts of the annual cycle are being identified and conserved through the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). In the Atlantic Flyway, for example, Deveaux Bank was recognized as a WHSRN site of international importance due to supporting nearly half of the Atlantic population of this (sub)species (Sanders et al., 2021). In the non-breeding grounds, Reentrâncias Maranhenses was recognized as a site of hemispheric importance, as it hosts c. 44% of all hudsonian whimbrel counted in South America. In the Pacific Flyway, the Humedales Orientales de Chiloé supports 61% of the Pacific population of Hudsonian whimbrel, making it a WHSRN site of hemispheric importance. Additionally, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands also works with its contracting parties to identify, manage and protect wetlands of international importance, many of which encompass Hudsonian whimbrel habitats.

6.5 Population monitoring

Most Shorebird National Action Plans of individual countries within the range of the Hudsonian whimbrel have their own population monitoring framework, but the International Shorebird Survey, coordinated by Manomet Conservation Sciences (https://www.manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey/), sets a standardized monitoring approach for shorebird populations across the Western Hemisphere. The Conservation Plan for this (sub)species also suggests supporting the efforts of the Neotropical Waterbird Census as a way to maintain population monitoring (Wilke & Johnston-González, 2010).

7. Effects of the proposed amendment

7.1 Anticipated benefits of the amendment

As a result of the inclusion of the taxon in Appendix I of the CMS, it is expected that the taxon will stand out as a focus of actions to generate knowledge, conservation and management, to, ultimately, ensure its long-term population viability. It is expected that existing initiatives will be strengthened and expanded, as well as international cooperation will be encouraged to enhance integration on population monitoring and on management and conservation actions.

Examples of existing initiatives dedicated to promoting concerted actions towards the conservation of the Hudsonian whimbrel and its habitat include the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative (AFSI; https://atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/), the Midcontinent Shorebird Conservation Initiative (MSCI; https://midamericasshorebirds.org/), and Road to Recovery (R2R; https://r2rbirds.org/). Both AFSI and MSCI identified priority actions to reverse the decline of focal shorebird species in the Americas, one of them being the Hudsonian whimbrel. These actions were built collaboratively by specialists, conservationists and government agencies from countries throughout the Americas. The R2R initiative was created as a response to the loss of three billion birds in the United States and Canada (Rosenberg et al. 2019). The R2R strategy is centred around species conservation working groups built upon international and interdisciplinary collaboration. The Hudsonian whimbrel was identified as one of “tipping species” and is one of the R2R species working group.

7.2 Potential risks of the amendment

No potential risk was identified.

7.3 Intention of the proponent concerning development of an Agreement or Concerted Action

Currently, a working group formed at the Second Meeting of the Americas Flyways Task Force (AFTF, 2024) is discussing the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or an Initiative for the AFTF. The Hudsonian whimbrel is one of the (sub)species included (under *Numemius phaeopus*) in the Annex III of the Action Plan for the Americas Flyways 2018-2023 ('Annex 3 to Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP13)'), and consequently, a priority species for the MoU or Initiative under discussion.

8. Range States

- Argentina: non-breeding.
- Belize: non-breeding.
- Brazil: non-breeding.
- British Virgin Islands: migration and non-breeding.
- Canada: breeding and migration.
- Chile: non-breeding.
- Colombia: non-breeding.
- Costa Rica: non-breeding.
- Cuba: migration.
- Dominican Republic: migration.
- Ecuador: non-breeding.
- El Salvador: non-breeding.
- French Guyana (France): non-breeding.
- Guatemala: non-breeding.
- Guyana: non-breeding.
- Haiti: migration.
- Honduras: non-breeding.
- Jamaica: migration.
- Antigua and Barbuda: migration.
- Barbados: migration.
- Dominica: migration.
- Grenada: migration.
- Saint Kitts and Nevis: migration.
- Saint Lucia: migration.
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: migration.
- Trinidad and Tobago: migration.
- Mexico: non-breeding.
- Nicaragua: non-breeding.
- Panama: non-breeding.

- Peru: non-breeding.
- Puerto Rico: migration.
- Suriname: non-breeding.
- Bahamas: migration and non-breeding.
- United States of America: breeding, migration and non-breeding.
- Venezuela: non-breeding.

9. Consultations

10. Additional remarks

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