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**PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF
THE HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*)
ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION**

Summary:

The Government of Chile and Brazil have submitted the attached proposal for the inclusion of the Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) on Appendix I of CMS.

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PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*) ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION

A. PROPOSAL

The proposed amendment presented here to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) aims to provide support for the inclusion in *Appendix I of the Convention* the hudsonian godwit *Limosa haemastica* as a migratory species threatened with extinction. This proposal concerns all populations of the hudsonian godwit, whose range encompasses North, Central, and South America.

The hudsonian godwit has been listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International, 2024) in recognition of studies suggesting that the species declined >95% from 1980-2019, with that rate accelerating during the species' most recent three generations (Smith et al. 2023). The current hudsonian godwit population size is estimated at ~87,000 individuals (García-Walther et al. 2017, Faria et al. 2025). The combination of their rapid decline and overall small population size are consistent with listing the species as Endangered.

Although the family Scolopacidae is listed in Appendix II of the Convention, this species would benefit from the internationally coordinated conservation effort that would arise from its inclusion on Appendix I of the Convention. Hudsonian godwits have occurred in 61 countries or territories, including 16 contracting parties of the Convention. CMS could provide justification and establish obligations for these countries to work towards halting the population decline of this species and conserving its habitats throughout its annual cycle.

B. PROPONENT

Chile, Brazil.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

- 1.1. Class: Aves.
- 1.2. Order: Charadriiformes.
- 1.3. Family: Scolopacidae.
- 1.4. Genus, species or subspecies: *Limosa haemastica* Linnaeus, 1758.
- 1.5. Scientific synonyms: None.
- 1.6. Common names(s), in all applicable languages of the Convention:
 - English: Hudsonian Godwit
 - French: Barge hudsonienne
 - Spanish: Zarapito de pico recto, Becasa de Mar.

2. Overview

The hudsonian godwit is a long-distance migratory shorebird in the family Scolopacidae. Each year, they undertake a 'loop' migration that leads them from nonbreeding areas in southern South America to breeding areas in the Arctic and sub-Arctic of Canada and the USA and back again. Along the way, they encounter myriad threats, including habitat degradation, anthropogenic disturbances, sea level rise, agricultural conversion, hunting, tundra

shrubification, phenological mismatches, and climate change-driven hurricanes. Their population is thought to have declined at a rate >10% year over their past three generations.

3. Migrations

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

Hudsonian godwits have one of the longest migrations of any terrestrial bird species in the world – exceeding 30,000 km roundtrip – from nonbreeding sites in southern South America (e.g., Tierra del Fuego and Isla Chiloé) to breeding sites in the sub-Arctic and Arctic of Canada and the USA (Walker et al. 2024). Northward migration witnesses the entire species undertaking up to 7-day nonstop flights over the open Pacific Ocean from southern South America, while southward migration includes a multi-day crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, as well as stops in the Amazon Basin and a crossing of the Andes Mountains (Senner et al. 2014, Linscott et al. 2022). During both north- and southward migration, godwits predominantly rely on small, seasonal wetlands in mid-continental regions, including in the USA, Canada, Bolivia, and Brazil (Senner 2012; Linscott et al. 2024). They also occasionally make use of coastal stopover areas throughout the Pacific and Gulf coasts of Central America during northward migration and along the Atlantic coasts of both North and South America, as well as across most islands in the Caribbean Sea (Raffaele et al. 1998), during southward migration. As a result, they have been recorded in more than 60 separate territories or countries.

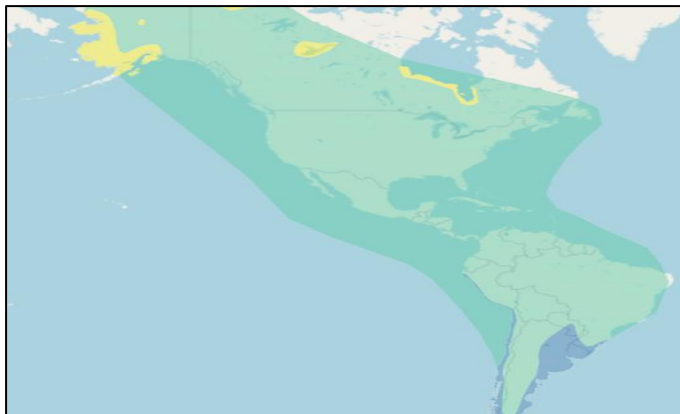


Figure 1. Year-round distribution of Hudsonian Godwits *Limosa haemastica*. Yellow represents breeding areas; green areas occupied during migration, and blue the nonbreeding season. Map provided by BirdLife International (2024).

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

All hudsonian godwits migrate (Walker et al. 2024), although young birds migrate south to South America at the end of their first summer of life and then remain on the continent throughout the year until reaching the age of three (Navedo and Ruiz 2020; Martinez-Curci et al. 2025).

4. Biological data (other than migration)

4.1. Distribution

Hudsonian godwits breed in three largely disjunct regions (Fig. 1) – along the western shore of northern James Bay and southern Hudson Bay; in northwestern Canada, stretching from Great Slave Lake to the Mackenzie River Delta; and in Alaska, along the southern edge of the Brooks Range, along the eastern shore of the Bering Sea, and along the northern shore of the Gulf of Alaska and Cook Inlet (Walker et al. 2024). The two Canadian breeding populations

then migrate southward *via* the Hudson-James Bay coasts before spending the nonbreeding season together along the Atlantic coasts of southern Brazil, Argentina, and the Chilean portion of Tierra del Fuego (Blanco et al. 2006; Smith and Watts 2013; Walker et al. 2024). The Alaskan breeding population, on the other hand, migrates southward *via* the Prairie Pothole Region of southern Canada before continuing on to nonbreeding areas on the Pacific Coast of Chile (Espinosa et al. 2006; Senner et al. 2014; Delgado et al. 2022). Irrespective of their breeding population or nonbreeding destination, most godwits appear to stopover in the central Amazon Basin of Brazil and Bolivia before stopping again in the inland Pampas Region of Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil (Senner et al 2014; Linscott et al. 2024; Martinez-Curci et al. 2025). There are also scattered records in inland wetlands, in the Brazilian Cerrado and Pantanal (WikiAves 2025).

During the stationary portion of the nonbreeding season, hudsonian godwits congregate in large flocks in intertidal bays, especially in Argentina in Bahía Samborombón (Martinez-Curci et al. 2015a), Bahía Blanca (Blanco et al. 2006), and Bahía San Sebastián (Faria et al. 2025), as well as in Chile in Bahía Lomas (Espoz et al. 2022) and on Isla Chiloé and the adjacent mainland of the Los Lagos region (Andres et al. 2009; García-Walther et al. 2017; Valenzuela-Rojas et al. 2023).

Young birds that do not migrate to North America to breed during their first 1-2 years predominantly migrate to the inland Pampas Region of Argentina – e.g., the provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fe, and La Pampa – during the boreal summer (Navedo and Ruiz 2020; Martinez-Curci et al. 2025). In some years, some of these young birds instead remain in coastal areas (Espinosa et al. 2006).

4.2. Population

At the species level, Hudsonian godwits are estimated to have a population size of ~87,000 individuals. This comprises an estimate of 56,276 (range = 9,326-113,221; Faria et al. 2025) for the populations spending the nonbreeding season on the Atlantic coast of South America and 31,085 (range = 29,847-32,323; Garcia-Walther et al. 2017) for the population spending the nonbreeding season on the Pacific Coast of South America. This small population size is the result of substantial declines over the past half century. A recent study estimated that, since 1980, the species' population has declined by >95%, with that decline accelerating to a rate of >10% per year over the last three generations (e.g., 19 years; Smith et al. 2023). The data for this study were largely gathered from stopover sites used by the two Canadian breeding populations, however. Godwit population estimates from Isla Chiloé, Chile – where the Alaskan breeding population predominantly spends the nonbreeding season – do not exhibit a similarly strong trend, but instead vary substantially from year to year (Valenzuela-Rojas et al. 2023). There thus may be considerable intraspecific variation in recent population dynamics across the Hudsonian godwit range.

4.3. Habitat

The habitat use of Hudsonian godwits changes dramatically across their annual cycle. During the nonbreeding season, they occur almost exclusively in intertidal habitats comprised of soft, muddy substrates that they can probe with their long bills for benthic prey (Bala et al. 1998; Blanco 1998; Ieno 2000; Senner and Coddington 2011). Similar intertidal habitats are also used during migration, especially during southward migration on the coasts of Hudson and James bays in northern Canada (Morrison and Harrington 1979), the Gulf of St. Lawrence in eastern Canada (Maisonneuve et al. 1990), and along Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA (Veit and Peterson 1993), as well as on islands in the Caribbean (Raffaele et al. 1998).

More often, during migration, godwits make use of shallow water (e.g., <10 cm depth) wetlands in mid-continental regions (Linscott 2025). These shallow water wetlands are frequently

seasonal and may occur in natural habitats – such as post-glacial depressions in the grasslands of the Prairie Pothole Region of North America (Skagen et al. 2008) or along the banks of rivers in the Amazon Basin of South America (Linscott et al. 2024) – as well as anthropogenic habitats – such as farmland (Skagen et al. 2008) or along the shores of reservoirs (Linscott 2025). Because these types of habitats are frequently seasonal and heavily dependent on precipitation levels and management techniques, individual godwits rarely stopover in the same location in multiple years even while migrating along the same migratory corridor over the course of their lives (Senner et al. 2014; Linscott 2025).

During the breeding season, godwits nest at the tundra-taiga interface in wet or boggy habitats (Swift et al. 2017a). In Canada, these habitats are dominated by wet sedge meadows (*Carex* sp.) interspersed with *Larix laricina*, while in Alaska godwits are more frequently found in muskeg bogs or floodplains of rivers that are characterized by small patches of *Picea mariana*. Godwit nests in these habitats are frequently clustered and, thus, their distribution across the landscape is not uniform, leading to disjunct patches of habitat use throughout their range (Swift et al. 2017b). As the climate has warmed and permafrost has melted, woody shrubs have begun to encroach on such habitat patches, with largely unknown consequences for nesting godwits (Ballantyne and Nol 2017).

4.4 Biological characteristics

Hudsonian godwits exhibit a relatively high rate of annual adult survival (73-82%; Swift et al. 2020), leading many individuals to lead long lives (>13 years). At the same time, godwits exhibit slow rates of reproduction, laying only 3-4 eggs in a clutch and reneating only when their clutches are depredated early during incubation (Senner et al. 2017). The survival of godwit nests varies dramatically across their breeding distribution, ranging from an average of 20% in Churchill, Manitoba, Canada to >90% in Beluga, Alaska, USA (Senner et al. 2017; Wilde et al. 2022a). Once they hatch, godwit young are precocial and nidifugous, leaving the nest almost immediately and feeding themselves throughout development. Most godwit young die during this period, however, with some years witnessing near complete reproductive failure and, at most, only 30-40% of chicks surviving in the best years (Wilde et al. 2022a). Godwit nests are depredated by a variety of mammalian – e.g., red fox *Vulpes vulpes* – and avian predators – e.g., Common Raven *Corvus corax*, Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, and Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*. This same suite of predators, prey on godwit chicks and are joined by Short-billed Gulls *Larus brachyrhynchus* where godwit breeding areas and gull colonies overlap (Swift et al. 2018; Wilde et al. 2022b). Godwit chicks, in turn, prey on a range of invertebrate taxa and much of godwit chick survival is determined by the degree to which they are able to find sufficient resources to fuel their rapid growth during the short sub-arctic summer (Senner et al. 2017). As climate change has accelerated and summer conditions have become less predictable, godwits across their range have become increasingly mismatched with the availability of their invertebrate prey (Senner et al. 2017, Wilde et al. 2022a).

During migration and the nonbreeding season, godwits form flocks, sometimes numbering in the thousands. These congregations move between high-tide roost sites and low-tide foraging areas (Basso et al. 2024) where they prey upon marine worms and small bivalves (Bala et al. 1998; Hernandez et al. 2008; Martinez-Curci et al. 2015b). On Isla Chiloé, which has numerous small bays in close proximity to each other, individual godwits remain faithful between years to complexes of bays, but frequently move among bays within a complex throughout the nonbreeding season (Basso et al. 2023; Swift et al. 2023). The ability of godwits to recover from their recent southward migration, survive the nonbreeding season, moult, and prepare for their upcoming northward migration is, in large part, determined by the amount of disturbance individuals experience during the nonbreeding season (Navedo et al. 2019, Swift et al. 2023). Frequent disturbances, from both predators and humans, reduce the amount of time they can spend foraging and increase the amount of time they spend commuting between

different foraging and roosting sites. Individuals occupying more disturbed sites are therefore less likely to survive northward migration and/or successfully reproduce (Swift et al. 2020).

The nature of the immense distances covered during their annual migrations necessitates that godwits spend considerable amounts of time preparing for and recovering from these migrations. They thus undergo substantial physiological changes over the course the year (Gutiérrez et al. 2019) and must make use of high-quality habitats throughout their annual cycles to ensure that they are able to migrate on time (Senner et al. 2014), complete multi-day open-ocean crossings (Linscott et al. 2022), and rapidly prepare for their next flight (Clements et al. 2025).

4.5. Role of the taxon in its ecosystem

As migratory birds, godwits play crucial roles in the movement of resources across hemispheres (Bauer and Hoyer 2014). In particular, their arrival to high latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere helps to trigger key trophic cascades that provide nutrients for entire sub-arctic and arctic ecosystems and can disperse seeds across vast distances (Green et al. 2023). At more local scales, shorebirds frequently play an important role in biological control, regulating the abundance of benthic organisms in intertidal habitats (Booty et al. 2020).

5. Conservation status and threats

5.1. IUCN Red List Assessment

Hudsonian godwits are listed as Vulnerable, under IUCN criteria A2b+4b, in recognition of their small population size, recent population decline, and the number of threats they face throughout their annual cycle (BirdLife International 2024).

5.2. Equivalent information relevant to conservation status assessment

Hudsonian godwits are listed as Endangered in Canada (COSEWIC 2019), a species of conservation concern in the USA (USFWS 2021), a Category I species (e.g., most critical) in Argentina (Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible 2020), and Vulnerable in Chile (Ministerio del Medio Ambiente 2023).

5.3. Threats to the population

Hudsonian godwits face a wide array of threats throughout their annual cycles. However, those threats can largely be grouped into four overarching categories:

- (1) *Agricultural conversion and loss of inland shallow water wetland habitat.* The conversion of inland shallow water wetlands to agricultural habitat is currently approaching rates not seen since the 1920s. In the Prairie Pothole Region of the USA, up to 5.4% of remaining natural grasslands per year were converted to soy between 2006-2011 alone (Wright and Wimberly 2013). This rapid rate of habitat loss superimposed on top of the natural dynamism of midcontinental wetland habitats, means that the amount of shallow water wetland habitat available to godwits as stopover habitat during their migrations can change by more than two hundred-fold between years (Linscott 2025). Similar rates of agricultural conversion are occurring in the Amazon Basin (Silva Junior et al. 2020) and the Pampas Region of Argentina (Martinez-Curci et al. 2025). This can substantially impair the ability of godwits to efficiently find the high-quality stopover habitat they need to complete their migrations.

- (2) *Anthropogenic disturbance of intertidal habitats.* The past two decades have witnessed an unprecedented increase in the use of intertidal habitats for aquaculture in South America (Baquedano et al. 2025). The disturbances caused by aquaculture – even at seemingly low levels of human activity – can negatively influence the foraging and roosting behaviours of godwits (Navedo et al. 2019). In turn, areas with higher levels of disturbance are occupied by godwits in poorer body condition (Swift et al. 2023) that are less likely to complete their northward migration or successfully reproduce during the subsequent breeding season (Swift et al. 2020).
- (3) *Hunting.* Godwits are hunted at two junctures in their annual cycle. During southward migration along Hudson and James bays in northern Canada, godwits are hunted for subsistence by people from First Nations groups. They are also hunted for sport on a number of Caribbean islands where they may stopover after having encountered storms *en route* over the Atlantic Ocean (Watts and Turrin 2016). While an unknown number of godwits are shot each year during these periods, hunting in these two regions represents a known and substantial threat to other shorebird species (McDuffie et al. 2021), and godwits likely have little ability to absorb similar losses at the species level (Watts et al. 2015).
- (4) *Climate change.* Climate change is influencing godwits at nearly every stage of their annual cycles. In the mid-continent of North America, increasingly severe droughts and rain events are causing dramatic year-to-year swings in wetland availability (Linscott 2025). On the breeding grounds in the sub-Arctic and Arctic, rapidly advancing springs are causing phenological mismatches between the hatch of godwit chicks and the availability of their invertebrate prey, leading to regular reproductive failure across their breeding range (Senner et al. 2017; Wilde et al. 2022). During southward migration over the Atlantic Ocean, increasingly frequent and severe hurricanes have the ability to disrupt godwit flights and, potentially, cause mass mortality events (Watts et al. 2021). And, in coastal South America, sea level rise has the potential to drastically reduce the amount of time during which intertidal foraging habitats are available to godwits in the near future (García-Walther 2025). In turn, each of these aspects of climate change can interact with the other threats that godwits are facing, multiplying their effects and causing even more rapid and dramatic consequences for godwit populations.

5.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

Each of the threats detailed in Section 5.3 has the ability to either directly influence Hudsonian godwits during the migrations – e.g., increasingly severe storms over the Atlantic Ocean or continued agricultural conversion of shallow water wetlands – or indirectly, *via* their influence on the ability of godwits to prepare for their migrations – e.g., intertidal disturbance and sea level rise.

5.5 National and international utilization

Hudsonian godwits are hunted both for sport and subsistence (see section 5.3), although there are no precise estimates of the number of individuals hunted per year. Godwits are also an eco-tourism draw, especially in coastal Chile, where there is an annual shorebird festival, and along the western shore of Hudson Bay, Canada.

6. Protection status and species management

6.1. National protection status

Hudsonian godwits are protected in Canada under the Migratory Birds Convention Act and, in the USA, under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Hunting this species in these two countries, except for subsistence by indigenous people, is illegal, as are activities that lead to the

unnecessary 'take' of substantial numbers of individuals. Both countries also have national shorebird conservation plans that detail conservation strategies for shorebirds, but neither of these grant godwits or any other shorebird species any additional legal protection. In Brazil, all migratory birds are protected under Law N° 5.197, which forbids the hunting of wild animals. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Peru have all developed national shorebird conservation plans, although these plans do not provide additional protection measures for godwits.

6.2. International protection status

Currently, hudsonian godwits are protected internationally only under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This Treaty was enacted in 1918 as a federal law in the USA to protect migratory birds in international cooperation with Canada, and has since been expanded to include Mexico, Japan, and Russia.

6.3. Management measures

The Hudsonian Godwit Conservation Plan (Senner 2010) was written to provide guidance about godwit management and conservation and has been used to guide conservation funding directed toward godwits by the federal government in the USA. However, having now been written 15 years ago, the plan is in need of an update. Godwits are also a focal species of the recently completed Mid-Continent Shorebird Conservation Strategy (Midcontinent Shorebird Conservation Initiative 2025), which provides additional guidelines for targeted management activities. No godwit-focused captive breeding program is currently in place, nor has the need for one been assessed.

6.4. Habitat conservation

Numerous sites critical for Hudsonian godwits have been identified by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), including the Humedales Orientales de Chiloé, Chile; Bahía Samborombón, Argentina; Cheyenne Bottoms, USA; and Quill Lakes, Canada. Nonetheless, designation as a WHSRN site, alone, does not carry any protection status. As such, relatively few of the key sites and habitats utilized by godwits throughout their annual cycles are formally protected. This is especially the case in the mid-continent of North America, where the vast majority of godwits make use of private land during their north- and southward migrations (Skagen et al. 2008).

6.5. Population monitoring

No godwit-specific monitoring scheme currently exists, but many regions have monitoring initiatives that nonetheless aim to capture changes in godwit population sizes. On the breeding grounds, the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring has extensively surveyed the Canadian Arctic, including much of the godwit breeding range in Canada (Smith et al. 2025). During southward migration through North America, a number of the sites used by godwits along the Atlantic Coast and in the Canadian portion of the Prairie Pothole Region are monitored by the International Shorebird Survey (Smith et al. 2023). In South America, sites across nearly all of the godwit nonbreeding range are covered annually by the Neotropical Waterbird Census (Wetlands International 2025) and, once every five years, the region is more intensively surveyed by the South American Coastal Shorebird Survey (Senner and Angulo 2014; García-Walther et al. 2017; Faria et al. 2025). There are thus a number of datasets that can continue to be referenced for updates on the population trends of hudsonian godwits.

7. Effects of the proposed amendment

7.1. Anticipated benefits of the amendment

The proposed amendment will benefit existing initiatives dedicated to promoting concerted actions towards the conservation of the Hudsonian godwit and/or its habitat such as the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative (Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Conservation Initiative 2015), Midcontinent Shorebird Conservation Initiative (Midcontinent Shorebird Conservation Initiative 2025), and Road to Recovery (R2R; <https://r2rbirds.org/>). Both AFSI and MSCCI identified priority actions to reverse the decline of focal shorebird species in the Americas, the Hudsonian godwit being a focal species for MSCCI. 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. The R2R strategy is centred around species conservation working groups built upon international and interdisciplinary collaboration, including one closely related to the Hudsonian godwit and frequently co-occurs with them throughout their annual cycle – the Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*).

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 godwit is one of species listed 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: nonbreeding
- Belize: migration
- Bolivia: migration
- Brazil: migration and nonbreeding
- British Virgin Islands: migration
- Canada: breeding and migration.
- Chile: nonbreeding.
- Colombia: migration
- Costa Rica: migration
- Cuba: migration
- Dominican Republic: migration
- Dutch Antilles: migration
- Ecuador: migration
- El Salvador: migration
- French Guyana: migration
- Guatemala: migration
- Haiti: migration

- Honduras: 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: migration
- Nicaragua: migration
- Panama: migration
- Paraguay: migration
- Peru: migration and nonbreeding
- Puerto Rico: migration
- Suriname: migration
- The Bahamas: migration
- United States of America: breeding and migration
- Uruguay: migration and nonbreeding
- Venezuela: migration

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