



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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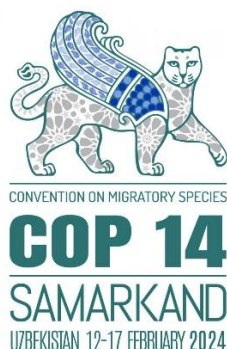
15th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 to 29 March 2026
Agenda Item 28.13

**STATEMENT ON HUMAN AND ANIMAL CULTURE AS DETERMINANTS OF DYNAMIC
SPATIAL UNITS FOR SPECIES CONSERVATION ACTION**

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

The CMS Secretariat and the IUCN Species Survival Commission co-convened a side event on Tuesday 12 February, and the following Statement on Human and Animal Culture as Determinants of Dynamic Spatial Units for Species Conservation Action was agreed by the participants.



Statement on Human and Animal Culture as Determinants of Dynamic Spatial Units for Species Conservation Action

Samarkand, 14 February 2024

The CMS Secretariat and the IUCN Species Survival Commission co-convened a side event on Tuesday 12 February, and the following *Statement on Human and Animal Culture as Determinants of Dynamic Spatial Units for Species Conservation Action* was agreed by the participants. We submit it for the record.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that culture is important for both human and non-human populations. Social learning, the processes which can generate discrete cultures within and between animal social groups, can result in behavioural variation across populations. Some socially learned behaviours can be persistent and relatively stable, whilst others may be more ephemeral. As a result, social learning can generate resilience or vulnerability and can increase the efficiency of reintroductions or translocations or improve human wildlife conflicts or interactions.

Animal culture is an important tenant of biodiversity and is highly relevant to many aspects of conservation science, policy and practice. The groundbreaking work conducted over the last decade in this area by CMS, has identified several key aspects, including the need to conserve cultural capacity across populations to generate resilience and the potential for adaptation to a wide range of threats.

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species integrates Green Status metrics that quantify the impact of conservation action on population recovery, forecasts the effect of conservation interventions, and measure progress towards achieving fully conserved status. Evaluation of Green Status requires delineation of spatial units by subpopulation, following ecological and geographical features, and location, or a combination of these. Both human and animal culture can act as drivers of population structure, and therefore determinants of spatial units relevant to Green Status and conservation action under CMS. In addition, indigenous peoples and local communities divide animal populations following criteria such as use and spirituality.

Given the broad diversity of vertebrate taxa for which there is emerging evidence of social learning and the multifaceted interface between social learning, animal culture and conservation, the participants agreed the need to formalize the collaboration between CMS and IUCN on this important, cross-cutting issue, specifically to explore:

- implications for population structure and defining coherent geographical units;
- utility for reintroductions, translocations and human-wildlife interactions;
- suitability for integration into Green Status assessments;
- application under 'special attributes' in Red List assessments;
- opportunities to incorporate indigenous perspectives and local knowledge on animal cultures to advance understanding and conservation objectives.

Cultural transmission can generate complexity within and between animal populations which generates several fundamental questions for conservation scientists and managers. We welcome the opportunity to explore these important issues further and invite anyone willing to join the conversation. Please share your interest with us at cms.secretariat@cms.int and ssc.iucn@gmail.com