

**8th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the
CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC8)**

Bonn, Germany, 15 – 18 December 2025

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**TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR THE CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON FLYWAYS**
(Prepared by the Secretariat on behalf of the CMS Flyways Working Group)

ScS-SC8 CRP 9.3.2

Summary:

This document presents draft Terms of Reference (TOR) of the CMS Working Group on Flyways (FWG), prepared by FWG members, with a view to formalize key provisions regarding the role, remit and governance structure of the FWG as a group mandated by and supporting the Scientific Council.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON FLYWAYS

1. The Flyways Working Group (FWG) was set up in 2009, based on decision of the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP9), through [Resolution 9.2](#), as an open-ended working group on global bird flyways within the framework of the Scientific Council. Its mandate has been strengthened through resolutions and related revisions and decisions by the COP, including [Resolution 10.10](#) *Guidance on Global Flyway Conservation and Options for Policy Arrangements*¹, [Resolution 11.14](#) *Programme of Work on Migratory Birds and Flyways*¹, and [Resolution 12.11 \(Rev.COP14\)](#) *Flyways*. The FWG's role has been to act as a think tank on flyways and relevant frameworks. It has undertaken and supported a range of activities and produced significant outputs, including:
 - Three major reviews published in CMS Technical Series No. 27, titled [A Review of Migratory Bird Flyways and Priorities for Management](#):
 - Review 1 - Analyzed existing CMS and non-CMS administrative arrangements.
 - Review 2 - Analyzed current knowledge of bird flyways, principal knowledge gaps and conservation priorities;
 - Review 3 - Analyzed policy options for migratory bird flyways;
 - Developing and monitoring the Americas Flyways Framework and other regional initiatives;
 - Providing guidance on conservation and management at both global and regional flyway levels.
2. The FWG's scope covers all migratory bird species under CMS, including waterbirds, seabirds, landbirds, raptors, and passerines. Its membership is composed of CMS Scientific Council members, invited experts and organizations with relevant expertise.
3. In the light of the COP Decisions 14.137 and 14.140 to review and update the Flyways Programme of Work, and considering the expansion of the FWG and its range of activities, FWG members mentioned, at the fourth meeting of the FWG ([FWG4](#)), held online on 18 February 2025, that it would be pertinent to clarify and formalize the FWG's role, remit and governance structure through Terms of Reference (TOR). A drafting exercise was initiated, resulting in draft TOR that were submitted to the fifth meeting of the FWG ([FWG5](#)). The FWG members endorsed the draft TOR and requested the Secretariat to submit them to the Eight Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council for adoption.

Recommended actions:

4. The Sessional Committee is recommended to review and adopt the draft Terms of Reference of the FWG contained in the Annex of this document.

¹ Repealed and superseded by Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP14) *Flyways*.

ANNEX

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CMS WORKING GROUP ON FLYWAYS

1. Background and purpose

This Working Group is established in line with the mandate provided by Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP14) *Flyways* to assist the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and its associated instruments to ensure the exchange of best practices and the identification of global synergies and gaps across the different flyway-related initiatives, either developed within the framework of the CMS or outside.

The Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP9) adopted [Resolution 9.2](#)¹ which established an open-ended working group on global bird flyways within the framework of the Scientific Council. The Working Group's remit was to act as a think tank on flyways and frameworks, and was tasked with reviewing scientific and technical issues for conservation of migratory birds and their habitats (e.g. [UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.27 Future Flyways Policy](#)), and relevant international instruments, initiatives and processes, as the basis for future CMS policy on flyways and contributing to the work on the future shape of CMS. The revisions of the Flyways mandate at the following meetings of the COP² agreed upon the continuation of the Flyways Working Group (FWG). The FWG has supported the production of various milestone outputs including the global Programme of Work on Flyways 2014-2023, and 'A Review of Migratory Bird Flyways and Priorities for Management'³.

2. Role and Scope

The Working Group, consisting of experts identified in cooperation with the Secretariat, exists to advise the Scientific Council on issues linked to migratory bird flyway conservations and to perform the following activities:

1. Support the implementation of Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP14) *Flyways* and related Decisions directed to the Scientific Council and develop guidance to aid Parties in identifying key priorities and major implementation gaps in their region.
2. Support the definition, implementation and monitoring of the Flyways Programme of Work.
3. Provide guidance and input to the conservation and management of flyways at global and flyway level during the inter-sessional period, as a basis for CMS policy on flyways.
4. Provide a platform to discuss and review CMS-related scientific and technical issues on flyways and relevant migratory bird-related matters.
5. Review relevant scientific and technical issues, international initiatives and processes linked to flyways, migratory birds, their habitats and the threats to them.
6. Help to ensure the coordination between various CMS Working Groups and Task Forces (e.g., Illegal Killing of Birds, Landbirds, Energy) on flyway-related actions and priorities, and enhance synergies in their implementation.

The geographical scope of the Flyways Working Group is global. The Flyways Working Group remains in place until the Sessional Committee decides its work is complete or an alternative

¹ Repealed. Superseded by Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP14).

² COP10 to COP14, endorsed through the relevant resolutions on *Flyways*, superseded by Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP14).

³ CMS Technical Series No. 27

~~arrangement is made. The terms of office of the Flyways Working Group are open and will be considered automatically renewed by each meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council unless otherwise decided by the Council.~~

3. Membership

Membership should aim to cover all major flyway regions of the world and promote participation of persons knowledgeable in flyway issues and relevant flyway conservation frameworks. The number of members should be optimized to be able to work effectively.

1. Membership of the Working Group can include both members of the Scientific Council and observers; in line with the Rules of Procedure of the Scientific Council.
2. The Working Group will strive to maintain a balance of gender, regional representation and taxonomic categories of expertise.
3. The involvement of Working Group members is entirely on a voluntary basis.
4. Relevant independent experts, including representatives of non-CMS flyway initiatives, on migratory bird ecology and policy are encouraged to participate and assist with the implementation of the Programme of Work.
5. If needed, experts external to the Working Group and interested in contributing to the objectives of the Working Group may be invited to join meetings or to support specific tasks.

4. Governance

The Working Group will select a Chair and Vice-Chair from among its Sessional Committee members. The Working Group will operate by seeking consensus among its members. A Coordinator may be appointed to assist with implementing the Programme of Work subject to the availability of external resources.

5. Organisation of Work

1. A Flyways Working Group Programme of Work detailing specific activities will be developed for each intersessional period.
2. The Working Group will mainly operate electronically by communicating via email, virtual meetings and, subject to available external resources, making use of a dedicated workspace.
3. To address key conservation priorities, the Flyway Working Group may establish thematic sub-groups to deliver effective solutions for migratory bird conservation.
4. An annual meeting may be organized, subject to available external resources. In-person meetings may be held in the margins of Sessional Committee meetings and other meetings as appropriate.
5. The Chair of the Working Group will report on progress to the Sessional Committee.
6. The CMS Secretariat will endeavor to support and facilitate the coordination of the activities and the organization of meetings of the Working Group, as well as maintain the Flyway Working Group webpage on the CMS website.