



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 – 29 March 2026
Agenda Item 28.13

CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY

(Prepared by the Scientific Council and its Expert Working Group on Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity and the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Decisions 14.227–14.230 *Conservation Implications of Animal Culture* and proposes new Decisions for adoption. It also proposes amendments to Resolution 11.23 (Rev.COP12) *Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity*.

The attached draft Resolution and Decisions would support the achievement of Target 4.1, 5.3 and 6.1 of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032.

This document was revised by the Scientific Council at its 8th Meeting of the Sessional Committee in December 2025.

CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY

Background

1. To support implementation of Resolution 11.23 (Rev.COP12) *Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity*, COP14 adopted the following Decisions:

14.227 Directed to Parties

Parties are requested to:

- a) *support actions and research, including of Concerted Actions, that investigate the conservation implications of animal culture and social learning for a diverse range of taxa, including fish and reptiles;*
- b) *apply a precautionary approach by considering cultural processes as relevant for the conservation of all species for which there is evidence for social learning;*
- c) *where specific cultural groups have been identified, give specific attention to threats (including human-wildlife conflict) and good practices that might be specific to this particular cultural unit;*
- d) *upon receiving a request from the Secretariat, submit information on any actions taken in line with paragraphs (a) to (c) for transmission to the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity;*
- e) *use information generated by the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity on the growing understanding of the conservation implications of animal culture and social complexity within their interactions with the CMS daughter agreements; and*
- f) *provide technical and/or in-kind support to allow the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity to undertake the reviews, develop the guidance and facilitate the cooperation with IUCN as requested in Decision 14.228, and to convene an in-person workshop during the intersessional period before COP15.*

14.228 Directed to the Scientific Council

The Scientific Council is requested to:

- a) *invite newly appointed Councillors that have relevant expertise to engage in the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity; and*
- b) *consider the outputs of the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity and make recommendations to COP15, based on its findings.*

14.229 Directed to the Scientific Council, through its Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity

The Scientific Council, through its Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity, subject to the availability of external resources, is requested to:

- a) *promote the practical application of the increasing knowledge about animal culture and social learning in conservation management by:*
 - i. *exploring shortcuts for incorporating social learning into management, complementing traditional management techniques, including developing guidance on methodologies for detecting social learning and providing advice on phylogenetic inference;*
 - ii. *reviewing updates on culture-related Concerted Actions and providing guidance as required;*

- iii. *considering whether further culture-related Concerted Actions should be brought forward and developing proposals as appropriate;*
 - iv. *conducting a review that identifies instances in which social learning is involved in animal behaviours and mitigation measures for human-wildlife conflict;*
 - v. *conducting a review of examples at the intersection of social learning and changes in behaviour related to climate change in human-wildlife conflict;*
 - vi. *developing guidance for engagement with stakeholders to illustrate why animal culture and social learning are relevant to conservation;*
 - vii. *continuing further development of case studies illustrating the importance of animal culture and social learning in the conservation of CMS-listed species;*
 - viii. *exploring the potential link with Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) and other place-based conservation tools that identify sites or seascapes of biodiversity importance;*
 - ix. *exploring the impacts of hunting on social structure;*
 - x. *exploring opportunities for linking with the GEO BON global biodiversity observation network;*
- b) *support research on animal culture and social learning by:*
 - i. *developing guidance on methodology for detecting social learning;*
 - ii. *incorporating a variety of 'lines of evidence' on social learning and animal culture, including from local communities, and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples;*
- c) *make use of the potential synergies with CMS Agreements/MOUs/Initiatives by:*
 - i. *developing a table of all CMS Agreements/MOUs/Initiatives to identify the species of highest priority;*
 - ii. *compiling examples into a document or brochure outlining the relevance of animal culture and social learning;*
 - iii. *passing this publication on to Parties and Signatories in the context of upcoming meetings; and*
- d) *increase collaboration with IUCN on matters related to animal culture, including by:*
 - i. *bringing the issues and opportunities around social learning and animal culture to the attention of the World Conservation Congress in 2025;*
 - ii. *convening a workshop in collaboration with the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Human-Wildlife Conflict & Coexistence Specialist Group to further explore human-wildlife interactions in connection with social learning;*
 - iii. *engaging with the relevant IUCN bodies to develop synergies for integrating social learning and cultural processes into management activities.*

14.230 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *request Parties to submit, about 18 months before COP15, information on actions taken in line with Decisions 14.227 (a) to (c) for transmission to the Scientific Council and its Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity;*
- b) *subject to the availability of external resources, convene an in-person workshop to assist the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity with providing best practice advice on the implementation of management strategies for species that learn socially, categorizing and designating cultural units and identifying any further culture-based Concerted Actions; and*
- c) *subject to the availability of external resources, support the Scientific Council and its Expert Working Group with the development of a publication outlining the relevance of animal culture and social learning for publication on the CMS website and support the development of the reviews and guidance foreseen in Decision 14.229.*

Activities of the Animal Culture Expert Working Group (ACEWG)

2. The Expert Working Group currently has 88 members, all considered leaders in the fields of social learning, social complexity and animal culture for different taxonomic groups. It continues to be chaired by Philippa Brakes (Whale and Dolphin Conservation/Exeter University) and operates under the responsibility of the COP-appointed Councillor for Connectivity, Fernando Spina.

Publication of a Journal Special Issue

3. Many of the mandates given in Decision 14.229 a) and b) were implemented through the publication of a special issue of a scientific journal, an idea first discussed during the [2nd CMS Workshop on Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity](#) (2023). With editors from the Expert Group leading this initiative, a special issue was developed for the journal, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, with the theme [Animal culture: conservation in a changing world](#). The issue was published in May 2025 and includes 19 contributions led by many individuals from the ACEWG and beyond, covering taxonomic reviews, cross-cutting issues and conservation-focused articles, such as for translocation or cultural rescue. The themed issue highlights recent scientific discoveries which reveal that culture is widespread across vertebrates. Traditions of behaviour, from tool use to migration, and dietary specialization to vocal dialects, have been found to be passed on in numerous species of mammals, birds and fish. The special issue is the first to present a comprehensive picture of how the science in this field can have potentially important implications for conservation agendas. All the articles in the issue are open access and are available under the links below:

Introduction

- [Animal culture: conservation in a changing world](#)

Part I: Taxonomic perspectives

- [Social learning and culture in birds: emerging patterns and relevance to conservation](#)
- [Cold-blooded culture? Assessing cultural behaviour in reptiles and its potential conservation implications](#)
- [Fishy culture in a changing world](#)
- [On the interface between cultural transmission, phenotypic diversity, demography and the conservation of migratory ungulates](#)
- [Knowledge transmission, culture and the consequences of social disruption in wild elephants](#)
- [Culture and conservation in baleen whales](#)
- [Ecology and conservation of socially learned foraging tactics in odontocetes](#)
- [Integrating culture into primate conservation](#)
- [The flexibility of social learning and its conservation implications in mammals and beyond](#)

Part II: Cross-cutting issues in wildlife conservation

- [The growing methodological toolkit for identifying and studying social learning and culture in non-human animals](#)
- [Worlds that collide: conservation applications of behaviour and culture in human–](#)

wildlife interactions

- [Strategies for integrating animal social learning and culture into conservation translocation practice](#)
- [The effect of habitat health and environmental change on cultural diversity and richness in animals](#)
- [Network indicators of cultural resilience to anthropogenic removals in animal societies](#)
- [Cultural processes and demography: implications for conservation and beyond](#)

Part III: Conservation in action

- [Conserving avian vocal culture](#)
- [Concerted conservation actions to support chimpanzee cultures](#)
- [Integrating cultural dimensions in sperm whale \(*Physeter macrocephalus*\) conservation: threats, challenges and solutions](#)

Outreach to CMS Daughter Agreements

4. At the [16th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee](#) in December 2024, the topic of animal culture and social learning was raised as part of the Expert Working Group's efforts to reach out to CMS Agreements/MOUs/Initiatives (Decision 14.229 (c)). Since cetaceans are among the species known to have populations that can be defined by their cultural traits, CMS invited ACCOBAMS to consider how incorporating knowledge of cetacean culture can contribute to the conservation of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area.
5. Specifically, under Conclusion 30 *"the Scientific Committee welcomed the new issue noting the invitation from CMS to engage in this and recommended that a working group would be established to allow for further discussion of this issue and the potential to hold a workshop at the next meeting of the [European Cetacean Society] will be explored. The ACCOBAMS working group on Culture and Social learning will consider the potential importance of social learning and culture for cetacean conservation in the ACCOBAMS region and will liaise as appropriate with the CMS expert group. It will review available information and seek to provide concrete recommendations. The working group will report back on progress to the next Scientific Committee Meeting"*.
6. As part of the activities of this working group, a hybrid workshop co-organized by ACCOBAMS and CMS was held in April 2025 at the 36th Conference of the European Cetacean Society in the Azores, entitled 'Cetacean culture: navigating change in the ACCOBAMS region and beyond' (report available [here](#)). The following recommendations were agreed by participants, to be considered by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee:
 - Include consideration of culture in the sperm whale Conservation Management Plan (CMP),
 - Include consideration of culture in the fin whale CMP,
 - Encourage researchers in the region to consider whether their focal populations demonstrate indicators of social learning and/or culture,
 - Encourage consultation with the CMS Expert Group when there is doubt about whether a behaviour is socially learned,

- Consider how threats (underwater noise, habitat loss, prey reduction, etc.) could impact the transmission of cultural behaviours important to survival or reproduction of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area,
 - Conservation actions should ensure that cultural transmission routes and social structure are maintained and should aim to protect holders of ecological knowledge (e.g., older individuals),
 - Mapping of migratory routes along with threats for migratory cetacean species in the region, e.g., fin whales, may provide greater detail on risk and could indicate where specific conservation actions should be taken,
 - Conservation actions should consider the species-specific habitat requirements for different cultural behaviours to be expressed e.g. the impacts of noise on the ability for cetaceans to be able to hear/communicate, will differ,
 - Knowledge of cultural behaviour in specific species/populations is an important educational tool and can be used to explain to the public/decision makers why this particular species/population needs protecting.
7. In addition to this outreach to ACCOBAMS, the issue was on the agenda of the [29th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee](#) (September 2025), with an introduction to the topic from the Chair of the Expert Working Group. The meeting established an ASCOBANS Working Group on Cetacean Culture. In November 2025, the working group was merged with the one established by ACCOBAMS. The joint working group will liaise closely with the CMS ACEWG.

Collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

8. Another area of focus for the intersessional period was to increase cooperation with IUCN on animal culture (Decision 14.229 (d)). Following attendance by IUCN representatives at the 2023 workshop, collaboration between IUCN and CMS in this area has continued, including through a joint side-event during CMS COP14 on animal culture, which resulted in a joint CMS-IUCN statement on animal culture ([UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.28.13](#)).
9. In June 2025, IUCN held the inception meeting for a five-year initiative (2025-2030) led by IUCN in partnership with the Arcus Foundation to advance the consideration of animal culture in guiding conservation policy and practice. The Chair of the CMS Animal Culture Expert Working Group is directly involved in the project, which will draw on multiple streams of knowledge and perspectives on animal culture to deepen understanding of and appreciation for the diversity and importance of animal cultures to help guide conservation policy and practice. This will include engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, including inter alia, conservation practitioners, Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples Organizations and local communities to develop non-extractive collaborations and equitable pathways for integrating insights on animal culture and conserving cultural capacity across wild populations. The project will also be guided by collaboration with the CMS Expert Group and the newly formed IUCN CEESP-SSC Conservation of Animal Culture Task Force (see para. 12 below for more on the new Task Force).
10. The main goals of the project are to:
- Broadly inform and socialize the concept of animal culture across IUCN bodies and processes, and to influence the wider conservation community.
 - Develop common language and understanding in this field for stakeholder engagement.

- Explore application of emergent evidence and new understanding for a range of global conservation frameworks and initiatives to develop advice and recommendations.
 - Collaborate with the CEESP-SSC Conservation of Animal Cultures Task Force in its mission to assess the feasibility and suitability of incorporating culture into conservation frameworks such as the IUCN Green Status of Species assessments and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ assessments.
 - Develop an equitable process for engaging with Indigenous Peoples and other stakeholder groups in this field.
 - Collaborate with Indigenous Peoples Organizations through agreed equitable pathways to ensure traditional knowledge is recognized appropriately when incorporated into animal culture initiatives.
 - Ensure synergies with work in this area being conducted under CMS, other MEAs and relevant conservation bodies to ensure a cohesive, consistent and evidence-based approach to the conservation of animal cultures across these international bodies.
 - Support initiatives that place cultural diversity as a focus of conservation efforts – for example, through capacity-building and citizen science projects that engage with Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) – and source funding to help secure pilot field-projects.
 - Develop an IUCN communications strategy on animal culture as a vehicle for science-based education on threats and conservation initiatives, including through the development of an IUCN publication in this field.
 - Explore the concept of the intrinsic value of animal cultures from a range of different perspectives and consider how animal cultures are valued across different human cultures.
11. While the focus of CMS is specifically on migratory species, IUCN can also provide expertise on non-migratory species, or those species that disperse within Range States. The different approaches complement each other, and the two organizations will continue to collaborate on animal culture by identifying opportunities for synergies and cross-pollination. For example,
- a) the guidelines for phylogenetic inference¹ that CMS is developing and the perspectives on the importance of connectivity, as well as the effects of climate change and wildlife disease on migratory species, provide valuable opportunities for collaboration with the work that IUCN will be undertaking in this emerging field,
 - b) IUCN expertise from specialist groups on translocations and human–wildlife conflict, as well as the knowledge and perspectives of IPLCs, may also inform the implementation of CMS Concerted Actions in this area,
 - c) ongoing CMS activities to disseminate evidence across daughter agreements and MOUs will provide a further channel for collaboration between the two organizations.
12. In addition, IUCN launched a Task Force on the Conservation of Animal Cultures jointly convened by the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) and the Species Survival Commission (SSC). It brings together expertise on non-human culture in a wide range of taxonomic groups, and applies this knowledge to other, less extensively studied and non-migratory, cultural species to identify salient conservation

¹ Phylogenetic inference is the process of reconstructing evolutionary relationships. This may provide insights on how social learning behaviours have originated and diversified among species. The ACEWG is working on developing tools for understanding how plausible it would be to infer that an evolutionary related species, occupying a similar niche, perhaps with similar social structure, may also have social learning, as a way to overcome the scarcity of data.

targets. The Task Force also works to understand and integrate knowledge from conservation practitioners as to what works in the field, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local community perspectives on animal culture and kinship. Through these cross-disciplinary efforts, the Task Force will inform and shape stronger conservation approaches that recognize, understand and protect diverse perspectives and approaches to the conservation of animal cultures. It is co-chaired by the Chair and another member of the CMS Animal Culture Expert Working Group, ensuring full synergy between the work of the two bodies.

Activities of the Secretariat

13. The Secretariat sent out Notification [2025/001](#) on 6 January 2025 in reference to Decision 14.230 (a), requesting Parties to submit information on actions taken in line with Decisions 14.227 (a) to (c). No responses were received.
14. The Secretariat has supported the activities of the ACEWG, which operates through a dedicated group on Teams, throughout the intersessional period. This includes helping to co-organize the workshop, 'Cetacean Culture: Navigating Change in the ACCOBAMS Region and Beyond', held at the 36th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society (see para. 6 above), and several calls with the IUCN Secretariat and Commission members regarding the establishment of the Task Force on the Conservation of Animal Cultures and the design of the IUCN-led project to advance the consideration of animal culture in conservation policy and practice (para. 9 above). With funding provided by the Government of Monaco, the Secretariat was able to cover the open access fees for two articles in the special issue on animal culture (para. 3 above). Furthermore, the Secretariat supported the ACEWG in developing a draft table providing an overview of all CMS Agreements, MOUs and initiatives, the species they cover, and key relevant topics of interest, as well as upcoming opportunities to reach out to the Parties or Signatories. This table will be the basis for further prioritization and outreach during the intersessional period.
15. Established via Resolution 11.23 without defined terms, the ACEWG is among the few Scientific Council working groups lacking terms of reference. The modus operandi was established through email consultations. In order to ensure a more transparent arrangement, and following discussions during the 7th meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council, the Secretariat is now proposing simple terms of reference for adoption, as contained in Annex 1 of this document.

Discussion and analysis

16. Since the adoption of [Resolution 11.23 \(Rev.COP12\) Conservation Implications of Animal Culture and Social Complexity](#) in 2017, the scope and direction of this field of work has matured considerably. Accordingly, a revision of the Resolution is proposed, as contained in Annex 2 of this document.
17. Work completed by the ACEWG so far identified evidence for social learning and culture spread across vertebrate species. As highlighted in the [introductory article](#) of the theme issue [Animal culture: conservation in a changing world](#), "*Social learning and animal culture can influence conservation outcomes in significant ways. Culture is a dynamic phenomenon; socially learned behaviours can be transmitted within and/or between generations and among populations, which can facilitate resilience, or in other circumstances generate vulnerability. Culture can be a driver of evolutionary diversification, population structure and demography, shaping sociality and influencing underlying biological processes such as reproduction and survival, affecting fitness. [...] Culture is complex; integrating cultural processes into conservation is challenging. No*

one-size-fits-all policy can be recommended. Instead, we aim to balance current understanding of underlying processes with a diversity of practical implementations in this nascent field, exploring and supporting developing pathways towards conservation efficiencies. Key themes that emerge include conserving cultural capacity, benefits of data sharing, along with the intrinsic value of animal cultures and the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.”

18. Accordingly, further work is required to support governments in integrating this complex topic in their conservation management. The ACEWG can identify plausible guidelines for phylogenetic inference that can be implemented in practice, and help identify specific conservation targets for activities such as translocation and reintroduction, and human–wildlife interactions. CMS has been spearheading work in this area over the last decade. By extending collaboration with IUCN, CMS will benefit from insights on science, conservation practice and policy implementation that will avoid the siloing of efforts in relation to nature conservation and culture.
19. In addition, [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.28.9 Cumulative Effects Assessments](#) notes that the potential usefulness of social impact assessment methodologies in relation to animal culture might benefit from investigation, and contains draft Decisions for the ACEWG to this effect.

Recommended actions

20. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) adopt the Terms of Reference for the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning contained in Annex 1 of this document;
 - b) adopt the draft Resolution contained in Annex 2 of this document;
 - c) adopt the draft Decisions contained in Annex 3 of this document; and
 - d) delete Decisions 14.227–14.230.

DRAFT

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EXPERT WORKING GROUP
ON ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL LEARNING**

Background

The Animal Culture Expert Working Group (ACEWG) was established through Resolution 11.23 to assist the Parties of the Convention on Migratory Species and its associated instruments with understanding the conservation implications of culture and social complexity. Following an initial focus on cetaceans, since 2017 it has considered the conservation implications of social learning and animal culture for all taxonomic groups covered by the Convention.

Purpose

- A. The primary objective of the ACEWG is to support the delivery of relevant tasks contained in the Programme of Work of the Sessional Committee (POW).
- B. In addition, the ACEWG will support the implementation of relevant Resolutions and Decisions directed to the Scientific Council, as well as provide advice to Parties on the application of the increasing knowledge about animal culture and social learning in conservation management.
- C. The ACEWG will provide a platform to discuss and exchange information and scientific findings on animal culture-related matters with a specific focus on their relevance for conservation efforts. Mandates will be given through Decisions at each COP.
- D. The ACEWG will further, as capacity allows:
 - a) promote the practical application of the increasing knowledge about animal culture and social learning in conservation management, e.g. by:
 - i) reviewing updates on culture-related Concerted Actions and providing guidance as required;
 - ii) considering whether further culture-related Concerted Actions should be brought forward and developing proposals as appropriate;
 - iii) developing ongoing guidance for engagement with stakeholders to illustrate why and how animal culture and social learning are relevant to conservation;
 - b) support research on animal culture and social learning, e.g. by:
 - i) disseminating guidance on methodologies for detecting social learning;
 - ii) incorporating a variety of 'lines of evidence' on social learning and animal culture, including from local communities, and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples;
 - c) promote synergies and collaboration with CMS instruments, as well as the IUCN, e.g. by:
 - i) engaging with CMS Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, and Initiatives and any relevant work streams they may establish;

- ii) working closely with the IUCN CEESP-SSC Conservation of Animal Cultures Task Force;
- iii) continuing to engage with the relevant IUCN bodies to develop synergies for integrating social learning and cultural processes into management activities.

Membership

- A. Membership of the Expert Working Group includes members of the Scientific Council and external experts considered leaders in the fields of social learning, sociality or animal culture. Membership is only upon invitation or agreement of the leadership of the ACEWG, i.e. Chair, responsible Councillor and the Secretariat.
- B. The ACEWG strives to maintain a balance of gender, regional representation and areas of expertise.
- C. The involvement of ACEWG members is entirely on a voluntarily basis.
- D. If and when needed, experts external to the ACEWG and interested in contributing to its objectives may occasionally be invited to join meetings or to support specific tasks.

Organization of Work

- A. The ACEWG will elect a Chair from among its members and will operate by seeking consensus among the group. If not a member of the Scientific Council, the Chair will be supported by the COP-appointed Councillor for Connectivity to ensure close alignment with the Scientific Council's work and procedures. If the Chair has to leave her/his position, a new Chair will be appointed from among its members.
- B. The ACEWG will mainly operate electronically by communicating via a dedicated workspace in MS Teams, and email if needed. Meetings (in-person or virtual) will be held as required and, for in-person meetings, depending on funding.
- C. The Chair of the ACEWG will report on progress to the Sessional Committee.
- D. The CMS Secretariat will support and facilitate the coordination of the activities and the organization of meetings of the ACEWG.

Duration

The ACEWG will remain in place until the Sessional Committee decides that its work is complete or an alternative arrangement is made.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 11.23 (Rev.COP12)

NB. Proposed new text is underlined. Text to be deleted is ~~crossed out~~.

Text from Existing Resolution	Commentary	Clean New Text Proposed
CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY <u>LEARNING</u>	Title amended	CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL LEARNING
Recalling that Resolution 10.15 Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024) instructed the CMS Scientific Council's Aquatic Mammals Working Group to provide advice on the impact of the emergent science of cetacean social complexity and culture as it related to regional populations;	Remove because Resolution 10.15 was repealed	
Aware that the CMS Scientific Council expert workshop on the conservation implications of cetacean culture held in April 2014 recommended that "management decisions should be precautionary and assume that populations may contain discrete social elements which have conservation significance warranting further investigation";	Remove, outdated	
Noting that the CMS Scientific Council endorsed the recommendations of the expert workshop on the conservation implications of cetacean culture, contained in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.18;	Remove, outdated	
Recognizing that many species of mammals, a number of socially complex mammalian species, such as several species of cetaceans, great apes and elephants, <u>birds and fish, and some reptiles</u>, show evidence of having <u>social learning or</u> non-human culture (hereafter 'culture'),	Reflecting more recent evidence	<i>Recognizing</i> that many species of mammals, birds and fish, and some reptiles, show evidence of social learning or non-human culture (hereafter 'culture'),
Concerned that highly social species <u>that exhibit social learning</u> face unique conservation challenges,	Change of wording to clarify focus	<i>Concerned</i> that species that exhibit social learning face unique conservation challenges,

Text from Existing Resolution	Commentary	Clean New Text Proposed
<p><i>Aware</i> that the social transmission of knowledge between individuals may increase population viability and provide opportunities for the rapid spread of innovations and thus adaptation to environmental change, <u>highlighting the importance of maintaining ‘cultural capacity’ within and between populations for the development and transmission of adaptive cultural behaviours.</u></p>	<p>Introducing the important concept of ‘cultural capacity’ in the Resolution text</p>	<p><i>Aware</i> that the social transmission of knowledge between individuals may increase population viability and provide opportunities for the rapid spread of innovations and thus adaptation to environmental change, highlighting the importance of maintaining ‘cultural capacity’ within and between populations for the development and transmission of adaptive cultural behaviours,</p>
<p><i>Further aware</i> that this transmission of knowledge may also increase the impact of anthropogenic threats or can operate synergistically with anthropogenic threats to compound their impact on a specific social group or more widely,</p>		<p><i>Further aware</i> that this transmission of knowledge may also increase the impact of anthropogenic threats or can operate synergistically with anthropogenic threats to compound their impact on a specific social group or more widely,</p>
<p><i>Recognizing</i> that the impact of removal of individuals from populations of socially complex species <u>that exhibit social learning</u> may have consequences beyond simply a reduction in absolute numbers,</p>	<p>Change of wording to clarify focus</p>	<p><i>Recognizing</i> that the impact of removal of individuals from populations of species that exhibit social learning may have consequences beyond simply a reduction in absolute numbers,</p>
<p><i>Also recognizing</i> that populations of some species are better delineated by cultural behaviour than genetic diversity or geographic isolation,</p>		<p><i>Also recognizing</i> that populations of some species are better delineated by cultural behaviour than genetic diversity or geographic isolation,</p>
<p><u><i>Grateful</i> for the groundbreaking work of the CMS Animal Culture Expert Working Group² since its establishment in 2015.</u></p>	<p>New text, including footnote</p>	<p><i>Grateful</i> for the groundbreaking work of the CMS Animal Culture Expert Working Group¹ since its establishment in 2015,</p>
<p><i>Conscious</i> that the scientific investigation of culture and social complexity learning in mammals <u>vertebrates</u> is a rapidly evolving field which <u>can be informed by local and Indigenous ecological knowledge, and that collaboration between CMS and IUCN in this field</u> is <u>will be instrumental for informing conservation targets for migratory species, increasingly important for conservation management, and</u></p>	<p>Broadened species coverage, and added mention of local and Indigenous ecological knowledge, plus the collaboration with IUCN</p>	<p><i>Conscious</i> that the scientific investigation of culture and social learning in vertebrates is a rapidly evolving field which can be informed by local and Indigenous ecological knowledge, and that collaboration between CMS and IUCN in this field will be instrumental for informing conservation targets for migratory species, and</p>
<p><i>Considering</i> that the CMS Family is in a strong position to take account of this emerging information in its work,</p>		<p><i>Considering</i> that the CMS Family is in a strong position to take account of this emerging information in its work,</p>

² Established as ‘Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity’ through Resolution 10.15 *Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024)*; now called ‘Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning’

Text from Existing Resolution	Commentary	Clean New Text Proposed
<p><i>The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals</i></p>		
<p>1. <u>Welcomes the guidance developed by the Animal Culture Expert Working Group as output of its workshops and as published open access in the 2025 Royal Society Philosophical Transactions B issued on ‘Animal culture: conservation in a changing world’ report of the CMS Scientific Council Expert Workshop on the conservation implications of cetacean culture, contained in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.18;</u></p>	<p>Pointing to the most relevant and recent guidance</p>	<p>1. <i>Welcomes</i> the guidance developed by the Animal Culture Expert Working Group as output of its workshops and as published open access in the 2025 Royal Society Philosophical Transactions B issue on ‘Animal culture: conservation in a changing world’;</p>
<p>2. <i>Encourages</i> Parties to consider culturally transmitted behaviours when determining conservation measures;</p>		<p>2. <i>Encourages</i> Parties to consider culturally transmitted behaviours when determining conservation measures;</p>
<p><u>2bis. Further encourages Parties and other stakeholders to support actions and research that investigate the conservation implications of animal culture and social learning for a diverse range of taxa, including fish and reptiles;</u></p>	<p>New text in line with guidance from the Expert Group</p>	<p>3. <i>Further encourages</i> Parties and other stakeholders to support actions and research that investigate the conservation implications of animal culture and social learning for a diverse range of taxa, including fish and reptiles;</p>
<p>3. <i>Also encourages</i> Parties and other stakeholders to assess anthropogenic threats to socially complex mammalian <u>vertebrate</u> species on the basis of evidence of interactions of those threats with social structure and culture <u>socially learned behaviours</u>;</p>	<p>Clarifying focus</p>	<p>4. <i>Also encourages</i> Parties and other stakeholders to assess anthropogenic threats to vertebrate species on the basis of evidence of interactions of those threats with social structure and socially learned behaviours;</p>
<p>4. <u>Urges Parties to consider cultural processes as relevant for the conservation of all species for which there is evidence for social learning, applying a precautionary approach to the management of populations for which there is evidence that influence of culture and social complexity learning may be a conservation issue, and to support conditions for ‘cultural capacity’ in these species, where appropriate;</u></p>	<p>Adding the consideration of cultural processes and the important concept of ‘cultural capacity’ in the Resolution text in line with guidance from the Expert Group</p>	<p>5. <i>Urges</i> Parties to consider cultural processes as relevant for the conservation of all species for which there is evidence for social learning, applying a precautionary approach to the management of populations for which there is evidence that influence of culture and social learning may be a conservation issue, and to support conditions for ‘cultural capacity’ in these species, where appropriate;</p>

Text from Existing Resolution	Commentary	Clean New Text Proposed
5. <i>Encourages</i> Parties and other stakeholders to gather and publish pertinent data for advancing the conservation management of these populations and discrete social groups;		6. <i>Encourages</i> Parties and other stakeholders to gather and publish pertinent data for advancing the conservation management of these populations and discrete social groups;
5bis. <i>Encourages</i> Parties and other stakeholders that, <u>where specific cultural groups have been identified, they give specific attention to threats (including human–wildlife conflict) and good practices that might be specific to this particular cultural unit;</u>	New text in line with guidance from the Expert Group	7. <i>Encourages</i> Parties and other stakeholders to give specific attention to threats (including human–wildlife conflict) and good practices that might be specific to any particular cultural groups that have been identified;
6. <i>Requests</i> the CMS Scientific Council to maintain an the intersessional Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning expert working group dealing with the conservation implications of culture and social complexity, with a focus on, but not limited to cetaceans which <u>considers the conservation implications of social learning and animal culture for all taxonomic groups covered by the Convention;</u>		8. <i>Requests</i> the Scientific Council to maintain the intersessional Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning, which considers the conservation implications of social learning and animal culture for all taxonomic groups covered by the Convention;
7. <i>Invites</i> relevant CMS Scientific Councillors for taxa other than cetaceans with relevant expertise to review the findings of the expert working group and engage in this work expert group; and	Edited since no longer a primary focus on cetaceans	9. <i>Invites</i> Scientific Councillors with relevant expertise to engage in this work; and
8. <i>Requests</i> the expert group <u>Animal Culture Expert Working Group</u> to report its findings and any proposals for future work through the CMS Scientific Council to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.		10. <i>Requests</i> the Animal Culture Expert Working Group to report its findings and any proposals for future work through the CMS Scientific Council to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

CLEAN TEXT OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION 11.23 (Rev.COP12)

CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL LEARNING

Recognizing that many species of mammals, birds and fish, and some reptiles, show evidence of social learning or non-human culture (hereafter 'culture'),

Concerned that species that exhibit social learning face unique conservation challenges,

Aware that the social transmission of knowledge between individuals may increase population viability and provide opportunities for the rapid spread of innovations and thus adaptation to environmental change, highlighting the importance of maintaining 'cultural capacity' within and between populations for the development and transmission of adaptive cultural behaviours,

Further aware that this transmission of knowledge may also increase the impact of anthropogenic threats or can operate synergistically with anthropogenic threats to compound their impact on a specific social group or more widely,

Recognizing that the impact of removal of individuals from populations of species that exhibit social learning may have consequences beyond simply a reduction in absolute numbers,

Also recognizing that populations of some species are better delineated by cultural behaviour than genetic diversity or geographic isolation,

Grateful for the groundbreaking work of the CMS Animal Culture Expert Working Group³ since its establishment in 2015,

Conscious that the scientific investigation of culture and social learning in vertebrates is a rapidly evolving field which can be informed by local and Indigenous ecological knowledge, and that collaboration between CMS and IUCN in this field will be instrumental for informing conservation targets for migratory species, and

Considering that the CMS Family is in a strong position to take account of this emerging information in its work,

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Welcomes* the guidance developed by the Animal Culture Expert Working Group as output of its workshops and as published open access in the 2025 *Royal Society Philosophical Transactions B* issue on 'Animal culture: conservation in a changing world';
2. *Encourages* Parties to consider culturally transmitted behaviours when determining conservation measures;

³ Established as 'Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Complexity' through Resolution 10.15 *Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024)*; now called 'Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning'

3. *Further encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to support actions and research that investigate the conservation implications of animal culture and social learning for a diverse range of taxa, including fish and reptiles;
4. *Also encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to assess anthropogenic threats to vertebrate species on the basis of evidence of interactions of those threats with social structure and socially learned behaviours;
5. *Urges* Parties to consider cultural processes as relevant for the conservation of all species for which there is evidence for social learning, applying a precautionary approach to the management of populations for which there is evidence that influence of culture and social learning may be a conservation issue, and to support conditions for 'cultural capacity' in these species, where appropriate;
6. *Encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to gather and publish pertinent data for advancing the conservation management of these populations and discrete social groups;
7. *Encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to give specific attention to threats (including human–wildlife conflict) and good practices that might be specific to any particular cultural groups that have been identified;
8. *Requests* the Scientific Council to maintain the intersessional Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning, which considers the conservation implications of social learning and animal culture for all taxonomic groups covered by the Convention;
9. *Invites* Scientific Councillors with relevant expertise to engage in this work; and
10. *Requests* the Animal Culture Expert Working Group to report its findings and any proposals for future work through the CMS Scientific Council to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

DRAFT DECISIONS

CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL LEARNING

Directed to Parties

- 15.AA Parties are requested to apply insights from the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning to enhance work under CMS instruments, emphasizing the conservation value of 'cultural capacity'.

Directed to Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

- 15.BB Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide financial and technical support to the Expert Group on Animal Culture, specifically in relation to hosting an in-person workshop during the next triennium as foreseen in Decision 15.CC.

Directed to the Scientific Council, through its Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning

- 15.CC The Scientific Council, through its Expert Working Group on Animal Culture and Social Learning, subject to the availability of resources, is requested to:
- a) promote the practical application of the increasing knowledge about animal culture and social learning in conservation management by working to:
 - i) assess and provide advice on possible shortcuts for incorporating social learning into management, complementing traditional management techniques, including developing advice on phylogenetic inference;
 - ii) continue to identify and compile instances in which social learning may be involved in animal behaviours and mitigation measures for human–wildlife conflict and explore opportunities to collaborate with the IUCN Human–Wildlife Conflict & Co-existence specialist group;
 - iii) conduct a review, in collaboration with the Working Group on Climate Change, of any examples of social learning-related changes in behaviour as a result of climate change that increase human–wildlife conflict;
 - iv) provide advice on the potential link with Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) and other area-based conservation tools that identify sites or seascapes of biodiversity importance;
 - v) explore and prepare a report on the impacts of hunting on social structure and cultural capacity;
 - vi) investigate and provide advice on the potential of social impact assessment methodologies for understanding impacts of human activities on social learning, social structure and culture in migratory species;

- b) convene an expert workshop to:
 - i) provide best practice advice on identifying specific conservation targets in different settings,
 - ii) categorize and develop parameters for designating cultural units in different migratory species,
 - iii) distil practical advice that can be implemented by relevant managers and decisionmakers, and
 - iv) suggest any further culture-based Concerted Actions;
- c) develop user-friendly guidance for scientists on the practical aspects of detecting social learning, based on the special issue, *Animal culture: conservation in a changing world*;
- d) identify for which CMS instruments animal culture and social learning are likely to be most relevant, compile examples from the special issue, *Animal culture: conservation in a changing world*, into a document or brochure outlining the relevance for species covered by these instruments, and make use of upcoming meetings to bring this to their attention;
- e) seek to convene a workshop in collaboration with the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Human–Wildlife Conflict & Coexistence Specialist Group and the IUCN CEESP-SSC Conservation of Animal Cultures Task Force to further explore human–wildlife interactions in connection with social learning;
- f) engage in the five-year initiative (2025-2030) led by IUCN to advance the consideration of animal culture in guiding conservation policy and practice.

Directed to the Scientific Council

15.DD The Scientific Council is requested to review the work under CMS to date on animal culture and social learning, including consideration of its relevance to implementation of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032 and to provide advice to COP16 on the direction of further work on this subject under CMS.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.EE The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources:

- a) convene an in-person workshop to assist the Expert Working Group on Animal Culture with the tasks outlined in Decision 15.CC b);
- b) support the Scientific Council and its Expert Working Group with the dissemination of guidance developed as foreseen in Decision 15.CC;
- c) support the Scientific Council with implementation of Decision 15.DD; and
- d) approach the Secretariat of the GEO BON global biodiversity observation network to explore opportunities for linking work on animal culture and social learning with the network.