



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.27 (Rev.COP15)
Original: English

TAXONOMY AND NOMENCLATURE

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 15th Meeting (Campo Grande, March 2026)

Recalling that with Recommendations 6.1 and 9.4, and Resolutions 10.13, and 11.19¹, the Conference of the Parties adopted standard references to be recognized and used as the bases on which the CMS Appendices and amendments thereto should be prepared,

Noting that biological taxonomy and nomenclature are dynamic,

Aware that international efforts to take coherent action to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity at the species level can be significantly hampered if there is no common understanding of which animals or plants are included under a particular species name and can present particular challenges for activities such as the implementation of conventions that have legal implications,

Acknowledging that in order to strengthen the global effort to meet the Targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, it would be sensible to try to ensure greater harmonization between biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements in the field of taxonomy and nomenclature,

Further noting that the case for such harmonization is made more compelling by the fact that of the 133 CMS Parties, only one is not also a member of CITES,

Acknowledging that the harmonization of nomenclature can lead to a more integrated process, reduction of duplication and greater sharing of information between biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs),

Further aware that a harmonization of bird taxonomy and nomenclature among MEAs and other partners, such as CITES, Ramsar, IUCN, BirdLife International, Wetlands International and UNEP-WCMC, can improve synergies benefitting migratory species' conservation and better implementation of CMS Family instruments,

Recognizing that the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB) have repeatedly expressed their support for the idea of moving towards harmonization of nomenclature and taxonomy in the lists of species that they use, and requested stronger cooperation among MEAs towards that goal,

Stressing that notwithstanding the adoption, for practical reasons, of standard nomenclatural references at the species level, biological diversity at all taxonomic levels should be valued, conserved and used sustainably,

¹ The Recommendations and Resolutions were repealed and consolidated into Resolution 12.27 (Rev.COP15)

Acknowledging that the adoption of a new reference may imply cases of synonymy, species aggregation (lumping) and/or splitting of species, and that CMS has agreed rules as outlined below on how to act in such cases and their consequent reflection in the Appendices,

Emphasizing that stability over time in the taxonomy and nomenclature of species listed under CMS is essential to ensure legal security for the implementation of the Convention,

Recognizing that the taxonomy used in the Appendices to the Convention will be most useful to the Parties if standardized by nomenclatural references,

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

1. *Adopts* the list of standard references² included in the Annex to be recognized and used as the basis on which the CMS Appendices and amendments thereto are prepared;
2. *Agrees* to refer to the online version of the standard fish, bird and marine mammal references at the time of listing new species on the Appendices of CMS and *instructs* the Secretariat to preserve a hard-copy excerpt from the relevant online reference as the standard reference for the newly listed species;
3. *Instructs* the Scientific Council to review the online versions of the fish, bird and marine mammal references for the species listed on the Appendices at its last meeting before each meeting of the Conference of Parties and make recommendations as to whether the name of any listed species should be updated;
4. *Agrees* to follow a conservative approach in the use of the online references to update names of listed species, waiting for a new taxonomy to be confirmed by the majority of scientists and other legal frameworks such as CITES before implementing any change;
5. *Agrees* to adopt the same approach for other taxonomic groups in the event that online versions of standard references will be adopted for those groups; and
6. *Reaffirms* the rules adopted by the Convention for the treatment of cases of synonymy, species splitting and species aggregation (lumping) as a result of a change of standard nomenclatural reference, as follows:
 - Synonymy: corrections can be made automatically as there is no change of status for any listed population;
 - Splitting: when a listed taxon is split into two or more, each of the resulting taxa retains the listing status of the former aggregate taxon; and
 - Aggregation (lumping): if a taxon listed in either Appendix I or Appendix II of the Convention is merged with one or more unlisted taxa, under its name or that of one of the unlisted taxa, the entire aggregate taxon will be listed in the Appendix that included the originally listed, narrower taxon in all cases where the unlisted entity thus added has the same conservation status as, or a worse one than, that of the previously listed taxon. In all other cases, a taxonomic or geographical restriction will be introduced, pending consideration by the Scientific Council and the Conference of the Parties of extended listing proposals.

² As of yet there has been no need for a standard taxonomic reference for insects or reptiles (except marine turtles).

Annex to the Resolution

**LIST OF STANDARD REFERENCES ADOPTED BY
THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**

Mammals

Marine mammals:

Committee on Taxonomy. *List of marine mammal species and subspecies*. Society for Marine Mammalogy, www.marinemammalscience.org, (continuously updated);

Terrestrial mammals (except Felidae spp.):

Wilson, D. E. & Reeder, D. M. (ed.) (2005): *Mammal Species of the World. A Taxonomic and Geographic Reference*. Third edition, John Hopkins University Press as the standard nomenclatural reference for terrestrial mammals, as recommended by the 14th meeting of the Scientific Council;

Felidae spp.:

Kitchener A. C., Breitenmoser-Würsten Ch., Eizirik E., Gentry A., Werdelin L., Wilting A., Yamaguchi N., Abramov A. V., Christiansen P., Driscoll C., Duckworth J. W., Johnson W., Luo S.-J., Meijaard E., O'donoghue P., Sanderson J., Seymour K., Bruford M., Groves C., Hoffmann M., Nowell K., Timmons Z. and Tobe S. (2017): A revised taxonomy of the Felidae. The final report of the Cat Classification Task Force of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group. *Cat News Special Issue 11*, 80 pp.

Birds

HBW and BirdLife International. *Handbook of the Birds of the World and BirdLife International digital checklist of the birds of the world*. Available at <https://datazone.birdlife.org/about-our-science/taxonomy> (updated annually).

Marine turtles

Eckert, K.L., Bjorndal, K.A., Abreu-Grobois, F.A. and Donnelly, M. (Eds) (1999). *Research and management techniques for the conservation of sea turtles*. IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group Publication No. 4.

Fishes (except Acipenseriformes)

Fricke, R., Eschmeyer, W. N. & R. van der Laan (eds) 2025. ESCHMEYER'S CATALOG OF FISHES: GENERA, SPECIES, REFERENCES (<http://researcharchive.calacademy.org/research/ichthyology/catalog/fishcatmain.asp>). Electronic version (downloaded on 19 August 2025 and available in UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.29.3);

Acipenseriformes

Fricke, R., Eschmeyer, W. N. & R. van der Laan (eds) 2023. ESCHMEYER'S CATALOG OF FISHES: GENERA, SPECIES, REFERENCES (<http://researcharchive.calacademy.org/research/ichthyology/catalog/fishcatmain.asp>).

Electronic version (downloaded on 12 May 2023 and available in UNEP/CMS/COP14/Inf.31.1).