



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



FIFTH MEETING OF THE FLYWAYS WORKING GROUP

(Online, 27 May 2025)

CMS/FLYW5/Meeting Report

MEETING REPORT

(Prepared by the CMS Secretariat)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMBI	Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative
BLI	BirdLife International
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Parties
EAAF	East Asian-Australasian Flyway
EAAFP	East Asian-Australasia Flyway Partnership
FWG	Flyways Working Group
MOP	Meeting of the Partners
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
POW	Programme of Work
ScC-SC	Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council
SG	Sub-group
TOR	Terms of Reference

MAIN MEETING OUTCOMES

1. The 5th Meeting of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Flyways Working Group (FWG5) took place on 27 May 2025, 12-2pm (Bonn time, GMT+2) online via MS Team.
2. FWG5 meeting was attended by 24 members (at Annex 1), during which the following key discussions and agreements were made:

Updates from the three Sub-groups (SGs)

- a. **New Programme of Work (POW), Gaps, and Priorities SG**
Provided updates on the drafting of the FWG 2026-2029 POW, and agreed upon the amendments for the next steps of endorsement by the FWG and its submission to the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council (ScC-SC).
- b. **Seabirds SG**
Shared progress on the draft seabirds and marine flyways resolution and draft decisions, endorsing the finalization for the draft submission to the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (CMS COP15).
- c. **Other Instruments and Platforms/Hubs SG**
Presented the ongoing ideas based on brainstorming, and received feedback for further development, inviting support from other SGs. The draft document is agreed to be shared shortly after FWG5, and the meeting for the SG is to be scheduled around the third week of June, pending due to the Chair's travel schedule. Participation will be open to other SG members who are interested in joining.

Review of the Draft Revised Flyways Resolutions

- d. There was an agreement to provide a comparison table between the current Resolution 12.11 (Rev.COP14) *Flyways*, and the newest version of proposed amendments to this resolution, kindly supported by Mark Carey, for submission to the 8th meeting of the ScC-SC, foreseen to be held at the end of 2025.

Review of the Draft FWG TOR & Membership

- e. The draft TOR was recommended for submission to the ScC-SC.
- f. It was recommended for the members to review and update the FWG membership list, using the email invite list as a reference. Missing names could be informed to the Chair or the CMS Secretariat.

Recommendations for the FWG

- g. Submission of a document proposing the draft Seabirds resolution was agreed to be made by the FWG, with the identification of the internal submission deadline to the Secretariat as 25 August 2025.

1. Opening of the meeting, welcoming and introduction of participants

3. Rob Clay (FWG Chair, Manomet, CMS COP-appointed Councillor for Birds) opened the meeting, welcoming the 24 participants to the 5th meeting of the FWG and outlined that the meeting would focus on i) reviewing the progress of the three SGs in response to [Decision 14.140](#), ii) determining the next steps to finalize key documents in consideration of CMS COP15, iii) making recommendations in regards to FWG, and iv) reviewing the

FWG membership. The Chair made a brief apology for the delays regarding delivering the draft of *UNEP/CMS/FWG5/Doc.5 Working Document on CMS and Non-CMS Instruments and Platforms/Hubs*. The Chair suggested the document be circulated after the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda and meeting schedule

4. The Chair shared the draft [UNEP/CMS/FWG5/Doc.1 Draft Annotated Agenda](#).
5. Narelle Montgomery (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Australia; Chair CMS Scientific Council) raised a question regarding the submission deadline of any documents from the FWG – considered as 24 October 2025 – since there seemed to be an inconsistency with the date internally circulated within the CMS Secretariat. In this regard, Narelle asked the Secretariat for clarification.
6. Iván Ramírez and Tilman Schneider (CMS Secretariat) noted that the internal deadline for the documents with scientific components are stated as 10 September 2025, and that it was preferable to be provided earlier. Mr. Ramírez ensured to double-check internally and to get back to Ms. Montgomery.
7. The Chair reiterated the request that the Secretariat confirm the deadline to ensure the submission of documents in due course.

3. Review of draft POW

8. Mark Carey (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Australia) provided an overview of the draft [UNEP/CMS/FWG5/Doc.3 Draft Flyways Working Group Programme of Work for 2026 - 2029](#), noting that an earlier draft was presented in the previous meeting of FWG in February 2025 ([FWG4](#)) and shared online with FWG members to receive collective comments and edits. Feedback was gathered and reflected by the POW SG, also reviewed by the Secretariat, and finally sent for review during the 5th meeting of FWG. Mr. Carey asked for any questions or comments on the content of the draft before the endorsement by the FWG.
9. Regarding Activity 6.2.1 *Review options to further develop conservation frameworks for all migratory birds in the EAAF*, Olivier Biber (Chair of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group) asked if there could be a possibility of incorporating landbird conservation in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) beyond the current EAAFP focus on waterbirds, and if there was a possibility of changing the taxonomic coverage of activities under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and its Secretariat by a request from the CMS Secretariat. Olivier recalled that the Secretariat had received a request from Simba Chan, in regards to the Yellow-breasted Bunting.
10. Mr. Carey acknowledged the point raised by Mr. Biber and expressed that there was a keen interest from Australia in the conservation of the species that are not covered by the EAAFP. Undertaking a situation analysis in the EAAF was considered as a first step to tackle this aspect. Yet, Mr. Carey also noted the time constraints to have a concrete discussion at COP15 considering the decisions that would be made by the EAAFP at its upcoming [12th Meeting of the Partners \(MOP\)](#) in November 2025.
11. Spike Millington (International Crane Foundation) suggested to directly mentioning landbirds in the document to remove confusion if the situation analysis aims to address the birds that are not covered by the current agreements under EAAFP. Since there was an existing partnership for waterbird conservation in EAAF, Mr. Millington suggested that making a clear distinction would reduce confusion.

12. Considering the need for flexibility in terms of timing, Ms. Montgomery suggested removing in the relevant POW item “By ScC-SC10” and “COP16”, and Mr. Biber recommended to emphasize it “as a priority” due to its urgent status.
 13. Iván Ramírez noted that understanding the timeline for such an initiative was the key concern.
 14. Mr. Millington recommended that the CMS Secretariat to submit a side event on the issue for the EAAFP MOP12, while Mr. Ramírez, although agreeing with this could be an option, was concerned with the current capacity of the CMS Secretariat since it was working on the upcoming CMS COP15 documents and already planned to organize one meeting of the Asia Pacific Illegal Taking of Migratory Birds Intergovernmental Task Force (ITTEA) and two side events during the EAAFP MOP.
 15. Mr. Schneider also recalled that the CMS Secretariat is preparing side events for the MOP, focusing on the Illegal Taking of Birds that would include landbirds. As the EAAFP had a corresponding Task Force that dealt with illegal taking of waterbirds, Mr. Schneider highlighted the possibility of filling the gaps. Mr. Schneider stated that the focus of the side events should be on concrete issues such as energy and illegal taking.
 16. Ms. Montgomery agreed with the statements made by the CMS Secretariat. Noting that the POW was for the FWG, not the CMS Secretariat, Ms. Montgomery suggested the current text would allow the CMS Secretariat to explore collaboration with the EAAFP. Mr. Millington understood Ms. Montgomery’s point, clarifying that the suggestion was made in the context the CMS Secretariat as was one of the Partners of the EAAFP.
 17. Mr. Carey concluded to make the amendments to the action as agreed during the discussion, finalize the document and submit it to the ScC-SC on behalf of the FWG.
- 4. Review of draft seabirds and marine flyways resolution (Chair Seabirds subgroup)**
18. Sharing the draft [UNEP/CMS/FWG5/Doc.4 Seabirds and Marine Flyways](#), Mr. Carey provided an overview of the draft resolution, which was first presented during the 4th meeting of the FWG4 in February 2025, and outlined the subsequent review process and discussions with the POW SG in May. He noted that some of the comments received were considered to be out of scope and to better fit into the broader flyway resolution and thus were not incorporated. He asked for comments or questions on Annexes I and II of the document while highlighting the relevance of the topic to the upcoming third United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice, France, 9-13 June 2025) as well as noting a draft of paragraph mentioning as a placeholder for work on a gap analysis pending to be included in the document.
 19. Mr. Millington recalled his comments on six marine flyways, noting that they just covered pelagic species but not inshore flyways nor circumpolar ones under the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI).
 20. Mr. Carey stated that the SG on seabirds decided to focus the taxonomic scope to seabird species based on the [BLI seabird tracking database](#) and [the paper published in early 2025](#). The SG agreed that other taxonomic groups and the AMBI could be better included in the broader flyways resolution. Only Phalacrocoracidae (cormorants and shags) were added to the listing of seabird families.
 21. Mr. Millington agreed with the point made by Mr. Carey, clarifying that the clear narrowing scope would help the readers understand the context of the listings.

22. Graeme Taylor (Department of Conservation TePapa Atawhai, New Zealand) added that the scope of the species was based on their range, going beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone. Mr. Millington noted that some species such as Laridae (gulls and terns) migrate outside of country boundaries. Mr. Carey recalled that gulls and terns are included in the list under the draft resolution. Mr. Millington clarified that there was no objection to this, but it was a general comment.
23. Mr. Carey concluded that there were no further comments and the draft was endorsed by the FWG, pointing out some brackets that need to be filled.
24. Mr. Ramírez congratulated the work of the SG on the draft resolution, especially the leadership of Mr. Carey. Mr. Taylor also expressed his appreciation to Mr. Carey.
5. **Review of draft document on Other Instruments and Platform Hub (Subgroup Chair)**
25. The Chair shared the draft document UNEP/CMS/FWG5/Doc.5 *Working Document on CMS and Non-CMS Instruments and Platforms/Hubs*. He again apologized for the delays resulting from very busy times working on flyways conservation issues in the Americas. The Chair provided an overview of the previous meeting that discussed the aims of the SG on enhancing communication and coordination across CMS and non-CMS instruments regarding flyways conservation, including information gathering, repository development, capacity building (focusing on the Global South), effective implementation strategies between instruments, lessons learned approach, collaboration and representation with broader groups of stakeholders.
26. Based on the identification of such opportunities, the Chair illustrated a summarized version of a listing of potential approaches, including mapping of CMS instruments through the utilization of a table for comparison, the expanded mapping covering global flyways instruments and initiatives beyond CMS instruments, the establishment of a centralized digital repository (e.g. Flyways Conservation Library), and the organization of inter-flyway webinar series to share lessons learned across the instruments.
27. The Chair stated that the SG was aiming to have representatives from other flyways present at the upcoming EAAFP MOP in November to promote sharing experiences, as well as to identify opportunities to implement such initiatives perhaps during the meetings before COP. He restated that these were at the initial stage of brainstorming, hence the document would be shared within the SG shortly for further development. Acknowledging that the other SGs are in the finalization stage of their work, he invited those from other SGs for constructive discussion on this agenda.
28. While finding tools helpful to enhance the work of FWG in terms of flyways, Mr. Carey asked for clarification of the repository, whether it was considered as an initiative that would be hosted by the CMS Secretariat or as an independent one. The stakeholders and resources for the implementation of such initiatives were raised as questions. Mr. Carey also pointed out that the global flyway meeting initiative aligned with the points made related to the POW, which was positive.
29. The Chair acknowledged such issues and stated that there had not been a reconvening of the SG for discussions on the practicalities yet. Either the repository would be hosted by the CMS Secretariat or established as an independent system. Resource implications were considered but needed further discussion. He further noted that the proposals made in the draft document would not lead to significant changes to the POW.

30. Mr. Ramírez raised two comments considering how many of the issues and needs are captured in the Strategic Review of Flyways, and the potential of the new CMS website, due this Summer, to serve as a resource. However, he also noted the very real need for more case studies and lessons learned.
31. Ms. Montgomery supported the points raised by Mr. Carey and Mr. Ramírez. Suggestions were made to check the existing website of the CMS Secretariat such as topic pages (e.g. light pollution, ecological connectivity) or task force pages e.g. of the [Energy Task Force \(ETF\)](#). As flyways and ecological connectivity were closely linked, new resources developed for the FWG could align with existing CMS content on related topics. Ms. Montgomery agreed with the idea of a central digital repository for case studies and best practices, but questions remained regarding its structure, complexity, and the feasibility of maintenance under the CMS Secretariat.
32. While agreeing with the need for easier accessibility to digestible information and communication, Mr. Millington pointed out that the key issue was whether the CMS Secretariat, along with its new website had the capacity to take the role as a central hub for the flyway community.
33. Highlighting the key role of the CMS Secretariat in flyways, Mr. Ramírez emphasized that the WG's clearly defined vision, potentially benchmarking the existing models (e.g. task forces and global initiatives), should be prioritized and the capacity of the CMS Secretariat could be constructively examined. Mr. Ramírez also underlined that the goal was to showcase both CMS and non-CMS flyways initiatives.
34. Mr. Griffin (FACE - European Federation for Hunting and Conservation) asked if there was a discussion on coordination among different CMS instruments working on similar issues (e.g. EUROBATS in terms of wind collision) and suggested for the identifications for such possible overlaps across instruments.
35. The Chair stated that there was no such discussion but agreed that it could be discussed further during the regathering of SG to consider broader initiatives beyond birds.
36. The Chair concluded the agenda, noting that the feedback raised will be taken back to the SG, and other members from different SGs are invited to support the refinement of ideas and the assessment of capacity/resource needs.

6. Review of draft revised Flyways resolution (Chair)

37. The Chair shared document [UNEP/CMS/FWG5/Doc.6 Draft Revised Flyways Resolution](#), which had been primarily led by the POW SG, especially Mr. Carey. Many thanks were given to him for his great contribution to the draft. While acknowledging the CMS Secretariat's efforts to streamline the resolution prior to the COP14, the Chair highlighted the aim of the revised draft on making the contents have a better flow and be up-to-date by incorporating the progress on the Central Flyway Initiative, and the Americas Flyways Framework. The Chair further recalled that one of the next steps for the CMS Secretariat was to provide a table for comparison, in order to easily track the changes between the previous and new versions.
38. Mr. Carey added that the SG aimed to align the new draft amendments to the resolution with the new POW and the priorities under FWG. A final review was encouraged to ensure consistency between the two documents.
39. The Chair asked Mr. Ramírez for an update on the potential regional MOU that was discussed during the previous meeting on the Americas Flyways Framework in

December.

40. Mr. Ramírez stated that the circulation of the meeting report was pending, but it was agreed on that the SG first internally worked on the possible idea of having an MOU by preparing an outline document. Given the time constraint, it was suggested to have either a discussion during COP15 or a submission of information documents on the Americas Flyways and then move forward. Mr. Ramírez highlighted the keen interest of Brazil to support such initiative that could involve non-CMS Parties such as Canada, Mexico, and the United States.
41. The Chair offered support from the SG to help prepare basic drafting or secretariat-level support. The need for a political decision was highlighted to move forward and the Chair anticipated that the meeting report would be shared soon, so that progress on the Americas Flyways initiative could begin. The Chair closed by commending Mr. Carey for the impressive work done on the draft resolution, noting no further comments as a sign of its quality.
42. Mr. Millington commented that the previous Flyways POW had been too broad and resource-dependent, similar to early iterations. Establishing a practical prioritization process to focus on what could realistically be achieved with available resources was suggested, as a general call for strategic focus to ensure meaningful progress.
43. Mr. Carey agreed that the new POW needed to be realistic and actionable, and shared a suggestion raised from a subgroup. The implementation of flyways engagement with the ETF as a contributor to the action was suggested to make the workplan more feasible and targeted.
44. Mr. Millington agreed that preserving history was valuable but saw it as a separate issue. A strong support for the streamlining of the resolution was emphasized, as it made the document more accessible and effective. The Chair acknowledged this point of view.
45. As a side note, the Chair suggested the SG compile the preambular text that had been removed over time, which was to preserve the historical context and evolution of flyways efforts.
46. Mr. Carey stated that he would support the CMS Secretariat with creating a comparison table of the draft resolutions, which would be eventually submitted to the ScC-SC8 at the end of 2025, and the resolution would be presented in a comparative format.
47. The Chair highlighted that virtual meetings would make coordination easier and suggested the post-COP FWG meeting to start identifying priorities and commitments, noting this would allow progress early in the triennium. The next clear step identified was to prepare a comparison table, with the support of Mr. Carey.

7. Review of draft Flyways WG Terms of Reference (Chair)

48. The Chair shared the draft [UNEP/CMS/FWG5/Doc.7 Terms of reference of the CMS Scientific Council Working Group on Flyways](#), noting that no official TOR had been agreed upon until now although the group had existed for 16 years. The Chair provided an outline of the draft, the development of which was led by Mr. Carey, covering the group's purpose, role, membership, governance, and work organization. Feedback from participants was invited.
49. Mr. Carey expressed his appreciation to Ms. Nicola Jane Crockford (BirdLife International) for providing the draft TOR, which served a foundational role for the current

draft.

50. There was no objection against the draft, given that everyone was able to have a review beforehand.

8. Recommendations for the FWG

51. The Chair reinstated the clarification from the CMS Secretariat regarding the internal deadlines and submission logistics.
52. Mr. Ramírez emphasized the importance of receiving FWG documents early – ideally by 25 August – to allow sufficient time for internal review and input before the official deadlines. He also requested clarification on whether Australia intended to submit the seabird resolution directly or the FWG would do this through the Secretariat, to better understand the roles in the submission process.
53. Both Ms. Montgomery and Mr. Carey made clarifications and agreed that the seabird resolution was expected to be submitted through the FWG, not by the Australian Government, as it was a product of the group's work. Both speakers agreed that this approach is appropriate given the resolution stems from decisions directed to the FWG. They also expressed confidence in meeting the deadline, which is 25 August.
54. The Chair agreed with the plan, confirming their commitment to officially submitting the finalized documents on behalf of the FWG, in coordination with Mr. Carey and the CMS Secretariat.

9. Review of FWG membership

55. The Chair stated that the membership of the FWG remained open, but participants were encouraged to regularly review and invite appropriate experts to ensure the right expertise was involved for the best support of the work. The Chair concluded with a statement that the document would be forwarded to the ScC-SC, expressing many thanks to Mr. Carey and Ms. Crockford.

10. Any other business and Closure of the meeting

56. The Chair discussed clear next steps, including the need for the SG's finalisation of its work on Other Instruments and Platforms/Hubs. A meeting was proposed to be scheduled around the third week of June. Participation was opened to other SG Members who are interested in joining.
57. The Chair also reminded the members to review and update the FWG membership list, using the email invite list as a reference. Missing names could be informed to the Chair or the CMS Secretariat.
58. No other business was raised. The Chair thanked the participants and suggested that the next meeting might occur before the document submission deadline or before the ScC-SC8 meeting in December. A short in-person meeting prior to the ScC-SC8 was also considered as a possibility to maintain momentum.
59. The Chair declared the closure of the meeting at 14.00hrs GMT+2.

ANNEX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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