

Third Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group | *Sempach, Switzerland, 12-14 December 2018*

HORIZON SCANNING

Prepared by David Stroud

Introduction

1. The Terms of Reference (paragraph 4) of Technical Advisory Group includes requirements to:

- a) *Provide expert advice, information and make recommendations on the implementation of the Raptors MoU, to the Signatories and the CU, as requested;*
- b) *Analyse, as necessary, scientific advice and assessments and to make recommendations, particularly concerning the content of Annexes I, II and III, in the Action Plan of the Raptors MoU;*
- c) *Provide comments on any proposals to amend the MoU text which have a technical content;*
- d) *Prepare a written report of its activities to deliver its work programme for each session of the Meeting of Signatories to be submitted to the CU at least 60 days in advance of the meeting; and,*
- e) *Carry out any other tasks referred to it by the Meeting of Signatories (MoS).*

2. These tasks relate largely to the provision of advice concerning the implementation of the MOU's Action Plan. However, as previously discussed at TAG meetings, it is important that the Group has the opportunity of bring issues to the attention of Signatories which may be 'emerging' as factors likely to affect the status of migratory raptors either directly or indirectly (and which may not currently be covered within the Action Plan).

3. For reference, the following are the key conservation issues (essentially threats) currently identified in the Action Plan and so these are not repeated in the subsequent list of Emerging Issues:

- Protected areas and their management
- Risk analyses at sites relating to causes of mortality
- Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs), Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) etc.
- Addressing habitat loss, including habitat restoration
- Impacts of power lines (electrocution and collision) and wind farms (collisions)
- Conservation through the activities of other sectors
- Communication and raising public awareness
- Promotion of research and improved monitoring
- Impacts of toxic chemicals
- Assessing scale of harvests

4. The Annex presents a non-exhaustive list of issues (not in any priority order) which potentially are, or may become, of significance for raptor conservation in the geographic area covered by the Raptors MOU.

Action requested

TAG is requested to:

- a. Review the list of issues and to suggest ways forward, if needed, for each;
- b. Add any new potential emerging issues, including ways forward, if needed for each; and,
- c. Identify any top priorities where action is considered necessary now, so as to bring those issue to the attend of Signatories.

Annex: A 2018 list of potential emerging issues for the Raptors MOU (in no priority order)

1. Emerging diseases

Emergent diseases have been identified as a major issue for birds. Some aspects of that agenda have been developed in the specific context of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus (HPAI H5N1) and responses to it (via the Scientific Task Force on avian influenza & wild birds and Resolutions CMS 3.18 and 4.15). The recent occurrence of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 has been less than about a decade ago, but there have been recent widespread outbreaks of H5N¹ and H5N8.¹

The 2016-17 H5N8 epizootic in Europe resulted in the reported² mortality of 124 individuals of the following species:

- Unidentified buzzard, eagle, falcon, hawk and owl spp.
- Barn owl (*Tyto alba*)
- Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)
- White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)
- Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)
- Rough-legged buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*)
- Eurasian Eagle-owl (*Bubo bubo*)
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)
- Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)
- Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)

In 2008, CMS Resolution 9.8 established a Task Force on Wildlife Disease to establish co-ordination between MEAs on non-HPAI issues³.

For Ramsar's Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP), Wildlife & Wetland Trust (WWT) developed a comprehensive Wetland Disease Handbook⁴ which was launched at Ramsar COP12 in June 2012, and has since been published as *Ramsar Technical Report No.7*. This is highly relevant to issues of bird diseases more generally, not just waterbirds (e.g. it provides guidance on actions to be taken to investigate disease outbreaks). TAG 2 considered that the MOU should continue to work with the CMS Task Force and promote the Ramsar Handbook, adding any raptor-specific input.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- Continued participation in CMS Wildlife Disease Task Force.
- Given its general applicability, actively promote recognition of the Ramsar *Wetland Disease Handbook* [at MOS] and subsequently encourage its dissemination.
- [Other Actions?..]

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/724857/avian-flu-uk-europe-russia-180709.pdf

² Alarcon, P., Brouwer, A., Venkatesh, D., Duncan, D., Dovas, C.I., Georgiades, G., Monne, I., Fusaro, A., Dan, A., Śmietanka, K., Ragias, V., Breed, A., Chassalevris, T., Goujgoulova, G., Hjulsager, C.K., Ryan, E., Sánchez, A., Niqueux, E., Tammiranta, N., Zohari, S., Stroud, D.A., Savic, V., Lewis, N.S. & Brown, I.H. (2018, in press). Comparative epidemiology and genetics of the largest wild-bird mediated HPAI H5 'Guangdong' lineage epizootic in Europe (2016-2017) with previous HPAI H5 epizootics (2005/2006 and 2014/2015). *Emerging Infectious Diseases*

³ CMS Res 9.08: Responding to the Challenge of Emerging and Re-Emerging Diseases in Migratory Species, including HPAI H5N1 <https://www.cms.int/en/document/responding-challenge-emerging-and-re-emerging-diseases-migratory-species-including-highly>

⁴ <http://www.wwt.org.uk/conservation/saving-wetlands-and-wildlife/publications/ramsar-wetland-disease-manual/>

2. Raptors and the developing post-2020 development process

In many countries, funding for ‘traditional’ single species conservation activity becomes increasing scarce. Priorities for the ‘external’ spend of government finance are very often linked to the support of development processes (such as driven by the UN Sustainable Development Goals) and in support of the high-level Aichi Targets – linked to CBD’s Strategic Plan 2011-2020.

The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement⁵ as with CMS, has tried to position itself in this policy landscape with a clear message that actions for waterbird conservation also deliver ecosystem benefits for people dependent on wetlands.

With much international discussion on the development of a post-2020 development process under CBD, are there actions that the MOU could undertake – either alone or with CMS – that could stress the relevance of actions for migratory raptors in this developing international policy landscape – and thus facilitate funding for raptor conservation actions?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- What opportunities exist for raptor conservation in these wider policy arenas, and how can the MOU enhance its visibility?

3. Promoting raptor conservation through ‘non-traditional’ sectors of society

Some sectors of society can have considerable influence on the decisions that communities take concerning environmental resource use. Women’s groups in particular can be influential and BirdLife International has many examples of the importance of reaching such groups in order to gain community support for conservation actions for critically threatened species. Schools and faith groups are other examples. Should the Signatories and the Coordinating Unit be aiming to work with and communicate through such sectors of society?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- *[Actions, if any?..]*

4. Raptors in urban environments

Increasing urbanisation is bringing some raptor species into closer proximity to human settlements. Issues include disease transmission risk (to and from birds, e.g. salmonella) and opportunities for education and awareness. Would guidance be valuable for urban authorities (quite a lot exists but it is perhaps not very accessible)?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- Does the MOU have a role in dissemination guidance on urban-nest raptors? How might that be taken forward?

5. Take for traditional medicines and other such cultural uses

Some body parts of birds of prey are used in traditional medicines and for other purposes – for instance there is apparently a belief centred in Southern Africa that smoking vulture brains allows one to see

⁵ For example <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/document/draft-resolution-aewas-contribution-aichi-targets-and-relevance-sustainable-development-1>.

into the future. Accordingly, there was concern at the time of the 2010 FIFA World Cup hosted by South Africa that this might lead to a significant increase in illegal killing of vultures linked to gambling on match outcomes.

Is this a real and present threat and to what extent should we respond – recognising that illegal killing and taking for traditional medicines are far from limited to raptors?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- What strategic actions (working with what other organisations?) could the MOU undertake to change behaviours away from those that see raptors as components of traditional medicines?

6. Impacts of pollution

Do we have any sort of international oversight of pollution levels (body burdens of pollutants) in raptors at international scales? National monitoring schemes exist in some countries but is this information collated, e.g. by EURAPMON? Is this a significant issue? Would an international overview be useful?

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- *[Actions, if any?...]*

7. Impacts of agricultural chemicals on raptors

Historically, a cause of occasional mortality – typically through secondary poisoning impacts. Sometimes significant mortality.

Major work on this issue has been undertaken by the CMS-led Minimizing Poisoning Working Group, lead to Resolution 11.18 and associated Guidance being adopted at CMS COP11⁶. The Raptors MOU should continue to contribute to the Working Group and actively disseminate adopted guidance.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- Highlight CMS Resolution 11.18 and associated Guidance at MOS2.
- Encourage dissemination of Guidance by Signatories and others post MOS2.
- *[Other Actions?...]*

8. Birds of prey and corporate industry

Corporations and especially Trans National Corporations (TNCs) wield substantial resources and their operations can have major impacts on the natural environment.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- Should raptor conservationists be engaging more closely with TNCs? How could this be achieved?

⁶ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_15_Preventing_Bird_Poisoning_of_Birds_E_0.pdf
http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/COP11_Doc_23_1_2_Bird_Poisoning_Review_%26_Guidelines_E_0.pdf

9. Reducing airstrike risk from raptors

In other fora, the rapid growth of air traffic has led to enhance risk of collisions with migratory geese⁷,⁸, and the need for strategic responses (e.g. through AEWA's European Goose Management Platform⁹).

Minuted discussion at TAG2 said:

"Airstrikes might be an emerging issue or an existing problem the impact of which was being underestimated. With the rapid growth of air traffic, this was a problem that was likely to grow. The Chair said that this was a complex issue. When birds thought to pose a threat to aircraft safety were shot, the carcasses attracted other birds. Mr Prommer said that poisoning of birds near airfields was a problem."

"Mr Shobrak said that there were advantages and disadvantages of having birds present near airfields; the presence of raptors deterred other species. Fernando Feas (Expert - Spain) agreed saying that raptors could reduce by 75 per cent the presence of other birds, but unfortunately their prey included some endangered species. Mr Kenward said that falconers were good ambassadors, not just in Spain but in other countries too."

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- Is there a specific need for raptor-relevant guidance in relation to a) reduction of risk from raptors to planes at airports, and b) inappropriate responses from airport authorities?

10. Conflicting renewable energy development

Major recent work undertaken jointly with CMS and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) lead to Resolution 11.27¹⁰ and Guidance¹¹ adopted at CMS COP11. Renewable energy and the deployment of associated technologies remain high on the parent Convention's agenda.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- Participate in Energy Task Force created under CMS Resolution 11.27

11. Recreational threats, including disturbance

Examples include Kite Flying Festivals and increasing use of quadcopter drones. Likewise, what are the implications of drones constructed as raptor look-alikes? Rock climbing and paragliding might have adverse effects on raptors.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- In some countries, there is good practice of liaison between rock-climbers and conservations such that climbing near sensitive raptor nests in the breeding season does not occur. Would it be useful for the MOU to document these examples and good practice case studies?

⁷ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13280-017-0901-2>

⁸ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13280-017-0903-0>

⁹ <http://egmp.aewa.info/>

¹⁰ <https://www.cms.int/en/document/renewable-energy-and-migratory-species-1>; revised at COP12

<https://www.cms.int/en/document/renewable-energy-and-migratory-species-2> (CMS Res.11.27 (Rev.COP12))

¹¹ <https://www.cms.int/en/document/renewable-energy-technologies-and-migratory-species-guidelines-sustainable-deployment-0>

12. Impacts of new tracking technologies

One potential emerging threat is linked to tracking technology resulting in individualization on the one hand involving more people in the marvels of nature, but on the other generating emotional responses, sometimes at the expense of conservation of populations.

In addition, new research is highlighting the potential negative impacts of satellite tags and other marking devices. Worryingly, some evidence has also emerged of tagged birds being deliberately selected and intentionally killed due to the tracking devices being misperceived as mechanism for international espionage.

Consideration should be given to issuing guidance on the use of remote cameras and drones, especially those that were made to resemble raptors. Guidelines might include advice on safety distances from nests.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- Still an issue? How to take this forward?

13. Conservation in conflict zones

Not a new threat but should we not be challenging ourselves to consider developing mechanisms to address this issue and its consequences (e.g. surge in netting in North Africa, rapid rise in indiscriminate shooting of raptors due to increased widespread availability of guns in the Middle East). Note that IUCN have done post-conflict assessments, e.g. in Afghanistan¹².

There may be more general guidance from IUCN on this, which might be useful in a raptor context.

Future actions in relation to the Raptors MOU:

- *[Actions, if any? ...]*

¹² <http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/afghanistanpcajanuary2003.pdf>