



# CMS Bulletin



Bulletin of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

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## The year in review:

This has been an especially busy year for CMS, with activities taking place on many fronts. The Conference of the Parties, the Scientific Council and Standing Committee all met in April in Geneva. The decisions taken there lay the groundwork for the Convention's work programme for the next three years.

A number of the Agreements concluded under CMS in recent years have begun to make visible progress in their respective fields. Equally important, more and more concerted conservation activities are being carried out under CMS auspices for particular species or whole groups of migratory animals.

This issue of the **CMS Bulletin** reports on all of these activities, and includes a special report on the

endangered Siberian crane. For further information on any of the topics covered in this issue, readers are invited to contact the CMS Secretariat at the address given below. Those with access to the INTERNET may also examine the CMS World Wide Web site: <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/cms> which makes available a wide range of information in English, French and Spanish (completely revised as of August 1997).

The Secretariat thanks all those who have helped to make 1997 one of the most fulfilling years so far. All of the staff take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy holiday season, and a prosperous and productive 1998.

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### Late News:

**The South African Government has formally confirmed its invitation to the CMS Conference of the Parties to meet in South Africa in 1999.**

The meeting has been scheduled tentatively for the first half of October 1999. Details of the precise date and venue will be announced in the forthcoming months.

Produced by the Secretariat of the Convention.  
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Disponible también en español.*

# CMS Agreement Update

*Based in part on information received from the Agreement secretariats*

For more information on any of the Agreements described below, readers are invited to contact the responsible secretariat at the address given on the last page of this issue.

## *Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS)*

The membership of ASCOBANS remains static, at seven Parties: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. A further eight Range States are eligible to accede to the Agreement: Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Russia, as well as the European Union.

Officials of France and the European Union have recently reiterated their intention to join the Agreement. Norway participates actively in ASCOBANS' scientific work but, owing to its desire to maintain a consistent national policy, has indicated that it will not sign the agreement itself.

Discussions are continuing with Ireland on a possible extension of the ASCOBANS area into their waters to coincide with Ireland's designated whale and dolphin sanctuary.

## Advisory Committee

The ASCOBANS Advisory Committee meets periodically to monitor and facilitate progress on implementing the Conservation and Management Plan, as well as to identify key areas of concern and research. Its fourth meeting was held 30 June-2 July 1997, on the island of Texel in the Netherlands.

The Committee reviewed preparations for the second Meeting of Parties, the achievements of ASCOBANS in the first triennium, as well as the

functioning of the Advisory Committee.

The meeting further addressed issues such as: by-catches of small cetaceans, especially harbour porpoises; effects of pollutants; disturbance-reduction; stranding schemes; protected areas; population-structure studies of harbour porpoise in the North Atlantic; design of a monitoring system for harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea; research options for the Baltic Sea; promotional campaigns; and the future location of the Secretariat. The Rules of Procedures were amended so that NGOs can apply for observer status at future meetings of the Advisory Committee.

The Netherlands presented a report that summarised the matters relevant to ASCOBANS deriving from the IWC workshop on chemical pollution held in Bergen, Norway, in 1995. A resolution was drafted on facilitating a comprehensive research-programme on cause-effect relationships between harbour porpoise health and chemical pollutants, for presentation to the Meeting of Parties.

A By-catch Working Group presented a report, subsequently modified to take into account comments made at the meeting, on by-catch issues in relation to small cetaceans as well as resolutions on reduction and monitoring of by-catch in fishing gear for presentation to the Meeting of Parties.

Belgium presented a review of stranding schemes in the ASCOBANS area and considered the possibility of establishing an inventory-type database of national stranding databases at the ASCOBANS Secretariat.

## Meeting of Parties

The Second Meeting of Parties to ASCOBANS was held in Bonn on 17-19 November 1997, hosted by the German Government.

Representatives of North and Baltic Sea countries, together with numerous representatives from national and international organisations discussed a wide range of issues. One of the most important of these was the need to bring about a reduction in the numbers of small cetaceans caught incidentally by

fishery practices. The Meeting decided that the level of by-catch should be reduced to less than 2% of stocks.

The Meeting also focussed attention on the influence of pollutants on small cetaceans. It was decided that further research should be undertaken – beyond that which had already been carried out – to analyse, for example, the effects of organic pollutants on cetaceans and, where appropriate, to ascertain where there is a need for action.

The Meeting also adopted recommendations on the establishment of protected areas, the avoidance of disturbance to the animals, and on further research projects, particularly regarding the status of stocks and the causes of threats to small cetaceans.

The Meeting considered the role, functions and powers of the Advisory Committee, concluding that the existing arrangements were sufficient, subject to there being ample clarification of the text of the Agreement in this regard.

The Parties adopted a budget for the next three years, and decided to relocate the ASCOBANS Secretariat from Cambridge to Bonn, as from 1998. The move is intended to enhance the already close co-operation with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat.

## ASCOBANS Secretariat

Ms. Jette Jensen, the Secretary to ASCOBANS, is undertaking a promotional campaign and has presented the work of ASCOBANS at various intergovernmental and non-governmental meetings including the Conference of the European Cetacean Society, the Conference of the Parties to CMS, and EC NATURE.

The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) granted observer status to ASCOBANS in March 1997, and the Secretary presented the work of ASCOBANS at a HELCOM working group meeting (EC NATURE). As a result of this, cooperation was established with them on the newly adopted HELCOM recommendation on harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea.

## Special Supplement: The Mystery of the Missing Siberians

**A**lmost 20 years ago, a small flock of Siberian Cranes was discovered spending the winter on the Caspian lowlands of northern Iran. In the early years as many as 12 were counted but during the past decade there have only been 9-10 including one or two juveniles. Although the population reproduces, it does not increase. Miraculously, it survives. The migration route and the breeding grounds have remained a mystery.

Throughout the winter, the cranes separate as pairs and family groups on flooded rice fields where farmers live-trap wild ducks from October through March. Catches depend on baiting the ducks and encouraging them peacefully to fly into the traps. By chance, larger birds like cranes were protected by the trappers who keep intruders away. Just before the waterfowl migrate, a "shoot out" disrupts a peace normally punctuated only by the flute-like calls of the Siberian Cranes. Usually, however, the cranes migrate a few days before the shoot out.

The Russians have known for decades that small numbers of Siberian Cranes are occasionally spotted on spring migration west of the Caspian Sea and then on wetlands of the Volga delta on the north-west Caspian. The cranes continued north and disappeared.

In recent years, Japanese researchers have attached a small Platform Transmitter Terminal (PTT) weighing less than 100 grams to endangered cranes in east Asia. Data from the NOAA satellite is processed in France and the USA revealing the migration routes, resting areas, breeding and wintering grounds for various populations—information vital to conservation.

ICF has been involved in Siberian crane conservation for many years, but satellite tracking only became possible when the Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ) joined the effort. Through support of NEC Corporation and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT), WBSJ provided four satellite radios for attachment to Siberian Cranes in Iran. There were two big challenges – getting researchers to Iran and catching the cranes without disrupting the duck trapping.

During the winter of 1994-95, the Iran Department of the Environment invited George Archibald to Iran to release two captive-produced Siberians with the wild cranes and to capture two wild cranes. Satellite radios would be attached to all four birds. Unfortunately, a delayed visa invitation forced the two cranes and George to remain in Baraboo. Then the US Government placed a ban on the export to Iran of all materials, except human body parts needed for medical reasons. Siberian Cranes did not qualify.



Photo: Bholu Abrar Khan



Migration route of satellite-tracked Siberian Crane, March-May, 1996. Map by Milford Muskett.

Through the assistance of the secretariat of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species, headquartered in Germany, a new plan was implemented the following winter. Communication with Iran would be from Germany, and a Russian crane researcher, Dr. Yuri Markin, would release captive-reared cranes in Iran and capture and mark the wild cranes. Through the fine efforts of the office of Wisconsin's Senator Herbert Kohl, the US government granted an exemption for the export of the live Siberian Cranes. Lufthansa German Airlines provided complimentary passage for the precious cargo from Chicago to Tehran. A grant from the National Wildlife Federation allowed Yuri Markin to join both the ICF cranes and the wild cranes in Iran and to begin the work.

The duck trappers would not allow Yuri and his Iranian colleague, Mr. Bahrami Nasab of the Department of the Environment, to work inside the duck trapping area where the wild Siberian Cranes spent most of their time. Consequently, just outside the hunting area, but still on wide open expanses of rice fields, Yuri constructed two small netted pens—one for each of the two captive cranes. He planned to introduce these birds gradually to their new surrounding. The calls of the captive cranes were heard by the wild cranes. One wild family, including a pair and their juvenile, flew near the cage of a captive crane. The wild male crane tried to attack the captive bird. By modifying the cage, Yuri was able to trap a territorial and aggressive wild male. Color bands and a satellite radio were attached and the bird was soon released.

Unfortunately, Yuri did not have time or opportunity to capture another wild crane. Satellite radios were attached to the two captive cranes, and the birds were released. The satellite radios allowed researchers to follow the two ICF Siberian Cranes and the marked wild crane. Unfortunately, the ICF cranes failed either to join the wild cranes or to migrate. One was captured placed in the Pardisan Park in Tehran. The captive cranes had proved vital in the capture of the wild crane, and may be used to lure wild cranes into traps in the future.

The wild crane carrying the PTT migrated west across the Caspian lowlands, across Azerbaijan, Chechnya, and then to the delta of the Volga. There it rested for 17 days before continuing northwest to a presumed breeding area just east of the Ural Mountains and northwest of the city of Tyumen.

From a helicopter, researchers Alexander Sorokin and Yuri Markin searched the wetlands for white cranes. Although the high expense of helicopter work limited surveys to just hours, a family of breeding Siberian Cranes was located. They had a chick! The female, moulting and flightless, was captured and color-banded. Unfortunately, the color-banded male that carried the satellite radio from Iran was not located. The satellite informs us that he summered in that region in 1996 – we hope with his mate and a new chick.

The word for Siberian Crane in Russian is "sterkh." A mountain near the wetland where the cranes are breeding is called Sterkh Mountain, and several of the local people living in that region have the surname "Sterkh." These people, however, were unaware of the Siberian Cranes. Perhaps conservation of the last few Siberian Cranes on the breeding grounds, along their newly-charted migration route, as well as in Iran, will result in the slow recovery of this remnant flock. A scientific report on the satellite tracking of the Iranian Siberian Crane is under preparation for publication by WBSJ.

*The preceding article first appeared in the November 1996 issue of The ICF Bugle. It is reproduced here with the permission of the authors: Dr. George Archibald, Director of the International Crane Foundation and Dr. Yutaka Kanai, Deputy Director, Research Center, Wild Bird Society of Japan.*

## **European Bats Agreement**

Progress made at the first Advisory Committee meeting (Vilm, Germany, April 1996) was followed up at its next session held in January 1997 in Kraków, Poland. The Executive Secretary, Mr. Eric Blencowe, and members of the Committee prepared analyses for consideration on this occasion. The central European venue allowed a greater number and diversity of Range States to attend, including Belarus, Latvia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The meeting laid much of the groundwork for the second session of the Meeting of the Parties, scheduled for 1-3 July 1998 in Bonn, Germany. The date and venue are subject to confirmation once budgetary approval for financial support to the meeting has been obtained by the German Government, which will happen at the end of this year.

A meeting of seven of the Agreement's Range States was held in September in Budapest, Hungary. The meeting considered the monitoring data that has been collected so far, and agreed practical steps to assess the population status of Central European populations of Schreiber's bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii*). It is hoped that the involvement of non-Parties in the meeting (Hungary was the only Party present) will encourage them to participate more actively in the Agreement, and to accede to the Agreement itself.



Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*)

The Bat Agreement's secretariat coordinated the first "European Bat Night" across five countries on the weekend of 20 September this year. Britain, France, Germany, Poland and Ukraine co-operated on a series of public events. The Secretariat designed and financed the production of five posters dedicated to the event, one for each participating country in each language. The occasion was a great success in all countries participating, with over 10,000 people attending the event in Berlin, together with numerous representatives of the national and international media.

An even larger event is envisaged for next year, with the active involvement of as many of the Parties and non-Parties in the Agreement area as possible. European Bat Night #2 will take place on Saturday, 29 August 1998. Further details will appear in subsequent issues of the **CMS Bulletin**.

## **Advisory Committee**

The next Advisory Committee meeting will probably take place in Prague in March 1998. In order to prepare for that meeting, likely to be the last before the full meeting of Parties in Bonn, a small working group will meet early in the new year to consider draft recommendations on monitoring certain species, as well as the draft transboundary programme. The Secretariat is working closely with Parties, non-Parties and expert national non-governmental organisations to develop these proposals.

Photo: F. Greenway

## **African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**

The AEWA has now been signed by 11 Range States, five of which (Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, European Union, and Mali) endorsed the Agreement this year. The signature or ratification process has been now completed in four of the 11 signatory countries (Guinea, Netherlands, Switzerland and Sudan).

The Interim Agreement Secretariat and the European representative on the CMS Standing Committee visited the CMS Secretariat in September to consult about the further work needed to attract more countries to the Agreement. They also discussed preliminary plans for the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS and the first session of the Meeting of Parties to the Agreement, provisionally scheduled to take place back-to-back in October 1999. Discussions also focussed on possible pilot projects and the preparation of various reports for both meetings.

## **Wadden Sea Seals Agreement**

This agreement between Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands has now been in force for five years. In 1996, the Parties adopted a revised Management Plan, detailing the activities which will be undertaken between 1996 and 2000. It takes account of the results of scientific research in the past period and translates political decisions and targets into management actions.

Among other things, the geographical scope of the agreement has been extended to encompass the adjacent offshore area within the 3-nautical mile zone. The exemptions for taking have been limited and common criteria to release seals into the wild have been drawn up. Also, the coordinated monitoring of seals has been harmonized and improved to enable a better estimation of population size and trends.

## **Slender-billed Curlew Memorandum of Understanding**

The Governments of Yemen and Greece signed the MoU on 7 September 1997 and 29 October 1997, respectively, bringing the number of Parties to 17.

The Secretariat has encouraged the initiation of conservation projects for the Slender-billed Curlew in several Range States, and is maintaining close contact with various organisations, scientific institutions and national authorities that are already involved in such action. The key partners include BirdLife International, the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural History, the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) and Euronatur.

BirdLife has recently produced a first draft of a comprehensive longer-term action plan for the species, as called for under the terms of the MoU. Concrete activities are already under way in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Russia and Ukraine.

Under its "LIFE" Programme, the European Commission is financing a protection and monitoring project in southern Europe, with particular emphasis on Greece.

CIC is expected to carry out a multinational campaign aimed at raising awareness among hunters. In addition, the Secretariat is seeking financial assistance from external sources with a view to helping to put immediate measures into effect along the birds' migration routes in central Asia and at its wintering sites.

CIC donated DM 10,000 towards the financing of expeditions to the peat areas in southwestern Siberia in search of the breeding locations of the Slender-billed curlew. From 20 May to 20 July, two groups of ornithologists, under the leadership of Dr. Bojko (Ekaterinburg) and Dr. Chernov (Plost) led the searches. A further search in the southwest Siberian steppe region was carried out from 20 May to 18 June by Dr. Yurlov (Novosibirsk) and Dr. Boere (Netherlands) on behalf of the Russian Bird Conservation Union (RBCU). In 1996 two similar expeditions took place under the RBCU and LIFE-Programme.

Although the breeding areas still have not been found, good news was received from Iran, where the Persian Gulf wintering areas of the bird (50 individuals) were discovered.

Because the discovery of the breeding locations of the Slender-billed curlew is paramount to the conservation of the species, the CMS Secretariat, together with the RBCU, organized a seminar in

Moscow in November 1997. Present were scientists – including the expedition leaders – and representatives of the Russian nature conservation and hunting authorities.

A central theme of the seminar was the reports of the expeditions carried out in the last few years. The experts were able to reduce the potential breeding area from an estimated 3 million square kilometres by 40%. In 1998 two further expeditions are to take place to the remaining areas: a "northern" survey to the peat areas of the forest-steppe and the southern edge of the taiga, and a "southern" one to the steppe area.

In its closing session, the seminar agreed recommendations on the future measures necessary for the conservation of the Slender-billed curlew. This paper is available upon request from the Secretariat, as is a status report on the species prepared in early 1996.

Within the framework of the MoU and the Action Plan, the Secretariat is planning to hold, in Autumn 1998, a symposium of country representatives and experts. Its aim will be to facilitate the coordination of monitoring efforts and to intensify protection measures.

## Agreements under development

### *Houbara Bustard (Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii)*

The Secretariat and the IUCN Environmental Law Centre are presently reviewing a draft Agreement text and preliminary draft Action Plan that will be attached and integrated in the Agreement. The final draft Action Plan is expected to be prepared by the lead country (Saudi Arabia), with the assistance of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's working group on the Houbara bustard.

### *Great Cormorant (Western European population)*

At the meeting of the CMS Conference of the Parties in April 1997, the Conference agreed a recommendation (No. 5.3) on the development of an

Action Plan for this species in the African-Eurasian region.

It recommends that Denmark and the Netherlands finalise their work on the Action Plan before the end of this year, focussing initially on the sub-species *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*. The Action Plan should include guidelines for dealing with the possible serious damage caused by birds in the fisheries sector, while maintaining a favourable conservation status for the species. Once completed, the Action Plan should be submitted to the CMS Scientific Council and distributed to the Range States.

Denmark and the Netherlands were invited to bring together an international group of experts from nature conservation and fisheries sectors to complete the Action Plan, having regard for the activities of the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Wetlands International working groups.

The expert group met from 25-26 September 1997 in Copenhagen. It endorsed by majority an Action Plan submitted by Denmark and the Netherlands to send the Action Plan to the organs of the Convention and to the Range States involved, requesting the latter immediately to implement the recommendations outlined in the Action Plan.

The recommendation of the Conference of the Parties called further for an advisory committee of experts to be established under the aegis of the Scientific Council to facilitate coordination of the implementation of the Action Plan. The establishment of such a committee will be on the agenda of the next meeting of the Council.

## Ongoing projects

### *Mediterranean Monk Seals*

The Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) is listed in Appendix I of CMS. As a consequence, Range States which are Parties to CMS are committed to provide strict protection measures for these highly endangered animals and their habitat.

Morocco, Portugal, Spain and the European Union are CMS Parties and Range States of the Monk seal. Mauritania will hopefully accede to CMS very soon.

In its Resolution 4.2 the CMS COP4 (Nairobi, June 1994) endorsed the recommendation of the CMS Scientific Council that *inter alia* *Monachus monachus* be the subject of concerted action. This was further resolved by the CMS COP5 in Resolution 5.1 (Geneva, April 1997).

Owing to an epidemic which broke out in early 1997, the remaining viable population of the Mediterranean monk seal on the Atlantic coast of Western Africa (Cap Blanc) has been reduced by about one-third. All adults and several of the younger animals have died.

In June 1997 the Secretariat sent two letters to a large number of governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations requesting assistance for rescue measures intended to be undertaken by an expert team coordinated by Dr. P. J. Reijnders.

Dr. Reijnders has received a very positive response from a number of the institutions/organisations to which the letters were addressed with the appeal for financial and technical assistance. There is hope that the population will recover in the medium term if their living conditions are favourable and no further catastrophe arises.

Dr. Reijnders is now taking matters forward. The conservation plan which has been developed will be reviewed by the experts and the Range States' authorities and donor organisations over the next few months. Conservation measures should then begin in early Spring 1998 at the latest.

The Secretariat should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who responded so positively to the campaign and who contributed so generously to enable conservation measures to be taken forward.

### **Cetaceans**

CMS is sponsoring a cetacean project in West Africa (focussing on Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Gambia), aimed at gathering much needed information on cetacean distribution and cetacean-fisheries interactions in coastal waters.

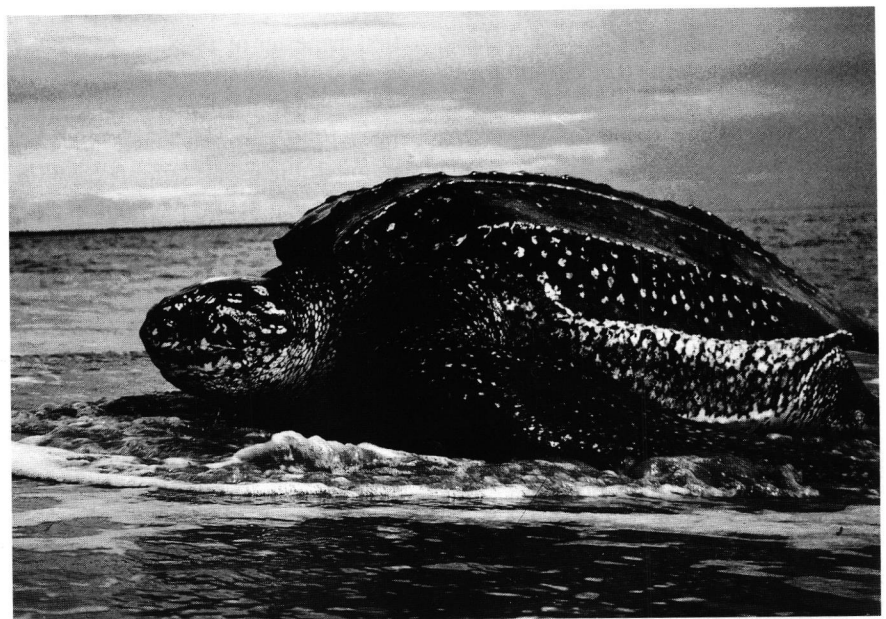
The field work, which is being led by Dr. Koen van Waerebeek, began in October 1997 and a final report is expected in mid-1998.

### **Marine Turtles**

Discussions are currently under way with the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group to inject new life into a co-operative agreement on various marine turtle activities. Progress will be reported in the next CMS Bulletin.

The Secretariat has also had preliminary discussions on the organization of further regional strategic planning and training workshops, using a model that has proved successful in the western and northern Indian Ocean.

Workshops in South-East Asia (possibly in Malaysia) and West Africa are tentatively planned for mid- and late-1998, respectively. The Secretariat is participating in a small marine turtle workshop in Gabon in December 1997, which will serve as a precursor for a larger meeting covering the countries of the Atlantic coast of Africa.



Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coracea*)

Photo: J. Fretey

### **Sahelo-Saharan ungulates**

The Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Science (IRSNB) has developed a draft status report on various endangered ungulates of the Sahelo-Saharan region, has updated a draft action plan and is preparing, under the authority of

UNEP/CMS, a meeting of representatives of the Range States and experts.

The Meeting has been rescheduled to be held from 19 to 23 February 1998 in Djerba, Tunisia. The invitations have recently been circulated.

### **Ungulates of the Arabian Peninsula**

The authorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have recently agreed a draft "Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Concerning the Conservation of Wild Ungulates in the Arabian Peninsula". The MoU aims at providing the legal basis for the coordinated strict protection of a number of desert mammals and their habitat.

The species covered are: the Arabian oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*), reem gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa marica*), idmi gazelle (*Gazella gazella*), Nubian ibex (*Capra ibex nubiana*) and Arabian tahr (*Hemitragus jaykari*). The Range States for the MoU are Bahrein, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, the

Republic of Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.

The Secretariat will provide legal advice through the IUCN Environmental Law Centre (ELC) and will endeavour to assist the lead country with the organisation of a Range State meeting.

## Focus: the endangered Siberian crane

This issue of the **CMS Bulletin** introduces a new feature that should be of interest to many of our readers. A portion of each issue will be devoted to an exposé of one of the endangered species listed in the CMS Appendices. In addition to giving background information on the species, up-to-date progress reports from the field will be included.

The present issue focuses on the highly endangered Siberian crane (*Grus leucogeranus*), one of CMS' flagship species. Dr. George Archibald, one of the world's foremost experts on cranes, and Dr. Yutaka Kanai, a specialist in satellite tracking, shed some light on the migration of these elusive birds in "The Mystery of the Missing Siberians".

Regular followers of the Convention will know that efforts to bring the western and central Asian populations of this magnificent bird from the brink of extinction are being carried out within the framework of the *Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane (1993)*.

There are now seven signatory countries to the MoU, including five that are not yet Parties to the parent Convention: India, Islamic Republic of

Iran, Kazakstan, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The International Crane Foundation (ICF), the Wild Bird Society of Japan, and the UNEP/CMS Secretariat are formally co-operating in the initiative.

The Secretariat has organized two meetings of Siberian crane experts and governmental administrators – the first in Moscow in May 1995, and the second in Bharatpur, India, in November 1996. The Secretariat has entered into discussions with the Iranian authorities to explore the possibility of having that important Range State host the next meeting, perhaps in the first trimester of 1998.

A detailed Conservation Plan for the years 1997-1999, currently being implemented, is one of the useful outputs of the Indian meeting. An action plan tailored to each Range State aims to achieve three basic objectives:

- to reduce mortality in the remaining populations;
- to increase numbers and genetic diversity; and
- to enhance co-operation among the Range States and other concerned agencies.

Copies of the revised Memorandum and Conservation Plan are available upon request from the Secretariat.

### Updates from the field

*(Based on reports from George Archibald, Claire Mirande, Alexander Sorokin, Ellen Tavakoli and Belinda Wright)*

The momentum that began with a number of successes in 1996 has carried over into this year, with progress in several areas. As reported below, dedicated Russian researchers have made important break-throughs in their releases of captive-reared birds, egg substitution techniques and satellite monitoring. As many as 10 Siberian cranes have returned to their traditional wintering grounds in the Islamic Republic of Iran and another three to their winter home in India - proof that the small flocks are continuing to reproduce and sustain themselves at a very low rate.



Keoladeo National Park, India

Photo: E. Blencowe



Siberian cranes (*Grus leucogeranus*)

Photo: G. Archibald

## Russian Federation

The work in Russia has progressed very well this year. Russian colleagues have worked diligently to implement a recovery strategy that involves releasing captive-reared, juvenile Siberian cranes into the wild; substituting Siberian crane eggs into the nests of Eurasian cranes; and monitoring the birds' migration by satellite tracking.

### *Releases of captive-reared cranes*

In August 1997, six Siberian crane chicks were transported from the Oka Reserve breeding centre, southeast of Moscow, to the Tyumen district some 1500 km to the east. There they were released on a grassy island in a lake, where they were observed from the nearby mainland feeding on insects and other natural foods. Two of the youngest chicks perished: one from injuries suffered in combat with a sibling, and another killed by a White-tailed eagle.

In early September, all four remaining chicks fledged and flew off. They were spotted four days later with a large flock of Eurasian cranes in a nature reserve 40 km away. The reserve is known to be a traditional staging area for their Eurasian cousins.

However, several of the local people had observed the Siberian crane juveniles with Eurasian cranes, and they seemed to be wild and in excellent condition. It is hoped that, the Siberian cranes' integration into the Eurasian flock was successful, thereby allowing them to learn a new migration route.

### *On the breeding grounds of the western Asian flock*

The breeding area of the small population of Siberian cranes that migrates each year to Iran (via Kazakstan and Azerbaijan) can be found in the wetlands near Uvat, a few hundred kilometres northeast of Tyumen. In May 1997, Russian researchers substituted Siberian crane eggs into the nests of three pairs of Eurasian cranes that also frequent these wetlands.

In August, they returned to the area and conducted aerial surveys, hoping to find pairs of Eurasian cranes with sub-adult Siberians. Although many Eurasian crane families were spotted, no mixed families were observed. It is speculated that the juvenile Siberian cranes fledged in early August (in the wild this normally happens after about 65 days) and moved with their foster parents from the immediate nesting area.

It is known from satellite tracking data that some of these Eurasian cranes migrate from the Tyumen staging area to winter at a location on the Afghanistan-Iran border. It is possible therefore that the four Siberian cranes may have ended up there as well. Intensive surveys will need to be conducted to prove this theory.

Although these particular birds were not found, the search effort near Uvat was handsomely rewarded: two pairs of Siberian cranes, each with a juvenile, were located! The male of one pair was the same bird that had been fitted with a satellite transmitter (PTT) in Iran in February 1996, and whose northward migration had been followed for about three months that spring (see following article).

Since much was known already about the migratory behaviour of this family, it was decided only to capture and colour-band the female of the pair to permit future identification. The juvenile of the second pair was fitted with a Russian-made PTT, which has since provided information on its movements on a daily basis.

The cranes left the breeding area at the end of August, and the PTT data showed that the juvenile arrived at the Narzum wetlands in northwestern Kazakstan just four days later. It remained there for about one month, before moving rapidly to the Astrakhan Nature Reserve on the delta of the Volga river at the northwest corner of the Caspian Sea.

Researchers there observed three groups of Siberian cranes: two pairs, each with a chick (most certainly the birds which migrated



Map courtesy of International Crane Foundation

from Uvat) as well as four individuals, for a total of 10 birds. They remained at this site for almost a month before continuing their southward migration through Azerbaijan to Iran.

The PTT data gathered by the Russian researchers highlights the vital importance of both the Narzum and Astrakhan sites, and the need to put in place long-term protection and monitoring programmes there.

### *On the breeding grounds of the Central Asian flock*

The Kunovat Basin in northern Russia hosts the breeding area of the few birds that continue to migrate to wintering grounds in India. In late May 1997, five Siberian crane eggs were placed in nests of Eurasian cranes. When Sasha Sorokin and Yuri Markin returned in late August, they observed three pairs with fledged juvenile Siberian cranes.

Added to the success of this experiment, they discovered that the last remaining pair of Siberian cranes on the Kunovat Basin had fledged a juvenile, in August 1997. The nesting of this pair and rearing of the young was captured on videotape by Edward Nazarov.

It is hoped that these successes in the Russian Federation will translate into increased numbers of Siberian cranes in the wild in the coming years.

### **Islamic Republic of Iran**

The first of the Siberian cranes which migrated from Uvat, by way of Narzum and Astrakhan, were reported to have arrived in Fereidoonkenar and Esbaran, Iran on 23 October 1997. The remaining birds arrived at these sites a few days later, giving a total of as many as eight birds, comparable to numbers in previous years.

### **India**

Keoladeo National Park, 200 km south of Delhi, is home to a small flock of Siberian cranes that has dwindled from about 200 birds in the 1960s to just a few birds today. The birds spend the winter in the park after a journey of several thousand kilometres which takes them from the Kunovat Basin in



Photo: D. Hykle

Russia (see map) through Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

After not coming at all in 1994 and 1995, their reappearance in February 1996 gave new hope for the survival of this most endangered flock.

On 17 November 1997, three Siberian cranes – a pair with a chick – arrived at Keoladeo, much to the relief of conservationists who eagerly await their annual arrival. For the past two years now, the birds have reached Keoladeo much earlier than in previous years, when January or February was the norm. (Last year, three adult birds arrived on 16 November 1996, breaking that trend.)

In January 1997, an unsuccessful attempt was made to capture one of the wild cranes at Keoladeo, in order to attach a satellite transmitter. The plan had been agreed, after considerable discussion, by the expert meeting held in India the previous November. Despite the best efforts of Mini Nagendran and a veteran

bird trapper, Ali Hussain (pictured here, above), the wary cranes proved themselves to be as elusive as ever to the traditional trapping techniques that were attempted.

### **ICF - United States**

The long-awaited Siberian crane video, produced by the International Crane Foundation with support from CMS, has recently been completed. Distribution of the English and Russian language versions is under way. "Blank" versions that allow for translation into local languages have also been prepared. Master copies were sent to Pakistan and are being translated into Urdu, Pashtu, and Dari for airing in Pakistan and Afghanistan. ICF is contacting the other Range States to obtain clear information on the broadcast format needed.



Working on the Siberian crane video script at ICF. From left to right: George Archibald, Claire Mirande, Steve Landfried, Douglas Hykle

## CMS membership

The number of Parties to CMS has now reached 51, with the accession of Peru in June this year and the ratification of Chad, which took effect in September 1997. Formal confirmation of Mauritania's accession is eagerly awaited, since the necessary internal procedures in that country have apparently been completed.

Contacts with government officials suggest that a number of other countries are giving serious consideration to joining the Convention. It is hoped that ongoing discussions with the authorities of a number of Eastern and Southern African countries – Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe in particular – will bear fruit and will be followed up by early parliamentary consideration of this matter.

Several South and Central American countries – notably Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay – have also expressed interest in the Convention recently, and the Secretariat is taking the necessary steps to capitalise on this interest.

A strategy for promoting CMS in the Asia-Pacific region has been drawn up and will be pursued actively next year. Various contacts with senior government officials in Malaysia and Yemen have been well-received, and give rise to optimism that these countries will take the necessary internal procedures leading to their eventual accession to CMS.

In the mean time, officials attending a meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) were briefed on CMS last June by the CMS Scientific Councillor of the Philippines, Mr Carlo Custodio.

In Europe, the Secretariat has had positive contacts with Austria, Greece and Liechtenstein, some of which look quite promising. There is as yet no further progress to report with respect to Central and Eastern Europe.

More targeted recruitment efforts, facilitated by a series of profiles of key non-Party States prepared by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, will begin in earnest in 1998.

## From the regions

### *Africa*

On the initiative of South Africa, a memorandum of understanding for the conservation and sustainable use of the Sandgrouse (family: Pteroclididae) is being developed by the three Range States of the species: Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. These nomadic birds are at risk due to land degradation and hunting pressure.

In mid-September 1997, experts of the Range States met in Botswana and reached broad consensus on the text of a draft MoU aimed at co-ordinating conservation activities. National species action plans are now being developed. A further meeting is scheduled for April 1998 in order to discuss and finalise the MoU and the complementary plans.

### *Americas and the Caribbean*

Through the initiative of Parties and non-Parties present during COP5, a Working Group for the Conservation of Migratory Species in Latin-America and the Caribbean was created. The group aims to provide a regional forum for discussion and elaboration of future projects and agreements for the conservation of migratory fauna; to contribute to the increase in membership and strengthening of CMS in the region, to help put into effect the recommendations of the first South American Technical Workshop; and to evaluate progress periodically in subsequent meetings.

The inclusion at COP5 of many species of South American birds and mammals in the CMS Appendices is an encouraging illustration of the

closer links which the Convention is establishing in this region.

Further visible progress is beginning to materialise with the execution of a number of projects supported by CMS:

A small project on the Ruddy-headed goose, involving Argentina and Chile is collecting valuable information about this endangered species. A media campaign is being developed in the region and searches in both breeding and wintering areas have been conducted. The number of birds continues to be low, but hopefully the factors that impede the recovery of the species will be identified, allowing corrective measures to be taken.

Around the world, albatrosses experience significant mortality as a result of getting hooked in fishing lines. A one-year study to address this problem, to be conducted by Uruguayan scientists, will begin as soon as the government authorities give their approval. The project will collect data about the magnitude of the problem and will investigate solutions for avoiding the incidental capture of albatrosses.

The La Plata Dolphin, recently included in Appendix I of CMS, is also at risk due to incidental capture in coastal areas of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. A workshop being organized in November 1997 with CMS support will bring together regional specialists and some international experts, to discuss a strategy aimed at safeguarding the species.

Two endemic species of Andean flamingoes and the Andean deer were identified by the COP5 as species requiring concerted action. Range States of these species are encouraged to make proposals for concrete actions to be taken for these species.

Following a proposal presented during the sixth meeting of the Scientific Council, a document reviewing the conservation status of

## Conference of the Parties

The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties took place from 10-16 April 1997 at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland. Attendance was excellent, with representation from 43 of the then 49 Parties, 38 observer States, and 25 intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. The main conference was preceded by meetings of the Scientific Council and the Standing Committee.

The meeting decided on the following main items:

- the addition of 21 species to the list of endangered migratory animals (CMS Appendix I) for which concerted actions are needed. Among them: various European birds, two species of flamingo, the Humboldt penguin and the Andean deer;
- the addition of 22 species to CMS Appendix II, requiring internationally co-ordinated measures. Among them: all albatrosses, South American dolphins and the South African penguin;
- to focus on a number of endangered species already listed in Appendix I, to initiate better coordination among their Range States for the species' protection, for example, the Mountain gorilla, Siberian crane, La Plata dolphin and Andean flamingoes.

The Conference also agreed new strategic objectives for the implementation and further development of CMS in the forthcoming triennium. These will include activities to gain synergies between related global conventions.

The Conference adopted a model for the administrative integration of Europe-based Agreement secretariats

### Europe

The Secretariat of the European Bats Agreement organised a workshop in Hungary in September, attended by seven Central European countries. The meeting discussed progress in the conservation programme for Schreiber's bat, populations of which are declining at an alarming rate in that sub-region. The importance of joining both the Bats Agreement and CMS, and the benefits which could be gained from such membership, were emphasized. The Secretariat will be following up with correspondence to the responsible ministries and agencies in these countries with a view to reinforcing this message.

The *Program for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna* (CAFF) has been operational for several years. A number of Action Plans, including one for the conservation of Arctic birds, have been developed under its auspices. Whereas the CAFF programme concerns several European countries that are already Parties to CMS, the governments of the largest countries (Canada, Russian, United States) are still reluctant to join CMS and AEW.

On the occasion of the CAFF International Working Group (September 1997), the Netherlands presented a *Global Overview of the Conservation of Migratory Arctic Breeding Birds Outside the Arctic*. The report, prepared by Wetlands International with funding from the Netherlands Government, was endorsed by the meeting. It emphasizes the importance of CMS, AEW and other activities under CMS for the conservation of all migratory birds breeding in the Arctic. A final version of the report will soon be published and widely distributed.

The European representative on the CMS Standing Committee, Dr. Gerard Boere, also submitted to the meeting the text of a letter sent to the responsible Russian State authority, presenting detailed arguments for that country (and other Arctic nations) to join AEW as well as CMS.

small cetaceans in southern South America was presented during the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Scientific Council. This background paper is a first important step towards the development of a regional agreement for the conservation of small cetaceans in the region.

### Asia-Oceania

The Secretariat continues to follow with interest the activities taking place within the framework of the *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 1996-2000*. In March, it attended the International Workshop on Wetland and Waterbird Conservation in North-East Asia, held in Beidaihe, China, in conjunction with the second meeting of the Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee.

The Workshop produced a final declaration which, among other things, called for the development and strengthening of partnerships for co-operation in the area of management techniques, information exchange, and training and research. Governments were invited to explore the possible development of a regional agreement on the conservation of migratory waterbirds, and enhanced involvement in CMS.

One of the highlights was the formal launching of a North-East Asian crane reserve network, including the designation of 16 sites from 5 countries (China, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation).

The Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee considered progress reports on implementation of the Asia-Pacific Strategy (in particular through the corresponding action plans for cranes, shorebirds and anatidae) and on the establishment of various working groups. The next meeting of the Committee, which will by then include representation from a CMS Party, is provisionally scheduled to take place in Kazakstan in April 1998, in conjunction with a proposed Central Asia-Indian flyway workshop.

under the auspices of UNEP, and agreed a budget which, in addition to financing core activities in the 1998-2000 triennium, provides over \$600,000 for project activities.

The Conference also issued an appeal to all Parties and interested IGOs/NGOs to prepare actions for the celebration of CMS's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1999.

During a week-end break in the conference, an interesting symposium on animal migration was held at the IUCN headquarters in Gland. The Secretariat is presently preparing for publication a record of the proceedings, including a selection of photographs of the species covered in the symposium. Copies should be available in early 1998.

The proceedings of the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (in English, French and Spanish) were circulated in August 1997, together with a second volume of Party reports. Both documents are available from the Secretariat upon request.

## Standing Committee

The 17th meeting of the Standing Committee was held at the close of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties in April. Saudi Arabia (the representative of Asia on the Committee) was elected as the new Chair, and the Netherlands (representative of Europe) was elected Vice-Chair. The new regional representatives are: Guinea (Africa); Uruguay (America and the Caribbean) and the Philippines (Oceania).

Invitations have been circulated for the next Standing Committee meeting, scheduled to take place in Bonn on 3-4 February 1998. Among other things, the Committee will review its work programme arising from the COP5, and it will evaluate and decide on offers from Parties to host the sixth

meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

## Scientific Council

The Scientific Council, having assembled just before the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, will probably meet next in early June 1998. A heavy agenda can be expected, as a result of several tasks assigned by COP5. The precise date and venue of the meeting will be announced shortly.

## Secretariat news

With the April 1997 meeting of the Conference of the Parties well out of the way, the CMS Secretariat has begun to take on a more permanent shape. In mid-December, Ms. Linette Eitz-Lamare (India) will join the staff of the Secretariat as a full-time clerk, replacing Ms. Eve Kolasa who had served in that position on a part-time basis.

Readers familiar with CMS will recall the long-standing efforts to finance and recruit an administrative officer based in Bonn. The Secretariat has recently submitted a proposal to UNEP for the recruitment of a person experienced in fund management and programme matters.

A number of staff who were recruited to assist in preparations for the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties have now moved on, upon completion of their contracts. The Secretariat wishes Ms. Hilda Lunscken (United States) and Mr. Hubert-Marie Cuvelier (France) every success in their future careers.

Just two essential posts remain to be filled – that of Information Officer and Information Assistant. The recruitment exercise for the former is

well advanced, and the successful candidate should be able to join the Secretariat in early 1998. The Information Assistant, who will be recruited locally, is expected to be in place around the same time. Together their efforts should help to improve the character and frequency of information about CMS provided to the Parties and the public at large.

Finally, a bit of housekeeping: in keeping with the decision of the Conference of the Parties to harmonize the titles of the head (Mr. Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht) and deputy head (Mr. Douglas Hykle) of the CMS Secretariat with those of other comparable convention secretariats, their posts have been renamed Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary, respectively.

## Other news

### *European Union and Indian CMS Focal Points retire*

After long careers in species conservation and more general environment matters, Mr. Richard Geiser and Mr. Subash Chandra Dey have retired from service in the European Commission and the Government of India, respectively.

Both were actively involved in CMS issues, and were familiar figures at most of the major CMS meetings held in recent years. The Secretariat extends its appreciation to both gentlemen for their contribution to the development of the Convention, and wishes them a long and happy retirement.

Australia has nominated Dr. David Kay as the new CMS Focal Point, following a change in post for Dr. Peter Bridgewater. Dr. Bridgewater was Chair of the CMS Standing Committee between 1994 and 1997, and was actively involved in the Convention's work during that period.

## Linkages

### *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species*

The Executive Secretary attended part of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in Harare in June, and made a statement about the relationship between the two Conventions.

### *Convention on Biological Diversity*

The Scientific Councillor for Belgium, Dr. Roseline Beudels-Jamare, attended a meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) in Montreal in early September. At this meeting the Secretariat presented a progress report on collaboration between the two Conventions.

### *United Nations Environment Programme*

Convention secretariats have recently been invited to submit proposals as to how their respective activities can be incorporated into the UNEP's own work programme. The CMS Secretariat responded to this request in September, and further developments are awaited.

## Appeal!

The Convention on Migratory Species will celebrate its **20<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1999**. It would be a pity to see this date go by without a flourish, and the Secretariat therefore appeals to all readers to think up ideas on how this significant event could be marked. For example, why not try to initiate a postage stamp (see the example, opposite, from Monaco, issued at the occasion of the recent IWC 49 meeting). Perhaps we could produce a beautiful calendar for 1999.

The Secretariat will not be in a position to organize any special

activities itself, as it will be completely pre-occupied in 1999 with arrangements for the forthcoming COP. However, all ideas will be welcome, and we will endeavour to identify some Party to sponsor the activity.

Please feel free to send all ideas to the CMS Secretariat by e-mail or fax.

In any case, special efforts to implement CMS and recruit more Parties should be undertaken by all Parties and NGOs. A message to all: CMS Focal Points, please consider providing some funds in your Ministry's budget for 1999. NGOs: please consider making some contributions to the implementation of CMS Agreements.

## Useful addresses

### *Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas*

ASCOBANS Secretariat  
c/o Sea Mammal Research Unit  
High Cross, Madingley Road  
CAMBRIDGE CB3 0ET  
United Kingdom  
Tel/Fax: (+44) 1223 30 12 82  
e-mail: ascobans@smru.ac.uk

*Note:*  
The Secretariat will move to Bonn in early 1998. The address will be the same as that of the Convention Secretariat.

### *Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe*

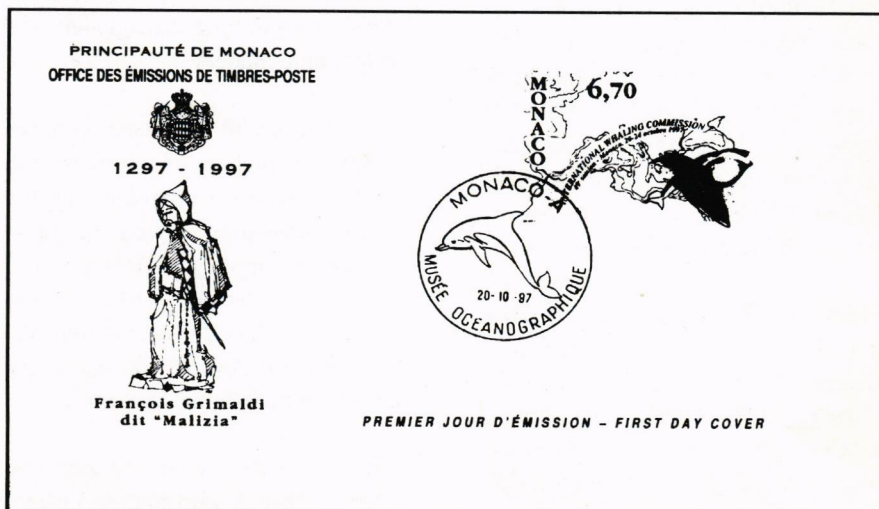
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### *Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds*

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### *Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea*

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