



# CMS Bulletin

Issue no. 8, November 1998



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## GROWTH AND CONSOLIDATION

The Convention on Migratory Species is growing. In the last few months, it has been joined by three new member States, the Secretariat has incorporated new staff and a list of projects has received the endorsement of the Scientific Council for conservation actions to be taken where they are needed: in the field. Project proposals have already started to flow in and the Secretariat is currently very busy working on them and on the preparations for 1999.

Next year will see the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the Convention and, hopefully, the entry into force of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the most ambitious Agreement ever developed under CMS. Other agreements, projects and activities are in the pipeline, and some will become a reality before the end of 1999.

This cumulation of events is a unique opportunity to draw attention to the Convention, its aims and its role. Governments, institutions, and the general public alike, need to be made aware of the wealth of animal species whose conservation is dependent on the implementation of international co-operation. One of the tools that allows direct access to information from many corners of the world is the Internet. The CMS website has been renovated completely, and will play a major role in the distribution of information in relation to the 1999 events.

With the recent accessions, membership of CMS has grown to 55 Parties as of 1 September 1998:

**Mauritania** joined CMS with effect from 1 July 1998. The country is host to one of the most outstanding wetland systems in the African continent, the Banc d'Arguin National Park, a World Heritage site. This area is used by several million waterbirds in their movements to and from Europe and Africa. It is internationally important for breeding waterbirds as well. Mauritania is also a Range State for the highly endangered Mediterranean Monk Seal and for several species of endangered Antelopes (all included in CMS Appendix I).

**Romania** became a Party to CMS on 1 July 1998. Romania is arguably one of the most important countries in Eastern Europe for migratory species, particularly waterbirds, birds of prey, sturgeons and cetaceans. The Danube delta, a World Heritage site, is a prime area for breeding, wintering and passage birds.

**Uzbekistan's** accession to the Convention took effect on 1 September 1998. The importance of Uzbekistan for migratory species of wild animals lies with its geographical position and its diverse habitats. The country hosts populations of many CMS Appendix I species, particularly of raptors, steppe- and waterbirds. It is also an important wintering area for geese and for the passage of the rare Siberian Crane. In the mountains, Snow Leopards can still be found.

**Late news:** **Paraguay** ratified CMS on 23 October 1998 and will thus become its 56th Party with effect from 1 January 1999.

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## Sixth meeting of the CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP6)

The sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, from Wednesday, 10 November 1999, to Tuesday, 16 November 1999. The conference, which is being hosted by the Government of South Africa, will be preceded by meetings of the Scientific Council (4-6 November) and the Standing Committee (9 November). A full-day symposium on the theme of animal migration is planned for Sunday, 14 November 1999.

The Governments of South Africa and the Netherlands and the UNEP/CMS Secretariat are working together with a view to organizing the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Waterbirds (AEWA) at the same venue, from 7 to 9 November 1999, subject to the Agreement having entered into force by then. This being the case, a joint opening ceremony for both meetings is planned for the evening of 6 November 1999.

An invitation letter, together with a pre-registration form, has been circulated by the Secretariat to the potential delegates and observers. The letter also included a reminder of relevant dates in relation to COP6 (see box). A provisional agenda for that meeting, which is subject to review by the Standing Committee at its January 1999 meeting, was also enclosed.

So, the ball for COP6 has already been set rolling. New information will be appearing in further issues of the CMS Bulletin, and will also be posted on the Internet CMS website.

### RELEVANT DATES IN RELATION TO CMS COP6

28.02.99 -	deadline: pre-registration for COP6
10.05.99 -	deadline: Country Reports (art. VI.3, Convention text)
13.06.99 -	deadline: proposals to amend Convention text or its Appendices
4-6.11.99 -	CMS Scientific Council - 9th meeting
6.11.99 -	Joint CMS - AEWA Opening Ceremony
7-9.11.99 -	AEWA 1st Meeting of the Parties
9.11.99 -	CMS Standing Committee
10-16.11.99 -	CMS 6th Conference of the Parties (COP6)
14.11.99 -	Symposium on Animal Migration

### STANDING COMMITTEE

The CMS Standing Committee held its 18th meeting in Bonn, 3-4 February 1998. The Committee was updated on the work of the Secretariat, the development of a headquarters agreement and the efforts to recruit new Parties in the various regions. It discussed its work programme, budgetary matters and the allocation of funds, the preparations for the 20th anniversary of CMS and the co-location of Agreement secretariats.

The next meeting of the CMS Standing Committee will be held in Bonn, 28-29 January 1999. Main items in the agenda are the preparation of the budget and other documents to be submitted to the next COP, important arrangements for that meeting and, again, an update on the work of the Secretariat and the development of the Convention.

### CMS WEBSITE

A completely renovated version of the CMS website was posted on the Internet last September. The site contains official documents and updated information on CMS activities and those of its related Agreements.

Relevant novelties include a new 'Frequently Asked Questions' section (on migration, animals, conservation and CMS), new 'Events/Meetings' section, renovated 'News' and 'Links' sections and also the possibility to request official documents online.

All this appears in a new interface, with more graphics and in-built frames so as to make surfing speedier and more attractive. The renovation has concentrated on the English version; French and Spanish versions will follow in due course, as resources allow.

Along with the renovation, there has been considerable expansion, from just over 70 files to nearly 150 at the moment. These will be further increased as new documents are posted, to make information quickly available online.

The location of the website remains unchanged at its usual address: <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/cms>. It is the result of long-term co-operation with and assistance from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, for which the UNEP/CMS Secretariat is most grateful.

The fact of the renovation has been publicised widely (for example, it was on top of WCMC's *latenews* page for over a month). Interest in the site has also increased: statistics indicate that a new visitor is added every 50 minutes. Visitors come from many different countries, both Parties and non-Parties to CMS.

A special effort is being made to keep the site up to date now and in the future and to provide useful information to the Parties, to interested professionals and to the general public. Webmasters are invited to link their related websites to CMS and subsequently inform the Secretariat, should they like to do so.

## 8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

The CMS Scientific Council held its 8th meeting in Wageningen, the Netherlands, 3-5 June 1998. The Council, as one of the main steering bodies of CMS, provided guidance on the future conservation work of CMS. The meeting considered how best to allocate the sum of US\$ 600,000 to conservation projects in countries and regions where CMS is active. This sum had been set aside by the 5th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP5, Geneva, April 1997). The projects to which the Scientific Council agreed to assign funds are listed in the adjacent column.

The Council was briefed on the status and conservation activities for many species, notably the Mediterranean Monk Seal, Sahelo-Saharan ungulates, Whale Shark, small cetaceans, southern albatrosses, Great Bustard, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Siberian Crane, Andean flamingos and marine turtles. It also discussed at length the conservation needs of those and other species, including the Mountain Gorilla and the African Elephant. Another main issue was the listing of more species in the CMS Appendices.

The Scientific Council appointed new focal points for particular species: Dr. Luis Mariano González (Spain) for the Mediterranean Monk Seal and Dr. Colin Galbraith for the Corn Crane. The existing Lesser White-fronted Goose Working Group was formally endorsed as a CMS working group. Another working group was formed on tracking devices, and the Council indicated its intention to take a more active role in this issue.

Draft proposals for inclusion of species in the listings of the CMS Appendices were discussed. The species involved were, among others, the Whale Shark, four species of small cetaceans in the Indian Ocean and sturgeons. Councillors were reminded that, in order to include new species in the CMS Appendices, a formal proposal must be submitted by one or several Range State Parties at least 150 days before the meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The last substantive part of the discussion focussed on the procedure for the submission of projects to be funded by CMS. The Secretariat will play an active role in helping with the handling of the proposals. An internal screening panel, consisting of the five rapporteurs appointed at the meeting, was created.

A full report of this meeting is available from the Secretariat and online, at the CMS website.



*The world's largest colony of the highly endangered Mediterranean Monk Seal, in Cape Blanc, Western Sahara, was affected by a mass die-off, May to July 1997. The situation in the rest of the species' range is somewhat more stable. In the picture, a Monk Seal from Turkey.*  
Photo: Cem Kirac

## LIST OF PROJECTS

approved in principle during the 8th meeting of the CMS Scientific Council:

### BIRDS:

- Transformation of action plan for Lesser Kestrel and Corn Crane;
- Scoping study for Quail;
- Lesser White-fronted Goose awareness campaign;
- Transformation of the Siberian Crane Conservation Plan into a medium size GEF project;
- Slender-billed Curlew: expedition to Persian Gulf, and support for projects endorsed by the Working Group;
- Workshop on Houbara Bustard;
- Status report on Syrian Serin;

### MAMMALS:

- Recovery plan for Mediterranean Monk Seal;
- Sahelo-Saharan antelopes: implementation of conservation plan;

### SMALL CETACEANS & LARGE FISHES:

- Survey of dolphin population in Timor & Arafura seas;
- Survey of small cetaceans in Gulf of Tonkin, China & Viet Nam;
- Training workshop in West Africa;
- Conservation status of small cetaceans in Senegal & the Gambia;

### MARINE TURTLES:

- Study of marine turtles on Atlantic coast of Africa;
- Aerial survey of nesting in Guinea-Bissau and neighbouring countries
- GIS database on nesting beaches, Indian Ocean;
- Indo-Pacific marine turtle migration (genetics);
- Marine turtle tagging and by-catch survey, Sri Lanka;

### NEOTROPICAL REGION:

- Ruddy-headed Goose follow-up on conservation actions;
- Conservation of Huemul deer;
- Andean flamingos winter census & awareness campaign;
- Southern South America waterbird workshop;
- Franciscana Dolphin census & studies

## NEWS FROM...

### SECRETARIAT STAFF

Ms. Bothena Bendahmane has been appointed Administrative / Fund Management Officer. A Moroccan by birth, Ms. Bendahmane has experience in development issues in Africa, particularly among francophone countries. She has worked for UNICEF, for UNEP and also as a Fund Management Officer for UNEP's Regional Offices. She lived in Nairobi for 10 years and subsequently in Bahrain for 2 years before taking this position. She is married and has two children.

Mr. Carles Carboneras has been appointed Information Officer. Before coming to Bonn, Mr. Carboneras served in the Catalan Ministry of Environment in Barcelona. He trained in Law and has experience in environmental education, with the media and the Internet. He is also an amateur ornithologist. He is married and has two children.

Mr. Robert Vagg has replaced Mr. Eric Blencowe as Special Projects Officer. Mr. Vagg has been seconded for a period of 2-3 years by the U.K. Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. There, his field of work was the implementation of the EC Habitats Directive and, more recently, monitoring the performance and activities of English Nature, the wildlife protection agency. After his secondment came to an end, and before retaking his former job with the Government of the U.K., Mr. Blencowe was farewelled in an emotive party attended by representatives of the German Government, other United Nations organizations and all the CMS staff.

Mr. Suhel al-Janabi has been seconded by the City of Bonn as German Liaison Officer. He is a geographer by training and has worked for several years at the University of Bonn. He was also employed by the German development cooperation agency, with a particular focus on French-speaking Africa (regional-planning and nature-protection projects based on GIS and remote-sensing). He also has experience in PR and marketing.

Dr. Eugeniusz Nowak retired at the end of June, after five years of work for the UNEP/CMS Secretariat. He was on secondment from the German Nature Conservation Agency. Dr. Nowak's work on waders (notably on the Slender-billed Curlew) and other water and steppe birds is widely renowned. He is much respected among the scientific community and will be missed in the Secretariat. We wish him good luck in his future activities.

### AEWA



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The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) continues to grow. It has been signed by 18 States already and ratified by 6. The AEWA Interim Secretariat is putting a big effort in trying to get signatory countries to speed up the ratification process so that the Agreement can enter into force soon. Government representatives, NGOs and scientists in non-signatory countries are also being approached in order to encourage their countries to sign and eventually ratify the Agreement. CMS Parties in particular should play an active role. The goal: to have at least the necessary 7 ratifications among European/Asian and another 7 among African countries so that the AEWA can enter into force in late 1998 or early 1999.

The Government of South Africa has offered to hold the First Meeting of the Parties to the AEWA in Cape Town in November 1999. It would ideally coincide with the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) to CMS, scheduled for early November 1999 in Cape Town, subject to the Agreement having entered into force by then.

This would make 1999 a truly memorable year for CMS, with the celebrations of the 20th Anniversary, the holding of COP6 and the First Meeting of the Parties to AEWA. This Agreement has been defined as "the major tool for waterbird conservation in the next century" for the African-Eurasian flyway. Some ambitious pilot projects are already being initiated by the Government of the Netherlands in West Africa and East Europe. They warrant similar action by other developed countries in Europe to be undertaken in developing countries along the flyway.

The AEWA Interim Secretariat also produces a regular Newsletter that is packed with useful information on species and habitat conservation, education, research, implementation, projects, publications and general information, as well as the standard Secretariat news. A copy can be obtained from the AEWA Interim Secretariat.

## NEWS FROM...

### EUROBATS



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The Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (EUROBATS) had its second session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) from 1 to 3 July 1998 in Bonn, Germany. One of the issues of the meeting was to decide on whether to integrate the Eurobats Secretariat, in administrative terms, within the UNEP/CMS Secretariat. The MOP decided to proceed in a co-ordinated manner, together with ASCOBANS and, possibly, AEWA. For this purpose, it adopted only a biennial budget and decided to meet again in 2000 (instead of 2001), preferably in conjunction with ASCOBANS MOP3.

A full report of the MOP meeting and other Eurobats-related news can be obtained directly from the EUROBATS Secretariat.

In June, Mr. Jens Lützen took up his new job as Administrative Assistant and in October, Mr. Andreas Streit was appointed as the new Executive Secretary to Eurobats. Many thanks are due to Mr. Eric Blencowe for the excellent job he did establishing and running the Secretariat during the past three years.

### ASCOBANS



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The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS) has taken two important decisions this year. First of all, the appointment of a new Secretary. Mr. Holger Auel, a marine biologist from the University of Kiel, Germany, with experience in pelagic ecosystems of high latitudes, took up his new position in May 1998.

Secondly, the Secretariat moved from Cambridge to Bonn and is now co-located with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat in the United Nations premises. This results from a decision of the Second Meeting of Parties (MOP2) in Bonn, November 1997, and should provide for improved communication. It is expected that both secretariats will benefit greatly from the experience, as has been the case with Eurobats.

Based on the recommendations given by MOP2, the Advisory Committee elaborated a workplan for the next triennium during its fifth session held in Poland, April 1998. Incidental entanglement of cetaceans in fishing gear (by-catch) is considered to be the most important threat to porpoises and dolphins in the Baltic and North Seas and should therefore be tackled with the highest priority in the coming years. In co-operation with other relevant international organisations, ASCOBANS will focus on the effects of marine pollution and acoustic disturbance on small cetaceans. This will also be reflected in the discussions during the next Advisory Committee meeting, to be held in Aberdeen, 12 – 14 April 1999.

### ACCOBAMS



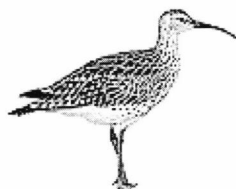
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With the establishment of an Interim Secretariat, the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) is on a firm footing. The Agreement has now been signed by 13 Range States, and has been ratified by Monaco, whilst a number of other countries are in the final phase of their ratification process. Indeed, the Principality is taking an active role in the development of ACCOBAMS, since it is providing interim secretariat services through its *Service de l'Environnement*. ACCOBAMS has initiated contacts with many other organisations and has been present at many relevant fora.

Among the latest news concerning ACCOBAMS are the recent (28 September 1998) signature of the Agreement by Romania and the interest shown by other States in the Black Sea area to join it too. The 5th Medmaravis Symposium on Mediterranean Marine Wildlife endorsed the Agreement and its conservation plan and urged all coastal States of the Mediterranean and Black Seas to become full parties to ACCOBAMS. Representatives of Greece, Israel, Spain and Tunisia, attending a recent meeting of the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan, announced that the ratification process was well under way.

## NEWS FROM...

### Slender-billed Curlew MoU



The Slender-billed Curlew Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed by Yemen and Greece in the last few months, bringing the total up to 17 Range States and 3 co-operating organisations. The species is the focus of much attention. A Slender-billed Curlew Working Group (SbCWG) was officially established under CMS, with a secretariat provided by BirdLife International. It aims to bring together scientists and decision-makers for the conservation of this species.

During the Wader Study Group Annual Meeting in Hungary in October, the SbCWG met for the first time. A technical discussion was held on the different options to test satellite transmitters with similar species, so that they could be used safely on Slender-billed Curlews once technology allows for transmitters that are light enough. Presentations were made on the current situation of the species in Russia, Hungary and Ukraine, although there are no new records from those areas. The only records this year are from Greece and a potential one from Morocco. The SbCWG is bringing new impetus and ideas for the conservation of the species.

An Action Plan is currently being prepared in UNEP/CMS format by the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences. A research expedition by Russian and Dutch experts to the Persian Gulf to try to confirm potential sightings of Slender-billed Curlews in the region will receive funding from CMS. Meanwhile, a new expedition to locate the nesting areas again failed to do so.

An international workshop on the Slender-billed Curlew will take place in Greece as part of the EU-funded LIFE project on this species. Also, within the same initiative, an informative brochure has been produced, targeted at the hunting community in order to try to reduce the risk of any bird being shot.

### Siberian Crane MoU



Iran will host the Third Meeting of Siberian Crane Range States, to be developed under the MoU on this species. The meeting will take place in the city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea, 7-14 December 1998. The main objective is to review implementation of the conservation plan agreed in the previous meeting (Bharatpur, India, November 1996). Representatives of all Range States, together with the leading authorities on this species, are expected to be present in Ramsar.

Once again this year, Russian researchers have been carrying out an ambitious programme of work aimed at identifying the migration routes and key staging areas of the Siberian Cranes that winter in India and the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the time of writing, the fieldwork —sponsored by Vogelpark Walsrode (Germany)— was still in progress. The team of scientists, led by Dr. A. Sorokin, succeeded in attaching a transmitter to one of the wild birds at Uvat, east of the Ural mountains, near the Ob river. At the end of August, the family group began its long southward migration. Passing through Kazakstan, they are expected to reach the wintering grounds in Iran, on the Caspian Sea, by late November. In early October, they were tracked to the Volga Delta, where they were expected to remain for about one month.

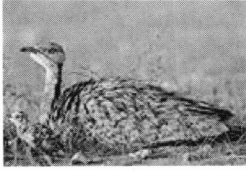
At Kunovat, some 600km to the north, a transmitter was placed on a wild Siberian Crane chick belonging to another family—these ones destined for India— as well as on a Siberian Crane chick which had been cross-fostered by Common Cranes. Early satellite tracking data showed both families migrating in a southerly direction, following the Ob river, separated by a distance of about 200km. By early October, they had reached northern Kazakstan.

The third element of the Russian strategy was to release six Siberian Crane juveniles from the Oka Nature Reserve and two from Vogelpark Walsrode into a flock of Common Cranes situated about 200km south of Tyumen,. The young birds had been reared in captivity using a special technique, known as "costume-rearing" designed to ensure that they would be imprinted on members of their own species. Transmitters were also fitted to two of these birds. As of early October, the flock of Common Cranes had ventured only about 70km from the original release site.

We eagerly look forward to hearing how the adventure turns out. Stay posted!

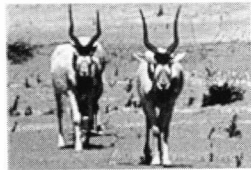
## UPDATE ON OTHER CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

### Houbara Bustard



The draft Agreement for the Asian population of the Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii*) is ready for distribution. However an Action Plan which is intended as an integral part of the Agreement still needs to be developed. A meeting of expert volunteers was held 17-19 October 1998 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The first skeleton of such an Action Plan was developed, as well as a schedule of the further work for its detailed elaboration. The Secretariat hopes that both the Agreement proposal and the draft Action Plan can be officially distributed in the first trimester of 1999.

### Sahelo - Saharan Antelopes



After a long period of preparation, a seminar of representatives/experts from the 14 key Range States of the Sahelo-Saharan region and international organisations was held from 19-23 February 1998 on the Isle of Djerba, Tunisia, hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture of Tunisia. The meeting updated draft status reports for the 6 endangered antelope species of the region and discussed extensively a draft Action Plan for the protection and recovery of the species and their habitats. In a Declaration of the participants, the authorities of the Range States and all relevant UN and other international organisations are called upon to assist in the transfer into action of the Action Plan. The Seminar also invited the UNEP/CMS Secretariat to develop a proposal for a Range State Agreement and to organise a follow-up meeting in two years' time. The final version of the Action Plan and status reports will be published soon by the Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique.

### Andean Flamingos



Since the two endemic Andean flamingos were included in Appendix I in 1997, CMS has become involved in activities with these species. In February 1998, CMS participated in a workshop organized in a small town near Laguna Pozuelos an important lake for flamingos protected by Argentina and located at an altitude of 3,600 metres. The South American Andean Flamingos Specialist Group was created there, including the four Range States, Argentina, Bolivia (the only one not yet a CMS Party), Chile and Peru.

Since then the Group has been in close contact with the Secretariat. It has been conducting flamingo censuses during recent summers and now has a good idea of numbers and the main lakes used by the birds. But where the flamingos are during the winter remains a mystery. Conducting censuses of flamingos at an altitude of 3,000 to 5,000 metres in sparsely populated areas with very few roads is a difficult task, and during the winter conditions are very harsh. In spite of this, last austral winter the Group conducted a census but failed to find the main wintering areas. During the last Scientific Council Meeting a grant to conduct a winter census was approved and plans are being developed to carry out the census next year that hopefully will provide the answer to this key question. An MoU to be signed under CMS has been drafted and is under review at present.

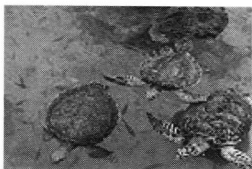
### Albatrosses (Southern Hemisphere)



Progress continues to be made towards the development of an albatross Agreement under the leadership of Australia. During a recent meeting of the Valdivia Group countries, there was unanimous support for action on an albatross Agreement. The text in the meeting communiqué said: "The Valdivia Group expressed unanimous support for an Australian project on southern hemisphere albatross conservation," ... "It further noted that a Regional Agreement under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) has the potential to contribute significantly to the restoration and maintenance of albatross populations. The Valdivia Group favours the establishment of an ad hoc working group to examine options for regional cooperation to address the range of serious threats to southern hemisphere albatross populations. The Group accepted Chile's offer to host the first meeting of the working group." At the moment of this bulletin going to press the Secretariat is waiting to receive information on the date of the meeting.

## UPDATE ON OTHER CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

### Marine Turtles



As reported elsewhere, at its meeting in June 1998 the Scientific Council endorsed a number of projects focusing on the conservation of marine turtles. These include studies of marine turtles in a number of West African countries, a prototype Global Information System (GIS) database and mapping facility for Indian Ocean nesting beaches, a genetic study to help elucidate migration in the Indo-Pacific, and a tagging programme and by-catch survey in Sri Lanka. The Secretariat is still awaiting formal proposals for some of these projects.

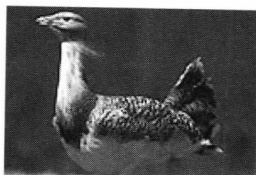
Authorities in Côte d'Ivoire, a signatory to CMS, have reacted favourably to the Secretariat's proposal that that country host an international workshop on the conservation of marine turtles along the Atlantic coast of Africa. Further discussions, notably concerning co-funding arrangements with the Government of France, are needed before the meeting dates can be announced.

In the meantime, the Secretariat has prepared a "user-friendly" questionnaire to gather information about the conservation status of marine turtles of the region. The regional representative for Africa on the Standing Committee (Guinea) is coordinating the distribution of the questionnaire and the gathering of replies. Responses have been requested by the end of November.

Earlier this year, CMS funded the production of an A4-size poster to help identify the marine turtles of the Atlantic Ocean. Produced by WIDECAS, a non-governmental organization active in the Caribbean, the poster has been widely distributed in Africa and a number of French-speaking countries in the Americas and Caribbean. Copies are available from the Secretariat.

Finally, the Secretariat wishes to appeal to recipients of the *draft* report "Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa", circulated to selected Focal Points, Scientific Councillors and others in May 1998, to send their comments and corrections to the author, Dr. Jacques Fretey, whose address appears on the inside cover of the publication. The final version of the report will be completed in 1999.

### Great Bustard, central Europe



The Great Bustard is one of the most endangered birds in Europe. In large regions of its traditional European range the species has already vanished. Without active protection measures, the species is doomed to disappear. The remaining population is dispersed in several small populations and many animals migrate.

The Secretariat, with assistance from experts in international law and zoology, has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at conserving the middle European population of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*), thus following advice from the CMS Scientific Council and the Conference of the Parties (Rec. 4.2, Nairobi 1994). The proposal (comprising drafts of the MoU and a well-structured Action Plan) was submitted in August 1998 to the authorities of key Range States and the relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations for their perusal.

### Latin American Working Group

At the invitation of the Government of Uruguay, the First Meeting of the Working Group for the Conservation of Migratory Species in Latin-America and the Caribbean will take place in Punta del Este between 14 and 16 December 1998. Progress of projects and activities in the region will be discussed and plans for the future will be drawn up.

#### Image credits:

p. 5, *Delphinus delphis*, M. Carwardine/Biotica; p. 6, *Numenius tenuirostris*, F. Jutglar; *Grus leucogeranus*, B. Abrar Khan; p. 7, *Chlamydotis undulata*, P. Goriup/Nature Conservation Bureau; *Addax nasomaculatus*, H.P. Müller; *Phoenicoparrus jamesi*, O. Rocha; *Diomedea cauta*, T. Palliser; p. 8, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, J.M. Pinto/UNEP/Select; *Otis tarda*, R. Tidman

**FOCUS ON:**

Photo: C. Carboneras

**The utmost part of the Earth**

The weather in the extreme south of Patagonia is harsh. Dry winds blow almost perpetually from the west. Snow is abundant during the winter and days are short and cloudy. The brief summer is milder and days are longer but the wind and cloud cover remain. The area has been molded by glaciers which covered part of the region during the last glaciation 14,000 years ago. Some glaciers are still present. In the south of Tierra del Fuego, the Andean Range ends with impressive mountains covered with forests and snow at the top along the Beagle Channel. The north of the island and south Patagonia is a gently rolling steppe covered by grasslands.

Today oil exploitation and sheep ranching are the main commercial activities. Owing to tax incentives the human population has increased on the Argentinian side of the island, from around 20,000 inhabitants in 1980 to the 70,000 souls at present. On the Chilean side there are no big cities in Tierra del Fuego, but Punta Arenas, located on the mainland on the Brunswick Peninsula, with a

population of 97,000 inhabitants, is the biggest city of the region.

There are many endemic species and owing to the harsh winters, many are migratory, like seed-snipes, ibises, shorebirds, flycatchers and others. A very peculiar and interesting group of birds is the Austral Geese (*Chloephaga* spp.) as yet poorly known. The genus is endemic to this part of the world with five species.

**The Ruddy-headed Goose**

The mainland population of the Ruddy-headed Goose (*Chloephaga rubidiceps*) is endangered, included in CMS Appendix I and designated a "Concerted Action" species by the Conference of the Parties. CMS has financed a bi-national study conducted by CONAF (Corporación Nacional Forestal) in Chile and by Wetlands International in Argentina. These two countries share the entire continental population. The aim of these studies has been to clarify the status of the species, identify the main breeding and wintering areas, develop media campaigns in the region and draft a Memorandum

of Understanding for its conservation in the framework of CMS.

For unknown reasons, the population has declined from being the most abundant goose in the north of Tierra del Fuego, to an estimated population of around 300 birds today. According to Sir Peter Scott, the renowned British ornithologist, conservationist and artist who visited the island in 1953, it was "the commonest goose round the farms in the open pampa of the northern part of the island". He also observed that "An interesting feature is that both Ashy and Ruddy are more numerous round the farms whereas the Uplands are more evenly distributed out in the country". By 1961 it was estimated that the Ruddy-headed Goose represented only 10% of the population of geese of Tierra del Fuego and today it is estimated as only 0.1%. The entire continental population winters in Argentina. A separate, non-migratory population numbers tens of thousands of geese, and is resident and widespread on the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas.

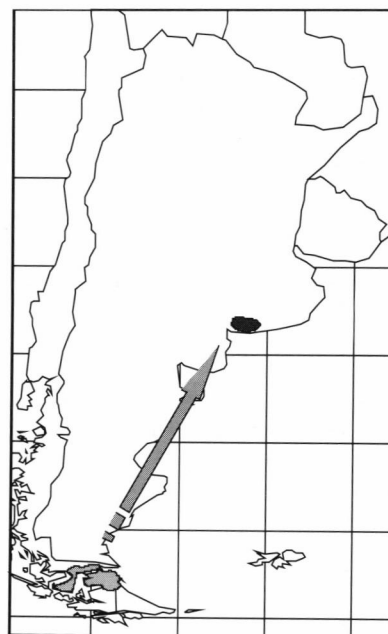
The Ruddy-headed Goose nests on the ground not far from rivers or lagoons, and only in a very restricted range in the grasslands of northern Tierra del Fuego and adjacent mainland Chile. During the CMS financed project, four breeding pairs were found in San Gregorio, continental Chile. In comparison with the northern hemisphere the nesting range for the geese in southern South America is very reduced. Land masses in the northern part of North America or Eurasia are vast, but the southern part of South America is very narrow, and even a big expanse of it is a semidesert not suitable for waterbirds. This may be one of the limitations for the recovery of the population, coupled with man-made modifications. By the middle of this century the Patagonia Fox (*Duscycion griseus*) had been introduced into the island from mainland Patagonia, to combat the European Rabbit also introduced. It is very likely that the introduced fox preyed on the eggs and chicks of the Ruddy-headed Goose, the smallest of the three geese species. During the research conducted with CMS support a Patagonia Fox was observed actually preying on one chick. Until recently it was not known that the Ruddy-headed Goose also nests on the mainland where this fox has been naturally present. This may weaken the theory that the fox, as a new predator, was the main culprit in the diminution of the population.

Vegetation on the island has changed because of sheep ranching, and this may also have had an impact on the population, but there are other reasons. The Austral geese are considered an agricultural pest, and have therefore been treated as such. In Patagonia a reward was paid until the early seventies for pairs of feet and for eggs. Between 1972 and 1973, 150,000 eggs of geese were purchased by the authorities on the Argentinian side of Tierra del Fuego. The Ruddy-headed Goose is the tamest of the three species which were considered problematic and used to nesting close to farmhouses and other human developments. It is

reasonable to suppose that, for this reason, they suffer bigger pressure. In the wintering areas geese are still chased by planes or other means to drive them away from the crops. Hunting has continued in both the breeding and wintering habitats as well as on their migratory routes, and this practice is increasing as a sport, along migratory routes and in wintering areas. The Ruddy-headed Goose is protected by law in Argentina and Chile but, being similar to the female of the Upland Goose it is possible that it is still being hunted as a result of mistaken identity. And as it mixes with flocks of the other goose it is likely to be subject to the same harassment that the other species suffer.

During the winter the Ruddy-headed Goose migrates to the southern part of Buenos Aires province, apparently following a route along the Atlantic coast. The present wintering area lies between the city of Tres Arroyos, the locality of Energía and the coastline. Around 300 birds have been counted there in recent years, by a group of volunteers from the La Plata Ornithological Association, which participated also in the CMS funded project. This part of the pampas has very rich soils and is used for crops such as wheat, corn or sunflowers and extensive cattle-breeding. This means that almost no natural grasslands are now left.

Intensive studies have been conducted by Ron Summers on the Falkland Islands/Malvinas with the Austral Geese, in particular in relation to the conflicts with sheep ranching. However, few studies have been undertaken on the mainland, until the support provided by CMS stepped in. Some monitoring has been conducted in Argentina since the early 1970s to present. In 1975 the first warning about the species' situation was published by Rumboll, and some surveys were undertaken in the wintering area. More recently surveys have been conducted on Tierra del Fuego by Benegas and Loekemeyer and in the Buenos Aires province by La Plata Ornithological Association.



*The continental population of the Ruddy-headed Goose nests in a reduced area in the extreme south of South America and migrates to spend the winter months in another limited sector of the pampas. The total population is estimated at around 300 birds.*

However, there was never in the past a coordinated project which capitalized on the interest and knowledge of all these people and which set up an international team of researchers and institutions of the two countries to work together. The CMS funded project has been very successful in collecting new information, in creating more regional concern and awareness and in fostering international co-operation. A draft MOU has been prepared and is under revision. If adopted, as expected, it will promote closer cooperation for the management and conservation of this goose.

The last meeting of the Scientific Council approved for a second phase of the project, to expand the surveys to areas which have not been covered in previous work, collect more information about habitat and breeding, to try to identify the causes for the decline and to continue and expand the awareness campaign. It is expected that these activities will be conducted in the frame of the MOU. Daniel Blanco, from Argentina, will coordinate the work and Jesper Madsen, from Denmark and a goose expert, will advise on the project. It is hoped that these activities will improve the situation of this beautiful and endangered goose of the uttermost part of the Earth.

## NEWS FROM UN / UNEP

The reform of the United Nations and political priority setting are two of the important tasks of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. UNEP Executive Director, Dr. Klaus Töpfer, who took up the post as Head of UNEP, HABITAT and UNON in early February 1998, has initiated plans to reorganise the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

The outlines of the new structure are: the establishment of a three level hierarchy, the introduction of entities which allow for interdisciplinary work and the transfer of all administrative and fund management issues for UNEP, HABITAT and the UNEP-administered conventions to UNON.

The CMS Executive Secretary attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council and was invited, together with the Heads of the other UNEP administered Convention Secretariats, to a UNEP Managers Meeting with the Executive Director. Dr. Töpfer informed them of his plans to coordinate more intensively the Convention Secretariats as well as the work programmes of biodiversity related conventions. This goal was welcomed by most of the parties of the Governing Council session.

## NEWS FROM BONN

As a consequence of the establishment in Bonn of larger institutions belonging to, or institutionally linked with, the United Nations and the CMS Secretariat's move to the new UN premises a new headquarters agreement for CMS needs to be concluded. Very difficult institutional and international legal questions require at first intensive examination and consultations within the German Government and the responsible CMS and UNEP/UN entities and thereafter negotiation between the agreement parties. This long-lasting process is still going on, requiring much time and energy from all people involved.

## LINKS WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS

- The Executive Secretary attended part of the CBD COP4 in Bratislava, Slovakia in May 1998. In a welcoming address at the opening ceremony and in a document which was distributed during the meeting, he explained that CMS is fully complementary to the Convention on Biological Diversity. CMS, with its special instruments, assists in the implementation of the CBD as regards migratory species and their habitats.
- Following up on a recently completed study by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) on ways of harmonizing information management amongst the five biodiversity-related conventions, the CMS Secretariat hosted a meeting of technical staff of CBD, CITES, CMS, the World Heritage Convention, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and UNEP in Bonn, 6-7 October. The representatives made quick progress in charting cooperation on a number of short-term products and developed parameters for some of the study's longer term, more ambitious goals. They also set up a closed e-mail mailing list, graciously to be hosted by the CBD secretariat, for ease and speed of communications amongst themselves.
- One of the first fruits of these labours will be a common Web "Entry Page" to all the secretariats' Web sites, which is planned to be operational by mid- to late-November 1998, mostly thanks to the CBD secretariat. The common Entry Page will also include a search engine that will continuously spider the five Conventions' Web sites with full-text indexing. With an eye towards a future database of all policy and scientific documentation held in the secretariats, both Web- and paper-based, the representatives also developed a tentative list of attributes that in future should be attached to all documents the secretariats produce or formally receive. They also agreed upon other common standards, such as treatment of country and region names, dates, etc.

## PUBLICATIONS

*The Asian Waterfowl Census, 1994-1996.* Results of the Coordinated Waterbird Census and an Overview of the Status of Wetlands in Asia. Edited by A. Lopez & T. Mundkur. 1997. Published by Wetlands International in collaboration with CMS and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

*Kraniche, Vögel des Glücks,* by Carl Albrecht v. Treuenfels. Rasch & Röhring, Hamburg 1998. An excellently-illustrated review of the world's Cranes (Gruidae), published with support from Lufthansa.

*Symposium on Animal Migration.* The proceedings of this first symposium, held on the occasion of the 5th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (Geneva, April 1997) has finally gone to press. The publication has been made possible thanks to the contribution of the Government of the Netherlands.

## GROMS

The Global Register of Migratory Species (GROMS) is an ambitious project led by the Zoological Research Institute, Museum Alexander Koenig, in Bonn, Germany. It intends to summarize our state of knowledge on migratory species in a standardized relational database, including geographical information. The database contains 10 tables, providing fully referenced information on species, vernacular names, migratory behaviour, habitat, threats, protection status, bibliography, addresses of monitoring organizations and experts. Maps of distribution and migratory routes are vectorized and standardized in a way that they can be exported to other GIS projects.

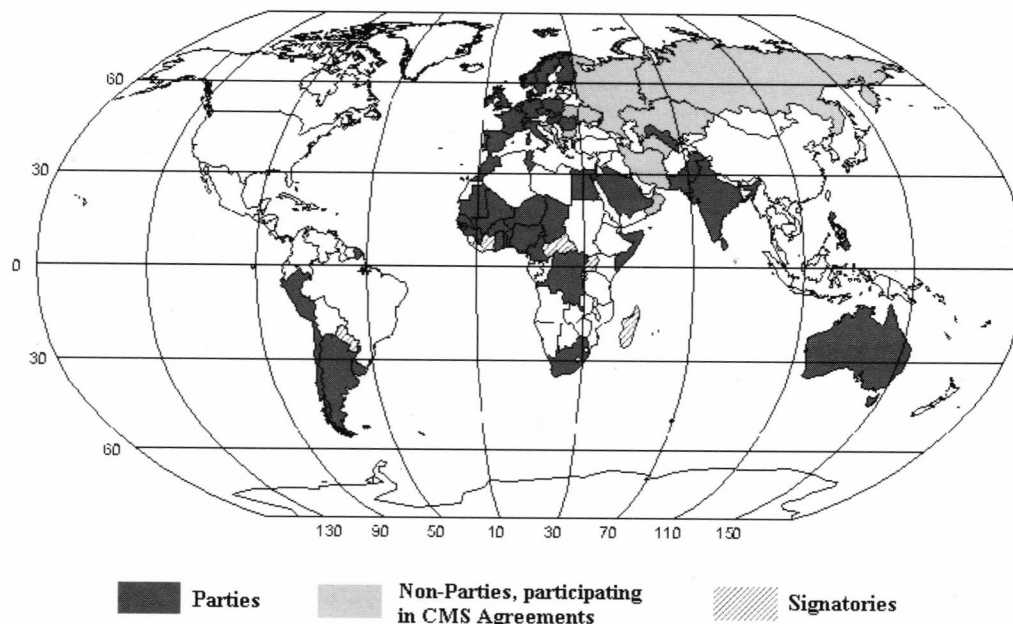
The database will serve both scientific and conservation goals, trying to bridge the gap between conservation and pure science. It will reveal deficiencies in information, support CMS and contribute to the Clearinghouse Mechanism under CBD. The database will be made available in CD-Rom and via the World Wide Web, after completion of data entry in about two years time.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATES	TITLE	VENUE	ORGANISED BY
18 - 21 Nov. 98	Large Herbivore Initiative	Lelystad, Netherlands	Bem Convention
19 - 21 Nov. 98	International Workshop on Slender-billed Curlew	Alexandroupolis, Greece	Greek Ministry of Agriculture, LIFE - Nature
26 - 27 Nov. 98	Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy. 4th Meeting of Executive Bureau	Geneva, Switzerland	UNEP / Europe Office
30 Nov - 4 Dec 98	Conference on Co-operation for Development of Coastal and Marine Environment	Cape Town, South Africa	UNEP / Africa Office
30 Nov - 4 Dec 98	Bem Convention: 18th Standing Committee	Strasbourg, France	Council of Europe
30 Nov - 11 Dec 98	UN Convention to Combat Desertification - COP2	Dakar, Senegal	UNCCD Secretariat
1 - 4 Dec. 98	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: 1st Oceania Regional Meeting	Hamilton, New Zealand	Ramsar Bureau
8 - 13 Dec. 98	3rd Meeting Siberian Crane Range States	Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran	UNEP/CMS Secretariat
14 - 16 Dec. 98	CMS Latin American Working Group	Punta del Este, Uruguay	Ministry of Agriculture, Uruguay
28 - 29 Jan. 99	CMS Standing Committee	Bonn, Germany	UNEP/CMS Secretariat
1 - 5 Feb. 99	20th Session UNEP Governing Council	Nairobi, Kenya	UNEP
10 - 18 May 99	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands - COP7	San Jose, Costa Rica	Ramsar Bureau
24 - 28 May 99	International Whaling Commission - 51st Annual Meeting	Grenada	IWC
23 June 99	CMS: 20th Anniversary Signature of the Convention in Bonn	Bonn, Germany	UNEP/CMS Secretariat City of Bonn
4 - 16 Nov. 99	CMS: Conference of the Parties (COP6), Scientific Council, Standing Committee, Symposium on Animal Migration — see box page 2	Cape Town, South Africa	UNEP/CMS Secretariat Government of South Africa
7 - 9 Nov. 99	AEWA: 1st Meeting of the Parties (tentative)	Cape Town, South Africa	AEWA Interim. Secretariat Government South Africa

### Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

*Map of CMS Parties, Signatories and other participating States (as of 01.09.98)*



The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNEP