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Annex 1

Action Plan to eradicate the illegal hunting, taking and trade of birds in South-West Asia 2024 – 2030

Geographic scope: Bahrain, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Milestones in the production of this action plan

February 2020: initial information gathering by online questionnaire to inform stakeholder workshop (postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic)

October 2021: stakeholder workshop held on the shores of the Dead Sea, Jordan

November 2021: draft Action Plan was circulated for comment

February 2022: online stakeholder workshop

June 2022: updated draft Action Plan circulated for comment

Introduction:

Over the past few decades, bird populations have been experiencing a dramatic and unprecedented decline. For wild birds, illegal hunting, taking and trade, is a main driver of global extinctions, and it is the most significant threat, after habitat loss, to migratory birds. The illegal hunting and taking and trade of birds occurs worldwide, e.g., poisoning of vultures in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ogada 2014), shooting of raptors in Europe (Selås et al 2017) and North America (Finkelstein et al 2014), trapping of songbirds in Asia (Kamp et al 2015) and capture for the bird trade in South America (Alves et al 2013). Illegal killing and taking poses a global threat to biodiversity and has attracted international attention. For example, in 2014, the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) adopted a Resolution later revised in COP13 CMS/Resolution 11.16 (Rev. COP13) The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds.

In the Middle East, high levels of illegal hunting, taking and trade of birds were reported in Mediterranean countries, such as Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, as well as in nearby Cyprus in a study by BirdLife International (Brochet et al 2016). This study estimated that between 11– 36 million birds/year may be illegally killed or taken in the whole Mediterranean region, including 6–22 million in the Mediterranean Middle Eastern countries (i.e., Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Turkey) and Cyprus.

Global action plans for globally threatened species, such as White-headed Duck Oxyura leucocephala (Endangered; Sheldon et al. 2018), Saker Falcon Falco cherrug (Endangered; Kovács et al. 2014), Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca (Near Threatened; Robinson & Hughes 2006) and Sociable Lapwing Vanellus gregarius (Critically Endangered; Sheldon et al. 2012) and the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (Botha et al. 2017) all highlight illegal killing and trapping as an important threat.

The definition of illegal hunting of birds

To simply the text throughout the Action Plan we refer to illegal hunting and taking of birds, however this does include trapping, trade and other types of illegality. However, when referring to illegal hunting and trapping we are following the legal definition adopted by CMS Resolution 11.13 Rev CoP13, which is as follows:

“Activities which are illegal under national or regional law/regulations and involve the deliberate pursuit, killing, injuring or catching alive of wild birds or are aimed at illegal marketing live or dead specimens of wild birds, including their parts and derivatives.

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Such activities include but are not limited to: killing/trapping in closed periods, in areas with prohibitions in force, by unauthorised persons and/or protected species; use of prohibited means and substances; breach of bag limits; possession, donation, use, movement, transfer, offer for sale, advertisement, consumption, import, introduction from the sea, transit or export, of specimens.”

How many birds are illegally killed and taken in the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq? Using a diverse range of data sources and incorporating expert knowledge, it has been estimated that at least 1.7–4.6 million (best estimate: 3.2 million) birds are illegally killed or taken each year across the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq (Brochet et al. 2019). Worryingly, it is likely that these figures are underestimates, as data were not available for some parts of the region. A wide range of birds are likely to be affected with evidence suggesting that at least 413 different species are illegally killed and/or trapped, many of them during their perilous migratory journeys from breeding to wintering grounds and back. Several species of global conservation concern were reported as illegally killed or taken, including Marbled Teal Marmaronetta angustirostris, Common Pochard Aythya ferina and European Turtle-dove Streptopelia turtur (all classified as Vulnerable on the global IUCN Red List). Of even greater concern, the Critically Endangered Sociable Lapwing Vanellus gregarius was reported to be known or likely to be killed illegally each year. This is particularly worrying given the small population size and recent rapid decline of the species (Sheldon et al. 2013). Birds were reported to be illegally killed or taken primarily for sport, but also for food, sold mainly as a delicacy. In most countries, a much stronger focus on monitoring, effective legislation, enforcement, justice and prevention, particularly through awareness raising should be key priorities to tackle the illegal killing and taking of birds.

International obligations and flyway context

[Introductory text to be inserted]

Table 1. Summary of applicability of major international conservation instruments by country within the geographic scope of this Action Plan.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Party to  CMS | Party to  AEWA | Signatory  to Raptors  MoU | Party to CBD | Party to  Ramsar |
| Bahrain |  |  |  |  |  |
| Iran (Islamic Republic of) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Iraq |  |  |  |  |  |
| Jordan |  |  |  |  |  |
| Kuwait |  |  |  |  |  |
| Oman |  |  |  |  |  |
| Qatar |  |  |  |  |  |
| Saudi Arabia |  |  |  |  |  |
| United Arab Emirates |  |  |  |  |  |
| Yemen |  |  |  |  |  |

Long-term vision:

South-West Asia will be a safe haven for all wild birds and their illegal killing and taking are eradicated.

Overarching long-term goal:

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To eliminate the illegal hunting, taking and trade of migratory (IKB)[[1]](#footnote-1) birds in South-West Asia, through international cooperation and effective national action.

**High-level objective of this action plan (up to 2030):**

By 2030 there will be 50% a significant reduction in the numbers of birds illegally killed and taken from the agreed baseline, in the region .

Objectives

Objective 1: Each range state to develop, endorse and implement a National IKB Action Plan, or equivalent policy document, and in line with this regional plan.

Objective 2: Enhance our understanding of the importance, scope, scale, geography and motivations behind illegal hunting, taking and trade of migratory birds at national and regional level.

Objective 3: To ensure that the illegal hunting, taking and trade of migratory birds is addressed effectively and efficiently in national legislation that follows common principles across the region.

Objective 4: To ensure effective and efficient enforcement of relevant legislation is

undertaken, through the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.

Objective 5: To undertake education, outreach programmes and capacity building to improve awareness on IKBwithin and beyond the region.

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Objective 6: To ensure cooperation and participation in international fora, ensuring and benefiting from exchange of experience and best practice.

Objective 7: To address issues socio economic issues and circumstances driving IKB in the region.

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# Action Framework[[2]](#footnote-2),[[3]](#footnote-3)

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| Objective 1: Enhance our understanding of the importance, scope, scale, geography and motivations behind illegal hunting, taking and trade of birds at the regional level | | | |
| Activity | Priority | Timescale | Responsibility |
| Develop guidelines for carrying monitoring of IKB for the definition of the baseline |  |  |  |
| Develop a baseline estimate at national level |  |  |  |
| Collate national baseline, and d |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Develop guidelines for undertaking national socio-economic assessments to understand motivations behind IKB |  |  |  |
| Carry out socio-economic studies and assessments of the IKB situations in each country describing IKB forms, and distribution and impact. |  |  |  |
| Carry out an analysis on the understanding of types, scope, scale, geography and drivers of IKB at regional level |  |  |  |
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| Objective 2: Each range state to develop, endorse and implement a National IKB Action Plan, or equivalent, where necessary | | | |
| Activity | Priority | Timescale | Responsibility |
| Provide regional guidelines for the development and implementation of National IKB Action Plans and relevant policies |  |  |  |
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| Develop and implementat National IKB Action Plans through a consultative process |  |  |  |
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| Objective 3: To ensure that the illegal hunting, taking and trade of birds is addressed effectively and efficiently in national legislation, that follow common principles across the region | | | |
| Activity | Priority | Timescale | Responsibility |
| Organize Regional workshop on hunting legislation. |  |  |  |
| Develop common standards for national hunting legislation. |  |  |  |
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| Objective 4: To ensure effective and efficient enforcement of relevant legislation is undertaken, through the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary | | | |
| Activity | Priority | Timescale | Responsibility |
| Conduct situation analysis of the enforcement of relevant legislation (based on existing tools (e. g. ICCWC Analytic Toolkit[[4]](#footnote-4)) |  |  |  |
| Build technical capacity of law enforcement agencies through training courses and exchange visits. |  |  |  |
| Allocate to law enforcement agencies sufficient resources to properly enforce legislation. |  |  |  |
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| Objective 5: To undertake education, outreach programmes and capacity building to improve awareness on IKB within and beyond the region | | | | | |
| Activity | | Priority | Timescale | Responsibility | |
| Promote the wonder of migration to a wide audience | |  |  |  | |
| Consider engaging local communities in citizen science, as appropriate | |  |  |  | |
| Contribute to international flyway initiatives (Central Asian Flyway Initiative/AEWA) |  | |  | |  | |
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| Objective 6: To ensure cooperation and participation in international fora, ensuring and benefiting from exchange of experience and best practice | | | |
| Activity | Priority | Timescale | Responsibility |
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| Objective 7: To address issues socio economic issues and circumstances driving IKB in the region. | | | |
| Activity | Priority | Timescale | Responsibility |
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# Annex: Country profiles for each country

[Feedback is that this would be useful and should include an outline on which species are illegally killed (not numbers) and the key types of illegal killing. It could also include information on bird species present, protected areas, current legislation etc}

Annex: Examples of best practice in tackling IKB?

[Use MIKT as an example and provide links to the relevant documentation]

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1. IKB add same comment as TOR [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Column headings and additional columns need to be considered in light of the implementation process the group wish to follow. For example using the terminology: ‘Result’ or ‘Target’; ‘Indicators/means of verification’ etc.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Activities need further development and agreement at a future workshop) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/resources/pub/ICCWC\_Toolkit\_v2\_english.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)