CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES







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The Bonn Convention

« ...Wild animals in their innumerable forms are an irreplaceable part of the earth's natural system, which must be conserved for the good of mankind... »

« ...Each generation of man holds the resources of the earth for future generations and has an obligation to ensure that this legacy is conserved and, where utilized, is used wisely... »

- from the preamble of the Convention



Why conserve migratory animals?

Of the world's 1.75 million or more described animal species, at least 8,000-10,000 migrate. They use different habitats for different phases of their life cycles, living in one environment for part of the year and reproducing in another, or concentrating in one area and dispersing over another. These animals have evolved to make use of different environments and resources that are available only on a temporary basis.

As they depend on different habitats, which they use as stepping stones during their migration, they are more vulnerable than sedentary animals.

They range from antelopes to fish, from whales to elephants, from bats to birds. Even apparently frail insects, such as the Monarch butterfly, cover enormous distances.

Migratory animals are essential components of the ecosystems that support all life on Earth. By acting as pollinators and seed distributors they contribute to ecosystem structure and function. They provide



food for other animals and regulate the number of species in ecosystems. Migratory animals are potentially very effective indicators of environmental changes that affect us all.

In local and global economies, too, migratory animals play an important role: through subsistence, recreational and commercial hunting, and fishing activities providing food and income. More recently they have become prime attractions for ecotourists such as bird spotters or whale watchers.

In addition, migratory species have a great significance in many cultures – in legends, stories, religions, medicine and customs. They even play a major role in the way we measure time and experience seasons. Nowadays humans also benefit from them for recreational activities and educational purposes.



A heavy toll

Human pressure is often intense on migratory animals and on the habitats they need to survive. Unsustainable hunting and fishing practices and incidental capture in fisheries take a heavy toll on thousands of species. Destruction of wetlands, forests and grasslands removes food and shelter vital to life. Barriers to

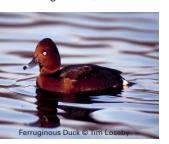
migration such as roads, fences, dams, power lines and wind farms can disrupt migratory patterns and result in a significant number of deaths. Birds face the danger of electrocution, injuries or death caused by power transmission lines or towers. Armed conflicts pose a threat to humans and animals alike.



The introduction of alien species and the harmful effects of industrial and agricultural pollutants are further risks. The potentially huge impact of climate change is just beginning to be understood, but it is predicted that migration patterns and reproduction will be disrupted. As a result, many migratory animals are becoming increasingly rare. A great many are threatened with extinction.

A need for international concerted action

While migrating, many stecies cross national borders, artificial constructs which are, of course, not recognised by animals. Borders not only divide countries, they also separate national legislation, interests and political priorities. Migratory animals



are particularly vulnerable in international waters. There, the lack of national jurisdiction makes it even more necessary for countries to assume their shared responsibility to conserve this common natural heritage.



A global platform for co-operation

As an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environmental Programme, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. The Convention brings together the states through which migratory animals pass, and lays the legal foundation for conservation measures throughout the species' migratory range. Measures are embedded in detailed conservation and management plans. The common goal is achieved by two means: concerted actions for endangered species and co-operative agreements for migratory species that have an unfavourable conservation status.

Tailored global and regional solutions for endangered animals

Migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I of the Convention. States strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring their habitats, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Besides establishing obligations for each state joining the Convention, CMS promotes concerted action among the range states of many of these species. Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention. For this reason, the Convention encourages the range states to conclude global or regional agreements.

CMS: a framework convention

CMS acts as a framework convention, providing for separate, international legally binding instruments and other agreements among range states of single migratory species or, more often, groups of species. Countries do not have to be a party to the parent convention to be able to join one of its associate agreements. These agreements can be adapted to the requirements of particular regions with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of the Convention's efforts.



The agreements may range from legally binding treaties to less formal instruments, such as Memoranda of Understanding. The development of models specially designed according to conser-

vation needs throughout the migratory range is a unique feature of CMS. All agreements are based on specific management and conservation plans. Between 1990 and early 2008, nearly twenty international agreements were concluded under the CMS umbrella, for bats, birds, elephants, dolphins and whales, marine turtles and seals.



Bird observation © Camillo Panziani-Hungary-WOW Project Coordination Unit

Promoting practical research and conservation



studies of breeding habits, fencing of nesting areas, site identification and mapping, or the genetic analysis of tissue samples.

CMS promotes co-operative research and conservation projects on migratory animals worldwide. The spectrum of activities is wide, ranging from population counts to the evaluation of the quality of habitats and threats, as well as the use of satellite telemetry to identify migration routes. Other projects focus on





On the move to 2010

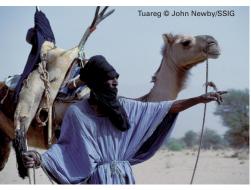
A paramount task is to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations' targets of significantly reducing biodiversity loss by 2010. The 8th Conference of the Parties (COP) to CMS in

November 2005 embraced the theme "on the move to 2010" instructing CMS and its regional agreements to co-operate in adopting indicators to measure the 2010 target. Conserving migratory animals and their habitats helps to preserve entire ecosystems, thus supporting life on Earth.



Bird observation @ Camillo Panziani -Mauretania-WOW Project Coordination Unit

Contributing to sustainable development



lopment through implementation of "World Summit on Sustainable Johannesburg, 2002. It supports conservation programmes that bring long-term benefits to local communities.

CMS supports ecoactivities nomic involving the sustainable use of migratory species. Ecotourism such sustainable whale watching generates considerable income. CMS is committed to the promotion of sustainable deve-

the goals set at Development"



Working in partnership

As the only global convention specialising in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes, CMS complements and co-operates with a number of other treaties and international bodies, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the World Heritage Convention. It benefits from the support of several non-governmental organisations.

How the Convention works

CMS institutions are the

- Conference of the Parties (COP), the decision-making body which meets at three-yearly intervals to review implementation of the Convention and to decide on priorities for future work;
- > Standing Committee, with regional representation which provides policy and administrative guidance between the regular meetings of the COP;
- Scientific Council, consisting of one expert appointed by each Party as well as specialists appointed by the COP, which provides advice on scientific issues and priorities for research and conservation;
- > Secretariat, which develops and promotes services agreements, meetings, supports and supervises research and conservation projects and co-operates with governments and organisations. The secretariat is provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).



Conference of the Parties © CMS



Agreement guidelines

Each agreement should cover the whole of the range of the migratory species concerned and describe the range and migration route. Species agreements provide for co-ordinated conservation and management plans. They promote conservation and restoration of the habitats important for maintaining the species at a favourable conservation status.

Memorandum of Understanding: An explanation

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is not legally binding, but is rather an expression of political commitment. Under an MoU, immediate short-term measures are co-ordinated across a range of a species or group of species.

Action Plan: Basic characteristics

CMS Action Plans describe specific conservation actions for habitats and species. They identify both threats and key sites (breeding, feeding, wintering areas). Assuring appropriate management, enforcing hunting regulations and undertaking studies into genetics, population dynamics and behavioural ecology are further features of these plans. There are different Action Plans from range-wide to country specific actions.

Concerted Action: A success story

The Convention has identified species deserving special attention. Parties, that are range states for such animals are required to conserve and restore important habitats, to prevent, reduce, remove or compensate for obstacles to migration and not to take animals from the wild.



Small Grants Programme: the project side of CMS

The Small Grants Programme (SGP) plays a significant role in promoting CMS initiatives and has been the Convention's main tool in supporting Concerted Actions. The SGP has proved successful at generating further funding from other donors. It acts as a practical international conservation instrument in individual countries and regions.

Migratory birds: from the Arctic to the Antarctic

Due to their often spectacular and long-distance journeys, birds are perhaps the best-known group of migratory animals. Many species migrate from high latitudes to the tropics and beyond. One species, the Arctic Tern, an elegant white seabird, even breeds in the Arctic and migrates to the Antarctic!



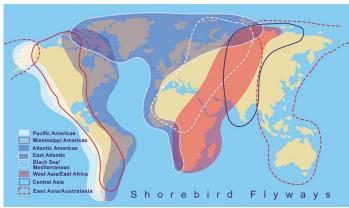
To be able to complete their life cycles successfully, migratory birds not only need their natural breeding and wintering habitats to be preserved; they reauire traditional stopover sites to be maintained. This makes it particularly challenging to conserve migratory birds.

A safer world for birds of passage

The largest agreement developed so far under CMS focuses on waterbirds. The African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) covers 235 species of bird and, among other initiatives promotes a flyway project, the "Wings over Wetlands" (WOW) —



made up of eleven pilot projects in twelve selected countries. It is the largest such project ever undertaken in the African-Eurasian region and represents a unique approach among Multilateral Environment Agreements. The geographic area stretches from the northern reaches of Canada and the Russian Federation to the southernmost tip of Africa. AEWA contains a comprehensive Action Plan as a result of intensive negotiations among all countries concerned. It aims to conserve waterbirds while maintaining a compatible regime of human activities in the general context of wetland conservation.



© International Wader Study Group, map drawn by Rodney West, in "Migratory Species and Climate Change – Impacts of a Changing Environment on Wild Animals", 2006.

From the Arctic to the Cape of Good Hope

Migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats are indispensable components of biodiversity. Their ecology is fragile and

habitats and species are under increasing threat worldwide.

The WOW African-Eurasian Flyways Project under the auspices of AEWA is the largest international wetland





and waterbird conservation initiative ever to take place. It aims to conserve the critical areas needed by migratory waterbirds across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, Greenland and the Canadian Archipelago. Through its unique flyway-scale conservation approach, WOW will enhance international conservation efforts to improve the conditions and management of waterbirds and key wetland sites in Africa and Eurasia.

Conserving single bird species

In addition, some of the rarest birds in the world are covered by CMS regional Agreements in the form of Memoranda of Understanding.

With the support of the Convention, the tiny populations of the Siberian Crane are benefiting from captive breeding and the releases of young birds, which are taught their traditional migration routes by hangglider pilots. The Siberian Crane Wetland Project, built on the MoU, forms the next step of the long-term programme to secure the species' survival.



The Slender-billed Curlew, one of the rarest of all migrants, is the subject of urgent efforts under CMS to discover its last winter refuges and where it breeds in the vastness of Eurasia.



The main challenge of conserving the spectacular Great Bustard under a CMS Memorandum of Understanding is to manage modern agriculture throughout the bird's range in Central Europe.

Another species covered by a CMS MoU, the Aquatic Warbler, is a small songbird,



which totally depends on a dwindling number of sites of a particular wetland type in Europe. Fortunately, the great majority of the key range states has now signed up to save it using the instruments of the Convention.



Slender-billed Curlew © C H Gomersall/RSPB

Conservation across continents

A major agreement for the conservation of waterbirds of the Central Asian flyway is envisaged under the framework provided by CMS.

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) tackles threats to these ocean wanderers, which range from drowning on long-line hooks set by commercial fishing vessels, to the taking of eggs and young birds by cats and rats.

Birds of prey in the African-Eurasian region have a poor conservation status. They are subject to a variety of human induced threats, such as habitat loss or degradation, hunting, illegal shooting and poisoning. Collisions with aerial structures and electrocution by





power lines also contribute to population declines. An agreement for migratory birds of prey, increasing the profile of owls and raptors in the region, is underway and will promote more effective conservation through the international co-ordination of action tackling the threats to migratory birds of prey.





White-naped Cranes @ BirdLife

Birds in the western hemisphere

In South America, a Memorandum of Understanding for the two endemic species of Andean Flamingo, living in high-altitude lagoons subject to intense human pressure, is being negotiated. These flamingos migrate in the wetlands to forage and depend

on the conservation of these habitats. Human activities such as agriculture, mining and unregulated tourism have been the main reason for the drop in population size.

Southern South American Migratory Grassland Bird Species and their habitats are the focus of another Memoran-





dum of Understanding. Fragmentation of grassland and illegal capture and trade have been the main reasons for the populations' decline. The aim of the Action Plan is the protection of the habitats and the birds in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia and Uruguay.



The Ruddy-headed Goose has been persecuted especially in its wintering grounds in the South of the Argentinian province of Buenos Aires. This exclusively South American Memorandum of Understanding has been concluded between Chile and Argentina to save this population from the imminent danger of extinction.

CMS threats and challenges: Avian Influenza and Wild Birds

In 2005 concerns about the role of migratory birds in spreading the highly pathogenic Avian Influenza virus H5N1 led to the establishment of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds. It is composed of 14 members and observers, including UN bodies, wildlife treaties and specialist intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. Its role is to advise

on the conservation impact of the disease and to develop an Early Warning System. The main vectors for spreading the virus are trade in poultry, caged birds and human movements. A longer term solution to minimise the risk of wild birds contributing to the spread of the virus would be the separation





of poultry farms from wetlands used by wild birds to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. To reduce contacts, natural habitats like water bodies should not be used by both domestic and wild birds. Maintaining healthy wild habitats will limit the number of waterbirds that enter agricultural areas, while biosafety standards in keeping and transporting farmed birds must be improved.

Marine mammals: a regional approach

The conservation of marine mammals listed in the CMS Appendices is a great challenge, in particular because these species are affected by multiple threats, often within international waters. CMS has adopted a regional approach with promising results. Three CMS agreements are engaged in different areas of cetacean conservation, while further agreements exist for the conservation of the monk seal and dugong.

Conserving whales and dolphins

The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCO-BANS) aims to conserve small whales, dolphins and porpoises such as the once-familiar Harbour Porpoise and the spectacular Orca. The most important threats facing



these species of toothed whales are incidental capture in fisheries, collisions with ships, acoustic disturbance and marine pollution. Under the auspices of ASCOBANS, the Jastarnia Plan, the Recovery Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the Baltic Sea, is the result of a collaborative effort of a series of scientific initiatives and meetings over several years. The main focus of this recovery plan is the identification of human induced threats to the recovery of the species.



The second Agreement on whales and dolphins developed under the Convention is the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS). Its main aim is to reduce threats to small and great whales, such as the Fin and the Sperm whale.

Conservation Plans under this agreement provide, among other things, for the assessment of human-cetacean interactions, emergency response measures, the establishment of protected areas and the reduction of negative interaction with fisheries.



Rescue for Pacific Cetaceans



dolphins in the Pacific Islands region, which have not yet recovered to prewhaling levels. This framework of CMS helps the countries to standardise the conservation and the educational programmes for local communities and commercial fishing.

Migration routes of marine mammals pass through the coastal waters of countries as well as the high seas. The relevant Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region covers all populations of whales and





Relief for Atlantic marine mammals

A number of species of small cetaceans can be found in West African waters, including the endemic Atlantic humpback dolphin. Small cetaceans, which include dolphins, porpoises and small toothed whales, are subject to various threats, such as habitat degradation, bycatch, direct catch, over-fishing and

pollution. In order to study and provide information on the conservation status of small cetaceans in West Africa, CMS started an initiative for the Conservation of Marine Mammals in Western Africa. Western African Talks on Cetaceans and their Habitats (WATCH) are a series of scientific and inter-governmental meet-



ings on marine mammals. The aim is to develop an Action Plan for the conservation of West African small cetaceans and manatees: the Memorandum of Understanding of West African Small Cetaceans and Sirenians of the Eastern Atlantic Basin.

Tackling threats to seals

The Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea was concluded as the first Agreement under CMS after an epidemic in 1988 killed 60% of the region's Harbour Seals. The Agreement has proved successful: the population has regained its pre-epidemic levels and, although still subject to diseases, the seals are



no longer threatened with extinction. The aim is to restore and maintain viable stocks, and increase reproductive capacity, including improved survival rates among juvenile seals.



The Mediterranean Monk Seal is one of the most threatened marine mammals in the world. The Memorandum of Understanding concerning conservation measures for the Eastern Population of the Monk Seal aims to save the last few animals (approximately 500) remaining in the wild. Recovery of the depleted population and reducing habitat loss are the main focus.

Dugongs: protection in waters



The dugong is a large strictly marine, herbivorous mammal. The Memorandum of Understanding covering the Indian Ocean is designed to conserve the populations and their habitats from detrimental anthropogenic influences like hunting or agricultural and industrial runoff into the waters they live in.

Dugong © Dr. Armin Trutnau/ Still Pictures

Marine turtles: towards a global approach

Marine turtles are among the oldest vertebrate life forms on Earth. They are threatened by by-catch, unsustainable consumption of both meat and eggs, degradation of the coastal environment, climate change and marine pollution. Little is known about their lives in the open ocean. They provide a perfect example of the need to bring together local communities,

conservationists, researchers and government authorities to work in a co-ordinated way.

There are two CMS Memoranda of Understanding concerning marine turtles: one for the Atlantic Coast of Africa and another for the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA).





Fish in troubled waters

The European Sturgeon is an anadromous migrant, meaning the adults leave the sea to swim up rivers to reproduce. They are sensitive to any physical barriers to their migration and are severely affected by physical and chemical changes to watercourses. The Action Plan developed strategies to assist the wild population with captive breeding and release schemes.



The Whale Shark is the largest living fish species, growing up to 14 metres long. It inhabits the open sea in tropical and warmer temperate waters and feeds on plankton. Seasonal feed-

ing aggregations of the sharks occur at several coastal sites. Though it is usually seen out at sea, it has also been found closer to shore, entering lagoons or coral atolls, and near the estuaries of rivers. CMS is leading efforts to develop a global conservation instrument for migratory sharks. With the help of a Memorandum of Understanding, threats like illegal trade and fisheries by-catch could be reduced. This initiative is particularly urgent given that the annual take of sharks worldwide has been estimated to exceed 100 million individuals.

Terrestrial mammals: from A to Z

Numerous different migratory land mammals from apes to zebras regularly cross national borders. Several are endangered and therefore listed on the Convention's Appendices, such as bats, the magnificent Snow Leopard, the Bactrian Camel, Mountain Gorillas, African Elephants, deer species, and several antelope species in Africa and the Saiga antelope in Eurasia. Just as these animals vary, so do the strategies for their conservation.





Initiatives for primates

Mountain Gorillas build new nests each day at dusk and move on at dawn to new areas of forest. Despite their relatively small population sizes compared to other migratory species covered by CMS, the ranges of gorilla populations frequently cover several countries. Destruction or modification of their habitat by deforestation, woodland exploitation, increasing demand for

arable land and also the development of infrastructure such as forest roads are the main threats. Unstable political climates, armed conflicts, viral epidemics, illegal killing for trophies and for bushmeat, kidnapping infant gorillas for zoos and the exotic pet



trade, and habitat loss have been the most serious pressures on gorilla numbers. CMS endorses UNEP's Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP), and is working towards establishing the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and Their Habitats, to develop gorilla ecotourism as a source of conservation and community income.

Conserving African antelopes



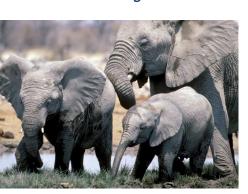
Oryx, other antelope species and gazelles are key species in the biodiversity of the North African Sahelo-Saharan region. They have developed unique adaptation responses to the most arid environment. In addition to being a primary source of food they have historically played a major role in the



livelihood of local communities. But due to severe man-made impacts on their habitats and excessive hunting they are rapidly declining. An Action Plan for six seriously endangered species, developed with active support of the Convention, recommends reinforcing some of the populations in the wild with captive-bred individuals, reducing mortality and enhancing international co-operation. With support of European and American zoos more than 50 antelopes were translocated to Tunisia in 2007.



The world's largest terrestrial mammal



Elephants © Betty Bruce - UNEP / Still Pictures

West African elephant populations have become extremely vulnerable. The loss of 90% of their habitat and illegal killing are the primary causes. The Memorandum of Understanding therefore aims mainly to stop illegal killing and to reduce the rate of habitat loss.

Central Eurasian aridland mammals

Steppes and deserts are a favoured domain of activity for CMS. Arid zones, despite their relatively low species density, host a number of highly emblematic, remarkably adapted species. The conservation and restoration of the unique megafauna of the mountains and steppes in cold and temperate deserts and semi-



deserts of Asia and Europe are essential for these exceptional habitats. The Central Eurasian arid-land concerted action covers Eurasian mammals, such as Bactrian Camels, Yaks, Khulans, Snow Leopards and gazelles.



Bactrian Camels © Richard Reading

Protecting land mammals

The Central Asian Bukhara deer, once numbered in great quantities, faces the threat of extinction as a result of human activities. Today, only a few hundred animals remain as a result of illegal



hunting as well as artificial regulation of the water regimes in the river valleys where they live. A Memorandum of Understanding developed under CMS aims to save the species from the brink of extinction.

Combating poaching of antelopes

Until the early 1990s, more than one million Saiga Antelopes used to roam the steppes and deserts of Eurasia. In recent decades, poaching for the saiga's meat and horn, which is used in Chinese traditional medicine, has contributed to the decline of all



saiga populations. The aim of the Memorandum of Understanding is to reduce current exploitation levels and restore the population status of these nomads of the Central Asian steppes.



Working for European bats

The CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (Eurobats) deals with 46 species known to occur in Europe. The most immediate threats to them nowadays derive from degradation of the places where they live, disturbance of roosting sites and certain insecticides and





pesticides. Eurobats achieved new and improved legal protection standards for bats. The "European Bat Night" is a popular annual awareness-raising event celebrated all over Europe.



Journeys at risk: Insects

Monarch Butterflies are found all around the world in temperate, sub-tropical to tropical areas. They are found in open habitats including meadows, fields, marshes and cleared roadsides. Not all populations are migratory, but those that are cover distances of up to 3,000km. The migration may take up to three generat-



Monarch butterflies © Gene Nieminen, USFWS

ions to complete with the females laying their eggs along the way. The destruction of their habitat through constructing roads, housing developments and agricultural expansion poses the greatest threat. Conservation measures thus focus on habitat restoration and protection.





Web Sites of Agreements under CMS:

ACAP

http://www.acap.aq

ACCOBAMS

http://www.accobams.org

AEWA

http://www.unep-aewa.org

ASCOBANS

http://www.ascobans.org

Common Wadden Sea Secretariat

http://www.waddensea-secretariat.org

Eurobats

http://www.eurobats.org

Gorillas

http://www.naturalsciences.be/science/projects/gorilla

CMS related Web Sites:

Avian Influenza Wildlife and the Environment Web

http://www.aiweb.info

GRASP

http://www.unep.org/grasp

International Crane Foundation

http://www.savingcranes.org

IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU Website

http://www.ioseaturtles.org

Sahara Conservation Fund

http://www.saharaconservation.org

Siberian Crane Wetland Project

http://www.scwp.info

WOW

http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org

UN ACTION TO CONSERVE WILDLIFE IN A CHANGING WORLD

«...The States are and must be the protectors of the migratory species of wild animals that live within or pass through their national jurisdictional boundaries...»

«...Conservation and effective management of migratory species of wild animals require the concerted action of all States within the national jurisdictional boundaries of which such species spend any part of their life cycle...»

- from the preamble of the Convention

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