

## CMS COP15 Highlights: Friday, 27 March 2026

The Committee of the Whole (CoW) of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) approved in-session documents and proposals to amend the CMS Appendices, and reviewed agenda items related to Concerted Actions (CAs). CoW Chair Khalid Cherki (Morocco) adjourned the evening session before delegates proceeded with working group deliberations ahead of the additional CoW session scheduled for Saturday morning.

### Review of In-Session Documents

Several conference room papers (CRPs) were approved, in some cases with minor amendments, and forwarded to COP for adoption, including on: multiple systems of knowledge; preventing poisoning of migratory birds; action plans for birds; and internationally important raptor areas; development of the next State of the World's Migratory Species report; marine pollution; deep-sea mining; sharks and rays; seabirds and marine flyways; Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Global Action Plan; cumulative effects; infrastructure; Joint CITES-CMS African Carnivore Initiative; Regional Action Plan for Jaguar Conservation; light pollution; and conservation implications of animal culture and social complexity.

The CRP on resource mobilization was reverted to the working group on cross-cutting issues for further discussion. The EU and UK requested deleting text on sustainable use in the CRP on climate change, and the CoW recommended the CRP to the COP as amended.

### Amendment of CMS Appendices

**Flesh-footed Shearwater:** NEW ZEALAND introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.6](#) to list the Flesh-footed Shearwater (*Ardenna carneipes*) on Appendix II. They noted the proposal is supported by the inclusion of perspectives from New Zealand's Indigenous Peoples. Co-proponents FRANCE and AUSTRALIA expressed their support, alongside BRAZIL, PANAMA, EU, MONACO, SAMOA, SENEGAL, and the AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS (ACAP).

The CoW recommended this proposal for adoption by the COP.

**Hudsonian Whimbrel:** BRAZIL introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.7](#), for the inclusion of the Hudsonian Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) on Appendix I. With CHILE, they emphasized the species' long-distance migration from the Arctic to South America and threats that have led to a 70% population decline over three generations.

The EU, MAURITANIA, PANAMA, BENIN, SENEGAL, and DOMINICAN REPUBLIC expressed their support, and the CoW submitted the proposal to the COP for adoption.

**Hudsonian Godwit:** CHILE outlined [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.8](#) proposing to include the Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) on Appendix I, noting that addressing the multiple threats faced by the species along its migratory route would strongly benefit from international collaboration.

PERU, EU, NEW ZEALAND, PANAMA, URUGUAY, BRAZIL, ECUADOR, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, and SAUDI ARABIA supported the listing, and the CoW decided to recommend the proposal for adoption by the COP.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** URUGUAY introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.9](#) to list Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) on

Appendix I. Underlining that land-use change is a major threat to the species, they emphasized the importance of CAs to engage the agricultural sector as partners.

PERU, ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA, PANAMA, EU, ECUADOR, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, COSTA RICA, and BRAZIL supported the listing, and the CoW submitted the proposal to the COP for adoption.

**Snowy Owl:** NORWAY tabled [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.10](#) for the inclusion of the Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) on Appendix II, detailing its wide migratory ranges and significant declines in population stability and breeding success.

SAUDI ARABIA, LIBERIA, MONACO, EU, PANAMA, and BRAZIL noted their support, and the CoW recommended the proposal for adoption by the COP.

**Ibera Seedeater:** BRAZIL introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.11](#) to include the Ibera Seedeater (*Sporophila iberaensis*) on Appendix II. They noted that some congeneric species are included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Bird Species and their Habitats, and that an Appendix II listing would enhance efforts to address their threats.

ARGENTINA, PARAGUAY, EU, PANAMA, URUGUAY, BOLIVIA, and PERU supported the proposal, and the CoW recommended the listing to the COP for adoption.

**Thresher spp.:** PANAMA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.12](#) and [Inf.30.2.12](#) to include the Pelagic Thresher (*Alopias pelagicus*), Bigeye Thresher (*A. superciliosus*), and the Common Thresher (*A. vulpinus*) on Appendix I. They emphasized the Pelagic Thresher is categorized as Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, with the Bigeye and Common Thresher in the Vulnerable category. Underlining bycatch and direct catch as major threats to these highly migratory species, with misidentification a common problem, they stressed the need to follow a precautionary approach.

NEW ZEALAND opposed the listing of the Bigeye and Common Thresher on Appendix I, emphasizing these species do not meet the listing criteria. Following interventions by other Parties and citing support in the room for the proposal, NEW ZEALAND said they would not stand in the way of agreement but noted their reservation regarding insufficient evidence and "the worrying precedent" for the listing of the Bigeye and Common Thresher.

PERU and CHILE opposed listing all three species, noting the regulations associated with such a listing could lead to increased bycatch discard and push fisheries towards unreported activities.

MONACO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, BRAZIL, EU, BENIN, UK, URUGUAY, PARAGUAY, GHANA, WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE, and SENEGAL supported the listing of all three species.

With no consensus in sight, PANAMA submitted a motion for a vote. The proposal passed, with 49 for, one against, and six abstaining. The proposal was forwarded to the COP for adoption.

**Patagonian Narrownose Smoothhound:** BRAZIL introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.13](#) to include the Patagonian Narrownose Smoothhound (*Mustelus schmitti*), which has experienced an 80% population decline, on Appendix II. SENEGAL, PANAMA, INSTITUTO BALEIA JUBARTE, and

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (WCS) supported the proposal, which was forwarded to the COP for adoption.

**Scalloped Hammerhead Shark:** ECUADOR introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.14](#) to include the Scalloped Hammerhead Shark (*Sphyrna lewini*), which has suffered an 80% population decline, in Appendix I. It was supported by PANAMA, KENYA, BRAZIL, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, UK, SAUDI ARABIA, SENEGAL, and CHARLES DARWIN FOUNDATION. PERU initially objected, citing potential impact on the food security of fishing communities, but later said they would not break the consensus. Thanking Peru for their flexibility, the Chair sent the proposal to COP for adoption.

**Great Hammerhead Shark:** ECUADOR introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.15](#) to include the Great Hammerhead Shark (*Sphyrna mokarran*) in Appendix I. Underscoring the impact of overfishing, and targeted and bycatch taking, as well as the high value of the Hammerhead's fin, they urged acting to prevent "this giant from disappearing from our Ocean." PANAMA, EU, BRAZIL, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, SENEGAL, MONACO, NORWAY, KENYA, LIBERIA, SAMOA, FIJI, BANGLADESH, and INSTITUTO BALEIA JUBARTE supported the proposal, noting the value of the species to ecotourism and recreational diving. PERU initially objected, citing current management plans, potential fisheries impact, and knowledge gaps, but later said they would not break the consensus. The proposal was sent to the COP for adoption.

**Angular Angelshark:** BRAZIL, noting coordination between range states of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, withdrew this proposal to list the Angular Angelshark (*Squatina guggenheim*) in Appendix II ([UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.16](#)).

**Spotted Sorubim:** BRAZIL introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.17](#) to include the Spotted Sorubim (*Pseudoplatystoma corruscans*), a migratory freshwater species, in Appendix II. ECUADOR, EU, PERU, PARAGUAY, URUGUAY, SENEGAL, PANAMA, and WCS supported the proposal. The CoW sent the proposal to the COP for adoption.

**Bukhara Deer:** UZBEKISTAN withdrew the proposal to remove the Bukhara Deer (*Cervus elaphus yarkandensis*) from Appendix I ([UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.30.2.4](#)), and noted a multistakeholder workshop on connectivity in the Lower Amu Darya Biosphere Reserve would be convened in September 2026. The EU thanked Uzbekistan for their constructive approach.

### Interpretation and Reporting on Implementation of the Convention

**National Reports:** The Secretariat tabled [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.22](#) and [Inf.22](#), recalling that COP14 had requested the development of a revised national reporting template, and will be finalized by the Secretariat and submitted for consideration to the Standing Committee (SC) at its 59<sup>th</sup> meeting. UNEP-WORLD CONSERVATION MONITORING CENTRE outlined insights on Parties' progress in implementing the Convention since COP14, citing: regional cooperation among implementation successes; highly pathogenic avian influenza among the emerging threats faced; and the full prohibition of taking of Appendix I species, as well as financial and technical capacity constraints, among the most common challenges to implementation.

BRAZIL proposed an amendment to streamline reporting requirements, and the CoW submitted the document to the COP for adoption.

### Concerted Actions Reports

**Progress in the Implementation of Concerted Actions:** The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2](#), noting that the CAs for Pallas' Cat, Lahille's Bottlenose Dolphin, and Humpback whales of the Arabian Sea were considered complete, while the CA for the Great Bustard in Asia was considered closed. The CoW noted the report.

**Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) Behavioral Diversity and Cultures:** IUCN introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.1](#), noting substantial progress on CA activities. The CoW noted the report.

**Straw-colored Fruit Bat (*Eidolon helvum*):** UGANDA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.2](#), noting work was ongoing. The CoW noted the report.

**Pallas's Cat (*Felis manul*):** The ASSOCIATION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY OF KAZAKHSTAN introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.3](#), noting this cat's inclusion under the Central Asian Mammals Initiative was a "milestone" for Pallas's Cat conservation. The CoW noted the report.

**Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*):** NORTH MACEDONIA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.4](#). The EU urged range states to complete the CA. The CoW noted the report.

**Giraffe spp.:** The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.5](#), highlighting that the combined number of the four Giraffe species has increased to approximately 140,000. The CoW noted the report.

**Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) of the Arabian Sea:** The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.6](#), noting the CA was complete. IUCN and other observer organizations urged the COP to provisionally endorse the resulting regional conservation management plan (CMP) without delay and to authorize the SC to adopt the CMP once finalized during the intersessional period, given the endangered status of these whales. The CoW noted the report.

**Sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) of the Eastern Tropical Pacific:** The Secretariat introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.7](#). The CoW noted the report.

**Franciscana Dolphin (*Pontoporia blainvillei*):** URUGUAY introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.8](#). The CoW noted the report.

**Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*):** NEW ZEALAND introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.2.9](#), noting engagement with fisheries and improved understanding with tracking tools. The CoW noted the report.

**Blue Shark (*Prionace glauca*):** INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE ESG introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.10](#), noting engagement with the tourism sector and development of best practice guidelines. The CoW noted the report.

**Common Guitarfish (*Rhinobatosrhinobatos*) and Bottlenose Wedgefish (*Rhynchobatus australiae*):** IUCN introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31/2/11](#), highlighting data exchange and distribution of regional identification guides, and policy achievements strengthening international management of trade. The CoW noted the report.

### Concerted Actions Proposals

**Proposals for Concerted Actions for the Triennium 2026-2029:** The Secretariat presented [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.3/Rev.1](#) introducing proposals for CAs.

**Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) Behavioral Diversity and Cultures Already Listed on Appendix I and II of the Convention:** IUCN introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.3.1](#). PAN-AFRICAN SANCTUARY ALLIANCE and SENEGAL supported the proposal. The CoW recommended approval.

**Straw-colored Fruit Bat (*Eidolon helvum*):** UGANDA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.3.2](#), and the EU supported it. The CoW recommended approval.

**Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*):** NORTH MACEDONIA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.3.3](#). The CoW recommended approval.

**Striped Hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*):** UZBEKISTAN introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.3.4](#) proposed for listing on Appendix I and II of the Convention. The CoW recommended approval.

**Masai Giraffe (*Giraffa tippelskirchi*), Northern Giraffe (*G. camelopardalis*), Reticulated Giraffe (*G. reticulata*), and Southern Giraffe (*G. giraffa*):** ETHIOPIA introduced [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.31.3.5](#). SOUTH AFRICA and ZIMBABWE proposed amendments. The Secretariat will prepare a CRP.

### In the Corridors

The conclusion of the COP hung in the balance Friday, with progress in fits and starts. Delegates' heads were spinning as they tried to keep track of so many strands of negotiations, and by the afternoon it became apparent that it would be a working weekend.

For veteran insiders, it's a familiar COP *dénouement*, but to a first-time participant, it all seemed a bit much. "I've been running around to working groups and side events, but there's so much to learn," the delegate said. "I just want to contribute the best I can."

After a prolonged debate in the CoW over listing three Thresher sharks in Appendix I, the CoW resorted to a vote, a rare sign of intractable disagreement. Yet to a CMS COP newbie, progress was evident: "I would tell the leaders, 'good job!' Let's persevere and keep connecting people and ideas. That's what we have to do." With two days left until closing, a more seasoned delegate noted their optimism that this COP may yet go further and "connect the habitats we care so deeply for."