



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL FRIDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 1999

On the second and final day of the CMS Scientific Council, delegates reviewed proposals for amendments to Appendices I and II, heard updates on progress made in developing new agreements and considered Appendix I species for concerted action and Appendix II species for cooperative action. The Council also considered taxonomic nomenclature and guidelines on the use of satellite tracking devices, and elected a new Chair.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II

Chair Devillers introduced the proposals for amendments to Appendices I and II (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6.11 Annex) and reminded the Council that these proposals would be forwarded to the upcoming COP.

AMENDMENTS OF APPENDIX I: The Council considered and endorsed proposals to list seven new species in Appendix I: Manatee populations restricted to Honduras and Panama; the Buff-breasted Sandpiper; the Strange-tailed Tyrant; the Saffron-cowled Blackbird; the Zelich's Seedeater; the Chestnut Seedeater; and the Rufus-rumped Seedeater.

William Perrin (COP-Appointed Councillor) presented a report regarding the possible inclusion of the Gangetic Dolphin, and the Sei and Fin Whales in Appendix I (UNDP/CMS/ScC.9/Doc.7). He stated that the Gangetic Dolphin has an estimated population of 3500 to 5000 and is in serious decline. The Council agreed that the Gangetic Dolphin is a prime candidate for Appendix I inclusion, but emphasized that the proposal must be brought forward by a Range State, such as India. With regard to the Sei Whale and Fin Whale, the Council determined not to recommend their inclusion in Appendix I at this time.

AMENDMENTS OF APPENDIX II: Chair Devillers introduced a proposal to list the Manatee populations in Honduras and Panama. Wim Wolff (the Netherlands) suggested that all Manatee populations be included. The Council also considered and endorsed proposals to list: the Arafura and Timor Sea populations of the Indian Ocean Bottlenose Dolphin; and the Southeast Asian populations of the Pantropical Spotted Dolphin, Spinner Dolphin and Fraser's Dolphin.

Wolff expressed concern over the threats to Petrel populations due to long-line fisheries bycatch and supported the listing of seven proposed species: the Northern Giant Petrel; Southern Giant Petrel; White-chinned Petrel; Spectacled Petrel; Grey Petrel; Black Petrel; and Westland Petrel.

Perrin introduced a proposal to list the Whale Shark. Drawing attention to depletion of Whale Shark populations in Southeast Asia, he emphasized the need for cooperative research and conservation actions, and noted a US proposal to list the Whale Shark in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES). Wolff suggested the Basking Shark should also be included.

Rainer Blanke (Germany) introduced a proposal to list 27 Sturgeon species and identified unsustainable catch for caviar as the species' greatest threat. He identified the Caspian Sea and adjacent rivers as the primary harvesting areas and noted the destruction of spawning areas due to pollution and dams. Noting that some Sturgeon species are addressed by CITES, he underscored the CMS' role in regulating legal catch, addressing illegal catch and combating pollution, and called for a regional agreement. Wolff suggested such an agreement should encompass additional species in need of protection with similar ecological requirements, and drew attention to threats to Sturgeon populations in the North Sea due to trawling. Pierre Pfeffer (COP-Appointed Councillor) underscored the need for CMS to cooperate with CITES and suggested that some Sturgeon could qualify for Appendix I of the CMS. Chair Devillers cautioned that this could result in some caviar-exporting Range States losing interest in conserving Sturgeon and addressing pollution in the Caspian Sea. An observer from Iran agreed that listing in Appendix I could result in a loss of interest and inadvertently encourage greater emphasis on oil excavation in the Caspian Sea. The Council endorsed all proposals.

APPENDICES I AND II SPECIES SELECTED FOR CONCERTED AND COOPERATIVE ACTION

COP-Appointed Councillors presented the Council with proposals for selecting Appendix I species for concerted action and formal review (CMS Resolution 3.2 and 4.2). They also suggested Appendix II species for cooperative action (CMS Recommendation 5.2). The Council agreed to include these species in a draft resolution to be forwarded to the COP.

SPECIES PROPOSED FOR CONCERTED ACTION: Michael Moser (COP-Appointed Councillor) highlighted elements to be considered before supplementing the list, *inter alia*: the existence of protection programmes; a sufficient number of Range States Parties to the Convention; and the possibility for realistic action. On this basis, he suggested the Fluff Tail, Blue Swallow and Aquatic Wobbler be added. He noted existing local research programmes on these birds which could facilitate development of action plans. Regarding a WCMC proposal to add ten new bird species, Moser said such action would be useless until Range States were willing to cooperate.

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Roseline Beudels (Belgium) said the absence of collaboration of important Range States paralyzes protection of disappearing species and lamented the lack of immediately available data necessary to demonstrate the Snow Leopard's need for concerted action. Roberto Schlatter (COP-Appointed Councillor), reporting on a variety of neo-tropical species, recommended the inclusion of the Southern Marine Otter, the Southern River Otter and the Humboldt Penguin.

SPECIES PROPOSED FOR COOPERATIVE ACTION:

Moser suggested the addition of the Jackass Penguin, the Albatross and the seven species of Petrels. Beudels suggested adding the African Elephant. Schlatter recommend adding dolphins of Southern South America.

NEW AGREEMENTS UNDER DEVELOPMENT

SMALL CETACEANS AND OTHER THREATENED

MAMMALS: Schlatter, addressing small cetaceans and other threatened mammals in Southern South America, highlighted the potential for implementing binding agreements for conservation and monitoring and stressed the need to maintain technical meetings to further progress.

With regard to efforts in Southeast Asia, Perrin said economic and political turmoil in the Southeast Asia region had obstructed progress. Stressing the problematic nature of the region for small cetaceans, he called for international cooperation, increased awareness, transfer of expertise and greater baseline information. Perrin noted progress in Australia and the Philippines and identified Indonesia as a major area of concern with negligible work in progress. He highlighted a draft letter of agreement between Australia and Indonesia and a proposal for a joint initiative between the Philippines and Indonesia.

With regard to the West African region, Perrin noted a completed project in Senegal and the Gambia to collect basic information and build infrastructure and a second project underway in the same region to expand these activities together with a workshop planned in Guinea.

ALBATROSS OF THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE:

Andrew McNee (Australia) noted the dearth of information on two-thirds of the 150 Albatross populations living in the world. He emphasized that almost half of the known populations are decreasing rapidly and noted that long-line fishing operations are their most significant threat. On efforts toward an agreement covering all populations of the Southern hemisphere, he highlighted a recent Valdivia Group meeting hosted by Australia where consensus on the need for an instrument was expressed. He supported: increasing action; enhancing dialogue with Range States; including countries with fishing activities on the high seas; and coordinating with other initiatives. McNee stressed a lack of confidence about the survival of many populations and some species, and called on the Council to support actions needed to conclude an agreement through the CMS. Martine Bigan (France) underscored France's support for an agreement and previous conservation efforts and expertise in this regard. Colin Galbraith (United Kingdom) supported the initiative. Raúl Vaz Ferreira (Uruguay) highlighted a conservation project recently implemented in Uruguay. John Cooper (BirdLife International) stressed the high mortality rate of the species and indicated support for an agreement. The Council agreed that the Range States with breeding areas should act as a nucleus for enabling the initiative to progress.

SOUTH AFRICAN SAND GROUSE: Peter Botha (South Africa) indicated that Botswana, Namibia and South Africa had collaborated on a MOU and elected a scientific adviser to begin drafting an action plan.

MARINE TURTLE: McNee called for a new regional instrument under CMS auspices to protect the species in the Indian Ocean and noted the report of the Consultation on Needs and Mechanisms for Regional Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles (UNEP/CMS/Conf.6/Inf.14).

AQUATIC WARBLER: Cooper called for protection of the species' breeding habitat, mostly in Eastern Europe, and said additional data on migratory patterns should be compiled. He said Range States would convene in the next weeks to decide on the need for a MOU. The Council agreed to add the Aquatic Warbler to the list for concerted action.

OTHER MATTERS

GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF SATELLITE

TRACKING DEVICES: The Chair reported on a workshop held at the Council's eighth session which concluded that the CMS was an appropriate forum to review the ethical and practical issues surrounding tracking devices. However, participants to the workshop stressed that the CMS should only intervene when either a Party requests the help of the CMS or the CMS is funding a project involving tracking devices. The Chair noted that the CMS has not taken any action on this issue since its eighth session.

REVIEW OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS: On the UK draft resolution on bycatch, Colin Limpus (COP-Appointed Councillor) recommended that the resolution be broadened to identify the wide variety of fisheries responsible for killing Marine Turtles. He also suggested adding a paragraph mandating the CMS to present its position at international fisheries meetings and other relevant fora. Wolff drew attention to the definition of migratory species in the resolution. The Council also reviewed draft resolutions to be forwarded to the COP on: institutional arrangements for the Scientific Council; and standardization of taxonomic nomenclature for the CMS Appendices which would standardize taxonomy with CITES.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS: On the election of the Council Chair and Vice-Chair, Chair Devillers noted that no nomination had been submitted for the Vice-Chair and suggested a written election process via post with nominations to be submitted by 1 January 2000. The Council elected Galbraith to serve as the Council Chair. Galbraith thanked the Council for his appointment and commended Chair Devillers on his leadership and commitment to action.

MEETING CLOSURE: With regard to the date and location for the 10th session of the Scientific Council, Hykle proposed that the Council meet in the first half of 2001 with the location to be determined. Chair Devillers thanked delegates for their work and drew the meeting to a close at 5:45 pm.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the Scientific Council drew smoothly to a close, many delegates migrating from the meeting room expressed confidence that agreement on many issues and momentum on cooperative actions signaled renewed progress under the CMS. Others cautioned against "counting their eggs before they hatch" and warned of potential political hurdles on the horizon as the AEW and CMS COP begin.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

AEWA/COP-6 OPENING CEREMONY: The Opening Ceremony of MOP-1 of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and COP-6 of the CMS will take place in the Grand Ballroom at 4:30 pm. Representatives of the South African Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the Netherlands' State Secretary for Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, as well as an NGO representative, are expected to deliver opening remarks. Dr. Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director, will give the key note address. Following the ceremony, delegates will attend a reception hosted by the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa.