



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

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**CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY**

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Manila, October 2017)

*Recalling* that Resolution 10.15 Global Programme of Work for Cetaceans (2012-2024) instructed the CMS Scientific Council's Aquatic Mammals Working Group to provide advice on the impact of the emergent science of cetacean social complexity and culture as it related to regional populations,

*Aware* that the CMS Scientific Council expert workshop on the conservation implications of cetacean culture held in April 2014 recommended that "management decisions should be precautionary and assume that populations may contain discrete social elements which have conservation significance warranting further investigation",

*Noting* that the CMS Scientific Council endorsed the recommendations of the expert workshop on the conservation implications of cetacean culture, contained in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.18; *Recognizing* that a number of socially complex mammalian species, such as several species of cetaceans, great apes and elephants, show evidence of having non-human culture (hereafter 'culture'),

*Concerned* that highly social species face unique conservation challenges,

*Aware* that the social transmission of knowledge between individuals may increase population viability and provide opportunities for the rapid spread of innovations and thus adaptation to environmental change,

*Aware* that this transmission of knowledge may also increase the impact of anthropogenic threats or can operate synergistically with anthropogenic threats to compound their impact on a specific social group or more widely,

*Recognizing* that the impact of removal of individuals from populations of socially complex species may have consequences beyond simply a reduction in absolute numbers,

*Also recognizing* that populations of some species are better delineated by cultural behaviour than genetic diversity or geographic isolation,

*Conscious* that the scientific investigation of culture and social complexity in mammals is a rapidly evolving field which is increasingly important for conservation management, and

*Considering* that the CMS Family is in a strong position to take account of this emerging information in its work,

*The Conference of the Parties to the  
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Welcomes* the report of the CMS Scientific Council Expert Workshop on the conservation implications of cetacean culture, contained in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.18;
2. *Encourages* Parties to consider culturally transmitted behaviours when determining conservation measures;
3. *Also encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to assess anthropogenic threats to socially complex mammalian species on the basis of evidence of interactions of those threats with social structure and culture;
4. *Urges* Parties to apply a precautionary approach to the management of populations for which there is evidence that influence of culture and social complexity may be a conservation issue;
5. *Encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to gather and publish pertinent data for advancing the conservation management of these populations and discrete social groups;
6. *Requests* the CMS Scientific Council to maintain an intersessional expert working group dealing with the conservation implications of culture and social complexity, with a focus on, but not limited to cetaceans;
7. *Invites* relevant CMS Scientific Councillors for taxa other than cetaceans to review the findings of the expert working group and engage in this expert group; and
8. *Requests* the expert group to report its findings and any proposals for future work through the CMS Scientific Council to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties.