

FIFTH MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP TO THE RAPTORS MOU

(Online, 14 December 2022)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/TAG5/Report

MEETING REPORT

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

1. Welcome Note & Update on the Team of the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU

Mr Des Thompson (Chair of the TAG) opened the meeting by welcoming all participants and introducing Ms Lauren Lopes as the new Associate Programme Management Officer supporting the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU.

Mr Umberto Gallo-Orsi (Coordinating Unit) followed, informing that the anticipated agenda item “Comments on the Draft Report to MOS3” would not be discussed because of the unavailable date of the Third Meeting of Signatories to the Raptors MOU (MOS3).

2. Review of the Workplan of the TAG

Mr Gallo-Orsi explained that the aim of the discussed document was to revise the Workplan of the TAG. He noted that the activities included in the Workplan proposal presented stemmed from the following sources:

- Unimplemented actions listed in the Technical Advisory Group to the Raptors MOU (TAG) Workplan 2016-2020;
- Terms of Reference (TOR) of the TAG;
- Rules of Procedure for Meetings of Signatories, as adopted at the Second Meeting of Signatories (MOS2, Trondheim, October 2015);
- Actions agreed at the Fourth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG4, Online, December 2021); and
- Activities contained in Table 2 of the MOU’s Action Plan, as updated following TAG4.

With the Workplan proposal presented, the Coordinating Unit proposed changes to the Workplan’s format that aimed to facilitate monitoring implementation progress. New columns were included in the Workplan to that effect. A prioritization of activities (core, very high, high, medium, or low) was also added to guide the TAG’s work. Mr Gallo-Orsi explained that the activities marked as ‘core activities’ corresponded to activities belonging to the core mandate of the TAG, meaning that such activities would necessarily have to be implemented.

Mr Gallo-Orsi read out each activity included in the proposal and the following comments were made by the meeting’s participants:

Activity 9: *Clarify the criteria for inclusion of a species in Category 2 of Table 1 of the MOU's Action Plan.*

- Mr Mohammed Shobrak (Member of the TAG) asked for clarification on the aim of the activity and the intended meaning of 'regional assessment'. Mr Gallo-Orsi clarified that the activity aimed to understand what exact geographical dimension should be considered as 'regional' for a species to be included in Category 2 of Table 1 of the MOU's Action Plan.

Activity 14: *Provide guidance on the Migratory Raptor Safe Zones approach to Signatories.*

- Mr André Botha (Vice-Chair of the TAG) agreed to keep the activity at low priority, noting that there was considerable debate at the recent Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC15, Victoria Falls, November 2022) around what constituted Raptor/Vulture Safe Zones. He added that there did not seem to be much interest in establishing such areas in Europe. Mr Botha agreed to be involved in the activity should a volunteer be needed.

Activity 17: *Assess the protection status of the sites listed in the Action Plan's Table 3 and their effectiveness in conserving migratory raptors.*

- Mr Thompson suggested putting the USD 9,000 figure in brackets because the actual cost of the activity could be higher. Ms Vicky Jones (Member of the TAG) added that such cost would depend on the exact data sources used for implementation.
- Participants agreed that 'effectiveness' in the description of the activity needed to be defined as part of the activity.

Activity 18: *Provide recommendations on the value of new technologies, including satellite tracking to: assess mortality; and identify mortality causes, important sites, distribution range, and migration pathways.*

- Ms Jones pointed out that the activity was linked to the Conservation Status Assessment Report. She indicated that, whilst preparing the commissioned Conservation Status Assessment Report (CSAR), BirdLife International (BLI) was, in parallel, coordinating a multispecies study of causes of mortality of tracked birds in the western portion of the MOU's area. For this, BLI would be including information on causes of mortality among tracked raptors in the upcoming CSAR on a pro-bono basis.
- Ms Jones suggested that consideration be given to the importance of including this kind of information in future CSARs, noting that such could be done on a periodic, rather than regular basis. This would provide tangible information on the threats faced by a sample of individual raptors to complement the broad scale assessment of threats to each species undertaken as part of the IUCN Red List process. If the TAG considered such information relevant, then a dedicated budgeted activity should be added to the TAG's Workplan covering the eastern portion of the MOU's area.
- Mr Botha remarked that work was already being done on the value of new technologies. He considered that Activity 18 could, therefore, obtain useful results relatively quickly.
- Mr Ralph Buij (Observer) agreed on the importance of collecting and analysing information on tracking mortality. He added that a lot of such information had been compiled during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Mr Thompson suggested that the activity be raised to 'high' priority.

- Mr Botha suggested adding 'Assess and' before 'Provide', on the first line of Activity 18.
- Mr Thompson then suggested changing the 'Expected Output' column's text to read 'Guidance material' instead of 'Information material', and adding 'and other technologies' after 'satellite tracking'.
- Ms Jones pointed out that the group had been discussing two different needs: the need to assess the value of new technologies for studying species, but also that for assessing key threats to raptors in the MOU's area. The latter could either be: included in Activity 18; included in Activity 23, which concerned CSARs; or made a new activity. The Group agreed to reflect the matter further below in the table.
- BirdLife International and the Peregrine Fund offered to take the lead on Activity 18.

Activity 20: *Study the impact on raptors of locust and Quelea control programmes.*

- Mr Buij considered that the impact of locust and Quelea control programmes on raptors was greatly underestimated, noting that a lack of information on the matter should not be interpreted as low importance. He considered that the activity should be raised to 'high' priority, to which Mr Botha, Mr Shobrak, and Mr Neil Deacon (Member of the TAG) agreed. In agreeing, Mr Shobrak made reference to cases of different species being affected by such control programmes in Saudi Arabia, and Mr Deacon to the many mobile units spraying areas of Zimbabwe against species considered pests.
- Mr Botha stated that access to information on control programmes was an issue that also needed addressing. He suggested adding an activity or subactivity to promote access of researchers and monitors to control programme sites so that data could be collected to assess impacts. Mr Gallo-Orsi also suggested collaborating with FAO on the matter.
- The Group agreed to reflect in the table the need to monitor impacts on raptors in locust and quelea control areas.

Activity 21: *Understand the impacts of climate change on raptors, particularly on their habitats and prey.*

- Mr Matt Parsons (Observer) informed the TAG that the United Kingdom's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) was reviewing evidence of the impact of climate change on migratory species and how changes in migration affected ecosystem functioning. Mr Parsons suggested that the TAG consider JNCC's work in implementing Activity 21.
- Mr Mátyás Prommer (Member of the TAG) noted that a lot of work had already been done on raptors and climate change and offered to contribute to compiling such information.
- Ms Jones added that a "Bird Migration and Climate Change" workshop organized by Navarra Environmental Management on 31 March 2022 had addressed climate change's impacts on raptors. She suggested that the outcomes of that event also be considered in implementing Activity 21.

Activity 23: *Monitor the conservation status of migratory raptors listed in Annex 1.*

- Ms Jones suggested adding a subpoint about the need to include information on satellite tagging mortality in the CSAR. Mr Thompson suggested that such activity be attributed its

own line given its importance.

Activity 25: *Advise on matters pertaining to raptor conservation, including in response to the climate-biodiversity crisis.*

- Mr Prommer proposed that a new activity be added calling for the development of guidelines for raptor reintroduction programmes. Mr Thompson stated that Cambridge Press would be having something published on the matter soon. Ms Jones then indicated that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) had also published '[Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations](#)', to which Mr Botha added that such guidelines were being used often.
- Mr Shobrak considered that long-term monitoring of raptor reintroduction programmes was also an important issue.

In closing the discussion on the agenda item, it was agreed that individuals would revert to the Chair and Coordinating Unit if they wished to take on responsibility for any of the activities included in the Workplan, either as leads or as contributors.

3. Review of the Terms of Reference of the TAG

Ms Lopes introduced the revisions proposed to the TOR of the TAG. She explained that changes concerned: reordering of the text; addition/rephrasing of headers; elimination of repetition and obsolete parts; editorial amendments/improvements; and addition of information for improved clarity and readability.

The revisions proposed to the document:

- clarified that the work of the TAG was to be guided by a Workplan that was to be developed by the Group and approved by MOS;
- clarified that representatives of Signatories could attend TAG meetings as observers, at the discretion of the Chair;
- clarified that Signatories and Cooperating Partners could nominate more than one candidate for TAG member, that nominations were not constrained by the nationality or work base of the nominees, and that both Signatories and Cooperating Partners could nominate individuals for both the position of regional representative and expert;
- clarified that any member of the TAG could propose to the Chair items to be discussed at TAG meetings;
- limited the number of terms that TAG members could serve for (two, exceptionally three); and
- limited the number of terms that the Chair and Vice-Chair could serve for (two, non-sequential terms).

Following the presentation, Ms Jones asked when Signatories would get the opportunity to comment on TAG Workplans. In response, Mr Gallo-Orsi indicated that there was no established process for consultation with Signatories prior to sessions of the MOS, apart from the normal process by which MOS meeting documents were made available to Signatories up to 30 days prior to the meetings. The thinking had been to collect views at the MOS, but if TAG members would want to consult with Signatories beforehand, then that could potentially be arranged for.

Speaking as an observer to the Meeting, Mr Parsons noted that from the United Kingdom's perspective, early engagement on the matter would be welcomed.

Mr Gallo-Orsi then suggested that the TAG could use the deadline framework already in place in the Rules of Procedure. I.e., the TAG could consider adopting the deadline of 150 days prior to MOS for preparing the Workplan and submitting it to Signatories, and Signatories could be given the deadline of up to 60 days prior to MOS to comment.

The Meeting agreed with the revisions made to the TOR of the TAG, noting that they sharpened the document. The Group also agreed that, before making any amendments to the TOR with regards to deadlines for Signatory consultation on TAG Workplans, the TAG would seek to understand better the practice of other CMS MOUs on the matter.

4. Review of the Site Nomination and Amendment Form

Mr Gallo-Orsi presented the few changes proposed to the Site Nomination and Amendment Form explaining how they significantly improved the document’s usability by allowing for listed sites to be amended.

The Meeting agreed on the valued added by the revisions presented.

5. Nominations for Renewing the TAG Membership

Ms Lopes introduced the document explaining the size and composition requirements of the TAG membership, the procedure for electing TAG members, and the criteria that individuals needed to meet to be able to integrate the Group. She then presented the selection panel that operated starting June 2022 to select the 15 candidates most suitable for joining the TAG following MOS3. She presented the results of the panel’s selection exercise, noting that the 15 selected individuals would represent a retention of 50% of existing TAG members, thus supporting the continuity of the TAG’s work. Ms Lopes also remarked that the panel’s selection improved gender balance by raising the total number of serving women from one (Ms Jones) to four.

6. Timeline and Deadlines for Meetings Ahead

Mr Gallo-Orsi presented the schedule that follows (the dates included in the ‘Deadline’ column became available after the Meeting and were added to the present Meeting Report for the convenience of Members of the TAG):

Deadlines	Time before MOS	Document	Reference
3 February 2023	150 days	Submission by Signatories of proposed amendments to the MOU and its Annexes accompanied by rationale and, if appropriate, supporting scientific evidence	ROP, Rules 16.3(a), 16.3(b)
17 February 2023	136 days	Coordinating Unit (CU) shares any proposals to amend the MOU and its Annexes received from Signatories with all other Signatories and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG)	CU’s internal planning

4 April 2023	90 days	Submission by the TAG of proposed amendments to the MOU and its Annexes accompanied by rationale and, if appropriate, supporting scientific evidence	ROP, Rules 16.3(a), 16.3(b)
18 April 2023	76 days	CU shares with all Signatories any proposals to amend the MOU and its Annexes received from the TAG	CU's internal planning
4 May 2023	60 days	Submission by Signatories and the TAG of comments on amendments to the MOU and its Annexes proposed by Signatories and TAG	ROP, Rules 16.3(c), 16.3(d)
3 June 2023	30 days	Documents for MOS made available	ROP, Rule 2.5
3 July 2023		Start date of MOS3	

Mr Gallo-Orsi suggested that the TAG next meet after Signatories' proposals are received by the deadline of 150 days prior to MOS3.

The new TAG membership would ideally meet soon after MOS3 takes place. Until then, the Coordinating Unit shall inquire Signatories about their potential interest in hosting such TAG meeting.

7. Thank you Note to Current TAG Members & Closing of the Meeting

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the TAG, together with the Coordinating Unit, thanked all TAG members for their work and commitment during their appointment.

ANNEX I
ALPHABETICAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members of the TAG

Mr André Botha <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Manager Birds of Prey Programme Endangered Wildlife Trust South Africa
Prof Des Thompson <i>Chair</i>	Principal Adviser on Science and Biodiversity NatureScot United Kingdom
Dr Jari Valkama	Senior Curator Finnish Museum of Natural History Finland
Mr Mátyás Prommer	Nature Conservation Referent Department of Nature Conservation and Ecology Herman Ottó Institute Nonprofit Ltd. Hungary
Prof Mohammed Shobrak	Professor Taif University Saudi Arabia
Dr Munir Virani	Chief Executive Officer The Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund United Arab Emirates
Dr Neil Deacon	President BirdLife Zimbabwe Zimbabwe
Dr Nyambayar Batbayar	Director Wildlife Science and Conservation Center Ulaanbaatar Mongolia
Dr Suresh Kumar	Senior Scientist Wildlife Institute of India Chandrabani India
Dr Vibhu Prakash	Principal Scientist Bombay Natural History Society India
Dr Vicky Jones	Flyways Science Coordinator BirdLife International United Kingdom

Observers

Ms Hannah Wheatley	International Biodiversity Adviser Joint Nature Conservation Committee United Kingdom
Mr Jorgen Eriksson	Desk Officer Natural Environment Department Swedish Environmental Protection Agency Sweden
Ms Karen Gaynor	Scientific Support Officer CITES Secretariat

	Switzerland
Mr Matt Parsons	Joint Nature Conservation Committee United Kingdom
Mr Nick Warmelink	Policy Officer International Species Conservation Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality Directorate-General Nature, Fisheries and Rural Affairs The Netherlands
Mr Ralph Buij	Africa and Asia Program Director The Peregrine Fund The Netherlands

Convention on Migratory Species

Ms Lauren Lopes	Associate Programme Management Officer (Dugong MOU Raptors MOU) CMS Office - Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates
Mr Nikola Besek	Intern - Avian Species CMS Secretariat Germany
Mr Tilman Schneider	Associate Programme Officer (Avian Species) CMS Secretariat Germany
Mr Umberto Gallo-Orsi	Programme Management Officer (Raptors MOU) CMS Office - Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates
