

Urgent Protection Proposed for Some of the World's Most Known Species

Giraffes, Lions, Leopards, Chimpanzees amongst Threatened Animals Proposed for Urgent Protection under Global Conservation Treaty

Bonn, Germany, 1 June 2017 - Once abundant, these species are now threatened by unprecedented destruction of their habitat, poaching, climate change and pollution. Proposals to afford greater protection to 35 species will be made at what is expected to be the largest wildlife conference of the year, CMS COP 12, which is scheduled to take place 23-28 October 2017 in Manila, Philippines.

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS) is a global treaty protecting wildlife moving across international borders. At the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) more than 125 governments are expected to negotiate and potentially agree on coordinated measures on how to reverse the impacts already being felt on these animals and to ensure the species' survival.

The negotiations will revolve around placing these species on Appendix I of the treaty, which affords full protection and requires all countries to ensure that there is no taking or on Appendix II which foresees putting in place management strategies among countries for species that cross their borders.

The listing proposals come from all the continents: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Thirty-five species in total have been proposed, including animals ranging from those that roam the steppes of Central Asia (e.g. the Asian Wild or Przewalski's Horse), well-known majestic African mammals such as Leopards, Lions and Giraffes, birds known for undertaking vast migrations spanning continents and oceans (e.g. the Christmas Frigatebird) and sharks including the Whale Shark which are being overfished with no regulatory impunity to the point where they are now highly threatened,

"The high number of proposals to list species on the Appendices of CMS is a vote of confidence in the Convention as the lead forum for protecting migratory wildlife. As countries turn to CMS to prevent species extinction, the Convention is well placed to coordinate conservation measures for migratory animals and their habitats across the globe. At the same time, the high number of species proposals is a sign that we have a real battle on our hands. We need to strengthen our efforts to better protect a variety of flagship species in different ecosystems. We depend on these species for livelihoods and food security and this is why our future as humankind is intrinsically linked to their survival", said Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of CMS.

For the first time, a CMS COP will be held in Asia, in a region with many mega-diverse countries which are currently undergoing rapid development leading to pressures on migratory wildlife. The COP will be hosted by the Government of the Philippines which has put forward several listing proposals including placing the Whale Shark on Appendix I as well as setting the theme of the COP "Their Future is Our Future – Sustainable Development for Wildlife and People". The theme links the conservation of migratory animals with global efforts underway to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals agreed by the United Nations in 2015.

The full list of species proposed for inclusion on the CMS Appendices is made up of 13 mammals, 16 birds and 6 fish species. The species are: the Lion, the Leopard, the Chimpanzee, the Giraffe, the Gobi Bear, Przewalski's Horse, the Indian Gazelle, the African Wild Ass, the Caspian Seal, the Hoary Bat, the Eastern Red Bat, the Southern Red Bat and the Southern Yellow Bat (mammals); ten species of vulture (the White-rumped, the Indian, the Slender-billed, the Red-headed, the White-backed, the Cape, Rüppell's, the Hooded, the White-headed and the Lappet-faced), the Steppe Eagle, the Christmas Frigate Bird, the Black Noddy, the Yellow Bunting and the Great Grey Shrike and Lesser Grey Shrike (birds); and the Whale Shark, the Dusky Shark, the Blue Shark, the Angelshark, the Common Guitarfish and the White-spotted Wedgefish (fish).

The overview of the listing proposals are available on the CMS website:

<http://www.cms.int/en/news/2017010-proposals-amend-appendices-convention>

And the actual listing proposals will be made available shortly on www.cms.int

Notes for Editors with further details about the species:

Mammals in the steppes and deserts of Africa and Asia

- **The Lion**, numbers of which have declined by 43 per cent in the last two decades across the continent, has been proposed for inclusion on Appendix II. Today an estimated 20,000 – 30,000 animals remain in merely 8 per cent of their historical range. Illegal killing, prey depletion, habitat loss, trade in lion body parts, and disease are the key threats. The species faces a high risk of extinction in the wild.
- **Giraffe** numbers have declined by almost 40 per cent from more than 160,000 in 1985 to a current estimate of almost 100,000. Giraffes are threatened by habitat loss, illegal hunting and drought. In the last century, Giraffes appear to have gone extinct in at least seven countries. Today, they live in fragmented populations across sub-Saharan Africa. Appendix II listing could promote collaboration between Giraffe Range States.
- The **Leopard** is experiencing severe declines in populations globally. Leopard populations have been highly reduced and isolated across the species' range. The species has been extirpated from large areas and only occupies 25-37 per cent of its historical range. Leopards are now extinct in North Africa. Leopards face habitat loss, prey depletion, illegal hunting and unsustainable trophy hunting. Transboundary conservation would benefit the big cat.
- The **Gobi Bear** together with wild Bactrian camel is considered an umbrella species of the Gobi ecosystem. Conservation of this species will also help to protect other wildlife species in the Gobi region. Gobi bears are critically endangered and are found only in the extreme environment of the Gobi Desert of Mongolia and China. Less than 45 bears remain in this unique ecosystem. They are superbly adapted to the low food availability and harsh environment of the Gobi Desert with temperature variation of 80°C. Listing on Appendix I would provide for strong international protection and much needed attention for this rare species and its fragile habitat.
- **Przewalski's Horses (Asian Wild Horses)**, relics from the Ice Age, roamed widely over the steppes of Central Asia, China and Europe before the 20th century. Today, with less than 400 reintroduced and native-born animals living in the wild, the species is Critically Endangered. Limited habitat, pasture and water, as well as mining and military activities threaten the species. Hybridization, social stress and disease associated with domestic horses exacerbate the threats. Appendix I listing would ensure a higher degree of international protection for this species.
- The **Indian Gazelle** (Chinkara) is one of the largest grazing species adapted to semi-arid and arid grasslands and deserts. It plays a key role in maintaining vegetation cover in these ecosystems and is an important prey species for large predators. Apart from India, populations across the range are small, scattered and greatly reduced by over hunting. In addition, border fences present a barrier to migration. Listing on Appendix II of CMS would provide for international protection and support much needed transboundary cooperation between Range States.
- The **African Wild Ass** is well adapted to life in arid habitat in Eritrea and Ethiopia. It can sustain a water loss of up to 30 per cent of its body weight and vary its body temperature to reduce moisture loss. Current population estimates indicate that the wild population across the entire range of this species has declined alarmingly by over 90 per cent since the 1970s, making it the most endangered wild equid in the world. Listing on Appendix I and II could improve protection and ensure the survival of the species.

Aquatic Mammals

- In 2005, the **Caspian Seal** was found to have declined to a very low level of 100,000 or fewer seals, which is about 10 per cent of their former greatest abundance. Unsustainable hunting was the main driver of Caspian Seal decline during the 20th century. Recently bycatch of seals, primarily in illegal sturgeon fisheries has been identified as a major cause of mortality. The species has been proposed for listing on both Appendices.

Great Apes, Africa

- The **Chimpanzee**, with a life expectancy of up to 50 years in the wild, is the most widespread of the great apes. However, numbers are expected to be more than halved for the period 1975-2050 across most its range. Habitat loss, expanding industrial agriculture, hunting for bushmeat, for traditional medicine and for the capture of live infants for illegal wildlife trade are major threats. The Chimpanzee is proposed for listing on both Appendices. An Appendix I listing would require protection, while an Appendix II listing would strengthen collaboration between countries sharing trans-boundary populations.

Bats in the Americas

- **Four species of bat in South America** – the Hoary Bat, Eastern Red Bat, Southern Red Bat and Southern Yellow Bat are proposed for listing on Appendix II. The Hoary Bat migrates some of the longest distances of any bat. In addition to deforestation, collisions with wind turbines are a major threat. More than 75 per cent of 500,000 mortalities in North America occurring during migrations are linked to wind energy.

Vultures and other bird species

- Ten **Vulture** species have been proposed for listing on CMS Appendix I in response to the vulture crisis. Devastating declines in their numbers over the last 25 – 30 years have been driven by a series of threats. Unintentional and targeted poisoning of vultures in elephant poaching incidents has led to a dramatic decline in Africa because their circling above a kill lets the authorities know where poachers are operating. Electrocutation at and collision with power generation and transmission infrastructure; habitat loss; reductions in food availability; and disturbance exacerbate the situation. Most Old World vultures are classified as 'Critically Endangered' or 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of species threatened with extinction. A Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures is a CMS-led effort to address the urgent threat facing one of the two most threatened groups of birds on Earth.
- The **Steppe Eagle** is a migratory raptor which has suffered rapid population declines in recent years. During its migration, which spans thousands of kilometres from Asia to Africa, individuals can cross numerous national boundaries. The species offers important ecosystem services by controlling certain pest populations, such as rodents. It also feeds on carrion and other organic waste in the environment. In recent times, major land-use changes caused by intensification of agricultural practices have affected this species in its traditional steppe-land breeding habitat. Additionally, the Steppe Eagle is threatened by electrocution on, and collision with power lines, as well as unintentional poisoning and some level of direct persecution by those who consider it a threat to livestock. The Steppe Eagle has been proposed for listing on Appendix I.
- Populations of the **Christmas Frigatebird** declined by at least 66 per cent over the last three generations, due to habitat clearance and dust fallout from phosphate mining, marine pollution, overfishing and bycatch in fishing gear. It has been proposed for inclusion on Appendix I.
- **Black Noddy** - The main threat to the population at two breeding sites in the Philippines is a continued loss of breeding habitats. Only up to 25 per cent of the present adult population in 2017 could breed due to lack of breeding trees and foliage for nesting materials.

- The **Yellow Bunting** is threatened by habitat loss, high levels of pesticide use, and unsustainable hunting and trapping for the bird trade. Appendix II listing would encourage more stringent monitoring, encourage enforcement of current laws preventing hunting or capture, and increased protection of both breeding and wintering habitats.
- **Great Grey Shrike** - Favorable environments have disappeared or shrunken sharply, such as reeds, vast expanses of wet meadows that have gradually given way to cereal monocultures. In future, the species may experience a sharp contraction of its breeding range due to habitat loss, shortage of prey and climate change.
- The European population of the **Lesser Grey Shrike**, one of the European passerines that has declined the most in a century in terms of numbers and distribution, has been proposed for listing on Appendix II.

Sharks and Rays

- In addition to the largest fish on Earth, the **Whale Shark**, which is already listed on Appendix II and now proposed for Appendix I, five further species have been proposed for listing on the CMS Appendices, including those of significant commercial interest, such as the **Blue Shark** and the **Dusky Shark** for Appendix II. Twenty million Blue Sharks are being caught every year, but despite this high figure, management measures are largely missing. The endangered **Angelshark** has been proposed for inclusion in Appendix I and II.
- The **Common Guitarfish** and the related **White-spotted Wedgefish**, two ray species, have been proposed for listing on Appendix II. Furthermore, the Mediterranean Sea population of the Common Guitarfish has been proposed listing in Appendix I.

CMS - the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is an environmental treaty under the aegis of UN Environment and provides a legal framework platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass to agree on internationally coordinated conservation measures for a wide range of endangered migratory animals worldwide. CMS is a growing convention with special importance due to its expertise in the field of migratory species. At present, there are 124 Parties to the Convention. Further information can be found on the CMS website: <http://www.cms.int>

COP – the Conference of the Parties is the main decision-making body of the Convention, which meets every three years to adopt policies and laws for the protection of migratory wildlife and to propose new species under the framework. COP12 is taking place in Manila at the invitation of the Government of the Philippines. On the eve of the COP, a High Level Segment attracting Ministers from across the globe will discuss the linkages between protecting migratory wildlife and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

More details on the COP12 agenda are available on the CMS website.

Related links:

[Notification with list of proposals](#)

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