

Minimising the risk of poisoning to migratory birds

Title

BirdLife's views on the resolution

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Poisoning – both deliberate and accidental – is one of the major problems facing migratory birds worldwide, as identified in the CMS flyway resolution. Some birds of prey, especially vultures, are known to be under severe threat from poisoning.

For many other species, poisoning is widespread but is often little noticed or reported, and its effects are more serious than usually realised. But there is no international guidance available for states wishing to address the poisoning problems faced by birds. Without coordinated action, poisoning will remain a major driver of declines in many species.

CMS is the only instrument that can provide international guidance to governments on such a species-specific issue – as shown by the CMS guidelines on powerlines and windfarms. A draft resolution on minimizing the risk of poisoning to migratory birds has been submitted to COP-10 of the CMS by the Swiss Government. It calls on Parties to the CMS, non-Party range states and other stakeholders, including NGOs, to cooperate to address the poisoning of migratory landbirds, whether through the deliberate use of poisons, secondary poisoning by agrochemicals or where other wildlife is the primary target, or accidental or negligent misuse of poisons.

‘Addressing bird poisoning has wider benefits, because there are often great risks also for other wildlife, domestic animals and for people’, said Dr Leon Bennun, BirdLife International’s Director of Science. ‘Bird poisoning is a human health issue too.’ CMS guidelines on preventing poisoning of migratory birds would ideally be developed through a focused working group. A donor is being sought to support a poisoning working group; adoption of the resolution will greatly increase the chances of finding such support.

The group would continue to oversee implementation of the guidelines once they had been adopted at COP-11 in 2014. The CMS/UN Food and Agriculture Organisation’s Task Force on Wildlife Diseases provides an example of how effective such a focused working group can be. The working group would undertake a detailed assessment of the scope and severity of

the poisoning of migratory birds globally, and how it varies geographically and between species and families. Where sufficient evidence exists, it would recommend suitable responses, such as legislation, the operation of effective regulatory regimes, and understanding and addressing the socio-economic drivers of poisoning.