

# Songbirds workshop - Working group discussions



# Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19)

## Directed to the Secretariat

- a) within 12 months of the conclusion of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties, commission a **preliminary study** on the scale and scope of international songbird trade to consider the **management and conservation priorities** of songbird taxa involved in such trade;
- b) consult with appropriate technical experts in the preparation of documents on the conservation, **trade, management, enforcement** and **regulatory priorities** of the songbird taxa identified;
- c) convene a technical workshop to consider the findings of the study and the reports referred to in paragraph b);
- d) invite the members of the Animals and Standing Committees, representatives from range, exporting, transit and consumer States, and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in the workshop; and
- e) make the results of the study and workshop, together with recommendations, available to the Animals Committee for its consideration.

# Possible topics for discussion (not an exhaustive list)

- Captive breeding of songbirds – differentiating between wild and captive bred specimens, registration, marking (review of Res. Conf. 8.13 and 7.12)
- Demand – what drives demand, shifts in demand, merit releases, demand reduction and behavioural change
- Role of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in sustainable trade
- Hybrids and the potential impacts on wild birds
- Harvest methodologies and mortality rates (including during transportation)
- Possible listing proposals – lessons learnt
- Complexity of songbird trade – diverse, shifts, opportunistic
- Appendix III listings
- Capacity building and public awareness
- Mandate for Secretariat to produce additional lists for consideration by the Animals Committee in consultation with Birdlife International
- Improved data recording and management
- Disease management (seized birds spreading disease to local populations)
- Research (NDF)
- What to do with seized birds (repatriation...)
- Purpose of “watch list”

# Observations and draft recommendations



# Implementation of Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19)

## Observations:

- With the submission of the study (Parts 1 and 2) and the results of this workshop, Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) will have been implemented.

## Recommendations:

- Invite the Secretariat to submit the study, workshop report and (TBD) to the Animals Committee for its consideration.
- Watch list can be used to inform listing to CITES, conservation action, and periodic review of CITES-listing

# What to do with seized birds

## Observations:

- Repatriation of species seized in non-range States to the Parties of origin is a challenge (issuing of CITES permits and veterinary complications, another problem often is identifying and proving the origin of the seized birds – use of DNA testing to identify origin). An observed tendency is that they are placed with qualified appropriate facilities (zoos, rescue centres or, in some countries, private breeders), unless the country of origin wants them back. Birds need veterinary care before being repatriated.
- Repatriation is foreseen by CITES: the country of repatriation must accept repatriated animals. Resources available for repatriation are often limited, meaning seized birds may instead be sent to rescue centres
- Genetically appropriate place to release birds (e.g. sub-species)
- What to do with seized hybrids/semi-domesticated birds? Hybrids and/or semidomesticated birds may have impacts on wild populations by contaminating the gene pool (although hybrids may be infertile) and/or affecting the song of wild birds (unknown)

# What to do with seized birds

## Recommendations:

- Remind Parties of the provisions of Resolution Conf. 17.8 (Rev. CoP19) on *Disposal of confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species*, including in particular paragraph 5 and Annexes 1 and 3 of this Resolution, and invite them to consider how these may be applied to non-CITES listed species, as appropriate.

# Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs)

## Observations:

- NDF methodology is a useful methodology for determining sustainability in CITES and non-CITES listed species.
- It is important to consider sex ratios of birds in trade and the different impacts on wild populations.
- There is a need to understand the whole trade chain from harvest to consumer.
- The NDF workshop concluded in Nairobi on 8 December 2023, and will result in general guidance and specific guidance for birds and migratory species on making NDFs.



# Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs)

## Recommendations:

- Encourage Parties to share NDFs for songbird species for inclusion on the CITES website.
- Invite Parties to test the new draft guidance coming from the NDF workshop and provide feedback to the Secretariat to inclusion in its report to AC/PC.
- Invite Parties to apply the NDF guidance to determine whether or not offtake of non-CITES listed species is sustainable.
- Invite Parties to consider involving graduate students in the making of NDFs (e.g. the CITES Master's course).
- Remind Parties that NDF is required for the founder stock of CITES-listed species in captive breeding operations (Resolution Conf. .

# Capacity Building

## Observations:

- Challenges identified include the lack of data (particularly quantitative) on trade in (and captive breeding of) non-CITES listed species, evolving taxonomy and species identification
- Technical and financial capacity of Parties to handle seized and repatriated live songbirds is often lacking.

## Recommendations:

- Identify existing ID material; request AC to review (need to be simple and fit for purpose) – part of ongoing work on ID materials (Dec. 19.142 – 19.144)
- Encourage Parties to develop structures for a species identification network for songbirds, noting the importance of correct identification of songbirds in trade, where possible down to (sub)species/geographically distinct varieties, to ensure preservation of natural genetic diversity.
- Encourage Parties to continuously build their capacity (technical and financial) to handle seized and repatriated live songbirds.

# General Observations

- Large numbers of songbirds are traded both domestically and internationally and for various purposes. This trade is very complex, involving hundreds of species, many of which are not listed in CITES and therefore not subject to international trade regulation.
- The trade in songbirds often overlaps with trade in other bird species (i.e. the same holding facilities, traders, transport companies and routes are involved), and in some cases may provide cover for illegal trade
- Analyses have shown that there are several hotspots in this trade, with regard to consumer perspective as well as from origin
- However there are large gaps in the knowledge on the actual volume, trends, species concerned and impact of this trade on wild populations as well as on the actors, and their motivations, in the various trade chains
- There are also gaps in the knowledge regarding captive-breeding, animal welfare, potential risks with regards to invasive species, and biosecurity of songbirds
- There is a need for executable guidance, knowledge sharing and capacity-building for the management and disposal of confiscated songbirds, particularly when confiscated in large numbers
- There is variability in legislation around the management and keeping of songbirds as well as its enforcement

# General recommendations

- **Parties are encouraged to:**
  - Consider implementing measures to gain better understanding of the trade in songbirds and if needed also implement measures to make sure the species that are or may be affected by international trade are used in a sustainable manner.
  - Share legislation concerning nationally protected songbird species and regulation of their trade, including national lists of species which are considered to be invasive.
  - Invite importing Parties to inform countries of origin, where these can be identified, in case of seizure of non-CITES listed species that may be nationally protected.
  - Collect and share data to address knowledge gaps concerning songbird trade.
  - Taking into account the complexity of the trade, consider multi-species approaches in national conservation planning and collaboration with other range States, and transit and consumer States.

# Captive breeding and marking

## Observations:

- Some species are difficult to breed in captivity, which means trade is dependent on wild-caught specimens.
- On marking:
  - Doing both microchipping and ringing enhances security.
  - Where the species is too small for microchipping, ringing will be sufficient.
  - Smaller species of songbirds may suffer mortality from attempted ringing.
  - Chicks and nest sites may be abandoned by parents after the ringing process.
- Maintaining a close relationship between regulators and breeders, and trade associations, may reduce illegal activity (e.g. Bali myna), but could be labour intensive.
- Ways to differentiate between captive bred specimens and wild specimens include rings, behaviour, morphology, genetics, and the use of other technologies.
- There are concerns in relation to the release of captive-bred hybrids, sick individuals and/or surplus females.
- Tools and expertise for veterinary care, and appropriate animal husbandry, are lacking for songbird species.

# Captive breeding and marking

## Recommendations:

- Invite Parties to consider registration of all songbird breeding operations, ensuring regular inspection and record-keeping to ensure traceability.
- Encourage Parties to share expertise on veterinary care, animal husbandry and techniques of differentiating the origin (wild-caught or captive-bred) or gender of songbird species.
- Encourage Parties to consult the CITES website ([insert link](#)) and share information concerning registered forensic labs and techniques to assist with determination of origin.
- Invite Parties to undertake research into the impacts of handling of birds on their well-being (to be taken into consideration during the review of Resolution Conf. 8.13 (Rev. CoP15)).
- Invite Parties to consider for which species captive breeding may make meaningful contributions to conservation of those species in the wild, as appropriate.
- Invite Parties to use the SiTDB ([insert link](#)) and contribute any available information in relation to the ease of breeding.
- Encourage Parties to implement capacity building activities, as required, to develop breeding know-how and protocols (e.g. diets, numbers per cage, etc) in countries of origin.

# Demand

## Observations:

- If trade is sustainable, demand reduction may not be necessary.
- If trade is unsustainable and/or illegal, demand-reduction or other behaviour-change measures may be necessary.
- Bird keepers often stick to a particular type of bird, e.g. those with the same diet.
- Shifts in trade may occur as a result of a wide variety of factors such as overexploitation, changing consumer preferences, or in response to a CITES listing. Additional research on value chains, investigating livelihoods, social studies to investigate different aspects of the trade, could be beneficial.

## Recommendations:

- Remind Parties of the provisions of Resolution Conf. 17.4 (Rev. CoP19) on *Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species*, and consider how those provisions may be applied to non-CITES listed species, as appropriate.
- Encourage Parties to undertake behaviour-change interventions where trade is unsustainable, taking into consideration specific factors driving demand (along the entire trade chain in country of origin and in consumer states), and share lessons learned with other Parties.

# Role of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs)

## Observations:

- IPLCs play various roles, which may be gender-specific, in the songbird trade chain (e.g. trapping, cage building, etc) and they should be involved in ensuring trade is sustainable.
- Sustainability of livelihoods is often overlooked when considering the sustainability of trade.
- Sometimes trade in songbirds does not significantly contribute to livelihoods, but is a traditional activity with spiritual, ceremonial, recreational or other values. There is a need to enable the rights of IPLCs and support livelihood options contributing to the conservation of wildlife as an integral part of the response to address illegal trade in wildlife.
- Listings come with bureaucratic costs that some countries cannot bear. In some cases, trade shifts to breeders outside range States, who reap the benefits instead of the range States, and could undermine sustainable harvest of wild specimens by IPLCs.
- There is a need to acknowledge the complexity of livelihood issues and diversity of markets and how they drive trade.



# Role of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs)

## Recommendations:

- Encourage Parties to identify alternative income-generating opportunities for IPLCs when species become protected and/or otherwise unavailable for harvest
- ~~Encourage Parties to understand the value chain (define term) for traded species in order to inform their decision-making~~ [Understanding the trade chain is relevant for CITES. Understanding the value chain goes beyond the CITES mandate.]
- Encourage Parties to enable the rights of IPLCs and support livelihood options contributing to the conservation of songbirds as an integral part of making trade legal and sustainable (e.g. promote IPLCs stewardship to protect songbirds and their habitats, and add value to their relationship with the resource, such as involving IPLCs in captive breeding).

# Data recording and management

## Observations:

- Traders and law enforcement personnel do not always record complete information regarding the species being traded/seized
- Accurate data on trade in non-CITES listed species is incomplete, in relation to both quantities and species involved, as well as trade routes, origins and destinations.
- CITES listing (Appendix III) could assist in the collection of trade data. One of the criteria is the species has to be protected by law in the country that proposes the App. III listing.

# Data recording and management

## Recommendations:

- Encourage traders, customs and law enforcement personnel to record trade at the species level, including CITES-listed and non-CITES listed species.
- ~~Incorporate a feedback loop to Parties confirming what has been entered into the CITES trade database, as a mechanism to overcome reporting/recording errors~~ [Secretariat to explain process]

# Harvest methodologies and mortality rates

## Observations:

- Some trapping methods are very indiscriminate, e.g. use of mist nets and glue sticks. Bycatch is usually taken to market rather than killed/released
- Trappers coming into an area from outside often target specific species.
- There is consensus that mortality rates are higher in illegal trade. More information is needed on the mortality rates along the trade chain from harvest to export (both legal and illegal) to determine the overall mortality rates to make NDFs.

## Recommendations:

- Invite Parties to consider adopting measures through legislation to control the use of non-selective trapping practices, including provisions to regulate bycatch and prohibit trapping during reproductive periods
- Recall the provisions of Resolution Conf. 10.21 (Rev. CoP19) on *Transport of live specimens*, and the IATA guidelines.

# Disease management

## Observations:

- In legal trade there is disease screening and better animal welfare standards (true for late stages of international trade, less certain for early stages (capture and holding))
- There is a risk of disease (and parasites) transmission to consumer, other birds in trade, and the environment (wild bird populations)
- Health regulations and transport regulations not always observed even in legal trade

## Recommendations:

- Illegally and legally traded birds both, should undergo health checks and treatment as soon as they are in possession of the authorities.
- Encourage Parties to include sanitary measures in their national legislation relating to the release of seized animals back into the wild
- Invite Parties to implement biosecurity recommendations to avoid spread of pathogens, such as diagnostic testing upon import/export, maintaining closed system songbird breeding operations, transporting animals in lower densities to reduce pathogen transmission, disinfection of shipping materials.

# Possible inclusion in CITES

## Observations:

- It is important to make the outcomes of this workshop and the study referred to in Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) available to Parties (link to decision 19.186 on *identifying information on species at risk of extinction affected by international trade?*)

## Recommendations:

- Parties considering developing a possible listing proposal under Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) are encouraged to work with consumer Parties and to consult with other range States as recommended in Res. Conf. 8.21 (Rev. CoP16)
- Encourage Parties to consider Appendix III listings for species that meet the criteria set out in Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP18) – native species and nationally protected. Proponents must consult with other range States and consider application of the proposed listing across the species range.

# Possible inclusion in CITES

## Recommendations:

- Parties developing a possible listing proposal under resolution Conf 9.24 are encouraged to take note of resolution Conf 12.11 on standard nomenclature and are encouraged to contact the nomenclature specialist of the animals committee in the early drafting stage to confirm the appropriate use of CITES-adopted birds nomenclature in the proposal
- Invite the Secretariate to add an additional table recognising the standard nomenclature, indicating where the nomenclature deviates from that used in the study [BirdLife to insert text]

# Prioritisation of songbirds in trade (methodology)

## Observations:

- CITES listed species have been excluded from the current list of 162 species identified as being in international trade.
- There was consensus that the shortlist of 22 had limited value.
- Reason for listing should be whether a species is or may be affected by international trade.
- New cases for Periodic Review will be selected at AC33.

## Recommendations:

- The wider watchlist (162) + CITES-listed species to be provided to parties for consideration instead of the shorter list of 22.
- Invite the Secretariat to work with BirdLife to include a list of range states for each of the species in the long list (548). Include an appendix that reflects the critically endangered and endangered species for which international trade may impact their conservation status
- Invite the Animals Committee to consider songbird species in the upcoming Periodic Review.



# Other

**Observations:**

**Recommendations:**