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OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Thirty-third meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 12 – 19 July 2024

Species conservation and trade

Terrestrial species

SONGBIRD TRADE AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT (PASSERIFORMES SPP.)

1. This document has been submitted by the Secretariat in relation to agenda item 39 of AC33.*
2. The Annex to this information document contains the proceedings of the technical workshop on *Songbird trade and conservation management* held on 11 – 14 December 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand.

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SONGBIRD TRADE AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

Proceedings of the hybrid workshop held from 11 to 14 December 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand



Songbird Trade and Conservation Management: Proceedings of the hybrid workshop held from 11 to 14 December 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 11 to 14 December 2023, close to 100 experts, policy makers and stakeholders from 28 countries gathered online (66) and in person (33) at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, for an international workshop on songbird trade and conservation management. The workshop was convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and was conducted in English, with interpretation in French and Spanish. The four-day meeting was attended by representatives from range States, exporting, transit, and consumer countries, the CITES Animals and Standing Committees, BirdLife International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (ASTSG), the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), non-governmental organizations, and the pet trade industry.

The workshop was convened in accordance with Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) on *Songbird trade and conservation management (Passeriformes spp.)*, adopted at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18, Geneva, 2019) and revised at its 19th meeting (CoP19, Panama City, 2022). It provided participants with an opportunity to discuss the scale and scope of international songbird trade, and consider the conservation, trade, management, enforcement and regulatory priorities of songbird taxa involved in such trade.

This report contains background information and sets out the objectives of the workshop. It summarizes the workshop discussions and outlines a set of recommendations and next steps that were identified by workshop participants.

This report will be presented for consideration at the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC33, Geneva, July 2024).

1 WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

1.1 Date and venue

The workshop was held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, from 11 to 14 December 2023. It was conducted in English, with interpretation provided in French and Spanish.

1.2 Organization and acknowledgements

The workshop was convened by the CITES Secretariat and was made possible by financial support from Sweden. The background study *A Global Assessment of Songbirds in Trade*, parts 1 and 2, was prepared under contract from the CITES Secretariat by BirdLife International and was made possible by financial support from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Sweden.

1.3 Background

At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties considered document [CoP18 Doc. 79](#), submitted by Sri Lanka and the United States of America, which described the threats facing songbirds (order Passeriformes) from habitat loss and particularly unregulated, illegal, and unsustainable trade. It highlighted that the vast majority of the approximately 6,000 songbird species are not listed in CITES, and that songbird trade is poorly documented outside of CITES-listed species. At the same meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.256 to 18.259 on *Songbird trade and conservation management (Passeriformes spp.)*. The Secretariat reported on progress with the implementation of these Decisions to the 31st meeting of the Animals Committee (AC31, online, 2021) in Document [AC31 Doc. 30](#), noting that no external funding had been secured at the time to enable the implementation of Decisions 18.256 to 18.259. The Animals Committee subsequently

submitted Document [CoP19 Doc. 74](#) for consideration at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19, Panama City, 2022), which adopted the revised and renewed Decisions 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) to 18.259 (Rev. CoP19) on *Songbird trade and conservation management (Passeriformes spp.)*, as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

- 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) Subject to available funds, the Secretariat shall:
- 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.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 18.257 (Rev. CoP19) The Animals Committee shall review document CoP18 Doc. 79 and the results of the study and workshop on trade in songbirds, with the recommendations of the Secretariat, as per Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19), and make its own recommendations to the Standing Committee or 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 18.258 (Rev. CoP19) The Standing Committee shall consider the recommendations by the Animals Committee and make its own recommendations to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to Parties and non-Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, commercial traders and donors

- 18.259 (Rev. CoP19) Parties and non-Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, commercial traders and donors are encouraged to provide funding to the Secretariat for the implementation of these Decisions.

1.4 Workshop objectives

The workshop was convened in fulfilment of paragraph c) of Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) on *Songbird trade and conservation management (Passeriformes spp.)*, and provided participants with an opportunity to discuss the scale and scope of international songbird trade, and consider the conservation, trade, management, enforcement and regulatory priorities of songbird taxa involved in such trade. Participants also had an opportunity to submit resource materials for consideration during the workshop, and to review the preliminary findings of the background study *A Global Assessment of Songbirds in Trade*, parts 1 and 2, prepared under contract from the CITES Secretariat by BirdLife International. The final version of this study, along with this workshop report and its recommendations, will be presented for consideration at the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee (Geneva, July 2024).

1.5 Agenda

The workshop agenda is included in Annex A.

1.6 Documentation

All documentation for the workshop remains available at <https://cites.org/eng/node/138343>, including the background study (parts 1 and 2 and the table of priority songbirds), and a summary of responses to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/103. Additional information documents and literature on a variety of topics is also available at the abovementioned link, including:

- Illegal songbird trade and captive breeding of songbirds in Europe;
- The impact of the deletion of birds from CITES Appendix III on global trade reports and dynamics;
- Songbirds in Trade Database;
- Songbird Species Knowledge Initiative;
- Americas Songbird crisis;
- Asias Songbird crisis;
- Other resources.

Finally, the above link includes copies of all presentations made during the workshop.

1.7 Participants

A list of all workshop participants and the countries/ organizations they represent is included in Annex B.

2 WORKING STRUCTURE

2.1 Opening session

The workshop opened with a welcome address from the CITES Secretary-General, Ms. Ivonne Higuero, who emphasized that songbirds face increasing threats that demand our urgent attention and collaborative action. Ms. Higuero further stated that: *“Thailand, with its rich biodiversity and deep cultural appreciation for nature, serves as a fitting backdrop for these discussions on the challenges and opportunities surrounding the trade in songbirds, whose melodious tunes and exquisite plumage, hold a special place in our collective consciousness.”*

Next, Karen Gaynor of the CITES Secretariat gave an introductory presentation to explain and establish the conduct and objectives of the workshop, in line with paragraphs a) and b) of Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) cited above.

2.1.1 Background study: A Global Assessment of Songbirds in Trade

Amy McDougall from BirdLife International then gave a detailed introduction to the background study '*A Global Assessment of Songbirds in Trade*', which is organized in two parts. Part 1 analyzes the patterns and processes in the global trade in songbirds, while part 2 presents a proposed prioritization of songbird species in global trade to inform management and conservation priorities.

Participants learned that the main data sources used for the study included the CITES Trade Database, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS), a digitized dataset of market survey reports and other sources of information on birds in trade (Donald *et al.*, 2023)¹, the Songbirds in Trade Database (SiTDB) (Juergens *et al.*, 2021)², the European Union Trade in Wildlife Information Exchange (EU TWIX), the TRAFFIC Wildlife in Trade Information System (WiTIS), information provided by Parties to CITES in response to [Notification to the Parties No. 2023/103](#), and a review of single-species and multi-species studies from the grey and academic literature. Although CITES is only concerned with international trade, both international and domestic trade were considered for this initial scoping study, as the former is not independent of the latter.

The aforementioned datasets were combined to develop a 'trade prevalence score', which can help to discriminate between heavily or unsustainably traded species and all other species. However, BirdLife emphasized that there are many ways that can be used to prioritize species for management and conservation interventions, and the approach used in this study is only one such option.

[Notification to the Parties No. 2023/103](#) was issued on 22 August 2023 to seek information on the status, management and trade in songbirds. Twenty-four Parties and two observer organizations responded to the Notification, providing extensive information on regional trade routes and key importer/exporter countries in Southeast Asia, South America, and the Balkans, as well as providing greater details on global trade routes to Europe and the Middle East. This information was used to inform the list of songbird species potentially threatened by trade.

Key takeaways from the study include:

- Trade in songbirds is pervasive, involving millions of wild-sourced songbirds annually, and taking place at all scales from local to global and across many songbird families.
- With 6,603 known extant species, the order Passeriformes is the largest order of birds, representing 60% of all bird species worldwide. Currently, 94 songbird species (1.4% of all songbird species) are listed in CITES Appendices, including 13 in Appendix I, 75 in Appendix II and 6 in Appendix III.
- The addition in 1997 to CITES Appendices of a number of heavily traded species resulted in a significant increase in the number of CITES-listed birds in legal trade, but this subsequently declined, first in wild-caught birds (rarely recorded in trade since 2005) and more recently in captive-bred birds.
- LEMIS data between 2000 and 2014, which includes 555 CITES-listed and non-CITES-listed species of songbirds, shows an overall decline in the number of live

¹ Donald, P.F., E. Fernando, L. Brown, M. Busana, S.H.M Butchart, S. Chng, A. de la Colina, J. Machado Ferreira, A. Jain, V.R. Jones, R. Lapido, K. Malsch, A. McDougall, C. Muccio, D. Nguyen, W. Outhwaite, S.O. Petrovan, C. Stafford, W.J. Sutherland, O. Tallowin, R. Safford, 2023. *Assessing the global prevalence of wild birds in trade*. bioRxiv, p. 2023.08.09.552606. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2023.08.09.552606>.

² Juergens, J., S. Bruslund, J. Staerk, R.O. Nielsen, C.R. Shepherd, B. Leupen, K. Krishnashamy, S.C.L. Chng, J. Jackson, R. da Silva, A. Bagott, R.R. Nóbrega Alves, D.A. Conde, 2021. *A standardized dataset for conservation prioritization of songbirds to support CITES*. Data in Brief, 36 (2021), Article 107093. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2021.107093>.

songbirds legally imported to the United States of America, with very few wild-caught songbirds being imported by 2014.

- Available evidence of illegal trade in songbirds, both domestic and international, indicates that the most frequently recorded songbird species being illegally traded are White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*, included in Appendix II in 2023) and Common Hill Myna (*Gracula religiosa*, included in Appendix II in 1997), based on literature, WiTIS and EU TWIX data.
- Trade datasets and literature resources sample only a small part of the overall global illegal trade. Numbers of songbirds in illegal trade are certainly very much higher than the data indicate.
- Songbird families with the highest proportional volume of species in trade include the Estrildidae (estrildid finches), Paradisaeidae (birds of paradise), Cardinalidae (cardinals and allies), Viduidae (indigobirds and wydahs), Sturnidae (starlings, mynas and allies) and Emberizidae (buntings). However, trade patterns may vary at regional scales.
- Hotspots of songbird trade include Asia (particularly Southeast Asia), South America (particularly the Guiana Shield and the Southern Cone), West Africa and the Maghreb region of North Africa, and Europe (particularly the Balkans and the wider Mediterranean region).
- Wild-caught birds dominate the international trade in 89.4% of species traded. This is the case for both CITES and non-CITES listed species. While, captive-bred individuals appear to be increasing in legal trade, illegal trade in wild-caught specimens of the same species may occur at the same time.
- Captive-breeding operations can affect wild populations if they depend on wild-caught individuals to bolster or found new breeding populations. Interbreeding of different subspecies may also erode genetic lineages and genetic diversity of wild populations if interbred individuals escape or are intentionally released.
- Purposeful misreporting of wild individuals as captive-bred is an issue for some species (especially those with abundant wild populations and which are expensive or difficult to breed in captivity).
- There are numerous examples of trade in songbirds that is unsustainable at local, national or global levels, which can impact a wide range of wild songbird populations, even when the species concerned is initially abundant. Nevertheless, significant data gaps remain, such as lack of knowledge of wild population sizes or accurate assessments of trade volume. Consequently, efforts in the framework of CITES to address sustainability issues in songbird trade need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, and will depend on the availability of adequate data to inform management and conservation decisions.
- The impact of regulatory changes on the sustainability of songbird trade remains unclear. Many countries with advanced national legislation are key trading hubs for the illegal and legal international trade in songbirds. Trade bans on wild-caught birds imposed by the United States of America and the European Union may, on the face of it, have had a positive impact on the viability of wild songbird populations, but when examined more closely, the consequences are more complex. There is evidence that legal trade in the EU was replaced by illegal trade with wild birds being laundered into the captive-bred market, and that bird trade was displaced into other regions (e.g. new trade routes for birds from Africa to the Middle East and South Asia).

The study also produced a list of songbird species that should be prioritized for management and conservation action. Of the approximately 6,600 species of songbirds, the study found evidence that 548 are heavily traded. Of these, there are 162 songbird species where there is evidence of significant trade in wild-caught individuals. BirdLife used trade prevalence scores and global threat status (as per the IUCN Red List) to identify a draft shortlist of 22 priority

species for management and conservation action, recognizing that their approach is only one of many possible approaches that could be used to draw up a shortlist. During the workshop, this shortlist of 22 species, and the methodology used to develop it, were extensively discussed, and recommendations were made (see Section 3 of this report).

2.2 Additional presentations by observer organizations

Following the introduction to the background study, additional background information was presented by workshop participants, who had made submissions to the Secretariat prior to the workshop.

2.2.1 Addressing illegal and unsustainable songbird trade in Asia

Jessica Lee and Serene Chng from The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (ASTSG) presented a brief history of ASTSG's establishment and its programme of work. ASTSG aims to create synergy among the many organizations and individuals working on Asian songbird trade issues, by bringing together subject matter experts from different fields and facilitating efforts to:

- "prevent the extinction of Asian songbirds threatened by unsustainable trapping and the trade in wild-caught passerines"; and
- "address the impact of the trade and find solutions through which the growing threat to an ever increasing number of songbird species can be reversed and improve the conservation status of all species involved".

ASTSG also contributes updated information and recommendations for IUCN Red List assessments and CITES listing proposals and decisions. A conservation strategy containing recommendations and action points from the first Asian Songbird Crisis Summit (Singapore, 2015) guides the ASTSG's priorities. A two-tiered list of priority taxa (last updated in April 2022) is maintained by the group, which recognizes unique conservation units (e.g. subspecies or subpopulations) threatened by trade (international and domestic), even if they are not globally threatened at the species level. Tier 1 of the list includes 43 taxa whose survival is urgently impacted by trade, making them the top priority for conservation actions. Tier 2 is a watch list of 25 taxa that are present in trade but where the severity of impacts on wild populations requires more research and monitoring.

ASTSG presented several examples of interventions and successes by its members, with among others:

- Ecosystem Impact's work on Simeulue and its satellite islands off the western coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, which achieved ongoing successful breeding (and reintroduction) of the White-rumped shama (*Copsychus malabaricus hypoliza*), the implementation of SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) patrols, continued collaboration with local communities (in particular women) and the employment of 39 members of local communities as Conservation Rangers;
- Kanopi Indonesia's work in Yogyakarta and Central Java, Indonesia, to build community capacity in sustainable landscape management, develop community-based monitoring and strengthening local livelihoods, with a focus on ex-poachers;
- FLIGHT's work in Indonesia on supporting law enforcement agencies to intercept and seize smuggled songbirds and map out trade networks, which resulted in the rescue of an estimated 180,000 songbirds from the illegal wildlife trade in the past 5 years. Surviving birds are released back into the wild;
- Other initiatives mentioned include:
 - Silent Forest Group, a working group of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Songbird Taxon Advisory Group;

- Songbirds in Trade Database (see also section 2.2.2 below);
- Support provided to proponent Parties Malaysia, Singapore and United States for the CITES listing of Straw-headed bulbul (uplisting) and White-rumped shama (see also section 2.3.9 below).

The discussion that followed this presentation raised the question of seized birds being released into the wild and the risks posed by releasing subspecies that were captured on one island back into the wild on another island, where they may hybridize with local subspecies. ASTSG confirmed that this is an ongoing concern, both in the captive-bred and seize-release scenarios.

Asked whether the relative numbers of birds in trade compared to the size of their populations in the wild is used as a measure to identify species most impacted by trade, ASTSG noted that that information is often hard to obtain, given that many of the (sub)species in trade live on small, remote islands and there is not a lot of knowledge about either the size of their wild populations, or the volume of trade. It is more informative to look at trends: when the availability of a species on the market declines, but demand increases (as indicated by an increase in prices), that is a good proxy for identifying that the wild populations of the species concerned are declining.

2.2.2 Songbird Species Knowledge Index (SKI)

Simon Bruslund of Copenhagen Zoo presented the Songbird SKI, which is a collaborative initiative by multiple institutions, using the Species360 methodology to look at large datasets, with the aim to support the implementation of Decision 18.256, adopted at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18, Geneva, 2019). Species360 is a software-driven company owned by zoos around the world, which keeps records of all the data of zoo animals.

As a result of the work undertaken by the Songbird SKI, the Songbirds in Trade Database (SiTDB) was developed. The latest version has evolved into an open-access online database, available at <https://www.sitdb.org>. It includes information on all songbird species, and whether or not they are in trade, as well as a judgment regarding the level of concern for species in trade (based on a qualitative approach). Additionally, the SiTDB has started collecting data about the difficulty in breeding certain species in captivity, which is dynamic, based on the level of knowledge and breeding experience that exists.

Care should be taken about looking at international trade in isolation. In the SiTDB assessment of level of concern, none of the species assessed have a high level of concern when looking at international trade only, but for many species there is a high or very high level of concern for domestic trade. It follows that when there is a high concern for a species in domestic trade, combined with a moderate concern for that same species in international trade, then there is potentially a problem.

SiTDB has been looking at different ways of identifying priority species, by firstly identifying those that are in international trade (excluding those that are CITES-listed), then going through a decision tree which includes considering their IUCN Red List status. The resulting list includes many of the same species as those identified by BirdLife, and has indeed been incorporated in that study (see section 2.1.1 above). Geographically, most of the species that are considered threatened by trade on the IUCN Red List are found in Southeast Asia, but when looking at species found in international trade but for which their (often outdated) IUCN Red List assessment does not identify trade as a threat, many are found in Africa.

The SiTDB is intended as an information document for CITES, but also as an additional resource for making IUCN Red List assessments. It is also intended to inform priorities for zoos and conservation programmes and to inform research and recommendations for action by other stakeholders.

2.2.3 Studies on CITES listing changes and illegal songbird trade in the EU

Simon Bruslund further presented ongoing studies on songbirds undertaken with the support of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), particularly a study on the impacts of the EU ban on the import of wild birds, and an investigation of the illegal trade in wild songbirds in the EU.

Exploring the Global Trade Impact of CITES Listing Changes amidst the EU Import Ban on Wild Birds

In 2007, Ghana de-listed 114 bird species from Appendix III, including 71 songbird species (*Passeriformes*). This was shortly after the European Union, in October 2005, implemented a ban on the import of all wild birds for commercial purposes, mainly in response to the spread of avian influenza. This ban was made permanent in 2007 and remains valid today. Prior to this ban, the EU was the biggest importer of wild birds globally.

The ban contributed to a big drop in global bird trade in 2006, which was also partly the result of the global spread of avian influenza, which led many countries to restrict bird trade. An analysis of the CITES Trade Database clearly demonstrates this drop in bird trade, and suggests that this trade has remained relatively low since then. A closer look at the data reveals that prior to the ban, some 70% of bird species in trade consisted of the species delisted by Ghana in 2007, and that trade in those species completely stops in 2006. By 2010, the species which were not delisted by Ghana were back to their pre-import-ban trade levels.

As a result of the delisting, data on trade in delisted species is no longer recorded in the CITES Trade Database, which raised the question of whether trade in those species actually stopped, or if it continued without being recorded. LEMIS data shows that prior to 2006, there were very few imports into the United States of America of species delisted by Ghana in 2007. However, following the EU import ban, trade in delisted species to the United States of America surged, going from zero individuals imported in 2006 to nearly 40,000 individuals imported in 2007, nearly doubling the global bird trade that was reported in the CITES Trade Database for that year. This demonstrates that the EU import ban did not result in bird traders going out of business, but rather that they very quickly found new markets. Senegal, Guinea and Mali together accounted for 70% of the trade in delisted species recorded in the CITES Trade Database prior to 2007, and nearly 50% of the trade in those species recorded in LEMIS after 2007 (although the bird species concerned had been listed in Appendix III by Ghana until 2007, trade from Ghana only accounted for 0,6% of all trade in those species).

In conclusion, this study highlights that the delisting amplified the perceived drop in global bird trade following the EU import ban, but that trade in West African birds continued outside the EU. The study also highlights that Appendix III is a very effective tool to regulate and monitor trade, and that gaining a complete picture of the trade situation for any species or species groups required compilation of multiple, complementary datasets.

An investigation of the illegal trade of wild songbirds in the EU

This study explored the effectiveness of the EU import ban on wild birds and how it has affected songbird imports. It found that, despite the ban, species not previously seen in trade or captive breeding in the EU were entering the market (for example, Collared laughingthrush - *Trochalopteron yersini* - from Viet Nam appeared on the EU market in 2016). On the basis of data recorded in the SiTDB, the study looked at trade in wild-caught songbirds in the EU after 2006 and compared that with which species are being bred in captivity in the EU.

A total of 911 songbird species with wild-caught specimens in the EU trade were identified, covering 67 (48.6% of) songbird families. Of these, only 38 species are listed in the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations, and only 22 are listed in CITES. Of the 911 species with wild-caught specimens in trade, there was evidence of captive breeding for 552 species. Possible reasons

why wild-caught specimens of species that are also bred in captivity include: i) captive breeding may not be able to supply the high demand in the EU; ii) wild individuals are often cheaper than their captive-bred counterparts; and iii) among some consumer groups, wild birds may be perceived to be more attractive.

The study highlights the existence of a previously undocumented illegal trade in songbirds in the European Union and shows that the demand in the EU cannot be met by captive breeding alone and may play a role in the population declines of some species. However, more research is needed to gain a better understanding of the numbers involved. There is a need for better enforcement, but also to fill loopholes in existing legislation (for example, it is legal to bring wild birds as personal pets and then sell those in the EU). There is still little awareness about the EU import ban and the conservation impacts of songbird trade, hence awareness raising and demand reduction campaigns are also recommended.

The discussion that followed this presentation highlighted the challenges faced by enforcement, given that trade within the EU (between Member States) remains possible, and each Member State has different requirements for the marking of specimens (eg. ringing), making it difficult, if not impossible, for enforcement officers to differentiate between wild-caught and captive bred birds.

2.2.4 Songbird trade observations and seizures in Southeast Asia

Serene Chng from TRAFFIC International - Southeast Asia shared some examples of trade data collected through market observations and seizure analyses in Southeast Asia, and discussed some of the caveats involved in looking at these types of data.

- Market surveys (full market inventories) were carried out in selected major cities across Southeast Asia, giving a snapshot of the volume of trade and the species involved;
- From 2014 to 2018, TRAFFIC recorded over 86,000 birds for sale (both legal and illegal) in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The vast majority of these were songbirds;
- In Indonesia, 90% of birds in trade are native, whereas in Singapore, 80% of birds in trade are not native. In Viet Nam, 90% of birds recorded in trade are not protected by law. Many species are believed to be wild-sourced as they are not known to be commercially captive-bred;
- An increase in prices can indicate increasing demand for and/or increasing rarity of a species;
- In 2017 and 2018, subsequent surveys of two of Bali's biggest bird markets found a 5% increase in bird species sourced from eastern Indonesia and more montane species, indicating a shift from locally sourced birds to birds sourced further afield. This may indicate a depletion of local populations;
- TRAFFIC regularly collects seizure data from open and government sources. These seizure data have also informed the SiTDB and the BirdLife study. An important caveat is that seizures are an indication of illegal trade and enforcement and reporting effort, and therefore represents an unknown proportion of illegal wildlife trade;
- Between January 2014 and November 2023, 49% of all bird seizures in Southeast Asia involved songbirds (1,126 seizures), while 82% of all confiscated birds were songbirds (527,820 seized songbirds);
- Between 2014 and 2020 there was a five-fold increase in the number of songbird seizures in Southeast Asia, indicating increased awareness / attention paid to the issue by law enforcement agencies. Over the same time period, there was a 55-fold increase in the volume of songbirds confiscated;
- Many seizure incidents do not record data on the origins and destinations of seized birds. Only 10% of incidents included information on international trade routes. These involved eleven exporting / transit countries and 17 destination countries. While most

of this trade is regional in Southeast Asia, it also involves other regions, including East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the United States of America;

- A lot of birds are being smuggled by sea across the Straits of Singapore and Melaka, as well as overland from Sarawak (Malaysia) to West Kalimantan (Indonesia). This indicates that songbird trade is increasingly an international issue, and suggests that the species involved are no longer sufficiently abundant locally to supply the demand;
- More data on wild populations is required to assess the impact of trade.

The discussion following this presentation emphasized the need to understand the drivers of trade, including from the demand side, especially in light of the fickleness of the trade, which may see significant shifts in volumes being traded in one species, or shift from one species to another (eg. substitute or 'gateway'³ species).

2.2.5 Trade in live birds from Africa

Rowan Martin of the World Parrot Trust shared insights into the scale and scope of trade in non-CITES listed birds from Africa, based on studies of that trade from the perspective of concerns about the sustainability of the trade in parrots, and the overlap between that trade and non-CITES listed birds, including songbirds. This presentation confirmed points raised previously by Simon Bruslund with regard to the EU import ban on wild birds and the near-simultaneous delisting of 114 bird species by Ghana, and supplemented those with information about trade in African birds going elsewhere than the EU or the United States of America.

One study focusing on birds offered for sale on social media by West African traders found that:

- Online trade in birds from Africa occurs at scale, with lots of birds being traded and many different species being mixed together;
- Of the top 15 birds offered for sale online, eleven were non-CITES listed, and five were songbirds (none of which are CITES-listed);
- Overall, 37 species of songbirds were being offered for sale online (compared to 71 songbird species having been delisted by Ghana in 2007, so it appears that not all of those species are still actively being traded);
- Songbirds were being traded in greater quantities than non-passerine bird species;
- Trade routes involve destinations particularly in South Asia, but also in the Middle East, with some routes transiting through the Horn of Africa.

Another study looked at UN Comtrade data (submitted by all UN Parties to the World Customs Organization), again focusing on non-CITES listed birds. This study focused in particular on Singapore and Hong Kong SAR of China, which are known trade hubs. This study showed that:

- A very significant proportion of live birds being traded between 2006 and 2020 originate from Africa, involving over a million birds (70%) imported to Singapore alone;
- Mali, Guinea and Mozambique emerge as significant exporting countries (and Tanzania prior to its ban on the export of wildlife being put in place in 2018).

In conclusion, Africa is a major source of live birds entering global trade, including songbirds. There is overlap of legal and illegal trade, including trade in threatened species, but there is little monitoring of this trade and its impacts.

³ A 'gateway' species is a species that may be bought by pet owners to gain experience in the caring for or breeding of that species prior to 'graduating' to another species that is more difficult to care for or breed.

2.3 Perspectives from Parties to the Convention

The second day of the workshop was dedicated to sharing experiences from Parties in relation to the issue of songbird trade in their respective countries, and the actions taken to address it.

2.3.1 Suriname

Mr. Romeo Lala from the Suriname Forest Service joined the workshop online and spoke about the trade in songbirds in Suriname.

Trade in songbirds in Suriname is primarily for singing competitions. The most popular songbird species in the country is *Oryzoborus (Sporophila⁴) crassirostris*, which is protected by the State Order on Game 2002. This law establishes a hunting season and a bag limit for the trapping of cage species, however, there is no limit on the number of birds a trapper is allowed to possess, except if the purpose of the trade is export. Legal international trade in songbirds occurs and is regulated through an export quota list for some species. Common trade destinations include the United States of America, Kuwait, the Czech Republic and Uzbekistan. There is also illegal trade, with an annual demand for songbirds from Surinamese origins in the Netherlands. Smuggled species are not listed on the CITES Appendices, but they are nationally protected in Suriname.

At the national level, demand for songbirds is driven by hobbyists, participants in singing competitions, songbird breeders (occasionally), pet shop owners, and indigenous and tribal community members. The culture of keeping songbirds for singing competitions may have started as early as the arrival in Suriname of the first immigrants from China in 1858, and has since been recognized as a sport. There are more than thirty registered songbird breeders in the country, who are mostly interested in *Oryzoborus crassirostris* and *O. angolensis*.

Enforcement of the law has its challenges, with only few field stations currently staffed by the Suriname Forest Service. Game wardens patrol arterial roads and markets, and Port Health Inspectors intercept smuggled wildlife at border stations and international airports. Violation of these laws is considered an economic offense, with jail time and fines usually being imposed.

Regulatory priorities identified by Suriname include:

- Making an NDF of wild songbird populations;
- Do an inventory of songbird stocks held by breeders and pet shops;
- Establish a possession limit for keeping songbirds;
- Create preconditions to ensure only captive bred specimens of *O. angolensis* and *O. crassirostris* may be traded internationally. Meanwhile, wild-caught specimens of other songbird species may still be allowed for trade.

2.3.2 Cuba

Ms. Viana Victoria Barceló Pérez from the CITES Management Authority of Cuba provided an overview of songbird trade in Cuba.

Legal trade in songbirds occurs both domestically in Cuba, and internationally, with the main importing countries being the Netherlands (Curaçao), Guatemala, Mexico and Panama. There is also significant illegal trade, with birds being illegal caught in 98 locations across the country, according to a survey undertaken for the period August to November 2021. Domestically, the illegal trade is driven by a demand for pets and the use of songbirds for religious purposes.

⁴ Note that *Oryzoborus* is listed as *Sporophila* in the Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World, however, CITES Parties still treat it as *Oryzoborus* in line with the standard nomenclature reference Howard & Moore 3rd Ed.

International illegal trade also occurs, with common destinations being the United States of America and Spain.

The trade in songbirds is regulated by Decree-Law 31/2021 on Animal Welfare, Law no. 151/2023 Criminal Code (which imposes fines and prison sentences of two to five years, or three to eight years if the offences were carried out in a protected area, by using toxic substances, explosives or other means of mass extraction, or as part of a group of three or more persons or linked to transnational organized crime), Law 150/2023 on the System of Natural Resources and the Environment, and Resolution 92/2023 for the control of species of special significance, genetic resources of biological diversity and activities with biological risk.

The government of Cuba has taken actions to implement the Lima Declaration on illegal wildlife trade, through prevention and enforcement, citizen perception, control of private companies and artisans, legal commercialization of natural resources, and improved border control. Its priorities going forward include:

- Strengthening control in the areas where songbird species are harvested, including the use of modern technology;
- Improving coordination between the authorities involved;
- Imposing criminal sanctions on offenders;
- Coordination with zoos for quarantine and reintroduction of confiscated animals or creation of true rescue centres;
- Strengthening border control and delivery of information to prepare the annual illegal trade report to CITES;
- Demand reduction.

2.3.3 United States of America

Dr. Jen Miller of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) joined the workshop online, and gave a presentation about the USFWS' attention on songbird trade for singing competitions. This international trade is fueled by U.S. demand, and regulated by the Wild Bird Conservation Act (which applies to CITES-listed species), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act. Due to its contributions to declines in native migratory birds as well as non-native birds, and the resources required to care for frequently seized live and injured birds, songbird trade for singing competitions is a USFWS priority.

Songbird trade for singing competitions in the Americas involves strong socio-cultural and economic value of birds in trade, some of which sell for as much as 10,000 USD per bird. The trade occurs at domestic, regional and intercontinental levels, and is driven by a demand from participants in singing competitions (mostly adult men) in the Guiana Shield, Caribbean and global diaspora. Birds are harvested by trappers, often located in rural communities, and transported from rural areas to major cities via road, sea, and air. Preliminary evidence collected by USFWS suggests this trade is driving declines in wild songbird populations.

The USFWS approach focuses on: i) catalyzing work on solutions, especially human dimensions; ii) strengthening the network of partners; and iii) attracting more attention to and investment in the issue. For example, the USFWS Combating Wildlife Trafficking Program's Species Conservation Catalyst Fund (SCCF) invests 5 million USD over 10 years to support new and existing strategies to reduce the illegal, unsustainable international trade of songbirds native to the Guiana Shield and Caribbean traded for singing competitions. Supported actions include: i) research on trade chains and impact on species and people; ii) species recovery; iii) sustainable livelihoods and sourcing of birds; iv) strengthened laws and authority capacity; and v) sustainable and traceable consumer demand. A Notice of Funding Opportunity (<https://www.fws.gov/service/species-conservation-catalyst-fund>) for Songbirds had closed

just a few days before the workshop; the next funding opportunity will likely be available in 2025.

Successes to date include 1.5 million USD in project awards by June 2024 from SCCF Songbird, increased coordination across NGOs, universities and government agencies in at least six source and demand countries, and projects committed to fill critical gaps in knowledge and data.

In conclusion, the illegal, unsustainable songbird trade for singing competitions appears to be threatening native songbirds in the Americas.

2.3.4 Thailand

Ms. Klairoong Poonpon from the Department of National Parks of Thailand next shared experiences from Thailand.

The Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act, B.E. 2562 (2019), or WARPA, regulates the protection of and trade in wildlife, including 228 songbird species. Of these, twelve are listed as breedable.

Legal trade in songbirds occurs domestically, and reflects a strong cultural connection to bird keeping and singing competitions. Red-whiskered bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) is a particularly popular species. Legal international trade also occurs in small numbers, with Red-whiskered bulbul and Hill myna (*Gracula religiosa*) dominating exports. There are few legal imports recorded between 2018 and 2022.

Illegal trade also occurs, and is widespread. The most common species involved include Red-whiskered bulbul, White-rumped shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*), Scaly-breasted munia (*Lonchura punctulata*), Baya weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*), and Stripe-throated bulbul (*Pycnonotus finlaysoni*). This illegal trade, some of which occurs online, concerns both exports from and imports into Thailand, originating, for example, from Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.

Challenges identified by Thailand include:

- Development of a database and a mobile App for identification of CITES-listed species to facilitate the registering of breeding and trading of wildlife species for ownership purposes, to reduce illegal activities and improve traceability;
- Monitoring the breeding operation and trade;
- Internal mechanisms to enhance conservation efforts;
- Demand reduction;
- Identifying the conservation actions that would be most beneficial to priority species.

2.3.5 Morocco

The situation of songbird trade and conservation in Morocco was presented by Mr. Mohamed Noaman from the National Agency of Water and Forests (Agence nationale des eaux et forêts).

Several songbird species are listed in Category 4 of Law 29.05 on the protection of wild species of flora and fauna and the control of their trade, which entered into force in 2015 and prohibits their wild harvest, export, sale, and keeping (including for breeding) in the absence of a permit. European goldfinch is also covered by the Game Law (Loi sur la chasse).

Morocco is located on the East Atlantic Flyway, and provides habitat to a large number of migratory and resident birds, 40% of which are songbirds. There are 30 songbird families, and 110 species with breeding populations. Domesticated songbird species include European greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*), Eurasian linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), European serin (*Serinus serinus*), Eurasian siskin (*Spinus spinus*), and European goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*).

Several hybrids are also found in captivity. Species commonly found in trade are often wild-caught or bred in captivity by hobbyists. No captive breeding permits for songbirds have been issued in Morocco.

European goldfinch is targeted most by poachers, due to high demand both nationally and internationally and the attractiveness of its plumage and song repertoire. The male is also used to crossbreed with canaries. Most seizures of this species occur near the border with Algeria (almost 75%), followed by the northern region (border with Europe).

Songbird conservation and management efforts in Morocco to date have included:

- Encouraging hobbyists to organize themselves in associations and federations;
- In partnership with those federations, elaboration of a procedure to regulate birdkeepers and the management of the issuance of permits for the capture and keeping of European goldfinch for the benefit of association members;
- Awareness raising among federations for the establishment of captive breeding facilities, especially for European goldfinch, in accordance with applicable legislation;
- Strengthening surveillance and anti-poaching by putting in place Wildlife Surveillance and Control Units;
- Capacity building of judges, magistrates, customs, Royal Gendarmerie, and the Wildlife Surveillance and Control Units through the organization of training sessions;
- Signature of an agreement with the Customs and Indirect Tax Administration for better application of Law 29-05;
- Engagement of federations and associations of birdkeepers for awareness and the fight against poaching;
- Morocco's readiness to support any initiative of the international community, aimed at putting in place the necessary provisions to strengthen measures to protect songbirds;
- Regulating and combating international trade in European goldfinch is a priority for Morocco.

2.3.6 Senegal

The presentation of Senegal's experiences with the songbird trade was delivered by Ms. Rokhaya Pléa from the Department of Water, Forests, Hunting and Soil Conservation (Direction des eaux, forêts, chasses et de la conservation des sols).

The trade in songbirds is regulated by Decree No. 86-844 of 24 January 1986 regarding the Hunting and Wildlife Protection Code, which stipulates that the importation of wild or live animals, parts or derivatives requires a permit. Legal trade of songbirds mostly concerns Estrildidae (49%), Fringilidae (42%) and Ploceidae (9%), according to trade data covering the period 2013 to 2022. Illegal trade also occurs, with 500 birds (representing 14 species) seized at the airport in Dakar in 2017 (destination: Madrid), and illegal possession and export of live birds recorded in 2020.

Senegal acts as an exporting, importing, and transit country for the songbird trade. Imports into Senegal originate from Guinea, Mali, South Africa, and Spain, whereas exports are destined to Australia, Côte d'Ivoire, the United States of America, as well as countries in Europe, the Middle East, East and Southeast Asia, and Oceania.

Senegal identified the following priorities:

- Inform other Parties of any restrictions on the trade in songbirds;
- Require traders to ship the birds sold to avoid any illegal trade;
- Evaluate songbird stocks;

- Increase understanding of the reproduction period of each songbird species in order to avoid issuing permits during this period;
- Impose fines for any birds that arrive at destination lifeless.

2.3.7 Switzerland

Participants next heard from Mathias Lörtscher of the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office of Switzerland and Chair of the CITES Animals Committee.

In Switzerland, any import of live wild birds, whether they are CITES-listed or not, requires an import permit and physical controls upon import. In addition, due to a common Veterinary Agreement with the European Union, no wild-taken species may be imported into Switzerland from outside the EU. Breeders are required to be able to provide proof of legal origins of birds in their possession, and to transmit this information to the new owner upon the sale of the bird. The harvest and trade in wild species originating from Switzerland is not permitted. Birdkeeping is regulated by animal welfare and hunting legislation. Facilities that keep and/or breed birds on a commercial scale have to be registered. Some groups of songbirds need a detention permit from cantonal authorities (hummingbirds, trogons, sunbirds, birds of paradise), whereas national species can only be taken and kept under very strict conditions.

While trade data for CITES-listed species is publicly available on the CITES Trade Database, trade data of non-CITES-listed species is not easily available. A new analysis tool for these data is in development.

The legal trade in songbirds concerns almost exclusively trade in live birds of captive bred species, with Italy, Germany and other European Parties being the most common trade partners. Most of the trade is for cagebirds, with some trade for competitions also occurring.

There is some illegal trade, but songbird seizures at Swiss borders are very rare. In 2023 there were exceptionally two incidents of illegal trade in birds, but these did not concern songbirds.

2.3.8 Oceania

Mr. Hugh Robertson of the Department of Conservation of New Zealand, and Representative of the Oceania Region on the CITES Animals Committee, presented the situation of songbird trade in the region.

Trade in live birds is limited in Oceania, but Birds of Paradise mounts and feathers are more widely traded. All Birds of Paradise (Family Paradisaeidae) are included in CITES Appendix II. Since 1975, fewer than 200 live specimens of 19 species of Birds of Paradise were exported from Papua New Guinea, according to the CITES Trade Database, mostly to zoos in Australia, China, Japan, and the United States of America.

With regards to trade in non-CITES-listed songbirds, neither Australia nor New Zealand allow the export of any live specimens of native songbirds, although specimens of some species were exported before Australian regulations came into place (e.g. Gouldian finch (*Chloebia gouldiae*)). Similarly, fifteen species of mainly European songbirds were introduced and became naturalized in New Zealand before Animal Health Regulations came into force, and eight species were introduced and became naturalized in Australia. The situation is similar in other Parties from the Oceania region.

In New Zealand, it is illegal to keep native songbirds as pets. Small numbers of songbirds are kept and legally traded within New Zealand through pet shops, cagebird organizations, and online sales.

In conclusion:

- the Oceania region has limited trade in live songbirds, and songbirds are not frequently kept as pets in the region;
- Birds of Paradise mounts and feathers are the most widely traded songbird specimens;
- Some evidence of illegal laundering of songbirds through the region exists;
- The volume of trade in non-CITES listed songbirds in the region does not currently warrant consideration of those species for inclusion on CITES Appendices.

2.3.9 Singapore

Dr. Adrian Loo of the National Parks Board of Singapore shared his experience with the preparation of the proposal to transfer the Straw-headed bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*) from Appendix II to Appendix I, which was adopted at the 19th session of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19, Panama City, 2022), with a 12-month delay in implementation to give range States time to amend their legislation and take other measures to prepare for the uplisting.

The proposal was submitted by Singapore, Malaysia and the United States of America, and followed extensive consultation with range States. It was supported by ASEAN Member States (Thailand, Myanmar) and NGOs (WWF, TRAFFIC, WCS, IUCN). The Straw-headed bulbul meets three of the biological criteria stated in CITES [Resolution Conf. 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II*, i.e. Criteria A i), A ii) and C i). The whole process of preparing the proposal, including stakeholder consultations and gathering the required data, took around seven years.

Singapore emphasized that, although a CITES Appendix I listing only regulates trade, national legislations are tied into the CITES listing, providing greater clarity for enforcement, better compliance, and stronger deterrence, as illegal trade in Appendix I species can result in higher penalties in national legislation; this can help to reduce pressures from poaching and trafficking.

Dr. Loo also gave an overview of the work of the National Parks Board, which acts as the CITES Management Authority, Scientific Authority, Enforcement focal point, and forensic lab. The Centre for Wildlife Forensics is the first CITES registered wildlife forensics laboratory in Asia, and collaborates with other forensic labs in the region. Singapore also leads on an INTERPOL taskforce on bird trafficking, which was formed to establish and organize joint enforcement operations on songbirds, and to share intel and case studies.

Dr. Loo further emphasized that it takes time to effect change. For example, it took 10-15 years of education to remove shark fins from the menu in Singaporean restaurants and wedding dinners, where shark fins used to be an important part of the menu.

Finally, the advice imparted by Dr. Loo is that any proposal needs to be supported with solid scientific data and trade data, which takes time to collate and analyze.

2.4 Discussion

The following issues were brought up during the first two days of the workshop, and discussed in greater depth by the breakout groups on the third day:

- **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 learned;

- **Complexity of songbird trade** — diverse, shifts, opportunistic;
- **Appendix III listings;**
- **Capacity building and public awareness;**
- **Mandate for the 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 the "watch list".**

2.4.1 Breakout groups

On the morning of the third day, two breakout groups were created to discuss the abovementioned topics in greater depth. The breakout groups each had representation from Parties, non-governmental organizations and industry experts, and were chaired by Mathias Lörtscher, Chair of the Animals Committee, and Hugh Robertson, Vice Chair of the Animals Committee and its lead on songbirds. While the breakout groups met, the online session was suspended.

Breakout groups reported back to plenary in the afternoon of the third day, at which point the online session was resumed. The fourth day was dedicated to reaching consensus among all participants regarding the workshop's key observations and draft recommendations. These observations are discussed below, while the proposed draft recommendations are collated in section 3 of this report.

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 impacts 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.

What to do with seized birds

- 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 of birds (e.g. sub-species).
- What to do with seized hybrids/semi-domesticated birds? Hybrids and/or semi-domesticated 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).

Non-detriment findings (NDFs)

- 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.
- 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.

Capacity Building

- 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.

Captive breeding and marking

- 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.

Demand

- 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.

Role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs)

- 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 it is a traditional activity with spiritual, ceremonial, recreational or other values. There is a need to enable the rights of IPLCs and support the 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.

Data recording and management

- 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.
- Remind Parties that there is a feedback loop to validate what has been entered into the CITES trade database, as a mechanism to overcome reporting/recording errors.

Harvest methodologies and mortality rates

- 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 the 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.

Disease management

- In legal trade there is normally 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.

Possible inclusion of songbird species in CITES Appendices

- 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*).

Implementation of Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19)

- 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

Prioritisation of songbirds in trade (methodology)

- 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.

3 PROPOSED DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above-mentioned observations, the workshop agreed to submit the following outputs to be considered further by AC33:

- a. The preliminary study (Parts 1 and 2);
- b. The workshop report (to be shared through an information document);
- c. The priority list of 204 species (162 songbird species where there is evidence of significant trade in wild-caught individuals and 42 species that are already listed in CITES Appendix I or II) that may require further attention. The workshop considered that the priority list could be used to inform possible listings under CITES, management and conservation actions, and the periodic review of CITES listed species;
- d. A list of range States of each of the species in the long list of 548 species for which there is evidence that they are heavily traded;
- e. A list of Critically Endangered and Endangered species for which international trade may impact their conservation status;
- f. A table recognizing the standard nomenclature, indicating where the nomenclature used in the study deviates from standard nomenclature adopted by Parties; and
- g. A series of observations (preceding section) and recommendations (below) to help improve the management and conservation priorities of songbird taxa involved in international trade.

Recommendations from the technical workshop:

1. In accordance with Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19), the workshop on *Songbird trade and conservation management* recommends that the Animals Committee:
 - a. encourage Parties to:
 - i. consider implementing measures to gain a 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;
 - ii. share legislation concerning nationally protected songbird species and regulation of their trade, including national lists of species which are considered to be invasive;

- iii. collect and share data to address knowledge gaps concerning songbird trade;
 - iv. 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; and
 - v. share non-detriment findings (NDFs) for songbird species for inclusion on the CITES website;
 - b. 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;
 - c. 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;
 - d. invite Parties to test the new draft guidance coming from the NDF workshop to determine whether or not offtake is sustainable and provide feedback to the Secretariat;
 - e. invite Parties to consider involving graduate students in the making of the NDFs (e.g. the CITES Master's course);
 - f. remind Parties that an NDF is required for the founder stock of CITES-listed species in captive-breeding operations; and
 - g. consider songbird species in the upcoming Periodic Review.
- 2. Concerning **capacity-building**, the workshop recommends that the Animals Committee:
 - a. Identify existing identification (ID) material for songbirds included in the CITES Appendices and request the Animals Committee to review the ID material as part of ongoing work on ID materials (see Decisions 19.142 to 19.144) to ensure it is simple and fit for purpose;
 - b. 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; and
 - c. encourage Parties to continuously build their capacity (technical and financial) to handle seized and repatriated live songbirds.
- 3. Concerning **Captive breeding and marking**, the workshop recommends that the Animals Committee:
 - a. invite Parties to consider national registration of all songbird breeding operations, ensuring regular inspection and record-keeping to ensure traceability;

- b. 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;
 - c. encourage Parties to consult the CITES website (https://cites.org/eng/prog/imp/Wildlife_forensics) and share information concerning registered forensic labs and techniques to assist with determination of origin;
 - d. 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 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#) on *Use of coded-microchip implants for marking live animals in trade*];
 - e. invite Parties to consider for which species captive-breeding may make meaningful contributions to conservation of those species in the wild, as appropriate;
 - f. invite Parties to use the Songbirds in Trade Database (SiTDB) (<https://www.sitdb.org/>) and contribute any available information in relation to the ease of breeding; and
 - g. 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.
4. Concerning **demand**, the workshop recommends that the Animals Committee:
- a. 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; and
 - b. 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.
5. Concerning the **role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)**, the technical workshop recommends that the Animals Committee:
- a. encourage Parties to identify alternative income-generating opportunities for IPLCs when species become protected and/or otherwise unavailable for harvest;
 - b. encourage Parties to understand the value chain for traded species of songbirds in order to inform their decision-making; and
 - c. 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).

6. Concerning **data recording and management**, the workshop recommends that the Animals Committee encourage traders, customs and other law enforcement personnel to record trade and seizures at the species level, including CITES-listed and non-CITES listed species.
7. Concerning **harvest methodologies and mortality rates**, the workshop recommends that the Animals Committee:
 - a. 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; and
 - b. recall the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 10.21 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Transport of live specimens*, and the International Air Transport Association Live Animals Regulations (IATA LAR).
8. Concerning **disease management**, the technical workshop recommends that the Animals Committee:
 - a. invite Parties to perform health checks and treatment on illegally and legally traded birds, as soon as they are in possession of the authorities;
 - b. encourage Parties to include sanitary measures in their national legislation relating to the release of seized animals back into the wild; and
 - c. 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.
9. Concerning the **possible inclusion of songbird species in the CITES Appendices**, the technical workshop recommends that the Animals Committee:
 - a. encourage Parties developing a listing proposal under [Resolution Conf. 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#) to take note of [Resolution Conf. 12.11 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Standard nomenclature* and 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; and
 - b. invite the Secretariat to prepare an additional table recognizing the standard nomenclature, indicating where the nomenclature used in the study deviates from the standard nomenclature adopted by Parties.

4 NEXT STEPS

This workshop report, along with the items listed in draft recommendation 1 a-f above, will be submitted to the Animals Committee for consideration at its 33rd meeting (AC33, Geneva, July 2024). The Animals Committee shall, on the basis of these documents and in accordance with Decision 18.257 (Rev. CoP19), make its own recommendations to the Standing Committee or 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

Agenda of the workshop

Workshop on songbird trade and conservation management 11-14 December 2023 (UN Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand) Agenda – Rev. 1 (8 December 2023)

- *Interpretation available in English, French and Spanish*
- *Online participation in plenary sessions of the workshop will be possible via Zoom (links shared by email from remco.vanmerm@un.org)*

DAY 1 Monday 11 December 2023

9:00 – 12:00 (Plenary)

1. Welcoming remarks
2. Conduct of the workshop
3. Objectives of the workshop

The aim of the workshop is to discuss the results of the songbird study and other information shared with participants.

4. Presentation of background information followed by a Q&A session
 - *Introduction by BirdLife International (including methodologies, data sources and responses to notification)*
 - preliminary study on the scale and scope of international songbird trade
 - identification of priority songbird taxa

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 17:00 (Plenary)

4. Presentation of background information contd. followed by a Q&A session
 - *Other submissions received*
 - IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (Ms. Jessica Lee and Ms. Serene Chng)
 - EAZA (Mr. Simon Bruslund)
 - Species 360 (Mr. Simon Bruslund)
 - TRAFFIC (Ms. Serene Chng)

DAY 2 Tuesday 12 December 2023

9:00 – 12:00 (Plenary)

5. Presentations by workshop participants (15 minutes max.) followed by a Q&A session

Central and South America and the Caribbean

- Suriname (Mr. Romeo Lala - online)
- Cuba (Ms. Viana Barceló Pérez)

North America

- United States of America (Ms. Jen Miller – online)

Asia

- Bangladesh (Ms. Fa-Tu-Zo Khaleque Mela)
- Thailand (Ms. Klairoong Poonpon)

Africa

- Morocco (Mr. Mohamed Noaman)
- Senegal (Ms. Rokhaya Pléa)

Europe

- Switzerland (Mr. Mathias Lörtscher)

Oceania

- New Zealand (Mr. Hugh Robertson)

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 17:00

5. Presentations by workshop participants contd.
6. Moderated discussion (Mr. Hugh Robertson and CITES Secretariat)
 - a) reporting on CITES Decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19) under the following headings for the priority taxa identified (has this aspect been addressed or not; is more work needed; identification of knowledge gaps, possible sources of information; develop draft recommendations, etc.):
 - conservation
 - trade
 - management
 - enforcement
 - regulatory priorities
 - b) Any other issues concerning conservation and trade in songbirds not covered above.
7. Establishment of breakout groups (topics to be determined)

DAY 3 Wednesday 13 December 2023

9:00 – 12:00 (Plenary)

8. Breakout groups

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 17:00 (Plenary)

9. Reports from breakout groups
10. Proposed draft recommendations

Participants are invited to submit proposed draft recommendations in advance. These draft recommendations will be collated with the recommendations coming from the workshop. A consolidated set of draft recommendations will be produced at the end of the workshop.

DAY 4 Thursday 14 December 2023

9:00 – 12:00 (Plenary)

11. Criteria for inclusion of a species in the CITES Appendices (CITES Secretariat)
 - Appendix I or Appendix II [Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP19)]
 - Resolution Conf. 8.21 (Rev. CoP16)
 - Appendix III [Res. Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP19)]

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 17:00 (Plenary)

13. Review of final outputs and draft recommendations
14. Next steps
15. Closure of meeting

List of participants

Technical workshop on songbird trade and conservation management

11 – 14 December 2023

List of participants

| PARTIES | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------|
| Algeria | Nafissa MAHIEDDINE | Online |
| Austria | Gerald BENYR (Animals Committee Regional Representative for Europe) | Online |
| Bangladesh | Fa-Tu-Zo Khaleque MILA | Online |
| Belize | Mauro GONGORA (Animals Committee Regional Representative for Central and South America and the Caribbean) | In person |
| Brazil | Maria Izabel GOMES | Online |
| Brazil | Raquel SABAINI | Online |
| Cuba | Viana Victoria BARCELO PEREZ | In person |
| Dominican Republic | Indira SANCHEZ | Online |
| Guyana | Lemuel CROMWELL | Online |
| Guyana | Sherica ISAACS | Online |
| Guyana | Johann WALDRONN | Online |
| India | Sasikumar CHERUKULAPPARATHU | Online |
| India | Siddharth SINGH | Online |
| Indonesia | Mohammad IRHAM | Online |
| Indonesia | Rini RACHMATIKA | Online |
| Israel | Ben ROSENBERG | Online |
| Malaysia (Sabah) | Siti Nur Ain AMPUAN ACHEH | In person |
| Malaysia | Hanis | Online |
| Malaysia | Khusaini | Online |
| Malaysia | Rahmah | Online |
| Mexico | Luis Guillermo MUÑOZ | Online |
| Morocco | Mohamed NOAMAN | In person |
| Mozambique | Tania MACUACUA | Online |
| Mozambique | Inalda MORAIS | Online |
| New Zealand | Hugh ROBERTSON (Animals Committee Vice Chair) | In person |
| Netherlands | Jamie BOUHUYS | Online |
| Republic of Korea | Jaewoong HWANG | Online |
| Saudi Arabia | Abdullah ALHAKAMI | Online |
| Saudi Arabia | National Center for Wildlife | Online |
| Senegal | Rokhaya PLEA | In person |
| Singapore | Sandra CHIA | In person |
| Singapore | Adrian LOO | In person |
| Solomon Islands | Rose BABAUA | In person |
| Suriname | Romeo LALA | Online |
| Switzerland | Mathias LOERTSCHER (Animals Committee Chair) | In person |
| Thailand | Athaporn | Online |
| Thailand | Thitinat CHANPHUANG | Online |
| Thailand | Chatchaya | Online |
| Thailand | Department of National Parks | Online |
| Thailand | Department of National Parks | Online |
| Thailand | Krairat | Online |
| Thailand | Wanichaya NILVICHIEEN | Online |
| Thailand | Wongwilai PATANASIRIPONG | In person |

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------|
| Thailand | Pattana PETKROD | Online |
| Thailand | Klairoong POONPON | In person |
| Thailand | Puchit SAE KONG | Online |
| Thailand | Bencharong SANGKHARAK | In person |
| Thailand | Udchareeya | Online |
| Thailand | Amornrat WONGWAI | In person |
| Trinidad and Tobago | Denny DIPCHANSINGH | In person |
| Uganda | Joward BALUKU | In person |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sonia KHELA | Online |
| United States of America | Charlotte HACKER | In person |
| United States of America | Emily HORTON | Online |
| United States of America | Jen MILLER | Online |
| United States of America | Dara SATTERFIELD | Online |
| United States of America | Anne ST. JOHN | Online |
| Animals Committee Nomenclature Specialist | Peter Paul VAN DIJK | Online |
| OBSERVER ORGANIZATIONS | | |
| Bird Conservation Society of Thailand | Khwankhao SINHASANI | In person |
| BirdLife International | Alex BERRYMAN | Online |
| BirdLife International | Vinayagan DHARMARAJAH | In person |
| BirdLife International | Paul DONALD | Online |
| BirdLife International | Christopher LUNNON | In person |
| BirdLife International | Amy MCDOUGAL | In person |
| BirdLife International | Shelby WEE | In person |
| Birdtour Asia Limited | James EATON | Online |
| China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation | Yanjun XU | Online |
| CMS Secretariat | Ivan RAMIREZ | Online |
| CMS Secretariat | Tilman SCHNEIDER | Online |
| CMS Secretariat | Susan TSANG | Online |
| CMS Secretariat | Nora WEYER | Online |
| Copenhagen Zoo | Jacqueline JÜRGENS | Online |
| European Association of Zoos and Aquaria | Simon BRUSLUND | In person |
| European Association of Zoos and Aquaria | David JEGGO | Online |
| Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University | Supakit KONGKASORN | Online |
| Humane Society International | Ronald ORENSTEIN | Online |
| IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group | Sofiya SHUKHOVA | Online |
| Jacksonville Zoo | Donna BEAR | Online |
| Lincoln Park Zoo | Sunny NELSON | In person |
| Mandai Nature | Jessica LEE | In person |
| Monitor Conservation Research Society | Boyd LEUPEN | Online |
| Monitor Conservation Research Society | Chris SHEPHERD | Online |
| Organization of Professional Aviculturists | David GARCIA | In person |
| Organization of Professional Aviculturists | Elia VIADER MASUET | In person |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Pet Advocacy Network | Robert LIKINS | In person |
| Sustainable Innovation Initiatives | Mark GIBSON | In person |
| Species Survival Network | Ann MICHELS | Online |
| Teyeliz | Juan Carlos CANTÚ GUZMAN | Online |
| TRAFFIC Southeast Asia | Serene CHNG | In person |
| TRAFFIC Southeast Asia | Kanitha KRISHNASAMY | Online |
| TRAFFIC Viet Nam | Trinh NGUYEN | In person |
| Wildlife Conservation Society | Wafda AFINA | Online |
| Wildlife Conservation Society | Andina AURIA | Online |
| Wildlife Conservation Society | Naomi DOAK | In person |
| World Parrot Trust | Rowan MARTIN | Online |
| Yayasan Kanopi Indonesia | Irfan ROSYADI | Online |