

TENTH MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP TO THE RAPTORS MOU

(Online, 19 February 2026)

UNEP/CMS/RAPTORS/TAG10/Report

MEETING REPORT

(Prepared by the Coordinating Unit of the Raptors MOU)

1. Welcome Note

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all participants, and introduced Ms. Alexandra Caron-Strehlow, who joined the CMS Office – Abu Dhabi recently as Associate Programme Management Officer. The two observers, Ms. Mahra Alhaneaee and Mr. Nick Warmelink introduced themselves and expressed their appreciation for joining the meeting.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The Chair opened the floor to proposals for amending the meeting agenda. The agenda was adopted as planned, aiming to address the reports of TAG members on the progress in implementing the TAG Workplan 2023-2026, CMS COP15, the next TAG meeting, and any other business.

3. Review of Actions from the 9th TAG meeting

The Chair gave the floor to the Coordinating Unit (CU), who invited the TAG Workplan leads and contributors to present the implementation status of their assigned activities.

Action 1: TAG members were encouraged to promote the Raptors MOU and to help the Coordinating Unit in bringing new countries on board as Raptors MOU Signatories.

The CU stated that this action is ongoing, with Uganda and Zimbabwe which joined the Raptors MOU in 2025.

Action 2: TAG members were requested to help fill gaps in STF membership for North and East Africa.

The CU reported that this action is ongoing, and that STF membership will be renewed after CMS COP15.

Action 3: The Raptors MOU CU was planning a virtual meeting of the Vulture MsAP Working Group to launch the WG, agree on TOR and a Work Programme and invite further nominations.

The CU explained that this action is pending due to lack of staff resources in 2025, and added that increasing engagement from governments is needed.

Action 4: TAG members were invited to consider options for and encourage identification of (inter)national ambassadors for vultures and/or the threats they faced.

The Chair stated that previous ambassadors are not active anymore, and that he is not aware of new suggestions. The profile of such ambassadors was discussed between TAG members, and it was concluded that a “celebrity” high profile to bring maximum visibility to vultures is best.

Action 5: The TAG was encouraged to suggest actions to promote synergies between CMS-led activities and the Raptors MOU.

The CU informed TAG that this action is ongoing. The IIRAs are a factual contribution to a standardised CMS approach to area-based conservation and the CMS-lead Connectivity initiative. The Coordinating Unit also mentioned its involvement in the Energy Task Force, the South-West Asia Illegal Taking of Birds Task Force (SWAITBT), and the Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT). The Coordinating Unit invited TAG members to share with them their engagements and related activities.

Action 6: The TAG was requested to take note of the Report on progress from Task Leaders and suggest ways to address the challenges.

This action was discussed with further agenda points.

Action 7 – Task 2: On behalf of the TAG, the CU with support of Ms Vicky Jones would prepare a TAG proposal for MOS4 to include Bonelli’s Eagle in the Raptors MOU Annex 1 (Species List).

The CU stated that this action is pending the identification of the MOS4 host country and suitable dates.

The Chair mentioned that the USA is considering downgrading the Peregrine Falcon in their national legislation, and that take is allowed there. International organizations have expressed their concerns related to migration, and the negative effects this could have on populations from Canada and Greenland for example. If accepted, this reduced protection could be used as an example to influence CITES. The USA would not consider comments from foreign countries and organizations, but foreign organizations have been sending some anyway. The Chair also reminded participants that the USA is not a Party to the CMS nor a Signatory to the Raptors MOU.

Action 8 – Task 4: The TAG was invited to review the draft Resolution on Internationally Important Raptor Sites and the draft Decision, and provide comments to the CU by the end of March 2025.

The CU reported that inputs were received and the document was finalised and submitted to the ScC SC8 where it was well received. The document will be discussed at COP15 (<https://www.cms.int/document/internationally-important-sites-raptors>).

Action 9 – Task 4: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Des Thompson, Mr Mátyás Prommer and Mr Mohammed Shobrak would develop an appropriately worded document with clear justification for the TAG recommendation not to downlist the Peregrine Falcon from CITES Appendix I by the end of March 2025; this would be circulated to the TAG for comment within ten days. The revised document would then be submitted to the Raptors MOU Signatories, who would be encouraged to present it to their CITES counterparts.

This action was completed. The draft document was extensively discussed and the TAG endorsed it. It was circulated by the Coordinating Unit as a TAG position to all Signatories of the Raptors MOU.

Action 10 - Task 4: The Raptors MOU would provide this document to the CMS ScC by July 2025, for CMS to submit a comment to CITES.

The CU stated that the document was shared with the CMS Executive Secretary who attended the CITES COP.

Action 11 - Task 9: Ms. Vicky Jones agreed to draft a discussion paper, for TAG comment, on regional assessment that would recommend an approach to the presentation of regions, unfavourable conservation status, regional guidance and concerning the identification of potential Category 2 species.

The CU and Ms. Vicky Jones explained that this work is pending the identification of the Raptors MOU MOS 4 host country and suitable dates.

Action 12 - Task 13: TAG members were requested to take note of the plan for the next phase of the Site Network Analysis, and to provide guidance on the identification of sites and gaps by the end of March 2025.

Action 13 - Task 15: The TAG was requested to provide input to the CSAR2 proposal and produce a draft document by September 2025, which would include improved visual content and highlight the endangered status of (migratory) raptors.

Action 14 - Task 15: The CU would produce a visually-appealing summary version of the CSAR2 in time for MOS4.

The CU explained that the three tasks listed above are pending the identification of the Raptors MOU MOS 4 host country and suitable dates.

Action 15 - Task 16: The TAG was invited to submit comments on the document Review of best practice of using drones by the end of April 2025.

The CU stated that this action was completed. As TAG does not produce its own guidelines and, as done for the [satellite tag attachment](#) which was produced by the Vulture SG, the Raptors MOU CU invited Israel Nature & Parks Authority, to produce the report that would then be posted on the Raptors MOU website among the resources.

Action 16 - Task 18: The TAG Chair would enquire about progress in studying the impact on raptors of locust and *Quelea quelea* control programmes with the Task lead, Mr. Neil Deacon.

The CU reported that a letter was sent in January 2026 to the Director of Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA) inviting to cooperate and share information and a reminder a few weeks later. No response has been received so far.

Mr. Neil Deacon provided an overview of the red-billed quelea (*Quelea quelea*) control in East Africa:

In East Africa, the control of the red-billed quelea relies heavily on the application of organophosphate pesticides, which pose a significant risk of secondary poisoning to non-target species. The DLCO is involved in quelea control operations in approximately seven to eight countries however, operational data are not shared. Independent assessments indicate that record-keeping is often inadequate and that recommended dosages are not consistently adhered to. This lack of compliance affects both the range of species impacted and the geographic extent of contamination.

Strategically, greater emphasis should be placed on preventing quelea flocks from dispersing beyond spray zones, as fleeing birds may transport toxic residues to surrounding areas, thereby broadening environmental exposure. Organophosphates can accumulate rapidly and may persist in the environment for extended periods, with reported half-lives of up to 45 days. Documented cases of mortality in hyenas following exposure underscore the likelihood that raptors and vultures are similarly affected through secondary poisoning.

The method of application significantly influences the area of impact. Factors such as wind drift and spray nozzle specifications determine the dispersion and reach of the pesticide. Targeting nests containing chicks may increase the efficacy of control efforts. At present, spraying operations are conducted year-round, raising further concerns regarding cumulative environmental effects.

Alternative and complementary approaches warrant consideration. Drones, for example, may be deployed not only for targeted spraying but also as a deterrent to disperse quelea flocks. Ecologically, red-billed quelea preferentially feed on native grasses and typically shift to cultivated crops only when natural food sources become depleted. Although the DLCO has tested chemical repellents, these were ultimately rejected. Notably, in South Africa, drone-based chemical spraying has been implemented on sorghum crops as part of quelea management strategies.

Ms. Darcy Ogada noted that a former intern at The Peregrine Fund attempted to obtain records from DLCO but was unsuccessful. She suggested that a formal request submitted by a government representative may have a greater likelihood of securing access to the relevant data.

Mr. Neil Deacon expressed concern that relevant records may be concealed, and raised doubts as to whether countries are fully complying with their obligations under applicable international treaties.

Ms. Darcy Ogada further noted that prey depletion in certain areas may be driving raptors to relocate to new regions, potentially exposing them to additional risks and altering established ecological dynamics.

Ms. Vicky Jones inquired whether any organization is currently assessing the human health impacts of these control measures with which the TAG might collaborate, and whether there are ongoing studies examining sublethal effects on wildlife.

Mr. Neil Deacon further stated that ingestion of approximately 1.25 poisoned red-billed quelea would be sufficient to cause poisoning in a human, underscoring the potential severity of secondary exposure risks.

The Chair invited discussion on what actions the TAG or the Raptors MOU might take to address the situation. Engagement with the FAO was proposed; however, it was noted that FAO itself does not appear to have access to the relevant operational data.

The Coordinating Unit suggested that increasing the visibility of the issue could be a constructive first step. In this regard, it was observed that, within the framework of the CMS, there is a Working Group on Preventing Poisoning that could potentially consider this matter in the future.

It was further suggested that the TAG could prepare a document outlining the key challenges associated with the issue, with a view to raising awareness and encouraging greater transparency and accountability. Mr. Neil Deacon agreed to take the lead in drafting such a document.

The Chair queried whether it might be more strategic to engage directly with individual countries on a bilateral basis, with a view to encouraging accountability in identified gap areas, particularly in relation to both wildlife and human health impacts. The involvement of Zimbabwe and South Africa was highlighted as potentially valuable in this regard.

Ms. Darcy Ogada proposed convening a dedicated meeting with DLCO, the FAO office in Kenya, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the issue is formally placed on their agenda. She noted that such engagement could also be organized at a regional level. This could take place in the context of the MOS, should Kenya be willing to serve as host, or alternatively as a focused session of the CMS WG on Preventing Poisoning.

Action 17 - Task 19: On behalf of the TAG, Mr. Mátyás Prommer, Mr. Des Thompson and Mr. Ralph Buij would formulate a concise document for Signatories highlighting the impacts of climate change on migratory birds of prey.

Building on the overview presentation given during TAG9 by Mr Prommer, Mr. Thompson title 'Climate Change and Raptors', Mr Prommer and Mr. Thompson are exploring working with a PhD student to draft a document for signatories highlighting the impacts of climate change on birds of prey.

Action 18 – Task 19: On behalf of the TAG, Mr Mátyás Prommer, Mr. Des Thompson and Mr. Ralph Buij would produce a short document for the CMS ScC by the end of August 2025 to highlight the impact of climate changes on raptors linked to the Samarkand SPMS.

Action 19 – Task 23: Mr. Murn Campbell would seek input from the TAG on a list of topics on which to determine priority research needs, after which the TAG would produce a decision-making framework for guiding research on migratory raptors.

As Mr. Campbell could not attend this point was not discussed

Action 20 – Task 24: On behalf of the TAG, Mr. Des Thompson would seek further input to a horizon scanning exercise in 2025 across the MOU region, and would take this to a global level thereafter.

This work is to be taken forward as part of CMS COP15 Decision “Climate Change and Migratory Species” directed to the Scientific Council No. 15.CC b): *Undertake a horizon scan of potential impacts of climate change on migratory species, including the identification of threats, opportunities and disrupters, as well as potential conservation actions and how they can be pragmatically implemented.*

Action 21 – Task 25: On behalf of the TAG, Mr. Campbell Murn, Ms. Arianna Aradis, Mr. Jovan Andevski and Mr. Des Thompson would develop by the end of September 2025 implementation guidelines specific for raptor reintroduction to complement the existing IUCN Reintroduction Guidelines; this would start through development of a draft document to seek input on which areas needed more detail with respect to raptors.

The CU explained that, with the support of interns, it has produced a draft report based on interviews to experts in Europe and Asia. The report is produced as an Information Document to this meeting, and is available on the TAG meeting page on the Raptors MOU website.

Action 22 – Task 26: The CU would explore how to support the development of a raptor-specific sub-indicator for the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership Biodiversity Barometer.

The CU explained that this action has not been ongoing due to lack of capacity.

Action 23: The CU would organise a TAG meeting in June 2025, which would probably be online.

The CU had bilateral communications with selected TAG members to follow up on individual tasks.

Action 24: The CU invited TAG members to approach their national MOU Focal Points to consider hosting MOS4.

The CU explained that this action will be discussed during the dedicated agenda point (agenda point number 5).

4. Review of the TAG Work Plan 2024-2026

The Work Plan was discussed briefly, as most of its points had already been addressed during the discussion of the actions in the previous item.

Action 7: Contribute to the CMS Energy Task Force and ensure that the potential impact on raptors of energy production and distribution infrastructure is properly addressed.

Participants were informed that IFC has recently produced new guidelines on electrocution. The Coordinating Unit, IAF, the ETF, and IRENA will organise webinar on these guidelines most likely in May 2026.

Mr. Mohamed Shobrak asked if there were guidelines about poisoning, including suggestions of alternatives. The CU stated that the current [guidelines](#) developed by the Preventing Poisoning WG were still valid. The development of more detailed guidelines could be included in the next Work Plan of the TAG.

5. Update on hosting MOS4

The Coordinating Unit has been reaching out to Signatories with a notification in 2024 and following that with several individual communications in an effort to identify a host for MOS4. Approaches have been made to countries in Central Asia, North Africa, Europe, and Southern Africa. While the Coordinating Unit can contribute to the meeting from savings generated through voluntary contributions received over the last few years, a host country is still required to provide about USD 40,000, as well as logistical support, including a venue, catering, and assistance with visas. The option of two countries co-hosting the MOS could also be considered.

The Coordinating Unit reminded participants that once a host country is identified and the Host Country Agreement signed, the meeting date must be announced at least six months in advance. MOS4 will also address numerous activities, including the review of TAG membership, with 50% of TAG members up for renewal.

The Chair suggested Kenya as a potential host in relation to the red-billed quelea control poisoning issue. Mr. Nyambayar Batbayar noted that Mongolia is hosting the UNCCD COP in August 2026 and is therefore unable to host the Raptors MOU MOS4. Ms. Darcy Ogada requested a document summarizing the responsibilities expected of host countries so that she can review it internally and determine whether to engage with Kenya's government. The Chair inquired whether Hungary could host the MOS, to which Mr. Mátyás Prommer responded negatively due to scheduled elections in 2026.

The Coordinating Unit further noted that the 2026 voluntary contributions, highlighted in the annual letter to Signatories, will focus on supporting the delivery of MOS4.

6. Exchange updates on raptor-relevant documents and events at COP15

The Coordinating Unit presented the four raptors documents the Raptors MOU is responsible for:

- [Steppe Eagle Global Action Plan](#)
- [African Eurasian Vultures](#)
- [Saker Falcon Global Action Plan](#)
- [Internationally Important Raptors Areas](#)

The Coordinating Unit then presented the four CMS COP15 side events the Raptors MOU is coordinating or co-coordinating:

- 'A new phase for conserving and managing the Saker populations' (23 March, 13:45-14:30). Contributors are: Saker Task Force (chair Colin Galbraith), UAE, Mongolia (TBC), IAF which will launch a report on falconers).
- 'One Species, 62 Range States: Launching the Global Action Plan for the Conservation

of the iconic Steppe Eagle' (24 March, 13:45-14:30). Contributors: Raptors MOU , RSPB, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia.

- 'Soaring Together: Lessons from the African Eurasian Vulture Multi-species Action Plan (MsAP) and the Strategic Launch of the Americas Vulture MsAP initiative' (24 March, 12:45-13:30). Contributors are: Raptors MOU, IUCN VSG, Zimbabwe (TBD), Ecuador, VCF, Fundacion Condor Andino.
- 'Delivering One Health by Preventing Poisoning from NSAIDs and lead ammunition' (26 March, 12:45-13:30). Joint initiative by WOA, CMS, and IUCN.

The Coordinating Unit asked which members of the TAG will be attending COP. Responses are: Mr. André Botha, Mr. Imad Cherkaoui, Mr. Mohamed Shobrak, and Ms. Vicky Jones. Participants who will attend COP15 agreed to meet there.

The Coordinating Unit extended the invitation to 20 February meeting with the members of the VCG to discuss CMS COP15.

7. Agenda Item for MOS4

The Coordinating Unit invited signatories to develop a raptors conservation strategy. While some countries have made progress in this regard, overall advancement has been limited. The Coordinating Unit sought the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members' perspectives on the suggestion to encourage countries to develop a plan for implementing the MOU Action Plan, rather than preparing separate national raptors conservation action plans. This approach could also facilitate reporting by the countries.

Ms. Darcy Ogada shared insights from her experience contributing to the development and early implementation of the Vulture Multi-species Action Plan for Kenya 2024-2034. She noted that in many countries, governments face significant challenges in implementing conservation actions due to limited capacity. However, the process of developing a conservation action plan itself provides substantial benefits, including ensuring public participation. In Kenya, for instance, this is legally mandated, which necessitates stakeholder consultations across the country during the plan's development. Such consultations promote awareness, engagement, and ownership among a broad range of stakeholders.

Mr. Mohamed Shobrak emphasized that focusing efforts at the regional level, particularly for the Arabian Peninsula, may be more relevant than national-level approaches, a view supported by Ms. Vicky Jones. He noted that certain countries would benefit from targeted support, such as webinars for signatories outlining regional priorities and guidance for preparing such action plans.

Ms. Fadza Matsvimbo highlighted that developing a national plan is an effective way to engage stakeholders who might not otherwise be involved. While challenges in implementation may arise, the process helps build wider ownership and establishes a foundation for continued advocacy. She also noted the associated costs and the potential risk of losing focus on regional connections but stressed the value of broad engagement.

Ms. Arianna Aradis added that an Action Plan provides governments with a clear framework to prioritize conservation actions. Mr. Neil Deacon noted that Switzerland set a strong example in

presenting its Strategic Guidelines and Management Priorities for Raptor and Owl Conservation in Switzerland.

8. Any Other Business

The issue of BSPB as a potential Vulture Ambassador was discussed. The Chair invited the Coordinating Unit to clarify the rationale for the role, noting that the Ambassador should be someone able to raise vulture conservation issues at high political levels and engage directly with governments. Appropriate recognition, such as a ceremony held in conjunction with MOS, was also suggested. Ms. Vicky Jones recalled that the previous TAG meeting had proposed considering a high-profile public figure, such as a professional athlete, to increase visibility. While acknowledging BSPB's excellent work, participants noted that appointing an NGO may not be the most suitable approach and could raise sensitivities if one organization were selected over others. The Chair opened the floor open to suggestions.

Ms. Vicky Jones noted that during the AEWA MOP, Algerian delegates indicated they would welcome training on satellite tagging to help reduce military suspicions, as tagged birds have reportedly been impounded. She suggested that a Raptors MOU–endorsed factsheet or guidance document, which could be easily translated, might be helpful in this regard. The Coordinating Unit indicated that the forthcoming Raptors MOU intern could take this forward, with the support of the TAG.

The Coordinating Unit informed the TAG that it is considering a possible expansion of the geographical scope of the Raptors MOU to South-East Asia and Australasia and sought members' views on this proposal. The Chair expressed support for exploring the idea further. Mr. Mohamed Shobrak noted that he was not fully aware of the migratory relevance of such an expansion but agreed that it would be worthwhile to examine, adding that it could provide additional opportunities for CMS Parties to engage in different ways. The Coordinating Unit clarified that the first step would be to prepare a scoping document to assess the relevance of the proposal, including the species concerned and its alignment with the CMS definition of a migratory species. Ms. Vicky Jones added that demonstrating interest from governments at MOS would be beneficial, potentially helping to attract additional donors and broaden the geographic impact of the MOU.

9. Closing of The Meeting

The Chair thanked all participants for their valuable contributions and emphasized that regular attendance at these meetings is essential to effectively support the work of the Raptors MOU. He noted that participation levels will be reviewed and taken into account when considering future inclusion in the TAG. The Chair then formally closed the meeting.

10. Action Points

- 1) The Coordinating Unit will send a document summarising the responsibilities expected of MOS host countries to Ms. Darcy Ogada.

- 2) Ms. Darcy Ogada will review this document internally and determine whether to engage with Kenya's government.
- 3) Mr. Neil Deacon will draft a fact sheet on raptors poisoning due to red-billed quelea control in East Africa.
- 4) The Coordinating Unit will add the development of TAG guidelines on poisoning and alternatives in the next Work Plan of the TAG.
- 5) The Coordinating Unit will prepare a scoping document to assess the relevance of a possible expansion of the geographical scope of the Raptors MOU to South-East Asia and Australasia, including the species concerned and its alignment with the CMS definition of a migratory species.
- 6) The Coordinating Unit will produce a factsheet or guidance document about the satellite tagging of birds, to raise awareness and reduce suspicions from military bodies, with the support of the TAG.
- 7) The Coordinating Unit and the Chair will review TAG meetings' attendance.

ANNEX 1
ALPHABETICAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members of the TAG

Andre' Botha <i>Chair</i>	Co-Chair Vulture Specialist Group Hawk Conservancy Trust South Africa
Mátyás Prommer <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Senior Ecologist Tilad Environmental Consultancy Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Arianna Aradis	Senior Researcher , Bird Migration Research Area Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) Italy
Darcy Ogada	Africa Program Director The Peregrine Fund Kenya
Des Thompson	Principal Adviser on Science and Biodiversity NatureScot United Kingdom
Fadzai Matsvimbo	Preventing Extinction Programme Coordinator BirdLife International, Africa Secretariat Kenya
Imad Cherkaoui	Associate Professor Institut Scientifique de Rabat (University of Mohamed V) Morocco
Mohammed Shobrak	Consultant & Board member National Centre for Wildlife Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Neil Deacon	International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey Former President, BirdLife Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
Nyambayar Batbayar	Director Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia Mongolia
Vicky Jones	Flyways Science Coordinator BirdLife International United Kingdom

Convention on Migratory Species

Alexandra Caron-Strehlow	Associate Programme Management Officer CMS Office - Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates
Umberto Gallo-Orsi	Programme Management Officer (Raptors MOU) CMS Office - Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates

Observers

Mahra Alhanaee	Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund United Arab Emirates
Nick Warmelink	Policy Officer Nature and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature Netherlands
Asaf Mayrose	Israel Nature & Parks Authority Israel

Apologies

Campbell Murn	Head of Conservation and Research Hawk Conservancy Trust United Kingdom Lecturer School of Biological Sciences, University of Reading United Kingdom
Karen Aghababyan	Executive Director BirdLinks Armenia Armenia
Munir Virani	Chief Operative Officer Mohamed Bin Zayed Raptor Conservation Fund United Arab Emirates
Ohad Hatzofe	Head Avian Ecologist, Division of Science & Conservation Israel Nature & Parks Authority Israel
Ralph Buij	Senior Scientist, Animal Ecology Wageningen University & Research The Netherlands Africa and Asia Conservation Director The Peregrine Fund