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In Depth- Conservation of Migratory Species

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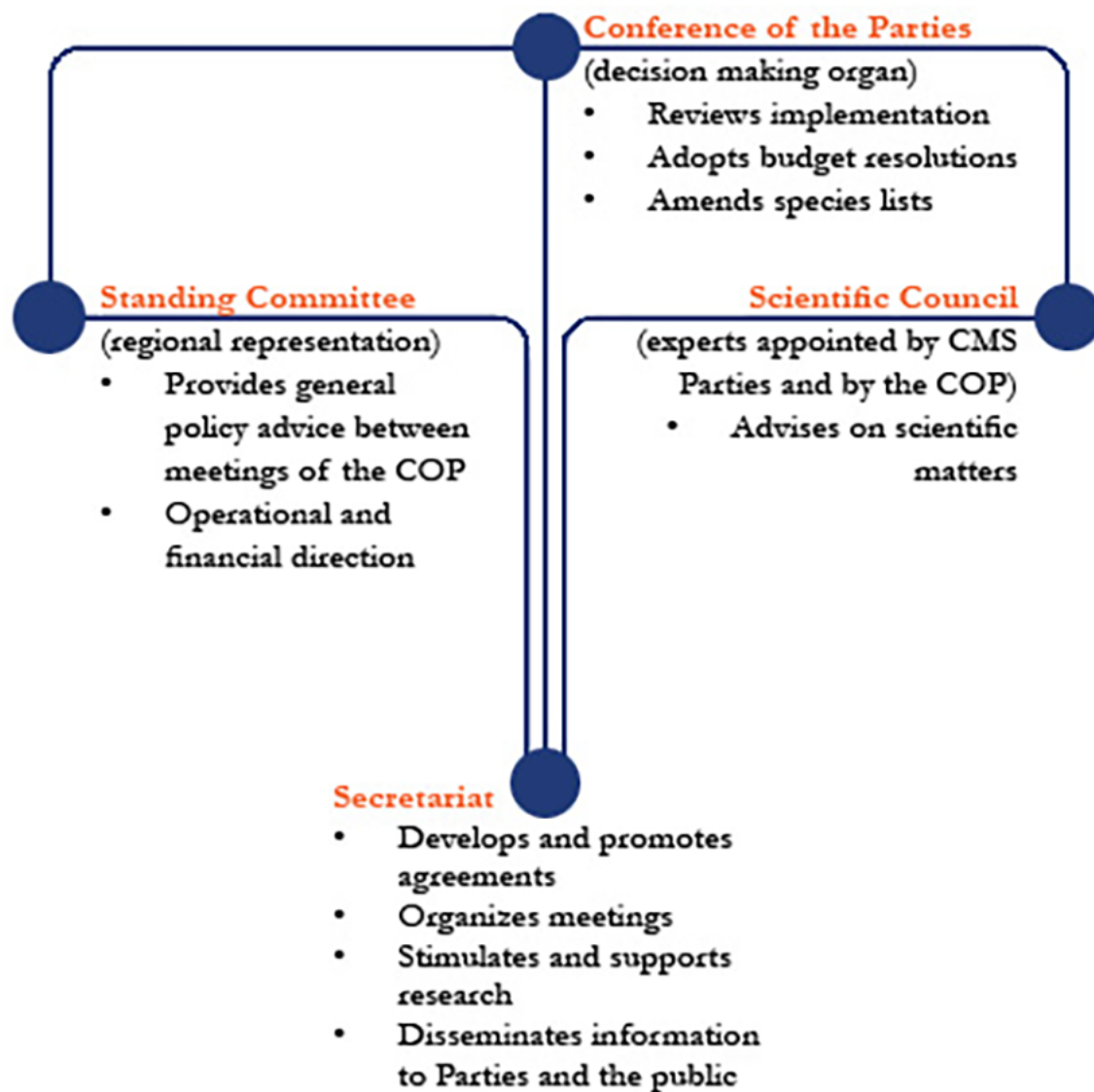
<https://youtu.be/XfPMhCO3z3w>

In the inaugural session, India has taken over its Presidency for the **next three years**, till 2023. CMS is an **environmental treaty** under the aegis of the **United Nations Environment Programme** that provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.

- The **theme** of CMS COP-13 is '**Migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home**'.
- The **mascot** for CMS COP-13 is '**Gibi – The Great Indian Bustard**'. It is a **critically endangered species** (according to the IUCN) and has been accorded the highest protection status (listed in Schedule I) under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

- CMS is also known as the **Bonn Convention**. It is the **only convention** that deals with **taking or harvesting of species** from the wild. It currently protects 173 migratory species from across the globe.
- **Enforcement Year:** The Convention came into force on **November 1, 1983**. The Secretariat that administers the Convention was established in 1984.
- **Parties:** As of 1st November 2019, there were **130 Parties** to the Convention– **129 countries plus the European Union**. **Maldives** is the latest country to join it (November 2019).
- **Species Covered:** Convention has two Appendices:
 - **Appendix I** lists migratory species that are **endangered** or **threatened with extinction**.
 - **Appendix II** lists migratory species which have an unfavourable conservation status and which **require international agreements** for their conservation and management.
- **Migratory Species:** A migratory species is one that cyclically and predictably crosses one or more national jurisdictional boundaries due to factors like food, temperature, shelter, etc.
- **Purpose:** It specifies the duty of States to protect the species living within or passing through their national boundaries/ jurisdiction.
- **Structure:**





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<https://youtu.be/H8cE8I7iMok>

CMS- COP 13

- The **Logo** of **COP 13** was inspired by ‘**Kolam**’- a traditional art form Southern India used to depict **key migratory species** in India like Amur Falcon, and Marine Turtles.
- It highlighted the **importance of ecological connectivity** (unimpeded movement of species and flow of natural processes) to better protect migratory wildlife and their habitats.
 - CMS has focused on the connectivity concept to be integrated into the new **Global Biodiversity Framework** (which will be adopted in 2021 in China).
 - Also, countries can integrate biodiversity and migratory species considerations with their national energy and climate policy actions.
- COP 13, proposes to **include ten new species for protection under CMS** viz.:
 - Three **Indian** Species: ***Asian Elephant, Bengal Florican, Great Indian Bustard.***
 - Other **7** from around the world: ***Jaguar*** (proposed by Costa Rica, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay), ***Whitetip shark*** (Brazil), ***Little Bustard*** (EU Nations), ***Urrial*** (Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan), ***Antipodean Albatross*** (New Zealand, Australia, Chile), ***Smooth Hammerhead Shark*** (Brazil), and ***Tope Shark*** (EU Nations).
- COP 13 highlighted the **threats to biodiversity**:
 - Loss and fragmentation of habitats, and habitat destruction & degradation.
 - Climate change.

- **Agenda of the Meet:**

- The Convention for the first time looked upon the impact of **light pollution** (increasing artificial light affecting migratory species and insects) on birds, bats & marine turtles,
- Address declining population of **insects**,
- Impact of **plastic pollution** on freshwater and terrestrial species, etc.
- Given the focus on moving away from fossil fuels energy to renewable sources of energy, the potential of **renewable energy and related powerline infrastructure** adversely impacting the migratory birds and bats was also discussed.
- Work of the **CMS energy task force** (set up in 2015) to reconcile renewable energy developments with the conservation of migratory species was taken under consideration.
- Also, discussed the adoption of dedicated actions to protect 12 species including Gangetic River Dolphin, Gabon, and Giraffe. (India has prepared a concerted action proposal to protect **Gangetic River Dolphin**).

India and the CMS

- India has been a party to the Convention **since 1983**.
- India has signed a **non-legally binding** Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CMS on conservation and management of **Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008), and Raptors (2016)**.
- With 2.4% of the world's land area, India contributes to around 8% of the known global biodiversity.
 - Indian subcontinent is a part of a significant bird flyway network, i.e, **Central Asian Flyway** that covers areas between the **Arctic and Indian Oceans** with at least 279 populations of 182 migratory waterbird species (including 29 globally threatened species).
- India also provides **temporary shelter** to several migratory species including Amur Falcons, Bar-headed Geese, Black-necked Cranes, Marine Turtles, Dugongs, Humpback Whales, etc.

Annihilation of Wildlife by Human Activities

- According to a report by the **World Wildlife Fund**, growing consumption of food and other resources by humans, **natural habitat loss**, developmental activities like dam, etc. have caused a serious decline in animal population.
 - This has also begun the **Sixth Mass Extinction** (biological annihilation of wildlife due to humans).
- According to the **Living Planet Index**, nature will take around 5-7 million years to recover, even if the destruction stops now. Since 1970-2014, 60% of animal populations have been wiped out due to human activities.

India's Commitment & Initiatives

International Level

- **International Solar Alliance.**
- **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.**
- Industries transition leadership with **Sweden.**
- India's actions compliant with the **Paris Agreement goal** of containing the rise in temperature to below 2°C.
- Strengthened association with the **ASEAN** and **East Asia Summit** countries in sync with the **Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative (IPOI).**

National Level

- India has launched the **National Action Plan** for the conservation of migratory species along the **Central Asian Flyway.**
- India also announced:
 - Establishment of an **institutional facility** for undertaking research, assessments and capacity development through a common platform,
 - Conservation of marine turtles- by launching its **Marine Turtle Policy and Marine Stranding Management Policy**, by 2020,
 - **Reduction of pollution** from micro-plastic and single-use plastic,
 - **Transboundary protected areas** for conservation of species like Tigers, Asian elephants, Snow Leopard, the Asiatic Lion, the one-horned rhinoceros, and the Great Indian Bustard, and
 - Sustainable **infrastructure** development like **Linear Infrastructure Policy Guidelines** to tailor development in ecologically fragile areas.
- India has set an ambitious target of 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030. To achieve this, India is pushing towards enhanced use of electric vehicles, smart cities, and conservation of water, etc.
- India has taken the leadership role in promoting **Green Economy** including conservation of mountain ecology with people's participation.
- Under **Project Tiger**, with an increase in the number of tiger reserves, the tiger population has been doubled in India 2 years before the set target of 2022.
- India supports 60% of the global Asian Elephants population and there are approx. **30 elephant reserves** for it. Also, '**Project Elephant**' aims to protect their habitats & corridors.
- Further '**Project Snow Leopard**' to protect their population in the Himalayan range. India recently hosted steering committee meeting of the **Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme** that resulted in the **New Delhi Declaration.**

- **India's National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-2031):**
 - It consists of **17 chapters with new action themes** like Climate Change and Wildlife, Wildlife health, Inland Aquatic and Coastal and Marine conservation, and Human-wildlife conflict mitigation.
 - It has chapters on **people's participation** in wildlife conservation to elicit the involvement of people in wildlife conservation.
 - It provides for **priority projects** like setting up of '**Electronic-eye (e-eye) surveillance**' in highly sensitive Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas, beside the use of Drone/ UAV technology for **airborne monitoring and better protection** of wildlife.
 - It also focuses on '**Management of Tourism in Wildlife Areas**' and '**Control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife**'.
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** To protect and conserve wildlife from illegal poaching and hunting. There are **Six Schedules** in the Act:
 - Schedule **I** and part **II** of Schedule **II** provide **absolute protection** with the highest penalties.
 - Schedule **III** and Schedule **IV** provide **protection with lesser penalties**.
 - Schedule **V** includes **animals that can be hunted**.
 - Schedule **VI** **bans cultivation and planting** of protected plants.

Offences Punishable under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

- The Act was amended in 2003 and provided for stringent punishment for **hunting** or harvesting the wild animals.
- Schedule I and Schedule II provides for offences related to wild animals' body part or products.
- Penalty enhanced for hunting or altering boundaries of a Sanctuary or National Park.
- Vehicles or weapons used for committing crimes can be seized.
- Minimum imprisonment is three years that can be extended to seven years with a minimum fine of ₹10,000.

Other Wildlife Protection Acts passed by States:

- Madras Wild Elephants Preservation Act, 1873
- All India Elephant Preservation Act, 1879
- The Wild Bird and Animals prohibition Act, 1912
- Bengal Rhinoceros Preservation Act, 1932
- Assam Rhinoceros Preservation Act, 1954
- Indian Board for Wildlife, 1952

India is the largest landmass before the Indian Ocean and holds almost 90% of stopover sites for birds that migrate in this region. Migratory species are crucial because of cultural and ecological reasons. Therefore, proactive measures should be taken to address their dwindling population.