

BirdLife International Policy Recommendations for CITES CoP20

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
Samarkand, Uzbekistan | 24 November – 5 December 2025

This document details BirdLife International's policy recommendation for the Twentieth meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

BirdLife International is the world's largest conservation partnership with 123 national Partners and is the pre-eminent international authority on bird conservation. BirdLife is the Red List Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List, mandated to assess and regularly update the global extinction risk of all 11,000 bird species. BirdLife is working to tackle poisoning and illegal and unsustainable hunting and trade of threatened species such as vultures, songbirds and parrots.

KEY ASKS

Species-specific matters:

- **West African Vultures:** We advise close attention to trends in the trade in vultures for belief-based use across all of Africa and strongly endorse the West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan 2023-2043 (WAVCAP) launched in April 2024.
- **Songbird Trade & Conservation:** It is essential that work continues based on the workshop on songbird trade and conservation, that met in December 2023, and that its recommendations are adopted. We strongly urge taking action to submit additional listing proposals for songbirds on the CITES Appendices and explicitly welcome and support the proposal to include six *Sporophila* species, demonstrating alignment between its general recommendations and specific measures.

Proposals to amend Appendices:

- BirdLife supports all four bird proposals.
- **White-backed Vulture and Rüppell's Vulture:** It can be difficult to distinguish between vulture species in life; thus, provision of identification materials is essential. Further species listings, or a whole-group listing, may be necessary in the near future.
- **Peregrine Falcon:** Considering that the impacts of recent avian flu outbreak are not yet properly understood, we suggest that transferring Peregrine Falcon to Appendix II should include a zero quota for taking birds from the wild.



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Strategic Matters

CITES Strategic Vision CoP20 Doc. 13

BirdLife welcomes the proposed amendments to the CITES Strategic Vision outlined in CoP20 Doc.13. It is essential that the Strategic Vision is aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. As CBD COP17 will consider the global process made in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, **we consider it important that the Secretariat contributes to the monitoring framework by providing to the CBD Secretariat any relevant data collected.**

Maintenance of the Appendices

Standard nomenclature

BirdLife welcomes the recommendation of Animals Committee to consider adoption of an updated standard nomenclatural reference for birds, considering the recently published consolidated checklist of the world's birds (AviList), which BirdLife is also adopting.

Adoption of this checklist by CITES will ensure that the species and higher-level taxonomy of CITES will match that of the IUCN Red List and other data sources.

Species-specific matters

West African vultures (*Accipitridae* spp.) CoP20 Doc. 74

BirdLife remains concerned about the impact of vulture killing, exploitation and trade as threats to vulture species in recent years, including illegal international trade relating to belief-based use.

Over the past five decades, populations of seven out of Africa's eleven vulture species have declined by as much as 80–97%, with four species classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List including 4 of the 6 West African species addressed in this document, the other 2 species being Endangered. Belief-based ritual and medicinal use of illegally killed and traded vultures and their body parts is well known in West Africa. Parts sold include heads, legs, eggs, feathers, bones and even faeces, in the belief that they can cure a variety of ailments be they physical, mental and spiritual in nature. Most are killed using poison, such as carbamates, strychnine and warfarin.

Numbers of vultures documented under CITES in international trade, documented in illegal trade reports to CITES, or seized at international borders, do not match the numbers of vultures reported for sale at many markets across the region (including in range States where the species offered for sale are close to extinction) nor the evidence of international trade within the region based on the origins of specimens for sale stated by the sellers.

This context has led to the proposal from 13 West African range States to transfer two West African species, White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* and Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli* from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I; this proposal, also supported by BirdLife, is treated below.

Recommendations:

BirdLife International **supports** the adoption of the draft decisions in CoP20 Doc. 74.

BirdLife advises close attention to trends in the trade in vultures for belief-based use across all of Africa, as this is now known to be responsible for globally significant numbers of vultures outside West Africa, appears likely to cause further deterioration in their conservation status, and could become linked to illegal trade (inward or outward) in West Africa, thereby exacerbating the situation there.

BirdLife strongly endorses the West African Vulture Conservation Action Plan 2023-2043 (WAVCAP) launched in April 2024 by CMS, BirdLife International and IUCN, in collaboration with West African vulture range States, and urges for its implementation. **The WAVCAP is a subregional plan to guide West African states in reducing the risks posed to these same six vulture species** as in Doc. 74, elaborating on the CMS Multi-species Action Plan to conserve African-Eurasian vultures 2017-2029. It focuses on addressing key threats faced by vultures in West Africa, with a focus on reducing the imminent threat posed by belief-based use.



Songbird trade and conservation management (Passeriformes spp.) CoP20 Doc. 83

BirdLife has become increasingly concerned about the impact of songbird exploitation and trade. The threat to some Asian songbirds from unsustainable trade is well known, with increases in extinction risk for a suite of species since 2016 demonstrated on the IUCN Red List. BirdLife works closely with the IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (ASTSG) and agrees with the group's updated list of priority taxa whose survival is urgently impacted by trade.

Evidence is mounting regarding the significance of unsustainable trade elsewhere in the world, including in the Americas, where severe trade-related threats are well known for certain songbird species. Trade (sometimes international) for food or cagebirds, is increasingly recognised as an element of the illegal killing and taking of songbirds in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, South-East Asia, Pacific Islands, Caribbean, Central America and South America. Further examples exist in all regions of the world, although international trade data are scattered, in part since most bird species are not CITES-listed.

In this line, BirdLife emphasizes the need for improved monitoring and trade data collection for non-listed songbird species, particularly in the Americas. It is also important to note that, in the Global South, the available evidence may

not always meet the standards set by scientific journals and publications; however, this should not be interpreted as an indication that the species in question is not subject to trafficking.

Recommendations:

BirdLife **supports** the adoption of the draft decisions in Cop20 Doc.83.

Based on decision 18.256 (Rev. CoP19), working group on songbird trade and conservation met in December 2023. **It is essential that work continues based on the workshop and that its recommendations (Annex to CoP20 Doc. 83) are adopted.**

BirdLife strongly urges taking action to submit additional listing proposals for songbirds on the CITES Appendices and explicitly welcomes and supports the proposal to include six *Sporophila* species (as discussed below), demonstrating alignment between its general recommendations and specific measures.

Proposals to Amend Appendices

Proposal 15. *Bycanistes* spp. and *Ceratogymna* spp.

Recommendations:

BirdLife **supports** the proposal to list all *Bycanistes* spp. and *Ceratogymna* spp. in Appendix II.

Proposal 16. White-backed Vulture and Rüppell's Vulture

Recommendations:

BirdLife **supports** the proposal to transfer White-backed Vulture and Rüppell's Vulture from Appendix II to Appendix I. We believe these species to meet the biological criteria set out in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) and recent evidence of international trade is extremely concerning.

BirdLife notes that **Hooded Vulture has been omitted from the proposal**. Available data show that Hooded Vulture (Critically Endangered) is one of the most heavily traded species and, for this reason, we believe it meets the criteria for listing in Appendix I. While we recognise that this is not feasible at the current stage, we urge parties to give this due consideration at future CoPs.

It can be difficult to distinguish between vulture species in life, and this challenge is greater for body parts, indicating a risk of traded parts of Appendix I listed species being wrongly assigned to less threatened 'lookalike' vulture species currently in Appendix II. As noted in proposal clause 9 regarding 'similar species', **provision of identification materials is essential, but further species listings, or a whole-group listing, may be necessary in the near future.**





Proposal 17. Peregrine Falcon

Recommendations:

BirdLife **supports** the proposed transfer of Peregrine Falcon from Appendix I to Appendix II. When last assessed globally for the IUCN Red List (2021), Peregrine Falcon was considered likely to have an increasing population trend and did not meet or approach any of the thresholds for listing as globally threatened.

Recent avian flu outbreak impacts are not yet properly understood; this does not necessarily affect the species' global conservation status but has affected some national populations. Therefore, **we suggest that transferring it to Appendix II should include a zero quota for taking birds from the wild**. This approach would reduce administrative burden while still addressing ongoing conservation concerns.

Proposal 18. *Sporophila angolensis*, *Sporophila atrirostris*, *Sporophila crassirostris*, *Sporophila funerea*, *Sporophila maximiliani*, *Sporophila nuttingi* (Great-billed Seed-finch)

Recommendations:

BirdLife **supports** the proposal to include *Sporophila maximiliani* in Appendix I believing this species to meet the biological criteria set out in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) and that evidence of international trade in this highly threatened species (listed as Endangered) is extremely concerning.

We also **support** the listing of *Sporophila angolensis*, *Sporophila atrirostris*, *Sporophila crassirostris*, *Sporophila funerea* and *Sporophila nuttingi* in Appendix II given difficulty in identification of specimens (particularly females and immatures).

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