

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

May 2026

Updates



COMMUNICATIONS

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT:

Thank you for your input and collaboration on IUCN motions and CITES issues over the past year.

ACTIONS:

None at this time

RECENT/UPCOMING MEETINGS AND DATES OF INTEREST:

- IUCN World Conservation Congress: October 8 - 15, 2025
- CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) CoP20: November 24 - December 5, 2025
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) CoP15: March 23 - 26, 2026
- CITES 34th Animals Committee: July 13 - 17, 2026
- Convention on Biological Diversity's Scientific Body (SBSTTA28): July 27 to August 2, 2026

Updates

IUCN

The IUCN 2025 Congress outcomes include a 20-year strategic vision for nature, 148 resolutions adopted by members, and the Abu Dhabi Action Plan. The Congress also initiated a IUCN Program for 2026–2029 to guide the organizations work.

Motions of importance to AFWA include:

- Resolutions 65 & 81: They initiate a formal process to consider updating the IUCN Policy Statement on Sustainable Use and call for the development of new international standards for wild species management. This is a (continued next page)

CMS

CMS CoP15 addressed the threats identified in the CMS 2026 migratory species report which found 49% of CMS-listed species are in decline. Key CoP outcomes include:

- Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds: Emphasis on lead ammunition and agrochemicals.
- Illegal and Unsustainable Take & The Global Taking Initiative (GTI): The GTI will address domestic illegal and unsustainable take. This includes taking for food, sport, medicine, and human-wildlife conflict retaliation. As resource agencies our insights into and data on sustainable harvest (continued next page)

Southern Wings

While we celebrated 15 years of success in 2024, the program has yet to reach its annual investment goal of \$2 million. At its Annual Meeting, AFWA approved the Southern Wings Presidential Task Force Report, marking a pivotal moment for the program. The resulting report outlines bold recommendations to elevate the program over the next 15 years. The Southern Wings Advisory Committee, Chaired by Kendra Wecker (OH DNR), was stood up and has started implementing the report recommendations. Recommendation 1: Set Clear, State-Specific Annual Investment Goals. (continued next page)

CITES COP20

The CITES Technical Work Group is comprised of Stewart Liley (Western), Carolyn Caldwell (Midwest), Buddy Baker (Southeastern), Gordon Batcheller (Northeast), and Deb Hahn (AFWA).

Nearly 160 countries attended CoP20 and considered proposals to amend the CITES appendices. Of particular interest to AFWA were the following species listing proposals.

- Peregrine falcon: transfer from Appendix I to II (submitted by the U.S. and Canada) was not adopted.
- All *Anguilla* (eel) species: inclusion in Appendix II (continued next page)

The International Relations Committee guides involvement in and/or engages on international conventions, initiatives, agreements, and policies that impact U.S. state and Canadian provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies.



space where our technical expertise will be vital to ensure standards remain practical and science-based and to inform sustainable use policy discussions.

- Resolution 91: This resolution is more conceptual but carries management implications. It urges us to recognize 'free evolution'—ecosystems functioning and adapting without human intervention—as a core conservation objective.
- Resolution 113: This is a relatively new focus area. It asks us to define 'Longevity Conservation' and specifically evaluate how the harvest of older and larger individuals impacts population biodiversity and resilience.
- Resolution 134: This focuses on overexploitation and specifically calls for the identification of species that may need new listings under multilateral agreements to prevent further decline.
- Resolution 121: Support the new membership category for subnational governments and ensure their participation in global conservation agendas.
- Resolution 066: Promote sub-national protected areas that contribute to Target 3 (30x30), highlighting shared governance and conservation objectives. Collaborate to adopt models using IUCN guidelines for recognition and sustainable management of protected areas.



can inform this conversation as they develop sustainability thresholds.

- **Communities, Livelihoods, and Wildlife Health:** They formally adopted the One Health approach and took action to support community-based conservation initiatives.
- **Pastoralism:** Emphasizing the importance of grasslands conservation.
- **Animal Culture and Social Complexity:** It recommends considering animal culture, behaviors passed through social learning rather than genetics, and its implications for conservation and management.



Recommendation 2: Launch a Recognition Program.

Recommendation 3: Establish a Southern Wings Advisory Committee and explore ways to streamline the program.

Recommendation 4: Develop a communications strategy and launch a spring outreach initiative.



(submitted by the European Union) was not adopted.

- Genus-wide listings for *Crotalus* and *Sistrurus*: inclusion in Appendix II (submitted by México and Bolivia) was not adopted.
- Transfer of Guadalupe Fur Seal from Appendix I to Appendix II was adopted.
- Deletion of Caribbean Monk Seal from Appendix I was adopted.

Top Priority Documents and Issues:

- Doc. 87, Eel Resolution: The resolution provides recommendations to support the conservation, management, enforcement, and collaboration of eels.
- Docs. 15.1 and 15.2, The Role of CITES in Reducing Zoonotic Disease: AFWA's focus is on ensuring the work aligns with the mandate of CITES.
- Doc 61, Rapid Movement of Wildlife Diagnostic Samples: AFWA supports tools and processes that allow for the faster movement of select wildlife samples.
- Doc. 102, 'Lookalike' Criterion: AFWA supports a review to ensure the criteria are adequate and implemented appropriately and hope this discussion advances.

CONTACTS

U.S. Co-Chair

Ryan Brown (Virginia)

Canadian Co-Chair

Vacant

Staff:

Deb Hahn, International Relations Director
(202) 838-3458, dhahn@fishwildlife.org