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Mark Carwardine's **AT A GLANCE...**

THE BONN CONVENTION

WHAT IS THE BONN CONVENTION?

The Bonn Convention is the colloquial name for the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. Also known simply as the Convention on Migratory Species (or CMS), it's a treaty designed to bring together all the countries through which migratory animals pass in order to coordinate essential conservation measures.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Migratory animals are especially vulnerable because they move back and forth across national borders. Excellent protection in one country means little if a species is unprotected after it leaves. So the convention is needed to provide 'passports' for migratory animals to cross borders freely.

THAT SOUNDS DIFFICULT

It is. Take European turtle doves, for example. A single dove flying from West Africa to the UK may pass through half a dozen countries (it spends roughly six months of the year in Africa, 2½ months on migration and 3½ months in the UK). For it to survive its twice-yearly journeys, each country en route must provide safe passage. And that's clearly not happening – it may be why we've lost 96 per cent of our breeding turtle doves in the past 50 years.

SO ISN'T THE CONVENTION WORKING?

It is working, to a degree. It got off to a slow start, partly

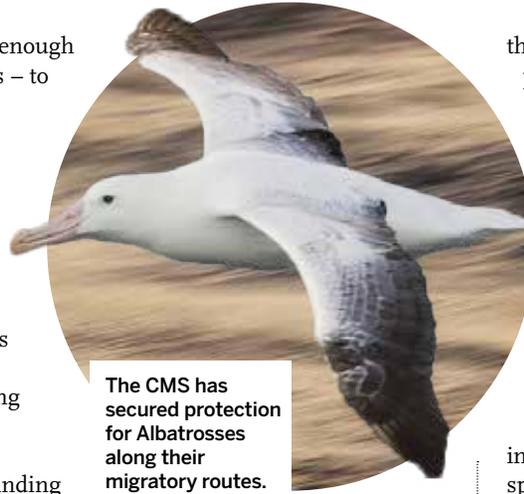
because there weren't enough signatories – or Parties – to have any real impact, but it has improved its record in recent years. There are two obvious problems. First, it doesn't have regulatory teeth – instead, it provides a mechanism for nations to come together to address problems facing particular migratory species, and so it has relatively few legally binding agreements. Second, while there are now 124 Parties, many strategically important range states – including the USA, Canada, Mexico, China, Japan and Russia – have not signed up (though they can, and sometimes do, ratify particular regional agreements). The UK has been a signatory since 1985.

WHO RUNS IT?

The Secretariat – the convention's coordinating body – is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in Bonn, Germany. It collaborates with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental partner organisations, from BirdLife International and the IUCN to the International Whaling Commission and the Bern Convention.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Rather like CITES (see November's 'At a Glance'), the Bonn Convention lists species in different appendices. Migratory species threatened with extinction



The CMS has secured protection for Albatrosses along their migratory routes.

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● Every month he demystifies some of the most important issues affecting the world's wildlife and assesses the organisations that protect it.

throughout all or a significant portion of their range are listed in Appendix I, and Parties are obliged to provide them with immediate protection. Migratory species that need (or would significantly benefit from) international cooperation are listed in Appendix II, and Parties are encouraged to protect them. The appendices include everything from sperm whales and snow leopards to yellow-breasted buntings and loggerhead turtles. The convention also develops guidance on how to mitigate threats to migratory species.

WHO MAKES THE BIG DECISIONS?

Big decisions are made at ad hoc conferences and the triennial Conference of the Parties. These range from legally binding treaties (called Agreements) to less formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). To date, seven Agreements have been signed, including the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels and the Conservation of Populations of European Bats. There are MOUs on migratory sharks, the slender-billed curlew, West African populations of the African elephant and 16 other species, taxonomic groups and populations. The 12th Conference will be held in October 2017 in the Philippines. 📍

● Find out more at the CMS website www.cms.int