Raptors MOU Conservation Status Assessment Report

Summary

Wings of Change: Unveiling the Raptors MOU Conservation Status Assessment

Current global conservation status

Combining Raptors MOU species categorised as globally threatened (i.e. ‘Critically Endangered’, ‘Endangered’ or ‘Vulnerable’) or ‘Near Threatened’ on the IUCN Red List, 34% of them are considered to have an elevated risk of extinction.

Vultures are the most threatened group, with a total of eight “Critically Endangered” species and the highest percentage of threatened or Near Threatened species (93%), followed by eagles with 50% of eagle species being threatened or Near Threatened.

Vulture Crisis: 93% are threatened or Near Threatened

Figure 1 – Conservation status of Raptors MOU species

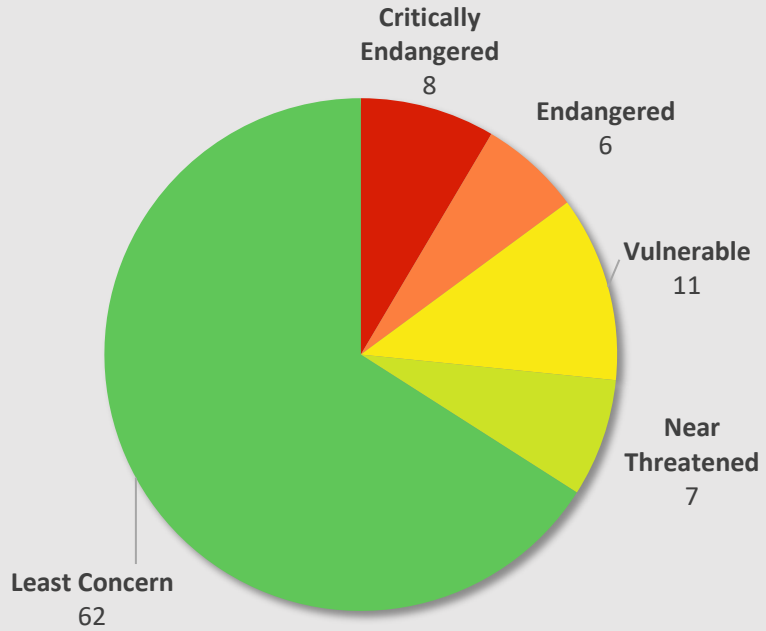
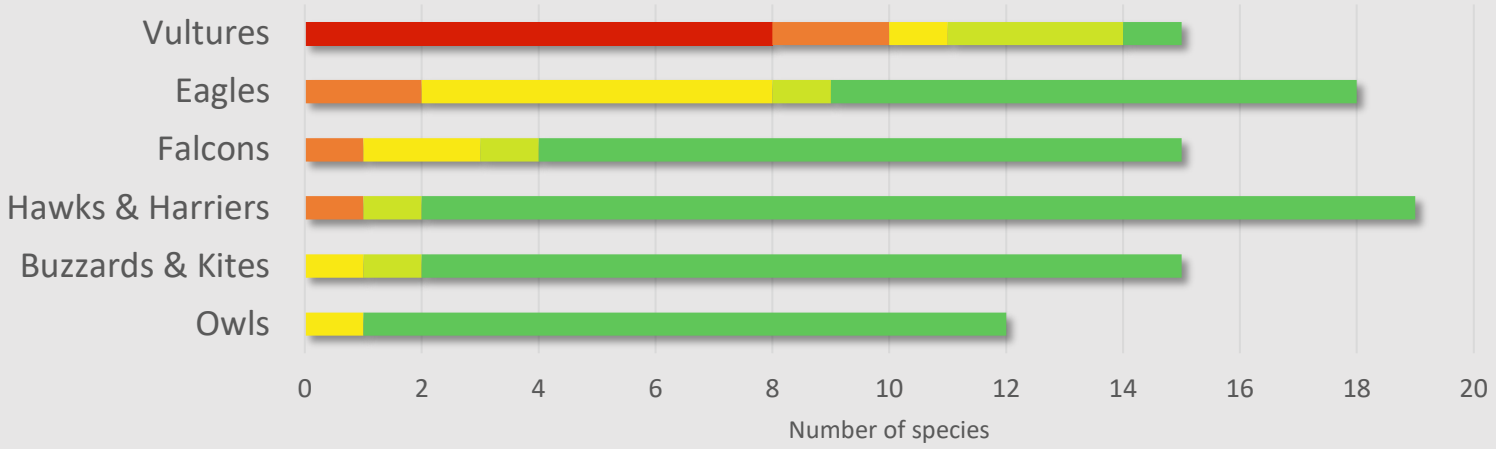


Figure 2 – Conservation status by group



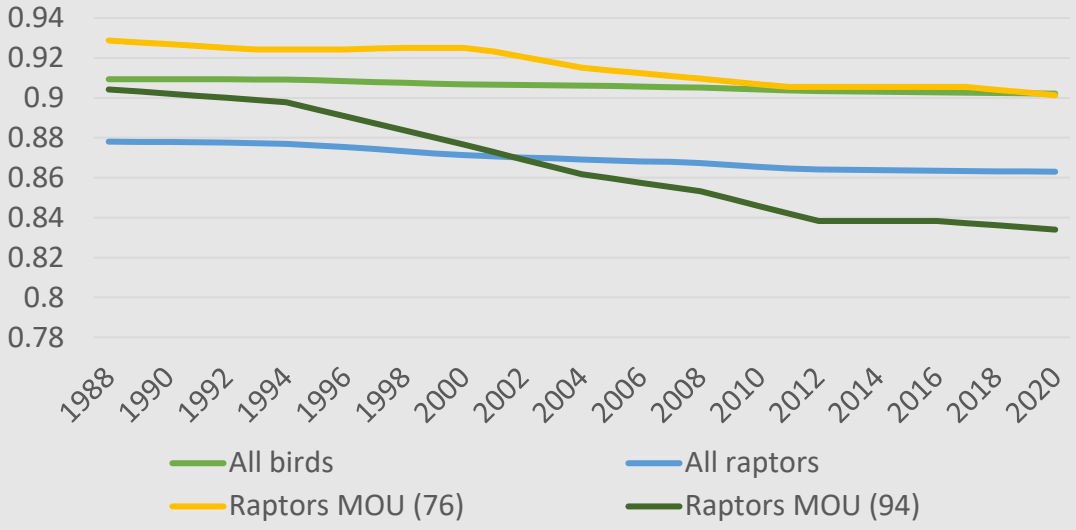
Conservation Emergency: 34% of raptors on the verge of extinction

Trends in global conservation status

The Red List Index (RLI) measures trends in extinction risk over time for groups of species. For Raptors MOU species, there has been an overall increase in extinction risk since 1988.

Conservation Priority: Migratory African-Eurasian raptor species are in poorer conservation status when compared with all birds

Figure 3: Red List Index 1988 - 2020



When considering only those 76 species covered by the Raptors MOU since 2008, the increase of extinction risk appears to have slowed after the Raptors MOU came into force, suggesting that the MOU may have contributed to slowing deterioration of the conservation status of this sub-set of migratory raptors. An expanded list of 93 species has been covered by the Raptors MOU since 2015, the list is proposed to be to be expanded to 94 migratory raptor species at MOS3.

Escalating Extinction Risk: the conservation status of African Eurasian raptors has been deteriorating faster than the overall rate for all birds

This wider set of migratory raptors have poorer conservation status than the average status of all birds or all raptors, and the deterioration in conservation status of this group since 1988 is much steeper than for all birds or all raptors. It is hoped that the listing of these species in the Raptors MOU alongside the listing of 11 Raptors MOU species on CMS Appendix 1 at COP 12 (2017) will contribute to slowing this deterioration by helping to guide the targeting of conservation interventions by governments and other stakeholders.

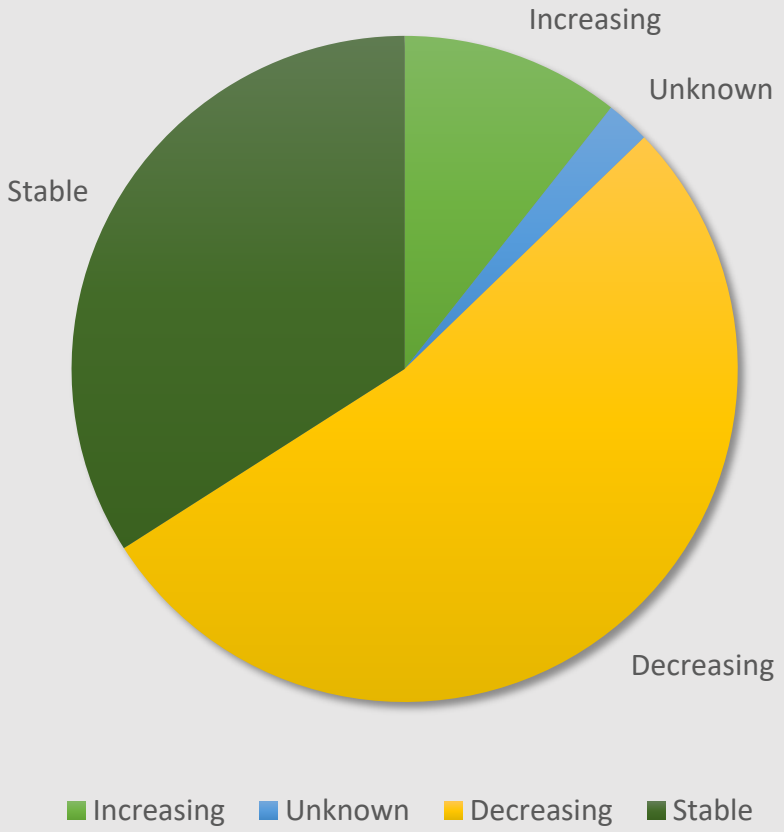
Global population trends

While considerable changes in population size are needed to trigger an IUCN Red List category change, declining population trends can be an early indication that conservation status is deteriorating. More than half (53%) of Raptors MOU species are in decline, while one in three (34%) have stable population trends and just 11% are increasing. Therefore, if conservation efforts for migratory raptors are not stepped up, many more raptor species could become threatened in the future.

Migratory Raptors in Peril: urgent conservation action required to prevent further decline

The movement of Raptors MOU species between Categories 1, 2 and 3 over time also reveals concerning trends. Between MOS1 and MOS3, the majority (59%) of Category changes on Table 1 were implemented because of deteriorating conservation status or trajectory, rather than improving status. This percentage was particularly high between MOS2 and MOS3, when 75% of Category changes represented deteriorations.

Figure 4: population trend of Raptors MOU species



Alarming Decline: over 50% of migratory raptor species in Africa-Eurasia facing population reductions

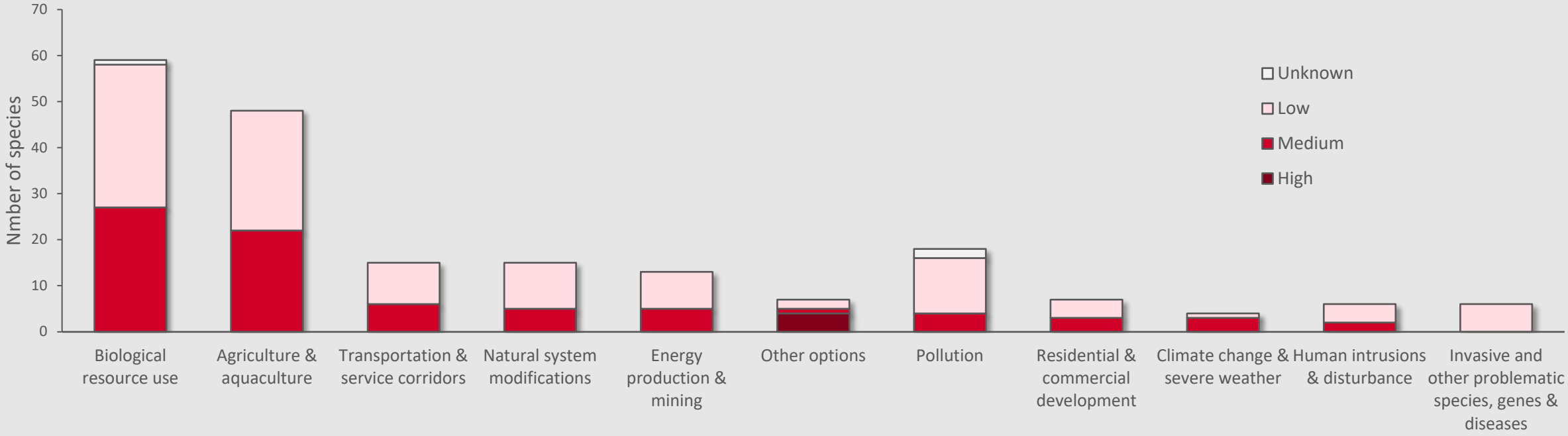
Threats to species globally

According to the IUCN Red List threats classification scheme, the greatest threats to Raptors MOU species are habitat loss due to agriculture and logging, hunting and trapping (which includes intentional and unintentional poisoning, illegal shooting, taking for belief-based use) and electrocution / collision with powerlines and wind turbines.

Major Threats to Raptors: habitat loss, illegal killing, and collisions with energy infrastructure

Information on mortality from migratory raptors tracked in the African-Eurasian flyway indicates that electrocution is a very important and possibly underestimated threat and confirms that illegal killing of various kinds including poisoning is a key threat, with poisoning being a particularly important issue for vultures.

Figure 5: Threats to Raptors MOU species



Conservation actions needed

In order to improve the conservation status of migratory raptors, Signatories will need to address key threats with much greater urgency and cooperate to encourage other Signatories and Range States to also act. The most frequently reported conservation actions needed include:

Safeguarding sites and habitats	Communicate and educate	Protect and enforce	Target recovery action
Protect, safeguard and effectively manage important sites for raptor populations, which must be accompanied by appropriate monitoring and, where necessary, enforcement actions.	Communicate, educate and raise awareness to address the underlying motivations behind human-induced threats such as poisoning, illegal shooting and trapping.	Improve legislation, its implementation and enforcement, and implement policy changes for example to ensure energy infrastructure is bird safe.	Implement or maintain species recovery and ex-situ conservation actions for the most threatened species.

Many of the tools needed for Signatories to achieve this are already in place, but greater implementation is needed.

Action Plans exist for many species, Task Forces set up under CMS provide guidance to address specific threats such as energy infrastructure and illegal killing.

Signatories can ensure that these actions are undertaken within their jurisdiction and in cooperation with other Range States.

Empowering Governments: CMS guiding tools and Species Action Plans provide vital support to take action

Conservation action works

When appropriately implemented, conservation action can be highly effective, and has already improved the fortunes of several migratory raptors. For example, the population of Red Kite has increased significantly over the last decade following targeted conservation actions across its range, including a highly successful reintroduction programme.

Urgent Action Required:
key threats must be tackled to reverse declines of migratory raptor species

From Struggle to Success:
conservation triumphs of migratory raptors, like the Red Kite, prove recovery is achievable

Knowledge gaps

Despite raptors being a charismatic group, there remain major gaps in knowledge for many species about their ecology, movements, key sites, greatest threats, and even basic information about population size and trends.
These gaps mean that deterioration in conservation status may go unnoticed, and emerging threats may be missed, leaving stakeholders unable to take effective action in time.

Greater investment and support for monitoring and research is therefore essential, as is experience-sharing and improved coordination.

Bridging the Gap:
Research and monitoring are crucial in overcoming knowledge

Joint Action:
International cooperation is key to migratory raptors conservation

Towards Collective Conservation: international cooperation required to safeguard 94 species

It is clear that urgent action is needed to improve the conservation status and the future of the 94 Raptors MOU species.

Effective conservation will require international cooperation. Signatories with specific experiences can share their knowledge and actively contribute to capacity building.

Signatories with greater access to financial resources can support work in lower-income countries or jointly fundraise to benefit species of shared interest.

Ultimately, each Signatory must deliver effective conservation actions more rapidly, also working in partnership with others outside their national borders.

The first Raptors MOU Conservation Status Assessment Report was produced by BirdLife International with the support of the Raptors MOU Technical Advisory Group for the in occasion of the Third Meeting of Signatories of the Raptors MOU. The report was generously supported by the Environmental Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD) on behalf of the UAE government.

The report details the status, trends, conservation needs and knowledge gaps for the 94 migratory birds of prey species proposed by TAG as Annex 1 for MOS3. Most of the analyses presented are based on the IUCN Red List datasets curated by BirdLife International.

Recommended citation

CMS Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit (2023) Conservation Status Assessment Report MOS3 – Summary. Raptors MOU Coordinating Unit. Abu Dhabi.

About this publication

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This summary highlights some key findings from the report and distils key take-home messages for Signatories, Raptors MOU Range States, Cooperating Partners, and the conservation community at large.

Photo

Cover: Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* © Waheed Al Fazari
Page 6: Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* © Andras Kovacs
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