

Saudi Arabia Launches Regional Task Force to Combat Illegal Taking of Migratory Birds

UN-backed initiative brings together regional partners in Riyadh to strengthen cooperation and protect threatened species

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, May 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has launched a new regional task force aimed at tackling the illegal hunting, capture, and trade of migratory birds across South-West Asia. The initiative was announced during a high-level meeting in Riyadh, hosted under the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).



Launch of the South-West Asia Illegal Taking of Birds Task Force (SWAITBT) in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The newly formed South-West Asia Illegal Taking of Birds Task Force (SWAI-TBT) brings together range states across the region to coordinate efforts to reduce illegal bird killing and ensure the protection of species that migrate through South-West Asia.

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*Dr. Mohammed Qurban, CEO
of the National Center for
Wildlife*

The task force was launched with support from the National Center for Wildlife, Saudi Arabia's official focal point to CMS, and follows the Kingdom's recent recognition by the CMS Secretariat with the CMS Champion in acknowledgment of its leadership in protecting migratory species.

Each year, millions of migratory birds pass through South-

West Asia, including species such as the Steppe Eagle, Sociable Plover, and several threatened falcon populations. Illegal hunting and unregulated trade continue to pose serious threats to their survival, despite international conservation efforts.

“This initiative brings governments in the region together to collaborate on a shared conservation goal which cannot be addressed alone,” said Amy Fraenkel, Executive Secretary of CMS. “By increasing the capacity of key players, aligning laws, enforcement, and on-the-ground conservation across South-West Asia, this Task Force gives us a realistic chance to shut down the trafficking routes and illegal taking hotspots that have decimated iconic species. It is a model of multilateral cooperation that can deliver real results for wildlife and people alike.”

Saudi Arabia is leading this collaborative initiative to help countries improve national regulations, close enforcement gaps, and promote shared strategies for conservation and compliance. The task force also aims to build capacity among law enforcement and judicial bodies, promote information exchange, and raise public awareness about the importance of protecting migratory species.

Dr. Mohammed Qurban, CEO of the National Center for Wildlife in Saudi Arabia, emphasized the importance of collective action: “Saudi Arabia is proud to lead this effort to protect migratory birds that connect our continents and habitats. Through this task force, we are working with our neighbors to share expertise, align enforcement practices, and ensure these species are safeguarded for future generations.”

The SWAI-TBT will also support implementation of the South-West Asia Action Plan on Illegal Bird Killing and promote alignment with existing CMS initiatives, including the Raptors MOU, the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan, and the Central Asian Flyway.

This initiative contributes directly to global conservation goals, including Target 5 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which calls for ending illegal and unsustainable use of wild species.

The launch of this task force reflects Saudi Arabia’s broader environmental commitments under Vision 2030 and highlights its growing role in advancing regional and global biodiversity cooperation.

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