



**IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade
Specialist Group**



Conservation Success Stories

**Asian songbirds receive
greater international protection
at CITES COP19**



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THREAT ADDRESSED

Few songbird species are listed on CITES Appendices, including those threatened by international trade, making it difficult for national law enforcement agencies to regulate and enforce against international songbird trafficking.

TARGET

A Position Statement from the ASTSG on improved use of CITES for songbird conservation. (T-035)



Straw-headed Bulbul to Appendix I



White-rumped Shama to Appendix II



SUCCESS LEVEL

Successful

Success category:

Policy and legislation improvements

Success subcategory:

New policies implemented

Success story:



REASONS FOR SUCCESS

This successfully improves international trade protection for two priority species representing multiple priority taxa identified by the IUCN SSC ASTSG and paves the way for potential listing for other suitable candidate species in Asia. This also turned out to be of interest to Parties in other regions of the world who were concerned about unsustainable levels of international songbird trade of their native species – this was discussed at the CITES technical workshop on songbird trade and conservation management in December 11-14, 2023, which ASTSG representatives attended and presented at.

The members of IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (IUCN SSC ASTSG), the Singapore and Malaysian governments, and other partners proposed the Appendix II listing of the White-rumped Shama and uplisting of the Straw-headed Bulbul to Appendix I, both of which were successfully adopted. Two songbird-focused side events further raised the issue's profile, introducing the Songbird Species Knowledge Index, which drew from the open-access Songbirds in Trade Database (SiTDB) created by IUCN SSC ASTSG Trade, Legislation and Enforcement subgroup members.

The Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*) was proposed for transfer from Appendix II to I, and the White-rumped Shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*) for inclusion in Appendix II. Both species face population declines from unsustainable, illegal trade and have been priorities for the IUCN SSC ASTSG and NGOs. These were the first CITES proposals by range states Singapore and Malaysia.

CoP18 set the stage for future songbird trade discussions when the US and Sri Lanka submitted "Songbird Trade and Conservation Management (Passeriformes SPP)" under species-specific matters. Its adopted recommendations directed the Secretariat to consult experts, convene a workshop, and study international songbird trade. Despite COVID-19 delays, NGO coalitions advanced tools like the Songbird Species Knowledge Index and BirdLife International's information document on CITES-listed songbirds. During this period, Singapore and Malaysia (White-rumped Shama) and the US (Straw-headed Bulbul) collaborated on two songbird proposals.

Members of the IUCN SSC ASTSG, which included representatives from conservation organisations such as BirdLife International and its Asian partners, TRAFFIC, Monitor Conservation Research Society (Monitor), Mandai Nature, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), *ex situ* conservation bodies such as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and others convened before and throughout CITES CoP19, met and lobbied with Parties, and intervened to voice support of both proposals. This resulted in many Asian and global Parties taking to the floor to voice their support for both proposals. After discussion and negotiations among Parties, both proposals were adopted, with a 12-month delayed implementation for the Straw-headed Bulbul. The **CITES Appendices** have now been formally updated.

CoP19 also saw two well-received songbird-themed side events. The IUCN SSC ASTSG will continue to be active and work to support better regulation of the international trade in songbirds under CITES. ■ **SERENE C.L. CHNG**

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-CoP19-Prop-08-R1.pdf>;
<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-CoP19-Prop-09-R1.pdf>;
https://conservation.species360.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Songbird-SKi_digital_small_04.pdf; <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/31/Inf/E-AC31-Inf-11.pdf>; <https://www.birdlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CITES-InfDoc-REPRESENTATION-OF-SONGBIRDS-PASSERIFORMES-IN-THE-CITES-APPENDICES.pdf>; <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/notifications/E-Notif-2023-015.pdf>.

Vulnerable Northern River Shark,
(*Glyphis garricki*)
Photo: Grant Johnson

Interviews about human wildlife
interactions with local inhabitants
Photo: Kiran Thapa Magar

Vicuña management by Cooperativa
Agroganadera de Santa Catalina and Comunidad
Aborígen Atu Shapi de Morritos.
Santa Catalina, Jujuy Province, Argentina
Photo: Yanina Arzamendia

Story photo credits

Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*)
Photo: Jonathan Beilby

White-rumped Shama
Photo: Jonathan Beilby

Community songbird monitoring and
protection, Indonesia
Photo: Asian Songbird Trade SG archives

Cacti from genera *Copiapoa* and *Eriosyce*
confiscated in Italy and repatriated to Chile in 2021
Photo: Andrea Cattabriga