

**3rd Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of
Understanding on the Conservation of Southern South American
Migratory Grasslands Bird Species and their Habitat**

Florianópolis, Brazil, 2 - 4 December 2024

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REPORT OF THE MOU COORDINATION

(Prepared by the Government of Brazil)

1. Introduction

This document reports on the efforts of the Department of Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MMA) of Brazil in supporting the coordination and implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Birds and their Habitats (MdE Pastizales) of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

This report covers the activities implemented from 2018 to 2024.

2. The MoU on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Birds and their Habitats

The Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Bird Species and their Habitats, also known as MdE Pastizales (in Spanish), was established under the auspices of CMS and became effective on 26 August 2007. It was signed by representatives of Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil, who committed to joining forces to work towards the conservation of migratory bird species that use natural grasslands in southern South America.

In December 2010, the First Formal Meeting of Signatories (MOS1) of the MoU was held in Asunción, Paraguay. During this meeting, government representatives approved the International Action Plan, which was intended to guide efforts from 2010 to 2015. On July 2018, with the need to evaluate the Action Plan implementation and to begin planning for a new cycle, the Second Meeting of the MoU (MOS2) was held in Florianópolis/SC, organized by the Ministry of the Environment (MMA) together with the National Center for Bird Conservation of the Chico Mendes Chico Institute for Biodiversity Conservation – CEMAVE/ICMBio, with the presence of the signatory countries and other members of the CMS. The meeting successfully updated the MoU, which was scheduled to be finalized in 2023.

During the meeting, it was approved that Brazil would coordinate the Grasslands MoU from 2018 to 2022. In September 2020, a virtual meeting was held to monitor the MoU action plan. Since there has been no meeting between 2022 and 2023, a new meeting is considered important to conclude the implementation cycle and transfer the coordination to another signatory country, as initially planned. Currently, the MOU covers 11 species of grassland birds, two Charadriiformes - *Calidris subruficollis* and *Numenius borealis* - and nine Passeriformes - *Alectrurus risora*, *A. tricolor*, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, *Polystictus pectoralis*

pectoralis, *Sporophila cinnamomea*, *S. Hypochroma*, *S. palustris*, *S. ruficollis*, and *Xanthopsar flavus*.

3. South America Grasslands

Grasslands are natural ecosystems that support a rich diversity of animal and plant species. The native grasslands and their biodiversity are crucial for several environmental services that are essential to human sustenance and well-being. Additionally, grassland ecosystems also provide landscapes of great beauty and high value for tourism and leisure, as well as serve as a source of inspiration for culture and the arts. Moreover, the variety of forage plants found in the grasslands makes them ideal for raising livestock. Well-managed extensive livestock farming is now recognized as a productive activity that can contribute to the conservation of these ecosystems and their associated species. Proper pasture management helps maintain native vegetation and ensures an adequate carbon balance.

Some species that inhabit southern grasslands require tall, dense vegetation, while others live in low-lying grasslands. There are also those that depend on mosaics formed by different countryside environments. The diverse configurations of the fields are essential to maintain bird diversity, whereas uniform pastures can lead to a decline in bird populations. Many species are at risk of extinction, mainly due to the degradation of their habitat.

4. Threats

Multiple factors contribute to the decrease in bird populations. Most threats to birds derive directly from anthropogenic activities, with habitat loss and degradation being the most impactful pressure factor. In addition to habitat loss, the illegal capture and commercialization of birds and the introduction of invasive alien species – whether intentional or accidental - have significant cumulative impacts on species covered by the MoU. Other contributing threats include pollution, the conversion of native grasslands for agriculture (soybeans, onions, rice) and forestry; reforestation using non-native species like pine, eucalyptus, and exotic grasses, which rapidly modify the ecosystem; predation by wild boars of nests on land; poor livestock practices; and inappropriate use of fire; wind farms; illegal capture and trade of birds.

However, the conservation of the grasslands is not inseparable from the presence of cattle and grazing, in addition to other management practices. Although we still have a limited understanding of the thresholds between sustainable use and degradation, it is known that improper field management—such as intensive mowing, the use of exotic forage, the application of pesticides, and both biological and chemical controls, as well as uncontrolled fire — can significantly contribute to the degradation of these ecosystems. Additionally, overgrazing beyond the carrying capacity of the environment also impacts species diversity.

5. Coordination of the MoU Implementation

5.1. Second Meeting of the Signatories (MOS 2)

The Second Meeting of Signatories (MOS2) occurred on July 24-25, 2018, in Florianópolis, hosted by the Government of Brazil, with the support from Manomet and the CMS Secretariat.

The meeting aimed to review the status of the species covered by the MoU and to renew conservation projects and initiatives. Additionally, it focused on updating the Action Plan, extending the MoU's signature to other countries in the region, and establishing a stable and lasting coordination mechanism. The inclusion of countries that are range states for the MoU species has also been suggested.

During this meeting, there was a presentation on the activities and results of the work conducted by Alianza del Pastizal, Guyra-Paraguay, and Aves Argentinas.

A format for future national reports was adopted, and the objectives and targets of the Action Plan were reviewed and updated.

There was the inclusion of a new species in the Memorandum, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (Bobolink), along with a suggestion of including the species *Sporophila iberaensis* in the annexes of the CMS so that it can later be included in the MoU.

There was a discussion about potentially changing the geographical scope of the MoU. However, to strengthen this instrument, it was decided to maintain the focus on the five signatory countries and the current geographical distribution. Other countries outside the region will be invited to join as observers, allowing them to share their experiences.

The Secretariat has proposed a rotating coordination mechanism. Brazil agreed to take on this coordination role, which was intended to last until 2022, with the support of the CMS Secretariat. However, due primarily to challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, this period has been extended.

5.2 Virtual Meeting

A monitoring meeting of the activities of the Action Plan of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Birds and their Habitats was held virtually from September 1- 4, 2020. The virtual meeting was organized by the Government of Brazil in collaboration with the CMS Secretariat during the COVID-19 pandemic, to maintain communication with members and reaffirm commitment to the MoU and the conservation of birds in the southern regions.

The objective of the virtual meeting was to review and discuss the actions each country has taken to achieve the five objectives of the Action Plan agreed upon by the Signatories participating in MOS2. To prepare for the meeting, the coordination team of the MOU of the Government of Brazil created a monitoring spreadsheet and request that the members to complete it prior to the meeting.

The Government of Brazil was taking the lead in coordinating the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and its Action Plan, following the rotational coordination mechanism established at the Second Meeting of MOU Signatories (MOS2) in Florianópolis, Brazil, in 2018. This coordination will continue until the next meeting, MOS3, scheduled for December 2024.

The monitoring results are available in the spreadsheet from this meeting, which can be downloaded using the following link: <https://www.cms.int/en/meeting/virtual-meeting-monitoring-action-plan-mou-conservation-grassland-birds-south-south-america>.

6. Action Plan

After the virtual meeting of MoU monitoring, minor adjustments to the plan were made and the following objectives and actions of the Action Plan were decided to continue. This includes an overview of actions that have not started or are not completed, those in progress, and those that have started, along with any implementation challenges.

Objective 1: Promote the protection and sustainable management of grasslands of importance for migratory species and the ecosystem services they provide.

This objective includes 11 actions, out of these, 2 actions have not been started or completed, 6 are in progress but facing problems, and 3 are progressing as planned.

OBJECTIVE 1: Promote the protection and sustainable management of grasslands of importance for migratory species and the ecosystem services they provide
ACTION 1.1. Compile available information on priority areas for bird conservation in the MOU, seeking regional representativeness and complementarity.
ACTION 1.2. Identify conservation and management figures, including suitable incentives for the conservation of migratory grassland birds in each country, at the subnational and regional levels.
ACTION 1.3. Ensure the protection of priority areas under appropriate mechanisms for the conservation of migratory grassland birds.
ACTION 1.4. Identify protected areas lacking management plans that include the needs of migratory grassland birds or that require updating to include those needs and the ecosystem services that the areas provide.
ACTION 1.5. Develop and update management plans for protected areas that consider the needs of migratory grassland birds and the ecosystem services that the areas provide.
ACTION 1.6 and 1.7. Promote, develop, and strengthen good management practices (GMPs) for migratory grassland bird habitats.
ACTION 1.8. Promotion of traditional grassland practices as a mechanism to support the conservation of migratory grassland birds.
ACTION 1.9 – 1.10. Promote the use of native seeds and forage plants in pastoral systems.

Objective 2: Develop and coordinate monitoring and research programs for MOU species, their habitats, and grassland ecosystems.

This objective includes 10 actions, with 3 currently in progress facing implementation challenges, and 7 in progress in the planned period.

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop and coordinate monitoring and research programs for MOU species, their habitats, and grassland ecosystems.
ACTION 2.1. Facilitate access to existing information and improve the distribution maps and key areas of the Memorandum of Understanding species in each country party.
ACTION 2.2. Analysis of Representativeness Gaps (GAP) in the protected area system of the region.
ACTION 2.3. Conduct niche modeling studies in areas important for species conservation
ACTION 2.4. Increase knowledge of seasonal movements and habitat needs of species.
ACTION 2.5. To improve knowledge of the biology and demography of the species in the Memorandum.
ACTION 2.6. Carry out studies on the effectiveness of different management techniques (fire, rest, animal loading, afforestation, agriculture) for the conservation of species and the increase of production.
ACTION 2.7. Disseminate existing information and promote new studies on the carbon balance in natural grasslands under livestock management systems.
ACTION 2.8. Create a group of scientists to advise the decisions of the Grassland Bird Study Group (MOU).
ACTION 2.9. Develop studies on the control of the invasive alien forage crop <i>Eragrostis plana</i> .

ACTION 2.10. Investigate the importance of roadside strips/shoulders along highways and neighborhood roads for the conservation of native grasslands.

Objective 3: Raise awareness of the importance of natural grasslands and endangered species.

This objective includes 5 actions, 2 of which are in progress but facing implementation challenges, while 3 are in progress in the planned period.

OBJECTIVE 3: To raise awareness about the importance of natural grasslands and endangered species.

ACTION 3.1. Develop educational campaigns to discourage the illegal trade in these species.

ACTION 3.2. Implement educational campaigns to discourage the illegal trade in species.

ACTION 3.3. Develop a communication strategy for grassland conservation targeting the general public, decision-makers, markets, and financial sector.

ACTION 3.4. Implement a communication strategy for grassland conservation targeting the general public, decision-makers, markets, and financial sector.

ACTION 3.5. Promote the organization of symposia on grassland birds at national/international ornithology meetings and agricultural sector meetings.

Objective 4: Develop and strengthen public and private policies for the conservation of natural grasslands and promote collaboration with the productive sector and civil society.

This objective includes 10 actions, 5 are in progress facing implementation challenges, and 5 are in progress in the planned period.

OBJECTIVE 4: Develop and strengthen public and private policies for the conservation of natural grasslands and promote collaboration with the productive sector and civil society.

ACTION 4.1. Develop and implement legislative measures for the conservation of grasslands in unprotected areas.

ACTION 4.2. Develop, update and implement planning instruments in grassland regions.

ACTION 4.3. Develop and implement regulations on invasive alien species in grassland regions (wild boar, pine, eucalyptus, forage, etc.).

ACTION 4.4. Develop and implement control programs to prevent illegal capture and trade of species.

ACTION 4.5. Promote, regulate, and supervise the use of roadsides and roads to maintain natural grasslands in areas of importance for species.

ACTION 4.6. Increase surveillance and monitor the extent and geographic distribution of illegal capture and trade of species.

ACTION 4.7. Building dialogue and collaborating with the productive sector for the conservation of grasslands.

ACTION 4.8. Develop and implement financial incentives for grassland conservation, e.g., lines of credit for good practices, environmental services, green products, environmental certification.

ACTION 4.9. Promote collaboration with civil society through the joint implementation of national action plans.

ACTION 4.10. Explore the potential of grasslands for tourism purposes, ornamental plants, and other uses.

Objective 5: Strengthen international cooperation for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

This objective includes 7 actions, 3 of which have not started and 4 are in progress in the expected period.

OBJECTIVE 5: Strengthen international cooperation for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

ACTION 5.1. Promote the use of interactive systems to share and systematize monitoring information on migratory grassland species.

ACTION 5.2. Strengthen the implementation of north-south conservation agreements for grassland bird conservation.

ACTION 5.3. Promote the interface between the MOU and the Mercosur SGT6 group for grassland bird conservation issues.

ACTION 5.4. Organize a technical-scientific workshop to develop a methodology for the census and monitoring of birds of the MoU at the international level.

ACTION 5.5. To explore the potential of rangelands to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

ACTION 5.6. Coordinate common actions and management protocols for protected areas through Red Parques.

ACTION 5.7. Ensure the long-term financial viability of the MoU by developing a business plan.

7. MoU Species

Table 1. List of the MoU Species¹.

Species	English	Spanish
Charadriiformes		
Scolopacidae		
<i>Numenius borealis</i>	Eskimo Curlew	Zarapito boreal, zarapito esquimal, chorlo polar
<i>Calidris subruficollis</i>	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Playerito canela
Passerines		
Tyrannidae		
<i>Polystictus pectoralis pectoralis</i>	Bearded Tachuri	Tachuri, tachuri canela
<i>Alectrurus tricolor</i>	Cock-Tailed Tyrant	Yetapá chico
<i>Alectrurus risora</i>	Strange-Tailed Tyrant	Yetapá de collar, tijeleta de las pajas
Icteridae		
<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Bobolink	Charlatan
<i>Xanthopsar flavus</i>	Saffron-Cowled Blackbird	Tordo amarillo, dragón
Thraupidae		
<i>Sporophila ruficollis</i>	Dark-Throated Seedeater	Capuchino garganta café

<i>Sporophila palustris</i>	Marsh Seedeater	Capuchino pecho blanco
<i>Sporophila hypochroma</i>	Gray-And-Chestnut Seedeater, Rufous-Rumped Seedeater	Capuchino castaño
<i>Sporophila cinnamomea</i>	Chestnut Seedeater	Capuchino corona gris

¹ CMS website: <https://www.cms.int/en/species>.

Table 2. Species distribution, conservation status and CMS appendices.

Species ¹	Distribution - countries of MOU ²					IUCN Red List ₂	CMS Appendix ¹
	ARG	BOL	BRA	PAR	URU		
<i>Numenius borealis</i>	x		x	x	x	CR*	I
<i>Calidris subruficollis</i>	x	x	x	x	x	VU	I, II
<i>Polystictus pectoralis pectoralis</i>	x	x	x	x	x	NT**	II
<i>Alectrurus tricolor</i>	x	x	x	x		VU	I, II
<i>Alectrurus risora</i>	x		x	x	x	VU	I, II
<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	x	x	x	x		LC	II
<i>Xanthopsar flavus</i>	x		x	x	x	EN	I, II
<i>Sporophila ruficollis</i>	x	x	x	x	x	NT	II
<i>Sporophila palustris</i>	x		x	x	x	EN	I, II
<i>Sporophila hypochroma</i>	x	x	x	x	x	NT	I, II
<i>Sporophila cinnamomea</i>	x	x	x	x	x	VU	I, II

¹ CMS website: <https://www.iucnredlist.org>. * *N. borealis* is considered Possibly Extinct; ** status of the species *P. pectoralis*.

8. Cooperating Organizations

During MOS2 in 2018, the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network and the Argentine Wildlife Foundation committed to collaborating as cooperating organizations.

9. Final Comments

To conclude the current cycle of implementation of the MoU Action Plan, review its objectives and actions while planning a new cycle, the coordination of the Brazilian government, the CMS Secretariat, and Manomet Conservation Sciences, organized and actively supported the Third Meeting of MOU Signatories (MOS3). This meeting will take place in Florianópolis, alongside the Second Meeting of the Americas Flyways Task Force, from December 2-6, 2024.

The importance of consistently holding meetings among the signatories is emphasized, alongside the need for monitoring the action plan implementation, to ensure steady progress. Despite challenges in implementation, such as a lack of funding and human resources, ongoing dialogue has led to observable progress. Countries have increasingly collaborated by sharing experiences, good practices, and reporting progress in implementation. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has proven to be an essential instrument of international cooperation for the conservation of grassland birds and their habitats.