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Preface

The present volume results from a workshop on behalf of the 20th anniversary of the „Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals“ or „Bonn Convention“, celebrated in Bonn in 1999. The workshop was funded and organised by the newly founded, interdisciplinary „Center for Development Research“ (ZEF) at the University of Bonn. Among its current projects is the „Global Register of Migratory Species (GROMS)“, which is embedded into its research agenda on development aspects of ecology and biodiversity.

Sustainable development and biodiversity finally got the necessarily high priority on the agenda of policy makers. It is now up to scientists to prevent that these important thematic areas remain mere buzzwords, and to provide sound data on species distribution, their conservation status and threats to biodiversity. Migratory animals are a particular challenge for the application and implementation of international and national legal instruments, as they cross borders and in many countries only have a status of visitors (though not always treated with hospitality).

New information technologies are of increasing importance to monitor and document species information. Within the last years, the World Wide Web emerged as an important platform for both environmental organisations and scientists, providing rapid access to biodiversity data. But the existing huge data sets require harmonisation, integration and validation. The GROMS is tailored to store this scattered information within one database, including geographic information on migration. The present workshop was an excellent opportunity to discuss possible cooperation with other database projects and ongoing initiatives related to bioinformatics. At the same time, severe knowledge gaps became evident. As shown by this volume, new technologies provide a huge variety and quantity of high-precision data on migratory species, most of which provide surprising insights about their life history and migratory pathways. They lead to clear recommendations for conservation policy, which hopefully will be implemented by the Bonn Convention with its existing agreements.

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