



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
CONCERNING CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR
THE AQUATIC WARBLER (*Acrocephalus paludicola*)
Biebrza National Park, Poland, 13-15 May 2010
Agenda Item 7.1

EXTENSION OF THE MEMORANDUM'S GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE: RECOGNITION OF ADDITIONAL RANGE STATES

(Note prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with BirdLife International)

1. The geographical scope of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is the geographical area to which the MoU applies. The geographical scope corresponds to part or all of the range of the species that the MoU targets (as defined by Article I paragraph 1.f of the Convention, i.e. the areas of land or water that a migratory species inhabits, stays in temporarily, crosses or overflies at any time on its normal migration route).
2. The Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*) does not explicitly define its geographical scope, however, paragraph 10 stipulates that all Range States of the Aquatic Warbler are eligible to sign the MoU. The MoU currently applies to 15 Range States identified at the time of the MoU's conclusion in Minsk on the basis of the state of knowledge on the distribution of the species. In this regard however, the Minsk Declaration of the Meeting to Finalise the Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler (30 April 2003) recognizes that owing to a lack of information at the time of the adoption of the MoU a Range State not originally listed in the instrument could be identified in the future. Should this occur, the meeting advised the CMS Secretariat, acting as the Depositary, to find an appropriate solution to make signature possible.
3. The First Meeting of Signatory States to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning conservation measures for the Aquatic Warbler (Criewen, Germany, 25-26 June 2006) discussed this topic under agenda item 8.4, and recommended to consider the recognition of additional Range States according to expert knowledge and advice.
4. The MoU's present coverage of the breeding range of the Aquatic Warbler is complete. All countries with a potential to re-establish the Aquatic Warbler as a breeding bird are in any case already covered by the MoU as part of the range during migration.



5. In contrast, the migration and wintering ranges of the Aquatic Warbler are presently not fully covered by the MoU. Since the conclusion of the MoU in 2003, new knowledge and expert discussions are suggesting the recognition of the following seven additional countries as Range States with regular annual occurrence of Aquatic Warblers:

- Luxembourg: According to recent data, the Aquatic Warbler is being recorded in Luxembourg mainly during autumn migration, but occasionally also during spring. Since 2000, there have been at least 22 records, mostly through ringing schemes, at three sites. The Valley of the Syre with 18 records seems to be the most important site in the country for the species. These findings are consistent with the fact that all neighbouring countries are acknowledged to be part of the migration range of the species.
- Portugal: According to newer information, the species is regularly recorded in Portugal during autumn migration, especially in wetlands along the Atlantic coast. For the most important site, the Lagoa de S. Andre, 2-15 birds were estimated for the year 2008. Considering the fact that the species follows the Atlantic coast during its autumn migration, it is not surprising that the species is now regularly being recorded in Portugal as well, even though a major part of the population still seems to take a “shortcut” through the centre of the Iberian Peninsula.
- Switzerland: The species is regularly being recorded in low numbers during migration, especially during spring at large lakes like Lac Genève and Lac Neuchâtel. The regular occurrence of the species in Switzerland in spring seems logical considering the now confirmed information about a more southerly spring migration route through Mediterranean France, rather than through Atlantic France like in the autumn.
- Slovakia: Ringing work during the past two years has proven the regular occurrence of the species in the Gbelce Marshes during spring migration with, e.g., 6 specimens caught on 5 different days during April 2008. The location of the site between the Hungarian and the southernmost Polish breeding sites suggests that it might even be a potential (irregular) breeding site.
- Morocco: This country seems to be very important for the species during both spring and autumn migrations. Literature analysis identified 37 records up to 2004. In recent years, the species has been recorded regularly in the Loukkos marshes close to Larache. It is very likely that the majority of Aquatic Warblers passes this country during both migration periods, when suitable wetlands in Morocco will be of major importance as stopover sites.
- Mauritania: The species is recorded in Mauritania mainly during migration (40 records identified up to 2004 in both migration periods). It is however likely, that sites in southern Mauritania, especially along the Senegal river, are being used also as wintering sites. The most likely potential wintering site in Mauritania is the Diawling National Park in the Senegal Delta, located very close to the Djoudj National Park in Senegal on the other side of the Senegal river. A satellite image study identified several smaller potential wintering sites in southern Mauritania.

- Mali: This country is considered as a likely wintering Range State. The literature search for historic records identified only 5 records in winter up to 2004. But a satellite study identified major areas of potentially suitable wintering habitat, which leads experts to believe that Mali is, together with Senegal and Mauritania, one of the very few countries holding major wintering areas for this species, with the Inner Niger Delta identified as the main search area.
6. Of the above listed seven countries, four (Portugal, Morocco, Mauritania and Mali) have already been considered as Range States in the new International Species Action Plan approved by the EU in 2009, while the other three (Luxembourg, Switzerland and Slovakia) are considered for the first time in the currently proposed new version of the International Action Plan forming part of the MoU.
7. Other countries along the European-West African flyway of the species appear to hold the species only as a vagrant. It is therefore currently not considered justified to include them as Range States of the MoU on the ground of practical and financial considerations and considering the limited added conservation benefit for the species. Should future information show that any of these countries holds Aquatic Warblers annually in significant numbers, then their potential status as range states should be revisited.

Action requested:

The Signatories are requested to:

- Discuss and, where appropriate, endorse the above proposal to recognise 7 additional Range States to the MoU.