



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 8.0

REPORT ON MOU COORDINATION

(Prepared by the Aquatic Warbler Conservation Officer)

I. Introduction

1. This document reports on the work of the BirdLife/CMS International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Officer (AWCO) to support the coordination and implementation of the Aquatic Warbler MoU.
2. It should be taken into account that there has been a gap in the staffing of the AWCO position, as the position of the AWCO remained vacant for 14 months between March 2007 and May 2008, because the previous AWCO Mr. Viktor Fenchuk moved on to become the Chief Executive of APB-BirdLife Belarus, the organisation that hosts the position. Mr. Fenchuk continued to be the acting AWCO at no cost to the CMS-RSPB project budget until his successor was recruited. For instance, Aquatic Warbler counts were executed at Sporava and Dzikoe mires (2 of the 3 most important AW breeding sites in Belarus) in May-July 2007. Besides that, several smaller suboptimal sites in the Pripyat floodplain were covered by censuses. However, he could obviously devote to this role only a limited amount of time.
3. This report covers the project activities implemented by the new AWCO Mr. Uladzimir Malashevich from 1 June 2008 to 30 April 2010.

II. Coordination of MoU Implementation

4. Technical advice was provided to the CMS Secretariat in preparation for the Second Meeting of Signatories, including the development of a new draft Range State reporting template, Priority Projects List, Proposition on Future MoU Coordination, and provided other supporting documentation for the MoU meeting.
5. Assistance was provided to the development of the new International Aquatic Warbler Species Action Plan, which should be the basis for an updated CMS/MoU Species Action Plan.

6. The content of the AWCT website (www.aquaticwarbler.net) was considerably and frequently updated during the reporting period and it is now the biggest online resource for Aquatic Warbler conservation. The following information can be found there: news, current data on the species' biology, distribution and numbers, a picture gallery, recording of songs, information on threats, and results of finished and ongoing research and conservation projects. The website contains more than 100 scientific articles and conference presentations, monitoring reports from five countries (Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, United Kingdom) since 1998, Site Data Sheets containing detailed habitat descriptions and regularly updated monitoring data from 24 breeding sites.

7. The site database for the species was maintained. GIS database was updated: borders of the most Belarusian AW breeding sites were specified and updated based on field examination and/or using satellite images analysis, new sites were added. Site Data Sheets (SDS) for 8 Belarusian sites (visited during counts 2008 and 2009) were created or updated. 27 SDS covering 5 countries are already available on-line.

8. The second issue of the Aquatic Warbler Flyway Newsletter containing information about the progress on the MoU's implementation was compiled. Paper and electronic version of the Newsletter were disseminated in May 2010.

9. Awareness rising activities were implemented. An article concerning the problem of the deepening of the Ukrainian Pripyat was written in the BirdLife Newsletter (December 2008), a number of interviews about AW conservation were given, news about the most important AW conservation issues were written and placed on the AWCT website and on the APB-BirdLife Belarus website.

10. The list of AWCT members was updated. The contact information of existing members was also updated. 19 new members joined the tea; now there are 49 members from 15 countries.

III. Aquatic Warbler conservation

11. The AWCO led, or contributed significantly to the following conservation projects/initiatives:

- a) A new project targeting at the establishment of a sustainable vegetation management system at key AW breeding sites: Upper Basin of Biebrza (Poland), Sporava and Zvanets mires (Belarus), Pripyat-Tsyr (Ukraine) was developed. The technical possibility of mechanical mowing with currently available machinery was confirmed during the joint visit of experts to Sporovo and Zvanets mires organized in July 2009. A joint project planning meeting was organized in February 2010 in Kovel, Ukraine. The applicant - UNDP Belarus and all project partners (OTOP, APB and USPB) attended the meeting. The project application was prepared by AWCO in a close cooperation with all project partners and UNDP. This project was successfully submitted to the Joint Technical Secretariat of Cross Border Cooperation Programme "Poland-Belarus-Ukraine". Decision on funding will be made in June 2010. In case of positive decision the new project with a total budget €1,652,181 will be launched in January 2011.

- b) In addition to the newly developed project a vegetation management system is being developed in the framework of the ongoing Climate and Biodiversity Project in Sporava mire (Belarus): the areas for vegetation management and the place for the briquetting facility were chosen; offers of briquetting equipment were collected; costs, terms and formalities of industrial engineering were estimated; the running costs were also calculated. Equipment purchasing and industrial engineering will be finished in 2010.
- c) AW counts were coordinated and implemented in 2008 and 2009 in the most important Belarusian breeding sites. Assistance of volunteers from Belarus, Germany, Latvia and UK was organized. The information about counts was disseminated through a specially created web page for potential participants, through AWCT and then forwarded by AWCT members further to European bird watcher lists. It was also suggested for RSPB sabbaticals to take part in AW counts in Belarus. As a result of monitoring work Belarusian AW population was estimated and a report was placed on the AWCT website.
- d) Formal protection for four AW breeding sites in Belarus has been ensured. These small suboptimal sites holding 21-35 singing males (s.m.) were located outside the borders of Important Bird Areas or Protected Areas. However, there are still 4 other AW breeding sites holding 2 % of Belarusian population (140 s.m.) being still not formally protected. The information on AW numbers at these sites as well as information on habitats conditions and threats must be updated first. Formal protection for these unprotected sites will be arranged after complete counts in Belarus in 2010.
- e) Support to other ongoing AW conservation projects. Support was provided for the Climate and Biodiversity Project (Belarus) in activities targeting at the establishment of a vegetation management system in Sporava mire. Besides that, the AWCO is a member of steering committee of the LIFE Project on AW conservation in Poland and Germany.

Action requested:

- The meeting is invited to take note of the report.