



**SECOND MEETING OF THE AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY LANDBIRDS
WORKING GROUP**

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 25-27 November 2015

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Contribution to the CMS workshop in Abidjan, 25-27 November 2015

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In addition to the activity information for the Second Meeting of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group, Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), 25-27 November 2015, which I already returned to Borja Heredia, I have the following comments to offer, related to 1. The workshop on land use and land use change to be organized for 2016 and 2. The relevance to the WG of promoting a bird atlassing scheme in West Africa.

1. The workshop on land use and land use change to be organized for 2016

a. The geographical focus should preferably be on all of the geographic region covered by the Landbirds Action Plan. Or at the very least, the geographical focus should include all the regions visited by the species of interest during their annual migration cycle.

b. Land management organizations from the regions of interest, including farmer organizations, should be involved as early as possible. Their representatives should help decide the goals of the workshop. This is essential to the success of the workshop.

For the Sahel region:

c. A recent report to Vogelbescherming BirdLife-The Netherlands should be relevant: *Improving land management in the Sahel for the benefit of farmers and migratory birds: examples of success in increasing the number of trees and in integrated natural resource management.*

d. Sahara Sahel Foods is an NGO based in Zinder, Niger, that focusses on foods that can be collected from trees indigenous to the Sahel. Such trees can be of benefit to farmers and pastoralists as well as migratory songbirds. It may be worth considering involving this NGO in the workshop.
<http://sahasahelfoods.com/>

e. The BTO and RSPB were involved in organizing three workshops in the Cambridge area in 2010 on migratory birds and land use (and land use change) in the Sahel. The first workshop resulted in a paper by Atkinson and colleagues on habitat use by migratory landbirds from (northern) Europe in

the Sahel. The results from the second and third workshops, and the questions they left unanswered, will also be relevant to the proposed CMS AEMLWG workshop.

f. Isolated wetlands in the Sahel are of benefit not only to (migratory) waterbirds, but also to (migratory) landbirds. These wetlands, numbering in their thousands across the Sahel, are not only important to (migratory) birds, but also to local farmers, pastoralists, fishermen and collectors of natural products. As a result, isolated wetlands in the Sahel are under enormous pressure while their management is often largely uncoordinated. Participatory integrated natural resource management (PINReM) of these wetlands is essential for the survival of many migratory landbirds. See e.g.:

Brouwer, J., A.H. Abdoul Kader and T. Sommerhalter 2014. Wetlands help maintain wetland and dryland biodiversity in the Sahel, but that role is under threat: an example from **eighty years of changes at Lake Tabalak in Niger**. *Biodiversity* 15: 203-219, special issue on drylands. DOI: [10.1080/14888386.2014.934714](https://doi.org/10.1080/14888386.2014.934714)

Brouwer, J. 2014. Wetlands in drylands in the Sahel: the urgent need for good joint governance. Pp. 108-125 in: P.M. Herrera, J. Davies and P. Manzano Baena (eds), *The Governance of Rangelands: Collective Action for Sustainable Pastoralism*. Routledge, Oxford, UK.

Brouwer, J. 2014. Are the most valuable resources in drylands isolated wetlands? Paper presented at the Second Scientific Conference of the UN Convention on Combating Desertification, Bonn, Germany, 9-12 April 2013. *Planet@Risk* 2, Special Issue on Desertification:47-57. <http://www.planet-risk.org/index.php/pr/article/view/45>

Brouwer, J. 2010. Climate Change in Dryland and Wetland Ecosystems in the Sahel Region. Pp. 32-45 in: Andrade Pérez, A., Herrera Fernandez, B. and Cazzolla Gatti, R. (eds.) *Building Resilience to Climate Change: Ecosystem-based adaptation and lessons from the field*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 164pp.

http://www.iucn.org/knowledge/publications_doc/publications/?6297/Building-resilience-to-climate-change--ecosystem-based-adaptation-and-lessons-from-the-field

Brouwer, J. 2009. The seasonal role of isolated wetlands in the Sahel: key resources for people and biodiversity, under pressure from global change. Paper presented at 'Seasonality Revisited', an International Conference organised by the Future Agricultures consortium at the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK, 8–10 July, 2009.

[http://event.future-](http://event.future-agricultures.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=17&dir=DESC&order=name&Itemid=44&limit=5&limitstart=35)

[agricultures.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=17&dir=DESC&order=name&Itemid=44&limit=5&limitstart=35](http://event.future-agricultures.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=17&dir=DESC&order=name&Itemid=44&limit=5&limitstart=35)

g. Given the preceding, a French GEF (FFEM) project proposal by ONCFS, on sustainable use of wetlands and waterbirds in the Sahel, will be of interest. Contact Pierre Defos du Rau pierre.defosdurau@oncfs.gouv.fr.

For NW Europe:

h. experiences with set-aside and wildlife margins to agricultural fields in Groningen and elsewhere in The Netherlands, may be relevant to the proposed workshop.

2. The relevance to the WG of promoting bird atlasing schemes in the countries of interest

Part of the problem in protecting migratory landbirds in the African-Eurasian migratory system is lack of good knowledge of the locations and habitats that they frequent during part or all of their annual cycle. An atlasing scheme can help increase such knowledge. For Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso there exists the on-line, open-access, bilingual (English and French) West African Bird DataBase www.wabdab.org. The database contains geo-referenced records, including breeding records, as well as photos, of all bird species for each country. Information can be extracted per species, location or area (e.g. IBA or nature reserve). Maps can be created per country or for all countries together, from all records or selecting records from particular months of the year and/or a particular period of years. Historical records mostly still need to be added. While there is overall coordination, **the data from each country can be managed separately, and by a local organisation if it has the capacity.**

To better involve local people, in this database information on bird names in local languages and bird stories in local cultures is also collected. Information on migration to and from these

countries is planned to be included, but realization has been slow for lack of manpower and funding. Ring recoveries, satellite tracking and geolocators have so far shown Niger to be connected by migratory birds to 93 other countries.

The WABDaB software can easily be made suitable for use in other countries in West Africa, or indeed in other regions.

Up until now, information on relations between birds and land cover is only included in the WABDAB on an ad hoc basis, via comments in the Remarks field. We would like to include land cover information in as meaningful a way as possible.

- For the interaction of individual birds with the vegetation we can **add a field ‘interaction with vegetation’ for individual observations**. E.g. a bird feeding on the fruit of a particular tree or shrub.
 - To get a better idea of **habitat use** by each species, we can **add a field ‘vegetation structure’** to the definition of a location. A drop-down list of vegetation structural units seems preferable to floristic units, as the list for the latter can be almost endless. And on the basis of the vegetation structure and location a vegetation ecologist can make a pretty good guess at the plant species involved.

Please find below several alternatives for vegetation structural units to be included in the bird records in the West African Bird DataBase. All comments will be much appreciated.

Table 1 from Atkinson et al. 2014.

Definitions of the habitats used in this study as modified from Di Gregorio and Jansen (2000).

Rocky Outcrops Bare rocky outcrops, often associated with inselbergs

Villages Areas of continuous human habitation

Farmland Open land dominated by annual or perennial crops, with 0-10% canopy cover of naturally-occurring woody species

Grassland Dominated by grasses and herbs, with 0-10% canopy cover of woody species

Farm/Shrubs As farmland but with 10-40% cover of open stands of shrubs or bushes 2-7m tall

Grass/Shrubs As grassland but with 10-40% cover of open stands of shrubs or bushes 2-7m tall

Shrubland Open stands of shrubs or bushes 2-7m tall (> 40% cover)

Farmland/trees As farmland but with a canopy cover of woody plants > 8 m tall of 10-40%

Grassland/trees As grassland but with a canopy cover of woody plants > 8 m tall of 10-40%

Shrubland/trees As shrubland but with a canopy cover of woody plants > 8 m tall of 10-40%

Open woodland An open stand of trees at least 8m tall with a canopy cover of 40% or more, the field layer usually dominated by grasses

Wet woodland A continuous stand of trees at least 8m tall along seasonal or permanent rivers or lakes, at least 10m tall with interlocking crowns

Irrigated Farm Areas of farmland that are irrigated for crops such as rice.

Wet Grassland Areas of damp grassland surrounding open water

Fringing Vegetation Vegetation < 10m tall fringing areas of open water (permanent or seasonal). Includes woody species such as *Acacia nilotica*

Emergent Vegetation Vegetation, such as *Phragmites* and *Typha* that requires permanent or semi-permanent inundation

Open Water Areas of open water which are permanent or seasonal

Vegetation structure table from Dutch Montagu's Harrier Foundation expeditions, 2007 and on

habitat	
F	farmland
FB	combination farmland & bush
T	tigerbush
B	bush steppe (<15 trees/ha)
BT	bush steppe with trees (>15 trees/ha)
WO	open woodland (>15 trees/ha)
FT	combination farmland & trees
G	grassland
GT	grassland with trees
EP	erosion plain (glacial)
WE	wetland
V	village/city
D	completely degraded habitat - erosion plain

Vegetation degradation table from Dutch Montagu's Harrier Foundation expeditions, 2007 and on

degradation	degradation means (per habitat):
0no degradation	F erosion, overgrazing, lack of undergrowth
1some degradation	FB erosion, overgrazing, lack of undergrowth
2degraded	T erosion, lack of undergrowth in the stripes of bush
3very degraded/destroyed	B erosion, overgrazing, lack of undergrowth
	BT erosion, overgrazing, lack of undergrowth
	WO erosion, overgrazing, lack of undergrowth
	FT erosion, overgrazing, lack of undergrowth
	GT erosion, overgrazing, lack of undergrowth
	EP cannot degrade
	WE erosion, lack of vegetation by overgrazing/trampling