



**CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY
SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS**

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment programme



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

ABIDJAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, 25-27 NOVEMBER 2015

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Acronyms

AEMLAP - African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan

AEML-SG - African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Steering Group

AEML-WG - African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group

AEWA - Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds

AP - Action Plan

APLORI - A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute

AW - Aquatic Warbler

AWCT - Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team

BfN – German Federal Nature Conservation Agency (Bundesamt für Naturschutz)

BMUB - German Federal Ministry for the Environment (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit)

BNHS - Bombay Natural History Society

CAMI - Central Asia Mammal Initiative

CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity

CMS - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

COP – Conference of Parties

CREMA - Community Resource Management Areas

EU- European Union

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FLAP - Friends of the Landbirds Action Plan

IBAs - Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas,

IUCN - The International Union for Conservation of Nature

LIFE+ - EU Regulation for the Environment and Nature Conservation

MEAs - Multilateral Environmental Agreements

MLSG - Migrant Landbird Study Group

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

NCF - Nigeria Conservation Foundation

NGO - Non-Governmental Organizations

NNCML - Nigerian National Committee on Migratory Landbirds

OTOP – Polish Society for the Protection of Birds

PAs - protected areas

POW – Programme of Work

RSPB - The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

SAP - Species Action Plan

SEO - Sociedad Española Ornitológica - BirdLife Spain

SSAP - Single Species Action Plans

TD - European Turtle-dove

TOR - Terms of Reference

UFOPLAN – German Environmental Research Plan (Umweltforschungsplan)

UK – United Kingdom

UNCCD - United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNEP - United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WA – West Africa

WABDaB – West Africa Bird Database

WG - Working Group

YBB - Yellow-breasted Bunting

Summary

1. The second meeting of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group took place from 25-27 November 2015 at the UNEP Sub-regional Office in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The meeting was financially supported by the Government of Switzerland.
2. The meeting endorsed the Terms of Reference of the new Coordinator (hosted by BirdLife International in Nairobi, Kenya) of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group.
3. A revised *modus operandi* for the Working Group and the expansion of the Working Group based on existing technical capacity needs were agreed upon.
4. The meeting took note of initiatives implemented by various stakeholders which contributed to the conservation of migratory landbirds. It also welcomed new ones particularly one on monitoring migratory landbirds at UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Africa, with funding from the German Government.
5. Priority regions for AEMLAP implementation were identified as: East Atlantic Flyway, Eastern Palearctic-Russia & South Asia and Rift Valley-North Eastern-Eastern Africa-Middle East.
6. Funds permitting, a stakeholders' workshop on land use and land use change focusing on West African region would be held in October-November 2016. The meeting noted that the land use and land use change in other regions could also be an important issue of concern in migratory landbirds conservation.
7. A Programme of Work for the implementation of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP) was developed and adopted pending further refining and finalization after the meeting.
8. The meeting took note of the progress made in the action planning for the AEMLAP flagship species, namely, Yellow breasted-Bunting, European Roller and European Turtle-dove. The meeting resolved to maintain the species as priority for the Action Plan since they were still facing serious threats, but identified: Basra Reed-warbler, Spotted Ground-thrush, Redwing, Meadow pipit, Asian and African Houbara as potential species for action planning. Interested stakeholders were welcomed to take the lead in developing action plans for the species.
9. There was agreement that the Action Plan is developed into an Initiative (taking the Central Asia Mammal Initiative, CAMI model) but remain open to a stronger instrument that covers all the migratory birds in the Africa-Eurasian region.
10. The meeting recommended development of synergies between CMS sister instruments and processes including AEWA, the Aquatic Warbler MOU, the Raptor MOU, the Task Force on Illegal Killing in the Mediterranean and others such as CBD, UNCCD and the Bern Convention.
11. It was recommended that further work to operationalize the Friends of Landbirds Action Plan be taken forward.

12. A draft resolution to be presented in the next CMS COP was discussed.
13. The beginning of 2018 (after COP 12) was proposed as the date of the next meeting of the Working Group.

1. Introduction

The second meeting of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group (AEMLWG) took place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 25-27 November 2015. The meeting was conducted at the premises of the Sub-Regional Office for West Africa (WA) of UNEP which is also the location of the Abidjan Convention Secretariat. The first two days involved discussions as per agenda items while an excursion to Grand Bassam Ramsar site and Forêt Classée of N'ganda N'ganda and the Ehotile National Park was conducted on the third day. The meeting was attended by 32 people from various institutions and backgrounds. A list of participants is attached to this report.

Day 1: 25 November 2015

2. Main Discussions

2.1 Opening Remarks, introduction of participants and adoption of the agenda

The Chair of the WG, Olivier Biber, welcomed all to the meeting and thanked the organizers for the work well done. He also thanked Swiss Government for availing the finances which enabled holding of the meeting and Côte d'Ivoire for agreeing to be the host.

Ms Angèle Luh (Sub-Regional office, UNEP) indicated that this was a large meeting that the sub-regional office was hosting and welcomed all. The office, which hosted, Abidjan Convention started operations in April 2015.

In his opening remarks, Borja Heredia (CMS Secretariat) indicated that it was a great pleasure to see everybody after a lot of back and forth communications. The first meeting of this WG happened in Ghana, Accra 2012, where the AEMLAP was developed and now it was time for implementation. The Plan was adopted at CMS COP 11, Quito, in 2014. In terms of moving forward, he indicated that WA would be the focus for implementation of the Plan in the first stage. The UNEP sub-regional office had been very supportive in organizing the meeting. He thanked the Swiss Government for sponsorship of the meeting.

The Chair further indicated that he looked forward to a realistic roadmap to AEMLAP implementation, ahead of the next CMS COP. The WG had been commissioned by the Scientific Council of CMS to lead the Plan's implementation and would report on progress made in the next COP. He also looked forward to a POW with clear and feasible tasks and respective leads.

A round of introduction was made with participants indicating their institutions of affiliation and their interests in conservation work.

The agenda of the meeting was adopted with an item on “up- and down listing of some species in the IUCN Red List” added for discussion.

2.2 Coordination of the Working Group: introduction of the new Coordinator and approval of Terms of Reference

Borja Heredia introduced the new coordinator, Alex Ngari (BirdLife International, Kenya) and the draft TOR to the meeting. He indicated that a key task of the coordinator was to create a network of contacts to support AEMLAP implementation. The Chair thanked BirdLife International for hosting the Coordinator.

Nicola Crockford (RSPB, UK) suggested that the Coordinator’s working relationships would need to include South Asia; Olivier Biber suggested that CBD be added as one of the MEAs to link with and that the species listed should be flexible to give allowance for changes. After the discussions the draft TOR was adopted with the minor changes.

2.3 *Modus operandi* and composition of the Working Group and Steering Group

It was suggested that the report of the first meeting of the WG held in Accra be added to the meeting documents. As part of the *modus operandi* it was recommended that members hold meetings via Skype or other electronic means. The meeting was informed that the AEML-SG operated like a bureau or Standing Committee of the WG and worked by consensus; WG members could propose new members primarily to fill in existing gaps and bring in relevant expertise. It was agreed that Nicola Crockford prepare a list of categories of groups which and individuals who could be included in the WG to present it later in the day. A “long list” of members would be kept by the Secretariat including the participants of the Accra (2012) and Abidjan (2015) meetings. The *modus operandi* was adopted.

2.4 Introduction to Resolution 11.17 on the Landbirds Action Plan

Borja Heredia introduced the migratory landbirds resolution and AEMLAP adopted at COP11 in Ecuador, Quito (2014). The resolution urged Parties to address habitat loss, to work with local communities, synergize with other MEAs including the Bern Convention to prevent illegal killing and trade; implement anti-poisoning CMS guidelines; engage with the Migrant Landbird Study Group (MLSG) to fill knowledge gaps; engage with public awareness (through FLAP); and organize regional workshops to address landbird issues. On the institutional framework, it urged parties to hold consultative meetings (such as the 2nd WG meeting) to determine the future of the AEMLAP. On capacity, it encouraged technical transfer, working with partnerships, sharing protocols; on species actions, it encouraged liaising with MLSG to develop SSAPs; and expand the membership of the WG. The AEMLAP covered 128 Range States and 502 species including 32 Globally Threatened and Near Threatened, and 124 Least Concern with decreasing trends.

The Chair commented that these were the resolutions that guided the implementation of the AP e.g. the formation of the MLSG. A proposal to include emerging diseases e.g. avian influenza, in a new resolution was made.

2.5 Reports of Working Group members on implementation of the Action Plan

Alex Ngari presented a summary of the reports submitted by WG members and welcomed further contributions from the participants. The following were highlights of the discussion:

- BirdLife Asia: had been holding discussions regarding setting up an East Asia Bird Monitoring Scheme and conservation of the YBB.
- Joost Brouwer: operated the WABDaB.
- BirdLife Africa: was part of Spring Alive campaign (coordinated by OTOP); there were plans to submit a LIFE+ project to the EU Commission; the Project Coordinator in OTOP was Karolina Kalinowska and Jaroslaw Krogulec (Poland) offered to be the WG link with her.
- APLORI offered post-graduate certificates on ornithology studies and had adopted the British Trust for Ornithology's BirdTrack as it had good quality control measures.
- Nigerian National Committee on Migratory Landbirds (NNCML): this was a joint initiative of the NCF (with support from the RSPB), APLORI, the Leventis Foundation and the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Park Service. It was chaired by the CMS national focal point with NCF being the Secretariat.
- Report from Spain: as a member of the EU, Spain had to implement the Habitats and Birds Directives, which were obligations under EU legislation; there was a tradition of bird taking which was very localized in a couple of Mediterranean provinces; Spain had a very important stop-over area (La Nava lagoon in Palencia) for (AW; the Natura 2000 Network in Europe was in place in Spain including Special Protection Areas for birds. Burkina Faso had had ringing recoveries of birds from Spain.
- “Mainstreaming conservation of migratory soaring birds into productive sectors in the Red Sea/Rift valley”: Alex Ngari introduced this project, the outputs of which could be beneficial to landbirds when applied in the region.
- Oral reports: Philippe Sibley (France) said that an Action Plan was in place for the Oortolan Bunting; there was some traditional taking which was illegal; birds had been logged in the Russian Federation and Scandinavia; birds from Finland were trapped in the Landes (south west France).
 - Alfred Oteng Yeboa (Vice Chair of the WG, Ghana): a section on migratory species was included in the Ghanaian National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBSAP); the same could be done for the other countries.
 - Nana Kofi Adu-Nsiah (Ghana): there was a programme in his country involved in policy interventions and engaging people in wildlife management called Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA); it had a multispecies focus including landbirds.
 - Manu Shiiwa (APLORI, Nigeria): protected areas (PAs) were not the only ones important for landbirds, but also farmlands; there was need to involve the communities in bird conservation; birds were whistle blowers to environmental degradation.
 - Hillaire Beibro Yaokokore (University Felix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire): there was a department on biodiversity at the University and a team was working on birds though not involved in the West Africa Bird Database;

they worked on wetlands, cocoa plantations, pests, cultivation, forests; there were 15 researchers working on ornithology, five at doctoral level. The chair invited them to participate in the MLSG.

- Yao Kouakou (Ministry of Water and Forests, Côte d'Ivoire): Hunting had been forbidden since 1974 by the Government in every part of the national territory; compliance and enforcement were not good; the ministry was encouraged to look into establishing a national landbird committee.
- Franz Bairlein (Germany): there was a need to develop an online tool for reporting e.g. through a detailed questionnaire, with focus on AEMLAP, which would be filled in by government officials, NGOs and other stakeholders. Also there is need to: appoint focal points at national level; develop a dedicated place for AEMLAP online (potentially the Scientific Council workspace); need to make the reporting template more detailed and online. Adama Nana (Burkina Faso): the questionnaire should be bound to time periods, the more precise the questions were, the more valuable it would be; Djarma Ali Ngarmoudi (Chad): the questionnaire would be very useful.
- *Action point* - The CMS Secretariat to create an online reporting template open to governments, NGOs and other stakeholders, access could be regulated through a password; the Scientific Council workspace could be used as a platform for information exchange; links could be created with FLAP and MLSG.
- Peter Puchala (Slovakia): Natura 2000 included areas for birds; some management plans for these sites were in preparation; there were ongoing projects on some bird species e.g. bee-eaters, sand martins; he had been involved in the pan-European bird monitoring scheme for the last 10-15 years.
- Beibro Yaokokore (Côte d'Ivoire): the learning institutions could be useful to gather more data but also in mobilizing the existing ones; it could be useful to have a synthesis of bibliographies; local studies were important; more capacity on research was needed e.g. on use new techniques such as geo-locators could be achieved in a collaborative way.
- Jaroslav Krogulec: data had been collected for AW which had later been complemented with geo-locators and some more precise data.
- Alex Ngari: announced about a publication on bird ringing at Ngulia in Kenya; he suggested that the organizers should be contacted to contribute to AEMLAP implementation.

2.6 Discussion on regional priorities for the implementation of the Action Plan

Borja Heredia made a presentation on various approaches which could be followed to determine the regional priorities following the geographical remit of the CMS resolution on AEMLAP. Some highlights of the presentation were:

- *Approach 1*: priorities could be based on the three regions covered by the AP, e.g.: Africa - there could be something like the AEWA Africa Initiative; Europe: Natura 2000, EU-related works; Middle East and Central Asia: an extension of the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan to cover landbirds.

- *Approach 2*: the regions could be broken down into sub-regions with a focus on major issues of sub-regional concern: e.g. WA, Mediterranean Region -illegal killing and other CMS initiatives, Middle East-North Eastern Africa, Western Europe, North Eastern Africa, Eastern Asia including India and the Russian Federation.
- It was suggested that it would be important to ensure that different regional priorities were identified in relation to thematic areas of the AP.
- *Approach 3*: A flyway approach was also proposed, linking breeding and wintering grounds of migratory landbirds although landbirds migrated on broad front. A combination of approach 2 and 3 was proposed; e.g. with East Asia and the Russian Federation being singled out for monitoring, killing and taking as key issues with a focus on the YBB. Identification of priorities should be guided by the existing knowledge initiating work in such regions and then activities expanded to elsewhere; a clear possibility was the Europe-West Africa flyway as a priority area.
- The East Atlantic Flyway presented good opportunities for synergies e.g. from BirdLife International, along the AW migratory route, this species had many areas which were known to science and conservation community; there was about 20 years' work on the species which could benefit the prioritization process.
- Another possible priority area could be the Sahara, as an obstacle to migrating birds, some stop-over sites could be in danger and conserving these sites could immensely contribute to solving many migratory landbird problems. Action in this region could take advantage of on-going programmes e.g. the Great Green Wall where participating countries were planning activities and we could seek collaboration as part of implementation mechanisms.
- For work in the Russian Federation and East Asia, engagements could be made through Alexander Mischenko (Severtsov's Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Science/NGO BirdsRussia)

Regional priorities agreed upon:

1) *East Atlantic Flyway* (West Europe and WA): offered opportunities to learn from ongoing work which could later be expanded to the rest of the regions/flyways. Nicola Crockford was proposed to be the contact for East Atlantic region, including WA. Franz Bairlein, Jean Philippe Sibley, Kate Hand (UK) (through the Turtle Dove Action Plan work), University of Abidjan, Direction de la Faune et Ressources Cynégétiques, the Ramsar Committee of Côte d'Ivoire, and the NNCML could lead on Western Palearctic work.

2) *Eastern Palearctic-Russia and South Asia* – Nicola Crockford made a presentation on priorities for this region as shared by Balakrishna Pisupati of the BNHS and Simba Chan of BirdLife Asia. Priority activities in this region could be: identifying stopover and wintering sites, formulation of national or regional landbird monitoring programmes, identification of major breeding sites and preventing hunting e.g. by strengthening of law enforcement through bilateral agreements especially in China; study of migration of the YBB and other species to improve knowledge base for conservation. It was proposed that Mikhail Kalyakin (Moscow State University) and Alexander Mischenko be invited to be members of the WG from the Russian Federation. Nicola Crockford was the contact for this region.

It was noted that identifying stop-over and wintering sites for migrants was a considerable task and would need a lot of volunteers. This challenge could be overcome by learning and applying what is happening in Europe; mobilization of volunteer support and sharing of experiences could be a key activity of the WG.

3) *Rift Valley-North Eastern-Eastern Africa-Middle East* - the Basra Reed-warbler was proposed as the flagship species for this region (other species could be Houbara bustard and Spotted Ground-thrush); working in this region provided good opportunities to link with the Raptors MOU; Alex Ngari was the contact person for this region.

It was observed that useful links could be made with livelihood initiatives; species could help in linking up the other flyways and understanding the migratory behaviour of birds; following a multi-species (e.g. Hirundinidae etc.) approach to conservation of landbirds could prove to be a good strategy.

It was agreed not to rank the priorities in order of any importance as this would probably lead to relegation of some regions.

2.7 Discussion on land use change in West Africa and its effect on migratory landbirds

Kate Hand made a presentation about the subject. Highlights of the presentation and discussions were:

- Agricultural development, forest and tree loss, and wetland loss to hydro-dam development were key drivers of land use change; the underlying drivers included population growth, changes in household income, commodity markets and policies.
- To start to address these issues, a regional workshop to discuss the land use issue could be held in 2016, subject to availability of funding, and its outcome could contribute to the preparation of a resolution for CMS COP12.
- It was hard to say at what point a landscape had ‘reached’ resilience, but we could be sure that there was a long way to go before we reached this point, and that biodiversity was continuously being lost.
- We did not have enough knowledge about the linkage between agricultural expansion and the decline of migrants; some forms of agriculture might be benefiting migrants; we had to show this link clearly. Issues such as global commodity prices were an important to agricultural development; land use change was ultimately linked to resource demand.
- More knowledge was also needed on the effects of other types of land use change on birds; ultimately, we needed to be able to link land use changes to changes in bird population; it was likely that land use change tended to favour generalists, with specialists becoming rarer.
- Conservation of local biodiversity must be integrated into the land use debate to attract the attention of the policy makers, as well as ecosystems services angles such as water resource scarcity that were more likely to be of interest to decision makers; e.g. Ghana used water issues as a tool to achieve conservation in the Volta region. It was noted that, similarly, supplying water in Abidjan was likely to be difficult due to lowering of

aquifers, following cutting down of forests – putting the population at risk. Nevertheless, ecosystem services should not be oversimplified and should be considered in relation to the intrinsic value of biodiversity.

- In many places in WA, forests had been degraded to extent that forests were now defined as a small patch of trees; we should be conscious of baselines. Mining and agriculture were important factors for land use change, and we needed to recognize the balance that needed to be found between different land uses, not all of which would be for conservation.
- Management should be such that we had mining areas, PAs, and conservation areas. However, in many cases when there was more demand for land, then the norm unfortunately was to go for conservation areas. Introduction of best practices, certification schemes and so on, could be used as a means of solving some of the problems related to land use.

Under the agenda item on land use changes, a presentation was also given by Nana Kofi Adu-Nsiah. It dwelt on the land use systems in Ghana and the implication for achieving migrant-friendly land use:

- Ghana lost about 2% of forest every year.
- Land use changes were mainly due to: agriculture expansion-cassava, cocoa, palm oil and rubber, unsustainable wood extraction, illegal logging, uncontrolled fires, mining and infrastructural development.
- The CREMA programme was introduced in 2003 to engage communities in managing natural resources; to date, 20 CREMAs had been established. The governance system in the country ensured that the decentralized units had significant control on the natural resources.
- 17% of the land Ghana was in PAs (including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, IBAs); CREMA focused on wildlife outside the PAs, it was supported by by-laws and backed by national law and a strong local government system. Conservation and economic gain went hand in hand in CREMAs, creating incentives for community participation in conservation. CREMAs had their own governance structures, with involvement of community leaders and tribal chiefs; communities had the right of control and access to resources.
- Some CREMA successes included: improved governance; improved incomes at household level; greater conservation awareness; improved conservation in some PAs; reduced illegal activities; improved security in PAs; and improved land use practices by farmers.
- The Wildlife Division in Ghana, which oversaw the CREMA programme, invited other NGOs to participate in CREMA development; the Ghana Wildlife Society complemented this work through its programmes at IBAs;
- To curb illegal logging, it was proposed that communities could own trees grown outside PAs.
- Some challenges/limitations: weak community coherence, lack of a leader/champion e.g. community chiefs.

- Wildlife monitoring took place within CREMAs; biodiversity baselines for habitat and wildlife monitoring could be part of the establishment of CREMAs; some CREMAs participated in beekeeping for extra income; the system put the communities at the centre of resource management.
- Ghana could develop a manual on the CREMA system as well as documenting best practices; flagship projects could be designed around CREMAs; the WG could devise flagship projects (e.g. on bird monitoring) and also identify flagship species of birds to work with on CREMA topic.
- University students were using CREMAs for research.
- Côte d'Ivoire had initiated a similar process, but faced significant challenges to date.

Kate Hand further led the participants into a discussion regarding five key questions on the proposed West African workshop on land use:

Question 1: addressing land use change in the non-breeding areas of migratory landbirds areas in WA should be the priority focus of AEMLAP implementation during the period up to COP 13; this should include, in the next triennium, consideration of land use changes happening in breeding and passage areas of the flyway, including Spain, Maghreb areas, the West and South Mediterranean (where WG activity could add value to existing action in this area); an appropriate first step on West African land use would be a workshop; a first step towards addressing West African land use could be discussion at the 3rd African Congress for Conservation Biology, from 04 – 08 September 2016.

Question 2: The assessment of land use changes affecting migratory landbirds as identified in the paper (UNEP/CMS/Landbirds/WG2/7b, Section 2) was broadly correct; overall, more data and information were needed on how land use change affected landbirds (and links should be made with MLSG to further this). A literature review would be an appropriate first step identifying priority land uses, in advance of the workshop.

Question 3: The complete list of drivers of land use change highlighted in UNEP/CMS/Landbirds/WG2/7b should be considered in the development of the workshop, namely: agricultural expansion and intensification (including growth of irrigated crops), fuelwood collection (including for charcoal), timber extraction, conversion of floodplain woodlands to plantations of non-native species, changes in grazing regimes, and damming (including by hydropower). Other drivers, including energy distribution, urbanization, transport infrastructural development, should also be considered. The focus of the discussions should be to identify key drivers that can be influenced.

Question 4: Workshop participants should constitute: NGOs, Government representatives, UN affiliated bodies (e.g. FAO, UNCCD), the regional economic community and researchers/scientists. UNEP should be involved in the development of the workshop.

Question 5: A proposal was made to hold the workshop in Abuja, which is felt to be quite secure (though costs could be a limiting factor); the Swiss Government may have funding available; it should be held with simultaneous translation facilities; a budget needs to be

developed depending on the location amongst other considerations. Timing was October-November 2016 avoiding overlaps with the ones planned in North WA.

Possible next steps after the workshop: Land use priorities under AEMLAP and defined responses to land use change problems; project proposals could be developed as response mechanisms; a steering group to drive implementation of recommendations of the workshop could be formed.

2.8 Discussion of the composition of the Working Group

The proposed composition of members of the WG was presented by Nicola Crockford; the suggestion was made to include Democratic Republic of Congo and Southern Africa; alternative names could be proposed if current members failed to show interest. Ornithologists from WA (and perhaps in East Africa) and universities could be included in the MSLG and AEML-WG membership. This was an action point for point for the CMS Secretariat.

Day 2: 26th November 2015

2.9 Preparation of a Programme of Work (POW) for AEMLAP and the WG

Alex Ngari presented the draft POW which was further worked on in plenary. It included: thematic areas of AEMLAP, priority flyway regions, a lead/potential partners and the timeframe for the proposed actions. It was proposed that the action areas be related to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals as donors might emphasize such linkages. After further discussion, a draft POW was approved, pending finalization by the CMS Secretariat and WG Coordinator.

It was proposed that synergies should be developed with the UNCCD Secretariat especially after the interest on birds and desertification was expressed by Professor Uriel Safriel, one of the world's leading scientists on land degradation and Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology of the UNCCD.

2.10 Update on single species action plans and potential revision to species priority list

Nicola Crockford made a presentation on YBB, with the following highlights:

- Hunting of the species was mainly taking place in Eastern China, where tens of thousands of illegally taken individual birds were confiscated by the authorities every year.
- The species might be suffering the same fate as the Passenger Pigeon. In China, one YBB cost about \$10 in local markets.
- Bilateral relations between China, the Russian Federation and Japan support work on the species. There would be a symposium in 2016 in Canton on the SAP. The SAP should consider: public education, law enforcement, sharing of expertise, production of a hunting tool kit in the Chinese language, use of genetic studies to further understand species populations, socio-economic considerations as well as the option of rearing the bird in captivity.

- SSAP to be drafted in the course of 2016 (with Simba Chan and Katsumi Tamada of Hokkaido Research Institute being the contact persons) so that it could be ready by the next COP; most funding was likely to come from Asia.
- There appeared to be no proper information on the entire species population and care was needed on data gathering. The western population migrated through India while the other through China. The French population (though the species was very rare and a vagrant in the country) of YBB was declining rapidly but that did not mean the global population of YBB was in decline.
- The Banding Group had not been working.
- Apart from taking, habitat change should also be investigated as a factor impacting YBB.
- Johannes Kamp was the main YBB expert in Germany.

Alex Ngari gave an update regarding the European Roller:

- The species had been down-listed on the IUCN Red List, since conservation measures had led to an increasing population.
- MME (BirdLife Hungary) was leading the development of the SAP through a EU LIFE+ project (ROLLER+), which would now cover the species' range to include other countries; they had brought forward their workshop date to 2017 (ahead of the CMS COP12, so that the ISSAP – one output of the workshop - could be presented to CMS Parties for adoption).
- Belarus shared a national SAP which had been translated into English (from Russian).
- BirdLife South Africa and the SEO were interested in joining the work on the European Roller; SEO had been satellite-tracking European Rollers.
- A Rocha (Portugal) and experts from France were doing some studies and conservation work on the European Rollers. They were also open to working with others.
- The WG should bring stakeholders together to identify factors in threats to Rollers and reignite the action planning for the species – Action point: Jaroslaw Krogulec to provide initial contacts from BirdLife Hungary.
- A conference of Roller specialists was part of the ongoing work in Europe.
- The Roller should be maintained as a priority species within AEMLAP and as a component of the POW, also, given that the species had been listed on CMS Appendix 1; SAP work should be expanded to Africa. Alex Ngari to continue working with Jaroslaw Krogulec until an appropriate lead individual was found.

Update for the European Turtle-dove by Kate Hand:

- The development of an International SAP was being funded by the EU, looking at the entire TD lifecycle; consultations and workshops (in Africa and Europe) would be done in 2016, in which African partners were strongly encouraged to be involved. The action planning process would be brought forward so that the SAP could be adopted at CMS COP 12.
- A TD Study Group had been established, as a subset of MLSG.
- The WG could be key to the implementation of the plan once finalized.

- TD was a challenging species to manage, since it faced potential threats from land use change in Europe and Africa, diseases and hunting (it could be legally hunted in some European countries), efforts to change this situation had faced some resistance; the population of the species was declining and the hunting community was aware of this.

2.11 Species changes in the IUCN List

- WG to keep European Roller as a flagship species as it was still facing serious threats such as illegal hunting.
- Potential species for listing in the resolution for action planning: *Acrocephalus griseldis* Basra Reed-warbler (Endangered), *Zoothera guttata* Spotted Ground-thrush (Endangered) (an action plan existed but needed to be updated), *Turdus iliacus* Redwing (Near Threatened), *Anthus pratensis* Meadow Pipit (Near Threatened), *Chlamydotis macqueenii* Asian Houbara (Vulnerable) and *Chlamydotis undulata* African Houbara (Vulnerable); the CMS office in Abu Dhabi had commissioned BirdLife International to review the status of the African population.
- Many species were candidates for action planning which would also benefit others; a group of species could be put together for a multispecies action plan (e.g. a group of shrikes could be put together for listing in the resolution), the whole list could be reviewed to see if there were gaps;
- Champions were needed so as to put the species in the next resolution; the Meadow Pipit could be put forward but for habitat reasons to act as an umbrella bird – representing many groups; habitats could as well be prioritized and see which birds qualified for inclusion.

2.12 New and ongoing projects

- Kate Hand gave a presentation on some relevant BirdLife projects and initiatives, including: Living on the Edge - which involved livelihood improvement and habitat rehabilitation, and for which the Senegalese project partner won the 2015 AEWA Award); a Shea Butter project - which could be brought into the land use workshop planning and/or WG could recognize it as part of AEMLAP implementation project; and Illegal killing: EURING was participating in the illegal killing initiatives – this should be put as part of POW of the WG.
- The BMUB project: Borja Heredia informed the meeting about a project by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) on monitoring and conservation of migratory birds in Africa. This project was very relevant for AEMLAP since it will focus on landbirds and would be implemented in the UNESCO's network of Biosphere Reserves. There were approximately 80 Biosphere Reserves in Africa with a mandate on research and monitoring of biodiversity and the project will include capacity-building for bird monitoring through training workshops for local coordinators from selected Biosphere Reserves. The project was funded by the BMUB under its UFOPLAN. Franz Bairlein suggested that monitoring should reach out into the landscapes as few migrants were going to the Biosphere Reserves; the Biosphere Reserves should only act as a starting point on monitoring. Monitoring tools already existed and these should be adapted; the project would be introduced at the Fourth Session of the General Assembly of the African Network of Biosphere Reserves

(AfriMAB) in Accra which was taking place concurrently with landbirds WG meeting in Abidjan; Alfred Oteng Yeboah offered to send a message that they should emphasize the landbirds, as waders were also to be included in the project.

- In Nigeria, a project on protection of a roosting site for Barn Swallows by the Wildlife Conservation Society was being carried out through funds by German Government. The project addresses seeking alternatives to taking of the birds and fire management activities.
- The WG acknowledged the contribution the German government is making to conserve migratory landbirds.
- More initiatives were uploaded as part of meeting documents, see <http://www.cms.int/en/meeting/second-meeting-african-eurasian-migratory-landbirds-working-group>.

2.13 Institutional framework for the Landbirds Action Plan

Borja Heredia delivered a presentation on the institutional framework for AEMLAP, including the criteria adopted by COP for the preparation of new CMS instruments. The following were highlights of the presentation and discussions:

- AEMLAP options were to:
 1. remain as a stand-alone action plan
 2. become a legally binding agreement
 3. become an MOU (i.e. not legally binding)
 4. integrate into an existing instrument e.g. Raptors MOU, AEWA
 5. become a Landbirds Initiative (e.g. similar to CAMI, which took a geographic regional approach and sought synergies with different programmes or involved species clustering).
- The current economic and political climate within CMS Party states did not favour the creation of new instruments as some existing instruments were not being actively implemented. It was better to have an AP that was actively implemented and monitored; the members of the WG however agreed that they should aim for a legally binding instrument.
- Although there were no risks in proposing a more ambitious option, it would be better to build synergies with other instruments e.g. AEWA
- It would be possible to propose expanding an existing Agreement covering all birds in the region, but this might risk loss of interest by key stakeholders (e.g. donors).
- The AP could be transformed into a landbird Initiative which could then evolve into a more powerful instrument.
- Undertaking a cost benefit analysis might help to evaluate the advantages of transforming the AP into an Initiative or a binding instrument or expanding existing MOUs
- The AW MOU or Raptor MOU or AEWA could be expanded to cover migratory landbirds species. In the draft resolution, a paragraph suggesting the expansion of the MOUs to accommodate landbirds could be considered.
- There might be no advantage of having the AP as a legally binding instrument as this did not necessarily guarantee its implementation (e.g. the Gorilla Agreement); however, having a strong instrument for migratory landbirds should be the ultimate goal.

- There was agreement that the Action Plan should be developed into an initiative (like CAMI) but remain open to becoming an Agreement that covered all the migratory birds in the Africa-Eurasian region.

2.14 Synergies with other CMS instruments and collaboration with other CMS processes

A presentation on AW was provided by Jaroslaw Krogulec with the following highlights:

- AW was the most threatened (Vulnerable) landbird in the continental Europe.
- The AWCT had started working in WA and had been very successful.
- SAPs had been prepared in the '90s by Nicola Crockford and Borja Heredia.
- AW used different routes to move from Europe to Africa and when returning; geolocators had been used in AW research; the species was regularly located in Morocco; African stopovers provided important fueling points.
- Wintering happened in WA especially in the Senegal Delta. Ephemeral wetlands were important habitats for the species. Habitat changes had occurred due to construction of freshwater reservoirs and irrigation.
- The main threats to the species were: drought, overgrazing, desertification, salinization of fresh water wetlands, succession of grassland by scrub and building of hydro-dams; the Inner Niger Delta in Mali had been experiencing negative changes as well.
- Conservation efforts of the Djoudj wetlands in Senegal, which experienced pressure from local people who wanted to grow rice, needed to be increased.
- Opportunities for synergy existed in protection of stopover sites in WA; the AW could serve as an umbrella species to cover other landbirds.
- More opportunities for synergy on illegal killing of birds existed through the Mediterranean Task Force, for which a coordinator was being recruited; the WG Coordinator should forge more collaboration with the illegal killing Coordinator.

2.15 Updates on MSLG

A written update had been provided by the Chair (Danae Sheehan) of MSLG and uploaded as part of the meeting documents, see:

http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Doc_14_Report_Migrant_Landbird_Study_Group.pdf.

2.16 Updates on Friends of the Landbirds Action Plan (FLAP)

The suggestion and the approval to set up a support group (FLAP) to assist the core AEMLAP team were made at the first workshop on AEMLAP in Ghana. During this meeting, the social media and the Scientific Council e-workspace were identified as possible communication avenues among the members of FLAP.

While introducing the discussion on FLAP, Alex Ngari indicated that this idea had been further discussed but not much progress had been made. The possible target group and its structure were still being explored, but it could be useful to reach an audience such as land managers. It could be a place for all - a one-stop shop - with many relevant links developing it into a portal. It could run crowd funding campaigns, feature global events such as World Migratory Bird Day as well as people's projects at site level.

It was agreed that Alex Ngari should lead in development of this idea further with Nicola Crockford and Jaroslav Krogulec providing the necessary support including contact details of relevant people (e.g. the Spring Alive Project Coordinator – Karolina Kalinowska). The MLSG platform and also the Technical Committee of CMS workspace could be used to host FLAP. The development of FLAP would require financial input. The CMS communications team could be contacted to provide technical support for FLAP development. Volunteers could be sought to run the FLAP platform.

2.17 Financial issues: funding opportunities for the implementation of the AP

Borja Heredia presented budgetary estimates with the following highlights:

- The estimates were termed to be very conservative and the essence of the allocations was explained
- Due to the importance of thematic workshops and to the working of the WG, the number was increased to three for the period between 2016 and 2020.
- The budget of the proposed regional workshop on land use was adjusted to about €40,000 noting that donors might be reluctant to support meetings with large budgets.
- It was proposed that capacity-building, as it was a very important aspect, be included in the POW.
- MLSG was run without a set budget and hence volunteers were engaged to provide services. It worked in the same way as the AWCT. There was potential to raise some income through FLAP e.g. attracting foundations willing to finance projects.
- The budget presented was an informal one and was meant for orientation only, so it would not require CMS Parties to look into it.

2.18 Preparation for COP 12: Potential content of a new resolution on migratory landbirds including a Programme of Work

A draft resolution was presented by Borja Heredia and discussions held on what could possibly be included in the final draft. The items included:

- revised species annexes
- the POW and proposed budget
- new priority species for SAP development
- proposals for institutional framework
- recommendations from the WA land-use workshop
- proposals for a 3rd meeting of the WG

2.19 Next meeting of the WG

The next meeting of the WG would tentatively be held at the beginning of 2018 (after COP 12 in 2017), funds permitting; the venue was still to be decided and could be held back to back with another meeting.

2.20 Closure of the Meeting

The Chair thanked all for their active participation and Switzerland as the main donor; UNEP for its administrative support; the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and SOS-Forêts (BirdLife Country Partner) for their contributions to a successful meeting.

Alfred Oteng Yeboah (the Vice-Chair) praised the development of a POW for implementation of the AP, and praised all for the good contributions.

Borja Heredia thanked all, for their patience and constructive attitude, Angèle Luh of UNEP for the warm hosting and Olivier Biber for a very able and effective chairmanship.

Angèle Luh indicated that it was a privilege and a pleasure hosting the meeting. She wished all a nice excursion.

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