



Updates on

African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP)¹

August – September 2016

Topics in this update:

- Programme of Work (POW) on implementing AEMLAP with priorities for the period 2016-2020 is now online
- Research on the Yellow-breasted Bunting and the hunting menace
- Action planning for the European Turtle-dove
- The European Roller and a vision for a Pan African monitoring strategy

We welcome short articles related to conservation work and research on migratory landbirds. The updates are currently produced once every two months.

1. Introduction

The aim of this regular issue is to share snapshots of work done on research and/or conservation of migratory landbirds within the African-Eurasian region and in line with the implementation of AEMLAP. Through the updates, we hope to encourage action-taking by stakeholders to conserve migratory landbirds which have experienced major population declines in the recent times.

The Working Group on implementation of AEMLAP, in its Second meeting in 2015, developed a Programme of Work (POW) with priorities for the period 2016-2020. The POW can now be accessed from the CMS landbirds webpage: <http://www.cms.int/en/node/4186>. Visit this page also <http://www.birdlife.org/africa/projects/african-eurasian-migratory-landbirds-action-plan-aemlap> for more information about AEMLAP.

¹ AEMLAP is a UNEP/CMS instrument for action to improve conservation status of migratory landbirds; see www.cms.int for more info

2. Yellow-breasted Bunting surveys in Far East Russia



Since 2013, surveys on population size and ecology of the Endangered Yellow-breasted Bunting at Muraviovka Park in Far East Russia are carried out by field teams of the Amur Bird Project. The work is done by volunteers, supported by the Mohammed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft e.V. and British Ornithologists Union in 2016. This important breeding area at the middle stream of the Amur River, suffers from annual man-made fires. Transect counts revealed that densities in burned areas are much lower than in unburned plots. Furthermore, a first investigation on breeding success using miniature temperature loggers showed that breeding might start delayed in habitats hit by spring fires.

A study using colour-rings was started in 2015, when nine Yellow-breasted Buntings were ringed with individual combinations. Three out of seven males returned to their breeding grounds in 2016, and around 30 more birds were equipped with coloured rings. To shed light on the yet unknown migration routes, 19 adult males were fitted with light-level geolocators.

More than 200 individuals of sympatric breeding Black-faced Bunting, Chestnut-eared Bunting, Common Reed Bunting and Japanese Reed Bunting received individual ring combinations as well so as to make survival rates comparable. Hopefully many of these birds will come back next year.

For further details contact wieland.heim@gmx.de and see www.amurbirding.blogspot.com

3. Thousands of captured Yellow-breasted Bunting uncovered

On 5 September 2016, the Forest Police of Tangshan, Hebei Province (near Beijing and Tianjin) in conjunction with local NGOs in China, uncovered and rescued about 36,400 migratory birds including about 6,100 dying Yellow-breasted Buntings from illegal hunting dens. No individuals were arrested at the site but the police opened investigations into the matter.

This instance involving massive numbers of birds being hunted, comes at a time when studies show that the global population of the Endangered Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* has declined by 90% and retracted its range by 5000 Km since 1980. The species has all but disappeared from Eastern Europe, European Russia, large parts of Western and Central Siberia, and Japan.

Over-harvesting at the stop-over and wintering sites has been suggested to be a big contributor to the declines. Congratulations to the Chinese police department and the involved NGO activists!

You can find the reference to the story here: <http://news.qq.com/a/20160907/046305.htm> and a video on the police raid can be viewed here: http://www.miaopai.com/show/bxFNnCxYrwzUqpLSPdIjA_.htm

Addressing species harvesting and other conservation issues regarding Yellow-breasted and the sympatric Rustic Bunting will be a subject of discussion at a major species action planning workshop organized by BirdLife Asia on 2nd-4th November 2016 at Guangzhou, China. More information about the workshop can be obtained through Simba Chan, simba.chan@birdlife.org

4. Major strides made to draw a species Action Plan for the globally threatened European Turtle-dove

As part of the development of an International Action Plan for the Turtle-dove, two draft documents have been produced and circulated for review: a Species Status Report and a review of progress against the EU Management Plan (draft copies are available on request from ian.fisher@rspb.org.uk, and all comments/input welcome as there are still significant gaps). This is the second of four opportunities to feed into the Action Planning process, along with the upcoming workshops (December and January) and the circulation of a draft Plan early next year. The first and the second workshop will address the western and eastern parts of the flyway respectively.

The Turtle-dove continues to decline across much of Europe, although with some stable populations in Central and Eastern areas, most likely linked to persistence of good breeding habitat. Implementation of the 2007 EU Management Plan has been lackluster, with some notable exceptions. The most progress has been made with measures to mitigate hunting effects (non-overlap of hunting and breeding seasons), to collect hunting information, and to monitor populations. There has been little progress with predictive modelling and working outside of the EU, both in West Africa and for collection of information and data from the eastern edge of the species' range. However, most Member States have carried out some form of habitat conservation work. Hard data to support effectiveness of the Plan are generally lacking, and in some countries, engagement is low because the species is seen to be abundant.

5. Monitoring European Rollers on their African wintering grounds

Like numerous migratory bird species, European Roller numbers have declined significantly (in recent years) as a direct result of human-related activities. While there is a very strong knowledge base and an active, dedicated conservation network on their Eurasian breeding grounds, very little is known about these birds in their African wintering areas. The population status and trends remain unknown, the threats faced by these birds on both their migration routes and wintering grounds are unclear, and many gaps still exist in understanding the flyway routes followed by different population and subspecies.



A Pan-African European Roller Monitoring Programme for this AEMLAP flagship species is being established through BirdLife South Africa's Preventing Extinctions Programme. The primary aim is to establish an active African network of researchers and conservationists to help improve our understanding of the status of European Rollers on their wintering grounds. We hope that this will ultimately lead to an African Species Action Plan being drawn up for the European Roller to complement that done for the northern breeding grounds, and thus covering the species' entire flyway.

An open round table discussion will be held at the upcoming 14th Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) in Senegal this October, and we invite the participation of all interested.

For further details contact Helene Loon: Helene_loon@yahoo.com

6. Tracking the European Roller during their migration

The European Roller used to be a common breeding bird throughout Europe but by the 1980's disappeared from most of its habitats. Due to huge conservation efforts by enthusiastic birders, the core population of East-Europe is stronger now.

In 2014, a LIFE+ project was started by MME, Birdlife Hungary (Conservation of the European Roller in the Carpathian Basin (LIFE13/NAT/HU/000081) to among others outputs get more information, which could help to preserve this beautiful bird species.

The implementation of this project continues to reveal remarkable migration patterns by this bird.

Hungarian researchers have used PTTs (Platform Transmitter Terminal) to follow the Rollers. The first set of results have provided useful information, such as: how fast the Roller flight is and where their stop-over & wintering sites are.



You can follow four European Rollers *en route* on this website: www.satellitetracking.eu

For more details contact: tokody.bela@mme.hu

7. Other information

- BirdLife announces [call for applications](#) for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot
- Visit <http://migrantlandbirds.org/> for more on research about migratory landbirds.
- The 14th Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) will be held in Dakar, Senegal on 16th-21st October, 2016.
- Regional (under CMS/AEMLAP) Land-use Workshop in West Africa will take place on 24 and 25th November 2016, in Abuja, Nigeria
- The 45th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee will take place on 9 – 10th November 2016 in Bonn, Germany.
- The 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be held on 5 – 17th in December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico.
- European Turtle-dove action planning workshop is on 19th - 21st 2016 December 2016 at Centro Nacional de Educación Ambiental, near Segovia, Spain
- Joint European Turtle-dove & European Roller Action Planning Workshops will take place on 16-20th January 2017 at Kecskemét, Hungary

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