



Updates on

# African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP)<sup>1</sup>

October – December 2016

## Topics in this update:

- The CMS COP 12 is here with us!
- Advances in AEMLAP flagship Species planning
- Good for Waders and Aquatic Wabler too
- *Science* highlights fears for migratory birds
- PAOC and AEMLAP
- It's a clarion call on sustainable landuse in West Africa

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

## 1. Introduction

Through this regular issue, we aim to share snapshots of research and/or conservation work on migratory landbirds within the African-Eurasian region and in line with the implementation of AEMLAP. We hope to encourage action-taking by stakeholders to conserve migratory landbirds which have experienced major population declines in the recent times. We also hope the updates could catalyze development of linkages among stakeholders addressing various issues affecting migratory landbirds.

## 2. CMS COP 12 is here with us!

The 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (CMS COP12) will take place in Manilla, Philippines, on 23-28 October 2017. The period up to the COP will be a busy one for the AEMLAP-Steering Group and by extension the Working Group. Two important meetings (See below for dates) by Scientific and Standing and

<sup>1</sup> AEMLAP is a UNEP/CMS instrument for action to improve conservation status of migratory landbirds; see [www.cms.int](http://www.cms.int) for more info

Committees will take place ahead of the COP to prepare for the meeting. The Scientific Committee meeting will particularly be important in reviewing documents to be submitted to the COP.

Important decisions will be made during the COP and therefore it is very helpful to prepare in good time. There will be a lot of consultations among the Working Group members of AEMLAP and other stakeholders hence, the early part of 2017 will be a good time to make suggestions aimed at delivering a Resolution promising a better future for the migratory landbirds.

The Chair of AEMLAP – Working Group is Olivier Biber ([o.biber@bluewin.ch](mailto:o.biber@bluewin.ch)) while the contact at the CMS Secretariat is Borja Heredia [borja.heredia@cms.int](mailto:borja.heredia@cms.int).

### **3. Action planning for the AEMLAP flagship Species gathers momentum**

#### ***a. Experts meet in China to chart ways to save the Endangered Yellow-breasted Bunting***

Hopes for the future survival of Yellow-breasted Bunting (YBB) *Emberiza aureola* were raised in November 2016 when 50 experts from ten countries including Cambodia, China, Germany, Japan, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Thailand and Vietnam met to discuss means to reverse the declining trends of YBB. Development of an international species action plan to save the species was progressed and the resulting plan, once a finalized plan could also hugely benefit the sympatric Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* among others. The workshop identified a number of threats to the YBB with the most important being, trapping of the birds in its wintering grounds in China where it is highly appreciated as food. A working group for the YBB has been established and is being coordinated by BirdLife International.

For more details about the action planning for the species contact Simba Chan at, [simba.chan@birdlife.org](mailto:simba.chan@birdlife.org)

#### ***b. Stakeholder meeting in Spain discusses how to address European Turtle-dove declines***

The first workshop to develop an international action plan for Turtle-dove successfully took place in December in Segovia, Spain. The workshop was aimed at covering the western section of the flyway - both Africa and Europe. A total of 35 participants from 13 range states took part in the workshop including representatives from BirdLife, FACE, the Spanish, Portuguese, French and Moroccan governments, and the European Commission. Overall, 128 experts from 44 countries had contributed information for the development of the plan prior to the meeting.

The key threats were identified as loss of one or more of the three key elements of Turtle-dove breeding success or survival in its wintering grounds (available and accessible food, water, and nesting/roosting sites); illegal killing (all forms of taking of birds outside of the hunting regulations); and unsustainable hunting. Work is currently ongoing to develop a sustainable hunting model to enable appropriate actions to be developed. Additional critical issues that need to be addressed are lack of awareness by the public, law enforcement agencies and government, poor international cooperation, and most pressingly, many knowledge gaps (including accurate population figures, movements throughout the lifecycle, productivity and survival, estimates of legal and illegal taking of birds, effects of disease).

From the workshop it was apparent that most of research work on the species had happened in the European section of the flyway but very limited knowledge is available from the southern reaches of the species range.

A draft first draft of the Action Plan will be circulated at the start of April 2017. For more information about the development of the species action plan contact Ian Fisher at [ian.fisher@rspb.org.uk](mailto:ian.fisher@rspb.org.uk).

#### 4. Conserving key sites of Aquatic Warbler in the East Atlantic Flyway could benefit more migratory landbirds



The best studied wintering sites for the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* in Africa are in Senegal River Delta where the species has been recorded in the habitats of other migratory landbirds with large numbers of Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* (50,000-200,000) and Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (75,000–300,000). At the delta, more than 10, 000 individuals of the Bluethroat and Grasshopper Warbler have been recorded. Sand Martin have been estimated at more than 2 million birds over the Scirpus marshes of the delta.

In Mauritania, the potential Aquatic Warbler habitats on continental ephemeral wetlands are

less known than coastal zones like Diawling National Park or Banc d'Arguin NP, but both are rich in biodiversity and are important sites for migratory birds.

BirdLife, through a MAVA Foundation funded project have initiated actions aimed at saving waders in Diawling and other sites in the region. Although targeting waders, the actions supported by the project could potentially bring benefits to the Vulnerable Aquatic Warbler and other migratory landbirds in the target sites.

For more information on Aquatic Warbler work contact [jaroslaw.krogulec@otop.org.pl](mailto:jaroslaw.krogulec@otop.org.pl) while for MAVA supported work in the Atlantic coast of West Africa, write to [Geoffroy.Citegetse@birdlife.org](mailto:Geoffroy.Citegetse@birdlife.org).

#### 5. AEMLAP featured at the 14th Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) in Dakar, Senegal

The 14th Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) was held in Dakar, Senegal in October, 2016. During the conference sessions that cut across many subjects, including migratory birds, there were a host of papers presented. There was wide acknowledgment that migratory birds were experiencing declines. Whereas there were many studies conducted in the Northern Hemisphere, there was very little known of the migratory birds in their wintering and staging sites in the African-Eurasian flyway. There was general consensus that it was still largely unknown where many species went on migrating to Africa, and this posed a challenge in terms of designing conservation measures for the birds. The low capacity in the African region on research on migrant ecology and the need to increase it was highlighted. Overall, during the conference, there were relatively few papers on wintering or migrant ecology.

The importance of research in sharpening international policy instruments and resolutions was underlined through a talk on AEMLAP. It was clear that policies were as good as the available knowledge provided by the researchers. On the other hand the policy demands could be useful in prioritizing research work.

The congress featured two successful round table discussions which were dedicated to migratory landbirds: one by Migrants Landbirds Study Group (MLSG) and the other on development of a Pan-African Monitoring Scheme for the European Roller.

The Congress developed a declaration calling upon the African Union to promote and coordinate governmental responses at continental level to prevent declines in birds populations. Further, the declaration called on African governments to support the implementation of AEMLAP among other actions to reduce threats to birds in the continent.

## 6. A letter published in *Science* decries rapid declines in migratory bird populations in Europe and the UK

The migratory birds are at a higher risk of extinction than the non-migratory and sedentary ones in the African-Eurasian flyway region. In the letter published in *Science* journal, the author (Prof. Franz Bairlein of Institute of Avian Research, Germany) warns that habitat degradation and loss, illegal killings and climate change are leading to rapid declines in migratory bird populations in Europe and the UK. However, to conserve the birds, knowledge about their migratory routes is important and any successful interventions to save the birds must incorporate actions that also improve the livelihood of people in the Africa. AEMLAP has been cited as one of the policy tools that could help, if implemented, to address the situation. Read more on this [here](#).

## 7. Stakeholders call for an end in unsustainable land use in West Africa

Participatory planning and environmental-friendly land use practices, supported by and effective land governance regime are the key ingredients to sustainable land use in West Africa. This is according to [The Abuja Declaration on Sustainable Land Use for People and Biodiversity in West Africa](#) which was adopted on 25th November 2016. The Declaration is as a result of a two-day workshop held in Abuja, Nigeria, hosted by the Government of Nigeria and sponsored by the Government of Switzerland. Participants were unanimous in calling for land use practices that guarantee continued ecosystem service provision to the people and biodiversity preservation in West Africa. This workshop was held in line with AEMLAP's Programme of Work finalized in 2016.



Read more about this workshop [here](#).

## 8. Other information

- Visit <http://migrantlandbirds.org/> for more on research about migratory landbirds.
- 2nd Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council will be on 10.07.2017, Bonn Germany
- Joint Meeting of the CMS Task Force/Bern Convention Special Focal Points on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Birds to take place on 21.06.2017
- Joint Meeting of the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean and the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds to take place on 22.06.2017
- CMS 46th and 47th Standing Committee Meetings will take place on 22nd and 28th October 2017 in Manila, Philippines
- The next European Ornithologists' Union Conference will take place on Aug 18-22.8.2017 in Turku, Finland

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