



SOCIEDAD ESPAÑOLA DE ORNITOLOGIA
SEO/BirdLife

WetCap

**Strengthening Waterbird and Wetland
Conservation Capacities in North Africa**

(Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia)

Progress report

March 2009 – December 2009





SEO/BirdLife

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WetCap:

Strengthening Waterbird and Wetland Conservation Capacities in North Africa Progress Report March – December 2009

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Report to AECID
by SEO/BirdLife and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat

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Executive Summary

The Project on Strengthening Waterbird and Wetland Conservation Capacities in North Africa is a capacity building project for the region of North African which was developed in 2007/2008 by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in close cooperation with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and in accordance with its Azahar Programme.

The idea for developing this project was born at a first consultation meeting between AECID, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and BirdLife/SEO, which took place in March 2007 on the initiative of the Executive Secretary of the AECID Azahar Programme, Mr. José Jiménez García-Herrera. Mr. Garcia-Herrera was highly interested in cooperating with the UNEP African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and invited the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat to develop a proposal for a project of three years duration, based on the Azahar Programme. He agreed that on approval of the project proposal, AECID would sponsor the project with 1.2 Mio €

After several phases of consultation between AECID, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, BirdLife/SEO and other partners to be involved in the implementation of the project, a final project proposal was submitted to AECID in May 2008. This proposal was approved by AECID in June 2008 and the first grant of 400,000 € for the first year of implementation was transferred to the UNEP account. It was agreed that if the implementation of the WetCap project was carried out to its satisfaction, AECID would subsequently finance the second and third years of implementation.

Unfortunately, further funding was cancelled by AECID due to policy changes within AECID, as communicated to the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in November 2009; this decision has caused serious financial problems and the WetCap project might need to be cancelled after its first year of implementation already.

However, during the course of this reporting period (March – December 2009), the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and SEO/BirdLife together with the other project partners have made significant progress with the preparation and implementation of the WetCap project activities.

The project was formally launched on 23 March 2009 by way of a mutual press release, the content of which was approved by all project partners including AECID (see Annex I).

The preparatory phase between the launch of the project and the start of the implementation of the first year's activities in June 2009 was used for the development of a common work plan for all partners involved and for drafting and concluding the necessary contracts between the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and its main project partners (SEO/BirdLife and BirdLife International) as well as with additional subcontracted partners (Wetlands International, BirdLife Middle East office etc.).

Since June 2009, SEO/BirdLife, which was already closely involved in the development of this 3-year project, has been providing the coordination and the facilitation of activities carried out under the WetCap framework on the regional level, while the

UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has remained responsible for the overall management of the project. Additional technical support has been provided by the project partners BirdLife International and Wetlands International together with local partner organizations.

This progress report covers the preparatory phase between 23 March 2009 and May 2009, as well as the implementation of activities from June to December 2009, which refers to the different components of the project:

Component 1: Capacity building, training and awareness for waterbird and wetland conservation of important stakeholders in the region. Participation of North African experts in WOW Training of Trainers workshop as a first step to training professionals from this area as trainers for conservation work at the flyway level.

Component 2: Building knowledge and providing better access to information on the critical network of sites required by migratory waterbirds. Organization of the Critical Site Network Tool (CSN) gap identification workshop to train experts from the region on the use of this tool and involve them in the identification of future activities aiming to enhance and complement existing data to be found in this tool.

Component 3: Supporting local waterbird and/or wetland conservation projects. Guidelines and application forms for the operation of the WetCap Small Grants Fund have been developed. Funds permitting, the Small Grants Fund could become operative and provide small grants to local projects.

Overarching activities: The overall project coordination and management are well underway. Information and awareness raising products (website and other material) have been developed in accordance with the work plan.

Acronyms:

AECID	Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development
AEWA	United Nations Environmental Programme/ Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Secretariat
BLI	BirdLife International
CMZH	The Moroccan wetlands Centre
CSN	Critical Sites Network
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SEO	Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/BirdLife, BLI partner in Spain)
SGF	Small Grants Fund
TB	Training Board
ToT	Training of Trainers
WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WI	Wetlands International
WOW	Wings Over Wetlands (project)
WP	Work Plan

A. Introduction

Ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources are our natural capital. Missed opportunities to invest in this natural capital contribute to the biodiversity crisis that is becoming more evident and more pressing by the day. The degradation of soils, air, water and biological resources can negatively impact on public health, food security, consumer choice and business opportunity. The rural poor, most dependent on the natural resource base, are often hardest hit.

Developing our capacity to manage biodiversity, ecosystems and provision of ecosystem services is an essential step towards better management of our natural capital.

Thus WetCap aims at strengthening waterbird and wetland conservation capacities in Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The project is assisting the targeted countries in implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) concerned with wetland and waterbird conservation, namely the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and the Ramsar Convention. Built on the ongoing Wings over Wetlands UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyway Project (WOW)¹, WetCap, moreover, significantly contributes to the implementation and success of WOW by providing complementary and “follow-up” activities for the focused region.

B. Preparatory phase

During the period between the launch of the project on 23 March 2009 and the start of the implementation of activities, the following preparatory actions were taken:

1. After AECID had approved to start with the implementation of activities a common work plan was developed to coordinate the cooperation between all project partners involved (for latest version see Annex II).
2. Small Scale Funding Agreements between the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and SEO/BirdLife on the coordination and implementation of the project between June 2009 and June 2010 were negotiated and concluded.
3. A Small Scale Funding Agreement between the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and BirdLife International Headquarters on technical support with the implementation of different project activities between June 2009 and June 2010 was negotiated and concluded.

¹ <http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/>

4. Wetlands International as well as the BirdLife International Middle East office were sub-contracted by BirdLife International with respect to supporting the implementation of activities covered by the Agreement mentioned under 3).
5. The bilingual project summary sheet has been updated and is being distributed to potential partners and stakeholders (for latest version see Annex III).

C. Project implementation

1. Project management and coordination; Information management

a) Recruitment of the WetCap Regional Coordinator (completed 100%)

Leading organisation: SEO/BirdLife

SEO/BirdLife, which is responsible of the BirdLife International Country Programme in Morocco, provides the coordination of regional activities for the WetCap project. As of June 2009, Imad Cherkaoui, Moroccan ornithologist with a PhD in ornithology and ecology of birds, has been appointed as Regional Coordinator. The main duties of the Regional Coordinator are the facilitation of the project implementation and the coordination of activities on the regional level and in close cooperation with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and the Project Steering Committee. Moreover, the Regional Coordinator maintains regular contact with the different stakeholders in the project countries.

As Representative of SEO/BirdLife in Morocco and Regional Coordinator for the WetCap project, Imad is based at the new SEO/BirdLife facilities in Salé (Annex IV). The Moroccan wetlands Centre (CMZH) is being temporarily relocated until further notice.

Related article on the AEWA website:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/news/news_elements/2009/wetcap_coordinator.htm

b) 1st Steering Committee meeting (completed 100%)

Leading organisation: UNEP/AEWA Secretariat

The first Steering Committee Meeting of the WetCap project (PSC meeting) took place in Bonn, Germany at the United Nations Campus on 25 August 2009. The Steering Committee Meeting provided a first opportunity to assemble the representatives of all core partner organizations involved in the technical and administrative delivery of the project to discuss the work plan for the first year of implementation and progress made so far with the project preparation and implementation. The meeting was attended by representatives of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, BirdLife International, SEO/BirdLife, Wetlands International and the Regional Coordinator. The role of the Steering

Committee is to guide, advise, and oversee the project's technical progress and performance.

Related article on the AEWA website:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/wetcap/news_elements/1st_meetg_steering_committee.htm

A second PSC meeting will be organized before the end of the first year of implementation of the WetCap project. The exact date and agenda will be circulated soon.

On short notice it might be necessary to address the overall continuation of the project at this meeting and how to face the lack of funding with respect to the activities foreseen in Years 2 and 3:

The Steering Committee members will especially have to decide how to continue with regard to the Small Grants Fund which foresees the implementation of local waterbird and wetlands-related development projects in each of the countries, but for which funding is currently not available. The call for project proposals was planned to be published at the end of 2009 and the Steering Committee expected to select the final projects to be funded at that PSC meeting; however the entire activity had to be postponed due to the financial problems currently faced by the project.

Another major issue will be to discuss the list of possible surveys to be undertaken in each country as an outcome of the CSN gap-filling workshop held on 3 - 5 December 2009, an activity which might also have to be cancelled in the light of the current financial constraints.

Finally the Steering Committee will have to decide whether the adaptation of the training material, made available through the Wings over Wetlands UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyway Project (WOW)², to the region of North Africa foreseen to take place during the course of Year 1 should still be undertaken as planned since training workshops might have to be cancelled due to the financial situation.

c) Development of a project website and other information material (80%)

Leading organisation: UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in close cooperation with the project partners

aa) Project website

In order to raise awareness and provide adequate coverage on the project, a dedicated bilingual webpage for the WetCap Project has been created and hosted by the AEWA website (<http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/wetcap/>). All project activities are fully described and articles reflecting progress made with the implementation of the project are available through the website's news section on a regular basis. Moreover, the website provides background information on the project countries and partners.

² <http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/>

bb) Project brochure

An informative project brochure has been drafted and circulated to the WetCap project partners for approval (see Annex V). The brochure will soon be printed and made available in English and French, provided the WetCap project does not need to be cancelled for financial reasons.

cc) Bilingual project summary sheet

As mentioned above the bilingual project summary sheet has been updated and circulated among different stakeholders (for latest version see Annex III).

dd) WetCap news in AEWA E-Newsletter

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat regularly sends out news via its E-Newsletter. News relevant for WetCap were included in the following issues:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/newsletter/aewa_newsletter_21.htm

http://www.unep-aewa.org/newsletter/aewa_newsletter_22.htm

http://www.unep-aewa.org/newsletter/aewa_newsletter_23.htm

Articles referring to the WetCap project have also been published by various other stakeholders, examples of which can be viewed under the links below:

<http://hqweb.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=573&ArticleID=6108&l=en&t=long>

<http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/03/wetcap.html>

http://www.birdlife.org/flyways/africa_eurasia/waterbirds/index.html

http://www.birdlife.org/regional/africa/pdfs/19th_ebulletin_March_2009.pdf

http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/06/wader_atlas.html

<http://www2.canoe.com/infos/environnement/archives/2009/03/20090327-153233.html>

<http://appablog.wordpress.com/2009/03/24/waterbird-conservation-in-north-africa-gets-a-boost/>

http://www.portaldelmedioambiente.com/noticias/4950/birdlife_international_lanza_la_campana_nacidas_para_viajar_born_to_travel_para_salvar_a_las_aves_migratorias/

<http://www.eic.or.jp/news/?act=view&word=&category=&oversea=1&serial=20369>

2. Activities by component (Year 1)

WetCap contains three major components, under which activities were carried out as follows:

Component 1: Capacity building – training and awareness raising

a) 1-day Training Board (TB) meeting to adapt the WOW framework training and awareness raising programme to North Africa (0%)

Leading organisations: SEO/BirdLife, BirdLife International

Stakeholders involved in the conservation of wetlands and migratory waterbirds must have a common level of understanding of key issues and practices in order to be able to communicate effectively with one another across the flyway. For this purpose a transferable framework for training and awareness raising programmes is being produced under the Wings over Wetlands UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyway Project (WOW). This framework programme provides a generic structure and content designed to strengthen capacity for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands. It is made available for adaptation and implementation across the AEWA region. The training modules are: 1) Understanding the flyway approach; 2) Applying the flyway approach; 3) Communicating the flyway approach.

Under WetCap it is planned to adapt the programme for North Africa during the first year of implementation in order to implement it in all project countries during the course of Years 2 and 3 of the project.

The following activity is planned to be carried out in February/ March 2010:

1-day meeting of selected experts from each country aiming at:

- i) Reviewing the training modules and already adapted programmes (e.g. Middle East, West Africa), and elaborating a programme for North Africa.
- ii) Establishing a Training Board of approximately 10 people, which will proceed with the tasks related to the adaptation of the training programme as identified by the meeting.

Participants at this meeting and members of the Training Board should be professionals/ managers representing national NGOs and/ or training institutions in the project countries and having the capacity to follow up the meeting and adapt the training and awareness raising programme to the region of North Africa.

b) Regional and national adaptation of the framework training and awareness raising programme (0%)

Leading organisations: SEO/BirdLife; members of the Training Board

This activity constitutes a follow-up of the 1-day TB meeting.

The members of the Training Board will complement the training modules with region and/or country-specific material (e.g. case studies, maps) as identified by the 1-day TB workshop.

c) Participation of North African experts in WOW Training of Trainers workshop (100%)

Leading organisations: SEO/BirdLife, Wetlands International

A sub-regional Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop to build wetland and waterbird management capacity and raise awareness for flyway conservation in Western and Central Africa (including Mauritania which is also part of the region covered by the WetCap Project) took place in Limbe, Cameroon from 2 - 10 November 2009.

The workshop was organized by the Wetlands International Africa office in Dakar, Senegal, in collaboration with the Garoua Wildlife School in Cameroon in the framework of the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Project.

During the 1st WetCap PSC meeting, it was decided to facilitate the participation of three representatives from North African countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) at this training workshop through funding from the WetCap project. The Maghreb experts who participated in the workshop work in the field of wetlands and migratory bird conservation in governmental institutions (universities and agencies of forest protection) and are also members of local environmental NGOs.

The aim of this intensive capacity-building exercise was to train the participants to conduct workshops in their own countries in order to transfer the knowledge on waterbird and wetland conservation to a wider circle of professionals working in this field (foreseen in Year 3 of WetCap). Moreover the workshop in Cameroon also offered a unique opportunity for the representatives from North Africa to exchange their expertise and to examine potential synergies with countries from neighbouring regions in Africa (see Annex VI).

Related article on the AEWA website:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/wetcap/news_elements/cameroon_workshop.htm

d) Translation of key MEA documents (50%)

Leading organisations: BirdLife International; UNEP/AEWA Secretariat

In order to enable access to all key documents that are crucial for stakeholders in all countries to encourage their participation in the process of international cooperation, it is intended to translate relevant MEA documents into Arabic (all strategic documents of AEWA and the Ramsar Convention, i.e. the Agreement and Convention texts, Strategic, Plans, Action Plans, Conservation Guidelines and International Implementation Priorities).

The aim is to reach a much wider group of stakeholders in North Africa and to enhance the use of such strategic and guiding documents throughout the WetCap region. The translated documents will then be widely distributed among all stakeholders.

In Year 1 the focus has been on the translation of the training modules that will be used in training workshops organised under the WetCap project. In addition all the main strategic AEWA documents are being translated and will be distributed to all stakeholders in the region.

Component 2: Increasing knowledge on waterbirds and wetlands

This component aims to introduce the CSN Tool to experts and professionals and to put it into practice in the region.

The CSN Tool is a central information portal, integrating current knowledge on migratory waterbirds along the African-Eurasian flyway. This new web-based application will support the identification and conservation of the network of sites used by waterbirds to complete their annual migrations across the region. The CSN Tool will integrate flyway scale conservation efforts and foster regional cooperation amongst a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organizations towards flyway level conservation of migratory waterbirds in the region.

Under this component local stakeholders will be enabled to use the CSN Tool and review the latest up-to-date information on migratory waterbirds, their flyways and important sites and to enhance their capacity to plan and manage the conservation of migratory waterbirds and the critical sites along the flyway. Moreover, it is foreseen to collect new data on wetlands and their importance as habitats for waterbirds and to fill identified gaps in the central portal. Data gathered will help to make the new critical sites network comprehensive by linking wetlands in the North African countries to the overall WOW network of critical sites. Moreover, it will help locals to assess the importance of individual wetlands in the wider context of the international sites network. Field missions could also be used to train young professionals on the collection and analysis of data. New data might also be incorporated into the information and knowledge network (CODDE) of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet).

a) Regional workshop: Review of data obtained through CSN tool and identification of gaps (completed 100%)

Leading organisation: SEO/BirdLife

A 3-day workshop for representatives from the five project countries (as well as Libya, which is not covered by WetCap, but was invited to send participants at its own expenses), aiming at reviewing data of the CSN tool and identifying gaps of knowledge took place on 3 - 5 December 2009 in Morocco at the Red Crescent Centre (Mehdia, Kenitra).

This workshop was attended by 20 representatives from the governments, NGOs and research institutions of the five project countries Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia as well as of Libya. In addition, experts from BirdLife International, UNEP/AEWA, UNEP/WCMC, Wetlands International, the Spanish BLI partner SEO/BirdLife, BirdLife Africa and the French Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage took part (see list of participants Annex VII, photos Annex VIII, Workshop Agenda Annex IX). Representatives from AECID in Morocco also participated in the workshop.

The CSN tool workshop was the first activity carried out under Component 2 of the WetCap project on “Increasing knowledge on waterbirds and wetlands in North Africa”.

Funds permitting, it is planned to conduct gap-filling surveys and monitoring missions in each country in 2010 and 2011 in order to fill the gaps of knowledge identified by the participants. These missions could also be used to train young professionals on data collection and analysis in the field.

The CSN Tool will be available online in late 2010. Also zoomable PDF maps for all of the countries can be uploaded from this website <http://syfsr.com/?e=FB1D4709C9CA4BA9BDB49A70B081BB07>

Related article on the AEWA website:

http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/wetcap/news_elements/morocco_workshop.htm

b) Selection of field survey missions in each country (In process, 40%)

Leading organisations: SEO/BirdLife, BirdLife International and Wetlands International

A technical report provided by the facilitators is being drafted. Thus on the basis of the results and recommendations of the CSN gap-filling workshop the final list of four field survey missions will be selected by the PSC. The surveys will be conducted by local organizations and professionals, also offering the possibility for training young professionals on data collection and analysis, and will be organized in close consultation with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and the Regional Coordinator.

Component 3: Local projects on waterbird and wetland management and monitoring

Preparation of the call for project proposals for the WetCap Small Grants Fund (completed 100%)

Leading organisation: UNEP/AEWA Secretariat

This activity will directly benefit local community projects focusing on waterbird and wetland conservation. The aim is to provide funding for two projects in each country (10 projects) which directly contribute to the implementation of AEWA and Ramsar at the local level.

The guidelines and relevant application forms for the Small Grant Fund have been drafted and approved by the Steering Committee (see Annex X) and are ready to be used for an official call for project proposals.

According to the work plan it was foreseen that the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat would call for project proposals in late December 2009. However, this activity has been postponed due to the financial constraints the project is currently facing. As soon as funding for this activity is secured, stakeholders in all project countries will be invited to submit proposals of local projects to be funded under this activity.

3. Constraints

Since its launch in March 2009, the WetCap project has reached a high level of recognition and acceptance within its project region and on the international platform. The implementation of its activities has successfully started and proven to be a real asset for the region's waterbird and wetland conservation initiatives. The deliveries of the project such as the recently held CSN Tool workshop have attracted the interest and commitment of governmental institutions and NGOs in the countries covered by the WetCap project and strengthened cooperation within the region.

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and SEO/ BirdLife project staff were very surprised to learn about the decision of AECID to cancel funding for Year 2 and 3 of the project in late November 2009. This decision will have a tremendous effect on the reliability of the project and on the ongoing process of governance promotion by strengthening capacity building for the conservation of key wetlands and species. The activities of the project are designed to stretch over a period of three years; to stop the project after its first year would basically mean that all the preparatory work done since early 2007, as well as the activities already implemented since March 2009, would have been carried out in vain, thus not resulting in final outcomes.

Apart from the inefficient use of human and financial resources, cancelling the project would mean a real step-back for the conservation work undertaken in the region of North Africa, which, undoubtedly benefits from this capacity building project.

The cancellation of this project would also have a detrimental effect on the name and reputation of all partners involved, a situation which could have a far-reaching impact on future activities. Project partners will therefore have to consider possible strategies helping to reduce the damage to their reputations and trust in the organizations involved, to a minimum.

If the decision to cancel funding is irreversible, we will have to thoroughly review the remaining activities and budget for Year 1 in order to use the remaining resources sensibly with respect to possible cancellation of the whole project.

4. Annexes

List of annexes

- Annex I. Press release of 23 March 2009 launching the WetCap project
- Annex II. Work Plan for 1st year 2009-2010
- Annex III. Bilingual summary sheet about WetCap
- Annex IV. SEO/BirdLife Morocco Program Office in Rabat
- Annex V. Draft brochure on WetCap
- Annex VI. WOW ToT in Limbe, Cameroon, 2-10 November 2009
- Annex VII. List of participants to CSN workshop
- Annex VIII. CSN workshop pictures
- Annex IX. CSN workshop Agenda
- Annex X. WetCap Small Grant Form