



SIXTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
16 – 17 June 2010, The Hague, the Netherlands

**DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING
SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLANS**

Introduction

The development and implementation of international Single Species Action Plans (SSAPs) is one of the flagship approaches for the conservation of migratory waterbirds under the Agreement. As specified in paragraph 2.2 of the AEWA Action Plan, Parties shall cooperate with a view to developing and implementing SSAPs; the Agreement Secretariat shall coordinate the development, harmonization and implementation of such plans.

A major review of the stage of preparation and implementation of SSAPs was submitted to the 4th Session of the Meeting of the Parties (document AEWA/MOP 4.10). This paper summarised the progress that Parties and other Range States had made in implementing SSAPs and also set a list for the development of further SSAPs in order of priority (54 populations in Category 1 of the AEWA Table 1). At the same meeting, a set of seven new SSAPs was endorsed, which brought the number of SSAPs under the AEWA framework to a total of 15. AEWA Parties have also been implementing and reporting some additional SSAPs under the Agreement; these had been developed before AEWA came into force and were endorsed under different processes or frameworks.

This report aims at updating the Standing Committee on the progress of developing new SSAPs or the updating/revising of existing ones and how the existing SSAPs are being implemented.

Action requested from the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is requested to note the progress made by the Secretariat and give further guidance, as appropriate.

Development of new SSAPs under AEWA or update/revision of existing ones

There are currently three new SSAPs in the pipeline for the following (sub)species/populations: Slaty Egret (*Egretta vinaceigula*), Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii* – Western Siberia & NE Europe/North-west Europe population) and Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*). One SSAP, for the Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*), is being currently revised out of the three for which an update/revision was required by Resolution 4.4 and a revision of the SSAP for the Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*) is also being undertaken. In addition, the working group which is dealing with the draft SSAP for the Dark-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*) met at a workshop and decided on presenting a different type of paper for the conservation of this species to the MOP.

Slaty Egret (*Egretta vinaceigula*)

The AEWA Secretariat is partnering with the BirdLife International African Partnership Secretariat for the development of the SSAP for this intra-African migrant. The process is currently in the planning phase. A stakeholder workshop is envisaged to take place in Botswana in the end of 2010 or early in 2011. Funding for this SSAP has been kindly provided by the Swiss Government. The Slaty Egret has been ranked second in the priority list for the development of new AEWA SSAPs (document AEWA/MOP 4.10).

Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii* – Western Siberia & NE Europe/North-west Europe population)

Wetlands International initiated the development of an SSAP for this population as a part of a bigger project focused on the conservation of this Bewick's Swan population called "The Long Journey. Demonstrating a practical approach to flyway conservation: a Russian-Dutch collaboration". A stakeholder workshop took place in September 2009 in St. Petersburg in the Russian Federation. The draft plan is currently at the level of consultation with experts and workshop participants. The project is being funded by the Dutch Government under the BBI Matra fund. The Western Siberia & NE Europe/North-west Europe population of the Bewick's Swan has been ranked 32nd in the priority list for development of new AEWA SSAPs (document AEWA/MOP 4.10).

Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*)

The development of this SSAP was supported by the Scottish Natural Heritage under the auspices of their Species Action Framework. A stakeholder workshop took place in February 2009 on the Island of Islay (Scotland). There was a debate as to which framework the plan should be developed under (due to two out of four Range States not being parties to AEWA), but it was finally decided that AEWA represents the preferable framework for the implementation of this Action Plan. The draft plan is currently being consulted with the Range States. The Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose is not listed on the priority list for development of new AEWA SSAPs, but it is marked with an asterisk in Column A of the AEWA Table 1 and in accordance with paragraph 2.2.1 of the AEWA Action Plan, such populations are also prioritised for action planning alongside populations in Category 1 in Column A.

Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*)

The SSAP for this species was developed in the mid-1990s before AEWA entered into force and was endorsed by the Bern Convention, CMS and the European Commission. It is the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, however, which took steps towards the coordination of implementation of this Action Plan and supported an expert working group on the Red-breasted Goose together with RSPB, WWT and VBN. Recently the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat collaborated with the European Commission on the revision of the Red-breasted Goose SSAP which was commissioned to BirdLife International. The draft revised plan has been circulated for consultation.

Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*)

This SSAP is one of the three which were first developed and endorsed under the Agreement at the 2nd Session of the Meeting of the Parties in 2002. Since then a wealth of new knowledge on the population size and distribution, threats and migration routes has been accumulated so that a major revision and geographical expansion of the plan became necessary. This revision was launched in March 2009 with a stakeholder workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Financial support was provided through the Darwin-funded project on the conservation of the Sociable Lapwing led by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The draft plan is currently being consulted with experts and workshop participants.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*)

An SSAP for this sub-species was initiated in another process before AEWA entered into force and later on brought into the framework of the Agreement. The latest draft was made available in 2004 and circulated to the Range States. This draft, was not, however, signed off. In order to overcome one of the most contentious issues of this draft plan related to hunting, the AEWA Secretariat, financially supported by the government of UK and the Netherlands, commissioned a scientific study on the effect of hunting on the population by 1972 to Alterra (the Netherlands) and NERI (Denmark). Results of this study became available at the end of 2009 and will be published in 2010. The working group dealing with the drafting of the SSAP met in a workshop in December 2009 and decided that instead of an SSAP, the MOP shall be presented with a conservation brief outlining the status of the population, threats to it and issues to be monitored. The reason for abandoning the development of an SSAP at this stage is that the population is large (>200,000 birds) and relatively stable at present, therefore it was considered that it would not merit an SSAP, an approach targeted at populations with higher conservation needs.

Implementation of existing SSAPs

This update does not represent an overview of the substantive implementation of the existing SSAPs (as it was done in the MOP4 review), but rather how the coordination of implementation of the plans has been organised by the Secretariat.

Resolution 3.12 instructed the Secretariat to establish mechanisms to coordinate the international implementation of SSAPs pursuant to paragraph 2.2.1 of the Agreement's Action Plan. The Secretariat developed a proposal in this respect, which was presented to the 9th meeting of the Technical Committee (TC) and approved by the Committee. Under this mechanism a Species Working Groups will be established for each SSAP, consisting of designated governmental representatives of the principal Range States, as well as representatives of national expert and conservation organisations as invited to the national delegations. In addition, the chair of the working group may invite and admit international expert and conservation organisations and individual experts as observers. A part- or full-time Coordinator post shall be based in an organisation or institution, ideally in one of the principal Range States. The operations of the Species Working Groups, including costs of its coordination, shall be financed primarily by their members, i.e. the Range States, and in some cases, if applicable, by their observers. The AEWA Secretariat should seek to outsource coordination to organisations/institutions and formalise such partnerships through Memoranda of Cooperation (MoC).

Following the approval by the TC of this mechanism for coordination of international implementation of SSAPs, the Secretariat commenced identifying possible coordinating organisations and establishing MoCs with them. From the 15 SSAPs endorsed under AEWA so far, priority for establishing coordination mechanisms was given to nine of them plus the Red-breasted Goose for which an AEWA SSAP is in the pipeline.

The first two SSAPs for which MoCs were concluded were for the the White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) and the Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*). Coordination of these two SSAPs was outsourced to the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust which has a long standing experience in the conservation of both species and was also involved in the drafting of both SSAPs. The first steps are to convene a Species Working Group for the White-headed Duck and to restructure the existing expert working group for the Red-breasted Goose and adapt it to correspond to the structure of an AEWA Species Working Group.

The coordination of implementation of the Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*) SSAP was outsourced to the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan; a coordinator is based at their Headquarters. A small initial budget supporting the coordination has been jointly provided by the AEWA Secretariat and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Sociable Lapwing International Working Group is now being convened.

More recently coordination of four SSAPs was taken over by BirdLife International – for the Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*), the Madagascar Pond-heron (*Ardeola idae*), the White-winged Flufftail (*Sarothrura ayresi*) and the Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*). A coordinator based in the BirdLife’s African Partnership Secretariat in Nairobi will be dealing with the SSAPs for the latter three intra-African migrants. A kick-off funding is envisaged to be provided by the AEWA and CMS secretariats. The Northern Bald Ibis SSAP will be coordinated by two BirdLife national partner organisations – the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Spanish Ornithological Society – as well as the BirdLife Middle East Secretariat. Species Working Groups for these four SSAPs are to be convened shortly.

The eighth SSAP for which a mechanism is being established is the plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*). The Species Working Group is being convened and its first meeting is already being planned. A coordinator is based in the AEWA Secretariat thanks to the financial support of Norway and a number of important international activities are being already implemented under this coordination. A more detailed update is provided in Annex 1.

For two of the ten prioritised SSAPs no suitable coordinating organisation has been identified as yet. For the Maccoa Duck (*Oxyura maccoa*) SSAP the Secretariat discussed the matter with the chief compiler of this plan – the African Gamebird Research Education and Development Trust (AGRED). Unfortunately AGRED did not take up the offer of coordinating the implementation of this plan. The BirdLife partner organisation in the Netherlands (Vogelbescherming Nederland - VBN) was approached for taking over the coordination of the Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) SSAP and the organisation is still considering this proposal.

ANNEX 1

Implementation of the International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*)

The Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWfG) was adopted at the 4th Meeting of the Parties in 2008. This Action Plan covers the Fennoscandian and the Western Main wild populations of the Lesser White-fronted Goose. The overall coordination for the implementation of the Action Plan was placed within the AEWA Secretariat and is currently being facilitated by the Coordinator for the Lesser White-fronted Goose. This post is currently sponsored solely by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management with some funds expected from the Finnish Ministry of the Environment for 2010.

In general it can be said that the implementation of the Action Plan has begun, slowly but steadily, with many concrete conservation activities planned for 2010 and beyond. The main contributing factor to the relatively large number of conservation projects and activities for this species is the generous funding made available on a regular basis by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management as well as other donors such as the German and Finnish Ministries of the Environment.

The overall implementation approach of the Secretariat is to encourage and assist all key Range States to establish national working groups and national Action Plans for the species. To this aim the Secretariat convened the International LWfG Working Group as foreseen in the Single Species (SSAP) in 2009. The first meeting of the group is planned for November/December 2010. So far 11 of the 22 Range States mentioned in the SSAP have designated official national focal points and experts for the Working Group. The Secretariat is working on receiving nominations from the remaining countries.

Efforts to institutionalize LWfG conservation in all the key Range States is a lengthy process, which makes it crucial to simultaneously back this work with concrete conservation measures targeting key threats to the species. Therefore the Secretariat is assisting in the planning of and fundraising for LWfG conservation projects in accordance with the priorities set out in the SSAP. The focus for these concentrated conservation efforts is currently on those Range States outside Europe where the threats to the species are thought to be most severe (i.e. Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan etc.).

Conservation projects include a LWfG monitoring mission to the Syrian Arab Republic which was conducted in February 2010 to identify potential key LWfG wintering sites in Syria as well as train local conservationists in identifying LWfG. A report with conservation recommendations is being finalized. In addition LWfG posters and flyers were printed in Arabic for further awareness-raising on the species in Syria. These can be put to further use in other Arabic speaking countries.

The AEWA Secretariat also helped organize and raise funds for an ongoing project in the Kumo-Manych Depression in Kalmykia, Russian Federation (a major site for the LWfG) for the regulation of spring and autumn hunting on waterbirds during spring and autumn migration.

Other projects in the pipeline include an extensive monitoring mission to Kazakhstan in September/October 2010 followed by a workshop in Kostanay, Kazakhstan facilitated by the AEWA Secretariat with the aim to establish a national LWfG Working Group, start the drafting of a national Action Plan for the species as well as draw up an operational work plan for immediate implementation, particularly on tackling the hunting issue.

In addition funds have been made available for the production of a short PR-video on the LWfG intended to raise awareness of this threatened species amongst the general public and also hopefully to entice further donors to support LWfG conservation work in the future.

The Secretariat is also involved in conservation measures along the LWfG European flyway. A new EU

LIFE+ project application for the LWfG is in the pipeline and will be submitted to the EU Commission in September 2010. A first preparatory meeting was arranged in Greece in March 2010 by the Hellenistic Ornithological Society (HOS), WWF Finland and the AEWA Secretariat. Possibilities to secure longer term funding for the LWfG Coordinator position at the AEWA Secretariat within the framework of the possible LIFE project are being explored.

The AEWA Secretariat also facilitates the work of the Committee for Captive Breeding, Reintroduction and Supplementation of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Fennoscandia (RECAP Committee). The second RECAP Committee meeting was held in September 2009 at Nordens Ark near Gothenburg in Sweden, where Committee members visited the Nordens Ark LWfG breeding facility. The Committee also agreed on Terms of Reference for an independent scientific review of LWfG genetics. The third meeting of the Committee is foreseen for early autumn 2010.