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FOURTH MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE
CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS (AEWA)
12-13 MAY 2003, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR COORDINATION OF WATERBIRD RINGING SCHEMES, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

In the previous International Implementation Plan as well as in the current one for 2003-2007 the coordination of Waterbird ringing schemes, particularly in Africa has been listed as a priority.

Ringling studies have contributed to understanding of waterbird migration and ecology particularly in EUROPE. The project as listed in the IIP 2003-2007 foresees in the development of AFRING that will be based on the good experienced gained in Europe with EURING.

For the southern part of Africa a ringing scheme exists already, which is called SAFRING. The Avian Demography Unit (ADU), University of Cape Town, coordinates it.

Being aware of what role of ADU is playing regarding SAFRING, the Secretariat inquired Prof. Les Underhill from AD, if ADU would be interested to carry out project 20 of the IIP 2000-2004. It seems that ADU is the only suitable organisation in Africa that could execute the project building on experiences gained on SAFRING. The quote here attached was received from ADU.

PROPOSAL OF THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat requests the Technical Committee to review the current proposal and give guidance to the Secretariat on how to proceed on this matter. It should be noted that funds are available only for 2003/ 2004 and to ensure that the whole project could be executed additional funds are needed. Any guidance or support to secure the remaining funds needed would be welcome. Last but not least the Technical Committee is requested to look into the matter on how AFRING could be sustained after the life span of the project and to provide some advice to the Secretariat on this.

Priority 20

COORDINATION OF WATERBIRD RINGING SCHEMES IN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

SAFRING, at the Avian Demography Unit, University of Cape Town, has already started to develop the concept of AFRING in the following ways:

- Changed its newsletter from *Safring News* to *Afring News* in 2001
- Extended ringing services beyond South Africa in southern Africa (Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, Malawi)
- Recently extended ringing services beyond southern Africa to Senegal (2001), Sao Tome (2002) and Madagascar (2002)

Project description

To develop an African waterbird ringing scheme (AFRING), with a focus on migratory waterbirds.

Scope

Geographical: Africa.

Taxonomic: AEWAs species.

Time-scale: This project covers Phase I, 2003-2004. Phase II will cover 2005-2007 and species projects will be determined at a Stakeholders workshop.

Work plan and staffing

In the current proposal, SAFRING will develop AFRING further in three respects: expand infrastructure which will enable the ringing scheme to handle projected data volumes, coordinate an African workshop to discuss AFRING issues, undertake training workshops in waterbird ringing, and initiate exemplar field projects involving selected species of migratory waterbirds.

1. Staffing

To develop the ringing of migratory waterbirds in Africa, the limited infrastructure at SAFRING needs to be extended. The following on-going posts are needed:

African Waterbirds Ringing Coordinator
Species Coordinator

Initial expenses include:

Computers for above staff

Contract computer programmer – design software for all ringers in Africa to use

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2. Workplan

The tasks of the African Waterbirds Ringing Coordinator and Species Coordinator would be the following:

- a. Extend SAFRING's database to include ringing data from throughout Africa

Compile a numbered African species list, an African gazetteer, and design a computer module to cater for satellite data (specifically for African Penguins, flamingos and White Storks).

- b. Collate historical waterbird ringing data from throughout Africa, and undertake analyses

Obtain ringing data from historical waterbird ringing in Africa, i.e. the WIWO expeditions with ringing programs, ringing schemes in Ghana and Tunisia, UK groups in the Djoudj, Dutch WIWO expeditions, wader ringing by the Western Cape Wader Study Group, etc.

Electronic ringing data needs to be organized into the standard format; computerize data that is not in electronic form.

Prepare species summaries of the ringing data on the web as is happening in SAFRING (data summaries for 15 AEWA species have already been completed):

<http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/safring/results/results-index.htm>

The electronic data can then be further analysed and published.

- c. Combine ringing data with Waterbird Count data

This allows more extensive analysis of available data and has been done for *Tringa glareola* in southern Africa (H.-D. Oschadleus, 2002, *Ring* 24:71-78).

- d. Administer and run ringing training courses

SAFRING runs one or two national ringing training courses annually, some with a waterbird focus. We are both willing to mount similar courses in other African countries where there is sufficient interest and potential species projects, and delegates could also attend courses in South Africa. Suitable sites in South Africa are Lamberts Bay in the Western Cape (waders, terns) and Barberspan in Northwest Province (waders, ducks). The most convenient format for this training should be discussed at a stakeholders meeting (see below).

- e. Initiate specific species projects

See appendix for some potential examples.

One new such project could be started annually.

The listed projects, or alternatives, should be discussed at a stakeholders meeting (see below).

- f. Organize stakeholders meetings

Opportune times to hold meetings for stakeholders and other interested parties would be at Waterbirds Around the World conference in Edinburgh in April 2004 and/or the PAOC in Tunisia in November 2004. An extra day could be planned for AFRING stakeholders (ringers, government officials, NGOs) to discuss issues. SAFRING could provide a detailed account of current operations involving training of ringers, purchase of rings and equipment, and standards of data collection. Discussion sessions can adapt and formalize SAFRING procedures into an AFRING code of practice. The meeting can be used to forge further links throughout Africa and plan species specific projects. Financial assistance is budgeted for so that key delegates can travel to Edinburgh/Tunisia. These people would be able to attend the linked conference. The African Waterbirds Ringing Coordinator and Species Coordinator will plan the meeting, invite the relevant people, and determine the budget (to help fund attendees).

- g. Process new ringing data and recoveries, Data analysis, and Report writing

- h. Administer finances; purchase rings and other ringing equipment from the manufacturers and supply them to ringers

3. Sustainability

An AFRING scheme and its individual projects can be made sustainable with the assistance of Wetlands International in approaching governments for on-going support.

Budget for Phase I

	2003/04	2004/05
<i>1. Infrastructure</i>		
African Waterbirds Ringing Coordinator	\$11,000	\$11,000
Species Coordinator	\$10,000	\$10,000
Running expenses (photocopying, postage, telephone, faxes, stationery, computer consumables, etc)	\$3,000	\$3,000
Infra-structural expenses (office space, electricity, internet access, cleaning, security, etc)	\$3,000	\$3,000
Computers (2 PCs, one printer, associated hardware)	\$2,000	-
Contract computer programmer	\$2,000	-
<i>2. Course, Workshop and projects</i>		
Training courses	\$5,000	\$9,000
Stakeholders' workshop	\$5,000	\$5,000
One exemplar species, <i>e.g.</i> White Pelican	\$5,000	
One exemplar species, <i>e.g.</i> Wood Sandpiper		\$5,000
Total	\$46,000	\$46,000

APPENDIX: Exemplar species projects

Full-scale projects will be carried out on selected species to demonstrate the potential of an AFRING contribution to knowledge on the migratory patterns of waterbirds in Africa. These projects will be done by expanding current projects as well as starting new projects. They will include metal ringing, as well as other marking techniques, notably colour ringing, cohort colour ringing of colonial chicks, and satellite and other forms of tracking. These projects will be linked to census work where appropriate.

Funding for these projects includes the cost of rings, colour rings or satellite transmitters where relevant, and travel and other logistical costs where relevant. The Species Coordinator will need to draw up budgets for these projects – flexibility is partially provided for in increasing or decreasing the number of ringing expeditions for a particular project.

The following AEWA species are suggested as possible exemplar species:

1. Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

As a well-known waterbird taxon, pelicans may be regarded as conservation “flagships”. The Great White Pelican occurs throughout much of Africa where it is conspicuous at large water bodies. Marking (colour banding, satellite tracking, etc.) and counting pelicans lends itself to the involvement of volunteer/amateur groups. It is currently unknown how isolated the various populations in different parts of Africa may be, and a study is envisaged which will address this issue, commencing with the breeding populations occurring within southern and eastern Africa.

2. Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* and Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*

Flamingos are being studied in Africa (Mauritania, Senegal, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya plus all the southern African countries), particularly in coordinating a continent-wide simultaneous census. This is being done with the help of Wetlands International, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, and many individuals. Little is known of the large-scale movements of these two species, and understanding their movements will greatly aid monitoring their populations, distribution and conservation.

3. Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*, Swift (Crested) Tern *Sterna bergii*

These 3 tern species cover a large part of Africa’s coastline and are migratory to varying extents. All 3 have been well-ringed, but there is a need for colour ringing with age class cohort colours. Their different migration strategies could make for interesting comparison.

4. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

The international Polish led *Tringa glareola* project is active in eastern Europe, but this species migrates through Africa to southern Africa.

5. Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Using colour-ringing in selected countries through Africa to study local movements and use of wetlands by this species. There is also the possibility of using such a project for educational purposes as this species is so ubiquitous and easily recognizable.

6. Comb-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

This is the duck in Africa with the longest movements, but it is not known if these movements are nomadic or migratory. A ringing programme would monitor this’ species movements in the future.