

PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF REPORTING ON THE STATUS OF MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS IN THE AGREEMENT AREA

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AEWA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE TO THE AEWA STANDING COMMITTEE

Background

In March 2004, the Technical Committee discussed proposals to enhance the analytical content of the *Status Report* to the Meeting of Parties (Annex 2). In order that such changes might be implemented for MoP3, the Technical Committee proposes the following outline structure for the *Status Report*.

Proposed structure

A proposed contents is outlined in Annex 1, responding to MoP2's request that, "*the Technical Committee to develop, at its next meeting, proposals for enhancing the analytical content of the third edition of the AEWA Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbird in the Agreement Area, and to consider how that information may be used to direct input to future reviews of the Agreement's implementation priorities.*"¹

Resource implications

The revised structure of the report should not be difficult to produce. The analyses can be derived from manipulation of a spreadsheet containing *Waterbird Population Estimates* data and information. (The example analyses, and text, of the paper discussed by the Technical Committee in March 2004 took two working days to prepare), from an analysis of IWC data and by extracting information from National Reports.

IWC information exists but needs prior analysis for inclusion into the report. National Reports do currently not provide much information that is additional to *WPE* and IWC, but this will hopefully improve in the future.

IWC data has considerable potential to inform the status report in Europe and increasingly for Africa and that part of Central Asia that is in the AEWA region. Data derived from the IWC can be used to report on population status and trends, notably through the tabulation of summary results, changes in population sizes and trends, or more specifically of changes in numbers at individual sites. MoP2 called for a

¹ Resolution 2.1

strengthening of the IWC as a basis for assessing the status of waterbirds in the Agreement area. IWC data are currently under-utilised, largely as a result of lack of resources to undertake such analyses.

The degree to which IWC data can be used in the context of the *Status Report* will thus depend on resources available for the development of specific analyses. The proposals made below relate largely to data and information drawn from the pre-compiled *WPE3* — largely to reduce resource requirements. Depending on resources available greater analysis and use of IWC data might be possible to include.

The main element of the proposals made below that is not currently available is matching each population to a geographical region and/or flyway system. Such allocation would be a one-off task useful also for future reporting. Given the number of populations involved, this may take two days of work to set up an appropriate spreadsheet. Work could commence on that task immediately.

Allocation of populations to individual countries would maximise value of such information for Contracting Parties, although this would be a larger task (possibly ten days for all AEWA populations?). Depending on resources, this might be undertaken either for the MoP3 report or subsequently for MoP4.

Timetable and process

- i. Format of the report should be approved by the Standing Committee in autumn 2004.
- ii. This would allow a suitably developed *Status Report* and possibly other reporting products to be drafted in early 2005.
- iii. Discussion of draft Status Report — especially the geographically focussed sections should be discussed at the next meeting of the Technical Committee (?May 2005).
- iv. It is important that this initial draft is available for the Technical Committee at its next meeting so that the conclusions from the *Status Report* can inform the process of redrafting the Agreement's *Implementation Priorities* during 2005.
- v. The draft report should be revised in September 2005 following the finalisation of *Waterbird Population Estimates 4* by Wetlands International. (Public consultation of the draft *WPE4* occurs June - August 2005).
- vi. Both *Status Report* and *Implementation Priorities* to be submitted to MoP3 in December 2005 (circulation November 2005).
- vii. Following approval by MoP3, both the report, and separately the summary, might both be developed as widely disseminated products summarising the current status of migratory waterbirds in the AEWA region and aimed at government decision makers and others.

Future developments

There is considerable scope to develop this status report as a web-based product, linking to other data and information sources. For example, links could be provided through the AEWA GIS Map server, which would allow instant access to regional status and trend information. This is planned within the AEWA GEF project and would be premature for the MoP3 report. However, in any further development of reporting, the Technical Committee should keep this issue under review.

September 2004

Annex 1

Proposed structure of the AEWA report on the status of migratory waterbirds in the Agreement area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE STATUS OF MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS IN AFRICA AND WESTERN EURASIA IN 2005

The Executive Summary should contain a paragraph on each of the main elements of the report listed below.

The Summary should be drafted in such a way that it may be converted into a simple booklet.

STATE²

Species accounts

These will be only included if there is new information on status to report since the MoP2 Report since there is already extensive background information in the previous two *Status Reports*.

For any populations where there is a proposal to change the Action Plan status of the population, the relevant status account will be used to provide the audit trail of data and information supporting such a proposal.

- Specific issues for MoP3 report: taxonomy and population structure of a number of taxa (*e.g.* wader species and herons) will need revision following changes proposed by Specialist Groups and now adopted by *WPE3*.
- ‘Baseline’ analyses of IWC results for future reporting against in following years.

Tabulated data and information on species and populations

Essentially this will be an extract of relevant data and information from *WPE4* and the IWC³.

² Note that some of the state and trends can be generated from national reports using web applications, similar to the CMS Information system, and links could also be provided through the AEWA GIS Map server, which would allow instant access to regional status and trend information. But this is planned in the medium term within the AEWA GEF project, so should form part of a move to more web-based reporting for MoP for MoP4 and beyond.

³ How much information from National reporting should be extracted and included here? One would assume this has been incorporated into *WPE4*, but may be we should elucidate the process here and below. This way we would create another additional incentive for countries to report on the status and trends and the implementation of various agreed activities. What do the others think? - Christoph Zöckler

Annex 1

How much do we know?

A review of overall state of knowledge, especially in terms of assessing numbers of populations that have a population estimate and/or a trend evaluation (as a measure of performance of the Action Plan's central focus on research and monitoring), as well as reporting on the coverage of the IWC in terms of sites and populations assessed..

Number of populations with an estimate and/or trend

- by taxa
- by geographical area

Quality of estimates - how good is our information?

Population trends

Summary of population trends expressed:

- by taxa (*e.g.* waders, flamingos, terns *etc.*).
Note that it may be more appropriate to split these groups into groups of ecologically similar species rather than strictly by taxonomy.
- by geographical area
No geographic apportionment of the Agreement area is appropriate for all species given the range of different migration systems and ecologies. Accordingly it is suggested that the areas defined in Resolution 1.8 for the allocation of Technical Committee members is adopted on the basis that this will provide a focus for discussion of status issues within each of these areas:
 - North- and Southwestern Europe
 - Eastern Europe
 - Central Europe
 - Southwestern Asia
 - Northern Africa
 - Central Africa
 - Western Africa
 - Eastern Africa
 - Southern Africa
- by flyway system (for those waterbirds where flyways are clearly defined, such as waders)

Discussion of trends in AEWA listed species and populations in relation to the 2010 WSSD target and as potential indicators for CBD and Ramsar targets.

It may be possible, if not for MoP3 then for MoP4, to develop one or more multi-species 'headline indicator' by integrating information from many species, and building on Wetlands International's European Waterbird Indicator.

Annex 1

The status of the most threatened species

Review of the status of IUCN Red List species within the Agreement Area⁴:

- In which geographical areas do (most) Red Listed waterbirds occur?
- Which taxonomic groups have most Red Listed waterbirds?
- Overall, what have been the changes to Red Listed waterbirds since AEWA came into force – more/fewer species?
- Specific focus on certain migration types such as intra-African migrants?

RESPONSE

International Action Plans

Which Action Plan species have international action plans and where do these occur?

- Update on the implementation of these plans
- What is the status of these species? (recovering?)

Which Action Plan species do not yet have international action plans and where do these occur?

- What is the status of these species? (still declining?)

CONCLUSIONS

What are the main issues for MoP attention with respect to:

- State of knowledge?
- Priority geographic areas?
- Status of different waterbird groups?
- Causes of population changes?
- Implementation priorities for AEWA derived from the results – what should happen?

⁴ Note that BirdLife International is currently working on a Waterbird Red List Index similar to their Global Red List Index,

**AEWA Technical Committee
March 2004**

Developing AEWA's species status reporting

Background

AEWA's Action plan requires the production for each Meeting of the Parties "reports on the status and trends of populations".

For MoP1 in 1999, Wetlands International produced a draft status report for consideration, later published separately by AEWA (Wetlands International 2000). For MoP2 in 2002, a second edition of this status document was produced (Wetlands International 2002a). The format of both documents was similar in providing information on the changing conservation and population status of each of the AEWA-listed migratory waterbird populations, and presented this information in a series of species accounts.

MoP2 requested that, "*the Technical Committee to develop, at its next meeting, proposals for enhancing the analytical content of the third edition of the AEWA Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbird in the Agreement Area, and to consider how that information may be used to direct input to future reviews of the Agreement's implementation priorities.*"⁵

Determining the content of the status report

The *Status Report* currently has no explicit objectives — these are necessary before its content can be determined.

The following are suggested objectives:

1. To document the current status of each waterbird population listed by AEWA, in particular presenting any significant changes in conservation status, population size, distribution, migratory status, or other factors that may have a bearing on the listing of these populations or on relevant conservation measures;

⁵ Resolution 2.1

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2. To document the data, information, and judgements that underpin any cases for changing the status of populations listed in Table 1 of the Action Plan (thus providing necessary transparency, and for audit purposes).
3. To provide both ‘top-level’, and more detailed information, on the changing status of migratory waterbird populations that will enable decision and policy-makers in Contracting Parties and other stakeholders assess the efficacy of current conservation measures, and the need for further actions. Feedback from the changing status of populations should highlight for attention any issues that need to be addressed by the Agreement’s Implementation Priorities;
4. To provide information to the wider public on the changing status of waterbird populations.
5. To relate changes in waterbird populations to their migratory status the geographic area they occur in, as well as to other taxa and physical or chemical parameters for comparative and analytical purposes, especially so as to elaborate the root causes for these changes⁶.
6. To assist appropriately in the general harmonisation of reporting on the state of the environment which is also being promoted by international conventions and treaties.

The format of the current *Status Report* is currently drafted and formatted as a detailed technical report. As such it fulfils Objective 1 well. It partly addressed Objective 2.

In terms of providing top-level messages on changing population status (Objective 3) it is inadequate. The volume of data, information and contexts presented obscure key issues. Further there is no attempt to analyse the wealth of information brought together to identify those major issues to which the Contracting Parties should be giving their attention.

It is currently largely inaccessible to the public in terms of being rather user-unfriendly (Objective 4).

It currently does not address Objectives 5 and 6.

What sort of analytical content is desirable?

There is a range of analytical enhancements that that would provide useful information relevant to the proposed objectives:

- Are some taxonomic groups of waterbirds faring more poorly overall than others?

⁶ For example, see Zöckler *et al.* (2003) for a good example of the types of analysis that can elucidate general issues linked to patterns of decline.

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- Are there some geographic regions within the Agreement area where waterbirds are faring particularly badly?⁷
- Are waterbirds associated with particular habitat types faring worse than others?⁸
- Is there co-incidence in the timing of apparent changes in numbers between taxa or geographic areas?⁹
- Has there been any change in species composition over time at specific sites¹⁰?
- How effective is conservation provision in improving the status of the most severely threatened waterbirds?
- Are there some geographic areas where we have particular poor information on the status of migratory waterbirds and where, as a consequence, surveys should be directed as a matter of priority?¹¹

There are a number of examples of analysis and presentation of complex data that might serve as models for the further development of the *Status Report*. These include:

- The use of multi-species indices such as those employed in the *State of the UK's Birds*¹². Such indices can summarise large amounts of data to present a simple overall picture — a so called 'Headline Indicator'. A further example is one of the Indicators from England's recently published *Biodiversity Strategy*¹³: This concept has also been successfully applied at the European level (Wetlands International 2003).

⁷ At least for waders, an example might be the steppe regions of the Caspian Basin, according to recent evaluations by the International Wader Study Group (Stroud *et al.* 2002).

⁸ Again for waders an example might be the especially poor status of waders breeding on wet grassland habitats in Europe – which are subject to a wide range of negative agricultural influences (Stroud *et al.* 2002).

⁹ Here it should be noted that the baseline or reference point for assessments of trends or changes in population size should be documented to allow comparison of changes against time.

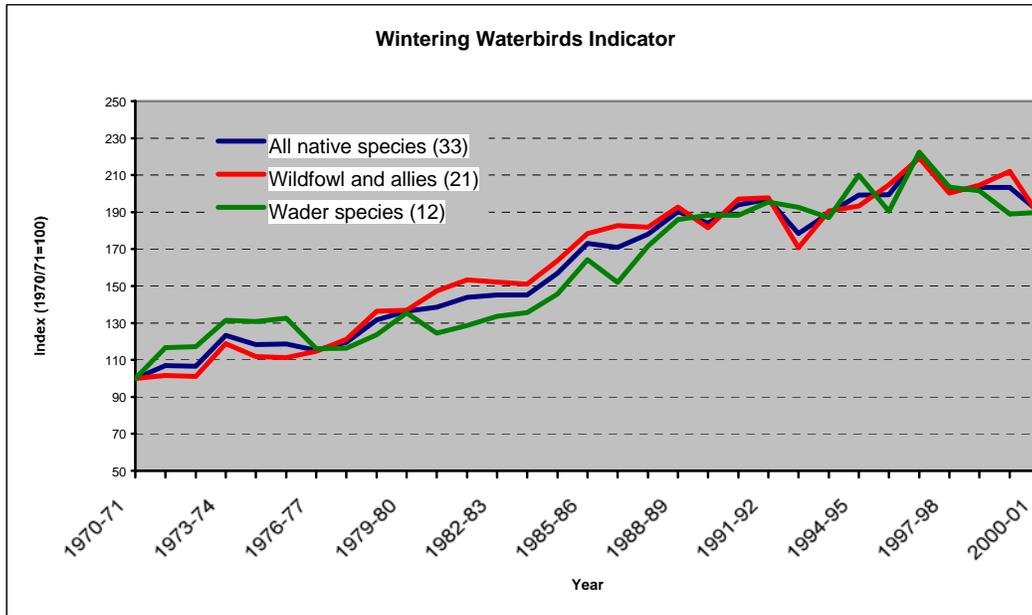
¹⁰ Looking at species composition rather than at changes at the individual species' population levels can be a tool in picking up the effects of climate change for example.

¹¹ Again for waders, there is very poor population information in the Black-Sea/Mediterranean Flyway (Stroud *et al.* 2002).

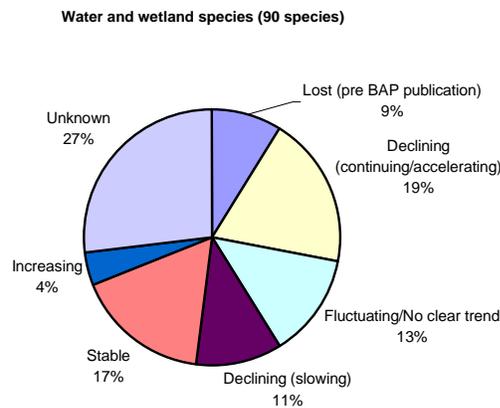
¹² www.rspb.org.uk/Images/State%20of%20UK%20Birds%202002_tcm5-42039.pdf

¹³ See for example: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/biostrat/> and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2003/031201b.htm>

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- Simple pie-charts present information on relative proportions of species in different categories:



- Pie-charts can also be linked to maps to present comparisons between geographic regions (*e.g.* see page 15 of *Waterbird Population Estimates 3* (Wetlands International 2002b) for a good example)¹⁴.
- Maps showing status distinctions between counties, such as in WWF-International's *Living Planet Report* (WWF & WCMC 2002)¹⁵. Note that this style of presentation could be adopted for regions and need not necessarily relate to countries should it be desired to present information at broader scales.

¹⁴ www.wetlands.org/pubs&/WPE.htm

¹⁵ http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/general/livingplanet/index.cfm;
http://www.panda.org/downloads/general/LPR_2002.pdf

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Types of analysis

Manipulation of simple spreadsheet summarising of data on AEWA-listed waterbirds, and drawn from *Waterbird Population Estimates 3* suggests some types of analysis that might be instructive in the context of the objectives above. Thus:

1. In terms of overall priorities for species conservation, there are major taxonomic differences between the different groups of waterbirds listed in the AEWA Action Plan (Figure 1).
2. Given that there are different numbers of species in the different families of waterbird, there may be merit in expressing such information on conservation status proportionately. Thus, it appears that a high proportion of the species of Cranes, Storks and Ibises, and Cormorants are globally threatened — indeed half of all Crane species in the region (Figure 2).
3. In terms of the proportions of species that are IUCN Red Listed (a slightly broader category than globally threatened (Figure 3¹⁶), over 80% of Cormorant species are Red Listed.
4. Turning to the status of populations as expressed by trend information, summary information (Figure 4) shows that over half (59%) of all populations have either an unknown population trend or are known or thought to be decreasing. Nearly 50% more populations are known to be declining than are increasing. (These statistics highlight an overall situation that should be a ‘headline’ issue for AEWA – yet has not been even noted in previous information presented to the MoP. Indeed, a fundamental target for the Agreement should surely be to improve this situation, through the implementation of its priority actions, reporting accordingly to each MoP. See below in relation to target-setting).
5. Figure 5 breaks down different populations trends by family. It shows that a large number of the populations of ducks, geese and swans are declining (many more than are increasing).
6. How good is our information on population trends? Figure 6 summarises information on the proportion of populations for which there is no information on population trend at all — information that is fundamental to any assessment of conservation status. Over half of all the populations of Divers, Rails and Crakes, Plovers and Stone Curlews¹⁷ have no current information on their trends. This indicates some taxonomic priorities where AEWA should be setting priorities for the establishment of monitoring.
7. What is the conservation provision for those globally threatened waterbirds that are listed by AEWA and is it effective? Of 15 waterbird species globally threatened with extinction and listed by AEWA, seven are the subject of

¹⁶ Note that this presentation is dominated by the somewhat misleadingly high apparent proportions for some families with a limited number of species, most of which are on the IUCN Red List.

¹⁷ Note, however, that this family comprises only a few populations.

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international action plans (generally those species occurring in Europe¹⁸), whilst eight are not (generally those occurring in Africa and the Middle East¹⁹). All those species without action plans are still declining (Figure 7), whilst at least some of those with action plans are either stable or increasing in numbers. This might suggest that, whether or not this more favourable status is directly attributable to an International Action Plan, there are probably conservation benefits that come from the attention associated with an international action planning process. However, action planning appears not to have reached Africa: most existing plans have been driven by the European Union and/or the Council of Europe (e.g. Heredia *et al.* 1996; Schäffer & Gallo-Orsi 2001).

The above are just a very small number of the analyses that are possible from readily available data. Further elaborations are possible, in particular looking at geographic aspects (where are waterbirds faring especially poorly?) as well as including additional analytical factors such as population size.

Target setting

Such analyses could and should be directly informing the development of implementation priorities for the Agreement – providing direct feedback from the ‘real world’. Further, they could be used to establish baselines against which the effectiveness of the Agreement can be assessed. For example:

- The progressive reduction in the number of waterbird population about which we have poor or no information.
- A reduction of the proportion of waterbird populations that are decreasing.
- A reduction of the number of IUCN Red Listed waterbird species within the Agreement area.

Reporting on such statistics to each MoP would give a real measure of the effectiveness of the Agreement in ‘making a difference’, and thus achieving some of the objectives that are set out in the Agreement text itself.

There is scope to use information on waterbirds — as a group with probably the largest internationally compiled datasets of biodiversity to assist in the monitoring progress towards the target set by world leaders of achieving “*a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity*” by 2010. AEWAs could play a key role here in facilitating the appropriate analyses for waterbirds within Africa and Western Eurasia to assess movement towards this target.

¹⁸ *Anser erythropus*, *Branta ruficollis*, *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, *Oxyura leucocephala*, *Crex crex*, *Vanellus gregarius* and *Numenius tenuirostris*.

¹⁹ *Geronticus eremita*, *Grus leucogeranus*, *Sarothrura ayresi*, *Phalacrocorax neglectus*, *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, *Egretta vinaceigula*, *Ardeola idea*, *Grus paradisea* and *Grus carunculatus*.

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Types of reporting

A fundamental question that the Technical Committee must determine is who reporting is aimed at, and to what end (as the nature of the reporting product will be determined by its objectives — note that there is a direct link to the Agreement's proposed Communications Strategy here).

Note that the text of the Agreement's Action Plan refers to the need to produce "Reports on the status and trends of populations" - indicating the need for more than a single product.

At minimum there would appear to be at least three distinct audiences and possibly different related reporting products:

1. **Conservation scientists.** A detailed triennial report on changes of status to populations since the last MoP, including a detailed audit trail as to the data and information used in support of any proposed changes in status. This would be similar (but not entirely identical) to the current *Status Report* (Wetlands International 2001, 2002a), as it would also contain greater analytical content as requested by MoP2.
2. **Governmental decision and policy makers.** A non-technical report aimed at governmental decision makers and others, containing synthesised results from the analysis, and summarising main conservation/status change issues. In particular, this report should aim to make links between the changing status of waterbirds and any desirable changes to the Agreement's *Implementation Priorities* in response to these changes. (This might be included as an extended Executive Summary of report 1 above, and include the use of indicators and between-flyway comparisons).
3. **Public and other interested parties.** A non-technical, accessible report containing much of the information produced for 2 above, but possibly with additional material also.

The recommendation from the MoP is that the "*enhancing the analytical content of the Conservation Status Report*" should be "*used to direct input to future reviews of the Agreement's implementation priorities*". This implies that there will need to be careful sequencing of these two documents - since the conclusions of the *Status Report* (= 'what is happening') will/should influence the *Implementation Priorities* (= 'what do we propose to do about it').

National reporting²⁰

National Reports are an important commitment assumed when a country ratifies AEWA. AEWA reporting is one part of the overall reporting commitments of the Member State, *e.g.* Ramsar, CMS and of course its commitment to the 2010 target

²⁰ Whilst National Reports are one important source of information, there are others also that will be important in the development of overall status reporting by AEWA. These include data and information from the IWD database, Specialist Groups and others.

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with which water birds can substantially contribute already (probably at the same time with Ramsar reporting!)

Only eight Parties submitted National reports to MoP2. MoP2 agreed "*that the Secretariat would wait until it had received further reports from the countries, and then prepare a synthesis for dissemination after the current Meeting of Parties.*"

It is not clear, however:

- whether any further national reports have been received?
- how or when national reports that have been submitted will be published?
- whether any synthesis has been or will be undertaken of MoP2 national reports? (Such syntheses are important in providing context and 'added value' to Contracting Parties, and thus help to encourage timely reporting. For example, the regular regional syntheses of National Reports produced for each Ramsar CoP are perceived as a valuable source of information by Contracting Parties).
- what were the reasons for such low rate of completion of national reports? and
- how these reasons might be addressed prior to MoP3?

Next steps

2. The Committee is invited to discuss:
 - a. Desirable types of reporting to MoP 3 (audiences to be reached and overall products to deliver appropriate information, together with types of reporting products — *e.g.* web-based (on-line queryable database?) *v.s.* conventional publications);
 - b. Specific types of analysis that might be included in reporting in response to the request from MoP2.
 - c. The timetable and sequence of necessary further work. A possible sequence may be as follows:
 - i. In terms of process, it is recommended that this draft paper (with practical examples) be further developed by a Working Group of the Committee and circulated for comment to the full Committee by the end of June 2004 at the latest for approval.
 - ii. It should then be submitted to the AEWA Standing Committee for consideration and agreement at its meeting later in 2004 (date uncertain).
 - iii. This would allow a suitably developed *Status Report* and possibly other reporting products to be drafted in early 2005.

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- iv. This timing will allow the conclusions from the *Status Report* also to feed in to the process of redrafting the Agreement's *Implementation Priorities* during 2005.
 - v. Both *Status Report* and *Implementation Priorities* to be submitted to MoP3 in late 2005.
3. The Committee should further discuss the issues raised by the low rate of submission of national reports to MoP2 and how the situation may be approved for MoP3.
 4. The Committee should discuss the possibility of recommending to MoP2 that targets are set for the effective of delivery of the Agreement objective²¹ "*to take immediate action to stop the decline of migratory waterbird species and their habitats*", given that such targets might be effective drivers for the scope and nature of AEWA's reporting.
 5. The Committee should consider the role that AEWA can play in facilitating analyses of waterbird monitoring data so as to assess overall movement towards the WSSD target of reducing biodiversity loss by 2010.
 6. The Committee should consider how best the development of AEWA's reporting can co-ordinate and link with other international reporting initiatives, including other national reporting to Multilateral Environmental Agreements, CMS-related reporting²², the Global Biodiversity Information Facility²³, and monitoring the delivery of the WSSD 2010 target).

References

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²¹ Agreement Preamble, para 7

²² The CMS Information Management System provides access to the various components and services derived from the implementation of the CMS Information Management Plan. This system brings together the data from various expert organisations, the knowledge generated within the CMS and other biodiversity agreements, and the information provided by the Parties to CMS through their National Reports. <http://quin.unep-wcmc.org/isdb/cms/taxonomy/>

²³ www.gbif.net

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12 February 2004

Version: Monday, 18 April 2005

Figure 2. Proportion of AEWA-listed waterbird species (by family) that are globally threatened. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.

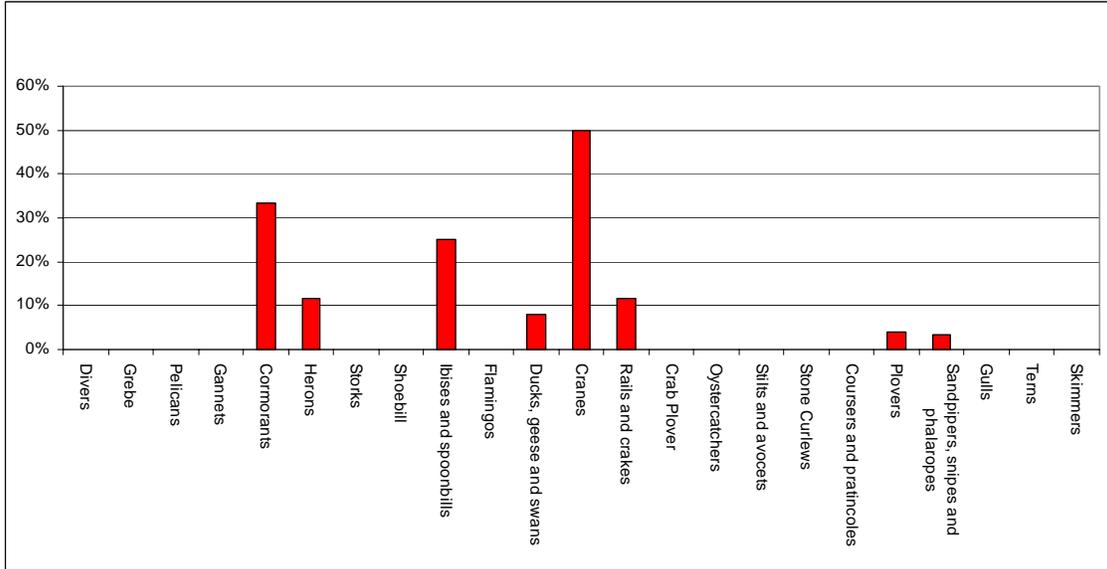
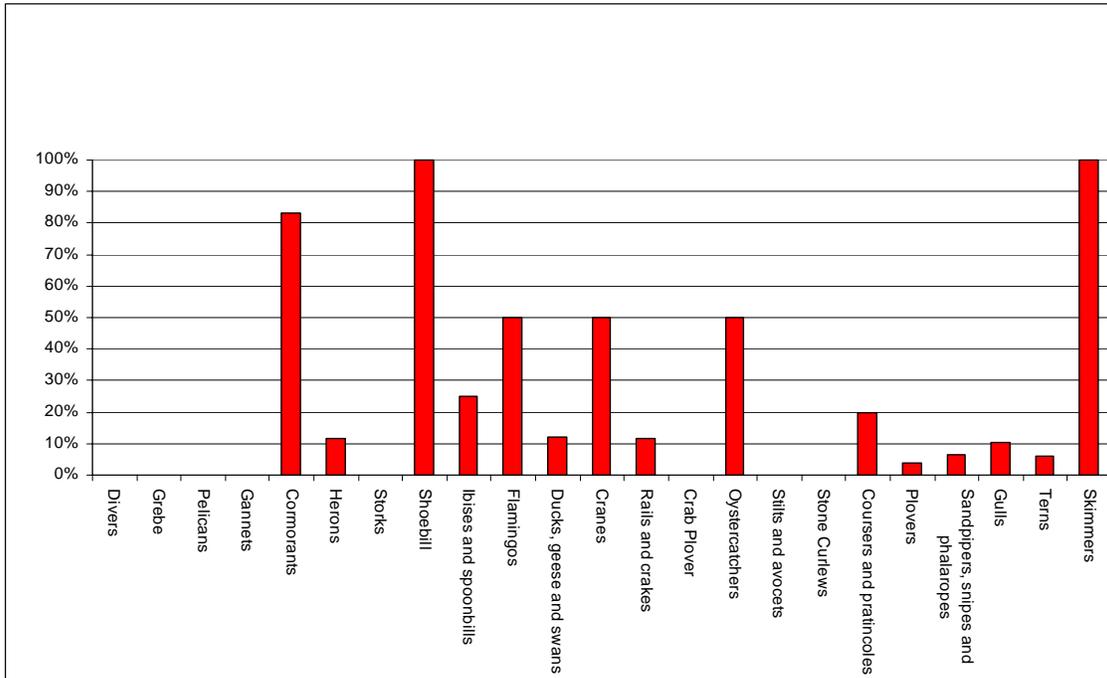
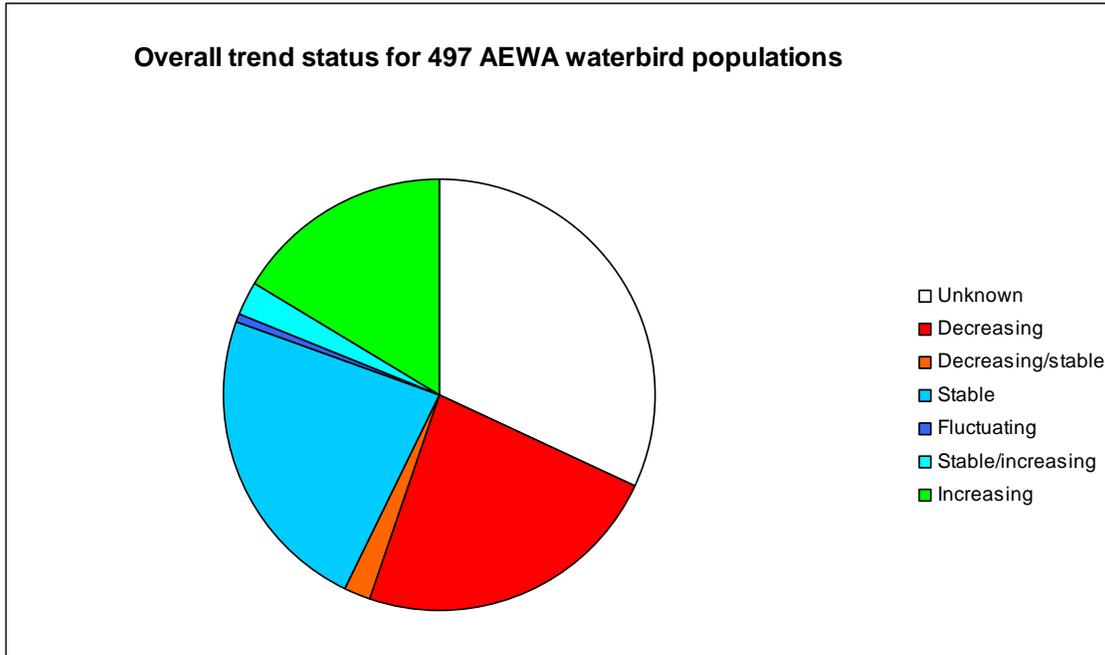


Figure 3. Summary of the proportion of AEWA-listed waterbird species that are on the IUCN Red List (by family). Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.



Version: Monday, 18 April 2005

Figure 4. Population trends for all waterbird populations listed by AEWA. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.



Version: Monday, 18 April 2005

Figure 5. Trends in AEWA listed waterbird population summarise by family. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.

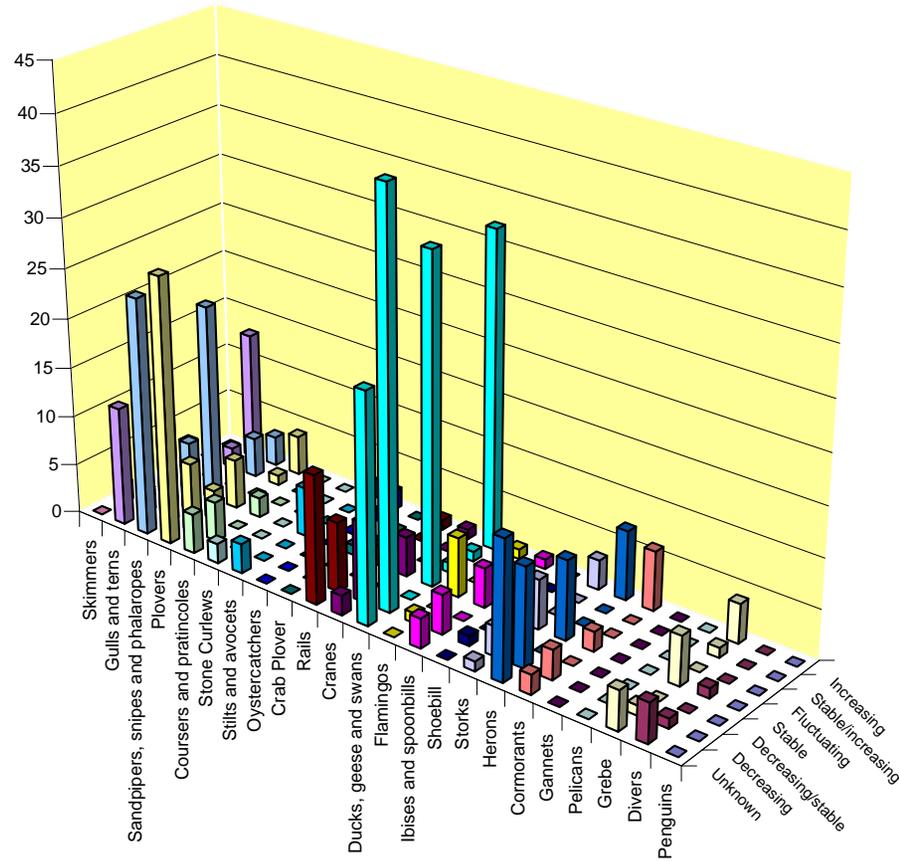


Figure 6. Those waterbird families for which we have poorest information on population trends. Proportion of AEWA-listed populations in each taxonomic family for which there is no information on population trend. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.

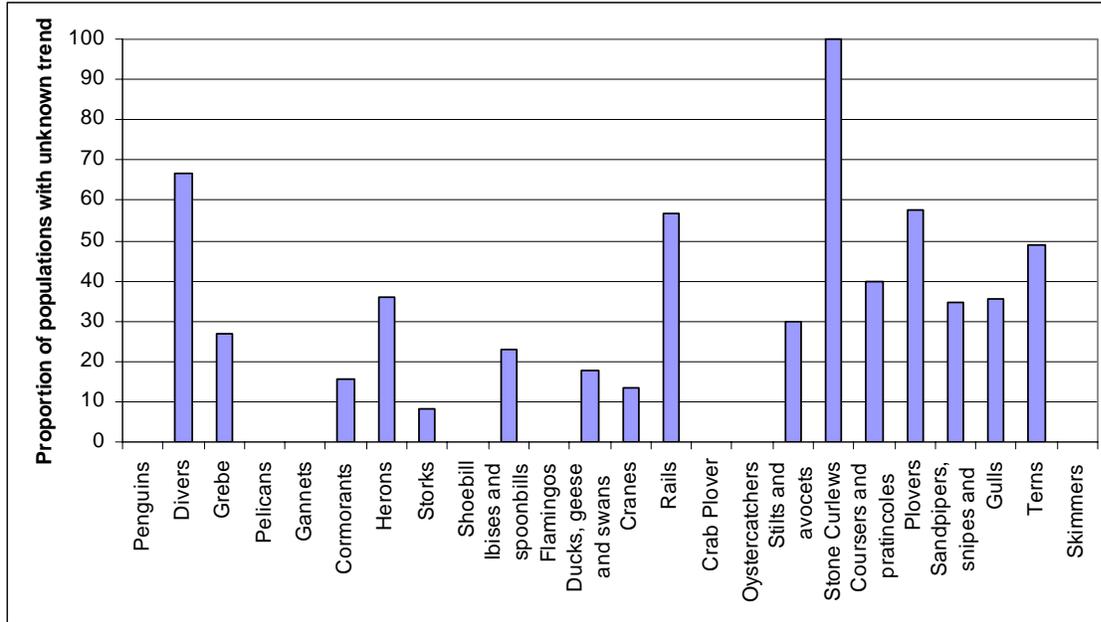


Figure 7. Population trend status of globally threatened waterbirds with and without international action plans. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3* and other information.

