



12th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
31 January – 01 February 2017, Paris, France

REVISED FORMAT FOR AEWA CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

Introduction

The 5th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA requested the Technical Committee (TC), in Resolution 5.10, to undertake a critical review of the style and format of AEWA's Conservation Guidelines. Such a review was undertaken by the Technical Committee during the course of 2015.

At the 6th Session of the Meeting of the AEWA Parties in November 2015, the Parties requested the Technical Committee to complete this review and to make recommendations inter-sessionally to the Standing Committee on both the style and subject matter of future Guidelines (Resolution 6.5).

The review of [AEWA's Conservation Guidelines: Format and Future Priorities](#) was presented at the 13th Meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee, which took place on the 14-17 March 2016 in Israel.

The enclosed recommendations regarding the revision of the format for AEWA Conservation Guidelines are based on the outcomes of the review.

Action Requested from the Standing Committee:

The Standing Committee is requested to review the conclusions and proposed recommendations below for the further development and revision of AEWA Conservation Guidelines, and to approve them for further use:

TC conclusions and recommendation to the Standing Committee

- A. Any new guidance drafted (and updates of existing guidance), should consist of two elements:
 1. A simple **Conservation Guidance Briefing Note** of maximum two pages in length. This should aim to summarise the issue; present key needs or messages; and point to further relevant sources of guidance. This would facilitate translation of such briefings into a range of other languages at low cost.
 2. A more detailed **Conservation Guidance Background Document**. These should be constrained in length to a maximum length of c.25 pages. Any further background information should be presented or published in separate format (and linked).

- B. As much as possible, emphasis should be placed on presenting AEWA guidance as a ‘guide to guidance’ – i.e. providing a synthesis of the multiple sources of information already available.
- C. AEWA should aim to routinely translate briefing notes into Russian and Arabic resources permitting.
- D. There is little merit in AEWA producing guidance on where this has been produced by other MEAs. Accordingly, there would be merit in preparing a high level guide to sources of guidance, indexed by subject matter. This should cover key guidance documents prepared by AEWA, Ramsar, CMS and IUCN in the first instance, but in principle could/should include any source of relevance to AEWA Parties’ needs.
- E. The Technical Committee proposes the following prioritised task list related to future work on Guidelines as follows:
 - 1. Develop an index guide to existing MEA guidelines and handbooks relevant to AEWA’s mission. (This would deliver MOP6’s request to summarise relevant fisheries guidance).
 - 2. Produce the ‘field guide’ to managing disturbance as already planned by the Technical Committee. (This would capitalise on existing work and could be disseminated jointly by Ramsar).
 - 3. Produce a Guideline on reducing conflicts with human interests in a new format. (This can be seen as a full revision of the existing AEWA Conservation Guidelines No. Guideline 8 which was overdue for review).
 - 4. Review and update the following Guidelines in line with the rolling schedule agreed by the TC:
 - #1 – Single Species Action Plans
 - #3 – Site inventories
 - #4 – Site management
 - #7 – Ecotourism at wetlands
 - #9 – Waterbird monitoring

These revisions should at least generate a briefing note according to the new format, even if there are no textual changes to the existing guidelines.

AEWA's CONSERVATION GUIDELINES: RECOMMENDED CHANGE TO FORMAT AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

Prepared by the AEWA Technical Committee

Summary

1. Through 2015, a review of the use of AEWA's *Conservation Guidelines* was undertaken at the request of MOP5. MOP6 asked the Technical Committee (TC) to consider the results of this survey and make recommendations inter-sessionally to the Standing Committee on both the style and subject matter of future Guidelines. This paper is the result of this request.
2. There was an excellent response rate to an on-line questionnaire¹ from 60 countries. Respondents reflected a range of potential AEWA target audiences and can probably be considered as a balanced and representative sample (although of course this is unknowable).
3. A simple summary of all the responses is given in Annex 2 of the TC paper http://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_tc13_12_format_update_aewa_conservation_gls_en.docx.
4. Although about a third of respondents (36%) used AEWA *Conservation Guidelines* regularly (at least once a year), over half (56%) used them either only occasionally or never. Also of relevance are National Reports to MOP which indicate a low degree of reported use of *Conservation Guidelines*. Accordingly, there is scope to significantly improve the use of *Conservation Guidelines*.
5. Greatest preference was for short detailed briefing notes together with more detailed topic reviews: an indication of need to have multiple styles of advice products (as recognised by the Ramsar Convention with respect to STRP outputs²). Clearly least preferred was broad Guidance covering multiple issues.
6. The TC discussed the findings of the survey at its 13th meeting and **makes the following recommendations to the Standing Committee with respect to AEWA's conservation guidance:**
 - i. Any new guidance drafted (and updates of existing guidance), should consist of two elements:
 - o A simple **Conservation Guidance Briefing Note** of maximum two pages in length. This should aim to summarise the issue; present key needs or messages; and point to further relevant sources of guidance. This would facilitate translation of such briefings into a range of other languages at low cost. (An example is given in the Annex).
 - o A more detailed **Conservation Guidance Background Document**. These should be constrained in length to a maximum length of c.25 pages. Any further

¹ French: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AEWA_Guidance_FR
English: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AEWA_Guidance_EN

² http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/final_report_and_components_ramsar_scientific_technical_advice.pdf

background information should be presented or published in separate format (and linked).

- ii. As much as possible, emphasis should be placed on presenting AEWA guidance as a ‘guide to guidance’ – *i.e.* providing a synthesis of the multiple sources of information already available.
- iii. AEWA should aim to routinely translate briefing notes into Russian and Arabic, resources permitting.
- iv. There is little merit in AEWA producing guidance on where this has been produced by other MEAs. Accordingly, there would be merit in preparing a high level guide to sources of guidance, indexed by subject matter. This should cover key guidance documents prepared by AEWA, Ramsar³, CMS and IUCN in the first instance, but in principle could/should include any source of relevance to AEWA Parties needs.
- v. TC proposes the following prioritised task list related to future work on *Conservation Guidelines* as follows:
 - Develop an index guide to existing MEA guidelines and handbooks relevant to AEWA’s mission. (This would deliver MOP 6’s request to summarise relevant fisheries guidance).
 - Produce the ‘field guide’ to managing disturbance as already planned by TC. (This would capitalise on existing work and could be disseminated jointly by Ramsar).
 - Produce a Guideline on reducing conflicts with human interests in new format. (This can be seen as a full revision of existing Guideline 8 which was overdue for review).
 - Review and update the following Guidelines in line with the rolling schedule agreed by TC:
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 - #9 – Waterbird monitoring

These revisions should at least generate a briefing note according to the new format, even if there are no textual changes to the existing guidelines.

³ Ramsar used to maintain a library of useful third-party resources http://ramsar.rgis.ch/cda/en/ramsar-documents-wurl/main/ramsar/1-31-116_4000_0 but its current dysfunctional web-site seems no longer to make this information readily available.

1. Background

At the time of drafting the Agreement, the *Conservation Guidelines* (originally drafted as a single document by Wetlands International) were seen as significant guidance for the Parties: “Noting that these ... provide a common framework for action but have no legally binding effect.”⁴

The purpose of the Guidelines is “...to assist the Parties in the implementation of this Action Plan.”⁵

The Agreement’s Action Plan provides for guidance on eight issues (Guidelines Nos. 1-8). Guidance on a further six subject areas has been since prepared (Table 1).

Since the drafting of the Action Plan there have been a number of relevant developments:

- The development of the internet as a means of dissemination of information, which in much, but by no means all of the Agreement area, has revolutionised access to information via web-sites.
- The progressive development of relevant advice and guidance by other MEAs and international bodies – including CBD (and its SBSTTA), the Ramsar Convention (and its STRP), the EU (with respect to the application of the Birds and Habitats Directives) and IUCN.

Drafting of the *Conservation Guidelines* is a major task for the TC and until recently, it was far from clear who actually used them, whether they adequately fulfilled needs and indeed what those information needs actually were.

A linked issue was that the existing guidance has been developed from the perspective of ‘what waterbird conservationists think others need to know about waterbird conservation’, rather than any analytical approach which asks other sectors (whose activities may impact on waterbirds) what information they need (i.e. an analysis of user-needs).

Most Parties – the core audience for the Guidelines – report that they do not use the current guidelines as shown by the analysis of the National Reports to MOP5 (below), whilst informal discussions with many waterbird conservationists show little or no awareness of these documents by other ‘stakeholders’:

“Use of the AEWA Conservation Guidelines

“The average proportion of respondents reporting use of the AEWA Conservation Guidelines was 35% (24% of the 62 Contracting Parties), with the greatest number of Parties using the *Guidelines for a waterbird monitoring protocol* and the smallest number using the *Guidelines for identifying and tackling emergency situations for migratory waterbirds*.

The principal reason provided by Parties for not using the Guidelines was that alternative guidelines were used; it was often stated that there was considerable overlap between these and the AEWA Guidelines.”⁶

Accordingly, Resolution 5.10⁷ on *Revision and adoption of Conservation Guidelines*, made two requests of the Technical Committee:

⁴ Resolution 2.3.

⁵ Para 7.3. of the AEWA Action Plan.

⁶ Analysis of AEWA National Reports for the Triennium 2009-2011. http://old.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop5_docs/pdf/mop5_12_analysis_nr_2009-2011.pdf

⁷ http://old.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop5_docs/final_res_pdf/res_5_10_adoption_cg.pdf

7. *Requests* the Technical Committee, as a matter of priority and in the first part of the next triennium, to undertake a critical review of the style and format of AEWA's Conservation Guidelines, *inter alia* considering the following existing issues:
 - 7.1 the merits or otherwise of shorter information notes that might be easier to translate into local languages;
 - 7.2 the need to target different styles or types of guidance to different audiences (e.g. government policy makers, wetland managers, other relevant stakeholders or user groups);
 - 7.3 the merits or otherwise of regionally specific guidance;
 - 7.4 knowledge of the extent of use of the existing guidelines and implications for the dissemination of guidance; and
 - 7.5 the potential value of a 'guidance to guidance' format as has been developed by the Ramsar Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

8. *Further requests* the Technical Committee to make recommendations to the Standing Committee on the basis of the review described in paragraph 7 above, prior to developing further guidance in the current format for consideration by the Sixth Meeting of the Parties;

MOP6 carried this task forward (Resolution 6.5), and asked the TC to consider the findings of the survey and make recommendations to the Standing Committee.

- “4. *Requests* the Technical Committee, as a matter of priority to:
- Complete its review of the style and format of AEWA Conservation Guidelines as outlined by Resolution 5.10;
 - Make inter-sessional recommendations regarding any proposed changes to the Standing Committee; and
 - Following the Standing Committee's approval and resources permitting, put in place a rolling programme to revise and update existing guidelines, as necessary, and developing any new guidelines according to new formats as agreed.”

Overall, the task can be summarised as three linked issues:

- a. **How** (in what format and by what means) should AEWA provide technical guidance on waterbird conservation issues?
- b. On **which subjects** should this advice be provided?
- c. **How often** should guidance be updated?

2. Existing guidelines

Table 1 presents a summary of existing AEWA *Conservation Guidelines* and their status (whether or not these have been revised since their initial adoption).

Table 1. Summary of existing *Conservation Guidelines*.

No.	Conservation Guideline	When adopted	Last updated
1	Guidelines on the preparation of National Single Species Action Plans for migratory waterbirds	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 3 (2005)
2	Guidelines on identifying and tackling emergency situations for migratory waterbirds	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 5 (2012)
3	Guidelines on the preparation of site inventories for migratory waterbirds	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 3 (2005)
4	Guidelines on the management of key sites for migratory waterbird.	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 3 (2005)
5	Guidelines on sustainable harvest of migratory waterbirds	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 6 (2015)
6	Guidelines on regulating trade in migratory waterbirds	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 5 (2012)
7	Guidelines on the development of ecotourism at wetlands	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 3 (2005)
8	Guidelines on reducing crop damage, damage to fisheries, bird strikes and other forms of conflict between waterbirds and human activities	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 3 (2005)
9	Guidelines for a waterbird monitoring protocol	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 3 (2005)
10	Guidelines on avoidance of introductions of non-native waterbird species	MOP 2 (2002)	MOP 5 (2012)
11	Guidelines on how to avoid, minimize or mitigate impact of infrastructural developments and related disturbance affecting waterbirds	MOP 4 (2008)	
12	Guidelines on measures needed to help waterbirds to adapt to climate change	MOP 4 (2008)	
13	Guidelines on the translocation of waterbirds for conservation purposes: Complementing the IUCN Guidelines	MOP 5 (2012)	
14	Guidelines on how to avoid or mitigate impact of electricity power grids on migratory birds in the African-Eurasian region	MOP 5 (2012)	
15	Guidelines on national legislation for the protection of species of migratory waterbirds and their habitats	MOP 6 (2015)	

No.	Conservation Guideline	When adopted	Last updated
16	Renewable energy technologies and migratory species: guidelines for sustainable deployment	MOP 6 (2015)	

3. Update of existing guidelines

Updating guidance has to balance the resources (time by Technical Committee and/or cost to engage contractors) to undertake this task against the risk of having adopted guidance that is no longer ‘fit for purpose’. TC 12 agreed that existing Guidelines should be updated as follows:

1. **At any time**, where it is known an adopted *Conservation Guideline* clearly no longer reflects international ‘best practice’ (for example if relevant IUCN guidance on the subject has changed), then it should be amended at the first possible instance to ensure AEWA’s guidance represents ‘best’ international practice – both legally and technically⁸.
2. **All** guidance should be subject to review every three cycles⁹ (nine years) with a view to update/amendment if this is deemed necessary. Note that review does not necessarily imply amendment – it is just a process to assess whether there is any need for amendment or update so AEWA’s guidance represents ‘best’ international practice.

Dates of last review of Conservation Guidelines are as follows:

Date last reviewed?	Conservation Guidelines
2005	1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9
2008	11, 12
2012	2, 6, 10, 13, 14
2015	5, 15, 16

The first tranche of AEWA Guidelines (nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9) are thus already overdue for review. Such activity needs thus to occur during 2016-2017, such that any amendments could be considered by MOP 7 in 2018.

⁸ This also follows from the requirement of para 7.3. of the Action Plan that “The Agreement secretariat shall ensure, where possible, coherence with guidelines approved under other international instruments.”

⁹ The logic for three cycles is the balance between too frequent need for activity and the risk that much longer periods are likely to result in Guidelines becoming significantly dated.

4. How should AEWA provide technical guidance?

The Parties at MOP 5 posed a number of questions in Resolution 5.10 (above). To inform the TC's response to these questions, a simple on-line questionnaire (in both English and French) was developed at TC 12 (Annex 1) and the survey run from June to December 2015.

It was circulated on several occasions to a number of waterbird networks, including to members of the Goose, Swan, Duck and Threatened Waterbird Specialist Groups (May and June); a meeting of governmental representatives in Denmark (October); and to participants at MOP 6 (November).

The detailed results are given in Annex 2 of the TC paper http://www.unep-awea.org/sites/default/files/document/awea_tc13_12_format_update_awea_conservation_gls_en.docx and summarised below.

Summary results from the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to address a number of issues. What follows is a simple summary of the data – more sophisticated analysis would be possible (responses for particular regions, or type of respondent).

Respondents

Question 1

- There were a total of 154 responses from 60 countries, 122 to the English and 34 to the French questionnaire.
- There was very limited response at MOP 6 despite repeatedly advertising the survey (just seven responses from 207 participants – 3%). However, when 143 non-responding MOP 6 participants were contacted with a personalised email in December, this generated 65 responses (45%). These responses significantly added to the overall sample of respondents.
- There was a good level of response from AEWA National Administrative and Technical Focal Points; the Technical Committee members and observers; AEWA National Administrative Focal Points; and other MOP participants. Over half (55%) of respondents indicated that they worked internationally.
- About half of respondents (49%) were involved with some aspect of waterbird monitoring. Many were advisors to governments (39%) or academic researchers (38%). Fewest (8%) were involved with invasive species control which may be a reason why invasive species issues were seen as a low priority (and use of AEWA's invasives guidelines was very low – see below).

Conclusions

- a) There was an excellent response rate covering a very large number of countries.
- b) Very significantly the greatest overall response was from personalised emails to possible respondents.
- c) Respondents reflect a range of potential AEWA target audiences and can probably be considered as a balanced and representative sample (although of course this is unknowable).

Where and how respondents seek information

Questions 2 & 3

- Most respondents used on-line searching of scientific journals and organisational websites to obtain the information they needed for their work (Question 2), although reference books (presumably in hard copy) were significantly used (64%).
- The tables under Questions 2 & 3 in Annex 2 of the full summary¹⁰ list the main source of information currently used. Of significance are:
 - The role of personal networks and colleagues as a source of information.
 - The broad range of sources used. Any individual typically (and not unexpected) uses multiple sources of information.
 - AEWA partner organisations (especially BirdLife International, Wetlands International and IUCN) are key sources of information, as is the Ramsar Convention, although less so CMS probably reflecting the less developed range of guidance and information there.

Conclusions

- d) AEWA is just one of multiple sources of guidance on waterbird conservation.

Current use of AEWA Conservation Guidelines

Question 4

- Although about a third of respondents (36%) used AEWA *Conservation Guidelines* regularly (at least once a year), over half (56%) used them either only occasionally or never. [Also of relevance are National Reports to MOP which indicate a low degree of reported use of Conservation Guidelines].
- Most frequently used Guidelines related to Action Plans, monitoring and harvest. Least referred to related to translocation, non-natives and emergency situations. This is similar to relative use as reported by Parties through National Reports (see section 1 above).

Conclusions

- e) There is scope to significantly improve the use of *Conservation Guidelines*.

Style and format of AEWA Conservation Guidelines

Question 5: style and format

- In terms of content, participants expressed the following preferences (from most to least preferred):
 1. Short briefing notes containing key points with guidance on further sources of more detailed information
 2. More detailed, in-depth reviews of issues
 3. Case studies

¹⁰ of http://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_tc13_12_format_update_aewa_conservation_gls_en.docx

4. Guidance with more regional content (e.g. relevant to just some parts of the Agreement area)
5. Guidance on decision-making processes and procedures (i.e. more policy-related content)
6. Less detailed reviews, but summary syntheses of key areas
7. Specific content – covering a single issue (possibly in more detail)¹¹
8. Broad content – covering many related issues (possibly in less detail)

Question 5a: languages

- Greatest preference was expressed for Russian language guidance, followed by Arabic, Spanish, Swahili and Portuguese. No other languages were suggested.

Conclusions

- f) The preference for short detailed briefing notes, but also more detailed topic reviews might be seen as contradictory, but can also be seen as a desire to have multiple styles of advice products (as recognised by the Ramsar Convention with respect to STRP outputs¹²). Clearly least preferred was broad Guidance covering multiple issues.

Which subjects should AEWA provide technical guidance on?

Question 6.

Recalling that the purpose of the Guidelines is “...to assist the Parties in the implementation of this Action Plan”, Annex 2 summarises the main subject areas of the Action Plan and relates these issues to existing Guidelines. Existing Conservation Guidelines broadly cover most Action Plan subject areas (as would be expected).

- Highest preference was expressed for i) Guidelines related to reducing conflicts with human interests; ii) management of land-use changes; and iii) management of disturbance. (A ‘field guide’ to managing disturbance has already been planned by the TC and awaits funding as a joint project with Ramsar STRP). Lowest levels of preference were expressed for guidance related to management of protected areas and control of invasive species – both issues where there is extensive existing guidance available.
- The TC12 recognised the following issues – which as issues are typically recent additions to the Action Plan – currently have no (or limited) relevant guidance. Of these, considerable guidance related to CEPA and (probably?) habitat restoration has been prepared by others¹³.
 - Issues related to regulation and management of disturbance
 - Rehabilitation and/or restoration of habitats

¹¹ Comment: synthèse des connaissances sur un sujet donné, mais actualisée régulièrement (au moins annuellement) c'est-à-dire un document de référence "vivant".

¹² http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/final_report_and_components_ramsar_scientific_technical_advice.pdf

¹³ e.g. Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA). A Toolkit for National Focal Points and NBSAP Coordinators. IUCN. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/2007-059.pdf>

- Elimination of bycatch from fisheries
 - Management of threats from aquaculture
 - Eliminating lead fishing weights
 - Communication, participation and public awareness (CEPA)
- Of the requests for further guidance, some include topics such as conflict resolution, waterbird monitoring and site management, for which AEWA already has Guidelines. This suggests that AEWA's own guidance is not as well known as it could be with at least some of its target audience.
 - Many of the other requests relate to issues where existing guidance readily exists from Ramsar, IUCN, CBD or other sources.
 - Some other requests relate to issues where new guidance might usefully be prepared jointly with Ramsar and/or CMS (e.g. climate change adaptation measures for wetlands; addressing illegal trade, taking and killing; mainstreaming nature conservation policies within government).
 - Additionally, MOP6 requested guidance (funding permitting) on Reducing the impact of fisheries:
 - Compile existing – and where necessary complement – conservation guidelines and recommendations based on the priorities identified in paragraph 5 of Resolution 6.9 and best available science and bring these to MOP7. (Resolution 6.9)

5. TC conclusions and recommendation to the Standing Committee

- F. Any new guidance drafted (and updates of existing guidance), should consist of two elements:
3. A simple **Conservation Guidance Briefing Note** of maximum two pages in length. This should aim to summarise the issue; present key needs or messages; and point to further relevant sources of guidance. This would facilitate translation of such briefings into a range of other languages at low cost.
 4. A more detailed **Conservation Guidance Background Document**. These should be constrained in length to a maximum length of *c.*25 pages. Any further background information should be presented or published in separate format (and linked).
- G. As much as possible, emphasis should be placed on presenting AEWA guidance as a ‘guide to guidance’ – i.e. providing a synthesis of the multiple sources of information already available.
- H. AEWA should aim to routinely translate briefing notes into Russian and Arabic, resources permitting.
- I. There is little merit in AEWA producing guidance on where this has been produced by other MEAs. Accordingly, there would be merit in preparing a high level guide to sources of guidance, indexed by subject matter. This should cover key guidance documents prepared by AEWA, Ramsar¹⁴, CMS and IUCN in the first instance, but in principle could/should include any source of relevance to AEWA Parties needs.
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These revisions should at least generate a briefing note according to the new format, even if there are no textual changes to the existing guidelines.

¹⁴ Ramsar used to maintain a library of useful third-party resources http://ramsar.rgis.ch/cda/en/ramsar-documents-wurl/main/ramsar/1-31-116_4000_0 but its current dysfunctional web-site seems no longer to make this information readily available.

Annex 1. Example format for AEWA Conservation Guidance Briefing Note

AEWA Conservation Guidance Briefing Note Preparation of site inventories for migratory waterbirds

Relevance to AEWA

Identification and conservation of key sites for migratory waterbirds is a critical element of national obligations under AEWA. Parties have obligations to:

- undertake and publish national inventories of habitats important to waterbirds listed in [Table 1 of AEWA Action Plan](#); and
- identify all sites of national and international importance for Table 1 species.

Who is this guidance aimed at?

Those responsible for the conservation, management and monitoring of multiple wetland and other sites important for migratory waterbirds.

Key messages

- An inventory of important sites is one of the basic tools for the conservation and management of migratory waterbirds. Developing national inventories of important areas and habitats is a critical first step for many subsequent processes including conservation as protected areas (as appropriate), habitat management, and the planning and implementation of monitoring. Inventories help prioritise actions at national scales.
- The primary responsibility for fulfilling AEWA obligations lies with national governments. In many cases, the actual inventory process will be carried out by a government agency. Alternatively, it could be contracted out to an institute, non-governmental organisation (NGO) or private individual, given adequate government support (financial, logistical and legal).
- Data obtained in the site inventory should be maintained in a central database, housed within a government institution for the sake of continuity.
- The general objectives of any site inventory are:
 - to locate all relevant sites, and identify those that are priority sites for conservation;
 - to identify the functions and values (ecological, social, cultural) of each site;
 - to establish a baseline for measuring future change;
 - to provide a tool for planning and management; and
 - to permit local, national, and international comparisons.

- Furthermore, the inventory process should:
 - facilitate the creation of a network of experts;
 - stimulate cooperation in conservation and management; and
 - promote awareness amongst the general public and decision makers.

- In order to achieve the desired objectives, any inventory should:
 - use standardised methods;
 - incorporate data as a baseline for monitoring changes;
 - be regularly updated; and
 - be easily disseminated to managers, decision makers and the general public.

- An inventory process will usually be divided into three phases:

Phase 1: Compile existing knowledge. Major sources of information are: existing inventories; bibliographic research; and networks of experts.

Phase 2: Prepare a preliminary site list. This is the most important part of the inventory. The objective should be to complete a national list of key sites as soon as possible, without wasting too much time gathering detailed information for individual site descriptions.

Phase 3: Prepare a detailed inventory. Each site and its surroundings should be described in more detail. Important features include:

 - precise delineation and good maps of the site;
 - delineation and detailed description in synergy with other inventories, where appropriate;
 - for wetland habitats: identification, delineation and description of the catchment area;
 - detailed, standardised habitat description of the site; detailed information on sustainable and non-sustainable forms of land use (including hunting and ecotourism) and threats; and
 - a database with data on the occurrence of waterbirds at the site.

- There are many existing sources of information on important sites for waterbirds. Some of these are listed below, and these should be used as a starting point.
- Draft inventory entries should be circulated amongst as many specialists and agencies as possible to improve the data and information on each sites.
- Sites boundaries should be mapped, using aerial or ground surveys to ensure the inclusion of all important parts of the site.
- It is strongly recommended that the site descriptions be modelled on the format adopted in the [Ramsar Information Sheet](#) and using [associated Ramsar guidance](#). This will ensure compatibility with many other inventory schemes that use Ramsar as a common standard.
- Sites should be monitored and the inventory updated regular intervals.

- It is important that inventories are publically accessible ensure all those whose activities may impact these sites have easy access to information on their significance.

What other AEWA Guidance is relevant?

Conservation Guidelines (2005 - first editions):

- No. 3. [Guidelines on the preparation of site inventories for migratory waterbirds.](#)
- No. 4. [Guidelines on the management of key sites for migratory waterbirds.](#)
- No. 9. [Guidelines for a waterbird monitoring protocol.](#)

Where to find more information?

About wetlands	Ramsar Sites Information Service Ramsar Convention The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative - MedWet
About European sites	Natura 2000 and the Corine database (EU)
About Important Bird Areas	What and where
Other listings	World Heritage Sites

Relevant decisions from other international environmental agreements

Ramsar Convention's Handbooks on [Inventory, assessment and monitoring](#) and [Wetland inventory](#) are major sources of information as is the [Strategic Framework](#) for Ramsar Sites.

Previous relevant Ramsar Resolutions include:

- [VI.12: National Wetland Inventories and candidate sites for listing Resolution](#) (1996)
- [VII.20: Priorities for wetland inventory Resolution](#) (1999)
- [VIII.6: A Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory Resolution](#) (2002)
- [X.15: Describing the ecological character of wetlands, and data needs and formats for core inventory: harmonized scientific and technical guidance](#) (2008)

Convention on Biological Diversity [Decision X/31: Protected areas](#) (2010)