



12th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

31 January – 01 February 2017, Paris, France

REPORT BY THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE AEWA STANDING COMMITTEE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT TO THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION

This report was compiled by East Africa regional representative (Uganda), focusing on the developments since the last Meeting of the Parties (MOP) which took place from 9 to 14 November 2015, in Bonn, Germany.

Report as per the AEWA guidelines

1. **Number of Contracting Parties in the region / number of Range States in the region. New accessions since the previous TC meeting. Actions by the regional representative to persuade non-parties to ratify the Agreement.**
 - ❖ Number of Contracting Parties – 5 (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, Kenya & Uganda)
 - ❖ Number of Non-Contracting Parties – 2 (Somalia & Eritrea)
2. **Number of range states (parties and non-parties) that provided feedback for this report.**
 - ❖ Two (2)
3. **Has the Regional Representative actively promoted accession to AEWA among the Range States in their region? If so, how has accession been promoted by the Regional Representative?**

No action for the reporting period
4. **Which developments regarding the implementation of AEWA have taken place since the last Meeting of the Parties?**

SOUTH AFRICA

Activities to implement the Single Species Action Plans relevant to South Africa

Several International Single Species Action Plans developed under the Agreement of the Conservation of Migratory Waterbird Species (AEWA) are applicable to South Africa, namely:

- a) **International Single Species Action Plan for *Egretta vinaceigula* (Slaty egret)**

This particular SSAP was recently developed. South Africa in 2014 nominated a South African representative to the International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) Working Group which is coordinated by Birdlife Botswana. South Africa through Birdlife SA is involved in development the status of the species although it is a vagrant to the country. No progress regarding the implementation of this SSAP since the establishment of the ISSAP Working Group.

b) International Single Species Action Plan for *Sarothrura ayresi* (White-winged Flufftail)

South Africa has not developed a National Single Species Action Plan for this species but is implementing some aspects of the ISSAP, namely the research. South Africa participated in the Working Group for ISSAP for the species in Ethiopia from the 10-12th August 2015. Thereafter, a National Working group with relevant national stakeholders is in process of being established through the Terms of Reference coordinate the implementation of the ISSAP. South Africa is also in the process to seek approval for the Chairmanship for the Working Group for ISSAP which is currently being chaired by Ethiopia.

Additionally, in partnership with BirdLife South Africa, the National Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) provided partial funding to a research project conducted by BirdLife South Africa which is on-going till 2017. The research is addressing the following:

- Habitat preferences for White-winged Flufftails at Middelpunt wetland, including a description of vegetation (sedges, grasses, vegetation structure, hydrology and water depth).
- Determine a list of species that co-occur that can be used as key indicators for the potential presence of White-winged Flufftail. Densities and abundance of these species would also be determined.
- Estimation of numbers of White-winged Flufftail individuals at Middelpunt wetland. These data will allow a more accurate estimate of the population size in South Africa: current estimates are based on ad hoc sightings only.
- Disease testing and blood parasite counts (ecto- and endo-parasites) within the species, allowing determination of whether the species is susceptible to threatening diseases, which could impact on its natural potential to adapt and survive.
- Management of Middelpunt Wetland:
 - ✓ Determine whether the Carex sedges and Pycreus-Fuirena-Leersia sedge-meadows at Middelpunt are expanding, contracting or stable. What environmental factors such as flooding, soil moisture, burning, etc might be affecting the Carex? What management procedures would be best to ensure that the Carex beds and sedge-meadows are preserved (assuming those are the habitats preferred by the White-winged Flufftail).
 - ✓ Analysis of fire history data to determine a suitable burning regime.
 - ✓ Determine floristic succession, e.g. are Typha and Phragmites spreading?

- ✓ Impact of cattle grazing on the wetland vegetation. Available literature from North America suggests that cattle grazing can impact significantly on sedge meadows.

c) International Single Species Plan for Grey Crowned-Crane

South Africa through the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) led in the process to develop the ISSAP for the conservation of the Grey-crowned Crane which has been adopted at 6th Meeting of the Parties (MoP 6) to AEWA in Nov 2015 in Germany.

A South African Biodiversity Management Plan is currently being drafted for all three of South Africa's cranes (Blue and Wattled Cranes and the Grey Crowned-crane) which will draw on elements of the Single Species Action Plan.

d) International Multi Species Action Plan for the Benguela Upwelling System

South Africa through Birdlife SA has led the process to develop the Multi-species Action Plan for the Benguela Upwelling System which was adopted at AEWA MoP 6 in Nov 2015 in Germany. South Africa is awaiting the formalization of the implementing structure to be established in support by the AEWA Secretariat in this regard for the implementation of this Multi Species Action Plan

e) National Biodiversity Management Plan for *Spheniscus demersus* (African Penguin)

Although there is no International Single Species Action for the African penguin, South Africa is in process of implementing the National Biodiversity Management Plans for Species (BMP-S) for the African penguin which was published for implementation in 2013 in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. The development and the implementation of this BMP is provided for by the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004). As part of the implementation process, new colonies of the African penguins have been re-established at Stony Point and Simon's Town.

Activities on habitat conservation or restoration and rehabilitation of waterbird habitats.

Two major sites, namely:

a) Hartebeesspruit-Colbyn Valley Wetland ecosystem

The South African government in collaboration with key stakeholders is in a process to declare the Biodiversity Management Plan for an Ecosystem (BMP-E) for the Hartebeesspruit-Colbyn Valley Wetland ecosystem. One of the main aims of the development and subsequent implementation of the Hartebeesspruit-Colbyn Valley Wetland BMP-E is that the BMP-E will serve as a pilot for local government support to mainstreaming biodiversity at the local-government level, particularly in achieving protection of the threatened wetland and

associated peatland through collaboration and buy-in between various spheres of government, stakeholders and resource users. The BMP-E will furthermore serve as a pilot to test the robustness of the Norms and Standards for BMP-Es. This emphasises the need for a collaborative effort to conserve Colbyn Valley Wetland as a threatened ecosystem, which plays an integral role in housing waterbirds including migratory ones as well, water quality and flood attenuation as part of the Hartebeesspruit system

b) Ingula Conservation Area

Ingula is situated 55km from Ladysmith, (20km northeast of Van Reenen) within the Drakensberg range, on the border between the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. The presence of high altitude wetlands that provides the site for the upper and lower dam and the presence of a peat bed in the wetland. Furthermore, this wetland had, in recent years, been identified as one of only nine known sites in South Africa visited in summer by the White-winged Flufftail (*Sarothrura ayresi*), an enigmatic rail known only to breed in three wetlands in Ethiopia during July and August. The area is in process of being proclaimed as a nature reserve. There are many reasons for this, the most important being the large expanse of grassland, wetland and escarpment forest. The wetland system hosts a large variety of species, and is in need of protection following years of overgrazing and inappropriate burning. The area also fulfils criteria for proclamation as a Ramsar site and is of international significance. The Ingula conservation area hosts 4 of South Africa's critically endangered species (Red Data List) being White-winged Flufftail, Wattled Crane, Rudd's Lark and Eurasian Bittern.

Education and information activities on waterbirds, waterbird habitats and the Agreement

Ongoing education and information activities include:

- ✓ **World Wetlands Day (WWD)** which is celebrated every year in the 2nd of February
- ✓ **Flufftail Festival:** This is an initiative by BirdLife South Africa and partners. This celebrated in the margins of WWD. South African government is also a partner in this regard. The 2017 Flufftail Festival followed a successful 2016 Flufftail Festival at Cresta Shopping Centre, Johannesburg from 02 to 08 February 2016. The 2017 festival will take place from 30 January to 06 February 2017 in Maponya Mall, Soweto. This event and the contribution by the Department will form part of the awareness raising activities in support of the celebration of World Migratory Bird Day, which is celebrated annually on 10 May 2017.
- ✓ **World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD):** In 2016 the WMBD was celebrated by a media statement released by the Minister of Environmental Affairs. Additional several organizations such as the University of Limpopo Big Birding Bash and

Field and Forest Birdwatching celebrated the day by educational and bird watching activities respectively.

- ✓ Other events in this regard amongst others include:-
 - **Save Our Seabirds Campaign:** The Save Our Seabirds (SOS) Festival aims to raise awareness of the plight of seabirds and celebrate their beauty through a series of free evening lectures and a photographic exhibition at the Two Oceans Aquarium during National Marine Week
 - **World Environment Day:** Celebrated on the 5th of June every year, World Environment Day aims to inspire more people than ever before to take action to prevent the growing strain on planet Earth's natural systems from reaching the breaking point.

Activities related to prevention of Poisoning of Migratory Birds

The Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS COP11, 4 – 9 November 2014, Quito, Ecuador) adopted Resolution 11.15 which endorsed the Guidelines on preventing the risk of migratory bird poisoning and requested the establishment of task groups, in the context of the CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group, addressing either thematic issues (e.g. for different poison types) and/or geographical regions to progress its work.

In this regard, a 'Sub-regional Workshop on Preventing Poisoning on Migratory Birds' was held on the 24 August 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa, in response to CMS Resolution 11.15. It was jointly organized by the Secretariats of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS), the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (UNEP/AEWA), and the Coordinating Unit of the MOU on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU). This activity has been kindly sponsored by the European Commission through the Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) Programme Cooperation Agreements with UNEP.

The purpose of the Workshop was to develop and adopt a Sub-regional Implementation Plan for the CMS Guidelines to Prevent the Risk of Poisoning to Migratory Birds covering the Southern African sub-region. This was circulated for comments and South Africa provided inputs. The Parties are requested to report progress on the implementation of this through the national reporting system. In terms of progress, South Africa is considering establishing a National Committee to deal with poisoning issues regarding wildlife which will include migratory birds. Though, South Africa does not experience a lot of duck hunting and in wetlands hence this is not really considered. The banning of lead shot for hunting in wetlands has not been considered yet as hunting of waterbirds is not a big issue like in Europe. Further engagements with relevant stakeholders are in place and will continue to get an understanding in relation to the impact of lead-shot in South Africa.

5. Overview of special activities and/or meetings related to AEWA

- **AEWA Strategic Plan workshop:** The Meeting of the Parties (MOP) for the AEWA, established in accordance with Article VI of the Agreement text is the principal decision-making body to the Agreement. The 6th session of the MOP, which took place in Bonn Germany from 9 to 14 November 2015 instructed the Standing Committee (StC), working together with the Technical Committee (TC) and supported by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, to revise the AEWA Strategic Plan taking into account the CMS Strategic Plan for Migratory Species from 2015 to 2023, and to present a draft plan for the period 2019 to 2027 for consideration and adoption by the 7th session on the MOP which will take place in 2018. South Africa participated in the AEWA Strategic Plan workshop convened by the AEWA Secretariat from 27 June to 01 July 2016 in Bonn, Germany.
- A severe regional drought (the worst in living memory) is impacting levels of water in rivers, wetlands and other waterbodies. The drought may be linked to both the El Niño Southern Oscillation and to climate change. The impacts of the drought on waterbirds have not been assessed yet, but may severely impact on breeding success and survival of many freshwater-dependent species.

UGANDA

A. Activities to implement the Single Species Action Plans relevant to Uganda

a) Developed the Grey Crowned Crane Species Action Plan

Uganda has finalized the development of the Action plan for the Grey Crowned Crane. To Uganda, this specie is not only of significance due to its endangered status but also because it is the national bird. By working together, with some of the conservation partners, the government of Uganda has finalized the development of the action plan and it is now ready for implementation in order to reduce the threats to the specie. The Crane Action Planning process for Uganda incorporated the actions outlined in the International Grey Crowned Crane Single Species Action Plan developed under the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

b) Bi-annual counting of water birds in selected key IBAs

Uganda, through the conservation partners Nature Uganda, has been undertaking bird counts in the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Uganda. This activity is of great value to AEWA because it helps in recording birds including the migratory birds observed in the IBAs

c) Response to Avian flu

Uganda is currently registering a threat from the Avian flu suspected to have been brought in by the migratory birds. A number of dead birds were recorded by locals

and reported to the government. An inter-institutional team from relevant government agencies was dispatched to the reported area, where samples and laboratory assessments were undertaken which proved that the deaths were caused by Avian flu. The government of Uganda is undertaking measures to safeguard both birds and people and the support of the international communities and conservation partners is very much needed.

B. Review of Wildlife Policies, Laws and others of relevance to AEWA

a. Uganda Wildlife (Amendment) Bill, 2015

Uganda has been undertaking the process of reviewing the National wildlife law which is the main law regarding wildlife in Uganda. The review process is underway. Cabinet has already approved the Bill, and preparations are underway to submit the Bill to parliament for debate. This law being the main wildlife law guides the implementation of all wildlife related issues including those of AEWA and its review is of great importance since the Bill tries to address the gaps that have been identified in the current law.

b. Operationalization of The Uganda Wildlife Research and Training Institute Act, 2015

Uganda passed a law aimed at strengthening wildlife research in the country. Through this law, a government agency with wildlife research and training mandate has been established and now the government is undertaking measures to develop the capacity of this institution. When the planned reforms are undertaken, Uganda's wildlife management capacity will have been significantly boosted and this is of great value to all wildlife including migratory birds.

c. Development of Wildlife Policy Implementation Plan

Uganda's wildlife policy (Uganda Wildlife Policy, 2014) is a product of a review process of the previous wildlife policy, to take care of new issues which emerged and of relevance to wildlife conservation. Uganda is developing a policy implementation plan which shall help in aiding the implementation of the policy objectives. The implementation draft plan has been developed and due to undergo through the relevant processes.

6. Overview of special issues that might be of interest to the StC

These are some of the issues which Uganda is preparing to undertake which are of interest to AEWA standing committee:

Developing the Single Species Action Plan for the Shoebill stork. In line with international planning process for the Shoebill stork, which was launched by UNEP/AEWA Secretariat at Uganda Wildlife Education Centre in Entebbe, Uganda from 9th to 12th October 2012, Uganda, who is a very key range state for this specie is very interested in developing its single specie action plan but lack of funds has still stalled the process.

Uganda participated in the meeting of the SPWG that was held in Bonn, 28–30 June 2016 which discussed the findings of an evaluation of the existing Strategic Plan and identified some of the key elements to be included in the new Strategic Plan.

Uganda in its capacity of Chairperson of the Standing Committee to AEWA participated in the 13th Meeting of the Technical Committee held in Nasholim, Israel, 14-17 March 2016, at the kind invitation of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, in collaboration with the Israel Ornithological Center of the Society for the Protection of Nature. The meeting determined the programme of work 2016-2018 for the Technical committee.

Uganda participated in the activities of the CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group, including filling of the review questionnaire in preparation for the working group meeting that will take place 20-21 February 2017 in Toledo, Spain.