



UNEP AEW A

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of travelling waterbirds



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Agreement on the
Conservation of African-Eurasian
Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

A message from UNEP



by Dr. Klaus Töpfer,
Executive Director of the United Nations Environment
Programme (UNEP)



The success story of AEWA is documented by the importance given to its flyway approach by a high and constantly growing number of Contracting Parties, which have recognized the potential of this relatively young Agreement. In terms of species conservation the implementation of the Agreement has just started.

Its wide range of activities and the support it receives from other international organizations and NGOs however prove that the Agreement already is a powerful and unique instrument on the way to waterbird conservation in the African-Eurasian region. The UNEP-GEF African/Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways Project, which will play a major role for the implementation of the Agreement during the next five years, is, in my view, the best example for the Agreement's success.

Having evolved in the course of the last 200 million years migratory waterbirds constitute an important part of global biological diversity and of the ecosystem as a whole. The number of birds migrating between Europe and Africa has declined by 1 per cent per annum over the past 30 years. These species could become extinct

in the next 100 – 200 years, some of them, like the Slender-billed Curlew, even much earlier. There is no species that is not threatened by the loss of habitat in its breeding or wintering area or along its migration route. Humans exert great pressure on their natural environment. The figures are alarming and self-explanatory: during the past 150 years, humans have directly impacted and altered close to 50 per cent of the global land area. By 2032 biodiversity could be threatened on more than 70 per cent of the land area, which is continuously being converted to agricultural land, plantations and urban areas. Wilderness areas are disappearing as roads and urban centres spread into forests and desert zones. Conflicts between nature and humans are inevitable.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 biodiversity was discussed as a key issue for the United Nations along with water, energy, health and agriculture. 190 government representatives identified and committed themselves to the goal of significantly reducing the loss of biodiversity by 2010, acknowledging that water, energy,

health, agriculture and ultimately poverty cannot be tackled without the conservation, wise use and proper distribution of the many benefits arising from the living world. Humankind is dependent on healthy ecosystems to meet all its physical and mental needs. Many biodiversity-rich regions are located in developing countries where poverty is an issue. The proper and responsible use of the Earth's natural treasures therefore should be adapted to the problems of people in a given region. It is important for decision-makers to recognize that biodiversity is the heart of sustainable development. In this spirit, AEWA supports long-term sustainable solutions, which integrate the needs of people in migratory waterbird conservation, for example by creating nature reserves or national parks. This helps to combine nature protection and the concerns of local people.

Given the current rapid decline in biodiversity worldwide and the ever-increasing extent and intensity of many human activities, the 2010 target will require unprecedented efforts in adapting our activities to the needs of natural systems.

However, with a sense of urgency Johannesburg has paved the way for action. It is now the task of international treaties committed to biodiversity conservation such as AEWA to contribute to achieving this goal. The success of the Global Flyways Conference in Edinburgh in April 2004 has shown the willingness of the international community to meet the challenge. However, the conservation of waterbirds along their flyways needs the combined efforts of all concerned countries. On this note I take the liberty of appealing to all Range States to AEWA who have not yet acceded to the Agreement to do so. The Agreement will allow them to participate in a recognized regional framework, to seek support for project development and to enhance information exchange on the international level in order to achieve the goals set on the national level. And above all, it will allow each country to share responsibility and to contribute to the conservation of these beautiful and important animals for the benefit of future generations.

Introduction

The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA): the largest flyway conservation tool in the world

by Dr Gerard C. Boere,
former Senior Policy Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands and

Mr. Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht,
former Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

The thinking about the conservation of migratory birds at a flyway level by means of a legal instrument for Eurasia and Africa goes back to the late nineteen fifties. The first flyway maps for waterbird species in this part of the world were published by the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB, now Wetlands International) and Professor Isakov in the former USSR. They served a scientific goal, not yet a conservation or management goal.

The development of the Bonn Convention (1979) as a framework convention opened the way to establishing separate instruments for geographical areas, single species and species groups. It is therefore no surprise that in the year the Bonn Convention came into force, 1983, the IUCN published a first proposal ("the green booklet") for an all-migratory species convention (not only birds) for Eurasia and Africa. Elements of that document were later used in the early drafts for AEWA. The long-term experience in North America with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and its four flyway institutions also inspired the development of AEWA.

Tens of joint African-European expeditions to the larger wetlands all over Africa provided the first good data on the many wetlands of international importance and

demonstrated their strong interrelatedness at the flyway level. Co-operation with the former USSR on migratory waterbirds has always existed, but the political changes in the USSR in the late nineteen eighties and early nineties greatly stimulated East-West co-operation and opened the vast Russian Arctic breeding area - with its millions of waterbirds, and the origin of the global flyways - for joint research and conservation activities.

Furthermore several Western European countries developed policy plans on international nature conservation, often with conservation and the sustainable use of wetlands and migratory birds as priorities, aiming to use the instruments of both the Ramsar and Bonn Conventions for the species' conservation beyond their own countries.

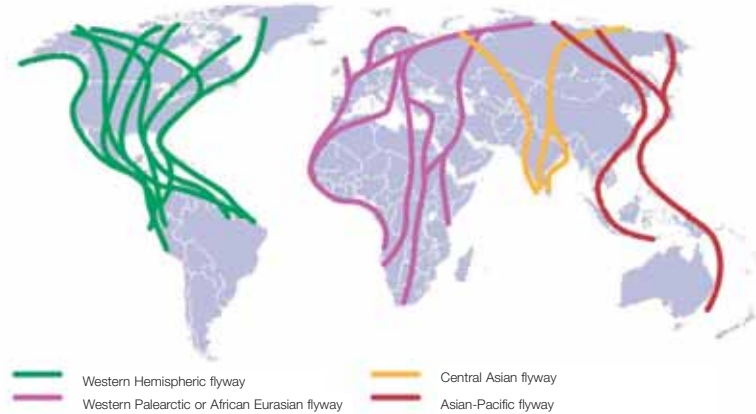
How it started

The first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Bonn Convention in 1985 (Bonn, Germany) agreed to start the development of just a few relatively simple agreements to gain experience with the Convention. All these were highly Euro-centric. The Western Palearctic Anatidae Agreement was one of these. This was seen as a priority to stimulate international co-operation in the management and



The flyway concept

Flyways are broad corridors, which are used by migrating birds. Four major flyways have been defined in Europe, Asia and in the Americas. These split up into a number of alternative routes and some species or individuals can cross from one flyway to another. Although other flying animals use flyways, the concept is more conventionally applied to migratory birds, especially migratory waterbirds.



sustainable harvesting of waterbird populations in the light of the, at that time, ongoing polarisation between the hunting and conservation communities. In accordance with the provisions of the Bonn Convention, the Netherlands took the lead in the development of the Agreement. From 1988 onwards the Netherlands' Government seconded a scientist to the Convention Secretariat to assist in the general development of the Convention and the development of the Agreement and species lists. When the drafts were completed, the Commission of the European Communities claimed competency for the further development and negotiation of the Agreement, but failed to take the respective action. At the request of the Convention Secretariat the EC Commission agreed in early 1993 that the Secretariat should take the lead. From this moment the negotiations became more dynamic.

During the ongoing consultations it became apparent that a Western Palearctic Anatidae Agreement would be too limited. Soon all migratory waterfowl species in the entire Western Palearctic area were included. A comprehensive study undertaken by experts of the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) and sponsored by the Royal Society

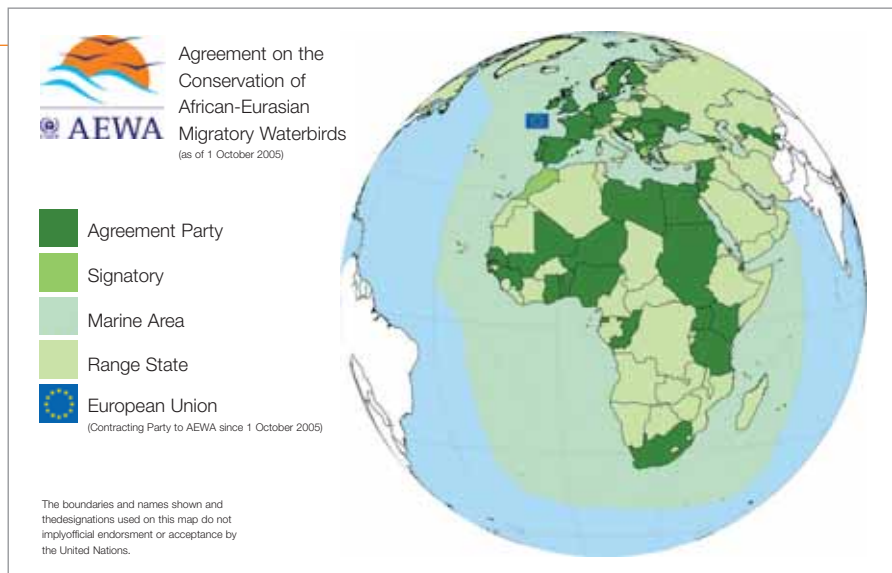
for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), identified the relevant waterbird species including their current conservation status and defined more precisely the bio-geographic area of the Agreement. Also, in long discussions, the title of the Agreement was considered.

The Head of the Convention Secretariat suggested changing the name entirely to put more emphasis on the African and Asian component of the Agreement. Thus the Range States could be certain that all waterbird species were covered by the Agreement, i.e. those migrating southward from the Arctic region, including north-eastern Canada and the East Asian Arctic, those birds migrating in the opposite direction in intra-African migratory movements, and those migrating from Asia westward to Africa. This would also help to emphasise that all birds of these species are a common natural resource of all the Range States in all three continents. It would also emphasise the North-South dialogue and the need for sustained support for African and Asian countries to take responsibility for the millions of waterbirds coming from the "North", "South" and "East" that migrate through and winter in their countries.

With the assistance of dedicated experts from IUCN-ELC, BirdLife International, RSPB and IWRB, the Convention

Secretariat prepared three drafts of the Agreement and presented them for official consultation to the governments of the Range States. With support mainly from the Netherlands, but also from the EC Commission and Germany, important steps were taken towards the Agreement's negotiation and conclusion, such as an expert workshop in the Netherlands (1992), informal consultations with all Range States in Nairobi (1994) and the final diplomatic conference in The Hague, the Netherlands (June 1995), to agree on the text of the Agreement.

Background information was provided by Wetlands International and BirdLife International. The late Professor Cyrill de Klemm wrote, together with the IUCN Environmental Law Centre, the first legal text for the Agreement. Over the years the initial opposition from the hunting community disappeared when it became clear that AEWA would not lead to further restrictions on hunting but would be an extremely important tool for the appropriate conservation of endangered and vulnerable species and for the sustainable use of species with a favourable conservation status at a trans-national and trans-continental level.



Implementing AEWA: promising steps taken

During the period 1996 to early 2000, the Netherlands provided the interim Secretariat and started a number of developments towards the practical implementation of the Agreement. Conservation guidelines were developed, population statuses were determined via the International Waterbird Census, and an analysis of species for future addition to the Agreement was made.

Using the AEWA as the legal instrument, countries developed support programmes on a bilateral and international level in various regions of Africa and Asia.

After the First Meeting of the Parties in South Africa (1999) the permanent Secretariat was set up in Bonn, and a rapid increase in the number of Parties provided the necessary financial means for programmes aimed at concrete conservation actions.

Data collection, including ringing programmes, within Africa were encouraged by the development of the African Waterbird Census, and training of field observers, for example through Wetlands International programmes and those of the Wetlands and Wildfowl Trust, was undertaken.

The recently approved AEWA-GEF programme, to run for the next five or six years, will pay much attention to the protection, including sustainable use by the local population, of a large number of important wetlands. This programme includes a substantial training element for regions in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia for all levels of government and NGOs to implement the aims of AEWA.

AEWA: the future

Clearly the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement has set a precedent on flyway conservation for a large part of the world, as demonstrated by the rapid

increase in the number of its Parties. Ideally two similar Agreements (the Asia-Australasian and the all-American flyways) would cover the globe with a legal system for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory waterbirds and their habitats. That can only be achieved if AEWA fulfils its promises: conservation of the species requiring it, sustainable use of what can be sustained, halting the loss of wetland habitats, involvement of the people along the flyway in the work, capacity-building where this is urgently needed and, last but not least, organising the sustainable use of waterbirds as a shared resource of all Range States and mutual assistance of the Range States in their conservation work. Then AEWA will serve as a model, although each region and flyway has its own specifics when it comes to policy, political balance and priorities.

A new challenge is to start thinking about including more species, even non-aquatic ones, and a still larger area when discussing the development of structures, for example for the Central Asian Flyway. From a biological point of view the CAF deserves its own flyway institutions; from a practical and financial point of view inclusion into AEWA may be a good option. However, that is for the future. The first priority must be to implement AEWA's aims and goals; if this functions and the Agreement has a broad ownership in the whole region, extension to a larger geographical area and including more species would be most welcome.

Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*)

The Slender-billed Curlew is a medium-sized wader, one of the six existing curlews of the same genus. It remains a bird about whose ecology and biology (food habits, breeding behaviour, etc.) very little is known. At the end of the breeding season in northwestern Siberia, the Slender-billed Curlew migrates over a distance of 5,000-6,500 km, crossing southeast Russia and southeast Europe to its wintering grounds in Morocco and along the Persian Gulf.

It is arguably the most threatened bird species of the Western Palearctic, the lack of knowledge adding to the difficulty of conserving it. The conservation challenge is compounded by the fact that identification of the species is not straightforward and that it is a medium to long-distance migrant, crossing many countries in which conservation is needed. The population of the species was estimated in 1994 to be between 50 and 270 individuals, but a recent estimate, made in 2002, counted no more than 50 birds. The conservation status of the Slender-billed Curlew is "Critically Endangered".

The species has been listed on the AEWA Table 1, Column A, under categories 1a, 1b & 1c, which gives an example of the status of the populations of migratory waterbirds. The key to classification is the basis for implementation of the Action Plan. This

listing characterizes the Slender-billed Curlew as a species that is included in Appendix I to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1a), that is listed as "threatened" in "Threatened Birds of the World" (BirdLife International 2000) (1b) and has a population numbering less than about 10,000 individuals (1c).

In addition a Memorandum of Understanding for the conservation of this curlew has been concluded under the aegis of the Bonn Convention. An International Action Plan has been operational since 1996 and is the main tool for conservation activities for this extremely rare bird.

The Action Plan comprehends conservation priorities including effective legal protection for the Slender-billed Curlew and its look-alikes, the location of its breeding grounds as well as key

wintering and passage sites, the appropriate protection and management of its habitat and awareness-rising amongst politicians, decision-makers and hunters.

Furthermore several surveys to identify breeding grounds, as well as migration stopover and wintering sites of the Slender-billed Curlew are being supported by AEWA, the European Union's "LIFE Programme" and other sources. Several expeditions were made to Tunisia, Albania, Libya, West Siberia, Iran and Morocco, however, neither nesting sites nor wintering places were discovered.

In parts of the Mediterranean the Slender-billed Curlew was once the most common curlew species. Hopefully it is not too late to save it from extinction. Occasional news about sporadic non-confirmed sightings from different countries still keep the hope alive.





AEWA - far beyond species conservation

by Mr. Jürgen Trittin,
Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany

Migrating birds are symbols of the fact that the world's natural heritage does not belong to individual countries. "Our" white storks, hatched on the roof of a farmhouse in Germany, migrate to other countries in autumn and spend the winter in Croatia, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Uganda or South Africa – a fascinating phenomenon you can observe by visiting the website www.naturdetektive.de. This website features the female white stork called "Prinzesschen". This animal has been monitored by means of telemetry for longer than any other animal in the world.

The survival of migratory species is dependent on various countries - effective conservation of these species therefore requires international co-operation and clear regulations. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) therefore commissioned the Federal Republic of Germany with the elaboration of an Agreement, which was adopted as "the Convention on Migratory Species" or "Bonn Convention" in 1979. The concept of conservation was at the forefront – in particular restricting the excessive use of living resources. Under the auspices of the Bonn Convention, and with the intention of reconciling protection and sustainable use of waterbirds, the international community drew up the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), which came into force

in 1999. Germany was the second country to sign this Agreement after the Netherlands, demonstrating its great interest in this Agreement. Before coming into force the AEWA was presented to the German expert community at a symposium of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation.

The conservation of waterbirds in Germany is an integral component of the general nature conservation strategy with its various measures and regulations. In this context, instruments such as the AEWA and the EU Birds Directive play a crucial role. These instruments complement each other perfectly. In the framework of the Birds Directive, many sites which are important for waterbirds have been or will be declared protected sites. However, for most of the waterbird populations the European Union is too small on a geographic scale. The AEWA ensures the necessary move beyond the borders of the European Union into entire habitats of all our waterbirds, and provides additional components for the conservation regime. Above all, this applies to the recognition of single populations, the call for long-term monitoring measures and to provisions to ensure the sustainability of hunting activities. As one result of these provisions, lead shot is being phased out in



a growing number of federal states in Germany.

The impact of the AEWA reaches far beyond species conservation in the narrow sense: for the implementation of further international environmental agreements, e.g. the Kyoto Protocol, the increased use of renewable energy sources is necessary. Germany is engaged in the promotion of these energy sources, and at the same time in research on the effects of power plants in the renewables sector on birds. For the German Government it is essential that the expansion of wind energy takes place within an environmentally sound framework. Great importance is therefore attached to accompanying ecological research. The German Government's Future Investment Programme focuses on offshore wind power. The aim is to answer the question as to what effects offshore wind parks have on migrating birds, fish and marine mammals. Possible effects on marine birds and bird migration (e.g. risks of collision) are being closely considered. A research co-operation with our AEWA partner Denmark is being striven for.

In future AEWA should strengthen the co-operation in and between its regions: for

example concerning the development of eco-tourism, the promotion of renewable energy sources and sustainable land use and fishery concepts, but also the exchange of knowledge and experience for recording and conserving waterbirds. Germany will therefore be giving substantial financial support to the GEF project "African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways" over the coming years. It is a pleasure to see – for the German Government, but also for me personally – that the "flyways project" will be launched this year. Could there be a better birthday present for the AEWA and the international waterbird conservation community?

Not only with regard to this important project, but also to the AEWA as a whole, I offer my best wishes for successful work in the future. This work should be primarily in line with the decision of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biological diversity by 2010. Thus the AEWA can be part of international nature conservation efforts which must still be intensified. The 2010 target, for example, provided substantial orientation for the Seventh Meeting of the

Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2004. The Parties adopted an ambitious work programme aimed at installing a global network of protected areas by 2010 on land and by 2012 at sea. The work carried out under the AEWA will be an extremely valuable contribution to this network.

I very much hope that more countries will join the AEWA in the future, because migrating species can only be protected in their entire habitat if the concerned Range States are actively involved in the specific conservation measures. Germany will encourage corresponding activities and will further support the AEWA Secretariat in continuing its successful work for the benefit of our common heritage.

UNEP-GEF African/Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways Project

by Mr. Ward Hagemeyer, Programme Head Biodiversity Conservation, Wetlands International

In 2003 the UNEP-GEF African/Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways Project proposal was approved at all stages within the GEF Council. The proposal was the result of a four-year process of planning and consulting with partners. The implementation of this project will start by the end of 2005.

What the project will do

Overall the project will enhance the conservation status of migratory waterbirds across the African/Eurasian flyways. A series of strategic and catalytic activities will be executed to enhance the capacity available to carry out conservation activities that benefit these species. This will include: improving individual skills and competence, the range of tools available to individuals, the information base on sites and best practices, and the ability of practitioners to communicate with one another on flyway-relevant issues. Some of the key project outputs are:

- a critical site network tool available on the internet, providing information on the most important sites which migratory waterbirds depend on across the African/Eurasian area. This will target decision-makers and site managers who need this information for planning and management;*
- best practice wetland management will be showcased in 11 demonstration projects in 12 countries (see map);*
- enhanced technical capacity of*

waterbird counters in key sub-regions (Central Asia and the Caucasus States, the Middle Eastern States, Western Africa, Eastern Africa) through classroom and field-based training;

- identification of additional improvement to the knowledge base on existing critically important sites for migratory waterbirds;*
- stakeholder-owned Wetland and Waterbird Training and Awareness Raising Programmes in four subregions;*
- resources for Wetland and Waterbird Training and Awareness Raising Programmes;*
- exchange programmes developed and initiated across the project area and a sustainability strategy for their long-term implementation developed, and*
- an electronic discussion forum for migratory waterbird issues.*

The project partnership

The partnership from the preparatory phases of the project has been enhanced – the United Nations Office for Project Management (UNOPS) will take the role of Executing Agency for GEF-funded activities in the project. This will reduce the administrative load on the technical partners. UNEP remains as the Implementing Agency. The main technical partners are Wetlands International (WI) and

BirdLife International (BLI) who are named contractors, with WI taking the lead technical role. The 11 demonstration projects will be executed by the local executing agencies that developed them in the PDF-B phase. UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre is a key technical partner and will be developing the internet portal for accessing information on the critical site network. The Secretariats of AEWA and the Ramsar Convention retain their engagement as the key multilateral environment agreements whose action plans are supported by the project.

The importance of the project for AEWA

Besides the fact that the project will raise awareness of and build capacity for the implementation of AEWA and its action plan, the project contains numerous activities that will take forward the International Implementation Priorities of AEWA. The GEF Flyways Project will make a major contribution to the implementation of the AEWA Action Plan.

Project endorsement

The project has been endorsed by the governments of Estonia, Gambia, Hungary, Lithuania, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Turkey and Yemen.

Map of the AEWA Area and location of demonstration sites

Project donors

There are currently more than 40 donors that have committed funds to the implementation of the project. The main donors are GEF, the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, the AEWA Secretariat and Wetlands International.

Activities up to the end of 2005

The project documentation has been prepared for implementation based on the GEF Project Brief and will then be endorsed by the GEF Chief Executive Officer. Following this, the key project staff (the Chief Technical Officer and Junior Operations Manager) will be recruited through an international process by UNOPS. These processes are currently ongoing. It is anticipated that the project will start in the autumn of 2005.



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Haapsalu-Noarootsi Bays, Estonia | 7. Saloum-Niumi, Senegal/The Gambia |
| 2. Biharugra's Fishponds, Hungary | 8. Wakkerstroom, S. Africa |
| 3. Nemunas Delta, Lithuania | 9. Dar es Salaam wetlands, Tanzania |
| 4. Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania | 10. Lake Burdur, Turkey |
| 5. Kokorou and Namga wetlands, Niger | 11. Aden Lagoons, Yemen |
| 6. Hadejia-Nguru wetlands, Nigeria | |

AEWA spreads its wings

by Mr. Robert Hepworth,
Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)



The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) is the umbrella UNEP Convention which originally drafted the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement and led the negotiations that led to the final signing ceremony 10 years ago on 16 June 1995 in The Hague. The AEWA Secretariat is also administered by UNEP and co-located with the Secretariat of its mother Convention at the UN-Headquarters in Bonn, Germany. AEWA and CMS share objectives as well as infrastructure. They represent each other at important meetings and join efforts in communication.

As a multilateral environment agreement AEWA aims to conserve migratory waterbirds at a flyway level. Since it came into force in 1999 CMS has proudly observed and supported the increasing importance of its largest and fastest growing Agreement. CMS and AEWA have a common vision: The phenomenon of animal migration must be sustained as a unique part of our natural heritage. While taking action to conserve migratory animals, both Agreements now contribute to achieving the 2010 target to halt or reduce the loss of biodiversity.

Migratory waterbirds cover incredibly large distances during their annual cycle. They need resting, feeding and breeding areas along their flyways. Protecting both the birds themselves and their habitats during their recurrent migration is the only way to

ensure their survival. As those flyways span entire continents regional and international cooperation is imperative. Thus the right conservation tool is a legally binding agreement on an international level. Thus as a global Convention under UNEP with a specific power to negotiate legally binding regional agreements for migratory species, CMS created the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement. All signatories to AEWA strive for the goal of protecting endangered and vulnerable bird species. AEWA covers a variety of habitats for migratory waterbirds such as the Siberian tundra, reservoirs, agricultural land and the Sahel desert.

CMS has strongly supported the development of the UNEP-GEF African/Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways Project. This is the largest species project currently under way under the CMS family of Agreements. Many countries and regions of the agreement area are set to participate in the USD 13.1 million project to conserve the critical network of sites required by Migratory Waterbirds on the African-Eurasian flyways. Besides being multi-country it is also a multi-stakeholder contribution to the conservation of migratory waterbird species and the wetland sites they depend on across the African-Eurasian flyways. Local communities living along the flyways depend on wetlands and their resources. Careful wetland management and

sustainable use of waterbirds are vital for poverty reduction. Improving individual skills and competence, the availability of information as well as communication on flyway issues should enhance the capacity to implement relevant conservation activities.

This project is designed to promote international cooperation between governments, IGOs and NGOs, local communities and the private sector. This is a crucial component of the flyway approach of which the UNEP-GEF African/Eurasian Flyways Project is an excellent example. Capacity building will boost international cooperation and support national endeavours to reduce the loss of biodiversity in wetlands. Waterbirds are unique indicators to evaluate progress made in reducing the loss of biodiversity. Thus the UNEP-GEF project will contribute to the 2010 target by providing capacity and data necessary to use the indicators.

UNEP is the implementing agency of this project; Wetlands International and BirdLife International are the main technical partners. Priority conservation activities under AEWA and Ramsar will help to emphasize socio-economic development issues in the conservation sector and preserve wetlands as values and natural resources. It is now absolutely crucial that this project is turned into effective outcomes on the ground.

Like its mother Convention, AEWA maintains a number of collaborative relationships with related conventions, NGOs, IGOs, its Parties and UNEP in order to maximise synergies. Annexes of both

AEWA and CMS list species that benefit from coordinated action to maintain populations of endangered bird species as, for example, the Ferruginous Duck that is listed on both CMS Appendices as well as on the annexes of AEWA and the EU Birds Directive. It is a species identified for concerted action. It is not only exposed to habitat loss and hunting. Other threats include drowning in fishing nets, lead poisoning, disturbance, and climate change, which increasingly leads to drought conditions in Asian breeding and African wintering areas. CMS is striving to improve this waterbird's conservation and management by contributing to a global action plan in collaboration with AEWA. This action plan was jointly developed by CMS and AEWA and is to be considered for adoption by the third Meeting of the Parties to AEWA in Senegal. It includes a comprehensive conservation strategy over the entire range of the species.

Another concerted action species is the Lesser White-fronted Goose included in both Appendices of CMS and AEWA. This bird was once a numerous breeding species in Arctic and sub-Arctic areas between Scandinavia and the Far East. However, the world population has declined dramatically during the last century. The species is globally threatened. Heavy hunting pressure and loss of feeding habitats along the migration route and at the wintering grounds are the main causes of its decline. BirdLife International in Norway and CMS have joined hands to increase awareness on conserving the species. CMS supports a project to identify migration routes in unexplored areas as well as wintering areas of the bird along this

flyway. This is a crucial element in the design of a comprehensive conservation strategy for the species. The broader scope of the project aims to considerably reduce hunting pressure and to establish a network of protected areas to conserve critical habitats.

Other species also benefit from close collaboration between CMS and AEWA. Both Agreements have committed themselves to save one of the rarest birds from extinction: the Slender-billed Curlew is critically endangered and rated as Europe's most threatened bird species with less than 50 individuals. In order to save this species from extinction, CMS has concluded a Memorandum of Understanding to which AEWA has an important share. In addition, CMS and AEWA combined their forces to identify wintering sites of this rare bird. Once the signatories to the MoU will have acceded to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, the MoU will come under AEWA's oversight. CMS is confident that this move will further enhance work to ensure the species' survival.

More than half of the world's ecosystems that support life on Earth are threatened by degradation and unsustainable use. In the light of the state of global ecosystems and their impact on human well-being and migratory species, countries must enhance their efforts to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by the year 2010. AEWA with its unique precedent on flyway conservation makes a difference.



Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*)

The Sociable Lapwing is a migratory wader, which breeds in Kazakhstan and south-central Russia, and winters in southwestern Asia and northeastern Africa. During the breeding season it can be found in dry steppes and semi-deserts, mainly in areas with feather grass (*Stipa pennata*) and/or wormwood (*Artemisia spp.*) steppe habitats, and often in association with saltmarsh areas.

The conservation status of the Sociable Lapwing is "Vulnerable". There have been two main declines leading to the current situation. One was in the 1950s, supposedly as a result of habitat deterioration in breeding grounds. Another

major decline was in the 1970s-1980s, coinciding with a reduction of the breeding range in the Pavlodar region of Kazakhstan. The population decline continued until the end of the 1990s and by the end of the century the Sociable Lapwing had become an extremely rare species. At the International Sociable Lapwing Workshop in Moscow in 2002, the global population was estimated at 200-600 breeding pairs (ca. 600-1,800 birds).

The population has decreased throughout its range due to rapid cultivation of steppe areas and either lack of grazing or high grazing pressure on remaining grasslands. Many nests are destroyed by cattle and

agricultural activities. Also the expansion of Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*), the main predator of its nests, has additional adverse effects.

An International Single Species Action Plan for the Sociable Lapwing has been developed under the aegis of AEWA. This Action Plan describes and evaluates current knowledge on ecology, habitat requirements, and seasonal distribution of this species, as well as conservation measures that need to be undertaken both by governmental and non-governmental bodies to ensure that the decline of the species population does not continue further and that the Sociable Lapwing will be conserved for future generations.



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AEWA ready to contribute to the 2010 target

by Mr. Emmanuel Severre,
Chair of the Standing Committee of AEWA



The second Meeting of the Parties to AEWA (September 2002, Bonn, Germany) decided to establish a Standing Committee for the Agreement. Amongst others, Tanzania was elected as a member of this Committee. Since then I have been pleased to represent my country and to chair the AEWA Standing Committee.

AEWA is one of the most ambitious agreements developed so far under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The Agreement entered into force on 1 November 1999. However, it was concluded at the end of the Negotiation Meeting to adopt the text of the Agreement on 16 June 1995 in The Hague, the Netherlands. That is why we celebrated the 10th Anniversary in June this year, in Bonn, Germany.

This is not the first time I have been involved in AEWA business. I represented my country at the Negotiation Meeting to adopt the AEWA text in 1995. I also represented my country as Head of Delegation to MOP1 and MOP2 of AEWA. I had been involved in many other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as CITES, CMS, Ramsar, etc. before I became the Chair of the AEWA Standing Committee. Having been involved in different MEAs I think I am well placed to comment on the growth of AEWA since its adoption.

Looking at AEWA, the first thing I note is that the Agreement has been drafted by experts for experts. The text of the Agreement, as well as the Action Plan that is annexed to it, is very accessible. The general approach of looking at species at a flyway level is a concept that is well understood by ecologists, environmentalists and even the general public. So the pragmatic approach is the strength of the Agreement. The concept is widely appreciated and there is no doubt that this has led to the growth in the number of Contracting Parties to 51 as of 1 October 2005.

Although the Agreement as such is still quite young, many activities already are or have been up and running, fully meeting the expectations of Contracting Parties. Activities worth mentioning here are for example the review on the use of agrochemicals in Africa and their impacts on migratory waterbirds; the study on the potential impact of marine fisheries on migratory waterbirds; the exchange of know-how on traditional approaches to wetland and waterbird management in Africa; enhancing conservation of the critical networks of wetlands required by migratory waterbirds on the African-Eurasian flyways; the international status on the use of non-toxic shot for hunting waterbirds; EU Action plans for huntable species with unfavourable conservation



status; and the development of many International Single Species Action Plans, amongst others one for the Macao Duck.

The activities to implement the Agreement are initiated and coordinated by the AEWA Secretariat. The achievements of this small but very committed team over the years are commendable. Therefore I would like to congratulate wholeheartedly the AEWA Secretariat on what it has achieved in the last ten years. This has not been an easy job considering the limited resources available. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Contracting Parties for enabling the Secretariat to carry out its tasks.

During the third meeting of the Standing Committee earlier this year we discussed the future development of the Agreement. As always, there are different views on this. On one hand the general feeling is that we should focus more on the implementation of the current Agreement. On the other hand new developments such as new Bird Agreements require our attention. The Standing Committee noted that a Strategic

Plan for the Agreement is lacking. A Strategic Plan may help to guide it along a better and more streamlined course. A proposal to draft such a Strategic Plan is to be tabled at MOP3.

The Standing Committee is convinced that nowadays communication is the most important tool to raise awareness on AEWA. With the limited resources available the Secretariat has done its utmost and, as noted already, has also managed to convince 51 Range States to join the Agreement. Looking at membership coverage of the Agreement it is clear that still more has to be done. The Standing Committee approved the final draft Communication Strategy for the Agreement, which is to be submitted to MOP3 for adoption. Meanwhile the German Government has decided to provide the Agreement Secretariat with a Junior Professional Officer as of 17 October 2005, which I am sure will be highly appreciated by the Contracting Parties. This person will play an important role in the implementation of the Communication Strategy. The challenge will be to communicate the

added value of AEWA to other MEAs at all levels, considering that there is much to share with them, in particular with Ramsar and CBD to mention just two. If we are successful in this respect, it will have a tremendous impact on the implementation of the Agreement.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002, South Africa) the leaders of the world undertook to halt the current rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. AEWA is ready to contribute to the target set for 2010. However, the strength of the chain depends on the strength of each link. By putting our forces together, whether as Contracting Parties, Range States, NGOs or IGOs, we can achieve this at least for the waterbird species listed under AEWA.

Finally, I would like to congratulate AEWA on its 10th Anniversary and hope that the Secretariat will receive the resources needed to implement the Agreement adequately. Range States which have not so far joined AEWA are encouraged to do so in the near future.

The AEWA Communication Strategy – an important tool for successful waterbird conservation

The basic tools for successful cooperation on an international level are good communication and the efficient exchange of information, resources and experience. AEWA has therefore initiated the development of its own Communication Strategy, which will aid the implementation of AEWA and its Action Plan and the continued development of the membership.

The key function of communication with regard to waterbird conservation is clearly defined in the Agreement text: general awareness-raising programmes and the exchange of information and results from

research, monitoring, conservation and education programmes are named amongst the general conservation measures. In consequence, the development and implementation of an AEWA Communication Strategy was specified in the AEWA Implementation Priorities for 2004 - 2007 as adopted at the second Meeting of the Parties held in Bonn in 2002. The draft strategy was approved by the second AEWA Standing Committee (Bonn, 2004) and is now to be presented for adoption to the third Meeting of the Parties in Dakar, Senegal, in October 2005. However, important elements of the Strategy such as the improvement of the

AEWA website and the development of a monthly electronic newsletter as elementary tools to spread information, as well as the development of guidelines for the accession to AEWA have already been implemented. The implementation of the complete Strategy is expected to take five years.

The target groups for the Communication Strategy are the Parties and Non-Party Range States, partner organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders along the flyways, but also donors and the general public. Accordingly, the Strategy basically contains four communication objectives for AEWA:

1. Internal communication

An effective internal communication and information exchange among the formal bodies of AEWA will be reached by increasing interactivity during and between meetings, and especially by evaluating the system of regional representation in the Technical and Standing Committees in order to specifically improve the internal communication within the respective regions.

2. External communication

The communication between the Parties, Range States and other AEWA stakeholders as well as between these and the AEWA Secretariat will be improved by organizing regional meetings of the Parties and establishing regional AEWA information exchange centres. In addition, more AEWA ambassadors will be engaged among the Parties and partner organizations to help the Secretariat with the recruitment of new Parties.

3. Capacity building

Training seminars will be conducted at a regional level, and manuals and toolkits developed for the participants of these. The seminars, manuals and toolkits distributed to the participants will enable them to conduct their own courses at a national level for participants from all countries of the trainees' respective regions.

4. Public awareness

As already stated, some of the Communication Strategy objectives to increase knowledge and awareness of AEWA, such as the improvement of the website, the development of an e-newsletter and guidelines for accession, have already been achieved. However, the Secretariat's task will now be to maintain the website and to issue the newsletters regularly. In addition, more public awareness material such as posters, special leaflets and stickers will be developed to be included in the AEWA toolkit that already exists.

AEWA 10th Anniversary – a retrospective

by Mr. Yousoof Mungroo,
Chair of the Technical Committee of AEWA



16 June 2005 was the 10th Anniversary of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), which was concluded on 16 June 1995 in The Hague, the Netherlands. Ten years of existence is not only a milestone for the Agreement, but is also an opportune time to assess its progress, achievements and the challenges ahead.

The aim of the Agreement is to provide protection and to conserve the waterbirds along their migration routes through coordinated and concerted actions on the part of Range States, giving special attention to endangered species and species with unfavourable conservation status. The number of migratory species which are ecologically dependent on wetlands and covered by the Agreement, has increased from 170 (MOP1, 1999) to 235 (MOP2, 2002). However, not all the listed birds require conservation action and still not all endangered birds have been listed. In order to find a compromise on what could have been an endless debate, all migratory waterbirds - irrespective of their conservation status - were included in Table I of the Action Plan. The question that immediately arises is whether the Contracting Parties or Range States, especially developing countries, countries with economies in transition and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have the know-how and the resources to implement

the conservation measures of the Action Plan. This is a real challenge for the Agreement. To ensure implementation of the Action Plan the Agreement has to provide the tools and facilitate conservation actions thereof. The African-Eurasian Flyways GEF Project, the implementation of which is likely to start end of 2005, could provide the answer to capacity building in Contracting Parties or Range States.

The Agreement entered into force on 1 November 1999 with 17 ratifications. As of October 2005 the number of Parties to the Agreement has reached 51. In the past six years the number of countries which have ratified the Agreement has increased threefold. The Agreement covers 117 countries and I believe that the priority of priorities for the Secretariat is the recruitment of new Parties to the Agreement. This can be achieved, as proven by the Executive Secretary, by continuous dialogue, persistent canvassing and awareness campaigns for non-Party Range States. The draft Communication Strategy which is to be submitted to the Third Meeting of Parties (MOP 3) in Senegal for adoption will definitely help with raising awareness and enrolling the support of more countries for the cause of the Agreement.

Mauritius signed the Agreement on 26 October 2000. I must say that the visit in



April 1999 of Mr. Bert Lenten, the Secretary of the former Interim Secretariat of the African-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement, to Mauritius did help in reactivating the procedures for ratifying the Agreement. The Government of Mauritius pledged its full support to the Executive Secretary at the 6th Technical Committee meeting held in Mauritius and to promulgate AEWA in the Southern African Region. I have been very fortunate to be actively involved with AEWA since its first MOP in 1999. As the temporary Chair of the AEWA Technical Committee I participated in the selection exercise of the Executive Secretary at the UNON office in Nairobi and later as Chair witnessed the progress of the Agreement.

AEWA, daughter Agreement of CMS, is species oriented, giving protection to waterbirds, an important component of global biological diversity, along their migration routes. The Agreement, if implemented by the Parties, will help governments to honour their pledge at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. AEWA is complementary to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The latter aims at protecting wetland habitats by declaring

them as Ramsar sites, i.e. wetlands of international importance, while the focus of AEWA is on the conservation and sustainable use of waterbird species that are ecologically dependent on wetlands. It fits that during the Global Flyway Conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in May 2004 a Joint Work Programme between the Secretariats of Ramsar, CMS and AEWA was signed. Furthermore, both the Ramsar Convention and AEWA will be beneficiaries in the African/Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways Project under GEF.

Considering that there have so far been only two AEWA Meetings of Parties and only two trienniums have lapsed since the Agreement came into force the progress made by the Agreement with an initial skeletal Secretariat staff during this short life span is noteworthy. Three Single Species Action Plans have been completed, five more will be submitted to the MOP3 for endorsement and the number of birds under the Agreement has risen to 235. Several important tools for the implementation of the Agreement have been finalized for approval by MOP3: the AEWA Communication Strategy and the Guidelines on National Reporting among

others. The Agreement has already been established on a solid foundation. It has now to focus specially on the recruitment of new members and the implementation of the Agreement. Continuing the present trend and ensuring that sufficient funds are made available to the Secretariat means that without doubt there is a very bright future ahead for the Agreement.



AEWA - a view from a new contracting party

by Mr. Nicholas Hanley,
Head of Nature and Biodiversity Unit, DG Environment, European Commission



I am very pleased that the European Community has become the latest party to ratify AEWA, building on the membership and support of many EU Member States to this important international Agreement.

AEWA is of particular relevance to us as it provides an excellent framework for international co-operation on the conservation of waterbirds and is complementary to the work and achievements of our Birds Directive, which has been the principal EU legislation for conserving wild birds since 1979. This EU law has led to significant improvements in the status of many of Europe's most threatened birds. Progress has been achieved through targeted action, in particular by the creation of a growing network of Special Protection Areas, which now covers in excess of 8% of the EU's territory. In this network particular importance has been attached to the conservation and management of wetlands that support migratory waterbirds.

However, scientific studies show that much more needs to be done both in the

European Union and elsewhere. The conservation of many waterbirds that occur in the EU is dependent on factors that operate throughout a much larger geographical range, including the African continent. There are heightened concerns about the decline of migratory waterbirds, especially waders, which will need responses at the flyway level for the different species. As part of an overview of 25 years of implementation of the Birds Directive, which took place last year, there was wide support for strengthening EU commitments and action for global bird conservation through ratification and implementation of AEWA.

We hope that by becoming a party to AEWA the European Community can work more closely with the other parties and the Secretariat. Our common goal must be to encourage and promote focused and co-ordinated action for the conservation of waterbirds throughout their flyways. After 10 years AEWA has established the necessary framework for such action. The challenge in the coming years will be to realise this potential through practical

measures on the ground in all the flyway countries. The EU can hopefully provide a significant supporting role as a partner in this process.

Of course the conservation of waterbirds cannot be seen in isolation. Their conservation status is an indication of the overall health of the natural environment, especially wetland ecosystems. The protection of biodiversity should not be seen as a threat to economic development, but as an essential precondition to long term sustainable use and management of natural resources. In this regard the current review of EU development policies gives increased attention to the mainstreaming of biodiversity in development assistance.

I would like to congratulate all those who have worked so hard over the past decade to consolidate the central role that AEWA has to play in international biodiversity conservation and wish it every success in delivering the necessary practical actions to achieve its already ambitious goals in the coming years.

Black-winged Pratincole (*Glareola nordmanni*)

The Black-winged Pratincole is a Palearctic wader. It breeds in the steppe and desert belt of Eurasia, and winters in tropical Africa. The Black-winged Pratincole prefers to breed on dry salty soils ("solonets and solontchak") with low vegetation cover and patches of bare ground, and on overgrazed steppe pastures. It avoids steppes with high vegetation.

The species experienced a population decline, which has been observed since the end of the 19th century, probably caused by the extensive ploughing of virgin steppes for the development of arable agriculture. An additional extremely rapid decline was recorded in the middle of the 20th century, most dramatic in the western and northern parts of the species' breeding range. In the second half of the 20th century numbers of Black-winged Pratincole became locally stable or even increased, which was presumably related to the irrigation of steppes. Unfortunately the population again began to decline sharply, primarily in the south of Russia, in the 1990s. The current population size is estimated at between 9,700 and 14,900 birds.

The Black-winged Pratincole is threatened by the destruction of its

ests by cattle and by agricultural machinery, disturbance by humans and also poisoning by pesticides. Natural limiting factors, e.g. the influence of ground predators, also play an important role for the decline of the population.

Because of the dramatic situation of the Black-winged Pratincole population, an International Single Species Action Plan was developed under the auspices of AEWA. The general objective of the Plan is to ensure that the population of the Black-winged Pratincole becomes stable or increases as a result of conservation initiatives, which take into account habitat requirements of the species (primarily in breeding areas) as well as the interests of local agricultural communities.



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The Dark-bellied Brent Goose International Action Plan

by Dr Barwolt S. Ebbinge, Centre for Ecosystem Studies, Alterra, Wageningen (NL)

*Why do we need an international action plan for a thriving species like the Dark-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta b. bernicla*)?*

This question often arises when people discuss action plans at AEWA meetings, but the graph below indicates clearly that not so long ago, in the nineteen fifties in fact, this small sea goose was very rare indeed, with a world population of only 16,000 individuals.

*Before the 1930s Brent Geese were very common in winter in the tidal zones along the coasts of Western Europe, ranging from the west coast of France, the British Isles to the Wadden Sea, which extends from the Netherlands, along the German coast to Denmark. Reliable censuses such as we have today were lacking, but it is clear that in those days there were hundreds of thousands of these black geese at least. When they arrived in masses in Britain following cold spells on the continent in the 1920s they were described by Coombes as 'the grand armies'. Also abundant in those days were vast beds of eelgrass (*Zostera marina*), the Brent's preferred winter food. The wasting disease that virtually destroyed most of the eelgrass-beds along the Atlantic coasts in the 1930s led to a massive decline in numbers of Brent,*

although, as we know now, their decline was probably due to the heavy hunting pressure the birds became exposed to when forced to find alternative food such as grass and winter wheat, and thus became more easily accessible to hunters.

*Because of considerable concern about this decline shortly after World War II, some key wintering countries closed hunting of the species, e.g. the Netherlands in 1950, Great Britain in 1954, followed by France in 1966. This, however, did not lead to an increase, thus strengthening the belief that the disappearance of eelgrass, rather than hunting, had been the reason for the decline. The closure of hunting for Dark-bellied Brent in Denmark in 1972, which was primarily done to protect the even rarer Light-bellied Brent Geese (*Branta b. hrota*), was followed by an unprecedented recovery in numbers of Dark-bellied Brent (see Fig.1).*

This rare event led to a series of meetings focusing on Brent. In December 1977 in Paris the First Technical Meeting on Western Palearctic Migratory Bird Management was exclusively devoted to Brent Geese. In fact this meeting, organized jointly by the IWRB (now Wetlands International) and the CIC, can be seen as a

precursor to AEWA. In 1979 a second meeting of this kind was organized in Paris, now widening its scope to cover other migratory bird species as well.

Other important meetings for Brent were the International Workshop 'Brent Geese in the Wadden Sea' in September 1994 in Leeuwarden (NL), organized by the Dutch Society for the Preservation of the Wadden Sea and the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. And, in January 1997, there was an international workshop held on the island of Texel (NL), which recommended that the range states Russia, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom make an international action plan to be linked to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

In the same year and following this workshop, an impressive compilation of recently accumulated information was made by Jacqueline van Nugteren in the Flyway Management Plan.

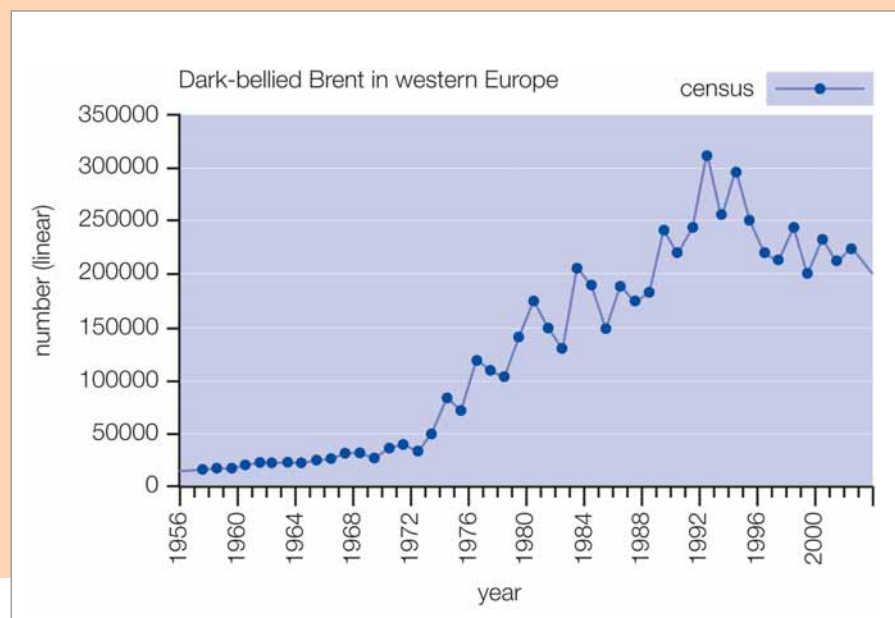
The 'hot potato' in this discussion was, and still is, the issue of hunting. Hunters argued that some hunting should be reopened now that the population had recovered so well. Non-hunting nature conservationists, however, feared that the reopening of

hunting, in particular in the remaining intertidal areas and saltmarshes, would have detrimental effects on the distribution of the birds, and could force even more Brent onto agricultural land and thus exacerbate the conflict with farmers. A sound population dynamic model should be made, incorporating the impact of hunting, to underpin final decisions about whether or not to re-open hunting possibilities. All these issues are addressed in the Draft Action Plan, of which the fourth version is now about to be accepted by all Range States. Meanwhile, Brent Geese have declined again from well over 300,000 in 1992, to less than 200,000 in 2003 (see Fig.1), without re-opening of hunting in

western Europe. For reasons not known breeding success has seriously declined during the last decade.

So this small sea goose again puzzles us, and it is good to learn that this year funding has been made available by AEWA (a UK grant) and the Dutch Government to make a thorough survival analysis, including the impact of hunting. This is a major step towards a full population dynamic model.

This historic overview shows that the Brent Goose is not just an abundant species, but was quite rightly the first species selected by AEWA to have an international action plan.



Both for the range states already mentioned and for the so-called 'fly-over countries' Finland, Estonia, and Sweden, this action plan can serve as a guideline to not only protect and manage an interesting species, but also to protect its important coastal habitat, which supports many more migratory bird species.

Fig. 1:
Population size of Dark-bellied Brent as estimated during the mid-winter counts in western Europe.

Madagascar - ready to join



by Ms. Zarasoa,
Head of the Marine and Coastal Environment Department,
Ministry of the Environment, Water and Forests, Madagascar



Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island and its biodiversity and ecosystems are among the richest on the planet. Its extensive forests are inhabited by numerous animal species, while its rivers and the surrounding ocean are rich in marine mammals and fish. The island has plentiful supplies of water and vast areas of wetland that are of considerable ecological importance. All these features make Madagascar an ideal nature reserve and perfect habitat for a large number of indigenous terrestrial and marine flora and fauna.

The conservation and sustainable use of natural resources are among our country's top priorities. The solemn undertaking given by the President of the Republic at the Fifth World Parks Congress, held in Durban in September 2003, to triple the number of Madagascar's protected sites served to strengthen the country's commitment to overcome the growing threat to its biodiversity. Numerous legislative measures pertaining to environmental and forestry policies, as well as mining regulations, have been taken to translate that commitment into action, including the elaboration and implementation of various national strategies.

Furthermore, to combine all the various efforts aimed at reducing the threat to different natural habitats and their inhabitants and the often irreversible

consequences, Madagascar, for more than a decade, has been carrying out research and sustainable management activities through effective participation by the competent public departments, research institutes and international and local non-governmental organizations. The strategy is based on cooperation and synergies in the implementation of the international conventions ratified by Madagascar, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

Since 1980, Madagascar's growing awareness of the magnitude of the environmental challenges and the need to deal with them effectively has led it to sign and ratify the Bonn Convention, although, unfortunately, the process of ratification has not yet been finalized. With a view to participating fully in the efforts and actions being carried out under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), and mindful of their vital role in protecting all endangered species, the



Ministry of the Environment, Water and Forests held a workshop on the AEWA and CMS in Madagascar on 12 May 2005. The workshop, which was financed by Conservation International, Madagascar, and the Secretariats of AEWA and CMS, in addition to raising awareness of the advantages and obligations associated with the conservation and rational management of migratory species, also provided a platform for the exchange of information and experiences, as well as a chance to describe the remit of AEWA and CMS. The convivial atmosphere fostered some instructive and informative exchanges

between experts, government officials and non-governmental organizations involved in the conservation of biodiversity. During the workshop, Mr. Bert Lenten, Executive Secretary of AEWA, speaking on behalf of CMS and AEWA, highlighted the action plans and projects that had been financed by the CMS up to February 2003, and the advantages of AEWA's approach; presentations were also made by various bodies, as well as eminent experts on endangered marine and terrestrial species in Madagascar.

Currently, migratory birds are at risk in Madagascar due to the long distances they have to fly and their dependence on a network of wetlands that is shrinking and degrading as a result of the activities of riverine communities, and the effects of natural disasters. Such activities, which do not comply with the principles of sustainable and wise use, include uncontrolled hunting, over-fishing, the conversion of wetlands into rice fields, the establishment of aquaculture basins and consequent reduction in feeding areas, and the construction of various types of infrastructures, such as dams.

Taking into account that the conservation of migratory birds is both an important and challenging undertaking, the workshop drew up the following recommendations: the elaboration of action plans for the most endangered species; the preparation of a

national strategy for the conservation of migratory species; the identification and designation of important sites for the protection of migratory birds (ZICOs), the compilation of inventories of species according to their geographical distribution; and the promotion of education and awareness-raising in local communities, as well as programmes to assist their development.

Madagascar was able to justify its ratification of CMS and AEWA for two main reasons: they would provide the means necessary for the conservation and sustainable management of its migratory species, and they would allow the country to strengthen its legislation on the protection of wild animals through a more rigorous application of certain provisions in the conventions it had already ratified, including the Ramsar Convention, CITES and CBD. With regard to CMS and AEWA, Madagascar had already taken steps to ensure the timely signing of the instruments of ratification.



The use of agrochemicals in Africa

In Africa, a wide range of agrochemicals is used for agriculture and for pest control purposes. Some of these products are highly toxic to wetland fauna and flora, and also to migratory waterbirds. The Important Bird Areas (IBA) are sites of global importance for the conservation of birds. Many IBA sites are in Africa and most of these are in areas where pesticide use is important, such as Algeria, Egypt, Kenya and South Africa. Statistics show that the most frequently-used pesticide groups are in decreasing order: insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, rodenticides and growth hormones. Approximately 90-99% of vector control pesticides are used in malaria control.

Pesticides used in these areas are potentially dangerous for wildlife such as waterbirds. The agrochemical impacts on migratory waterbirds may be direct or indirect. They are direct where they involve survival or reproductive rates, whereas they are indirect when they have an effect on the food-chain.

For example, reports from some parts of the birds' range indicate that hundreds of storks can die after eating the carcasses of pests soon after the application of chemical control agents. It is possible that insidious long-term effects can occur as the chemicals accumulate in the fatty tissue of

the birds, causing death when the fats are metabolized during periods of high activity, e.g. during migration or while feeding their young.

Another example is Lake Bogoria in Kenya: As many as 50,000 lesser flamingos have died on the Kenyan Rift Valley lake since July 2004. The lake supports the highest concentration of flamingos in the world. The birds are dying from a "mystery disease" that may be linked to pollution. Tests done on dead birds show high levels of heavy metals.

IBA sites and pesticide use in Africa

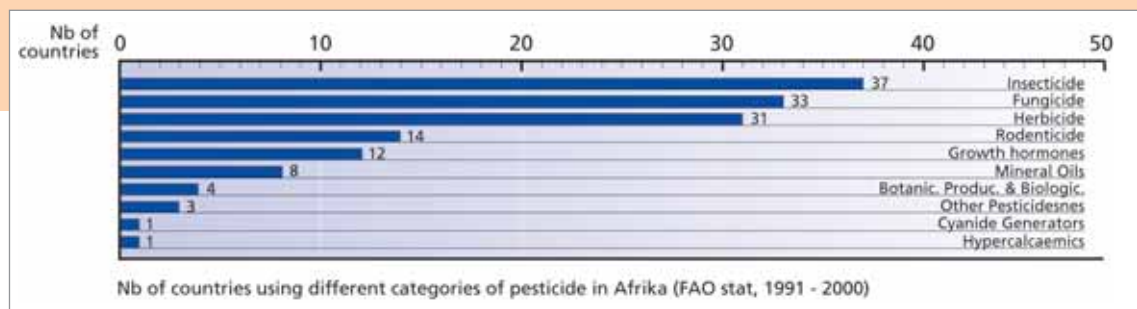
Moreover, many toxicological studies have demonstrated the effects of pesticides on birds: samples of liver and visceral fat from 86 cormorants (*Phalacrocorax africanus*) collected at the eastern end of Lake Kariba between January and October 1986 were analyzed for 22 organochlorine compounds. Decreases in population densities were found to correlate with increasing levels of POPs. For some chemicals, like DDT, evidence was obtained of a causative relationship between the concentration of the compound and reproductive failure.

In Africa regulations on pesticide use are

often lacking. The majority of users do not have sufficient information on the pesticides used and their impact on the environment. In order to understand the hazards, it is important to have information on the quantities of active ingredients they contain.

An AEWA study has therefore been initiated to quantify the actual and potential impact of various pesticides on migratory waterbirds. It is based on three parallel approaches: flyways and staging areas, pesticide use patterns and ecotoxicity data. A final report on the study will be published at the end of 2005.

The biggest problem concerning the use of pesticides in Africa is obtaining statistical information; this is due both to the lack of organisation and to the monetary value of pesticide data. It is thus important to complete and improve databases on pesticide use and to determine the hazards caused by agrochemicals on waterbirds, e.g. through residue analysis of egg samples to estimate the pollution levels in certain habitats, or to gather data in locust infestation areas to determine the real impact of treatments on bird mortality. A better knowledge of the effects of agrochemical use will facilitate the implementation of effective conservation measures.



Sites and species - two sides of the same coin...



by Mr. Peter Bridgewater,
Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



The Ramsar Convention and AEWA have developed a strong relationship during the last ten years – partly under the general framework of co-operation for migratory species under the CMS, but within a joint programme of actions between AEWA and Ramsar. AEWA came into existence to address a key issue: the need for more formal and pro-active action to safeguard waterbirds migrating along the complex of routes between Africa and Europe.

In so doing it developed for a particularly crucial area the flyway approach that had been the hall mark of Ramsar's early work. The Agreement therefore has the effect of increasing the awareness in countries along this complex of flyways of the needs of these species. During the last ten years the Agreement has made great progress in ensuring a better profile for the species of migratory waterfowl.

During the last ten years the Ramsar convention has helped to increase the number of AEWA Contracting Parties. And Ramsar is very much about conservation and wise use of wetlands – the key habitat for the species being conserved under AEWA. Of course, the Convention has gone beyond wetlands or birds to embracing broader perspectives, as our understanding of the role of water and wetlands in the global water cycle has grown. Thus it is the complementarity

between AEWA and the Convention that is now the base to build on the development in recent years, to make a fully co-operative future.

The two areas where the Agreement and the Convention can well work together are science and outreach. Science because as we learn more about the needs of the species in space and time, and as we understand more about the management needs for the wetlands and supporting ecosystems, we can develop joint efforts to ensure conservation of the species through wise management of the sites. Here work jointly by the scientific subsidiary bodies will be important in the coming years.

Regarding outreach, ensuring that good and adequate information is available to Parties and to civil society within the Parties, to AEWA and Ramsar is critical for effective implementation of the Convention and the Agreement. While governments accede to the instruments, it is the local populations that can ensure the effective implementation of the instrument – or its failure.

A further feature of the synergy we are developing between us is to ensure that we have universal membership of the Convention and the Agreement for the countries in the flyways. This is especially true given the holding of the Convention's ninth COP in Kampala, Uganda, in

November this year. Our joint work plan recognises this and we have agreed to promote to our respective Contracting Parties in the African-Eurasian region the complementarity of our two instruments and encourage accession to each instrument by non-Parties.

The AEWA certainly represents a key area where we can deepen and develop the linkages and synergies we have already built, for this critical group of bellwether species, in a critical area of the world.



Alien invasive species

Humans have been transporting animals from one part of the world to another for thousands of years, sometimes deliberately (e.g. livestock released by sailors onto islands as a source of food) and sometimes accidentally (e.g. rats escaping from ships).

Problems with alien invasive species are most likely to occur due to hybridisation with closely-related species otherwise separated by geographical barriers. Other potential problems are caused by the alien species preying on the natives, competing with them for food, disrupting or destroying their habitats, or introducing pathogens or parasites that weaken or kill them. Alien invasion is one of the biggest causes of bird extinction worldwide, after habitat destruction and over-exploitation. Currently, nearly 30% of Globally Threatened Birds (GTBs) are affected by alien invasive species.

AEWA has developed a guideline on avoidance of introduction of non-native migratory waterbird species. This should at least help to solve the problem arising from hybridisation with closely-related species previously separated by geographical barriers. Monitoring of imports and exports of non-native waterbird species and the introduction of measures to prevent the escape of non-native waterbird species from captive collections are elements of this guideline.

Nevertheless it still remains essential to develop strategies to prevent the negative effects not only of non-native migratory waterbirds but also of other alien invasive species, in order to reduce one of the most common contributory factors to recent losses among the world's avifauna.



The first ten years of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement

A BirdLife Perspective

by Dr Michael Rands,
Director and Chief Executive, BirdLife International



In congratulating the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement on its tenth anniversary, BirdLife looks back with pleasure on our association with the Agreement, which extends over the whole ten years, and indeed further back, to the days when the Agreement was first taking shape.

At the conclusion of the final negotiation meeting in The Hague in June 1995, there was a real sense of achievement at the completion of an historic text that made provision for so many key bird species over such a wide geographical area. There was justifiable pride in having produced an innovative Action Plan to form part of the Agreement. However, there was also uncertainty. Would enough states support the Agreement to make it viable? Could the sometimes differing views of states on the conservation and sustainable use of waterbirds be reconciled? Would conservationists and hunters agree over how populations should be assessed and managed? In addition, very importantly, would the resources be made available to do all the work envisaged? After ten years, we now know the answers to these and to many other questions – and they are mostly positive answers.

The Agreement has certainly proved to be attractive to states, growing in a steady way, and membership has now exceeded 50 Contracting Parties. This is certainly enough to permit a wide range of useful activities, but there is still the need to grow further towards the maximum of nearly 120 Parties. Several northern states, which include the vital breeding grounds of many AEWA species, have yet to join. Non-member countries in western Asia and the Middle East, which support important populations of wintering and migrating birds, should be encouraged to play their part. In Africa, where the potential for growth is greatest, AEWA needs to persuade many more governments of its value to their people: with poverty such an overwhelming issue for the African continent, we should emphasise the vital role that migratory waterbirds and the places where they live, play in sustaining the lives and livelihoods of human communities. The AEWA Secretariat continues its good work in approaching potential new Parties; new publicity materials, supported by the Government of Luxembourg, will play a useful role. However, existing Parties and observers must also help: BirdLife will continue to promote the Agreement, particularly through its network of Partners all along the African-Eurasian flyway.

There has been little conflict within AEWA between those who seek primarily to conserve waterbirds and those whose ultimate purpose is sustainable use. This desirable situation has resulted in large part from the mechanisms established by the Agreement.

The Technical Committee, in particular, has achieved a balance in both its formal membership, and in the observers who are regularly invited to its meetings. BirdLife continues to be included among the latter and greatly values this opportunity to play a part in the development of the Agreement. Certainly, differences of emphasis sometimes emerge among its members, but the Committee is well aware that the main threats to waterbirds in Africa and Eurasia come from loss and degradation of habitat, something that we can all agree to work together to combat. The work of the Committee is underpinned by science, and the importance of reliable data cannot be overestimated, whether this information comes from counts of living waterbirds, or from hunters' bag statistics. Challenges certainly remain in this area of work: as one example, we need to ensure that appropriate funding will be available for the International Waterbird Census and the regularly published Waterbird Population Estimates, both of which provide crucial information on status and trends without which the Agreement cannot function. Cooperation with other users of the same information would help, including the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on Wetlands, the European Commission and others.

The Agreement has made considerable progress with the development and implementation of International Single Species Action Plans - a process with which the BirdLife Partnership has been particularly closely involved - and includes those covering the most threatened waterbird species in the world, such as the Northern Bald Ibis and the Sociable Lapwing. Much work remains to be done in this area, and in particular to encourage implementation at the national level within the Range States. Incidentally, such implementation is often hard to measure, in the absence of national reports. These are required by the Agreement, but the record of their submission is frankly unsatisfactory, and ways must be found to encourage their regular publication, to the benefit of all working on the Agreement.

The replacement of lead shot in hunting ammunition with non-toxic alternatives is taking much longer than was envisaged ten years ago in The Hague. The issue is surrounded with complex technical, economic and welfare arguments, as well as those related to the conservation and sustainable use of waterbirds. However, we must not let this complexity discourage us from strenuous efforts to reach solutions that will reduce and eventually eliminate a source of mortality which is in nobody's long-term interest.

An exciting recent development has been the project funded by the Global Environment Facility "Enhancing conservation of the critical network of wetlands required by migratory waterbirds

on the African/Eurasian flyways". This will enable a great range of work of value to AEWA, ranging from identifying sites of international importance (using information from, among other sources, BirdLife's Important Bird Area and Endemic Bird Area programmes) to capacity building for survey and monitoring, and many other key areas of work besides. It is to be hoped that the necessarily rather complex initialising procedures can be completed to allow implementation to begin in 2005. Thanks are due to our colleagues at Wetlands International for the tremendous efforts they have made to bring this project about.

A major challenge for the Agreement continues to be to find funding for the many tasks before it. The Secretariat is to be congratulated, in a time of economic difficulty and currency fluctuations, on finding funds to allow many projects to go ahead. Thanks are due to donor governments (notably Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) for their generous support, but more needs to be done.

In this tenth anniversary year, with the Third Meeting of the Parties taking place, AEWA can take justifiable pride in its achievements so far. However, there is no room for complacency. All those of us involved, Contracting Parties, experts and observers, must use this year to renew our commitment and redouble our efforts for the conservation of waterbirds. In committing BirdLife resources to this continuing effort, may I wish AEWA every success in the next decade, and long into the future.

Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*)

The Northern Bald Ibis is a distant relative of storks and herons. Once it was widespread across northern Africa, the Middle East and even the Alps, but now it is classified as 'Critically Endangered'. The Bald Ibis lives in semiarid rocky plains, but occurs also in cultivated fields and high altitude pastures and meadows. The birds are colonial breeders that nest on cliffs, often along watercourses or the coast.

Although the birds are long-lived, in captivity reaching an average of 20-25 years, a sharp decline since the beginning of the 20th century was recorded both in the western and in the eastern population. The main cause of the decline was the use of pesticides (DDT), but also human disturbance and hunting. There are only very few individuals left, i.e. in the Souss-Massa National Park in Morocco (420 birds, status 2004) and a genetically distinct population of three pairs recently rediscovered in Syria.

AEWA has initiated an International Single Species Action Plan for the Northern Bald Ibis. The drafting of the plan has been contracted out to SEO/BirdLife Spain. The key priority for conservation is to ensure the protection of the Moroccan population, which occurs at two sites. The Souss-Massa National Park was designated specifically to protect its nesting and feeding areas.

The following have been identified as the main goals to increase the number of Northern Bald Ibis colonies in Morocco, Syria and Turkey (the Turkish population is represented by a free-flying captive flock):

- to maintain agriculture and grazing regimes in order to achieve sustainable exploitation of rangelands and halt advance of desertification processes
- to promote alternative sustainable grazing regimes and energy use, coupled with the promotion of socio-economic development of local communities
- to control firewood collection to prevent destruction or degradation of feeding areas
- to stop hunting
- to control the construction of illegal buildings on or near to breeding and feeding sites
- to reduce the risk of intoxication

Thanks to conservation programmes there are already first small signs that the population in Souss-Massa National Park is stable and since 1999 increasing. Implementation of the Action Plan for the Northern Bald Ibis will help to continue this trend.



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AEWA - more than species conservation

by Ms. Jane Madgwick,
Chief Executive Officer, Wetlands International



The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. Ten years of migratory waterbird conservation focus in the UNEP/CMS family. This is good news because in these ten years, against the background of the credibility of CMS as the mother convention, AEWA has generated a significant momentum for waterbird conservation in the region of Africa, Europe and the western part of Asia.

At least part of its success, apart from its clear focus on migratory waterbirds, is due to the fact that it is more than a species conservation initiative. It promotes a true flyway conservation approach; arguably the most successful of its kind. It combines the management of the species, sites, habitats and human activities, and amalgamates these into a successful mix that delivers benefits for nature and people. This human component of flyways is important to stress here. This aspect is often poorly recognised, although it is often through the conservation of migratory waterbirds that habitat and site quality can be restored, and hence ecosystem services for local communities.

In its ten years since fledging, AEWA has spread its wings over very large parts of the flyway region, currently covering 51 countries, creating the condition for successful delivery of flyway conservation. Of course there remain challenges, like

bringing the possibly single most important country into the agreement family: Russia, with its vast territories of Arctic breeding habitats and many very important stop-over sites. Nevertheless, the Secretariat is to be congratulated on the enormous achievements in its relatively young life.

However, the Agreement is much more than the Secretariat and its activities. The Secretariat embodies the international component of the Agreement. This complements the work of Contracting Parties and other Range States at the national scale. The Agreement creates the international framework and conditions in the form of tools, mechanisms, guidance, coordination and commitment, for the national actions to be successful. It cannot be stressed enough that without national commitment and activities the Agreement stands no chance of being successful.

Wetlands International is convinced of the potential and effectiveness of this flyway approach, to the extent that we have made it one of our four global goals in our new 10-year Strategy to develop flyway initiatives as ecological networks all around the world. The good partnership that we have with AEWA and its mother convention CMS is a strong example of how we believe we can contribute to the flyway approach to conserve species and habitats and to improve people's well-being. Wetlands International will continue to provide a lot of



support and to work very closely with the Agreement's Secretariat. On the other hand, the Agreement helps to create the conditions for Wetlands International to achieve its strategic goals.

On the tenth anniversary it is also time to look ahead. The Agreement has so far focused on growing and establishing itself in the region. Now a new phase in the life of AEWA is starting, a phase where implementation of the Agreement Action Plan is becoming more and more important. Wetlands International clearly sees the importance of this change in focus and is therefore proud to be able to make a very significant contribution to this implementation and to build the capacity for it in the region, for example through the UNEP-GEF African/Eurasian Flyway Project

that will start this year. It will develop tools and capacity for the conservation of a network of critical sites for the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the African-Eurasian Region. For this reason, the AEWA Secretariat and Contracting Parties make a significant financial contribution to this project (besides many other donors, of which GEF and the German Government are the most important). As the leading subcontractor in this challenging project, Wetlands International looks forward to many more years of fruitful cooperation with AEWA!



African Waterbird Ringing Scheme (AFRING)

Very little is known about the migration of waterbirds in Africa. This applies both to intra-African migrants, and to migrants entering the continent from the rest of the Agreement Area.

In Europe, ringing studies have contributed greatly to the current understanding of migration and ecology, for example the European Union for Bird Ringing (EURING). This scheme was started in 1963, with the stated aim of organizing and standardizing scientific bird ringing in Europe. All the European ringing schemes that supply numbered rings for the study of wild birds are members of EURING. In 1966 EURING devised a standardized coding system for ringing recovery data to encourage the exchange of information between the



various national ringing centres. This code is now used by all national ringing centres and permits the easy transfer and analysis of data from many different sources.

By comparison, in Africa the lack of data is proving to be a major obstacle for the development of AEWA; for example, the lack of understanding of the movements of a species between countries limits the ability to generate management plans. A body corresponding to EURING in Africa is the South African Bird Ringing Unit (SAFRING). SAFRING was established in 1948 and has been operating continuously since that date. Since its inception, SAFRING has had a strong tradition of providing ringing services in southern Africa, especially in Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho, Mauritius and Malawi. Incoming ringing data is entered into a computer database, and some historical data has also been included. However, SAFRING covers only the southern region of the continent and not Africa as a whole.

From the point of view of AEWA, there is a great deal of hidden information that could play a critical role in the development of conservation activities for migratory waterbird species within the Agreement Area. AEWA therefore created a pilot study to develop an African Waterbird Ringing Scheme (AFRING), which, it is hoped, will provide international coordination between the various ringing schemes. The objectives of this pilot study are to:

- *determine the volume and location of waterbird ringing recovery data for waterbird species within the Agreement Area;*
- *undertake an exploratory analysis of the diversity of approaches needed to exploit the vast amount of existing ringing recovery data for these waterbirds, which can be implemented by AEWA;*
- *demonstrate the efficacy of these approaches by applying them to an exemplary set of species;*
- *plan a strategy for the full analysis of this database, and to identify the many stakeholders which will be needed to achieve this;*
- *provide guidelines for future waterbird ringing strategies, in such a way that these can make an important contribution to waterbird conservation science and the objectives of AEWA.*

The first African waterbird ringing course was held in East Africa (Kenya) in September 2004. The course focused on this part of Africa because the ringing scheme in the region is relatively well established, providing a useful platform from which to launch waterbird ringing initiatives in Africa. The course gave the delegates an excellent opportunity to learn more about wader catching, ageing and sexing techniques.

Another course is planned for Ghana in 2006 to train Western African ringers, and will help to develop the African Waterbird Ringing Scheme further.

AEWA unites interests

by Mr. Dieter Schramm,
President of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)



"Nature knows no borders" is a slogan often used and perhaps sometimes even over-used. Nevertheless, where the safeguarding of migratory waterbirds is concerned its truth should not be underestimated, and in that respect the value of AEWA cannot be too highly stressed. Therefore, it is a great honour to address you on behalf of the CIC – International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation – in this publication marking the tenth "bird-day" of AEWA. The vital role of AEWA in integrating flyways on an African-Eurasian scale should be highlighted. In no other part of the world do migratory waterbirds cross annually so many political borders, cultural boundaries and other demarcation lines between a huge variety of community-created conditions such as different conservation strategies. In this respect special concern should be paid to the breeding areas, the Central Asian areas and last but not least to Africa – a continent that needs as much awareness and support from outside as possible where sustainable nature conservation is concerned. In other words: the geographical scope of AEWA is very relevant and a valuable complement to the more narrow European approach.

Many international tools have been established to conserve biodiversity and secure sustainable development. In this "jungle" AEWA plays a significant role by placing special focus on waterbirds and

their habitats, and above all by creating synergies between partners with common interests. CIC welcomes AEWA in this important role. In this respect CIC appreciates AEWA's clear co-management orientation, with the involvement of stakeholders at all levels. There is a need for this kind of broader approach in order to get people actively involved. This is particularly the case wherever hunters are concerned. There is a long tradition of harvesting waterbirds. Recreational hunting is very popular, but throughout history subsistence hunting of waterbirds has always gone on. In many remote regions waterbirds are still an important food resource. In order to unite all these interests and to secure the long-term sustainability of harvest management, a joint approach by all stakeholders is needed.

AEWA is the only international nature management tool that mentions explicitly in its Action Plan the need to phase out hunting with lead shot in wetlands. CIC, in its 2003 resolution "Problems of the Use of Lead Shot for Hunting in Wetlands", addressed this particular problem and stressed the common aims. These are not only to eliminate unnecessary and wasteful losses of wildlife as well as of avoidable pollution or deterioration of natural habitats, but also the clear requirement for hunting to be sustainable in terms of its impact on populations, and that hunting must be based on the principle of wise use in order



to improve the general perception of hunting and the hunters' image. Therefore, CIC urges governmental and non-governmental bodies at both national and international levels to combine efforts to increase education measures and awareness among hunters and to make available relevant information about problems related to the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands. It also urges hunters at all levels to participate in discussions on the future use of lead shot for hunting.

As to our future co-operation, CIC appreciates its official seat on the AEWA Technical Committee. In addition to the day-to-day co-operation, this Committee provides our two international bodies with a valuable platform for joint management and understanding. Furthermore, the Meetings of the Parties are a suitable forum for strengthening our mutual interests and involving new stakeholders from all the countries within the African-Eurasian region. Finally, there are many good examples of our co-operation on concrete projects – demonstrating how to combine nature conservation with sustainable use in a way that benefits everyone involved.

All best wishes for our future co-operation and HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Phasing out lead shot in wetlands

Lead poisoning in waterbirds through the ingestion of spent lead shot is a serious environmental problem. Cartridges for hunting waterfowl each contain around 30 grams of lead. A hunter fires an average of 3-6 cartridges for every bagged bird. Only a few pellets actually hit the bird, the rest fall to the ground or into the water. Thus, thousands of tons of lead are deposited annually in wetlands around the world.

Waterbirds deliberately pick the pellets from the bottom and ingest them, mistaking them for food items or grit, which is retained in the gizzard to facilitate the grinding of food.

Lead is a highly poisonous metal, causing severe anaemia and affecting the nervous and circulatory systems, liver and kidneys. Depending on the amount of pellets swallowed, birds die within a few days or weeks. If a bird swallows only one pellet, it usually survives, although its immune system and fertility are likely to be affected. Also, even low concentrations of lead have a negative impact on energy storage, which affects the ability to prepare for migration. Many waterbirds have lead levels in their flesh well above the generally accepted health norm for human consumption. It is estimated that lead poisoning through the ingestion of spent lead shot kills many

millions of waterbirds worldwide each year. Presently, only six AEWA Contracting Parties plus the USA have phased out the use of lead shot in wetlands. Five Contracting Parties are well on the way but the majority of Range States, including the remaining 40 Contracting Parties have not yet complied with Paragraph 4.1.4. ("Parties shall endeavour to phase out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands by the year 2000"). Phasing out lead shot appears to entail certain difficulties, which impede a smooth transition to non-toxic shot. There are various reasons for this, but lack of awareness is generally the main impediment.

In order to deal with the problem of lack of information, both among hunters and authorities, the Agreement Secretariat was requested by MOP2 to raise awareness of the issue. Since then the Secretariat has organized several workshops on the subject. In addition, a special AEWA Newsletter, a reader and several articles have been published and widely distributed. The Secretariat will continue to increase awareness on problems of using lead shot for hunting in wetlands and on the availability of alternatives.





The Agreement has taken off and is ready for the future

by Mr. Bert Lenten,
Executive Secretary of AEWA



Earlier this year we approached the different organizations with the request to provide us with their view on what AEWA has achieved so far and what the challenges for the future will be. All organizations responded very positively to this request, enabling us to compile this booklet. The Secretariat is very grateful for this.

As mentioned by Ms. Jane Madgwick, the CEO of Wetlands International, the Agreement is more than just the Secretariat. As Executive Secretary of AEWA in principal I fully agree with this. However, at the same time I must say that the Secretariat's role should not be underestimated. An Agreement without a Secretariat is a car without a motor. The role of the Agreement's Secretariat is to initiate, stimulate, coordinate, and to oversee the implementation of the Agreement. However, needless to say this can only be done if the Secretariat receives the necessary support to do this. Contracting Parties and Range States, UNEP, the CMS Secretariat and other IGOs and NGOs play a crucial role in the implementation of AEWA.

Since 1 January 1996 I have been involved in AEWA as Executive Secretary. The staff has grown from initially one to currently three permanent members. On 17 October 2005 the Junior Professional Officer, who has been provided by the German Government, entered on duty. In addition, we have four temporary staff members to support us. All of them are very dedicated and committed to their work for AEWA. As Head of the Secretariat I must say that this also is one of the reasons why we have achieved so much over the last ten years.

My feeling is that it is not for the Secretariat to evaluate the success of AEWA, and in any case many of the articles in this booklet already give an impression of our achievements. Nonetheless, in my view, one of the most important achievements of the last ten years is the awareness which has been raised on flyways and the general acceptance of the 'flyway approach', which will be the main basis for our future work.

The challenge AEWA has to face for the future is to increase the implementation of



the Agreement in order to meet the 2010 target as set by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002, South Africa). Another challenge will be to strengthen the cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements and to secure the necessary resources to implement the Agreement adequately. Moreover, the discussion on further developments of the Agreement such as the extension of the geographical scope or the inclusion of other bird species has already started within the last few years and will be a major issue for the next decade. Whatever decision is taken in this respect it will be important to maintain AEWA's present strength as a highly pragmatic Agreement focusing on the flyways of the listed species.

I would like to thank Dr Gerard C. Boere, former Senior Policy Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), the Netherlands, and Mr. Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht, the former Executive Secretary of CMS, for having taken the initiative to develop the Agreement. Without their vision and without the support of the

LNV and CMS we would not have AEWA. While celebrating the Tenth Anniversary, tribute should be paid to these two visionaries. Tribute should also be paid to all those individuals and organizations that have supported our work over the last ten years.

With currently 51 Contracting Parties and more to join in due course we can say that the Agreement has really taken off. With the support of all stakeholders we are certainly prepared for the future.

Finally, I would like to wish all of us a Happy AEWA Birthday, and congratulate us all on what has been achieved so far.

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