



## 12<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

31 January – 01 February 2017, Paris, France

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### GENERAL GUIDANCE ON THE DEFINITION OF SPECIES POPULATIONS UNDER AEWA

#### **Introduction**

As part of the AEWA Technical Committee work plan for the inter-sessional period 2016-2018, which was approved by the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA in November 2015 (Resolution 6.17), the Committee was tasked with considering the delineation of population boundaries for selected AEWA species. The specific recommendations regarding the delineation of these species populations are presented to the Standing Committee for approval in meeting document 12.12.

As part of undertaking this task, the AEWA Technical Committee identified the need to further elaborate the existing 'Guidance on the Definition of Biogeographical Populations of Waterbirds' adopted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Meeting of the AEWA Parties in 2005 (Doc. MOP3.12).

Therefore, at its 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting on the 14-17 of March 2016, the AEWA Technical Committee drafted and adopted the attached additional general guidance on the definition of species populations under AEWA.

#### **Action Requested from the Standing Committee**

The Standing Committee is requested to review the proposed further guidance on the definition of species populations under AEWA and to approve it for further use.

## The Definition of Species Populations under AEWA

(Drafted and approved by the AEWA Technical Committee at its 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 14-17 March 2016)

### Introduction

Annex 2 of the Agreement lists the species the agreement applies to. It has also been established that only migratory populations of species should be listed in Table 1 of the AEWA Action Plan.

Document MOP3.12 reviews the practice and principles of defining waterbird populations and concludes:

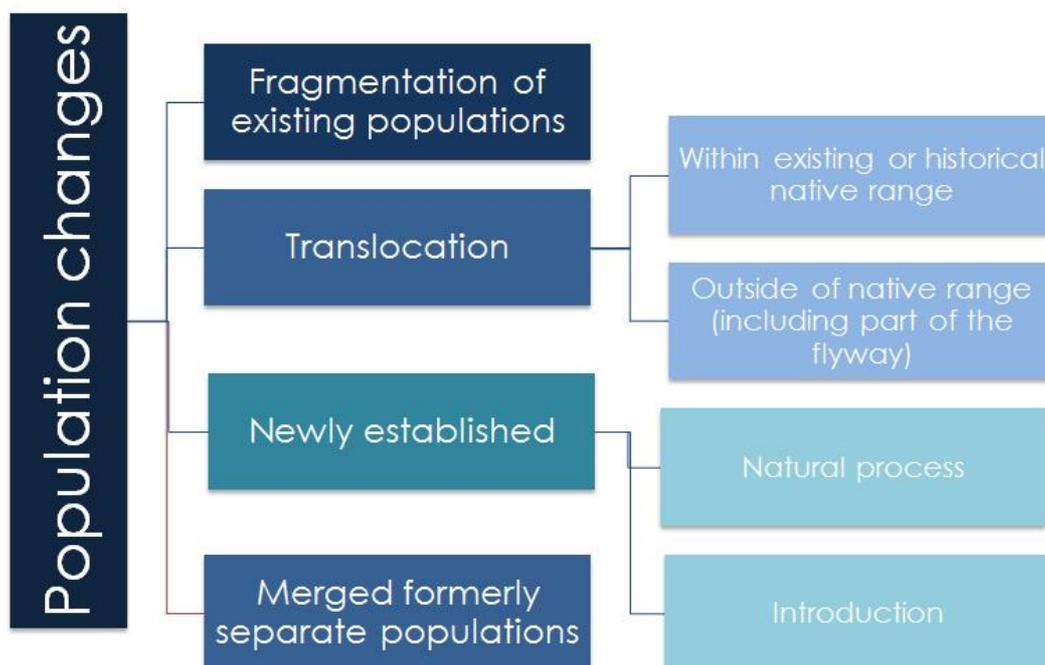
*"A waterbird biogeographical population is a population of a species or a sub-species that is either geographically discrete from other populations at all times of the year, or at some times of the year only, or is a specified part of a continuous distribution so defined for the purposes of conservation management".*

Key elements of this definition are that biogeographical populations are to be defined based on taxonomy (i.e. species, subspecies) and dispersion patterns (discrete throughout the year, some time of the year, or it is a specified part of a continuous distribution).

However, the guidelines do not address how to treat populations of AEWA species:

- 1) isolated as a consequence of population decline (i.e. a formerly continuous distribution becoming fragmented leading to discrete populations);
- 2) translocated completely within the native range;
- 3) newly established or for which migration routes have been modified, including the creation of new breeding and/or non-breeding/wintering ranges as a result of translocation.
- 4) newly established as a result of range expansion or colonisation;
- 5) newly established as a result of unintended introductions (e.g. due to escaped birds);
- 6) where two formerly separate/fragmented populations have merged into a continuous population

Figure 1. Possible population changes



## Proposed treatment

Regarding populations under point 1) above, the definition outlined in document MOP3.12 can be applied to fragmented populations as appropriate.

Regarding populations under point 2), the original - or in the absence of a former AEWA listing, the historical - population definition would apply;

Regarding populations falling under point 3), it follows from AEWA's conservation objectives that these populations should be listed on Table 1 if their reintroduction was carried out according to the principles of the AEWA translocation guidelines. Further, it follows from the definition of biogeographic populations in document MOP3.12, that populations which are discrete throughout the year or part of the year should be treated as separate populations.

For populations under point 4) the issue to be considered is whether the new population is an extension of an existing population - in which case it should be considered as part of the original population - or whether it is a distinct one – in which case it could be considered as a separate population following the definition outlined in document MOP3.12.

Regarding populations under point 5) - without prejudice to those falling under point 3) - and following from the provisions of Article III.g) of the Agreement Text<sup>1</sup>, non-native species are not subject to the conservation regime of AEWA.

For populations under point 6), these previously separate populations can be considered as one population, applying the definition outlined in document MOP3.12.

Table 1. Population changes and their treatment under AEWA

Population change	Treatment under AEWA
Fragmentation of existing population	Treat the populations as distinct populations in Table 1
Translocation within the native range	Treat the population as part of the existing population, or in the absence of an extant population, as part of the historical population
Translocation (partially or completely) outside of the existing range	a) Treat as a separate population and b) list on Table 1 if the translocation has been carried out in accordance with the AEWA translocation guidelines
Newly established as a result of natural processes	Treat as a separate population if it has distinct breeding or non-breeding areas
	Treat as part of the original population if it has no distinct breeding/wintering areas
Newly established as a result of unintended introduction (i.e. escaped birds)	Should not be recognized on Table 1 under AEWA
Formerly separate/fragmented populations have merged into a continuous population	Treat as one population, applying the definition outlined in document MOP3.12

<sup>1</sup> Article III.g) requires that Parties shall "*prohibit the deliberate introduction of non-native waterbird species into the environment and take all appropriate measures to prevent the unintentional release of such species if this introduction or release would prejudice the conservation status of wild flora and fauna; when non-native waterbird species have already been introduced, the Parties shall take all appropriate measures to prevent these species from becoming a potential threat to indigenous species*"