



AEWA NATIONAL REPORT

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

September 2005

National Parks and Conservation Service,

Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries

**AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY
WATERBIRDS (The Hague, 1995)**

Implementation as at September 2005

Contracting Party: Republic of Mauritius

**Designated AEWA Administrative Authority: National Parks and Conservation
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1. OVERVIEW OF ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

1.1 Summary of progress to date

Mauritius by declaring the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird sanctuary as a Reserve is providing protection to the migratory waterbirds visiting it every year. There is more to be done in relation to the management and restoration of the site and censusing of the migrants

1.2 Outline of planned actions for national implementation over the next three years

The identification and survey of wetlands all over Mauritius will be carried out. Monitoring of the migratory waterbirds will be intensified. More and more public awareness campaign on the importance for the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds will be carried out by means of talks in schools, production of pamphlets and displays and articles in the local press.

1.3 Outline of priorities for international co-operation over the next three years

To carry out ringing of birds in collaboration with other countries to have a better understanding of the migratory route and the place where they breed.

2. SPECIES CONSERVATION

Legal measures

2.1 Has a national policy/strategy or legislation to protect and conserve species covered by the Agreement (Table 1: column A; column B) and their supporting important areas been developed? If so:

The Wildlife and National Parks Act 1993 provides for the protection of species covered by the Agreement and for the proclamation of wetlands as special reserves for habitats of waterbirds.

(a) What are the main features of the policy/legislation?

Section 15 of the Act stipulates that “no person shall, except in accordance with a permit issued by the authorized officer, hunt, rear, have in possession, purchase, sell or export, any protected wildlife or wildlife product derived from protected wildlife.

Protected Wildlife in the Act is defined as wildlife other than game and the wildlife specified in the Second Schedule. None of the game and the Wildlife in the Second Schedule is a species covered by the Agreement. Therefore by inference all the species covered by the Agreement are protected under the Wildlife and National Parks Act 1993.

b. Which organisations are responsible for implementation?

The National parks and Conservation Service of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries is responsible for the implementation of the Act.

c. How does it relate to other national initiatives (e.g. national Biodiversity Action Plans)?

The Act is in line with the objectives of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The NBSAP is being finalized.

2.2 What legal measures or practices has your country developed to prohibit or regulate for the following (refer also to section 4 on hunting):

a. Taking of, and trade in birds listed in Column A and B of Table 1 (where

utilization or trade contravenes the provisions set out in paragraphs 2.1.1 (a) and 2.1.2 of the Action Plan)?

Neither taking of nor trade in birds listed in column A and B of Table 1 is allowed.

b. Methods of taking?

Not applicable

c. Setting of taking limits and monitoring these limits?

Not applicable

d. Sustainable hunting of species listed in Categories 2 and 3 (and marked by an asterisk) in Column A only?

Not applicable

e. Exemptions to the provisions set out in paragraphs 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3?

Not applicable

Single Species Action Plans

2.3 Of the species covered by the Agreement (species listed in Table 1: column A), which spend part or all of their life history in your country, which have formal international (Category 1, species marked with an asterisk) or national (column A) Single Species Action Plans:

None of the species listed in column A of Table 1 is a regular migrant to Mauritius, hence no single species Action Plan has been proposed.

Emergency Measures

2.4 Describe any bilateral or multilateral co-operative action that your country has undertaken to develop and implement emergency measures to conserve species in response to unfavourable or endangering conditions occurring in the Agreement area.

No bilateral or multilateral co-operative action has been developed. However, an oil spill contingency plan is in place for the protection of the bird species in the wetland (estuary) and the estuary itself against oil spill.

Re-establishments

2.5 Has a policy on species re-establishments been developed in your country? If yes, please outline the main features of the policy and give details of any re-establishment programmes for species covered by the Agreement.

a. Proposed? b. In preparation? c. Being implemented?

No policy on species establishment has so far been developed in Mauritius.

Please append a list of species and their action plan status. (For international plans indicate which other countries are involved in plan development/implementation.)

Nil

Introductions

2.6 Has your country developed and implemented legal measures to prohibit the introduction of nonnative species? Please provide details, particularly describing measures to control the release or introduction of non-native species (please indicate which species and their status).

There is a National Invasive Species Committee set up by the National Parks and Conservation Service under the Chairmanship of the University of Mauritius and the NPCCS as Secretary, to advise on the control and to prevent entry of alien invasive species in Mauritius. However, the species listed as potential invasive have been mainly plants and some animal pests but not migratory waterbirds.

There is at present discussion to extend the terms of reference of the Committee to all animal species.

3. HABITAT CONSERVATION

Habitat inventories

3.1 Has your country developed and published inventories of important habitats for species covered by the Agreement? If yes, please provide details, including any provisions to maintain or update these inventories.

The National Parks & Conservation Service is finalizing the terms of reference for a project to identify and survey the wetlands (coastal and inland) in Mauritius.

3.2 Has your country undertaken a strategic review of sites to develop a national network of important sites or areas for species covered by the Agreement? Please append a list of identified sites of international importance.

The Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary (about 26 hectares in area) which has been listed as a Ramsar site is visited every year by some 13 regular migrants and some 6 rare migrants, all the 19 birds species are covered by the Agreement.

A second site – the Blue Bay Marine park has been proposed as the second Ramsar site to the Ramsar Secretariat.

Conservation of areas

3.3 Describe the legal frameworks and other measures through which sites (including transfrontier sites) including of international importance gain practical protection. (Please append a list of internationally important protected sites.)

Three wetlands have been proclaimed as Reserves under Section 11 of the Wildlife and National Parks Act 1993:

- (i) Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary (RTREBS)
- (ii) Bras d'Eau
- (iii) Bassin Sarcelle

The first one is a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance, hence an internationally protected site, while the other two are nationally protected sites.

3.4 Has your country developed a management planning process for protected sites? If yes, please outline the types of management plans and organisations responsible for development and implementation.

It is mandatory under the Act for a Reserve proclaimed under the Act to have a management plan which prior to being approved by government is circulated for public comments.

It is the responsibility of the National Parks and Conservation Service for the development and implementation of the Management Plan for the RTREBS.

3.5 How many protected sites have formal management plans (please append a list of sites and their management planning status): a. Proposed? b. In preparation? c. Being implemented?

So far there is no formal management plan. The Management Plan for the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary is in preparation.

3.6 What measures does your country have in place to ensure the wise use of wetland habitats and to prevent habitat degradation e.g. pollution control and managing water resources? Please provide examples of best practice initiatives particularly involving cross-sectoral co-operation or public participation.

As wetlands habitats have been proclaimed as Reserves under the Wildlife and National Parks Act 1993 no activity which is inconsistent with the purposes for which a land has been reserved is allowed without the approval of the Minister.

No industry/factory is allowed to discharge its used water into the river course. The water quality of the estuary is being monitored regularly.

A solid waste dumping site at the edge of the estuary has been converted into a transfer station where solid waste are being compacted and carted away to land fill site.

An animal quarantine station for cattle near the RTREBS has been transferred.

There is now a project under the Ministry of Local Government to rehabilitate both the ex-dumping site and ex-quarantine area to provide in the first stage a football ground and a “*Parcour de Santé*” for the people of the locality.

The water of estuary is being regularly analysed to monitor its quality.

Rehabilitation and restoration

3.7 Does your country have a policy for the identification, rehabilitation and restoration of wetlands important for species covered by the Agreement? Please provide examples of rehabilitation and restoration projects and initiatives undertaken.

There is a project being implemented by the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit (NDU) to rehabilitate and restore an important wetland in Grand Bay (North West). However, a study needs to be carried out to know whether the wetland in question provides habitat for species covered by the Agreement.

Capacity building in the rehabilitation and restoration of wetlands is required for NPC's staff

4. MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES

Hunting

4.1 Outline the main features of legislation or legal measures in your country to control hunting of the species covered by the Agreement (e.g. use of lead shot and poisoned baits, and to eliminate illegal taking).

Waterbirds in Mauritius are not listed as game under the Wildlife and National Parks Act 1993 and hence are not allowed to be hunted. Furthermore, no hunting is allowed in reserves proclaimed under the Act, except for management purpose if required.

4.2 Does your country monitor hunting levels? If so, how is this information collated and reported?

No, not applicable as waterbirds are not being hunted.

4.3 Describe action undertaken by hunting clubs and organisations to manage hunting activity e.g. cooperative action, issuing of licences and proficiency testing of individual members.

There is an "Association des Chasseurs" but the management of hunting activity is being done by the respective land owner or lessee and it concerns the hunting of deer and wild pigs mainly.

Permit to carry a fire arm is issued by the Commissioner of Police under the Firearm Act while hunting licences are being issued by the Commissioner of Police under the Wildlife and National Parks Act. No proficiency testing of hunters exists.

Eco-tourism

4.4 What is the status of eco-tourism programmes or initiatives in your country? Please provide examples of projects with an indication of the significant outcomes.

Ecotourism is fast gathering momentum. It is true that tourists are attracted mainly by the sun, the sand and the sea of Mauritius but there is an increasing demand for ecotourism.

The Black River Gorges National Park (BRGNP) is a very popular destination for tourists and locals because of its breath taking scenery and its richness in biodiversity.

The RTREBS since the construction of a Visitor Center is attracting more and more visitors. There is an awareness project funded under UNDP/GEF Small Grant Project in the pipe line where a local non-governmental organization will include the construction of a hide, production of educational materials and purchase of binoculars to raise awareness among the local communities.

4.5 *What social and economic benefits accrue to the local communities from the conservation of important waterbird sites?*

The conservation of the RTREBS, as a waterbird site, has resulted in the closing down of many pollution generating activities in the region. The people in the region will be provided with infrastructures namely football pitch and a jogging track which will undoubtedly improve the quality of their life.

The influx of visitors to the RTREBS could be economically exploited by the people in the region by developing small business like sale of souvenirs, handicrafts, etc.

Other human activities

4.6 *Does your country carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of activities potentially affecting protected sites or areas important for species covered by the Agreement? If yes, briefly describe the main features of your EIA policy and procedures.*

The undertakings requiring an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) are listed in Part B of the First Schedule to the Environment Protection Act 2002 (EPA). The two activities mentioned in the list which could potentially affect protected areas are

- (i) Land cleaning and development in environmentally sensitive areas such as water catchment areas, water logged areas etc and
- (ii) Wetland development

The main features of our EIA policy and procedures are:

A proponent, as per Section 18 of the EPA Act has to apply for an EIA licence in respect of an undertaking specified in the First Schedule of the Act. He shall have to submit to the Director of the Department of Environment an EIA report signed by him or his duly appointed legal representative (Consultants) giving a series of information listed in the Act like proof of ownership, site plan, a true and fair statement and description of the undertaking proposed, the direct or indirect effects that the undertaking is likely to have in the environment and mitigating measures, an environment monitoring plan.

As per Section 20 of the Act, the EIA is open for public inspection and the Director shall give notice of public inspection in the Government Gazette and in two issues of two daily newspapers.

The Director has to review the EIA. There is also under the Act an EIA Committee consisting of Permanent Secretaries of different Ministries with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment as Chairman.

The task of the EIA Committee is to examine the application for an EIA licence referred to it after review by the Director and makes recommendations to the Minister of Environment.

The Minister, after taking into consideration the recommendation of the EIA Committee, within a limited time may approve the issue of the EIA licence on such terms and conditions as he may deem appropriate or disapprove the EIA and reject the application.

On approval of an EIA by the Minister, the Director issues the EIA licence on the terms and conditions specified by the Minister.

The proponent, if the EIA application is rejected, can have recourse to an appeal.

4.7 Please describe the main features of your planning policy and provide examples of practical implementation (e.g. activities to minimising disturbance of species populations or limit the impact of species populations on crops or fisheries). Please summarize any land-use conflicts especially emphasising successful

solutions to problems encountered in promoting the wise-use of waterbirds and their habitats.

Below is an example of a conflict which has been solved at the highest decision taking level, the Cabinet of Ministers.

It was proposed in the 1990's by the then Mauritian Marine Authority to dredge the estuary to provide substratum for reclaiming land for extension of the port area. The then Ministry of Agriculture objected to this dredging proposal as all the mudflats would be flooded by sea water causing the destruction of the foraging ground of the migratory birds.

A visit was organized for the Cabinet and the decision to carry out the dredging further at sea with the additional cost that would be involved was taken on the site itself thereby saving the habitat of the migratory birds.

The Prime Minister further established a Fund for the development and protection of the estuary as a wetland habitat.

5. RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Status of research and monitoring programmes for species

5.1 How are priorities for research identified in your country? Please briefly describe your country's research programmes, including any bilateral or multilateral co-operative action, for wetland habitats and for species covered by the Agreement (e.g. studies into species population, ecology and migratory patterns). Please append a list of research activities initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years.

The need for research in a particular field is identified by the relevant institution. A project brief is prepared for approval by the Ministry. If funds have not been made available in the budget to carry out the research, it is then up to the institution concerned to seek the source of funding.

The main research being carried out at the RTREBS is on water quality of the estuary. This has been done mainly by University students.

5.2 What monitoring activities does your country undertake, including any bilateral or multilateral cooperative action, of wetland areas and species covered by the Agreement (e.g. national monitoring schemes, International Waterfowl Census)?

Please append a list of monitoring activities or programmes initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years

The need for research in a particular field is identified by the relevant institution. A project brief is prepared for approval by the Ministry. If funds have not been made available in the budget to carry out the research, it is then up to the institution concerned to seek the source of funding.

The main research which has carried out at the RTREBS during the past 4 years is on water quality of the estuary, presence of metals in the silt, analysis for presence of E-coli in the water and feeding habits of the migratory birds. These have been done mainly by University students. A university student has even produced a management plan for the estuary as a requirement of a project to be carried out during the second year of the course.

With the recruitment of additional staff at the NPCS a census of water birds will be carried out during this migratory period from October 2005 to April 2006. However NPCS and the study would have gained if training on methodology of censusing could be provided to the NPCS's staff.

6. EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Training and development programmes

6.1 Describe the status of training and development programmes which support waterbird conservation and implement the AEWA Action Plan.

A couple of officers the National Parks & Conservation Service staff have benefited from training in the preparation of management plan for wetlands. However there has not been any training opportunities in the actual management and restoration of wetlands as water fowl habitat and censusing of waterbirds. Besides providing legal protection to waterbirds in the wetland programmes to support waterbird conservation does exist.

6.2 What bilateral or multilateral co-operative action is your country undertaking to develop training programmes and share examples of good practice?

Workshops on Ramsar Convention and classification and importance of wetlands have been organised through SADC/IUCN. We would welcome training programmes on censusing of

birds , management of wetlands and sharing of good practices through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Raising public awareness

6.3 Describe activities to raise public awareness of the objectives of the AEWA Action Plan. Please outline any particular successes generating public interest in, and securing support for, waterbird and wetland conservation (e.g. campaigns, information notes or other initiatives)?

The NPCS has been organizing on the occasion of World Wetland Day for the past two years drawing competition on wetlands and migratory waterbirds for primary school leavers (Age group 11 – 12) of the region in the context of public awareness and the importance of wetlands as waterbirds habitat.

Visits to the estuary have been organized for pupils of primary and secondary schools (12 classes of 35 to 40 pupils each) of the region and free transport has been provided as an incentive for the head teachers/principals to organize the visit. This has been a laudable exercise which is being extended to schools of other regions.

A television educational programme has also been filmed at the estuary.

Pamphlets have been printed and distributed freely on the RTREBS and on some of the migratory birds hibernating there, all of which are listed in the Action Plan.

A Visitor Centre has been built in the RTREBS and inaugurated in September 2004 to provide information to visitors to the estuary on wetlands and migratory birds and for them to view the water birds (through the telescope). The Centre, during the migratory period (October to April) is open on weekends as well.

It is with great regret that we have not been able to avail ourselves of the grant from AEWA for the production of posters on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of AEWA.

It is being planned to celebrate as from next year the World Wetland Day on 2nd February and the Migratory Waterbirds Days on 9th and 10th April

7. FINAL COMMENTS

7.1 General comments on the implementation of the AEWA Action Plan

The AEWA Action Plan is being implemented because the birds species under the Agreement visiting the Reserve are being given legal protection. We would be glad to stand guided by the Secretariat to improve on the implementation of the Action Plan.

7.2 Observations concerning the functions and services of the various AEWA bodies

- a. The Agreement Secretariat**
- b. International organisations**
- c. AEWA NGO partners**

The Agreement Secretariat through its newsletter has been keeping the Parties informed about its activities (b) and (c). The Parties would gain if the International organizations and AEWA NGO partners could develop communication link with them by identifying a focal point. At present, there is interaction only between the Secretariat and the international organizations and NGOs.

The list of Focal Points of all contracting Parties, if made available to all parties, would help to improve on communication among Parties.

7.3 How might the Action Plan be further developed as a practical aid for national and international conservation of migratory waterbirds?

The Action Plan is very explicit and needs regular monitoring of its implementation and upgrading now and again.

Lastly the Secretariat should endeavour to provide tools to the Parties to facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan.

8. Progress to implement Resolutions and Recommendations of the Meeting of the Parties

Please summarize progress to implement decisions of previous Meetings of the Parties.

Mauritius has submitted its report in the form of a letter on the implementation of decisions of the second Meeting of the Parties on the use of lead shots.

Mauritius has been regular with the payment of dues to AEWA and has contributed further by hosting the 6th Meeting of the Technical Committee in May 2005 in Flic en Flac, Mauritius.

9. OPTIONAL SECTION – Planned and future actions

Contracting Parties are invited to outline below any further information regarding the aims of the Agreement, for example, planned actions or other informative examples.

- 1. Species conservation***
- 2. Habitat conservation***
- 3. Management of human activities***
- 4. Research and monitoring***
- 5. Education and information***

List of abbreviations and acronyms used in the report

AEWA	Agreement in the Conservation of African Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds
BRGNP	Black River Gorges National Park
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
EPA	Environment Protection Act of 2002
MOP	Meeting of Parties
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPCS	National Parks and Conservation Service
RTREBS	Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary
SADC	Southern African Developing Countries
IUCN	World Conservation Union

References

AEWA Action Plan (2003 – 2005)
AEWA Agreement Text

Environment Protection Act of 2002

Wildlife and National Parks Act of 1993
MOP2 Resolutions and recommendations
Correspondences from Office File

Appendices

Appendix 1: Status of Single Species Action Plans

Appendix 2: List of sites of international importance

Appendix 3: Status of management plans for sites of international importance

Appendix 4: List of research and monitoring programmes and projects

Appendix 5: List of national institutions involved in migratory waterbird conservation

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Appendix 7: List of relevant migratory waterbird and habitat conservation projects initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years