

**19<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**  
*12–14 March 2024, Virtual conference format*

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**REPORT OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

*14-16 March 2023, Bonn, Germany*

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## Summary of TC18 Decisions

AGENDA ITEM		DECISION
<b>Agenda item 4</b>	Adoption of the Agenda and Work Programme	The Meeting adopted the Agenda (document AEWA/TC18.3 Rev. 1) and Work Programme (document AEWA/TC18.4 Rev. 1) with the minor amendment to place Working Group 6 at the end of agenda item 9.
<b>Agenda item 5</b>	Admission of Observers	The Committee agreed to admit the observers present and welcomed them to the meeting.
<b>Agenda item 6</b>	Election of Officers	Ms Melissa Lewis was elected as Chair and Mr Taulant Bino as Vice-chair of the Technical Committee for the triennium 2023-2025.
<b>Agenda item 9.1</b>	TC Working Group 1 (Field of Application)	<p>The principle of shortening names of populations listed in Table 1 of AEWA's Annex 3 as presented in document AEWA/TC18.7 was approved and a new task 1.7. <i>Shortening of population names in Table 1 of AEWA's Annex 3</i> was added to the TC workplan.</p> <p>The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Maccoa Duck as presented in document AEWA/TC18.8 Rev.1 was approved.</p> <p>The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Bewick's Swan as presented in document AEWA/TC18.9 Ins.1 was approved.</p> <p>The decision on document AEWA/TC18.10 <i>Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Greylag Goose</i> was deferred given there was not enough information at present to move forward and the population will be kept under review.</p> <p>The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Glossy Ibis as presented in document AEWA/TC18.11 was approved.</p> <p>The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Bar-tailed Godwit as presented in document AEWA/TC18.13 was approved.</p> <p>The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Caspian Tern as presented in document AEWA/TC18.14 was approved.</p>
<b>Agenda item 9.2</b>	TC Working Group 2 (Species Conservation)	The priority list for species action and management planning as presented in document AEWA/TC18.15 Ins.1 and the revised Annex 2 was approved. The list of prioritised populations for management planning in Annexes 5-7 will be transcribed into the document after the meeting and will be finalised without the need to bring it back to the TC.
<b>Agenda item 9.4</b>	TC Working Group 4 (Management of Human Activities)	The Draft ToR on a Guidance on Methods and Tools for Waterbird Harvest Data Collection as presented in document AEWA/TC18.18 Ins.1 was approved, and the module on harvest data reporting in the National Report Format will be extended to non-Party Range States.

		The Draft ToR on a Rapid Assessment of Sustainability of Harvest of AEWA Waterbird Populations as presented in document AEWA/TC18.19 was approved noting that minor adjustments may still have to be made.
<b>Agenda item 9.8</b>	TC Working Group 8 (Strategic, reporting, emerging and other issues)	The Draft Revised Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2021-2024 as presented in document AEWA/TC18.21 Ins.1 was approved except for the chapter on HPAI which still needs revision.
<b>Agenda item 10</b>	Briefing from Possible Break-out Groups	Under TC Working Group 1, the delineation of biogeographical populations of the European Shag as presented in option D of document AEWA/TC18.12 was approved. Under TC Working Group 4, the Draft ToR for a Review of the Nature and Extent of Waterbird Harvest and the Socio-economic Importance of Waterbirds as presented in document AEWA/TC18.16 Ins.1 was approved. Under TC Working Group 1, the Draft ToR on a Guidance on Adaptive Management as presented in document 18.17 Ins.1 was approved. Under TC Working Group 2, two sub-tasks under task 2.5. <i>Priorities for seabird conservation</i> were approved.
<b>Agenda item 11</b>	Date and Venue of the next Technical Committee Meeting	The next Technical Committee Meeting will be convened in early 2024 and will take place online.

### **Agenda item 1. Opening**

1. The Vice-chair of the Technical Committee (TC), Mr Taulant Bino, opened the meeting, welcoming all those present. He pointed out that he was the Vice-chair of the TC and would be presiding over the meeting only until the new officers were elected for triennium 2023-2025.

2. Mr Bino was happy to be able to welcome many observers, especially those from Africa. He continued to also welcome the new members of the Technical Committee: Ms Maria Dias representing the North and South-western Europe region, Mr Hichem Azafzaf representing the Northern Africa region, Ms Melissa Lewis representing the Southern Africa region, Mr Zurab Javakhishvili representing the Eastern Europe region, Mr Yves Souangbi representing the Central African region, the Game Management Expert Mr Jesper Madsen, the Rural Economics Expert Mr Nils Bunnefeld and finally the CEPA Expert Mr Chris Rostron.

3. Mr Bino reminded all those present that the meeting was the first of the triennium 2023-2025 and that it was an important one, as the new workplan would more precisely be developed to define the deliverables, responsibilities, and timelines for the coming three years.

4. Finally, Mr Bino sincerely thanked the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany for providing funding, which made it possible to hold the meeting in-person and wished everyone a productive and enjoyable meeting.

5. Mr Jacques Trouvilliez, AEWA Executive Secretary, warmly welcomed the members and observers to the Committee. He reiterated the importance of the meeting, since it would be setting the scene for the next three years and emphasised that the TC was at the heart of the work of AEWA.

6. Mr Trouvilliez welcomed the Standing Committee (StC) members, who were also present at the meeting: the StC Chair Mr Simon Mackown, the StC Vice-chair Ms Humbu Mafumo as well as Mr Nick Warmelink representing the Depositary.

7. Finally, he wished all those present a fruitful meeting.

8. Mr Sergey Dereliev, Head of the Science, Implementation and Compliance Unit at the AEWA Secretariat, also welcomed all those present and said it was essential that the TC met in-person, which was only possible thanks to the generous contributions of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany as previously already mentioned by Mr Bino.

9. Mr Dereliev reiterated the importance of the TC, saying that it needed to work as a team and that it was the engine of AEWA and a think-tank which contributed to its implementation. This meeting was an important one where the blueprint of the work for the next three years would be created.

### **Agenda item 2. Welcome Addresses**

10. Mr Preben Clausen, Technical Focal Point of Denmark, informed all those present that Mr Madsen was not able to attend the meeting in-person due to a flu and said that he would do his best to represent Denmark.

11. Mr Dereliev clarified that also the representative of the Eastern Africa region Mr Peter Njoroge as well as the representative of the Western Africa region Ms Khady Gueye had cancelled their participation. Since Mr Madsen, however, had been quite instrumental in the sustainable harvest agenda, it was decided that he would exceptionally join the meeting virtually for the respective agenda items.

### **Agenda item 3. Modus Operandi of the Technical Committee**

12. Mr Dereliev introduced document AEWA/TC18.2 *Modus Operandi of the Technical Committee of AEWA*, explaining that it had been adopted by MOP7 and that there had not been any changes since. Only the annexes had been updated. Changes could only be made at the next MOP in 2025, if necessary.

### **Agenda item 4. Adoption of the Agenda and Work Programme**

13. Referring to documents AEWA/TC18.3 Rev.1 *Provisional Agenda* and AEWA/TC18.4 Rev.1 *Provisional Work Programme*, Mr Dereliev explained that the bulk of the meeting would be dedicated to the detailed planning of the TC workplan implementation.

14. Mr Dereliev informed everyone that the order of working groups under agenda item 9 would slightly be changed in that Working Group 6 on Education and Information would be taken at the end of the agenda item. He furthermore asked all those present whether anyone had anything to add under agenda item 12 *Any other Business*.

15. Since there were no additions under agenda item 12 and no further remarks, the Provisional Agenda and Work Programme were adopted.

**Decision:** The Meeting adopted the Agenda (document AEWA/TC18.3 Rev. 1) and Work Programme (document AEWA/TC18.4 Rev. 1) with the minor amendment to place Working Group 6 at the end of agenda item 9.

#### **Agenda item 5. Admission of Observers**

16. Introducing this agenda item, Mr Dereliev informed those present that four of the AEWA NGO partner organisations were permanent observers to the Technical Committee, all of which played a critical role by contributing additional expertise towards the delivery of the work of the Committee: the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), BirdLife International, the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation in the EU (FACE) and Migratory Birds of the Western Palearctic (OMPO).

17. Other observers included representatives of the Contracting Parties, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Botswana, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Tanzania, Zimbabwe as well as the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

**Decision:** The Committee agreed to admit the observers present and welcomed them to the meeting.

#### **Agenda item 6. Election of Officers**

18. Introducing this agenda item, Mr Dereliev noted that Ms Ruth Cromie had retired after two terms on the TC and that two officers, Chair and Vice-chair, were to be elected for the triennium 2023-2025.

19. Upon Mr Dereliev's invitation for nominations among the Regional Representatives for the Chair of the TC, Ms Maria Dias nominated Ms Melissa Lewis. There were no further nominations. The Committee elected by acclamation Ms Lewis as Chair of the TC for the triennium 2023-2025.

20. Mr Dereliev explained that Mr Bino had been on the TC serving as Vice-chair for three years and was now on his second term. Mr Bino had already expressed an interest to continue, however, alternative proposals could be made.

21. Since there were no further nominations, the Committee elected by acclamation Mr Bino as Vice-chair of the TC for the triennium 2023-2025.

22. Ms Lewis thanked the TC members for electing her as Chair and congratulated Mr Bino on being re-elected as Vice-chair. Ms Lewis took her place at the front table to preside the remainder of the meeting in her capacity as newly elected TC Chair.

**Decision:** Ms Melissa Lewis was elected as Chair and Mr Taulant Bino as Vice-chair of the Technical Committee for the triennium 2023-2025.

## **Agenda item 7. Reports by the Regional Representatives**

23. The attending regional representatives delivered progress reports on the implementation of the agreement to the meeting from their respective regions. The reports by the regional representatives on the implementation of AEWA in their respective regions are available in Appendix I. These include reports from the Central Europe, North and South-western Europe, Northern Africa, and Southern Africa regions.

## **Agenda item 8. Report by the Secretariat**

24. Mr Trouvilliez introduced document AEWA/TC18.5 *Report of the Secretariat* by giving all those present a brief overview on the organisation and staffing of the Secretariat; general management, including recruitment of Parties and cooperation with other organisations; Communication, Information Management and Outreach; Science, Implementation and Compliance as well as on capacity-building.

## **Agenda item 9. TC Work Plan 2023-2025**

25. Ms Lewis introduced document AEWA/TC18.6 *Workplan for the AEWA Technical Committee 2023-2025*, which was going to be reviewed during the substantive part of the meeting. She thought that the TC had a very ambitious workplan for the triennium and said that this would be the meeting where all the planning would begin.

26. Handing over to Mr Dereliev, Ms Lewis asked him to introduce the workflow of the meeting under this agenda item. Mr Dereliev explained that the workplan would be discussed in detail within the eight working groups which would take place in the plenary consecutively and the agreed planning will be captured in a customised tabular template. He further explained that there were priority levels assigned to each task and there was an indication of which strategic plan objective it related to as well as an indicative budget, which was needed to complete the task.

27. Mr Dereliev pointed out that the leads of each task group would be expected to be active and to make sure the work was progressing. Unlike in previous years when Secretariat staff were assigned to support working groups, due to capacity shortage, there would now be only a Chair for each working group, who would oversee the work of the task groups.

28. The detailed outcome of the discussions in the eight working groups under agenda items 9.1 to 9.8 were summarised in the further elaborated TC workplan for the triennium 2023-2025. The report below from items 9.1 to 9.8 includes records only on those agenda items which required a decision to be taken on a meeting document as well as any new tasks that have been added to the workplan.

### **Agenda item 9.1. TC Working Group 1 (Field of Application)**

29. Mr Nagy introduced documents AEWA/TC18.7 through AEWA/TC18.14, whereby documents AEWA/TC18.8 through AEWA/TC18.14 were all relevant to task 1.2. *Population definitions*.

30. After an extensive discussion on document AEWA/TC18.7 *Proposal for Simplifying Names of Populations Listed in Table 1 of AEWA's Annex 3*, the principle of shortening names of populations was agreed upon by the TC. It would be applied when compiling the proposal for amendments to Table 1, which would be submitted to the MOP for review and approval. Wetlands International would compile a list with proposed names for Table 1. For this a new task was added to the workplan, namely task 1.7. *Shortening of population names in Table 1 of AEWA's Annex 3*.

31. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.8 Rev.1 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Maccoa Duck*, it was agreed that the definition of the Eastern Africa population would be revised and only include areas in Kenya and Tanzania, as proposed.

32. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.9 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Bewick's Swan*, following some discussions it was decided to revise the document and upload an in-session version. This would give Mr Nagy some time to look up several of the issues raised, which would help to have a more informed discussion and decision-making process. With the minor changes and corrections made as presented in document AEWA/TC18.9 Ins.1, the delineation, as described in the in-session version of the document, was agreed upon.

33. Given that there was not enough information at present to move forward on document AEWA/TC18.10 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Greylag Goose*, the decision was deferred, and it was agreed to keep the population under review.

34. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.11 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Glossy Ibis*, it was agreed to change the name of the new population to Caspian & C Asia (bre) as well as to make some minor adjustment to the boundaries, as proposed.

35. There was an extensive debate on document AEWA/TC18.12 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the European Shag*, particularly on presented options B and D. Therefore, a break-out group was established to move the discussions forward. The break-out group was asked to report later to the meeting what they, based on their discussions, thought would be the most sensible way forward.

36. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.13 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Bar-tailed Godwit*, it was agreed to change the population names in Table 1 to *Limosa lapponica taymyrensis* and *Limosa lapponica yamalensis*, as proposed.

37. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.14 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Caspian Tern*, it was agreed that the breeding range of the population should be extended to the western shore of Lake Vänern and to the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga. The flyway should be extended to the Atlantic coast of Europe and towards the border of Russia and Ukraine. In Africa, the eastern limit of the flyway should be extended to the line of Djibouti to Maindi on the Indian Ocean coast of Kenya to include the Rift Valley lakes. The southern boundaries should be extended to the Upemba National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Decisions:**

The principle of shortening names of populations listed in Table 1 of AEWA's Annex 3 as presented in document AEWA/TC18.7 was approved and a new task 1.7. *Shortening of population names in Table 1 of AEWA's Annex 3* was added to the TC workplan.

The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Maccoa Duck as presented in document AEWA/TC18.8 Rev.1 was approved.

The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Bewick's Swan as presented in document AEWA/TC18.9 Ins.1 was approved.

The decision on document AEWA/TC18.10 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the Greylag Goose* was deferred given there was not enough information at present to move forward and the population will be kept under review.

The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Glossy Ibis as presented in document AEW/TC18.11 was approved.

The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Bar-tailed Godwit as presented in document AEW/TC18.13 was approved.

The delineation of biogeographical populations of the Caspian Tern as presented in document AEW/TC18.14 was approved.

#### **Agenda item 9.2. TC Working Group 2 (Species Conservation)**

38. With reference to task 2.1. *Priority list for species action and management planning*, Mr Nagy introduced document AEW/TC18.15 *Draft Priority List of Populations for Action and Management Planning in 2023-2025*.

39. Following some discussions, the meeting agreed on the prioritisation of species/populations for action and management planning, while noting that Mr Dereliev and Mr Nagy would make some editorial changes to be presented in an in-session document for everyone to review. These were agreed upon later in the meeting as presented in document AEW/TC18.15 Ins.1 and the revised Annex 2. The TC agreed that the list of prioritised populations for management planning in Annexes 5-7 will be transcribed into the document after the meeting and will be finalised without the need to bring it back to the TC.

40. Referring to task 2.4. *Sustainable harvests and the socio-economic importance of waterbirds*, Mr Hearn introduced document AEW/TC18.16 *Draft ToR for a Review of the Nature and Extent of Waterbird Harvest and the Socio-economic Importance of Waterbirds*.

41. Following some discussions and comments made, Ms Lewis suggested a small break-out group be convened to tweak some of the wording in the ToR for an in-session document to be uploaded and report back to the meeting, once everyone had the chance to review the changes made.

42. With reference to task 2.6. *Guidance on adaptive harvest management (AHM)*, Mr Madsen introduced document AEW/TC18.17 *Draft ToR on a Guidance on Adaptive Management*.

43. Ms Lewis noted that resulting from the discussions a general chapter on the importance of adaptive management more broadly and that adaptive management could not purely be seen in the context of harvest should be added, while the principal focus remained on AHM.

44. Furthermore, Ms Jones agreed to draft some changes to the text in paragraph 1 under the duties of the contractor regarding the relevant legislative framework. This would then be uploaded as in-session document for everyone to review. In addition, Mr Madsen would include some of the resource requirements for adaptive management as proposed by Mr Parsons.

#### **Decision:**

The priority list for species action and management planning as presented in document AEW/TC18.15 Ins.1 and the revised Annex 2 was approved. The list of prioritised populations for management planning in Annexes 5-7 will be transcribed into the document after the meeting and will be finalised without the need to bring it back to the TC.

#### **Agenda item 9.4. TC Working Group 4 (Management of Human Activities)**

45. With reference to task 4.6. *Harvest data estimates from non-Party Range States*, Mr Cy Griffin introduced document AEW/TC18.18 *Draft ToR on a Guidance on Methods and Tools for Waterbird Harvest Data Collection*, in his role as lead of the ad-hoc task group dealing with this ToR.

46. Following some discussions, everyone agreed with the ToR as presented in document AEWA/TC18.18. However, Mr Griffin noted that in the ToR the duties of the contractor in the AEWA region were described, but in the modules the agreement area was mentioned. He thought it was important to specify the AEWA region and add Contracting Parties and non-Party Range States in brackets.

47. Ms Lewis suggested that Mr Griffin add that clarification to the text in track change, have an in-session document and agree on the text at a later stage of the meeting. The changes made as presented in document AEWA/TC18.18 Ins.1 were then agreed upon.

48. Furthermore, it was agreed to extend to non-Party Range States the module on harvest data reporting in the National Report Format in an endeavour to collect all the information.

49. Moving on to task 4.7. *Sustainability of harvest*, Mr Madsen introduced document AEWA/TC18.19 *Draft ToR on a Rapid Assessment of Sustainability of Harvest of AEWA Waterbird Populations*.

50. The TC agreed to the ToR as presented in document AEWA/TC18.19 with the caveat of possible minor adjustments still to be made. In addition, it was noted that the methodology would not be developed under the contract to be issued for the rapid assessment but would be done in the context of the assignment under the contract on recovery of EU Birds Directive Annex II species by the European Commission. A team of contractors had already been hired to develop the methodology, which would be brought back to the TC for review and joint approval.

51. Finally, Mr Madsen noted that the timing of the different projects should be looked into in more detail to ensure to capitalise on the ongoing processes and to create synergies between the activities.

**Decisions:**

The Draft ToR on a Guidance on Methods and Tools for Waterbird Harvest Data Collection as presented in document AEWA/TC18.18 Ins.1 was approved, and the module on harvest data reporting in the National Report Format will be extended to non-Party Range States.

The Draft ToR on a Rapid Assessment of Sustainability of Harvest of AEWA Waterbird Populations as presented in document AEWA/TC18.19 was approved noting that minor adjustments may still have to be made.

**Agenda item 9.8. TC Working Group 8 (Strategic, reporting, emerging and other issues)**

52. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.21 *Draft Revised Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2021-2024* relevant to task 8.1. *National Reports*, Mr Parsons suggested to add some text on highly pathogenic avian influenza.

53. Mr Parsons explained that his proposal was to introduce a new question which better described the logical process that Parties may need to go through when thinking about avian influenza.

54. After introducing the draft text as presented in document AEWA/TC18.21 Ins.1 the reporting format was agreed upon except for the chapter on HPAI which still needed revision.

**Decision:**

The Draft Revised Format for National Reports on the Implementation of AEWA 2021-2024 as presented in document AEWA/TC18.21 Ins.1 was approved except for the chapter on HPAI which still needs revision.

## **Agenda item 10. Briefing from Possible Break-out Groups**

55. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.12 *Delineation of Biogeographical Populations of the European Shag*, the break-out group reported to the meeting that based on their discussions the proposed option D to retain subspecies *aristotelis* as one population, but to split subspecies *desmarestii* into a West and an East Mediterranean population (including the Black Sea) would be the most sensible way forward. The TC members agreed.

56. Regarding document AEWA/TC18.16 Ins.1 *Draft ToR for a Review of the Nature and Extent of Waterbird Harvest and the Socio-economic Importance of Waterbirds*, Mr Dereliev introduced the addition made to the socio-economics paragraph, which was to include examples or case studies of temporal changes in socio-economic effects, and how these are related to varying management approaches and conservation status of the relevant populations over time.

57. All those present agreed to the addition made.

58. Moving on to document AEWA/TC18.17 Ins.1 *Draft ToR on a Guidance on Adaptive Management*, Mr Dereliev again introduced the additions that were made. The first addition was to include an assessment of the context, including the relevant legislative framework under the duties of the contractor. The second was for the contractor to provide perspectives on human and economic resource requirements (scale-dependent) in the different phases of an adaptive management program.

59. All those present agreed to both additions made.

60. There was also a break-out group dealing with task 2.5. *Priorities for seabird conservation*. These discussions resulted in two sub-tasks. The first being to produce a more detailed work plan for the task group and the second being to prepare for submission to MOP9 an operational guidance for Contracting Parties on how to implement the adopted priorities. All those present agreed to this approach.

### **Decisions:**

Under TC Working Group 1, the delineation of biogeographical populations of the European Shag as presented in option D of document AEWA/TC18.12 was approved.

Under TC Working Group 4, the Draft ToR for a Review of the Nature and Extent of Waterbird Harvest and the Socio-economic Importance of Waterbirds as presented in document AEWA/TC18.16 Ins.1 was approved.

Under TC Working Group 1, the Draft ToR on a Guidance on Adaptive Management as presented in document 18.17 Ins.1 was approved.

Under TC Working Group 2, two additional sub-tasks under task 2.5. *Priorities for seabird conservation* were approved.

61. After concluding the briefings from the break-out groups and with that the discussions on agenda item 9, Mr Dereliev outlined the next steps in finalising the further elaborated TC Work Plan 2023-2025. The detailed planning, which was captured in the customised tabular template in the course of the meeting, will be edited and tidied up by the Secretariat and then posted on the TC Workspace for review and comments. The Secretariat will revise the Work Plan accordingly following the feedback received and will post the final version which will be considered agreed and approved. This should be completed as soon as possible, and within a month from this meeting.

## **Agenda item 11. Date and Venue of the next Technical Committee Meeting**

62. Mr Dereliev said that there would be a total of three TC meetings in the triennium and that the next meeting should be convened for early 2024 and would take place online. It would not be the same

format as the first and the last meetings of the triennium and Mr Dereliev and Ms Lewis would work on a concept for it. It would probably be more targeted at the status of implementation of the workplan.

**Decision:** The next Technical Committee Meeting will be convened in early 2024 and will take place online.

#### **Agenda item 12. Any Other Business**

63. No further issues were raised.

#### **Agenda item 13. Closure**

64. Upon Ms Lewis's invitation to make final comments, Mr Dereliev said that it was a pleasure spending three days with all those present and hoped that everyone felt energised. He reminded the TC members that there was quite some work ahead of them with many pro bono tasks included in the workplan.

65. Mr Trouvilliez was happy to have been able to organise the meeting in-person and once again thanked Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands for providing the necessary funds. He was impressed by everyone's engagement throughout the three meeting days. Finally, he wished everyone a safe return home.

66. Ms Lewis thought that the workplan developed during the meeting was probably the most ambitious since she started being involved in the TC. She noted that the meeting had been very intense and thanked everyone for staying alert and vocal and for volunteering their time to continue to engage in the delivery of the tasks. She thanked not only the TC members, but also the observers and thought it was fantastic to have input from the StC and from Party observers across Europe as well as from several African countries. Ms Lewis wished everyone safe travels and looked forward to seeing everyone online at the next meeting.

67. With that the Chair declared the meeting closed.

## **APPENDIX I – Reports by the TC Regional Representatives on the Implementation of AEWA in their Respective Regions**

### **Regional Report – Central Europe**

1. Number of Contracting Parties in the region / number of Range States in the region. New accessions since the previous TC meeting. Actions by the regional representative to encourage non-party Range States to accede the Agreement.

1. Albania
2. Bulgaria
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Croatia
5. Czech Republic
6. Hungary
7. Italy
8. Montenegro
9. Northern Macedonia
10. Romania
11. Slovakia
12. Slovenia
13. Serbia and
14. Greece in June 2023

2. Activities to implement the AEWA International Single Species Action Plans relevant to the region.

#### Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, and Serbia

No action plan in place for the above species. Nevertheless, monitoring of wintering and breeding birds is undertaken regularly and major habitats designated as protected areas

#### Bulgaria and Romania

Action plan for Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) adopted and awareness activities in place. Some funding for their implementation provided from the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment.

#### Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, and Slovakia

Action plans in place. Management plans for wetland SPAs in place

3. Emergency situations (extreme cold, draught, toxic or oil spills, etc.) that have occurred and have affected waterbirds and/or their habitats since the last TC meeting and response to them.

#### Greece, Bulgaria, Romania Albania, and Montenegro

Avian flu (H5N1) – More than 2,200 victims of Dalmatian Pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus*) and a few hundred of Great White Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) in 2022, more than 15-18% of the global population.

Major number of victims in Greece where the colony of the Dalmatian Pelicans in Mikri Prespa recorded more than 1.600 dead adults, more than 50% of the breeding adults in Prespa and more than 12-14% of the global population for the species.

4. New or major ongoing waterbird species re-establishment (reintroduction, supplementation) initiatives.

No major efforts in the reintroduction or habitat rehabilitation for AEWA species despite discussions for the re-establishment of the Marbled Teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) in Italy.

5. Activities on eradication or other type of action regarding alien species.

#### Italy

- Control or eradication of Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)
- Control or eradication of African Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*)

#### Slovenia

- National Action Plan for Invasive Species in place

6. New or major ongoing activities on habitat (site) inventory, conservation or restoration and rehabilitation of waterbird habitats.

- Identification of sites of international and national importance for waterbirds for all the range countries.
- Habitat inventory for the potential Natura 2000 sites for Albania, Montenegro and Serbia.

7. Progress of the region in phasing out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands.

- The use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands prohibited in all EU countries (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Greece)
- Still in place in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Serbia.

8. New or major ongoing research and monitoring activities on waterbirds and waterbird habitats.

- Research and monitoring activities for AEWA species are in place in all the range countries if Central Europe.
- Monitoring of wintering and breeding waterbirds regularly conducted and reported in scientific papers and national reports.

9. New or major ongoing education and information activities on waterbirds, waterbird habitats and the Agreement.

- Education and information activities on waterbirds and their critical habitats occurring in all the range countries.

10. Problematic cases threatening waterbirds or their habitats (e.g. infrastructural developments, changes in legislation, etc.).

#### Infrastructural developments in Albania

- Vlora International Airport in the Landscape Protected Area of Vjose-Narta, an IBA, KBA and Candidate Emerald site.
- Two lawsuits against the airport by national NGOs AOS and PPNEA as the airport is considered in breach of the national legal framework on Protected Areas, Protection of Fauna, EIA etc.
- A joint appraisal mission of AEWA, CMS and Bern Convention in August 2022. The draft report of the mission has highlighted the breaches to the international conventions and

agreements. Draft recommendations are provided by the Bern Convention. Final decision of the Bern Standing Committee is expected soon.

#### Changes in legislation in Albania

- Reduction of the boundaries of wetland protected areas in Albania through the Council of Ministers Decisions 59/2022, 60/2022.
- Some wetland protected areas (Nature Managed Reserve of Lake Shkodra, Kune-Vain, National Park of Divjaka-Karavasta, Butrint) reduced by 8-20%.
- According to the Albanian NGOs this reduction seriously risks the ecological integrity of the wetland sites and AEWA species considering that three of the areas are Ramsar Sites and all the areas are IBA, KBA and Candidate Emerald Sites
- Albanian NGOs supported by international NGOs and coalitions are conducting a campaign for the reversal of the decisions.
- Two lawsuits of a coalition of 10 national NGOs are already in the Albanian court.

#### 12. Extent of use of the AEWA Conservation Guidelines by the parties.

- Partial use of AEWA guidelines or similar ones developed by other international institutions/organisations.

### **Regional Report – North and South-Western Europe**

1. Number of Contracting Parties in the region / number of Range States in the region. New accessions since the previous TC meeting. Actions by the regional representative to encourage non-party Range States to accede the Agreement.

There are 16 Contracting Parties plus the EU, and 4 non-party Range States in the North and South-Western European region.

2. Number of Range States (Parties and non-party Range States) that provided feedback for this report.

Twelve parties (71%) provided feedback to the report: **Belgium** (reporting period: 2021-2022), **Finland** (2021-2022), **France** (report period not mentioned), **Iceland** (2021-2022), **Monaco** (2021-2022), **Netherlands** (2020-2023), **Norway** (2020-2022), **Spain** (2021-2022), **Sweden** (2021-2022), **Switzerland** (Sept 2020-March 2023), **UK** (Jan 2021-Feb 2023) and the **European Union** (01/2021 to 02/2023)

3. Activities to implement the AEWA International Single Species Action Plans relevant to the region.

**Summary:** Parties reported activities to implement SSAP of the following species: **Eurasian curlew** (Belgium; France; Netherlands; Norway; UK), **Black-tailed Godwit** (Belgium; France; Netherlands; Norway; Sweden; UK), **Pink-footed Goose** (Belgium; Norway), **Common Eider** (Finland; France; Norway), **Barnacle Goose** (Iceland; Norway; UK), **Greylag Goose** (France; Norway), **Taiga Bean Goose** (Norway), **Corncrake** (Norway), **Long-tailed duck** (Norway), **Velvet scooter** (Norway), **Great Snipe** (Norway), **Ferruginous Duck** (Spain), **Northern Bald Ibis** (Spain), **Eurasian Spoonbill** (Switzerland)

#### **Belgium**

Curlew, Godwit

- In 2021 a Species Protection Programme for wet grassland breeding birds has started for the Flemish region. This SPP puts the focus on the breeding sites for Eurasian curlew and the Black-tailed

Godwit and aims to restore populations in bad status across the range in the region and to support the populations that are doing well (at these sites, the focus is broadened to other species of wet grassland breeders that are present). The analysis of this SPP has also been used to identify the places where targeted AEC-measures of the new CAP should be taken.

- The SPP also lead to (kind of spin-off) a specific CAP-measure targeted at Lapwings breeding on arable fields, where the species is breeding more and more often, and where measures that target on grassland management do not match the species' needs nor the farmers' practices. It gives the farmers a small subsidy for no working the fields until the eggs have hatched – this gives a good match with maize crops, as maize is sown relatively late in spring and lapwings like maize stubble to breed. We hope this might help to stop the negative trend, as the species is less well covered or supported by nature management than godwits or curlews.

- Very soon a dedicated staff-member will start working specifically on this SPP to support and carry out more pro-active actions; but some actions have already been initiated, as radio-tagging of Curlews in order to better understand their habitat use during the breeding season. (We are in contact with the International Working Groups of the Godwit and Curlew).

Pink-footed Goose

- Wintering site restoration (wet polder grasslands) has been continued to offer the hibernating geese a favourable foraging area, reducing pressure on agriculture.

### **Finland**

Management plan for the Common Eider was finalized. In FI Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture and Finnish Wildlife Agency had active roles in the preparation of the plan.

### **France**

- participation in the working groups and AEWA platforms for curlew, black-tailed godwit and greylag goose;

- ISSAP Eider review;

### **Iceland**

Barnacle goose:

Ongoing monitoring plan for 2020-2022:

Survey on spring-staging Barnacle Geese in NW-Iceland in 2022.

Bird ringing in SA Iceland (both colour rings and GPS-tags) during moulting season in 2022. Approx 450 birds ringed.

Approved monitoring plan for 2023 – 2026

- Poll on attitude of farmers towards barnacle geese 2023 and 2026 to identify better conflicts of interest and develop possible approaches
- Bird ringing in NV Iceland (both colour rings and GPS-tags) during spring migration in 2024
- Bird ringing in SA Iceland (both colour rings and GPS-tags) during moulting season 2023 – 2026, has been ongoing since 2017
- Breeding population count in early breeding season 2023 and 2026.

Light-Bellied Brent goose:

- Ongoing annual monitoring at stop-over sites in SW Iceland. Evidence of rather rapid population decline. A total of 1599 birds seen in October count. Simultaneous counts at wintering sites in Ireland suggest the smallest population size since 2003.

### **Monaco**

The government has been working on National legislation for the Protection of terrestrial species taking into account the AEWA protection lists.

### **Netherlands**

- Continued financial support for coordinator position BtGW-ISSAP (2022-2025).
- Financial support for Joined Regional Meeting BtGW & Curlew (Papenburg).
- Overviews of numerous studies and activities on BtGW can be found in a range of newsletters from AEWA BtGW Coordinator.
- Continued support to EGMP via range of in-kind contributions in form of research activities (overview reported to EGMP).

### **Norway**

Norway has an international and national adoption of SSAP of following species: Pink-footed Goose (Svalbard pop), Barnacle Goose, Greylag Goose, Taiga Bean Goose, Corncrake, Long-tailed duck, Velvet scoter, Great snipe, Black-tailed godwit, Eurasian curlew and Common eider. In addition the Norwegian SSAP of Lesser white-fronted goose (LWfG) is important, as for the other national SSAP for this species, despite of the retirement of the AEWA/ISSAP (MoP8). This includes a transregional management for the Fennoscandian flyway for the LWfG

Monitoring programmes for EGMP-species, with adaptive harvesting management strategies in close cooperation with data centre at Aarhus university.

Monitoring of Corncrake and Black-tailed godwit (Icelandic sub. Population *Limosa l. islandica*) by Birdlife/Norway.

Black-tailed godwit subsp. *islandica* is also a prioritized species in Norway in with authority in the Nature diversity Act, and has therefore an extra protection.

Information campaign in collaboration with agricultural authorities on declining ground nesting birds in farmland Norway, e.g. Corncrake, Eurasian curlew, Black-tailed godwit and Northern lapwing.

Agricultural schemes on best practise in farmland, with economic means to landowners (grants and compensation for loss of income)

Revision on hunting regulations in 2022, with introduction of regulated quotas for common eider, a bag limit of 5 birds/day and max 25 birds yearly.

### **Spain**

- Preparing a national strategy for the conservation of Ferruginous Duck, which will be included as target species within the update of the current National Strategy for the conservation of marbled teal, white-headed duck and red-knobbed coot ([https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/publicaciones/pbl\\_estrategia\\_cerceta\\_focha\\_malvasia\\_tc\\_m30-197259.pdf](https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/publicaciones/pbl_estrategia_cerceta_focha_malvasia_tc_m30-197259.pdf)).

- We are also continuing the reintroduction project of the Northern Bald Ibis, which is also a species covered by an AEWA action plan. The project is developed in southern Spain (Cádiz, Andalucía) by the Junta de Andalucía, Zoobotánico de Jerez and the collaboration of other entities such as the Biological Station of Doñana (CSIC) and the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge. This project was officially approved in 2013 and the situation of the species

population in Spain is getting better in the recent years. Nowadays there is a completely wild and human-independent breeding population of around 25 pairs and a total estimated number of more than 100 birds. The most updated information is included in the 2017-2019 report (attached<sup>1</sup>).

### **Sweden**

Our national plan for Lesser White-fronted Goose continues even though its ISSAP under AEWA was discontinued.

Activities for Black-tailed Godwit continues, although the national multispecies action plan for waders in wet grassland habitats was discontinued in 2019.

### **Switzerland**

With the revision of the hunting law, we tried to protect all waterbird (also Eurasian Spoonbill) from hunting, apart from half a dozen very common species. Unfortunately, the revision was rejected by the public vote. Thus, many species, such as the common pochard will remain huntable until the next revision of the law, which will take probably more than a decade.

### **UK**

Curlew:

In recent years, the curlew population in the UK has seen population declines as a consequence of habitat loss, fragmentation, agricultural intensification, predation pressure and unsustainable hunting along their migratory pathways. Defra has provided the seed funding to establish the Curlew Recovery Partnership (CRP), which brings together a range of organisations providing co-ordination and support to those engaged in curlew conservation. The CRP have recently partnered with Natural England to set up a new two-year project using Species Recovery Programme (SRP) funding, co-ordinated by the CRP with scientific oversight provided by British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and partners in the CRP Research Working Group. The aim of the project is to trial interventions that will address the key drivers of low productivity and inform developing agri-environment measures.

The UK Government will continue to play our role in helping to address the threats to Curlew *Numenius arguata* conservation through, for example, direct engagement in specific activities such as Natural England's project to recover the species in the East of England. This project involves the translocation of curlew eggs from airfields for captive rearing, prior to releasing them in suitable habitats. It is hoped that this work will help pioneer the recovery of the species elsewhere within their range. Progress is monitored by the BTO with the aim of increasing our understanding of headstarting as a conservation tool for curlew.

Black-tailed Godwit:

Delivery activity in the UK in the past two years has primarily been delivered through the LIFE Blackwit UK (Project Godwit) project. This project has successfully trailed headstarting as a conservation technique for godwits and significantly increased the productivity of the UK population. Increased recruitment into the breeding population is anticipated when these birds mature. In tandem with this, habitat improvement works have been undertaken to increase the extent of available habitat

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<sup>1</sup> Note from the regional rep: a series of documents were sent by Spain as annexes to the report: "Censo Coordinado Nacional REPRODUCTORES 2021 (2).pdf"; "Conclusiones Censos Coordinados 2022.pdf"; "Programa Reintroducción Ibis Andalucía\_Memoria 2017-2019 para MITECO.pdf"; "REPRODUCTORES 2022.pdf"; "Spain\_Ruddy Duck eradication review 2022.xlsx"

and secure sites less at risk of flooding in the breeding season. A draft UK Action plan to cover 2023-2033 is in development with an anticipated publishing date of 31st March 2023.

#### European Goose Management Platform:

In 2020, the UK funded the creation of a population model for the East Greenland Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* population. This model will inform the implementation of the Barnacle Goose International Single Species Management Plan (ISSMP) across the East Greenland population's flyway. It will hopefully also inform the implementation of the plan for the Svalbard population as well. The UK has also supported the initial development of an impact model to inform the implementation of the Barnacle Goose ISSMP in both the East Greenland and Svalbard populations. It is hoped the impact model will be completed in 2023. These models will be used to inform discussions on Greenland barnacle goose harvest, due to take place prior to the EGMP meeting in June 2023.

Initial discussions between some range states have taken place on the recent change to the Icelandic Greylag Goose status and it has been agreed that a flyway plan will be developed. Work on this will follow on from the current work on barnacle goose plans.

4. Emergency situations (extreme cold, draught, toxic or oil spills, etc.) that have occurred and have affected waterbirds and/or their habitats since the last TC meeting and response to them.

**Summary:** Almost all parties responded to this question; extreme weather events (mostly drought periods but also extreme cold) and avian influenza were often mentioned.

#### **Belgium**

- 2021 and 2023 had long summer drought periods, affecting the breeding habitat of waterbirds and the quality of stop-over sites (presence of shallow water) during the summer migration.

#### **Finland**

No such cases in FI during the reporting period. There was an exceptional drought period in SW-Finland last summer, but we do not know if this period had any impact on any bird species.

#### **France**

[no response to this question]

#### **Iceland**

Early March 2022: An oil-spill in the harbour-area of Suðureyri village in Westfjords of Iceland impacted Eider ducks (*Somateria mollissima*) with at least 100 dead.

#### **Monaco**

None

#### **Netherlands**

- New avian influenza outbreak in The Netherlands in 2021/2022, with many casualties in waterbirds. A new development was the presence of influenza into the 2022 breeding period, allowing it to extend into breeding populations (strongly affecting colony breeding birds but range of affected species is still expanding). Response was removal of dead birds (especially in colonies), increased monitoring and research on most vulnerable populations.
- Draughts in 2021/2022 affected breeding success of inland breeding waders in wet grasslands.

- Extreme heat periods in 2021 and 2022 affected the food availability of migrating waders during their moulting and resting periods in the Wadden Sea and southwestern Delta.

### **Norway**

High pathogenic bird flu (/HPAI) have affected some populations of waterbirds/seabirds throughout the Norwegian coastline. Especially Nothern gannet, gulls sp and Whooper swan have been found and reported dead along the coastline and open sea.

### **Spain**

- Avian flu: despite mass mortality events have not been detected in Spain during 2021-2022, there is an increasing worrying situation for wild birds as serious cases have been announced, such as the death of two Bearded Vulture chicks in their nests in Andalucia and the loss of four breeding pairs of peregrine falcons in the Madrid buildings after the death of four territorial adults. During October 2022 a greater number of seabirds –in relation to previous years- were collected at atlantic beaches in Spain, being the most affected species the northern gannet. Subsequent mortality events during the 2022-2023 winter were registered, with hundreds of guillemots, razorbills and puffins dead at northern Spain beaches; but they were not positive to avian flu.

### **Sweden**

No major emergency situation has occurred since the last TC meeting in February 2022 that has affected waterbirds.

### **Switzerland**

We did not have any difficult situations that affected waterbirds in Switzerland.

### **UK**

Avian Influenza:

The UK's avian influenza disease control measures seek to contain the number of kept animals that need to be culled, either for disease control purposes or to safeguard animal welfare. Our approach aims to reduce adverse impacts on the rural and wider economy, the public, rural communities and the environment (including impact on wildlife), whilst protecting public health and minimising the overall cost of any outbreak.

Responsibility for the disease control is devolved to the four administrations of the UK, and it is for the devolved administrations to assess their disease risks and respond accordingly. However, each of the four administrations are an integral part of the decision-making process and seek to take a coordinated approach to disease control and prevention wherever possible, including mitigating the impact on wild bird populations. The UK contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases of animals explains how the administrations work together in responding to an outbreak at a UK level. The UK's approach to avian influenza disease control is set out in the Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain and the Notifiable Epizootic Avian Disease Control Strategy for Northern Ireland supported by the Mitigation Strategy for Avian Influenza in Wild Birds in England and Wales.

Severe Weather – freezing conditions throughout UK December 2022

The UK has a Severe Weather Scheme, which helps the conservation of waterfowl during periods of prolonged severe cold weather by putting restrictions in place in regard to shooting in order to reduce disturbance. In December 2022 the UK reached a period (eight days) of consecutive freezing conditions

– this meant that across the UK a voluntary restraint on waterfowl shooting was put in place temporarily. The restraint was lifted after three days of continuous thaw.

### **European Union**

[no response to this question]

5. New or major ongoing waterbird species re-establishment (reintroduction, supplementation) initiatives.

**Summary:** Most countries didn't reply or report any major initiative under this topic, apart from Spain; during 2021 and 2022 more than 1,300 marbled teals have been released to the wild at different priority wetlands of Spain and other countries (Italy) through a cooperation agreement with a LIFE project ongoing for the species. In Sweden, The Lesser White-fronted Goose reinforcement programme continues.

### **Belgium**

- No such initiatives to report.

### **Finland**

Activities related to mallard farming and introduction have been under discussion during the preparation of the new action plan for the “sustainable hunting of water birds”. Unfortunately, there is no common agreement on how to arrange this activity in a correct way in FI.

### **France**

[no response to this question]

### **Iceland**

Does not apply.

### **Monaco**

None

### **Netherlands**

• The last re-establishment/re-introduction of a species under AEWA was the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) in 1969. No recent re-establishments nor new initiatives foreseen. Total overview of previous reintroductions [via this link](#).

### **Norway**

No

### **Spain**

- After its official declaration as species in a critical situation (<https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/temas/conservacion-de-especies/especies-proteccion-especial/2-2-1-proteccion-situacion-critica.aspx>), the conservation activities with the marbled teal were strengthened since 2018. One of the main action lines is the conservation ex situ, and a captive-breeding program with a restocking plan of the species. The Spanish working group for the conservation of the marbled teal has approved technical guidelines for conservation ex situ and for coordinating the work of the official captive-breeding centers (El Saler in Valencia region and Cañada de los Pájaros in

Andalucia). As a consequence, during 2021 and 2022 more than 1,300 marbled teals have been released to the wild at different priority wetlands of Spain (in Andalucía, Valencia, Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid regions), and even to other countries (Italy) through a cooperation agreement with the LIFE project ongoing for the species in Sicily.

The status of the marbled teal in Spain is becoming better as a consequence of the investment and involvement of governments and stakeholders, and during 2022 a total of 115 breeding pairs (females accompanied by chicks) were observed. There is also a LIFE project at national scale that is boosting the impact of the conservation activities towards the marbled teal in Spain (<https://www.cerceta-pardilla.es/en/>).

### **Sweden**

No new or major initiatives. The Lesser White-fronted Goose reinforcement programme continues.

### **Switzerland**

No new initiative nor any other activities.

### **UK**

See update under curlew and BTG section 1.

### **European Union**

[no response to this question]

## **6. Activities on eradication or other type of action regarding alien species.**

**Summary:** Most parties reported activities related to the eradication/control/monitoring of the situation of the Ruddy Duck, and some of the Egyptian goose

### **Belgium**

- Eradication of the Ruddy Duck is continuing, in the framework of the protection of the white-headed duck in Europe. Only very low numbers of Ruddy Ducks remain in BE.

### **Finland**

No need for such activities.

### **France**

- Life Oxyura aiming at the conservation of the white-headed duck by eradication of the ruddy duck in France;

### **Iceland**

No avian alien species in Iceland needs eradication.

Eradication measures on American mink (*Mustela vison*) in various localities.

### **Monaco**

None

### **Netherlands**

- In countries of the European Union (EU), the European exotics regulation applies, which includes plants and animals that cause damage to nature. So also, in the Netherlands. Part of the European exotic species regulation is the Union list of invasive exotic species. EU countries must

combat the invasive alien species on the Union list. Some of these species are found in the Netherlands. The Union list is regularly updated.

- The Netherlands has recently been able to intensify the control of the small and non-expanding population of Ruddy Duck in the Netherlands.
- There are no special programs for controlling Egyptian Goose and Canada Goose. Hunters (working on voluntary basis) are enabled legally to control these species.

### **Norway**

There is an ongoing prioritized work for the Nature Inspectorate, culling and killing American mink along sensitive waterbirds areas in Norway to protect waterbirds breeding. The south-eastern part of Norway holds parts of a introduced barnacle goose population, which is partly in conflict with farmland because of e.g. grazing on grass. Extended use of preventive measures such as collecting and punctuating of egg is allowed.

### **Spain**

- Spanish authorities continue the control program of the Ruddy duck, aiming at eradicating this invasive species affecting the white-headed duck. In the attached excel file, the situation of the Ruddy duck and the activities performed in Spain during the last years are shown.
- There have been other activities related to the control of alien invasive species in Spain following the national legislation (Royal Decree 630/2013) that also favour waterbirds. These activities have been mainly directed to:
  - o Publication and implementation of national strategies against alien invasive species (<https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/biodiversidad/temas/conservacion-de-especies/especies-exoticas-invasoras/ce-eei-estrategia-planes.aspx>)
  - o Implementation of control programs of invasive alien species: racoon in Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid regions, alien snake species in Balearic and Canary archipelagos, removal of water hyacinth in different river basins of western Spain.

### **Sweden**

No activities. Sightings of ruddy duck are now very rare. Egyptian goose is seen annually in Sweden.

### **Switzerland**

- We are very alert to the emergence of Ruddy duck. So far no big problem t, as importing and keeping them is illegal.
- In our protected areas we try to remove all incoming Egyptian geese and stop them from breeding.

### **UK**

Ruddy Duck:

The UK Ruddy Duck population is now thought to number approximately 12 birds which are found spread across seven regions. Many of these are single birds and although some movement between regions does occur, this is unusual and so the species is probably functionally extinct in most regions of the UK. Breeding is becoming increasingly rare with no evidence to date of breeding since 2018 . It is however possible that a very small number of birds capable of breeding (2-3 pairs in total) might still exist in the West Midlands and North-West of England. Monitoring of the population via internet reports, communication from site managers, and site visits continues, as does culling of birds wherever there is a risk of breeding in the future.

## Egyptian Goose:

The UK Egyptian Goose population is almost exclusively confined to England, with expanding core areas in East Anglia (mainly Norfolk) and the Thames basin, and some colonisation of the East Midlands; away from these core areas it currently remains a localised species. GB population estimates were 9,661 at the end of December 2018. Since December 2019, Egyptian Geese have been subject to a series of restrictions and prohibitions under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 and in England, from 1st January 2021, the species has been included on two new general licences that permit users to kill or take certain species of wild birds for defined purposes. COVID-19 restrictions, followed by Avian Influenza, have meant that activity in the field has been limited. However, we were able to plan the refinement of population and distribution data and the feasibility, effort and cost of removal next year.

## European Union

[no response to this question]

7. New or major ongoing activities on habitat (site) inventory, conservation or restoration and rehabilitation of waterbird habitats.

**Summary:** restoration projects mentioned by most parties, some focus on climate change resilience; other conservation activities also reported by some parties

## Belgium

- numerous projects are going on, smaller and bigger, in the framework of climate change but where water birds often benefit, directly or indirectly:
  - o flood control projects restoring wetlands in river valleys (big projects mainly in the Scheldt basin as part of the SIGMA<sup>2</sup>-flood control project)
  - o smaller scale projects in the field of water retention, slow down runoff, reuse water, to combat drought or to buffer more water: in short projects that reduce the impact of drought and/or flooding as a result of climate change. To support these projects, a special Blue Deal Fund has been established as part of the Flemish Climate Adaption Plan 2021-2023 to support projects from the field.

## Finland

The on-going governmental program provided substantial financial boost to national nature conservation and restoration activities in FI. Both HELMI<sup>3</sup> and SOTKA<sup>4</sup> programs have allowed restoration activities in large number of valuable sites in FI. Until now SOTKA program has covered 635 hectares of wetlands in 43 different locations. According to FI Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture: “Co-operation of SOTKA wetlands, The Finnish Game Foundation and Waterfowlers Network has resulted four pilot cases of Flyway funding from Denmark, The Netherland, UK and Italy for waterbird habitat work in wider environment of Finland, contributing to the AEWA Strategic Plan Target 4.4.”

## France

- several contribution projects contribute to it (for the curlew habitats in particular)

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<sup>2</sup> Note from the regional rep: <https://www.sigmaplan.be/en/about-the-sigmaplan/>

<sup>3</sup> Note from the regional rep: <https://ym.fi/en/helmi-habitats-programme>

<sup>4</sup> Note from the regional rep: <https://kosteikko.fi/en/>

## Iceland

New protected areas established in 2021 and 2022:

- Látrabjarg Nature Reserve. Established 2021. Largest bird cliff in Europe. Very important breeding area for guillemot (*Uria aalge*), Brunnich's guillemot (*Uria lomvia*), razorbill (*Alca torda*), puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) and kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*).
- Lundy Island Nature Reserve. Establish 2022. Breeding colony for puffin (*Fratercula arctica*).
- Flatey Island Nature Reserve - extension. Established in 1975. Doubled in size in 2021. Diverse birdlife including breeding colonies for Eider duck (*Somateria mollissima*), Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisea*), Red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) and the very rare in Iceland Red phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*).
- Blikastaðakro/Leiruvogur Nature Reserve. Established 2022. Very important stop-over and wintering site for waterbirds in particular for Light-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) and Purple sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*) as well as i.e. Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) and Red knot (*Calidris canutus*).

Approved new conservation plan for the protected area Svarfaðardalur Nature Reserve (Established 1980). A wetland area in North Iceland, important breeding site for many waterbirds including Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), Widgeon (*Anas penelope*), Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), Common gull (*Larus canus*) and Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*).

Various wetland reclamation projects.

Rewetting of drained wetlands is an ongoing task for nature conservation and climate change mitigations as a part of the Government's strategy for conservation. The Soil Conservation Service is administering the programme and cooperates with landowners and others interested in reclamation. There were six projects in operation in 2019 covering a total of 149 ha.

Property	Area (ha)	Ownership
Brekka 30	Private landowner	
Bakki 28	Private landowner	
Sogn 21	State	
Ytri-Hraundalur	10	State
Kollaleira	35	Local government
Hólmar	25	Local government

## Monaco

The government has undertaken the restoration of the cliffs used for nesting by *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*.

## Netherlands

- Actual information on important bird sites on <https://www.sovon.nl/nl/gebieden> (both N2000 and additional sites)
- Continuation of the review of the SPA network en SPA species

## Norway

No

## **Spain**

- During 2021 and 2022, Spanish authorities have approved budgets for implementing different restoration projects of wetlands, within the framework of the UE Next Generation funds. There are other projects ongoing at regional level that will recover an important surface of former natural lagoons and wetlands.

- The main ongoing projects are the following:

- Recovery of the Mar Menor coastal lagoon (<https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/mar-menor/>)

- Framework for the recovery of Doñana (<https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/marco-actuaciones-donana/> )

- Other line of activities in this field is the protection of wetlands and peatlands from agricultural labour in the framework of the new Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027. In fact, there is a conditionality measure (GEAC 2) that impedes the transformation and alteration of wetlands and peatlands by any agricultural practice, so it is necessary to fully mapping these areas across all the country to cover this protection. In this case, it has been updated the National wetland inventory (with new information from a greater number of regions), the Ramsar site inventory and the habitats of community interest belonging to wetlands and peatlands. Similarly, there is another compulsory measure to be covered by the farmers under the mentioned Strategic Plan (GEAC 4), that establishes the need for the protection of buffer strips across all water courses and bodies, impeding the use of chemical products to the natural vegetation in a band of 5m to these wetlands.

## **Sweden**

A wetlands programme has been implemented since 2018. The Swedish EPA is currently continuing this programme by developing a list areas suitable for re-wetting (wetland restoration) that will be proposed to the Swedish government.

## **Switzerland**

With the help of the Swiss Ornithological Institute, we examined all our nationally protected areas (10 of international and 25 of national importance) for the most important disturbance factors, defined core areas that should be better protected and other measures to improve protection such as optimized perimeter boundaries.

## **UK**

Habitats/SPA:

In the UK many of our designated sites protect the habitats of waterbirds. In England the 25 Year Environment Plan commits to restoring 75% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) by area to favourable condition by 2042.

Wetland site inventory

The UK is committed to establishing a wetland inventory, in support of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, mapping our wetlands for the first time and underpinning future actions to protect these vital habitats.

## **European Union**

The Commission has proposed a new law to restore ecosystems for people, the climate and the planet: [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law_en)

The Commission has launched a new EU biogeographical process, aimed at supporting MS and reviewing their progress towards achieving two targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, (1) protecting 30% of land and sea and strictly protecting at least 1/3 of protected areas and (2) ensuring that at least 30% of species and habitats protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives currently not in favourable status will be in that category by 2030, or at least show a strong positive trend. EU Member States (MS) will be submitting their pledges for achieving the targets in the first semester 2023. Throughout 2023 and beginning of 2024, several Biogeographical Seminars will provide the opportunity to MS to exchange on the pledges and most importantly on the measures they will put in place at national level. Migratory waterbirds might be among the species targeted by pledges and measures.

#### 8. Progress of the region in phasing out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands.

**Summary:** strong progress in all EU MS parties due to recent ban in the proximity of wetlands.

##### **Belgium**

- lead shot in wetlands has been banned.

##### **Finland**

The use of lead shot has been banned by a new legislation in all wetlands and close to water bodies.

##### **France**

- enforce the ban on lead ammunition within 100m of wetlands this year.

##### **Iceland**

Phasing out of lead shots has hardly begun in Iceland and discussions on possible implementation has been limited. The EU regulation on ban of using and carrying lead shots in wetland areas took effect in Iceland 15 February but we are still working on the mapping of wetland areas affected by the regulation. The hunting season is ending and by the start of the next hunting season we will be able to provide better information on the mapping and implementation.

##### **Monaco**

non applicable

##### **Netherlands**

- Non-issue in The Netherlands as lead is completely banned in The Netherlands. By the end of 2020 the EU banned lead gunshot in wetlands in all European Union Member States under REACH, the EU's framework regulation for chemicals. However, the use of lead shot was already banned in The Netherlands since February 1st, 1993. Possession of lead shot in the field is also illegal, though illegal use is sometimes reported. The enforcement of this ban is carried out by the police. A hunter's certificate will be suspended in case of an offence. The ban is generally accepted by the hunting community, since there are good alternatives available at comparable costs.

##### **Norway**

Norway will follow the EEA countries and REACH regulation prohibiting lead shot over wetlands which took place from 15th of February this year.

## **Spain**

- Spanish national legislation includes, since 2007, the ban of use of lead shot ammunition in different wetlands (Ramsar sites, Natura 2000 sites and protected areas). This has allowed the coverage of more than 80% of all wetlands in Spain. The prohibition of lead ammunition has been proved as an efficient tool to reduce the impact of lead intoxication in waterbirds in our country (see <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6675918/>)

- Spain has supported the entry into force of the Regulation (EU) 2021/57 OF THE Commission of January 25, 2021, that modifies Annex XVII of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, regarding the registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction of substances and chemical preparations (REACH) modifies entry 63 of Annex XVII of the REACH Regulation, in regarding the restriction of lead and its compounds. So, since 15th February 2023 it is completely forbidden (in all types of wetlands and around 100 m of these) the use and possession of lead ammunition with the purpose of hunting. This has been an important step towards the total avoidance of intoxication of waterbirds from lead. The Ministry has also published a clarification note to show how this new Regulation should be implemented ([https://www.miteco.gob.es/images/es/report\\_notainterpretativareg2021\\_57\\_tcm30-553120.pdf](https://www.miteco.gob.es/images/es/report_notainterpretativareg2021_57_tcm30-553120.pdf))

## **Sweden**

Sweden has had a ban on the use of lead in ammunition in wetlands since 1998. The recent EU ban on lead in ammunition is more far-reaching than the Swedish ban since 1998 and has now been implemented in Sweden since 15th February 2023. The Swedish EPA is currently working on developing information material mainly for the hunting community about the updated ban.

## **Switzerland**

No, phasing out lead shot in some ammunition was part of the revised hunting law, but unfortunately turned down by public vote. We will try again by the next possible opportunity, as this aspect is regulated in the ordinance and every few years under revision.

## **UK**

The use of lead ammunition in England is currently restricted by the Environmental Protection (Restriction on the use of Lead Shot) (England) Regulations 1999. These Regulations prohibit the use of lead ammunition on all foreshores, in or over specified SSSIs (predominantly wetlands) and for the shooting of all ducks, and geese, coot and moorhen.

### **UK Reach**

In May 2022 the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and Environment Agency (EA) published a restriction dossier on lead in ammunition. The dossier focused on the evidence of risk by lead in ammunition on human health and the environment, as well as the socio-economic impact of introducing a restriction under UK REACH. The dossier set out the case for introducing restrictions on lead in ammunition and launched a six-month public consultation, which closed on 6 November 2022.

In January 2023, HSE announced a six-month extension to the restrictions process to allow for consideration of the large volume of responses received during the public consultation, including many detailed and technical submissions. There will be a further 60-day consultation in Summer 2023, which will give stakeholders an opportunity to comment specifically on the socio-economic impacts of the restriction proposals. HSE's final recommendations are expected in November 2023 this year. The

Environment Secretary will then review and make a decision, with the consent of the Welsh and Scottish Ministers.

### **European Union**

In January 2021, the Commission adopted a Commission Regulation restricting the use of lead gunshot in wetlands across the EU. It applies since 15 February 2023 in all 27 EU Member States. This restriction also allows Member States to ban lead gunshot in all areas if 20 % or more of the country's territory is wetlands. In this case, the restriction applies from 15 February 2024. This EU-wide restriction harmonises the national legislation already in place in various forms in 23 EU Member States and introduces new legislation in four EU Member States.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0057>

ECHA has also prepared a restriction dossier on lead use in hunting (beyond wetlands), sports shooting and in fishing. The proposed ban concerns all types of ammunition used for hunting. The draft opinion of the Committee for Socio-Economic Analysis (SEAC) of ECHA was agreed on 2 June 2022 and underwent a public consultation. Based on ECHA's final report, the Commission will prepare a legislative proposal for amending the list of substances restricted under REACH that will be submitted to a vote by the EU Member States in the REACH Committee. This is expected in 2023.

### 9. New or major ongoing research and monitoring activities on waterbirds and waterbird habitats.

**Summary:** some new research reported, such as on several threats (disturbance, impact of wind farms, seabird bycatch, climate change), and several monitoring reports mentioned

### **Belgium**

- For the Flemish region, a study is planned this year to identify the sites where disturbance by drones on breeding birds and concentrations of migratory waterbirds could pose a significant disturbance risk. This is done to motivate restrictions on the use of drones (flying height, temporal restrictions, type of drone, ...) in the framework of the EU directive 2019/945 on UAS and third-country operators of UAS.

### **Finland**

We already have monitoring systems for the water birds. Some needs for further investigations have been identified in areas with high pressures of new wind mills.

### **France**

- LIMAT project aiming at estimating the breeding population sizes of Anatidae and Waders in France. First figures available this year

- various ringing and study programs for these species (e.g. curlew breeding y/c Val de Saône)

### **Iceland**

New and ongoing monitoring projects implemented in 2022:

- New and ongoing monitoring of meadow birds (mostly waders) at breeding sites in various habitats, including heath- and wetland. Includes monitoring of Golden plover, Dunlin, Common Snipe, Black-tailed godwit, Whimbrel, Redshank, Meadow pipit and Arctic skua. Some areas have been

monitored since 2006/07 and others since 2010/11 but since 2022, a more widespread program has been implemented and now there are transects spread across the country that will be monitored annually.

- New monitoring project of waterbirds at lowland lakes in 5 new areas with focus on Great northern diver and Slavonian grebe. Addition to ongoing long-term monitoring of waterbirds at Lake Mývatn since 1974 and other lakes in NE Iceland since 2004/05. Regular aerial surveys in the highlands, aimed at Great northern divers, Whooper swans and Pink-footed Geese, planned to start in 2026
- New and ongoing monitoring of waders at stop-over-sites during migration at three key sites in W and NE Iceland. Emphasis on Red knot, Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone.
- New monitoring and population ecology studies of Arctic tern at all breeding colonies in two important bird sites in W and NE Iceland.
- New monitoring and population ecology studies of Great skua in main breeding sites in E and SE Iceland. Complete census scheduled for every 5 years.
- Ongoing monitoring of seabirds at bird-cliffs in NW and N Iceland. Since 1984.
- Ongoing monitoring of seabirds in Snæfellsnes National Park.
- Irregular surveys in key stop-over sites of Greater White-fronted Goose. Regular monitoring planned to start in 2024.
- Ongoing monitoring of Light-bellied Brent Geese at migratory stop-over sites (since 2002).
- Ongoing monitoring of Barnacle Goose (see reporting on AEWa ISSAP in section 3).
- Ongoing monitoring of Greylag Goose (since 1990) with increased effort from 2020 due to changed status of population.
- Local monitoring of Pink-footed geese in East Iceland. Regular aerial surveys on breeding grounds in the highlands planned to start in 2026
- Ongoing monitoring of shorebirds during migration in Blikastaðakro/Leiruvogur Nature Reserve in SW Iceland.
- Ongoing monitoring of Northern Gannet breeding colonies (since 1984). Next census planned in 2024.
- Annual monitoring of Shag and Cormorant breeding populations (since 1975).
- Annual winter bird counts since 1952 in multiple locations in Iceland. Most important monitoring project for many sedentary or wintering gull and duck species.

### **Monaco**

The government has undertaken an avifauna inventory in 2020, taking into account waterbirds.

### **Netherlands**

- Latest report on national trends in Dutch waterbirds 2021/2022 (Watervogels in Nederland in 2021/2022): (<https://stats.sovon.nl/pub/publicatie/20975>) and on breeding birds incl. waterbirds 2021 (<https://stats.sovon.nl/pub/publicatie/20976>)
- Conservation Ecology Group, Groningen (<https://www.rug.nl/research/gelifes/ceg/publications>)
- Shorebird research, Groningen ([https://www.rug.nl/research/gelifes/ceg/\\_piersma/intertidal-foodwebs](https://www.rug.nl/research/gelifes/ceg/_piersma/intertidal-foodwebs))
- Meadowbird research, Groningen ([https://www.rug.nl/research/gelifes/ceg/\\_piersma/meadow-birds](https://www.rug.nl/research/gelifes/ceg/_piersma/meadow-birds))
- Godwit Landscape Project 2021/2022 – University of Groningen. ([Year reports on Globalflywaynetwork.org](https://www.godwit.nl/Year-reports-on-Global-flyway-network.org))
- Prolonged support of lectureship on Meadowbirds, Van Hall Larenstein research, Velp
- Active participation in the modelling consortium of AEWa-EGMP

- BirdLife The Netherlands (i.c.w. a.o. Sovon Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology): research and conservation Program We & Shorebirds
- Sovon Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology: research projects on avian influenza, participation in We & Shorebirds-program (a.o. research on disturbance of resting birds on high water roosts), Cumulative Human Impact on bird Populations, several projects on the impact of gas extraction, other human usages and fisheries in the Wadden Sea on birds
- 4th total Flyway count East-Atlantic Flyway, January 2023

### **Norway**

National monitoring for seaducks both winter and breeding ongoing for many decades. Monitoring of EGMP- goose species in place.

### **Spain**

- Spain has continued implementing the national coordinated census of waterbirds during winter, for its submission to Wetlands International.

- For the most endangered species, regional authorities have performed periodic coordinated census which can be consulted in the attached documents.

### **Sweden**

No new research activities has started since the previous reporting. Many of the research and monitoring activities previously reported are still continuing, e.g. the “Threatened Coastal Birds” programme by Birdlife Sweden and the long-lasting birds monitoring programme by Lund University with a particular focus on coastal birds.

### **Switzerland**

No, waterbird counting as usual, in the sites of international importance in winter every month, in the nationally important, twice a winter.

### **UK**

Wetland Bird Survey (Webs’):

UK-wide monitoring of waders and wildfowl in the non-breeding season continues, as the partnership (between statutory bodies and NGOs) was renegotiated in 2022 for the next five years. The scheme produces annually updated population trends for over fifty species of waterbirds.

Goose and Swan Monitoring Programme:

There have been major changes to this scheme following the withdrawal of WWT from long-term monitoring activities. BTO has joined with JNCC and NatureScot in the new GSMP partnership to deliver monitoring of those goose and swan species for which WeBS has not been the ideal means of monitoring. With all wildfowl monitoring now “under the same roof”, there will be changes to GSMP reporting, which will be closely integrated with WeBS reporting in the future. A range of changes and improvements will be made to the scheme over the next few years, including scoping of solutions to monitoring of Icelandic greylag geese in light of the high degree of overlap with British greylags on their wintering grounds.

Seabirds Count, the 4th breeding seabird census for Britain and Ireland:

Now in its final phase, involving analysis and write-up of results of surveys conducted between 2015 and 2021, for the 25 regularly breeding seabird species in the UK. This will be the most comprehensive

census to date, including population estimates of urban-nesting Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls based on new survey methods and modelling. The aim is to have the results published in the latter half of 2023 in the form of a book, with online complimentary resources being launched at the same time.

#### Seabird bycatch:

As part of a suite of analyses on seabird bycatch in UK waters, covering a range of AEWA listed species, Defra & JNCC have published reports on <https://randd.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectId=20461>:

Ongoing work is identifying areas and fisheries around the UK that might be suitable for regional pilot schemes to undertake seabird bycatch mitigation trials (Defra), and a more in-depth study of bycatch of Northern Fulmar in Scottish waters (Scottish Government).

#### Marine bird monitoring:

In 2021, Defra initiated an ambitious marine natural capital evidence programme (mNCEA). As part of this, foundational data collection on assets includes new surveys in UK waters of seabirds at sea (via a citizen-science based approach called VSAS), Balearic Shearwater, and non-breeding marine birds (divers, grebes and ducks), as well as a review of breeding seabird monitoring in UK waters. The programme is ongoing and will report in 2025.

The UK government has provided funds to commission research to critically review the evidence of the impact of climate change on migratory species, how changes in migration may affect ecosystem functioning and services, and consider future scenarios and how the conservation of migratory species may provide positive benefits. Outputs expected in Summer 2023.

### **European Union**

[no response to this question]

#### 10. New or major ongoing education and information activities on waterbirds, waterbird habitats and the Agreement.

**Summary:** several activities reported, mostly linked to specific ongoing programmes/projects in each country.

#### **Belgium**

- No such initiatives to report.

#### **Finland**

SOTKA program has made it possible to organize plenty of education and trainings related to removal on IAS.

#### **France**

- OFB/FFS training "Hunting and management of wetlands: challenges and integration of human activities to improve their preservation (which took place last week at Tour Du Vallat)

#### **Iceland**

Icelandic Institute of Natural History Educational Talk series 2021-2023 included two talks on sea- and waterbirds. More planned in Spring 2023.

Various educational projects organized by BirdLife Iceland (<https://fuglavernd.is/>).

Various educational projects about and situated at protected areas organized by the Environmental Agency.

### **Monaco**

The government regularly educates schoolchildren on the nesting of waterbirds.

### **Netherlands**

- Year of the Curlew (2019): recruitment of bird counters, additional counts and education of the public on this endangered species
- Year of the Oystercatcher (2023): recruitment of bird counters, additional counts and education of the public on this endangered species
- Publication of the film Grutto! “The journey of our national bird” (2022)

### **Norway**

Yearly information campaigns in media on the UN/ Migratory birds days.

### **Spain**

[no response to this question]

### **Sweden**

No activities apart from what is mentioned under Question 8.

### **Switzerland**

No

### **UK**

Population trends of over 50 species of waterbirds continue to be published as Official Statistics in the annual publication of Waterbirds in the UK, and on WeBS Report Online (<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/wetland-bird-survey/publications/webs-annual-report/online-reports>). The next report will be published in April 2023 (reporting on 2021/22 surveys).

The UK joined other Contracting Parties to the OSPAR Commission in contributing to the Quality Status Report 2023, due for publication in Summer 2023. Specifically, as regards AEWA-listed species, it presents indicator assessments involving estimates of abundance and productivity of waterbirds and seabirds throughout the OSPAR region and provides an assessment of the likely causes of change. The UK is now helping to develop a Regional Action for Marine Birds (RAP-birds) to address the identified declines.

The “Biosecurity for LIFE” project ends in March 2023, but additional external (non-LIFE) funding has been secured to enable final completion of the project’s objectives. This project has created invasive non-native species (INNS) biosecurity plans and surveillance on 18 important breeding seabird island SPAs, with a further 22 scheduled to be completed by April 2023. The project has produced extensive educational outreach and publicity material, with the aim of improving the knowledge on the risks of insufficient biosecurity measures on our important seabird islands.

The UK was part of a consortium of countries involved in achieving improvements to the database of “European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS), including a new data-sharing agreement and migration of ESAS database from JNCC to ICES Data Centre.

### **European Union**

[no response to this question]

11. Problematic cases threatening waterbirds or their habitats (e.g. infrastructural developments, changes in legislation, etc.).

**Summary:** windfarm development mentioned often by parties as an emerging potential threat; other threats mentioned were water darkening, heat waves and droughts, disturbance, invasive alien species, expanding yielding of sea vegetables on mudflats,

### **Belgium**

- No such initiatives to report.

### **Finland**

The pressure to develop and build new windmills along important migration routes or resting areas is under discussion.

The darkening of lake and river waters (color of water) is dramatically changing large number of fresh water ecosystems. As a result of the darkening of water the availability of large insect larvae as a prey species may decrease. This trend is a problem for species like the Golden Eye and small Grebe species, for example. The darkening of waters results from the drainage of mires and forests. Even if there are not many new ditches the composing process, once started, may continue decades and cause problems for the water ecosystems.

### **France**

[no response to this question]

### **Iceland**

An increasing number of windfarm projects have been planned and presented in the last 2-3 years, many within or close to important bird areas in Iceland. Some are currently in EIA process. If completed will add pressure to migratory populations of many species in particular swans, geese and waders. Legislation changes on wind energy is currently under review at the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Climate.

An increasing number of land-use projects are being planned in areas where important habitats for wader species are found especially heathland species such as Golden plover and Whimbrel. These include forestry projects, planning of new summerhouse areas and infrastructure for tourism. Few of these projects require EIA.

Continued and rapid spread of Nootka lupin (*Lupinus nootkatensis*), an exotic invasive plant species, threatens habitats of heathland species.

### **Monaco**

None

### **Netherlands**

- Impact of extreme heat periods
- Impact of extreme drought periods
- Ongoing impact of disturbance and tourism on birds
- Impact of the expanding yielding of sea vegetables on mudflats, especially in the SW Delta
- Cumulation of threats on birds
- The increase of invasive species (non-avian) and the uncertainty of their impact on ecosystems

### **Norway**

Planning for offshore and onshore windpower turbines along the coast, political pressure with local and regional infrastructure threatening wetlands.

### **Spain**

- The main issue regarding the conservation of important wetlands in Spain corresponds to the lack of water availability in the Doñana National Park and the lower Guadalquivir basin. The diagnosis of the situation affecting the hydrological dynamics of this important wetland can be found in the work developed by WWF Spain (<https://www.wwf.es/?55100/Analisis-de-los-problemas-ambientales-de-Donana-y-el-Estuario-del-Gudalquivir>). The main activities programmed to reverse the situation and to improve the conservation of the habitats and the natural water dynamics in the area are found in the initiative launched by the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (<https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/marco-actuaciones-donana/>)

### **Sweden**

No problematic cases since the last report.

### **Switzerland**

A lot of pressure from the energy side (f. ex. windmills, solar panels)

### **UK**

[no response to this question]

### **European Union**

[no response to this question]

## 12. Extent of use of the AEWG Conservation Guidelines by the parties.

**Summary:** most parties did not answer or report any activities under this topic.

### **Belgium**

- nothing to report

### **Finland**

The Guidelines are not much in use in FI: Most of the activities are identified at national level and also most of the actions are “tailor made” according to the local conditions and needs.

### **France**

[no response to this question]

### **Iceland**

[no response to this question]

### **Monaco**

[no response to this question]

### **Netherlands**

- No activities since last report.

### **Norway**

Norway uses the AEWA conservation guidelines for the preparation of national action planning. Monitoring programmes for ISSAP-species are financed by the authorities. These programmes developed in coordination with other European countries and "own" by research institutions. These are again coordinated with other European activities, cf [www.sespop.no](http://www.sespop.no). Present Nature Biodiversity Act are in line with requirements from both Bern- convention originally, and also AEWA. Our revision of Quarry species is revised every 5 years and can easily adapt to any AEWA annex changes. NEA has also used the guidelines to response and form national units and protocols upon emergency situations upon migratory seabirds.

### **Spain**

[no response to this question]

### **Sweden**

No recent use.

### **Switzerland**

[no response to this question]

### **UK**

[no response to this question]

### **European Union**

[no response to this question]

## 13. Any other information.

### **Belgium**

[no response to this question]

### **Finland**

The preparation of national PAF (Prioritized Action Framework), as part of the EU activities, has been boosting both the development of national pledges (as a part of the implementation of EU BD strategy) and at the same time it has been a backbone for the development of some of the largest LIFE projects ever.

### **France**

[no response to this question]

### **Iceland**

[no response to this question]

### **Monaco**

[no response to this question]

### **Netherlands**

[no response to this question]

### **Norway**

[no response to this question]

### **Spain**

[no response to this question]

### **Sweden**

[no response to this question]

### **Switzerland**

[no response to this question]

### **UK**

[no response to this question]

### **European Union**

The Commission has also set up a Task Force on the Recovery of Birds (<https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/e21159fc-a026-4045-a47f-9ff1a319e1c5/library/2e8bdb2d-d948-4ce0-b16c-6c07b1e1fc62?p=1>) that addresses the conservation (and management for the huntable ones) of bird species (including waterbirds). The AEWA Secretariat is invited to the meetings of the TFRB. It has also launched a contract aimed at “Supporting the recovery of bird species of Annex II of the birds Directive in non-secure status” (36 months -starting on 30/12/2022). The Commission has had informal meetings with AEWA on topics addressed under this contract to co-ordinate actions.

## **Regional Report – Northern Africa**

1. Number of Contracting Parties in the region / number of Range States in the region. New accessions since the previous TC meeting. Actions by the regional representative to encourage non-party Range States to accede to the Agreement.

The Northern Africa region of AEWA consists of seven signatory parties namely:

- Algeria (1)
- Madeira
- (Portugal) (2)

- Canary Islands
- (Spain) (3), Egypt
- (4), Libya (5)
- Morocco (6) and
- Tunisia (7)

## 2. Number of Range States (Parties and non-party Range States) that provided feedback for this report.

This report was prepared with contributions from: Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

## 3. Activities to implement the AEWA International Single Species Action Plans relevant to the region.

The majority of the **Northern African countries** monitor migratory waterbirds. In most of these countries, particularly Globally Threatened and Near Threatened species are monitored, such as **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii*, **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala*, **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*, **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*, **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* and **Northern Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita*.

**Algeria** is carrying out an AEWA-funded project to implement the International Action Plan for the **Northern Bald Ibis**, which aims to carry out a study to enable the reintroduction of the Northern Bald Ibis in Algeria. In **Morocco** the monitoring of the **Northern Bald Ibis** population in the Souss Massa National Park continued and **marking and tracking of some birds using GPS** was done. The Black-tailed Godwit was removed from the list of huntable species (carried out by ANEF). AAO/BirdLife in **Tunisia** has reported high numbers of White-headed Duck gatherings in the Sebkhet Sejoumi Ramsar site: 800 ind. in January 2021 and 2,200 ind. in January 2022. The second record is the largest group gathering for this species known for the country. Tunisia has published its **first birds red list** in 2022. 74 species are red-listed: 10 species are Extinct (ET), 13 are critically endangered (CR), 22 species are Endangered (EN) and 29 species are Vulnerable (VU). Almost the half, 31 species are waterbirds.

## 4. Emergency situations (extreme cold, draught, toxic or oil spills, etc.) that have occurred and have affected waterbirds and/or their habitats since the last TC meeting and response to them.

In recent years, **recurrent dryness has been a major challenge** for almost all North-African countries. It hit the conservation and integrity of inland wetlands and their birds In **Tunisia** during January 2023, 60% of the natural and artificial wetlands visited in the northern and central part of the country were dry.

Civil society and environmental NGOs continue to think that Sebkhet Sejoumi, designated as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) No. 1712 but threatened by the embankment of the water body and by an unsuitable development plan (Plan d'Aménagement et de Valorisation), is in strong need of an MCR and IRP AEWA mission. The site hosts almost a quarter of the waterbirds wintering in the country (see table 2 the last 5 years of IWC) and is an important nesting site for globally threatened species such as the White-headed Duck (47 pairs in 2021, 12 pairs in 2022) and the Marbled Duck (6 pairs in 2021 and 5 pairs in 2022).

## 5. New or major ongoing activities on habitat (site) inventory, conservation or restoration and rehabilitation of waterbird habitats.

### Algeria

Some sites have benefited from projects for their restoration such as the lake of Tonga and the lake of Réghaia. These projects aim at the restoration, the depollution and the development of the sites so that they may fully play their role of hosting and stopover sites for migratory birds crossing the Mediterranean, and more generally for the biodiversity.

### Morocco

ANEF has set up artificial nests to encourage Greater Flamingos to nest Khnifiss Lagoon Ramsar site, Similar project - construction of artificial nests for the Greater Flamingo (25 in total) - was carried out by GREPOM/BirdLife Morocco. On the same site two floating rafts to promote the nesting of *Iarolimicolae* were installed.

### Libya

In December 2021 the progress of the designation of 19 new protected areas, 2 of them being Ramsar Sites was reported by Libya. In January 2023, 26 potential sites of conservation interest were identified with the support of the GEF Med Programme and in collaboration with IUCN-Med, SPA/RAC and WWF North Africa

### Tunisia

General Directorate of Forests (DGF) has reported progress in the preparation of its new wetland strategy. Several wetland conservation projects were carried out in collaboration between international and national NGOs and the biodiversity conservation authorities such as the GEMWET project in the Djebel Nadhor and Ghar El Melh Lagoon KBA and Ramsar city of Ghar El Melah.

## 6. New or major ongoing research and monitoring activities on waterbirds and waterbird habitats.

Most countries (**Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt**) reported mid-winter waterbird counts (IWC) and monitoring of waterbird species in SPAs, IBAs and KBAs.

North African countries have published a synthesis report of waterbird data for 2009 to 2018. The report shows a list of Ramsar criteria 5 & 6 wetlands, and the range of some waterbird species and it gives recommendations for site management, intervention against illegal bird killing, etc.

Three new scientific articles used, partially or totally, data from the North-African MedWaterbird database:

1. Benefits of protected areas for nonbreeding waterbirds adjusting their distributions under climate warming (Elie & all 2020),
2. Imputation of incomplete large-scale monitoring count data via penalized estimation (Dakki & all 2021),
3. Anticipating the effects of climate warming and natural habitat conversion on waterbird communities to address protection gaps (Verniest & all 2023).

A new version of the local language identification guide to waterbirds in **Northern Africa** (in Arabic language) was published in partnership between Association “Les Amis des Oiseaux” (AAO/BirdLife in Tunisie), the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB) and Tour du Valat Research Institute.

In January 2021, 2022 and 2023 AAO/BirdLife in Tunisia organized 3 training courses on waterbird census, identification and data management. The training is part of the capacity development strategy for the MedWaterbird Network and aims to increase the number of skilled IWC observers. Representatives from **Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Djibouti and Saudi Arabia** attended the training with the support of TDV, SPA/RAC, WWF-North Africa, Naturschutzbund (NaBu), Saudi Wildlife Services, AAO/BirdLife in Tunisia and DGF Tunisia.

**Algeria** organized a national waterbird Training, from 14 to 19 May 2022 in the National Park of Taza in the Wilaya of Jijel, sponsored by DGF Algeria and WWF AFN.

#### 7. New or major ongoing education and information activities on waterbirds, waterbird habitats and the Agreement.

**Several countries** organized events and awareness raising activities dedicated to waterbirds and wetlands during World Migratory Bird Day, World Wetlands Day and other celebrations in 2021 and 2022.

#### 8. Problematic cases threatening waterbirds or their habitats (e.g. infrastructural developments, changes in legislation, etc.).

In **Morocco** Urbanization and infrastructure development is putting waterbirds under threat.

In **Tunisia** a potential threat to migratory waterbirds is emerging with plans to enhance the use of alternative energies such as wind, solar power, and the increase in the length of the high and medium voltage electricity network (HT/MT).

Illegal waterbird hunting is increasing and underestimated, at least in the eastern part of **Libya** and in **Tunisia**.

## Regional Report – Southern Africa

1. Number of Contracting Parties in the region / number of Range States in the region. New accessions since the previous TC meeting. Actions by the regional representative to encourage non-party Range States to accede the Agreement.

- 7 Contracting Parties / 14 Range States (plus Ascension Island and St Helena, with the United Kingdom being a Contracting Party).
- No further accessions in this region since the previous TC meeting.

2. Number of Range States that provided feedback for this report.

7 – Botswana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (contributors included Technical and National Focal Points for several countries as well as other useful contacts).

### 3. Activities to implement the AEWA International Single Species Action Plans relevant to the region.

#### **ISSAP for the Conservation of the Grey Crowned Crane**

##### **South Africa**

Activities to implement this ISSAP include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Grey Crowned Crane nest monitoring has begun with 62 nest sites. Farmers/landowners are being engaged and research has commenced into using drones for nest monitoring.
- Grey Crowned Crane tracking will start before the end of 2023 to better understand this species' landscape use and movement.
- Rehabilitation centres are actively encouraged to submit data on the poisoning of cranes to the poison incident database. There have been four cases of Grey Crowned Crane poisoning in the last four years. Crane carcasses that were found were tested for lead and all cases showed long-term lead poisoning in the bone. The source of poisoning is ingested metallic lead, but the source of that lead is unknown. The working hypothesis is that this is from ingested shotgun shot left in the environment. A lead testing kit has been obtained for a rehabilitation centre in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands and ethics forms are being pursued to investigate the threat of lead to this species.

##### **Zambia**

This year, BirdWatch Zambia has plans, through its partnership with the International Crane Foundation and WWF-Zambia, to tag the cranes on the Liuwa plains and Kafue Flats in order to study their movements and behaviour. For over 50 years, Crowned Cranes have not been observed on the Barotse floodplains, being mostly restricted to wetlands of the Liuwa Plains. However, due to the connectivity of Liuwa Plains, Barotse and Kafue Flats, there is potential for migration of this species across landscapes.

##### **Zimbabwe**

The conservation of Grey Crowned Cranes has continued to be promoted by BirdLife Zimbabwe in the Driefontein Grasslands Ramsar Site. In this regard:

- Joint ground surveys have been successfully conducted twice annually in the Driefontein Grasslands since 2019.
- There was wide education and awareness-raising on the conservation of Grey Crowned Cranes and other species, such as the Wattled Cranes, in this Ramsar Site. The awareness was also extended to the three districts that share the Ramsar Site. Engagement at district level influenced integration of wetland conservation into district plans.
- Wetland restoration that took place in this area improved habitat of the Grey Crowned Cranes and other wetland bird species. However, more efforts in habitat restoration and ecosystem management are still required. There is also a need to extend monitoring of Grey Crowned Cranes beyond the Driefontein Grasslands.

#### **ISSAP for the Conservation of the Lesser Flamingo**

BirdLife South Africa (BLSA) has taken on the role of coordinator of the Lesser Flamingo International Working Group and is collaborating with the AEWA Secretariat to resuscitate this forum. Discussions are also underway regarding the potential for a coordinated census for this species (possibly for early 2024). The 2022 Pan-African Ornithological Congress provided an opportunity to discuss both of these topics with participants involved in Lesser Flamingo conservation in Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

## **Botswana**

- Botswana has developed a draft Flamingo Action Plan, which is at an advanced stage awaiting the approval of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Director.
- Botswana has developed draft legislation to minimize human disturbance (such as low flying aircrafts and tourist activities) at key flamingo breeding sites. The draft has yet to be finalized and gazetted.

## **South Africa**

- Following the initial establishment of a Local Conservation Group for Kamfers Dam, it has been decided to expand this group into a South African Flamingo Research and Conservation Group, Terms of Reference for which are in the process of being finalized. It is envisioned that this group's activities will include, *inter alia*, monitoring population numbers and distribution, assessment of threats and developing strategies to mitigate these, implementing conservation action and safeguarding important sites. The group's founding members are representatives from Ekapa (the BirdLife Species Guardian for the Lesser Flamingo), BLSA, and Sol Plaatje University.
- Given that it is a priority to obtain accurate population data for the Lesser Flamingo throughout its range and that ground surveys are not practical for all sites, BLSA has been working to develop a method of deriving population estimates from drone and satellite imagery. This product is currently being refined and, once complete, would provide a rapid, reliable, and scalable method of estimating the state and trend of this species. A hurdle, however, is the cost of satellite imagery at the resolution needed (spatial resolution of ca.50cm).
- Using a combination of field data, water tests/analysis and satellite imagery, BLSA has additionally developed, and aims to refine, a habitat tool that can map the presence and state of suitable foraging habitat for Lesser Flamingos (namely, water bodies with appropriate food sources - i.e., cyanobacteria).

## **ISSAP for the Conservation of the Madagascar Pond Heron**

### **Breeding range**

Two countries within the species' breeding range have national species action plans:

- Madagascar - *Strategy for the conservation of the Madagascar Pond Heron 2022-2030*. Key achievements have included the following:
  - 3 new articles published related to the biological and ecological study of this species (2019-2022).
  - 21 nesting sites were identified, with approximately 800 breeding pairs (2022).
- Mayotte (France outre-mer département) - *National Action Plan for Mayotte (2018-2022)*. An update of this action plan is underway. Key achievements include:
  - A standardized document for this species' population monitoring was developed and has been implemented since 2018.
  - The population evaluation occurring in 2021-2022, with 830 mature birds

There is no national action plan for the French islands (Europa, Aldabra), although the Madagascar Pond Heron has been recorded there (2022 data is available). To date, there are no records for this species in the Seychelles, Comoros or Mauritius (investigation is needed).

### **Non-breeding range**

Data is available from the International Waterbird Census for some countries, such as Kenya and Mozambique.

### **ISSAP Coordination**

An effort is being made to revitalize the International Working Group through communication and information sharing regarding the ISSAP's implementation. To this end, focal points have been contacted from countries within the species' breeding range.

### **ISSAP for the Conservation of the Slaty Egret**

The first planning meeting was held with the AEWAs Secretariat in 2020. Birdlife Botswana is to facilitate and host the first Slaty Egret International Working Group Meeting in Botswana in 2023. This meeting has been postponed twice due to COVID-19, as travel by other range states (Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and the AEWAs Secretariat from Germany could not materialize. Proposals are at initial stages, but tentative dates (which have yet to be put forward before Botswana's authorities) are mid-September to early October 2023.

### **ISSAP for the Conservation of the White-winged Flufftail**

#### **South Africa**

The White-winged Flufftail National Working Group continues to meet annually and coordinate the measures of various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders towards implementing the International Single Species Action Plan for this species. Important progress has been made in the current reporting period, including, *inter alia*, the following:

- The Middelpunt Wetland was declared a private nature reserve. The intent to designate this site as a Ramsar Site has also been approved by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and the Ramsar Information Sheet has been submitted to the Ramsar committee for consideration. A wildlife-friendly fence has been completed at the site to control grazing and evaluation has begun using camera traps.
- Steps are underway to expand the Greater Lakenvlei Protected Environment (the proposed expansion has been gazetted for public comment).
- Ingula Nature Reserve was declared a Ramsar Site.
- Rehabilitation work has commenced at Verloren Valei Nature Reserve by Working for Wetlands and work continues in the Greater Lakenvlei Protected Environment by Glencore.
- A community conservation project has been initiated at Ntsikeni Nature Reserve.
- Site monitoring (including to explore the fine scale habitat requirements for this species) continues, as do acoustic surveys to identify its presence.

Mining and prospecting activities continue to be of concern for this species' habitat (although the threat of diamond prospecting immediately adjacent to the Middelpunt Wetland has fortunately been averted). Development pressure from wind farms is also an emerging concern. Due to limited grid capacity in areas traditionally targeted by wind energy development, developers are now exploring new areas with pockets of good wind resource, including near White-winged Flufftail habitat. It is known from monitoring data from operational wind farms that other flufftail species (i.e., Striped, Buff-spotted and Red-chested) have been killed by turbines. There is also a reasonably good idea (from habitat suitability models) of where White-winged Flufftails might occur. What is unknown, however, is how this species is using the surrounding landscape to move and how this might translate into collision risk. The need for a solid understanding of White-winged Flufftail movement ecology is therefore growing.

### **IMSAP for the Conservation of the Benguela Upwelling System Coastal Seabirds**

The first meeting of the AEWAs Benguela Coastal Seabirds International Working Group took place in March 2021. The meeting developed a Rolling Work Plan for the period 2021-2025. Unfortunately,

however, lack of capacity (both funding and human capacity) has hampered the coordinated implementation of this work plan.

## **Namibia**

Namibia currently holds approximately 4,000 breeding pairs of African Penguins that, along with other threatened seabirds, traverse the entire Namibian coastline. Plans for coastal bird conservation are progressing, despite being slowed down by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Seabirds (SANCCOB) was able to successfully complete phase 1 of a Seabird Conservation Project, which focused on improved preparedness in the event of an oil spill or other emergency situation. Notable accomplishments include the following:

- While the seabirds traverse the entire coastline, their breeding islands are concentrated in the southern part of the country. The towns of Lüderitz and Oranjemund were therefore identified as initial sites in which to store important response equipment that can be accessed quickly when needed.
- In 2021 (and continuing into 2022), SANCCOB provided training to Namibian nationals on first response and oiled wildlife response. Trainees consisted of personnel from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) and the University of Namibia (UNAM).
- SANCCOB drafted a National Oiled Wildlife Contingency Plan for Namibia, which will be integrated into the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan. This is the first time the country has adopted preparedness measures that encompass its most vulnerable seabird species during an oil pollution incident.
- Although the initial aim was to address the lack of preparedness in Namibia and the threat posed to endangered seabirds by an oil pollution incident, the project evolved into a broader conservation initiative with the establishment of the dedicated non-profit Namibian Foundation for the Conservation of Seabirds (NAMCOB). Project partners are SANCCOB, the Debmarine-Namdeb Foundation, the Namibia Nature Foundation, the Namibia Chamber of Environment, the African Penguin Conservation Project, Dr Jessica Kemper, and The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore. A Constitution has been adopted to conserve seabirds on the Namibian coast and in its marine exclusive economic zone, with emphasis on the most threatened species and improved protection for the Namibian Islands Marine Protected Area (NIMPA). NAMCOB project partners are currently working on a funding model to create job opportunities for Namibians and to empower the project to deal with future incidents.

## **South Africa**

A variety of research and conservation activities regarding the Benguela coastal seabirds continue in South Africa. These include, *inter alia*, the following:

- A second African Penguin Biodiversity Management Plan has been drafted (the final version of which has yet to be gazetted).
- Following many years of an Island Closure Experiment and consultation with NGOs, academic institutions and the fishing industry, an international panel of experts has been convened to provide recommendations regarding fishing closures around African Penguin breeding colonies. These closed areas have the potential to improve the conservation status of African Penguins by ensuring that they do not have to compete with fishing vessels for prey directly around their colonies. Additionally, work has started to identify ecosystem thresholds to be included in the models used to set sardine and anchovy quotas, as an effort towards improving the implementation of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management.
- Efforts are underway to establish a new, land-based African Penguin colony at De Hoop Nature Reserve (see further section 5 below).

- Automated Penguin Monitoring Systems are being used at three colonies to monitor conditions of African Penguins in real time to facilitate mitigating at-sea threats.
- Marine Important Bird Areas for the Endangered African Penguin (8 sites), Cape Gannet (2 sites) and Cape Cormorant (4 sites) have been included in the Critical Biodiversity Area map that the South African government will use to expand South Africa's Marine Protected Area network.
- Ongoing research has been initiated by BLSA into non-breeding distributions of African Penguins and Cape Gannets, in collaboration with Nelson Mandela University and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.
- SANCCOB's Chick Bolstering Project (which officially commenced in 2006) has led to over 9,500 African Penguin chicks being admitted to the Chick Rearing Unit in Cape Town, with 81% being successfully released back into the wild.

4. Emergency situations (extreme cold, draught, toxic or oil spills, etc.) that have occurred and have affected waterbirds and/or their habitats since the last TC meeting and response to them.

### Malawi

A significant concern is the frequent drying up of Lake Chilwa. It's unclear whether this is due to climate change or is more a siltation issue. However, when the lake dries, it means that many people who ordinarily rely on fishing turn to bird hunting as a livelihood. There are not measures to ensure that this hunting is sustainable, as these fishermen are not formal members of hunting clubs and do not abide to their rules.

### South Africa

- Cape Cormorant mass chick abandonment:  
During the routine vehicle patrol on Robben Island on 12 January 2021, SANCCOB observed Kelp gulls (and later Sacred Ibis) predating on small Cape Cormorant chicks that had been abandoned by their parents. The chicks were also exposed to extreme temperatures (hot and cold), as they didn't have their parents to protect them. With the help of Robben Island Museum's Environmental Unit, Two Oceans Aquarium and the National Sea Rescue Institute, 1,865 Cape Cormorant chicks were rescued over a three-day period. Unfortunately, many more chicks died due to hyperthermia, hypothermia or predation. One week later, a similar situation unfolded on Jutten Island and a further 173 chicks were rescued with the help of SANParks and the Pelican Watch volunteers. In total, 2,038 Cape Cormorants were rescued and sent to SANCCOB for hand-rearing and rehabilitation, making this the second-largest seabird rescue since the MV Treasure oil spill in 2000. Cape Cormorants are a challenging species to care for in a rehabilitation facility due to their low tolerance to stress and high tendency to imprint on humans. Many chicks were in poor condition when they were rescued and many of the most compromised chicks did not survive the first week. 90% of all mortalities observed occurred within the first eight days after rescue. During the following four months, the team hand-reared more than 1,000 birds. Lack of food is the suspected reason for the mass abandonment, with low levels of small pelagic fish stocks, primarily sardine, cited by environmental scientists. The mismatch between timing of breeding and hot weather conditions was also a factor. Rising temperatures due to climate change will further negatively affect fish availability, so these mass abandonments may become more frequent.
- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI):  
In 2021, the H5N1 strain of HPAI affected various AEWA species in the Western Cape Province (the majority being Cape Cormorants). Numerous governmental and non-governmental organisations collaborated to monitor and manage the situation. A disease surveillance programme has been put in place to monitor seabird colonies for avian influenza

and a coordinated reporting system is in place. Improved carcass management and testing has also been implemented.

More recently, in November 2022, penguins admitted to the SANCCOB seabird hospital in Cape Town tested positive for HPAI and developed clinical symptoms, resulting in SANCCOB Cape Town being placed under quarantine. The quarantine notice stipulated that SANCCOB Cape Town was prohibited from admitting any new seabirds rescued and, in addition, no seabirds in care were permitted for release. This was an immense challenge as there were just under 500 African penguins at the centre. A temporary offsite quarantine facility was implemented to receive any new rescued seabirds. The offsite facility remained open for November, December and the first few weeks of January. Permission was granted by the State Veterinarian to allow SANCCOB Cape Town to continue admitting seabirds to the offsite facility, as well as releasing seabirds from this site that met the required criteria. Strategies adopted by SANCCOB to manage the outbreak included: activating SANCCOB's internal disaster response contingency plan (which included implementation of an internal Incident Management Structure); implementation of a strict biosecurity regime to prevent cross-contamination; and screening of new birds rescued for symptoms by a clinical veterinarian outside SANCCOB's facility. There were many challenges during this period relating to finding sufficient human capacity as well as managing secondary health complications that typically affect seabirds when time in a captive environment is prolonged. Detailed swim and feeding plans were implemented and weekly healthy checks continued for all the birds in care. SANCCOB Cape Town's state of quarantine was ultimately lifted by the Western Cape Veterinary Services in February 2023 after vigorous PCR testing came out negative for any Avian Influenza. The offsite facility was demobilized, and the first release of seabirds occurred not long after. Despite the challenges experienced, this response has provided an opportunity for SANCCOB to understand the disease better, how it behaves and how African penguins and other seabird species respond to it and can recover successfully. These lessons learnt will be valuable going forward during future outbreaks.

- *Oil spills:*

In the period since the last regional reports to the AEWA Technical Committee, two oil spills have resulted from ship-to-ship bunkering in Algoa Bay. Fortunately, these resulted in considerably fewer oiled seabirds than previous bunkering-related oil spills (in 2016 and 2019). Following the 2021 spill of 400 litres of heavy fuel, three oiled Cape Gannets and one African Penguin were identified and rescued – it being a stroke of luck that the spill occurred during the annual moult cycle for African Penguins, with the result that they were confined to islands. No oiled seabirds were reported after the 2022 spill. Notably, the number of African Penguins on St Croix Island has decreased severely in recent years (see section 11 below), and the few remaining individuals may have avoided the slick. In both instances, relevant oil response teams were initiated in accordance with South Africa's National Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

- *Chemical spill:*

In 2021, during unrest in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, a large agrochemicals warehouse was set on fire. Runoff from firefighting efforts washed effluent into the adjacent river system, Umhlanga estuary and beach, killing aquatic life. Cleanup was undertaken and biological monitoring is ongoing. Fortunately, there has been no evidence of direct impacts on birds. Indirect impacts (e.g., impacts on food resources) are more difficult to quantify. However, birds returned to the estuary fairly soon after this event and it has not reduced the numbers of birds found in this area.

- Floods:

The KwaZulu-Natal Province was hit by devastating floods in 2022, which caused significant infrastructural damage – including to sewerage infrastructure. Raw sewage continues to run into river systems, which is a concern for waterbird habitat.

## 5. New or major ongoing waterbird species re-establishment (reintroduction, supplementation) initiatives.

### **Mauritius**

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation is working to attract seabirds onto Ile aux Aigrettes and Round Island (here, in collaboration with Durrell). Ile aux Aigrettes lost its seabird population over a century ago due to poaching and invasive species, such as cats and rats. Between 2009 and 2017, 620 chicks of six seabird species were translocated to Ile aux Aigrettes, of which 87% fledged to survival. Species translocated included the following AEW species: Red-tailed Tropicbird, White-tailed Tropicbird, Sooty Tern, Lesser Noddy, and Brown Noddy. Additional activities aimed at increasing the likelihood of seabirds re-establishing on the island include: plastic seabird decoys, playback of seabird calls, creation of seabird-friendly habitat to attract prospecting and returning seabirds, and measures to prevent animal predators from reaching the island and to protect seabirds from poaching.

### **South Africa**

BLSA, CapeNature and SANCCOB have been working to re-establish an African Penguin colony at De Hoop Nature Reserve. This project aims to create resilience in the penguin population by increasing the number of colonies and bridging the gap between South Africa's east and west populations. In 2018, a predator-proof fence was constructed, and penguin decoys and a speaker playing penguin calls were installed. Over 180 juvenile African Penguins have been released at the colony site to encourage them to imprint on the colony and return in future when they are ready to breed. In June 2022, adult penguins were found at the colony and in October, two chicks were seen (and have subsequently fledged). This is the first time penguins have bred at the colony in 15 years and the first human-assisted African Penguin colony establishment. Penguins have also been using the colony as a moulting site, which is a good sign for future colonisation.

## 6. Activities on eradication or other type of action regarding alien species.

### **Mauritius**

At Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary there are controls of *Typha domingensis*.

### **South Africa**

- The Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (GDARDE) has compiled a draft risk analysis for the Black Swan as part of the requirement to list the species under the national Alien and Invasive Species (A&IS) Regulations. This species has been recorded at a variety of waterbodies in Gauteng and breeding was recorded at one site. While two breeding pairs have been removed from the wild, this process is time-consuming and open to public opposition. A more proactive strategy, aimed at reducing potential for escape/deliberate release, is required. The proposed listing of this species under the A&IS Regulations will create a legal basis for setting minimum keeping requirements which is currently lacking.
- Invasive alien plant (IAP) clearing is occurring in the Verlorenvlei Ramsar Site catchment, focusing on the central catchment area (the 9,000 ha Moutonshoek Protected Environment). BLSA developed the IAP Management Unit Clearing Plan for Moutonshoek (2019) and, in

partnership with West Coast District Municipality, funds its implementation. To date, more than 60% of the Moutonshoek river valley has been cleared.

- BLSA also co-funds the IAP clearing team at the Berg River estuary. This team was trained and equipped by BLSA and is now employed (on rolling contract) by West Coast District Municipality.

### **Zambia**

Invasive species have spread across many wetlands in Zambia, affecting important sites for waterbirds. BirdWatch Zambia (BWZ) is involved in documenting primary drivers for invasive species, designing, implementing and sharing techniques to control and eradicate invasive alien species, and expanding invasive species control efforts to multiple sites that are under threat. Currently, the organisation is implementing invasive species control projects at two Ramsar Sites, which are among Zambia's major wetlands and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) as well as important stopover sites for migratory birds:

- The first of these projects involves the biocontrol of *Salvinia molesta* on the Lukanga swamps. BWZ has been working on the Lukanga swamps to control *Salvinia molesta* since 2013. After manual control failed in 2013, the organisation received funding from the Darwin Initiative to initiate the biological control of the weed in 2017. This has seen some parts of the swamps completely cleared of the weed, resulting in improved habitat for waterbirds. However, there are still areas and other important wetland habitats that are infested. There is consequently a need to expand on the current interventions by identifying and mapping all possible sources and infested areas and initiating control measures.
- The second project involves the manual control of *Mimosa pigra* on the Barotse floodplains. In 2022, BWZ received funding for this project from WWF. To date, at least 18ha of the weed has been cleared out of the target of 100ha.

### **Zimbabwe**

Efforts to remove invasive species within protected area waterbodies are addressed in the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

7. [New or major ongoing activities on habitat \(site\) inventory, conservation or restoration and rehabilitation of waterbird habitats.](#)

### **Mauritius**

See above regarding activities at Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary and Ile aux Aigrettes.

### **South Africa**

- Biodiversity stewardship (an approach through which private and communal landowners voluntarily enter agreements to protect and manage their land in biodiversity priority areas) continues to play a crucial role in expanding South Africa's protected areas network. Recent examples of declarations with relevance to AEW species include the Upper Wilge Protected Environment and the Middelpunt Nature Reserve. Various types of post-declaration support are provided, which involves working alongside landowners to create safer habitat for biodiversity through certain extension services, habitat and avifaunal monitoring, and the development/review of habitat management guidelines and management plans, amongst other measures.

- In partnership with provincial environmental agency, CapeNature, BLSA produced a strategy outlining the agreed approach to safeguarding priority estuaries for conservation in the Western Cape. This document has now been approved and adopted by provincial authorities, with recommendations from the strategy included in the relevant, newly updated Estuary Management Plans. The strategy focuses on coastal estuarine waters (public access land) and the project is working with CapeNature, other government partners and the local communities to facilitate the declaration of formal protected areas over large areas of the Olifants River, Verlorenvlei, Berg River, Bot River-Kleinmond and Klein River estuaries, including the open water, mudflats and large areas of endangered, highly valuable salt marsh.
- A 7,000 ha protected environment on the north bank of the Berg River estuary, at Velddrif on the West Coast (which consistently ranks within the top three estuaries for conservation in South Africa) has just completed the 'Intention to declare' process, and is set to be fully declared before the end of 2023, with the accompanying environmental management plan. It includes more than 1,000 ha of estuarine functional zone and will be the first estuarine protected environment in South Africa. At the Klein River estuary (ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the country for its conservation importance), a further three nature reserves and a protected environment (currently, totalling around 3,000 ha) are in the early stages of the declaration process.
- The Ingula Nature Reserve and Berg River estuary have been declared as Ramsar Sites.
- The Western Cape Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) project was launched towards the end of 2021. Led by BLSA, this pilot project is developing the framework for identifying and recognising OECMs in the province, including resource requirements, for roll out across South Africa.
- BLSA is leading on efforts to trial bankside erosion mitigation techniques in estuarine environments at the Berg River estuary pilot site, focused on soft-engineering interventions and estuarine habitat rehabilitation (e.g., reed marsh planting; landscaped, re-vegetated banks). Building on this bankside erosion adaptation work, BLSA has also expanded to include measures to safeguard blue carbon habitat - specifically, the protection, rehabilitation and restoration of salt marsh habitats. This is also being trialed at the Berg River estuary, with the Olifants River estuary as a secondary site.

### **Zambia**

See details in section 6 above regarding clearing of invasive species from important sites for waterbirds.

### **Zimbabwe**

Habitat restoration by BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ) in the Driefontein Grasslands Ramsar Site and IBA has restored at least 50 hectares of wetlands between January 2020 and March 2022. BLZ, working closely with the Environmental Management Agency and Gutu Rural District Council, has managed to build local capacity in sustainable wetland management. BLZ additionally monitors indicator wetland flagship species (cranes) in this area.

## **8. Progress of the region in phasing out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands.**

### **Regional progress**

In January 2023, BirdLife International and BirdLife South Africa hosted a two-day workshop on lead advocacy in the context of vulture conservation. Although the workshop was not focused directly on waterbirds and lead shot, it included presentations highlighting both AEWAs' requirements on this matter and the progress that has been made in the European Union; and participants' discussions

expanded well beyond the threat that lead poses to vultures specifically. Participants included representatives from BirdLife partners and governments from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as hunting associations from South Africa and Zimbabwe. This provided an opportunity to share experiences and ideas (including regarding the role of legal regulations in promoting a transition to non-lead alternatives); and for stakeholders from countries that have not already developed action plans on lead and wildlife to take the first steps towards doing so.

### **Botswana**

A National Wildlife Poisoning Working Group, comprising wildlife stakeholders, has just been formed and poisoning protocols have been drafted. The aim is to ultimately have a Lead Poisoning Working Group that will specifically address the threat posed by lead to wildlife and wetlands and advocate for the phasing out of use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands.

### **Namibia**

In 2021, the Namibian Wildlife Lead (Pb) Poisoning Working Group was established. This Working Group endeavours to incentivise the transition of hunting and the wildlife sector to lead-free ammunition, including by awareness-raising, testing and providing information on non-lead alternatives, research into lead in wildlife meat on markets, supporting the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism to transition to using lead-free ammunition, and exploring the introduction of an environmental levy on lead ammunition and a waiver of taxes on lead-free ammunition. (*See further <https://n-c-e.org/namibian-wildlife-lead-poisoning-working-group>*)

### **South Africa**

SA Wingshooters and the SA Hunters and Game Conservation Association (SAHGCA) both have position statements recommending that their members not shoot over wetlands with lead shot, and the SAHGCA is undertaking ongoing awareness raising amongst its members and the general public on the risks associated with the use of lead-based ammunition. In the Gauteng province, it has been recommended for several years that all hunting licenses and permits to hunt damage causing waterfowl (e.g. Egyptian Geese on golf estates) include a condition that no hunting is permitted over wetlands and that no lead shot may be used when hunting near wetlands or rivers where there is potential for shot to drop into water. Compliance is not monitored. However, GDARDE has communicated this issue in meetings with representatives of the local wingshooter community and they agree that this is a necessary measure.

Despite the above, the availability and affordability of lead-free shotgun ammunition remains a significant hurdle. No lead-free shotgun shells are currently manufactured in South Africa, with the result that they have to be imported at six times the price of standard lead shotgun shells.

South Africa's Lead Task Team (LTT) (a multi-stakeholder forum, which was established by government in 2019) endeavours to ensure that wildlife in South Africa is not harmed by exposure to lead. The LTT's activities include, *inter alia*, awareness raising, identifying and filling research gaps, providing policy and management guidance, and active engagement with affected parties. Its current Action Plan envisions actions to ensure the local production of lead-free ammunition (including 12-gauge shotgun shells) and that such ammunition is sold by the majority of ammunition retailers. To this end, the South African government is being encouraged to take steps to attract the manufacture of non-lead ammunition to South Africa. However, the LTT's work has, thus far, had little focus on enhancing the demand for, and availability of, shotgun shells specifically and it has been agreed that a dedicated workshop is needed on this topic.

The LTT's Action Plan also envisions the adoption of measures by conservation agencies to reduce lead exposure and impacts in protected areas. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife has drafted a policy and Standard Operating Procedure (including transitional arrangements) regarding the use of non-lead ammunition in the protected areas it manages and other provincial conservation agencies are being encouraged to take similar measures. The LTT recently submitted comments on South Africa's draft Game Meat Strategy, in which it advocated for the regulation of lead levels in game meat intended for human consumption.

## 9. New or major ongoing research and monitoring activities on waterbirds and waterbird habitats.

### **Botswana**

There are biannual waterbird counts in all the important waterbird areas across the country by Birdlife Botswana (BLB) in collaboration with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP). The Waterbird monitoring program involves DWNP and BLB staff as well as individual volunteers. The biannual bird counts are done in January and July. The program targets countrywide monitoring but currently most of the monitoring is done in the southern-eastern part of the country as well as part of the central district, with low participation in the upper central and north regions which are wetlands rich. The DWNP research office in Maun has liaised with BLB and is currently identifying wetlands to be monitored in the north.

### **Mauritius**

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation is doing some monitoring related to the 2020 MV Wakashio oil spill.

### **South Africa**

- The Coordinated Waterbird Counts (CWAC) project consists of a programme of regular mid-summer and mid-winter censuses at many of South Africa's most important wetlands.
- In Gauteng, GDARDE continues to conduct summer and winter waterbird counts at sites across the province. Volunteer counts at several historical CWAC sites lapsed over the years and safety concerns may see counting stop at others in the near future. While GDARDE has taken over some of these sites, they are now close to capacity and will need to build network resilience by engaging more volunteers.
- BLSA is coordinating the Northern and Western Cape's response to the 2023 summer International Waterbird Census, Total Count of the East Atlantic Flyway. This involves the inclusion of additional coastal wetland sites to the national CWAC registrar. BLSA also continues to institute additional bird monitoring as part of the CWAC at estuarine IBAs (i.e., more than the standard biannual counts), allowing for a better understanding of bird movement in response to seasonal changes and management, such as artificial breaching of river mouths. At the Berg River estuary, BLSA undertakes additional monitoring of Cape Cormorants (which roost in their tens of thousands at the commercial salt works) and of the reedmarsh heronries.
- As part of its Memorandum of Understanding with the Western Cape environmental agency, CapeNature, BLSA conducts analyses of waterbird trends at priority estuaries, contributing to Estuary Management Plan reporting frameworks. BLSA will also be providing training in CWAC and waterbird identification to government officials, NGOs and local community members in 2023 at sites along the West and South coasts.
- The SA Hunters and Game Conservation Association has started a Wild Harvest Survey, in which its members voluntarily report on birds hunted every year.

## **Zambia**

BirdWatch Zambia conducts waterbird monitoring activities through the biannual waterbird counts on the Kafue Flats (Lochinvar and Blue Lagoon National Parks) – one of the most important sites for waterbirds in Zambia. These counts are undertaken to assess and evaluate the status and trends of all waterbirds; and have additionally provided opportunities for collaboration with various stakeholders for improved management, working towards curbing threats to the habitat and species. The waterbird count has been consistently done on the Kafue Flats. Collected data has been submitted to Wetlands International for inclusion in the International Waterbird Census database.

## **Zimbabwe**

- Waterbird counts are conducted in January and July of each year. BirdLife Zimbabwe continues to coordinate this across the country.
- Monitoring of restored sites continues in the Driefontein Grasslands. Basic hydrological assessment conducted in the Driefontein Grasslands in 2021 yielded data on the different fish species found in the wetlands as well as habitat data. This will require follow-up to fully determine the correlation between the Grey Crowned Crane and other small organisms found within the wetlands.

## **10. New or major ongoing education and information activities on waterbirds, waterbird habitats and the Agreement.**

### **Botswana**

- Botswana commemorates the World Bird Migratory Day Celebrations every year and the event is hosted near wetlands that host migratory waterbird species. On the day, primary and secondary schools participate in the event through public rallies and then conduct school competitions based on waterbirds. In 2022, the World Migratory Bird Day was commemorated in the Makgadikgadi wetlands system at Rakops village in October. The commemorations engaged students from schools in the area. The main objective of the commemoration is to install bird conservation at grassroot level, hence the targeting of school children. A total of 200 students took part in the awareness march through Rakops village. The march targeted the general public. Themed competitions were conducted by students. This year, the event is going to be conducted at the upper part of the Okavango Delta World Heritage Site.
- Radio interviews on the national radio programme called “Makgabiso Naga” and print media are used to educate the public. A brochure on waterbirds has been developed to educate the public. There are also local film documentaries on waterbirds such as the “Flame Bird”, a documentary depicting the migration of lesser and greater flamingo at their breeding site at Makgadikgadi pans, their largest breeding site in Southern Africa.

### **Malawi**

Elephant Marsh has established its first community conservation area. The community guides are also being trained to help with monitoring.

### **Mauritius**

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation undertakes information activities in respect of seabirds, and the does so at NPCS at Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary.

## South Africa

- Annual media campaigns have been run around World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), and the BirdLasser migratory bird challenge has also been linked to WMBD during this period.
- The Spring Alive event celebrates the arrival of migrants during the South African spring.
- The annual Flufftail Festival seeks to enhance awareness about the importance of water and the biodiversity that wetlands support. An interactive ‘Be a Wetland Warrior’ activity book (designed around the Grade 6 curriculum) is available at the following link: <https://www.birdlife.org.za/support-us/events/flufftail-festival/>
- BLSA, through the South African Names for South African Birds project, published a complete list of South Africa’s birds in isiZulu in 2022. Despite this being the most common first language in South Africa, a full list of vernacular names did not exist for any local languages other than English and Afrikaans. This milestone was achieved through consultative workshops with Zulu-speaking representatives, linguists, onomasticians, and bird experts. These new names remove a long-prevailing language barrier for local people and will encourage participation in and awareness of birds and their conservation.
- The Cape Gannet was BLSA’s Bird of the Year for 2022, resulting in efforts to raise awareness about this species and the threats it faces. These included the development of infographics, fact files and lesson plans (available at the following link: <https://www.birdlife.org.za/bird-of-the-year-2022/>).

## Zimbabwe

- Joint crane surveys conducted by BLZ, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, the Gutu Rural District Council and a few individuals representing communities in Driefontein Grasslands, have been successful.
- A wetland and crane conservation project initiated by BLZ in the Driefontein wetlands continues. The project increased awareness of the conservation of Grey Crowned Cranes and Wattled Cranes, key wetland indicator species for this area. Alternative sources of livelihoods provided to the rural communities living in this area helped reduce threats to wetlands. The local villagers were educated about environmentally friendly income generating livelihoods that have no/minimum contact with wetlands. Local agreements developed by the communities were instrumental in regulating human activities around the wetlands. Capacity building of communities and stakeholders in wetland conservation also takes place under this project. Four Local Conservation Groups in Driefontein have had their capacity in crane and wetland monitoring strengthened to benefit waterbirds.

11. Problematic cases threatening waterbirds or their habitats (e.g. infrastructural developments, changes in legislation, etc.).

## Mauritius

There are generally problems with development over wetlands.

## South Africa

- *Legal requirements for EIAs and compliance therewith:*  
Various steps have been taken in recent years to strengthen South Africa’s requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) – including to ensure that relevant threatened species are taken into consideration and that species impact assessments are performed to a

consistently high standard. Unfortunately, compliance with these requirements remains poor in many EIAs. Additional concerns regarding environmental authorisations include the following:

- South African law makes allowance for the retrospective authorisation of unlawful activities. This provision is open to abuse. For instance, on the West Coast, the illegal damming of water has had serious and adverse environmental impacts on surface waterflow – including to the Verlorenvlei estuary (an IBA and Ramsar Site that is already in a very poor state).
- South Africa's President recently declared a national state of disaster in response to the country's electricity crisis, and it is currently unclear how measures to expedite energy developments in response to this crisis may dilute environmental protections.

- Mining:

There has been a significant increase in prospecting and mining applications within IBAs and in close proximity to (or sometimes within) designated protected areas. For instance, a coal prospecting right was recently granted within the Devon Protected Environment (the designation of which was highlighted in the last southern African report to the AEWA Technical Committee, given its importance for species such as the Maccoa Duck, Black-winged Pratincole and Greater Flamingo). The number of prospecting and mining applications in some areas (e.g., in proximity to Wakkerstroom and along the West Coast) make cumulative impacts a serious concern.

- Marine noise pollution:

The impacts of underwater noise remain a significant concern for African Penguins. The African Penguin colony at St Croix Island (in Algoa Bay) was, in 2015, the largest global population, providing nesting habitat for 7,616 pairs (i.e., 39% of South Africa's African Penguin population). This colony is currently the fourth largest population after it decreased to 1,543 pairs in 2022, an unprecedented short-term decline of 80%. A recent study found a strong correlation between an exponential increase in vessel-derived noise associated with ship-to-ship bunkering activities (i.e., offshore fuel transfers) in proximity to St Croix Island and the decrease in the African Penguin population (Pichegru et al., 2022). An Environmental Risk Assessment for ship-to-ship bunkering in Algoa Bay recently commenced and is intended to consider the full range of environmental risks associated with this activity. In addition, the following research is currently underway:

- The project 'Acoustic Foraging Network of African Penguins' (AFNAP) led by the University of Paris-Saclay and in collaboration with BLSA and Nelson Mandela University (NMU), was initiated in 2021 to understand the behavioural responses of African Penguins to marine noise and how this may affect their communication network at sea. To date, miniature hydrophones and accelerometers have been deployed on African Penguins in Algoa Bay to facilitate this. In addition to this monitoring, *in situ* hydrophones were deployed at two locations in Algoa Bay in 2022.
- BLSA and SANCCOB installed an Automated Penguin Monitoring System (APMS) on Bird Island, Algoa Bay in October 2022. Data from the APMS will be used to assess the response of birds to various potential threats including marine noise (using *in situ* hydrophone data) and resource competition.
- NMU researchers will be monitoring noise levels in close proximity to bunkering and transiting vessels in 2023 to improve our understanding of the noise levels associated with bunkering activities.

- *Threats identified at waterbird monitoring sites in Gauteng:*  
GDARDE has developed a very basic datasheet to record threats to waterbirds and their habitats at each of the waterbird monitoring sites in Gauteng routinely counted by GDARDE staff. The results are sent to the compiler of the annual Gauteng Environmental Sustainability report. Reed encroachment, eutrophication, wire fences and the spread of Water Hyacinth are among the most widespread threats. Bronkhorstspuit Dam is the latest dam in the province to experience a substantial increase in Water Hyacinth infestation reducing the extent of wader habitat and creating access problems for recreational users. Roodeplaat Dam and Premier Dam are both routinely heavily infested with this weed. Water Hyacinth is also starting to appear at smaller isolated wetlands. GDARDE is also assisting with efforts to manage the Water Hyacinth problem within the Blesbokspuit Ramsar Site.  
During routine waterbird monitoring in 2022, GDARDE found two Greater Flamingos caught on a barbed wire fence running through a pan. The fence could not be removed so various types of marker devices are being tested with the intention to make the wire strands more visible to birds. The focus is on effectiveness, cost of production and installation and durability. This is a small-scale trial but will hopefully build the local body of knowledge around fence mitigation. Flamingos and Blue Cranes continue to use the site and no further incidents have been recorded but it is not possible to know whether this is due to the markers.

## **Zambia**

- *Mining:*  
There has been an increase of mining in protected areas, particularly within IBAs. One good example is in Lochinvar National Park, which falls within the Kafue Flats IBA. Mining has caused rapid degradation of the habitat suitable for a number of birds and the looming expansion of the mine is going to have more negative impacts on the habitat. Additionally, there are some explorations of geothermal energy which are posing a greater threat to the waterbirds and their habitat. Another example is the approved mining in the lower Zambezi National Park, which is likely to affect waterbirds and other species.
- *Large Scale Agriculture:*  
One example is farming in the Lukanga swamp, which is an important site for approximately 360 migratory and resident bird species. This farming covers more than 2,500 ha of the IBA and poses threats to the Lukanga habitat and its associated biodiversity.
- *Damming:*  
The high demand for power generation due to increased industrialization and the growing human population have put pressure on many waterbird habitats in the country. One notable example is the Itezhi-tezhi dam, which is a reservoir for two sites (Itezhi-tezhi and Kafue Gorge) that feed generated power to the national grid. The flood regime on the Kafue flats is now regulated thereby, affecting the normal flooding patterns of the site. This has affected breeding patterns of a number of bird species including the cranes, lapwings, pratincoles etc.
- *Road construction:*  
Infrastructure projects such as construction of roads have negatively impacted waterbirds and their habitats. For example, the construction of the Mongu-Kalabo elevated causeway road across the Barotse Floodplains has altered the normal drainage and flooding patterns of the Barotse Floodplains, particularly around Mongu and Lealui areas. This has influenced distribution of invasive species, which is affecting the normal ecological processes of the site.

## **Zimbabwe**

- *Gill-nets:*

The massive increase in formal and illegal artisanal gill-netting (and the accompanying surge in the quantity of discarded gill-nets) is a major concern. Cheap mono-filament nets are used (on which it is not considered worth expending time for repairs), and the very light gauge of mono-filament used in construction of these nets is such that they have a very short working life. Although the nets are prohibited by the National Parks Act, this restriction is not effectively enforced. Areas impacted include, *inter alia*, the Lake Chivero (Lake Robert MacIlwaine) – a Ramsar Site. BLZ has been monitoring this lake since the 1960s and has recorded the local extinction of the African Darter there in the last nine years. Other waterbirds that were very common at that Ramsar Site were Saddle-billed Storks and Goliath Herons which are now rarely seen around the lake.

### 12. Extent of use of the AEWA Conservation Guidelines by the parties.

No answers were received to this question. This suggests that considerably more effort is needed to raise awareness regarding, and promote the use of, AEWA's Conservation Guidelines in this region.

### 13. Any other information.

## **Mauritius**

A regional Training of Trainers workshop on the Flyway Approach to the Conservation and Wise Use of Waterbirds and Wetlands was held in Mauritius from 6-10 February 2023. The workshop was co-organised by the AEWA Secretariat and the Mauritius National Parks and Conservation Service. It included visits to Ile Aux Aigrettes, Ile Au Phare and Ile de la Passe, as well as Pointe Desny and Blue Bay Marine Park Ramsar Sites.

## **South Africa**

- The Regional Red List for birds is in the process of being updated.
- After several years of delays, a project is about to commence to develop a National Implementation Plan for AEWA. It is envisioned that this process will act as an accelerator for South Africa's NBSAP review and feed into the revision of its NBSAP.

**APPENDIX II – TC18 List of Participants**

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