

1st Meeting of the AEWA European Seaduck International Working Group

9-10 December 2020

MEETING REPORT

1. Introduction

The 1st Meeting of the AEWA European Seaduck International Working Group took place online on the 9th – 10th December 2020 supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN).

The meeting objectives included reviewing progress made with the implementation of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plans (ISSAPs) for Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) and Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*). In addition, Working Group members and observers discussed and agreed on coordinated action with respect to priority conservation activities, also taking into consideration the draft AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), expected to be adopted at AEWA MOP8 in 2021.

2. Opening and Welcome

Oliver Schall from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) opened the meeting and welcomed participants on behalf of the host government of Germany, followed by the Working Group Coordinator Richard Hearn from the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) and Nina Mikander from the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

3. Appointment of Chair Country for the Working Group

Norway proposed Germany as Chair country for the Working Group. The proposal was seconded by Denmark. Jochen Krause (BfN), Oliver Schall (BMU) and Sandra Vardeh (BfN) subsequently shared the chairing of the meeting.

Decision: *Germany was elected to Chair the Working Group for the duration of this meeting as well as the following inter-sessional period until the next meeting of the Working Group.*

4. Adoption of the Agenda

Richard Hearn (WWT) presented the agenda (document ES IWG 1.1 rev.1). There were no requests for changes to the agenda or for any other business.

Decision: *The agenda was adopted with no changes.*

5. Admission of observers

Decision: *All observer organisations as outlined in the preliminary participants list (document ES IWG Inf. 1.7 rev.1) were admitted to the Working Group.*

6. Working Group Terms of Reference

Nina Mikander (UNEP/AEWA Secretariat) presented the Working Group Terms of Reference (document ES IWG Inf. 1.2 rev. 1), based on the generic Terms of Reference for AEWA International Species Working Groups developed by the AEWA Technical Committee.

7. Update on the coordination of the IWG

Richard Hearn (WWT) gave an update on the status of Working Group membership and coordination.

Decision: *The new Working Group Coordinators Ib Krag Petersen (Aarhus University) and Ainars Aunins (University of Latvia) were welcomed to the group. The Coordinators will continue efforts to get designations to the Working Group from the range states still yet to provide this.*

8. Overview on the current status of the Long-tailed Duck and Velvet Scoter

Richard Hearn (WWT) presented an overview of current knowledge of the status of both species (comprising two populations of Long-tailed Duck and one population of Velvet Scoter) under the auspices of the Working Group. The conservation status of all three populations is rather difficult to ascertain at the current time, due to a lack of new population-scale population or trend estimates. However, the available national data on abundance and trend present a mixed picture; consequently, there is no clear evidence for a change in status at the current time.

9. Summary on the status of ISSAP implementation

Richard Hearn (WWT) presented a brief summary on the implementation status of both the Long-tailed Duck and Velvet Scoter ISSAPs based on received national reports, also highlighting ongoing activities under other international processes such as Helcom, Ospar and CAFF. Countries were also requested to report back during the discussion on additional activities observed or implemented.

Discussion (main points only):

Shipping and oil

Norway has recently (2019) developed vulnerability maps as part of a national seabird action plan.

Bycatch

The United Kingdom has recently developed a National Plan of Action for Seabird Bycatch.

Testing of mitigation measures has been undertaken, and is ongoing, in several countries, with no promising results to date.

Hunting

Long-tailed Duck or Velvet Scoter have been removed from national hunting lists as follows: Estonia (Long-tailed Duck in 2016), Latvia (both species in 2016), Norway (Long-tailed Duck in 2017), Denmark (both species in 2020). In Sweden, hunting of Long-tailed Duck is currently under review. In Finland, hunting of Long-tailed Duck is now more regulated and the annual harvest has fallen to ~1,800 birds in 2019 (~15% of the harvest rate around 2000). Post-meeting information from Germany is as follows: In Germany, the Long-tailed duck is protected by Federal Hunting Legislation and the respective legislation of the German "Länder" (federal states). The Velvet Scoter is protected by the essential German Federal states: those bordering the North and Baltic Sea coast and Baden Württemberg, where the species regularly appears during winter time far away from the coast in the Rhine Area including the Lake of Constance.

Protected areas

The United Kingdom has recently designated three new marine Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for Long-tailed Duck and two new marine SPAs for Velvet Scoter, meaning that around 60% of the national population of Long-tailed Duck and 87% of the national population of Velvet Scoter now occur in SPAs.

Germany is undertaking comprehensive management planning for all marine protected areas.

Predation

Finland is undertaking active control of Raccoon Dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*).

Monitoring

The conduction of a coordinated mid-winter survey in large parts of the Baltic in 2016 is an activity that has the ability to raise knowledge about these two seabird species, as well as other marine bird species. A coordinated analysis to achieve large scale density estimates and abundances, along with fine geographical scale spatial modelling is in progress, with financial support applied for. This effort not only inform the group

about population size and trends, but also form a valuable platform as data input for efforts to produce vulnerability maps and general spatial planning.

Decision: *Range states will be asked to report on the implementation of prioritized activities in advance of the next meeting of the Working Group.*

10. Overview of other relevant AEWA activities

Nina Mikander (UNEP/AEWA Secretariat) gave a brief update on other activities and processes of relevance under AEWA, including the action-planning process for the Common Eider as well as work on the further prioritization of seabird activities under the Agreement which are both expected to be adopted by the AEWA Parties at MOP8 in October 2021.

11. Dedicated Thematic Sessions

The Working Group then discussed and prioritized ISSAP activities common to both seaduck species in four sessions on (i) monitoring, (ii) bycatch, (iii) marine spatial planning and (iv) harvest, with dedicated thematic overview presentations provided by Ib Krag Petersen (Aarhus University), Yann Rouxel (RSPB), Nele Markones (Kiel University) and Nina Mikander (UNEP/AEWA Secretariat), respectively.

Decision: *The agreed priority activities were included in the draft workplan 2021-2023 which will be circulated to the meeting participants for comments together with the draft meeting report.*

12. Additional species-specific actions

The Working Group went through additional species-specific actions from both ISSAPs that were not covered by the previous thematic sessions and identified further priority activities to be included in the workplan.

Decision: *The agreed priority activities were included in the draft workplan 2021-2023 which will be circulated to the meeting participants for comments together with the draft meeting report.*

13. Fundraising for activities

Nina Mikander (UNEP/AEWA Secretariat) provided an overview of fundraising opportunities for discussion.

Decision: *The Coordinators will lead on establishing a list of ongoing projects as well as projects in development. The Secretariat will share a list of UN-approved private companies for possible partnerships.*

14. Next Meeting

Germany proposed to host the next meeting of the Working Group on the Island of Vilm on the German Baltic Sea coast in March 2022.

Decision: *The 2nd Meeting of the AEWA European Seaduck IWG will take place in March 2022 on the Island of Vilm in Germany.*

Note: *The 24.-26.03.2022 have since been communicated as the meeting dates by the BfN.*

15. Meeting closure

Sandra Vardeh (BfN) thanked all participants for their active participation in the meeting on behalf of Germany and reiterated the invitation to Vilm in 2022, followed by Ib Krag Petersen on behalf of the Coordinators and Nina Mikander on behalf of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.