24th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
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REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AEWA FOR THE EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA REGION – JUNE 2024

This report provides an update of the activities undertaken in the Europe and Central Asia region of the AEWA.

The number of Contracting Parties in the Region / Number of Range States in the Region.

There are 42 Contracting Parties (including the European Union) out of 54 Range States (including Canada).

The Contracting Parties and Range States for the European and Central Asia region are listed in Table 1.

8 countries have submitted a report.

Belgium

Which developments regarding the implementation of AEWA have taken place in the region since the last Meeting of the Parties?

AEWA is well implemented already in Belgium.

Overview of special activities and/or meetings related to AEWA

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 not 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 on. 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. The cold spring in 2023 and wet spring in 2024 resulted in unfavourable conditions to sew maize very soon which stimulated

farmers to take up this new measure. In 2023 it concerned more than 10.000ha (numbers for 2024 are not available yet).

- A dedicated staff-member has started mid 2023 working specifically on this SPP to support and carry out more pro-active actions. Radio-tagging of Curlews in order to better understand their habitat use during the breeding season is continued.

Activities on eradication regarding alien species

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.

Overview of special issues that might be of interest to the StC

- In Wallonia (southern part of Belgium) all use of lead shot is now legally banned within 100m of wetlands by the 'Arrête du Gouvernement Wallon' of 2 May 2024, following the European Decision of 25 January 2021. Before it was 50m, and nickeled lead shot was still allowed. In Flanders (northern part of Belgium) such ban was already issued earlier.

- Numerous projects are going on, smaller and bigger, in the framework of climate change but where water birds often benefit, directly or indirectly:
  - flood control projects restoring wetlands in river valleys (big projects mainly in the Scheldt basin as part of the SIGMA-flood control project).
  - 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.
- New research: For the Flemish region, a study has been concluded 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 certain vulnerable bird areas, in the framework of the EU directive 2019/945 on UAS and third-country operators of UAS.
  See:
  https://www.vlaanderen.be/inbo/publicaties/vliegbeperkingen-voor-dronegebruik-boven-natuurgebieden (in Dutch).

Italy

Developments regarding the implementation of AEWA since the last Meeting of the Parties

National Management Plans:

- On May 10, 2023, the National Management Plan for the Common pochard, prepared by ISPRA (National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research), was adopted by Italy.
- Currently, ISPRA is working on the National Management Plan for the Northern Lapwing on behalf of Ministry of Environment and Energy Security.

Surveys of AEWA species:

During the period 2022-2024, ISPRA carried out national-scale monitoring of the Audouin's Gull and European Shag within the framework of the Marine Strategy.

Filling knowledge gaps:

The Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE) has funded a series of activities carried out by National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research, with the aim of filling knowledge gaps about the movements of AEWA species present in Italy through the use of miniaturized GPS technologies. Here are the results achieved from 2022 to the present:

1. Kentish Plover: The telemetry activity focused on both the movements of breeders during egg incubation (2018-19) and those carried out during the breeding period (2019-currenttly). The study conducted during reproduction revealed movements on a markedly larger scale than previously thought. Individuals nesting on the beach travel up to 16 km from the nest, frequenting wet areas behind the dunes (Cecere et al. 2023)[1]. The study's results provided important information for planning conservation actions for a species classified as at risk of extinction at the national level. The study on non-breeding movements is still ongoing and has shown that many individuals move to areas located within national borders, while a smaller but significant portion of individuals travel to suitable areas beyond the border: France, Tunisia, Morocco.

2. Eurasian Woodcock: In the winter of 2022, telemetry activity began for woodcocks wintering in central-southern Italy. This activity gave information on the timing and routes of migration, as well as the breeding areas. It was thus possible to determine that almost all of the tagged individuals come from central Russia.

3. Northern Lapwing: In 2022 and 2023, it was carried out a telemetry activity of lapwings nesting in Northern Italy, with the aim of investigating habitat use during nesting and identifying migration routes and wintering areas. A manuscript on habitat use of individuals breeding in the intensive agroecosystem of Po Plain has been submitted in June 2024 for publication on a Scientific Journal. Moreover, the GPS-tagging of individuals breeding in Italy revealed that 87% of tagged birds (27 birds) spent the non-breeding period outside national borders: most of them moulted in France and then moved along the Iberian Peninsula. Some individuals wintered in Morocco and Algeria. In addition to this, in January 2024, 30 lapwings wintering in North Italy have been GPS tagged in order to identify the populations of origin (breeding areas), which could be subject to potential hunting activities in Italy.

4. Black-headed Gull: In 2023, 10 individuals nesting in Northern Italy were marked with GPS. This pilot activity aimed to assess the feasibility of a study to identify the wintering areas of the species. Data collected so far indicate that approximately 50% of individuals remain within national borders even after the breeding season, while the remaining 50% spend the non-breeding period along the Mediterranean coasts of France and Spain.

5. Mediterranean Gull: In 2023, 10 breeding individuals were marked, adding to those marked in 2016 and 2017 (36 birds), as part of a study conducted by ISPRA with the financial support of MASE. A manuscript is currently being prepared on the movements of breeding individuals during egg incubation and chick rearing. Tracking during the non-breeding period has highlighted a pattern quite similar to the Black-headed Gull's one: 40% of individuals remain in Italy after breeding, while the other 60% spend the non-breeding period primarily along the Mediterranean coasts of France and Spain.

[1] Cecere, J. G., Picone, M., Basso, M., Panzarin, L., Berton, F., Imperio, S., & Serra, L. (2023). Male but not female Kentish plovers Charadrius alexandrinus modulate foraging behaviour according to tide during incubation. Journal of Ornithology, 164(4), 815-823.

6. Common Gull-billed Tern: The telemetry activity of individuals nesting in Italy (Northern and Southern Adriatic, and Sardinia) began in 2019 and continued until 2023. The study characterized the movements of the species during the breeding season and analysed habitat use (Scridel et al. 2023)[2] Migration routes and areas used during the non-breeding period were also identified, all located along the coast of West-Central Africa.

7. Northern Pintail: In 2022-2024, the GPS-tagging of individuals wintering in Northern Italy, which began in 2018 and was funded by a private donor and MASE, continued. The 128 GPS- tagged individuals allowed the identification of an important stopover site in Hungary, in addition to breeding areas primarily located in Siberia, in the Pechora region and Eastern Europe.

LIFE PROJECTS: In 2022 and 2023, the final actions of the LIFE Marbled duck PSSO (LIFE18 NAT/DE/000797) have been undertaken. The project aimed at restoring and creating ideal conditions both for wintering and breeding within Natura 2000 site «Pantani della Sicilia Sud-Orientale» for two of the rarest and mostly endangered duck species at EU level, Marbled duck and Ferruginous duck. More specifically, in 2022, the latest release of specimens of marbled duck at Longarini marsh was completed and the largest and most relevant portion of habitat restoring planned actions has been successfully performed. Again in 2022, at least 4 pairs of Marbled duck entirely formed by specimens released in the area in the context of project's restocking program have successfully bred in the area; among these pairs, at least 2 pairs have bred and grown-up juveniles within the areas re-shaped and improved for the purpose with the creation of suitable niches for the species to breed.

Overview of special activities and/or meetings related to AEWA

A National Action Plan to combat crimes against wild birds was approved in 2017, with a 5 year duration, implementing the Rome Strategic Plan to eradicate Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade in Wild Birds in Europe and the Mediterranean region (IKB). Among the commitments undertaken by the Plan, there is the periodical report on the activities to combat poaching through the Scoreboard mechanism. At the end of the Plan's duration, in order to give continuity to the ordinary commitment to combat poaching, Italian Ministry of the environment and energy security have signed agreements with ISPRA and CUFA (Forest Carabinieri), e.g. the Convention between the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security and the Carabinieri for the implementation of "Activities aimed at providing collaboration and technical-operational support in the fight against poaching", started in 1st semester 2023. The scoreboard is still compiled through the committee envisaged by the National Action Plan, to fulfill the commitments undertaken with the Rome Strategic Plan.

Among the outcomes of the National Action Plan, the document "*I crimini contro gli uccelli selvatici. Approfondimenti tematici per un'efficace azione di contrasto*" (Crimes against wild birds. Thematic insights for effective counteraction) were published in 2022. The document provides a consistent picture of the issue and its impacts, with an examination of the related legislation, to support magistrates and all professionals involved in the investigation of offences. The document is available (in Italian) at this link: https://www.isprambiente.gov.it/it/pubblicazioni/documenti-tecnici/i-crimini- contro-gli-uccelli-selvatici-approfondimenti-tematici-per-unefficace-azione-di-contrasto

Overview of special issues that might be of interest to the StC

HPAI

[2] Scridel, D., Serra, L., Pirrello, S., Basso, M., Franzoi, A., Cardillo, A., ... & Cecere, J. G. (2023). Sex-mediated changes in foraging behaviour according to breeding stage in a monomorphic seabird adapted to rural habitats. Animal Behaviour, 198, 181-193.

A serious outbreak of HPAI H5N1 was detected in 2023, predominantly in colonies of Black-headed Gulls and Sandwich tern during breeding period, and in wintering Teals. Carcasses of birds that were tested positive for H5N1 have been found mainly in Emilia-Romagna. Veneto and Lombardia but also in other regions (Piemonte, Trentino Alto-adige, Sardegna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia).

The list of carcasses tested positive for H5N1 in the period 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 can be downloaded at the following link: https://www.izsvenezie.it/temi/malattie-patogeni/influenza- aviaria/situazione-epidemiologica-hpai/

The Netherlands

Which developments regarding the implementation of AEWA have taken place in the region since the last Meeting of the Parties?

HPAI

- Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland has published a report on the vulnerability of specific wild indigenous bird populations to avian influenza, with regard to their conservation status. Furthermore, a report was published on the impact of avian influenza on sandwich terns and other seabirds, and the actions that could be taken to alleviate the impact of bird flu in populations of wild birds.

- With 'yogelgriep app' an app (including dashboard) is being implemented, which allows for professionals and the general public to register dead and sick birds that are potentially affected by avian influenza. These records are linked to the organisations responsible for monitoring and testing for HPAI.

- Within a contract of EFSA, Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland has updated the EU list of wild bird target species for the passive surveillance of H5 HPAI viruses in Europe, first published by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in 2017. Passive surveillance, which aims at the virological detection of AI in wild birds found dead or moribund, is part of HPAI surveillance programmes in EU member states. To compile this updated list, both epidemiological and ornithological data were used. Species were then categorised into ecological groups, based on their relevance for early warning purposes, considering the likelihood of virus transmission to poultry. https://doi.org/10.2903/sp.efsa.2024.EN-8807

- Through a collaboration between EURING, EuroBirdPortal and Ausvet that is funded by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland has contributed to the development of an Early Warning System for HPAI outbreaks in wild birds. The Bird Flu Radar is based on data on distributions and movements of wild birds as shown in the Migration Mapping Tool, combined with data on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreaks available from the EU's Animal Disease Information System (ADIS), supplemented with data from EMPRES-i for the United Kingdom. The tool is available online and will be further developed throughout 2024 and 2025. https://euring.org/migration-mapping/bird-flu-radar

- The ministries of VWS and LNV are working on a Bird Flu 'Action Plan' which describes how the Dutch government will accelerate dealing with bird flu outbreaks in The Netherlands, and how it will handle the possibility of bird flu becoming zoonotic.

Species conservation

- The CIBBRiNA LIFE project starting second half 2023 aims to achieve EU cross-border cooperation and fisheries engagement to establish regional monitoring programs to achieve a steep change in the reliability of bycatch estimates and further develop, test, and implement effective mitigation measures for the incidental bycatch of o.a. coastal and seabirds. NL will deliver program manager.
- National Species Action/Conservation Plans are being developed for several seabird species. In 2023/2024 the plans of four species were/are to be published. In the period until 2030 it is expected that action plans will be developed for five more species (to be determined).

Habitat conservation

- Continuation of the review of the SPA network and SPA species.
- Steps are made towards embedding the "Battleplan Black-tailed Godwit" (Aanvalsplan Grutto) in provincial policies and ensuring appropriate funding.
- Extention of the Wij&Wadvogels ('Us and Waders') programme into phase two which runs 2023-2027. The Waddenfonds and the ministry of LNV invest six million euros in our coastal wetlands, most of which goes to the acquisition and development of new habitats for birds, and/or the restoration of existing habitats.

Monitoring

- Continued monitoring of AEWA species and their habitats.

Invasive species

- During 2023 the management of ruddy duck has continued. The last winter count (December 2023) indicated a 32% decrease in numbers compared to 2021 and 2022. Going from, respectively, 112 and 108 to 75 individuals.

SEPA

- The extension of the Wij&Wadvogels program (see habitats section) also contains funds for activities aimed at public engagement, also including a focus on minizing disturbance of coastal wetland and waders.
- Year of the Oystercatcher (2023): recruitment of bird counters, additional counts and education of the public on this endangered species.

Overview of special activities and/or meetings related to AEWA

- An analysis is ongoing on the Dutch national system of hunting and wildlife management, which regulated hunting and other forms of offtake of certain AEWA populations. This could e.g., result in a change of huntable (bird)species in the Netherlands.
- NL participated in meetings related to the AEWA StC, AEWA TC, and several AEWA working groups (EGMP, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit). Regarding meetings related to AEWA, NL also participated at the CMS COP14.

NORWAY

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AEWA

HPAI

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority and the Environment Agency have collaborated on a preparedness document (action plan) after the big outbreak of HPAI on kittiwake in 2023 in northern Norway. 24 000 birds were collected dead after this incident. The total death toll of birds died is not yet estimated. The document also discusses the impact of bird flu on other wild indigenous bird populations, which species may be at risk and what actions can be taken to alleviate the impact of bird flu in populations of wild birds.

The plan also covers how the authorities will accelerate dealing with bird flu outbreaks in Norway, and how it will handle the possibility of bird flu becoming zoonotic.

EGMP

Norway is participating in the AEWA European Goose Management Platform (EGMP) and in June 2024 hosted the ninth EGMP working group meeting in Tromsø, Norway.

NAP

Norway has evaluated the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Fennoscandian Lesser White-fronted Goose population, whose only known breeding sites are found in Norway. The report with an English summary can be found here: NINA Brage: Evaluering av norsk handlingsplan for dverggås.

A National Species Action Plan is being developed for seabirds. The plan will go through a multilateral hearing process amongst the different authority bodies of fisheries, oil and gas, finance and others, with the aim of arriving at common solutions and measures.

The Norwegian Environment Agency is also the national focal point for the ISSAP Black-tailed Godwit/Eurasian Curlew, and we continue our efforts on conservation measures. Among these are compensation schemes to farmers who set aside areas for birds and adjust their farming methods to help ground-breeding birds.

Monitoring

Continued monitoring of AEWA species and their habitats in Norway.

Invasive alien species

Norway prioritizes the eradication of invasive alien species with an ongoing focus on the American mink. The state inspectorate (the field and game control of the Environment Agency) and hunting organisations focus on seabird colonies and protected areas.

Republic of Serbia

Administrative, Institutional & Legislative /Policy measures:

Since the Illegal killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds has been identified as main problem (law and institutional aspects) and in order to find ways of acting and cooperating between authorities and organizations in combating illegal activities related to birds, the Government of the Republic of

Serbia adopted in 2021 the Conclusion on the acceptance of Recommendation no.205 (2019) of the Standing Committee of the Convention of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, adopted on December 6, 2019, which refers to the Rome Strategic Plan on Eradicating the Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade of Wild Bird Species for the Period 2020-2030, as a joint strategic document of the Bern Convention and CMS MIKT.
Republic of Serbia is planning to create an Action Plan for the Implementation of Rome Strategic Plan**.**

Activities for the implementation of the AEWA **(**Scientific Research and Monitoring; Education and Public Awareness; International Cooperation; Protection and conservation measures)

In the frame of the "EU Green Agenda in Serbia" project, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with the support of Government of Sweden, presented a new initiative - project "Protecting and investing in biodiversity and water for enhanced climate resilience" for improving the protection of wetlands and conservation of diversity of flora and fauna, which is very important in the era of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. The objective of the project is to support the EU environmental reform and efficient, inclusive, and sustainable implementation of the Green Agenda in Serbia. The project will give focus to biodiversity, water and wetlands and climate resilience, by strengthening policy and base-conditions, supporting further work on Nature Based Solutions (NbS) through pilot projects and promote opportunities for mobilization and scale-up of climate and biodiversity financing.

On the invitation of the Museum of Natural History and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia participated in the national monitoring scheme of Bulgaria for the monitoring of migratory birds at the Ringing station Dragomansko Blato near Sofia, Bulgaria, as part of the project on reporting of bird population status in Bulgaria. Ornithologists of Bulgaria have presented to the Institute a methodology of work in the field (setting nets, ringing birds, gathering the necessary information about caught individuals', etc.) and the system of reporting to the European Commission on the situation in Natura 2000 areas.

Sweden

Which developments regarding the implementation of AEWA have taken place in your country since the last Meeting of the Parties**?**

Action plans/Management plans

- Ongoing efforts related to the national action plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose. A new action table is being developed.
- The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has completed a national review of Sweden's implementation of AEWA ISSAP's and ISSMP's.
- Updated management plan for great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) was adopted in 2023.

Research and monitoring

- As part of the National Monitoring Programme for birds, Sweden has contributed with data to the International Waterbird Census (IWC) since 1967.
- Yearly national monitoring program for wintering sea birds.
- National annually programme for monitoring of breeding coastal waterbirds in place since 2015 and for species wintering in lakes and coastal areas.

- A subprogramme with the purpose to register the presence and population sizes of breeding bird species characteristic of coastal and archipelagic areas in the Gulf of Bothnia, thus enabling changes of these to be monitored.
- A knowledge compilation for great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) was developed in 2023/2024.
- Project Lesser White-fronted Goose received funds to attach transmitters on Lesser White-fronted Geese.
- Funds have been distributed to inventory Swedish Lesser White-fronted Geese in Latvia, mapping of important rest and night roosting sites and their use during the spring migration.
- Projekt Lom receives yearly funds to invententory red-throated loon and black-throated loon.
- BirdLife and WWF has inventoried bird fauna in Tavvavuoma as part of the Arctic Flyways project. Funds were distributed specifically to follow bar-tailed godwit because it was/is unknown where they nest in Norrbotten.
- Ongoing research project on Common eider, Velvet scooter and Red-breasted merganser in the archipelago of the Baltic sea. Focus on mapping hatching success, adult survival and migration. Pilot project on brooding movements and duckling survival.
- Since 2023 building up a Swedish wing survey. Geographically adapted to collection of bag statistics and with focus on migrating water birds. Ambition to produce age ratio for hunting harvest and derogation shooting of all geese and duck species shot in Sweden in 2024 and onwards.
- Sweden participates in the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM/ICES Working Group on Seabirds
- Crippling rates monitored for diving ducks, dabbling ducks, geese and swans.
- GPS-tracking of Whooper swans, Taiga bean geese and Barnacle goose for research questions related to migration and local movements
- Contributes with data to several of the parameters used for modelling population dynamics by EGMP.
- Yearly counts of all goose species since 1977.
- Collecting of Swedish harvest data has been done since 1939. In recent years several improvements and development projects have been initiated. An application for mobile phones for reporting harvest is being implemented. Also, several changes are underway to adjust todays system with the requirements given by different processes within AEWA.
- National data were used for Greylag goose, Bean goose, and Canada goose to study shifts in temporal trends and correlative patterns, and to infer possible causal links between harvest and population trends. The study provides an opportunity to guide management given the data collected within the present monitoring, as well as to suggest improvements for future data collection.
- Project regarding geese management in the new agricultural landscape, from the field to the flyway. Four integrated sub-projects aim to: 1) increase understanding of movements and habitat utilization by geese in the new agricultural landscapes, 2) evaluate and develop tools to alleviate crop damage, 3) increase understanding of patterns and processes in the socio-ecological goose management system, and 4) study challenges of national and flyway-level management and how to overcome these challenges (e.g. lack of appropriate monitoring, effort needed to regulate population size). The project has an explicit multi-species multi-actor trans-disciplinary approach spanning spatial scales from field and farm to flyway. It will provide missing knowledge and tools facilitating proactive future management of geese.
- The connection between damages and number and distribution of birds is being studied.
- Regarding crane management there is a project on how we can combine a sustainable agriculture with wetland biodiversity. The main objective is to improve the knowledge of the interactions

between cranes, agricultural production and wetland bird diversity and the consequences it may have for stakeholder conflicts and successful management strategies.

- Ongoing project for estimating age dependent survival rates of common cranes.
- GPS-tracking of common cranes for research questions related to migration and local movements.

Alien species

- A number of individuals of Egyptian goose (*Alopochen aegytiaca*) have been eradicated each year in recent years.
- Mink have been eradicated in several parts of the country. Perhaps the most remarkable is on Holmön outside Umeå where mink has been completely exterminated. After these measures, local populations of many seabirds have recovered significantly.
- There is ongoing work towards the establishment of the raccoon dog.

Habitat conservation

- Starting in 2018, the government has invested funds for the restoration and construction of wetlands in order to strengthen the landscape's own ability to maintain and balance water flows. Around 30 km^2 of wetlands are restored annually. The restorations that have been carried out have also had an impact on waterbirds.
- Since 2022, around 2,000–3,000 hectares of wetlands are protected accordance with the indicator for the national Mire Protection Plan.
- BirdLife continues mapping IBA-areas in the Baltic Sea.

Overview of special activities and/or meetings related to AEWA

Working Groups

Sweden have participated in the:

- the work and meetings of the European Goose Management Platform and its task forces. Financial support has been provided to EGMP for 2022-2024.
- Eurasian Curlew IWG.
- Black-tailed Godwit IWG.
- Seaducks IWG.
- Sweden have participated in Common Eider AHMP Technical Group meetings.

Ukraine

Key events of importance to AEWA

The general situation in the country caused by the unprovoked and unjustified aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has had a negative impact on the implementation of environmental protection measures under international environmental treaties, including AEWA.
At the same time, in 2023-2024, a number of regulations were adopted or developed that will contribute, among other things, to the conservation of birds in the African-Eurasian region:

Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 12 May 2023 No. 499 *"On Approval of the Procedure for Establishing Protected Zones for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Forests and the Procedure for Establishing Protected Zones for the Conservation of Objects of the Red Data Book of*

Ukraine", which aims to create special protection zones around key habitats of rare and vulnerable species, including waterbirds;
A draft procedure for monitoring biological and landscape diversity has been developed and submitted to the Government for consideration and is expected to be adopted soon. Waterbirds have been identified as priority monitoring targets;

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine continues to work on the draft law "On the territories of the Emerald Network" (Reg. No. 4461 of 04.12.2020). The purpose of the draft law is to legislate the Emerald Network sites and create the preconditions for the creation of new sites, which currently number 377. A significant number of Emerald Network sites are important for the protection and restoration of waterbirds and their habitats.

The GEF project "Global Biodiversity Framework Early Action Support" is being implemented to develop a new biodiversity strategy and action plan in accordance with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022

Measures are being taken within the framework of the Action Plan for the Conservation of the Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra* L.) in Ukraine, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources No. 102 dated 11.03.2019.

We continue to take measures to preserve waterbirds in protected areas.

The impact of the war

Russia's military aggression has a significant negative impact not only on people's lives, but also on the environment and biodiversity.

As a result of the invasion of Russia, our natural heritage is suffering significant damage. Military operations, the destructive effects of explosions, the movement of military equipment, the construction of fortifications, fires caused by shelling, and chemical contamination of soil have a detrimental effect on natural ecosystems, and wildlife and plant habitats are destroyed or disturbed. Rare species of flora and fauna, including those listed in the Red Book of Ukraine, are under threat - 600 species of animals, including waterfowl, and 750 species of plants and fungi.

As of today, 514 territories of the nature reserve fund with an area of 0.80 million hectares, and a total of 900 nature reserve areas with an area of 1.24 million hectares have been affected since 24 February 2022.

10 national nature parks, 8 nature reserves and 2 biosphere reserves remain occupied as of today. Currently, thanks to the efforts of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Dvorichanskyi National Park, Sviati Hory National Park, and Kamianska Sich National Park have been de-occupied. At the same time, 16 Ramsar sites covering an area of about 600,000 hectares are under threat of destruction in Ukraine. At the same time, another wetland, the Velyki Kuchuhury and Mali Kuchuhury Archipelago, is currently a frontline where fierce fighting is taking place. These are areas that have the status of wetlands of international importance due to their unique biodiversity.

Currently, about 82 territories of the Emerald Network with an area of 1.9 million hectares remain occupied. Since 24 February 2022 a total of 160 Emerald Network sites covering 2.9 million hectares have been affected. In addition, the process of creating new areas of the nature reserve fund has suspended in most regions due to the hostilities. It is currently impossible to assess the actual level of damage to nature reserves caused by the war. In many places, active hostilities are ongoing, and numerous restrictions are being imposed on environmental activities in the temporarily occupied territories. Natural ecosystems also suffer from fortification construction, damage by explosions, military vehicles, fires, etc.

Biodiversity was particularly adversely affected by the explosion of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam. Wetlands of international importance and a number of Emerald Network sites were affected.

Zone of direct influence includes NNP "Nyzhnedneprovskiy", "Velykyi Luh", "Kamyanska Sich".

In the zone of influence there are a number of territories of the Emerald Network: UA0000106 - Kakhovske Reservoir, UA0000037 - Velykyi Luh National Nature Park, UA0000192 - Lower Dnipro, UA0000109 - Dniprovsko-Buzkyi Lyman, UA0000215 - Kinburnska Kosa, UA0000017 - Black Sea Biosphere Reserve, UA0000097 - Biloberezhzhia Sviatoslava National Nature Park, UA0000207 – Berezanskyi, UA0000107 - Oleshkivski Pisky.

The Kakhovka reservoir is an Emerald Network Site UA0000106 with an area of 218,119 hectares, recognized by the Standing Committee of the Convention for the Conservation of Wild Flora and fauna and natural habitats in Europe (hereinafter referred to as the Berne Convention).

The drop in water level due to the undermining of the dam of the Kakhovka reservoir led to a significant decrease in the area of the reservoir. 25 vulnerable habitat species requiring protection under Resolution 4 of the Berne Convention Standing Committee and 82 species of animals and plants protected under Resolution 6 of the Berne Convention Standing Committee are threatened with extinction. In addition, according to the Council of Europe database, populations of another 251 species of wild animals and plants that have different conservation status in accordance with national or international red lists or are protected under international law are at risk.

The decrease in the area of the water mirror will be accompanied by shallowing of huge areas, which will lead to massive death of fish and other aquatic organisms, loss of spawning grounds for fish, as well as food supply for birds of the wetland complex, which are protected by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the Agreement on the Conservation of Afro-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds.
In addition to aquatic ecosystems, large-scale damage will be caused to the biodiversity of coastal areas.

It is currently impossible to give an accurate assessment of biodiversity damage. After the end of the war, detailed scientific surveys of the affected areas are required.The destruction of the dam and the sharp descent of large volumes of water from the Kakhovka reservoir led to a change in the ecological nature of three Ramsar sites: the flooding of the "Dnieper River Delta", which will lead to the death of all mammals and other animals and the destruction of nesting birds; a sharp change in the hydrological regime and drainage of the "Large and Small drifts" and "Floodplain of the Seven Lighthouses", which will lead to the death of a large number of ichthyofauna and other aquatic organisms (mainly benthic organisms). The aquatic species are known to be important food supply for waterbirds. The situation threatens with sharp desalination of adjacent marine areas, which can lead to a change in the ecological nature and death of ichthyofauna and aquatic organisms in two Ramsar lands "Yagorlyk Bay" and "Tendrivska Bay". The cascade of further environmental changes is a complex and poorly predictable process.

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat, pursuant to Resolution XIV.20: The Ramsar Convention's response to the environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the damage to its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) stemming from the Russian Federation's aggression, organised a special mission of experts to Ukraine to assess the impact of the war on wetlands of international importance. The results of this work are currently being processed.

After the end of the war, it will be necessary to conduct a large-scale assessment of the impact of military operations on biodiversity, including on species included in the scope of AEWA, and to take appropriate measures to conserve and restore their populations and habitats.

United Kingdom

Which developments regarding the implementation of AEWA have taken place in your country since the last Meeting of the Parties?

Black-tailed Godwit: Following the conclusion of the LIFE project BTG recovery work has continued through two Species Recovery Programme projects, one extending headstarting work and the other addressing knowledge gaps identified in the UK action plan which was published in Sept 2023. See: National-Action-Plan-for-BTG-2023-2033.pdf (projectgodwit.org.uk) . Post-project monitoring of the Godwit LIFE outcomes continues and will be reported on later in 2024.

Wader Recovery Zones and Forestry/Planting guidance - Defra, Natural England and the Forestry Commission published revised guidance to help ensure that woodland creation schemes on upland farmland and moorland in the north of England have a minimal impact upon the vulnerable, internationally significant populations of breeding curlew, lapwing and redshank that inhabit such landscapes (see https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-afforestation-proposed-on-or-near-nationally-important-upland-breeding-wader-areas).

European Goose Management Platform: The UK has supported the development of an integrated population model (IPM) for the purpose of better understanding the dynamics of the Greenland/Scotland and Ireland population of barnacle geese and to inform the management of offtake. Informed by a census in 2023, the model indicates that the population is now at or close to the lower limit of acceptable abundance. Consequently, it was agreed in June 2024 that Iceland and Scotland implement measures to reduce levels of offtake to as close as possible to zero. There are no management plan activities reported for the Svalbard/South-west Scotland population of barnacle goose, because the plan has not been developed, due to highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreaks in 2021/2.

Detailed discussions have taken place between UK and Iceland (and in consultation with other Range States) to prepare for a flyway plan for the Iceland/UK & Ireland population of greylag goose, following the change to the status of this population at MoP8.Priority has been given to improving understanding of population size and trend, about which there are significant uncertainties.

HPAI - Natural England (UK statutory conservation agency) in partnership with RSPB have launched a project to improve understanding of impacts and possible interventions to address AI in wild birds. The project includes updating seabird breeding counts, improving the evidence base on the transmission of HPAI and influencing factors and additional conservation interventions for breeding seabirds. The results from the RSPB HPAI Seabird Survey Project show mortality rates at selected breeding colonies, which are partly likely due to HPAI.

Ruddy Duck: The UK Ruddy Duck population is now thought to number approximately 12 birds, spread across seven regions. Many are single birds and the species is probably functionally extinct in most regions of the UK. There has been no evidence of breeding since 2021.

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. 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. Management plans are under development with work planned to commence later in 2024.

Lead Shot: The UK REACH restriction process relating to lead in ammunition was initiated in 2021 by the then Defra Secretary of State, with the agreement of the Scottish and Welsh Governments. This triggered a process under the UK REACH regulations, with the dossier preparation and recommendations process led by the HSE. HSE expects to formulate its final restriction opinions by September 2024, and send to the Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government in October 2024. The decision to apply any UK REACH restrictions, or not to do so, will subsequently be made by the Defra Secretary of State, with the consent of the Scottish and Welsh Ministers.

Overview of special activities and/or meetings related to the AEWA

- The UK:
    - made available £25,000 in voluntary contributions to the AEWA Secretariat for the Species Officer role.
    - Made available £ in voluntary contributions to support the AEWA Plan of Africa and development of indicators.
    - attended the 19th meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee online in March 2024.
    - Led a working group of the AEWA Technical Committee to review the seabird conservation priorities approved by MOP7 and provide guidance on their delivery, for consideration at MoP9.

Overview of special issues that might be of interest to the StC

Goose and Swan Monitoring Programme: UK-wide monitoring of those goose and swan species for which WeBS has not been the ideal means of monitoring continues to be delivered under the new GSMP partnership between JNCC, NatureScot and BTO. With all wildfowl monitoring now "under the same roof", GSMP reporting has been closely integrated with WeBS reporting. A range of improvements to the scheme have been initiated or are being planned 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: surveys conducted between 2015 and 2021, for the 25 regularly breeding seabird species in the UK, and published in 2023 (Seabirds Count | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation). This is 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.

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 online available here Science Search (defra.gov.uk) [3]

[3] 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 was completed in 2023 (Improving understanding of seabird bycatch in Scottish longline fisheries and exploring potential solutions - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)).

For international bycatch work, see under OSPAR, below.

Marine bird monitoring: Marine natural capital evidence programme (mNCEA) initiated in 2021. 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 Volunteer Seabirds at Sea or VSAS), and Balearic Shearwater. A review of sampling approaches for breeding seabird monitoring in UK waters has been published (Seabird population and demographic monitoring in the UK: a review and recommendations for future sampling | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology), and a review of methods for undertaking non-breeding marine bird (divers, grebes and ducks) surveys to provide population estimates is being undertaken. The programme is ongoing and will report in 2025. VSAS is already established in Scotland and currently collects seabirds at sea data from four ferry routes, with plans for further expansion in the future.

Climate Change: In December 2023, the UK government launched a report on Climate Change and Migratory Species at UNFCCC COP28. The report, which was commissioned by the UK government through JNCC and prepared by the British Trust from Ornithology, looks at the impacts of climate change on migratory species, conservation measures to support migratory species adapt to a changing climate, and their role as nature-based solutions to climate change. The key messages of the report were presented at a Special Event at CMS COP14 and the findings were used to update CMS Resolution 12.21 on Climate Change and Migratory Species, and guide priority actions ahead of the next CMS COP. The three-part report and summary for policy makers can be found on the JNCC website.

OSPAR: The UK joined other Contracting Parties to the OSPAR Convention in contributing to the Quality Status Report 2023, published in 2023. Specifically, as regards AEWA-listed species, it presents indicator assessments involving estimates of abundance (here)[4] and productivity (here)[5] of waterbirds and seabirds throughout the OSPAR region and provides an assessment of the likely causes of change. The UK is now helping to implement a Regional Action for Marine Birds (RAP-birds, adopted by the OSPAR Commission in June 2024) to address the identified declines. The UK is leading on the following tasks: enhanced measures for marine birds, flyways scale conservation, offshore wind mitigation/compensation, reducing the impact of mammalian predators.

The UK is engaged with initiatives within the NE Atlantic, through the OSPAR Convention to minimise - and where possible eliminate - seabird bycatch. In particular, in June 2024 the OSPAR Commission adopted Recommendation 2024/02 on reducing by-catch of marine birds in the maritime area. The Recommendation – which was led by the UK with the support of other Parties - expands existing species-specific recommendations to more marine bird species (beyond those species listed by OSPAR as threatened and/or declining) and all relevant types of fishing gear.

[4] https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/quality-status-reports/qsr-2023/indicator-assessments/marine-bird-abundance/

[5] https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/quality-status-reports/qsr-2023/indicator-assessments/marine-bird-breeding-productivity/

Reports not provided by:

- Albania
- Armenia
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Hungary
- Georgia
- Germany
- Iceland
- Israel
- Ireland
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Republic of Moldova
- Monaca
- Montenegro
- North Macedonia
- Norway
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan

Table 1: Europe and Central Asia - Contracting Parties and Range States

Europe (Contracting Parties in bold)	**Albania**
	Andorra
	Armenia
	Austria
	Azerbaijan
	Belarus
	Belgium
	Bosnia-Herzegovina
	Bulgaria
	Canada
	Croatia
	Cyprus
	Czech Republic
	Denmark
	Estonia
	Finland
	France
	Georgia
	Germany
	Greece
	Iceland
	Israel
	Italy
	Ireland
	Hungary
	Latvia
	Liechtenstein
	Lithuania
	Luxembourg
	Malta
	Republic of Moldova
	Monaco
	Montenegro
	The Netherlands
	North Macedonia
	Norway
	Poland
	Portugal
	Romania
	Russian Federation
	San Marino
	Serbia
	Slovakia
	Slovenia
	Spain
	Sweden
	Switzerland
	Turkey
	Ukraine
	United Kingdom of Great Britain
Central Asia	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
	Kazakhstan
	Turkmenistan
	Uzbekistan