

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, 1979

African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement and Action Plan

Implementation during the period 1999 and 2001

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1. Overview of Action Plan implementation

1.1 Summary of progress to date

The Croatian National Strategy and Action Plans have been produced (Radoviæ 2000), including draft proposals for the National Action Plans as well as priority list for the preparation and implementation of final Action Plans. These were approved by Croatian National Parliament in 1999. However, due to the deficiency of the financial and human resources, until now no further progress have been made and no National Action Plan has been produced so far.

1.2 Outline of priorities for national implementation over the next three years

Priorities for national implementation are given according to NSAP:

1st Priority group

Action plan for protection of Corncrake (*Crex crex*)
 Action plan for protection of Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
 Action plan for protection of Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

2nd Priority group

Action plan for protection of non-breeding bird populations: Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*), Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*), Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) and Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)
 Action plan for protection of Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)
 Action plan for protection of night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), Little and Great White Egret (*Egretta garzetta* and *E. alba*), Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)
 Action plan for protection of Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)
 Action plan for protection of Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)
 Action plan for protection of Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*), Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) and wintering population of Teal (*Anas crecca*)
 Action plan for protection of Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)
 Action plan for protection of breeding population of Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
 Action plan for protection of breeding population of Whiskered, White-winged and Black Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida, leucoptera & nigra*)

3rd Priority group

Action plan for protection of breeding population of Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)
 Action plan for protection of Little Crake (*Porzana parva*) and Baillon's Crake (*Porzana pusilla*)
 Action plan for protection of Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minima*)
 Action plan for protection of Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

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

For international co-operation priorities are: Transboundary management plan for Lower Neretva valley and, according to priorities given in SAP-BIO: the Action Plan to combat the hunting, poaching and harvesting in coastal Croatia and the Action Plan for inventarisation and restoration of coastal wetlands. Also, the INTERREG CADSES project "Dynamics of the ecological elements in the overlapping of fish, birds and humans activities in transitional ecosystem: guidelines to an integrated management of protected area" is recently initiated in co-operation with University of Lecce, Italy, and National Institute for Biology, Slovenia, and planned to last from 2003 to 2005.

2. Species conservation

Legal measures

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

a. What are the main features of the policy/legislation?

The new Nature Protection Act is under completion now. The old one Act followed the classical approach to nature protection focused on protected areas and species. The new Nature Protection Act will include protection of the overall nature and define nature as the entire biological and landscape diversity. It is harmonized with EU directives and relevant international conventions.

b. Which organisations are responsible for implementation?

The responsible organisation is MEPPP.

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

The new Nature Protection Act derives from NSAP.

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

a. Taking of, and trade in birds listed in Column A and B of Table 1 (where utilisation or trade contravenes the provisions set out in paragraphs 2.1.1 (a) and 2.1.2 of the Action Plan)?

All species, except: *Anser fabalis*, *A. albifrons*, *Anas strepera*, *platyrhynchos*, *acuta*, *querquedula* & *clypeata*, *Aythya ferina* and *Gallinago gallinago* are protected under the Nature Protection Act, and taking of and trade are completely prohibited. Listed species are covered under the Act on Hunting and can be hunted between 1st September (for ducks) or 1st October (for geese) or 16th October (for Snipe) till 31st January. The trade of all bird species protected under the Nature Protection Act is prohibited, as well as any egg collection.

b. Methods of taking?

Methods of taking for listed species are regulated under the Act on Hunting.

c. Setting of taking limits and monitoring these limits?

Taking limits are given for each species in hunting management plans for each hunting ground.

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

There are no such species in Croatia.

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

Not relevant for Croatia.

Single Species Action Plans

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

a. Proposed?

National Action plans are proposed in NSAP for species given in Appendix 1 of this report.

b. In preparation? None.

c. Being implemented? None. Croatia took part in preparation of the International Action plan for Ferruginous Duck (Schäffer & Gallo-Orsi 2001), but without its further implementation.

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

Emergency measures

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

There were no emergency measures until now.

Re-establishments

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

The species re-establishments will be regulated by new Nature Protection Act. There were no such programmes in Croatia until now.

Introductions

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

According to the new Nature Protection Act, introduction of non-native species will be completely prohibited. There aren't any introduced non-native waterbird species in Croatia.

3. Habitat conservation

Habitat inventories

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

There aren't any published inventories of important habitats in Croatia until now. We are just at the beginning of preparing Emerald and European Ecological Network in our country.

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

National network of important sites or areas is developing under Emerald, European Ecological Network and SAP-BIO programmes.

Conservation of areas

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

All internationally important sites are already protected in Croatia. They gain practical protection through their Management Authorities (existing for Kopaèki rit, Lonjsko polje and Plitvice Lakes).

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

Until now, there were no developed management plans for protected sites. Under international programmes it is proposed to prepare management plans for Kopaèki rit and Neretva Delta. According to the new Nature Protection Act all important sites should have management plans.

- 3.5 How many protected sites have formal management plans (please append a list of sites and their management planning status):

- a. Proposed?
- b. In preparation? Kopaèki rit and Neretva Delta
- c. Being implemented? None

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

Pollution control is the competence of State Water Directorate. There are no special measures to ensure wise use of wetland habitats. The important problem in using of wetland habitats is the problem with carp fishponds that present very important habitats for water birds, but are in extremely difficult economic situation – some of them already stop with their production – that

could lead to their disappearance in near future. There are attempts to realise the programme based on assistance for the fishponds that agree to certain measures of management, which support the biodiversity (Tutiš & Radoviæ 1996).

Rehabilitation and restoration

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

Up to now, there are only proposed projects for Neretva Delta and Kolansko blato on the island of Pag.

4. Management of human activities

Hunting

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

Please, see paragraph 2.2. Lead shots are still commonly used in Croatia. Poisoned baits are prohibited, but are still the practice in some area. In MEPPP, the Committee for problematic of illegal use of poisoned baits in nature is recently constituted.

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

Hunting limits are given for each species in hunting management plans for each hunting ground, but hunting levels are given only as very rough statistical data (for example, data for all waterfowl are given together!)

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

Hunting organisations manage issuing of licences, education and proficiency testing of individual members.

Eco-tourism

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

There are no eco-tourism programmes in the country. However, there are some examples of smaller projects in Nature Park Lonjsko polje and Special Reserve Crna Mlaka.

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

As eco-tourism is on its very beginning in Croatia, we have no data about social and economic benefits for the local communities. There may be some economic benefits in the Nature Park Lonjsko polje.

Other human activities

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

All activities affecting nature (constructions, electric power lines, dams) must have EIA, prepared by authorised organisations (private or public). A special committee evaluate EIA. EIA must include any measures needed for diminishing negative impact on environment.

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

One of the important problems is the impact of Cormorant and other fish-eating birds (esp. Grey Heron and Great White Egret) on carp fishponds. This problem is connected to that mentioned under 3.6. However, it is not solved yet. Planned INTERREG CADSES project (see under 1.3) will focus on the overlapping of fish and bird fauna and humans activities in transitional ecosystems of the Adriatic Sea.

5. Research and monitoring

Status of research and monitoring programmes for species

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

Priorities for research are identified according to NSAP, but due to the deficiency of the financial and human resources there have been no further progress. For list of research activities see Appendix 4 of this report.

- 5.2 What monitoring activities does your country undertake, including any bilateral or multilateral co-operative action, of wetland areas and species covered by the Agreement (e.g. national monitoring schemes, International Waterfowl Census)? Please append a list of monitoring activities or programmes initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years

See Appendix 4 of this report.

6. Education and information

Training and development programmes

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

None

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

None

Raising public awareness

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

MEPPP organized the campaign about problems of carp fishponds in January 2002, meeting Possibilities of conservation and revitalisation of Kolansko blato, island Pag in May 2002 and use to honour International wetlands day with informative pamphlet, and notes in the media (TV, newspapers etc.)

7. Final comments

7.1 General comments on the implementation of the AEWA Action Plan

Croatia is now finishing its new Nature Protection Act based on NSAP. It will establish the new nature protection policy that has been appointed by NSAP. With this new Act we will have a legal background for better implementation of AEWA Action Plan, as "nature" will no more present only protected animals and protected areas, but complete biodiversity of Croatia. Of course, very slow changing in legislation (concerning, for example, phasing out of lead shot use) and the deficiency of the financial and human resources should still impact implementation.

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

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

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

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

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

9. OPTIONAL SECTION-Planned and future actions

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

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

List of abbreviations and acronyms used in the report

MEPPP - Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning

NSAP – National Strategy and Action Plans for the Protection of Biological and Landscape Diversity

SAP-BIO - Strategic Action Plan for the Conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity

References

Radoviæ, J. (ed) 2000: An Overview of the state of Biological and Landscape Diversity of Croatia with the Protection Strategy and action Plans, MEPPP, Zagreb

Schäffer, N. & U. Gallo-Orsi (eds) 2001: European Union action plans for eight priority bird species. BirdLife International. Luxembourg

Tutiš, V. & J. Radoviæ (eds) 1996: Importance of carp ponds for the protection of waterbirds in Croatia. Proceedings of a Workshop Zagreb, Croatia 30 October 1996. Croatian Ornithological Society, Zagreb.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Status of Single Species Action Plans

Appendix 2: List of sites of international importance

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

Appendix 4: List of research and monitoring programmes and projects

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

Appendix 6: List of relevant World Wide Web addresses for national institutions involved in migratory waterbird conservation

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

Appendix 1: Status of Single Species Action Plans

Proposed in 1st Priority group:

Action plan for protection of Corncrake (*Crex crex*)

Proposed in 2nd Priority group:

Action plan for protection of non-breeding bird populations of Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

Action plan for protection of non-breeding bird populations of Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*)

Action plan for protection of Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)

Action plan for protection of Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

Action plan for protection of Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

Action plan for protection of Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Action plan for protection of Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*) and Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*)

Action plan for protection of Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)

Proposed in 3rd Priority group:

Action plan for protection of Baillon's Crake (*Porzana pusilla*)

Action plan for protection of Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minima*)

Action plan for protection of Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

Appendix 2: List of sites of international importance

Ramsar sites:

1. Special Reserve Neretva Delta (11,500 ha)
2. Nature park Lonjsko polje (50,650 ha)
3. Nature park Kopački rit (17,700 ha)
4. Special Ornithological Reserve Crna Mlaka (625 ha)

UNESCO World Natural Heritage

1. National park Plitvice lakes (29,482 ha)

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

Management plans for sites of international importance - in preparation

for Nature park Kopaèki rit

for Special Reserve Neretva Delta

Appendix 4: List of research and monitoring programmes and projects

4.1. Research activities in last three years

Research on breeding numbers and distribution of Audouin's Gull in South Adriatic Sea
(completed by Slovenian Ornithologists in 2001)

Research on breeding numbers and distribution of Corncrakes in Turopolje, Central Croatia
(completed in 2000)

Studies of ornithofauna of the lower Neretva Valley (different studies of Croatian and
Slovenian ornithologists, ongoing)

Research of ornithofauna of the Vransko lake, North Dalmatia (ongoing)

4.2. Monitoring activities in last three years

International waterfowl Census (ongoing)

International Corncrake Monitoring Scheme (started in 2002)

International Ruff Census (completed, in spring 2001)

Breeding Waders in Europe 2000 (completed)

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

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

Research on breeding numbers and distribution of Corncrakes in Turopolje, Central Croatia (completed in 2000) - resulted with protection of Turopolje, one of the most important breeding sites for Corncrakes in Croatia