



FORMAT FOR REPORTS

OF THE PARTIES

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

Implementation during the period 2002 and 2004

Contracting Party: CROATIA

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1. Overview of Action Plan implementation

1.1 Summary of progress to date

Croatian legislation already fulfilled the obligations of AEWa by protecting all species listed in the Table 1 by Nature Protection Act or Act on Hunting. In this report the implementation of Action Plan between 2002 and 2004 is presented.

The State Institute of Nature Protection developed the inventory of wetland habitats in Croatia under Ramsar SGF project and National network of important sites for under CRO-NEN project Natura 2000. The project "Building-up the National Ecological Network as a Part of the Pan-European Ecological Network & NATURA 2000 Network" (project acronym CRO-NEN) co-financed by the European Commission Life II Fund started in January 2003 and finished in May 2005. Implementation of this project is one of the obligations Croatia has to meet in the accession process to the European Union. Concept of Ecological network represents implementation of EU legislation according to the following guidelines: Conservation of wild birds (Council Directive 79/409/EEC) and Conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). Based on these Directives, Croatia determined the areas important for conservation of threatened European species and habitats which will then become a part of the EU ecological network NATURA 2000. Very important component of this project is the establishment of National Biodiversity Monitoring Programme which will include a wide variety of associates-expert and amateur. This will ensure systematic gathering of data and biodiversity monitoring in Croatia.

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

- Further development of National Biodiversity Monitoring Programme.
- Phasing out lead shot for hunting in wetlands.

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

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?
- b. Which organisations are responsible for implementation?
- c. How does it relate to other national initiatives (e.g. national Biodiversity Action Plans)?

The protection of species covered by Agreement is covered by Nature Protection Act (NPA). The new NPA was adopted in Croatian parliament on 20th May 2005 and come in force on 16th June 2005 (OG 70/2005). It includes protection of the overall nature and defines nature as the entire biological and landscape diversity. It is harmonized with EU directives and relevant international conventions. It is in accordance with obligations of the AEWA. From 2004 responsible organisation is Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate. Previously, it was Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning. Nature Protection Strategy and Action Plan for Protection of Biological and Landscape Diversity (NSAP)(OG 81/99) was adopted in 1999. The NSAP has set up a new policy of nature protection that is being put in practice through new national legislation, especially Nature Protection Act. According to the provisions of the NPA, the NSAP should be revised every 5 years. This revision is planned for 2005.

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

- a. Taking of, and trade in birds listed in Column A and B of Table 1 (where utilization or trade contravenes the provisions set out in paragraphs 2.1.1 (a) and 2.1.2 of the Action Plan)?
- b. Methods of taking?
- c. Setting of taking limits and monitoring these limits?

All species, except: *Anser fabalis*, *A. albifrons*, *Anas strepera*, *platyrhynchos*, *acuta*, *querquedula* & *clypeata*, *Aythya ferina* and *Gallinago gallinago* are strictly protected under the Nature Protection Act, and taking of and trade are 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. Methods of taking for listed species are regulated under the Act on Hunting. Automatic and semi-automatic weapons, sound recording, traps, nets, baits and poisons are prohibited. Taking limits are given for each species in hunting management plans for each hunting ground separately.

According to the NPA, trade of all bird species strictly protected under the NPA is generally prohibited, as well as any egg collection, but individual specimens of strictly protected wild species may be kept in captivity, bred, sold or bought on the basis of a permit granted by the Ministry, provided that:

- these specimens are legally imported into the Republic of Croatia and have their owner;
- these specimens had been legally acquired before the species was legally protected;
- these specimens belong to the species that can be reasonably used in small amounts and under the conditions of a strict control, in order to maintain the favourable conservation status of the species, as it is prescribed by the Ministry in a rulebook, on a selective basis and on a limited scale (for the moment there are no such exemptions regarding AEW listed species)

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

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

There are no hunting of any species listed in Categories 2 & 3 in Column A and no exemptions to the provisions set out in paragraphs 2.1.1., 2.1.2. and 2.1.3.

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?*
- b. In preparation?*
- c. Being implemented?*

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

Croatian ornithologists took part in preparation of International Single Species action plan for Corncrake and Ferruginous Duck, which are under preparation.

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 bilateral or multilateral co-operative actions, only national emergency measures after the fire that burnt almost complete reed belt at Vransko Lake, the last heronry in the Mediterranean part of Croatia. Project was financed by AED. 50 nesting platforms for Purple Heron and Pygmy Cormorants were build and placed in the colony, as well as the

observation post which will enable the monitoring in the colony.

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-establishment is regulated by Nature Protection Act. There were no re-establishing bird species in Croatia until now.

Introductions

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

Introduction of all non-native species, especially allochthonous fish species is prohibited in Croatia, according to Nature Protection Act (70/2005). Non-native species can be introduced only exceptionally, after the risk assessment and with special permit issued by the Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate. In regard to breeding operations, all physical or legal entity intending to breed or grow autochthonous or foreign wild taxa must take measures to obtain the permit in compliance with the NPA (70/2005) or a special regulation. Should the procedure of granting a permit show an ecological risk, the applicant may be required by the Ministry of Culture, prior to granting the permit, to prepare a risk assessment study for the purpose of controlling adverse impacts on local ecosystems and autochthonous species. Unfortunately, control of the release is not very effective and local hunting organisations are sometimes trying to introduce new game species in Croatia without risk assessment and permission.

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.

Inventory of wetland habitats in Croatia is developed by State Institute of Nature Protection under Ramsar SGF project. It will be available on web in spring 2005. It comprised a total of 390,885 ha of wetland area as well as 50,516 km of rivers and streams.

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 for birds (including species covered by the Agreement) is developed under CRO-NEN project Natura 2000. Sites of international importance for species covered by the Agreement are listed in Appendix 2.

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.)

Some important sites in Croatia are already protected according to national legislation – as National Parks, Nature Parks or Special Ornithological Reserves. List of internationally important protected sites are given in the Appendix 2. Lastovo is designed for Nature Park. Details about sites which are part of the national network (importance, criteria, protection status, habitats, threats etc) will be available at www.cro-nen.hr.

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, no management plans for protected areas important for migratory birds covered by AEWA are adopted. Under international programmes the management plan for Nature park Kopački rit was prepared but not adopted and management plan for Nature park Lonjsko polje is proposed (it will be prepared within the LIFE III project for 2006, submitted by the Public Institution for governing of the Nature park Lonjsko polje). According to the Nature Protection Act (OG 70/2005) all protected areas 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?*
 - Nature park Lonjsko polje
- b. *In preparation?*
 - Nature Park Kopački rit
- c. *Being implemented?*

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

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 & Radović 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.

According to the NPA (70/2005), wetlands, including waters, represent natural values in terms of the present Act and should therefore be conserved in the natural or near-natural state wherever possible and appropriate.

In April 2002 the project “Revitalisation of a small Mediterranean wetland Kolansko blato on the island of Pag “ was successfully finished. The main goal of the project was to provide an example how to maintain natural habitat conditions and prevent further degradation mainly caused by succession and unsustainable human activities. This project was financed by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Croatia.

Within the Ministry of Culture there is an ongoing process for establishment of the Nature park Neretva Delta, one of the most important areas for waterbirds in Croatia. Neretva Delta is characterised by extensive reed bed and it holds the most significant populaton of Baillon’s Crane in Croatia. It is and importan site for other crakes, Bitterns and small passerines breeding and wintering in reeds.

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).

See under paragraph 2.2. Lead shots are still commonly used in Croatia. Poisoned baits are prohibited, but are still the practice in some area. The Committee for problematic of illegal use of poisoned baits in nature took several actions to control use of poisoned baits. The lead shots are still widely used in wetland area. First steps were taken in publishing information about this subject in the hunting journals and having oral presentations in Croatian Hunting Association about problems with lead poisoning in wetlands.

4.2 Does your country monitor 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. cooperative 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.

Eco-tourism programmes are developed in Nature Park Lonjsko polje. Several educational programmes have been developed there, such as “The White Stork in Čigoć” (for school children) and “Spoonbills and Herons in the Krapje dol Bird Sanctuary” (for bird-watchers). At Crna Mlaka fishponds (Ramsar site) and Special Ornithological Reserve Vransko lake new bird observation towers and hides have been established. Brochures about both sites were published and spread among local community, school children and bird-watchers.

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

Eco-tourism is still beginning in Croatia and calculations about social and economic benefits

for the local communities were not made. The economic benefits are probably the highest 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, infrastructures, electric power lines, wind farms, dams) must have EIA, prepared by authorized organisations (private or public). A special committee evaluates EIA. EIA must include any measures needed for diminishing negative impact on environment. In case of a planned activity in nature which is not carried out within the context of an environmental impact assessment and is likely, by itself or in combination with other activities, to have a considerable impact on an ecologically important area or a protected natural value, its acceptability to nature with respect to the objectives of conservation of this ecologically important area or a protected natural value shall be evaluated in conformity with the Nature Protection Act (OG 70/2005). In case of planned activities in nature, for which an environmental impact assessment has been made obligatory by a special regulation, the acceptability to nature shall be evaluated within the context of environmental impact assessment in conformity with a special regulation.

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

Conflicts between land-use and waterbirds are most serious at carp fishponds. Shooting for scaring is most common practice at fishponds. Economic compensations are paid based on at least one year survey of the number of waterfowl at fishpond.

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. Inventarisation of the different taxa (incl. birds) has been taken at many protected areas (National Parks and Nature Parks). 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 cooperative action, of wetland areas and species covered by the Agreement (e.g. national monitoring schemes, International Waterfowl Census)? Please append a list of monitoring activities or programmes initiated, ongoing or completed in the last three years

As a part of CRO-NEN project, the National Biodiversity Monitoring Programme was established. Species and areas for monitoring are chosen based on their international and national importance. The list of monitoring programmes for Agreement species are given in Appendix 4.

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.

There are no special training specific to the AEWA Action Plan, but different trainings in bird and nature protection in general are organised by some NGOs (Croatian Ornithological Society, Eco Center Caput insulae etc).

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)?

Celebration of the International Wetlands Day (February 2003, 2004 and 2005) has been organized in 2003 by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning and in 2004 and 2005 organized by the Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate and the State Institute for Nature Protection. The aim was to raise awareness among wider public about the importance of wetlands, species connected with it and to promote the need for their protection. The celebration is always open to the press and presented in media. Promotional posters, leaflets and stickers were published. Celebration of the Migratory Waterbirds Day in April 2005 was organized in cooperation of the Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate and Croatian Hunting Association. The aim was to promote the importance of conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats among the hunters. AEWA poster was translated and published with financial support from AEWA Secretariat.

Educational campaign "Save birds and their habitats at Vransko Lake" aimed school children and visitors in the Nature Park. Two informative pamphlets about Crna Mlaka carp fishponds were published, one for visitors (bird-watchers) and other for school children, designed to be used during outdoor school lessons.

MEPPP organized the campaign about problems of carp fishponds in January 2002, and meeting "Possibilities of conservation and revitalisation of Kolansko blato" at island Pag in May 2002.

7. Final comments

7.1 General comments on the implementation of the AEWA Action Plan

No special comments.

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.

Croatia has been working generally for the implementation of the decisions of MOP2 e.g. by participating in preparing an international species action plan for Ferruginous Duck and Corncrake and identifying internationally importance sites for AEWAs species (as a part of CRO-NEN project).

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

AED - Academy for Educational Development

CRO-NEN - Building-up the National Ecological Network as a Part of the Pan-European Ecological Network & NATURA 2000 Network

KEC - Karst Ecosystem Conservation

MEPPP - Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning

NPA – Nature Protection Act (OG 70/2005)

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

References

Appendices

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

List of internationally important protected sites:

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)

List of internationally important sites for bird species covered by Agreement developed under CRO-NEN project Natura 2000 (www.cro-nen.hr):

1. Podunavlje and lower Podravlje - A4i, B1i, B1iii, B2, C1, C2,
2. Upper flow of the river Drava (from Legrad to Pitomača) – B2

3. Fishponds Grudnjak and Našice C2,
4. Gornje Poilovlje (incl. fishponds Poljana, Garešnica and Končanica) - A4i, B1i, C2,
5. Fishponds near river Česma (Siščani, Blatnica and Narta) C2
6. Fishpond Jelas polje B1i, B2, C2, C5,
7. Lonjsko polje (incl. fishpond Lipovljani) - B1i, B2, C1, C2,
8. River Sava from Žitnjak to Rugvica - B2
9. Pokupski basen (incl. fishponds Draganić, Crna Mlaka and Pisarovina) - A41, B1i, C2
10. Turopolje – B2
11. Karst fields in Lika (Ličko, Gacko, Krbavsko, Bjelopolje, Gračačko, Kosinjsko) - C2
12. Istria and National Park Brijuni A4ii, B1ii, C2
13. Kvarner archipelago - A4ii, B1ii, B2, C2
14. NW part of Dalmatia (incl. island Pag) - B1i, B1ii, B2, C2
15. Vransko lake, Pakoštane - A4iii, B2, C2
16. Silbanski grebeni and Zadar archipelago - A4ii, B1ii, B2, C2
17. National Park Krka - B1iii, B2, C2
18. Lastovo and surrounding islets (Lastovnjaci, Vrhovnjaci and Tajan) – B2
19. Off-shore islands - B1iii, B2, C2
20. River Neretva - B1i, B2, C2

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

Nature Park Kopački rit – in preparation

Nature park Lonjsko polje - proposed

Appendix 4: List of research and monitoring programmes and projects

4.1. Research activities in last three years

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

Research of ornithofauna of the National park Krka (completed)

Research of ornithofauna of the Poljana fishponds (completed)

Karst Ecosystem Conservation (KEC) project (ongoing)

Dinaric Alps rare habitats and species conservation project Croatia (PINMATRA) (ongoing)

Colour-ringing project of Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) in Croatia (ongoing)

Colour-ringing project of Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) in Croatia (ongoing)

4.2. Monitoring activities in last three years

ongoing :

Monitoring of Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*) breeding population in Croatia

Monitoring of Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) breeding and flyover population in NW Croatia

Monitoring of breeding colonies of herons and spoonbills in Croatia

Monitoring of wintering population of Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) in NW Croatia

Monitoring of isolated breeding population of Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) in Croatia
Monitoring of isolated breeding population of Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) in Croatia
Monitoring of breeding population of Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) in Croatia
Monitoring of breeding Corncrake (*Crex crex*) in Croatia
International Waterfowl Census

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

Ministry of Culture, Nature Protection Directorate
State Institute for Nature Protection
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF)
Ministry of Science and Technology (MST)
Institute of Ornithology, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts

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

http://www.min-kulture.hr/priroda/priroda_fr.htm
<http://www.dzsp.hr/>

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

Restoration of the mixed colony of the Pygmy Cormorant and Purple Heron in Nature Park Vransko Lake (completed)