



AEWA Eurasian Curlew International Working Group
Establishment of an adaptive harvest management process for the Eurasian Curlew
ssp. *Numenius a. arquata*

18 September 2019, Paris, France

Proposal for the Establishment of an Adaptive Harvest Management Programme

1. Introduction

The Eurasian Curlew sub-species *Numenius a. arquata* (Europe/Europe, North & West Africa population) is listed on Annex 3, Table 1 of AEWA in Column A, Category 4, therefore hunting of this population may continue on a sustainable use basis under the provisions of the Agreement, by way of an exception (AEWA Action Plan, Annex 3, paragraph 2.1.1). This sustainable use shall be conducted within the framework of an international species action plan, through which Parties will implement adaptive harvest management.

The AEWA International Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Eurasian Curlew was adopted at the 6th Meeting of the AEWA Parties in 2015. Included therein, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, is a specific objective to increase the survival of the species by ensuring that any harvest is sustainable. This is foreseen to be achieved by launching an adaptive harvest management process, as specified in Action 3.1.1, for the portion of the *N. a. arquata* population which spends part of its life cycle in France, where hunting is permitted. Action 3.1.2 of the Action Plan also specifies that a complete moratorium on hunting in France shall be reinstated until the adaptive harvest management process has established its recommendations, which are to be implemented if and when hunting is re-opened.

France is currently the only range state of the sub-species where an open hunting season is anticipated. However, the concept of adaptive harvest management and the practice established by AEWA in this respect requires the involvement of all relevant range states within the flyway of the respective population. It should be noted that the species is listed as huntable on Annex II/B of the EU Birds Directive also for Denmark, Ireland and the UK which means that these countries have the same legal right to hunt the species, even if in accordance with Article 7(1) of the Directive, they currently choose not to do so. A better understanding of hunting practices in the African part of the range is also still needed.

As outlined in the International Action Plan as well as below, adaptive harvest management does not only involve the monitoring of possible harvest or defining and adjusting possible harvest quotas, but also the work linked to increasing the reproduction and recruitment of a species, habitat conservation and management etc. throughout the flyway. Input from all range states and relevant stakeholders is also crucial for the establishment of the population estimate as well as for carrying out continued population assessments on a regular basis to inform the iterative adaptive harvest management process.

At the first meeting of the inter-governmental AEWA Eurasian Curlew International Working Group (European breeding range states) in September 2018 in Scotland, UK, the governments present agreed to launch a separate process under AEWA for the establishment of adaptive harvest management of the Eurasian Curlew under the leadership of France and facilitated by the AEWA Secretariat – as foreseen in the International Action Plan for the species.

The objective of this meeting is therefore to agree on the modalities for establishing adaptive harvest management for the Eurasian Curlew as well as to subsequently agree on next steps and responsibilities.

To this end, the AEWA Secretariat has – in collaboration with Aarhus University - drafted the initial outline of an Adaptive Harvest Management Programme presented below on the basis of the processes developed and agreed for the Taiga Bean and Greylag Geese under the auspices of the AEWA European Goose Management Platform (EGMP).

Although in the case of the Eurasian Curlew sub-species *Numenius a. arquata* we are dealing with a declining population with a recovery objective (as opposed to an abundant population causing damages), many of the same programmatic steps apply. It should be noted in particular that the same scientific rigour, standards and transparency which have been established under the AEWA EGMP shall also apply to any other AEWA taxa for which adaptive harvest management processes are being developed and implemented.

Until an internationally agreed adaptive harvest management process is established to ensure sustainability of harvest, all hunting of the Eurasian Curlew sub-species *Numenius a. arquata* must be suspended in order to be in compliance with the provisions of AEWA.

2. Proposed Adaptive Harvest Management Programme for the Eurasian Curlew (ssp. *Numenius a. arquata*)

Following the mandate provided by the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Eurasian Curlew adopted at MOP6, any harvest of the sub-species, if undertaken, shall be sustainable (Result 3.1). The Action Plan further foresees that this be achieved by launching an adaptive harvest management process for the portion of the *N. a. arquata* population which spends part of the life cycle in France, where hunting is permitted (Action 3.1.1.).

In addition, management processes under AEWA shall also comply with relevant provisions under other legal frameworks which cover the species concerned. In case of the Eurasian Curlew, as a species in decline, it is important that adaptive harvest management also ensures compliance of EU Member States with the last sentence of Article 7(1) of the EU Birds Directive i.e. “*Member States shall ensure that the hunting of these species does not jeopardize conservation efforts in their distribution area*”.

The identified key range states are now requested to proceed with the implementation of this action by reaching - as a first step - agreement on the elements of an Adaptive Harvest Management Programme for the Eurasian Curlew sub-species *Numenius a. arquata* (Europe/Europe, North & West Africa population) as well as the coordination structure, workflow and tentative timelines for its development.

Following the various processes developed under the AEWA European Goose Management Platform, the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme for the Eurasian Curlew is proposed to consist of the following nine elements:

2.1. Introduction

Description of the purpose and the scope of the Programme, including the mandates pertaining from the AEWA legal text as well as the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the species.

2.2. Definition of Management Unit(s)

As mentioned above, the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme shall be established for the portion of the *N. a. arquata* population which spends part of its life cycle in France, where hunting is anticipated. An initial analysis of ring recoveries etc. indicates that individuals from throughout the Northern European breeding range of the population stage and/or winter in France during the autumn/winter when the hunting season is taking place (document EC IWG AHM 1.2).

However, further data and subsequent analysis are still required to confirm the definition of the appropriate management unit(s) (i.e. which parts of the population migrate through / winter in France). However, it should be noted that the management unit concept may not be directly applicable to the Eurasian Curlew and that another approach may be necessary, but this will also be clarified as part of the technical work which will follow.

2.3. Definition of the Favourable Conservation Values for the population

The long-term goal of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Eurasian Curlew is to restore the AEWA populations of the species to a favourable conservation status, as demonstrated by its assessment as Least Concern against IUCN Red List criteria.

There is a need to determine at what stage the sub-species *Numenius a. arquata* (Europe/Europe, North & West Africa population) can be considered to be in a Favourable Conservation Status by determining the Favourable Reference Values for the population.

2.4. Definition of Conservation Targets above the Favourable Reference Values

In order to ensure that the population is maintained at a Favourable Conservation Status in the long-term, whilst providing for an open hunting season, Conservation Targets with respect to population, range and habitat above the Favourable Reference Values need to be established and agreed. Agreement will also be required on what what timelines for reaching these targets will be acceptable.

2.5. Monitoring Indicators and Programmes

Clear and effective monitoring indicators and programmes will be identified to measure whether the conservation and management objectives are met.

2.6. Protocols for the iterative phase (decision-making, monitoring and assessment)

Management actions are evaluated systematically and adapted accordingly for improved management. The detailed protocols are added as an Annex to the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme.

2.7. Annex I: Workplan

A rolling workplan focusing exclusively on the priority activities related to adaptive harvest management of the Eurasian Curlew will be included as an annex to the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme and reviewed annually.

All other identified priority conservation activities related to habitat management etc. as foreseen in the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Eurasian Curlew will remain under the remit of the inter-governmental AEWA Eurasian Curlew International Working Group (EC IWG) and the rolling workplans adopted by the group. The Eurasian Curlew Working Group Coordinator will be charged with ensuring that both workplans are in sync and that reporting between both bodies (i.e. the EC IWG and the body coordinating the AHMP, see point 3 below) is carried out, as necessary.

2.8. Annex II: Population Model

This section will include the Eurasian Curlew population model to inform harvest management decisions in the iterative phase of the AHMP.

2.9. – Annex III: Protocols for the iterative phase (decision-making, monitoring and assessment)

Protocols for the iterative phase will be presented in this section, in order to systematically evaluate management actions and adapt them accordingly for improved management.

3. Coordination and oversight

Overall coordination of the adaptive harvest management process for the Eurasian Curlew (sub-species *Numenius a. arquata*) will be provided by the AEWA Secretariat and technical coordination of the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme outlined above will be provided by Aarhus University under an existing agreement with the Secretariat.

It is suggested that a temporary, time-limited Technical Group be established to work out the technical needs of the programme in more detail and to subsequently deliver on the necessary technical work under the supervision of Aarhus University. The Technical Group will be convened by the AEWA Secretariat. The Range States and observer organisations will designate their experts to the Group.

The iterative phase is proposed to involve annual decision-making for the adaptive harvest management related decisions in conjunction with the meetings of the AEWA European Goose International Working Group as all key range states concerned are also members of the EGMP. Decisions related to the wider implementation of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Eurasian Curlew are proposed to remain under the auspices of the AEWA Eurasian Curlew International Working Group, working in close cooperation with the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme coordinating body, as outlined above under 2.7.

4. Provisional steps and timeline

Depending on the availability of resources as well as the agreed workflow and steps involved, it is anticipated that the proposed Adaptive Harvest Management Programme could potentially be established and implemented to a degree by which relevant information would be available by mid-2021 in time to inform a decision regarding the 2021/2022 hunting season.

Initial timelines are indicated below, but these will, however, very much be dependent on resource availability as well as the further elaboration of the necessary substantive details of the programme by the proposed Technical Group, including an analysis of existing information and knowledge gaps crucial for the process.

ACTIVITY	LEAD	NOTE
September 2019		
Outline of the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme agreed	Range states	Not all range states will be present/represented at government level at the Paris meeting. The Secretariat will seek their approval following the meeting via correspondence.
October 2019		
Technical Group convened	AEWA Secretariat	Deadline for expert designations mid-October.
December 2019/January 2020		
Technical Group meeting	Aarhus University Technical Group	Discuss in detail all elements of the AHMP requiring technical input, incl. data and resource needs and availability; review and revise the AHMP development process timelines, as necessary
February 2020		
Delineation of the segment migrating/wintering in France agreed ("Management Unit(s)")	Technical Group Range states	Following the proposal prepared by the Technical Group, the subset of range states may be subject to change.
March 2020 – March 2021		
Favourable Reference Values agreed	AEWA Secretariat Technical Group Range states	
Conservation Targets agreed	AEWA Secretariat Technical Group Range states	
First population models developed by June 2020 (final model ready by March 2021)	Technical Group	
June 2021		
1 st Adaptive Harvest Management Programme ready for adoption	AEWA Secretariat Technical Group Range States	
June 2022		
Review of Harvest Flyway Management Programme (as necessary)		

Improved population model developed		
Review workplan		

5. Provisional funding requirements

An initial indication of the foreseen additional costs of the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme is provided below in order of expected magnitude (thousands, tens of thousands etc.). Along with the more precise timeframe, more detailed calculations will only be available once the Technical Group breaks down and assesses needs as well as available capacity in more detail.

Programme step/element	Additional funding required (Euro)
AEWA Secretariat: overall coordination and compilation of the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme ⁱ	-
Aarhus University: coordination of the Technical Group and technical supervision, development of the population model and monitoring protocols	tens of thousands
Definition of the Favourable Reference Values	thousands
Technical Group: participation of national experts, provision of data	In-kind funding from the range states and observer organisations (expertise, provision of data, staff time, meeting participation etc.)
Communication and outreach	thousands

6. Action requested from the range states

- Agreement on the outline of the Adaptive Harvest Management Programme for the Eurasian Curlew sub-species *Numenius a. arquata*, including the proposed coordination and workflow of the process as well as recommended tentative timelines.

ⁱ Note that the Secretariat will only be in a position to provide this coordinating function whilst the project position of the Species Conservation Officer is secured.