

**COMMENTS/REMARKS OF THE UNEP/AEWA SECRETARIAT
ON THE FOLLOWING PROJECT PROPOSAL:**

Project title: Support to CASH as part of the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme

Proposed by: Committee for Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring (CASH)

General comments/remarks: As indicated in the proposal the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has also applied for funds from the Agreement Secretariat for the monitoring of waders outside the breeding season. In this sense this proposal could be seen as complementary to that of BTO. Like the BTO project this project could be listed for AEWA's next International Implementation Priorities 2006-2010. Furthermore, this project, together with that of BTO, could possibly be eligible for GEF funding in case if it were related to climate change.

Involvement of the Secretariat: The Secretariat has not been involved in CASH so far.

Justification: It is well known that many wader species worldwide are in decline. Monitoring programmes could perhaps reveal reasons for this decline. Thus, this project could provide data and more detailed information useful for conservation responses

Budget: Although the amount of funds requested is reasonable, no funds are available in the current budget 2004 to cover these costs. This means that if the Technical Committee approves the project the Secretariat must seek additional funds through voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties.



Funding Proposal for AEWA to support the CHASM as part of the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program

Background:

AEWA is one of the three major global flyway areas linked to the Arctic region. The Committee for Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring (CHASM) met in December 2003 near Copenhagen for the first time to discuss the first steps for guiding the implementation of an effective circumpolar program for monitoring Arctic-nesting shorebirds. Such a program should ensure that existing monitoring programs continue to be well coordinated and supported, while simultaneously integrating them into a Holarctic program.

The AEWA region covers a large proportion of the Arctic region and many shorebirds breeding in the Arctic migrate south through this region. In addition to monitoring activities within the Arctic region (e.g., Arctic Birds Breeding Conditions Survey), several initiatives outside the Arctic region occur within AEWA and the other two flyways. Along the migration route and on wintering sites the population size, status and fitness of waders has and is being monitored.

We are soliciting funds to fully develop and implement a circumpolar Arctic-nesting shorebird monitoring program, with an initial focus on coordinating activities within the AEWA flyway. Similar proposals will be proposed for the other flyways. We believe that flyways within the Americas and Asian Pacific could equally contribute in supporting the process towards an enhanced monitoring effort. CHASM is one important component of the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP), which includes other bird networks such as Anatidae and the Circumpolar Seabird Group. The CBMP contributes to the overall efforts of the global science community by monitoring the loss of biodiversity against the 2010 target, in line with the WSSD declaration in Johannesburg 2002, and the Kuala Lumpur declaration of the CBD CoP in 2004.

Rationale

Monitoring programs allow scientists to assess the status and trends of animals, and to detect and assess the effects of human activities on these same animals. The Arctic region, while generally poor in species diversity, is home to a disproportionately large number of waders. Indeed, roughly 20% of the world's shorebird species and some 30 million of the roughly 100 million individual shorebirds in the world breed in the Arctic. An estimated half of that is migrating along the AEWA region. Population estimates have been derived recently for the 100 biogeographical populations of the 37 most typical Arctic nesting shorebird species. Numerical trends were identified in 52 of these, 12% of which are thought to be increasing, 42% stable, 44% decreasing and 2% probably extinct. All of these Arctic-nesting species migrate to temperate and tropical regions of the globe, and through these migrations, Arctic-nesting shorebirds link every continent except Antarctica and visit nearly every country on earth.

Such declines give cause for concern. The loss of shorebird populations or entire species would be directly counter to the stated desire of world leaders to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biological diversity. Arctic-breeding shorebirds are important members of wetland communities. Such habitats are under intense threat from human development and yet support some of the most diverse animal communities on earth. The potential ecological

impact on the health and integrity of wetlands caused by the disappearance of shorebirds is unknown. The reduction or loss of shorebird populations may be a symptom of habitat degradation, but it may also be a cause of further degradation as well. Because shorebirds are critically dependent upon distinct staging sites spread across many nations and vast latitudinal distances, they effectively integrate, and thus their status reflects, environmental conditions over much of the globe. The essential reproductive activities of Arctic-nesting shorebirds occur in those northern regions of the planet most likely to experience the earliest and most severe effects of global warming. Sea level rise induced by climate change also poses a threat to the inter-tidal areas favoured by these birds outside the breeding season. As long-distance migrants from these threatened habitats, shorebirds may serve as important messengers of global climate change.

Activities

The Copenhagen meeting made big steps towards common circumpolar monitoring of shorebirds. However several important components remain to be settled. The next steps require the establishment of a more formal working group, and the preparation of a monitoring plan that will outline the common standards and tools for comparison and analyses of data on a circumpolar and flyway context. Such an effort will provide a major contribution to the global monitoring effort. At this stage we propose another meeting of the CHASM members that will ensure expertise on the outlined issues (see below) at global level. The time and venue of the meeting has yet to be decided, but will likely occur in conjunction with other meetings of circumpolar nature.

1. In an effort to establish a formal shorebird expert group to deal with monitoring and other conservation issues concerning Arctic-nesting shorebirds, we propose to conduct a meeting that will carry on from the work conducted in Copenhagen in December 2003. We will define a terms of reference and elect a governing body to carry this program forward. We will work closely with CAFF and the International Wader Study Group to formally recognize this group.
2. To fully develop and implement a circumpolar Arctic-nesting shorebird monitoring program. Such a program requires the preparation of a plan that will include and build upon the existing monitoring programs, such as the Arctic Birds Breeding Conditions Survey (ABBCS) and the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM). Participants of this workshop will focus on the following individual components of the plan.
 - Identification, definition, and encouragement of the collection of a core set of biological variables, including population (e.g., size and structure, seasonal distribution) and demographic (e.g., recruitment and survival) parameters of Arctic-nesting shorebirds.
 - Identification of indicators within Arctic-nesting shorebirds based on a set of criteria, such as distribution across the circumpolar Arctic, international obligations, current monitoring activities, degree of endangerment, and available information. Such a prioritisation will assist managers in determining how and where to allocate limited funds, and determine the potential to form international collaborations.
 - Expansion of existing monitoring programs to include environmental factors important for interpreting the trajectories of population trends, including physical and biological parameters, such as climate, habitat, predator, and alternative prey variables.

- Identification of the best locations at which to survey individual shorebird species and subspecies so as to maximize logistical and financial efficiency.

We are aware that the BTO has also submitted a proposal for funding. However, we consider both proposals as important and complementary. We hope both proposals can be sufficiently funded to progress on the efforts on circumpolar shorebird and wader monitoring.

Budget

Meeting of ca. 15 to 20 people with travel and accommodation estimated at approximately of US \$ 40,000.

We ask AEWA for a contribution of US \$ 20,000 and will ask sponsors from the other flyway areas to co-fund the proposal by the equal amount.

Chairs of CHASM

Dr. Richard Lanctot

Mikhail Soloviev