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## **FIFTH MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

*30<sup>th</sup> March – 2<sup>nd</sup> April, North Berwick near Edinburgh, Scotland*

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### **PROPOSAL ON HOW TO REPORT ON STATUS AND TRENDS OF POPULATIONS FOR MOP3**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In accordance with Article VI, paragraph 8 (a) of the Agreement, at each of its ordinary sessions the Meeting of the Parties shall: *“(a) consider the actual and potential changes in the conservation status of migratory waterbirds and the habitats important for their survival, as well as factors, which may affect them”*.

In the Action Plan under paragraph 7.4. it is stated that the Agreement Secretariat, in coordination with the Technical Committee and the Parties, shall prepare a series of international reviews necessary for the implementation of this Action Plan, including (a) reports on status and trends of population. In addition and as indicated in subparagraph (c), international reviews should be prepared of the networks of sites used by each population, including reviews of the protection status of each site as well as of the management measures taken in each case. No clear reference is made in paragraph 7.4 to the other factors that may affect migratory waterbirds.

Both for MOP1 and for MOP2 Wetlands International produced a draft status report on the conservation status of migratory waterbirds in the Agreement Area. The MOP1 report was published by AEWA in its Technical Series.

According to Resolution 2.1, operational paragraph 9, the Meeting of the Parties took note of the second edition of the Report of the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area (AEWA. Inf 2.14) as the best information currently available on the status of the populations of waterbirds covered by the Agreement. However, in paragraph 10 of the same Resolution the Technical Committee was requested to develop, at its next meeting, proposals for enhancing the analytical content of the third edition of the AEWA Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area and to consider how that information may be used to direct input to future reviews of the Agreement's implementation priorities.

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Technical Committee it was decided to establish an intersessional Working Group consisting of Mr David Stroud, Mr Ward Hagemeyer and Mr Christoph Zöckler. Please find attached the document produced by this Working Group

## **PROPOSAL OF THE SECRETARIAT**

The Secretariat proposes reviewing the document attached hereto and in particular discussing the next steps indicated under that heading (see page 9 of this document).

In addition, the Secretariat also proposes reviewing Article VI, paragraph 8 (a) in which the Meeting of the Parties is also requested to consider actual and potential changes of habitats important for the survival of migratory waterbirds, as well as factors that may affect them. So far this has not been done.

# AEWA Technical Committee

## March 2004

### Developing AEWA's species status reporting

#### Background

AEWA's Action Plan requires the production for each Meeting of the Parties of "reports on the status and trends of populations".

For MoP1 in 1999, Wetlands International produced a draft status report for consideration, later published separately by AEWA (Wetlands International 2000). For MoP2 in 2002, a second edition of this status document was produced (Wetlands International 2002a). The format of both documents was similar in providing information on the changing conservation and population status of each of the AEWA-listed migratory waterbird populations, and presented this information in a series of species accounts.

MoP2 requested that the Technical Committee should "*develop, at its next meeting, proposals for enhancing the analytical content of the third edition of the AEWA Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbird in the Agreement Area, and to consider how that information may be used to direct input to future reviews of the Agreement's implementation priorities.*"<sup>1</sup>

#### Determining the content of the status report

The *Status Report* currently has no explicit objectives — these are necessary before its content can be determined.

The following are suggested objectives:

1. To document the current status of each waterbird population listed by AEWA, in particular presenting any significant changes in conservation status, population size, distribution, migratory status, or other factors that may have a bearing on the listing of these populations or on relevant conservation measures;
2. To document the data, information, and judgements that underpin any cases for changing the status of populations listed in Table 1 of the Action Plan (thus providing necessary transparency, and for audit purposes).
3. To provide both 'top-level', and more detailed information, on the changing status of migratory waterbird populations that will enable decision and policy-makers in Contracting Parties and other stakeholders assess the efficacy of current conservation measures, and the need for further actions. Feedback from the changing status of populations should highlight for attention any issues that need to be addressed by the Agreement's Implementation Priorities;
4. To provide information to the wider public on the changing status of waterbird populations.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 2.1

5. To relate changes in waterbird populations to their migratory status the geographic area they occur in, as well as to other taxa and physical or chemical parameters for comparative and analytical purposes, especially so as to elaborate the root causes for these changes<sup>2</sup>.
6. To assist appropriately in the general harmonisation of reporting on the state of the environment which is also being promoted by international conventions and treaties.

The format of the current *Status Report* is currently drafted and formatted as a detailed technical report. As such it fulfils Objective 1 well. It partly addressed Objective 2.

In terms of providing top-level messages on changing population status (Objective 3) it is inadequate. The volume of data, information and contexts presented obscure key issues. Further there is no attempt to analyse the wealth of information brought together to identify those major issues to which the Contracting Parties should be giving their attention.

It is currently largely inaccessible to the public in terms of being rather user-unfriendly (Objective 4).

It currently does not address Objectives 5 and 6.

### What sort of analytical content is desirable?

There is a range of analytical enhancements that would provide useful information relevant to the proposed objectives:

- Are some taxonomic groups of waterbirds faring more poorly overall than others?
- Are there some geographic regions within the Agreement area where waterbirds are faring particularly badly?<sup>3</sup>
- Are waterbirds associated with particular habitat types faring worse than others?<sup>4</sup>
- Is there co-incidence in the timing of apparent changes in numbers between taxa or geographic areas<sup>5</sup>?
- Has there been any change in species composition over time at specific sites<sup>6</sup>?
- How effective is conservation provision in improving the status of the most severely threatened waterbirds?
- Are there some geographic areas where we have particular poor information on the status of migratory waterbirds and where, as a consequence, surveys should be directed as a matter of priority?<sup>7</sup>

There are a number of examples of analysis and presentation of complex data that might serve as models for the further development of the *Status Report*. These include:

- The use of multi-species indices such as those employed in the *State of the UK's*

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Zöckler *et al.* (2003) for a good example of the types of analysis that can elucidate general issues linked to patterns of decline.

<sup>3</sup> At least for waders, an example might be the steppe regions of the Caspian Basin, according to recent evaluations by the International Wader Study Group (Stroud *et al.* 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Again for waders an example might be the especially poor status of waders breeding on wet grassland habitats in Europe – which are subject to a wide range of negative agricultural influences (Stroud *et al.* 2002).

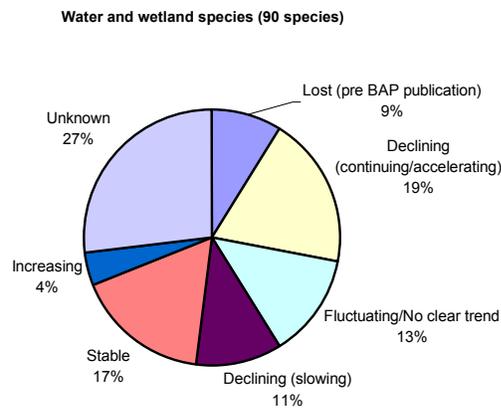
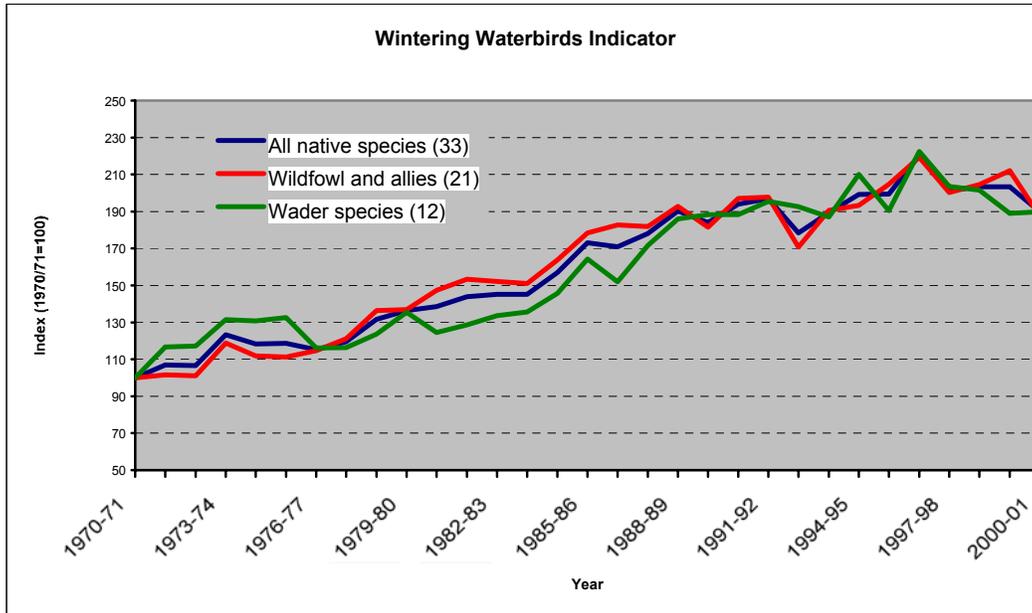
<sup>5</sup> Here it should be noted that the baseline or reference point for assessments of trends or changes in population size should be documented to allow comparison of changes against time.

<sup>6</sup> Looking at species composition rather than at changes at the individual species' population levels can be a tool in picking up the effects of climate change for example.

<sup>7</sup> Again for waders, there is very poor population information in the Black-Sea/Mediterranean Flyway (Stroud *et al.* 2002).

*Birds*<sup>8</sup>. Such indices can summarise large amounts of data to present a simple overall picture — a so called 'Headline Indicator'. A further example is one of the Indicators from England's recently published *Biodiversity Strategy*<sup>9</sup>: This concept has also been successfully applied at the European level (Wetlands International 2003).

- Simple pie-charts present information on relative proportions of species in different categories:



<sup>8</sup> [www.rspb.org.uk/Images/State%20of%20UK%20Birds%202002\\_tcm5-42039.pdf](http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/State%20of%20UK%20Birds%202002_tcm5-42039.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> See for example: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/biostrat/> and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2003/031201b.htm>

- Pie-charts can also be linked to maps to present comparisons between geographic regions (e.g. see page 15 of *Waterbird Population Estimates 3* (Wetlands International 2002b) for a good example)<sup>10</sup>.
- Maps showing status distinctions between counties, such as in WWF-International's *Living Planet Report* (WWF & WCMC 2002)<sup>11</sup>. Note that this style of presentation could be adopted for regions and need not necessarily relate to countries should it be desired to present information at broader scales.

## Types of analysis

Manipulation of simple spreadsheet summarising of data on AEWA-listed waterbirds, and drawn from *Waterbird Population Estimates 3* suggests some types of analysis that might be instructive in the context of the objectives above. Thus:

1. In terms of overall priorities for species conservation, there are major taxonomic differences between the different groups of waterbirds listed in the AEWA Action Plan (Figure 1).
2. Given that there are different numbers of species in the different families of waterbird, there may be merit in expressing such information on conservation status proportionately. Thus, it appears that a high proportion of the species of Cranes, Storks and Ibises, and Cormorants are globally threatened — indeed half of all Crane species in the region (Figure 2).
3. In terms of the proportions of species that are IUCN Red Listed (a slightly broader category than globally threatened (Figure 3<sup>12</sup>), over 80% of Cormorant species are Red Listed.
4. Turning to the status of populations as expressed by trend information, summary information (Figure 4) shows that over half (59%) of all populations have either an unknown population trend or are known or thought to be decreasing. Nearly 50% more populations are known to be declining than are increasing. (These statistics highlight an overall situation that should be a 'headline' issue for AEWA – yet has not been even noted in previous information presented to the MoP. Indeed, a fundamental target for the Agreement should surely be to improve this situation, through the implementation of its priority actions, reporting accordingly to each MoP. See below in relation to target-setting).
5. Figure 5 breaks down different populations trends by family. It shows that a large number of the populations of ducks, geese and swans are declining (many more than are increasing).
6. How good is our information on population trends? Figure 6 summarises information on the proportion of populations for which there is no information on population trend at all — information that is fundamental to any assessment of conservation status. Over half of all the populations of Divers, Rails and Crakes, Plovers and Stone Curlews<sup>13</sup> have no current information on their trends. This indicates some taxonomic priorities where AEWA should be setting priorities for the establishment of monitoring.
7. What is the conservation provision for those globally threatened waterbirds that are

<sup>10</sup> [www.wetlands.org/pubs&WPE.htm](http://www.wetlands.org/pubs&WPE.htm)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.panda.org/news\\_facts/publications/general/livingplanet/index.cfm](http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/general/livingplanet/index.cfm);  
[http://www.panda.org/downloads/general/LPR\\_2002.pdf](http://www.panda.org/downloads/general/LPR_2002.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Note that this presentation is dominated by the somewhat misleadingly high apparent proportions for some families with a limited number of species, most of which are on the IUCN Red List.

<sup>13</sup> Note, however, that this family comprises only a few populations.

listed by AEWA and is it effective? Of 15 waterbird species globally threatened with extinction and listed by AEWA, seven are the subject of international action plans (generally those species occurring in Europe<sup>14</sup>), whilst eight are not (generally those occurring in Africa and the Middle East<sup>15</sup>). All those species without action plans are still declining (Figure 7), whilst at least some of those with action plans are either stable or increasing in numbers. This might suggest that, whether or not this more favourable status is directly attributable to an International Action Plan, there are probably conservation benefits that come from the attention associated with an international action planning process. However, action planning appears not to have reached Africa: most existing plans have been driven by the European Union and/or the Council of Europe (e.g. Heredia *et al.* 1996; Schäffer & Gallo-Orsi 2001).

The above are just a very small number of the analyses that are possible from readily available data. Further elaborations are possible, in particular looking at geographic aspects (where are waterbirds faring especially poorly?) as well as including additional analytical factors such as population size.

## Target setting

Such analyses could and should be directly informing the development of implementation priorities for the Agreement – providing direct feedback from the ‘real world’. Further, they could be used to establish baselines against which the effectiveness of the Agreement can be assessed. For example:

- The progressive reduction in the number of waterbird populations about which we have poor or no information.
- A reduction of the proportion of waterbird populations that are decreasing.
- A reduction of the number of IUCN Red Listed waterbird species within the Agreement area.

Reporting on such statistics to each MoP would give a real measure of the effectiveness of the Agreement in ‘making a difference’, and thus achieving some of the objectives that are set out in the Agreement text itself.

There is scope to use information on waterbirds — as a group with probably the largest internationally compiled datasets of biodiversity to assist in the monitoring progress towards the target set by world leaders of achieving “a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity” by 2010. AEWA could play a key role here in facilitating the appropriate analyses for waterbirds within Africa and Western Eurasia to assess movement towards this target.

## Types of reporting

A fundamental question that the Technical Committee must determine is who reporting is aimed at, and to what end (as the nature of the reporting product will be determined by its objectives — note that there is a direct link to the Agreement’s proposed Communications Strategy here).

Note that the text of the Agreement’s Action Plan refers to the need to produce “Reports on the status and trends of populations” - indicating the need for more than a single product.

At minimum there would appear to be at least three distinct audiences and possibly different related reporting products:

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14 *Anser erythropus*, *Branta ruficollis*, *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, *Oxyura leucocephala*, *Crex crex*, *Vanellus gregarius* and *Numenius tenuirostris*.

15 *Geronticus eremita*, *Grus leucogeranus*, *Sarothrura ayresi*, *Phalacrocorax neglectus*, *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, *Egretta vinaceigula*, *Ardeola idea*, *Grus paradisea* and *Grus carunculatus*.

1. **Conservation scientists.** A detailed triennial report on changes of status to populations since the last MoP, including a detailed audit trail as to the data and information used in support of any proposed changes in status. This would be similar (but not entirely identical) to the current *Status Report* (Wetlands International 2001, 2002a), as it would also contain greater analytical content as requested by MoP2.
2. **Governmental decision and policy makers.** A non-technical report aimed at governmental decision makers and others, containing synthesised results from the analysis, and summarising main conservation/status change issues. In particular, this report should aim to make links between the changing status of waterbirds and any desirable changes to the Agreement's *Implementation Priorities* in response to these changes. (This might be included as an extended Executive Summary of report 1 above, and include the use of indicators and between-flyway comparisons).
3. **Public and other interested parties.** A non-technical, accessible report containing much of the information produced for 2 above, but possibly with additional material also.

The recommendation from the MoP is that the "*enhancing the analytical content of the Conservation Status Report*" should be "*used to direct input to future reviews of the Agreement's implementation priorities*". This implies that there will need to be careful sequencing of these two documents - since the conclusions of the *Status Report* (= 'what is happening') will/should influence the *Implementation Priorities* (= 'what do we propose to do about it').

## National reporting<sup>16</sup>

National Reports are an important commitment assumed when a country ratifies AEWA. AEWA reporting is one part of the overall reporting commitments of the Member State, e.g. Ramsar, CMS and of course its commitment to the 2010 target with which water birds can substantially contribute already (probably at the same time with Ramsar reporting!)

Only eight Parties submitted National reports to MoP2. MoP2 agreed "*that the Secretariat would wait until it had received further reports from the countries, and then prepare a synthesis for dissemination after the current Meeting of Parties.*"

It is not clear, however:

- whether any further national reports have been received,
- how or when national reports that have been submitted will be published,
- whether any synthesis has been or will be undertaken of MoP2 national reports. (Such syntheses are important in providing context and 'added value' to Contracting Parties, and thus help to encourage timely reporting. For example, the regular regional syntheses of National Reports produced for each Ramsar CoP are perceived as a valuable source of information by Contracting Parties).
- what were the reasons for such low rate of completion of national reports, and
- how these reasons might be addressed prior to MoP3.

## Next steps

1. The Committee is invited to discuss:
  - a. Desirable types of reporting to MoP 3 (audiences to be reached and overall

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<sup>16</sup> Whilst National Reports are one important source of information, there are others also that will be important in the development of overall status reporting by AEWA. These include data and information from the IWD database, Specialist Groups and others.

products to deliver appropriate information, together with types of reporting products — e.g. web-based (on-line queryable database?) vs. conventional publications);

- b. Specific types of analysis that might be included in reporting in response to the request from MoP2.
- c. The timetable and sequence of necessary further work. A possible sequence may be as follows:
  - i. In terms of process, it is recommended that this draft paper (with practical examples) be further developed by a Working Group of the Committee and circulated for comment to the full Committee by the end of June 2004 at the latest for approval.
  - ii. It should then be submitted to the AEWA Standing Committee for consideration and agreement at its meeting later in 2004 (date uncertain).
  - iii. This would allow a suitably developed *Status Report* and possibly other reporting products to be drafted in early 2005.
  - iv. This timing will allow the conclusions from the *Status Report* also to feed in to the process of redrafting the Agreement's *Implementation Priorities* during 2005.
  - v. Both *Status Report* and *Implementation Priorities* to be submitted to MoP3 in late 2005.
2. The Committee should further discuss the issues raised by the low rate of submission of national reports to MoP2 and how the situation may be improved for MoP3.
3. The Committee should discuss the possibility of recommending to MoP2 that targets are set for the effective of delivery of the Agreement objective<sup>17</sup> "*to take immediate action to stop the decline of migratory waterbird species and their habitats*", given that such targets might be effective drivers for the scope and nature of AEWA's reporting.
4. The Committee should consider the role that AEWA can play in facilitating analyses of waterbird monitoring data so as to assess overall movement towards the WSSD target of reducing biodiversity loss by 2010.
5. The Committee should consider how best the development of AEWA's reporting can co-ordinate and link with other international reporting initiatives, including other national reporting to Multilateral Environmental Agreements, CMS-related reporting<sup>18</sup>, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility<sup>19</sup>, and monitoring the delivery of the WSSD 2010 target).

## References

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<sup>17</sup> Agreement Preamble, para 7

<sup>18</sup> The CMS Information Management System provides access to the various components and services derived from the implementation of the CMS Information Management Plan. This system brings together the data from various expert organisations, the knowledge generated within the CMS and other biodiversity agreements, and the information provided by the Parties to CMS through their National Reports. <http://quin.unep-wcmc.org/isdb/cms/taxonomy/>

<sup>19</sup> [www.gbif.net](http://www.gbif.net)

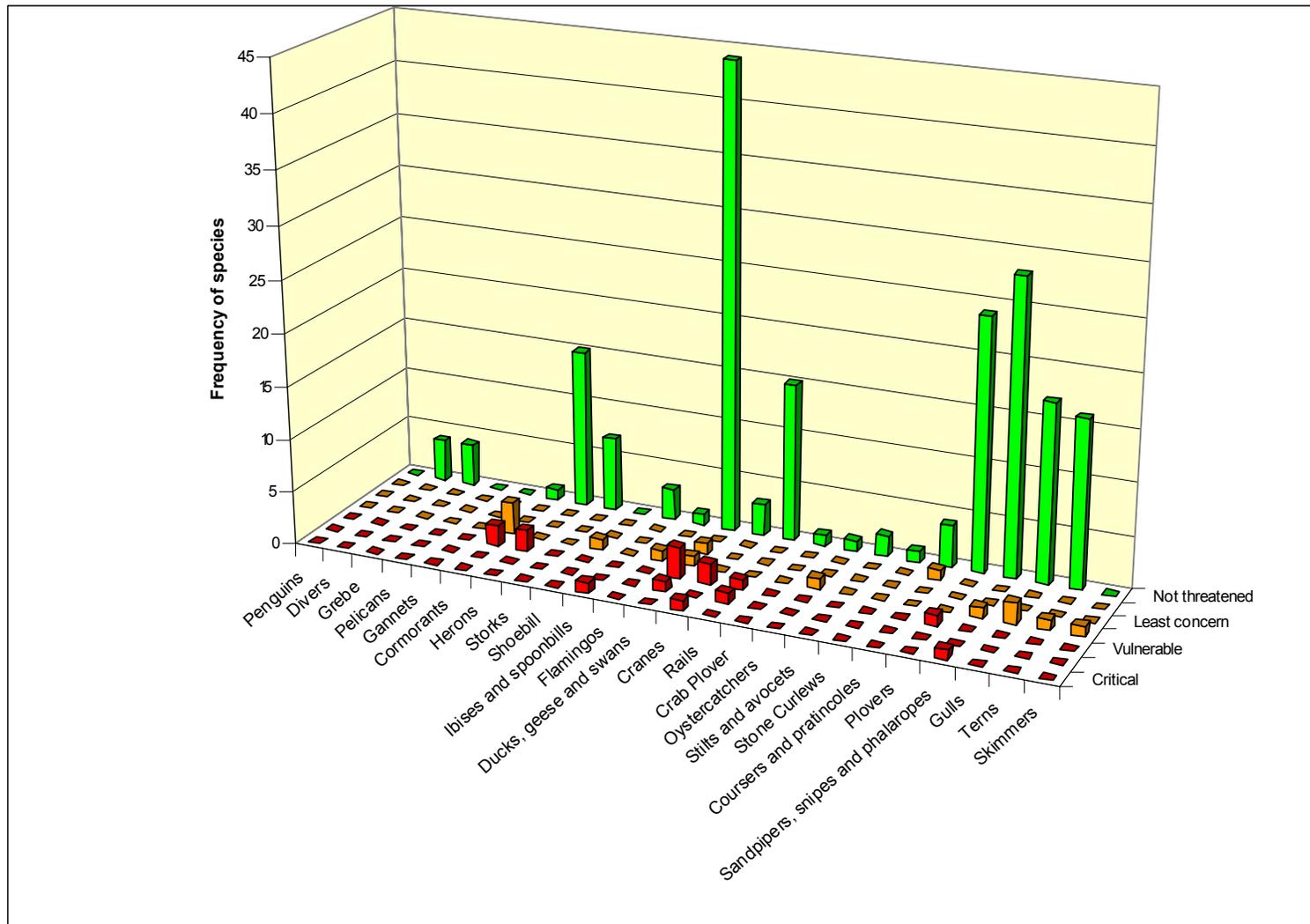
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*Ward Hagemeyer, Wetlands International*  
*David Stroud, JNCC UK*  
*Christoph Zöckler, WCMC*

12 February 2004

Version: Friday, 12 March 2004

Figure 1. Summary data on IUCN Red List status for AEWA listed waterbirds (numbers of species in each family with different IUCN Red List status). Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.



Version: Friday, 12 March 2004

Figure 2. Proportion of AEWA-listed waterbird species (by family) that are globally threatened. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.

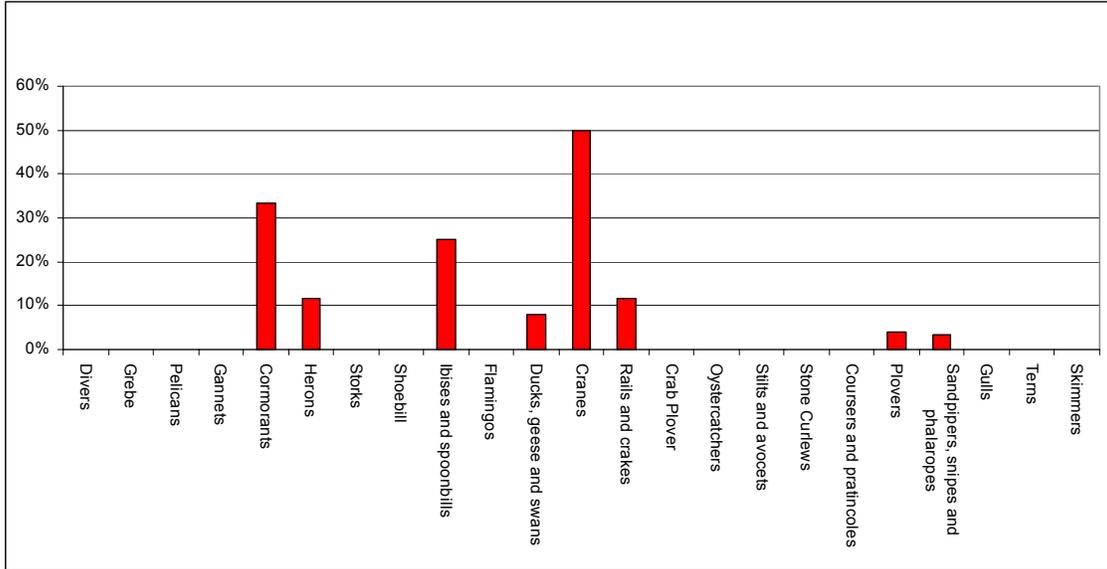


Figure 3. Summary of the proportion of AEWA-listed waterbird species that are on the IUCN Red List (by family). Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.

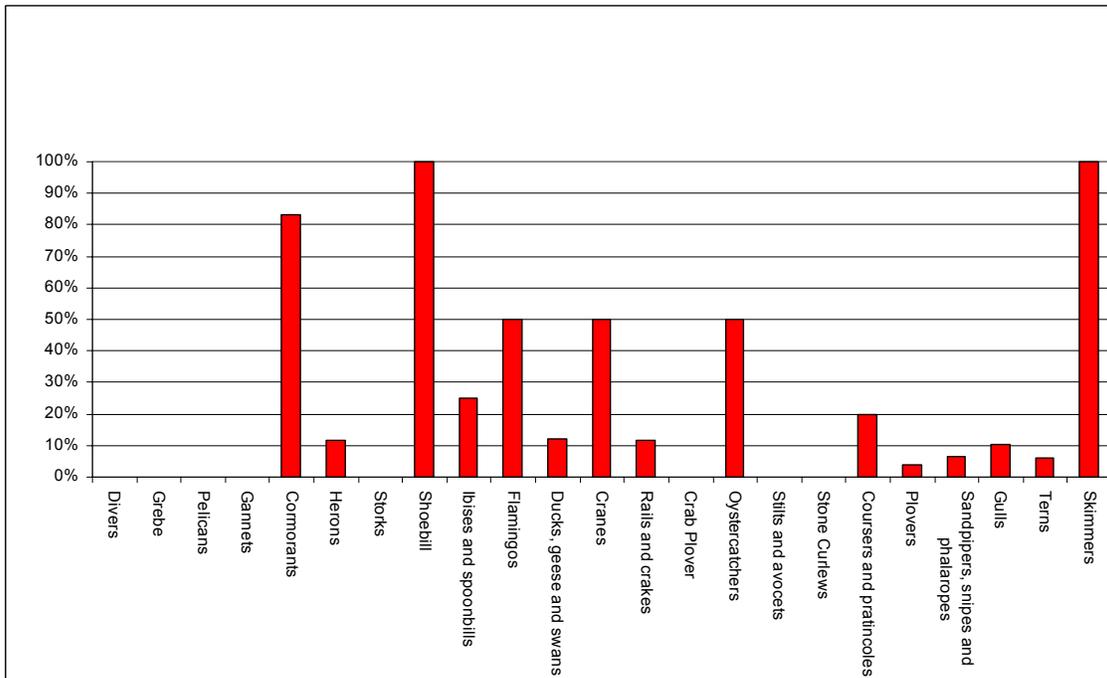
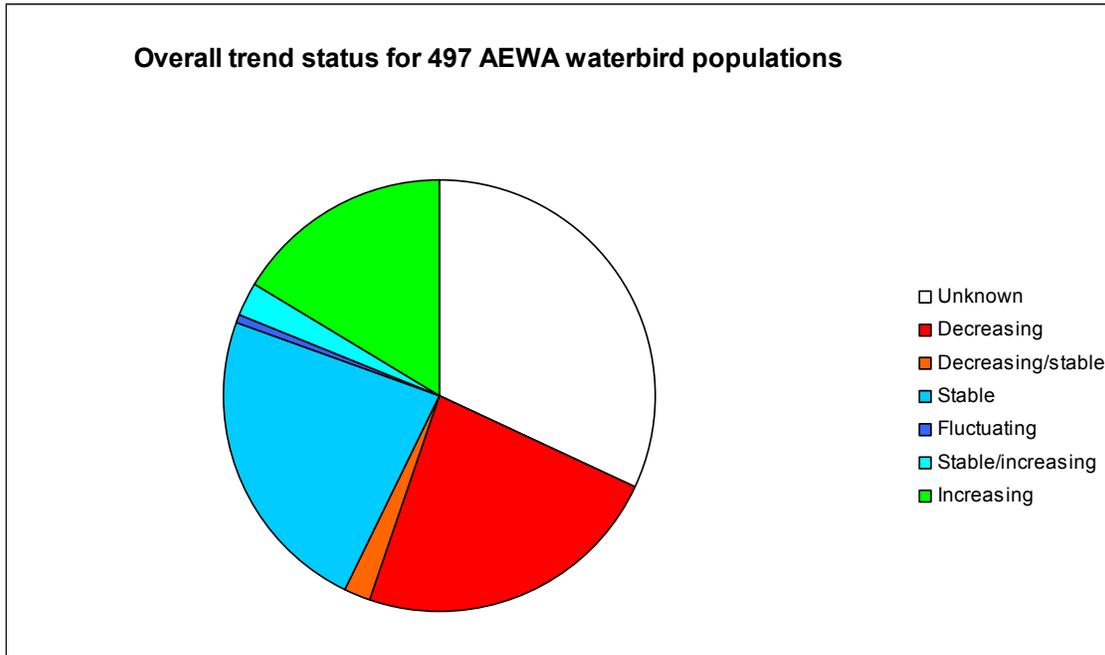
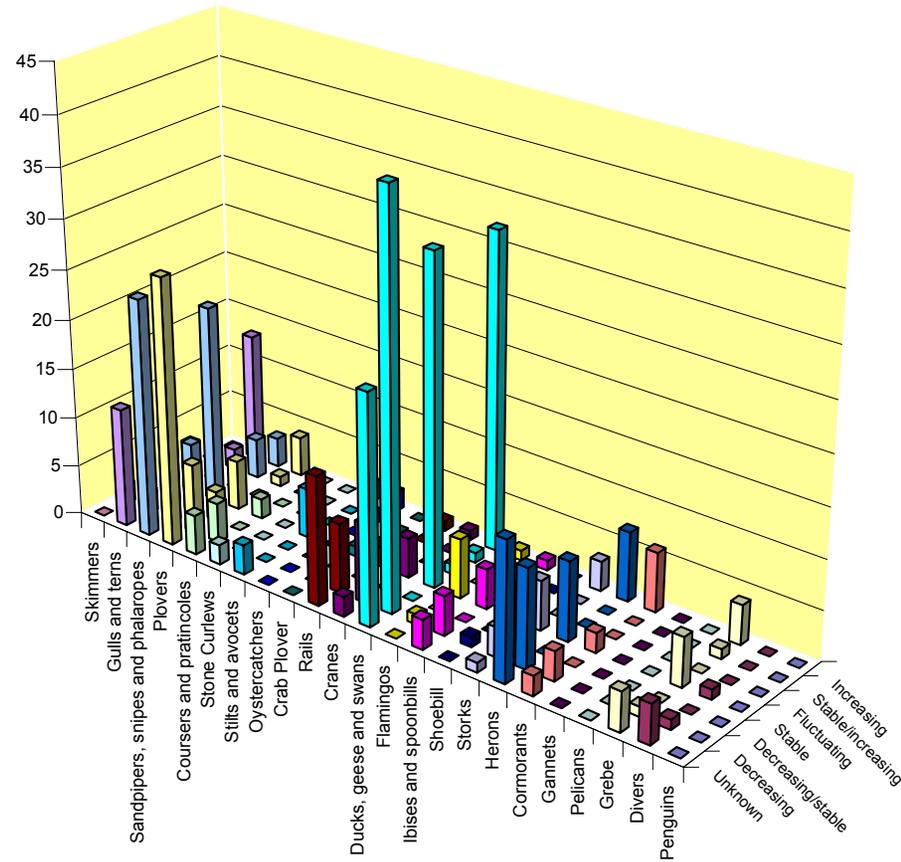


Figure 4. Population trends for all waterbird populations listed by AEWA. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.



Version: Friday, 12 March 2004

Figure 5. Trends in AEWA listed waterbird population summarise by family. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.



Version: Friday, 12 March 2004

Figure 6. Those waterbird families for which we have poorest information on population trends. Proportion of AEW-listed populations in each taxonomic family for which there is no information on population trend. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3*.

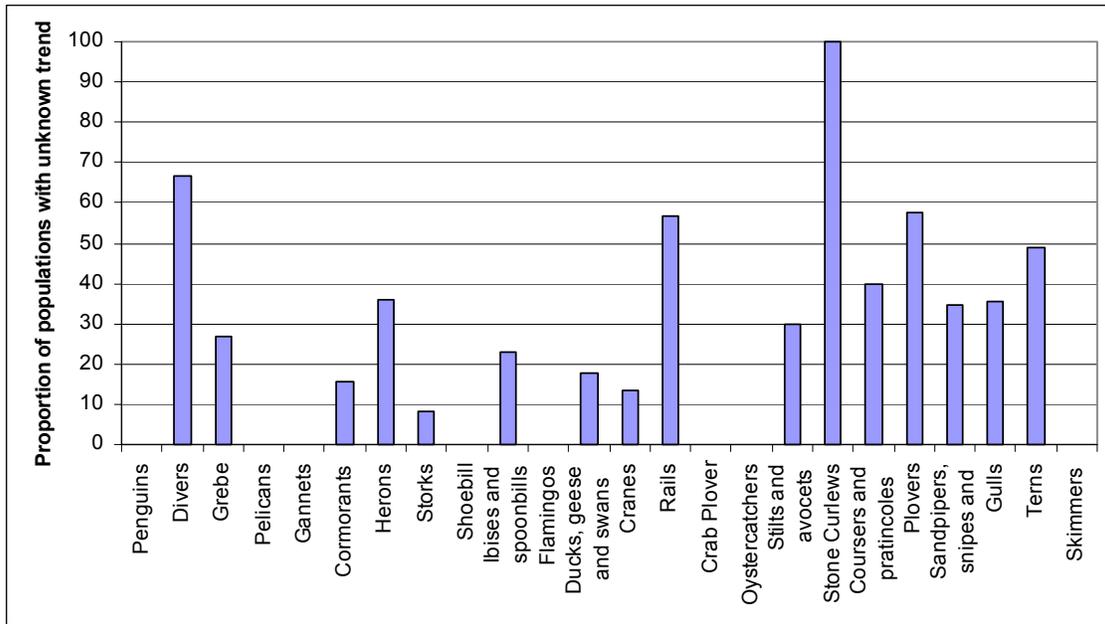


Figure 7. Population trend status of globally threatened waterbirds with and without international action plans. Source: *Waterbird Population Estimates 3* and other information.

