

Flyway management for species of conservation concern

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For migratory species of conservation concern, common or complementary approaches to conservation at international scale are necessary to ensure their survival throughout their annual cycle. The last decade has seen a number of initiatives to seek co-operation for single species of threatened migratory waterbirds at international or flyway scales. As summarised by the following papers, some of these initiatives have been more successful than others.

The workshop reviewed flyway management planning initiatives with the aim of deriving 'best practise', in particular those features of procedure or policy that lead to effective implementation and conservation delivery, and reached the following recommendations:

- **Plan Production.** Production of species action plans needs to involve all stakeholders, ideally through holding focused participatory workshops using an established structure.
- **Plan Structure.** Action plans need to be produced to an established format with clear, specific, measurable, attainable, and prioritised targets backed up by thorough annual work programmes and realistic funding plans. They should facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of subsequent implementation, linking threats, actions and measurable objectives.
- **Plan Endorsement/Affiliation.** Endorsement by relevant international institutions, conventions, agreements, conservation organisations and national governments is highly desirable, although this in itself does not determine success or failure.
- **Plan Implementation.** Action plan implementation needs to be based on the twin premises of sound science and collaboration. International plans need to be transcribed into national action plans so as to ensure government commitment and support. Ideally, national action plans should be enshrined in national legislation (e.g. to implement national biodiversity action plans). In many cases, local community involvement is critical for successful implementation, and specific recommendations on this issue should be included in action plans. Greater priority needed to be afforded to communication, education and public awareness activities. Where relevant, building network capacity to enable sound implementation should be an integral factor in the action planning process. The success of long-term implementation may be enhanced if there is measurable short-term progress, demonstrating the success of plans to key stakeholders and funders at an early stage.
- **Plan Review & Update.** Plans need to include a predetermined process for monitoring and regular update in order to learn from past successes and failures, i.e. an appropriate feedback mechanism. Most importantly, plans should be viewed as "living" rather than "static" documents incorporating an iterative monitoring and re-evaluation process to refresh priorities in order to react to inabilities to achieve the ideal agreed objectives. If the other issues identified in this series of recommendations can be addressed, the only (but totally defeating) reason for failure may be the lack of flexibility in an action plan to deal with evolving constraints.

- **Species Recovery Team.** The existence and enthusiasm of a highly motivated, multi-disciplinary Species Recovery Team, comprising key individuals and bodies that will be involved in plan implementation, is critical to successful implementation. A dynamic coordinator with the long-term commitment and organisational backing to drive the implementation process is essential. Recovery Team spirit needs to be maintained through regular communication between members, for example through team meetings and list servers. All Recovery Team members should be in agreement over the goal and priorities outlined in the action plan thus engendering a strong sense of plan ownership. Recovery Team members should be sensitive to cultural differences between range states and of the effects of human and logistical capacity limitations on the timescale for plan implementation.
- **Plan Funding.** Existence of national or international funding instruments (e.g. EU-LIFE funding) increase the chance of successful implementation. However, Species Recovery Teams need to incorporate fund-raising expertise in order to make the most of these opportunities. Species Recovery Teams also need to exploit all possible 'marketing' opportunities.
- **NGO Involvement.** The wholehearted, and ideally financial, backing of national or international non-governmental organisations is probably the most crucial factor in determining the success or failure of species action plans.