

X Spoonbill Workshop conclusions

WORKSHOP

1. 29 participants from 13 different countries attended the workshop in a multicultural, friendly and benevolent atmosphere. Organising the ESIEG workshop in Croatia was an opportunity to strengthen the network towards Eastern Mediterranean countries. It was a success with representatives present from Croatia, Montenegro, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria and Egypt. We acknowledge the great organisation by the Croatian Society for Birds and Nature Protection in Croatia, the Department of Biology of the University of Osijek in Croatia, the Institute of Ornithology CASA in Croatia and Tour du Valat, Research Institute for the Conservation of Mediterranean Wetlands that allowed the success of the workshop.
2. ESIEG thanks sponsors (Tour du Valat) for their financial support that allowed the venue of a plenary speaker from Finland and representatives from Hungary, Algeria, and Egypt. Nevertheless, we regret the lack of means and the short time that prevented the obtention of visas for more representatives from Africa.
3. ESIEG was glad to have the venue of several PhD students working on spoonbills. We would like to include more young scientists in the future workshop to enable them to join the international networks and discuss their study topics. The involvement and mentoring of the new generation of spoonbill experts will not only allow the group continuity to the future but also bring a new perspective to its present.
4. ESIEG expresses high concerns for the preservation of key sites for spoonbills in Europe. There is an urgent need for the appropriate management of Doñana Ramsar site and Croatian fishponds that are part of the Natura 2000 sites.
5. ESIEG acknowledged the development of joint genetic study and study on survival that included several flyways and expressed the intention to widen the geographic scope of these studies.
6. The Eurasian spoonbill international action plan was updated considering a new evaluation of priorities. An evaluation of achievements was also performed. There will be published in the proceedings in 2023.

TRENDS AND MAIN RESULTS

7. East Atlantic flyway
 - a. ESIEG expressed his major concern about the situation of Doñana degradation of wetlands. Doñana is a major wetland for wintering and stopover of

migrating spoonbills. Both drought and diversion of water for agriculture constitute a major threat for the East Atlantic population.

8. Central Europe / Central Mediterranean flyway

- a. ESIEG expressed his major concern about the situation of the mismanagement of Croatian fishponds that lead to spoonbill breeding and feeding habitat destruction despite being NATURA 2000 sites. Majority of Croatian spoonbill breeding population depends on these man-made habitats, but recent fishpond “reconstruction works” for the purpose of intensification of production, funded by EU money, are causing serious habitat degradation and loss of colonies.
- b. In the Carpathian Basin, the dryness in the 2019 - 2022 period caused serious problems for the breeding spoonbills because the natural wetlands dried out. This led to many foraging areas disappearing and the number of the breeding pairs and breeding success were very low. ESIEG encourages wetland management that helps to preserve water in natural wetlands.

9. South East Europe / East Mediterranean flyway

- a. Population increase in some countries in the South East European breeding population is highlighted, but threats and knowledge gaps still exists.
- b. Activities from the Eurasian spoonbill international action plan were prioritised for the first time for this flyway.

10. *P. l. archeri*

- a. Further research, including genetic study, is needed to understand the status of breeding population at Egyptian Red Sea islands

11. *P. l. balsaci*

- a. Over the last years, monitoring is reinforcing through regular evaluation of the numbers of breeding pairs in the main breeding sites and ringing of chicks in order to have a better understanding of the trend of this unique population.
- b. The population breeds on low lying islands that are subjected to regular jackal attacks as well as flooding, which is expected to exacerbate with sea level rise. Also, jackals seem to have increased with increasing freshwater availability in the nearby villages, which may increase attacks on breeding colonies.

COMMUNICATION

12. A logo of the group was created and adopted in 2020.

13. For the first time, due to COVID situation and the postponing of next workshop, a virtual meeting took place in October 2021 with 35 participants from 16 different countries.

ESIEG ORGANISATION

14. ESIEG acknowledges AEWA Secretariat in regards to our proposal to split Central Europe and South East European flyways in 2019. Recent genetic study presented at this workshop strengthens the new delineations now adopted by AEWA.
15. ESIEG took note of the temporary pause in the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the AEWA Secretariat and the coordination of ESIEG in May 2021. Accordingly, use of the AEWA logo by ESIEG stopped since then. We regard positively the likely reintegration of ESIEG into AEWA scheme in 2023.

NEXT STEP

16. Next ESIEG workshop will be organised in 2025 in Bulgaria or the Netherlands.

Petrčane, Croatia, 6th October 2022

Eurasian Spoonbill International Expert Group