

13th MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
03 - 05 July 2018, The Hague, the Netherlands

**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AEWA
FOR THE EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA REGION**

This report provides an update of the activities undertaken in the Europe and Central Asia region of the AEWA since the 12th AEWA Standing Committee held in Paris, France, 31 January – 01 February 2017, in particular as regard the admission of new range States, the implementation of the agreement, activities related to the agreement and any other relevant issues.

1) Number of Contracting Parties in the Region / Number of Range States in the Region. New accessions since the previous StC meeting

There are 37 Contracting parties (including the European Union) out of 54 Range States (including Canada) in the Europe - Central Asia Region of the AEWA: 36/50 in Europe and 1/4 in Central Asia.

These Contracting parties are: Albania, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, FYR of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan.

New national focal points (NFP) have been appointed or are to be appointed for the 15 following Contracting Parties: Belarus, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Uzbekistan. The contact details of all the NFPs are provided in Annex.

No new accessions has been registered since the last Standing Committee. The last range state in the region which became Contracting Party was Belarus on 1st April 2016.

2) Number of Range States (Contracting Parties and Non-Contracting Parties) that provided feedback for the report.

Not all the Contracting Parties of the region have reported. The information below summarises the reports provided by 14 countries: Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and UK.

The Non-Contracting Parties have not been solicited given the lack of contact points.

3) Activities undertaken since the 12th Standing Committee to promote accession to the AEWA in the Europe - Central Asia Region

The regional representative approached the representatives of Austria and Poland during the last Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (December 2017) to promote the accession of their

respective countries to AEWA. For Austria, a focus has been put on the fact that Austria will be President of EU at the time of MOP7.

The regional representative has also facilitated the contact between AEWA Secretariat and Portugal for the nomination of a NFP and the payment of cotisation arrears.

4) Developments regarding the implementation of the AEWA since the 12th Standing Committee

Albania:

- Monitoring activity
 - With the support of the NaturAL Project (EU IPA program implemented by Italian Cooperation in partnership with IUCN and SBI) the International Waterbird Census in Albania has been carried out with the participation of experts and staff of the Ministries Agency, for three years in a row, in January of 2016, 2017 and 2018. The number of individuals identified over the last two years, is greater than in the first year –nearly 98,600 in 2016, 162,000 in 2017 and approximately 140,000 in 2018.
- World Migratory Bird Day
 - Every year Albania celebrates the World Migratory Bird Day in one of the Marine Protected Areas, with the participation not only of the officials of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment and National agency of Protected Areas, but also representatives of local authorities, experts and researchers, different environmental NGOs, inhabitants of the surrounding areas, media, TV etc.

Belgium:

- A Species Protection Program for the Corncrake (*Crex crex*) in Flanders was established on 21 December 2015 and is running for 5 years from then.
- A Species Protection Program for the Eurasian bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) has been launched in December 2016. This program will run for 5 years.
- The LIFE Belgian Nature Integrated Project (LIFE 14 IPE BE002 “BNIP”) is running. It includes in field measures to protect the Corncrake (*Crex crex*) and the Eurasian bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), in accordance with the Species Protection Programs for these species.
- Belgium is participating in the AEWA European Goose Management Platform. Financial support has been provided to the AEWA EGMP datacenter for the years 2017 and 2018.
- Works to enlarge and improve the important wetland “Zwin” at the Dutch-Belgian border are entering the final stage. In 2019 the wetland will be enlarged with 120ha of intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh, providing extra foraging opportunities for migrating water birds and extra breeding opportunities for birds of marine intertidal habitats (gulls, terns).
- A species management plan has been initiated for breeding European herring gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull in Flanders. These species tend to breed more and more on rooftops in urban and industrial areas where they are causing nuisance and other problems. In order to limit nuisance, ad hoc destructive measures on nests and eggs have been carried out the past years. With this species management plan, these measures will be embedded in a broader perspective with also a positive approach towards establishing sustainable breeding sites, with the focus on nuisance reduction, not reduction in the number of birds.
- For the wetland area Yzervallei (Ramsar area and SPA under the birds directive), one of the most important areas for wintering waterbirds in Belgium, population goals and implication

for future management of the site have been discussed and agreed with local stakeholders. In the field, nature restoration works have been carried out in the Blankaart-area (900ha) in order to restore the habitat for marshland breeding birds and to offer more permanent suitable foraging conditions for migrating and wintering waterbirds.

- The Zennegat, a flood control area of 65 ha, has been finished in 2017. The area is designed as a fresh water tidal wetland with reduced tides. The establishment of this wetland is a project in the larger framework of the “Sigmaphan” to control the risks of flooding in the Scheldt basin. A number of other wetland restoration projects (in combination with flood control) are currently being prepared in the Scheldt basin.
- As to meet Recommendation n° 149 (2010) of the Bern Convention, and the obligation of the European Regulation n° 1143/2014, a control program on ruddy duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) is being executed. The current aim is to have the species eradicated by 2020. Being a ruddy duck range state, Belgium also forms part of the AEWa White-headed Duck International Working Group. In June 2017, a workshop was organised among public authorities and terrain managers from the Netherlands and Belgium to exchange tips and trips on ruddy duck control, especially with regard to the border population. At present, sightings of ruddy duck have become very scarce. Probably no more than a handful of birds remain.
- Control of summer geese, mainly greater Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) is taken up by several partners. The aim is to keep the population and its associated damage under control. Counting of the summer population is being carried out in order to monitor the impact.
- A population model for the resident barnacle geese (*Branta leucopsis*) in Flanders has been made and will be finalized in 2018.

Denmark:

- From July 2018 Denmark will restrict the hunting season on Long-tailed duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) and Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) to only include males resulting in a protection of the females. This is a response to the declining populations of the two species.
- The presentation table of hunting seasons will be reorganized to clarify and highlight the protection of taiga bean goose in northern Jutland
- The Environmental Protection Agency has funded a Ph.D. project on Common Eider in the Baltic Sea. The project will analyze survival data, model population development and evaluate different management options through model scenarios.
- In 2017 the Danish Environmental Protection Agency published a new revised action plan against invasive species that describes 36 different actions. Six of these actions are targeting invasive predators. The action plan has been translated to English.
- Organized eradication programs are in place for raccoon dog and American mink. The programs are carried out in cooperation with the Danish Nature Agency and the Danish Hunters’ Association. Special attention is given to vulnerable protected areas including wetlands with ground nesting birds.
- Aarhus University has taken on the role as Data Centre for the AEWa European Goose Management Platform, starting January 2017, including the lead on monitoring and assessment activities related to the involved goose populations, coordination of an international modelling consortium under the EGMP and the Task Force for the Pink-footed Goose under the EGMP. The work is carried out in close cooperation with the AEWa Secretariat and range states to the EGMP. Aarhus University also acts as national experts in the national delegation of the EGMP. In relation to the EGMP activities, several research

projects are carried out, some of which are funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, such as site use and affiliations of Taiga Bean Geese wintering in Denmark, social aspects of adaptive management and cost-benefit analyses of international flyway management plans.

France:

- Support to the implementation of the African Initiative:

France carried on providing funding to the Technical Support Unit (TSU) which includes ONCFS and Tour du Valat.

Since the last standing Committee, the TSU permanently implemented activities both in North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

In North Africa, the TSU:

- organized the yearly workshop of the Mediterranean Waterbird Network Tunis, 11-18 September 2017. The main goals of this meeting were to work on collaborative scientific papers on IWC in North Africa and to complete and sign the convention on data sharing between the countries. Following the update and finalization of the overall IWC database, completed in 2017, the network was also able to work on the Medwaterbirds storage and exchange platform (www.medwaterbirds.net) where the data are to be transferred. The network also prepared the next IWC operation. The opportunities of funding of the Mediterranean Waterbird network and its extension to other Mediterranean countries were also discussed.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the TSU:

- Organized a workshop on IWC data management aimed at 3 Sahelian countries in Tour du Valat on 20-25 November 2017, aiming at cleaning and updating national IWC database of Senegal and Mali.
- Implemented several the activities of the RESSOURCE project in partnership with CIRAD, OMPO, BirdLife and Wetlands International, in particular in Chad, Egypt and Sudan. This project of an amount of 5 M€ on 4 years will enhance the management of waterbirds in the Sahel and Nile Valley. Coordinated by FAO which also cofunds the project along with FFEM and UE, the project which began in Novembre 2016, includes five components: (i) Monitoring of the ressource « Waterbirds »; (ii) Conservation of the ressource « Waterbirds » and integrated management of wetlands; (iii) Knowledge and sustainable use of the ressource « Waterbirds »; (iv) Capacity strengthening and (v) Improvement of legislative and institutional frameworks for the ressource « Waterbirds ». Thanks to this project waterbird numbers and harvest were surveyed in Senegal, Egypt, Chad, Sudan and Mali since 2016. See: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/fr/item/445552/icode/>

- Technical cooperation with Russia, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia:

Through a financial support to the NGO, OMPO, France carried on the development of the project initiated in 2012 aiming at improving knowledge on the conservation status of 5 species of *Turdidae* (4 thrushes and the Blackbird) and 6 species of *Anatidae*.

Regarding the *Turdidae* in 2017 this project : (i) carried out the assessment of the current status and trend of breeding populations in Eastern Europe (St. Petersburg and Karelia regions of Russia, Lithuania, and since the former year, Kaliningrad Territory in Western Russia); (ii) interrupted the monitoring of Thrushes species in Ukraine due to unreliable results until a coordinator who would be able to take over the local network be appointed; (iii) explored the possibility of developing the

network in Belarus; (iv) assessed the reproductive success through the monitoring of the age-ratio of the birds ringed during their autumn migration in North Western Russia or hunted in Southern Europe.

For the *Anatidae*, the monitoring of Duck populations in Eastern Europe and Russia has been refocused on a priority species, the Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, to take into account the AEWA resolution 6/1 adopted during the MOP 6 (Bonn, 9-14 November 2015) and the recommendation of the Salekhard Conference (30 November-5 December 2015) highlighting the need to investigate the reasons of the decline of the species classified as "vulnerable" by the IUCN Red List, at the scale of its distribution range (including western Siberia). In addition, anticipating the likely launch of an AEWA International Action Plan (ISSAP) by the MOP 7, OMPO has set itself the following objectives: (i) assess the current level of the Russian breeding population from the data of the 1st Breeding Bird Atlas of Western Russia (in progress) and from recent works in Siberia; (ii) identify the Common Pochard ecosystem by recognising the biotic and abiotic factors that may have had a long-term impact on the reproduction of the species, based on ecological monitoring of sites studied for decades in Belarus (Lake Osveyskoe), Latvia (Lake Engure and Lake Kanieris) and in Lithuania (Lake Kretuonas); (iii) clarify the breeding strategy of nesting females with their brood, equipped with GPS/GSM devices (Lithuania); (iv) develop an experimental restoration program of breeding habitat in Lithuanian sites in cooperation with BirdLife International. The results obtained in 2017 were presented during a Regional Workshop held in Vilnius (13-14 October 2017) with the support of the Aarhus University (Denmark). The workshop underlined the importance of water quality, the richness of submerged and floating beds, the biomass and quality of the benthos, the interaction with gull's colonies; the role of fisheries management and the impact of invasive species predation and the need to control it.

- International management plan for the Greylag Goose

The French Ministry of Environment, together with National Hunters' Federation and Fondation François Sommer has funded the drafting of the International Management Plan for the Greylag Goose (NW/SW European population) under the AEWA. The drafting has been entrusted to OMPO. A first draft was presented at the launching workshop in Paris in October 2017 (see below). A revised second draft was circulated in March 2018, so as to get a "final document" to be examined by the Technical Committee in April, then by the present Standing committee.

In addition, France contributed to the functioning of the European Goose Management Platform (EGMP) for 30,000 Euros in 2017. A new, probably higher, funding has been secured for 2018.

- Eradication of invasive alien species of Birds

The EU Regulations on IAS (Regulation No 1143/2014 - 22 October 2014, Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1141 - 13 July 2016, Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017 / 1263 - 12 July 2017), have been transcribed into French law by the Decree No. 2017-595 of April 21, 2017 on the control and management of the introduction and spread of certain animal and plant species, the Order of February 14, 2018 on the prevention of the introduction and spread of invasive alien animal species in metropolitan France, and the Order of February 14, 2018 on the prevention of the introduction and spread of species invasive alien plants on the metropolitan territory.

The decree of April 21, 2017 gives provisions for species already established: eradication for new populations, confinement for others. The first order of February 14, 2018 prohibits the introduction into the natural environment of several animal species, including the Canada goose. A more restrictive level (Level 2) also prohibits the possession, sale, exchange or transport of the IASs listed in the European regulation, with derogation for zoos (under conditions) and transitional measures for the current legal holders (no reproduction, no escape). The Egyptian Goose and the Ruddy Duck are regarded by Level 2, the objective being to avoid new introductions.

- For Canada goose, the control plan applied since 2012 is being evaluated.
- For Egyptian Goose, not huntable in France, the destruction is allowed by prefectural orders.
- For Ruddy duck, the National strategy (2015-2025 National Plan to combat Ruddy Duck) is designed in accordance with the Berne Convention: only sworn officers can kill them (destruction shots). 97 Ruddy ducks including 27 females were thus killed in 2017, nearly half of them on Lake Granlieu. This figure is lower than in previous years. This very year, the number of bird contacts was lower than in previous years. So as to obtain additional human and technical resources to eradicate the national population estimated at ca. 200 individuals, France submitted a LIFE project of 5 years (01/10/18 - 30/09/2023) entitled "Oxyura against Oxyura" of € 1.68 million (of which € 1.21 million from the EU).

Georgia:

- Project Special Protected Areas (SPAs) for birds in Georgia

This project is implemented in Georgia by the Ilia State University with support of GIZ.

The association agreement between Georgia and the European Union, signed on 27 June 2014, includes obligations regarding the implementation of the following two EU directives relevant for the conservation of biological diversity: (i) Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora; (ii) Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds.

According to the association agreement Georgia is obliged to establish a network of Emerald and Special Protection Areas (SPA) and to initiate priority management measures within four years after signing of the association agreement.

The objective of the Ilia State University is to support the Biodiversity Protection Service of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia in the selection of candidates to be nominated as Special Protected Areas for Birds (SPAs). In particular, Ilia State University implemented following project activities:

- Identified candidate Special Protected Areas for Birds (as future Emerald sites);
- Performed baseline study for each individual candidate SPA (biodiversity-georgia.net/SPA);
- Prepared maps of each SPA (biodiversity-georgia.net/SPAmaps);
- Developed a monitoring scheme of the SPAs;
- Produced SPA monitoring manual;
- Prepared database for monitoring data;
- Trained stakeholders in monitoring methods;
- Performed monitoring of 3 selected pilot SPAs;
- Updated checklist of Bird species of Georgia (biodiversity-georgia.net/aves);
- Produced web page for the SPAs for birds.

24 SPA were identified and for each site there are identified species which use these sites during their migrations and the different stages of life were identified. There are many AEWA species among them.

- Study of Velvet Scoter population in Georgia.

This study supported by The Rufford Foundation, is implemented by the Ilia State University scientists. After obtaining the initial basic data, it is planned to continue by monitoring of Velvet Scoter and develop a cooperation with stakeholders to reduce the identified threats.

Germany:

- Trilateral Waddensea Conference

The largest area for migrating waterbirds in Europe is the “Waddensea”, the world’s largest transgressional coastal wetland site with an Conservation Area of about 11000 km² shared by the Germany, The Netherlands and Denmark.

Every four years these states dedicate a Ministerial Conference to the protection and management of this region. In its 40th year of Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) the states convened for its 13th Trilateral Governmental Conference on 18.05.2018 in Leeuwarden under the Dutch Presidency, which was handed over to [Germany](#) for the next four years. In the so-called [Leeuwarden Declaration](#) the responsible Ministers in charge of these range states reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation with partners like AEWA and decided i.a. the following issues of AEWA interest:

- The development of a trilateral ”Single Integrated Management Plan” for the whole World Heritage Waddensea Site;
- The further implementation of the Action Plan for Breeding Birds in the Wadden Sea;
- The continuation and consolidation of the work on the “Flyway vision” in the framework of the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI) with relevant governmental and intergovernmental organizations aiming to extend the cooperation especially with regard to the Arctic and the continuation of monitoring along the entire flyway and specific capacity building;
- A trilateral “Management and Action Plan Alien Species” (MAPAS) is intended addressing the appropriate issues in this context;
- Ongoing activities like the ”[Wadden sea Quality status report](#)” or the “Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme (TMAP)” were endorsed.

The Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) is the executive organ of this cooperation. From Summer 2018 onwards and together with CAFF –the Convention on Arctic Flora and Fauna- a post for an AMBI-Coordinator (Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative) based at the CWSS in Wilhelmshaven, Germany was created to foster the cooperation with Africa, which will at the same time create a closer cooperation of CAFF and CWSS.

- Protection of marine sites in The German North Sea

Within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the German North- and Baltic Seas in September 2017 six marine sites were secured by secured by [administrative orders](#), which is an important step for the further protection of i.a. marine ducks, divers and other seabirds too.

- Projects concerning migrating birds energy and in particular wind energy

Within CMS Family, Germany dedicates a high financial support in issues aiming at preventing risks for birds due to renewable energy and its transport in voltage lines.

An important national focus of German research projects is dedicated to species conservation is the prevention and reduction of letal bird accidents with wind energy rotors – a specific new project dedicated to birds and bats started in autumn last year.

- Voluntary contributions & MoP support

In 2017 Germany co-financed i.a. the 7th Edition of the Report on the conservation status of migratory waterbirds in the Agreement area (Conservation Status Report /CSR 7) with an amount of 25,600 €.

In 2018 Germany made so far funds available with a total amount of 55,600 € for the Meeting of the International Working Group (IWG) for the Eurasian Curlew, the African Preparatory meeting for the 7th MoP and for Participation of delegates in the 7th MoP in South Africa.

Hungary:

- In February 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ministry responsible for nature conservation and BirdLife Hungary on exchange of monitoring data and co-operation in the fight against illegal killing of birds. Exchange of data take place every year by 31 March.
- A new awareness-raising activity, the Crane Festival was launched by the Hortobágy National Park Directorate in October 2016, and was organized for the second time in 2017.
- A new, informal working group was formed in 2015 by experts from state nature conservation organisations and NGOs, focusing on the protection and management of wildfowl and cranes, with annually organized meetings.
- A project was launched under the Environment and Energy Operation Programme that aims to map and assess ecosystems and their services in Hungary, including wetlands and their services.

Luxembourg:

- Resolutions of MOP6

Luxembourg introduced a proposal to the European Commission, asking for a common acknowledgment of the global Red Listing of the Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*), Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), Armenian Gull (*Larus armenicus*), Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) and Razorbill (*Alca torda*), and for consideration of the implications of these changes in listings for MOP7.

- Voluntary contribution

Luxembourg contributed with a grant of 55,000 EUR towards the Climate Resilience Project.

The Netherlands:

- International cooperation East Atlantic Flyway:
 - At the 13th Trilateral Governmental Wadden Sea Conference in Leeuwarden , the Netherlands on the 18th of May 2018 specific attention was given to the importance of the Flyway cooperation.
 - Under the umbrella of the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, the Netherlands continues with coordinating, supporting and supervising waterbirds counts of tidal areas in West Africa together wit hall other relevant partners. In January 2017 the 2nd huge simultaneous count was held in 30 countries, involving more than 1500 counters. The final report of the total synchronous counts of the East Atlantic Flyway in 30 countries in 2017 is now being produced.

- In 2018 The Netherlands financed and organized the birdcounts in the key areas along the East Atlantic Flyway as part of the Waddensea Flyway Initiative. .
- The Netherlands contributes to the Conservation of Arctic Floa and Fauna, Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (CAFF/AMBI) To help to reinforce the East Atlantic Flyway.
- The Netherlands also contributes to a research project called “Sensing ecological changes in the Wadden Sea and Arctic sites as indicated by migratory birds of the EAF, staking in the WaddenSea”.
- The 2016 trilateral Framework Actionplan for Breeding birds in the Trilateral Waddensea resulted into a specific actionplan for the Dutch Waddensea breeding birds and is pending implementation. This programme is taken up in the EU Life-IP delta Nature programme the Netherlands succesfully submitted.
- Coordinator Black Tailed Godwit ISSAP
 - A memorandum of understanding was signed by the AEWA secretariat, Sovon(Dutch Center for Field Ornithology) and the Ministry for the coordinatorship of the AEWA Action Plan for the Black Tailed Godwit. A meeting for the ISAP BtG Working Group was organized in Dakar, Senegal for the stop-over and wintering countries of the Black Tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa limosa*).
- Monitoring
 - In the Netherlands the Network for Ecological Monitoring has ongoing standardized monitoring schemes for annual counts of populationsize and distribution of waterbirds.
- Agri-environment
 - A new Agri-environmental Management Scheme was established. It has a specific goal to work on the conservation of 67 species of the Birds- and Habitatsdirective and to boost their habitats of grasland, tall vegetation, ditches and puddles. Those species include all grasland waders among which Black Tailed Godwit, Lapwing, Ruff, Redshank, Curlew. An approach is developed including scenario’s for the preservation of the breeding meadow bird populations. The national and regional governments, together with farmers collectives, nature conservation organisations, relevant NGO’s and scientist have developed action plans for focus areas, of which the implementation has started in 2018.
- Technical Focal Point
 - In March 2018 a new Technical Focalpoint for AEWA was appointed from Sovon (Dutch Center for Field Ornithology).

Slovakia:

- Conservation of species
 - National Action Plans for *Aythya nyroca* and *Botaurus stellaris* were developed and submitted to the Ministry of Environment for approval.
 - A proposal for national mechanism to reduce disturbance to waterfowl during severe winter weather (based on UK JNCC scheme) was elaborated by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic in 2017 and submitted to the Ministry of Environment.
 - Winter census of waterbirds (over 500 sites checked) have been carried out as well as census of breeding birds.

- New triangle consoles have been installed in power lines. Installation of tools for better visibility of power lines have been made - aerial marked ball for power lines.
- Management and restoration of habitats of waterbirds have been considered within various EU funded projects:
 - LIFE07 NAT/SK/000707 Protection of populations of threatened bird species in natural habitats in inner Danube delta;
 - LIFE12 NAT/SK/000488 Integrated management of river ecosystems in southern Slovakia;
 - LIFE09 NAT/SK/000395 Conservation of *Botaurus stellaris* and *Aythya nyroca* in SPA Medzibodrozie;
 - LIFE10NAT/SK/00080 Restoration of NATURA 2000 sites in cross-border Bratislava capital region;
 - LIFE14 NAT/SK/001306 Restoration and management of Danube floodplain habitats;
 - LIFE12 NAT/SK/001155 Protection of birds in SPA Ostrovné lúky;
 - LIFE 13 NAT/SK001272 Energy in the landscape - power lines and conservation of priority bird species in Natura 2000 sites (implemented by or in cooperation with NGOs - Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development BROZ; SOS/BirdLife Slovakia).
 - ERDF project "Development of data on favourable conservation status of selected bird species and their habitats in SPAs" implemented by the State Nature Conservancy tested the methodology for long-term systematic monitoring of selected birds and several publications were produced on situation in SPAs. Project Monitoring and management of Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) was also implemented by the State Nature Conservancy.
- Educational activities
 - Several different activities and events have been organized in various parts of the country for the World Migratory Bird Day.
 - New educational trails and information boards have been installed in wetlands.
 - Workshops, conferences and excursions were organized within the related projects.

Slovenia:

Continuous efforts have been made to increase conservation through improved management of Natura 2000 sites, important for waterbird populations covered by the AEWA. This is done through regular work of state nature conservation authorities and through implementation of projects

Sweden:

- Participation in the development of ISSAP for *Melanitta fusca* and ISMP for *Branta leucopsis* and *Anser anser*.
- Contribution to the development and implementation of the European Goose Management Platform.
- Since 2015 new national monitoring program for breeding coastal seabirds. Program started partly due to the rapid decline in certain bird populations (i.e. wintering Long-tailed Duck and breeding Common Eider), but including a large part of the seabird species breeding along the coastline. Increased monitoring efforts on Common Eider in the Baltic Sea during 2017-2018.
- Yearly national monitoring program for wintering sea birds (IWC) has been enlarged to include subspecies and demographic separation of Taiga and Tundra Bean Goose.

- LWfG: ongoing efforts related to the successful national SSAP. Comprehensive genetic study.
- Study to identify the presence of the two subspecies *fabalis* and *rossicus* among shot Bean Geese.
- Inventory of geese for age determination and identification of proportion of juveniles.
- Continuous efforts to increase protection through international treaties and directives, e.g. establishment of new N2000 sites etc.
- In December 2016 two major wintering areas was designated in the Southern Baltic Sea. One of them, Hoburgs Bank and Midsjöbankarna, is the largest protected area in Sweden as it comprises around 1,050,000 ha.

United Kingdom:

- National network of Special Protection Areas
 - In 2016, the UK published the third review of its national network of Special Protection Areas under the EU Birds Directive (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7309>). The review is believed to be the first review of a complete national protected area network assessed against an explicit baseline. Numbers of all qualifying species on SPAs in the 2000s were assessed against their status in the 1990s.
 - The main findings from the review were reported to the Standing Committee in 2017.
 - The review was essentially a gap analysis – assessing the sufficiency the network for relevant species. The second phase of the review concluded in 2017, with advice being provided to government and its conservation agencies on how identified insufficiencies could be addressed for the species concerned.
 - Work is continuing to implement the recommendations made by the Review, and the information in the assessment continues to be a critical resource to guide conservation actions related to the UK’s implementation of AEWA.
 - Recent SPA classifications for waterbirds are summarised at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3517> and include several SPAs in the marine environment as UK progressively develops a coherent marine SPA network.
- Conservation of species
 - **Ruddy Duck:** Work continues to eradicate Ruddy Duck from the UK, with the population currently estimated at 23 birds. These are found in a number of discrete populations of between two and five birds. Confirmed breeding occurred in only region in 2017 (Cheshire). Two to three broods appear to have been raised but most or all of these were removed in winter 2017/18.
 - **Goose:** (i) Work on implementing Goose Management Schemes in Scotland, for Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* in particular, continues ; (ii) Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* are now one of the scarcest non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. UK has engaged with AEWA regarding an Implementation Review Procedure case concerning the lack of legal protection from hunting for the geese in Wales and England.
 - **Curlew:** (i) There has been consider activity related to the conservation needs of Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, with Ministerial commitments to give the species high priority in the light of widespread and continuing declines <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-10-17/debates/17101737000001/LowlandCurlew>. The species has been identified as UK’s highest ornithological conservation priority on the basis of both the proportion of the international population in the UK and the species’ global Red List status:

- <http://www.curlewcall.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Brown-et-al-2015-The-Eurasian-Curlew-the-most-pressing-conservation-priority-in-the-UK.pdf>. (ii) Natural England (NE) is part-funding and working with the RSPB on a trial Curlew recovery project as part of Natural England's Action for Birds in England partnership. This project is trialling the response of breeding Curlews to changes in habitat management and targeted predator control at six upland locations throughout the UK. The results of this work should help inform the development of more effective agri-environment measures to manage and restore upland farmland habitats for breeding Curlews. NE is also part-funding the Shropshire-based 'Curlew Country' project which is working with farmers to improve grassland management for Curlews and has also trialled predator control. Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship provide options for the restoration and management of farmland and moorland habitats for a range of breeding waders, including Curlews. (iii) Also, a Curlew Forum was established following the "Call of the Curlew" workshop at Slimbridge in February 2017 with the objective to study the breeding behaviour and conservation status of the relatively small breeding populations remaining in southern England. Regional groups contribute reports on the breeding status in their area to newsletters and a Southern Curlews website <http://www.curlewcall.org/>. The Forum's goal is to work with farmers and land managers to reverse the current decline and to continue to monitor the status of breeding Curlews across southern England. This will be achieved by sharing knowledge and experience, raising awareness, offering advice and securing funding to implement effective conservation measures.
- **Breeding waders and agri-environment schemes:** The 2016 Breeding Waders of English Upland Farmland (BWEUF) survey censused breeding waders on English in-bye land, and investigated relationships with agri-environment schemes (AES) delivery. It found significant, positive results for all the target wader species, except Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, with the patterns especially strong for Curlew and for options for grazing and habitat restoration. It also attempted to estimate the population sizes of the main breeding wader species on English in-bye for the first time. The final report has yet to be published.
- National IUCN status assessment for UK birds
 - A first assessment of national IUCN Red List status for British birds was published in 2017¹. Migratory waterbirds assessed as **Critically Endangered** include the following breeding species: Pintail *Anas acuta*, Garganey *Anas querquedula*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, Ruff *Calidris pugnax* and Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*; and the following non-breeding species and sub-species: Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis*, Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*, Smew *Mergellus albellus*, and Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*.

5) Overview of special activities and/or meetings related to the AEWA

Albania:

- Hunting moratoria

The impact on the birds' populations of the two moratoria on the hunting ban is evident. After the first law on hunting ban for a period of two years 2014-2016, the second law banned hunting for a 5 year

¹ Stanbury, A., Brown, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Gillings, S., Hearn, H., Noble, D., Stroud, D.A. & Gregory, R. (2017). An assessment of the risk of extinction for birds in Great Britain. *British Birds* 110: 502-517.

period, from 2016 to 2021 - Reference Law no. 61/2016, of 2.6.2016 - "On the approval of the hunting ban in the Republic of Albania". In addition to the quietness of the zones, an increase in the number of individuals has been witnessed.

- Illegal killing of birds

Albania took part in the second meeting of the intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean, co-ordinated by CMS, which took place in Sliema, Malta in July 2017.

- New structure with positive impact to waterbirds

A new structure, dependent on the Ministry of Tourism and Environment was established in 2015, namely the National Agency of Protected Areas, with offices in all regions of the country. This agency ensures a greater and more careful monitoring of the territory it covers, including those in the west part of the country, where there is a massive migration of migratory birds.

Belgium:

Belgium took part in the following meetings:

- AEWAs 2nd AEWAs European Goose Management International Working Group meeting (Copenhagen, 15-16 June 2017).
- International Species Management Plan Workshop for the Greylag Goose (October 2017, Paris).
- Flemish stakeholder meeting on international goose management – 22 September 2017: this stakeholder meeting is set to discuss the proceedings of the AEWAs international goose management activities and to conclude the point of view to be taken to international meetings by the National Focal Point.

Croatia:

In September 2017 an international project "Preserving the Tern Populations in the Sava and Drava Basin - ČIGRA" within the Interreg V-A Cooperation Program Slovenia - Croatia, has started. Leading partner of the project is the Institute for Ornithology of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, while other associates are: the Public Institution for Management of Protected Areas and Other Protected Natural Values of the Zagreb County "Green ring", the Faculty of Sciences in Zagreb, the BIOM Association from Zagreb, the DOPPS Association from Ljubljana and the National Institute of Biology from Ljubljana. Main goal of the project is to increase the degree of conservation of continental population of Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) in Natura 2000 areas in Croatia and Slovenia through establishment of long-term nesting conditions.

Denmark:

- Denmark hosted the 2nd meeting of the European Goose Management Platform international working group in June 2017. The meeting was hosted by the Danish Environmental protection Agency under the Ministry of Environment and Food.
- Denmark hosted the first management planning workshop on the international species management plan for barnacle goose in June 2017. The meeting was hosted by the Danish Environmental protection Agency under the Ministry of Environment and Food.

- Denmark participated in the first management planning workshop on the international species management plan for greylag goose in October 2017. The workshop was hosted by France.

France:

- France attended the following events:
 - 2nd meeting of the AEWAs European Goose Management International Working Group (EGMP-IWG), held in Copenhagen, Denmark 15-16 June 2017;
 - Workshop of the Working Group for the Development of the AEWAs Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027, Dakar, Senegal, 10-12/10/2017;
 - 14th Meeting of the AEWAs Technical Committee (TC14), 10 - 13 April 2018, UN Campus, Bonn, Germany, through two French thematic experts for Game Management and Rural Economics;
 - 3rd meeting of the AEWAs European Goose Management International Working Group (EGMP-IWG), held in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, 19-21 June 2018.
- France (MTES) organised with AEWAs Secretariat, OMPO and the Fondation François Sommer pour la Chasse et la Nature, the AEWAs International Management Planning Workshop for the Greylag Goose (NW/SW European population) in Paris, France 4-6 October 2017.
- A feasibility study to deepen the knowledge on the ability of some long-distance migratory birds to anticipate extreme weather events was carried out through a partnership between the French Ministries of Armies and of Environment, and the National Museum of Natural History. The main species investigated were the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica baueri* and *L. L. menzbieri*) and the Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*). The report of this first feasibility phase funded by the two ministries for 35,000 Euros, has been produced. The second, operational phase, will be launched as soon as the funding requested will be obtained. Even though this study will not be carried out within the AEWAs zone, it will provide a large amount of data on those long-distance migratory birds.

Luxembourg:

- National Biodiversity Strategy: The Government of Luxembourg adopted in January 2017 the revised National Biodiversity Strategy, integrating specific measures towards the protection of migrating species and especially for the conservation of wetland related species and the restoration of their habitats. See: http://environnement.public.lu/fr/natur/biodiversite/mesure_2_pnpn.html
- Designation of Protected Areas: Luxembourg substantially increased its efforts in the designation of protected areas. Nowadays, 27% of Luxembourg's territory is protected as Natura2000 sites, of which most target the protection of wetlands and their species and habitats. In the last 3 years, the territory of nationally designated, more strictly regulated and protected areas increased by one third.

Hungary:

- Monitoring activity

There is a long-term on-going monitoring activity in Hungary which has been running since 1996 (continually increasing in site and species coverage). The autumn, winter and spring migration of 78 species of waterbirds (Gaviiformes, Podicipediformes, Anseriformes, *Phalacrocorax carbo*,

Phalacrocorax pygmaeus, *Egretta alba*, *Ardea cinerea*, *Fulica atra*, *Grus grus*, *Haliaetus albicilla*, *Pandion haliaetus*) are monitored at 53 sites between August and April in Hungary.

- Management plan, action plan.
 - Hungary took part in the AEWA Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose, which has not ended yet. A new LIFE project for the species was submitted by the Hortobágy NP Directorate, Hungary, but unfortunately was not supported by the European Commission.
 - Preparation of a national species action plan for the Eurasian Spoonbill according to the AEWA action plan. The expected deadline for the completion is about the end of 2018.
 - A national species action plan for the Pochard (*Aythya ferina*) and the Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) is being drafted in the frame of the Environment and Energy Operational Programme.
 - All SSAPs relevant for Hungary are being implemented (e.g. Lesser Whitefront, Eurasian Spoonbill, Corncrake, Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew), at least in the level of regular monitoring, habitat restorations and habitat management (also nesting site protection measures in the case of Corncrake) and agri-environmental schemes.
- Internationally funded projects: Presently, two important LIFE projects are running with the aim of wetland management and restoration.
 - Between 2014 and 2020, Hungarian organisations are the beneficiaries of an international LIFE+ project: “Large scale grazing management of steppe lakes in the Hortobágy”. The main objective of the project is to eliminate the threat factors affecting the steppe lakes and to bring these wetlands to a favourable ecological state. Main activities: to eliminate the manmade canals and dikes; to increase the number of grazing animals on the project areas; to introduce ecologically sustainable high level grazing; to cut down plantation woodlands; to monitor the condition of the steppe lakes.
 - Between 2013 and 2019, the Kiskunság National Park Directorate, Hungary is the beneficiary of an international LIFE+ project: “Restoration of Pannonic sodic wetlands in the Kiskunság”. The project’s overall objective is the restoration of the original water dynamics and natural habitats of a sodic lake and its catchment area, which is one of the most important of such habitats in the Carpathian Basin located in the central part of the Kiskunság. Main activities: to eliminate and fill the man-made canals and ditches; to reduce overgrown vegetation; to increase the number of grazing animals; to establish or renovate the infrastructural background of livestock keeping; to restore arable lands to grassland; to eliminate the stands of non-indigenous and invasive plants.
 - In addition, the Environment and Energy Operation Programme supports 32 projects in this period (2014-2020) that contain wetland restorations.

The Netherlands:

- The Netherlands attend the meetings of the European Goose Management Platform and participates in the taskforces. The Netherlands also contribute financially to the platform. The activities of the platform concerning the Barnacle Goose are supported by the funding of a major Dutch research project.
- The Netherlands participated and funded the workshop for the Black Tailed Godwit working Group in Senegal in November 2017.
- The Netherlands participated at the Technical Committee meeting in Bonn, in 2018.

Sweden:

Sweden attended the following meetings:

- EGMP Goose Modelling Consortium (9 May and 15 August 2017);
- AEWa International Management Planning Workshop for the Barnacle Goose (12-14 June 2017, Copenhagen);
- 2nd Meeting of the AEWa European Goose Management International Working Group (15-16 June 2017, Copenhagen);
- AEWa International Management Planning Workshop for the Greylag Goose (NW/SW European Population) (4-6 October 2017, Paris);
- EGMP Taiga Bean Goose Task Force (13 February 2018);
- EGMP Agricultural Conflicts Task Force (20 February 2018);
- EGMP Pink-footed Goose Task Force (26 April 2018).

United Kingdom:

- Seventieth anniversary of monitoring non-breeding waterbirds in the UK
- The Wetland Bird Survey, funded by the British Trust for Ornithology, RSPB, Joint Nature Conservation Committee and in association with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, celebrated 70 years of waterbird monitoring in 2017. During that time well over one million counts have been made and other statistics are presented in the Scheme's most recent annual report (<https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/wituk-2016-17.pdf>).

6) Overview of special issues that might be of interest to the StC.

Croatia

- Emergency measures

In January 2017 during the cold weather spell in Europe, Croatian Ministry of Agriculture has issued the Order on measures to prevent the occurrence and spread of avian influenza in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, No. 5/17 and 13/17) that was published in Official Gazette on the 16th of January 2017 and entered into force on the 17th of January 2017. Those measures also included ban on hunting of birds. Ban was declared for the whole territory of the Republic of Croatia until the 8th of February 2017. After that date and until the 25th of March 2017 the ban was limited to hunting grounds within 20 km of the outbreak and/or confirmed bird influenza locations. At the end, the hunting ban was withdrawn on the 25th of March 2017. Although these measures were put in place for other reason, Croatia has fulfilled the obligation under paragraph 2.3 of the AEWa Action Plan.

France:

- Hunting moratoria.

The impact on the birds' populations of the two moratoria on the hunting of the Eurasian Curlew (except in the shore coastline) and the Black-tailed Godwit which are running up to July 30th 2018 has been assessed. The assessment which shows the the moratoria had no obvious and significant impact on the conservation status of these two species, has been submitted to several fora. The decision on the future of these moratoria will be taken at the end of July.

7) Any other relevant information.

Hungary:

The extreme and long-lasting cold spell in January 2017 raised concerns for waterbirds – however, apparently it did not cause any noticeable losses. The outbreak of avian flu in winter 2016/2017 caused some losses in waterbird populations, and notably, even some Lesser White-fronted Geese died, probably due to this disease.

Alopochen aegyptiacus, an IAS of EU Community concern, appears as an irregular vagrant in Hungary, but the first very few breeding records have also been observed. In the first case where a pair were known to breed successfully in consecutive years, the family were almost completely eradicated in 2017 (one of the adults and 10 out of 11 nestlings were shot) as a measure to stop the spreading of the species (under EU law).

11 visitor/interpretation/education centres are operating at Ramsar sites, and 6 centres at other wetlands. In addition to other wetland values, they also deal with waterbirds.

Contact details of the National Focal Points

Highlighted: new National Focal Points

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