



**2nd MEETING OF THE AEWA BLACK-TAILED GODWIT
INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP**
23-24 November 2016, The Hague, the Netherlands

Meeting Report

23 November 2016

Opening of the meeting

Opening and welcome

Annegien Helmens, Leader of the Cluster Species of the Department Nature and Biodiversity of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to the Ministry.

The chair Wilmar Rimmelts (Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs) also welcomed the participants to the 2nd Meeting of the AEWA BtG International Working Group (North-West European Breeding Range States), which was being hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Adoption of the agenda

The chair Wilmar Rimmelts presented the agenda. Maja Roodbergen (Sovon Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology) announced she preferred to start with a general introduction of approximately 15 min. Rimmelts suggested to continue to the country presentations after the introduction and, if there was still room in the program, to present the slides from France, whose delegate could not attend. Jos Hooijmeijer of the University of Groningen was not be able to attend the meeting and the discussion on the status of implementation of the ISSAP and the prioritisation of activities was moved to the slot on the next day where his presentation was scheduled. There were no requests for any other business.

Decision: The agenda (Doc. BtG IWG 2.1) was changed accordingly and adopted.

Admission of observers

Wilmar Rimmelts requested the Working Group to admit the representative from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds from the UK Hannah Ward as observer to the meeting. She would also give two presentations during the meeting.

Decision: Hannah Ward was admitted to the meeting as observer.

Update of status of the Black-tailed Godwit

A general overview presentation on the *limosa* population status of the Black-tailed Godwit was provided by Roodbergen (Sovon Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology, presentation 1) on the basis of a workshop held in Haapsalu, Estonia in 2014 and information from literature.

The meeting also received more detailed information on the status of the Black-tailed Godwit in the form of country updates from Belgium (Geert Spanoghe, Instituut Natuur en Bosonderzoek, presentation 2), Germany (Hermann Hötter, Michael-Otto Institute of the Naturschutzbund, presentation 3), the UK (Hannah Ward, presentation 4) and the Netherlands (Wolf Teunissen, Sovon, presentation 5). A country update was also delivered by France (presentation 6) and presented by René Alma (Coordinator, Directorate of Rural Areas; DLG), in the absence of a representative from France

In addition, Wendy Ates (Project manager of environmental management plans of the Dutch Province of Noord-Holland, presentation 7) presented information on the implementation of the new Agri- Environmental Program in the Netherlands and more specific in the Province of Noord-Holland.

Decision: All presentations will be distributed to the Working Group members in pdf-format by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat following the meeting. The Secretariat will collate the information from the presentations on ISSAP implementation progress made in an overview slide, to aid discussion on the 24th.

Implementation progress and revision of AEWA BtG ISSAP etc.

Report on the AEWA BtG IWG coordination and budget

The IWG Coordinator René Alma explained how the coordination had been organised previously. The coordination of the Working Group had previously been provided by DLG (Directorate of Rural Areas) with first Ivo Walsmit and then Thijs Sanderink serving as the Working Group Coordinator. After DLG was suspended in 2013, the coordination continued under the new Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) but no activities were organised. Since June 2016 René Alma acts as Coordinator. He has 800 hrs per year for this function. However it is not clear whether the coordination will continue under the Netherlands Enterprise Agency. Remmelts will check the availability of funding for the coordination. It is the intention to organize the first regional African Working Group Meeting in Senegal next year.

Decision: Remmelts will check availability of funding at the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs for the continuation of the coordination of the Working Group

Revision of the AEWA BtG International Action Plan – update

Nina Mikander (UNEP/AEWA Secretariat) explained that the ISSAP BtG is coming to the end of its term at the end of 2018. A decision needs to be made on whether to retire, revise, or prolong the ISSAP. As the species is still in decline in most of its range, retiring is not an option. Mikander explained the possible pros and cons of a revision versus a prolongation and the steps to be taken in both cases (presentation 8). The Working Group members present at the meeting agreed that the goals, results and activities as outlined in the current ISSAP remained valid and that there is currently no need for a revision. All efforts should be invested in increasing implementation of the most urgent activities. However, France had signalled to be in favour of a revision prior, as they will have new information regarding the moratorium on hunting in 2018.

Decision: The Working Group does not consider a revision necessary and would advise to prolong the ISSAP by another ten years. However, in light of the comments received from France, the IWG recommended that the tenure of the ISSAP be prolonged by 3 years, until 2021. Mikander will communicate this advice to the AEWA Technical Committee.

Presentation of ongoing projects and processes related to AEWA BtG ISSAP

Hermann Hötter presented the draft of the EU Multi-Species Action Plan for grassland breeding waders (MSAP), concentrating on the breeding habitat of wet grasslands (presentation 9). The MSAP will have a strong focus on implementation of actions. It should be ready by the end of 2018.

Discussion: the MSAP focusses on wet grasslands, while the ISSAP considers the whole flyway. However, there is much overlap so a good coordination between the International Working Group and the MSAP-team is required.

The International Working Group received the draft status report for the MSAP (Appendix 1); comments can be sent to Jutta Leyrer (Michael-Otto Institute of the NABU).

Next, Hannah Ward presented the plans for the UK EU LIFE project for the Black-tailed Godwit (presentation 10) and Gerrit Gerritsen (Vogelbescherming Nederland) presented the meadow bird program of Vogelbescherming (presentation 11).

Decision: Hermann Hötter will send the draft of the MSAP to the Working Group members for consultation, to ensure good coordination between ISSAP and MSAP. NABU, BirdLife and

the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat will also be in touch regarding how best to coordinate implementation between the two Plans.

24 November 2016

Wilmar Remmelts welcomed Helene de Jong (Dutch Province of Fryslan) to the meeting, stressing the increasingly important role of Dutch Provinces in nature conservation.

Heinrich Belting (regional government of Lower Saxony, Germany) presented information on the large-scale LIFE project 'meadow birds' in Lower Saxony (presentation 12).

Current research, knowledge gaps etc.

As mentioned previously, this part of the program was skipped, as Jos Hooijmeijer could not attend and time was limited. He, as well as David Kleijn of Wageningen University, delivered factsheets on their ongoing research (Appendix 2 and 3).

Decision: Members of the Working Group are asked to fill out the knowledge gaps in the draft of the working plan which will be circulated (see next item on agenda).

Status of implementation, prioritisation of activities and draft of working plan

Nina Mikander led the Working Group in a discussion on the implementation progress made on the activities listed in the ISSAP. The Working Group also updated the prioritisation of urgent activities in Table 10 of the ISSAP which applies to the North-Western European Range States (see below). Activities prioritized as Essential and as High were included in the draft Workplan for this regional sub-set of the Working Group and Mikander facilitated a discussion on concrete actions to be implemented during the next three years (Appendix 4).

Decision: The AEWA Secretariat will circulate the draft working plan and members of the Working Group are asked to decide on who will be responsible for which actions and to fill out the additional columns.

Decision: Geert Spanoghe will circulate the Flemish definition of 'good historic grasslands' which was needed as this grassland type is an important target habitat of the Belgian Habitats Directive. This could serve as an example for a definition of good meadow bird grasslands.

Decision: Helene de Jong will circulate a leaflet on BtG habitat requirements, including information on water levels, vegetation and management.

Meeting closure

Wilmar Remmelts closed the meeting, thanking everybody for their presence and contribution, and invited the participants to a pancake lunch in nature reserve Meijendel. Nina Mikander thanked Wilmar Remmelts and the Ministry for hosting the meeting.

AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Black-tailed Godwit – Table 10, as amended by the 2nd Meeting of the North-Western European Range States of the AEWA Black-tailed Godwit International Working Group in 2016

Table 10.

| Results | National activities | Priority | Time Scale | Implementation progress |
|---|--|--|------------|---|
| Degradation of breeding habitat quality and habitat loss has stopped | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent further habitat loss in key breeding area to urbanisation, infrastructure and other planning, and loss of openness of the landscape. Implement this kind of protection in national legislation • Prevent loss (such as turning wet grassland into maize fields) and degradation of permanent grasslands important to breeding BTG • Improvement of management of protected areas by taking into account the habitat requirements of the BtG. • Support site specific activities that maintain the openness of BtG habitats and thereby reduce mortality from predators. Develop actions to restore openness in former breeding areas. • Ensure that the identified key breeding areas are managed in a site specific manner sufficient to maintain population levels at agreed targets, including the monitoring of impact of management implemented | High | Short | DE: locally BE: currently not a threat NL: Core areas; new AES; Nature Management Plans |
| | | Essential | Medium | DE: locally BE: currently not a threat NL: BtG's breed mainly outside reserves and N2000 No special measures to prevent loss of wet grassland |
| | | High/Essential locally in Lower Saxony | Medium | DE: yes, but still gaps in SPAs BE: locally (some designated areas are well managed but with threats just across the border (eg. forest). NL: AES postponed mowing; And regulating water tables - |
| | | High | | BE: locally NL: no special measures to improve openness (possibilities to implement local measures) |
| | | | | NL: in its infancy - no targets |

| Results | National activities | Priority | Time Scale | Implementation progress |
|--|--|----------------|-----------------|--|
| Low productivity caused by agricultural practice is significantly reduced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support biodiversity-sensitive management (including appropriate grazing and/or mowing regimes for the BtG) of important breeding habitats through AES/Agricultural policy in order to promote chick survival. (NOTE: mainly about increasing the scale of activities) • Take BtG interests into account in the management of grassland nature reserves. • Maintaining/re-introducing grassland areas with optimal groundwater level to secure food availability for adults and chicks • Maintaining/re-introducing the openness of the landscape (and thereby also reduce predation) • Support that the identified key breeding areas are managed in a site specific manner sufficient to maintain population levels at agreed targets, including the monitoring of impact of management implemented | Essential/High | Immediate/Short | DE: locally BE: relative high part of the population breeds in meadow bird reserves, eliminating losses by agricultural practice, and there are AES in designated areas, not concentrated with low impact on (relative small part of) population NL: Core areas; new AES/collective approach; Very limited within core areas |
| | | Medium | Short | DE: ongoing NL: ongoing, but still needs to be improved |
| | | Essential/High | Immediate/Short | DE: locally NL: only in reserves, only to very limited extent in core areas |
| | | High | Short | DE: locally NL: No special measures to improve openness (but possibilities available locally) |
| | | High | Short | NL: No targets; Last-minute monitoring; Policy vs. management |
| | | | | |

| Results | National activities | Priority | Time Scale | Implementation progress |
|------------------------------|--|----------|------------|--|
| Knowledge gaps filled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather long-term and representative data on reproduction, survival in relation to breeding habitat quality, migration etc. | (High) | (Short) | UK: yes DE: yes BE: Annual breeding census of about 80 % of the population with 90% or more in some years, but limited information on nest success, none of breeding success or survival NL: done and ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve estimates of juvenile survival and causes of mortality and implement a model with population dynamics to be able to quantify the significance of threats and measures. | (High) | (Short) | NL: ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of the arrival and settling ecology of godwits. | (High) | | NL: ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish national population goals for the species by the end 2013 | (High) | | BE: not nationally, locally NL: not done |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, as a matter of priority, the key breeding areas in each range state, by applying scientific criteria such as the percentage of the national Black-tailed Godwit population using each site | (High) | | NL: Core area approach |