

Minutes of the EBCC Board Meeting

Wednesday 8 September 2004, 17.00 hrs,

Bird Numbers 2004, Kayseri, Turkey

1. Chairman's welcome

2. Apologies for absence

Received from Ward Hagemeijer and Ake Lindstrom.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

These were printed in *Bird Census News* 14(2), 34-44.

4. Report of the EBCC Executive Committee (ExCo)

Chairman's Report attached as Annex 1.

5. Financial Report

Treasurer's Report attached as Annex 2.

6. The status of EBCC

At its last meeting, Board voted unanimously to allow ExCo to seek to make EBCC a Foundation under Dutch law (following the model adopted by the Wader Study Group) should further investigation prove this affordable. Such a move requires a redrafting of EBCC's constitution.

Background:

At present, the legal status of EBCC is somewhat ambiguous. EBCC exists as a 'de facto' organisation under Belgian Law. Unfortunately, EBCC's ability to tender for contracts and employ staff, should it wish to, is limited by its current status. ExCo perceives this as a potential barrier to further development of EBCC's work and its capacity to achieve its stated objectives. EBCC has a constitution (reproduced in *Bird Census News* 1995, 8, 60-66), with country delegates, an executive committee, and board meetings of those delegates held at its conferences.

At the last Board meeting the potential advantages and disadvantages of following the Wader Study Group of adopting Foundation status were outlined.

At that time, the potential advantages of EBCC becoming a Foundation were seen as:

1. EBCC's legal status would be formalised
2. It would be able to raise and handle funds
3. It would be able to employ staff should it wish to
4. It would be able to tender for or commission work
5. Present structures would require little, or no, modification
6. It would help to clarify the financial responsibilities of ExCo members

It was appreciated that there may also be some costs, particularly in registering the Foundation formally, and in liaising with a Notary to deal with legal aspects.

Progress since the last Board meeting:

Following the last meeting, ExCo redrafted EBCC's constitution, following the Wader Study Group model. There remained, however, a number of questions that could only be answered by a Solicitor (Notary) working under Dutch Law. Through the offices of SOVON, a Notary was approached and instructed to work on EBCC's behalf. Her advice was somewhat unexpected. She advised strongly against EBCC becoming a Foundation under Dutch Law, as such Foundations are unable to have members (equivalent to delegates for EBCC).

However, the Notary suggested that it would be eminently sensible for EBCC to become an Association under Dutch Law. An Association has to have a management committee (ExCo in EBCC's case), and a general meeting of members (the Board of delegates in EBCC's case). Following further discussion within ExCo, the Notary was asked to draft EBCC's Articles of Association, using the redrafted constitution as a basis.

The draft Articles were received a week before this Board meeting. ExCo had hoped to share the draft Articles with Board and perhaps even to vote on whether to accept them or not. Unfortunately, more work is required on them before ExCo is satisfied that they can be presented to Board. However, ExCo does not wish to wait a further three years before revising EBCC's status. To this end, ExCo would like delegates to vote on the draft Articles of Association by post, rather than waiting for the next Board meeting.

Over the coming weeks, ExCo will revise the draft Articles with the Notary, until both parties are content with them. ExCo then proposes to hold a consultation, during which the draft Articles will be circulated to delegates for comment. Once these comments have been dealt with, ExCo proposes to ask delegates to vote on the draft Articles *by post*.

Under its existing constitution, postal voting is not simple. All delegates must be informed of the vote and at least half of them must agree to a postal vote. Once the postal vote is agreed, two-thirds of all delegates must vote (or opt not to). To change the constitution, two-thirds of those that cast a vote must favour that change.

ExCo is not asking delegates to vote for constitutional change at this Board meeting, rather it is simply asking them whether they are content to vote for constitutional change *at some time in the near future* by post. Delegates would be provided with the finalised Articles of Association and explanatory information to allow them to come to a decision when voting.

ExCo recommended delegates vote at this Board meeting to allow a vote on constitutional change to be undertaken by post in the future.

Board voted unanimously in favour of ExCo's recommendation to allow a vote on constitutional change to be undertaken by post in the future.

However, as only 26 out of EBCC's 56 delegates were present at the Board meeting, the number voting in favour – though doing so unanimously – fell just short of the half of all delegates needed. Because of this, it will be necessary to contact those delegates absent from this meeting to ask them to vote on the same question.

7. The Kayseri Declaration

The EBCC Conference will shortly be followed by a high-level conference, organised by the Dutch Government and European Commission, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Birds Directive. The timing of these two events provides a unique opportunity to push for some

significant and sustained funding from international and governmental sources for bird monitoring in Europe. To this end, ExCo proposed that the Kayseri conference should draft a Declaration to forward to the Dutch conference, outlining the importance of pan-European monitoring, including EBCC's role within that. A Declaration was drafted and circulated for comment during the conference. The final declaration is attached as Annex 3.

8. EBCC's next (17th) Conference

EBCC received a single offer from a country willing to host EBCC's next conference. This offer is from Italy, via Lorenzo Fornasari, and it is planned to hold the conference in March 2007. The conference will be organized by CISO (the Italian Ornithological Society) with the help of Pavia and Milano University, and with financial support from the regional administration of Lombardy. The conference venue will probably be near Lake Garda.

Board voted unanimously in favour of the Italian proposal to host the 2007 conference.

9. Election of new Executive Committee

Several members of ExCo wished to stand down at this conference. These were: David Gibbons, Juha Tiainen, Martin Flade, Tibor Szep and Lorenzo Fornasari. There were five nominations for these five vacant posts on ExCo. These were: Hans-Günther Bauer, Ruud Foppen, Uygur Ozesmi, Ake Lindstrom and Frederic Jiguet.

ExCo proposed the following changes to its officers and members:

Richard Gregory (Chairman, UK)

Hans-Günther Bauer (Secretary elect*, Germany)

Anny Anselin (BCN Editor, Belgium)

Ruud Foppen (Treasurer, Netherlands)

Uygur Ozesmi (Delegate Officer, Turkey)

Ward Hagemeijer (Netherlands)

Ake Lindstrom (Sweden)

Frederic Jiguet (France)

Przemek Chylarecki (Poland)

Alexander Mischenko (Russia)

* H-GB will become Secretary in September 2005, and will be an ordinary member of ExCo until then. Secretarial duties during this period will be shared between other ExCo members. Strictly, as the number of nominations equalled the number of vacant posts no voting was required. However, in order to give the new ExCo a clear mandate, Board was asked to vote on whether or not they were in favour of the proposed ExCo.

Board Voted unanimously in favour of the proposed Executive Committee.

10. Any other business

On behalf of the Board, Martin Flade, warmly thanked David Gibbons for all the work he had done for EBCC in his role as Chairman. David Gibbons in turn thanked all the other outgoing members of ExCo, and wished the new committee well.

List of people attending the Board Meeting:

| Name | Country | Delegate (Y/N) |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Mart Niklus | Estonia | N |
| Lorenzo Fornasari | Italy | Y |
| João Pedro Pina | Portugal | N |

| Name | Country | Delegate (Y/N) |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Juho Tiainen | Finland | Y |
| Ian Burfield | UK | N |
| BahtiyarKurt | Turkey | Y |
| Karel Stastny | Czech Republic | Y |
| Petr Voříšek | PECBM | N |
| Przemysław Busse | Poland | N |
| Igor Gorban | Ukraine | Y |
| Jeremy Greenwood | UK | N |
| Koen Devos | Belgium | Y |
| Olivia Crowe | Ireland | Y |
| Norbert Teufelbauer | Austria | Y |
| Michael Dvorak | Austria | Y |
| Nikolai Petkov | Bulgaria | N |
| Svetoslav Spasov | Bulgaria | Y |
| Ali Stattersfield | UK | N |
| Franz Bairlein | Germany | N |
| Marc Kéry | Switzerland | N |
| Brian Huntley | UK | N |
| Helen Baker | UK | N |
| Erica Dunn | Canada | N |
| David Hussell | Canada | N |
| Hans-Günther Bauer | Germany | N |
| Uygar Özesmi | Turkey | Y |
| Ruud Foppen | Netherlands | N |
| David Noble | UK | Y |
| Tibor Szép | Hungary | Y |
| Martin Flade | Germany | Y |
| Alexander Mischenko | Russia | Y |
| Goetz Rheinwald | Germany | Y |
| Frédéric Jiguet | France | Y |
| Juan Carlos Del Moral | Spain | N |
| Sergi Herrando | Spain | N |
| Lluís Brotons | France | N |
| Oskars Keiss | Latvia | N |
| Ainars Aunins | Latvia | Y |
| Janis Preidnieks | Latvia | Y |
| Arco Van Strien | Netherlands | N |
| Heldbjerg Henning | Denmark | Y |
| Michael Borch Grell | Denmark | Y |
| Gregoire Loïs | France | N |
| Romain Julliard | France | N |
| Niklaus Zbinden | Switzerland | Y |
| Verena Keller | Switzerland | N |
| David Stroud | UK | N |

| Name | Country | Delegate (Y/N) |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Klaus Witt | Germany | N |
| Magne Husby | Norway | Y |
| Svein H Loretsen | Norway | Y |
| Sergey Kochanov | Russia | N |
| Frank Saris | Netherlands | Y |
| David Whaley | Cyprus | N |
| Judy Dawes | Cyprus | N |
| David Gibbons | UK | N |

ANNEX 1. EBCC Chairman's report for the period March 2001 to September 2004

1. Membership of ExCo

The ten members of ExCo as elected at the Board meeting of 28 March 2001 have been:

David Gibbons (Chairman; United Kingdom)

Ward Hagemeijer (Vice Chairman; Netherlands)

Anny Anselin (Treasurer & Editor of *Bird Census News*; Belgium)

Richard Gregory (Secretary; United Kingdom)

Martin Flade (Germany)

Juha Tiainen (Finland)

Tibor Szep (Hungary)

Przemek Chylarecki (Poland)

Lorenzo Fornasari (Italy)

Alexander Mischenko (Russia)

Alexander Mischenko stood down as a member of ExCo in spring 2003, and Elena Lebedeva (also from Russia) was co-opted by ExCo in his place. Elena has since resigned her position and Alexander was co-opted back to the role once again. Since the last Board meeting, Martin Flade has served as Delegate Officer, a new post introduced by ExCo in order to improve communications with country delegates.

ExCo has also called upon the expertise of a range of observers during its meetings. These were:

Ian Burfield (who replaced Des Callaghan as BirdLife International observer)

Ruud Foppen (observer for SOVON)

David Noble (observer for British Trust for Ornithology)

Petr Vorisek (coordinator of the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme)

Uygar Ozesmi (Chairman, Kayseri Conference organising committee)

2. Meetings of ExCo

ExCo has met twice-yearly since the last Board meeting, with its 22nd to 28th meetings held in: Brussels, Belgium (October 2001); Brodowin, Germany (April 2002); Prague, Czech Republic (September 2002); Beek-Ubbergen, Netherlands (May 2003); Kayseri, Turkey (September 2003); Lammi, Finland (April 2004); and Kayseri, Turkey (September 2004).

3. Conference proceedings

1995 Parnu (Estonia) conference proceedings:

The proceedings of the EBCC's 13th International Conference held in Parnu, Estonia in 1995 have recently been published as a special edition of *Bird Census News* (even though several papers presented at the conference had already been published in *The Ring* 17 (1-2):

Anselin, A. (ed.) (2004) Bird Numbers 1995, Proceedings of the International Conference and 13th meeting of the European Bird Census Council, Parnu, Estonia. *Bird Census News* 13 (2000).

The publication, in 2004, of the 1995 Parnu proceedings as a special volume of *Bird Census News* for 2000 needs some explanation! Originally, the proceedings were to be published by the conference organisers, Estonian Ornithological Society, on behalf of EBCC. After several years of editorial work, however, it became clear that there would be no published proceedings without extra help. By agreement with the conference organising committee, EBCC ExCo took control of the publication, intending to publish it as a special volume of *Bird Census News* in 2000. ExCo arranged additional editorial help but that, too, failed to materialise, causing further delay. Eventually, in 2003, ExCo assumed the role of editor, its members and observers undertaking all the remaining editorial work. Anny Anselin, editor of *Bird Census News*, undertook the final edit and ExCo thanks her for her Herculean efforts on their behalf.

ExCo apologises to all Parnu conference delegates, and especially the authors, for the long delay. The Parnu proceedings are available on the EBCC website, www.ebcc.info.

2001 Nyiregyhaza (Hungarian) conference proceedings

The proceedings of the 15th EBCC conference, held at Nyiregyhaza, Hungary, in March 2001, will be published as a special edition of *Ornis Hungarica*. The proceedings will be printed in September 2004, and circulated to all Hungarian conference delegates in autumn 2004. The citation for the proceedings is:

Szép, T., Blair, M. and Báldi, A. (eds.) 2003. Bird Numbers 2001, Monitoring for Nature Conservation. Proceedings of the 15th International Conference of the EBCC. *Ornis Hungarica* 12-13. The full proceedings are, however, already available on the conference website , <http://zeus.nyf.hu/~szept/15thebcc.htm>, and will also be made available via the EBCC website. ExCo is extremely grateful to the editors, Tibor Szep, Mike Blair and Andras Baldi, for the hard work they put into this publication over several years.

4. Bird Census News

Since the last Board meeting, five issues of *Bird Census News* have been published. These are:

Volume 14, no. 2 (2001)

Volume 15, nos. 1 & 2 (2002)

Volume 16, nos. 1 & 2 (2003)

These volumes cover 184 pages. Volume 15 (1) was entirely dedicated to the Turkish atlas project, while volume 16 (1) was a special issue on Pan-European Monitoring. As outlined above, the Parnu proceedings (200 pages) was published as the delayed *Bird Census News* volume for 2000. *Bird Census News* has a circulation of 300.

A contents list for volumes 11 (1998) to 16 (2003) is available on the EBCC website (www.ebcc.info), with some complete editions available to download. ExCo is extremely grateful to the Institute of Nature Conservation (I.N.) in Belgium for providing financial support for the publication of Bird Census News.

5. Provision of data from the EBCC Atlas of European Breeding Birds

At each of its meetings, ExCo considers requests from a range of users, keen to make use of Atlas data for academic or conservation purposes. Amongst others, requests have been received from: Szabolcs Nagy (BirdLife), Carlos Vila (Uppsala University), Pam Berry (University of Oxford), Joe Crocker (CSL Ecotoxicology), Hans Schmid, Marc Metzger, Ian Owens, Carsten Rahbek, Rob Thomas, Berien Elbersen, Mireille de Heer, and Brian Huntley/Rhys Green (University Durham/RSPB University of Cambridge).

6. EBCC on the web

EBCC has a web presence at www.ebcc.info. ExCo contracted CSO (Czech Ornithological Society, BirdLife Partner in Czech Republic) to develop EBCC's new website. During spring and summer 2004, ExCo and observers provided a range of information to CSO for them to incorporate on the website. Design, layout and technical matters were all dealt with by CSO.

ExCo and its observers are grateful to Petr Zasadil and Lucie Stejskalova at CSO for their help in developing EBCC's new website.

7. The status of EBCC

Discussions about changing the status of EBCC have taken up a substantial amount of ExCo's time over the last three years. Because of the importance of this matter to EBCC, this issue is treated as a separate agenda item in the Board meeting (see agenda item 6).

8. Planning for the 16th EBCC conference in Kayseri, Turkey.

Uygar Ozesmi (Chairman of the organising committee of this conference) joined ExCo when discussing plans for the conference. In September 2003, ExCo visited Kayseri to see the facilities and help plan the conference.

9. Support for establishing new common bird monitoring schemes in Europe

ExCo, its members or observers, have provided support, in various ways, to help establish new common bird monitoring schemes in Bulgaria, Germany, Portugal and Romania.

10. Liaison with delegates

The establishment of a Delegate Officer (Martin Flade) has allowed ExCo to update the list of delegates (and their contact details) substantially over the last three years, especially during 2003 and 2004. ExCo is endeavouring to find at least one delegate for each of 46 countries.

Prior to the Kayseri conference the country status of delegates was as follows: 21 countries with 2 responding delegates; 8 countries with 1 responding delegate and 7 countries with no responding delegates; for 10 – mostly small – countries, no delegates have yet been identified.

Further attempts will be made to update the delegate list during the Kayseri conference. [Note that during the conference a further 6 delegates were confirmed, bringing the total number of delegates to 56].

11. Pan-European monitoring: *The Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring scheme*

The Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring scheme (PECBM) project follows on from a series of EBCC initiatives to develop Euromonitoring, dating back to the 1980s, most notably the successful Villa Cipressi workshop held in Italy in 1996.

PECBM began in January 2002 with financial support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB: BirdLife Partner in the United Kingdom). The Czech Society for Ornithology hosts the project co-ordinator, Dr Petr Vorisek; the project manager, Dr Richard Gregory, is based at RSPB. The PECBM is an association of individual experts and organisations cooperating through the EBCC and BirdLife International, with the support of the RSPB, EBCC, BirdLife International, Czech Society for Ornithology, and Statistics Netherlands.

The PECBM aims to collate national survey data on common birds in a harmonised way from its European network of expert ornithologists. It aims to increase both the number of countries collecting and submitting data on trends, and the number of bird species covered, to help develop and promote the concept of biodiversity indicators in Europe, and thereby promote bird conservation. More widely, the project aims to improve the scientific standard of bird monitoring across Europe by fostering co-operation and the sharing of best practice and expertise. For details: see <http://www.ebcc.info> 'Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring'.

The first task for the project was to establish a network of cooperating experts across Europe. This list stands at close to 120 contacts. The next task was to organise a monitoring workshop that was held in Prague in September 2002. Some 53 participants attended from 26 countries. This meeting reviewed current knowledge and data availability, and agreed a process for the collation of national trends (using TRIM) into Pan-European species indices and then Pan-European indicators (see *Bird Census News* 2003, Volume 16). A further step was to establish a Technical Group with representatives from RSPB, SOVON, BTO and Statistics Netherlands to help steer the technical development of indices and indicators.

The result of this work came to fruition in 2003 with the creation and publication of the first ever Pan-European indices and indicators based on data for 48 common species of farmland and woodland from 18 countries (<http://www.ebcc.info> 'Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring'). The provisional indices and indicators created have been used extensively and have received a very favourable response from policy and decision makers in Europe. Our work on birds leads the way in biodiversity monitoring and indicators in Europe and there are various refinements, developments and improvements planned. The provisional indicators have been used widely, for example: in the EU's 2003 Environment Policy Review, Environment Related indicators, and a leaflet on indicators; in Eurostat's Yearbook 2004; in the European Environment Agency's Signals 2004 and core indicator set; in the IRENA indicators of agriculture; in the European Action Plan for Skylark; and in BirdLife's *State of the World's Birds* report, biodiversity indicators position paper, and 'Farming for Life' campaign.

The work has been presented to the European Commission and the European Parliament, to a meeting with Eurostat, European Commission, European Environment Agency, and the

European Topic Centre, and to an international conference hosted by the UK Royal Society's 'Beyond extinction rates: monitoring wild nature for the 2010 targets'. One paper entitled "Developing indicators for European birds" will be published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences*. Further papers are planned.

The wild bird indicators are being actively considered as a structural indicator for Europe, representing biodiversity (for both the long and short list), and as an indicator of sustainable development in Europe.

At the time of writing, data collation for 2004 is well under way. National trends have been received from 12 countries and data for another dozen are expected soon. Once assembled and processed, the Pan-European indices for species and the Pan-European indicators will be updated.

The main priorities for the PECBM scheme in 2004 have been:

- to formalise species selection and the classification of birds to habitat types.
- to expand the number of species and countries contributing data (70+ species in 2004 & around 20 countries).
- to help improve the indices generated by existing count schemes.
- to support new national count schemes; and most importantly, increase financial support for both national and international monitoring initiatives for common birds.

The PECBM is in active discussion with the European Commission regarding financial support for the scheme. A funding proposal has also been sent to the Czech Science Foundation, the outcome of which will be known in November 2004.

The main limiting factor for the project thus far has been capacity. This has, regrettably, limited feedback to the network, publication of reports and papers, support to individual countries and so forth. The scheme plans to remedy this situation by securing funding to offset the costs of country participation where appropriate, and increase core staff time. It is hoped that a second monitoring workshop will be held.

The PECBM would like to thank the many individual experts, data providers and organisations responsible for national data collection and analysis. It is only through a great deal of goodwill and cooperation that this has been a success.

Finally, EBCC has worked under contract to the European Topic Centre/Nature Protection and Biodiversity via Wetland International to develop wild bird indicators and explore bird habitat relationships. This work, carried out by SOVON and RSPB, has generated considerable income to EBCC.

12. Strategic planning

ExCo has spent some time looking forward to major new work areas, strategic directions, identity, and its links with birdwatchers. We take the view that Pan-European monitoring will remain a significant work area and of very high priority to EBCC. We do not envisage repeating a European Breeding Bird Atlas in the near future, but may wish to do so in the longer term. We see the boundaries between count schemes and atlas projects diminishing over time. ExCo sees the need to raise the profile of EBCC with a range of audiences, from

policy makers to general birdwatchers. Developing an attractive web site will be central to achieving this goal.

David Gibbons (6 September 2004)

ANNEX 2. Financial Report for the period 01.03.2001-15.08.2004 European Bird Census Council

Assets on 15.08.2004:

1. Check Account Euro

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Account on 01.03.2001 | 341.20 | |
| Account on 15.08.2004 | 6148.26 | A1 |
| Difference | + 5807.06 | B1 |

2. Check Account GBP (presented in Euro)

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Account on 01.03.2001 | 0.00 | |
| Account on 15.08.2004 | 1603.11 | A2 |
| Difference | + 1603.11 | B2 |

3. Savings Book

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Account on 01.03.2001 | 1559.99 | |
| Account on 15.08.2004 | 5286.29 | A3 |
| Difference | + 3726.30 | B3 |

4. Cash Money

| | | |
|--------------------------|------|-----------|
| In cash on 15.08.2004 | 0.00 | A4 |
|--------------------------|------|-----------|

5. Total assets on 15.08.2004:

A1+A2+A3+A4= 13037.66 Euro

Details on income and expenses Account Check Euro:

a. Bird Census News

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Income | |
| Subscriptions | 86 |
| Sponsorship Vol. 14/2, 15/1-2, 16/1-2 ¹ | 2272.80 |
| Total | 2358.80 |
| Expenses | |
| Production Vol. 14/2, 15/1-2, 16/1-2 | 972.80 |
| Mailing of Vol. 14/2, 15/1-2, 16/1-2 | 1300 |
| Total | 2272.80 |
| Difference | + 86 |

1: Sponsorship by the Institute of Nature Conservation

b. Contracts

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Income | |
| Royalties EBCC Breeding Bird Atlas ² | 3067.92 |
| Invoice 2001/1-3, 2002/1, 2003/1-2, 2004/1 | 10.674 |
| Total | 13741.92 |
| Difference | + 13741.92 |

2: BTO and SOVON kindly waived their rights in favour of EBCC

c. ExCo Meetings

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Expenses | |
| Brussels, Brodowin, Nijmegen, Lammi | 2947.04 |
| Total | 2947 |
| Difference | - 2947.04 |

d. Miscellaneous

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Expenses | |
| Agreement DDA Cottbus conference | 600 |
| EBCC website | 900 |

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Total | 1500 |
| Difference | - 1500 |

e. Banking

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Income | |
| Interest Cheque Account | 0.38 |
| Total | 0.38 |
| Expenses | |
| Charges | 103.69 |
| Total | 103.69 |
| Difference | - 103.31 |

f. Transfer between Accounts

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Check Account to Savings Book | - 3470.51 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|

The ExCo wishes to thank the Institute for Nature Conservation (Brussels) for their financial help with Bird Census News.

Anny Anselin
EBCC Treasurer
31.08.2004

ANNEX 3.

Conclusions from the 16th international conference of the European Bird Census Council

Kayseri, Turkey

September 2004

The triennial EBCC conference was held from 6-11 September at Erciyes University, Kayseri, Turkey and was attended by **126** specialists on bird survey and monitoring from **24** countries across Europe.

RECALLING that 2004 is the 25th anniversary of the European Union's (EU) Directive on the conservation of wild birds, that it is also the 25th anniversary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the fifth anniversary of the Agreement on the conservation of African-Eurasian migratory waterbirds (AEWA) developed under the auspices of CMS;

NOTING that it is also the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats (Berne Convention), which requires for non-EU countries virtually identical conservation provisions to the EU Birds Directive, so establishing a comprehensive and continent-wide framework for bird conservation;

NOTING ALSO that the three pillars of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, to which all European countries are Contracting Parties, relate to the protection of internationally important wetlands, the wise use of all wetlands, and to the international co-operation between countries to these ends;

AWARE that through their establishment of these inter-governmental treaties, governments have assumed important obligations to maintain the favourable conservation status of Europe's birds across their range and distribution, including the establishment of ecologically coherent networks of protected sites;

NOTING ALSO the global biodiversity target established by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, of "significantly reducing the current rate of loss of biological diversity" by 2010, and the even more challenging EU target of "halting the decline of biodiversity by 2010";

CONSCIOUS that populations of many birds continue to show declines at both national and international scales, and noting that in many cases this is a consequence of land-use policies, notably the EU's Common Agricultural Policy which has simplified and intensified European agriculture, and at the same time has resulted in the abandonment of lower-intensity farming practices in many areas, especially extensive pastoralism;

FURTHER AWARE that birds can be excellent indicators of the health of the wider environment and of the sustainability of human activities given that they occur in a range of habitats, that they are responsive and sensitive to environmental changes, and that these changes can reflect those of other biodiversity;

NOTING that most monitoring of birds is undertaken by extensive networks of volunteers as an expression of interest in birds and commitment to conservation; and **ALSO NOTING** the high public interest in birds provides a unique opportunity to raise levels of public awareness about wider environmental concerns such as climate change through national programmes of education;

CONSIDERING that understanding these wide-scale changes is essential so that appropriate policy responses can be developed and implemented;

WELCOMING the considerable progress made by EBCC and others¹ in developing a Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme, which has already produced habitat-based indicators and trends for 48 bird species in 18 countries;

PLEASED that the high policy relevance of the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme indices to inform debate on biodiversity indicators and targets, and sustainability in Europe has been recognised by many international institutions²;

WELCOMING the support already given by governments for the establishment and maintenance of existing bird monitoring programmes in Europe, **HOWEVER, GREATLY DISMAYED** at the absence of funding in some countries and withdrawal of public funding for common bird monitoring by the government of Denmark;

FURTHER CONCERNED that despite this high international policy relevance, **no**³ resources have yet been provided by governments or international institutions for the development of the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme at an international scale, despite being aware that long-term financial resourcing of this important work at both national and international scales is critical to realise its full potential; and

BEING AWARE that representatives of EU governments will meet with international organisations and stakeholder interests in November 2004 in The Netherlands, to review the progress achieved during the last 25 years of the Birds Directive, and to develop priorities for future implementation.

The Conference Participants –

REQUEST THAT the European Commission and the Dutch Government transmit this statement to participants of the November Birds Directive Conference to inform discussion – in particular of the following critical issues:

- ❖ The urgent need for biodiversity trend information to measure commitments made under the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 to significantly reduce the current rate of loss of biological diversity by 2010, and the EU target of halting the decline of biodiversity by 2010.
- ❖ The value and policy-relevance of bird monitoring schemes, not just in providing information on the changing status of bird populations, but also as

¹ The Pan European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBM) is a partnership of EBCC, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, BirdLife International, Statistics Netherlands and Czech Society for Ornithology, along with national bird monitoring organisations responsible for data provision.

² Including the European Commission's 2003 Environment Policy Review, EU Environment related indicators pamphlet, Eurostat Yearbook 2004, European Environment Agency (EEA) Signals 2004, EEA 2004 report 'High Nature Value Farmland: Characteristics, Trends, and Policy Challenges', IRENA indicator no. 28 'Population trends of farmland birds in EU-15', EEA core set indicator BDIV 2h 'Species Diversity - Trends of a representative selection of species populations associated with different ecosystems', and short-listed on the Eurostat Structural Indicator list for 2005 to report on the Lisbon Strategy.

³ Recognising a small amount of funding from the European Topic Centre/Nature Protection Biodiversity for indicator production.

relatively easily monitored indicators of wider ecological change and environmental sustainability;

- ❖ The critical need for long-term governmental financial support to maintain and further develop the capacity of national bird monitoring schemes, especially to inform government obligations to maintain bird populations under a range of international conservation treaties, and the need to work in partnership with non-governmental organisations to this end;
- ❖ The urgent need for funding, especially from international institutions, to support and further develop the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme, to allow annual production of trends and indicators for biodiversity in Europe.
- ❖ The need for responsive policy actions to be taken wherever the results from monitoring identify that birds or their habitats are in an unfavourable conservation status; and
- ❖ The need for support for meaningful indicators to fully implement the Birds Directive and other international treaties.