

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 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.

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.