

Minutes of the 31st EBCC ExCo Meeting, Chiavenna, Italy,

28 April 2006, 9.30 a.m.- 18.15 p.m. and 29 April 2006, 10.30 a.m.-17.15 p.m.

Attending: Richard Gregory (RG, chair), Anny Anselin (AA, BCN Editor), Hans-Günther Bauer (HGB, Secretary), Ian Burfield (IB, Observer BirdLife Int.), Elisabetta de Carli (ED) and Lorenzo Fornasari (LF, 2007 Conference Organizers), Ruud Foppen (RF, Treasurer), Frédéric Jiguet (FJ), Åke Lindström (ÅL, Delegate Officer), David Noble (DN, Observer BTO), Uygur Özesmi (UÖ), Petr Vorisek (PV, Coordinator PECBM). **Apologies:** Ward Hagemeijer (WH, vice Chairman), Przemek Chylarecki, and Alexander Mischenko (AM)

1. Chairman's welcome

RG welcomes attendees to the 31st ExCo meeting and appreciates the good turnout. Special thanks go to Elisa, Elisabetta and Lorenzo for hosting and arranging the meeting. RG reminds everyone that EBCC is happy to support travel costs of ExCo members to attend meetings if they do not have funds.

2. Review of action points

Minutes of last meeting accepted, no comments. No objections to items of current meeting.

Maintaining links with the Society for Conservation Biology. Henk Sierdsma is going to attend the first ECCB (European Congress for Conservation Biology) in Eger, Hungary. He will report to EBCC on his impressions and experiences there in written form. A number of RSPB staff will attend too and can provide feedback.

3. Organisation of the 17th EBCC Conference in Chiavenna, Italy

ExCo viewed the facilities available at the Hotel Aurora and discussed options given ~150-200 participants. The latter figure seemed to be a maximum given the venue. Some discussion of how best to arrange the main conference room for a plenary (200 seats?) and a parallel session (50 seats?). This needed careful thought to create appropriate viewing and seating arrangements for the conference.

In first circular, months before the meeting, (short) abstracts have to be sent in by the authors (for abstracts document and for pre-conference exposure at the EBCC home page). Additional request for small papers to be prepared for the Proceedings Volume in *Avocetta* and to be handed over at the meeting; as a minimum for this short paper extended abstracts required, but maximum should be a few (say 1-4) pages in printed version (a bit longer in double-spaced print), format open, but DN proposes a written guidance to authors to help reduce heterogeneity. Short paper should be sent in within 4 weeks after meeting, LF to constantly remind authors during this time per email. If no paper received, short abstract is to be published instead.

No general rejection of submitted papers intended, but oral presentations sometimes swapped to posters, especially if topic is only of marginal interest, is repetitive, or quality insufficient for oral presentation. UÖ proposes that LF should prepare a draft of conference plenaries and topics for discussion within the Scientific Committee (and at next ExCo) in order to achieve final list of sessions. Invitations to plenary talks should be out soon. Only one suggestion so far received (LF) by Ruven Yousef or K. Bildstein on Raptor migration. Further suggestions for plenary talks: Steve Willis or Yvonne Collingham on the Climatic Atlas (IB), Paul Ferraro on conservation efficiency analysis (HGB), SPA monitoring requirements (RF; IB to see on this), Niclas Jonzén on turning monitoring data into management action (ÅL), Hans Winkler on Long distance migrant dynamics or Luc Lens, Peter Jackson on the African aspect (RG, RF, HGB), Rob Fuller, Per Angelstam, Martin Flade, Frank Thompson (USA) or others on forest bird monitoring and conservation (DN), Jim Nichols on Community dynamics and capture-recapture models (FJ), and in order to include a representative of the host nation: Mauro Fasola on Monitoring and ecology of herons (LF). Final suggestions via e-mail to RG and LF; RG as Chair offers to invite the speakers once the list is completed. Expenses for plenaries (at least accommodation &

conference fee) to be offered by EBCC (consequently impossible to afford a large number of speakers from the USA).

Special workshops planned: (1) Spatial Modelling methods and programmes (maybe in addition to – and after – a session in the early afternoon) organized by the SpatMod Working Group, (2) Working With Volunteers (recruitment, instruction, testing) organized by DN, (3) Data Management and Analysis including TRIM, TRENDSPOTTER and internet-based programmes, organized by Arco van Strien and RF, (4) potentially: PECBM by PV and RG; additionally, Special Interest Groups in the afternoon of 17th (no further involvement of EBCC apart from organisation),

Conference Programme 2007

ExCo should meet on 17th to start in the morning; also on 17th arrival and registration of participants. On 18th and 19th Sessions, the Board meeting should also take place on 19th (not on 16th as suggested); the field trip will follow on 20th, final sessions and workshop and a conference declaration on 21st followed by departure on Sunday 22nd.

Pre-registration form to be sent to the national delegates and ExCo members for distribution among possible attendees in their countries. LF to send form to delegates (list provided by AL). Should also use the IOC conference list, hopefully available from F. Bairlein or F. Scheiffahrt. The official e-mail address for the organization of the Italian conference is now EBCC2007@faunaviva.it.

PV suggests to put “conference banner” on main web page of EBCC with link to Faunaviva page. First announcement for conference to be released within one week. LF *et al.* to be congratulated on creating such an excellent and attractive website for the conference.

Available for EBCC conference: in Hotel Aurora 45 Single and 38 Double or Triple rooms to accommodate ~120 people; there are two more hotels available in Chiavenna and several others in places nearby. Target is 200 attendants, but total number necessary for financial coverage not yet calculated. Conference fee includes food (all except for 3 dinners), coffee, banquet. Total estimated costs amount to 75.000.- € including proceedings. But additional costs accrue for inviting ca. 20-25 eastern European attendees and to cover their costs partly or completely (in Kayseri up to 15 people from Eastern Europe had their costs thus waived or reduced, however, it was a very varied approach depending on direct requirements or expenses claimed). Furthermore, have to consider reduced fee for delegates (or other important contributors) from eastern European countries. A figure of 75.- € or 100.- € was suggested. These costs have to be balanced in the budget.

Income through early conference fee of 200.- € p.P. → this is equivalent to 30.000.- € based on an attendance of 150 people. A higher fee (of say 225, or 250 - €) could support cost waiving of Eastern attendees (UÖ); this “supportive fee” to be announced in 2nd circular. Plan to create a contingency fund from EBCC account of ca. 2000.- € to cover part of the expenses of low income participants.

A further ca. 30.000.- € will arise from contributions and sponsoring by other parties. It will take some time to create a final balanced budget depending on sponsorship achieved, number of participants from different countries, etc etc.

Length of plenaries 45 min + 5 min discussion, standard talks 15 min + 5 min; generally not more than two parallel sessions. Each session with 5 talks, after plenaries 2 or 3 talks. Coffee breaks as long as possible (20-30 min depending on fastness of service), lunch break 1 ½ -2 hours. Ideally offer several excursions in a distance of maximally 120-150 km, one or two of them culturally oriented (Como, including boat trip on lake; Wine and food trip), another one or two of them in the mountains (if possible), and to Pian di Spagno, including the ringing station. Excursions would come back to Chiavenna in late afternoon/early evening.

4. Draft Articles of Association

RF and RG report on the (lack of) progress. It had been decided that a meeting with notary was the only sensible option to finalise the Articles of Association. The final version to be finalised as soon as possible. Organisation of postal voting by delegates was hard to achieve before the conference next year. Given the circumstances, there was now merit in making the vote at the next conference, when the delegates were assembled. Voting information would need to go out before the conference. Expenses for Tea are already put down in the financial report, but we will have to await further potential bills from her.

5. Financial report

RF reports that last years' financial report was still not finished. He has made some corrections, and after a final check with AA it will be sent to ExCo together with the present report. Considering new report, see written statements for further details. Both reports are added as appendices to these minutes. Decision to constitute a contingency fund for next EBCC conference of at least 2000.- € to support participants from low income countries.

Brussels account will be closed in due course and money transferred to Dutch account.

RG thanks RF and AA for excellent progress in all financial matters.

Expenses for ExCo meetings not discussed yet, but any expenses claimed will be covered by EBCC (as in the past), position to support ExCo members very clear when this was needed.

6. Bird Census News

AA reports on current state of next BCN issue 2006/1, which will comprise 40-42 pages and should be finalized about end of June/beginning of July.

There are no further articles yet for the subsequent issue. AA will make a summary (with conclusions) on the Prague PECBM workshop and send it to PV for revision to be included in issue 2006/1. Further suggestions: New information on Chiavenna Meeting to be prepared by LF and ED. Ask A. Mitschke and C. Sudfeldt again for article on new German Breeding Bird Atlas; also ask S. Gillings (BTO) for report on new British Breeding and Wintering Atlas. Some mention also of papers coming from Kayseri proceedings to be published in BCN (see below).

Agenda item for (one of the) next meetings with respect to colour use in BCN (HGB). This debate could include a broader discussion of BCN; its scope, role, and look. The paper version will have to stay black-and-white in the foreseeable future (no costs involved for EBCC), but web version should/will be in colour. In future, authors may be required to provide a black-and-white as well as a colour version of their articles to cover for both publication forms. Also, reconsider other means of income to provide for print version in colour. UÖ suggests putting information about the web version of BCN on the front cover of the print version.

7. Proceedings of Kayseri Conference

The list of articles sent around to ExCo members was incomplete. It comprises now 19 papers, two (or more) of which will be published in BCN. Only 11 articles have been reviewed so far, 8 have not (reviewers: LF, DN, D. Gibbons, J. Tiainen, W. Hagemeijer, M. Flade). These have to be finished by end of May (HGB to ask M. Flade). Afterwards decide within the Editors how to proceed with each individual paper (currently communication problem with Associate Editor).

ÅL and FJ prepared to take over review work, so double assignment for the paper Juha is to review (ÅL) and Y. Ferrands paper on woodcocks (FJ). Reviews to be sent to authors in June and returned by July (with room of a few more weeks). Whole process to be finished by the next ExCo. English language revision may be necessary after papers are returned by the authors.

Aim to publish Proceedings before the next EBCC conference.

8. Delegates' list

ÅL prepared a paper for distribution among ExCo members. 60 confirmed delegates are on list with 55 of these ÅL has achieved a personal contact. Network encompasses 35 European countries, 12 of which currently without "active" delegates (but there are names for some). Suggestions for names to be given to ÅL in due course (f.e. IB thru BirdLife list, PV thru Prague meeting list etc.).

Delegates should be provided with EBCC contacts, general information and a "things to do as a delegate" (a short list of those points is on the EBCC homepage), and words on what the Board is doing for them. Some delegates are perhaps unsure about what EBCC is and what ExCo does, and what their role is in EBCC work. ExCo needed to improve this situation. Suggestion to send the minutes of ExCo meetings (without the appendices and action points) as a newsletter to all delegates, alternatively (PV)

summarize outcome of meetings to inform delegates of EBCC work once a year. → Decision to circulate slightly shortened minutes among delegates. These and other ways of informing delegates could have the form of an internal newsletter sent out by the Delegate Officer ÅL; before this Board members have to be able to check the minutes for sensitive issues before these go public.

9. EBCC Website

In general works very well, especially PECBM, BCN, workshops etc.; suggestions and comments to DN and PV very much appreciated.

EBCC atlas aspects still need updating, intention to put sample maps on (RF and Henk Sierdsma still to act, see last minutes). Also, update delegates' list. Guest book currently only attracts spam so will be removed. The search tool doesn't work and needs to be fixed. The web address framing is unhelpful. PV asked about upgrading the website system (as for CSO site) – this might cost ~200.- €. → Decision from ExCo to upgrade, EBCC would cover the cost.

Suggestions for further additions. DN reported that status pages on atlas and monitoring projects in each country together with contacts should appear on homepage soon - with a suggestion to increase attractiveness with pictures. DN had had an encouraging response to his email to delegates and would cross check contacts with ÅL. New workshop reports could be posted (f.e. TRENDSPOTTER software)? PV raised web capacity problems given that currently he was the single web manager. This problem should be alleviated somewhat when a PECBM technical assistant is appointed, but it remains an issue. DN kindly raised the possibility that Susan Waghorn (BTO) could act to assist EBCC given her very considerable web expertise and knowledge of this area of work. This offer was warmly welcomed by the Chair.

Thanks go to DN for his valuable work as our temporary web champion. Thanks also to PV for his considerable work in keeping the website updated.

10. PECBM scheme

PV provided a brief progress report. All relevant items are on the EBCC website, including most recent progress report. The first 'State of Common Birds in Europe' report is almost finished and in the proof stage. PV presents cover and latest draft. It will be distributed during May to all Delegates and partners. In addition, biannual progress reports on web site are planned. Maintenance of network also through meetings, i.e. conference in Hungary in autumn this year.

The 2006 PECBM indicator update is in progress. Deadline for last year's data due by May - data for *all* species requested. New species selection is to be implemented in parallel with data collection this year. One species list for a bio-geographical region is still outstanding.

Fund raising for some countries is still necessary to improve and install count schemes, especially in Balkans and Eastern European countries; unsuccessful application for grant with Czech Science Foundation. PV presents overview of the successful European Direct Grant providing money for the PECBM scheme for 21 months (appendix to these minutes).

PECBM office will move together with CSO office. New address will be advertised soon. Email address unchanged.

RG has maintained a positive link with the BL Forest Task Force and the FINE project proposal. The latter is a funding proposal to improve knowledge of forest indicators. RG to discuss project further with Andrzej Bobiec in Cambridge in September.

A number of talks on PECBM have been given, or will be given soon by RG (e.g. BOU conference, Leicester; joint UK-French Statistical Society's meeting, Paris; Green Week Brussels; IOC, Hamburg).

- **Approval of GEF SGP**

History of project expanded on. Seven countries involved (Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Turkey, Macedonia, Poland, and Lithuania) with different fundamental aspects towards the development of CBM schemes or capacity for such schemes; therefore funding runs for different lengths and with differing intensity → activity-based budgeting. Management lies with BSPB (contacting every project partner). Altogether, 150.000.- \$ total budget, in the end funding amounts to some 10.000.- \$ per country to develop their schemes or capacity in different ways; running for 18 months, starting in autumn. Co-

financing by EU, RSPB and other sources. PECBM is a partner in the project. EBCC ExCo should have observer status during project phase and to assist as appropriate.

Svetoslav Spasov (BSPB) has a list of contacts from all these countries → to be sent to ÅL (see Top 8).

Project manager to be appointed or possibly Svetoslav, should be invited to visit next ExCo in Radolfzell and report on the project.

- Rural development regulations

New EU regulation valid from 2007-13. Provision of a 'farmland bird index' will be obligatory for EU member states. If there is no national monitoring scheme, this needs to be developed, otherwise available baseline data to be used. Index even has to be supported by national government. Quality and composition of indicator (currently consists of 23 species from the PECBM 2003 indicators) not questioned by relevant (agricultural) ministers or by Commission.

The requests made by the Commission on national requirements under the regulation raise a number of questions about implementation and interpretation. There is the potential at least for some confusion. Not clear (IB) how many EU countries have adopted the farmland indicator on a national level. Lobbying work in Brussels may be necessary to make sure that national or subnational responsibilities in this respect are clarified (certainly not the case in Benelux, Germany, Italy etc., where each of the regions/Bundesländer is responsible). BirdLife and EBCC jointly try to get an overview of the status of index implementation in all EU countries. Further action was agreed to advise the PECBM network on whole process and how they can benefit from the network. Furthermore, very soon propose e.g. sampling strategies to cover farmland habitats and count all bird species present, more intelligent adaptive selection of farmland species on a national level, funding opportunities and strategies to pursue funding.

11. Spatial Modelling Workgroup

First partial European bird abundance maps produced in Solsona; methodology needs to be adjusted with respect to density calculations from different field methods. The aim was for this work to be extended and results to be presented in Hamburg 2006 and then in Chiavenna 2007.

A proposal has been written as an invitation for PECBM people to become involved in this initiative, beginning with data on 10 farmland birds.

Funding for national groups would be very important, and a funding proposal necessary moving forwards. An option would be through EU sources, LF to see if his contacts there are a possibility (ISPRA and Topic centres also worth investigating). In funding proposals, the use and applicability of the methods would be important, in addition to their considerable scientific merit; UÖ suggests to have outside experts check the proposal to see if it includes all relevant applied aspects. The little time available to Workgroup members is currently devoted to the science part rather than to develop frameworks for practical proposals and funding. Assistance in guiding the project from a practical perspective would be advantageous. ExCo suggested the need for a strategic plan for the work. A five-year plan might prove very helpful in framing the development of the work, even if elements were aspirational.

RG suggests having a dedicated workshop in the next 12 months for Spatial Modelling in order to kickstart the project and develop the proposal for the group, just as PECBM did in 2002 in Prague. NATO or other European sources could be asked to fund such a meeting and the subsequent proceedings. As a major new initiative for EBCC, it is important for the project to get the full backing of delegates and for delegates to feel fully involved and properly consulted.

RG thanks the Workgroup for their excellent progress with the Spatial Modelling scheme. This area of work is of considerable and growing relevance and importance to EBCC, and we are very fortunate to have such a group of capable individuals taking the work forwards.

12. Recent data requests

Eight current data requests for EBCC Atlas information (database currently held by SOVON, W. Hagemeyer, RF and BTO). Data provision costs and data charge costs accrue and shall be provided by the requesting parties; they constitute the EBCC's main income. Data charges can be waived when financial means of the applicant are low and science or conservation action is the main aspect of the

analysis. EBCC has to be acknowledged in any written output of the project. EBCC guidelines on data provision are available to be sent to every applicant. These guidelines could be posted on the EBCC website.

EBCC should be provided with the final output (paper, report etc.) of requesting parties. In order to keep track of what is being done with EBCC data this needs to be managed properly. DN, RF and RG will see to this together and formalize the procedure so that requests are 'monitored' from inception to completion.

- Barbara Anderson, UKPopNet. Work underway modelling birds and climate change (RG collaborating and to act as EBCC co-author on any outputs)
- Sander Terlouw, Forest and Nature Cons. Agreed to supply black-tailed godwit data charging for one species, plus data provision costs (RF)
- FJ expands on his climate change request (heatwave effect on breeding populations); request granted after initial discussion on scope (national/European) of project. Both FJ and Stuart Newson (BTO) are listed as EBCC authors.
- FJ, proposed *Acrocephalus* habitat modelling project, informal or deeper link-up recommended with Martin Flade and AWCG (FJ action) to ensure the group are aware of the work and contribute if they wish to be involved.
- Rob Thomas, UK Rare Breeding Bird Panel Data analysis, cp. Determine status of 50 rare species with respect to core or peripheral distribution in Europe using atlas data. Use of atlas data is a small part of the work – suggestion of EBCC acknowledgement (DN).
- Colin Beale/Jack Lennon, effects of climate change on spatial distribution with respect to interspecific interactions; also other data sets involved; DN as representative of EBCC should be fully involved and a charge for data would be made (~500.- €)
- Katarzyna Biala, impact of farming practices, needs presence/absence data from the atlas as well as abundance and distribution; collaboration wanted, since from EU Commission; Ward H. would be the natural lead on this if he has the time; discuss with K. Biala about more collaboration, since some aspects have already been done (RG will discuss this). EBCC can provide atlas data – only national contacts could provide information on abundance and distribution from their databases.
- Steve Willis, request already presented at last meeting (but failed funding), resubmitted and now being reviewed. BiEII database, climate change predictions with respects to abundances (from EBCC atlas); IB & RG involved – more news available in the autumn, if funding is successful.
- Fiona Sanderson, proposal to use EBCC atlas information for scoring analysis of farming area quality across Europe; idea being to create a hotspots map for farmland birds in Europe to help BirdLife lobby for targeted conservation action; product will be internal report possibly a paper, funding by RSPB possible. RG to take forward.
- POSTSCRIPT: William Wint has requested data on bird diversity across Europe as generated by the atlas. Specifically, he has requested species richness values per 50 km grid in GIS format for a project 'Emerging Diseases in a Changing Environment' known as EDEN (<http://www.eden-fp6project.net/>) which has now been running for about 18 months. RG has requested comments from WH, RF & DN. It is suggested that data is provided with a cost to be decided, but it does not appear to be large task.

13. EBCC co-authorship policy

Best to have a set data agreement policy or procedure before negotiating co-authorship, according to this policy, probably best to invite the national coordinators willing to contribute for their input early on. If they want to be involved, they might contribute and become co-authors, if not, their contribution to the data set will be properly acknowledged, as allowed by the journal.

Views differ among ExCo, but it is obvious that procedures have to be made clear, and national co-ordinators have to be able to see and comment on papers prepared by EBCC. Practicality and workability of multi-author papers with over 20 contributors (with respect to correcting or commenting papers, sign agreements etc.) has to be considered too. The named authors on papers should represent EBCC input and interests.

Procedure: set a number of rules/written policy on what is required to qualify for co-authorship in scientific papers by EBCC. A draft document on this should be provided for next ExCo meeting, with UÖ, RG, PV, LF and FJ taking part and with FJ taking the lead in the process. There needs to be a more transparent process and rules, but at the same time some flexibility and common sense applied. EBCC's work, and specifically the PECBM, is a fantastic example of how like-minded individuals and organisations can work together to achieve more than they could individually do. Similar examples are very rare! It is essential that any new procedures fully meet the needs and sensitivities of our national delegates/data providers.

14. BirdLife's proposed "State of Europe's Birds Report 2008"

Paper by IB sent around ExCo members. Funding not secured yet but fund raising has started. Answering IB's request: EBCC is very interested in collaboration and as co-partner in this publication. EBCC can provide input from PECBM scheme and certainly try to join in the funding bids. It might be sensible to have a combined Birds Report 2008, but BirdLife's Report is supranational, EBCC's 'State of Common Birds Report 2008' would focus more on national common bird data. It is quite possible to produce the two reports as long as we coordinate carefully and target our outputs. Proposal will be brought forward in due course.

15. EBCC's potential role in monitoring scarce birds in Europe. Repeat of the European breeding bird atlas?

Monitoring scarce birds will be potential workshop or session in Chiavenna 2007. Scarce birds tend to fall between the gaps in standard monitoring frameworks and do deserve some attention. The group discussed the need and sense in producing a repeat European breeding bird atlas at some point in the future. It is obvious that a repeat atlas cannot only be based on spatial modelling data from CBMs. Scarce and rare birds need to be treated differently. New atlas work seems to be necessary, or at least desirable, to bolster EBCC's reputation. The current atlas has proved to be of critical importance in modelling climate change impacts on birds and any update would be eagerly used by a broad group of customers in Europe. Atlas revenue has singly supported EBCC activities for some time. ExCo agreed to come back to this as an agenda item for autumn, but thematically structured beforehand. In addition, we could discuss an Atlas on common breeding birds as a potential output from the Spatial Modelling Workgroup.

16. Any other business

- BirdLife's new regional office organisation. Head of European Division (new) is now in Brussels, as will be media/communication and fund raising people. Since some BirdLife people do not want to move, they will leave/or have already left BirdLife. The BirdLife conservation and data research unit will stay in Wageningen.
- ExCo has discussed the desirability for raising the organisation's profile in the past, but no progress has been made in this respect. It was agreed we should revisit the previous discussions and take this matter forward. It is likely that rapid progress could be made with relatively modest input in people's time and EBCC money – we should identify some 'quick-wins'.
- RG reminded everyone that plenary sessions for Chiavenna have to be fixed, everybody asked to find speakers.
- Russian CBM on Farmland now financed through the Dutch embassy as a 12-month project. AM had provided a report on the project, which is also on the EBCC website and will appear in next issue of BCN. It is hoped that this initiative will pave the way for wider monitoring. AM to be congratulated on steering the project and in securing funding. Well done also to RF and WH who suggested this funding possibility in the first place! ExCo looked forward to hearing more about the project in the autumn.
- HGB introduces the book he was constantly moaning about, a concise edition of the German-language handbook on Central European birds, the "Kompendium". A short English summary of Kompendium requested for BCN.

17. Provisional date and venue of next meeting

Date for next meeting is 27.-29.10.2006 in Radolfzell/Southern Germany; confirmation and more information on venue and plans at a later stage.

Secretary
Hans-Günther Bauer

Chairman
Richard Gregory