

34th ExCo meeting in Thetford, 12-13 October 2007

Present: Richard Gregory (RG, chair), Anny Anselin (AA, BCN Editor), Ruud Foppen (RF, Treasurer), Åke Lindström (ÅL, Delegate's Officer), Hans-Günther Bauer (GB, Secretary), Juan Carlos del Moral (JCM, SEO/BirdLife, Conference Organizer 2010), Svetoslav Spasov (SS), Alexander Mischenko (AM), Sylvia Barova (SB, SEED BI), Alena Klvaňová (AK) and Petr Vorisek (PV, PECBMS), Frédéric Jiguet (FJ, Data Request Officer), Ian Burfield (IB, Observer BirdLife International), David Noble (DN, Observer BTO).

Apologies: Uygur Özesmi, Lorenzo Fornasari.

TOP 1: Chairman's welcome and organizer's welcome to the Thetford meeting. RG particularly welcomes new members and guests, and thanks DN and his team for hosting and arranging the meeting.

TOP 2: Minutes of 33rd meeting, checking back on Action points

Three-year agreement with CSO to maintain EBCC website should be settled in a new contract. Expenses of €840 per year will accrue (no problem with V.A.T., if paid as a grant). Everyone agrees to go forward with new contract. Annex to this contract will specify work, but this needs to be flexible.

Minutes agreed upon unanimously

TOP 3: Proceedings of Kayseri Conference

Potential papers from Kayseri for BCN have not been sent to AA yet. UÖ sent short report to RG saying that Kayseri Proceedings are delayed further and review process not yet finished [apparently, some authors have not received their reviewed papers yet!]; but manuscripts soon to be provided to Turkish Journal of Zoology (however, UÖs contact to the TJZ editor are currently limited).

TOP 4: Review and Proceedings of 17th International Conference in Chiavenna

Lorenzo provided overview of 37 papers from the Chiavenna conference (at least two more are expected). Potential reviewers have already been contacted, but suggestions for additions to the refereeing list are greatly appreciated.

Reviews requested to be available by early December. Printing of proceedings scheduled for August 2008. Thanks go to Lorenzo for his great work.

TOP 5: 18th International EBCC Conference in Spain

JCM envisages town of Càceres (province of Extremadura) as venue for EBCC Conference 2010; small city, but up to 2000 beds available in hotels (low-cost accommodation like hostels also present); additional advantage: SEO office in town. Venue itself (conference centre of regional administration) provides several lecture rooms in close proximity to each other with maximum capacity of 700 persons in main hall. Timing: spring, best in March. Càceres is close to the National Park Monfragüe, and other areas (e.g. steppe, river and forest bird habitats)

available for excursions close-by. Everybody in total agreement on venue and (provisional) planning, recommendation by ExCo to proceed from here and organize Conference in Càceres. ExCo to meet at venue in advance, but not yet clear when is best time to do so – probably autumn 2008. JCM to invite ExCo whenever he sees input of ExCo as being most valuable. Conference website is planned, PV suggests link to EBCC website. Budget balance important, ExCo to provide help with former budget construction and subsidization processes.

TOP 6: Articles of Association

Registration at the Chamber of Commerce has to be finished soon, but best if done from 1 January 2008, since then start of new fiscal year. Two persons are direct proposers of the submission on behalf of EBCC, namely RG and RF. On top of this, official registration has to be submitted also by members of ExCo. To this end, hard copies of Dutch forms need to be filled in by all elected officers during the Thetford meeting (English translations of the form are available for reference), and a photocopy of individual passports included. All relevant passports available except Uygar's, who has to provide details at a later stage. Official paper of acceptance as Association under Dutch law will then be issued from the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. In future, some more bureaucracy attached to the EBCC proceeds, minutes to be signed and filed somewhere etc.

Since post of Vice Chairman is needed for Association under Dutch law, RG proposes Ruud Foppen for this position. RF is voted unanimously as new Vice Chairman of EBCC.

TOP 7: Financial report

RF gives short financial report for period up to October 2007. Mentions a range of transactions. Income includes money for data supply paid by Peter Fabian, Dübendorf (CH)... Some still to be expected, especially €4000 from EC Joint Research Centre (Ispra, Italy) (to be negotiated by RF). Money will be forwarded to SOVON, who provided the data.

Expenses of €1100 to go to CSO. Additional costs for the ExCo meeting in part already provided (e.g. AM's travel expenses).

RF wishes to finalize all unsettled financial aspects before the end of 2007, especially if no contracts exist. Example is Ward's unsettled data request business.

TOP 8: Bird Census News

AA reports on Volume 20 of BCN. First issue appeared in June, second to appeared in November; sufficient number of papers available, rest of 5 pages will be filled with news and reviews etc.

Future items to be included in BCN should be negotiated with AA.

New director at Brussels institute will have to be asked if financing for BCN can be assured for the future.

Digital form of BCN instead of hard copies would reduce costs. AA will send e-mail to non-Delegates if they wish to change to internet version, she will also include this questionnaire inside BCN 20/2. Delegates will still receive hard copy.

SS suggests to include small fee in conference fee to cover costs of BCN, and subsequently to provide BCN to a wider audience in order to raise profile. The mailing list should include all relevant institutions in each country.

TOP 9: Delegates' list

ÅL has worked hard to provide ExCo with a revised Delegates' list. There were some additions to the list since the Chiavenna meeting, but still 6 countries without any delegate and the Andorran delegates about to drop out. Croatia as yet unclear, but ÅL had contact to one candidate. Albania remains "black hole" as far as contacts are concerned. Other possible contacts still to be negotiated, e.g. for Iceland and Macedonia.

RF suggests to send an EBCC e-mail newsletter to the Delegates, about twice a year, to keep in better contact and inform them about new developments (similar to – and mentioning - the bi-annual PECBMS report). General agreement.

The Delegates' input should include updating the national parts on the EBCC website.

TOP 10: EBCC website

DN prepared a paper on recent developments, and AK developed a different spreadsheet independently. Interactive EBCC atlas report working fine (hosted by SOVON). Other postings are mainly from the PECBMS project, including its report for 2007. Also included on website are the revised EBCC constitution, RGs revised paper on "What is the EBCC?", the country reports (which include summaries of main Common Bird Monitoring schemes, the atlas projects and other monitoring works – but still quite a few countries missing), the "useful reading and references" section, the updated Delegates' list, and the Minutes of EBCC board and ExCo meetings, as well as information on workshops (such as the one in Chiavenna). Monitoring software and methods are provided with links as well. Also, the section on BCN is constantly updated (Vol. 20 already included). DN mentions that the global bird atlas compilation by Gibbons, Donald et al. (due for publication soon in *Bird Study*) is considered for inclusion on website, also the "Best Practice Guide"; in future, training workshops and courses could be offered on a co-authorship basis via website. IB suggests checking the EURING website for similar information and ideas, since this group is doing similar work to EBCC in their field. Access statistics on website presented by PV are encouraging; up to 9000 different IP addresses involved, and the total number of annual web-site 'hits' is almost into six digit figures.

Steven Baillie gives a short introduction into the work of **EURING** and the use of the EURING Data Base (EBD), also information on the MIGRATION mapping tool. Long-term aim might be to have an electronic migration atlas for Europe. Swallow project touched upon, further projects possible (after having some more output on Swallow project). EURING booklet produced – "Bird Ringing for Science and Conservation" -, will be distributed among interested people; so far only in English, but translations planned – also available as pdf on EURING website.

CES scheme network is going to be improved (so far c. 500 sites). Standardized analysis of CES data envisaged. MARK programme discussed shortly.

EURING with no core funding, contributions through staff time of individual members. EBD now based in BTO headquarters.

EURING technical conferences, essentially on mark-recapture methodology, also touches a lot on census data and population dynamics. In future combined data sets of mark-recapture and census projects available. Next conference in Italy in Sept. 2009.

TOP 11: Recent data requests

Only new data request since last meeting:

- University of Rome: climate change project; contacted RG

TOP 12: Co-authorship policy

FJ finished a preliminary draft paper on co-authorship policy and circulated it to ExCo members. Any comments from ExCo members at this stage very welcome. Apparently, data provision not really controversial, but co-authorship policy might be. Here, further input necessary.

TOP 13: PECBMS

Report from Petr made available via e-mail and attached to these minutes; will also be posted on the website to inform all partners.

AK plans to publish overview paper on common bird monitoring schemes (for BCN).

Including Estonia (still pending, communication with Andres difficult) there will a data set of 20 countries available for analysis in the present year (Belgian data lacking due to work overload). Draft indices might be available end of this year.

New annual report (2007) will be issued with 3000 copies; pdf-version also available. All logos of participants are available and shall be included.

Another publication, the "best practice guide" (including case studies), will be finished by November and provided both as hard copy and pdf. Special issue of Bird Cons. Int. asked for paper on indicators.

Proposal for study/analysis of life history traits of European birds by RG, Steve Ewing (RSPB), PV and AK (as follow-up of Ibis paper), will include national coordinators as co-authors. In some countries this kind of analysis has already been done (e.g. NL, F, S).

Formal questioning of agricultural indicator by Eurostat/DG AGRI was met with extensive analysis and report by PV and RG (which in turn was not commented on again). Problems accrued through changes/modifications of the indicator species used and varying national data sets included. In future, try to stabilise indicator species set. Report available to everybody.

Next PECBMS workshop planned for time period between August 2008 and spring 2009; suggestions for date and subjects welcome, similar procedure to last workshop intended.

Maybe special workshop on the open-source TRIM tool "BirdStats" necessary, according to PV "it works".

TOP 14: SEED BI project

SB expands on recent developments and activities in the SEED BI project. Three new countries are considering starting pilot monitoring schemes, namely Turkey, Belarus and Macedonia, and Lithuania has re-started their scheme. Further details in summary report distributed among ExCo.

Discussion:

- Forum to discuss SEED BI project with policy makers in Bulgaria necessary, best in connection with EBCC meeting in Bulgaria in spring 2008 (later date would be ineffective).
- Funding for national projects running out, but required in order to stabilize and continue projects. Ideas for future financing very welcome. LIFE+ would be an option, but deadline for 2008 would be rather soon; yet, if envisaged for 2009, would be good option. Application of individual partners here not very helpful, better for EBCC to apply.

- Direct contact and help in “developing countries” still very necessary; probably best by “western” partner organizations or co-ordinators, such as Sweden (SOC) helping in Belarus etc. ÅL will get in contact with his colleagues to further this. Other larger national organisations have to be asked, if they want to take up such a partnership. Five countries of SEED BI are already supported by RSPB through the BirdLife network (but not Macedonia and Lithuania).
- Not only ask for money, also ask for staff time in collaboration process.
- Internationality of project important argument for continuation of national schemes.
- There are also other countries in need of assistance or funding (or both) outside the SEED BI project such as Slovenia, Slovakia, Cyprus, etc.

TOP 16: Spatial Modelling Workgroup

Modelling Workgroup currently focuses more on objectives and specification of aims, i.e. is internalising its work. Paper shall be written on problems, technical requirements and possible solutions with first examples, using raw data from some, but not all countries. Afterwards set up specific programmes and discuss within EBCC framework. Only after specification of these aspects ask national co-ordinators for cooperation and possible access to their data. No funding available yet for future work, and both strains, scientific and political funding, still feasible. IB will try again to promote work and needs of Spatial Modelling Workgroup with EEA and Joint Research Centre (JRC), in hope of helping establish future funding at EU level.

TOP 17: Monitoring globally threatened birds in Europe

IB reports that internal report is planned by BirdLife on extent and nature of monitoring of Globally Threatened Birds in Europe. Done by questionnaire distributed among BirdLife Partners. Initial results, based on feedback in 2005, indicate that monitoring of these species is very patchy, and not particularly good for many. Goal is to convince decision-makers to invest in streamlined, harmonized monitoring to produce results of maximum use for conservation.

TOP 18: Global wild bird indicator project

Continues to develop links with monitoring projects in the world, including BirdLife Partnership with over 100 Partners. Project just started, and is on agenda of African Partnership Meeting in Oct. 2007. Aspects followed are: propose common bird monitoring methods; introduce census programmes in countries lacking any monitoring activities; support developing initiatives such as the ones in Burkina Faso and Zambia etc. (which already have input from European ornithologists); run pilot project in a few countries in Africa, combining the data in indices; make use of EBCCs “best practice guide” in these areas (and also to Asia etc.). Project leaders at present are RG and Mark Eaton. Plans for plenary or symposium during Pan-African congress in September 2008 in South Africa. RG would welcome input and discussion from ExCo members and observers interested in this project and would update them on progress from time to time.

TOP 19: Strategic direction – profile-raising paper

From the outside, EBCC represents the Atlas and PECBMS. Shall EBCC continuously focus on these aspects (and indices, monitoring methods etc.) or are we open to new fields? Expansion

into Africa, or to species group projects already discussed; certainly stronger co-operation with EURING a possibility discussed at Thetford.

Growing reputation is also important. Stated goals might increase public awareness. An overall aim might be to establish common bird monitoring schemes in all European countries. Most important EBCC issues are listed in Articles of Association. This to be presented in the next Board meeting.

TOP 20: Next ExCo meeting

Next ExCo meeting will take place in Bulgaria in April 2008, SS and SB inviting. Information on date and venue via e-mail.

Meeting in autumn 2008 not yet decided, but suggestion/invitation (AM) to meet in Moscow in Sept. 2008 (better time than Oct.). Might also be in Spain, pending conference planning progress.

TOP 21: Any other business

- Global IUCN Red List status of some European species may need to be revised. There are currently discussion topics on www.birdlifeforums.org on 4 such species: Yelkouan Shearwater, Caucasian Black Grouse, Eurasian Curlew, and Dartford Warbler. Other topics may appear later in October, pending assessment of suggestions received. The deadline for initial comments is end of November. Launch of revised list due mid 2008.
- AM reports on Russian Farmland Common Bird Monitoring Project; written report sent out to ExCo beforehand. The first year of Common Bird Monitoring was financed by the Netherlands Embassy (amount of €12.000), but no funds were available for continuation, so activity dropped considerably. Financial consolidation necessary; future funding searched for with more impetus. Similar funding as in SEED BI would be feasible, since additional plots in Eastern Europe called for. Money from Interreg might be possible; meadow birds project (see below) a good “starting point”.
- AM presents new Bird Atlas of Moscow city (in Russian) from 2006; plans for extension of work on complete Moscow region.
- Collaborative project on monitoring Russian meadow birds with French hunting organization Office National de la Chasse ONCFS (finance secured up to 2009).
- SEQUIN (S seabird Ecological Quality Indicator).
Round table discussion in Chiavenna led to the decision to develop seabird indicator (ICES very keen); in Portugal in spring 2008 this indicator will be further discussed, probably based on population numbers and/or breeding success data (initially for one species). BirdLife is informed and directly involved through IB, but JNCC (UK) is main actor.
- European Raptor Monitoring
Project proponents should work collaboratively rather than following individualistic approaches. Paola Movalli Duke (I) and Ubbo Mammen (D) together with Scottish Raptor Monitoring Group should meet and make grant proposals together (for ESF and LIFE+). EBCC should not be directly involved for now, but maintain a watching brief.
Discussion ensues about possible future role of EBCC in supporting work of monitoring work on species groups in general, i.e. not only on raptors, but also on waders, geese, etc., or threatened species, on which capacities are already often present.

RG closes meeting on Saturday at 17.15 and particularly thanks the local organizers for their great hospitality and perfect organization.

Secretary: Hans-Günther Bauer

Chairman: Richard Gregory