

37th Board meeting of EBCC in Cáceres (Spain), 21-22 April 2009

Present: Richard Gregory (RG, chair), Anny Anselin (AA, BCN Editor), Ruud Foppen (RF, Vice President, Treasurer), Åke Lindström (ÅL, Delegate's Officer), Hans-Günther Bauer (GB, Secretary), Virginia Escandell, Juan Carlos del Moral (VE + JCM, Conference Organization 2010), Svetoslav Spasov (SS), Sylvia Barova (SB, Observer SEED BI), Jana Škorpilová (JŠ, PECBMS), Ian Burfield (IB, Observer BirdLife Int.), David Noble (DN, Observer BTO), Lluís Brotons (LB), Alexander Mischenko (AM).

Apologies: Petr Vorisek (PV), Frédéric Jiguet (FJ, Data Officer), Lorenzo Fornasari (LF).

TOP 1: Chairman's welcome to the Cáceres meeting.

The Chairman heartily welcomes all members and guests. Special thanks go to VE and JCM for hosting and arranging the meeting. Plans are to start with the EBCC Board Meeting on 21st, with the Annual General Meeting taking place in the morning of 22nd April, being followed by the remainder of the Board Meeting topics.

TOP 2: Minutes of 36th Board meeting, checking back on Action points

Checking back on agenda items of the last Board Meeting it can be concluded that virtually all actions have been completed or will be dealt with until next meeting, except:

- Website not yet updated on constitutional changes.
- Data request business not finished yet.

The Minutes of the 36th Board Meeting are accepted unanimously.

TOP 3: Proceedings of the 16th and 17th International Conferences

LB shows the publication of the Kayseri Proceedings which appeared in 2008 as Vol. 24 of the *Catalan Journal of Ornithology*. It was sent to all authors and most of the attendees of the Kayseri conference, and handed out the attendees of the PECBMS workshop in Prague in January 2009. RG congratulates all involved in bringing this about, but especially ICO, LB and Sergi Herrando for their generosity, energy and hard work.

The update on the Chiavenna Proceedings was still pending.

TOP 4: Planning for the 18th International EBCC Conference in Spain (22-26 March 2010)

- General organisation

JCM presents draft of timetable for the Cáceres Conference 2010. A discussion on the start of the evening presentation and subsequent welcome reception on 22nd ensues; agreement that 7 p.m. should enable most participants to arrive in time. Proposal to change schedule somewhat in order to reduce the amount of sessions (i.e. reduce "daily workload"). Agreed to one plenary talk first thing in the morning and one first thing in the afternoon, summing up to six plenaries during the conference. The length of the plenary talks would be 40 min; up to four presentations should follow these plenaries before the mid-morning and mid-afternoon tea/coffee breaks. Agreement that the length of the "normal" talks should be 15 min talk, 5 min discussion time. At any time, two parallel sessions with talks should suffice; if need arises one could have three (this would lead to a maximum total of over 100 talks). Organizers have to see if there is enough

demand to install more than two parallel sessions. Poster session should take place at end of the first morning session, instead of fifth talk, running into the first coffee break. Same on the second day, but not on Friday.

- Publications

First step will be for the authors to send in an *abstract* of their paper(s) by 15 September 2009, in order for the organisers to assess who to accept (or turn down) and to plan the whole conference. The second step is for the authors to bring an *extended abstract* to the conference (with a month of grace). A collection of extended abstracts is what Board wishes to publicize. As a possible third step, a “Proceedings” issue of normal *papers* could be published within ARDEOLA, but EBCC involvement would be limited here. Board agreed that an “extended abstract” collection within our BCN journal should be sufficient. Details (templates) on what the two types of abstract should look like need to be presented in the next announcement. It is envisaged to publish the extended abstracts in a “special look BCN”.

- Suggestions for plenaries

Best to kick off the conference with a Spanish political figurehead, e.g. the Minister of Environment, if possible (Spain will hold the rotating EU Presidency during this time). The list of plenary invitees was being finished during the Board Meeting, details need to be settled by JCM and RG – this leading to the final list of 6 lecturers which ought to be invited soon.

- Conference budget

Could not be settled yet. Best to put a conference fee of some 200 to 300 € up on the webpage to inform early registrators, and calculate the exact figure as soon as all information on budget issues are settled (sponsorship, costs etc.). There may be opportunities for SEO to pursue funding from the Spanish Government in relation to the rotating EU Presidency they will hold. 2010 has also been declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations.

Sponsorship for participants of low-income countries could either include direct payments to these participants in order to waive their conference fee or to organize cheaper accommodation prices for them (or both).

- Time schedule

The first conference announcement is needed as soon as possible; this shall include all current information and the deadline for the abstracts. The second announcement has to be published in summer, including information on all plenary speakers, the likely costs (conference fees etc.), excursion plans and other information currently not available. Important that this appears before the paper abstracts are called for in September 2009.

TOP 5: Succession planning – proposals for new Board members in 2010

Some members of current Board might step down at the next election, and replacements need to be found. First suggestions for new Board members were discussed. The official procedure to have new Board Members elected would be a letter of interest from the candidate and a supporting letter from two Delegates; but Board can suggest members as well. Board needs to clarify how the actual voting process in Cáceres will take place.

In order to get round the problem of being restricted in the number of Board members to 10, the “void” of unoccupied fields of work could be filled with *active observers*. A discussion ensued on the extension of the number of observers from other “European Players” or rather a closer link and collaboration with these organisations on specific issues.

TOP 6: Financial report

RF gives a report on the financial year 2008, the first financial report of EBCC as an Association under Dutch Law. Comparison with past years is thus unnecessary.

The “Book year” of the financial report starts on 1 January and ends on 31 December 2008. One part of the report is the balance sheet*, the other the expenses/benefits part where individual transfers are explained (in detail, if necessary). Benefits for 2008 amount to 9699.19 € and expenses to 7721.09 €, combining to a balance of +1978.10 €.

* this includes fixed assets (bank account and other goods on the positive side), and liabilities

There is also a list of ‘accounts receivable’ (on aspects arranged during the financial year, but money to be received later) and a list of creditors (with money to be spent in due course). At the moment, the financial situation of EBCC is very good.

Board approves fully of the financial report.

Another obligation under Dutch Law is the report of a two-person treasury commission, which is still outstanding. Board considered it a priority to press ahead with defining the commission and coming to agreement on how it might operate to meet the legal requirements, but to do so in a simple and efficient manner.

TOP 7: Association under Dutch Law, “rules and regulations”

RF explains that the way we work has been little affected by the Dutch Laws. However, it is still necessary that we communicate this to Delegates. At the moment, it does not seem necessary to set up by-laws to describe our working arrangement more thoroughly, as these are not really needed for most of the items we currently work on, e.g. not even the election of Board. So far, experience suggests that the Board is able to apply the rules defined in the constitution and use them to do its work without the need for further clarification.

TOP 8: Bird Census News

AA reports that Volume 21/1 and 21/2 of BCN have been published since October 2008. Prospects for 2009: quite a few articles from the Prague PECBMS workshop have been promised. This will fill Volume 22/1, but there is only one promised article so far for Vol. 22/2. Input from Board members, i.e. short notes, would be very good. Financial means for the production of BCN were again granted for 2009 by AA’s institution. RG thanks AA for her work and also her institute for providing the invaluable financial support to BCN. Official ISSN registration of BCN is now completed.

TOP 9: Delegates’ list

ÅL presents the newly revised Delegates list. Progress has again been made, and there are now two Delegates from Iceland. Altogether, 39 countries have two, 4 have one and only 3 have no Delegate (Albania, Andorra and Georgia) in EBCC. Suggestions for changes in some countries are discussed. Potential Delegates of EBCC can be voted in by Board, which formally ratifies ÅL’s list of new Delegates, namely E. Sultanov (Azerbaijan), J.-Y. Paquet (Belgium), Y.S. Baris (Turkey), M. Ghasabian (Armenia), I. Budinski (Croatia), Y. Kolbeinsson (Iceland), G. Willi (Liechtenstein), A.J. van Strien (The Netherlands). This list has to be verified by AGM. LB reports that there is contact with scientists in Andorra, which currently restore the country’s monitoring system. So maybe in autumn there is a chance to find Delegates from Andorra, too. Still not included is the Kosovo (because it is not officially recognized yet by the UN), but IB and SS have contacted people there, so future representation seems possible. Probably best to have a list of contacts in those countries unrepresented in EBCC in order to improve Delegate status in future.

TOP 10: Newsletter

ÅL reports that the third Newsletter is almost finished. Basically, it includes the news spread during the Board meeting. So far very little input (i.e. not any) has been received from Delegates to widen the scope of the Newsletter. Although this information had been solicited by ÅL, it almost never meets with any response. Involvement of Delegates has to be improved. The suggestion arises to have a more “personal” approach in the Newsletter by showing pictures of new Delegates and giving short information on the respective country and the Delegate’s work.

TOP 11: EBCC website

DN reports that 4 new additions have been made: a summary of the new Czech breeding monitoring programme, the latest report on the PECBMS scheme, a review of Gregory et al. paper in PLoS on climate change effects, and a report on the next EBCC conference. Very little change on the website structure has been made; the country pages are not up to date, but there is a template available for missing country reports. Partial responsibility of Board members to make sure that reports from their country are being added to the website; ÅL also needs to follow this up by writing to the respective Delegates in order to gather these reports.

The paper on “responsibilities of Delegates” is not included on the website yet, but will be provided by ÅL (to DN). Useful references and links are still not well organized but really useful. This should be improved; but who can do the time-consuming work to improve the website? There is also a creative element of improving websites. EBCC has to find somebody willing and able to do this. One of the new Board members should be chosen with respect to his/her ability to take up this work → i.e. the need for an EBCC “Website Officer” is recognized. It is formally decided by Board to install such a position. Another idea was that EBCC might be able to spend some money on a person in the short-term to improve the website, i.e. finance somebody for a few months to refresh the site and contents.

SS offers his help to improve the website, DN will write down which (immediate) actions would be necessary in the near future to fill existing gaps.

CSO will move to a new server within the next months in order to have the available services improved (new tools, more possibilities to expand etc).

TOP 12: Recent data requests

Several new data requests were received after last meeting, which are discussed in detail with respect to acceptability and the costs, e.g. charges.

The decision was made that all new data requests should be handed over directly to FJ.

TOP 13: PECBMS

As before, a short written report was produced by the PECBMS group and delivered to Board; the contents are presented by JŠ. The indices and indicators till 2006 for Europe, EU and their regions have been updated, and future calculations will include data from a new country, i.e. Slovakia. However, the collection of national indices for the forthcoming update is still incomplete since two countries had not delivered their data (prior to the Board meeting). This will postpone publication of indices until at least summer 2009.

For the workshop in Prague all PECBMS results were produced on CD and distributed widely.

The Best Practice Guide was released in December 2008 and was also distributed among participants of the Prague workshop. Further copies are available from the NHBS Environment Bookstore.

The grant of the EU Commission for PECBMS had finished in March this year, but funding has now been confirmed for the next three years (but with 50% co-funding to be found, which is quite a burden). The formal grant proposal has still to be finished within the next weeks, which is binding a lot of the group's work force (especially PV). Currently work on long-term plan of PECBMS is ongoing, also with regard to producing interesting (and not repetitive) annual reports and the 'State of Europe's common birds' reports at more relevant intervals.

TOP 14: Co-authorship policy

FJ, RG and PV finished the paper on co-authorship policy and RG presented it to Board in advance of the meeting. Board agrees with the content, the paper is thus ratified unanimously.

TOP 15: Spatial Modelling Workgroup (SMOG) update

The biggest change within the work of SMOG involves the SCALES project, which will start in early May with an initiation meeting in Leipzig; it will include a range of scientific fields (i.e. up-scaling and downscaling modes, habitat structure analysis etc.). The group will, after negotiating their work to SMOG, report back to Board as soon as specific items have been worked out. With the SCALES project money postdoc can be financed for 14 months under supervision of LB in Catalonia. The postdoc has not been selected yet.

TOP 16: SEED Plus project; EBCC "Twinning Officer"

The SEED BI project officially ended in March 2009, but some activities had to be taken forward into the months to follow.

A twinning approach has been adopted in order to couple active, but less advanced organisations (mainly set up in the SEED project, but also others such as Luxemburg, Italy and Portugal) with well-advanced organisations of other European countries with the aim to support the organisations "in need" and expand on the progress made so far. This could mean that financial support is granted (based on specific fund raising), but also includes strategic, methodological (training) or organisational help. However, the actual demands of less advanced organisations need to be identified first, especially if demands in different countries are identical and synergy effects could be used.

Discussion on how to take this project forward ensued. Best to have a person responsible within EBCC ranks and able to drive this forwards ("SEED or Twinning Officer"). SS kindly offers to take up such a position within EBCC Board; but there is also the option to accommodate this under the PECBMS, where professional (i.e. financed) EBCC staff time is available (albeit with very limited time). Within the PECBMS grant proposal, twinning work could be identified as a part of the planned work in developing capacity for new countries to provide data and existing countries to improve data provision. Such aims are key to the ambitions of the PECBMS so in this sense this is a natural place for the work to sit.

News stories on successful twinning on the EBCC website and in the Newsletter would be very helpful to highlight the aims of this new initiative and reinforce the value EBCC attaches to such activities.

RG thanks SB for her work on SEED, which was a tremendous success, and for presenting the Twinning Approach at this meeting.

TOP 17: Strategic direction, “2020 vision/target” – profile-raising – new EBCC atlas

EBCC profile could be raised by creating a leaflet on its work; a group consisting of SB, IB, Peter Eekelder (a member of RF’s institute) and RG would see to organise production of such a leaflet. An EBCC cap, badge and other merchandise material (business cards, stickers etc.) would also be helpful to raise awareness. Extended press work would be possible. A small committee to think over the possibilities of a new atlas should be set up within EBCC ranks – also in order to keep the lead on Atlas work in Europe. This committee/commission should be set up by RF, RG, LB, GB, IB and DN. Web-based data collection and the new atlas shall be agenda items at the next Board meeting, where we should have a full discussion.

TOP 18: BirdLife International update

There is a new chief executive of BirdLife since March 2009: Marco Lambertini (Mike Rands left to lead the new Cambridge Conservation Initiative). Claire Papazoglou, the head of the European Division, has also left (to become Director of BirdLife Cyprus). Her successor will be an Italian named Angelo Caserta. He will start in July, based in Brussels, but as the European Partnership has only just adopted a new programme for 2009-2012, no dramatic changes in work priorities are to be expected.

The idea of producing a joint BirdLife/EBCC report (‘State of Europe’s Birds 2010’) has stalled because of a lack of funding, despite continued efforts by IB and the European Division’s fundraiser, and despite its relevance to assessing whether the 2010 target has been met. Likewise, efforts to raise funds to compile an updated European IBA inventory, and to hire someone to act as a ‘champion’ for IBA monitoring across Europe, have also failed to date.

Work continues on the RSPB-funded project to examine the likely impacts of climate change on the European IBA network. This project mirrors one that took the same approach in Africa, and involves the same team (Durham Uni, RSPB and BirdLife). The first paper from the African project has just been published in *Ecology Letters* (Hole *et al.* 2009). Provisional results from the European project are now emerging, and similar publications are expected in the next year.

An important focus for BirdLife during 2009-2012 is to start filling the ‘gaps’ in the European network, most notably in the Western Balkan states of former Yugoslavia. Immediately before this board meeting, IB attended the first Adriatic Flyway Conference in Ulcinj, Montenegro. He met representatives of NGOs from most of the relevant countries and discussed various issues with them, including ways of developing and improving bird monitoring. He encouraged all of them (but especially the EBCC delegates) to attend the 2010 conference in Cáceres. He also suggested to Board that the Western Balkans might be a good location for a future conference.

Since the last Board Meeting, a special issue of the Swedish journal *Ambio* had been published, containing a suite of papers on monitoring ‘of’ and ‘with’ raptors (some co-authored by BirdLife/EBCC staff or colleagues). This lends weight to the initiative of Paola Movalli Duke *et al.* to set up an EU-wide raptor monitoring network. Paola resubmitted an application for funding to the European Science Foundation last autumn - should hear the outcome by summer 2009.

Plans to promote more harmonised monitoring of seabirds have also advanced. IB and Ian Mitchell (JNCC) have been invited to write a paper for the Seabird Group journal on the results of the seabird monitoring questionnaire (provisional results were presented in Chiavenna). This will also be promoted at the World Seabird Conference in Canada in September 2010. BirdLife is also following progress under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive to establish biodiversity indicators for assessing whether sea areas are in Good Environmental Status.

Only one European species (Red Kite) was discussed in the 2008-2009 Globally Threatened Bird Forum, and its status will remain the same (Near Threatened) in the 2009 IUCN Red List (to be launched in mid May). However, concerns have been raised about the status of another

dozen or so European species, so IB and colleagues will examine these over the summer. IB thanks Board Members for their inputs, and encourages them to continue spreading the word. On 12 June 2009, the European Commission will launch a report detailing the results of the first ever assessment of the conservation status of all the species and habitats listed in the Habitats Directive. Efforts are now underway to develop an equivalent reporting framework under the Birds Directive, to allow the EC to assess whether Member States are meeting their obligations. BirdLife has been subcontracted to develop a draft format for this purpose, which should be streamlined with the Habitats Directive method but also take into account other relevant factors (e.g. Red List and SPEC criteria).

TOP 19: Date, time and venue of Board Meeting in autumn 2009

The next Board meeting shall take place in October in Lund (Sweden), best from Thursday 8th to Saturday 10th, with arrival on 7th (Wed.). ÅL should see through the different accommodation and meeting room options and costs and inform Board about them a.s.a.p.

TOP 20: Any other business

- Tabled proposal from Steve Willis linking species' climate ranges in Europe and in Africa (proposal to NERC programme), funding chances look encouraging as it received very positive reviews; EBCC to receive money for data provision if finances were granted. Discussion within Board will continue in this case. RG being asked to contribute on behalf of EBCC;
- Tabled Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) over web-based training tool (birdid) on Norwegian website between Norwegian Group HINT, BirdLife Int. and EBCC was distributed among Board members. This is not a legally binding paper, but a cooperation between HINT and the other groups is envisaged; EBCC's endorsement is important for HINT in order to be taken seriously; Board unanimously agrees to sign the MOU. SS kindly agrees to act as the EBCC representative on the Steering Committee of birdid. IB will now take the MOU on to BirdLife for their consideration.
- Recent agricultural policy changes (scrapping a set-aside) seem likely to have serious consequences on bird communities in farmlands. But exact data are still lacking and need to be collated; IB asked if such recent data are available from anywhere in Europe, and if so please send them to ariel.brunner@birdlife.org;
- EOU conference in Zürich in August will be attended by the following Board members or observers: IB, JS, AA, GB, PV; the ECCB conference in Prague in September will be attended by RF, JS, IB, RG, PV.
- Simon Butler's work with the PECBMS data on developing a risk assessment model for European farmland birds and then predicting future changes in their populations and the European Farmland Bird Indicator under different scenarios is progressing. Outputs from the models will soon be available and this information would be used as a basis for one or perhaps two scientific papers
- If an EBCC award shall be presented at the next conference, then Board should collect proposals for next meeting (→ agenda point in next Board meeting)

RG closes meeting on Wednesday (22nd Apr.) and particularly thanks the local organizer JCM and VE for the excellent organization, he also thanks JŠ for representing the PECBMS.

Richard Gregory
Chairman

Hans-Günther Bauer
Secretary