

38th Board meeting of EBCC in Lund (Sweden), 8-10 October 2009

Present: Richard Gregory (RG, chair), Anny Anselin (AA, BCN Editor), Ruud Foppen (RF, Vice President, Treasurer), Åke Lindström (ÅL, Delegate Officer), Hans-Günther Bauer (GB, Secretary), Virginia Escandell, Juan Carlos del Moral (VE, JCM, Conference Organizers 2010), Lorenzo Fornasari (LF, Editor of 2007 Conference Proceedings), Petr Vorisek (PV, PECBMS), Jana Skorpilova (JŠ), Ian Burfield (IB, Observer BirdLife International), Kate Risely (KR, Observer BTO).

Apologies: Svetoslav Spasov, Alexander Mischenko, Lluís Brotons (LB), Sylvia Barova, Frédéric Jiguet (FJ), David Noble (DN).

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

Chairman welcomes all Board members and observers, especially Kate Risely, who stepped in at short notice for David Noble as observer for BTO. Special thanks go to ÅL and his team for hosting and arranging the meeting and the excursion.

TOP 2: Minutes of 37th Board meeting, checking back on Action points

- The planned paper on Articles of Association has been finished by RF (Top 16); the Articles are now provided on the website
- EBCC's "Delegate responsibility paper" has been prepared by ÅL for RG to sign; it was spread among Board members, and will soon be posted on the website together with Articles of Association
- Snippets and ideas are requested for the next newsletter; a group photograph from the Lund meeting should be included. After each meeting a list of update items should be gathered
- EBCC website editing will be taken over by Laura Smith (BTO) in future, more involvement in web championing is again possible; aim to generally invest more in restructuring and constant updating of EBCC website; also continue to work on the idea of a contract with CSO to update and improve the website.
- National reports (including PECBMS review on common bird monitoring schemes, see www.ebcc.info/index.php?a=cat.13) on website should be restructured. Currently information on the country pages and PECBMS pages were somewhat overlapping.
- RF still needs the contact details of the data request people in order to be able to send them their respective invoices
- LB has provided Board with papers from SMOG

The minutes of the 37th Board Meeting are agreed upon unanimously.

TOP 3: Proceedings of 17th International Conference in Chiavenna

Of the 41 papers received, 2 were rejected and 6 sent on to BCN; the remaining 33 papers are now being finalized. About half of them will be sent for layout within a few days, the remainder a few weeks later (after having got back to the authors to clarify some details). The plan is to finish the proceedings issue towards the end of this year.

LF was unhappy with the reviewing process, since some of the reviews were quite inadequate and had to be repeated costing unnecessary time. After these second reviews, LF will now have to get into contact with some of the authors to improve – or finally reject – re-reviewed papers.

Final distribution of the proceeding issue will be granted by the Avocetta editorship. About 20 extra copies of the Chiavenna proceedings should go to the EBCC chairman for subsequent use (and distribution). Some copies should be sent to JCM /VE for them to distribute among conference participants in Cáceres and they should be made available in Cáceres for interested quarters.

TOP 4: Planning of 18th International EBCC Conference in Cáceres

JCM gives overview of the plans for the conference. Several points were discussed: The registration form for low-income participants has been finished. On the website, EBCC offers help to low-income participants without being very specific yet about total coverage. In Chiavenna, a reduced fee of 75 € and reduced accommodation costs were offered. A similar offer as in Chiavenna would be feasible for the Cáceres participants.

Board together with JCM and VE corrected and finalized the text of the Second Announcement. There shall again be a general limit for acceptance of abstracts and number of presentations as in Chiavenna, where there were 8 sessions and 15 symposia, with 7 plenaries, 110 oral presentations and some 70 posters. Plans for Cáceres amount to 9 plenaries with an individual length of 40+5 min; having two parallel sessions after each plenary and 4 workshops would give a total of 22 sessions; some 92 oral presentations would fit into this scheme. If more slots for presentations were required, these should be accommodated in a third parallel session on one of the days. The complete programme will be scheduled as soon as the respective abstracts have been submitted and reviewed.

The Cáceres conference budget is not yet balanced and needs more thought.

The next Board meeting shall take place prior to the Cáceres conference on Monday 22 March, at 10.00 a.m., with Board members required to arrive in Cáceres during the course of Sunday 21st March.

TOP 5: Succession planning

ÅL informs Board about the procedures for the elections. In general, EBCC Board may consist of up to 10 members, two of which can be voted in by Board itself and all others are elected by Delegates during the General Meeting. The Board should consist of 10 members. There was the suggestion to have small profiles written on each of the prospective candidates to help guide Delegates. The elections within Board (i.e. Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) and other members are to be held individually. The current Board does not formally recommend a new Board, and ideas for Board members can come from any Delegates as they see fit, but clearly there is a responsibility on the current Board to steer this process in the best interests of the Association.

Any prospective Board members and Board members who wish to continue in their positions will need recommendations from two national Delegates and a signed statement of willingness to continue to stand for election and further the aims of the EBCC.

Discussion arises on which positions within Board have to be filled by able candidates. In addition to the four important tasks mentioned above, Board might wish to consider positions such as the Delegates Coordinator, Website Coordinator, Data Officer, Strategic Goals/Development Coordinator, a Policy Coordinator, and a BCN Editor. Also important, but maybe coverable by outside persons are positions such as a profile-raising person, a meetings/conference coordinator, a publication coordinator, and persons responsible for/reporting on PECBMS, SMOG, and the New Atlas project. On top of this, regional representation has to be kept in mind for EBCC Board to speak on behalf of its Delegates across Europe.

An extension of the list of “observing institutions” (e.g. EURING, Wader Study group, Wetlands International etc.) is currently not envisaged due to the large number of possible candidates, which would render future Board meetings unwieldy. Individuals from these organisations might be invited by Board to attend specific meetings from time to time.

TOP 6: Financial Report & Annual Commission Report

No report produced for this meeting, as the financial year only ends end of December. Financial situation of EBCC is virtually unchanged and positive throughout. Frank Saris and Koen de Vos, which Board wanted to install as its Audit commission for the 2008 and 2009 financial reports during the next conference, have both agreed to take over such a position. Both are official Delegates and shall be present in Cáceres.

In future, the provision of a short balance sheet by the treasurer should ensure that an expenditure plan can be made at Board meetings. Current budget runs to about 6000.- €. Provisional agreement on financing the revamping of the website, probable costs amount to some 2000.- € depending on type of work (IT slightly more expensive than “standard” changes). We need to have a list of necessary tasks set out and work through the list for prioritization. Some caution is needed on EBCC expenditure given our modest current balance and any expenditure would need to be agreed by the daily management team.

TOP 7: Bird Census News

AA distributes an activity report for BCN which is then discussed.

The second issue of the current year is not completely filled yet, but the envisaged and potential authors will receive a reminder on their respective possible contributions. Reports on the Cáceres meeting, the tri-annual Chairman’s report, and papers as e.g. on the German breeding bird atlas, will be required to fill Vol. 23. Some of the extended abstracts of the Cáceres conference could be printed in BCN 23/2, if received in time; most abstracts will probably go to Ardeola.

TOP 8: Delegates’ list

ÅL reports that there was very little progress since the last meeting, but the list already looks impressive and “vibrant”. There will be opportunity at the Cáceres conference to talk to some potential candidates in order to extend and update the Delegates’ list. But difficulties in Albania, Caucasus, Andorra etc. are likely to persist.

TOP 9: Newsletter; snippets for newsletter

The next issue of the Newsletter will be finalized by ÅL in late October 2009. All items shall be collected and finalized during the current Board meeting. The Romanian BirdLife Partner, SOR, had received government funding for five years to take forward a package of monitoring including their breeding bird survey.

TOP 10: EBCC Website

PV reports on some of the aspects that were included on the website, including news on the use of indicators. Despite former information, the website provider has not been changed yet, the contract having been automatically prolonged until July 2010. Visitor frequency at the EBCC website was more or less stable for the last 12 months, amounting to about 2000 new users (IP addresses) per month, which is very encouraging.

It could be worth to check on how many links exist on the website to other important ornithological sites. This being in the responsibility of the Delegates and Board members, it should be an item for the newsletter.

TOP 11: Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS)

The main results and achievements in PECBMS since the last meeting are summarized in a report, which is presented by PV.

Financial stability for the next three years has been granted through European Commission funding under the heading of “Delivering European Bird Indicators (DEBI)” (a LIFE+ Direct Grant). This is great news after difficult times this year during which the project had to be supported by the RSPB.

A new list of indices, trends and indicators will be published by beginning of November 2009 (on website), and the next update should already be made available mid-2010 in order for the reports to become more up-to-date and regular. The annual brochure has been dropped in its current form due to the heavy workload to produce it and to the comparatively low dividend it delivers. It was viewed better to publish such a brochure on a five-year timeline, or better perhaps on a six-year one to coincide with the reporting rate of the EU directives (which will be rescheduled soon).

It was decided instead that the PECBMS should produce a streamlined annual report with its main findings (indicators and species indices) for distribution to the PECBMS network and others. There would be extensive references and more detailed information available on the EBCC website. The brochure will thus be replaced by a similarly distributed leaflet ‘Population trends of European Common Birds’, the first to appear in June 2010 coinciding with the indices update.

There might be two sessions on the PECBMS in Cáceres, including one focussed on the twinning approach and a training workshop on Birdstats.

TOP 12: Recent data requests

Data requests were not fully handled this year due to a gap in responsibility.

Two recent data requests are currently processed:

- Sylvain Antoniazza needs to be contacted concerning Barn owl data. RG will provide data compiled by Frederic Jiguet.
- Janine Sybertz request looks a good proposal and is approved by Board members; no service charge will be requested. RF kindly suggested that Henk Sierdsema at SOVON would provide the data free of charge. RG to take forwards.

TOP 13: EBCC Working Groups

a) Spatial Modelling Workgroup (SMOG) update; SCALES

LB et al. have put together a report on the SMOG group’s activities, their review on technical aspects is still in draft; a post-doc (Francesc Sardà), financed through SCALES and CTFC, will work for 20 months on the project, also with respect to the technical requirements of the

SCALES project. Two more SCALES/SMOG meetings will be held before the Cáceres meeting, the next working group meeting will be on 17-19 November in Solsona.

b) Creation of a Climate Change Working Group

No specific action has been taken yet, but such a group might act as a focal point in the many activities that are running at the moment. Setting a framework for such a working group/ discussion group/ platform is an important prerequisite in order to make sure that there is a positive output and synergetic effect in climate change studies in Europe. EBCC should encourage such a group to form under its auspices (but not necessarily within Board) and bring together strong exponents in European ornithology.

c) Creation of an Atlas Working Group

An informal "New Atlas" group currently consists of GB, LB, IB, RF, LF, RG, FJ, and DN; other people interested to join would be Simon Gillings, Rob Fuller, Marc Kéry, Arco van Strien, Hans Schmid and others. Board discussed the draft paper tabled by GB and others. Many issues would need to be clarified and resolved to make the project workable and viable. There was no clear vision on what form the work might take, how and why we would need to undertake a new atlas, what critical conservation and policy questions it would address, who might fund the work etc. Currently, there is no compelling project proposal and one is certainly needed before this concept is discussed more broadly and presented to the EBCC conference. However, Board agreed that a new breeding bird atlas project was potentially very important to EBCC and that this group should pursue it actively. The Cáceres conference represented an excellent opportunity to assess the interest of EBCC Delegates and conference goes to this new initiative and to get their support to drive it forwards.

As an aside, it might also be possible to receive money from the Lifewatch initiative in order to set up an initial atlas workshop. It would be best to hold a workshop on the "EBCC Atlas of Breeding Birds II" immediately prior to, or during the Cáceres conference - the actual launch of any project being later, as this would be funding-dependent. In any circumstance, there is a good deal of work to do and time required to discuss all the important aspects necessary to deal with such an ambitious project.

TOP 14: Strategic direction, "2020 vision/target", EBCC leaflet

RG has put forward a paper on the current situation of EBCC together with a self-critical review and assessment of its work and prospects. DN and LB and others have provided valuable comments on this paper.

Major points raised in the paper are: the growth and development of EBCC is possible due to its very good projects, especially the atlas and PECBMS. Lots of high-impact publications stem from collective work in pan-European ornithology, and may also stimulate academics positively. However, achievements are still below our possibilities, as partnerships have not been built in the fashion necessary; EBCC is often considered as a data provider rather than a real collaborator. Thus, some of its profile could be lost. Sufficient funding seems to be ever more important in EBCC's present and future projects, as lack of funding is a barrier to expansion of our work. Maybe staff is necessary to improve our work and reduce the work load for the volunteer Board members (but again, where should we obtain such funding).

Suggestion of three- and six-year project plans of EBCC that might be set up by Board in future; consequently, possible strategic aims of EBCC Board were defined by RG in a draft paper.

Agreement that an atlas project will cover a great many of the aspects raised in RG's paper. In order to find out which aspects EBCC Delegates would find most important, a questionnaire would be helpful (this would also provide a mandate for future programmes, especially before

setting up a six-year strategy). Subsequently, we should develop a priority list of future actions by Board.

EBCC could form a European platform together with all the other bird specialist groups (including Wetlands Int., Euring, Wader Study Group, Raptor groups etc.) in order to develop common plans.

TOP 15: EBCC Awards

No formal guidelines for the awards are available. They have been based on making a significant and outstanding contribution to the aims of EBCC, long-term dedicated commitment to EBCC, and significantly promoting the EBCC. Past awards went to Anny Anselin and Ward Hagemeyer for their long-standing and important contributions to EBCC. Board unanimously supported the suggestion of one other candidate for an EBCC award. This person is going to receive the Award at the Cáceres meeting.

TOP 16: Practical implications of EBCC as an Association under Dutch Law

RF has produced a draft guide on practical implications. Board agrees to adopt this guide and put it on the website, where it should be side by side with ÅL's information sheet for Delegates.

TOP 17: Preparations for the Board meeting & Annual General Meeting in March 2010

Due to legal requirements, there is a need to tell people about the upcoming Annual General Meeting in due course. It is best to use the Newsletter platform to achieve this.

TOP 18: Planning of a new EBCC atlas/web-based data collection

For discussion of new EBCC atlas see under Top 13 c; however, web-based data collection not discussed due to time shortage.

TOP 19: Update from BirdLife International

Since July 2009, Angelo Caserta is new Regional Director of BirdLife Europe (in Brussels).

European IBA workshop in Poland, end Sep 2009, resulted in the common wish to have better guidance on species monitoring and protocols for site-based monitoring. Could EBCC help by bringing together existing guidance on different species groups into one overarching 'manual'?

IB continued his involvement in work on an EC contract to develop an official format for Member States to report on the status and trends of bird species, under Article 12 of the Birds Directive. At present, reporting is 3-yearly and largely process-based. The intention is to change this to 6-yearly (i.e. aligned with Article 17 reporting under the Habitats Directive) and to make it more outcome-oriented. The EC (and IB) are advocating a broad but shallow system that would deliver data on all species, but some Member States are concerned about the potential burden and wish to restrict it to Annex I and huntable species. Once agreed, there may be potential to negotiate the delivery of EU trends via PECBMS, and to streamline the process with BirdLife's *Birds in Europe* publications. IB is also advocating for the EC to support any New EBCC Atlas.

The annual *Globally Threatened Bird Forum* discussions will start in Nov 2009, to feed into the 2010 IUCN Red List. European species whose global status will be discussed include Steppe Eagle, Greater Spotted Eagle, Corncrake, Azores Bullfinch, Corsican Nuthatch and possibly some others, including several Macaronesian endemics, if sufficient information can be gathered in time. IB encouraged Board members to promote this: www.birdlifeforums.org

TOP 20: Any other business

- Board is happy with RF's work in the collaboration with the joint European platform for biodiversity monitoring (their actions are defined within the Lifewatch framework).
- Alexander Mischenko sent a paper on bird monitoring activities in Russia to Board members. Participation in the Russian farmland and woodland monitoring schemes was very low due to lack of funding, but the meadow-bird monitoring scheme received somewhat better coverage (and funding); also, Corncrake monitoring is continuing. Board has to admit that the progress of these schemes in Russia has been very limited and that EBCC support was insufficient. In the meantime, Russian BirdLife partner RBCU has been demoted from BI partnership; a replacement is sought, and currently probably forming.

RG closes the meeting at 18.30 on Saturday and thanks ÅL for his great hospitality and perfect organization, JCM (and VE) for the great efforts in preparing the next EBCC conference, and Kate Risely for representing BTO at this meeting.

Richard Gregory
Chairman

Hans-Günther Bauer
Secretary