

44th Board meeting of EBCC in Cluj and Praid (Romania), 11 - 13 October 2012

Present: Ruud Foppen (RF, Chairman), David Noble (DN, Vice Chairman/Treasurer), Hans-Günther Bauer (GB, Secretary), Anny Anselin (AA, BCN Editor), Henning Heldbjerg (HH, Development Officer), Lluís Brotons (LB, SMOG/ SCALES), Mikhail Kalyakin (MK), Oskars Keišs (OK, Development Officer), Verena Keller (VK, Conference Officer), Åke Lindström (ÅL, Delegate Officer). Observers: Ian Burfield (IB, BirdLife International), Mark Eaton (ME, RSPB, Development Officer), Petr Voříšek (PV, PECBMS), Zoltán Szabó (ZS, Cluj conference organiser), Dan Hulea (from ROS) and three of the local organisers (Cristi Domșa, Gábor Bóné, Beáta Nagy).

Apologies: Szabolcs Nagy (SN, Observer, Wetlands Int.)

Thursday (Cluj) 9:00-12:30, Friday (Praid) 12:45-16:45, Saturday 9:10-10:40

TOP 1: Chairman's welcome to the Cluj (and Praid) meeting.

The Chairman welcomes all Board members and observers to the 44th Board meeting in Cluj (first day) and Praid (from second day), and thanks Zoltán and his team very much for organising this meeting (and the Cluj conference).

TOP 2: Adoption of agenda, identifying AOB

The agenda is accepted as sent out.

TOP 3: Recent data requests

Currently, there are only two requests pending, both concern applications from students for EBCC atlas data for single species research projects. Data requests for PECBMS are immediately put forward to PV, anyway.

TOP 4: Report on SMOG/SCALES/EU-Bon

LB had provided information and the role of EBCC in EU-BON during the ASC meeting. EU-BON is a new €7 million German-led project funded by the EU research budget under Framework Programme 7 (FP7). It is intended to help Europe contribute to the global GEO-BON initiative. A project kick-off meeting will take place in Berlin in Feb. 2013.

SCALES work is now mostly done. The team's partners are reported to be very pleased with EBCC input within the different work packages and the invitation to take part in EU-BON consortium probably follows from this. Francesc Sárda has finished his post-doc position and is no longer part of the project.

Thanks to LB and Sergi Herrando (SH), € 5000 from the SCALES project are going to be forwarded to EBCC.

TOP 5: Preparation of EBCC Conference in Cluj 2013

ZS reports on progress in the preparation of the conference. Several members of the local organising committee also attend the Board meeting (cf. presence list).

After a short deliberation, Board agrees upon the conference logo, one of four draft logos sent out to Board by ZS before the meeting (a Starling emerging from a flock). The artist will improve the "background flock", but the Starling will stay as it is.

A provisional version of the conference website, minus a few elements had also been constructed and was presented to Board by Gabor Bone. The Board liked the look, and were asked to send further comments once all had looked more carefully (at www.ebcc2013.ro).

Currently there are four full-day mid-conference excursions planned: (1) sightseeing tour of Cluj (probably only for half a day), (2) visit of a town Turda 40 km (north-)east of Cluj including a tour to the nearby saltmine and to a golden eagle's nest, (3) visit of a village with world heritage status, (4) birding tour to the fishponds about 70 km northeast of Cluj (apparently the best site for migrant birds in Transylvania). For all four tours, buses and guides will have to be organised. Agreement that all four excursions should be offered, but that the minimum numbers to carry them out should be specified beforehand. It was noted that birding excursions are usually more popular than cultural ones. Details of the potential birds to be seen should be included in the tour descriptions in order to make sure that a sufficient and possibly even distribution of participants is reached.

The preliminary calculation of the conference costs has been estimated, so far assuming ca. 250 participants (a minimum of 200 participants will be necessary to make ends meet). The conference venue costs will be generously waived by the University, helping to keep costs down. Board asks ZS to convey its gratitude to the University. All main costs except those needed for the invited plenary speakers have been included (5 speakers). Furthermore, no staff/helpers costs have been included in the budget, although these might wish to attend the conference, visit the excursions and take part in the dinners. These additional costs and expenses make a contingency or emergency budget necessary. Competition prices etc. could come from exhibitors (optics, publishers etc.). Support for low-income countries should also be included, making the fee for high-income countries higher (could be put down as a "sponsorship registration fee"). Participants from low-income countries will have to apply in order to receive sponsored registration fees; there could be up to 50-70 persons sponsored this way, but the maximum number sponsored needs to be settled soon. Conference fees could be € 240 normal price and € 100 reduced fee. In the first announcement approximate fees will have to be shown, with final fees to be announced in February.

Outside sponsor money has not been taken into account in the budget yet, but sponsorship might be very difficult to gain in Romania at present (have to await the new elections which will take place in January). Funding from local administration is possible, some additional sources might come from exhibitors, but none of this is settled yet.

Meals and food will be inexpensive compared to Cáceres, as will be the accommodation offered. The student dormitory will amount to 7-8 € per night and house up to 200 persons, alternatives are € 20-40 for ** hostel accommodation, € 30-50 for ***hotels and up to € 75-150 for *****hotels (large selection of hotels available).

A specific conference slogan has not been developed yet, but Board suggests to use the current EBCC slogan "Every bird counts"; the organisers could use both the English and Romanian version on the logo. The conference dates should be announced as soon as possible after the Cluj Board meeting (First announcement already by 20 October). The website can be "launched" immediately including general information about the conference, but without the need yet to specify every detail. Conference will be held in the period from 16-20 September. Arrival day will be on Monday 16th, the first scientific programme day will be Tuesday 17th, the official opening in the evening of that day. The EBCC Board meeting should take place on Monday 16th September, maybe only for half a day to allow for travel to Cluj.

Additional non-EBCC meetings, e.g. the waterbird coordinator meeting, can be added pre- or post-conference (to be decided by the relevant organisers), suitable venues will be made available.

The EBBA2 workshop will require a whole day within the Cluj conference running in parallel with other conference sessions; we expect a minimum of 50-60 participants from some 46 countries to this workshop.

Timetable: First Announcement to be made just after the Board meeting via Newsletter and by direct email to the Delegates and participants of last conferences. The beginning of abstract submission shall be set for October, to end on 31 January 2013; this also needs to be published in the First Announcement. The Second Announcement in early January should point out that abstract submission will end by end of January. Evaluation of abstracts shall be done in February prior to next meeting of the Board. Registration for the conference should be opened in February (and might already include registration for dormitory accommodation) and coincide with the second announcement and the deadline for the submission of abstracts. Registration shall be closed on 30th June (definitely for all presenters, since their

late registration would impact programme construction). Late registration shall be accepted until 15 August but would incur an increased fee.

The main conference time frame should be similar to the one adopted in Cáceres, with two parallel sessions and not three as in Chiavenna. Decision stands to have five plenary talks of 45 min each. Length of orals should be 20 min including time for questions and 2 min “moving time”.

Days shall be scheduled as such: 9:00 start of plenary followed by first sessions, 13:00 lunch, 15:00 start of plenary followed by second sessions, 19:00 dinner. This would provide two 4-hour sessions per day (minus extended breaks of at least 30 min).

Scientific Programme: As decided earlier, the Scientific Programme Committee (SPC) consists of VK [Chair], DN [“Secretary”], LB, RF, HH, MK, ÅL, PV, and ZS. SPC collects all abstracts for assessment, i.e. accepts or rejects presentations and contacts all authors, prepares the scientific programme and forwards it to the Local Organising Committee (LOC); SPC will also edit the abstract book, whereas layout and printing will be carried out by the LOC. LOC will decide if one of their group should join SPC. Abstracts for posters could be accepted later than those for oral presentations. There will be no limit to the number of accepted posters, these will be exhibited in the main hall and accessible during the whole conference including the coffee breaks.

Publication: Not settled yet, first discussions with regional journal started, but no decisions made. Catalan Ornithological Journal could again step in if need be, with BCN again willing to take some of the “surplus” papers.

TOP 6: Minutes of 43th Board meeting, checking back on Action points

GB has sent the short-version Minutes of the 43rd meeting to JŠ for inclusion on the website.

All actions of the last Minutes will be dealt with under the respective agenda items below.

The Minutes of the 43th Board Meeting are agreed upon unanimously.

TOP 7: Bird Census News

AA will send a mail around to Delegates announcing that the new digital issue of BCN can be found on the EBCC website. Individual subscriptions (€ 10), corporate subscriptions (€ 15) or voluntary payments are still open for discussion. AA opts for the latter, including an invitation to donate voluntarily in correspondence.

RF thanks AA very much for the great work on the new-look BCN, which looks super and is a huge step forward. Board members provided feedback on minor issues and that the quality of figures could be improved to make sure that printouts are readable (for this AA needs to be sent high-quality originals).

There are already several contributions (promised or sent) for the subsequent issue (including: Mikulov report, PECBMS report and another paper from PV, a paper from O. Biber, and one on the Russian atlas from MK); a section on the European atlas was considered best for next spring. BCN 2/2012 should be completed by the end of the year.

TOP 8: Delegates list

ÅL included the new-version list in the Dropbox. No real changes to be reported on. Still 3 countries with 0 Delegates and 3 countries with 1 Delegate.

There is still no contact with Albania, but correspondence has been taken up with Andorra (which did not answer to the EBBA2 questionnaire). A new contact in Armenia, Karen Aghabayan from the Acopian Center for the Environment, who is interested to collaborate in EBBA2, could be a possibility, but contacts with the Armenian BirdLife partner should be renewed despite their lack of response so far. Georgia still a problem.

TOP 9: Newsletter

The next issue of the Newsletter is in preparation and ÅL hopes for further input from the Board. ÅL mentions that feedback by Delegates is very limited and needs to be improved ("not sure if they really read it"). During the next AGM Delegates should be made aware that more feedback should be provided. They should also be asked to comment on the current form of the Newsletter and how they would like to participate in its creation. Might mention that the editor of the Newsletter will change at the end of 2013.

TOP 10: EBCC website

As for the past few years, there have not been many changes except for updates, i.e. of PECBMS (overall report, trends, and indicators) and the Board and AGM minutes. There is no plan for a separate website for the EBBA2 project for now, but this need will be re-evaluated as work progresses. DN noted that many parts of the website could be modified, improved and updated (e.g. the "Useful reading" part, the country report pages etc) but require greater effort. The need to update country pages will be included in the Newsletter and all invited to make suggestions for improvements.

TOP 11: Report on PECBMS

PV had sent an update of developments in the PECBMS project to Board before the meeting. The situation for the team is very difficult as EU funding is currently not available for this year (also see the ASC minutes).

There will be no report provided for Eurostat due to lack of funding, and also because PECBMS were not asked by Eurostat for such a report. However, supra-national trends are still being calculated by the PECBMS team.

A new indicator for Fennoscandia ("mountain bird indicator for northern Europe") is being developed by ÅL and colleagues, which is based on 14 species of alpine tundra and subalpine birch forest habitats. The ensuing paper is almost finished but has not been submitted yet, as the authors await input from the ornithological community (including conservation-policy issues) before submission. Board's opinion is very positive about this work, which might stimulate plans for an Alpine indicator (the only one currently produced is the one for the Swiss region).

PV promises to make comments and suggestions on the Fennoscandian indicator, for example on the computing process, and send them to ÅL.

TOP 12: EBBA2, report on developments

The Atlas Steering Committee (ASC) Meeting was held back to back with the Board meeting, with all Board members attending. The main items regarding EBBA2 are summarised here. Since the Board meeting in Sempach, ASC held a Skype conference in June 2012 evaluating the offers by institutions to host an atlas coordinator for one year. Another ASC meeting followed in Glasgow at the end of August. Expressions of interest were received from the C atalan Ornithological Institute (ICO), the Czech Ornithological Society (CSO) and BirdWatch Ireland. However, due to a lack of funds to finance this coordinator for a year, and to the good offers from ICO and CSO, the ASC decided to move forward by dividing the tasks between the relevant people, particularly between Sergi Herrando (ICO), responsible for developing atlas methodology, database issues etc. and Petr Vorisek (CSO), responsible for contacts with national coordinators. Some funding is secured from the SCALES project, a contribution from the Swiss Ornithological Institute, and from BTO. Substantial in-kind contributions come from RSPB, where Daniel Hayhow is supporting the ASC on fundraising issues. Smaller tasks are taken over by members of the ASC. A workshop to support national coordinators from countries that indicated a need for guidance will be held in Barcelona from 20 to 22 March 2013. The Russian atlas has started well, but there is also a lack of funding and a need for support by ornithologists from abroad. Other national atlases are in the planning phase. EBBA2 has been promoted at several conferences.

TOP 13: Wetlands International news update

VK reports that things move forward within WI and her overall impression is positive, but since SN could not be present in Romania, no further news are available.

BirdLife International news update

IB reports that the Global IUCN Red List has been updated in May, with some European species involved in the changes, e.g. Saker now up-listed to EN, Velvet Scoter also to EN, Long-tailed Duck and Yellow-bellied Shearwater to VU, and Rock Partridge to NT. BirdLife International is now gearing up for the 2013 update, which will include discussions on Bearded Vulture and Balearic Shearwater. But BiE3 is currently reviewing the European status of all species anyway, so more changes can be expected after 2014.

Financial situation of BirdLife Secretariat main office is slowly improving, but some national partners are facing major problems now in the wake of the global financial crisis.

A major focus for the coming year is BirdLife's World Congress in Ottawa, Canada, in June 2013. This is also where BirdLife's new global strategy for 2013-2020 will be finalised and adopted.

BirdLife's Head of Science Alison Stattersfield will step down from this position to be succeeded by Stuart Butchart.

The first global marine IBA inventory will officially be launched later in October in the form of an e-atlas. Since its launch in 2006, BirdLife's global IBA monitoring framework has seen patchy implementation in Europe and other continents, for various reasons. Some European Partners (often including or with support from EBCC network/delegates) have made good progress, whilst others have focused on other issues, especially during the financial crisis. To improve uptake and awareness, BirdLife plans to launch a new initiative, called "IBAs in Danger", highlighting seriously threatened sites that need urgent conservation action. Nominations will be processed over the coming months, with a proposed launch at the World Congress.

TOP 14: BiE3 / Red List / Article 12 reporting

Rob Pople was appointed as the BiE3 project coordinator and has made a good start since August. The 2nd BiE3 Steering Committee meeting was held recently, involving RF, DN, PV, SN and others. Species checklist and IT tool for Article 12 reporting has now been finalized and sent to the EU countries. Lists and materials for non-EU countries shall be sorted out in coming months. Member States have to report by Dec 2013. Aim is to collate non-EU data before then, allowing combination and analysis at EU and pan-European scales in first half of 2014. EC contract requires production of summary Red List brochure (as already done for other taxa) by end of 2014. Currently, no resources (or demand?) to produce a big "BiE3" book; the new SPEC assessments could be communicated by means of a scientific publication.

Very important to receive updates from BirdLife Partners and EBCC Delegates on changes in the political situation and progress with reporting in EU countries (such updates will also be provided to the EC by the governmental side). Lots of partners are now receiving contracts from their respective governments to assist with Article 12 reporting. The guidance document on tackling issues raised in Mikulov shall be improved until January 2013 and then disseminated.

Pan-European range maps (i.e. polygons) need to be produced for the European Red List. BirdLife intends to find an easy way to do this, e.g. by running an expert consultation exercise to solicit comments and suggested changes to BirdLife's existing global species range maps for European species.

TOP 15: Rewilding Europe project initiative on wildlife comeback in Europe

RF reports that the project coordinators have asked EBCC and PECBMS independently for additional data. EBCC Board is confident it can engage in this project, which has benefits in future project opportunities for CSO; although the limiting factor could be CSO's current working capacity.

TOP 16: Twinning/Development Officers report

Work was limited to the discussion about how atlas work can be improved in some countries. Atlas activities might provide the best opportunity to get new countries involved in EBCC work.

TOP 17: Eastern European developments, including Russian bird atlas

Was discussed under the ASC discussion item 10.

TOP 18: Date and venue for get together in spring 2013

Discussion ensues on how to combine ASC and Board meetings with other venues and meetings. Best to combine the next Board meeting with the Barcelona workshop in March; Board votes in favour of this. So, Board meeting, AGM and ASC meetings back to back before the atlas workshop which starts Wednesday 20 March. Board best to start on Monday 18 March. In future, will probably have Board meetings in some of the “under-developed” regions in order to promote the atlas, but capacity is an issue and further discussion postponed this until after the workshop, where we will meet the representatives to discuss such meetings.

TOP 19: Vision of EBCC

EBCC’s vision paper should be finalized shortly after the spring meeting (as it should be presented at the next AGM in September 2013), thus work on it should start very soon.

TOP 20: Any other business

- Funding bird monitoring in Latvia. OK thanks EBCC Board for providing letters to the Latvian Government to help secure funding for the national monitoring scheme. The Latvian Ministry of Agriculture has now granted one year’s funding of the monitoring project.
- CSO has produced two prototypes of an “official” EBCC t-shirt, asking whether Board would want to have such a t-shirt produced on a larger scale. The design would be free of charge; the selling price would be open to negotiation. There could be a small profit for EBCC (or the t-shirt would be used as a promotional freebee at workshops and Delegates meetings which would incur small costs). Also have to consider that there will be a conference t-shirt in Cluj (and at subsequent conferences) which could compete with it. Board in favour of having an EBCC t-shirt and the idea should be followed up by PV. The colour, the language part on the back and the “every bird counts” bit are very good and important elements of the new t-shirt. Board also made some suggestions for modifications to the logo and design and that font be set larger.
- Decision on the 2016 EBCC conference venue shall be on the agenda of the next Board meeting.
- Future line-up of EBCC Board. The Board needs to be re-elected at the AGM in Cluj in 2013 for the next three year stint. Possible changes in Board are discussed.
- Frédéric Jiguet has sent a research proposal document to PV, RF and ÅL, which links research teams in 20 countries, in applying for a joint EU grant (FP7) by the end of November. Not clear, what the group are asking from EBCC, and awareness that there are massive administrative requirements involved in EU projects. Board will wait to see what ensues, but the PECBMS group should be discussing it within its Steering Group.

RF closes the Board meeting on Saturday at 10:40 a.m. and thanks Board members and observers very much for their participation and for their contributions.

Ruud Foppen
Chairman

Hans-Günther Bauer
Secretary

