

Minutes of the 50th Board meeting of EBCC in Mikulov, Czech Republic

November 6, 2015

Board Present: Ruud Foppen (RF, Chairman), David Noble (DN, Vice Chairman/Secretary), Anny Anselin (AA, Treasurer/BCN Editor), Henning Heldbjerg (HH), Mikhail Kalyakin (MK), Oskars Keišs (OK), Danae Portolou (DP), Aleksi Lehikoinen (AL)

Observers and Invitees: Petr Voricek (PV, PECBM/EBBA2), Marina Kipson (MK), Jana Skorpilova (JS), Anna Gamero (AG), Kai Gedeon (KG, Conference Organiser 2016)

Apologies: Lluís Brotons (LB), Mark Eaton (ME), Szabolcs Nagy (SN, Wetlands International), Verena Keller (VK), Ivan Ramirez (IR, BirdLife), Sergi Herrando (SH, EBBA2), Gabriel Gargallo (GG, EuroBirdPortal)

TOP 1. Welcome , Adoption of Agenda and Minutes of Last Meeting

The Chair RF welcomes all Board members and Observers including most members of the PECBM/EBBA2 team from CSO in Prague (JS, AG, MK). Plan is for a very short Board and AGM meeting, held on the morning immediately following the PECBM and EBBA2 workshops at the same venue. The main items are the Annual General Meeting and discussion of the upcoming EBCC conference in Halle, following a presentation from RBCC 2016 conference organiser Kai Gedeon. The agenda was approved but due to time constraints and the absence of some Board members, the order was re-arranged and some items (e.g. 12 Data Requests, 13 Report from Wetlands International and 14 Report from BirdLife) were omitted.

Secretary DN went through the actions of the previous Board meeting in Kiev (Ukraine). Most actions related to the 2016 conference, contact with delegates, BCN and news about dates had been carried out. Actions to be carried forward were AP3 for all to contribute to a circulated document from PV on EBCC projects and remit, AP4 to communicate with Cluj conference organisers about Proceedings, AP12 on an EBCC communications document.

AP1: DN to finalise minutes of Board meeting in Kiev and post in DropBox.

TOP 2. Annual General Meeting (AGM)

This item was a very short AGM focused on the Chair's report on activities, changes to the Delegate list and the Financial Report from the Treasurer. Delegates are invited to all AGMs (held once per year) but are not expected to attend those other than the ones held every three years in conjunction with EBCC conferences. Delegate Officer OK noted that apologies for not attending the AGM in

Mikulov were received from Igor Gorban (Ukraine), João E. Rabaça (Portugal), Hans Schmid (Switzerland), and Norbert Teufelbauer (Austria).

Chair RF provided a short summary of EBCC activities over the past year. Treasurer AA summarised the Financial Report for 2014 circulated prior to the meeting, including expected income and expenses for 2015. Key message is that EBCC has about 30k in its account, with an additional 3.5k to receive. Overall, since the previous year, there has been a small improvement in assets, and income from data broadly compensates for costs for the EBCC website and travel expenses for some Board members to meetings. Key sources of income this year were data requests from SOVON, University of Exeter, and transfer of old atlas data to GBIF.

AP2: DN to circulate minutes of AGM to Board, and post on EBCC website.

OK presented the Delegates Officer's Report. A second (new) delegate – Karen Aghababyan has been proposed for Armenia, with a letter of support from Nature Rights Protection. Delegates in attendance voted 4:0 to accept Karen Aghababyan as a new delegate for Armenia. There has been no response from Georgia on delegates. Although not a delegate, Guillermo, attending the workshops, is a good contact for Georgian EBBA2 work currently. He is happy to be a delegate if eligible and is in contact with all three relevant groups or individuals in the country (Alexander Abuladze, SABUKO Society for Nature Conservation and Batumi Raptor Count). No other changes to delegates are currently proposed but OK has received notice from Andorra proposing a future change in delegates. To be discussed at the next Board meeting, once letter received

TOP 3. Reflections on Mikulov workshops

Organisers PV and CSO team reported that the Mikulov workshops had seemed to go well but the two elements (PECBM and EBBA2) had been difficult to organise back to back. Another reported issue is that participants in one workshop felt uninvited to the other workshop (for capacity reasons), which reduced the possibilities for synergy between projects and sent a mixed message about the integration of EBCC aims.

DP thought it would be good to be stronger in enforcing agreement / decisions on issues being discussed during the workshops. PV stated that decisions had been reached in most cases.

Everyone was enthusiastic about the speed talk session (25 in all). Regarding progress on EBBA2, the high number of squares covered in Ukraine was a highlight; the lack of much coverage in Turkey a disappointment.

Given issues with holding multiple workshops at the same venue without becoming a 'conference', Board agreed that it is advantageous to have all project teams meet together at EBCC conferences, but to otherwise have workshops focused on the individual projects. 2016 is not a problem, because we have the Halle conference where all projects are represented. An issue for subsequent years and in budget planning for PECBM, etc.

AP3: PV to circulate action points from decisions made at the Mikulov conference.

TOP 4. Update on research consortiums

PV reported that for EEA proposal to use bird data at site level to relate to ecosystem services, we are waiting to hear more about their requirements. They are interested in long-term use of these data and MAES maps. Likely option is a pilot using some data in case studies.

DN asked about EBCC involvement in TRUSTEE project which colleagues in France, including Karine Prince, are working on. OK is doing fieldwork in another work package.

RF/PV reported that the EUBON project is almost finished, but we haven't yet seen any outputs relevant to EBCC.

DN reported that the EBCC's Spatial Modelling Group (SMOG) was planning to apply for a CESAB grant in France, which would facilitate holding meetings and workshops to take forward approaches to modelling atlas and other data for EBBA2. Proposal to be submitted in ca one month.

Board then discusses how best to ensure that atlas and monitoring activities are used by relevant bodies in policy. PV reiterated advice from BirdLife Europe to initiate talks with EC about policy-relevant outputs as soon as possible. Another idea is to organise a brainstorming workshop to engage with scientific community.

Aleksi Lehtikainen (AL) made two specific proposals: (1) to organise a workshop bringing researchers together to use data from three data sources (EBBA2, PECBM, EBP), possibly through a COST action, and (2) an ERF research grant for 2 PhD & 2 other students for 4-5 years, with work packages specifying work. AL is happy to lead on the latter, but noted that chance of success could be low/uncertain.

Danae Portolou (DP) suggested a LIFE 'communications' grant to put together a communication package, including videos, on EBCC outputs. This would require matched funding.

TOP 5. Cluj Conference Proceedings

DN reported that he had recent contact with Judit Veres-Szaszka, who had taken over some responsibility on this from Zoltan Szabo. A provisional list of EBCC reviewers for 8 submitted papers had been agreed.

AP4: DN to liaise with Judit Veres-Szaszka about circulating the papers to reviewers.

TOP 6. EBCC Conference in Germany in 2016

This was the main discussion item for this meeting. Kai Gedeon (KG) presented the overall financial plan, noting that they are still waiting for confirmation of 20k from BFG.

Conference fees likely to be 220 euros for regular participants and, and 80 for reduced fee for low income countries (used World Bank threshold of 20k income per year – so all eastern and southern countries are considered low income). Fees include registration, conference packs and conference dinner. No provision for student fees.

Budget includes 50k-70k for travel allowances. PV noted that MAVA grant could cover attendance for ca 8 participants to support EBBA2.

Website will officially open when the funding starts on Nov 15. KG and his organising team had prepared framework. The Scientific Programme Committee (SPC) met and provided text for key elements prior to Board meeting. Expecting to get personal information from plenary speakers, for posting on website by Nov 15th. KG presented the conference logo, of a red kite flying out of the EBCC logo.

Board discussed themes and topics, starting with those supplied by KG and SPC. Usual suspects plus winter bird monitoring. Some concern about topics sounding too broad as written (e.g. new techniques and methodologies, and whether this would include satellite tracking or drones – e.g. only when used for monitoring populations). Agreed to add effects of land use change, farmland birds, woodland birds, modelling. Combined some groups: e.g. evaluating policy effects and effects of conservation action. Agreed to highlight citizen science aspects and make EBBA2 aspirations more explicit.

Currently plans for three workshops to be fit into the programme in advance: (1) EBBA2; (2) Birds and citizen science (cooperation beyond borders), and (3) waterbird monitoring. Room for at least one more workshop.

Post-conference workshop on the 'International Waterbird Census' to be held on Sat, Sept 10th. Szabolcs Nagy (SN) organising, and will need external financing for travel grants. KG asked whether this should be announced on www.birdnumbers2016.de and whether participants would use the EBCC conference website for registration and submissions, and information about travel grants.

There is a Pre-conference Meeting on 'EuroBirdPortals' organised by Gabriel Gargallo (GG) and Hans Schmid (representing Ornitho), with attendance by some members of EBCC Board. RF noted there was no need for special travel grants for this, or to register using conference website unless staying for rest of conference. KG asked whether they will want a workshop as well.

Agreed after discussion that there is room in the programme for four workshops, and those currently suggested should be scheduled in. There is no problem with having additional self-organised workshops not parallel with main lectures (e.g. evenings). There could be self-selected workshops – for example on TRIMaps or PECBMS tools

Board then discussed key dates leading up to conference. The abstract submission deadline for oral presentations and posters will be Feb 28th with an unofficial deadline of March 15th. The plan is to announce acceptance of oral presentations by April 30th. Speed Talks are also planned and the possibility for these will be mentioned at the time of registration. Oral presentations not accepted may be acceptable for speed talks, or posters.

Plan to announce and early draft of the programme at the time the website goes live. Final programme will be circulated ca 4-8 weeks before conference. Seven plenary speakers and overall programme agreed but suggestion from Board to have the excursion on the 2nd day. German atlas talk could be good start to conference, and end with Franz Barlein on Friday.

There will be a deadline to apply for travel allowances. List of invited speakers/participants will be available by May 1st, for considering travel allowances. PV noted that this list could then be used to identify key gaps in countries and EBBA2 contacts.

AP 5: all to send any other topic ideas to RF or KG by Nov 10th.

AP 6. KG to liaise with SN about information, registration and travel grants for the waterbirds workshop to be held after the EBCC conference.

TOP 7. Report from EBCC Delegate Officer.

Changes to delegates already covered during AGM. OK looking for material to include in the EBCC newsletter to be circulated subsequent to Board meeting. Discussion of the value of producing a joint newsletter in future that would encompass EBCC, PECBM, EBBA2 and EBP activities. This could be a substantial task and would need an editorial board.

TOP 8. Bird Census News update

AA reported that the last issue of BCN was in June, next one expected in Dec. The spring 2016 issue is already planned, and the autumn 2016 issue is planned to be a special issue on winter bird monitoring.

TOP 9. EBCC website update and developments.

Short discussion on need to improve and update EBCC website, building on progress made with the new EBBA2 website hosted at CSO and using the new software. Agreed to continue discussion on best approach to integrating different EBCC projects and develop website, at the next Board meeting.

TOP 10. Strategic meeting between BirdLife and EBCC

RF updated all on meeting in Brussels on Sept 13th with BirdLife on policy-relevant work and relationship with EBCC & PECBM. Attended by VK, DN, RF and PV from EBCC. Exchanged information about main EBCC projects, discussions with Eurostat and others about indicators, EBP and the Life Preparatory bid, niche-based approaches to indicator development, and Article 12 reporting. BirdLife talked about the three-year EuroSAP project (with Christina I), and its search for funding for the next BiE3. Currently in contact with EBCC about guidelines for the latter reporting and some potentially spurious population estimates. BirdLife involved in Horizon2020 proposal around IBA monitoring, and apps (in Indonesia, Spain and Slovenia) on bird trends and threats. All agreed annual meeting is good idea.

TOP 11. Update on Eurapmon

DN reported that Eurapmon had been completed and that members of the consortium, including BTO, were discussing plans for a follow-up bid to COST, likely to focus on the value of monitoring raptor populations and levels of contaminants in tissues in relation to EC policy on potentially toxic substances. The proposal would be submitted in spring 2016.

TOP 12. EBCC data requests – postponed to next meeting

TOP 13. Report from Wetlands International – postponed to next meeting

TOP 14. Report from BirdLife International – postponed to next meeting

TOP 15. Date and venue of next Board meeting

Given that early April is best for atlas training in southeast Europe, the weeks starting April 11th and April 18th were suggested, with an optional practical atlas training session to be held on the subsequent weekends. Potential country options include Bulgaria, Croatia (for specific atlas training requirements), Macedonia (atlas coverage rather than training) and Belarus (to help liaise between NGOs, although field season starts later).

AP7: DN to circulate proposed dates to Board.

AP8: Marina Kipson (MK) to contact national contacts to assess interest, dates and potential contenders for MAVA EBBA2 support.

TOP 16. No other business.

Ruud Foppen
Chairman

David Noble
Secretary