



European Bird Census Council



Minutes of 56th EBCC Board meeting in Athens

Venue: Phillipos Hotel, Athens

Date /Time: October 30th and 31th 2018, full days

Present: Ruud Foppen (Chair, RF), Aleksi Lehikoinen (AL), Mikhail Kalyakin (MK), Dawn Balmer (DB), Henning Heldbjerg (HH), Oskars Keišs (OK), Danae Portolou (DP), Verena Keller (VK), Sergi Herrando (SH), Joao Rabaca (JR), Ivan Ramirez (IR), Anny Anselin (AA), Mark Eaton (ME), Szabolcs Nagy (SN), Lluís Broton (LB)

Not attending Board meeting: Petr Vorisek, Tom Langendoen, Anna Staneva, Gabriel Gargallo, Sergi Herrando

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda

We started the meeting with the remaining agenda items from the Atlas Steering Committee, chaired by Verena. Welcome to Dawn Balmer who replaces David Noble, and will undertake role of Secretary. Other roles that DN covered will be discussed in Evora in April 2019.

2. Minutes and Actions of 55th EBCC Board meeting in Evora

The Minutes from the 55th meeting need to be presented to delegates of Evora in advance of the conference. Changes to the 55th minutes will be corrected by DP and uploaded to the website.

AP5: Communications plan. The plan is for the EBCC website to act as an umbrella website with links to new standalone websites for EBBA2 and PECBMS. The EBCC website would provide summary information about EBBA2 and PECBMS, but readers would be directed to those specific websites. Need to establish who has permission to update website. Alena Klanova is happy to update website, but needs content providing. A proposal from Communications team is required, stating what needs doing on website (remove old content, add new content, update publications) and draw up a schedule for changes. Need to circulate a proposal, and use email to carry forward this item (DP).

AP1: communications team prepares a proposal for new website content

All other Action points covered in the agenda of 56th meeting. RF thanks DP and DN for their help with Minutes from the 55th meeting.

3. EBBA2

VK gave a brief update of the meeting on the 29th October of the Atlas Steering Committee. Excellent progress has been made with gathering data on distribution and abundance from the countries, though there are still some outstanding, and this will hopefully arrive by the end of December. Progress has been made on deciding what data to present in the maps and consideration of mapping styles; further trials are required to test colour options and map styles.

The EU has interest in using site level data from EBBA2 for farmland birds. Maria –Luisa Paracchini from Joint Research Center (JRC) about to sign a contract with EBBA2 on support to refining data analysis from EBBA2 and PECBMS. Policy interpretation of EBBA2 still ongoing.

Fundraising has been difficult; few opportunities still in discussion. MAVA negotiations are increasingly difficult as they wind down their activities, though VK remains hopeful they will continue support. Work for species account information is offered in-kind will make a significant difference to the budget.

Work on species accounts will begin in January. Board members will act as Account Editors, and ensure accounts are delivered on time, are the correct length, and that species experts have been consulted. Decisions need to be made on word length and number of maps for each species account. Recommendations are to keep number of authors to three, and citations to five, with some flexibility permitted. VK will check all accounts to finalise and sign off. The timescale is as follows:

Finalise guidelines by the end of December 2018.

Attempt to allocate all species to authors by end of December 2018.

Finalise accounts from authors by 31 July 2019.

Been through all the editing stages by 30 November 2019.

Publication by December 2020.

Work is progressing well on illustrations (44 artists from 18 countries, 172 illustrations received).

4. EBCC conference Evora

Welcome to João Rabaça.

JR outlined progress with conference organisation so far.

Funding: It has been difficult to raise funds for travel grants, and at the moment no travel grants will be available for low-income countries. The aim will be to keep the reduced fee for low-income countries. So far there have been enquiries from 5–6 people from low-income countries but JR is unclear how many people from low-income countries may attend. There is also a shortfall in funding for the buses required for the fieldtrip. JR is still waiting to hear back from some applications and will review funding in December. VK explained that EBCC conferences are open to all and it is important that a wide range of delegates are represented. If funding remains low, we could consider making funds available from EBCC accounts for low-income countries, though it is unclear how much would be required. SN reported that 15,500 euros have been secured for IWC coordinators to attend the workshop; the amount provided will depend on requests and may cover travel and accommodation. The budget for the PECBMS workshop is unknown.

Logistics: Consider the timing of Board Meeting and Atlas Steering Committee meeting and inform members.

Excursions: The excursions are in planning stage, there are five planned and no issues except funding as discussed above.

Hotels: Some will give discounts to delegates. It is important that all delegates make their own arrangements.

Publication of abstracts: Publication of abstracts are planned for Airo (?), and also agreed for proceedings. This will be free of charge. Carlos Godinho will act as Head Editor and the rest of the Scientific Committee will act as Editors. Submissions will be required by the end May 2019, and published December 2019.

Review of abstracts: AL informed us that talks had been ranked by the Scientific Committee

members and suggested that talks with the lowest ranks are moved to speed talks. Some people submitted two abstracts so suggest take the highest ranking talk and move other to a poster. AL applied themes to each talk to get an idea of subject groupings. There were few papers on indicators, but more papers on methods, population dynamics and trends. There were few on demography. Worth checking whether the lower ranked talks are from eastern Europe. The next task for the Scientific Committee is to see how the talks fit in the programme, and whether there is a requirement for any speed talks. If speed talks are required, we need to give a strong message to delegates that speed talks are valued, so they are not disappointed, and provide guidelines to delegates. The costs for electronic posters are high, so unlikely to be offered at the conference, but the final decision not made.

Registration: There have been 100 registrations so far. There were some issues with the Paypal system; the University says there is a problem and doing all they can to solve the problem. Essential this is fixed as soon as possible so that payments can be made (JC confirmed Paypal issues now fixed 31/10/2019).

Posters: Currently small number of posters submitted. The space can accommodate c30–40 posters.

Workshops: EBBA2, PECBMS, IWC, Bird monitoring, decision making and public policies (SPEA, Environmental Ministry). EBBA2 workshop has not yet planned – key aims would be an opportunity to bring EBBA2 coordinators up to date, consider post-EBBA2 opportunities – further thought required. The IWC event for coordinators is all arranged.

Side events: Marc Van Roomen is planning an IWC event for East Atlantic flyway, though not part of the conference. This is planned to be on Friday/Sat afternoon so close to the IWC workshop. Is there anything specific planned for the Eurobird Portal? This needs to be checked with EBP coordinator Gabriel Gargallo

AP2: CSO team to set up a Goolesheet for list of invited delegates for PECBMS, IWC, EBBA2.

AP3: IR to consider applying for funding from a foundation that may be receptive.

AP4: Need to decide on chairs, workshop leaders etc as soon as possible so that travel arrangements can be organised.

AP5: Inform successful delegates regarding their oral submission in early November, and promote posters.

5. News from BirdLife International (IR)

Projects/activities

Raptor project

The IUCN keen to do Mediterranean and N African assessment of raptors under MAVA funding, but asked to delay the work until the Redlist work has been completed.

Article 12 Reporting

BirdLife has participated in the European Red List of Birds tender which was released at the end of July, and a deadline just five weeks later. A training and assessment verification role has been included in the proposal. BirdLife had contacted EBCC to ask if they were interested in participating in the tender but had not received a reply, so aim to include EBCC as a consultant once we have full confirmation of approved budget. There is no plan for Steering and Technical Committees; instead more technical meetings with the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC-BD) and the

European Commission are included. It is expected the budget will be tight (350K) and will need to cover an EU and a pan-European assessments over 30 months, four technical reports and one full-colour publication. The official deadline for the EU assessment is early 2020 aiming to feed the results into the Strategy 2020 Assessment Report. The deadline for the pan-European assessment is first half of 2021. The plan is to keep Anna Staneva as overall coordinator with four to six staff working on the project, starting Jan 2019. The focus will be more on analytical work and less on Main tasks now are to verify reports from Article 12, go back to countries if any inconsistencies, validate, send analysis to commission. Data collection from non-EU countries will use a similar approach to previous years – some payment to a few countries for help with process. No funding for workshops, launches etc. Variation in different countries for own assessments (6, 10 years). SN raised questions about non-breeding trends used in the report, and if a new method could be applied.

VK suggests for next round need to talk to Commission and IUCN about how best to use new EBBA2 data, and trend data. EBCC needs to be more pro-active in the future.

EUROSAP

BirdLife completed the three-year LIFE EuroSAP project in September. Nine Species Action Plans (SAPS) were approved by the European Commission in May 2018, and three SAPs will be approved by AEWA in December and one (Turtle Dove) will be approved also by the CMS (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals). These documents contain the most recent data available on the 16 targeted species, and are publicly available at <http://www.trackingactionplans.org>. Within the EuroSAP project, a distribution model for Turtle Dove was developed by the EBBA2 team in collaboration with experts from RSPB and research organisations from Western Europe. The aim is to help identify Priority Intervention Areas (PIAs) for Turtle Doves, which is one of the priority actions of the International Species Action Plan. The results will be presented to the Directorate-General for Environment and EU Member States and a proposal will be submitted on how to incorporate PIAs in National Conservation Strategies. More work is needed to provide higher level of detail of the model (potentially by PECBMS team) and to look at relationship between different variables.

IEEP project

The Drivers of successful implementation of the Nature Directives project, led by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), with small input from BirdLife, is almost completed. A final report has been submitted to the European Commission, while IEEP will be presenting the project results meetings of the EU Member States in October and November. The most important results of the project are the case studies showing the successes of conservation across the EU and cover different species and habitat. The 2018 update of the Global Red List will be published on the 14th of November.

AP6: RF to respond to IR/AS regarding EBCC involvement as consultants.

6. News from Wetland International (SN)

Two issues were discussed: developing a wetland bird index based on both breeding (e.g. PECBMS) and non-breeding (IWC) data and how to take forward the colonial breeding bird monitoring issue. New AEWA monitoring guidelines have been produced following collaboration with Sovon and WWT. The aim is to give guidance on how schemes can deliver to Article 12 and to help countries with no strong monitoring system in place.

EU Waterbird Indicator – a EU NGO grant programme will provide more frequent and up to date statements on species assessment, though not species level trends. There is no equivalent of the PECBMS project for waterbirds yet. Three policy instruments for waterbirds described - water framework, marine framework and coastal zone management. Policy does require waterbird indicators (AEWA, Ramsar Convention). There is a plan to produce indices at species level, and a dashboard view to show population growth rates and thematic multi-species indices based on mid-winter counts for Annex 1 species, and Annex 2 species. IWC covers 40 species, bringing IWC and PECBMS together can double species covered, whilst incorporating IWC, PECBMS and colonial species can triple the number of species covered. The addition of PECBMS data would really make a difference, and colonial species add further increases. We concluded that IWC and PECBMS combined could produce a larger species pool and produce more representative indicators. Adding colonial breeding birds would further increase the pool, especially for marine and coastal habitats. There was a need to further investigate the mix of winter and breeding season data and assess which datasets are most robust, and consider whether the winter and breeding season trends agree, and which species can you potentially bring datasets together for. DP commented that in Greece, they only carry out IWC counts on specific weekends, and undertake the counts even if weather is bad, which means that in some years the information might not be very reliable. VK echoed the need to try to include more species in to PECBMS, though we are still far away from reliable trends for all species, especially for waterbirds. EBCC need to push this forward, and have a leading role. We need to establish how many countries provide annual species indices for waterbirds. We concluded we need a to mobilise data better and need a joint initiative to have a pooling effect of data, and need to review the current information available on annual trends.

AP7: Compile a simple matrix of species and country and ask country coordinators to fill in what information is available at the country level. (SN, HH)

7. PECBMS

Petr Vorisek provided a written report (see PECBMS update October 2018).

Key points discussed:

Data for 2018 update collected, checked and ready for calculation of European trends and indicators. Difficulties with data delivery from some countries persist, but overall aim (to produce updated indices and indicators) will be achieved, although with some delay. There is a complex revision of data quality control, computation procedure and other steps within the production of indices and indicators was planned for 2018 update, but this will not happen due to capacity reasons. There are 169 individuals in the network. Information on generic breeding bird monitoring schemes was updated on the website. Maaïke de Jong took part in IOC, she gave a talk in the session on citizen science. The new PECBMS website www.pecbms.info was launched on 19 September and is a great improvement, making the information easier to access.

There is a new PECBMS website at <https://pecbms.info/>

There has been some discussion around a new forest bird indicator for EU policy purposes, specifically an implementation of niche based approach for species selection. Further work has been suspended for now. A mini-workshop, where species selection will be discussed, is planned in winter 2019, most likely to be combined with a mini-workshop on regional Farmland Bird Indicator as there will certainly be overlap among participants. Discussion around a Regional Farmland Bird and how to develop the indicators at regional (sub-national) level is finished. The main problem is a lack of both, standardised monitoring, and timed species lists data from the regions covering sufficient

period. The results will be summarised in a report and will be also discussed at the mini-workshop in winter 2019.

An on-line tool for collecting TRIM output files from national coordinators including automatic data quality control is available. Adaptation for RTRIM outputs will only be needed. A second tool, a pilot tool for collection of site level data, is under preparation, though delayed. ICO is doing excellent job in programming the tool and we expect everything will be properly finished by the end of the grant. Arco Van Strien will visit Prague in December and will discuss how to proceed further with tools used for calculation of supranational outputs. The Steering Group/Technical Group meeting met in May 2018 in Prague. There has been a meeting with DG Agri in early October 2018 in Brussels. The meeting was initiated by DG Agri, and clarified technical and methodological details of production of the FBI.

Maaïke de Jong left the position of PECBMS coordinator at the end of September 2018. Eva Silarova will start working on 1 November (part time). We will allocate other tasks among rest of the team, i.e. Alena Klvanova and possible Petr Vorisek. Petr will leave the position of the head of the unit in the CSO and also the position of PECBMS project manager by the end of 2018. He plans to leave CSO in near future too, but the details will depend on failure or success of several projects we have applied for in 2018. CSO is strongly committed to continue in coordination of PECBMS and will make sure the project runs smoothly. Steering Group Skype discussion is planned for early November to discuss the issue too. Important to consider the composition of Board with respect to representation of EBCC on PECBMS.

A letter to the editor was published in *Biological Conservation* as a reaction to a paper about gaps in biodiversity monitoring in Europe. A manuscript of a paper on Russian contribution to EBBA2 and perspectives of development of common bird monitoring in European Russia was submitted to the proceedings from the Russian Ornithological Congress.

A grant has been applied for a project on 'Citizen science for evidence based decision making on biodiversity in an era of global change'. The estimated budget is 3.049.900,00 Euro, and will be led by CSO.

It is hoped this grant would support citizen science initiatives in East and South of Europe where there is an urgent need to develop biodiversity surveys in order to provide policies with reliable and unbiased information on biodiversity. The project aims for 12 target countries in East and South Europe to be able to contribute with standardised biodiversity data to international initiatives. The plan is to train volunteer fieldworkers in bird identification using the well established programme BirdID from Nord University, and to train national and regional coordinators in the methods and approaches needed to run citizen science programmes. The project concept was submitted and now waiting to hear if they will be invited to submit a full project proposal in November and December 2018.

Marina Kipson left for maternal leave in early October and Maaïke de Jong left the CSO at the end of September 2018. New PECBMS coordinator was recruited and will start working from November 2018.

8. Euro Bird Portal

The EBP viewer maps were updated to show data from Croatia; the viewer now shows data from all except three EU member states (Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia). Plans for further agreements in the

future eg Russia.

The 12th EBP meeting took place in Évora on April 12-13th 2018 with 19 people from 11 different countries attending. The next meeting will be in Brussels in November and the discussion will focus on how to continue the work of EBP, and consider what the possibilities are for further research. The key aim is to generate and implement automatic data flow; trials are in place and are functional – one of the highlights of EBP so far. The BirdTrack and Ornitho online systems, which collect c.60% of all the EBP data, were connected to the central EBP database repository in late spring. Aves Synfony (Slovakia) and Trektellen (data from Netherlands and Belgium) joined recently, and the work with Avimap (Netherlands), DOFbasen (Denmark), Tiira (Finland), Dabasdati (Latvia) and Birds.cz (Czech Republic) is advancing well. Thanks to the new data flow system, data is submitted automatically to the EBP central repository on a daily basis and updated up to the previous day.

A report on hunting periods by Gabriel Gargallo and Stephen Baillie has now been published and describes how to use EBP data as an information tool to better define and back up decisions on hunting. The guidelines concentrate on the use of online bird portal data, primarily for determination of the onset of spring migration, because observational data of the type gathered by national portals and collated by EBP are particularly suitable for measuring it. This is especially important for the European Commission. Although the report is published, there is still a need to understand whether Member States and stakeholders are using the document. The document is available here: <https://goo.gl/qJUipD>

9. Standing update on future Board composition (RF)

Ruud Foppen, Anny Anselin, Oskars Keišs and Llouis Brotons are stepping down, and David Noble stepped down earlier in the year. We discussed the four positions on the Board and have proposed candidates for Chairman (Mark Eaton) and Treasurer (Chris van Turnhout). Dawn Balmer is willing to take on the role of Secretary. We discussed earlier mentioned potential candidates Jean-Yves Paquet and Gabriel Gargallo. RF contacted both and Jean-Yves is willing to accept. Gabriel Gargallo gladly to accept, but is also happy to continue as an observer. New names which were mentioned and discussed are Ainars Aunins from Latvia and Yuriy Strus from Ukraine. After some discussion we decided to ask Ainars as our fifth candidate. When a new chair is appointed, VK will become Vice-Chair.

We agreed we need to inform delegates that four people are stepping down and ask if they want to become a board member or propose others, but also inform that we have 4–6 candidates already, and that the Board have proposed candidates for Chair and Treasurer.

AP8: Ask Ainars Aunins to join the Board (RF).

AP9: Prepare email to delegates, inform 4 stepping down, ask for names to propose but Board will make 4 recommendations (OK, RF).

AP10: Summarise current thinking on board members and roles (VK).

We discussed whether we should we change the constitution (statute) to make it clear the number of terms that board members and Chair can serve and concluded that the new board should do this

AL would take on the role coordinating Bird Census News. Roles of Data Officer, Delegates Officer and Conference Officer to be discussed further.

10. Report from EBCC Delegates Officer

OK reported that some delegates are difficult to communicate with and agreed to contact them all again soon.

AP11: Send email to all delegates with general update from EBCC (OK).

11. Financial Report updates for 2018 (AA)

The budget showed 36,386 euros at April 2018 and 25,500 euro at October 2018. 11,000 euros have been provided to Ana Gamero PECBMS (10,448 euros) and there have been some travel costs for Evora and bank costs.

AP12: Consider whether any overheads can be put in project budgets. RF to talk to PV.

AP13: Prepare report for Evora conference (AA)

12. Bird Census News update

There was a new issue in June 2018, though there were some delays. AL will take over from AA after the Evora meeting in April 2019. AA expressed a willingness to help with an Editorial Board role. Proposed to keep same layout at the moment. Themes of garden monitoring schemes, national atlases and contributions to EBBA2 were considered for the next issue.

AP14: Request for contributions in next newsletter – send out Jan 2019 (AL, ME).

AP15: Ask Olga whether she is still available to do layout (AA).

13. Discussion of research opportunities and proposals and standing update on ongoing EBCC research collaborations

Following the last workshop in Prague, we continue to develop ideas how to use atlas data following last workshop in Prague. We discussed whether we should we collate ideas on spreadsheet or have another workshop focusing in more detail on research ideas to develop proposals. There is a need to be more proactive in asking for projects and getting people involved.

AP16: Enquire if there is willingness to have a second workshop to cover EBBA2 and PECBMS data, and ask if there are any proposals out there that EBCC could get involved with (AL)

14. Update on communications (Plan, EBCC website, newsletter, social media)

The newsletter is working well. More work is required on the website. The EBCC website should act as an 'umbrella' website with slim-down content on EBP, EBBA2 and PECBMS and clear links to the three new websites, where more detailed information can be found. Alena Klanova is happy to continue to make changes to the website but needs direction.

AP17: DP to lead on proposal for website content, with help from other Board member.

15. Previous EBCC Conference business

David Noble communicated that the organisers of the Cluj conference are in favour of publishing the proceedings in BCN and David have obtained email addresses for the authors of the six papers and he is in the process of writing to them to apologize and to see if they still want to publish their paper in BCN.

AP18: DN to contact proceeding contributors with apology

16. Trektellen, Bird Observatories, a new global or pan European project?

There are many portals in individual countries which are used by birdwatchers to record their sightings at a range of sites, with birdwatchers having many different sites. Trektellen is site based with most observers contributing data from just one sites, and has become a repository for nocturnal migration information. Daily visible migration counts from many Bird Observatories are submitted to Trektellen. Bird Observatories are also keen to deposit their daily census records in a database and are using a range of portals eg BirdTrack in the UK. We discussed whether there is there a role for EBCC to influence data collection and research. These portals have good information on migrants outside breeding and winter period, and may complement information on breeding and winter monitoring; we discussed if any trends be produced for the migration period. Is there information from weather radar that can be fed in?

AP19: Produce a matrix to show what the different portals offer so we can gain a better understanding (DB)

AP20: Talk to Gabriel Gargello about possible relations with EBP and if advice can be provided on migration monitoring (RF)

17. Any Other Business

MK told us how the focus is starting to shift to monitoring now that Atlas is starting to come to the end. There are internal talks about sending the atlas data to GBIF, though there are some conflicts of interest to overcome.

DP explained that a consultancy had won the bid to provide indicators for the Greek Ministry but the Consultancy will have to request data from BirdLife as they don't have their own data. We suggest DP contact PV regarding the data received by PECBMS and the consistency and quality of data provided by the consultancy.

RF announced the Dutch atlas was complete and there would be a launch later in the autumn.

HH told us that the fieldwork for the Danish atlas was finished and that writing was underway. They were very pleased with the fieldwork.

The next EBCC conference will be in 2022 and offers of locations and organisations to host are welcomed.

AP21: Request offers for hosting the next conference in the newsletter for delegates (need to know end Dec). RF checks with Alena the date of next newsletter.

AP22: Email delegates to request offers for location of next conference. See AP10 (OK)

Regarding Evora 2019, the Board needs to prepare the Treasurer Report, Chairmans Report and Delegates/Board elections.

AP23: Produce a timetable for producing the Treasurer Report (AA), Chairmans Report (RF) and Delegates/Board elections (OK, RF).