

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the European Bird Census Council

9th June 2020 15:00 CET (14:00 BST)

Present: Karen Aghababayan, Vitalie Ajder, Dawn Balmer (Secretary), Taulant Bino, Mattia Brambilla, Gianpiero Calvi, Mark Eaton (Chairman), Henning Heldbjerg, Christina Ieronymidou, Mikhail Kalyakin, Johannes Kamp, Verena Keller, Katharina Klein, Alena Klvaňová, Peter Knaus, Åke Lindström, David Noble, Jean-Yves Paquet, Clara Pladevall, Danae Portolou, João Rabaça, Stoycho Stoychev, Sven Trautmann, Chris van Turnhout (Treasurer), Silvia Ursul, Danka Uzunova, Metodija Veleviski, Thomas Vikstrøm, Danka Uzunova.

1. Chairman's welcome

Mark Eaton (ME) gave a warm welcome to everyone who joined the meeting. It was the first EBCC AGM to be held by video conference, and thanked everyone for joining.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Juan Carlos del Moral, Gabriel Gargallo, Aleksi Lehikoinen, Ivan Ramirez.

3. Minutes of last AGM available on the website (<http://www.ebcc.info/board-meetings/>)

4. Chairman's report

ME gave an update on the work of EBCC (see Chairman's report circulated to all delegates ahead of the meeting). It's been a good and busy year with Eurobirdportal (EBP), Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring (PECMBS) and the European Breeding Bird Atlas (EBBA2) all making excellent progress. ME expressed many thanks to all the delegates who contributed to these projects.

At our last Annual General Meeting, in Evora in April 2019, Ruud Foppen, Anny Anselin and Lluís Brotons stood down from the board and we welcomed Chris van Turnhout, Ainar Aunins and Jean-Yves Paquet in their places. ME thanked the Observers who contribute to the Board meetings and to EBCC projects throughout the year. The Board met in Sempach (Switzerland) in November 2019 while the spring meeting in April 2020 took place over Zoom.

Henning Heldbjerg, Delegate Officer, has recently been in touch with all country delegates to ensure that they are still active, engaged with relevant activities within their countries and willing to support the activities of the EBCC. As a result, a number of changes to the delegate network have been proposed. We thank those delegates stepping down for their support, and welcome new delegates to the network.

Anny Anselin stepped down as Editor of Bird Census News in spring 2019. Aleksi Lehikoinen stepped into the position of Bird Census News editor, with support from Henning Heldbjerg, Mark Eaton, Jean-Yves Paquet and Olga Voltzit. The most recent issue was published in April 2020. ME thanked everyone involved in BCN and encouraged all to think about content and consider publishing articles there.

It's been a busy period for communication of EBCC work. The website www.ebcc.info and separate websites for the three main projects are maintained and updated regularly. The EBCC website has been redeveloped and will be relaunched in June. The [e-newsletter](#) is currently sent to over 400 contacts, four times a year, featuring a range of relevant news items both on EBCC activities but also items of interest from across the network. Please encourage others to sign up to the e-newsletter so we can spread EBCC news more widely. We also issued an additional [short e-newsletter regarding Covid-19](#) and its impact upon the EBCC network and activities. On Facebook there is an account for the [EBBA2 project](#) and a new account for the [EBCC](#) started in March 2020, and Twitter accounts for EBP (@EuroBirdPortal), EBBA2 (@newebba) and a EBCC (@_EBCC) account – our intention is to merge those three accounts into one active EBCC account in due course.

At the autumn 2019 board meeting we heard proposals for hosting the next EBCC conference in Switzerland and in Latvia. The board were impressed by both bids, and so made the decision to hold the next EBCC conference, our 22nd, in Switzerland, and the following one in 2025 in Riga, Latvia. The 22nd conference will be hosted by the Swiss Ornithological Institute in Lucerne in April 2022; further details will be announced soon. From what we have seen of the venue, facilities and organising team, and what we know of the EBCC community, we can anticipate another great conference.

New European indices, based on the data from 28 European countries and covering 170 common bird species for the period 1980–2017, were published in December 2019. Multi-species indicators were produced for Europe and its regions (West, North, Central & East and South Europe), whole EU, New and Old EU states and biogeographical regions. The indicators were computed for common farmland, common forest, and all common birds.

PECBMS developments have included a new forest bird indicator for EU policy purposes as agreed at the mini-workshop in Solsona. There has also been a lot of work done developing an on-line tool for collecting TRIM output files from national coordinators including automatic data quality control and this was used in this year's data collection. The program (TRIM, TRends and Indices for Monitoring data) was rebuilt by Statistics Netherlands as a package for the freely available and widely used open source program R. An on-line tool for collection of site level data is also under preparation. A pilot version was finished in January by ICO and the tool will be further developed during 2020. In March, the PECBMS Steering and Technical Group meeting took place via Skype.

Plans for the publication of the European Breeding Bird Atlas are on track, and there has been an immense amount of work put in by the team over the last year, delivering all material by February 2020. Publication is planned for late November and the coordination team are working with Lynx on the final production. The impacts of covid-19 are unknown but are not thought to be significant. There have been discussions around promotion of the book and a launch event to celebrate the project, though with continuing covid-19 implications it is not clear if that will be possible.

Work is underway on a methodological paper on the modelling approach used for EBBA2 and a first paper using atlas data to look at species' range change across Europe. There are plans to collaborate with individuals and organisations within the EBCC network on further publications. Discussions are underway about making the atlas data available to other researchers from late 2021 onwards using a data request approach..

The Eurobirdportal continues to work well and involves organisations from 30 different countries and takes data from 20 different online bird portal systems. The 'live' version of the EBP viewer was launched in spring 2019 and allows the public can now see almost real-time visualisations of the movement of 105 bird species across Europe. The vast majority of the data (99%) is currently submitted automatically to the EBP central repository on a daily basis. Nearly 50 million records collected in 2019. A priority remains to encourage the collection of complete lists since these

enable more robust analyses than casual records; although the proportion of data submitted as complete lists has increased to 30% during the last few years, there is still room for improvement. EBP is working with the European Food & Safety Agency (EFSA) developing tools to aid the surveillance of avian influenza. This work includes collaboration with EURING to produce a web tool combining data on species' distribution and connectivity. The 15th EBP meeting took place in Barcelona in March 2020, with representatives from 15 countries. data use and policy-related subjects were key topics discussed.

EBCC continues to engage with other like-minded organisations across Europe on areas of mutual interest. We are working with Wetlands International to develop ideas on better monitoring of colonial, range-restricted and scarce species for which there are significant knowledge gaps currently. The EBCC network have been supporting BirdLife International in the compilation of data and provision of expertise to enable new Red Lists for the Europe Union and all-Europe to be published. There have been recent discussions with Rewilding Europe, the Zoological Society of London and BirdLife International on a revision of the 'Wildlife Comeback', and also with Butterfly Conservation Europe to see how EBCC might work more closely with them in the future.

Covid has had a big impact on the EBCC community this spring and summer, on individuals and organisations, but also on fieldwork opportunities and funding for projects. EBCC offers support to the whole community.

5. Financial Report for the year 2019-20

Chris van Turnhout (CvT) presented the Financial Report for 2019. Thanks to Ruud Foppen and Gunna Vos who approved the accounts. Capital stands at nearly 31,000 euros, the increase in funds a result of data charges made for research projects. New research projects planned are expected to generate another 10,000 euros. Expenses in 2019 are mainly for development of the new website, and travel and accommodation for Board members from low income countries. There is scope to allocate to 20,000 euros to either PECBMS or EBBA2 and a decision will be made at a later point. Thanks to CvT for preparing the financial report.

6. Changes in national Delegates

Henning Heldbjerg (HH), Delegates Officer, made contact with delegates during May 2020 to provide an up-to-date list of delegates and had a response from 75 delegates. Until now we have had 87 EBCC delegates from 46 European countries; the full list is downloadable as an Excel spreadsheet from the website <https://www.ebcc.info/what-is-ebcc/who-are-we/>. Two delegates per country are permitted. Changes at the AGM are as follows:

- **12 delegates are stepping down:** Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece (x2), Iceland (x2), Italy (x2), Norway, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland
- **9 new delegates suggested:** Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece (x2) Iceland (x2), Italy (x2), Switzerland
- **No new delegates suggested yet (3):** Norway, Serbia, Slovenia.
- **One more country with an EBCC-delegate:** Albania

Welcome to Taulant Bino (Albania), Nermina Sarajlić (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Christos Barboutis and Danae Portolou (Greece), Mattia Brambilla and Gianpiero Calvi (Italy) and Peter Knaus (Switzerland).

No confirmation of delegates for Croatia and Iceland (x2) yet. Thanks were expressed to HH.

7. Next Bird Numbers conference

As mentioned above, the next EBCC conference is planned for April 2022 in Lucerne, Switzerland and the following one in Riga, Latvia. More details to follow.

8. Any other business

There was a general discussion about how well the zoom meeting had gone and Ake Lindstrom said it was good to see young people at the meeting. We agreed that future AGM's should be made available by video conference, even in years when there is a conference, so those that cannot attend can join in. There was also the suggestion that some particular issues could be discussed through zoom on a regular basis; please make suggestions to the Secretary.

Kataerina Klein asked if a country can have more than 2 delegates and it was confirmed that EBCC statute says only two. David Noble asked if there was any progress in contacting countries without delegates and HH confirmed at we are about to contact potential delegates there, and also to make progress in countries with just one delegate.

Karen Aghababyan asked what the plans are, and strategy of EBCC, in regards of expanding PECBMS to the East. Verena Keller explained that EBCC have been very focussed on the Atlas in recent years though there has been increased engagement with more countries through Atlas work and it was encouraging to hear of countries starting monitoring or enlarging existing schemes. VK said that EBCC had applied for a large grant but did not get it and that would have helped with technical and financial support. Alena Klvaňová said it was still a priority to expand and support new schemes. She said PECBMS hoped to involve Croatia very soon; there is already a monitoring schemes running. Serbia and Andorra have a monitoring schemes, and Belarus have data that need checking which will take time, but hopefully Croatia and Andorra are very close to joining PECBMS. Armenia have provided data and is being looked at. She also explained that the Moscow region of Russia (a huge region, bigger than Switzerland!) has good quality data and hopes to be able to include the region soon.

Jean-Yves Paquet promoted Bird Census News and said the last issue was very good. He said it was important for the community to keep in contact and that articles don't have to be complete results. He encouraged everyone to promote BCN on social media. The next EBCC Newsletter will have details about the EBBA2 book so this is a good way to spread the news within your networks. Karen Aghababyan asked if there are plans for an index for BCN. Jean-Yves Paquet explained that EBCC were looking for a technical solution. Mark Eaton added that there was a plan for indexing which recently fell through.

Sven Trautmann asked if the sales of EBCC artwork successful and Alena Klvaňová said that 50 original paintings had been sold.

Alena Klvaňová asked that those delegates on Facebook help us promote the EBCC account by following us and sharing the posts (<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanBirdCensusCouncil/>)

Dawn Balmer
Secretary, EBCC