

## **Draft minutes of 60<sup>th</sup> EBCC Board meeting**

**Date /Time:** 1 December 2020 (0930-1230 CET) and 4 December 2020 (0930-1300 CET)

**By zoom**

**Attendees:** Mark Eaton (Chair, ME), Verena Keller (Vice Chair, VK), Dawn Balmer (Secretary, DB), Chris van Turnhout (Treasurer, CvT), Aleksi Lehikoinen (AL), Mikhail Kalyakin (MK), Henning Heldbjerg (HH), Danae Portolou (DP), Petr Voříšek (PV), Alena Klvaňová (AK), Anna Staneva (AS), Sergi Herrando (SH), Gabriel Gargallo (GG), Ivan Ramirez (IR), Szabolcs Nagy (SN), Ainars Aunins (AA), Jean-Yves Paquet (J-YP)

### **Tuesday 1 December**

#### **1. Welcome and adoption of agenda)**

ME welcomed everyone to the meeting. The agenda was re-organised due to availability of Board Members over the two dates.

#### **2. Minutes and Actions of 59<sup>th</sup> EBCC Board meeting**

Action points were mentioned under each agenda point.

#### **3. EBBA2 update and plans for the launch**

Books have been printed and VK and ME have received their copies. VK said it had been a very busy time finishing the book. Lynx had some difficulties due to staffing, and communication was tricky at times and was stressful at the end. The book looks good. First print run of 2500 has sold out, and second print run (1500 at present) organised for January; the EBCC are due to receive royalties after the first 1000. Publicity by the EBBA2 team and EBCC is going well. Press releases are planned in many countries, including an article in the Guardian. VK has done some interviews already. There has been little time to progress with a plan for an online version of the maps. SH provided a brief concept but more to do over coming months.

#### **4. PECBMS progress report**

AK informed us that this year, not all national coordinators sent us their updated national species population trends and indices because of the modifications of the methods for this year. The new European Common Bird Indicators were published on June 30th. This update was based on data from 28 countries, from 1980 up to 2017, and for the first time, the indicators for the year 2018 are estimated using the moving average (running mean). The methods were discussed with Statistics Netherlands and Eurostat. As usual, the indicators were computed for common farmland, common forest, and all common birds on the European level, for EU and the European regions (Central & East, South, West and North Europe). The reason for the estimation is saving time to allow for the general data set revision, implementation of new tools, to clean up the database, and to run various analyses. This will lead to improved data quality controls and speed up all the processes needed for the production of species trends and indicators in the following years.

There has been considerable work to improve data flow and analyses. Data revision was carefully planned and analyses written in R, with scripts for a table with criteria (needed for quantification of whole decision process) completed. The data revision on a national basis started and was done for Lithuania, UK, Netherlands and Sweden. By the end of 2020, approximately 75% of the data revision will be completed, and the remainder finished by the end of March 2021. The RTRIM-shell on-line tool (for collecting output files from national coordinators including automatic data quality control) has been improved, with thanks to David Marti and Eloi Rovira (ICO), and communicated via the website. A new on-line tool tutorial was prepared and published. RSWAN (a new program for European species index calculation) was explored and improvements were discussed with Arco van Strien and Tom van der Meeij (Statistics Netherlands).

A report on PECBMS was published on the website in June 2020. PECBMS contributed to the EBCC Newsletter published in June and the PECBMS website was updated regularly. During the summer a survey on the production of national bird indicators across the EU Member States was carried out. There was no response from Malta: it is a Member State of the EU and data are missing. PECBMS now has its first logo, developed in cooperation with a graphic designer and with advice from the Project Steering Group – the board provided responses on the final options.

Work has been carried out on the first PECBMS data paper, which presents an updated European dataset of annual indices and trends for bird species as well as the methodology used for counting, national and European indices, and trends calculation. The paper also provides a brief overview of the applications of the data. The data paper was submitted to Scientific Data in September and a revised manuscript was resubmitted on 27 November and a decision is awaited. The PECBMS team have also been involved in a paper regarding EU bird population change analysis (Fiona Burns, RSPB Centre for Conservation Science) and an assessment of relative habitat use as a metric of species habitat association and specialization (Enya O'Reilly, Simon Butler, University of East Anglia). Anna Gamero is preparing the site-level data for a project aiming to advance the understanding of stability within and among ecosystems and across ecological scales (RSPB and the University of Sheffield). There has been work on a Turtle Dove migration project, looking at the delineation of flyways, led by Hervé Lormée from Office Français de la Biodiversité and Carles Carboneras from Instituto de Investigación en Recursos Cinegéticos; 10-yr multiplicative trend of the populations flying the western and the central-eastern flyway will be supplied.

There is good progress with schemes; ongoing discussions with Greek colleagues to discuss policy issues with their national indicators and discussions with Serbian colleagues to discuss the future monitoring scheme in their country. Assisted Belarus with computing the indices of 15 species delivered and overall assessment of the scheme. Assisted Croatia with the assessment of their scheme and the quality of data and very much hope the Croatian indices of farmland birds can be involved in PECBMS indicators next year. PECBMS also helped to raise funds for breeding bird atlas in Ukraine via CSO fundraising. Worked with the Belgian coordinator regarding data revision plans, and gave advice about using RSWAN. In Serbia, new volunteers were trained during EBBA2 and there is a chance of establishing a monitoring scheme, though there is a difficult political situation in Serbia and they require some help with funding. AL discussed monitoring in Israel and an opportunity to use data from Israel in a collaborative project. The team are in contact with Veronika Vyšná discussing Brexit and its implications for the EU indicators. In September, EU27 indicators (excluding the UK) were calculated and delivered to EUROSTAT. Thanks to Jana Škorpilová and Anna Gamero for their continued input.

**60-1 AP: Provide new information for country pages on PECBMS website.**

## 5. Euro Bird Portal report (GG)

Since April, the main task has been working on the connectivity with the Russian online portal. There is good news from Slovenia; they have sent data through which needs to be formatted and manually loaded, with a view to automated loading in the future. EBP are also collaborating with Iceland to get them on board. Work continues on the EFSA project; 50,000 euros to produce a tool (updating older BTO tool). A second contract may be possible, worth 100,000 euros, which will be important funding for EBP (25% to BTO for tool). This is very good news for EBP; the nine month contract starts late November. GG is preparing a pilot project with the European Commission following meeting earlier in the year. We briefly discussed whether the EBP data can contribute to the BCN paper on the impacts of Covid on survey work. GG thought there was good information in EBP, especially around changes in reporting rates.

## 6. Update on communications (DP, AK, ME)

Two special issues of EBCC newsletter were produced during the year (Covid in April, EBBA2 in October) and Summer and Autumn issues also published, and Winter will be published in early December. The EBCC website has been kept up to date with eight news items published since April. There are now 418 followers on the EBCC Facebook though it is quite difficult to find news; the most popular news items were about the Russian and Danish Atlas, and PECBMS bird trends. The EBBA2 Facebook has 3198 followers. We need to consider how to handle the movement of followers from EBBA2 to EBCC account in due course.

AK and VK have also been working on updating the EBBA2 website to update the text in view of the publication of the book. JYP translates some useful articles for their own newsletters so they are widely distributed in Belgium. Mailchimp stats show most people open the newsletter the day it is distributed, and click through to several articles.

Twitter has 463 followers and is growing slowly, but it isn't a very active account. JYP offered to tweet from EBCC account on EBBA2 launch day. We have not yet merged EBP (1700 followers) and EBBA2 (861 Followers) to the EBCC account yet. We need to think about how long to keep the EBBA2 account after the launch of the Atlas.

**60-2 AP: Please continue to send news through to AK for the website and social media.**

**60-3 AP: Encourage Board members to share the EBCC Newsletter with their contacts.**

## 7. Bird Census News update (AL, ME, HH)

Progress for the next issue is promising.

- one accepted manuscript in language checking and nearly ready for layout
- one manuscript in revision
- two manuscripts in review
- one manuscript promised
- two interview requests sent
- one brief introduction to online result portal planned

There are enough papers for one volume (2020) and this is planned for publication in January 2021. There is also a plan to interview some Board members, and to have a country focus, starting with Finland. DB suggested a summary of the impact of Covid on fieldwork across Europe. GG has produced a summary of Ornitho observations during spring lockdown.

**60-4 AP: DP to re-circulate the Google spreadsheet to collate info on impact of Covid. Aim to write a short paper for BCN.**

AL has been working with Biodiversity Heritage Library to archive BCN. Discussion about the details has started and there has been positive feedback. David Stroud has sent a box of old BCN to ME, going back to Volume 3, but there may be some gaps. Need some advice on format and metadata that will be required. All old volumes (1–15) need to be scanned. Anny has copies of these but no scanning option and can share the scanning task. ME will scan the copies he has, and DP volunteered to scan volumes provided by Anny.

### **8. Report from EBCC Delegates Officer (HH)**

HH contacted all delegates in the summer and a few corrections have since been made. There is still no delegate in Iceland, but then Yann Kolbeinsson said he could stay on as delegate if needed. A colleague from Albania has been in contact and is keen to have some involvement in EBCC and he may be suitable as a second delegate. HH has been in contact with a potential second delegate from Norway but no reply. In Norway, Ingar Jostein Øien agreed to stay on as the delegate, and AL can help with new contact.

We discussed Albania and will follow up. DP and GG will follow up their contacts. There had been no response from seven delegates.

### **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December**

#### **1. EBBA2 launch (feedback) and next steps**

The Board extends formal gratitude to everyone involved in EBBA2, and everyone involved in the organisation of the Workshop and Launch. Both events were well attended:

Workshop - 70 in the zoom, plus 280 on YouTube

Launch - around 300 people attended

EBBA2 book launch - 1430 views on YouTube

EBBA2 workshop - 1740 views on YouTube

We will continue to promote the YouTube link, with running order and times and give a direct link to the five minute video.

We discussed the idea of using Zoom/YouTube to engage with a wider EBCC audience, for example an opportunity to meet PECBMS National Coordinators, discuss newly published papers. Common Bird Monitoring on national levels could be a good theme for a meeting too.

There is an opportunity to have a session with Karen Aghababyan (Turkey), Armenia Atlas and Latvian Atlas, perhaps in February, which gives us time to organise and promote to a broad EBCC audience. It would be a good idea to invite countries still to finish atlases e.g. Serbia.

#### **60-5 AP: Discuss and organise an online meeting for February (All)**

DP was very moved by the launch, and ME was also slightly sad that we could not meet in person but we agreed we were all very pleased with the workshop and launch.

VK thanked everyone for the wonderful painting (original of the book cover painting of the Ortolan Bunting), it was a real surprise.

#### **2. Discussion on EBBA2 research**

AL gave an update on the progress on the first paper together with Durham University; they met with researchers on 11 November, and are currently drafting the paper (methods and results started).

Other work/data requests:

i) Mathieu Chevalier et al Improving regional projections of species distributions under climate change. Funding approved.

ii) Consortium including Prof Tomas Part & Alaaeldin Soutan: performance of SDMs based on EBBA1 data to those now published as EBBA2 data. Funding agreed.

iii) AL group in Finland – propose to work on speed and direction of community changes across Europe. Funding agreed.

VK talked about an idea around European population estimates. There is potential work with Ian Burfield to produce a best practice guide and analyse what information we have. VK also suggested we develop research projects that deal with eastern Europe.

SH is working on a project funded by the EU Joint Research Centre that looks at changes on agricultural birds.

### 3. EBCC Research Steering Group update

LB gave an update on the EuropaBON (Horizon 2020) three-year project he is involved in. The project set up meeting took place in early December. This project is likely to be an important project for EBCC in the coming years, and will require some input from the Board. Its main objective is to work with the European Commission to develop a model for biodiversity monitoring in Europe which is cost-effective and policy relevant. There is an explicit link to mobilisation of data and policy. This is a great opportunity for the EBCC community to show how well our model has served this purpose. Richard Gregory is also involved in the project as a member of the advisory board. EBCC are responsible for the identification of hubs. The EU is the focus for this work and we recognise that EBCC work goes beyond the EU. There is more information on the website: <https://europabon.org/>

AL updated us on the Horizon 2020 funding call for restoration projects involving 8–9 case studies across Europe with different habitat type. The EBCC role could be to evaluate how good these restoration projects have been by developing local indicators using PECBMS data. Five-year project. Develop tools how potential positive impacts of the restoration can be monitored. CVT wonders if there is any correlation between common species in PECBMS and the scarcer species that are the focus of restoration. JYP added that protected areas are an important topic for research, using EBP, PECBMS and EBBA2 data.

**60-6 AP: AL to circulate research ideas again**

**60-7 AP: Need a strategic discussion in longer term where EBCC wants to focus research, but need for the research group to meet earlier and prioritise plans for work (propose January)**

### 4. Data request process

AL presented a paper.

A common data request form for all three projects (EBBA2, EBP, PECBMS)

- Each of the projects would have a data request page/link which would link to the EBCC central page. The page would have a request form where data type, aims of the use, schedule of the project etc. are completed.
- The information is automatically updated to an online form e.g. google docs page to keep on track of the data requests.
- System will automatically send an email to six people (two per each project) and starts the data handling process.

- The common EBCC data request page should also include short summaries of all the data types (what is available on request and what is already open access) and data access policies including handling fees.

**60-8 AP: AL will establish a google word document where we will draft the questions for the data request** ([https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Fj\\_GUAZ48QQ6sGK6OFhj1ZdqQqWxb1U8FWurUqE-HQY/edit#heading=h.iwecm08u6cqp](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Fj_GUAZ48QQ6sGK6OFhj1ZdqQqWxb1U8FWurUqE-HQY/edit#heading=h.iwecm08u6cqp))

**60-9 AP: Write short data summaries and snapshot of the data types. (SH, AL, AK, GG)** This can be also used to advertise the data for research e.g. through social media.

1) Data handling

- The six (or three people minimum) meet at least once a month online to deal the data requests, what the data handling fee would be and are there chances to get discount (e.g. students, country, topic which is very favoured by EBCC board, etc.).
- Need to follow the data policies of the data types and general principles:
  - i) Is the proposal supporting the main research goals of the EBCC?
  - ii) Does the proposal include people who are at the core of the EBCC network?
  - iii) Is the aim to study multinational data? (if no -> contact National Coordinators?)
  - iv) Is the data extraction straight forward (i.e. no large additional work require)?

**60-10 AP: Review the EBBA2 data access policy and consider if more clarification is needed (All)**

2) Data handling fees

- There should be a clear procedure how the data handling fees are calculated. Preferably this would include a couple of different fees per data type and make it clear that fees mainly cover time required to handle data (e.g. atlas breeding scores and abundances and time visit data).
- Preliminary fees could vary between e.g. 5000–10000€ though need to consider a range of data users (academic, commercial, amateur, data provider).
- The full fee will be presented in the data request even though the final cost would be 0€.
- It should be mentioned in the data handling fees that the funding will be used to maintain and develop the monitoring network in Europe.
- The use of the data handling fee should be flexible. EBCC board can decide depending on particular needs.
- Part of the funds could be for the actual person doing the data handling.

**60-11 AP: Make a suggestion for fees for various data types and data users (SH, AL, GG)**

LB suggested we clearly signpost people for EBBA1 data to GBIF and show we are interested in open data. He explained the pressure to supply data for free. It will be important to explain the handling fee provides vital funds for EBCC.

AL suggested we engage with researchers at an earlier stage, tell them about EBCC data sets before they get research grants accepted, so that funds for data handling can be included.

ME summarised we want people to know about EBCC, we want our data to be used, yet we don't want to profit but seek to provide resources to support EBCC work. It gives us capacity to release the data and make available.

DB suggested we are providing a service in delivering metadata and guidance on how to interpret the data. The data is free but you're paying for the interpretation.

We need to provide clear guidance on the expectation of turnaround of a data request. Clarify there are different levels of data too – there is EBBA2 data but there may also be national data available direct from the country (at a finer scale).

Regarding EBBA2, data won't – in principle - be available for a year until the data is available online. VK points out that we should deal with data requests that cannot wait already this year. Otherwise we risk bad reputation. The requests coming in now also help us to gain experience with the procedure we are developing.

## **5. Next EBCC conference 2022**

Still confident there will be a conference in 2022. There has been some progress on building a website which will be launched in 2021, and plan further announcements. Need to set up a Scientific Programme Committee from the Board (see Agenda item 6). Ideas for Plenary speakers also required. We should use EBCC social media channels to promote the conference rather than having specific accounts. We noted the timing of the EOU conference is now 14–18 of March 2022 at University of Giessen.

VK would like to have a strong EBBA2 presence at the conference, but also need to think about other topics and plenaries. We agreed there was no strong requirement for the board to visit Switzerland in spring 2021.

Potential conference themes:

Atlases, Beyond EBBA2 (looking beyond EBBA2, what are the next plans for EBCC), how might future atlases be run (use of online portals). How to increase engagement with birdwatchers (work with social scientists) – maybe some ideas at <https://www.ecsa-conference.eu/programme> <https://www.envirocitizen.eu/> <https://eu-citizen.science/>

We would need 4–6 plenary speakers. Suggestions included Michael Schaub on Integrated Population Monitoring, Thomas Sattler – overview of birdlife in Switzerland, outputs from the Swiss Atlas, conservation, EURING – Migration Atlas, BirdLife International – how to use EBBA2 in their conservation work (or similar) e.g. Ian Burfield, European Butterfly work – learn about their structure, work e.g. Martin Warren BC Europe, Ecological view from the East – what is happening to farmland, forest. Acknowledged that the gender balance amongst invited speakers should be an issue.

**60-12 AP: Provide some invitation text for the website together with the LOC (ME).**

## **6. Standing update on future Board roles and composition (ME)**

Positions of Conference Officer and Chair of Scientific Programme Committee are vacant.

AL, VK, HH, MK, AA, JYP, ME volunteered to be part of the Scientific Programme Committee. The role of the Chair is to be in contact with the local organising committee, organise the process for looking at abstracts and scoring, plan the programme, including plenary speakers. JYP offered to take on the role of Chair. We agreed we did not need a Conference Officer in this case as VK has strong links with the local organising committee.

**60-13 AP: Convene Scientific Programme Committee when required by Swiss organisers (JYP).**

## **7. Financial update for 2019 (CvT)**

Income 2020:

2000€ Mathieu Chevalier

5000€ Damaris Zurell



Expenses 2020:

135€ banking cost

3060€ work Anna Gamero

2924€ EBCC website

Balance 42,001.82€

We thanked CVT for his work on the finances.

#### **8. News from BirdLife International**

The EU level assessment for Art. 12 reporting/Red List was completed and published in State of Nature report in October, and is also available online. Interactive dashboards are also included this time and give a lot of opportunities to explore the data. EC are working on a brochure which will be launched later. Work on Pan-european Red List assessment has started and will be published in May 2021. AEWA assessments and PECBMS will be included in this new assessment.

#### **9. News from Wetlands International**

SN gave an update on the AEWA Conservation Status Report; IWC trend analyses up to 2018 for 364 AEWA populations have been produced (<http://iwc.test.wetlands.org/index.php/aewatrends8>), and draft status assessments for the AEWA populations have been published. This can be accessed at <http://wpe.wetlands.org/search?form%5Bspecies%5D=&form%5Bpopulation%5D=&form%5Bpublication%5D=11&form%5Bprotection%5D%5B1%5D=1> but you need to be registered and logged in to be able to see the drafts. This status assessment builds also on the new ERLOB data BirdLife International has kindly provided prepublication access to. The CSR report will be produced by end of December together with the proposed changes to Table 1 of AEWA. The classification on that table determines the conservation regime applicable to the different AEWA populations.

IWC trends have been published for waterbird species that mainly winter in Europe except geese (which are often monitored under separate schemes). These reporting cards can be accessed at <http://iwc.wetlands.org/index.php/eumsi>.

Population-level trend analysis for 31 waterbird populations using the PECBMS data have been finalised. The report was used in the CSR status assessments. It can be found at <https://www.wetlands.org/download/20081/>. Multiple trends are shown. PECBMS National Coordinators were authors.

Finally, the JNCC is funding a review of the IWC trend analysis methodology with a view of developing a new statistical procedure that helps to overcome some of the problems we have. The tendering process is being concluded now and we expect the results by end of March 2021.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

There is now some progress with the Evora conference proceedings according to Carlos Godinho. AL has reviewed all seven papers submitted.

The Latvian Atlas will be published in the early New Year, currently looking through proofs.

EOU have requested symposiums to be submitted. VK asks if we should propose a symposium on macro ecology/distribution, or keep it for the EBCC conference. ME suggested we should propose a symposium.

**60-14 AP: Look at the EOU call, and look at the symposium that David Noble put together last time and see how we can build on it.**



ME explained the autumn BOU conference in 2021 will be on monitoring.

We congratulate MK and Olga Voltzit on the publication of the Russian Atlas, and for their contribution to the European Atlas.

Dawn Balmer, Secretary