

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

20th April 2021

19:00 CET, held virtually

Present:

Ainārs Auniņš Board, Aleksis Lehtikainen Board, Alena Klvanova Board, Andrej Vizi, Anton Morkovin, Carlos António Marques, Carlos Godinho delegate Portugal, Chris van Turnhout Delegate The Netherlands & Board, Danae Portalou Delegate Greece & Board, Daniel Palm Eskildsen, Danka Uzunova Delegate N. Macedonia, David Noble Delegate UK, Dawn Balmer Board, Dimitrije Radišić, Eva Silarova, Gabriel Gargello EBP observer, Gentian Hoxha, Gianpiero Calvi Delegate Italy, Katharina Klein Delegate Luxembourg, Henning Heldbjerg Delegate Denmark & Board, Jean-Yves Paquet Delegate Belgium & Board, Jiri Reif Delegate Czechia, John Atle Kålås, Juan Carlos del Moral Delegate Spain, Karen Aghababyan, Koen Devos Delegate Belgium, Lechosław Kuczyński, Liridon Hoxha - Republic of Kosovo, Mamikon Ghasabyan, Mark Eaton Delegate and Board, Mattia Brambilla Delegate Italy, Metodija Veleviski, Mikhail Kalyakin Delegate Russia & Board, Musil Petr, Nermina Sarajlić Delegate Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nicky Petkov delegate Bulgaria, Peter Knaus Delegate Switzerland, Petr Voříšek EBCC Observer, Qenan Maxhuni, Ruud Foppen Treasury Commission, Sergi Herrando Delegate Spain & EBBA2 Observer, Silvia Ursul Delegate Republic of Moldova, Sven Trautmann, Thomas Vikstrøm Delegate Denmark, Valentin Serebryakov, Valts Jaunzemis, Vanessa Amaral Rogers, Verena Keller Delegate Switzerland & Board, Viesturs Kerus, Vitalie Ajder, Vlatka Dumbovic and Zoltan D. Szabo.

1. Chairman's welcome (Mark Eaton)

Mark welcomed everyone to the second AGM held by zoom. Annual General Meetings are usually held at conferences every three years, or held alongside Board Meetings. By meeting virtually, we have a great opportunity for everyone to attend. We will be recording the event.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Johannes Kamp and Åke Lindström.

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

4. Presentation: Update on the first breeding atlas of Armenia - Karen Aghababyan

5. Chairman's report (Mark Eaton)

The full Chairman's report will be available on the EBCC website; and this evening I will present the highlights and important news. It has been an outstanding year in unprecedented and challenging circumstances. EBBA2 was published in December 2020 and EBP and PECBMS continue to develop and work has continued, although in some countries data collection was impacted by Covid-19 restrictions upon fieldwork, and there may be other impacts upon the network such as upon capacity and funding.

The work of the EBCC is reliant upon the support of scientists, ornithologists and conservationists, their organisations, and networks of many thousands of volunteers across Europe, and we offer them our heartfelt thanks for their expertise, dedication and enthusiasm which makes our work possible, and for

perseverance in this most difficult of years.

There are no changes of Board composition and no changes are planned, all members make a great contribution to EBCC. The current board is as follows:

Ainar Aunins (Latvia)

Dawn Balmer (Secretary, UK)

Mark Eaton (Chair, UK)

Henning Heldbjerg (Delegate Officer, Denmark)

Mikhael Kalyakin (Russia)

Verena Keller (Vice-chair, Switzerland)

Aleksi Lehikoinen (Editor *Bird Census News*, Research Officer, Finland)

Jean-Yves Paquet (Belgium)

Danae Portolou (Greece)

Chris van Turnhout (Treasurer, Netherlands)

The Board has also called upon the expertise of the following observers:

Gabriel Gargallo (EuroBirdPortal)

Sergi Herrando (European Breeding Bird Atlas 2)

Alena Klvaňová (Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme)

Szabolcs Nagy (Wetlands International)

Ivan Ramirez and Anna Staneva (BirdLife International)

In addition, we are pleased to report that Petr Voricek, who has long played an important role in EBCC projects, has accepted our recent invitation to join Board meetings as an observer.

Two two-day Board meetings were held virtually, and we also held short interim meetings between the full board meetings, as well as meetings of various subgroups working on, for example, *Bird Census News* and our research programme.

Chris van Turnhout, EBCC Treasurer will report separately to the AGM. The bank balance is looking healthy thanks to payment to EBCC arising from research projects using EBBA2 data. We are looking to develop a Small Grants Fund, which will enable us to provide targeted financial support to specific projects across the EBCC network; more details to follow in due course.

Henning Heldbjerg, has done an excellent job working with the National Delegates to ensure the network is robust. Thanks to all delegates for the work they too, and special thanks to those stepping down, and joining us. Aleksi Lehikoinen continues as Editor of *Bird Census News*, with support from Henning Heldbjerg, Mark Eaton, Jean-Yves Paquet and Olga Voltzit. Vol 33 was published this year and included new content. We have communicated with delegates, wider network and the general public across Europe through various routes. The website was updated in 2020 to include new information, and newsletters were sent out (four times a year) to over 600 contacts, and a special newsletter was produced to celebrate the launch of EBBA2. We have been active on social media (Twitter and Facebook) and have been using YouTube to share content, and have launched a new forum in the SLACK application enabling communication within the broad PECBMS network.

Our next EBCC conference is planned for 4-8 April 2022 in Lucerne, Switzerland and more details can be found on the conference website (ebcc2022.ch). Work on the Pan European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme continues to progress very well, with a focus on technical develop and improvement of data flow and analyses. The first PECBMS data paper was published in *Scientific Data* in March and the team have been involved in a number of other important projects over the year. The PECBMS website has been updated regularly, and a webinar was held in March, with over 40 participants attending.

The publication of EBBA2 in December was the highlight of the EBCC year. An immense amount of work

was involved, with added issues posed by the pandemic especially in Spain where part of the atlas coordination team was based. A superb virtual event was held, with teams in Prague, Barcelona and Sempach hosting the launch and workshop. Videos from the day are on the EBCC YouTube channel. The Atlas launch gained considerable media attention. There was a good pre-publication offer and sales have been very good (waiting for third print run). In parallel to the work for the book the coordination team supported national partners with database extracts. As a special support to the coordinators in Russia, 50-km maps showing species occurrence across Europe and modelled maps cropped to show only the Russian territory were produced for inclusion in the national atlas of European Russia. The EBCC research group has been working on the first analyses on distribution change for all European species, in collaboration with researchers from several institutions and we expect the final draft shortly. The EBBA2 team are now working on the planned online version of the maps, using MAVA Foundation funding, to make the maps freely available. Special credit should be given to the EBBA2 team, National Coordinators, the 100,000 observers, funders, publishers, artists and authors. Petr Voricek, Sergi Herrando and Verena Keller have been inspirational throughout.

Eurobirdportal continues to grow and improving the value of online reporting. There are partners from 34 countries, including all 27 EU countries except Malta. Iceland became a new partner, whilst Russia and Lithuania have joined but not yet submitted data. Currently, 16 out of the 19 online systems submitting data to the EBP are doing so automatically on a daily basis. In 2020, more than 56m bird records were collected. The amount of structured data continues to grow; currently, 34.3% of the whole EBP data-holding comes from complete or fixed lists. EBP has been funded by the European Food and Safety Authority (EFSA) in the context of avian influenza surveillance in Europe. Annually, the EBP provides bird occurrence and observation effort information for the 50 bird species targeted by EFSA in relation to avian influenza surveillance. A further 32 new species will be added to the data flow and over the next few months all 50 EFSA target species will be available in the EBP viewer, increasing the total number of species available from 105 to 137.

EBCC continue to work closely with Wetland International and Birdlife International, and are collaborating with Rewilding Europe, the Zoological Society of London and BirdLife International on a revision of the 'Wildlife Comeback' report.

Thanks to community of birdwatchers, ornithologists, scientists, friends who have supported the work of EBCC over the last year. We offer our condolences to all those who have lost relatives or friends, and our gratitude to all heroic individuals who remain at the forefront of combating this crisis, and hold out hope that we are on the verge of emerging from this difficult period. We hope to meet many of you at the conference in Switzerland in 2022.

6. Financial Report for the year 2019-20

CVT present key figures from the Treasurer's Report for 2019-20. There was 42,002.02 EUR in bank account at start of the year. The main income streams have been from the handling of data from EBBA2. In addition there have been few expenses over the last year; there has been no travel or accommodation costs for Board meetings as they have been held virtually. There were a small number expenses relating to the bank, website, and supporting EBCC related projects. Overall, the finances of EBCC are very healthy.

Ruud Foppen and Koen Devos have reviewed the accounts, looked at the administration, and consider the accounts to be correct and transparent, and confirm that the Treasurer did a good job. They commented that the Financial overview has been clearly presented and gave some advice to the Treasurer which has been taken on board. ME thanked CVT for managing the EBCC accounts.

7. Changes in national Delegates

HH presented the changes in the National Delegates. There have been five new delegates during the last year, some of which replaced delegates who stepped down many years ago.

Norway: John Atle Kålås (Norwegian Institute for Nature Research – NINA), replacing Magne Husby

Portugal: Carlos Godinho (LABOR - Laboratory of Ornithology, Dept. of Biology and ICAAM) and

Hany Alonso (SPEA BirdLife-Portugal), replacing João E. Rabaça and Júlia Almeida

Iceland: Gunnar Thor Hallgrímsson (University of Iceland) and Yann Kolbeinsson (Northeast Iceland Nature Research Centre).

Only five countries have only one delegate and these are Albania, Azerbaijan, Liechtenstein, Serbia, and Georgia. Forty-two countries have two delegates. In total, there are 47 countries and 89 delegates which is an excellent achievement.

The online list of delegates <https://www.ebcc.info/about-us/national-delegates/> will be updated after the AGM.

8. Presentation: International Census Plots – the beginning of monitoring in Serbia – Dimitrije Radisic

9. Presentation: Latvian Breeding Bird Atlases 1980–2017 – Viesturs Kerus

You can purchase the book here: <https://www.nhbs.com/latvijas-ligzdojoo-putnu-atlanti-1980-2017-latvian-breeding-bird-atlas-1980-2017-book>

10. Any other business

Karen Aghababyan commented that *Bird Census News* doesn't have an impact factor and is not registered in ResearchGate which makes it less attractive for publication. Mark Eaton and Aleksi Lehikoinen responded to say that the situation is unlikely to change.

Dawn Balmer
Secretary