

EUROPEAN MONITORING NEWS

Introducing the EBCC board: Aleksi Lehikoinen

Mark Eaton



What is your title and the current working position?

I am senior curator at the Finnish Museum of Natural History, University of Helsinki. My duties include coordination of the bird monitoring schemes in Finland and lead my own research group, the Helsinki Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/helsinki-lab-of-ornithology> I am also leading the national bird expert group which is doing e.g. the national red listing of birds and work as a member of the Finnish IBPES panel, which gathers research data on biodiversity for use by decision-makers, experts and citizens.

What are your main research interests and projects at the moment?

My main research interests are how anthropogenic changes, especially climate change and human land use, are affecting biodiversity using birds as a study taxon. I have used large-scale long-term monitoring data, including EBCC and EURING data, in many projects. The current research projects include European bird monitoring data to investigate e.g. the (i) avian responses on habitat loss and fragmentation, (ii) altitudinal shifts of bird populations in European mountain areas, (iii) role of survival and productivity on population dynamics of European passerines, (iv) how reliable the species distribution models are for predicting future population changes, (v) cumulative effects of climate change on bird populations, (vi) habitat selection of declining hunted bird species for restoration and (vii) how to do protected area prioritisation to meet the European Biodiversity Strategy targets.

What is your current role in the EBCC?

My main responsibility in the EBCC board is to advance the research related to EBCC projects. This includes creating connections with researchers and enhancing funding applications for research purposes. I am also leading the newly established EBCC acoustic monitoring group (AMOG) and chairing the scientific committee of the EBCC Bird Numbers conference in Riga.

Tell us a bit about your involvement at Hanko Bird Observatory, and what is so special about the place and the work there.

I was the manager of the Hanko Bird Observatory during 2000-2017. I started when I was a MSc student in biology at the University of Helsinki and used the long-term monitoring data started on 1979 in my MSc and PhD theses. Overall, I have spent over 1100 days at the observatory as a volunteer observer. The specialties of observatory are autumn irruptions of boreal species, such as woodpeckers, owls and tits. Some memorable moments include e.g. 58 migrating black woodpeckers (18 ringed), a night with 39 trapped owls (4 species) and over 26 000 migrating coal tits during a single morning. The activities of observatory have increased substantially during past years and currently in addition to the standardized monitoring routines (migration counts, breeding surveys and ringing), the observatory is also providing nature education, guided tours and works as an important site for training young birders on the national level. The collected data is freely available for research purposes through the web-page of the observatory (halias.fi). I also use regularly the data of the observatory with my MSc and PhD students.

Do you still manage to take part in fieldwork, and if so, what do you do?

I try to participate every year in surveys of the long-term monitoring schemes including four winter bird count routes and line transects and waterbird surveys during the breeding season. Regular fieldwork is stimulating and gives new ideas for research and it is great fun too!

Tell us something about your interests away from birds and ornithology... perhaps about your snow sculptures, which some attendees at the last EBCC conference will have seen?

I have had a hobby of making snow sculptures for more than ten years. It has been an interesting learning process of snow structure and different techniques, but I have also learned a lot about photographing and art in general. I use sometimes photos of the sculptures in science communication. Snow sculptures are visible at instagram account [@marathanskat](https://www.instagram.com/marathanskat).

