

Introducing AMOG — the newest member of the EBCC family!

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Acoustic monitoring — using hardware and software to record and identify bird species — has undergone tremendous development over the past 15 years. In particular, Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM), which uses autonomous recording units capable of collecting data for weeks or even months, has the potential to revolutionize bird monitoring, as well as the monitoring of other taxa.

Several organisations within the EBCC network have begun to explore — or even actively implement — these innovative acoustic monitoring methods in their work. Alongside the exciting opportunities this brings, acoustic monitoring also presents a range of challenges that may affect current and future bird monitoring practices.

To address these developments and encourage knowledge exchange among its partner organisations, the EBCC established the Acoustic Monitoring Group (AMOG) in June 2024, following an initiative from the EBCC board. AMOG's goal is to coordinate, align, and integrate acoustic bird monitoring initiatives across Europe, strengthening the overall efforts in bird monitoring. If necessary, AMOG will also advise the EBCC board on matters related to acoustic monitoring.

As its first initiative, AMOG distributed a questionnaire on the perception, use, and future potential of acoustic monitoring among EBCC partners, receiving responses from 47 individuals across 32 countries. The results were presented at the EBCC Conference 2025 in Riga and are summarised in this issue of *Bird Census News* (p. 4).

Responding to growing interest and requests from EBCC partners, AMOG also drafted the EBCC Statement on the Use of Auto-ID Tools in Long-Term Monitoring. At present, AMOG recommends refraining from using identification

apps such as *Merlin Bird ID* or *BirdNet* in Breeding Bird Surveys (see p. 5 of this BCN). This recommendation is based on concerns that these tools may introduce biases of unknown magnitude into long-term datasets. Before such tools are widely adopted, we must first understand their implications and develop clear guidelines for their use.

At the EBCC Conference in Riga in April 2025, AMOG organised a workshop on different aspects of acoustic monitoring, which was well-attended (approximately 120 participants). This strong turnout reflects the significant interest in the topic within the EBCC network. Participants generally agreed on the great potential of acoustic monitoring for studying elusive species, remote habitats, or generally regions with limited observer coverage. However, there was also consensus that the EBCC and its network are not yet focused on deriving abundance data (e.g. densities) through PAM. While this area is scientifically promising and rapidly evolving, it is not yet ready for large-scale monitoring applications. Workshop participants encouraged AMOG to develop a comprehensive strategy for how the EBCC can contribute to the field of acoustic monitoring, and to prepare practical guidelines for organisations interested in launching their own PAM initiatives.

Currently, AMOG includes 21 members from 15 institutions. If your national bird monitoring organization has some experience with acoustic monitoring and is interested in joining and supporting AMOG, please contact the Co-chairs Aleksi Lehtikoinen (aleksi.lehtikoinen@helsinki.fi) or Thomas Sattler (thomas.sattler@vogelwarte.ch), including a brief description of your interests and current activities related to acoustic monitoring.

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