



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

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THIRD MEETING OF SIGNATORIES TO
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
CONCERNING CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR
THE AQUATIC WARBLER (*Acrocephalus paludicola*)
Ventė, Lithuania, 20-21 May 2015
Agenda Item 5.0

SECRETARIAT REPORT

Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat

1. New Signatories

The last Meeting of Signatories (MOS2) took place in Biebrza National Park (Poland) the 13-15 of May 2010. Since MOS2 two Range States signed the MOU:

- Luxemburg on 10.07.2010
- Switzerland on 21.11.2011

The total number of signatories amounts now to 16. These are the following: Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Luxemburg, Switzerland and Mali.

2. National contact points

Nominations of national contact points are being received at the Secretariat. The list will be finalised during the Meeting of Signatories once some of the pending nominations are confirmed.

3. MOU Coordination

The CMS Secretariat provides the secretariat for this MOU, while BirdLife International, through its UK partner, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), continues to provide coordination services. This arrangement covers administration of the MOU; Aquatic Warbler data management; facilitating communications across the species' range; supporting existing conservation projects; monitoring; direct active conservation work and research, and development of new conservation and research projects, including fundraising.

To coordinate the implementation of the MoU, the position of an International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Officer (AWCO) has been established. The position of the AWCO was formerly based at APB-BirdLife Belarus in their Minsk office. In 2014, a new AWCO was appointed, now based with the Polish Society for Protection of Birds (OTOP-BirdLife Poland).

The AWCO will continue to work in close cooperation with the BirdLife International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team and other organizations, including the CMS African-Eurasian Migratory Landbird Working Group (AEMLWG), across the range states of the Aquatic Warbler in order to coordinate the implementation of the MoU, to promote the exchange of information between the range states and cooperating organizations, and to support partners with the development, fundraising and implementation of conservation projects aimed at this species.

The AWCO is supported through a Small Scale Funding Agreement between CMS and the RSPB.

4. Meetings

The Secretariat attended an international conference on Aquatic Warbler Conservation, which took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 14-15 November 2013. The conference was organized by the Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania within the EU LIFE+ programme in frame of the project "Securing sustainable farming to ensure conservation of globally threatened bird species in agrarian landscapes" (LIFE09 NAT/LT/000233).

The CMS Secretariat was represented at this meeting by Johannes Stahl, who presented a poster on "Potential synergies between the Aquatic Warbler MoU and the Action Plan for improving the conservation status of migratory landbirds in the African-Eurasian region (AEMLAP)".

The conference highlighted, *inter alia*, the following issues as being of key importance for Aquatic Warbler conservation:

- The decline of Aquatic Warbler in almost all areas, especially of the marginal populations;
- Possible emergency measures such as translocation to boost particularly threatened populations;
- Management conflicts (e.g. Ratrak mowing with positive impacts for Aquatic Warbler and negative impacts for other species);
- Requirements for agro-environmental management within the European Union; and
- Significant knowledge gaps regarding wintering and stopover sites in Africa.

The Secretariat also participated in the meeting "Migratory Landbirds: Research, Monitoring and Conservation", which took place at the Institute of Avian Research, Wilhelmshaven (Germany), the 26 – 28 March 2014. This was the inaugural meeting of the Migratory Landbird Study Group (MLSG), a network of specialists and organizations involved in research, monitoring and conservation of migratory landbirds. The aims of the MLSG are to:

- Maintain contact between both amateurs and professionals studying migratory landbirds;
- Facilitate international co-operative studies;

- Provide a vehicle for exchange of information on migratory landbirds and their biology;
- Promote scientific capacity building throughout the flyway (especially in Africa).

The CMS Secretariat was represented at this meeting by Borja Heredia.

5. COP11

The 11th Conference of the Parties to CMS took place in Quito (Ecuador) in November 2014. Several avian resolutions were adopted, some of them of great relevance to the Aquatic Warbler MoU, including the following:

Resolution 11.17 on an Action Plan for Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region

The thematic areas of the AEMLAP focus are habitat conservation, taking and trade, research and monitoring, and education and information. The most important identified threat to migratory landbird species is habitat loss and degradation at breeding and non-breeding sites, as well as at the network of sites these species depend on during migration. Taking and trade for economic and cultural purposes can also negatively influence some populations. Other threats include the risk of disease and collision.

A positive spin-off of the landbirds action plan has been the creation of the Migratory Landbird Study Group (MLSG) as a group of scientists that will promote research in support of this initiative. A communication platform under the name of Friends of the Landbirds Action Plan (FLAP) is also being developed.

There is a request to develop single species action plans for a first set of species including the Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and European Roller *Coracias garrulus*. The Resolution also requests the continuation of the Landbirds Working Group until COP12, extending its membership to incorporate expertise from geographical regions currently absent, to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the action plan. There are strong connections between this Resolution and those on illegal killing and poisoning.

This Resolution and Action Plan are particularly relevant to the Aquatic Warbler MoU since some of the provisions of the MoU could be implemented through AEMLAP and synergies between both instruments should be maximised.

Resolution 11.14 on Migratory Birds and Flyways

The Resolution adopts a Programme of Work on Migratory Birds and Flyways. Among other premises, the POW requests Parties to ensure the improvement of species conservation status through continued implementation and sharing of best practice between single species action plans and MoUs, including the Aquatic Warbler MoU.

Resolution 11.15 on Guidelines to Prevent Poisoning of Migratory Birds

The COP adopted comprehensive Guidelines to prevent the poisoning of migratory birds.

Poisoning is a significant global problem affecting a wide range of migratory bird species across almost all habitats and regions. Birds may be exposed to multiple sources of poisoning in their ranges causing lethal and sub-lethal effects, with predatory birds being one of the most vulnerable to poisoning.

The Guidelines contain recommendations to cover five priority poisoning areas:

- Insecticides;
- Rodenticides;
- Poison-baits;
- Veterinary pharmaceuticals;
- Lead ammunition and fishing weights.

The Resolution officially adopts the Guidelines and proposes the continuation of the open-ended Preventing Poisoning Working Group until COP12, renewing its membership to incorporate expertise from geographical regions as well as representatives of industry and governments, to address the impact of other sources of poisoning and geographic gaps and to monitor the implementation of the Guidelines.

Resolution 11.16 on Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade of Migratory Birds

Illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds have been identified as some of the key factors that threaten the conservation status of migratory birds. Together with other factors such as habitat degradation and fragmentation, illegal killing is contributing to the population decrease of several species included in CMS Appendices. Although a problem of global scale, there are specific regions and hotspots in the world where it is particularly acute and well documented, as it is the case with the Mediterranean Region. Several CMS instruments are attempting to address this issue, but the severity of the problem requires an integrative and unified approach under the broader CMS framework.

The Resolution calls on Parties, non-Parties and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, to engage in immediate cooperation to address the illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds.

In particular, it calls on the Secretariat to convene an Intergovernmental Task Force to Address Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean in conjunction with the Secretariat of the Council of Europe (Bern Convention), involving the Mediterranean Parties, including the European Union, other interested Parties, and other stakeholders such as BirdLife International and the hunters organizations. This Task Force should act as a best practice example to be replicated in other areas of the world where illegal killing occurs.