

**UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL REPORT
FOR THE AQUATIC WARBLER MOU AND ACTION PLAN
2003-2006**

This reporting format is designed to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan associated with the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. Reporting on the Action Plan's implementation will support information exchange throughout the range and assist the identification of necessary future actions by the Signatories. The questions presented here go beyond the scope of information already requested from CMS Contracting Parties for national reports to the CMS Conference of the Parties.

GENERAL INFORMATION

<p>Which agency or institution has been primarily responsible for the preparation of this report?</p> <p>UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee</p>
<p>List any other agencies, institutions, or NGOs that have provided input:</p>
<p>Reports submitted to date:</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Period covered by this report:</p> <p>from 30 April 2003 to 30 April 2006</p>
<p>Memorandum in effect in Signatory State since: 30 April 2003</p>
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OBJECTIVES

1.0 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE

1.1. *To promote national and international broad policies and legislation which favour the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler and its habitat*

1.1.1. *Promote the full protection of the Aquatic Warbler and its habitats through national and international legislation*

- a) Is the Aquatic Warbler protected under national legislation in your country?
- Yes, the species is protected and protection level is sufficient
 - Yes, the species is protected, but protection level is not sufficient
 - No, the species is not protected
- b) If Yes, please describe the state of protection and limitations and conservation responsibilities this protection status imposes on the state, conservationists and land-users.

See UK national report to AEWA MoP3 (http://www.unep-aeewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop3_docs/national_reports/uk_nat_rep_mop3.doc) for a full description of the implications of species national protection legislation (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended).

- c) If the Aquatic Warbler is not protected or protection level is not sufficient, please describe what your country is planning to do to ensure highest possible protection of the species.
- d) Is there national legislation in place in your country that ensures effective protection of Aquatic Warbler habitat (breeding, stop-over and wintering sites), including prevention of potentially detrimental activities (drainage, mineral extraction, industry, etc.).

Yes No

- e) If Yes, please provide details.

See UK national report to AEWA MoP3 (http://www.unep-aeewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop3_docs/national_reports/uk_nat_rep_mop3.doc) for a full description of the implications of national legislation (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended) as related to the protection of sites and habitats.

A UK Species Action Plan has been in place for Aquatic Warbler since 1995:
<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=76>

- f) If No, please describe measures taken to ensure protection of Aquatic Warbler breeding habitats.

1.1.2. *Seek national or international policy incentives to maintain suitable farming practices at breeding sites which are impacted by drainage or threatened by succession*

Are there any national or international policy incentives to maintain suitable farming practices at breeding sites in your country (agro-environmental schemes, etc.)?

Yes No Country is outside of breeding range

If yes, please describe briefly the nature of the incentives and whether they are effectively applied or used by farmers and land-managers.

If no, please describe what measures are being taken to ensure availability of such incentives.

2.0 SPECIES AND HABITAT PROTECTION

2.1. *To promote adequate protection of the breeding sites and remove key factors adversely affecting the breeding habitat*

2.1.1. *Seek designation as protected areas of all sites regularly holding breeding Aquatic Warblers.*

- a) In the table attached (Annex I), please provide details for all regularly occupied Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country and indicate their protection status (*please expand the table if necessary*).
- b) If Aquatic Warbler breeding sites currently are not fully protected or protection level is not sufficient, please provide information about constraints and what your country is planning to do to ensure full and adequate protection of these sites.
- c) If Site Management Plans have not been developed for all Aquatic Warbler breeding sites, please describe what hampers development of Management Plans and what your country is doing to ensure development, approval and implementation of Site Management Plans for regular Aquatic Warbler breeding sites.
- d) Please advise what assistance you would require to complete or improve existing Site Management Plans.

2.1.2. *Prevent habitat alteration, habitat fragmentation, pollution and other factors that could be detrimental to the Aquatic Warbler in its breeding sites*

- a) Are new *development* projects that could potentially have a detrimental effect on current or potential Aquatic Warbler breeding sites (such as drainage, peat extraction, construction of highways, etc.) subject to environmental impact assessment in your country?

Yes No Country is outside
of breeding range

- b) Have there been any potentially detrimental projects *implemented* in any Aquatic Warbler habitat in your country since signing this Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes No

- c) If yes, indicate sites involved, give details and describe the outcome of impact monitoring if available.

- d) Has implementation of any potentially detrimental project in any Aquatic Warbler habitat in your country been *halted* since signing this Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes No
 Not applicable

e) If Yes, please give details.

2.2. *To manage the breeding habitat to increase numbers, productivity and distribution*

2.2.1. *Regulate water levels and restore natural water conditions*

a) Has water management been implemented at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country?

Yes No Country is
outside of breeding range

b) If Yes, please describe actions taken, sites involved and effects expected/achieved.

c) What constraints are limiting implementation of these activities at other sites in need of effective water management?

2.2.2. *Prevent natural succession of the vegetation by undertaking management where necessary*

a) Has vegetation management been undertaken at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country to prevent natural succession?

Yes No Country is
outside of breeding range

b) If Yes, please describe actions taken (mowing, bush-removing, etc), what equipment was used for vegetation management and how efficient it was. Please refer to reports if available and comparative analysis of different types of equipment if it was conducted.

c) If No, what constraints are limiting vegetation management at other sites where it is needed and what is your country doing to ensure proper vegetation management at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites?

2.2.3. *Hand-scything and mowing*

a) If historical information is available, please describe to which extent current Aquatic Warbler breeding sites were hand scythed and mown.

b) Are hand-scything and mowing being applied for habitat conservation for the Aquatic Warbler in your country?

Yes No Country is
outside of breeding range

c) If Yes, please describe how this was approached, which sites were involved and the area covered. Please provide details if conservation effect of hand-scything and mowing has been evaluated. Please refer to published materials if available.

- d) What constraints are limiting hand-scything and mowing at sites where extensive habitat management is needed?

2.2.4. *Controlled burning*

- a) Is controlled burning a legal habitat management tool in your country?
 Yes No
 Not applicable
- b) If Yes, is burning used as a habitat management tool for Aquatic Warbler? Please describe actions taken, sites involved and effects achieved or expected. Please refer to published materials if information regarding the effects of controlled burning has been summarized and published.
- c) If No, then what actions are being undertaken to legalize controlled burning?

2.2.5. *Grazing*

- a) Has grazing been used for habitat management at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country?
 Yes No Country is outside of breeding range
- b) If yes, please describe which animals are used, which sites are involved and what effects are expected/achieved. Please give reference to published materials if information regarding the effects of grazing has been summarized and published.

2.2.6. *Disseminate habitat management recommendations to land managers*

- a) Are Aquatic Warbler habitat management recommendations being disseminated to land managers and other interested parties in your country?
 Yes No Country is outside of breeding range
- b) If Yes, please describe ways of dissemination of habitat management recommendations to land managers used: events, publications, etc. Please give reference to published materials.
- c) If No, then what constraints are limiting dissemination of habitat management recommendations and what should be done to overcome these constraints?
- d) Please advise if there is successful experience other Range States can draw on and what assistance your country would require to help share this information.

2.3. *To protect the Aquatic Warbler and its habitat in the winter quarters and along the migration route*

2.3.1. *Promote the protection and appropriate management of wintering and passage sites*

a) In the table attached (Annex I), please provide details about major Aquatic Warbler passage and wintering sites in your country (*please expand the table if necessary*)

b) Are primary Aquatic Warbler passage/wintering sites appropriately managed in your country?

Fully Partially No

c) Please list on-going and implemented projects and provide brief information about results achieved.

A five year project to restore reed-bed habitat has been undertaken at Marazion Marsh, a RSPB reserve and SPA for Aquatic Warblers. The project was aided by £49,000 from the EU funded LIFE project, part of a £4million initiative to help Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* and their habitat in the UK. See <http://www.rspb.org.uk/england/southwest/conservation/marazion.asp>.

d) What are the remaining gaps and what is your country planning to do to ensure sufficient protection and management of primary passage/wintering sites?

2.4. To restore habitats for the Aquatic Warbler

2.4.1. Undertake the ecological restoration of potential breeding sites

a) Have potential or irregularly occupied Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country been evaluated?

Fully Partially No Country is outside of breeding range

b) If Yes, what initiatives aimed at ecological restoration of potential breeding sites have been undertaken in your country? Which sites are involved and what effects are expected/achieved?

c) If No, what are the constraints and which actions should be taken in order to overcome these constraints?

3.0 MONITORING AND RESEARCH

3.1. To develop and implement a monitoring programme enabling population trends to be tracked

3.1.1. Distribution of a methodology for counting Aquatic Warblers

a) Is the methodology adopted for counting Aquatic Warblers used on the national level *different* to what is advised in the Aquatic Warbler Species Action Plan?

Yes No No methodology is adapted

Irregular occurrence limits the potential for systematic survey. The sites regularly used (see Annex) are well watched and observations from those areas and elsewhere are annually published in country bird reports, and collated nationally and published by the journal *British Birds* (see Annex for more details).

b) If Yes, please describe briefly possible differences and amendments.

- c) Does your country have experience applying this methodology and what can be learned from this experience?
- d) What does your country do to distribute and familiarize relevant institutions/specialists with this methodology?

3.1.2. *Undertake national surveys to estimate breeding populations*

- a) Have national (all-country) surveys of Aquatic Warbler breeding population been undertaken in your country?
 - Yes (give years) _____
 - No
 - Country is outside of breeding range
- b) If Yes, what methodology is used (full counts, transect counts, etc.) and what organization was coordinating the survey?
- c) What is the size and trend of the national breeding population (vocalizing males)? Please refer to published materials if applicable.

Year of survey:	Year of survey:	Year of survey:
Population size:	Population size:	Population size:

- d) If Yes, to which extent was the territory of your country covered by the survey:
 - Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
- e) When is the next national (all-country) survey of the Aquatic Warbler planned in your country?
- f) If no national surveys have been conducted, please indicate existing constraints and what you country going to do to ensure that national surveys of the Aquatic Warbler are conducted?

3.1.3. *Collect data at the major known passage sites and identify further resting sites*

- a) Have studies at known Aquatic Warbler passage sites been conducted in your country?

Yes No
- b) If Yes, please describe briefly, which major passage sites are being monitored, what monitoring is being conducted (Aquatic Warbler population, habitat parameters, impact assessment, migration strategy, etc) and which organizations are involved?

Statutory sites classified for Aquatic Warblers in the UK are all subject to JNCC's Common Standards Monitoring programme which aims to regularly assess the features for which the sites have been classified. See <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2217> for further information.

- c) What are the main findings and what conservation implications do they have?
- d) If Yes, to what extent are major known Aquatic Warbler passage sites are being monitored in your country?
- Fully (> 90% of known sites)
 - High (60-90 % of known sites)
 - Medium (30-60 % of known sites)
 - Low (< 30 % of known sites)
- f) To what extent have major Aquatic Warbler passage sites been identified in your country?
- Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - No monitoring is conducted
- g) What are the gaps and what is your country doing to address them?

3.1.4. *Identify major wintering areas*

- a) Have studies aimed at identifying Aquatic Warbler wintering areas have been conducted in your country?
- Yes No Country is outside of wintering range
- b) If Yes, what are the main findings and conservation implications? If available, please refer to published reports.
- c) If Yes, To what extent was the territory of your country covered by the survey of wintering areas?
- Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
- d) If wintering sites have been identified, to what extent are these sites being monitored during migration?
- Fully (> 90% of known sites)
 - High (60-90 % of known sites)
 - Medium (30-60 % of known sites)
 - Low (< 30 % of known sites)
 - No monitoring is conducted

- e) If your country is outside of Aquatic Warbler wintering range, which international initiatives aimed at identification of Aquatic Warbler wintering grounds has your country been involved in? What are the main findings?
- f) What are the gaps and what needs to be done to help address them?

3.1.5. *Research into habitat characteristics at migration and wintering sites*

- a) Has research into habitat characteristics at migration and/or wintering sites been conducted in your country?
 Yes No
- b) If Yes, please provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.
- c) What are the main findings and conservation implications?
- d) What are the remaining gaps and what needs to be done to address them?

3.1.6. *Research on movements during the breeding season / exchange of subpopulations*

Has research on Aquatic Warbler movements during breeding season/exchange of subpopulations been conducted in your country?

Yes No Country is outside of breeding range

A recent review of movements of Aquatic Warblers through the UK was published by Marchant (2002)¹ based on information derived from UK ringing and other data and information.

Annual totals of ringed Aquatic Warblers are reported by BTO each year (http://blx1.bto.org/pdf/ringmigration/22_4/ringreport.pdf). Seven birds were ringed in 2004, bringing the cumulative total ringed in the UK to 745.

If Yes, please describe which territories were covered, what methods were used (colour ringing, radio-tagging, etc.) and what were the main findings. Please give reference to published materials if available.

If Yes, was the research on movements during the breeding season coordinated with researchers from neighbouring Aquatic Warbler Range States.

Yes No

¹ Marchant, J.H. (2002). Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. Pp. 720. In: Wernham, C.V., Toms, M.P., Marchant, J.H., Clark, J.A., Siriwardena, G.M. & Baillie, S.R. (eds.) *The Migration Atlas: movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland*. T. & A.D. Poyser, London.

If the research hasn't been conducted, what is your country planning to do to initiate such cooperation?

3.1.7. *Develop and implement an international monitoring programme*

Is your country participating in development and/or implementation of international Aquatic Warbler monitoring programmes?

Yes No

If Yes, please list on-going and completed projects and indicate which areas they focus on and which other countries are involved. Please provide reference to published results if available.

The UK government has funded RSPB to undertake a study of migratory connectivity of Aquatic warblers using stable isotopes (see <http://www.rspb.org.uk/science/Ecology/2004/aquaticwarbler.asp>). Results have been published by Pain *et al.* (2004)².

"Results suggest that birds from Poland moult at a discrete and relatively geographically restricted area within Africa, which is separate from and further north than the moulting areas used by birds from Belarussian and Ukrainian breeding populations. Polish birds may therefore be particularly vulnerable to environmental changes on their African moulting/wintering grounds, and locating these is a conservation priority.

Work is currently underway to verify this hypothesis, and to further refine the search for Aquatic Warbler wintering areas, using resident African warblers as surrogates."

Are there areas that haven't been properly addressed, if so, what needs to be done to assist your country in addressing these gaps?

3.2. *To promote research useful for the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler in the future*

3.2.1. *Undertake comparative studies on breeding success and population recruitment in different habitats*

a) Have studies on breeding success and population recruitment in different habitats been conducted in your country?

- Yes, in collaboration with other Range States
- Yes, on the national scale
- No comparative studies have been conducted
- Country is outside of breeding range

b) If available, please list on-going and completed studies and give reference to published reports.

² Pain, D.J., Green, R.E., Gießing, B., Kozulin, A., Poluda, A., Ottosson, U., Flade, M. & Hilton, G.M. 2004. Using stable isotopes to investigate migratory connectivity of the globally threatened aquatic warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. *Oecologia* 138: 168-174.

- c) What are the main findings of these studies?
- d) Are there any future comparative studies your country is able to initiate? What would be needed to do this?
- e) If no comparative studies are being implemented, what is your country planning to do to stimulate this research and what assistance would be required?

3.2.2. *Assess the effect of burning, scything, mowing, grazing and water conditions on breeding populations*

- a) Effect of which of the following factors and potential habitat management techniques on Aquatic Warbler breeding population was assessed in your country?

- Controlled burning
- Scything
- Mowing
- Water conditions
- Other _____ (what)
- No assessment has been conducted (country outside breeding range)

- b) What are the main findings and conservation implications? If available, please give reference to published reports.

- c) Are there any gaps? What limits further assessment of this factor's effects?

3.2.3. *Develop collaborative research and monitoring programmes between range-states*

- a) Is your country involved in international collaborative and monitoring programmes on the Aquatic Warbler?

Yes No

- b) If yes, please provide brief details about on-going and completed projects. Which Aquatic Warbler range states are involved? What fields studied?

- c) What are the main findings and conservation implications?

- d) What are the gaps and what is needed to address them?

4.0 PUBLIC AWARENESS

4.1. *To ensure development of a strong network of organisations and individuals committed to the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler*

- a) Does a network of organisations/individuals committed to the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler exist in your country?

Yes No

- b) If Yes, how broad is this network and what organizations/individuals are taking the lead in facilitation and coordination of its development?
- c) What actions does your country undertake to broaden the circle of organisations and individuals committed to conservation of Aquatic Warbler?

The UK Species Action Plan for Aquatic Warbler (<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=76>) does not envisage any specific communication or publicity actions are currently needed for Aquatic Warblers in the UK. – in large part owing to their irregular occurrence.

- d) What successful experience can other Range States draw on?
- e) What would be needed to establish a network if it does not already exist or to improve an existing one?

Not applicable – see above.

4.2. To use the Aquatic Warbler as a flagship species

Has the Aquatic Warbler been used as a flagship species in your country for the inventory and protection of wetlands?

Yes No

If Yes, please briefly describe how and provide examples if available.

If No, what limits promotion and use of the Aquatic Warbler as a flagship species and how does your country plan to address this?

No plans to use as a flagship – irregularity and unpredictability of occurrence limits the usefulness of the species as a flagship.

4.3. To prepare educational materials promoting and giving information

- a) Have any educational and promotional materials about Aquatic Warbler been developed in your country?
- Yes, specifically devoted to the Aquatic Warbler.
- Yes, the Aquatic Warbler is included into materials with a broader context.
- No, Aquatic Warbler is not covered in educational and promotional materials.

If Yes, please describe the nature of such materials and how they were disseminated. Please give reference to published materials if available.

Species is highlighted in general information and web-resources concerned with key sites, e.g. <http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/m/marazionmarsh/index.asp>

If No, please describe what limits development of such materials and give details about what your country is planning to do to promote Aquatic Warbler and its conservation.

PART II. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Please report on the implementation of the country-specific actions listed for your country in Part II of the Action Plan and provide information if that is not already covered by your answers under Part I. Please describe not only the measures taken but also their impact on the Aquatic Warbler or its habitat in the context of the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan. Where you have already answered on country-specific actions in Part I, please only add a reference to the relevant answer here.

Current status assessments

Records of Aquatic Warblers at key (and other sites) are collated and published annually by county bird reports. Nationally, these records are further collated and an annual summary published in the journal *British Birds*. Most recent assessments have been published by Fraser & Rogers (2003, 2004)³.

The most recent national assessment⁴ of population size was 33 (five year mean 1996-2000). National totals of 11 in 2001 and 12 in 2002 were reported by Fraser & Rogers (2003, 2004).

The past and current status of Aquatic Warblers in England was recently reviewed by Brown & Grice (2005)⁵.

³Fraser, P.A. & Rogers, M.J. 2003. Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2001. *British Birds* 96: 626-649.

Fraser, P.A. & Rogers, M.J. 2004. Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2002. Part 1: European Bee-eater to Little Bunting. *British Birds* 97: 647-664.

⁴Baker, H., Stroud, D.A., Aebischer, N.J., Cranswick, P.A., Gregory, R.D., McSorley, C.A., Noble, D.G. & Rehfisch, M.M. (2006). Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds* 99: 25-44.

⁵Brown, A.F. & Grice, P. 2005. *Birds in England*. Christopher Helm, London. 600 pp.

Sites of international importance for passage Aquatic Warblers in the UK

Name of the site, geographical coordinates	Status (B – breeding, W – wintering P – passage)	Aquatic Warbler population supported (vocalizing males (breeding) or individuals (migration or wintering))	Year of survey	Total area of the site	Area of the site under protection	Type of protection	Does protection level fully reject possible detrimental developments? [Yes/No]	Site Management Plan (D – developed, A - approved, I – implemented)
Dungeness to Pett Level (http://www.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2046)	P	30 ⁶	Count as at 1997	1,474.04 ha	1,474.04 ha	National = SSSI International = SPA; (proposed Ramsar site)	Yes	
Marazion Marsh (http://www.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2087)	P	6	Count mean 1994-1998	54.58 ha	54.58 ha	National = SSSI International = SPA	Yes	
Poole Harbour (http://www.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2031)	P	11	Count as at 1997	2,271.99 ha	2,271.99 ha	National = SSSI International = SPA & Ramsar (http://www.jncc.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11054.pdf)	Yes	

The network of EU Special Protection Areas classified for passage Aquatic Warblers is described at: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/pdf/UKSPA/UKSPA-A6-100.pdf>. It is estimated that about 70% of the national 'population' occurs with these three sites.

Further information on these and others sites is available from: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-1412>.

⁶ Note that these totals are rather higher than more recent totals (Fraser & Rogers 2003, 2004).