

Global Flyways Workshop



Seosan, Republic of Korea, 17-20 October 2011

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Workshop concept

There are an increasing number of flyway initiatives for migratory bird conservation taking place around the globe, with varied approaches, and with considerable and valuable experience to share.

However the experience of these initiatives, while often well publicised within their own flyway is often poorly known elsewhere.

This has led to independent evolution of approaches in different flyways and relatively little 'inter-flyway' exchange of experience. While many of the challenges faced are similar, different approaches have been taken to tackle them.

Much can be gained through the sharing of lessons learned from these different approaches, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and by taking a more global view of our flyway conservation efforts thus far.

Background

'Waterbirds around the world', an international conference on waterbirds, their conservation and sustainable use was held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2004. From this meeting emerged [The Edinburgh Declaration](#), which contains a number of specific recommendations for urgent action and concludes that there remains a need for better collaboration/ more effective conservation efforts in the Americas, African-Eurasian, Intra-African, Central Asian and Asian-Australasian Flyways (see extract Annex 1).

In November 2008, Ramsar's tenth Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution X.22 on [Promoting international cooperation for the conservation of waterbird flyways](#) (see extract Annex 2). One element of this:

- URGES the governing bodies of flyway initiatives to take steps to share knowledge and expertise on best practices in the development and implementation of flyway-scale waterbird conservation policies and practices, including successful means of disseminating critical supporting data and information to stakeholders and others, and ENCOURAGES the Secretariats of Ramsar, CMS, AEWA and the biodiversity programme of the Arctic Council to work together with their governance and scientific subsidiary bodies and other interested organizations to establish a mechanism for such sharing of knowledge and experience; [See also Annex 1 below].

In December 2008, the Convention on Migratory Species' ninth Conference of the Parties requested [Resolution 9.2](#) (see extract Annex 3) the establishment of:

"..an open-ended working group on global bird flyways within the framework of the Scientific Council to act as a think tank on flyways and frameworks, and tasked with reviewing scientific and technical issues for conservation of migratory birds and their habitats, and relevant international instruments, initiatives and processes, as the basis for future CMS policy on flyways and contributing to the work on the future shape of CMS." [See also Annex 2 below].

Aspects of these two tasks are closely linked.

Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel discussed the delivery of this task at its 15th meeting in January 2009. Its suggested approach to deliver is given in Annex 4.

STRP's process and this international workshop will provide key input to the work of the CMS Scientific Council working group on flyways established led by CMS Scientific Councillors Taej Mundkur and John O'Sullivan. The workshop outcomes will be reported to CMS COP10 (Bergen, November 2011) through the CMS Working Group and Scientific Council and to Ramsar COP 11 (Bucharest, June 2012).

Workshop objectives

The Workshop will:

- review current frameworks for flyway-scale conservation of migratory birds and their habitats;
- highlight lessons which have been learnt from the implementation of flyway conservation initiatives in order to promote exchange of experience and good practice; and
- develop guidance so as to further strengthen flyway management frameworks.

Workshop structure: a thematic approach

Initial thinking on the structure of a workshop is, rather than (geographically) focus on each of the different international initiatives in depth, to instead review a number of implementation themes, and compare and contrast how the various different initiatives have tackled the delivery or promotion of these within their own constraints and opportunities (including cultural and political frameworks).

Such themes might relate either to conservation policy (*e.g.* management and protection of important sites; species action planning; promotion of monitoring *etc.*), or relate to more internal processes as to how initiatives organise and manage themselves (*e.g.* governance processes; input from scientific subsidiary bodies; means of engagement with Range States and other stakeholders *etc.*).

The idea is that for each of these themes, an initial presentation might be made by one of the initiatives where there is a good story to present, with follow-up discussion identifying different models and considering constraints and opportunities more widely. For example, WHSRN might present its experience on the twinning of protected areas, whilst AEWA might present its experience in relation to single species action planning.

The draft programme below suggests eight possible overall themes each of which (taking half a morning or afternoon session) would be informed by two relevant presentations, followed by substantial discussion time:

1. Addressing species conservation through the flyway approach;
 - Species Action Plans as a tool
 - Leveraging species action plans to conserve secondary species or groups (*e.g.* are there albatross species action plans that have practical spin-offs and leverage to help conserve other species or habitats?)
2. Addressing site/ habitat conservation through the flyway approach;
 - Establishing and conserving national and international site networks

- Habitat/site management within and beyond “protected areas”
- 3. Contributions of science to the application of the flyway approach;
 - How can research help in the practical application of the flyway approach and what priority research needs remain (*e.g.* flyway bottlenecks such as northward staging areas)?
 - How can we measure the effectiveness of our flyway conservation efforts?
- 4. Achieving effective flyway-scale conservation;
 - Processes for international cooperation
 - National engagement and implementation
- 5. Innovative approaches to flyway conservation;
 - Innovations from other international programs and frameworks for conservation or change. [Select some specific known examples that may be useful]
 - Regional, national & local levels – [Engaging business, industry, health, education sectors in project design, implementation and ownership.]
- 6. Developing capacity for flyway conservation;
 - At the flyway scale
 - Within countries and partner organisations
- 7. Communication, education and awareness raising within flyway initiatives;
 - Within the network/partnership/stakeholders
 - To external target audiences
- 8. Practicalities of flyway initiatives.
 - Approaches to funding flyway initiatives
 - Structuring flyway initiatives to achieve effective collaboration (how Flyway scale frameworks can be assisted to operate more effectively; improving facilities and options for regional scale networking among partners and stakeholders; bringing in new partners and skills.)

Participation: Approximately 25 participants

Proposed Date & Venue: 17-20 October 2011, Seosan, Republic of Korea

Extract from the Edinburgh Declaration

In support of the recommendations above, the Conference concluded the following:

- For the Flyways of the Americas, collaboration between North, Central and South America and Caribbean nations is developing, based on conclusions of the conference of nations to consider the status of migratory birds held during the VIIIth Neotropical Congress in Chile, and in the recent completion of a Waterbird Conservation Plan for the Americas. Despite more than a century of conservation efforts in North America and emergence of a shared vision for biologically-based, landscape orientated partnerships, it is clear that international co-operation amongst Pan-American countries sharing migratory birds should increase.
- In African-Eurasian Flyways, the generally good knowledge of waterbirds is not being effectively transferred into necessary national and local actions. Nor have conservation efforts led to maintaining or restoring the health of many waterbird populations, including globally threatened species. There are urgent needs to integrate waterbird conservation as part of sustainable development, to the greater benefit of local communities and other stakeholders dependent on wetlands as well as benefiting biodiversity. The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (UNEP/AEWA) provides a good basis to achieve this.
- Intra-African Flyways are extremely poorly known and would benefit from greater attention.
- Many of the waterbirds of the Central Asian Flyway appear to be declining, although information on status and trends is generally poor. In most countries there has been little previous investment in conservation and low involvement of local stakeholders in the sustainable management of wetlands. An international framework for the development of conservation initiatives for migratory waterbirds in Central Asia is urgently required to promote co-operative action. Better information is needed to identify priority conservation issues and responses.
- The waterbirds of Asian-Australasian Flyways are the most poorly known, and the greatest number of globally threatened waterbirds occur here. This flyway extends across the most densely populated part of the world, where there are extreme pressures not only on unprotected wetlands but also on protected sites. Effective protection of wetlands of major importance is a critical need, as in other regions of the world. There are huge, and crucial, challenges in ensuring effective wise-use of key sites, as well as ensuring that consumptive uses of waterbirds are sustainable.
- Conservation of pelagic waterbirds in the open oceans gives a range of unique challenges. The entry into force of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels is a most welcome development, and its full implementation is an urgent need. Addressing issues of seabird by-catch, especially by illegal and unregulated fisheries remains a critical need to reverse the poor conservation status of many species, as is the general need to achieve sustainable marine fisheries.
- Most of the world's known flyways originate in the Arctic. The recent development of international co-operation between arctic countries is welcome, as is the recognition of the crucial need to involve local communities and their traditional local knowledge in waterbird management. Austro-tropical Flyways also require research.
- Climate changes are already affecting waterbirds. The consequences of climate change for waterbirds will be multiple, and will greatly exacerbate current negative impacts such as habitat loss and degradation. There is a need for wide-scale planning, at landscape and flyway scales, to reduce or mitigate the impacts on waterbird populations and their habitats. Research that explores a range of potential future scenarios will be required to underpin this planning and will need data from long-term monitoring and surveillance.
- The conservation status of non-migrant waterbird populations around the world in many cases is poorer than that of migrants, and these waterbirds generally have less focused international attention than migrants. Addressing conservation requirements of non-migrant waterbirds should also be given national and international priority.

- On a densely populated planet it is crucial that waterbird conservationists focus on their relationships with communities and governments as the means both of reversing the causes of poor conservation status, and of resolving conflicts with protected species. Adequately funded programmes of communication, education and public awareness need to be the core of all waterbird conservation initiatives.
- Science has identified the critical importance of a small number of key sites to long-distance migrant shorebirds and that human activities at some of these are responsible for recent dramatic declines in certain shorebird populations.
- Recent research has highlighted the genetic and demographic risks incurred by species that have small populations. These have implications for the design of species recovery programmes.
- The frequency and magnitude of disease losses among waterbirds (from emerging or re-emerging disease agents) have increased to the extent that they demand attention. These diseases not only affect waterbirds but have impacts on humans. Solutions require a multi-disciplinary approach.
- An integrated approach to the monitoring of waterbirds gives cost-effective identification of the reasons for waterbird population changes. There are good examples of the collection of demographic information and its integration with census data. Further such national and especially international schemes should be strongly encouraged and funded.
- Systematic analyses for atlases confirm the value of ringing studies in assessing the conservation status of breeding, wintering and stop-over sites within flyways. To this end, there should be integration of data from conventional ringing and colour-marking, telemetry, stable isotope analyses and genetic markers.

Extract from Ramsar [Resolution X.22 \(2008\)](#)

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

19. STRONGLY ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and other governments actively to support and participate in relevant international plans and programmes for the conservation of shared migratory waterbirds and their habitats, including *inter alia* the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership, AEWA, WHSRN, WCASN, and the Central Asian Action Plan for Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats;
20. ENCOURAGES those Contracting Parties whose territory lies in regions covered by *inter alia* the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, AEWA, WHSRN and WCASN, and which are yet to join these agreements or initiatives, to do so;
21. URGES Parties to identify and designate as Ramsar sites all internationally important wetlands for waterbirds on migratory flyways that meet the Criteria in the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Resolution VII.11, as amended), in line with the long-term targets established for these Criteria;
22. WELCOMES the statement by the Republic of Korea to the 35th meeting of Ramsar's Standing Committee that intertidal mudflats should be preserved and that no large-scale reclamation projects are now being approved in the Republic of Korea, and ENCOURAGES all Contracting Parties in their efforts to protect such habitats in future and to monitor them and mitigate any past development impacts on or losses to them;
23. URGES Contracting Parties, other governments and relevant organizations urgently to enhance their individual and collective efforts to address the root causes of the continuing decline in waterbird status, especially in the light of implications for the achievement of WSSD's 2010 target on wetland biodiversity;
24. URGES the governing bodies of flyway initiatives to take steps to share knowledge and expertise on best practices in the development and implementation of flyway-scale waterbird conservation policies and practices, including successful means of disseminating critical supporting data and information to stakeholders and others, and ENCOURAGES the Secretariats of Ramsar, CMS, AEWA and the biodiversity programme of the Arctic Council to work together with their governance and scientific subsidiary bodies and other interested organizations to establish a mechanism for such sharing of knowledge and experience;
25. REQUESTS Wetlands International to draw upon status information from *Waterbird Population Estimates* to report periodically on the state of the world's waterbirds to the Contracting Parties of Ramsar, CMS, AEWA and CBD, and URGES Contracting Parties and others both to contribute the necessary financial support to enable the production of such international assessments and to support the coordinated International Waterbird Census (IWC), which contributes to these population estimates and assessments and the provision of much other relevant knowledge; and
26. INVITES the Convention's International Organization Partners, particularly BirdLife International and Wetlands International, to provide consultative and other technical services to Contracting Parties in addressing the decline of waterbirds through facilitating and assisting collaborative participation of Contracting Parties, non-contracting parties, and the private sector in the implementation of flyway initiatives at national level, supporting the updating of national wetland inventories and monitoring of sites for waterbirds (see Resolution X.15).

Extract from CMS [Resolution 9.2 \(2008\)](#)

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Waterbirds Flyways

5. *Decides* to establish an open-ended working group on global bird flyways within the framework of the Scientific Council to act as a think tank on flyways and frameworks, and tasked with reviewing scientific and technical issues for conservation of migratory birds and their habitats, and relevant international instruments, initiatives and processes, as the basis for future CMS policy on flyways and contributing to the work on the future shape of CMS:

(i) Central Asian Flyway

- (i.i) Welcomes the launch of the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats (January 2008), as stated in UNEP/CMS/Conf.9.27, for one of the world's most vital routes for migratory birds, covering 175 species, 13 of which are already listed on Appendix I of the Convention;
- (i.ii) Urges the immediate execution of the Action Plan through the completion of pilot projects in view of the recognised necessity of having a Central Asian Flyway conservation instrument;
- (i.iii) Appeals to all Range States for a sustained commitment, both in terms of conservation interest and resource provision, in order to implement effectively the above mentioned Action Plan; and
- (i.iv) Supports the Secretariat's call for the Range States to meet in 2009-2010 in Central Asia in order to: review the Action Plan, agree on future projects subject to external funding, establish coordination arrangements for Central Asian Flyway management and conservation, and explore the possibility of the preparation of a CMS instrument or extending an existing instrument, either legally binding or non binding, under Article IV of the Convention concerning the conservation of these species and requests the Secretariat to involve the relevant regional Agreements, in particular the Secretariat of the AEWA in the view of a possible close collaboration with the AEWA using all available synergies.

(ii) East Asian-Australasian Flyway

- (ii.i) Welcomes the establishment of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and recognises this Partnership as fulfilling the conditions of a non-binding agreement under Article IV paragraph 4 of CMS, as noted inter alia in the 31st Meeting of CMS Standing Committee (September 2006);
- (ii.ii) Expresses the hope that EAAFP will serve as a bridge to a more permanent arrangement under CMS auspices, as CMS will deploy its experience in the development of similar intergovernmental instruments under Article IV of the Convention, notably the Agreement on the conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP);
- (ii.iii) Requests the Secretariat to take an active role, subject to its resources, in the technical and other work of the Partnership; and
- (ii.iv) Further requests that EAAFP present a report to the next Conference of the Parties, and if appropriate, to the intervening meeting of the Standing Committee in order to update on the development of the partnership. A representative should also be invited to attend the Scientific Council;

(iii) American Flyways

- (iii.i) Expresses the interest of advancing the development of an international framework to address conservation priorities for migratory birds and their habitats, covering areas for breeding, wintering and resting sites throughout the Americas. The initiative will consider the existing South American instruments such as the Ruddy-headed Goose, Grassland Birds and Andean Flamingos MoUs, as well as other existing initiatives;

(iv) Pacific Flyway

- (iv.i) *Recognizes* the importance of conservation of migratory birds and their habitats in the Pacific Flyway that are under threat, notably from global climate change; and
- (iv.ii) *Requests* the Secretariat, through the Working Group on the Scientific Council, to review the status of species priorities in the flyway to identify the appropriate instruments for their conservation.