



Strasbourg, 27th June 2022

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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

42nd meeting

Strasbourg, 28 November - 2 December 2022

GROUP OF EXPERTS ON THE CONSERVATION OF WILD BIRDS

7th meeting, Valencia (Spain)

hybrid meeting format

9-10 June 2022

Meeting Report

*Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the 7th meeting of the Group of Experts on the Conservation of Wild Birds which took place in Valencia, Spain in a hybrid format;
- Take note of the proposals by the Group for its future work.

1. Opening of the meeting and welcome of participants

The Chair, Mr Rastislav Rybanic (Slovak Republic), opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and thanking the Spanish authorities for the generous invitation to host the meeting and the interesting field visit held on Thursday, 9th June to the Albufera Natural Park and La Granja wildlife rescue and breeding centre.

Mr Borja Heredia, representing the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, welcomed all participants to Valencia on behalf of the Spanish authorities and wished all participants engaging and fruitful discussions.

2. Introduction by the Secretariat: technical information, meeting objectives and expected results

After presenting information on the practicalities of the hybrid meeting, Ms Nadia Saporito, Junior Project Officer of the Bern Convention Secretariat, recalled that the last meeting of the Group of Experts had been held in Malta in 2017 and explained that the objective of this year's meeting was to:

- take stock of work done on the implementation of the Bern Convention Recommendation on birds and power lines and discuss the further needs for work on the matter;
- discuss and, if appropriate, agree on necessary steps to promote lead shot bans to prevent the poisoning of birds;
- learn about bird reintroduction projects in the region of Valencia and multi-species Action Plans in Mura-Drava-Danube and Türkiye;
- identify new areas of focus for the future work of the Group of Experts;
- appoint a new Chair and Vice-Chair.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting agenda was adopted with no amendments.

4. Reintroduction of species: the experience in Valencia

Mr Juan Jiménez, Head of the Wildlife Service of the Generalitat Valenciana, presented the bird reintroduction projects in the region of Valencia. Meeting participants were informed of the species reintroduced in the region of Valencia, of key aspects to take in consideration for the reintroduction of species and lesson learned from the experience in Valencia. The slides of Mr Jiménez's presentation are accessible [at this link](#).

5. Protecting birds from electrocution and collisions with powerlines

The Secretariat highlighted that bird mortality caused by collision and electrocution on electric powerlines negatively affected populations of endangered bird species, including those listed in the Annexes of the Bern Convention. It further recalled that, following the suggestion of the Group of Experts in 2004, the Standing Committee had therefore adopted *Recommendation No. 110 (2004) on minimising adverse effects of above-ground electricity transmission facilities (power lines) on birds*.

As electrocution on powerlines continued to be one of the main causes for severe losses in population, in April 2011, an International Conference on power lines and bird mortality in Europe, organised by BirdLife, resulted in the 'Budapest Declaration on bird protection and powerlines'. Following the Budapest Declaration, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention adopted a temporary system of biennial reporting for monitoring the implementation of Recommendation No. 110 (2004). The reporting was delivered in 2014 and 2016.

Following the introduction by the Secretariat, Mr Borja Heredia presented the legal framework on powerlines and birds in Spain. Mr Heredia briefed meeting participants on the content of a Decree dated 2008¹ which defined technical criteria to which electrical structures in protected zones should adhere for the safeguard of birds. Participants were informed of a plan funded by the European Union for the prevention of electrocution of birds in various regions in Spain, aiming at retrofitting at least 20,000 structures. Finally, Mr Heredia stressed that the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge was also working on a long-term national strategy against electrocution and collision with power lines. The slides of Mr. Heredia's presentation are accessible in Spanish [at this link](#).

The Group stressed that interventions on powerlines at international level should focus on flyways of migratory birds; in this perspective, the [Eurasian-African Bird Migration Atlas](#) was identified as a good source of information on high-risk areas of electrocution and collision with powerlines. The Group also underlined the importance of translating technical knowledge of conservation experts into more accessible information for relevant stakeholders.

The issue of increased operating temperatures of the currently widespread technology of High Temperature Low Sag conductors (HTLS) (180 °C compared to 75 °C) and the lack of scientific evidence of the possible consequences of these structures on birds were also brought to the attention of the Group. More generally, the question on how bird conservation can be taken into account into the development of new technologies was raised. It was suggested that a conference be organised for national governments, civil society and, most importantly, representatives of the energy sector to discuss the issue of electrocution and powerlines, using the model of the International Conference organised in Budapest by BirdLife in 2011. In addition, a study on new technologies in the field of powerlines and related potential risks on birds was also proposed to be conducted in the future.

6. The actual situation with lead shot bans to prevent poisoning of birds

Mr Rafael Mateo Soria, Associate Professor at the Institute for Game and Wildlife Research, presented on lead poisoning in wild birds. Mr Mateo gave meeting participants an overview of the issue, explained how lead exposure can be monitored and illustrated the effects of lead on the neurological system, immune response and reproduction of wild birds. The presentation then focused on lead shot regulation in Europe. The slides of Mr Mateo's presentation are accessible [at this link](#).

The Group stressed that collaboration with hunters is crucial to prevent lead poisoning of birds and that the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE) could play a central role in facilitating communication and offering hunters practical guidance on how to replace lead shots with other ammunitions. The Group further suggested that, while the legislative process to ban lead shots in European Countries is ongoing, the Bern Convention could disseminate existing scientific evidence on the effects of lead on biodiversity.

7. Multi-species Action Plans

7.1 Action Plan for river birds in the five-country biosphere reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”

Ms Tanja Nikowitz, WWF Austria, and Mr Matthias Gattermayr, REVITAL, presented the Action Plan for river birds in the five-country Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”. Despite being one of the ecologically most important river systems in Europe, the “Mura-Drava-Danube“ river system suffered from habitat loss due to hydropower dams, navigation improvements and flood protection. The Action Plan is the first species conservation plan developed on a transboundary level within the Biosphere Reserve. During her presentation, Ms Nikowitz stressed how the support of the Bern Convention could strengthen the implementation of the Action Plan and possibly stimulate the development of similar species actions plans in transboundary protected areas in Europe. The slides of Ms Nikowitz's and Mr Gattermayr's presentation are accessible [at this link](#).

¹ Real Decreto 1432/2008, de 29 de Agosto [Protección de la avifauna contra la colisión y la electrocución en líneas eléctricas de alta tensión. \(miteco.gob.es\)](#)

7.2 Preparation of a multi-species Action Plan targeting 5 duck species in Türkiye

Mr Burak Tatar, representing the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, presented on a multi-species Action Plan for the conservation of five duck species currently being developed in the framework of the cooperation with the European Union. The Action Plan was part of a wider project for the preparation of a nationwide biodiversity conservation strategy. The slides of Mr Tatar's presentation are accessible [at this link](#).

8. Proposals to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention: work ahead

Ms Ursula Sticker, Secretary of the Bern Convention, informed the Group of Experts on the Vision for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030, which was adopted by the Standing Committee at its 41st meeting in December 2021. The text of the Vision, available at [this link](#), highlights the mission of the Bern Convention and indicates four key overarching goals. Ms Sticker informed meeting participants that the Vision would be accompanied by a Strategic Plan, currently under elaboration.

Taking into consideration the Vision adopted by the Standing Committee, the Group recommended that the Bern Convention should continue its work on the conservation of wild birds and identified the following areas of focus for the future work of the Group of Experts:

- follow-up on the issue of electrocution and collision with powerlines;
- study the threats of windfarms and renewable energies on wild birds;
- support non-EU Bern Convention Parties in their efforts to ban lead shot in wetlands;
- seek synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements for species action planning;
- contribute to promotion of bird-friendly agriculture practices across the region.

9. Appointment of Chair and vice-Chair

The Group warmly thanked the current Chair, Mr Rybanic, and the current Vice-Chair, Mr François Lamarque, for their dedication and commitment to the Group of Experts. The Group appointed Mr Burak Tatar (Türkiye) as the new Chair and Ms Salome Nozadze (Georgia) as the new Vice-Chair of the Group of Experts. Their term of office shall comprise two consecutive Group of Experts meetings.

10. Next meeting of the Group of Experts

The Chair informed the Group of Experts that the next meeting will be held in 2024. He kindly invited the representatives of Contracting Parties to express their interest of hosting the next meeting in their country to the Secretariat.

11. Any other business

No other business was raised.

12. Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked the members of the Group of Experts for the productive meeting and declared the meeting closed.

Appendix I – List of Participants

Contracting Parties	Name
Armenia	Mr Arman AVAGYAN "Hydrometeorology and monitoring center" Ministry of the Environment
Bulgaria	Mr Valeri GEORGIEV Ministry of Environment and Water
Croatia	Ms Maja POLIĆ State Inspectorate
Czech Republic	Ms Eliška ROLFOVÁ Ministry of the Environment
Finland	Ms Nina MIKANDER Ministry of the Environment
France	Mr Charles-Henri DE BARSAC Ministère Ecologie
Georgia	Ms Salome NOZADZE Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture
Germany	Mr Oliver SCHALL BMUV - Federal Ministry for the Environment
Hungary	Mr Andras SCHMIDT Ms Éva FEJES Ministry of Agriculture
Malta	Ms Jessica FENECH Wild Birds Regulation Unit
Poland	Mr Wiktor WYŻYŃSKI General Directorate of Environmental Protection
Portugal	Mr João LOUREIRO ICNF, Institute of Nature Conservation and Forests
Serbia	Ms Snezana PROKIC Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia
Slovakia	Mr Rastislav RYBANIC Integra Consulting
Spain	Mr Borja HEREDIA Mr Rubén MORENO-OPO Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge Mr Juan JIMÉNEZ Generalitat Valenciana

	<p>Ms Susana SÁNCHEZ CUERDA Dirección General de Sostenibilidad, Junta de Extremadura (GPEX)</p> <p>Mr Roberto MATELLANES FERRERAS Ms Patricia MONTERDE VITORIA Ms Devora MUÑOZ Tragsatec, Group Tragsa</p>
Türkiye	<p>Mr Burak TATAR General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks</p>
United Kingdom	<p>Mr Matthew PARSONS Joint Nature Conservation Committee</p>
International/national governmental and non-governmental organisations, Secretariats of Conventions	Name
Albanian Ornithological Society	Mr Erald XEKA
BIOM Association (BirdLife Croatia)	<p>Mr Boleslaw SŁOCIŃSKI Mr Mate ZEC</p>
BirdLife Europe & Central Asia	Mr Willem VAN DEN BOSSCHE
BirdLife International	<p>Ms Lilla BARABAS Ms Nicola CROCKFORD</p>
CABS - Committee Against Bird Slaughter	Ms Stefania TRAVAGLIA
CIC (International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation)	Ms Iben Hove SØRENSEN
Convention on Migratory Species	<p>Mr Olivier BIBER Mr Iván RAMÍREZ PAREDES Mr Fernando SPINA Ms Nora Nora Marie WEYER</p>
CZIP/Birdlife Montenegro	Mr Bojan ZEKOVIĆ
European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA)	Mr Simon BRUSLUND
FACE (European Federation for Hunting and Conservation)	Mr Alexander GRIFFIN
Hellenic Ornithological Society/Birdlife Greece	Ms Zoi-Antigoni SIDERI-MANOKA

	Ms Georgia-Panagiota ALEXOPOULOU
Int. Association for Falconry & Conservation of Birds of Prey	Mr Julian MÜHLE Mr Gary TIMBRELL
Nature Conservation Egypt	Mr Haitham MOSSAD
Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania	Mr Zydjon VORPSI
Invited Speakers	Name
	Matthias GATTERMAYR Revital Integrative Naturraumplanung
	Rafael MATEO SORIA Institute for Game and Wildlife Research
	Tanja NIKOWITZ WWF Austria
Council of Europe Secretariat	Name
	Ms Ursula STICKER Secretary of the Bern Convention
	Ms Nadia SAPORITO Junor Professional Officer
	Ms Emma BOUTIER Coordination assistant