

ELEVENTH MEETING OF PARTNERS OF THE EAST ASIAN – AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY PARTNERSHIP
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, 12-17 March 2023



Decision 8

Maintaining up-to-date Population Estimates and Trends of Migratory Waterbird Populations for the EAAFP

Aware that the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) provides an informal and voluntary international framework for the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the EAAF and aims to enhance the conservation status of the migratory waterbird groups covered by the Partnership with the goal that “Migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway are recognised and conserved for the benefit of people and biodiversity”;

Recognising that up-to-date information on the status of populations of migratory waterbirds in the EAAF is required for a range of purposes, including: (a) deriving the EAAF Flyway Site Network thresholds (1%), (b) providing an international context for periodic prioritization of populations, (c) providing a technically sound basis to develop and implement conservation action plans for these populations, (d) Red Listing of species, and (d) assisting in measuring the success of the Partnership in achieving its overall goal;

Recalling that Objective 3 of the EAAFP Strategic Plan 2019-2028 on enhancing flyway research and monitoring activities, calls for Key Result Area (KRA) 3.1 that states “National monitoring systems to assess the status of migratory waterbirds and their habitats are established, maintained and further enhanced.” for which two Indicators have been identified: 3.1.1 A standardized monitoring methodology for migratory waterbirds and their habitat is developed and used in nationally coordinated monitoring programmes, and 3.1.2 All country partners have nationally-coordinated monitoring programs in place. In addition, KRA 3.2 states “Conservation status reviews for waterbird populations are produced and updated to set and adapt priorities for action” of the Strategic Plan; for which two Indicators have been identified: 3.2.1 Data on migratory waterbird population estimates, trends and distributions is maintained by the Partnership, and 3.2.2 Two updates have been produced and published by 2028;

Recognising that EAAFP Decision 10.12 *Development of a Conservation Status Review of Migratory Waterbird Populations for the EAAFP* inter alia “Calls on the Partners and the Secretariat to support periodic production of the EAAF Conservation Status Review (at least every alternate MoP or not more than four yearly) as appropriate within national circumstances”;

Taking into account that the first Conservation Status Review of Migratory Waterbird Populations for the EAAF (CSR1) was issued in July 2022 and provides the latest information on the 276 EAAF biogeographic populations of 216 migratory waterbird species and boundary maps for all biogeographic populations for

the first time; and noting that the CSR1 Summary Report is available on the EAAFP website (<https://www.eaaflyway.net/csr-1-launch/>);

Acknowledging the role of Wetlands International in the preparation of the CSR1 in coordination with the EAAFP Science Unit/Secretariat and in consultation with the Technical Sub-committee, Partners, Working Groups, Task Forces and other experts;

Thanking the EAAFP Technical Sub-committee for its guidance, and review and approval of the CSR1 Summary Report issued in July 2022 and for the advice for it to be used by the Partnership;

Acknowledging the financial resources provided by the EAAFP Secretariat, the Norwegian Environmental Agency and Wetlands International for preparation of the CSR1;

Noting that the EAAF Secretariat in liaison with Wetlands International has made all CSR1 population size and trend estimates, 1% thresholds and boundary maps available on the Waterbird Populations Portal (www.wpp.wetlands.org);

Further noting that the CSR1 has identified major gaps and limitations in knowledge about the distribution, size estimates and trends of many populations exist (populations for which there is poor information, including those that congregate away from wetlands, species with mixed populations in the non-breeding period, populations that are dispersed in the non-breeding period, with secretive behaviour or that congregate offshore); that the distribution and definition of most biogeographic populations is poorly understood; and that the CSR1 provides the following recommendations to address these major gaps:

- i. *Improve information and its availability on waterbird population size estimates and trends:*
 - a. Develop and resource a comprehensive flyway monitoring programme covering all EAAFP waterbird populations.
 - b. Give priority to the 28 populations for which no population size estimate exists and populations for which no recent size and trend estimate are available (nearly 70 populations). This should include breeding surveys, migration surveys, and special monitoring efforts for small and threatened populations, secretive populations, those occurring outside wetlands and offshore populations.
 - c. Strengthen and expand the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) in areas with currently low coverage and capacity gaps.
 - d. Provide national monitoring guidance (as called for by MOP Decision 10.12), including advice and standards for the appropriate methods to monitor different waterbird populations.
 - e. Strengthen national monitoring efforts, through incorporation of waterbird monitoring activities as a priority action within EAAFP national and site partnerships (including through their incorporation into new EAAF guidelines being developed by the Partnership in 2021-22) [as covered by DD6].
 - f. Establish a partnership of organisations with international experience of waterbird monitoring to develop and support implementation of an EAAF monitoring programme, including development of national monitoring guidance.

Sheets and in informing prioritisation of important sites for the Regional Flyway Initiative led by the Asian Development Bank and BirdLife International;

Further noting that the biogeographic populations of 8 families of seabirds, namely Alcidae (auks, murre and puffins), Oceanitidae (Austral storm petrels), Procellariidae (shearwaters & petrels), Stercorariidae (skuas and jaegers), Phaethontidae (tropicbirds), Hydrobatidae (Northern storm petrels), Sulidae (gannets and boobies), Fregatidae (frigatebirds) need to be defined for review by the Technical Sub-committee to enable the populations be included in future CSR editions;

Also noting in relation to the updating of the global Waterbird Population Estimates, that Ramsar COP14 Resolution XIV.18 requests its Scientific & Technical Review Panel “to develop a technical proposal to enable the resourcing of both the update process and data collection. The technical proposal will address the process for the future Waterbird Population Estimates updates, in consultation with Contracting Parties, Secretariat, relevant flyway agreements and partnerships, Wetlands International and interested entities”; and

Recalling the EAAFP Monitoring Task Force recommendation to MOP9 for development of a cooperative programme that builds on the existing monitoring activities, to strengthen and enhance waterbird and site monitoring across the Flyway; Decision 10.12 that called on the Monitoring Task Force to develop standardised guidance required for development and implementation of comprehensive national waterbird monitoring programmes; and Decision 7.6 that called for reporting on the status of Flyway Network Sites.

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In relation to the Conservation Status Review (CSR):

1. *Agrees* that the latest population size, trend estimates and 1% thresholds from the CSR process as available through the WPP are used by the Partnership, including for future EAAF Flyway Network Site designations;
2. *Requests* Wetlands International (as per Decision 10.12) to coordinate preparation of a proposal and budget for the CSR2 to be developed in consultation with the Technical sub-Committee, Science Unit of the Secretariat, Anatidae-, Shorebird-, Crane-, Seabird- and Black-faced Spoonbill Working Groups, Scaly-sided Merganser-, Spoon-billed Sandpiper-, Far Eastern Curlew- and Waterbird Monitoring Task Forces, other expert networks and Partners;
3. *Further requests* the Seabird Working Group as a priority to propose the delineation, size and trend estimates of biogeographic populations of 8 families of seabirds, namely Alcidae (auks, murre and puffins), Oceanitidae (Austral storm petrels), Procellariidae (shearwaters & petrels),

Stercorariidae (skuas and jaegers), Phaethontidae (tropicbirds), Hydrobatidae (Northern storm petrels), Sulidae (gannets and boobies), Fregatidae (frigatebirds) in time for inclusion to CSR2;

4. *Encourages* the Secretariat to prioritise, facilitate and resource the periodic preparation of the CSRs through the Secretariat budget, starting with preparation of CSR2 for completion by 2026;
5. *Calls* on Partners and the Secretariat to contribute resources to support maintenance and updates of the Waterbird Populations Portal to improve delivery of information and support the work of the Partnership;

In relation to improving waterbird size and trend information through development/ strengthening of comprehensive national waterbird monitoring programmes:

6. *Instructs* inclusion in the work plan of the Technical Sub-committee oversight of the development, resources permitting, of a robust EAAF collaborative monitoring and analyses framework led by the Waterbird Monitoring Task Force jointly by the Anatidae-, Shorebird-, Crane-, Seabird- and Black-faced Spoonbill Working Groups, Scaly-sided Merganser-, Spoon-billed Sandpiper-, Far Eastern Curlew- Task Forces, the Science Unit and a number of NGOs, community organisations who are undertaking monitoring, and expert networks. This will need to include development of national guidelines, to ensure standardised monitoring to improve (a) waterbird population estimates and trends, and (b) wetland status monitoring of EAAF Network Sites and potential network sites, building on the Asian Waterbird Census <http://www.wetlands.org/awc> and other monitoring programmes;
7. *Urges* Partners to provide technical and funding resources to progress development and implementation of the EAAF collaborative monitoring and analyses framework, including for organisation of regional workshops, training of trainer courses and mentoring;
8. *Encourages* Partners and others who are already supporting international monitoring initiatives to continue and strengthen their support and invites other Partners to contribute to the development and maintenance of waterbird and wetland monitoring and particularly to establish and support initiatives for species/populations for which there is poor or outdated estimates and in those geographic regions where monitoring is lacking or is insufficient;
9. *Urges* Partners and other donors to provide financial contributions for roll out of national waterbird and wetland monitoring and research through the Waterbird Fund or other international and national funding mechanisms, and
10. *Encourages* the Waterbird Monitoring Task Force, working with the TsC, to report to each MOP on development and implementation of the EAAF collaborative monitoring and analysis framework.