The Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative

Revised Workplan 2015-2019
The Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) is a Working Group of the Arctic Council.

**CAFF Designated Agencies:**
- Norwegian Environment Agency, Trondheim, Norway
- Environment and Climate Change Canada, Ottawa, Canada
- Faroese Museum of Natural History, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands (Kingdom of Denmark)
- Finnish Ministry of the Environment, Helsinki, Finland
- Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik, Iceland
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greenland
- Russian Federation Ministry of Natural Resources, Moscow, Russia
- Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Stockholm, Sweden
- United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage, Alaska

**CAFF Permanent Participant Organizations:**
- Aleut International Association (AIA)
- Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
- Gwich'in Council International (GCI)
- Inuit Circumpolar Council International (ICC)
- Russian Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
- Saami Council


Cover photo: Peter Prokosch, UNEP GRID Arendal

Back cover photo: Jan van de Kamp

For more information please contact:
CAFF International Secretariat
Borgir, Nordurslod
600 Akureyri, Iceland
Phone: +354 462-3350
Fax: +354 462-3390
www.caff.is
www.facebook.com/CAFFS
@CAFFSecretariat

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/. All photographs are subject to a separate restricted copyright and may not be reproduced without explicit consent, which should be sought directly from the copyright holder.
## Table of Contents

**Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway**

- Introduction .................................................................................................................................................................................. 7
- Species .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 7
- Objectives and Actions ...................................................................................................................................................................... 8

**Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the Americas Flyway**

- Introduction .................................................................................................................................................................................. 15
- Species .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 15
- Objectives and actions ..................................................................................................................................................................... 16

**Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the African-Eurasian Flyway**

- Introduction and context .............................................................................................................................................................. 19
- Species .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 19
- Objectives and actions ..................................................................................................................................................................... 20

**Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the Circumpolar Flyway**

- Introduction .................................................................................................................................................................................. 23
- Species .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 23
- Objectives and actions ..................................................................................................................................................................... 24
Map 1. AMBI Flyways
- Americas Flyway
- Circumpolar Flyway
- East Asian-Australasian Flyway
- African-Eurasian Flyway
The Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI) is a project under the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) designed to improve the status and secure the long-term sustainability of declining Arctic breeding migratory bird populations. AMBI works with many partner countries and organizations to support and initiate actions that target priority species and conservation issues across a series of focal geographies. For more information please visit: www.caff.is/ambi

Circumpolar Flyway
- Focal AMBI Areas

Americas Flyway
- Focal AMBI Areas

East Asian Australasian Flyway
- Focal AMBI Areas

Priority Conservation Issues
- Marine bycatch
- Unsustainable harvest
- Climate change
- Habitat loss/degradation

African-Eurasian Flyway
- Focal AMBI Areas
Map 2. East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Bar-tailed Godwit (spp. baueri and mensbeiri)
Dunlin (spp. arctica)
Great Knot
Curlew Sandpiper
Red Knot (spp. rogersi and piersmai)
Spoon-billed Sandpiper
Lesser White-fronted Goose
Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Flyway Working Group Members

Evgeny Syroechkovskiy (Russia)
Rick Lanctot (USA)
How Choon Beng (Singapore)
Lu Jun (China)
Jiang Hongxing (China)
Sung-Ryoung Kang (Republic of Korea)
Eiko Okawa (Japan)
Suresh Kumar (India)
Nicola Crockford (BirdLife International)
Barend van Gemerden (BirdLife International)
Simba Chan (BirdLife Asia)
East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership
Lev Neretin (UNEP)
Courtney Price (CAFF Secretariat)
Jennifer Provencher (AMBI Coordinator)

Introduction

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) is a migratory corridor that stretches from the Russian Far East and Alaska, southwards through East Asia and Southeast Asia, to Australia and New Zealand, encompassing 22 countries and supporting over 50 million migratory birds from over 250 populations, including 33 globally threatened and 30 near-threatened species. During the AMBI evaluation and revision process carried out at the mid-way point of the project in 2017, the boundaries of this flyway were extended to include India to emphasize the importance of this area for Arctic breeding migratory birds within the region.

Species

- Spoon-billed Sandpiper
- Great Knot
- Red Knot
- Bar-tailed Godwit
- Dunlin
- Lesser White-fronted Goose
- Curlew Sandpiper
Objectives and Actions

**Objective 1. Secure important breeding and staging habitats of key AMBI-EAAF migratory bird species in Arctic Russia and Alaska, with a focus on Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit and Dunlin.**

**Russia**

**Action 1 Improve conservation work on Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the breeding grounds.**
   a. Identify and protect known Spoon-billed Sandpiper breeding habitat, including creation of a network of protected areas in Southern Chukotka at key breeding locations.
   b. Survey potential but previously unsurveyed breeding sites in Chukotka and revisit sites not surveyed for more than ten years to update the status of the species at particular locations and develop local conservation plans.
   c. Ensure priority conservation measures in the Arctic are taken, including continuous support of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper 'head-start' program in Meinypilgyno as the most efficient tool to increase breeding productivity.
   d. Improve knowledge on breeding distribution, population productivity and local threats to Bar-tailed Godwit and Dunlin, as well as Red and Great Knots in the Eastern Russian Arctic, to provide necessary information for improvement of conservation measures.

**Action 2 Assist nomination of several key breeding and/or staging shorebird areas in the Russian far East as EAAF Partnership Network Sites with follow-up conservation actions.**

**United States**

**Action 3 Encourage and assist in the nomination for the EAAF Partnership Flyway Site Network of important breeding and staging areas used by priority species in Alaska as part of the EAAF Partnership Flyway Site Network.**
   a. Undertake bird surveys to improve knowledge of important breeding and staging sites for priority species in Alaska.
   b. Assess quality of reclaimed areas on the Arctic coast as breeding habitat for shorebirds.
   c. Engage with industry partners to develop projects to develop best practices to maximize the value of reclaimed coastal habitats.

**Russia/United States**

**Action 4 Share experience and methodologies for surveying shorebird distribution, monitoring population size and trends, conducting demographic studies, and managing habitats of priority species and other migratory birds.**
   a. Share experiences associated with monitoring and conserving breeding shorebirds in the Beringia area and elsewhere along the flyway via cooperation projects and exchange visits between Russian and United States specialists, with an initial focus on existing field stations studying Spoon-billed Sandpipers in Chukotka and Dunlin at Barrow.
   b. With the assistance of Russian experts on Spoon-billed Sandpipers, survey potential breeding areas for this species in western Alaska.
   c. Prepare manuals and conduct training courses and exchange visits related to the monitoring of waterfowl populations (e.g., developing aerial survey methods using experience of United States Fish and Wildlife Service) and managing of their habitats on the breeding and non-breeding grounds within Russia. Goals would include 1) conducting a jointly organized aerial survey in the Russian Arctic using a Russian light plane and observers trained in Alaska in 2018-19 or later, 2) repeating waterfowl surveys in Russia that were conducted in collaboration with the US FWS in the 1990s to 2000s.
Objective 2. Secure intertidal and associated habitat for Arctic waders at key staging and wintering sites in the EAAF.

Russia

Action 1 Ensure improvement of protection of the Russian Far East intertidal shorebird stopover sites.
   a. Undertake surveys at selected key shorebird concentrations at the Russian Far East during passage seasons and develop habitat mapping, local awareness raising and conservation plans for key areas particularly for areas identified by recent satellite tracking.
   b. Initiate cooperation with administrations of coastal regions within the Far East of the Russian Federation (Chukotskiy Autonomous District, Sakhalinskaya and Magadanskaya Oblast', Kamchatskiy, Khabrovskiy and Primorskiy Kray) and corporate sector (mineral resources extrication companies etc.) on conservation of shorebirds and environmental education.

United States

Action 2 Gather better information on spring and fall staging sites and requirements of Dunlin and Bar-tailed Godwits along western Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, coastal Bristol Bay, and northern side of Alaska Peninsula.

China

Action 3 Ensure protection of Jiangsu Coast ecosystem, especially the Rudong and Dongtai areas, for Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other Arctic shorebirds.
   a. Ensure the protection of all sites important for Spoon-billed Sandpiper, through creation of the GIS data base, designating and effectively protecting and managing national nature reserves or similar level protected areas, including seeking World Heritage Site status, over a sufficient extent of key staging habitat to sustain populations of Spoon-billed Sandpiper and other Arctic waterbirds.
   b. Through work with National and subnational governments, achieve the stopping or modification of intertidal reclamation plans in Jiangsu province to minimize disturbance to populations of Arctic-breeding waterbirds, in particular the revision of plans for the Tiaozini Reclamation project to exclude Spoon-billed Sandpiper habitat from development.
   c. Undertake public awareness raising and develop local and national pride in migratory stopover and wintering sites including support for an annual Spoon-billed Sandpiper Festival coordinated by local government and non-government organizations.
   d. Support the conservation of intertidal flats and bird species by 1) developing business partnership agreements with local entrepreneurs to promote ecotourism that supports protected area establishment and management; such ecotourism might include attractive information centres that are tourism attractions in their own right and provide environmental education, 2) promoting ecological certification of the shellfish industry.
   e. Explore the feasibility of restoring intertidal flats and associated habitats, including through Spartina control, to help sustain migratory bird populations and restore ecosystem services.
   f. Develop partnership of all bodies active in SBS conservation in China under leadership of SFA. Run regular workshops and link conservation work with activities of Russia-China bilateral on migratory birds and Spoon-bill Sandpiper (SBS) Task Force of the EAAFP. The National Bird Banding Centre (NBBC) of China to develop more marking and satellite tracking of SBS in China.

Action 4 Ensure protection of Luannan Coast especially Nanbao, Tanshan for Red Knot and other Arctic shorebirds.
   a. Secure protected area status and effective management of remaining intertidal habitat and associated wetland ecosystems and demonstrate optimised management for Arctic shorebirds of a complex of intertidal, fish/shrimp ponds and salt works in line with the principles of eco-civilization.
   b. Cooperate with China’s National Bird Banding Center (NBBC) or others to start work toward establishing a Hemispheric Coastal Environment Observatory for Migration Studies at Nanbao linked to the Field Studies Centre being developed by Wetlands International further inland and with Broome Bird Observatory in Australia.
   c. Develop ecotourism and public awareness raising activities to promote local and national pride in the global importance of Nanbao.
   d. The National Bird Banding Centre of China to initiate marking and satellite tracking of Bar-tailed Godwits at Bohai Bay aiming to better understand migration pattern of Limosa lapponica anadyrensis subspecies to develop better conservation planning and future cooperation with Russia to protect this subspecies.
Action 5 Ensure protection at Yalu Jiang, Liaoning for Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Great Knot and other Arctic shorebirds.
   a. At Yalu Jiang NNR, support development and implementation of a management plan to halt further loss of intertidal area and conserve and restore habitat for feeding and roosting.
   b. Support public awareness raising activities to highlight the global importance of the site and develop local and national pride and ownership.
   c. Share positive experiences between festival organizers at Yalu Jiang and other important areas, such as Alaska and New Zealand as a way of building support for conservation at these sites.

Republic of Korea

Action 6 Support conservation of the intertidal areas on the west coast of the Republic of Korea for the Spoonbilled Sandpiper, Great Knot, and Dunlin.
   a. Make efforts to apply best practices and knowledge on coastal conservation, including technical cooperation and scientific exchange with other comparable regions.
   b. Promote and support the conservation and restoration schemes of coastal wetlands, for example, showing global leadership in building a “Caring for Coasts” Initiative under the CBD and Ramsar Convention, fostering intertidal conservations programs at the appropriate government institutions and building a partnership among interested parties including local communities.
   c. Support designating the key habitats as special sites that are afforded more protection.
   d. Promote the importance of conserving Korea’s remaining intertidal shorebird zones for the protection of Arctic breeding and other migratory waterbirds.

Singapore/Southeast Asia

Action 7 Support Singapore in its aim to help develop capacity for management of wetland and migratory birds in the region.
   a. Explore the possibility of forming an Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) plus network of migratory bird sites.
   b. Support the preparation of case studies on migratory bird conservation and wetland management, as a way of raising awareness and sharing expertise around these important issues.

Action 8 Cooperate with Singapore on the development of wide-scale International dialog focused on the conservation of Arctic migratory birds in South-East Asia.
   a. Explore the opportunity of organizing in Singapore in 2016-17 an international conference/workshop migratory bird conservation.
   b. Encourage development of diplomatic dialog within ASEAN region to promote cooperation on the conservation of Arctic migratory birds and addressing of unsustainable use of their resources and their wetland habitats.

Japan

Action 9 Further develop the dialog to promote cooperation on the conservation of Arctic migratory birds on the EAAF with focus on selected priority actions identified within this Action plan, including conservation of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Japan and on the flyway and building on existing bilateral migratory bird agreements.

India

Action 10 Work with relevant agencies in India, including the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, in consultation with other Indian research institutions to develop a project in Indian that would assess shorebird/wader conservation needs in the region. This project should be preferably linked to ongoing Arctic bird conservation activities happening in the Arctic, in which India would like to take part and also contribute to Arctic bird conservation on the flyways connecting India and the Arctic.

All Countries

Action 11 Coordinate implementation of actions related to the conservation of intertidal habitats in the EAAF and support to secure more resources for the operation of the EAAFP Secretariat based in Republic of Korea.
Objective 3. Prevent illegal harvest and regulate unsustainable legal harvest of Arctic migratory birds, with a focus on Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Bar-tailed Godwit, and other priority species

Russia

Action 1 Support development and implementation of national and regional strategies and action plans for elimination of illegal harvest of birds in Russia.

a. Conduct surveys at selected key shorebird stopover sites in and the Russian Far East to identify key concentrations of shorebirds and Lesser White-fronted Geese during north and southbound migration, and work with local/ regional governments to develop protected areas and prepare conservation plans for such sites. Plans should include information on raising awareness of impacts of illegal harvest and methods to reduce and eventually eliminate it.

b. Work with federal and regional legislators to reduce/close sport hunting of all migratory shorebirds and geese of unfavorable conservation status in Eastern Siberia and the Russian Far East.

c. Update Russian National Red Data book with key declining Arctic migratory species of EAAF to be included in the new edition and initiate planning and implementation of regional activities for their conservation.

United States

Action 2 Conduct outreach, assess the magnitude and impacts of legal subsistence harvest on priority birds in Alaska, with a focus on Bar-tailed Godwits.

a. Develop outreach materials on priority species that are harvested in the spring and summer subsistence harvest; materials should be in English and relevant native languages.

b. Work with the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council and the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Information Technicians and other relevant entities as appropriate, to begin a dialogue with rural Alaskans to discuss the status of priority species, and the role they play in regulating these populations.

c. Assess the importance of priority species in the diet of rural Alaskans. This step should, where possible, assess the level of harvest occurring.

d. Once reasonable estimates of harvest are documented, conduct population modeling to assess whether this level of take is impacting population sizes of priority species.

e. Should levels of harvest be found to have a measurable impact on the priority species, work with
   i. the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council to promote a sustainable legal harvest of relevant species,
   ii. Refuge Information Technicians to develop outreach programs to reduce level of harvest, and
   iii. school administrators and teachers to develop class programs to educate students about impact of harvest;

f. Share best experience with the Russian part of Beringia and other parts of the Russian Far East to assist in developing dialogue with local communities on sustainable hunting of shorebirds and improvement of management practices.

China

Action 3 Support development and implementation of national and regional strategies and action plans for elimination of illegal harvest of birds in China.

a. Work with the Chinese government to ensure the highest level of national protection for the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

b. Work with the local/regional governments to strengthen patrolling and law enforcement at all key coastal sites used by Spoon-billed Sandpiper, to conserve the population and to raise awareness of impacts of illegal harvest and develop methods to eliminate it, as part of overall conservation actions for the sites.

c. Use satellite tracking and other means to identify key stopovers of Lesser White-fronted Goose and other Arctic geese, and work with national/regional governments and research institutions to develop monitoring techniques and implement conservation plans for such sites; plans should include actions to eliminate illegal harvest.

d. Improve survey and monitoring efforts to increase the knowledge and distribution of priority species including Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwits, and Great and Red Knots at stopover and wintering grounds to assess the level and mitigate illegal killing.
e. Better understand and address the drivers behind the system of illegal trapping and marketing of wild birds.

f. Support the development of regular monitoring and enforcement actions at key markets and restaurants focused on illegal wild birds in cooperation with SFA, regional governments, law enforcement organizations and Food Control Inspectors.

g. Support the organization of national and regional workshops in China to address shorebird conservation and follow up actions on implementation, especially illegal hunting on the Dongtai/Rudong coasts of Jiangsu province.

India

Action 7 Work with the Indian Government (India the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India in consultation with Indian research institutions) to host workshop in India to assess the hunting or poaching of waders, and further assess and revise the conservation status of AMBI species wintering in India or in the region.

All Countries

Action 8 To ensure implementation of actions on illegal killing and unsustainable harvest, raise funds to hire a fulltime coordinator in the Singapore office of BirdLife-Asia whose responsibilities will be to:

a. Coordinate with EAAF partners, NGOs and other federal and provincial leaders to raise funds through proposal writing and other means to address the illegal killing and unsustainable harvest issue.

b. Ensure the preparation and publication of a comprehensive overview of the illegal killing and unsustainable harvest problems identified in the region.

c. Support the preparation of case studies aimed at highlighting solutions to illegal harvest at demonstration sites, including raising awareness of the issue, conservation planning and alternative livelihood programs.

Action 9 Support cooperation of Secretariats of the EAAFP and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreements (see About AMBI African-Eurasian work plan for further details) to coordinate the work on Lesser White-fronted Goose conservation on East Asian Flyway via EAAFP Anatidae Working Group.

Action 10 Work with relevant partners to undertake a flyway level situation analysis on the illegal hunting, taking and trade of migratory birds in the EAAF.

Objective 4. Work with partners to increase the number and quality of population estimates of Arctic breeding waterbirds in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway

Action 1 Work with EAAF Partnership, Wetlands International, range states and other partners to improve population estimates for Arctic-breeding waterbirds in the EAAF (as part of the Waterbird Population Estimates update process) through supporting collation of up to date information on estimates and trends.

Action 2 Cooperate with the EAAF Waterbird Monitoring Task Force, and with Wetlands International, BirdLife International and Global Flyway Network and others to strengthen monitoring of Arctic-breeding migratory waterbirds along of the flyway, particularly in the Yellow Sea and Southeast Asia (e.g. through support to strengthening capacity and regular monitoring of key sites at multiple times of the year).

Action 3 Cooperate with relevant partners to seek support for the Waterbird Fund (https://waterbird.fund) to foster additional strengthening monitoring of Arctic-breeding migratory waterbirds in the EAAF.

Objective 5. Improve management of waterbird sites throughout the East Asian - Australasian Flyway

Action 1 Cooperate with relevant EAAFP range state governments and other partners to extend the African-Eurasian Critical Site Network Tool 2.0 (CSN2.0) to the EAAF to develop, improve and promote the accessible inventory of nationally and internationally important coastal and inland sites for Arctic breeding waterbirds along the flyway.
Map 3. Americas Flyway

Key areas of interest for the AMBI Americas workplan

Red Knot (spp. rufa and roselaari)

Semipalmated Sandpiper
Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the Americas Flyway

Flyway Working Group Members

Garry Donaldson (Canada)  
Rick Lanctot (USA)  
Danielle Paludo (Brazil)  
Carla Friedrich (UNEP)  
Rob Clay (WHSRN)  
Jennifer Provencher (AMBI Coordinator)  
Courtney Price (CAFF Secretariat)

Introduction

This flyway hosts Arctic-breeding birds that winter within the Americas outside of the Arctic. It includes the Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic flyways. It stretches from Russia and Canada to the tip of South America. The geographic focus for this first phase of the AMBI workplan is the eastern and central Canadian Arctic, and the northern coast of South America (from Caribbean Colombia to northeastern Brazil).

Species

- Red Knot
- Semipalmated Sandpiper
Objectives and actions

**Objective 1. Evaluate, and determine appropriate mitigations, to impacts of overabundant goose populations on Arctic shorebird habitat.**

Action 1 Conduct research that is designed to identify and quantify the magnitude and mechanism(s) of impact that white goose habitat destruction has on breeding populations of shorebirds, in particular Semipalmated Sandpipers, in the eastern and Central Canadian Arctic.

Action 2 Incorporate Inuit knowledge and advice into management recommendations.

**Objective 2. Evaluate and determine appropriate mitigations to loss and shifting of shorebird habitat from climate change.**

Action 1 Undertake an analysis that identifies the attributes and locations of shorebird habitats that are most likely to persist under future climate scenarios.

Action 2 Encourage the protection of large contiguous tracts of shorebird habitat, in parts of the eastern and central Canadian Arctic that are least susceptible to climate changes.

Action 3 AMBI will explore opportunities to conduct assessments that quantify the vulnerability of key sites for shorebirds on the north coast of South America to climate change, and recommend actions to mitigate and/or to adapt to these impacts. AMBI will facilitate transfer of the knowledge and recommendations to habitat managers at the relevant sites.

**Objective 3. Mitigate habitat impairment from human intrusions and disturbance.**

Action 1 Communities and other partners associated with established Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) and Important Bird Area (IBA) sites will be encouraged to conduct site assessments to identify critical threats to the focal species, and develop strategies to mitigate these threats.

Action 2 AMBI will cooperate with initiatives that document the scope of shorebird hunting at selected sites along the Flyway. This includes working with hunters to assess level of take (in countries with legal hunts) and using direct observation and indirect measures (e.g., number of registered firearms, quantity and species of birds sold in local markets) as an indicator of hunt level (in countries where hunting is illegal).

**Objective 4. Mitigate habitat destruction and degradation from development.**

Action 1 AMBI will create maps showing the overlap of rice farms, shrimp farms, and key shorebird habitat sites in northern South America.

Action 2 There are existing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for these activities elsewhere in the world, that could be adapted for this region. AMBI will make accessible searchable, accessible BMPs that are useful for rice cultivation and shrimp farming in northern South America. BMPs should take into account the potential exposure of shorebirds to harmful chemicals used in rice cultivation and shrimp farming, both in terms of type and application, and the timing of habitat use by shorebirds (e.g., for feeding, roosting, or both).

Action 3 AMBI will work to ensure that key sites for shorebirds have been clearly identified and documented in publicly-available databases, that information on these sites is incorporated into development bank/multilateral agreement decision tools and environmental safeguard policies, and that the information is readily available to governments in the focal area and incorporated into development plans.

Action 4 AMBI will work to obtain site designations (e.g., Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network, Ramsar sites), and ensure that information about each site’s characteristics and ecosystem services is transmitted to local and national governments.
Map 4. African-Eurasian Flyway

Black-tailed Godwit

Bar-tailed Godwit (spp. taymyrensis)

Lesser White-fronted Goose

Dunlin (spp. arctica and schinzii)

Red Knot (spp. canutus and islandica)
Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the African-Eurasian Flyway

Flyway Working Group Members

Anders Braa (Norway)
Nicola Crockford (BirdLife International)
Nina Mikander (African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement)
Courtney Price (CAFF Secretariat)
Jennifer Provencher (AMBI Coordinator)

Introduction and context

This flyway is defined by the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). This flyway hosts Arctic-breeding birds that winter in western and central Europe and western Africa. It includes the East Atlantic, Black Sea/Mediterranean, Central Asia, and West Africa/Asia Flyways.

Species

- Red Knot
- Bar-tailed Godwit
- Dunlin
- Black-tailed Godwit
- Lesser White-fronted Goose
Objectives and actions

**Objective 1 Secure intertidal non-breeding habitat of Arctic waders in Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea-Bissau.**

**Action 1 Share experience on World Heritage nomination**

a. Support to Guinea-Bissau for World Heritage (WH) resubmission to be included in the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat/le Parc national du Banc d’Arguin (CWSS/PNBA) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) 2014-2016 action plan and submitted to the Wadden Sea Board for approval on 28-29 January 2015.
   i. to include help with redefining boundaries.
   ii. to support the development of capacity within Guinea-Bissau, especially, to maximise the long-term benefit of such an investment, the relevant technical institutions and civil society, to implement the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) (any workshops, training, documents etc. should be in Portuguese).

**Action 2 Strengthen international recognition of the site**

a. Produce an exhibition on the Bijagós for display at international events, especially those targeted at Arctic Council countries, via the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI).

b. Encourage production of documentaries on the Bijagós and its biodiversity richness, including its role for migratory Arctic birds.

c. Encourage the production of publications and articles on the Bijagós.

d. Organise exchange visits between the Bijagós and the Wadden Sea (and possibly also the Yellow Sea of Republic of Korea which may be proposed for World Heritage and Ramsar status, including in the framework of an MoU with the CWSS, and with PNBA, via WSFI and the UNESCO MOU between PNBA and CWSS.

e. Develop proposals and determine the requirements for promoting international ecotourism within the Bijagós.

f. Support IBAP’s submission to extend the Ramsar Site to the entire Biosphere Reserve.

g. Support the WSFI workshop in March 2015 in Nouakchott and the PNBA, featuring the Bijagós, in the framework of the MoU between CWSS and PNBA, featuring the Bijagós, in the framework of the MoU between CWSS and PNBA, jointly with other partners (e.g., African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), AMBI, Abidjan Convention, PRCM), with funding from the Mauritanian government, the Banc d’Arguin and Marine and Coastal Biodiversity (BACoMaB) Trust Fund, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and involving other East Atlantic flyway countries. This could provide an opportunity to:
   i. launch this AMBI African-Eurasian Programme of Work
   ii. convene international expertise to support resubmission of the Bijagós WH nomination.
   iii. further integrate efforts of WSFI, AEWA and other partners / initiatives
   iv. enable African countries to formulate what they need to support intertidal habitat conservation (e.g., through facilitating an analysis of gaps and opportunities).

**Action 3 Coordination of the implementation of the Bijagós component of the AMBI workplan**

a. Fundraise to recruit a full time position for two years to align with the second phase of AMBI.

b. Facilitate the hiring of a Coordinator who can:
   i. ensure the implementation of the AMBI Bijagós work plan (in close liaison with the AEWA Secretariat who are providing the coordinators for the other two components of the AMBI African-Eurasian work plan.
   ii. coordinate activities and catalyse financial and diplomatic support plus exchange of experience and begin to develop links with the companies that are involved in oil and gas exploration near the Bijagos that may also have links to Arctic Council countries.
   iii. facilitate the improvement of links between the AEWA and WSFI processes.
   iv. play a role in any future of the Wings over Wetlands Partnership.

**Objective 2 Support measures under the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWFG) International Working Group (IWG) to prevent illegal killing of Lesser White-fronted Geese.**

**Action 1 Reduce Lesser White-fronted Goose mortality rates caused by illegal harvest**
a. Support the implementation of conservation activities related to illegal killing of Lesser White-fronted Geese at prioritized critical sites:
   i. Finalize management plans for the selected sites in collaboration with local governments and stakeholders;
   ii. Implement field study to assess the reasons for illegal killing of Lesser White-fronted Geese at key staging areas in northern Kazakhstan and adjacent Russia, including recommendations for action;
   iii. Take first steps towards launching initiative for sustainable harvest of migratory waterbirds in Central Asia.

b. Support the continued efforts to identify (and document) new critical sites for the species – particularly breeding, staging and wintering areas of the Western main population and the spring staging areas of the Fennoscandian population:
   i. Satellite-tracking of Lesser White-fronted Geese from the Russian breeding/moultin areas and Norwegian staging areas;
   ii. International expeditions to locate potential wintering and staging sites.

Action 2 Strengthen conservation efforts for the Eastern main population, by promoting the establishment of an agreed flyway framework as well as a National Working Group in China and increasing cooperation with the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Group International Working Group (LWFG IWG).

a. Establish a Task Force under the East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership with the aim to develop an International Action Plan for the Eastern main population;

b. Encourage government representatives from China and Japan to engage in the AEWA LWfG IWG;

c. Assist with the development of a work plan for the Eastern main population whilst awaiting finalization and adoption of the Action Plan, outlining urgent priority measures;

d. Encourage the establishment of National Working Group for the species in China (potentially coupled with the organization of a national workshop including all stakeholders)

Action 3 Showcase the Lesser White-fronted Goose as a flagship species in relation to the ongoing international conservation efforts under AEWA for this Arctic migratory breeder at the next Artic Biodiversity Congress in October 2018, highlighting, in particular, the work regarding illegal killing.

Objective 3: Increase quality and quantity of population assessment data of Arctic breeding waders in the African-Eurasian Flyway.

Action 1 Improve breeding population estimates for Arctic waders (in High Arctic Eastern Canada, Greenland, Iceland and Russia) in cooperation with the International Wader Study Group.

Action 2 Further strengthen monitoring of Arctic breeding migratory waders at staging and wintering sites by collaborating with the African-Eurasian Waterbird Monitoring Partnership and its Waterbird Fund, using, where applicable, the Integrated Flyway Monitoring Strategy developed under the framework of the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative in the East Atlantic Flyway.

Action 3 Facilitate the inclusion of Arctic waders in the coastal monitoring plan of the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) currently in development under CAFF, using existing data sources as appropriate.

Action 4 Explore options for using existing platforms to provide for a common database/website for the presentation of Arctic wader tracking data and the promotion of tracking studies.

Objective 4: Improve management of wader sites throughout the African-Eurasian flyway.

Action 1 Maintain and improve inventory of nationally and internationally important sites for Arctic breeding waders in each Range State along the flyway and make this information available through the CSN Tool 2.0 and the AEWA Site Network Review, in collaboration with the International Wader Study Group, the BirdLife IBA network using existing protocols.

Action 2 Develop and implement or strengthen implementation of site management plans for priority wader sites along the flyway.
Map 5. Circumpolar Flyway

- Ivory Gull
- Thick-billed Murre
- Steller’s Eider
- Common Eider
- Long-tailed Duck
- Snowy Owl
Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI): Workplan for the Circumpolar Flyway

Flyway Working Group Members

Grant Gilchrist (Canada)
Amie Black (Canada)
Rory Crawford (BirdLife International)
Ingar Jostein Øien (BirdLife Norway)
Jennifer Provencher (AMBI Coordinator)
Courtney Price (CAFF Secretariat)

Introduction

In addition to the traditional flyways identified as areas of concern, the AMBI Expert Group identified a Circumpolar Flyway that covers focal species (mainly seabirds and seaducks) that spend most or all of their life cycle in Arctic regions, and migrate east-west rather than north-south.

Species

- Ivory gull
- Thick-billed Murre,
- Steller's Eider
- Common Eider
- Long-tailed Duck
- Snowy Owl
Objectives and actions

**Objective 1: Obtain critical information on key at-sea sites for marine bird congregations.**

**Action 1** Develop and implement at-sea surveys

**Action 2** Develop and implement at-sea tracking

**Action 3** Identify areas where key marine seabird habitats intersect with current and especially emerging commercial fisheries, resource exploration and shipping developments

**Objective 2: Mitigate habitat degradation.**

**Action 1** Identify and participate in current initiatives to facilitate protection of marine birds and marine bird habitat

a. Work to develop Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) in the Circumpolar Arctic with focus placed on the equitable inclusion of Indigenous organizations, Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge. Examples include a SEA for Baffin Bay/Davis Strait (Canada) as well as the proposed Lancaster Sound national marine Conservation area feasibility assessment (Canada).

b. Initiatives to create new Marine Protected Areas in the circumpolar Arctic, such as:

i. PAME's marine protected areas initiative. AMBI- Circumpolar flyway participation in the work of this group would ensure that the needs of circumpolar focal species are addressed.

ii. In Canada, the new Oceans Protection Plan has a major objective of establishing marine protected areas in Canada's arctic.

iii. Establishment processes for major arctic marine protected areas (e.g. Canada's Lancaster Sound National Marine Conservation Area establishment).

iv. Work to coordinate and expand efforts to identify and review Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas throughout the Circumpolar Arctic (EBSA, global)

c. Work to identify processes to protect habitat in Norway, Greenland, and Russia in which CBird, AMBI, and CAFF could have ongoing input

d. Work to better understand effects of plastic pollution in the ocean on Arctic seabirds and seaducks.

**Action 2** Ensure that guidelines for responsible seabird colony viewing are made available to the tourism industry.

**Objective 3: Mitigate seabird and seaduck bycatch.**

**Action 1** Undertake gill net bycatch assessments in key regions.

Identifying the scale of bycatch in these key areas/fisheries could have several aspects:

a. Assess existing data on gillnet bycatch from national observer programmes, independent studies, grey literature. This would provide an update to the recent global review (Zydelis et al 2013), and could include data recently collected in the lump sucker fishery in Norway.

b. Work with circumpolar countries to share gillnet fishing effort data to examine overlaps with bird distribution (links to issue 1), potentially through the development of an Arctic-wide map. This will inform future priority areas for engagement. Implicitly requires careful data management to ensure confidentiality.

c. Assist national governments in incorporating seabird bycatch data collection into existing observer programmes through updating protocols and providing training and expertise (this includes a role for NGOs with relevant expertise, like BirdLife).

d. From the fishing effort/bird overlaps work, identify key fisheries where observer coverage is lacking and work with fisheries in these regions to improve bycatch data collection and quality.

e. Carry out demographic modelling in relation to known bycatch rates for species that are known to be vulnerable to fisheries bycatch, and where the rates of bycatch are understudied in the Arctic region.
Action 2 Promote and initiate discussions to implement bycatch mitigation measures with fisheries partners to reduce seabird bycatch in vulnerable populations.

a. Technical Mitigation Measure Development in an emerging fishery – Nunavut, Canada

In Canada, Nunavut has an emerging fishery for turbot (Greenland Halibut, Reinhardtius hippoglossides) and other species are being examined for their marketability. These species are fished commercially using long lines and gillnets, and fishing activities are concentrated in Baffin Bay and Davis Strait. Though fishing levels are currently low, it is possible that the industry will grow quickly with potential quota increases as new fisheries develop (Aarluk Consulting Inc. 2014). This presents an opportunity to research, develop and implement bycatch mitigation measures early in the development of Nunavut’s fishery, thereby normalizing conservation-oriented standard operating procedures.

Though seabird bycatch in Canadian Arctic waters is known to exist (Mallory 2006) there is a paucity of data on bycatch levels and the species involved. Despite this, efforts to test the effectiveness of experimental mitigation measures such as gear type and sensory alerts (visual and audio) in Arctic waters should be made in areas where species that are susceptible to gillnet bycatch (identified in Zydelis et al. 2013) congregate in large numbers (see Issue 1 above). Seabird bycatch reduction measures should be developed alongside the expansion of Nunavut fisheries, allowing for local and regional resource users and managers to actively participate and perhaps lead in experimental trials and policy implementation.

Best-practice mitigation measures for longline and trawl fisheries have been developed (see Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels Best Practice mitigation advice), so efforts should be made to engage with resource managers in all countries and regional fisheries management organizations (including the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation) to have these measures implemented in fisheries that overlap with concentrations of bycatch-susceptible species.

b. Promote the testing of Mitigation Measures in the lumpsucker fishery in the North Atlantic

As in Nunavut, experimental seabird bycatch mitigation measures should be tested in an area with an established gillnet fishery with seabird bycatch. The lumpsucker fisheries in Iceland, Greenland, Norway and Canada are all prospective options. The Icelandic lumpsucker gillnet fishery has just been Marine Stewardship Council certified, and the Greenlandic fishery is in the process of being certified, which may provide opportunities to develop mitigation measures working with industry.

Measureable Target to Evaluate Action 3.2.a and 3.2.b

a. Mitigation measures for long lines, which are recognized as effective and not to impede target catch should be promoted within fisheries in Nunavut as a viable way to reduce seabird bycatch in the region.

b. A review of existing gillnet mitigation measures that could work in Arctic regions should be completed that will form the basis of discussions for mitigation actions if the future.

c. Key habitat sites for susceptible species and overlaps with gillnet fisheries identified – work with partners to highlight spatial/temporal patterns that should be prioritized to reduce bycatch rates.

d. In steps similar to those identified for gillnet fisheries, countries and regional fisheries managers should share fishing effort data to identify overlaps with bird distribution, highlighting areas where further data collection and the implementation of mitigation measures should occur (i.e., overlaps between northern fulmar and longline fishing operations).
**Objective 4: Mitigate unsustainable harvest.**

**Action 1** AMBI will work with C-bird to promote opportunities to have a dialogue with authorities for management plans that seek to combine the knowledge of status of hunted species between countries.

a. Guidelines should be developed for reporting harvest consistently throughout the circumpolar Arctic by 2016. Guidelines should draw on and expand approaches of harvest reporting from regions where it is currently most effective.

b. Develop outreach and education plans to support sustainable harvest of seabirds with an emphasis on direct local involvement from coastal communities by 2016.

c. The efforts of the AMBI Circumpolar Flyway and its members should offer outreach and engagement expertise intended as a helpful third party in regions where new seabird harvest regulations and/or amendments are proposed.

d. Promote and facilitate the development of international management plans for harvested species that move across borders.

**Objective 5: Begin to assess status of poorly known Arctic bird species.**

**Action 1** Support the activities and priorities of the International Snowy Owl Working Group (ISOWG) through the ISOWG appointee to the AMBI Circumpolar Working Group.