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CAFF Progress report

SAO Meeting November 2020

The third board meeting of the Swedish Chairmanship of CAFF was held online in September. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have meant that several workshops scheduled since the last SAO meeting have been moved online, i.e. annual meetings for CAFF's Freshwater, Marine and Coastal Monitoring Groups; the Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Arctic Mining roundtable dialogue; and, a workshop on the resilience and management of Arctic Wetlands. Focus continues on implementing the "Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA)".

Action Plan for Biodiversity 2013-2021: Implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessments (*Actions for Arctic Biodiversity*)

Development of the new Actions for Arctic Biodiversity for 2021+ was delayed because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted on the ability to organise workshops and facilitate discussions needed to complete the Plan in time for the 2021 Arctic Council Ministerial. This delay will allow for more time to develop content and structure; including alignment with the post-2020 UN Global Biodiversity Framework, which is currently under development and which has also been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was agreed that the current plan would be extended until 2023 and will continue as the guiding framework for CAFF and the Arctic Council on biodiversity activities. A report providing an overview of implementation of the current Action Plan, and of possible ways forward, is being prepared as a deliverable for the 2021 Ministerial.

Activities

Activities since the last SAO meeting have focused on finalization and preparation of Ministerial deliverables, including to:

- Develop a new *Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* focusing on ensuring the program's continued relevance, implementation and sustainability. This plan is scheduled for delivery to the 2021 Ministerial;
- Finalize the first *State of the Arctic Terrestrial Biodiversity (START)* report, which will summarize the status and trends in key elements of the Arctic terrestrial environment and provide advice on how to improve Arctic terrestrial biodiversity monitoring. The results will be based on efforts to find, gather, integrate and interpret all available Arctic terrestrial biodiversity monitoring datasets to improve the detection and understanding of changes in circumpolar terrestrial biodiversity. The work captured in the report has been showcased in a series of peer-reviewed articles in a special journal edition;
- Conduct a mid-term evaluation and update the 2019-2023 Work Plan for the *Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI)*, which entails tracking progress of implementation and key results, and providing strategic program advice to support AMBI implementation under a changing conservation context;
- Develop Records of Observer Contributions focused on AMBI with the National Institute of Ecology, Republic of Korea, Spanish Polar Committee, National Forestry and Grassland Administration, China;

- Complete the final report on phase 2 of the *Resilience & Management of Arctic Wetlands* project; and work on developing policy recommendations from phase 3 for delivery to the 2021 Ministerial;
- Develop a first draft of CAFF texts for the SAO report to Ministers and 2021-23 CAFF Workplan.
- Continue work with AMAP on a scoping process to deliver options for common actions to address climate change impacts on Arctic ecosystems and associated climate feedbacks;
- Progress towards the development and organisation of the Arctic Biodiversity Congress 2022, planned for Russia;
- Finalise the project plan for phase 2 of the Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Arctic Mining initiative, focused on ensuring biodiversity is considered in all decision-making processes that affect or are affected by status and trends in biodiversity. This includes planning, management, governance, and development activities;
- Develop a youth engagement strategy that includes options for youth engagement in CAFF activities. The strategy will outline key considerations and provide advice for how to directly engage youth on the conservation and sustainable use of Arctic biodiversity, and, through their engagement with CAFF, they are able to find pathways to leadership and careers related to Arctic science, conservation and sustainable development; and
- Conducting communication and outreach on CAFF activities through lectures and social media.

Other ongoing activities include project development e.g. indicator development; data aggregation and rescue; identification of knowledge gaps; development and implementation of coordinated monitoring plans (Coastal, Freshwater, Marine, Terrestrial); and reporting on status and trends in biodiversity.

Products

Recent outputs from CAFF work include:

- A series of reports looking at the impacts of plastics on Seabirds in the Arctic, designed to feed into and support the Regional Plan for Litter in the Arctic being developed by PAME; and the Arctic Plastics Monitoring Plan being prepared by AMAP. Reports are currently under layout in accordance with the new visual identity for the Council:
 - An overview of published information on seabird exposure and vulnerability to plastic pollution in Arctic environments;
 - An overview of policy frameworks related to plastic pollution and seabirds in the Arctic;
 - Developing a framework for a plan to monitor plastic pollution and seabirds; and
 - Plastic Pollution and Seabirds in the Russian Arctic: Workshop Report, November 2019
- Film: “Skimming the Surface: Using Seabirds to Monitor Plastic in the Arctic” available in [English](#), and subtitled in [Russian](#), [Greenlandic](#) and [French](#). CAFF in cooperation with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology showcase the problem of plastics pollution in the Arctic and explore plastic interactions with seabirds to build support for a circumpolar plastics monitoring program that will include birds as an indicator of whether marine plastic mitigation efforts are effective.
- National reports on implementation of CAFFs Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group activities: Faroe Islands; Finland; Iceland; US, Japan, UK (Currently under layout).
- International Black-legged Kittiwake: [Conservation Strategy and Action Plan](#)
- Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Plan (CBMP): Arctic Marine Biodiversity Monitoring 2020 - 2021 [Work Plan and Status Report](#).

- Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Plan (CBMP): Arctic Freshwater Biodiversity Monitoring 2020 - 2024 [Work Plan and Status Report](#).
- The Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative: Americas Flyway Workplan 2019-2023 translated into Spanish: [Plan de Trabajo de la Ruta Migratoria de las Américas 2019-2023](#).