

International Co-operation for the Protection of Waterbirds along their Flyways

Common Wadden Sea Secretariat



Fishermen at Yawri Bay, Sierra Leone, a key site for migratory waterbirds of the East Atlantic Flyway

Activities Report 2012

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Introduction

The project *International Co-operation for the Protection of Waterbirds along their Flyways*, which aims at intensifying co-operation for the protection of waterbirds along the African-Eurasian Flyway, started in January 2012, following on from planning meetings and development during 2011. The project is financed by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment & Nature Conservation (BMU).

During 2012, much attention was paid to strengthening links with other key partners, planning through the set-up and engagement of an advisory board and steering group, developing information materials and setting plans in motion for delivery of capacity-building activities in early 2013. Contributions were also made to the development of the WSFI monitoring project.

Project Activities

Phase 1: Development of concepts and specifications

- Development of a framework of co-operation in the areas of management and research along the African-Eurasian Flyway

It was initially planned to develop a framework of co-operation in the very early stages of the project. This framework should determine the future cooperation of the Wadden Sea World Heritage state parties with partners along the East Atlantic Flyway as required from the UNESCO decision. However, after discussions between persons involved in the project and through input of the steering group and advisory board, it was decided that a flyway vision should first be developed with close input of the advisory board for eventual adoption at the 12th Trilateral Governmental Wadden Sea Conference in 2014.

The draft vision was developed in late 2012 with advisory board input for submission to the Task Group World Heritage in early 2013. The framework will be developed during 2013 after the draft vision has been approved by this group.

The draft vision statement selected was this: *“Migratory birds find lasting refuge along the East Atlantic Flyway from northern breeding areas to their key Wadden Sea stopover and to the African coastline, and inspire and connect people for future generations”*.

- Development of a capacity-building concept for the East Atlantic Flyway

Plans for two national training courses were developed during 2012 for delivery in January 2013. These and their subsequent evaluation will guide development of the final capacity-building concept during 2013. Priority target groups, areas and training needs were developed, and a work-sharing programme of training course delivery established with the Conservation of Migratory Birds project (CMB) of BirdLife International.

The main training tools in use are the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Flyways Training Kit and the toolkit on identifying and counting waterbirds in Africa produced by Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS). An additional training tool focused more on wetland management for migratory birds is under development, in partnership with CMB and Wetlands International Africa. The CMB project is taking the initial lead on this, and the first draft has been submitted for further development.

- Establishment of a supporting project advisory group

The CWSS established the advisory group, and a first meeting was held in September in Wilhelmshaven. A project steering group was also established, and two meetings were held – in May 2012 in La Rochelle and in September 2012 in Wilhelmshaven.

Phase 2: Organisation and implementation planning

- Project inception meeting

A project inception and planning meeting was held in Freetown, Sierra Leone in February 2012, back-to-back with the CMB annual project review and project steering committee meeting. This provided an excellent opportunity to introduce the project, as well as the WSFI monitoring project. Strong links were forged with regional staff and offices of Wetlands International and BirdLife International, as well as with national partners from the 'PRCM region'; (PRCM is a regional cooperation framework covering countries between Mauritania and Sierra Leone, as well as Cape Verde).

During this meeting, it was identified that the capacity-building and monitoring projects needed to operate under a named and identifiable 'banner'. It was decided to name this the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI), which has proved a successful badge for the programme. Subsequent to this, a leaflet focused on the WSFI was produced in English and French, placing the initiative firmly in the West African context.

- Selection of a defined project area

The East Atlantic Flyway has been identified as the key focal flyway of the WSFI, with this initial project area being the western seaboard of Africa. The CMB project focuses especially on the region between Mauritania and Sierra Leone, which also is the most important region for supporting Wadden Sea birds. This region therefore also forms a core area of the WSFI capacity-building project. However, some greater outreach and engagement with countries further east and south along the flyway is also planned.

Attention was paid in 2012 to development of a suitable map to highlight the project area. It was decided to clearly show the East Atlantic Flyway, with the connection between the Wadden Sea and other key sites. An analysis was carried out to identify all sites supporting >100,000 birds, >500,000 birds and >1 million birds. This was used to determine which sites to highlight on the map, but will have other uses as well. The draft map (right) was produced by Vogelbescherming.



- Identification of potential target groups and planning for implementation of capacity-building activities

A programme of capacity-building activities in coastal West Africa was planned jointly with Wetlands International and BirdLife International under the CMB project. Target groups vary somewhat between countries, but it was clear that community groups need to be involved wherever possible. Wider planning was achieved with representatives of all PRCM countries during the February 2012 meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone, with follow-up at the monitoring workshop in Dakar, Senegal in June 2012.

- Identification of monitoring and research needs in the selected area

Through this activity, the WSFI capacity-building project contributed time and planning to the development of the monitoring framework and monitoring strategy under the WSFI monitoring project. This included active participation in the CMB / WSFI monitoring workshop held in Dakar, Senegal in June 2012.

Phase 3: Implementation

- Planning for delivery of capacity-building

Joint training events were planned with Wetlands International and BirdLife International for the PRCM region under the CMB project. It was identified that the WSFI would organise training courses in Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone and in one other country outside the PRCM region, probably Angola. Meanwhile, the CMB project would organise courses in Senegal, Guinea and The Gambia. Initial plans are in place for a regional training event for late 2013, as well as a number of small awareness events.

There were significant discussions concerning the development of a regional photographic guide to waterbirds of the East Atlantic Flyway in Africa, which will also highlight the flyway itself and key coastal wetland habitats. Final recommendations will be made for this guide in early 2013.

- Implementation of capacity-building programme

No training courses were carried out in 2012 directly under the WSFI-capacity-building project, although contracts were prepared and signed and first payments made for two national courses scheduled for January 2013.

One regional training course was held at the Parc National de Diawling in Mauritania under the WSFI-monitoring and CMB projects in December 2012. Tim Dodman contributed significantly to the development and delivery of this training course, under the WSFI-capacity-building project. This included development of the draft programme / agenda and design of several training sessions. The joint training workshop was successful in meeting its main objective of strengthening the capacity of the regional network in planning and executing field monitoring of waterbirds and their habitats in the coastal zone.

- Joint development of a long-term management plan for the target area

A regional plan to guide the management of migratory waterbirds, in particular migratory waders, along the East Atlantic Flyway will be developed through consultation and a regional workshop in 2013. Discussions were held in 2012 for the planning of this workshop to be held jointly with the CMB project; the workshop is expected to take place in November 2013 in the Sine Saloum Delta of Senegal.

Pilot management / ecotourism projects have been discussed with some partners, and will get underway in 2013. Initial activities are likely to take part in Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.

Brief Evaluation

The project started a little later than scheduled, and activities took some time to get going. However, 2012 was a very useful and productive year for the WSFI, with strong partnerships forged, a regional identify established and practical plans put in place for capacity-building activities in 2013 and 2014. Awareness of the initiative was quick to take off, mainly through participation in a number of meetings / worskhops in Europe and West Africa.

Rescheduling of activities into 2013 and 2014 was approved by the proejct advisory board in September 2012 to accomodate for the late start and to give due time to the development and adoption of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation flyway vision. There was regular and productive communication during 2012 between Tim Dodman and the CWCS.

The project is in an excellent position to forge ahead with a range of activities in 2013 and into 2014.