

Report of the EU Conference

“25 Years of the Birds Directive: Challenges for 25 Countries”

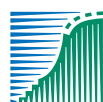




Report of the EU Conference

“25 years of the Birds Directive: Challenges for 25 Countries”

7-9 November 2004
Bergen op Zoom
The Netherlands



agriculture, nature
and food quality



This report is a joint publication of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Netherlands and the Directorate General for the Environment of the European Commission, April 2005.

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This report in pdf-format and the background documents can be found at the website of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality at <http://www.minlnv.nl/25yearsbd> and the website of the European Commission at http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/nature_conservation/focus_wild_birds/25year_birds_directive/index_en.htm.

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Foreword

25 years ago, the European Member States acknowledged the need to unite to protect the conservation of birds. The outcome was the Birds Directive: the first piece of European nature legislation. We've come a long way since then.



The network of protected areas for bird conservation in the first 15 EU Member States now covers an impressive 8% of Europe's terrestrial territory as well as substantial inshore marine areas, with the new Member States already having shown great effort in the designation of their sites. Combined with a strong protection regime, the network has secured the continued existence of wetlands and other key areas. It's an impressive achievement, but much still remains to be done.

During its presidency, the Netherlands worked with the European Commission to jointly organise the Conference "25 Years Birds Directive: Challenges for 25 countries" to mark the 25th anniversary of this landmark Directive, review the progress we've made and, perhaps most importantly, to discuss the challenges ahead. The Conference revealed that notwithstanding the positive results we have achieved, we should not rest on our laurels. We must remain active. We cannot afford to ignore the scientific data showing that many bird species – those of farmland habitats in particular – are declining, as this decline could reflect a general worsening of the quality of nature in Europe. Such a deterioration could affect the ability of our ecosystems to help generate the goods and services that are the basis for sustainable development in the European Union.

I am pleased, therefore, that the conference has resulted in ten solid objectives and associated action points that will ensure our efforts to conserve birds will continue. The consensus reached on further integrating the Birds Directive into other policies, on target dates for the completion of designation, on streamlining the implementation of nature legislation and on strengthening of research, communication and finances, will aid our work in the near future.

This report tells the story of the conference and how the conclusions were reached. I hope it does justice to the efforts of the many people who were involved. I would like to thank each of the impressive number of more than 150 participants from Member States and organisations for contributing to the conference. I am particularly pleased with the strong input from sectors other than nature, because nature conservationists cannot effectively combat the dangers to birds by themselves: we must all pull together. I therefore applaud the team spirit shown at the conference and all the efforts being made to integrate nature policies in other sectors.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all the speakers and to the authors of conference papers, whose contribution was essential to the outcome of the conference.

Finally, I would like to thank the European Commission for the solid cooperation in organising the conference. This joint effort has not only been very fruitful, but also very enjoyable.

Cees Veerman
Minister of Agriculture, Nature and
Food Quality, The Netherlands

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a horizontal line and a short vertical stroke at the end.

Foreword

The Birds Directive has been helping to ensure the conservation of Europe's birds for the last 25 years. The conference organised jointly by the Netherlands Government and the European Commission under the Dutch Presidency of the Council of Ministers in November 2004 was of strategic importance for bird conservation in Europe, and represented the culmination of celebrations of these 25 years.



The conference took stock of the significant achievements in bird conservation in Europe inspired by the Birds Directive. These include the network of Special Protection Areas, which protects many vital habitats, targeted actions to restore populations of some of our most endangered bird species, and strengthened dialogue and action for sustainable hunting of wild birds.

However, the picture is not all positive. The conference showed that there are still major gaps in implementation. It also identified future priorities for bird conservation in the enlarged European Union. The health of bird populations is indicative of wider pressures on biodiversity, not just in agriculture but elsewhere. So action on bird conservation is an important contribution towards meeting the overall aim of halting the decline of biodiversity by 2010.

The recommendations of the Bergen op Zoom conference, which are the result of much consultation and consensus, highlight the key challenges that need to be faced if we are to halt the decline of Europe's wild birds. These recommendations will help the Member States and the European Commission, working with the various stakeholders, to achieve this goal. They have already provided valuable input for the Commission's forthcoming Communication on Biodiversity, which sets out an overall EU strategy for meeting the 2010 biodiversity target.

Birds are an important and valued part of our natural heritage, so Europe's citizens will expect us to succeed with the ambitious task of conservation, for the benefit of present and future generations. I look forward to working with all Member States and stakeholders in the coming years to ensure the conservation and wise use of Europe's wild birds and their habitats.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Veerman and the Netherlands Government for their excellent organisation of this conference, which should serve as a very useful model for similar events in the future.

Stavros Dimas
Commissioner for the Environment

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stavros Dimas', written in a cursive style.

Summary

This report highlights the achievements of the EU conference “25 years of the Birds Directive: Challenges for 25 Countries”, held from 7 to 9 November at Bergen op Zoom, the Netherlands. The Birds Directive has been one of the cornerstones of EU nature and biodiversity legislation for a quarter of a century. As part of the 25th anniversary celebrations for the Directive, the conference was organised jointly by the Netherlands presidency of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission, with the aims of reviewing the achievements of the Birds Directive, highlighting any gaps remaining in its implementation, and identifying new challenges for the coming years.

The conference brought together representatives of the Member States, candidate Member States, non-governmental organisations, international governmental organisations and industry. It was the key event in a process to evaluate the contribution made by the Birds Directive to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in Europe. Among the key themes considered were the safeguarding of sites, habitat conservation in the wider rural environment, living sustainably with birds, and improving the knowledge base. The conference aimed to develop the broadest consensus possible on the role of the Birds Directive in meeting the 2010 target of halting the loss of biodiversity, set by EU Heads of State and Government in 2001.

Building on the results of the major stakeholder conference on biodiversity under the Irish presidency (May 2004), underlined by the “Message from Malahide”, this conference highlighted the relevance of the Directive and birds as flagships for achieving biodiversity targets and communicating them to the citizens of Europe. The conference acknowledged that thanks to the implementation of the Birds Directive, important results with respect to safeguarding Europe’s wild birds and their habitats have been achieved over the past 25 years. However, the latest scientific evidence confirms that many common bird populations continue to decline, which reflects wider degradation of Europe’s natural resources. For this reason, it was reaffirmed that the goals and principles of the Directive are today at least as valid as in 1979 and that it has a vital role to play in meeting the 2010 biodiversity targets. Priority should be given to better integrating the requirements of the Directive into all relevant EU policy areas, to completing the terrestrial network of Special Protection Areas by 2005, and to fully extending it to the marine environment by 2008. Actions should be taken for species under threat, and human activities should be sustainable and compatible with bird conservation requirements. A set of bird conservation indicators to monitor and evaluate the efficiency of measures taken under the Directive should be implemented by 2006. Moreover, the conference concluded that for bird conservation and the implementation of the necessary actions, it is necessary to strengthen research efforts, communication and awareness, and provide adequate financing. The presidency called on the European Commission, Member States and stakeholders to take special note of the Conclusions reached at Bergen op Zoom, particularly the ten priority objectives and recommended actions.

The Conference and this report

The Conference

The programme for the conference aimed to provide opportunities for broad debate while focusing on providing a clear set of Conference Conclusions. The conference was organised under the joint chairmanship of Mr. Giuseppe Raaphorst, Director for Nature at the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and Mr. Nicholas Hanley, Head of the Nature and Biodiversity Unit at the Directorate General for the Environment of the European Commission. The first day of the Conference, 7 November 2004, involved two informal excursions to Special Protection Areas near Bergen op Zoom, the Netherlands. On 8 November, the Conference was officially opened by Mr. Chris Kalden, the Secretary-General of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. In this plenary session there was then an introductory speech by Mr. Nicholas Hanley followed by an overview of the state of Europe's birds by Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA). A panel discussion with stakeholders then took place. In the afternoon, the draft Conclusions were discussed and fine-tuned in the different workshops, after which the European Commission and the Netherlands Presidency prepared the final Conclusions for tabling in the closing plenary session on 9 November.

The morning of 9 November started with a series of key-note presentations on important topics. Mr. Paulo Albergoni provided a vision on rural development based on experiences in creating a nature friendly farm at La Cassinazza, Italy. Mr. Ladislav Miko, Deputy Minister for Nature Protection and Landscape in the Czech Republic, presented a vision on an enlarged Europe from the perspective of a new Member State. Mr. Jan van Seeters of Dow Chemical Benelux B.V., gave an industry perspective on a vision for sustainable development. The perspective of the Youth was given by representatives of the International Montessori School at Tervuren. Finally, Ms. Dorette Corbey gave her vision from the European Parliament.

Mr. Nicholas Hanley and Mr. Giuseppe Raaphorst summarised the main outcomes of the previous afternoon's workshops and how these had been incorporated into the proposed final Conclusions. Participants then discussed and agreed the final Conclusions from Bergen op Zoom. Ms. Catherine Day, Director General of DG Environment, responded to the draft conclusions on behalf of the European Commission. Minister Veerman then responded on behalf of the Netherlands Presidency and concluded the meeting. After the conference formally ended, there was opportunity for excursions after lunch. A number of side events also took place during the conference.

The output of the meeting provides a strong basis for determining the future orientation of the implementation of the Birds Directive, and should inform the thinking of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission in its work on this subject.

Outline of this report

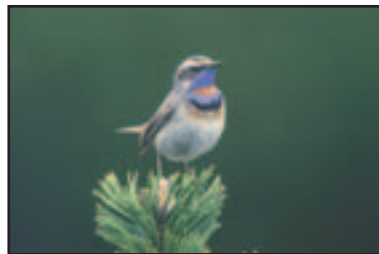
This conference report has been compiled by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in cooperation with the Nature and Biodiversity Unit at the Directorate General for the Environment of the European

Commission. The report follows the order in which presentations and discussions took place in the meeting. In order to be informative and accurate and yet enjoyable to read, the report focuses on summarizing the proceedings.

This report starts by presenting the key document that resulted from the conference: the “Bergen op Zoom declaration”. The report then goes back in time, and presents in chronological order the preparations for the conference, highlighting the objectives of the conference and the topics to be debated. An account is then given of the way the conference proceeded, starting with the opening speech of Secretary-General Chris Kalden, then reporting the introductory speeches, the panel discussion, workshops, side events, key-note speeches, plenary discussion of the Conclusions, closing statements, and ending with the closing speech by Minister Cees Veerman of the Netherlands. The appendices contain background information to the conference.

The documents supporting the conference can be found on the website of the European Commission at http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/nature_conservation/focus_wild_birds/25year_birds_directive/index_en.htm and the website of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality at <http://www.minlnv.nl/25yearsbd>.

1. Conclusions from Bergen op Zoom



The Conference Conclusions are structured in three parts:

1. **Preamble:** Providing the context including summarising key achievements and remaining gaps and challenges for implementation of the Birds Directive. The preamble was not tabled for discussion in the workshops, but was agreed on in the final plenary session.
2. **Objectives:** Ten priority objectives, to achieve the overall aims of the directive (and, building on the “Message of Malahide”, help meet the 2010 biodiversity target).
3. **Actions:** Recommended actions, 44 in total, to achieve each objective.

The Conference Conclusions were presented as Presidency Conclusions by the Netherlands to the EU Environmental Council in December 2004.

“REINFORCING OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING EUROPE’S WILD BIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS”

CONCLUSIONS FROM BERGEN OP ZOOM November 9, 2004

1. Recalling the vision and commitment provided a quarter of a century ago by the European Union and its Member States to conserve our shared heritage of wild birds by adopting Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds in 1979 (hereafter referred to as the Directive).

2. Recognising that this Directive was the first significant step to address the loss and degradation of biodiversity in the EU and that it is a key instrument for the achievement of the wider EU biodiversity objective, set by EU heads of state and government at Göteborg in 2001, to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010, reiterated in the 6th Environmental Action Programme and underlined by the “Message of Malahide” (2004), reflecting the views of a broad Stakeholder Conference on the achievements and necessary actions with respect to the biodiversity targets for 2010 and the ensuing Council Conclusions of June 2004 on this subject.

3. Also recognising that the Directive is one of the key EU instruments that contributes to the realisation of the objective set by world leaders in Johannesburg in 2002 ‘to significantly reduce the rate of (global) biodiversity loss by 2010’, and other international agreements such as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, the Convention on European wildlife and habitats (Bern), the Convention on wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat (Ramsar) and the Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals (Bonn). Also aware of the Edinburgh Declaration (April 2004) of the Waterbirds around the World Conference which highlighted the need for increased international cooperation along migratory flyways.

4. Noting that the EU contribution to these global and Pan-European objectives has even increased since the enlargement of the EU from 9 Member States in 1979 to 25 in 2004, with a corresponding increased area of application of the Directive.

5. Aware that birds reach – in 2004 as much as in 1979 – the hearts of millions of Europeans and are therefore powerful ‘messengers’ to inform the public about the overall state of the Europe’s environment and to gain public interest and support for measures to achieve the EU and global 2010 objectives.

6. Conscious that the 25th anniversary of the Directive provides an excellent and timely opportunity to reflect on its achievements, – to identify remaining gaps in its implementation, and to focus on priorities for future action – especially in light of recent calls by EU heads of state and government to accelerate action to meet the 2010 objective.

ACHIEVEMENTS.

7. Convinced that the Directive has provided a strong legal framework and common high standards for the conservation of all wild bird species and their habitats in the Member States.

8. Conscious of the major contribution made by volunteers to the monitoring and management of wild birds and their habitats, which, together with the work of researchers and managers from the Member States' and Community institutions, has provided a broad scientific basis for a reflection on the achievements of the Directive.

9. Noting with satisfaction that thanks to the implementation of the Directive over the past 25 years important results have been achieved with respect to safeguarding Europe's wild birds and their habitats, and especially welcoming the following key results.

KEY RESULTS OF 25 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIRDS DIRECTIVE.

- Establishment of an extensive network of special protection areas, already covering 8% of Europe's terrestrial territory as well as substantial inshore marine areas
- Provision of a strong protection regime halting loss of wetlands and other key habitats
- Improvements in the status of many threatened bird species by targeted measures, supported by international action plans
- Capacity building, experience and expertise in positively managing habitats for birds with support from funds such as the EU LIFE Nature programme
- Promotion of dialogue and action to ensure that hunting is sustainable, including provision of guidance, which has led to agreement between key stakeholders
- Elimination of trade in wild birds as a pressure on their populations.

10. Recognising that these key results could only have been achieved due to the contribution and commitment of Stakeholders, Member States and the European Commission, and that these key results also reflect that increasing awareness and concern for wild birds has led to the adaptation of human behaviour to avoid harmful activities that negatively impact on wild birds.

REMAINING GAPS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES.

11. Concerned however that, notwithstanding significant progress in implementation, the latest scientific evidence confirms that many common bird populations continue to decline, especially those dependent on rural landscapes as well as long-distance migrants, and that the overall aims of the Directive have therefore still not been fully realised.

12. Concerned, moreover, that these negative trends in bird populations probably reflect a wider degradation of Europe's natural resources, thereby undermining the capacity of Europe's ecosystems to provide the goods and services which underpin EU sustainable development. Convinced that adequate implementation of the Directive is necessary for enhancing common practices across the Community and therefore for achieving the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.

13. Conscious that the existence of viable bird populations require integration with policy development and implementation of other sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, transportation, tourism, fisheries and energy. Also conscious that in some cases, in order to achieve the conservation objectives for birds and their habitats, there is a need to incorporate bird protection requirements into spatial planning, especially in the light of the human population density of Europe.

14. In this context noting the Commissions proposal for funding of Natura 2000 and looking forward to the outcome of current discussions in the Council and European Parliament.

15. Recognising that since 1979 new issues have emerged, which need to be taken into account whilst implementing the Birds Directive, such as climate change, and that there is a need for increased international co-operation along migratory flyways.

16. Recognising however that there is a need to redouble our efforts to communicate Natura 2000 and other elements of EU nature and biodiversity policy (building on the El Teide declaration), to ensure more effective integration into relevant sectoral policies and to provide for adequate financial means to achieve our objectives.

17. Welcoming the initiative of the Province of Noord-Brabant to commit itself to active involvement in reaching the 2010 target, in the framework of the Countdown 2010 Initiative, thus setting an excellent example for other regions in Europe.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES.

18. The Conference on the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Birds Directive, co-organised by the EU Presidency of The Netherlands and the European Commission and held in Bergen op Zoom on 7, 8 and 9 November 2004, reaffirms that the goals and principles of the Directive are today at least as valid as in 1979 and that it has a vital role to play in meeting the 2010 biodiversity targets.

19. The Conference therefore recommends the European Union to reinforce its commitment to safeguarding Europe's wild birds and their habitats by committing itself to the following priority objectives and asks the Member States, European Commission and Civil Society to implement the recommended actions that have been attached as an Appendix to these Conclusions.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES FOR SAFEGUARDING EUROPE'S WILD BIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS.

1. Urgently complete the terrestrial network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) by 2005, fully extend it to the marine environment by 2008 and establish an effective protection regime for all SPAs, with management objectives in place and initiated for all sites by 2010.
2. Ensure that the overall SPA network is functionally coherent and resilient to future changes and pressures, including the development and implementation where appropriate of tools for achieving ecological connectivity.
3. Take urgent actions for species under threat, including the implementation of international action plans and national measures.
4. Ensure that opportunities to integrate the requirements of the Birds Directive into all relevant EU policy areas and Community instruments are fully realised, including the development of agri-environment and forest-environment measures and actions that deliver measurable benefits for birds and other wildlife.
5. Work towards a common approach for Natura 2000 (for both SPAs and SACs), take care that use and other human activities within and outside classified areas are sustainable and compatible with bird conservation requirements, and promote and implement proportionally the 'wise use' principle with respect to birds and their habitats.
6. Implement by 2006 a set of bird conservation indicators to monitor and evaluate the efficiency of measures taken under the Directive and in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy, in particular to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target, with the potential to communicate bird conservation problems effectively to the general public and to decision-makers and provoke appropriate and effective policy responses.
7. Strengthen research that is focused on achieving the objectives of the Birds Directive and the 2010 target and that is robust and responsive to future challenges, and reflect this through the appropriate revision of Annex V of the Birds Directive.
8. Reinforce measures for communication and awareness raising with respect to bird conservation, including public participation and stakeholder involvement in managing SPAs.
9. Ensure adequate EU and national financial support for bird conservation policy and the implementation of the necessary actions.
10. Strengthen EU commitments and action for Pan-European and global bird conservation and maximise the contribution the Bird Directive makes to this.

Annex: Recommended actions to achieve priority objectives. (2010 and earlier targets).

OBJECTIVE 1

Urgently complete the terrestrial network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) by 2005, fully extend it to the marine environment by 2008 and establish an effective protection regime for all SPAs, with management objectives in place and initiated for all sites by 2010.

Action 1-1 Identify and classify additional sites where necessary to complete the network of Special Protection Areas in accordance with objectively verifiable scientific criteria (Member States); prepare a distance to target indicator for measuring completeness of the network in agreement with Member States (EEA, Commission, Member States, stakeholders); with a view to facilitating this task for the marine, complete guidance document on establishing NATURA 2000 in marine environment (Commission and Marine Expert Working Group, Member States).

Action 1-2 Transpose Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (avoidance of damages to Natura 2000 sites, including SPAs) fully into national legislation and put it into practice in planning policies and decision-making (Member States).

Action 1-3 Strengthen administrative and other structures to ensure effective protection of SPAs with provision of guidance on provisions of Article 6 to decision making authorities (Member States).

Action 1-4 Establish and implement conservation objectives and management plans or other appropriate measures, including monitoring for enabling adaptation of management practises, involving local stakeholder groups (Member States).

Action 1-5 Integrate SPAs in relevant sectoral plans and programmes, including Rural Development Plans, and strengthen the involvement of all relevant land users in the conservation of SPAs and the broader landscape of which they are part (Member States).

OBJECTIVE 2

Ensure that the overall SPA network is functionally coherent and resilient to future changes and pressures, including the development and implementation where appropriate of tools for achieving ecological connectivity.

Action 2-1 Prepare guidance on ecological connectivity and the interpretation of article 3 and 4 of Birds Directive and Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, including the identification of complementary measures in the wider landscape, for example ecological networks, corridors, stepping stones and buffer zones, which require appropriate management for improving the long-term coherence of the SPA network. (HABITATS/ORNIS Committee, Commission and EEA).

Action 2-2 In the light of future pressures and changes to SPAs, especially from predicted climate change, prepare to ensure the resilience of the SPA network, applying as appropriate the provisions of article 6 of the Habitats Directive (Member States, European Commission).

Action 2-3 Implement the ecosystem approach in practical decision-making in all relevant situations as an important tool in the delivery of the CBD 2010 target, and facilitate application through capacity building and information, based on the guidelines that have been developed by the CBD (Member States, Commission).

OBJECTIVE 3

Take urgent actions for species under threat, including the implementation of international action plans and national measures.

Action 3-1 Update and prepare new international action plans for globally threatened and other highly endangered species listed in Annex I, in partnership with relevant international conventions and within a perspective of the distribution area of the species/populations. (Member States, Commission and stakeholders).

Action 3-2 Put in place national and EU measures to implement priority recommendations of international plans, with adequate financing. (Member States, Commission and stakeholders).

Action 3-3 Ensure an adequate monitoring and review system, where feasible in harmony with relevant international conventions and agreements, to enable the efficacy of the plans to be evaluated and improved as necessary at regular intervals. (Member States, Commission and stakeholders).

OBJECTIVE 4

Ensure that opportunities to integrate the requirements of the Birds Directive into all relevant EU policy areas and Community instruments are fully realised,

including the development of agri-environment and forest-environment measures and actions that deliver measurable benefits for birds and other wildlife.

Action 4-1 Develop and promote a more integrated and participatory approach to sustainable use and protection of birds and biodiversity outside the SPA network in relation to fishery, agriculture, forestry, environment, development policy, transport, tourism, communications and energy sector, etc. (Member States, European Commission). The Member States can use Land use planning for this purpose.

Action 4-2 Identify and promote clearly defined actions for respecting the legally binding provisions of the Birds Directive under cross-compliance and compensatory measures and for active bird protection under good farming practice and agri-environmental and ecological forestry measures (Member States) with development of appropriate guidance on this subject (Member States, European Commission).

Action 4-3 Strengthen ways to improve communication and dialogue with farmers and foresters, land and forest owners, land managers, authorities and stakeholders to promote bird conservation within the new framework of Rural Development and in the context of the «European model of multifunctional farming» as well as within cohesion policy (Member States, European Commission).

Action 4-4 Develop and achieve targeted farm management prescriptions under agri-environmental measures, which actually meet the needs of birds (Member States).

Action 4-5 Develop guidance at EU and national levels on application of compensatory measures, agri-environment and forest-environment measures for birds and biodiversity, for both private and public areas (Member States, European Commission).

Action 4-6 Ensure that the implementation of the Water Framework Directive enhances the conservation of water-dependent bird habitats and in particular SPAs (European Commission, Member States).

OBJECTIVE 5

Work towards a common approach for Natura 2000 (for both SPAs and SACs), take care that use and other human activities within and outside classified areas are sustainable and compatible with bird conservation requirements, and promote and implement proportionally the 'wise use' principle with respect to birds and their habitats.

Action 5-1 Exchange 'best practises' with respect to the protection regime, both within and outside SPAs, on the implementation and practical use of the protection provisions, on management planning, and on possibilities and limitations of using derogations. In this respect especially pay attention to the cooperation of nature protection partners with relevant other stakeholders, like – among others those involved in farming, forestry, fisheries, hunting, industry, transportation sector, tourism and recreational activities, (Member States, ORNIS Committee, European Commission, Stakeholders).

Action 5-2 Enforce the provisions of the legal framework of the Birds and Habitats Directives to offset losses from new plans and projects with investments in nature, and explore the possibilities to balance positive and negative effects on species and habitats (Member States, European Commission).

Action 5-3 Further develop EU guidance on legal and technical concepts relevant to the application of the Directive (e.g. pertinence of favourable conservation status', 'significant effects' etc.), where there is a particular need, for example, for common standards (European Commission).

Action 5-4 Improve integration of bird protection requirements in the application

of other EU instruments relevant to land use planning and sustainable use (e.g. EIA and SEA) (Member States, European Commission).

Action 5-5 Work towards a common approach, where legally feasible, for Natura 2000 (both for SPAs and Special Areas of Conservations - SACs), especially regarding the implementation of the protection regime, the approaches for dealing with derogations from the provisions for species protection under both Directives, management planning, monitoring and reporting (European Commission).

Action 5-6 Promote and strengthen a dialogue and common action on best ways to ensure that different economic sectors are in harmony with the requirements of the Directive (e.g. wind farms, waterways, ports, electric pylons). Develop sector-specific actions and 'Codes of Conduct' to promote wise use of birds and the sustainable management of their habitats by stakeholders including the ones mentioned in action 5.1, and guidelines where necessary (Stakeholders, Member States, European Commission).

Action 5-7 Further strengthen dialogue and action under the "Sustainable Hunting Initiative", building on the solid basis provided by the "Guidance document on hunting", and if necessary implemented in national law depending on decisions of Member States, including implementation of actions under the "Agreement on Hunting" such as development of management plans for huntable species considered to have an unfavourable conservation status and bag statistics for huntable species, and establishment of observatory systems to provide scientific information to manage hunting. (European Commission, Member States, Stakeholders).

Action 5-8 Aim to phase out the use of lead shot in wetlands as soon as possible and ultimately by 2009 (Member States, European Commission).

Action 5-9 Ensure effective enforcement with respect to illegal killing, trapping and poisoning of birds (Member States, European Commission).

OBJECTIVE 6

Implement by 2006 a set of bird conservation indicators to monitor and evaluate the efficiency of measures taken under the Directive and in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy, in particular to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target, with the potential to communicate bird conservation problems effectively to the general public and to decision-makers and provoke appropriate and effective policy responses.

Action 6-1 Indicators: develop, test, optimise and finalise by 2006 a set of bird indicators, including a bird population indicator to be part of the list of indicators for reporting on Sustainable Development Strategy by 2004 and for the next Spring Report (European Commission, EEA, relevant stakeholders).

Action 6-2 Monitoring: use, and if necessary develop, effective and harmonised monitoring and reporting frameworks (building on existing monitoring approaches and methods including those of civil society using memorandums of understanding where appropriate) in order to establish adequate data flows on the status and trends of species, sites, habitats and related management measures; this is especially to reveal and communicate key trends of the bird indicators from 2006. In this respect, the collection and the proper scientific interpretation of hunting bag statistics is necessary. (European Commission, EEA, Member States, relevant stakeholders).

Action 6-3 Reporting: adopt best approaches to streamline and ensure adequate and timely reporting under the Birds and Habitats Directives, and EC Biodiversity Strategy (Member States, European Commission, EEA), relevant international agreements from 2006 onwards (European Community, Member States, international secretariats).

Action 6-4 Information management, analysis and dissemination: ensure that all data are widely and readily available as information in line with the Aarhus Convention and for assessment and analysis in a wide spatial context and develop systems for exchange of best practice of monitoring and data management, so

as to promote scientifically robust monitoring (European Commission, EEA, Member States, relevant stakeholders).

OBJECTIVE 7

Strengthen research that is focused on achieving the objectives of the Birds Directive and the 2010 target and that is robust and responsive to future challenges, and reflect this through an appropriate revision of Annex V of the Birds Directive.

Action 7-1 To effectively deliver research to support implementation of the Birds Directive (Article 10, Annex V), identify knowledge gaps and implement research on key priority issues for bird conservation - such as the effective management of sites, coherence and resilience of the SPA-network, so as to ensure the survival and reproduction of relevant species, implementation of the protection regime, diagnosis of the cause of bird population declines, especially in long-distance migrants including outside the EU, predictive modelling on impacts on bird populations, especially in relation to climate change, and necessary work to underpin the effective delivery of the “Guidance document on hunting” (European Commission, Member States, ORNIS Committee).

Action 7-2 Consider ways in which co-operation between bird researchers and policy makers can be strengthened (European Commission, Member States, ORNIS Committee).

OBJECTIVE 8

Reinforce measures for communication and awareness raising with respect to bird conservation, including public participation and stakeholder involvement in managing SPAs.

Action 8-1 Implement the “El Teide Declaration”, inter alia through the development of partnerships, involving the broad range of stakeholders in the conservation and management of SPAs and Natura 2000 sites, the sharing of experience and good practice in managing the Network, the sustainable use and management of Natura 2000 areas for educational and recreational purposes (Member States, European Commission, Stakeholders).

Action 8-2 Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of communication channels on the implementation of the Natura 2000 Network and Birds Directive by positive dialogue between the European Commission, Member States and stakeholders continued through charters, guidance documents, to improve efficiency of communication channels. (Member States, European Commission).

Action 8-3 Encourage “Countdown 2010” initiatives, such as the example of Province of Noord-Brabant, supported by the Netherlands Presidency, the Commission and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to halt the loss of biodiversity from now to 2010, in other regions, or by other partners. (Member States, European Commission, EU Committee of the Regions).

Action 8-4 Ensure access to all relevant information, public participation, including active involvement of the youth, and call for swift adoption of access to justice requirements of the Århus Convention applied to projects, and plans and programmes, relating to or having an impact on bird conservation. (Member States, European Commission).

Action 8-5 Promote public awareness and education and the involvement of citizens, in particular youth, for example by monitoring of and reporting on birds (European Commission, Member States and Stakeholders).

OBJECTIVE 9

Ensure adequate EU and national financial support for bird conservation policy and the implementation of the necessary actions.

Action 9-1 Implement the necessary technical and financial instruments and measures required for the full implementation of Natura 2000 and for the protection outside Natura 2000 areas for species protected under the Habitats and Birds Directives. The Community institutions are requested to ensure that within the current discussions for the Financial Perspectives and the related instruments, adequate financing for Natura 2000 is assured (European Institutions, Member States).

Action 9-2 Allocate adequate long-term financial resources to develop and maintain bird indicators, monitoring, reporting, research, assessment and their co-ordination, including financial and organizational support for non governmental and other organizations, as well as adequate financial resources allocated to promote communication, awareness raising and networking initiatives, as identified in the "El Teide Declaration", and for other conservation actions identified in the Communication on Financing Natura 2000. (Member States, Commission).

Action 9-3 Allocate by 2006 adequate financial resources to national, European and international bird conservation research and to the dissemination of its results, including sufficient funding under the Community FP7 (European Commission, Member States).

OBJECTIVE 10

Strengthen EU commitments and action for Pan-European and global bird conservation and maximise the contribution the Bird Directive makes to this.

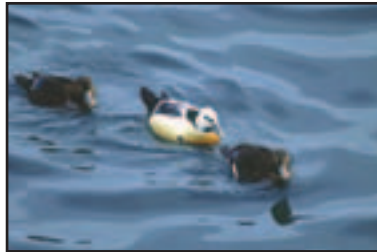
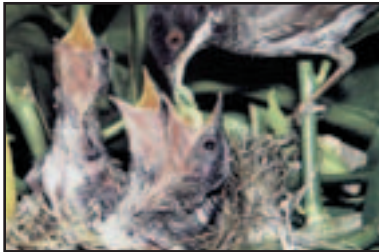
Action 10-1 Adopt the recent proposal from the Commission to ratify the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement - AEWA (Council of Ministers), and support its implementation (Member States, European Commission).

Action 10-2 Promote and support coordinated actions to strengthen the flyway management and long-term monitoring of waterbirds and other long-distance migratory bird species outside the EU notably in Africa, the Middle East and European non-EU states (Member States, European Commission).

Action 10-3 Strengthen the role of SPAs as an important contribution to the Pan European Ecological Network and the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (Member States, European Commission).

Action 10-4 Cooperate with the relevant international conventions, such as the Convention on wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat, the Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals and its suite of agreements (e.g. AEWA), the Convention on European Wildlife and natural habitats and the Convention on Biological Diversity, with a view to a common framework for implementation of monitoring and research activities, within and outside the EU, which are in line with the provisions of the Birds Directive (European Commission, Member States, international secretariats).

2. Introduction to the Conference



The Birds Directive and the context for the conference

What are our commitments?

The overall aim of the Birds Directive is to ensure healthy and viable populations of all wild bird species in the European Union. This is to be achieved through a comprehensive protection scheme containing a number of separate but related components:

- One relates to habitat conservation and includes a particular requirement to designate Special Protection Areas for migratory and other vulnerable wild bird species.
- A second consists of a series of bans imposed on activities that directly threaten birds (such as the deliberate destruction of nests and the taking of eggs) and associated activities such as trading in live or dead birds.
- A third component establishes rules that limit the number of species that can be hunted and the periods during which they can be hunted (hunting seasons should not include periods of greatest vulnerability – such as return from migration, reproduction and the raising of chicks). Rules also define certain permitted methods of hunting (for example, non-selective hunting methods).

For the second and third components, derogations can be granted, provided that strict requirements are met and that there is no other satisfactory solution.

These key commitments are expressed through a number of key objectives specified in the articles and annexes of the Directive.

The implementation of the Birds Directive, together with the Habitats Directive, also helps the European Union and its Member States fulfil their commitments to international biodiversity conventions. Since 1982 the Community has been a party to the Convention on European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and the Convention on Migratory Species (Bonn Convention). Community ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993 has led to the development of an EC Biodiversity Strategy (1998) and Biodiversity Action Plans (2001).

By setting an objective of halting the decline of biodiversity by 2010 at the Göteborg Summit of 2001, EU Heads of State and Government acknowledged the vital importance of biodiversity for sustainable development. Given that birds are important indicators of biodiversity, achieving the objectives of the Birds Directive is critical to reaching the 2010 target.

Why is there a need for an evaluation of the implementation of the Directive?

The Directive is the oldest and one of the most important pieces of legislation dealing with biodiversity at the EU level. It was adopted in response to concerns about serious declines in bird populations and because of the recognition that birds are a shared heritage of Member States, EU policies affect birds and therefore the EU must respond. The major concerns identified in the 1970s were habitat loss, degradation, the need for adequate site protection and the need for the regulation of activities such as hunting and the taking of birds and their eggs.

Twenty-five years after the adoption of this framework law it was time to review the achievements of the Directive in relation to its objectives. This review took place in the context of the wider debate on the decline of biodiversity and of the EU target to halt this decline by 2010. It also took place shortly after an historic enlargement of the EU to 25 Member States.

Is there reason to celebrate?

The implementation of the Directive has resulted in many positive achievements that give just cause for celebration. These include:

- the establishment of an extensive network of special protection areas (SPAs), already covering 8 % of Europe's terrestrial territory as well as substantial inshore marine areas
- the provision of a strong protection regime for these sites which have made a major contribution to halting the loss of wetlands and other key habitats
- improvements in the status of many threatened bird species, thanks to targeted measures supported by international action plans
- capacity building, experience and expertise in positively managing habitats for birds with support from funds such as the EU LIFE-Nature programme
- the elimination of trade in wild birds that put pressure on their populations
- the promotion of dialogue and action to ensure that hunting is sustainable, including provision of guidance, which has led to agreement between key stakeholders.

Furthermore, increased awareness about the objectives and requirements of the Birds Directive has significantly contributed to positive changes in people's attitudes and behaviour towards wild birds and their habitats.

Is it all good news for Europe's birds?

Despite the significant progress in implementing the Directive, wild birds in Europe still face serious problems and their overall status continues to decline. According to BirdLife International's latest assessments, 43 % of Europe's 524 bird species have an unfavourable status; this compares with 38 % a decade ago. According to the latest evidence, common birds dependent on rural landscapes have declined particularly sharply, due to changes in land use, agriculture and other practices. Long-distance migrants are also in decline, but the reasons for this are less clear.

These declines are symptomatic of the pressures facing biodiversity in general. They also demonstrate the need for reinforced action for bird conservation across the EU and beyond.

Objectives of the conference

The principal aims of the conference were to:

- Reflect on the achievements of the Birds Directive since its adoption
- Identify any significant gaps in implementation that still remain to be filled
- Highlight priorities for action in the coming years, especially with a view to the 2010 biodiversity target.

The output of the meeting should provide a firm basis for determining the future orientation of the implementation of the Birds Directive, and should inform the thinking of the Environment Council and the new Commission. The background studies and reports that had been prepared for the conference provided a basis for reflecting on the Directive's achievements as well as for identifying significant gaps. During the conference itself more time was devoted to examining these outstanding gaps and emerging challenges that need to be faced if the objectives of the Directive are to be met.

Preparations: leading up to the conference

The conference was the culmination of a series of reflections on the implementation of the Directive, promoted by the European Commission over the previous few years. In the course of 2004, the Netherlands and the Commission worked together closely with a view to jointly organising this conference under the Netherlands presidency.

Special studies and publications

A number of overviews of key subjects of the directive were requested and supported as part of the preparations for the conference. They include:

- **Special Protection Areas:** “A data overview of the network of Special Protection Areas in the EU15. ETC/NPB (2004) by the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity” (under contract with the European Environment Agency)¹
- **Action plans for threatened species:** “Implementation of action plans for 23 Annex I bird species that are priority for LIFE-Nature funding”, prepared by BirdLife International under contract to the European Commission²
- **LIFE Nature and Birds:** The contribution of LIFE-Nature to the implementation of the Birds Directive by Communita Ambiente (consultants for LIFE-Nature programme)³
- **Birds in Europe 2 and Birds of the European Union: a status assessment.** Two major reviews of the status of birds in Europe, prepared by BirdLife International for the conference with funding from the European Commission and the Netherlands government, and launched at the conference.

DG Environment of the European Commission produced a general overview report on the implementation of the Birds Directive, using elements from Member States’ national reports in the context of Article 12, drawing on a report by the Institute of European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and taking a 25-year perspective⁴. This was presented as one of the background papers for the conference.

Workshops on thematic issues

During the two years leading up to the conference, a series of thematic workshops on key topics relevant to the Birds Directive was also held, with the involvement of the ORNIS Scientific Working Group⁵ and other experts from stakeholder groups⁶. The outputs of each of these workshops fed into preparations for this conference, and were used in particular when drafting context papers for the conference workshops.

Promoting dialogue on sustainable hunting

Given that hunting has proven to be the most controversial element of the Directive, in 2001 the European Commission launched a **sustainable hunting initiative**⁷ with a view to promoting constructive dialogue between hunting and bird conservation societies. A ten-point plan was agreed between these parties and approved by the ORNIS Committee as a basis for action on this issue. Building on earlier work documenting reproduction and pre-nuptial migration periods for all EU15 countries, the Commission produced a **guidance document on hunting** under the Birds Directive. Work under the sustainable hunting initiative led to BirdLife International and FACE signing an **Agreement on sustainable hunting under the Birds Directive** on 12 October 2004 with support from the European Commission. This provided a key input to the conference preparations on the topic of sustainable hunting.

Other ongoing relevant initiatives

A number of other ongoing initiatives at EU level were also directly relevant to the issue of the overview. They included:

- The debate on **financing Natura 2000**. In July 2004 the Commission published a communication to both the Environment Council and the European Parliament on future perspectives regarding financing⁸. At the time of the Conference this matter was being examined by a working group of the Council
- The broader EU biodiversity review process. A key element was the output of the stakeholder conference held under the Irish presidency in May 2004, especially the “**Message from Malahide**” and the ensuing Environmental Council conclusions from June 2004⁹
- **Marine expert working group** on the establishment of Natura 2000 in the marine environment, which included developing guidance for marine extension of the SPA network (including offshore)
- The **Natura 2000 Networking Initiative**¹⁰
- Work on **provisions of Article 6** of the Habitats Directive in relation to compensatory measures to be taken for loss or damage to Natura 2000 sites
- The proposal by the European Commission to the European Council in July 2004 that the European Community ratify the **African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**, in recognition of the need for international cooperation for the conservation of migratory birds throughout their flyways.

Coming to Conclusions

Discussion themes for the conference: workshops

The evaluation of the Directive yielded four priority themes for the conference that were considered in a workshop setting (see chapter 3 for details on the workshop content and results). Appendix I to this report provides a table outlining key provisions of the Birds Directive and showing how they were considered in the context of each of the following four workshops:

- A. **Safeguarding Europe’s most valuable species and sites**
- B. **Caring for common birds beyond sites**
- C. **Living sustainably with birds**
- D. **Improving the knowledge base**

In addition, it was recognised that some issues were common to more than one workshop. Four such crosscutting issues were also considered at the conference and in the workshops:

1. Strengthening the **EU commitment and action for Pan-European and global bird conservation** and maximising the contribution of the Birds Directive to this
2. Ensuring adequate national and EU **financial support for bird conservation policy**
3. Reinforcing measures for **communication and awareness-raising** with respect to bird conservation, including public participation and stakeholder involvement
4. Developing **research to support the EU’s bird conservation policy** so that this policy is robust enough to meet future challenges.

Determining the content of the workshops

The Commission and the Netherlands presidency jointly prepared draft discussion papers for the four workshop themes. Following their presentation to a small group of Member States and key stakeholder groups on 29 July 2004, revised versions of these documents were sent to Member States on 6 August 2004 inviting their comments. On 20 September 2004 an ORNIS+ meeting took place at which members of the ORNIS Committee and stakeholder groups considered the approach taken in these discussion documents and whether the right issues were being addressed. Using the comments received, revised information and context papers on the topics were prepared for the conference workshops.

Arriving at Conclusions

Building on the results of the papers for the workshops, the Commission and the Netherlands presidency prepared draft Conference Conclusions, which were sent to all participants a week before the conference, for comments. At the start of the conference, a final draft, taking into consideration comments received, was distributed for discussion in the workshops. Following an approach similar to that used for the May 2004 Malahide Biodiversity Conference, in the workshops the participants fine-tuned the objectives and actions of the Conclusions; the results were discussed in the closing plenary session, with the aim of achieving consensus, which was attained.

3. The Conference from day to day



3.1 First Day: Opening and Panel Discussion

Opening of the conference on behalf of the Netherlands presidency

Mr. Chris Kalden, Secretary-General of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

On behalf of the Netherlands presidency, Mr. Kalden opened the Conference. In his words of welcome, Mr. Kalden recalled the excellent cooperation with the European Commission in preparing for the conference.



Referring to the thousands of migrating birds that pass each year through a small country such as the Netherlands, Mr. Kalden emphasized that political borders or national borders have no meaning for birds and that effective bird protection requires international cooperation. Therefore, the challenge for this conference was to harness all efforts to achieve a coherent Natura 2000 network. This is essential as Europe attaches importance to international cooperation and action to protect migrating birds. The Birds Directive was a major step in adequately protecting wild birds. It is now urgent, Mr. Kalden stressed, to effectively complete the implementation of this directive, to avoid further loss of important habitats for breeding, migrating and wintering birds in Europe. Even in the more intensely populated parts of Europe there should be room for birds.

Mr. Kalden gave a brief history of bird protection legislation in the Netherlands. In 1912 the law for the protection of Birds was adopted, and amended in 1936. As in most European states, the requirements of the Birds Directive have not been easy to fulfil. The Netherlands was under the impression in the 80s and 90s that it was sufficient to designate only 30 Special Protection Areas, but in 1998 the European Court summoned the Netherlands government to designate more sites. Soon afterwards, the Netherlands identified a further 49 SPAs. The process to designate these didn't go smoothly, as more than 1500 objections were received by the Netherlands government. However, the task has been accomplished and now, after over 20 years, the Netherlands has almost completed its network of SPAs.

This was, however, not the end of the story, according to Mr. Kalden. Now that SPAs have been identified, it is essential to ensure adequate protection of the birds and their habitats through effective management of the SPAs. Using the example of the Wadden Sea, Mr. Kalden explained that the Government's priority to both nature protection and sustainable economic development could result in difficult decisions to be made.

As to whether there are reasons to celebrate 25 years of the Birds Directive, Mr. Kalden gave a positive answer. Even in a densely populated country such as the Netherlands an effective network of SPAs has been established. Furthermore, this has been achieved with the involvement and support of all stakeholders and sectors.

Closing his welcoming words, Mr. Kalden appealed to the participants to examine important challenges for the future. These include climatic change, the enlargement of the European Union, how best to observe and maintain the protection regimes, and especially communicating bird conservation with society.

Welcome on behalf of the European Commission

Mr. Nicholas Hanley, Head of the Nature and Biodiversity Unit at the Directorate General for the Environment of the European Commission

In his words of welcome, Mr. Hanley mentioned that the adoption of the Birds Directive, 25 years ago, was the first significant commitment of the EU for nature conservation. Since then the debates on bird conservation have oftentimes been quite heated but they are generally more constructive in recent years. It is now timely to celebrate the Directives successes as well as to recognize shortcomings in its implementation. We should also think afresh, as we face the challenges of bird conservation in the 21st century.



Mr. Hanley underlined that the conditions in which the Birds Directive is applied have evolved considerably since 1979. Since then there was a gradual strengthening of environment and nature commitments of the European Union, which has grown from 9 to 25 countries, with further countries having applied to join. He also recognized the important and growing involvement of stakeholders and non-governmental organizations.

The Birds Directive must now be seen in the context of a broader debate on biodiversity. There is now much greater concern for biodiversity loss and degradation. Among its global environmental commitments, Mr. Hanley explained, the European Union has an ambitious target to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010. The “Message from Malahide” articulates these new concerns. It is necessary to orient our actions and priorities for bird conservation towards meeting these targets.

Mr. Hanley recognised that there has been much progress in implementing the Birds Directive, for example trade in wild birds has largely been eliminated as a pressure on populations. There has been a significant increase in awareness and improved dialogue with hunters. But more needs to be done. A number of countries still have to finalise their network of Special Protection Areas. Despite improvements in the status of many threatened species others are still endangered. Many formerly common birds are declining, especially those dependent on farming landscapes. There is a need to reinforce action across the EU and beyond.

Concluding his words of welcome, Mr. Hanley formulated some challenges for this conference. He requested the participants to reflect on both the achievements and gaps, focussing especially on the 2010 biodiversity target. We also need to ensure an open and transparent dialogue with stakeholders and the general public, since many of the challenges ahead require a change of thought and human behaviour.

Mr. Hanley concluded by highlighting the challenge of integrating bird conservation into broader land- and water use policies. There will be future opportunities and constraints and we will have to deal with the growing pressures on land and space. This applies to both old and new member states. The new rural development policy also provides many opportunities. The challenge is to engage more the different actors, and to generate a common sense of ownership of bird conservation where possible. There is a need for an ambitious approach but also one that is pragmatic and balanced.

The Birds Directive: Progress and Prospects – the Facts

Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA)

Ms. Jacqueline McGlade reported on the latest information on progress over the past 25 years and so opened up the discussion on prospects for the coming years. Her presentation started with explaining the historical background, followed by a review of the recent progress with the protection of species under the Birds Directive and ended with a number of Conclusions.



The historical background

Ms. McGlade recalled that it was the concern about the decline in wild birds that helped trigger the environmental movement in the 1960s, as evidenced by Rachel Carson's seminal work *Silent Spring*. She further recalled that birds are often the first wild animals to attract a child's attention and that from an early age, people are fascinated by the variety, shapes, colours, songs and flight of birds. They learn to recognise several different species by the age of 1 or 2 and in many cases maintain a fascination for birds and a concern for their well being throughout their lives. Ms. McGlade saw it as no coincidence, therefore, that birds were at the centre of the first international laws on nature protection. These include the Ramsar Convention on wetlands of 1971, and the following Bern and Bonn Conventions and the Birds Directive, all adopted in 1979.

The Birds Directive was a response by the then European Economic Community to concerns about the rapid decline in the numbers of wild birds as well as the 'serious threat to the conservation of the natural environment' and to wider 'biological balances'. Thus, from an early stage in European environmental policy-making, Ms. McGlade stated, birds have been used as indicators of environmental quality.

Recent progress

In assessing recent progress, Ms. McGlade drew on the recent work of BirdLife International, which is developing a robust system of data gathering, indicator development and assessments through its network of partner organisations, professional ornithologists, volunteers and enthusiasts across Europe. She also used the latest information from Wetlands International as well as the overview of the network of Special Protection Areas compiled by the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity for this Conference¹¹.

The classification of a coherent network of Special Protection Areas is one of the core objectives of the Birds Directive. Progress towards meeting this objective was initially slow with only some 600 sites and 50,000 km² covered by 1991. Following the commencement of legal action by the European Commission in the early 1990s as well as other incentives there has been a dramatic increase in the number of classifications in recent years. In 2004 there were over 3,600 sites and a total coverage of over 280,000 km², including marine sites. Ms. McGlade pointed out that this made up about 8 % of the EU15 territory, with individual Member State coverage ranging from less than 2 % in France to over 15 % in Spain. The 10 new Member States are in the process of classifying their Special Protection Areas, which will provide another substantial leap in coverage.

Whether this coverage meets the requirements for the specific species is not an easy question to answer, Ms. McGlade continued. A definition of sufficiency has not yet been agreed under the Birds Directive. In the absence of an agreed approach to determining the sufficiency of the network the European Commission uses various scientific references to assess the completeness of SPA designations in

different Member States. This includes BirdLife International's inventory of Important Bird Areas. Currently just over 44 % of the Important Bird Area total has been designated as Special Protection Areas in EU15. Several of the new Member States – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia – have proposed a significantly larger proportion (around 90 %) of their Important Bird Areas as Special Protection Areas. The other new Member States are listing smaller proportions or have not yet submitted their lists.

According to Ms. McGlade, there appears to be room for improvement in coverage in most Member States, particularly for the more common or widely distributed species, even if it is argued that Important Bird Areas overstate the requirements for SPAs under the Birds Directive.

To answer the question whether the Special Protection Areas and their management were effective, in the absence of an agreement on how to assess favourable conservation status for birds or for other species under the Birds Directive, Ms. McGlade referred to several studies. The two new studies by BirdLife international and its methodology based on the IUCN Red List criteria for threatened species and the requirements of the Birds Directive were combined with information compiled by the European Environment Agency on changes in land cover in and around SPAs between 1990 and 2000.

These assessments have found that:

- bird species of marine, coastal, inland wetland and Mediterranean forest habitats are increasing in numbers in the EU25 Member States
- provisional analyses by Wetlands International indicate that waterbird populations are fluctuating less in SPAs than in other non-classified areas
- in EU 15 population trends between 1990-2000 show that species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive and therefore subject to special protection measures did better than non-Annex I species
- population trends show that between 1900-2000 Annex I species in the EU15 did better than the same species in the non-EU15 countries
- in EU 15 in the period 1990-2000, most of the 23 Annex I species with a Species Action Plan (supported by the LIFE-Nature financial instrument) did better than those without one
- illegal trade in wild birds has been almost completely eliminated across the European Union
- preliminary analyses of changes in land cover inside and outside Special Protection Areas from about 1990 to 2000 in Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy suggest that for most of the main habitat classes in these countries there has been less change inside SPAs than outside.

However, the assessments also have indicated that:

- 48 % (216 of 448) of bird species had Unfavourable Conservation Status within the EU25 Member States in 2000; this is a slight improvement on 1990, when 51 % of species were assessed to have Unfavourable Conservation Status
- 72 % (126 of 174) of bird species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive had Unfavourable Conservation Status within the EU25 Member States in 2000; this is similar to the situation in 1990, when 73 % (120 of 164) had Unfavourable Conservation Status
- the status of species listed in Annex II of the Birds Directive and hence that may be hunted appears to have worsened since 1994. 46 % (36 of 79) of these huntable species now have Unfavourable Conservation Status at EU25 level
- farmland birds and long-distance migrants are continuing to decline in numbers in the EU25 Member States.

Ms. McGlade summarised the results by stating that the classification and

management of SPAs under the Birds Directive appears to be maintaining habitats and species populations, and producing some improvements in conservation status in many areas. In other words, the more management in place, the better. However, she pointed out that this summary does not apply to huntable, long-distance migratory and farmland birds. In this respect, Ms. McGlade referred to the agreement signed in October 2004 between the Hunters' Association FACE and BirdLife International, as part of the European Commission's Sustainable Hunting Initiative, which should reduce hunting pressure on the huntable species listed in Annex II of the Directive which are considered to have Unfavourable Conservation Status, and help restore them to Favourable Conservation Status. She also stressed the need to find out why many long-distance migrants who cross the Sahara to reach their wintering grounds are in decline, and called for international cooperation to help address this issue, for example through the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement.

Based on the biodiversity indicator that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the European Bird Census Council and BirdLife International have developed on the basis of population trends of representative species of common farmland and forest species, and the similar indicator being developed by Wetlands International for wetland species, Ms. McGlade stated that overall, generalist species numbers have remained fairly stable over the past 20-30 years. Wintering populations of wetland species are stable or increasing, possibly due to the benefits of warmer weather and the management of hunting. Numbers of forest species have decreased by about 10-20 % over the past 20-30 years. Numbers of farmland species have decreased more dramatically over the past 20-30 years and by up to 60 % for the group of farmland specialists, with larger decreases for some individual species, such as the Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), the Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*), the Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and the Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*).

The methodology used, which can be applied at a pan-European, European Union and national level, has been adopted as the biodiversity indicator within the extended set of structural indicators to be considered by the European Council at its meeting in Spring 2005.

Ms. McGlade also drew attention to the active networks of professional and amateur ornithologists that in many countries form the basis for the work coordinated by BirdLife International to produce bird indicators and assessments of population trends and conservation status. She also noted the great public interest in this work, which is resulting in websites that countries are opening up for the general public to gain access to local information and in turn provide information on the environment they observe around them. The example she mentioned was the Swedish website "artportalen": <http://www.artportalen.se>.

Side event: Citizens' website for monitoring species

Mr. Johan Nilsson from Sweden gave a presentation on the website "www.artportalen.se". This internet site, called "Species Gateway" in English, is an independent site for collecting sightings of species. It is open to anyone wishing to contribute data on birds, butterflies, moths, plants and fungi, and also allows sightings to be reported by mobile phone. It will soon be expanded with modules for reporting amphibians, reptiles and mammals. With the exception of confidential observations whose use is restricted to the data provider, authorised persons within the relevant organisations, and the Swedish Species Information Centre, the data gathered can be used by anyone – the general public, scientists, organisations and authorities. All observations are published first and verified later by authorised persons within the organisations.

At the Second Annual GBIF Science Symposium in Oaxaca, Mexico, the website was awarded the 2004 Ebbe Nielsen prize for innovative application of biodiversity informatics in biosystematics.

Ms. McGlade called for these local scale activities and opportunities to be taken into the Shared European Spatial Environmental Information Service – part of the Inspire and Global Monitoring for Environment and Security activities under way in each Member State and being developed by the European Environment Agency in partnerships across the European Union. She also supported the idea that every country develops a public portal so that those interested in the EU member countries can report sightings of the 25 birds selected for the anniversary celebrations. Supported and maintained by the national authority or a national organisation, the portals could also enable observations to be made on progress (or lack of progress) in reducing the threats to these 25 birds, their Special Protection Areas and their wider habitats in order to generate an interest in their effective management and help the responsible authorities to halt biodiversity loss in general and bird loss in particular. The fact that most countries had selected large, relatively common, easily recognisable birds as their emblematic birds could prove helpful in this. Through the activities of linking local information to a Europe-wide service, the EEA would be able to provide access across national portals, so that everyone interested can readily track sightings and progress for all 25 emblematic birds.

Conclusions

In her concluding remarks, Ms. McGlade referred to the 25 years of experience with the Birds Directive in the European Union, with 25 Member States and 25 symbolic national birds selected. She mentioned that now the need existed to have 25 success stories, one for each bird, but not to wait another 25 years for this success. In Ms. McGlade's view, a focus on achieving making progress on conserving birds as a major contribution to halting biodiversity loss by 2010 allows us to:

- learn from the experience of the first 25 years – SPAs make a difference, focussed management within SPAs makes a difference, addressing the pressures in and around SPAs makes a difference
- involve all interested parties – from site managers through farmers, foresters, hunters and developers to professional ornithologists, bird enthusiasts and the general public – particularly children
- improve the monitoring and reporting of the status and trends of birds and their habitats
- contribute to protecting biodiversity more generally, for example through greening of the Common Agricultural Policy, and
- improve our environment and our own well being.

Finally, Ms. McGlade concluded that there has been progress in the past 25 years, but that pressures on bird populations and their habitats persist and the threats they face continue to worsen in many areas. She saw a need to work much harder over the next 5 years to achieve the target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010 and a need for more collaboration and agreements to do so – not just with hunters but also with farmers, forest-owners, other landowners and developers, fishermen, tourist organisations and the widest possible public. Ms. McGlade stressed that a lot of the information needed to reach the 2010 target for birds was available. And that, if the target for birds is achieved, this will significantly help reach the targets for other species and for biodiversity as a whole. The European Environment Agency in cooperation with all interested organisations and individuals would then be monitoring progress and telling people about it. “But with only barely five years left before 2010”, Ms. McGlade stressed, “there is no time to lose...”.

Panel Discussion

The purpose of this part of the plenary session was to have an open and active discussion with representatives of key stakeholder groups to get their views on the celebration of 25 years of the Birds Directive. The discussion was chaired by Ms. Maria Henneman, an independent journalist in the Netherlands, who animated the discussion. The panellists were asked central questions of the conference, the response to which provided a basis for wider debate. This formula allowed for the perspectives of the stakeholders to be presented in a lively and interactive manner. The key discussion points are outlined below. The following stakeholders participated in the discussion:



- **Ms. Nicole Nowicki**, Special Delegate of Eurosite, European Network of Nature Conservation Management Organisations
- **Ms. Claire Papazoglou**, Head of EU Policy of BirdLife International, International Alliance of Bird Conservation Organisations
- **Mr. Henk De Bruin**, Head of Port Development of the Port of Rotterdam
- **Mr. Thierry De l'Escaille**, Secretary General of ELO, European Landowners' Organization
- **Mr. Franz-Josef Feiter**, Secretary General of COPA, Committee of European Agricultural Organisations
- **Mr. Jonathan Swift**, Vice President of FACE, Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation of the EU.

State of the Art after 25 years of the Birds Directive

Mr. Jonathan Swift of FACE said that much has changed, especially in the hunting scene. Keen hunters are also nature conservationists, contributing to good and practical nature conservation measures. He called for a further consideration of the role of hunting for Annex II species that have an unfavourable conservation status. In this respect, Mr. Swift referred to the FACE publication *Hunting and biodiversity*, which gives a variety of methods and approaches to address the unfavourable conservation status of birds.

Mr. Franz-Josef Feiter noted that relations between bird conservationists and farmers had greatly improved and said that this process should continue. Farmers were not involved in 1979 when the Birds Directive was adopted, and some Member States were even unaware or did not appreciate the significance of what had been decided. In the past 25 years, collaboration has intensified. Mr. Feiter saw it as a good thing that the complexity of the topic is now recognised, with many partners informed and involved, but farmers still needing to be better informed.

Mr. Thierry De l'Escaille of ELO said that biodiversity is also an important asset for landowners, as it adds value to their land. Landowners work together with Eurosite and other organisations. This includes the LIFE programme, which is important for landowners. ELO wants to promote good agricultural practice, aimed at reconciling the interests of landowners and biodiversity. The designation as Natura 2000 site should be seen as a compliment, and rural actors should be in a position to live with the consequences.

Ms. Nicole Nowicki of Eurosite stressed the strong need for new ways of management, and new ways of successful pan-European cooperation. She called for a change of mindset: from local thinking to European thinking, even beyond Europe to African countries.

Mr. Henk De Bruin said that the Port of Rotterdam aims to promote the sustainable use of its facilities, and has an open, learning-oriented attitude: "We are not only a port, but also the 'keepers' of more than 10,000 ha of a Marine Protected Area.

The extension of the port was accompanied by investments in nature. Economy and ecology have to go hand in hand, but first we have to earn money. The Birds Directive is not a burden, and most business people are willing to discuss the consequences of its implementation. International companies are also interested in keeping their area clean.”

Reasons to celebrate today

Ms. Claire Papazoglou and Ms. Nicole Nowicki agreed that there were good reasons to celebrate, but also that the implementation of some of the conservation priorities of the Birds Directive is still lagging behind. The Birds Directive continues to have a positive influence on the conservation status of birds. Many Annex I species nowadays have a positive conservation status, trade in birds has been regulated, and so has hunting. Species action plans for threatened species have proven to be very successful. Moreover, it is now widely acknowledged that some areas are not for profit, but purely for nature. Finally there has been some integration of the protection requirements of birds into other sectors. The integration of bird conservation requirements into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and future LIFE-Plus funding is very important. Ms. Papazoglou referred to the following two new publications: *Birds in the European Union 2004*, and *Birds in Europe 2*, also 2004, which were to be launched by BirdLife International at the conference. From these and other studies it has become clear that farmland birds are in serious decline. This also applies to long-distance migrants. However, it has also been made clear, Ms. Papazoglou continued, that special measures, carried out under the Birds Directive, are useful and contribute effectively to the protection of birds.

Side event: the presentation of *Birds in Europe* (second, fully revised edition) and *Birds in the European Union*.

During the conference, BirdLife International’s director Mr. Michael Rands presented two new and very useful books to Minister Veerman: *Birds in Europe* and *Birds in the European Union* published by BirdLife International with financial assistance from the European Commission. The Netherlands funded the costs of printing *Birds in the European Union*.



Birds in Europe 2 (2004) or BiE2 is the second review of the conservation status of all wild birds in Europe. Like its 1994 predecessor, *Birds in Europe* (BiE1), it identifies priority species (Species of European Conservation Concern, or SPECs) in order that conservation action can be taken to improve their status.

The 1994 edition proved to be of great value: its conclusions were used when deciding for which species the European Commission should prepare Species Protection Plans. The geographical scope of *Birds in Europe* extends from Greenland in the west to the Urals in the east, and from Svalbard in the north to the Canary Islands in the south. Thanks to increased political stability in the Balkans and the Caucasus, it was possible to collect data from the countries in those regions. The overall message from BiE2 is as clear as that from BiE1: birds in Europe continue to be threatened by widespread environmental change, and many populations are now in deeper trouble than a decade ago. As birds are good environmental indicators, the ongoing decline of so many species sends out clear signals about the state of European biodiversity and the health of the wider environment. Given the scale of the problem, the need for the massive and urgent response called for in BiE1 is now even more pressing. Action must be taken immediately – not only to stop the continuing loss of Europe’s once rich and abundant avifauna, but also to show serious commitment to halting biodiversity loss by 2010.

Birds in the European Union is restricted to the European Union of 25 Member States. Based on BirdLife International’s extensive data on bird populations, trends

and conservation status, it analyses the situation of wild birds in the 25 Member States of the enlarged European Union. It is concluded that the implementation of the Birds Directive, and especially the network of Special Protection Areas has had a positive influence on the conservation status of birds. However, many birds are still threatened and remedial action is particularly urgent for grassland birds. It is also concluded that in the 25 EU Member States, grassland birds are doing worse than at Pan-European level.

Mr. Swift said that the agreement between FACE and BirdLife International is seen as particularly positive. He called for action plans and interpretive guidance on the Birds Directive, in order to inform and help people at local level. He also stressed the need to promote good practise as well as a good balance between economic sustainability, respecting the precautionary principle.

Integration of bird conservation in other sectors and financial reform

Mr. Pfeiter explained the difficulties that farmers face in reconciling economic and ecological needs. The activities of farmers play a role in achieving the favourable conservation status of some birds, but also contribute to the decline of other birds. The new CAP could be of great help, if extra money were made available for farmers through the second pillar. Mr. Feiter saw the reform of the CAP as being on the right track, because it underlines that it is essential to accept that farming has to be viable. Opening markets could lead to increased pressure on the environment and loss of income should be compensated by direct measures to assure income. However, Mr. Feiter saw a need for a good balance between agriculture and nature conservation. Small and medium-sized farms may not need to intensify, but we have to ensure that direct income support will continue.

Ms. Papazoglou emphasised that there is a need for better integration of Natura 2000 into rural development plans. The present idea of a new LIFE-Plus instrument does not get the support of BirdLife International because it is too vague and lacking focus on nature.

Ms. Nowicki agreed with this, and added that there is a need to be more prudent with the agricultural situation in the 10 new Member States, especially as there are still many birds there, and in this situation a so-called “Western approach” with strong planning is unlikely to work.

Mr. De l’Escaille agreed with BirdLife International and hoped that the right options would be selected. In his eyes, financing of Natura 2000 by the Commission should be promoted.

Mr. Swift also supported this position: “Through local initiatives integrating nature conservation and hunting, progress can be made, but without money you get nowhere. Local biodiversity action plans, for example for bats, waterfowl (etc.) also need funding.”

Mr. Feiter saw one of the challenges for the future of agriculture as making the integration with nature conservation possible, using new technology, fertilisers and pesticides. The opening up of the European markets would create a need for compensation for farmers, to avoid a major restructuring of the farming world. Loss of production should therefore be compensated for by direct income payments. In the eyes of Mr. Feiter, the CAP goes in the right direction, but this should be ensured for the future. Farmers are the most cost effective and efficient ‘keepers’ of the landscape, providing a valuable service to society. Young farmers must be confident of earning a living throughout their career. To meet the above needs, it is essential to have enough money in the second pillar.

Ms. Nowicki could not say whether farmers were indeed the best ‘keepers’. Within LIFE-Nature, it is mostly farmers who are involved, which works well within the

strict Netherlands planning system, but would not necessarily work in other systems. She pointed out that extensive farming is extremely important – especially in the new Member States.

Mr. De l’Escaille added that there should be no problem of integration with farming. It is still possible to maintain economic activities while fully respecting nature. New techniques serve both interests and provide for better integration.

The network of Special Protection Areas

Ms. Papazoglou referred to the inventory of Important Bird Areas (IBAs). BirdLife International considers that all the important terrestrial sites are mentioned in this publication and that all of them should be protected as SPAs, although it recognises that not all Member States agree this should apply to all IBAs.

Mr. De l’Escaille referred to the importance of corridors and also the need for more than simply SPAs. To engage the general public, a wider concept is needed. It is essential to have a positive attitude and good practice, to go along with the SPAs.

Mr. Swift saw a need to complete the Network Natura 2000 and to have all SPAs protected in their functioning, which would include the involvement of local stakeholders: partnerships are essential.

Mr. De l’Escaille agreed with a need to build bridges and coalitions between stakeholders, because there is a common target. Therefore, political agreements should be found and actions proposed.

Mr. De Bruin emphasised that the enforcement of protective measures is necessary and just as important as having clear goals. Nature should be conserved. Every port with Natura 2000 interests in the European Union should be subject to the same regulations. He offered the help of the “Ecoport Foundation”, a network of ports cooperating and exchanging information on environmental issues.

With regard to farmers having to help halt biodiversity decline by 2010, Mr. Feiter stressed that farmers are increasingly dependent on public money. Supplying information to farmers will therefore become a major challenge for national administrations. World markets will put increasing pressure on farmers. There is a strong need for Europe to positively influence this process. Other parts of the world need to participate in environment protection too, also given the influence that it has on ways of agricultural production and resulting prices. EU negotiators should push this topic more in world trade talks in Geneva.

General conclusions

- Mr. De Bruin called for direct relations between ecological and economical goals, and for the involvement from the clients of ports and emphasised that there was a need to ensure a “level playing field” in applying the Birds Directive: “no more, no less.”
- Mr. De l’Escaille supported this remark and added that we need to have the same interpretation in all European countries.
- Mr. Pfeiter agreed on this position and said that we should and could harmonise agricultural production and ecology in a sustainable way. In future, modern agriculture in Europe should be economically and ecologically sustainable. There should be no distortions or unfair competition between European farmers and farmers from outside Europe.
- Ms. Nowicki expressed that the ambitions were at the right high level.
- Mr. Swift said that wise use, good communication, and involvement of local people are all very important. This, next to money, confidence and the provision of a legal basis for the engagement of local people.

- Ms. Papazoglou said that the priorities for BirdLife International are the realisation and effective management of Natura 2000, the integration of the conservation of birds into other sectors, as well as the financing of Natura 2000 and the protection of birds and monitoring.

The chair, Ms. Henneman, thanked the forum members and the participants in this discussion.

Closing of the plenary session

Director-General Mr. André van der Zande of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality thanked all speakers and participants in the discussion and closed the plenary session of the first day by formulating some general conclusions:

- We need to continue dialogue, especially with the economic sector
- During the next 5 years actions under the Common Agricultural Policy will be pivotal for the conservation of birds and the realisation of the 2010 biodiversity target, especially cross-compliance, good agricultural practice and measures under the second pillar
- Money is important but subsidies will have their limitations: first we should encourage landowners to take up their responsibilities; subsidies are a last measure, not the beginning of the solutions.

3.2 First Day: Workshops

The process of evaluation of the Directive revealed that four key thematic issues merited particular attention at the conference. Each of these was the subject of a workshop on the first afternoon, although it was recognised that some issues – the crosscutting issues – had relevance to more than one workshop.

Below, the topics of the workshops and the crosscutting issues are explained first. Then follows the report of each workshop. The objectives mentioned in the reports are the final objectives, also given in the final Conclusions presented in chapter 1 of this report.

In total, 10 objectives and 44 accompanying actions were debated in four parallel workshops. For these debates, workshop papers were prepared. These papers defined the focus of each workshop, summarised the relevant commitments under the Directive, outlined the progress and experience in implementing these commitments, and defined the challenges for achieving them. The papers can be found at the website of the Conference.

Themes of the workshops

Workshop A: Safeguarding Europe's most valuable species and sites

One of the most important objectives of the Directive is the establishment of a coherent network of special protection areas (SPAs) for vulnerable and migratory species. SPAs form an integral part of the Natura 2000 network. Despite very substantial progress, significant gaps still remain, especially for the marine environment. To avoid damage to the sites, SPA classification needs to be underpinned by effective protection systems. It also requires positive site management planning and action, with the involvement of different stakeholder groups. Consideration also needs to be given to other complementary measures, to ensure the network functions and that it is adaptable to future environmental changes. The role of the SPA network in the context of international flyways needs to be strengthened.

Workshop B: Caring for common birds beyond sites

Some of the greatest problems facing Europe's birds and their habitats cannot be solved by site-based approaches. There is a need to find new and improved ways to integrate bird conservation requirements into the definition and implementation of sectoral policies affecting land and water use, especially in relation to farming, forestry and fisheries. There are increasing opportunities for integrating the requirements of the Birds Directive into different EU sectoral policies and instruments that need to be realised, including the development of agri-environment systems that deliver measurable benefits for birds and other wildlife.

Workshop C: Living sustainably with birds

Whereas the Directive provides a strong legislative framework for the protection and sustainable management of bird populations both within and outside sites, there have been conflicts with different user groups, especially in relation to the management of hunting. Often, the disputes have been based on misunderstandings and poor communication. There is a need to develop and strengthen approaches so that human activities can be reconciled with the conservation objectives of the Directive in a balanced and proportionate way, respecting the principle of wise use.

Workshop D: Improving the knowledge base

There is a need for good scientific information to demonstrate that the measures taken are achieving the objectives of the Directive and that its implementation is contributing to meeting the 2010 target of halting biodiversity decline. This needs to be underpinned by bird conservation indicators and monitoring systems that can be used to communicate bird conservation problems effectively to the general public and to decision makers, with a view to provoking appropriate policy responses.

Crosscutting Issues at the workshops

Preparations for the conference had also highlighted other crosscutting issues that needed to be considered. These issues and the approaches to be taken to address them are outlined below:

1. Strengthening the EU commitment and action for pan-European and global bird conservation and maximising the contribution of the Birds Directive to this

In addition to the ongoing international work on biodiversity, especially in the context of EU participation in international conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, there is recognition of the need for enhanced collaboration along migratory flyways for birds. The recent proposal from the European Commission to the Environment Council to ratify the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) is a practical response to this need. This issue was considered in Workshop A (Safeguarding Europe's most valuable bird species and sites).

2. Ensuring adequate national and EU financial support for bird conservation policy

The achievement of many of the objectives of the Directive is contingent on there being adequate human and financial resources. At the time of the conference there was already ongoing debate on the financing of Natura 2000. The Communication on financing Natura 2000¹² produced by the European Commission was being considered by the Council. This document emphasised the need to integrate Natura 2000 funding requirements into Rural and Regional Development programmes in the future. The Commission had also recently made a new LIFE-Plus proposal, intended to subsume all funding lines managed by DG Environment of the European Commission (from 2007 onwards). In light of the fact that the issue of financing Natura 2000 was already being considered at Council level, this topic was not intended to be a primary focus of this conference. The issue of financing was dealt with under Workshop B (Caring for common birds beyond sites).

3. Reinforcing measures for communication and awareness raising with respect to bird conservation, including public participation and stakeholder involvement

This is especially relevant in the context of managing Natura 2000 and therefore is already the focus of a Natura Networking Initiative, including activities promoted in the context of the annual Green Days. However, the issue goes beyond site management: it is also about sustainable use and human activities that affect wild birds and their habitats. This was dealt with in Workshop C (Living sustainably with birds).

4. Developing research to support the EU's bird conservation policy that is robust in the light of future challenges

Article 10 of the Birds Directive encourages Member States to carry out research as a basis for the protection, management and use of populations of all birds covered by the Directive. Successful implementation of the Directive needs to be underpinned by a scientific understanding of species, their habitats, and the processes affecting them. This is also highly relevant to emerging challenges such as the effects of climate change on birds. This issue was primarily considered in Workshop D (Improving the knowledge base).

Workshop A: Safeguarding Europe’s most valuable species and sites

“The coherence of the network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs)”

Chair: Mr. Michael Starrett, President of Europarc Federation and CEO of the Heritage Council in Ireland.

Rapporteurs: Mr. Micheál O’Briain, DG Environment of the European Commission, and Mr. Peter Bos, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Minutes: Mr. Graham Dusseldorp, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Central question for the workshop:

Whether the EU and its Member States are achieving the site protection objective of the Birds Directive, and if not, what measures need to be taken to meet them, particularly with a view to the 2010 target of halting biodiversity decline.

Two crosscutting issues were addressed in this workshop: firstly, action to strengthen EU commitments to pan-European and global bird conservation, and, secondly, the role of action plans for threatened species.

More specifically, the workshop aimed to address the following questions:

1. Is the network of designated SPAs complete, and if not what measures are needed to achieve this objective?
2. Do we have an adequate protection, management and monitoring regime in place for the SPAs?
3. Is the network of SPAs functionally coherent and resilient to future changes and pressures, and – where needed – how can we develop the tools for achieving ecological connectivity?
4. How can we strengthen EU commitments to pan-European and global bird conservation?
5. How can we best continue to prioritise actions for the most threatened species, including the use of action plans?

These questions and issues were addressed by discussing four objectives: objectives 1, 2, 3 and 10.

OBJECTIVE 1

Urgently complete the terrestrial network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) by 2005, fully extend it to the marine environment by 2008 and establish an effective protection regime for all SPAs, with management objectives in place and initiated for all sites by 2010.

Discussion on this objective initially focussed on whether the target dates of 2005, 2008 and 2010 were attainable. There was eventual consensus on maintaining these target dates, since they focused on the 2010 biodiversity target and had already been agreed for Natura 2000 at the May 2004 Malahide conference. It would also be legally difficult to defend later dates that went far beyond the initial targets set in the Directive.

A second discussion topic related to setting management objectives and whether they should be kept in this objective. This text was retained, as management objectives, although not stated as such in the text of the Birds Directive, are central to the effective implementation of the SPA network. This is mentioned in the Commission’s guidance document on Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. Furthermore, they are necessary and positive elements for reaching the desired

goals, in addition to preventative measures under the protection regime for SPAs. Regarding recommended action 1-1, the European Topic Centre for Biodiversity and the European Commission explained that a distance to target indicator is a measure to determine to what extent the SPA networks are complete for different Member States. The goal is to reach agreement on an adequate indicator for this. There was consensus on the necessity of agreement with Member States. Regarding recommended action 1-4, consensus was reached that monitoring was necessary as input for enabling management practices to be modified, and not just to assess implementation of the appropriate measures. Finally, recommended action 1-5 was broadened from just Rural Development Plans to include all other relevant sectoral plans and programmes.

OBJECTIVE 2

Ensure that the overall SPA network is functionally coherent and resilient to future changes and pressures, including the development and implementation where appropriate of tools for achieving ecological connectivity.

The main discussion regarding objective 2 dealt with the concept of resilience. The questions were how to assure that the SPA network is adaptive to deal with unknown future change and whether a list of all possible future changes was necessary. Consensus was reached that the exact wording was not important. What mattered, was the idea behind it. Resilience does not mean that future change is predictable, but that the network is sustainable and has been set up so that it will be able to adjust to such change. Regarding recommended action 2-1, the participants agreed to the Chair's proposal to add an extra action dealing with "Future changes and pressures, including climate change."

OBJECTIVE 3

Take urgent actions for species under threat, including the implementation of international action plans and national measures.

Objective 3 was broadened, to emphasise that the action plans are international, but that there may also be a need for other measures at national level. The issue of adequate financing was not debated, since the topic was discussed in Workshop B (objective 9). The term "species under threat" was clarified as not being limited to globally threatened species.

Recommended action 3-1 was broadened to also incorporate the possibility to include new action plans, and to encompass the perspective of the distribution area of species and/or populations.

At the request of the participants, recommended action 3-3 on monitoring and reviewing plans was altered to recognise the value of a harmonious approach with other Conventions and Agreements and an evaluation system that enables improvements where required.

OBJECTIVE 10

Strengthen EU commitments and action for pan-European and global bird conservation and maximise the contribution the Bird Directive makes to this.

Objective 10 enjoyed the support of all participants. Action 10-2 was altered to not only promote, but also *support* the actions.

The workshop ended with a brief discussion about objective 4, which lay beyond the scope of this workshop. The Chair undertook to pass on the suggestion to bring the actors involved in objective 4 and action 4-1 more in line with each other.

Workshop B: Caring for common birds beyond sites

“Conserving birds in the wider land- and seascape”

Chair: Mr. Thierry de l’Escaille, Secretary General of the European Landowners Organization (ELO).

Rapporteurs: Ms. Carleen Weebers, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, and Ms. Alexandra Vakrou, DG Environment of the European Commission.

Minutes: Ms. Sabine Ketele, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Central question for the workshop:

The central question for this workshop was how we could more effectively integrate bird habitat protection requirements into other policies that affect the wider environment. This included the question which policies and sectors directly or indirectly affect wild birds. Furthermore, the degree to which these policies have been taken on board and integrated effectively to meet the above requirements was considered.

A crucial crosscutting issue dealt with during this workshop was the availability of national and EU financial support to implement the necessary actions and achieve the objectives of the Birds Directive.

More specifically, this workshop aimed to address the following questions¹³:

1. Do we have sufficient knowledge on the interactions of birds with the wider countryside and how countryside and land policies impact on birds and on the main threats and opportunities to birds emerging from the reformed Common Agricultural Policy and other Community policies?
2. What opportunities exist to integrate bird protection requirements into other EU policy areas such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and which conservation actions cannot be funded under the Common Agricultural policy and the Common Fisheries Policy?
3. How can we plan for birds more effectively? (Incorporate bird protection actions in programmes, provide for the best possible measures, design better and efficient agri-environmental schemes that are beneficial for birds, and monitor the performance and impact of these schemes on bird populations)
4. How can we ensure adequate national and EU financial support for meeting the objectives of the Birds Directive?

These questions and issues were addressed by debating two objectives: objectives 4 and 9.

OBJECTIVE 4

Ensure that opportunities to integrate the requirements of the Birds Directive into all relevant EU policy areas and Community instruments are fully realised, including the development of agri-environment and forest-environment measures and actions that deliver measurable benefits for birds and other wildlife.

The original objective 4 was not altered by the workshop participants. However, there was a lively discussion which underlined that a number of policies and sectors are instrumental for the successful implementation of the Birds Directive. The debate mainly focused on including all other relevant policies and sectors for which the integration objectives and actions were relevant. It was decided not to strive for an exhaustive list to be included in the objective 4, since this was

probably unattainable. It was agreed instead that objective 4 be left at a more abstract level, while referring to the most appropriate policies and sectors in the recommended action 4-1. Promotion of an integrated and participatory approach was also added under 4-1. It was also felt that agricultural policy and the forestry sector produce some of the more easily recognisable effects on birds populations and their protection. It was considered that these two sectors were the most important to target in the immediate future. The focus and attention should be on issues of cross-compliance and the design of appropriate agri-environmental measures for birds. In this context it was not agreed to broadening the communication focus beyond farmers and foresters. It was felt that there should be guidance on best practices to follow, guidance for the design of the most appropriate bird targeted agri-environmental measures and good monitoring of agri-environmental programmes. Discussion about adding actions around the Water Framework Directive lead to the inclusion of an additional recommended action 4-6 on the Water Framework Directive. Participants also felt that land use planning should play a role in the integration-participatory approach.

OBJECTIVE 9

Ensure adequate EU and national financial support for bird conservation policy and the implementation of the necessary actions.

Since the European Commission and the Member States (Council group) were still debating the Commission's Communication on Financing Natura 2000, discussion in this workshop merely focused on pertinent objectives and actions. All participants agreed in principle with the proposed objective and actions. However, alterations were necessary in the wording to focus these more on the ongoing financial debate, without making premature decisions, and reflecting these into the actions. Recommended action 9-1 was broadened to focus on the full implementation of the Natura 2000 network and the protection of species outside the designated/classified areas, while the European institutions are requested to ensure adequate financing. The recommended actions 9-2, 9-3 and 9-4 were merged and also incorporated financial elements from other objectives. This resulted in two new recommended actions (Action 9-2 and 9-3). Recommended action 9-2 is complementary to recommended action 9-1 in support of the Natura 2000 network needs and highlights a range of topics for which financial resources are required (monitoring, communication, research, support for NGOs and other partnerships which seek to promote networking and awareness raising, etc.). Recommended action 9-3 arose from the discussions in Workshop D and requests adequate financing for bird conservation research as well as for the dissemination of results.

Workshop C: Living sustainably with birds

“Sustainable management of bird populations and sites: experiences with the concept of wise use and the protection regime”

Chair: Mr. Rob Wolters, director of the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC).

Rapporteurs: Mr. Martin Lok, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, and Mr. Joaquim Captao, DG Environment of the European Commission.

Minutes: Mr. Jan Sevenster, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Central question for the workshop:

How can we best combine sustainable management and the wise use of biodiversity with assuring the conservation requirement of wild bird species and their habitats?

A crosscutting issue also addressed in this workshop was the measures to reinforce communication to the public, awareness-raising and public participation.

More specifically, the workshop aimed to address the following questions:

1. How can we strengthen the effectiveness of the protection regime for bird species and their habitats, while maintaining its proportionality?
2. How can we better promote and assure the sustainable use of biodiversity, in particular of birds?
3. How can we improve communication to the public, awareness-raising and public participation?

These questions and issues were addressed by debating two objectives: objective 5 and 8.

OBJECTIVE 5

Work towards a common approach for Natura 2000 (for both SPAs and SACs), take care that use and other human activities within and outside classified areas are sustainable and compatible with bird conservation requirements, and promote and implement proportionally the “wise use” principle with respect to birds and their habitats.

The main issue in the discussion on objective 5 was whether and to what extent there was a need for harmonisation. In this regard the Chair’s proposal to phrase the objective as “work towards a common approach” was accepted by the participants. A reference for possible common standards, when needed, was also added to recommended action 5-3.

Recommended action 5-2 referred to legal obligations and was seen by participants as being too weak and not having any added value over what is already contained in the Directive. It was therefore decided to put the accent on enforcement. A similar conclusion concerned recommended action 5-9, where the accent was also put on the enforcement of existing legal obligations.

The need to harmonise, whenever possible, the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives was discussed and led to the revised version of recommended action 5-5 which stresses that this should be done when legally feasible.

The participants also agreed to phrase recommended action 5-6 in such a way that it applies to all economic sectors and not just to the ones explicitly mentioned and to include in this action an explicit reference to the development of codes of conduct.

The discussion on recommended action 5-7 focussed almost completely on the

possibility of giving a legal value to the guidance document on hunting produced in the framework of the “Sustainable Hunting Initiative”. Although some of the participants in the workshop had strong and opposing views on this issue, an agreement was reached, to mention the possibility for individual Member States to give the document a legal status.

Finally, there was also some debate on the date of 2009 included in recommended action 5-8, concerning the phasing out of the use of lead shot in wetlands.

Although there are legal requirements to do this earlier (the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement set a goal of achieving this by 2000), it was decided to keep the reference to 2009 in this action, due to a question of feasibility and in line with the agreement signed by BirdLife International and FACE in the framework of the “Sustainable Hunting Initiative”.

OBJECTIVE 8

Reinforce measures for communication and awareness raising with respect to bird conservation, including public participation and stakeholder involvement in managing SPAs.

There was full agreement regarding objective 8 and most of the changes to the recommended actions related to improving the wording and did not affect their contents. The only substantial modifications concerned the accent on effectiveness and efficiency of communication in recommended action 8-2, the mention of swift adoption of the measures on access to justice, due to the recognition that the Aarhus Convention is not yet legally binding, and the special mention of youth included in recommended action 8-5. Concerning the lists of those responsible for implementation of different actions, it was decided to add the European Commission to recommended action 8-2 and the EU Committee of the Regions to 8-3.

Workshop D: Improving the knowledge base

“Indicating birds and birds as indicators: Challenges for bird monitoring, indicators and reporting

Chair: Gordon McInness, deputy director of the European Environment Agency (EEA).

Rapporteurs: Ms. Anne Teller, DG Environment of the European Commission, and Mr. Eduard Osieck, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Minutes: Mr. Sander van Opstal, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Central question for this workshop:

How to set up an efficient monitoring and reporting system for birds at EU level, using indicators to communicate effectively to the general public and to decision-makers in order to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Birds Directive and, if needed, provoke appropriate policy responses?

More specifically, this workshop aimed to address the following questions:

1. How can we improve the existing mechanisms (both organisational and financial) to achieve effective monitoring systems for bird needs, making best use of governmental and non-governmental organisations, volunteers and citizens?
2. How can we strengthen the existing reporting system under the Birds Directive and streamline it with reporting obligations under the Habitats Directive and where possible, other international agreements?
3. Which bird indicators have a good potential to function as biodiversity indicators, and which steps should be taken for their further development?
4. What are the future research needs and priorities to improve knowledge on bird conservation?

At the opening of the workshop, representatives of the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU (FACE) emphasized important issues that they considered as deserving a written statement in the final report of the workshop. First of all, the crucial topic of bird monitoring, indicators and reporting, which should have been prominent 25 years before, still has not received proper attention. The Chair agreed that such a statement should be part of the final conclusions of the workshop. UNEP/AEWA mentioned the importance of taking a flyway approach since a lot of problems for European birds have their cause outside the European Union, and that research and monitoring was therefore also required outside the European Union. UNEP/AEWA tabled a paper with concrete proposals to improve international co-operation and capacity building outside EU. The Chair agreed to integrate this dimension into the debate.

These questions and issues mentioned above were addressed by debating two objectives: objective 6 and 7.

OBJECTIVE 6

Implement by 2006 a set of bird conservation indicators to monitor and evaluate the efficiency of measures taken under the Directive and in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy, in particular to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target, with the potential to communicate bird conservation problems effectively to the general public and to decision-makers and provoke appropriate and effective policy responses.

Discussions on this objective initially focused on whether the target date of 2006 was attainable since the ORNIS Committee had not yet given its agreement to a set of bird conservation indicators. There was eventual consensus on maintaining the target date subject to changing 'agreed' to 'common' set of indicators, and adding a specific reference – in accordance with recommended action 6-1 – to the need for indicators for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy. This implied that DG Environment of the European Commission and the EEA have a leading role to play in this process.

A second discussion topic related to the need for the policy responses that are to be triggered, to be not only 'appropriate', but also 'effective'. Recommended action 6-1 was modified accordingly. The explicit reference to the need for developing distance-to-target indicator for SPAs was deleted since it would have prejudged the results of the discussion of Workshop A.

Regarding recommended action 6-2 on monitoring, the need for 'proper scientific interpretation' of hunting bag statistics was added, to reflect the wording of the Agreement between FACE and BirdLife International on Directive 79/409/EEC signed on 12/10/04 with the support of the European Commission in the framework of the "Sustainable Hunting Initiative". In addition, the frameworks for monitoring and reporting to be developed, were explicitly characterised as 'effective' and 'harmonized'.

In recommended action 6-4, an explicit reference was made to the Aarhus Convention, which was considered as an essential tool in the context of access to environment information.

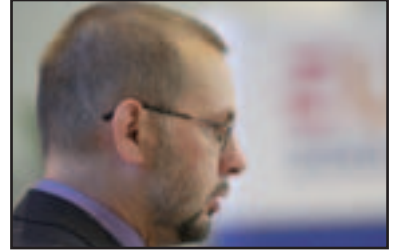
OBJECTIVE 7

Strengthen research that is focused on achieving the objectives of the Birds Directive and the 2010 target and that is robust and responsive to future challenges, and reflect this through an appropriate revision of Annex V of the Birds Directive.

Objective 7 enjoyed the support of all participants and was expanded to include mention of a recommendation to revise Annex V, to take account of the considerable change in the situation since adoption of the directive, including recognition of the need for good scientific data to underpin effective delivery of the "Guidance document on hunting".

Finally, the relevant actors involved – i.e. the European Community, Member States, EEA, NGOs, international secretariats - were added in each of the actions.

3.3 Second Day: Key-note Speeches



Vision on rural development

Key-note speaker: Mr. Paulo Albergoni, deputy director of “La Cassinazza”, on behalf of Mr. Giuseppe Natta, director

Mr. Albergoni began by introducing “La Cassinazza”, an ancient farm located in the village of Giussago (province of Pavia), on the plain of the river Po in Italy. The farm extends over 400 ha. Until 1996 the farm was managed as any other large farm in this area, but since 1996 there has been a major change in vision, aims and management style. The implementation of EC Regulations 2078/92 and 2080/92 helped create a totally different farm and a transformed countryside. In 1996 there were no woodlands or hedges, only arable land, by 2002 190,000 native trees and shrubs had been planted.



In his speech, Mr. Albergoni explained that at European level the financial situation was as follows: each year, each four person family in the EU transfers € 1.000 to agriculture. Of this amount, 60% is paid by the family as tax to finance the Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) annual per hectare subsidies; the remaining 40% the family pays as consumers when purchasing agricultural goods (which are not purchased at market prices, but at a higher European price). The costs that the consumers pay are even higher, since the CAP subsidies indirectly cause damage to the environment, landscape and biological diversity, lead to insecure food supplies and, in the long term, lead to the impoverishment of agricultural soils.

The well-known problems partly attributable to agricultural policies include pollution of the groundwater by nitrates, the eutrophication of the Mediterranean Sea caused by the polluted waters of intensively cultivated areas such as the Po, Rhone and Ebro watersheds, and the algae outbreaks in the Adriatic Sea. These have caused significant harm to the tourism industry. It is for these reasons, Mr. Albergoni claimed, that many economists have described EC agricultural subsidies “perverse subsidies”: the damage these subsidies do to citizens is far greater than the money spent. He recognised that EC agricultural subsidies are not the only examples of perverse incentives. In order to reach highly desirable environmental goals, perverse subsidies should be replaced by “virtuous subsidies”.

Mr. Albergoni said that if landowners were to be asked to voluntarily use part of their land for wetland creation, such as reed beds, excellent results could be reached at very low cost. Landowners would adopt this policy more rapidly if the economic benefits were high.

Among the aspects included in third generation agricultural production systems he mentioned:

- Production of systems to protect hydrogeological stability and regulate the water supply
- Production of water purification systems
- Landscape production and protection
- Production of thermal mitigation systems and systems that absorb polluting gases
- Production and protection of endangered plants and animals
- Production of services to mitigate the impact of large urban areas
- Production of reservoirs of agricultural fertility.

Mr. Albergoni said that European civil society is increasingly demanding safer agriculture – safer for the environment, which includes landscape management and stewardship of open and accessible rural areas. He suggested that the twenty-first century in Europe would see the emergence of a third generation agriculture: post-industrial agriculture. A sound rural policy can produce more wealth than any

other European policy, through the reclamation of some very significant resources. In a regulated system, contributions and incentives affect the value of goods. For example, if there were no subsidies for growing wheat, this crop would be of no value to landowners, who would therefore not cultivate it and thus would avoid producing the damage identified with highly intensive agriculture.

Mr. Albergoni saw that the main force driving agriculture in Europe does not come from farmers and landowners, who, in his words, simply act in their economic self-interest, but from policies that include subsidies for such activities. If subsidies were aimed at improving soil fertility, the beauty of landscape or the health of the environment and the foodstuffs being cultivated, landowners would take completely different decisions. The enormous resources devoted to agriculture could also be used to improve the rural landscape and health, as well as to preserve the natural and historical heritage of these areas. In addition to these resources, in Europe there exists efficient and deeply rooted institutional land ownership, which, according to Mr. Albergoni, is an equally useful tool for environmental protection.

Third generation agriculture is capable of integrating rural resources with the natural environment in order to achieve goals important from both an environmental and an economic point of view. Mr. Albergoni concluded his speech by saying that private property is the best tool to protect scarce resources such as the environment: "There is a need to create the conditions for a successful, living countryside, protecting private property, enterprise and environment, in the direction of Third Generation Agriculture."

Vision on an enlarged EU: new Member States: 25 weeks of implementation

Key-note speaker: Mr. Ladislav Miko, Deputy Minister of Environment of the Czech republic

Mr. Miko outlined some of the specific challenges that the new Member States face in implementing the Birds and Habitats Directive. Many of the conditions are somewhat different. Most of the new Member States are relatively small countries. They are biodiversity rich with large natural areas and many species of conservation interest. Other complicating factors include the very short time that has been available in the new Member States to implement the Birds Directive. Birds are not as popular with the general public as in some western Member States. Furthermore, Natura 2000 was also sometimes seen as an obstacle to the expected growth in economic activities, for which infrastructure has to be put in place.



As to the present situation regarding establishing a network of SPAs in the Czech Republic, Mr. Miko pointed out that 41 candidate Special Protection Areas had been identified, covering almost 9% of the territory of the Czech Republic. About 60% of the SPAs relate to already protected areas (national parks, nature reserves, protected landscape areas). Eighteen SPAs have already been adopted by the Government (representing 30% of total area). This includes the conditions to be followed in particular areas. One SPA proposal has been denied by the Government.

Mr. Miko also saw advantages for the new members states in making use of earlier experiences in the 15 EU Member States with implementation of the nature directives. Considerable knowledge on methods of mapping and designation of areas was already available. Some tools and approaches were already known. There was also cooperation and guidance from EU 15 and the European

Commission, which was helpful. However, there were also negative effects as partners were aware about mistakes and past failures in applying the directive in the 15 EU Member States. Such information from EU 15 countries often created a very negative response.

The Czech government invested a lot in creating a positive climate. This involved three rounds of constructive dialogue in establishment the network of SPAs:

- **First round:** this entailed pre-negotiations about the proposals (with municipalities, regions, landowners), which were amended in response to the comments and relevant objections
- **Second round:** this related to negotiations before the adoption process
- **Third round:** during which the adoption process was carried out by the government.

Overall, about 60% of the amendments were accepted by the government, but the Ministry is still facing criticism for “insufficient dialogue”, which may be related to a lack of acceptance of some SPAs.

Mr. Miko finished his presentation by highlighting some key challenges for the future:

- What is the optimal size of SPAs?
- There will be a need for a certain balance between site size and the protection regime: the larger the area is, the less stringent the conservation regime seems to be.
- What is understood by partnership of nature conservation and landowners/farmers?
- Do we really have the same targets and priorities?
- Are SPAs imposed or negotiated?
- Do we have effective enforcement tools at international and national level?

Vision on sustainable development: perspectives from an entrepreneur

Key-note speaker: Mr. Jan Van Seeters, Environmental Director at Dow Chemical Benelux B.V.

Mr. Van Seeters stated that sustainable development is not just a nice thing to do, but is also something that has to be done in order to survive as a company. For Dow Chemical, this means seeking a proper balance between People, Power and Planet.



Mr. Van Seeters explained that the Dow Company is on the Schelde river, which is a protected area under the Birds and Habitats Directives. Dow actually went to court to appeal against the designation, but lost the case. The reason why Dow went to court was not that the protection of birds in itself would be bad, but that there were too many uncertainties associated with the designation: what would be the consequences for businesses?

Describing the lengthy process of obtaining permission to build a new pipeline station, which took 3 years instead of the regular 1 year period, Mr. Van Seeters recounted his experience with the uncertainties about the implications of the Directive; even the authorities do not seem to have the answers. He explained that when building a pipeline you need to be granted a permit within 12 months, because otherwise you lose your window of opportunity in business: people would no longer want to build on your site. This is how the Birds Directive stands in the way of cost-effective production. The uncertainty that comes with environmental protection and the experiences with the Birds Directive would

unfortunately make Dow think twice about voluntarily installing peregrine bird boxes again, Mr. Van Seeters admitted.

Uncertainty with the Birds and Habitats Directives poses a serious problem for entrepreneurs. There is a major need for clearer interpretation of these nature directives. Mr. Van Seeters considered that countries other than the Netherlands applied the Birds and Habitats Directives less strictly. From the point of an enterprise, greater clarity on what is required and common standards of conduct and interpretation between countries is needed. There should be greater clarity on the do's and don'ts, in order to minimise the administrative burden.

The issue of the heavy time burden on business in order to deal with the procedures of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive was also highlighted as a major concern, as the example of the pipeline showed. If the implementation requirements were clear, Mr. Van Seeters was convinced that companies could fulfil them. Another concern raised by Mr. Van Seeters was the need for better integration of European environmental laws. Finally, he highlighted that there were big differences between Member States in the extent to which they have protected sites under the Birds Directive, with significant parts of their territory being designated by countries such as the Netherlands. He suggested to have a system of differentiated management and protection within these zones, especially in countries where large territories have been designated.

Guest speakers: Youth

Children from the International Montessori Primary school at Tervuren, Belgium, participated in the meeting. They were invited to make a statement in the plenary session, responding to the debates they had heard during earlier presentation and outlining their vision for the future.



The children that participated were Kai Lange, Joukje Hoekstra and Stephanie Muscat. The following is an extract from their presentation:

“We, adolescent citizens of the future, need to be involved in present day decision making. We should be part of the decisions that are taken now! We are pleased that the bird was chosen as a symbol. The bird is one of the very few animals that travel across all parts of the planet, earth, air and water. The bird was one of the very first species group to view the earth from a different angle, and to observe a new perspective. We, young adults, still have the ability to gaze at the world from a bird's eye point of view.

In general, a bird has a wide view of the world. They can be completely focused, and just as easily see an entire landscape. Similarly a human can observe the world, or choose to focus on a single point, a single issue.

At birth we gaze with wide-eyed anticipation at the world. But as we develop and learn, we create lenses that build up and distort our views. The more intensely we gaze at the world, the more disconnected from reality we become. This is an important paradox.

Everyone in this room has a purpose, an opinion, a perspective. We are with 150 persons, but there is only one reality. We each view the world in a slightly different way, just as we disagree on solutions to environmental issues. Although our perspectives conflict, we must in the end agree on one reality. This is not a “them against us” situation, we together must find solutions.

For the majority of you it was over 25 years ago that you came into the world. At that time you perceived the world as a whole. You felt one with nature. But bit by bit, generation by generation, we became more disconnected from reality. We, teens, young adults, are striving to stay in touch with nature.

The key to this solution is in our hands. We teenagers need and want to work. Not with books, but really on the land. We are lucky to be able to work on a farm: a real farm. We work, we think, we decide and we make mistakes. Not as a trouble maker, but as a decision maker. My hands and my mind all the time work together. Because I feel in charge, my will develops non stop. This is what our future needs. People that want to work, use their minds and have the will to make always new decisions. But we have to start today, with us. Don't wait!

Now in order to create a win-win situation, all of us need to work together, respect each other, and not be scared of each other.

If only you would allow and trust us to do so we will become the responsible caretakers of the future. Together with you, once again a whole new group of people is more than happy to become involved with the important issues and challenges we can not even imagine today.

So next time when you have a meeting as this one, give us a name tag again, and include us on the name list and take us in your deliberations. We are really worth being taken seriously. We only have one chance to grow up! Never again”.

Guest speaker: Ms. Dorette Corbey, MEP

After the key-note presentations by the different stakeholders, Ms. Dorette Corbey, Member of the European Parliament, gave her view on 25 years Birds Directive. Ms. Corbey has a strong interest in the implementation of the Birds Directive and acted as rapporteur in the European Parliament to deal with a previous Commission proposal to amend the Directive. She recalled the debate between bird watchers and hunters that has gone on for the past decades, and appreciated the great steps forward that have been made since the Birds Directive came into effect. Emphasizing the importance of nature as a value in itself, but also the positive relationship between nature and health, she considered the objectives of the conference as far-reaching, useful and necessary.



Ms. Corbey emphasised the importance of having common indicators that are generally accepted by stakeholders and that are understandable by the general public. She recalled that through her work in the European Parliament on the Birds Directive she was greatly impressed by the hundreds of thousands of volunteers for nature conservation and especially for bird watching.

Ms. Corbey concluded with a call for better engagement of younger people, since nature is central to their future. Ms. Corbey confirmed that she was very pleased with the quality and content of the debate that she had heard at the conference.

3.4 Second Day: Plenary Conclusions



The results of the Day One

Mr. Nicholas Hanley, Head of the Nature and Biodiversity Unit at the Directorate General for the Environment of the European Commission, and Mr. Giuseppe Raaphorst, Director for Nature at the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, reported on the results of the previous day, both as regards the plenary and the workshops. Mr. Hanley confirmed that the overall discussions had been very positive, facilitated by a very useful panel discussion during the first session. There was a good atmosphere in all workshops and the right spirit had contributed to significant progress. The debate had also placed bird conservation in a broader context. Mr. Hanley noted that the concept of *resilience* to future changes had been the subject of discussion in more than one workshop. In this context resilience is to be understood as the capacity to respond, among others, to climatic change. Even though the word resilience is not in the Birds Directive itself, the concept is central to the long term achievement of the objectives of the Directive, including ensuring a coherent network of SPAs. Finally, the amended Conclusions had been grouped around key objectives. For the sake of clarity, all financial and international recommended actions had been grouped under objectives 9 and 10. Following this overview report, Mr. Raaphorst went through each of the Conclusions, highlighting the objectives and actions that had been agreed upon by all participants in the workshops.

Plenary discussion of objectives and actions

The Chair of this session, Mr. André van der Zande, Director-General of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, continued by asking the Member States if they had any comments, alterations or revisions regarding individual objectives and accompanying recommended actions. One by one, the objectives and actions were revisited. There were no comments on the first three objectives except for minor grammatical changes and these were agreed upon.



Minister Veerman of the Netherlands intervened on objective 4, by highlighting the need for better integration of the requirements of the Birds Directive into all relevant EU policies. He stressed the critical need for improvements, especially in relation to farmland birds. The situation of these species is of particular concern. Nature conservation organisations cannot manage this problem by themselves. Changing land use is changing the relationship between agriculture and nature. One of the most important future challenges is the need to make new alliances between agriculture, nature organisations and landowners. Because of his firm belief that agriculture and nature are not antagonists, but allies, Minister Veerman also suggested a sustainable agriculture initiative, in line with the sustainable hunting initiative. He noted that it was up to us to make the change.

With the exception of grammatical clarifications objectives 4, 5, 6 and 7 were not modified. For objective 8, the children of the Montessori School intervened on behalf of Youth. They wanted to see Youth included among the list of stakeholders, as young people can contribute a lot more than the general public gives them credit for. Youth likes to be pro-active, and needs an opportunity to have a sense of ownership of the land, thereby learning through becoming caretakers. The Youth called for a move from a consumer position, to a producer position. The Chair, upon the suggestion of the Presidency, proposed an elaboration of action 8.4 to include active participation of the youth. This was agreed upon.

As regards objective 9, Minister Veerman stressed the importance of the issue of Financing for the successful implementation of Natura 2000. This is a key challenge for both Member States and the European Commission. Minister Veerman called for a discussion of this topic in appropriate forums, extending also beyond the next Environmental Council. He considered that the outcome of this conference would contribute usefully to this debate.

As there were no fundamental changes to objectives 9 and 10, the Chair then asked for comments on the preambles to the Conclusions. Through this discussion, in pre-amble section 12, the word “competitiveness” was replaced by “common practises”, to clarify that the meaning is to learn from each other’s experiences.

Having reached agreement also on this final adjustment, the Chair invited participants to give concluding statements.

Concluding statements from the participants

Mr. Michael Rands, Chief Executive of BirdLife International, welcomed the Conclusions and the business-like way that they had been dealt with. He appreciated that they included an outreach beyond Europe. He also emphasized the need for better integration of the directives into other European Policies, the full implementation of the legislation in all Member States and the importance of learning from one another. He also stressed the urgency to complete the designation of sites for which BirdLife has given much scientific input through its work on Important Bird Areas. He underlined the need for adequate financing and for setting up a good monitoring system, using birds as an accessible way of measuring biodiversity. BirdLife International was thanked by the Chair for its work on the conference.

Mr. Gilbert de Turckheim, President of FACE, welcomed the Conclusions. He announced that his organisation will work to achieve the objectives agreed at the conference. He recalled that the Directive continues to present challenges to the hunting community and called for reconciliation between hunters, bird conservation societies and other sectors, which would only be achieved through working together with perseverance. Welcoming the approach of developing guidance documents, such as the guide on hunting, Mr. De Turckheim emphasised that that this process should be strengthened under the Directive. Finally, he acknowledged the importance of the sustainable hunting initiative agreement with BirdLife International and thanked the European Commission for facilitating this dialogue.

Ms. Nicole Nowicki, Special Delegate of Eurosite, welcomed the idea for a common approach for Natura 2000. She appreciated the stated role for Eurosite in this, and called for a spreading of the concept of Natura 2000 to all people, using for instance the Green Days.

Mr. Thierry De l’Escaille, Secretary General of the European Landowners Organization, called for the use of the innovation and job creation in the countryside, where people are not always aware of the Birds Directive. A new win-win situation could be created through pragmatic solutions.

Mr. José Luis Herranz, Director General for Biodiversity at the Ministry for the Environment in Spain, stressed the need for a stronger focus on migratory species. He also referred to the needs of endemic species for which the Canary Islands are important. LIFE Nature has proven to be an effective tool for conservation but in its present form, according to Spain, this fund does not provide enough financial means to effectively conserve the birds of Europe.

The Netherlands Province of Zeeland, through its Governor Mr. Wim van Gelder, announced a collaboration with the Province of Noord-Brabant regarding the 2010 Countdown initiative. This in recognition of the fact that a large number of migratory birds use the Province. He called for improved communication to make the directives more understandable and applicable to the greater public and organisations, since there is still a lack of understanding. In his other position as vice-president of the Commission for Sustainable Development of the European Committee of the Regions, Mr. Van Gelder would bring up the Conference Conclusions in one of the following meetings of the Committee.

Mr. Rinze Hoekstra on behalf of the Youth expressed that they are global citizens and called for a perspective that extends beyond individual countries in which young people have a chance to be global.

Side event 3:

The Countdown 2010 initiative of the Province of Noord-Brabant (NL)

At the conference the Governor of the Province of Noord-Brabant, Ms. Hanja Maij-Weggen announced that the Province of Noord-Brabant would support the Countdown 2010 initiative, thus becoming the first Countdown 2010 region in Europe.

Noord-Brabant and Countdown 2010

“Countdown 2010” was launched in May 2004, with the following goal: “All European governments, at every level, will have taken the necessary actions to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010”. Countdown 2010 acts as an independent communications and technical support instrument to profile the importance of the global 2010 commitments in the EU and in a Pan-European context and to monitor the progress of the implementation of these commitments via highly visible actions. Countdown 2010 focuses on the Kyiv Biodiversity commitments, the Malahide targets, and the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas. It is a strategic alliance between many governmental and non-governmental partners who are committed to the goal of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

Urbanisation and industrialisation play an important role in Noord-Brabant, where nature and landscape have altered dramatically over the past few decades in response to human activities. Noord-Brabant is the first Countdown 2010 region. A detailed and comprehensive policy programme has been drawn up, including legislation and funding. Moreover, it seeks to increase the commitment of the general public, NGOs and private enterprises, through communication and public-private cooperation. It is the embodiment of thinking globally and acting locally and contributes towards the establishment of Noord-Brabant as a European testing ground for sustainable development.

For more information on the Province of Noord-Brabant environmental policies, visit <http://www.brabant.nl>

The Countdown secretariat : Europe@iucn.org.



Concluding Statement of Ms. Catherine Day, Director General of DG Environment of the European Commission

Ms. Catherine Day concluded by thanking all participants for a most constructive two days. The positive outcome revealed that a lot of work had been done, with clear suggestions and a strong message of consensus. She agreed with Minister Veerman that these things should be discussed in the Environment Council as well as in the Agricultural Council. Ms. Day welcomed the idea that Minister Veerman would act as an ambassador of the ideas and recommendations that were developed at the conference, by promoting them in the Agricultural Council and other forums. She highlighted the fact that there is a common agenda for a common future, even though that doesn't always make the attainment of our goals easy. From all stakeholders and sectors it is recognised that there is a need to work together.



As to the content of the Conclusions, Ms. Day emphasised the need to complete the process of designation of the Special Protection Areas. This is not only a task for new EU Member States, but also for EU15, the first 15 Member States. She stressed the commitment of the European Commission to ensure that the establishment of the network of Special protection Areas is successfully completed. This would hopefully be achieved in constructive dialogue with Member States and stakeholders but if there is a need for more than gentle persuasion, the Commission would also go to the EU Court of Justice to ensure compliance.

She emphasised that the designation of sites must be accompanied by positive management measures. This is to be achieved by the Member States in partnership with different stakeholders. There will be a need to avail of the significantly extended opportunities under EU financial and other policy instruments. The Commission will play its supportive role, in providing guidance where needed as well as in facilitating dialogue and exchange of good practice. We need to learn from each other. Member states should facilitate this, through communication with stakeholders and the general public, especially in relation to the Natura 2000 sites.

Ms. Day also advocated building on success in conserving threatened bird species, but also doing more for common bird populations that are in serious decline, as this is indicative of wider rapid loss of biodiversity. The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy provides greater opportunities for the Member States to address this issue. The Commission is willing to help promote dialogue and action in partnership with farmers and other key stakeholders to meet the biodiversity targets.

Referring to the “nouveau depart” – she welcomed the new start on sustainable hunting – Ms. Day highlighted the importance of having this positive dialogue and the European Commission was very pleased to be able to play a catalytic role in promoting the sustainable hunting initiative, which had resulted in a large degree of consensus being achieved by hunters and conservationist. This kind of constructive dialogue should be extended to other sectors. Ms. Day referred to the suggestions made by Mr. Van Seeters of Dow Chemical of the need for clarity and smoother implementation of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive and called for greater dialogue with stakeholders to find better ways in which we can reconcile economic growth and prosperity with our commitments to biodiversity and environmental protection.

Ms. Day recognised that the EU has shared global commitments for biodiversity, particularly in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and this

applies to birds. She encouraged other regions to learn from the positive experience of the EU, but also from its mistakes. The Commission has proposed that the Community ratifies the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement and the commitment from the EU states present at this conference towards this objective was therefore welcome.

She also stressed the need for adequate financing, mentioning that Spain was right in emphasising this crucial debate. Furthermore, she highlighted the need to communicate success stories, such as that for la Cassinazza. Involvement at all levels is needed and measures such as the 2010-initiative of the Province of Brabant are therefore very important. Concluding with the youth, Ms. Day explained that the participants were all there to make hard decisions, because politics is always about competing priorities. The recommendations of the Bergen op Zoom conference will facilitate the tasks of the European Commission and the Member States. They will already be used in helping prepare the Commission's Communication on Biodiversity in 2005. The Conclusions carry a powerful message. Ms. Catherine Day looked forward to positive results arising from this meeting and asked for a united effort from all participants. The EU would strive very hard to achieve the results. There is a need to harness public interest and support for this task that is essential to achieve .

Closing of the Bergen op Zoom Conference by Minister Cees Veerman of the Netherlands



Minister Cees Veerman recalled two wonderful days in which it was highlighted that the Birds Directive has proven to be an extraordinarily important tool for nature conservation in Europe. Successes had been celebrated and an agenda for the future had been established. The ten priority objectives now need to be realised. It was up to the EU, its Member States and non-governmental organisations to take the necessary actions and take responsibility for their attainment. This was not going to be easy, as the economy of the EU Member States is in a worrisome state, with important challenges such as an aging population and health care concerns, as well as security issues and climate change. The goal must be to strengthen these ambitions in a greater Europe. Minister Veerman also referred to the Youth present, and thanked them for having presented their arguments, making their cases and stating their views. This was an important value in itself.

Minister Veerman closed the conference by announcing that the Netherlands Presidency would take the Conference Conclusions to the Environmental Council of 20 December 2004, to give the recommendations extra political weight and underline the importance of the Birds Directive. Finally, Minister Veerman answered the philosophical question why birds get all this attention: it is because they are our friends and the protection of birds is both a duty and a joy!

4. Appendices

4.1 Key Provisions of the Birds Directive

ANNEX: KEY PROVISIONS OF THE BIRDS DIRECTIVE FOR 25TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

Key Objective/Commitments ¹⁴	Articles of directive	Overview preparatory elements	Conference focus
Maintaining or restoring bird populations	1 & 2	- Bird status reports by BirdLife	Key-note presentation on Day 1 by EEA Workshop D
Establishing a coherent network of SPAs	4	- SPA data overview of ETC/NP&B - Global flyways conference (April 2004) - Workshop on ecological networks (June 2004) - Ongoing work of NATURA 2000 marine expert group - LIFE for Birds report - Discussion document for Workshop A	Workshop A
Habitat conservation measures beyond SPAs	3 & 4	- Thematic workshops on farming and birds, forestry and birds - Inputs to and outputs from Malahide biodiversity conference - Discussion document for Workshop B	Workshop B
Special measures for Annex I species	4	- Overview of implementation of Annex I priority birds action plans	Workshop A
Species protection provisions, including sustainable use provisions such as hunting under directive	5, 6, 7, 8 and 9	- Measures under Sustainable Hunting - Article 9 and 12 reporting - Birds in the EU status report (BirdLife) - Initiative, including Guidance document - Discussion document for Workshop C	Workshop C
Reporting and monitoring under directive	9, 12	- Article 12 overview report - Ongoing work on monitoring, report and bird indicators with EEA and Eurostats - Discussion document for Workshop D	Workshop D
Research under directive	10	- Workshop on research (January 2004)	Workshop D

4.2 Perspective from the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

This paper was drafted by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and presented to the Conference, because it was unable to be represented at the Conference.

SYNERGY WITH THE EUROPEAN BIRDS DIRECTIVE: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (RAMSAR, IRAN, 1971).

The Ramsar Convention congratulates with pleasure the Birds Directive on its Silver Jubilee!!



Without doubt, availability and quality of fresh water resources is a serious environmental management issue for the decade, and for the next century. But couple this with the need to stem the loss of biological diversity, and you have the two keys to ensuring the base for sustainable development and human survival. The Ramsar Convention, in existence since 1971, aims to assist in the protection, production, purification of freshwater, but through promotion of integrated management of ecosystems (including component biodiversity) and water resources.

Ramsar is certainly about promoting the conservation of wetlands and their biodiversity, but through their wise use, as noted in priority objective 5 of your draft meeting Conclusions. Its innovative approach globally establishes a set of sites (Wetlands of International Importance) at the heart of the promotion of wise use of water and wetlands, or sustainable development. An effective system of well managed sites is the essential basis for conserving biodiversity, but it is not sufficient: such sites must be planned and managed as a series of linked parts of the global ecosystem matrix. In this way the ecosystems which form the sites can continue to function and retain their resilience. Again, key points in your draft conclusions.



This means that in Europe the Birds Directive and Ramsar Convention underpin and reinforce each other – a real case of synergy in action!

There are four key elements which govern this synergy. These include:

1. Institutions and Governance

Integrating wetlands with their surrounding landscapes requires close cooperation between stakeholders if all potential biodiversity and socio-economic benefits are to be secured in a sustainable way. Regional and local governments and representatives of local communities have a shared responsibility together with the managements of sites established under the Directive and/or the Convention to ensure that the linkages between the sites and the surrounding landscapes are developed and managed in such a way that they benefit both biodiversity (especially Birds) and local communities. And both must fit into the broader institutional framework of global and regional Multilateral Environment Agreements.

The Ramsar wise use concept, like the Ecosystem Approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), integrates the needs of biodiversity with the needs of people. It is the most appropriate means of framing the management of Wetlands of international Importance in their socio-economic and cultural contexts. The Ramsar Convention reflects best practice on the restoration and

management of wetland landscapes, in such a way that both the conservation of biodiversity is enhanced and local communities are revitalized.

Strengthening ecological coherence of wetlands and related ecosystems through linkages in the landscape can assist in providing essential ecological services to local communities, and thereby contribute to the improvement of human well-being. The Directive, in a European context, has a key role to play in providing complementary actions at the supra-national level to the global perspectives and actions of Ramsar.

2. Marine: linking marine systems with terrestrial

Many sensitive coastal and near-shore areas are threatened by inappropriate forms of development and natural resource exploitation. Both the Directive and the Ramsar Convention are well-placed to respond to these threats, and ensure the appropriate conservation and sustainable management of these critical land-sea ecosystems. Such supportive actions can deliver key biodiversity benefits in the coastal regions, as well as helping enhance viability of human livelihoods.

3. Understanding and managing within global change

Rapid global change — environmental, economic, cultural, political and institutional — is presenting the conservation community with fundamental and urgent challenges. Adaptive management strategies that deal more effectively with risks and uncertainties are necessary to ensure that wetlands and related ecosystems can maintain resilience in the face of ever-increasing and changing pressures. Ecological and evolutionary processes (migratory species, river flows, upland-lowland connections) need to be captured in establishing and managing linkages, in the framework of integrated management. Our knowledge of wetland management in the context of change is not adequate. One of the Conventions objectives, through its subsidiary science body, is the understanding how we can sustainably use natural resources. At the European level, complementary research actions under the Directive, focussing on birds and their supporting ecosystems are important in reaching the 2010 targets.

4. Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA)

CEPA is an important aspect of the Ramsar convention's activities, and, as the Birds Directive notes, Birds can reach the hearts of millions of people. They are our Ambassadors for conservation, and we need to make sure they take our broader conservation message to the wider Community. For the most effective conservation of birds and other wildlife associated with wetlands Ramsar believes it is vital that all stakeholders are involved. A dialogue needs to begin and continue between all partners, including the private sector. But to begin such a dialogue we need to have a population better informed about the issues, and the reality of species changes and loss. Ramsar and the Directive have common aims in this direction and we should continue to work closely together in Europe on these issues.

Issues of Bird Conservation are still vital – many species still appear in decline, especially those that use wetlands as feeding grounds, and staging grounds in migratory pathways. Maintaining, managing and recreating linkages between wetland sites and the wider landscape requires a specific management strategy, linking sites with their ecological and socio-economic context and explicitly promoting both biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. This is an application of the wise use concept, as well as fully reflecting the principles of the CBD's Ecosystem Approach.

For the future, the Ramsar Convention will continue to develop tools for the overall management of ecosystems and water resources, but always in the context of integrated management of species, ecosystems and people. So, together, Directive and Convention let us integrate the concerns for the conservation of the birds into the broader environmental agenda.

4.3 Excursions

At the conference, there were two optional excursions: (1) a tour around the Dutch Delta, visiting four different SPAs, Dutch historic buildings and the Delta works and (2) a shorter excursion to the SPA at the Markiezaats lake.



“Dutch Delta”

The excursion to the *Dutch Delta* was organised by the Province of Zeeland and two major Dutch nature conservation organisations: *Natuurmonumenten* and *Staatsbosbeheer*. The SPAs at the Krammer-Volkerak and the Oosterschelde were visited. The numerous migrating and wintering birds that are common visitors here include avocet, barnacle goose, brent goose, northern pintail, gadwall, oystercatcher, dunlin, common redshank. The Delta works and the memorial to the “*watersnood*” (the disastrous flood which inundated large parts of the provinces of Zeeland and Zuid Holland in 1953) were also visited.



“Markiezaats lake”

Participants who went on the excursion organised by the provincial nature organisation the *Brabants Landschap* and ELO (European Landowners’ Organization) to the *Markiezaats lake* SPA walked to an observation tower and along the edge of the lake. The following migrating and wintering birds are commonly seen here: brent goose, northern pintail, common teal, Eurasian widgeon, gadwall, oystercatcher, dunlin, common redshank.

4.4 Notes

¹ Available at : <http://nature.eionet.eu.int/publications/SPAs>

² Available at :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/nature_conservation/focus_wild_birds/species_birds_directive/index_en.htm

³ same as for footnote 2

⁴ same as for footnote 2

⁵ The Ornithological Scientific Working Group is a scientific advisory group that assists the Ornithological Committee, which is established under Article 16 of the Birds Directive. It provides a forum for Member States and the European Commission to discuss technical and scientific issues relating to the implementation of the Birds Directive.

⁶ These resulted in: '*Waterbird monitoring*' (November 2002), '*Farming and birds*' (April 2003), '*Birds as indicators*' (September 2003), '*Research and birds*' (January 2005), '*Forestry and birds*' (February 2004) and '*Ecological networks*' (June 2004). A special meeting of the ORNIS Scientific Working Group also took place during the Global Flyways conference in Edinburgh (April 2004) to examine the '*Contribution of the Birds Directive to waterbird flyway conservation*'. The Commission also organised a series of workshops on themes related to the directive ('*Legal aspects of implementation*'; '*Sustainable hunting*'; '*The perspective of youth*'; '*Birds and development*') as part of Green Week 2004.

⁷ See Commission web site on sustainable hunting at

http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/nature_conservation/focus_wild_birds/sustainable_hunting/index_en.htm

⁸ Available on DG Environment's web site at

http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/nature_conservation/natura_2000_network/financing_natura_2000/index_en.htm

⁹ Documents and conclusions for the conference are available on the Irish presidency web site at: http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/meeting.asp?sNavlocator=5,418,13&list_id=193

¹⁰ For further details see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/nature_conservation/natura_2000_network/communicating_natura_2000/natura_networking_init/index_en.htm

¹¹ The overview of the SPA network is available on the web site of the Topic Centre at http://biodiversity.eionet.eu.int/publications/SPAs/full_sum

¹² COM (2004) 531 final. See note 8

¹³ This workshop built on earlier discussions held with the ORNIS SWG in September 2002 (Wetland birds), April 2003 (Farming and birds), and February 2004 (Forestry and Birds). It also incorporated relevant results from the ongoing work of the marine working group.

¹⁴ The Directive also has an objective in relation to potentially damaging **invasive bird species**. However, with the exception of the threat posed by the non-native Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* to the threatened White-Headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (which is the focus of an EU sponsored international action plan) Member States in their Article 12 reporting have not highlighted this as a major concern at present.





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