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Agenda item 5: Conservation of Species and Habitats

5.1. Updating of the Action Plan for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol

Draft updated Action Plan for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol

Note:

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United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan
(UNEP/MAP)
Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC)
Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat
B.P. 337 - 1080 Tunis Cedex - Tunisia
E-mail: car-asp@spa-rac.or

Note by secretariat

The Mediterranean Action Plan for the conservation of bird species listed in the Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, identifies priorities and activities that need to be undertaken to attain its specific objectives. It also urges and encourages co-ordination, cooperation, and collaboration amongst Mediterranean states to work towards the achievement of conservation of a species or a group of species within this region. Following the request made for SPA/RAC during the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.22/28; Decision IG.22/12), the Action Plan for the conservation of bird species drafted in 2003 has been updated during the biennium 2016-2017. After more than five years from this update, a second update has been requested by the COP 21 (Decision IG.25/13) to review the results of the activities undertaken between 2018-2022 to ensure the effective implementation of the Action Plan.

The steps taken for the updating the Action Plan included checking to which extent each action/activity is achieved and identifying potential mitigation measures for its further implementation if necessary. This was done through a questionnaire filled in by the Contracting Parties where each action was examined in comparison. The questionnaire was tailored to address each action listed in the current action plan, identifying the level of progress achieved by each country, as well as by international and regional organizations, and assessing the impact of protection on the target species of the Annex II. A key indicator to the impact of the action plan is the conservation status of target bird species in the IUCN Red List since the start of implementation of the Mediterranean Action Plan.

Recently the national IMAP-based monitoring programmes related to seabirds (EO1: Common Indicators [CI] 3,4, 5) are at the first steps of their implementation, and they will certainly help fast assessment to the implementation of the Action Plan of the birds listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol. The draft updated Action plan is given in this document.

Foreword

In 1995, the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) adopted a new Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity (SPA/BD Protocol) in the Mediterranean. Annex II of this new protocol lists endangered or threatened species found in the Mediterranean.

Subsequently a series of nine Action Plans were also adopted by the Parties to the Barcelona Convention. They also urge and encourage co-ordination and co-operation amongst Mediterranean states towards the achievement of conservation of a species or a group of species within this region.

During their meeting in Monaco in November 2001 the Contracting Parties had asked SPA/RAC to draw up a draft action plan for the bird species appearing in Annex II, which listed 15 endangered or threatened bird species.¹ Consequently, in 2003, the Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted an Action Plan for the conservation of the bird species listed in Annex II. The main purpose of the Action Plan was to maintain and/or restore their population levels to a favourable conservation status and to ensure their long-term conservation. The Action Plan also aimed to contribute to the sharing of knowledge and expertise between the Mediterranean countries and to co-ordinate efforts among the countries and other relevant initiatives and agreements. It also inspired a synergic approach among the Mediterranean countries in the protection of these bird species and their habitats and encouraged research to fill the many gaps in our knowledge concerning coastal and pelagic birds in the Mediterranean, particularly seabirds' distribution and their movements, as well as their feeding, moulting and wintering areas at sea.

The development of the Action Plan for the conservation of these species followed various initiatives taken by other organisations, such as BirdLife International partners in Mediterranean countries, WWF, IUCN, Medmaravis, and Tour du Valat, on the conservation of birds and their important sites and habitats. Various actions have been taken at national level by the competent authorities and at species level by several non-governmental organisations (particularly BirdLife International partners) in their respective countries, to counteract some of the threats, which were being faced by several species covered by the Action Plan.

In 2005, the first Mediterranean Symposium on the ecology and conservation of the bird species listed in Annex II, was held in Villanova I la Geltrú (Spain) with the participation of 31 ornithologists and experts from 16 Mediterranean countries. The participants made several recommendations to SPA/RAC, including the addition of 10 new marine and coastal bird species to the list of Annex II². In November 2009, the 16th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, held in Marrakech (Morocco), adopted the addition of the 10 species of marine and coastal birds in Annex II, bringing up the total number of bird species to 25. Ten years after the Villanova Mediterranean Symposium it was appropriate to hold another symposium; SPA/RAC, in partnership with the Tunisian NGO Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO/BirdLife Tunisia), Medmaravis, Tour du Valat Biological Station and the Conservatoire du Littoral, organised the 2nd Symposium on Marine and Coastal Birds in the Mediterranean in Hammamet, Tunisia, in February 2015³ (a) to update the knowledge on the status of marine and coastal birds; (b) to assess the effect of new regulations, conventions and research tools; and (c) to call for a closer cooperation among the countries that adopted the list of 25 bird species of Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol. Subsequently, the Action Plan for the Conservation of Bird Species listed in

¹ The original number of species was 15, but two subspecies (*Puffinus yelkouan yelkouan* and *Puffinus yelkouan mauretanicus*) of one of the species (Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*), were given species status by taxonomists, namely Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* and Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*. The latter is one of the 10 added bird species to Annex II in 2009

² UNEP/MAP- SPA/RAC. 2006. *Proceedings of the first symposium on the Mediterranean action plan for the conservation of marine and coastal birds*. Villanova I la Geltrú, (Spain), 17-19 November 2005, (Ed. Aransay, N.) SPA/RAC, Tunis.

³ Yesou, P., Sultana, J., Walmsley, J. & Azafaf, H. (Eds.) 2016. *Conservation of Marine and Coastal Birds in the Mediterranean*. Proceedings of the UNEP-MAP-SPA/RAC Symposium, Hammamet 20-22 February 2015, Tunisia.

Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol has been updated to include the new added species (COP19, Decision IG22/12) and adopted by the 20th Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention, held in Albania in December 2017. Decision IG.23/08) After more than five years from this update, a second update has been requested by the COP 21 (Decision IG.25/13) to review the results of the activities undertaken between 2018-2022 to ensure the effective implementation of the Action Plan.

Following the request made for SPA/RAC during the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Decision IG.25/13), the Action Plan for the conservation of bird species drafted in 2003, revised in 2013, is updated during the biennium 2022-2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. Birds have captivated humans for millennia due to their beauty, song, flight, and ecological roles. Despite their significance, human activities have threatened many bird species in the Mediterranean and beyond. The Mediterranean region is home to several hundred bird species, some of which are exclusive to this climatic zone. Pelagic bird species are limited, but breeding colonies of Scopoli's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*), Yelkouan Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*), and the subspecies of the European Storm-petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus melitensis*) may be found along sea-cliffs or on small isolated rocky islands and islets.

2. Coastal seabirds, including the subspecies *emigratus* of the Lesser Crested Tern (*Sterna bengalensis*), whose breeding area is restricted to Libya, are found in river deltas and inland saltwater lagoons. Many other coastal species, however, are found breeding in sub-optimal and man-modified habitats such as salinas, while others rely on municipal waste dumps and discards from fishing boats for their food.

3. Ten new bird species have been added to Annex II, including the critically endangered Balearic Shearwater (*Puffinus mauretanicus*), and the near-threatened Armenian Gull (*Larus armenicus*), whose population trend has been assessed by the IUCN as decreasing. Although the rest of the new species are regarded globally as least concern (LC), their breeding range in the Mediterranean is restricted to a few countries, particularly eastern ones. Furthermore, the population trend of some of them, such as Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), Greater Sand Plover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*), Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*), and Common Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) has also been assessed as decreasing globally.

4. The ornithological calendar of the Mediterranean is dominated by the seasonal migrations of birds from Europe to Africa in autumn and vice versa in spring, and several species which breed in Europe over-winter in the Mediterranean basin. Nonetheless, the Mediterranean is the home of several hundred bird species, some of which occur exclusively in this climatic zone. The seabirds found along the crowded coastal zone and the islands of this almost land-locked sea are quite resilient, including the comparatively rare and localised Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*.

2. PRESENT STATUS OF MARINE AND COASTAL BIRDS LISTED IN ANNEX II TO THE SPA/BD PROTOCOL

2.1. Bird Species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol: List of Endangered or Threatened Species

5. The sequence and nomenclature follow del Hoyo, J. & Collar, N.J. (2014). HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World. Volume 1: Non- passerines. Lynx Edicions, Barcellona.

English Name	French Name	Scientific Name
Greater Flamingo	Flamant rose	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
European Storm-petrel	Océanite tempête	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i> ssp. <i>melitensis</i>
Scopoli's Shearwater	Puffin de Scopoli	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>
Yelkouan Shearwater	Puffin yelkouan	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>
Balearic Shearwater	Puffin des Baléares	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>
Pygmy Cormorant	Cormoran pygmée	<i>Microcarbo pygmaeus</i>
European Shag	Cormoran huppé	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i> ssp. <i>desmarestii</i>
Dalmatian Pelican	Pélican frisé	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>
Great White Pelican	Pélican blanc	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
Kentish Plover	Pluvier à collier interrompu	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Greater Sandplover	Pluvier de Leschenault	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i> ssp. <i>columbinus</i>
Slender-billed Curlew	Courlis à bec grêle	<i>Numenius tenuirostris</i>
Slender-billed Gull	Goéland railleur	<i>Larus genei</i>
Mediterranean Gull	Mouette mélanocéphale	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
Audouin's Gull	Goéland d'Audouin	<i>Larus audouinii</i>
Armenian Gull	Goéland d'Arménie	<i>Larus armenicus</i>
Little Tern	Sterne naine	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Common Gull-billed Tern	Sterne hansel	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Caspian Tern	Sterne caspienne	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	Sterne voyageuse	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
Sandwich Tern	Sterne caugek	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Osprey	Balbuzard pêcheur	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Pied Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur pie	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
White-breasted Kingfisher	Martin-chasseur de Smyrne	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Eleonora's Falcon	Facoun d'Éléonore	<i>Falco eleonora</i>

2.2. Overview of threats

6. In general birds are threatened by habitat loss and disturbance and also from contamination by oil pollutants. Fish farms and wind farms close to seabird colonies, as well as intensive deep-water fishing may constitute serious threats to some bird species.

7. Among the 25 species listed in Annex II as endangered or threatened one finds those:

- which are globally threatened;
- which are endemic to the region and have an unfavourable conservation status;
- whose populations are not concentrated in the Mediterranean, but which have an unfavourable conservation status and/or a restricted range in the region;
- whose populations are not concentrated in the Mediterranean, have a healthy conservation status but are regarded as flagship species.

8. However, they all have something in common. They are all endangered by a number of threats, including:

- Contamination by oil pollutants
- Direct and indirect depletion of food resources
- Non-sustainable forms of tourism
- Disturbance
- Direct persecution including illegal hunting and the use of poison
- Mortality from bycatch
- Wind farms
- Loss of habitats
- Degradation of habitat, particularly wetlands and small islands of high biological importance
- Introduction of and predation by alien species
- Climate change
- Marine litter (plastics)

2.3. Ecology and status of the species

9. The biology, ecology, distribution and conservation status of the fifteen bird species in the original Action Plan (2003) had been presented in an information document entitled “List of Threatened Bird Species as Adopted by the Barcelona Convention”. It was composed of an annotated List compiled by Medmaravis and edited by J. Criado, J. Walmsley and R. Zotier (April 1996) and gave the status, population size and trends, ecology, threats and conservation measures for each species. This was complemented by other national, regional and global contributions, particularly by BirdLife International.

10. The additional 10 species, which were originally proposed in 2005 during the first Mediterranean Symposium on the ecology and conservation of the bird species listed in Annex II, held in Villanova I la Geltrú (Spain), were presented by Xavier Monbailliu on behalf of Medmaravis, using a scientific criterion to screen possible candidate species. They are species of particular importance for coastal habitats in the Mediterranean. Their biology, ecology, distribution and conservation status were based on BirdLife International’s publication *Birds in Europe: Population estimates, Trends and Conservation status* (2004).

11. Several ornithological studies have been carried out in the Mediterranean in the last twenty to thirty years, as can be noted particularly in the proceedings of various symposia including those organised by SPA/RAC, Medmaravis, Conservatoire du Littoral, Tour du Valat, and national NGOs in the Mediterranean countries. Despite all these studies, there are still many gaps in the knowledge of coastal and pelagic birds and their habitats in the Mediterranean, particularly seabird movements and their distribution at sea. There is an urgent need for mapping of breeding, feeding, moulting and wintering areas of pelagic birds in the whole region.

2.4. Geographical scope of the Action Plan

12. The geographical scope of the action plan is the entire semi-closed sea and the Mediterranean bio-climate parts of its bordering countries. Some of the species, such as Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* and Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*, have a restricted breeding range in the Mediterranean. Others, such as Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*, have migration routes and/or wintering areas outside the Mediterranean. Other species, such as White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* and Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, are widespread elsewhere, but have a limited range and/or a small population in the Mediterranean. For Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, which is a globally Critically Endangered species, the Mediterranean used to be part of its wintering range, but now its population is estimated less than 50 according to BirdLife International species factsheet (2016) and there have been no recent confirmed records in the Mediterranean. Apart from the Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*, which is Near Threatened, and the Balearic Shearwater, which is Critically Endangered, the other newly added species to Annex II are of Least Concern, according to BirdLife International. However, their breeding population and/or range in the Mediterranean are quite restricted.

3. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

3.1. The main objective

13. The main purpose of the Action Plan is to maintain and/or restore the population levels of bird species listed in the Annex II of SPA/BD Protocol to a favourable conservation status and to ensure their long-term conservation.

3.2. Other objectives

- To share information, knowledge and expertise between Mediterranean countries and organisations dealing with the bird species listed in Annex II.
- To co-ordinate efforts among Mediterranean countries and other relevant organisations, initiatives and agreements, so as to ensure the implementation of this Action Plan.
- To encourage a synergetic approach among Mediterranean countries in the protection of the 25 listed bird species and their habitats.
- To encourage research to fill the many gaps which still exist in knowledge of coastal and pelagic birds in the Mediterranean, particularly of seabird distribution and movements, and of their feeding, moulting and wintering areas at sea.

4. STRATEGIC APPROACH

14. In the implementation of this Action Plan there are three levels of priority:

At Species level

- To implement this Action Plan for all species in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol.
- To consider the conservation of globally threatened species as one of the main priorities of the present Action Plan.
- To give priority to the conservation of other species, which have an unfavorable conservation status at regional level.

At National level

- To map the distribution of the species on land as well as at sea.
- To identify sea and coastal important bird areas, particularly for feeding and breeding.
- To identify and control threats for birds and their habitats.

- To protect and monitor Important Bird Areas (IBAs).
- To carry out proper Environment Impact Assessments for all proposed development where any of the species occur.
- To develop and implement appropriate legislation for the protection of birds and their habitats.
- To pursue the principles and adhere to the requirements of Agreements and Conventions related to bird conservation.

At Mediterranean level

- To strengthen co-operation and exchange of information and experience in research.
- To disseminate information.
- To promote and support the identification of coastal and sea areas which are important for birds.
- To promote the creation and monitoring of protected areas of coastal and marine important birds areas.
- To prevent and/or control the expansion of invasive species, particularly on small islands of high biological importance for birds.
- To identify and monitor migratory hotspots.
- To seek, whenever appropriate, collaboration at a broader international level with relevant Conventions/Agreements such as the Berne Convention, the Bonn Convention, and in particular with the Afro-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

5. ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTION PLAN

5.1. Protected areas

- Important bird marine areas should be identified and given legal protection status.
- Breeding sites of all threatened species should be legally established as protected areas with an adequate management plan.
- Coastal and marine protected important bird areas should be continuously monitored and properly managed.

5.2. Legislation

- Throughout the Mediterranean, species should be afforded legal protection by the Contracting Parties in countries where they breed, winter or occur during migration, as per the guidelines provided by SPA/RAC (see para. 5).
- Legislation should include dissuasive penalties.
- Assessment of environmental impact on these species and their habitats by any type of development should be legally obligatory.

5.3. Research

- In view of the existing gaps in knowledge of coastal and pelagic birds and their habitats in the Mediterranean, especially of their movements and distribution at sea, priority must be given to the mapping of breeding, feeding, moulting and wintering areas of the species concerned.
- Resources should be made available for researchers to fill the gaps in knowledge, such as for the establishment of a Mediterranean seabirds' atlas, and for monitoring population size and breeding success of less well-known species.
- In relation to the threats facing bird species, such as marine litter and climate change. It would also be good to carry out regular gap analyses to understand what research is needed and to prioritise research efforts.

5.4. Monitoring Activities

15. A major component of the Ecosystem Approach implementation in the Mediterranean is related to the monitoring and assessment of the status of the marine and coastal environment. In view of establishing a coherent region-wide framework, the Contracting Parties adopted in 2016 the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) (COP 19 Decision IG.22/7). IMAP sets out all the required elements to cover in an integrated manner monitoring and assessment of biodiversity and fisheries, pollution and marine litter, and coast and hydrography.

16. In relation to seabirds, IMAP proposes to monitor and assess the following common indicators (CIs):

- CI 3: Species distributional range (EO1);
- CI 4: Population abundance of selected species (EO1);
- CI 5: Population demographic characteristics (EO1, e.g. body size, age class structure, sex ratio, fecundity rates, survival/mortality rates).

17. IMAP recommends monitoring and assessing those common indicators for a selection of 11 representative species from the List of endangered and threatened species (annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol) and organised into 5 functional groups.

18. In this context, Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention should

- with the support of the SPA/RAC, update their national monitoring programmes for biodiversity and or develop one in line with IMAP and report regularly quality assured data.
- with the help of national, regional or international organisations, undertake, when appropriate, joint monitoring initiatives on a pilot basis, with the aim to share and exchange best practices, using harmonized methodologies, and ensuring cost efficiency.
- support and take part in regional initiatives and projects led by competent partner organizations that will contribute to the implementation of the of the IMAP in order to strengthen strategic and operational regional synergies.

19. The SPA/RAC should work further and create more opportunities with relevant partner organizations, in order to strengthen technical support that countries might need to implement the IMAP at national level.

20. Moreover, The MSFD requires EU Member States to monitor the state of their marine waters and to take measures to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES). This includes monitoring of bird populations and their habitats, according to the criteria designed to allow assessment of the conservation status of seabird populations at the EU level.

21. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to harmonize, as appropriate, the ongoing monitoring work within the framework of the IMAP/EcAp Process and MSFD with regard to monitoring guidelines and protocols as well as the bird species list to be monitored.

5.5. Awareness, Education & Training

- Contracting Parties should promulgate legislation concerning endangered bird species.
- Contracting Parties should seek and/or provide the training of personnel for monitoring, conserving and managing protected important bird areas.
- The organisation of ornithological training courses *in situ* for trainers, important bird areas staff and relevant personnel should be supported by SPA/RAC and the partners of the Action Plan.

- Public awareness and education programmes and campaigns highlighting the vulnerability of threatened species, directed particularly at stakeholders and decision makers, should be planned and implemented in co-operation with non-governmental organisations.
- Conduct regular capacity building needs assessments to identify the skills required in each country, divided by target group.

5.6. National Action Plans

- Contracting Parties should formulate National Action Plans for the conservation of endangered and threatened bird species in the Mediterranean.
- National Action Plans should take into consideration the implementation of the specific actions relevant to the particular countries proposed in this Action Plan.
- New and updated National Action Plans should address the current factors causing loss or decline of the bird species in Annex II; suggest appropriate subjects for legislation; give priority to the protection and management of sites; and ensure continued research and monitoring of populations and sites.
- Contracting Parties should apply and implement their Action Plans.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1. Regional co-ordination structure

22. Regional co-ordination of the implementation of the present Action Plan will be guaranteed by the Mediterranean Action Plan's (MAP) secretariat through the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC).

23. The main functions of the co-ordinating structure shall consist in:

- Promoting co-operation among Contracting Parties in those actions executed in trans-boundary areas and at sea in national waters and beyond.
- Promoting the development of a regional network for monitoring populations and distribution of threatened Mediterranean bird species, in co-ordination with other organisations.
- Supporting and collaborating with Contracting Parties in the establishment of important bird areas at sea.
- Providing detailed guidelines to assist countries in their efforts to afford adequate legislative protection to endangered species.
- Elaborating guidelines for monitoring and management plans in collaboration with experts and other interested organisations.
- Urging and supporting the Contracting Parties to create and/or update their national monitoring programmes in line with the guidelines and protocols elaborated within the IMAP/ EcAp process (Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria) and report regularly quality assured data.
- Supporting actions toward the harmonization as appropriate, of the Monitoring guidelines and protocols developed in the framework of the IMAP/EcAp Process and the MSFD
- Assisting countries in the monitoring and conservation of the species listed in Annex II according to the proposed actions by this Action Plan.
- Organising meetings of experts on specific subjects relating to the ecology and conservation of the bird species found in Annex II.
- Preparing progress reports on the implementation of this Action Plan.
- Encouraging complementary work, done by other international organisations with the same objectives, and promoting co-ordination to avoid possible duplication of effort.

6.2. Participation

24. Any interested international, regional and/or national organisation is invited to participate in actions necessary for the implementation of this Action Plan, while links with other bodies responsible for Action Plans dealing with one or more bird species listed in Annex II should be made, to strengthen co-operation and avoid duplication of work.

6.3. “Action Plan Partners”

25. To encourage and reward contributions to the work of applying the Action Plan, the Contracting Parties may at their ordinary meetings grant the title of “Action Plan Partner” to any organisation (governmental, nongovernmental, economic, etc.) that has to its credit concrete actions likely to help the conservation of birds in Annex II of the Protocol. Conditions for the awarding of the Partner title shall be adopted by the Contracting Parties following advice given by the meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs. The co-ordination structure shall set up a mechanism for regular dialogue between the participating organisations and where necessary, organise meetings to this effect. However, any dialogue could also be done by mail/email and webinars (online conferences).

6.4. Assessment and revision

26. National Focal Points for SPAs, in collaboration with national experts, will be expected to:

- Assess progress in implementing the Action Plan during their meetings.
- Suggest recommendations to be submitted to the Contracting Parties.
- Suggest adjustments to the implementation timetable.

6.5. Timing

27. The actions advocated by the present Action Plan have to be carried out over a five- year period, starting from when the Action Plan is adopted by the Contracting Parties. At the end of this period, SPA/RAC will:

- Prepare a report on the progress made so far in implementing the advocated actions
- Suggest adjustments to action and its implementation timetable, if appropriate
- Submit the updated action plan to the national focal points for spa, who will make follow-up suggestions to the parties.

6.6. Timetable

Action	Deadline	By whom
1. Organisation of the fourth Mediterranean Symposium on ecology and conservation of the bird species in Annex II.	By end of 2029	SPA/RAC & Partners
2. Protect legally all bird species in Annex II	1 year after adoption	Contracting Parties
3. Establish/support research and monitoring programmes to track changes in the trends and to fill gaps in knowledge of threatened species in partnership with other organizations	From 2024 to 2029	Contracting Parties, SPA/RAC, AP Partners, AEWA, BirdLife International
4. Revision of the directory of organisations and experts concerned with the threatened and endangered bird species in the Mediterranean.	By end of year 2029	SPA/RAC
5. Creation and implementation of National Action Plans for the conservation of endangered and threatened bird species in the Mediterranean; and update them every 5 years from the date of their creation.	From 2024 to 2029	Contracting Parties & SPA/RAC
6. Application and implementation of any Action Plans/monitoring Programmes of the bird species listed in Annex II.	From 2024 to 2029	SPA/RAC & Contracting Parties
7. Participation in promotion of a regional network for monitoring populations and distribution of Mediterranean threatened bird species, in co-ordination with other organisations.	From 2024 to 2029	SPA/RAC , AP Partners, AEWA, BirdLife International
8. Legal establishment of protected areas important for bird species listed in the Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, with adequate management plans at breeding sites	By end of year 2029	Contracting Parties
9. Support Contracting Parties and Partners to produce and publish relevant scientific documentation contributing to update knowledge and enhance conservation action taken on the Annex II species.	From 2024 to 2029	SPA/RAC, AP Partners, AEWA, BirdLife International, ICCAT, GFCM
10. Identification of areas important for the birds listed in the Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, on land and at sea (mapping of breeding, feeding, roosting, resting, molting and wintering areas).	From 2024 to 2029	Contracting Parties, AP Partners, AEWA, Birdlife International
11. Mapping of breeding, feeding, moulting and wintering areas of pelagic species.	From 2024 to 2029	Contracting Parties
12. Produce progress reports in the implementation of the Action Plan.	By end of year 2029	SPA/RAC
13. Assess capacity building needs, organize trainings, and report results of specific training courses and workshops in coordination/synergy with international and/or national NGOs	From 2024 to 2029	SPA/RAC, Partners & Contracting Parties
14. Optimize synergies with international agreements and organisations dedicated to bird conservation	From 2024 to 2029	Contracting Parties

15. Raise public awareness, provide educational programmes, and advocate for policy changes to stimulate the implementation of the Action Plan	From 2024 to 2029	Contracting Parties, SPA/RAC, AP Partner, ICCAT, GFCM
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7. PROPOSED SPECIFIC PLANS

28. The hereafter listed Specific Action Plans for the 25 bird species listed in the Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol should be implemented in all Mediterranean states where the species breed, winter or occur on migration. They should be reviewed and updated every three years. If sudden major environmental changes happen which may affect any of the species' populations in the Mediterraneanan, an emergency review should be immediately undertaken. The current status given below covers the countries that have a Mediterranean coast. Proposed actions, which apply to all species, should include inter alia the initiation of public awareness campaigns on the status of these species and the preparation of National Action Plans. Other on-going Action Plans, which have been developed by other institutions, and which cover some of the species, are listed below, and should be taken in consideration and implemented where these species occur.

7.1. Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)

Current status

29. In the Mediterranean, it breeds in localised sites in suitable wetlands, mainly in Spain, France, Turkey, Italy as well as in Algeria. Breeding colonies are established at sites free from human disturbance and secure from terrestrial predators. Breeding is irregular with numbers fluctuating from one season to another. Substantial numbers also occur in Tunisia, Greece and Cyprus but breed rarely. Mediterranean population seems to be separated from Asiatic populations, with minimal exchange and overlap in Libya and Egypt.

Current factors causing loss or decline

30. Urban development; habitat loss for tourism development; disturbance; and illegal killing.

Status under international instruments

- Class A - African Convention on the Conservation and Natural Resources (1968).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).
- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Listed in the AEWA Action Plan (Column B Category 2a)

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

31. To maintain healthy breeding populations and maintain wetlands where the species overwinter.

Proposed action

- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies.
- Monitor and warden breeding colonies.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Restore wetlands where the species used to breed.
- Maintain wetlands where the species overwinter.

7.2. European Storm-petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus ssp. Melitensis*)

Current status

32. This pelagic colonial species breeds in small to very large colonies mainly on islets and in caves along the coast. Subspecies *melitensis* is endemic to the Mediterranean. Important breeding colonies are found in Malta, Sardinia and Sicily. Breeding surveys are totally lacking for the Adriatic and eastern Mediterranean. A general decline has been recorded.

Current factors causing loss or decline

33. Loss of habitat; disturbance; predation by *Rattus* sp. and Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*; possibly contamination by oil pollutants of the sea.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).
- Annex I - European Union Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation offishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

34. To halt the decline and maintain healthy breeding colonies.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies, particularly in the eastern part of the Mediterranean.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to the breeding colonies.
- Monitor and warden colonies under threat.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes, which may result in loss of habitat and the introduction and/or spread of invasive species, particularly mammals (*Rattus* sp.) and Yellow- legged Gull *Larus michahellis*.
- Control and/or eradicate rats at all breeding colonies.
- Prevent the introduction of alien predatory species.
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Identify areas at sea important for the species.

7.3. Scopoli's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*)

Current status

35. This pelagic, colonial species is restricted to the Mediterranean, nesting in sea-cliffs, on rocky islands and islets. Breeds in Algeria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Turkey and Tunisia where the breeding population has been recently estimated at 140,000 pairs. The majority of the population spends the non-breeding season in the Atlantic. Its recent conservation status according to IUCN is of Least Concern (LC) but its population is thought to be in slow decline overall, although more research is required particularly in the eastern part of the Mediterranean and in the Adriatic.

Current factors causing loss or decline

36. Introduced mammals, such as *Rattus* sp., which affect breeding success; illegal hunting; taking of eggs and/or chicks; mortality from bycatch (longlines); development close to colonies and disturbance, and possibly oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

37. To halt the decline of the population and maintain healthy colonies.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies, particularly in the eastern part of the Mediterranean. Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies, including the taking of eggs and young.
- Monitor and warden colonies under threat of disturbance.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Monitor levels of mercury and chlorinated hydrocarbons in populations.
- Develop and implement management projects targeting the conservation of the breeding habitat and strict control of introduced mammals, as well as preventing the introduction of alien predatory species.

- Identify important bird areas at sea for the species.
- Develop an Action Plan to reduce mortality at sea especially from bycatch (longlines, gear nets).
- Reduce fishing harvest (small pelagic fishes)

7.4. Yelkouan Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*)

Current status

38. This pelagic colonial species breeds on rocky islands and islets. Population estimated at less than 33,000 pairs, with 95% of the population breeding along the Mediterranean shores of South European countries, with main breeding colonies in Greece Italy and Malta. Some pairs breed along the North African coast. Breeding surveys in the eastern Mediterranean are lacking and for a number of countries the population is very poorly known.

Current factors causing loss or decline

39. Lack of food resources; lack of protection of breeding colonies; predation by Rats *Rattus* sp, Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis*, and locally by feral cats and dogs; disturbance and illegal hunting; some mortality from bycatch (longlines, gear nets); and possibly contamination by oil pollutants at sea.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- EU European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).

Current Action Plans

40. National action plan is in place and is being implemented in France. BirdLife International partners are currently working on a LIFE project to produce an action plan.

Action Plan objectives and target

41. To halt the decline of the species, to restore its numbers to former status and to increase the knowledge about its biology.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to the breeding colonies.
- Monitor the population dynamics of the species and warden colonies.
- Control and if possible, eradicate rats in breeding colonies.
- Prevent the introduction of alien predatory species.
- Ensure the protection of the breeding habitat and create SPAs where breeding colonies exist. Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Promote adequate fishing practices, which take into account the conservation of the species.
- Reduce fishing harvest (small pelagic fishes)
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Undertake surveys of colonies and research on the conservation biology of the species.

- Identify areas at sea important for the species.
- Develop an Action Plan to reduce mortality at sea especially from bycatch.

7.5. Balearic Shearwater (*Puffinus mauretanicus*)

Current status

42. This pelagic, colonial species is restricted to the Balearic Islands; breeding on rocky islands and islets. It is the most threatened species in Europe. Current official population is estimated at 1989-2883 breeding pairs, but recent research at sea shows a much larger population of individual birds.

Current factors causing loss or decline

43. Predation by introduced carnivores (Genet, Pine Marten and feral cats); bycatch; and possibly oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979). European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).

Current Action Plans

44. A national Action Plan is in place and is being implemented in Spain

Action Plan objectives and target

45. To halt the decline of the species and restore its numbers to former status.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to the breeding colonies.
- Monitor the population dynamics of the species and warden colonies.
- Control and if possible, eradicate rats and predators in the colonies and prevent any introduction of terrestrial mammals in breeding colonies.
- Ensure the protection of the breeding habitat and create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Promote adequate fishing practices, which take into account the conservation of the species.
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Undertake surveys of colonies and research on the conservation biology of the species.
- Identify the marine important areas for the species.
- Reduce fishing harvest (small pelagic fishes)
- Develop an Action Plan to reduce mortality at sea especially from bycatch.

7.6. Pygmy Cormorant (*Microcarbo pygmaeus*)

Current status

46. The main breeding populations in the Mediterranean of this globally threatened species are found in Montenegro, Serbia, Greece, and Turkey, with some pairs in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel and Italy. It is restricted to lowland freshwater and brackish habitats, and in winter frequents coastal lagoons, deltas, rivers and riparian forests. The whole population of the Mediterranean countries probably numbers 11,000-13,000 breeding pairs.

Current factors causing loss or decline

47. Degradation and loss of wetland habitat; disturbance and illegal hunting; destruction of breeding colonies and bycatch with abandoned fish nets.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979). European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Listed in the AEWPA Action Plan (Column B Category 1)

Current Action Plans

- Action Plan for the Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* in Europe prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the European Commission (February 1996).
- Globally threatened birds in Europe Action Plans. Council of Europe – BirdLife International
 - EU Life-Nature (1996).
- Italy has a national Action Plan.

Action Plan objectives and target

48. To maintain the recent increase of the species' population size and distribution.

Proposed action

- Afford strict protection to the species and its habitat, particularly from hunting, disturbance and development.
- Manage wintering and breeding sites in order to meet the species' requirements.
- Monitor breeding and wintering populations.
- Monitor water levels and quality at breeding sites.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Research its feeding and dispersal ecology.
- Develop education campaigns for hunters.
- Restore degraded wetlands used by the species.

7.7. European Shag (*Gulosus aristotelis ssp. desmarestii*)

Current status

49. This Mediterranean endemic subspecies of the European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii* is present in the western Mediterranean (Balearic Islands, Corsica and Sardinia), and the Adriatic, Aegean and Black Seas, breeding along the coast on rocky islands and islets. The Mediterranean population numbers less than 9,000 pairs.

Current factors causing loss or decline.

50. Human disturbance; oil pollution; habitat loss; mortality from bycatch; Seine net fishing and long-line hauling close to colonies and moulting areas.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979) (79/409/EEC/1979).
- European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).

Current Action Plans

No national action plans, but a Species Action Plan for the Mediterranean Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii* in Europe was prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the European Commission (final draft December 1999).

Action Plan objectives and target

51. To ensure the survival of Mediterranean populations.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbances to the breeding colonies.
- Carry out rat-eradication programmes at breeding colonies.
- Monitor populations.
- Create SPAs where the species breeds, and encourage buffer zones surrounding breeding areas including adjacent sea area.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to breeding sites.
- Take measures to influence fishing policies in order to avoid negative effects on food stocks and food availability, and to avoid mortality from bycatch.
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Identify important bird areas at sea for the species.

7.8. Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*)

Current status

52. This species is vulnerable and globally threatened. In the Mediterranean, small populations (totalling 2500-2700 breeding pairs) are found mainly in Albania, Montenegro, Greece and Turkey. Breeds on inland and coastal wetlands and nests on floating islands of reeds and on bare ground on islands, isolated from mainland to be safe from mammalian predators. Up to about 3000 birds winter in Albania, Greece, Syria and Turkey.

Current factors causing loss or decline

53. Wetland drainage resulting in a sharp decline of available breeding sites; collisions with electric wires; persecution due to competition with commercial fisheries; illegal hunting and disturbance.

Status under international instruments

- Class A - African Convention on Conservation and Natural Resources (1968).
- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).
- Appendix I & II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals(1979).
- Appendix I - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1973). European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Listed in the AEWPA Action Plan (Column A Category 1a/1c).

Current action plans

Action Plan for the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the European Commission (April 1996).

Globally threatened birds in Europe Action Plans. Council of Europe – BirdLife International – EU Life-Nature (1996).

A new Species Action Plan is under development through EU funded LIFE Euro SAP Project 2014-2018.

Albania has a NAP, but it is only partly implemented, while a NAP is in preparation in Turkey.

Action plan objectives and target

54. To prevent any declines and to increase the population size to a level at which it can be regarded as safe.

Proposed action

- Confer strictly protected status on the species and its habitats during breeding and wintering periods in all range states.
- Establish supervised buffer zones around breeding colonies.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to the breeding colonies.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.

- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Manage in a sustainable way or restore where necessary all wetlands where the species occurs.
- Replace overhead electricity wires by thick cables or lay them underground.
- Monitor continually the breeding and wintering populations.
- Develop education campaigns for local fishermen and hunters, and decision-makers.

7.9. Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)

Current status

55. In the Mediterranean this species breeds in Turkey and Greece. Numbers have declined in the last thirty years, and now the breeding population in the Mediterranean is down to less than 1000 pairs (810-940bp). It nests on the ground in large reedbeds, bare earth or rocky islands, in isolation from the mainland to be safe from mammalian predators.

Current factors causing loss or decline

56. Habitat loss and destruction; depletion of fish stocks; persecution and disturbance; pollution; flooding; disease; illegal killing, and collision with electric power lines.

Status under international instruments

- Class A - African Convention on Conservation and Natural Resources.
- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix I (Pal.) II (Western Pal.) - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).
- European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Current Action Plans (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Listed in the AEWA Action Plan (Column A Category 1a/3c).

Current Action Plans

57. National action plan is in place and is being implemented in Israel.

Action Plan objectives and target

58. To reverse the decline of the breeding populations in the Mediterranean.

Proposed action

- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies and their habitat.
- Monitor and supervise breeding colonies.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of (a) coastal development and infrastructure that impacts and/or fragments habitats; (b) pollution; and (c) overexploitation of fish stocks.
- Develop education campaigns aimed at local fishermen.
- Restore degraded wetlands used by the species.
- Create artificial nesting sites close to foraging sites.

7.10 Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

Current status

59. This predominantly coastal small wader species has an extremely large global range and hence is evaluated by IUCN as of Least Concern. However the overall population trend is decreasing. It prefers sparsely vegetated, sandy or dry mud areas when breeding. While some populations of this species are sedentary or only disperse short distances, most inland and northern coastal populations have distinct separate breeding and wintering ranges. Small breeding populations breed in most Mediterranean countries with some 5000 pairs in Tunisia, up to nearly 2000 pairs in Spain, Greece, and Italy, and 'several thousands' in Morocco.

Current factors causing loss or decline

60. Disturbance of coastal habitats; degradation and loss of wetland habitat; land reclamation; declining river flows; urbanisation and predation by foxes, feral cats and dogs.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).

Current Action Plans

61. National action plan is in place and is being implemented in Slovenia.

Action Plan objectives and target

62. To reverse the decline of the breeding populations and of the number of migrant birds in the Mediterranean.

Proposed action

- Control of recreation activities and human disturbance at breeding sites.
- Reduce/ban debris removal from beaches during the breeding season (February-July)
- Reverse the abandonment of salt pans.
- Promote the traditional management of salt pans (as opposed to industrial management), including the permanence of stable water levels and of small sand banks in parts of salt pans suitable for breeding
- Stop pollution of wetland habitats, land reclamation, and infrastructure development at breeding sites.

7.11 . Greater SandPlover (*Charadrius leschenaultii* ssp. *Columbinus*)

Current status

63. This species has an extremely large global range and population size. According to IUCN criteria it is of Least Concern. However, in the Mediterranean the subspecies *columbinus* is known to breed only in Turkey (probably 800-1200bp) and Syria (400-1000bp). As a migrant it is fairly common in Israel, and very scarce or vagrant in some other eastern Mediterranean countries. During the breeding season this species is predominantly found in open, dry, treeless areas and rocky plains. In Turkey the species frequents heavily grazed saline steppe and usually breeds near water but exceptionally also some kilometres away from it.

Current factors causing loss or decline

64. Hunting & disturbance.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

65. To ensure the safeguarding and to prompt an increase of the present few breeding populations in the Mediterranean, as well as to provide it with safe passage and wintering grounds where it occurs in other Mediterranean countries.

Proposed action

- Confer strictly protected status on the species and on its “lookalike” species, where it occurs on passage and during winter.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding areas and their surroundings.
- Monitor, warden and afford appropriate protection and management of all breeding, passage and wintering grounds.
- Train wardens, unexperienced ornithologists and hunters in the identification of the species to assist in recording it.
- Increase public awareness of the species’ rare status in the Mediterranean.

7.12 Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*)

Current status

66. This is a globally threatened species, which is possibly extinct. Once described as common in the Mediterranean region, it is now one of the rarest and least known species in the Western Palearctic. Used to migrate from Siberia across eastern and southern Europe to winter in North Africa. On passage, occurs in a wide range of habitats: salt marshes, salt pans, brackish lagoons, dry fishponds, steppe and freshwater marshes. Last confirmed documented record in the Mediterranean was in Greece in 1999

Current factors causing loss or decline

67. Habitat loss at migrating and wintering areas. Other factors unknown.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix I - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).
- Appendix I - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1973).
- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Slender-billed Curlew under the Bonn Convention (CMS) (1994).
- Listed in the AEWA Action Plan (Column B Category 1a/1b/1c).

Current Action Plans

International Action Plan for the Slender-billed Curlew prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the European Commission (February 1996).

Globally threatened birds in Europe Action Plans. Council of Europe – BirdLife International – EU Life-Nature (1996).

Italy has a national action plan.

Action Plan objectives and target

68. To provide safe passage and wintering grounds in the Mediterranean.

Proposed action

- Confer strictly protected status on the species and on its “lookalike” species, where it occurs on passage and during winter.
- Monitor and warden wintering sites
- Afford appropriate protection and management of all passage and wintering grounds.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of development near wintering sites.
- Train wardens, unexperienced ornithologists and hunters in the identification of the species to assist in recording it.
- Increase public awareness of the species’ critically threatened status amongst politicians,

decision-makers and hunters.

- Ratify the AEWA Agreement by those countries which have not yet done so.

7.13 Slender-billed Gull (*Larus genei*)

Current status

69. This gull is both resident and/or migratory in the Mediterranean. It breeds colonially on sandy islands in salt pans at the coastal zone but also (as in Tunisia) in inland wetlands including salt lakes. It is found breeding at widely isolated scattered localities in some countries. It is presently known to breed in Spain (1650-1950bp), France (ca.1000bp), Italy (3000-5000bp), Greece (100-130bp) and Turkey (2000-3000bp). In Tunisia, up to 4000bp have been recorded breeding in Thyna salt-pans, and 10,560bp have been recorded breeding in the Golfe of Bou Grara, apart from other scattered sites. It also breeds in Egypt but numbers are unknown; formerly bred in Morocco; and there is no evidence of breeding in Algeria. The European population seems to be decreasing.

Current factors causing loss or decline

70. Disturbance of coastal habitats; degradation and loss of wetland habitats; human disturbance and illegal hunting; predation by feral dogs; eggs and chicks of this species are preyed upon by other gull species especially where colonies are frequently disturbed by humans; subsistence egg collecting by local people; pollution and flooding.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979). Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species and listed under the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement.

Current Action Plans

None. Regional management plans for seabirds including this species are in place and implemented in Spain.

Action Plan objectives and target

71. To maintain and increase a healthy breeding population and increase the number of its colonies.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies, particularly in the North African Mediterranean countries.
- Increase management in breeding areas.
- Prevent disturbance from tourism and recreational activities.
- Develop education campaigns for decision makers.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies, including the taking of eggs and young.
- Monitor and supervise colonies under threat.

- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Control or eradicate invasive competitive species and terrestrial mammals at colonies.
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Identify marine important areas for the species.
- Develop an Action Plan to reduce mortality at sea especially from bycatch.

7.14 Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

Current status

72. This gull breeds in dense colonies at lagoons, estuaries, coastal as well as inland saltmarshes, and on large steppe lakes and marshes in open lowland areas. It breeds mainly on the Black Sea coast of Ukraine and at scattered localities throughout Europe. In the Mediterranean it breeds in Spain, southern France, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. The Mediterranean also hosts in winter a substantial number of the European population. The Mediterranean breeding population is estimated to be 9400-15,700 pairs

Current factors causing loss or decline

73. Tourist disturbance at breeding colonies; habitat loss resulting from development; possibly contamination by oil spill and chemical discharges at sea; bycatch from long-line fishing; and the taking of adults and eggs by fishermen.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species and listed under the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement.

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

74. To maintain and increase a healthy breeding population; increase the number of its colonies; and give total protection to the wintering population

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies.
- Identify site-based threats and necessary management actions of protected areas.
- Increase existing management in breeding areas.
- Prevent disturbance from tourism and recreational activities.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies, including the taking of eggs and young.
- Monitor and supervise colonies under threat.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Create where possible artificially constructed nesting sites in coastal locations.

7.15 Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*)

Current status

75. This is an endemic Mediterranean species, with its main breeding populations occurring in the western Mediterranean in coastal and island sites; an average of 16,800 breeding birds in Spain in the years 2004-2016 being the largest. Other colonies occur in other parts of the Mediterranean including Greece, Turkey, Tunisia and Sardinia. It was close to extinction in the 1970s, but better enforcement of protection measures has resulted in an increase in the breeding population. In 2020, this species relapsed and was moved by Birdlife from LC to NT, based on information that it had a sharp decline in Spain.

Current factors causing loss or decline

76. Habitat alterations at breeding sites; changes in fishing practices in reference to fishing waste management policies; bycatch from fishing gear; competition with the Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*; egg collection; rat predation; human persecution and disturbance; and possibly depletion of food resources and contamination by oil pollutants.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).
- Appendix I & II -Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).
- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979). European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation offishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Listed in the AEWa Action Plan (Column A Category 1a/3a).

Current Action Plans

International Action Plan for Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the European Commission (March 1996).

Globally threatened birds in Europe Action Plans. Council of Europe – BirdLife International –EU Life-Nature (1996).

Action Plan to restore the Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* by Government Committee of Palm Islands Nature Reserve in Lebanon.

Official Working Group in Spain (Ministry of Environment) to review status and propose conservation actions for *Larus audouinii*.

A national action plan is in place and implemented in Italy; another is in preparation in Turkey and regional implemented management plans are on-going for a number of colonies in Spain.

Action Plan objectives and target

77. To halt the decline of the species and maintain a healthy breeding population and increase the number of colonies.

Proposed action

- Conduct research to understand the reason for the recent sharp decline in population.
- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies, particularly in the eastern part of the Mediterranean.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies, particularly the taking of eggs and young.
- Monitor and supervise colonies under threat.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Set an Action plan to reduce the dominance of the Yellow-legged Gull over the Audouin's Gull to restore the latter.
- Control or eradicate invasive competitive species and terrestrial mammals at colonies.
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Identify marine important areas for the species.
- Reduce fishing harvest (small pelagic fishes)
- Develop an Action Plan to reduce mortality at sea especially from bycatch and the illegal use of poison for fishing by fishermen.

7.16 Armenian Gull (*Larus armenicus*)

Current status

78. This species nests colonially in huge aggregations. Its European population has declined rapidly and it was listed by IUCN as Near Threatened. In 2021, the BirdLife International changed the rank of the species from NT to LC following a genuine increase in numbers of individuals of the Armenian Gull (BirdLife International, 2023). In the Mediterranean it breeds in western Turkey where it is resident, with a breeding population of 8000-10,000 pairs. In the Mediterranean it winters in the eastern part but numbers are not known. It is a common winter visitor and passage migrant to Israel where numbers have also decreased drastically. The species inhabits both coastal and inland waters, frequenting lakes, reservoirs, ponds and rivers. It breeds along the stony and grassy shores of mountain lakes, nesting and foraging in reed-beds and on beaches. In its winter range the species may also forage in agricultural fields and on fish-ponds.

Current factors causing loss or decline

79. Persecution (due to the damage it inflicted to fisheries); egg harvesting; and loss of habitat quality.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species and is covered by the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement.

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

80. To maintain the conservation status of the species and maintain a healthy breeding population.

Proposed action

- Identification and designation of important sites for this species.
- Education programmes to fishers to reduce persecution.
- Carry out studies to understand its ecology, including its diet and population trends.
- Compile an inventory of breeding sites and map critical habitats supporting the colonies, in the eastern part of the Mediterranean.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies, including the taking of eggs and young.
- Monitor and supervise colonies under threat.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Develop an Action Plan to halt the decline of the species and maintain a healthy breeding population.

7.17 Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons*)

Current status

81. This coastal seabird is a strongly migratory species which usually fishes in very shallow water. It has the most inshore distribution of all terns. It breeds in solitary pairs or in very small groups sometimes amidst colonies of other terns. Its European breeding population is estimated at 36,000-53,000 pairs. However the breeding population in all the Mediterranean countries is estimated at 11,000-14,500 breeding pairs with the highest populations in Turkey (3000-5000bp), Spain 2641-2691bp), Italy (2000-3500bp), Greece (1500-2000bp), France (700bp), Albania (200-500bp), and Israel (300bp). The overall global population trend is decreasing.

Current factors causing loss or decline

82. Habitat loss and destruction of breeding sites; human disturbance; and predation (feral cats and dogs and foxes).

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979). European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation offishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Listed in the AEWA Action Plan (Column A Category 3/a).

Current Action Plans

None; but national implemented action plans exist in Israel & Slovenia.

Action Plan objectives and target

83. To maintain healthy breeding colonies and to fill the gaps of knowledge in quantitative dataof breeding populations in a number of countries.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory and map critical habitats supporting the colonies, particularly in the eastern Adriatic and eastern Mediterranean countries where quantitative data are lacking.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to the breeding colonies.
- Eliminate predation.
- Monitor and warden colonies under threat of disturbance.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known colonies.
- Establish population size and trends.
- Restore wetlands where the species is known to breed.

7.18 Common Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

Current status

84. This species has an extremely large global range, but its breeding population in the Mediterranean is only 5800-7150 pairs: Spain (3185-3435bp), Turkey (1000-2000bp), France (873bp), Italy (550bp), Greece (180-280bp), Tunisia (150-350bp) and Libya (12bp). It breeds in a variety of locations not only in coastal areas, but also at inland lakes, rivers, marshes and swamps.

Current factors causing loss or decline

85. Deterioration and loss of habitat, e.g. through wetland drainage, agricultural intensification, pesticide pollution and fluctuating water levels; Development close to breeding and/or at foraging sites; and human disturbance at breeding colonies.

Status under international instruments

- Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

86. To safeguard the breeding areas; maintain a healthy breeding population and possibly increase it.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory and map critical habitats supporting the colonies.
- Ensure breeding sites protection from disturbance, development and modification.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Eliminate predation.
- Monitor and warden colonies under threat of disturbance.
- Prevent erosion of islet complexes,
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.

7.19 Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

Current status

87. This species has an extremely large cosmopolitan but scattered distribution. Some populations are sedentary while others are strongly migratory. It prefers nesting on sandy, shell-strewn or shingle beaches, sand-dunes, flat rock-surfaces, sheltered reefs or islands. In the Mediterranean the breeding population is less than 500 breeding pairs, and is restricted to a few countries in the eastern part: Turkey (150-300bp), Syria (100-200bp), Greece (up to 10bp). It is said that it breeds in Egypt, but no numbers are given.

Current factors causing loss or decline

88. Loss and deterioration of breeding habitat, human disturbance at nesting colonies, contamination by oil spills and marine pollution and bycatch in fishing gears.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979). Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).

Current Action Plans

None, but it is listed in the AEWA Action Plan (Column A Category 1a/3a).

Action Plan objectives and target

89. To strictly protect the small breeding population and possibly to increase it.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory and map critical habitats supporting the colonies.
- Ensure breeding sites protection from disturbance, development and modification.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Eliminate predation.
- Monitor and warden colonies under threat of disturbance.
- Prevent erosion of islet complexes,
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.

7.20 Lesser Crested Tern (*Thalasseus bengalensis* ssp. *Emigrates*)

Current status

90. This Mediterranean endemic subspecies is currently confined to Libya, at 4 colonies: Garah Island (2000 pairs), Ftiha Island (12 pairs) Ulbah Island (16 pairs) and Sabkhat Julyanah (70 pairs). Occasional breeding was recorded in former years in France, Greece, Italy and Spain.

Current factors causing loss or decline

91. Occasional disturbance by fishermen; probably predation by Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*; and possibly contamination by oil pollutants and toxic chemicals.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II - (African pops.) Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).
- European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).
- Listed in the AEWPA Action Plan (Column A Category 1/c).

Current Action Plans

None. However, a national action plan is in place in Libya but it is not yet implemented.

Action Plan objectives and target

92. To safeguard the breeding areas; maintain a healthy population; and possibly increase its population.

Proposed action

- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to breeding colonies, including the taking of eggs and young.
- Monitor and supervise colonies regularly.
- Create SPAs where the species' breeding colonies exist and prohibit access to known sites except for scientific purposes.
- Investigate whether local fisheries impact on breeding success.
- Prevent oil spills and chemical pollution of the sea.
- Establish population size and trends.
- Provide small artificial islands at Sabkhat Julyanah to encourage an increase of the colony size in the lake.

7.21 Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

Current status

93. This species can be found in Europe, Africa, western Asia, and the southern Americas. Whilst the European population is estimated at 79,900-148,000 pairs, the breeding population in the Mediterranean is estimated to be 6300-8800 pairs, nesting in colonies mainly in river deltas, on sandbanks and in salinas. Also migrates from elsewhere into the Mediterranean for wintering.

Current factors causing loss or decline

94. Degradation and loss of habitat mainly due to coastal development; disturbance by humans, animals predation and hunting; and possibly reduction of small pelagic fish abundance.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979). Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979). Listed in the AEW A Action Plan (Column A Category 3a/3c).

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

95. To maintain healthy breeding colonies and stop the loss of habitat.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory and map critical habitats supporting the colonies, particularly in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, where breeding surveys are lacking.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to the breeding colonies.
- Monitor and supervise colonies under threat of disturbance.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development that impact on wetlands and other breeding habitats.
- Restore wetlands where the species breeds.

7.22 Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Current status

96. This is a cosmopolitan species, which is vulnerable in several regions. Whilst the European population is estimated at 8,400-12,300 pairs, less than 120 pairs breed in the Mediterranean (mainly Balearic Islands, Corsica, Morocco and Algeria). Some local small populations have disappeared from other islands (e.g. Ibiza, Sicily & Sardinia). The newly established Italian population (<10 pairs) originates from Corsican individuals released in 2006-2010.

Current factors causing loss or decline

97. Habitat destruction and disturbance at breeding sites related to tourism. Mortality occurs mainly from illegal poaching, electrocution and collisions.

Status under international instruments

- Class B - African Convention on Conservation and Natural Resources (1968).
- Appendix II -Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979).Annex I - European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979). European Union Regulation laying down certain technical measures for the conservation offishery resources in the Mediterranean (1626/94 (EC) 1994).

Current Action Plans

None; but a regional species action plan is in place in Spain. France submitted to CMS a National Action Plan for Osprey as an instrument on 30 October 2019.

Action Plan objectives and target

98. Reverse the decline of the breeding population in the Mediterranean.

Proposed action

- Make an inventory and map critical habitats supporting the remaining breeding pairs.
- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit the destruction of its habitat, disturbance, and the taking or trade of the species.
- Use area-based measures to protect and restore its habitats.
- Create SPAs where it breeds.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes of coastal and infrastructure development near to known breeding sites.
- Research the causes of the decline of the species.

7.23 Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*)

Current status

99. This species has an extremely large range. However in the Mediterranean it is restricted to a few countries and is only known to breed in Israel (2500bp), Turkey (100-200bp) and in Syria and Egypt where breeding numbers are unknown. Decreases in populations have been noted in Syria, Israel, and Egypt. It inhabits small and large lakes, large rivers, estuaries, coastal lagoons and sandy and rocky coasts, dams and reservoirs with either fresh or brackish water with available waterside perches. It is generally sedentary with some local movements due to changes in the supply of food.

Current factors causing loss or decline

100. Use of poisons and pesticides; water storage developments; and bioaccumulation of pollution and toxins in the fish they eat.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II -Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats(1979).

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

101. Reverse the decline and maintain a healthy breeding population in the Mediterranean.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of the breeding areas and populations.
- Protect legally the species and all its key breeding sites.
- Carry out research on the species' range, ecology, habitat requirements and movements, to be used for the necessary conservation measures.
- Assess the potential threats and their impacts in order to develop appropriate response.
- Develop Regional Action Plans for the protection and management of the species' key sites.

7.24 White-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)

Current status

102. This kingfisher has a very large global range. However, in the Mediterranean it is restricted to a few countries, and is only known to breed in Israel (15,000bp), Turkey (170-250bp) and Egypt (> 10,000bp, but no proper estimates). It inhabits various habitats ranging from water bodies to farmland and palm plantations.

Current factors causing loss or decline

103. Use of pesticides; habitat degradation from various factors; gaps in knowledge of the species' ecology and behaviour and of the threats facing this species.

Status under international instruments

- Appendix II -Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).

Current Action Plans

None

Action Plan objectives and target

104. Reverse the decline and maintain a healthy breeding population in the Mediterranean.

Proposed action

- Compile an inventory of breeding areas and populations.
- All breeding sites should be strictly protected and supervised.
- Prohibit any development that would degrade the species' breeding sites.
- Carry out research on species ecology and habitat needs for future conservation measures.
- Assess the potential threats and their impacts in order to develop appropriate responses.
- Develop Regional Action Plans for the protection and management of the species' key sites.

7.25 Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco eleonora*)

Current status

105. This falcon breeds in colonies along the coast of the mainland or on rocky islands, which are often uninhabited. In Europe, which covers >95% of the breeding range, the population has been estimated recently at 14,300-14,500 pairs – the largest number of breeding pairs are found in Greece (12,360), followed by Italy (638-704), Spain (655), Cyprus (90-145) and Turkey (35-50). The North African population has been estimated at approximately 250 pairs (ca.72% of which are found in Tunisia). The current population trend is increasing. Almost all the entire population breeds on rocky Mediterranean islands.

Current factors causing loss or decline

106. Predation by cats and rats; human disturbance in colonies; habitat degradation; taking of eggs and young; hunting; and accidental poisoning from pest control methods.

Status under international instruments

- Class B - African Convention on Conservation and Natural Resources (1968).
- Appendix II - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979).
- Appendix II - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1973).
- Annex I European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC/1979).

Current Action Plans

International Species Action Plan Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the European Commission (final draft December 1999). A regional implemented species action plan for the Balearics, which host most of the breeding population in Spain, is in place.

Action Plan objectives and target

107. To safeguard the present colonies and encourage the increasing trend, through preserving the breeding sites particularly the uninhabited islands and eliminating any negative impacts on the species.

Proposed action

- Confer strictly protected status on the species.
- Prohibit all types of disturbance to the breeding colonies, including the taking of eggs and young.
- Monitor and warden colonies under threat.
- Create SPAs where breeding colonies exist.
- Plan, regulate and/or manage activities and processes, which may result in loss of habitat and the introduction/spread of invasive species.
- Control and/or eradicate species that have become invasive.
- Carry out breeding surveys in eastern Mediterranean countries. Prevent poisoning through awareness campaigns and cooperation with farmers.

Annex I

**ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE ACTION PLAN**

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I. PREAMBLE

1. The Mediterranean Basin is the world's second-largest biodiversity hotspot and the largest of the five Mediterranean climate regions. It includes the Mediterranean Sea and is surrounded by 21 countries with a coastline of 46,000 km, and a population of around 480 million people living across three continents. However, the growing population poses a risk to biodiversity, including seabirds. The Mediterranean environment provides economic and social benefits, but the need to preserve biodiversity for the future and protect it from threats is urgent. SPA/RAC and the Contracting Parties are working to address these challenges.
2. The Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) invited the Focal Points for SPAs to provide a report on the application of the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol). However, difficulties were encountered in preparing the report, including problems with communication, delays in submitting forms, and incomplete forms. After several years of this process, important milestones were reached but some of these difficulties still persist.
3. This assessment report examines the current status of the action plan's implementation based on a thorough literature review and responses to completed questionnaires or national reports. The evaluation draws on reports from 21 Mediterranean countries, three from the EU, and one from each of the following organizations: SPA/RAC, AEWA, IUCN, BirdLife International, and GFCM. The national reports included in this assessment cover a four-year period for each country, spanning from 2016 to 2022. Each party was expected to submit four reports during this timeframe, but unfortunately, two parties failed to submit any reports, two submitted only one, six submitted three out of four, and eleven submitted all four reports.

II. THE IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

II.1- PRODUCE AND PUBLISH AN UPDATED VERSION OF THE ACTION PLAN INCLUDING ALL 25 TARGET SPECIES.

4. The update of the Action Plan was adopted by COP 20 Decision IG.23/08, (Albania,2017) , edited and published by the end of 2022.

II.2- PROTECT LEGALLY ALL BIRD SPECIES IN ANNEX II OF THE SPA/BD

5. Most of the European Mediterranean countries compiled lists of natural sites of conservation interest, chiefly within the Natura 2000 framework in order to provide them and their birds with protection, Whilst most European Mediterranean countries announced approvals of related regulations that took place in their countries within the periods of reporting (2016-2022), including what is for strengthening the protection of species or to increase the surface of the protected areas, whether marine, coastal or both. Other Mediterranean parties kept benefiting from the assistance provided by International and Regional Conventions and Agreements (Biodiversity Convention, Eu Directive, AEWA/CMS Agreement, etc.). During the period 2016-2022, 78% of the Parties' progress reports (50 reports belonging to 21 countries during 2016-2022) indicated that the bird species of Annex II that are under the SPA/BD Protocol are also protected by newly amended decrees, decisions, or Laws (e.g., Hunting Laws). This Action of the legal protection of all birds in Annex II is ongoing to assure that protection is allocated to the 25 species or to the potential new species that might be added to the list following meetings of experts and reports of Contracting Parties. Similarly, there is a need to understand which type of regulation is more efficient, and in which country. Since European CPs rely on EU regulations and those of non-European CPs count on national Laws and on regulations issued by the secretariats of CBD, CMS, AEWA, SPA/RAC, etc., it is then possible to say that almost all

the Mediterranean countries are equipped with regulation tool to seriously protect the 25 species of the Protocol, provided an enforcement is strongly put in place.

6. It's been noticed that the assessment of the Action Plan implementation has revealed that few of the Mediterranean MPAs still suffer from weaknesses in the protection of their marine and coastal bird species, mainly due to the lack of administrative management, financial resources, and regulatory framework in 18% of the reports of the period 2016-2022 pertaining to 20% of the Parties. For this purpose and in order to reduce the gaps in legislative issues, SPA/RAC produced guidelines for reinforcing laws and regulations on the conservation and management of bird species listed in Annex II & III of the SPA/BD Protocol.

7. Similarly, from the assessment of the Action Plan implementation, the Parties granted, in one way or another, legal protection to the bird species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, but the three parties (Lebanon, Malta and Montenegro) that answered in the negative speak of difficulties linked to the regulatory framework, financial resources, and administrative management.

8. In brief, the mode of protection varied between setting lists of Nationally threatened species and approving new regulations, to patrolling and enforcing the Laws protecting those species.

9. But it is curious to discover that there are three bird species (Yelkouan Shearwater, Dalmatian Pelican, and Audouin's Gull) on the list of Annex II that have been upgraded from Near Threatened (NT) to Vulnerable (VU) by the IUCN and BirdLife International between 2016 and 2022. Some may say that this is because of a failure of certain protective measures for these birds due to offenses against existing laws related to natural habitats and birds; but it also could be, most probably, because of the assessments and evaluation of species made by IUCN and BirdLife which have had new access to recent detailed information obtained from researchers in the countries in which these species breed and which led to the classification of these three bird species as vulnerable. Consequently, it is very important to objectively know why these species are upgraded to a higher rank of danger instead of being downgraded to a lower rank. This requires a gathering of information obtained by monitoring the conservation trends of the bird species in Annex II, as a response to the implementation of the Action Plan. Moreover, the gathering of information through monitoring should preferably be an independent Action to understand if the legal efforts are rewarding in terms of sustainable conservation.

10. On another hand, 55% of respondent CPs to the questionnaire asked for various support to minimize challenges faced under legal protection. Willingness of decision makers to conserve birds may assist them in overtaking this issue through issuance of laws and imposing enforcements; 90% of respondents have legal protection for the marine and coastal birds in the Mediterranean. Bosnia and Herzegovina didn't offer this type of protection for an unknown reason. Bosnia and Herzegovina may inform SPA/RAC with a detailed report explaining what are the detailed deficiencies that deprived them from completing this action.

11. The present Action of legal protection has apparently no gaps but needs to be extended for another round for its completion.

II.3- OPTIMIZE SYNERGIES WITH INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED TO BIRD CONSERVATION

12. 51% of the Contracting Parties, mostly in the European side of the Mediterranean, indicated in their progress reports for the period 2016-2022 their cooperation and involvement in synergies with international organizations and/or agreements, whilst Bosnia and Herzegovina had mentioned that this is an ongoing action in the country, Croatia said that there are synergies with international agreements and organizations dedicated to bird conservation.

13. It appears that bilateral cooperation among Parties in relation to the implementation of the SPA/BD Protocol has been improving, especially during 2016-2022, where most of the countries are parties to several agreements under CMS, including AEW, and MOU Raptors. Lebanon has ratified the CMS Convention and signed the MOU-Raptors, Malta is working with UN and CMS, and Spain became a Contracting Party to ACAP. In the South Mediterranean region, the bilateral and multilateral cooperation is relatively weaker.

14. As for the challenges and difficulties, it appears that 21% of the reports of 5 countries denied the existence of synergy or expressed its weakness due to weak administrative management and lack of financial resources. This is said, no comments were given on how weak administrative management and lack of financial resources can oppose the optimization of synergies with international agreements and organizations dedicated to bird conservation.

II.4- INCREASE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BIRD SPECIES OF ANNEX II AND THEIR HABITATS

15. This Action was considered by the previous Action Plan implementation assessment as a constraint to the appropriate management of species/habitats if knowledge about the birds listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol is not increased or improved. In fact, the researchers and monitors are a source of knowledge that also feeds students through education, enlightens the public through awareness, and improves decision making through advocacy. It is also beneficial for the next Action to improve decision making.

16. Forty five percent of the Contracting Parties reported that the implementation of this work depends primarily on the availability of human and financial resources. Monitoring and research require sufficient and continuous resources, and solutions to fill this gap should be a topic of discussion of CPs. Innovative solutions need to be assessed, such as citizen-based monitoring tools, which could be deployed on a regional level.

17. To bolster this action about increasing knowledge on bird species of Annex II, IUCN produced in an answer to the questionnaire, the following Table (1), in which conservation status at global and European levels are given beside trend of each species. Only what is highlighted with blue are the explanation given by BirdLife International.

18. IUCN provided Table (1) on the conservation status & trends of the species listed in Annex II.

19. Between 2020 and 2022 IUCN facilitated the assessment of breeding birds of prey in the Mediterranean and Northern Africa region for the Red List. Two of the assessed species are included in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol. A link to both reports here:

- [The conservation status and distribution of the breeding birds of prey of North Africa | IUCN Library System](#)
- [The Conservation Status of Breeding Raptors in the Mediterranean - resource | IUCN.](#)

20. In addition, IUCN provided technical and logistic support to bird experts and organizations in North African countries to collect available information about bird populations for the Red List assessments mentioned above.

21. **BirdLife International** has mentioned that several BirdLife national partners in EU member States contributed to reporting under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), as well as Article 12 reporting under the EU Birds Directive.

Common name	Species name	category	year of assessment	EU	year of assessment		Comments	Change since 2017	Population trend
Greater Flamingo Flamant rose	Phoenicopterus roseus	LC	2018	LC	2020			no change	increasing
European Storm-petrel Océanite tempête	Hydrobates pelagicus ssp. melitensis	LC	2018	LC	2020		*This taxon has not been assessed at subspecific levels for the IUCN Red List	no change	unknown
Scopoli's Shearwater Puffin de Scopoli	Calonectris diomedea	LC	2018	LC	2020			no change	unknown
Yelkouan Shearwater Puffin yelkouan	Puffinus yelkouan	VU	2018	VU	2020			The species was assessed LC at EU level in 2015. Currently is threatened at global and EU regional level	decreasing
Balearic Shearwater Puffin des Baléares	Puffinus mauretanicus	CR	2018	CR	2020			no change	decreasing
Pygmy Cormorant Cormoran pygmée	Microcarbo pygmaeus	LC	2018	LC	2020			no change	increasing

European Shag Cormoran huppé	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis ssp. desmarestii</i>	LC	2018	LC	2020	*		no change	decreasing
Dalmatian Pelican Pélican frisé	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	NT	2017	LC	2020			not assessed at global level since 2017 no change at EU level (2015)	increasing
Great White Pelican Pélican blanc	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	LC	2020	LC	2020			no change	unknown
Kentish Plover Pluvier à collier interrompu	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	LC	2016	LC	2020			no change	decreasing
Greater Sand Plover Pluvier de Leschenault	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii ssp. columbinus</i>	LC	2019	NT	2020	*This taxon has not been assessed at subspecific levels for the IUCN Red List	The species is CR at EU 28	The species was assessed as VU in 2015 at EU and EU 28 levels. In 2020 the category has improved to NT	unknown
Slender-billed Curlew Courlis à bec grêle	<i>Numenius tenuirostris</i>	CR	2018	CR	2020			no change	decreasing
Slender-billed Gull Goéland railleux	<i>Larus genei</i>	LC	2019	VU	2020		The species is LC at EU 28	The species is Vulnerable in Europe 2020 but in 2015 species was assessed LC at EU and	unknown

								EU 28 levels	
Mediterranean Gull Mouette mélanocéphale	Larus melanocephalus	LC	2019	LC	2020			no change	decreasing
Audouin's Gull Goéland d'Audouin	Larus audouinii	VU	2020	VU	2020	This species has been upgraded from LC to VU in 2020 due to a steep drop in numbers in Spain (BirdLife International.	It is a threatened species but at EU and EU 28 this species was assessed LC in 2015		decreasing
Armenian Gull Goéland d'Arménie	Larus armenicus	LC	2021	LC	2020	This species has been downgraded from NT to LC in 2021 due to genuine increase following probably the protection of the biggest colony in Turkey (BirdLife International.		no change	unknown
Little Tern	Sternula	LC	2018	LC	2020			no change	decreasing

Sterne naine	albifrons								
Common Gull-billed Tern Sterne hansel	Gelochelidon nilotica	LC	2019	LC	2020			no change	decreasing
Caspian Tern Sterne caspienne	in	LC	2018	LC	2020			no change	increasing
Lesser Crested Tern Sterne voyageuse	Thalasseus bengalensis	LC	2018	NA				no change	stable
Sandwich Tern Sterne caugek	Thalasseus sandvicensis	LC	2019	LC	2020			no change	increasing
Osprey Balbuzard pêcheur	Pandion haliaetus	LC	2021	LC	2020		The species is EN in the Mediterranean region (2022)	no change at global and EU level	increasing
Pied Kingfisher Martin-pêcheur pie	Ceryle rudis	LC	2016	VU	2020			no change at the global level but at EU level it changed from EN to VU	unknown
White-breasted Kingfisher Martin-chasseur de Smyrne	Halcyon smyrnensis	LC	2016	VU	2020		From the Med countries, this species is only present in Turkey	no change	decreasing in EU
Eleonora's Falcon Facoun d'Éléonore	Falco eleonora	LC	2021	LC	2020		The species is LC in the Mediterranean (2021)	no change	stable

Table 1: The 25 species of the Action plan with conservation status at Europe and World levels. Also trends are given in 2023. The text highlighted with blue is provided by BirdLife International. All others are presented by IUCN

II.5- Target and lobby decision-making organizations and government bodies to stimulate the implementation of the Action Plan

22. There is no mention or even any hints of this Action in the national reports. Accordingly, it's worth fueling it with the outputs of the previous Action on increasing the knowledge of birds of Annex II and their habitats. This can assist CPs in knowing details about statuses of species in their countries and at regional levels. Most of the countries accessed this knowledge to know about the phenological status, conservation status, behavior, numbers, distribution in breeding, wintering and over summering seasons.

23. The produced knowledge will then be the material that will be used when visiting politicians and decision-makers to convince them about the importance of the birds and their habitats and make them appreciate the value of their decisions regarding the importance of sustainable conservation. Many decision-makers may show sympathy toward conserving species but they, in the majority, ignore the importance of the conservation of the corresponding habitats.

II.6- Organize specific training courses and workshops in coordination/synergy with international and/or national NGOs

24. During the same reporting period (2016-2022) very little training (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and several training activities (Croatia & Malta) were undertaken to assist in synergistic action. 15% of the parties pointed to pieces of training and workshops conducted during that period. At the same time, Croatia complained about the lack of technical guidance whereas Malta about the scarcity of financial resources. Egypt and Turkey mentioned a need for administrative management. In Lebanon, specific training of observers from the SPAMI Palm Islands Nature Reserve took place on the coast of Mina-Tripoli. Participants were trained in the identification of seabirds with financial support from SPA/RAC. Training courses were and are being regularly carried out in some countries in synergistic action.

25. Regarding the difficulties faced by the parties, Croatia complained about the lack of technical guidance whereas Malta about the scarcity of financial resources. Egypt and Turkey mentioned a need for administrative management.

26. In mean time, SPA/RAC provided Guidelines for management and monitoring threatened population of marine and coastal bird species and their important areas in the Mediterranean (2012) such as:

- Conserving, managing and restoring bird species.
- Conserving, managing and restoring the habitats of bird species.
- Measures of information and awareness for the various actors.
- Integrating measures for the conservation of bird species and habitats within coastal and marine planning processes.

27. SPA/RAC provided training to parties around the Mediterranean at two levels:

Sub-regional trainings :

1. [1st Training on monitoring techniques of the common indicators related to biodiversity and NIS](#) (16-22 July 2017, Kuriat islands, Tunisia)
2. [2nd training on monitoring techniques of the common indicators related to biodiversity and NIS](#) (22-28 September 2017, Samos Island, Greece)

National Trainings

3. [National training session on monitoring techniques of seabirds in Tunisia](#) (10-13 May 2018, Kerkennah islands)
4. [National training session on monitoring techniques of marine habitats and seabirds in Morocco](#) (26-29 June 2018, Al Hoceima National Park)

28. SPA/RAC supported the organization of training sessions on winter bird census by AAO (Association les Amis des Oiseaux) and Tour de Valat (January 2022/ January 2023).

29. Within the MAVA funded [Species](#) Project SPA/RAC supported education, awareness-programme planned within the study Improving Knowledge Base on Procellariidae of Turkey in Central Aegean Basin, implemented by DOGA (BirdLife Partner in Türkiye).

30. GFCM provided/supported education, awareness-raising and advocacy activities in the Med been to stimulate implementation of the Action Plan. They are:

- Good practice guides for handling seabirds (Good practice guide for the handling of seabirds caught incidentally in Mediterranean pelagic longline fisheries) and other vulnerable species.
- Identification guide of vulnerable species incidentally caught in Mediterranean fisheries building on a partnership with ACCOBAMS, SPA-RAC, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, MEDASSET and IUCN-Med has coordinated the final compilation and editing of this bycatch guide with the contribution of different experts of the Mediterranean.

II.7- Organize the 3rd Mediterranean Symposium on ecology and conservation of the bird species listed in Annex II

31. The 3rd Mediterranean Symposium on ecology and conservation of the bird species listed in Annex II couldn't be organized in 2017 as it was desired in the last Timetable. Instead, SPA/RAC planned to have this event to be scheduled in the last trimester of 2023. This activity is mainly activated by experts in birds. Hence the importance of engaging at least one expert from each country in the coming symposium, if not in person, the engagement could be through sending relevant papers and written lectures to SPA/RAC about the bird species of Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, with a focus on the possibility of adding new species to this list.

II.8- Participate in / promote a regional network for monitoring populations and distribution of Mediterranean-threatened bird species, in coordination with other organizations.

32. It is an action that wasn't clearly tackled by the parties during the period 2016-2022. Instead, the Action was mostly accomplished during the winter census under the coordination of Wetland International which is a kind of promotion of monitoring within a regional network. Also, the IMAP is calling for a regional consultant to work for the Mediterranean Action Plan with the objective of ensuring that national country teams of Mediterranean countries are given the necessary technical support and guidance to effectively deliver project activities related to monitoring and assessment, and related assessment scales aspects, and to support and coordinate the regional thematic/cluster experts. This said, there is a need to direct parties to enhance communication and coordination among governmental entities in the region, enhance stakeholder engagement in sea and coast management to bolster information sharing, diversify perspectives, and increase buy-in, share experience on improving ecosystem health, and increase adaptability to changing conditions, including new technologies, and new use of the sea and coast.

33. **Birdlife International** promoted/supported the development of a regional network for monitoring populations and distribution of Mediterranean threatened bird species, in coordination with other organizations, including under the last projects:

- LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (2011-2016) focusing on Yelkouan Shearwater, Scopoli's Shearwater and European Storm-petrel <https://birdlifemalta.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Malta-Seabird-Project-Laymans-Report-ENG.pdf>
- LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija (2015-2020) focusing on Yelkouan Shearwater conservation https://birdlifemalta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Birdlife-Report-English-Digital_V3.pdf
- [LIFE PanPuffinus!](#) (2020-2025) which is aiming at improving the conservation status of Yelkouan and Balearic Shearwaters

34. AEWAs supported the development of a regional network for monitoring populations and distribution of Mediterranean threatened bird species, in coordination with other organizations.

35. UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is closely involved in the African-Eurasian Waterbird Monitoring Partnership which coordinates the development of waterbird monitoring in the African-Eurasian flyways. The partnership is a coalition of 80+ organizations. More information please see here:

- <https://www.wetlands.org/publications/african-eurasian-waterbird-monitoring-partnership/> and here <https://europe.wetlands.org/our-network/waterbird-monitoring-partnership/>

36. The most recent report on the development of waterbird monitoring in the AEWA Area is available here:

- https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_mop8_26_report_development_waterbird_monitoring.pdf

37. The waterbird monitoring priorities in the AEWA Area were agreed by the Contracting Parties in 2022 at MOP8 and are available here:

- https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_mop8_27_waterbird_monitoring_priorities.pdf

38. Synergies with other frameworks on waterbird monitoring were also identified and presented in this document:

- https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_mop8_28_waterbird_monitoring_synergies.pdf

II.9- Establishment/support of research and monitoring programs to fill gaps in the knowledge of threatened species in partnership with other organizations

39. 43% of the progress reports indicated that they have set up research programs, monitoring protocols, and monitoring plans for the marine and coastal birds listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, particularly in the context of some of the SPAMIs. Two countries said that they are still in the process of developing the research and monitoring program. Some parties mentioned that research is carried out also by NGOs. Others indicated that this action is only carried on by NGOs. Croatia, Malta, Greece, Spain, Monaco, etc., have been cooperating with

various research institutions like IUCN, BirdLife International, LPO, CEN, Universities; and organizations such as AEWA, Ramsar, SPA/RAC, etc. However, supporting sea science and research, including changing environmental conditions, and evolving societal priorities, may be considered as an important tool to better manage species conservation.

40. The challenges and difficulties were due to a lack of financial resources for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malta, and Montenegro, and to administrative management and regulatory framework for Egypt and Lebanon.

41. Within the IMAP/EcAP process, SPA/RAC supported the elaboration of National Biodiversity monitoring programmes (including the monitoring of bird species of annex II of SPA/BD Protocol) in south Mediterranean countries. see the mentioned programme in this link https://rac-spa.org/ecapmed_ii

42. SPA/RAC has also elaborated the document on Scales of monitoring and assessments, assessment criteria, baseline and threshold values for IMAP common indicators related to sea birds.

43. SPA/RAC supported contracted parties to improve skills and expertise of relevance for the conservation of bird species through the implementation of the [MedBycatch](#) Projects funded by MAVA.

44. Evaluating seabird movements and its interactions with fisheries using an endemic and threatened shearwater along its Mediterranean range.' Implemented by the UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA

45. Improving Knowledge Base on Procellariidae of Turkey in Central Aegean Basin, implemented by DOGA (BirdLife Partner in Turkiya)

II.10- Support contracting parties and partners to produce and publish relevant scientific documentation contributing to updating knowledge and enhancing conservation action taken on the Annex II species.

46. This action was not included in the Parties' periodic reports for 2016-2022.

47. The challenges and threats in the questionnaires which were answered in the national reports (2016-2022) have had an indication that a good number of countries are in need of support for Regulatory legislation, administrative management, technical guidance, technical scientific capacity, and chiefly financial resources. All should be preferably covered under the umbrella of this supportive action. Thus, it is better that this Action gets rid of its aspect of Activity in favor of the aspect of a real Action and comes probably in the following form:

48. "Support contracting parties and partners to improve their skills and expertise in facing challenges and threats and to produce and publish relevant scientific documentation contributing to update knowledge and enhance conservation action taken on the Annex II species".

49. To improve the results of the Action Plan, and within its assistance to the Mediterranean countries, SPA/RAC supported:

- The water birds winter census in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia.
- The census and ringing of Ghara Island (Libya) colony of the Lesser Crested terns.
- The preparation of the National Action Plan for the conservation of marine and coastal birds in Syria.

- The elaboration of the report on the status of Pelicans in Montenegro.
- The elaboration of the Atlas of wintering waterbirds of Libya.

50. Birdlife International supported contracting parties to produce scientific documentation contributing to update knowledge and enhancing conservation action taken on the Annex II species. Several BirdLife national partners in EU member States contribute to reporting under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), as well as Article 12 reporting under the EU Birds Directive. As for the training, it was recently implemented through the MedBycatch project on bycatch monitoring.

51. AEWA contributing to this action when its AEWA Standing Committee opened a case file to review and advice on resolving threats to Sabkhet Sejoumi in Tunisia. This advisory process is undertaken jointly with the Ramsar Convention.

52. ICCAT supported contracting parties to produce scientific documentation contributing to update knowledge and enhancing conservation action for bird species listed in the Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol. In broad terms, ICCAT has Conservation and Management Measures related to seabird bycatch mitigation that apply to the area between 20-25 degrees South ([Rec. 07-07](#)) and to South of 25 degrees South latitude ([Rec.11-09](#)). With respect to scientific documentation, ICCAT scientists participate in broader seabird science and research as the broader scientific community. Within ICCAT, the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics' Subcommittee of Ecosystems and Bycatch has a standing agenda item that addresses seabird by-catch components of ICCAT fisheries. As part thereof, it welcomes contributions from any of its parties including documents to update knowledge on seabirds that are reviewed as part of the meeting and whose proceedings are published by ICCAT in Sub-Committee of Ecosystems and Bycatch reports as well as in the [ICCAT's Collective Volume of Scientific papers](#).

II.11- Identification of areas important for birds on land and at sea (mapping of breeding, feeding, molting, and wintering areas).

53. During the period 2016-2022, two to three progress reports from each contracting party were submitted to SPA/RAC. Fourteen reports (32% of the total reports from the 21 countries) provided updated information to their previous reports. One country (Spain) produced a bird Atlas and wintering counts; in Malta, some important areas for birds were added as protected areas, whereas the other 4 countries said that the identification of areas important to birds on land and at sea, and the mapping of birds at breeding, feeding, roosting, molting, and wintering are in process (under development). As for the difficulties and the challenges, they are of financial origin to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Malta, and Montenegro, and the administrative and regulatory framework for Egypt and Lebanon.

54. Areas Important for Birds (AIBs) are not identified in Egypt and they are under identification in Croatia and Cyprus; whereas they (AIBs) are better identified in Lebanon and Greece. There was a confusion in some CPs between AIB and IBA. But SPA and IBA could be an AIB but the latter couldn't be a SPA or IBA or IBBA. Since there are criteria for IBA and SPA, the AIB should also have its own criteria which may be develop by SPA/RAC.

55. In anticipation of identifying more important areas for marine and coastal birds, SPA/RAC has developed a guide to enable members to properly manage these areas. The guidelines for management and monitoring threatened population of marine and coastal bird species and their Important areas in the Mediterranean.

56. Birdlife International supported partners in the Mediterranean to identify and map important areas for birds on land and sea, including breeding, feeding, roosting, molting, and wintering areas:

Malta

57. Under [LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project](#) (2011-2016), the marine IBAs (feeding sites) were identified for Yelkouan Shearwater, Scopoli's Shearwater and European Storm-petrel https://birdlifemalta.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LIFE10NATMT090-MSP-A8_mIBA_Report_final.pdf

58. During our [LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija](#) project (2015-2020) in 2019, thanks to data collected, the breeding site for Yelkouan and Scopoli's Shearwaters (at Wied il-Mielah) was designated as SPA by Environment and Resources Authority

Croatia

59. Through the [LIFE Artina](#) project using seabird tracking and at-sea survey data collected 4 new marine IBAs for Yelkouan Shearwater were identified, including one cross-border site (2 separate IBAs) in the northern Adriatic overlapping the Croatian and Italian EEZ. The boundaries of an existing IBA was revised based on new data for the Yelkouan Shearwater and the Audouin's Gull.

Italy

60. As above, one of the new sites for Yelkouan Shearwater identified through the LIFE Artina project was in the Italian EEZ.

Greece

61. In Greece tracking data from Yelkouan Shearwaters on Gyaros has highlighted the importance of the Black Sea as a foraging area for breeding birds.

62. As per AEWA, it is an obligation for the Contracting Parties to undertake to identify the network of sites of international and national importance for AEWA-listed species. Between 2019 and 2022 the AEWA Technical Committee developed a simple framework for re-confirming the national inventory of sites of international and national importance and Contracting Parties have been submitting such inventories using that framework.

63. These inventories will be used to complement and update the Critical Site Network Tool which is the online facility for the AEWA Site Network: <http://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en>

64. A monitoring framework for the AEWA Site Network was also developed and approved in the last triennium: https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_mop8_29_site_monitoring_framework.pdf

65. As per AEWA, the production of scientific documentation to update the needed knowledge is an obligation of the AEWA Contracting Parties. In the last triennium priority knowledge gaps were identified: See: https://www.unep-aewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_mop8_30_overview_knowledge_gaps_needs.pdf

II.12- Legal establishment of Protected Areas (PAs) with adequate management plans at breeding sites

66. 79% of the national progress reports by the Contracting Parties for 2016-2022 are indifferent from their previous reports. Although, 9 countries added new information. Of them, Malta which has protected areas with management plans, whilst Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro have protected areas without management plans. Five countries have said that the establishment of the protected areas is in progress or under development. As for the remaining

countries, especially the European, they mainly

67. Regarding the challenges and constraints, Bosnia and Herzegovina focused on lack and policy and Regulatory Framework as this lack prevented them from establishing protected areas with adequate management plans at breeding sites. Egypt found in the weakness of the administrative management a unique obstacle. The obsessions of Montenegro, and Turkey were above all financial resources and technical guidance. Whereas, most of the Europeans like Croatia, Spain, Italy, Greece and few others were not having challenges faced.

II.13- Produce the 3rd Report on progress in the implementation of the Action Plan according to the proposed achieved indicators

68. This Action was not included in any of the periodic reports of the countries, but it is an important action that may briefly illustrate achievements on the model of the report of Mrs. Lobna bin Nakhla about the Action Plan for the birds listed in Annex II, APA/BD.

69. Otherwise, this Action corresponds to the present draft report on the progress in the implementation of the Action Plan, but after monitoring the common indicators for the bird species of the Action Plan.

NOTES

None of the above actions is fully implemented since more information and feedback from the countries will be needed through the answered questionnaires to better assess the implementation of the Action Plan. This is crucial to understand the real problems that need to be solved both at the regional and at national or local levels for effective actions. Hence the need to keep the same questions but more detailed to reach the goals of this Bird Conservation Action Plan.

Since the Action Plan is the roadmap or the action strategy toward ensuring the conservation of the marine and coastal bird species listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol, it is necessary not only to monitor those birds breeding on their sites but also to monitor the migrating and wintering bird species in their sites of agglomeration, roosting, feeding, resting, wintering, breeding and mapping their frequency, distribution and abundance with the aim of detecting their declining or increasing trends, and subsequently measuring the success rate of implementing the Mediterranean Action Plan using the common indicators for this purpose. This is important for the participation of all countries in the conservation of the birds listed in Annex II, whether they are breeding, overwintering, over-summering, or transient species.
