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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

23rd meeting
Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2003

Introduction to the Action Plans for Birds

*Document prepared by BirdLife International
with support from AEWA and the Dutch government*



Species Action Plans for
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* *
Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* *
Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* *
Great Snipe *Gallinago media* *
Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* *

1. Introduction

Five new Species Action Plans are presented for adoption by the Bern Convention Standing Committee at their 23rd meeting. This completes the task of producing action plans for all 37 European species (although the IUCN plan for the Caucasian Grouse *Tetrao mlokosiewiczzi*, which is 'Data Deficient', has not been presented to the Standing Committee) included in BirdLife International's book *Threatened Birds of the World*, which presents IUCN's most recent (2000) global red list of threatened bird species.

Sociable Plover is listed as globally threatened (in the Vulnerable category ie facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future), Pallid Harrier, Great Snipe and Cinereous Bunting are 'Near-threatened' (Species which are close to qualifying for Vulnerable), and Black-Winged Pratincole is 'Data Deficient' (inadequate information to make a direct, or indirect, assessment of its risk of extinction based on its range and/or population status).

These plans have been developed following the usual participatory approach of BirdLife International (see appendix for details of plan compilation). Three of them (Sociable Plover, Great Snipe and Black-Winged Pratincole) have been prepared at the request of the African Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA) and have a new format that results in shorter and more focused documents. The format is built upon the Logical framework process (LogFrame), which is the commonly used methodology to develop plans and projects.

These three plans were adopted at the AEWA second Meeting of the Parties in September 2002 through Resolution No. 2.13 "International action plans on the Sociable plover, the Black-winged pratincole and the Great snipe"

http://www.unep-wcmc.org/AEWA/eng/Meeting%20of%20Parties/MOP2docs/wrd/Resolutions/RES2_13_SAP.doc

The work has been supported by AEWA and by the Department of Nature Management of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries.

2. Geographical coverage

All five action plans cover the entire range of the species, and the compilers have established a network of more than 150 experts ranging from Europe to Africa and central Asia. See Table 1 below for the countries that need to implement each action plan.

* Reference documents:

Action plan for the Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* : document T-PVS/Inf (2003) 18
 Action plan for the Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* : document T-PVS/Inf (2003) 13
 Action plan for the Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* : document T-PVS/Inf (2003) 19
 Action plan for the Great Snipe *Gallinago media* : document T-PVS/Inf (2003) 14
 Action plan for the Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* : document T-PVS/Inf (2003) 17

Table 1 – Countries which need to implement each action plan

B = Breeding; NB = Non breeding

	Pallid Harrier	Black-winged Pratincole	Sociable Lapwing	Great Snipe	Cinereous Bunting
Afghanistan	NB		NB		
Albania				NB	
Algeria				NB	
Angola		NB		NB	
Armenia	NB	B	NB	NB	
Azerbaijan	B / NB	B	NB	NB	
Bahrain		NB	NB		NB
Bangladesh	NB				
Belarus		B		B	
Belgium				NB	
Benin	NB			NB	
Bosnia & Herzegovina				NB	
Botswana	NB	NB		NB	
Bulgaria	NB	B		NB	
Burkina Faso	NB			NB	
Burundi	NB	NB		NB	
Cameroon	NB			NB	
Centr. Afr. Rep.				NB	
Chad	NB	NB		NB	
China	B / NB				
Congo				NB	
Congo (Dem. Rep.)		NB		NB	
Côte d'Ivoire		NB		NB	
Croatia				NB	
Cyprus	NB	NB		NB	NB
Czech Rep.				NB	
Denmark				NB	
Egypt	NB	NB		NB	NB
Equatorial Guinee				NB	
Eritrea		NB	NB	NB	NB
Estonia				NB	
Ethiopia	NB	NB		NB	NB
Finland				NB	
France		B		NB	
Gabon		NB		NB	
Gambia	NB			NB	
Georgia	NB			NB	
Germany		B		NB	
Ghana	NB	NB		NB	

Greece				NB	B
Guinea	NB			NB	
Guinea-Bissau	NB			NB	
Hungary		B		NB	
India	NB		NB		
Iran	NB	NB	NB	NB	B?
Iraq	NB	NB	NB	NB	
Israel	NB	NB	NB	NB	NB
Italy				NB	
Jordan	NB	NB		NB	NB
Kazakhstan	B / NB	B	B	NB	
Kenya	NB	NB		NB	
Kenya				NB	
Kuwait			NB	NB	NB
Kyrgyzstan	NB		NB		
Latvia				B	
Lebanon	NB	NB		NB	NB
Liberia				NB	
Libya	NB			NB	
Liechtenstein				NB	
Lithuania				B	
Luxembourg				NB	
Malawi	NB			NB	
Mali	NB	NB		NB	
Mali				NB	
Malta				NB	
Mauritania		NB		NB	
Moldavia	B	B		NB	
Monaco				NB	
Mongolia	B / NB				
Morocco				NB	
Mozambique	NB			NB	
Namibia	NB	NB		NB	
Nepal	NB				
Netherlands				NB	
Niger	NB			NB	
Nigeria	NB	NB		NB	
Norway				B	
Oman	NB	NB	NB		
Pakistan	NB		NB		
Poland				B	
Portugal				NB	
Qatar		NB	NB		NB

Romania	B	B		NB	
Russian federation	B	B	B	B	
Rwanda	NB	NB		NB	
São Tomé e Príncipe		NB			
Saudi Arabia	NB	NB	NB	NB	NB
Senegal	NB			NB	
Serbia and Montenegro.				NB	
Seychelles		NB			
Sierra Leone				NB	
Slovak Rep.				NB	
Slovenia				NB	
Somalia	NB	NB			
South Africa	NB	NB		NB	
Spain				NB	
Sri Lanka	NB		NB		
Sudan	NB	NB		NB	NB
Sweden				B	
Switzerland				NB	
Syria	NB	B / NB	NB	NB	B?
Tajikistan	NB		NB		
Tanzania	NB	NB		NB	
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia				NB	
Togo	NB	NB		NB	
Tunisia	NB			NB	
Turkey	B / NB	B / NB	NB	NB	B
Turkmenistan	NB		NB	NB	
Uganda	NB	NB		NB	
Ukraine	B	B		B	
United Arab Emirates	NB	NB	NB		NB
United Kingdom				NB	
Uzbekistan	NB	B	NB	NB	
Yemen	NB	NB			NB
Yemen				NB	
Zambia	NB	NB		NB	
Zimbabwe	NB			NB	

3. Population trends and threats

The results of the review of the status and distribution of the species give reasons for serious concern in particular for the 'steppe' species: Pallid Harrier, Sociable Lapwing and Black-winged Pratincole. The Sociable Lapwing is rapidly disappearing and the current population estimate of 200-600 is significantly smaller than previously thought.

A number of 'steppe' species have been recorded in western Europe in the last few years with increasing frequency, and this may be the result of factors, which we still do not fully understand, that are pushing the species away from their original habitats.

The Great Snipe population is apparently stable with > 250.000 breeding pairs, >90% of which are in Russia. Habitat loss (floodplains along rivers in Central Europe, open areas above the tree line in Scandinavia) is the main threat. Hunting activities need to be monitored not only on the breeding grounds (spring) but also in Africa (winter) where the species seems to concentrate in a few areas and therefore to be vulnerable.

The Cinereous Bunting population is still difficult to assess (current estimate 700 – 5000 pairs) but the upper figure represents only an improvement in knowledge rather than an actual increase. The big dams planned or under implementation in Turkey are a concern for the species which seems to prefer the sides of river valleys, many of which will be flooded by reservoirs.

Table 2 Overview of the main threats to the species

Threats	Pallid Harrier	Black-winged Pratincole	Sociable Lapwing	Great Snipe	Cinereous Bunting
Agriculture intensification	X			X	
Habitat loss		X (ploughing of virgin steppes)	X (ploughing of virgin steppes)		
Drainage	X			X	X
Predation by Corvids					
Pesticide use	X	X	X		
Grass burning and cutting	X			X	
Overgrazing	X	X	X	X	X
Land abandonment (undergrazing)		X	X	X	X?
Disturbance		X	X	X	X
Reduced food availability	X				

All the species are directly affected by land use related to agriculture. For steppe species, following the large-scale ploughing of virgin land in the 1950s and '60s, the abandonment of agriculture does not seem to be slowing the decrease.

The habitat of the Great Snipe is very limited in area in the Scandinavian Peninsula, where it occurs in a narrow strip of open landscape above the timber line where grazing pressure is increasing. The floodplains (the main habitat in central Europe and in southern Russia) have been reduced by flood-control measures.

The role grazing plays for the Cinereous Bunting is not very clear; it seems that the presence of the species in Greece is related to a certain level of grazing and to the action of fires on the vegetation structure and composition.

4. Priority for actions

The lack of solid information on the threats and their impact on the species is the first priority for all five species. Nevertheless, special attention should be given immediately to the management of the many Important Bird Areas where the species occur.

In particular, surveys should be undertaken for the steppe species (Pallid Harrier, Sociable Lapwing and Black winged Pratincole), while regular monitoring schemes should be established for all the species.

Low input agriculture and low pressure grazing have an important role in shaping and maintaining the habitat for most of these species, and traditional agricultural practices should be maintained through appropriate policy such as agri-environment schemes.

Very little is known about the wintering areas of all the species and therefore, alongside actions in the Western Palaearctic, attention should be given to the Indian subcontinent and to Africa.

Table 3 – Overview of the conservation priorities

Conservation priorities	Pallid Harrier	Black-winged Pratincole	Sociable Lapwing	Great Snipe	Cinereous Bunting
Protect steppe wetlands	X				
Support traditional agriculture and cattle grazing	X	X	X	X	X
Ensure legal protection to the species and sites	X	X	X	X (or regulate/ monitor hunting)	
Improve law enforcement	X	X	X		
Research on habitat preference and ecology	X	X	X		X
Survey on breeding and wintering areas	X	X	X	X	X
Develop Site Management plans	X	X	X	X	X
Public awareness		X	X		

APPENDIX

ACTION PLAN FOR PALLID HARRIER *CIRCUS MACROURUS*

Compilers: Vladimir Galushin, Roger Clarke, Anatoly Davygora

No. of people contacted: 74 from 39 countries. The Ornithology Committee members were consulted on the first draft in December 2001.

Workshop: 4-5 March 2002, Moscow Zoo. Organised by RBCU (BirdLife in Russia). Attended by 31 experts.

Contributors: (54)

Abuladze, Alexander (Tbilisi, Georgia)
 Ananyan, Vasily (Yerevan Armenia)
 Arroyo, Beatriz (UK)
 Belik, Victor (Rostov, Russia)
 Bogomolov, Denis (Moscow, Russia)
 Borodin, Oleg (Ulyanovsk, Russia)
 Bragin, Evgeny (Naurzum, Kazakhstan)
 Bukreev, Sergey (Moscow, Russia)
 Callaghan, Des (BirdLife International, NL).
 Charalambides, Melis (Cyprus)
 Chernobay, Vasily (Volgograd, Russia)
 Clarke, Roger (UK)
 Cu, Nguen (Vietnam)
 Davygora, Anatoly (Orenburg, Russia)
 Dereliev, Sergey (Sofia, Bulgaria)
 Dzhamirzoev, Gadzhibek (Dagestan, Russia)
 Edisherashvili, Gia (Tbilisi, Georgia)
 Fefelov, Igor (Irkutsk, Russia)
 Flade, Martin (Germany)
 Frolov, Vyacheslav (Penza, Russia)
 Grishchenko, Vitaly (Kanev, Ukraine)
 Ilyukh, Mikhail (Stavropol, Russia)
 Kalyakin, Mikhail (Moscow, Russia)
 Karyakin, Igor (Perm, Russia)
 Katzner, Todd (USA)
 Korkina, Svetlana (Penza, Russia)
 Korolkov, Maxim (Ulyanovsk, Russia)
 Kostin, Alexey (Moscow, Russia)

Kovshar, Anatoly (Almaty, Kazakhstan)
 Kreutzberg-Mukhina, Elena (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)
 Lebedeva, Elena (Moscow, Russia)
 Levin, Anatoly (Almaty, Kazakhstan)
 Madders, Mike (UK)
 Matantsev, Valery (Izhevsk, Russia)
 Milobog, Yuri (Lugansk, Ukraine)
 Mischenko, Alexander (Moscow, Russia)
 Morozov, Vladimir (Moscow, Russia)
 Moseikin, Valery (Saratov, Russia)
 Munteanu, Dan (Bucharest, Romania)
 Potapov, Eugeni (S-Peterburg, Russia)
 Reif, Vitaly (Oulu, Finland)
 Reuven, Yosef (Eilat, Israel)
 Ryabtsev, Vitaly (Irkutsk, Russia)
 Saurola, Pertti (Helsinki, Finland)
 Shepel, Alexander (Perm, Russia)
 Shergalin, Jevgeni (Estonia)
 Shijirmaa, D. (Ulaan-Baatar, Mongolia)
 Simmons, Robert (South Africa)
 Sultanov, Elchin (Baku, Azerbaijan)
 Vetrov, Vitaly (Lugansk, Ukraine)
 Walsh, Marcus (Helsinki, Finland)
 Ye, Xiaodi (Beijing, China)
 Zubakin, Victor (Moscow, Russia)
 Zubkov, Nikolay (Kishinev, Moldova)

ACTION PLAN FOR BLACK WINGED PRATINCOLE *GLAREOLA NORDMANNI*

Compiler: Victor P. Belik, Elena A. Lebedeva

No. of people contacted: 48 from 34 countries. The members of the Ornis Committee and AEW Technical Committee were consulted on the first draft in November 2001.

Workshop: 3 March 2002, Moscow Zoo. Organised by RBCU (BirdLife in Russia). Attended by 17 experts.

Contributors: (40)

Antonchikov, Alexander (Russia)
Beljachenko, Alexander (Russia)
Bliznjuk, Anatoly (Russia)
Bragin, Eugeny (Kazakhstan)
Bukreev, Sergei (Russia)
Charalambides, Melis (Cyprus)
Chernobaj, Vasily (Russia)
Davygora, Anatoly (Russia)
Emtyl', Murat (Russia)
Gallo-Orsi, Umberto (BirdLife Europe)
Khokhlov, Alexander (Russia)
Khrokov, Valery (Kazakhstan)
Kirwan, Guy (UK)
Komarov, Jury (Russia)
Korol'kov, Maksim (Russia)
Korshikov, Leonid (Russia)
Kreuzberg-Mukhina, Elena (Uzbekistan)
Leonard, Pete (Zambia)
Lipkovich, Alexander (Russia)
Lokhman, Jury (Russia)

Mikhail Il'juch, Edward (Russia)
Minoransky, Viktor (Russia)
Molodan, Gennady (Ukraine)
Mongin, Edward (Belarus)
Morozov, Vladimir (Russia)
Moseikin, Valery, (Russia)
Munteanu, Dan (Romania)
Nankinov, Dimitar (Bulgaria)
Ndang'ang'a, Kariuki (Kenya)
Piskunov, Vladimir (Russia)
Richardson, Colin (United Arab Emirates)
Scott, Derek (Ireland)
Shahno, V. (Russia)
Sokhina, Evilina (Russia)
Sultanov, Elchin (Azerbaijan)
Tomkovich, Pavel (Russia)
Varlamov, Andrei (Russia)
Zakharov, Vladimir (Russia)
Zubakin, Victor (Russia)

DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR SOCIABLE LAPWING CHETTUSIA GREGARIA

Compiler: Pavel S. Tomkovich, Elena A. Lebedeva

Workshop: 2 March 2002, Moscow Zoo. Organised by RBCU (BirdLife in Russia). Attended by 17 experts.

No. of people contacted: 28 from 20 countries. The members of the Ornis Committee and AEW Technical Committee were consulted on the first draft in November 2001.

Contributors: (19)

Abuladze, Alexander (Georgia)

Davygora, Anatoly V., (Orenburg, Russia)

Richardson, Colin (Dubai, United Arab Emirates)

Scott, Derek (Ireland)

Sultanov, Elchin (Baku, Azerbaijan)

Lebedeva, Elena A. (Moscow, Russia)

Kreuzberg-Mukhina, Elena (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

Bragin, Eugeny A. (Naurzum Nature Reserve, Kazakhstan)

Molodan, Gennady N. (Donetsk, Ukraine)

Korshikov, Leonid V. (Orenburg, Russia)

Korol'kov, Maksim A. (Ul'yanovsk, Russia)

Bukreev, Sergei A. (Moscow, Russia)

Gallo-Orsi, Umberto (BirdLife Europe)

Moseikin, Valery N. (Saratov, Russia)

Khrokov, Valery V. (Almaty, Kazakhstan)

Chernobaj, Vasily F. (Volgograd, Russia)

Zubakin, Victor A. (Moscow, Russia)

Belik, Victor P. (Rostov-on-Don, Russia)

Morozov, Vladimir V. (Moscow, Russia)

DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR GREAT SNIPE GALLINAGO MEDIA

Compiler: John Atle Kålås (*Institute for Nature Research*)

Workshop: 22-24 February 2002. Organised by the Estonian Ornithological Society (BirdLife in Estonia) and held at their office in Tartu. Attended by 13 experts from nine countries.

No. of people contacted: 82 from 56 countries. The members of the Ornithological Committee and AEW Technical Committee were consulted on the first draft in November 2001.

Contributors: (43)

Umberto Gallo Orsi (BirdLife International)
 Jaanus Elts (Estonia)
 Anders Kalamees (Estonia)
 John Atle Kålås (Norway)
 Des Callaghan (BirdLife International)
 Bernt Lenten (UNEP, Germany)
 Kariuki Nding'ang'a (Kenya)
 Ainars Aunins (Latvia)
 Gleb Gavris (Ukraine)
 Sergei Fokin (Russia)
 Andres Kuresoo (Estonia)
 Leho Luigujõe (Estonia)
 Edward Mongin (Belarus)
 Vladimir Morozov (Russia)
 Liutauras Raudonikis (Lithuania)
 Michał Maniakowski (Poland)
 Jacob Höglund (Sweden)
 Viktor P. Ivanchev (Russia)
 Peder Fiske (Norway)
 Stein Are Sæther (Norway)
 Michael Grell (Denmark)

Melis Charalambides (Cyprus)
 Jacques Franchimont (Morocco)
 Dan Munteanu (Romania)
 Elchin Sultanov (Azerbaijan)
 Derek Scott (Iran)
 Michel Devort (France and Africa)
 Ranier Massoli-Novelli (Italy and Ethiopia)
 Guy-Noël Olivier (France and Africa)
 Joost Brouwer (Africa)
 Tim Dodman (Africa)
 Liz & Neil Baker (Tanzania)
 Albert Beintema (Mali)
 Nik Borrow (Gabon)
 Anthony Cizek (Zimbabwe)
 Patrick Claffey (Benin)
 Will Duckworth (Gabon)
 Pete Leonard (Zambia) Heimo Mikkola (Gambia)
 Nigel Redman (Kenya)
 Ian Sinclair (Namibia, Zimbabwe)
 Eddy Wymenga (Mali)

DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR THE CINEREOUS BUNTING EMBERIZA CINERACEA

Compilers: Tamer Albayrak, Arzu Gürsoy, Guy M. Kirwan

No. of people contacted: 48 from 19 countries

No workshop has been held regarding this plan and the ORNIS Committee has not yet been consulted as the species does not occur in any countries which are currently members of the European Union.

Contributors:

Akriotis, Triantaphyllos (Greece)
 Alder, Christine (UK)
 Alivizatos, Haralambos (HOS/BirdLife
 Greece, Greece)
 Aspinall, Simon (United Arab Emirates)
 Balmer, Dawn (UK)
 Bourdakos, Stratis (HOS/BirdLife Greece,
 Greece)
 Boyla, Kerem A. (Turkey)
 Callaghan, Des (BirdLife International,
 Netherlands)
 Charambides, Melis (Cyprus
 Ornithological Society, Cyprus)
 de Knijff, Peter (The Netherlands)
 Demircan, Sunay (Turkey)

Eken, Güven (The Netherlands, BirdLife
 International)
 Kurt, Bahtiyar (DHKD, Turkey)
 Miller, Alan (UK)
 Montag, Dany (Israel)
 Özen, Metehan (Turkey)
 Özesmi, Uygur (Turkey)
 Papacostantinou, Costas (HOS/BirdLife
 Greece, Greece)
 Richardson, Colin (United Arab Emirates)
 Sapir, Nir (Israel)
 Scott, Derek A. (UK)
 Taveres, José (RSPB, UK)
 Welch, Geoff (RSPB, UK)
 Welch, Hilary (UK)