

Wadden Sea Board

WSB 28

14 March 2019
Berlin, Germany



Agenda Item:	5.9 International Cooperation
Subject:	Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI)
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Submitted by:	CAFF

Background

The Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI) is a project of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), the biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council. AMBI is cooperating through the African Eurasian Flyway Coordinator at the CWSS with the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI). Both Initiatives are aiming for an improved conservation of the East Atlantic Flyway by cooperation with countries along the flyway.

Proposal: The meeting is invited to take note of the AMBI memorandum and the AMBI workplan.

Memorandum 26/02/2019

**Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI), African-Eurasian Flyway (AFEU)
Workplan 2019-2023, and AMBI AFEU Coordinator**
For information and guidance to the Wadden Sea Board

ISSUE:

This document provides background on CAFF's Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI), its objectives and actions for the African-Eurasian Flyway, and outlines areas of current and potential future cooperation with the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC), the CWSS and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI) for consideration by the Wadden Sea Board.

In addition, CAFF takes the opportunity to present the components of the recently completed AMBI workplan relevant to the WSFI (Annex 1).

AMBI AFRICAN EURASIAN (AFEU) FLYWAY AND COORDINATOR:

The AMBI AFEU Coordinator position was launched in 2018 and is currently funded for one year (May 2018-May 2019). The AFEU Coordinator joins the AMBI coordination team, comprised of the CAFF Secretariat, AMBI Global Coordinator and AMBI Americas Coordinator and AMBI East Asian-Australasian Flyway Coordinator. This position was identified as a need by the AMBI Steering Group and at various AMBI implementation meetings to help members of AMBI Flyway Committees¹ coordinate, seek funding, develop and implement the actions approved in the AMBI Work Plan. After discussions between CAFF and the CWSS, it was agreed that the AMBI AFEU Coordinator position would be located at the CWSS office in Wilhelmshaven to strengthen cooperation between the bodies and to assist in strategic guidance and support for the position. Main tasks of the AFEU Coordinator:

- Drafting, coordinating, and compiling strategic documents in close consultation with the AFEU Flyway Committee and other Flyway partners, in particular a policy crosswalk analysis for the AFEU Flyway, the AMBI 2019-2023 workplan, and an implementation strategy;
- Identifying alignments between AMBI and those of critical partners, and working to build partnership opportunities to achieve common goals;
- Coordinating actions and activities to implement the AMBI Work Plan 2019-2023;
- Mobilizing support from members of the AMBI Flyway Committee and other relevant partners to contribute to flyway implementation activities;
- Strengthening existing networks along the flyway and creating new connections to support conservation of Arctic migratory birds; and
- Raising awareness of the importance of international cooperation and concerted action needed to conserve Arctic migratory birds.

To help accomplish these tasks, the Coordinator has participated in several key events:

- *AMBI implementation workshop (Rovaniemi, October 2018)*: workshop for the preparation of the AMBI Workplan 2019-2023, with WSFI participation.
- *Arctic Biodiversity Congress (Rovaniemi, October 2018)*: organized by CAFF, with WSFI participation

¹ The AFEU Flyway Committee consists of representatives from Norway, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK, BirdLife International, the African Eurasian Waters Agreement (AEWA), and the CAFF Secretariat.

- *Expert workshop “Environmental protection of the High North” (Berlin, October 2018):* organized by the German Biodiversity Agency under the 2nd Arctic Science Ministerial Conference, attended by the AFEU Coordinator and CAFF Chair (USA).
- *WSFI Steering Group (Bonn, October 2018):* participation ahead of the preparatory workshop, together with the AMBI Chair (Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, Russia).
- *Preparatory meeting for WSFI Arctic workshop in Russia 2019 (Bonn, October 2018):* together with the AMBI Chair (Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, from Russia).
- *Wadden Sea Board 27 (Copenhagen, November 2018).*
- *AEWA MOP7 (Durban, December 2018):* participation in the MOP and organized a side event in which he presented on behalf of the WSFI, showcasing synergies and common activities between WSFI and AMBI.

Until the end of the position (May 2019), the following activities are envisioned for the AFEU Coordinator:

- Preparation of the implementation strategy for the AMBI AFEU Workplan 2019-2023 in consultation with Flyway Committee members (including WSFI) and other Flyway Partners. The implementation strategy will identify concrete activities and projects to undertake under each workplan objective and action, as well as mapping key partnerships to strengthen/establish, budget estimations, and fundraising opportunities;
- Preparation (under the guidance of the CAFF Board) of a first field visit to Guinea-Bissau to advance AMBI AFEU Work Plan 2019-2023 objectives and actions; and
- Participation in the WSFI Steering Group meeting (Bremen, April 2019) with the objective of further discuss pathways for cooperation with Arctic countries and for initiating a WSFI Arctic Workshop.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN AMBI AND THE WSFI/TWSC

The AMBI Work Plan 2019-2023 covers priority conservation issues and actions relating to migratory Arctic-breeding birds with a focus on habitat conservation and preventing unsustainable harvest. Supporting the protection of habitat in West Africa for migratory bird species is a major focus of the work under the flyway, in particular Objective 1, action 1 states “Secure intertidal habitat of Arctic-breeding shorebirds in Bijagós Archipelago, Guinea-Bissau”. The WSFI/TWSC have extensive experience working in the area and on this topic, and there is great potential for AMBI and the WSFI/TWSC to work together to assist local actors in their World Heritage site re-nomination submission. Other AMBI priorities include ensuring sustainable populations of Lesser White-fronted Geese are protected, addressing seaduck bycatch in the Baltic Sea, and increasing the quality and quantity of data available for decision-making. These priority activities have been selected where AMBI can potentially add significant value to existing initiatives through engagement of Arctic Council States and Observer countries. Value can be added through diplomatic interventions, fundraising, and through capacity building and exchange of information and experience within and between flyways.

FUNDING OF THE COORDINATOR POSITION:

To date, funding for the AMBI AFEU position has been provided by Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, and the Project Support Instrument (a funding instrument managed by the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation) to support the position and its work for one year. The CAFF Secretariat continues to discuss with these partners and others the potential to continue supporting the AFEU Coordinator position in a more sustainable manner. The cost of the position is 60,000 Euros salary, plus travel.

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Annex 1 – AMBI BACKGROUND

AMBI is a project of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), the biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council. AMBI is designed to improve the conservation status and secure the long-term sustainability of declining Arctic breeding migratory bird populations. Through conservation of a shared natural and cultural resource, AMBI will have a positive impact on societies for whom migratory birds are a source of livelihood and spiritual inspiration. The 2013 Arctic Biodiversity Assessment found that Many Arctic migratory species are threatened by overharvest and habitat alteration outside the Arctic, especially birds along the East Asian flyway. AMBI provides implementation of Recommendation #8 of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment to *'reduce stressors on migratory species range-wide, including habitat degradation and overharvesting on wintering and staging areas and along flyways and other migration routes'*.

AMBI was approved by Arctic Council Ministers in April 2015. It identifies on-the-ground actions to improve the conservation status and secure the long-term sustainability of declining Arctic-breeding migratory bird populations. It aims to enhance cooperation between Arctic and non-Arctic nations that host Arctic migratory birds throughout the year. Work is guided by the AMBI Work Plan 2019-2023.

AMBI organizes activities across four flyways:

- East Asian-Australasian Flyway;
- African-Eurasian Flyway;
- Americas Flyway;
- Circumpolar Flyway.

AMBI has brought together experts and partners from across the globe to develop workplans for each of the above flyways that address priority conservation needs of AMBI priority species in each respective geography. Actions proposed by AMBI are designed to bring added value to ongoing conservation programs, or to address issues that are currently underrepresented. While each of these flyway workplans are intended to stand alone, there are several crosscutting themes that are relevant for all flyways.

At a recent implementation meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, AMBI representatives and experts identified four cross-cutting actions that need to be implemented in all flyways, and which are reflected in this workplan:

1. Increase **data sharing and standardization** along and across flyways
2. Assess **cumulative effects** on Arctic-breeding migratory bird populations including climate change, pollution, shipping, fishing, infrastructure development, habitat loss, and harvest
3. Support conservation actions for Arctic-breeding migratory birds in non-Arctic countries through **coordinated cooperative efforts** with embassies and other diplomatic efforts, including supporting ongoing actions and initiatives
4. Support the **sharing of experiences and expertise** between wetlands that support Arctic-breeding migratory bird populations

Annex II – AMBI AFEU WORKPLAN 2019-2023:

Objective 1: Improve conservation and management of shorebird sites throughout the African-Eurasian flyway.

- *Action 1:* Secure intertidal habitat of Arctic-breeding shorebirds in Bijagós Archipelago, Guinea-Bissau:
 - a) Advance and potentially coordinate international engagement to support the Bijagós World Heritage nomination process, as appropriate.
 - b) Provide technical support to and enhance the capacity of IBAP and other national partners for strengthening the conservation management of the Bijagós Archipelago, including through its nomination and designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- *Action 2:* Ensure identification and documentation of key sites for shorebirds in available format as a tool for national/international sustainable site management.

Objective 2: Increase quality and quantity of population status assessment data of Arctic breeding waterbirds in the African-Eurasian Flyway.

- *Action 1:* Support the implementation of the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) and the revised AEWA Guidelines on Waterbird Monitoring with respect to those Arctic-breeding waterbirds for which optimal data are still lacking, through cooperation with the African-Eurasian Waterbird Monitoring Partnership and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative by providing financial and/or technical support.
- *Action 2:* Support improved population delineation of Arctic-breeding waders by collating Arctic breeding wader migration data (tracking, colour-marking, geolocator, ringing data, etc.) and presenting it on the CSN tool to improve flyway delineation data.

Objective 3: Development and dissemination of information and awareness materials addressing priority target

- *Action 1:* Support the development of communication products (in collaboration with flyway partners) showcasing migratory connectivity, knowledge gaps, and threats in the African-Eurasian flyway area.

Objective 4: Reduce bycatch of seabirds in the Baltic Sea

- *Action 1:* Support the implementation of the AEWA Long-tailed Duck and Velvet Scoter International Single Species Action Plans with respect to the identified activities regarding bycatch under the auspices of the AEWA European Seaduck International Working Group.

Objective 5: Support measures under the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWfG) International Working Group (IWG) to prevent illegal killing.

- *Action 1:* Assist the AEWA LWfG IWG with the translation and dissemination of awareness-raising and education materials in key areas for the species within the Russian Arctic amongst indigenous and local communities.
- *Action 2:* Support the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in engaging key Range States on a diplomatic level through Arctic Council member and observer country embassies.