

Outputs from the European Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (EBBA2) Workshop

March 20 to 22 2013, Barcelona

Observations, useful tips, suggestions for work at national level

This document summarises in concise format observations, ideas or suggestions from the workshop. As the presentations from the workshop and official conclusions are available at the website, this document accompanies them by capturing notes particularly from discussion sessions.

1. Situation in countries

(see also section Fieldworkers)

- Difficult or even risky to access some regions, e.g. Kosovo, southeast Turkey, parts of Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia, needs to be considered.
- Czech fieldworkers already visiting Macedonia and other countries of the West Balkans, can be potentially motivated to do some fieldwork for atlases in those countries.
- Armenia (Karen et al) can help others with training fieldworkers in bird identification.
- Good field guides (books) can make a real difference in many countries. Countries with similar languages particularly, but other countries too, could consider simultaneous translation of high-level field guides. This could be done on a commercial basis (a publisher is responsible for publication and distribution), our community should help with translation and perhaps distribution. Simultaneous translation into several languages can reduce the costs.
- Transboundary squares: guidelines will have to specify how national coordinators will report respective data for the European atlas.
- There is a potential to do fieldwork using the same field methods in adjacent countries, which would make cooperation easy.

2. Fundraising and planning

- Good to have a generic plan as well as an annual work plan.
- Check Interreg funds (or similar initiatives) for cross-border cooperation.
- Share coordination between NGOs and academic institutions.
- Stakeholders should be involved already in early phases of planning.
- Few suggestions for fundraising:
 - Write letters to municipalities which have birds in their logo.

- Write letters to companies with bird names or birds in their logo.
- Sponsor a species (account).
- Sponsor an individual grid square.
- Consider online auction systems.
- Easy payment via internet (donations) could help.

3. Methods incl. modelling

- Obtaining real data represents an essential step in the atlas work. Models that take “expert knowledge” on presence into account may be used too, but the different data quality has to be distinguished in the reporting process.
- For modelling purposes it would be better to have a sampling strategy with relatively small units of survey, especially in a heterogeneous landscape (such as the Caucasus or Alps); make sure that you have representative samples in each habitat of this unit. If this important strategy is taken into account, final modelled maps may look great in heterogeneous landscapes.
- Minimum requirements for atlas data: record exactly when and where the birds were found
- Need to stress the importance of data with exact locations, since data with low location quality are more difficult to use.
- Record how much effort was involved in the field work.
- Include all existing national field programmes into your atlas scheme to extend data collection and save expenditure on fuel or accommodation.

4. Data management incl. on-line recording schemes

- Only some 50% of the countries have a working online portal, some have a portal, but it is not usable for the atlas, the rest wishes to have one. In some national system atlas codes are not (yet) implemented.
- Need to develop international data repository, as at present nearly impossible to record data in foreign countries and store the data in your own system to submit them later to the respective countries.
- Data ownership policy needs to be refined. Also validation processes, protection against misuse and “selling out” of data.

5. Fieldworkers (both local and foreign)

- Travel agencies could help organize expeditions (“Atlas tours”) to remote destinations.
- There could be several different kinds of national “tours” for foreign birdwatchers offered within the atlas project, a) (the usual) target species tours, b) a mix of target species and visits of remote, uncovered areas, c) pure tours of remote, uncovered areas, or d) the “mixing” of local volunteers / technical organizers with experienced foreign ornithologists.

- Be very specific with your information to foreign birdwatchers (where, when, what with etc.) to escape unnecessary return questions; work out good homepage with all relevant information, especially on the grids to be surveyed (where are foreign birdwatchers most needed?). Think about central contact point / specific sub coordinator for foreigners.
- Should couple experienced foreign ornithologists with local volunteers, in order to achieve very good data output and additionally introduce field training for locals.
- Best to provide app for those field workers unable to read maps and orient themselves properly within the grid system.
- The national coordinators should make sure that a group of fieldworkers is responsible for the 50x50 squares and that their work is organised properly.
- Photographers of nature are numerous in Turkey, and could provide additional data.
- Specialists sometimes go to expeditions to other countries for single species surveys, but they usually record other species in the field; therefore could be included in the data collation too.
- Consider that some fieldworkers will be difficult to convince of a voluntary project now that money is available through other sources (wind farm projects etc.).
- In case payment for fieldwork is unavoidable, consider expeditions grants, coupling the paid work with voluntary work. Do not start payment of fieldwork in one season when finances for the remainder of the field seasons cannot be guaranteed.
- Quick and easy feedback to the fieldworkers is essential (atlas newsletter etc.); they also have to be properly acknowledged, i.e. see their names.
- Include competitive aspects in your feedback, as these are often very important to individuals, i.e. include lists of “most species recorded per square”, “most squares covered” or list first breeding records etc. with the name of the recorder.
- Do not underestimate the value of volunteers as fieldworkers (do not solely rely on professionals); try new ways and methods how to recruit volunteers for fieldwork. Absolutely necessary to regionalize coordination, even more so in large countries. In some even a national meeting/conference is highly unlikely to achieve and very costly.
- Students could be involved in atlas work as part of their master or PhD studies (e.g. data collection for their theses).
- Divert many outdoor activities (hikers, anglers, hunters etc.) to at least include recording of birds.

6. Communication

- Turkey (Kerem) can help/advice with communication via new social media.
- Establishing a blog for sharing the experiences could help improve work in inexperienced countries.
- Everyone to note that there will be several case studies of atlases at the Cluj conference.
- Examples of existing atlases should be made available. With methodological advantages and disadvantages.
- Best to have page with frequently asked questions (FAQs) on EBCC web site. Less experienced coordinators should send their questions in as soon as possible to be answered, if possible, by ASC. Would also be good if ASC would comment on some atlas examples to show the advantages or disadvantages of some methods (on the other hand; best in form of a table and add other info in info box; could also include relevant chapters of method books like that of Bibby et al.)

- ASC has to sell the atlas to the public more intensively. The need for EBBA2 has to be recognized by all national ornithological societies.
- Make national EBBA1 data available (e.g. via Observado).

Compiled by Hans-Günther Bauer, Verena Keller, Sergi Herrando and Petr Voříšek