Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna

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The Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI)

Protecting Arctic lifestyles and people through migratory bird conservation

Expert workshop report, Montreal, Canada, February 9, 2014

ARCTIC COUNCIL

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Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna

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Expert workshop report Montreal February 9th 2014

The first AMBI expert workshop took place in Montreal, Canada on February 9th 2014. This report documents the workshop results and next steps.

The purpose of the workshop was to launch the AMBI[1] and accomplish the following tasks:

- Recommend (with the rationale for choices) a high priority list of a few Arctic-breeding species where immediate conservation action would be useful for reversing population declines, for approval by the CAFF management board
- Identify early conservation and research actions that can be taken to improve the conservation status of priority species.

Photo: Morten Ekker

1. Context

There is an urgent need to increase political recognition of the challenges facing Arctic migratory birds and place their conservation firmly on the agenda. The recent addition of new observer countries to the Arctic Council provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges faced by a number of Arctic migratory bird species that are shared between Arctic Council member states and observer countries as well as non-observer countries. In particular, there is an opportunity to raise the plight of these birds, which are a shared natural resource and indicator of environmental health, with Foreign Ministries.

The requirement of Arctic Council Observer states to demonstrate their contributions to the work of the Arctic Council via its Working Groups provides an opportunity to secure conservation actions for Arctic breeding migratory birds along their migration routes.

1 Further information on AMBI can be found here: **http://www.caff.is/arctic-migratory-birds-initiative-ambi**

2. Considerations for design and implementation of AMBI

Participants (section 13) recognized that the following considerations must be kept in mind as we work to design and implement AMBI:

- There is an urgent need to translate research and political commitments into measurable, on the ground positive change for Arctic migratory bird populations.
- Given the considerable number of organizations already involved in various aspects of migratory bird conservation, it will be important to build upon existing networks and ongoing activities, including a number that are formal multilateral agreements.
- When encouraging changes for conservation, it will be important to offer alternative economic models for using natural resources, e.g. managed sustainable ecotourism, sustainable fisheries, sustainable harvesting methods, set-aside areas for conservation, etc.
- The issues facing migratory birds are complex, and the solutions may be as well. It will be important to break complex issues down into smaller components, where the scope of action, timeline and costs can be clearly described for each component.
- It was noted that circumpolar collaboration around seabirds for the purposes of AMBI is simpler because of the existence of CAFFs Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group (CBird). The AMBI group may want to consider formation of a CAFF expert group for shorebirds and/or waterbirds.
- It was noted that participation of Permanent Participants[2] is needed to ensure that AMBI can achieve its objective of benefitting northerners through migratory bird conservation.
- It was noted that no other countries or PPs have indicated that they wish to be on the AMBI steering committee[3]. The invitation is extended again here.

3. Criteria for prioritization

In addition to the criteria listed in the project proposal, the group considered the following criteria;

- The list of priority species should be short and concise (no more than six species or groups of species).
- It is preferable to include species from both the Nearctic and Palaearctic flyways.
- The circumpolar Arctic will be treated as a flyway to recognize species whose migratory paths are east-west within the Arctic rather than north-south.

4. Priority conservation issues

There are several ways in which one could prioritize which species to focus on. This could be done by habitat, by flyway, or by conservation issue. After much discussion, the group decided to prioritize further species' actions around key conservation issues. These were identified as:

- Habitat loss and/or degradation (including disturbance);
- Unsustainable harvest; and
- By-catch (emphasis on gillnet fisheries).

Corresponding priority species, locations, flyways, and habitats are listed in the table below.

2 Indigenous peoples' organizations have been granted Permanent Participants status in the Arctic Council. The Permanent Participants have full consultation rights in connection with the Council's negotiations and decisions. The Permanent Participants represent a unique feature of the Arctic Council, and they make valuable contributions to its activities in all areas – see here for more information - http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/permanent-participants

3 Since the meeting, the United States joined the Steering Committee.

Table 1. Main conservation issues for priority arctic migratory bird species, subdivided by flyway and focus areas. Note that this is a first cut at a prioritized species list- further narrowing of the list will occur.

Issue	Flyway	Species	Habitat/geographical location
1. Habitat loss/ degradation	***East Asian/ Australasian***	Bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica baueri* and *mensbeiri*)	Migration stopovers at Intertidal zones of southeast Asia (migration) especially the Yellow Sea site of Yalu Jiang (China), Jiangsu Coast(China), Geum Estuary(Republic of Korea)
		Dunlin (*Calidris alpina arcticola*)	Migration stopovers, staging and wintering grounds at Intertidal zones of southeast especially the Yellow Sea sites of Jiangsu Coast and Yalu Jiang (China).
		Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*)	Staging grounds at Intertidal zones of southeast Asia especially the Yellow Sea sites of Yalu Jiang (China) and Geum Estuary (Republic of Korea)
		Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rogersi* and *piersmai*)	Migration stopovers at Intertidal zones of southeast Asia especially Luannan Coast, Yellow Sea (China).
		Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynchus pygmeus*)	Migration stopovers, staging and wintering grounds at Intertidal zones of southeast especially the Yellow Sea site of Jiangsu Coast (China), south China coast and wintering sites in Myanmar and Bangladesh.
	Americas*	Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Calidris subruficollis*)	Migration stopovers in grassland ecozones of the United States and central America, wintering grounds in grassland ecozones in south America
		Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*)	Migration stopovers at Delaware Bay (United States) and possibly James Bay (Canada), wintering sites along southeast coast of the United States, north coast of South America and southern coasts of Argentina and Chile .
		Red Knot (*Calidris canutus roselaari*)	Migration stopovers along Pacific coast of the United States (Gray's Harbor, and wintering grounds in Mexico (lagoons in Baja Peninsula)
		Semi-palmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*)	Breeding areas on Tundra where Snow/Ross' geese are overabundant
	Central Pacific	Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitensis*)	Wintering grounds in Islands of Oceania that are susceptible to climate change-induced sea level rise
	Circumpolar	Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*)	Wintering grounds in Baffin Bay/Davis Strait (wintering)
	European **	Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa islandica*)	Breeding grounds in Iceland
		Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*)	Breeding grounds in Finland, staging grounds at Sivash Gulf, Ukraine, wintering grounds in United Arab Emirates.
		Dunlin (*Calidris alpina arctica*)	Breeding grounds at Spitzbergen
		Red Knot (*Calidris canutus islandica*)	Staging sites at Wadden Sea, Norway and Iceland; UK non-breeding sites.
		Red Knot (*Calidris canutus canutus*)	Wadden Sea staging sites West African wintering sites (Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania; Bijagos, Guinea Bissau).
		Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)	Northern European breeding areas especially Russia and Sweden; Sahel wintering areas e.g. Lake Chad (Chad, Nigeria), Doudj (Senegal).
		Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*)	Migration and wintering grounds in eastern Europe, especially in Russia and Ukraine
	Central Asian	Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*)	Migration and wintering grounds, especially in Russia (Ob Valley), Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Iraq.

Issue	Flyway	Species	Habitat/geographical location
2. Unsustainable harvest	***East Asian/ Australasian***	Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica baueri*)	On breeding grounds at Intertidal zones of western Alaska?? At migration stopovers in southeast Asia
		Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rogersi*)	Wintering grounds at Intertidal zones of southeast Asia
		Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynchus pygmeus*)	Wintering grounds at Intertidal zones of southern China and southeast Asia
		Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*)	Wintering grounds at Intertidal zones of southeast Asia
		Dunlin (*Calidris alpina arcticola*)	Wintering grounds at Intertidal zones of southeast Asia
	Americas	Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)	Migration stopovers in Western Alaska?? Migration stopovers in the Caribbean Wintering grounds in South America
		Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*)	Migration stopovers in the Caribbean
	Central Pacific	Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitensis*)	Wintering grounds in Oceania (predation by invasive species) Migration stopovers in Alaska??
	Circumpolar	Thick-billed murre (*Uria lomvia*)	Greenland (breeding, wintering)
	European	Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*)	Illegal/accidental hunting : • On breeding grounds (Russia); during post-breeding moult (Russia) • migration stopovers and wintering grounds; spring/ autumn hunting (Norway) (Kazakhstan, Russia, Azerbaijan, Iraq and China)
	West Asia/East Africa	Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)	Wintering grounds (Sahel)
3. By-catch	***All flyways***	Numerous species including the following six that are globally threatened or near threatened: • Circumpolar: Long-tailed Duck, Yellow-billed Loon (except Iceland and Greenland), Steller's Eider (except Canada, Greenland and Iceland), • Europe: Velvet Scoter • Americas and Asia: Black Scoter • Northern East Asian Australasian Flyway: Kittlitz's Murrelet	Gillnet fishery areas, especially in the North West Pacific Ocean, the North Atlantic Ocean near Iceland and the Baltic Sea.
	Circumpolar	Common Eider (Sommateria mollissima, 'seabirds')	Marine areas near Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland (lumpsucker fishery)

**Americas includes the Pacific, Mississippi, and West Atlantic Flyways*

***Europe includes the East Atlantic, Mediterranean/Black Sea flyways*

5. Species that are high priority on multiple flyways

All subspecies of Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) and many subspecies of Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) occurring across the globe were identified as high priority, as were Common Eiders, Thick-billed and Common Murres which are all vulnerable to gillnet by-catch.

6. High priority ecosystems

- Intertidal ecosystems on the East Asian Australasian Flyway (especially the Yellow Sea and key wintering sites for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper), and at key concentration sites along the Americas Flyway;
- Intertidal ecosystems on the Africa-Eurasian Flyway, especially the West African wetlands of Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania and Bijagos, Guinea Bissau
- Grasslands in the central flyway of North and South America;
- Lowland habitats of Iceland vulnerable to afforestation.
- Davis Strait/Baffin Bay/coastal Newfoundland

7. Discussion of Proposed actions

The group spent several hours discussing proposed actions and next steps. Proposed actions fell into two categories:

1. those that can be taken by CAFF for all priorities, regardless of species or location; and
2. those actions that could be taken in relation to a particular species, flyway, or conservation issue. It was recognized that "actions" could also be research actions, in cases where crucial information needed to identify appropriate conservation action is missing.

However, the group stressed that in the most pressing cases the current state of knowledge is sufficient to identify on-the-ground actions.

Below we present a list of potential action items that were suggested during the meeting. Due to time constraints the group could not distil the list to highest priority action items- there will be a further narrowing of actions to undertake in the short term.

7.1 Potential actions for all priorities

7.1.1 Awareness raising

- At the conclusion of the 2013 Arctic Ministers' meeting, the meeting Chair issued a statement that "*Ministers encouraged the Arctic Council to take a leading, coordinating role in the follow–up of ABA [Arctic Biodiversity Assessment] and encouraged Arctic States to implement its recommendations*[4]." The AMBI implements recommendation #8 from the *ABA Report to Policy Makers* . There should therefore be solid support from Arctic States for implementation of AMBI action items.
- It would be useful for the Arctic Council to issue a letter to foreign Ministries highlighting the plight of Arctic-breeding migratory bird and conservation challenges that they face and asking what actions are being undertaken to address the challenges. Arctic countries could illustrate their own commitment to good stewardship of arctic coastal ecosystems through the development of the CBMP Coastal Monitoring Plan.
- The CAFF Chair should write to key people within relevant Arctic Council Observer countries to communicate the importance of their countries to the successful implementation of AMBI and the need for their engagement in flyway conservation of Arctic breeding migratory species.
- With appropriate partners, create an awareness campaign about the biological, socio-cultural, and economic impacts loss of bird habitat and to provide incentives for better management. This could include theming the World Migratory Bird Day of CMS/AEWA and International Migratory Bird Day on Arctic Migratory Birds in 2015 or subsequently.
- The need to focus on corporate responsibility as a means of fostering on the ground conservation actions.

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4 Reduce stressors on migratory species range-wide, including habitat degradation and overharvesting on wintering and staging areas and along flyways and other migration routes.

a) Pursue or strengthen formal migratory bird cooperation agreements and other specific actions on a flyway level between Arctic and non-Arctic states with first priority given to the East Asian flyway.

b) Collaborate with relevant international commissions, conventions, networks and other organizations sharing an interest in the conservation of Arctic migratory species to identify and implement appropriate conservation actions.

c) Develop and implement joint management and recovery plans for threatened species with relevant non-Arctic states and entities.

d) Identify and advance the conservation of key wintering and staging habitats for migratory birds, particularly wetlands.

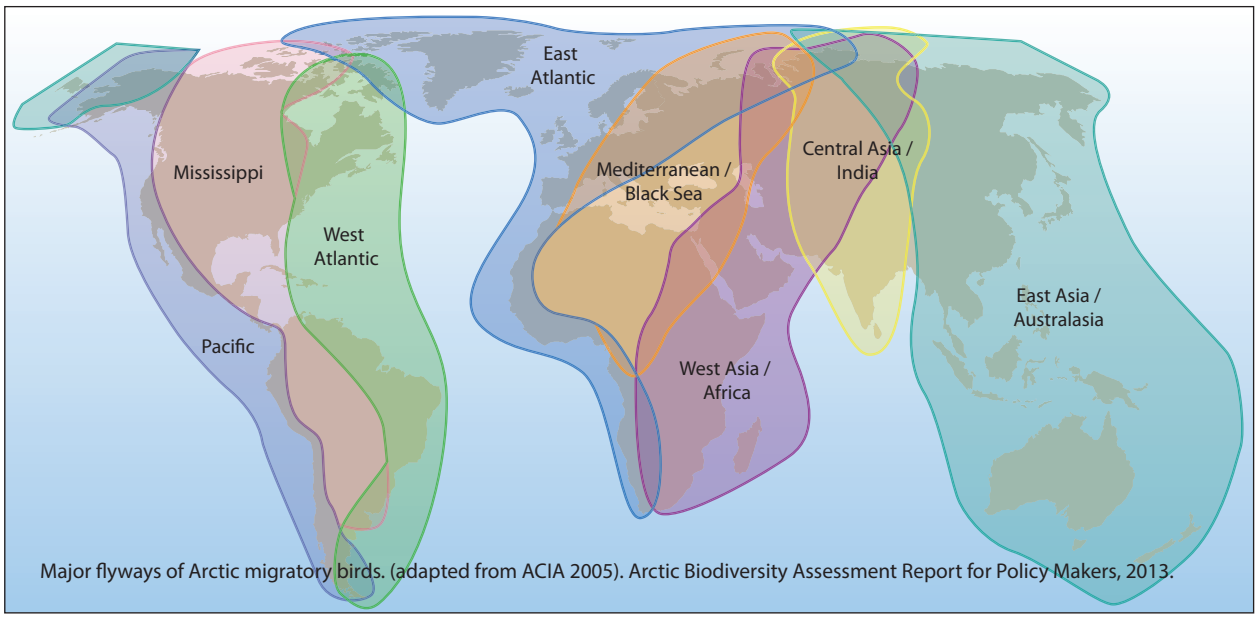
- There was consensus that the AMBI steering committee should organise a workshop in conjunction with the Arctic Biodiversity Congress to discuss next steps in AMBI and to engage with a broader range of partners.

7.1.2 Policy and Management Partnerships

- There are a broad range of agencies with whom AMBI should partner for specific action items including but not limited to, the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS); The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA); East Asian-Australasian Flyways Partnership (EAAFP). Other potential partners could include the Food and Agriculture Organization; the American Sustainable Business Council; the Global Business Alliance, and the United Nations Healthy Oceans initiative.
- AMBI should encourage twinning between countries, cities or flyway network sites; cooperative exchange programmes and transfers of lessons learned within and across flyways.
- BirdLife International (BLI) proposes to organize a Global Interflyway Network (GIN) meeting focusing on Arctic-breeding Birds. The agenda could be circumpolar in nature and emphasize sharing best practices within and between flyways; validating conservation priorities (including research that must be done to enable conservation actions); and developing partnerships for specific conservation action, including those that would fall under AMBI.
- This meeting could take place on the margins of the Arctic Biodiversity Congress in December 2014, in conjunction with the next meeting of AMBI and could serve to provide a more detailed technical underpinning of AMBI.
- By engaging the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group (WHSG) and more specifically the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), AMBI could "plug in" to the Americas shorebird network and effectively build partnerships with groups that work with Nearctic breeding species.
- There is a need to consider the role of sport and subsistence harvest of shorebirds, both within and outside of the Arctic, and to identify and approach partners who can encourage sustainable harvest in support of the actions on unsustainable harvest in Table 1. It was also stressed that harvest as a contributing factor to declines is not well understood, and a better grasp of the issue will be needed before conservation actions can be identified.

7.1.3 Monitoring and Research Partnerships

- The Arctic Shorebird Demographics Network (ASDN) is a time-limited research network that conducts shorebird research in Canada, the United States, and Russia. Some of the Network sites will continue to operate past the ASDN's five year mandate. It would be appropriate to make links between AMBI and ASDN.
- It was suggested that AMBI could support a proposal to develop a tagging project which would (a) fill crucial information gaps regarding key breeding, migration, and wintering sites for AMBI priority species (among others); and (b) could be a powerful tool for raising awareness of the flyways of Arctic birds and of AMBI itself. Perhaps AMBI could provide funds to tag birds that are AMBI priorities?
- There is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of AMBI conservation interventions. Coordination and capacity for evaluating any conservation action needs to improve not only in the Arctic but also in the wintering and staging areas. Improved shorebird monitoring is one action on which Arctic Council and Observer countries and organisations can unite among themselves and with the rest of the world as there are very few countries that do not host Arctic-breeding shorebirds.



Major flyways of Arctic migratory birds. (adapted from ACIA 2005). Arctic Biodiversity Assessment Report for Policy Makers, 2013.

8 Specific proposals

8.1 East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF)- habitat loss and unsustainable harvest issues

The Arctic migratory birds of this flyway are among the most threatened of all bird species, yet there are insufficient conservation resources to deal with the threats that they face. The Arctic Council (via AMBI) can bring a measure of political encouragement and technical expertise to the issue. It is important to focus on those issues where the Artic Council/CAFF can offer significant valued added, including through leverage, to improve conservation outcomes for these species (e.g. high-level policy dialogue and bilateral/multilateral discussions; linking migratory waterbird conservation to other high-profile issues; raising awareness with Foreign ministries to encourage prioritisation by their technical agencies, etc). AMBI action should be taken within the framework of the Resolution of Cooperation that it has with the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP). There are two clear priority conservation issues to be addressed by AMBI on the EAFF:

1. the ongoing and accelerating rate of loss of intertidal areas
2. An unsustainable harvest of Arctic shorebirds in coastal areas of SouthEast Asia. Following are some of the ideas around conservation actions and research that were suggested at the workshop:

Conservation actions:

- Establish broad-based outreach/monitoring programs in Western Alaska, Far East Russia and Southeast Asia to understand the level of harvest of shorebirds occurring, why harvest is occurring (for subsistence, commercial sale), and where appropriate, to determine if more sustainable harvesting systems can be developed. Where illegal harvest is detected, efforts could be made to educate local people about why these species do not have open seasons and to work with them to decrease harvest.
- Support intertidal habitat conservation efforts in the Yellow Sea through a dialog between CAFF and agencies that are developing intertidal areas in China and other Asian countries. Focus on exploring ways to ensure that sufficient habitat on Asian stopovers and wintering grounds are retained for the survival of Arctic species using those habitats.
- Prepare a list of key sites on the East Asian Australasian Flyway[5] based on important staging and wintering sites of AMBI priority species (e.g. Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Red and Great Knots, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Dunlin) and determine where little conservation action is occurring, and develop a conservation focus for those sites
- Using the spoon-billed sandpiper as a flagship species, facilitate the prevention of illegal shorebird harvest iby trapping in areas such as the Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces of China and wintering areas in Vietnam, Myanmar and Bangladesh . In particular:
  - Examine the drivers and socio-economic mechanisms behind Arctic small bird trapping in East Asian countries and identify ways to prevent or reduce illegal harvest;
  - Consider techniques to reduce availability of mist nets for small bird capture.
  - Cooperate with TRAFFIC (the wildlife trade monitoring network) to increase monitoring of harvest of AMBI priority species in China and South-East Asia.
  - Identify key areas of sport and subsistence shooting of Arctic shorebirds in the Russian Far East and develop a mitigation plan that focusses on awareness raising, education and compliance promotion activities.
- Identify opportunities to develop outreach activities that address the harvest of shorebirds in Western Alaska, with particular emphasis on large-bodied shorebirds (e.g., Bar-tailed Godwit, Hudsonian Godwit, Bristle-thighed Curlew).

International cooperation with Arctic Council observer countries:

- Plan consultations with Asian countries regarding cooperation on the margins of the CBD COP in Korea in October 2014. CAFF could send letters to further these discussions in May.
- Plan consultation meetings with Singapore in autumn-winter 2014-15 to develop a plan for co-operation on Arctic migratory bird conservation in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region.
- Explore opportunities for cooperation with Observer countries, particularly China, Japan and Korea, on conservation of Arctic birds in other countries of Flyway.
- Using the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative as an example, explore the opportunity to support exchanges between countries to share experience with on-the-ground implementation of conservation projects in intertidal areas.
- Approach China and Vietnam with a request to include Spoon-billed Sandpiper on the national lists of protected species so as to assign these species the highest conservation priority in those countries, and encourage development of national plans for species conservation.

5 IUCN Situation Analysis and The draft shorebird Action plan developed by WWF Hong-Kong should be considered key sources source of information for the Yellow Sea.

Research actions:

- Loss of prey items for wintering/migrating shorebirds is a large but unquantified concern at many sites. Conduct a data collection and analysis project to determine magnitude of the invertebrate harvest; the relative influence of, and the cumulative impact on Arctic migratory birds at their stopover sites. This could be followed up by a plan that identifies how to resolve the problem.
- Conduct sampling and analysis at key sites to assess levels of contaminants and develop remediation plans. Explore the opportunity to cooperate with AMAP;
- East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) shorebird tagging project: Most tagging of shorebirds in the EAAF has been from the Australian and New Zealand wintering areas and Alaskan breeding areas of birds that pass through the Yellow Sea. Little is known about the network of sites used by other species. To address this gap in information, a collaborative satellite tagging project could be undertaken in a range of South -East Asian countries. The tagging could be combined with communication activities to raise awareness about migratory birds in those countries, and the Arctic environment that supplies many of them. This is a component of the larger arctic shorebird tracking project which is described under 7.1.3, above.
- Continue monitoring of important stopover and wintering sites important for Arctic shorebirds at poorly studied parts of the Flyway. Follow up with site based management plans
- Develop a long-term monitoring plan that provides adequate coverage of major and peripheral sites.

8.2 Americas flyways- unsustainable harvest, habitat degradation issues

Shorebirds face a wide variety of threats in the Americas Flyways. However, except for a few well-studied species and issues, the influence of these threats on population declines is not known with enough certainty to ascribe specific threats to explain the decline in any one species.. Despite the lack of specific knowledge there are a number of known threats that are likely to be influencing a number of species which if addressed, would have beneficial outcomes for numerous species.

Conservation actions:

- Support implementation of the highest priority conservation actions identified by the Flyway Business Plans being developed for the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. These plans brought together regional shorebird experts and offer a prioritised list of conservation needs for focal shorebird species, including the priority AMBI species.
- Link AMBI into the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group (WHSG) and the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) to take advantage of their existing infrastructure and network of sites, respectively, to promote conservation actions for AMBI priority species. Identify the WHSRN sites most important for AMBI priority species and link AMBI objectives with WHSRN representatives responsible for these sites.
- Seek opportunities to engage the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to encourage ongoing adoption of sustainable Horseshoe Crab management plans and support conservation actions for beach habitats in Delaware bay for the conservation of Red Knots, Semipalmated Sandpipers and other Arctic-breeding shorebirds.
- Support conservation actions to counteract ¬continued development pressure in key migration and wintering sites along the major flyways of the Americas, including sites such as Panama Bay, Delaware Bay, Gulf of Mexico, and Northeast Brazil.
- In countries where shorebirds are hunted, work with partners to regulate sport and legal subsistence hunts and to enforce regulations where harvest is illegal.

Research actions:

- Coordinate with existing efforts to establish broad-based outreach/monitoring programs in the Caribbean and Northeast Brazil to understand level of harvest of shorebirds occurring, why harvest is occurring (for subsistence, sport, commercial sale), and if appropriate whether harvest can be done in a sustainable fashion. Where illegal harvest is detected, efforts should be made to educate local people about why these species do not have open seasons and to work with them to decrease harvest. Work should focus on the French Caribbean territories (Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana) and Barbados and involve the governments of France, Canada and the US in this effort.
- Coordinate with existing conservation alliances to promote conservation to reduce grassland loss and alteration in North and South America, and document how AMBI priority species are benefited.
- Determine the loss of shorebird habitat and its impact on shorebird breeding and migration in the Canadian Arctic caused by the grazing of overabundant Snow and Ross's geese.

8.3 East Atlantic flyway (by-catch, habitat loss)

The non-Arctic portion of the East Atlantic flyway had not been identified as a priority by Arctic countries prior to the AMBI workshop. However the workshop participant from Wetlands International suggested that the by-catch of seabirds was a significant issue off the coast of West Africa and indicated that conservation actions have already been identified (see below). In addition, it was recognized that the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative has made considerable progress in capacity building and conservation of migratory birds in West Africa and that there are many lessons to be learned from these experiences for other flyways and for AMBI.

Through the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, Arctic Council and Permanent Observers suggested considering local conservation projects (e.g. mangrove restoration and working with local communities to manage natural resources) at the most important sites visited by Arctic shorebirds in West Africa, notably the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania and Bijagos Ramsar Site in Guinea Bissau.

Conservation actions:

- Work to ensure that Icelandic afforestation policies do not result in declines in species such as dunlins and black-tailed godwit. This could include a) encouraging strategic planning of the location of planting to avoid sensitive areas, and undertaking sensitivity mapping to show where afforestation should be avoided to prevent declines in breeding waterbird populations, and b) raising awareness among the Icelandic public about the global importance of the breeding migratory waterbird populations of the Icelandic lowlands. CAFF could engage with a proposed mission to Iceland in 2014 of AEWA and the Bern Convention of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, to assist Iceland in meeting its obligations under these agreements and the CBD.
- Encourage action in the Baltic Sea to prevent gillnet bycatch, including the framework of the AEWA Single Species Action Plan for Long-tailed Duck due for completion in 2015.
- Engage China to modify fishery activities off the coast of West Africa to reduce seabird by-catch as many of the fishery fleets active in this region are Chinese.
- Build on the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative to assist West African countries (especially Mauritania and Guineas Bissau) in conservation of key wetland non-breeding sites for Arctic-breeding shorebirds, for example through restoration of mangroves and improved community management of key habitats.
- Address unsustainable shorebird catching, especially of Ruff, in the Sahel.

8.4 Circumpolar flyway (bycatch, overharvest, habitat degradation)

Conventional knowledge about the annual movements of Arctic seabird species has been turned on its head by recent tracking studies of species such as Common Eider, Northern Fulmar, and Ivory Gull. It is now known that at least some seabird species undertake annual migrations around the Arctic. Since most of the threats to seabirds are place-based, the most pressing need is for research action, to identify where and when these birds congregate during their life cycle (particularly during the non-breeding season).

Conservation Actions

- Identify and participate in current initiatives (e.g. Strategic Environmental Assessment for Baffin Bay/Davis Strait [Canada]; EBSA workshop) to ensure that critical breeding and wintering areas for seabirds and seaducks are taken into account when planning for resource extraction activities and commercial fishery exploration and shipping developments.
- Ensure that appropriate guidelines for seabird colony viewing are adopted through the Arctic Council cruise ship tourism initiative, and ensure this is encouraged via the draft CMS resolution *Guidance on development of national guidelines for boat based wildlife watching* due for adoption at COP11 in November 2014.

Research actions:

The following research actions were identified at the AMBI workshop, and subsequently through communication with Grant Gilchrist, chair of the CAFFs Circumpolar Seabird expert group (CBird).

- Devise and test mitigation measures with fishermen that will help to reduce seabird by-catch in gillnets (this action is applicable to all flyways).
- Undertake more detailed gillnet by-catch assessments for key countries eg NW Pacific, Iceland and the Baltic. This action could benefit the largest group of globally threatened Arctic migratory species (i.e., long-tailed duck, velvet

scoter, black scoter, yellow-billed loon, Steller's eider, Kittlitz's Murrelet) and is of particular importance and urgency. (The BirdLife Global Seabird Programme has already developed project proposals and is undertaking preliminary work that would allow for swift implementation of such a project).

- Identify the magnitude of by-catch of coastal seabirds and eiders related to the Lumpsucker fishery in Newfoundland, Greenland, and Iceland.
- Identify critical marine habitats of global importance for Ivory Gulls.
- Identify Arctic marine areas that support very high numbers of seabirds.
- Identify areas where key marine seabird habitats intersect with current and especially emerging commercial fisheries, resource exploration and shipping developments.

9 Species

9.1 Species-specific action plans

CAFF has developed action plans for several species or species groups (Eiders, Thick-billed Murre, and Ivory Gull) and action plans exist for many of the other AMBI priority species (e.g. the CMS/EAAFP Spoon-billed Sandpiper Action Plan, CMS Siberian Crane Action Plan, AEWA SAPs for black-tailed godwit, lesser white-fronted goose, red-breasted goose and one in preparation for long-tailed duck, EU plans for Steller's Eider and Velvet Scoter,., North American subspecies of Dunlin, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit). Workshop participants suggested that AMBI should focus on adding value to existing plans; by implementing previously identified action items and helping to complete networks already required by others (e.g. the EU Birds Directive and Ramsar). Existing species actions plans can be effective and result in change; e.g. the 1997 Strategic Plan for Common Eiders had a direct positive effect on eiders in Greenland and the Plan's impact can be measured.

9.2 Red Knot

The Red Knot is the only species included in the priority species lists from each migratory flyway. The *rufa* subspecies is listed on Appendix 1 of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) as a species of top priority for conservation action globally. Plans are underway to develop a CMS Americas Flyway Action Plan and project proposal at least for this subspecies. Under AMBI, and in conjunction with CMS, EAAFP and AEWA, consideration could be given to extending this to include all subspecies and thus develop the first circumpolar species action plan covering all the world's flyways. The red knot serves as an excellent flagship for intertidal wetland conservation and its link to arctic habitats (as well as in relation to unsustainable harvesting in some part of the world eg the Caribbean). Furthermore, there is much research and conservation work going on for this species at various points along each flyway, much of which is struggling for continued funding; bringing this work together as a coherent whole could assist in securing funding for the work in its entirety as well as ensure maximum synergies between all the components.


Red knots migrating. Photo: Morten Ekker

10 Next steps

- The above meeting summary will be vetted by workshop participants, ensuring that all highest priority issues have been captured accurately. Responses due back to the CAFF secretariat (Tom Barry) by March 21th.
- Workshop participants will provide more details on the actions that are currently in progress and indicate which ones need immediate attention. Response due back to the CAFF Secretariat (Tom Barry) by March 31th. *Ed. note- more details have been provided; next step (April to June 2014) is to identify which actions are highest priority and should be initiated in the short term.*
- The AMBI steering committee will identify which items will be considered for early implementation.

11 Reports referenced

Arctic Council, Kiruna Declaration, May 2013 – **download**.
Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF). 2013. Arctic Biodiversity Assessment: Report for Policy Makers. CAFF, Akureyri, Iceland – **download**.
Ganter. B and T. Gaston. 2013. "Chapter 4: Birds" In: Arctic Biodiversity Assessment: Report for Policy Makers. CAFF, Akureyri, Iceland – **download**
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Global Interflyway Network (GIN). 20111. Waterbird flyway initiatives: Outcomes of the 2011 Global Waterbird Flyways Workshop to promote exchange of good practice and lessons learnt – **download**.
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The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)/WWF Hong Kong EAAF Migratory Shorebird Stakeholder Workshop.. December 2013. – **more details**.

12 CAFF Resolutions of Cooperation referenced

- African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) – **download**.
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) – **download**.
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) – **download**.
- East Asian-Australasian Flyways Partnership (EAAFP) – **download**.
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands – **download**.

13 Participants

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Appiott	Joe	Canada	CBD Secretariat
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Crockford	Nicola	United Kingdom	Birdlife International
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Hagemeijer	Ward	The Netherlands	Wetlands International
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Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Photo: Christoph Zöckler

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