

# EBCC

European Bird Census Council



## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the European Bird Census Council

16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

19.00 CEST, held virtually

Present: Agu Leivits, Aiaha Eohwko, Åke Lindstrom, Alena Klvaňová, Anca Pui, Anny Anselin, Anton Morkovin, Arno Schneider, Carlos Godinho, Cristi Domsa, Danae Portolou, Danilo Graffeo, David Noble, Dawn Balmer, Diana Bonishko, Erald Xeka, Eva Šilarová, Garbriel Gargallo, Gianpiero Calvi, Hany Alonso, Henning Heldbjerg, Jana Škorpilová, Jiri Reif, Joni Vorpsi, Juan Carlos del Moral, Julia Stahl, Károly Nagy, Koen Devos, Lechoslaw Kuczynski, Malena Bodarenko, Mark Eaton, Mattia Brambilla, Metodija Veleviski, Mikhail Kalyakin, Oskars Keišs, Patric Lorgé, Petr Musil, Petr Voříšek, Qenan Maxhuni, Ruud Foppen, Samuel Wechsler, Sergi Herrando, Sharina van Boheemen, Primož Kmecl, Laura Silva, João E. Rabaça, Silvia Ursul, Stoycho Stoychev, Tom Auer, Tomaz Mihelic, Verena Keller, Virginia Escandell, Vitalie Ajder, Vlatka Dumbovic, Wesley Hochachka.

Apologies: Aleksii Lehtikainen, Jean-Yves Paquet

### Part 1

#### Confirmation & approval of the minutes from the previous AGM

Verena Keller (VK) welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes from the AGM in 2023 were accepted.

#### Board elections

We thanked Chris van Turnhout for his excellent work as a Board member and Treasurer (2019 to end 2023). He left SOVON at the end of 2023 and started a new job at Natuurmonumenten on 1 January 2024. Thank you Chris! EBCC is an association under Dutch Law so it is important for someone on the Board to be able to take on the role of Treasurer and speak the language. The Board proposes Julia Stahl as the Treasurer. Julia is the Head of Research at SOVON. A vote was taken and 97% voted for Julia. We congratulated Julia who was duly elected. We thanked Julia for the work she has already been doing over the last few months.

#### Report from the Chair for 2023, incl. report from the main EBCC initiatives (EBBA2, PECBMS, EBP)

VK thanked all Board members for their work. The Board members for 2023/24 were:

Verena Keller – Chair (2010)\*

Sergi Herrando – Vice-Chair (2022)

Dawn Balmer – Secretary (2019)

Chris van Turnhout – Treasurer (2019–2023)  
Mikhail Kalyakin – (2010)  
Aleksi Lehikoinen – Research Officer, Bird Census News editor until 2023 (2013)  
Danae Portolou – Communications Officer, Delegate Officer (2013)  
Mark Eaton – Bird Census News Editor from 2024 (2019)  
Ainars Aunins – Conference organiser 2025 (2019)  
Jean-Yves Paquet – Communications Officer (2019)  
Julia Stahl – Treasurer (2024)  
\*In brackets: year of election to Board

Thanks also to the Observers. Rob Robinson from BTO recently joined, to represent EURING.  
Observers in 2023/24 were:

Petr Voříšek - Manager of the EBCC Office  
Alena Klvaňová - PECBMS observer, Communications Manager of the EBCC Office  
Gabriel Gargallo - EuroBirdPortal observer  
Anna Staneva - BirdLife observer  
Szabolcs Nagy, Tom Langendoen –Wetlands International observers  
Rob Robinson – Euring observer

We had one physical meeting (in March, Northumberland, UK) and interim meetings in February, June and November.

There were many activities over the year. *Bird Census News* is published periodically; the latest issue included papers on recording other taxa during breeding bird surveys. Aleksi Lehikoinen stepped down as Editor and handed over to Mark Eaton. Thanks very much to Aleksi, Mark and the Editorial Team, and to Olga Voltzit who does the layout.

We have produced four newsletters over the last year. There are 755 recipients of the newsletter, and the opening rate is 51-61% (which is good). Thank you to Alena Klvaňová for her work. We welcome submissions for the newsletter so please send in material to [klvanova@birdlife.cz](mailto:klvanova@birdlife.cz).

EBCC social media profile continues to be good. Statistics for 30 March 2023 to 4 April 2024  
Facebook: 914 followers (648 previous year), 60 posts  
Twitter (X): 1,512 followers (1,394 previous year), 50 posts

On the EBCC website ([www.ebcc.info](http://www.ebcc.info)) from 1 April 2023 to 4 April 2024 we published 20 articles (news), promoted *Bird Census News* and updated the list of delegates.

We have also worked on the Small Grant Fund which aims to support national bird monitoring activities by EBCC partner organisations particularly in low- and middle-income countries in Europe. Eligible activities include start-up funding for new monitoring schemes, emergency funding to fill gaps in monitoring schemes, national atlases, start-up funding for online tools and capacity-building activities (e.g. to increase the number of skilled participants).

Applications were received in July 2023 and six projects were proposed after evaluation. Two projects were funded thanks to funding from the Swiss Ornithological Institute, the Catalan Ornithological Institute, BirdLife Denmark, private donors and EBCC. The two funded projects were:  
Bulgaria – gap filling for atlas and monitoring  
Cyprus- monitoring ‘across the political divide’

Call for applications for 2024 will open soon. VK encouraged those who were able to support the Small Grant Fund (<https://www.ebcc.info/sgf/>).

**PECBMS** work continues very well. It was a difficult time to secure funding from the EC, but now funding has been secured to 2026. New to this contract are Flyway-specific trends for a selected group of 5 long-distance migratory bird species and the development of a novel EU-level Urban Bird Index. The 2023 update was published on 11 December 2023 and included data on 170 species across 43 years from 30 countries. Two online webinars (EBBA Live Farmland; RTRIM shell) were held during the year. A new working group has been established to develop the European Mountain Bird Index.

**EBBA2** – 192 books sold in 2023 (8314 in total). Google Scholar shows over 300 citations in scientific publications. We have developed an agreement with NatureGuides for EBBA2 maps to be shown in the Collins Bird Guide app.

There have been three important publications using EBBA2 data:

Howard et al. (2023). Local colonisations and extinctions of European birds are poorly explained by changes in climate suitability. *Nature communications* 14.

Marjakangas et al. (2023). Ecological barriers mediate spatio-temporal shifts of bird communities at a continental scale. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 120.

Accepted: Improving national bird population estimates in Europe: insights from comparisons with atlas abundance data.

More than 50 data requests have been fulfilled: 45% of the data requests are for the 50-km occurrence data (open access). Small income from others which, apart of covering the data handling costs, feeds the Small Grant Fund.

**EBBA Live Farmland** work continues. Updated 10-km modelled maps for 50 species with PECBMS site-level data. Webinar presented on 31 January. The next phase will include incorporating PECBMS and EBP data and providing country outcomes available for national partners.

**EuroBirdPortal** work is developing fast. New EFSA contract to implement early warning system for HP Avian Influenza (2023-2025). Bird Flu Radar was launched September 2023 ([app.bto.org/mmt/avian\\_influenza\\_map/avian\\_influenza\\_map.jsp](http://app.bto.org/mmt/avian_influenza_map/avian_influenza_map.jsp)). The next major milestones in 2024 are: 1) an updated list of bird species for passive surveillance & 2) new improved risk assessment model based on EBP and EURING models extended to include 25 species. Budget: 600.000€

Life EBP Reinforcement project (July 2023-Dec 2026) is a new complicated project involving many partners – 10 partners. The main objectives are: 1) Improving geographical coverage and overall bird data quality, particularly, in SE and E Europe 2) Adding all species recorded in Europe to the EBP data flow making full use of the EBP data standard and updating the EBP viewer accordingly and 3) Producing two demonstrative outputs: i) pilot assessment of the Natura 2000 network for terrestrial migratory birds & ii) EBBA2-like maps for farmland birds combining PECBMS and EBP data.

The 20<sup>th</sup> EBP meeting and LIFE preparatory workshop on EBP data flow was held in November 2023 in Brno, Czech Republic involving 49 participants from 21 countries. This was followed by a training workshops on International Census Plots and online portals – 20 participants from 12 countries.

### **Treasurer's report**

Available funds 31 Dec 2022 85.590,79  
Available funds 31 Dec 2023 109.272,02  
Capital on 1 January 2023 85.590,79  
Profit/losses 2023 23.681,23

Benefits include income from data handling, research cooperation, small grant fund, EBBA2 royalties  
Expenses were banking costs, EBCC board meeting, EBCC office, EBCC projects, small grant fund, project funding

Budgets for 2024 and 2025 were presented

2024: benefits 13.000 expenses 35,000 balance -22.000 total 87.272,02

2025: benefits 5.500 expenses 35,5000 balance -30.000 total 57.272,02

We are now using some of the funds that have been saved up over recent years.

The Financial report was presented to EBCC Board on 20<sup>th</sup> March, authored by Chris van Turnhout and Julia Stahl. The Financial report was approved on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024 by the Treasury Commission (Ruud Foppen and Keon de Vos) and approved by EBCC AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024. Ruud Foppen gave a short summary of the work involved in approving the financial report and the checks carried out.

The financial report was approved by the delegates 97% (29 agreed, 1 abstain).

### **Report from the EBCC Office**

PV presented a short report which covered the management, coordination and administration of the office. Work has focused on board meetings, AGM, office meetings, database of contacts, communication group and research group. There has also been a lot of work around communication through the website, social media, meetings and conferences. More effort is required to seek funding to make the office sustainable.

A major task was the set-up and management of the Small Grant Fund.

The office has been supporting the development of monitoring schemes – new and existing schemes. This includes supporting International Census Plots, regional schemes in Eastern Europe, other assistance to eastern European colleagues. Assistance in the post EBBA2 period has mostly been around data requests, research papers, EBBA live and archives.

Assistance in PECBMS has related to the EU Nature Restoration Law, sustainable funding for PECBMS and strategic planning. Also helping with Life EBP enforcement, cost effectiveness analysis in EuropaBON, Cornell/ebird-EBP/EBCC collaboration and cooperation with Butterfly Conservation Europe.

### **Delegate officer report & changes in the delegates**

We have 90 delegates from 47 countries – thank you!

The changes are:

Albania: Zydjon Vorpsi (PPNEA) second delegate

France: Benoît Fontaine replaces Frédéric Jiguet

Malta: Nick Galea (BLM) replaces Alice Tribe

Netherlands: Albert de Jong replaces Chris van Turnhout (SOVON) and Savina van Boheemen replaces Robert Kwak

Romania: Cristi Domșa replaces Zoltán Benkő (SOR)

Switzerland: Samuel Wechsler replaces Peter Knaus (SOI)

Ukraine: Tatiana Kuzmenko replaces Yuriy Strus

Serbia: Marko Tucakov (Bird Protection and Study Society of Vojvodina) stepping down – in the process of proposing two new delegates Marko Šćiban and Dimitrije Radišić (BirdLife Serbia)

DP outlined the role of a delegate:

Only two delegates per country permitted with an aim to “to further the aims of the EBCC both at a national and international level by representing national views and communicating them to the Board, disseminating relevant EBCC news and information within countries, and engaging actively in EBCC initiatives.” The delegate should benefit from sharing ideas and knowledge with like-minded experts from other European countries.

Delegates are encouraged to:

- Attend the EBCC’s international conferences, AGM, workshops and meetings regularly
- Actively engage with EBCC projects and working groups
- Provide news and updates of relevant national monitoring/atlas projects for the EBCC website and Bird Census News
- Promote EBCC’s aims at national and international level
- Contact the EBCC Delegate Officer and inform of changes in contact or other details
- Respond to requests from EBCC
- Suggest new areas and initiatives for the development

According to the Statutes of the Association the following guidelines for selecting and appointing new Delegates apply :

- Membership termination only 4 weeks notice and at end of financial year
- New delegates can apply on recommendation by an existing delegate
- New delegates proposed in writing and form signed by both
- If no delegates exist, then Board or national group of ornithologists or monitoring experts from the country can make suggestions
- Applicants granted the status of delegate either from January 1<sup>st</sup> or July 1<sup>st</sup>

### **Conference “Bird Numbers” 2025**

Oskars Keiss presented an update on the conference. March 31<sup>st</sup> to April 5<sup>th</sup> 2025 at the University of Riga, Latvia.

Arrival in Riga is easiest by plane – airport RIX has good connections. There are train connections to Lithuania and Estonia. Bus to Tallinn and Tartu (Estonia), Vilnius, Šauliai and Klaipeda (Lithuania), Warszawa (Poland), Berlin and Frankfurt (Germany). Regarding accommodation, the university will offer cheap accommodation in dormitories and there is also a wide selection of hotels in Riga within walking distance of the university.

Deadlines are:

September 15<sup>th</sup> 2024: abstracts for oral presentations

October 31<sup>st</sup> 2024: oral presentation acceptance

January 31<sup>st</sup> 2025: poster abstracts

January 31<sup>st</sup> 2025: early bird registration

March 15<sup>th</sup> 2025: late registration

Registration fees (Euros)

|                         | Student * | Full |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|
| Early bird registration | 160       | 300  |
| Late registration       | 300       | 500  |
| One-day registration    | 100       | 200  |

\*student and low-income countries

Plenaries planned are:

Jane M. Reid: Using ornithological field data to predict rapid evolution of migration in response to climate change

Nestor Fernandez: Biodiversity monitoring context and directions in relation to EU policies

Heini Kujala: Using bird data for conservation prioritisation

Sergi Herrando: The integration of data, the spirit of the EBCC and challenges for the future

Oskars Keišs: Birds of Latvia through times: the way to the monitoring of country's avifauna.

Excursions will be on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and are planned for Ķemeri National Park, Gauja National Park, Engure Nature Park, Lake Babīte & Lielupe floodplains and Rundāle castle.

The meeting of the International Waterbird Count (IWC) coordinators is planned for April 5<sup>th</sup>.

The conference proceedings will be published in the journal *Environmental and Experimental Biology* (<https://eeb.lu.lv>).

## **Part 2 - delegate talks**

Many thanks to our three excellent speakers:

Testing sound recorders for the night bird program: Virginia Escandell, SEO/BirdLife

News from the III Portuguese Breeding Bird Atlas 2015-2021: Carlos Godinho, University of Evora

Breeding Birds in Vjosa Narta, 2023 Survey: Zydjon Vorpsi, PPNEA