

Needs and prospects for waterbird monitoring in the Mediterranean

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The International Waterbird Census (IWC), coordinated worldwide by Wetland International, is one of the major global monitoring programs dedicated to wetland conservation, notably through the implementation of the AEWA (African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement) and the Ramsar Convention. The IWC also constitutes a major support to the work of the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory (MWO) an international initiative to monitor and assess Mediterranean wetlands in order to advocate their conservation. Indeed, the MWO has defined a set of indicators (e.g. the Living planet index) which rely on monitoring data collected in the field such as the IWC.

Since 2012, Tour du Valat and ONCFS (French National Agency for wildlife and hunting management) have supported a North-African initiative to improve the spatial coverage and the overall quality of IWC. Here we present the results of this initiative and the gaps identified elsewhere in the monitoring scheme implemented in the Mediterranean Basin. We suggest building upon the success of the North-African initiative in order to promote an International Mediterranean Waterbird Network. This network should provide more reliable data on the status and trends of waterbird populations through a more effective collaboration between national NGO's, IWC national coordinators and international conventions and organizations.

The breeding and wintering avifauna of Cretan wetlands

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This work presents the breeding and wintering birds, including waterbirds and other species depended on wetlands, on Crete. Wintering and breeding bird surveys have been carried for the last 20 years. Moreover, additional surveys were carried out to contribute to the breeding bird atlas coordinated by the Natural History Museum of Crete. The survey work was carried out with the help of volunteers and aimed at covering the complete avifauna of Crete. About 80 wetlands have been surveyed, including 25 reservoirs. Most other wetlands represent small river mouths and saltmarshes along the shoreline. The traditional idea that Crete is poor in wetlands and there is a strong dependence of birds on this small number of wetlands has changed. There are some significant results in breeding passerines knowledge. Interestingly, some species being much more common

in the past, like Nightingale, are now very rare and local. At the same time Blackcap, a relatively new breeding bird species on Crete, is now abundant. Breeding as well as wintering waterbirds strongly depended on the water level of wetlands, with dry years having negative impacts. Artificial wetlands are nowadays hosting the majority of waterbirds on Crete as these wetlands are less disturbed by humans than the natural wetlands. Protection from hunting provides good conditions for birds at most reservoirs. Ferruginous Duck, for an island, form some remarkable wintering flocks. In recent years some wintering bird species, like Pochard and Teal, showed an obvious decline in numbers. Conservation actions for Cretan wetlands are still limited but proposals are on the way.