

Collaborative agreement between on-line bird recording schemes participating in the EuroBirdPortal (EBP) project

An agreement made under the auspices of the European Bird Census Council

This agreement is between organisations operating national or regional on-line bird recording schemes in Europe. The signatories agree to collaborate as outlined below in order to undertake the EuroBirdPortal (EBP) project which aims to improve understanding of bird distributions and movements across Europe.

1. Overall framework

- 1.1 The present agreement is made within the framework of the “Collaborative agreement between on-line bird recording schemes operating in Europe” (the parent agreement) undertaken under the auspices of the European Bird Census Council (EBCC). The signatories of the present agreement must therefore be signatories to the parent agreement.
- 1.2 The present agreement sets out the specific terms and conditions of the EBP initiative.
- 1.3 The signatories are formal partners of the EBP project, and, as such, will use their best endeavours to help to achieve the objectives of the project. Such involvement, however, does not entail any financial obligation.
- 1.4 This is a project of the European Bird Census Council, which is the organization formally responsible for the work undertaken within this agreement and the ownership of intellectual property.

2. Background

During the last ten years, the number and diversity of web portals dedicated to the collection of bird observations has increased rapidly and most of Europe is now covered by at least one of them. Some portals are based on very specific systems and cover a limited geographical area (e.g. a region or country) while others function across several countries using the same basic package. While there is substantial variation in the scope and volumes of data gathered by different portals, the advent of online data collection has produced a vast amount of data that would previously have been impossible to amass.

Unlike more traditional monitoring projects, which focus on structured data collection, these portals aim mainly to obtain year-round data from the relatively unstructured but intensive and widespread activities of birdwatchers. However, despite the fact that data are gathered following simple standardised protocols (e.g. complete lists), or in some cases even no protocol (casual observations), the vast amount of data contained in these portals and the sheer amplitude of their combined geographical and taxonomic coverage offer great potential for research on the temporal and spatial distribution of birds across large geographical areas. This is particularly the case where at least some basic information on recording effort is available. Such knowledge is urgently needed in order to increase understanding of bird distributions and movements and to address issues concerned with conservation and management (e.g. wind farms, avian borne diseases, flight safety).

In order to make best use of the data gathered by online portals across Europe, there is a need to establish and maintain a common database. Data sources are very scattered, and several portals have limited access or are available only in the native languages of their host countries. Given the diversity of initiatives and the well established nature of some of them,

any attempt to favour only one of the systems or to create a new common one would be both undesirable and impractical. We therefore aim to create a common data repository that will hold data from each of the existing systems. This will contain the minimum aggregated information required to realise the full potential for large scale spatiotemporal analyses of such data and for other research and applied uses that are appropriately undertaken at a European scale.

This initiative will be the perfect companion to the work developed by the other two main projects undertaken by the EBCC: the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS) and the new European Breeding Bird Atlas (EBBA2). PECBMS monitors breeding population trends across Europe, using large-scale and long-term common breeding bird surveys and developing indicators of the general state of nature, while EBBA2 will produce a precise snapshot of the breeding distribution of all European bird species for the whole continent and for a specific time window (2013–2017). The EBP project will complement PECBMS and EBBA2 by focussing on the study of continental-wide seasonal changes in bird distribution as well as those temporal changes taking place too fast as to be properly tracked by more traditional monitoring projects. EPB will promote the use of simple, standardized bird recording protocols so as to improve the quality of the results that can be produced using these data.

3. Objectives of the EBP

3.1 The purpose of EBP is to establish a European data repository based on aggregated data from online bird recording portals from across Europe with the following major objectives:

1) To describe large scale spatiotemporal patterns of bird distributions (seasonal distributional changes, migratory patterns, phenology) and their changes over time.

1.1. Modelling bird distributions in time and space.

- Produce seasonal distribution maps (at appropriate temporal scales), including dynamic maps showing movements across the continent, winter distribution maps and maps giving the most important bottlenecks, stop-over and roosting sites.
- Create short-term prediction maps (e.g. monitoring expected range changes for pests, predicting the spread of invasive/non-native species).
- Develop approaches for modelling long-term changes in distribution patterns with respect to climate, land-use and other factors.

1.2. Delimitating migratory flyways and bird movements.

- Establish migratory patterns in space and time.
- Deliver immediate and short-term forecasts/predictions (e.g. predicting wildfowl movements due to cold spells or in relation to the potential spread of avian-borne diseases).

1.3. Modelling phenological patterns.

- Establish phenological patterns of different species across space.

- Simultaneously study the phenological markers for different events within the annual cycle and their long-term changes over time and space (e.g. effects of climate change).

2) To improve the value of online data gathering portals.

2.1. Increase relevance and interest of the data collected, adding value to partner portals and thus encouraging people to record birds.

- Maximise the value of the data for science and conservation.
- Create visualisation tools showing continent-wide species by species maps and dynamic phenological graphs.
- Create a range of reports for birdwatchers that support their birdwatching interests and hence their desire to contribute to relevant portals.

2.2. Promote standardisation and best practices.

- Establish data collection standards that maximise the scientific value of the observations. In particular promote the recording of complete lists and other approaches that allow recording effort to be taken into account during analysis.

2.3. Improve cooperation amongst birdwatchers and organisations.

- Improve and develop data sharing and exchange protocols.
- Combine expertise and share ideas, algorithms and software where possible so as to make most efficient use of scarce resources.
- Provide a data source for other large scale projects (e.g. European atlases).
- Provide a European organizational basis for more global research in this area.
- Provide a data-base and data analysis tools that could potentially be used for other taxa.

4. EBP Steering and Executive Committees

4.1 The EBP Steering committee has the following functions:

- Seek collaborative funding for the work.
- Negotiate collaborations with third parties who are not members of the EBP partnership.
- Manage budgets and keep partners appropriately informed about financial matters.
- Decide on the development of additional projects that may be proposed within the EBP partnership.
- Determine the Rules of the EBP data repository to appropriately manage data uses and requests by third-parties (including requests from individual members to use the data for work that falls outside the EBP project).

4.2 The EBCC Board and every partner have the right to send one official representative to Steering committee meetings. Decisions may be made by simple majority; however, as far as possible these should be achieved by consensus. Additional observers from partner organizations are welcome to attend Steering committee meetings, but they do not have the right to vote.

- 4.3 The chair of the Steering committee is appointed by the members for a period of two years. They may serve a maximum of three terms (six years) after which they will not be eligible for immediate reappointment.
- 4.4 An Executive Committee, formed by 5-7 members of the Steering committee and its chair, will be in charge of the day by day operation of the project on behalf of the Steering committee and following the guidelines specified by the latter. The members of the Executive Committee will be elected by the Steering committee every two years.
- 4.5 The Steering committee will meet at least once a year.
- 4.6 All decisions agreed in the Steering committee and Executive Committee meetings will be clearly specified in their respective minutes, which will be circulated among all partners.
- 4.7 The Steering committee and the Executive Committee are responsible to the Board of the European Bird Census Council.
- 4.8 The Executive Committee will produce a brief annual report and accounts of the project which will be circulated to all members of the EBP project and to the EBCC Executive Committee.

5. Data use and sharing within the EBP project

- 5.1 All partners will submit or feed their aggregated data to the EBP data repository using the standard format and methods established by the project.
- 5.2 The original (aggregated) data made available to the EBP data repository will be used to create the products delivered by the project (research papers, reports, websites, maps, models, graphs, etc) as agreed by the Steering committee (see above).
- 5.3 The products of the EBP and selected information contained in them (i.e. not the original aggregated data) will be fully accessible to the public through the EBP website. This website will be Copyright EBCC so as to prevent unauthorized use of the material in publications or websites of third parties without explicit permission and appropriate acknowledgement.
- 5.4 All partners who wish to do so will be entitled to participate in research and production of other outputs from the data. Partners will be entitled to co-authorship of the resulting publications if they wish to be involved, subject to the requirement that all authors should contribute to discussions on project development and to the review of draft publications.
- 5.5 It is anticipated that research and production of other products from the EBP data will largely involve EBP partners. Others may be involved but they should not normally lead research projects or other work.
- 5.6 Financial information on all EBP projects should be made available to all partners on at least an annual basis.
- 5.7 If a project is led by a non-EBP partner organization then it should be treated as for data use by third parties (see below).

6 Use of data by third parties

- 6.1 Applications to access the original partner's aggregated data contained in the EBP data repository by third parties may be made through the EBP website data request module. Once a request has been approved, data may be supplied either manually or via an online system depending on technical developments. Depending on the nature and source of the request data extraction may be subject to a fee.
- 6.2 Data requests will be managed according to the formal Rules of the EBP data repository, as agreed by the Steering committee.
- 6.3 Each partner can decide if their aggregated data are to be made freely available or whether access requires their explicit permission (or that of the Executive

Committee) on a request by request basis. In either event those supplied with data will be required to complete a data request procedure in which they specify the uses to which the data will be put and agree to uphold the copyright and intellectual property rights of the EBP partners.

7. Credits

- 7.1 All products and initiatives developed in the framework of the EBP project should clearly show that they are the result of the EBP collaboration and all partner organisations operating bird recording portals that provided the data must be adequately visualized and credited.
- 7.2 Where EBP data are provided to third parties for research or other purposes they will be required to acknowledge the partners appropriately as outlined in Article 6.
- 7.3 Details of the acknowledgements required in particular circumstances will be agreed by the Steering and Executive Committees.

8. Membership of the agreement

- 8.1 Partners may join this agreement by signing the written undertaking to abide by the terms of this agreement and subject to the agreement at least a two thirds majority of the existing partners.
- 8.2 Partners may withdraw from this agreement by giving three months notice in writing to the chair of the EBP Steering committee. Any partner withdrawing from this agreement will cease to use any data or results that it has obtained through this agreement and that were collected by other parties outside its core area of operation. Data already contributed to the EBP will continue to be available for uses agreed by the partner prior to their giving notice that they were withdrawing from this agreement.
- 8.3 If a partner fails to abide by the terms of this agreement, they may be given three months written notice of the need to comply with the agreement. If they fail to comply with the agreement within this period, their membership of the agreement will be terminated.
- 8.4 The Board of the European Bird Census Council will be responsible for resolving any dispute concerning membership of this agreement.

13th March 2015

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Written undertaking

Name of the organization:

Name and web address of the on-line bird recording portal:

Primary recording country/region:

Herein, we agree to abide by the terms of this agreement,

(Signature, name & institutional post)

Date: ____ / _____ / _____