The Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme – an NGO perspective on biodiversity monitoring

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8 Nov 2022
Shaping the future European biodiversity monitoring Framework, Brussels
Why birds?

• ubiquitous
• popular, well studied
• conspicuous, well detectable
• high in the food chains
• react sensitively to the changes
• mirror the state of the wider environment
A bit of history

1966, Great Britain
Common Bird Census

- Has agriculture intensification caused the bird population to decline?
- British Trust for Ornithology (NGO), JNCC (state agency)
- 300 volunteers
A bit of history: Europe

Gradually other countries joined

- 1969 (1975) – Sweden
- 1975 – Finland, Denmark
- 1982 – Czechia
- 1983 – Estonia
- 1984 – Netherlands...
European Bird Census Council

- Association that unites experts in bird monitoring across Europe
- The aim: the best possible data to support bird conservation
- Led by a Board of 10 volunteer representatives plus observers who meet every six months
- Two national EBCC Delegates per country
- EBCC conference Bird Numbers every 3 years

www.ebcc.info
2002: Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS)

- The common bird monitoring programs in Europe are integrated through the PECBMS
- **Main aim**: to use common birds as indicators of the general state of the environment
- **Source of data**: national/regional monitoring schemes, organised by NGOs, research institutes, universities, museums
PECBMS today

- population trends of 170 bird species
- 30 countries, 34 schemes

Increasing number of both countries providing data and species covered by the PECBMS

Common bird monitoring schemes in Europe

PECBMS, ČSO, European Bird Census Council
< 15 000 volunteers

- well-established across Europe
- a good example for other taxa (butterflies)
- sharing the experience

Germany: 1300
Poland: 400
Czechia: 70
Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme

Volunteers

Statistics Netherlands

Catalan Institute for Ornithology

raw data

deadline

advise on statistics

on-line tools development

oversees the project management

Central Coordination Unit

National Coordinators

coordination, advice

national indices

Steering and technical Group

assists with technical statistical issues

Annual species trends, Indicators & Reports
PECBMS - how does it work: 1) national level

- Skilled volunteers
- Standardised methods
- Deliver **structured data** to the national coordinator
2) from the national to the international level

- **National coordinators** calculate **national species trends** for each species using RTRIM

- **The international coordinator** calculates **supranational species trends**
  - for each species from 30 national trends
  - weighted by the species’ national population size
  - using RSWAN
3) international level

- Supranational species trends ➔ Multispecies indicators

- Farmland Bird Indicator
- 39 species
- Last update: 1980–2021
Use of data

European common bird indicators

- EU’s Indicators of Sustainable Development and Structural Indicators
- Farmland Bird Indicator (FBI) for EU Rural Development Plans
- Nature restoration law 2022
- > 40 research papers
Use of data

- Eurostat
- OECD
- EEA
- WWF (Living Planet Index)
Developing indicators for European birds

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Published online 28 February 2005

Problems we face

• Lack of Funding or non-sustainable funding
• Lack of confidence (researchers, officers)
Problems we face

• Lack of volunteers – training, feedback, support
Messages – bird monitoring

• unique, reliable, long-term dataset on biodiversity
• robust, scientifically proven **methods**
• already **existing** tools and methodologies
• **citizen science** – low cost (but **not for free**)
• large coverage, long-term
Messages – ingredients of success

- **Clear methods**
- **Strong partners** and respected personalities on your side
- Enthusiastic **coordinators**
- **Respect** the differences (methodologic, cultural etc.)
- **Longevity**, continuity
- **Communication** – keeping the network alive
- Making the **outputs available**, open access BUT respect data ownership – coauthorship policy
- Inviting the **researchers** to study the data
- **Publishing** scientific papers to get respect and credibility
Thanks go to the volunteers

Poland

Greece

Great Britain

Denmark

Cyprus

Czechia
We thank to

- Fieldworkers
- National coordinators
- Supporters
- Stakeholders
- Colleagues
- Birds
Thank you for your attention