

Kushiro Initiative

SUMMARY STATEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS AND THEIR WETLAND HABITATS IN THE EAST ASIAN-AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY

2 December 1994. Kushiro, Japan

The "International Workshop on Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Wetland Habitats in the east Asian-Australasian Flyway", held in Kushiro from 28 November to 2 December 1994, was attended by 92 experts and government representatives from the following states and territories: Australia, Cambodia, China (People's Republic), Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Korea (Democratic People's Republic of), Korea (Republic of), Russia, Singapore, Thailand, USA, and representatives of Asian Wetland Bureau, The Ramsar Convention Bureau, Convention on Migratory Species, and the Wetlands for the Americas. The meeting was organised under the auspices of the Environment Agency of Japan, the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, with assistance from the Asian Wetland Bureau Japan Committee: partial financial support was received from UNEP Regional Office for the Asia Pacific, and the Convention on Migratory Species. It was held at the invitation of the Preparatory Committee for the Kushiro International Wetland Centre.

The meeting expressed its thanks to the local organisers and supporters for the excellent arrangements.

The meeting also congratulated the initiative of the Kushiro and other local governments in concluding a twinning agreement between Ramsar sites in the Kushiro region and Kooragang Ramsar site in New South Wales, Australia which is a model for establishment of a network of sites linked by migratory waterbirds.

The workshop discussed and exchanged information on the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats in the east Asian-Australasian region. Waterbirds are an important component of most wetland ecosystems. They are of great value economically, culturally, socially and scientifically, and this value must be maintained through proper management. Thus it is important to properly conserve waterbird species and their wetland habitats. However, for migratory waterbirds, it is inadequate to take such actions in individual countries or regions. Rather, conservation action requires international co-operation throughout the flyway.

The meeting agreed the following aim:

The current decline in the numbers of migratory waterbirds in the flyway and the degradation and loss of wetland habitats on which these species depend, should be stopped and reversed.

To achieve this, the meeting made the following recommendations:

1. Countries in the flyway should enhance mechanisms for collaborative action to conserve waterbird species; identify and establish a network of sites critical for waterbirds conservation; and ensure the species are managed on a sustainable basis according to the "wise use" principles.
2. Noting the important rôle of the Ramsar Convention in protecting wetland sites of importance to waterbirds, urged the Contracting Parties in the flyway to designate additional sites of importance for migratory waterbirds in accordance with recommendation C.5.1 of the 5th Conference of the Contracting Parties.
3. Noting the success of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network in facilitating the conservation of this group throughout the Americas, recommended the immediate establishment of an Asia-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network, linking sites important for shorebirds on their annual migration between North Asia and Australasia.
4. Recognising the need for an improved mechanism for co-ordination of conservation action between flyway countries, recommended the development of a legally-binding, multilateral agreement.
5. The workshop endorsed the framework for a Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy for the Asian-Australasia Flyway that will describe the principle issues, and identified mechanisms to be addressed in preparation of an action plan for particular groups of waterbirds (see Annex 1).
6. Developed an outline Action Plan for shorebirds prescribing particular actions necessary to conserve the shorebird populations in the flyway (see Annex 2 [currently under development by the Asian Wetland Bureau]).
7. Adopted a timetable for implementation, and requested that parties report on progress by the time of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention in March 1996.
8. Requested the organisers, on behalf of the Workshop, to convey and commend these recommendations to the countries in the flyway; and to assist in the location of resources for their implementation.

ANNEX 1: FRAMEWORK FOR WATERBIRD CONSERVATION IN THE ASIA-AUSTRALASIAN REGION

The Strategy for migratory waterbird conservation in the Asia-Australasia region will include the following principal proposals;

1. Co-ordination of activities in the flyway

The establishment of a formal multilateral agreement between the countries in the flyway is recommended.

2. Preparation of Action Plans for groups of species

Separate Action Plans should be prepared for certain groups of key species including shorebirds, cranes and ducks/geese. These should be prepared as soon as possible with the deadline for the shorebird plan set at June 1995. These Action Plans will identify needs to establish networks of linked sites/states.

3. Establishment of flyway reserve networks

Flyway reserve networks will be proposed as required under Action Plans for key species groups. These networks will include sites nominated by countries in the flyway. The network for shorebirds is planned to be established by March 1996. Consideration should be given to develop a similar network for migratory cranes in the flyway.

4. Review and enhancement of legislation and policy

A review is proposed of legislation and policies in the flyway countries related to waterbird and wetland habitat protection and management. Proposals will be made to harmonise legislation and policy frameworks to ensure minimum standards of protection in all range states, and implementation should be enhanced.

5. Implementation of Conventions and Agreements

Parties to the Ramsar Convention in the flyway should ensure they fully implement their obligations under the convention to maintain waterbird habitat, including the designation of additional Ramsar sites as appropriate and the incorporation of the "wise use" principal for wetland management into land-use planning.

6. Institutional strengthening and training

Adequate resources should be allocated to strengthen appropriate research and management agencies especially in developing countries through provision of funds, equipment and training.

7. Education and public awareness

Efforts to promote awareness and education in waterbird and wetland management need to be supported, especially in developing countries. Consideration should be given to supporting development of regional information networks, such as the Asia-Pacific Wetland Education Centre Network.

8. Research and monitoring

Encourage research to establish flyway populations, sizes and trends, and appropriate details of migration routes and of priority species. Systems of data collation, analysis and dissemination (including databases), need to be enhanced and made compatible. The Asia Waterfowl Census and other monitoring programmes should be supported and enhanced. Updated inventories of wetland sites should be prepared to clarify the status of sites. This may also provide input into activities such as preparation of directories of important bird conservation areas.

9. Implementation agencies

The strategy should be implemented by governmental, non-governmental and local community organisations, and private sector groups.

10. Implementation and evaluation

It is proposed that the Strategy will be implemented over an initial period of five years (1995-2000). Significant resources will need to be identified to ensure successful and timely completion of actions. Innovative funding schemes, such as through wetland habitats stamps, or public-private sector partnerships should be considered.

Progress in implementation of the strategy should be reported to the 1996 Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, and further progress, if any, to the 1997 Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species.