



Proposed BirdLife bird-based biodiversity indicators:

In 2001, the Heads of State of the European Union committed themselves to halting biodiversity decline by 2010 as part of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. It is essential to develop a set of biodiversity indicators to assess whether this goal has been achieved or not. During 2003, both the Environment and Foreign Affairs Councils adopted a position according to which a biodiversity structural indicator should be developed no later than during the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy, scheduled for 2004. This indicator should then be included among the short list of structural indicators published in the annual Spring Report considered by the Spring Summit of the European Council.

The review of the EC Biodiversity Strategy is culminating in the preparation and adoption of a Delivery Plan, aimed at delivering the 2010 target. As part of this process, the ad hoc working group on monitoring, indicators and reporting proposed a set of biodiversity indicators that would help to assess progress in implementing the Delivery Plan. This set of indicators is divided into three levels: level 1 is a structural indicator, level 2 includes headline indicators, while level 3 includes indicators linked to policy sectors.

BirdLife International, the global bird conservation organisation is the world's leading authority on the status and trends of bird species. Over the years, we have developed programmes to regularly collect and analyse data on birds, which can be turned into indicators of biodiversity. On the basis of this work, we are proposing a set of bird-based biodiversity indicators, summarised in the Annex to this paper. This set of indicators will fit into the indicators framework proposed as part of the ECBS review process outlined above, which was adopted by the Malahide Conference in May 2004.

Acted upon, this also contributes to the EU's ability to meet its international commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, where governments collectively committed to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

Data on trends of common bird species (The Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme - PECBMS)

The PECBM scheme collates national data in a harmonised way from a European network of ornithologists, covering 20 countries of the EU in 2004. Population trends are derived from annually operated national breeding bird surveys using proven statistical methods. These trends are then combined into multi-species indices showing the overall trend of birds characteristic of farmland and forest habitats. For comparison, there is also a multi-species index showing the combined population trend of generalist species. The resulting **Common Bird Indicator** (proposed **Structural Indicator 1.1**) shows at a glance the general overall health of the environment and of key habitat types in the European Union. It is timely, relevant, capable of annual up-date and statistically robust. It has all the qualities of an effective structural indicator,

which resonates with the public and policy-makers, and is by far the most advanced biodiversity indicator currently available. PECBMS is run collaboratively by BirdLife and the European Bird Census Council, with support from Statistics Netherlands.

Data on Globally Threatened Species of Birds

BirdLife International has been assessing the status of the world's birds since 1988. It is the official authority for listing globally threatened species of birds using the categories and criteria of the IUCN Red List. The latest update of the status of the world's birds was published in 2004, based on data collected systematically by BirdLife and stored in the organisation's World Bird Database. By examining the number of species moving between Red List categories as a result of genuine improvement and deterioration in status, it has been possible to develop a **Red List Index** (proposed **Headline Indicator 2.1**) which quantifies the overall change in threat status (i.e. the relative projected extinction risk) of all bird species. This information is unique: for no other group of organisms can we yet chart global trends in this way. The Red List Index can be disaggregated to show trends just for European birds, including the 20 globally threatened species and 16 Near Threatened species in Europe. BirdLife reviews the status of all these annually, and the Red List Index for European birds will be updated every four years.

For each of these species, BirdLife International has also developed international Species Action Plans, adopted by the ORNIS Committee and the Berne Convention. In 2004, BirdLife is preparing a thorough **assessment of the status and implementation of Species Action Plans** for the European Commission. This assessment should be repeated periodically, providing an important measure of our response to the needs of these most threatened species in Europe (proposed **Policy-relevant Indicator 3.4**).

Data on Species of European Conservation Concern

In 1994, BirdLife published the first-ever complete assessment of the regional conservation status of all regularly occurring European bird species. This status assessment was based on population trend data for the period 1970-1990 from all countries in Europe. Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC) were identified as those that have an unfavourable conservation status in Europe or are secure but concentrated in Europe. In 2004, BirdLife is publishing an updated status assessment using population trend data from 1990-2000. A separate publication will identify bird species with an unfavourable conservation status in the 25 Member States of the European Union, including all Annex I species (proposed **Headline Indicator 2.2**). The trends of species characteristic of key habitats types will also be analysed (proposed **Policy-relevant Indicator 3.1**). These status assessments are to be published every 10 years.

Data on Important Bird Areas (IBAs)¹

BirdLife has been publishing inventories of internationally Important Bird Areas based on a standard set of scientific criteria since 1981. The IBA programme has now been extended to all the regions of the world, with all globally important sites to be identified by 2010. In the European Union, a special set of criteria was developed to identify all sites that qualify for designation as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive. According to various judgements of the European Court of Justice, IBAs provide the best scientific evidence for SPA

¹ Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are key sites for the conservation of birds identified by using standard criteria across the world. In Europe, more than 3,500 IBAs have been identified so far.

designation. Therefore, we believe they provide the best “distance to target” estimate to measure the completeness of the SPA network in the EU (proposed **Headline Indicator 2.3**).

Using its network of site support groups across Europe, BirdLife is currently establishing an IBA monitoring programme to assess the conservation status of IBAs on a regular basis. Pilot monitoring schemes are already running in many European countries, with more coming on-line every year, and the programme should be fully operational by 2008. It will include monitoring the population levels of qualifying species and the existence and implementation of site management plans at these key conservation sites. It is expected that when the SPA network is completed, that is when all IBAs become designated, indicators derived from BirdLife’s IBA data will be directly relevant to analysing the performance of SPAs (proposed **Policy-relevant indicators 3.2 and 3.3**).

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Annex: The proposed set of bird-based biodiversity indicators by BirdLife International incorporated into the indicators framework proposed by the Biodiversity Expert Group as part of the EC Biodiversity Strategy review process, and adopted at the Malahide conference on 25-27 May 2004.

	<i>State</i>	<i>Response</i>
Level 1: Structural indicator	1.1 Farmland, forest and all common bird indicator for the EU (2004 – annually)	-
Level 2: Headline indicators	2.1 Change in status of globally threatened species (2004 – annually) 2.2 Change in status of Species of European Conservation Concern/Annex I species (2004 – every 10 years)	2.3 Coverage of IBAs by SPAs/all protected area categories (2004 – annually)
Level 3: Policy-relevant Indicators	3.1 Change in status of species of European conservation concern by habitats/regions (2004 – every 10 years) 3.2 Species population trends on SPAs (2008 – every 2-3years)	3.3 Coverage of SPAs by management plans (2008 – every 2-3 years) 3.4 Progress with implementing Species Action Plans (2004 – every 2-3 years)