

# UK SPA & RAMSAR (AVIAN) SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

## 2004 ANNUAL REPORT

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1. This is the third report of the SPA Scientific Working Group, which became the SPA & Ramsar (Avian) Scientific Working Group (SPAR SWG) in 2004, and includes all issues considered at meetings during 2004. During this period the Group met on the following occasions; 28 January, 26 May and 30 September.
- 1.2. At the request of Defra, the Group added consideration of the development of the UK Ramsar network, where this related to avian interests, to its remit in 2004, especially elements of the ongoing Ramsar Review. Revised *Terms of Reference* are appended to this report (Appendix 1).
- 1.3. Feedback was received from the *Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* (N2RSC) on the recommendations of the 2003 Annual Report; all were accepted. Two letters were received from the Chair of the N2RSC, covering the following work areas: application of the SPA Selection Guidelines (26<sup>th</sup> January 2004); clarification of the role of the SPAR SWG (27<sup>th</sup> September 2004). These are noted in this report.
- 1.4. The report includes reviews of a number of work areas identified within the revised *Terms of Reference*:  
Ramsar Review; cropped habitats; marine SPAs; sites for species with data to 1997; sites for species with data since 1997; monitoring SPAs; status of re-introduced/re-establishing raptors; taxonomic, migratory and/or population status of a number of species; treatment of mixed waterbird populations.
- 1.5. A provisional work programme for 2005 is appended to the report (Appendix 5).
- 1.6. A key element of the report is to summarise the decisions of the Group; those listed below are from 2004. It should be noted that because the SPAR SWG provides summary minutes of each meeting to the N2RSC, some of these decisions will have been considered by that group during the year; they are reported here for completeness, but may require no further action by the N2RSC. Summary outcomes of consideration by the N2RSC are noted in bold following each decision - they are taken from minutes of that group's meetings, but it should be noted that these may not always be available for inclusion in this report.
  - 1.6.1. **Recommendations and referrals to the UK Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee (if these have been considered by N2RSC during 2004 then they are marked with an asterisk)**
    - 1.6.1.1. *\*The SPAR SWG recommends that the N2RSC considers the mixture of measures implemented in the UK to meet the requirements of the Birds Directive in achieving desired conservation status of birds. Such consideration would benefit from review of the risk of voluntary measures and aim to identify the need for any additional SPAs. The SPAR SWG offers its assistance in undertaking this work (see 4.1). N2RSC considered this recommendation at its June 2004 meeting and requested that the SPAR SWG develop a concept note for the N2RSC to consider at a future meeting (draft minutes of June 2004 meeting); SPAR SWG will develop this in 2005.*

1.6.1.2.        \**The SPAR SWG recommends that the N2RSC considers the Group's advice on development of the UK Ramsar network for birds (see 5.1 and Appendix 4). **N2RSC considered this at its January 2005 meeting (minutes not yet available).***

1.6.1.3.        *The SPAR SWG confirms to the N2RSC that it endorses the JNCC recommendation that Northern Fulmar breeding colony SPAs be extended 2 km into the marine environment in recognition of the need to protect waters used for maintenance behaviour (see 5.3.3).*

1.6.1.4.        *The SPAR SWG recommends to the N2RSC that additional survey of the use of marine waters by Red-throated Diver, Manx Shearwater and all tern species is required to assist in the development of approaches for extending breeding seabird colony SPAs for these species into the marine environment (see 5.3.3).*

1.6.1.5.        *The SPAR SWG requests guidance from the N2RSC on the treatment of re-introduced / re-establishing species under the Birds Directive, including addressing the key questions of: (A) Does the Birds Directive apply to re-introduced species/populations? (B) If the Birds Directive does apply, at what point should Article 4 be implemented for an establishing population, especially if that population is predicted to become large and widespread? (C) In the UK, how do we apply the SPA Selection Guidelines to rapidly growing populations? (See 5.7)*

1.6.1.6.        *The SPAR SWG recommends to the N2RSC that the SPAR SWG should review the status of Red Kite and Osprey as part of the proposed 2008 network review, taking into consideration any N2RSC guidance on treatment of re-introduced / re-establishing species and making recommendations on further implementation of the Birds Directive for these species as part of that review process (see 5.7).*

1.6.1.7.        \**The SPAR SWG recommends to the N2RSC that a 1% biogeographical threshold of 200 pairs be adopted by the UK for the Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus torquatus* (see 5.8.3). **N2RSC has accepted this recommendation (draft minutes of June 2004 meeting).***

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. The SPA & Ramsar (Avian) Scientific Working Group is a consultative group that was established in November 2001 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to assist government administrations and the statutory conservation agencies in further developing the SPA and Ramsar networks within the UK, in particular promoting the coherent management of the networks and monitoring of sites.
- 2.2. The Group considers UK-scale scientific and technical issues regarding the SPA and Ramsar (avian) networks in the terrestrial and marine environment.
- 2.3. The Group comprises representatives from Government departments, devolved administrations and their statutory conservation agencies across the UK, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), and scientists from the voluntary conservation sector and other stakeholder groups, such as land-owners and managers, the water industry, marine and business sectors. A list of organisations represented in the Group is given in the 2001-2002 Annual Report.
- 2.4. The Group sits within a network of fora for the consideration of Natura 2000 issues:
  - bilateral discussions between NGOs and the Country Agencies
  - the *UK Natura 2000 & Ramsar Forum*<sup>1</sup>
  - the *UK Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee (N2RSC)*It provides advice and recommendations to the *UK Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* as well as acting on issues identified by them.
- 2.5. Formal *Terms of Reference*, along with an initial framework for discussions, were established at the Group's inauguration (See the 2001-2002 Annual Report). This framework was further developed into a rolling work programme. The *Terms of Reference* were revised in 2004 to add consideration of development of the UK Ramsar (avian) network to the Group's remit (Appendix 1).
- 2.6. The Group meets at least three times per year (January, May and September). Issues for discussion are typically supported with briefing papers that are circulated prior to each meeting (a full list for 2004 is given in Appendix 2). JNCC provides the Secretariat for the Group and hosts a web-page<sup>2</sup> on which selected briefings and the approved minutes of meetings are published.
- 2.7. The role of the *Annual Report* is to summarise active areas of work considered in the meetings of a calendar year, clearly denoting advice to Government, seeking the guidance of the *UK Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* or other fora where relevant, and also highlighting issues of a policy nature that were raised within the year but are outside of the remit of the Group. It also provides a provisional work programme for the following year (Appendix 5).

## 3. Response from the Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee to the 2003 SPA SWG Annual Report

- 3.1. The 2003 Annual Report, along with an outline of proposed work for 2004, was considered by the N2RSC at its June 2004 meeting. The N2RSC confirmed that the SPAR SWG was working in a helpful way and accepted all of the recommendations of the 2003 Annual Report.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/natura-ramsar-forum/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.jncc.gov.uk/species/UKSPA\\_ScientificWG/default.htm](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/species/UKSPA_ScientificWG/default.htm)

#### 4. Letters from the Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee to the SPAR SWG in 2004

- 4.1. Application of the SPA Selection Guidelines (26<sup>th</sup> January 2004): the N2RSC upheld its position that areas meeting Stages 1.1-1.3 of the SPA Selection Guidelines should not automatically be classified as SPAs, but that Stage 2 judgements remain relevant for selection of the most suitable areas.
  - 4.1.1. The decision in this letter led to further discussion within the SPAR SWG of the role of SPAs in achieving the desired conservation status of birds and agreement that there is a need for assessment of how the current suite of measures, including SPAs, is performing. The role of voluntary measures and network targets were highlighted as particular areas where additional consideration could be valuable.
  - 4.1.2. ***The SPAR SWG recommends that the N2RSC considers*** the mixture of measures implemented in the UK to meet the requirements of the Birds Directive in achieving desired conservation status of birds. Such consideration would benefit from review of the risk of voluntary measures and aim to identify the need for any additional SPAs. The SPAR SWG offers its assistance in the undertaking of this work.
- 4.2. Clarification of the role of the SPAR SWG (27<sup>th</sup> September 2004; see Appendix 3): this letter requested that the SPAR SWG re-examined its work to prioritise the major issues, particularly those within its original *Terms of Reference*, and specifically requesting a more strategic approach. The Group agreed that outcomes of the review of new data would be treated more strategically, bearing in mind the proposed 2008 review of the network. However, it was also agreed that issues remaining from the SPA Review should continue to be considered as per the existing work programme. The Group agreed to review its work programme to take into account the request from the N2RSC.

#### 5. Progress during 2004

##### 5.1. Ramsar Review

- 5.1.1. The *Terms of Reference* were revised (Appendix 1) to take account of new work on development of the UK Ramsar network. Work areas to assist the ongoing Ramsar Review were agreed: the possible scope of revisions to the Ramsar network as a consequence of the *SPA Review*; recommendations on development of the UK Ramsar network from review of BirdLife International's IBA/Ramsar analysis<sup>3</sup>. JNCC was requested to do the necessary analyses so that the Group could review these at its May 2004 meeting and approve advice at its September 2004 meeting for transmission to the N2RSC and the *Ramsar Review Steering Group* (RRSG).
- 5.1.2. The JNCC discussion report (Baker & Chambers 2004<sup>4</sup>) was reviewed alongside the RRSG's agreed interpretation of the Ramsar Criteria and consultation report. The Group agreed that some of the issues raised by consultation could not be resolved as part of the review; namely turn-over of waterbirds during migration and the definition of ecological units. As a result of discussion on the analyses and further comment from Group members, an advisory note was finalised and sent to the Chairs of the N2RSC and RRSG (see Appendix 4).

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<sup>3</sup> BirdLife International. 2001. *Important Bird Areas and potential Ramsar sites in Europe*.

<sup>4</sup> Baker, H. & Chambers, D. 2004. *Comparison of the UK Ramsar network against the UK SPA and IBA networks: discussion report*. Unpublished JNCC report, Peterborough.

5.1.3. **The SPAR SWG recommends that the N2RSC considers** the Group's advice on development of the UK Ramsar network for birds (submitted in January 2005 and appended to this report).

5.2. *Cropped habitats (CHIP)*

5.2.1. Members of the Group provided further comment on the draft discussion report circulated in 2003<sup>5</sup>. JNCC commissioned a further set of species accounts (Phase 2 of the project). More work on this project is planned for early 2005.

5.3. *Marine SPAs*

5.3.1. A considerable body of work on approaches to the development of SPAs in the marine environment was presented to and discussed by the Group during 2004.

5.3.2. An analysis of aerial surveys of birds in Liverpool Bay was presented to the Group by JNCC to complement previous discussion on Carmarthen Bay and as part of the development of generic guidance for seaducks, divers and grebes (Strand 2 in the JNCC marine SPA programme<sup>6</sup>). Draft generic guidelines will be reviewed in 2005.

5.3.3. Additional guidelines produced by JNCC on extending breeding seabird colonies into the marine environment were discussed. The Group agreed that a 2 km extension for Northern Fulmar (maintenance behaviour) was appropriate, but would welcome further survey work on this species. The Group was generally supportive of the recommendations for other species in the JNCC guidelines, but could not make decisions on Red-throated Diver, Manx Shearwater and the tern species – it recommends additional survey of these species.

5.3.3.1. **The SPAR SWG confirms to the N2RSC that** it endorses the JNCC recommendation that Northern Fulmar breeding colony SPAs be extended 2 km into the marine environment in recognition of the need to protect waters used for maintenance behaviour.

5.3.3.2. **The SPAR SWG recommends to the N2RSC that** additional survey of the use of marine waters by Red-throated Diver, Manx Shearwater and all tern species is required to assist in the development of approaches for extending breeding seabird colony SPAs for these species into the marine environment.

5.3.4. An update on progress in initiating the analysis of the European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) database was given by JNCC.

5.4. *Sites for species with data to 1997*

5.4.1. Smew: further consideration was deferred to 2005 pending acquisition and analysis of WeBS data.

5.5. *Sites for species with data since 1997*

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<sup>5</sup> Stroud, D.A. & Baker, H. 2003. *Cropped Habitats Information Project (CHIP): draft discussion report for the UK SPA Scientific Working Group on Phase One*. Unpublished JNCC Report.

<sup>6</sup> Johnston, C.M., Turnbull, C.G. & Tasker, M.L. 2002. *Natura 2000 in UK offshore waters: advice to support the implementation of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives in UK offshore waters*. JNCC Report 325, Peterborough. (section 6.3)

- 5.5.1. Spotted Crake: the Group considered a confidential paper on the status of Spotted Crake in the UK – a national survey was done in 1999. Members are concerned that due to patchy survey effort, there may be important biases in our understanding of distribution and the relative importance of different areas, although the national database does highlight the best areas. JNCC and RSPB were asked to consider ways in which annual survey of the species could be improved in future years, especially with regard to more systematic coverage. JNCC agreed to produce an advice note for the N2RSC, taking into account the desire for a more strategic approach to considering species with new data.
- 5.5.2. Corncrake: the results of the 2003 national survey were discussed, but the Group agreed that more time was required to review the briefing paper and that it would revisit this item at a future meeting. The GB population now exceeds the 1978 population, but increases have been largely within the core area (Orkney/Western Isles). The SPA network may now support around 32% of the GB population. The conservation strategy for the species was discussed and it was agreed that a review of all measures, including SPA provision, would be beneficial. Such a review could be done as a priority within any review done as a result of the Group's earlier recommendation (see 4.1.2).
- 5.5.3. Golden Eagle: results from the 2003 national survey were presented by RSPB and indicate a stable population, but with some minor changes in distribution. The RSPB analysis suggested that in 2003, 12.5% of the GB population was represented in the species' SPA suite in some way (for some pairs nest sites are outside of the network but feeding areas may be partly covered). Further discussion of Golden Eagle will be taken forward through bilateral discussions in Scotland.
- 5.5.4. Chough: A sub-group was established to take forward discussions on this species – it met in July and November 2004. The sub-group has developed a risk assessment of differing conservation strategies, reviewed data and maps, and developed ideas on target setting. JNCC will present a view on the principles underpinning the Chough suite of SPAs to the Group in future, taking into account the desire for a more strategic approach to the Group's recommendations. Chough will be considered further in 2005.
- 5.5.5. Capercaillie: a national survey was done in 2003/04 - the population estimate was twice that of 1998, but statistically the two estimates are not significantly different. The Group agreed to receive future updates only when significant developments have occurred.
- 5.5.6. Peregrine: results from the 2003 national survey were not available - the Group asked the Secretariat to invite the BTO to present results to the Group at a future meeting. Consideration is now likely in 2005.

## 5.6. *Monitoring*

- 5.6.1. WeBS Alerts: the Group was informed of the launch of the WeBS Alerts report on the BTO's website<sup>7</sup>.
- 5.6.2. JNCC presented its Birds Common Standards Monitoring Guidance and invited the Group to be part of the stakeholder assessment being run via the JNCC website. Discussion centred on conflicts in managing SPAs for multiple features, risks associated with setting baselines, and reporting.
- 5.6.3. Developing a framework for winter raptor monitoring: deferred (likely 2005).

## 5.7. *Re-introduced/re-establishing raptors*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm>



5.7.1. The Group considered three papers on the status of Red Kite, White-tailed Eagle and Osprey. Each tackled several key questions: does the Birds Directive apply to re-introduced species/populations; if the Birds Directive does apply, at what point Article 4 should be implemented for an establishing population, especially if that population is predicted to become large and widespread; in the UK, how do we apply the SPA Selection Guidelines to rapidly growing populations. While the Members had particular views on these, it was agreed to seek guidance from the N2RSC.

5.7.2. Red Kites are increasing relatively rapidly and the species is predicted to become abundant and widespread in the UK. The Group agreed that it would be difficult to assess SPA provision in these circumstances and that it would review the species as part of the proposed 2008 network review.

5.7.3. It was agreed that more information on White-tailed Eagles was required and that the Chair would approach the *Sea-eagle Team* to provide a fuller assessment of status. The Group will consider the species further when better information is available.

5.7.4. In light of the relatively poor success of the English re-introduction and the very recent nature of colonisation outside of Scotland, the Group agreed to leave further consideration of Osprey until the 2008 proposed review of the network.

5.7.5. ***The SPAR SWG requests guidance from the N2RSC on*** the treatment of re-introduced/re-establishing species under the Birds Directive, including addressing the key questions of: (A) Does the Birds Directive apply to re-introduced species / populations? (B) If the Birds Directive does apply, at what point should Article 4 be implemented for an establishing population, especially if that population is predicted to become large and widespread? (C) In the UK, how do we apply the SPA Selection Guidelines to rapidly growing populations?

5.7.6. ***The SPAR SWG recommends to the N2RSC that*** the SPAR SWG should review the status of Red Kite and Osprey as part of the proposed 2008 network review, taking into consideration any N2RSC guidance on treatment of re-introduced / re-establishing species and making recommendations on further implementation of the Birds Directive for these species as part of that review process.

#### 5.8. *Taxonomic and/or migratory status of selected species*

5.8.1. Eider: the Group had further discussion on the biogeographical status of populations occurring in the UK and agreed that more information was required before it could review its previous recommendation (2003 Annual Report).

5.8.2. Goosander: a paper on migratory status was considered. The Group agreed that current evidence suggests that goosanders in the UK (breeding and wintering) should be considered migratory. However, it was agreed to seek further opinion from Wetlands International on its treatment of the species before finalising a recommendation.

5.8.3. Ring Ouzel: the precision of the international population estimate for this migratory species cannot be improved; hence the Group agreed that the operational 1% threshold for use in the UK should be 200 pairs. Further consideration of aggregation and distribution of the species will be made in 2005.

5.8.3.1. ***The SPAR SWG recommends to the N2RSC that*** a 1% biogeographical threshold of 200 pairs be adopted by the UK for the Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus torquatus*.

5.9. *Mixed waterbird populations*

- 5.9.1. Where populations mix this creates problems in evaluating site importance and the Group recognises the need for guidance on treatment of mixed populations. The Ramsar *Scientific & Technical Review Panel* (STRP) is also developing recommendation on this issue, which could be adopted at CoP9 in November 2005. JNCC agreed to lead on producing draft guidance for consideration by the Group in 2005 and subsequent peer-reviewed publication.



## APPENDIX 1

### **Revised *Terms of Reference* of the SPA & Ramsar (Avian) Scientific Working Group (SPAR SWG): 2004**

#### UK Special Protection Area & Ramsar (Avian) Scientific Working Group (SPAR SWG)

#### Terms of Reference

##### Aims

The UK Special Protection Area & Ramsar (avian) Scientific Working Group (SPAR SWG) is a consultative group established by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to assist government administrations and the statutory conservation agencies in taking forward the further development of the SPA and avian Ramsar networks within the UK, in particular looking forward to the coherent management of these networks and monitoring of sites.

The Group will consider UK-scale scientific and technical issues regarding the SPA network in the terrestrial and marine environment. In particular, it will consider a range of issues raised in the context of the 2001 SPA review, *inter alia*:

- issues in respect of those species where the 2001 SPA review has indicated that there may be future cases for additional SPA provision, in particular, in the light of new national surveys, analyses, and conservation needs;
- consider those issues which the 2001 SPA review indicated as outstanding;
- the development of understanding of broader European contexts as relevant to informing the evolution of the SPA network within the UK;
- the implications of revisions of estimates of the sizes of bird populations, both nationally and internationally;
- the development of understanding of data needs for SPA classification and management, and the further development of systems and processes to ensure the timely delivery of such information; and
- the application of processes to monitor the SPAs individually and collectively.

The Group will also consider and advise on scientific and technical issues regarding the avian aspects of the UK Ramsar network. In particular, it will consider the avian aspects of the Ramsar Reviews, providing advice to the UK Natura 2000 and Ramsar Steering Committee. In addition, it will, if requested by the Ramsar Review Steering Group, provide advice on avian Ramsar issues in the UK Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

There is a significant range of potential issues to be addressed by the UK Special Protection Area & Ramsar (avian) Scientific Working Group. The attached Annex seeks to outline the principal activities regarding SPAs and orders these into short, medium and long-term priorities. An initial task for the Group will be to develop a more detailed work programme,

with key ‘milestones’, based on this Annex. The work programme will also include elements previously identified by the UK Ramsar Review Steering Group.

The activities of the Working Group in assisting government to meet the scientific and technical requirements of the Birds Directive will be complemented by discussions taking place within each of the countries. It will work closely with the UK Natura 2000 and Ramsar Steering Committee. A UK Natura 2000 and Ramsar Forum will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to consider broader issues regarding the development and management of the Natura 2000 and Ramsar networks.

### Composition

The Group will be representative of the Government departments/devolved administrations and their statutory agencies across the UK, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), and representation from the voluntary conservation sector as well as other stakeholder groups. The Group will thus comprise representatives of: Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Scottish Executive; National Assembly of Wales; English Nature; Scottish Natural Heritage; Countryside Council for Wales; Environment and Heritage Service; JNCC; and a representative selection of voluntary conservation agencies plus other stakeholder groups, such as those representing land-owning, land management, water industry, marine and business sectors, with the necessary scientific expertise.

On occasion, representatives from other organisations may be asked to attend where there is the need for information of a specific nature to be discussed by the Group.

### Method of operation

It is anticipated that the Group will hold about three meetings per year, with actions between these periods being taken forward by electronic communications.

### **Chair and Secretariat**

The Chair will be appointed by government prior to the first meeting. The Secretariat will be provided by JNCC who will convene and support the Group.

### Sub-groups

It may, from time-to-time, be desirable to establish smaller sub-groups to resolve certain issues. These will be time-limited and will focus on concluding specific tasks on behalf of the Working Group as a whole.

### Reporting

The Scientific Working Group will provide regular updates of its activity to the UK Natura 2000 and Ramsar Steering Committee.

## Issues for attention

The Scientific Group will develop a work programme with priority given to the following issues:

1. Appraisal of any further sites/boundaries/species which may qualify on the basis of high quality data from the 1992/97 data window of the 2001 network review.
2. Development of a strategic approach to further work to resolve issues outstanding from the 2001 Review.
3. Appraisal of further sites based on substantial high quality datasets collected during 1997-2000, and later 2001-2004.
4. Development of a strategic approach to the collection and interpretation of new data, information on population sizes, and site monitoring.
5. 'Sweep-up' review of outstanding network needs commencing with data window concluding 2005/6 (*i.e.* review starting in autumn 2006) informed by outcomes of monitoring processes.

## APPENDIX 2

### List of briefing papers presented to the SPAR Scientific Working Group during 2003

Note: Many of these papers are available from the JNCC website. However, some of the papers presented to the Group were confidential in nature and so will not be published (they are denoted by an asterisk). In addition, some papers were preliminary or draft briefings and most of these will not be published (these are noted).

#### January 2004

- Paper from the *Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* on the application of the UK SPA Selection Guidelines
- Letter from the Chair of the *Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* (dated 26<sup>th</sup> January 2004) on the application of the UK SPA Selection Guidelines
- Draft 2003 Annual Report of the SPAR SWG
- Ramsar Review: work programme and timetable for UK avian elements (Defra/JNCC paper)
- Analysis of aerial survey data for Liverpool Bay (JNCC PowerPoint presentation; not available on website)
- Treatment of Goosander populations in the UK (preliminary briefing; WWT)
- Review of SPA suite for Spotted Crakes (preliminary briefing; JNCC)\*
- Short information paper: SPAs for Ring Ouzels (EN)
- Implications of the 2003 national corncrake survey for the UK SPA network: a paper by the RSPB for the UK SPA Scientific Working Group\*

#### May 2004

- 2003 Annual Report
- Comparison of the UK Ramsar network with the UK SPA and IBA networks: a discussion report. Baker, H & Chambers, D. May 2004, unpublished JNCC report.
- Generic guidelines for extending the boundary to existing northern fulmar colony SPAs. McSorley, CA, Webb, A, Dean, BJ, & Reid JB, 2004. Draft JNCC Report
- Do gulls use coastal waters for maintenance activities? A review. O'Brien, S. 2003. Unpublished report to JNCC.
- The Birds Common Standards Monitoring Guidance (JNCC PowerPoint presentation; not available on website; full CSM guidance at [www.jncc.gov.uk/csm](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/csm))
- Progress in Review of SPA suite for chough: An information paper for the SPAR SWG (SNH)\*
- SPAs for chough in Wales – update on progress (CCW)\*
- Implications of the 2003 national golden eagle survey for the UK SPA network (RSPB)\*
- Red kites in Scotland and the UK SPA suite ( with notes on the situation in England and Wales) (SNH/EN/CCW)\*
- Sea eagles in Scotland and the UK SPA suite (SNH)\*
- Ospreys in Scotland and the UK SPA suite (SNH)\*

#### September 2004

- Letter from the Chair of the *Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* (dated 27<sup>th</sup> September 2004) on the role of the SPAR SWG
- Draft advisory note on implementation of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) for birds in the UK (as part of the Ramsar Review)
- Update on the work of the Chough SPA sub-group (JNCC; preliminary briefing)
- Treatment of Goosander populations in the UK (JNCC/WWT)
- Review of SPA suite for Spotted Crakes (JNCC)\*

## APPENDIX 3

### Letter from the Chair of the *Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* dated 27<sup>th</sup> September 2004: the role of the SPAR SWG

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Dr Ian Bainbridge  
Chair  
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27 September 2004

Dear Ian

#### SPA/R SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

I recently met colleagues in the devolved administrations to discuss Natura policy issues and undertook to write to you on issues relating to SPAs, including the SPA/Ramsar Scientific Working Group's terms of reference and forward work programme.

We agreed that a clearer strategic approach was needed by the UK to determine whether additions were needed to the UK SPA list in the light of new data. It was agreed that this should involve periodic strategic review by JNCC of the UK SPA network. For clarification this would incorporate the existing approach followed in the UK by publication of the SPA Review in 2001, which updated the assessment of UK SPAs published in 1992. We agreed that the next review should commence in 2008 with publication anticipated in 2010.

In the meantime, the role of the SWG remains as set out in its agreed terms of reference, to focus on those gaps already identified in the 2001 Review; consider species for which additional SPA may be necessary in the light of new data, analysis, and conservation needs; and the monitoring of populations for the purposes of monitoring the SPA network. The SWG remains an advisory group to Government, which will assist us in focussing the work of country agencies and the JNCC in selecting possible SPA or extensions to SPA in the light of data developments. The SWG has brought and should continue to bring to the attention of Government, through the Natura 2000 and Ramsar Committee and Forum, conclusions based on its assessment of datasets. Its purpose is to provide transparency and accountability within the site review process and draw upon the wider expertise of stakeholders. That said, it will - of course - be for the JNCC, working with the country agencies, to provide formal advice to Government in respect of possible new or amended SPAs. It appears to me that with the best intentions this split of responsibilities has become muddled.

I am conscious that the SPA SWG has recently been involved in some rather difficult discussions on additions to the SPA network, most notably the chough. In such cases it is for the SWG to advise Government and its agencies on the suitability of data to be used in the consideration of SPA lists, in line with the ToR calling for it to review the outstanding issues listed in the 2001 Review. Decisions about how these data should be used in a consistent and applicable manner and subsequent advice on site selection remain part of the JNCC's function in ensuring common standards are applied.

As you know, one of the current tasks of the Group is to consider new datasets as they become available and these are then put to the Natura 2000 and Ramsar Committee for endorsement. In order that we can make best use of the results, and the SPA SWG can contribute to the strategic review outlined above, I should be grateful if you would look at how a structured approach to consideration of information from new datasets could be adopted e.g. to consider how we could look across the results of surveys for different species that use similar habitat types to provide more joined-up recommendations that achieve the best conservation outcomes within the limited resources available and avoiding duplication of effort. A more strategic programme for consideration of the need for change that is closely linked to monitoring plans was envisaged in the original terms of reference which state that a priority issue for attention will be the development of a strategic approach to the collection and interpretation of new data, information on population sizes and site monitoring.

As part of this process it may be appropriate for the group to pause and re-examine its work programme to prioritise the major issues, particularly those in the original terms of reference. The terms of reference acknowledged that there was a significant range of potential issues to be addressed and I understand that members of the Group have recently been asked to comment on the work programme. This should not therefore represent an additional task for the group.

I am also asking David Stroud to convene a further meeting on chough in the light of my comments in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, since it is the JNCC's role to advise Government on the suite required by the UK to comply with the Directive and they are best placed to assess the application of common standards. He will no doubt update you on these discussions in due course.

Yours sincerely

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Chair of Natura 2000 and Ramsar Committee

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## APPENDIX 4

### **Advisory note from the SPAR SWG to the Chairs of the *Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee* and the *Ramsar Review Steering Group* on avian elements of the Ramsar Review**

#### UK RAMSAR REVIEW

#### SPA & RAMSAR (AVIAN) SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

#### **ADVISORY NOTE ON IMPLEMENTING THE RAMSAR CONVENTION FOR BIRDS: INFORMED BY THE COMPARISON OF THE UK RAMSAR NETWORK AGAINST THE UK SPA AND IBA NETWORKS**

The SPAR SWG recommends to the Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee and the Ramsar Review Steering Group that they consider the following advice when agreeing on the further development of the UK Ramsar Network.

In order to meet the objectives of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) and hence achieve a coherent and comprehensive UK Ramsar List, the current review should be used to inform the designation of new Ramsar sites, extensions to existing sites and addition of new qualifying features to existing sites, where they have been clearly demonstrated to meet the Ramsar Criteria.

In support of further development of the UK Ramsar List the following principles should be adhered to:

- Implementation of the Convention on Wetlands should be consistent for all birds that are ecologically dependent on wetlands.
  - The review has highlighted the need for a consistent approach to seabirds<sup>8</sup> and it is recommended that relevant wetland habitats<sup>9</sup> that support internationally, and where relevant nationally, important numbers of seabirds or assemblages of more than 20,000 individual waterbirds (to include seabirds) in any season should be considered for Ramsar designation.
  - The review has also highlighted the need for a consistent approach to sedentary wetland birds<sup>10</sup> and it is recommended that relevant wetland habitats (as defined by the Convention) that support internationally, and where relevant nationally, important numbers of sedentary wetland birds or assemblages of more than 20,000 individual waterbirds (to include sedentary wetland birds) in any season should be considered for Ramsar designation.
- Criterion 2<sup>11</sup> of the Convention on Wetlands should be fully implemented.
  - It is recommended that relevant wetland habitats (as defined by the Convention) that support nationally important populations of wetland birds that are listed as globally threatened by IUCN, in Appendix 1 of the Convention on Migratory Species, or are of high conservation concern in the UK<sup>12</sup> should be considered for Ramsar designation.

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<sup>8</sup> Seabirds are taken to be any species in the families Procellariidae, Hydrobatidae, Sulidae, Phalacrocoracidae, Stercorariidae, Laridae, Sternidae and Alcidae

<sup>9</sup> All habitats used by seabirds in any season, including inland habitats and also those marine/coastal habitats listed in Appendix 1

<sup>10</sup> A full list of relevant species can be developed, but will include mute swan, native North Scottish greylag goose and black guillemot

<sup>11</sup> The agreed UK interpretation of Criterion 2: Sites of national importance for wetland species categorised by IUCN as Critical, Endangered and Vulnerable, or on CMS Appendix I, or sites of national importance for species identified as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered under national endangered species legislation/programmes, or included on BAP lists or other sources where relevant

<sup>12</sup> See appendix 2 for possible species. The SPAR SWG recommends that the 2002 *Birds of Conservation Concern red list* be the source of these species (see Appendix 2)

To assist in implementing the above advice, the Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee and Ramsar Review Steering Group are invited to note the detailed analysis already presented in Baker & Chambers (2004)<sup>13</sup>, recognising the need for further work.

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<sup>13</sup> Baker, H & Chambers, D (2004) *UK Ramsar Review. Comparison of the UK Ramsar network with the UK SPA and IBA networks: a discussion report*. Unpublished report to the SPA & Ramsar (avian) Scientific Working Group, May 2004. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

[Appendix 1]

**Definitions of marine wetlands within the Ramsar Convention that may be relevant for seabirds and a UK comparison against the EU Habitats Directive Annex I habitat definitions**

**The Ramsar Convention definition of "wetland" and classification system for wetland type**

Under the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) "wetlands" are defined by Articles 1.1 and 2.1 as shown below:

**Article 1.1:**

*"For the purpose of this Convention wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres."*

**Article 2.1** provides that wetlands:

*"may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands".*

**Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type**

The codes are based upon the Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type as approved by Recommendation 4.7 and amended by Resolution VI.5 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. The categories listed herein are intended to provide only a very broad framework to aid rapid identification of the main wetland habitats represented at each site.

**Marine/Coastal Wetlands**

A -- **Permanent shallow marine waters** in most cases less than six metres deep at low tide; includes sea bays and straits.

B -- **Marine subtidal aquatic beds**; includes kelp beds, sea-grass beds, tropical marine meadows.

D -- **Rocky marine shores**; includes rocky offshore islands, sea cliffs.

E -- **Sand, shingle or pebble shores**; includes sand bars, spits and sandy islets; includes dune systems and humid dune slacks.

F -- **Estuarine waters**; permanent water of estuaries and estuarine systems of deltas.

G -- **Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats**.

H -- **Intertidal marshes**; includes salt marshes, salt meadows, saltings, raised salt marshes; includes tidal brackish and freshwater marshes.

J -- **Coastal brackish/saline lagoons**; brackish to saline lagoons with at least one relatively narrow connection to the sea.

K -- **Coastal freshwater lagoons**; includes freshwater delta lagoons.

Habitats Directive Annex I habitats with their corresponding Ramsar wetland types<sup>14</sup>

=	Ramsar type is ~ equivalent to related Annex I habitat
>	Ramsar type is wider than related Annex I habitat
<	Ramsar type is narrower than related Annex I habitat
#	Ramsar type and related Annex I habitat overlap
C	Non-wetland coastal habitat relevant under Article 2.1 of the Convention only

Habitats Directive feature code	Habitats Directive Annex I feature (* = priority habitat)	> < = C or #	Ramsar wetland type code	Ramsar wetland type
1110	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time	#	A	Permanent shallow marine waters
1110	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time	#	B	Marine subtidal aquatic beds
1130	Estuaries	#	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
1130	Estuaries	<	F	Estuarine waters
1130	Estuaries	#	G	Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats
1140	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	#	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
1140	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	#	G	Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats
1150	Coastal lagoons*	>	J	Coastal brackish/saline lagoons
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	#	A	Permanent shallow marine waters
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	#	B	Marine subtidal aquatic beds
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	#	D	Rocky marine shores
1160	Large shallow inlets and bays	#	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
1170	Reefs	#	A	Permanent shallow marine waters
1170	Reefs	#	B	Marine subtidal aquatic beds
1170	Reefs	#	D	Rocky marine shores
1210	Annual vegetation of drift lines	>	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
1220	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	#	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
1230	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts	#/C	D	Rocky marine shores
1310	<i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand	>	H	Intertidal marshes
1320	<i>Spartina</i> swards ( <i>Spartinion maritimae</i> )	>	H	Intertidal marshes
1330	Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i> )	>	H	Intertidal marshes
1420	Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs ( <i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i> )	>	H	Intertidal marshes
2110	Embryonic shifting dunes	C	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
2190	Humid dune slacks	>	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
21A0	Machairs	#	E	Sand, shingle or pebble shores
8330	Submerged or partially submerged sea caves	#	A	Permanent shallow marine waters
8330	Submerged or partially submerged sea caves	#	D	Rocky marine shores

<sup>14</sup> From; Moore, E, McLeod, C, Chambers, D & Betts, H (2004) *UK Ramsar Review (GB and Northern Ireland). JNCC analysis on distribution of nationally-threatened species (freshwater fish and vascular plants) and underrepresented SAC Annex I habitats*. Unpublished discussion paper prepared for Ramsar Review Steering Group meeting, July 2004. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

**[Appendix 2]**

**UK bird species that may be considered under Criterion 2 of the Convention on Wetlands**

[Wetland species categorised by IUCN as Critical, Endangered and Vulnerable, or on CMS Appendix I, or species identified as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered under national endangered species legislation/programmes, or included on BAP lists or other sources where relevant]

**IUCN Red Listed wetland birds in the UK**

Aquatic warbler  
Cormorant

**Convention on Migratory Species Appendix I wetland birds in the UK**

White-tailed eagle

**UK Birds of Conservation Concern (2002) red listed wetland birds**

<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/species/Birds/PosB/default.htm>

*Aquatic warbler*

Bittern

Black-tailed godwit (breeding population)

Common scoter (breeding population)

*Cormorant*

Marsh warbler

Red-necked phalarope (breeding population)

Reed bunting

Roseate tern

Savi's warbler

*White-tailed eagle*

## APPENDIX 5

### **SPA & Ramsar (Avian) Scientific Working Group provisional work programme for 2005**

#### **Items for short-term consideration by SPAR SWG that will be presented to the N2RSC for consideration during 2005/06 (agreed for attention prior to 2008 review)**

Chough: continuation of work of sub-group; outputs to SPAR SWG in May 2005 for consideration; finalise recommendations to the N2RSC by end 2005

Cropped Habitats Information Project (CHIP): complete project during 2005; finalise advice to N2RSC by summer 2006

Marine SPAs: review JNCC generic guidance on selecting SPAs for non-breeding waterbirds using marine waters and make recommendations to N2RSC as required

Marine SPAs: respond to JNCC consultation requests as and when necessary; make recommendations to N2RSC as required

2008 SPA Network Review: consider JNCC paper on possible scope of the review; make initial report to N2RSC by early 2006

Finalise guidance on the treatment of mixed migratory waterbird populations and submit for both peer-reviewed publication and as advice to N2RSC by end 2005

Examination of the roles and adequacy of the range of measures, including SPAs, implemented in the UK to meet the requirements of the Birds Directive (unlikely to report in 2005)

White-tailed Eagle: review additional information from the *Sea-eagle Team* on status and consider this in light of N2RSC guidance on treatment of re-introduced/re-establishing birds

Developing a framework for winter raptor monitoring (unlikely to report in 2005)

#### **Items for development/consideration by SPAR SWG in 2005 that will be included in the 2008 review (any outcomes will not be sent to N2RSC during 2005)**

Spotted Crane: finalise advice note on treatment under SPA Selection Guidelines

Peregrine: consider the results of the 2003 national survey

Consider further the small number of species for which taxonomic and/or migratory status is uncertain

Develop view on treatment of non-breeding, non-estuarine waterbirds, based on the Non-estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS), under the SPA Selection Guidelines

Develop guidelines on the use of new national population estimates in review of the SPA network

Consideration of SPA provision for Smew: finalise recommendations on treatment of Smew under the SPA Selection Guidelines

Best practice for bird surveys: finalise guidance



## APPENDIX 6

## Glossary

2008 SPA Review	A future review of the UK SPA network proposed by Defra in the framework to the Terms of Reference of the SPAR SWG.
Biogeographical population	A group of birds which breed in a particular location (or group of locations), breed freely within the group, and rarely breed or exchange individuals with other groups.
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology; has existed since 1933 as an independent, scientific research trust, investigating the populations, movements and ecology of wild birds in the British Isles. The BTO's speciality is the design and implementation of volunteer wild bird surveys.
CHIP	Cropped Habitats Information Project; a JNCC project to collate information on the use of cropped habitats by a range of birds. CHIP will inform consideration by the SPAR SWG of the need for designation of cropped habitats as SPAs.
Common Standards Monitoring (CSM)	The statutory conservation agencies' framework for monitoring the condition of interest features on designated sites.
EC Marine Experts Working Group	The main objective of the Marine Expert Group, established by DG Environment, is to develop a common understanding of the provisions of Natura 2000 relating to the marine environment in order to facilitate the designation and future management of these areas by the Member States. The group includes representatives from governments and NGOs.
IBA	Important Bird Area; a BirdLife International nomination of areas that meet specific selection criteria (see <a href="http://www.birdlife.net/vision/conservation_goals/sites.html">www.birdlife.net/vision/conservation_goals/sites.html</a> ).
Marine Natura 2000 Project Group	A statutory group, made up of government and conservation agency representatives, responsible for development of Natura 2000 in the marine environment and accountable to the Natura 2000 Steering Group. The group is chaired by an independent member of the Joint Committee and JNCC provides the Secretariat. The chair of the SPA SWG is a co-opted member.
N2RSC	Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee (formerly the Natura 2000 Steering Group)
Ramsar	The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 138 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1328 wetland sites, totalling 111.9 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.
Ramsar Review	In the context of the Strategic Framework and Guidelines for the Future Development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Resolution VII.11), the UK Government is currently reviewing its list of Ramsar sites, with special emphasis on assessment of non-avian features. The review aims to agree the process for revising the UK Ramsar network and will be reported to CoP 9 in 2005. Tied to this will be the submission of updated Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) and site maps to the Ramsar Bureau for CoP 9.
Re-introduced	The term used for birds that were formerly present or more widespread in the UK and that have been released from captivity into the wild.

Re-establishing	A term used to describe a population of a bird that is in a phase of increase in numbers and/or distribution due to one or more of the following; former limitations being removed, the population being enhanced through re-introduction schemes, from natural colonisation.
SPA Review	The working name of the published results of the review of the SPA network; <i>The UK SPA network: its scope and content. JNCC 2001</i> (cited as Stroud <i>et al.</i> 2001). [ <a href="http://www.jncc.gov.uk/UKSPA">www.jncc.gov.uk/UKSPA</a> ]
SPA Selection Guidelines	Guidelines developed and adopted by UK Government and the statutory conservation agencies for the selection of SPAs in the UK (published by JNCC in 1999; available from JNCC or at <a href="http://www.jncc.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/spa/guidelines.htm">www.jncc.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/spa/guidelines.htm</a> )
Stage 1/Stage 2	Refers to the two stages of the UK SPA Selection Guidelines.
UK Natura 2000 & Ramsar Forum	A statutory group, made up of government and conservation agency representatives, responsible for development of Natura 2000. Chaired by Defra ( <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/natura-ramsar-forum">www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/natura-ramsar-forum</a> ).
Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE)	A publication of Wetlands International; WPE presents international population estimates for non-breeding waterbirds throughout the world. This is the standard reference for the Ramsar Convention and for statutory use in the UK. The most recent revision is WPE3, published in 2002 and adopted for UK statutory use from January 2003.
WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey; a joint scheme of the BTO, WWT, RSPB and JNCC to monitor non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The principal aims of the scheme are to identify population sizes, determine trends in numbers and distribution, and to identify important sites for waterbirds.
WeBS Alerts System	A method of assessing changes in national, country, regional and site populations of non-breeding waterbirds over the short, medium and long term, drawing on WeBS data. The alerting system shows when these changes exceed certain thresholds and when evaluated in the context of wider changes will help inform conservation needs.
Wetlands International	A leading global non-profit organisation dedicated solely to the crucial work of wetland conservation and sustainable management. The organisation's mission is to sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity for future generations through research, information exchange and conservation activities, worldwide. Well-established networks of experts and close partnerships with key organisations provide Wetlands International with the essential tools for catalysing conservation activities worldwide. [ <a href="http://www.wetlands.org">www.wetlands.org</a> ]