
Specialist Group Workshop
Joint Ramsar-Wetlands International Workshops

**PAPERS FOR THE JOINT WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL AND RAMSAR
BUREAU WORKSHOPS**

NOVEMBER 4th 2000

WAGENINGEN

Peatlands Working Group

Wet Grassland Working Group

Threatened Waterbirds Project

Workshop on Guidelines for Peatlands

Introduction:

At the 9th STRP meeting in Gland in June 2000, the draft Guidelines were discussed in the Peatlands Working Group. The following notes, extracted from the minutes of the STRP meeting, introduce the present purpose of the Workshop:

Note also that the general guidance from the Ramsar Bureau on the development and content of Guidelines should be observed. Also note the more detailed guidance provided below by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention.

From the 9th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Report of the Meeting

AGENDA ITEM 21.2: Guidelines for peatlands

82. Doug Taylor (Wetlands International) made a presentation outlining the complexities of devising guidelines

for peatlands, largely because they are so diverse and have no proper inventory or classification system. He noted that 268 Ramsar sites have peat components, and 118 of these are threatened. He proposed that guidelines should focus upon 1) peatland soil characteristics, 2) peat-forming species, 3) species directly dependent upon peat soils, 4) hydrological characteristics of peatlands, and 5) the relative area of peatland. Doug Taylor noted that Wetlands International has problems with the notion of "biogeographic region" in applying Criterion 1 (Strategic Framework, para. 68) but would need to work with it. The SG agreed that the biogeographic region approach would have to be worked with, since it is a key part of the Strategic Framework, which was adopted by the Contracting Parties just a year ago and unlikely to be changed soon.

83. Jack Rieley proposed that the draft guidelines would be discussed at a Working Group workshop coinciding with the Wetlands International Specialist Group meetings in Wageningen, 4-5 November, which would need some financial support.

84. Tobias Salathé highlighted what could entail some new approaches to site designation among Doug Taylor's remarks, namely that Parties should designate a certain surface area or proportion of surface area and that threatened sites should have priority (since some Parties prefer to designate only unthreatened sites). Stephen Hunter indicated that the SC would wish to hear careful arguments before moving in these directions. The DSG acknowledged the various difficulties in preparing guidelines for peat and stressed the need for flexibility, particularly in accounting for regional differences in such a way as still to achieve global guidance.

Decision STRP 9.15: The STRP endorsed the approach to drafting guidelines being taken by the Working Group on Peatlands, and looked forward to viewing the draft document by the 31 December drafting deadline (see Annex IX)

The draft Guidelines, with inserted comments accompany this paper. The task for this Workshop is therefore to review the draft and develop it in time for the deadline set by the STRP.

To: STRP Peatlands Working Group,

Guidance for the Workshop from the Deputy Secretary-General of the Ramsar Bureau.

1. The context is that the guidelines should be supplemental guidance to contracting parties on how to apply the existing Criteria for Ramsar Site selection and designation, in recognition that peatlands are under-represented in the Ramsar List and appear provide difficulties for Contracting Parties in their selection. In other words peatlands can currently be selected under probably all the current Criteria (though it may be that the fish Criteria 7 & 8 are less relevant - a point for consideration), but some further guidance to CPs is needed on what sorts of features of peatlands they should be looking for under each Criterion that would make a site a good candidate for consideration.

Note that for some Criteria (e.g. #1) the long term target is (explicitly or implicitly) is to include good examples of sites within an area of search; for others (e.g. #6) the target is to include all sites that qualify.

A major issue the Group needs to consider is in relation to Criterion 1 (for which the long-term target is to have at least one suitable representative of each wetland type [found in each biogeographic region - see further

comment on biogeographic regions below]. Thus the target here is not necessarily to have all such sites designated, but implicitly rather to go for the 'best' or 'good' examples. So here the guidance on peatlands would concern what features (e.g. size, intactness, hydrological functioning, habitat diversity etc.) would help in selecting sites. Some of these overall 'high value' features may be relevant also (or more) relevant to Criterion 3 (maintaining biodiversity of particular biogeographic regions). Some careful structuring of the guidelines may thus be needed, especially if the Group considers going at the start for an overarching set of comments on 'important peatland features' before going into features relevant for each Criterion.

Criterion 2 (concerning threatened species or ecological communities) has an implicit target of all such sites meeting the Criterion. Here your supplemental guidance could address particularly how interpret for peatlands the generic guidance on threatened ecological communities contained in para 75 of Ramsar Handbook 7.

A similar approach should be taken in relation to each of the other Criteria, i.e. look at the existing generic guidance for each and develop interpretation of CPs about what this means in relation to peatlands.

2. On the biogeographic regions issue. STRP agreed that this is a difficult concept to interpret but your attention is drawn to the point stressed in STRP that the approach has only recently been further enshrined in the selection and designation approach by COP7 and it is most unlikely that CPs would go for further major changes to this topic so soon after endorsing it in Res. VII.11. Furthermore this is a generic matter that goes well beyond peatlands, and STRP/Standing Committee would need to consider it as such. However, your discussions now and in the workshop will help to throw up some options about how to tackle and present this issue using the example of peatlands. We have an opportunity here to try to develop the thinking a bit more and that would, be well received.

An approach to tackling this could be:

A). is there a generally accepted/acceptable set of biogeographic regions for peatlands? From what I have heard probably not, and this of course also relates to what I gather is the lack of overall broad-level classification of peatlands?

B). If no to A., can you suggest any pragmatic guidance, perhaps broadly geographical rather than biogeographical (i.e. something like the approach being proposed for the Asian Wetland Inventory), pending coming up with A. at a later date.

The important point here is that whatever guidance you propose should not have the effect of further deterring CPs in their peatland designations!

Could the group come up with some broad-scale categories for this, even if they are rather (bio-)geographically vague? I am thinking of such phrases as "tundra peatlands of Asia", "swamp-forest peatlands of SE Asia", "north-west European blanket bogs". Or alternatively even less habitat based: "peatlands of NW Europe", "peatlands of temperate Asia", i.e. regions in which broadly similar types of peatland occur?

3. "Controversial issues". Aside from biogeographic regions (and the lack of peatland inventory) needing to be presented in a positive way that does not impede designations, you'll recall there were two elements of the selection approach proposed by the Working Group at STRP9 that were substantively different from the current approach and guidance embodied in the Strategic Framework.

One was the suggestion that countries should designate a certain surface area or proportion of surface area, and the other that threatened sites should have priority. I'd remind the working group of the view of Stephen Hunter as Standing Committee Chair that SC would wish to hear careful arguments for such novel and different approaches (again since these would have much broader significance than just for peatlands) before considering moving in these directions. This relates, for example, to the point in 1. above about the current criteria and guidelines indicating selection of example sites, not all (or a proportion of all) an area of habitat.

4. As for the point about an "elite suite of sites" as the current approach, the general feeling of the Convention is that the Ramsar List represents the "jewels in the wetland crown", as embodied in the Vision for the List: "to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the ecological and hydrological functions they perform". So the strongly stated aim is for a suite of sites - hence going for proportion of area could be seen as a fundamental change in the basic tenets of the Convention. The matter may be best addressed in preparing guidance on boundary delimitation especially where a vast tract of a country is generally uniform peatland. My suggestion would be for the workshop to address any of the "controversial issues" and their broader implications after getting through as much as possible of the other meaty issues on the guidelines.

Dr Nick Davidson

Annex IX

Working Group 7: Peatlands

Development of Guidelines for the Identification and Designation of Peatlands for the Ramsar List

Wetlands International as Focal Point within Peatland Working Group

Workplan

1. Email draft Guidelines to Working Group beginning July 2000
2. Feedback from Working Group by end July 2000 to Wetlands International
3. Revised Guidelines to Working Group by end September 2000
4. Working Group discussion at Wetlands International Specialist Group meeting, 4-5 November 2000 to place in global context
5. Working Group, through Focal Point to produce Guidelines [by 31 December 2000]
6. Pass to Ramsar Convention Bureau for STRP 10 (April 2001)

7. Submit to Standing Committee 26 for transmittal to COP8

7. Terms of Reference for the STRP's Expert Working Group on Peatlands

Tasks given to STRP by COP7. Recommendation 7.1 and annex:

11. INVITES the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel and Ramsar International Organization Partners to assist Contracting Parties in evaluating this Action Plan, once completed, with regard to development of:

- i) additional guidelines for designation of peatlands as Ramsar sites;
- ii) further national and regional sustainable development, wise use and management guidelines for peatlands;
- iii) initiatives to transfer peatland development and restoration technology to developing nations and countries with economies in transition; and
- iv) standardized and globally applicable classification of peatland types and their ecological characteristics.

[Annex to Recommendation 7.1]

2.2 Ramsar Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Ramsar Bureau, IPS and IMCG and other interested Partners should review the extent and quality of peatland survey around the world and identify those areas in need of further inventory.

Activities:

1. Coordinate comments from STRP, International Organization Partners, and any interested Contracting Parties into the further development of draft Global Action Plan for Peatlands (see Recommendation 7.1) by end October 1999.
2. Finalize the Global Action Plan for Peatlands (GAPP) at the GAPP Discussion Group meeting in Freising, Germany (30 November – 1 December 1999) prior to urgent transmission to the 24th meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee for endorsement (alterations to the present draft version will be highlighted in bold). Refer to Decision SC24-8 of the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee.
3. Use the Freising meeting to review progress and set out requirements to make substantive headway within each of the eight 'opportunities' outlined in the GAPP and report findings to the 9th STRP meeting (June 2000).

And in particular:

4. With the support of interested Contracting Parties, develop guidelines for the designation of peatlands as Ramsar sites drawing on workshop discussions at Freising (November 1999) and Quebec (August 2000) and comments from the STRP. Guidelines should be developed by June 2001 for consideration by the Standing Committee later that year, and adoption by COP8 in 2002.
5. Work with the Inventory Working Group to develop procedures for the identification and review of peatland inventory. In close conjunction with the Wetlands International 'GRoWI – 2' project, a project concept should be devised for consideration and endorsement at the 9th STRP meeting (June 2000).

Members:

IMCG (Rob Stoneman), Co-Lead, IPS (Jack Rieley), Co-Lead, Wetlands International (Nick Davidson), Co-Lead, WWF (Chris Tydeman), GWEN to be available for advice (Toré Söderqvist)

Draft guidelines for the identification and designation of peatlands as Ramsar Sites - initial review

Scott Frazier and Doug Taylor

Wetlands International

Comments by Richard Lindsay

IMCG

1. I think that the first thing the paper should do is address WHY peatlands are an under-represented type. Clearly, something is happening to make this habitat invisible to those who identify potential Ramsar sites. It is only by tackling the root of the problem that we can expect to see a more balanced and realistic selection of peatland Ramsar sites from all parts of the globe. This stage clearly has fundamental relevance to "...the identification and designation of peatlands...".

All the guidelines in the world will not improve the situation if people are still failing to identify peatlands. We see the problem again and again. It is found afflicting the individual in the high street all the way to international conventions such as the FCCC - ask someone in the street what a peatland is, and you will get a blank stare or a hopelessly garbled story. Then look at the FCCC and Kyoto Protocol; a Convention concerned with global carbon balance and yet it fails to mention peatlands, although they contain 4 times the volume of carbon stored in the tropical rainforests. Something is fundamentally wrong and there is a steep learning curve ahead for most people.....

2. I would therefore take issue with several points made in the draft Guidelines below, and have inserted my comments in the appropriate places (in red). However, I feel that, in a general sense, the introduction starts with the wrong message. Really identify the problem at the start, and at least the scale of the solution needed becomes clearer.....

Introduction

This review paper considers the under-representation of peatlands in the Ramsar List, it reports summary statistics concerning peatlands in the Ramsar Database, and examines possible application of the Criteria to peatlands and draft guidelines for the identification and designation of peatlands as Ramsar Sites.

Description of peatlands

Peatlands are dominated by organic remains of many wetland plant species ranging from trees (e.g. *Betula* sp., *Salix* sp., palms); grasses and sedges, to mosses (*Sphagnum* sp.), and were formed in conditions of water saturation. Peatlands only form if the rate of plant decomposition is exceeded by the rate of deposition of material, with low dissolved oxygen [this often gives RISE to peat formation, although the peat may then exacerbate it] and raised acidity common results of peat formation.

Peats can form at a range of altitudes - sea level to more than 4,000 metres and may be dominated by sedges, mosses or the remains of swamp forests. Peatlands therefore contain [display] a very wide range of variability, but all require permanent [no, not necessarily permanent, just regular - on a year by year basis] saturation to prevent the oxidation and mineralisation of peats, which [may] subsequently rapidly erode [if this established pattern of saturation is disrupted].

Peatlands have been physically well mapped on a global scale [no they haven't! There are HUGE areas which are either totally unmapped, or are currently mapped as other habitat types. Not only are many of the northern boreal forests actually peatlands, but we are coming to realise that so is a high proportion of the tropical forest. The trouble is, people look at the tallest vegetation layer and assign the habitat to that, without identifying what the understory and ground-layer consists of. I personally know of cases in Australia where areas were dismissed for years as 'wet heath', and it was only when some of us from Britain flew over the area that we immediately recognised these areas for what they really were - extensive patterned fen peatlands. We really don't know how great is our ignorance about the peatland resource, but we do know it's a pretty large degree of ignorance. Saying that "peatlands have been physically well mapped on a global scale" sends all the wrong messages. Why else would Recommendation 7.1 have, as its first Action Point (before even moving onto the Global Action Plan), that CPs should urgently devote resources to peatland inventory? This theme should follow on from the introductory assessment of WHY peatlands are under-represented, and consider the urgent need for better understanding linked to further survey (thus fitting well with Recommendation 7.1 and the GAPP.) , amounting to about 400 million hectares (source: Ramsar Handbook7, Irish Peatland Conservation Council), however, their characteristics vary greatly, both in species composition within the peat and actively growing on the surface, and also in their chemistry and hydrological characteristics. Appendix 1 shows how variable peat distribution is by country [according to currently-know figures], but cannot indicate the relative values for e.g. biodiversity or water balance.

Peatlands, while extensive in area on a global scale, making up 50% of terrestrial and freshwater wetlands, are now more strongly [coming to be equally] recognised for their capacity to lock up carbon (Immirzi and Maltby, 199?), [than for other attributes]. Peats are especially vulnerable to water deficits. Carbon is released rapidly once oxygen penetrates into the peat to replace the space vacated by water, and depending upon location, soils can erode at a rate of over a metre annually (Uganda valley swamp example). Peats are additionally vulnerable to fire, once dehydrated.

The Global Action Plan for Peatlands (GAPP) reviewed at GBF 13 (Costa Rica, 1999), has identified global biodiversity, carbon storage and more generally, wise use for peatlands as being the key issues for action. While these issues are fully justified, the values of peatlands are harder to identify in terms of Ramsar Listing. Thus this paper does not deal with the issues discussed in the GAPP, except in terms of the possible criteria for listing, to enable guidelines to be drawn up for identification [again, an opportunity to emphasise that it's IDENTIFICATION

which is the key problem area] and designation of peatlands for the Ramsar List.

Ramsar criteria potentially applying to peatlands

Peatlands and the Ramsar Database

Peatlands are difficult to target for Ramsar Listing *per se* because they are very variable [this doesn't really make sense. They may be difficult to target through the Ramsar Database, but the text shouldn't give the impression that they are difficult to target *per se*. Besides, Recommendation 6.1 highlighted the fact that the Ramsar listing was significantly deficient when it came to peatland sites, so using the Database to begin addressing and resolving the problem doesn't quite seem logical. Coastal systems are very variable, but in general do not suffer from under-representation. Peatlands shouldn't be any more difficult to identify than any other habitat type, other than because we have such a poor lexicon for identifying and describing them. It is extremely interesting and revealing that the text here goes on comment how peatlands form a reasonable proportion of Ramsar sites, in effect, by accident..... They have been identified "for other reasons", yet in many cases, I suspect that if we looked at the peatland interest in detail, we would find the site fully justifying its designation for its peatland interest. So why have they not been designated specifically for their peatland interest? Precisely because people are failing to identify and recognise peatland interest when it exists.] and already form about 26% of the total number of Listed Sites in the current Ramsar List, mostly designated for other reasons than peat, such as birds, fish etc. Table 2 summarises some of the peat site attributes and reports areas and percentages.

Table 2. Analysis of Ramsar Listed Sites containing peat as at June 2000

Site type	Nr. of records	Area ha	Area as a percentage of area of peat-containing sites	Area as a percentage of total area of Ramsar Sites
Sites with peat	268	27,213,484	100%	35%
Sites with peat with recorded threats (sites with peat extraction, drainage, mining/quarries, other extraction)	118	7,883,161	29%	10%
Total Ramsar Sites	1028	78,195,293	--	100%

The Database does not hold information about the status of the peat itself, such as whether actively growing, in favourable hydrological status, etc. The value of the peat itself, can only be inferred from the Database.

This means that the key information held of direct value in targeting under-representation of peatlands is the area of Sites containing (unknown proportions of) peatland already listed and the geographical distribution, as compared to global distribution and area of peat from other sources [...but again, we need to emphasise that the Ramsar Database is not going to be the answer to under-representation..].

Selection of peatlands for Ramsar Listing

Targeting peat sites for Ramsar Listing can only be done by establishing a protocol for determining the proportion of the total world peatland resource that should be Listed, and proportional representation of the sub-types of peatland in the List. At present, therefore, of the [currently estimated] global resource of approximately 400 million hectares of peatland, Ramsar Sites containing at least some peat, cover nearly 7%. However, this is a gross over-estimate of the actual peat surface designated.

A key issue for resolution by the Ramsar Convention is the [means by which peatlands can be identified by CPs. A second key issue for resolution by Ramsar is the] definition of a biogeographic region, which at present is open to wide variation in definitions by Contracting Parties. Such regions set into context the relative rarity of a candidate Ramsar Site.

It is proposed that the guidelines used to identify peatlands for Ramsar Listing, aim to value or assess the following qualities of peatlands, and not indirectly dependent species.

The ecological character of the peatland

The relative area of the peatland and its peat-forming status compared to the biogeographic area historic total for peatland [put this next]

Peatland soil characteristics, including palaeo-environmental attributes

Peat-forming species actively growing on a peat soil

Species directly dependent upon peat soils or peat-forming species

The hydrological character of the peatland

Application of the Ramsar Site Criteria

The guidelines for application of the Ramsar Criteria (see Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance, Ramsar Handbook Nr. 7) do not currently contain guidance explicitly for peatlands, except in Guideline 70: Hydrological importance and a sink for carbon.

An outline of a possible relationship between Criteria and peatlands is set out in Table 3.

Table 3. Ramsar Criteria and possible peatland attributes

Criterion	Peatland attribute
1	Remaining raised mires/bogs (oligotrophic) with active peat forming mosses within a biogeographic region, which has lost more than 75%? of such mires/bogs Remaining fen/sedge peat wetlands, with active peat forming grasses or sedges within a biogeographic region, which has lost more than 75%? of such wetlands Ecological character of the peatland system Biogeographically irreplaceable palaeo-environmental peat soil content Water storage buffers Globally significant carbon store
2	Presence of vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered plant or animal species wholly dependent on peat attribute
3	Presence of plant or animal species wholly dependent on peat attribute
4	Presence of plant or animal species wholly dependent on peat attribute
5	Not applicable [don't agree - if the birds depend on the peatland itself]
6	Not applicable [don't agree - if the birds depend on the peatland itself]
7	Not applicable [don't agree - if the fish depend on the peatland itself]
8	Not applicable [don't agree - if the fish life-cycle stages depend on the peatland itself]

[I'm afraid I have to stop here because I have to sort things out for Quebec, but I'll spend some time in Quebec working on this, and hopefully have some further comments on the Guidelines themselves on my return on 15th August.]

Recommended draft guidelines

The attributes shown in Table 3 are further discussed below, with suggestions for extending the descriptions

given in the guideline statements as indicated.

Criterion 1

Employ Guideline 68 (after determining the biogeographic region), to select peatlands suitable for Listing and aim to select those that contain:

Active peat-forming plants [over more than 50% of a site?], whether trees, grasses, sedges, mosses, etc.

Irreplaceable palaeo-environmental information representative of the biogeographic region

For Guidelines 69 & 70: on the advice of climate change relevant expert group, select peatlands that by virtue of their favourable hydrological status contain:

globally significant carbon stores

water storage buffers

Criterion 2

Employ Guidelines 71-75, to select peatlands that are:

directly, by virtue of the peat soil, essential to the survival of dependent vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered plant or animal species

Criterion 3

Employ Guidelines 77-78, to select peatlands that are:

directly, by virtue of the peat soil, essential to the survival of dependent plant or animal species

Criterion 4

Employ Guidelines 79, to select peatlands that are:

directly, by virtue of the peat soil, essential to the survival of dependent plant or animal species

Further steps to be taken

Review the meaning of biogeographic regions and in that context:

Decide on proportion of a national peatland resource that should normally be considered for Listing (5%, 25% ??), and why.

Decide on the level of threat, i.e. loss of peatland (whether actively growing or not) to trigger Ramsar Listing

Agree on whether to restrict targeting of peatlands for listing to those that are important by virtue primarily due to their peat soil (as carbon store, as substrate supporting key species) or peat-forming plants.

Appendix 1: The land area of each country in the world that is covered with significant areas of peat. Adapted from: Taylor, J. A. (1983) The Peatlands of Great Britain and Ireland. In Gore, A. J. P. Ed. Ecosystems of the World Volume 4B, Mires: Swamp, Bog, Fen & Moor. (from IPCC website, <http://aoife.indigo.ie/~ipcc/index.html>, as at June 2000)

Country	Peat area (ha)	Peat area (% of land area)
1 Finland	10,000,000	33.5
2 Canada	129,500,000	18.4
3 Republic of Ireland	1,178,798	17.2
4 Sweden	1,500,000	17.1
5 Indonesia	700,000	13.7
6 Northern Ireland	166,860	12.4
7 Scotland	821,381	10.4
8 Iceland	1,000,000	9.7
9 Norway	3,000,000	9.4
10 Wales	158,770	7.7
11 Malaysia	2,360,000	7.2
12 U.S.S.R.	71,500,000	6.7
13 The Netherlands	250,000	6.0
14 Germany	1,618,000	4.6
15 Poland	1,500,000	4.4
16 Cuba	200,000	3.9
17 U.S.A	7,510,000	3.3
18 England	361,690	2.8
19 Austria	22,000	2.8
20 Denmark	60,000	2.8
21 Switzerland	55,000	1.3
22 Hungary	100,000	1.1
23 New Zealand	166,000	0.6
24 Belgium	18,000	0.6

25 Uruguay	100,000	0.5
26 Japan	200,000	0.5
27 Yugoslavia (the former)	100,000	0.4
28 China	3,480,000	0.4
29 Italy	60,000	0.4
30 Israel	5,000	0.25
31 Czech and Slovak Republics	33,000	0.2
32 France	120,000	0.2
33 Greece	5,000	0.04
34 Romania	6,000	0.03
35 Argentina	45,000	0.016
36 Spain	6,000	0.012
37 Australia	15,000	0.002
38 Bulgaria	>1,000	0.001

Wetlands International and the Ramsar Convention Bureau

Workshop on Guidelines on wet grasslands

Terms of Reference

Introduction:

This Workshop will base its work on the attached paper submitted by the Administrative Authority of Belgium, to the Ramsar Bureau. Please also refer the Note by the Deputy Secretary General under STRP9 agenda Item 21.3, for guidance. Additionally, the relevant extract from the STRP9 meeting is reproduced below.

Note also that the general guidance from the Ramsar Bureau on the development and content of Guidelines should be observed.

From the 9th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Report of the Meeting

AGENDA ITEM 21.3: Guidelines on wet grasslands

85. Doug Taylor noted that wet grasslands were not in the COP's original mandate and might be seen as a Western European issue only, where they are maintained by intensive grazing and highly managed water levels. In Ramsar terms, wet grasslands might already be found under a number of existing natural and human-made wetland types and could qualify for designation under all Criteria. He raised a number of basic questions about how this guidance could be developed; in a European context, for example, the criteria would have to include specification as to management.

86. The SG noted that the guidance should be global if possible, but if it can only be for the European context at this time, narrower guidelines could be brought to COP8 and more extended guidance deferred to COP9. Dave Pritchard urged avoiding taking a regional focus for any of the guidelines as a matter of principle, since a fragmented approach might encourage special interests and create a two-tiered definition of international importance. The DSG agreed but noted that many other wetlands types do not occur in all Parties (e.g., coral in Greenland); the approach should be global, but its application in some cases will be relevant to only some countries and regions.

87. Tobias Salathé noted that the precedent of adding karst guidelines is not analogous, since wet grasslands are already present in the Classification System as a crosscutting type within the existing classification and Criteria. It was urged that all of the Working Group leaders should stay in close contact to ensure consistency of language and approach, especially in regard to crosscutting issues. The Bureau should be advised if crosscutting issues begin to present problems.

Decision STRP 9:16: The STRP endorsed the approach being taken and approved of Wetlands International’s taking the lead on drafting the guidance on wet grasslands according to the timetable provided, with assistance from BirdLife International and the Administrative Authority in Belgium (see Annex X).

Annex X

Development of Guidelines for the Identification and Designation of Wet Grasslands for the Ramsar List

Wetlands International as Focal Point

Background

Wet grassland - identified in Ramsar classification as:

- floodplain component (e.g. Ts, U)
- human-made (e.g. 3, 4)

Current application of Criteria

Criterion	Does wet grass qualify?
1	Yes, if rare example
2	Yes, for rare/ diverse sward, birds, inverts
3	Yes, if significant for biodiversity resource

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 | Yes, if e.g. supports breeding waterbirds |
| 5 | Yes, if $\geq 20,000$ waterbirds |
| 6 | Yes, if $\geq 1\%$ of waterbird population |
| 7 | Yes, if inundated seasonal feeding area |
| 8 | Yes, if seasonal spawning area |

Some questions

With reference to DSG's note to STRP9:

Possible 3 categories of Guideline? If so, need to examine Ramsar typology and Criteria

Issue identified through concern only in Europe? i.e., need for only 1 category

Is hydrology + cutting / grazing regime definition required for one Guideline category?
If so, will imply fairly detailed management requirement, for water regime and sward;
sward/animal/bird biodiversity may depend on this requirement

Workplan for Wet Grassland Guidelines

Wetlands International to be the focal point

Accept offer from Belgium to contribute input

Ramsar Bureau/Birdlife/Wetlands International to assist by responding to drafts

Develop Guidelines through wider consultation [by 31 December 2000]

Final draft Guidelines for STRP 10 (by April 2001)

Pass to Ramsar Convention Bureau for entry to COP8 process, via SC26

Wetlands International and the Ramsar Convention Bureau

Workshop on Ramsar Sites and Globally Threatened Waterbirds

Introduction:

Following recent correspondence between the Bureau and Partners regarding the project to identify important sites for threatened waterbirds, the project has been discussed and endorsed by the Ramsar STRP (see decision STRP 9.12 below).

From the 9th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Report of the Meeting:

Decision STRP 9.12: The STRP endorsed the development of draft guidance on the designation of Ramsar sites based upon threatened waterbirds, as part of the development of guidance on under-represented types and in accordance with Resolution VI.12 on identification of candidate sites.

This Workshop aims to finalise the project proposal (current brief copied below) and to determine the following:

1. The form the output will take. For example, it "should yield something like the AEWA Anatidae or wader atlases, but at a global scale for threatened taxa, i.e. a range map (and possibly a listing of range states), with known sites shown, plus a listing of known sites including a data quality marker, and perhaps eventually a compiled site list covering all taxa (as in the back of the Anatidae atlas). The point about doing single-species site lists is especially in relation to the guidance in para 74(ii) concerning migratory networks. The site list would identify which sites are already Ramsar listed, and perhaps as a codicil which of these are actually listed for globally threatened species".
2. Exact data required by contracting parties (eg. a definitive list of variables based on IBA and Ramsar criteria).
3. Data sources. This will require detailed information on data which can be provided by different partners.
4. Criteria on which sites will be selected for inclusion.
5. Costings.

RAMSAR SITES AND THE PROTECTION OF GLOBALLY-THREATENED WATERBIRDS

PROPOSAL PREPARED BY ANDY GREEN, BAZ HUGHES, AND BROOKS CHILDRESS

THREATENED WATERFOWL SPECIALIST GROUP

BACKGROUND

A high proportion of the world's species and subspecies of waterbirds are considered as globally threatened according to IUCN criteria (Collar *et al.* 1994, Green 1996). The Ramsar Convention has great potential to provide effective conservation for threatened waterbirds. However, an analysis presented at the Anatidae 2000 conference (Green 1996) showed that the then current Ramsar site network was offering relatively little protection for globally-threatened Anatidae. Only 15 (31%) of the 48 threatened taxa had ever been recorded on Ramsar sites, and only nine (19%) had been recorded breeding. For the 21 highly-threatened taxa (i.e. endangered or critically endangered), the numbers were even worse: only two (10%) had been recorded on Ramsar sites and only one (5%) had been recorded breeding. Furthermore, even amongst those threatened taxa which had been recorded on Ramsar sites, only small proportions of their total populations were protected in most cases. Since the analysis by Green (1996), the number of Ramsar sites has increased from 685 to 1,023.

Historically, Anatidae have been of greater importance than any other taxonomic groups in the establishment and expansion of the Ramsar Convention (Matthews 1993). However, although there have always been provisions for taking threatened waterbirds into consideration when selecting sites to be included as wetlands of international importance under the Convention (Matthews 1993), in practice the emphasis in site selection seems to have focused largely on the total number of waterbirds using the site, rather than the presence or absence of threatened species (Green 1996).

In 1998, on behalf of the Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group, WWT conducted a literature review and liaised with TWIG members to compile a list of important breeding, wintering and staging sites for threatened waterfowl (see Appendix 1). A poster on this project was subsequently presented at the 2nd International Conference on Wetlands and Development in Senegal in 1998.

OVERALL PROJECT AIM

This project aims to assess the extent to which the current Ramsar Site network provides protection to globally threatened waterbirds (including all waterbird families, not just the Anatidae), and to produce a detailed Shadow List of sites that should be designated under the Ramsar Convention in order to protect threatened waterbirds. A first complete draft should be prepared in time for consideration by the Contracting Parties at COP8 in 2002. Ultimately, if the project is successful, it could be extended to cover other threatened taxa (i.e. other wetland animals and plants).

OBJECTIVES

1. For each waterbird family, assess which globally threatened species (and subspecies if a threatened list exists at that level) are recorded and/or are breeding on existing Ramsar sites.
2. Where suitable data exist, estimate the proportion of the global population of each threatened taxon (proportion of individuals) currently protected on Ramsar sites during breeding and/or non-breeding periods). Again, this activity is proposed for all waterbird families.
3. Identify a Shadow List of the most important sites for each threatened waterbird taxon that should be proposed for designation of Ramsar sites. A clear distinction should be made between wetland sites within existing contracting parties, and those found in geopolitical units which are not currently signatories of the convention. We propose to set a target for the minimum proportion of the total population of each threatened waterbird taxon that should be protected by the Ramsar site network at all aquatic stages of the annual cycle (e.g. wintering,

staging and breeding).

KEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Vital sources of information for carrying out this project successfully are listed below (NOT in order of priority, and we may have overlooked important sources). The length and complexity of this list illustrates the importance of obtained full support from various organisations in order to do a good job:

1. Files, databases and expertise held by each waterbird Specialist Group.
2. International Waterfowl Census (IWC) data for each region from Wetlands International.
3. Wetlands International reviews of IWC data, various wetland directories, and similar publications.
4. Ramsar Site directory and database (particularly information on habitat type and waterbirds present).
5. BirdLife International World Bird database/IBA databases.

WHO DOES THE WORK?

This project requires the involvement and cooperation of BirdLife International, Wetlands International, the Ramsar Secretariat, all waterbird related Specialist Groups, and The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (as Secretariat of the TWSG). WWT are prepared to take the lead on producing a project brief and funding proposal for the project, but require information from the above sources.

REFERENCES

Collar, N.J., Crosby, M.J. & Stattersfield, A.J. 1994. *Birds to watch 2: the world list of threatened birds*. BirdLife Conservation Series No. 4. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.

Green, A.J. 1996 Analysis of globally threatened Anatidae in relation to threats, distribution, migration patterns, and habitat use. *Conservation Biology* 10: 1435-1445.

Matthews, G.V.T. 1993. *The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: Its history and development*. Ramsar Convention Bureau, Gland, Switzerland.

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Historical copy only for information

Convention on Wetlands

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Draft for the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

San José, Costa Rica: 10-18 May 1999

Protection of threatened waterbirds by Ramsar sites

1. RECALLING Resolution VI.12 which "*urges each Contracting Party to recognise officially its identified sites meeting the criteria approved by the Conference of the Contracting Parties*";
2. RECALLING that Objective 6 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 is "*to designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List*";
3. NOTING that Resolution VII.[] and its Annex concerning a strategic framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of wetlands of international importance offer a more systematic approach than hitherto for setting objectives and targets for coverage of wetlands and wetland-related interests based on the concept of a global network of listed sites;
4. AWARE that analyses undertaken by the threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group of Wetlands International have shown that a significant majority of occurrences of those Anatidae taxa recognised as globally threatened are on wetlands which have not yet been listed under the Convention;
5. CONSIDERING that such sites are therefore a wetland type still under-represented in the List in the context of Strategic Plan Objective 6 referred to above;
6. RECOGNISING that protection may be afforded to sites of importance for threatened waterbirds by means other than Ramsar listing, but desiring nevertheless in the context of Resolution VII.[] referred to above that the Convention should play its part in this respect to the fullest extent possible;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

7. REQUESTS the Convention Bureau and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

to maintain contact with the Wetlands International Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group and other interested parties with a view as appropriate to pursuing further analyses of coverage of threatened waterbirds by sites listed under the Convention;

8. CALLS ON Contracting Parties to review the situation in respect of this issue at national level, to compile information on any sites which may meet the criteria for listing under the Convention by reason of their importance for threatened waterbird species, and to designate as many of these sites as possible for inclusion in the List without delay; and

9. REQUESTS the Convention Bureau to maintain an overview of action undertaken pursuant to this recommendation and to present a report on progress to the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

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