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STOP FLYING BLIND – THE NEED FOR BETTER DATA CO-ORDINATION TO SUPPORT THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

Although the EU Birds Directive and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement provide an adequate legal framework for sustainable management of migratory waterbird populations, both instruments leave harvest decisions of a shared resource to individual Member States and Contracting Parties without providing a shared information base and mechanism to assess the impact of harvest and coordinate actions in relation to mutually agreed objectives. A recent update of the conservation status of waterbirds in the EU shows that almost half of the populations of species listed on Annex II of the Birds Directive have a declining short-term trend and over half of them are listed in Columns A and B of AEWA. This implies that their hunting could either only continue under the framework of an adaptive harvest management plan or their hunting should be regulated with the view of restoring them in favourable conservation status. We argue that a structured approach to decision-making (such as adaptive management) is needed, supported with adequate organisational structures at flyway scale. This includes a stronger and timely coordination of data on a flyway basis regarding population sizes and harvest. Without this information, sustainability of harvest cannot be adequately assessed.



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