

Recommendations of the Heiligenhafen Conference, 1974

International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl
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[The Recommendations of the International Conference of 1974 are not official recommendations of the Convention.]

[Report of the International Conference at Heiligenhafen](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS adopted by the
International Conference on the Conservation
of Wetlands and Waterfowl at Heiligenhafen,
Federal Republic of Germany, 6 December 1974

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

Recommendation 1. The Ramsar Convention - Ratification

The Conference,

BEING AWARE of the high importance of the 'Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat' of which the text was approved at the Ramsar Conference in 1971;

RECOGNIZING the vital significance of the Convention in the effort to safeguard the endangered biotopes of the planet, and the great urgency of bringing it into force at the earliest possible moment;

NOTING that in the four years which have elapsed since the text was approved 4 States have become Parties to it and 5 other States have signed before ratification;

URGES Governments which have not already done so to become Parties to this Convention without delay.

CONSERVATION IN SPECIFIED COUNTRIES

Recommendation 2. Proposed Changes in the Legal Status of Pink-footed and Greylag Geese in Parts of Scotland

The Conference,

BEING INFORMED of the recent announcement of a proposal to place the Pink-footed Goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus*, and the Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*, in the 2nd Schedule of the Protection of Birds Act, 1954, in respect of certain parts of Scotland, thereby designating them 'pest species' which may be killed at any season;

RECOGNIZING that significant crop damage may be sustained by farmers when large numbers of wild geese are feeding on their land;

NOTING that both species are migratory birds of which the majority visiting the British Isles breed in Iceland thus indicating that their conservation and management are matters of international concern;

NOTING that many other countries have met similar problems involving much larger numbers of wild geese without having recourse to measures of the type now proposed in Scotland;

NOTING that British farmers have rights under the Act to protect their crops by shooting at any season;

NOTING the proven efficiency of new bird scaring devices;

URGES the Secretary of State for Scotland to reconsider the proposed Order in the light of the above considerations.

Recommendation 3. Return of Waterfowl to the Inner Thames in London, England

The Conference,

NOTING with delight the return of Waterfowl and Fish to the Inner Thames in London, England, as a result of the efforts of the Port of London Authority and the Greater London Council to control pollution during the last decade;

CONGRATULATES the Authorities concerned;

RECOMMENDS to the relevant Authorities of all countries that they take similar steps to reduce pollution of rivers under their control.

Recommendation 4. Development Threat to Marshes of the Lower Elbe Estuary in Lower Saxony

The Conference,

NOTING with grave anxiety the proposals for further industrial development in the already extensively industrialized area of the Lower Elbe in the Federal Republic of Germany, which will largely destroy the ecological value of this estuary;

NOTING ALSO that the estuary is of high international importance for both migrating and nesting waterfowl and waders, and in particular that during migration it supports approximately half of the world population of the Bewick's Swan, *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, a threatened species for which certain parts of the estuary constitute important feeding and roosting sites;

NOTING FURTHER that increased industrial development can only increase the risk of water and air pollution, and cause significant ecological changes affecting the long-term future of the birds;

RECOMMENDS that the Government of Lower Saxony exclude and protect from any industrial or other development plans which would worsen their present environment the following wetland areas which fall within its jurisdiction - namely the Asselersand and the south shore of the Elbe from the mouth of the Oste River to the Allwörden Outmarsh near Freiburg.

Recommendation 5. Conservation of the Lower Elbe Estuary Marshes in Schleswig-Holstein

The Conference,

NOTING with grave concern that plans to embank the Haseldorf and Wedel Marshes in Schleswig-Holstein are well advanced, and that as they stand at present these plans would entirely destroy the integral ecosystem of marsh and mudflat;

NOTING ALSO that these marshes are of international importance for wintering and breeding waterfowl and waders in a region which is rapidly becoming heavily industrialized;

NOTING FURTHER that a high biological productivity, of immense importance to Man, is dependent on periodic flooding of adjoining grasslands;

NOTING ALSO that the Haseldorf and Wedel Marshes together form the only remaining area of marsh liable to inundation along the Lower Elbe in Schleswig-Holstein and that there are only two much smaller areas left along the Lower Saxony shore;

RECOMMENDS most urgently to the Government of Schleswig-Holstein that they take all steps within their power to maintain the present tidal conditions in the Haseldorf and Wedel Marshes.

Recommendation 6. Conservation of the 'Rieselfelder' near Münster

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING the conservation of wetlands already stimulated by the formulation of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the 'Ramsar Convention');

BEING CONVINCED that an area of not less than 400 hectares in the wetland 'Rieselfelder Münster' as designated by the Westphalian Ornithologists Society in its Biotope Development Plan I is of international importance;

RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and of North Rhine-Westphalia and to the City of Münster that they give urgent and full support to the conservation of the Rieselfelder Münster.

Recommendation 7. Conservation of the Europe Reserve Riddagshausen-Weddeler Teiche

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING the importance of the 'Riddagshausen-Weddeler Teiche' nature reserve on the edge of the city of Brunswick, Lower Saxony, Federal Republic of Germany, whose international importance was recognized as early as 1968 when the European sector of the International Council for Bird Preservation designated it a 'Europe Reserve' not only as an area with particularly large numbers of breeding birds among them waterfowl whose populations were endangered, but also as an important resting-place in a region poor in natural waters;

LEARNING to its deep concern that the existence of this Europe Reserve is threatened by plans to build, alongside the area, a motorway which will cross an area indispensable for its water resources;

URGES the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and of Lower Saxony to choose one of the alternative routes suggested which would be less damaging for the environment.

Recommendation 8. Protection of Wetlands in Italy

The Conference,

BEING INFORMED that the Special Commission for Ecological Problems of the Italian Senate has proposed new legislation entitled 'Act for the protection of Wetlands';

RECOGNIZING the great importance of this initiative;

CONGRATULATES the Authority concerned;

RECOMMENDS that the definition of wetlands to be adopted in the final text of the law conforms with the definitions in the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the 'Ramsar Convention').

Recommendation 9. Protection of the Dollart

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING that the Dollart, as the last great area of natural brackish water on the Dutch and German North Sea coasts

1. has important breeding populations of Redshanks, Avocets, and Black-tailed Godwits;
2. represents an important roosting-place in the summer months for up to 4600 Black-tailed Godwits and in winter for up to 8000 White-fronted Geese and 2000 Bean Geese from the north east; and
3. provides protection and feeding-grounds for exceptionally large numbers of waders, ducks and other waterfowl coming from the whole Palearctic Region, in particular for up to 20 000 Avocets;

NOTING the action taken by the Government of the Netherlands to safeguard the saltings and mudflats and their bird populations in the Dollart area;

RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany that to ensure the conservation of these rich bird populations and their environment, it is absolutely essential

1. to prevent tourist development in the area on the seaward side of the dikes;
 2. to avoid encroachment on resting-areas in the mudflats and foreshore;
 3. to declare sufficiently large areas as nature reserves for waterfowl with a ban on hunting throughout the year; and
 4. to manage goose feeding-grounds inland where hunting is prohibited.
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Recommendation 10. Conservation of the Senegal Valley

The Conference,

BEING INFORMED that the Senegal valley in its entirety is to be profoundly altered by the various hydro-agricultural development projects planned by the Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Sénégal (OMVS);

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION that the Senegal delta and valley play a major rôle internationally as wintering grounds for millions of European and West Asian migratory birds as well as breeding grounds for African waterfowl;

CONSIDERING on the other hand, that past developments in the Senegal delta, in decreasing and degrading wetland areas, have deeply affected waterfowl as well as other natural resources;

RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Republic of Mali, [of] the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and of the Republic of Senegal to take all necessary steps to prevent adverse consequences which this development would have for the natural wetlands of the Senegal valley;

URGES those governments to associate trained ecologists in the planning and implementation of the project in order to ensure provision within these development plans for an adequate network of wetland reserves and to ensure the continued value of the Djoudj National Park as a wetland of international importance;

SUGGESTS that financial, technical or other assistance be sought from international organizations and Bilateral Agencies, if needed, for the implementation of these proposals.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Recommendation 11. The Need for Regional Cooperation in the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl and Related Research

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING that migrating waterfowl tend to follow regular routes which usually cross many political boundaries;

NOTING the dangers of lost opportunity and duplication when research on such waterfowl is conducted in isolation;

RECOMMENDS STRONGLY that all those responsible for waterfowl research should cooperate on a regional basis so as to achieve more effective conservation of waterfowl populations on breeding grounds, flyways and wintering areas based on scientific criteria and using the services of the International Waterfowl Research Bureau.

STUDIES OF DISTRIBUTION AND MIGRATION

Recommendation 12. Publication of Numerical Data on Waterfowl Distribution

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING the great value of the numerical data on waterfowl distribution presented to the Conference by the IWRB in assessing which wetlands must be conserved as part of the international heritage;

REALIZING that most of the data is collected by voluntary workers who must be encouraged in their efforts;

URGES the early publication of the data particularly for distribution to those involved in wetland ecology and planning and in hunting;

RECOMMENDS that national and international grant-aiding bodies should favourably consider supporting the cost of such publications as a major contribution to practical conservation.

Recommendation 13. A World-wide System of Marking for Swans and Geese

The Conference,

NOTING the increasing scientific importance of the recognition of individual birds in studies of Swans and Geese;

NOTING that the distribution of these birds is essentially international;

RECOGNIZING the dangers of confusion and duplication unless the marking methods are properly coordinated;

RECOMMENDS to the appropriate agencies that the following system, namely that the letter-number code repeated vertically around coloured neck- and/or tarsus-bands on swans and geese, be reserved exclusively for international studies coordinated on a world-wide basis through the International Waterfowl Research Bureau;

URGES all who are engaged in such research to adhere to the agreed system.

BIOCIDES

Recommendation 14. Use of Biocides

The Conference,

RECALLING Recommendation No 7 of the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl held in 1971 at Ramsar on the subject of pesticides;

NOTING with great regret that the circumstances therein described still obtain in many parts of the world;

RECOGNIZING that waterfowl and other wetland fauna are especially vulnerable to these effects;

URGES Governments of all countries to move as rapidly as possible towards the replacement of persistent pesticides by less persistent and more selective compounds and to support research into and application of alternative methods of pest control.

EDUCATION

Recommendation 15. Observation Facilities to Promote Conservation Education

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING the immense importance of education in the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl;

BEING AWARE of modern techniques for enabling the wariest of waterfowl to be observed at close quarters by large numbers of people without disturbance to the birds;

RECOMMENDS Governmental or other agencies operating waterfowl reserves to construct and maintain observation facilities which are compatible with the environment and accessible by screened approach, and to provide the necessary interpretive services so as to further this method of conservation education.

HUNTING RATIONALIZATION

Recommendation 16. Collection of Data on Population Dynamics of Quarry Species

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING that migratory waterfowl quarry species, harvested by many nations, constitute a common resource which must be managed with full consideration for its future well-being;

NOTING that only in a limited number of countries does the present state of knowledge of the biology of waterfowl permit a basic understanding of their population dynamics derived from research and management programmes such as unified hunting kill statistics, wing collections and ringing programmes, as proposed at the Leningrad Conference in 1968 and confirmed by Recommendation No 9 of the Ramsar Conference in 1971;

RECOMMENDS MOST STRONGLY that all Governments should encourage and support appropriate national authorities to gather, process and submit to the International Waterfowl Research Bureau data relevant to the abundance, production and mortality of such species.

Recommendation 17. Flexibility of Control of Hunting Pressure

The Conference,

RECOGNIZING that in many countries the shooting seasons are still excessively long;

RECOGNIZING the fluctuations in numbers of many quarry species of waterfowl brought about by the vagaries of climate, disturbance and habitat destruction;

NOTING the periodic requirements for control of hunting pressure at short notice as a result of extreme cold or other unforeseen factors;

RECOMMENDS Governments which do not yet have the necessary legislation for regulating hunting pressure from year to year or at short notice during the hunting season to introduce such powers at the earliest opportunity.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

Recommendation 18. Resolution of Gratitude

The Conference,

EXPRESSES its gratitude to the Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry of the Federal Republic of Germany for his invitation to attend and for the generous hospitality accorded to the Delegates and Observers;

EXPRESSES its thanks also to the Federal State Government of Schleswig-Holstein, to the Federal Institute of Vegetation Research, Nature Conservation and Landscape Management (BAVNL) and to the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB);

BEING aware of the complex problems involved in the organization of the present Conference;

CONGRATULATES all those involved in its preparation and successful implementation.

Annex II

RECOMMENDATIONS for Criteria to be used in identifying Wetlands of International Importance

1. Criteria pertaining to a wetland's importance to populations and species

A wetland should be considered internationally important if it:

- (i) regularly supports 1% (being at least 100 individuals) of the flyway or biogeographical population of one species of waterfowl,
- or (ii) regularly supports either 10 000 ducks, geese and swans; or 10000 coots; or 20 000 waders,
- or (iii) supports an appreciable number of an endangered species of plant or animal,
- or (iv) is of special value for maintaining genetic and ecological diversity because of the quality and peculiarities of its flora and fauna,
- or (v) plays a major rôle in its region as the habitat of plants and of aquatic and other animals of scientific or economic importance.

2. Criteria concerned with the selection of representative or unique wetlands

A wetland should be considered internationally important if it:

- (i) is a representative example of a wetland community characteristic of its biogeographical region,
- or (ii) exemplifies a critical stage or extreme in biological or hydromorphological processes,
- or (iii) is an integral part of a peculiar physical feature.

3. Criteria concerned with the research, educational or recreational values of wetlands

A wetland should be considered internationally important if it:

(i) is outstandingly important, well-situated and well-equipped for scientific research and for education,
or (ii) is well-studied and documented over many years and with a continuing programme of research of high value, regularly published and contributed to by the scientific community,
or (iii) offers especial opportunities for promoting public understanding and appreciation of wetlands, open to people from several countries.

4. Criteria concerned with the practicality of conservation and management

Notwithstanding its fitness to be considered as internationally important on one of the Criteria set out under 1, 2 and 3 above, a wetland should only be designated for inclusion in the List of the Ramsar Convention if it:

(i) is physically and administratively capable of being effectively conserved and managed,
and (ii) is free from the threat of a major impact of external pollution, hydrological interferences and land use or industrial practices.

A wetland of national value only may nevertheless be considered of international importance if it forms a complex with another adjacent wetland of similar value across an international border.