

**International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl, Heiligenhafen, 1974**

**International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl**

**Heiligenhafen, Federal Republic of Germany, 2-6 December 1974**

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**Report of the Conference**

**Recommendations of the International Conference at  
Heiligenhafen**

**INTRODUCTORY SPEECH**

by G V T Matthews

**Director of the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB)**

At our previous conference in Ramsar, Iran, we witnessed two major advances in wetland conservation.

Firstly, there was the magnificent gesture of His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah Aryamehr, offering to place one of Iran's wetland ecosystems of special global significance in joint trust with a suitable international agency, to conserve and administer for all mankind. The Iranian delegate will be telling us of the heartening progress that has been made towards the realization of the great Arjan International Reserve.

Secondly, the Ramsar Conference was successful in finalizing the text of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat. It had been hoped that sufficient countries would have ratified this Convention for it to be in effect by now. This Heiligenhafen Conference would then have been the first of the Conferences on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl called for under Article 6, organized as part of the continuing bureau duties of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

However, although the Convention is not yet officially in force, this Conference will have very much the character envisaged in Article 6. IWRB has been happy to make the technical arrangements and appreciates very much having been able to leave the hosting to the Federal Institute of Vegetation Research, Nature Conservation and Landscape Management (BAVNL). Already you will have had the comforting feeling that you are in good hands where BAVNL is concerned, having been welcomed at

'Aquabird' stands, sped on your way to Heiligenhafen and comfortably ensconced here. We shall have plenty of further opportunities for appreciating the efficiency and courtesy of our German hosts.

This afternoon we shall be privileged to hear the address of the Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Forestry, at whose invitation the Conference has gathered in Heiligenhafen. His speech will be followed by one from the Schleswig-Holstein Minister.

After having concerned ourselves with introductions, procedure, and protocol, we will pass to the main business of the Conference, the presentation of reports, country by country, on the status of the wetlands of international importance within their boundaries. In particular we shall examine changes which have come about since the last reviews at Ramsar. Some of these are for the good, but there will be many tales of further wetland losses in the past four years. It is difficult to overstate the urgency with which we must press for wetland conservation. Of all habitats this is one of the most fragile; easily disrupted and eliminated by modern technology. And with the vanishing wetlands go the plants and animals which depend on them, including our especial interest, the waterfowl.

One of the main functions of this Conference is to expose the threats to wetlands that are developing. While not seeking to pillory any country, we must aim to bring to bear the weight of informed international opinion so that the authorities concerned may be persuaded to restructure their plans; to take into account interests that they may not even know to have existed. We hope therefore that there will be critical, uninhibited discussion of the national reports. Where appropriate the Conference can pass official Recommendations, to be forwarded to the country involved.

Clearly, with 39 countries represented here, it will only be possible for their delegates to give but a brief résumé of their reports, many of which have been circulated beforehand or are being tabled. Much discussion will, we are sure, take place out of the formal sessions, and the threads will be pulled together on the last day of the Conference.

It is heartening that so many countries have been able to send delegates. At the first conference in the series, at St Andrews, Scotland, in 1963, there were only 17. At Ramsar I called attention to the happy coincidence that the 23 countries there was the number of those in the Great Staircase at Persepolis bringing tribute to the Achaemenid king, Darius. I have been unable to discover an equivalent coincidence in the history of our present hosts. Perhaps someone more erudite than I can help us here.

In view of the place of the Conference, it is also appropriate that we have an observer from the Council of Europe.

We welcome, as co-sponsors, the delegates of many international organizations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been carrying out the duties of

Depository for the instruments of signature, ratification or accession to the Ramsar Convention. I have already mentioned that IUCN will be performing the continuing bureau duties when the Convention comes into force. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (formerly CIC) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) were with us in Ramsar. An organization that has emerged since Ramsar, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) - offspring of the highly successful Stockholm Conference - has clearly great potential, and significant muscle, so we are grateful for its interest in our activities.

The International Biological Programme (IBP), by contrast, has recently been wound up after a decade of intense activity that not only advanced our knowledge but was a great force for international cooperation across all boundaries of national and ideological differences. One of the main projects of the IBP was to investigate the productivity of biological systems. It is therefore entirely appropriate that, having dealt with what may be termed "political" issues, our technical sessions should be started with an IBP paper. This, and others, draw attention to the high biological productivity of wetland ecosystems. Here is a message we must urgently get across to the administrator and planner - that we do not seek to conserve wetlands just for sentiment but because they are tremendously important - integral parts of the whole environment, destroyed at our ultimate peril.

Detailed assessment of biological productivity is a lengthy, painstaking procedure and there simply is not enough trained manpower, not to mention money, to allow of a detailed survey of every potentially important wetland. A wetland might well have been destroyed by the 'advance' of technological civilization before its value was completely established. Attention is therefore often concentrated on a few, relatively easily measured, indicator species and factors which demonstrate the richness of the habitat. The population of waterfowl using the wetlands has been the particular interest of the IWRB and its associates, so a group of papers will be presented giving as detailed and up-to-date a picture as possible. Data for Europe and part of Asia are now rather sophisticated; the picture for Africa may be painted with broader strokes, but nevertheless, it is vastly more complete than it was a few years ago. The mass of facts presented will enable us, it is hoped, to reconsider the criteria on which a wetland's importance should be assessed - with especial reference to the Ramsar Convention. It will be another major advance if a set of criteria can be underwritten by the Conference for future use by those countries that would become Parties to the Convention.

Some new developments in the cooperative, international study of waterfowl migration will be discussed as a necessary corollary to the examination of distributions.

From a day's excursion to neighbouring wetlands we will return, hopefully refreshed and not too wet, to examine the evolving, labile nature of wetlands which makes their scientific management of the utmost importance. Often we need to call a halt to their evolution at a particular moment in time; sometimes

we need to turn the clock back. Always we must attempt to counter the abuses to which wetlands are subject. If adequate wetlands are properly conserved and managed, then the waterfowl can stay and feed within their borders. Otherwise the birds spill over into agricultural land, giving rise to inevitable conflicts - the more so as the world's food shortage sharpens.

We cannot lock wetlands away from the contaminating hand - and foot - of man. Rather we must seek to control and guide and, in guiding, to educate the general public to appreciate the quiet beauty of the marshes and the wonder of the massed flights of waterfowl. Always our call must be that wetlands are not wastelands, but something to be treasured, used and enjoyed by man. Again, we hope that we have gathered together speakers who will bring about a lively discussion from which a consensus will arise that will be of service to planners and educationalists alike.

One class of user in the wetland environment over whom there has been much controversy is the hunter. Nowadays, however, his rôle as an acceptable predator in the system is widely recognized. What is required is control of both the harvest and the associated disturbance - a system of rationalized hunting based on biological principles. Again, much effort has been expended by the specialist groups of IWRB in this direction and a final set of papers will expound the present situation. We shall see how the hunters are themselves providing much of the evidence on which rationalization can be based. The way may be pointed to international agreements throughout the palearctic - just as there are already in the relatively few countries transversed by nearctic waterfowl.

We hope that the papers to be presented will be fruitful and stimulating. We hope you will leave feeling that this was not just another talking shop. Rather we hope for a meeting of minds, for fertilizing ideas, leading to new concepts and practical plans. May these ensure that at least the major wetlands of the world are conserved for future generations - of birds as well as of men.

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**REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION  
OF WETLANDS AND WATERFOWL**

**Held at Heiligenhafen,  
Federal Republic of Germany, 2 - 6 December 1974**

1. The Conference, the fifth in a series of similar Conferences, was held at the invitation of the Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry of the Federal Republic of Germany.

2. The Conference met in the Kursaal of the Ferienpark at Heiligenhafen, Schleswig-Holstein. The International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB) and the Federal Institute of Vegetation Research,

Nature Conservation and Landscape Management (BAVNL) of the Federal Republic of Germany between them organized the Conference and provided the Secretariat.

3. Credentials were accepted on behalf of the Conference from the Governments of the following countries:

Australia	Greece	Niger	Turkey
Austria	Iceland	Norway	United Kingdom
Bangladesh	Iran	Pakistan	USA
Belgium	Iraq	Poland	USSR
Canada	Ireland	Senegal	Zambia
Denmark	Italy	South Africa	.
Finland	Jordan	Spain	.
France	Mali	Sweden	.
Federal Republic of Germany	Mauritania	Switzerland	.
.	Netherlands	Thailand	.

4. Observers from the following countries attended:

Czechoslovakia	Portugal
Japan	Yugoslavia
Kenya	.

5. The following Specialized Organizations of the United Nations sent Delegates:

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

6. The Council of Europe sent an Observer.

7. The following Non-Governmental Organizations were represented by Delegates:

- International Biological Programme (IBP)
- International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP)
- International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (ICGWC)

- International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)
- International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB)
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

8. The Conference elected Dr W Erz, of BAVNL, to be President; Dr I Maximov, Head of the Delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and Professor A A Haapanen, Head of the Delegation of Finland, as Vice-Presidents, and Professor G V T Matthews, Director of the IWRB, as Rapporteur-General.

9. The following Committees were established by the Conference:

#### Credentials Committee

- to examine the credentials of Delegates and report to the Conference

Mr C Gulmann (Denmark)  
 Prof S Qasem (Jordan) Chairman  
 Mr Z Krzeminski (Poland)  
 Mr W Jangulo (Zambia)

#### Drafting Committee

- to process the Recommendations and Reports and to render them correctly in the Conference language

Mr R Lefebvre (France)  
 Dr W Winkel (Federal Republic of Germany)  
 Dr J Rooth (Netherlands)  
 Mr M Norderhaug (Norway)  
 Sir Peter Scott (United Kingdom) Chairman

#### Criteria Committee

- to examine the available evidence and to draw up definitive criteria of international importance for assessing wetlands

Dr T Lampio (Finland)  
 Dr D Goode (United Kingdom)  
 Mr V C Gilbert (UNESCO)  
 Prof H Sukopp (IBP)  
 Mr E Carp (IUCN)

Sir Hugh Elliott (IUCN) Chairman

Mr G L Atkinson-Willes (IWRB)

Mr A Prater (IWRB)

10. After a brief word of welcome from Mr K G Kolodziejcok on behalf of the German Hosts, an Introductory Speech was given by Prof G V T Matthews in his capacity of Director of the International Waterfowl Research Bureau. There followed the appointment of Officers and Committees, discussion of Rules of Procedure and other Conference business. The President, Dr Erz, took the Chair after his appointment and through the National Reports (up to paragraph 18).

11. The Conference was formally opened by the Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, Mr J Erti. During his speech he announced that the Federal Republic of Germany had just (28.11.74) signed the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention). This news was received with acclamation. A supporting speech of welcome was given by the Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry of Schleswig-Holstein, Mr E Engelbrecht-Greve. Dr L Hoffman, Executive Vice-President of the World Wildlife Fund, replied in the name of the Conference.

12. A statement was made on behalf of UNESCO regarding the number of countries that had signed or become Parties to the Ramsar Convention. This had been declared open for signature on 12 July 1972, in Paris. The present position was summarized:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Party to the Convention</b>
Iran	25 August 1972	
Finland	19 April 1973	28 May 1974
United Kingdom	6 September 1973	
USSR	13 February 1974	
Switzerland	21 February 1974	
Australia	8 May 1974	8 May 1974
Norway	9 July 1974	9 July 1974
Federal Republic of Germany	28 November 1974	
Sweden	5 December 1974	5 December 1974

The signatures of Australia, Norway and Sweden were made without reservation as to ratification, Finland ratified subsequently. The announcement that Sweden had become a Party to the Convention during the Conference was received with acclamation. The Iranian Delegation announced that the Iranian Parliament had ratified the Convention but the necessary Instrument had yet to be deposited in Paris. The Italian Delegation informed the Conference that their Ambassador in Paris had received instructions to sign with reservation. Several other Delegations indicated that an early signature was probable.

13. While noting the progress made in signing the Ramsar Convention, the Conference regretted that, in view of the accelerating loss of wetlands, nearly four years had passed since the Final Text was approved at Ramsar without seven States becoming Parties, as was necessary to bring the Convention into force. A Recommendation (No 1) on this subject was approved and, with other Conference Recommendations, is set out in Annex I.

14. The written National Reports of the 9 Signatory States were presented to the Conference preceded by brief statements from the Heads of their Delegations, in the order in which they had signed the Ramsar Convention. The National Reports reviewed the situation regarding the wetlands within their borders, and of the associated waterfowl populations. Particular emphasis was placed on changes that had occurred since the last reports at Ramsar.

15. Discussion of the United Kingdom Report led to a Recommendation (No 2) regarding the proposed change in the legal status of grey geese in parts of Scotland. The abandonment of industrialization on the River Medway, Kent, in line with Recommendation 5 of the Ramsar Conference was noted with satisfaction. So was the cancellation of plans to build the Third London Airport at Foulness, Essex. The improvement of the River Thames at London, through pollution control, gave rise to a commendatory Recommendation (No 3).

The Report of the Federal Republic of Germany led to several Recommendations (Nos 4-7) regarding the conservation of specific wetland areas. In one instance (No 4) the matter was so urgent that the Conference despatched a telegram to the appropriate authorities.

16. The written National Reports of the following 24 countries, with Delegates or Observers at the Conference, were then presented for discussion:

Austria	Iraq	Pakistan
Bangladesh	Ireland	Senegal
Belgium	Italy	South Africa
Czechoslovakia	Jordan	Spain
Denmark	Mali	Thailand
France	Mauritania	Turkey
Greece	Netherlands	Yugoslavia
Iceland	Niger	Zambia

Together with the written National Reports of 4 countries whose representatives were unable to be present:

Ethiopia, India, Israel, Madagascar



While the Delegate of Iceland could report improvements in wetland conservation, the fate of Thjorsarver (Ramsar Recommendation No 2) remained in doubt. So did that of the North Bull Island, Ireland (Ramsar Recommendation No 3). A Recommendation (No 8) was made to the Italian authorities concerning legislation for wetland conservation. The Delegation of the Netherlands was congratulated on the positive action to safeguard the Dollart (Ramsar Recommendation No 1, in part) and a further Recommendation (No 9) was made in this connection. The Report from Senegal gave rise to a Recommendation (No 10), also addressed to the Governments of Mali and Mauritania.

17. Verbal Reports or short statements were made on behalf of the other 6 countries having Delegates or Observers at the Conference:

Canada	Poland
Japan	Portugal
Kenya	USA

18. While noting in general that in several countries wetlands had been reprieved from development or were being restored and even created, the Conference felt that there was still a net loss of wetlands at a rate which was alarming in most countries of the world. It welcomed the rapidly increasing interest in wetland conservation as evinced by the present attendance of Delegates and Observers from 39 countries (as compared with 23 at Ramsar). The Conference called for increased cooperation on a regional and "flyway" basis (Recommendation No 11).

19. The Conference then passed to the consideration of the many Technical Reports that had been prepared. Vice-President Professor Haapanen took the Chair.

20. A first group of papers (Dykyjova & Kvét; Pieczynska & Szczepanski; Swennen) emphasized the very high biological productivity of wetlands, both freshwater and estuarine. The great inefficiency of Man's exploitation of fishery resources, especially when using fossil fuels to drive his boats, was noted.

21. The distribution and numbers of ducks, swans, coots and waders in Europe, Asia and North Africa, based on counts made at many thousands of wetland sites, were laid before the Conference (Atkinson-Willes; Prater). In necessarily somewhat less detail similar surveys for Western Africa and Eastern Africa were presented (Roux; Forbes-Watson). Recognizing that much of the essential data above is gathered by amateurs, who need the encouragement of seeing the results of their labours, a Recommendation (No 12) was made calling for funds to enable early publication.

22. With the Rapporteur-General in the Chair, further communications on the determination of the relative importance of wetlands (Perret; Bezzel) and progress being made in their registration (Goode; Carp) were received.

23. Using the foregoing technical information (paragraphs 20-22) the Criteria Committee, working through the period of the Conference, presented its Report on the final day. This was received in Plenary Session. A summary of its Recommendations is given at Annex II.

24. The especial necessity for international cooperation in the study of waterfowl migrations was emphasized in two papers (Ilyichev; Sladen). Welcoming progress in this field, and emphasizing the urgent need for the rapid analysis of data already collected, the Conference made a Recommendation (No 13) for the adoption of a world-wide system of letter-number codes on the leg-rings and neck-collars of swans and geese.

25. Next the Conference considered papers on the management of wetlands (Ladd, Linduska, Sorensen; Daiber & Price; Welcomme; Whitman; Mihelsons, Viksne & Mednis; Björk; Harrison, Grant & Swift; Fog; Reichholf). It was pleased to learn of the successful techniques for making the optimal use of existing wetlands, for creating new ones and for restoring wetlands degraded by human interference and pollution. However, the continuing threat to wetland fauna and flora by persistent biocides was the subject of a Recommendation (No 14).

26. The Conference was once more aware of the absolute necessity for collaboration in wetland conservation at all levels from Governments to individuals, including the full range of those with special interest in wetlands, be they research workers, farmers, administrators, naturalists, hunters, fishermen, reed-cutters, tourists or local inhabitants of marshland country.

27. The theme of the need for education in the broadest sense was driven home in a series of papers (Scott & Matthews; Ribaut; Festetics; Harrison). A Recommendation (No 15) urged the use of modern observational techniques to bring people to close quarters with wildfowl, thereby providing maximum educational impact.

28. A final group of papers considered waterfowl harvesting and regulation in the breeding areas (Lampio; Mihelsons), the need for the means of collecting data on the impact of hunting on waterfowl populations (Priklonski; Nowak; Boyd, Cooch & Harrison), and presented overviews of current practices in population management and proposals for the future (Linduska & Reeves; Mustein; des Clers). A Recommendation (No 16) was made on the collection of the necessary data. Another Recommendation (No 17) emphasized the need for flexibility in the control of hunting pressure. The Conference noted that in many countries the shooting seasons are still excessively long. The Delegation of the USSR urged that the aim should be a restriction to 60 days of actual shooting in the course of a season.

29. The Head of the Delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany made a statement announcing his Government's offer to produce a draft of a Convention concerned with the conservation of all

migratory animals, and to host a Conference to examine the problem. This would probably be in 1976, and would be in close association with UNEP and IUCN. The help of IWRB and of ICBP would also be welcomed. Vice-President Maximov welcomed this initiative on behalf of the USSR.

30. With the President in the Chair, the Delegate of UNESCO made a statement regarding the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme. The Delegate of FAO explained how that organization could help financially, particularly in developing countries. The Delegate of UNEP outlined the aims of his organization. The Delegate of ICBP stated the position of that Council and also spoke on behalf of ICGWC.

31. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee then took the Chair of the Plenary Session for discussion of the Recommendations of the Conference. Eighteen Recommendations were agreed. Full texts of these Recommendations appear in Annex I.

32. The Drafting Committee had also produced a text for the Final Act of the Conference. As it was not possible to have an agreed version for signature by all Delegates before the closure of the Conference, the present Report is provided, incorporating also the Summary Record of the Conference.

33. In view of the high cost of printing the Rapporteur-General was empowered by the Conference to shorten National Reports and Technical Papers when preparing the Proceedings. In cases of doubt he would consult with the Drafting Committee.

34. The President resumed the Chair and gave the floor to Mr W Jangulo, Head of the Delegation of Zambia. Mr Jangulo suggested that the next Conference in the series should take place in Africa. This was agreed. He then proposed that the site of the next Conference should be Lusaka, subject to the final agreement of the Zambian Government. The Conference signaled its approval of this invitation by loud applause.

35. The President then made a short speech of farewell and declared the Conference closed.

(signed)

WOLFGANG ERZ

President

PETER SCOTT

Chairman, Drafting Committee

G V T MATTHEWS

Rapporteur-General

