

The Prespa Statement on pelican conservation

Statement by the participants of the 1st Workshop on Pelican Research and Conservation in SE Europe,
1-2 May 2012, Prespa, Greece

On May 1-2 2012, 16 experts in pelican research and conservation, coming from 9 countries met in Pyli, Prespa National Park, Greece, for the 1st Workshop on Pelican Research and Conservation in SE Europe.

The workshop goals were to assess the population status of pelicans in this part of the world, identify the threats and suggest appropriate conservation actions that effectively address the key threats to these birds. Inputs were received from most of the countries in SE Europe where the species breed, overwinter or migrate.

The workshop participants recognized that:

- The pelican species occurring in the Western Palearctic, the Dalmatian Pelican (DP) *Pelecanus crispus* and the Great White Pelican (GWP) *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, face a range of threats from a variety of human-related factors possibly enhanced by global climate change.
- Populations of DP and GWP have vanished from large parts of their former range due to habitat loss.
- Both species breed in SE Europe where, their populations estimates and are sufficient and in western Asia where very little is known about their status. While the DP winters close to its breeding colonies, the Eurasian populations of the GWP migrate long distances (e.g. from SE Europe to East Africa).
- The DP is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red Data Book while the GWP is listed as Least Concern. Although both species are protected by laws in almost all countries in which they occur, in most countries enforcement of laws is poor.
- Pelicans are flagship species and have significant cultural importance for many countries, and are also vital components of wetlands that provide important ecosystem services.
- Disturbance by humans at breeding sites is the main threat for the conservation of the DP colonies in many places.
- Overhead power lines are still a direct and widespread threat for both species in many areas.
- Many of the nesting and feeding sites of both species also suffer from wild fires, especially affecting reed beds, but also other forms of habitat degradation resulting mainly in reduction of nesting sites in coastal areas due to erosion as well as decrease of fish stocks.
- Many of the stop-over sites of GWP situated along their migration routes between northern wintering and breeding areas, have been seriously degraded or disappeared the last years, thus affecting dramatically the stop-over ecology of these birds.

- About a quarter of all GWP (10,000) that migrate to East Africa arrive in Israel in very poor body condition due to starvation and cause serious damage to fish farms. It is very probable that without active management (i.e. supplementary feeding), the starved GWP would not survive or be able to complete their entire migratory cycle.
- The poorly planned deployment of wind energy facilities may pose significant threats to the survival of pelicans.

The participants of the 1st Pelican Workshop therefore recognized the urgent need for:

- Compiling information about status of populations and trends in some countries of SE Europe and the countries of west and central Asia;
- More focused work on wind parks and their potential impacts on pelicans as well as pelican movement ecology;
- Focused work on the migration ecology of GWP between SE Europe-Turkey-Israel
- Setting proper standards for all kinds of censuses and monitoring regarding pelicans in all sites they occur;
- Focused work on improving our effectiveness in estimating numbers and understanding the ecology and movements of non-breeders along the lower Danube and in Ukraine;
- Focused work on genetic connections of colonies; and
- Preparing and implementing National Action Plans for both species of pelicans in Greece and Turkey.

To support these priority needs the Pelican Specialist Group set out to:

- ❖ Compile an updated review of existing knowledge about SE Europe pelican populations and publish it.
- ❖ Set up in collaboration with other relevant institutions a joint proposal regarding the monitoring and conservation of pelican populations in SE Europe based upon international collaboration.
- ❖ Organize and hold the 2nd Workshop on Pelican Research and Conservation in SE Europe, in Turkey in 2015.

Finally the workshop participants urge the competent authorities in all countries where pelicans occur to take the appropriate measures in order:

- To ensure appropriate levels of protection and management for pelicans and their breeding sites.
- To ensure food availability and habitat protection in critical stop-over sites along the GWP migration route in Turkey, which is considered to be related to their physical condition upon arrival in Israel.
- To minimize and eventually stop disturbance in breeding sites through legislation, law enforcement and guarding of colonies.
- To ensure that spatial planning of all new energy infrastructure is pelican-friendly and that existing hazardous infrastructure are modified accordingly.
- To support research, capacity building and outreach programs for maintaining healthy pelican populations.

The participants:

Sebastian Bugariu / Romanian Ornithological Society, Romania.
Giorgos Catsadorakis / Society for the Protection of Prespa, Greece.
Alain Crivelli / Tour du Valat Biological Station, France.
Patrick Grillas / Tour du Valat Biological Station, France.
Orhan Gül / Ege University-Natural History Museum, Turkey.
Dionyssia Hatzilakou / Greece.
Ohad Hatzofe / Nature & Parks Authority, Israel.
Myrsini Malakou / Society for the Protection of Prespa, Greece.
Tanyo Michev / Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria.
Theodoros Naziridis / Lake Kerkini National Park Management Agency, Greece.
Ortaç Onmuş / Ege University-Natural History Museum, Turkey.
Borut Rubinic / DOPPS-Birdlife Slovenia Office, Slovenia.
Antonina Rudenko / Ukraine.
Darko Saveljic / Centre for Protection & Research of Birds of Montenegro, Montenegro
Spase Shumka / Protection and Preservation of National Environment in Albania, Albania
Mehmet Siki / Ege University-Natural History Museum, Turkey.

For further information contact the Chairman of the IUCN SSC-Wetlands International Pelican Specialist Group, Dr Giorgos Catsadorakis doncats@otenet.gr