

Darwin Fellowship - Final Report

(Please check guidance for submission deadlines, max 3 pages.)

Darwin Main Project Ref No	EIDPS037
Darwin Project Title	Developing implementation strategies for the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP)
Name of Darwin Fellow	Dr. Samuel Temidayo Osinubi
UK Organisation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Your Organisation(s)	BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat, West Africa Sub-Regional Office
Your role within your Organisation	Flyways Officer / CMS AEMLAP WG Coordinator
Start/end date of Fellowship	1 st July 2014 – 30 th June 2015
Location	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), The Lodge, Sandy, UK, SG19 2DL
Darwin fellowship funding (£)	18,385
Type of work (eg research, training, other, please specify)	Training and network development
Main contact in UK Organisation	Dr. Danae K. Sheehan
Author(s), date	Osinubi, S.T. & Sheehan, D.K. – Jul. 2015

1. Background

Before the start of the Darwin Fellowship, Dr. Osinubi worked as the Flyways Officer at the BLAPS Sub-Regional Office in Accra, supporting regional initiatives for migratory birds within the BirdLife Africa Partnership and acted as the coordinator of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Working Group (AEML-WG) since its establishment after COP10. Consequently, he worked closely with the AEML-WG, the CMS Secretariat, governmental representatives, other experts, BirdLife and the RSPB during the process of drafting and review of the AEMLAP documents.

The aim of the Fellowship is the successful implementation of the AEMLAP, which requires

- determining clear, verifiable targets,
- good communication between European and African stakeholders, and
- coordination of activities with effective CMS Secretariat support.

The long-term aim of the Fellowship is to secure a commitment for AEMLAP implementation from CMS AEMLAP Range States and other stakeholders.

In terms of organisational roles, the RSPB undertakes a significant programme of work on migratory birds, central to which is one focusing on declining species of landbird in the Africa-Eurasia flyway. The RSPB also provides BirdLife Partnership representation with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to assist the process of getting international species action plans agreed, monitored, reviewed and implemented. Through Dr. Danae Sheehan and Nicola Crockford, guidance is provided in coordinating the implementation of multidisciplinary actions within AEMLAP. David Stroud of the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) provides advice on how to catalyse the transformation of action plans into practical conservation action and how to support implementing agencies working at different scales. The BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat (BLAPS) coordinates the involvement of African BirdLife

Partners in BirdLife's Global Flyways Programme, which includes supporting their work with CMS and associated Multilateral Environmental Agreements, in particular AEMLAP. Based in the UK, Dr. Osinubi has been able to work with staff from the BirdLife Global Secretariat Global Science and Information Management teams.

2. Progress

Building on the progress documented in the interim report submitted in January 2015, the progress reported herein is for the period between January and June 2015.

With the adoption of the AEMLAP documents at the 11th CMS Conference of Parties (COP11), activities were focused on strengthening the network for implementing AEMLAP. A presentation detailing the development process of AEMLAP, organisations involved, objectives and implementation processes to date, and highlighting areas for collaboration was put together. This talk has been presented at different events and meetings in Europe, including the African Bird Club (ABC; as an invited talk during their annual general meeting and available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56Ljhb31ds4>) and the Aquatic Warbler Memorandum of Understanding (during the third meeting of signatories in Lithuania).

Due to the expiry of the UK academic visitor visa and unfeasibility of immediate renewal, and with the approval of the Darwin Fellowship, Dr. Osinubi relocated to the CMS Secretariat in Bonn, Germany, on 1st May, for the last two months of the Fellowship. Working at the CMS Secretariat offered a unique opportunity to directly discuss AEMLAP issues with CMS staff and explore linkages with other instruments and initiatives housed within the UN Plaza in Bonn. As a result of Dr. Osinubi being based in Bonn, it was possible to establish a link between the BirdLife fundraiser for Africa and the CMS fundraiser – a partnership that will make fundraising efforts more efficient. It was also possible to develop linkages with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). Dr. Osinubi was also able to spend a week (25th May to 1st June) working from the BirdLife Europe Office in Brussels. This visit enabled the presentation of the AEMLAP talk to the BirdLife Europe staff, as well as the organisation of several important meetings, which include meetings with the European section of the Society for Conservation Biology, the European Commission (EC) Directorate General (DG) for the Environment and the EC DG for International Cooperation and Development. These meetings explored avenues for funding and collaboration.

The Migrant Landbird Study Group (MLSG) organised the third meeting of its Executive Committee. This took place at the VogelBescherming Nederland (VBN, BirdLife in the Netherlands) office in Zeist, Netherlands, on 2nd and 3rd June. The focus of the meeting was preparations for the upcoming 10th European Ornithologists' Union conference, being held in Badajoz, Spain, from 24th to 28th August. The organisers of this conference have accepted for the MLSG to hold a satellite symposium on 24th August (<http://www.eou2015science.org/mlsg-satellite-symposium.html> and http://migrantlandbirds.org/wp/?page_id=574). MLSG roundtables and talks are also part of the EOU conference itself. The MLSG is also working to re-vamp the website (<http://migrantlandbirds.org/wp/>) and launch the membership structure.

A meeting of the AEML-Steering Group (SG) was organised at the CMS Secretariat on 12th June. Some members of the SG participated via Skype. This meeting allowed the discussion of key issues, mainly the second meeting of the AEML-Working Group (WG) taking place in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, in November 2015, with support from the Swiss government. Other issues include the interim AEMLAP Coordinator (in the person of Alex Ngari, a BirdLife Flyways Officer working on the Migratory Soaring Birds project and based in Nairobi, Kenya) and developing an AEMLAP work plan for this and the next intersessional periods, 2014 to 2017 and 2017 to 2020 respectively.

With the success of the online species tool – an AEMLAP search criteria embedded within the BirdLife DataZone that allows for a national and regional filtering of AEMLAP species – as an advocacy and a research tool that has been shared and used by governments and BirdLife Partners to explore the AEMLAP species list to identify national and regional priority species, discussions for a similar search criteria for the CMS Raptor MoU are underway. The intention is

that additional functionalities will be added to better link ‘Conventions’ with the BirdLife DataZone.

The Yellow-breasted Bunting is one of the three priority species for which international Species Action Plans are to be developed and implemented. In March 2015, a call was put out for volunteers willing to pay their way to support and participate in a survey of Yellow-breasted Bunting breeding sites in Mongolia (see Annex 1). Unfortunately, the short timing of the announcement restricted the number of volunteers able to commit to the survey. So, the survey has been postponed until 2016, to allow for more volunteers. Dr. Johannes Kamp et al. published a paper about the population collapse of this species (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12537/abstract>) and this has drawn some much-needed attention to the plight of the Yellow-breasted Bunting.

Dr. Osinubi has accepted the offer of a postdoctoral position at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute for African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. The research area is intra-continental migratory landbird movements, which addresses some of the migration connectivity knowledge gaps identified in the Action Plan. At the end of the Darwin Fellowship, on 30th June, Dr. Osinubi officially stepped down, both as the AEMLAP Coordinator and as a BirdLife Flyways Officer. A transition programme involving the old and the new interim AEMLAP Coordinator, Alex Ngari, has taken place and this was undertaken online and with a week-long meeting in Accra, Ghana, from 29th June to 3rd July. Working with Kate Hand, the Senior International Policy Officer at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB; BirdLife in the UK), Dr. Osinubi will continue supervision of Shadrach Kerwillian, the MPhil. Conservation Leadership student developing a communication strategy for a NGO to use in better engaging with multinational companies, until the placement project ends in August. It has also been proposed that Dr. Osinubi remains a member of the AEML-WG.

3. Achievements and Outcomes

The main achievement during the last six-months of the Fellowship has been the strengthening the network for implementation of AEMLAP through a combination of meetings, events, talks and implementation tools (mentioned under section 2, above).

4. Next Steps

	July	August	September	October	November	December
Interim AEMLAP Coordinator takes over						
Completion of MPhil Conservation Leadership placement project for FLAP						
Embedding Raptor MoU search criteria into BirdLife DataZone online species tool						
BirdLife Council of Africa Partnership (CAP) meeting						
AEML-WG meeting in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire						