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Waterbirds around the world

A global overview of the conservation,
management and research of the
world's waterbird flyways

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Cover photography: Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* arriving at Martin Mere, England. Photo: Paul Marshall.
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6.1 Conflict resolution. Workshop Introduction

Bruce Batt

Ducks Unlimited, Inc., One Waterfowl Way, Memphis, Tennessee 39120, USA.

Batt, B. 2006. Conflict resolution. Workshop Introduction. *Waterbirds around the world*. Eds. G.C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith & D.A. Stroud. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK. pp. 782-783.



“Farmer - what have you done with my grain?”

There are a growing number of examples from many countries, where there has been successful resolution of conflicts between goose populations and farmers. Protest banner (from 1989) in Nordrhein Westfalen, Germany, where goose shooting had been prohibited. Photo: David Stroud.

The conservation of waterbirds often comes into conflict with the advancement of economic, recreational, transportation and agricultural development both at broad landscape scales and at specific sites. This workshop covered several examples of the kinds of issues that are emerging as society advances.

Among the key points emerging from the papers were:

- Waterbird specialists must play key roles in the development of practical and sustainable solutions to most problems. It is critical to waterbird conservation that the best science available is applied to each situation.
- Problems can emerge unexpectedly in areas that may, even recently, have been thought to be of low threat to conservation interests. It is highly desirable to monitor all waterbird species, even the most common, to help ensure sensitivity to environmental changes when they occur in the future.
- After management actions have been implemented, it is important to follow through with adequate evaluation programs to encourage the continuation of satisfactory practices or to offer feed-back that provides guidance for improvements of future management programs. The case of the permanent inundation of the estuarine Cardiff Bay in the UK was reported by Burton.
- Competing alternative uses for limited habitats remain at the centre of most conflicts. With the habitats available to most species already generally much limited over what was historically available, it is critical that waterbird interests engage in these problems before significant investments have been made by economic interests.
- It is usually preferable to define mutually compatible uses of areas for both their natural values and for economic development, but these cases are often illusive to discover.
- It is critical to get all stakeholders involved in the resolution of most conflicts as mutual ownership of action plans is a highly desirable element that can lead to the successful results.
- The unusual problem of overabundant species has begun to emerge among a few species of waterbirds as described by Batt *et al.*. Management experience of the current cases

will provide important guidance for similar issues when they arise in the future with other species, or in other regions.

- Non-native waterbirds introduced beyond natural ranges, especially Anatidae, may have closely related species that might be subject to genetic swamping and excessive competition to the detriment of indigenous species (as described by Henderson in relation to the genetic impacts of Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* on White-headed Ducks *O. leucocephala* in Europe). Introductions of non-native waterbirds should be prevented at the outset, but if - despite this - ecologically damaging species have become established, it is preferable to move quickly to remove or contain them before the problem grows to the point where little can be done.
- New industrial uses of intertidal and supratidal habitats are especially threatening as these areas are critical to many species

of waterbird. Conflicts raised by intensive shellfisheries in the Dutch Wadden Sea are described by Ens, and as a consequence of intensive shrimp aquaculture by Schaeffer-Novelli *et al.* (See also papers within the section on 'Declining waterbirds: problems, processes and sites'). These problems are emerging in both developed and developing countries.

- Two examples of apparently successful resolution of conflicts between hunting and the local protection of waterfowl populations are described by Stroud *et al.* and by Cope *et al.*
- The growth of wind farms is a broadly important issue for bird conservation and has recently emerged in offshore environments. As stressed by Fox & Petersen, it is highly desirable to implement extensive monitoring of the impacts on waterbirds as better knowledge is critical for the location and management of this industry in the future.



The severe physical disturbance of inter-tidal sediments following mechanised dredging for cockles in the Dutch Waddensea is clearly visible from the air. Ens (this volume, p. 806) summarises the consequences of this fishery for waterbirds. Following intervention by the European Court of Justice, these damaging practices have now ceased. Photo: Jaap de Vlas.