

Component 3. Conservation of Species and Habitats

3.1 Asian Waterbird Census

Regular monitoring of waterbird population following standard protocols as the Asian Waterbird Census at all the major congregation sites within and around EKW shall be maintained in a coordinated manner so as to understand comprehensively the significance of the wetlands for waterbirds (both resident and migratory) and to plan and monitor habitat management strategies and actions.

The management plan will support mid-winter counts of waterbird as per Asian Waterbird Census protocol. The census may be carried out in collaboration with NGOs such as Prakriti Samsad, with prior experience in conducting such census. Census programmes will include training of prospective census participants and local waterbird enthusiasts.

Data collected during this monitoring work will include collection of detailed information on habitat structure and seasonal abundance and changes in different prey items (aquatic flora and fauna). Information collected should enable realistic population estimates of the different waterbirds and trends to be developed and provide guidance for management activities.

3.2 Bird health

Knowledge of the health of resident and migratory species that inhabit the wetlands is critical to understanding the risk and potential of transmission of avian diseases to other birds and animals, domestic poultry and people. Specific studies need to be undertaken to establish a baseline of the common and potentially harmful avian diseases, including the highly pathogenic strains of avian influenza that have a zoonotic potential.

Under the aegis of management plan, a training on wild bird disease will be provided to staff of Wildlife Department, EKWMA and select NGOs.

3.3 Culture of indigenous fish species

Culture of indigenous fish species which are often avoided in culture ponds but are in great demand by the local people, is proposed to be carried out in Goltala bheri which is owned by the government. EKWMA may also invite proposals from the willing fishery owners (govt./private/cooperatives etc.) for technical and financial support from EKWMA for culture of indigenous fish species. The seeds for indigenous fish species such as Koi (*Anabas testudineus*), Magur (*Clarius batrachus*) and Pangus (*Pangasius pangasius*) and others can be produced in the four hatcheries already proposed for the enhancement of fish yield.