



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature  
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION  
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<b>Document title</b>	Criteria element list for the HELCOM Core Indicator Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season
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<b>Submitted by</b>	OSPAR/HELCOM/ICES Joint Working Group on Marine Birds (JWGBIRD)

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### Background

For the third Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS III) it is planned to include the HELCOM Core Indicator *Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season*. HELCOM State & Conservation 14-2021 invited JWGBIRD to *prepare criteria element lists of breeding birds and crosscheck said lists with the species currently included under this indicator and submit the list to STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 for further consideration* (outcome STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021, paragraph 4J.62).

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the information provided.
- provide guidance as needed, especially in relation to criteria used to qualify waterbird species to be included in the indicator *Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season*.

## Criteria element list for the HELCOM Core Indicator *Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season*

From the beginning, the indicator *Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season* has included waterbirds in the sense of marine birds (Herrmann et al. 2013), and this intention was also reflected in the waterbird assessments for HOLAS II (HELCOM 2018). Accordingly, and also in the spirit of the MSFD, species were selected that are representative for the state of the marine waters of the Baltic Sea and the functioning of the Baltic Sea ecosystem. The interpretation was such that both species foraging at sea and species breeding in coastal habitats were considered. Habitats are considered to be coastal when they are directly influenced by the marine waterbody, i.e. beaches, (salt) marshes, coastal lagoons etc. Further, species should belong to the five functional species groups defined by JWGBIRD (ICES 2015) and subsequently treated in the MSFD (Com Dec. 848/2017).

Accordingly, the indicator focusses on species from the orders Anseriformes (swans, geese, ducks), Podicipediformes (grebes), Charadriiformes (waders, gulls, terns, auks) and Suliformes (cormorants), whereas predominantly terrestrial birds such as Passeriformes (songbirds) and Accipitriformes (raptors) are not addressed.

HELCOM recently produced a list Baltic Sea macrospecies (HELCOM 2020), which under the breeding birds includes species not representative for marine or coastal habitats. For example, a number of passerine species are listed, which neither are waterbirds nor can be allocated to one of the five species groups. On the other hand, the HELCOM list is lacking some species which may qualify to be included in the indicator assessments, such as the Common Redshank.

Annex 1 lists all species that are either on the HELCOM species list or are candidate breeding birds in coastal habitats according to the maps in the latest European breeding bird atlas (Keller et al. 2020). As each species has its role in the ecosystem and the breeding bird abundance indicator aims to observe biodiversity, there is no reason to omit a species from the assessment as long as it is present in numbers allowing the application of indicator. In the list of Annex 1 it is indicated which species were assessed in HOLAS II. Further, JWGBIRD furthermore provides an estimate of suitability of the individual species for an assessment of the status of the Baltic Sea based on their association with the marine/coastal habitat.

The datacall for HOLAS III named all the 30 species which were assessed in HOLAS II, but further asks for data of all other relevant species. Therefore, the list of species assessed for HOLAS III is not closed, rather the co-leads of the indicator will sift through the data received to see which species are meeting the requirements for an assessment based on the data available. Depending on spatial coverage, the list of species assessed can differ between the entire Baltic and the seven sub-divisions (merged from the 17 sub-basins), because the assessments will be conducted on two spatial scales.

In future discussion about the species assessed under the indicator *Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season* it needs to be defined by HELCOM and its bird experts how far inland the breeding birds are considered for the assessment and how close the contact to the marine ecosystem should be.

As roughly the same considerations apply to the indicator *Abundance of waterbirds in the wintering season*, JWGBIRD is seeking advice from HELCOM State & Conservation about what guidelines should be taken into account in the process of species selection for the waterbird indicators and the compilation of a regionally agreed species list, which follows the requirements of both the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the Article 8 assessments under the MSFD.

This document was circulated among JWGBIRD members from the HELCOM Contracting Parties. Comments were received from experts in Germany, Poland and Sweden. Amendments were done in the text, while comments on the table in Annex 1 are saved for the forthcoming compilation of a regional agreed species list for the indicator *Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season*.

## References

HELCOM 2018. Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season. HELCOM Core Indicator Report.

<https://helcom.fi/media/core%20indicators/Abundance-of-waterbirds-in-the-breeding-season-HELCOM-core-indicator-2018.pdf>

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ICES 2015. Report of the Joint ICES/OSPAR Working Group on Seabirds (JWGBIRD), 17–21 November 2014, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2014/ACOM:30. 115 pp.

[https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/acom/2014/JWGBIRD/JWGBIRD\\_2014.pdf](https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/acom/2014/JWGBIRD/JWGBIRD_2014.pdf)

Keller V, Herrando S, Voříšek P, Franch M, Kipson M, Milanese P, Martí D, Anton M, Klvaňová A, Kalyakin MV, Bauer HG & Foppen RPB 2020. European Breeding Bird Atlas 2: Distribution, Abundance and Change. European Bird Census Council & Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

HELCOM 2020. HELCOM Checklist 2.0 of Baltic Sea Macrospecies. Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings 174, 76p. <https://helcom.fi/media/publications/BSEP174.pdf>

## Annex 1

List of waterbirds breeding in the Baltic Sea Region according to the HELCOM Checklist of macrospecies (HELCOM 2020) and the European breeding bird atlas (Keller et al. 2020). Symbols as in the HELCOM checklist: x = breeding, (x) = sporadic breeding, 0 = extinct, 0(x) = extinct as regular breeder, but sporadic breeding records, p = presence. E = breeding occurrence due to European breeding bird atlas. Suitability for breeding bird abundance indicator: A = suitable because representative for the marine ecosystem, B = not suitable because not breeding in coastal habitats and/or not representative for the marine ecosystem. HOLAS III datacall: x = named in data call (data all other species can also be delivered). Note that an indication of occurrence in a country does not necessarily mean that the breeding population of this species is monitored in that country.

species	SE	FI	RU	EE	LV	LT	PL	DE	DK	HOLAS II assessment	HOLAS III datacall	suitability for indicator
Mute Swan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Whooper Swan	E	E	E	x	E	E	E		E			A
Barnacle Goose	x	x	x	x				x	x	n.a.	x	A
Canada Goose	E	E	E	E				x	E			A
Greylag Goose	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Taiga Bean Goose		x										B
Common Eider	x	x	x	x			(0)	x	x	GES	x	A
Velvet Scoter	x	x	x	x						GES	x	A
Common Goldeneye	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Smew	x	x	(0)									B
Goosander	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Red-breasted Merganser	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Common Shelduck	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Red-crested Pochard								x	E			B
Common Pochard	E	E	E	x	E	E	E	x	E			B
Tufted Duck	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Greater Scaup	x	x	x	x		(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	GES	x	A
Garganey	E	E	E	x	E	E	E	x	E			A
Northern Shoveler	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Gadwall	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Eurasian Wigeon	E	E	E	x	E	E		(x)				A
Mallard	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Northern Pintail	E	E	E	x		E		(x)	E			A
Teal	E	E	E	x	E	E	E	x	E			A
Little Grebe	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	x	E			A
Red-necked Grebe	E	E	E	x	E	E	E	x	E			A
Great Crested Grebe	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Black-necked Grebe	x					x	x	x	x			B
Slavonian Grebe	x	x	x	x	x		(0)	(x)	(x)			B
Eurasian Coot	E	E	E	x	E	E	E	x	E			B
Red-throated Loon	x	x										B
Arctic Loon	x	x	x									B
Great Cormorant	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Eurasian Oystercatcher	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Pied Avocet	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Common Ringed Plover	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Little Ringed Plover	E	E	E	x	E	E	E	E	E			B
Kentish Plover	0(x)						(0)	0(x)	0			B
Northern Lapwing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			B
Eurasian Golden Plover	x	x		x	x	x						B

Ruddy Turnstone	x	x	x	x				0		GES	x	A
Whimbrel	x	x	x	x	x							B
Eurasian Curlew	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	x	E			B
Black-tailed Godwit	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Ruff	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Broad-billed Sandpiper		x										B
Temminck's Stint	x	x		(x)								B
Dunlin	p	E	E	p				p		GES	x	A
Common Snipe	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Jack Snipe	x	x		x	x							B
Red-necked Phalarope	x	x										B
Common Sandpiper	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	(x)	(x)			A
Green Sandpiper	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			B
Marsh Sandpiper				x		x						B
Common Greenshank	x	x	x	x								B
Common Redshank	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Wood Sandpiper	x	x	x	x	x	x						B
Terek Sandpiper		x	x		x							B
Little Gull	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	(x)	x			A
Black-legged Kittiwake	x								0(x)			A
Black-headed Gull	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			A
Mediterranean Gull	(x)				E		x	x	x			A
Common Gull	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Lesser Black-backed Gull	x	x	x	x			(x)	x	x	GES	x	A
European Herring Gull	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Great Black-backed Gull	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	GES	x	A
Little Tern	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Gull-billed Tern								0	0			A
Caspian Tern	x	x	x	x		(0)	(0)	(x)	(x)	GES	x	A
Whiskered Tern					x	x	x	x				B
White-winged Tern				x	x	x						B
Black Tern	E	E	E	x	E	E	E	E				B
Sandwich Tern	x			x			x	x	x	GES	x	A
Common Tern	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	GES	x	A
Arctic Tern	x	x	x	x	x		0	x	x	GES	x	A
Arctic Skua	x	x		E						GES	x	A
Black Guillemot	x	x	x	x					x	GES	x	A
Razorbill	x	x	x	x					x	GES	x	A
Common Guillemot	x	x	(x)	E					x	GES	x	A