

MONITORING SCHEMES IN PORTUGAL, TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE

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Monitoring schemes are fundamental tools to access changes in abundance and distribution patterns of bird species and/or communities. Additionally, they provide up-to-date information, fundamental to design successful conservation measures and optimal management decisions. In Portugal the majority of these schemes are coordinated by NGO's or the National Conservation Institute, except a few schemes led by research groups. In this talk we will present an overview of the monitoring schemes in Portugal based on the publicly available information, since this is a fundamental tool to provide feedback to the volunteers and general public, but also to policy makers. The oldest monitoring scheme is the Wintering Waterbird Census running since 1976, while most schemes started after the year 2000 (e.g. Christmas and New Year Census (CANAN) – 2003, Common Bird Survey – 2004, NOCTUA – 2009). Most schemes have a multi-species approach or are focused on a particular group (e.g. Ardeidae), with few regular schemes targeting only a single species (e.g. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*). Except for the national Atlas, the number of volunteers involved is small (<100 participants/scheme) and this could be in part linked to insufficient feedback provided. Although most of the schemes occur in an annual basis, only three schemes are up-to-date with reports (winter Red Kite census, CANAN and NOCTUA). We analyze the results for all monitoring schemes based on the information available, focusing on the temporal series, the geographical coverage, and public engagement. We discuss the accuracy of the trends observed and their extrapolation for the overall populations. We identify where are the information gaps and suggest the priorities for monitoring, hoping that this promotes more sustainable schemes and a wider public engagement.