

Inaugural meeting on the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Fairbanks, Alaska, 25-27 May 1993

In June 1991 the environmental ministers from the eight arctic states (Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia and USA) signed a ministerial declaration in Rovaniemi (Finland). This implied the adoption of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). In April 1992 in Ottawa (Canada), the arctic countries created a forum for arctic nature for scientists, indigenous people and conservation managers of arctic nature for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF).

From 25-27 May 1993, the second meeting of CAFF took place in Fairbanks (Alaska) in the University of Fairbanks. Besides representations of the eight arctic states, this meeting was attended by representatives of non-arctic states and non-governmental organisations who have an interest in the arctic and had been given the status of observers. The Netherlands were also given observer status and G.C. Boere from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, who should attend the meeting, passed the honour of being the Dutch delegate on to me. A total of about 70 delegates

gathered, with delegations from USA (about 30), Canada (12), Russia (5), Norway (5), Denmark/Greenland (2), Iceland (1), Sweden (1), The Netherlands (1), Germany (1), Inuit Circumpolar Conference (4), Intern. Arctic Science Comm. (1), WWF Int. (1), Northern Forum (2) and US arctic network (2). During this meeting six separate working sessions took place, dealing with different themes of conservation problems in the arctic. One of them was exclusively dedicated to seabirds. Attenders of the seabird group were: D. Russell (Canada), A. Golovkin (Russia), P. Nielsen (Greenland), B.O. Frantzen (Norway), A. Petersen (Iceland), R. Hansson (Norway), J. de Korte (The Netherlands), J. Wright, D. Roby and K. Wohl (USA).

In their session the seabird group reviewed the list of species that will be used for AMAP and the proposed list of indicator species for the CAFF. The group recommended that the latter list should include the following species: Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia*, Common Murre *Uria aalge*, Little Auk *Alle alle*, Least Auklet *Aethia pusilla*, Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* and Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*. These are all common species and, except for Little Auk and Least Auklet, circumpolar ones.

The USA proposed creating a working group of seabird specialists to promote, facilitate and coordinate research, management and conservation activities of mutual concern in the arctic. Historically, research, these have been poorly coordinated on a circumpolar scale. This Circumpolar Seabird Group (CSG) will conduct its first meeting in February 1994 in conjunction with the Pacific Seabird Group meeting in Sacramento (California). The CSG meetings will alternate annually between the Atlantic and Pacific regions in conjunction with a major seabird meeting. The initial tasks for the CSG will be an evaluation of seabird colony catalog databases, the completion of the Murre Conservation Strategy and the editing of the Circumpolar Seabird Bulletin (CSB). Further details on these activities are presented below. It was agreed that the USA will provide the leadership to organise the first CSG meeting in February 1993.

The seabird group established the existence of seabird colony catalog databases in the arctic for the USA, Norway, Canada and Greenland. Russia and Iceland will be developing national databases in the near future. Joint catalog databases are also being developed by Norway and Russia (European) and USA (Alaska) and Russia (Far East). It was agreed that the purpose or goal of national catalog databases was to "document and archive seabird colony catalogue information to monitor the status and trends of seabird popu-

lations". There was consensus on the need to create a committee of experts to evaluate existing seabird catalog databases to determine the compatibility between selected catalog data fields (e.g. numbers of birds, transformation codes and quality of data codes) and the issues involving the development of a circumpolar catalog database. The colony catalog committee will operate as an ad-hoc group of the CSG. Canada will lead the completion of this activity.

The group reviewed Canada's draft outline on Murre Conservation Strategy and completed a final outline. Significant conceptual issues that were resolved involved the organisational structure of the proposed document and changing the tone of the document to voluntary rather than legally committing actions. There was consensus that a committee of murre experts is necessary to complete the strategy document. The murre committee would operate as an ad-hoc group of the CSG and conduct its first meeting in Sacramento in February 1994. Canada will develop a schedule for completing draft materials by February 1994 and finals by May 1994.

The USA proposed developing an annual bulletin to enhance the communication and exchange of information between scientists and managers interested in arctic seabird resources. The CSB will consist of one-page descriptions of management-oriented seabird investigations, short articles about seabird management and conservation activities and other information of mutual interest to seabird people. The CSB will be published in English only. It was recommended that the USA be the lead coordinator with each participating arctic country appointing "country coordinators". Each coordinator will be responsible for soliciting materials within their country and providing them to the lead coordinator by February 1994. Contributions of seabird specialists from non-CAFF members (e.g. The Netherlands) doing work in the arctic will also be included in the CSB. These contributions have to be sent directly to the lead coordinator. The USA lead coordinator will collate and edit (scientific accuracy only) all materials and provide a copy of the completed bulletin to each country's coordinator by March 1994 for their distribution. Lead coordinator of both CSG and CSB will be Kent Wohl, Marine and Coastal Birds Migratory, Bird Management, Alaska, 1011 E. Tudor, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, USA, tel: 907 786-3503, fax: 907 786-3641.

Samenvatting Tijdens een bijeenkomst van een door de acht arctische staten ingesteld forum voor de bescherming van arctische flora en fauna (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna; CAFF) in Fairbanks, Alaska, in mei dit jaar is de 'Circumpolar Seabird Group' (CSG) opgericht. Hieraan kunnen, naast de arctische staten zelf, ook belangstellenden uit andere landen deelnemen. Voorlopig hebben de Verenigde Staten, in de persoon van Kent Wohl (adres zie boven), het voortouw genomen van de organisatie

*en de coördinatie van het uit te geven tijdschrift, de 'Circumpolar Seabird Bulletin' (CSB). Tevens zal de volgende bijeenkomst van deze nieuwe zeevogelgroep door de Verenigde Staten worden georganiseerd in februari 1994. Dit zal geschieden te Sacramento, California, tegelijk met de bijeenkomst van de Pacific Seabird Group. Enkele zaken waarmee de CSG zich zal bezig houden zijn, naast het uitgeven van de CSB: het opzetten en onderhouden van een database van arctische zeevogelkolonies over het gehele arctische gebied en het opzetten van een beschermingsstrategie voor zeekoeten *Uria spp.**

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