

Photo: Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)
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Concept Briefing

April 2024

Bustards Without Borders





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Why BWB?

Bustards are the most threatened family of terrestrial birds, with 60% of species listed as threatened or near threatened with extinction. Bustard populations are declining worldwide due to habitat loss from agricultural expansion and intensification, urbanization, and infrastructure development, compounded by hunting, power line collisions, and pesticide use. Due to these sensitivities, bustards serve as indicators of sustainable agrarian landscapes: their conservation encompasses the protection of other declining grass- and shrubland species, and ensures the productivity of the landscape for healthy human food supply. Conservation strategies which focus on habitat protection, reducing illegal killing and unsustainable taking, and promoting sustainable land management are needed to reverse bustard population declines and ensure the preservation of these iconic species and their roles in our ecosystems. Effectively addressing these issues requires a united and urgent effort involving diverse organizations and stakeholders from all areas with bustard populations working together under a common umbrella.

Who is BWB?

Bustards Without Borders is a consortium of individuals, organizations, government institutions and other stakeholders with established expertise and commitment to sustainable bustard conservation. Members work together to share best practices, coordinate and advance the conservation of all bustard species across their ranges on four continents. The organizational structure of BWB is attached as Annex 1.

Our mission

BWB is dedicated to catalyzing actions for the sustainable conservation of bustards and their habitats, to include on-the-ground conservation activities, training, awareness, population and distribution monitoring and research as outlined in the Multi-species Action Plan to conserve African, Eurasian and Australian Bustards (Bustard MsAP, Annex 2). We take a collaborative approach to engage relevant and committed individuals from diverse geographic, institutional and professional backgrounds. The Bustard MsAP will mobilize governments and stakeholders worldwide, foster synergies, and promote coordinated efforts.

Our relationship to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

BWB harks to UNEP/CMS/Resolution 10.27 on Improving the Conservation Status of Migratory Landbirds in the African-Eurasian Region, adopted at CMS COP10, which calls upon Parties to undertake immediate and concerted international actions to conserve African-Eurasian migratory landbird species and their habitats throughout the flyway. BWB will be positioned within the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP), which was initiated in response to Resolution 10.27. The most recently revised AEMLAP Resolution adopted at COP14 specifically addresses the necessity of mitigating threats to migratory bustards¹.

1

According to the Resolution on AEMLAP (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.17 (Rev.COP14)), the Conference of the Parties 'Further calls on Parties to urgently take practical measures to address threats to migratory bustards, a highly threatened and declining group of migratory landbird species under particular pressure from illegal killing, unsustainable taking, collision with energy infrastructure and habitat loss and degradation including as outlines in relevant Species Action Plans.'

Our first steps

Our first step will be to develop a comprehensive Multi-species Action Plan for Bustards (Bustard MsAP, Annex 2) to guide the activities of the consortium in years to come. Regional Coordinators will gather data about the status of all bustard species within their geographical remit, to include their distribution and population status, define critical habitats and threats, pinpoint knowledge gaps and identify opportunities for conservation actions. This collaborative process will also contribute to the identification of key future BWB members. The draft of the Bustard MsAP will be shared with stakeholders and Range States for review, before presentation for adoption at CMS COP15.

Requirements for our hatch

BWB seeks modest funding for a short workshop to bring together key individuals to assemble data and draft the Multi-species Action Plan, which will launch our work programme.

Annex 1: Organizational structure of BWB

Coordination Unit

The governance of this consortium will be overseen by a Coordination Unit (CU) comprising the following members:

Name	Affiliation
Mr. Muhammad Jamshed Iqbal Chaudhry	WWF-Pakistan
Ms. Éva Fejes	Ministry of Agriculture, Hungary
Dr. Mimi Kessler	IUCN SSC Bustard Specialist Group
Mr. Miklós Lóránt	Kiskunság National Park, Hungary
Dr. Rainer Raab	TB Raab GmbH

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC) will collaborate with individuals, Range States, and stakeholders. Further, the SC will facilitate the challenging task of developing the Bustard MsAP, promote research, monitoring, training, and awareness initiatives, and ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of the actions outlined in the Bustard MsAP. Additionally, they will help explore funding opportunities for bustard conservation efforts globally. The SC comprises the following members:

Coordination Unit

Lead Coordinator for Africa

Lead Coordinator for Asia

Lead Coordinator for Australia

Lead Coordinator for Europe

Representative of AEMLAP

Representatives of committees to be formed within BWB, to include potentially:

Species Experts Committee

Threats Reduction Committee

Fundraising and Media Committee

Annex 2: Multi-species Action Plan to conserve African, Eurasian and Australian Bustards (Bustard MsAP)

Aim and objective

We aim to develop a comprehensive Multi-species Action Plan covering the whole geographic ranges of all 26 species of bustards worldwide to promote concerted, collaborative and coordinated international conservation actions. The main objectives are to:

- Organize a brief online workshop with a small group of key people to develop and finalize a questionnaire to gather information about distribution, population and threats faced by bustards in range states;
- Organize an in-person workshop for a limited number of participants to assemble the data gathered by questionnaire and compile a first draft of the Bustard MsAP;
- Collaborate and conduct formal consultation with all Range States, partners, and stakeholders, including seeking direct inputs from them at key milestones throughout the development of the Bustard MsAP;
- Address issues and threats faced by all bustard species and provide conservation management guidelines applicable to all Range States covered by the Bustard MsAP;
- Finalize the Bustard MsAP for submission to the 15th meeting of the CMS COP, scheduled to be held in 2026.

Background

Migratory birds, vital components of global biodiversity, inhabit various ecosystems and face diverse threats, both natural and human-induced, throughout their annual journeys. According to the first-ever State of the World Migratory Species report² (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 14.4) launched at COP14 in 2024, nearly half of the migratory species listed under CMS are declining, and more than one fifth of them face extinction, despite their ecological importance and provision of ecosystem services. Recognized as keystone species, they embody interconnectivity among ecosystems and ecological shifts. There are specific threats of particular significance to migratory birds along flyways that continue to have an impact on these species and their habitats including: degradation and loss of habitats such as savannahs and grasslands; agricultural intensification and habitat modification through desertification and overgrazing; inappropriate development of wind turbines and solar farms (UNEP/CMS/COP14/Decisions 14.207 and 14.208) on Renewable Energy and Migratory Species); collisions with power lines and electrocutions (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 10.11 (Rev.COP13) on Power Lines and Migratory Birds); illegal and/or unsustainable killing, taking and trade (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP14)) on the Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds); lead shot and other poisoning (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.15 (Rev.COP14) on Preventing Poisoning of Migratory Birds) - all aspects treated under the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.17 (Rev.COP14)) as well as under the umbrella of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032 (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 14.1).

Bustard species play a vital role in maintaining ecosystem health and biodiversity. These iconic birds contribute to ecosystem functioning through seed dispersal and regulation of insect populations. Moreover, they are one of the key indicators of sustainable land use. However, many bustard species face significant conservation challenges, including habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation due to agricultural expansion, urbanization,

²

State of the World Migratory Species report on the CMS website:

https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/State%20of%20the%20Worlds%20Migratory%20Species%20report_E.pdf

and infrastructure development. Additionally, illegal hunting, collisions with power lines, and pesticide use (by reduction of food supply) further threaten their populations. As a result, the majority of bustard species are categorized as threatened or near threatened on the IUCN Red List, highlighting the urgent need for conservation action. Protecting bustard species not only preserves their intrinsic value but also safeguards the ecosystems they inhabit, ensuring a healthier environment for both wildlife and people. Because conservation of bustards requires sustainable use of the landscape, efforts to conserve bustards benefit biodiversity conservation as a whole, demonstrating the importance of prioritizing their protection on a global scale.

The Bustard MsAP aims to serve as a critical link to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). By aligning its objectives with the GBF, the Bustard MsAP seeks to enhance the effectiveness of global biodiversity conservation efforts. The Bustard MsAP will contribute to several targets of the GBF, most of all to Target 4: Halt Species Extinction, Protect Genetic Diversity and Manage Human-Wildlife Conflicts, by halting and reversing the decline of bustard species worldwide. Additionally, the MsAP aims at the protection and restoration of their habitats (Targets 1-2), reducing poaching, unsustainable harvest and illegal trade (Target 5), promoting sustainable and biodiversity-friendly practices in agriculture (Target 10), and strengthening scientific research and monitoring capacities, and knowledge transfer through transboundary collaborations (Targets 20-21). <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets>

Scope: Species and geographic coverage

The Bustard MsAP will cover all 26 species of bustards worldwide (Table 1). An initial assessment suggests that 110 Range States host populations of one or more of these bustard species and therefore should be included within the geographical coverage of the Bustard MsAP (Figure 1).

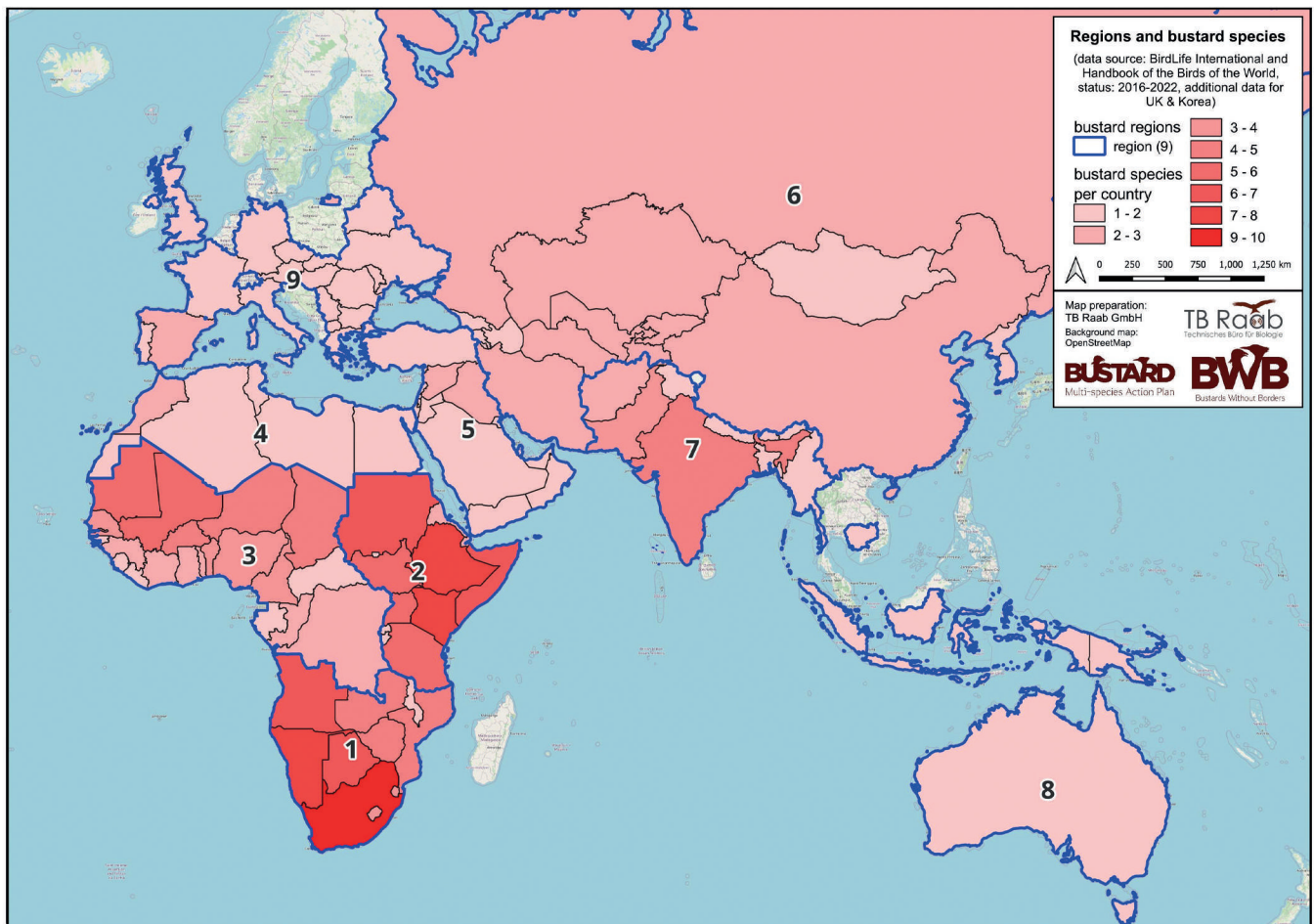


Figure 1. Overview of geographic scope of MsAP and geographic units of BWB. Map of all 110 Range States containing bustard species, with number of species per country and delineating 9 geographic units of BWB.

BWB regions

- 1 – Southern Africa
- 2 – Eastern Africa
- 3 – Western Africa
- 4 – Northern Africa
- 5 – Southwest Asia
- 6 - Central and East Asia
- 7 – South Asia
- 8 – Australia
- 9 – Europe

Table 1. Species³ to be covered by the Multi-species Action Plan to conserve African, Eurasian and Australian Bustards: CR: Critically Endangered, EN: Endangered, VU: Vulnerable, NT: Near-threatened, LC: Least Concern. (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/resources/categories-and-criteria>).

#	Species	Range/BWB regions	Global IUCN Red List Category 2023-1	CMS Status	Global population trend
1	Little Bustard (<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>)	Europe, Central and East Asia, Northern Africa	NT	Appendix I and II	Decreasing
2	Great Bustard (<i>Otis tarda</i>)	Europe, Central and East Asia, Northern Africa	EN	Appendix I and II	Decreasing
3	Buff-crested Bustard (<i>Lophotis gindiana</i>)	Eastern Africa	LC		Stable
4	Australian Bustard (<i>Ardeotis australis</i>)	Australia	LC		Decreasing
5	Savile's Bustard (<i>Lophotis savilei</i>)	Western Africa	LC		Stable
6	Great Indian Bustard (<i>Ardeotis nigriceps</i>)	South Asia	CR	Appendix I	Decreasing
7	Nubian Bustard (<i>Neotis nuba</i>)	Eastern and Western Africa	NT		Decreasing
8	Heuglin's Bustard (<i>Neotis heuglinii</i>)	Eastern Africa	LC		Stable
9	Denham's Bustard (<i>Neotis denhami</i>)	Africa (excl. Northern Africa)	NT		Decreasing
10	Ruppell's Bustard (<i>Heterotetrax rueppelii</i>)	Southern Africa (Namibia endemic)	LC		Stable
11	Karoo Bustard (<i>Heterotetrax vigorsii</i>)	Southern Africa	LC		Increasing
12	Kori Bustard (<i>Ardeotis kori</i>)	Eastern, and Southern Africa	NT		Decreasing
13	Hartlaub's Bustard (<i>Lissotis hartlaubii</i>)	Eastern Africa	LC		Stable
14	Blue Bustard (<i>Eupodotis caerulescens</i>)	Southern Africa	NT		Decreasing
15	Ludwig's Bustard (<i>Neotis ludwigii</i>)	Southern Africa	EN		Decreasing
16	Arabian Bustard (<i>Ardeotis arabs</i>)	South-west Asia, Eastern and Western Africa	NT		Decreasing
17	White-bellied Bustard (<i>Eupodotis senegalensis</i>)	Africa (excl. Northern Africa)	LC		Decreasing
18	Northern Black Bustard (<i>Afrotis afraoides</i>)	Southern Africa	LC		Stable
19	Southern Black Bustard (<i>Afrotis afra</i>)	Southern Africa	VU		Decreasing
20	Red-crested Bustard (<i>Lophotis ruficrista</i>)	Southern Africa	LC		Stable
21	African Houbara (<i>Chlamydotis undulata</i>)	Northern Africa	VU	Appendix I	Decreasing

3

Taxonomical reference: Del Hoyo, J. & Collar, N.J. (2014). Handbook of the Birds of the World and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World. Volume 1: Non-passerines. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona

22	Asian Houbara (<i>Chlamydotis macqueenii</i>)	Asia (all 3 regions)	VU	Appendix II	Decreasing
23	Little Brown Bustard (<i>Heterotetrax humilis</i>)	Eastern Africa	NT		Decreasing
24	Black-bellied Bustard (<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>)	Africa (excl. Northern Africa)	LC		Decreasing
25	Bengal Florican (<i>Houbaropsis bengalensis</i>)	South Asia	CR	Appendix I	Decreasing
26	Lesser Florican (<i>Sypheotides indicus</i>)	South Asia	CR		Decreasing

Approach

To implement the challenging task of developing the Bustard MsAP, the BWB plans to adopt the following approach and organizational framework.

International Bustard Working Group (IBWG)

Working Group members will include the Steering Committee of BWB, Regional Coordinators and individual experts from governments, organizations, research institutes and Range States. Given that the scope of Bustard MsAP includes four continents, the aim is for an inclusive International Bustard Working Group. Nominations for membership are invited from Range States, partners and interested parties, with representation particularly sought from countries that host core remaining populations of one or more bustard species, and those with specialist knowledge and expertise that is considered necessary for the development of the Bustard MsAP. It is anticipated that the IBWG will communicate predominantly electronically but that members may also be invited to participate in Regional Action Planning Workshops covering their respective region.

The International Bustard WG is formed by the following members:

Bustards Without Borders

- **Steering Committee**

Asia

- **Regional Coordinator South Asia**
- **Regional Coordinator Southwest Asia**
- **Regional Coordinator Central and East Asia**

Europe

- **Regional Coordinator Europe**

Africa

- **Regional Coordinator Southern Africa**
- **Regional Coordinator Eastern Africa**
- **Regional Coordinator Northern Africa**
- **Regional Coordinator Western Africa**

Australia

- **Regional Coordinator Australia**

Representative from BirdLife International

Representative from CMS Secretariat, Avian Species Team

Representative of CMS Scientific Council

Other key NGO partners

Funding needs

BWB urgently seeks funding support to advance its crucial mission, the first step of which is the development of a comprehensive Bustard MsAP. Firstly, funding is essential to host a workshop for bringing together key bustard experts and regional coordinators from Range States, requiring resources for venue charges, travel, and accommodation for sponsored participants. Secondly, it is crucial to involve an experienced consultant who can provide insights and speed the formulation of the Bustard MsAP. Lastly, funding is necessary for the design, production, and translation costs associated with finalizing the Bustard MsAP document. With adequate financial support, BWB can expedite the process of developing the Bustard MsAP, enabling comprehensive discussions, identification of distribution, population status, and threats faced by bustards, and ultimately, providing critical recommendations for their conservation.

Timeline and Milestones

The following timetable is proposed to ensure that the overall deadline for developing the Bustard MsAP is met.

Development of Bustard MsAP	Month											
Activities 2024	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Consultations to develop concept & Project Charter												
Establish BWB and identify Lead and Regional Coordinators												
Establish International Bustard Working Group (IBWG)												
Hosting of regular Steering Committee and IBWG telecons												
Online workshop including the Steering Committee of BWB, development and finalization of questionnaires												
Data/information collection from Range States by Regional Coordinators												
Workshop including the Steering Committee, evaluation of questionnaires												
First draft Bustard MsAP developed and circulated												
Activities 2025	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Hosting of regular Steering Committee and IBWG telecons												
Development of draft regional components for MsAP												
Action Planning Workshop 1 (Asia)												
Action Planning Workshop 2 (Europe and Australia)												
Action Planning Workshop 3 (Africa)												
Second draft Bustard MsAP produced and circulated												
Formal consultation with Range States & stakeholders												
Third draft Bustard MsAP developed												
Finalized MsAP submitted to CMS Scientific Council												

