

GBYP Steering Committee Meeting (online, 8 January 2021)

Participants:

Steering Committee (SC) members: Gary Melvin (SCRS Chair), Rui Coelho (SCRS Vicechair), John Walter (W-BFT Rapporteur), Enrique Rodriguez-Marín (E-BFT Rapporteur), Ana Parma (SC External Member) and Camille Jean Pierre Manel (ICCAT Executive Secretary)

Invited: Miguel Neves dos Santos (ICCAT Assistant Executive Secretary), Ana Gordo (ex E-BFT rapporteur), Francisco Alemany (GBYP Coordinator), Alfonso Pagá García (GBYP Database specialist) and Stasa Tensek (GBYP Assistant Coordinator)

The SCRS Chair welcomed all participants and opened the meeting. He also introduced Enrique Rodriguez-Marín as a new E-BFT rapporteur and welcomed him on board the GBYP SC. The SC members thanked Ana Gordo, who stepped down from that position, for her dedication and hard work within GBYP. The tentative agenda (Annex 1), as proposed by the GBYP Coordinator, was accepted with some modifications.

Regarding the correction of the current Aerial survey index, it was recalled that it has to be done by the end of March 2021, in order to be included in the MSE. It was clarified that the correction, in this step, applies only to fixing the calculation error, while the identified uncertainties related to the index will presume. The GBYP Coordinator informed the SC that Alnilam, the current contractor, is not able to correct the coding error autonomously and will therefore require an expert advice. It was agreed that a small group of SCRS experts briefly check the R code used by the contractor and, once they evaluate the amount of work that is needed for reviewing it, CREEM (St Andrews) experts are contacted. For this purpose, GBYP Coordinator will formally contact them and organize an on-line meeting, participants to which will be further decided. Once the code is corrected, the contractor will run it again and provide the corrected results. Some SC members were concerned if the contractor is able to make the reanalysis, especially considering the choice of the ground estimator.

As for the new methodologies to be used in the analysis, it was decided to apply a model-based approach. For this purpose, a call for tenders will be launched soon and John Walter will help in drafting the TOR. The objective is to create a statistical model structure that produces the index. It should be based on GAM or GLM and incorporate the detection function and other variables like the observer effect, temporal and spatial factors. The structure should be comprehensive, in order to be able to later incorporate the possible habitat, environmental and other variables. Since including habitat and environmental variables assumes great effort and will possibly not provide any insight on some key biases, it is not necessary to include them in this stage.

Concerning the further improvements of the survey, it was decided to carry out a pilot study in the Balearic Sea area (minimally) and use a double platform (observer + video camera). This pilot study should provide insights on the application of the new methodology and time and costs it implies. The GBYP Coordinator explained that it is feasible from the logistic point of view, given

that some aerial companies are already equipped with cameras. Nevertheless, a cost will probably be very high because of post processing of images, which still cannot be done automatically. Also, extending the area, in order to include buffer zone, will increase costs. This study will be covered by Phase 10 budget and the call for tenders will be launched in the forthcoming months.

With reference to the habitat modelling and environmental variables, it was discussed if they already have to be included in the reanalysis of the current data, as GBYP coordinator suggested. The SC decided it is not necessary to include them, at least not on a short-term basis, because they will not necessarily address the current biases. Therefore, this task was given a lower priority and it was decided to further postpone it.

Regarding the MSE process, a call for tenders for the external code review should be issued soon. The GBYP Coordinator will ask the MSE chair to draft the TOR, which should be later ratified by the SC before their final publication. As for the modelling expert, it was decided to continue the actual contract and extend the number of working days to work on the code with the reviewers. A contract proposal will be forwarded to the SC, which will have one week to provide its comments. The SC members commented that the review of the MSE process should also be considered in the future.

In relation to the planned workshops, tentative dates include late February for the close kin workshop and March for the tagging workshop. The final dates will be decided once the final SCRS calendar is set, which will probably be done by the end of January.

The next SC meeting will be scheduled for the end of March or early April and it will focus on following up the corrections of Aerial survey and taking final decisions on the proposal for the second amendment to Phase 10. The EU will be asked to nominate a permanent representative to participate as a guest to that and future SC meetings.

Annex 1

Annotated agenda

1. Call for tenders for model-based standardization of Aerial survey incorporating environmental and confounding covariates

Comment: Considering time pressure, I'd suggest as first step in this line to invite directly and urgently a CREEM group expert to revise and correct, with the support from Alnilam, the currently available index, the one already used in MSE, to ensure to have a right series by 31st March. I'll provide you some further info on that based on a meeting we'll held with Alnilam this evening. In parallel, the ToR for model based approach should start to be drafted, aiming at launching the Call ASAP.

2. Call for tenders for the MSE review

Comment: Define ToRs, open Call or invitation? Tom's contract could be also quickly discussed

3. Proposal/possible call for tenders (if external) for paired video/observer pilot studies that could maintain some element of continuity with the existing survey

Comment: I think it would be possible to carry out a "double platform" (human observers and automated methods as high resolution imagery) pilot survey in one region (presumably Balearic Sea since it is the easiest from logistical point of view and the only one already used in MSE), covering both the core areas and a buffer area around it, which could address several objectives at once: to compare automated methods with human observations, explore the feasibility of applying the strip method instead of line transect methods and in general determine the feasibility and costs of the "enlarged" surveys, all of that addressing most of reviewers recommendations. I would provide you some additional info on that.

4. Concrete workplan for 2021

Comment: It should be decided the timing of these actions and that of Close-Kin and Tagging workshop

5. Other matters