

## Preface to 2009 EURING Analytical Meeting proceedings

**Bernando De Bernardinis**

Published online: 18 March 2012  
© Dt. Ornithologen-Gesellschaft e.V. 2012

Biodiversity represents a unique value which we need to carefully preserve to honour what Nature has done during millions of years of natural selection and to ensure that future generations will be able to live in functional ecosystems. The dense and fascinating network of ecological relationships governing food chains in the different ecosystems ensures a long-lasting equilibrium to the environment where we all live.

During millennia, man, with his activities, has shaped the environment upon which he is directly dependent. At the same time, we have far too many examples of how human activities imply the loss of biodiversity. The challenge today is trying to match the presence of man with his activities with an environment preserved and respected in its richness of species and functional mechanisms.

Every day, we witness the loss of too many species, and then there are those we lose even before they have been described to science. Huge efforts are devoted at the international level to monitor the conservation status of species. The most detailed information surely refers to birds, which represent the best known group of organisms at the international level.

Within this scenario, there are alert tools largely based on the possibility to record declines in breeding populations. But if this information is very important to raise our awareness towards bird species which for centuries have been very common (just think of sparrows in several European countries), it is crucially important to be able to understand the mechanisms underlying the changes in numbers that we observe. Equally, and in an opposite

direction, the same is true for the rapid expansions of populations of alien species, which are also a serious cause of loss of biodiversity.

And it is here that the subject of the EURING Analytical Meeting comes into play. Individual marking is, in fact, the only approach able to unveil the demographic mechanisms governing the size of animal populations. What is progressively clear is the benefit that EURING has created in stimulating, beginning in the 1970s, the organisation of meetings which have seen ornithologists and biostatisticians working together in trying to understand how to better use the precious set of information on individually marked birds, which has been gathered through the unique example of citizens' science represented by the world community of ringers or banders.

Decades of work have led us to the 2009 Abruzzo meeting, to discuss the most recent results of the efforts of research groups all over the world. The growing use of mark/recapture methodologies has already and significantly contributed to improve our abilities to understand the reasons for demographic trends of bird populations, hence to evaluate how better to target our conservation efforts. And these meetings have also had a most important role in making the harvest of animal populations sustainable, whether it is economically important activities like fishing or free-time activities like hunting.

In this context of research applied to conservation and management of natural resources, our Institute, the ISPRA, hosts specific experiences and monitoring activities. I am happy that our Ringing Centre, which has been active since the 1930s, had the honour of hosting the EURING Analytical meeting, which was immediately followed by the EURING General Assembly. The fact that this took place 25 years after the previous one, organised in Bologna in 1984, confirms the efforts of our Ringing Centre towards

---

B. De Bernardinis (✉)  
Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale,  
Rome, Italy  
e-mail: segreteria.presidenza@isprambiente.it

long-term monitoring, thanks to the support offered through the field effort provided by our volunteer ringers.

Migratory birds represent the most symbolic example of sharing natural resources and of our responsibility for their conservation, and EURING is the scientific organisation able to coordinate the activities of thousands of professionals and amateurs, through the overcoming of language

or cultural barriers and the sharing of data on bird movements.

As ISPRA's President, I want here to thank the volunteers and EURING for their passionate work on birds, which has led to the development of scientific research worldwide.