

# Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census

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## Contents

1. Letter from the AWC International Coordinator .....	1	4. AWC News from the Region .....	2
2. Vacancy – Asian Waterbird Census International Coordinator....	2	5. International Black-faced Spoonbill Census 2008 .....	9
3. AWC 2008 Results Update.....	2		

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## 1. Letter from the AWC International Coordinator

Dear AWC coordinators and participants,

In this issue I would like to report on the progress of the development of the AWC since December 2007.

I am glad to report that we have secured a JPY6.5 million financial support from the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF) starting May 2008 – April 2009. This is the third year the KNCF has supported our project. The funding will go towards publication of the AWC report 1987-2007, organise a training workshop in Indonesia, improve the AWC website, and develop a fundraising strategy to sustain the continued success of the AWC. In addition, Wetlands International Headquarter in Netherlands will continue supporting the AWC through co-funding from the Global Avian Influenza Network for Surveillance (GAINS), managed by Wildlife Conservation Society. This fund will help with verifying, improving and integrating the AWC database.

Two initiatives are underway to improve access of information. Through the GAINS project, Wetlands International is developing an on-line, user-friendly database to increase efficiency in reporting. The second initiative involves designing a new website system, which will feature an improved AWC webpage.

The highlight of the AWC 2008 census includes the record breaking count of the Endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (2,065 individuals) and a significant count of the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Myanmar (84

individuals). In particular we would like to thank the Australia Wader Studies Group and Bird Australia for kindly sharing their shorebird count back to the 1970s with us. The Ornithological Society of New Zealand has also kindly shared with us their shorebird monitoring data spanning 1983-1993. Furthermore the Ministry of Environment of Japan has set up a project to support the waterbird monitoring programme within Japan. Details of this effort are found in the Japan section of this Newsletter.

Finally, due to logistical issues and an opportunity to settle down in Singapore, I will be leaving my position at Wetlands International at the end of July. Wetlands International is currently working to find my replacement. I will continue to support the AWC as a volunteer in the future.

Wetlands International continues to receive strong support from partner organisations in the Asia-Pacific region. I would like to thank each of you for your consistent support to the AWC and look forward to your continued support.

Best regards,

David Li  
AWC International Coordinator  
Wetlands International

## 2. Vacancy – Asian Waterbird Census International Coordinator

Recently David Li has decided to take a position with Sungei Buloh Nature Park in Singapore. Wetlands International would like to thank David for 11 years of commitment to Wetlands International, first with the China Office and then with the Malaysia Office. David has been the enthusiastic Coordinator for AWC over the past 7 years and has greatly strengthened the network with the National Coordinators.

Wetlands International is now seeking applications for the position of Asian Waterbird Census International Coordinator.

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) forms part of the International Waterbird Census (IWC), a global programme coordinated by Wetlands International since 1967. The AWC was launched in 1987 and has grown considerably in geographic coverage and participation. More information is available at <http://www.wetlands.org> under Biodiversity Programmes/Species/Waterbirds/International Waterbird Census.

The AWC is coordinated and implemented through a network of observers, national and sub-national coordinators (all volunteers) and one international coordinator. The AWC International Coordinator is employed by Wetlands International to coordinate the census in close communication and cooperation with the national and sub-national AWC Coordinators. Within Wetlands International, the AWC coordinator works in close cooperation with the Global Coordinator for IWC and with the Programme Head for Biodiversity and Ecological Networks.

Wetlands International is seeking applications from people living in Asia with the following qualifications:

- Sound knowledge of waterbirds
- Experience in working with volunteers and supporting networks
- Excellent communication skills in English
- University qualifications in science.

The position will be located in one of the Offices of Wetlands International in Asia. The intention is for the successful applicant to be able to work from the closest Wetlands International office. The salary level will be appropriate to local employment conditions.

Please contact Ms Sarala Aikanathan, Director, Wetlands International - Malaysia Office for the detailed information on the position and the selection criteria. Email: [sarala@wetlands.org.my](mailto:sarala@wetlands.org.my)

## 3. AWC 2008 Results Update

*David Li, AWC International Coordinator*

As of 1 July 2008, AWC Coordinators and individual counters have submitted reports from 230 sites from the 2008 census. We encourage countries that have not yet reported their count results to do so as soon as possible.

*Breakdown of AWC 2008 received by country*

Country	2008	Note
Bangladesh		To be reported.
Bhutan		No contact available.
India		To be reported.
Maldives		No contact available.
Nepal	20	
Pakistan	9	Received from Punjab.
Sri Lanka		To be reported.
<b>South Asia</b>	<b>29</b>	
Brunei Darussalam	17	
Cambodia	3	
Indonesia		To be reported.
Lao PDR		No contact available.
Malaysia		To be reported.
Myanmar	20	
Philippines	159	
Singapore		To be reported.
Thailand		To be reported.
Timor Leste		To be reported.
Vietnam		To be reported.
<b>Southeast Asia</b>	<b>199</b>	
China		
Mainland		To be reported.
Hong Kong		To be reported.
Macao		
Taiwan		To be reported.
Japan*		To be reported.
DPR Korea		No contact available.
Republic of Korea		To be reported.
Mongolia		No contact available.
Eastern Russia	2	
<b>East Asia</b>	<b>2</b>	
Australia		To be reported.
New Zealand		To be reported.
Papua New Guinea		No contact available.
Australasia		
<b>Total No. of Sites</b>	<b>230</b>	

## 4. AWC News from the Region

The following section provides an update on the AWC activities since December 2007.

### Australia

*Jo Oldland, Shorebird 2020 Programme Manager, Birds Australia, [j.oldland@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:j.oldland@birdsaustralia.com.au)*

The growing concerns over the declining population of shorebirds, increasing threats

throughout the East Asian -Australasian Flyway, and a need to determine trends for more species has led to a partnership between Birds Australia, AWSG, WWF-Australia and the Australian government in July 2007. The "Shorebirds 2020" project will build on the data collected over 27 years by the Australasian Wader Studies Group.

Over the 2008 summer counting season, there was an overwhelming response to the project. Hundreds of people, with widely varying shorebird ID & counting skills contacted Birds Australia to get involved in shorebird counts in their local area. Approximately 500 volunteers were involved in counting at over 70 sites across Australia, with many also donating large amounts of time in coordination and training at the local level - a very positive start to the program.

Recent analysis by Birds Australia has found that population of bird species such as the Curlew Sandpiper and Eastern Curlew have declined by 75% and 50% respectively throughout southern Australia over the last 25 years.

The project team at Birds Australia has put a lot of work into cleaning the data-base and redesigning it so it is easier to enter and extract data. Now that the data is relatively clean and contains less error, the team is undertaking an assessment of the current level of sampling to determine which population trends can be identified, and which species sampling needs to be slightly adjusted to determine trends. Early indication is that for species like Red-necked Stint, the data is available to project long-term population trends, while for species like Grey Plover, the data set is still weak. It seems unlikely that the program could be adjusted to determine trends for this species without radical adjustments to the methods. We will be able to offer more specifics in the coming months.

Many of the important areas to shorebirds in Australia have also now been mapped using GIS, and linked to site specific data. The hope is that these maps will be used by the Australian Government to quickly identify areas that need to be considered in management and planning decisions.

More information is available on <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au> and <http://shorebirds.org.au>. We will be revamping this site over the next couple of months to provide project updates, site information, maps and training resources. You can also participate and join in the 'Shorebirds Australia' Discussion Group at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Shorebirds\\_Australia](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Shorebirds_Australia) to keep informed on the project and talk with other shorebird counters around Australia.

## Brunei Darussalam

*Andrea Bloem, Panaga Natural History Society, [andreabloem@brunet.bn](mailto:andreabloem@brunet.bn)*

A total of 17 sites were counted during the AWC 2008 in Brunei Darussalam. Four new sites were included in addition to the thirteen sites that were counted previously. Most sites have a coastal landscape. Luagan Lalak and Tasek Merimbun are inland lakes and Bekiau is an inland buffalo field. The count was conducted between 15 December 2007 and 10 February 2008 as it was not possible to arrange the surveys at all sites in January. However, we plan to conduct the AWC 2009 at all sites in January.

The objectives of the AWC in Brunei are to create awareness in the number and variety of waterbirds in Brunei, and to make more people enthusiastic about bird watching and bird counting, especially by permanent residents of Brunei. By organising several training sessions and stimulating people to join the count of more than one AWC site, we hope to develop experience and more permanent enthusiasm for this beautiful hobby. This year, close to 30 people participated in the census, including an increased number of Bruneians. PNHS and BNS would like to express our thanks to all the volunteers who made this year's count a remarkable achievement.

A total of 14,288 waterbirds of 51 species were reported in the AWC 2008. This is the largest number of waterbirds ever recorded since we started participating in 1990. The observed major waterbird groups were Cormorants & Darters (1 species, 74 birds), Herons & Egrets (15, 11,301), Storks (1, 4), Geese & Ducks (2, 59), Rails & Coots (3, 137), Waders (25, 2,687), Gulls & Terns (4, 26). The highest number was for Cattle egrets with 1,591 individuals identified. Eighteen wetland dependent species were identified: 51 Raptors of 7 species, 207 Kingfishers of 5 species and 148 birds of 6 other species (warblers, wagtails, quail) were recorded.

Two globally threatened and two near-threatened (NT) species of waterbirds were reported: the vulnerable (VU) Chinese egret (11), Lesser Adjutant (VU, 4), the Oriental Darter (NT, 74) and the Grey-headed fish-eagle (NT, 2). Other highlights were the Northern lapwing, Black-headed gull, and Rufous night-heron.

The site with the highest number of threatened species was at the ASEAN National Heritage Site, Tasek Merimbun. The site showed evidence of Oriental darter roosting and breeding. Seria Wetlands and Brunei Bay Estuary have the highest varieties with Oriental darter, Chinese egret and Lesser adjutant.

Brunei Bay Estuary (Mentiri Prawn Farms), Wasan Rice Fields and Seria Wetlands are the sites with the highest number and greatest variety of shorebirds known in Brunei. Large concentrations of herons and egrets can be found in sites with roosts, like at Seria Wetlands, Tasek Merimbun, Makam di Luba, Brunei Bay Estuary and Tutong Sewage Tanks.

Several sites show very different results compared to previous years. This is mainly due to increased knowledge of the site, more extensive count, and more people involved. There is no relation whatsoever with developments at the site itself. This shows clearly that continuity, methodology and capacity in experienced bird watchers is essential to conduct a consistent and accurate AWC.

Though the method for Sungai Seria and Bera was the same as last year the increased numbers of birds still hide major disturbances taking place in the area. Two incidents are of particular concern. There was a significant oil spill in Sungai Bera last October, and ongoing flood mitigation projects where lowland rivers are being canalised under removal of all riparian vegetation.

## Cambodia

*Hong Chamnan, Wildlife Conservation Society – Cambodia, [wcs.hc@everyday.com.kh](mailto:wcs.hc@everyday.com.kh)*

Cambodia carried out its 10<sup>th</sup> AWC in January 2008. An overview of the results is presented here together with some comparisons from previous years.

Three sites were visited between 15-20 January, two less than last year's census. The census covered Ang Trapeang Thmor Sarus Crane Site of Banteay Meanchey province, Prek Toal Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve of Battambang province, and Boeng Prek Lapov of Takeo province.

Prek Toal recorded a total of 37,310 waterbirds. This included 1,276 Great cormorants, 9,664 India cormorants, 2,848 Little cormorants, 4,361 Oriental Darters, 8 Milky Storks, 1,706 Painted Storks, 10,855 Asian Openbills, 211 Lesser Adjutants, 120 Greater Adjutants and 1,890 Spot-billed Pelicans.

Ang Trapeang Thmor recorded a total of 20,836 waterbirds, including 6,582 lesser whistling Ducks, 6,351 Great Egrets, 3,667 Spot-billed Pelicans, 1,180 Pond Herons, 1,113 Purple Swamphens, 599 Painted Storks, 95 Black-winged Stilts and 23 Comb Ducks.

At Boeng Prek Lapov Sarus Crane Conservation Area, Takeo province, only 112 water birds of 13

species were recorded because the area is quite small and full of human activities. We hope that in the near future this area may attract more water birds to visit and stay permanently. The conservation team is trying its best to closely cooperate with local people to protect and save these species.

The two most important sites, Ang Trapeang Thmor and Prek Toal support many congregation waterbirds. Both sites are strictly protected with support from the local community.

We missed many sites this year due to inadequate funding resources to train people to conduct the surveys.

Prek Toal is the top priority site for waterbird count every year. Compared to 2007, the number of waterbirds here has increased. Meanwhile, the number of waterbirds at Ang Trapeang Thmor has declined slightly but remains an increasingly important site for breeding Painted Storks, Milky Storks and Spot billed Pelicans. At this site, the breeding nest of these species has increased from 65 to 158, with a breeding success rate of more than 90 percent.

For AWC 2009, we plan to count more sites throughout Cambodia, especially in the coastal zones (southwest of Cambodia) and around the Mekong River (Southwest of Cambodia). We also plan to encourage more volunteers for the AWC around Phnom Penh. We will raise funds to prepare educational materials of the importance of waterbirds.

## China

*Richard Hearn and Eileen Ree, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, [Richard.hearn@wwt.org.uk](mailto:Richard.hearn@wwt.org.uk)*

During February 2008, a team from the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC), Hefei (Cao Lei, Mark Barter, Cong Pei Hao, and several students), Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, UK (Eileen Rees and Richard Hearn) and National Environmental Research Institute, Denmark (Tony Fox) carried out waterbird counts and research at several lakes in the middle Yangtze floodplain.

This work is built particularly on the highly important efforts of Cao Lei and Mark Barter (funded by WWF-China), in developing waterbird census in the Yangtze floodplain and central China in recent years (see, e.g. Barter *et al.* 2006 for further details).

The initial focus was at East Dongting Hu, Hunan Province, where in addition to studying the ecology of goose species (especially Lesser White-fronted

Geese) wintering there, the team assisted National Nature Reserve staff with a coordinated count of waterbirds. Around 16,000 Lesser White-fronted Geese were observed during the census, feeding and roosting in the reserve. The success of the previous summer's breeding was also assessed through counts of the percentage of young birds and brood sizes. Data was collected on site use and feeding ecology of the geese. Other highlights also recorded during the census on 16th February included approximately 7,200 Falcated Duck, 5,950 Bean Geese (both *serrirostris* and *middendorffi* races), 5,585 Eurasian Wigeon, 4,600 Greater White-fronted Geese, 3,100 Gadwall, 2,250 Pied Avocet, and 1,600 Mallard, and a few hundred each of Common Teal, Northern Pintail, Smew and Grey Heron. A total of 45,776 waterbirds were recorded, clearly reinforcing the importance of this wetland for waterbirds and supports its designation as a wetland of international importance.

Visits were also made to Shengjin Hu and Fengsha Hu, Anhui Province, where research was conducted on Swan Geese and Tundra Swans. An impressive 15,000 Tundra Swans were observed at Fengsha Hu, and breeding success among this flock was high, at c.15% young within the sample taken. In addition to collecting data, much time was spent training undergraduate and postgraduate students from USTC in monitoring and research techniques.

Further Anatidae research is now continuing at USTC, with particular focus on Lesser White-fronted Geese. Plans are also underway to further develop baseline waterbird monitoring activities in collaboration with WWF-China. Updates on these activities will be reported in future issues of the AWC newsletter.

*Reference:*

Barter, M., Lei, G. and Cao, L. 2006. *Waterbird survey of the middle and lower Yangtze River floodplain (February 2005)*. China Forestry Publishing House, Beijing.

## India

[A.M.K.Bharos and Akhilesh Bharos, Chhaisgarh Wildlife Society, cwsraipur@yahoo.co.in](mailto:cwsraipur@yahoo.co.in)

The Ruff is a widespread winter visitor to the Indian subcontinent and is often seen in small parties or flocks with other waders. They are often found in freshwater lakes, pools, marshes, flooded fields etc (Grimmett & Inskipps 1998), whereas it is mentioned as partly passage migrant in India subcontinent by S. Ali & S. D. Ripley (1987 and 1995).

However, over the past 25 years, the Ruff is considered a rare winter visitor to the region of Chhatisgarh (17°46' - 24°06' N, 80°15' - 84°24' E) Sightings were only recorded at Baikunthpur (23°15' N, 82°33' E) in Sirguja district situated in the northern side of the state in 1995, and back further still in 1982 in Raipur district.

That changed on our AWC count at the Rajim area (20°58' N, 81°53' E) on 16 Dec 2007, 45 Km south east of Raipur, where a small party of eight birds were sighted at Koundkera village tank (6 Kms south east of Rajim). This is a small pond with vegetation on the shores and the wetland is shared by domestic cattle and other animals. The flock was busy feeding and was photographed from a distance.

The sighting of the species in this locality after a long lapse of time was a great surprise. This site has been visited four times in last three years, but it was never sighted there or at other wetlands of the area, though other aquatic avian species were present. Thus this sighting record is worth a mention in annals, owing to its rarity in Chhatisgarh region.

*Reference:*

Salim Ali & S. Dillon Ripley, *Compact Hand Book of the Birds of India & Pakistan, Ed 1987. Vol -2, P-174.*

Salim Ali & S. Dillon Ripley, *The Pictorial Guide to the birds of the Indian Subcontinent, Ed 1995. P-100.*

R.Grimmett, C Inskipps & T Inskipps, *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent, Ed 1998, P-486.*

## Japan

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The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) of Japan has been conducting the Monitoring Sites 1000 Project since 2003 in order to monitor natural ecosystems in Japan. The project aims to detect changes in the ecosystem by continuously collecting and analyzing data on indicator species in each ecosystem and contributing to the biodiversity conservation. The Anatidae and shorebirds are counted as indicators of inland-waters and tidal-flat ecosystems in the project.

In order to understand the long term fluctuations in the migrations of shorebirds and Anatidae in Japan, MOE is starting a programme to analyze AWC data and other available census under cooperation from relevant countries and organizations, to identify the fluctuations in waterbird migrations not only in Japan but also in Asian region. This joint cooperation will allow greater understanding of waterbird migration in the region and allow the network to be more proactive

in identifying population size and developing solutions to reverse any declining trends.

Activities of the programme in 2008 include 1) analyzing the fluctuation and its factors in the waterbird migrations between Japan and other Asian regions from the results of the AWC and other available census, 2) holding an international symposium to share information on waterbird migration and to discuss further collaboration to promote migratory waterbird census in Asia. We expect that the results from these activities could be fed back to AWC.

## Malaysia

*Yeap Chin Aik, Malaysian Nature Society  
kcayeap@yahoo.co.uk*

A total of 36 (53,607 individuals/73 spp.) and 22 (31,279/67) sites were surveyed in 2007 and 2008 respectively nationwide. Lower count sites in 2008 were attributed to lower participation of volunteers for that year. The Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Peninsular Malaysia, and the Sarawak Forestry Corporation were two government agencies involved in site-specific surveys.

Eight major waterbird groups were encountered during the census. The table below summarises the total number of individuals and species counted according to respective waterbird groups for 2007-2008. Five species exceeded the '1,000 individuals' mark (excluding unidentified species). These were the Chinese Pond-Heron (2,523/2,096), Cattle Egret (1,153/1,484), Mongolian Plover (5,122/1,272), Bar-tailed Godwit (1,213/1,067), and Eurasian Curlew (2,651/3,294). Additionally, seven species passed the mark in 2007, namely the Pacific Golden Plover (1,342), Whimbrel (1,664/1,409), Little Egret (2,311), Terek Sandpiper (1,306), Red-necked Stint (3,420), Curlew Sandpiper (1,292), and Whiskered Tern (1,338). In 2008, Common Redshanks reached 3,957 individuals.

Waterbird Group	No. of Individuals		No. of Species	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
Hérons & Egrets	8,308	6,276	14	12
Storks	42	36	2	2
Grebes	19	17	1	1
Geese & Ducks	36	31	3	2
Rails & Gallinules	229	347	7	7
Jacanas	4	5	1	1
Shorebirds	40,949	23,294	37	34
Gulls & Terns	4,020	1,273	8	8

TOTAL	53,607	31,279	73	67
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Despite lower volunteer participation in 2008, most of the coastal Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Malaysia, notably in the Peninsular and Sarawak, were covered at several sub-sites within these large IBAs. Four coastal IBAs in Peninsular Malaysia and the Bako-Buntal Bay in Sarawak were visited. The results are summarised in table below.

IBA Site & Code	Total No. of Individuals		Total No. of Species	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
PENINSULAR MALAYSIA				
Teluk Air Tawar-Kuala Muda	16,414	3,560	41	26
Matang coast	513	413	22	21
North-central Selangor coast	22,848	16,901	34	25
South-west Johor coast	-	1,433	-	21
SARAWAK				
Bako-Buntal Bay	5,841	3,049	36	38

Six globally threatened and near-threatened species were also recorded. The table shows the total number of individuals counted in 2007 and 2008. These species were mostly seen in the IBAs.

Species	RDB Status	Total No. of Individuals	
		2007	2008
Nordmann's Greenshank	EN	105	24
Chinese Egret	VU	109	96
Milky Stork	VU	8	7
Lesser Adjutant	VU	34	29
Malaysian Plover	NT	-	3
Asian Dowitcher	NT	3	3

## Myanmar

*Thet Zaw Naing, Myanmar Bird and Nature Society,  
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During the AWC 2008, the wintering Spoon-billed Sandpiper survey was conducted by German, Russian, Myanmar and Thai ornithologists at 13 coastal wetland sites of the Gulf of Martaban (Mottama) and Arakan (Rakhine) in Myanmar. A total of 63,298 shorebirds of 33 species and 7,027 waterbirds of 45 species were recorded during the survey. Eighty four individuals of Spoon-billed

Sandpiper at five sites and one Nordmann's Greenshank, which are globally endangered species, were recorded.

In addition, the Myanmar Bird and Nature Society (MBNS) carried out the AWC at seven inland sites. A total of 11,114 individuals of 44 species were recorded. MBNS would like to extend their appreciation to the participants of this year's census. MBNS is extremely grateful to Dr. Christoph Zöckler, Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy and their Spoon-billed Sandpiper survey team who kindly conducted the Spoon-billed Sandpiper survey in Myanmar.

## Nepal

*Hem Sagar Baral, CEO, Bird Conservation Nepal, [hem@himalayannature.org](mailto:hem@himalayannature.org)*

The year 2008 has been a very special one for us. For the first time ever, we were able to gather all the major local and regional coordinators from various parts of Nepal for a 3-day national workshop. The workshop was held in December 2007 in Lumbini, central Nepal. Lumbini was an ideal venue not only because Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) has an ongoing project at Jagdishpur Reservoir (a Ramsar Site 40km west) but also because it is centrally located in the country. Lumbini, above all, is also the birth place of Lord Buddha, a pilgrimage site one must visit!

The three-day national workshop was sponsored by the Ramsar Secretariat and BirdLife International. Support from BirdLife International came through the UK government funded Darwin Initiative project. A total of 26 participants were present during the workshop. The workshop was aimed at improving the understanding of the waterbird count process initiated by Wetlands International, informing participants about BCN's major projects, and how the work of BCN links to the government's plan of actions and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Detailed description and processes about Ramsar Sites and contingency measures on the possible spread of avian flu epidemic were also discussed. Most participants represented local conservation groups near wetlands sites or Important Bird Area (IBA). Therefore we also explored the possibilities of working together for conservation and management of the wetlands for maintaining optimum biodiversity.

Besides my explanation of the midwinter waterbird count processes, there were several other subject experts present. Mr Jhamak Karki, Ecologist at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), took lead role in matters related with Ramsar Sites. Mr Karki is a well

known expert on wetlands of Nepal and DNPWC is the main focal point and Administrative Authority for Ramsar Sites in Nepal. Dr Rebat Man Shrestha, Director at the Department of Livestock Services spoke about avian flu. Dr Shrestha has been on the task force of avian flu formed by Government of Nepal. There were number of well known experts such as Badri Chaudhary from Koshi, DB Chaudhary, Bishnu Mahato and Hem Subedi from Chitwan, Dinesh Giri at Lumbini and Hari KC from Pokhara who were on hand to share their vast experience and knowledge on bird identification. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and requested similar workshops in the future.

The impact of the workshop was reflected on the greater coverage of the wetland sites, better data quality and increased interest and enthusiasm among the counters. We also noted that many bird counters planned cross-sectoral visits with their colleagues. It was also a great opportunity for participants to meet people they had only known by names in reports.

Looking at the count data, we have once again counted quite a large number of wetland sites in Nepal. This year, 36 subsites were included, five more subsites compared to last year. Major areas where results of counts have been received included all four lowland Ramsar sites of Nepal: Koshi, Bees Hazari Tal, Jagdishpur Reservoir and Ghodaghodi Lake Complex. The new areas covered this year included several wetland sites in far west Nepal. The number of participants this year has reached above 80. This is also because of large number of villagers who participated in Puraina Tal, far west Nepal.

Although coverage and data quality have increased, we have found worrying data from some of the wetlands. These include two Ramsar Sites, Bees Hazari Tal and Ghodaghodi Lake Complex. Both show fewer numbers of waterbirds and there are no indications of improvement over last year's condition.

We surveyed a stretch of the Koshi River, north of the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, for the first time. Although unprotected, this stretch looks promising for Ruddy Shelducks and few other large waders. As many as 308 Ruddy Shelducks were counted in this stretch. The total count of the Ruddy Shelducks in the Koshi area was 1,788.

Within Koshi Tappu, two nests of Black-necked Stork with five chicks were noted. These are the only known nests in the country of this critically endangered species. The area of Koshi Barrage seems to have suffered further, with fewer birds in numbers and varieties counted in the survey.

Floodplains of three rivers in Rupandehi show continued presence of Sarus Crane. The total count of the three floodplains was 15. Gaidahawa Tal, a large wetland in Rupandehi district, found over 5,000 Lesser Whistling Duck. This area seems to have potential for further conservation work.

At Chitwan, the count showed good numbers of Ruddy Shelducks. The total count of the valley was 3,109, which is higher than any other areas in Nepal. The counts were made in Rapti and Narayani Rivers.

Bird Conservation Nepal has received a follow up grant from Danone /Evian group of companies to work in Jagdishpur Reservoir: a Ramsar Site. This project will follow up activities carried out under previous projects. We are also finding ways to work closely with the Darwin Initiative funded wetland programme at Koshi with UK's Wildfowl and Wetland Trust. This programme aims to improve status of birds and other wildlife at Koshi Tappu by working with local people that live at the edge of the reserve.

We would like to thank Himalayan Nature, Wetland Friends of Nepal and TigerTops for partial support at the workshop in Lumbini. Our thanks to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation especially authorities at Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Chitwan National Park, Bardia National Park and Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve.

Our special thanks go to TigerTops Group of Companies for their excellent coordination and support for midwinter bird count. TigerTops has generously supported this count for a number of years.

Our thanks also to the National Trust for Nature Conservation at Bardia and Kanchanpur, Nature Guide Association of Bardia and Sukla Phanta, Bird Education Society at Chitwan, Ghodaghodi Area Conservation and People Awareness Forum, Terai Arc Landscape Programme (mainly WWF staff), Forest Hideaway Hotel and Hotel Racy Shade at Bardia, Lumbini Buddha Garden Pvt Ltd at Lumbini, Koshi Camp Pvt Ltd at Koshi, Dolphin Conservation Centre at Thapapur and Himalayan Nature staff for all their kind help.

## The Philippines

*Carlo Custodio, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, the Philippines, [custodiocarlo@yahoo.com](mailto:custodiocarlo@yahoo.com)*

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines through its Protected

Areas and Wildlife Bureau sponsored the training of 150 personnel from all over the Philippines during the last quarter of 2007 on waterbird identification and monitoring. The training was in response to the need for better quality data for the Asian Waterbird Census and monitoring of migratory waterbirds in relation to the implementation of the Avian Influenza Protection Program. The training was held in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao representing the north, central and southern Philippines.

It might take another year before the overall quality of data for the AWC could be positively documented but a slight improvement in the data submitted for AWC 2008 has already been noted. This year, haphazard identification of species were significantly reduced unlike in previous years.

One-hundred fifty-nine wetlands were monitored in 2008 compared with 122 sites in 2007 and 57 sites in 2006. The figures represent a 30% increase in the number of sites monitored in 2008 compared to 2007. A few sites were not visited this year because they were deemed not important due to the very low numbers or complete absence of waterbirds.

The 292,447 birds counted in 2008 represents more than a 100% increase in the total number of birds counted in the 159 wetlands that were visited compared to the previous AWC. Eighty-five (85) species were seen in 2008 compared with 84 species in 2007 and 88 species in 2006. Counts in 10 sites exceeded the 10,000 bird level with Candaba swamp in Barangay Vizal San Pablo posting a record high of 17,759 birds from 44 species of which, 8 species are migratory ducks. Amalbalan & Hermosa in Dasol, Pangasinan posted a higher number of birds at 18,771 from 14 species. Of this, 12,053 were Cattle Egret, Intermediate Egret and Little Egret. Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary had a count of 15,735 birds (29 species); Santiago Island and Bayambang in Pangasinan had 16,567 birds (19 species) and 14,335 birds (14 species), respectively; Naujan Lake had a count of 13,588 from 14 species with Tufted duck contributing 12,600 to the count; San Roque, Kitcharao in Agusan del Norte and Tagbayawan of Surigao del Norte, two localities in Lake Mainit, respectively contributed 13,128 (11 species) and 11,093 (13 species) to the count; Cabusao in Camarines Sur contributed 10,555 from 13 species dominated by Philippine Duck, Mallard and Northern; and Arnedo in Pangasinan contributed 10,240 (11 species).

The highest number of individuals per species were the following: Little Egret (49,009), Tufted Duck (38,367), Cattle Egret (30,596), Little Ringed Plover (14,684), Philippine Duck (15,275), Intermediate Egret (12,928) and Black-winged Stilt (11,521).

The Candaba swamp habitat was important in terms of diversity of waterbirds, especially for migratory ducks. Olango Island is still very important for migratory waterbirds including the Chinese Egret and the Asian Dowitcher, where it was the only site where the species was recorded during the AWC. The other important sites for the Chinese egret were Tanza, Navotas in NCR, Brgy Pantalan, Nabaye, Ajuy, Sara in Iloilo, Bantayan Island in Cebu, Ormoc Bay and Carigara in Leyte, Guiuan in Eastern Samar, Basey in Western Samar, Malalag Bay in Davao del Sur, Banay-banay in Davao Oriental and Don Porfirio fishponds in Cotabato City. Malasi Lake in Isabela, Naujan Lake in Mindoro Oriental, Lake Mainit in Surigao and Agusan del Norte, are important for the Tufted duck. Mallard was reported in large numbers at Cabusao in Camarines Sur and Malasi Lake in Isabela. It should be noted that *Anas clypeata* was reported for the first time in Vitali, Zamboanga City, in the southwestern Philippines.

A total of 218 compilers participated in the AWC 2008, one less compared to 2007. Region 4 in south Luzon had 41, Region 1 in northwestern Luzon had 34 and Region 6 in the central Philippines had 31 participants. The Wild Bird Club of the Philippines contributed significantly to the counts in Candaba Swamp and the Critical Habitat and Ecotourism area in the Las Piñas – Parañaque area.

## Sri Lanka

[Udaya Sirivardana, Ceylon Bird Club, birdclub@sltnet.lk](mailto:birdclub@sltnet.lk)

The annual waterbird census is optimally carried out throughout the island in February 2008. Because of the armed conflict this has not been possible in the past 25 years. In many of the previous years, parts of the Northern and Eastern Provinces had to be excluded. This year the North Central and parts of the Southern Province also had to be left out for the same reason. The coverage this year was the smallest ever. The total number of birds counted was the lowest ever, chiefly because of this reason.

## 5. International Black-faced Spoonbill Census 2008

[Yat-tung Yu, Coordinator, International Black-faced Spoonbill Census, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, ytyu@hkstar.com](mailto:ytyu@hkstar.com)

The 2008 International Black-faced Spoonbill Census was carried out successfully in the second weekend of January with a total of 2,065 individuals recorded. Below are the results of the census.

Country	Count
South Korea	28
Japan	224
China Mainland	313, another 26 birds were recorded outside the census period
Taiwan	1030
Deep Bay (Hong Kong and Shenzhen)	369
Macao	50
Vietnam	49

It is a historical moment as the globally known population of the Black-faced Spoonbill has reached 2,000 individuals, doubling its population since it reached 1,000 individuals in 2003. It reflects the recovery of the spoonbill's population and the success of various conservation measures implemented in several sites.

Report of this census will be prepared soon and we continue to welcome any further information. Thank you very much for your help on the census. Your participation is the most important part in this census.

## English and scientific names of bird species mentioned in the Newsletter

English Name	Scientific Name
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola spp.</i>
Chinese Pond-Heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea modesta</i>
Chinese Egret	<i>Egretta eulophotes</i>
Rufous Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>
Milky Stork	<i>Mycteria cinerea</i>
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Greater Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos dubius</i>
Black-faced Spoonbill	<i>Platalea minor</i>
Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna arcuata</i>
Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>
Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>
Ruddy Shelducks	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>

English Name	Scientific Name
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Comb Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Falcated Duck	<i>Anas falcata</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Philippine Duck	<i>Anas luzonica</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Sarus Crane	<i>Grus antigone</i>
Purple Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Malaysian Plover	<i>Charadrius peronii</i>
Mongolian Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Asian Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Far Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Nordmann's Greenshank	<i>Tringa guttifer</i>
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	<i>Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus</i>
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
Grey-headed fish-eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichtyaetus</i>

**Note:** The sequence and nomenclature of waterbird species used follows the *Waterbird Population Estimates – Fourth Edition* (Wetlands International 2006).