

African Waterbird Census



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Wetlands International Africa
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About this newsletter

The main purpose of this newsletter is to facilitate communication in the African Waterbird Census (AfWC) network. To contribute please send news, short articles including photos and any information to Oliver Nasirwa (oliver.nasirwa@birdlife.or.ke).

African Waterbird Census and the network

In 2010, AfWC marks two decades of coordinated waterbird census work in Africa. The census has recorded tremendous successes in building a network of national coordinators and counters now spanning most of the countries in the African continent and associated islands. The census has been key in enhancing identification, monitoring, management and conservation of waterbirds, their populations and their habitats and identifying internationally important wetlands. Through bilateral and multilateral agreements, especially the Ramsar Convention and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the waterbird count data have been used in policy development at local, national, regional and global level. The data have been instrumental in improving the conservation of waterbird populations through the designation of Ramsar Sites and Important Bird Areas (i.e. wetland IBAs). Migratory waterbirds are benefiting through AEWA, an agreement that brings together countries to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitats. Over the years, the AfWC network has continued to provide a good base on which to develop tools for conserving waterbirds and wetlands. They include: the development of species actions plans, wetland site management plans; and

currently in process of development – the Critical Site Network Tool under the WOW project.

We encourage readers to participate and support the African Waterbird Census wherever they are and especially in their own countries. I hope this year there will be more sites covered and even more people involved in the counts.

Best waterbird counting dates are around **15th January 2010**, but any data collected between December and February is welcome. We welcome data collected any other time of the year, especially from sites that are rarely visited or have never been counted before.

This newsletter covers some available Single Species Action Plans; reports on two trainings: one in Maputo, Mozambique (on a national wetland and waterbird monitoring course) and the other in Limbe, Cameroon (on a flyway scale capacity building in wetland and waterbird management course). There are two calls: One requesting waterbird experts to participate in the consultation process of the Critical Site Network Tool development and the other requesting participation in the Slender-billed Curlew survey and searches.

Species Action Plans

Species Action Plans (SAPs) are an important tool in the conservation of waterbird species. SAPs bring together all information about the species concerned including its ecology as well as information on stakeholders and policies that affect the conservation status. SAPs identify gaps in information and outline a programme of action aimed at improving the conservation status of the species. SAPs that have been developed or are under development include for: Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Corncrake *Crex crex*, Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*, Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*, Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idea*, Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*. To get copies of some of these species action plans please visit: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/publications/ssap/index.htm>.

Moving On

We report the departure of Moussa Séga Diop, the Sub-Regional Waterbird Officer for Western and Central Africa and the moving on of Marius Wheeler the National African Waterbird Census Coordinator for South Africa. We thank them for the splendid work they did and wish them the best in their next appointments.

Wetland and Waterbird Monitoring Training in Maputo, Mozambique

A national wetland and waterbird monitoring training course was held at the Museu da Historia Natural of Mozambique in Maputo from 9 - 17 November 2009.

The training was facilitated by Wetlands International in collaboration with BirdLife International and Museu da Historia Natural. The aim



was to build the national capacity to conserve and manage wetlands and waterbirds. The course was attended by 17 participants drawn from the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Research Institute, Center for Sustainable Development of Coastal Zones, MICOA, WWF and the University-Universidade Eduardo Mondlane. It was officially opened by the Director of the Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA) Mr. Rogério Wamusse. A national group drawn from the participants was formed to carry-out wetland biodiversity monitoring and conservation work in Mozambique. For more information visit: <http://wow.wetlands.org/ABOUTWOW/LATESTNEWS/tabid/125/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

Improving wetland and waterbird management in Francophone Africa

Wetlands International Africa (WIA) organised a ten-day Training of Trainers (ToT) course in Limbe, Cameroon, which started on 2nd November 2009. The training aimed at improving the capacity of wetland and waterbird management in Africa. For the first time the Flyway Training Kit was put into practice in Africa. The kit is developed in the framework of the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW).



It is an important tool for capacity building in the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats. The kit continues to receive strong positive feedback. A total of twenty participants, mainly representatives from government and NGOs from Francophone African countries of Western and Central Africa took part. The course was officially opened by Mr. Koulagna Koutou Denis, Secretary General of the Cameroon Ministry of

Forestry and Wildlife on behalf of the Minister. For more information visit: <http://www.wetlands.org/NewsandEvents/News/Pressreleases/tabid/60/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2023/Default.aspx>.

The Critical Site Network Tool

The Critical Site Network Tool is being developed by Wetlands International, BirdLife International and others. Its aim is to make data about important sites for migratory waterbirds in the African-Eurasian flyways available to all kinds of users, from site managers to government decision makers. This is done through an appealing, user-friendly website which combines data from a number of sources. The draft list of the critical network of sites identified has been released in a call to AfWC, Important Bird Areas' national coordinators and other experts for consultations. This call requests national coordinators, country and regional experts to participate in the development of this tool for testing and commenting. Anyone interested in participating please contact Szabolcs Nagy at Szabolcs.Nagy@wetlands.org. A prototype of the Tool, containing the unimproved data, is available at <http://development-maps.unep-wcmc.org/wow/default.aspx>.

2010 Slender-billed Curlew Survey

The Critically Endangered Slender-billed Curlew (SBC) *Numenius tenuirostris* was last definitively recorded in Hungary in 2001. A Working Group for the species, established under the Convention on Migratory Species, is working on a project to organise surveys to search for SBC within the framework of IWC. The working Group are making a call to all counters to be on the lookout for the species especially in countries that are within its known range in Northern and eastern Africa. If any birds are found, a satellite telemetry team will travel as quickly as possible to the site and try to catch and tag the bird. For more information visit: www.slenderbilledcurlew.net.



Lake Nakuru National Park in Kenya is first IBA designated National Park in Africa

Lake Nakuru, a renowned Ramsar site, famous for millions of flamingos, became the first National Park in Africa to be designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA). Waterbird counts are regularly done on this lake as part of the African Waterbird Census coordinated by Wetlands International and implemented by the National Museums of Kenya in collaboration with Nature Kenya and Kenya Wildlife Service. The signage officially designating the Park as an IBA was unveiled at the main entrance of the Park on 19th September 2009. This was followed by the launch of the Fourth Edition of the 'Checklist of the Birds of Kenya'. The two occasions were presided over by the Honorable Minister for Forestry and Wildlife, Dr. Noah Wekesa.



Wishing you successful waterbird counts in 2010