Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census

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Letter to AWC national and regional coordinators

Firstly, I would like to thank all of you for your great and continuing effort in organising and participating in field surveys and expeditions. training courses and public awareness efforts to collect information on the status of waterbirds and wetlands in your country and reporting on this to the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC). Without your continued interest, support and dedication the AWC would not continue to provide the information base that is needed and used by numerous governments, conventions and people to plan, promote and implement conservation initiatives. The information you have submitted to us has greatly contributed to the conservation of waterbird species and waterbird population monitoring in the Asia Pacific and will continue to do so.

We are sorry if we have not kept in touch with most of you very often in the past, although we understand that it is important for us to keep regular communication to exchange ideas.

To promote communication and dissemination of information on developments and opportunities on this important programme, we have decided to launch this AWC Newsletter. We encourage AWC national coordinators to use this Newsletter to report on important national and local developments, issues and views that will help to develop the programme. In this inaugural issue, we are pleased to include a brief update by the new Malaysian Coordinator. We also foresee that this will help to promote and extend the role of the AWC in monitoring waterbirds and wetlands, and

that more wetlands can be regularly covered in the future.

The Newsletter will be produced twice a year. It is proposed that the Newsletter will be distributed to AWC Coordinators, conventions and key contacts. It will be posted on the Wetlands International website.

I am pleased to inform you that Wetlands International has renewed its commitment to the development of the International Waterbird Census (IWC), of which the Asian Waterbird Census forms an important part. As part of this, Wetlands International has recently recruited staff to coordinate and manage the Asian Waterbird Census. Mr. David Li has been appointed as International Coordinator (see below). Mr. Alvin Lopez, who was the AWC coordinator during 1996-1997 has returned after gaining a Masters Degree in Conservation Biology. Alvin will provide support in AWC development.

As this is an inaugural issue, we value your comments and suggestion to improve the Newsletter.

Thanks again and we look forward to your future cooperation and participation.

Dr. Taej Mundkur

Technical Director & Interim Executive Director Wetlands International – Asia Pacific

New AWC International Coordinator

It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. David Li as the new Waterbird Conservation Officer at Wetlands International – Asia Pacific. His primary task is to coordinate the AWC, data management, report production and other waterbird related projects.

David has worked for three years with the Wetlands International – China Programme. He was then responsible for organising projects related to the implementation of the Shorebird Action Plan in China, including workshops and training courses at the various network sites.

David has already made headway into the entry of data of the 1997 and 2001 census results, contacting coordinators, tracking spurious records, developing funding proposals, etc.

By Dr. Taej Mundkur

Call for AWC 1997-2001 data

Since no AWC report was produced since 1997, we have decided to publish a five-year (1997-2001) AWC report this year. The production of this report has been identified as a priority for the year 2001.

In order to include as much count information as possible in this report, we encourage all of you to collect and send us the wintering count information for the counts done for the past five years (i.e. 1997-2001). For those who have already sent us the information, we are truly grateful. All count data from December to February are acceptable. Kindly ensure that the information reaches us by 30 June 2001. Please let us know if you have any difficulties in meeting this deadline.

By David LI, AWC International Coordinator

AWC Coordination Work Plan for 2001

Following the meeting on the AWC at Wetlands International – Asia Pacific on 10 April, an AWC Work Plan for 2001 has been developed. The identified priorities for this year are producing an AWC report for 1997-2001 and raising funds to further develop the AWC in the next 5 years.

Task	Activities						
1. National coordination support	Evaluate and obtain feedback from AWC National Coordinators and identify the need to nominate new National Coordinators						
	Provide support and guidance to strengthen the role of National Coordinators						
2. Communication	Regular communication with National Coordinators						
	Coordination with Global IWC Focal Point and IWC Steering Committee						
	Coordination with Conventions (CMS & Ramsar)						
3. AWC Report	Draft AWC 1997-2001 report, data analysis and mapping						
	Report publication and distribution						
4. Data management	Data entry & management						
	Transfer of new database system from Wetlands International in the						
	Netherlands to Kuala Lumpur and conversion of AWC database						
5. Strategy and planning	 Development of a 5 year long term plan for development of the AWC (as part of the global IWC programme) 						
6. Fundraising	 Development of a proposal for AWC 1997-2001 publication to submit to CMS and Ramsar 						
	 Development of proposals for a 5 year AWC fundraising strategy 						
	 Development of a proposal for a workshop for AWC National Coordinators & Steering Committee meeting 						
7. Public awareness	Production of a biennial Newsletter to facilitate information exchange on activities carried out by the AWC volunteers network and other waterbird conservation initiatives						
	 Production of a brochure to increase public awareness and participation in the AWC and other waterbird conservation initiatives 						
	Enhance and update the current AWC Web site						
8. AWC Steering Committee	Establishment of a steering committee for the AWC						
9. Annual census	Preparation and organisation for AWC 2002						
10. Other issues	Activities to be carried out based on availability of project funds (e.g. AWC National Coordinators and Steering Committee meetings)						

New National coordinators for the AWC

Since May 2001 several changes have been made with regards to national coordination of the AWC. We would like to extend a warm welcome to all the following new coordinators.

In Malaysia, Mr. Yeap Chin Aik has replaced Ms. Glenda Noramly as the new national coordinator. Mr. Thein Aung and Mr. Thet Zaw Naing from the Forestry Department of Myanmar have become the new coordinators for Myanmar. In Cambodia, Mr. Hong Chamnan replaces Mr. Frederic Goes; Mr. Yuri Gerasimov has been nominated as the first AWC coordinator for the Far East Russia. In Australia, Mr. Jim Wilson has taken over from Mr. Ken Harris.

We are also truly grateful to all the past coordinators for their valuable assistance and support to the AWC.

AWC 1997-2001 information review

During 1997-2001, 1,333 completed count forms have been received (see table below). Nineteen Asian countries as well as Russia have participated in the AWC. More count forms for 1997-2001 are being collected and will be sent to us soon. A large amount of count information from India is still to be received; the data is being compiled into a comprehensive report by the Bombay Natural History Society and SACON.

Summary of AWC Information 1997-2001

	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001	
COUNTRY & REGION	Count	Site								
	form	form								
Bangladesh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	21
India	17	3	61	34	189	75	17	14	2	1
Nepal	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	8	0	0
Pakistan	43	1	7	7	31	0	15	0	0	0
Sri Lanka	46	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bhutan	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	18	0	0
South Asia (Total)	106	5	68	41	220	75	62	40	23	22
Brunei	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	47	47	11	2	0	0
Laos	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Malaysia	0	0	0	0	20	20	25	19	3	2
Myanmar	4	3	2	1	0	0	10	0	28	28
Philippines	0	0	4	1	0	0	46	0	7	6
Singapore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0
Thailand	3	2	1	1	0	0	7	0	0	0
Vietnam	0	0	1	0	8	7	0	0	0	0
Cambodia	0	0	0	0	12	12	13	13	0	0
South East Asia (Total)	12	10	13	8	87	86	112	34	48	36
China, P. R.	1	0	1	1	6	6	1	1	0	0
Hong Kong	14	0	15	0	16	0	17	0	0	0
Taiwan	38	4	41	0	52	8	0	0	0	0
Japan	37	0	41	0	37	0	34	0	0	0
South Korea	22	22	15	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Kamchatka, Russia	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
East Asia (Total)	113	26	113	1	113	15	53	1	0	0
Australia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Zealand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Papua New Guinea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australasia (Total)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	231	41	194	50	420	176	227	75	71	58

News from Participating Countries

Bhutan has participated in the AWC for the first time in 2000. Eighteen forms were submitted by Mr. Sherub and Mr. Peter Spierenburg.

Malaysia

Malaysia's participation in the AWC can be traced back to the early 1990s. Since then, much data

has been accumulated on important wetland sites and waterbird numbers. Within the period of the last seven years (1994-2000), a total of 69,200 waterbirds have been counted, covering most of the 13States and 3 Federal Territories in Malaysia. A breakdown of the data obtained from 1994-2000 is given below.

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. of Individuals	30,767	7,477	4208	No data	No data	11,182	15,566
No. of Sites	10	7	11	-	-	26	20
No. of States	4	2	4	-	-	9	7

For the year 2001, reports are still being received and have yet to be analysed. Among all the sites, Kapar Power Station and Pulau Tengah (both in the Selangor State) remain the most important sites for migratory waterbirds in Peninsular Malaysia. Pulau Tengah is also a Malaysian candidate for the Important Bird Area project.

The success of the AWC in Malaysia depends solely on the efforts of many volunteers from all the States. However, the coverage for the census is still lacking in some States especially Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang. It is hoped that in future these gaps would be filled as the AWC is recognised as a critical tool for waterbird conservation

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Myanmar

Mr. David Li participated in a field trip to Moyingyi National Nature Reserve, organised by the Forestry Department in conjunction with a Wetlands Conservation Workshop in Myanmar on 22 February 2001. The participants took this opportunity to carry out a census at the National Reserve. Twenty-seven species of waterbirds were recorded during the visit. Species with high numbers include Asian Open-bill Stork *Anastomus oscitans* (239), Purple Swamp Hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* (1200), Garganey *Anas querquedula* (800), Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna*

javanica (200), Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis* fulva (360) and Spotted Redshank *Tringa* erythropus (120).

Separate counts were done Mr. Anthony Sebastian, Mr. Simba Chan, Daw Khin Ma Ma Thwin, U Thet Tun, U Thet Zaw Naing and Dr. Jonathan Davies during 28 January to 12 Febuary, covering a total of 27 sites.

Bangladesh

After a gap of a few years, the 2001 census was successfully organized by Mr. Enam UI Haque this year and 21 sites were covered.

A Global Strategy for IWC 2001-2005

The IWC covers Europe and West Asia, Africa, Asia-Pacific and the Neotropics. The International Coordination Unit (ICU) of Wetlands International and the regional offices are currently developing a global strategy for the IWC 2001-2005. Among others, it aims to strategically review the global operation of the IWC in view of the global needs of international legal instruments, flyway strategies, site management, sustainable use of populations, public awareness and training/capacity building support.

Waterbird Population Estimates 3rd edition

The Waterbird Population Estimates is one of the most important publications produced by Wetlands International. It provides the basis for the 1% population thresholds used (together with many additional criteria) to identify Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Published every three years, the book is heavily dependent on counts organised by national waterbird monitoring schemes. Wetlands International plans to produce the 3rd edition of Waterbird Population Estimates in 2001.