

Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census

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1. Letter from the AWC International Coordinator

Dear colleagues and friends,

Thank you very much for your kind contribution of the Asian Waterbird Census. The 2002 census has been very successful due to all your great efforts. So far, we have received the reports and census forms from Coordinators in Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Many other Coordinators have informed us of the success of the census in their country this year and we request that they send in their results at the earliest.

To promote the AWC in the region, as the International Coordinator, our priority activities for the rest of this year include:

- continue working on collation of the AWC 1997-2001 data - we aim to finalise a draft report by the year end;
- enhance our communication with the coordinators, participants and our network by continuing to produce the biannual AWC Newsletter (May and November);
- update the AWC website regularly;
- produce a brochure on the AWC to assist national coordinators and others to raise awareness of the programme; and
- raise funds and facilitate fund-raising efforts to support priority activities at the regional and national levels.

We strongly encourage AWC National Coordinators to produce and disseminate your country/regional reports widely to provide feedback to your volunteer network and promote waterbird and wetlands conservation activities at the national and local levels. We would like to encourage and support your efforts to raise funds in your own ways to promote the AWC in your country or region.

Kindly let us know if you have any ideas, suggestion and comments in relation to our programme, so that we can work together to promote the AWC.

In addition to updates on the AWC and related waterbird work, this issue provides interesting and unedited updates from AWC coordinators and from the enthusiastic accounts you can tell that the AWC is still an enjoyable and important programme.

Thank you very much.

Best regards,

David LI
AWC International Coordinator
Wetlands International

2. Status of the AWC 1997-2001 report

Since the last update (AWC Newsletter No.2, November 2001), we have been collating information from 23 countries and region. We have now received very good count information from Japan and South Korea; Table 1 provides a summary of information received to date. We aim to finish the entry of count data for this report by July 2002 and to collate and analyze the data thereafter. We aim to complete a draft report by the end of the year. We are seeking funds to publish and disseminate the report.

Table 1. Summary of AWC count information received by Wetlands International (at 1 May 2002)

COUNTRY & REGION	Number of Count Forms Received				
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>Australia</i>	23	25	27	23	27
<i>Bangladesh</i>	6	25	12	13	30
<i>Bhutan</i>	0	0	0	18	3
<i>Brunei</i>	5	5	0	0	0
<i>Cambodia</i>	0	0	12	13	11
<i>Mainland China</i>	12	18	16	10	7
<i>Hong Kong</i>	14	15	16	17	16
<i>Taiwan</i>	38	40	52	38	40
<i>India</i>	17	61	189	17	205
<i>Indonesia</i>	0	0	47	11	10
<i>Japan</i>	37	41	37	34	29
<i>Korea, South</i>	22	15	69	100	114
<i>Laos</i>	0	0	0	16	1
<i>Malaysia</i>	0	0	20	25	25
<i>Myanmar</i>	4	2	0	10	33
<i>Nepal</i>	0	0	0	12	9
<i>Pakistan</i>	42	7	31	15	15
<i>Philippines</i>	29	32	35	46	41
<i>Russia, NE</i>	1	0	1	0	0
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	46	0	66	83	40
<i>Singapore</i>	0	0	0	0	10
<i>Thailand</i>	3	1	0	7	3
<i>Vietnam</i>	0	1	8	0	0
TOTAL	299	263	611	508	669

3. AWC 1994-1996 report now on line

The AWC 1994-1996 report (Lopez, A. & Mundkur, T. (eds.) 1997) collates important data on waterbirds and wetlands. The report has been recently uploaded on the Wetlands International website. To view and download the publication kindly visit <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/96rep/TOC.htm>.

As we have run out of copies of this important report, we expect that the downloadable copy on our website can increase awareness of the programme and your work. Do spread the word.

4. Presentation to promote the AWC

To promote the AWC in Malaysia, David Li and Yeap Chin Aik (the AWC coordinator for Malaysia), made a presentation each on the AWC during a national workshop on "Developing a Wetland Inventory, Assessment and monitoring Framework" on 18 April 2002 in Kuala Lumpur. David briefly talked about the AWC as a tool for monitoring waterbirds/wetlands in the region. Yeap used the example of the AWC in Malaysia and explained how the AWC programme can be developed to effectively monitor the waterbirds and wetlands in the country.

If you have made any presentations on the AWC, kindly let me know and we will list these in a forthcoming issue of the AWC Newsletter.

5. Linking the AWC to the AWI

An "Asian Wetland Inventory Regional Workshop" was organized by Wetlands International - Asia Regional Programme office in Phnom Penh, Cambodia between 8-9 April 2002. The workshop received participation from a total of 35 representatives from 10 countries. During the meeting, the need to establish a closer linkage between the AWC and Asian Wetland Inventory (AWI) programmes was discussed. Further discussions are needed to explore possible links in data collection, sharing, training, etc.

More information on the AWI is available on <http://www.wetlands.org/inventory&/awi/default.htm>

6. Roundup of AWC 2002 news from Coordinators

AUSTRALIA

Dr Rosalind Jessop, Chair, Australasian Wader Studies Group, moonbird@waterfront.net.au

One of the highlights of the year was undoubtedly the very successful expedition to the north-west of Western Australia from 15 September to 19 November 2001. This was the 21st special visit to band and count waders in NW Australia since 1981. The expedition was timed to cover the main period of arrival of juvenile waders in NW Australia. The expedition spent 20 days at Roebuck Bay (Broome), 20 days at 80 Mile Beach, 5 days at Port Hedland Saltworks and 2

days at the Lacepede Islands. Forty-eight people from 10 different countries participated in the expedition.

The principle objectives for the expedition were:

- undertake a complete ground count of 80 Mile Beach, Bush Point in Roebuck Bay (the biggest single wader roost in the East-Asian Australasian Flyway) and Port Hedland Saltworks,
- obtain recaptures of birds from previous years to facilitate survival rate calculations,
- increase information of migration routes by sightings of leg flags and recoveries,
- obtain a measure of breeding success in the 2001 Arctic summer by recording the number of juveniles present in catches in the latter part of the expedition,
- expand studies of terns – including on the Lacepede Islands, and
- provide the opportunity for participants to train in techniques used in wader research including mist netting, cannon netting and counting.

The next expedition will take place from November 16, 2002 to January 4, 2003. Interested participants should contact Clive Minton mintons@ozemail.com.au. Further “mini” expeditions will be made in the future. Dates will be advertised in *TheTattler*.

Other than this, Wader count was conducted in Victoria and Coorong in South Australia by the AWSG between January and February 2001. A count was also conducted at Coorong in February 2002. Full reports for these counts are available from the AWSG secretary, Ken Gosbell, kengb@ozemail.com.au.

Counts of waders at sites across Australia were conducted in the austral summer (winter of north hemisphere) of 2001 under the AWSG’s “Population Monitoring Programme”. Results of the count were published in *Stilt* 41.

BANGLADESH

Enam Ul Haque, National Coordinator,
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AWC has always been a time of intense activity and excitement for the bird-watchers in Bangladesh. It has been a time to stuff the backpack, dust off the sleeping bag and leave the comfort (and chaos) of the city for long boat-trips through the coast, rivers and lakes. AWC has also been the time to renew our friendship with the birders from abroad. This year, David Li, the International Coordinator joined our coastal tour.

AWC at the coast of Bangladesh started a little ahead of AWC season. A team of bird-watchers had reported sighting a flock of a record 120,000 Common Shelducks at the coast. Our team had seen a flock of 20,000 there a year before. The news of Shelducks numbering over a hundred thousand this year infused excitement and speed in our AWC. We hoped to reach the site before the Shelducks moved on. The 8-day long boat journey along the coast did not however, bring the mega-flock and the AWC-team together. We encountered only about 12,000 Shelducks (Ruddy and Common) put together. Besides the Shelducks, there were other gems to renew our excitement at the coast every day. We counted over 350 Bar-headed Geese, 3,500 Bar-tailed Godwits and nearly 1,500 Eurasian Curlew, all exceeding the 1% threshold of regional population. The 100 Black-headed Ibis was significantly higher than before. The total count from 17 sites at the coast was 35,000 birds of 54 species.

All the excitement of the coastal birding paled as our AWC progressed through the *Haor Basin*, a maze of lakes and rivers. It was a bird-watchers’ paradise. The duck density in the *Haor* was truly astounding. We counted 200,000 ducks in *Tangua Haor*, a Ramsar Site no bigger than 1,500 ha. More sensational was the population of threatened species like Ferruginous and Baer’s Pochards: 90,000 and 110 respectively. What a gorgeous wintering ground for the Pochards! We also counted over 6,600 Red-crested Pochards, 50,000 Northern Pintails, 14,000 Fulvous Whistling Ducks and nearly 6,000 Gadwalls. Any one of these numbers would be enough for the site to qualify as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The total count from 7 sites in the *Haor Basin* was 227, 600 birds of 65 species.

Besides the coast and *Haor*, the AWC covered 11 sites in the mangrove of Sunderbans, the sand-banks and mud-flats of Jamuna and Padma rivers. At several sites we were pleasantly surprised by species never seen there before. For the first time in the Sunderbans and at Patenga, we saw ducks: Pintail, Wigeon and Shelducks. These sites were good for 2 very sought after waders: Sunderbans for the Great Thick-Knee, and Patenga for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Ducks are new-comers here. We were also happy to see 28 Baer’s Pochards in Jamuna near Gaibandha. A lonely Oystercatcher and 6 River Lapwings were welcome new guests at the Muhuri Dam.

Our AWC wasn’t however, without disappointment. A very important visitor managed to evade our eyes this year. We just weren’t lucky enough to train our scopes on that elusive wader and say: ‘Here’s our Spoon-billed Sandpiper.’ That remains the challenge for our next year’s AWC.

BHUTAN

Peter Spierenburg, National Coordinator,
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This year we again attempted to cover some of the main wetland sites in West Bhutan. The job was done by four enthusiasts, Rebecca Pradhan, Tandin Wangdi, Tshering and Peter Spierenburg.

We started off as usual at the sewerage works near Thimphu. Here last year's impression of the increasing trend in number of Ruddy Shelducks was confirmed, with 39 birds present as compared to 16 last year. Another surprise was the presence of 11 Long-billed Plovers. With another 7 found at the other sites this year turned out particularly good for these rare waders. Three Coot were present at the sewerage tanks and a Black-tailed Crake showed itself in the marshy vegetation. In the evening a stunning 89 Goosanders came to roost on the sewerage tanks, almost doubling last year's top count.

Paro appeared to be rather disappointing, with a lot of disturbance along the river. The number of Ibisbills was slightly lower than in 2,000. This was made up by the presence of 10 Pintail Snipes and again a Black-tailed Crake.

The most spectacular sites to Bhutan standard are usually the two stretches of river between Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang. Here also Ruddy Shelducks are on the increase, with a minimum of 416 birds present. The Mallards on the other hand are remarkably stable, with 78, 77 and 83 counted in respectively 2000, 2001 and 2002. The Spotbilled Ducks (subspecies *zonorhyncha*) were again present, numbering 6. The most spectacular was the presence of 73 Ibisbills, including one flock of 27, allowing the total for all sites to reach 102, a lot more than the already impressive 80 of 2000. The Pallas's Fish Eagle was back this year, though only a single individual was spotted. The River Lapwing, a total of 30 encountered.

On the whole the 2002 count was remarkably good. Though a total of 1,158 waterbirds may not look impressive, the species were good.

CAMBODIA

Hong Chamnan, National Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation Society, tcu@forum.org.kh

The counts were conducted at three sites in the northwest (Ang Tropeang Thmor, Angkor and Prek Toal) and two sites near Phnom Penh (Bassac marshes

and Basset marshes) between 13 January and 17 February 2002. A total of 77 volunteers, including 22 Cambodian nationals, participated in the census.

There were less sites counted than in previous years (11 to 13 sites) but the participation increased nevertheless. We assume that the Cambodian people do understand and are interested to waterbirds. Unfortunately, no counts were supplied neither from the northeast nor the southwest, and one site regularly visited near Phnom Penh (Veal Samnap) was not included this year.

Despite the low number of sites, a record total of 42,283 waterbirds of 54 species were counted. This is almost the double of the highest previous total (year 2000). This is due to:

1. The intensive effort in Prek Toal where six teams counted birds along rivers and on the lake shore, and 5 teams counted birds at their nesting colonies in the flooded forest (total 19,301 waterbirds).
2. The amazing and unseen concentration of ducks at Tropeang Thmor reservoir, with an estimate 15,000 Lesser Whistling Duck, 2,000 Garganey and 155 Comb Duck (maximum count in Indochina).

These two major sites therefore contributed for more than 90 percent to the national total. Tropeang Thmor had also the highest waterfowl diversity (42 species).

Apart the highest country count of Lesser Whistling Duck mentioned above, high counts of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas were made in Bassac and Basset (139 and 120 birds respectively). A remarkable 212 Sarus Cranes were already present in Tropeang Thmor in January; such population was previously not seen at the site before later in the dry season (March-April). Despite maximum effort in Prek Toal, counts of storks, pelicans and ibis didn't significantly increased, except for Painted Stork that was mainly confined to the nesting sites. The Prek Toal count of 217 Darter is to be noted: it is by far the highest ever recorded during the AWC in Cambodia. It is an encouraging sign testifying the successful breeding of the 240-nest colony discovered in Prek Toal late last year.

The brief sighting of a Masked Finfoot was definitely the highlight of the year, as this species had not been recorded in the country since 1998.

To improve coverage and participation of Cambodians in coming years we should involve more participants from Northeast Cambodia and from Coastal zone to joint the census by organizing meeting before census or to find coordination in every province to be responsible for his own site and to send data to the coordination in Phnom Penh.

HONG KONG

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has recently published the 2nd edition of the "*Waterbird Count Handbook -A guide for participants in Waterbird Count in Hong Kong*". The handbook was published in two languages - English and Chinese. Information including timing of counts, techniques of counting, count for different habitat, standard count site etc. The Hong Kong waterbird counts have been conducted in a monthly basis. The waterbird counting report has been regularly published by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, hkbws@hkbws.org.hk.

INDONESIA

Yus Rusila Noor, National Coordinator, Wetlands International-Indonesia, noor@indo.net.id

Indonesia has been involved in the census since the beginning of its development in the late 1980s. Unfortunately, during that period, the results of the census were not really reflecting the diversity and abundance of waterbirds in Indonesia. The census results, however, have been used as a major source for policy making related with waterbird conservation, such as East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network and BirdLife International's Important Bird Area programme.

As the previous activities, the census was organised by Wetlands International-Indonesia Programme in 2002. A total of 44 sites were censused this year, resulting in the observation of around 28,000 birds of some 95 species. Again, this year's result is not comparable to the real condition of Indonesia's biodiversity richness, at which 186 species of waterbirds were recorded so far, and not less than 270 sites were identified as internationally important wetlands.

To obtain a clearer picture of the contributors' opinion on this census activity, a questionnaire was distributed to some 100 potential organisation/individual participants, asking to whether they are familiar with the census, the problems facing in doing the census and what do they expect from this census. In return, we only receive 30% of the questionnaires. We are still analysing the data, however, it can be summarised that the difficult access to observation sites, the lack of observation equipment and the lack of specific waterbirds field guides have been raised by most of the participants as major obstacles to the census. Additionally, most participants requested feed back of their observation and asking a national report to be distributed to all observers.

MALAYSIA

Yeap Chin Aik, National Coordinator, Malaysian Nature Society, natsoc@po.jaring.my (Attn: Yeap)

The Asian Waterfowl Census 2002 in Malaysia saw the participation of 35 volunteers in censusing various types of wetlands, both natural and man-made, throughout the country. A total of 23 site reports were received.

Comparatively, the number of sites surveyed this year declined slightly from last year (25 sites counted). Nevertheless the quality of the reports received remained high and the overall result increased in terms of the number of individuals and species. Forty percent of the sites are counted in first time.

Overall, 18,633 waterbirds from 67 species were counted during the census. The specially records are:

Individual sightings of the Chinese Egret, a globally threatened species, was a first for Kapar Power station and Bako-Buntal Bay, both Malaysian IBAs.

Two globally threatened species, the Storm's Stork and Lesser Adjutant, were counted in restricted sites. Eleven Storm's Stork were recorded in the Kinabatangan region (and area recently declared as a wildlife Sanctuary). A total of 79 Lesser Adjutants were counted in three States, usually along the coastlines.

Thirty-two species and 11,030 individual shorebirds were recorded in 15 sites. Important shorebird sites are the Kapar Power Station, Penaga-Bagan Belat, Matang, Parit Jawa and Bako-Buntal Bay, all Malaysian IBAs. Interestingly, two Nordmann's Greenshank and a single Spoon-billed Sandpiper were recorded at Bako-Buntal Bay and Kapar Power Station respectively. Both were first records for the sites.

The AWC is currently experiencing a steady growth in the number of sites. The positive development is greatly attributed by the Malaysian Nature Society's volunteers readiness to participate and contribute to waterbird conservation in the country. Nevertheless, more effort needs to be put into the waterbird census before a good coverage of sites surveyed in the country could be realised. More importantly, cooperation between the Malaysian Nature Society, Wetlands International and relevant government wildlife departments needs to be enhance the efficacy of the AWC in the future.

MYANMAR

The Zaw Naing, National Coordinator, Myanmar Bird & Nature Society

The Kyaukkalat Lake is 120 miles east from Yangon (capital of Myanmar). The wetland is narrow (12 acres), however has lots of waterbirds. The wetland is a bird sanctuary. The monks and local people are protecting the lake.

In January 2002, Myanmar Birds and Nature Society conducted the AWC at this site. The interesting records are: 109 Little Cormorant, 370 Herons and Egrets, 125 Asian Openbill, 266 Lesser Whistling Duck, 88 Purple Swamphen, 20 Pheasant-tailed Jacana, 64 Bronze-winged Jacana and 22 Shorebirds. The pleasant nature area, the famous mountain Zwekabin of Karen State, the ever flowing mighty Thanlwin River and the colorful waterbirds are the prominent and perspective features of Kyaukkalat Lake.

PAKISTAN

To enhance cooperation with AWC coordinators and to help develop the AWC programme, Wetlands International has recently supported Dr. Aleem Abdul Chaudhry (Email: mhaleemi@yahoo.com) the AWC coordinator for Punjab, Pakistan to conduct a survey of the threatened population of the White-headed Duck in February 2002 as part of the AWC annual census. The project was supported by the CMS through a grant to Wetlands International.

Only five White-headed Duck were reported during the survey, and it was revealed that the wetlands supporting this species have very low water levels or have dried up due to low rainfall for the last few years.

SRI LANKA

Deepal Warakagoda, National Coordinator, Ceylon Bird Club, Sri Lanka birdclub@sltnet.lk

In January-February 2002 the Ceylon Bird Club carried out the AWC in Sri Lanka for the 19th successive year. The period of the count has been extended to mid-February because it was often seen that in January water levels were high at many sites in the island and these were then shunned by waterbirds. This year's count was carried out by 27 members of the club helped by 10 other selected observers.

Coverage was resumed in the Mannar area, from which there was no ornithological data for years because of the armed conflict. Except some parts of

the Jaffna peninsula which have been covered almost every year, the rest of the north and east of the island remained unvisited for the same reason.

Approximately 225,000 waterfowl were counted, of 94 species. The total is the highest for the last seven years, the record being 304,000 in 1989.

Noteworthy is a gathering of c.100,000 "unidentified shorebirds" at Malala Lewaya in the Bundala National Park - a Ramsar Site - in the south-east of the island. Because of poor road conditions, this wetland could be viewed only from a distance at which a 60x telescope could not yield the identity of the birds; they were thought to be mostly Little Stints. About 4,000 Greater Flamingo were seen in the shallows of the Indian Ocean at Mannar, in the north-west of the island.

Uncommon birds recorded in the census were: Great Cormorant - many; Western Reef Egret, Black-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Glossy Ibis; Fulvous Whistling Duck - subject to ratification by the Records Committee; Eurasian Wigeon, Common Teal, Northern Shoveler, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Osprey, Common Coot, Crab Plover, Ringed Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Great Knot, Sanderling, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Ruff.

The Anaivilundawa wetlands complex near the west coast became Sri Lanka's second Ramsar Site in 2001. In 1998 the complex was declared a Sanctuary by the State, entirely owing to the Ceylon Bird Club's persuasion and data. However, because of breaches in dams not being repaired, and apparently using water by sand mining, the complex has been dry in several recent seasons and the present. This has resulted in a drastic reduction, sometimes a near absence of waterbirds.

The Kalametiya - Lunama Sanctuary 20 km from the Bundala complex is used by migrants to supplement it or in some years evidently as an alternative to it. We have been urging for many years that it too be a Ramsar Site. This has not been achieved, and it continuously faces various threats that could destroy it, the most recent being a proposed harbour.

At the stretch of coastal area in the west of Sri Lanka from Chilaw to Kalpitiya the prawn farm industry has revived, after a lull due to a disease, and more wetlands are being now used for authorised and unauthorised farms. The extensive loss of habitat here for migrating waterbirds due to this has been a problem for years - which also we have been publicizing since the beginning - but little action has been taken by the authorities.

TAIWAN

Woei-horng Fang, AWC Coordinator,
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This year marked the 14th year of participation of Taiwan in the AWC. The census was coordinated by the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan. The counts conducted between 1 and 31 January 2002. Almost one hundred participants joined the census. A total of 94,991 birds were recorded in 40 sites, less than totals of past several years. This was mainly due to not enough counting effort on some sites.

In this year's count, globally threatened species included: 594 Black-faced Spoonbills were highest count ever in AWC (427 in Tseng-Wen-Hsi, 155 in Szu-Tsaio, 4 in Chu-An, 1 in Lung-Lan-Tan, and 1 in Kuan-Tu), 3 Baikal Teals (1 in Kuan-Tu, 1 in Kuan-In, 1 in Hsin-Jen), 739 Saunders' Gulls (300 in Au-Ku, 286 in Han-Pao, 60 in Hsi-Kang, 51 in Ta-Chia-Hsi river, 20 in Kang-Nan, 12 in Sui-Lin, 7 in Pei-Kang-His and 3 in Pei-Men), 2 Far Eastern Curlew (1 Sui-Lin and 1 in Au-Ku), 1 Oriental Stork (Chin Men) and 1 Asiatic Dowitcher (Pei Men).

VIETNAM

Nguyen Duc Tu, BirdLife International-Vietnam
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Between 18-26 December 2001 and 07-23 January 2002, the BirdLife International-Vietnam Programme in collaboration with the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources carried out a series of surveys along the coastal zone of Quang Ninh province and central Vietnam. These surveys were also conducted within the framework of the AWC Programme.

In all, 33 sites were visited during these surveys, four of which were identified as Important Bird Areas (IBA) following the internationally recognised criteria. At most visited sites, the bird fauna is under serious threat from habitat loss, mainly conversion of natural landscapes to aquaculture. The second major threat was identified as hunting, which is especially serious during the migratory periods. Perhaps due to these reasons, only four sites supported high number of birds, as described below:

Tra Co peninsula (21°28'N, 108°01'E) Quang Ninh province, is situated at the northernmost tip of Vietnam, near the border with China. Several waterbird species were recorded here in high number, such as Kentish Plover (600), Heughlin's Gull (120) and Dunlin (100). In addition, two species of conservation importance were found: the globally

vulnerable Saunders's Gull and the nationally rare Great Cormorant.

Ha Nam island (20°53'N, 106°49'E) is situated in the south of Quang Ninh province. This area supports congregations of some waterbird species including Eurasian Wigeon (800), Northern Pintail (500), Great Cormorant (151), Falcated Duck and Spot-billed Duck. Especially notable is a record of 4 Black-faced Spoonbills, a globally endangered species.

Lam Binh lake (14°46'N, 108°59'E) is situated in Quang Ngai province, central Vietnam. A large number of waterbirds were recorded at this site including Common Tern (1,200), Common Redshank (200), Kentish Plover (300), Black-winged Stilt (250), Garganey (146) and Northern Pintail (150).

Tra O lake (14°18'N, 109°06'E) is situated in Binh Dinh province, central Vietnam. Despite the fact that this lake was fragmented by dykes for aquacultural pond development, several species were still recorded in large numbers: Common Tern (800), Common Redshank (200), Little Ringed Plover (300), Black-winged Stilt (450), Garganey (450), Northern Shoveler (280) and Common Coot (160).

In addition, bird counts also were carried out at two sites in the Red River Delta, during the period of the Asian Waterbird Census:

Xuan Thuy Nature Reserve (20°17'N, 106°23'E). This Ramsar Site is one of best site for shorebirds, and the key site for Black-faced Spoonbill in Vietnam. During the count, several species were recorded in high numbers such as Common Teal (450), Northern Pintail (100), Black-tailed Godwit (61) and thousands of egrets, herons and unidentified ducks. A total of 51 Black-faced Spoonbills were recorded.

Thai Thuy Nature Reserve (20°35'N, 106°36'E) Thai Binh province, supports ideal habitats for gulls and terns. In the count this year, 1,200 Black-headed Gulls were recorded.

The above sites, together with several already known ones, including Binh Dai coastline and Dat Mui Nature Reserve in the Mekong Delta are the most important sites in Vietnam for migratory birds. However, the conservation of such sites would not, by itself, be sufficient to conserve the bird diversity of the coastal zone. Therefore, it is necessary to implement appropriate measures along the entire coastal zone of Vietnam, in order to protect its rich migratory bird fauna.

7. News on Black-faced Spoonbill Census

Coordinated Winter Census

The Black-faced Spoonbill census was conducted during the 26-17 January 2002. Volunteer participants from "wintering" ranges in South Korea, Japan, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Viet Nam joined in the annual census. From an initial 288 birds in 1988-90, the population estimate of this globally threatened East Asian endemic species increased to 969 birds by January 2002, due to improved coverage and consistent effort. The census is coordinated by Tom Dahmer ecosys@pacific.net.hk and conducted in conjunction with the AWC.

Table 2. Count Result of the 2002 census

Country/ Region	Location	Number
Taiwan	Tsengwen Estuary	427
	Szu-Tsao	155
	Pei-men	1
	Kuanto	1
	Lan Yang Estuary	4
Macau	Taipa-Coloane reclamation	37
Hong	Inner Deep Bay	136
Mainland China	Shenzhen, Futian NNR	3
	JiaYancheng Reserve	23
	Zhejiang Province	1
Vietnam	Xuan Thuy Nature Reserve	51
	Ha Nam Island	3
Japan	Imazu tidal flat: Zuibaiji River	21
	Wajiro tidal flat and Tataru	14
	Manose River mouth	15
	Beppu Estuary	7
	Hikawa Estuary	18
	Hitotsuse Estuary	2
	Naha City	2
	Okinawa, Yone pond	16
	Ishigaki Island	3
South Korea	Jeju Island, Sungsanpo Reservoir	28
	Jeju Island, Hadori	1
TOTAL:		969

National Report from Vietnam

On 26-27 January 2002, BirdLife International Vietnam Programme organised Black-faced Spoonbill counts at Xuan Thuy Nature Reserve, Nam Dinh Province, Thai Thuy Nature Reserve, Thai Binh Province, and Ha Nam island, Yen Hung District, Quang Ninh Province. In total, 54 Black-faced

Spoonbills were counted including 51 birds at Xuan Thuy Nature Reserve and 3 birds at Ha Nam island.

Ha Nam Island is the first wintering site for the species in the country to be identified outside of the coastal zone of the Red River Delta after a recent record of 4 immature birds from a BirdLife/IEBR survey on 19 December 2001. On the return visit to the site on 26 January 2002, 3 juvenile Black-faced Spoonbills were observed, together with a single Eurasian Spoonbill. The remains of the fourth Black-faced Spoonbill were seen in the house of a local person. The death of this bird highlights the continuing threat to this species in the absence of strict controls on hunting at this site.

*By Vu Thi Minh Phuong, Communications Officer,
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8. The Neotropical Waterbird Census

Wetlands International in collaboration with Ducks Unlimited has recently published a report titled "*The Neotropical Waterbird Census, the first ten years: 1990-1999*". The publication can be downloaded from http://www.wetlands.org/pubs&/NT_census.htm.

9. Seeking comments/information on WPE 3

The "Waterbird Population Estimates" (WPE) is an important document for Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention and others, as it forms the standard reference to identify international important wetlands based on populations of waterbirds. The publication lists estimates of numbers and population trends of around 2,000 populations of 840 species of waterbirds worldwide. The first edition was published in 1994 and updated three years later: <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/WPEnote.htm>.

Wetlands International is seeking your comments and input on the draft of the third edition of the WPE. The document can be downloaded from our website <http://www.wetlands.org/news&/NewsItems/WPE3announcement.htm>. If you are unable to access the document, kindly contact us.

The deadline for submission of amendments and additions is **31 July 2002**, but the sooner the better! Kindly forward this information to all experts in your country to seek their support. For more information please contact David Li <david@wiap.nasionet.net> or Simon Delany at delany@wetlands.agro.nl.