

Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census

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1. Letter from the AWC International Coordinator

Dear AWC coordinators and participants,

Time is flying, though we haven't aware of it, it is time for us to review the year of 2002 and plan for 2003.

The AWC 2002 has been very successful, till October, we have received count data of 283 sites from 14 countries. Many other countries have informed us that successful census has been carried out, however, we encourage you to submit the AWC 2002 results at the soonest to be included in the year totals.

In August 2002, I had the opportunity to participate in several events related to waterbird conservation to promote the Asian Waterbird Census in China. Presentations for AWC have been made during the China Waterbird Study Group meeting and the China Waterbird Conservation Workshop held in conjunction with the International Ornithological Congress in Beijing. A number of people in China have showed their interest in participating in the AWC and contacts established with people in other countries to promote the census in their countries.

Besides this, fundraising efforts for publication of the AWC 1997-2001 report has been successful. CMS and Ramsar Convention have kindly agreed to provide funds to support this

important publication. With this support we will be in a position to produce the report in 2003. Look forward to 2003, we encourage all of you to help to promote the AWC in your country. The suggested date for the AWC 2003 is 11-26 January 2003. For those who can't meet this count period, information during the rest of January is acceptable. For poorly known areas, data during December 2002 - February 2003 is also acceptable. Count and Site forms for the census are available on the AWC website on <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/awcmain.html>

With our concerted efforts, we shall be able to achieve a much better result in 2003. I would like to thank you for your kind contribution in advance and wish you an enjoyable birding season and conservation effort in the New Year.

Best regards,

David Li

AWC International Coordinator
Wetlands International
<david@wiap.nasionet.net>

2. Successful AWC 2002

The AWC 2002 has been very successful. As at 31 October, a total of 283 count forms have been received from 14 countries. However, we are still awaiting data from the rest of the countries before we can provide a complete picture of the 2002 census.

Country/Region	Count forms received
Bangladesh	37
Bhutan	6
Brunei	9
Cambodia	5
India	2
Indonesia	44
Macau, China	1
Malaysia	23
Myanmar	34
Pakistan	49
Philippines	49
Russia Far East	1
Thailand	8
Vietnam	15
TOTAL	283

3. AWC news from the region

This section covers reports submitted by National Coordinators. We thank these Coordinators for these updates and invite other Coordinators to share the news and events underway to promote the census in their countries.

Bangladesh

Mr. Enam Ul Haque <enam.gqi@gg-group.com>, the AWC National Coordinator is organising the AWC 2003 in Bangladesh. They welcome participation from abroad to participate the tours. The cost will be shared by all the participants, which is about US\$20 per day per head. The Sunderbans tour may have some additional cost. Please feel free to contact Enam if you need further details on the tours or would like to participate in the census.

Date	Programme
2-9 Jan 2003	Mudflats of South-Central Coastal
10 Jan 2003	Mudflats of Padma River in Munshiganj District
16-20 Jan 2003	Mudflats of Kachikhali and Katka in the Sunderbans
23-25 Jan 2003	Muhuri Reservoir and Patenga Sea-Shore
30-31 Jan 2003	Mudflats of Jamuna River in Sirajganj District
7 Feb 2003	Ailer Beel in Faridpur District
12-17 Feb 2003	North-central lakes (Tangua & Pashua Haor)

China

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Mark Barter, Australasian Wader Studies Group
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After a gap of several years, the AWC in Mainland China will be restarted!

Wetlands International - China Office is planning to survey for Dunlin at some of the major lakes in Hunan, Hebei, Jiangxi and Anhui Provinces in January 2003. Whilst the survey is focussed on Dunlin, the opportunity will be used to count other shorebirds and other waterbirds and thus collect important data for the AWC.

Breeding ground surveys have shown that there are at least 1 million Dunlin in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway, perhaps as many as 3 million. However, so far we have found only 200,000 in the non-breeding areas, mainly in the coastal regions of Japan, South Korea and southern China. Where are the missing birds?

In recent years, large numbers of Dunlin, estimated to be around 50,000 birds, have been found at the East Dongting National Nature Reserve in Hunan Province. This discovery raises the question of how many more Dunlin may be spending the non-breeding season on the extensive system of lakes in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River and elsewhere. Perhaps this region is the major non-breeding area for the species.

Other than the Dunlin Survey, Forestry Department of Fujian Province has proposed a gulls survey during Dec 2002 to Jan 2003.

Wetlands International - China Office is contacting more wetland nature reserves in organising the AWC in China.

Hong Kong

Yu Yat Tung, AWC Coordinator, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society. <ytyu@hkstar.com>

The number of waterbirds at and around the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site is being monitored in a series of monthly waterbird counts. Winter Waterbird Counts occur from October to March, while Summer Waterbird Counts take place from April to September. This mid-monthly survey of waterbirds covers the whole Ramsar Site. This is carried out by a team of accredited voluntary surveyors of the

Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) at assigned sites in a synchronized manner.

The January count will be timed to coincide with the large-scale annual AWC organized by Wetland International, with the hope of combining the ornithological interest and conservation zeal to provide an effective tool for monitoring and protection of wetlands and waterbirds throughout the region.

The HKBWS has organized an annual January count of wintering waterbird in Deep Bay since 1979. In November 1992, this count was extended to include the whole of the winter period and since then, counts have taken place from November to March. In September 1995, the Hong Kong SAR Government designated the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay area as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. A long-term annual monthly waterbird monitoring programme at the Ramsar Site has been conducted since December 1997, as a fundamental part of the management strategy, and as an indicator of the health of the Deep Bay ecosystem. Since 2000, the programme has been wholly managed by the HKBWS under direct supervision by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Hong Kong SAR Government.

The January 2002 waterbird count took place on the 20th, and coverage of both the Ramsar Site and the Deep Bay area was complete.

A total of 51,333 waterbirds were recorded in the Deep Bay area (including Fu Tian), of which 39,249 were present in the Ramsar Site. All January counts since 1998 have been in the range of 50,000 to 55,000 birds, and so this count continues that pattern.

Ducks and grebes, at 16,964 birds, formed the largest proportion, and constituted approximately 33% of birds present in the Bay.

Gulls and terns (at 13,302 birds) comprised nearly 26% of the total, and the number of Black-headed Gulls recorded was 13,000, similar to recent years.

The number of Great Cormorants recorded was 6230; this is slightly lower than recent years, though it may simply have been due to the fact that some birds had not flown in to roost.

Waders comprised 20%, at 10,242 birds.

Indonesia

Yus Rusila Noor, National Coordinator, Wetlands International– Indonesia Office
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Indonesia experienced a better result during the implementation of the 2002 Asian Waterbird Census. We identified that the key factors for the improved results were the intense communication and promotion of the AWC between National Coordinator and the network members and through wider communication in the mass media. Identifying those factors, we will continue to organize the AWC 2003 by replicating the last year's strategy. The information on the AWC 2003 will be sent by email to network members as well as electronic mailing lists and through the snail mail! (regular postal service). The census will also be promoted during seminars/meetings that will be attended and/or organized by Wetlands International staff. The information will also be placed on our web site.

As an incentive to all participants who participated on the census, a book containing a country report of the 2002 AWC (including name of contributors, list of sites and species and graphics representation of results) has been produced by the Coordinator and is to be distributed to all contributors. We believe that this AWC report will be highly appreciated by network members, and subsequently will encourage other bird observers to submit their observations.

Additionally, Wetlands International – Indonesia has received a funding from Asean Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC) to produce an Indonesian Language book and CD on the Manual of Shorebirds Studies, being adapted from the Shorebird Studies Manual produced by Wetlands International in 1989. It is planned that the publication will also be distributed to those who participated on the Census.

Malaysia

Yeap Chin Aik, National Coordinator, Malaysian Nature Society <natsoc@po.jaring.my>

Based on the results of the recent AWC 2002, several limitations were identified which includes the lack of trained volunteers, site coverage and selectivity, funding and data management and dissemination. In response to address the limitations, certain immediate strategies will be implemented. Action will be

focussed on three aspects: consistency and coverage of site surveys, data/information management and data dissemination. The details of the strategy for the AWC 2003 in Malaysia is outlined below:

Current Needs	Strategy
<i>Stress the importance of visiting the same sites annually amongst volunteers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Putting up a roster of potential survey sites and volunteers and to be distributed amongst the birdwatchers to avoid duplication of effort. ➤ Publishing an article concentrating on waterbird conservation through monitoring using the AWC in the <i>Malaysian Naturalist</i>. ➤ Placing announcements and AWC-related articles in the <i>Suara Enggang</i> (bimonthly MNS bird bulletin).
<i>Prioritising survey sites in the country.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adopting and promoting a two-tier system; IBA and non-IBA wetland sites, where survey and monitoring priorities are given to IBA sites when possible.
<i>Enhancing cooperation between NGOs and wildlife departments (WD) to enlarge and improve coverage.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conduct joint surveys between individuals/WD or NGO/WD at selected wetlands, preferably IBAs. ➤ Collating and collecting survey results from WDs
<i>Improving database management and reporting methodology.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Setting up a proper data management system for the survey sites and birds. ➤ Setting up a volunteer database. ➤ Produce a national report.
<i>Improving dissemination of survey results.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dissemination of the national report to all volunteers through email. ➤ Dissemination of the national report (limited printed copies) to respective WDs. ➤ Publish a census summary in the <i>Suara Enggang</i>. ➤ Census summary also to be disseminated to regional bird discussion e-groups from Malaysia, Singapore and Oriental Bird Club.

East Malaysia

Tony Sebastian, AWC Coordinator for East Malaysia. <conrad@pc.jaring.my>

The AWC has been conducted in East Malaysia (States of Sarawak and Sabah on Borneo) in an uncoordinated manner over the past years. Counts have been made at sites according to where interested bird watchers have been located. The information from these counts has been useful, but has been unable to provide a picture of wintering sites across the northern shoreline of Borneo. Three concentrations of

counts can be discerned, as mentioned before, a result of location of counters:

Sabah: western coastline of Sabah, covering the sites of Likas Lagoon on the outskirts of Kota Kinabalu, state capital of Sabah. In 2001, a count was conducted (by the Sabah Wildlife Department) at Padang Teratak, in the Klias peninsula.

Sarawak (Miri): Counts were conducted at Loagan Bunut National Park, an inland floodplain lake; the estuary of the Baram River on the outskirts of Miri town and a peat swamp area close to Miri.

Sarawak (Kuching): In 2001 counts were made at Kampung Buntal and a series of sites along the shoreline east of Kuching (Semera, Jaie). Plans were made to count Pulau Bruit, the well-known wintering site on the island in the Rejang delta, but rough seas prevented the trip. In 2002, Buntal was repeated and additional sites at Kampung Chupak and a trip eastwards to Sri Aman, along the Batang Lupar were done. Pulau Bruit again was not possible due to rough seas.

Constraints: Sarawak's coast suffers from the effects of the NE monsoon during January, resulting in heavy rains and very rough seas. The majority of the potential coastal wintering sites are inaccessible by land, and therefore, despite plans over the past two years, none of these sites could be reached. Another constraint is the lack of bird watchers to conduct the AWC in a more comprehensive manner, thus limiting counts to nearby sites.

The focus for this year's AWC is inland sites (though an attempt to get to Pulau Bruit is planned). As in previous years, the MNS uses the AWC as an awareness activity, particularly at Buntal, which is close to Kuching. The event has attracted large participation from the public, including the media. The awareness value of this event is great, and steps have been initiated to provide better facilities for shorebird watching as well as affording the site legal protection.

Myanmar

Thet Zaw Naing, National Coordinator, Myanmar Bird and Nature Society <SST@mptmail.net.mm>

Myanmar has been involved in the waterfowl census since 1988. In this year 2002, Nature & Wildlife Conservation Division and Myanmar Bird & Nature Society carried out the AWC. The

counts were conducted between second and third week of January. The total count from thirty-three sites was 57,960 birds of 95 species. Twenty-three volunteers took part throughout the country.

In this year, 20 sites have been surveyed in the past re-surveyed and thirteen sites were new sites. In these 33 sites, five sites remained the most important areas for waterbirds on the reports which are Indawgyi Wetland Bird Sanctuary & Ayeyarwaddy River – 3 (between Myitkyina Township and Tarlawgyi Village) in Kachin State, Minhla Nyaung Lake & Ngalike Dam in Mandalay Division and Moeyingyi Wetland Bird Sanctuary in Bago Division.

A total of 15,504 individuals of Lesser Whistling Duck were dominated during the survey period. Followed by Common Coots (5,435), Spot-billed Ducks (3,824), Ferruginous Ducks (3,161) and Common Pochards (2,741). Six globally threatened bird species were recorded: Greater Adjutant, Lesser Adjutant, Spot-billed Pelican, Baer's Pochard, Sarus Crane and Greater Spotted Eagle. Three new species for Myanmar were noted: Black-necked Grebe, Crab Plover and Philippine Duck. However, the record of the Philippine Duck may need to be further assessed.

In 2003, it is proposed that to continue expansion of the AWC to cover more areas with the participation of more volunteers.

Nepal

Dr. Hem Sagar Baral, National Coordinator, President of BCN <bcn@mail.com.np>

Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) has been conducting the AWC since 1987. The 2002 census effort was rather disappointing because the government declared a state of emergency in the country. Therefore, the census could cover only stretches of rivers at Chitwan, Koshi River and Barrage. Nearly 7 different sites within these areas were covered and rest remained unsurveyed.

This year, although the emergency is lifted up, the law and order situation in the country is similar to last year. However, we are planning how best data can be collected in 2003 from maximum sites without jeopardizing life of our volunteers.

BCN will be holding talks with government staff to undertake the census and Department of National Parks in promoting the census.

Thailand

Philip Round, National Coordinator, Bird Conservation Society of Thailand <pdround@ksc.th.com>

Relatively few wetland sites were counted in Thailand during AWC 2002. Results were received from a cluster of eight freshwater wetlands in Buriram province, NE Thailand, where, thanks to the efforts of Royal Forest Department staff, Mr. Kobsak Sunthoraporn, Mr. Phayao Saidee, and others, there has been more or less uninterrupted midwinter count coverage over several years. A total of 21,353 waterbirds was recorded, of which the predominant species were Lesser Whistling-duck (1346 birds), Cattle Egret (3483), Little Egret (941), Wood Sandpiper (420), Chinese Pond Heron (417) and Purple Swampphen (408).

Of national conservation significance in Thailand were the numbers of Intermediate Egret (38) and Grey Heron (64). Both species are known only as winter visitors to Thailand (the former breeding population of Grey Herons having been long extirpated).

Other than the Lesser Whistling Duck, the only other ducks recorded at Buriram were Cotton Pygmy Goose (213), Garganey (285) Northern Pintail (26) and a single Baer's Pochard. This last species is giving particular concern, only small numbers having been recorded in Thailand in recent years. During the late 1980s, over 600 were recorded on two sites in the northern Central Plains, (426 at a single site Bung Boraphet). This site has not comprehensively covered during recent years, but there have been no sightings anywhere in the country of more than 15 together since the early 1990s.

Counts totaling 2567 ducks were made by Bird Conservation Society of Thailand members from Nong Bong Kai, Chiang Rai Province, one of Thailand's few Ramsar sites, in early February. This included a single Mandarin Duck and Eurasian Wigeon, five Mallard, Spot-billed Duck (105), Northern Shoveler (3), Northern Pintail (181), Garganey (2000), Common Teal (230), Ferruginous Pochard (36), Tufted Duck (5).

Some other counts outside the January count period were compiled for wetlands in Thailand's northern plains, Sukhothai and Phitsanuloke, during December 2001 by a joint team from BCST and The Wetland Trust (UK). Waterfowl recorded included 10,000 Lesser Whistling Duck, 400 Garganey, 100 Northern Pintail, and

a striking roosting concentration of 1200 Little Ringed Plovers on the runway of Sukhothai Airport.

BCST will hope to coordinate 2003 counts during the second and third weeks of January 2003, aiming to cover a greater range of sites, including both coastal and freshwater sites.

Vietnam

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Between 2001 and 2003, BirdLife International in Indochina received funding from the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF) for a project entitled *Conservation Monitoring at Xuan Thuy Nature Reserve*, which aims to assist biodiversity conservation at Xuan Thuy Nature Reserve in the Red River Delta, Vietnam.

As a part of a monitoring programme for Black-faced Spoonbill and Saunders's Gull established by the project, high tide counts of these two species are being conducted on a monthly basis. In total, six winter visits are planned for Xuan Thuy. During these visits, BirdLife, together with the reserve staff, will also carry out censuses of other migratory waterbird species at the site.

Towards the end of January 2003, staff from BirdLife Vietnam and other volunteers will visit several coastal sites in northern Vietnam to conduct the annual international Black-faced Spoonbill census. Sites to be visited will include Xuan Thuy NR, Nghia Hung district and Thai Thuy District in the Red River Delta and Ha Nam Island in Quang Ninh province. Information generated from the field survey will be submitted to Wetlands International for the AWC.

4. Other News on Waterbird Conservation in the Asia-Pacific

Ramsar side-event on Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy

To promote conservation of migratory waterbirds and wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region, a meeting on the *Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005* is

to be held on 22 November during the 8th Meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) or COP8 in Spain.

The Strategy has been developed as a collaborative programme by range states, Ramsar and Bonn Conventions, and NGO partners. The event aims to increase awareness, encourage and stimulate participation in the Strategy and its Plans.

Australia and Japan are sponsoring a resolution to COP 8 that calls for enhanced cooperation and funding for the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Asia-Pacific region. The Draft Resolution is available on http://www.ramsar.org/cop8_dr_37_e.htm. Successful implementation will depend on strong cooperation support and action by from all countries. Readers are invited to contact the appropriate national government agency attending COP8 and encouraging them to provide strong support for the Resolution and its implementation.

International census for the Black-faced Spoonbill

C. Y. Lam, Chairman of Hong Kong Bird Watching Society < hkbws@hkbws.org.hk >

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) has accepted the responsibility of coordinating the international census of the Black-faced Spoonbill. We take this opportunity to convey our thanks to Mr. Tom Dahmer, who coordinated the census in recent years, for his painstaking work and for the solid foundation which he has laid for this key step towards the conservation of the species.

After initial consultations and having checked tide data, the dates for the international census in 2003 are proposed on 24-26 January 2003. You are invited to mark these dates in your calendar and start preparing for the census.

The HKBWS has designated Mr. Yu Yat Tung < vytu@hkstar.com > as the focal person for the census. Do please feel free to contact him for participating of the census.

Data from the census will be fed back to the AWC.

Status overview of White-headed Duck in Central Asia

Wetlands International, with support from the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is conducting a status overview for the conservation of the White-headed Duck in Central Asia. The report provides the information of the species in 12 countries of the Central Asian region. The final project report entitled "The status overview and recommendations for conservation of the White-headed Duck in Central Asia" will be ready in January 2003 and can be downloaded from the Wetlands International website.

Waterbirds News from the International Ornithological Congress and related meetings

The International Ornithological Congress (IOC) was held in Beijing between 12 and 17 August. A number of waterbird related meetings were organized around this major event.

An International Crane Workshop was organised by China Ornithological Society and International Crane Foundation on 9 and 10 August in Beijing prior to the IOC. The meeting provided a good opportunity for researchers to exchange information. A numbers of papers on crane conservation and progress on research were reported during the meeting. The meeting paid particular attention to the mass mortality of Demoiselle Cranes and other birds and mammals in the central Aimaqs of Mongolia due to poisoning with Bromadiolone as a result of a large scale program to reduce the number of Brandt's Vole (*Microtus brandti*) in grasslands used for grazing of livestock. Participants agreed to draft a letter to the relevant ministries in Mongolia to express concern and provide recommendations to conserve these species. For more information please contact Claire Mirande, International Crane Foundation mirande@savingcranes.com or Simba Chan, Crane Flyway Officer simba@wing-wbsj.or.jp.

During the IOC, a Round Table Discussion titled "Conservation of the Shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway" was organised by Australian Wader Studies Group. For further details contact Phil Straw pstraw@optusnet.com.au. A special-interest meeting on conservation of herons was organized by the IUCN SSC/Wetlands International/BLI Heron Specialist Group. For further details contact James Kushlan jkushlan@aol.com.

A national Waterbird Conservation Workshop was held in Panjin City, Liaoning Province in northeast China between 15 and 17 August. An implementation programme for the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy: 2001-2005 in China was developed during the workshop with a focus on the implementation of the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Conservation Action Plan 2001-2005. For more details contact Warren Lee Long Warren.LeeLong@ea.gov.au, Shorebird Flyway Officer.

A "Strategy for the Threatened Birds of Asia" under preparation

The BirdLife Asia Partnership is preparing a new strategy for all threatened birds in Asia (including several waterbirds), that is set for publication early in 2003. The accounts have been prepared using the species accounts from the "Threatened Birds of Asia: the BirdLife International Red Data Book" and other many important conservation proposals, particularly at the national level. For more information contact Mike Crosby Mike.Crosby@birdlife.org.uk

5. New Publications on Waterbirds and Wetlands

The WPE third edition is out soon!

Wetlands International has, since 1994, maintained a database of global waterbird population estimates under contract to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Periodic publications list estimates of numbers and population trends of around 2000 populations of 840 species of waterbirds worldwide. The importance of this report is that it provides the basis for the 1% criterion under the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, under which any site which regularly holds more than 1% of a waterbird population qualifies for inclusion on the Ramsar list of wetlands of international importance. The report *Waterfowl Population Estimates* (Rose & Scott 1994) (or WPE) was updated three years later as *Waterfowl Population Estimates - second edition* (Rose & Scott 1997).

Wetlands International has been working to update the publication since early in the year. The third edition of this publication now is out! A side event to launch the publication will be organised during the Ramsar COP8 in Spain during 18-26 November 2002.

The IWC-West Palearctic and Southwest Asia 1997-1999 Report

Wetlands International has recently published "*Numbers and distribution of wintering waterbirds in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia in 1997, 1998 and 1999; Results from the International Waterbird Census*". This report is the latest in the series of IWC reports for the region and was officially presented during the 2nd Meeting of Parties to the African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement in Bonn, Germany, in September 2002. It is available from WI office in Wageningen <post@wetlands.agro.nl> and through the Natural History Book Service. You can also download it from http://www.wetlands.org/pubs&/IWC_qs11_index.htm

Shorebirds of the Yellow Sea

Wetlands International - Oceania recently published the "*Shorebirds of the Yellow Sea: Importance, Threats and Conservation Status*". Mark Barter <markbarter@optusnet.com.au>, the author made the following statement of this publication.

"Surveys conducted during the last 12 years show that the extensive intertidal areas and near-coastal wetlands of the Yellow Sea are the most important region in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway for migratory shorebirds, supporting at least 2,000,000 shorebirds during northward migration and perhaps 1,000,000 shorebirds on south migration.

A total of 36 shorebird species have so far been found to occur in internationally important numbers at one or more sites in the Yellow Sea; two of the species are classified as globally threatened, the Spotted Greenshank and Spoon-billed Sandpiper, whilst two are near-threatened, the Eastern Curlew and Asian Dowitcher. Twenty-seven sites have been identified around the Yellow Sea coastline at which at least one shorebird species has been recorded in internationally important numbers.

The rapid growth of the human populations and economies of China and South Korea is causing serious loss and degradation of coastal habitats. Achieving effective conservation of migratory shorebirds and their wetland habitats will be particularly challenging around the Yellow Sea coastline due to the high dependence of the local communities on intertidal resources. Effective action will need to be based on an ecoregion approach."

AWI Manual

Wetlands International has recently developed a manual for the Asian Wetlands Inventory (AWI). This manual provides related technical methods for wetlands Inventory and the information sheet for the data collection. Several countries have showed an interest in using the manual as a basis for producing national inventories. To promote the Manual and the AWI programme, a side event is to be organised on 21 November, during the Ramsar COP8 in Spain.

White-headed Duck Survey in Pakistan: 2002 now online

A White-headed Duck survey in Pakistan in 2002 was organised by Wetlands International's Asia Regional Office in Malaysia. The survey is funded by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) under the project "Status Overview and Recommendations for the White-headed Duck in Central Asia".

The White-headed Duck is a globally endangered species identified by IUCN. The South Asian non-breeding population (mainly winter in northern Pakistan) is facing a steep decline. The maximum of 1,039 birds was recorded in January 1968. In January 1983 and 1987, 734 and 733 birds were counted respectively. Between 1992 and 1994, however, only about 150 White-headed Ducks were recorded. The number of birds rapidly declined after 1995. During the 1995-1998 period as few as 50 birds were recorded every year. The number has dropped until 10 in 2001.

Peak counts at the Uchali complex in were very low. During the survey undertaken by Dr. A. A. Chaudhry and his colleagues of the Punjab Wildlife Research Institute, only 5 birds were counted in January 2002. This number was further reduced to 3 in February.

The report analyses the known threats to the White-headed Duck. The loss and modification of its habitat are identified as one of the main threats to this species. Recommendations have been proposed to promote the conservation of this small population. Do visit our website at <http://www.wetlands.org/news&/NewsItems/WHD.html> to download the PDF version of the report.

Wetlands International is currently working on the report of the White-headed Duck in Central Asia. It is expected to be ready by the end of this year.