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News from the International Waterbird Census
Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia
Issue no. 5 - DECEMBER 2003
Newsletter for Coordinators of national waterbird monitoring schemes

The main function of this newsletter is to keep coordinators of national waterbird monitoring schemes up-to-date with developments in the International Waterbird Census (IWC) in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia region. This newsletter was produced by Simon Delany, with assistance from Lieuwe Haanstra, Chris Baker, Ward Hagemeijer Gerard Boere and Saskia Henderikse. Please e-mail us if you have any questions or comments: simon.delany@wetlands.org

Contents (click on a title): [2003, another exciting IWC year](#), [Count dates](#), [Waterbirds around the World](#), [Informal meeting IWC Coordinators](#), [Atlas of wader populations](#), [Pan-Arctic wader workshop](#), [Global coordination of IWC](#), [Waterbird Population Estimates - Third edition](#), [Status of data submission to Wetlands International](#), [IWC database](#), [Trend analyses in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia](#), [UNEP - GEF African / Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways – GEF Council Approval](#)

2003, another exciting IWC year

As we review progress with IWC in 2003, we can look back on some very satisfying achievements. One of these is the development of **waterbird-based indicators for biodiversity**. Along with biodiversity indicators based on breeding birds (developed by EBCC /RSPB /BirdLife International) these have been proposed for use by the European Union and European Environment Agency for policy evaluation and for assessment of progress towards the 2010 target of reducing the loss of Biodiversity. The concept of this is very promising and you will undoubtedly be hearing more about this in the future. SEE PAGE 5 for more details.

The **coverage of the Census in Central Asia** has been greatly strengthened by a project, funded largely by the Dutch Government, focusing on the Central Asian Flyway, and run by Alexander Solokha in our Moscow Office. As well as facilitating improvements in IWC in Central Asia, Alexander has undertaken counts and training in Dagestan and Kalmykia in the Russian Caucasus region. Small grants contributed by the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) have greatly helped organisers of the census in Africa in January 2004, and in 2005, we plan to use some of these funds to assist national coordinators in the Middle East and Central and

Eastern Europe. More details of these plans will be available next year.

The waterbird monitoring team in 2003

We were very sorry when **Niels Gilissen** decided to leave his part-time post with us for a job with the Dutch Ministry of Defence, conducting and reporting faunal surveys of the military terrains throughout The Netherlands. Niels was an excellent colleague but he missed his fieldwork. We wish him all the very best now that he has found a job which will get him out and about again. Niels was not directly replaced, but we have established a contract with **Jan Blew**, who has coordinated the Waterbird counts database at the Dutch-German-Danish Wadden Sea for many years, and is well-established in European waterbird monitoring circles. We are very fortunate to have found such an appropriate and enthusiastic colleague, who will spend a number of hours per week working for us from his home in northern Germany. The rest of our team in Wageningen are **Lieuwe Haanstra** who continues his expert management of the IWC database (particularly, work on the new data management system), **Simon Delany** responsible for overall coordination of IWC in the region, and now taking on an increasingly global role, and **Ward Hagemeijer**, Head of Wetlands International's Species Conservation programme, responsible for strategic development, funding and other management issues.

Count dates: January 2004

Please note that the **recommended dates** for IWC counts in 2004 for Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia are:
17-18 January 2003

Recommendations for the counts

- As usual, for the convenience of volunteer counters, the recommended dates cover the weekend nearest the middle of January. Please note that these dates are for guidance only, and that counts from any dates in January are very welcome.
- Please include non-native species in the counts, because this group is of ever-increasing interest in relation to waterbird conservation issues.
- Please follow the general rules for data submission: include all necessary fields (species, count, date, sitecode, sitename) and check if the sitenames and sitecodes match the sitelist. Any changes in the sitelist should be reported.

Waterbirds around the World – International conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, 3-8 April 2004

Organised by Wetlands International and jointly hosted by the Governments of the United Kingdom and The Netherlands, with support from the Convention on Migratory Species, The Convention on Wetlands, BirdLife International, US Fish and Wildlife Service, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, CIC, FACE, Waterbird Society, CAFF, Pacific Seabird Group and many other national and international organisations.

Waterbirds Around the World will focus on all major themes and developments related to the

global conservation of waterbird flyways during their full annual cycle: breeding areas, stop-over sites and wintering areas, harvest of waterbirds, site networks, flyway monitoring, flyway management plans, climate change and flyways, nomadic migration and many more. It will address achievements of the last 40 years and formulate gaps and needs for initiatives to stimulate future conservation of the world's flyways and the species and habitats involved.

You can find out all about the conference, and register online at:

<http://www.wetlands.org/GFC/Default.htm>

Informal meeting for IWC Coordinators at Waterbirds around the World, Edinburgh, Saturday 3 April 2004

We do not have time to organise a formal meeting, but it will be valuable if all coordinators of national waterbird monitoring schemes attending the conference can get together for an informal discussion. The best time for this will be the first evening of the conference. Details of the time and place of this meeting will be sent to all national coordinators early next year.

An atlas of wader populations in Africa and West Eurasia

Another major publication from Wetlands International, produced in close collaboration with the International Wader Study Group –one of the largest and most active of the Wetlands International Specialist Groups - is the so-called *Wader Atlas*. This book will be a companion to the *Atlas of Anatidae populations in Africa and west Eurasia* published in 1996. The project started in 1998 and about half of the publication was written, by members of the Wader Study Group, in subsequent years. Financial difficulties caused significant delays, but a new injection of funds in 2003 is allowing updating and completion of the analysis and writing, although we are still looking for funds to publish the book. The Atlas will cover 91 species, and a map showing the breeding range at species level, and migration and wintering ranges at the level of biogeographical populations will be presented for each species.

Population estimates will also be presented, along with lists of key sites used by each population throughout the year. IWC data from Africa, Europe and the Middle East have been used to compile these maps and key site lists, and BirdLife International have generously provided data from their IBA database to complete the picture.

Pan-Arctic wader monitoring and research workshop, Karrebæksminde, Denmark, 3-6 December 2003:

Around 30 experts who study Arctic nesting waders in their breeding grounds, as well as in staging and "wintering" areas all over the world, recently held a ground-breaking workshop on the Baltic shore of Denmark. For a detailed report on the workshop, see:

<http://www.wetlands.org/news&NewsItems/PanArcticWorkshop.htm>

Global coordination of IWC

Programme Action Plan

In 2001 Wetlands International produced its draft Programme Action Plan titled "Global Waterbird Monitoring and Conservation in the new Millennium" see:

<http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/IWCstra.htm>.

In this document a strategic positioning of Wetlands International's waterbird related work is presented.

The major change in direction proposed for the IWC is development of a more global character and closer interaction of the regional schemes in terms of standardisation and data management.

IWC in the regions

Fortunately, The African Waterbird Census (AfWC), Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) and the Neotropical Waterbird Census (NWC) all use the same methodology as that established in the Western Palearctic in 1967, and development of a global IWC is only constrained by organisational, financial and logistical issues. There is one sizeable gap in the geographical coverage of the international waterbird monitoring coordinated by Wetlands International, namely North America, where current waterbird monitoring methods are not readily compatible with IWC. One of the tasks of our new one-woman Americas Office, managed by Melanie Steinkamp in Washington DC, is to explore possibilities for establishing a compatible census in North America.

Following the publication last year of results of 10 years of the Neotropical Waterbird Census, this year a **report on the African Waterbird Census** covering the three years 1999-2001 was published. The Census in Africa is going from strength to strength, and Cheikh Hamallah Diagana in our

Waterbird Population Estimates- Third edition

This publication, produced in 2002 is nearly out of print – about 150 of the print run of 2000 are left in stock. We have decided to produce a few hundred on CD RoM, to satisfy demand until the fourth

Dakar office, together with Tim Dodman have produced a very impressive summary of the results: http://www.wetlands.org/pubs&/waterbird_pub.html

In the Asia-Pacific region, David Li, the coordinator of the **Asian Waterbird Census** in our Kuala Lumpur office has had an extremely busy year. He organised a meeting of all the AWC national coordinators in October, and has now finished work on a report on the census in the years 1997-2001 which will be published in the New Year.

New data management system

The new data management system, when it becomes fully available in 2004, will provide a tool for extracting, summarising and managing waterbird monitoring data which will be identical in all the regions. We hope that this tool will also be used at national level by national waterbird count coordinators, thus establishing a high quality global standard for storing, organising, managing and reporting waterbird count data. See page 5. for details.

Manuals for national coordinators and counters

In 2003, we also updated two important documents titled *National waterbird count coordinators' manual, 2004* and *A manual for waterbird counters, 2004*. The first of these manuals provides detailed guidance on how to set up and run a national waterbird monitoring scheme using IWC methods, and the second is a manual for counters "on the ground". These manuals are not yet final, and are available for comment on the Wetlands International website at: <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/Manuals.htm>

Please take some time to review these documents – we welcome and value your ideas and opinions.

edition appears in 2005. Meanwhile, the publication on our website (which is the same as the CD RoM) has been revised and we have taken this opportunity to amend a small number of errors and omissions which appeared in the book.

Waterbird Population Estimates 3rd edition and Wetlands International waterbird count reports

To download these reports from the Web, please visit our website at:
http://www.wetlands.org/pubs&/waterbird_pub.html

Status of data submission to Wetlands International

Below you will find an IWC data status overview. This is a summary of which countries have sent us data for which years. If you see your country has not yet sent data for these years, we hope this will encourage you to send them as soon as possible. We are constantly trying to keep our database as complete as possible, and we hope that more countries will establish a routine for submitting their data for international analysis every year. Some national coordinators continue to send data in formats which take time for us to process, and this can result in delays in incorporating certain national data sets into the IWC database.

COUNTRY	2000	2001	2002	2003
Baltic/Nordic				
Belarus	+	-	-	+
Denmark	+	+	-	-
Estonia	+	+	-	-
Finland	-	-	-	-
Iceland	-	-	-	-
Kaliningrad	-	-	-	-
Latvia	+	+	+	+
Lithuania	-	-	-	-
Norway	+	-	-	-
Poland	+	-	+/-	-
Sweden	+	+	+	-
Black Sea/East Mediterranean				
Albania	+	+	-	-
Bosnia and Herz.	+	-	-	-
Bulgaria	+	+	-	-
Croatia	+	+	+	+
Cyprus	+	+	+	-
Egypt	-	-	-	-
Greece	+	+	-	-
Israel	+	+	+	-
Lebanon	+	+	+	-
Macedonia	-	-	+	-
Moldova	-	-	-	-
Palestine Authority	-	-	-	+
Romania	+	+	+	+
Russia	-	-	-	+
Slovenia	+	+	+	+
Syria	-	-	-	-
Turkey	-	-	-	-
Ukraine	+	+/-	-	-
Yugoslavia	+	+	-	-
Central Europe				
Austria	+	+	-	-
Czech Republic	+	+	-	-
Germany	+	+	-	-
Hungary	+	+	+	+
Slovakia	+	+	+	+
Switzerland	+	+	+	-

Northwest Europe				
Belgium	+	+	+	+/-
France	+	+	-	-
Germany	+	+	-	-
Ireland	+	+	-	-
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	+	+	-	-
United Kingdom	+	+/-	-	-
Southwest Asia				
Armenia	-	-	-	-
Azerbaijan	+	-	-	+
Bahrain	-	-	-	-
Georgia	-	-	+	+
Iran	+	+	+	+
Iraq	-	-	-	-
Jordan	-	-	-	-
Kazakhstan	+	+	+	+
Kuwait	-	-	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	+	+	+	+
Oman	-	+	-	-
Qatar	-	-	-	-
Russia	-	-	-	-
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-
Tajikistan	-	-	-	+
Turkmenistan	+	+	+	+
United Arab Emir.	-	-	+	-
Uzbekistan	+	+	+	+
Yemen	-	-	-	-
West Mediterranean				
Algeria	-	-	-	-
France	+	+	-	-
Italy	+	+	-	-
Libya	-	-	-	-
Malta	-	-	-	-
Morocco	-	-	-	-
Portugal	+	+	-	-
Spain	+/-	+/-	-	-
Tunisia	-	-	+	-

+ = available
 +/- = partly available
 - = not available

IWC database and data quality upgrade

One of the big achievements this year has been the near-completion of the new data management system. The system runs using MS Access, and has a user-friendly shell programmed in Visual Basic. It allows flexible storage, extraction, querying and reporting of waterbird count data, and includes a module incorporating the TRIM trend analysis program developed by Statistics Netherlands. It has been a huge amount of work programming this complicated application in such a way that it will be simple to use, and it is now running well on Lieuwe's machine. Some bugs still remain when attempting to establish stand-alone versions on other computers. Lieuwe will continue his sterling work on this enormous task, and we expect to have the new system available for use by any national or international waterbird count coordinator who wants it, in 2004. Lieuwe and Niels have also written a detailed manual explaining how to use the system. Establishment of this data management upgrade will be a major development in setting global standards.

New trend analyses of waterbirds in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia

This year we made excellent progress with an analysis of waterbird population trends from 1974 to 2001, and for the first time we have been able to produce reliable trends for species other than Anatidae, from 1989-2001. The results of this analysis will be published in 2004 when sufficient funding has been secured. This work was partly paid for by a contract with the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity in Paris, who have close links to the European Commission. Most European National

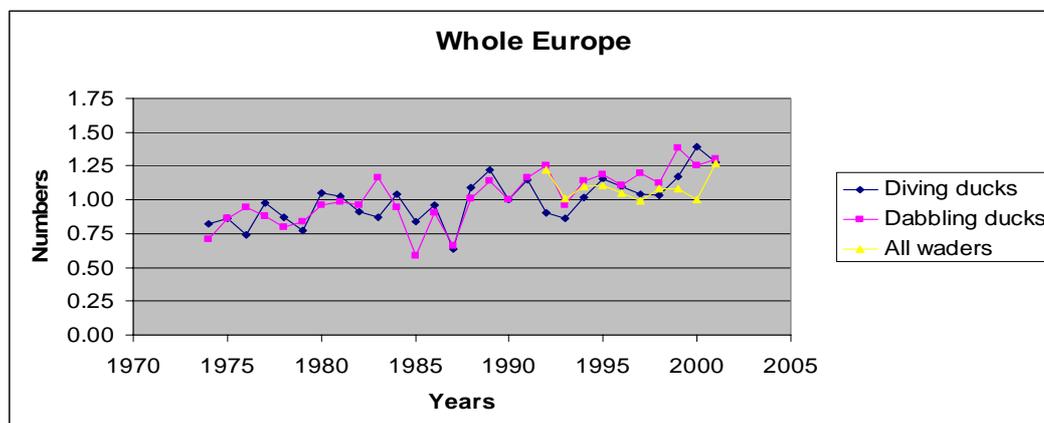
Coordinators responded positively to an urgent request for data up to and including January 2001 for inclusion in this analysis. Many thanks to all our collaborators in this work. The analysis revealed that we need to do more work on our data holdings on species other than Anatidae in the years 1967-1989 before we can calculate reliable trends for this earlier period. We also need to raise more funds for producing a publication next year which will analyse and interpret waterbird trends in Europe up to and including the year 2001.

Development of indicators of environmental quality

The first analysis we conducted involved using TRIM to calculate population trends of all waterbird species in Europe for which data quality is sufficiently high. These trends were then combined to produce a series of indicators of wetland quality in Europe, which will be used by the European Environment Agency and the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity, together with indicators of farmland and woodland birds produced by the European Bird Census Council, Statistics Netherlands and BirdLife International. These indicators will also play a role in evaluating the performance of the EU Birds Directive next year after 25 years of existence. We are very pleased to be able to present examples of these indicators here – this is the first time that this work has appeared in print anywhere! Careful interpretation of the indicators is needed. For example, increases in numbers of several species of ducks are likely to be related to increasing eutrophication of wetlands in Europe as a result of factors such as agricultural intensification. Increasing waterbird numbers do not necessarily indicate improving wetland conditions.

Indicators of wetland quality in Europe, calculated from IWC data

Species included in calculation of the indicators were: **Dabbling ducks and allies:** *Cygnus olor*, *Cygnus cygnus*, *Tadorna tadorna*, *Anas platyrhynchos*, *Anas crecca*, *Anas strepera*, *Anas penelope*, *Anas acuta*, *Anas clypeata*, **Diving Ducks and allies:** *Netta rufina*, *Aythya ferina*, *Aythya fuligula*, *Bucephala clangula*, *Fulica atra*, **Waders:** *Haematopus ostralegus*, *Recurvirostra avosetta*, *Pluvialis squatarola*, *Charadrius hiaticula*, *Numenius arquata*, *Limosa lapponica*, *Limosa limosa*, *Tringa totanus*, *Arenaria interpres*, *Calidris alpina*, *Calidris canutus*, *Calidris alba*



UNEP - GEF African / Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Flyways – GEF Council Approval!

As you know, Wetlands International have been developing a UNEP-GEF proposal focusing on the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their critically important wetland sites in the African/Eurasian flyways. Following a long review process the project was submitted to the GEF Council for consideration at its meeting on 19-21 November. We are delighted to be able to tell you that the project was approved and received commendations from some Council Members on its quality. This means that the project has now moved to the next stage of planning before implementation. This will be a complex and time-consuming process and we do not expect the project to start before the middle of 2004. However, the Council's approval marks a significant step forward for the project after a period of long and hard work by Wetlands International and our partners, including a number of you involved in the annual waterbird counts. Our thanks to all of those who have assisted and lets hope for a successful implementation in 2004!

More detailed information on the project will be forthcoming on the Wetlands International website. However, briefly we can tell you that the project will address three main areas:

1. Development of the network of sites of critical importance to migratory waterbirds;
2. Development of the basis to provide capacity development for wetland and waterbird

management in four focal sub-regions (West Africa, East Africa, Middle East and Central Asia / Caucasus States);

3. Enhancement of access to and availability of information to improve flyway scale species conservation.

We anticipate a number of opportunities and benefits for IWC Coordinators:

- A planning and management tool for flyway scale conservation providing information on the critically important wetland sites and their role for migratory species;
- Support for additional surveys and investigations in lesser known wetland sites in order to help develop the network of critical sites;
- Training opportunities for counters / coordinators in basic and advanced census techniques;
- Development of common protocols for data submission for counters working in the IBA Programme and IWC;
- Internet based data submission for IWC Coordinators;
- An Exchange Programme for stakeholders across the region in particular those involved in site management and conservation;
- Demonstrations of best practice site management in 11 sites across the region.

Finally...

Season's greetings to everyone involved in waterbird monitoring work throughout the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia. We hope that your counts in January are successful, rewarding and enjoyable.

Many thanks indeed for your continuing contribution to the IWC