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News from the International Waterbird Census

Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia

Issue no. 3 - December 2001

Newsletter for Coordinators of national waterbird monitoring schemes

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Shortcut to this newsletter: http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/Newsletter/IWC_News2001.htm

Introduction

Welcome to the third issue in the recent series of IWC Newsletters. 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. IWC has always functioned against a background of financial frugality, and 2001 was a particularly difficult year for Wetlands International in this respect. Production of a report on IWC in

the region, and the third edition of *Waterbird Population Estimates* were both delayed by a major restructuring operation within the organisation. These short-term setbacks will be compensated for by the long-term advantages of having a strategically planned and resourced waterbird monitoring programme operating at global level, with a high global profile attracting global-level support.

Count dates: January 2002

Please note that the recommended dates for IWC counts for Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia are:

12-13 January 2002

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.

Counts of non-native species

Please remember to include introduced and escaped waterbirds on your national recording forms and in instructions to counters. We are accumulating interesting and important data on the occurrence of such species in the region.

Update of addresses of National Coordinators

Every year we try to update the addresses of all National Coordinators. The current list is available at: <http://www.wetlands.org/iwc/wpai&swa/partner/WPaINC.htm>.

If you know of any foreseen upcoming changes or mistakes in your current address (particularly e-mail), please let us know.

Submission of data

As the new database is not yet operational and thus not available for sending out to National Coordinators of waterbird monitoring schemes, we would like to stress that it is important for us to receive data in any electronic format you can deliver. When data are submitted in Excel, text or other electronic formats, it is much easier for us to process and check them. Of course, we greatly appreciate receiving reports on national counts, but it would be very useful if the included data were also sent by e-mail or on a diskette. The preferred structure of count tables is presented below. For answers to any questions please contact Niels Gilissen (gilissen@wetlands.agro.nl).

Date	Sitecode	Species	Count	etc.
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12-01-02	12345678	ANACL	56	
12-01-02	12345678	FULAT	1234	
13-01-02	87654321	ANACL	12	
.....				

National waterbird count reports – *a request*

Many national waterbird counting schemes publish periodic reports or scientific papers where results are presented. National Newsletters for waterbird counters are also a feature of many national schemes. Wetlands International is very interested in receiving copies of these outputs for its library. We are very happy to exchange them for our newsletter and other publications. Of course, we already receive many such reports and newsletters, but we are aware of a few that are not sent to us. As we get back to work compiling an IWC report for January 1997, 98 and 99, we are very interested in hearing from national waterbird count coordinators who may not have supplied us with their published results and Newsletters. It is interesting to include a table of all such outputs in the report (see Table 2 on page 1 of the report on IWC in 1995 and 1996, published in 1999). Please note that these reports in no way replace data sent to us in electronic format for presentation of international overviews!

Reorganisation of Wetlands International

2001 has been a challenging year for Wetlands International. The global organisation has, since 1996, been governed by three Regional Councils and a Board of Directors, with strategic decisions being made by a Board of Members every three years. This governance structure has proved inefficient and costly. Furthermore, each of the three regional offices established in Wageningen (The Netherlands), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Ottawa (Canada) in 1996 has suffered financial difficulties at some stage during the past five years. The reasons for this are varied and complicated, but 2001 saw major initiatives in restructuring the organisation, raising funds for the various offices and programmes, and cutting costs. A new, simplified operational structure and a strategic plan for Wetlands International over the period 2002-2005 were discussed at Wetlands International's triennial Board of Members' meeting in Wageningen from 28 November – 2 December 2001. The decisions made at this recent and extremely important meeting are available in full on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.wetlands.org/aboutWI/BoM/BOM3Decides.htm>

The financial situation for Wetlands International remains difficult. The legal closure of the Africa-Europe-Middle East office will take place soon and will accelerate the process leading to the creation of a globally unified Wetlands International. We hope this will contribute to a more settled and productive year in 2002.

Staff changes

We were very sorry to lose **Cecilia Reyes** in April 2001. Cecilia was our database manager for four years before moving to a more senior position in a software design company in Wageningen. Cecilia

was not replaced for financial reasons, and has been sorely missed -much work was hampered or delayed in 2001 as a result of her departure. A recent agreement with ALTErra Green World research, the Dutch government research institute where our offices are located, has resulted in improved terms to Wetlands International for **Lieuwe Haanstra's** secondment, and he will now do a lot of the work that was formerly Cecilia's responsibility. **Simon Delany** remains the one staff member working full time on waterbird monitoring work in the Wageningen office, assisted part-time by **Niels Gilissen** and managed for the time being by **Ward Hagemeijer**.

Progress with Waterbird Population Estimates, third edition

The publication *Waterfowl Population Estimates* (first edition 1994, second edition 1997) is one of the most important outputs produced by Wetlands International. It provides the basis for the 1% population thresholds used (among several other additional criteria) to identify Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Published under contract to the Ramsar Convention Bureau, this book is heavily dependent on counts organised by national waterbird monitoring schemes. Production of the 3rd edition of *Waterbird Population Estimates* was delayed in 2000 (we now prefer the term "waterbird" to "waterfowl" because "waterfowl" has different meanings in North American and UK usage). A First Consultation Draft was produced for the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention in May 1999. In the second half of 1999, a start was made with improvements suggested by a number of users, notably the inclusion of English names of species, and the separate presentation of descriptions of breeding and non-breeding ranges. Plans to finish and publish the third edition in 2000 ran into financial difficulties, which proved difficult to solve. Funding has, however been secured in recent weeks and we plan to produce *Waterbird Population Estimates 3rd edition* in 2002.

The second (1997) edition of Waterbird Population estimates is now out of print – look after your copy if you have one; it may become a collector's item! Because the third edition will not be available for nearly a year, we are planning to scan the book and post it on our website. Read the announcement here:

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

IWC Database Upgrade and linking

We are still working on the upgrade of the IWC-database, but this work has suffered from continuing delays caused principally by the departure of Cecilia Reyes, our Data Management Officer, who left Wetlands International in April 2001 (see "Staff Changes" above).

In the meantime, some positive developments have taken place. Lieuwe Haanstra from ALTErra Green World Research has been officially put on secondment with WI-AEME. This means that he can devote more of his time to the database upgrade, something that he has already been working on together with Cecilia during recent years. Furthermore, we have made efforts to raise funds to contract a consultant to finalise the work. We hope to have the necessary routines ready before spring 2002, so we can use them to do analyses of the 1997-1999 data for the new IWC-report.

Apart from these ongoing activities, we developed new initiatives to establish links between IWC and

other bird monitoring schemes and organisations. In the 2000 Newsletter we already mentioned the cooperation between BirdLife International and Wetlands International. This has further developed into a joint proposal for linking the databases in the framework of the African-Eurasian Flyway Project (GEF-PDFb, see Chris Baker's article below). Another promising development was the initiation in 2001 of cooperation between Wetlands International AEME and the United States Geological Survey - Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. USGS Patuxent is managing bird monitoring databases similar to the IWC-database and we are working towards establishing links in order to be able to exchange data. In addition to this, USGS Patuxent is interested in developing a mid-winter waterbird monitoring project and Wetlands International will help with this in any way it can. These initiatives fit within the framework of the Global Waterbird Monitoring Strategy, a draft of which has been developed by Gerard Boere (see "Global Strategy...").

IWC 1997-1999 report

In last year's Newsletter we announced that work had begun on the latest report on IWC in the region, covering January 1997, 1998 and 1999. The departure of Cecilia Reyes from the team (mentioned above) and changes in the priorities of Wetlands International's Africa – Europe – Middle East office delayed progress with this publication and we now plan to complete it in 2002.

A new deadline is coming up: the Meeting of Parties of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) late September 2002 in Bonn, Germany. The report will be presented at this meeting. Niels Gilissen, Waterbird Monitoring Assistant, will be able to spend most of his time during the first half of 2002 on analysing data and writing the report, together with Lieuwe Haanstra and Simon Delany. Time available to prepare this report will be limited, and it will be simpler than the report on IWC in the region in 1995 and 1996, published in 1999. We hope for the first time to be able to present a number of maps illustrating the numerical distribution of species.

We have received most of the expected data, and for several regions the coverage is complete or nearly complete, so we have a good basis for the IWC-report. We are, however, still waiting for data from some countries.

Urgent request for data – January 1997, 1998 and 1999

If you hold any data from these three seasons and have not yet submitted them to Wetlands International, please do so before the end of February 2002. Data received after this date are unlikely to be included in the next international overview report. The table below summarises the status in December 2001 of data held on the IWC database in the three seasons covered by the report on which we are currently working.

Country	1997	1998	1999
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	-	-	-
Romania	+	+	+
Slovenia	+	+	+
Syria	-	-	-
Turkey	-	-	+
Ukraine	-	+	+

Country	1997	1998	1999
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	+	-	-

Yugoslavia	+	-	+/-
Central Europe			
Austria	+	+	+
Czech Republic	+	+	+
Germany	+	+	+
Hungary	+	+	+
Slovakia	+	+	+
Switzerland	+	+	+
+ = available +/- = partly available - = not available			

West Mediterranean			
Algeria	+	+	+
France	+	+	+
Italy	-	-	-
Libya	-	-	-
Malta	-	-	-
Morocco	-	-	+/-
Portugal	+	+	-
Spain	+/-	+/-	+/-
Tunisia	-	-	+/-
+ = available +/- = partly available - = not available			

Please advise us of any inadvertent mistakes you might happen upon in the above table!

Lead Poisoning Report

The most recent report from Wetlands International titled *Lead Poisoning in Waterbirds: International Update Report 2000* was published in September. This work was funded by the UK Government Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). The report reviews the large-scale environmental problem of lead shot ingestion by waterbirds. An analysis of responses to a questionnaire prepared by Wetlands International and returned by 75 countries (governments and NGOs) and 9 international organisations worldwide is presented. The analysis addresses the current state of legislation concerning the use of lead shot, and describes levels of lead shot awareness, coordination, research and development. It also reviews relevant developments since 1995. The report concludes with recommendations to governments, non-governmental organisations, hunters' associations and ammunition manufacturers about lead shot. The report has been distributed in hard copy form to governments, organisations and to individuals who contributed information. It is available for download from the Wetlands International website at: http://www.wetlands.org/pubs&/Lead_P_Report.htm

Global Strategy for waterbird monitoring and conservation

Although 2001 has been a difficult year for Wetlands International, there have also been positive developments. One of these has been the secondment of Dr Gerard Boere from the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries in the role of International Programme Coordinator. In this role (as reported in the 2000 Newsletter) Gerard has drafted a global strategy for waterbird monitoring and conservation. In current jargon, we have to call this a PAP (Programme Action Plan).

This document, a 44-page blockbuster, comprises a strategic positioning of Wetlands International's waterbird monitoring and conservation activities, including flyway initiatives, global waterbird population estimates, flyway atlases, gap-filling censuses, species action plans and site networks. The draft is available to download from the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.wetlands.org/aboutWI/BoM/IWCstra.htm>.

Constructive comments on this document are still being sought and will be very welcome before 31 January 2002. The strategy recognises that wider use of the IWC data is possible and needed, but that this potential cannot be realised without greater financial stability. The purpose of the Strategy is to allow the development of IWC into a fully global and targeted programme, which will become a cornerstone of global biodiversity conservation policies. The Strategy sets out the international position and role of IWC, which, if accepted, should provide a sound basis to request and receive the resources necessary to implement that role and to provide the high quality products required.

The organisation and running of IWC are sure to be affected by the Strategy, but there are no plans to dismantle the current structure of separate censuses in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Neotropics and Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia. Rather, it is envisaged that the introduction of a common database structure and data management system will introduce greater standardisation in approaches to the Census, which will allow better integration of the resulting data into global projects such as *Waterbird Population Estimates*. It is also hoped that waterbird monitoring in North America can be brought under the IWC umbrella, making it a truly global census, though this is a long-term aim.

Global Waterbird Advisory Panel

Within Wetlands International's new governance structure, advisory bodies to be known as Advisory Panels are planned. The purpose of these bodies will be to feed expert advice and opinion about particular programme areas into the meetings of the Board of Directors, and to gain the input of the Board of Directors into these programmes. A Global Waterbird Committee will be set up as the first of these Advisory Panels. The principal role of this Committee will be to facilitate the implementation of the new global strategy for waterbird monitoring and conservation. Its remit will be the strategic planning and development of Wetlands International's waterbird monitoring and conservation programme. Discussion about the Terms of Reference of this Committee took place at the recent Board of Members' meeting in Wageningen, and draft Terms of Reference drawn up by Doug Watkins from Wetlands International's Oceania office, Taej Mundkur from the Malaysia office and Simon Delany from Wageningen will soon appear on the Wetlands International website. Your input will be welcome.

For technical advice and guidance, the existing Waterbird Monitoring Steering Committees for Africa, and Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia will probably be retained, but with fewer members. In recent years, these committees have had both strategic and technical roles, but from 2002 onward, the strategic role will be taken over by the new Global Waterbird Committee, and smaller technical groups will meet to advise and guide on technical matters. The frequency of meetings of both global and regional technical groups will be decided by financial considerations. Meetings will take place back-to-back with Wetlands International's triennial Board of Members' meetings, and there will probably be one intersessional meeting of each group in addition.

Ramsar CoP 8 and AEWA MoP 2, 2002

One of the most important ways in which waterbird monitoring activity feeds into conservation action is through International Conventions and Agreements. 2002 will be a crucial year for many of these Conventions and Agreements. A lot of publicity has been given to the Rio +10 Conference of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) in September 2002 in Durban (following the Conference of the Parties to this Convention in April in The Netherlands). Similar gatherings under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS, The Bonn Convention) and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) will also take place in 2002. The 8th Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the Ramsar Convention will take place in Valencia, Spain in November 2002, and the 2nd Meeting of the Parties to AEWA will take place directly after the CMS CoP in Bonn in September. Wetlands International will contribute significantly to both these meetings. Specific input to the Ramsar CoP from Wetlands International's waterbird monitoring programme will include the launch of *Waterbird Population Estimates 3rd edition*. Input to the AEWA MoP will be even more substantial, and will include an update to the *AEWA Action Plan* and the *Report on the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement Area*.

AEWA Conservation Guidelines

An important element of the AEWA Action Plan is a document known as the *AEWA Conservation Guidelines*, prepared by Wetlands International in 1999. The aim of this document is to facilitate implementation of the Agreement in countries within the AEWA region. These guidelines contain detailed practical advice to conservation practitioners at national level. There are nine *Guidelines* in the 1999 version, which is available on the World Wide Web and will be published in hardcopy before the 2nd Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement 2002. Of particular interest to coordinators and counters in national waterbird monitoring schemes is Guideline No. 9. Titled *Guidelines for a waterbird monitoring protocol*. This is a step-by-step guide to setting up and running a national waterbird monitoring scheme using IWC methodology. The guidelines are available at: http://www.unep-wcmc.org/AEWA/eng/info/mop1/1_8.pdf

If you would prefer to receive *Guidelines for a waterbird monitoring protocol* as a document in MS word by e-mail, please send a message to Simon Delany or Niels Gilissen in Wageningen.

Gap-filling Census

It has long been the wish of waterbird count coordinators at Wetlands International to organise a special effort in one season when as many of the gaps in coverage which exist in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia could be covered by a major counting effort. An approach has been explored whereby counters from countries where waterbird counting is well-developed (mostly in western, northern and central Europe) conduct intensive surveys in countries where coverage for the midwinter census is normally lacking or incomplete (mostly in southern and eastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia). A feasibility study for this Gap-filling Census was completed in 2001, with the assistance of a majority of IWC national co-ordinators. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed.

Although the feasibility study showed that a gap-filling census in the region would be expensive, we are now in a position to prepare a funding proposal for the real thing in January 2004 or 2005. This is later than originally planned because of a change in priorities at Wetlands International headquarters in 2001. The new global strategy for waterbird monitoring prepared by Gerard Boere (above) includes gap-filling census work, but the 2001 feasibility study made it clear that such a census in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia will be expensive. Added to this, there has been discussion as to whether it might not be more urgent under a global strategy to conduct gap-filling censuses in less well-known parts of the world, for example Africa. Others argue that a gap-filling census in Africa is likely to be more productive in a few years' time, after capacity for waterbird monitoring in many African countries has been further developed. Discussion will continue into 2002 and we will keep you informed of developments. There are some copies of the feasibility study still available – please e-mail Simon Delany or Niels Gilissen if you would like a copy.

Progress with AEWA GEF PDF-B African/Eurasian Flyways project

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The GEF project is seeking to enhance the conservation status of African/Eurasian migratory waterbirds and the critical sites they depend on. The current phase of the project is developing the full GEF project proposal that will achieve this goal. It comprises various reviews and needs analyses focusing on areas such as training, communications, development of a site network and demonstration project development. Through these activities it is intended that a number of the Implementation Priorities of the AEWA and Actions of the next Ramsar Strategic Plan (2003-08 in draft form) will be implemented.

The year 2001 has been very busy for the project when most of these activities have been completed or are nearing completion. The main task now is to synthesise the findings and integrate them into a project proposal for a full GEF project proposal. This year has seen a number of notable activities in the region, including:

Arab States Outreach Workshop, Manama, Bahrain, January 2001.

Representatives from Arabic speaking States and non-governmental organisations active in the Middle East were invited to a workshop that was held immediately following the BirdLife International, Middle East Regional Meeting. In plenary sessions over two days, delegates were invited to discuss the current status of and needs for wetland and waterbird conservation in the region. The meeting was facilitated by Mike Smart who is writing a report on the outcomes and recommendations of the meeting. The report will form an important part of the final GEF proposal and it is anticipated that this will include a number of strategic and catalytic regional initiatives focusing on training, communications, exchange of know-how and the identification and better understanding of the critical sites in the region for migratory waterbirds.

Stakeholder workshops and consultations at 11 wetland sites across the AEWA area, 2001.

The full GEF project will include 11 demonstration projects from 12 countries in the AEWA area.

During this phase of the project the proposals for these projects are under development. The countries and sites involved in this process are: 1.Haapsalu-Noarootsi Bays, Estonia; 2.Biharugra's Fishponds, Hungary; 3. Nemunas Delta, Lithuania; 4.Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania; 5.Kokorou & Namga wetlands, Niger; 6.Hadejia-Nguru wetlands, Nigeria; 7.Saloum-Niumi, Senegal/The Gambia; 8. Wakkerstroom and Seekoeivlei, S.Africa; 9.Dar es Salaam wetlands, Tanzania; 10.Lake Burdur, Turkey; 11.Aden Lagoons, Yemen.

This development phase has been characterised by one or more workshops at each site to engage stakeholders in the project and keep them informed of the project objectives and progress. The sites each focus on an aspect of best practice wetland management, such as ecotourism, participatory management, site management plan development and wetland restoration which will enable meaningful contributions to sustainable site management on the ground and demonstration of best practices for workers across the AEWA area.

Workshop "Towards defining a network of critical wetland areas for migratory waterbirds", Wageningen, The Netherlands, June 2001.

One of the key outputs of the full GEF proposal is expected to be the establishment of a network of sites of critical importance to migratory waterbirds in the AEWA area. Gaps in this network will then be identified and work undertaken to fill these through additional site identification and survey. This workshop was held to help develop the concept into a practical plan for its development. Stakeholder organisations and experts in waterbirds attended the meeting including representation from BirdLife International, Ramsar Bureau, AEWA, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the Palearctic and African Waterfowl Censuses. The first day focused on the development of the concept, for instance definition of what a 'critical' site and a 'network' would mean in the context of the project. The second day then built on this conceptual work discussing the key technical concerns that would have to be addressed to develop the network. For instance, the best existing databases to use, how they can best be linked, what will be the key problems in achieving these links. A report was written by Simon Delany and this is now being used to develop the final report for this component and the full GEF project proposal.

Central Asian and Transcaucasus States Outreach Workshop, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, August 2001.

Representatives from Central Asian and Transcaucasus States and non-governmental organisations active in this region were invited to a workshop that was held immediately following the Central Asian-Indian Flyway workshop (see below). In plenary sessions over two days, delegates were invited to discuss the current status of and needs for wetland and waterbird conservation in the region. The meeting was facilitated by Ward Hagemeijer who is writing a report on the outcomes and recommendations of the meeting. The report will play a similar role to that generated from the Arab States Outreach Workshop.

Second Project Steering Committee meeting, Toubacouta, Senegal, September 2001.

This was the second and final scheduled Steering Committee meeting of the project. First drafts of most of the project outputs were presented for review by the Committee, which comprises representatives from BirdLife International, Wetlands International, AEWA Secretariat, AEWA

Technical Committee, Ramsar Bureau, Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel and UNEP. This made for a very intense three days of work with Steering Committee members making very significant contributions to the revision of these documents - in all they reviewed 17 reports and proposals! The feedback from these discussions is now being used to revise the reports and prepare them for synthesis into the full GEF proposal.

Current stage of the project

Despite all the good work that has been done this year, the project timetable has slipped and the original planned deadline for submission to GEF at the end of 2001 will be missed. It is now planned to submit the project in March 2002 and we are working intensively to realise this deadline. The full GEF brief is now being written. Resource mobilisation is ongoing (one of the most challenging aspects of this project) to ensure that the funds available from GEF can be matched by co-financing from other sources (a pre-requisite to receive GEF funds). With this new timetable it is anticipated that the full GEF project will be able to start in late 2002 or early 2003.

Towards a Strategy for Waterbird and Wetland Conservation in the Central Asian-Indian Flyway

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The regions of Central and South Asia encompass one of the world's greatest but least known bird migration routes. Several important routes form a so-called Central Asian-Indian Flyway (CAIF), which thus extends from Siberia to the Indian subcontinent covering large intra-continental territories between the Arctic and Indian Oceans. The birds on their annual migration cross international borders of several countries. This continental flyway comprises large semi-arid habitats with limited wetlands, particularly in the staging areas, and different groups of migratory waterbirds appear to overlap considerably in their usage of important sites. Many countries along the CAIF have developing economies with inadequate allocation of resources for research and conservation. Many of the wetlands are situated in areas with dense human populations where they are actively and unsustainably exploited by man. The wetlands and waterbirds along the CAIF are consequently very threatened, and therefore in need of science-based and internationally co-ordinated conservation measures.

In response to these needs the project "Towards a Strategy for Wetland and Waterbird Conservation in the Central Asian-Indian Flyway", financially supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries with co-funding from the UNEP/Convention on Migratory Species Secretariat started in April 2001 for two-year period. Wetlands International through its headquarters in Wageningen and the regional office in Moscow is coordinating the project. Geographically, the project includes the area from the northernmost breeding grounds in Russia to the southernmost wintering grounds in the Maldives and thus incorporates 21 Range States of Central and South Asia and Trans-Caucasia. As a part of the large Asia Pacific region, the Central Asian-Indian Flyway has

been included in *The Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy*, which has been developed with the support of the governments of Australia and Japan and coordinated by Wetlands International Asia-Pacific office in Kuala Lumpur. The project aims to promote international coordination of conservation efforts between the Range States through the development and implementation of an Action Plan.

Central Asia and Trans-Caucasia are also the areas of particular concern for the GEF-funded project "Enhancing Conservation of the Critical Network of Wetlands Required by Migratory Waterbirds on the African-Eurasian Flyway" coordinated by Wetlands International (See Chris Baker's update on this project above). Whilst there is already a relatively high degree of communication and exchange of information and expertise between countries in Europe and Africa relating to critical wetland areas, this is not the case for the Central Asia region or for the Middle East. This is manifested in the absence of many countries from these regions as Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, CMS and AEWA. That is why the Outreach Programme of this project focuses on the six Central Asian and Trans-Caucasus states, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The first significant event within the CAIF project, an International Workshop, was held from 18-20 August 2001 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In conjunction, the Outreach Workshop was also carried out from 21-22 August. Both meetings were jointly organised by Wetlands International and the State Committee for Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and funded by the CMS, and the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. The combination of the two workshops in time and place helped saving funds and gaining synergy, and, besides that, allowed consideration of regional issues, relevant to wetland and waterbird conservation, over a longer period and in more detail.

Although the time for preparation was short, representation of the governments from the region was remarkably good: Armenia, Bangladesh, China, Georgia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan participated. Only 6 states - Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Tajikistan - were unable to participate. CMS, AEWA, the Ramsar Convention, UNDP, WWF, and ICF contributed to the meeting through the participation of their experts. Wetlands International was represented by five experts from the AEME-headquarters, the Moscow office and Asia-Pacific office.

The CAIF workshop examined current conservation status of migratory waterbirds and wetlands in the Central Asian-Indian Flyway (CAIF) and reviewed a preliminary draft Action Plan. Taking into account the amendments and comments of the participants, this draft has been considerably reworked since the workshop. The new version is being finalised within Wetlands International before being presented for consideration by the AEWA Secretariat. After the draft Action Plan has passed this consultation stage, it will be presented to the governments of the Range States for consideration and adoption. After that procedure it will act as a basis for implementation of waterbird and wetland conservation activity in the Central Asian-Indian Flyway 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!