

## **ASIAN WATERBIRD CENSUS: RESPONSIBILITIES OF NATIONAL/SUB-NATIONAL COORDINATORS**

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) forms part of the International Waterbird Census (IWC), a global programme coordinated by Wetlands International since 1967. The AWC was launched in 1987 and has grown considerably in geographic coverage and participation. More information is available on <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/waterbirdstrategy/default.htm>

The AWC is coordinated and implemented through a network of observers, national/sub-national coordinators (all volunteers) and one international coordinator (a professional). As the census has grown from a simple waterbird counting exercise to a more comprehensive programme to monitor waterbirds and wetlands, and to promote their conservation, the responsibilities of the coordinators have grown. The AWC International Coordinator is employed by Wetlands International to coordinate the census in close communication and cooperation with the national and sub-national AWC Coordinators.

The basic responsibilities of national/ sub-national coordinators in relation to identifying priorities for co-ordination and promotion of the AWC at a national or sub-national level are outlined in this document. Overall responsibilities and those dealing with co-ordination, reporting and networking will be relevant to all coordinators. Responsibilities relating to enhancement of public awareness, training and on the ground activities are considered important support activities to the AWC and may be relevant in some countries.

### **SPECIFICATIONS:**

The AWC is a largely voluntary programme and the AWC of national/sub-national coordinator is usually a voluntary position. In principle, Wetlands International is unable to provide any funds to coordinators or to their host institution/organisation for their time or coordination costs.

The position of AWC coordinator is not a fixed term appointment. When a coordinator wishes to step down, he or she is requested to recommend a new coordinator. The appointee should be enthusiastic, well organised and have the ability to continue the coordination work for the country or region. Any handover of responsibilities needs to be coordinated and well communicated to ensure minimal disruption to the network of participants and focus of the work.

Upon confirmation of acceptance of an individual as a national or sub-national coordinator, the coordinator is expected to be able to allocate enough time to fulfil the required responsibilities promptly.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

#### Overall responsibilities

1. Serve as a national or sub-national focal point and co-ordinator for development and organisation of the international AWC programme.
2. In countries with sub-national coordinators, the national coordinator needs to work closely and openly to support sub-national coordinators to strengthen local networks, census activities, conservation efforts, and identify and appoint new sub-national coordinators where needed.
3. Regardless of funding to ensure the sustainable running the programme at the national/sub-national level.
4. Co-ordinate and develop activities wherever possible with existing national, local institutions and national offices of Wetlands International.
5. Maintain close liaison with Wetlands International national offices and the AWC International Coordinator of Wetlands International and provide feedback (suggestions, mechanisms and opportunities) to improve the functioning and effectiveness of the AWC programme.
6. Raise funds and support fund-raising activities at the national/local level to strengthen national networks to implement the AWC.

## Responsibilities of National/Sub-national Coordinators

### Co-ordination, networking and reporting

7. Develop and maintain a network of enthusiastic and competent volunteers and professionals to participate in AWC activities.
8. Prepare and collate a list of wetlands of national and international importance for waterbirds to be covered annually by the census (particularly Ramsar sites, Important Bird Areas, UNESCO Man and Biosphere sites, World Heritage Site, Network sites for Cranes, Anatidae and Shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, national protected areas) and in this way obtain long-term information on the status, uses and threats to the wetlands. Sites should be prioritised in order of importance for coverage.
9. Coordinate monitoring of all internationally and nationally important wetlands for waterbirds on an annual basis and extension to potentially important wetlands.
10. Identify Globally Threatened species and populations occurring in the country or region being coordinated, and give a high priority to identifying and monitoring sites used by these species and populations.
11. Ensure distribution to existing and potential participants of standardised wetland and waterbird monitoring forms and instructions, annual reports, other literature and promotional material in a timely manner.
12. Ensure receipt of the completed count and site forms after each census from participants according to the annual schedule.
13. Verify validity and accuracy of all count and site information received (including species identification and numbers recorded).
14. Coordinate/undertake collection and retrieval of information on waterbirds and wetlands covered by the annual census into a standardised computerised database. (The database should be compatible to the central global database system maintained by Wetlands International.)
15. Submit annual count/site forms in hard copy or digital copy by email to Wetlands International within the deadline as agreed with the International Coordinator, for inclusion in the regional database and regional reports/reviews.
16. Maintain an up-to-date address list of participants to enable rapid liaison and feedback to the participants.

### Enhancement of public awareness

17. Co-ordinate and encourage publicising of results of the AWC and related events to the general public through national and local mass media: local language newspapers, radio, T.V., local newsletters, development of a national AWC website, and other media.
18. Compile and disseminate an annual national overview report to feed back to the voluntary network and relevant national authorities.
19. Provide accurate and up-to-date information to national and local government conservation agencies and non-governmental organisations on conditions of wetlands and waterbird populations covered by the programme.
20. Encourage and initiate conservation awareness activities to increase the profile of wetlands and waterbirds and strive to maximise involvement of the local people.

### Training and capacity enhancement

21. Co-ordinate development and adaptation, production and dissemination of local language waterbird identification and training material for wetland and waterbird assessment for use by participants of the census.
22. Facilitate training of network members in wetland and waterbird identification, assessment and monitoring techniques through organisation of workshops and training courses.