

Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census

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1. Letter from the AWC International Coordinator

Dear AWC coordinators and participants,

Once again I am very pleased to report to you the latest developments in the AWC since the last Newsletter (No. 6) in November 2003.

The biggest news from us on the AWC is the recent launch of the AWC 1997-2001 report in Edinburgh, UK on 4 April 2004. The long-awaited report was made available with funding from the Japan Fund for Global Environment, Convention on Wetlands and Convention on Migratory Species – and to whom we are extremely grateful.

As a follow up to the AWC coordinators meeting in October 2003, the *Strategy for development of the Asian Waterbird Census: 2004-2006* was finalised and endorsed by all the AWC national/sub-national coordinators at the end of 2003 as a guiding document for the development of the AWC in the next 3 years. Wetlands International will work closely with all AWC national/sub-national coordinators as a team to implement the Strategy for the needs of conservation and monitoring of wetlands and waterbirds in Asia. Besides this, AWC coordinators have also endorsed the responsibilities for AWC National/Sub-national Coordinators and International Coordinators. All these documents will be made available online shortly.

As we have been informed by the national coordinators, the AWC 2004 census has been very successful in many countries. We welcome the first ever counts from the Maldives and

encourage further submissions from this important island nation. Species reported during the 2004 census that are worth highlighting here include, a high number of Spot-billed Pelican (2,766) and Oriental Darter (1,080) in Cambodia; counts of Swan Geese (60,886) and Lesser White-fronted Geese (16,937) in China that exceed their population estimates; encouraging numbers of Nordmann's Greenshank (39) and Chinese Egret (508) in Malaysia; and a record-breaking number of 1,206 Black-faced Spoonbill by the international census. Findings of the AWC in Cambodia, Mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, as well as the results of the International Black-faced Spoonbill Census are summarised in this newsletter.

Finally, I hope you will continue to find information presented in the newsletter interesting. Your contributions and suggestions are welcomed. I would like to thank you for your kind support to the AWC, and look forward to continually working with all of you in promoting the census for the conservation of our waterbirds and wetlands!

Best regards,

David Li
AWC International Coordinator
Wetlands International

2. Launch of the AWC 1997-2001 Report

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We are pleased to announce that Wetlands International has formally launched the new Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 1997-2001 report entitled "*Numbers and distribution of Waterbirds and Wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region. Results of the Asian Waterbird Census: 1997-2001*" on 4 April 2004 in Edinburgh, UK in conjunction with the Global Flyway Conference jointly organised by the UK and Dutch governments and Wetlands International.

The first copies of this publication were presented to representatives of the Ramsar Convention, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Japanese Government by Ms. Jane Madgwick, Chief Executive Officer of Wetlands International. Dr. Nick Davidson, Deputy Secretary General at the Ramsar Secretariat, Mr. Marco Barbieri Technical Officer of the CMS Secretariat, and Ms. Shiho Kanie, Chief of International Team, Wildlife Division of the Ministry of the Environment of Japan congratulated Wetlands International for the excellent work and publication. The launch was chaired by Mr. Ward Hagemeyer, Head of Wetlands International's Species Conservation Programme.

In introducing this report at the meeting, Mr. David Li, on behalf of Wetlands International, first expressed his appreciation for the contribution of thousands of AWC volunteers. Without their support, the AWC would not have been so successful and this report would not be available.

The report presents the latest information on waterbird numbers and distribution, as well as the status of important wetlands in Asia.

- The report summarises the results of the counts from 1,392 sites in 22 countries including 61 wetlands of international importance listed under the Ramsar Convention, 32 Migratory Waterbird Network Sites in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and 43 Important Bird Areas.
- A total of 291 species of migratory and resident waterbirds and 15 species of wetland-dependent raptors (birds of prey) were recorded; and a maximum of over 4.5 million waterbirds were counted in 2001.
- The publication provides distribution maps for 110 species, including 24 globally threatened species.

The data in the report aims to contribute to conservation efforts of wetland management bodies, government agencies, conventions and NGOs at local and international levels. Forewords

kindly provided by the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands and the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (two major international data users) call on their Contracting Parties to use this publication to promote wetland and waterbird conservation nationally thereby demonstrating the importance of the AWC.

The publication is available from the Natural History Book Service at <http://www.nhbs.co.uk>, and will shortly be available for downloading at the Wetlands International Website <http://www.wetlands.org/>



Dr. Nick Davidson, Ms. Jane Madgwick and Mr. Marco Barbieri appreciating the new AWC publication together. Photo by Dr. Taej Mundkur.



Ms. Jane Madgwick formally presenting the AWC report to Ms. Shiho Kanie. Photo by Dr. Taej Mundkur.

3. AWC 2002 - 2004 Results Update

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As of 1 May 2004, a total of 1,051, 1,107 and 195 sites were counted in 2002, 2003 and 2004 respectively as reported by the AWC coordinators and individual counters (see accompanying Table). For the first time, we have received count results from 2 islands in Maldives in 2004. We encourage countries that have not yet reported their count results to do so as soon as possible, in

order for us to gain a holistic picture of the census.

Country/Region	No. of Sites Counted		
	2002	2003	2004
Afghanistan			
Bangladesh	37		
Bhutan	6		
India	356*	462*	
Maldives			2
Nepal	3	2	10
Pakistan	70	67	
Sri Lanka	76	68	
South Asia Total	548	599	12
Brunei	9		
Cambodia	5	1	6
Indonesia	44		
Laos			
Malaysia	23	47	41*
Myanmar	53	77	37
Philippines	49	49	61*
Singapore	1	9	
Thailand	9	26	
Vietnam	16	4	4
Southeast Asia Total	209	213	164
Mainland China	2	32	
Hong Kong	3	3	
Macau	1	1	
Taiwan	33	23	32*
Japan	106	116*	
South Korea	118	118*	
Mongolia		1	
Eastern Russia	2	1	2
East Asia Total	265	295	34
Australia	29		
New Zealand			
Papua New Guinea			
Australasia Total	29		
TOTAL	1,051	1,107	195

Note: * indicates the number that has been reported by the coordinators, although count data is yet to be received.



4. AWC News from the Region

The following section provides an update of the AWC 2004 activities and results in the region.

Cambodia

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The counts were conducted at 6 sites from 16 January to 2 February 2004. Three sites in the northwest Cambodia (Ang Tropeang Thmor, Angkor and Prek Toal), two sites near Phnom Penh (Bassac marshes and Basset marshes) and one new site in central Cambodia, the Chinet River in Kampong Thom Province. A total of 51 volunteers, including 37 Cambodian nationals

participated in the census. The total number of sites counted was higher than in 2002 and 2003 (5 and 1 sites were covered respectively) and the number of participants have also increased, mainly due to an unprecedented effort in Angkor (16 participants).

Despite the low number of sites, a total of 41,910 waterbirds of 40 species were counted. This is almost double that of the count in 2002 when the 5 same sites were covered. A total of 24,357 waterbirds were counted at Prek Toal where eight teams counted birds along rivers and on the lake shore, and 12 teams counted birds at their nesting colonies in the flooded forest; Tropeang Thmor reservoir with a large concentration of ducks of 2,470 Lesser Whistling Ducks and 874 Garganeys make up a total number of 9,024 water birds at the site. The remaining four sites Veal Samnap, Stung Chinet river, Basset marshes and Angkor area had counts of 604, 429, 5,802 and 1,694 waterbirds respectively.

Apart from the highest national record of Lesser Whistling Ducks mentioned above, high counts of the Spot-billed Pelican were made in Ang Tropeang Thmor and Prek Toal (870 and 1,894 birds respectively). A remarkably high number of 231 Sarus Cranes were also present in Tropeang Thmor in January. Such a high number was not seen previously at the site before, and so late in the dry season (March-April). Other species counts worth mentioning at Prek Toal are the Oriental Darters (1,077), Painted Storks (1,505) and Asian Openbill (2,405).

To improve coverage and participation of Cambodians in the future, we should involve more participants to cover wetland sites in Northeast Cambodia and the Coastal line. A National AWC meeting needs to be organised to coordinate the count in each province in the country, each province needs to be responsible to undertake the count and submit their data to the national coordinator. Meanwhile, the most important wetland site should at least be covered by the census.

Mainland China

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Fourteen teams, consisting of about 60 people, worked over a two-week period in early February 2004, to count waterbirds in as many wetlands as possible along the floodplain of the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River stretching through Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Jiangsu to Shanghai. The teams consisted of staff from nature reserves, provincial and county forestry bureaus, universities and expert volunteers from

non-government organisations. The exceptional importance of the floodplain wetlands is shown by the very large number of waterbirds recorded and major concentrations of threatened species.

The survey teams counted 515,896 waterbirds of 83 species. Individual Province counts were: Anhui - 171,841, Jiangxi - 138,643, Hunan - 133,306, Hubei - 47,469, Jiangsu - 15,796 and the Shanghai Municipality - 8,841.

The most common species group was the Anatidae (ducks, geese and swans) comprising 66% of the waterbirds counted; next were shorebirds (17%), gulls (7%), and egrets and herons (5%). The most common waterbird species recorded were the Bean Goose (79,758) and Swan Geese (60,886). Other species counted in large numbers were the Dunlin (40,709), Common Teal (36,483), Common Black-headed Gull (32,114), Tundra Swan (30,925), Greater White-fronted Geese (25,241), Spot-billed Duck (22,562), Falcated Duck (18,364), Lesser White-fronted Geese (16,937), Spotted Redshank (15,274), Grey Heron (10,900) and Pied Avocet (10,538).

Thirteen globally-threatened species and one near-threatened species were found during the survey. The counts of Swan Geese (60,886) and Lesser White-fronted Geese (16,937) exceeded current estimates of their respective global (55,000) and regional (14,000) populations. Large numbers of cranes were seen: 93% of the global population of the Siberian Crane (2,784 individuals counted), 93% of the regional population of the Hooded Crane (933 individuals), and 68% of the regional population of the White-naped Crane (2,716). 57% of the global population of the Oriental Stork (1,697 individuals) was counted. Other globally-threatened species seen in smaller numbers were Baer's Pochard (630), Scaly-sided Merganser (31), Baikal Teal (28), Saunders's Gull (10), Black-faced Spoonbill (2), Red-breasted Goose (1) and Swinhoe's Rail (1). Seven individuals of the near-threatened Ferruginous Duck were counted.

Funding for the survey was provided by WWF Netherlands. We are very grateful to the State Forestry Administration, the Provincial Forestry Bureaus, Nature Reserve staff and the members of the counting teams for their assistance in the planning and execution of the project.

Taiwan

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This year marked the sixteenth year of Taiwan's participation in the AWC. The census was

coordinated by the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan. The counts were conducted between 1 and 31 January 2004 and a total of 81,476 birds were recorded in 32 sites, a number somewhat less than the average from the totals of past several years. This was mainly due to the lack of data from some important sites. The sites counted with more than 5,000 birds and contain species which meet the 1% population criteria include Err-Chung (6,531), Pu-Tai (5,700, Black-faced Spoonbill 20 and Caspian Tern 500), Ao-Ku (5,502), Szu-Tsao (6,637, Black-faced Spoonbill 78), Tseng-Wen Chi (4,612, Black-faced Spoonbill 400 and Caspian Tern 450), Kao-Ping-His (3,882, Great Cormorant 2,000), Feng-Shan Reservoir (3,272, Great Cormorant 2,829, may be the same birds recorded at Kao-Ping-His), Chu-An (10,968, Pacific Golden Plover 1,740 and Kentish Plover 3,700) and Lan-Yang-His (10,571, Pacific Golden Plover 3,050 and Kentish Plover 4,150).

In this year's count, the globally threatened species recorded are the Endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (a total of 505 birds counted, Tseng-Wen-His alone has counted 400 birds, which is the highest count ever recorded in AWC), Scaly-sided Merganser (1) and Red-Crowned Crane (1); Vulnerable Laysan Albatross (1), Dalmatian Pelican (1), Chinese Egret (1), Baikal Teal (2), Lesser White-fronted Goose (1) and Saunders' Gull (only 26 was recorded this year).

Some vagrants recorded that are worth mentioning are the Pied Heron (1), Greater White-fronted Goose (4), Bean Goose (1), Red-breasted Merganser (2), Ruddy Shelduck (1), Long-billed Plover (2), Great Black-headed Gull (1), Grey Phalarope (1) and Mew Gull (1).

The census was coordinated by the National Coordinator Dr. Woei-horng Fang and more than 100 volunteers participated.

Malaysia

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The country-wide AWC census this year resulted in several interesting sightings and numbers. However, while the West Malaysian surveyors had a generally smooth time monitoring waterbirds, our East Malaysian counterparts had to battle heavy rains (and even flooding) to reach their target sites. Nevertheless, without the determination and commitment from all volunteers and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Peninsular Malaysia, the AWC 2004

(Malaysia) would be dormant. Appreciation also goes to various NGOs and State agencies that supported the volunteers and the programme by providing manpower and logistics.

To date, a total of 41 sites were covered resulting in 26,913 waterbirds of 76 species. The breakdown according to major waterbird groups is as follows: Cormorants and Darters (1 species, 48 individuals), Herons and Egrets (15, 6,609), Storks (3, 52), Grebes (1, 142), Geese and Ducks (3, 61), Rails and Gallinules (7, 385), Finfoot and Jacanas (1, 2), Shorebirds/waders (36, 17,487), Gulls and Terns (10, 2,127).

Amongst the highest counts (above 1,000 individuals) for species were the Black-crowned Night-heron (1,362), Little Egret (1,112), Lesser Sand Plover (3,181), Black-tailed Godwit (1,347) and Common Redshank (2,477). Sites with the highest waterbird counts (above 1,000 individuals) were Yong Peng (1,329), Kapar Power station (7,707), Sekinchan-Sg. Nibong stretch (3,897), Penaga-Bagan Belat stretch (1,139), Matang (1,015), Bako-Buntal Bay (Kg. Buntal) (2,722) and Jaie-Semera stretch (1,449). Seven Malaysian Important Bird Areas (IBAs) were covered this year. Kapar Power Station, currently Malaysia's most important shorebird site, joined the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network in July 2003.

Several globally threatened and near-threatened waterbirds were also recorded, including the Endangered Storm's Stork (13 individuals), Nordmann's Greenshank (39); Vulnerable Chinese Egret (508), Milky Stork (8), Lesser Adjutant (31); and Near Threatened Oriental Darter (48), Malaysian Plover (29), Far Eastern Curlew (20) and Asian Dowitcher (20).

East Malaysia

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The AWC gave cause to great excitement in 2004. A single maximum count of 429 Chinese Egret was obtained at a high-tide roost inside an aquaculture farm at Jaie-Semera in west Sarawak. The discovery of this significant number of Chinese Egrets was not entirely fortuitous. It was a result of timing the census with a very high tide before dawn. Under cover of darkness, they will congregate in aquaculture ponds, but do not remain after it gets light. They readily roost on tall mangrove trees during high tides, preferring the tops of sea-facing *Sonneratia* and *Avicennia*.

More trips were made to other sites in late January and throughout the months of February and March, confirming this behaviour. Counts

from other sites along this stretch of coast produced totals of 315 (Feb), 176 (Feb) and 83 on 11 March 2004. On 14 April, a flock of 47 birds were still present at Kampung Buntal, a fishing village in the Bako-Buntal Bay. At least 25 were in full breeding plumage, with bright yellow bills, distinct shaggy crests dropping behind the head, black legs and bright yellow toes.

The total of 429 constitutes 14.3% of the estimated world population for the species. This does not include the extensive intertidal mudflats which extend eastwards to the Rejang delta. In mid-October 2003, around 30 Chinese Egrets were observed at the mudflats on the Maludam peninsula.

These findings are consistent with the postulation by *The Birds of the Thai-Malay Peninsula* (Wells, D.R. 1999) that Sarawak's coast may be an important wintering site for the species. This number is also the single largest winter count of Chinese Egrets outside the Philippines, where the previously largest known wintering population is the waters between Cebu and Bohol, and at Olango island in particular.

The postulation by *Threatened Birds of Asia* (Birdlife International, 2001) that a small but not insignificant proportion of the world's population is dispersed along the coastline of Borneo and Sulawesi between October and March each year, and that the species may have been a common winter visitor in Sarawak in the late nineteenth century, is now strengthened. Over the next few years, it will be possible to determine whether this year's extraordinary count is a result of some environmental changes at other wintering sites or that western Sarawak has always been a major site for the population, but has just not been investigated before.

Myanmar

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In Myanmar, 37 sites were counted in 2004. Nine sites have been surveyed in the past and 28 sites were new sites.

A total of 52,702 waterbirds of 111 species were recorded during the census. The listed waterbird species were divided into twelve major groups. The counted number of birds and species of respective groups are: Grebes (2 species, 192 individuals), Pelicans (1, 68), Cormorants and Darters (3, 2,695), Herons and Egrets (11, 3,010), Storks (6, 366), Ibises (2, 210), Anatidae (23, 32,409), Cranes (2, 2,067), Rails, Gallinules and Coots (6, 3,492), Finfoots and Jacanas (3, 140),

Shorebirds (39, 6,657) and Gulls, Terns and Skimmers (13, 1,396).

Six globally threatened species were recorded. The White-winged Duck (5 individuals) is the only Endangered species as listed in the IUCN 2001 category. The Spot-billed Pelican (68), Lesser Adjutant (29), Sarus Crane (8), Masked Finfoot (3) and Indian Skimmer (1) are listed as Vulnerable. The Near Threatened species recorded are the Oriental Darter (227), Painted Stork (7), Black-necked Stork (3), Black-headed Ibis (200), Ferruginous Duck (1,066) and Black-bellied Tern (41).

Myanmar Bird and Nature Society would like to extend their appreciation to the participants of this year's census. MBNS is also extremely grateful to Mr. Tim Inskipp, Mrs. Carol Inskipp, Mr. Joost van der Ven and Mr. John Howes, who kindly joined their waterbird survey.

Nepal

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During the survey this year, a total of 10 valid count forms for 10 sites respectively was received. All these sites have been counted in previous years. These sites are from Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara Valley and Royal Chitwan National Park. A total of 44 participants took part in the programme.

In spite of several threats to the waterbirds, this year there has been encouraging numbers of Ruddy Shelducks (2,627) and Common Mergansers (473) from Chitwan alone. In the report sent from the TigerTops area, only 45 species were counted this year compared to 53 species last year. Species like the Lesser Whistling Duck (resident), Purple Swampphen (resident) and Great Black-headed Gull (winter visitor) were absent from Chitwan. There was only one Lesser Whistling Duck reported from the eastern sector of Chitwan. The complete absence of this widespread species from Bees Hazari Tal, a recently declared Ramsar Site, is noteworthy.

The count shows that several of the previously common species could not be recorded. There has been notable decline in the fish-eating waterbirds that feed on surface water fish species, for example gulls and terns. This is exemplified by the fact that no terns were recorded from all the sites counted in Nepal. In general, all the large waterbirds (storks and large herons) have also declined. This is rather worrying and it is apparent that the fish stock has been significantly lowered in Nepalese wetlands.

Public awareness on the wise use of wetlands should be increased and this is very essential. Because of over fishing, disturbance and hunting, the wetland birds continue to suffer.

Philippines

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The 2004 Asian Waterbird Census in the Philippines recorded a total of 113,412 waterbirds from 76 species. There were a total of eight new species, some of them common, which were recorded in the census as follows: Watercock, Common Coot, Long-billed Plover, Swinhoe's Snipe, Long-toed Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Brown-headed Gull, and White-winged Black Tern. There was a total of 890 Chinese Egrets counted from different parts of the country where the greatest concentrations were in the Visayan islands, in central Philippines. A new record of the Chinese Egret was made in a locality called Tanza, a coastal town in the southeast corner of Manila Bay. The Asian Dowitcher composed of 23 individuals was only recorded on Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary, a Ramsar Site and a site on the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network. Lake Mainit in the northeast corner of the island of Mindanao in south Philippines, was found to host about 5,300 Tufted Duck. Naujan Lake, a part of the North East Asian Anatidae Site Network, on the island of Mindoro is also important for Tufted Duck, unfortunately it was not visited for the 2004 AWC.

Sixty-one (61) localities were visited this year with most of the new localities coming from the coastal areas and fringes of Manila Bay. The Bay, as in previous years, has been proving to be an important feeding ground for migrating shorebirds. Puerto Rivas in Balanga, Bataan had the highest count from a single locality at 12,632 birds. It would be worthwhile noting that Puerto Rivas is also a coastal town along the western portion of Manila Bay.

There was an increase in the number of counters this year, which numbered 135, compared with 122 counters in 2003. The majority of the counters came from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, however it should be noted that the staff from its National Capital Region contributed to the AWC for the first time. A new group of Filipino volunteers who are members of the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines also participated in the count for the first time. The Junior Ecologist Movement, which is composed of students of the Cor Jesu College in Digos, Davao del Sur in southern Philippines also continued to contribute to the AWC.

Sri Lanka

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The Ceylon Bird Club carried out the annual waterbird census in Sri Lanka between mid January and late February 2004. Twenty-one members of the club and seven other people participated.

For the census the country has been divided into 10 regions. For many years now, the Trincomalee region and parts of the Jaffna region could not be visited because of the military situation, and the Batticaloa region could be included properly. The region named 'Puttalam to Chilaw - inland' could not be covered well.

The weather during the census was dry islandwide. A total of about 205,000 waterbirds were counted. (The maximum has been 303,610 in 1989 and the minimum 51,166 in 2001. This is the third consecutive year with a count of more than 200,000.)

About 64,000 ducks were counted, mostly in the north, north-west and south-east of the country. Wigeon, which has shown a dramatic increase from a handful of birds to many thousands in 25 years which continue to be found almost entirely in the first two regions named above. Unusual in the census were about 7,300 cormorants and shags in the inland reservoirs of the Polonnaruwa area.

Degradation of habitat was noted most in the area north of the Colombo harbour, which is so badly polluted that it will be left out of the census in the future.

Karagan Lewaya has been a prime site for waterbirds in the south-east. In the past several years an area which includes Karagan Lewaya has been the subject of proposals for 'development' of various forms, by which the wetland would be lost to the birds. In this northern winter migrant season it was a very rich site for waterbirds, with the following approximate figures from the census, all conservative estimates: 15,000 Pintail, 8,000 Garganey, 10,000 Curlew Sandpiper, 8,000 Little Stint, 8,000 Marsh Sandpiper, 3,500 Lesser Sand Plover and 200 Kentish Plover. The CBC has for many years been urging protected status for the site.

The Anavilundawa wetlands, Sri Lanka's second Ramsar Site, continued to show poor numbers of waterbirds. Its problems, described in previous reports, were aggravated this year by the islandwide drought.

Vietnam

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On 17 and 18 January 2004, staff from BirdLife Vietnam and volunteers visited four coastal sites in northern Vietnam to conduct the annual international Black-faced Spoonbill count and waterbird census in accordance with the AWC programme. Sites visited were the Xuan Thuy Nature Reserve (Ramsar site), Nghia Hung district and Thai Thuy District in the Red River Delta and Ha Nam Island in Quang Ninh province. Total number of waterbirds counted was 1,264, 294, 1,376 and 1,393 respectively. Furthermore, another count was made at Xuan Thuy site on 8 February 2004, a total of 776 waterbirds were recorded.

Due to the outcrop warm weather and adverse tide conditions on 17 and 18 January 2003, not many birds were found in all four sites. A combination of the two counts at Xuan Thuy with the maximum count of each species makes the total count of 1,725 birds at the sites. The total number of waterbirds counted in Vietnam makes a total of 4,788 waterbirds of 29 species.

The most common species are the Little Egret (1,367) and Common Black-headed Gull (1,097). Three species of conservation status recorded were: Endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (61 individuals), Vulnerable Saunders' Gull (2) and Near Threatened Black-headed Ibis (1).

The counts were made possible by the support from a KNCF-funded project entitled *Generating Community Support for Conservation at the Xuan Thuy National Park*.



5. International Black-faced Spoonbill Census 2004

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The 2004 Black-faced Spoonbill census was conducted on 16, 17 and 18 January 2004 by volunteers including experienced bird watchers, researchers and ornithologists.

A record-breaking number of 1,206 Black-faced Spoonbills were counted in this census. This is the second year to record over 1,000 individuals after the first time in January 2003 and it is the first time the number has exceeded 1,200

individuals. This is a 13% increase from the count in 2003, and it is much higher than 9.3% when we compare the counts of 2002 and 2003. The known wintering population of the Black-faced Spoonbill has been increasing from the early 1990s when this census began, except for slight drops of number in the winter of 1996-97 and 1998-99. In addition, the death of 73 Black-faced Spoonbills from avian botulism in Taiwan in the 2002-03 winter seems to have not had a major impact on the growth trend.

The actual number can be even higher than this present number because the number in Xuan Thuy, third largest wintering site of the spoonbills, seemed to be under-counted due to unsuitable tides during the census period. The increase of this count was mostly a result of the discovery of new wintering sites in Hainan Island in this census where a total of 62 birds were seen (c.f. twelve birds were counted in January 2003) while a new highest count of 238 birds was recorded in Hong Kong which is a 32% increase from the 179 birds recorded in the previous census.

A total of 54 sites were surveyed during the winter of 2003-04 and forty of these sites were found to contain the wintering Black-faced Spoonbills. Coverage in this census was the highest of other censuses in previous winters when you compare the 47 sites covered in the winter of 2002-03, 25 sites in the winter of 2001-02 and 27 sites in the winter of 2000-01.

Please visit the HKBWS website at <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/bfs/> to download the full report of the Black-faced Spoonbill 2004 census.



6. News on Global Flyway Conference

Flyway Monitoring – a major topic at “Waterbirds around the world”

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The Global Flyways Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in April was a wonderful get-together of over 450 waterbird scientists and conservationists from more than 90 countries. The presence of Government ministers from The UK, The Netherlands and Scotland, and the participation in the conference by HRH Prince Charles, who gave a passionate speech about albatross conservation during the two-hour final session, ensured that the meeting had a high profile.

On the evening of 3 April, a historic evening meeting of national coordinators of International Waterbird Census (IWC) from all over the world involved 64 participants from over 40 countries, who heard of plans for the globalisation of IWC, based on a new, industrial strength, user-friendly data management system. The warm atmosphere and delightful team spirit shown at this meeting provided a wonderful start to the conference. Abdoulaye Ndiaye's presentation on training courses for waterbird and wetland monitoring and conservation in Africa was a real highlight of this meeting. Nick Davidson, Deputy Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands wrapped up the proceedings, and he singled out volunteers contributing to waterbird counting schemes as being particularly worthy of praise and gratitude for their great contribution to waterbird and wetland monitoring and conservation. The Asia-Pacific region was represented in this meeting by participants from Australia, mainland China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

A symposium titled *Flyway Monitoring – rising to the challenge* provided a global overview of current monitoring approaches and programmes, discussed practical ways to fill gaps in coverage and increase effectiveness, and suggested ways of linking monitoring results more closely to the needs of waterbird conservation and management. This need for better communication of results to the users of monitoring information, including, for example, the development of waterbird biodiversity indicators, was identified as an area where Wetlands International will be able to make significant future improvements in its outputs.

The importance of consistent, standardised monitoring of waterbird species, and the sites they use, was a recurring theme of the conference, and the vital role of Wetlands International's International Waterbird Census (IWC) in global flyway monitoring was strongly emphasised in many events. The Asia-Pacific part of IWC, the Asian Waterbird Census received a particularly high profile with the launch of the latest census report, and work on the Yellow Sea coordinated by Mark Barter being the subjects of very well attended sessions. Lew Young also gave an excellent plenary presentation about the APMWCS, and Taej Mundkur was convenor of two symposia, one on the East Asia-Pacific Flyway and another on the Central Asian Flyway.

The “Edinburgh Declaration” and other results of the conference are posted on www.wetlands.org/gfc.

7. News on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy

Migratory Shorebirds of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway: Population estimates and Important Sites

Doug Watkins, Manager, Wetlands International-Oceania, doug.watkins@deh.gov.au

The consultation draft of "Migratory Shorebirds of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway: Population estimates and Important Sites" by M. Bamford, D. Watkins, W. Bancroft, G. Tischler and J. Wahl, is available for peer review at <http://www.wetlands-oceania.org> Please forward information about the consultation draft to everybody who might be able to comment in some way. All review contributions will be acknowledged in the final report and contributors will receive a printed as well as a CD-ROM version of the report. So it's definitely worth having a look at the draft.

Shorebird Action Plan Update

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The 2004 first quarter updates on activities to promote shorebird and wetland conservation in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway is now posted in the latest issue of *The Tattler* (Newsletter of the East Asian Australasian Flyway). *The Tattler* also contains other interesting news on surveys in China and observations of colour flagged birds. This can be downloaded from <http://www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/tattler/tat-39.pdf>

More news on the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Strategy can be found at the web site at <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/waterbirdstrategyNews.htm>.



English and Scientific names of bird species mentioned in the Newsletter

English Name	Scientific Name
Laysan Albatross	<i>Diomedea immutabilis</i>
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>

English Name	Scientific Name
Chinese Egret	<i>Egretta eulophotes</i>
Black-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Pied Heron	<i>Egretta picata</i>
Milky Stork	<i>Mycteria cinerea</i>
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Storm's Stork	<i>Ciconia stormi</i>
Oriental Stork	<i>Ciconia boyciana</i>
Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Black-face Spoonbill	<i>Platalea minor</i>
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>
Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>
Red-breasted Goose	<i>Branta ruficollis</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
White-winged Duck	<i>Cairina scutulata</i>
Falcated Duck	<i>Anas falcata</i>
Baikal Teal	<i>Anas formosa</i>
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Baer's Pochard	<i>Aythya baeri</i>
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Scaly-sided Merganser	<i>Mergus squamatus</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Siberian Crane	<i>Grus leucogeranus</i>
Sarus Crane	<i>Grus antigone</i>
White-naped Crane	<i>Grus vipio</i>
Hooded Crane	<i>Grus monacha</i>
Red-Crowned Crane	<i>Grus japonensis</i>
Swinhoe's Rail	<i>Coturnicops eximius</i>
Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>
Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Masked Finfoot	<i>Heliopais personata</i>
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Long-billed Plover	<i>Charadrius placidus</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Malaysian Plover	<i>Charadrius peronii</i>
Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Swinhoe's Snipe	<i>Gallinago megala</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Asian Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>
Far Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Nordmann's Greenshank	<i>Tringa guttifer</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Long-toed Stint	<i>Calidris subminuta</i>
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicaria</i>
Mew Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Great Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>
Brown-headed Gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>
Common Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Saunders's Gull	<i>Larus saundersi</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
Black-bellied Tern	<i>Sterna acuticauda</i>
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucoptera</i>
Indian Skimmer	<i>Rynchops albicollis</i>