

Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census

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1. Letter from the AWC International Coordinator

Dear AWC coordinators and participants,

Season's greetings! As the new year draws near, we once again welcome your active participation in the AWC, the AWC 2007 has been proposed for 6-21 January. The successful implementation of the AWC in recent years and the information collected has been crucial for the consolidation of conservation activities from site to international level across the Asia-Pacific region.

The AWC 2002-2004 report to be published in early 2007 with support from Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF) summarized that over 2,000 sites covered by AWC in the three year period with nearly 8 million waterbirds recorded annually. More than 470 sites met the criteria of internationally important site by either supported more than 20,000 waterbirds or recorded more than 1% of the biogeographic population of at least one waterbird species.

Your invaluable support over the years has ensured the success of the AWC which in turn has greatly stimulated wetland and waterbird conservation initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region.

The year 2006 set a milestone for the AWC development, funding from the KNCF helped realise the 2nd AWC national coordinators meeting in Manila in October 2006, where a long-term AWC strategy for 2007-2015 was approved in principle, which will lead the direction of the AWC development in future.

There are also some successes for developing national coordination agencies for the AWC. For

example, the Ministry of Environment Japan kindly agreed to share annual waterbird count data with Wetlands International; the Panaga Natural History Society in Brunei committed to lead the AWC from 2007; the National Council for Conservation of Wildlife, Pakistan took the role as national coordinator for Pakistan. Details of these developments are reported in the newsletter.

Look forward to 2007, Wetlands International will work closely with all the AWC national coordination agencies in implementing the AWC 2007-2015 strategy. We shall improve our communication and coordination with the AWC voluntary network, encouraging training activities in countries, encouraging AWC in all internationally important sites and ensuring reliable data is collected. We are planning to establish an AWC on-line data entry and result reporting system to improve the utilisation and sharing of AWC data for wetland and waterbird conservation. We are also working hard in raising funds to support AWC activities and we hope to report some good news in the next AWC newsletter.

Finally, I wish you all a very Happy New Year and a successful AWC!

Best regards,

David Li
AWC International Coordinator
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2. Report on 2nd AWC national Coordinators Meeting

David Li, AWC International Coordinator,
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The 2nd Asian Waterbird census (AWC) Coordinators Meeting was held in Manila, The Philippines on 8-10 October 2006. The meeting was organized by Wetlands International; hosted by the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB), Department of Natural Resources (DENR) of the Philippines and financially supported by the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund. A total of 50 people from 20 countries and regions participated, including AWC coordinators and their representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China (including mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan), India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Other participants included international and national NGOs (BirdLife international, International Crane Foundation, Alterra, Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, Haribon, and KAAKBAY) as well as Wetlands International staff from the Netherlands, Malaysia, India, Oceania, Ukraine and Russia Offices.

Since the establishment of the AWC in 1987, the first formal gathering of AWC coordinators was in October 2003 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and the recent meeting in Manila was the second. It provided a great opportunity for the coordinators to come together to review the implementation of the AWC Strategy from 2004 to 2006 and to develop a long term strategy for 2007-2015.

Mr. Angelo T. Reyes, the Honourable Secretary of the DENR, who is also the Cabinet Member of the Philippine Government gave a keynote address following the welcome remarks by Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, Director of Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, DENR, and opening speech by the Chair, Mr. Ward Hagemeijer, Head of the Wetland Species Conservation Programme of Wetlands International.

The importance of the meeting was highlighted by encouraging statements from Dr Nick Davidson, Deputy Secretary General; Dr Guangchun Lei, Regional Advisor for Asia of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and Mr. Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species. Both Conventions have called for Wetlands International and the AWC coordinators to continue to strengthen this important regional waterbird and wetland monitoring programme in Asia. Statements from Mr. Kazuaki Hoshino, Chair of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee and Director of the Wildlife Division, Nature

Conservation Bureau, Ministry of the Environment Japan; and BirdLife International (presented by Ms. Cristi Nozawa, BirdLife International –Asia Division) called for support from the AWC network for the development of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership and Central Asian Flyway Action Plan and the BirdLife International Important Bird Areas monitoring and globally threatened birds update programme.

Presentations on regional initiatives, included the WSSD East Asian Flyway Partnership development, Central Asian Flyway Action Plan development, BirdLife International's Important Bird Areas and Threatened Bird Update, UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane and wetlands project update, International Black-faced Spoonbill census and bird flu (highly pathogenic avian influenza) and migratory waterbirds update. These presentations clearly demonstrated how the data collected through the AWC provides a strong basis for the development and implementation of these major regional conservation activities.

Presentations and reports from all national coordinators provided an overview of the implementation of the AWC Strategy 2004-2006 and helped to identify priorities for the future development of the programme. The overviews further demonstrated the value of the AWC for building the interest and capacity of groups to undertake the census, in generating awareness of the importance of waterbirds and wetlands, support to designation of new conservation areas and the collection of new and important information on the distribution and abundance of waterbirds at the national level. The presentations also helped to identify the key common issues and challenges for further development of the AWC into a strong volunteer based programme generating high quality information on waterbirds and wetlands. These challenges were mainly in the areas of local capacity and expertise, data quality control, coverage of important sites, communication and access to domestic funding for basic implementation of the AWC counts.

Using the main issues identified and priorities that were proposed, the meeting focused on development of an AWC Strategy and Implementation Plan for 2007-2015. The revised Strategy provides clear targets that the AWC coordinators will need to tackle as a team. Participants agreed on priorities to further enhance and maintain geographic and site coverage, strengthen local networks and improve data quality, enhance communication and public awareness, enhance capacity building, focus and strengthen fundraising efforts, increase support to local, national and international decision making processes and enhance the coordination mechanisms. In addition, actions and

implementation plans to support the major objectives were discussed and prioritized. It was agreed that the Strategy would be finalised through consultation in the coming months and published for wide distribution across the network.

Key technical issues discussed included the potential to extend the AWC to other seasons (currently the focus is only on the January count), collection of additional sites and species information, data sharing and on line data entry and result reporting system, bird flu and fundraising and useful conclusions were reached. Detailed results of the discussion will be finalised and circulated in the coming months to the AWC coordinators network.

The meeting agreed that the national coordinators meeting is a useful formal mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the AWC 2007-2015 strategy, and one meeting every three years was deemed appropriate. A list server of the AWC networks was agreed to as one of the mechanisms to assist ongoing communication amongst the AWC coordinators and volunteers network.

On the first day of the meeting, a field trip to the Candaba Swamp was hosted by the Honourable Mayor of Candaba, Mr. Jerry L. Pelayo.

The event was highlighted in the national TV news programme and major newspapers in the Philippines. This was a novel and effective opportunity for promoting the value of the AWC in the Philippines and in the region, as well as providing international support to local conservation efforts.

3. AWC News from the Region

The following section provides the detail plan for the AWC 2007 and report of AWC 2006 in the region.

Bangladesh

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The Bangladesh 2007 AWC schedule is planned as following; kindly feel free to contact the Bangladesh Bird Club in participation the census.

5 January 2007

One day survey JU Campus, Zoo and Ceramic Factory near Dhaka City.

7-13 January 2007

Coastal Islands survey around Bhola in the Ganges Delta. About 400 km boat-ride for 7 days & 6 nights with accommodation on boat. Survey sites covering Char Samiruddin, Sikder Char, Nabir Char & Char Kashem, Char Shahjalal, Kalkinir Char, Nijhum Dwip, Jahajmara, Char Bari, Moulvir Char, Doba Char and Char Kashem.

15-18 January 2007

Survey reservoir, beach & estuary at Baroiar Haat, Cox's Bazar and Teknaf. Four days & 4 nights trip by bus/jeep. Sites covering Muhuri, Patenga, Badar Mokam and Shaporir Dwip.

25-26 January 2007

Survey river, beel & heronry at Rajshahi and Monakosha. Two days & 3 nights trip by bus/taxi. Sites covering Padma Riverbank at Rajshahi, Pochamaria Heronry at Rajshahi and Monakosha Beel

For trip to Sunderban Mangrove, and large inland wetlands (including Aila Hoar, Halir Hoar, Pashua Hoar, Shoni Hoar, Banua Hoar, Tangua Hoar, Hail Hoar and Hakalooki Hoar), detailed schedule are to be prepared by Dr. Ronald Halder and Dr. Paul Thompson.

Brunei

Andrea Bloem, Panaga Natural History Society (PNHS), andreabloem@brunet.bn

2007 will hopefully bring about a revival of the long-term yearly waterbird counting in Brunei. This year the AWC will be coordinated by members of the PNHS. To draw attention to this event a review and a press-release was made after the AWC meeting in Manila. The press release reached all local newspapers (English, Malay and Chinese) and the Borneo Post, covering the whole of northern Borneo. One of the desirable results from the AWC Meeting was contacts was reestablished with neighbouring countries and further coordination and mutual support are subject to discussions now.

An announcement was made to encourage people to participate in counting waterbirds this coming January. This was sent to members of PNHS, Brunei Nature Society (BNS), the University of Brunei (UBD), the National Museum and there was also effort to revive the interest of some previous volunteers. We are aiming for a minimum of 10 participants, in order to form 5 teams of two (1 experienced combined with 1 junior birdwatcher). With these groups it should be possible to count all the areas that were counted in 2002. The counts will be conducted during the time period suggested by Wetlands International.

Cambodia

Hong Chamnan, Wildlife Conservation Society – Cambodia, wcs.hc@everyday.com.kh

1999 saw the inception of the AWC in Cambodia with bird counts in several places done by an estimated thirty participants. We have worked hard to encourage people to join the AWC by engaging them in the processes of conservation and impressing upon them the importance of the bird surveys. For a successful AWC, we need to involve not only local people but also relevant agencies to work together. AWC coordinators in each province were nominated in order that they will be more effective while taking on more responsibility for AWC in their provincial domains and regularly submit data to the national coordinator.

The objectives for the AWC in Cambodia are,

- To improve the quality of AWC data to achieve the aims of monitoring waterbird populations
- To enhance geographic and site coverage of the AWC
- To improve communication amongst AWC volunteers in each site
- To develop training, communication and public awareness programmes for the AWC

In 2007, we plan to conduct the AWC in January to ensure the accuracy of data. We will continue to ensure all volunteers will undertake adequate planning for the census. We will closely work with the government to encourage establishing protected areas in all IBAs. We will also establish AWC coordination mechanisms in every province to collect count forms in a timely manner after the census.

Besides the areas which have been covered annually, we plan to cover important wetland areas in the coast of southwest Cambodia and northeast of the country along the Mekong River. We will encourage volunteers in all provinces to ensure their participation.

We also plan to seriously improve communication amongst AWC volunteers by conducting regular meetings to implement the AWC 2007-2015 strategy.

We will conduct training courses on waterbird identification for volunteers to build up their knowledge and capacity. Moreover, we will continue to write articles about the AWC in Cambodia to the government in order to involve government agencies.

Indonesia

Yus Rusila Noor, Wetlands international – Indonesia Office, biodiversity@wetlands.or.id

In 2007, Wetlands International – Indonesia Programme will continue to coordinate the Asian Waterbird Census in Indonesia. In relation to the rapid dispersal of Avian Influenza, the coming AWC in Indonesia will be used to collect information about the important sites of waterbirds as well as collecting information on the event of mass waterbirds mortality.

As have been implemented previously, the AWC 2007 will bank its strength on the voluntary participation of national network members. A cooperative programme with Wildlife Conservation Society's GAINS (Global Avian Influenza Network for Surveillance) is being developed to improve the implementation of AWC 2007. This cooperative programme will mainly focus on the improvement of:

- Promotional materials and events
- Wider coverage of the census, including the distribution of forms as supplement of WI's magazine
- Improvement of data quality through short training for participants at some important sites
- Public observation, with possibility of inviting public figures
- Uploading observation data on the website
- Feedback to data contributors, including publication of census result

We do hope to gain improved data, in term of census coverage as well as data quality.

Japan

Ms. Noriko MORIWAKE, Wildlife Division, Nature Conservation Bureau, Ministry of the Environment, JAPAN, NORIKO_MORIWAKE@env.go.jp

The Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MoE) launched the Monitoring Sites 1000 Project in 2003, which is meant to monitor natural ecosystems in Japan. The project aims at detecting ecosystem changes by continuously collecting and analyzing data in support of biodiversity conservation. Anatidae and shorebirds are counted as biological indicators of the well-being of inland-waters and tidal-flat ecosystems in the project.

In the Monitoring Sites 1000, the population, species composition of the Anatidae and their habitat environment are being monitored at 80 sites of lakes and marshes during every migratory

season (spring and autumn) and wintering season. A total of 456,033 individuals (37,998 swans, 122,444 geese and 295,591 ducks) were observed at the last winter survey (mid-January) in 2006.

The population, species composition of shorebirds, Black-faced Spoonbill, Saunders's Gull and Common Shelduck and the health of their habitats are being monitored at 45 monitoring sites of tidal flats during every migratory season (spring and autumn) and wintering season. The present monitoring of shorebirds is derived from the similar successive research launched in 1988, therefore considerable data has been accumulated. A total of 24,225 shorebirds (32 species), 172 Black-faced Spoonbills, 2,499 Saunders's Gulls and 2,992 Common Shelducks were observed at the last survey in mid-January 2006.

In addition to the surveys under Monitoring Sites 1000 project, Japan has a simultaneous census of the Anatidae which is separately conducted at ca. 9,000 sites all over the country in mid-January by the MoE. In the simultaneous census of the Anatidae, ca. 800,000 swans, ca. 120,000 geese and ca. 1,870,000 ducks were counted at ca. 9,000 sites in mid-January, 2006.

For Cranes, stable wintering grounds of the Hooded Crane and White-naped Crane are found only in Izumi and Yashiro in Japan. The local governments have been conducting censuses of those species. A total of 10,027 Hooded Cranes and 2,486 White-naped Cranes were found in Izumi and 13 Hooded Cranes were found in Yashiro in January 2006. The Red crowned Crane is counted at its feeding sites in December and January by the MoE and Hokkaido prefectural government. A total of 1,081 Red crowned Cranes were found in the eastern Hokkaido area in January 2006. The number of the Red crowned Crane has been steadily increasing and first numbered over 1,000 individuals since the count started in 1953.

The census of the above-mentioned waterbirds is also going to be conducted in mid-January 2007. The results of Anatidae and shorebirds census conducted under 'Monitoring Site 1000' project will be submitted as AWC data. Also, to supplement this data, the total number of Anatidae species counted by simultaneous Anatidae census and the crane population data will be provided separately.

We would like to thank all the participants who counted the waterbirds and reported the count data.

Nepal

-Dr Hem Sagar Baral, CEO, Bird Conservation Nepal, hem@himalayannature.org

With the recent historic peace accord between the government and the Maoist rebel groups, people in Nepal are enjoying the much needed peace which was taken away for nearly a decade.

This means the year 2007 will see increased participation as well as a number of important wetlands to be covered. We have established good contact with a grassroots organization at Ghodaghodi Tal, a Ramsar Site in the far west Nepal for its coverage, site support and reporting. We aim to cover this wetland as well as other important wetlands in the far west.

We also aim to cover all the important sites that were covered in 2006. These include lakes at Pokhara, wetlands in Koshi and Chitwan. We also aim to systematically cover the Rara Lake, the largest lake in Nepal to find out what birds use the wetlands during midwinter.

Like previous years, we plan to launch the waterbird count programme jointly with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and mobilize some of the technical staff under this department. The first round of notice has already been sent to all potential counters. People are encouraged to cover any other major wetlands in the area and send records to us. Bird Conservation Nepal has already highlighted the count in their scheduled bird watching calendar which should help to make this event more successful. Himalayan Nature will support us in data gathering process as before.

A proposal has been submitted to access a small amount of funding from WWF Hong Kong. If funded we aim to conduct a training workshop in Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, central Nepal for people involved in counting to improve their data collection skills. This will ensure better data quality on which we can carry out trend analysis on waterbird populations.

Copies of all the data thus collected will be sent to Wetlands International in Kuala Lumpur. A copy will be kept in Nepal for national records. I am sure this event will once again be a very important event for us. I take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers for participating on the count in 2006. My special thanks to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Tiger Mountain Group of Companies, Bird Education Society, Koshi Camp Pvt Ltd, Lumbini Buddha Garden Pvt Ltd and Himalayan Nature staff for all their kind help. I look forward to receiving similar help in 2007 as well.

Pakistan

David Li, AWC national Coordinator, Wetlands International

In October 2006, Mr. Umeed Khalid, Conservator (Wildlife), National Council for Conservation of Wildlife (NCCW), Ministry of Environment of Pakistan was nominated as the national coordinator for the AWC. The nomination was formalized through an official letter received from Dr. Bashir Ahmed Wani, Inspector General Forest/Member Secretary of the NCCW.

We hope through the leadership of Mr. Umeed Khalid, a centralized AWC national coordination network will be re-established. The success of AWC in Pakistan can be achieved again after early 1990s. We look forward a successful AWC in 2007 from Pakistan.

Thailand

Petch Manopawitr, Bird Conservation Society of Thailand, pmanopawitr@wcs.org and Krairat Aeam-amphai, Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand

The AWC in January 2006 set a new record for Thailand, with 94 sites covered and a total of 474,297 waterfowls of 123 species identified and counted by over 120 observers from many groups of bird watchers and protected area staff. This report provides a detailed update of the summary report in last AWC Newsletter (No.11).

The sites have been re-grouped and assigned certain codes by the Wildlife Research Division for future reference and improved data quality. The categories included Non-hunting area (NT), National Park (NP), Wildlife Sanctuary (WS), Wildlife Conservation Development and Extension Station (WC), Forest Park (FP) and Wetland (WT). Except the Wetland category, all have conservation status according to Thai law. This year, 29 Non-hunting areas, 20 National Parks, 16 Wildlife Sanctuaries, two Wildlife Conservation Development and Extension Stations, one Forest Park and 26 Wetlands were surveyed.

The Wildlife Research Division under the Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) continued to mobilize many counters through its wildlife research station and protected area network around the country to cover the majority of protected area sites. BCST volunteers and key local bird groups helped to cover major sites outside the protected area such as the Inner Gulf of Thailand, Lower Central Plain,

Mekong River around Chiang Saen, Bung Khonglong and Ao Pattani.

With support from Wetlands International, BCST was able to coordinate the most comprehensive count for the Inner Gulf of Thailand in recent years consisting of 20 sub-sites and other 15 key wetland sites in central and southern Thailand such as Ao Bandon (IBA TH041), Pak Phanang, Laem Pakarang (IBA TH045), Pak Nam Krabi (IBA TH048) and Mu Ko Libong (IBA TH050). A total of 76,818 waterbirds of 91 species were counted and the report of this survey is available upon request.

Prior the count period, BCST held a one day training course for counters on waterbird identification and survey technique at Mahachai Bay Mangrove Research Station, Sumut Sakhon province and had a field practice at Khok Kham coastline. The training was very well received by over 60 volunteer birdwatchers. BCST used the opportunity to arrange group leaders and to divide sub-sites for the count of in the Inner Gulf of Thailand. The event was supported by Wetlands International; the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources; and instructors from the wildlife research division, the Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation.

Overall, the sites were well distributed throughout Thailand from the northern provinces of Chiang Rai (Nong Bong Kai and Chiang Saen Basin), the north-east (IBA sites of Buriram and Nong Khai), the central (Bung Boraphet), the east (Chonburi), the lower central plain (Ayutthaya, Nakorn Pathom, Pathum Thani), the Inner Gulf of Thailand (20 sub-sites) and most major wetland sites in the southern provinces (Sam Roi Yot NP, wetland sites in Chumporn (Thung Kha-Ao Sawi, Mo Ko Chumporn NP), Surat Thani (Ao Bandon), Nakorn Si Thammarat (Pak Phanang, Sichol), Patthalung (Thale Noi), Phang Nga (Laem Pakarang), Krabi (Pak Nam, Bo Moung), Trang (Mu Ko Libong) and Pattani (Ao Pattani).

The count in the Inner Gulf of Thailand from Bang Pu to Laem Phak Bia was conducted by over 60 BCST members and volunteers with financial support from Wetlands International. This resulted in a total of 52,042 waterbirds of 81 species being counted including one Black-faced Spoonbill (EN), one Spoon-billed Sandpiper (EN), 13 Nordmann's Greenshanks (EN), 5 Asian Dowitchers (NT), 9 Black-headed Ibises (NT), 31 Ruffs and 101 Grey Herons. The concentration of the Great Knot (1,450) at Laem Phak Bia was the largest-ever count made in Thailand. At least 8 species were recorded in internationally important concentrations (following Wetlands International 2002). These were the Little Cormorant (1,401), Black-winged Stilt (2,726), Lesser Sand Plover (6,298), Greater Sand Plover (1,945), Black-tailed

Godwit (3,078), Marsh Sandpiper (2,719), Red-necked Stint (3,447) and Brown-headed Gull (5,731).

The Lower Central Plain including the Wat Pai Lom non-hunting area and Tan-en non-hunting area (also located within the central plain) received the highest count with a total of 242, 424 waterbirds. The most numerous species counted was the Asian Openbill (239,196 birds). Other notable records in this area included 109 Painted Storks (NT) and 2 Spot-billed Pelicans (VU).

The Bung Boraphet non-hunting area received less extensive counts this year with a total of 32,145 waterbirds including the Oriental Darter (5), Ferruginous Pochard (4), Gadwall (1), Ruddy Shelduck (10), Northern Shoveler (6), Common Teal (72), Cotton Pygmy-Goose (883) and Garganey (2,222). The most numerous species counted at Bung Boraphet were the Lesser Whistling-Duck (15,961), Asian Openbill (4,532) and Little Egret (2,403).

Counts totaling 1,435 ducks were made at the Nong Bong Kai non-hunting area near Mekong River in Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai Province. This included six Baer's Pochard (VU), 20 Ferruginous Pochards, 20 Tufted Ducks, 7 Mallards, 2 Gadwalls, 7 Northern Shovelers, 324 Spot-billed Ducks, 150 Northern Pintails, 260 Garganeys, 50 Common Teals, 13 Eurasian Wigeons and 575 Lesser Whistling-ducks. Nine Glossy Ibises were also observed at the site.

The globally threatened/near-threatened species counted were Spot-billed Pelican (4), Chinese Egret (35), Milky Stork (3), Lesser Adjutant (1), Painted Stork (177), Black-headed Ibis (12), Black-faced Spoonbill (1), White-winged Duck (5), Baer's Pochard (8), Spoon-billed Sandpiper (1), Asian Dowitcher (25) and Nordmann's Greenshank (22).

The most numerous species counted were the Asian Openbill (243,885 which accounted for 51.4% of total count), Lesser Whistling-duck (92,836, 19.6% of total count), Lesser Sand Plover (11,201), Cattle Egret (10,857), Little Egret (9,306), Pond Herons (7,929), Brown-headed Gull (7,719), Black-winged Stilt (4,915), Black-tailed Godwit (4,435), Red-necked Stint (4,053), Intermediate Egret (3,834), Garganey (3,825), Black-crowned Night-heron (3,718), Red-necked Stint (4,017), Kentish Plover (3,633), Whiskered Tern (3,528), Little Cormorant (3,379), Marsh Sandpiper (3,200) and Great Egret (3,128).

In total, 20 IBA sites of 62 were covered during the AWC 2006 namely, Chiang Saen Basin (TH007), Doi Phu Nang NP (TH015), Sanambin NHA (TH020), Bung Khong Long NHA (TH021), Mae Wong NP (TH023), Umphang WS (TH024),

Huai Kha Khaneng WS (TH026), Kaeng Krachan NP (TH029), Bung Boraphet NHA (TH030), Lower Central Plain (TH031), Inner Gulf of Thailand (TH032), Khao Sam Roi Yot NP (TH036), Thung Kha (TH038), Ao Bandon (TH041), Laem Pakarang (TH045), Na Mounng Krabi (TH048), Mu Ko Libong NHA (TH050), Thung Tha Laad (TH053), Thale Noi NHA (TH056) and Ao pattani (TH058).

In 2007, at least 154 wetland sites have been identified for survey. DNP staff will continue to carry out country-wide waterbird survey especially in protected areas category while BCST and its partners will continue to cover key wetland sites both inside and outside the protected area system. We aim to cover a greater range of other potential sites and IBAs as well as revisit all the key wetland areas. We also plan to improve data quality by providing training and survey equipments to local staff in protected areas and to local bird groups. Communication among local coordinators will be enhanced to quicken the process of data gathering and the AWC can be used as a tool to promote conservation of wetlands and waterbirds around the country.

Acknowledgement: The report would not have been possible without contributions from Philip D. Round (BCST/Mahidol University), Wanlaya Chanittawong (DNP), Kritsana Kaew Plang (BCST) and all dedicated counters who submitted their count forms.

4. International Black-faced Spoonbill Census 2007

Yat-tung YU, Coordinator, International Black-faced Spoonbill Census, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, ytyu@hkstar.com

The annual International Black-faced Spoonbill Census will take place on 19-21 January 2007. This census is very essential to the conservation of this globally endangered species because it can provide a comparable and useful figure to assess the status of this species. Last year, a new high record of this species at 1679 individuals was counted but this species is still facing a high risk of extinction from various threats in its breeding, staging and wintering grounds.

You are cordially invited to join the census, especially to colleagues in the Black-faced Spoonbill's range countries and territories. The date also coincides with the Asian Waterbird Census.

To help our preparation, please kindly contact us to let us know whether you will be participating in the census and the site you will be responsible for. Please send me an email at hkbws@hkbws.org.hk and bfspoonbill@hkbws.org.hk

Guidelines and suggestions to the census are available for your reference. The report of the last census is also available for downloading at <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/bfs/index.html>

Moreover, if you are interested in getting more information on this species, or have interesting information about this species, you are welcome to read and post the information in a special forum inside the HKBWS Forum. The address is: <http://www.hkbws.org.hk/phpBB2/viewforum.php?f=30>

5. Waterbird Population Estimates fourth edition published!

Simon Delany, Waterbird Conservation Officer, Wetlands international, Simon.Delany@wetlands.org

The fourth edition of the Wetlands International publication *Waterbird Population Estimates* was printed in November and will be distributed in December and January. All coordinators of AWC will be sent a copy. Please let us know if you do not receive it in the coming weeks. Publication was delayed because of the need to do urgent, unplanned work related to Avian Influenza outbreaks in 2005-2006. The decision to print it as a book, rather than a CD also necessitated the raising of additional funds.

The publication presents authoritative information on geographical distribution, population estimates and population trends for the 878 species recognized as "waterbirds". One of the most important functions of the publication is to provide the basis of the 1% threshold for each population which allows sites holding numbers above this level to be recognized as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Of the 2,305 "biogeographic populations" into which these species are divided, globally, we now have estimates for 1,816 populations (79%) and trends for 1,200 (52%). In Asia we have estimates for 84% of populations, and in Oceania, for 75%. Information on population trends is now available for 44% of waterbird populations in Asia and 43% in Oceania. The conservation status of

waterbirds is more critical in Asia and Oceania than in any other regions of the world. In Asia, a worrying 62% of populations for which we have trends are decreasing or extinct, compared to only 10% which are increasing. In Oceania, 17% of waterbird populations have already gone extinct.

6. News on the Launch of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership

Dr. Taej Mundkur, Wetlands International-South Asia Office, taejmundkur.wi@vsnl.net

On 6 November 2006, the Partnership for the East Asian – Australasian Flyway was launched in Bogor, Indonesia. The ceremony was hosted by the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry. A total of 16 Partners participated in the Launch and 1st Meeting of Partners: Russian Federation, USA, Japan, Republic of Korea, The Philippines, Myanmar, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, the Ramsar Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species, the International Crane Foundation, BirdLife International, Wetlands International, WWF International, and the Australasian Wader Studies Group. Whilst the World Conservation Union was unable to attend, their letter of endorsement was tabled at the meeting. The Flyway Partnership is seeking to include all countries and identified China as a priority because of its importance for migratory waterbirds.

The Flyway Partnership is an evolution of the previous decade of work conducted under the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy and its species-group Action Plans. The new collaborative framework is designed to increase the work on sustainable use of internationally important sites for migratory waterbirds. The existing three species-group Site Networks will be combined into the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Site Network.

The 1st Meeting of Partners elected Australia as the Chair for a term of two years and the Republic of Korea as Vice-chair for the term of one year. The meeting made a number of decisions to establish the administrative arrangements for the Flyway Partnership and to develop a work plan for 2007 as a first step towards implementation of a five year Implementation Strategy. Australia, the Republic of Korea, Japan and USA offered to provide initial funding for a Secretariat in 2007.

The Partnership agreed that the list of migratory waterbird species and populations under the partnership would include some additional seabird species that have populations that spend most of their life history within the Flyway.

The Meeting of Partners agreed to write to the members of the previous Crane, Anatidae and Shorebird Working Groups requesting them to consider the Implementation Strategy of the Flyway Partnership. They will be invited to draft a Terms of Reference for their specialist group to provide support to the Flyway Partnership.

Partners agreed that three thematic groups were needed in 2007 to develop advice on the issues of “sustainable development and capacity development”, “communication, education and public awareness” and “science”. The development of a Communication Plan for the Flyway Partnership was considered a priority for 2007. The Asia-Pacific Working Group on Migratory Waterbirds and Avian Influenza established in early 2006 will be included under the Partnership.

Partners identified activities that would be undertaken in their countries and by their organisations across the Flyway in 2007 to support implementation of the Partnership. Task groups were also identified to progress administrative arrangements for the Flyway Partnership and to contribute to specific work plan activities for 2007. Recommendations of these task groups will be tabled at the next Meeting of Partners, which is scheduled for November 2007.

English and Scientific names of bird species mentioned in the Newsletter

English Name	Scientific Name
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola spp.</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea modesta</i>
Black-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Chinese Egret	<i>Egretta eulophotes</i>
Milky Stork	<i>Mycteria cinerea</i>
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Black-faced Spoonbill	<i>Platalea minor</i>
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna arcuata</i>
White-winged Duck	<i>Cairina scutulata</i>
Cotton Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas Penelope</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Baer's Pochard	<i>Aythya baeri</i>
Ferruginous Pochard	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
White-naped Crane	<i>Grus vipio</i>
Hooded Crane	<i>Grus monacha</i>
Red-Crowned Crane	<i>Grus japonensis</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultia</i>
Asian Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Marsh sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Nordmann's Greenshank	<i>Tringa guttifer</i>
Great Knot	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	<i>Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus</i>
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Brown-headed Gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>
Saunders's Gull	<i>Larus saundersi</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>

Note:

The sequence and nomenclature of waterbird species used follows the *Waterbird Population Estimates – Fourth Edition* (Wetlands International 2006).