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# Asian Waterbird Census

Sept 2016



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Dear Reader,

We are very pleased to provide you with the latest Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census.

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the volunteer participants, coordinators and supporters who have contributed their time, efforts and resources to the many achievements and actions accomplished during the first half of this year. Plans are moving ahead for the 2017 Indian Ocean Coastal Waterbird Counts as well as the annual AWC 2017. We are also pleased to provide an update on the IWC online database, data acquisition and regional reporting.

We also acknowledge the generous support of the Ministry of the Environment of Japan that enables us to coordinate the census regionally.

Good luck in your future monitoring and conservation efforts and we look forward to continue working closely with you in this important endeavour.

With kind regards,

Taej Mundkur and Tom Langendoen  
AWC Core Coordination Team

#### Dates for AWC 2017

The recommended dates for the AWC 2017 counts are from Saturday 7th to Sunday 22nd January, covering two weeks and three weekends. These dates are for guidance only and counts from any date in January are very welcome.

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#### **In memory of two wetland champions**

With great sadness we learnt recently of the passing of two true giants of waterbird and wetland conservation, **Luc Hoffman** and **Hugh Boyd**. Both were committed environmentalists and great supporters of our work, who will be greatly missed by all of us at Wetlands International. We would also like to extend our thanks to the family and friends of Hugh Boyd, who very kindly donated to Wetlands International in honour of his memory.

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#### **Celebrating the 50th count of the IWC: 'Let's make it count!'**

This year is the 50th anniversary of the International Waterbird Census (IWC), one of the world's most important and valuable monitoring programmes. The IWC network has shared hundreds of inspiring stories and images from around the world, demonstrating the various ways we are working together to conserve wetlands and waterbirds. Here are just a few of our favourites:

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including first counts from Timor Leste, [Afghanistan](#) and the Pacific Island of Palau.

- [Growing media coverage](#) in the print and electronic media in many countries highlighting the findings of the waterbird counts as well as pressing conservation issues for waterbirds and wetlands.
- [Half a million waterbirds counted in Barr al Hikman, Oman](#). Steps are now being taken to designate and protect this important site.
- [Baltic countries hold the first jointly coordinated survey of wintering waterbirds](#). This will provide important information on the numbers in the Baltic Sea, and tell us a lot about how the birds are distributed at sea.
- The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency gave a major boost to waterbird counts in East Africa, supporting counts in several AEWA Contracting Parties (Chad, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, [Rwanda](#), [Burundi](#) and Madagascar) and restarting IWC counts in Chad, Rwanda and Tanzania after many years.
- Great involvement of participants in several countries contributing to the [Caribbean Waterbird Census](#) in January/February and [Neotropical Waterbird Census](#) in February and July.

Many, many more stories are available on our [website](#), facebook and instagram pages!



Waterbird counts at Lake Chilika, India

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[Indian Ocean Coastal Survey 2017](#)

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occasion of the 50th anniversary of the IWC, Wetlands International is launching the 'Coasts Count!' campaign, focusing on action for coastal wetlands in January/February 2017, with a special emphasis on the Indian Ocean region.

After the worldwide success expanding and celebrating the waterbird census earlier this year, we will work to solidify its legacy by gaining concrete commitments for coastal site conservation and increasing understanding of coasts through waterbirds. As part of this campaign, we are initiating a large-scale survey along the coast of the Indian Ocean in Africa, Asia and Australia in 2017. This will support much needed population estimate updates, help us understand the distribution of coastal species in these flyways and give more insight into the importance and status of coastal wetlands around the Indian Ocean.

We have already secured some support for the counts, but much more is needed in particular:

- Experienced birders to help with the counts and train local enthusiasts in countries with lower capacity.
- Good optics, especially telescopes.
- Any donations that can help cover the costs of local counting teams, especially food and fuel.

We have launched a [new webpage](#) with a focus on countries that could benefit from international participation and support to the local count effort. Any leads or offers are welcome, please [contact us](#) if you are interested to help with this initiative!



Map of countries along the Indian Ocean invited to participate in the 2017 Indian Ocean Coastal Waterbird Count.

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## #Waterbirdscount monthly feature

As part of our campaign to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the International Waterbird Census, we invited our partners to share their favourite images of wetlands and waterbirds each month. Links to [January](#), [February](#), [March](#), [April](#), [May](#) and [June](#) take you to different parts of the world. In the last two months, July focuses on [coastal wetlands of India](#) and the August highlights the [importance of the Yellow Sea](#) to the East Asian- Australasian flyway and beyond.



Ruddy Turnstone at Miramar beach, Goa. Photo by Arabinda Pal.

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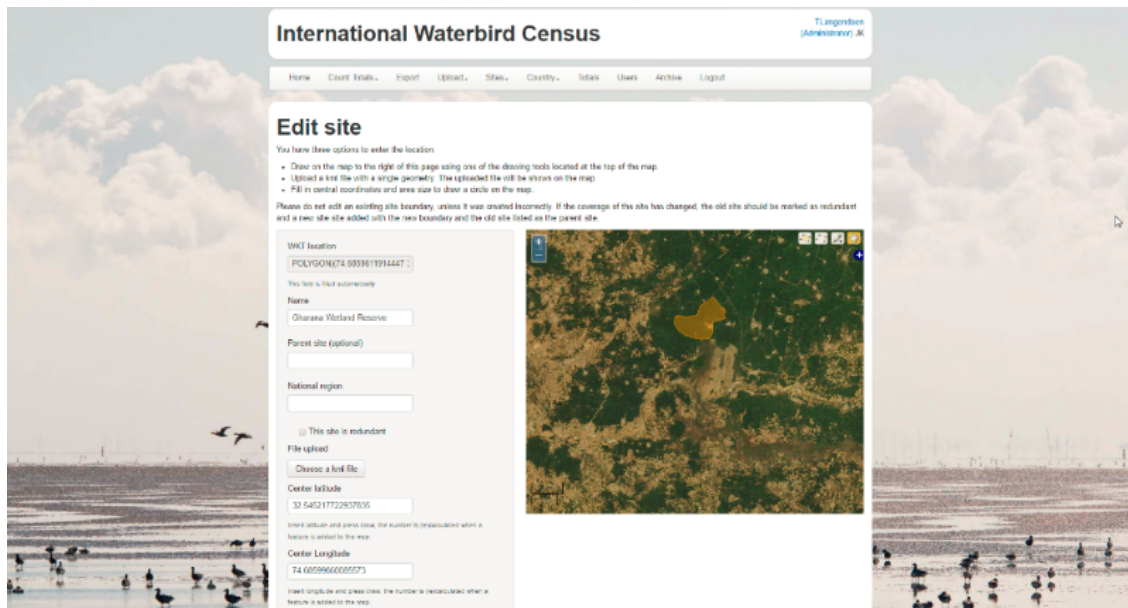
## Update on the IWC Online Database

We are pleased to announce that the International Waterbird Census (IWC) online platform is now operational and up-to-date with the latest Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) counts for most countries. The system gives national coordinators a platform to access their historical data or to upload and review site boundaries and new count data.

Currently the system is only available for use by national coordinators of the IWC, but

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[Contact us](#) for further information.



Drawing site boundaries is just one handy feature of the IWC online system.

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### [Update on 2016 AWC counts](#)

Many thanks to the participants and national coordinators who have already started submitting their AWC 2016 results, including Pakistan, Brunei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Australia and some Indian states. We propose to further test the IWC online database using these results and foresee more rapid turnaround reporting results.

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### [Update on 2008-2015 AWC summary report](#)

We have held off finalising the production of the AWC 2008-2015 regional summary report, as we have been awaiting information from a few key countries and contributors. We are pleased to report that the bulk of the outstanding information has now been received and we expect to finalise the report by mid-October. We will keep you posted!

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Wetlands International Indonesia has secured support for the coordination of the Asian Waterbird Census 2017. The National Geographic Foundation for Science and Exploration Asia has granted funds to support our project on “Asian Waterbird Census – Indonesia: Inventory and capacity building”. This project aims to respond to the request from the government to strengthen local capacity for monitoring through greater involvement of NGOs, universities as well as government staff responsible for management of sites of important for waterbirds. This is to be done in a more coordinated and sustained manner using the volunteer-based Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) programme as a basis. The project activities will therefore focus on i) Coordination of the Asian Waterbird Census in Indonesia through engaging volunteers, ii) strengthening the capacity of birdwatchers and government staff in waterbird identification and monitoring skills through training workshop and mentoring, iii) undertake short surveys and monitoring at key wetlands of international and national importance for waterbirds in Indonesia, iv) promote conservation action at key sites through dissemination of survey and AWC coordination results and dialogue with local agencies and public.

Given the size of the country, the project adopts a two pronged strategy, firstly short surveys at important sites (Ramsar sites, Flyway Network Sites, protected areas) where training of staff will enable increased monitoring related activities to be followed up and secondly to support monitoring of internationally/nationally important sites for waterbirds as yet unprotected.

The results from this census will be submitted through the newly established International Waterbird Census online database maintained by Wetlands International Headquarters in the Netherlands. The data will then be included in flyway level summaries and analyses that will be shared with the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) Partnership, Ramsar Convention and the global Waterbird Population Estimates updates and others. These results will also feed into the global IWC50 campaign to raise awareness and implement conservation action in the EAAF and other major flyways.

For further information and how to support this project, please contact the [national coordinator](#).

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A poster from the IWC50 produced by Wetlands International Indonesia

### Migration of People!

Ms **Budsabong Kanchnasaka**, our AWC coordinator in Thailand for the last few years will be retiring from government service shortly (National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department of the Royal Forest Department(RFD)). We wish to thank Ms Budsabong for all her support and efforts in coordinating the counts in Thailand and welcome Mr **Krairat Eiamampai** as the new coordinator.

The Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST) jointly coordinate the counts with RFD and Ms **Thattaya Bidayabha** takes over the responsibility for BCST from Mr **Ingkayut Sa-ar**, whom we thank for his support.

We would also like to acknowledge the support and input in the AWC work by Dr Judit Szabo, Science Officer of the EAAF Partnership Secretariat in Korea who has moved back to Australia. More on her role is posted [here](#).

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### Coordinated northward migration count of the Chinese Yellow Sea

In mid-April, our China office, in partnership with the Academy of Geography and Agricultural Ecology, CAS, Beijing Biodiversity Protection and Research Center and China Wildlife Conservation Association, organised a “Yellow Sea-Bohai Sea Synchronized Waterbird Survey Training Workshop” in Beijing. The event brought together representatives from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, State Oceanic Administration and State Forestry Administration – the three main agencies responsible for coastal wetland management. Importantly, it also brought together heads of nature reserves and their staff from the Yellow Sea who are keen to work with university professors, research students and others to strengthen the monitoring of their



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Bohai coast. A report is being compiled and will be made available shortly. [See here for a blog](#) by Taej Mundkur, who joined the reserve staff team in a count at the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve.



Staff from the Yellow River National Nature Reserve joining the April 2016 counts

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## Counts along the Korean Peninsula

This April & May, counts were held in wetlands along the Yellow Sea coast in both North Korea and South Korea.

The counts in North Korea were a repeat visit by the Nature Conservation Union of Korea (NCUK) and Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust (PMNT). Reports from the 2016 visit will be available soon, but you can find much more information about this exciting initiative and the 2015 visit [here](#).

In South Korea, counts were focused on the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper, but Birds Korea also took the opportunity to assess the numbers of other species at the important Nakdong and Geum Estuaries. Read [Nial Moores excellent blog](#) post to find out more about these counts and wetlands.

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## AWC India Coordinators Meeting

The AWC in India is traditionally coordinated by a network of active state coordinators

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opportunity to review progress and to look ahead at organising future AWC activities, including the 2017 Indian Ocean Coastal Waterbird Count. The meeting was organised by our South Asia office and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). Avendus Capitals, under their ongoing collaboration with our South Asia office on conservation and wise use of wetlands, kindly provided financial support for this meeting.

The participants will follow-up the meeting by strengthening and supporting the waterbird monitoring networks in their region. We look to continue the successful cooperation with Bird Count India and improve cooperation with state agencies. These actions are expected to benefit conservation of waterbirds and wetlands in the country and across the Central Asian Flyway.



Participants at the Delhi workshop take a short birding break

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## **AWC Seminar Malaysia**

On 25 June 2016, the Malaysian Nature Society organised an Asian Waterbird Census (Malaysia) Seminar entitled 'Charting the Future of Malaysia's Most Important Migratory Waterbird Roost Site: the Kapar Power Station Ash Ponds' to focus attention on the most important shorebird roost in peninsular Malaysia. The seminar brought together representatives and experts from the Malaysian Government, institutions of higher learning, corporate, and national and international non-governmental organisations. The site has been covered during the annual AWC, as well as other counts, with upwards of 10,000 migratory and resident waterbirds being reported. The power company Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) recognise the importance of this site and have been a long-time ally and supporter of the awareness raising and conservation efforts at this site and have expressed their willingness with work with others. The outcomes and



Photos from the Kapar seminar, by Wetlands International Malaysia

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### [New article on Manila Bay](#)

Arne Jensen has recently published a new article on the waterbird trends, threats and status of Manila Bay in the Philippines. This is one of the most important sites for migratory waterbirds in the Philippines. It also easily qualifies as a wetland of international importance, as it hosts up to 100,000 waterbirds and 23 species are present in numbers that exceed 1% of their entire biogeographic population. The article was recently published in the special edition journal for the 10th Philippine Bird festival and is available [here](#).

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## Upcoming Events

### **1-10 September: [World Conservation Congress, Hawaii](#)**

A number of meetings on waterbirds and wetlands being organised, including a workshop on the [Yellow Sea and EAAFP wetlands](#) on 4 Sept

### **2-6 September: [World Shorebirds Day: Global Shorebird Counting 2016](#)**

**1–2 October 2016: [10th Australasian Shorebird Conference. Auckland, New Zealand](#)**

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Partnership (EAAFP) will be hosted by the Government of Singapore. The meeting brings together Flyway partners and provides an important opportunity to review work implemented since the last MOP in Japan in January 2015 and plan ahead. These will include activities to strengthen monitoring of waterbirds, management of flyway network sites and other important sites, awareness raising, and improved functioning of the partnership. Information will become available [here](#).



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