

News from the International Waterbird Census Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia



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Newsletter for national waterbird monitoring coordinators and observers

The main purpose of this newsletter is to keep coordinators of national waterbird monitoring schemes in Europe, North Africa, Southwest and Central Asia, up-to-date with developments in the International Waterbird Census (IWC). It is also intended for counters and all others interested in IWC. This newsletter is actively sent to all national coordinators and is available for download for all others. For those who are behind with data submission, we especially wish to kindly request that you send waterbird count data up to and including **January 2008**. This newsletter was compiled at Wetlands International's headquarters in Ede, The Netherlands. Please e-mail if you have questions or comments: post@wetlands.org

Staff News

At Wetlands International (WI) headquarters in Wageningen, the Netherlands, **Ward Hagemeijer** is head of Biodiversity and Ecological Networks and **Szabolcs Nagy** is now Programme Manager – Biodiversity, responsible for IWC and related work. **Taej Mundkur** started work this year as Programme Manager – Flyways under the Shell Partnership. **Simon Delany** is Senior Technical Officer - Waterbird Conservation, responsible for IWC, Waterbird Population Estimates and various other publications and projects. Essential contributions are also made by Technical Assistant **Stephan Flink**. **Umberto Gallo-Orsi** is now responsible for WI input to the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW)

project and **Nicky Petkov** and **Moussa Diop** provided invaluable technical input to this project in 2009. **Nicholas Tubbs** coordinates work relating to Avian Influenza and acts as a focal point for the Wetlands International Specialist Groups. **Alexander Solokha** in Moscow coordinates work in Central Asia. Further afield, **Bharat Jethva** in Delhi, India coordinates the Asian Waterbird Census, **Oliver Nasirwa** in Nairobi, Kenya coordinate the African Waterbird Census and **Daniel Blanco** coordinates the Neotropical Waterbird Census in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Consultants who have worked closely with us on our waterbird work in 2008 include **Tim Dodman**, and **Rodney West**.

Count dates: January 2010

Please note that the recommended dates for IWC counts in 2010 in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia are:

16-17 January 2010

Recommendations for the counts:

- For the convenience of volunteer counters, the recommended dates cover the traditional weekend nearest the middle of January. These dates are for guidance only and counts from any date in January are very welcome
- Please submit your data in the standard manner recommended by Wetlands International, using the site names and site codes on the official site list, and providing details of any changes in, or additions to the site list

Development of new IWC database system

Wetlands International enjoyed a data management partnership with Alterra for over 12 years. After the move of Wetlands International from offices in the Alterra building in Wageningen, it became clear that it would be preferable to establish our own, independent system. A new, modern, Web-based, GIS enabled system was programmed in 2009 by Jonathan Palmer at the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York under our partnership with the Global Avian Influenza Network for Surveillance (GAINS).

Jonathan will visit in February 2010 to hand over the new system to Stephan Flink, who now becomes Technical Officer – Information Management, and we plan to roll it out globally later in the year. We expect that the new system will be suitable for use at national level and we hope that National Coordinators of waterbird count schemes lacking modern data management systems will join us in using the new system.

Wader Atlas wins an award!

It was recently announced that the book *An Atlas of Wader Populations in Africa and Western Eurasia*, produced by Wetlands International, together with the International Wader Study Group, has been awarded third place in the 2009 BTO/British Birds Best Bird Book of the Year Competition.

It's excellent to get this recognition for the large team of writers and editors who put the book together, and for the even larger numbers of researchers and counters whose work is included. We hope the book will be useful to decision makers whose policies affect the conservation of these birds, but it is also aimed at scientists, birdwatchers, waterbird counters and others who spend time in the places graced by these wonderful birds.

Full details of the awards will be published in the February edition of the journal *British Birds* and in the March/April edition of *BTO News*.

A copy of the Wader Atlas was sent to each of the Coordinators of IWC in June, and the book is now available on special offer at NHBS: http://www.nhbs.com/an_atlas_of_wader_populations_in_africa_and_tefno_162194.html&tab_tag=album

IWC Review

There has been a tendency in recent years for biodiversity related work to become increasingly difficult to fund. The IWC and associated work coordinated by Wetlands International has benefited from projects related to Global Flyway Agreements and Avian Influenza, but it has become ever more difficult to obtain funding for the core long-term monitoring work, particularly work necessary to liaise with the network of count coordinators and the IWC database.

At its most recent meeting in May 2009, Wetlands International's Global Waterbird Advisory Group (WIGWAG) discussed the growing challenge we face to get this core work funded. It was decided to undertake a full stakeholder review. An initial questionnaire was circulated widely over the summer of 2009 to gain the perceptions of as wide a group of stakeholders as possible. Many thanks to those of you who contributed to this questionnaire survey, which resulted in a report by an external consultant, David Pritchard titled *International Waterbird Census Review: consultation on scope*, available here: <http://www.wetlands.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=DMvNduc6rs4%3d&tabid=773&mid=5895>

The next stage will be an external review of technical and organisational capacity improvements necessary to run the scheme and an assessment of the necessary funding for technical up-grading of the scheme and for its effective management. This will be followed by a meeting in 2010, where we hope a consortium of donors will agree on a sustainable funding strategy. Current plans are to attach this to the meeting in celebration of the 15th anniversary of AEWA in June. We are very hopeful that 2010 will mark the start of a new era in Wetlands International's waterbird monitoring work.

Data submission overview by country

The table presents a summary of which countries have sent waterbird count data for inclusion in the IWC database in each year between 2002 and 2009. If you see that your country has not yet sent data for some of these years, we hope this will encourage you to send them as soon as possible. It is important to use the recommended formats when submitting data, to prevent delays in importing your data into the IWC database. Data from 2002 to 2006 are nearly complete, and for most National Coordinators, the priority now should be to send data from **2008 and 2009**.

+ = available +/- = partly available - = not yet available

	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Baltic/Nordic								
Belarus	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Denmark	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Estonia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Finland	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Iceland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kaliningrad	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Lithuania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Norway	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Poland	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Sweden	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Black Sea/East Mediterranean								
Albania	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Bosnia& Herz.	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+
Bulgaria	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Croatia	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Cyprus	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Egypt	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Greece	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Israel	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
Lebanon	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Macedonia	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Palestine A	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romania	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Russia	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Serbia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Slovenia	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Syria	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Turkey	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-
Ukraine	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Central Europe								
Austria	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-
Czechia	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
S Germany	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Hungary	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-

Slovakia	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Switzerland	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
North-west Europe								
Belgium	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-
France	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Germany	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Ireland	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
UK	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
South-west and Central Asia								
Armenia	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Azerbaijan	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Bahrain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Georgia	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Iran	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Iraq	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jordan	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-
Kazakhstan	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	-	+
Kuwait	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Oman	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Qatar	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Russia	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tajikistan	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Turkmenistan	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
UAE.	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Uzbekistan	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Yemen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
West Mediterranean								
Algeria	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
France (Med)	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Italy	+	+	+	+	+/-	-	-	-
Libya	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-
Morocco	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
Spain	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Tunisia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

2010 Slender-billed Curlew Survey

The Critically Endangered Slender-billed Curlew (SBC) *Numenius tenuirostris* was last definitively recorded in Hungary in 2001. A Working Group for the species, led by Nicola Crockford, was established under the Convention on Migratory Species at the end of 2008. The group has been working this year on a project to organise surveys to search for SBC within the framework of IWC.

The project objectives are:

- To catalyse and coordinate a last major effort to find the Slender-billed Curlew, focusing:
- in the short term, on thorough searches of known wintering sites and potential moulting sites with a view to satellite tagging the birds;
- in the medium term, if strontium stable isotope work narrows the search to within say 100-200 km, on trying to locate the breeding grounds;
- in the long term, in the last resort, ensuring proper documentation of the extinction of the Slender-billed Curlew and maximising lessons learnt to avoid other species following suit.

The approach is to supplement the standard IWC counts in January 2010 with specialised searches by separate teams. If any birds are found, a satellite telemetry team will travel as quickly as possible to the site and try to catch and tag the bird. A special Newsletter about the survey was

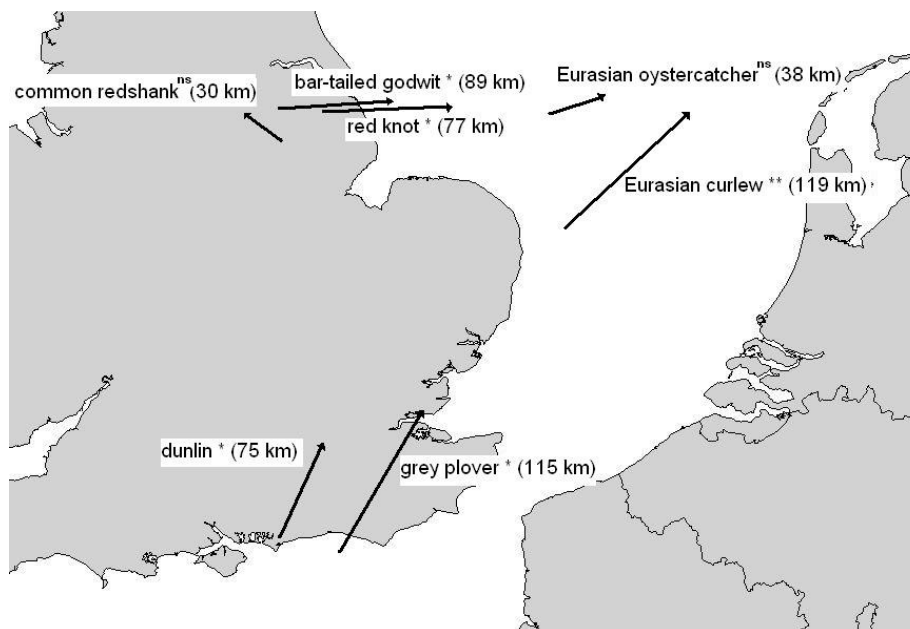
circulated in July 2009 and can be found, together with the search protocols and a host of other material related to this work at www.slenderbilledcurlew.net

Wader populations shift in response to climate change

A study using wintering waterbird count data and led by Ilya Maclean at the British Trust for Ornithology used Waterbird count data from 3500 sites in seven countries in northern Europe, collected over 30 years to demonstrate that the 'weighted centroids' of populations of seven species of wader occurring in internationally important numbers have undergone substantial shifts of up to 115 km, generally in a northeasterly direction, towards their breeding grounds. The study established that year-to-year changes in site abundance have been positively correlated with concurrent changes in temperature, but that this relationship is most marked towards the colder extremities of the birds' range, suggesting that shifts have occurred as a result of range expansion and that responses to climate change are temperature dependent.

Reference:

Maclean, I.D., et al., 2008. Climate change causes rapid changes in the distribution and abundance of birds in winter. *Global Change Biology* (2008) 14, 1–12, doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2486



Shifts in 'weighted centroids' of seven wader species in seven countries of northern Europe over 30 years

Wings over Wetlands (WOW) Project

In 2009, Wetlands International has focused on checking and improving the quality of the information held in the African and Western Palearctic IWC databases in order to enable inclusion of new sites into the Critical Site Network based on IWC data. This work has just been completed in December and a consultation process including the national IWC and IBA coordinators as well as the WI/IUCN SSC Specialist Groups is also starting. Many thanks to all the Specialist Group and IWC Coordinators who contributed to this effort.

The Critical Site Network will comprise sites that are internationally important to be protected under the Ramsar Convention, AEWA and other instruments. This information will be available through the Critical Site Network Tool. A prototype of the Tool, containing the unimproved data, is available at <http://development-maps.unep-wcmc.org/wow/default.aspx> for testing and commenting. The final version will be launched in June 2010 at the celebration of the 15th anniversary of AEWA.

Besides the work related to the Critical Site Network, the flyway training and awareness raising programmes, including Arabic, French and Russian versions, are being finalised in 2009.

WetCap Workshop, Morocco, December 2009

The WetCap project, funded through the Spanish BirdLife Partner, SEO, by the Spanish Development Cooperation Agency AECID, is effectively an extension of the AEWA Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) project into North Africa. See: <http://www.unep-aewa.org/activities/wetcap/index.htm>
The purpose of the project is to strengthen waterbird and wetland conservation capacities in North Africa.

One of the central aims of WetCap is to provide better access to information on the critical network of sites required by migratory waterbirds in the region. As a part of this process, a workshop was organised

in Mehdiya, Morocco, from 3 – 5 December 2009 where national coordinators of waterbird monitoring schemes from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt assessed their count site networks and identified and prioritized gaps in coverage by their waterbird counting schemes. One of the benefits of this work will be the availability of improved and updated data for inclusion in the web portal that will become accessible later in the year by the CSN Tool (see adjacent report on the WOW Project).

The final day of the meeting was spent discussing the potential to link the monitoring of waterbirds under IWC with monitoring Important Bird Areas (IBAs) on behalf of BirdLife International, including a case study from Tunisia where the Association Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO) is making heroic efforts to coordinate both schemes.

The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for the specialists working in this very important region to meet and discuss their work, including cooperation in counting of sites located on international boundaries.

Two Regional Training courses under the WOW Project

The first two “Training of trainers” courses, using all three modules of the Flyway Training Kit developed under the WOW project took place in Limbe, Cameroon and Maputo, Mozambique in November 2009. Reports on these highly successful courses, which were led by Tim Dodman and Oliver Nasirwa, can be found under the following links:

Cameroon

<http://www.wetlands.org/NewsandEvents/NewsPressreleases/tabid/60/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2023/Default.aspx>

Mozambique

<http://wetlands.org/NewsandEvents/NewsPressreleases/tabid/60/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2049/Default.aspx>

Avian Influenza networks

NEW-FLUBIRD - Network for Early Warning of Influenza Viruses in Migratory Birds in Europe with the European Commission. This project is being undertaken by a European network of virologists and ornithologists, data managers, epidemiologists and modellers, in order to provide “early warning and risk assessment systems” in real time of the threat posed to animal and human health by avian influenza (AI) viruses from migratory birds.

This three-year project was due to end soon but it has been extended for an additional six months and will be ending in June 2010. The final phase of the project includes the set up of a network of sites for semi-continuous coverage throughout Europe as well as in Africa and the Baltic States. We therefore apply the Flyway Approach which Wetlands International is actively promoting.

Sites were selected based on the occurrence of the species identified to be at Higher Risk of introducing AI into Europe as well as spreading AI within Europe. A capacity building workshop including training in the capture and sampling of wild birds was carried out in Nigeria for 35 participants from all over Africa. Also, sampling activities were carried out throughout Europe (including Hungary, Lithuania and Turkey). Additional sampling and capacity building activities are planned in 2010 in Egypt, Turkey and Sudan.

Specialist Groups News

In 2009, Wetlands International has sought closer contact with its Specialist Groups and with IUCN SSC over the shared groups. This has resulted in a new generation of Memorandum of Understanding between Specialist Groups and WI. These are currently being finalised. Also, a closer relationship with the IUCN SSC is foreseen to lead to joint effort and initiatives.

Several successful scientific meetings of the Specialist Groups took place in 2009 including for Swans, Geese, Waders and Freshwater Fish.

At a recent meeting with the Goose Specialist Group we discussed mutual expectations and needs and started planning the way forward for the revival of the scheme of special international surveys for geese that resulted in the publication of the book “Goose Populations of the Western Palearctic” in 1999. fundraising for these activities will begin in 2010 and we look forward to reporting on progress.

For further information, please contact Nicolas Tubbs (nicolas.tubbs@wetlands.org) and see <http://www.wetlands.org/Aboutus/Specialistgroups>.

Finally...

Season's greetings to everyone involved in IWC. We hope that your counts next month are successful, rewarding and enjoyable

Many thanks for your continuing contribution to the IWC