

GUIDELINES FOR THE ASIAN WATERBIRD CENSUS

1. Census Form

There are two separate forms for AWC: the Site Form and the Waterbird Count Form.

2. Site Form

Sites covered during the census include all types of natural and man-made wetlands, including, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, freshwater swamps, mangroves, mudflats, coral reefs, rice fields and sewage farms, etc. site data is entered onto standardised site forms.

Please check that the GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATE is given correctly in the site form, as this will form the basis of the site codes in the computer database. They are the most important piece of information needed to maintain an efficient database, just as important as the bird counts! Sketch maps of the sites are particularly useful, and it is important to provide details of the boundaries of the sites counted.

3. Waterbird Count Form

Waterbirds counted during the census include all types of waterbirds regularly encountered at wetlands, including, grebes, cormorants, pelicans, herons, egrets, storks, ibises, spoonbills, flamingoes, ducks, geese, swans, cranes, rails, jacanas, shorebirds gulls, terns. In addition, raptors, kingfishers and other wetland-dependent birds are covered. Count data is entered onto standardised count forms.

This exists count forms in four versions: East Asia (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Russia Far East); South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka); Southeast Asia (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam); and Australasia (Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea).

Counters should have received copies of their appropriate forms from their National or sub-national Coordinators, and should notify relevant National or sub-national Coordinators or Wetlands International - Malaysia if this is not the case. The census forms should be filled out as completely as possible and returned by the end of February at latest.

4. Census Dates

The official dates for the AWC is during the second and third week of January. This period includes three weekends to give as much time as possible to individuals who can only carry out counts on their days off from work. We will accept counts carried out in December and February from poorly known areas.

5. Count procedure

- 1) cover the most important waterbird sites;
- 2) visit all sites that were visited in the previous year, and use the same site names for them;
- 3) count or estimate the number of all waterbirds present;
- 4) give a figure for the number of individuals of each species present. Terms such as "hundreds" and "thousands" are not valid;
- 5) avoid giving ranges, e.g. 100-200, and instead provide the figure considered to be the best minimum estimate;
- 6) where waterbirds cannot be identified to species level, list them under their group (e.g. unidentified egrets);

- 7) if no waterbirds are found at a wetland which is known to have held significant numbers of birds in the past, complete a census form nevertheless and note that no birds were present. If possible, give the reason for the absence of birds (e.g. wetland completely dry, wetland frozen over or site very disturbed by hunters);
- 8) avoid duplication of effort - occasionally two or more censuses are conducted at the same site on different dates. Whenever possible, counters should liaise with one other and agree on ONE census form that gives the results of their combined efforts;
- 9) double check all the entries on the count forms. In particular, check to see that the figures are not inadvertently inserted on the wrong line, and that species' names are not confused;
- 10) if any species of waterbird which is not listed on the count form for the region has been observed, they are required to add it in the space provided at the end of the list and give additional information on its identification in the Comments section of the form;
- 11) write as clearly as possible and be sure to give the counter's full name and address on the Waterbird Count Form;
- 12) in the event that the counter feels that the wetland that has been counted is under severe threat of destruction or degradation, they need to inform the National Coordinator and develop a plan of action to raise awareness of the importance of the site and to conserve it. The National Coordinator may be able to advise whether international action involving Wetlands International and others is necessary.