

News from the International Waterbird Census
Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia
Issue no. 6 – June 2004
Newsletter for coordinators of national waterbird monitoring schemes

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Introduction

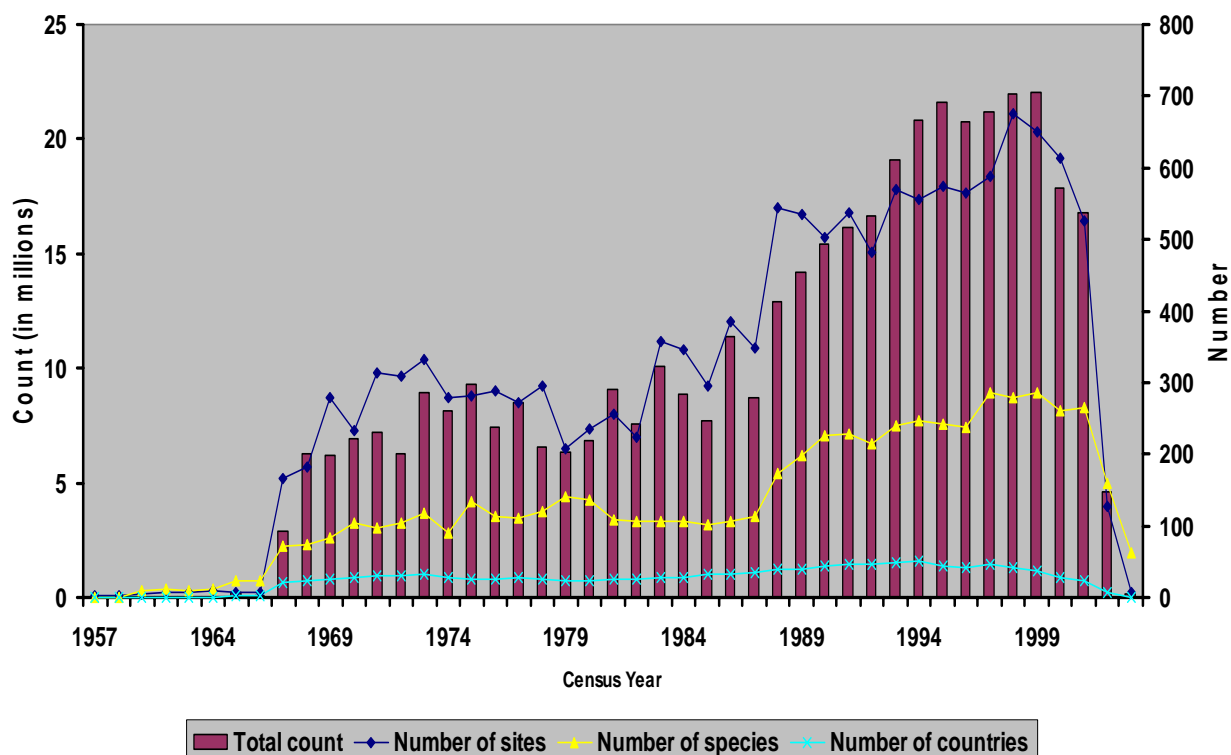
The main function of this newsletter is to keep coordinators of national waterbird monitoring schemes up-to-date with developments in the International Waterbird Census (IWC) in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia region. For those who are behind with data submission, we also wish to kindly request that you send waterbird count data up to and including **January 2002**. This newsletter was produced by Simon Delany, with assistance from Lieuwe Haanstra and Saskia Henderikse. Please e-mail if you have any questions or comments: simon.delany@wetlands.org

Status of data submission to Wetlands International

The graph shows the current content of the IWC database in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia region. Note that the number of sites plotted should be multiplied by 10! We are sure that the annual total number of waterbirds counted, which totalled 20 – 25 million between 1993 and 1999, has continued at this level. Part of the shortfall in recent seasons is because some

data are still being checked and formatted before being finally added to the database. Some of these missing data also remain to be submitted by National Coordinators. We now urgently require data missing from 2000, 2001 **and particularly 2002**, to allow us to bring our international-scale analyses up to date, ready for publication later this year.

IWC database content May '04



Data submission overview by country

The table presents a summary of which countries have sent us data for which years. If you see your country has not yet sent data for some or all of these years, we hope this will encourage you to send them as soon as possible. We hope that more countries will establish a routine for submitting their data for international analysis every year. Several countries have sent no data for inclusion in the IWC database since the 1990s. We particularly look forward to receiving updates from Algeria, Bahrain, Finland, Iceland, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, all of which have been major contributors to IWC in the past.

COUNTRY	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Baltic/Nordic					
Belarus	+	+	+	+	-
Denmark	+	+	-	-	-
Estonia	+	+	-	+/-	-
Finland	-	-	-	-	-
Iceland	-	-	-	-	-
Kaliningrad	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	+	+	+	+	-
Lithuania	+	+	-	-	-
Norway	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	-
Poland	+	-	+/-	-	-
Sweden	+	+	+	-	-
Black Sea/East Mediterranean					
Albania	+	+	+	+	+
Bosnia and Herz.	+	-	-	-	-
Bulgaria	+	+	-	-	-
Croatia	+	+	+	+	-
Cyprus	+	+	+	+	-
Egypt	-	+	-	-	-
Greece	+	+	-	-	-
Israel	+	+	+	+	-
Lebanon	+	+	+	+	-
Macedonia	-	-	+	-	-
Moldova	-	-	-	-	-
Palestine Authority	-	-	-	+	-
Romania	+	+	+	+	-
Russia	-	-	-	+	-
Slovenia	+	+	+	+	-
Syria	-	-	-	-	-
Turkey	-	-	+	-	-
Ukraine	+	+/-	-	-	-
Yugoslavia	+	+	-	-	-
Central Europe					
Austria	+	+	+	+	+/-
Czech Republic	+	+	-	-	-
Germany	+	+	-	-	-
Hungary	+	+	+	+	-
Slovakia	+	+	+	+	-
Switzerland	+	+	+	-	-

Some national coordinators continue to send data in formats which take time for us to process, and this can result in delays in incorporating certain national data sets into the IWC database. We are extremely pleased to see that data from 2000 and 2001 are nearly complete, and for most National Coordinators, the priority now should be to send data from **January 2002**. Data from more recent seasons are always welcome, and if enough National Coordinators send data from January 2003, we will be able to include them in this year's analysis.

COUNTRY	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Northwest Europe					
Belgium	+	+	+	+/-	-
France	+	+	-	-	-
Germany	+	+	-	-	-
Ireland	+	+	-	-	-
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	+	+	+	-	-
United Kingdom	+	+/-	-	-	-
Southwest Asia					
Armenia	-	-	-	+	+
Azerbaijan	+	-	-	+	-
Bahrain	-	-	-	-	-
Georgia	-	-	+	+	-
Iran	+	+	+	+	-
Iraq	-	-	-	-	-
Jordan	-	-	-	-	-
Kazakhstan	+	+	+	+	-
Kuwait	+	-	-	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	+	+	+	+	-
Oman	-	+	-	-	-
Qatar	-	-	-	-	-
Russia	-	-	-	-	-
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-	-
Tajikistan	-	-	-	+	-
Turkmenistan	+	+	+	+	+
United Arab Emir.	+	+	+	-	-
Uzbekistan	+	+	+	+	-
Yemen	-	-	-	-	-
West Mediterranean					
Algeria	-	-	-	-	-
France	+	+	-	-	-
Italy	+	+	-	-	-
Libya	-	-	-	-	-
Morocco	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	+	+	-	-	-
Spain	+	+	-	-	-
Tunisia	-	-	+	-	-

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

The importance of checking your site list and using site codes

It's always good when we receive data from a country and fit it into the growing pattern of the season's counts. Rather often, however, we need to spend a lot of time working on the data to ensure that they are compatible with previous submissions from the country. You can ensure that maximum use will be made of your data in our international scale analyses if you take care to correctly identify your sites.

We often receive count data from sites which we cannot identify from our existing site list for the country, usually because different site names are used in different years and no site codes are given. We use the site code to link the site data on one table with the data about species and counts on another table. Of course there are always variations in coverage between years – a new site is covered, an existing site is divided into two, or a new counter uses a different name for the site, for example. If you explain this in a covering note, we can quickly provide new site code(s). The use of site codes is essential, and if all countries rigorously adopt this practice, a lot of unnecessary work and delays will be avoided, and we will be able to use all the data which are sent to us.

Waterbird counts are most useful if they are carried out in the same way at the same sites every year, because this maximises the validity of trend analyses. It is only valid to compare counts of one year with those of another if the sites where counts were made are equivalent and matching to a considerable degree. If trend analysis is not carried out at national level, it will not always be clear to a national coordinator that differences in coverage have occurred compared to previous years. This is why it is always important to check each year's coverage with the existing national site list, to identify new sites and previously unused names.

We have been using standardised electronic recording sheets in Excel for some time now, and many National Coordinators find that this is a convenient way of submitting data. The latest version (which is also available in Russian) includes a list of species with the Scientific, English and French names. This version is also "personalised" so that it includes the site codes and site names of each country to which it is sent. Please let us know if you are interested in using these sheets to submit your data.

Waterbirds around the World – International conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, 3-8 April 2004

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, ensured that the meeting had a high profile.

On the evening of 3 April, a historic meeting of national coordinators of 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 team spirit shown at this meeting provided a great start to the

conference. 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 conservation.

The vital role of Wetlands International's IWC in global flyway monitoring was strongly emphasised in many events at this conference.

For those who couldn't make it – we really hope to see you next time!
For more details, see:
<http://www.wetlands.org/GFC/Default.htm>

Useful website

Here is an extremely helpful website. It lists the names of more than 5.5 million places and features, together with their geographical coordinates (in every format you can think of) in every country in the world.
<http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>
You can do queries online, or download files by country onto your machine as text files. You can

then import the files into user-friendly tables in Excel, Access or whatever.

As we move (in the medium term) towards putting the whole of IWC onto a GIS platform, and plotting IWC data on maps becomes ever more important, this website could be an important resource for any national or international waterbird monitoring scheme.

New trend analyses of waterbirds in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia

Last year we made excellent progress with an analysis of waterbird population trends from 1974 to 2001, and for the first time we were able to produce reliable trends for species other than Anatidae, from 1989-2001. This work was partly paid for by a contract with the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity in Paris, who have close links to the European Commission. Most European National Coordinators responded positively to an urgent request for data up to and including January 2001 for inclusion in this analysis. Many thanks to all

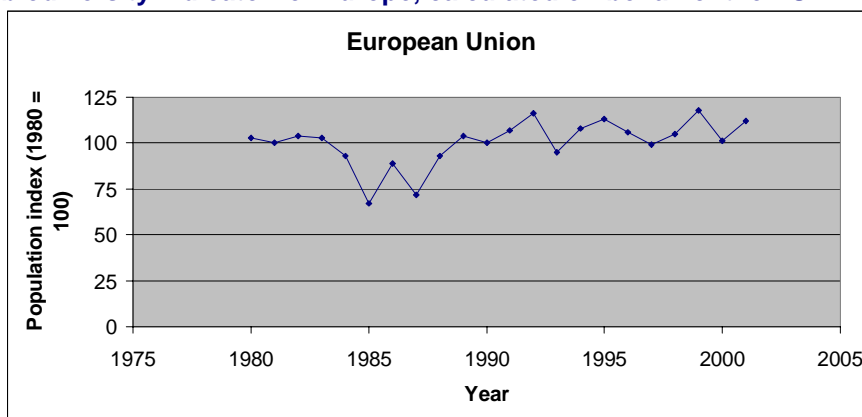
our collaborators in this work. A report on IWC in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia is due this year, covering the years 2000, 2001 and 2002, and for this reason we are making a big effort to update the IWC database so that it is as complete as possible **up to and including the count in January 2002**. Publication of these data will add six years to our published trends of Anatidae in Europe, for which trends have so far only been published up to and including 1996. A number of species will have their trends published in this analysis for the first time.

Development of biodiversity indicators using waterbird trend data

Last year's analysis used TRIM to calculate population trends of all waterbird species in Europe for which data quality is sufficiently high. These trends were then combined to produce a series of biodiversity indicators for use by the European Environment Agency and the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity, together with indicators of farmland and woodland birds produced by the European Bird Census Council, Statistics Netherlands and BirdLife International. These indicators will also play a role in evaluating the performance of the EU Birds Directive next year after 25 years of existence. We were very pleased to be able to present examples of these indicators in our

Newsletter of December 2003— this was the first time that this work appeared in print anywhere. Here is a link to that Newsletter: http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/docs/Newsletter_IWC2003.pdf We continued with this work into 2004, and produced a single indicator which was used by the EU to produce a leaflet on EU Environmental Indicators. For this leaflet, bird populations of farmland, woodland and wetland were taken as indicators of biodiversity in the EU, and presented along with eight other environment related indicators. The wetland bird indicator was based entirely on IWC data. Here is this wetland bird indicator produced for the EU, together with the text presented by the EU in their leaflet:

Wetland biodiversity indicator for Europe, calculated on behalf of the EU in March 2004



The species used to produce this graph were: Mallard, Common Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Common Pochard, Common Goldeneye, Common Coot, Dunlin, Red Knot, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher.

“Numbers of Europe's 12 most widespread and numerous wetland birds (duck and wader species) fluctuate naturally. Years with low numbers are often associated with cold winter weather. Two very hard winters in the 1980s had pronounced effects on wetland birds, but numbers recovered in the 1990s. Besides the pattern shown in the indicator, other wetland bird species, notably geese and Eurasian Wigeon, which habitually graze on agricultural land, have shown increases

in numbers. These species have actually benefitted from artificially improved grazing through agricultural intensification. They have therefore been excluded from the indicator. Although the combined trend of common wetland bird species is a stable one, several wetland bird species have shown declining population trends, the Mallard being a remarkable example”

New team member – Sergei Khomenko

IWC in Central and Eastern Europe has been strengthened by the employment in our office in Kiyev (Kiev), Ukraine, of Sergei Khomenko. Serge did his Ph.D. on Curlew Sandpipers and worked for 10 years at the Ornithological Station of the Black and Azov Seas in Melitopol before his move to Kiyev. He will act as Regional Coordinator of IWC in the Black Sea region, and his skills in data

management and analysis will be put to use on the IWC database. Alexander (Sasha) Solokha in our Moscow office now coordinates waterbird monitoring in Central Asia and Russia, and Serge and Sasha will work closely together to strengthen IWC in the eastern part of the “Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia” region.

Terms of Reference for National Coordinators of the International Waterbird Census

A recent request for Terms of Reference for IWC National Coordinators resulted in production of the text below. Together with the draft guidelines for National Coordinators and manual for counters, and later in the year, completion of the manual for the new IWC software package, these documents will clarify the methods necessary for successful completion of counts for IWC, and will assist the establishment of global standards.

Terms of Reference:

The success of the International Waterbird Census (IWC) depends to a great extent on activities carried out at national level. Every national waterbird monitoring programme is different. In many programmes, the counts undertaken for IWC comprise all the waterbird counts which are undertaken in the country. In many other countries, more frequent counts are organised, and the IWC data represent a sub-set of the waterbird count data collected each season. To maximise the usefulness of national contributions to IWC, national coordinators should carry out the following activities:

1. Maintain a list of contact details of observers and organisations which participate in waterbird monitoring in the country. The nature of this list will depend on how the census is organised at national level.
2. Distribute recording forms to counters (individual observers and organisations) before the recommended January count date for IWC, and collect completed forms in a timely manner after the count.
3. Check that forms are completed fully and correctly, and in particular that a Wetlands International site code is included with every record of a visit to a site, and that (groups of) species that were present, but not counted, are recorded correctly.
4. Coordinate the participation of the country in international waterbird surveys additional to the traditional “midwinter census”, particularly censuses of Geese and Seaducks. These additional censuses may be coordinated by additional national coordinators.
5. Ensure the complete and accurate entry to computer of all data collected.
6. Send results of the census to the international coordinator in an electronic format agreed with Wetlands International, before the end of the year in which the counts were completed.
7. Maintain the interest and enthusiasm of the count network by providing detailed feedback in the form of periodic national newsletters and/or reports to participating observers and organisations in the country. This feedback should include information selected from IWC newsletters and reports.
8. Liaise with waterbird count coordinators in neighbouring countries to ensure coordinated coverage of sites which overlap national boundaries.

Full guidelines for National Coordinators and counters are available at:
<http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/Manuals.htm>
These guidelines are still in draft and your comments are welcome.

As with the guidelines, these ToRs are not yet final and we welcome any amendments and additions you may wish to suggest in your role as an IWC National Coordinator.

Finally...

The Wetlands International waterbird monitoring team wish you all the best for the summer season. Many thanks indeed for your continuing contribution to the IWC