



**Animal Demography Unit**  
Department of Biological Sciences  
University of Cape Town  
Rondebosch 7701 South Africa  
Phone: (021) 650-2423  
Fax: (021) 650-3301  
www.adu.org.za



# COORDINATED AVIFAUNAL ROADCOUNTS (CAR)

INFORMATION SHEET No. 1

June 2013

## HOW TO COUNT

This information sheet is intended as a guide for CAR counts anywhere in South Africa, but minor regional modifications, particularly with regard to species to be counted, may apply. The maximum speed of 50 km/hr and the stops every 2 km are important aspects of the method which should be strictly adhered to so that statistically valid comparisons can be made between counts and between different parts of the country. Counts take place on the last Saturday of January and July.

### ROUTE AND STARTING TIME

1. The route that you have been allocated is highlighted on your route map. Familiarize yourself with your route beforehand and the written route description if available. Take along a road map if you think that you might get lost. It is essential that you always travel along your route in the same direction, so that the left/right hand side of the road remains the same from count to count! Always start and end your count at the same spot for each count so that you can record your route length accurately.
2. Get to your starting point at about 1–2 hours after sunrise to allow the cranes time to disperse from their mass roosts.

### THINGS TO TAKE ALONG

Binoculars, a telescope (if you have one), a pen or pencil, this information sheet, Information Sheet No. 4, your map and route description, relevant newsletter and the CAR roadcount form. Bird books, hat, lunch and a thermos or cooldrinks in a coolbox are recommended!

### WHAT TO DO IF BAD WEATHER SETS IN

1. If there is mist or rain and the visibility is bad, wait until the weather lifts before continuing.
2. If the weather does not lift later in the day, it is preferable to count the following day. But if you have travelled a long way and it is not possible to count the following day, then continue the count.
3. If you failed to do the count for any reason, please report this to your Precinct Organizer **as soon as possible** and arrange to do the count on the nearest possible day.
4. If the count in a whole area is called off, it may be rescheduled for a later date. It is important that all routes within a precinct are counted on the same day if at all possible.

### GETTING STARTED

1. At the starting point, fill in the details at the top of the CAR form as to the weather, odometer reading on your car (set your tripmeter to 0) and the time. Only one choice can be captured for weather, so please circle the choice that describes this for most of the count. Also fill in your ADU number and email address.
2. Travel slowly (max. 50 km/hr) and scan both sides of the road for cranes, bustards, korhaans, storks and other large terrestrial birds.
3. When you spot a bird, stop briefly and fill in the CAR form as explained in Information Sheet No.4.
4. Also stop every 2 km, as indicated by your odometer, get out of your car and scan around carefully in all directions with your binoculars for these birds. When available, telescopes should be used to confirm identifications, and not for scanning as this would alter the method. You may stop before the 2-km mark comes up, if at a particularly good viewpoint, but please do not allow more than 2 km to be travelled without stopping, unless it is not safe to stop. However, if visibility is poor after traveling 2 km, move on slightly to a spot with better visibility. Fill in the CAR form at each 2-km stop unless no birds were seen. Try to keep the stops short, as you have a long way to go!
5. If the route marked on your map involves backtracking down a road that you have already counted, drive this stretch at a normal speed and do not record any birds. Resume counting as soon as you get to new ground. Remember to record the km reading at the beginning and end of any backtrack or detour. In the event of a last minute change to your route, owing for example to a locked gate or flooded bridge, make a well-marked note on your CAR form. If you could not complete your route, mark your count conditions as poor and enter 'incomplete route' as reason.

### Species to be counted

The main species to be counted are listed at the foot of the CAR form. Note that six raptor species and three crow species are included in CAR counts. Check your regional section of the newsletter for any additional species. Remember that **korhaans should be counted both when seen and when heard**. All other species should be recorded **only** when seen.

## Korhaans

Korhaans (i.e. only the small bustards, not the three large species) should be counted **both when seen and when heard**. A call heard from one particular direction should be counted as **one** individual bird. No effort need be expended in finding calling birds. **NB: THIS METHOD OF RECORDING APPLIES ONLY TO KORHAANS.**

It follows that you should do your best to learn the calls of the korhaans in your area. Also take special care in making **both** visual and auditory identifications in areas where both the Northern Black/Whitequilled and Southern Black/Black Korhaan occur (i.e. parts of the Eastern Cape), and where both the Blue and Karoo Korhaans occur (i.e. parts of the Free State).

Do remember that the Northern Black Korhaan is now recognised as a separate species. If you are in the Free State or Karoo, then what the older fieldguides say is a 'Black Korhaan' or 'White-quilled Korhaan', is actually a Northern Black Korhaan!

## Out-of-range birds

If you observe any birds outside of their known ranges, e.g., a Kori Bustard in the Overberg, or a Denham's Bustard in the Karoo, please provide enough additional information about your sighting in the Notes section to allow us to verify that you have identified the species correctly. If possible, a photograph is always helpful. Please understand that documentation and verification is necessary in such cases because major changes in a species' known range, especially in the case of threatened species, have great scientific and conservation importance. This is particularly important for species that are easily confused, such as Denham's and Ludwig's Bustards and the Southern Black and Northern Black Korhaans, which overlap in parts of their ranges.

## Extra left-hand shaded column and km readings

The km readings are necessary to help get an exact location for important sightings; therefore they need to reflect the distance travelled along your fixed route. (Note that backtracks and detours do NOT form part of your route!) If you cannot set your odometer to 0, please use the extra left-hand shaded column for recording the odometer readings. Later you can fill in the corrected km readings, starting from zero, in the right-hand (white) km column. If you have to make any unexpected detours or backtracks, please also use the shaded column for your calculations to adjust all subsequent km readings. In other words, use the shaded column for rough work and the white column for your final figures, which are the ones which will be computerised. One way of recording backtracks is shown below:

ALL SPECIES						ONLY 3 CRANES & 3 LARGE BUSTARDS				
Use this column for km calculations	Km	Species	Count			Habitat <sup>2</sup>	Close to <sup>3</sup>	Activity <sup>4</sup>	Side of road	Farm No.
	Begin at zero	Use abbreviations*	Age class <sup>1</sup>			Use abbreviations listed below	Use alternatives listed below	Use alternatives listed below	L or R	from 1:250 000 map
			A	J	C					
	6.1	BC	5			pasture	feedlot	feeding	L	392
	12.3	BHH	1	1		wetland				
	15.5	Start	backtrack } =10km							
	25.5	End	backtrack }							
	32.2-10	22.2	LB	1		veld		inactive	R	395
	36.2-10	26.2	SG	10	2	wetland				

## FILLING IN THE ROADCOUNT FORM

See **Information Sheet No. 4** for instructions about filling in this form.

## Rating of count conditions

It is useful to have a rating of the overall conditions during a count. Please rate your count as **good, satisfactory or poor**. If visibility was good and there were no problems in covering the route, rate it 'good'. However if the grass was fairly long, but you feel you saw most of the birds present, rate it 'satisfactory'. But if the grass was very tall, or visibility was significantly reduced owing to mist, or you were unable to complete the route owing to an impassable road, rate it 'poor'. Also, you should still make a note describing any problems you had. Remember that this rating is only of the conditions that affect your count, such as reduced visibility, and **not** whether the count was poor in numbers.

And most importantly, **HAVE FUN!**

**Donella Young**  
Project Coordinator



Gauteng  
Department  
of Agriculture,  
Conservation  
and Environment



the detea  
the department of economic  
development, tourism and  
environmental affairs  
FREE STATE PROVINCE