



Animal Demography Unit

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COORDINATED AVIFAUNAL ROADCOUNTS (CAR)

INFORMATION SHEET No. 4

June 2013

FILLING IN THE ROADCOUNT FORM

Record the following details each time you see a bird and at each 2-km stop if birds are seen. Refer to Information Sheet No. 1 for other important details about CAR counts.

1. KM READING: from the tripmeter. Please zero your tripmeter at the start of your count.

Backtracks or detours: Please use a line of the roadcount form to record the km readings at the beginning and end of each detour or backtrack e.g. 'Detour from 10 km to 20 km'. Continue your route without adjusting your tripmeter. This is so that you can adjust the km reading later for data capture (see Information Sheet No. 1 for further details).

2. SPECIES: All cranes, all bustards, all korhaans, all storks (particularly White), Southern Ground-Hornbill, Secretarybird, Southern Bald Ibis, Black-headed Heron and Spur-winged Goose, as well as any other bird which has been identified as relevant in your area. Note that **six raptor** species and **three crow** species are now included in CAR counts, and listed at the foot of the Road Count Form. Tips to distinguish between Buzzards: The juvenile Jackal Buzzard can "easily be mistaken for the Steppe Buzzard, but has larger, broader wings and a pale unbarred undertail." (Sasol). The juvenile Jackal Buzzards "are larger and more heavily built, with stronger bills and broad rufous tails." The "smaller Steppe Buzzard has longer, narrower wings". (Roberts Birds). Use the abbreviations for species given at the foot of the CAR roadcount form.

3. COUNT: Count the number of birds seen. Cranes, bustards and storks frequently form quite widely dispersed flocks, so take care to scan around carefully in all directions with binoculars to ensure that you have seen all the birds present in the area. Birds that are near the road or at a great distance get counted in the same manner.

Age Classes: Especially in the case of cranes please decide whether they are adults (A), juveniles (J) or chicks (C) and record the numbers of each in separate columns. In the case of Blue Cranes; adults have a long 'tail', juveniles have a short 'tail' and chicks are downy. In Grey Crowned Cranes the juveniles have a shorter crest and no gular wattles, while the Wattled Crane juveniles have a white crown and the wattles are smaller than those of an adult. These age classes should be applied to all other species where possible, but if you cannot distinguish between the age classes, just record the total number of individuals in the first column (A). In general "chicks" are defined as downy, and "juveniles" are young feathered birds which are noticeably smaller than adults and/or have immature plumage.

4. HABITAT: The habitat occupied by **all** species should be recorded. Sometimes dispersed flocks will have individuals

on different habitat types. **In this case, count the number of birds on each habitat type separately and enter each group on a new line on the form, giving the same tripmeter reading for each line.** This will allow habitat use to be recorded accurately.

These are the major habitat categories:

- bare ground:** a recently ploughed field in which crops have not yet sprouted. (Abbreviate to 'bare'.)
- crops:** a field of growing crops, e.g. maize, wheat, oats, barley. (Abbreviate to 'crops'.) If you can specify crop type then refer to the **sub-categories** below and abbreviate accordingly.

The habitat category 'crops' has been divided into **four sub-categories:**

- cereal crops:** cereals such as wheat, maize, oats, rye and barley. (Abbreviate to 'cereal'.)
- non-cereal crops:** non-cereal herbaceous crops such as lupins, canola and vegetables. (Abbreviate to 'non-cereal'.)
- orchards:** cultivated fruit trees, vineyards, rooibos, *Opuntia* (prickly pear), cultivated rows of proteas, and any other crops where the structure of the crop is higher and/or woodier than that of the other non-cereal crops. (Abbreviate to 'orchard'.)
- forestry plantations:** stands of planted trees such as pines, eucalyptus and wattles. (Abbreviate to 'plantation'.)

N.B. Where possible observers should still specify the type of crop e.g. wheat or potatoes, if they are able to. This should be recorded, for example, 'cereal – wheat'.

- stubble:** a field in which the crop has been cut or harvested that is characterised by thick, cut dry stalks. (Abbreviate to 'stubble'.)
- pasture:** a field of broad-leaved pasture (e.g. lucerne, clover, medics, etc) or 'unnatural' grassland which has been planted specifically for grazing purposes. **Do note:** A pasture is neither a natural grassland nor the remnants of a cultivated crop. Pastures are usually monocultures of one type of plant, and often appear lush. Natural grasslands, on the other hand, have a diverse mix of plant species. (Abbreviate to 'pasture'.)
- mown pasture:** field which is usually green, with cut grass or lucerne, that may be lying on the ground or may have been baled and removed. The field is clearly grass, not a cereal crop, and has clearly been mown. **Please note:** This category is usually applicable in the grassland biome only. (Abbreviate to 'mown'.)
- natural vegetation/veld:** includes all types of **indigenous** natural vegetation, e.g. natural grasslands (applicable to the grassland biome, e.g. parts of the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal), natural fynbos/renosterveld (applicable in the

south-western Cape) and natural Karooveld. (Abbreviate to 'veld'.)

- g) **burnt grassland:** recently burnt and still black. (Abbreviate to 'burnt'.)
- h) **fallow land:** land which is not being actively cultivated, but has been ploughed in the past. Weeds and some pioneer indigenous vegetation may be evident, and there may be a few remnants of stubble if the land has been fallow for only a year or two. This category is distinct from natural vegetation in that there is not the same diversity of indigenous plants, the structure of the vegetation is obviously not the same as unploughed veld, and signs of past ploughing are evident (e.g. run-off lines, ridging, piles of stones). Fallow land may also be used for grazing, but is distinct from pasture as defined above. (Abbreviate to 'fallow'.)
- i) **wetland:** includes dams, pans, rivers, vleis etc., as well as a seasonally 'dry' wetland (Abbreviate to 'wetland'.)
- j) **flying:** When a bird is flying; put 'flying' for habitat. However, if a bird is only flying because it was disturbed, or because it is displaying, then record the habitat that it took off from.
- k) **other:** any habitat that does not fall into any of the above categories. Please specify 'Other – road/verge' if the bird is on the road or in the road verge.
- l) **unknown:** if you cannot distinguish the type of habitat, usually because it is too far away.

N.B. If a raptor is perched on a pole/pylon, record the habitat that is most dominant in the area near the pole, usually the agricultural habitat. Put down 'on pole' / 'on pylon' for *Relevant feature nearby* and 'perched' for *Activity*.

5. RELEVANT FEATURES NEARBY: This column is intended to provide us with additional information about habitat. Birds may be in a habitat because of a food or water source or some other important factor nearby. By nearby we mean within 100 m of the bird. **Please note that you don't need to fill this in for every sighting**, only if there is an additional important feature that you feel may have attracted the bird. If a bird is in an agricultural habitat or wetland, but is also within 100 m of indigenous vegetation, then put 'veld' in this column. If the habitat that a bird is in is 'veld', you don't need to put 'veld' for *Relevant feature nearby*. Note that 'on pole', 'on pylon', 'on wire', 'roadkill', 'carcass' and 'rocky outcrop' have been added to these options now that raptors and crows are included in the counts.

6. SIDE OF ROAD: Please **always** write **L** or **R** in this column to indicate whether the birds were on the left hand side of the road or on the right. We cannot capture left **and** right. This information helps to narrow down the locality of the sighting. **Do note: Routes must always be driven in the same direction.** If for a particular reason you are unable to do your route in the normal direction, please make a conspicuous note, adjust your km accordingly and indicate that you have done so in the Notes section.

N.B. The following columns should only be filled in for the three cranes, i.e. Blue, Grey Crowned and Wattled Cranes, the three large bustards, i.e. Kori, Denham's and Ludwig's Bustard, and the raptors and crows.

- 7. ACTIVITY:** Record the activities that the birds are engaged in at the time of observation, using the following categories:
- a) **inactive:** e.g. standing, preening, loafing etc.
 - b) **feeding:** i.e. actually eating or walking along looking for food.
 - c) **flying:** i.e. airborne.
 - d) **breeding:** i.e. mating, incubating, etc. Do not disturb any bird seen incubating.

e) **displaying:** i.e. displaying or dancing birds (don't include this activity with breeding).

For raptors and crows there are two additional activities as well:

- 1) **perched**
- 2) **hunting** (actively searching for food).

Usually, all flock members are engaged in the same activity, but if not, record the most dominant activity.

8. COLOUR RINGS: For colour-ringed birds write down the sequence of the colour rings from top to bottom (e.g. red over blue) in the section provided as well as km. Note: the right and left legs of the bird are decided as if you were the bird. Capture the information under the Notes tab. It is very helpful if you can take a photograph as well.

9. DEAD BIRDS: Record dead birds under Notes: recording species name, km reading, whether under powerline or other information that may indicate suspected cause of death. Important contacts: For powerline deaths please contact Constant Hoogstad (Eskom–EWT Strategic Partnership Project Manager): 011 3723600 or 0860 111535 or 082 3344176 (after hours) or constanth@ewt.org.za. For suspected poisonings please contact Zeldah Hudson: 011 3723600 or zeldah@ewt.org.za

10. FINISHING

- a. Fill in the time when you completed your route. (This should usually be in the early afternoon. You are welcome to take a break before the end of the route, but do indicate this break (when and for how long clearly on your form).
- b. Calculate the length of your route, i.e. subtract any detours or backtracks from your tripmeter reading, and fill the distance in on your form. Make sure all the details required are completed and fill in any information of interest or comments in the Notes section provided.
- c. If you are new to CAR you can register by clicking on CAR in the left hand menu on the ADU website, then select **Register**. If you are already registered with an ADU no., but do not have a password, or have forgotten your password, click on **Apply for password** on the CAR webpage.
You are recognised by your email address, so it is vitally **important** that we have your current email address in our database. If your **email address changes** please send us an email to info@adu.org.za with your new address and we will update the database so that you will be able to continue to log in and submit data. Many thanks.
- d. Please capture your results online on MyBirdPatch if possible. Login using your email address, password and ADU number. click on the CAR tab in the grey banner. Click on "Add a new card" in the "Manage your CAR submissions" page, then follow the online instructions. Please check your capture!
- e. Make a copy of your form and **always** keep one (in case it gets lost in transit).
- f. Send your CAR form to your Precinct Organiser as soon after the count as possible. If you are unable to capture your count online your Precinct Organiser will do this or send it to a volunteer.
- g. If you were unable to do the count at the last minute, or have any problems or queries, please contact your Precinct Organiser.
- h. If you have problem registering or capturing data please check the FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on the CAR webpage or contact your Precinct Organiser, or Michael Brooks on 021-6504751 or Michael.Brooks@uct.ac.za

Thank you for your time and care in counting and contributing to this project and conservation!

Donella Young
Project Coordinator