



Avian Demography Unit

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COORDINATED AVIFAUNAL ROADCOUNTS (CAR)

INFORMATION SHEET No. 1

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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 map. Familiarize yourself with your route beforehand and 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, relevant newsletter and the CAR roadcount form. Bird books, lunch and a thermos of tea 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 (if possible set your odometer 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.
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 travelling 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 travelled, 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.

Species to be counted

The main species to be counted are listed at the foot of the CAR form. Check your regional section of the newsletter for additional species. The Black Harrier can be counted on a voluntary basis (use abbreviation **HAR**). 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 occur

(i.e. parts of the Eastern Cape), and where both the Blue and Karoo occur (i.e. parts of the Free State).

Do remember that the Northern Black Korhaan, also known as Whitequilled Korhaan or Whitewinged 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', 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/Stanley's Bustard in the Karoo, please provide enough additional information about your sighting (on a separate piece of paper) 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/Stanley's and Ludwig's bustards and the Southern Black/Black Korhaan and Northern Black/Whitequilled Korhaan, which overlap in parts of their ranges.

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 these are only conditions that affect your count, such as reduced visibility, and **not** whether the count was poor in numbers.

Reporting dead birds

If you see any poisoned or electrocuted birds, record this on your CAR form, record the exact position and report this immediately to Nature Conservation officials who will investigate the matter. You can also phone the Poison Working Group at 011 4861157 (o/h; cell: 0824468946) or Eskom 0860111535.

FINISHING

1. 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).
2. Calculate the length of your route, i.e. subtract any detours or backtracks from your odometer 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 section provided.
3. Make a copy of your form and **always** keep one (in case it gets lost in the post or via fax).
4. Send your CAR form to your Precinct Organiser as soon after the count as possible.
5. If you were unable to do the count at the last minute, or have any problems or queries, please contact your Precinct Organiser.

And most importantly, HAVE FUN!

James Harrison and Donella Young
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