

Animal Demography Unit

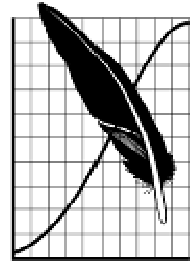
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COORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWAC)

INFORMATION SHEET No. 2

APRIL 2009

COUNTERS, COMPILERS AND COORDINATORS

Many people will become involved in CWAC. This information sheet will help to clarify the categories of CWAC participants and their tasks without going into technical details. These will be dealt with in future information sheets.

Counters: The counters form the broad base of the CWAC pyramid. They will carry out the actual counts. Their responsibilities are to liaise with the compilers, carry out the counts according to instructions and submit their results to the compilers. Information specific to their counting duties at a specific CWAC site they will obtain from the relevant compiler. A counter can be involved in one or more counts, on a regular or occasional basis. They will be kept informed of general CWAC developments and progress through the various communication means such as CWAC newsletters, email, the website or post.

The most important qualifications of an effective counter are an ability to identify all the waterbird species likely to be seen and a willingness to adhere to a particular set of procedures during the count.

Compilers: Compilers form the second tier of the CWAC pyramid. A compiler performs the vital function of organizing the counts at a particular CWAC site. The compiler's duties fall into three principal categories:

- 1) Liaising with counters;
- 2) Collating and submitting data;
- 3) Ensuring continuity of coverage.

Liaising with counters: The compiler must ensure there are enough counters to cover the site adequately, that they perform the count on the correct date and time, and according to a particular method. This implies that the compiler may need to engage in some simple training in some cases. Methods are determined by a set of general principles (dealt with in a separate information sheet) and by the requirements of the particular wetland. (It is important that records be kept of the methods used so that these can be applied consistently.) It is always preferable, although not essential, that the compiler also be a counter so that communication and contact with other counters is as direct as possible.

Collating and submitting data: The compiler should collate the data from the various counters as soon as possible after the count has been completed and obtain any information relevant to the interpretation of the results, e.g. weather conditions, water levels, etc.

It is the compilers duty to complete the CWAC census form carefully and check it before submitting it to the coordinator within two weeks of the count date. The compiler will also be sent a printout for checking against his or her records to verify that the ADU has computerized the data correctly.

Ensuring continuity: It is the compiler who has the responsibility for ensuring that a count takes place regularly every January and July. Achievement of the goal of CWAC is completely dependent on the continuity and regularity of coverage at each site.

Compilers should always groom someone as a substitute compiler so that they can hand over the responsibility if and when necessary. This implies that even where the jobs of counting and compiling can be done by one person, at least one other person should be brought in as a backup. Compilers should take care to inform the coordinator if there is a danger of continuity being interrupted. These considerations make it highly desirable that compilers be based at an organisation such as a bird club or conservation body, which will allow them to draw from its manpower resources.

Compilers will be kept informed of general CWAC developments and progress through the various communication means such as CWAC newsletters, email, the website or post.

Coordinators: Coordinators form the top tier of the CWAC pyramid. In addition to the National Coordinator (NC) based at the Animal Demography Unit (ADU) in Cape Town, there will be Regional Coordinators (RC) in some areas. Regional Coordinators are likely to be based at organisations such as bird clubs or Provincial conservation bodies and will be responsible for planning, liaison and organisation at a regional level. Whether a compiler liaises with an RC or the NC will depend on local circumstances. A Terms of Reference document for RCs is available from the NC.

The NC will be responsible for the overall management of the CWAC project. This includes registering of new sites and providing project feedback to participants. The NC will also liaise directly with compilers by means of CWAC information sheets and circulars as well as personal correspondence. Computerisation and vetting of CWAC data is the NC's responsibility as is the provision of computerised data to Wetlands International (WI).

CWAC Advisory Group: The National Coordinator will be assisted in the management of the project, specifically on important project issues, by an Advisory Group (AG). This will be a National group of people, specifically selected to provide input and help steer the project in the right direction. The AG will be represented by a selection of people, with various backgrounds, all somehow associated with the CWAC project. The functioning of the group is governed by a Terms of Reference document available from the NC.

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