



Avian Demography Unit

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COORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWAC)

INFORMATION SHEET No. 2

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Counters, Compilers & 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 CWAC newsletters, Bird Numbers (the ADU's journal) and CWACNET, the electronic news and information service for CWAC.

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 that there are enough counters to cover the site adequately, that they perform the count on a particular date 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. He should then fill in 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 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 goals of CWAC are 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 organization such as a bird club or nature conservancy which can draw from its manpower resources.

A compiler may be responsible for one or more CWAC sites. Compilers will receive Bird Numbers and in addition will receive CWAC information sheets and occasional newsletters.

Coordinators: Coordinators form the top tier of the CWAC pyramid. In addition to the National Coordinator (NC) based at the Avian Demography Unit (ADU) in Cape Town, there will be Regional Coordinators (RC) in some areas. Regional Coordinators are likely to be based at organizations like bird clubs or conservancies and will be responsible for planning, liaison and organization 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 setting policies and for registration of new CWAC sites. He will provide feedback through ADU News to all counters and compilers. He will also liaise directly with compilers by means of CWAC information sheets and circulars as well as personal correspondence. Computerization and analysis of CWAC data is the NC's responsibility as is the provision of computerized data to Wetlands International (formerly the International Wildfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau) in the Netherlands and to the Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism in South Africa.

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