



Animal Demography Unit

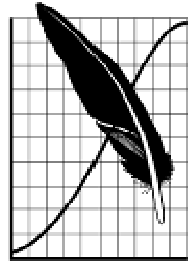
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COORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWAC)

INFORMATION SHEET No. 9

APRIL 2009

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE CENSUS FORM

PLEASE READ THROUGH THESE GUIDELINES CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THE CENSUS FORM. THESE GUIDELINES ARE APPLICABLE FOR ALL VERSIONS OF THE CENSUS FORM; PAPER AND ELECTRONIC. IT IS ADVISABLE TO USE THE ELECTRONIC CENSUS SHEET AVAILABLE FROM THE CWAC WEBSITE.

A. The following notes refer to items on the front page of the census form:

Name of site: The full correct name of the site, as it will appear in reports and publications.

Site code: An 8 digit number, based on the centre-point co-ordinates of the site, with which the site is registered at the ADU. Use only the registered code. If a site code has not been allocated yet, please contact the project coordinator for further details.

Please be consistent in your use of the official site code, even if the code does not accurately reflect the actual centre-point co-ordinates. The site code is used as a unique identification number within the CWAC database.

Date of survey: The date the count was done; use the *dd/mm/yyyy* format.

Starting time: The time the count started.

Finishing time: The time the count ended.

Name of compiler: Your full name.

ADU observer code: Your 5 digit ADU observer code (e.g. 01025, 00653, 00020). If you do not have an ADU observer code yet, please leave the space blank and one will be allocated to you. In such a case please provide all your contact details in the appropriate field. Upon registration the project coordinator will inform you of your ADU code.

Season: Indicate the appropriate season of the count depending on the date of the count. Summer counts take place between 15 January and 15 February, winter counts between 1 July and 31 July. Counts conducted outside these periods can be indicated as "other".

New contact details: If any of your contact details have changed, please provide them here. Alternatively leave the field blank.

Names of observers: Initials and surname of any additional observers that took part in the count. Please use the correct format.

Has this site been counted for CWAC before? Indicate whether this site has previously been counted for CWAC, or if it is a new site.

Type of count: Indicate the survey method used for this count. If more than one method was used, option 5 should be selected.

Conditions for count: Indicate the conditions under which the count was done. Additional comments can also be included in the comments section.

Condition of wetland: Indicate the volume of water present at the wetland during the count. Please remember that, even if the site is dry and no waterbirds are present, this still constitutes a count and a census form should be completed and returned, otherwise it will be assumed that the site was not visited during the census period.

Percentage of wetland area covered by count: Indicate the percentage shoreline and open water covered during the count. Most times this will have to be estimated, therefore round off to the nearest 5%. Note that, as far as possible, the site should be consistently counted in the same manner on each occasion.

Fixed-point photography: Indicate if any fixed-point photographs were taken during this particular count. If yes, provide these in digital format to the project coordinator. Please indicate the number of the fixed point, the name of the site, and date with each photograph. Provide as much information as you can.

Comments: Use this section to write any comments concerning the count, especially any factors that may have affected the results. Also use this space for comments related to the birds, e.g. unusual sightings, new heronries, roost sites, new threats, etc.

B. The following notes refer to the back page of the census form:

Count data: The count data is entered in the “Count” column. The blocks are unavoidably small, so please take care to write as legibly as possible.

Breeding data: An additional column headed “B” has been inserted just left of the “Count” column. Use this column to indicate the breeding status of those species’ found breeding. If no breeding behaviour was observed, leave the block blank. The breeding status codes are explained below

Code 2 - possibly breeding: evidence of possible breeding includes,

- adult bird or a pair of adults, in breeding plumage, in suitable habitat, singing full song (i.e. not just contact or alarm calls), during the breeding season;
- as above and engaged in courtship or territorial display, during the breeding season.

Note that the observation must be made during the breeding season, as given in the Atlas of Southern African Birds, Roberts' or other suitable texts. Singing and displays are sometimes observed outside of the breeding season but this is not acceptable evidence of breeding.

Code 3 - probably breeding: evidence of probable breeding includes,

- adult bird feeding a mate;
- adult bird carrying nesting material;
- adult bird building or excavating a nest;
- an identifiable nest currently under construction;
- a recently completed but empty identifiable nest;
- adult sitting in the cup of a nest and thought to be incubating eggs or brooding chicks;
- agitated behaviour or distraction display by an adult bird, suggesting presence of nest or young out of the nest;
- adult carrying food but nest not seen;
- adult carrying faecal sac but nest not seen;
- adult carrying food into a completed nest;
- adult taking a faecal sac out of a nest;
- recently used, as revealed by fresh eggshells or droppings, but empty nest;
- fresh droppings, moulted feathers, or food remains found around or under a nest that cannot be seen into, but is thought to be active;
- recently fledged juvenile with gape flange and/or some downy feathers seen away from the nest;
- recently fledged juvenile accompanied by an adult.

Code 4 - confirmed breeding: Evidence for positive breeding includes,

- eggs seen in the nest;
- nestlings seen, or heard calling, in the nest;
- sighting of downy chicks or non-flying juveniles of species which leave the nest on hatching, e.g. ducks, cranes, waders.

NOTE: *If you have evidence for more than one status code, use the highest number on your CWAC census form, i.e. 4 instead of 3 and 3 instead of 2.*

Total count: Tally your count and indicate the total in the appropriate block. If you use the electronic version of the census form, this function is performed automatically.

Additional breeding information: An additional breeding information box has also been added to the end of the form. This is for species for which it is **possible to estimate the total number of active nests that are present**. This would apply especially to species which breed in groups, as in a heronry or a colony. Of course it is very useful to know how many pairs are breeding at a site because this may have considerable conservation significance. In such cases you should count the number of active nests and enter this number into this box, together with the species name and the 5 digit species code number (just read it off the species list on the form). Please note the following points:

- (a) For those species for which you have entered "Additional Breeding Information", you would also have indicated a breeding status code of 4 (confirmed breeding) in the "B" column.

- (b) There may be several species for which you are able to give a breeding status code in the “B” column; however you may be unable to provide any “Additional Breeding Information” for all of these species. This is perfectly acceptable.

NOTE: *In all instances of observed breeding, if the contents of a nest are known, i.e. eggs and/or chicks, you also have sufficient information for the completion of a Nest Record Card or for active heronries/colonies a Colony/Heronry Record Card. You are encouraged to fill in these cards in such cases and submit it with your CWAC form. Refer to the Nest Record Card Scheme for further details.*

Additional census information: This section is only applicable to the paper census form. This space can be used for any additional information. If space is lacking, please use a separate sheet of paper. Alternatively, record all your additional information in the “comments” field.

Thank you for reading this information sheet carefully. We look forward to your valuable CWAC contributions.

Doug Harebottle, James Harrison & Marius Wheeler