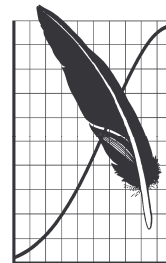




Animal Demography Unit  
 Department of Zoology  
 University of Cape Town  
 Rondebosch 7701 South Africa  
 Tel. (021) 650-4698  
 Fax. (021) 650-3434  
 E-mail: [marius.wheeler@uct.ac.za](mailto:marius.wheeler@uct.ac.za)  
 Web: <http://www.adu.org.za>



## COORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWAC)

NEWSLETTER 29

June 2008

### Dear Waterbird Counters

It has been a very busy 2008 thus far and I am sure for you as well. There have been some major developments, particularly around the CWAC website. I am pleased to report that I have received numerous positive comments regarding this development.

There are new CWAC census forms in circulation. The species coding has changed and it is imperative that we all upgrade to the new forms.

The ADU is launching a competition to find a logo for the CWAC project. There is a great book prize up for grabs.

A National Lesser Flamingo survey takes place during July. If your site supports this species, please try and link-up with this project.

I hope that you will enjoy the June newsletter and find it informative.

*Greetings, Marius Wheeler*

#### How many Lesser Flamingos are there in southern Africa?

The southern African Lesser Flamingo population has been estimated to number between 55,000 – 65,000 individuals during the mid 1990s. This seems to be an under estimate since it appears that there are more birds around now. At times, Kamfers Dam in the Northern Cape, the Goldfields wetlands in the northern-eastern Free State, Etosha Pan (Namibia) and Sua Pan (Botswana) each support more than that number. The question that arises is; do we have a small “resident” population which is at times supplemented with 10s of thousands (perhaps 100s of thousands) of birds from East Africa? This has been previously suggested, but there is still no direct evidence for any movement of birds between the two regions.

In order to try and get to grips with the size of the southern African population of Lesser Flamingos, a coordinated survey is planned; to coincide with the upcoming CWAC surveys. The survey dates for Lesser Flamingo are 20 and 21 July 2008. During this survey, as a minimum, we'd like to have all of the sites surveyed which at times have supported more than 750 Lesser Flamingos (Table 1). Technically the definition of a key site is one at which >1% of the southern African population has been counted sometime during the past five years. If the southern African population number's 100,000 birds, (an estimate based on simultaneous counts at the above four sites), then key sites will be those localities which at times have supported more than a 1,000 birds.

We would like to request CWAC counters, specifically for those sites listed in Table 1, including any other sites that support Lesser Flamingos, to try and do their waterbird surveys on either 20 or 21 July. Let's finally try and get to grips with the size of our Lesser Flamingo population. Your support in this regard would really be appreciated. For more information please contact Mark Anderson ([manderson@half.ncape.gov.za](mailto:manderson@half.ncape.gov.za)) or Marius Wheeler ([marius.wheeler@uct.ac.za](mailto:marius.wheeler@uct.ac.za)).

*Mark Anderson*

**Table 1** represents sites in the sub-region which have at least once, during the past 10 years, supported a minimum of 750 Lesser Flamingos (South Africa), and 550 Lesser Flamingo (Namibia & Botswana).

Wetland	Province / Country	Compiler
Bokaa Dam	Botswana	??
Gaborone Game Reserve Dam	Botswana	??
Lake Ngami	Botswana	Pete Hancock
Shashe Dam	Botswana	??
Sua Pan	Botswana	Graham McCulloch
Chatty Salt pans	Eastern Cape	Paul Martin
Bloemhof Dam	Free State	Brian Colahan
Flamingo Pan	Free State	Brian Colahan
Skoppan	Free State	Brian Colahan

St Helena Mine Dams	Free State	Brian Colahan
Stinkpan	Free State	Brian Colahan
Sunnyside Pan	Free State	Brian Colahan
Stan Madden Bird Sanctuary	Gauteng	Stan Madden
Lake St Lucia	KwaZulu-Natal	Caroline Fox
Blinkpan (Lothair)	Mpumalanga	Marjorie Nuns
Kanhym: Pan 1	Mpumalanga	Ken Hatting
Cape Cross	Namibia	Rod or Holger
Etosha Pan	Namibia	Wilfred Versfeld
Lake Oponono- Ekuma River	Namibia	Wilfred Versfeld
Luderitz Sewage works	Namibia	Holger Kolberg
Mile 4	Namibia	Rod or Holger
Sandwich Harbour	Namibia	Rod or Holger
Swakop River mouth	Namibia	Rod or Holger
Tsumkwe Pans (especially Nyae Nyae)	Namibia	Holger Kolberg
Walvis Bay	Namibia	Keith Wearne
Leeupan	North West	Piet du Plessis
Ganspan B	Northern Cape	Mark Anderson
Kamfers Dam	Northern Cape	Mark Anderson
Orange River mouth	Northern Cape	Mark Anderson
Spitskop Dam	Northern Cape	Mark Anderson
Berg River 2: Cerebos Salt pans	Western Cape	Felicity Ellmore
Berg River 4: Hotel Salt pans	Western Cape	Mel Tripp
Berg River 11: Doornfontein Floodplain	Western Cape	Elsje van der Linde
Langebaan	Western Cape	Rob Simmons
Paarl Bird Sanctuary	Western Cape	Yvonne Weiss
Strandfontein Sewage Works	Western Cape	Dick Barnes



Department of Agriculture,  
Conservation and Environment

### **Competition Time!!**

As promised, CWAC is launching a competition in search of a project logo. I am really excited about this development! Since inception of the CWAC project, some 16 years ago, the project has always been associated with the ADU logo.

The time has arrived for the project to find its own logo. I am confident that this is a step in the right direction. The new logo will support the project's identity and hopefully also serve as a quick and easily recognisable means of association.

I want to urge all, especially the "graphically inclined" project participants to come up with ideas for logos. We would like to receive a wide variety of ideas and we need your help to do that.

You will be allowed to design the logo as you wish, digitally, or by hand. It may be in colour, or plain black and white, extravagant or simple; whatever

takes your fancy. There are no restrictions, but keep the following tips in mind:

- A simple design usually works better;
- It must be well suited for colour and black and white printing;
- It must be relevant to the CWAC project;
- Ensure that the logo is well defined and of high quality, especially hand-drawn logos;
- It should be well balanced and scalable;
- It must be easily recognisable;
- It must be unique.

These are some basic tips but please feel free to search for more information on logo design. The internet is particularly useful in this regard. The prize up for grabs is a selection of any two of the following ADU publications:

- The Adventures of Peter the Penguin;
- The TOTAL CWAC Report;
- The Atlas of the Birds of Sul Do Save, Southern Mozambique;
- The ESKOM Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland;
- Birds of the Orange River Estuary and Surrounding Area;
- The MAZDA CAR Report;
- The Atlas and Red Data Book of the Frogs of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland;
- Review of Ring Recoveries of Waterbirds in Southern Africa.

The competition is open to anybody and entries will be accepted until 30 September 2008. Entries can be forwarded to me in digital format, or by post. A pre-selection phase will follow and the cream of the crop will go through to the final. The winning logo will then be chosen by an independent panel.

I hope to start receiving your logos soon! If you have any questions in this regard, please feel free to contact me. No need to be a rocket scientist to compete in this competition – get those pencils sharpened!

### **Summer results**

The 2008 summer counts have been completed, however it is very difficult for me to draw any preliminary conclusions based on the data. Compared to figures from the previous summer season (2007), results are quite varied, both higher and lower. A large percentage of the counts, including counts for some key sites, are still outstanding, making analysis of the data very difficult at this stage.

I am pleased to report that the data on the CWAC website is up to date, up to and including the summer 2007 counts. For those that have submitted any additional monthly or quarterly counts during 2007; these will also be included. Anybody that is

interested to know what the results / species trends are for their particular wetland, feel free to visit the website at: <http://cwac.adu.org.za/>

Some of the 2008 summer highlights that I can mention include the following sites:

#### **Langebaan: Japan se klip – Bottelary:**

This site includes the eastern shoreline of the Langebaan Lagoon (West Coast National Park). During our January CWAC count, some large groups of waders were spotted on this section. The total number of birds observed was 17,505 and included 3,300 Grey Plover, 1,600 Turnstone, 800 Red Knot, 2,970 Curlew Sandpiper, 4,950 Sanderling, 1,600 Bar-tailed Godwit and 1,600 Common Whimbrel. Thanks to Sten Johansson for coordinating this count.



#### **Lake St Lucia:**

The long running drought is persisting in the region and the lake level has been steadily declining since the mouth breached in March 2007 and its subsequent closure in late August. Some of the highlights during the aerial survey conducted on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2008 included, 203 Pink-backed Pelican, 4,140 Great White Pelican, 415 White-breasted Cormorant, 119 Great White Egret, 602 African Spoonbill and 194 Caspian Tern. Thanks to Caroline Fox and her team from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife for undertaking the count.



#### **Leeupan:**

Situated in the North West Province just north of Barberspan, this site yielded 6,001 Lesser Flamingos during the January count. This is an extraordinary number of Lesser Flamingos, representing about 10% of the southern African population. Thanks to Piet du Plessis and his team for conducting this count.

#### **Public Data Access**

The ADU in partnership with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) needs your support!

In order for the CWAC website to fulfil its potential as a valuable biodiversity data portal for the public good, we need permission from you or your organization as the data owner in order to allow us to make the data available on the web. Of course there are data ownership, sensitivity and acknowledgement issues to be addressed, and both the ADU and SANBI acknowledge this. You or your organization will remain the data owner. The ADU simply serves the purpose of making your valuable data available in a standardized and useful format to aid the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds.

There is a tremendous need for access to this kind of information and I urge everybody to seriously consider making their data available.

I will soon start sending out letters to compilers in this regard. You may receive the documentation via email or post. Please give your consideration to this very important issue. I thank you in advance.

***I would welcome short articles or snippets on waterbird or wetland issues. If you would like to contribute such an article, please contact me.***

#### **The Twelfth Pan-African Ornithological Congress**

The Twelfth Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) will take place at the Goudini Spa Conference Centre, near Cape Town, from Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> to Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2008. For further information on the PAOC, please visit their website at: <http://paoc12.adu.org.za/>

The CWAC project will host a Poster as well as a Round Table discussion at the conference and of course all participants to the conference are welcome to attend. The final date and time will be announced at a later stage.



#### **New Census Forms**

As reported earlier in the year, the time has arrived to make the switch to a new census form. Let me briefly explain the reasoning for this change.

The CWAC species listed on all the previous versions of the CWAC census forms have been using a certain species numbering system. These numbers have in the past been referred to as the ADU number or the Roberts number. As an example, Great Crested Grebe's number was 0062, but on the new census form, this species's code has changed to 000042.

As a result of project integration within the ADU we are shifting all our bird data collection projects onto a single numbering system. Projects such as CWAC, BIRP (Birds in Reserves Project) and SABAP2 (South African Bird Atlas Project) now all use the same species numbers. This simplifies data management significantly. Please take note that the new number allocated to each species is purely a reference number. It bears no association with either the old ADU or Roberts 6 numbers.

With the rollout of the Excel Census form earlier this year, some of you may have noticed that these forms already had the new numbers listed. However, we also need to start using the same format in the use of the Word and PDF forms - these include the many paper census forms I receive. I would like to ask everybody to switch over to the new forms as soon as you can.

For those of you mainly submitting data via snail mail, please print out the new **PDF - version 5** and submit future data on this form. For those participants receiving the newsletter by post, I have included a copy of this new census form with the newsletter for your convenience. You are welcome to make more copies of this form as you need, or alternatively please let me know and I can send you some extra forms.

For those submitting data mainly via the digital forms (Word and Excel), you would have received your new forms some time ago. I would encourage you to try and use the new **Excel - version 3** form. This form replaces the previous version 2. The new form is much more user friendly; all the data fields are located on one sheet - no more jumping between sheets. Furthermore, the sheet is searchable (just use your normal Ctrl-F function). For those that want to copy the data out of the form, you can easily do so. Lastly, the form has been redesigned and the print margins have been set. You can print the form out on normal A4 paper - just be wary, the grey scale will use extra toner/ink!

Inevitably there will be some people that experience problems with the new Excel and Word forms. In fact, since sending out the forms a few days ago, I have already received note of some people experiencing problems in opening the forms. If you are experiencing any problems with either of the forms, please let me know. We may have a solution to the problem and I will send you a slightly different version of the form that may work on your machine. Please do not use any of the previous versions.

***If you are keen to participate in any of the other ADU projects, please visit our website for more information. You could try bird, reptile or butterfly atlassing!***

### **Thank You!**

The ADU is particularly grateful for the logistical help received from the following provincial conservation organizations: **Cape Nature, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment, Northern Cape Provincial Government and the Free State Department of Tourism and Environment.** We also thank the many **BirdLife** participants around the country for their valued support.

The ADU would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every CWAC participant for the valuable contributions they have, and will continue to make during 2008. We value your support.



### **Winter CWAC Dates**

The 2008 winter count can take place on any day during the month of July. Please keep the National Lesser Flamingo Survey dates (**21 / 22 July**) in mind when planning your outings. If your site(s) support this species, it would be hugely beneficial to synchronise your counts with these dates. If further information is required on any of these count dates, please feel free to contact your regional organiser or myself. I wish everybody all the best with their counts!

***Marius Wheeler,  
CWAC Coordinator***



*African Fish Eagle –  
Caroline Fox*