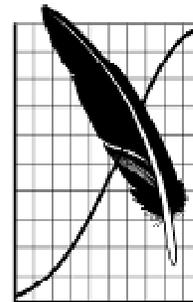




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COORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWAC)

NEWSLETTER 30

02 February 2009

Dear Waterbird Counters

The New Year is already one month old! It is just amazing how time flies! I hope that everybody is already hard at work and making the most of our summer weather. This season's counts are well underway and the data is pouring into my office. Thanks indeed to everybody for their support.

Yes, our project has its own **Logo!!** I am delighted about this. The winner...s are revealed!

World Wetlands Day is TODAY!! Have you gone out to survey your wetland yet?

We pay **Tribute** to a great conservationist from KZN.

Two copies of **Birds of Africa** by Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan are up for grabs!

These are some of the stories in this, the **30th Edition** of the CWAC newsletter. Hope you enjoy them!

Greetings, Marius Wheeler

Finally we have our own project logo!

I am extremely delighted to unveil the new logo that was chosen as the winner! As many of you know we started our search in June last year. A call was put out for people to submit their creations. Various logos were received from around the country and eventually the winning logo was chosen by means of a "Public CWAC" vote. The top five logos voted for were as follows:

Number 5: 41 Points



Number 4: 49 Points



Number 3: 84 Points



Number 2: 95 Points



Number 1: 110 Points



The new CWAC logo is the combined effort of two dynamic people. Mel Tripp, associated with AAA School of Advertising was responsible for the concept and design of the logo. Wayne Jones from Cocolure Illustration, DTP & Design did the illustration and final setting. Congratulations to both of you for doing an outstanding job! We are fortunate to have such talented people in the CWAC team and really appreciate the time you have put into this. It has certainly paid off. Your book prizes will be on their way soon!!

I would also like to thank all the other people that participated in this competition. Those that submitted logos as well as the people that voted. Thanks indeed for your contributions. From the ADU's side we are confident that the CWAC logo is a step in the right direction; providing the project with a clean crisp means of association. I think we can all be very happy with the outcome!

World Wetlands Day 2009

Today is World Wetlands Day. The theme for this year's event is: **Upstream downstream – wetlands connect us all.**

Essentially World Wetlands Day is all about raising awareness. This year's theme puts the spotlight on how we as humans, and indeed all living things that require water, are interconnected by this common denominator. Whether you live upstream or downstream, you form part of a big web of living creatures, all critically dependant on water.

Water is life – we all know that. Without it we cannot do anything; not even live.

Clean healthy wetlands supply us all with an enormous benefit. Some of us know about these, but generally, the broader public are unaware of these. This is especially true for South Africa. Wherever you look, wetlands are being polluted, neglected, built-over, destroyed, over-utilised, left unprotected, the list goes on and on. How is this still possible in this day and age you may ask?

There are many reasons for the above happening and it will certainly not be possible to even remotely deal with all of these aspects in this newsletter. One point I do want to bring up though, is that of raising awareness. This is one method that we all can use; assist in, to the benefit of wetlands. Raising awareness means going out and telling those people that do not know about the importance of wetlands, exactly why they should be protecting them.

We as the CWAC community have a fair understanding as to why wetlands are important; from a bird perspective. World Wetlands Day, and indeed during the whole month of February while we do our summer surveys, offers us an opportunity to raise awareness about the plight of our local wetlands and associated waterbirds.

I urge each and every one of you to do something in this regard; in whatever way you can assist. Take a few new people out next time you go out to count the waterbirds – tell them about the importance of the wetland. Raise the wetland issue at the bird club – give a small slideshow on your favourite waterbird(s). Tell people about the CWAC website – where they can obtain waterbird information from. Try and involve your local school in waterbird and wetland issues – you need to make it fun for the kids. Design a waterbird / wetland poster (it is really easy) and have it printed and put up in an appropriate place – maybe the school or public library.

Organise a beach or wetland clean-up – involve the municipality, schools and local people. Write a small article about a waterbird / wetland issue in your local newspaper. If you can involve your employer or employees in some or other way – do that. Set-up an “environmental page” on your business’s website and focus on environmental / wetland issues in your local area – there is absolutely no reason not to. Start a waterbird blog!

The more we talk, the more people will hear. The more they hear, the more likely they are to change their perceptions about wetlands. Once this has

happened, the more likely they are to take action. That is what raising awareness is all about!

For a host of ideas on what you could be doing to promote wetland awareness, visit the Ramsar website: http://www.ramsar.org/wwd/wwd_index.htm



Some winter highlights

Many of the wetlands around the Port Elizabeth area comprise artificial wetlands yet they have shown to support significant numbers of waterbirds. These wetlands are all surveyed by Dr Paul Martin.

Coega Salt pans:

A newly registered site that delivered a total of 1 730 birds. Of particular interest were the following numbers: 279 Black-winged Stilts, 176 Kelp Gulls, 636 Grey-headed Gulls of which 237 comprised breeding pairs. Another highlight included 490 pairs of Swift Tern breeding.

Chatty Salt pans:

Another one of Dr Paul's sites. A total of 607 Black-necked Grebes were counted. This represents approximately 4% of the regional population! Other highlights included 176 Pied Avocets and 102 White-breasted Cormorants.

Redhouse Salt pan:

A total of 1 769 birds counted. This number included 40 Little Grebe, 110 White-breasted Cormorant, 314 Reed Cormorant, 304 Greater Flamingo, 120 Lesser Flamingo, 108 Yellow-billed Duck, 435 Kelp Gull and 46 Caspian Tern.

Zwartkops River Estuary:

Also counted by Dr Paul Martin. Large numbers of breeding Sacred Ibis were reported from this section. Good numbers of African Black Oystercatcher (35) and Kelp Gull (1 133) were also reported.

Stewards Pan:

Situated on the East Rand and counted by Sean West. This site delivered 1 818 African Sacred Ibis as well as 3 061 Grey-headed Gull.

Trafalgar Marine Reserve:

Situated on the southern KZN coastline, this site produced 400 Cape Gannets as well as 600 Swift Terns!

Blood River Vlei (Central):

Situated close to Vryheid in KZN. A total bird count of 3 625 was reported. Both species, Spur-winged Goose (1 445) and Grey Crowned Crane (123), represent at least 1% Ramsar levels.

De Hoop Vlei:

A total of 7 490 birds were reported. Species that reached Ramsar levels include:

- Great Crested Grebe – 179
- White-breasted Cormorant – 506

Species that reached sub-regional IBA levels include:

- Little Grebe – 297
- Red-knobbed Coot – 4121
- Pied Avocet – 173

I would welcome short articles or snippets on waterbird or wetland issues. If you would like to contribute such an article for inclusion in the next newsletter, please contact me.

New sites registered with the CWAC programme during 2008

Nr	Site Name	Province	Compiler
1	Coega Saltpans	Eastern Cape	Paul Martin
2	Groot Riet Pan	Free State	Stephen Hill
3	Smithfield Dam	Free State	Brian Colahan
4	Toronto Pan	Free State	Brian Colahan
5	Vaal Dam: EE1 (Extreme East)	Free State	Rosemary Girard
6	Gatemore Farm Dams	KwaZulu-Natal	Evelyn Hughes
7	St Lucia Beach: Swimming Beach to First Rocks	KwaZulu-Natal	Caroline Fox
8	Sundumbili Sewage Works	KwaZulu-Natal	Frank Rautenbach
9	Zini Estate Wetland	KwaZulu-Natal	Frank Rautenbach
10	Rooipoort Nature Reserve: Davis Drift2 - R64 Bridge	Northern Cape	Andrew Stainthorpe
11	Rooipoort Nature Reserve: Rooidam	Northern Cape	Andrew Stainthorpe
12	Rooipoort Nature Reserve: Shauws Drift - Davis Drift2	Northern Cape	Andrew Stainthorpe
13	Rooipoort Nature Reserve: Twin Gates - Shauws Drift	Northern Cape	Andrew Stainthorpe
14	Atlantis Dunes: Pond 7	Western Cape	Thumeka Mdlazi
15	Berg River 15: Vlaminkvlei Night Roost	Western Cape	Keith Harrison

16	Berg River 16: Lower Berg River Night Roost	Western Cape	Keith Harrison
17	Breede River Estuary: Power lines - Ronnys Wooden House	Western Cape	Stiaan Conradie
18	Langebaan Country Estate	Western Cape	Keith Harrison
19	Loch Lotus Dams	Western Cape	John Jones
20	Riviersonderend Sewage Ponds	Western Cape	John Jones

Thanks very much to those compilers who have registered new sites with the CWAC project. If you know of wetlands in your area that may be worthwhile counting or are currently counting areas that are not registered with CWAC, please consider bringing them onboard.

We also encourage people to count / register sites that may at first seem a bit odd... as a CWAC site. Examples may include small offshore islands where marine birds congregate either to breed or roost. Provided you have the means and authority to gather such data, areas such as these would make ideal CWAC sites. Regular tern roosts along the coastline, these may include day or night roosts, are also examples where really valuable data can be collected.

The recently registered Lower Berg River Night Roost surveyed by Keith Harrison from the West Coast Bird Club, is providing invaluable data on roosting species such as White-breasted Cormorant, Cape Cormorant and various tern species. Only by doing these counts have we recently discovered that this part of the Berg River can easily support up to 30 000 Cape Cormorants in a single evening!

The criterion is simple. If the site harbours waterbirds, including marine species, this could potentially be valuable information. If you have any site(s) in mind, however odd they may seem, feel free to contact me and we can discuss the feasibility of incorporating your counts into the CWAC programme. It would certainly be of National importance.

A tribute to Amos Myeza (1952 – 2008)

Amos Myeza, Technical Assistant for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, passed away on 24 October 2008 after a short illness. He was based at St Lucia Research for 32 years and had participated in the St Lucia CWAC counts since their inception.

He was known for his knowledge of wildlife in all its forms. With his friendly nature and affinity for people he was well known to many visiting scientists. He had built up an expertise in counting water birds and will be sorely missed by us all at St Lucia.

Caroline Fox, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

CWAC, SABAP1 & SABAP2 working in harmony

During the second half of last year many of you would have received lists from me indicating out of range waterbird species for your particular sites, including sites that you may be familiar with. Thanks to those people that have completed them. I have made the appropriate corrections.

The aim of the process was to clean some of the older CWAC data in the database. Previously, data that entered the database was never really effectively checked for species distribution errors, or as we generally refer to as out of range (ORF) species. As a result, many errors existed in the CWAC database.

This has all changed recently with the CWAC and SABAP databases now working effectively together. Any new data that enters the CWAC database is immediately assessed against clean (accurate) SABAP1 & 2 data. If any ORF species are detected these are immediately highlighted and can be easily queried with the compiler.

Submitting your data electronically on the new Excel census form is however key to the effectiveness of this process. The reason for this is because the Excel form is processed digitally, as opposed to the other forms that are processed manually.

Thanks to everybody who has switched over to the Excel census sheets. I have received positive comments from many of you. For those still using the Word format sheets, please consider upgrading to the Excel sheets. If you experience any problems with the new Excel form please let me know so we can work on a solution. The Excel sheets are available from me directly or from the CWAC website. <http://www.adu.org.za>

People using normal paper census forms are of course welcome to continue using these. If you need copies, please let me know and I will forward some.

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 atlasing!

In need of some resources?

Wetlands International, through the African Waterbird Census has donated two bird books for distribution within South Africa. Two copies of Birds of Africa, by Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan, as well as a pair of serviced binoculars are available for waterbird monitoring.

If you know where this equipment can be put to good use, please send me a short motivational letter describing what it would be used for, how this will benefit waterbird monitoring and who the people that will be using it are. Preferably this equipment needs to be sent to a person / office / department where a real need exists for such equipment.

For those interested, please send me your motivations by the end of March 2009.



Thanking 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 Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation 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 2009.

2009 CWAC counting dates

The summer counting season is currently underway. Please try and get to your site(s) by mid - February. If you run into logistical problems and you are unable to make it by this date, please try and conduct your count as soon as possible thereafter.

The winter count can take place on any day during the month of July. If further information is required on any of these dates please feel free to contact your regional organiser or myself. I wish everybody all the best with their 2009 counts!

**Marius Wheeler,
CWAC Coordinator**

