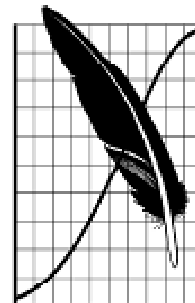




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COORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWAC)

NEWSLETTER 31

December 2009

Dear Waterbird Counters

2009 is finished!! Unbelievable how the time flies!! It has been a great year for CWAC. I have been incredibly busy at times, and I am sure you as well, but still I have enjoyed every single moment of it. The two events that stand out to me are the launch of our own project logo – that happened back in February. And of course the revision of the project mission statement. Both of these events will help carry the project forward into the future. I think everybody deserves a pat on the back... and a well deserved break.

Still there is much to be done. No doubt 2010 and the years to come will hold many new challenges. Next year is also the big “Football / Soccer” year and this spectacular event will certainly have some impact on our waterbird surveys during the month of July. My advice is to plan your winter surveys well in advance.

Unfortunately the end of 2009 also means my stint with the ADU has come to an end. As most of you will know by now I have taken up a new position with CapeNature. I am starting with them in January next year.

The last six years as project coordinator for the CWAC and BIRP projects has been incredible. I have worked with many amazing and committed people from all over the country – people that really want to

contribute towards bird conservation. I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one. It has been a real pleasure working with all of you. I trust that you have enjoyed the journey likewise and wish you all the very best for the future. The work that we do remains crucial for bird conservation, nationally and internationally. Keep up the good work!!

Lastly I would like to extend a welcome to the new project coordinator that will be appointed early next year. I wish you all the best for the New Year. I hope that you will take the CWAC project to even greater heights. Know that you have many hard working and dedicated people all over the country, and here at the ADU, to help you achieve this.

May you all have a relaxing festive season and wishing all of you a great 2010!

*Festive & Final greetings,
Marius Wheeler*

If you are keen to participate in any of the other ADU projects, please visit our homepage for more information
www.adu.org.za
It's all about citizen science!!

Short – term planning for the 2010 summer count

Regarding the planning for the upcoming summer count, it is business as usual. We

cannot afford my departure to negatively affect the running of the project. Having said that, there will be an interim period where there won't be a project coordinator in the office. I will be leaving the ADU in mid-December and as a result there won't be anybody in the office until early next year. Luckily this period falls over the summer holiday but it may happen that the new coordinator only takes office late in March. At this stage there is no finality on the appointment date.

This period obviously covers the summer CWAC surveys and I am therefore concerned. I want to reiterate that the counts go ahead as usual. The CWAC summer surveys can take place on any given day during the period mid-January to mid-February. If logistically this is difficult for you or your team, please conduct your count as soon as possible thereafter. A new appointment is likely to have been made by the time the 2010 winter surveys start (July) thus it is expected that there will be no impact in this regard.

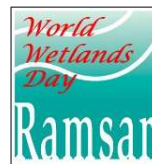
My current email address (marius.wheeler@uct.ac.za) will remain active and you are welcome to keep using it, even after my departure. Please keep sending your data and any other correspondence to this address. If you are unable to communicate with this address, for whatever reason, an alternative address has been set up (cwacrsa@gmail.com). Please only use the alternative address if the original address fails.

It goes without saying that from the time of my departure until the new coordinator is appointed there will be nobody in the office to take your calls, queries or respond to your email messages. On behalf of the ADU I would like to apologise for the inconvenience. If you have any urgent concerns please feel free to contact the ADU on telephone 021 650 2423 or on email address (adu-info@uct.ac.za). For information and data queries related to CWAC please feel free to visit the project website (<http://cwac.adu.org.za>).

World Wetlands Day 2010 “Caring for wetlands – an answer to climate change”

“At the end of 2009 a critical climate change meeting of the world’s leaders will take place in Copenhagen, and in January 2010 we will begin the International Year of Biodiversity, so biodiversity and climate change will definitely be hitting the headlines in the coming year. Our theme is therefore timely, and there is much to say at global and national levels about wetland species and ecosystems under continuing threat from unsustainable human practices, about the likely impact of climate change on wetland ecosystems, and importantly, about the role of wetlands in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Thus there is plenty of scope for you, the key World Wetland Day actors, in terms of your focus for the day.”

Ramsar Secretariat



Summer 2009

A total of 356 sites were surveyed during this period. This excludes some Northern Cape data that has not been received yet. The 2009 summer season was not as wet as the previous year with more sites being listed as dry on average. This was particularly evident in the eastern parts of the country. A total of 277 198 waterbirds were counted during this period.

A total of 4 new sites were registered during the summer reporting period. The table below indicates in which provinces these fell and who the compilers were.

Site Name	Province	Compiler
Kleinemonde West River: Mouth - 4km upstream	EC	Anne Williams
Blaauwklip	WC	John Jones
Berg River 17: Berg River Mouth Tern Roost	WC	Keith Harrison
Cape Columbine Tern Roost	WC	Keith Harrison

Some of the highlights for the 2009 summer season included:

Droëvlei:

Situated close to Malmesbury in the Swartland this medium sized farm dam can be home to particularly high numbers of Egyptian Geese. A total of 5250 birds were counted of which 4507 were Egyptian Geese. Thanks to Mrs Mariana Delport for coordinating this count.

Wadrif Saltpan:

This site situated on the West Coast between Lamberts Bay and Elandsbaai can easily qualify for Ramsar status with figures such as this: Black-necked Grebe (639), Greater Flamingo (1219), South African Shelduck (242), Cape Shoveler (509) and Maccua Duck (103). When wet this site regularly supports high numbers of important waterbirds. It should be afforded formal protection status. Thanks to Mr Kevin Shaw from CapeNature for undertaking regular surveys.

Lourens River Estuary:

A small tidal estuary just west of Strand situated in the Western Cape. This site regularly supports high numbers of roosting terns. The count total was 5909 birds with 45 Caspian Tern and 5500 Common Tern included. A tribute goes out to the family of Mr Gordon Scholtz who recently passed away. Gordon was instrumental in surveying this site on a regular basis with no less than 50 counts conducted there. Thanks to Duncan and Inès Cooke for taking over the monitoring.

Wilderness Lakes: Touw System:

This Ramsar site once again supported a high species diversity (45) and total count (7788). Some of the species highlights include: Great Crested Grebe (312), Little Grebe (254), White-breasted Cormorant (185), Reed Cormorant (271), Cape Shoveler (499), Yellow-billed Duck (1036) and Red-knobbed Coot (4416). Thanks to Mr Ian Russell from SANPARKS for his

continued monitoring support at both Wilderness Lakes.

Rooiwal Sewage Works:

Exceptionally high numbers of Glossy Ibis (650) and Southern Pochard (548) were observed during this very wet count. Only 2 Yellow Wagtails were observed but it is likely that more birds were present in the surrounding area. Mr Andre van der Walt does the monitoring at this site.

Springbokkamp Pan & Marrick Pan:

Both sites reported good numbers of Black-necked Grebe and South African Shelduck. Springbokkamp Pan's figure (2227) included 387 Black-necked Grebe and 305 South African Shelduck. Marrick Pan's figure (1655) included 312 Black-necked Grebe and 262 South African Shelduck. Thanks to Mr Eric Herrmann from the Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation for monitoring both these sites.

The CWAC newsletter & website is looking for short articles or information snippets on waterbird or wetland issues. If you would like to contribute please contact the project coordinator

Winter 2009

A total of 341 sites were surveyed during this period. This excludes some Northern Cape data that has not been received yet. A total of 320 316 waterbirds were counted.

A total of 5 new sites were registered during the winter reporting period. The table below indicates in which provinces these fell and who the compilers were.

Site Name	Province	Compiler
Teal Dam	GP	Craig Whittington-Jones
Penwarn	KZN	John Crowson
Goukou River: Melkhoutfontein - Cobb Hole	WC	Jean du Plessis
Nagenoeg Dam	WC	Sheila Walker
Meerlust Dam	WC	Sheila Walker

Some of the winter highlights included:

Sandpan & Bullfrog Pan:

Both Sandpan (3400) and Bullfrog Pan (2500) close to Benoni in Gauteng supported large numbers of breeding Grey-headed Gull. Thanks to Mr Peter Huggins for monitoring both these important sites.

Nsumo Pan:

The total count (1517) included 13 different species. Highlights included 754 Pink-backed Pelican (200 breeding pairs) and 323 Yellow-billed Stork (100 breeding pairs). Thanks to Mr Beka Nxele from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife for monitoring this special site.

Lake Eteza:

This site once again delivered good numbers. A total bird count of 5851 included 35 different species. The most significant numbers included: 1700 Great White Pelican, 507 African Spoonbill of which 122 were breeding, 806 Spur-winged Geese and 778 White-faced Duck. Our sincere appreciation to Mrs Caroline Fox and the whole Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife team involved in monitoring this and many other KZN CWAC sites.

Barberspan:

Barberspan had an exceptionally good winter count. A total bird count of 14734 included 52 different species. Highlights included 274 Little Grebe, 400 Spur-winged Geese, 3484 Egyptian Geese and 8856 Red-knobbed Coot. All four species surpassed Regionally Important IBA levels. Thanks to Dr Johan Botha and his team from North West Parks and Tourism Board for all their hard work.

Hartbeespoort Dam:

The Hartbeespoort Dam surveys were suspended in 1999 primarily as a result of human disturbance, increased housing development and water quality deterioration. None of the early counts indicated any

significant numbers of birds or species present, however data was limited.

Ten years later BirdLife Harties has taken up the challenge and started monitoring again. The second count was conducted this year on the 18th of July. A decent total count of 5485 included important species totals such as 42 Great Crested Grebe, 457 White-breasted Cormorant, 342 Reed Cormorant, 113 African Darter, 1107 African Sacred Ibis, 1336 Red-knobbed Coot and 24 Caspian Tern. This site is renowned for its poor water quality but it is still encouraging to see such numbers of birds. Further monitoring is recommended.



Thanking you!

The ADU is particularly grateful for the logistical help received from the following provincial conservation organisations: **CapeNature, 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 would also like to thank the many **BirdLife** participants around the country for their continued support.

The ADU would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every CWAC participant for the valuable contributions they have made during 2009.

2010 survey dates

The 2010 summer count can take place on any day between mid-January and mid-February with the preferred dates being the last weekend of January. Please continue with your surveys and data submissions as per normal.

The winter count can take place on any day during the month of July with the preferred dates being the 14, 15 and 16th of July. I wish everybody all the best with their counts.

**Marius Wheeler,
CWAC Coordinator**