Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census

No. 11, June 2006

Editor: David Li
Language Editing: Taej Mundkur and Mohala Santharamohana

Wetlands International
(Registration: 394031D)
3A39, Block A, Kelana Centre Point
Jalan SS7/19, 47301 Petaling Jaya
Selangor, MALAYSIA
Tel: +603-7804 6770
Fax: +603-7804 6772
E-mail: david@wetlands.org.my
Web site:
http://www.wetlands.org/articlemenu.aspx?id=8fb450de-f760-42bb-8337-c9942a41d5fc

==========

Contents

==========

1. Letter from the AWC International Coordinator

Dear AWC coordinators and participants,

This issue of the AWC Newsletter is part of our event to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the AWC. Over the past 20 years, the AWC has been extremely successful in identifying internationally important wetland sites, important bird areas, the distribution and population of waterbird species and contributed towards conservation activities at local to international levels. Through the programme, local conservation networks were established, waterbird and wetlands conservation awareness were raised and many important sites for waterbirds were conserved.

However, there are many challenges still to be addressed. Particularly, inconsistent site coverage has been a major issue for proper monitoring of waterbird populations. Very few of the grand total of 6,600 sites were surveyed annually. Besides, the lack of capable volunteers in some developing countries has also meant that poor quality data continues to be submitted.

What is our way ahead after 20 years of implementing the AWC? How could we contribute to conservation efforts in a more effective manner? With the welcome support of Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF), Japan we hope to answer these questions this year. As part of the KNCF grant support, we will organise an international meeting for the AWC coordinators in October 2006. Together, we will review the implementation of the AWC Strategy 2004-2006 (that was developed at the first AWC coordinators meeting in Malaysia in October 2003), and carefully plan our future development. As an outcome, a long-term AWC strategy shall be developed.

Besides the KNCF support will also allow us to collate and publish the results of the AWC 2002 to 2004 by early next year. As always, the results can be used for conservation purposes by a large international constituency, in addition to providing valuable feedback to the AWC volunteers.

We shall also continue the AWC Newsletter which has been seen as an effective tool for communication amongst the AWC volunteers' network. This issue provides you with reports of the AWC 2006 from Cambodia, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. We thank you for your kind support of the AWC.

Finally, we would appreciate your kind comments and suggestions on how to improve the AWC in the future.

Best regards,

David Li
AWC International Coordinator, Wetlands International, david@wetlands.org.my

2. AWC News from the Region

The following section provides an update of AWC 2006 in the region.

Cambodia

Hong Chamnan, Wildlife Conservation Society - Cambodia Programme, wcs.hc@everyday.com.kh

The AWC 2006 in Cambodia attracted a record number of participants. The participation of 61 volunteers (compared to 14 in 1999, 32 in 2000, 54 in 2001, 13 in 2002, 13 in 2003, 37 in 2004 and 39 in 2005) attests to the growing interest in nature outings in Cambodia. The AWC can be regarded as a simple, inexpensive tool for building awareness on waterbird and wetland conservation in Cambodia and deserves continued support in years to come.

In 2006, 6 sites were visited from 5 January to 26 February, less number of sites surveyed compared to 9 sites in 2005. The sites covered were Boeng Veal Samnap, Krous Krom, Angkor Wat area, Bassac marsh, Prek Toal and Ang Trapaing Thmor. A total of 93,550 individual waterbirds of 40 species were recorded.

Ang Trapaing Thmor is the largest wetland area in the northwest of Cambodia and very important site for waterbirds with 33 species and 25,955 waterbirds recorded. The highest number of waterbirds was the Lesser Whistling Duck (17,663). Other species recorded were Cattle Egret (1044) , Little Egret (909), Purple Swamphen (877), Common Teal (766), Chinese Pond Heron (758), Intermediate Egret (614), Comb Duck (570) and Great Egret (445). This site is also good for the Sarus Crane in the non-breeding season. Moreover, this area supports many important bird species such as Black-necked Stork, Black-headed Ibis, White-shouldered Ibis, Bengal Florican, Spotted-billed Pelican and Woolly-necked Stork.

Prek Toal is one of the largest waterbird breeding colonies in Southeast Asia. From December–May, many waterbirds come to breed in the flooded forests. At least 10 species of waterbirds breed in the Prek Toal core area such as the Lesser and Greater Adjutant, Black- headed Ibis, Asian Openbill, Painted Stork, Milky Stork, Spot-billed Pelican, Black-necked Stork, Oriental Darter and Grey-headed Fish Eagle. Moreover, many of the waterbird species come to feed as well because of the rich fishery resources at Prek Toal. The AWC count was conducted at both nesting site and feeding areas around Prek Toal within the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve. In AWC 2006, we recorded a large number of Indian Cormorant (16,666), Great Cormorant (1,083) and Oriental Darter (3,800). The total 2006 AWC count at Prek Toal is 59,647 waterbirds of 33 species.

Since the Endangered Bengal Floricans were found in the Krous Krom area in 1999 by the Wildlife Protection Office in the Siem Reap Provincial Department of Forestry, Cambodia has been considered as one of the most important countries for this species. The AWC has been conducted in Krous Krom for two years. We have recorded some important species in dams built by local people for dry season rice farming. The dams are good for some large waterbirds feeding in the short period of time from December to March. When the dams are dry, the waterbirds move to the Tonle Sap lake area to feed. In the 2006 AWC at Krous Krom, we recorded some large waterbirds - Chinese Pond Heron, Painted Stork, Sarus Crane, Comb Duck, Spot-billed Duck, as well as some shorebird species. However these waterbirds were strongly disturbed when local people also farming rice at the same time.

The Bassac marshes of the Mekong floodplain near Phnom Penh support a fairly good diversity of waterbirds: 40 species were recorded in Boung Veal Samnap and the total number of birds counted was 6,492. The increased number of waterbirds reported this year compared to last year was due to a large flock of Little Cormorant and unidentified cormorants (1,500-2,000).

In conclusion, two areas in Cambodia, Ang Trapaing Thmor and Prek Toal Core area supported the largest number of waterbirds in 2006. We were not able to cover many other areas this year due to the lack of funds to support people or train them on identification of waterbirds and counting techniques.

In the future AWC, we need to cover more important areas, especially the coastal areas and around the Mekong River in Southwest of Cambodia. More volunteers will be encouraged to carry out the AWC especially in some provinces around Phnom Penh and along the Mekong River. Funds will be needed to prepare education materials on waterbirds to get people to understand about the importance of waterbirds.

CHINA

Mainland China

Xu Qiang, Technical Officer, Wetlands International-China Office, xq@wetwonder.org

Due to the fact that access to many wetlands was closed in January 2006 in ongoing efforts to prevent the spread of Bird Flu; the AWC 2006 was carried out only at a few sites this year. The surveys were conducted between 8 and 27 February. A total of 22 sites of 5 provinces were surveyed, with 30,464 waterbirds of 56 species recorded. However, more survey results are still expected from the volunteers.

A total of 2,172 waterbirds were recorded at Zhanjiang National Nature Reserve, Guangdong province. The survey covers 7 sub-sites namely Cao Qiao (75 individuals), Tai Ping (95), Dong hai (634), He An (241), Xia Shan (200), Wu Li (430) and Tiao Feng (497). In all, 9,275 waterbirds were recorded in Hainan Province, where a total of 12 sites were surveyed, namely Tashi (909 individuals), Bamenwan (2,121), Wanning Reservoir (1,121), Longgun Town (913), Shanya River (272), Xinying (743), Huanglonggang (896), Jianfeng Reservoir (469), Bashuo Harbor (448), Guyue Village (1,072), Datian Nature Reserve (58) and Daguangba Reservoir (253). A total 2,412 waterbirds were recorded wintering in the Tianjin Coast, including the Oriental White Stork (1), Relict Gull (836) and Saunder's Gull (61). In Shuangtaihekou National Nature Reserve, Liaoning Province, 1,015 waterbirds were recorded and In Danjiang Nature Reserve, Henan Province, a total of 15,588 waterbirds were recorded including the Black Stork (9) and Swan Goose (3,000).

We would like to thank the volunteers who conducted the survey and reported the count data to Wetlands International-China Office.

Hong Kong

Yat-tung YU, Coordinator, Waterbird Monitoring Programme, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, ytyu@hkstar.com

The AWC at the Deep Bay area, including the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site in Hong Kong was conducted on 22 January 2006. This census covered all the areas of the Ramsar site including the new Hong Kong Wetland Park at Tin Shui Wai and the Futian National Nature Reserve in Shenzhen.

A total of 47,627 waterbirds were counted in this area, of which 24,740 (52%) were counted in the Ramsar site. This total figure included 10,347 Great Cormorants – a new high number of this species for Hong Kong, 4,345 Ardeids, 12,958 ducks and grebes, 374 rails and coots, 7,894 shorebirds and 11,709 gulls and terns. This census recorded a 12.5% decrease from the figures in previous census and this decrease is mainly due to fewer ducks present in this census (c.f. ducks and grebes in January 2005: 22,521 individuals). Reasons for this decline are believed to be habitat deterioration caused by sedimentation at the intertidal mudflat and disturbances from illegal-operating fishermen.

Taiwan

Dr. Woei-horng Fang, Vice President, Wild Bird Federation Taiwan, whfang@ha.mc.ntu.edu.tw

This year marked the eighteenth year of Taiwan's participation in the AWC. The census was coordinated by the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan and more than 100 participants participated. The counts were conducted between 1 January and 31 January 2006. A total of 136,950 birds were recorded in 42 sites. The sites where more than 5,000 birds were counted or contained species which met the 1% population criteria include Hua-Chiang-Chiao (5,307 individuals), Ta-Cheng (4,290, Kentish Plover 3,146), Da-Pi (3,454, Northern Lapwing 1,500), Chu-Shui-Hsi South (10,082), Pu-Tai (8,295, Caspian Tern 500), Ao-Ku (8,751), Szu-Tsao (11,778, Black-faced Spoonbill 360), Tseng-Wen Estuary (17,564, Black-faced Spoonbill 530, Caspian Tern 450, Great Egret 1,200), Kao-Ping River (7,193), Feng-Shan Reservoir (2,917, Great Cormorant 2660), Chu-An (8,635, Pacific Golden Plover 1,740), Lan-Yang River (7,220, Pacific Golden Plover 3,700, Kentish Plover 2,000), and Chin-Men Island (7,590, Great Cormorant 3,359).

Globally threatened species recorded include the Endangered Black-faced Spoonbill (556 in Tseng-Wen Estuary were the highest ever counted in the AWC; 259 in Szu-Tsaio, 4 in Pei-men, 5 in Chu-An, 2 in Chin-Men), Oriental White Stork (1 at Chu-shui River south), Swan Geese (6 in Kang-nan), and Scaly-sided Merganser (1 in Kung-Liao); Vulnerable Baikal Teals (1 each in Chu-An, Li-Tse and Wu-Wei-Kang), Baers' Pochards (3 in Tseng-wen-chi), Lesser White-fronted Goose (1 at Lan-Yang River), and Saunders' Gull (32 in Han-Pao, 10 in Pa-chang River, 8 in Au-Ku, 5 in Pei-Men, 3 in Tseng-Wen Estuary, 2 in Pu-Tai); as well as the Near Threatened Asian Dowitcher (1 in Pu-Tai).

Some vagrants recorded include the Glossy Ibis (1 in Lung-luan-tan), Greater White-fronted Goose

(separately recorded in Chu-An, Wu-wei-kang, Chu-shui-chi south, and Feng-shan reservoir); Bean Goose (2 in Chu-shui-chi south), Red-breasted Merganser (10 in Tseng-wen-chi and one in Szu-tsao), American Wigeon (2 in Chu-an and 1 in Kang-nan), and individual Long-billed Plover in Kung-Liao, Long-billed Dowitcher in Chu-an, Little Gull in Pu-Tai and Mew Gull in Lan-Yang River.

Malaysia

Yeap Chin Aik, Senior Science Officer, Malaysian Nature Society, conservation2@mns.org.my

The AWC 2006 in Malaysia was carried out in all States with the exception of Kelantan, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Sabah. Breaking tradition from the two-week January survey period, surveys undertaken within a three month period (December 2005-February 2006) were accepted. This was necessary as surveys in Sarawak (East Malaysia) were often difficult to carry out in January due to strong winds and tides linked to the monsoon as well as the lack of experienced volunteers.

An extensive coastal survey of western Sarawak, from Buntal bay to Pulau Bruit, was undertaken by Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) with support from volunteers the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) and University Malaysia Sarawak (UMS). The survey was jointly funded by Wetlands International and SFC. A survey of the coastal area was conducted in the mid 1980s by the Asian Wetland Bureau (now known as Wetlands International) and has since not been attempted until now. Through the surveys, information on non-breeding shorebird population along its western coastline has been updated and would be used to chart future priorities in shorebird conservation work. A detailed report of the survey is being compiled by SFC and will be made available shortly.

A total of 73 sites were surveyed nationwide. The figure, however, is higher but several sites were aggregated under a single large site e.g. north-central Selangor coast. Seven Important Bird Areas (IBA) were visited, including Teluk Air Tawar-Kuala Muda (Penang), Matang coast (Perak), North-central Selangor coast (Selangor), South-west Johor coast (Johor), Bako-Buntal Bay (Sarawak), Sadong-Saribas coast (Sarawak) and Pulau Bruit (Sarawak).

A total of 91,612 individuals from 85 waterbird species were reported. Nine major waterbird groups were observed. They include Herons and Egrets (16 species, 15,558 individuals), Storks (2, 135), Ibis (1, 1), Grebes (1, 58), Ducks and Geese (4, 123), Rails and Gallinules (6, 372), Jacanas (1, 5), Waders (43, 66,265) and Gulls and Terns (11, 9,095). Four globally threatened and two near-threatened waterbirds were reported: the Chinese Egret (VU, 471 individuals), Milky Stork (VU, 6), Lesser Adjutant (VU, 129), Nordmann's Greenshank (EN, 41), Malaysian Plover (NT, 136) and Asian Dowitcher (NT, 303). The remaining wild population of Milky Storks at Pulau Kelumpang (Matang coast IBA) has declined drastically from over 100 individuals fifteen years ago. A report on a detailed study of the species have been published jointly by Wetlands International and the Wildlife Department in February 2006, conservation efforts, include captive breeding and release programmes, have been planned to address this serious problem (Li *et al.* 2006). Large congregations of Chinese Egrets along the western Sarawak coast strongly suggest that the area is a main non-breeding ground for the species.

Interestingly, the Sarawak surveys yielded a single Eurasian Oystercatcher amongst a shorebird flock at Bako-Buntal Bay. This represents a first record for Borneo (G.W.H. Davison, pers. comm.). In Peninsular Malaysia, two possible sub-adult/juvenile Heuglin's Gulls were observed at Klang islands. The Records Committee of the MNS-Bird Conservation Council is currently evaluating the observation. If accepted, a new species will be added to Malaysia.

Other highlights of the AWC include the Black Bittern, Black-headed Ibis, Wandering Whistling Duck, Northern Pintail, Slaty-breasted Rail, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Black-winged Stilt, Green Sandpiper, Far Eastern Curlew, Brown-headed Gull, Black-headed Gull and several possible shorebird species (Oriental Plover, Little Curlew, Spotted Redshank, Temminck's Stint and Dunlin).

MNS would like to thank all its faithful and new volunteers who made this year's count a remarkable achievement.

Myanmar

Thet Zaw Naing, Myanmar Bird and Nature Society, sst@mptmail.net.mm

A total of 63 sites were counted during the AWC 2006 in Myanmar. Fourteen sites have been surveyed in the previous years and 49 sites were new sites. Most of the sites (36 sites) were situated at the mouth of Ayeyarwaddy (Irrawady) River in Ayeyarwaddy delta, South Myanmar which has been especially surveyed for shorebirds. This survey was funded by Wetlands International. Mr. Joost van der Ven supported the

fund for surveys at Indawgyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary, Ayeyarwaddy River and other sites in North Myanmar. A total of 88,915 waterbirds of 101 species were recorded during the AWC. This is the largest number of waterbirds since the country started participating in the census since 1987.

The listed waterbird species were divided into twelve major groups. The total number of birds and species of respective groups are: Grebes (3 species, 260 individuals), Pelicans (1, 5), Herons and Egrets (10, 4,926), Storks (5, 154), Frigatebirds (1, 1), Ibises (2, 300), Anatidae (18, 32,227), Cranes (1, 2,600), Rails, Gallinules and Coots (6, 5,687), Finfoot and Jacanas (2, 221), Shorebirds (38, 30,167) and Gulls and Terns (11, 10,174). The most numerous species recorded was the Lesser Whistling Duck (9,495 individuals), followed by the Ruddy Shelduck (8,271), Lesser Sand Plover (7,126), Brown-headed Gull (6,968) and Little Pratincole (5,732). Three globally threatened species were recorded. The Endangered Nordmann's Greenshank (28 individuals) has not been seen in Myanmar for more than hundred years. Two Vulnerable species recorded were the Spot-billed Pelican (5) and Lesser Adjutant (22). The Near-threatened species recorded included the Oriental Darter (213), Painted Stork (1), Black-headed Ibis (274), Ferruginous Duck (2,852) and Black-bellied Tern (34).

One new species for Myanmar, the Great Frigatebird was recorded. The other notable records in 2006 AWC were the Black-necked Grebe (10), Long-billed Plover (735), Kentish Plover (4,644), Lesser Sand Plover (7,126), Greater Sand Plover (1,137), Black-tailed Godwit (1,305), Bar-tailed Godwit (247), Whimbrel (1,218), Common Redshank (2,896), Common Greenshank (711), Common Sandpiper (721), Temminck's Stint (142), Long-toed Stint (394) and Mew Gull (1).

I would like to extend my appreciation to the participants of this year's census. I am also extremely grateful to Wetlands International and Mr. Joost van der Ven who kindly funded the survey at Ayeyarwaddy River Delta and North Myanmar respectively.

Nepal

Hem Sagar Baral, Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), hem@birdlifenepal.org

For the AWC 2006, we planned in advance. The Warden Seminar at Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve was a good opportunity to communicate with protected area managers where we could ask them to participate in the AWC and send their data to the BCN. Wetlands and marshes at Koshi and Pokhara have been covered this year. Although the aim was to cover all the Ramsar Sites of Nepal, we unfortunately could not cover Ghodaghodi Lake of the far west Nepal. Jagdishpur Reservoir was covered for the very first time and we intend to continue this trend also in the future. In spite of our efforts to cover Rani Tal and other far western lowland wetlands, worsening security situation prevented us from taking counts there. A total of 12 wetland areas were covered this year of which six were new entries. Within these areas there were various sites which were covered separately. These include 9 in Pokhara, 7 in Chitwan and 4 in Koshi Tappu. So in total 29 sites were covered. As many as 55 participants were involved in direct counting supported by half that number of support staff. Chitwan had the largest number of participants (26) confirming its prime place for bird enthusiasts in this country.

Data from this year indicate that while some places have remained the same as during last year's count, some have become highly deteriorated as a habitat for birds. The total absence of duck species from Bees Hazari Tal and its associated wetlands (Ramsar Site) is the most worrying of all the count records this year. Jagdishpur Reservoir was counted for the first time and its total bird population is most encouraging. Data from the counts indicate that some lakes in Pokhara merit recognition as Ramsar Sites. In future years, with a proper counting system in place, we intend to generate more information from all these interesting wetlands.

This year, Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, TigerTops Chitwan Jungle Lodge, Bird Education Society, Shey Phoksundo National Park and Koshi Camp have made great effort to cover more than one site within their area.

I would like to thank all the participants for their outstanding contribution to this year's AWC. I look forward to even better site coverage and more involvement from participants in the count next year.

New Zealand

Andrew Crossland, South Island Co-ordinator, OSNZ New Zealand Wader Census, Andrew.Crossland@ccc.govt.nz

In New Zealand, monitoring of shorebirds has been carried out since 1984 by the Ornithological

Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) which undertakes national surveys in the austral summer (November) and winter (June). A trial shorebird survey was carried out in the South Island only during February 2006, which is close to the AWC dates. There is currently no systematic national survey of other waterbird guilds (eg; Anatidae, cormorants, rails, herons, terns, etc) but in recent years waterbird surveys have been undertaken in some regions (such as Canterbury and Westland in the South Island). Count data from these surveys will be contributed for the current AWC period and it is hoped that more regions of New Zealand and a wider sample of waterbird species will be covered in future surveys.

The Philippines

Carlo Custodio, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, the Philippines, *custodiocarlo@yahoo.com*

There was an apparent decline in the number of sites covered in the Philippines for the AWC 2006. The decline was mainly attributed to Region VI in the Visayas being unable to do the count within the prescribed period. The counts nevertheless are included in this report but in a separate sheet. Counts from 2 important sites, Olango Island from Region VII in the Visayas and Naujan Lake, Mindoro Oriental from Region IV-B were not received and these sites were Olango Island, of the Shorebird Site Network and Naujan Lake of the Anatidae Site Network. Fifty-seven (57) sites were covered for AWC 2006. Eighteen out of the 57 sites were new and if the 12 sites from Region VI were added, there would have been 69 sites covered in 2006.

There were a total of 118 compilers in this year's count with many coming from new sites in Region I (Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur and Pangasinan) in northeast Luzon. The Wild Bird Club of the Philippines (WBCP), a Philippine non-government organization, also substantially added to the output. It expanded its coverage of sites by assisting in the counts for the National Capital Region (Metro Manila), Region III and Region VII.

There were 105,177 birds counted belonging to 88 species from all sites. Again there was an apparent decline in the total number of birds counted because of the non-inclusion of the data from Region VI and the failure of the compilers from Naujan Lake and Olango Island to submit their reports. The highest counts were recorded from Region 13-Caraga (10,060 birds, mostly Tufted Duck), Region I in Bani, Pangasinan (10,229), Candaba Swamp in Pampanga (9,106, mostly ducks, herons and egrets), Region IX in Vitali Wetland Area, Zamboanga City (7,583, mostly Little Egret) and Region 13-Caraga in Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary (6,627, mostly Little Egret).

The Little Egret, Tufted duck and the endemic Philippine duck were the most abundant species, with counts of 18,477, 9,606 and 8,585, respectively. There were more Chinese egrets reported from La Paz, Carmen in Region XI than from the Visayas (Regions VII and VIII) with 100 birds counted. The most numerous shorebirds were the Kentish Plover (3,849), the Black-winged Stilt (1,849) and the Common Sandpiper (1,620).

It should be noted that the Little Egret was found nesting in the Vitali Wetland Area in Region IX. This has never been reported before. The Australian Stilt has also been positively identified from the Mampang-Tugbungan Wetland Area and Vitali Wetland Area of the same Region. There has been reports that the Black-winged Stilt and the Australian Stilt might not actually be two different species but only one. However, until this issue is resolved, the two species would be reported separately.

Sri Lanka

Udaya Sirivardana & Deepal Warakagoda, Ceylon Bird Club, *birdclub@sltnet.lk*

The Ceylon Bird Club carried out the annual waterbird census in Sri Lanka from mid January to mid February 2006. 16 members of the club and four other people participated.

The large Jaffna region could be covered only partially and quickly, and by one person, as the armed conflict had again changed the situation there. For the same reason the east of the country was excluded. The North Central Province had to be omitted, as the person assigned could not find a time free of both rain and demands of occupation.

The total number of birds counted was c. 54,000, the second lowest in the 23 years of the census (except for 1987 when the security situation excluded many count areas). The lowest was c. 51,000 in 2001, and the totals in the four years between are each well over 200,000; among the highest.

There are several reasons for the low count. Every year migrants make up most of the total. This season the numbers of migrant birds, waterbirds and others, to Sri Lanka was unusually low. The richest census regions are Jaffna, Mannar and the South-East. The situation in

Jaffna is described above. In Mannar water levels were very high.

As explained in previous reports, birds may happen to be away from a site during the census. In mid October 2005, over a 100,000 Indian Cormorants and Little Cormorants' were seen at a single tank (reservoir) in the N C P (*Ceylon Bird Club Notes* 2005: 128). When the census there was done belatedly (see above) in March, the total for the Province was c. 1,800!

A total of 89 species was recorded, which is about average. The less common among them were: Black-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Crab Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Green Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Great Knot, Long-toed Stint, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Ruff.

The problems at Anavilundawa (a Ramsar Site) described in previous reports appear to be solved. The count there, however, was rather low because of high water levels. With regards to other sites, there are no special comments to make this year on threats or harm to habitats.

Thailand

Petch Manopawitr, Committee member of Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST), pmanopawitr@hotmail.com

The AWC 2006 in Thailand was again a big success with more than 100 wetland sites covered and an estimated 200,000-plus waterbird counted by over 120 observers (bird watchers throughout the country and Department of National Parks staff). With support from Wetlands International, the BCST coordinated a comprehensive count of the Inner Gulf of Thailand and some key wetland sites in the south. Immediately preceding the count period, BCST held a one day training course on waterbird identification and survey techniques for over 60 volunteer counters at the Samut Sakhon Mangrove Research Station. The event was supported by Wetlands International, the Department of Marine and Coastal Resource Conservation and by instructors from the Wildlife Research Division, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plants Conservation.

Globally threatened/near-threatened species counted included Chinese Egrets (VU) at two new sites; Painted Stork (NT), Baer's Pochard (VU), Black-faced Spoonbill (EN), Black-headed Ibis (NT), Spoon-billed Sandpiper (EN), Asian Dowitcher (NT) and Nordmann's Greenshank (EN). Data is currently being analysed before submission to WI, and a comprehensive report on the Inner Gulf of Thailand is additionally in preparation.

Vietnam

Nguyen Duc Tu, Wetland Programme Officer, BirdLife International Vietnam Programme, tu@birdlife.netnam.vn

From November 2005 to February 2006, the waterbird censuses in accordance with AWC programme were conducted in 6 coastal wetland IBAs in the Red River Delta of Vietnam. The sites visited were An Hai District, Tien Lang District, Thai Thuy District, Tien Hai Nature Reserve, Xuan Thuy National Park and Nghia Hung District. The counts were made under a KNCF funded project and supplemented by contributions from volunteer birdwatchers.

In total, at least 13,313 waterbirds of 59 species were counted. During the counts, four species of conservation concern were recorded: Black-faced Spoonbill (EN - 74 birds), Spoon-billed Sandpiper (EN - 6), Saunders's Gull (VU - 329) and Ferruginous Duck (NT - 8). Beyond the AWC counts, two other species of conservation concern recorded this winter are the Painted Stork (NT - 11 birds in September 2005) and Baer's Pochard (VU - 1 in March 2006). The most notable count was 288 Saunders's Gulls recorded in Thai Thuy IBA (3.4% of the estimated global population) and 74 Black-faced Spoonbills in Xuan Thuy IBA (4.3% of the global population).

During the surveys, major threats to bird populations in the coastal zone of the Red River Delta were identified as hunting and habitat loss caused by reclamation, afforestation and over-exploitation of wetland natural resources. The survey results also demonstrated that, without appropriate management, the natural values of coastal wetland IBAs in the delta have rapidly degraded.

3. International Black-faced Spoonbill Census 2006

Yat-tung YU, Coordinator, International Black-faced Spoonbill Census, Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, ytyu@hkstar.com

The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS) coordinates the annual International Black-faced Spoonbill Census. The 2006 census was scheduled on 6-8 January 2006 and a total of 1,679 Black-faced Spoonbills were counted. This figure shows a 14% increase from the figure of 1,475 individuals of the 2005 census. Taiwan still holds the largest wintering group in which a total

of 826 Black-faced Spoonbills were counted with Hong Kong coming in second (including counts from the Futian National Nature Reserve, Shenzhen, China) with a total of 346 individuals counted.

This census has proven to be a practical means to provide an annual and comparable figure to assess the population of this globally endangered species. The wintering population of the Black-faced Spoonbill has been increasing since the commencement of this census. However, a total of 70% of the wintering population concentrated in the two sites mentioned above and hence this species is highly susceptible to threats of habitat degradation and destruction of the sites and avian disease.

Report of the 2006 census will be soon available for download in the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society website: http://www.hkbws.org.hk/bfs/index.html (English) or contact me at bfspoonbill@hkbws.org.hk and the society office at hkbws@hkbws.org.hk

❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀❀

4. News on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy

Dr. Taej Mundkur, Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Coordination Officer, taejmundkur.wi@vsnl.net

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway stretches from the breeding grounds of the Russian Far East and Alaska, southwards through East and South-east Asia, to Australia and New Zealand and encompasses 23 countries. The East Asian–Australasian Flyway is home to over 50 million migratory waterbirds from over 250 different populations.

In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, the Governments of Japan and Australia, together with Wetlands International, successfully proposed a Type II Partnership for the conservation and sustainable use of sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds in East Asia, South East Asia and Australasia.

In November 2004, representatives from twenty-one Governments, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) met in the Republic of Korea to discuss future regional cooperation using the Type II Partnership model from the WSSD. They agreed that this Partnership would enhance collaboration between Governments, IGOs and NGOs and contribute towards achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Partnership will contribute to the implementation of a number of inter-governmental agreements and other international frameworks, including the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on Biological Diversity (resolutions 7.4 and 7.28), the UNDP and UNEP Project Priorities and Guidelines, the UNEP Water Policy and the Portfolio of Water Actions compiled at the 3rd World Water Forum.

Endorsement of the Partnership as a regional initiative within the framework of the Ramsar Convention as stated in Resolution 9.7 is a significant recognition of the importance of this Partnership in the Flyway.

The Partnership builds on the achievements of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, and its Action Plans for Anatidae, Cranes and Shorebirds. The Strategy and Action Plans have guided international cooperation and activities to conserve and protect internationally important habitat for migratory waterbirds since 1996.

Achievements under the Strategy and Actions Plans have included the identification of more than 700 sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds in the Flyway and the development of Site Networks for Anatidae, cranes and shorebirds, as well as a range of activities that have increased our knowledge of migratory waterbirds, raised awareness of the importance of these birds and built capacity for managers responsible for maintaining sites important for migratory waterbirds across the Flyway.

Despite these efforts, waterbirds and their habitats are under increasing pressure from rapid population growth and economic development, particularly in East and South East Asia. These pressures impact on the waterbirds that spend the non-breeding season in these countries as well as those waterbirds that utilize the central parts of the Flyway during migration. This Partnership recognises the importance of economic development for local communities that share important sites with migratory waterbirds, whilst ensuring the availability and quality of habitat required to maintain populations of migratory waterbirds.

The Partnership recognises that building and

promoting the site network for migratory waterbirds, and delivering capacity building at a local level to ensure sustainable delivery of ecosystem services, will enhance the conservation status of the migratory waterbirds covered by the Partnership.

The formal launch of the Partnership is expected to take place in late 2006, the venue and time are to be finalized shortly.

Partnership Working Group

The Partnership is being developed by an international Working Group with representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, USA, Ramsar Secretariat, BirdLife International, Wetlands International, World Wide Fund for Nature, and the Chairs of the three existing Working Groups for Anatidae, Cranes and Shorebirds under the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy. Australia provides Interim Secretariat facilities to the group.

The Partnership Working Group has met twice, first in Krabi, Thailand in December 2005 and more recently in Canberra, Australia in March 2006. The work towards development of documentation to support the new Flyway Partnership is progressing well and will be communicated to the partners shortly.

English and Scientific names of bird species mentioned in the Newsletter

English Name	Scientific Name
Black-necked Grebe	*Podiceps nigricollis*
Spot-billed Pelican	*Pelecanus philippensis*
Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*
Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*
Chinese Pond Heron	*Ardeola bacchus*
Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*
Intermediate Egret	*Ardea intermedia*
Great Egret	*Ardea modesta*
Chinese Egret	*Egretta eulophotes*
Black Bittern	*Ixobrychus flavicollis*
Milky Stork	*Mycteria cinerea*
Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*
Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*
Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia episcopus*
Oriental White Stork	*Ciconia boyciana*
Black-necked Stork	*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*
Lesser Adjutant	*Leptoptilos javanicus*
Greater Adjutant	*Leptoptilos dubius*
Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
White-shouldered Ibis	*Pseudibis davisoni*
Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
Black-faced Spoonbill	*Platalea minor*
Wandering Whistling Duck	*Dendrocygna arcuata*
Lesser Whistling Duck	*Dendrocygna arcuata*
Swan Goose	*Anser cygnoides*
Bean Goose	*Anser fabalis*
Greater White-fronted Goose	*Anser albifrons*
Lesser White-fronted Goose	*Anser erythropus*
Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*
Comb Duck	*Sarkidiornis melanotos*
American Wigeon	*Anas americana*
Baikal Teal	*Anas formosa*
Common Teal	*Anas crecca*
Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*
Philippine duck	*Anas luzonica*
Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*
Baer's Pochard	*Aythya baeri*
Ferruginous Pochard	*Aythya nyroca*
Tufted Duck	*Aythya fuligula*
Red-breasted Merganser	*Mergus serrator*
Scaly-sided Merganser	*Mergus squamatus*
Sarus Crane	*Grus antigone*
Slaty-breasted Rail	*Gallirallus striatus*
Purple Swamphen	*Porphyrio porphyrio*
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*
Crab Plover	*Dromas ardeola*
Eurasian Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*
Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*
Australian Stilt	*Himantopus leucocephalus*
Little Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*
Northern Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*
Pacific Golden Plover	*Pluvialis fulva*
Long-billed Plover	*Charadrius placidus*
Kentish Plover	*Charadrius alexandrinus*
Malaysian Plover	*Charadrius peronii*
Lesser Sand Plover	*Charadrius mongolus*
Greater Sand Plover	*Charadrius leschenaultii*
Oriental Plover	*Charadrius veredus*
Long-billed Dowitcher	*Limnodromus scolopaceus*
Asian Dowitcher	*Limnodromus semipalmatus*
Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*
Bar-tailed Godwit	*Limosa lapponica*
Little Curlew	*Numenius minutus*
Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*
Far Eastern Curlew	*Numenius madagascariensis*
Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*,
Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*
Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*
Nordmann's Greenshank	*Tringa guttifer*
Terek Sandpiper	*Xenus cinereus*
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*
Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*
Great Knot	*Calidris tenuirostris*
Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*
Long-toed Stint	*Calidris subminuta*
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	*Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*
Broad-billed Sandpiper	*Limicola falcinellus*
Ruff	*Philomachus pugnax*
Mew Gull	*Larus canus*
Heuglin's Gulls	*Larus heuglini*
Brown-headed Gull	*Larus brunnicephalus*
Black-headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*
Saunders's Gull	*Larus saundersi*
Relict Gull	*Larus relictus*
Little Gull	*Larus minutus*
Caspian Tern	*Sterna caspia*
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*
Black-bellied Tern	*Sterna melanogaster*
Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybridus*
Great Frigatebird	*Fregata minor*
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*
Bengal Florican	*Houbaropsis bengalensis*

Note:
The sequence and nomenclature of waterbird species used follows the *Waterbird Population Estimates – Third Edition* (Wetlands International 2002).