

# 50 Years of the International Waterbird Census - Let's Make it Count!



The International Waterbird Census (IWC) is a vital source of information for the conservation and management of wetlands and waterbirds in all the world's major flyways. January 2016 marks the 50th count of the IWC, an important moment to celebrate the achievements of the global partnership of organisations and individuals who make this happen. We must also look to the future and build on progress so far.

**Wetlands International calls on governments, organisations, companies and volunteers to step up efforts to conserve wetlands for waterbirds.**



**5 million km<sup>2</sup>** of critical areas for waterbirds identified through the IWC



**871 waterbird species** regularly assessed, prioritising conservation action



**15,000 people** monitoring **25,000 sites** in over **100 countries** annually

## Join our campaign – action for wetlands and flyways

In 2016 Wetlands International will launch a global campaign to inspire and promote action for the conservation of wetlands along the world's flyways. We will act as a catalyst and involve all governments and partners. All contributing activities will be connected and made visible. We will stimulate action through:

- A Tool Kit and guidance relevant to all scales and flyways.
- Annual awards for outstanding contributions of governments, companies, NGOs, knowledge institutes and individuals, per flyway.
- Key events such as the 50<sup>th</sup> IWC count, World Wetlands Day, World Migratory Bird Day and others.

## What governments and other partners can do now:

- **Knowledge:** provide logistical support and resources to national coordinators and invest in training to strengthen local networks.
- **Coverage:** ensure monitoring of wetlands and waterbirds in January 2016 at Ramsar sites and other critical wetlands, including remote sites, and support our efforts to identify and close gaps.
- **Action:** strengthen measures to manage and restore critical wetlands and threatened species.
- **Awareness:** engage the private sector, students and wider public in wetland and waterbird conservation.

To join the campaign or for more information:

[www.wetlands.org/IWC](http://www.wetlands.org/IWC)

email: [iwc@wetlands.org](mailto:iwc@wetlands.org)

# Fifty years, thousands of stories. Here are a few which demonstrate the importance of the census across the world in informing actions for wetlands and waterbirds

## Working together to identify critical sites

The IWC is a major contributor to the award-winning Critical Site Network Tool in the African-Eurasian Flyways, which brings together information about migratory waterbird species to help conservation efforts and the implementation of international agreements. So far the tool has helped identify over 3000 sites meeting the Ramsar criteria for Wetlands of International Importance.



## Promoting informed management

At the outset of the IWC, most goose populations were declining, a trend continuing in parts of the world where there are gaps in monitoring coverage such as Central and East Asia. However, European populations have recovered remarkably, thanks to regulated hunting based on geese population status. The IWC is the most important source of information for estimating population status, and is now helping to identify solutions to new conflicts arising from population increases.

## Guiding research and conservation efforts

In the United Kingdom, the national IWC scheme - Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) - applies an alert system that flags up species and sites which significantly decline below target values, helping the national authorities to identify and act upon threats before it is too late.

## Monitoring of a network of flyway sites

Within the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, a region where widespread coastal and inland habitat loss and waterbird declines are a major concern, regular monitoring has helped to identify the main remaining strongholds for migrating waders. In turn, in the Yellow Sea, this information has also served to focus conservation action in areas such as on the Luannan coast in China.



## Development and updates of Red List of Threatened Species

The IWC counts have been an important source of information for species assessments and periodic updates of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species around the world. The bird assessments are led by BirdLife International. In addition they contribute to development of national Red Lists, such as the Red Book of Threatened Birds of Colombia.

## Contributing to our understanding of interactions of wild birds and avian viruses

In recent years, zoonotic diseases, including those caused by highly pathogenic avian influenza strains, have had huge impacts on domestic poultry, human health and livelihoods, and wild birds. By assisting in delineating and monitoring the major waterbird flyways around the world, the IWC has been invaluable in improving our knowledge and understanding of these birds and the complex interactions of wild birds, poultry and viruses. This has guided actions that do not have destructive impacts on wetlands, especially where wild bird populations interact with local poultry production.

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