

THE ASIAN WATERFOWL CENSUS (AWC) 2001: A MALAYSIAN REPORT

Summary

The Asian Waterfowl Census 2001 (Malaysia) in January received encouraging participation from the birding community as reflected by its results. A total of 25 reports from 10 states were received. There was an increase from last year's count in terms of species and number of individuals. A total of 16,308 (58 species) of the listed birds were recorded at 25 sites. Despite the decrease in the number of sites surveyed, the quality of the information remained high. The report below will further deliberate on the information received for this year's count.

1.0 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

1.1 Sites surveyed

A total of 25 wetland sites in 10 states were surveyed throughout the country during the period. Selangor have the highest number of sites surveyed (7), followed closely by Sarawak (5) and Perak (4). Kedah, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Sabah and Pahang had one each. Two sites were observed in Pulau Pinang and Perlis. The further breakdown of the information is shown below:

Fourteen sites were re-surveyed while eleven were new to the count. A wide range of habitat was covered including riverine mangroves, mudflats, ricefields, old mining pools, reservoirs, beaches, natural freshwater lakes, estuaries, wetland sanctuaries and high-tide roosts. A further breakdown of the sites surveyed is listed below.

PERLIS

1. Kuala Perlis
2. Timah-Tasoh Dam

KEDAH

3. Kedah Coast (Kuala Kedah to Kampung Sala)

PULAU PINANG

4. Pantai Acheh Village
5. Penaga-Kuala Muda

PERAK

6. Pinji Estate
7. Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary
8. Proposed Kinta Nature Park
9. Kamunting Mining Pools

SELANGOR

10. Paya Indah Wetland Sanctuary
11. Berjantai Tin
12. Kampung Bukit Chunggang
13. Jeram Beach
14. Kapar PowerStation
15. Putrajaya Wetlands
16. Rantau Panjang Ex-Mining Ponds

KUALA LUMPUR

17. Pantai Hall Sewerage Ponds

MELAKA

18. Batang Tiga

PAHANG

19. Sungai Galing

SARAWAK

20. Loagan Bunut Lakes

21. Kuala Baram

22. Miri Peatswamp

23. Kampung Buntal

24. Kampung Jaie/Kampung Semera

SABAH

25. Likas Bird Sanctuary

1.1.1 Sites of Significant Importance for Waterbirds

Two sites remained the most important areas for waterbirds based on the reports; Kapar Powerstation in Selangor and Kampung Buntal in Sarawak. A total of 4,049 and 5,326 waterbirds were recorded on at Kapar and Kampung Buntal respectively on the same day, 14th January.

1.1.2 Wetland Type, Status and Threats

Most of the sites surveyed can be classified into three wetland type namely;

- ✦ estuaries, tidal mudflats and salt pans;
- ✦ gravel pits, mineral workings and mining pools; and
- ✦ mangrove, nipah.

Based on these habitats, most of the sites surveyed remains unprotected (12 sites). Few, however, remained under government protection (6 sites) or under private ownership (6 sites). The status of the rest remains unknown due to the lack of information.

Many of the sites are currently threatened by several factors. The main threat is vegetation clearance (9 sites) followed by pollution from solid waste (7 sites) and cutting and domestic sewerage (6 sites). Eutrophication remains problematic for some inland lakes or ponds (3 sites).

1.2 Waterfowl Count

An increase in the number of species (59) and individuals (16,308) was noted for the count as compared to last year, 56 and 15,566 respectively. The heron and egret and geese and duck category showed an increase in individual number with 4,081 and 363 respectively (2000: 2,282 and 168 respectively). The number of species, however, remains unchanged. Shorebirds (waders, gulls and terns) declined slightly as compared to last year with 10,232 (waders) and 1,237 (gulls and terns) individuals. The number of species counted for waders (27 species) also dropped from last year (29 species). Gulls and terns recorded 2 additional species from last year's five.

The most numerous species (over the 1,000 individual threshold) encountered throughout the count were the Mongolian Plover (1,389), Redshank (1,222), Eurasian Curlew (1,108), Greater Sand Plover (1,047) and Chinese Pond-heron (1,044).

Three globally threatened species were recorded; the Storm's Stork (2 individuals) in Sarawak, Lesser Adjutant (3 individuals) in Perak and a single Nordmann's Greenshank in Pulau Pinang. Locally endangered birds such as Oriental Darters (4 individuals) in Sarawak and Malaysian Plovers (8 individuals) entered this year's count as well.

A complete count for the AWC 2001 is showed below;

(Family/ Species/ Number of Individuals)

GREBES

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (43)

CORMORANTS & DARTERS

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* (4)

HERONS & EGRETS

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* (18)

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* (7)

Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (710)

Chinese Pond-heron *Ardeola bacchus* (1,044)

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (645)

Little Heron *Butorides striatus* (83)

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (852)

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* (224)

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* (97)

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (79)

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (17)

Unidentified herons and egrets (305)

STORKS

Storm's Stork *Ciconia stormi* (2)

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* (3)

GEESE & DUCKS

Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (28)

Indian Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus* (35)

Common Teal *Anas crecca* (300)

RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS

Slaty-breasted Rail *Rallus striatus* (4)

Ruddy Crake *Porzana fusca* (1)

White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea* (13)

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* (88)

Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea* (6)

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (98)

Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* (138)

SHOREBIRDS – WADERS

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (270)

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (149)

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* (18)
 Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (36)
 Malaysian Plover *Charadrius peronii* (8)
 Mongolian Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (1389)
 Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (1047)
 Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (65)
 Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* (481)
 Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (928)
 Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* (1,108)
 Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* (2)
 Redshank *Tringa totanus* (1222)
 Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (53)
 Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (112)
 Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* (1)
 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (64)
 Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (226)
 Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (200)
 Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* (2)
 Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (39)
 Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* (3)
 Red Knot *Calidris canutus* (19)
 Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* (82)
 Rufous-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (405)
 Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (135)
 Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (5)
 Unidentified shorebirds (2163)

GULLS & TERNS

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus* (24)
 White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (235)
 Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (121)
 Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (22)
 Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* (51)
 Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* (522)
 Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* (39)
 Unidentified terns (223)

1.3 Other Interesting Sightings

- ✦ Five sightings of Ruff along the Kedah coast.
- ✦ A total of 633 Chinese Pond-Heron were recorded along the Penaga-Kuala Muda stretch, Pulau Pinang while a single population of 248 were counted roosting at the Sungai Galing riverbank.
- ✦ A single Nordmann's Greenshank was seen along the Penaga-Kuala Muda stretch.
- ✦ 564 Black-crowned Night-herons at the proposed Kinta Nature Park and another 133 at Rantau Panjang ex-mining ponds. These represent inland populations of this particular species.
- ✦ Three Lesser Adjutants at Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary, Perak.

- ✍ A single count of 300 individual Common Teals at Pinji Estate, Ipoh.
- ✍ Two Storm's Stork were sighted at the Loagan Bunut freshwater lakes.

2.0 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The annual Asian Waterfowl Census is an important tool for waterbird and wetland conservation in Malaysia. Data collected is necessary for monitoring the population trends of the waterbirds in each site. For example, man-made habitats such as former mining pools and reservoirs or even oxidation/sewerage ponds have shown that they may hold some conservation value as waterbirds have been recorded roosting and feeding in them. Such phenomenon is not unusual in other countries as well (eg. high-security oil refinery in India).

In future, continuous monitoring of sites is necessary to maintain a high level of consistency in the records and information collected. Therefore, annual re-counts of all the sites are a must. Current census (and even past) has shown that major information gaps still exist particularly from the East Coast (Peninsular Malaysia), Sarawak and Sabah. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that some or even single reports have been sent in for this year's count from these areas.

The continuity and success of the Asian Waterfowl Census depends entirely on volunteers and conservation-minded people. It is hoped that more sites would be covered, also re-counted, for next year's count.

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