

## Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) is part of the global International Waterbird Census (IWC). This citizen-science programme is supporting the conservation and management of wetlands and waterbirds worldwide.

The Census is done yearly between the months of January and February and is a citizen science programme, wherein, volunteers across Asia and Australasia visit wetlands in their country and count waterbirds.

The two-day Asian Waterbird Census 2020 commenced in Andhra Pradesh under the aegis of experts from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) on January 5, 2021.

### About Asian Waterbird Census

- The AWC is an integral part of the global waterbird monitoring programme, the International Waterbird Census (IWC), coordinated by Wetlands International
- It runs in parallel with other regional programmes of the International Waterbird Census in Africa, Europe, West Asia, the Neotropics and the Caribbean
- It was initiated in 1987 in the Indian subcontinent and since has grown rapidly to cover the major region of Asia, from Afghanistan eastwards to Japan, Southeast Asia and Australasia
- Other major regions that are covered under AWC include the entire East Asian - Australasian Flyway and a large part of the Central Asian Flyway
- As of January 2021, more than 6,100 sites of 27 countries have been covered with the active participation of thousands of volunteers

#### **When was the Asian Waterbird Census 2021 held?**

The recommended dates for AWC 2021 were between January 2, and 18, 2021. However, it may have been conducted between December 2020 and February 2021. As of March 2021, the outcome of AWC 2021 is yet awaited.

#### **What are Waterbirds?**

The birds which are ecologically dependent on wetlands are known as waterbirds. Few examples of waterbirds are Great crested grebe, Mallard, Grey Heron, etc.

#### **What are the Wetlands?**

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season.

### Objectives of the Asian Waterbird Census

Given below are the main objectives of the Asian Waterbird Census:

- To obtain information on an annual basis of waterbird populations at wetlands in the region during the non-breeding period of most species
- To monitor the status and condition of wetlands
- Encouraging the citizens to learn more about waterbirds and wetlands
- Supporting local conservation activities for wetlands

## Other Organisations Contributing To Conservation Activities

Based on the Asian Waterbird Census, the number and species of waterbirds discovered in the country can be calculated and then steps can be taken for the conservation of these birds and wetlands. There are a few other organisations that contribute to the conservation activities, including:

- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands identify and monitor wetlands of international importance
- The Convention on Migratory Species monitor the habitats and migratory status of waterbirds
- The Convention on Biological Diversity contributes to the conservation and sustainable development of biodiversity

Apart from the above-mentioned organisations, there is BirdLife International's Important Bird Area (IBA) Programme, [IUCN](#)'s Global Species Programme, Wetlands International's Waterbird Population Estimates programme and more that work for the conservation of biodiversity and wetlands.

## Asian Waterbird Census India

- The two-day Asian Waterbird Census 2020 commenced in Andhra Pradesh under the aegis of experts from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)
- The Wetlands International and BNHS jointly coordinate on the AWC
- A list of internationally recognised AWC sites and wetland IBAs are prepared in India based on which the census is done

### **What is the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)?**

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is a pan-India wildlife research organization, which has been promoting the cause of nature conservation since 1883.

### **What are Ramsar sites and which is the latest addition to the list of these sites?**

A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. The latest one included in this list is the Tso Kar Wetland Complex of Ladakh. Get the [List of Ramsar Sites](#) at the linked article.

## About the International Waterbird Census (IWC)

- The International Waterbird Census (IWC) is a monitoring programme operating in 143 countries to collect information on the numbers of waterbirds at wetland sites. There are 5 separate regional schemes of the IWC that represent the major flyways of the world:
  - Africa-Eurasia (AEWC)
  - Asia-Pacific (AWC)

- Caribbean (CWC)
- Neotropics (CNAA)
- Central America (CCAA)
- All types of natural and man-made wetlands that are covered by the Ramsar Convention and all types of waterbirds species regularly encountered at wetlands are counted under IWC