

# IWC Croatia

Winter counting of  
waterbirds

## Guide for volunteers

ZEUS Association

Biom Association

Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature

Geonatura



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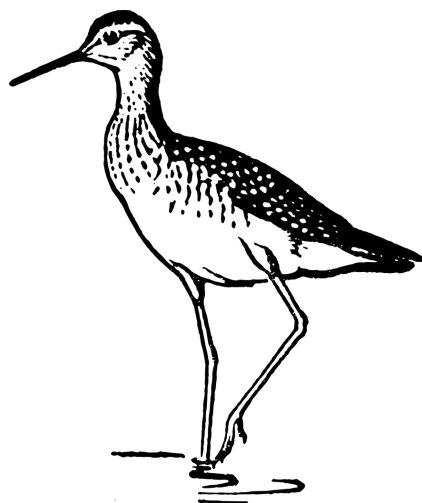
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# What is IWC?

The International Waterbird Census (IWC) is a long-term project of the world waterbird count organized by Wetlands International, the world organization for the protection of wetlands. Its goal is to achieve a better understanding of the threat on species and their habitats through continuous monitoring of the number of birds on water surfaces.

Waterbirds are an increasingly endangered group of birds, primarily because of the destruction of wetland habitats around the world. By comparing the numbers from previous years, the population and certain species status is assessed. Based on these data, the protection of species and their habitats is being planned. January is suitable for waterbird count because it is considered that by then all waterbird species are on their wintering grounds, where their concentration is the highest, and they have not yet started the spring migrations.

This is the oldest and largest biodiversity monitoring program in the world, at the same time the largest civic science project. It's carried out since 1967, and Croatia has participated in it since 1982. Action exclusively depends on volunteers of all ages and levels of knowledge who solely by their motivation enable a large number of locations to be visited and an even larger number of birds to be counted each year.



# IWC in Croatia

The winter waterbird count in Croatia has been carried out since 1982. National coordinator responsible for data collection is Adrian Tomik from Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature. There are four other coordinators who are responsible for the coordination of volunteers and countings in their area. They communicate with volunteers and direct them to designated areas, and are available for support and additional information.

Civil society organizations, public institutions for the management of protected areas and various educational institutions are also included in the organization of the counting. About a hundred observers participate each year in Croatia, and the number of recorded birds often exceeds a hundred thousand.

## NATIONAL COORDINATOR

**Adrian Tomik,**

Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature  
tomikadrian@gmail.com

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# IWC in Croatia

## Western Croatia:

- Istria County
- Rijeka County
- Karlovac County
- Lika-Senj County

## Eastern Croatia:

- Požega-Slavonija County
- Virovitica-Podravina County
- Vukovar-Srijem County
- Brod-Posavina County
- Osijek-Baranja County

## Northern Croatia:

- Međimurje County
- Varaždin county
- Koprivnica-Križevac County

## Central Croatia:

- Zagreb County
- Krapina-Zagorje County
- Bjelovar-Bilogora County
- Sisak-Moslavina County
- City of Zagreb

## Southern Croatia:

- Zadar County
- Šibenik-Knin County
- Split-Dalmacija county
- Dubrovnik-Neretva County

# How and when to get involved?

Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature, Biom Association, and ZEUS Association invite all bird and nature lovers to join the 56th traditional International Winter Waterbird Count (IWC) which officially takes place on **January 13th and 14th, 2024**. To cover as many areas as possible, the count can take place throughout the entire of January, but it is preferable to do it as close as possible to the central weekend (depending on the volunteer's capabilities and time).

The locations where the birds are counted are not random. A list of localities is available, as well as a map, from which you can choose one (or more) localities and contact the responsible coordinator as a volunteer. Whether you are a regular IWC participant or would like to join for the first time, we recommend that you contact the coordinator for your area and check which locations are available to avoid double recordings.

## **Location table**

(and other useful information)

[IWC location table 2024](#)

## **Location map**

[IWC map 2024](#)



If you need more information about the desired locality or you don't know where you would count, contact the competent coordinator who will direct you to a specific locality. If you are joining the IWC for the first time or are unsure about identifying or counting flocks of birds, the regional coordinator can connect you with experienced observers with whom you can do the field work.

# Bird identification

To prepare for the fieldwork, we recommend that you inform yourself about the species of birds you can expect in selected locations and how to recognize them. For this purpose, we have several recommendations:

- Ivan Budinski's lecture on IWC and frequent wintering species in Croatia:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWAr2Wz3nz4>
- BirdID webpage where you can browse all European species and practice recognition through quizzes, including ours (quiz IWC Croatia, ID 172):  
<https://www.natureid.no/bird/>
- the best key for identifying birds, the book *Birds of Croatia and Europe*, in Croatian edition, with useful drawings and descriptions enables you to improve your identification skills:  
<https://ptice.biom.hr/o-knjizi/>
- Wetlands International's interactive site using whose maps you can explore all recorded populations of all waterbird species in the world (scroll down for a list):  
<https://wpp.wetlands.org/explore>

Although the main species of interest for the IWC are waterbirds (waders, waterfowls), it is useful to count all birds that are closely related to aquatic habitats (e.g. kingfisher, white-throated dipper, bearded reedling, common reed bunting, white-tailed eagle, osprey...), and if desired, it is possible to include all bird species you notice: when processing data, it is easier to delete an entry than to add a new one later.

# Field preparation

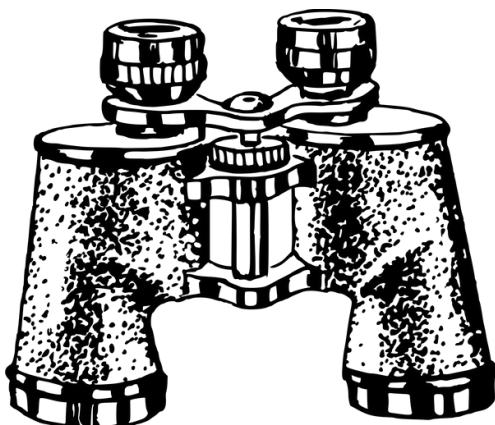
Before going to an unfamiliar locality, check the access and potential points from which you will be able to count birds. Gather information about activities that can affect the count (hunting, fishing, rafting, gravel digging, fish pond maintenance...).

Dress appropriately for local conditions. Be sure to check out the weather forecast and in case of reduced visibility or bad weather conditions postpone the count for another day.

When counting, be sure to have binoculars (or a telescope) and something to record the species and number of individuals (mobile phone, recorder, notebook, field form), as well as a key to bird identification. A camera with a telephoto lense is a very helpful tool if available.

When counting birds in large flocks, a manual counter or camera could be helpful. If you are counting from several points, use a map and/or GPS for orientation to avoid counting the same birds twice. It is good to have a map of the area, either digital or paper, especially if you are at the location for the first time.

If you have no experience with IWC or bird identification, seek the help of a more experienced volunteer in time.





# Data logging

During the counting, be sure to note:

## **Name of the location and date of visit:**

- especially if you plan to visit multiple locations

## **Species:**

- in codes you understand (instead of the mallard / wild duck, write e.g. wil.duc./an.plat./mall.)
- at least a family or a group in cases where determination of the species is difficult or impossible (duck/anatida)

## **Number of individuals:**

- based on the addition principle: add only the number of newly arrived individuals to the original number and add them only at the end of the daily count (15 + 3 + 20 + 1 + 1 = 40)
- try to visually divide large flocks into smaller groups (of 10, 20, 50...) and try to at least give a rough number

## **Weather conditions:**

- especially on water surfaces that freeze: it is important to report the information that the locality is completely frozen even when there are no birds present

The complete list of data that we collect through official forms, including all of the explanations can be found at the following link:

[IWC field form 2024](#)

After returning from the field, add up and identify what you can from your photos or sketches. Please be sure to send your information **in the form of an official Excel form** to your coordinator **by February 15th**, which greatly facilitates data processing and enables us to publish them as soon as possible.

# Important notes

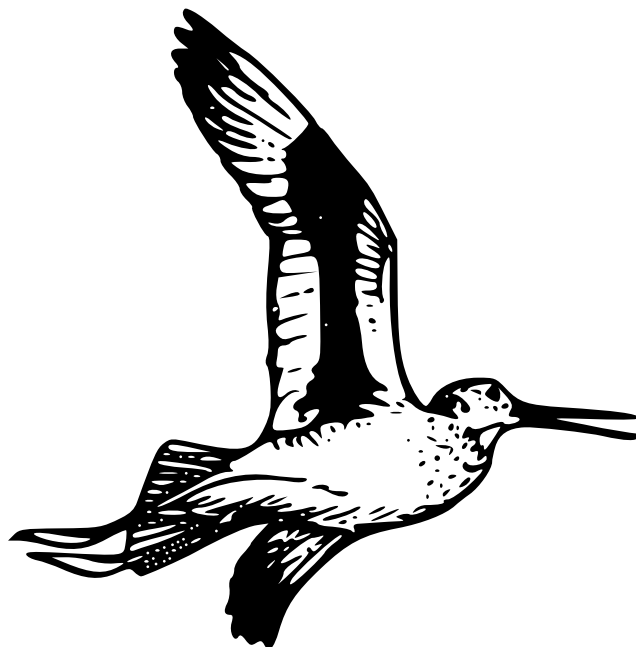
If the area where you want to count is not on the map, contact the regional or national coordinator. We accept data from new locations only if location coordinates and habitat descriptions are provided.

Make arrangements in advance with other volunteers at the same location about the details of the count (transportation, duration of the tour...) through our Google Group (link: <https://groups.google.com/g/iwchrvatska>).

If you are counting at a private property (fish ponds, gravel pits, lakes, salt pans, etc.), announce yourself.

The sea coast is insufficiently covered, despite the fact that many waterbirds winter there, so we kindly ask volunteers to give preference to the locations on the coast, if possible.

Many species of waterbirds do not remain only in water habitats (eg seagulls can be found in landfills, fields, harbors, etc.), which is why such localities should not be neglected either.



# About us:



## Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature

[www.ptice.hr](http://www.ptice.hr)

[https://www.facebook.com/Hdzpp?locale=hr\\_HR](https://www.facebook.com/Hdzpp?locale=hr_HR)

[https://www.instagram.com/h\\_dzpp/?hl=hr](https://www.instagram.com/h_dzpp/?hl=hr)



## Association Biom

[www.biom.hr](http://www.biom.hr)

[https://www.facebook.com/biom.hr?locale=hr\\_HR](https://www.facebook.com/biom.hr?locale=hr_HR)

[https://www.instagram.com/udruga\\_biom/](https://www.instagram.com/udruga_biom/)



## Association ZEUS

[www.zeus-senjar.hr](http://www.zeus-senjar.hr)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/zeus.senjar/>

<https://www.instagram.com/zeus.senjar/>

## Geonatura

[www.geonatura.hr/](http://www.geonatura.hr/)

<https://www.facebook.com/geonatura.hr>

<https://www.instagram.com/geonatura.hr/>

