

**MEGHALAYA BIODIVERSITY BOARD**



# **A BRIEF REPORT ON ASIAN WATER BIRD CENSUS (AWC) 2025**



**A BRIEF REPORT ON THE ASIAN WATER BIRD  
CENSUS2025**

**Date: 11.02.2025**

**Venue: wetland areas of umiam lake  
RI-BHOI DISTRICT, MEGHALAYA**



**Submitted to  
NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY AUTHORITY, GOVT. OF INDIA**



**Submitted by  
MEGHALAYA BIODIVERSITY BOARD  
SILVICULTURE BUILDING, LOWER LACHUMIERE,  
SHILLONG – 793001  
Website: <https://megbiodiversity.nic.in>  
E-mail: [secretarymbb@gmail.com](mailto:secretarymbb@gmail.com)**

## **ASIAN WATERBIRD CENSUS (AWC)**

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) is an annual, region-wide waterbird monitoring program that takes place in January and February. As a crucial component of the International Waterbird Census, the AWC contributes significantly to the conservation and management of wetlands and waterbirds globally.

The AWC initiated in 1987, has been instrumental in tracking waterbird populations, monitoring wetland health, and engaging local communities in wetland conservation efforts. The program's findings provide valuable insights into the ecological status of wetlands and the populations of waterbirds that depend on these habitats. The AWC contributes to the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds by identifying important sites, monitoring populations, and raising awareness about conservation issues.

The main objectives of the AWC are:

1. To gather annual data on waterbird populations at wetlands during the non-breeding season.
2. To monitor the status and condition of wetlands across Asia.
3. To promote awareness and encourage citizen participation in waterbird and wetland conservation.

The Census is done yearly between the months of January and February, wherein, volunteers across Asia visit wetlands in their country and count waterbirds. The AWC is implemented through a network of national coordinators and volunteers who conduct waterbird counts at selected wetland sites. In India, the AWC is coordinated by Wetlands International South Asia and the Bombay Natural History Society.

## **AWC IN MEGHALAYA**

The first-ever Asian Waterbird Census in Meghalaya was successfully conducted in the year 2022. This program was organized by the Meghalaya Biodiversity Board in collaboration with the Office of the Divisional Forest Officer-Khasi Hills Wildlife Division, Shillong.

The Fourth Asian Waterbird Census in Meghalaya was conducted on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2025 in collaboration with the Office of the Divisional Forest Officer-Khasi Hills Wildlife Division, Shillong covering the wetland areas of Umiam Lake, Ri-Bhoi District. The waterbird census was carried out across five key sites; namely Mawlyndep, Umbir, Lad Umsaw, Dew Saw and Lum Pongdeng.

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2025 event held at Lum Nehru Park was participated by a distinguished group of individuals including Shri Julius R.B. Blah, RFO of Lum Nehru Park, Khasi Hills Wildlife Division, Shillong. Other participants were scientists and the technical team from Meghalaya Biodiversity Board, Forest Department and Meghalaya State Wetland Authority, and Biodiversity Management Committee members from Umniuh, Mawlyndep and Umsawkhwan.

Dr. Dipankar Lahkar from Aaranyak, Guwahati and Shri Nibir Medhi, Senior Biologist in the office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Head of Forest Forces are the experts during the program. They played a crucial role in the identification of waterbird species during the Census, thereby ensuring accuracy and depth of the Census.

Volunteers from nearby BMCs namely Umniuh Khwan, Mawlyndep and Umsaw Khwan took part in the program in their respective areas. Their active participation and enthusiasm contribute in making the program a success.

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2025 commenced with a concise meeting at Lum Nehru Park, Umiam, Ri-Bhoi District. The experts emphasized the primary objectives of the AWC as well as the procedure to be followed while carrying out the waterbird count. By bringing together experts and stakeholders, the event helped raise awareness about the importance of waterbird conservation and the role that citizens play in monitoring and protecting these species.

Five groups were formed by the participants and each group was assigned a key site. During the exercise, the birds were observed with the help of binoculars and photographs were taken



while in flight, diving, feeding, and resting. The birds were identified with the help of the scientists and experts in the groups.

Across the five sites, a total of 173 waterbirds, representing 14 species, were identified and recorded; with the Great Crested Grebe having the highest count of 73.

### **DETAILS OF THE SITES AND COUNTS**

**Name of the Wetland:** Umiam Lake, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya.

**Area:** 801.89 hectares (ha)

**Sites with the Geo-coordinates:** Five sites were selected and the list is given below in Table 1

**TABLE 1:**

| <b>Sl. No.</b> | <b>Counting Site Names (Sites surrounding Umiam Lake)</b> | <b>Latitude</b>                  | <b>Longitude</b>                 |
|----------------|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1              | Site 1- Mawlyndep   | 25.646456 N                      | 91.86084 E                       |
| 2              | Site 2- Umbir (UCC Umiam)                                 | 25.651485 N                      | 91.864222 E                      |
| 3              | Site 3- Lad Umsaw   | 25.672824 N                      | 91.891135 E                      |
| 4              | Site 4- Dew Saw   | 25.658173 N                      | 91.893848 E                      |
| 5              | Site 5- Lum Pongdeng                                      | 1. 25.658316 N<br>2. 25.658404 N | 1. 91.897207 E<br>2. 91.897297 E |

**Number of waterbird species and their count at site level:** The list of waterbird species is given in the table below (Table 2)

**TABLE 2:**

| Sl. No.      | English Name         | Scientific Name               | Sites  |            |            |        |        | Species wise total |
|--------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------|------------|------------|--------|--------|--------------------|
|              |                      |                               | Site 1 | Site 2 UMB | Site 3 UMN | Site 4 | Site 5 |                    |
| 1.           | Great Cormorant      | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>    | 02     | 13         | 04         | -      | 25     | 44                 |
| 2.           | Little Cormorant     | <i>Microcarboniger</i>        | 09     | -          | -          | -      | -      | 09                 |
| 3.           | Oriental darter      | <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>   | -      | -          | -          | -      | 02     | 02                 |
| 4.           | Great Crested Grebe  | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>     | 02     | -          | 56         | 15     | -      | 73                 |
| 5.           | Little Grebe         | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> | 06     | -          | -          | -      | -      | 06                 |
| 6.           | Common Kingfisher    | <i>Alcedo atthis</i>          | -      | -          | -          | -      | 01     | 01                 |
| 7.           | Indian Pond Heron    | <i>Ardeola grayii</i>         | -      | -          | 01         | -      | -      | 01                 |
| 8.           | Intermediate Egret   | <i>Ardea intermedia</i>       | -      | 02         | 02         | -      | 01     | 05                 |
| 9.           | Little Egret         | <i>Egretta garzetta</i>       | 04     | -          | -          | -      | -      | 04                 |
| 10.          | Little Ringed Plover | <i>Charadrius dubius</i>      | 05     | -          | -          | -      | -      | 05                 |
| 11.          | White Wagtail        | <i>Motacilla alba</i>         | 12     | 02         | 02         | -      | 02     | 18                 |
| 12.          | Red-wattled lapwing  | <i>Vanellus indicus</i>       | 02     | -          | -          | -      | -      | 02                 |
| 13.          | Pipit spp.           | -                             | -      | 01         | -          | -      | -      | 01                 |
| 14.          | Grey heron           | <i>Ardea cinerea</i>          | 01     | -          | 01         | -      | -      | 02                 |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |                      |                               |        |            |            |        |        | <b>173</b>         |

## GLIMPSE OF ASIAN WATERBIRD CENSUS 2025



Group photo of the participants



Observation of water birds at Umiam Lake













Pipit spp.



Intermediate Egret  
*Ardea intermedia*









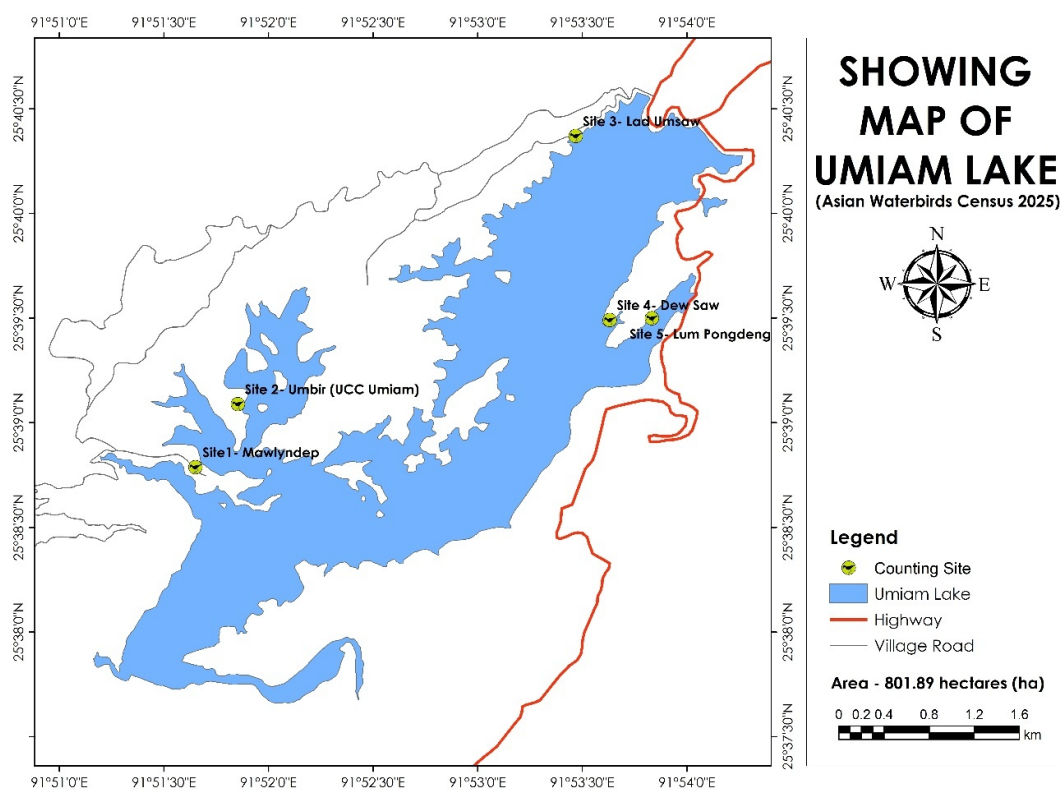
Participants with the BMCs members



Participants with the BMCs members



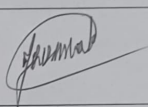
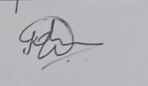
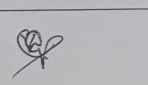
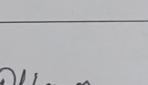
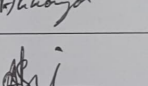
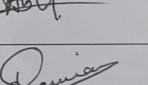
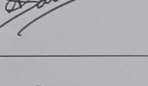
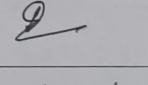
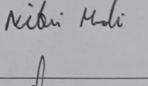
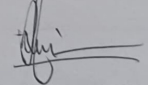
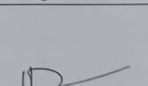
Umiam Lake



Map of Umiam Lake











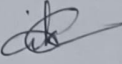


**ATTENDANCE FOR THE FOURTH ASIAN WATER BIRD CENSUS  
(AWC) 2025 HELD ON THE 11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, 2025  
Venue: UMIAM LAKE, SHILLONG**

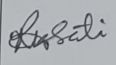
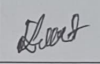

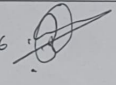
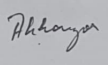
| Sl. No. | Name & Designation                             | Department/Institution /Organization/BMCs | Phone Number | Signature   |
|---------|--|---|--------------|---|
| 1.      |  |   |              |   |
| 2.      | Junius R. B. Bhat                              | RFO, Lum Nohu Park, Umiam                 | 9862883506   |    |
| 3.      | Ms. Wanzi Bakorlor Kharsaknah (Biologist MSWA) | Meghalaya State Wetland Authority (MSWA)  | 6009967920   |    |
| 4.      | Kittabang Nongrum (Biologist/FA) MSWA          | "   | 8729804829   |    |
| 5.      | Aldrinus Kharkongor (Biologist, Wildlife)      | MFD                                       | 8729930965   |    |
| 6.      | Antoingmiki S. Langshing (Biologist/FA) MSWA   | MSWA                                      | 8974408995   |    |
| 7.      | AIBORLANG SAWIAN (BIOLOGIST)                   | MFD                                       | 8794257690   |   |
| 8.      | Dr. Dipankar Lohkon Wildlife Biologist         | Aaranyak                                  | 8638014685   |  |
| 9.      | Nibin Medhi                                    | MFD                                       | 8638275375   |  |
| 10.     | MININGSTAR RANKE                               | MARLYNDEP BMC                             | 7628067299   |  |
| 11.     | Nialson Dohdong                                | "   | 6009963224   |  |
| 12.     | Pretty Nonghsap                                | Umriah - Khuan                            | 9866302625   |  |



**ATTENDANCE FOR THE FOURTH ASIAN WATER BIRD CENSUS  
(AWC) 2025 HELD ON THE 11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, 2025  
Venue: UMIAM LAKE, SHILLONG**

| Sl. No. | Name & Designation       | Department/Institution /Organization/BMCs | Phone Number | Signature   |
|---------|--------------------------|---|--------------|---|
| 13.     | Cordinaria Thangthao     | Umiam khwan                               | 8837326299   |    |
| 14.     | Charnoldson Majan        | Umiam khwan                               | 9362308338   |    |
| 15.     | Melanjap Tyngkan         | Umiam khwan                               | 9863085543   | M. Tyngkan  |
| 16.     | Dr. D. Evanoreen Klongsi | MBB                                       | 9485450057   |    |
| 17.     | Dr. S. Dey               | MBB                                       | 9779104418   |    |
| 18.     | Olyvia Thokchom          | MBB                                       | 7005572215   |   |
| 19.     | Rindaplin Lyndokh        | MBB                                       | 9436913176   |  |
| 20.     | Dr. Anphelia B Syiem     | "   | 9615566899   |  |
| 21.     | Banlamlauy Pamen         | "   | 8289946327   |  |
| 22.     | Andaemiki Koo            | "   | 6033098968   |  |
| 23.     | Raajjintimen Hryngmin    | "   | 7005725310   |  |
| 24.     | George I. Kuzkalang      | MBB                                       | 7640878845   |  |

**ATTENDANCE FOR THE FOURTH ASIAN WATER BIRD CENSUS  
(AWC) 2025 HELD ON THE 11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY, 2025  
Venue: UMIAM LAKE, SHILLONG**

| Sl. No. | Name & Designation  | Department/Institution /Organization/BMCs | Phone Number | Signature   |
|---------|---------------------|---|--------------|---|
| 25.     | Lemedy Kharsati     | MBB                                       | 6009334322   |  |
| 26.     | E. W. Lakshmi       | MFD                                       | 9366902050   |  |
| 27.     | Wanshwa Shobay      | M.F.D                                     | 9615013168   |  |
| 28.     | Raju Sunoz          | M.F.D                                     | 9863072736   |  |
| 29.     | Aldwinus Kharkongor | MFD                                       | 8729930965   |  |
| 30.     |                     |   |              |   |
| 31.     |                     |   |              |   |
| 32.     |                     |   |              |   |
| 33.     |                     |   |              |   |
| 34.     |                     |   |              |   |
| 35.     |                     |   |              |   |
| 36.     |                     |   |              |   |

## State records 173 Waterbirds

### Asian waterbird census records 173 birds in Meghalaya

The Fourth Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2025 has recorded 173 birds belonging to 14 different species in the wetlands of Meghalaya.

The census took place on February 11, 2025 and was carried out in Mawlyndep, Umbir, Lad Umsaw, Dew Saw and LumPongdeng, covering the wetland areas of Umiam Lake, Ri-Bhoi district.

Notable species identified during the census included the Great Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe and White Wagtail.

Other species observed included the Grey Heron, Indian Pond Heron, Little Cormorant, Pipit species, Oriental Darter, Little Grebe, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Common Kingfisher, Little Ringed Plover and Red-wattled Lapwing.

The Waterbird Census 2025 was organised by Meghalaya Biodiversity Board in collaboration with the Office of the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Khasi Hills Wildlife Division, Shillong.

The AWC is part of the global International Waterbird Census (IWC). It is a citizen-science programme supporting the conservation and management of wetlands and waterbirds worldwide done annually between the months of January and February.

Volunteers from across Asia and Australia participate in this effort, counting waterbirds in wetlands within their respective countries, in collaboration with National Waterbird Census programs.

The event saw the participation of a distinguished group of individuals, including Julius R.B. Blah, RFO of Lum Nehru Park, Khasi Hills Wildlife Division, Shillong. Scientists and Technical team from Meghalaya Biodiversity Board, Forest Department and Meghalaya State Wetland Authority also contributed to the success of the event.

Local Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) from nearby areas, including Umniuh Khwan, Mawlyndep and Umsaw Khwan were also involved in the census.

Dr. Dipankar Lahkar from Aaranyak and Nibir Medhi, Senior Biologist, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Forces, played a key role as experts, ensuring the accuracy and depth of the census.

The findings highlight the rich biodiversity of the region and underscore the critical role of wetland conservation in maintaining healthy ecosystems for waterbirds.

The data gathered through these annual censuses contribute to the management and protection of wetlands, supporting efforts to safeguard these vital habitats for migratory and resident waterbirds.

### Asian Waterbird Census

Shillong, Feb 15: Meghalaya successfully conducted the Fourth Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2025, recording 173 waterbirds from 14 different species. The survey covered key wetland sites in Umiam Lake, Ri-Bhoi district and highlighted the region's rich birdlife.

The census saw the active participation of forest officials, scientists, and conservationists, along with local Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) from villages like Umniuh Khwan, Mawlyndep, and Umsaw Khwan.

Among the experts present were Dr Dipankar Lahkar from Aaranyak and Nibir Medhi, Senior Biologist at the Office of PCCF & HOFF, who played a crucial role in data collection and analysis. Organised by the Meghalaya Biodiversity Board in collaboration with the Khasi Hills Wildlife Division, the census took place at Mawlyndep, Umbir, Lad Umsaw, Dew Saw, and Lum Pongdeng.

The event kicked off at Lum Nehru Park, where experts discussed the significance of the AWC, which is part of the global International Waterbird Census (IWC). Conducted annually across Asia and Australasia between January and February, this citizen-driven initiative helps track waterbird populations and wetland health.

Among the 14 species recorded, notable birds included the Great Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, and White Wagtail. Other species sighted were the Grey Heron, Indian Pond Heron, Little Cormorant, Pipit species, Oriental Darter, Little Grebe,