

First Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2022 conducted in Meghalaya.

Shillong, February 19: Meghalaya Biodiversity Board today organised and conducted Asian Waterbird Census, 2022 simultaneously at five (05) sites *viz.* Umsaw, Umbir, Umniuh, Mawlyndep, Umiam covering the wetland areas of Umiam Lake, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya today with support and guidance from professionals involving the nearby Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) members. The AWC was conducted in the presence of the Chief Wildlife Warden and Member Secretary, MBB.

The experts involved were Dr. Sonali Ghosh, IFS CCF (R&WP) from Assam Forest Department; Dr. Bibhuti Lahkar, Dr Udayan Borthakur, Dr. Pranjal Kumar Das and Dr. Leons Mathiew Abraham (Veterinarian) from Aaranyak and Mr. Nabajit Choudhury, independent Photographer.

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 is done yearly between the months of January and February, wherein, volunteers across Asia and Australasia visit wetlands in their country and count waterbirds. It works in partnership with many existing national waterbird census programmes.

As per e-Bird Checklist of Citizen Science, more than 40 waterbirds are listed for Ri-bhoi District. During the exercise about 102 waterbirds comprising of 8 (eight) species were observed. This is a small beginning for which the Board will be taking up more such exercises in the years ahead.

It is for the first time that AWC have been conducted in the State with the involvement of the government department, national NGOs and the local community involving the BMC members.