

## Impact of Coronavirus: IWC Coordinators questionnaire responses

In March 2021 a questionnaire was sent to all IWC coordinators in the African-Eurasian Flyway to assess the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the 2021 IWC. A similar questionnaire was also sent to EBCC coordinators. 69 coordinators responded to the IWC questionnaire.

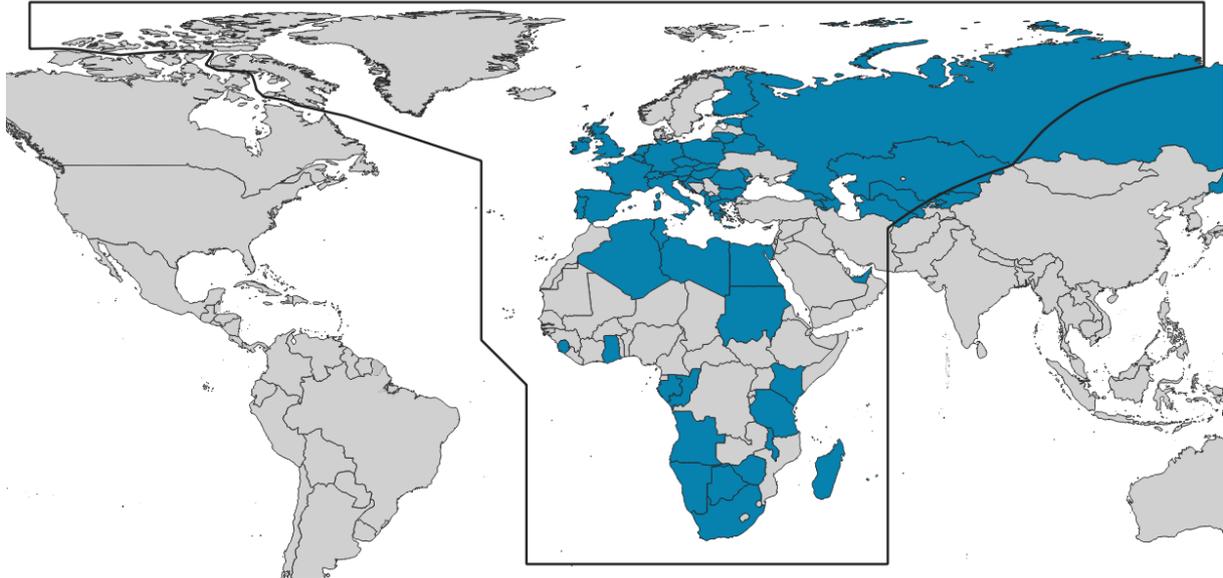
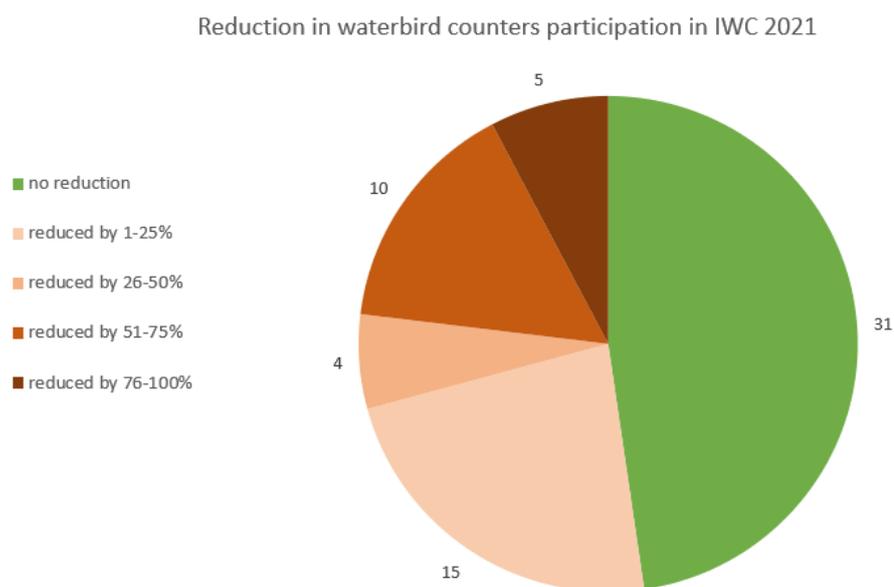


Fig 1. Countries responding to the IWC questionnaire highlighted in blue.

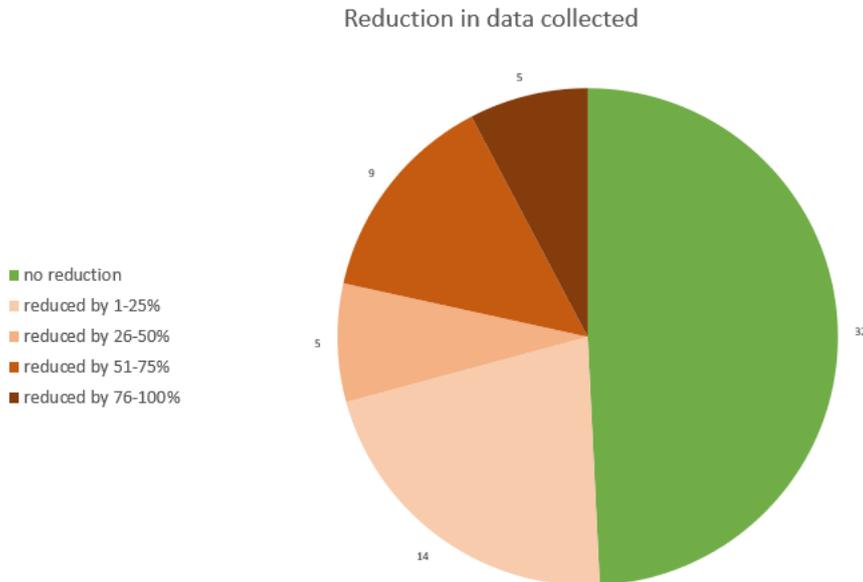
### Counter participation in 2021

31 (48%) countries reported no reduction in the number of participants and 15 (23%) saw a reduction of 25% or lower. 15 (23%) countries saw participation drop by more than 50% during the pandemic.



## Data collected in 2021

Similar numbers were reported for the reduction in data collected in 2021. 32 (49%) of countries reported no reduction in coverage, 14 (22%) saw a reduction of up to 25% and 14 (22%) saw a reduction of over 50%. However the pandemic made coverage of many larger and more complex sites especially difficult. This was often because there were travel restrictions limiting the access to larger sites or difficulty in organising sufficiently large teams with social distancing to cover the site properly.



## Outlook post pandemic

Generally coordinators did not expect the pandemic to have any longer lasting impacts on the national waterbird monitoring programmes. Most expected the situation to return to normal once the pandemic restrictions were lifted. The costs of the counts during the pandemic were sometimes higher because more accommodation and transport was needed to ensure social distancing. Several coordinators also highlighted ongoing issues with limited resources (funding, materials, personnel) and but these are not specific to the pandemic and rather reflect the need to integrate the IWC more closely with national policy and conservation management requirements.

## Conclusion

We expect to see a noticeable drop in the sites and numbers counted in the IWC 2021 compared to earlier years. It is likely that this will be exacerbated by the generally lower coverage of important waterbird sites across the flyway. However we can be cautiously optimistic that this reduction in counts will be a one-off event and counting will have largely returned to normal already in 2022.