

# NATIONAL REPORT DUCK COUNTS SURINAME

JUNE 2003

## THE WETLANDS

### Introduction

The whole Surinamese coastal area can be considered as one big wetland. Hence it always was difficult to choose the limits of the wetlands for the counts. During the regional meeting I got a much better understanding of the criteria how to choose. Together with Mr. Mohadin we changed the division of the wetlands in zones used so far. We did it in a way that the results still could be compared with those of former years. The zones 1, 2 and 5 have been deleted. We never saw great numbers of ducks there and the situation is that such also cannot be expected in the future. The zones 4a and 3a have been lumped into the new zone "Matapica". This zone has not been surveyed this year, because of budgetary reasons. Also here we never saw many ducks, but this might change in the future. The zones 4b and 3b have been lumped into the new zone 'Walapa kreek'. Zone 6 remained as zone "Pralala Pan", but is now restricted to the lagoon only. The zones 7, 8, 9 and 11 along the coast between the Coppename River and Nickerie River became the new zone 'Totness – Nickerie'. And the zones 10 and 12 changed into zone 'Bigi Pan'.

Thanks to Foek Chin Joe we now have nice photos of the this year surveyed wetlands.

### Zone 'Walapa kreek'

- . The area is an abandoned plantation area, and consists of brackish short grass and fern swamps, and brackish to fresh water short grass swamps. There are many open waters. The water depth varies between approx. 30 cm in the dry season to approx. 70 cm in the rainy season. Some parts dry up in the dry season. Some of the lakes are partly covered with *Nymphae spec.* The area is very well accessible, and is known for its rich fish population and fishing activities. Some fisherman have their overnight camps here. Extensive hunting may occur.

### Zone Pralala Pan

The Pralala Pan within the Coppename-monding Nature Reserve, is a large lagoon surrounded by Mangroves *Avicennia spec.* and with patches of Mangroves in the lagoon. It is not deep. Probably not deeper than 1 m. The water is salt or brackish. During dry seasons the water level can be very low, and part of the lagoon may dry up. Only the deep middle part may then have water. No part of the "Pan", however, dried up this year. As far as we know there is no threat for the waterfowl as we think that the Pan is very difficult to access, and above all, hunting is not allowed in nature reserves. Some illegal hunting, however, still may take place.

### **Zone Totness-Nickerie**

This zone contains the narrow coastal strip from Totness to the mouth of the Nickerie River. Most of the coastline is covered by Mangroves *Avicennia spec.* with patches of dying mangroves. This zone is directly influenced by the tide, and is connected with the sea by many small creeks. The water may vary from brackish to salt. There are some brackish short-grass marshes and brackish open water lagoons. Water depth may reach to more than one meter in the rainy season, and many marshes and lagoons dry up in the dry season. The most western part of the zone is well accessible, hence lot of fishery activities and hunting take place here.

### **Zone Bigi Pan**

The Bigi Pan is the largest open water lagoon in the country surrounded by mature and dying mangrove forest, and shallow salt to brackish water swamp covered with halophytic herb vegetation, short grasses and ferns. A larger area which is also called Bigi Pan contains also many open water lagoons which vary from brackish to fresh water, surrounded by short grass swamps and tall grass swamps dominated by *Typha angustifolia*.

In between there are several small open waters. It is in these open waters where waterfowl are found. Partially, the Bigi Pan is also surrounded by rice fields. The depth of the water in the Bigi Pan varies from approximately 50 cm in the dry season to approx. 1 meter in the rainy season. Parts of the lagoons surrounding the Pan dry up in the dry season. The Bigi Pan itself never dries up.

The entire area is subjected to tidal action, and is very accessible. The Bigi Pan is connected with the sea by several creeks and with the Nickerie River by the Jamaer Canal

The Bigi Pan is known for its rich fish population and many fishermen use the area for fishing which takes place the whole year round. Several fishermen have their camp in the Pan. The area is also visited by plenty hunters. Lot of hunting takes place here.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Almost all surveys have been executed with the maximum number of 5 participants.

Participants from last year who continued, where Kris Mohadin, Rabin Nekrui, Foek Chin Joe and Otte Ottema. Shamita Sahdew 'Mieke' is in principle still in the group of participants, but could not participate in the surveys this year due to unforeseen circumstances. We recruited 3 new counters: Chequita Bikhi, Rawien and Adjai. Particularly the last one is promising but all three are motivated well. Foek has been more than useful by making nice photos and Kris helps me with producing the field sheets and the National Report. In general he is an important support.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the Blue Wing counts were comparable with the first two years in the sense that the peak this year was again in the beginning of March. The total numbers

of Blue Wing did not differ much from last year. Like last year, the Pralala Pan had less Blue Wing and never the high numbers from before (10000 or more). Walapa kreek (former zone 4b) had the highest numbers for this year. In the beginning of March we counted more than 8000 Blue Wing there.

We may interpret the data in the following sense. Until far in January Blue wing keep coming from the North. The birds which migrate in November and December do not stay long but go further south. End of January, these birds start to return to Suriname but do not move on further North. Half March the birds start moving north. End March all have left. It is also possible, that they start moving North in the beginning of March and that the turnover is high.

### **ENCOUNTERED PROBLEMS**

We still have not been able to estimate the amount of open water and floating and emergent vegetation in the wetlands. There are simply too many lagoons and the area's are to large and to different to accomplish this task. We also cannot provide good maps of the wetlands, because they are not available.

### **PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR**

If sufficient funds are available we will continue in the same way, including Matapica, but we would like to make our work easier by using head-phones and recorders which have to be purchased yet (5 of each).