

Neotropical Waterbird Census in French Guiana

Year 2024



Striated Heron © R. Jantot

Regional coordination
Olivier Claessens



GEPOG

With the financial support of



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Wetlands
INTERNATIONAL

In short...

February 2024 census

- **40** monitored sites
- **25** mobilized observers
- **59** counted species
- **141,698** counted waterbirds
Including 122,551 shorebirds (108,966 Semipalmated Sandpipers)

This session was marked by exceptional numbers of Stilt Sandpipers, Short-billed Dowitchers and Lesser Yellowlegs for this time of year, as well as a record number of Common Gallinules on the lakes of Kourou. Overall, shorebird numbers were lower than in previous years, mainly due to the decline of rice fields in Mana.

July 2024 census

- **51** monitored sites
- **24** mobilized observers
- **72** counted species
- **54,596** counted waterbirds
Including 32 565 shorebirds (22,842 Semipalmated Sandpipers)

The July session stood out from previous ones for its particularly low numbers of shorebirds, partly due to the changes of mud banks, which made the monitored sites less attractive for birds, and partly to the development of mangroves along the Cayenne coastline, which hampered observation. The integration of new counting sectors has not compensated for this decline. Herons and egrets are also decreasing (3,000 instead of 4,000), despite a remarkable abundance of Striated Herons in the Kaw marshland. We also noted the exceptional presence of a Purple Heron, the 3rd Guianan record for this migratory bird coming from Europe.

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Background

Geography of French Guiana

Along with Suriname, Guyana and part of Venezuela to the west, and the Brazilian state of Amapá to the east and south, French Guiana is part of a geomorphological complex known as the Guiana Shield, which forms the northeastern part of the South American continent, facing the Atlantic Ocean. It is made up of some of the oldest granitic rocks on Earth, and a sedimentary coastal plain of varying widths. In the Guiana Shield, French Guiana stands out by the virtual absence of a coastal plain. Over 90% of the region is covered by forest. As a result, marshlands and other continental wetlands are very little developed in French Guiana, and are mainly found at the western (Savanes Sarcelles, Mana polder) and eastern (Kaw marshland) ends of the coastal plain (Uriot 2023).

The majority of French Guiana's wetlands are made up of coastal mudflats and mangroves, which are particularly rich, in a good state of conservation and display an exceptional natural dynamic that is unique in the world: under the effect of marine currents, the mud banks formed by the sediments of the Amazon move from east to west along the coast, which thus undergoes a cyclic alternation of facies ranging from sandy beach to uncovered mudflat to mangrove forest, before returning to the initial state of silt deposits and erosion after about fifteen years.

Waterbird census in French Guiana

Coordinated by GEPOG, waterbird censuses in their current form began in French Guiana in 2022 (Piolain 2022). After an initial failed attempt in the 1990s, this revival is part of a wider GEPOG action program dedicated to shorebirds. In view of the sharp decline in shorebird populations in North America and the importance of French Guiana on the West-Atlantic flyway, the need to monitor these species became apparent. The implementation of the Neotropical Waterbird Census (NWC) in French Guiana is one of the actions that meet this objective, and as such benefits from financial support from the Canadian government and the French Office for Biodiversity (OFB).

This is the third annual NWC report in French Guiana, in their “modern” version (Claessens 2023). We refer to the initial report (Piolain 2022) for a broader presentation of French Guiana, the situation of waterbirds in the territory and the context in which these censuses were set up.

Census dates and sites

Census sessions 2024

Waterbird census in French Guiana are part of the Neotropical Waterbird Census, the South American version of the International Waterbird Census. They therefore follow the same protocol in terms of dates and frequency. Two sessions are held each year:

- In February between the 1st and 3rd weekend.
- In July between the 1st and 3rd weekend.

In 2024, these sessions took place between February 3rd and 18th and between July 6th and 21st. For practical reasons, the Kourou sites were monitored in July 2024, two days before the official start of the session.

As in previous years, coordinated counts were organized simultaneously in nearby, interconnected sites: on the coast of 'Cayenne island' (February 3rd, July 6th), and in the rice fields of Mana (February 10th, July 20th).

Monitored sites

A total of **52 sites were monitored in 2024**. They are spread all along the coast, from Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni to Rémire-Montjoly and the Grand-Connétable Island. A number of non-coastal sites are also monitored: Pripris de Yiyi (Sinnamary), lakes of Kourou, pastures and quarry at the Route de Guatemala (Kourou), Leblond marshes (Cayenne), lagoons of Larivot and Concorde (Matoury), and the Kaw marshland (Régina). Although these sites are of secondary importance in terms of numbers, they allow us to include non-migratory or freshwater species that are not, or only to a limited extent, considered at coastal sites.

Most sites have been monitored every year since 2022. This continuity is essential for comparing results and identifying long-term trends. However, five new sites were added in 2024: the Kaw River estuary, the 'Plage des Bois flottés', the 'Grande plage', the 'vasière de l'École de voile' (Kourou), and Pointe Liberté (Macouria). It should also be noted that, after a one-year absence, Savanes Sarcelles (Mana) was surveyed again in 2024 during the July counts. On the other hand, the Kourou River estuary, one of the most important birding sites, is now inaccessible and can only be seen from Pointe des Roches. Due to the size of the mudflats and the observation distance, it is impossible to count the birds precisely or to distinguish between species. Therefore, only general and very rough population figures can be estimated.

40 sites were monitored in February and 51 sites in July; 39 sites were monitored during both sessions. Among the sites with more than 500 counted waterbirds, the Kaw River estuary, the 'Plage des Bois flottés', the 'Grande plage' and the 'vasière de l'École de voile' (Kourou) were only included in the census in July.

Observers

The two sessions in 2024 involved a total of **36 observers and companions**. Waterbird censuses are included in the events calendar offered to GEPOG members, which enabled a dozen beginners to take part by accompanying an experienced observer in charge of the count. Four organizations were involved.

Our sincere thanks for their participation go to:

- Maison de la Nature de Montsinéry, the Amana National Nature Reserve, the Grand-Connétable Island National Nature Reserve, the Kaw-Roura National Nature Reserve;
- Michaël Arlandis, Béatrice et François Berthelot, Pauline Bottero, Grégory Cantaloube, Olivier Claessens (GEPOG), Alex Greene, Lilian Eprendre, Léa François (GEPOG), Thibaut Ferrieux, Roland Jantot, Laurent Kelle, Cristina Marquès Ferri (RNKR), Camille Mauvisseau, Todor Mishev, Laure Molinier (MNS), Elie Monin (GEPOG), Geoffrey Monchaux-Lefèvre (RNNGC), Solenne Monchaux-Lefèvre, Fabienne Ourmiah, Julien Piolain, Etienne Plaine, Christian Pomier, Gwendal Quimbire, Elven Remérand, Vincent Rufay, Aurélie Saintes, Mélodie Schmidt, Gabriel Siong (RNA), Quentin Uriot, Sylvain Uriot, Maxime Vildieu, Alexandre Vinot, Ronald Wongsopawiro (RNA).



Counting waterbirds in the rice fields of Mana, 20/07/2024 © O. Claessens

Results

February census: general results

The total number of waterbirds counted in February was **142,079**, which is 17,338 fewer than in February 2023 (-13%). The difference is mainly due to the Semipalmated Sandpiper. The fluctuating distribution of shorebirds on mudflats and the difficulty of counting them accurately explain these variations.

These birds belonged to **60 species**. Excluding shorebirds, which accounted for 86% of the species counted in February, the majority of other species were, as usual, ardeids (figure 1). Among them, the Little Blue Heron and the Snowy Egret dominate. Frigatebirds, skimmers and larids account for half of the population.

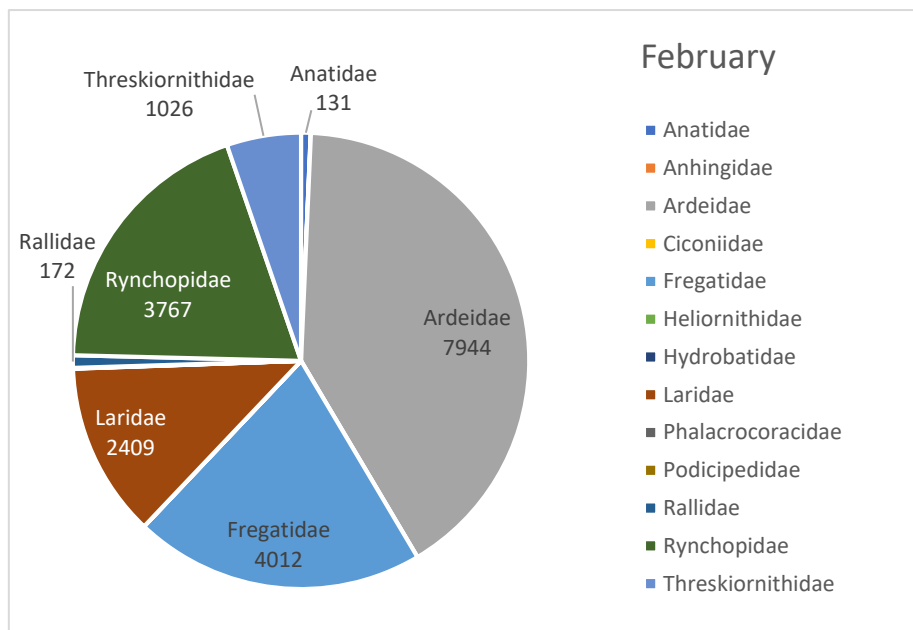


Figure 1: Taxonomic composition of waterbirds counted in February 2024, excluding shorebirds.

July census: general results

In July, a total of **71,584 waterbirds** of **73 species** were counted, half as many as in February. This proportion is in line with numbers observed in 2022, and is explained by a much lower number of shorebirds in summer than in winter. Shorebirds now account for just 46% of all waterbirds (figure 2). This is almost 62,000 fewer birds than in July 2023. Unsurprisingly, Semipalmated Sandpiper accounts for most of this difference. It should be remembered, however, that the estimate of sandpipers present on certain sites in July 2023 was subject to a high degree of uncertainty due to counting difficulties caused by the size and distance of the mudflats. In this respect, the results for 2024 seem more credible.

Excluding shorebirds, larids dominate the waterfowl population in July. With over 16,000 individuals from the colony on the island of Grand-Connétable, the Cayenne Tern is the main species in this group.

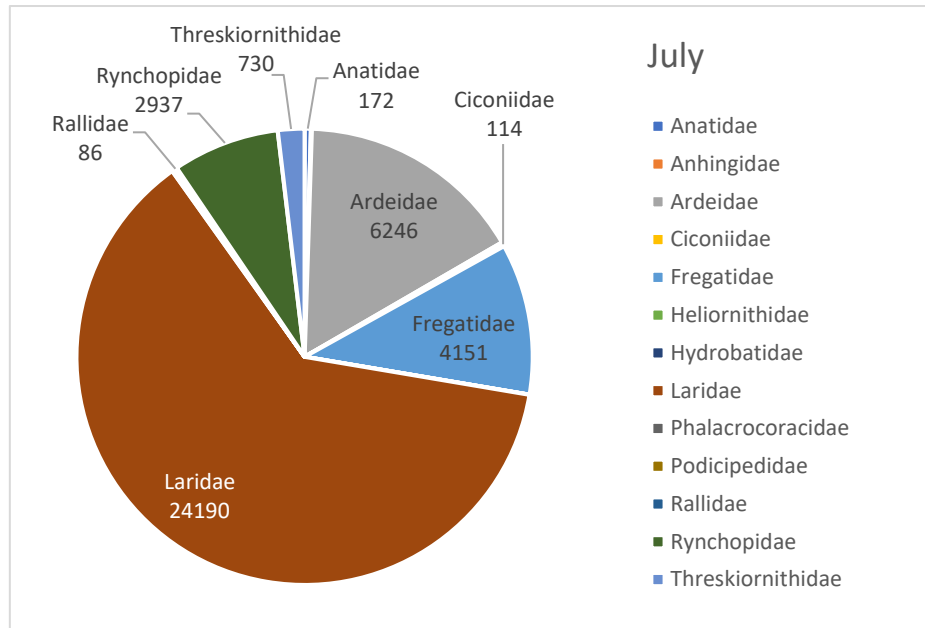


Figure 2: Taxonomic composition of waterbirds counted in July 2024, excluding shorebirds.

In both sessions combined, **213,613 waterbirds** were counted in 2024, compared to 252,416 in 2022 (and 292,762 in 2023, but this total was probably skewed by an overestimation of shorebirds in July). Even excluding the year 2023, this assessment reflects a significant drop in waterbird numbers over three years, although it is important to note the inaccuracy of the shorebird counts (see below).

Specific results

- [Anatidae](#)

Duck numbers remained very modest in 2024, both for local species (White-cheeked Pintail, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Muscovy Duck) and North American wintering species. Among the latter, only 50 **Blue-winged Teals** were counted in February, and only one **Lesser Scaup** showed up this winter. Once again, the Savanes Sarcelles, the main staging and breeding site, was not monitored in February. Despite the inclusion of this site in July, numbers of **White-cheeked Pintails** and **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** remained below the figures of 2022. The presence of a Blue-winged Teal during the July census was exceptionally early for this boreal migrant. It follows the no less exceptional sighting of a group in the rice fields on May 10th, at a time when these birds should be arriving on their North American breeding grounds. One may wonder if this individual did not summer in the rice fields, as the first Blue-winged Teals are usually seen in French Guiana only in mid-September.



Blue-winged Teal (*Spatula discors*) and White-cheeked Pintails (*Anas bahamensis*),
rice fields of Mana, [20/07/2024](#) © S. Monchaux-Lefèvre

- [Ardeidae](#)

The increase in the number of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at coastal sites is probably due to the development of the mangroves on the coastline of Cayenne, which facilitates the observation of this species. More intriguing were the record numbers of **Striated Herons** noted in the Kaw marshland in July, confirmed by an off-protocol count along the Kaw River. An unusual abundance of food, combined with the presence of young birds born during the season, is undoubtedly behind this high concentration of Striated Herons.

The July session led to the exceptional discovery of a **Purple Heron** in the Kaw marshland. This was the third record of this migratory heron from Europe in French Guiana (Lenrumé *et al.* 2024a).

- [Fregatidae](#)

As with the Laughing Gull and nesting terns, the numbers of **Magnificent Frigatebirds** correspond mainly to those of the breeding colony on the island of Grand-Connétable Nature Reserve, where they are present all year round. However, the recorded numbers are very approximate.

- [Laridae](#)

The numbers of **Laughing Gulls**, **Sooty Terns**, **Royal Terns**, **Cayenne Terns** and **Brown Noddies** mainly reflect those of the colony of the Grand-Connétable Island Nature Reserve. These species are almost absent from the colony in February and are in full breeding season in early July.

The South American **Yellow-billed Tern** shows higher numbers in July, when birds that have bred in neighboring countries disperse, while the **Gull-billed Tern** and **Common Tern**, which breed on the North American coast, are present in greater numbers in February during their wintering in South America. These patterns are consistent with those of previous years. The phenology of the **Large-billed Tern** is less clear, its low numbers making variations insignificant.

- [Shorebirds](#)

The **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, which still represents the overwhelming majority of shorebirds observed on the French Guianan coast (85% on average over the two sessions), showed a drop of -25% in February and -74% in July compared to the previous year. These variations must be interpreted with caution, observation and counting conditions are largely responsible for this apparent drop in numbers. The inaccessibility of some major sites and the difficulties of counting birds scattered over large areas mean that the results are difficult to compare from one year to another, and even from one session to the next. Nevertheless, it is likely that the quality of the mud banks on the monitored sites has also declined, resulting in some of the birds moving to other sites that are not monitored or where they are more difficult to count.

The **Stilt Sandpiper** reached a record number of 2,487 birds in February. The **Short-billed Dowitcher** (4,026 birds) and **Lesser Yellowlegs** (1,758 birds) reached remarkable scores in July, while the **Red Knot** almost equaled its 2023 score, with 235 birds. The July census took place at a pivotal time for fall migration; the date of the census in the Mana rice fields, a week later than in 2023, may therefore have contributed to this increase in numbers.

As last year, the **Black-necked Stilt** achieves its best score in July, during the breeding season: 19 occupied nests were observed in a single plot in the Mana rice fields during the census.



Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*), Cayenne, 28/03/2024 © O. Claessens

- [Rallidae](#)

Among the rails, the **Common Gallinule**, which breeds on the lakes of Kourou, reached record numbers in February, with 144 individuals counted. This highly localized population shows significant and unexplained variations in numbers over the year, while the species is only occasionally and marginally found at other sites. It is clear that fallback sites or other population centers in French Guiana are still unknown, except one in the municipality of Iracoubo (which is not monitored as part of NWC, and the precise location of which is kept secret). In terms of rare species, we can report the comeback of the Rufous-necked Wood-Rails in Macouria after three years without sightings, as well as the observation of a Paint-billed Crake in Cayenne and a Yellow-breasted Crake in Mana.

- [Rynchopidae](#)

As in previous years, the **Black Skimmer** was present in significant numbers at both sessions. This year, numbers were even higher in February than in July. Several subspecies, with varied geographical origins, have been observed in French Guiana, but are rarely distinguished by observers. A better understanding of the variations in their proportions over the year would provide crucial information for understanding the phenology of these populations.

- [Threskiornitidae](#)

The number of **Scarlet Ibises** counted during the NWC was slightly higher this year, but remains unrepresentative in the absence of counts at roosts. **Roseate Spoonbills** showed higher numbers in February this year; it will be interesting to see whether this trend continues in future years. Finally, one **Glossy Ibis** was seen again in July in the rice fields of Mana. This species, which is still exceptional in French Guiana, could become a regular visitor in the near future (Lenrumé *et al.* 2024b).



Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), Kaw marshland, [10/07/2024](#) © L. Eprendre

Results by location

The distribution of numbers between the monitored sites is broadly the same as in previous years: coastal sites host almost all the waterbirds counted during the census (figures 3 and 4), while freshwater sites appear to be more anecdotal. This quantitative disparity masks in fact the importance of “inland” wetlands (marshes, lagoons, wet savannahs, ponds and canals) for certain species that frequent coastal mudflats little or not at all.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the distribution presented here reflects that of the monitored sites and not that of waterbirds throughout French Guiana or even the entire coastline.

Over the two seasons as a whole, four sites exceeded 20,000 birds each, accounting for 64% of the counted numbers (table 1): these are the coastal sites of Cayenne and Kourou, which are home to staging and wintering shorebirds, with the exception of Grand-Connétable Island and its seabird breeding colony. The former are particularly important in February, while the island of Grand-Connétable reaches its peak numbers in July, after the breeding season.

*Table 1: General overview of NWC counts by site in 2024.
Highlighted sites were new in 2024.*

Site	Municipality	February	July	Total
Estuaire du Kourou	Kourou	49,241	7,177	56,418
Anse de l'Hôpital	Cayenne	29,192	1,301	30,493
Île du Grand-Connétable	Régina	4,005	25,680	29,685
Pointe des Amandiers et Anse Nadeau	Cayenne	19,428	1,544	20,972
Polder de Mana - casier 12	Mana	5,783	8,886	14,669
Pointe Buzaré et Anse Méret	Cayenne	10,608	2,849	13,457
Littoral des rizières	Mana	5,894	5,879	11,773
Pointe et anse de Chaton	Cayenne	7,741	1,861	9,602
Polder de Mana - casier 11	Mana	310	5,073	5,383
Plage des Bois flottés	Kourou	NC	3,201	3,201
Polder de Mana - casier 9	Mana	2,702	272	2,974
Vieux port de Cayenne	Cayenne	2,384	515	2,899
Polder de Mana - casier 8	Mana	1,703	511	2,214
Estuaire de la Rivière de Kaw	Régina	NC	1,513	1,513
Polder de Mana - casier 10	Mana	993	283	1,276
Pointe du Mahury et Base navale	Rémire-Montjoly	76	773	849
Polder de Mana – pré-casiers 10-13	Mana	171	649	820
Vasière de l'École de voile	Kourou	NC	733	733
Pointes Pollux et de l'Etat Major	Kourou	409	310	719
Grande Plage	Kourou	NC	535	535
Île du Petit-Connétable	Régina	281	145	426
Pointe des Roches	Kourou	77	167	244
Pointe Isère	Mana	NC	238	238
Rivière de Kaw - secteur Maripas	Régina	NC	225	225
Pointe de la Roche Bleue	Saint-Laurent-du-M.	207	11	218
Rivière de Kaw - secteur Méziac	Régina	NC	214	214
Pointe Liberté	Macouria	62	132	194
Marais de la Crique Fouillée	Cayenne	81	110	191
Lac Bois-Chaudat	Kourou	132	24	156
Marais Leblond	Cayenne	117	34	151
Savanes Sarcelles	Mana	NC	141	141

Lac Bois-Diable	Kourou	67	45	112
Rivière de Kaw - secteur Riché	Régina	NC	99	99
Guatemala - pâtures	Macouria	58	36	94
Lac Marie-Claire	Kourou	54	29	83
Bassins de lagunage du Larivot	Matoury	40	40	80
Pointe de Montjoyeux	Cayenne	3	77	80
Guatemala – carrière de sable	Macouria	NC	71	71
Dégrad des Cannes	Rémire-Montjoly	51	10	61
Bassins d'épuration de Fatima	Saint-Laurent-du-M.	42	13	55
Bassins d'épuration de Concorde	Matoury	14	36	50
Pripris de Yiyi	Sinnamary	21	23	44
La Charbonnière	Saint-Laurent-du-M.	31	13	44
Anse de Montabo	Cayenne	8	29	37
CSG – lac Orchidée	Kourou	15	12	27
Îlets Dupont et îlots rocheux à l'ouest	Cayenne	NC	24	24
Salines de Montjoly	Rémire-Montjoly	9	10	19
Plages de Rémire et Gosselin	Rémire-Montjoly	2	16	18
Plage de Montjoly	Rémire-Montjoly	7	11	18
Anse de Bourda	Cayenne	6	NC	6
Guatemala – étang du pk 38	Macouria	4	1	5
Plage des Hattes	Awala-Yalimapo	NC	3	3
Total		142,029	71,584	213,613

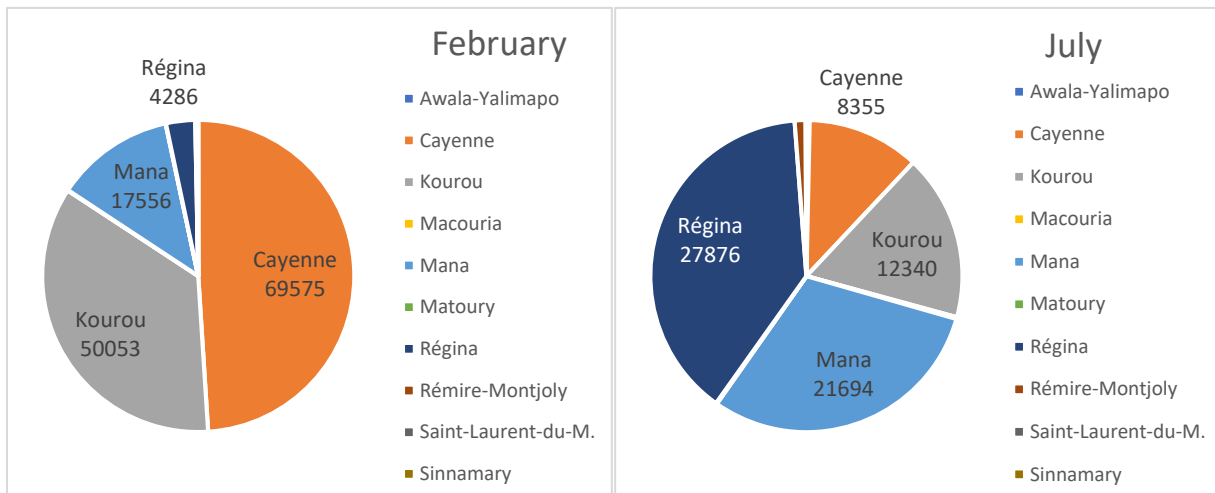


Figure 3 and 4: Distribution of waterbirds by geographical sectors during the two NWC sessions in 2024.

As in previous years, the Cayenne coastline remains the area with the highest bird abundance in February, ahead of Kourou and the rice fields and the Mana coast, hosting almost as many birds as all the other monitored sites. In July, the island of Grand-Connétable took the lead, and the rice fields of Mana were ahead of Kourou and Cayenne (figure 3 and 4).

The changes of mudbanks since the previous year has made some coastal sites more or less favorable for shorebirds, while the development of mangroves complicates bird observation and counting in some cases. Thus, the Vieux port de Cayenne, which hosted 22% of the birds in February 2023, has become marginal in 2024. The same applies to the Pointe des Roches and the Pointes Pollux et de l'Etat

Major in Kourou, where the birds have largely moved to the right bank of the Kourou estuary making counts difficult.

In the Mana rice fields, birds move from one plot to another and between the rice fields and the coastal mudflats according to the tide and the mud outcrops within the plots, making it important to carry out the counts simultaneously on a set of plots. Bird numbers remained broadly the same between the years 2023 and 2024.

The contribution of subcoastal ponds and marshes, modest in quantitative terms, is mainly qualitative by harboring species that are absent from coastal sites. Thus, the lakes of Kourou are the only sites to host a significant population of Common Gallinule, with remarkable numbers, especially in February. The Concorde lagoon basins are home to several pairs of Least Grebes, while the Leblond marsh and the Crique Fouillée marsh are home to the majority of the Gray-breasted Crakes. The Kaw marshland and the Kaw River are home to most of the Anhingas, Neotropic Cormorants, Striated Herons and Azure Gallinules.



Common Gallinules (*Gallinula galeata*), Kourou, [03/02/2024](#) © T. Ferrieux

The geographical distribution of waterbirds across all sites during the two counting sessions is shown in figure 5 and 6. It should be remembered that this does not represent the overall distribution of all the waterbirds present in French Guiana, but only those present on the monitored sites.

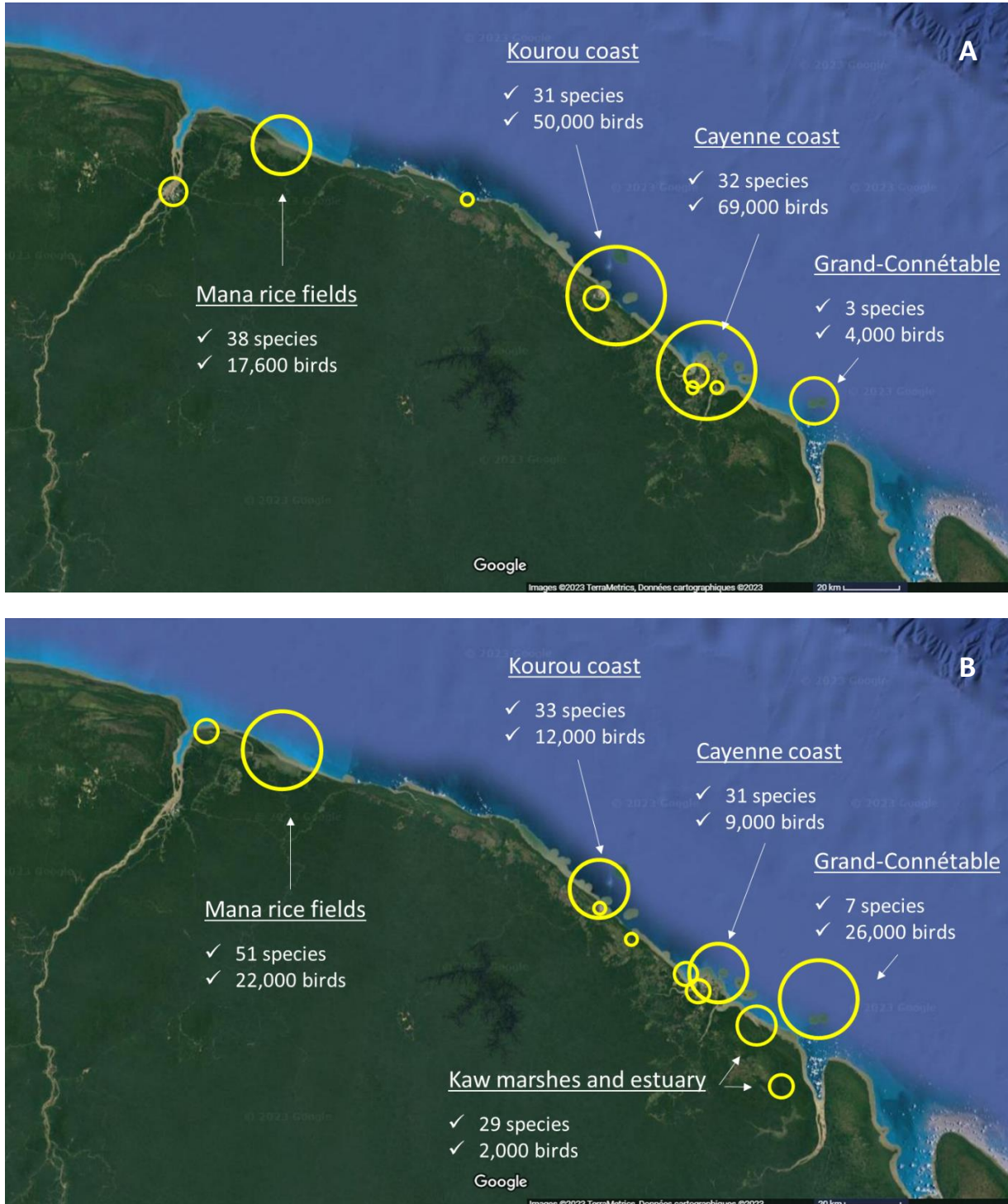


Figure 5 and 6: Distribution of waterbirds counted during the two 2024 sessions. A: February; B: July. The numbers are rounded.

Balance sheet by location

Municipality	Site name	Counts		% Counts		Number of species	
		February	July	February	July	February	July
Awala-Yalimapo	Plage des Hattes	-	3	0%	0%	-	2
	Pointe Isère	-	238	0%	0%	-	6
Cayenne	Anse de Bourda	6	-	0%	0%	4	-
	Anse de l'Hôpital	29,192	1,301	21%	2%	24	18
	Anse de Montabo	8	29	0%	0%	3	9
	Îlets Dupont et îlots rocheux à l'ouest	-	24	0%	0%	-	4
	Marais de la Crique Fouillée	81	110	0%	0%	14	14
	Marais Leblond	117	34	0%	0%	10	6
	Plage de Montjoly	7	11	0%	0%	5	3
	Pointe Buzaré et Anse Méret	10,608	2,849	7%	4%	19	18
	Pointe de Montjoyeux	3	77	0%	0%	3	11
	Pointe des Amandiers et Anse Nadeau	19,428	1,544	14%	2%	13	21
Kourou	Pointe et Anse de Chaton	7,741	1,861	5%	3%	17	14
	Vieux port de Cayenne	2,384	515	2%	1%	24	18
	CSG – lac Orchidée	15	12	0%	0%	7	2
	Estuaire du Kourou	49,241	7,177	35%	10%	18	26
	Grande Plage	-	535	0%	1%	-	9
	Guatemala – carrière de sable	-	71	0%	0%	-	5
	Guatemala - pâtures	58	36	0%	0%	14	4
	Lac Bois-Chaudat	132	24	0%	0%	9	4
	Lac Bois-Diable	67	45	0%	0%	13	10
	Lac Marie-Claire	54	29	0%	0%	4	4
	Plage des Bois flottés	-	3,201	0%	4%	-	17
	Pointe des Roches	77	167	0%	0%	7	12
Macouria	Pointes Pollux et de l'Etat Major	409	310	0%	0%	7	8
	Vasière de l'Ecole de voile	-	733	0%	1%	-	14
Macouria	Guatemala – étang du pk 38	4	1	0%	0%	3	1
	Pointe Liberté	62	132	0%	0%	9	17
Mana	Littoral des rizières	5,894	5,879	4%	8%	21	32
	Polder de Mana - casier 10	993	283	1%	0%	15	17
	Polder de Mana - casier 11	310	5,073	0%	7%	13	28
	Polder de Mana - casier 12	5,783	8,886	4%	12%	26	35
	Polder de Mana - casier plot 8	1,703	511	1%	1%	19	19
	Polder de Mana - casier plot 9	2,702	272	2%	0%	19	15
	Polder de Mana – pré-casier 10-13	171	649	0%	1%	14	18
	Savanes Sarcelles	-	141	0%	0%	-	13
Matoury	Bassins d'épuration de Concorde	14	36	0%	0%	3	2
	Bassins d'épuration du Larivot	40	40	0%	0%	1	3
Régina	Estuaire de la Rivière de Kaw	-	1,513	0%	2%	-	16
	Île du Grand-Connétable	4,005	25,680	3%	36%	3	7
	Île du Petit-Connétable	281	145	0%	0%	3	5
	Rivière de Kaw - secteur Maripas	-	225	0%	0%	-	8
	Rivière de Kaw - secteur Méziac	-	214	0%	0%	-	8
	Rivière de Kaw - secteur Riché	-	99	0%	0%	-	10
Rémire-Montjoly	Dégrad des Cannes	51	10	0%	0%	8	4
	Plages de Rémire et Gosselin	2	16	0%	0%	2	5

Municipality	Site name	Counts		% Counts		Number of species	
		February	July	February	July	February	July
	Pointe du Mahury et Base navale	76	773	0%	1%	11	10
	Salines de Montjoly	9	10	0%	0%	6	2
Saint-Laurent-du-M.	Bassins de lagunage de Fatima	42	13	0%	0%	5	3
	La Charbonnière	31	13	0%	0%	8	3
	Pointe de la Roche Bleue	207	11	0%	0%	5	5
Sinnamary	Pripris de Yiyi	21	23	0%	0%	5	6
Total		142,029	71,584	100%	100%	61	73



Striated Heron (*Butorides striata*), Awala-Yalimapo, 21/07/2024 © O. Claessens

Summary table by species

Family	Species name	Latin name	February	July
Anatidae	White-cheeked Pintail	Anas bahamensis	67	114
	Muscovy Duck	Cairina moschata	13	15
	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Dendrocygna autumnalis		42
	Lesser Scaup	Aythya affinis	1	
	Blue-winged Teal	Spatula discors	50	1
Total Anatidae			131	172
Anhingidae	Anhinga	Anhinga anhinga	4	25
Total Anhingidae			4	25
Ardeidae	Little Blue Heron	Egretta caerulea	3,491	2,992
	Little Blue Heron / Snowy Egret	Egretta thula / caerulea imm.	936	
	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	4	15
	Snowy Egret	Egretta thula	3,040	1,865
	Tricolored Heron	Egretta tricolor	203	185
	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax	11	40
	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Nyctanassa violacea	26	396
	Great Egret	Ardea alba	173	490
	Cocoi Heron	Ardea cocoi	9	41
	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	14	37
	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea		1
	Striated Heron	Butorides striata	36	182
	Rufescent Tiger-Heron	Tigrisoma lineatum		1
	Least Bittern	Ixobrychus exilis	1	
Boat-billed Heron	Cochlearius cochlearius		1	
Total Ardeidae			7,944	6,246
Charadriidae	Collared Plover	Anarhynchus collaris	12	26
	Wilson's Plover	Anarhynchus wilsonia	2	2
	Semipalmated Plover	Charadrius semipalmatus	771	534
	Black-bellied Plover	Pluvialis squatarola	263	109
	American Golden-Plover	Pluvialis dominica	1	
Total Charadriidae			1,049	671
Ciconiidae	Wood Stork	Mycteria americana		114
Total Ciconiidae				114
Fregatidae	Magnificent Frigatebird	Fregata magnificens	4,012	4,151
Total Fregatidae			4,012	4,151
Heliornithidae	Sungrebe	Heliornis fulica		1
Total Heliornithidae				1
Hydrobatidae	Leach's Storm-Petrel	Hydrobates leucorhous	1	
Total Hydrobatidae			1	
Jacanidae	Wattled Jacana	Jacana jacana	193	310
Total Jacanidae			193	310
Laridae	White-winged Tern	Chlidonias leucopterus		1
	Black Tern	Chlidonias niger surinamensis		36
	Laughing Gull	Leucophaeus atricilla	403	1,769
	Brown Noddy	Anous stolidus		240
	Large-billed Tern	Phaetusa simplex	30	6
	Yellow-billed Tern	Sternula superciliaris	371	914

	Cayenne Tern	Thalasseus (sandvicensis) eurygnathus	331	16,683
	Roseate Tern	Sterna dougallii		3
	Sooty Tern	Onychoprion fuscatus		34
	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica	451	179
	Common Tern	Sterna hirundo	212	97
	Royal Tern	Thalasseus maximus	111	4,188
	Sternae sp.	Sternae sp.	500	40
Total Laridae			2,409	24,190
Phalacrocoracidae	Neotropic Cormorant	Phalacrocorax brasilianus	4	40
Total Phalacrocoracidae			4	40
Podicipedidae	Pied-billed Grebe	Podilymbus podiceps	6	9
	Least Grebe	Tachybaptus dominicus	2	13
Total Podicipedidae			8	22
Rallidae	Common Gallinule	Gallinula galeata	146	44
	Yellow-breasted Crake	Porzana flaviventer	1	
	Paint-billed Crake	Mustelirallus erythropus		1
	Rufous-necked Wood-Rail	Aramides axillaris		1
	Gray-cowled Wood-Rail	Aramides cajaneus	2	2
	Gray-breasted Crake	Laterallus exilis	9	18
	Mangrove Rail	Rallus longirostris	4	4
	Russet-crowned Crake	Anurolimnas viridis	4	1
	Ash-throated Crake	Mustelirallus albicollis	1	
	Azure Gallinule	Porphyrio flavirostris		8
	Purple Gallinule	Porphyrio martinica	5	7
Total Rallidae			172	86
Recurvirostridae	Black-necked Stilt	Himantopus mexicanus	18	107
Total Recurvirostridae			18	107
Rynchopidae	Black Skimmer	Rynchops niger	3,767	2,937
Total Rynchopidae			3,767	2,937
Scolopacidae	Bar-tailed Godwit	Limosa lapponica		1
	White-rumped Sandpiper	Calidris fuscicollis		2
	Stilt Sandpiper	Calidris himantopus	2,487	19
	Pectoral Sandpiper	Calidris melanotos		1
	Western Sandpiper	Calidris mauri	1	
	Sandpiper (not identified)	Calidris sp.	3	20
	Red Knot	Calidris canutus	50	235
	Least Sandpiper	Calidris minutilla	131	113
	Sanderling	Calidris alba		2
	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Calidris pusilla	108,966	22,842
	Short-billed Dowitcher	Limnodromus griseus	3,702	4,026
	Pantanal Snipe	Gallinago paraguaiae		3
	Spotted Sandpiper	Actitis macularius	205	44
	Sandpiper (not identified) (Tringa)	Tringa sp.		305
	Willet	Tringa semipalmata	226	181
	Solitary Sandpiper	Tringa solitaria	28	3
	Hudsonian whimbrel	Numenius hudsonicus	209	136
	Greater Yellowlegs	Tringa melanoleuca	1,505	320
	Wader (not identified)	Charadriiformes sp.	3,100	1,580
	Lesser Yellowlegs	Tringa flavipes	592	1,758
	Ruddy Turnstone	Arenaria interpres	86	191
Total Scolopacidae			121,291	31,782
Threskiornithidae	Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus		1

Scarlet Ibis	Eudocimus ruber	953	697
Green Ibis	Mesembrinibis cayennensis	2	3
Roseate Spoonbill	Platalea ajaja	71	29
Total Threskiornithidae		1,026	730
Total		142,029	71,584



Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*), Cayenne, 12/06/2022 © S. Uriot

Conclusion

After three years of experience, the Neotropical Waterbird Census in French Guiana is well established. It can rely on about twenty regular observers. The number of sites included in the monitoring is increasing slightly, but more importantly, those that were designated in 2022 as priority sites continue to be visited on each session despite the hazards and difficulties of counting.

The changes of mud banks and observation conditions due to the rapid development of mangroves on certain sections of the coastline make monitoring much more difficult and sometimes frustrating, when the sites are abandoned by birds for several seasons or when we know that the majority of them are invisible. This is a particularity of the Guianan coastline among all the other sites monitored on a continental and probably global scale, which forces us to consider complementary sites in order to compensate for these variations. Unfortunately, there are only a few accessible coastal areas.

In this context, it is essential that the Neotropical Waterbird Census can rely on all protected areas. The involvement of the Kaw-Roura Nature Reserve, including the monitoring of the Kaw marshland and the designation of a new census area in the Kaw River estuary, as well as that of the Amana Nature Reserve including the Savanes Sarcelles, is to be welcomed. The monitoring of the old rice fields of Mana will make sense when the ecological management of this major area becomes effective.

From an ornithological point of view, the year 2024 is characterized by a sharp decline in numbers of Semipalmated Sandpiper, which has an impact on the overall balance, despite the good numbers of some other species. Once again, both sessions of 2024 had some good surprises in store for the involved observers. Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis, Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, Paint-billed Crake, Yellow-breasted Crake and other rarities were present during the census.

Thank you again to all observers who participated in the waterbird census this year. See you in February 2025 for the next counts!

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