

Discussion

compiled by

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Introduction

One major challenge in any field of applied research is to make sure that the results of the studies are made available as rapidly as possible to those in a position to apply them. This means more than formal scientific publication, as many of those in a position to influence land management will not have the time or opportunity to consult such primary literature. The urgency is perhaps greatest for habitats and populations which have already suffered major losses. Wet grasslands are undoubtedly amongst these.

Most of the natural lowland wetlands in much of Europe were totally destroyed long ago. Therefore, lowland breeding wader populations depend on traditionally managed and man-influenced semi-natural habitats. For some species, such as Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, the whole of the European breeding population depends on these long-established, semi-natural habitats. The characteristic breeding terrains of these wader populations are now wet grasslands and other low-intensity farming areas. In addition, many of these areas are important for breeding and wintering wildfowl, and some hold regionally threatened invertebrate species and plant communities. Especially during the last 15 to 20 years, the traditional wet meadows and related habitats themselves have been increasingly destroyed due to drainage and agricultural intensification, encouraged by various land-use policies.

Unless the requirements for the maintenance of suitable wet grassland habitat for waders is made clear and accessible, land managers who wish to conserve such habitats will not be in the best position to do so. The Wader Study Group

and its organizers of this workshop were therefore keen to ensure that the most up-to-date studies reported at the meeting were made as clear and accessible as possible to a wide audience.

Accordingly, in order to bring together the main information from the workshop, the meeting concluded with a general discussion guided by the subjects of the earlier programme. I would like to thank the following who helped prepare the basis of the discussion in the short time available as the meeting progressed: Albert Beintema, Rhys Green, Hermann Hötter, Brigitte Klinner and David Stroud.

The discussion started by reviewing the present state of information, focussing on further needs, and moved on to make recommendations on the basis of the body of available information.

Present knowledge and further needs

Questions raised included:

1. On population sizes and distributions

- Have declines continued?
- Do we need an update of WSG's breeding populations review?
- If so, would this need new surveys and / or standard methods? If so, should these be based on small plots or wider quick surveys? The need for surveys in Iceland was noted.
- Do we need a sample monitoring system? If so, should this focus on areas of highest population densities or marginal areas where increases or decreases might be more evident? The sensitivity of scarce species