

EDITORIAL

At the October meeting of the Wader Study Group, one of the editors, in reporting the progress and present state of the Bulletin, reviewed its aims and their degree of achievement so far. The meeting decided that this review ought to be published in the Bulletin, taking into account some of the resulting discussion. It is the hope of the editors that what follows will be considered by readers as very much open for discussion and they would welcome further comments.

The potential functions of the Bulletin can be grouped usefully under three headings: (i) an information service, (ii) encouraging the analysis and publication of data, especially where there is an accumulated backlog, and (iii) helping further research by keeping workers informed of other studies and methods, arranging cooperative ventures, etc. Although some parts of the Bulletin's contents fall into more than one of these categories, we shall consider below how well these functions are being fulfilled.

Information Service

The Bulletin publishes announcements, notices and requests for information or assistance. As far as we can tell from readers' comments, this seems to be fairly satisfactory or, perhaps more correctly, the means of improvement do not lie in our hands. This concerns requests for information which (apart from colour-marking sightings) are notoriously poor in drawing responses. Possibly they are too easily forgotten. Perhaps readers might bear in mind that people only take the trouble to make a request for information when they have a serious intention to analyse such material. In our attempt to overcome this problem, we are including a list of current requests which refer to the latest issues of the Bulletin in which addresses and details appear. We anticipate that this summary will appear in each Bulletin.

Also partly under this heading are the lists of recent recoveries and recent publications. Readers appear to be happy with these, but please remember that the recent publications list benefits from all additional references supplied, particularly those in fairly obscure, local or some foreign journals. Please send in (to MWP) a note (or reprint) of any publication by yourself or others when published or of it, if it has been omitted from previous lists.

Encouraging analysis and publication

Generally, this seems to be working well. The Bulletin provides a forum for publication of preliminary results and sounding out of ideas, as well as for interim publication on species for which recoveries or measurements accumulate at a slow rate. A preliminary paper in the Bulletin is not a substitute for subsequent publication in a recognised and widely-circulated journal, either as soon as analysis is complete or when slowly accumulating data allow. It is perhaps also useful to note that the Bulletin does not have a waiting list: articles normally appear in the next Bulletin after their receipt. There may be many advantages, therefore, in preparing preliminary reports, as many ornithological journals now have waiting lists of over two years - although 'British Birds' and 'Ringing and Migration' are notable exceptions. The appearance of initial reports in the WSG Bulletin definitely does not preclude publication elsewhere.

We have noted recently many cases of authors of journal papers making reference to articles in WSG Bulletins. While the editors of the Bulletin make every effort to ensure that statements and conclusions in analytical articles are adequately supported by the evidence presented, these articles are usually of a preliminary or speculative nature. There is certainly no objection in principle to reference being made to such analyses, and indeed, it is right that appropriate credit should be given. We request, however, that authors should bear in mind the above considerations when making reference to papers in the WSG Bulletin. The editors would be pleased to assist in cases of difficulty. They are also very ready to advise anyone

thinking of writing an article for the Bulletin and to comment on preliminary drafts, if so desired.

Aiding further research by information exchange and assisting of cooperative ventures. In many ways this aspect embraces and extends the two earlier headings. It is probably also the area in which most scope for improvement lies. The largest gap which we can see at present concerns information on the interests of the various groups and individuals, together with outlines of particular studies in progress.

One way in which the Bulletin has tried to cover this is by the list of ringing totals. Recently, however, very few ringers have submitted these and it had been our intention to discontinue this item. Despite this, meetings of the WSG have twice asked for the totals list to be continued and, in an attempt to carry out this wish, we intend to attach to each Bulletin a simple form to act as a reminder in this matter. The form with this Bulletin should be returned in March with the totals for the period October to February inclusive. This is not a competition for the largest ringing totals but a simple means of keeping each other informed on which species our activities are concentrated. We would be delighted if ringers overseas were also prepared to return these forms.

A second innovation in this general area is what we hope will become a series of articles outlining the activities of various groups. More of this is said elsewhere but we are hoping for more of this sort of article from both Britain and elsewhere - not, incidentally, at the cost of analytical articles, but in addition to them.

We have outlined our ideas above; what are yours? We would welcome your comments and, even more so, your articles.

CURRENT REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

It is undoubtedly very easy to forget about continuing requests for information. This sort of study can, however, be very useful in providing enough material for analysis in situations where a single worker or group are unlikely to accumulate sufficient. For this reason we are listing below those requests which are current, together with a note of the Bulletin in which full details and addresses can be found.

Colour-ringed or dyed waders: various schemes. Tony Prater will forward records to appropriate persons.

Weights of re-trapped Ringed Plover chicks. Bull. 17 (April 76).

Jack Snipe, all aspects. Bull. 18 (August 76).

Ornithologists visiting Tunisia. Bull. 18 (August 76).

Corpses of freshly dead waders. (This Bulletin).

WADER CATCHING ON THE RIBBLE

In the near future it is hoped to establish a programme of regular wader cannon netting on the Ribble Estuary. At present the South West Lancashire Ringing Group has some Wash equipment on loan, and has made two catches, one of Sanderling and one of Oystercatcher. The Ribble holds very large numbers of waders (it was second only to Morecambe Bay in the 1973/4 Estuaries Enquiry counts), and to date is virtually unworked, with respect to wader ringing. If anyone is interested in the prospect of cannon netting on the Ribble, could they please contact Ian Bainbridge, Dept. of Biology, Liverpool Polytechnic, Byrom Street, Liverpool 3.