

CWRG has always been a small group with specific aims and we plan to remain so. Soon our emphasis on spring Dunlin will probably change to autumn Dunlin. Hopefully we can improve our studies of Ringed Plover and Whimbrel and extend to other species - particularly Redshank. Additionally Group members do tend to get mixed up in other things such as recent cannon netting of gulls at rubbish tips in the Midlands and near Tenby and some of us are not sure whether we are true wader ringers or renegades from the gull cause returning to our true calling!

We have published one short report of 18 A4 duplicated pages which is mainly a recovery list enclosed in a fine and elegant cover depicting flying Dunlin drawn by Ray Bishop (A few copies are still available from the author, price 30p). Most of the recoveries listed are Dunlin and we have segregated them according to race. As well as the usual Scandinavian birds we have caught Dunlin from the Mauritian, the Moroccan and the Icelandic wader expeditions and while mentioning wader expeditions I should mention that a CWRG man visited NE Greenland for waders in 1972 and that three CWRG men were members of the Wader Study Group half of the Joint Biological Expedition to Greenland in 1974 the results from which but I digress.

Waders ringed by CWRG: Snipe 1, Ringed Plover 189, Turnstone 42, Grey Plover 3, Oystercatcher 15, Redshank 19, Dunlin 3528, Knot 27, Curlew Sandpiper 1, Whimbrel 42, Curlew 14, Bar-tailed Godwit 9: Total 3890.

G.H. Green, Windy Ridge, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcs.

WADER COUNTS: January 1976

(as reported to the 1977 IWRB Meeting)

Tony Prater

Almost the whole of the Atlantic coast of Europe was counted in January 1976. The numbers of the principle species recorded are presented in Table 1. Only NW Spain was not covered. The table includes estimates based on previous counts for countries where data were lacking for 1976 and can therefore be compared with Table 1 in the report presented at Alushta. Further details on the counts are summarised below.

Denmark. Apart from the Waddensea, a further 19 sites were counted. Very few waders were found with only C. alpina (2,300) and T. totanus (90) exceeding 50 individuals.

Waddensea. Counts were made in Denmark and the Netherlands, although details from the latter area have not yet been received. Relatively small numbers and no C. canutus were observed in the Danish Waddensea.

Delta. Details of counts made in this rapidly changing area were received for both January 1975 and 1976. Interestingly there are relatively few changes in the status of wintering birds since massive reclamation work has taken place. In 1976 the wintering flocks of R. avosetta (440); T. erythropus (53) and A. interpres (2,200) were of particular note. A detailed paper on the eight full

counts of the birds of the Delta region made since September 1972 will be published shortly.

Belgium. Following the first count of the 63 km. of beach in 1975, the 1976 counts in addition included the estuarine habitat of de IJzermonding and Het Zwin. Large numbers of A. interpres (524), C. maritima (315) and C. alba (307) were again recorded. The flock of 230 P. pugnax at Het Zwin is one of the largest wintering in Europe.

Ireland. The Irish Wildbird Conservancy 'Wetlands Enquiry' continued to provide most valuable comparative data of wader populations; numbers of most species in 1976 were slightly lower than the previous year.

Britain. The BTO/RSPB/WT 'Birds of Estuaries Enquiry' also maintained a full series of counts. In 1976 numbers were very close to those of 1975 with most species remaining at their previously high level. Numbers of C. canutus increased slightly but they remained about 200,000 fewer than in the early 1970's.

France. 1976 provided the first full series of counts since 1970. This most valuable contribution revealed many changes in the status of both species and wetlands. Large decreases in the numbers of C. canutus (from 110,000 to only 10,800) and L. limosa (15,000 to 7,800) were noted. Of the major coastal areas the numbers in Baie du Mont St. Michel (maximum 60-80,000) and L'Anse de L'Aiguillon/Baie d'Oleron) were noticeably lower, both mainly due to the lower numbers of C. canutus. On the other hand the true importance of Bassin d'Arcachon (with 220,000 C. alpina) was shown.

Portugal. A further expedition financed by C.E.M.P.A., La Tour du Valet Foundation and the RSPB provided more extremely valuable data on the waders in Portugal. The Tejo, the complex area of the Algrave and the Sado estuary, were again shown to be of international importance. Other species of special interest were those normally regarded as African wintering birds, C. minuta (510), C. alexandrinus (650), T. erythropus (200) and H. himantopus (90) being the most significant.

Morocco. Although full counts were not made a count of the important northern site of Merja Zerga was undertaken and almost 40,000 waders were seen. Principal species were C. alpina (17,500), L. limosa (9,000), C. hiaticula (5,000) C. alexandrinus (3,000), R. avosetta (1,700) and P. squatarola (1,600).

Counts made elsewhere

Pakistan. A number of lakes were counted by the IWRB mission in January/February 1976. Relatively small numbers of waders were observed, although emphasis was not placed on this group of birds. Only Lake Ghauspur with over 12,000 waders, including 8,000 L. limosa and 2,900 H. himantopus supported important concentrations.

Algeria. In January 1977 an extensive series of counts was made. The most important observations were at Marais de la Macta where almost 8,500 waders were seen; this included C. minuta (3,600),

TABLE 1. Counts of waders made in Europe in January 1976.

	Ireland	U.K.	Denmark Other areas Wadd- ensea	Delta	Belgium	France	Portugal	TOTAL	Other Areas	Estimated TOTAL
H. ostralegus	17.3	207.3	+	7.1	99.0	0.7	0.3	365.6	278.9	644.5
C. alexandrinus	-	+	-	-	-	0.1	0.6	0.7	-	0.7
C. hiaticula	0.7	8.4	+	-	0.1	1.1	1.8	11.1	3.4	14.5
P. squatrola	0.6	13.3	+	-	4.5	10.0	6.9	35.4	6.7	42.1
A. interpres	0.5	11.7	-	-	2.2	0.3	0.1	15.4	1.7	17.1
N. arquata	10.9	63.4	+	1.4	8.0	13.7	1.3	99.2	85.9	185.1
N. phaeopus	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	+
L. limosa	2.8	4.4	-	-	-	7.8	9.9	24.9	6.1	31.0
L. lapponica	16.7	41.6	-	6.2	6.0	1.3	6.2	78.1	18.1	96.2
T. totanus	7.5	79.1	0.1	1.2	3.8	3.1	5.3	100.4	15.6	116.0
T. erythropus	+	0.1	-	-	0.1	+	0.2	0.4	+	0.4
T. nebularia	0.1	0.3	-	-	-	+	+	0.5	+	0.5
C. canutus	17.7	198.4	+	-	17.0	10.8	0.7	245.0	48.5	293.5
C. alpina	47.2	564.6	2.3	5.7	81.0	349.0	56.1	1106.7	222.0	1329.6
C. alba	0.3	6.9	-	-	0.4	0.7	0.3	9.0	1.0	10.9
C. minuta	+	+	-	-	-	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5
P. pugnax	+	0.1	-	-	+	0.3	+	0.6	1.5	2.1
R. avosetta	-	0.1	-	-	0.4	10.6	11.6	22.7	2.7	25.4
H. himantopus	-	-	-	-	-	+	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2

Note: numbers presented in thousands; + = Less than 50 counted.

* based on 1975 winter counts in the Netherlands and Federal Republic of Germany, and 1969 counts of NW Spain.

C. alpina (2,100), R. avosetta (1,010), L. limosa (950), C. alexandrinus (300). Over a hundred waders were present at Salines d'Arzew, mainly R. avosetta (660) and Mare de Boufatis (170).

DURHAM UNIVERSITY TEESMOUTH SHOREBIRD RESEARCH PROGRAMME

L.R. Goodyer.

The Tees estuary in NE England formerly spread over about 6,000 acres (2,500 ha.) but during this century progressive reclamation, mainly for port facilities, the steel and chemical industries and, more recently, oil-based processes, reduced the intertidal area to about 1,000 acres (400 ha.) by 1970 and to about 400 acres (160 ha.) in 1974. Further reclamation is proposed. Large numbers of wintering waders and Shelducks continue to be supported by the estuary, so that densities of feeding birds are very high. The ecology and behaviour of the birds and their invertebrate prey species have been studied by Durham University personnel since 1970. Aims have included the prediction of the effects of proposed reclamations and, if reclamations take place, monitoring the effects. The results of the work have been used on several occasions in providing information for the planning and conservation bodies.

Catching of waders at Teesmouth by Durham University started in the autumn of 1975 as an extension of these studies when the need for individually marked birds arose. At present studies of individual behaviour are concerned with Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Plover, Sanderling and Turnstone but work also continues on Oystercatcher, Redshank, Knot, Dunlin, and Shelduck. Ringing all species is the other aim of the catching programme, so that the detailed position of Teesmouth in the annual cycle of these birds can be examined, and any changes in pattern associated with further reclamation studied.

Catching at Teesmouth presents additional difficulties to those encountered at many other estuaries. Probably because of the continued large scale reclamation and associated engineering activity, the wader flocks at Teesmouth have not developed strongly traditional roosting sites and their roosting behaviour is very variable. Also, the highly unnatural shoreline on large parts of the estuary often makes net-siting difficult. Mist-netting has often been impracticable because of the illumination from the many industrial plants surrounding the area. In late 1975 the loan of cannon-netting equipment from the Wash Wader Ringing Group allowed a start to netting. Because of the practical difficulties and a restricted number of occasions when attempts were possible, only just over 200 birds were caught, but these did allow a start to the studies on individual birds - Turnstones, Grey Plovers and Curlews - by research students at Durham.