

In 1976, with the aid of a grant from the Nature Conservancy Council, two cannon-nets were purchased and an additional staff member employed to co-ordinate the catching and counts. With catching possible throughout the year, 1,500 waders of 9 species had been caught by the spring of 1977. Evidence on movement patterns is already accumulating rapidly and a strong relationship between flocks on Teesmouth and at the Wash is becoming evident. Dunlins have shown seven local recaptures and six from the Wash while more distant movements have involved Shannon (Ireland), Netherlands, Norway, Sweden (2) and E. Germany. Three Knots from the Wash and one from Iceland have been recaptured and one Sanderling has also come from the Wash, there also being two local recaptures for this species. Norway has provided an Oystercatcher and a Turnstone and there have been two local Turnstone recaptures.

The ringing work is closely integrated with counts of high water roosts and low water feeding flocks, feeding and other behavioural studies, and invertebrate sampling. It is hoped that this will give a much clearer picture of the use made of Teesmouth by waders. This is of immediate conservation interest as proposals for the reclamation of the rest of the estuary are always present.

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MINUTES OF THE SUMMER W.S.G. MEETING HELD ON 9th OCTOBER, 1977  
AT 45 BODENHAM ROAD, HEREFORD.

Those present included Dr. C.D.T. Minton (Chairman), A.J. Prater (Secretary/Editor), M.W. Pienkowski (Editor) and representatives of the following groups: Celtic Wader Research Group, Devon and Cornwall Wader R.G., Durham University, Farlington R.G., Scan R.G., South West Lancs. R.G., Leigh R.G., and Wash Wader R.G. Apologies for absence were received from Merseyside R.G. and C.M. Reynolds.

- 1) Chairman's remark. A brief review was made of the advances in field work and particularly the much greater effort going into publications, several of which are now in press and others in final stages of preparation.
- 2) Secretary's report. Membership is now about 320, with almost a third coming from outside Britain. Most groups are sending in WSG data forms, although a few do not yet. All data were requested and it was suggested that as a minimum an annual submission of forms for species caught in small numbers would be ideal. Concern was expressed that much data on inland waders caught in small numbers was not received. Two members noted that some people had paid subscriptions recently but had not yet received a bulletin. This matter would be taken further by the Chairman and Secretary to ensure that it did not happen again.

3) Treasurer's Report. (The Treasurer was delayed in the U.S.A. and was unable to provide a report). The Secretary said that an application for a grant to help with a detailed breeding study of Common Sandpipers had been made by the South Pennine R.G. (via P. Holland) and that the grants committee thought it deserved help and suggested £15 be sent. The meeting approved this. An advance report on progress with the study in 1977 was most encouraging. (See elsewhere in Bulletin, Ed.)

4) Editor's Report. Apologies were offered for the recent delays, due mainly to typing; as a result several offers of assistance were made (from P. Jackson, R. Little and H.P. Sitters). The copy date for bulletins is March, June and October. To catch up, bulletins are planned for November 1977 and early February 1978. Contributions are urgently needed! G.F. Appleton offered to help with proof reading.

Congratulations were given to Paul Pratley for producing the much improved bulletin. A special tribute was paid to Jim Pratley, who died in late September. He had greatly helped the WSG in its early publications.

A number of members suggested back numbers of bulletins should be produced to sell to members and libraries to ensure that all the bulletins were widely available. G.H. Green and K. Lessels agreed to look further into this. It was also agreed that a small duplicated sheet setting out aims, methods and membership details should be produced. A.J. Prater was to draft it and to see if a copy could be inserted loose into each copy of the forthcoming wader ageing guide. It was suggested that a card cover should be put onto the bulletins in future. This would improve their permanency. G.H. Green agreed to approach R. Bishop about designing it.

5) Cannon-netting code of practice. J.M. McMeeking had almost completed a revised draft based on comments made at the October 1976 meeting and written comments sent directly to him. K. Lessels agreed to finish the drafting and to circulate copies to groups and to the R. and M. Committee for final comments. A single sheet with the main safety considerations for cannon and mist-netting for new recruits (written by K. Lessels) was circulated. It was felt that this was a very useful summary and with very minor modifications could be produced and distributed to all groups who would like copies.

6) Cannon-netting equipment a) projectile ropes. In view of the excessive wear on this item and recent projectile losses on firing several groups were experimenting with alternatives. The most promising appears to be a metal rod linked to the projectile, described by R. Little (SCAN R.G.). Synthetic ropes were noted as stronger than sisal but at least four, preferably five, tucks were needed to splice them.

b) other items. Some difficulties with an occasional fuse not firing was noted and specification/quality control was queried. Samples and details of failure to Dr. C.D.T. Minton who will then contact the manufacturers. SWLRG noted 24½ inch barrels appeared as effective as 30 inch (and cheaper and lighter).

7) Wader Ageing Guide. A.J. Prater reported on the current position and tabled examples of contents; it was expected to be available in late December 1977, price £2.50.

8) Programme for Ringers Conference. The members suggested that as the WSG session took place in the late evening, just a single talk after the business session was best. For the 1978 programme (January 7th) it was suggested and agreed that A.J. Prater should give an illustrated talk on 'Ageing of Waders'. A short film might also be available.

9) Group activities and reports a) International. The International Waterfowl Research Bureau has recently formed a Ringing Research Group. A discussion was held on a draft wader ringing programme that M.W. Pienkowski and A.J. Prater had prepared. It was hoped that a progress report can be printed in the February 1978 WSG bulletin together with draft suggestions.

b) National. Durham. 1900+ caught on the Tees. Five species of special study with colour-rings (Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Grey Plover, Sanderling and Turnstone). The large number of wintering Sanderling appear mostly adult and have higher weights than the Wash.

Farlington. Just started, with some success, to use two half-sized nets. Selected sampling to be attempted.

Devon and Cornwall. Dunlin and Oystercatcher / Dr.J. Goss-Custard) main objectives. Detailed Dunlin study on Plym being continued and samples being obtained over many areas.

Scan. Moderate catching only, apart from last December. After Dunlin and wintering Geeenshank. Hope to expand in Anglesey.

Celtic. Autumn passage is now a main objective; Ringed Plovers all year and more on Redshank and Whimbrel. Spring Dunlin data being written up.

S.W. Lancs. Well off the ground. After all species but Sanderling (very large winter population) and Oystercatchers (study involving W. Sutherland) are main target species. Ruffs wintering and Golden Plovers are also hoped for.

Merseyside. Are becoming more active again and adding to their long history of wader catching.

Highland. Are extending into waders and very keen to obtain help from further south. (W. Dick and C. Minton already helped).

Wash. Continuing work with steady filling of gaps but large Knot autumn and winter catches, which are extremely important, have not yet been achieved. 11,500 waders have been caught so far in 1977.

10) Any other Business.

- a) Scan noted difficulties of communication between BTO, Scan and other Anglesey ringers and hoped that this general problem can be avoided elsewhere. It was noted that ringers must make every effort to check before moving to a new area.
- b) H.P. Sitters suggested that cooperative field projects should be considered by WSG members to answer certain problems. He agreed to examine possible projects.
- c) It was reported that there were several cases of inadequate receipt of data from multi-international controls. This was considered by all present to be an extremely serious failing in the present operation of the Ewing system. The meeting unanimously agreed that a return to double ringing of foreign controls should be requested on waders until such time as an infallible system of communicating later recoveries/controls to all interested parties had been set up. The Chairman was initially asked to make further representations to the R. and M. Committee of the B.T.O.
- d) Concern was expressed that many small inland wader ringers did not participate in the WSG. It was agreed that this was undesirable and a greater attempt should be made to involve them.
- e) The aims and activities of the WSG should be made more widely known via a note in the next Ringers Bulletin and in BTO News (action HPS/AJP.)
- f) It was noted that some people did not hear of the early April meeting of specialists on Wader feeding ecology in Durham. It was hoped that wider advertisement might be possible in future so that really keen interested parties might be invited. Numbers were limited however as it was intended to be a workshop and not a conference.

The meeting ended with a warm vote of thanks to Pat and Clive Minton for hosting it again.