

Editors' Report

Due to the change of date of the AGM from January to October, this is the fifth number of the Bulletin to appear since the last report was written. Numbers 25, 26, 27 and 28 contained 46, 48, 54 and 48 pages respectively, together with various forms and even what might be described as a colour supplement in number 27. Despite a remarkably tolerant view of 'deadlines' by the editors and considerable problems with the postal service, all bulletins have appeared on schedule. We owe this achievement to the readiness of our typists, Ann Perry and Ann Pienkowski, to work all hours, to the efficiency of our printers, Lake Shore Graphics, and to the resilience of the Appleton clan in collating and posting 700 copies, aided now by Ted Miller's computer-printed addresses.

The change in printing arrangements have been fully detailed in various bulletins and will not be repeated here except to echo the Chairman's thanks to the Royal Society. The format of the Bulletin has now stabilized somewhat but we retain the flexibility necessary for its varied content and its ability to include topical items at short notice (and MWP's need to squeeze a quart (1.14 l.) into a pint (0.57 l.) pot when preparing the pre-printing paste-up). We continue to attempt minor improvements and are working on the type-face incompatibilities.

In terms of content, as envisaged in the last report, we have been able to publish articles on a wider range of subjects than previously, including counts and distribution, body composition, catching and marking methodology, breeding biology, population dynamics, foraging behaviour, ecology, habitat-usage, territoriality, size selection and song display, whilst retaining a strong representation of ringing-based studies. The North American section has become a regular feature, under the editorship of Guy Morrison, now in collaboration with Pete Myers. Other contributions have come from S.America, Australia, many parts of Europe and Africa and Mongolia. Our popular series on 'Introductory Statistics' by Jeremy Greenwood has been successfully completed (and reprinted in Dutch in the magazine 'TWIRRE'), and we have started an occasional series on summaries of the current work of various wader research groups. Other innovations include publishing fairly detailed abstracts of meetings, both of WSG and of other organisations, including the International Waterfowl Research Bureau Shorebird Ecology Working Group and wader papers from several American conferences; book reviews, rather than brief notices; and the development of the colour marking register which is already proving of great value in passing on sightings to the correct workers and preventing confusion between schemes. WSG is now providing the wader colour marking co-ordination for British ringers and for Euring. We have also been particularly pleased to be able to publish the results of our two co-operative spring migration projects so soon after their completion.

There have also been two recent changes in arrangements for regular items. The computerisation of ringing recoveries at the BTO has enabled them to supply a full list to Harry Green who prepares the published version in the Bulletin. Second, I have been trying for years to find someone foolish enough to take over the listing of recent publications: at last most of this is now handled by Nick Davidson - thanks to him and the many people who help with obscure publications and the journals we do not usually see.

What of the future? More of the same - but we remain ready to consider anything new as well, and constructive criticism is always welcome. The current issue contains details of new projects as well as a wide range of articles and we are planning something special for December!

Michael W. Pienkowski

Co-ordinators' Report

When the Advisory Panel was initially set up, it was involved in considering the changes which have resulted in the present structure of the Group. As there do not seem to have been any serious crises since then, the Panel has not had to concern itself with administration. The role of the Panel is now more to promote ideas for future co-operative projects or any other development that seems desirable. Any such ideas are always gratefully received by myself from anyone, whether on the Panel or not.

Unlike larger organisations with large administrative structures, the running of WSG falls on rather few part-time individuals. In this respect it is worthwhile remembering that the organising of any project or analysis can only be done if a member is prepared to take on the work involved. Generally approaches to the Group are made by members with firm projects in mind, although we may be able to put members in touch with others in the formative stages.

The first two co-operative projects (Knot migration and Spring migration in Britain) of the Group have proved successful. Migration studies are clearly well suited to this type of project, where local studies and observations can be made more meaningful in synthesis with others. The new project in conjunction with Durham University will involve a great deal of work but will give results of scientific and conservation importance in an area of Europe where movements of waders is least clear.

Hopefully in the future it will be possible to extend the scope of WSG projects to areas such as feeding ecology, breeding biology, distribution and habitat registration.

W.J.A.Dick.

CHANGING AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE, SCOTLAND AND BREEDING WADERS

by G.H.Green

Ornithologists visiting the valleys north of the edge of the Highlands of Scotland in the past must have been impressed by the large numbers of waders breeding in the fields of the straths (Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Snipe *Capella gallinago*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*) and by the abundance of other birds searching the pastures for invertebrate food. Many of the fields on the floors of the larger glacially formed valleys were poorly drained, managed as rather wet pastures and grazed by sheep and cattle. However, in many places all this is changing as the changing pattern of land use (from mixed farming to intensive arable) sweeps north from England to insert its tentacles into the valleys of Scotland. For example, when I first visited Strathardle (Perthshire) five years ago most fields were pasture and waders were abundant but in 1980 many fields had been ploughed, other pastures had been improved and there remained only a handful of wildlife rich fields where many waders were breeding. The modern usage of under draining, herbicide and fertilizer are resulting in botanical, invertebrate and ornithological poverty - a familiar English scene.

Obviously the march of agricultural progress will continue, especially in the present harsh economic climate, and farmers cannot be expected to maintain vast areas for wildlife at their own economic loss. The main object of this note is to point out to wader ornithologists the changing faces of the Scottish valleys. I know the conservation bodies are aware of the situation but I do not think much quantitative survey work on breeding waders of these valleys (as opposed to the poorer areas subject to forestry development) has been done. If some could be organised in those valleys as yet unchanged at least we may be able to quantify the losses and perhaps pin-point areas worthy of conservation.

G.H.Green, Windy Ridge, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcs WR10 3EW, England.