

MINUTES OF THE WADER STUDY GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, UTTOXETER

1 NOVEMBER 1980

The meeting was opened by the chairman, G.H.Green, who welcomed 44 members to Uttoxeter. There were seven apologies for absence (G.F.Appleton, P.Dugan, P.R.Evans, Mr. & Mrs. L.Goodyer, A.Hardy and B.E.Murray). Members present were from France, Netherlands, W.Germany and U.K.

The chairman pointed out that this was the first AGM since 6 January 1979 because the Extra-ordinary General Meeting 13 October 1979 had decided to move the AGM, previously held at the British Trust for Ornithology's Ringing & Migration Conference, to an independent autumn meeting of WSG.

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last AGM.

The chairman reminded members that officers' reports had already been published in the Bulletin.

Chairman's report (G.H.Green)

The chairman highlighted several points from his published report, notably that the WSG now had a formal constitution (proposed at the Extra-ordinary General Meeting and now agreed) and that the same meeting had agreed to an increase in the annual subscription to £5. The Group had undertaken two projects (a) a study of the spring passage of Knot and (b) a study of the spring passage of Turnstone, Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Sanderling through Britain. Both had been successful. The Knot project was leading to further work while the study of spring passage in Britain was being evaluated by Peter Ferns. Future projects already in hand included 'The migration of waders inland' organised by OAG Münster and 'Movements of wader populations in western Europe'. The latter was a major project based at Durham University and funded by the EEC and the Nature Conservancy Council.

The chairman reminded members of the proven power of dye marking and colour ringing in the study of waders and pointed out the high risk of confusion between schemes unless some sort of co-ordination could be arranged. At the request of EURING, WSG is co-ordinating wader colour marking and maintaining a register of all schemes reported to the Group. Members were urged to contact M.W.Pienkowski before embarking on a colour marking scheme.

Finally the chairman thanked Joint Editor M.W.Pienkowski and the other officers G.F.Appleton, W.J.A.Dick, E.H.Miller (N.American membership secretary who produces the Group's address labels), R.I.G.Morrison (N.American Editor) and B.E.Murray for their help in running the group. Special thanks were given to G.F.Appleton, the retiring administrative secretary. N.A. and J.A. Clark were welcomed as joint administrative secretary and co-opted to the officer's committee.

Administrative Secretary's report (G.F.Appleton)

In G.F.Appleton's absence the chairman presented his report. Membership now numbers over 500, with an increase in continental European membership and a decrease in N.American membership. G.F.Appleton gave special thanks to those who had helped with collation of the bulletin, notably M.W.Cooke and P.L.Ireland.

Treasurer's Report (B.E.Murray)

In B.E.Murray's absence the chairman presented his report. The Royal Society's Grant and Loan had tided the Group over a very difficult period. The £5 subscription was at present adequate (The accounts to 31 December 1979 are shown in Bulletin no. 29).

Editor's report (M.W. Pienkowski)

M.W.Pienkowski had nothing to add to his published report. He thanked joint editor G.H.Green, G.F.Appleton and his helpers who collated and dispatched the Bulletin and C. & C. Johnson who had coped with the latter task for the August Bulletin. N.Davidson had now taken over the task of compiling the lists of recent publications.

Questions

The chairman asked if the meeting had any questions to put to the officers on their reports.

1. R.Summers asked if the Bulletin could be printed in two columns per page thus making it easier to read. The Editors replied that such a move, although perhaps desirable, would be expensive to set up. The text is presently typed for the printer on a straightforward electric typewriter. To sort the words into columns would require the use of a word-processor. At present we could not afford to set the Bulletin in columns.
2. C.Smit said that members from the Netherlands would find it much easier to pay subscriptions through a Giro account and asked if the Group could arrange this. It was agreed that the Treasurer should be asked to look into the matter and to open a Giro account if there were no unexpected difficulties.
3. Mrs. C. Johnson asked why the print run for the Bulletin was 700 when circulation was around 500. The editors said that many difficulties had arisen in the past because the group could not supply back numbers. Members joining at any time in a calendar year were entitled to the Bulletins for the whole year. Other copies were sent to libraries and used in support of various projects, publicity etc. The editors felt that the margin of extra copies was not too large.
4. O.Fournier asked if there would be time for general discussion of Group projects. It was decided that such time would be available later in the day.

Any other business

1. The Chairman informed members that N.A. & J.A. Clark had been co-opted as administrative secretary (jointly) until the next elections.
2. The Chairman said that WSG had been asked to become a non-paying contributory member of IWRB. It was agreed that the officers should investigate this matter and that the Group should co-operate with IWRB.
3. The Chairman said that a new project investigating the numbers and distribution of waders breeding in Scottish valleys was being investigated. Such a project could give valuable baseline data in the face of changing agricultural practices in what were important wader breeding areas.
4. The Chairman said that the Group's collection of measurements of waders on WSG forms was being re-organised and gathered at Durham University. In future only photocopies will be sent out to avoid loss of the original data. Users might have to help meet costs of photocopying.
5. C.Smit said that G.Boere was still co-ordinator of Dutch wader work. He said that a co-ordinator in the Netherlands for WSG might be useful to bring people interested in waders together and to lend weight to applications for financial support. It was agreed that this matter should be discussed again later in the day.

Date and venue of next AGM

OAG Munster offered to act as hosts for next year's AGM. This was agreed and the members of OAG Munster were thanked for their kind offer. Most of the people present were prepared to go to Munster and it was agreed that costs etc should be investigated.

WSG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - DISCUSSION SESSIONS

1. O. Fournier opened the discussion by requesting more international co-operation particularly in connection with the IWRB and to investigate the declining Knot population. O. Fournier also asked that forms and methods for projects exchanged between countries should be less complicated, he was particularly concerned about the Inland Wader Counts from Germany.

The representatives from OAG Munster asked that the instructions be adhered to if possible to produce uniform data but said that any data would be welcome. In view of this O. Fournier thought that the counters in France would probably carry out counts but not as frequently as requested due to other commitments. W. J. A. Dick suggested putting summaries of IWRB counts in the WSG bulletin to aid communication.

On the subject of colour ringing O. Fournier suggested that the WSG write to individual ringing schemes to inform them the co-ordination taking place.

2. Dutch section of WSG - it was thought that it would be useful to have a Dutch section with a 'contact man'. The Dutch decided to discuss this amongst themselves and possibly elect a co-ordinator. It was confirmed that WSG would welcome the establishment of a Dutch section. It was pointed out that a country co-ordinator could translate the languages on WSG forms.
3. Catching methods - N. A. Clark asked if anyone was interested in a new type of mist net which is useful for catching small numbers of birds in light sites. Any information on the availability of these nets will be published in a future bulletin.
4. B. Witts described a mini cannon net which he had used on a recent expedition. The net measured about 12m x 8m and had two small cannons, the whole net set weighs only 50lb and can be carried in a rucksack.
5. O. Fournier asked that details of cannon nets and equipment should not be published in order to prevent unsuitable persons making or obtaining cannon nets. W. J. A. Dick said that cannon nets are not sold without thorough investigation, and proper training. P. L. Ireland said that generally the responsibility for supplying cannon nets from Britain lies with the Wash Wader Ringing Group and assured O. Fournier that every care is taken. C. M. Lessells said that a cannon net can be obtained 'off the shelf' in the U.S.A. and P. Prokosch added that a firm in W. Germany is advertising a cannon net in its catalogue but has never sold one.

P. L. Ireland said that punt gun powder is no longer available unless an order for 500kg is placed. This is obviously impossible so alternative powders are being investigated. Rifle number 0 has been suggested. TS6 has been tried on the Wash, 19g of this has been found to give the same result as a full cartridge of punt gun powder. A further suggestion was that Silver Knight 2 - a powder used in mock Mediaeval jousts - might be suitable! (Subsequent tests have shown this to be unsuitable.) The safety of fine grain powder was questioned and two safety measures were suggested: i. that only cartridges of the correct size should be used to avoid over-filling. ii. Weld a piece of metal onto the bottom of the projectile so there is a space for the gases from the finer powder. This has been tried in France and was successful. (Please write to WSG before making experiments *.)

6. Finally there was a discussion, initiated by the members of the Netherlands Ornithological Mauritania Expedition, about where the large numbers of wintering waders wintering in Mauritania bred. It was suggested that estimates of breeding density are generally too low. Although the large number of birds could not be accounted for in Scandinavia it was thought possible the Icelandic estimates are far too low. It was generally agreed that more estimates of breeding density are required.

* STOP PRESS: Punt Gun powder is now available again: cannon-netters requiring supplies should contact P. L. Ireland.

INFORMAL MEETING 10 JANUARY 1981

About 50 WSG members attended an informal meeting held during the British Trust for Ornithology's Ringing & Migration Conference, Swanwick, Derbyshire, England on 10 January 1981.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the next AGM was to be held at Munster, West Germany, in September and he expressed the hope that a good contingent would travel from Britain. Some sort of communal transport was to be arranged and costs etc. would be published in the April Bulletin. Members heard from B. E. Murray (Treasurer) that our financial position was still sound thanks to a good paid-up (to end 1980) membership and the Royal Society grant. M. W. Pienkowski gave a progress report of the Durham Project 'Movements of waders in Europe' and he said that excellent progress had been made. H. Galbraith outlined the 1981 pilot project surveying waders breeding on Scottish Agricultural land (mainly in straths and glens) and R. Fuller told of the related BTO survey of breeding waders in wet meadows south of the Border. W. Dick told of his forthcoming visit to West Africa in search of new (to wader-philés) wader wintering grounds. Finally P. R. Evans gave an interesting discourse on the problems facing waders in cold weather in winter, possible wildfowling bans in such weather and how we badly need data to enable us to understand these matters. His discourse, enlarged and modified, is printed elsewhere in this Bulletin together with reports on many of the other matters discussed at the meeting.