

## BTO/RSPB SURVEY OF BREEDING WADERS OF WET MEADOWS

by K. Smith

Spring 1982 will see surveys of breeding waders taking place throughout England, Wales and Scotland. In England and Wales I am organising the joint British Trust for Ornithology/Royal Society for the Protection of Birds survey of Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows. This survey will look principally at damp grassland sites in the lowlands and the key species to be covered are Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and, in a few areas, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*. The major objectives of the survey are to identify the remaining lowland sites for breeding waders and to assess their current breeding populations. The related project in Scotland, sponsored by the Wader Study Group, the Scottish Ornithologists Club and the BTO is described elsewhere in this issue.

Wet lowland grassland sites are being lost to drainage and agricultural improvement at an alarming rate. In most counties extensive river improvement and land drainage works have already been completed and large areas of wet grassland have already lost much of their interest. However small areas may still be undrained and in a few cases, such as the Somerset Levels in the SW of England and Derwent Ings in Yorkshire, extensive areas still remain. There are already drainage proposals for many of these areas and, if Water Authority land drainage surveys are any guide, the pressure to drain can be expected to increase. It is therefore vital that we take stock of our remaining wet grassland habitat now before it is too late.

This summer pilot surveys have been successfully completed in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Suffolk. As well as providing a valuable test of the proposed methodology, these surveys have demonstrated just how rare breeding waders have become in much of lowland England. Is this true of the rest of the country?

In most counties it is hoped that complete coverage can be achieved. However discussions are taking place this autumn with BTO Regional Representatives, County Trusts, Bird Recorders, etc. to establish lists of sites which, because of an immediate drainage threat or good breeding wader populations, should be given high priority for survey. It is vital that next year we make the survey coverage as complete as possible - in many areas the pace of land drainage is such that any delay will mean more sites are lost before we can even know about their importance.

As wader enthusiasts you can make a special contribution by undertaking to survey your particular study areas and by volunteering your expert help to cover other sites. Please contact me at the BTO, Beech Grove, Tring for further information on the survey and the names of the county organisers.

## REPRINTING OF BACK NUMBERS OF WSG BULLETINS

Following the announcement in Bulletin 32, sufficient orders have been placed to justify reprinting of the missing back-numbers. This will be undertaken soon. Meanwhile, an order form is again enclosed with this issue in case readers wish to order further copies. Because of the financial restrictions outlined in Bulletin 32, payment must be sent with order.

## CORRECTIONS TO BULLETIN 32

Page 25. For "C. Mullié", read "W.C. Mullié".

Pages 38 and 39 were transposed. The recoveries at the top of page 38 relate to Dunlin and those at the top of p 40 to Curlew.

## OTHER NOTICES

### Coloured-ringed Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Dedicated readers will know, by now, that it is not unusual for WSG to be unable to identify the origins of a particular colour-ringed bird reported to us. Usually this is because there have been, in the past, several schemes using the same set of ring combinations. A more unusual case occurred recently when we received a very detailed report of a colour-ringed Whimbrel in Dorset, England. Our problem is that we have no colour-ringed schemes for Whimbrel registered! We hope to hear from the ringer soon!

### Colour-dyed Sanderling *Calidris alba*

As part of the study of Movements of Wader Populations in Western Europe, Rowena Cooper of Durham University is conducting detailed work on Sanderling movements, especially in north-east England. As for other species in the wider study, sanderling may be dyed yellow/orange, red, green, light blue or dark blue. Some of the Sanderling under detailed study may carry individual combinations of colour-rings, rather than a single temporary colour-flag used in the wider study.

Sightings (which, as for the general study, will be acknowledged), giving as much detail as possible, would be welcome. As for other sightings, they should be sent to: M.W. Pienkowski, Wader Study Group, Dept. of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, UK. Where appropriate, they will be passed on.

### Colour-flagged Redshanks

A large number of Redshanks *Tringa totanus* in the north-east of Scotland have been fitted with coloured leg flags above the "knee" joint. The flags carry individual codes, a letter on one side of the flag and a number on the other. Would anyone seeing a flagged bird please take note of the colour and, if possible, the letter and number on the flag. Also, please note which leg carries the flag and whether any other markers, such as coloured rings, are present on the bird's other leg. Please inform: Simon Greenstreet, Culterty Field Station, Newburgh, Ellon, Aberdeenshire, AB4 0AA. Telephone Newburgh 631.

Colour-flags are also being used in other projects. If in doubt as to which scheme marked the bird, please send the sighting to M.W.Pienkowski for forwarding.

"The Stilt"

We were delighted to receive recently issue no.1 of "The Stilt", the Bulletin of the Australasian Wader Studies Group of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (RAOU). Included were abstracts from a RAOU Wader Scientific Day in Sydney in May 1981, covering topics including banding and wader counting in various areas, habitat selection, diet, the use of rainwater lakes by waders, the use of morphometric, weight and moult data by wader workers and the microbes of waders. A report on the progress of national wader counts (which, in addition to their almost inevitably fascinating results, have already been used in land-use planning cases), some short notes, a brief history of the formation of AWSG and a list of office-holders. Forthcoming attractions for issue 2 include a report on the first national winter wader counts and notes on the ageing of Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers (in the hand and in the field).

If any of our readers in Australasia and adjacent areas are not already subscribers to "The Stilt", we would be surprised. They can, however, correct this omission by sending \$(Australian) 3 a year to AWSG, RAOU, 21 Gladstone Street, Meronee Ponds, Vic. 3039, Australia.

## MINUTES OF THE WADER STUDY GROUP ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT MÜNSTER, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, ON 13 SEPTEMBER 1981

On behalf of the Chairman, G.H.Green, who was unable to be present, Dr. M.W.Pienkowski welcomed members to the meeting. There were apologies for absence from Mr. Green, the Treasurer B.E.Murray, Mrs. J.A.Clark, N.C.Davidson, Dr. P.J.Dugan, Dr. P.R.Evans, Dr. R.W.Furness, H.Galbraith, Mrs. A.E.Pienkowski and D.J.Townshend. Approximately 40 members attended the meeting, these being drawn from Belgium, France, Germany, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Thailand and the United Kingdom. The officers' reports had already been published in the Bulletin, and were presented in summary.

### Chairman's Report (G.H.Green)

In G.H.Green's absence, M.W.Pienkowski presented his report. Attention was drawn to the Group's new status as a contributor member (non paying) to the International Wildfowl Research Bureau (IWRB), following many years of co-operation between the two organisations. (IWRB was already an honorary member of WSG.) Attention was drawn to WSG's activity in its current projects, to the Netherlands Expedition to Morocco and to the expedition by W.J.A.Dick and O.Fournier to Guinea Bissau, where another large wader wintering area had been discovered. It is hoped to develop work in this area in the future.

### Administrative Secretary's Report (N.A. Clark & J.A.Clark)

The continuing spread of membership around the world was noted, new countries represented being Ecuador, Papua New Guinea and India.

### Treasurer's Report (B.E.Murray)

In B.E.Murray's absence, M.W.Pienkowski presented his report. It was noted that the present state of finances closely matched those predicted by the Treasurer in his previous report. The subscriptions will probably have to be raised in 1983, because of continuing inflation.

### Editors' Report (M.W.Pienkowski)

The Editor reported that the Bulletin is reaching a state in which more material of a high standard is being received than can be published in issues of the current size, and suggested that this should be discussed following the officers' reports.

### Co-ordinator's Report (W.J.A.Dick)

W.J.A.Dick summarized his published report.

### Matters arising from the reports

In view of the matters discussed in the Editor's report, Dr. Pienkowski invited comments as to whether members would like the issues of the Bulletin to remain at their present size with some material being turned away. Alternatively, the size of each issue could be increased somewhat without increasing the cost of postage at surface rates, but incurring increased publication costs. This would mean increasing the subscription somewhat more than would be necessary simply to allow for inflation. The meeting strongly recommended an increase in Bulletin size and requested the officers to prepare a proposal for increased subscriptions for the next AGM.

The possibility of opening a Giro account, particularly to assist international payment, was again raised. Dr. Pienkowski reported that the officers had made several enquiries of the Post Office in Britain about this, so far without reply. The matter would be pursued energetically.

### Election of officers

There was only one nomination for Administrative Secretary, so that N.A. & J.A.Clark were jointly elected unopposed.

### Next Meeting

An invitation from Dr. P.R.Evans and others to hold the 1982 AGM in Durham, U.K., was readily accepted, probable dates being 23/24 October. Members from the Netherlands and France suggested the Delta area and Vendée, respectively, as possible venues for 1983 or later, and these ideas were warmly received.

### Any other business

A suggestion had been received from Michael Smart, Assistant Director (Conservation) of IWRB, that an area in south Tunisia greatly warrants studies. It forms the only area in the Mediterranean Sea with a substantial tidal range, and appears to be a very important site for migrant and wintering waders. His suggestion of a joint WSG/IWRB expedition, possibly in autumn 1982, to assist workers in Tunisia in investigating this area was enthusiastically received. This will be investigated further.

At the end of the meeting M.W.Pienkowski thanked the members of OAG Münster for all their hard work in organising the conference and for the excellent hospitality in their fine research station. Thanks were also extended to the University of Münster for providing the lecture theatre and facilities for the scientific meeting.