

WADER STUDY GROUP MEETING 1983, DELTA AREA, THE NETHERLANDS

The 1983 Annual General Meeting and scientific meeting of the Wader Study Group will be held on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 November 1983, in the Delta area of SW Netherlands, at the invitation of Dutch WSG members, assisted by Belgian colleagues who also work on the birds of this area. The conference buildings are "De Schouwse Boer" (the Schouwen Farmer), near Haamstede on the island of Schouwen (now linked to the mainland by dams and bridges). There are ample accommodation, restaurant and bar facilities, lounge and meeting rooms, and the centre is pleasantly positioned in dunes 1 km from the shore and 4 km from one end of the site where an enormous tidal surge barrier is under construction across the Oosterschelde estuary. The area is extremely rich in wintering waders and wildfowl. The AGM will be held on Saturday morning, followed by the scientific meeting for the rest of Saturday and Sunday morning. There will be an excursion to see the birds and the sea-defence works on the Delta on Sunday afternoon. Accommodation will be available from Friday evening or Saturday morning until Sunday, but accommodation on Sunday night can easily be arranged for those who require it. Executive Committee members please note that a committee meeting is planned for Friday 18 November.

Our hosts are attempting to keep the costs as low as possible so as not to discourage visitors from abroad (especially the British as the £ sinks slowly beneath the waves). The estimated cost (including all meals, coffee, accommodation) should be about Dfl. 80 (less than £20 at current rates). As the exact cost cannot be given at present, about half (i.e. £10 or Dfl. 40 should be paid at the time of booking. Bookings are definite, so that this is non-returnable. The balance will be charged later.

The programme is being planned and aims to follow requests and suggestions made at last year's meeting. Fuller details will appear in the August issue (but members are advised to book now, rather than leave it until then). We hope to include talks on the two WSG/BTO/SOC/RSPB surveys of breeding waders in Britain and some consideration of estimating breeding numbers of waders in Europe; a report on the WSG work this summer in the Uists (Hebrides); papers on the studies of breeding waders by Albert Beintema and others in the Netherlands, and possibly elsewhere in Europe and in the Arctic. We also plan to include reports of recent work in the non-breeding season in Guinée Bissau and Egypt.

Being in the Delta area, we cannot ignore waders wintering in Europe: these will be considered in relation to the major habitat modifications taking place in the Delta and elsewhere. Because of the requests at the last meeting for inclusion of these various topics, the limited time available, and the importance of leaving some time for informal discussions, very little time is available in the programme for further contributions. Anyone wishing to offer a talk should write as soon as possible to either Mike Pienkowski or Theunis Piersma (addresses below).

A booking form for the meeting is enclosed with this issue and should be returned to Theunis Piersma, Korte Nieuwstraat 4, 9724 LC Groningen, The Netherlands. Either enclose a cheque for £10 (English sterling) payable to "Wader Study Group" or transfer Dfl. 40 to giro account 5485692 T.Piersma.Rek.WSG, Groningen. Any queries concerning accommodation or transport in Holland should be sent to Henk Baptist, Deltadienst-Rijkwaterstaat, P.O. Box 439, 4330 AK Middleburg, The Netherlands.

A note for British visitors

The timing of the meeting will allow British visitors to travel by the overnight ferry Friday-Saturday and Sunday-Monday. Our Dutch hosts have kindly offered to arrange transport by minibuses from the ferries on Friday night or Saturday morning and back to the ferries on Sunday evening. To take advantage of this, British visitors should use either the Hull-Rotterdam Europort (North Sea Ferries) service or the Sheerness-Vlissingen (=Flushing) (Olau-Line Ferries) service. (The service from Harwich arrives at Hook of Holland, and transport cannot be provided from there.)

The Hull-Rotterdam Europort service is daily in each direction, departing at 1800 and arriving at 0800 (both ways). The return costs (which includes evening meal and breakfast) are from £48 (£36 for students) for reclining chair, £60 for couchette (i.e. berth in simple 2-berth cabin); £72 for berth in 2-berth cabin with toilet and wash-basin; £88 for berth in 2-berth cabin with toilet, wash-basin and shower. (Half price fares are available for senior citizens in the 3 higher price categories: the company presumably feels that reclining seats are unsuitable for senior citizens; at least one of your officers thinks that reclining seats are unsuitable for people.)

The Sheerness-Vlissingen service is twice daily in each direction, departing from Sheerness 11.00 and 23.00 (arriving Vlissingen 19.00 and 07.00) and departing Vlissingen 12.00 and 22.30 (arriving Sheerness 18.00 and 07.00). The return fare is £16.50 provided a return is started within 52 hours of arrival; otherwise £33. Unlike the Hull ferry, these figures do not include meals. Nor do they include accommodation which will be required on overnight ferries. The costs of accommodation per journey (i.e. multiply by 2 for return) are: £2.50 for a seat, £4.00 for a berth in a 3- or 4-berth couchette, £7 for a berth in a 4-berth cabin with shower & toilet, £8 for a berth in a 2-berth cabin with shower & toilet. (Luxury cabins are also available but it seems unlikely that these will be required by WSG members.)

On both of these services it may be possible to arrange a party discount if enough people are interested. It may also be possible to arrange sharing of transport to and from the ports in Britain. We are prepared to investigate this, provided booking forms are returned by 1 June at the latest, preferably earlier. The 'Travel Arrangements from Britain' form should be returned to Dr M.W. Pienkowski, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, UK.

SURVEY AND MONITORING OF WADERS BREEDING IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES

Notes on this subject appeared in WSG Bulletin 35:5 and 36:2-5. The AGM agreed that WSG should become involved in a survey of waders on South Uist, Benbecula and North Uist during the summer of 1983. Plans are now well advanced after discussions with the Nature Conservancy Council. A two-pronged survey is planned during May and June which includes work by a twelve-man WSG team in June. Further details will be given in the August Bulletin. Meanwhile if anyone with an interest in waders is considering visiting the islands this summer please contact us first. Your observations could be useful.