

ESTIMATES OF WADER NUMBERS DURING MIDWINTER IN NORTHERN ADRIATIC COASTAL WETLANDS

by Fabio Perco

Until now very few data have been published on wader numbers in Italy. According to Prater (1976), few waders winter in the country, apart from some hundreds in the delta of the River Po. More recent inventories by Carp (1980) and Scott (1980) present only very limited quantitative data on the occurrence of waders in Italy. This is because until a few years ago hardly any wader counts were carried out. This short note is a first attempt to give some quantitative information on wader numbers in Italy. The wader censuses were carried out mostly from 1979 - 1984, while counting wildfowl.

The wetlands surveyed are shown in Figure 1, and are as follows:

- A: Mouth of the Isonzo River (3000 ha). Sand-banks and salt-marshes bordering the open sea.
 B: Lagoon of Grado-Morano (20 000 ha). Shallow brackish to saline tidal lagoons with large areas of emerging flats in the eastern parts, separated from the open sea by low sand-dunes.
 C: Lagoon of Caorle (10 000 ha). A lagoon now partly dammed to restrict sea-water

Table 1. Midwinter estimates of waders in northern Adriatic wetlands in Italy. See text for location of wetlands.

	A	B	C	Wetlands D	E	F	G	H	Approx. Total
Oystercatcher <u>Haematopus ostralegus</u>						1-10	1-10	+	10
Grey Plover <u>Pluvialis squatarola</u>	10-50	500-1000	10-50	50-100	50-100	200-500	10-50	1-10	1500
Little Ringed Plover <u>Charadrius alexandrinus</u>						1-10	1-10		10
Ringed Plover <u>Charadrius hiaticula</u>			+		1-10	10-50	10-50		60
Dunlin <u>Calidris alpina</u>	200-500	2000-5000	100-200	100-500	5000-10 000	100-500	100-500	10-50	12 500
Little Stint <u>Calidris minuta</u>	10-50	2000-5000	50-100	50-100	2000-5000	500-1000	100-500	10-50	8500
Sanderling <u>Calidris alba</u>			10-50	1-10	1-10	10-50	10-50	1-10	100
Curlew <u>Numenius arquata</u>	1000-2000	500-1000	50-100	50-100	100-500	500-1000	100-200	10-50	3700
Common Sandpiper <u>Actitis hypoleucos</u>	10-50	200-500	10-50	100-200	200-500	200-500	50-100	1-10	1500
Marsh Sandpiper <u>Tringa stagnatilis</u>					1-10				5
Greenshank <u>Tringa nebularia</u>		1-10	10-50	10-50	50-100	50-100	50-100	1-10	300
Spotted Redshank <u>Tringa erythropus</u>						10-50	10-50	1-10	60
Redshank <u>Tringa totanus</u>		200-500				100-200	50-100	1-10	600
Ruff <u>Philomachus pugnax</u>				1-10					5
Snipe <u>Gallinago gallinago</u>	10-50	200-500	50-100	100-500	1000-2000	2000-5000	500-1000	10-50	6500
Avocet <u>Recurvirostra avosetta</u>							50-100	1-10	80

+ indicates present but not counted

Approximate total of all species = 35 430 (estimated range 30 000-50 000)

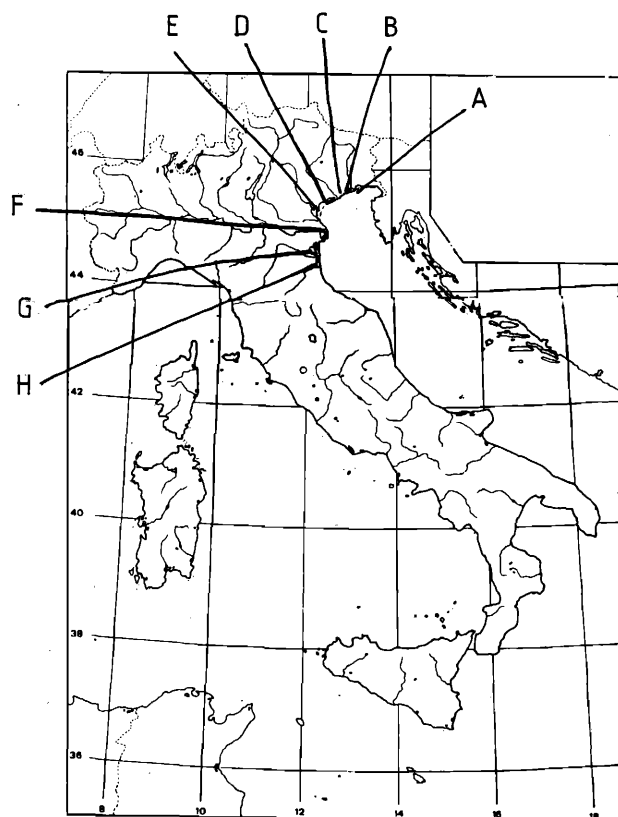


Figure 1. Wetlands in northern Italy for which counts were made between 1979 and 1984.

inflow. Only a few areas are tidal. Vast areas are being used as fish-breeding grounds.

D: Lagoon of Venice (northern part) (25 000 ha). A partly dammed complex of lagoons, with vast areas of tidal flats and open water.

E: Lagoon of Venice (southern part) (35 000 ha). Part of the Venice lagoon complex, more or less similar to the northern part but with larger areas of tidal flats.
 F: Po River delta (30 000 ha). River delta with partly degraded lagoons, partly tidal, with vast sand-banks along the coast.
 G: Lagoon of Comacchio (*sensu lato*) and the mouth of the River Reno (16 000 ha). A completely degraded lagoon, with salt-pans and sand-banks along the coast.
 H: Saline de Cervia (800 ha). Salt-pans.

The following observers provided the information summarised in Table 1:

Areas A & B: Roberto Parodi, Fabio Perco and Paolo Utmar;
 Areas C, D & E: Giampaolo Rallo;
 Areas F, G & H: Paolo Boldreggini, Federico Montanari and Roberto Tinarelli.

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WSG AUTUMN MEETING 1983 - AN INSIDE VIEW

by Steve Percival and Digger Jackson

In keeping with recent tradition, the Wader Study Group AGM and conference were held in an area famous for its large and threatened communities of waders. Since the catastrophic floods of 1953, the Rhine Delta in the southern Netherlands has undergone extensive habitat manipulation under the auspices of the Dutch Government's Delta Project. On the night of Friday 18 November 1983 WSG members converged on the conference centre at Nieuw Haarstede on the island of Schouwen in the Delta, to savour the delights of Dutch cooking and alcohol. Rumours abounded that these pursuits might be interrupted by talks about waders! Meanwhile, the group's elite, who had driven and flown in from Norway, West Germany, Birmingham and Teesside, were locked away in secret committee meeting.

The conference opened on Saturday morning, with a welcome from Dr. Gerard Boere of the Dutch State Forest Service, who presented a gift of gingerbread men to all present, in celebration of the forthcoming feast of Santa Claus. Soon we were engrossed in the first session of talks, on breeding wader surveys. Here we were treated to a variety of topics from many countries, including Rob Fuller's account of the WSG's own very successful survey in the Outer Hebrides; for which Tim Reed later reassured us that they had "got the timing right".

A Portuguese film on the Algarve wetlands brought to our attention the importance of using scientific names for birds. Whilst highlighting the conservation issues of this important area, the film also demonstrated the problems of translating Portuguese bird names into English. This had led the commentator to some misunderstandings of the species involved.

In particular, the rarity of the Sultan *Porphyrio porphyrio* and the Diving Goose *Tachybaptus ruficollis* gave the meeting some cause for concern! Johan van Rhijn enlightened us about the antics of satellite and independent male Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* on their leks, in an excellent talk about their reproductive strategies.

Before the evening session, our hosts provided us with one of the local delicacies: raw Herring *Clupea harengus*. Having overcome our prejudices, many of us were amazed at its texture and flavour, and it is believed that some even enjoyed it! The High Arctic was the focus for the next set of talks. Brian Witts spoke on the Joint Services Expeditions to Ellesmere Island, and Ko de Korte spoke on the arrival of breeding waders in Greenland.

After a hard night's drinking, local studies on the Delta dominated Sunday morning's talks, Henk Baptist and Patrick Meire illustrating the research work being carried out in the area.