

**INTERNATIONAL WADER MIGRATION STUDIES
ALONG THE EAST ATLANTIC FLYWAY:
PLANS FOR SPRING 1987**

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As during the last two springs, there will be many studies of waders throughout the East Atlantic flyway during spring 1986. The Wader Study Group will again be co-ordinating the international aspects of this work, to make full advantage of the opportunities to collect further information on the routes, sites and strategies used by waders migrating back to their breeding grounds. Full details of the rationale of the project, and the methods involved, are given in *WSG Bull.* 42: 5-9 (December 1984).

The work of the project during the last two springs has already proved of great value in expanding understanding of how individual waders move along the flyway during a single return migration. Such information has been extremely scarce for many species, because it is very difficult to collect. Yet such information is vital for a clear understanding of the role and importance of the staging areas used by waders along the flyway.

The most powerful tool in collecting this information is the temporary dye-marking of birds, and their subsequent sighting elsewhere along the flyway during the same spring. Dye-marking associated with the project during 1985 and 1986 has already produced a number of such sightings, which have contributed considerably to our view of the migration of several wader species. This information has been used extensively in reviewing the current knowledge of the East Atlantic flyway for the WSG Workshop on the Conservation of International Flyway Populations of Waders in September 1986 (Piersma et al. 1987. *WSG Bull.* 49, *Suppl.*). Sightings of birds colour-marked during the project have also proved invaluable in understanding the role of northern Norway in the spring migration of Nearctic Knots *Calidris canutus islandica* (Davidson et al. 1986. *Ornis Scand.* 17: 175-179, Uttley et al. 1987. *WSG Bull.* 49, *Suppl.*), and in the use of north-east Iceland in spring (Whitfield and Magnusson 1987. *WSG Bull.* 49, *Suppl.*).

The project in spring 1987 will continue in its general aims of gradually building up the number of observations of within-season movements of waders, by colour-marking waders, and wherever possible by regular counting and checking for the presence of colour-marked birds. As in previous years there will be a

number of particular target species and populations. Below we list the plans and prospects for spring 1987, as far as we know them at the time of going to press (November 1986). Many of these plans are provisional at the moment, and will depend on the groups and individuals concerned successfully financing their studies. We should emphasise, as before, that WSG cannot provide financial backing for any of the separate research projects concerned: the role of WSG is in co-ordinating the international aspects of the work of each group.

The locations of the main participating groups for the project in spring 1987 are shown in Figure 1. In addition to these studies there will be a number of groups and individuals counting and observing for marked waders.



Figure 1. Areas in which major studies are planned that will be contributing to the project during spring 1987.

NEARCTIC KNOTS

The work in West Germany, Norway and Iceland during the last two years has revealed a great deal of new information about the spring migration of Nearctic Knots. However, as always such findings raise as many questions as they have provided answers. Amongst the many gaps, we particularly need to discover whether some Knots reach northern Norway from early spring staging sites in north-west England, as well as from The Wash, The Wattenmeer and Moray Firth; the identities of Knots in Porsangerfjord in northern Norway; the precise breeding grounds of Knots using northern Norway; more about the origins and destinations of Knots passing through north-east Iceland and north-east Scotland; and whether there is a regular movement of Knots from Norway to Iceland in late May. Studies will be continuing in many of the locations used last year, as well as some additional sites.

We aim to catch, and in some cases dye-mark, Knots at several of their early spring staging sites, notably in western France (Denis Bredin), the Schleswig-Holstein part of the Wattenmeer (Peter Prokosch), and north-east Scotland (Highland Ringing Group). Following unsuccessful attempts to catch Knots in north-west England (where few Knots have been ringed in recent years), further attempts are planned in 1986.

Further work is planned also by the Durham/Tromsø Universities team in 1987 in northern Norway, focussing this year on discovering the origins and destinations of the large numbers of Knots using Porsangerfjord, in Finnmark. Some further observations are planned also for Balsfjord, to capitalise on the studies there during the last two springs.

In May 1986, Philip Whitfield confirmed the importance of parts of north-east Iceland for Knots. He and colleagues plan further work there in 1987, to discover more about the origins and destinations of these birds. After preliminary work in 1986, a research team from Lund University will be making detailed studies of the migration and staging of Knots (and other waders) in west Iceland. Work will involve censuses at many sites in western Iceland, and more detailed studies of fat accumulation, feeding behaviour and departure directions at a few selected sites.

More information on the links between staging areas and breeding grounds is much needed. An Irish expedition plans to work on Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* in a seldom-visited part of Germania Land, in north-east Greenland. Whilst there they will also observe and attempt to catch Knots. Guy Morrison visited Alert, on Ellesmere Island, in northernmost Canada in early June 1985, and caught and ringed Knots there. He plans to return there in June 1987 to continue this work, and as part of the Durham University-based studies of spring body condition of Knots.

In May 1986, Knots caught in Balsfjord were fitted with a single orange colour-ring. This was done to discover if the birds return to the same late spring staging area each year, and to trace birds to their breeding grounds and wintering areas. To extend this part of the work, Knots caught on each late spring staging area and on each of their breeding areas in 1987 will be fitted with a site-specific colour-ring.

SIBERIAN KNOTS

Much still remains to be discovered about the spring migration of Siberian-breeding Knots from Africa through western Europe (see Dick *et al.* 1987. *Ornis Scand.* in press). Valuable information came from Knots dye-marked in Mauritania in 1985 as part of the WSG project, and seen later in western France. A Dutch expedition will be visiting Guinea Bissau and other parts of the West African coast early in 1987 and will aim to dye-mark Knots there. The work of the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO), co-ordinated by Denis Bredin, and involving catching and marking Siberian Knots in western France will continue, and Peter Prokosch on the Wattenmeer will again try to catch Knots believed to be from the Siberian population.

SANDERLINGS

Very little is known of the details of the spring migration of Sanderlings *Calidris alba* from Africa and Europe along the East Atlantic flyway. For this reason Sanderlings were selected as one of the target species for the project. Several planned studies may throw some light on which breeding and staging areas are used by Nearctic and Siberian breeding populations. To this end it is planned to dye-mark birds in southern and western Africa.

Recent observations have revealed that some Sanderlings passing through Iceland in late spring occur in north-east England between autumn and early spring. Sanderlings are one of the target species for the detailed studies of wader migration phenology in western Iceland by the Lund University team.

OTHER SPECIES

The Dutch expedition in West Africa plans to dye-mark Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*, to trace their migration routes northwards, believed to be across the Mediterranean. Two teams from the Netherlands aim to locate these birds during their spring migration through the eastern Mediterranean, in the Porto Lago area in northern Greece, and near the Gulf of Ishkenderun in south-east Turkey. Both teams hope to make series of wader counts, and to catch waders, working in close co-operation with local groups.

The Tay Ringing Group has been working for some years on the breeding origins of Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* in Britain and western Europe. As part of these studies they plan to dye-mark Purple Sandpipers in Britain in early 1987, and look for sightings elsewhere later, particularly in Iceland.

The extensive wader catching and counting work in the Dutch Delta area, organised by Rob Lambeck and Eric Marteiijn, will continue during spring 1987.

The complexity of the plans outlined above, and the research priorities of the main participating groups, mean that there will be no emphasis this year on the other target species: Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*.

ORGANISATION

The organisation of the project will continue as in 1986. Organisers, or 'contact-persons', of the main participating groups should keep the project co-ordinators (Nick Davidson and Theunis Piersma) informed about their progress of the plans, and should pass the relevant information on achievements (no. of birds marked, counts etc.) as soon as possible after their spring work has been completed. The organisation of temporary colour-marks will be co-ordinated by Chris Thomas, to whom all queries and requests over marking should be addressed.

Sightings of colour-marked waders should, as usual, be passed through the WSG Colour-marking Register (Hector Galbraith, WSG Colour-marking Register, Department of Zoology, The University, Glasgow G12 8QQ, U.K.).

Many wader workers start to become active as

the sap begins to rise in the spring. We have listed here those who we know plan to be actively working on waders in spring 1987: if you too will be working on waders anywhere on the East Atlantic flyway and would be able to participate in the project, by catching and/or counting and observing waders, we would be delighted to hear from you. Contact Nick Davidson with queries and offers of help.

Any further developments in the plans for the project will be included in an updated version of this notice in *Bulletin* 49 (April 1987).

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WADER STUDY GROUP ANNUAL MEETING AND AGM, GDANSK, POLAND, 25-27 SEPTEMBER 1987

As was announced in *WSG Bulletin* 47, the Wader Study Group 1987 AGM and autumn meeting will be held in Gdansk, on the Polish Baltic coast, on 25-28 September 1987. It will be hosted by the Ornithological Station of the Institute of Zoology, Polish Academy of Sciences. As in previous years, the formal part of the meeting will begin with the AGM on Saturday morning (26 September) and finish on Sunday afternoon (27 September). Participants are advised to arrive during the afternoon or evening of Friday 25 September. A whole day excursion to interesting wader sites near Gdansk will be organised for Monday 28 September.

Accommodation will be available in the buildings of the Ornithological Station and its surroundings from 25-29 September (and longer if required). The cost of the meeting will be kept to a minimum - as usual. Although not yet fixed, costs will be within the range of recent WSG meetings, probably at around £12 per day. For various reasons it is vital that we know well in advance the exact number of participants (and their identities) for this conference. Therefore please send the enclosed booking form to Hermann Hotker, Biologische Station, Coermuhle 181, 4400 Munster, Fed. Rep. of Germany as soon as possible, ignoring the fact that there are no prices for accommodation, meals, etc. given on it. We apologise to anyone for whom the absence of precise costings at this stage may pose problems in obtaining finance to attend the meeting.

Because there are a number of differences in the booking arrangements for this meeting compared to the usual WSG procedures, particularly in the need to book as early as possible, anyone intending to go to the meeting should read this announcement carefully, and act on it as soon as possible. It will not be possible to accept late bookings.

PROGRAMME

A major reason for accepting the Ornithological Station's kind invitation to Gdansk - besides the fact that Gdansk is a most attractive town - is our hope to see more colleagues from Poland and adjacent European countries at this

conference than we usually do at WSG and other meetings. Rather than having a workshop, as in Edinburgh in 1986, we intend to organize a more "traditional" WSG conference with a variety of themes covered by talks and posters, allowing time for broad discussion about many aspects of current work on waders. At the time of writing this announcement (November 1986) the programme is still very open, but we hope to include talks on the results of wader ringing in Poland, the 1987 East Atlantic Flyway Study, results of other WSG projects and highlights of the expeditions to Africa and elsewhere taking place this winter.

Anybody wishing to offer a talk or to present a poster should write to Hermann Hotker, Biologische Station, Coermuhle 181, 4400 Munster, Fed. Rep. of Germany, giving the title and subject of the talk AND a brief abstract. Slide and overhead projectors will be available - please say if you require other equipment. Talks must be limited to 20 minutes, to allow time for the informal discussions, tea, coffee and beer! Posters will be exhibited throughout the course of the conference. The size of the posters should not exceed 1 m².

it is most important that both speakers and poster demonstrators to supply an abstract in advance, so that we can distribute copies at the beginning of the meeting.

Each abstract should be typed on an A4 page in the following way:

lines 1 and 2: title (capital letters please);
line 3: author's name (capital letters please);
lines 4, 5 and 6: author's address;
lines 7 to 26: abstract.

Please note that all offers of talks/posters (with accompanying abstracts) must reach Hermann Hotker by 1 August 1987 at the latest.

BOOKING AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Anyone intending to attend the meeting should read this section very carefully before sending in their booking form. As mentioned above, it is not possible to give the exact costs of the conference at present, because this depends partly on the number of participants. All