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## WSG INTERNATIONAL PROJECT ON BLACK-WINGED STILTS: SECOND PROGRESS REPORT

by Philippe J. Dubois

### INTRODUCTION

The main event of the year was a technical meeting held from 12-13 December 1986 at Rochefort, France, between the national co-ordinators of the WSG Project. Portugal, Spain, France and Italy were represented. We discussed the results of studies carried out in each country in 1986, together with the L.P.O. Expedition to Morocco in September 1986. An international colour-marking scheme was adopted, starting in 1987. A project proposal will be submitted to the E.E.C. for a co-operative study on Black-winged Stilts in Southern Europe.

### RESULTS

As the first progress report, we summarise the results of the studies carried out in each country.

Portugal (co-ordinator: Rui Rufino, CEMPA, Lisboa).

#### Les Batty (supervising students at the University of Faro)

Feeding and feeding behaviour of *Himantopus himantopus* in one salina at Faro (by Antonina M. dos Santos).

Studies of feeding rates (number of paces, number of items ingested and number of pecks) and food availability. The results suggested that the main prey was *Artemia salina*, although other prey were taken when the salinas had a lower salinity level.

#### M. Bolton (at Portimao)

Study of factors affecting hatching success in a small population in South-west Portugal. The major factor influencing hatching success seems to be the degree of vulnerability to ground predators.

#### A. Xeira (Tejo Estuary)

(This work was started in 1983 by Goncalo Jardim of which a note was published)

The 1985 and 1986 studies focussed on changes in breeding and non-breeding numbers, clutch size and hatching success, breeding success, and dispersion.

In the breeding seasons a total of 12 adults and 26 juveniles were colour ringed. Two adults ringed in 1985, were present at the site this season.

#### G. Vowles (Algarve)

41 young were ringed in 1985 and 25 in 1986 in Algarve.

Spain (co-ordinator: Luis J. Alberto, Facultad de Ciencias, Sevilla)

From regional censuses carried out for 3 years in Spain, the national population was estimated to be 8 000 pairs, well below the "over 20 000 pairs" stated in the literature (BWP).

France (co-ordinator: Philippe J. Dubois, L.P.O., Rochefort).

In 1986, 166 juveniles were ringed (135 colour-ringed) together with 8 adults. The first results from the colour-ringing programme which began in 1983 show that some degree of philopatry occurs in juveniles, some birds can breed from the first year but most of them seem to breed only from the third year, and that some mate-changing occurs during the breeding season.

The significance of supranormal clutches was also studied. Some sightings of birds coming from the Atlantic coast were made in Morocco, Sardinia and Camargue.

Table 1. Number of pairs breeding in each region in 1985 and 1986

|                | 1985    | 1986    |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| Piemonte       | 21-35   | 35-45   |
| Veneto         | 106-122 | 78-96   |
| Emilia-Romagna | 351-389 | 480-537 |
| Toscana        | 10-18   | 3-4     |
| Puglia         | 170     | 100-112 |
| Sardegna       | 142-152 | 170-171 |
| Sicilia        | 46-52   | 20-31   |
| Lombardia      | 1-2     | 7-9     |

Table 2. Number of pairs breeding in each habitat in 1985 and 1986

|                                    | 1985 |       | 1986 |       |
|------------------------------------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Ricefield                          | 20   | 2.2%  | 40   | 4.2%  |
| Sugar refinery and pig-farm basins | 152  | 17.0% | 214  | 22.6% |
| Fish culture basins and canals     | 6    | 0.7%  | 4    | 0.4%  |
| Salinas                            | 274  | 30.7% | 262  | 27.6% |
| Dammed freshwater pools            | 85   | 9.5%  | 49   | 5.2%  |
| Lagoons and coastal pools          | 353  | 39.7% | 380  | 40.0% |

Italy (co-ordinator: Roberto Tinarelli, Bologna)

A census of the Italian breeding population of Black-winged Stilts was made through a group of 40 researchers. The total population was estimated to be 893-1005 breeding pairs. The distribution of pairs in 1985 and 1986 is shown in Table 1. Table 2 shows the use made of different habitats. Compared to 1985 the number of breeding pairs had increased in Emilia-Romagna region, decreased in the Puglia region and had not changed in the other regions. A total of 96 pulli were ringed during the spring 1986 (81 with colour-rings). Data were collected on breeding chronology, egg laying, hatching, nest descriptions and breeding success. All the data on breeding biology, plus those collected in 1983, 1984, 1985 and with those to be collected next season will be the object of a comprehensive final report in 1987.

Greece (co-ordinator: Vassilis Goutner, Thessaloniki)

No progress in 1986.

Morocco (L.P.O. Team Expedition - September 1986)

In autumn 1986 a team from the L.P.O. (J.J. Blanchon, Y. Berthome, A. Doumeret, P.J. Dubois and M. Metais) spent 3 weeks in South Spain and Morocco. Censuses and age/sex-ratios were made. Studies of diurnal activities and foraging strategies of both adults and immatures were made. Studies on diurnal activities and foraging strategies of both adults and immatures were made at Sidi Moussa/Oualidia, where 26 birds were caught mainly by cannon-netting, which appears to be very efficient. A report was published for the French Environment Ministry.

#### International Colour-marking Scheme

From 1987 onwards it was decided that each country of marking would be identified by a specific colour-ring. This ring will be placed above the left tarso-metatarsian articulation, whatever the national scheme. The following colours were chosen:

Portugal: black  
Spain: white  
France: yellow  
Italy: dark green  
Greece: red  
Africa: orange

All sightings should be sent to the WSG Colour-Scheme Co-ordinator (H. Galbraith, 96 Neilston Road, Paisley, Strathclyde, PA2 6EL, U.K.).

#### The Future

An E.E.C. Project proposal will be submitted at the beginning of 1987. Expeditions are planned in North Africa during the 1986/87 winter by R. Tinarelli, and during the 1987/88 winter an L.P.O. Expedition is planned in Mali and Senegal to study wintering conditions of Black-winged Stilts and to search for colour-marked birds from Europe.

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