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REVIEW: BULLETIN OF THE WORKING GROUP ON WADERS (USSR)

M.G. Wilson

KONDRATIEV, A.Ya. (Ed.). 1989. *Bulletin of the Working Group on Waders*. (In Russian) Pp. 70. All-Union Ornithological Society (USSR Academy of Sciences) and Institute for the Study of Biological Problems of the North (Far East Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences), Magadan 0.40 roubles. 300 copies printed.

This second Bulletin of the Soviet Wader Group begins with a report from the Executive Committee. Some new regional representatives have been appointed, but gaps remain to be filled. Recommendations are made for improving the work of the representatives, including liaison with the Committee. Potential contributors to the Bulletin are advised that much of the material submitted is not suitable for publication, but records of rare or endangered species, 'sensational' new records, the more exciting ringing recoveries, and announcements important to a large number of ornithologists will be welcome. Publicity for the Soviet Wader Group is guaranteed at home (through *Ornithologiya* and the Bulletin of the All-Union Ornithological Society) and abroad (bibliography of Soviet publications on waders prepared by V. V. Morozov in *WSG Bulletin*). The 4th All-Union Wader Conference is due to take place in Donetsk in February 1990: G. N. Molodan (pp. 6-7) gives more details on topics to be covered, competitions, registration, contributions, and the names of the seven-man organising committee under the chairmanship of V. E. Flint.

The Wader Records Committee presents its report on pp. 7-11. Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* on Gera'd Island (1 bird) and Wrangel Island (2 pairs) in 1988 are accepted as the first for the USSR: M. S. Stishov and V. I. Pridatko (p. 60) describe voice and behaviour and note that both pairs on Wrangel Island showed distraction displays. A claimed breeding record of American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* on Wrangel Island is considered not fully authenticated, while the Committee reserves judgement on a report of an alleged Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* on Gera'd Island. In contrast, there is no doubt about the country's first Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*, second White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, and *P. dominica* (all Chukotka) as these were collected.

Certain published records have not stood up to critical re-examination: with the rejection of a record on the Volga, Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* has yet to occur in the European USSR, while a museum specimen of '*C. subminuta*' from Chukotka proved after closer scrutiny to be Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii*. Doubt is cast on breeding records of the last species

and Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* in central Yakutia, and of *L. falcinellus* (non-proven) in Kamchatka. Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis* records in the eastern European USSR, southern Yamal peninsula and Turkmeniya are all rejected, and the claimed breeding of Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* in Leningrad region (see the book by Mal'chevski & Pukinski 1983) is thought more likely to refer (and a photograph in the book supports the revision) to Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*. The Records Committee emphasizes the need to provide full supporting details for all records submitted and requests notification of other apparently erroneous records in the literature.

While the value of regional committees for the assessment of many records is fully recognized, records of certain species are, it is considered, better examined at an All-Union level. All records of the following 18 species should be submitted to the Soviet Working Group Records Committee: Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*, Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*, American Spur-winged Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*, Killdeer, Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus*, American Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani*, Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*, Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Spotted Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, White-rumped Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, Eskimo Curlew *N. borealis* and Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*. This list may be of interest to foreign birdwatchers visiting the Soviet Union: for example, P. Hottola from Finland reported (*Dutch Birding* 9:123) apparently the first 20th-century record of Spur-winged Plover for the USSR (April 1984 at Batumi, Black Sea, not to mention the country's first Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* at the same place in October 1984). The Committee further wishes to receive for consideration breeding records of Wandering Tattler *Heteroscelus incanus*, Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*, Broad-billed Sandpiper, and Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria*, also reports of any species breeding outside its normal range.

I. M. Gorban' (pp. 12-13) discusses the work of records committees in general (they have been established in the Soviet Baltic republics and in the western Ukraine - at L'vov in 1982). A committee for the whole of the Ukraine is deemed desirable but has yet to be set up. Meanwhile, a list of 30 wader species (rare breeders and vagrants) is put forward and this is likely to be adopted - probably with some revision following discussion - by such a committee.

Of the five new reserves ('zapovedniks') established in the RSFSR, and one in the Ukraine, in 1987-8, two are important for waders: 1) Dagestan (north-west Caspian); and 2) Daurian (south-east Transbaykal), which boasts colonies of Relict Gull *Larus relictus*, Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, and (the only breeding site in the USSR) Oriental Pratincole. It is also an important staging post for migrating birds, including the largest autumn gatherings in the country of Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*.

V. S. Sarychev (pp. 16-18) reports on membership and activities in the Central Region, touching on site-mapping, waders and man-made habitats, and protection of sites. Project *Haematopus* (p. 19) seeks to ascertain the status and distribution of Oystercatcher *H. ostralegus longipes* in this region.

Of the 39 wader species recorded in the western Ukraine, 14 are breeders. I. M. Gorban' (pp. 19-21) briefly summarizes the history of wader studies in the region, and emphasizes the need to concentrate future research on movements, population trends, and breeding ecology. M. E. Zhmud (pp. 21-23) reviews the present status of waders in the Ukraine. An ornithological data-bank (primarily on breeding biology) was set up in neighbouring Belorussia in 1983 (M. E. Nikiforov et al., pp. 23-24).

Studies of waders and other birds have been carried out in the extreme north-east of the USSR (the territory east of the Kolyma river) by, among other, L. A. Portenko, A. V. Krechmar, V. E. Flint, A. A. Kishchinskiy, P. S. Tomkovich and, not least, A. Ya. Kondratiev who (pp. 24-28, with map) explains the role of the Institute for the Study of Biological Problems of the North and notes that there are two reserves (Wrangel Island and Magadan) in a region where 50 species of waders have been recorded - a number likely to increase owing to the proximity of the North American continent. Future studies should be concerned with distribution, migration routes, little-known species, and so on.

Much further south, in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, wader students have been looking at pre-breeding behaviour of Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria*, breeding biology of White-tailed Plover *C. leucura* and others, and waders in two reserves and the Ila delta. During March - May 1988, over 2 000 waders of 30 species (including 719 Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* and 638 Little Stints *Calidris minuta*) were ringed and special attention was paid to fat reserves of migrants (A. E. Gavrilov, p. 29).

M. E. Zhmud (pp. 30-32) writes on the organization of population-ecology studies. A. K. Yurlov (pp. 33-34) heads a six-man team whose aim is to find and safeguard the breeding grounds of the Slender-billed Curlew: a search on the Tartas river in 1988 was unsuccessful, while this Bulletin appeared too early to report on the joint Soviet-ICBP expedition to the Tara river in 1989. Sadly this also was fruitless. Perhaps 1990 will bring happier news.

A number of reports (pp. 35-42) concern wader ringing and movements: colour-ringing and marking in Kazakhstan, Chukotka, Yamal (A. A. Vinokurov & E. I. Gavrilov, p. 35), with 7 508 birds of 39 species ringed in south-central Siberia, Australian-ringed Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and Indian-ringed Little Stint recovered there, Curlew Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint in Australia (A. P. Savchenko, pp. 36-37). A total of 6 300 birds of 36 species were ringed at the Chany lakes (Novosibirsk) in 1974-1987, including 1 311 Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* and, in 1987, 26 adult and juvenile Dowitchers (A. K. Yurlov, pp.

37-38). On the north-west Black Sea, the ringing total for 1974-1987 was 16 121 birds of 34 species, producing 117 recoveries (A. I. Korzyukov, pp. 38-40). A Kentish Plover ringed 31 December 1985 at 25°35'N, 78°05'E in India was recovered at Lake Alakol' in Kazakhstan (46°18'N, 81°24'E) on 2 September 1987, 2 320 km N (E. I. Gavrilov & F. F. Karpov, p. 40). P. S. Tomkovich (pp. 41-42) summarizes what is known about movements of Knot *Calidris canutus* from the four geographical populations. Wrangel Island birds, together with those from Alaska are described as a new subspecies, wintering in America. Small Chukotka birds (*rogersi*) migrate along the Pacific coast of Asia. Nominate *canutus* breeds in Taimyr and on the New Siberian Islands. Larger birds from Taimyr migrate west to Europe, but small Knot from the New Siberian Islands have not been recovered there. The wintering grounds of these two populations are still not known exactly, nor (perhaps) the breeding grounds of birds wintering in Africa. Further collecting of specimens and morphometric data is recommended, but attention is also drawn to the work of A. A. Goede (Delft, Netherlands) on determining metal levels (and hence origin) in the plumage of Knot and other waders.

V. Yu. Il'yashenko (pp. 43-46) explains wader pterylosis with the help of figures and puts forward, for the benefit of the field ornithologists, a simpler scheme than that used by Stettenheim in *Nomina anatomica avium* (1979). Following this, P. S. Tomkovich (pp. 46-47) appeals for help in the preparation of a guide to the downy plumage of waders.

Thirty-six wader species feature in the national and republican or regional Red Data Books of the USSR: E. I. Sotnikova (pp. 47-49) lists these birds together with their status in each of the RDBs in which they are included. Up to the end of 1988, 62 reserves had been established in the RSFSR: E. I. Sotnikova and V. G. Krever (pp. 49-51) discuss the extent to which the 16 wader species listed in that republic's Red Data Book enjoy a measure of protection through breeding within the reserves, also noting whether new reserves are planned for parts of their breeding range.

P. S. Tomkovich et al. (pp. 51-58) describe breeding conditions on the tundra from the Kola Peninsula east to Chukotka in 1988 (lemmings, arctic foxes, weather: see review of Bulletin 1 in *WSG Bulletin* 55: 29-31). (A more detailed translation of this article appears elsewhere in this *Bulletin*: Eds.).

Speculation about Cox's Sandpiper *Calidris paramelanotos* continues: P. S. Tomkovich (pp. 58-59) summarizes reports and discussion in the Western literature and cites L. S. Stepanyan's 'somewhat surprising' view that the bird is most likely a hybrid between Ruff and Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* or Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata*.

Apart from book reviews, the final items in this second Bulletin are short notes (pp. 59-62) on Spoon-billed Sandpipers *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus* in Lazo Reserve (Sea of Japan) in August 1986, Semipalmated Plovers on Gerald and Wrangel Islands in 1988 (see above), first Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* breeding in the Siberian subarctic (Yamal), July 1988, vagrant Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Lake Baykal (September 1987), two Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* collected apparently for a Lithuanian (!) museum in Magadan region in summer 1987, and Dotterel *Eudromias morinellus* and Knot breeding at Lake El'gygytgyn (Anadyr' Highlands) in 1988.

The address of the Soviet Working Group on Waders is c/o Zoological Museum of Moscow State University, 6 Herzen Street, SU-103009 MOSCOW,