

NOTES & NEWS & NEWS NOTES & NOTES & NEWS & NEWS NOTES & NOTES & NEWS

WADER NOTES AND NEWS

compiled by Nick Davidson & Rodney West



EARLY AUTUMN RETURN OF WADERS TO BRITAIN

In the latest issue of *BTO News* Dick Lambert and Robert Prys-Jones report on unusually large numbers of several wader species arriving back in Britain on the Ribble Estuary and the Wash in July. By mid-July on the Ribble over three times more than the average numbers of Oystercatchers, Knots, Sanderlings, Dunlins, Bar-tailed Godwits, Curlews and Turnstones were present on the estuary, many still in full breeding plumage.

On the Wash the Wash Wader Ringing Group found very large numbers of *schinzii* Dunlin (predominantly Icelandic breeders). Unusually for so early in the autumn there were almost equal numbers of males and females in these flocks. Usually females return first, leaving males looking after unfledged young.

Lambert and Prys-Jones speculate that the early return is a consequence of a poor or curtailed breeding season, and the BTO Estuaries Unit (BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Herts. HP23 5NR, U.K.) would like to hear of any other reports of similar early-returning waders elsewhere.

If the breeding season was indeed poor, then there may be low proportions of juvenile birds found in flocks during autumn and winter, so reports of this would also be interesting. If a poor breeding season has been the cause of the early arrivals back on moulting and staging areas, then the problem must have been extremely widespread across arctic, sub-arctic and temperate breeding grounds. The species involved in the Ribble influxes come from a wide range

of breeding areas including high arctic Canada and Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia and probably parts of Siberia and northern Britain.

Any information on the breeding success of waders in these areas in 1990 may therefore help to throw some light on whether early British arrivals were a consequence of breeding failure. We would be pleased to hear comments from anyone with such information. Certainly first news from parts of the Taymyr peninsula in Siberia (see Bulletin 58) suggested at least a moderate breeding season, and the breeding of Turnstones in northern Ellesmere Island seemed to be proceeding as normal at least until mid-July (Theunis Piersma, pers. comm.).

Source: *BTO News* No. 170, September/October 1990.

Nick Davidson



SYMPOSIUM

SHOREBIRD ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

An invitation is extended to all interested parties to participate in a symposium on shorebird ecology and conservation in the Western Hemisphere, to be held during the IV Neotropical Ornithological Congress in Quito, Ecuador, in November 1991.

The organising committee is planning to invite world-class speakers, provide simultaneous English-Spanish translation, and support the participation of Latin American biologists through travel grants. For more information contact:

Gonzalo Castro, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, c/o Manomet Bird Observatory, Manomet, MA 02345, USA (telephone (508)-224-6521).



WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE REPORT

The Greenland White-fronted Goose Study (GWGS) is a voluntary and non-profit making research organisation established in

1978 to undertake research on all aspects of the ecology, population, distribution and migration of these scarce geese. A major aspect of the group's work in the last ten years has been the promotion of Greenland White-fronted Goose conservation in the British Isles, Iceland and Greenland. To that end regular census counts are undertaken in autumn and spring each year to monitor the size of the wintering goose populations.

There is much of interest to wader-workers in the migration and conservation approaches for this small population of arctic-breeding long-distance migrants which depend on continuing conservation of just a few wintering and staging areas.

The latest research report from the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study has just been published. This 44-page A4 report contains a wide range of information on arrival and departure dates, international census results, regional reports from Scotland, Wales, Greenland and Iceland, reports of conservation issues, both positive and damaging, and an overview of a decade of Greenland White-fronted Goose research and conservation.

Copies of *Greenland White-fronted Geese in Britain: 1987/88 - 1989/90*. Greenland White-fronted Goose Study Research Report No.7 are available from:

David Stroud, 5 Parkway, Nassington, Peterborough PE8 6QE, U.K., price £3 incl. post and packing.



WANTED - FEATHER MITES

One of the most fascinating talks at the 1990 WSG conference in Comacchio was given by Jacek Dabert of Poznan University in Poland. Jacek talked about feather mites on waders, and how these can give some important insights into the phylogenetic relationships between wader species. Particularly intriguing was the suggestion that the Sun Bittern *Eurypyga helias* may be closely related to waders.

Jacek would be pleased to receive feather mites from waders to help with his research. The simple procedure is as follows:

1. Feather mites look like small dots on the surface of the feather vane. Put two flight feathers (e.g. the right and left third primary) and some small coverts into a paper envelope and seal it.
2. Write in pencil on the envelope the



- following data:
- species of bird,
 - collection place,
 - name of collector,
 - date, and
 - the types of feathers enclosed.

3. Put the envelope(s) containing the feathers into a sealed jar, filled with 60-70% ethanol as preservative.

The material should be sent to: Jacek Dabert, Department of Animal Morphology, Poznan University, Szamarzewskiego 91A, Poznan 60-569 POLAND.



SUFFOLK ESTUARIES REPORT

Suffolk, in south-eastern England, is a low-lying coastline dissected by the five estuaries of the Blyth, Alde, Deben, Orwell and Stour which provide feeding and roosting grounds for nationally and internationally important numbers of many waders and wildfowl species. The area is under considerable pressure from recreation and industrial developments, notably the recent loss of an important mudflat and saltmarsh area on the Orwell Estuary to the expanding Felixstowe Docks.

A highly active group of wader catchers, counters and watchers has been operating on the Suffolk estuaries in recent years, spurred in part by the need to know more about how waders use these important estuaries in the face of continuing damaging pressures. The group has just produced its impressive third report (Suffolk Estuaries Report 1989, edited by Rodney West and Mick Wright). This is packed with a great deal of well-presented information in its 52 pages.

Items include reports of the count results on each of the estuaries, features on estuarine invertebrates, the implications of global warming for Suffolk estuaries, and several reports of low water counts of waders and wildfowl on individual estuaries, and the first ever synchronised low water count over all the estuaries. In addition there is a species by species report for waders and wildfowl, a detailed analysis of the numbers, distribution and migrations of Dunlins on the Alde estuary, and an analysis of information about Kingfishers in Suffolk.

This is an excellent example of a well produced report full of valuable information

collected by a large group of wader enthusiasts who are working largely in a voluntary capacity.

Copies of *Suffolk Estuaries Report 1991* can be obtained from: Rodney West, Farnham Barn, Farnham, Saxmundham, Suffolk, price £2.50, including postage and packing.

Nick Davidson



1990 EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN WADER PROJECT

The Eastern Mediterranean Wader Project 1990 was organised by Vincent van der Berk and Tom van der Have under the auspices of WIWO, the Netherlands-based international wader and waterfowl research foundation. Its main objective has been to analyse in detail the spring migration strategies of arctic-breeding waders as they pass through the eastern Mediterranean.

As members attending the 1990 WSG conference in Comacchio heard, the project was highly successful, with major contributory projects taking place simultaneously in Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Greece, and the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, and with another eight satellite projects also linked to the work.

A preliminary report has already been produced specifically to provide rapid feedback to the participants and funding organisations, and a full report containing detailed analyses of the findings of the study is in preparation. In addition we will be including further reports of the project in a future Bulletin. In the meantime our congratulations to the organisers and all the participants for contributing to a major step forwards in our understanding of what is a rather poorly known wader flyway by comparison with the East Atlantic Flyway.

AT LAST.

A FUNCTION FOR AN ACRONYM

Acronyms, those words formed from the initial letters of groups of words, are generally more irritating than useful since they usually need a dictionary to help decipher what they really mean. Now, however, we hear of a highly unusual use for a wader acronym.

The Netherlands Ornithological Mauri-

tian Expedition 1980 goes under the acronym 'NOME'. This was the first of the recent string of major Dutch wader expeditions to the Banc d'Arguin and other parts of the West African coast. The expedition laid much of the groundwork for the more recent visits so comprehensively reported in the recently published *Homeward Bound* volume (see Bulletin 58 Wader Notes and News).

During these expeditions NOME member Theunis Piersma collected a variety of molluscs, including examples of a previously unknown Rissoid gastropod. This has now been described as a new species, *Setia nomea* (Moolenbeek, R.G., & Piersma, T. 1990. A new *Setia* species from Mauritania (Gastropoda: Rissoidae). *Gloria Maris* 29(2): 31-33). The specific name is derived from the expedition's acronym.

It is not unusual for a new species to be named after the person who discovered it. Indeed we reported three such cases, of intestinal parasites being named after wader-workers, in Bulletin 53. It is the first time, however, that we have heard of a species being named after a whole expedition, and named by its acronym at that.

The message should now be clear to all expedition organisers: make sure that the name you devise for your expedition produces at least one vowel in the resulting acronym. Perhaps even the WSG should consider a name-change so as to encourage future taxonomists to immortalise the group with a latinised version of our acronym for the specific name of some yet to be discovered wader species!

Nick Davidson

THE OYSTER-CATCHER COMES OF AGE

The Oystercatcher emblem of the Wader Study Group was designed by Ray Bishop when the group was formed in 1970. It remains a highly appropriate emblem for such an international group since black-and-white oystercatchers are distributed almost worldwide.



As part of the redesigning of the *Bulletin* and other group material by our Membership Secretary, Rodney West, the emblem has now taken on a new appearance. Oyst-

