
Western Hemisphere Section for WSG

Peter Hicklin

On 4-5 November 1991, I attended that most interesting meeting between North and South American shorebird researchers in Quito, Ecuador, entitled-*Shorebird Ecology and Conservation in the Western Hemisphere: a symposium* (see Theunis Piersma's summary in *WSG Bulletin* 63).

In the course of the meeting, much of the informal conversations and discussion I became involved in centred around the *Bulletin's* New World Section and how it could serve a greater communications role for shore birdologists in the Western Hemisphere.

I attended this meeting since, first of all, I was on the organising committee, and secondly, I was keen to meet some of my Latin American colleagues attending the IV Congreso Ornitológica Neotropical of which the shorebird symposium was a part. Since Dr. Gonzalo Castro and Julie Sibbing had the organizing well under control, I anticipated a relatively quiet sojourn in Quito. But then Theunis Piersma arrived.....

As Vice-Chairman of the Wader Study Group, Theunis had clear intentions about improving and enlarging the 'New World Section' of the *Bulletin*. And as I am co-editor of the Section and a long-standing admirer of the Wader Study Group, Theunis found very receptive ears to any ideas he had, especially regarding that section of the *Bulletin*. I accepted to be on the Steering Committee (actually I volunteered and Theunis, obviously pushed into a corner, accepted) and in very little time, the quiet stay-in-the-background attitude I had come to this meeting with changed to a jump-right-into-it schedule of informal meetings to reach numerous

agreements with many wader enthusiasts about the 'New World Section' of the *Bulletin*. Exciting? You bet!

My initial suggestion to Theunis was to change the name of the 'New World' Section. I did so in part because that designation was clearly of some annoyance to many of our Latin American colleagues. And the term 'New World' often signifies North America to many readers. To digress slightly, when Christopher Columbus 'discovered' the New World he was met by natives who had lived on this continent for centuries. The designation 'New World' ignored the 'old' culture already in place when young Columbus stepped ashore. And so to correct for this misnomer, the new section in the *Bulletin*, to be entitled the 'Western Hemisphere Section' will, from this time onwards, contain scientific papers, news of people and announcements from shorebird watchers and researchers in the western hemisphere (i.e. North, Central and South America).

One of my first assignments was to assemble a new Steering Committee which would include members from both North and South America. That turned out to be a very easy task as all those I approached accepted with unbridled enthusiasm. The Steering Committee of the 'Western Hemisphere Section' of the Wader Study Group now consists of:

Luis G. Naranjo, *Colombia*

Paulo Antas, *Brazil*

Pablo Canevari, *Argentina*

Susan Haig, *United States*

Peter Hicklin, *Canada*

The members of the Steering Committee will serve three-year terms. In three years, the present Steering Committee will be dissolved (on 5 November 1994 to be exact) and the Chairman (yet to be appointed by the WSG Executive) will ask each member if they wish to re-offer for another term; those who wish to move on will be replaced by the Chairman. At that time as well, the Chairman will be asked to re-offer or will be replaced by the Executive of the Wader Study Group. The Executive will approve the final composition of the Western Hemisphere Steering Committee at the beginning of each new three year term.

To assist our Latin American friends to submit articles in English when their working language is often Spanish, Dr. Michel Sallaberry of the University of Chile, will serve as South American editor/translator so as to allow research papers and survey results from Latin America to become regular contributions to the *Bulletin*.

Once the newly organised Western Hemisphere Section takes off, some effort will be made to organise regional chapters such as Atlantic, Prairie and Pacific chapters (in Canada, U.S. and Latin America) which, individually, could meet on an annual basis while a general meeting of all chapters could be held every two to three years. And, who knows, maybe one of these years, members from Britain and Europe and the Western Hemisphere could meet to discuss shorebird/wader issues. Dr. Raymond McNeil has already offered to hold such a meeting at his new research station in Venezuela. I already look forward to signing up!

The symposium in Quito helped bridge

