
REVIEWS

Gretton, A. 1991. *Conservation of the Slender-billed Curlew*. ICBP Monograph No 6. Cambridge, UK.

As long ago as 1943 Stresemann and Grote asked the question "Will the Slender-billed Curlew go extinct?". The population since that time has continued to decline, so that now only a handful of individuals are annually recorded on migration or during the winter. A species that once numbered many thousands of individuals is now estimated, perhaps optimistically, to have a population of around 400 birds, and still we do not know where the species breeds or where the main wintering areas are. There have been some tantalizing reports of flocks numbering 30-40 birds in North Africa in recent years, but these have not been substantiated despite extensive enquiries and recent field surveys. The species remains an enigma and one of conservation's great challenges.

Until Prater and Scott reviewed the status of the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* in 1980 there had been little interest shown in this species despite its continuing rarity. In

1987 ICBP decided to undertake a detailed project to examine the status and ecology of this little known wader.

This new monograph brings together in one volume all that is known of the Slender-billed Curlew under headings such as field identification, past numbers and distribution, the breeding grounds, the decline and its causes, the status of the bird in known and possible range states, and its ecology and behaviour. It concludes with a detailed action plan for future conservation.

To produce a monograph on a species for which the current breeding and wintering range remain largely unknown is surely not easy, nevertheless Adam Gretton, with the help of national co-ordinators appointed in each of the known range states, has produced a thorough review of current knowledge.

There is much information presented on knowledge of past breeding records, which sites are regularly used on pas-

sage and some clues as to where we should look to find this species during the winter. The action plan details what must be done in each of the known range states to give the Slender-billed Curlew a chance of survival.

The protection of sites used regularly by this species on migration and in winter is considered essential, but this alone will not suffice unless there is total protection from the hunting of this and similar species particularly other curlews *Numenius* spp. and godwits *Limosa* spp. Some of these measures will not be popular in countries where similar species are traditionally hunted, but if the author is correct in his assumption that hunting is the most important reason for the decline, it is essential that action is taken now across all known range states.

Adam Gretton has not been able to answer Stresemann and Grote's question but the ICBP project, that forms the basis of this book, has helped to focus attention on this critically endangered bird. The question of how we can protect this species has been at least partially answered. The real challenge that faces conservationists over coming years is how the Slender-billed Curlew can best be brought back from the very brink of extinction.

Graham Elliott

Kirby, J.S., Ferns, J.R., Waters, R.J. & Prys-Jones, R.P. 1991. *Wildfowl and wader counts 1990-91*. Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge. 82 pp. ISSN 0965 3708.

The publication of the annual report on the results of the National Waterfowl Counts and the Birds of Estuaries Enquiry in the UK is always eagerly awaited by the many counters and ringers who provide the data, and by conservationists who need up to date information in their seemingly endless task of protecting British estuaries and other wetlands. The return to an A4 format (as was the first BoEE report in 1971) allows much improved presenta-

tion of the many tables, while the handsome colour illustration on the cover upgrades the look of the report.

The usual tables giving the maxima for species at their main resort over the five winters (1986/87 - 1990/91) provide a useful update on the most important sites. Average peak wader counts for these winters are given for each of the 119 estuaries covered by the BoEE. The long run of counts for many wet-

lands in the UK enable national indices to be calculated for January numbers of wildfowl from 1960 and from 1971 for waders.

Records continue to be broken. The winter 1990/91 saw the highest total counts of Avocet *Recurvirostra avocetta*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* in the UK. The October count of over 169,000 Knot *Calidris canutus* was an all-time record for any wader on an estuary. While the January 1991 indices show that both the Dark-bellied



Brent *Branta b. bernicla* and Grey Plover populations (from similar breeding areas in arctic Siberia) are on a continuing high, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Redshank *Tringa totanus* numbers were substantially down on the previous year. The Redshank (mostly from the Icelandic breeding population) that winter on east coast estuaries suffered a major mortality

during a cold spell in February.

It is good to see that low tide counts are being undertaken on an increasing number of estuaries, providing crucial information on feeding areas. Species accounts not only comment on the counts, but usefully summarise the results of research and expeditions. Notable among the latter were expedi-

tions to central west Greenland and to the Taimyr Peninsula. Perhaps before long, the BoEE will have assembled enough data to allow a more detailed analysis of the wader counts on UK estuaries during passage periods.

James Cadbury
BoEE Co-ordinator for The Wash (Norfolk)



Estafiev, Alexey A. 1991. [*Waders and their ecology in the Bol'shezemelskaya tundra and Yugor Peninsula.*] Leningrad, Nauka publishers. (In Russian), 144 pp.

The author, Dr Alexey A. Estafiev, is a well known Russian ornithologist working in the Department of Animal Ecology, Institute of Biology, Komi Scientific Center, Ural Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Kommunisticheskaya str., 24, Syktyvkar 167610, Russia. In this book he focuses on the wading birds occurring in the Bol'shezemelskaya tundra and Yugor Peninsula located in the north-eastern part of European Russia. The observations were made during nine field seasons (1976-1984). The check-list below shows the 33 species of waders recorded in the area with those nesting indicated with +.

<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	+
<i>Gallinago stenura</i>	+
<i>Gallinago media</i>	+
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	
<i>Numenius arquata</i>	+?
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	+
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	+?

In the species accounts, information on the timing of migration, habitat distribution and breeding densities is given. In some, species density fluctuations in various years are also presented. A special chapter is dedicated to habitat selection by waders. Breeding densities of waders in various types of habitats are compared.

A separate chapter is given on reproductive success of waders and its dependence on various factors. The author considered that the date of average day temperature exceeding 0°C and the snow-melt date determine the beginning of the reproductive period of waders. Timing of reproduction in studied species are compared and their clutch sizes are given. Reproductive success and mortality factors are given and discussed for the major breeding species. A major mortality factor for clutches was flooding (10.9%), although predator activity was lower than in other regions (5.2%).

One chapter was devoted to the summer-autumn migration of waders and sites where they are concentrated in the tundra. Aerial survey data on wader densities in areas with wader

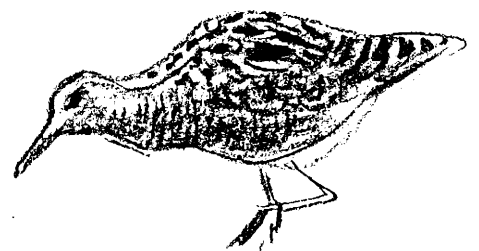
concentrations are given. Places of high autumn densities are mapped.

The book is very well written and is a good account of wader biology in this part of the Arctic.

Eugene Potapov



<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	+
<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	
<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	+
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	+
<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	
<i>Eudromias morinellus</i>	+
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	+?
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	+
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	+?
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	+
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	
<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	+
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	+
<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	+
<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	+
<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	+
<i>Phylomachus pugnax</i>	+
<i>Calidris minuta</i>	+
<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	+
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	+?
<i>Calidris alpina</i>	+
<i>Calidris maritima</i>	+?
<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	+?
<i>Calidris canutus</i>	
<i>Calidris alba</i>	
<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	+



Howes, J. & Bakewell, D. 1989. *Shorebird studies manual*. Asian Wetland Bureau Publication No. 55. Kuala Lumpur. 362 pp. ISBN No: 967 99979-9-5.

This book is a compendium of techniques used in shorebird research compiled by John Howes and lavishly illustrated by David Bakewell. It is, in fact, the first manual of shorebird studies to be published. The concept was first raised during the INTERWADER programme, which initiated large-scale field studies in Asia in 1983 and involved many NGOs and government agencies unfamiliar with wader study methods. The manual emphasises the importance of field study of the living bird and its habitat, and covers the practical aspects and difficulties encountered in such studies.

In eleven chapters the reader (or apprentice waderologist) is guided through the first stages of shorebird study. After a general review of Asian flyways, threats to shorebird populations and their conservation, a systematic account is given of all shorebird families in Asia.

As all science starts with correct identification, several chapters are dedicated to field identification of waders. The reader is introduced to the terminology of bird topography, plumage patterns and aspects of moult. The most important shorebird identification features, such as variation in bill shape, head pattern, flight pattern, body shape, are illustrated with skilful drawings. Most of the features presented are very useful for identification to the genus level. However, I would have liked more discussion of 'look-alike species groups' illustrating the important discriminating characters for each group, although a few examples are given (e.g. Swinhoe's, Pintail and Common Snipe).

The identification section is concluded by a chapter with practical suggestions for making notes and field sketches. After reading this part everyone should be able to draw a shorebird with simply two circles and several straight lines! I very much enjoyed the opportunity to peek into a sample of notebooks; several pages were reproduced and some of them contained lively sketches and accounts of the

daily routine of wader counting. This section could be complemented by more detailed information on sexing and ageing shorebirds in the field, as well as estimating the proportion in winter/summer plumage.

After a few words on basic equipment like telescopes and binoculars, the fundamentals of real science are laid down in chapter seven. A wide range of methods in field surveys and censuses are presented together with their merits and disadvantages. Special attention is given to accuracy of counts. The section on calculating turnover rates could be extended with a discussion of the many possible sources of error.

Although not easily accessible for the novice waderologist, radar tracking provides excellent data on shorebird movement during migration and chapter eight is dedicated to this sophisticated technique. Much of these studies were initiated to investigate the problems of bird strikes near airfields: small, innocent waders can easily damage large, high-tech war planes (these interesting side effects of wader protection need more study).

The following chapters are concerned with the bird in the hand, giving an overview of methods to catch them (chapter nine), and what to do with them when caught (chapter ten). In the latter chapter a detailed account is given of banding, morphometrics and colour marking. All drawings are instructive and clear, but the explanation of moult score calculation could be improved. Exponents are used for simple addition, which may be confusing. Furthermore, drawings could have been used to illustrate the occurrence of flight feathers of different age, indicated by (sometimes slight) differences in wear. This well-known phenomenon is especially important in first-summer long-distance migrants, many of which return to the breeding grounds in their second calendar year.

The final chapter is an introduction to the wild and exciting field of shorebird feeding ecology. Information on what shorebirds eat and where they get it is essential for adequate management and conservation of shorebird populations. Many aspects of feeding ecology are presented: guidelines for field observations, sampling and identification of prey items, faeces analysis, prey availability. A long list of references for further reading concludes this chapter.

Although the title implies a general manual to shorebird studies, the book is heavily biased to wader study in Asia (for which it was primarily intended). However, this does not preclude its global usefulness as most of the methods described can be applied to shorebird study elsewhere. For example, most of the wader genera occurring in the Asian region are present in the African-Paleartic migration system.

My advice to every 'freshman' waderologist who is head over heels with wader research: buy this book. It will give you a firm grounding in shorebird research. But I can also recommend it to the more experienced shorebird researcher. It can serve as an excellent guide to their work with novice shorebird researchers. With respect to the African-Paleartic flyways, there is certainly a need for an adapted version of this manual, and a French (or even Russian) edition would be most welcome. Who will accept the challenge?

Tom van der Have

Editorial note: The Executive Committee have accepted Tom's challenge! Over the next 18 months, work will be progressing towards an analogous methodological manual covering especially the Western Palearctic. As part of the process of collating this material, next year's Annual Meeting in Suffolk will have a special emphasis on wader methodologies. The Odessa Protocol identified the need for training materials of this sort to be widely available to promote wader studies, especially in countries without a tradition of such work. The Committee intend to publish the manual as a Supplementary *Bulletin* which will enable wide circulation in support of the aims of the Odessa Protocol.



Bregnballe, T., Halber, K., Hansen, L.N., Petersen, I.K. & Thorp, O. 1990. *Ornithological Winter Surveys on the Coast of Tanzania 1988-89*. ICBP Study Report No. 43, ICBP-Danish Section, Zoological Museum & Institute of Population Biology, Copenhagen, Denmark.

This report is based on two winter surveys; 15 January - 13 March 1988 and 6 January - 12 March 1989, organised by the ICBP in Denmark and Tanzania. A total of 162 km (10% of Tanzania's coastline) was surveyed, in sections chosen as areas likely to be good for birds. A further 92 km of tidal channels and rivers were surveyed from a boat. This selective approach made it difficult to multiply up to a national population total, but a rough estimate of 300,000 wintering waders was made.

The survey showed that Tanzania was clearly very important for certain species on the east African coastline, especially Crab Plovers (over 700 seen), Terek Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers, Whimbrels, Grey Plovers, Greater Sand Plovers, Little Stints and Greenshanks. Counts were also made of herons, gulls, terns and other sea birds, including breeding boobies and terns. A detailed account is given for each species. Unlike many coastal areas in the third world, the waders in Tanzania were not regarded as a food source by the local people, so were rarely disturbed. However, like other tropical coastlines, mangrove felling was prevalent and is seen as a threat to the coastal environment.

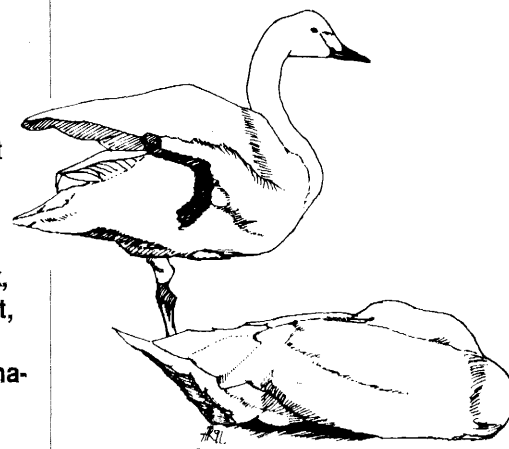
It is gratifying to see yet another chunk of the African coastline receive a major survey. By this piecemeal approach it should be possible to have a detailed picture of the entire continent sometime in the future. However, Mozambique and Madagascar seem rather daunting compared with the relatively uncomplicated coasts in other countries.

All partial surveys, like this one, are faced with the problem of trying to estimate the total population from sample sites and a knowledge of the habitats in the uncounted area. I feel that in future surveys better sampling techniques

should be employed in order to get a better estimate of total populations; e.g. stratified random sampling for the open coastline, coupled with complete surveys of key areas such as estuaries. However, these statistical problems rather pale in comparison to logistic ones - e.g. when the expedition yacht struck a coral reef and sank.

Copies of the report are available from; ICBP-Denmark, c/o Jan Dyck, Institute of Population Biology Unit, University of Copenhagen, Universitetsparken 15, DK - 2100, Copenhagen Ø, Denmark.

Ron Summers



PERENNOU, C., ROSE, P. & POOLE, C. 1990. *Asian Waterfowl 1990*. International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, Slimbridge, UK. Price £8 from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BX, UK.

This is an A5 volume of about 80 pages detailing the results of waterfowl counts made in Asia during midwinter 1989/90 (generally in January 1990). Asia in this case stretches from Saudi Arabia in the southwest, to Japan and Korea in the northeast, and to Indonesia and Papua New Guinea in the southeast. There is little information from the USSR and a further five countries in the region. Not surprisingly, coverage in some countries is extremely patchy. The volume summarises a large database that, for 1990, covers nearly 1,500 wetlands and 6.6 million waterfowl of 200 species. A brief description of the counts from each country is given followed by a comprehensive table of numbers counted in each country. Numbers counted in some countries, e.g. India, receive further breakdown.

This is an impressive compilation: IWRB and the Asian Wetland Bureau have carried out a very difficult interna-

tional co-ordination project across a vast region where communications are undoubtedly not straightforward. To get this sort of summary document produced within one year of the counts (in order to encourage counters to continue) is admirable. Anyone interested in numbers and distribution of Asian waterfowl ought to have this volume, but if information is needed on a specific site, then it is probably best to refer to the underlying database.

The task of protecting wetlands in this region will undoubtedly be easier as a consequence of the data compiled by this project.

Mark L Tasker



To belong to a Region or to a Community?

Habitat selection in Belgian Lapwings (Vanellus vanellus): an appeal for information

In Belgium, to belong to one Region or another is "The" topical question. This seems to be the case for Lapwings too.

In my two study areas (one in northern part of Belgium and one in the southern part) the extent of coverage by either meadows or crop fields, is similar. But Lapwings do not choose the same nesting habitat at the same moment. In the northern part, first breeders prefer meadows, later ones choose crop fields. In the southern part, Lapwings nearly exclusively choose this nesting habitat.

An inquiry by Belgian ringers and bird-watchers suggests that, before 1 May (sowing time), northern Lapwings prefer to place their nests in meadows, and southern ones in ploughed lands. After this date, all of them choose crop fields (maize, beet, garden peas).

In Belgium, before the 1960s, Lapwings nested only in wet meadows in the northern part of Belgium. Now, they have become more or less common all over the country. Why do southern Lapwings avoid meadows? We can suggest two hypotheses.

(1) Lapwings have progressively colonized the southern part of Belgium from the north. But they have had to change their habitat choice. In this case, the choice could be called "regional".

(2) Lapwings have colonized the southern part of Belgium from any other, southern, or eastern, country where they nest in ploughed fields; and they continue, by tradition, to choose this habitat, despite the fact that it is no longer the best choice. In this case, the choice would be a "cultural" one.

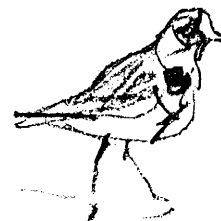
Information from other countries is still

needed. I would like to call on anyone able and willing to help me by:

- filling in a recording for available from me about the nesting habitat (clutch habitat) used by breeding Lapwings in any European region, before and after sowing time.

- sampling blood of Lapwing chicks during the nest breeding season. Equipment for blood sampling and storing will be sent to anyone upon request.

Forms and further information are available from Anne Versailles, Ecology Unit - UCL, 5 Place Croix du Sud, B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.



Errata

Unfortunately, even our eagle eyed proof readers are known to make the occasional slip! We apologise for the transposition of columns which occurred in V.K. Ryabitshev and N.S. Alekseeva's abstract of their talk to the Odessa Conference (*WSG Bull.* 65:17). The correct version is given below.

Species	Density limits nest/square km		Site tenacity % mean \pm SD	
	Mid. Yamal	N.Yamal	Mid.Yamal	N.Yamal
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	0 - 0.04	2.2 - 3.6	-	58 \pm 10
<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	0 - 0.04	0.1 - 0.2	-	-
<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	0.3 - 0.8	0	42 \pm 18	-
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	0.09 - 0.2	0 - 0.08	53 \pm 14	-
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	3.7 - 8.1	0	62 \pm 9	-
<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	15 - 32.1	3 - 6	+	-
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	0	0 - 0.1	-	-
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	3.1 - 18.1	0 - 5	0	-
<i>Calidris minuta</i>	0 - 16.2	37 - 95	0	0
<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	1.9 - 5.6	7 - 9	58 \pm 10	10 \pm 9
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	once	0.2 - 1.3	-	-
<i>Calidris alpina</i>	0.7 - 2	24 - 33	37 \pm 12	68 \pm 4

