

REVIEWS

These three recent reports from The Foundation Working Group on International Wader and Wildfowl Research (WIWO) are excellent examples of the sound and useful reporting of data collected on exciting trips to far-flung places. Since its foundation in 1980 WIWO has carried out more than 40 expeditions, mainly organised by volunteers and including participation from the host countries. The knowledge so accumulated has certainly resulted in considerable leaps in our understanding of wader annual cycles and key sites, as well as making a significant contribution to the cause of wader conservation.

Altenburg, W. & Kamp, J. van der. 1991. Ornithological importance of coastal wetlands in Guinea. ICBP Report No. 47, Cambridge/WIWO Report No. 36, Zeist. 63pp. Dfl 25 (plus Dfl 10 p&p for payments from abroad).

This report is the result of a request from the Guinean Ministry of Environment to ICBP – now BirdLife International – to support the creation and management of some bird reserves in Guinea. To identify priority zones for future protected areas, ICBP contracted WIWO to carry out, in co-operation with Guinean colleagues, a thorough census of the birds and other key vertebrates of the coastal wetlands. The census results are reported in this volume, together with an inventory of the coastal wetlands. There is also a brief discussion of the international importance of the Guinean coastal wetlands, but a comprehensive assessment of sites qualifying for Ramsar status is reserved for a separate report, produced in French for use especially by the Guinean Government and international nature conservation organisations. Most of the proposed Ramsar sites are in mangrove areas, these being the most threatened wetlands.

During the European winter these wetlands, especially the mudflats, support over half a million waterbirds, as

c.430,000 Palearctic waders join Afrotropical species. Internationally important numbers of the following wader species were recorded: Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. In addition there are considerable numbers of flamingos, herons, egrets and terns.

In the summer, numbers decline by 80% – or 90% in the case of the Palearctic migrants. But there are considerable breeding populations of certain waterbirds e.g. Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, African Darter and Green-backed Heron.

Two major threats identified were large scale tree-cutting and extension of rice culture into the mangrove areas. Also hunting and disturbance of breeding colonies are a problem.

Spiekman, H. 1992. Results of wader ringing activities in Tunisia 1962–1986. WIWO Report No. 44, Zeist, The Netherlands. 31pp. Dfl 15.

Long-term wader ringing data for the Mediterranean are virtually non-existent. Hence this Tunisian data-set is a rare and precious resource, salvaged from Centre de Baguage de Tunisie (CBT – the Tunisian Ringing Centre) archives due to the foresight of Dutch WIWO expeditioners and T Gaultier, erstwhile head of CBT. With appropriate permission, the data for about 70,000 waders was photocopied in Tunisia and is now computerised on a WIWO database in the Netherlands, where it is available for use by those interested. A data exchange with the EURING-database is also underway.

This report presents data for 30 wader species, trapped in cages mainly in the salines of Rades on the border of Lake

Tunis, between 1962 and 1986. Total numbers ringed (65,329 in total) and the number of retraps (3,980 in total) are given. For the 13 species with more than 100 birds caught between 1966–81, cumulative catch totals per month and per calendar year are presented graphically. The report gives a brief description of the general migration pattern through Tunisia of these 13 species, with some reference to the literature. It also briefly assesses the variation in numbers and age-ratios between years. However, it does not contain detailed analyses of morphometrics, migration phenology or foreign recoveries as these are to be published elsewhere.

Altenburg, W., Wymenga, E. & Zwarts, L. (eds). 1992. Ornithological importance of the coastal wetlands of Guinea-Bissau. WIWO Report No. 26, Zeist, The Netherlands. 166pp. Dfl 25 (plus Dfl 15 p&p for payments from abroad).

This report is a collection of papers, four of which have been published elsewhere (French summaries are given). They result from a Dutch WIWO expedition from December 1986 to February 1987 to investigate claims that the coast of Guinea-Bissau might be the most important coastal wetland system for Palearctic waders between Senegal and Namibia, supporting an estimated 1.1 million wintering waders.

Of particular relevance to waderologists are the papers from *Ardea* 76–78 by Leo Zwarts on numbers and distribution of coastal waders (on intertidal flats), Eddy Wymenga et al. on geographical breeding origin and migration of waders wintering in West Africa (ringing data), Wibe Altenburg & Tom van Spanje on the utilization of mangroves by birds (qualitative rather than quantitative) and avifaunistic notes on rice fields (the third important type of coastal wetland in Guinea-Bissau) by Wibe Altenburg & Jan van der Kamp. There is also a useful concluding chapter with conservation recommendations.

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