

The 1994 Wader Study
Group conference in
Büsum:
a personal view

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My first Wader Study Group conference was at Commachio. Every year since then I am surprised by the special character of the conferences, in spite of the fact that everybody talks about waders. From Italy I remember the talks on the Black-winged Stilt, the amount of excellent food and the rain during the excursion. In Hungary we learned Hungarian folk dancing and played around in a very strange smelling swimming pool, where four of the Spanish members discovered that one of the Dutch girls understood Spanish (whilst they were comparing notes on the beauty of the different females in the swimming pool). From Texel I remember three of the British Committee members bicycling in the rain against the wind on bicycles which seemed to be somewhat too big.

And last year in Ipswich I was surprised many times. The High School was not at all cold and the food was surprisingly good for Britain. Drinking coffee was a real event, with everybody staring into his or her cup to find out whether they had got coffee or tea. The band 'The Price of Doughnuts' (with additions by Jan Kube) were extremely good - we could not get enough of them, and the English beer was just as Rodney had promised.

This year, arriving in the night at the youth hostel in Büsum, I was really wondering where we had landed now. Büsum at night is rather dark and the architecture of the youth hostel was rather dark too. Lucky me that I like the smell of mussels, and "what's in a building"?! Next morning we found out that the building does not matter, it is the people who stay in it that are more important!

The program was as full as it could be, with even talks and slides on

Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening. So this time no dancing at all. The talks were of high quality, nobody took more of the time than necessary and this led to very fruitful discussions. Hans Meltofte even thoughtfully managed to leave 30 of his 40 minutes to get us going in discussion. Even shorter was Gerhard Nikolaus who gave a talk with only one overhead sheet. He gave a kind of introduction to a short unexpected session on Curlew Sandpipers, in which different speakers presented new theories about the spring and autumn migration in Europe. The OAG Münster and the BTO showed what has been done with the counting effort of hundreds of persistent counters.

Something completely different was a talk on the effects of PCB and DDT in Dunlin. It was quite a new subject for a WSG meeting. Meinte Engelmoer did some research at the meeting. He brought stuffed museum skins of Oystercatcher and Dunlin with him. Everybody was asked to take the same measurements, like wing- and bill length to see whether there would be any similarity between measurers. I am very curious to know what came out of this exercise; he better not publish it in the *Bulletin*.

To give more attention to the effort people put into posters we had a poster competition, which seemed to be a big success. The winning poster was entitled: "The Grey Plover on Yamal Peninsula: site tenacity, mate tenacity, plumage patterns and breeding success" and made by Vadim K. Ryabitsev from St. Katerinenburg. The second best was made by Prezmek Chylarecki from Poland with the title: "Feather mites are common ectoparasites living on primaries of the Ringed Plover." The third best poster was entitled: "Behaviour of meadow birds towards aircraft close to an airport" by Norbert

Kempf and Ommo Huppopp from Germany. The audience agreed to have the competition again next year [on condition that the prizes are again announced by Petra and Jaga - Ed.].

Wader enthusiasts from 16 countries visited Büsum, and as you can see from the Table below, an incredible number of women attended the meeting.

The country	male-female ratio		?
	male	female	
Norway	1		
Hungary	6		
Portugal	2	2	
USA	1		
Germany	43	15	1
UK	20	6	
Italy	6		
Russia	9	2	
Sweden	1	1	
Netherlands	17	1	
Finland	1	1	
Spain	2		
Czech Republic	3		
Denmark	6		
Ukraine	2		
Poland	2	1	
Total	122	29	1

Who can tell me why women attend the meetings en mass nowadays? And what about the many young ones?

Hermann and his team had arranged every thing perfectly. The separation of congress hall and youth hostel accomodation was no problem at all, the 10 minute walks were refreshing. I enjoyed the conference in Büsum very much, my compliments go to the organising team that offered an excellent program in a very good atmosphere, and also to all the people who gave talks. Almost everybody had done his or her best to make it worthwhile to listen! Even Declan Troy, a native American speaker, apologized for his bad English. And I will always remember the nice ladies from the kitchen.

