

## NOTES & NEWS

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Robin M. Ward

### 10 SLENDER-BILLED CURLEWS IN ITALY

A total of 10 Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris* were sighted at a wetland in Italy this winter. With just a single individual wintering at Merja Zerga in Morocco this year (the only regular wintering site known), concern over the future of the species has reached a peak in recent months. For the past six years, two to three individuals have wintered at Merja Zerga, but this year only one bird appeared fuelling fears over the fate of the other two.

The sighting in Italy came as the hunting season was drawing to a close and shooting activity was at a peak. Happily, the Italian authorities posted guards at the site for the duration of the Slender-billed Curlew's stay.

While the full reasons for the drastic decline of the species are not known (in the latter part of the nineteenth century it was reported as commoner than the Eurasian Curlew *N. arquata* or Whimbrel *N. phaeopus* in some places), hunting is believed to have played a part, individuals being easily mistaken for their commoner congeners.

### THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE SHOREBIRD RESERVE NETWORK: TOWARDS A SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Wetlands for the Americas celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network Program (WHSRN) by hosting WHSRN's first international workshop in Ottawa, Canada from 11

- 13 May 1995. Since its inception in 1985, the WHSRN Program has been instrumental in promoting shorebird conservation from Canada's arctic islands to Tierra del Fuego. WHSRN sites in 7 countries now help to conserve as many as 30 million shorebirds and over 10 million hectares of wetland habitat.

Eighty-five participants representing 31 WHSRN sites including representatives from the Asian Wetland Bureau, the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Bureau, the World Bank, government wildlife agencies from Canada, United States, Brazil, Mexico and Suriname, Ducks Unlimited, Wildlife Habitat Canada, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Ramsar, Conservation International, the Bonn Convention and a number of local and national NGOs, convened in Ottawa to discuss WHSRN's growth over the last decade and to chart a conservation strategy into the next millennium.

The three-day workshop was designed to lay the groundwork for establishing a shorebird conservation strategy for the western hemisphere. Introductory remarks and excellent presentations were followed by workshops on three specific themes: shorebird ecology, conservation and management, and outreach.

The WHSRN Workshop demonstrated the successful marriage of science and conservation in what is widely considered to be one of the more innovative approaches to waterbird conservation in the Western Hemisphere. The following are a series of interesting and important observations and recommendations presented to the plenary session:

- Wetlands for the Americas, through its WHSRN Program, should coordinate the development of a shorebird conservation strategy to unite the many excellent and highly successful shorebird conservation initiatives currently underway throughout North and South America. To assist this endeavour, the formation of a Shorebird Technical Committee was suggested;

- Build stronger links between sites and between knowledgeable individuals and/or groups. The idea of twinning sites and encouraging inter-site cooperation should be promoted as a means of sharing the responsibilities and the demands of the Network (the strength of any given site within WHSRN is amplified if it knows it can count on the technical, financial and political support of other network sites);
- Continue to be based on sound scientific principles while ensuring the broader, socio-economic and geo-political issues are incorporated into models for conservation of shorebirds and shorebird habitats;
- Strengthen its international partnerships with AWB, IWRB, Ramsar and the World Wildlife Fund, to mention a few; and
- Work to encourage and assist in the development of similar shorebird networks in Europe, Africa and Asia.

In hosting this workshop, WA was able to assess the strengths of its WHSRN Program and gauge the needs of its constituents. Clearly, the program has tremendous potential as individuals at WHSRN sites begin to work collaboratively in a united effort to further the conservation of shorebirds and their habitats in the Western Hemisphere.

Proceedings will be published this summer and distributed to workshop participants. Those interested in copies, and who were not able to attend the WHSRN Workshop, can contact Ian Davidson, Wetlands for the Americas, 7 Hinton Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4P1, Canada.

**Further information about the workshop, including full texts of the two summarising talks, can be found elsewhere in this Bulletin.**

### "YOU HAVE CLEARANCE TO LAND...."

Gudmundur Gudmundsson recently established that passage and

wintering Sanderling *Calidris alba* colour-ringed at Teesmouth were staging in Iceland on their way to Nearctic breeding grounds (*Ardea* 80: 315-326). This link has been explored further by Peter Evans' shorebird team at Durham University. Several Sanderling that were radio-tagged this May at Teesmouth were later located in Iceland by Gudmundsson using a radio receiver. Of five transmitter birds that departed from Teesmouth in mid-May, at least three 'refuelled' in Iceland. The time between last signal detection at Teesmouth and first detection in Iceland was as little as two days. This would suggest that the journey of 1,600 km or so is undertaken by at least a proportion of birds with a non-stop flight. Utilisation of radio tags in further collaborative research on this migration hop is planned for future spring passage periods.

".....BUT YOU'VE OVER SHOT!"

Over 4,500 km off course, Britain's second ever Grey-tailed Tattler was found at Burghead, Grampian, Scotland in November 1994. In the early hours of the morning subsequent to the bird's discovery, over 90 motorists were caught for speeding by the Grampian police on their way to Burghead! *British Birds* reports rumours "that certain individuals were so determined to end up with a longer [bird] list than their colleagues that they were claiming to have been stopped for speeding on three separate occasions." This brings back memories to some of us of the exodus of like minded individuals on cessation of the WSG Conference at Texel when Great Knot was the quarry on the nearby mainland - but then we dipped [missed the bird]!

### IN THE STILT

Reporting upon recent shorebird research and conservation in the Australasian/East Asian flyway is the latest edition of *The Stilt* (No. 25), the AWSG journal. Within is detailed the concerns and recommendations of the Australian Wetland Alliance (AWA) regarding Ramsar sites. AWA has been formed by a number of Australian non-government

organisations, including AWSG. AWA aims to conserve Australia's wetlands by promoting communication between interested parties and enhancing co-operation for wetland conservation activities through Australia.

A preliminary report is given by C.D.T. Minton & D. Rogers on the "Tundra Ecology '94" expedition - a major multidisciplinary scientific expedition to the Russian Arctic on which both authors participated (pp. 40-42). Sixty scientists, about a third of whom were ornithologists, were present on each of three legs of the expedition which transversed the north Russia coast by ship. The team of scientists were taken ashore at seventeen locations between the Kola Peninsula and Chutotsk Peninsula. The ornithological research ranged from radar migration studies to the injection of heavy water into waders to study their metabolic energy consumption.

Amongst the many exciting findings of the expedition were the sightings of Australian coloured leg flagged birds: a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* on N.E. Taimyr from Victoria, a Sanderling breeding on the New Siberia Isles from S.E. Australia and a Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* on the Indrigirka Delta from N.W. Australia. The Curlew Sandpiper sighting confirms for Minton and Rogers a considerable overlap in the breeding areas of the species which migrate to Africa and to Australia.

A major paper (pp. 23-32) comes from Chris Chafer on the prey-specific foraging techniques of the Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*. At least fourteen prey-specific foraging techniques were found to be used to hunt individuals from at least 49 prey species. The data collected is interpreted to support the view that optimal diet choice in predators with foraging time constraints consume a more catholic diet than would otherwise be expected.

Other articles include a questioning of the impact of the introduced Marram grass *Ammophila arenaria* upon the demise of the Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis* in Australia (p. 22), the breeding distribution of

Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* in the Russian Far East (pp. 37-39), and the identification of Lake Finness, Northern Territory, as an internationally significant site for Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* (p. 21). Of particular interest to ringers is a paper (pp. 33-34) by Natasha Taylor that describes the condition capture myopathy in waders, the ways of reducing its incidence and a technique for its treatment.

A new AWSG project report is announced in *The Stilt* entitled *Wader movements in Australia*, authored by Richard and Margaret Alcorn, and Mike Fleming. It presents an analysis of regular count data collected from 1981 to 1990 by RAOU, providing information on the timing of arrival and departure of all migratory wader species commonly found in southern and eastern Australia, and on the annual variation in timing. The timing and flocking of many resident species has also been determined, as has the response to drought and flood of inland species.

### COASTAL ZONE PUBLICATIONS

The *Journal of Coastal Conservation (JCC)* is a new journal for integrated research and management of coastal zones. The emphasis is on natural resources and their sustainable use in the context of the past and future social and economic developments. *JCC* covers both natural and human sciences as required for a thorough understanding of the patterns and processes in coastal systems, this includes animal ecology. *JCC* is the official scientific organ of the European Union for Coastal Conservation (EUCC). For further information contact: Drs. Vera Noest, Managing Editor *JCC*, Institute of Ecological Botany, PO Box 559, S-75122 Uppsala, Sweden.

A newsletter that brings together coastal zone information from the Coastal Research and Management Group is *Coastal News*, published by the U.K. Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The latest edition (1/95) includes news items from the organisations JNCC, English Nature, the EUCC and National Trust, as well as from the Isle of Man. For further information contact Nick Davidson.

Coverage in *Coastal News* is given to a major project supporting management of the British coastal zone. Over the next two years JNCC is producing a series of Coastal Directories, under the general title *British Coasts and Seas* on behalf of a wide-ranging funding consortium. The Directories will provide a set of baseline environmental information on the whole British maritime zone to which interpretation is provided. These Directories are designed to help everyone involved in using and managing the coastal zone. For further information contact Caroline Robson, JNCC, Monkstone House, City Road Peterborough, PE1 1JY, UK.

*Coastal Zone Topics: Process, Ecology & Management* is a new occasional series published by JNCC and the Estuarine and Coastal Sciences Association (ECSA). *Coastal Zone Topics* is designed to improve the flow of information on coastal resources, processes and management needed by those developing and implementing initiatives in coastal zone management. It publishes volumes based on papers presented at ESCA's annual local meetings, other workshop and symposium volumes and volumes providing reviews of particular topics relevant to the UK coastline and its management. Coverage of a volume usually includes both scientific and management aspects covering both marine and terrestrial parts of the zone. For further information contact JNCC's Coastal Conservation Branch.

### FIELD GUIDES WANTED

We have received an appeal from the Moscow-based organisation "Ecosystem" which is promoting field studies for young people in the CIS. They are desperately short of funds and particularly need field identification guides covering all groups of plants and animals.

If you have any unwanted guides which you would like to donate, please send them to:  
Dr James Hindson, Field Studies Council, Preston Montford, Shrewsbury SY4 1HW, UK. Tel. 01743 851074; Fax. 01743 850178.

### CREATIVE WETLAND CONSERVATION

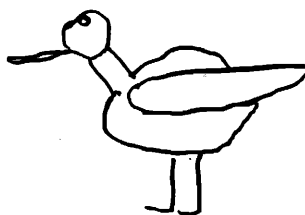
The first issue of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's research newsletter *Wetland News* described the range of WWT's research activities. These include behavioural ecology, a proposal for a UK national wetland register, and work on wetland ecology and management. The main focus of the newsletter is creative conservation.

WWT is developing reedbed filtration systems designed to maximise conservation benefits without compromising water treatment potential. The reedbed established at the Trust's headquarters was created to deal with the waste water problem caused by the 3,000 captive wildfowl at Slimbridge. The scheme was the first in the UK to incorporate habitat creation as a major objective.

WWT has recently published a manual of practical advice to help industry manage, restore and create wetlands for the benefit of wildlife (see review elsewhere in this *Bulletin*). The volume, *Wetlands, Industry and Wildlife* is available from: WWT, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT, UK (price £14.95, including UK [postage]).

WWT's constancy, the Wetlands Advisory Service (WAS) is currently undertaking a major survey of the tidal section of the River Thames, with particular emphasis on establishing patterns of passage and overwintering use by waders and wildfowl. Further survey work has been conducted in the Irish Sea close to six important British waterfowl sites. Ornithologists spent three months on surveying from an ESSO oil and gas exploration boat, recording, amongst other species, several waders.

To receive copies of *Wetland News*, contact Louisa Beveridge at the address above, or on 01453-890333.



### SNIPPETS FROM THE IWRB WOODCOCK AND SNIPE RESEARCH GROUP'S NEWSLETTER NO. 20

#### *Breeding success*

Ageing samples of Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* wings is a useful technique to estimate the breeding success of this secretive species. This method suggested greater breeding success in 1993 than the record low in 1992.

In Denmark Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* had a good season in 1993.

For the first time the weight of some shot birds has been recorded. Calculation of a condition index (weight/wing length) has allowed the monitoring of the bird's response to severe weather.

In France wing sampling is continuing on the three snipe species.

Record numbers of Woodcock were ringed in France in 1993/94. Of birds ringed, 7.9% were directly recovered and shot, on average, 26.4 days after ringing.

Expeditions also visited Russia, the Baltic States, Poland and Denmark. A total of 204 Woodcock were ringed (mainly in Russia). Of these, 80.4% of Russian birds were juveniles (65.4% of Danish ringed Woodcock).

#### *Woodcock population size*

Long-term projects in France have intensified. The results indicate a more or less constant occupation of French forests by breeding Woodcock.

The number of roding Woodcock in an area does not give an absolute figure for the population. The status of Woodcock in the far east of Russia is under investigation. Isolated populations exist and if shooting is assumed to eliminate all displaying males, then first results suggest that there are 1.3-1.5 times more males in the cohorts studied than the number of observations suggest.

## E-MAIL ADDRESSES

With more and more members entering 'The Net', we thought it might be useful if we compiled a list of member's e-mail addresses and then publish it in a 1996 *Bulletin*. If you are interested in supplying your e-mail address for incorporation into this list, please contact the Membership Secretary or e-mail the General Secretary on [petra@nioz.nl](mailto:petra@nioz.nl). (*sic!*, the world's shortest e-mail address- Ed.)

## YOUR NOTES AND NEWS WANTED!!!

To keep this column topical in reflecting current national and international wader study activity, please help us by gathering information and send contributions to Robin Ward & Lys Muirhead, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DM1 3LE, UK. All news, views and other snippets most gratefully received!

## IMPORTANT: JANUARY 1 IS SUBS RENEWAL DAY

Sorry to keep on about subscription renewal dates but.... The subscription rates for 1996 are the same as now, so it you could please remember to have your payments with me by January 1 1996 it really would be a great help. This applies particularly to our members who are outside Europe, especially in the Western Hemisphere and beyond who need to be mailing payment probably sometime in November. Early payment will guarantee that the April *Bulletin* is posted to you on time.

*Many thanks, Membership Secretary*

## WSG LIBRARY TRAVELS EAST

For many years the Group has exchanged journals with other similar publications. These, and items sent to the *Bulletin* for review, have built up

into quite a library of scientific publications, which have spent the last few years in the Editor's garage. It was agreed by the Executive Committee some years ago that these journals should be deposited somewhere where they would be properly curated and used by a greater number of wader workers as a research resource. The Ornithological Station at Gdansk was the ideal home, but the problem was how to get these weighty tomes to Poland!

Thanks to the kind assistance of the Anglian Water Authority in the UK the problem was solved this May. Anglian Water loaned the Chairman's new Land Rover Discovery to the WSG's Membership Secretary and two friends, Steve Piotrowski and Mick Wright. They also granted us £200 for petrol expenses.

The library got to Gdansk without any hitches, and the Land Rover and English returned in one piece, so thank you Anglian Water!



A second generation English Pole officially hands over the library to Jadwiga and Maciek Gromadska at the Ornithological Station in Gdansk.