Winter 1997/98 European Non-estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey

Little information is available on the number of waterfowl that make use of non-estuarine coasts (Rose & Stroud 1994) and yet these habitats may be critical to the overwinter survival of waterfowl, particularly during cold winters. The only large scale survey of non-estuarine coasts in Europe, the Winter Shorebird Count, covered 90% of Britain's coastline during the 1984/85 winter (Moser & Summers 1987). The repeat 1997/98 winter survey will include as much of the non-estuarine coastline of Europe as possible.

The new survey will modify slightly the methods used by the original Winter Shorebird Count. The basic sampling units are 1 km to 2 km stretches of coast which will be surveyed once in December 1997 and January 1998. Using stratifications by country, habitat and counter availability, the survey will lead to revised non-estuarine waterfowl population estimates. These revised values will help with the 1998 re-assessment of Western Palearctic population levels and the adjustment to the European/East Atlantic Flyway population estimates in 2004 following the nine year cycle of revision of the 1% thresholds for Western Palearctic waterfowl (Rose & Stroud 1995).

The survey will need a National Organiser to coordinate counts of each nation's coastline. The overall co-ordination of the project will be the responsibility of the British Trust for Ornithology and the Wetland Bird Survey partners (WWT, JNCC and RSPB), hopefully under the auspices of the Wader Study Group, but the population estimates for each country will be published by the national organiser. Key coastlines are those of Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Co-ordinated coverage of any other Mediterranean and West African coastlines would be most welcome.

Moser, M.E. & Summers, R.W. 1987. Wader populations on the non-estuarine coasts of Britain and Northern Ireland: results of the 1984-85 Winter Shorebird Count. *Bird Study* 34: 71-81.

Rose, P. & Stroud, D. 1994. Estimating international waterfowl populations: current activity and future directions. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 73: 19-26.

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European Non-Estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey (NEWS)

NEWS OBJECTIVES

1 To estimate the population size of waders and possibly ducks on European non-estuarine coasts.

2 To help update the East Atlantic Flyway and North-west European waterfowl population estimates.

NEWS METHODS

1 A single count of waders and possibly ducks on non-estuarine coasts throughout Europe.

2 The key non-estuarine coastal species include sea-duck, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, *etc.*

3 The National Organiser divides the coast of each country into several sections a few hundred kilometres long (see Figure).

4 Each section is then divided into small 1-2 km units of coast.

5 Then, according to the numbers of counters in a section, the National Organiser decides on the number of units to be counted.

6 In a section with very many counters all or almost all units are counted (Figure: A).

7 In a section with many counters perhaps one unit in three is counted, if fewer counters are available one unit in six is counted (Figure: B). If no counters are available then no units are counted in a section (Figure: C).

8 In each case the National Organiser selects units that are representative of the coast. A simple selection guide is to count every second, every third, every fourth, every tenth unit, *etc.* Obviously if a unit is in a military base or a big factory it does not have to be counted!

9 Avoid only counting units that are next to each other, especially if these units are known to have

many birds on them. Only counting areas known to hold many birds could lead to very high and incorrect population estimates for the section and the country.

10 Each unit is counted once at anytime from 1 December 1997 to 31 January 1998. Two sections near to each other can be counted on different days.

11 Each counter records the most common habitat type in their section (*e.g.* rock, sand, shingle, boulders, *etc.*).

NEWS NEEDS

1 A National Organiser in each country.

2 A team of waterfowl counters in each country, ideally spread around the country.

3 Some counts from each major non-estuarine habitat (*e.g.* rock, sand, shingle, boulders, *etc.*).

NEWS DOES NOT NEED (BUT USEFUL IF POSSIBLE)

1 Complete coverage of any coastline.

2 Complete coverage of any one habitat.

3 Detailed habitat information.

NEWS CO-ORDINATION AND PUBLICATION

1 Methods have been adapted from the 1984 Winter Shorebird Count and the 1994/95 NEWS Pilot Survey.

2 Methods can be adapted for the specific needs of each participating country.

3 Overall co-ordination will be the responsibility of the BTO and the WeBS partners, under the auspices of the Wader Study Group.

4 Co-ordination between countries will be by e-mail, fax, phone and letters. It is hoped to have an e-mail bulletin board.

5 Publication of each country's population estimates will be the responsibility of the national organiser; the European population estimates publication will include all of the national organisers.

European Non-Estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey: suggested sampling strategy