

COMMENT: Mongolian waders

Remarks on the paper "Observations on waders in the south-west Mongolia in July and August 1993" by C. Tourenq *et al.* *Wader Study Group Bull.* 77: 32-37.

No one doubts that Mongolia is an area of great importance for its breeding and migratory waders. It is thus a pity that knowledge of these birds is still poor in the region. In this respect the paper of C. Tourenq and co-authors is of interest as it covers the least explored part of Mongolia, although probably at the same time the least suitable one for waders.

The paper describes original records of waders in the hot dry deserts of SW Mongolia, however it gives also much information, derived from a literature review, on the status, distribution and habitats of the recorded species across Mongolia. As a result it appears that the authors have undertaken a comprehensive (or even exhaustive) overview of all available data on waders in Mongolia. It must be noted, however, that it is not the case.

To review records with the aim of summarising species distribution in Mongolia is a separate and hard task. For example, it should be noted that there is a rather large Russian faunistic literature concerning Mongolia; in particular joint Soviet-Mongolian expeditions explored the country for many years in 1970s and early 1980s and undertook much collecting. The aim was to write a handbook on the "*Birds of Mongolia*" although unfortunately this has not been achieved. Nevertheless at least three books published in Russia deserve to be mentioned: those of Kozlova (1975), Fomin & Bold (1991), and Sum'yaa & Skryabin (1989). There is also one very interesting paper devoted especially to waders in Mongolia (Ostapenko *et al.* 1980). There are also papers describing the fauna of the deserts of southern Mongolia (Bold & Tsevenmyadag 1982; Kurochkin & Mikhailov 1994). Incidentally, both the latter reference and the Catalog of Fomin & Bold (1991) contain data on waders of the Gobi National Park area, the subject of the paper by Tourenq *et al.* It also gives a very good overview of the status and distribution of each species in Mongolia, based on the original data and studies of Polish, German and Russian expeditions. Thus any further overview of distribution of waders in Mongolia will be far from complete without noting with these publications.

A mis-identification of one wader species is quite obvious from the description given in by Tourenq *et al.* The Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria* is not "similar in size to the Common Snipe *G. gallinago*" and is not "paler". It is a fairly large and dark-coloured snipe, though with whitish

edges to mantle and scapulars (Hayman *et al.* 1986; pers. obs.). Therefore the bird recorded in an oasis of the Gobi National Park could be either Common Snipe or Pintail Snipe *G. stenura*, both known on migration in Mongolia (e.g. Ostapenko *et al.* 1980).

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