

Obituary

George Underhill

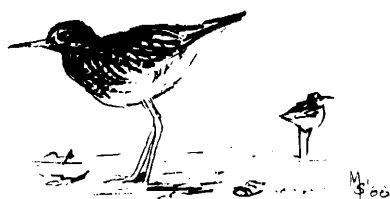
George Underhill, one of the earliest members of the Wader Study Group from outside the United Kingdom, died on 21 January 1997, aged 78. He was an integral part of the Western Cape Wader Study Group from its inception in 1971, and participated in all the activities of the group.

Unlike most of us, whose lives become progressively less productive, George's life was a crescendo. He took on a new lease of life in the early 1970s after an operation for an ulcer that had plagued him for a couple of decades; after his wife died in 1987 his interest in birdringing became a passion. He spent his last active day, 30 December, ringing (mainly Cape Sugarbirds) and checking the 20 active nests he had found of Whitefronted Plovers and African Black Oystercatchers; it was while walking between nests that he fell and fractured vertebrae in his neck.

He was a reluctant traveller - although war service had taken him to North Africa, Madagascar and Europe, he believed that there was so much to see and do in the Western Cape Province of South Africa that there was no need whatsoever to travel beyond it!

We will miss his dry sense of humour, his energetic commitment to the task in hand, and his amazing ability to locate nests.

Les Underhill



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AFRICAN-EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRD AGREEMENT

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands opened the Agreement for signature on 15 August 1996, having provided the text in all four official languages (English, French, Arabic and Russian). So far the Agreement has been signed by Germany, Guinea, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

SLENDER-BILLED CURLEW

As of January 1997 15 range states have signed the Memorandum of Understanding outlined in a previous *Bulletin*. The CMS Secretariat is planning to hold a symposium in autumn 1997 of country representatives and experts. Its aim is to co-ordinate monitoring and intensify current protection measures. The European Union, under its LIFE Programme is financing a protection and monitoring project in southern Europe, particularly in Greece.

In 1996 the Russian Conservation Union sent an expedition to the steppes area of southwest Siberia and another was organised to the moor region of the taiga. Although breeding areas have still not been found, good news has been received from Iran, where the Persian Gulf wintering areas of the bird (up to 50 individuals) were discovered.

CMS SECRETARIAT MOVES

As of 9 December 1996:

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RED KNOT TURNS RED IN USA

Sixteen species have recently been listed as being of the greatest conservation concern ('red alert') in North America. Three are waders Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus*, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* and Red Knot *Calidris canutus*. Of these perhaps the most surprising is the Red Knot - identified as vulnerable because the species is dependent of just a few sites.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to our member Prof Dr Yaa Ntiama-Baidu, now head of the Zoology Department at the University of Accra, Ghana, for the honour of receiving the "Medal of the Golden Ark", awarded by HRH Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands for her many achievements in the field of nature conservation in Africa.

The Golden Ark was presented to Yaa on Friday 31 January 1997 during a celebration at the Dutch Embassy in Accra. Yaa can look back on a rewarding year. After becoming Professor and the Head of the Zoology Department in early 1996, she hosted a most successful IX Pan-African Ornithological Congress in December 1996, a conference where many WSG members showed up. Early December also saw the formal opening, by the First Lady of Ghana, of the new Ghana Wildlife Society Headquarters in the centre of Accra. This, again, is a "Yaa initiative" that made it to fruition through her great dedication and persistence.

Additionally, earlier in 1996, she was elected as Chair of the Ramsar Convention's Scientific and Technical