

Colourmarked Oystercatchers at the White Sea, Russia: Nine year old consequences of the Dutch visit. *Rob Lambeck, Elena Lebedeva and Vitaly Bianki.*

Avocet workshop in Vannes, the new IDEA

On the Monday after the WSG conference (27 September 1999) a workshop on population dynamics of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* was held. The workshop was attended by 53 participants from 12 countries. Twelve speakers reviewed the status and the population development of Avocets breeding in 11 European countries, most of them in Western Europe. Comparisons between different countries revealed striking similarities in the population development of Avocets throughout Europe during this century. The most recent data, however, suggested diverging patterns of fluctuation, stabilisation, increase or even decrease in different regions. Habitat management in the widest sense and enhanced protection from persecution and disturbance seem to be factors responsible for at least some of the observed patterns. Habitats used by breeding Avocets differ greatly between countries. It is intended to publish the

results of the country-wise accounts in more detail in one of the next WSG Bulletins.

From the discussion following the presentations it became clear that there are still major gaps in the understanding of the functional processes behind the dynamics of the European Avocet population. One of the difficulties arises due to the lack of reliable estimates of adult and juvenile survivorship in Avocets. Another point poorly understood is the exchange rate between regional populations and how this influences the population dynamics. The latter point was identified as to be one which could possibly be tackled by common field activities in the next years.

A small working group was formed (see below) and a proposal for a new WSG project is currently being developed. The working title is International project on Dispersal in European Avocets (IDEA)

The aim of this project is to estimate the degree of dispersal between breeding sites of Avocets on a European scale. Both natal dispersal and breeding dispersal will be considered. The fieldwork will include an intensification

of colour ringing and improved searching for colour marked individuals at breeding sites. Colour-ringed Avocets can relatively easily be sighted on breeding grounds so that a coverage of a significant percentage of Avocet colonies in many countries can be achieved. For this the help of many volunteers is needed. Volunteers feeling able to check Avocet colonies in their regions should contact one of the members of the Avocet working group:

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WSG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2000 September 8th–11th, 2000, Norwich, UK

All WSG members are invited to revisit the Group's roots at the turn of the Millennium. The conference will take place at the University of East Anglia, between Friday 8 and Monday 11 September 2000. Norwich is close to the Wash, the premier wintering wader site in the United Kingdom, and the North Norfolk Coast, two sites that hold 430,000 waterfowl between them.

The Conference's theme is "Counts and marking – past, present and future" and so we would like to encourage people from all over the world to participate. On Saturday, the opening session will be on ringing and we would like to include talks which highlight what has been learned during the last thirty years and the priorities for the next thirty years. The second session aims to describe how past counts have been used and how new techniques and perhaps wider coverage will improve our knowledge of wader population dynamics. In the third session we would like examples/suggestions of how integrated studies that make use of marked birds and counts can improve our understanding of wader behaviour, phenology, population dynamics, as we prepare to face the challenges of the new Millennium. We plan to invite keynote speakers to sum up each of the three sessions.

The Sunday sessions will be more general and we would encourage people to submit talks on any wader studies in which they are involved. In the afternoon participants will be given the choice of two excursions. One will visit two RSPB reserves on the Wash, Snettisham & Titchwell, at a time of the year when an impressive number of passage birds should be present. The other will travel further south, into Suffolk to visit Breckland, one of the last strongholds of the Stone Curlew in England. On Monday, the workshop will cover the likely effects of Global Climate Change on wader populations. This should follow on nicely from the main Conference theme as climate change will probably provide a major impetus for wader research over the next thirty years.

Norwich Airport can be reached by plane directly from Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Manchester and Paris. Alternatively, you can fly into one of the London airports and travel on by road and train from there. London Luton and London Stansted are both within three hours of Norwich by road. Frequent coach and train services run from central London if you are flying into London Gatwick or London Heathrow airport. Norwich is within three hours of central London by train. There are also good train and coach connections with other large UK cities. A regular fast ferry service runs from Hoek van Holland to Harwich, which is also within reasonably easy reach by road and rail.

The Organising Committee looks forward to seeing you all. Encourage your friends and colleagues to come and help us make this a Millennium Conference to remember! More detailed information will be supplied in the April 2000 issue of the Wader Study Group Bulletin. For further information please contact Mark Rehfish, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, IP24 2PU, UK. Tel: 0044 1842 750050; Fax: 0044 1842 750030, e-mail: mark.rehfish@bto.org.