



Minutes of the 1999 WSG Annual General Meeting, Ile de Berder, Vannes, France

The 1999 WSG Annual General Meeting was held at 09.00 hrs on Saturday 25 September during the annual conference at the Ile de Berder, Vannes, France.

The Chairman opened the AGM by welcoming Clive Minton and family and William Dick — founding members of the WSG.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received Julianne Evans, Mike Pienkowski, Pablo Canavari and Jim Wilson.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 17 October 1998 at Keszthely, Hungary and published in *Bulletin* 88: 1-3 were accepted as a true record of that meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

Gerard Boere summarised the year and noted that 1998 and 1999 were years in which the International Wader Study Group had still further strengthened international links. He noted some of the many international fora where Group members have been active and summarised many the Group's recent and proposed initiatives. Through bringing together active field workers in many countries, the Group performs a unique role.

1999 was a year with many international meetings that have discussed varying aspects of waterbird and wetland conservation. There was scope for WSG to influence the outcomes of these meetings. In particular, the Group continued its impressive publication output and the current flyway atlas project and the updating of flyway population estimates gave real opportunities to ensure that governmental decisions were taken based on best available

data and information.

He noted that on 10 September 1999 the International Wader Study Group had formally been registered as a Society under Dutch law. This was the end of a long process, which had been started in 1996, to formalise the status of the group — increasingly important for a variety of financial reasons. He paid tribute to those Executive Committee members who had spent much time over this period on this complex task, in particular Bob Loos and Nick Davidson.

He concluded by congratulating the Editor on a very productive year, as well as publishing three *Bulletins*.

4. General Secretary's Report

Nick Davidson outlined the main activities of the General Secretary. This post was developing an increasingly important administrative role within the management of the



WSG. With the Group now engaged in a wide range of activities, the General Secretary acts in a general co-ordination role, especially supporting the work of the Executive Committee and the other Officers. Since 1996, in addition to the autumn meeting of the Executive Committee, there has been a spring business meeting of the Group's Officers, which allows the supervision of the important business. This meeting also identifies those items that need to be brought to a full discussion at the full Executive Committee and/or the Annual General Meeting of members.

The General Secretary stressed the important voluntary contributions made by the Officers of the Group in contributing substantial amounts of their own time (as well as travelling expenses) to ensure the smooth running of the Group. This has materially contributed to the keeping down of running costs and so avoiding the need to increase membership dues for nine consecutive years.

5. Membership Secretary's Report

The Membership Secretary noted that total membership was 632 at the end of 1998. This was similar to that in 1997. Numbers were at their highest level ever.

Notwithstanding this stable membership, it is important to seek more members who will enable the Group to further develop its financial base and thus its programme of co-operative research and surveys as well as publications. To this end, all members were asked to help with finding new members. A new revised membership form was produced in 1998 and Rodney offered to send stocks and other promotional material to any member that might be in a position to encourage new members to join the WSG.

6. Treasurer's Report

Bob Loos, noted the financially healthy situation of the Group, in significant part owing to the substantial voluntary contributions of time in running the Group's various activities.

He summarised his detailed Officer's

report, noting the small deficit (£560) in the overall budget for 1998. The Group's capital remains sufficient, however, to cover running costs for a year.

The Treasurer reported that the independent audit committee (Humphrey Sitters and Peter Evans) had checked the Group's accounts, clarified various items and were content with the accounts as presented.

7. Editor's Report

In the absence of the Editor, Julianne Evan's report was presented by David Stroud.

The *Bulletin* continues as the principle item of the Group's publication programme. The last year had seen three *Bulletins* published each of 76 pages and substantially on time. The August issue had been subject to some delays and was expected from the printers very soon.

The *Bulletin* continued to contain a good mix of material: topical reports, regular items and features and papers including some very significant data and information. Of particular note was a photo essay on the behaviour of Wood Sandpiper in the April 1999 issue, and Julianne was keen to include more such contributions.

The Editor requested in particular that members should continue to submit material for the reviews section and also any suitable artwork that might be used to enliven the *Bulletin*.

The task of producing the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* is a treadmill and she particularly thanked those that had helped contribute various sections on a regular basis, and especially Rodney West for his considerable assistance in preparing final layouts.

8. Project Co-ordinator's Report

Ole Thorup noted that two WSG projects had completed their fieldwork phases during 1998. The spring Ruff census project reported in April 1999 (*Bulletin* 88: 43-48), whilst in December 1997 and January 1998 fieldwork was undertaken for

the European Non-estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey (*Bulletin* 83: 10-11).

The *Tringa glareola* 2000 project was active whilst collation of current best estimates of national population sizes of breeding waders was occurring for the WSG project *Breeding Waders in Europe 2000*.

The development of the Arctic Waterfowl Breeding Conditions Database has continued at Moscow Museum with the help of funding from Wetlands International.

9. WSG-Wetlands International Liaison Officer's Report

David Stroud noted that the formal link with Wetlands International continues to be successful. 1998 was another extremely busy and productive year. In preparation for the triennial meeting of its Board of Members (its international governing body on which the International Wader Study Group is represented by the Liaison Officer) in November 1998, a detailed summary of the activity of the Group was prepared.

This showed that WSG arguably achieves as much as many small professional societies — all the more impressive since all this activity is carried out without any salaried co-ordination at all! Of all Wetlands International's Specialist Groups, it is clear that the WSG is one of the most active and productive (by a significant margin).

Wetlands International requires its Specialist Groups to produce a forward plan of activity to link with the main directions and goals of the organisation. The previous plan was prepared by Nick Davidson and published in the *Bulletin* three years ago. For the next three-year period, a new plan has been drafted and sets out a broad framework for the Group's activities (*Bulletin* 89: 7-18).

The three-year plan will materially assist the Executive Committee in reviewing and guiding the activity of the WSG. We will use it to report progress on an annual basis.

Significant progress has been made in a number of areas of conservation activity during 1998: the development of the wader count database has continued with final fruits of this



activity becoming apparent with revised population estimates for East Atlantic flyway populations being prepared.

Progress has been made with the development of a flyway atlas for waders in the African-Eurasian region with Wetlands International funding.

10. Elections of Officers and members of the WSG Executive Committee

Following the expiry of their terms of office, and their indication of willingness to stand again, the following were re-elected for a further term as Officers of the Executive Committee:

Vice-Chairman **Theunis Piersma**

Membership Secretary

Rodney West

Project Co-ordinator **Ole Thorup**

The post of WSG-Wetlands International Liaison Officer had been filled on a co-opted basis until formalisation by the Wetlands International Board of Members in November 1998. Accordingly, David Stroud was elected to the Executive Committee as:

WSG-Wetlands International Liaison Officer **David Stroud**

Nicola Baccetti was re-elected for a further term as an ordinary member of the Executive Committee.

In seeking wider geographic representation within the Executive Committee, **Les Underhill** (Africa) and **Bob Gill** (North America) were co-opted to the Committee as ordinary members, together with **Robin Ward**.

11. Subscription rates for 2000

For reasons outlined in the Treasurer's Report, there will be no subscription rate increase in 2000 for those paying in UK Sterling. The Treasurer noted, however, that for some of those paying in other currencies, increases had occurred owing to the consequences of a strong Pound on exchange rates.

At least for the time being, the Group would continue to budget in Ster-

ling. This was a sensible response to the fact that much of WSG's expenditure (related to *Bulletin* production) was paid in the UK.

The Treasurer noted the Executive Committee's view that, in order to avoid the Group falling into deficit on running costs over the next few years, a rise in subscription rates was anticipated to be needed in 2001.

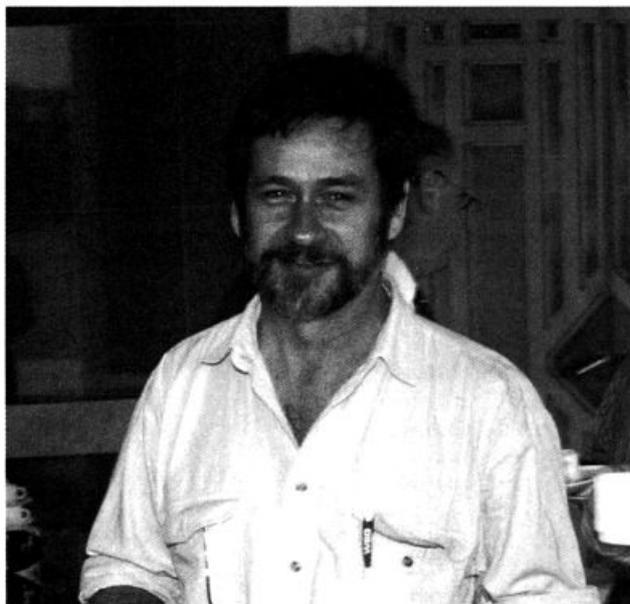
12. Future conferences and Conference Co-ordinator's Report

On behalf of the BTO, Mark Rehfish invited everybody to the UK where the 2000 conference will be held in East Anglia from 8-11 September.

Petra de Goeij outlined proposals for meetings in the coming years. In 2001, it was anticipated that the annual meeting would be held in The Netherlands, although the precise location and timing were currently unclear. A special meeting was being planned for May 2001 to be held at Delaware Bay (to coincide with the peak of spring wader migration there).

In 2002, there were possibilities of a return meeting, ten years on, in Odessa or alternatively somewhere else in the southern Mediterranean. There were no current plans for the meeting in 2003 and Petra noted that the Executive Committee would be pleased to receive suggestions.

13. Any other business



PABLO CANEVARI

It is with huge sadness that we report the death of Pablo Canevari, a long time supporter and friend of the Wader Study Group. As some of you may have known already, Pablo was diagnosed last month with brain cancer after being unwell for some time. His contribution to wader and waterbird science and conservation in South America and elsewhere has been huge. He was key to setting up Wetlands International's South American programme and had recently returned to Buenos Aires to lead the development of Wetlands International in the region after spending three years working for the Bonn Secretariat. In his many years of conservation activity, Pablo was largely responsible for establishing many of the wetlands and waterbird programmes throughout the region. His name was synonymous with waterbird conservation and had earned the respect of his peers worldwide. His enthusiasm and wealth of ideas have made an important contribution to the thinking of the WSG through his membership of EXCO, and as a personal friend of many of us this is dreadful news. He will be sorely missed. An obituary will appear in the next *Bulletin*.

