



Minutes of the 2000 WSG Annual General Meeting - Norwich, United Kingdom

The 2000 WSG Annual General Meeting was held at 09.00 hrs on Saturday 9 September during the annual conference at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

In the unavoidable absence of the WSG Chairman Gerard Boere, the meeting was chaired by WSG Vice-Chairman Theunis Piersma.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received Gerard Boere, Mike Pienkowski, Hugh Boyd, Rodney West and Nick Davidson.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 25 September 1999 at Ile de Berder, Vannes, France and published in *Bulletin* 91: 1-3 were accepted as a true record of that meeting.

3. Chairman's and General Secretary's Reports

Theunis Piersma opened the meeting by apologising for the lack of advance circulation of Officer's reports. An unfortunate combination of events had meant that it had not been possible to collate and publish these in advance of the AGM. He noted, however, that reports would be available for

inspection during the course of the 2000 conference and all would be published in the December 2000 *Bulletin*. As ever, feedback and comments on these by the membership would be welcome.

In summarising the Chairman's and General Secretary's reports, Theunis noted that 1999 had been another successful year for the WSG with an active publication programme and involvement by the membership in a variety of other areas.

4. Membership Secretary's Report

On behalf of Membership Secretary Rodney West, Bob Loos noted that total membership was 620 at the end



of 1999. This was similar to that in 1998. Numbers were effectively stable, although this stability concealed a turnover of about 30-40 members a year.

5. Treasurer's Report

Bob Loos, noted another year in which the financial status of the WSG had been essentially healthy, in significant part once again owing to the substantial voluntary contributions of time by the officers and others in running the Group's various activities. He presented and summarised receipts and expenditure for 1999, noting that the Group had assets of £26,747. This capital remained sufficient, should the need arise, to cover running costs for a year. For 2001, there was the prospect of a balanced budget, although the budget currently did not include expenditure to publish the review papers arising from the 1999 Avocet Workshop in France. It was anticipated that this cost would be found from savings arising from smaller than usual Bulletins in 2000.

With respect to subscriptions, he noted that there was no proposal to increase these for 2001. However, in discussing the lack of a subscription increase, he emphasised that this happy situation (no increase since 1992) related solely to the UK membership: a consequence of the Group budgeting in pounds sterling. Most members living elsewhere in Europe had, in contrast, experienced subscription increases of up to 40% in recent years as a consequence of varying exchange rates. This has led to increasing discrepancies.

Because of these exchange-rate related problems, and in order to provide a small surplus that will help defray the cost of the Group's ambitious publication programme, the membership (and in particular

those from the UK) will be asked to make an additional voluntary contribution at the time of 2001 subscription renewal. A request will be included with the membership renewal forms to be mailed in November 2000. The success of this appeal will influence the decision as to whether or not there will need to be a general subscription increase for 2002.

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.

6. Project Co-ordinator's Report

Ole Thorup noted that two WSG projects were active during 1999. The Breeding Waders in Europe 2000 project continued, and new national estimates of breeding wader populations had recently been compiled for Sweden, Spain and Russia. The current meeting would provide a valuable opportunity to review these and other data with those national co-ordinators for the project who were present.

Ole Thorup invited Magdalena Remisiewicz to present a brief update on the *Tringa glareola* 2000 project. In the course of the last year, a further six new stations had become involved in the project. Some sites were involved in trapping and colour-marking Wood Sandpipers, whilst others were also undertaking migration monitoring. Past ringing data had been supplied from yet further sites. It was hoped to hold a workshop to review the project so far and plan the publication of results. It was hoped to collate all the data and information collected, and to publish these in a volume in the International Wader Studies series, possibly in 2004.

7. Editor's Report

The Editor, Julianne Evans, noted that the *Bulletin* continues as the principle item of the Group's publication programme.

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.

As a consequence of domestic pressures she had indicated to the Committee her desire to step down from the role of Editor, but had agreed to continue until a successor could be identified.

8. WSG-Wetlands International Liaison Officer's Report

David Stroud noted another busy year in WSG's involvement with Wetlands International. He highlighted three areas of publication activity.

The long-awaited 'Odessa Proceedings' (International Wader Studies 10) was now with the membership. The production of this 500 page volume had been a mammoth task that had weighed heavily as those on the editorial team. The editors had progressively shouldered responsibilities for the range of tasks involved in bringing the proceedings to fruition: from the organisation of the meeting, arranging translations, undertaking scientific and copy-editing through to the task involved in its eventual production. It had been a 'relay race' with the task being progressively handed on. He highlighted in particular the rôles of those "carrying the baton across the finishing line" – Rodney West for his beautiful layouts and for taking



on the responsibility for production; and Les Underhill for his organisation of printing and distribution from Cape Town.

The membership had been circulated with a copy of the Proceedings of the Fifth European Woodcock and Snipe Workshop (International Wader Studies 11). The Group had had no involvement in this meeting or in editing of the publication, but it had been made available to the membership through the WSG relationship with Wetlands International.

Progress continues to be made with the production of the flyway atlas for waders in the African-Eurasian region with funding from the Dutch and Belgium governments as well as the European Commission via Wetland International. A consultation draft covering 39 species was prepared and presented to the first Meeting of Parties of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement in Cape Town in November 1999. It had since been widely distributed for comment to species experts and national organisations of the International Waterbird Census within the region. There had been an enthusiastic response and texts were being corrected.

With additional funding, texts for the remaining 49 wader species occurring within the region are being drafted and these would be circulated for comment during 2001. It was anticipated that the final volume would be published in 2002.

9. Pablo Canevari

Theunis Piersma paid tribute to Pablo Canevari — friend, colleague and member of the Executive Committee. Pablo died suddenly in March 2000 following a short but acute period of illness. An apprecia-

tion of Pablo's life by Gonzalo Castro was read out. The AGM was silent for a period in respect of his memory. (A full appreciation and obituary will appear in a future Bulletin).

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

Following the expiry of her term of office as Editor, and her willingness to stand again, Julianne Evans was re-elected for a further term (or until such time as a replacement can be found) as an Officer of the Executive Committee. Herman Hötter was re-elected for a further term as an ordinary member of the Executive Committee.

Bob Gill, Les Underhill and Robin Ward, having been co-opted to the Committee in 1999, were all elected as ordinary members of the Executive Committee. It was noted that the election of Les Underhill and Bob Gill helps further broaden the geographic representation within the Executive Committee.

The Chairman noted that the Executive Committee intended to co-opt the following to the Committee with immediate effect: Humphrey Sitters, Rowena Langston and Patricia Gonzalez. Patricia (Argentina) would provide the Committee with co-ordinating contact with South American countries — a similar rôle to that formerly undertaken by the late Pablo Canevari.

The Chairman noted with regret the decision of Nick Davidson to stand down as General Secretary (although he will continue as Vice-Chairman). This follows Nick's recent move to the post of Deputy Secretary-General of the Ramsar Bureau. Theunis paid tribute to Nick's dynamism in his work for WSG over

recent years, and the AGM recorded their appreciation with acclamation.

The Chairman then outlined some of the consequential changes in rôles of the Officers that were proposed in the coming year. Humphrey Sitters would progressively take over the rôle of Bulletin editor from Julianne Evans with the current expectation that he would stand for election to this position at the 2001 AGM. Rowena Langston would assist as a member of the editorial team, as well as supporting other EXCO members with other tasks.

Julianne Evans, with support from Petra de Goeij, would take over the position of General-Secretary from Nick Davidson with immediate effect.

With the co-option of Humphrey Sitters to the Committee he has stepped down from the independent audit Committee. Martin de Jong (The Netherlands) has agreed to undertake this task, with Peter Evans, in future.

11. Subscription rates for 2001

For reasons outlined in the Treasurer's Report, there will be no subscription rate increase in 2001 for those paying in pounds sterling.

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

Petra de Goeij invited everybody to The Netherlands where the 2001 conference will be held in Kollumerpomp from Thursday 30 August-Sunday 2 September 2001. [It is currently planned that a one-day workshop on inland waders will be held on the preceding Friday rather than Monday as in recent years].

Petra outlined proposals for meetings in the coming years. A special



meeting was being planned for May 2001 to be held in the vicinity of Delaware Bay (to coincide with the peak of spring wader migration there). [Details of this meeting appear elsewhere in this Bulletin].

In 2002, the Wader Research Group Kuling had offered to host the annual meeting in Gdansk, Poland. There were currently no firm arrangements for 2003. Petra noted that, on behalf of the Executive Committee, she was always pleased to receive suggestions or discuss possibilities.

13. Any other business

Peter Evans (UK) noted the wide range of tasks currently undertaken by members of the Executive Committee on an entirely voluntary basis. Many of these tasks were onerous. He wondered if the time had not come to consider employing someone on a part-time basis to undertake some of these administrative tasks, for example, Bulletin production and distribution, advertising, maintaining membership records, and undertaking sales of the Group's publications. There appeared to be many who were unaware of the Group and its activity. The assistance of part-time professional support would assist in raising the profile of the Group and allow the Officers to contribute their talents to areas of the Group's work that were less mundane.

The Chairman noted that, at least in the short-term, this was unfortunately not a possibility given the WSG's current financial situation. He indicated, however, that there was a move in this direction with the Executive Committee having recently agreed in principle to seek quotes for the professional layout of camera-ready copy for the Bulletin. He thanked Peter Evans for raising the

issue and said that the Committee would discuss the issues it raised at its next meeting.

Jim Wilson (Australia) wondered if there was the possibility of the Group to receive tax-deductible donations. The Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) had found this to be a highly successful means of raising additional finance for its research fund.

Bob Loos noted that, unlike the AWSG, the membership of the WSG resides in many countries each with different legal and tax regimes. In theory such arrangements could be set up in The Netherlands, but they would not be available for residents of other countries.

As a founder-member of the WSG, Jack Sheldon (UK), voiced concern that the WSG had drifted far from its roots. He considered it now to be a professional organisation, run by professionals for professionals and with no scope for amateur involvement. However, most ringing of waders in the UK was still undertaken by amateurs. He considered that most of the amateur membership of the WSG had left, and noted that there was current talk of UK wader ringers starting another group that would better cater for their interests.

The Chairman agreed that whilst professionals perhaps had more opportunity to travel internationally and so to attend WSG conferences, he still thought there was a significant amateur involvement with the WSG both in the UK and elsewhere. The issue was an important one and had been under discussion by the Committee at its meeting the previous day. He considered that the WSG still tried to stay 'close to the roots' — for example, the Bulletin had not evolved to become a full

scientific journal and still maintained an emphasis on rapid publication of news, preliminary results and other such information of interest to active fieldworkers.

Both he and the Committee considered that the idea of starting a UK group was an excellent idea. It would never be possible for the WSG to cater for all interests and geographical areas equally. He considered it important that there be "grass-roots" organisations, as well as a basic level of international co-ordination and co-operation — something the WSG arguably did very well. There were good models of national wader groups effective in other countries and a UK group would complement these. He saw this as an entirely positive development and wished the development of this group well. WSG would provide assistance in establishing such a group if this would be helpful.

There being no other items of business, the meeting closed at 10.00.

