



## Editorial

This special 100th volume of the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Peter Evans, a leading figure and inspiration in the International Wader Study Group ever since its inception in 1970. We start with a tribute to Peter and his pivotal role in coastal ecology research by his long-standing friend from the other side of the North Sea, Rudi Drent.

Rudi Drent describes Peter Evans as “a visionary” and “a man with a mission ... with a sense of urgency ... and a concern for scientific action for conservation”. What would be the most appropriate way to celebrate the life of such a person as well as the landmark 100th volume of our *Bulletin*? For the WSG’s Executive Committee, the answer was simple: “It needs to be a big issue about the big issues in wader science and/or conservation.” So, here it is!

I am absolutely sure that Peter Evans would have been delighted with this volume. Sixty-eight wader researchers have combined to write 39 thought-provoking articles on what they see as “big issues”. Certainly some important subjects are not covered, but what we have is wide-ranging in terms of both geography and topic. The WSG was born in Britain so it is not surprising that a third (13) of the articles are by British authors, but Continental Europe is also well represented (9 articles) as is North America (11) and Australasia (6). Although Asia, Africa and South America are not represented among the authors, several articles relate to those continents in one way or another (including one wholly devoted to the Yellow Sea, probably Asia’s most important wader stopover site).

The spectrum of topics discussed in this volume could hardly be wider; from the problems for waders of introduced mammals (in both Scotland and New Zealand!), to habitat degradation and restoration, the impact of recently recovered predator populations, the likely global and potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change as well as the need to strengthen the arrangements we have for monitoring wader populations and to improve our understanding of demographic processes. All these, and indeed every subject discussed in this volume, can fairly be described as “big issues”. But what is the biggest of the big issues? Few would argue about this: it is surely that, as Zöckler *et al.* show, almost half of the wader populations for which we have adequate information are in significant decline and, generally, the reasons are poorly understood. As trend information is only available for 41% of wader populations, the true picture could be much worse. This is a challenge for all of us and especially for the WSG as a whole.

This “big issue on the big issues” is surely a success in that it has enabled a large number of wader researchers to express their arguments and concerns without the restrictions of formal paper writing and in a stimulating and informal fashion. It has proved a major expense, but once funds have recovered, it is an exercise worth repeating.

*Humphrey Sitters*

