



Bulletin 103

Editorial: Important new initiatives in wader research and monitoring

Grassland waders or “meadowbirds”

The Workshop on Farmland Waders held during the 2001 IWSG annual conference concluded with the “Kollumerpomp Statement” noting widespread declines in waders using European farmland habitats, calling for more targeted research to better understand the problems as well as urgent conservation measures. Subsequently, in September 2002, the first *Symposium on the Conservation of Meadowbirds in North Germany and the Netherlands*, reported in this volume, highlighted many of the same issues and concentrated especially on the problems of waders breeding on wet grassland.

The outcome of these meetings shows that already we have a fairly good understanding of the problems grassland waders face. Indeed, many were identified decades ago – particularly intensive land drainage, high stock densities and early mowing dates – and steps were taken to reduce their impact. Now, however, the state of grassland wader populations seems to be worse than ever. New problems are emerging such as the increasing impact of fox predation as well as a whole array of factors related to intensive agriculture. The lesson is that research, monitoring and conservation measures need to keep pace with the ever-changing agricultural scene. We cannot stop, sit back and regard the problem as solved; we must keep going!

One initiative of the Kollumerpomp conference was the formation of an IWSG Wet Grassland Working Group with the specific purpose of maintaining the momentum in grassland research and conservation. Sadly, this came to nothing because no one could be found to take the lead. Now, however, I am pleased to announce that Mark Smart – who works on wet grassland wader conservation for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in SE England – has agreed to act as the convenor of the IWSG Wet Grassland Working Group. All IWSG members who have any interest in waders that use wet grassland habitats at any time of year (or in any part of the world) are asked to notify their interest to Mark. The plan

is that the Wet Grassland Working Group will be quite informal and will act simply as a means of exchanging information and expertise on waders using farmland habitats. Communication will be mainly by announcements in the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* and e-mail, though ordinary post will be used where necessary. Mark Smart’s contact details are:

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Arctic-breeding waders

Not only is the Arctic huge, but also outside the breeding season Arctic-breeding waders occupy a large proportion of the remainder of the entire world. It is not therefore surprising that efforts to co-ordinate research and monitoring of Arctic-breeding waders have proved difficult to get organised. I am consequently happy to announce that thirty leading Arctic wader researchers met in Denmark in December 2003 and came up with the proposal – now adopted as an IWSG ‘project’ – to form the Committee for Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring (CHASM). This volume includes full details of the CHASM proposals with an introduction by IWSG Chairman, Hermann Hötker.

All interested in Arctic-breeding waders – whether actually in the Arctic or elsewhere in the world – are encouraged to take part in CHASM and to communicate their interest to the CHASM joint chairmen, Rick Lanctot and Mikhail Soloviev. Further announcements about CHASM initiatives will be made in future issues of the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* and two special CHASM-related workshops are planned for the IWSG annual conference to be held at Papenburg, Germany, during 4–7 November 2004.

Humphrey Sitters

