

WSG PROJECT ON MOVEMENTS OF WADER POPULATIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE: FIFTH PROGRESS REPORT

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Previous progress reports on this project have tended to dwell on the parts of the work concerned with dye-marking of birds and sightings of these. The reason for this is, of course, that, although detailed analyses of these observations take a great deal of time, some information is readily apparent from a fairly quick examination of them. The same cannot be said of the transfer of wader ringers' data to computer. The analyses that will be possible when this task is complete will be extremely interesting and valuable. However, while the transfer is in progress there are very few results to show. Accordingly, we are all the more pleased that ringers are continuing with this work and, indeed, making great progress. Therefore, pausing only to mention that the visible movements part of the project continues to generate valuable, and sometimes surprising, results, we are devoting most of this report to a summary of progress in transferring ringing data to computer.

The present state of computerization of wader ringing data is summarized in Table 1. This details information acquired in terms of numbers of WSG green data sheets. Each of these holds up to 25 birds, so that the total of 3484 forms on the 10 main species, plus those on other species, represent data on approximately 100,000 individual birds. (We apologize for the exclusion of other species from the table. This was prepared mainly for the EEC Environment Programme and the Nature Conservancy Council, who finance the project. The main aspects of the contract and, indeed, most data available concern these ten coastal species.) We should perhaps summarize the main reasons for transferring these data to computer. Apart from making possible complex analyses of weights and measurements, the data kept by ringers provide two essential components for the study of usage of coastal areas by shorebirds and patterns of movements between these areas. These are local retraps and totals of birds marked. Such data are obtainable, for all practical purposes, only from ringers' files and notebooks. In combination with the recoveries and recaptures available from national ringing schemes, these are essential to a full analysis of movement patterns.

Where ringers and groups have indicated to us the proportion of their data now transferred to green forms, we have tried to include this in the Table. In other cases we have made guesses. We would welcome any corrections to either of these categories. Also, of course, we would greatly welcome data (or enquiries) from any other wader ringers not yet listed in the Table.

We said above that we would not include much in this report about the visible marking scheme, which has continued to produce a steady stream of results. However, the project was extended in one important way in late 1981. As a complement to the widescale movements project, Rowena Cooper has started to investigate some of the smaller scale movements within the non-breeding season apparently shown by some species. She reports here on studies of Sanderling Calidris alpina along the coast of north-east England.

More than 100 Sanderlings have been caught since October 1981, following earlier studies on survival, feeding and social behaviour of this species, in which individuals were marked (Evans et al. 1980). Most were marked with plumage dyes, but 60 were also colour-ringed, with individual combinations. A nocturnal high water roost at Saltburn, 10 km south-east of Teesmouth, has provided a new catching site, and mist-netting there has been organised by the South Cleveland Ringing Group. Retraps and sightings of marked birds indicate strong fidelity to the south side of the River Tees by most birds marked at Saltburn. But some are more mobile, a few moving up and down the northeast coast, whilst others have switched sides of the river. Other birds have flown to more distant sites - one Sanderling was seen at Filey, North Yorkshire, 70 km south-east, at the end of January, having been at Teesmouth prior to that. In most cases, birds have switched from the south to the north of the Tees, chiefly in October and December. These movements coincided with high spring tides, and were similar to the changes observed in previous autumns and early winters. Some individual Sanderlings have displayed similar patterns of movement to those of preceding years - one made the 55 km northward shift to St. Mary's Island, Whitby Bay, as it did last winter. The aim of the study is to identify some of the underlying reasons for these movements as well as to describe them. Despite these signs of movements, during most of the winter there has been a fairly stable population of about 600 Sanderlings at Teesmouth, but during January this increased to over 800.

As ever, we are grateful to the many participants of the project, whether they are peering into the mist trying to identify Sanderling colour-rings, checking a flock of 20,000 Knot Calidris canutus for dyed birds, transcribing rain-smearred writing in aged notebooks to green forms, or helping in any of the many other ways.

Reference

Evans, P.R., Brearey, D.M. & Goodyer, L.R. 1980. Studies on Sanderling at Teesmouth, N.E. England. Wader Study Group Bull. 30: 18-20.

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Table 1. Quantity of data on ringed and measured birds transferred to computer file at Durham. This is divided by species (in approximate priority order), and ringer or group. Numbers indicate the number of data sheets transferred to computer-file; each sheet holds data on up to 25 birds.

Ringer or Group	Knot <i>C. canutus</i>	Sanderling <i>C. alba</i>	Ringed Plover <i>Ch. hiaticula</i>	Grey Plover <i>P. squatarola</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit <i>L. lapponica</i>	Dunlin <i>C. alpina</i>	Redshank <i>T. totanus</i>	Curllew <i>N. arguta</i>	Oystercatcher <i>H. ostralegus</i>	Turnstone <i>A. interpres</i>	Total
Kalø (Vadehavet, Denmark)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
BGNF Wattenmeer (N.Friesland, Germany)	All data on computer file										
	43	0	2	15	5	119	7	8	28	4	231
Steltlopperringgroep FFF (Netherlands Waddenzee)	All data for all species on computer file and checked										
	4	0	5	7	5	27	14	7	72	5	146
Durham University/Université de Rennes/Wader Study Group/CRBPO/GEFLA (Brittany & Normandy, France)	All data for all species on computer file; most checked										
	0	0	0	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	6
Durham University Morocco Expedition 1980	All data for all species on computer file and checked										
	1	0	3	1	1	16	3	1	0	4	30
Netherlands Morocco Expedition 1981	All data for all species on computer file and checked										
	1	0	2	1	0	17	4	0	0	1	26
A.R.Mainwood (Sutherland, Scotland)	All data for all species on computer file and checked										
	2	1	6	1	1	11	7	4	10	5	48
Highland Ringing Group (Moray Firth, Scotland)	All data for all species on computer file, and being checked										
	41	0	6	0	25	14	99	0	74	11	270
Hugh Clark (Firth of Forth, Scotland)	All data up to 1980, for all species, on computer file and being checked										
	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	5
Edinburgh Ringing Group/Nature Conservancy Council/Durham University/Edinburgh University (Firth of Forth)	All data for all species, on computer file and being checked										
	22	0	8	3	1	43	40	0	26	13	156
Durham University (Teessmouth, England)	All data up to late 1980 on computer file and most checked. Later data (and some for this area by various ringers in earlier years) not yet available.										
	125	56	37	36	13	239	32	17	18	24	597
South Cleveland Ringing Group (Cleveland, England)	All data to date on computer file and all but current checked										
	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
Wash Wader Ringing Group (The Wash, England)	Data received so far on computer file and being checked. Data on other species not yet available										
	494	20	38	98	115	568	72	9	53	77	1544
Richard Howard (Essex, England)	Data received so far concerns only those birds for which measurements were taken. A coding schedule for those birds which were ringed only (mainly in early years) is currently being written. All 1980 data on computer file and checked; all 1981 data on computer file and being checked. All "measurement" data for the following species for years indicated is now on computer file: Knot 1972-1981, Ringed Plover 1972-1981; Bar-tailed Godwit 1961-1981. Sanderling data prior to 1980 is available on a different computing system and is awaiting translation.										
	2	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	15
S.H.Sporne (Hants., England)	Probably most data on computer file and being checked										
	1	0	12	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	21
Lower Test Ringing Group (Hants)	Probably most data on computer file and being checked										
	0	0	11	0	0	36	8	2	7	2	66
C.M.Reynolds (Dorset, England)	All data for all species on computer file and checked										
	2	1	4	1	1	30	4	0	1	0	44
Nigel Clark, Edinburgh University (Severn Estuary, English side)	Probably all data for all species on computer file, and being checked										
	4	3	10	0	1	116	31	15	10	4	194
SCAN Ringing Group (North Wales)	All data on computer file and some checked; some early data on computer file at University College, Cardiff to be transferred and translated.										
	7	2	20	0	2	53	88	3	33	7	215
South Manchester Ringing Group (Cheshire, England)	Almost all data on computer file and being checked										
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
South West Lancashire Ringing Group (Ribble Estuary, England)	1981 data on computer file; earlier data not yet received										
	11	37	10	2	5	35	1	0	1	1	103
North Solway Ringing Group (Solway Firth, Scottish side)	Probably all data on computer file and being checked										
	0	4	14	0	0	21	0	0	0	2	41
Clyde Ringing Group (Clyde Estuary, Scotland)	Probably all 1980-81 data on computer file and being checked; earlier data not yet received.										
	0	0	0	0	0	33	31	0	0	0	64
Nigel Buxton (Outer Hebrides, Scotland)	Possibly most data on computer file and being checked										
	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	8
TOTALS	All data on computer file and being checked										
	763	138	196	169	177	1384	452	69	339	161	3848

Other data will be available as follows:

On file in other computing systems and to be translated: Celtic Wader Research Group (Severn Estuary, Welsh side); North Down Ringing Group (Belfast Lough, N.Ireland); and possibly Tay Ringing Group (Tay Estuary, Scotland); Grampian Ringing Group (Ythan Estuary, Scotland).

Data also available but not coded from O.W.Røstad (Norway) and Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat (France).

Some data on other shorebird species has also been transferred to computer file.