

BREEDING WADERS IN THE SOMME ESTUARY AREA (FRANCE)

by François Sueur

Introduction

This paper enumerates species of breeding waders in the Somme estuary area. The area consists of a bay with mudflats, with sandhills in the north and shingle in the south. The outer belt is a wet plain with many marshes and pools.

Results

Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus. About 20 pairs (Sueur 1979). No increase after the creation of the reserve of Somme Bay in 1968.

Lapwing Vanellus vanellus. Decrease with draining in Marquenterre (the north of the area): 100 to 150 pairs at the start of the 1960's (Anon 1964), about 70 pairs in 1972 (Kerautret 1973), 58 to 81 pairs in 1970-75 (Mouton 1976), 53 pairs in the very dry year of 1976 (Kerautret 1977) and about 60 pairs to the start of the 1980's.

Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula. Occasional breeding species: 1 pair in 1976 and 4 pairs in 1977 (Sueur 1979).

Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius. 6 to 9 pairs in the 1970-75 period (Mouton 1976), but a decrease since then.

Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus. 40 to 50 pairs. An increase since 1981, after a period of stability.

Common Snipe Gallinago gallinago. Small numbers breed occasionally in the area.

Woodcock Scolopax rusticola. Only one case of breeding in the 1950's. Probably bred also in 1974, 1980 and 1981.

Curlew Numenius arquata. Probable breeding in 1973 to 1976. Breeding was proved in 1977 with two adults and one flightless young (Sueur 1979).

Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa. One pair in 1976 (songs and nuptial flights), but breeding was not proved.

Redshank Tringa totanus. No recent breeding records, but song flights over wet grasslands in 1973, 1977 and 1981.

Common Sandpiper Tringa hypoleucos. One breeding pair in 1976 and 1977.

Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus. Bred in the 19th century, but not again until 1965: 3 pairs (Fournier & Spitz 1966), and probably bred also in 1977.

Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta. A new breeding species. The number of pairs had increased from 12 in 1975 (Sueur 1975), through 26 in 1976, 31 in 1977, 52 in 1978 (Sueur 1979), 57 in 1979, and 58 in 1980 to 68 in 1981.

Stone Curlew Burhinus oedipnemus. This was a common breeding species in Marquenterre in the 19th century (Menegaux 1911), but decreased after 1955 with the forestation of sandhills. No observations in the breeding period since 1975.

References

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Appendix

Since 1973, the following studies on waders have been in progress in Somme estuary area: census of all waders during annual cycle; predation of Oystercatchers on Cerastoderma edule and Macoma balthica; migration and wintering of Golden Plovers Pluvialis apricaria; phenology of migration, and subspecies which occur, in Redshanks; and breeding behaviour and demography in Avocets.

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RINGING TOTALS

At present, ringing totals are included in each issue of the Bulletin, with each list covering a period of four months. A major function of the ringing totals is to indicate where and when waders have been caught and ringed recently, and the listings have been found useful by numerous people trying to discover who might have information on particular species. However, there are no strong reasons for publishing the list three times per year, and in future we will publish an annual listing. This will be published in April, to cover each calendar year. The present ringing totals form includes only those waders that are regularly caught in Europe, because most contributors to the lists are ringers active in Europe. We hope that in future more ringers from outside Europe will contribute ringing totals. To make this less time-consuming for contributors, we will be including on the form wader species that are commonly caught outside Europe. We will retain the facility for the separate listing of waders ringed as adults and as pulli. Please therefore note that:

1. The Ringing Totals form enclosed as a loose insert with this Bulletin is for the three months October - December 1982, and not for the usual four months (October 1982 - January 1983).
2. The next Ringing Totals form will be enclosed with Bulletin No. 39 (December 1983), and will cover the period January - December 1983.