

Group structure

Group structure and management will continue as present, but planned are:

- Improved links outside Western Palearctic developed through regional co-ordinators;
- Stronger representation in the Western Hemisphere developed in association with the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network;
- Target of 10% increase in membership.

N.C. Davidson, WSG/WI Liaison Officer

NEWS FROM THE IWRB WOODCOCK AND SNIPE RESEARCH GROUP

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Common Snipe *G. gallinago* and Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* differ considerably from all other European wader species in many respects. For this reason, the Woodcock and Snipe Research Group was established as a distinct Research Group of IWRB in 1974.

Due to their cryptic colouring and secretive behaviour, Woodcock and Snipes are rarely seen and may therefore not be counted as most other waders. However, since all of them are huntable species over most of their range, indirect population estimates have been calculated using two parameters, namely bag statistics and the recovery rates of ringed birds.

The most recent population estimates are published in the proceedings of the Fourth European Woodcock and Snipe Workshop (*IWRB Publ. 31*, 114 pp. 1994) [reviewed in *WSG Bulletin 75*: 7].

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NOTES & NEWS & NEWS & NOTES NOTES & NEWS

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HAPPY 25TH BIRTHDAY RAMSAR CONVENTION!

On 6 February 1996, the Ramsar Convention celebrated its 25th birthday. The Convention has had enormous influence in the conservation of wetlands, and has a current total of 90 Contracting Parties. A total of 765 wetlands of international importance covering over 51 million ha (as of November 1995) are listed by its signatory nations, a total that grows monthly. It is fitting that Australia, the first country to sign the Convention, should be host to this year's Conference of the Contracting Parties (the sixth since the Convention came into force).

The Conference of the Parties is being held in Brisbane between 19 and 27 March and waders are due to feature prominently in a number of the Resolutions and Recommendations proposed.

The Ramsar Conference is being preceded by an international meeting organised by the Australasian Wader Study Group focussing on "Shorebird conservation in the Asia-Pacific region" (see insert in *Bulletin 78*). The aims of this meeting relate especially to means of enhancing international co-operation in shorebird conservation along the East Asian/ Australasian flyway (see below). The Asian Wetlands Bureau's Shorebird Flyway Officer Doug Watkins outlined some of the issues in *Bulletin 77*: 63.

A full report on the outcomes of both the Ramsar and AWSG Conferences will appear in *Bulletin 80*.

David Stroud

EAST ASIA-AUSTALASIAN SHOREBIRD FLYWAY PROJECT

This project has been developed as part of the implementation of the 'Kushiro Initiative' (see *Bulletin 75*: 18-19).

A Shorebird Reserve Network proposal developed by AWB was presented to bilateral migratory-bird meetings involving Japan, China and Australia in June 1995. At the meetings, Australia announced that it proposed to draft a recommendation for the next Ramsar meeting in support of the Shorebird Network Proposal.

In September, the recommendation supporting the development of a network of sites for the conservation of shorebirds was formally presented by the Australian Government to the Ramsar Standing Committee meeting in Brisbane. Japan joined Australia in co-sponsoring the recommendation.

Also in September, the Australian Minister for the Environment wrote to each of the countries that are Parties to the Ramsar Convention in the East Asia-Australasian Flyway to encourage them to support the recommendation and nominate a site for the Shorebird Reserve Network.

Plans are well on track for the launch of the Network at the Ramsar Conference in Brisbane in March 1996. In addition to Australia and Japan, the UK (Hong Kong) and New Zealand have formally indicated support for the recommendation. At Government officer level, the recommendation has strong support in the Philippines, China, Indonesia and the US (Alaska). With all the countries there is a need for follow-up work to discuss the potential sites for nomination to the Network.

In late November and December 1995, AWB plans follow-up discussions in New Zealand, China, Hong Kong and Vietnam.

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