REVIEWS

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Does your organisation publish lots of material that gains only limited circulation? Why not share these secrets with other waderologists?

We are seeking currently to enhance scope and coverage of the Reviews section of the *Bulletin*. I would be grateful to receive any publications principally concerning waders or their wetland habitats for consideration in the Reviews section.

D.A. Stroud

Gerritsen, G.J. & Groen, N.M. 1995. *Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit Project 1993.* WIWO Report 51, Zeist.

Turn to page 40 of this report immediately. Witness a little piece of history. Not just to identify the incredibly enthusiastic Dutchmen who made this project (the first really extensive breeding wader study in Iceland) happen, but also to meet three unsung heros of Icelandic wetland conservation: Johann-Oli Hilmarsson, Einar Tholeifsson and Johann-Oli's beleaguered Lada Niva!

No-one can possibly visit the lowlands of SW Iceland without being impressed by the quality and extent of the breeding wader populations of the area. However, at the same time you cannot help but be stunned by the scale of wetland loss to agriculture that has taken place in recent decades. The whole area described in this report comprises some 3,500 km^2 of outwash from three large glacial melt rivers. The resulting landscape of sedge-rich grasslands of varying levels of inundation has long been cattle grazed in summer and cut for winter keep.

From the 1890s onwards, agricultural improvement involved spring and summer flooding to encourage the growth of *Carex lyngbei*, a large sedge found nowhere else in Europe which thrives in waterlogged conditions and which can be cut for very high quality hay. The improvements in yields which this change brought about were such that sedge hay could be sold to farmers in other areas. However, the cost of harvesting (using horses in water often over a metre deep) was such that when drainage began to offer a grass-based hay crop as an alternative around 1940, there was popular shift to this alternative. By the 1970s, government subsidies encouraged extensive drainage throughout the entire southern lowlands, such that only the very wettest areas remained undamaged. This undoubtedly had a very profound impact on the wader populations breeding in these areas, and the fragments that remain bear witness to what incredible numbers of birds must have bred in the area in its heyday.

The report concentrates on the Black-tailed Godwit populations of 14 such fragments which form the basic study areas featured in the southern lowlands, supplemented with other observations from Skagafjördur in the north. There are excellent results presented on habitats, densities, breeding biology, biometrics, *etc.*, plus follow-up analyses of the subsequent resightings of individually marked birds and extensive documentation of other species encountered. The whole study looks afresh at the status and distribution of Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits and offers exciting new perspectives on this population. It was very pleasing to see an Icelandic summary to enable its wider dissemination, but I would especially commend this report to all wet meadow breeding wader buffs. You really do not know what you are missing if you have not witnessed the sheer audible volume of some of these Icelandic wetlands, as the displays of Dunlin, Snipe, Black-tailed Godwits, Whimbrel and Redshank all compete for your ears.

For far too long, the breeding waders of Iceland have been disproportionately large dots in an awkward top-left hand corner of our perspective. Let us hope this report marks a major key change: a new thrust to our understanding of these important populations and a turning point in their conservation.

Tony Fox

Waders and farmland

Baldock, D., Beaufoy, G. & Clark, J. 1994. *The nature of farming. Low intensity farming systems in nine European countries.* Institute for European Environmental Policy, London. ISBN 1-873906-01-3.

Lovegrove, R., Shrubb, M. & Williams, I. 1995. *Silent fields. The current status of farmland birds in Wales.* RSPB, Newtown.

Two publications this year have highlighted yet again the importance of farmland as a habitat for waders, as well as the effects that changing agricultural practices can have on populations.

The nature of farming. Low intensity farming systems in nine European countries, jointly written by a group led by David Baldock, is the summary report of a study that aimed to compile information on the character and distribution of low intensity farmland systems in Europe from primarily a nature conservation perspective. It attempts to assess the way in which these systems are changing in each of the countries considered and thus evaluate the implications for nature conservation both now and in the future.

The report defines and describes low intensity farmland in France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the UK. It then reviews the importance of such

systems for nature conservation, looks at the changes affecting them, and the conservation implications of these developments. It concludes with recommendations for support to maintain these low intensity farmland systems.

The report documents that without doubt, low intensity farming are hugely important for the conservation of biodiversity in Europe. The conservation value of such systems rests largely on their capacity to maintain semi-natural habitats by means of appropriate practises such as the harvesting of crops and grass later in the summer than under intensive systems, or the shepherding of livestock on seasonal pastures.

The report describes how management practises can affect populations of species such as waders. For example, invertebrate populations are adversely affected by nitrogen application, however, differing rates of application can favour or hinder different wader species. It is pointed out, however, that relatively few species benefit from the conditions found on intensively farmed land. Research into the proportion of nests lost to trampling at different stocking rates is quoted showing losses of up to 93% for Redshank *Tringa totanus* - clearly a highly significant factor.

In all, this is an interesting and important report - with the ravages of the CAP altering the character of the more low intensive farming systems of Europe, and the possibility of eastern European countries joining the EU and making the same policy mistakes, it is clear that total reform of European agricultural policy is long overdue. It should be high on the agenda at the forthcoming inter-governmental conference in 1996. Meanwhile, careful targeting of agri-environment and ESA schemes could mitigate some of the worst excesses.

The dire straits of Wales' farmland birds is revealed in a new report from the RSPB. ***Silent fields*** paints a depressing picture of the decline and current status of 12 representative species of farmland birds in Wales.

It relates the population declines to land use changes and in particular the enormous developments that have taken place in agriculture over the last 50 years. the 12 species chosen include four waders: Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria,* Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus,* Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Curlew *Numenius arquata.*

Golden Plover have declined from between 38% to 100% on five areas of moorland, Lapwing have crashed in numbers by around 79% in seven years, Snipe, which were found in 71% of Atlas 10 km squares in 1968-72 fell to 45% of squares by 1988-91, and Curlew have declined by up to 84%, with declines most marked in dairying areas. The report catalogues the changes in farming practises, in particular the massive increase in stocking rates. Nest predation rates have increased at the same time.

The report does not set out to provide answers to the problems, but is issued partly as a consultation document, with a follow-up report promised next year.

Mick Green

Meininger, P.L., Wolf, P.A., Hadoud, D.A. & Essghaier, M.F.A. 1994. *Ornithological survey of the coast of Libya, July 1993 (with notes on some wetlands in Tunisia).* WIWO report No. 46. Dfl 15,- (+ Dfl 15,- adm. & postage costs) from Stichting WIWO, van Stuyvenbergweg 4, NL-6644 AB Ewijk, The Netherlands.

The Libyan coast is probably that part of the Mediterranean coastline with fewest data on waterbirds, and there are almost no data available on the numbers of waders breeding, on migration or wintering.

The main aim of this Dutch-Libyan expedition was to rediscover breeding colonies of Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, as breeding had not been confirmed since the late 1930s. The finding of two colonies (of 1,700 and 40 pairs) thus made the expedition very successful indeed. The breeding conditions of the Lesser Crested Terns are described in detail in this WIWO report.

Most efforts were invested in the search for seabird colonies and for Sea Turtles. Brief visits, however, were made to a number of coastal wetlands and these are described also in the report.

The visit period (19 to 28 July) was too late to get very much information on breeding waders and too early to hit any migration peak. Still the expedition obtained some interesting observations even on waders. The breeding of Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* was proved for the first time in Libya; the Stilt was found breeding at two sites both with tens of pairs, whereas a pair of Pratincoles with an almost fledged juvenile was found at one of the same sites.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* was found at most of the coastal wetlands both breeding and moulting, and in the lagoon named Ayn Zayanah an impressive concentration of at least 700 birds was seen. This site proved to be a very interesting wetland (holding also the breeding Collared Pratincole and Black-winged Stilts). I can strongly support the recommendation of the report, that more complete wader and waterbird surveys should be undertaken at the site, which is quite easily accessible situated very close to the city of Benghazi.

This report is a tasty appetiser to this little known wader land.

Ole Thorup

Beintema, A., Moedt, O. & Ellinger, D. 1995. *Ecologische Atlas van de Nederlandse Weidevogels.* Schuyt & Co, Haarlem. In Dutch, with English figure- and table-captions and summary. 352 pp. ISBN 90 6097 391 7. Price *c.* 115 Dfl.

Most WSG members are aware that the Dutch have great pride about the high densities of waders breeding in

their grasslands. Black-tailed Godwits and Lapwings come as close to national symbols as the roaring Lions on the weaponry of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. With this beautiful and impressive book, an ecological atlas of the Dutch meadow birds, Albert Beintema, Oene Moedt and Danny Ellinger have produced an impressive testimony to the grassland-breeding waders of the Low Countries. Beintema, responsible for most of the text, is a first class writer. He writes in an informed, intense and very witty style. Moedt and Ellinger, responsible for the majority of the very many colour photographs, are first rate photographers. In addition, Moedt has written two especially beautiful chapters, one on the history of the Dutch meadowbirds and their environments, another on the breeding behaviour of meadowbirds. In their long acknowledgement, the rôle of the Wader Study Group in the compilation and review of data on breeding waders is not forgotten.

The book starts off with a chapter defining a meadowbird. Right from the start and throughout the book, Beintema manages to convey a sense of relativity, pointing out that what one regards as meadowbirds changes continuously over time and varies from place to place. Differences between species in their use of meadows are a direct function of agricultural practice, illustrating in different ways the tension between increased plant and arthropod productivity enhancing food availability, and reduced food stocks and breeding success at the highest levels of fertilization and farming activity.

The second chapter gives brief general descriptions of what are called the "primary" and "secondary" meadowbirds. All meadow-breeding waders of The Netherlands (Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Snipe and Ruff) belong to the first category. This is followed by the chapters on meadowbird history and breeding behaviour. In the latter chapter, the unbelievable photographs of Moedt steal the show. Egg-laying godwits, a Lapwing removing an egg-shell and burying it, courtship and copulations, Snipe interactions, and the feathery interactions of the famous Ruffy weirdos, they are all found there, sharp and nicely composed, almost jumping out of the book.

The remaining seven chapters are all thematic. In succession, Beintema describes the Dutch research on eggs (including hatching success and all factors influencing it); chicks (including fledging success and the energetics of post-hatch waders); the meadowbird areas of The Netherlands (showing the considerable differences between meadowbird communities; agricultural practices and management attitudes between the provinces); European meadowbirds (taking the reader from Iceland to the steppes of Kazachstan); meadowbirds outside Europe (the steppes of central Asia, the prairies of North America, the pampas of South America, the savannah of Africa, the sheepland of Australia and the Lapwing of New Zealand grasslands); the migration and ecology of three migrating meadowbirds (Black-tailed Godwits and Ruffs commuting between Europe and west Africa, Snipe wintering in Europe); and finishes with meadowbird conservation, including discussions of land-use, egg-collecting, nest protection and meadowbird conservation in Europe.

The discussion of meadowbirds in other parts of the world comes as a welcome surprise, and is it here that the use of Dutch will hurt most; I don't think there exists a similar in-depth treatment in the English literature.

Even Beintema's beautiful texts, which I was able to read and understand (I think) when I was completely exhausted, have their limitations. He is a master in discussing and presenting the research he has been involved in himself, but I missed an integration with complementary studies from elsewhere. For example, all the detailed information on survival rates of Lapwing chicks is not brought into perspective by also discussing adult survival, in-depth studies of which have been published by British workers (I realize that this is the sort of criticism that people from "the rest of the world"often offer the Brits themselves). Most of these studies are actually listed in a comprehensive and internationally oriented, list of references. Perhaps, some more time should have been spent on the list, since it is far from error-free.

In summary, the '*Ecologische Atlas van de Nederlandse Weidevogels*' is a brilliant production that will be appreciated by all with a soft spot for open and wader rich habitats. It can be enjoyed by looking at the pictures and by reading the Dutch text. A comprehensive summary in English and English captions cut the losses for those not fluent in this language.

Theunis Piersma

Hagemeijer, W.I.M., Schepers F.J. & Hallmann, B. 1994. *Wintering waterbirds in the coastal wetlands of Albania, 1993.* WIWO Report No. 49. 113 pp.

Kayser, Y., Bino, T. & Gauthier-Clerc, M. 1995. *Recensement des oiseaux d'eau hivernants en Albanie, 17 janvier - 7 février 1995.* Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat, Arles, France. 79 pp.

These two reports summarise recent winter surveys of Albanian wetlands: the former published as an attractive booklet as with most other WIWO reports, the latter having a more basic layout. Both include details of itineraries, site maps and descriptions, species totals per site and a complete list of sightings. Of course, they refer to different winters. The French report includes a slightly larger number of sites, notably an inland one (Lake Ohri), and makes comparisons with the results of the previous survey when a much smaller number of birds was found to be present.

After almost no information existed on Albanian wetlands for so many years, it is really important that the results of the recent surveys have been made so rapidly available. Both reports include a section attempting to evaluate the value of the area in the Mediterranean context, and for species such as Pygmy Cormorant or Dalmatian Pelican it is clear that some sites have an extremely high conservation priority. The importance

of Albania for waders is probably less clear, as figures from the rest of the Mediterranean presently require updating. A very strong similarity seems to exist, however, with numbers and species occurring on the nearby Italian coast of Apulia, only 70 km away. Albanian totals for Avocet, Kentish Plover, Curlew and Redshank are quite remarkable by north Mediterranean standards.

Both reports are essential to anybody planning to visit Albanian wetlands (also in seasons other than winter), and both contain useful data for a reassessment of the Mediterranean population size of several waterbirds.

The Dutch report can be obtained at the cost of 20 DFL from WIWO (or at the next few WSG meetings), the French one should be requested at the Tour du Valat Biological Station (fax +33 909 72019).

Nicola Baccetti

Groen, N.M. & Zomerdijk (eds.) 1994. *Waders and waterbirds along part of the Atlantic coast of Morocco: Autumn 1991 - Spring 1992.* WIWO Report 47. 110 pp.

Moroccan wetlands are well known as staging or wintering areas for waterfowl and waders from the East Atlantic and Eastern Mediterranean flyways. Five teams of Dutch ornithologists set out to quantify wetland usage along a significant part of the Atlantic Coast of Morocco through a whole autumn-spring period. Most wetland areas, including small and temporary waterbodies, between Tangiers and the Oued Massa, south of Agadir, were surveyed five times between September 1991 and March 1992.

Despite being crammed into 110 pages of A5 format, the results are well presented with summary tables, individual species accounts (putting the results into context with flyway populations) and site accounts (including a sketch map of Merja Zerga). All waterbirds are covered including herons, grebes, storks, flamingo, geese, ducks, rails and 32 species of wader. In addition, there are the results of a detailed study of Cattle Egret (based on car counts), results of systematic seawatches, a systematic list of all bird species seen (including locations of species seen on occasional excursions inland), and brief recommendations for management of the wetlands surveyed.

This report is a fine example of what can be achieved by a small group of ornithologists and should definitely be studied by any researchers (or just plain birders) wishing to make the most of a trip to Morocco. The report is in English, with brief summaries in French, Dutch and Arabic.

Kivit, H., Nijmeijer, H. & Ovaa, A. 1994. *Waders and waterfowl migration in the Çukurova Deltas, south Turkey, Spring 1990.* WIWO Report 48. 161 pp.

This study built upon earlier work in this area by WIWO (WIWO Report No. 22) and formed part of the joint WIWO/DHKD Eastern Mediterranean Wader Project. Weekly counts of waterbirds were undertaken between March and May 1990 of four wetlands in the western part of the Çukurova deltas: Akyatan Gölü, Tuzla Gölü, Yemisli Gölü, and a series of oxbow lakes. Species accounts are given for all waterbirds (grebes to terns) recorded and maps identify areas of importance for species recorded in reasonable numbers. A tremendous amount is packed into 161 pages.

The waterbird species accounts are followed by sections on food and foraging studies and ringing activities (biometrics given for over 300 waders of 11 species). In addition there are systematic lists of all birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians seen. The report is in English, with a two-page Turkish summary.

Both above reports can be ordered from WIWO, c/o Driebergseweg 16c, NL-30708 JB, Zeist, the Netherlands. Report 47 costs 20 Dfl and report 48 costs 25 Dfl. Payment can be made direct to postal giro account 2666009 or to ABN-AMRO bank account 57.02.16.613 of Stichting WIWO, Lindengracht 9, 3633 (add Dfl 15 administration charge to each separate order from outside the Netherlands). Alternatively, cash or a Eurocheque may be sent to WIWO (in which case there is no administration charge).

John Holmes

Hustings, F. & van Dyk, K. (eds) 1993. *Bird census in the Kizilirmak delta, Turkey, in spring 1992.* 168 pages, WIWO-report 45, Zeist.

This report details the results of an extremely intensive study of the birds of the Kizilirmak delta on the north, Black Sea, coast of Turkey during March-June 1992. There were 41 participants in the fieldwork; 22 Dutch, 17 Turkish and two British.

The Kizilirmak delta extends to about 56,000 ha. It encompasses a wide range of habitats and boasts a bird list of more than 300 species of which 286 were recorded during this study. This means that 65% of all of Turkey's bird species were recorded in the Kizilirmak delta during spring 1992 alone. In the eastern part of the delta there is a large wetland ecosystem of 10,000 ha consisting of extensive marshes, several lakes, a forest and dunes. In the west, there is a lake of 2,000 ha with surrounding marshes and dunes.

Most of the report consists of a systematic list summarising observations of all species recorded. It is clear, however, that the greatest fieldwork effort was put into the assessment of breeding populations, particularly those of wetland species. Among these, waders are significant as the following list shows:

	Est. no. pairs
Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*	13-15
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*	250-300
Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*	4
Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*	40-50
Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*	65-115
Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*	250-275
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*	25-35
Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*	100-125
Redshank *Tringa totanus*	20-30
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*	0-2

The delta is just as important for other wetland species including Dalmatian Pelican *Pelicanus crispus* (6 pairs), Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (200-250), Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (230), Great Egret *Egretta alba* (11-15), Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (475-500), Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (30-35), White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (125-130), Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (76), Crane *Grus grus* (40-50), Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* (250-275) and Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (500-750).

Observations of non-breeding birds show that the Kizilirmak delta is an important migration stop-over site for many waders, particularly Ruff ('several thousand'). The most spectacular numbers of passage migrants, however, were Little Gulls *Larus minutus* with about 50,000 recorded.

The results of the survey form the basis of recommendations for the conservation of this valuable site. These include the regulation of human activities such as hunting, fishing, reed-cutting and agriculture; the close monitoring of all hydrological activity; education programmes for schools in the area to develop a better local understanding of the value of the site as well as proposals for further research.

This was a very thorough study. The report is well-presented. It deserves a wide circulation. Although it covers 286 species with the result that waders are not prominent, it has much of interest for wader researchers and should not be ignored by them.

Humphrey Sitters

Spiekman, H. & Groen, N.M. 1993. *Breeding performance of arctic waders in relation to lemming densities, North-East Taimyr, Siberia, 1992.* WIWO-report nr. 33. Zeist. Cost: Dfl 30.

Now that Russia is more open to visiting western scientists, expeditions to arctic Asia are becoming more frequent. This report is from one such expedition and presents the results of the second of a two year study on the relationship between lemming density and wader breeding success in north-east Taymyr. In itself, the report presents some good evidence to further highlight the immense importance of the humble Lemming's 3-4 year population cycle to, not only waders, but the whole tundra ecosystem. It is, however, just a preliminary expedition report and a complete analysis of the same data is provided in Underhill *et al.* (1993).

The crucial findings discussed in this report were as follows. Maximum lemming densities were nearly seven times higher in the study area in 1991 than in 1992. Wader nesting success was also much higher in 1991 than in 1992 and the authors suggest this was due to lower predation pressure on waders when their predators' preferred prey was abundant. No direct information on predation was collected to determine the relative importance of different predators. Information on weather and the availability of insects to waders was collected to eliminate these two factors. Very few comparisons are made with the 1991 season so that the strength of the overall study is not promoted in this report.

This publication contains much additional, often anecotal, information. For example, a bird-species status list is given as are some wader biometrics in the appendices. Much of this may be of interest to anybody working on waders, lemmings or predators in the Arctic. The report may also provide logistical information for people planning similar expeditions. It is unlikely to be bought by anybody else, however, since the general principles behind the lemming cycle, predators and other birds are better described elsewhere (*e.g.* Greenwood 1987; Underhill *et al.* 1993).

Reading this report was a good reminder of how useful it can be to publish this type of report because it contains information which would otherwise have become part of the often impenetrable bank of grey literature. Perhaps a greater effort should be made to follow WIWO's example in other countries.

Greenwood, J.J.D. 1987. Population Biology - 3-year cycles of lemmings and arctic geese explained. *Nature* 328: 577.

Underhill, L.G., Prys-Jones, R.P., Syroechkovski, JR., E.E. *et al.* 1993. Breeding of waders (Charadrii) and Brent Geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* at Pronchishcheva Lake, northeastern Taimyr, Russia, in a peak and a decreasing lemming year. *Ibis* 135: 277-292.

John L. Quinn

ARCTIC BREEDING CONDITIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you to all those who submitted data for the 1995 breeding season and provided comments on the format and content of the questionnaire. We intend to summarise the 1995 season in an article for the August *Bulletin*, so if you visited the arctic last summer there is still time to send us a summary of your observations.

Forms are available from the editorial address.

David Stroud & Nick Davidson