

## AN OPEN LETTER TO MARINE ORNITHOLOGISTS

As the newly appointed Chairman of the Seabird Specialist Group of the International Council for Bird Preservation, I am writing to ask for suggestions, ideas, and help from all interested marine ornithologists. Christoph Imboden (Director, ICBP) has suggested two main tasks for our specialist group:

1) to recommend to ICBP an integrated programme of a) surveys of the world seabird populations; b) conservation orientated research projects; and c) conservation action projects with urgent, important, and desirable priorities.

2) to assist in developing seabird projects for inclusion in the ICBP Conservation Programme, the ICBP Data Bank Programme, and the ICBP Migratory Bird Programme. If you desire information on any of these programmes let me know.

We are interested in identifying individuals who have data on various species or regions and who are willing to contribute to our programme. If you are interested in cooperating or know someone who might be, please write to me.

In late 1984 the ICBP plans to publish the proceedings of a seabird conservation workshop held in Cambridge, U.K. in 1982 that gives a reasonably complete data set on the status of the seabirds of the world and the threats to those populations. We want to use those data as a starting point to determine what further data are needed. I believe the best way to proceed now is to ask for volunteers willing to be responsible for individual species, genera, families, regions, or those who have data to provide.

The questions we want to answer for each taxon are:

- 1) distribution, numbers, breeding seasons, and status.
- 2) habitat requirements (nesting, roosting, feeding, wintering, etc.).
- 3) food habits, food requirements and energetics.
- 4) distribution and movements at sea; what specific conservation problems at sea need to be addressed?
- 5) clutch size, egg size, chick growth data, breeding biology information; what is available and what do we need to know?
- 6) basic data on morphology (plumages, moult, mass, body size, etc.).
- 7) behavioural data.

- 8) what specimens exist and their nature (study skins, spirits, skeletons).
- 9) complete bibliographies.

We need individuals who are willing to WORK, to communicate with other knowledgeable specialists, and to organize, receive, and collate notices of what data are/are not available (both published and unpublished). Volunteers who are interested in handling the data should contact me and we will look into how to proceed with formats and other matters.

Let me know what you think about these preliminary suggestions. I can only act to stimulate effort on behalf of seabird conservation through the ICBP, and I view my job as to open communication on behalf of the ICBP programmes. Please write to me now with any thoughts you may have. Remember, it is up to you to let me know what you think. This MUST be a joint undertaking.

I look forward to serving in this exciting project.

11 June 1984

*Ralph W. Schreiber, Chairman, Seabird Specialist Group,  
International Council for Bird Preservation, c/o Natural History  
Museum, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007, U.S.A.*

### **THE SEABIRD GROUP CONFERENCE, DENSTONE COLLEGE**

15 - 18 FEBRUARY 1985

Following the success of the 1982 Conference at Denstone, it is planned to hold another one there in 1985, with the general theme Population studies and population monitoring.

The structure and organization of the conference will be broadly similar to its predecessor: starting Friday evening, formal proceedings closing Sunday afternoon. As before, it is planned to hold a Workshop Session on Monday on population monitoring.

We hope to keep the residential costs to an absolute minimum and, at this stage, envisage the charge for full board and Conference fee to be no more than U.K. Pounds 30 - 40. Limited funds will be available for travelling expenses; however we expect to use these mainly to defray expenses of speakers from overseas.

As last time, we expect the meeting to be very well attended by British seabird workers; papers have already been offered by Drs J.C. Coulson, T.R. Birkhead, R.W. Furness, P. Monaghan and Professor G.M. Dunnet.

*J.P. Croxall, Chairman, The Seabird Group, c/o Royal Society for  
the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy SG19 2DL, U.K.*

## THE WADER STUDY GROUP

The Wader Study Group (WSG) is an association of amateur and professional workers on the Charadrii (waders or shorebirds) from all parts of the world. By 1982, membership of the WSG was over 500 people, more than half of members living in countries other than Britain (where the group was formed in 1970), and including people in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Australasia as well as Europe. North American members have their own section within the WSG. Interests of the Group have diversified from the original concentration on migration-related studies to embrace all aspects of research on waders, including e.g. counts, breeding biology, feeding ecology and behaviour.

The aims of the WSG are to maintain contact between both amateur and professional individuals and groups studying waders; to help organize co-operative studies; and to provide a vehicle for exchange of information. The main means of achieving these aims is by publication of the Bulletin (see below). WSG maintains contacts with many regional, national and international bodies interested in bird research and conservation, notably the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB), and often works alongside them in co-operative studies. The Group has also been involved in the organization of expeditions to remote areas to fill gaps in the knowledge of waders. Projects co-ordinated by WSG have included studies of the spring migration of Siberian-breeding Knot *Calidris canutus* through Europe and Africa, and of other species passing through western Europe. Current projects include a comprehensive assessment of the networks of coastal sites used by shorebirds in Western Europe in the non-breeding season; a large-scale investigation of spring migration through the Americas; a long-term monitoring of the usage of inland sites in Europe; and an investigation into the effects of severe winter weather in Europe. Most of these studies have immediate relevance to conservation as well as increasing basic understanding of wader biology. These comments also apply to the current WSG co-operative projects concerning breeding waders; two surveys of breeding wader distributions and densities in lowlands in England and Wales, and in Scotland; and an intensive study of similar matters in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland where rapid changes are being made, due to agricultural practices. WSG also co-ordinates (on behalf of several national authorities) the use on waders of colour-marks visible in the field, and attempts to forward sightings of these.

The Wader Study Group Bulletin provides a forum for news, notices, recent ringing recoveries, recent publications, new methods of catching and study, articles and preliminary or interim publication of results from all parts of the world. The editors try to maintain a balance of material ranging from newsletter, informal descriptions of research activities, meetings and expeditions to formal presentation of results or preliminary analyses.

The Bulletin appears three times per year, in April, August and December, the deadlines for copy being the first of February, June and October respectively, for notices, but articles must be received well before these dates. Articles, notes, papers,

notices, obituaries, requests for information, books for review, reprints of papers and other items should be sent to the Editor, Dr. N.C. Davidson, Dept. of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, U.K. Material relating to America may be sent to the editors of the N. American section (Dr. J.P. Myers, Vertebrate Biology, Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th and the Parkway, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103, U.S.A.; and Dr. R.I.G. Morrison, Canadian Wildlife Service, 1725 Woodward Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0E7). Matters relating to the circulation of the Bulletin should be sent to the Secretaries (address below).

Membership of the WSG is open to all individuals or groups interested in waders. The subscription is mainly devoted to the cost of production and circulation of the Bulletin. The annual subscription is U.K. Pounds 10 (or US\$17 or Canadian \$21). Outside Europe, bulletins will be sent by airmail for a total subscription of U.K. Pounds 13 (or US\$22 or Canadian \$27). All cheques should be made payable to "Wader Study Group" and must be in British, US or Canadian currency. Alternatively, payments may be made by bank giro (in English Pounds) to Lloyds Bank Ltd, 7 Victoria Place, Haverfordwest, Dyfed SA61 23Z, U.K. (Bank sorting code no. 30-93-98), with reference to WSG account (no. 0095972).

Applications for membership should be sent to the Secretaries: N. & J. Clark, Department of Zoology, University of Edinburgh, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JT, U.K.

The African Seabird Group exchanges publications with the Wader Study Group and its Bulletins may be consulted in the Niven Library, FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town.

## A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

I thank the following, whose careful reviewing of manuscripts submitted to *Cormorant* in the last year has greatly eased the editorial burden, apologies to anyone omitted:

A. Berruti, P.B. Best, G.M. Branch, S.C. Broni, R.K. Brooke, C.F. Clinning, J.P. Croxall, D.C. Duffy, J.W. Enticott, M.W. Fraser, R.W. Furness, P.C. Harper, M.P. Harris, P. Harrison, P.A.R. Hockey, M.J. Imber, R.P. Prÿs-Jones, R.M. Randall, P.G. Ryan, D.C. Schneider, M. Schramm, P.D. Shaughnessy, W.R. Siegfried, J.C. Sinclair, W. Suter, M. Tasker, J. Warham, A.J. Williams, R.P. Wilson, L.G. Underhill.

NOTE: The 'Recent Literature' section, which is to be expanded to cover the whole Southern Hemisphere, has been held over to a future issue.

Editor

## THE GULL STUDY GROUP

The Gull Study Group (GSG) was established at the Larid Symposium held at Nottingham University, United Kingdom, in 1979. Since then its membership has increased to around 100 people from various parts of the U.K. and the Continent. All groups involved in gull studies in the U.K. are active members.

The GSG aims to foster communication between individuals and groups studying gulls and provides a vehicle for exchange of information about gulls. It also co-ordinates colour-marking schemes through its Colour Ringing and Tagging Register and helps organize co-operative studies.

Members receive a Bulletin every boreal summer and a Newsletter every year. Articles, notes, papers, notices, requests for information and lists of recoveries relating to gulls can all find a home in the Bulletin and the editors are always happy to receive items for publication. The Bulletin also includes abstracts of papers presented at GSG meetings.

Membership is open to all individuals and groups interested in gulls. An application form can be found below. The subscription is a modest U.K. Pounds 3,00 per individual or U.K. Pounds 4,50 per family. This money is mainly used to produce and circulate the Bulletin. All subscriptions should be made payable to the 'Gull Study Group'. Applicants resident abroad please note that subscriptions should be paid in British currency. Please send the completed form and payment to the Secretary.

Chairman: Mark Fletcher, MAFF, Hook Rise South,  
Tolworth, Surbiton, Surrey, U.K.

Secretary: Kenneth Taylor, c/o BTO, Beech Grove, Tring,  
Herts. HP23 5NR, U.K.

Bulletin Editors: Pat Monaghan, Zoology Dept, University of  
Glasgow, Glasgow, G12 8QQ, Scotland, U.K.  
Jim Shaffery, ABRG, Dept. of Zoology,  
University of Oxford, South Parks Road,  
Oxford, U.K.

Treasurer: Chris Johnson, 23 Brockington Rd, Bodenham,  
Hereford, HR13LR, U.K.

The African Seabird Group exchanges publications with the Gull Study Group and its Bulletins may be consulted in the Niven Library, FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town.

## THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

The Royal Naval Birdwatching Society was established in 1946 to help and encourage members serving in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Women's Royal Naval Service in the observation and study of birds at sea. The RNBWS has widened its membership to include all those interested in birdwatching who share a common background : the sea itself. Membership now totals about 350 including many from the Merchant Navy of several countries, ocean weatherships, the offshore oil industry, Ministry of Defence Navy Civil Service, passengers on cruise liners and yachtsmen. Reports received cover most sea areas of the world.

The primary aim of RNBWS is to provide a forum for the exchange of information and observation of seabirds, and of landbirds at sea by members for whom birdwatching is first and foremost a hobby, and to provide advice and support to make the best use of such opportunities at sea. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardized recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.

RNBWS is affiliated to the British Trust for Ornithology and the International Council for Bird Preservation (British Section) and maintains close links with many other societies such as the (British) Seabird Group and the "Seabirds at Sea Team" of the Nature Conservancy Council.

RNBWS has built up a reporting system using standardized recording forms for passage reports covering seabirds, seabird census sheets, land birds and for birds examined in the hand. The society has established a number of local representatives both in home ports and in ports overseas to provide a focus for bird-watching activities when in harbour.

The annual journal, *Sea Swallow*, is available to nonmembers at cost price (UK Pounds 3,00). The RNBWS Bulletin appears two or three times a year. Ordinary Members - Annual Subscription UK Pounds 5,00. All applications to the Secretary. Associate Members - Ornithologists who are not eligible for full membership but wish to further the aims of the Society receive publications at cost price. Honorary Secretary and Treasurer : Lieutenant-Commander E.S.W. Maclure RN, "Melrose", 23 St David's Road, Southsea, Hampshire PO5 1QH, England.

The African Seabird Group exchanges publications with the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society and its Journals and Bulletins may be consulted in the Niven Library, FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town.