

NOTICES

Subscriptions

As reported elsewhere in this issue, the Annual General Meeting approved the subscription arrangements proposed in Bull. 24. The 1979 subscription is £2.50 (or £3.00 for air-mail despatch of Bulletins to members outside Europe). The corresponding rates for members paying to the North American section are \$5.50 or \$6.50 (Canadian or U.S.).

If you have not yet renewed your subscription for 1979, please do so as soon as possible. A form is enclosed with this issue. If you have paid the subscription at 1978 rates, please forward the balance as soon as possible. All cheques should be made payable to "Wader Study Group". Except for members paying subscriptions in U.S. or Canadian dollars to the N. American Secretary/Treasurer, payments can be accepted only in British currency (drafts drawn on a British bank or international money orders or similar).

To minimise the costs of changing currency to members in countries other than UK, Canada and USA, members resident outside these countries may, if they wish, pay their subscriptions for 1979, 1980 and 1981 now at current rates. This offer does not apply in UK, Canada or U.S.A.

Non-members wishing to join the group should write to the Administrative Secretary (or, in America, the General Secretary of the N American Section) for an application form. Their addresses will be found on the inside front cover.

Reprinting of WSG Bulletins 1 to 20

At the time of writing, reprinting of these issues is in progress, and we hope that those who ordered sets will receive them within a few weeks.

Wader Study Group Autumn Meeting 1979

After a gap of one year, the Group will be re-introducing the one-day autumn meeting in 1979. This year the venue will be Nottingham University and the date Saturday 13 October.

The format of this meeting has been variable in the past, including on various occasions business meetings of the group, discussions on developmental problems in catching techniques, short talks on results and discussions on future research. How the meetings develop (if at all) is up to the membership, particularly those who attend the meetings.

In the case of this first meeting we are taking steps to keep the cost to an absolute minimum. Accordingly, we are not arranging accommodation for the preceding or following nights but it will be possible to arrange camp-bed type accommodation with members living in the area for those who require it.

We had hoped to include details of costs for the meeting in this issue but this has proved impossible because of administrative problems at Nottingham University resulting from the current strike by public employees. Although this makes booking at this stage difficult, it would be helpful if persons wishing to attend could indicate their intention on the form enclosed with this issue.

As to content of the meeting, the Officers are open to suggestions. If necessary, space in the programme will be made available for discussions on catching methods etc. We shall clearly hope to include reports on the two co-operative spring projects. We hope that members who are able to give 20 minute talks on their work will offer to do so. Whether or not we shall be able to fit all in will depend, of course, on how many are offered, but please do not be deterred from offering a contribution.

Depending on the response, we hope to be able to include the programme in the August Bulletin, which will also include details of cost. LATE NEWS: The approximate cost per person will be £3-00. This will include lunch and coffee and tea during morning and afternoon sessions.

Ringling totals

The tables of current ringling totals are included in WSG Bulletin because of popular demand. Their main use is to give an immediate impression of the activities and current interests of the various groups and their current success in pursuing their various projects. The item is, however, one of the most difficult to produce because to include a reasonably topical report depends on receiving and collating within a few days the totals from many sources who themselves may have to collect the data from several people within a few days of the end of the period to which the totals relate. Because

of these difficulties, recent totals have incorporated assorted addenda, post-scripts and stop-presses as well as the main tables.

In the hope of avoiding these problems in future, the periods covered by the totals are being changed to the following groupings: October to January inclusive (April issue), February to May inclusive (August issue) and June to September (December issue). The last date for receipt of these totals by the Editor will be 20 February, 20 June and 20 October, respectively. In order to adjust to this new schedule, the current issue includes a form for totals for the months March to May inclusive. This should be returned by 20 June.

Although the new periods suit the seasons of autumn and spring migration and wintering slightly less well, they probably suit breeding season studies slightly better than previously. The main point, however, is that we should be able to include all totals in the tables which are fairly easy to consult. This, of course, depends on the co-operation of those sending in totals.

The moult of waders - an appeal for data

Over the last ten years or so and especially within United Kingdom and Ireland many wader ringers have entered details of trapped birds on to Wader Study Group data forms which have been collected centrally first by A.J. Prater at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and more recently by WSG Administrative Secretary G.F. Appleton. The bank of data is both large and extremely valuable and we are now developing plans to make full use of it. In the past parts have been used but there are extremely large amounts from some species (eg Dunlin) which can probably only be properly investigated using a computer while other species can be examined 'by hand'. Besides the usual body measurements of weight, bill length and wing length and information on the age and sex of each bird the state of primary moult has often been recorded by a shorthand notation based on the usual scoring method, eg N⁵4¹3¹03 means that, starting from the junction between primaries and secondaries and moving outwards along the wing, the bird has five new primaries (can also be scored 5⁵), one at stage four, one at stage three and three old unmoulted primaries. During the annual post-nuptial moult the secondaries, tail and many of the other feathers are replaced within the span of primary moult so this recording system gives a good guide to the stage of moult. The information can be collected quickly even when many birds are caught together and require rapid 'processing'.

Although general descriptions of the progression and timing of moult have now been made for many waders there is still a great deal to be learnt, particularly about less often caught species and, in often caught species, about variations between years and age groups. We have reached the stage when a full scale analysis of the data already collected is required so that conclusions can be drawn and published and the direction of future research indicated.

The BTO has recently commenced a full analysis of its entire collection of moult data cards which have been collected by ringers during the last 10-15 years. This collection does not contain many records for waders: the bulk of data for these is, as I have described, either on WSG forms or in the records of wader ringing groups or individuals. Also, even though the BTO would like the wader data analysed their present system, based on work by Derek Thomas at Swansea, could not cope with the additional data which would double their work task.

Preliminary discussions between WSG officers, Drs. D. Thomas and J.J.D. Greenwood who have both developed methods of moult analysis, and Dr. R. O'Connor who is BTO Director, have suggested that the WSG should initiate its own programme of moult analysis parallel to the BTO scheme and endeavour to find separate funds to do the work. Such a plan of campaign is being investigated and we hope such an approach can be adopted. If all goes well we can soon start to make full use of the data already on our files.

Now (for some of you) comes the crunch! Some of you are doubtless aware that there are large omissions from our files. Some ringing groups and individuals have, for a wide variety of reasons, not sent in their data to WSG. Some do not like the WSG data form, others have been too busy, some don't want to be bothered, and yet others object to the additional 'office' chore which has to be added to all the other office work associated with bird ringing. However, the time has come for us to appeal to all of you to send in your backlog of data and to start, if you do not do so, to send in data regularly. The forms are available free of charge from the Administrative Secretary, Graham Appleton, whose address is on the inside of the cover of this bulletin. For some groups this of course means a great deal of work and you might like to contact us first to see if some photocopying arrangements can be made to avoid the chores of re-copying everything. Similarly if you use an automated data storage system please contact us first before sending in data.

One word of reassurance - we are not trying to monopolise or steal your data! The source of everything used in publication will be acknowledged. But, more important, if anyone has a particular interest which they would like to follow up on a National or International scale or if anyone would like to help in the work please contact us. Write to either of the editors.

Colour-dyed Knot *Calidris canutus*

In addition to the colour-dyeing of Knots being carried out in South Africa and France as part of the WSG study of spring passage of Siberian Knots, a smaller study involving dyeing of Knot is being undertaken on the Tees estuary in north-east England by the University of Durham. The organisers of both schemes have taken considerable care to ensure that the two schemes will not conflict with each other or jeopardize their results of either.

Each year, the population of Knots on the Tees estuary drops by 60 - 70% in late February and early March when the birds depart, presumably to some other estuary before commencing pre-migratory fattening. While it is thought likely that the Knots move to one of the British west coast estuaries, it is possible that some return to the Waddensea or to the Humber or the Wash. It is in an attempt to resolve this problem that dyeing of birds is being carried out.

The birds are being marked with a green dye on the breast and rump and, while this will last for only about six weeks, it is hoped that marked birds will be visible even in fairly dense roosting flocks, especially with careful observation by means of a telescope. Where possible, however, observations of feeding birds is likely to prove more rewarding as, in view of the dispersed nature of such birds, a greater area of plumage is visible.

In view of the possible destinations of the departing birds, assistance of the WSG members in Britain and Holland is being requested, and several of those strategically placed have been contacted already. By the time this note appears most of the dye will have been lost by washing or moult but the details are given here in case observers have already noted any such birds. Also, the experiment will be repeated next winter.

Ideally, the information required is similar to that requested by William Dick for the other Knot project, i.e. location and extent of area covered, date, time, number of Knots, number inspected for dye and number marked, although less complete information is welcome, particularly for birds already seen by the time this note appears. Records should be sent to:
P.J. Dugan, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, England.

Weights of waders in cold weather in Britain

Most readers will be aware of the considerable interest in the variation in waders' weights through the winter season in recent years. Papers at conferences have shown mean weight graphs through the winter; similar graphs have appeared in Wash Wader Ringing Group Reports and, in particular, in a paper describing the winter weight variation in Dunlins which was given at a R & M conference by Clare Lloyd and, in a revised form written by M. W. Pienkowski, C.S. Lloyd and C.D.T. Minton is now in press in 'Bird Study'.

For most waders in Britain mean weights rise during the winter to a December peak, then fall during the next three months before a large pre-migratory increase in spring. Much interest has been expressed in deposition of mid-winter fat, its relevance to survival in bad weather and the ability of the birds to regain weight they may have lost in a cold spell. Most of the work on which reports have been founded was done in the long series of relatively mild winters and we have been longing for a cold winter to test various theories and to collect cold weather data. Winter 1978-79 has been extremely cold in places and may have given us the opportunity although catching efforts may have been disrupted by difficult road conditions preventing wader ringers getting to the coast. Also conditions may have been more severe inland than in coastal areas. However, any wader weights collected will be of considerable interest. Also any counts of dead birds on tide lines and their weights will be valuable. Finally weights following cold weather are of equal interest. Particularly useful are weights of individuals caught both during and after the cold weather.

The Editors very much hope that some data has been collected and we should be very pleased to hear from you. Information either in the form of short notes or as raw data for collation centrally would be welcome in any quantities, large or small. Similarly we should like to hear of any counts of dead waders on tidelines.

2nd notice: Symposium on Birds of the Sea & Shore, November 1979, Univ. of Cape Town
Organised by: The Southern African Seabird Group, The Western Cape Wader Study Group & the Cape Bird Club

A 5-day symposium, consisting of 3 days of formal sessions and 2 days of excursions, will be held at the Univ. of Cape Town, South Africa 19-23 Nov. 1979. The theme will be "Birds of the sea and shore", with papers on seabirds & waders, both inland & coastal. Papers are expected from Britain, France, New Zealand, Holland & USA as well as southern Africa. The symposium forms part of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Southern African Ornithological Society & of the 150th Anniversary of the Univ. of Cape Town. Excursions are planned to the Cape Gannet & Jackass Penguin colonies of Malgas Island, Saldanha Bay, Langebaan Lagoon to view waders & a half-day seawatching cruise off the west coast of the Cape Peninsula. Persons interested in attending should write to Mr G D Underhill, 12 Roseberry Rd., Mowbray 7700, South Africa. Registration fee, including the proceedings and teas, is R10.00. Costs of excursions will be made available later. Persons wishing to offer a paper should also write to Mr J Cooper, Southern African Seabird Group, c/o FitzPatrick Inst., Univ. of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa, giving the title. Abstracts will be requested later. Formal proceedings to be published as a special supplement to Cormorant, Bull. of the Southern African Seabird Group.