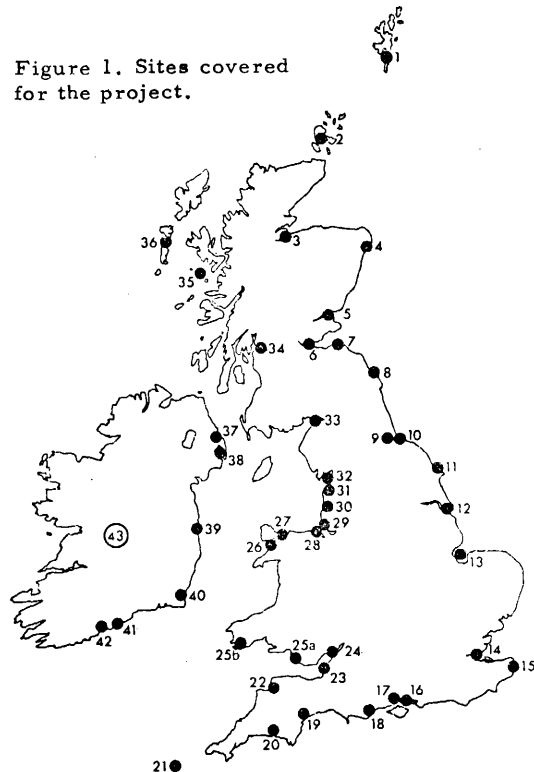


Table 1. Departures of Dunlins and Ringed Plovers observed on 12 May in South Wales.

Time	Number of birds leaving in each flock		Compass bearing
	Dunlin	Ringed Plover	
1740	20	20	341
1803	41		340
1830	75		341
1835	65		339
1841	45		340
1854	145		325
1910	90	20	335
1915	25		335
1945	100	10	335
2020	150	30	335
2020	45		335

Figure 1. Sites covered for the project.



SPRING PASSAGE OF SIBERIAN KNOT - INTERIM REPORT

by William J.A. Dick

The excellent response to the notices announcing the project in the last two Bulletins was most encouraging, and at least 40 people in 15 countries have agreed to participate. The project is intended to investigate the spring migration of Knot Calidris canutus from wintering grounds in Africa on passage through Europe, by means of counting, ringing and colour-dyeing.

At the time of writing (11 June) the Knot should be reaching their arctic breeding grounds and it is too early to say how successful the project has been. Observers have been requested to return recording forms by 30 June so that the results can be analysed rapidly, for presentation at the autumn meeting at Nottingham University, and for publication. However some comments are possible already, based on field work in South Africa, France and Germany.

In South Africa the Cape Wader Group monitored the departure of Knot from their wintering grounds and also managed to catch over 200. Fifty-four were adults of an age to move north, and were dyed with picric acid. Having such good information on dates of, and weights at, departure will allow much more complete interpretation of the passage further north.

In the Vendée, Olivier Fournier and his team carried out regular counting throughout the spring at the Baie d'Aiguillon, the most important staging post in France for Knot. The comprehensive Vendée counts show a rapid passage concentrated into a few days in mid May. Flocks were seen departing on migration. Catching was carried out in two separate weeks in April and May, two teams from England visiting Olivier, and some 200 Knots were dyed with a dark blue dye on the undersides. The birds were very obvious in the field and could be seen in flocks at a distance, although we do not know how well the dye lasted. The Knot proved much more difficult to catch in 1979 than in 1978 mainly due to very adverse weather conditions. A larger sample of dyed birds would obviously have given a better chance of observations further north, but the sample was large enough to establish, from the bill lengths, that the Knot were clearly Siberian. One South African ringed bird was recaptured and one Danish.

In the Nordfriesische Wattenmeer in Germany a research team from Kiel University have been carrying out an intensive research programme at the Nordstrander Bucht, an area under immediate threat of reclamation. Regular counting of certain fixed areas has been carried out throughout the spring, and three aerial surveys of the entire Wattenmeer undertaken. In addition to studies on Brent Branta bernicla and Barnacle Geese B. leucopsis, nearly 900 waders were caught between March and May, including 115 Knot. It is already clear that both Greenland and Siberian populations use the Wattenmeer as a major fattening ground, and some very high weights were recorded. In one catch of 14 Knot, one Knot had been ringed in Mauritania in 1973 and one in Sweden!

It is probable that the project may pose more questions about the migration system than it answers. For example, do Knot from wintering areas in West and South Africa tend to use particular sites on the European coastline? How much mixing occurs between Greenland and Siberian populations? At present we know very little indeed of the complexities of the migration system but this spring's data will certainly provide many answers.

The project is also having other "spin off", for example, in providing information on other species, in increasing contacts between members of the WSG in different countries, and in providing hard data which will be used immediately to present the case for conservation of proposed reclamation areas in Germany. I would like to thank everyone who participated, and hope you enjoyed the field-work as much as we did!