

WADER STUDY GROUP DATA FORMS: FIRST ADDITIONS

by Michael W. Pienkowski

The response to the new WSG data forms for ringers has been very good and many groups and individuals are now using these both for new work and old information. Inevitably some problems have arisen, particularly where some groups record measurements not at present widely used. Below are some amendments to the instructions. Most will probably affect relatively few users.

General

Our attention has been drawn to the 'rub-out' ball-point pens made by 'Paper Mate', as an alternative to pencils for filling in the forms. The advantages are that the ball-point ink is easier to read but can be erased as easily as pencil, and that the pen does not need to be sharpened. The disadvantage is the price: about £1.50 for the pen and about £0.80 for refills. Anyone using the pens should also be warned not to use them for general purposes, particularly the writing of bank cheques - unless they do not mind the risk of amendments by other people!

Capture Method

Add 8 = wilster net (see WSG Bull. 26: 10-12)

Time at capture

Use zero (or blank) if unknown - but do not mix known and unknown on the same sheet.

Time after capture

Use zero (or blank) if unknown - but do not mix unknown and the use of the 'Interval' system (see basic instruction leaflet) on the same sheet.

Scheme (and 2nd scheme, if 2 rings)

The form was originally designed for British ringers but we are delighted that it has also been adopted by some ringers in Germany and the Netherlands (in the latter country, the whole form and instructions have also been produced in Dutch!) As the instructions stand, ringers using non-British rings would have to write the scheme on every line. To avoid this, the program has been modified so that it has a list of the ringing scheme to which each ringer or group belongs. Therefore, ringing scheme normally need be entered only for any retraps or controls, and for new birds only if the ringer or group are using rings not supplied by their usual ringing schemes.

Status

It has been pointed out that it is often useful to collect measurements from dead birds. The forms can be used for these and the 'status' column can be used to indicate: D = found dead; K = killed (under licence); T = trapping casualty.

We did recognise when drawing up the scheme that occasionally space for three rings will be needed for a bird, e.g. when a bird already carrying two worn rings is caught and these need to be replaced. We did not code for this because it is likely to happen only infrequently and because all records for the bird should be traceable through two numbers on any one occasion. The best policy would be to code such birds as status '3' and to list two of the ring numbers (including any new one) in the spaces provided. The third ring number and an explanatory note should be given in the remarks space or in one of the margins.

Long ring numbers

Some American ring numbers now use 9 digits. If anyone is fortunate enough to capture one of these, we will find a way of dealing with it!

Moult

Occasionally, waders show 3 generations of feathers in one wing, e.g. new feathers moulting in (scores 1 to 5), the old feathers they are replacing (score 0), and other complete feathers obviously older than these. If desired, these last can be coded as V ("very old").

Moult code

If a bird is in active moult and the scores for each primary are given, the moult code (1) may be omitted if desired.

Colour rings

For those ringers marking birds with temporary dyes or leg flags for the current WSG project and other WSG-registered studies, a 'T' entered in the first colour-ring spaces for each bird would be helpful in keeping track of the marking.

Head and bill

Some ringers are measuring total head length (head + bill) on some small species, notably Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, to an accuracy of 0.1 mm. To code these data treat the 3 spaces under Head + Bill on the form as referring to tens, units and the first place of decimals, rather than to hundreds, tens and units. Do not write the decimal point but do enter '1' in the single (unlabelled) space on the first line of each such sheet immediately before the spaces for Ringer or Group.

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COMMON SANDPIPERS IN THE PEAK DISTRICT

by P.K. Holland

(Abstract of Talk given at WSG Autumn meeting 1979 at Nottingham University)

About 100 pairs of Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos* breed in the Peak District, England, most of them being round the large reservoirs in the upper Derwent and Goyt Valleys. Only one significant concentration of stream-side birds exists and this is the one we have mostly studied.

The first birds arrive back 15-20 April at a favoured spot where the R.Alport joins the R.Ashop. Here there is good feeding on a muddy stretch of stream and in a few fields where new lambs are kept. The males then move out to re-occupy their old territories. The order in which the territories are filled is the same from year to year. Females are more likely to occupy a new territory and have done so even when their mate of the previous year was still occupying an earlier site where they had successfully raised young. Up to the middle of May there is much display and calling. Although several birds ringed as pulli have bred they have not done so in their first year. We have, however, two records of one-year-old birds giving anxiety alarm calls, as if with young, just outside our study area. Other birds ringed as pulli have been recorded breeding in neighbouring catchment areas (less than 10 km away).