

WADER STUDY GROUP

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Shortly after I arrived at work today on a rather cold, wet morning (having had difficulty starting the car and put up with the usual rush-hour morning traffic jam) the phone rang and the switchboard operator said "George Miles for you". At that moment I had no idea who George Miles was but I said "put him through". A clear voice said "You don't know me although we have met at Ringers' Conferences. I am George Miles from Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates". As he went on speaking it dawned on me that he was actually speaking from Dubai! Now, I do not generally move in circles where telephone calls across the world are an everyday occurrence so I was a bit surprised! However, George had phoned to tell me about an exciting morning's wader watching, "on the creek out the back here" he said "we have just been watching 1000 Black-tailed Godwits, 16 Oystercatchers, 150 Black-winged Stilts, 180 Whimbrel, 50 Curlews, 2000 Dunlin, 12 Spotted Redshank, 200 Ringed Plovers, 2000 Redshank, 80 teal and various other ducks. Also nearby about 1000 Sanderlings". This I gathered was an unusually high number of waders in his experience of the area, even for the Autumn passage. George thought the area was important for passage waders and he hoped some sort of study could be initiated. He promised to collect records and write up some of his observations for WSG Bulletin. After further discussion he rang off and I returned to work imagining flocks of waders wheeling and turning in the scorching heat over an Indian Ocean beach.....

Why had he phoned I wondered? Was he moved by the spectacle of wader migration on a special morning? Did he feel he must tell somebody about it who would appreciate the magic? Or did he expect me to grab a few cannon-nets, collect a few friends and catch the next Concorde...? Then I could be on an Indian Ocean beach - tonight! tomorrow morning! catching Siberian waders!

So many wader people seem to travel at the drop of a hat - look at the reports in the Bulletin. Perhaps that is why the Group seems to thrive on an International scale with many members as migratory as the waders which fascinate them. Maybe our next project should be to study wader migration through the Arabian Gulf, down the coast of Arabia to East Africa. Waders from Siberia.....have cannon net, will travel! who will pay? who will organise the project? Arabian sun instead of an English November.... Mind you, there might be a few political problems.

G.H.Green

WADER STUDY GROUP TREASURER

Bryan Murray, who has been an excellent Treasurer for the Group for several years, has taken a post in Monte Carlo. In the circumstances he felt he should give up the job even though we tried to persuade him to continue. There would of course been problems arising from having a treasurer so far away when most of the bills are paid in the United Kingdom. We shall miss Bryan's help and advice and his efficient handling of our finances and offer him our grateful thanks and good wishes in his new job.

We are pleased to announce that S.J.Sutcliffe has agreed to become our 'Acting co-opted treasurer' and we hope he will become full treasurer at the next AGM.

Steve Sutcliffe has been active in the wader field for many years mainly being involved with wader catching with Celtic Wader Research Group in South Wales. He has also undertaken counts in the Birds of Estuaries Enquiry. He also has an accountancy and business background which we hope will be to our advantage!

BREEDING WADERS OF SCOTTISH AGRICULTURAL LAND

Those of you who have read the December 1980 and April 1981 issues of the Bulletin will already be familiar with this survey. Pilot work for the main survey starting in 1982 was carried out last spring and summer and involved workers scattered all over Scotland from the Borders to Shetland. Observers were asked to fill in cards giving their estimates of the number of pairs of each species on each site visit. They were also asked to comment on habitat and on any particular difficulties that they had in their field work. While a fuller analysis of the methodology will appear in due course, we can say that for many of the more accessible sites a single visit should provide an acceptable level of accuracy. Snipe Gallinago gallinago appear to be the main flies in the ointment but Ken Smith of the BTO has been concentrating on these and he should have his recommendations prepared in plenty of time for next season.

Next year will be the first full year of the survey and we hope that vast numbers of people will contribute in covering as many sites as possible. To recap on the scope of the survey: we should be most effective if we concentrate on those areas at lower altitudes most likely to be affected by agricultural change. Thus pasture, hay meadows, bogs, rough grazing, cereal fields and ploughed land should all be considered suitable study areas. Results from observers wishing to work other habitats (eg. machair) will be very welcome. As well as areas of proven worth (eg. the east coast straths) we are also to cover the less well known areas eg. the west coast glens - these may prove particularly rewarding.

If you live in Scotland or are coming up for a holiday in April, May or June and would like to take part please contact me, Hector Galbraith at 96 Neilston Road, Paisley PA2 6EL.