

INLAND WADER COUNTS IN 1981

by OAG Münster

It is a little bit too early to say very much about the progress of the Inland Wader Count project in the last year since, at the time of writing this article, the counting forms are still coming in. It is quite obvious, however, that the network of counting sites has become somewhat closer in some regions during 1981. We hope to prepare a more comprehensive report on the project for the next WSG Bulletin.

In 1981, for the first time, data from the project have been used for a paper not primarily concerned with wader counts: Bloch, Bruderer and Steiner (1982, Vogelwarte, in press) compared some counting data with radar observations in the Alps. We were quite glad to see that counting waders is not merely a self-satisfying job!

The prospects for the project in 1982 are not so bad. Counting will probably begin at some sites in Belgium, in Hungary and in Spain so that the area "infected" by counting sites in Europe will be larger. In order to cope with the expected (and hoped for) data we plan to involve a computer in the storage and handling of the material. Nevertheless, we will of course welcome any new participants in the project.

OAG Münster, Biologische Station Rieselfelder, Coermühle 181, D-4400 Münster, West Germany.

WEIGHT CHANGES OF MOULTING RUFFS *PHILOMACHUS PUGNAX* IN THE SEWAGE FARMS OF MÜNSTER

by Thomas Kepp, OAG Münster

Abstract of talk at WSG Meeting at Münster

The former sewage farms of the city of Münster are a resting and moulting site of international importance for waders. Some results of the wader ringing programme were presented. The relationships between weight, moult, and migration disposition of Ruffs were shown and discussed:

1) Spring migration period. The weights of males (Ruffs) showed distinct increases, whereas those of females (Reeves) were relatively constant level, when plotted as means of ten days periods. This fact is explained by different lengths of stay of sexes: the mean resting periods of Ruffs were longer than those of Reeves.

2) Autumn migration: Weights of adults. For both sexes, the weights of moulting individuals were distinctly lower than those of non-moulting birds, or of birds which had completed or suspended moult. Unlike the mean weights of Reeves, those of Ruffs varied considerably. This can be explained by the different moulting behaviours of the sexes: in contrast to Ruffs, only very few Reeves were found in advanced stages of moult. The relationship between moulting stage and weight was discussed.

3) First-year birds in autumn. Their weights were comparatively constant throughout the autumn migration period, and lower than those of the adults. This may be related to their shorter lengths of stay.

4) Theoretical flight range. The fat reserves were estimated by means of extreme weight differences of recaptured birds. At a supposed flight speed of 70km/h on average Ruffs can fly non-stop from Münster to North Africa (according to the formula of McNeill & Cadieux, improved by Summers & Waltner).

O.A.G. Münster, Biologische Station Rieselfelder, Coermühle 181, D-4400 Münster, West Germany.

WADERS AND COLD WEATHER

December 1981 and January 1982 brought spells of extremely severe weather to much of north-west Europe. The effects of severe weather on shorebirds (and, indeed, other wildlife) are of great interest, both to aid our understanding of which conditions are critical to survival and to ensure that human interference does not exacerbate difficult natural situations.

Following the previous severe winter in 1978-79, plans had been formulated, both to provide protection for shorebirds from excessive disturbance, and to obtain information on how the birds actually were affected (see the article by P.R. Evans on 'Why catch waders in cold weather?' in WSG Bull. 31: 23-24). In the event, in 1981-82, various unforeseen political problems arose.

In this issue of WSG Bulletin, we are publishing several articles giving initial information concerning the severe winter of 1981-82. Peter Evans sets the scene with an account of when the weather occurred; when wildfowling bans were imposed and some implications for waders. Nigel Clark draws together first information and impressions from around Britain, clearly showing the great regional differences in severity of effect on shorebirds. Then Nick Davidson makes a preliminary comparison of the effects, mainly in one estuary, of the 1981/82 cold spells with those of 1978/79; this emphasizes yet again how different species are affected differently by low temperatures and high winds. Finally, David Townshend reports on the use of an area by Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* only in cold winters, and draws attention to another source of underestimation in survival estimates.

All these are preliminary reports, written so that the information gathered in this cold period is not lost. Further analyses and studies of material gathered are under way. We shall hear more of this in future issues. We shall also return to the subject soon, possibly in the August issue, to discuss, in detail, the further information which should be gathered when severe weather strikes next.