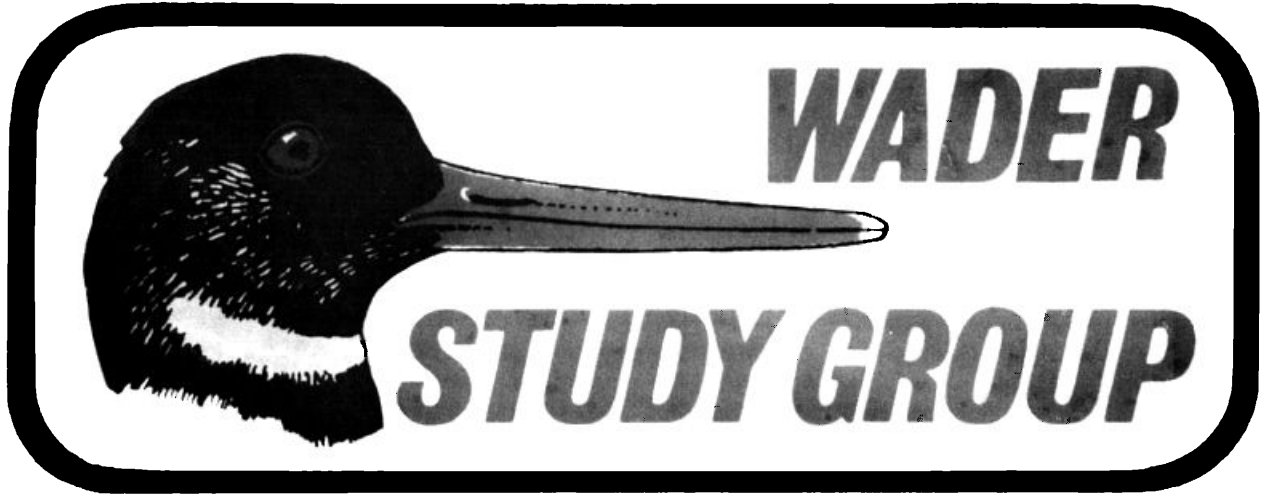


CAR STICKERS: BY POPULAR DEMAND!

As announced at the AGM in Durham last October, and at the request of a number of members, the WSG has produced car stickers. These are now available. They are printed in black and red on a white background and, as can be seen from the full-sized (but monochrome) reproduction below, depict the Group's Oystercatcher emblem.



The WSG Car Sticker. Areas coloured red are shown grey in this illustration.

These attractive car stickers, offered exclusively to WSG members, will add a distinguished note to any car, or other means of transport (and appear to serve as parking permits at certain academic establishments). They make ideal gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas and Easter, and are suitable for all ages.

Obtain your car-sticker either by:

- 1) sending a cheque for £0.75 payable to 'Wader Study Group' to the Secretaries: N.A. & J.A. Clark, Department of Zoology, University of Edinburgh, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JT, UK., or
- 2) sending Dfl. 3.30 to Theunis Piersma Rek. WSG, Groningen, on giro account number 5485692 with reference to Wader Study Group Car Stickers, or
- 3) sending DM3 to the postal cheque account (716 70-304 in Hannover) of Hermann Hötter, Schiplagello, 4520 Melle 8, FRG, writing your address and the number of stickers required on the remittance form. Alternatively, send DM3 in stamps to Hermann Hötter at the above address.

All prices include postage and packing.

For members paying in £ sterling, an order form is enclosed with this issue of the Bulletin.

WSG PROJECT ON THE EFFECTS OF SEVERE WEATHER ON WADERS: FIRST PROGRESS REPORT by N.C. Davidson and N.A. Clark

The first winter in which we have run this project will have ended (hopefully!) by the time you read this report. At the time of writing (mid February 1983), the winter has been mild throughout most of Britain, with only short periods of fairly low temperatures. Even during the recent period of snowfalls, temperatures remained well above those of the severe weather of last winter. This has been invaluable in allowing time for the collection of data with which to compare the effects of any severe weather in the future. It has also allowed time to establish the project, to improve methods, and to solve any initial problems. 26 individuals or groups have registered so far for population counts and/or tideline searches. These observers cover 18 estuaries or areas. In Britain, there is a good geographical spread of observers, so that we have some coverage of most areas (Figure 1). However, there are some notable gaps in coverage, for example the Humber, East Anglia, south-west England, and north-west Scotland; also in Ireland. We would particularly welcome observers in these areas. Of course, additional observers in any area will be very useful: the more observers covering an area, the better the chance that the effects of severe weather will be detected rapidly. We have coverage also of two areas of continental Europe: the Somme estuary in France, and a part of the Dutch Waddenzee. It would be most useful to extend coverage for this project to other parts of Europe, since weather conditions and (hence mortality) during severe weather may differ markedly between Britain and other parts of Europe.

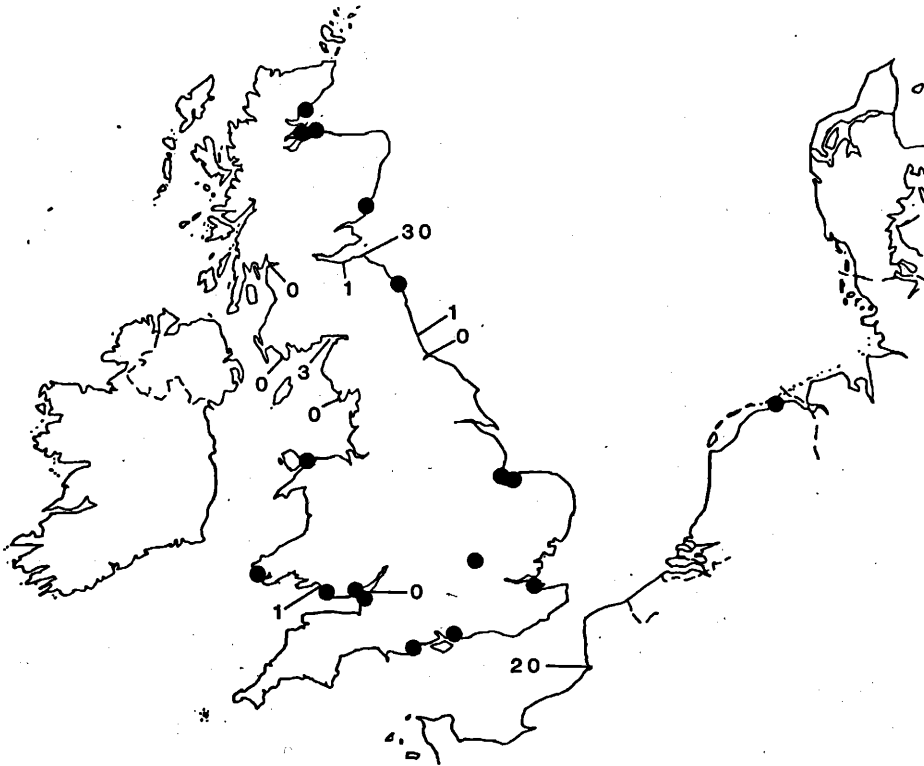


Figure 1. Numbers of wader carcasses found during tideline searches between October 1982 and January 1983. ● shows sites for which no returns have yet been received.

During the last severe winter (1981/82), statutory bans on the shooting of birds were introduced in Britain to reduce disturbance of birds thought to be weakened by starvation during severe weather. In conjunction with these, the British Trust for Ornithology has decided to ban most catching of birds for the duration of any future wildfowling bans. In consultation with the BTO and the Nature Conservancy Council, the WSG negotiated exemption from bans on catching birds during the winter of 1982/83 for several groups studying waders. These groups have been contacted directly. The major reason for the exemptions being permitted is to allow these groups to contribute to the WSG project on the effects of severe weather by collecting essential information on the weights and identity of live waders during severe weather. In turn, the WSG project on the effects of severe weather is designed to provide information required to assess the need for, and efficacy of, bans. One condition of the exemption was that the exempted groups should contribute data collected during severe weather to this project. Any groups with such data should therefore send it as usual on WSG green forms, with a note that severe weather data is included. It is only by comparisons between the condition and identity of waders surviving and dying during severe weather that the effects and consequences of severe weather on waders can be understood fully.

Completed tideline search forms have not yet been received from all observers. A preliminary analysis of those received to date, mostly covering the period October 1982 - January 1983, shows that few wader carcasses have been found so far at most sites (Figure 1). None of the carcasses can be positively identified as having died from starvation (for example by low body weight and exhaustion of fat reserves). On only two sites have more than a very few carcasses been reported. Several of the dead waders from the Somme estuary in France had been shot, and this may account for most of the mortality there. This emphasises the differences in shooting pressure on estuaries in France compared to those in Britain. No carcasses found in Britain were reported as shot. On the Firth of Forth, the other site where a number of dead waders have been reported, all had been killed by predators. A preliminary examination of intact carcasses from the Solway and Co. Durham, for which there was no obvious cause of death, found that they had certainly not starved, since they were heavy and had appreciable fat loads. Nine species of waders have so far been found during tideline searches. These include small species such as Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. This shows that it is not only the large, obvious, carcasses such as those of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* and Curlews *Numenius arquata* that can be found during searches.

The numbers of carcasses shown in Figure 1 have not been corrected for variables such as the length of tideline searched, the number of visits, and population sizes of live waders. A more detailed analysis will be made once all returns have been received. Population counts made at the same sites as tideline searches will be invaluable for estimating the proportion of wintering wader populations that are found dead during tideline searches. Data on the biometrics, age, sex, and racial origin of carcasses will allow us to build up a picture of which parts of a population die in mild winters, for comparison with the identity of those dying during past (and any future) severe spells.

The first winter of this project ended on 31 March 1983, so if you have not already done so, you should return all completed tideline search and population count forms, and WSG green forms containing severe weather catch data, as soon as possible. We shall then be able to complete a more detailed analysis before next winter. It is already clear that sufficient information is emerging for the project to be a valuable means of monitoring the effects of severe (and mild) winters on waders, and that the project should continue during next winter (October 1983 - March 1984). Watch this space in Bulletin No. 38 for further details.

Finally, we extend our thanks to all observers who, having geared themselves for scouring the beaches during arctic conditions, were faced with mild and sunny weather for much of the winter. Without their assistance, this project could not operate. We will try to arrange more severe weather conditions for future winters.

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