

INTERWADER

INTERWADER, the International South-east Asia Wader Study Project, is an international co-operative research project launched in 1983 to investigate the numbers, distribution, ecology and conservation status of the 50+ species of waders recorded in South-east Asia. Using light aircraft during August - November 1983, we have mapped the distribution of passage and wintering populations of waders in Peninsula Malaysia, and ringed and colour-marked waders in Malaysia and Singapore. In 1984 we hope to expand this programme into Thailand and Borneo using aerial and ground surveys, with colour-marking at selected sites. The scope of such studies is dependant on funding and personnel, and this is an appeal to ornithologists with wader experience, who would like to help with fieldwork for two or more months of the 1984 season (August - December inclusive), to contact us at the address below. Participants may need special visas, for which we must apply as soon as possible. Applicants should send personal details, a statement of relevant experience, and availability dates. At present our projected funding will cover local transportation and the field expenses of a limited number of participants. This situation may change, and there is a possibility of subsidised air travel in special cases.

We are anxious also to contact ornithologists who have local information on wader numbers and sites within the region. One of the aims of INTERWADER is to compile a site directory for future use in population estimates and conservation programmes. Any information, however scant, on date, location and numbers, would be very useful. Contributors will be acknowledged in resultant future publications. We are also interested in information on Storks, Ibises, Spoonbills and coastal Ardeids.

Please contact: Duncan Parish & David Wells, Interwader Project, c/o World Wildlife Fund Malaysia, P.O. Box 10769, Wisma Damansara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

SHOREBIRD WEIGHTS AND FLIGHT RANGES - A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

In many studies of the migration of shorebirds, weights collected shortly before departure from a wintering ground or stopover site have been used to estimate flight range, and so identify the chain of sites used by a wader during its migration. Several formulae (based on various combinations of theory and empirical results from different bird species) exist for calculating flight ranges. These give widely differing estimates of potential flight range for a given weight. For shorebirds, the longest range estimate is almost twice the shortest, and for long-distance migrants this difference may amount to several thousand km. Clearly, the use of different formulae will result in greatly differing interpretations of migration strategy and behaviour. It is, therefore, crucial to establish which of the formulae presently available (if any) gives an accurate estimate of the flight ranges of shorebirds. The problems of using flight range formulae for shorebirds are discussed in more detail in a paper to appear in 1984 in Ringing & Migration.

One critical test of flight range formulae comes from individual shorebirds that have made known migratory flights under known weather conditions using known amounts of fat. (Fat is the main fuel during flight, and all flight range formulae use a measure of fat load in their calculation.) Thus, the test requires instances of shorebirds that have been caught and weighed immediately before and after a migratory flight. Unfortunately, data of this type are scarce, and very difficult to collect. It is, however, probable that many ringers have a few examples in their files of ringed birds recaptured soon after completing a migratory flight.

This request forms part of an attempt to compile a sufficiently large data set to test adequately flight range predictions. To provide useful information, a bird should have been recorded before and after a migratory flight of at least 500 km within 1 week. Preferably, the bird should have been weighed at first capture at least. Cases of birds recaptured, or found dead, at the end of a flight are both useful.

From the nature of the data, it is clear that in most cases one person (or group) will have complete information on a bird at either the start or end of its flight only. It is important, however, to supply as much information as possible about the ringer and/or ringing scheme involved at the other end of the flight, since the ringer/finder can then be contacted for further information.

The information needed (ideally) about each bird is:

1. Species, age, sex, ring number.
2. Biometrics, especially wing-length, bill-length, total head-length.
3. Date and place of capture, and weight and time of weighing after capture, before flight.
4. Date and place of capture (or finding), and weight and time of weighing after capture, after flight.
5. Distance flown (if already calculated).
6. Name and address of ringer/finder at other end of flight.

Less-complete information will also be useful: for example, if a bird was not weighed at one end of its flight, it is still valuable to identify the distance that it had managed to fly.

It will soon be possible to identify many such cases from the WSG archive of shorebird ringing data. If you have already contributed your data to the archive, there is no need to respond directly to this request, unless you can provide additional information, not coded on WSG green forms, about relevant cases. Ringers in Britain and Europe who do not yet contribute their shorebird ringing data to the WSG archive are encouraged to do so as soon as possible, as the opportunity may not exist in the future. Contact Mike and Ann Pienkowski at the address below if you wish to take advantage of the system.

Please send any information that you can contribute to: Dr. N. C. Davidson, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE, UK.