

ON WADERS IN WORCESTERSAUCE : A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE 1984 ANNUAL WADER STUDY GROUP MEETING

by Cor Smit

After having read Harry Green's descriptions of Worcester, its surrounding countryside, the promises of comfortable college facilities and the presence of a bar, attending the 1984 Annual WSG meeting was a necessity. Though from the outside the residence halls remarkably resembled a kind of barracks which should have been very familiar to those who have had the opportunity to join a proud army, there appeared to be an enormous number of delightful bathrooms. Those who had spent a week in the Wash prior to the meeting will have especially enjoyed these a lot.

After Friday supper many participants assembled in a remarkable pub - no wonder, since all pubs in England are remarkable. In this one, however, every chance to communicate was quickly made impossible because of a loud noise, called music by some optimists, produced mainly by a computerized organ-like instrument. Despite this it became a very enjoyable evening.

The list of participants to the 1984 Annual Meeting showed 32 British, 8 Dutch, 4 German, 3 French and 2 Portuguese names. The Annual Meeting itself was as pleasant as ever: short and good fun. Harry Green apologized for the high costs of the meeting but hoped for lower prices for the next two years. The 1985 meeting will be organized in La Rochelle on the French west coast in October 1985 and already now it became obvious that many thought of the French cuisine and wines. The Saturday session of the scientific program featured the Dutch in Africa and the Scots in England. The session was opened by a delightful talk by Wibe Altenburg on Black-tailed Godwits in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. According to the speaker a lot more work will have to be done in the future. In stating this he brought forward an argument to go to Mali next year. Klaas van Dijk introduced us to exotic areas in Tunisia, where counts as well as catching activities have been carried out in what appeared to be the most important wader area in the Mediterranean. Mike Nicoll surprised many with a mini cannon-net, especially designed to catch Purple Sandpipers and Turnstones on rocky shores. He also introduced several other ways of catching waders in this habitat type: these were apparently less successful. Ken Smith talked about territorial Green Sandpipers in Hertfordshire whereas John Speakman crept into the skin of a Redshank to explain why foraging activities decrease when wind speeds increase. Unfortunately Redshanks do not behave as they should do theoretically. Bob Furness informed us that Purple Sandpipers do not trust Redshanks and Oystercatchers, not to mention gulls. To say it more properly, in VIG = 5.32 - 0.314 in TURN - 0.329 in PURP - 0.183 in RED - 0.126 in OYS, which probably most participants to the meeting had not realized before. Philip Whitfield made clear that British raptors still are not really allowed to eat waders. However, according to rumours in the low countries, waders may really taste better than British peas. Nigel Clark showed his splendid talents for drawing and improvising when, just after

the start of his talk the slide projector broke down completely. After having enjoyed the delights of British dinner, nearly all participants assembled in the college pub, which remarkably fast ran out of all kinds of beer.

The Sunday session was dominated by a nice variety of new WSG projects and the surprise of a new wader "species", the Dunderling. Shortly after the bar ran dry, Nigel Clark (its discoverer) claimed it as a hybrid Dunlin x Sanderling. We will hear a lot more of this bird, since it appeared to be very easy to catch. In the spring of 1985 we hope to learn everything about wader migration in W Europe we have been dreaming of for many years. Peter Prokosch and Theunis Piersma demonstrated that colour-marked waders will have to develop completely new migration strategies for the spring of 1985 to avoid being seen by one of the many keen WSG observers, spread out all over Europe. Philip Dubois announced a new WSG project on Black-winged Stilts which is very welcome because it will specifically be a S European wader project. Mike Moser announced very good expectations for a successful wader survey along non-estuarine British coasts in midwinter 1984/85. Antonio Araujo informed us on the use of salinas by wintering waders in S Portugal, whereas Theunis Piersma (him again!) surprised all by showing the first results of his enquiry on breeding wader numbers in Europe. Highlight of the Sunday session was a talk by David O'Connor on Spartina removal in the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, using herbicides. The effectiveness and the moral side of the application as a management tool resulted in one of the most vivid and interesting discussions during the meeting.

The organisation of the weekend was mainly done by Nick Davidson and Mike Pienkowski. Their talents for organization and improvisation resulted in a smoothly organized and successful meeting. To be recommended for the future to everybody, not only to raptors: waders in Worcestersauce. A very fine recipe.

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