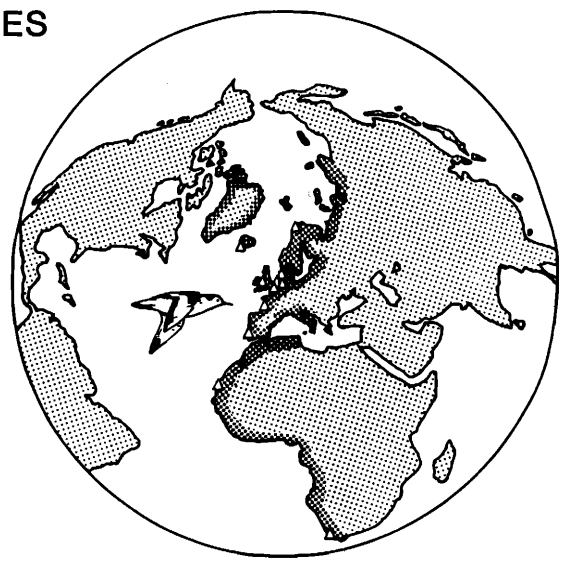
INTERNATIONAL WADER MIGRATION STUDIES ALONG THE EAST ATLANTIC FLYWAY DURING SPRING 1985

SECOND PROGRESS REPORT

by Theunis Piersma



This, the first report on the project after the period of fieldwork during spring 1985, can only give a preliminary summary of the extent of the data collected at the various study sites. The aims and methods of the project are fully described in *Bulletin* 42: 5-9. At the time of writing (July 1985) some of the data sets are certainly incomplete, and we are continuing to receive reports of dye-marked birds. More comprehensive reports will appear in future *Bulletins*, and a more exhaustive summary will be given at the WSG Annual Meeting at La Rochelle, France in October 1985. Also at this meeting several of the main participating teams will give detailed reports of their work.

Target species for this co-operative study are Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. All the main participating groups were successful in catching waders during spring 1985. In all, over 10 000 waders were caught, and almost 6000 birds of the 7 target species were dye-marked. The achievements of each group are summarised below.

South Africa
Contrary to previous expectations, valuable catches of 128 Knots and 37 Sanderlings were made at Langebaan Lagoon on 31 March and 11, 13, 20 and 26 April. The Knots caught on this last date were probably just a few hours from their departure northwards, to judge from a series of counts at a roost-site at Langebaan Lagoon.

Mauritania
On the Banc d'Arguin during, March and April 1985, 1433 waders were captured and 1256 of these were dye-marked. Amongst those caught were 5 birds carrying foreign rings, and another 32 from our own studies. Resightings of dye-marked birds, counts, and observations of departing flocks suggested that the main departure period of the target species was from early April onwards. Sightings of dye-marked birds from north of the Banc d'Arguin include reports from France (4 Knots, one Dunlin and one Turnstone!), Great Britain, The Netherlands, West Germany and Denmark.

Portugal
During the first 3 weeks of May, 490 waders of the target species were caught and dye-marked in the Algarve, southern Portugal. Most (427 birds) were Dunlins. A number of counts were made between March through until the first half of May.

France
From 23 March to 24 May, 1346 waders of the target species were caught and dye-marked on the Atlantic coast of France between the Loire and the Gironde. Sightings of these dye-marked birds further north have been reported to date from the Netherlands and the west coast of Great Britain. In addition to the target species, 242 other waders were caught. Detailed series of counts have been made on the Vendee coast and in the Somme estuary, Picardie.

Great Britain
At 5 sites along the west coast of Great Britain (Wembury (Devon), the Severn, the Ribble, Morecambe Bay and the Solway) a total of 2977 waders of the 4 target species of this part of the project were caught. 1682 were dye-marked and at least 4 later re-sighted in Iceland. A good number of 'within-Britain' re-sightings of marked birds have been recorded, and regular counts were made at many sites throughout the country.

Delta area, The Netherlands
234 waders of the target species were caught by a team from the Deltadienst. At least 18 000 waders were checked for dye-marked birds, but none were seen! At 3 locations a series of counts were made at high tide, and at Breskens a series of counts was made also of waders migrating into the Westerschelde.

Wadden Sea, The Netherlands
Regular counts were made at various sites along the mainland coast and on the islands. Along the Friesian coast a team organised by K. Koopman caught 168 waders of the target species during 4 nights of mist-netting. J. Jukema managed to catch 375 Bar-tailed Godwits with a wilster-net. At least 10 000 waders were checked for colour-marks.

Wadden Sea of Schleswig-Holstein, West Germany
During the first and especially the last week of May, 1470 waders of the target species were

cannon-netted on the Eiderstedt peninsula. Most (1020) birds were Dunlins. 340 waders were colour-marked, and the catches included no less than 36 birds carrying foreign rings. On 5 June, the very large total of 100 000 Knots were recorded from around Scharhorn alone.

Norway
1730 Knots, of which 870 were dye-marked and/or leg-flagged, were caught in Balsfjord (Troms) on 3 occasions between 12 and 26 May. 35 birds carried rings from elsewhere, the majority being from moulting and wintering areas on the east coast of Britain. Counts and observations of dye-marked birds showed little turnover during the 2-3 weeks when the birds were present. No dye-marked Knots from elsewhere were seen during regular checks of the 15 000 birds present; nor were any dye-marked birds of other target species seen. Knots arrived at Porsangerfjord (Finnmark) about a week later than in Balsfjord. No dye-marks were seen in checks of 800 of the 20-30 000 Knots present in the third week of May.

Iceland
One cannon-net catch of 32 Knots was made on 14 May in S.W. Iceland. Amongst these were a bird ringed in Britain and another in the Netherlands. Mist-netting earlier in the season proved unsuccessful. However no less than 17 colour-marked waders from outside Iceland were seen during the spring fieldwork. Most had been marked in Britain.

The Future
Would all readers please note that any outstanding reports of colour-marked waders should be sent as soon as possible to the *WSG Colour-marking Register, Dr. D.J. Townshend, Department of Zoology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, U.K.* Similarly, any other outstanding information of relevance to this project, requests and comments should be sent to the *WSG Co-ordinator, Theunis Piersma (address below).*

Would all 'contact-persons' from the main participating groups please note that a short meeting to discuss the details of the work carried out this spring, and plans for the project in future springs, will be held at approximately 2000h on Friday 4 October 1985 at La Rochelle, during the WSG Autumn Meeting. Anyone unable to attend this meeting should make any neccessary comments in advance to the Co-ordinator.

Finally, our thanks to all those who have participated in the project for their help in further increasing our understanding of the spring migration systems of waders.

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THE WINTERING GROUNDS OF THE BLACK-TAILED GODWIT IN WEST AFRICA

by Wibe Altenburg, Jan van der Kamp and Albert Beintema

INTRODUCTION

From 2 October to 15 December 1983 the first two authors studied the winter distribution of the Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* in West Africa. This study was part of a project on migratory birds of WWF/IUCN (project 3096) and ICBP (project 9238), focused upon migration and wintering of two 'Dutch' bird species, the Black-tailed Godwit and the Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*. The aims of the godwit study were: 1) to map the wintering areas of the Black-tailed Godwit in Southern Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, 2) to count aquatic birds in these areas, 3) to describe the winter habitats and their possible threats, and, 4) to study feeding ecology (on a small scale), in view of possible godwit damage to rice fields. In this short note we only present data on numbers of godwits in the study area. Information on other subjects can be found in our expedition reports (Altenburg & van der Kamp 1985a, 1985b).

THE BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

Three subspecies of Black-tailed Godwit are recognized (Figure 1):

a) The eastern subspecies, *Limosa l. melanuroides*, from East Siberia and Mongolia; winter counts on the Australian coast (Jessop & Lane 1983), probably the most important wintering area for this subspecies, indicate a breeding population of at least 15 000 pairs.

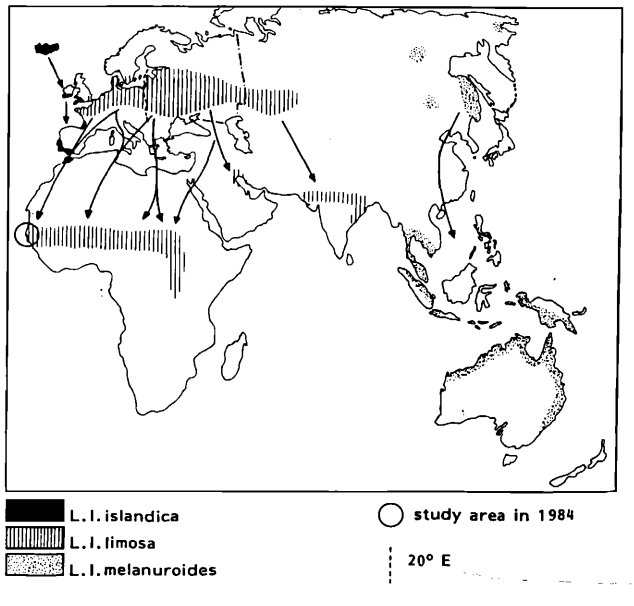

Figure 1. The most important breeding areas of the Black-tailed Godwit, the probable wintering areas and a number of possible migration routes (arrows). After Cramp & Simmons (1983), Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* (1977) and Voous (1962).