

INTERNATIONAL WADER MIGRATION STUDIES ALONG THE EAST ATLANTIC FLYWAY: A PROGRESS REPORT FOR SPRING 1986

by N.C Davidson and T. Piersma



Full details of this project during spring 1986, concentrating on the recently-highlighted complexities of the spring migration system of Knots *Calidris canutus* breeding in the Nearctic (Canada and Greenland), were announced in *Bulletin* 45: 4-6. To this end we aim to trace Knots, chiefly by dye-marking and leg-flagging, from selected wintering areas, to early spring staging sites in Britain and the southern North Sea, and then on to their two major late spring staging areas in Iceland and northern Norway. Local organisers and major participants are listed in *Bulletin* 45: 4-6.

So far over 200 Knots have been dye-marked on wintering areas at Teesmouth and the Firth of Forth. Attempts to dye-mark Knots on wintering sites on the Essex coast and in Vendee and Charente-Maritime, France have proved unsuccessful.

Plans are well advanced for catching and marking Knots on their early spring staging areas on parts of the Wadden Sea and Wattenmeer, the Wash and the Moray Firth. So far 877 Knots have been caught and dye-marked on the Wattenmeer in late April. These included 5 birds that had been ringed in May 1985 in north Norway by the Durham/Tromso Universities study.

The Durham University/Tromso University study of Knots in Balsfjord, north Norway, will continue during May 1986, with a priority of catching Knots to further identify their origins, and to fit Knots with a permanent single colour-ring. This will allow us to assess whether individual Knots use the same staging areas each spring. A visit to catch Knots at Porsangerfjord, the other main staging area in north Norway in May, is also projected. Similarly, catching and observations will be attempted in Iceland during May.

In addition to these extensive studies on populations of Nearctic Knots during spring 1986, LPD intend to catch and dye-mark Knots in Vendee and Charente-Maritime in the spring. Many Knots which occur at these sites in spring are considered to belong to the Siberian population, and some are known to have overwintered in 1985 on the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania.

In addition to the participants listed in *Bulletin* 45, a Dutch expedition to the Banc d'Arguin in late winter and spring 1986 aims to catch and dye-mark Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*, Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* and Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, and to catch and leg-flag only Knots. Any further observations of these birds in spring 1986 will amplify the valuable information on the northwards migration of waders from the Banc d'Arguin collected during the 1985 project. Also a Dutch team will be making observations of waders on the coastal wetlands of Morocco during spring 1986.

We would like anyone visiting wetlands, especially on the coast, in spring 1986 to look for marked waders. These may be marked with plumage dyes in one or more places, and/or with coloured leg-flags. Contact your local organiser, or the project co-ordinators Nick Davidson and Theunis Piersma, for recording forms. When observing a marked bird, try to

record the colour and location of all dye-marks and leg-flags, and also the number of birds of each species seen and the number checked for marks. Reports of incomplete sightings can also be of use, as can checks of flocks which reveal no marked birds. All report forms and observations of marked birds should be sent to the WSG Colour-marking Register (Hector Galbraith, WSG Colour-marking Register, Dept. of Zoology, The University, Glasgow G12 8QQ, U.K.). This will ensure that the origins of marked birds (whether or not they were marked as part of the spring 1986 project) are identified as expeditiously as possible. To this end we ask anyone marking waders as part of the spring project to send details of all birds that they have marked as soon as possible to the Colour-marking Register.

The International Flyway project in 1985 revealed much valuable information about how waders migrate in a single spring up the East Atlantic Flyway, and we hope that the project in spring 1986 will add even more to our understanding and conservation of flyway populations of waders. This topic will be discussed in detail during the Workshop on the Conservation of International Flyway Populations of Waders, which will be held as part of the WSG Annual Conference in September 1986. Booking forms are included with this *Bulletin*.

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Stop-press. The Durham/Tromso Universities study caught over 600 Knots in Balsfjord, N. Norway, including birds ringed in the U.K., The Netherlands, West Germany and East Germany, as well as many that had been ringed in Balsfjord during the study in May 1985. The team narrowly failed to catch Knots in Porsangerfjord, where 20-25 000 were counted. In Balsfjord, the birds from West Germany included one of those dye-marked in the Wattenmeer in April 1986. Another of these dye-marked birds was seen by P. Whitfield in May 1986 amongst several thousand Knots in north-east Iceland. There was also substantial passage of Turnstones and Ringed Plovers through this area. One of the Turnstones had been colour-ringed at Teesmouth.

A visit by R.I.G. Morrison to Alert, Ellesmere Island in early June resulted in the capture of 40 Knots and 60 Turnstones. One Knot and 4 Turnstones carried British rings, but no Knots were seen carrying colour-marks from the Wattenmeer or Norway.

Plans for the continuation of the Durham/Tromso study in N. Norway are well forward, and will concentrate on unravelling the identity of the Knots using Porsangerfjord.