

## REVIEWS

DUBOIS, P.-J. AND MAHEO, R. 1986. *LINICOLES NICHEURS DE FRANCE*. Pp. 291; numerous figures, tables and illustrations; A4. Ligue Francaise pour la Protection des Oiseaux, La Corderie Royale, BP 263, 17305 Rochefort, France. Price FF100 + FF18.50 postage and packing. In French.

This excellent soft-backed A4 format book is the culmination of intensive research by Philippe Dubois and Roger Maheo. The guts of the book is the collation of all that appears to be known about the breeding biology and population dynamics of French breeding waders.

After the initial review putting waders in their taxonomic context, the text settles to its task. The summary table on page 13 presents the stark reality: only 26 000 - 31 000 pairs of waders breeding in the whole of France - fewer than the British population of many individual species. Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* at 17 000 - 20 000 pairs dominates, with Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* next at 2600 - 3000 pairs. Rarest of all is Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* with only 5 - 13 pairs.

Each species is treated separately in a standard sequence: historical introduction and context, broken down regionally where possible; current status; distribution maps with accompanying vignette; French population in European context - including data less than 9 months old; reproductive biology (clutch-timing, size, egg volume, breeding success, etc.) with comparative data from other studies; reasons for population change. Every species is treated in this level of detail.

The text is well written, and illustrated by good vignettes and half-page black and white photographs of each species. After the species accounts there is a good synthesis on constraints on breeding biology and numbers, followed by a consideration of wader biogeography. Last, but not least, comes a concluding chapter on the agents of change affecting French breeding waders (drainage, wetland reclamation, tourist disturbance, changes in agricultural practices, loss of land to building, hunting). Constraints are considered in turn, with a detailed summary table summarising, by locality and Departments the threats and species primarily concerned. As would be expected from a bird protection organization, there is a discussion of shooting seasons and effects, plus suggested changes (if appropriate) for individual species. The bibliography is good, indicating the depth of the comparative work undertaken. The last few, unnumbered, pages are forms for filling in and returning to LPO for any data that may have been missed. Perhaps the population total may creep to 32 000 pairs?

One last word, even if you're not French, buy this book, enjoy it - it's more digestible than Birds of the Western Palearctic, and shorter!

Tim Reed

MELTOFTE, HANS. *POPULATIONS AND BREEDING SCHEDULES OF WADERS, CHARADRII, IN HIGH ARCTIC GREENLAND*. Meddr Gronland, Biosci. 16.1985. pp. 43. Price Dkr. 74 plus postage. (Available at a special price to the WSG members of Dkr. 59.20 plus Dkr. 8 postage and packing by Postal Giro DK 700 34 47 from Nyt Nordisk Forlag - Arnold Busck A/S, Kobmagergade 49, DK-1150 Copenhagen K, Denmark. Tel. +45.1.122453).

This is a review paper based on the author's seven seasons of observations on waders in north-east and north Greenland, and on other published work (261 references). Data is drawn from 12 census areas in north-east Greenland, 1 in north Greenland, and 1 on Ellesmere Island.

The paper is divided into the main headings of breeding distribution and habitats, population composition and changes, density, population fluctuations and changes, spring migration, arrival and immigration, pre-breeding concentration and dispersal on the breeding grounds, start of breeding and timing of egg laying, non-breeders and non-breeding years, post-breeding gatherings and departure of adults, post-fledging movements and departure of juveniles, and autumn migration. The constraints on the annual cycle and population densities and distributions are discussed. Finally an attempt is made to estimate the total population sizes of waders in high arctic Greenland.

The paper draws on widely scattered references in the literature and sets these within an easily understandable framework. The author clearly understands and feels for his subject. The influence of snow cover (or lack of it) to the breeding schedule and distribution is demonstrated. The attempt to estimate the total populations of waders based on just 12 census areas inevitably leads to inadequate estimates of numbers of breeding pairs, and in certain cases the population estimates are clearly too low (as the author admits). One could question also whether the sections on spring and autumn migration outside Greenland should have been included. These sections add background to the main body of the paper, but the few paragraphs presented here cannot do justice to a very complicated subject, where new findings have now shown that some of the earlier publications which are quoted were not always correct.

However for anyone interested in high arctic breeding waders, or the migration systems of the north-east Canadian and Greenland populations, this paper is a must.

J.R. Wilson