

WHAT IS WIWO?



WIWO is the Dutch Working Group for International Wader and Waterfowl Research. It is a foundation under Dutch law, and was established in 1983 to unite the activities of various Dutch ornithological expeditions to Southern Europe and Western Africa and to build on the growing organisational and scientific experience to promote new scientific activities in these and other areas. WIWO is an organisation of volunteers, varying in number and scientific background. The first aim of WIWO is to enable the collection of critical data on wetland areas important for waders and waterfowl along the entire East Atlantic Flyway, especially about those areas which are endangered and/or little studied. WIWO does not want to be a co-ordinating organization, since others already exist and are very active (WSG, IWRB, ICBP, IUCN and others).

WIWO aims to carry out the field work and subsequent analysis of data. A central theme in WIWO's activities abroad is the system of connections for migratory waders and waterfowl, between the continuously threatened and disappearing wetlands. Counts of the birds present are not sufficient to answer all questions: more important is to determine the total number of birds that really use an area in a certain period (i.e. quantifying turnover), and how such areas are used by the birds. Answering questions on the factors limiting the use of certain areas by birds requires the catching, marking and detailed studies of feeding ecology.

Careful preparation for lengthy stays in far-away places is essential, both because of the complexity of this kind of research, and because the study areas are also often difficult to reach. This kind of research can incur high costs. The analysis of data and the preparation of reports and manuscripts require a large investment of time, and is often undertaken by the participants in addition to their normal daily work. The published reports help to encourage the protection and management of wetlands along the migratory flyways via the existent national and international nature conservation organisations. The expedition-participants invest personal money in the work as well as their time. However, WIWO also needs additional financial contributions from private and governmental agencies to carry out the larger projects.

The Netherlands Ornithological Mauritanian Expedition 1980 can be considered as WIWO's first, though unofficial, activity. In 1981 and 1982 there were expeditions to coastal wetlands in Morocco, and in 1984 and 1985 some

Portuguese wetlands were visited. In 1984 a team also worked in the Gulf of Gabes, Tunisia. A second expedition to the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania was organised in March-April 1985 while a third expedition was carried out there in February-April 1986. Shorter visits were made to wetlands in Turkey in several successive years. From October 1986 until February 1987 a group of WIWO volunteers will explore the coasts of West-Africa with their own ship. The aim is to map coastal wader and waterfowl habitat along Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry and Sierra-Leone. Research plans on wader migration in Greece and Turkey are finished and will be carried out in 1987 or 1988.

All correspondence should be sent to WIWO, p/a Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds, Driebergsweg 16c, 3708 JB Zeist, The Netherlands.

List of publications

So far the following publications are available:

1. Altenburg, W., Engelmoer, M., Mes, R. and Piersma, Th. 1982. Wintering waders at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania. Stichting Veth tot Steun aan Waddenonderzoek, Leiden. f 37,50
2. Kersten, M., Piersma, Th., Smit, C. and Zegers, P. 1983. Wader migration along the Atlantic Coast of Morocco, March 1981. Rin report 83/20, Texel, Netherlands. f 25,--
3. Philippona, J. 1985. Waterbirds at some wetlands in Turkey and Greece, October 1984. WIWO report no. 3 Zeist, Netherlands. f 4,--
4. Bijlsma, R.G. and de Roder, F.E. 1985. Waders along the coast of Thailand during November and December 1984. WIWO report no. 4, Zeist, Netherlands. f 10,--
5. Roder, F.E. de. 1985. Waterbirds on some Turkey's wetlands, October/November 1983. WIWO report No. 5, Zeist, Netherlands. f 8,--
6. Berk, V. van den, van den Berk, N., Bijlsma, R.G. and de Roder, F.E. The importance of some wetlands in Turkey as transient and wintering areas for waterbirds. WIWO report no. 6, Zeist, Netherlands. f 10,--

7. Piersma, Th. 1985. Wader studies and waterbirds in the Nakdong Estuary, South Korea in September 1984. WIWO report no. 7, Zeist, Netherlands. f 10,--
8. Chalabi, B., Skinner, J., Harrison, J. and van Dijk, G. Les zones humides du Nord-West Algerien en 1984. WIWO report no. 8, Zeist, Netherlands. f 10,--
9. Ens, B., ed. 1985. Entre le Sahara et la Siberie (Rapport pre liminaire des recherches sur le Banc d'Arguin en Mars et Avril 1985). WIWO report 9 (85-9F). Zeist, Netherlands. f 5,--. (A version in Dutch is also available.)

Copies of these reports can be obtained by paying the required amount to postal giro-account 2666009 of the "Stichting WIWO", Ewijk, Netherlands. It is also possible to send an International Money Order (with the requested amount) to the Stichting WIWO, c/o Dribergseweg 16c, 3708 JB Zeist, Netherlands. Postage is included in the prices.

OBSERVATIONS OF A MIGRANT COMMON SANDPIPER IN ETHIOPIA

J.C. Hillman, M.J. Lagen and D.W. Yalden

On the evening of 8 August 1986, a Toyota Landcruiser literally ran over a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* which was either roosting or feeding at a puddle on a track in the Hareenna Forest, Bale Mountains National Park, Ethiopia (39°44'E, 06°44'N, alt. 2 400 m). The bird was captured, dazed but apparently unharmed. It was measured, weighed, and given a Nairobi Museum ring (B25801); with a wing length of 110 mm, it was probably a male (cf. Lofaldi 1981, Holland et al. 1982) and presumably, on ringing recoveries reported by Cramp & Simmons (1983), part of the Russian breeding population. It weighed only 30.5 g, and the prominent keel confirmed that it was in poor condition; in Britain, breeding male Common Sandpipers weigh on average 51.6 g (n = 42, s.d. 3.3; Holland et al. 1982), but before migrating they may accumulate up to a further 30 g of fat. The bird was kept overnight in a bird bag, and reweighed in the morning at 29.5 g. When released at first light it walked from the hand, and immediately commenced feeding, at about 1 m range from its former captor in a ford of a nearby stream.

Over the next 9 days, it was seen feeding at or near the ford on at least 9 occasions. At dusk on the 18 August, it was retrapped, using a small, single-shelf mistnet set across the stream above the ford. It then weighed 43.0 g, a gain of 13.5 g in 10 days' of feeding (or 1.35 g per day). It was released immediately, but was not seen on the 19th, nor subsequently; since it was flying well by this time, we presume that our disturbance caused it to resume its migration.

There are several points of interest about this record. Even a weight of 43.0 g seems low for a migrant Common Sandpiper to be continuing its migration, though it matches the range quoted by Ash (1969) for spring migrants at Defilia oasis in Morocco (mean 38.8 g, range 35.0-43.5 g, n = 12). It is surprising that a migrant should allow itself to reach such a low weight when it must have crossed several potential feeding areas (sea shores, lakes, rivers) on any conceivable route from Russia to Ethiopia. We have on occasion seen colour-ringed adult Common Sandpipers back on their English breeding grounds in late April (Holland et al. 1982) which fed intensively, virtually ignoring the observer even at ranges down to 10 m, giving the impression of being exhausted and

near starvation. These observations have led us to suspect that adult Common Sandpipers undertake "long-hop" migrations. The Ethiopian bird clearly suggests this, in contrast to the rather slow and hesitant passage which is implied by the dates of peak counts of this species at various sites in Western Europe (O.A.G. Munster 1984). Juveniles (in autumn) or returning first-year birds (in spring) may take longer over their migrations, than breeding adults. The early date by which our bird had reached Ethiopia is also noteworthy; O.A.G. Munster (1984) report a mean migration date in Hungary (presumably of Russian birds) of 14 August by which date our individual was well established in Ethiopia (2 other, unringed, Common Sandpipers had also arrived by that date; they also left by the 20 August).

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- O.A.G. Munster. 1984. Inland wader counts - third progress report. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* 30: 15-17.

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