

## WADER STUDY GROUP ANNUAL MEETING AND AGM, GDANSK, POLAND, 25-28 SEPTEMBER

As was announced in previous *WSG Bulletins* (47 & 48), the Wader Study Group AGM and autumn meeting will be held in Gdansk, Poland. Preparations for the meeting are progressing well and preliminary bookings suggest that it will be one of the largest WSG conferences ever. From these preliminary applications there appears likely to be at least 100 participants. This number is too great to be accommodated at the original venue, the Ornithological Station. Accordingly the whole meeting will now take place at the Baltic Youth Centre, a short distance from the Ornithological Station. All accommodation and meals, and the conference hall, will be in this building, which is surrounded by woodland with the sea-shore nearby.

### Accommodation and Costs

The change of location mean that there will be also some alterations to the accommodation and costs for the meeting. Accommodation will now be the same for all participants, in 2- or 3-bedded rooms, so you will no longer need to bring mattresses, tents or sleeping bags with you.

Costs will be very slightly higher than originally planned, but are still very low. These will be \$13 per day (approx. £8.50) for food and accommodation. Hence the cost of the whole meeting will be \$39 (approx. £25.70), excluding the cost of a contribution to the costs of petrol for the excursion. Methods of payment will be explained separately to all those who have booked.

### Booking

The deadline for bookings remains 1 May 1987, although we may be able to accept bookings up to 1 July 1987. However, we cannot guarantee people booking late the cheap costs of the accommodation, nor the facilities of 'WSG Tours' (see below). Furthermore you may have insufficient time to complete all the formalities (visa etc.) needed to reach Poland. If you are intending to come, please therefore return a completed booking form to Hermann Hotker, as soon as possible, if you have not already done so. Participants who have already booked for the meeting will shortly receive, from the Ornithological Station in Gdansk, further details about documents and travelling.

### Travelling by 'WSG Tours'

The response to the offer to organise buses for the trip to the meeting was even greater than expected, and WSG will definitely be entering the travel business this year. At present we are trying to select the best route and timing. This is not an easy task since places such as Paris, Copenhagen and Rome are hardly on a direct line between the Netherlands and Gdansk. Provisionally, we intend to arrange a bus or buses that will depart from Hook of Holland and travel through The Netherlands and northern West Germany and East Germany to reach Poland. The departure of the bus(es) from Hook of Holland would be timed to meet a Harwich - Hook of Holland Sealink ferry. Participants who have indicated interest in 'WSG Tours' will be contacted in the coming weeks, and should be prepared to pay in advance for the trip.

### Programme

The programme is not yet finalised, although an outline can now be given. Talks will cover a variety of themes including feeding ecology, breeding biology and expedition reports. Many papers will deal with studies from Eastern European countries, and these are sure to be a highlight of the conference. We hope to be hearing about research in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union.

Offers of talks and posters are still welcome. Please write to Hermann Hotker giving the title and a brief abstract. Please say if you need equipment other than slide and overhead projectors. Talks must be limited to 20 minutes (15 mins talk and 5 mins questions). The size of posters should not exceed 1 m<sup>2</sup>. Both speakers and poster presenters are reminded to kindly provide an abstract in advance, so that copies can be distributed at the start of the meeting. Abstracts should be typed on an A4 page as follows: lines 1 & 2, title (capital letters please); line 3, authors name (capital letters please); lines 4,5 & 6, authors address; lines 7 to 26, abstract. Please note that all offers of talks and posters must reach Hermann Hotker by 1 August 1987 at the latest.

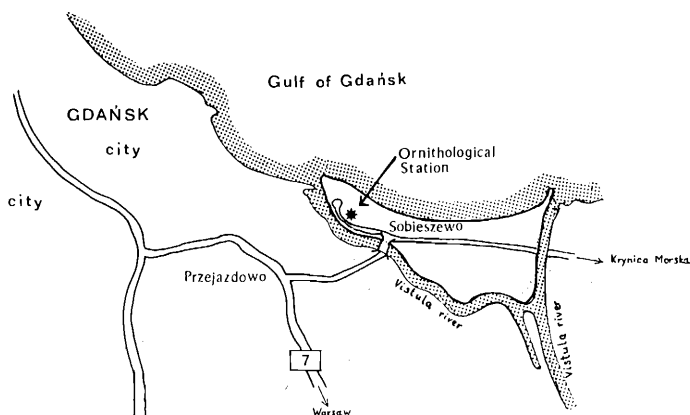
### Excursion

We are planning an excursion that will last the whole day on Monday 28 September. Transport will be provided by the "WSG Tours" buses and a Polish bus. The final place to be visited by the excursion is about 80 km north-west of Gdansk, and the "WSG Tours" buses may start their return journey to the Polish border from there directly.

It would be advisable to bring rubber boots and outdoor clothing for the excursion, and for any short walks in the woods around the meeting venue.

### How to reach the meeting location

Anyone planning to arrive independently in Gdansk by train, plane or ferry should let Jadwiga Gromadzka (Ornithological Station, 80-680 Gdansk 40, Poland) know the details as



soon as possible, so that meeting arrangements can be arranged. For others arriving by "WSG Tours" or in private cars, a simple map is given here, showing how to reach the Ornithological Station from the centre of Gdansk. All participants should go directly to the Ornithological Station. Thereafter, its staff will take care of you.

The Ornithological Station is about 18 km from Gdansk centre. Choose the Warsaw road no. 7 (until recently this was road no. E81). In Przejazdowo village turn left towards Sobieszewo and Krynica Morska. After crossing the Vistula river by a pontoon bridge, turn left at the roundabout and drive for about 2 km along the river. The buildings of the Ornithological Station, with big white walls, should be easy to recognise on the right-hand-side of the road.

All this information, other instructions, and letters of invitation will be sent directly to all those who have booked. This will be the last full announcement of the meeting in Poland, since all booking arrangements must be completed before the press date of the August 1987 issue of the *Bulletin*.

We look forward to meeting with everyone in Poland, at what we are sure will prove to be one of the most exciting and stimulating WSG meetings ever.

Hermann Hotker, Biologische Station, Coermuhle 181, 4400 Munster, Fed. Rep. Germany.

## WSG SURVEYS OF BREEDING WADERS IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES, 1986

by R.J. Fuller

This note summarises the findings of the fourth consecutive year of survey work on breeding waders carried out by WSG in the Southern Isles (the Uists) of the Outer Hebrides. As in previous years, numbers and distribution of breeding waders were assessed using a transect method. The eight study areas were spread throughout the western seaboard of the Southern Isles and covered a total area of 31 sq. km. Reports on the surveys of previous years have appeared in *WSG Bulletin* 39: 5-29, 43: 14-15.

Further checks on the accuracy of the transect method were made. The results obtained by two different teams of observers, each of which covered the same two study plots, were compared with independent population assessments derived from colour-marked adults and nest finding. A further site where the 'real' populations of breeding waders were also known was covered by just one team. The different teams obtained very similar results. The absolute accuracy of the method proved poor at one site where there had been particularly heavy predation by gulls and where a high proportion of the waders were either sitting on repeat clutches or had left the site by the time of the survey. The accuracy of the transect counts was much higher at the other two sites although numbers of Ringed Plovers were over-estimated.

Numbers of estimated pairs of breeding waders on the eight study areas combined, with percentage changes from 1985 in parentheses, were: Oystercatcher 630 (-5%), Ringed Plover 568 (-27%), Lapwing 1005 (-4%), Dunlin 636 (-18%), Redshank 463 (-23%). Some of these decreases may have been a result of many birds not breeding at the time of the survey, perhaps as a result of bad weather conditions during the spring. There is evidence that Snipe have decreased substantially over the period 1984 to 1986.

Breeding wader numbers were studied in relation to drainage at two study areas where substantial drainage had occurred since 1983. As with previous years, there was no evidence of any clear decreases in numbers of waders that might be associated with the drainage. However, there was some indication that Oystercatchers were increasing on those parts of the study areas that had been drained. In studying the effects of such habitat changes, however, it is important to conduct observations over a long period of time because the site fidelity of individual birds may mask changes in habitat quality in the short-term.

Further observations were made on the role of cultivation as a factor influencing the distribution of waders on dry machair. Numbers and distribution of waders since 1984 were studied on two large areas of dry machair, each more than 80 ha, where there had been large-scale changes from cultivation to fallow and vice versa. On neither site was there any evidence that the gross distribution of waders had changed in response to the changes in cultivation.

In 1986 the wader surveys were conducted by Dave Chandler, Tim Davis, Rob Fuller, Anne Goodall, Tim Jones, Steve Percival and Mike Pienkowski. Checks on the accuracy of the method were made possible by Digger Jackson who worked out the 'real' wader populations of various areas of machair as part of a separate detailed study. We also thank Paul Boyer and Mary Elliott for their advice and hospitality during the survey. The work was carried out under a Nature Conservancy Council contract.

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