

WADER NOTES AND NEWS

compiled by Nick Davidson

DELAYS TO BULLETIN 57

Members should by now have received the much delayed *Bulletin* 57. We apologise for the prologed delay in the publication of this *Bulletin*. Regrettably the long delays in editing and production were compounded even after the issue was printed by a UK mailing complication which delayed receipt by members several further weeks.

Members should also have received a separate mailing of details of the 1990 AGM and Annual Conference in Italy in early October (see also elsewhere in this issue). We hope that this next *Bulletin* (No. 58), following hard on the heels of *Bulletin* 57, will help to redress the balance of the delays to other recent issues. Major editorial changes are now in hand. These are intended to bring the publication of *Bulletins* back on schedule by the end of 1990, and we hope to include full details in *Bulletin* 59, planned for publication soon after the Conference in Italy.

CHANGE OF TELEPHONE NUMBER

Would members please note that the telephone number of the Membership Secretary, Rodney West, has changed and is now UK 0728-603942.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON WADERS 50

Recent Publications on waders 50, compiled by Gudmundur Gudmundsson has been held over and will be published in *Bulletin* 59.

HOT NEWS FROM SIBERIA

Hermann Hotker, WSG's Co-ordinator, this summer visited the Taymyr Peninsula in northern Siberia for the second successive year. Here he gives a first impression of what it was like this year to visit this important breeding area for many waders using the East Atlantic and other Asiatic flyways.

"Less than 15 months before the start of this year's expedition to the taymyr peninsula none of us really believed that we would have the opportunity to see the breeding grounds of Knots, Grey Plovers and other arctic waders in Siberia this year. *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, however, were much quicker than we had anticipated and it was as early as 30 May 1989 when we began a 5-weeks' cruise to various sites in the eastern part of the Taymyr peninsula. 1989 was a year with an exceptionally late spring and a very low density of lemmings. Both factors worked against a high breeding success of waders and other birds. According to all the hypotheses, 1990 would be different.

This year's expedition aimed to study the arrival and breeding performance of waders and Brent Geese in the north-western part of the Taymyr peninsula. As in 1989 our trip was part of a system of expeditions to the Siberian north organised by Academician Prof.

E.E.Syroechkovski, to whom we are much indebted to help. The foreigners in the team consisted of a delegation from The Netherlands - Gerard Boere, Bart Ebbing and Bernard Spaans, with a British annex, Andrew St. Joseph - and a German party including Hans-Heiner Bergmann, Hendrik Brunckhorst, Hermann Hotker, Georg Nehls, Eugen Nowak, Peter Prokosch, Hans-Ulrich Rosner, Heinrich Schmauder and Martin Stock.

Arriving with the first part of the team at our study site north-east of the delta of river Pyasina (74°N, 87°E) on 1 June I was faced with a landscape mainly consisting of snow and ice. The snow-free patches were inhabited by flocks of Shorelarks and Snow Buntings as well as small parties of White-fronted Geese. Waders, with the exception of a few vagrants, could not be found. Their arrival did not start until 4 June, and peaked between 7 and 12 June, when the snow melted on their favourite breeding sites. The location of the study area on the west coast of Taymyr allowed us to observe directly the spring migration of some of the waders. For example the migration of Grey Plovers took place from 6-15 June (median 8 June) and we saw Knots passing by from 7-11 June (median 8 June). A simple time calculation involving departure times in the Wadden Sea and flight speed suggests that these birds probably had a stop-over somewhere between the North Sea and Taymyr. This also holds true from the Brent Geese which arrived later than most of the waders. Finding this extra stopover site on the East Atlantic Flyway could fill in one of the major gaps in understanding the migration patterns of Siberian waders. A hot candidate for such a site is the White Sea, situated just midway between Taymyr and the Wadden Sea. The White Sea possesses a considerable area of intertidal mudflats and is ice-free during this critical early spring period. The waders may, however, also rest and feed at many other sites along the Siberian shore.

Our preliminary data from the Pyasina study site show that there may be large food resources, of earthworms, nematodes and small arthropods, at some places on the snow-free coastal ridges. Unfortunately we could not cannon-net more than two Little stints, two Grey Phalaropes and four Turnstones so that the information about arrival weights is still quite limited.

After the snow had melted at the end of June we found high densities of breeding Little Stints (42 pairs per km²) and displaying male Curlew Sandpipers (23 males per km²). Other breeding waders were Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Pacific Golden Plover, Dotterel, Temminck's Stint, Sanderling, Pectoral Sandpiper, Turnstone, Red-necked Phalarope and Grey Phalarope.

At the beginning of July the second part of the team arrived and established a camp on the northern coast of the peninsula near the Sterljegova polar station. After some weather problems the work mainly on breeding Knots and Grey Plovers could be started successfully. The studies in that camp were so fascinating that even Gerard Boere returned to 'basic' fieldwork. As in the year before the expedition ended with catching moulting Brent Geese and Barnacle Geese in the deltas of the rivers Taymyra and Pyasina.

Altogether 174 wader nests were found and exactly 500 adults and chicks were ringed. Some

of the adults were marked with colour rings, so that it may be possible to see marked birds from the taymyr along the European, African and even South Asian shores this winter.

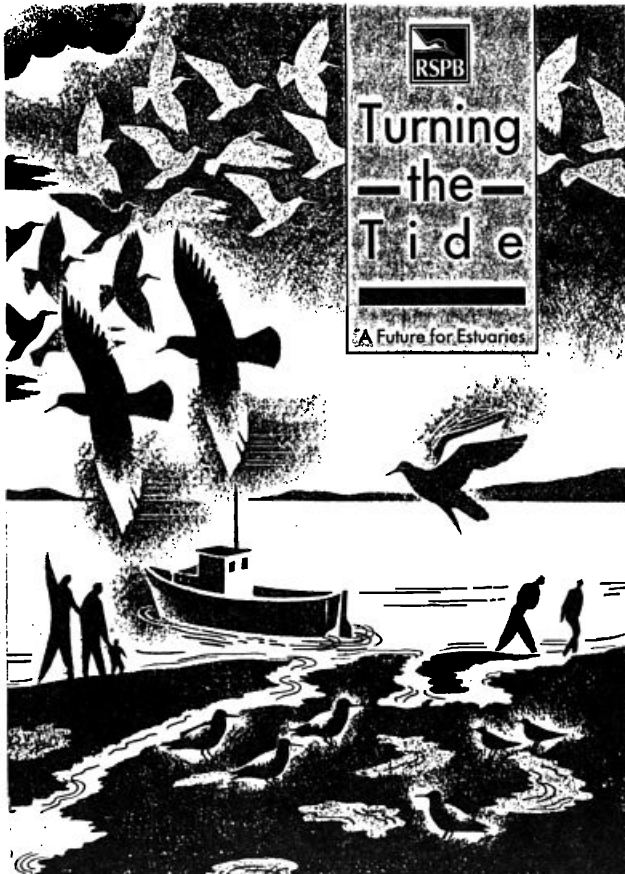
As in 1989 it was not only the unique nature and landscape of northern Siberia that fascinated us but even more wonderful was the hospitality and real friendship that we experienced there. I am sure that the *WSG Bulletin* is not very widespread on the Taymyr coast but nevertheless I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Russian colleagues for the nice weeks in the tundra, and especially Alla Grosheva who did an excellent job in keeping and sometimes even increasing our weight levels at all phases of the expedition. Thank you also to all the fishermen who kindly allowed us to use their banjas, which prevented 'olfactory disasters'."

Hermann Hotker

TURNING THE TIDE

Britain's estuaries are of major international importance for their breeding, migrant and wintering wader populations, supporting over 2 million birds using the East Atlantic flyway (see for example *WSG Bulletin* 49, *Supplement*). Yet there are many pressures from man's activities that are causing loss and damage to this vital wildlife resource. These are highlighted by a recent report from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, entitled *Turning the Tide. A Future for Estuaries*, as part of the RSPB's Estuaries Campaign. This proposes a number of UK Government actions needed urgently if Britain is to fulfill its international obligations for safeguarding wetland and waterfowl safeguarding.

For further information on the RSPB's Estuaries Campaign contact Philip Rothwell, Coastal Policy Officer, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.



ICBP/FFPS CONSERVATION EXPEDITION COMPETITION

The International Council for Bird Preservation and the Fauna & Flora Preservation Society established a Conservation Expedition Competition in 1985. An additional cash injection over the next three years by British Petroleum means that each year there will be 12 cash prizes totalling £20,000 each year. All grants will go to young Europeans taking part in expeditions to developing countries who will address a wildlife conservation issue of international significance.

For further information, contact: Gary Allport, Expeditions Officer, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ.

BIOMETRICS OF ICELANDIC BLACK-TAILED GODWITS

Gerrit Gerritsen requests information on the biometrics of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*. From a rough analysis of the biometrics of *L.l. limosa* and *L.l. islandica* there is the possibility of much more overlap between the bill-lengths of the two subspecies than is claimed in the literature.

For a more thorough analysis he needs biometrics of more individuals of known *islandica* subspecies, especially the lengths of bill, wing and tarsus.

If you can help, please contact: Gerrit J. Gerritsen, Julianastraat 40, 8019 AX Zwolle, The Netherlands.

HOMEWARD BOUND: PROBLEMS WADERS FACE WHEN MIGRATING FROM THE BANC D'ARGUIN, MAURITANIA, TO THEIR NORTHERN BREEDING GROUNDS IN SPRING



B.J. ENS, T. PIERSMA, W.J. WOLFF & L. ZWARTS (eds.)

'HOMEWARD BOUND'

We have just received what appears as a remarkable milestone in the expansion of knowledge about waders at the African end of the East Atlantic Flyway. *Homeward Bound: problems waders face when migrating from the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, to their northern breeding grounds* is edited by Bruno Ens, Theunis Piersma, Wim Wolff and Leo Zwarts and

is published as a special edition of *Ardea* (Vol. 78(1/2), 1990).

The 364 pages of this special issue are a collection of 23 papers covering some of the results of the three Dutch projects in West Africa: the Dutch-Mauritanian project in 1985-86, an expedition to Guinea-Bissau in 1986-87, and some of the first results of Project Banc d'Arguin in 1988. The papers cover a wide range of species and topics notably feeding ecology, nutritional reserves and the energetics of migration, and at a first glance is packed full of well-presented new information and analyses.

A full review of this volume will appear in a future *Bulletin*, but in the meantime, those members who cannot wait can obtain a copy by paying DFL 55.00 (incl. postage and packing) to postal giro account 2 666 009 of Stichting WIWO, Ewijk, The Netherlands, or by sending an international money order (Eurocheque or postal giro order) to: Stichting WIWO, U. v. Stuivenbergweg 4, 6644 AB Ewijk, The Netherlands.

A TRANSATLANTIC MIGRANT

Although we know that there are still many discoveries to be made about how waders migrate around along their flyways - witness the *Homeward Bound* volume described above - the broad migration patterns of most populations seem generally clear. There are always, however, those few rugged individualists amongst the waders we study. Jacquie Clark and Steve Dudley of the British Trust for Ornithology report one of these in a recent *BTO News*.

XS30063 was a Turnstone ringed at Edinburgh in Scotland in November 1986, and caught again nearby on the Firth of Forth later that winter. Many of the Turnstones wintering in Britain are known to breed in Greenland and high arctic Canada. These birds breed further north, and belong to a different subspecies, than the low arctic Canadian Turnstones that migrate south through the New World for the winter. This particular European-wintering Turnstone seems, however, to have felt the need for a change of scene, albeit a fatal one, since it was found dead after a snowstorm on 30 December 1989 at Beaufort, North Carolina on the Atlantic coast of the USA.

A very few other waders have seemingly made this transatlantic shift - some years ago a British-ringed Knot *Calidris canutus* was reported dead from the Bahamas - but this is a particularly clear-cut example of a transatlantic change in wintering grounds. It would be intriguing to know the whereabouts of its breeding grounds.

Source: *BTO News* No. 167, March-April 1990.

ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE IN GREENLAND

One of the added excitements of wader work in the arctic is the appearance of an exciting range of large mammals such as musk ox, arctic wolf and polar bear. These large, and often intransigent, animals can sometimes be hazardous to man and man to them. A recent booklet *Encounters with wildlife in Greenland* by Henning Ting provides a wealth of helpful advice about how to avoid damage and danger when you find an arctic fox rummaging through your food, or when you discover that a polar bear thinks that you are food. There is a wealth of practical advice and information, of interest to wader workers visiting any area of the arctic. Particularly intriguing is the 'Chili con Carne Alarm' for polar bears. But if you want to find out more, a copy of *Encounters with wildlife in Greenland* can be obtained from Atuakkiorfik, PO Box 840, DK-3900 Nuuk, Greenland or Danish Polar Center, Hausergade 3, DK-1128 Copenhagen K, Denmark.

