

Wader Study Group Annual Conference, Hajduszoboszlo, Hungary 4-6 September 1992

As we go to press the closing date of 30 June for bookings for the 1992 WSG Annual Conference is fast approaching, and we hope that members have sent their booking forms and offers of talks and abstracts to the organisers by now. Members will recall that the early booking date is necessary because the meeting is being held in a spa hotel in a popular holiday resort: rooms will otherwise be booked by other visitors to the water cures so that those book late may be disappointed.

Full details of the conference, which

immediately precedes the 9th International Waterfowl Ecology Symposium being held at the same venue, and booking forms were given in *Bulletin* 64 (April 1992).

As outlined in that *Bulletin* there is no special theme or workshop planned for the conference this year, so members will have plenty of opportunity to talk about all aspects of wader life and times. We do, however, plan to devote part of the meeting to reporting on the special and highly successful WSG Odessa Conference held in April this year. For those unlucky enough to have missed the opportunity to go to Odessa, this will include an outline of the key features and successes of the conference, and an outline of the content and implications of the "Odessa Protocol" drawn up and unanimously

endorsed by the conference delegates. The Hungary conference gives the opportunity to report on the achievements in the six months since the protocol was established, and to discuss the ways in which WSG can take forward the recommendations of the protocol into collaborative action for improving our understanding and safeguarding of migratory waders.

We look forward to seeing everyone in Hajduszoboszlo.

If you have any queries about conference bookings please contact the local organisers:

WSG Conference Secretariat (Attn. Tamas Szekely), Department of Zoology, Kossuth University, Debrecen, Hungary (tel (36) 52 16666 ext. 334; fax (36) 52 10936).

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compiled by Nick Davidson

WSG Odessa Conference

The WSG conference held in Odessa in April 1992 was a great and exciting success. Some reports, a text of the "Odessa Protocol" drawn up by the conference delegates, and abstracts of all the talks and posters are included in this *Bulletin*. There will be further reports of the conference in *Bulletin* 66, and there will also be a report-back session on the Odessa Conference during the WSG Annual conference in Hungary in September 1992. We hope that at that time also to develop a set of priorities for follow-up action by WSG. All this will be reported in future *Bulletins*.

News of WSG Bulletin Supplements

As this is written in late June, we are about to go to press with the next of our ever expanding series of Supplements to WSG Bulletins, supplied free to fully-paid-up members. This is *The migration of Knots*, a 210-page supplement based on the workshop on knots held during the 1990 WSG meeting in Denmark. This contains 28 papers, and is illustrated throughout with black-and-white photographs by Jan van der Kam, with a full-colour cover also featuring Jan van der Kam's photographs. This is scheduled for publication in August 1992 and will be circulated free to all WSG members. Additional copies will be available for sale at £15 including postage and packing.

The Supplement on *Disturbance to waterfowl on estuaries*, summarising recent research on this important but poorly understood conservation topic, is progressing well. This is a joint production between WSG, RSPB and the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee,

and is being edited by Phil Rothwell and Nick Davidson. It is on schedule for publication late in 1992.

As mentioned elsewhere in this *Bulletin* we are now planning to add another Supplement to the series - the proceedings of the Odessa Conference, *Migration and international conservation of waders*. We are in the early stage of planning this supplement, which will be edited by Hermann Hötter, Pavel Tomkovich, Nick Davidson and Jadwiga Gromadzka. We plan to arrange for translations of papers in Russian and to publish this supplement in English with Russian summaries. We are hoping to publish this volume late in 1993.

Plans are also being discussed for updating and expanding the first WSG Bulletin Supplement - *Breeding waders in Europe* - since much new information has come to light since its publication in 1986. Further information about this exercise will be given in a future *Bulletin*.



Save Tsen-Wen River Estuary, Taiwan

We have recently received a letter from Mr Yeh-Wang Chen, president of the Wild Bird Society of R.O.C (Taiwan), concerning a major development threat to the Tsen-Wen River Estuary in south-western Taiwan. This estuary is the wintering ground for two-thirds of the world population of the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*, whose population has declined greatly in recent decades. The 1991/92 wintering population of Black-faced Spoonbills was only 194 birds. The estuary is also important as a site used by thousands of other waders and wildfowl.

The local government is now planning to develop industry on the northern side of the estuary, on the roosting site of the Black-faced Spoonbills.

The Wild Bird Society of R.O.C. is seeking international support in their fight to protect this important wetland site, and are seeking to have the estuary designated as a sanctuary for the spoonbills rather than lose it to industrial land-claim. The Society is asking that anyone who wishes to help writes to those responsible for making the decision about development or sanctuary to express their concerns. These people are:

Mr President Lee, Teng-Hui 122,
Chung-Chin S. Rd., Sec. 1, Taipei,
Taiwan, R.O.C.

Mr Hau, Pei-Tsun President of Executive Yuan 1, Chung-Hsiao E. Rd., Sec. 1, Taipei, taiwan, R.O.C.

Ling, Shiang-Nung, Vice-Chairman,
Council of Agriculture, 37 Nan-Hai Rd.,
Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Li Ya-Chao, Magistrate, Tainan County Government, 36 Ming-Chee Rd., Hsin-Yin, Tainan, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Would you also send a photocopy of your letters to: President Yeh-Wang

Chen, Wild Bird Society of R.O.C., 6 Alley 13, lane 295, Fu-shin S. Rd. Sec. 1, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C. (tel. 886-2-7067219; fax 886-2-7548009).

AWSG News In The Stilt

The Stilt No. 20 has recently been published and includes 76 pages of exciting wader information. This includes an analysis by Michael Bamford of the impact of human depredation on waders on the East Asian Flyway. He suggests that up to 18% of the Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* population is harvested annually by wildfowling. This amounts to half the presumed annual mortality for the species.

There is also a report on the AWSG Regular Counts Project, which together with the earlier RAOU Wader Studies Project has now yielded a database of over 36,000 records of 56 wader species over a 10-year period.

There are two articles of considerable practical interest to those wader-workers catching and marking waders. Mark Barter & Megan Rush explain their simple manufacturing technique for colour-flags as well as how to attach them to birds. Michael Weston looks at the problem of methodological bias in the techniques of cannon-netting, and suggests some ways of isolating this bias.

Brett Lane describes the first survey of the Yellow River delta in north-eastern China. The survey was undertaken by Wang Tian Hou and a team from Shanghai's East China Normal University and covered part of the 350 km². They estimate that up to one million waders may use the area during their southwards migration, with the most numerous species being Kentish Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper and Terek Sandpiper, but over 2,000 Eastern Curlews were also seen in the small area covered. The Yellow River delta

may thus be a coastal wetland of comparable major international importance to the Wadden Sea, Delaware and San Francisco Bays and the north-west Australian coast.

Conservation problems in Japan

Fujimae tidal flats at Nagoya in Japan are internationally important, and are threatened by the plans of Nagoya City authorities to dump garbage on them. Some 60% of the tidal flats in Ise Bay have already been destroyed and the Fujimae flats are the largest remnant. The city claims that there is no alternative despite five other suitable sites close by being identified by the Save Fujimae Association. The bay has as yet been given no officially recognised conservation status or legal protection because of legal technicalities because the local government, Nagoya City, refuses to nominate it for Ramsar status.

Despite the creeping destruction of shorebird habitat over the years Ise Bay is still one of the five most important places in Japan for migratory waders, holding at times over 10% of the Japanese populations of Grey Plover, Red-necked Stint, Dunlin and Bar-tailed Godwit.

Further information is available from: Atsuo Tsuji, Save Fujimae Association, 2-212 yashirodai Meito, Nagoya 465, Japan.

Isahaya Bay is part of the Ariake Sea, a 30,000 ha area of tidal flats that is Japan's most important area for migratory waders. 5,000-10,000 waders overwinter, but many more use the tidal flats as a staging area. There have been many plans since 1948 to claim the Bay for agriculture, mining, industry and housing. So far these plans have been largely by the opposition of local communities, especially the dishing co-operatives who have declared the Bay to be "the womb of the Ariake Sea".



There remains a proposal to close of the Bay for flood control. This plan would destroy 3,000 ha of tidal flats through land-claim or inundation under a freshwater reservoir. Despite continuing opposition it now seems likely that copious national funds from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will lead to agreed compensation for the fishing co-operatives and that the barrage scheme will be implemented.

The Japan Environment Agency declared as early as 1975 that it "could not approve" of the project because of its impact on the tidal flats. The Agency has, however, little influence on the Ministry. The Bay still has almost no conservation status, and international pressure may help to encourage Japan to nominate the Bay for declaration as a Ramsar site by the time of the next Ramsar Wetlands Convention, in Kushiro, Japan in 1993.

Further information from: *Jeremy Thompson, Japan Wildlife Research Centre, Yushima 2-29-3, Bunkyo-Ku, Tokyo 113, Japan.*

AWSG News is supplied by Hugo Philipps (11 Marlton Crescent, St Kilda, VIC 3182, Australia) from whom further information about AWSG can be obtained. WSG has a reciprocal membership arrangement with AWSG - contact WSG membership Secretary for further details.

Australasian Flag Watch 1992

Mark Barter of AWSG sent the following information and request for sightings of colour-marked birds on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Orange leg-flagging of waders has continued during the last year in south-eastern Australia with a further 3,000 birds being marked. The project is aimed at increasing our knowledge of migration routes in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway at a time when habitat

destruction is rampant and populations of some wader species appear to be in serious decline. Such information is essential for the formulation of soundly-based management plans to ensure long-term survival of the different wader species.

Allowing for a conservative annual survival rate of 75%, it is estimated that approximately 5,500 leg-flagged birds are now flying up and down the Flyway.

Estimated numbers of flagged birds of each species are as follows:

Red-necked Stint	2,600
Curlew Sandpiper	1,200
Oriental Pratincole	450*
Ruddy Turnstone	300
Red Knot	300
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	300
Sanderling	150
Bar-tailed Godwit	150
Greenshank	30
Pacific Golden Plover	20

* birds flagged by AWSG team in Java

Small numbers of Eastern Curlew, Great Knot and Terek Sandpiper have also been leg-flagged.

Additionally some Bar-tailed Godwits have been flagged green in Australia. New Zealand has commenced flagging Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits with white flags.

Checks on recaptured flagged birds have shown that flag retention is almost 100% over the last year. Details of flag manufacture and attachment techniques are published in the April 1992 Stilt.

Results to date have been extremely encouraging. Two Sanderling have been seen on southwards migration in Japan, five Red Knot and two Red-necked Stints have been identified in New Zealand, and Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers have been seen on northwards migration in

Hong Kong. Additionally, very useful information on both northwards and southwards movements within Australia has been obtained.

The great majority of flags have been placed on the upper right leg (tibia), but a few are on the lower right leg (tarsus) - especially Ruddy Turnstone - and on the left leg. Reporting the exact position is not important.

Would everyone please keep a watch for leg-flagged birds on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, particularly during the migration periods on April/May and July/September, and also in the breeding season. Reports of sightings should include species name, place (including latitude and longitude), date and also approximate numbers and species of waders present.

The information should be sent to: *Australian Bird Banding Scheme, GPO Box 8, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia (tel. (61)-(06)-2500321; fax (61)-(06)-2500399).*

Have you paid your membership fee for 1992?

Are you wondering why you have not received this Bulletin? Perhaps it is because you have not renewed your WSG membership for 1992, despite our Membership Secretary's strenuous efforts and costly reminders to you. Perhaps you have forgotten to change your standing order to your bank so that you are paying only at the old rate of membership? Or perhaps you have put those brightly coloured membership renewal forms into your 'pending file' where they are still buried? Maybe you have changed your address and forgotten to tell us? In that case somebody else may be receiving and enjoying your Bulletins and free Supplements at your expense!

We find it hard to believe that you have



deliberately let your membership lapse, given the great value of the three *Bulletins* a year you receive packed full of fascinating information about waders worldwide. And then there are the increasing number of special supplements that you receive free for just the price of your annual membership. There are three more planned for the next year. Remember, almost all your subscription goes directly towards the production and circulation of the WSG *Bulletin*, almost all of which is produced on a voluntary basis by the editorial team. Without your subscription we could not produce such large or informative *Bulletins*.

Even if you have not paid your subscription promptly you will receive a reminder with the April *Bulletin*. After that we send you a final reminder but no August *Bulletin*. But after that we cannot afford to divert further resources to send you further reminders.

Of course, if you have not paid your 1992 subscription you are most unlikely to be reading any of this! But maybe you are reading the *Bulletin* of a paid-up member with whom you are doing collaborative work. Do remember to check your subscription payments and if you want to receive all this exciting new wader information in the next year, maybe you would like to complete the Standing Order on the membership form so you do not need take any further action to receive your *Bulletins* (until a future membership rate change).

Do also please check that we have your address correctly - we cannot tell if we are sending your *Bulletin* to the wrong address. If you have any problems with receiving *Bulletins*, or have any other membership queries, please contact the Membership Secretary (Rodney West) who will be pleased to help.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Hermann Hötter and Brigitte Klinner (both WSG Executive

Committee members) on the birth of a son, Oliver. We are currently trying to establish from the WSG Constitution whether this means that Oliver is automatically eligible to become the youngest ever WSG member!

WSG conference on "Migration and international conservation of waders", Odessa, Ukraine, 13-17 April 1992

79 participants from 13 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States of America) attended this special WSG conference hosted by the University of Ukraine. The conference provided a unique opportunity for wader scientists from east and west to meet to discuss methodologies, current knowledge and future directions for international collaborative wader research. As well as learning a great deal about the research of many waderologists working in western and eastern Europe and northern Asia, a great many new friendships were forged and collaborations devised. We express our very great thanks to all members of the organising committee of the conference, and all their helpers for their huge efforts in ensuring that the conference was so successful at a time of such rapid political and economic change, and for stimulating such a friendly and lively atmosphere for the conference.

During the conference there were many fascinating talks and poster presentations and the abstracts of all these are published elsewhere in this *Bulletin*. We are planning to publish papers derived from these talks and posters as a future WSG *Bulletin Supplement*. This will be edited by Hermann Hötter, Pavel Tomkovich, Nick Davidson and Jadwiga Gromadzka and aims to bring the results of much recent research on waders in east Europe and north Asia to a wide international audience, and to report on international initiatives for

wader research and flyway conservation.

As well as talks and posters, many of the delegates visited the historic Odessa Opera House, and the spectacular limans (coastal lagoons) near Odessa. At that time of year wader migration was in full swing and the shallow brackish lagoons were full of many passage waders such as Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, and Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*. A lucky few went on a 3-day excursion to the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta after the conference. This vast area of reed swamps, shallow islands and coastal lagoons holds rich and abundant variety of waterfowl, perhaps most spectacular being flocks of White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. Further accounts of the conference, the excursion and travelling will appear in *Bulletin* 66 (December 1992).

A major achievement of the Odessa Conference was the drawing up of an "Odessa Protocol on international cooperation on migratory flyway research and conservation". This provides a series of recommendations for practical future action through collaborative research on migratory birds derived from the agreed views of delegates from countries over a huge geographical area of great importance to migratory waterfowl. The full text of the Odessa Protocol is included in this *Bulletin*. We hope that it will be useful to wader-workers worldwide in planning and promoting flyway research, and as an international text to take to their governments and conservation agencies.

Nick Davidson, on behalf of the WSG Executive Committee

