

# NOTES & NEWS & NEWS NOTES NOTES & NEWS & NEWS NOTES

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## ADDICTED TO BIRDS

This is the title of a new 240 page book by Annie Rogers the subject of which encompasses the antics of several antipodean WSG members; some being displayed in the 16 full colour plates! Banding waders in the *Australia North-west, Duncan Parish and Australia, Clive Minton and Victorian Waders* are three of the fifteen chapters. The book describes Annie's transition from an amused and sceptical observer to a full-blooded Australian bander and passionate champion of bird conservation.

Copies can be ordered at A\$25 plus postage (weight 400 g) each, from Annie Rogers, 340 Ninks Road, St Andrews, Victoria 3761, Australia. Author's royalties will be donated to the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union.

## SEVERE DROUGHTS THREATEN WHSRN SITES IN USA

The latest issue of the Wetlands for Americas (WA) newsletter reports on an issue that illustrates the importance of the availability of alternative wetlands sites for shorebird populations. A six year drought has wrought drastic environmental changes at WHSRN sites in the west and mid-west US, causing once-thriving wetlands to dry up. Shorebirds once seen in large numbers are literally disappearing.

At one of the sites described, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area in Central Kansas, a spring passage of 50-80,000

shorebirds in previous years, amounted to only 30 or 40 birds in 1992. Current evidence indicates that drought cycles were far worse in eras past to which birds are believed to have evolved to deal with. "The problem" says Gonazalo Castro, Executive Director of WA, "is that most alternative sites have already been destroyed or converted to other uses." Long term effects are not yet known.

Elsewhere in the newsletter attention is drawn to the WA Shorebird Game. Designed for children of nine years and up, this exciting board game illustrates migration patterns and highlights the obstacles encountered during migration. Is this to be the 1993 WSG Annual Conference unspecified Saturday night entertainment (*Bulletin 66*)?!

## ISRAEL WADER RESEARCH GROUP

Blitzblau Shai, Head of IWRG, has sent us the following summary about the group and its activities. The IWRG is a voluntary association founded in 1991 as part of the Israel Ornithological Center of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. IWRG members are amateur and professional researchers who deal with all aspects of the biology and ecology of shorebirds in Israel.

Israel, located at the crossroads of three continents: Asia, Europe, and Africa is a major migration route for hundreds of thousands of waders. A total of 58 species of waders have been recorded in Israel since 1957. At least 53 wader species are known as passage migrants. Eight species of waders have been recorded as breeders in Israel since 1968, but only in small populations.

IWRG activities are conducted at different levels focusing on scientific study, conservation and educational instruction. The IWRG co-operates with the Israeli scientific academy, Tel Aviv University's Zoology Department, the

International Birdwatching Center Eilat, and with the Israel Nature Reserve Authority.

The IWRG Newsletter is a quarterly publication and includes summaries of the IWRG activities, articles, notes and observations. For annual membership and subscription, send a cheque for \$12, made out to the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, to Blitzblau Shai, IWRG, Carmel Coast Field Study Center, Ma'agan Mikha'el, Doar Na Menashe, 37805, Israel.

## KILLER HAILSTONES

The impact of a freak hailstorm that swept across Foulness Island, Essex, U.K., in September, with hailstones the size of golf balls is described in the latest issue of RSPB *Birds* (winter 1992). Fishermen in the River Crouch reported 350 dead birds and a dead seal. Mollie Drake, organiser of the Foulness wildfowl counts, reports that 1,961 dead birds were found the next day. The list is remarkable, and included 208 Oystercatcher, 164 Bar-tailed Godwit, 109 Grey Plover, and 42 Curlew. The biometrics and age composition of this random sample of waders are being examined by Nigel Clark of the British Trust for Ornithology.

## COLOUR RINGED WADERS

### GOLDEN PLOVER

In January 1992, North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory started a study of Golden Plovers using a series of individual colour rings, and investigating movements to and from the island as well as flock fidelity, and other aspects of Golden Plover behaviour.

Each bird carries four colour rings plus the usual metal ring. On the right leg there is a light green ring above the tarsus (the scheme identifier). On the right tarsus is another colour ring above the standard metal ring. On the left tarsus are two colour rings.



Details of any sightings no matter how incomplete would be greatly appreciated. All sightings will be fully acknowledged with a print out of the birds movements, etc.

Please send details to North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory, Twingness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney KW17 2BE, U.K.

#### REDSHANK

Redshank are currently being colour ringed at Teesmouth, north-east England, as part of a Durham University study of survival, nutrition and energetics of Redshank during winter. The project, which started in October 1992, will run until spring 1995. Each bird carries five colour rings plus the usual metal ring. On the birds' left tarsus is a tall lime (light green) ring (the scheme identifier). There are two colour rings above the tarsus of each leg, the colours of which may be black, lime, dark green, red, white and yellow. The metal ring is positioned on the right tarsus. Ian Mitchell would welcome any information on sightings of these birds. Details should be sent to P.I. Mitchell, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Science Laboratories, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, U.K.

## MIGRATION, DISPERSAL AND NOMADISM

The Southern African Ornithological Society are organising a symposium on the above topic to be held at Langebaan, South Africa, from 12-16 September 1993. The symposium will take place on the shores of Langebaan Lagoon, one of southern Africa's prime wader sites, in the new West Coast National Park. At the time of the conference, the migrant waders will be arriving from their northern breeding grounds, and the spring flowers in the Park will, weather permitting, be close to their best.

All persons interested in attending this symposium should inform Mr T.B.

Oatley, Avian Demography Unit, Dept. of Statistical Sciences, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 7700 South Africa, in order to receive the First Announcement giving further details of the programme.

Papers on all aspects of migration will be welcomed, but special attention will be devoted to the Palearctic-African, intra-African, and Southern Ocean migration systems and to the conservation of migrant birds. The concepts of dispersal and nomadism will be interpreted liberally, and will include topics such as the foraging movements of seabirds. Papers presented will be considered for publication in a special number of *Ostrich*, the journal of the Southern African Ornithological Society.

## NEW RUSSIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL JOURNAL

The first issue of *The Russian Journal of Ornithology* has recently been published. This is the first ornithological periodical in Russia since the 1930s and is indeed the first non-governmental one for 70 years. The journal welcomes authors from all over the world. Papers are in Russian with an English summary or (some) in English. All figure captions and tables are also translated into English. No papers on waders are included within the first issue. The journal focuses on:

- ◆ Distribution and density of birds in the former USSR
- ◆ Ecology of Russian birds
- ◆ Behaviour of Russian birds
- ◆ Energetics of Russian birds
- ◆ Migration and seasonal distribution of birds in Russia
- ◆ Biology of endemics and rare species in the former USSR.

The *Russian Journal of Ornithology* is an independent periodical (two issues in 1992 and quarterly henceforward) whose editor in chief is Dr. Alexander Bardin. The 1992 subscription price is £19 (UK), £22 (Europe) and £27 (rest of the world). All subscription orders outside Russia should be sent to E. Potapov, c/o EGI, Dept. of Zoology, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS, U.K.

## IN THE STILT

The latest edition (No. 21) of *The Stilt*, the AWSG journal, contains a wide variety of information about waders on the East Asian/West Pacific flyway. There is a progress report on the National Plan for Shorebird Conservation in Australia, which is being prepared by Doug Watkins, and is now close to completion. Estimates of populations of the different wader species have been used to identify sites of international and national importance. An Action Plan contains recommendations on subjects such as community awareness, development approval processes, and increasing the information on shorebirds. There are three papers in the continuing series on morphometrics, which discuss Little Curlew, Sanderling, and Victorian Masked Lapwing.

A report from the Broome Bird Observatory highlights the importance of north-west Australia as a wader habitat and flyway terminus. Large numbers (33-400) of Eastern Curlew were seen regularly during March and the winter. More astonishing was the presence of 35 Asian Dowitcher in June.

#### SPARTINA INVASION

Two papers concern the encroachment of *Spartina anglica* on mudflats of Anderson's Inlet, Victoria. One summarises initial results of a long-term count programme monitoring waterfowl populations. Observations suggest that at one site *Spartina* growth is restricting roost site availability, forcing waders to leave the site at very high tides. The impact of *Spartina* on international migratory



waders is discussed in the second paper.

A paper on the changing wader numbers in Swan Bay, Victoria, shows that numbers in the Swan Bay–Mud Islands, mainly of the smaller waders have declined from about 12,000 to 7,000 from 1983–92. Numbers of Great Knot have also decreased. Analysis of capture–recapture data is planned to investigate the possibility of increased mortality being the cause of decline.

#### SPOON-BILLED SANDPIPER

Pavel Tomkovich analyses migration of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the Far East of Russia. This species is listed in the *Red Data Book of the USSR* as 'rare and vulnerable'. In spring Spoon-billed Sandpiper pass very rapidly through the region, covering 5,000 km in 10–14 days. After breeding, adults migrate before young, with an overlap of only two days in southern areas of the Russian Far East. The birds make more stops and show a broader dispersion in autumn, however the main stop-over sites are the same on both migrations. Two of the most important sites are protected while another is under pressure from hunting.

#### WADERS IN NEW ZEALAND

Paul Sager presents a preliminary report on the New Zealand wader counts of 1990 and 1991. As in most years the top five migratory waders were Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstone, Lesser Golden Plover and Red-necked Stint. In line with previous winter counts, waders were concentrated at four main locations. Following record over-wintering counts of Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot in 1989, numbers of these birds declined in 1990 and 1991.

#### ASIA WETLAND BUREAU NEWS

This includes an outline of the policies adopted by the Karachi, Pakistan, meeting. These urge development of national wetland strategies and action

plans. In conjunction with Shortland Wetland Centre of NSW the AWB has initiated an informal communication network among education centres in the Asia Pacific region. The Asia–Pacific Education Network also aims to provide information services to individuals working in the field.

## AWSG NEWS

Hugo Philips describes conservation problems in China where wetlands are threatened by agricultural development, especially the shrimp farm industry. All known major staging areas for migratory shorebirds are threatened by land claim. One example cited is the Yellow River Delta Nature Reserve in Shandong Province, which is in an area of expansion of the oil industry. It is currently subject to land claim, despite being of global significance, as one of the most important staging areas in the Flyway.

Also reported is the catching and ringing of a Cox's Sandpiper *Calidris paramelanotos*. This bird, an individual from a species first described in 1982, was banded, photographed, and released at Inverloch, Victoria, Australia, by the Victorian Wader Study Group.

#### FLAGGING ON EIGHTY MILE BEACH

During a gruelling expedition to Eighty Mile Beach, the AWSG have ringed and colour-flagged a further 4,500 waders. The North–West Australian Wader Expedition was the most recent of a series beginning in 1981, and aimed at increasing our knowledge of migration routes in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. The total number of birds marked on the flyway is now more than 10,000.

The totals for the expedition included 1,477 Red-necked Stint, 960 Great Knot, and 11 Eastern Curlew. Some birds were retrapped from previous years as far back as 1981 and 1982. A Terek Sandpiper from Hong Kong and Red-necked Stints banded in Taiwan

and Victoria were also caught. The number of juvenile birds trapped was relatively low, confirming Pavel Tomkovich's suggestion that species breeding in the Asian high arctic, such as Red-necked Stint, Ruddy Turnstone and Curlew Sandpiper, had a very bad breeding year. Accurate counts of waders on Eighty Mile Beach were also made to provide baseline data for determining long-term trends.

## MEETING CROSSES THE WATER

For the first time in its history the Colonial Waterbird Society is to hold its annual meeting outside North America. Their next Congress will take place in Arles from 6–10 October 1993. The first day will be devoted to a symposium on the *Study and Conservation of Colonial Waterbirds in Mediterranean countries*. The rest of the Congress will cover more general papers on the biology and ecology of colonial waterbirds (including seabirds).

The symposium format consists of invited and contributed papers in two major areas: breeding biology of colonial waterbirds and conservation of their wetlands as nesting sites; feeding ecology of colonial waterbirds and conservation of their wetlands as foraging sites. Proceedings will be published as a supplemental issue of *Colonial Waterbirds*.

Further information from Dr. Frank Cezilly, c/o Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat, Le Sambuc, 13200 Arles, France.

