Wader news from the Pacific Coast of the Americas

Compiled by Rob Butler

ESTABLISHMENT OF WILDLIFE ECOLOGY CHAIR

Interest in shorebirds (waders) in the Americas has been heightened with the establishment of the Wildlife Ecology Chair at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Vancouver, Canada. The purpose of this new position is to provide students with a mixture of sound academic training with a conservation flair.

The position is funded by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and the National Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada. Dr. Fred Cooke from Queen's University was awarded the position of Chair and Tony Williams from University of Sheffield was successful in competing for the position of Physiologist. David Lank accompanied Fred Cooke to SFU to take up an Adjunct position in Wildlife Ecology.

PACIFIC ECOLOGY PROJECT

A major program in Wildlife Ecology is the Pacific Shorebird Ecology Project begun by CWS. The study centers on Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* of which nearly the entire world's population migrates through Canada each year. Brett Sandercock is into his second year of research of clutch size on the breeding grounds near Nome in western Alaska. Patrick O'Hara will join Francisco Delgado and Rob Butler's long-term banding study on the winter quarters in Panama this autumn. Nils Warnock will begin post-doctoral studies in Ensenada, in Baja Norte California with support from Lew Oring at the University of Nevada, Fred Cooke at SFU, Rob Butler at CWS and Horacio de la Cueva in Mexico. Other shorebird studies underway are Dov Lank's soon-to-be published studies of Ruffs and Pippa Shepard's study of Dunlins wintering near Vancouver. Patrick O'Hara, Francisco Delgado and Rob Butler are collaborating on a demographic analysis of five years of recapture data in Panama. Guy Morrison, Rob Butler and Francisco Delgado will publish an atlas of shorebird distribution in Panama this winter. Colin Clark, Ron Ydenberg and Rob Butler are collaborating on a dynamic programming model of migration with the intent of extending it to the entire year.

The project has benefited from visits from Bruno Ens and Theunis Piersma. The similarity of approaches and questions prompted Rob Ydenberg to propose a joint Canadian-Dutch expedition to Panama for the near future. We look forward with enthusiasm to collaboration with colleagues interested in questions about how changes in habitat and behaviour of individuals are equated into changes in fitness and ultimately to population levels of shorebirds.

NEW CWS RESEARCH FACILITY

The Pacific Wildlife Research Centre opened officially in the summer of 1994 on the Alaskan National Wildlife Area about 20 km south of Vancouver. The new facility is the home of CWS on the Pacific Coast of Canada. It provides new office space and lab facilities for CWS and SFU researchers, staff, students and visiting scientists. It also saw the removal of God-forsaken trailers forever!!

MIGRATION STUDIES

Great success was had in 1992 in tracking the migration of Western Sandpipers from California to southwest Alaska. Over 70% of the miniature radio transmitters glued to the back of peeps were detected away from the site of attachment and many were picked up over 3,000 km away. This US Forest Service and CWS funded project was carried out by Chris Iverson, Mary-Anne Bishop, Rob Butler, Nils Warnock and Sara Griffiths. Results are being written now. A similar project will begin in 1995 to follow individuals from the winter quarters in Baja California and southern California, to the breeding grounds in western Alaska. If successful, we might be able to follow individuals throughout the year!!

FORMATION OF THE WESTERN SHOREBIRD GROUP

Twenty-nine shorebird aficionados met at the American Ornithologist's Union meeting in June 1994. The purpose of the group will be to improve communication between shorebird researchers in the western hemisphere via an internet address and to promote conservation concerns to Wetlands for the Americas. Interested individuals should contact Rob Butler or Lew Oring for details.