

an important one. It does not cost us a lot, and if it helps then it is something that we need to pursue.

#### 4. Enhancing linkages with our international partners

My fourth point relates to enhancing linkages with our international partners. Sometimes a key feature of our program description has been that we want to act as a support for the Ramsar Convention, and one of the things that we have been doing is encouraging countries where we have WHSRN sites to join Ramsar. We have had some success and I would like to think that our efforts have, in fact, provided in some cases the first introduction of governments or site managers to Ramsar. We will continue to do that.

Our program has a linkage with World Wildlife Fund. Another important linkage that we are pursuing is with the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) and the International Waterfowl and Wetland Research Bureau (IWRB). This linkage was, in my view, a very good idea when it was brought up a number of years ago, but it is a very complicated arrangement and takes some time to work

through the system. If anything, this meeting has convinced me that in fact the extra strength that we will get through that alliance will enhance our programming rather than detract from it. It will help us improve our impact when action on global issues is required. Institutionally, it will provide us with needed stability.

AWB and IWRB have institutional strengths from which we could benefit. For example, their regular review of strategic planning and active use of research groups which could, in fact, form the basis for the shorebird technical group that we were talking about.

Finally, one of the things that we have heard here is that we can, from the WHSRN program, export at least the idea of linking sites and helping, through our advice and cooperation, to establish flyway shorebird networks in other regions. Whether that formally materialises into one title or not I think still remains to be seen and it is appropriate to take the caution from this group that having a single name might not be the best idea. Certainly the business of having flyway networks in other regions and have our sites appropriately linked is a good one.

## Wings around the world: a global shorebird network

*Rob Butler*

The highly migratory nature of waders (shorebirds) has made them an attractive group of birds for international conservation of wetland biodiversity in the Americas. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), established a decade ago, has secured over 30 reserves between Alaska and Tierra del Fuego. The aim of WHSRN is "to use shorebirds as a symbol for uniting countries in a global effort to maintain the Earth's biodiversity". However, WHSRN is designed to secure sites with large numbers of shorebirds in the Americas. Many species do not gather in large concentrations and some spend part of their annual cycle outside the Americas. Especially problematic for WHSRN are eight species that breed in Alaska and winter outside the WHSRN flyway in Oceania (Gill *et al.* 1994 (reprinted with amendments in this *Bulletin*). This problem is compounded by the Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitensis* and Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* that breed in Alaska and stage or winter in the State of Hawaii. Hawaii is politically within the Americas but outside the WHSRN network. In addition, seven species breeding in the Russian Far East spend the winter in North America (Gill *et al.* 1994).

The recent establishment of the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network (EASRN) by the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) partly addresses these problems. Linking WHSRN and EASRN would provide an attractive approach for basin-wide protection of Pacific Rim

shorebirds. However, it does not address species that migrate between North America and Europe. For example, the entire *islandica* subspecies of Red Knot breed in the Canadian and Greenland arctic and migrate to Europe for the winter. A Knot reserve network that encompassed the breeding grounds in Ellesmere National Park in Canada, with the migratory staging site in the Wash in the UK and winter quarters in the Dutch and German Wadden Sea would address the problem for this subspecies. The establishment of this intercontinental reserve network should not be difficult considering the legal protection already afforded these sites.

Many other examples similar to the complexities of shorebird migration routes in the Americas occur in other parts of the world and begs for a 'Global Shorebird Network' (GSN). The GSN would parallel the conservation efforts of Wetlands International to bring world-wide attention to our conservation efforts. It would overcome the problems of species that disperse widely around the globe, provide a mechanism for sharing of expertise, and provide a world-wide voice for shorebird conservation.

Criteria for site designation in the different networks will need to reflect different population sizes in the flyways. The experience of WHSRN and EASRN show that this scenario is workable. The GSN might also include a new site designation, known as a Global Shorebird Reserve. A Global Shorebird Reserve would include a handful of sites

that hold exceptionally large numbers of individuals and species of shorebirds from a wide geographical region.

The Wader Study Group can serve an important role in providing a forum for developing criteria and site identification internationally and for a Euro-African Network, and joining with AWB and WHSRN to provide world-wide scientific advice in establishment of a GSN.

#### REFERENCE

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#### WHSRN Sites

