



## CIRCUMPOLAR ARCTIC ENVIRONMENTAL GIS DATABASE

### CALL FOR SUPPORT

In April 1996 I started working at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre to join into the Arctic Database project. The main objectives of the work will be the compilation of sites of ornithological importance into the GIS database in the Circumpolar Arctic.

The work is a joint project with support of Wetland International, the Wader Study Group and many other international and local organisations. The database will support the efforts of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) and contribute to the action plans of the international conventions (e.g. especially Ramsar and Bonn). It is intended to be used in combination with different layers of information on environmental and especially ornithological data. Close linkage with existing schemes, regional databases and organisations is therefore necessary to avoid unnecessary duplication.

The database has been under development for two years in collaboration with Moscow State University and UNEP/GRID-Arendal. Information about vegetation, forest extent, major rivers, permafrost, National parks and protected areas for Russia has been included into the GIS Map-Library. Some detailed information about important wetlands, seabird colonies and wilderness areas exist only for selected areas in Russia and Scandinavia. The data have been used in a preliminary gap analyses of the Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN) for CAFF. The process highlighted the need for detailed information on sites of importance for inland breeding, mainly migratory birds.

The CAFF programme already coordinates the compilation of a circumpolar seabird colony database, but information on inland sites of ornithological importance is missing.

The compilation of a database of information on waterfowl on a circumpolar scale will therefore be extremely valuable for many aspects of scientific work in the Arctic. It will

also assist political decisions and guide practical work in conservation.

Anybody, who is working on **waders in the Arctic**, is requested to support the project with information. Please contribute with data about

- breeding sites
- important moulting sites
- important roosting and wintering sites
- of waders in the Arctic Region as defined by CAFF or
- information about persons who might know about a particular area.

Please fill in the questionnaire provided by David Stroud. All data will be mapped in the GIS Map Library and compiled in a central database, to which every contributor will have access.

Hopefully many of you will help compiling the database and support the project. Thanks to everybody.

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## *BP Conservation Programme: call for applications*

BirdLife International has recently called for applications for the 1997 BP Conservation Programme. This awards annual prizes of £3,000 to four projects. The Conservation Programme was launched in 1985 with the objective of promoting a greater quantity and quality of conservation orientated projects to address global priorities.

A project must clearly address a conservation issue of international importance and should preferably be derived from the priorities identified by international conservation organisations, for example, focusing on species listed in the IUCN Red Data Books or one of the Endemic Bird Areas identified in the Birdlife publications *Putting Biodiversity on the Map* or *Birds to Watch 2*. The project must fall within one of the following four categories:

**Tropical Forests, Oceanic Islands & Marine Habitats, Wetlands, Grasslands, Savannas & Deserts, Globally Threatened Species** (*er... isn't that more than four categories?? Ed.*).

The programme is open to teams from across the world. The project should consist of young people, preferably undergraduates, although it is recommended that, if possible, at least one postgraduate in life sciences should be included. Experienced teams, with many expeditions behind them, will not be considered. The project must involve local students or counterparts and must have clearance from the host government.

Project descriptions must be received by the Expeditions Officer no later than 31 December 1996. Please feel free to phone the Expeditions Officer to discuss your ideas at an early stage.

Further details of the programme and information concerning applications may be obtained from: Expeditions Officer, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, United Kingdom.  
Tel. + 44 (0)1223 277 318.  
Fax. + 44 (0)1223 277 200.  
E-mail: [birdlife@gn.apc.org](mailto:birdlife@gn.apc.org)

## Where have all the Little Ringed Plovers gone?

Our Group (Gruppo Attività e Ricerche Ornitologiche del Litorale) has been monitoring a Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* breeding population since 1990.

The species in Latium (Central Italy) seems to be considered as "vulnerable" in the Red data Book, due to generalised loss of habitat, touristic disturbance and other anthropogenic stresses, natural predation and the fluctuations of water levels in rivers.

Recently (1994) the regional population was estimated at less than 74 pairs, mainly distributed along the coastal sand dunes (49%) (Biondi *et al.* in press). During the study period we made counts in closely defined and favourable areas (coastal dunes, coastal wetlands, rivers and streams etc.). Changes in distribution were determined by counting all active nests simultaneously located during May in a predetermined census area (the overall extent being 118 ha) along the coast near Rome from Civitavecchia harbour to Ardea (100 km).

After an increase in 1993, the population size plummeted between 1995 and 1996 by 43.7%.

No trends are known for this species in Europe and Italy. Are the causes to be found in a severe draught in the African wintering areas?!? Is the species locally stressed by a low reproductive success (hatching success was 29.9%; fledging success 15.4%) as reported by Biondi *et al.* (1996) ?!?

If you have any detailed information regarding population trends in this species for the period 1994-1996, please write to Massimo Biondi and Loris Pietrelli, c/o GAROL, via del Castello, 17, 00119 Ostia Antica, Rome, Italy.

## Arctic waterfowl breeding success and weather in 1995

There has been an enthusiastic response to the pilot questionnaire circulated with a previous *Bulletin* and we have at least some information on waterfowl breeding conditions for all arctic countries in 1995. **Thank you very much to all those who completed and returned forms!**

Constraints on editorial time has meant that the summary article intended for this *Bulletin* has, unfortunately, had to be deferred until the December issue. In the meantime, a brief newsletter summarising the results collected so far will be circulated soon to all those who have submitted information.

Progress is being made with the formal establishment of an international co-ordination network for this work, and it seems probable that the pan-arctic co-ordination will be undertaken from Moscow, with national contact points established in each arctic country as well as those countries (such as the UK) without arctic territory but with regular scientific activity in the arctic. Details will be reported in these pages in due course.

Recent meetings have been held with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre to ensure that data collation and storage for their circumpolar arctic GIS database (page 10) will be compatible with WSG activity. The basic supply of data to WCMC is best undertaken through the use of WSG pilot questionnaires as indicated by Christoph Zöckler. Further discussions are planned with WCMC to establish how we can work more closely together and reduce the amount of form-filling to a bare minimum!

If you have visited the arctic in 1996, we would encourage you to complete a questionnaire for your study area. We would hope to summarise 1996 data in the April 1997 *Bulletin*.

*David Stroud & Nick Davidson*