

difference in schedule together with ring recoveries and direct observations of migrations suggests the existence of two geographic populations (western and eastern) within the Curlew Sandpiper breeding range. Annual and possibly intraseasonal redistribution of breeding birds are apparent for Curlew Sandpiper at least on Taimyr. A model is proposed to explain variation in breeding dates and densities in relation to snow and weather conditions in the region. In years of heavy nest predation coupled

with early breeding many birds are likely to move further north for renesting. This behaviour is responsible for a double peak breeding in northern parts of the breeding range recorded in several studies.

Odessa Proceedings launch

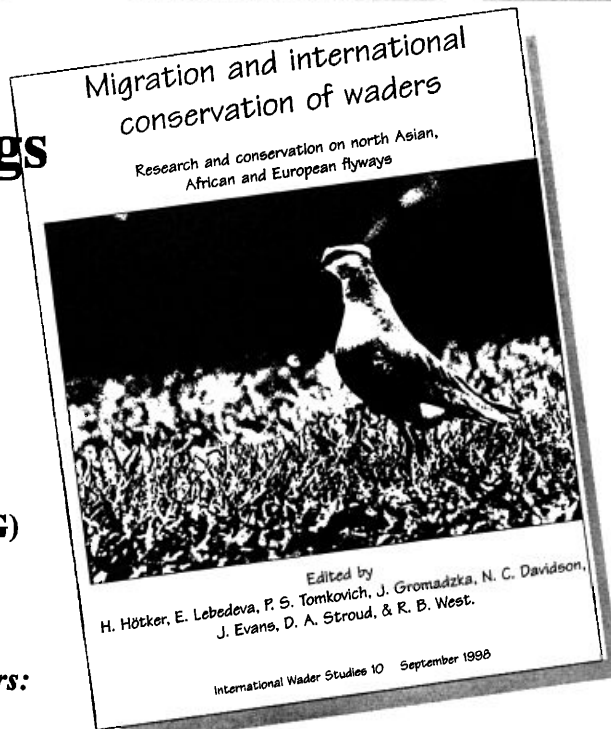
The launch of the International Wader Study Group's (WSG) 500 page publication *Migration and international conservation of waders: research and*

*conservation on north Asian, African and European flyways*¹ took place at Kiev, Ukraine on 25 September 1998 at an event hosted by Dutch government. The first copy of this work was ceremonially presented to the Ukrainian Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection, Ya. Movchan, by the Netherlands Ambassador, O.W.C. Hattinga van 't Sant.

In his address to the Press Conference, Minister Movchan stressed the imperative for environmental protection and summarised some of Ukraine's current and proposed initiatives regarding the protection of wetlands and waterbirds including his government's recent signature of the Ramsar Convention. Particularly welcome was his announcement of Ukraine's formal ratification of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) which had occurred earlier that week. In his presentation, the Netherlands Ambassador highlighted the benefits to countries such as Ukraine from taking

early action to conserve natural wetland systems, contrasting the Dutch experience where the restoration and recreation of now degraded remnants of more extensive wetlands is costing huge sums of money.

The WSG-Wetlands International Liaison Officer, David Stroud, outlined the contents of the volume, part of the *International Wader Study Series*, that was being launched. It is a unique compilation of long-term and short-term studies on waders in a part of the world with few previous studies, set in an international context by descriptions of



International Wader Study Group Meeting, Cape Town, South Africa, August 1998 *A personal view*

The IWSG meeting in Cape Town was a delight to attend. Held in conjunction with the 22nd International Ornithological Congress it was a good opportunity for members (especially non-European members) to come who might not have been able to attend otherwise. It was also a wonderful opportunity to meet the people and see first-hand the impressive quantity and quality of the work underway in southern Africa.

The South African museum was a lovely venue; during breaks it was possible to marvel at whales and galaxies in addition to the wonders of shorebirds. Cape Town itself is a lovely and interesting city, set between the ocean and dramatic cliffs and tablelands. It has a sense of a city full of life, with a slightly chaotic mix of chic waterfront shops and restaurants, busy streets and government buildings, and inner city street life. The streets held a fascinating mix of beautiful older buildings, lovely gardens, and ubiquitous razor wire and window bars on buildings. Walking through the streets was never boring, with a large variety of lifestyles evident everywhere.

The organisers went all out to ensure it was a delightful meeting to attend. Everything ran very smoothly and included many special extras, such as authentic style South African food for lunches and dinners, and door to door pick up and drop off service. One of the highlights of the meeting was the field trip day to Langabaans Lagoon and the West Coast National Park. Both were superb places - Langabaans for the bird life (one of southern Africa's premiere wader sites) and the West Coast National Park for the flowers, scenery, and wildlife of all sorts. Both places were so fascinating that our hosts had a difficult job keeping us to our schedule. The meeting was a great opportunity for those who were able to attend to see a whole other side of wader studies, enjoy a wonderful location, and be hosted by some of the most dedicated and delightful hosts one could ever hope for.

Frances Schmechel

current flyway-scale research and conservation activity. It contains nearly 90 papers on waders in eastern Europe and northern Asia and is prefaced by descriptions of current international wader conservation activity, including proposals for ways of developing a global wader flyway conservation strategy.

The idea for the volume originated at a WSG meeting in Odessa in 1992 and WSG's aim has been to reflect the great diversity of research on waders in eastern Europe and northern Asia in the 1980s and early 1990s. Hence papers range from faunistic surveys in limited study areas, through sophisticated ecological analyses to brief reviews summarising long-term research programmes. Overall, the volume provides a picture of the nature of wader research in the region, and yields a

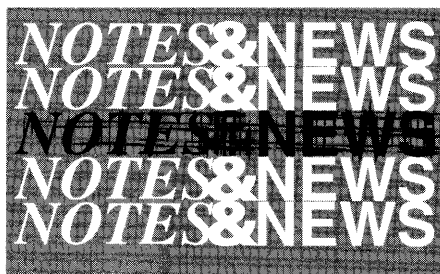
wealth of new data for those studying the ecology and distribution of different species and populations.

David Stroud noted that whilst generous financial support from Wetlands International and the British Ornithologists' Union had been instrumental in allowing the printing of the volume, it could not have been produced without the estimated three person-years of voluntary time expended by the WSG in bringing this publication to fruition. He outlined the wide range of activity that been undertaken in European and Asian flyways since the Odessa Conference, with the finalisation and imminent entry into force of AEWA being of major significance. He concluded by suggesting that a follow-up meeting in Odessa in 2002 might be appropriate in

the context of reviewing a range of wader conservation problems. If such a meeting might be co-sponsored by the Ukrainian government, it might also be an appropriate regional co-ordination meeting for programmes under AEWA.

The presentations sparked lively debate from the representatives of national media who attended.

¹Hötter, H., Lebedeva, E., Tomkovich, Gromadzka, J., Davidson, N.C., Evans, J., Stroud, D.A. & West, R.B. (eds.) 1998. Migration and international conservation of waders: Research and conservation on north Asian, African and European flyways. *International Wader Studies* 10. 526 pp. £35.00 (incl. postage) from International Wader Study Group, c/o National Centre for Ornithology, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, UK



WATERBIRDS IN THE ZOUTE DELTA

Watervogels in de Zoute Delta 1996/97 is the latest publication reporting on the monthly counts of waterbirds in the salt waters of the Delta area, south-west Netherlands. The counts presented are part of a biological monitoring programme of the large waters in the Netherlands that involves close collaboration between Governmental bodies and volunteers. The first half of the report summarises the trends in the waterfowl populations of the Zoute Delta since 1987 and identifies populations of international importance. In winter, more than 450,000 waterbirds are present in the Zoute Delta when the 1% level (1% of a population regularly present, a criterion for international significance) is exceeded more than 100 times. The area is in fact of major international significance for waterbirds throughout the year. The report then focuses upon the waterbird populations censused within the period July 1996 - June 1997 in comparison with the

previous two years for the different components of the Delta complex.

Throughout the report's first half, the influence upon waterbird population levels of severe winter weather is made evident. A subsequent chapter discusses the consequences of the severe winter 1996/7. In addition to changes in numbers and distribution, there was a considerable mortality among birds. A total of 11,873 dead waterbirds were registered, of which 7,168 were Oystercatchers, 1,509 were Dunlin and 714 were Redshank.

The report concludes by discussing the occurrence of six species in the Zoute Delta area in more detail: Cormorant, Shelduck, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatcher, Grey Plover and Dunlin.

Watervogels in de Zoute Delta 1996/97 is written in Dutch with the figure legends and summary also provided in English. The publication details are: Meininger, P.L., Berrevoets, C.M. & Strucker, R.C.W. 1998. *Watervogels in de Zoute Delta 1996/97*. Rapport RIKZ-98.001. Rijksinstituut voor Kust en Zee, Middelburg. ISBN 90-369-3402-8.

THE USA'S 17TH RAMSAR SITE

The United States has designated the 445 ha Bolinas Lagoon in Marin

County, California, less than 20 kilometres up the coast from San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. Managed by the Marin County Open Space District, this tidal embayment provides an important coastal environment that is unparalleled along the northern California coast. Open water, mudflat, and marsh provide productive and diverse habitats for marine fishes, waterbirds, and marine mammals, and it is also part of a much larger protected natural habitat complex in the region. The geographical location along the Pacific Flyway makes the Lagoon an ideal staging ground and stopover site for migratory birds, and the temperate climate provides wintering habitat for a wide array of waterfowl and shorebirds. Bolinas Lagoon is listed under Criteria 1b on representativeness, 3a on waterfowl, and 4b on importance for fish. The area supports a number of recreational uses, including the use of manually-powered watercraft.

With the addition to the List a few days ago of Sand Lake in South Dakota, the total area covered by the USA's 17 Ramsar sites comes to 1,172,835 hectares.

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