



Greetings from newly elected WSG Chairman: Hermann Hötter

When Gerard Boere asked me to accept nomination as new WSG Chairman, I felt very pleased and greatly honoured – pleased because I have long been an enthusiastic supporter of the WSG, and honoured because I will be following in the steps of such trailblazers as Gerard and Mike Pienkowski. For those who do not know me: I work for NABU (the German BirdLife partner) at its Institute for Bird Protection. My main research interest is waders breeding on wet grassland. I became imprinted on waders in my early youth, in the mud of the sewage farms of Münster. Later, I swapped freshwater mud for saltwater mud and spent a couple of years studying Avocets on the coast of Schleswig-Holstein – still a passion of mine.

For me, and virtually all the wader people I know, the WSG is something special. Those who attended the conference at Kollumerpomp must have realised this. It is unique in combining science (sometimes at the cutting edge), conservation and fun. It is a melting pot of all those interested in waders, be it amateurs, professional researchers or nature conservationists. This is easy enough to see in the *Bulletin*, but it is even more evident when we meet together. Whenever and wherever WSG conferences are held, it is always the same: almost immediately even newcomers feel like members of a big happy family. It would be interesting to know whether this has something to do with the habits of the birds we study which also occur in big, tight, and sometimes mixed flocks in the season when our conferences take place!

It should not be forgotten that the success of our group and its good atmosphere depends very much on the hard



work, behind the scenes, of our volunteer officers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my colleagues on the Executive Committee for their involvement, in particular Julianne Evans and Humphrey Sitters for editing the *Bulletin*, Les Underhill for bringing us to the World Wide Web, Bob Loos and Rodney West for the administrative and financial management of the group, David Stroud for representing us in various other organisations, Ole Thorup for managing the projects, Petra de Goeij for helping with the conference organisation and, of course,

Gerard Boere for all he did for the group and handing it over in such good shape. I would like to add a special thank you to Julianne who edited the *Bulletin* with great care and diligence for five long years.

As for the future: I promise to do my best to ensure that the WSG remains an open platform for all sorts of scientific activities around waders. So please use it, get involved with the WSG, publish your news and results in the *Bulletin* and visit our website. We need new members: tell your friends and colleagues about the WSG – don't keep it to yourselves! Let them know how fantastic it is (those who came to the Kollumerpomp conference will have no difficulty with this!). But please also tell me if there is anything you would like to see changed in the way the group is run. Feedback from all members is vital if we are to maintain the group as a vigorous and worthwhile organisation.

I am very much looking forward to my time as your Chairman. I hope to see as many of you as possible next October at our conference in Poland.

