

Walvis Bay, Namibia: a key wetland for waders and other coastal birds in southern Africa

K. WEARNE¹ & L.G. UNDERHILL²

¹*Coastal Environmental Trust of Namibia, PO Box 786, Walvis Bay, Namibia*

²*Avian Demography Unit, Department of Statistical Sciences, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa*

Wearne, K. & Underhill, L.G. 2005. Walvis Bay, Namibia: a key wetland for waders and other coastal birds in southern Africa. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 107: 24–30.

Keywords: Walvis Bay, Namibia, saltpans, waders, Ramsar site, conservation

Between 1997 and 2005, the complex of wetlands at Walvis Bay, central Namibia, supported, on average, 156,000 waterbirds in summer (median of nine January surveys) and 82,000 waterbirds in winter (median of eight July surveys). This site thus supports the largest number of waders of any wetland in southern Africa. For 25 species (11 waders), maximum counts exceeded the 1% thresholds for the flyway populations; for 19 species the median counts exceeded this threshold. Eight wader species had median summer counts exceeding 1000 birds: Curlew Sandpiper (31,000), Sanderling (8,800), Little Stint (5,800), Chestnut-banded Plover (2,300, and a winter median of 5,500), White-fronted Plover (1,200 and 1,500 in winter), Pied Avocet (1,200 and 1,600 in winter), Ruddy Turnstone (1,100) and Grey Plover (1,100). Numbers of most species, with Red Knot as exception, were larger than during a survey made in 1977. The wetland is a Ramsar site and an Important Bird Area. Conservation issues include reduction of intertidal habitat, the juxtaposition with the town of Walvis Bay which is Namibia's main deep-water port, and siltation of the lagoon.