



# *Bulletin* 107

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## **Pied Avocets breeding in Western Europe**

This issue features a series of papers on the Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* breeding population of Western Europe.

Pied Avocets are among the most spectacular and charismatic birds of European coastlines. They breed in colonies, often at places easily accessible to the public and behave conspicuously. This makes them very popular with bird-watchers as well as with people who only have a general interest in nature.

Over the past few hundred years the European avocet population has had a chequered history. It suffered a severe decline in the second half of the 19th century, and became extinct in many regions. Since then, most populations have recovered, some quite spectacularly. Although the full reasons for the population increase are under debate, it is clear that protection from human persecution, especially hunting and egg-collecting, has played a major role. Avocets can therefore be regarded as a success story for the nature conservation movement in Europe and this has led to the species being adopted as the logo of several bird protection organisations.

As avocets are so conspicuous and so admired, their numbers have been recorded in considerable detail, particularly during the second half of the 20th century. Preliminary analyses of these data revealed that the timing and speed of

population increases appeared to differ between regions. In order to investigate the reasons for these apparent differences and establish exactly how the avocet population has developed, 53 avocet experts from twelve countries met for a workshop held on 27 September 1999 during the International Wader Study Group conference at Ile de Berder, Golf de Morbihan, Brittany, France.

This volume includes papers based on the twelve talks and posters presented at the 1999 workshop as well as additional contributions on the same theme. Each author was asked to include an estimate of the number of avocets breeding in a particular country or region at the end of the 20th century and to describe the population dynamics, distribution, breeding habitats and relevant conservation issues in as much detail as possible. As a result, we are pleased to present a comprehensive review of the conservation status of one of the most fascinating wader species to be found in Western Europe.

We would like to record our thanks to all contributors to the workshop and to this volume and we particularly express our appreciation to Guillaume Gélinaud and his team for their excellent organisation of the workshop in the delightful setting of the old monastery on Ile de Berder.

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