



Bulletin 113

INTERNATIONAL WADER STUDY GROUP

Policy on ethical standards in respect of wader research by members and submissions to the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* and the *International Wader Studies* series

Introduction

The Executive Committee of the IWSG has recently given consideration to ethical aspects of the work of members or work published in the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* or *International Wader Studies Series*. Members and others are rightly concerned that studies should not involve mortality, injury, stress or unnecessary risks to individual birds or impact upon populations. Nevertheless it has to be recognised that few, if any, studies of birds are free of risk. Even purely observational work may cause some disturbance or increase the risk of predation. Against such considerations must be balanced the likely gain in knowledge and especially the conservation benefit of this knowledge. The nature of potential impacts of different studies form a continuum and it is not possible to make simple classifications or to test against simple thresholds. This issue is, however, important and must not be avoided.

The policy

The IWSG expects all of its members in conducting research into waders and the authors of all papers submitted to the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* and *International Wader Studies Series*:

- To act within the law of the country in which the work is conducted. They must ensure therefore that they have the necessary licences or permits for whatever they are doing. Investigators should abide by the spirit as well as the letter of relevant legislation.
- To have full and proper regard for conservation considerations and humane practice and to interfere with the lives of waders as little as possible, particularly in minimising mortality, injury, stress and unnecessary risks to their well-being.

The IWSG is not opposed in principle to the taking of birds for valid scientific purposes or procedures that carry a risk of mortality, injury or stress. However, studies should avoid unnecessary risks to individual birds or impact significantly upon populations. In all cases the impact of a study must carefully be evaluated in terms of balance between the possible gain in knowledge weighed against possible adverse consequences for individuals or populations. Research workers should be aware that even field observations of free-living birds could result in significant disturbance to their lives. Papers may be rejected by IWSG editors solely on ethical grounds.

