

Notes & News



Notes & News is compiled by Silke Nebel to whom contributions should be sent.
(Department of Biology, University of Western Ontario, 1151 Richmond Street North, London, Ontario,
N6A 5B7, Canada; Fax: +1-519-661-3935; snebel2@uwo.ca)

PROJECT NEWS

WOW! New website helps flyway project take off

The 'Wings Over Wetlands' (WOW) Project has launched its new website (www.wingsoverwetlands.org). The pages give an insight into the largest international wetland and waterbird conservation initiative ever to take place in the African-Eurasian region. WOW is fostering international collaboration along the African-Eurasian flyways, building capacity and demonstrating best practice in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The new website gives an overview of the different components of the project, including the Critical Site Network Tool and the Flyway Conservation Training Framework.



International Wader Study Group Colour-marking Register

Autumn typically sees an increase in the number of colour-marked waders that are reported to the International Wader Study Group Colour-marking Register. Most sightings are submitted via the online reporting form at www.ring.ac hosted on the EURING website.

Inevitably, due to the difficulties associated with reading colour-rings – waders are often distant, in water, against strong light and roosting with one leg tucked into the feathers – some sightings will not match any of the schemes in the register; usually as a result of not seeing all the rings or noting an incorrect colour. Sometimes, however, I receive photographs of the bird in question and when the legs and rings are clearly visible, and no rings appear to have been lost, there can be no doubt about the accuracy of the sighting, showing that the bird was ringed in a scheme that was not registered with the IWSG.

Currently, the Register holds details of schemes from over 300 ringers, yet there are still schemes being used that are not registered. These unregistered schemes are a concern for anyone who colour-marks birds; not only because this increases the chance of more than one project marking different birds in the same way, but also because it is detrimental to the public image of ringing.

For the vast majority of birdwatchers (at least within Europe) the Colour-marking Register is perhaps the only contact they have with the IWSG, so it is important that the Register works efficiently and ringers provide feedback to

observers. If you know of anyone colour-marking waders within in the East Atlantic Flyway, please make them aware of the Colour-marking Register so that wader studies can ensure the continued support of the wider bird watching community.

As always, thanks must go to all of the ringers who have responded to observers, as much of the continued success of the Colour-marking Register is reliant on good relations between ringers and observers.

Mark Collier
IWSG Colour-marking Register, The Nunnery,
Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, UK
wsg@bto.org

CONSERVATION NEWS

Spoon-billed Sandpiper finds Species Champion

WildSounds, the leading international wildlife book and sound guide supplier, has become the latest Species Champion to support the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Program. Furthering their long-term commitment to environmental causes, WildSounds has now stepped forward to 'champion' Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*. Populations of this wader have crashed over the last decade, and recent surveys of its breeding grounds in the remote Russian province of Chukotka suggest that the situation is now absolutely critical.

The British Birdwatching Fair, better known as Birdfair, is helping raise funds to prevent extinctions. Birdfair is the first Global Programme Sponsor of the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme and has committed its entire profits from 2007, 2008 and 2009 to the cause. Birdfair is aiming to beat the record amount of £226,000 it raised in 2007 and expects more than 20,000 people to contribute by visiting the fair over the three days in August. Birdfair is drawing attention to the search by highlighting a 'Super Six' Critically Endangered Species in 2008: Azores Bullfinch, Ararape Manakin, Tuamotu Kingfisher, Sociable Lapwing, Dwarf Olive Ibis and Spoon-billed Sandpiper. BirdLife International has plans in place to save them all and the work is ready to begin as soon as 'Species Champions' can be found to fund the essential conservation required. There was good news for the first of the 'Birdfair Super Six' when Birdwatch magazine announced it would 'champion' Azores Bullfinch back in January. Their funds are already helping urgent conservation work taking place in the Azores through BirdLife's Portuguese Partner SPEA.



Ramsar News

USA adds two new Ramsar sites to the list – the **Francis Beidler Forest** (6,438 ha) in South Carolina is a protected swamp forest along a broad, flat-bottomed alluvial valley, constituting the largest remaining virgin stand of bald cypress and tupelo gum trees in the world. More than 300 vertebrates and 300 plants depend upon the site for survival, and a number of threatened and/or vulnerable species are present. The site is used by bird- and nature-enthusiasts and students, as well as fishers and deer- and hog-hunters in some parts, and low-density farming and grazing occurs in the surrounding area. A principal hydrological role of the site is the improvement and maintenance of water quality of the waters flowing through it, but high levels of mercury have been found in the fish. Logging, farm run-off, and urban sprawl from Charleston are seen as potential threats from outside the site. The visitors' centre offers a full range of environmental education programs.

The **Olentangy research wetland** (21 ha) in Ohio is a complex of created and natural freshwater riverine wetlands located on the campus of The Ohio State University in Columbus. The wetlands include freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands, permanent rivers/streams/creeks, seasonal/intermittent freshwater marshes, and permanent freshwater marshes. It is a unique combination of 1) a biologically diverse assemblage of different wetland and riverine habitats both representative and unique to the region; 2) high-quality university teaching, research, and publishing related specifically to wetland ecology and management; and 3) significant wetland ecotourism and outreach for an urban community where few wetlands remain.

Serbia has designated its 9th Wetland of International Importance. **Zasavica** (1,913 ha) is a Special Nature Reserve and BirdLife IBA; aquatic and swampy ecosystems line up along with fragments of floodable meadows and forests representing one of the last preserved pristine swamp areas in Serbia. **Zasavica** has inspired many legends and myths, and it is woven into the cultural being of the people. Photographs of the site and its wildlife can be seen at http://www.ramsar.org/wm/w.n.serbia_zasavica.htm.

Korea has designated an important wintering stop for migratory birds along the East Asian–Australasian flyway. **Muan Tidal Flat** (3,589 ha), a Wetland Protected Area, is an intertidal sand- and mudflat ecosystem, largely free of human disturbance, on the coastline of the Yellow Sea, located in the mouth of semi-enclosed inner bay. Some 49 species of winter waterbirds have been observed. It is a notable spawning ground for marine organisms, with some 357 species recorded, providing valuable food resources for the migratory birds.

Ecuador has designated its 13th Wetland of International Importance. **Complejo Llanganati** (30,355 ha) is a complex of lagoons of glacial origin, situated between 2,960 m and 4,571 m a.s.l. and fed by rivers and seasonal floods, as well as swamps and extended peatlands associated with different types of vegetation, which gives them particular characteristics. They are an important source of water for the nearest populated areas. It is habitat to more than 14 flora species found in the IUCN Red List. The complex belongs to the Tropical Andes Hotspot, said to be the richest and most biodiverse region of the planet, which includes a sixth of the plants of the Earth in 1% of the territory. It holds a number of endemic flora and fauna species, as well as migratory birds. The

site is listed under IUCN Management Category II (National Park) and became a BirdLife International 'Important Bird Area' in 2005.

Colombia has designated **Sistema Lacustre de Chingaza** (4,058 ha) in the central highlands as its fourth Wetland of International Importance. The site is a complex of lagoons and wetlands that supply water to the capital city, Bogotá. Located in the Northern Colombian Andes between 3,050 and 3,950 m a.s.l., this region supports one of the dampest páramos of the country and is a center of particular endemism which has been the refuge for more than 400 flora species and 500 fauna species, some of them endangered and others which have not yet been identified. The complex is formed by 20 lagoons and is of great importance for migratory birds. The high Andean lakes have great pre-Columbian ceremonial significance.

Argentina has designated that country's 17th Ramsar site, bringing the area covered by the Convention there to more than 4 million ha. **Humedal Laguna Melincué** (92,000 ha) is a Multiple Use Reserve in Santa Fe province. The lagoon constitutes a wetland of regional and continental relevance, and it is of great importance for resident and migratory species. It is one of the two floodplain wetlands that support one of the most important populations of the Andean Flamingo in its winter distribution. This species is considered to be the rarest of the five flamingo species found at a global level. Among the wetland's hydrological values are the recharge of aquifers and the moderation of extreme temperatures registered in the area. The threats that negatively affect this site are related to human activities, such as livestock, agriculture, and waste water disposal.

Italy has removed one of its Ramsar sites from the Montreux Record of sites "where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur". Managers at **Stagno di Molentargius** have made substantial progress in resolving the problems for which the site was added to the Record in 1990. The site represents a complex system of ecosystem units of great nature conservation. It includes a diverse array of different habitats from freshwater basins, salt water basins, coastal areas, and a flat characterized by prevailing aridity. It was included in the Montreux Record for industrial and urban effluent, illegal dumping and poaching, coastal urban development, which destroyed important nesting sites, and eutrophication problems. Articulated rehabilitation actions have been successfully taken to recover these areas at natural conditions since then.

There are presently 158 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1,758 wetland sites, totalling 161 million ha.

CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group Meeting, Sinaloa, Mexico, 9–13 March 2009

In February 2006, shorebird biologists decided to form the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group (WHSG) during the 1st Shorebird Science in the Western Hemisphere Meeting in Boulder, Colorado. This new and exciting group represents the first time biologists have tried to study shorebirds in a comprehensive fashion from their breeding grounds in the Arctic to their wintering grounds in South America. Over 100 professionals and 70 students from ten countries in the





Western Hemisphere participated in the first meeting. The range of participants expanded greatly when the second meeting of the WHSG took place in Venezuela in May of 2007. At this time, over 50 people from 16 countries participated, including Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, Columbia, Venezuela, Suriname, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Cuba, Mexico, Australia, Canada and the United States. This announcement is for the 3rd meeting of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group which will be held in Sinaloa, Mexico.

The primary function of the WHSG is to serve as the “glue” that binds the many other shorebird initiatives together throughout the Western Hemisphere. This would include research, monitoring, site-based conservation, outreach/education and other national, regional and local initiatives. One of the principal tasks of a Western Hemisphere group is to organize and hold scientific meetings. To accomplish this, we are organizing the 3rd meeting of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group at the Hotel Playa Mazatlán in Mazatlán, Mexico between 9 and 13 March 2009. The purpose of the meeting is three-fold and includes science, management and outreach. The science agenda hopes to: 1) bring together biologists studying breeding, staging and wintering shorebirds throughout the Western Hemisphere in one location, 2) promote information sharing on methodologies and study design among biologists working on different shorebird species, 3) to promote range-wide studies of shorebirds by fostering collaborations among biologists interested in particular species, 4) integrate science into the implementation of various shorebird conservation plans, and 5) to generate enthusiasm among the shorebird community to conduct additional studies of shorebirds in the future.

To further the science component, we have planned a two-day population demographic modelling workshop led by Dr Brett Sandercock on the 7 and 8 March and a 4-day international course on avian movements and migration technology sponsored by MIGRATE (Migration Interest Group: Research Applied Toward Education) between the 16 and 19 March. We encourage people interested in shorebird management, outreach and education to use this opportunity to gain knowledge and organize symposium/give presentations at the meeting.

Travel awards will be offered to graduate students in North, Central and South America to attend the meeting and workshops. Professionals in Latin America will also be able to apply for travel support. The deadline for submission

of proposed symposia is 1 Oct 2008. Please send ideas to Stephen Brown (Sbrown@manomet.org) who is working with the Shorebird Research Group of the Americas to plan the scientific component of the meeting. Additional details of the meeting, including logistics, call for abstracts, science program, and international travel, will be posted on the US Shorebird Conservation Plan website. Sinaloa is readily accessible from the International Airport of Mazatlán. Please mark your calendars now and plan on attending. Overall coordinator for the meeting is Rick Lanctot (richard_lanctot@fws.gov, telephone: 907-786-3609), Stephen Brown is the Science Coordinator (sbrown@manomet.org, telephone: 508-224-6521) and local organizers are Xico Vega (xicovega@itesm.mx, telephone: 52-667-7166456) and Guillermo Fernández (gfernandez@ola.icmyl.unam.mx, telephone: 52-669-985-2845).

Thanks to Rick Lanctot for this item.

...AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST!

Join “Friends of the Red Knot” (FoRK) . . .

. . . and make new friends yourself! The 12-year old founders of the kids club in Baltimore, Maryland (US) heard about the plight of the Red Knot and decided to take action. They have, among other things, organized letter-writing campaigns, created educational displays, helped out on a bird-banding project, and even gave testimony at a State hearing. To learn more, go to <http://mysite.verizon.net/vzeu3rwwf/>.

Thanks to Nick Davidson for this item.

Black-winged Stilts breeding in Britain

Black-winged Stilts are usually found in southern Europe, and have only rarely been recorded breeding in Britain, most recently in 1987. They have now set up home in Neumann’s Flash in Cheshire, south of Manchester. Whether they are there to stay remains to be seen, but they have doubtlessly chosen a birdwatcher-friendly site, as Neumann’s Flash is not only wheelchair accessible, but staff and volunteers are available during visiting hours ready to answer any questions. Go to <http://www.rspb.org.uk/brilliant/sites/cheshirestilts/index.asp> for directions.

Thanks to Nick Davidson for this item.



Piping Plovers *Charadrius melodus* on the coast of Texas, USA, September 2008. Photo by H.P. Sitters.

