

The Odessa Protocol on international co-operation on migratory flyway research and conservation

The Wader Study Group Conference at Odessa, 13-17 April 1992

CONSCIOUS that birds are an international heritage and that nations along the flyways of wading bird populations share a responsibility for the conservation of these migratory birds and their habitats, as recognised in international agreements such as the Ramsar and Bonn Conventions;

AWARE that the integrity of these flyways is at risk from habitat loss, unregulated hunting pressure, pollution and other human activities, so that there is an urgent need for effective conservation actions requiring close collaboration between research and conservation workers, international, national and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, international bodies, site managers, and relevant institutions;

NOTING that very large proportions of wading bird populations using flyways breed and stopover at sites in eastern Europe and northern Asia (especially Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tadjikistan), and that many states are actively involved, nationally and internationally, in actions to conserve migratory bird populations;

WISHING to make maximum use of existing valuable but dispersed information, and noting that a most effective and economic means of collating existing data and gathering critical new data is through the co-ordinated activities of both amateur and professional researchers;

1. STRESSES the need for the production of international flyway conservation strategies for each of the wader flyways (East Atlantic, Mediterranean/Black Sea; West Asia/Africa; Central Asia/India; East Asia/Australasia), and recommends that the Wader Study Group should co-ordinate the production of such strategies;

2. UNDERLINES the importance of the identification and effective conservation of international networks of sites and areas on which these birds depend;

3. RECOMMENDS that, to allow geographical comparisons and time-series monitoring, common standards for field methodology and data collection and handling be adopted by all organisations for work on wader populations, and that close co-ordination of systems depending on data exchange, such as ringing centres and other databases, be enhanced;

4. RECOMMENDS that governments and non-governmental organisations provide resources to address present urgent needs in the study and conservation of waders in eastern Europe and northern Asia (especially Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tadjikistan) which provide the areas of breeding and non-breeding usage for a high proportion of these shared populations;

5. EMPHASISES that all countries can learn from the experience of others and recommends that those people and organisations with experience in particular aspects should assist others by:

- providing training and training materials, including publications,
- assisting in establishing compatible databases,
- arranging exchange visits,
- supporting and helping to arrange conferences,
- continuing co-ordination of colour-marking schemes,
- assisting with publication of results and raising public awareness,
- encouraging further bilateral and multilateral agreements on co-operation;

and underlines the facilitating role which the Wader Study Group and other international organisations can play in these respects;

6. RECOMMENDS that collaboration between volunteers and professionals be actively encouraged, with initial building of confidence, feedback of information, and other support;

7. RECOMMENDS that full use is made of existing relevant information, which should be made available, after being gathered by simple techniques including questionnaires, initially on aspects such as site inventories of wader habitats, information on trends in wader population sizes with time, and analyses of human activities potentially affecting these habitats;

8. RECOMMENDS that programmes of research into crucial gaps in knowledge of the biology of waders be developed by the collaboration of relevant organisations along flyway routes;

9. RECOMMENDS that all states along Wader flyways sign and implement relevant international agreements;

10. CONGRATULATES the State University of Odessa and the Ukrainian Ornithological Society for their initiative in hosting the international conference and so facilitating future international collaboration on wader research and conservation.

The Wader Study Group Conference on Migration and International Conservation of Waders, held at Odessa, Ukraine, 13-17 April 1992, was attended by 79 participants from 13 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America), with further contributions from Canada, Denmark, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

THE FLYWAY CONCEPT

A 'flyway' is a concept developed to describe areas of the world used by migratory animals such as waders. Flyways can be defined as the migration route(s) and areas used by wader populations in moving between their breeding and wintering grounds. Each wader species and population migrates in a different way and uses a different suite of breeding, migration staging and wintering sites. Hence a single flyway is composed of many overlapping migration systems of individual wader populations and species, each of which has different habitat preferences and migration strategies. From knowledge of these various migration systems it is possible to group the migration routes used by waders into broad flyways, each of which is used by many species, often in a similar way, during their annual migrations.

There are no hard and fast separations between flyways, and their use is not intended to imply any major biological significance. Rather the use of the flyway concept is valuable for the convenience of its approach in permitting the biology and conservation of waders, as with other migratory species to be considered in broad geographical units into which the migrations of species and populations can be more or less readily grouped.

Recent research into the migrations of many wader species throughout Europe and Asia indicates that in this part of the world the migrations of waders can broadly be grouped into five flyways: from west to east (see Figure) being the East Atlantic Flyway, the Mediterranean/Black Sea Flyway, the West Asia/Africa Flyway, the Central Asia/ India Flyway, and the East Asia/Australasia Flyway.

