

Extract only - complete publication at www.jncc.gov.uk/worldwaterbirds

Waterbirds around the world

A global overview of the conservation,
management and research of the
world's waterbird flyways

Edited by G.C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith and D.A. Stroud

*Assisted by L.K. Bridge, I. Colquhoun, D.A. Scott,
D.B.A. Thompson and L.G. Underhill*



landbouw, natuur en
voedselkwaliteit



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



EDINBURGH, UK: THE STATIONERY OFFICE

© Scottish Natural Heritage 2006

First published in 2006 by The Stationery Office Limited
71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9AZ, UK.

Applications for reproduction should be made to Scottish Natural Heritage,
Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW, UK.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 11 497333 4

Recommended citation:

Boere, G.C., Galbraith, C.A. & Stroud, D.A. (eds). 2006.
Waterbirds around the world. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK. 960 pp.

Names used for geographical entities do not imply recognition, by the organisers of the *Waterbirds around the world* conference or other supporting organisations or governments, of the political status or boundaries of any particular territory. Names of territories used (and any alternatives) are included solely to help users of this publication apply information contained within this volume for waterbird conservation purposes. The views expressed in papers included within this volume do not necessarily represent views of the editors or the organisations and governments that supported the conference and this publication.

Cover photography: Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* arriving at Martin Mere, England. Photo: Paul Marshall.
(www.paulmarshallphotography.com)

Copyright of all photographs used in this publication resides with the named photographers.

5.2 Declining waterbirds: problems, processes and sites. Workshop Introduction

David A. Stroud

Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY, UK. (email: DavidStroud@jncc.gov.uk)

Stroud, D.A. 2006. Declining waterbirds: problems, processes and sites. Workshop Introduction. *Waterbirds around the world*. Eds. G.C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith & D.A. Stroud. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK. pp. 641-642.



The globally threatened Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* is in rapid decline for reasons that are not understood. The destruction and degradation of key sites on its East Asian flyway, especially in the Yellow Sea, will further impact on the species. Photo: Christoph Zöckler.

The status of many waterbird populations is poor, with major declines reported for many taxa, in many parts of the world as reported by many studies throughout this volume. Habitat loss and degradation remains the principle driver for these declines, although many other factors are significant, including the impact of over-exploitation as noted for geese by Syroechkovskiy in East Asia. For long-distant migrants, the ecological quality of major staging areas appears to be of key importance in sustaining populations. This has been noted especially for long-distance migrant waders (e.g. Barter, Syroechkovskiy and Stroud *et al.*).

The workshop reviewed the status of waterbirds and explored the processes underlying current observed declines. In particular, it considered issues at a number of ‘mega-sites’ which have been implicated as causes of declines of migrant waterbirds in those areas.

Whilst much conservation attention has been focused on the needs of migratory species — the subject of several international legal instruments concerning their conservation — a high proportion of globally or near threatened waterbird species are sedentary. Some of these species are much more poorly known and have a significantly worse conservation status than migrants. Evaluation

of their current status suggests these species should receive urgent priority conservation attention, especially in light of the absence of international structures (such as, for example, the Convention on Migratory Species) to promote their conservation.

Of particular conservation concern is the declining environmental status of several key staging areas (such as inter-tidal wetlands of the Yellow Sea described by Barter), which provide energetic spring-boards for long-distance migrants. The degradation of these areas compromises the status of many migrant waders and other waterbirds. The rapid collapse of populations, forced below threshold levels, has been predicted theoretically, and now appears to be occurring in a number of rapidly declining populations. Baker describes the genetic and ecological consequences of small population sizes in waders — issues of significance to other waterbird taxa also.

Conservation responses must urgently address causes of wetland loss and degradation, as well as enhancing monitoring and research so as better to inform appropriate conservation policies. National and international strategies and conservation instruments have scope to help, but need to be much more strategic in their implementation so as to address root causes.



The completion of the 33 km seawall at Saemangeum in South Korea will destroy 40 100 ha of tidal-flat and shallows - an estuarine system which on present knowledge is the most important wader site in the whole of the Yellow Sea, supporting internationally important numbers of at least 17 species of waders (including several globally threatened species). Photo: Mark Barter.

A range of actions are desirable:

- There is urgent need for more and better population monitoring. As a minimum, adequately funded national monitoring programmes are required. The International Waterbird Census co-ordinated by Wetlands International offers an effective framework within which such monitoring can be organised.
- Internationally co-ordinated programmes should be developed to assess waterbird productivity and survival. This information would aid in the development of more focussed and cost-effective conservation responses. Interpretation of

multiple information sources and especially spatial data is greatly helped by Geographic Information Systems.

- The application of IUCN Red-list criteria at subspecies/population level should be encouraged to highlight the conservation status of individual biogeographic populations. This information is especially valuable in the context of listings under various international treaties.
- Further comparative analyses, using existing data and information, of waterbird status in different regions and flyways should be undertaken.
- The status of waterbirds worldwide should continue to be reviewed with the aim of continuing to provide technical advice to international conventions and other organisations as to those populations which should receive major attention with respect to their conservation, monitoring and research.

World leaders at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, in 2002, established a target of “a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity” by 2010. The declines reported in from all over the world suggest that, for many groups of waterbirds, it will be extremely challenging to achieve these targets without major changes to economic processes and the attitudes of society.

World leaders noted that to achieve this target “will require the provision of new and additional financial and technical resources to developing countries”. It was noted also that at a minimum, significantly greater investment is urgently needed not only in developing countries, but also in developed nations. This is required to establish and maintain national monitoring schemes, as well as to understand the causes of population declines so that appropriate, targeted conservation responses may be made.



The rapid collapse of waterbird populations has been predicted theoretically and now appears to be occurring in a number of rapidly declining populations, including that of the Nearctic Red Knot *Calidris canutus rufa*. Photo: Rob Robinson.