

Extract only - complete publication at [www.jncc.gov.uk/worldwaterbirds](http://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](http://www.paulmarshallphotography.com))

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

## The Wetlands International Waterbird Harvest Specialist Group: challenges and objectives

Gilles Deplanque<sup>1</sup> & Tunde Ojei<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ANCGE c/o OMPO, 5 avenue des Chasseurs, 75017 Paris, France. (email: gillesdeplanque@nordnet.fr)

<sup>2</sup>Capacity Building Officer, Wetlands International, PO Box 471, 6700 AA Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Deplanque, G. & Ojei, T. 2006. The Wetlands International Waterbird Harvest Specialist Group: challenges and objectives. *Waterbirds around the world*. Eds. G.C. Boere, C.A. Galbraith & D.A. Stroud. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh, UK. pp. 874-875.

An IWRB “Hunting Research Group” was originally established in 1969, and was subsequently renamed the Wetlands International “Waterbird Hunting Specialist Group”. However, for a number of reasons, not least the reluctance of the hunting world to provide information on the size and composition of hunting bags, since the mid-1990s the group found it increasingly difficult to operate effectively so as to contribute assessment of patterns of waterbird hunting in different parts of the world.

In 2001, Wetlands International and other relevant bodies including OMPO - Migratory Birds of Western Palearctic and other organisations concerned with waterbird harvesting reviewed the situation, and agreed to redevelop the Specialist Group. The Group has now been renamed the “Waterbird Harvest Specialist Group” (WHSG), in recognition of a widened scope that now covers other forms of waterbird harvest beyond direct hunting harvest. Its overall objectives are:

- i. to use waterbird harvest data to improve population estimates of waterbird species which are too widespread and dispersed for estimates to be made from site-based censuses such as the International Waterbird Census; and
- ii. to assess the hunting pressure on huntable waterbird populations, so as to establish whether or not it is sustainable.

Concerning objective i., waterbird harvest data has already been used to improve the biogeographic population estimates for some waterbird species, notably for Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* in Europe which has led to a major correction to previous underestimates in the latest editions of Wetlands International’s *Waterbird Population Estimates*.

The Group’s working basis is that sustainable use is the harvesting, whatever its nature, of a species with due consideration for its conservation status, whether its demographic trend is



Teal *Anas crecca* decoys. Photo: Else Ammentorp, Danmarks Jægerforbund/Danish Hunters Association.

stable or increasing. To better understand and assess the extent of sustainability of waterbird harvests there is a need to combine and compare different parameters such as population estimate, productivity rate, natural mortality, hunting harvest assessment, other human harvest and other human causes of mortality.

The new Group held its first meeting during the Edinburgh Global Flyways Conference, and identified three initial challenges in developing its work. These are: defining the Group’s scope of activity within the field of waterbird harvests; developing a strong global network with a good balance between developed and developing countries; and defining a strategy, objectives and priorities for developing work on the different aspects of the Group’s scope.

### The Harvest Group’s scope of activity

The Group’s work will cover:

- i. Waterbird harvests by hunting and hunting trade exploitation;
- ii. Intentional non-hunting waterbird harvests for food or trade purposes; and
- iii. Unintentional waterbird harvests (anthropogenic mortality) which are directly caused by other human activities such as marine oil pollution, all types of collisions (wires, land and air transportation, glass-facades of buildings, installation of wind turbines on migratory corridors etc.), various poisoning (hunting lead, agricultural pesticides or insecticides), proliferation and straying of pets, and introduced predators (especially cats).

The Harvest Group will not be dealing with indirect waterbird mortality or disappearance resulting from human activities such as wetland degradation, urbanisation and coastal development.

### Establishing a global network

A strong membership network of motivated and competent people in each of the three main areas of the Group’s scope, and good regional spread of expertise and activity, will be crucial for the group to be meet its objectives. The initial membership of the Group was over 30 people from 21 countries and several continents, and this has now grown and widened following the discussions at the Global Flyways Conference. However, there remains a gap in good regional coverage, with most of the membership still being European-based.

### Defining a strategy, objectives and priorities

The Group recognises that there is a real need for better knowledge of hunting harvests on waterbird species. The majority of the Group’s members have expertise in this aspect of waterbird harvest: many are members of hunting societies while others live in communities where waterbirds are hunted for food. Although waterbird hunting assessment will therefore be a strong priority for the Group, other harvest sectors will not be neglected.

### Waterbird hunting harvests

On the basis of available data, some countries monitor, or seek to monitor, the waterbird hunting harvests, but on the whole the effort is inconsistent: some countries have harvest monitoring schemes for all hunted waterbirds, but others monitoring only for particular species (e.g. Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* or Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*) or have data only by species group (e.g. geese, ducks, sea ducks, waders). In addition, the methods used for the monitoring also differ greatly between countries for technical, cultural or sometimes political reasons.

The Group identified the major potential for comparing the results of different monitoring methods as a way forwards to avoid long debates about the use and accuracy of different methodologies. For example, in France two different monitoring methods, exhaustive and statistical, have been applied simultaneously for Jack Snipe. Both methods provided the same result, with an estimate of a little less than 50 000 birds harvested annually. Such similarity is quite remarkable, and such comparisons suggest that at least in some cases, the results of different methods used in different countries may be comparable. This will be helpful in compiling multi-county harvest assessments, since some countries have long-established methods which they do not wish to change. It may also be helpful in recommending appropriate methodologies to countries which do not yet undertake harvest monitoring.

The key approach, regardless of what method is used, is to collect the data at the species level. This is essential so as to

allow for comparisons between species, to use the results in improving waterbird population estimates, and to use the data in assessments of sustainable use.

### Intentional non-hunting harvests

This aspect of the group's work will focus on:

- i. Estimates of seabird harvest from fishery activities (nets and long-lines); and
- ii. An awareness campaign aimed at public authorities, through providing mortality or productivity decrease estimates resulting from lead-shot and lead-weights from fishing in wetlands; and recommending, without delay, further research effort on substitute materials.

### Unintentional harvests directly linked to human activities

Here the priority will be to assess the anthropogenic mortality of seabirds from oil-spills, both from shipwrecks, and from dumping of oil at sea which is believed to cause heavy annual mortality of seabirds, as the basis for encouraging the reinforcement of security norms and international controls, especially for degraded ships.

All those involved in waterbird harvest assessment worldwide are encouraged to join the WHSG, so as to strengthen and broaden its capacity to undertake its priority work.



As well as exploring direct harvests, the Harvest Specialist Group will also review unintentional waterbird mortality as a result of collisions with man-made structures such as wind-turbines. Photo: Tom Stroud.