

## NOVE KNJIGE

### New books

DELANY, S., SCOTT, D., DODMAN, T. & STROUD, D. (2009): **An Atlas of Wader Populations in Africa and Western Eurasia**. – Wetlands International. pp 524.

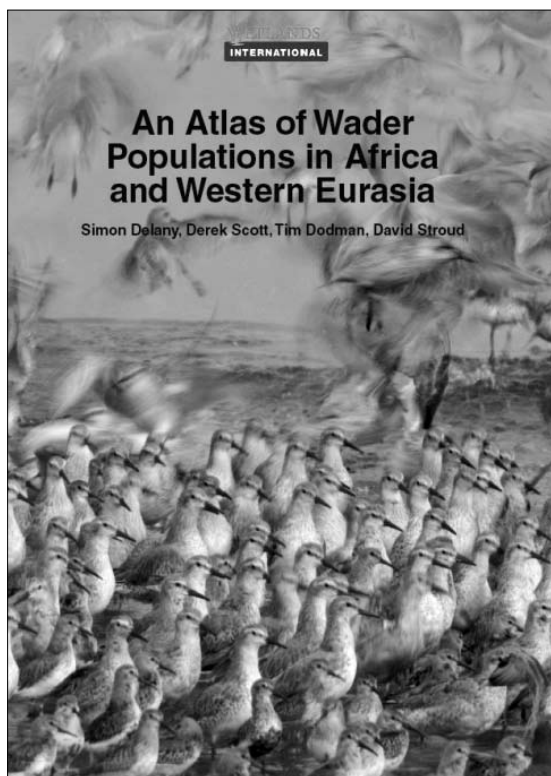
#### »The Wader Atlas« – International cooperation in bird conservation really pays off

A book launched on 20 May 2009 by Wetlands International demonstrates the need for international cooperation if we want to conserve birds, the most mobile of all animals, and shows the effectiveness of this cooperation when it is enthusiastically and effectively implemented.

*An Atlas of Wader Populations in Africa and Western Eurasia*, to give the book its full title, is a result of hundreds of thousands of hours of fieldwork by observers, most of whom are volunteer birdwatchers, who count waterbirds because they find it enjoyable and rewarding, and who send their count data to Wetlands International, who analyse and interpret them in forms such as this beautiful book. The book rewards the observers by putting their local efforts into an international context, but its usefulness goes far beyond that.

Waders are among the most migratory of all birds. This book shows that some species such as the Ruff and the Ringed Plover, may migrate from the furthest eastern extremity of arctic Russia to Southern Africa and back every year. These incredible journeys are very stressful, and in order to survive them, the birds need networks of high-quality sites, which may be thousands of kilometers apart, to rest and refuel undisturbed. Damage to or loss of just one of these critical sites can reduce the survival of the birds in the same way as the damage or destruction of a single link destroys the integrity of a chain.

It has long been recognized that protection of these remarkable birds and their wetland habitats needs an internationally agreed framework, and international treaties such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) under the United Nations Convention on Migratory Species are used by signatory governments for this purpose. These treaties require scientific information to act as the basis of the



policies they implement, and products such as the Wader Atlas are prepared with this need in mind.

One of the principal findings of the book is that the sites needed by these birds have very variable levels of protection in different parts of the region covered. Site and habitat protection in Europe is relatively comprehensive and effective, due to a number of factors including European legislation, under which many sites are protected by the Birds and Habitats Directives. In Africa and the Middle East, protection is much more haphazard and there are fewer protected sites overall.

The Atlas reveals that the site holding the highest number of wader species in internationally important numbers (an officially recognised category under which any site which hosts 1% or more of a population qualifies as being internationally important) is relatively unknown and hitherto unrecognized. This site is Barral Hikman in Oman, where 18 wader species have been recorded in internationally important numbers since 1990. The Dutch-German-Danish Wadden Sea, the largest inter-tidal area in Europe, holds the highest number of waders overall – in some seasons more than 4 million – and has recorded 17 species in internationally important numbers. The Sivash Gulf



on the Sea of Azov in Ukraine has also recorded 17 species at this level, the Rhine-Maas-Scheldt delta in The Netherlands 16, and the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania, 15.

This book puts the conservation of the 90 species of wader found in Africa, the Middle East and Europe on a much firmer footing. Policy makers at national and international level now have a much better idea of which sites and species are most in need of the limited resources available for this work. Nature conservation organizations and site managers are likewise better informed. And the birdwatchers whose efforts form the basis of much of the book know that they are making a difference to the survival of the birds and places that they value so highly.

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