

THE PRESENT STATE AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE PROJECT “TRINGA GLAREOLA 2000”*

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INTRODUCTION

The Wood Sandpiper is a common and widespread migrant over Europe and Africa, both on spring and autumn passage. However, only its movements over Western Europe have been investigated in detail, eastern migration routes are known only at the basic level (e.g. Myhrberg 1961, Viksne and Mikhelson 1985). The knowledge on its inland migrations over the remaining regions of Europe is deficient and fragmentary, as the species has been studied only locally. Thus, the international research project “Tringa glareola 2000” has been established in order to enhance and coordinate international studies on migrations of the Wood Sandpiper. In particular, such aspects of spring and autumn passage as flyways and wintering areas of populations, migration phenology and dynamics, migration speed and energetics, have been addressed. The project has been conducted since spring 1997 by the Waterbird Research Group KULING, under auspices of the Wader Study Group. In five years (till 2002) the project coverage has expanded from 2 to 37 sites of Wood Sandpiper's numerous occurrence in 26 countries – 17 in Europe, 7 in Africa, and 1 in Asia (Fig. 1). In 29 of these sites studies on the Wood Sandpiper have been conducted in the years of the project (and in few cases – also in preceding seasons), for 8 sites archive data will be provided.

METHODS AND RESULTS

Movements of Wood Sandpipers are studied by two main methods – catching and counts, supported by observations from sites of the species concentrations. Below, the methods, the material collected in years 1997-2001 and the preliminary results are presented.

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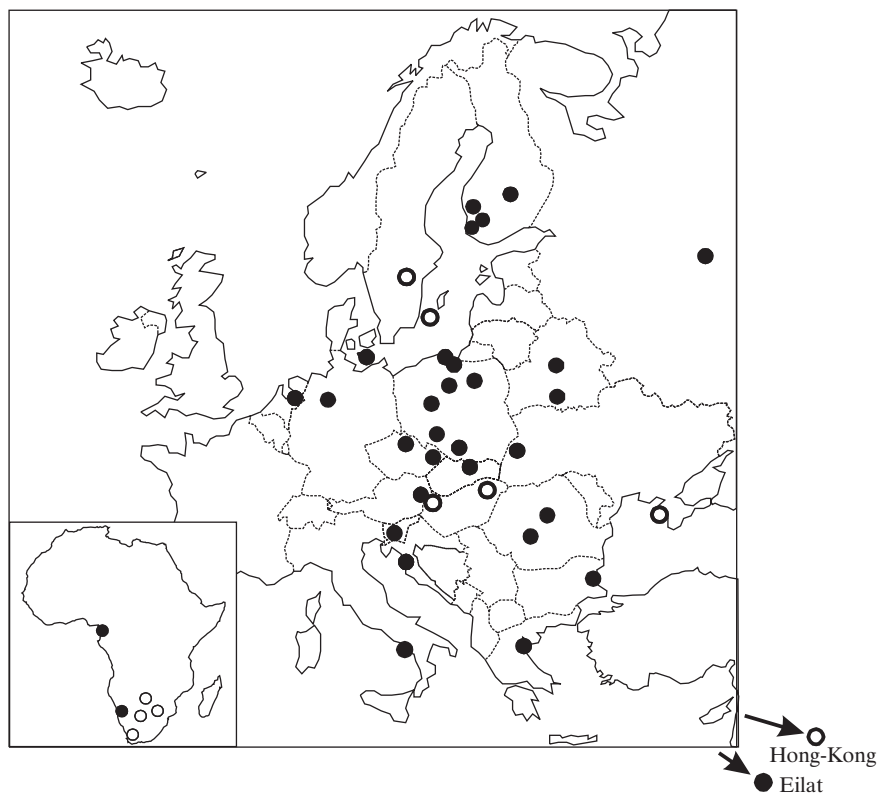


Fig. 1. Sites participating in the project "Tringa glareola 2000". Black circles – sites working in years of the project (1997-2001), open circles – sites for which archive data will be provided.

Ringling

In years 1997-2001, Wood Sandpipers were trapped and ringed altogether at 18 ringing sites; material from earlier years from 8 additional ringing stations will be provided (Fig. 2). In years 1999-2001, catching was performed in spring simultaneously at 2, and in autumn – at 12 stable localities. Apart from ringing with standard metal rings, Wood Sandpipers were colour-marked, in order to increase the recovery rate. A combination of 4 colour rings (2 at each leg over the tarsal joint), that can be read by an observer with a telescope or even a binocular, indicates the locality and the period of ringing. Colour ringing was applied widest in 2001, when in spring birds were marked at 3 ringing stations, and in autumn season – at 12 stations (Fig. 2). Till the end of the spring 2001, 1784 Wood Sandpipers were colour-marked and they gave 17 resightings (Fig. 3). Thus, the recovery rate obtained with this method is at *ca* 1% level, similar to earlier results of the project (Remisiewicz 1998). Recoveries from the spring season – poorly represented in results from traditional ringing (Myhrberg 1961, Meissner 1997) but predominating among colour-ringed birds' resightings (Fig. 3) – are of special interest. The concentration of re-

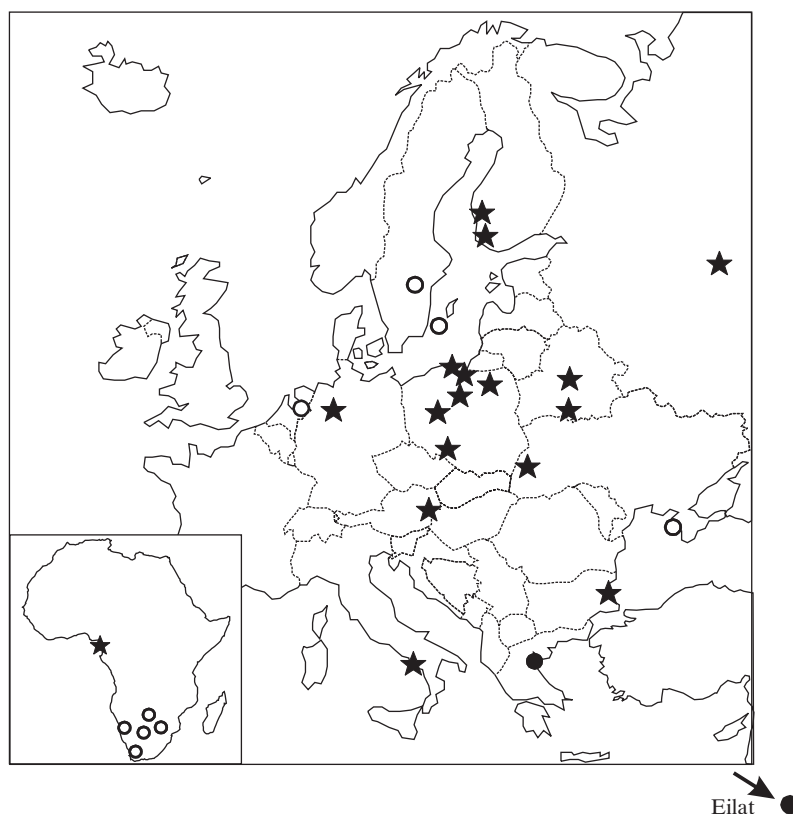


Fig. 2. Ringing stations working within the project “*Tringa glareola* 2000”. Black symbols – ringing stations working in years of the project (1997-2001): asterisks – stations where Wood Sandpipers were colour-marked in 2001, circles – stations where Wood Sandpipers were ringed in previous years; open circles – ringing stations for which archive data will be provided.

cords in central and eastern Germany and a single record from Sicily of birds ringed in autumn in the Gulf of Gdańsk region suggest two routes of their return from wintering grounds. A few, but conspicuous, records of birds ringed in spring 1998 in Napoli region (Italy) – and recovered in early spring (9 March 2001) in Burkina Faso, in migration peak (30 April 2000) in Czech Republic, and in late spring (28 May 1998) in breeding grounds in Finland – seem to reflect the course of passage along one of the routes. Also the record of a Wood Sandpiper colour-marked in Hohenau-March (Austria) on autumn migration in 2000 and observed the next autumn in the same site, is notable. Despite initial doubts, whether the rings will be visible in a species using wet meadows as stopover habitat, the method of colour ringing proved useful. In high grass it is indeed difficult to spot even flash-colour rings, but the majority of resightings came from more open areas as banks of fish-ponds or lakes, also used by the Wood Sandpiper as stopover sites.

At the majority of the ringing stations, biometric measurements were taken from trapped Wood Sandpipers – at almost all sites wing length, total head length,

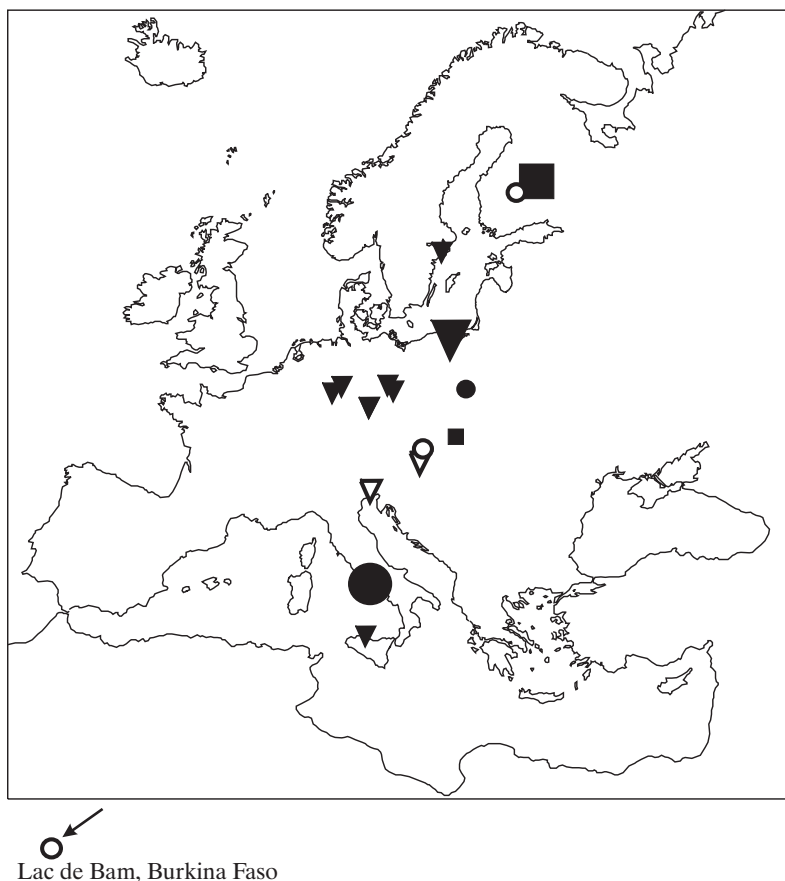


Fig. 3. Long-distance resightings of Wood Sandpipers colour-marked within the project “*Tringa glareola* 2000”. Corresponding symbols mark the stations (large symbols) and resightings of birds ringed at these stations (small symbols): triangles – the Gulf of Gdansk region (Poland), circles – Pericarole (Napoli, Italy), squares – Sappi Bird Ringing Station (Finland); black small symbols – spring records, open small symbols – autumn records.

bill length and tarsus (or tarsus+toe) length were measured and birds were weighed. Since 1999, the fat score has been also checked at several stations according to the scale of Scebba and Moschetti (in press).

Regular counts

In the years of the project, regular counts have been conducted during spring migration season – in 8 sites, and during autumn – in 20 sites (Fig. 4). These data will be complemented by long-term series of data, reaching the 1960s and the 1970s, from Germany, Austria and Finland. The frequency of counts differed among sites, thus special concern will be required while analysing this material.

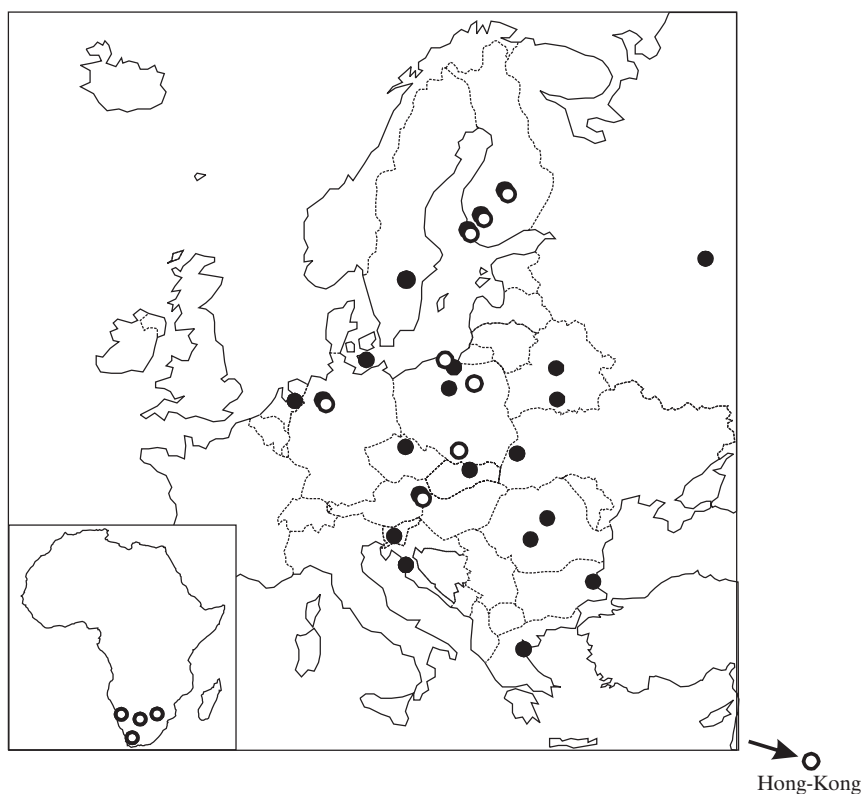


Fig. 4. Sites covered with counts of migrating Wood Sandpipers within the project "Tringa glareola 2000". Open circles – spring migration counts, black circles – autumn migration counts.

Observations

Frequent controls and observations of flocks of migrating Wood Sandpipers provided by birdwatchers from different regions of Europe, supplement the data obtained by the described methods. Greater attention paid by observers to the species since the project was widely announced has resulted in resightings of colour-marked birds. The material collected during WIWO (Foundation Working Group International Wader and Waterfowl Research) expeditions to Africa and South-Eastern Europe, kindly provided from the International Wader Database, gives an additional information on sites of birds' concentration.

ORGANISATIONAL STAGE OF THE PROJECT

The fieldwork has been conducted for own funds of project participants. Colour rings, according to the scheme coordinated by the author, were provided to the majority of ringing stations within the research grant of the University of Gdańsk (Poland); few stations financed colour rings on their own.

In years 1997-2001, the project has been promoted by 12 notes and progress reports published in ornithological journals in 8 languages and yearly reported at the Wader Study Group Annual Meeting. Information on the project has been also available at 3 WebSites in Polish, English and German; details are presented in English at WRG KULING WebSite: www.free.ngo.pl/kuling.

On 21-22 December 1998, the 1st Workshop of the project was held in Gdynia (Poland) and proceedings of that meeting were issued in "The Ring" no 20, 1-2 (1998). The 2nd Workshop, financially supported by the University of Gdańsk, took place on 8-9 December 2001 and the present issue follows that event.

PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

The collecting of field data within the project is planned till the end of the autumn season 2002. Afterwards, all the available material will be analysed together by topic groups of project participants. At the 2nd Workshop of the project, teams that will work on migration dynamics, ringing recoveries and energetic aspects of Wood Sandpiper migration were preliminary established. The results of the research are to be published in 2005 as an issue of International Wader Studies dedicated to Wood Sandpiper migration. The 3rd Workshop of the project "Tringa glareola 2000", aimed to coordinate work on that publication, will be a part of the Wader Study Group Annual Meeting on 4-7 October 2002 at Hel (Poland). Despite termination of the fieldwork focused on Wood Sandpiper migration, a well-cooperating international network of wader ringing stations and monitored sites has been established, giving a great potential for future research on movements of that or another wader species.

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