



WIWO: AN INITIATIVE-SUPPORTING ORGANISATION OF VOLUNTEERS

The Working Group on International Wader and Waterfowl Research (WIWO) supports volunteer ornithologists interested in studying waterbirds in countries with little own potential for such studies. WIWO functions as an intermediary by providing people planning waterbird studies abroad with assistance and guidance in logistics and applications for funding. Which research topics are taken up primarily depends on the interest and available time and resources of the volunteers. Since 1983 more than 100 projects have been carried out

WIWO'S MISSION

1. To stimulate, initiate and execute wader, waterbird and wetland research
2. To transfer knowledge of wetlands and wetland bird populations.

These aims include a great variety of worldwide research activities on any species of waterbird. However, the focus is on migratory waterbirds within the East Atlantic Flyway due to practical considerations. The range of WIWO's activities can be described as ***'studies on waterbirds worldwide, with special attention to migratory species in wetlands in the Afro-Palaeartic migration system'***.

NO ROADS, ONLY DIRECTIONS

WIWO's Forward Plan (www.wiwo.org), provides a framework for guiding initiatives for future projects and background information for funding organisations. It identifies major gaps in our knowledge of distribution, life cycle and population dynamics of migratory waterbirds and reviews projects to provoke new volunteer initiatives. Detailed planning of future activities at the project level is undesirable and unrealistic for a strong volunteer participation. Therefore, the Forward Plan does not contain planned projects, but summarises current knowledge of distribution and movements of migratory waterbirds and resources and limitations involved. Subsequently, priorities were identified which are necessary information for effective management of waterbirds and wetlands.

ORGANISATION AND WORKING METHODS

WIWO supports volunteer initiatives to realise its aims. The basis of the organisation is formed by a large group of volunteers, mainly scientifically trained biologists but also many dedicated amateurs, initiating, organising, carrying out and reporting on research projects. The board stimulates initiatives, provides guidance and practical assistance in the logistics of project organisation, maintains quality standards and acquires funding. Projects are adopted by WIWO after evaluation of a written project proposal and a board member is appointed as contact person.

Project proposals are reviewed with respect to feasibility, scientific importance, and volunteer character. Volunteers generally invest in the organisation and execution of projects large amounts of time and, in many cases, also money. Although most projects are initiated from the WIWO-network, many are carried out in co-operation with other organisations such as Wetlands International, BirdLife International or organisations in the countries involved. Permissions and visas needed for research from the local authorities should be arranged well in advance. Counterparts from institutions and universities are invited to participate in the projects. Projects often include one or two lines of research (see next page).





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Census work, basically consists of counting waterbirds in wetland areas. For population identification, catching and ringing of birds is an important source of information, such as recoveries linking breeding and wintering areas or different stopover sites, and biometric data which can be used to identify birds from different breeding populations.

Migration ecology, the study of feeding ecology and physiological constraints of migratory birds, is as important to conservation as census work. For migratory birds, critical conditions for population survival may occur during the annual cycle, and along the migratory routes. Conditions in one stage of the annual cycle may influence what happens elsewhere. Successful conservation policy requires knowledge of factors limiting a bird's performance during all stages of the annual cycle. This type of work is usually carried out in co-operation with professionals and facilities of scientific institutions.

CONSERVATION

WIWO projects collect scientific information. Conservation and management actions are better dealt with by local or international governmental and non-governmental organisations. However, the WIWO-reports based on the research activities provide much relevant information on the importance, threats and conservation needs of wetland areas. These reports have led to practical conservation actions in several cases and are cited in many publications on waterbird and wetland conservation.

COUNTERPARTS

WIWO transfers information and skills critical for conservation through contacts and co-operation with authorities, universities and private organisations in the countries visited, and the invitation of local counterparts to participate in the projects. No special training is provided for counterparts, but by participating, they become familiar with research techniques and problems, as well as the areas studied and the threats they face. Crucial in this co-operation is the enthusiasm that is transferred by working together in often-difficult conditions. This cannot be replaced by any indoor course or training! WIWO activities have produced lasting local research and conservation spin-offs in Iran, Mauritania, Oman, Tunisia,

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