

BOOK:



'Homeward Bound: Problems Waders Face When Migrating from the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, to their Northern Breeding Grounds in Spring'. Editors Ens, B. J., Piersma, T., Wolff, W. J. and Zwarts, L. Den Berg, Texel: Foundation Working Group for International Wader and Waterfowl Research (WIWO), Research Institute for Nature Management (RIN). pp 364.

The 23 papers in this book synthesize the results of a series of Dutch expeditions during the 1980s to the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, in west Africa. The papers also form a special issue of Ardea (Volume 78, 1990), the journal of the Netherlands Ornithologists' Union.

The number of waders spending the northern winter along the east Atlantic flyway (the west coast of Europe and Africa from the Arctic Circle to South Africa) is about seven million. As pointed out in the introductory paper in the book, this is a small number in human terms. Of these, about two million winter at the Banc d'Arguin which, at about 20°N, is just inside the northern tropic. (The wetlands at Walvis Bay Lagoon and Sandwich Harbour are the southern analogues, on the edge of the Namib!).

Besides the Introduction by the Editors, the papers are arranged in five sections: What makes the Banc d'Arguin attractive for waders? (six papers); Description of migration patterns in space and time (five papers); Migratory behaviour (two papers); How to acquire the nutrient reserves necessary for migration (six papers) and Providing energy budgets for migration schemes (three papers).

There are no papers that are 'data dumps'; the Dutch expeditions to Mauritania have published their basic findings in a long series of reports and papers. Here we are presented with a synthesis of the findings over the years, carefully compared with research to the north and to the south.

The book is a must for waderologists. Besides the factual data for a specific wetland in the context of its international importance, there is a wealth of information that has universal relevance. I like the clear descriptions of fieldwork techniques, many of which could be applied at southern African wetlands.

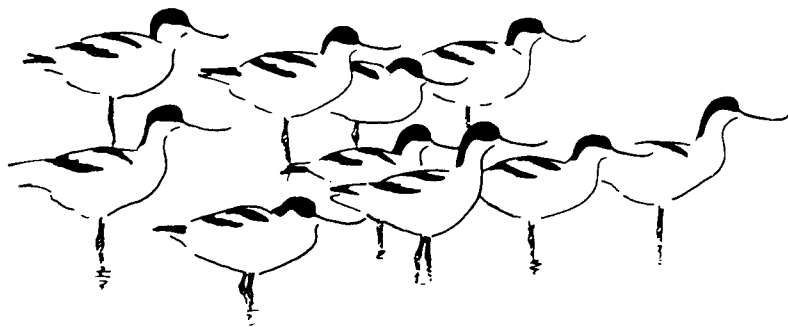
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L. G. Underhill



(drawing Jos Zwarts)