

# Wildfowl 63

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**Associate Editor**

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**Photograph:** Spotted Crake, by Do Van Dijck/Minden Pictures/FLPA.

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## ***Wildfowl* 63: Editorial**

The year 2013 has been a particularly busy one for *Wildfowl*. Two volumes of the journal have been published – not only this standard issue (*Wildfowl* 63), but also a special issue on Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* (*Wildfowl* Special Issue No. 3), which draws together papers on a range of Brent Goose subspecies and populations presented at the 15th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group, held at Arcachon, France, in January 2013. Additionally, much work has gone into preparing electronic copies of the entire *Wildfowl* back catalogue, and I am delighted to report that pdf files for all papers published from 1948 onwards are now available for reading and downloading on the Open Journal System (OJS), accessible via the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) website at [www.wwt.org.uk/wildfowl-journal](http://www.wwt.org.uk/wildfowl-journal). This greatly facilitates dissemination of the results of studies published in the journal over the decades, as the papers can now be found not only by visiting the websites but through search engines such as GoogleScholar. It is particularly pleasing to have the early volumes stored for posterity as these, then known as the *Severn Wildfowl Trust Annual Reports*, serve to describe the history of the WWT. Equally importantly, electronic *Wildfowl* should help to improve access to recent publications, including papers in the current issues, making the authors' work even more widely known. Immense thanks are due to Christine Orchard, a volunteer at WWT, for her sterling work and expertise in scanning the printed editions of *Wildfowl* and for using OCR (optical character recognition) software to make each of the papers searchable. That these papers are now available is also thanks to the efforts of my colleague Robin Jones, who not only set up but developed and improved the look of the *Wildfowl* pages on the OJS website, and most importantly added all the titles, authors, abstracts and pdfs of papers onto the system.

The current issue, *Wildfowl* 63, is a relatively slim volume but I think of high quality and interest. The review of Madagascar's endemic wildfowl is not only timely, with the increased focus on these little-known, endangered species in recent years, but it provides useful insights into the development of knowledge and conservation of these birds. Observations made by Russian scientists of Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* breeding on Kolguev Island since the 1980s give a fresh understanding of the colonisation of new high-arctic nesting areas by the geese, whilst the study of Barnacle Geese from a recently established breeding colony in the Netherlands illustrates how new populations develop. Preliminary results are also presented from a study of the secretive Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, a stocky Starling-sized bird which tends to skulk in thick cover, but which has a noisy whiplash-like *hwuit, hwuit* call during the breeding season. Counts made of calling males, combined with tracking of radio-tagged birds to follow the movements of individuals caught and fitted with these devices, are providing valuable information on habitat use by the crakes at a restored wetland in Denmark.

In January 2013, we were saddened to hear of the death of Prof Geoffrey Matthews, who for many years was Director of Research and Conservation at WWT, and editor of this journal. Tributes to Geoffrey's impressive and influential career have been published in the

national press (the *Guardian*, *Telegraph* and *Times*), in other ornithological journals, and on the websites of the Ramsar Bureau, the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), Wetlands International and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. So here we dwell on his long service to *Wildfowl*, which he edited to an incredibly high standard for 21 years. He took on the role of editor for *Wildfowl* 19 in 1968, with Malcolm Ogilvie as co-editor, and continued overseeing the journal up to and including *Wildfowl* 39 in 1988, the year in which he retired. Prior to Geoffrey becoming editor, the journal was published as the *Wildfowl Trust Annual Report* and was divided into two parts: an account of the Trust's activities for its Members, and scientific papers on various aspects of wildfowl biology. The name changed to *Wildfowl* in 1968, the thinking behind the change (as described by Geoffrey and Malcolm in the editorial at the time) being that the journal should focus on the study and conservation of wildfowl (without "annual report" aspects included), in which case a title was required that reflected its contents more accurately. By this stage *Wildfowl* was already established, regularly publishing papers on the biology and conservation of ducks, geese and swans by authors other than Wildfowl Trust staff, but under Geoffrey's stewardship it became an acknowledged highly-rated international publication, attracting papers from leading researchers of the day. An overview of *Wildfowl* volumes 19–39 indicates that an impressive *c.* 420 papers were reviewed, edited and published during this time, excluding progress reports from the Trusts' various research programmes. Moreover, in addition to his editorial responsibilities and his



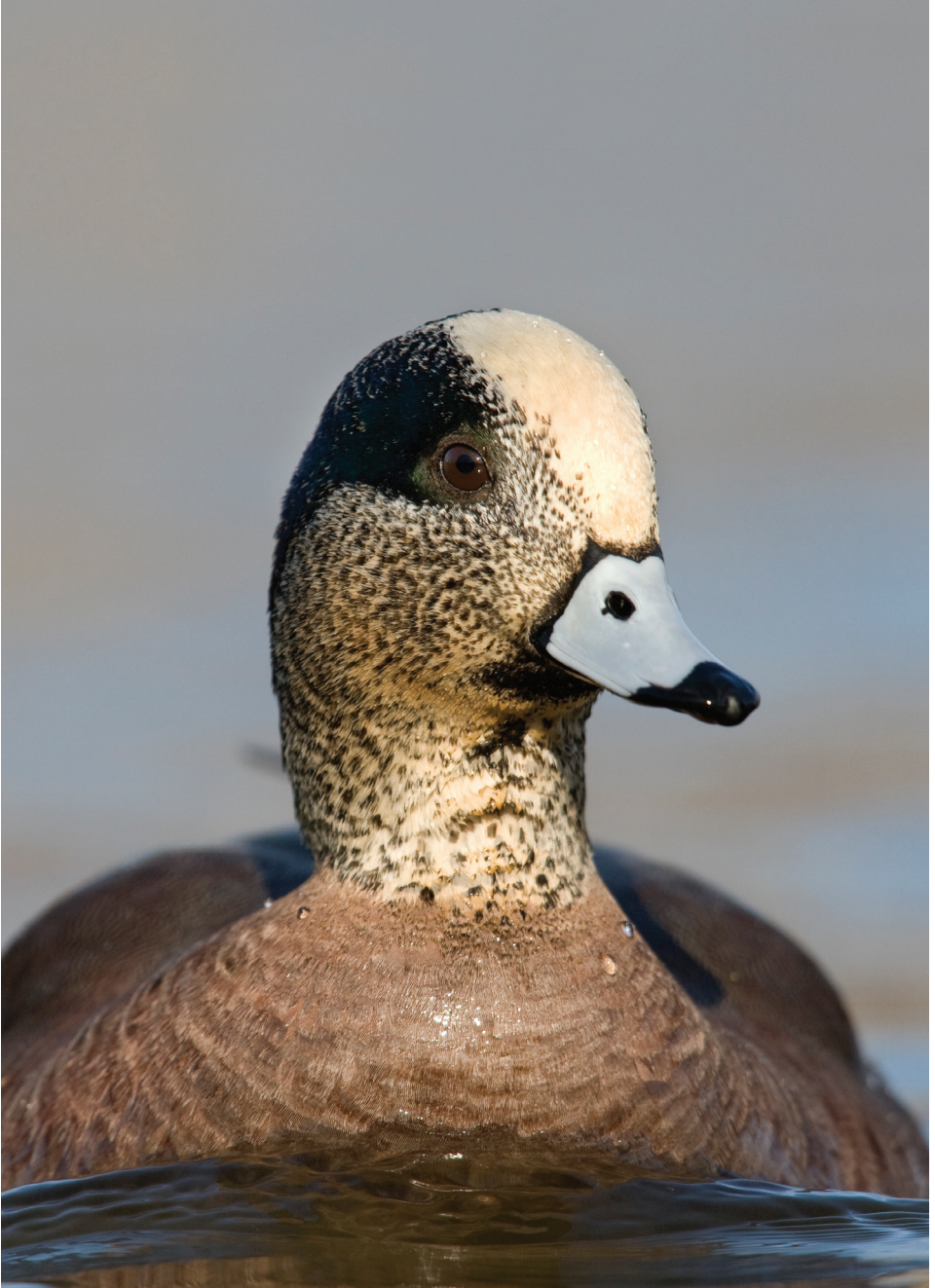
**Photograph:** Geoffrey Matthews with Russian scientist Prof. Valdimir Flint (holding the Bewick's Swan named "Flint") at a swan catch at Slimbridge in January 1979.

pioneering contributions to wetland and waterbird conservation during the 1960s–1980s, Geoffrey found time to continue his research and to write scientific papers and reviews. Some (c. 29) of his publications appeared in *Wildfowl*, on a diverse range of subjects including Greylag Goose *Anser anser* biometrics, Nacton Decoy, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* behaviour, and most recently a paper on his main research interest entitled “*Nonsense orientation in Mallard; a resumé and an investigation of the mechanism of a sun-compass*” which appeared in *Wildfowl* 35. In his final editorial (in *Wildfowl* 39), Geoffrey wished the journal well, noting that the new editor Dr Janet Kear had received universal acclaim for the way in which she improved the already prestigious *Ibis* journal, and that *Wildfowl* would be in safe hands. Nevertheless, the scientific reputation that Geoffrey originally established for the journal forms the basis for its continuation into the 21st century, with authors who published in *Wildfowl* under Geoffrey’s editorship still doing so today. We hope that he’d appreciate that the young researchers whose early efforts he accepted for publication retain their enthusiasm and interest in this ever-engaging family of birds many years later, and that he would be content with the current standard of their contributions.

Preparation of *Wildfowl* 63 has been a major collaborative effort, and I remain indebted to Tony Fox for his time, effort and invaluable comments as Associate Editor for *Wildfowl*. I am also most grateful to Editorial Board members – Jeff Black, Bruce Dugger, Andy Green, Matt Guillemain and David Roshier – for continuing to provide the advice and support essential for maintaining the standards and interest of the journal. I thank the referees for their valuable comments on the papers, Louise Edwards for her expertise and Ellen Matthews (EM Typesetting) and the staff at Berforts Information Press Ltd. for taking the papers forward to publication. My colleagues Maggie Sage, Linda Dickenson and Jane Gawthorne provided helpful support throughout, including in the distribution of *Wildfowl* 63.

**Eileen Rees**

**Editor: *Wildfowl*  
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**Photograph:** American Wigeon, by Donald M. Jones/Minden Pictures/FLPA.