

Foreword

“What a great idea.” That was my immediate reaction when Rick Kaminski told me about collaboration between the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) in the United Kingdom and the team that conducted the 6th North American Duck Symposium and Workshop (NADS 6), *Ecology and Conservation of North American Waterfowl* (ECNAW). The event occurred in Memphis, Tennessee in January 2013. A key part of that great idea was to broaden the content and title of this publication to include waterfowl from across the Northern Hemisphere. Indeed, since 1997, the NADS have stimulated intercontinental relationships and efforts among colleagues to understand, conserve and sustain waterfowl and their habitats throughout the northern part of the globe.

The NADS 6/ECNAW symposium was built on a rich history of progress in waterfowl and wetlands research and conservation, as is nicely explained in the Preface to follow. Briefly, NADS 6/ECNAW combined efforts of three groups of specialists that had previously established separate conferences in North America: the NADS, the North American Arctic Goose Conference, and the International Sea Duck Conference. Each separate gathering had assembled many of the world’s specialists to review advancements in waterfowl and wetlands science; this progress has helped steer ongoing management, conservation and future scientific efforts for their focal waterfowl taxa. These conferences each had an excellent reputation as a “must attend” event for academic, government, and non-government scientists and students. Thus, NADS 6/ECNAW was assured to be an unprecedented assemblage of the world’s waterfowl specialists and, from the level of knowledge exchanged, this proved to be the case for all those attending the meeting.

This special issue of *Wildfowl* is the first published proceedings from any NADS. The specialists in the field will appreciate the effort required to conduct a symposium of this magnitude and then follow with a peer-reviewed proceedings. This outcome was accomplished through an extraordinary level of engagement by all who were involved and they are acknowledged in the following Preface. All those folks also recognise that Rick Kaminski’s leadership was the driving force of the symposium and publication of this volume – a vision he has pursued for over half a decade.

Dedication of the symposium to the memory and contributions of Guy Baldassarre was an inescapable decision in view of all participants’ recognition of Guy’s huge lifetime commitments to waterfowl science, conservation and education. His untimely death in 2012 was an overwhelmingly sad event. Guy had made personal contact and was friends with a very large portion of those in attendance at NADS 6/ECNAW, as a result of his superb career. He wrote, with Eric Bolen, the 1994 original and the 2006 second edition of *Waterfowl Ecology and Management* – the waterfowl profession’s first comprehensive text book. Many conference participants have a tag-eared edition of both treatises on their reference shelf. I cherish the personalised copy of the second edition.

Not one to seek praise or credit, Guy would nevertheless surely have been proud of the

conference and this proceedings – for a moment at least, before he sought conversation with whoever was willing to talk about waterfowl and the latest findings from new studies, especially if the research resulted from students' efforts. Indeed, Guy had planned to attend the symposium and sign copies of his monumental 2014 revision of "*Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America*," as he did for his and Eric's book at previous NADS. Francis Kortright and Frank Bellrose, the first and second authors of "*Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America*," respectively, would be thankful to Guy for bringing new life to this classic waterfowl treatise.

The WWT brings its own record of excellence in waterfowl research and conservation that extends historically back to the 1940s. They originally focused on the status of waterfowl in Great Britain, on introducing the general public to the beauty of waterfowl, and on emphasising the need for conservation to assure the future of these remarkable species. Since then they have established a singular position of leadership in a multitude of waterfowl and wetlands conservation matters, extending from their local education centers and across the world through engagement in many venues (including the United Nations) and the development of international research and conservation projects, a record that continues to mount to this day. For most North American waterfowl biologists, arrival of the annual *Wildfowl Trust Report* (which evolved into *Wildfowl*) was a highlight that provided a window for many subjects that extend from propagation of endangered species to detailed analyses of courtship behaviour and to population inventories of waterfowl throughout the world. The WWT's record of accomplishment is unequalled. I urge the world's waterfowl enthusiasts to make the WWT Centres in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland high priority destinations if they ever find themselves in the United Kingdom.

The WWT actually engaged in North American waterfowl conservation from their earliest years of population monitoring, because a portion of Light-bellied Brent Geese, known as Atlantic Brant in North America, fly across the Atlantic Ocean from breeding areas in eastern Arctic Canada to winter in coastal Ireland. My predisposition is to label these geese as "North American" because that is where they breed. I suspect WWT thinks of them as European geese that migrate to Canada to breed before they return "home" to Ireland. Both perceptions are correct and augur well for the future of these birds. On a broader basis, it is critical that people throughout the flyways of waterfowl assume the responsibility of caring for the birds and the places in which they live whether they are breeding, migrating or wintering.

Also, Sir Peter Scott, the founder of WWT, conducted the first ever field investigation of the then endangered Ross' Goose in the central arctic of Canada in 1949. The conservation of the entire world's waterfowl clearly has been their mission from the onset. Collaborations have since been much more active and ongoing, so this publication should be seen as an important example of the richness of today's pattern of international cooperation and accomplishment in waterfowl science and conservation.

The life histories of most northern hemispheric waterfowl encompass annual passages that extend between northern and southern latitudes and breeding and wintering habitats. The

ecology of waterfowl throughout their annual cycle and the occurrence of cross-seasonal, carry-over effects on their survival and recruitment are now a core paradigm guiding waterfowl science, conservation and management. However, few researchers are able to work closely with the birds year round amongst latitudes. Bringing students, managers and scientists together to share and review their findings at gatherings like NADS is one of the most significant benefits to the birds and to the scientific basis for their future. This partnership between WWT and NADS in the production of these proceedings is a natural and welcome step in the continued quest for intelligent and effective application of science to the future understanding of waterfowl ecology and management in the northern hemisphere.

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Photograph: Lesser Snow Goose (blue morph) on Wrangel Island, Russia, by Sergey Gorshkov.