

## **Wildfowl 71: Editorial**

The year 2021 has been time of transition and change for the *Wildfowl* journal. At the end of 2020, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) informed the Editorial Board that, after 70 years of publishing *Wildfowl* and its precursor the *Wildfowl Trust Annual Report*, the two 2020 issues (*Wildfowl* 70 and *Wildfowl* Special Issue No. 6) would be the last to be produced by the organisation. This decision was taken in line with the WWT's plans to refocus as a wetland conservation charity, committed to making its current vision – “a world where healthy wetland nature thrives and enriches lives” – become a reality. The WWT also confirmed, however, that it was fully supportive of the Editorial Board finding a new publisher for *Wildfowl*, and we are dedicated to finding the best way forward for the journal. The journal has a long-established reputation as the pre-eminent forum for disseminating results of scientific studies on wildfowl (*Anatidae*), associated waterbirds and their wetland habitats, providing a valuable information resource for scientifically-sound management and conservation of these species, and we feel that this should not be lost. Following an unprecedented number of papers submitted to *Wildfowl* in 2021, we now plan to consider alternative established publishing houses in the coming months. Meanwhile, *Wildfowl* is being published by “Wildfowl Press”, a newly-formed publisher dedicated to the journal, with pdfs also being made available online as usual.

Despite the challenges of the last 12 months, 2021 has been particularly pleasing in many other ways. Papers in the 2018 and 2019 issues of the journal received much attention, being cited promptly by other authors, resulting in the journal's Impact Factor (*i.e.* the 2-year citation rate) increasing to 1.417, bringing it for the first time within the top 10 ornithological journals listed in Web of Science. Moreover, an exceptional set of papers was submitted for the current issue, *Wildfowl* 71, including three papers now appearing on scoter species (on Black Scoters *Melanitta americana* and Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata* in North America and on the small Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* population breeding in European Georgia), two comparing the behaviour of Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiaca* and Greylag Geese *Anser anser* in an urban setting, and two on Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus*, the first giving results of the January 2020 international census of the Icelandic population, and the second an insight into the swans' use of lakes on the Isle of Tiree. Given the major issues resulting from the proliferation of human debris in the environment, it is somewhat sobering to learn in another paper about the ingestion of synthetic micro-fibres by swan species in the UK. The decline in the number of Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* breeding in Armenia is also cause for concern.

More encouraging, however, is Helmut Kruckenberg's study of waterbirds in the Ems-Dollard region of Germany, which is also a tribute to George Atkinson-Willes. In particular recalls Atkinson-Willes' heartfelt plea (in his 1961 paper entitled “Emsland without wildfowl”), for greater awareness of the consequences for birds reliant on these sites of the increasing pressure being exerted on wildfowl habitat throughout the Northwest European

flyway. Whilst the area was indeed lost to many waterbirds during the second half of the 20th century, Kruckenberg found that, following the creation of two flood polders during the 1990s, the area is once again of international importance for migratory geese, swans and waders.

George Atkinson-Willes, who died aged 80 in 2002, joined the Severn Wildfowl Trust in the 1950s, and there he developed the National Wildfowl Counts in Britain and famously became the first coordinator of the International Waterbird Censuses (IWC), collated by International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB – now Wetlands International). The IWC, which remains crucial for monitoring trends in migratory waterbird populations, requires full international cooperation for assessing changes in the numbers and distribution of each species. The photograph included in the preliminary pages of this issue illustrates the range of international representation at the IWRB meeting held at Slimbridge in June 1979, with George Atkinson-Willes in the centre of this group of luminaries. I am indebted to several individuals, particularly Mike Smart, Tony Fox and David Salmon, who were able to confirm the names for most of those attending.

The support provided to the journal in 2021 has been truly exceptional. I'm indebted to the *Wildfowl* production team of Ellen Matthews (EM Typesetting) and Andrew Hopwood (Henry Ling Ltd), who took the change of publisher in their stride and helped to ensure that *Wildfowl* 71 was published on schedule. I'm also immensely grateful to Dafila Scott for kindly preparing the beautiful drawing and to Oscar Langevoord for finalising the "Wildfowl Press" logo. Paul Marshall produced yet another superb cover design. Tony Fox (Associate Editor) has been a tower of strength throughout, and he and the other Editorial Board members (Jeff Black, Bruce Dugger, Andy Green and Matt Guillemain) have provided great encouragement and advice, not only regarding this year's papers but in discussing future plans for the journal. As always, I'm immensely grateful to reviewers who kindly provide expert opinion on papers submitted to the journal, and to Linda Dickerson and Jane Gawthorne-Dover for their help in ensuring that papers submitted to the [wildfowl@wwt.org.uk](mailto:wildfowl@wwt.org.uk) email address continued to reach me. Perhaps the greatest encouragement, however, has come from readers and subscribers confirming their interest in supporting the journal into the future. Finally, I must take this opportunity to thank Ronald Graham, for his tolerance of the amount of time that I spend on the computer, particularly now that I'm supposed to be reducing the work-load as "semi-retired".

**Eileen Rees**

**Editor: *Wildfowl***