

***Wildfowl* 72: Editorial**

We are living in very uncertain times. The Covid pandemic continues, war is traumatising Europe, avian influenza is causing mass mortality in bird species, and consequences of climate change are becoming more evident across the globe. The death of HM the Queen, whilst not unexpected, is nonetheless unsettling, not only in the UK and other Commonwealth realms but more widely, following the constancy of her long and steadfast reign. Under these troubling circumstances it is reassuring to look back on the period following World War II, when communication with East European citizens was exceedingly difficult (particularly before arrival of the internet), yet like-minded individuals separated by political boundaries but with a common passion for birds and their habitats still formed international cooperation and inter-governmental agreements, for the conservation of wildlife. A particular example is the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the “Ramsar Convention”), which was the supreme achievement of Professor Geoffrey Matthews, to whom this issue of *Wildfowl* is dedicated. Development of the text for the Convention during 1965–1971 at the height of the Cold War, described by Stroud *et al.* (2022a), is an inspirational story of people working together across boundaries and politics to make the Convention come to fruition. Geoffrey notably said that, on his death, they would find “Ramsar” carved on his heart.

The immense workload and diplomacy required to see the Ramsar Convention ratified and implemented fell primarily to the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB). The history of the organisation (a network coordinated by a small secretariat), from its inception in the mid-20th century up to reconstitution as Wetlands International in 1995, is eloquently described by Stroud *et al.* (2022b) in this issue of *Wildfowl*. The IWRB was also headed by Matthews during 1969–1988, at a time when the organisation was not only pivotal in underpinning work on the Ramsar Convention but was also initiating and continuing other major programmes requiring multi-national cooperation, including developing the International Waterbird Census (IWC), setting international standards for wetland and waterbird conservation, and preparing wetland inventories. The work transcended the formidable political barriers and overcame the problem of the more limited communication systems of the time (correspondence being mainly by letter), for the benefit of waterfowl and particularly for migratory species.

Encouragement can be gleaned not only by remembering the progress achieved by the ground-breaking conservationists of the 20th century but in finding that their legacy lives on in work continuing to this day. Moreover, the communications genie cannot easily be put back in the bottle, and information continues to flow. This issue of *Wildfowl* is particularly wide-ranging in its coverage. It not only includes the keynote paper on the history of the IWRB but also a review of the distribution and conservation of Far Eastern Curlew, insights into the movement patterns of diving ducks *Aythya* sp. in western Europe and an analysis of Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* feeding activity in relation to their energy requirements

during wing moult. The two wetlands-orientated papers – on the Adiyaman-Gölbasi Lakes important bird area (IBA) in Turkey and the Porbandar wetlands in western India – both build on the IWRB's earlier initiatives, in utilising data gathered as part of the IWC and the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC).

I'm immensely grateful to Mary Matthews, not only for supporting this issue of the journal, but personally also for her knowledge and guidance at the start of my career on joining the Wildfowl Trust's (now WWT's) long-term study of Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* back in 1977, which continues (in modified form) to this day. Production of *Wildfowl* 72 was greatly facilitated by the involvement of Ellen Matthews (EM Typesetting) and Andrew Hopwood (Henry Ling Ltd), who as always have ensured that the journal is published on schedule, with the look much enhanced by Paul Marshall's amazing cover design. I remain totally indebted to Tony Fox (Associate Editor) and the other Editorial Board members (with Chris Spray joining Jeff Black, Bruce Dugger, Andy Green and Matt Guillemain on the Board earlier this year), and to the reviewers who kindly provide expert opinion on papers submitted to the journal. WWT's Linda Dickerson kindly ensures that any papers submitted to the wildfowl@wwt.org.uk email address continue to reach me. Last, but far from least, I again thank Ronald Graham, for his patience and tolerance of the amount of "retirement" time that I spend on the journal.

Eileen Rees

Editor: *Wildfowl*

References

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