

## Notes from the editor

### 20 Euros for a kilo of salt

Some time ago, one of the best Swedish gastronomical cooks I know, told me that he had found salt that costs 60 Swedish kronas for a box containing 300 grams. That makes 20.000 Euros per ton. Knowing that you can buy industrially produced sea salt - e.g. from Yemen - for 8 Euros per ton or even manually produced salt in Figueira da Foz for 110 Euros per ton, I was intrigued and asked what salt that could be and he answered: "Fleur de Sel de Guérande."

The disparity in prices is only one aspect that illustrates how complex the global salt business is. Several of the ALAS studies - both interregional and local - show this.

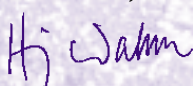
We have chosen to focus this 6th Newsletter on quality aspects of salt and labelling procedures. It is a vast theme, but the various articles and examples will hopefully give you an interesting introduction and some informative reading. A Technical Letter will later treat the same subject more in detail together with more economical elements.

Each Newsletter looks upon the latest events in the four sites, the main being the recent inauguration of the salt museum in Pomorie. This is the first salt museum in Bulgaria. The birth took place during the Project Management Committee's meeting in early September and representatives from all the sites were present. Congratulations to the local ALAS team and to the municipality of Pomorie, that will now have one more "cultural pole" to present to both the inhabitants and the tourists.

I also wish to remind you about the Final Conference, that takes place at the end of this year. You can still inscribe yourself (until October 25) - please check page 8 and of course our web-site for more details.

Oh, I forgot to tell you who the Swedish cook is. It is my father.

In sale salus,



editor

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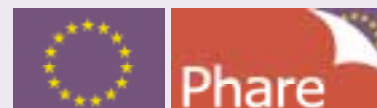
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*Corophium volutator*  
(read more on page 8)



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ECOS-Ouverture is the European Commission's Programme for Co-operation between the regions and cities of the European Union and their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe.

## Sicily, Italy

The salinas of Trapani and Marsala, on the west point of Sicily, are well known. During the Middle Ages boats from the Nordic countries made the long trip to come here and fetch salt. I had the opportunity to go there in spring 1998. Although several salinas have been restructured and modernized, some have maintained the traditional, manual way of making salt. The salt is harvested by hand three or four times every summer. In this flat, windy landscape the wind-driven pump houses (see photo) stand out against the evening sky.

Two interesting salt museums, one near Trapani in Paceco and the other in Mozia, close to Marsala, are operating. The museum in Mozia is hosted in a mill where they still grind the salt.



The wind-driven pumps in Mozia Salinas, near Marsala.

This sixth Newsletter has chosen quality labelling of salt as central theme. It is a vast subject and the Newsletter can therefore only give a first introduction. A more detailed Technical Letter is under production and will be available later this autumn. This Technical Letter will also focus on the economical aspects with information based on the economical studies carried out within ALAS.

The precarious situation of many traditional salinas is obvious and most of those still in operation face economical and structural difficulties. Still, being traditional can be turned into an advantage. There is today a demand for traditional products, as long as they hold high quality – and have an official recognition.

Labelling of salt is one way to protect both the salt producer and the consumer. It might be of particular interest for the small, artisanal salinas when they want to differentiate their product from an industrial one. Labelling can both augment the sales and benefits.

Every country has its own legislation, so we have chosen to study the French system, based on the long experience of the salters in the Guérande co-operative (see case study on page 4). Since 10 years also the European Union has introduced its own labels covering both origin and quality.

## Quality labelling

Each country has its own policy for the classification of foodstuffs.

These can very often be confusing for the consumer, as he or she does not fully know the status (value) of the label.

To list all national quality labels is close to impossible. The French example will therefore serve as a base to illustrate some of the better known national labels:

● **Label Rouge:** A quality label for products with a strict protocol to follow. The salt from Guérande obtained it in 1991. The classification has to be accepted by the National commission on labels and conformity certification (CNLCC) and then signed by the Minister of Agriculture.

● **Certification Conformance Produit (CCP):** Guarantees the conformity of the product (manufacturing, transformation, packaging, origin). Has to go through the CNLCC procedure.

● **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC):** Links the product to a "terroir", a specific region and know-how. Many wines and cheese benefit from an AOC. The National institute for original appellations (INAO) is in charge of the control and decides upon each new demand. INAO also handles the juridical protection – both on national and international levels – of this label.

● **Agriculture Biologique (AB):** Guarantees that the product does not contain pesticides or forbidden fertilizers. This bio-label is also under the responsibility of the CNLCC.

● **Nature et Progrès** is a label attributed to organic farmers that respect the organization's regulations. Several salters in Guérande have had this label since 1989 and the salters in Algarve, Portugal, obtained it recently.

● **Agri-confiance:** Attributed to salt producers of the Guérande co-operative in 2000. It covers the production and collect of salt from the salinas.



*An attractive packaging can – combined with quality labelling – be an interesting way to sell more salt at a better price.*

*It should be noted that from 2002 it is not allowed to sell a geographically restricted product with an official quality label without having the European system PGI (see page 3).*

## How to obtain a quality label

Most labelling is handled by the Ministries of Agriculture (and eventually Environment), but some specific labels are managed by independent organizations (in France: Nature et Progrès, Label Rouge, ISO). The competent regional authorities (Ministry, Chamber of Agriculture) will provide with precise advice and assistance.

### What is ISO?

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) was created in 1946 with the aim to create international norms in many domains. ISO 9002 – that many salt producing companies have – is an insurance of the quality in production, transformation and annex activities. The Guérande salt co-operative obtained it in year 2000 when the new buildings and machinery were operational. ISO 14000 is a model for environmental management of the company.



## The European systems for developing and protecting foodstuffs

The European Commission has to face a wide range of different foods in Europe. If a product earns a fame that goes beyond the national borders it can find itself in a market where similar products pass themselves off as the genuine article and take the same name. Ouzo and feta are two Greek examples of this, Guérande's *fleur de sel* another. This unfair competition discourages the producers and misleads the consumers. Since 1992 the European Union has therefore developed some specific "systems" to encourage diverse agricultural production, to protect product names from misuse and imitation and to help the consumers by giving them information about the specific character of the products. The names of about 500 cheese, meat, fruit and vegetable products are currently registered under the EU legislation. But no salt, yet.

### ● Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

covers the foodstuffs that are produced, processed and prepared in a precise geographical area using recognised know-how.



### ● Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

shows the geographical link which must occur in at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation.



Furthermore, the product can benefit from a good reputation. This is considered to be a more supply system than PDO. A French product can obtain it only if it previously has a Label Rouge.

● A third system is **Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG)**, which does not consider the geographical origin, but emphasizes the product's traditional character, either in the composition or in means of production.



● The European Community nowadays also has a **logo for organic food**. It was introduced in March 2000 and is used on a voluntary basis by farmers whose systems and products satisfy EU regulations (EEC No 2092/91). If you find this

logo on a product, you can be assured that:

- ✓ at least 95% of the product's ingredients have been organically produced;
- ✓ the product complies with the rules of the official inspection scheme;
- ✓ the product has come directly from the producer or preparer in a sealed package;
- ✓ the product bears the name of the producer; the preparer or vendor and the name or code of the inspection body.



## How to register a product name on the European level?

There are of course some steps to follow:

- ✓ A group of producers join together and define the product according to precise specification.
- ✓ The application, including the specifications, must be sent to the relevant national authority (often the Ministry of Agriculture or its regional section).
- ✓ Examination at the national level before transmitting the dossier to the European Commission.
- ✓ Control procedures are to be carried out.
- ✓ If the product meets the requirements, a first publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities will inform those in the Union that are interested.
- ✓ If there are no objections, the European Commission publishes the protected product name in the Official Journal.

**More information** can be obtained from the European Commission's web-site:

[www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual)

## What is an alimentary salt?

The World Health Organization – under the influence of the multinational salt companies – imposes that food grade salt must contain at least 97% of sodium chloride (*Codex Alimentarius CX STAN 150-1985*). Traditional salts – due to their mode of harvest and richer variety of minor salts – rarely reach these levels. Many countries - also the European Union - have adopted this biased rule, which – both in theory and practise - prevents traditional salts from being sold. Still many traditional salts are available on the market, but to obtain an official label or to enter the European system it is more difficult.

After several years of studies, writing and lobbying, the French Atlantic salt is about to be officially recognized as "alimentary". The French Agency for Health and Security of Foodstuffs (AFSSA) has given a positive response both for the salt as a product from agriculture (and not mines) and to lower the levels for NaCl to 94%. This should make all traditional salt producers happy, because it opens to a hopefully prompt European recognition and the possibility to apply for European labelling.

H.J.D.

A logo should be easy to identify and remember.



# The Guérande strategy

**The traditional salinas of Guérande in Brittany face the Atlantic coast of France, close to the estuary of the Loire River. It is probably the best example of a salt producing site that, although threatened 30 years ago, has managed not only to survive but to develop into one of Europe's best examples in the field of integrated local development.**

In 1972, facing the risk of total abandonment, the 250 remaining salters (*paludiers*) decided to create a professional organization. The *Groupeement des Producteurs de Sel de Guérande* was born. At the same time some young people arrived from outside the area and the entirety of craftsmen got more dynamic. In 1979, the first young salters were trained and this annual training course has since then allowed a total renewal of the salters. More than 180 people have been trained. The training school is organized by the Chamber of Agriculture in close collaboration with the professionals.

The salters and their organizations have always been aware of the quality aspects of their salt. But it was not until 1989 that a major study, APROSEL, was carried out. The whole area contributed to the work: the salters, nature conservationists, hunters, tourist offices, developers,

politicians, civil servants... The final report showed that a clear strategy for the future of the salt production was of vital importance. The inseparable keywords were:

- the site (the salinas),
- the men and women and
- the products from the salinas.

This scheme might seem obvious, but in Guérande it did not remain only words, but a full strategy indeed came into action.

The study also resulted in the creation of APROSELA, an important link between producers and traders for all questions linked to quality policy, management of resources and promotion. APROSELA also managed to obtain a French quality distinction, the prestigious *Label Rouge*. (Many salters have also obtained the organic marking of their salt under *Nature et Progrès*.)

Very rapidly the former organization of salt producers was consolidated and changed into a co-operative, thus giving the salters full control over their product, all the way from the salinas to the consumers.

The salters have also managed to integrate both ecological management of the area and handling of the visitors in this particularly touristic part of France. The salinas are also a member of the network *Remarkable Gastronomical Sites*. Finally, they are today protected by stringent French

legislation (*Site Classé*), Natura 2000 and by the International Convention on Wetlands, the Ramsar Convention.

Today, the main action of the Co-operative is based on the quality aspects of the salt and the management of the stocks and sales. Apart from the labels mentioned previously, it also obtained ISO 9002 for the transport, stocking, transformation, packaging, loading and selling of the salt and its by-products. The salters have individually signed specific contracts – *Agri-confiance* – for the production and transport of their salt. Both these warranties are handled by the French Association for Quality Insurance (AFAQ).

When we talk to Natalie Langlais at the Chamber of Agriculture in Nantes, she is happy to announce that two years of intensive research and lobbying are about to give results. The French Association for Health and Security of Foodstuffs (AFSSA) has given a positive response to classify the Atlantic salt as a product from agriculture (and not from mines as previously was the case for all salts, even from salinas) and also lower the NaCl levels from compulsory 97% to 94%. This will open the way for the famous *Sel de Guérande* to obtain more labels, also within the European Union.

[www.seldeguerande.com](http://www.seldeguerande.com)



## Necton and TradiSal Portuguese experiences in the Algarve

**Necton is the story of two men – both biologists – who intended to grow algae that produce beta-carotene in the Algarve region in south Portugal, but ended up by producing traditional salt.**

**TradiSal is an association of salters that got a French organic quality label.**

While putting up their project Necton's two initiators realised that even salt production could be an interesting complement to their main activity, especially salt from the small traditional salinas that still exist in the area. A salter, *marenoto*, advised them to act quickly, because most of the small salinas were in bad shape and of urgent need of management not to dry out or be filled with rubbish.

Necton produced its first salt in 1998. But according to the Portuguese law, the salt could not be sold as table salt. In fact, salt in Portugal fall into three categories and pure sodium chloride is the only accepted as table salt. The salt Necton had produced – like other traditional, non-refined salts – had a much greater variety of other mineral salts and trace elements than the present legislation allows.

East of Necton's salinas lies the nature reserve of Castro



*A traditional salina on the Algarve coast in Castro Marim.*

Marim. Here some *marenotos* had already joined and through a local development programme – *Odiana* – they created TradiSal, a producers' association. One of its actions was to search for help from the salt co-operative in Guérande, where they found a long experience in the matter and got good advice how to carry on. Through this co-operation, the Algarve salters obtained the French organic quality label *Nature et Progrès*. This is a concrete example of how traditional salt producers can co-operate.

Most of the salt from the traditional salinas in the Algarve today finds its way to France and the U.S.A. where the demand for tasty culinary salt is already developed and surpasses the production. But TradiSal wants to go even further, trying to persuade more young people to take up the traditional ways of making salt. And together with the other salters throughout Portugal TradiSal tries to change the Portuguese legislation so that the traditional

salt can be sold in better conditions also in Portugal.

Necton joined TradiSal in 1999 and less than a year ago Necton received an award from the Slow Food organization.

Thanks to the work of TradiSal there seems to be hope for the future for traditional salinas in the Algarve.

For more information: [www.necton.pt](http://www.necton.pt)

## The Slovenian salt, from study to strategy

It was already in 1999 that a study for the long-term development of the Secovlje Saltworks Landscape Park (KPSS) was carried out. Its aim was to present different scenarios that could preserve both the traditional salt making as a commercial activity and the typical ecosystem with the present biodiversity and the identity of a coastal landscape. The chosen scenario – the most ambitious – targeted three key issues: nature protection, cultural values and economic aspects.

It became clear that the protection of the natural and cultural heritage is closely related to the survival of the traditional salt production in combination with development of new products (brine and fango\* for medical use) and other environmentally friendly activities (eco-tourism, sustainable mariculture).

The strategy for the future includes:

- The action of the Co-operative Society SOLINE PIRAN z.o.o., with the priority to regain the status of traditional arts and crafts to the salters' profession.
- The integrated management of the entire area.
- The preservation of the traditional salt production in the currently used areas in order to recover and maintain the salt-pans infrastructure in optimal condition and obtain storage facilities for the salt.
- The assertion of specific brands – linked to the Landscape Park - for the natural sea salt, fango and brines. (The certification of the salt's geographical origin is in the process of being accepted, while for fango and brines the procedure is more complex due to health regulations.)
- The integration of health tourism as a complementary activity.
- The financing of the KPSS from the national budget, including the costs for reconstruction and maintenance of the infrastructures (dikes and dams).
- The national decree indicating that SOLINE PIRAN is the principal holder not only of the economic activities around the salt production but also of the management of the Landscape Park.

*Extract from a document prepared by  
Peter Derzek, director of SOLINE PIRAN*

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*\*Fango is blackish saline mud, which turns soft and kneadable. It is found on the edge of the salt pans. Fango is rich in minerals and helps in regenerating the skin.*



## Meeting with a salt director

**Pomorie can today boast with two salt producing companies, Pomorie Saltworks and Solari 98 Ltd. During the Project Management Committee in September, we met with Emanuil Gavalyov, director of Pomorie Saltworks and asked him some questions.**



*Emanuil Gavalyov in front of the only traditional salina remaining in Pomorie.*

**ALAS Newsletter:** How is Pomorie Saltworks operating?

**Emanuil Gavalyov:** We are a state company, but will be privatised before the end of this year. The salinas – state owned for some decades – have now been given back to their previous owners. The company's buildings are in Pomorie and here we dry, grind and pack the salt. The salt also goes through the iodination process here. The company employs 40 people and about 20 extra during the harvest.

**A.N.:** How much salt is produced in Pomorie today?

**E.G.:** Before 1984 we produced about 25.000 tons every year. But since then many salinas were filled in and houses were built on them, so today we only produce around 14.000 tons. Together with the nearby salinas of Burgas, we produce as much as 80.000 tons. Due to the heavy rains that came in end July, we believe that we will not get more than 3.000 tons this year here in Pomorie.

**A.N.:** What is the Pomorie salt used for?

**E.G.:** The large part – 10.000 tons – is sold as table salt. The rest goes to the porcelain factories, for cosmetics and medicine.

**A.N.:** Who are the buyers?

**E.G.:** There are today many private traders in Bulgaria, they buy and distribute the salt. There are actually 48 companies that deal with salt.

**A.N.:** Do you export some salt?

**E.G.:** Yes, to Serbia, Macedonia and to the KFOR troupes in Kosovo.

**A.N.:** Does salt from other countries come to the Bulgarian market?

**E.G.:** Of course. Bulgaria imports salt from many countries: Israel, Tunisia, Yemen, Jordania and Egypt. The cheapest salt comes from Yemen, it costs only 8 Euros per ton, whereas we sell our salt for 35 Euros.

**A.N.:** Do you have any projects for the future?

**E.G.:** Yes, when the company has been privatised we will make much more attractive packaging. We will also try to obtain a certificate that indicates that the salt comes from an ecologically rich area, a nature reserve far from pollution.

## Errata:

It is not easy to make maps. On the map in the previous Newsletter Pomorie landed in Rumania and should be moved down 2 cm. The Mani peninsula in south Greece is not the left but the one in the middle. All my excuses.

In Newsletter 4 we showed a map of European salt museum. Since then the historical museum in Solotvino has answered to our enquiry. Solotvino is an important site for salt production and the local museum also treats this subject. Solotvino is situated in southwest Ukraine, close to the borders to Rumania and Hungary.

New, corrected maps will be published with Newsletter 7, so if you have any remarks, please send them to the editor before November 15.

## The salt and breeding season 2002

This very peculiar summer – with extreme rains and dramatic flooding in many regions - has also affected the salt production. The Atlantic side seems to have avoided the worst and Figueira had a "small", but still acceptable season. In the Adriatic, Piran expected 1.500 tons, but only got 150. In Pomorie the small salina - with frequent harvests – produced some salt, whereas the big salinas – with one single harvest – are in a more delicate situation. Also Greece has been affected by the rains and the production was lower than normally.

The birds have also had difficulties during the breeding season. Heavy rains in Piran destroyed many nests, the colony of Sandwich terns in Pomorie was flooded and the breeding attempt of flamingos in Lesvos was annihilated due to heavy northern winds that made the water levels rise for several days and drowned the eggs.



*The colony of Sandwich terns in the Pomorie Lake was flooded and all nests drowned due to the heavy rains in July. After the season, the volunteers from the NGO Green Balkans therefore reinforces the island. Hopefully 2003 will be a better year, both for salters and birds.*

## Opening of the Pomorie salt museum

**The first salt museum in Bulgaria – one of the ALAS project's many achievements – was inaugurated on September 7. After many months of work, both with restoring two old buildings near the traditional salina and building the exhibition, the local ALAS team could be proud of the result.**

Already at 8.30 in the morning, the space outside the museum was full of curious visitors. People observed the salina and saw that the production this year would be low due to the heavy rains in late July. But this would not cast a cloud over the day. The local project manager, Milcho Skumov, assisted by Elena Kafadarova, gave a first speech to the growing crowd. The Mayor or Giorgi Trukhchev said some words and opened the museum by cutting the string.

We could now discover the contents of the museum. The walls are covered with photos that show the history of salt making in Pomorie. Each photo has a precise subtitle in both Bulgarian and English, a very good initiative that facilitates for the foreign visitors. This photographic collection is really a valuable resource for the museum. A giant map of the area gives a general view. Several tools and models of the disappeared keleve give an extra value to the exhibition.

Theodora Petanidou summarized the ALAS project and congratulated the Municipality to have done this work. Hjalmar Dahm presented the ALAS video – which now will be translated into Bulgarian – and then it was high time to drink champagne and taste the cream cake with the museum logo.



*Milcho Skumov giving the speech in front of an expectant crowd.*



*The exhibition contains photos, models and tools. Robert Turk, ALAS Project Manager in Piran, checks out the coarse salt in the wheelbarrow.*

## ALAS publications and other outputs

Many of the interregional tasks in ALAS have now been completed. All studies and experts' reports, Technical Letters and General Leaflets will be available through our web-site, but most probably not before December.

The ALAS video is ready in its English and Greek versions. It describes the fascinating salina landscapes from the Atlantic, through the Mediterranean into the Black Sea. It portrays the work of the salter, the tools and technical solutions. A section of the film treats the ecological importance of salinas and their (potential) role in local economy and for sustainable development. The script is written by Theodora Petanidou and your (favorite) editor has filmed all images and directed the work. The 14 minutes long video was edited by Yannis Koufonikos in the Cinergon studios in Athens. The music is composed by Nikos Kypourgos.

The video will be distributed in December, hopefully sent to all European salt museums.

## Report from the PMC meeting 6-8 September 2002

The Project Management Committee met in Pomorie during three days in September. The members went through the last developments on the four ALAS sites. The interregional tasks were a major subject and since the PMC last met – in Piran in May – a huge progress has been made. A main announcement was of course the ALAS video, but also several interregional studies are now ready and other publications are waiting to be printed.



*Yannis Koufonikos (left) while editing the ALAS video. Nikos Tamiolakis, Cinergon's director seems pleased with the result.*

## ALAS FINAL CONFERENCE

«Salt and salinas as natural resources and alternative poles of local development».

29 November - 1 December 2002.

Mytilene, island of Lesbos, Greece.

The aims of the Conference are to diffuse the results of the ALAS Project and make them known, as well as to summarize and reset the objectives of ALAS through the salt museums that are under creation in the four Project sites.

A major objective of the Conference is to organize networks of collaboration between interested institutions and individuals dealing with salt, salt production, management of salinas and salt museums. Such networks, to operate beyond the framework and auspices of the ALAS Project, can be those of Mediterranean salinas, of Salt Museums, of scientists and experts in salinas issues, of traditional salt producers etc.

### INDICATIVE THEMATIC UNITS AND ISSUES

- Historical value of Mediterranean salinas
- Know-how of salt making until the beginning of the 20th century in the Mediterranean.
- Cultural, natural and educational value of salinas
- Creation and operation of salt museums
- Ecology, ecological management, environmental education in salinas
- Alternative forms of salinas exploitation and local development: salinas and tourism - salt gastronomy - salt and salinas as basis for local development
- Planning, general management and conservation of salinas

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### CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

#### Friday 29/11/2002

Plenary session of the Conference: Presentation of the ALAS results - Keynote speakers

#### Saturday 30/11/2002

Four parallel workshops: Local development, Nature conservation, Cultural heritage, History and know-how of traditional salinas in Greece  
Excursion to the salinas and the Salt Museum of Polichnitos

#### Sunday 1/12/2002

«What futures for the Mediterranean salinas?»: Presentation of the Conference results denoting those of the workshops - Keynote speakers of International Institutions - Conclusion of the Conference.

### LANGUAGE

Official languages of the Conference are English and French. The workshop on the History and techniques in traditional salinas of Greece will be held in Greek.

### ATTENDANCE

Persons wishing to participate in the Conference are expected to duly fill in the enclosed inscription form (or download from [www.alas.gr](http://www.alas.gr)) and send it to the Organizing Committee **before October 25.**

### CONFERENCE FEE

50 € to be paid upon arrival at the conference inscription desk. The fee covers conference documents, excursion and social events.

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## ALAS calendar for coming events

29 Nov - 1 Dec 2002

ALAS final conference  
in Lesbos "Salt and Salinas as  
natural resources and alternative  
poles of local development"

2 - 3 December 2002

Project Management Committee

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All photos in this issue: Hjalmar Dahm.

Drawing on page I by Mperoch (alias Marios Flash) The mud shrimp, *Corophium volutator*, is a common – and sometimes feared – crustacean in all salinas. This Amphipod digs galleries in the mud and can thus provoke leaks and other structural changes in the pools. But for the birds it is 18 mm of delicacy.

For local language Newsletters (translations), contact the local project manager.



## Next ALAS Newsletter: December 2002

This will be the last issue and it will focus on the results from the whole project and from the Final Conference. Please send manuscripts before 1st of December.