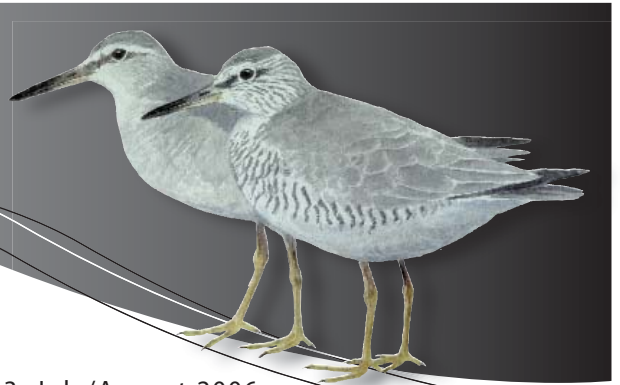


Tattler

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Newsletter for the Asia Pacific Flyways

No. 3: July/August 2006

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Editorial

Tattler is received by many libraries in various parts of the world who like to catalogue issues in a logical sequence. The new series of Tattler, with date but no issue number on the front page, has caused some headaches for librarians. We therefore now include the number of the series (starting at No. 1 in the new series in January 2006) as well as the date.

At the recent Western Hemisphere Shorebird Meeting in the USA (see page 4) Bob Gill presented a talk on the formation of a hemisphere-wide shorebird group covering the Americas. Such a group would help to complete an effective networking of shorebird workers over all of the world's shorebird migratory flyways together with the Asia Pacific Shorebird Network, mentioned in earlier issues of Tattler, as well as the already established European/Africa Flyway. The meeting in the USA saw the inaugural meeting of the Shorebird Research Group of the Americas (SRGA). Sharing resources and networking over all of the major shorebird flyways will help us to move forward on some of the critical issues threatening shorebirds,

Most of us know that the drainage and destruction of wetlands is intrinsically wrong. Wetlands are the kidneys of

the land, storing and filtering water and providing habitats for wildlife. Now a UN report point out that wetland restoration and management may well be critical in preventing the outbreaks of avian flu (see page 9). Millions of dollars are being spent on combating this potentially deadly disease, on the other hand some wetland managers are struggling to obtain sufficient funding to appropriately manage wetlands nature reserves including the management of water levels and water quality. Large wetlands reserves or parks close to large centres of human populations, such as Centennial Park in Sydney, Guandu Nature Park in Taipei and Mai Po in Hong Kong are important for public education as well as waterbird habitat management and should be adequately funded. Lessons learned from these wetland centres can be used to demonstrate techniques for enhancing degraded wetlands, especially those that allow mixing of wild waterbirds with domestic stock, which are thought to be a source of Avian Flu, infecting wild birds which could spread the disease.

With the destruction of the Saemangeum intertidal mudflats by the South Korean Government attention is now being focused on the nearby Geum Estuary. With the loss of Saemangeum the importance to the Geum Estuary will be intensified. A workshop is planned in Seoul in September this year to focus attention on the related issues. Ongoing monitoring of Saemangeum and the Geum Estuary are planned during the spring of 2007 and 2008. Meanwhile the dates for the forthcoming Ramsar Convention in South Korea have not yet been announced.

The Asian Waterbird Census will be holding its second regional coordinators meeting in Manila in October this year (see page 12). This will provide an opportunity to advance the regular monitoring of important wetlands throughout the Asia Pacific region through networking and the holding of training workshops.

Tattler is the newsletter for the Asia Pacific Flyways. Readers are encouraged to submit articles of interest about shorebirds and their conservation. We would like to extend our coverage to all countries in the Asia Pacific. Please send articles to The Editor, Tattler, PO Box 2006, Rockdale Delivery Centre, NSW 2216, Australia or email to tattler@avifaunaresearch.com.au

Phil Straw, Editor

China-New Zealand Shorebird Partnership

In April 2004 a partnership was formed between two Shorebird Network Sites with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Miranda Naturalists' Trust, representing the Firth of Thames Shorebird Network Site on the North Island of New Zealand and the Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve, located in the northern Yellow Sea of China. It was felt that forming a 'Sister Site' relationship would help to facilitate co-operative studies between staff of the two centres and lead to a better understanding of migratory shorebirds in China and New Zealand with local authorities and the general public.

In November 2005 Mr Zhang Guangming from Yalu Jiang and Mr Lu Yong from Wetlands International – China, arrived at Miranda for a two month stay to learn about how the Miranda Shorebird Centre operates. They were also involved with education work at the Centre and attended

were also lost due to rain. The survey was carried out earlier than in previous years at Yalu Jiang some species still in relatively low numbers due to birds still making their way north through the Yellow Sea. It had also been a colder than usual spring which may also have slowed northward migration. However, all the key species in the reserve were present in good numbers with nine species present in internationally important numbers namely, Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Great Knot, Grey Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Eastern Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Kentish Plover and Spotted Greenshank. Broad-billed Sandpiper and Little Curlew, which, in the past had occurred in internationally important numbers, were completely absent during this survey. Counts of 43,875 Dunlin, 296 Eurasian Oystercatcher, and 1,485 Kentish Plover were higher than previous counts.

So far Yalu Jiang is the most important known site in the Yellow Sea for both sub-species of Bar-tailed Godwit, *baueri* and *menzbieri*, during northward migration.

Colour Bands and Leg Flags

It was difficult to determine the exact number of flagged birds seen, but at least 49 individual birds of three species, Bar-tailed Godwit, Great Knot and Grey Plover were recorded from seven flagging sites/regions - South Island New Zealand, North Island New Zealand, Victoria, SE Queensland, NW Australia, Chongming Dao and Yalu Jiang. At least two Bar-tailed Godwits flagged at Chongming Dao several weeks earlier were seen. Chongming Dao has changed from white over black flags to black over white so they can use an alphanumeric code on the white, which should be more visible in the lower position.

All colour bands seen were on Bar-tailed Godwit from New Zealand with a total of 63 partial or full band combinations recorded. Only 25 could be fully confirmed and were from South Island - Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Tasman Bay, Golden Bay and Farewell Spit. North Island – Manawatu Estuary and Firth of Thames.

Shorebird Banding

The YJNRR staff were keen to band and flag shorebirds during the survey but unfortunately permits to band birds had not arrived when the survey was planned (for a full moon period). Attempts were made however to mist-net on three nights, as much for a training exercise as anything but clear skies and full moon at high tide made it difficult and only one Dunlin was caught. Plans to band more birds in 2007 are underway.

Schools Visits

We visited the Gushan High School as we had done in



The Mayor of Dandong (2nd from left) with representatives from Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve and Miranda Naturalists Trust. (Photo by Keith Woodley)

the Australasian Shorebird Conference held in Nelson, on the South Island of New Zealand, as well as taking part in field studies. In March 2006 Ms Jai Na, from Yalu Jiang, and Ms Yang Xiuzhi, from Wetlands International – China, arrived for a two-month stay with similar objectives to the previous visitors. These visits were deemed very successful and plans were made for more YJNRR staff to visit Miranda in 2006-07.

In April 2006 Adrian Riegen, Keith Woodley, Gillian Vaughan and Bruce Postill (four members of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust council) spent two weeks at Yalu Jiang to help YJNRR staff conduct the fourth comprehensive shorebird survey of the reserve, to help with training of staff from other Chinese nature reserves, talk to local schools about shorebirds, participate in a birdwatching festival and to undertake some shorebird banding.

The shorebird survey ran from 13 – 23 April, with a break in the middle to take part in the Birdwatching Festival on 19 April (see Table 1). Four days of counting

2004 but found the school roll has increased by over 1000 to 5000+ in that time with over 4000 students living in. Keith presented a lecture about the shorebirds and the environment. Some students are very interested in environmental issues and it is hoped we can do more with these students in the coming years.

Acknowledgements

Miranda Naturalists' Trust involvement would not have been possible without the considerable support of the Dandong Bureau of the State Environment Protection Administration and the Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve management staff as well as Wetland International – China and Oceania.

We must also acknowledge the generous assistance of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust towards the travel costs of the New Zealand contingent and note that those travelling from New Zealand did so in their own time and to a varying extent, at their own expense.

Adrian Riegen, Miranda Naturalists' Trust

Sixth Australasian Shorebird Conference

Newcastle University

July 2007

Call for papers and expressions of interest.

The next Australasian Shorebird Conference will be held at Newcastle University, New South Wales, Australia 6-7 July 2007. The main theme of the conference will be 'shorebirds and their habitats in the Asia Pacific region' focusing on the migratory flyways and conservation issues in the region.

Symposia will include:

The Yellow Sea – the crossroads for the flyways of the Asia Pacific region

Identifying critical shorebird habitats in the East-Asian Australasian Flyway

Inland wetlands – the great unknown

Managing wetlands for the survival of shorebirds for tomorrow's generations

Avian diseases – recognising the culprits

Expressions of interest are invited and should be sent to Coordinator Sixth Australasian Shorebird Conference, P.O. Box 2006, Rockdale Delivery Centre, NSW 2216, Australia; or <PhilStraw@avifaunaresearch.com>

The results of the conference will be published as a working document for managers.

There will be limited assistance for participants from Asian countries who can demonstrate their need for financial assistance to attend the conference. Anyone considering applying for assistance should indicate their intentions by 30 September 2006. Applicants will be chosen on merit after the receipt of an abstract.

Fourth ASC Proceedings available free

The proceedings of the Fourth Australasian Shorebirds Conference 'Status and Conservation of Shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway' are now available for free download via the web:

<<http://www.wetlands.org/publication.aspx?ID=fec69ae2-dd15-4c5d-ac76-dd959e5bc07a>> printed copies are still available from Phil Straw, AWSG Vice Chairman, P.O. Box 2006, Rockdale Delivery Centre, NSW 2216, Australia or at <PhilStraw@avifaunaresearch.com>

Table 1: Summary of the shorebird count at Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve 12- 23 April 2006

Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	3
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	45,691
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	89
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	6,100
Eastern Curlew <i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	2,126
Curlew sp. <i>Numenius sp</i>	4,100
Spotted Redshank <i>Tringa erythropus</i>	113
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	54
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	2
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	33
Spotted Greenshank <i>Tringa guttifer</i>	24
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	3
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	27
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	6
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	4
Great Knot <i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	16,268
Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	1
Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	62
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	43,875
Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	7
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	296
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	13
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	5,573
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	1,485
Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	4
Unidentified	1,000
Unidentified large	1,200
Unidentified small	1,200
TOTALS	129,359

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Meeting

The Shorebird Science in the Western Hemisphere meeting took place from 27 February to 2 March 2006 at Boulder, Colorado, USA. It consisted of 4 plenary lectures, 9 symposia (6 species-based and 3 on broader issues consisting of 61 papers), 43 general papers among 10 subject themes, and 34 posters. Representatives from at least 10 Western Hemisphere countries and three other continents were present. Much of the Latin American presence was possible because of financial support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service, and I thank the different regional non-game coordinators for their assistance.

Each day of the meeting began with a plenary lecture. Bob Gill's talk on Monday morning, "Are We a Flock and Do We Know Where We are Going?" set the stage for the meeting by exploring past attempts to unite shorebird efforts in the Western Hemisphere and looking at how other shorebird groups throughout the world have addressed this issue. He offered ideas for a Western Hemisphere model that could function without adding undue structure and administrative burden. Bob's talk was scheduled first in the meeting because we wanted participants to consider the possibility of forming a hemisphere-wide group throughout the meeting. On Tuesday morning we shifted hemispheres and heard from Phil Battley whose plenary "To beg, borrow and steal: the art of doing research on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway" provided an overview of how shorebird conservation and research is conducted in another, shorebird-rich corner of the world. He described a system that consists of primarily volunteers and few government or university research projects. Though short on funds, biologists along the flyway have initiated extensive banding programs and used species such as the Great Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Spoon-billed Sandpiper and others to galvanize support and enthusiasm for shorebird conservation. On day three of the meeting we returned to the Western Hemisphere and South America in particular and heard from Luis Germán Naranjo. His plenary entitled "Shorebird Biology and the development of Colombian Ornithology" described the contributions of shorebird biology to the development of modern ornithology in Colombia and Northern South America. Luis discussed several milestones, including the formation of ornithology schools and the initiation of annual ornithological meetings in Columbia that led to substantial increases in waterbird studies in that country. On Thursday, Lew Oring gave a stimulating and well-received talk (" 'Our' Shorebirds: Gondwana Northward and Back Again") during which he discussed how shorebirds as a group emerged temporally and spatially on the world scene and how such actions as glaciation and historic and contemporary human influences have shaped the shorebird fauna as we know it. He clearly showed how anthropogenic and natural alteration of the environment has affected shorebird abundance, distribution, and behaviour.

This meeting also served as the inaugural meeting of the Shorebird Research Group of the Americas (SRGA)

– a group designed to bring shorebird researchers together to increase our knowledge of shorebirds in the Americas and ensure that information is available for conservation purposes. As their first project, SRGA is promoting a cooperative approach to determining the causes of shorebird population declines.

In addition to SRGA symposium, eight other symposia were held. Two of these were on broader issues and six were species based. The Shorebird Movements symposium focused on factors that affect how shorebirds navigate through their environment. The Neotropical Priorities symposium sought to put a world and South American perspective on the conservation status of North American shorebird species, and to initiate an assessment of the conservation status of Neotropical-breeding shorebird taxa. Species-based symposium included biologists studying the Black Oystercatcher, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Snowy Plover, and Western Sandpiper. Although the Western Sandpiper Research Network was meeting for an unprecedented 9th time, many of the other groups had never met before and consequently this was the first opportunity for researchers to finally meet people they had corresponded with for years. I think most people would agree that such personal exchanges lay the groundwork for the establishment of other collaborative efforts. This certainly has been the case for the Western Sandpiper group, whose members have published a record number of articles on many aspects of this species breeding, staging and winter ecology. Only the future will reveal the success of these initial meetings. Representatives from three other species-based working groups also gave short presentations, although these groups did not formally meet.

Hope to see all of you at the 2nd Shorebird Science in the Western Hemisphere meeting that will be held in conjunction with the VIII Neotropical Ornithological Congress in Maturin, Venezuela, on 13-19 May 2007.

Richard Lanctot

Obituary – Vladimir E. Flint 1924-2004

Professor Vladimir E. Flint passed away soon after his 80th birthday. He was the founder and a consultant of what is now the Working Group on Waders for the Russian-speaking countries. He was a widely known and respected ornithologist and organizer of animal science and conservation in Russia. He will be irreplaceable and his death is a painful loss to all who knew him.

Flint's love of birds was persistent and manifested itself in a variety of ways. As a an undergraduate working on the White Sea in 1952 he produced a number of valuable contributions later used major publications including *The Field Guide of the Birds of the USSR* (1968), later produced in English. This book played a colossal role in stimulating a new generation of Soviet ornithologists.

Pavel Tomkovich
(source Wader Study Group Bulletin)

Yalu Jiang Birdwatching Festival

19 April 2006 was 'Bird Festival Day' at Yalu Jiang National Nature Park. This was held in the reserve at Erdaogu (Site 2) where several shrimp ponds have been set aside for bird roosts. A new visitors centre had just been completed and two new hides each with a capacity of several hundred people have been erected overlooking the roosting ponds. The mayors of Dandong and Donggang have approved funding to improve the roost island. The festival was attended by some 300 invited guests who arrived with a police escort in a kilometre of cars. 300 school children launched the day with a series of well-rehearsed songs and fan dances. Various dignitaries from the mayor of Dandong down spoke about the need to care for the birds and the environment, although the audience's attention was diverted several times as thousands of shorebirds put on their own well-rehearsed display of formation flying. After the speeches the guests walked to the seawall just as the tide peaked forcing the 30,000 Bar-tailed Godwit, Great Knot and other species to lift from the mud in front of the gathering. After the birds had gone to inland roosts the invited throng were treated to a civic reception in nearby Donggang.

Three days later at Erdaogu several Chinese families came on their own accord to see the birds, they were not disappointed and it was very pleasing for us to see that ordinary people in China are starting to take an interest in birds, nature and the environment.

Adrian Riegen, Miranda Naturalists' Trust



School children performing at the Yalu Jiang Birdwatching Festival. Photo © Keith Woodley.

2006 Banding Program of Chongming Dao

The Chongming Dao Dongtan banding and flagging project continued during 50 days of the northward migration from March 20 to May 17, except for a nine day break due to adverse weather conditions. Qiang Ma acted as project leader this year with the assistance of Dongtan Reserver staff and university volunteers, previously carried out by Kejia Zhang who was on leave in Canada.

Over 3880 shorebirds of 31 species were banded. Of which 37 banded birds from North West Australia, two from New Zealand, one Terek Sandpiper from Japan and one Sharp-tailed Sandpiper from Taiwan were caught and then released.

In this season, we had two important changes. The first, we changed our White over Black flag combination to Black over White on April 6. The second, we released the first Great Knot banded with engraved flag in the fly way on April 11. In all we released 489 birds (249 Great Knot, 120 Red Knot, 83 Whimbrel, 27 Common Greenshank and 10 Bar-tailed Godwit) with engraved flags. In the forthcoming South migration, Black-tailed Godwit and Grey Plover will also be banded with engraved flags.

Qiang Ma



Asiatic Dowitcher with black over white flag combination
Photo: ©Kejia Xhang

Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring update

The closure of the 33 km seawall at Saemangeum in South Korea was discussed in some detail in the April 2006 Tattler. Birds Korea and the Australasian Wader Studies Group instigated a counting program; the Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring Program (SSMP); to help understand the consequences of this reclamation for the migratory birds using this area, and started surveying in the first week of April. At the time of writing the previous Tattler summary, fieldwork had not been completed. Surveys continued through to late May, and the key findings for the entire period are summarised here.

Over 30 volunteers (spread throughout the period) counted shorebirds from land and from boat, starting at the beginning of April and concentrating survey effort over the spring tide cycles in mid-April, late April and again in mid-May, with reduced effort towards the end of the month. Although a percentage of early-migrating species (e.g. Kentish Plover, Eurasian and Eastern Curlew) and very late-migrating species (e.g. Red Knot) might have been missed, the counts are considered to have recorded the vast majority of individuals of most species using the area on northward migration. This assumption is based on the steady rise in number of shorebirds throughout April into May, coupled with a peak followed by a rapid fall off in numbers of almost all species, especially between 20 and 25 May.

The SSMP has re-confirmed the extreme international importance of the area for shorebirds, especially as a possible optimal staging site (rather than one with a very high turnover rate). Shorebird count results of all species within the Saemangeum system were; 71,709 (15-17 April), 149,325 (27-29 April) and 176,955 (13-16 May) while within the Geum Estuary the results were; 45,371 (17 April), 51,568 (26 April) and 66,627 (15-17 May). Gomso Bay to the south was comparatively very poor for shorebirds, with the highest count in the period being only 767, on 17 May. The peak counts for Saemangeum and the adjacent Geum Estuary exceeded a quarter of a million birds.

The three most abundant shorebird species recorded in the combined Saemangeum/Geum area were Great Knot, with 116,126 in mid-May (approximately 30% of the world population, without any consideration of turnover), followed by Dunlin (82,718, also in mid-May), and Bar-tailed Godwit (15,876 in mid-April), while 34 Spoon-billed Sandpiper and 14 Nordmann's Greenshank were recorded within the Saemangeum area in mid-May, along with 70 Nordmann's Greenshank at the Geum Estuary. Other threatened species recorded by the SSMP included Black-faced Spoonbill (maximum of 12), Chinese Egret and Saunders's Gull (minimum of 44). In addition, about 300 leg-flagged and 50 individually colour-banded shorebirds were noted, with observations of birds banded in South Korea, New Zealand, Australia, China, Japan and Alaska.

The rapid seawall construction and closure led to a sudden reduction in tidal exchange, and a mass die-off of shellfish from about 25 April. This provided many

Great Knot and Dunlin with a temporary, abundant and easily accessible food source. There was no unambiguous evidence either of birds moving to alternative areas, or of birds starving, although there was a shift in distribution. Most of these shellfish beds were completely exhausted by late May, when the birds' abdominal profiles also suggested that Great Knot remaining within the Saemangeum system appeared less well-fed than those at the Geum Estuary. It can be confidently predicted that unless there were to be a rapid return of more natural tidal conditions, the Saemangeum system will no longer be able to support large concentrations of shorebirds.

With the massive degradation, and probable loss, of Saemangeum, the adjacent Geum Estuary now becomes South Korea's most important remaining shorebird site. This site too, however, is threatened with imminent reclamation, to be conducted in two phases, one infilling the natural coast, the other converting offshore tidal-flats into an industrial estate.

In order to raise awareness of the impacts of reclamation on shorebirds the SSMP data for 2006 has already been made widely available, in both Korean and English, on websites (such as those run by Birds Korea at <http://www.birdskorea.org>) and in published accounts, with a fuller report underway. In addition, an international workshop is planned in Seoul for September 2006, and counts will be repeated in spring 2007 and 2008



Great Knot Photo © Jan van de Kam

– the year in which South Korea hosts the next Ramsar Convention conference. We continue to welcome further volunteer participation from experienced counters, as well as financial support. We suggest that readers wishing to express their concern about the situation write to the South Korean embassy or consulate in the country where they live; background information for preparation of such letters is provided on <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/articles/saemangeum.html> and <http://www.birdskorea.org/saemref.asp>.

The SSMP will not only be of local or national value. While it will clearly reveal local changes in shorebird use, the data will also mesh into monitoring programs already being conducted by shorebird specialists in Australasia, providing perhaps one of the first examples of tracing the impact of large-scale reclamation at the population level.

Nial Moores, Birds Korea
Danny Rogers, Phil Battley and Ken Gosbell, AWSG

Javan Lapwing Expedition

A survey of shorebirds was carried out along the coastal areas of Southern Lumajang, East Java, Indonesia, as a part of the "Javan Lapwing Expedition". This expedition was carried out over two periods; between 15 June and 8 July 2005, and 26 December 2005 to 15 January 2006. A total of 9 observers from various cities in Java participated in the survey. The primary objective of this expedition was to obtain an update on the existence of this presumed extinct species. In addition, it was intended to gather data from Southern Lumajang for nomination as an Important Bird Area. A survey of local villagers was carried out as part of the survey in an effort to gather any data on the Javan Lapwing as well as any other species at potential IBA sites.

The area surveyed was regarded as preferred habitat for Javan Lapwing and many of the people interviewed were adamant that the species still existed, however the team were unable to substantiate the presences of a single individual.

We did however, confirm that the area met the criteria as an Important Bird Area due to the presence of good habitat for some globally-threatened, restricted range birds as well as migratory species. A total of 111 bird species were observed during the expedition, including 3 globally-threatened species (Christmas Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*, Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* and Javan Coucal *Centropus nigrorufus*) and 2 threatened-species (Javan plover *Charadrius javanicus* and Grey-headed Fish-eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*).

More than 400 shorebirds of 16 species were counted along the sandy coast including Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*, Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Javan Plover *Charadrius javanicus*, Lesser sand-plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*, Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, White-headed Stilt *Himantopus leucocephalus* and Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*. Other species observed included Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* and Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*. Observations were also made of 28 other waterbird species.

Full PDF report in Indonesian language can be obtained from the author's address.

(Reported by Fransisca Noni Tirtaningtyas fransisca_noni@yahoo.com and ilwan Londo ilwan_londo@yahoo.com).

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* – First Australian Occurrence

Deep in cotton growing country 650 km north-west of Sydney lies a small grain-handling township of Burren Junction. It is here that two bird watchers, Karen and Brett Davis from Jervis Bay saw a bird that they could not identify from their Australian field guide. Fortunately they were able to take digital photographs and send the images by email to other bird watchers who were able to access field guides to birds overseas and identify the bird as a Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*.

The Grey-headed Lapwing breeds in north-eastern China and Japan and migrate to Nepal, north-east India, Bangladesh and southern China during the northern hemisphere winter. They are occasionally recorded as vagrants in the Philippines and in Indonesia.



More than 100 bird watchers travelled great distances within days of it being discovered in late June 2006. It was still there in late August and appears to have adopted the town, staying close to the tiny urban area, particularly in a grassy paddock opposite the grain storage silos at the western end of town. It is quite a handsome bird; grey above and in front extending down to a black breast band and a white belly below. The eye is bright red. Unfortunately, it has a large spherical red-brown growth under the right foot, causing a slight limp. It often raises the right leg when resting transferring a red-brown stain to the right side of the belly, indicating that the growth is probably infected.

Our bird has moved south instead of north at this time of year and has also considerably overshot Indonesia!

Chris Herbert

Of colour-banded godwits and the elusive red knots in Asia

Many Bar-tailed Godwits have been colour flagged in the East Asia-Australasian Flyway. However, in addition to flags, many New Zealand godwits have also been fitted with several colour bands which help to easily identify the individual bird in the field. More Bar-tailed Godwits were colour-banded in New Zealand during 2006 than in previous years. This, combined with the fact that joint survey work in China and South Korea, meant that more eyes were out looking for longer than in previous years.

During the Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring Program in South Korea, 40 sightings were made of colour-banded godwits including 20 confirmed combinations involving 23 individuals from seven locations around New Zealand. Elsewhere in South Korea another 19 sightings were made, including the increasingly famous 2YWWB, which has now been seen at exactly the same site (Ersa-ri, Hongsung) three years in a row, arriving within the same week each year. Even in the most carefully watched areas only a few of the birds were observed more than once. This suggests that some birds may stay to 'refuel' while others move northwards within the Yellow Sea (we have one record of a bird seen in both South Korea and China in the same year). The departure of godwits towards the breeding grounds was evident in South Korea by mid-May, when only one colour-banded godwit was found despite extensive searches.

In China, the first record was of a bird caught rather than seen! It was a bird from Christchurch trapped at Chongming Dongtan, near Shanghai, by Zhang Kejia and colleagues on 30 March. The rest of the Chinese sightings were from Yalu Jiang in the northeast part of the Yellow Sea. This is where a team from the Miranda Naturalists' Trust, in New Zealand, joined staff from the Yalu Jiang National Nature Park to check godwit legs (when they weren't counting the massed throngs of birds). Of the 63 sightings they made, 26 individual combinations were confirmed. Another 12 birds could be identified to site or region where they were banded by reading part of the colour band combination. These had come from both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. With another year of data collection like this we will be able to assess whether there is any difference in the migration routes of godwits from different parts of New Zealand.

Japan again turned up a banded bird at Gan-no-su, Wajiro tidal flat, Fukuoka. This year it was much harder for the observer than last year – he had to look through 15 birds, instead of only three birds seen last year, to find the banded one!

The question of whether godwits fly direct to Asia from New Zealand has not yet been solved. The indications from banded birds are that they probably do not. We have good departure date information for birds from the Firth of Thames but the quickest journey to eastern Asia recorded is 11 days, which leaves time for a stopover of up to one week en route. Banding is not the best tool to address

flight lengths with but it can give some useful pointers. We hope to track the northward migration of godwits directly using satellite transmitters in 2007, so keep your eyes on this spot.

Finally, where are all the banded Red Knots? Again the sole record during migration was one bird caught at Chongming Dongtan.

Phil Battley philbattley@quicksilver.net.nz
David Melville david.melville@xtra.co.nz
Rob Schuckard rschckrd@xtra.co.nz



A colour-banded godwit photographed in Japan 11 days after being last seen in New Zealand. (Photo by Kouji Takenaka)

Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund

The 'Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund' has been established to provide financial support to projects at site of importance for migratory waterbirds in the East Asia - Australasian Flyway.

Cathay Pacific placed an initial donation of HK\$500,000 (approx. US\$65,000) into the Fund which is administered by WWF Hong Kong, and further donations are actively being sought to increase the amount in the Fund so that a greater number of worthwhile projects can be supported in future.

Each year, up to 25% of the amount in the Fund will be earmarked for disbursement to support approved projects. At present, the maximum amount that can be applied for each project shall not exceed US\$4,000.

Three projects has been funded in the first round of application in June 2006. You may visit <http://www.wwf.org.hk/eng/maipo/awcf/projects.html> <<http://www.wwf.org.hk/eng/maipo/awcf/projects.html>> for details.

There will be a single call for applications to the Fund each year with the deadline currently being 31 October 2006. For further information, please check <http://www.wwf.org.hk/eng/maipo/awcf/> or contact the AWCF Administrator by e-mail awcf@wwf.org.hk.

Save wetlands to cut bird flu risk: UN

A United Nations (UN) report says restoring the world's wetlands may be critical to preventing outbreaks of avian flu, as their revival will keep migratory birds from mixing with domesticated fowl.

It says the degradation of wetlands has forced wild birds, some carrying the deadly H5N1 strain, into alternative habitats. That increases the risk of the spread of the disease to poultry and onto humans, many of whom live in close proximity to their flocks. "The loss of wetlands around the globe is forcing many wild birds onto alternative sites like farm ponds and paddy fields, bringing them into direct contact with chickens, ducks, geese and other domesticated fowl," the report said.

The report, which has been presented at a two-day conference at the Nairobi-based UN Environment Program (UNEP), notes that contact between migratory birds and their domesticated cousins is a major cause of the spread of avian flu. That includes the H5N1 strain, which is potentially deadly to humans. "We know there is a very tight link between the conditions of ecosystems and the likelihood of threats to human health," David Rapport, a Canadian professor of ecosystem health and the lead author of the study, said.

Pollution filters

Additionally, UNEP deputy director Shafqat Kakakhel says wetlands play a significant role in filtering pollution and absorbing floods and storm water. "There are numerous pressing reasons for conserving and restoring degraded ecosystems like wetlands," he said. "Their ability to disperse and keep wild birds away from domestic ones is now yet another compelling argument for conserving and rehabilitating them."

The report says current anti-bird flu measures, including isolation, quarantine, culls and medication, are likely to be only "quick fixes" and that environmental improvements offer medium- and long-term solutions. It urges "massive" investment in wetlands restoration as well as concerted efforts to move poultry farms from beneath migratory bird flyways where the chances of domestic fowl being infected are greater.

From Agence France-Presse

Spoon-billed Sandpiper expedition Bangladesh 2006

At least 11 of the globally endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper have been found at three sites along the Bangladesh in January, during an international expedition of British, German, Russian and Bangladeshi Ornithologists funded by the German based Manfred-Hermsen-Foundation, raising hopes for the survival of the birds, whose population has declined to just 300-350 pairs in the wild. The sightings are all from previously unknown sites and crucial in the understanding of the wintering grounds. It is now assumed that the species is much more scattered, wintering along the mudflats between the Gulf of Thailand in the East and the Eastern shores of Bangladesh in the West. No birds were found in the Western part of Bangladesh, coinciding with no sightings on the East coast of India at last year's expedition in West Bengal. Bangladesh and possibly Myanmar, where no information is available, are highly important wintering areas for the species. In this respect it is of great concern that so many mudflats have been observed as degraded or converted into prawn farms or salt pans without the vital intertidal exchange of saltwater, vital for the species feeding grounds. These mudflats disappear at an alarming rate in Eastern Bangladesh, but also in Thailand, Vietnam and possibly Myanmar and gradually reduce the habitat of the species with equally or worse impact than the devastating large-scale reclamation of the Saemangeum mudflats in Korea.



The expedition members received a warm reception from the local people, the government and the press. The expedition even received the backing and well wishes of the president of Bangladesh. The level of interest and support is very promising and hopefully for the implementation of a future action plan envisioned in the country and beyond in the region to protect core sites along the flyway. The safeguarding of international ecosystems will not only help the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, but also secure the livelihoods of many million people depending on coastal fisheries.

Christoph Zöckler, ArcCona Consulting Cambridge
Source: *Wader Study Group Bulletin*

East Asian - Australasian Flyway Shorebird Action Plan

July 2006 – Quarterly Update

To submit news on migratory shorebird conservation in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, or for enquiries on the Shorebird Action Plan please contact Warren Lee Long at Wetlands International – Oceania. Email: warren.leelong@wetlands-oceania.org Tel: +61 2 6260 8341

Development of the Network:

- **Six new Shorebird Network Sites in Australia were noted by the MWCC on 10th July**, including 4 sites in Queensland (Currawinya, Bowling Green Bay, Shoalwater Bay, Great Sandy Strait) and 2 sites in Victoria (Shallow Inlet and Discovery Bay). This expands the Shorebird Site Network to 45 sites in 12 countries.
- **Nominations for 4 new Shorebird sites in China are close to completion:** Nandagang, Hengshui Hu, Poyang Hu and Nanjishan. State Forestry Administration (SFA) requested Wetlands International – China to directly assist the provincial SFA managers to nominate these internationally important sites to join the Network.
- **The Thailand national workshop for migratory waterbirds is planned for September 2006.** The Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy and Planning, NGOs, provincial agencies and local stakeholders will meet to develop priorities and projects for shorebird conservation in Thailand, including nominations for new shorebird sites. Contact Asae Sayaka at Wetlands International – Thailand: <asae-s@psu.ac.th>
- **A Philippines national workshop for migratory waterbirds is also planned for early October 2006.** The Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, NGOs, regional agency staff and other stakeholders will workshop to identify a set of priority steps for advancing national and international efforts on shorebird conservation in The Philippines.
- **The Shorebird Action Plan will continue until the new Flyway Partnership is launched in November 2006.** Additional activities under the Action Plan in this period are to assist a smooth transition for Network Sites from the Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy to the new Flyway Partnership and to ensure that a strategic set of projects for shorebird conservation are commenced within the Partnership.
- **The Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund (AWCF) has opened a 2nd call for proposals. Applications close 31st October 2006.** This fund was initiated by a generous contribution from Cathay Pacific to WWF

Hong Kong, and other contributors are being sought to strengthen the fund. For more information on the AWCF fund, and to download application guidelines see: <http://www.wwf.org.hk/eng/maipo/awcf/>

Appropriate Management of Network Sites:

- **The second Indonesian shorebird skills training workshop was completed at Palembang and Cemara, NE coast of Sumatra, in late April 2006.** Phil Straw (AWSG) provided volunteer training services for 11 trainees from forestry agencies, NGOs and Universities, with workshop coordination and assistance provided by Wetlands International – Indonesia Programme. The workshop also established stronger networking arrangements for shorebird conservation in Indonesia.
- **A community training workshop on “Conservation of Shorebirds and Wetlands”** was completed at Krabi Estuary and Bay, Thailand on 17, 18th June. Wetlands International – Thailand assisted local communities and provincial agencies to explore alternative community incomes and ways to protect critical shorebird habitats at their new Shorebird Network Site. See results at: <<http://www.wetlands.org/articlemenu.aspx?id=0e324b12-5bc2-4439-8816-10ec3b91c825>>
- **The Shorebird Studies Manual is being translated to Thai language** for distribution in late 2006 by Wetlands International – Thailand. This has been assisted by the Australian Governments’ Natural Heritage Trust funds under the Shorebird Action Plan.
- **The shorebird migration brochure was printed in Thai language in May** and is being distributed widely to stakeholders at shorebird sites in Thailand. This was supported by the Danida funded coastal management project at Krabi. Wetlands International – Thailand is working with hotels in Krabi and Trang Provinces initially to distribute the brochure to visitors.
- **Recommendations on conservation of migratory shorebirds and key habitats in the Yellow Sea** are being developed for the Biodiversity Plan of the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (YSLME) Project. Wetlands International is also providing specialist advice which will contribute to the Biodiversity Strategy and the Public Awareness and Communications Strategy’ - for guiding activities under the Yellow Sea Partnership.
- **A Workshop on migratory shorebirds and coastal zone management at Tanghai, Bohai Sea,** is planned for late September. Wetlands International – China will convene a gathering of local experts and stakeholders to examine information on key shorebird habitats, local impacts and threats, and

options for managing these areas within the coastal development planning frameworks at Tanghai, where the major industry and port development of "Cao Fei Dian" has already commenced construction.

Improving the Information Base

- **Results of the waterbird survey of the Irrawaddy Delta** completed in February 2006 by the Myanmar Nature Society, were published in *Indian Birds*, Vol 2 No 3, pp 65-71. Eight species of migratory shorebirds were recorded in numbers exceeding the 1% criteria, confirming the international importance of the Irrawaddy Delta.
- **The 2nd Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) National Coordinators Meeting** is planned for 8-10 October 2006 in Manila. The meeting will be hosted by the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) of the government of the Philippines, and will focus on a long-term strategy for strengthening the AWC. Contact David Li: AWC International Coordinator, Wetlands International, Tel: +60-3-78046770, Email: david@wetlands.org.my

Information Contacts:

The "Shorebird Site Network" E-mail Discussion Forum assists networking and information exchange among site managers, shorebird experts, education specialists and other partners in the flyway. To join this un-moderated e-mail discussion forum please contact the Shorebird Flyway Officer, Warren Lee Long: <warren.leelong@wetlands-occeania.org>.

The Waterbird Strategy Calendar for 2006 is available at:

<<http://www.wetlands.org/articlemenu.aspx?id=62fa7e34-4ea30-4c97-b8a9-4a96bee8d267>>. If you are aware of other events appropriate to the Flyway, please send information to Dr. Taej Mundkur (Asia Pacific Waterbird Strategy Coordination Officer): <taejmundkur.wi@vsnl.net>.

Volunteer Opportunity as Migratory Waterbirds Officer in Thailand

Wetlands International-Thailand, in collaboration with Krabi Provincial Administrative Organization, is seeking an intern or volunteer to assist projects on wetland and waterbird conservation in Thailand. The volunteer Waterbird Officer will provide technical assistance on wetland and waterbird conservation for staff of local government organizations, community-based organizations, local communities in Krabi and Trang provinces. Work will include dealing with local communities to reduce environmental impacts on coastal resources, and assisting them in environmental education & awareness activities. Sustainable livelihoods, and eco-tourism could be work topics as well as.

The volunteer may work closely with the Director and staff of Wetlands International Thailand in identification and development of project proposals to meet priorities currently identified by Wetlands International Thailand.

The period of placement will be 24 months and based at a newly established project office of Wetlands International - Thailand in Krabi Province. The volunteer would commence in October 2006. Wetlands International Thailand will provide accommodation during the period of placement. A short Thai language training course will be provided.

If interested please send your CV to:

Asae Sayaka

Director
Wetlands International Thailand
P.O. Box 95, Kor Hong Post Office
Hat Yai 90112
Thailand
Tel/Fax: +66-74-429307
E-mail: asae-s@psu.ac.th

New shorebird website

A new shorebird website has been set up by the PRK (Working Group on Waders) by our Russian colleagues with support as a Small Nature Protection Initiative Project from the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Moscow. The website can be accessed at <www.waders.ru> in English as well as Russian and provides a welcome link with workers in the breeding grounds of many of the migratory species that occur throughout the Asia Pacific.



Community training workshop on "Conservation of Shorebirds and Wetlands" at Krabi Estuary and Bay, Thailand on 17, 18th June (Photo: Asae Sayaka, Wetlands International - Thailand)

Asian Waterbird Census meeting

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) is an international programme for monitoring the status of the waterbird population (including shorebirds), distribution and the status of the wetlands. The AWC runs parallel to other international censuses of waterbirds in Africa, Europe and Neotropics under the umbrella of the International Waterbird Census (IWC). The AWC was initiated in 1987 under the co-ordination of Wetlands International in the Indian subcontinent, and has grown rapidly to cover most countries of South Asia, East Asia and South East Asia, as well as Pacific and Russia Far East. The objective of the census is:

- To obtain annual information on waterbirds at wetlands in the region during the northern hemisphere non-breeding period of most species (January), as a basis for site evaluation and population monitoring;
- To monitor on an annual basis the status and condition of wetlands; and
- To encourage greater interest in waterbirds and wetlands amongst people, and thereby promote the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds in the region.

The overall programme is coordinated by Wetlands International Malaysia Office (earlier known as Asian Wetlands Bureau and Wetlands International – Asia Pacific) and implemented by volunteers in each country. Counts for each country are normally coordinated by a volunteer national or regional coordinator who is responsible for sending out count forms, liaising with participants and receiving forms after the census, compiling national report and forwarding it to the international coordinators.

Over the past 20 years, over 6,000 wetlands sites from 26 countries in the region have been surveyed at least once by the AWC. The AWC has been extremely successful in identifying internationally important wetland sites, important bird areas, the distribution and population of waterbird species and contributed towards conservation activities at local to international levels. Through the programme, local conservation networks were established, waterbird and wetlands conservation awareness were raised and many important sites for waterbirds were conserved. However there is a need to monitor more wetlands on a regular basis, at least annually, if we are to pick up declines in waterbird populations and identify problems areas and management issues.

To further develop the programme of the need of wetland and waterbird conservation in the region, Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF), Japan recently approved a grant of JPY 5 million to support the development of the AWC in 2006. With the KNCF support, an international meeting for the AWC national coordinators will be held in Manila, the Philippines in October to develop a long term strategy of the AWC, a report of the AWC 2002-2004 result will also be published by early 2007 under the KNCF support.

For more information on the AWC, contact David Li, AWC International Coordinator <david@wetlands.org.my> or visit Wetlands International website at <http://www.wetlands.org/articlemenu.aspx?id=8fb450de-f760-42bb-8337-c9942a41d5fc>

AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

Call for Papers and Expressions of Interest

The Fourth Biennial Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held in Perth, Western Australia on 3rd to 5th of December 2007. This conference provides a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region. The venue will be the University of Western Australia, and the Western Australian group of Birds Australia (RAOU) will host the conference.

A post-conference field excursion will be available.

You are invited to express your interest in attending this conference, and presenting a paper by visiting www.birdswa.com.au/aoc2007 or by writing to the conference co-ordinator:

S. Mather, Birds Australia Western Australia, 167 Perry Lakes Drive, Floreat, WA 6014, Australia

Email: aoc2007@birdswa.com.au

Telephone: 61 (0)8 93896416

Shorebird Conservation Toolkit

WWF-Australia with funding from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust is pleased to announce the launch of the Shorebird Conservation Toolkit - www.shorebirds.org.au - to help protect and enhance shorebird habitat across Australia.

The toolkit builds on the success of the national Shorebird Conservation Project (2001-2005), drawing from over 31 on-ground and community-driven shorebird conservation projects.

The toolkit is a comprehensive resource that will enable users to:

- * understand and appreciate shorebirds, their habitat and conservation needs;
- * locate important shorebird sites in Australia and access population estimates;
- * develop site survey and monitoring programs;
- * identify/assess site management needs, and implement/evaluate management actions;
- * write grant applications, site communication plans and media releases;
- * access existing resources;
- * identify and advocate international/national conservation options; and
- * access organisations with knowledge/expertise in practical shorebird and wetland conservation.

The toolkit is available on-line at www.shorebirds.org.au and on CD

For further information contact Bianca Priest 03 6225 1394 or bpriest@wwf.org.au