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Newsletter for the Asia Pacific Flyways

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Tattler is the quarterly newsletter of the Australasian Wader Studies Group. Contributions are welcome and encouraged for all working with shorebirds and their habitats along the East Asian- Australasian Flyway. Please contact the editor for more information.

Editorial

The counting is all done for the summer season with participants monitoring an impressive number of sites for the Shorebirds 2020 program. This program has reinvigorated counts nationwide and has added to the valuable data sets obtained in other long term projects.

Most of the migratory waders have now departed Australia's shores and many people waved them goodbye from all corners of the country.

And as the waters flow slowly from Queensland south to Lake Eyre, some of the resident shorebirds and waterbirds will flock there to breed and produce another of nature's spectacles—with birds and water as far as the eye can see.

But Australia is a country of extremes, for as the rain poured down in Queensland, fires ravaged drought-stricken Victoria. The Rogers family, long time AWSG members and known to most in the shorebird community, lost their family home and with it, their library. Please support the appeal to refill their shelves.

North-west Australia Wader & Tern Expedition 2009 31st October to 21st November 2009

The next wader and tern banding expedition to north-west Australia will take place from 31st October to 21st November 2009. Please register your interest NOW.

North-west Australia was discovered to be one of the prime locations in the world for wading birds with a peak population of nearly 750,000 waders and a huge variety of species (50, nearly a quarter of the 214 species of waders worldwide).

The fieldwork program will, as usual, consist of regular banding and appropriate counting of waders and terns at two locations (Broome and 80-Mile Beach) over the three week period.

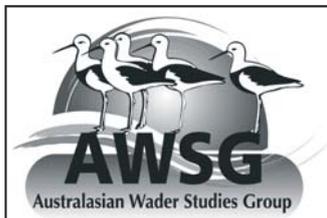
A large number of people will be needed and you are invited and strongly encouraged to join the expedition team—we welcome overseas

participants with usually half the team coming from abroad.

Previous wader banding or expedition experience is not essential. What is important is the readiness to work hard (when required) and be a contributor to the team (lazy/loners won't fit in!). It is a wonderful opportunity to mix with, and learn from, others with different backgrounds and experience. Although not obligatory, as this is an AWSG activity we would welcome you becoming a member.

Please contact Clive (mintons@ozemail.com.au) or Roz (moonbird@waterfront.net.au) for further information.

Clive Minton, Roz Jessop, Chris Hassell and Maureen Christie



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A Special interest Group of Birds Australia

www.awsg.org.au



7th Australasian Shorebird Conference Hobart, 4-6 September 2009 — Call for papers

The theme of the 7th Australasian Shorebird Conference will be "*Resident and Migratory Shorebirds – Managing Their Future*". This will encompass several inter-related themes including:

- Future prospects for shorebirds in the East-Asian Australasian Flyway
- Knowledge gaps in regard to Resident shorebirds
- Beach nesting birds and sea level rise
- Conservation status and threats to shorebirds

If you are interested in presenting an oral or poster at the Conference, please email the organisers at awsg2009@gmail.com with a title, author(s) and affiliation(s), and an abstract of no more than 150 words. Please indicate whether the abstract is for an oral or poster presentation. We encourage all potential presenters or those with posters to contact the organisers for more information.

If you would like to be placed on the mailing list for the Conference and receive future newsletters and emails, or if you wish to attend the Conference, please email the Conference organisers at awsg2009@gmail.com

There will be an ice-breaker on the evening of Friday 4 September, and a Conference dinner on the Saturday evening. If you have specific dietary requirements, please advise the organisers as we will cater for your dietary needs at the Saturday and Sunday lunches, ice breaker and the Conference dinner.

If you wish to bring a partner to the Icebreaker or Conference Dinner, please advise the organisers. The Icebreaker will be free and open to partners, but extra tickets for the Conference dinner will be on sale.

Some delegates have indicated that they require a letter of invitation for an Australian visa to be

issued. If you require such a letter, please contact the organisers and an invitation on Conference letterhead will be sent to you. This should be sufficient for the visa to be issued.

We request that Conference attendees organise their travel to Tasmania, accommodation in Hobart, and pre- or post-Conference trips with Tonia Cochrane at inala@inalabruny.com.au. Tonia has negotiated special prices for the Conference, so please email her to discuss your travel and accommodation needs. Please contact Tonia directly for all accommodation and trip enquiries and bookings and payments for these. Do not send payments for accommodation or trips to the organisers.

The registration cost for delegates will be AUD\$240 per person (approx. USD\$160) and AUD\$200 (approx. USD\$130) for students. This fee includes a copy of the abstracts volume, morning, afternoon teas and lunches on both days, and tickets to the Conference dinner and Icebreaker .

Depending on interest, visits may be organised to local shorebird sites in south-east Tasmania; trips to other shorebird sites in the state may also be organised if sufficient interest is shown.

If you have any queries or if we can assist you in any way, please contact the organisers at awsg2009@gmail.com and we will be happy to help you.

Please circulate this news and call for papers as widely as you can to colleagues, associates and students and please email the organisers at awsg2009@gmail.com for further information.

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee, I look forward to seeing you in Hobart later this year.

*Dr Eric J Woehler
Convenor, 7th Australasian Shorebird Conference*

Darwin's first overseas leg flag sighting !!

A Greater Sand Plover that had been banded in Darwin (yellow over blue flags on right tibia) was sighted at HanPao (ChangHwa County) by the Taiwan Wader Study Group at the end of March. The bird was very close to the observers who were able to read the band number.

*Chung-Yu Chiang
Taiwan Wader Study Group*

Ed- The bird was banded as an adult on 30 October 2008 at Finnis Beach, south-west of Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. It was observed 4244km from its banding location.



Darwin's first overseas leg flag sighting

Shorebirds 2020, Birds Australia Summer 2008/09 Count

This past summer people volunteered to do shorebird surveys at an incredible 150 shorebird areas. This effort has been a remarkable demonstration of how volunteers acting together can make a huge impact towards shorebird conservation, and goes a long way towards our target of surveying 155 priority shorebird areas around the country. These efforts are forming a powerful picture on declining shorebird populations, threats, and habitat loss in Australia. Survey records continue to flow in to the national office, however preliminary indications are that shorebird numbers appear to be down in many areas.

One result highlighted by this year's survey was the loss of shorebird populations that were once found in inland wetlands in south-east Australia. In the 1980s these areas supported tens of thousands of shorebirds. Now many are dry, and have been for a number of years (even Lake Colac in Victoria was dry this year!). Combine this with what is happening in the Coorong Ramsar site, and it is clear that the south-east of the country is not capable of supporting as many shorebirds as it once was.

The summer counting season is now completed. The next round of counts will be the national winter counts in June-July.

Western Australia

In NW WA Great Knot populations appear to have declined by over 20%, most likely as a direct result of the habitat loss in the Yellow Sea, notably Saemanguem. Also, this year a project in NW WA led by Chris Hassell and Danny Rogers led to a more complete count of habitats in that area than ever before. Elsewhere in WA, an expedition to Shark Bay led by BAWA members has led to a much improved understanding of shorebird distributions in this important area. Further south, the amount of data coming in will make a more complete count of the shorebirds found there than has been done in many years.

Northern Territory

Gavin O'Brien has taken over the count coordination from the Keates family, and has done an excellent job at both continuing the program there and looking for ways to expand.

South Australia

There has been a remarkable effort at counting led by Birds SA, Trevor Cowie, Jane Cooper, Paul Wainwright and Maureen Christie. The information being collected is providing a more comprehensive understanding of shorebird numbers and distribution in SA than ever achieved in the past. At a glance, the decline in Curlew Sandpiper has become so dramatic at some sites that statistics are hardly needed anymore to document the changes. Inland wetlands are often too dry to support waders, with the health of the Coorong in particular continuing to decline.



March 14 workshop participants at Thompson Beach inland salt pans- Photo by Lainie Berry

New South Wales

Counters have been busy completing monthly counts at core sites. These more frequent counts provide a much more powerful dataset, and often allow for maximum summer counts that are more reliable. There have been many new people and groups getting involved, and they have been sending count data (including historic data) from sites for which we have not received data in years.

Queensland

The Queensland Wader Study Group continues to count monthly at some of the nation's largest and most important shorebird areas, and new people are getting involved from BOCA groups and BA NQ. A count by Wetlands International was completed for key parts of Broad Sound. It will be interesting to see if more shorebirds have turned up in Queensland wetlands after the floods.

Victoria

There are early reports of fewer Red Knots, and inland wetlands are missing thousands of shorebirds (a less than surprising result of having no water). Volunteers on the Bellarine Peninsula region have conducted many counts over the summer to help define the habitats in the area and discover how much benefit there is to doing repeat surveys. Also, counting at the core sites has continued by new people and groups, such as Sunraysia Bird Observers Club.

Tasmania

In Tasmania, an area with some of the longest and most consistent data sets in the country, counts have continued at these informative sites, with a few new areas being counted by a few more people.

Rob Clemens, Birds Australia's Shorebirds 2020 Technical Manager





Shorebird Counting and ID Workshops

Our two most recent Shorebird Counting and ID workshops were held in Adelaide on 22 February and 14 March, with field trips to Thompson Beach and Barker Inlet Wetlands. The workshops were extremely well attended with over 120 participants in total.

The field trip to Thompson Beach on 22 February was a huge success. We saw several thousand birds at the site, including Red Knot, Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Greenshank, Grey Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Red-capped Plover. The number of birds at Barker Inlet was much lower, but participants were able to see a variety of species, including Marsh Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Greenshank, Black-winged Stilt, Red-kneed Dotterel, and a late arrival of a Red-necked Stint flock.

For the second workshop in March, we again visited

Thompson Beach. Owing to huge tides that day, both the birds and our intrepid workshopers retreated inland to salt pan roost sites. Strong winds meant that viewing conditions were less than ideal, but we saw several dozen Bar-tailed Godwits, as well as Greenshank, Ruddy Turnstones, Red-capped Plovers, Red-necked Stints and Marsh Sandpipers. Thanks to the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges NRM Board for supporting these two events.

By Lainie Berry, Shorebirds 2020 Project Officer

Our newest Shorebirds 2020 team member

Lainie Berry has joined the Shorebirds 2020 project at Birds Australia. She will run the workshop program and produce the newsletter.

This project is supported by Birds Australia and AWSG, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and WWF-Australia

Spoon-billed surveys

Two surveys of the wintering grounds of Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* starkly illustrate the extreme and growing pressures this Critically Endangered species faces. The second annual survey on the coast of Myanmar found one new wintering site, but numbers overall were less than in the previous year. But in Vietnam, where more than 27 individuals were recorded in the mid-1990s, not a single Spoon-billed Sandpiper was seen in January 2009.

The Myanmar survey was carried out in mid-January by an international team of German, British, Russian, Canadian and Burmese scientists, led by BANCA (BirdLife in Myanmar) and ArcCona Ecological Consulting, Cambridge (UK). In total, 63 birds were found by two teams, operating on the Rakhine (Arakan) coast, and in the Bay of Martaban. The total of 48 birds in the Bay of Martaban was similar to the 2008 figure, but at the island of Nan Thar near the Bangladeshi border, only 14 were recorded, compared to 35 in 2008.

A new site with at least one Spoon-billed Sandpiper was found along the Rakhine coast. The survey indicates that the Bay of Martaban, close to Yangon (the capital of Myanmar), may be the most important wintering site for the species in Myanmar. The 48 birds observed are a minimum, and probably well below the total number that winters in the estuary. The survey covered only 25-40% of suitable habitat, and the flocks of waders were difficult to approach. The surveys also took place during neap tides, when some prime feeding areas dry out, resulting in considerable local movements within the bay.

"Taking all this into consideration, the site may hold

more than 100 Spoon-billed Sandpiper", said Christoph Zöckler of ArcCona Cambridge. "However, it has no protected status at present, putting the site at risk from development."

At both Martaban and Nan Thar island there was evidence of hunting and trapping, which targets larger birds, but may also entangle and kill small waders. The pressure of an increasing coastal population means that younger hunters may have begun to target smaller birds.

"With the support of a member of a local environmentalist group, we negotiated an immediate halt to trapping with the hunters from two villages which take birds from the island, in return for a small compensation", said Zöckler. "In the longer term the local environmentalist group is being encouraged to develop an economically and ecologically sound alternative to hunting, of which community-based eco-tourism seems the likeliest."

The survey in the Red River Delta, Vietnam, was a part of a long-term initiative by the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SBS) Recovery Team to discover key non-breeding grounds of the species. It was organized in cooperation with the BirdLife Indochina Programme, supported by Japan Wetlands Action Network, and funded by Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund.

Between 9 and 18 January, six expedition members from Russia, Japan and Vietnam surveyed three key locations (Quan Lan, Thai Thuy and Xuan Thuy), where the species had been observed before. In spite of intensive efforts, no Spoon-billed Sandpipers were seen, although over 5,700 shorebirds were counted, and most of them identified to species level.

"There is still a chance that some Spoon-billed Sandpiper are staying in the area, since we didn't cover the whole coast, and because two birds were seen in Quan Lan on 26 December, 2008", said survey member Evgeny Syroechkovskiy. But he added: "We may have missed some individuals, but not any serious numbers."

Enormous pressure on the intertidal areas was observed in many parts of the Red River Delta. "It is likely that local habitat transformation and illegal bird trapping were among the main reason for the species decline in the earlier years", said Syroechkovskiy. However, problems at migratory stop over sites may have contributed.

"These surveys, and monitoring in Thailand and Bangladesh, are increasing our knowledge of the wintering range of the species, and will enable us to propose coastal areas which need to be protected to

ensure the survival of Spoon-billed Sandpiper", said Mike Crosby, Senior Conservation Officer, BirdLife's Asia Division.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper is one of the species benefitting from the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme. In August 2008, Wildsounds became a Species Champion for Spoon-billed Sandpiper. The programme is spearheading greater conservation action, awareness and funding support for all of the world's most threatened birds, starting with the 190 species classified as Critically Endangered, the highest level of threat.

Birdlife International News
18-03-2009

http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/03/sbs_surveys.html

More Reclamation Approved in the Republic of Korea

In mid-March, the national Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs in the Republic of Korea approved another round of reclamation projects, including reclamation (i.e. conversion of wetland to dry land) of 715 ha of tidal-flat at Song Do in Incheon.

Although far less well-known than Saemangeum, Song Do is one of a number of other internationally important shorebird sites in the ROK also being reclaimed. Based on Birds Korea data, this latest reclamation project will "take out" an area that supports internationally important concentrations of ten species of waterbird. Recent counts at Song Do Tidal-flat include 1000 Mongolian Plover, 7950 Black-tailed Godwit, 3000 Common Greenshank, 8000 Great Knot and at least 11 Nordmann's Greenshank.

The decision to reclaim Song Do Tidal-flat comes

after formal statements to Ramsar that "tidal-flats will be preserved and that no more large-scale reclamation will be approved in the Republic of Korea", and also after Incheon City (which has jurisdiction over Song Do) hosted the last Flyway Partnership meeting (November 2008).

There is a period of further assessment of this project, which is slated to start in June 2010. It is very much hoped that if suitable concerns are expressed in the very near future, then the damage of this reclamation project to shorebirds of the Flyway can be reduced.

For more on Song Do and large-scale reclamation there please see:

<http://www.birdskorea.org/Habitats/Wetlands/Songdo/BK-HA-Songdo-Tidal-flat-reclamation-2009-03.shtml>

5th Australasian Ornithological Conference Armidale, NSW 2009 — Call for Papers

The Fifth Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held in Armidale in northern New South Wales from 30 November to 4 December 2009. There will be four days of spoken presentations, posters and discussions with field excursions on the middle day of the conference. The conference is organised by Birds Australia (Northern NSW) on behalf of Birds Australia and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

We are now calling for offers of spoken and poster papers. Please visit the AOC website (<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/whats-on/australasian-ornithological-conference.html>) to register for the conference and state your interest in presenting a paper. Please submit an abstract of your

presentation as an email attachment to Hugh Ford (hford@une.edu.au). Details of format and length will be given on the website. Space for spoken talks is limited, as we shall only run two parallel sessions over the four days. We shall therefore select spoken papers from abstracts that have been submitted by the deadline of 31 August 2009. (Early bird registration also closes on that date.) Preference will be given to papers that will present new information or ideas on birds of the region. We suggest that posters be used for the early stages of a project and for more management-orientated work. Time will be set aside in the program to view posters, as well as during morning, lunch and afternoon breaks.

Hugh Ford and Stephen Debus





Visit to Swain Reefs 27TH January to 4TH February 2009

Annual visits to study Roseate Terns on the Swain Reefs commenced in July 1999, but since 2001 have taken place in January. The dates for this visit had to be postponed twice and soon after departure from Gladstone Harbour, we had to contend with 30-40 knot winds, which continued unabated day and night for the 7½ days we were at sea. Ironically the weather had been calm during the period originally scheduled for the visit!

In spite of the above problems the visit was a considerable success, with the minimum targets of 1000 Roseate Terns captured and 100 retrapped being exceeded. The major loss from the shortened period of the visit (originally scheduled for 11½ days) was the lack of time for the planned exploration of areas to the south and east for Roseate Tern congregations on other cays. The shortage of time and the rough weather were also responsible for us not being able to visit the important site of Riptide Cay (100 km. north of the Swains) which had held the highest Roseate Tern congregations in 2008.

The 2009 team was almost completely new, with only 3 of the 10 persons present on the boat having been involved in previous Roseate Tern visits to the Swain Reefs.

Fewer Roseate Terns were counted this year than in 2008, partly because of the omission of Riptide Cay from the itinerary. However, the total of 14,012 is not significantly different from the 15,370 counted at the same cays in January 2008.

Eight cannon net catches were made, five at Gannet and one each at Bacchi, Bylund and Luscious Cays. The achievement of a total of 1083 birds was an excellent outcome given the unfavourable weather conditions. Because of the extremely strong winds the Roseate Terns roosted almost exclusively on the exposed shores and the points at the end of each cay. If they tried to seek shelter on the downwind side of a cay they were blasted with horizontally blown coral sand.

Cannon nets are normally fired downwind or, at most, into only a moderate headwind. We were fortunate that we had again brought with us large mesh cannon nets (which have less wind resistance, but require individual extraction of each bird) including a new, extremely small (8 m. x 8 m.), "Spit" net. Amazingly this would go out fully if set at a low angle, even against a 30-40 knot wind. In its first firing it managed to catch 194 Roseate Terns!

Birds in all catches, except those at Bacchi Cay and Luscious Cay, were again given a white plastic leg flag on the right tarsus. We had to reduce the amount of the time-consuming leg flagging operation at Bacchi when a storm tide, caused by 40 knot winds, flooded part of the top of the island and started to wet one of the keeping cages. At Luscious we were running against a very tight

timescale to meet the departure deadline for Gladstone and no birds were flagged. With the whole team in top gear we managed to band, or record retrap details on, all 281 Roseates in just over one hour (beating the deadline by five minutes!).

Five Black-naped Terns and 2 Little Terns were also banded during the visit. Crested Terns, Lesser Crested Terns, Common Noddies, Silver Gulls and some additional Black-naped Terns, which were caught, were released unbanded.

Population Origins

All but 26 of the 1083 Roseates caught were assigned to three population groups (as in previous years) - *bangsii* (Japan/Taiwan/Northern Hemisphere breeders); Unknown (breeding at unknown locations somewhere in northern Australia), or Local (*gracilis*, breeding on the Inner Barrier Reef).

Overall 53% of the birds caught were recorded as *bangsii*, 44% as Unknown and 3% as Local. This is a smaller proportion of *bangsii* than usual, the figure normally being 60 - 65%.

It is thought that part of the cause of this lower figure is that some *bangsii* were incorrectly recorded as "Unknown" in the first four catches. In previous visits, which have mainly taken place in early/mid January, *bangsii* were generally easily recognisable because they had 1 - 3 (usually 2) unmoulted old outer primaries. With the recent visit taking place two weeks later than normal some *bangsii* no longer had any old outer primaries. This made them superficially resemble Unknown birds. However it was then realised that most Unknown birds had either fully grown their new outermost primaries (but were still undergoing an active "6 moult") or had nearly done so. The *bangsii* without any old feathers still had the two outermost primaries in active moult, often with the outermost primary only at Stage 1 or 2).

Once this situation had been recognised such birds were classified as *bangsii* and given a sub code J2. These are recorded for the last four catches. Although J2 seemed to form about 25% of the total *bangsii* birds the difference in the percentage of *bangsii* between the first four catches (51.9%) and the last four catches (54.3%) was quite small. The figures do suggest therefore that there may have been some diminution of the *bangsii* population in the Swain Reefs area this year. *Bangsii* breeding output in one of the principal breeding areas in Okinawa, Japan, is known to have been adversely affected by habitat destruction, caused by development, in recent years.

It was particularly satisfying to catch 104 previously marked birds. At 9.6% of the total this was the highest retrap rate achieved so far in this study. It is partly the result of the longevity of this species

and also because of the good catching success in 2008. Even at Luscius Cay, where a catch has been made only once previously, the retrap rate was 7.1%. As usual many of the birds banded in previous years were re-trapped at different cays. This demonstrates the high mobility within the Swain Reefs complex.

There was again a good crop of overseas-banded birds – 9 from Japan and 6 from Taiwan. Three of these had also been captured at Swain Reefs in previous years. The recaptures of overseas-banded birds also provide interesting information on the age to which Roseate Terns can live. Three of those from Japan had been banded in 1990 – two as chicks and one as a breeding adult. The former are now 18½ years old and the latter at least 20½ years old.

Some of the most important information generated by the visit comes from the 81 retraps of birds banded in previous January visits. Such data enables calculations of survival rates to be made. It is also possible to derive an estimate of the total Roseate Tern population from which we are sampling.

Seabird Counts

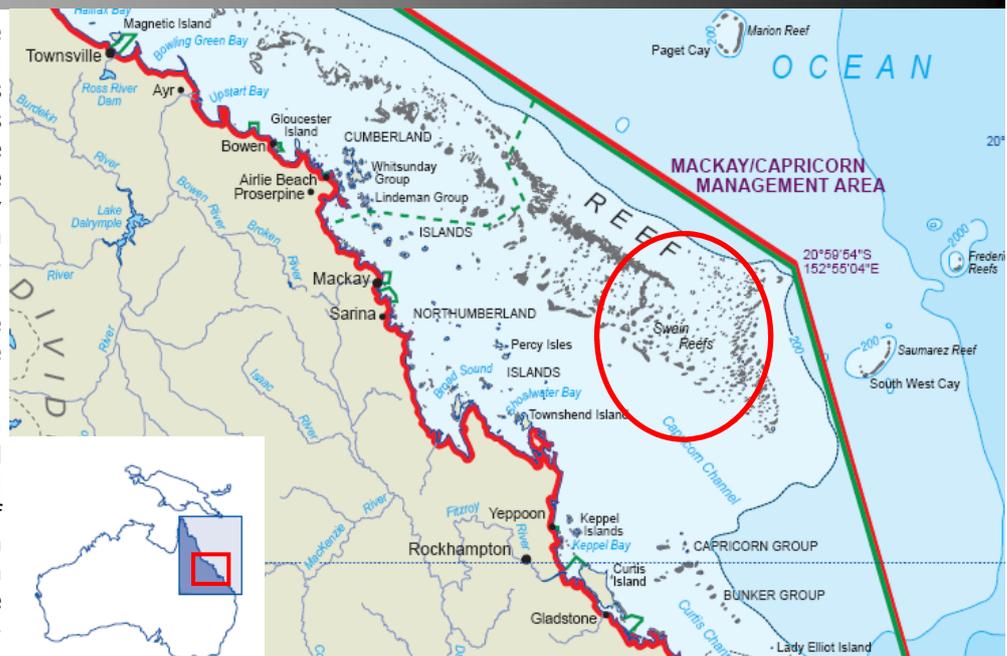
Counts were made of all birds present on each cay visited, with particular emphasis on breeding seabirds. This is part of the long-term population monitoring program undertaken by QPWS/Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Nesting activities seemed to be similar to previous years on the main islands (Frigate/Price/Thomas/Gannet). However there were no breeding birds on either Bylund or Luscius and only one pair of Brown Boobies on Bacchi. These islands seemed to have suffered a significant loss of area and/or height by wind/wave erosion since January 2008.

Acknowledgements

The highest praise must go to the marvellous crew of the Kerra Lyn for their perseverance and preparedness to continue with the fieldwork program in the most difficult wind conditions. Damon Shearer greatly assisted in preparations for the visit and in fieldwork. Malcolm Turner was a valuable team member and generous in passing on his extensive knowledge of the Barrier Reef.

Bruce Knuckey and his colleagues in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service are again greatly thanked for giving permission for the visit to take place. I



Location of Swain Reefs, Queensland, Australia

also thank the VWSG Team for so unhesitatingly and uncomplainingly persevering through some demanding field operating conditions. It is pleasing that we were able to achieve so much under such difficult circumstances.

The Future

It is recommended that a careful review now be made of the Roseate Tern project.

Each annual visit is a significant time and financial commitment by the volunteers and an additional cost to QPWS (although they would still have to visit to continue the seabird counts). However we need to remember that the Swain Reefs concentration of Roseate Terns is the largest in the world and that we therefore have significant obligations to monitor its health and to help ensure its numbers are maintained. We also need to recognise that it is unwise to interrupt the collection of a long-term data set unless one is absolutely sure that further such data is not going to be beneficial.

We now know quite a lot about the main movements of the Swain Reefs populations although we still don't know where the Unknown birds breed! And the 2008 and 2009 retraps will enable us to improve our estimate of the average annual survival rate/total population estimates. But given likely changes in the environment, associated with climate change for example, and given the on-going loss of breeding habitat in the Northern Hemisphere Roseate Tern breeding areas, it may be sensible to continue population/survival rate monitoring as at present (especially given that the 2009 data suggests there may have been some reduction in the bangsii population already).

Clive Minton
VWSG





Taking to the Eyre- 'The cannon-net approach to a contemporary wader survey'

Few places contain the myriad of coastal wetlands that we see on the Eyre Peninsula (EP) in South Australia. The west coast contains a striking geomorphology which supports spectacular headlands, off-shore islands, dynamic beaches, coastal embayment's, mudflats and mangroves. These habitats provide the remoteness and diversity to support a rich assemblage of waders; many species uncommon elsewhere in South Australia.

Survey work by an AWSG team in 2000 revealed that many sites on the EP supported nationally and internationally important populations of waders. Ten years on, and with Shorebirds 2020 in full flight, the opportunity to repeat this ambitious survey developed and quickly gained momentum. The Eyre Peninsula NRM Board also recognised the value of this contemporary investigation and kindly funded a good proportion of the project.

Under the guidance of Jane Cooper a team of 31 observers comprised mostly of local volunteers was assembled to take on the task. Boats, vehicles and ATV's were organised and DEH staff also stepped in to support the effort.



Some of the St Peter Island team waiting for their boat-ride.

The 2009 survey took the team to 12 shorebird areas and 51 count areas across the Peninsula and represents the most complete regional assessment of shorebird abundance undertaken.

The table below shows preliminary count data from the 2009 survey. Flock mobility, water levels, weather conditions and survey effort between the surveys vary, so direct comparisons are not always possible.

The remote sites at Eyre Island, St Peter Island and Tourville Bay were highlights in a region that contains many unspoilt shorebird roosts. Razor-fish own the mud-flats and the shorebirds use the tides opportunistically to optimise their feeding activities.

For the most part, localised threats to shorebird sites are still moderate and are unlikely to be adversely affecting shorebird abundance or species richness. Aquaculture activities are an increasing but mostly manageable impact. Changes in abundance over the ten year span are more likely to be attributable to East Asian-Australasian Flyway impacts or recent breeding success. Whatever the case, a contemporary survey at this scale is a large undertaking, an excellent ecological study and a benchmark from which future shorebird abundance studies can be measured. Congratulations to all involved.

A comprehensive survey report will be available later in the year. For further information please Email Jane Cooper at ocyphaps@bigpond.com

Paul Wainwright (on behalf of the team)

| | 2000 | 2003 | 2009 |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Eastern Eyre Peninsula | 3151 | 3645 | 3128 |
| Lincoln NP | na | 742 | 456 |
| Lower EP Wetlands | na | na | 940 |
| Coffin Bay | 1928 | 805 | 3196 |
| Lake Newland CP | 1706 | 1598 | 1472 |
| Venus Bay | 135 | 993 | 676 |
| Baird Bay | 3810 | 2181 | 2673 |
| Sceale Bay | 3100 | 1137 | 1638 |
| Seagull Lake | 605 | 187 | 1297 |
| Streaky Bay | 2010 | 1795 | 2179 |
| Acraman Creek | 1162 | na | 1233 |
| Eyre Island Smoky Bay | 6139 | 4293 | 1438 |
| St Peter Island | 3468 | na | 4521 |
| Murat Bay | 2044 | 1308 | 1085 |
| Tourville Bay | 4927 | 1947 | 3803 |
| TOTAL WADERS | 34185 | 20631 | 29735 |

Roseate Tern Protected under JAMBA

The Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) is now formally included in the Annex to the Japan - Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA). As a result it also appears on the List of Migratory Species protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The amendments to both the international agreement and domestic legislation came into effect on the 23rd of March this year.

The Roseate Tern's inclusion in the JAMBA annex means it is now subject to a series of special protection measures committed to by the governments of Japan and Australia. These include a prohibition on the taking of, or trade in, birds and their eggs (except in limited circumstances); special measures aimed at conserving the birds and their habitats; exchange of information between the two governments on research undertaken; and the encouragement of joint international conservation programs.

These broad international obligations are implemented domestically under the EPBC Act, administered by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA). Migratory Species are one of seven matters of National Environmental Significance (NES) which must be referred under the Act. This means that any action that might have a significant impact on local populations of Roseate Tern or any other listed migratory species must be referred to the Minister for a decision.

The JAMBA amendment came about as a result of groundbreaking research conducted by Paul O'Neill

and Rebecca White from the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, Clive Minton from the Victorian Wader Studies Group, and Kiyooki Ozaki from the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology. Mr Kiyooki's team had been directing an extensive banding project of Roseate Terns in Japan for some years, though the birds' migratory habits remained a mystery until the January 2002 capture of 1190 roseate terns in the Swain Reefs, at the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef. Among these were 19 birds carrying Japanese leg-bands, and one banded in Taiwan. Birds captured in the Swain Reefs study were subsequently recovered in Japan. This evidence, along with subsequent trapping of Roseate Terns in both countries, proved conclusively that members of the species regularly migrated between Australia and Japan.

On the basis of this information, Australia proposed the Roseate Tern's inclusion in the JAMBA Annex at the 13th JAMBA consultative meeting held in Shanghai in May 2006. Japan and Australia agreed to implement the addition, as well as mutually agreed amendments to the scientific names of 14 species. Domestic legislative processes had to be completed in both countries before diplomatic notes could be exchanged on 23 December 2008, with the amendments coming into effect 3 months after that date, on 23 March 2009. The amendment to the List of Migratory Species under the EPBC Act came into effect on the same day.

Penny Baker
Migratory Birds Taskforce
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Amendments to 14 species names under JAMBA

| Common name | Current scientific name | Updated scientific name |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Cattle Egret | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> (<i>Ardeola ibis</i>) | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> (<i>Ardea ibis</i>) |
| Great Egret | <i>Egretta alba</i> | <i>Egretta alba</i> (<i>Ardea alba</i>) |
| Lesser Golden Plover | <i>Pluvialis dominica</i> | <i>Pluvialis fulva</i> |
| Common Sandpiper | <i>Tringa hypoleucos</i> | <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> |
| Grey-tailed Tattler | <i>Tringa incana</i> (<i>Tringa brevipes</i>) | <i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i> |
| Terek Sandpiper | <i>Xenus cinereus</i> (<i>Tringa terek</i>) | <i>Xenus cinereus</i> |
| Sanderling | <i>Crocethia alba</i> (<i>Calidris alba</i>) | <i>Calidris alba</i> (<i>Crocethia alba</i>) |
| Grey Phalarope | <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i> | <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i> (<i>Phalaropus fulicaria</i>) |
| White-winged Tern | <i>Chlidonias leucoptera</i> | <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> |
| Caspian Tern | <i>Hydroprogne tschegrava</i> (<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>) | <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i> (<i>Sterna caspia</i>) |
| Oriental Plover | <i>Charadrius veredus</i> | <i>Charadrius veredus</i> (<i>Charadrius asiaticus veredus</i>) |
| Wandering Tattler | <i>Tringa incana</i> | <i>Heteroscelus incanus</i> |
| South Polar Skua | <i>Stercorarius maccormicki</i> | <i>Catharacta maccormicki</i> |
| Long-tailed Jaeger | <i>Stercorarius longicauda</i> | <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i> |



South-East Asian nations share Ramsar experiences

South-East Asia's wetlands are very important for biodiversity, national economies and the wellbeing of human communities. Historically, they have been viewed as unproductive areas, and converted to other land-uses, and many important wetlands in the region remain unprotected and under threat. In recognition of their importance, countries in the region have signed up to the Ramsar Convention, under which they commit to wise use of wetlands and to designate and conserve internationally important wetland sites.

Thailand recently hosted a round table and study tour, involving government and civil society organisations from Cambodia, Malaysia and Vietnam, to share experience with Ramsar implementation. The visit was organised by BirdLife International and hosted by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (Thailand's Ramsar Administrative Authority (RAA)) and the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST, BirdLife in Thailand). BirdLife chose Thailand for the round table and study tour because of the country's strong commitment to Ramsar implementation, the good progress made with the designation of Ramsar Sites, and the very active programme of wetland conservation by local and national government departments.

The round table discussed and agreed on priorities for implementing the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015, and the Ramsar Programme of Communications, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA). CEPA is a tool to support the implementation of the Convention at all levels from site to international level. The round table also explored ways of ensuring sustainability in the implementation of the Convention at national level including sustainable financing and putting in place institutional structures (such as national focal points, and national wetland committees). Participants talked about plans in each country to designate new Ramsar Sites; current priorities include Tram Chim in the Mekong Delta (the most important wintering site for Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* in Vietnam), Preak Toal (a huge waterbird colony in Cambodia) and key sites in the Inner Gulf of Thailand.

For the study tour, delegates were taken to the Inner Gulf of Thailand, south of Bangkok, where BCST has been advancing wetland conservation, working with local groups and communities, and encouraging Ramsar Site designation. They found that local communities had a better understanding of the importance of the sustainable use of wetland products, and in general they all supported the Ramsar designations. BCST has been supporting activities of the Local Conservation Group at Khok Kham, a wintering ground of Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*. The delegates talked to local groups about attitudes to Ramsar designation and similar issues facing them.

Day two of the study tour took them to the Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park, which is now managed as a Ramsar site, but has a challenging history that other countries could gain valuable lessons from. The tour participants learnt that communication between conservationists and the local community is very important. Constant work with the local community may change their attitude to the protection of the site. "The main reason for the round table and study tour was to create a full, shared understanding of the new strategic plan, and of CEPA, as well as to develop programmes of work between BirdLife partners and the RAAs in the participating countries", said Simba Chan, Senior Conservation Officer in the BirdLife Asia Division. "We wanted the other countries to benefit from Thailand's experience in gaining support and communicating the benefits of Ramsar designation, which has enabled the country to designate 11 Ramsar sites."

The round table and study tour was undertaken as part of a wider project to strengthen partnerships for Ramsar implementation in South-East Asia, which is sponsored by the UK Government's Darwin Initiative, the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund, and the Ministry of Environment (Government of Japan).

Birdlife International News
26-03-2009

http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/03/ramsar_meeting.html

Rogers Family Bushfire Library Restoration Appeal

As you will probably all be aware by now AWSG members Annie, Ken and Danny Rogers lost their home in the Victorian bushfires in February.

We have decided to open an appeal to help them restore their library which is crucial to their livelihood.

If you would like to make a cash donation please send a cheque made out to AWSG Rogers Library Appeal and send it to the Secretary, Penny Johns,

PO Box 227, Flinders Victoria, 3929. If you would like to donate by EFT please contact Penny pjohns@optalert.com phone:03 9421 6423.

If you would like to donate books, Danny has sent us a list of books that have been lost. Please contact Penny to receive the list or to discuss mailing/delivery. It would be helpful if you could discuss any proposed gift of books with Penny or Danny, (03) 9710 1345 to avoid any duplication.

Shorebird monitoring along the Flyway

I had the pleasure of representing the AWSG and Birds Australia at three meetings in Fukuoka, Japan (30 Jan 09 to 2 Feb 09). The first meeting included presentations on waterbird population monitoring activities throughout the flyway, given by experts from Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Australia and Japan. This was followed by an international symposium, where many of the same representatives presented on monitoring activities and recent research from throughout the flyway. The last meeting included a poster session and presentations from counters and researchers from throughout Japan. All meetings were well attended, especially by those in Japan with a passionate interest in waterbird conservation.

Overall, I was struck by three things during my time in Fukuoka. First, I knew of the increasing pressures on migratory shorebird populations throughout the flyway, but the scale of the loss was brought home at the meetings, and the threats seem more imposing when viewing some of the very urban landscapes left for shorebirds in some areas. Second, I was struck by the similarities in the challenges we face in Australia and those faced in Japan. The common traits and challenges between Japan's monitoring 1000 project, and the Shorebirds 2020 program were especially obvious and refreshing. Finally, I was struck by how a shared concern for waterbird conservation overcame the obvious language and cultural differences of those in attendance.

I picked up several good ideas from Japan's Monitoring 1000 program including methods to report changes in populations and conditions, some data management techniques, and some new ideas on public events to promote shorebird education. I also came away with an improved understanding of some of the threats sites outside Australia are facing. In Japan, for example, many shorebird sites are in close proximity to urban areas, and not surprisingly many sites appear to be threatened by encroaching urban development. There was a clear desire from some participants to learn of best management practices that would limit the impacts from these threats. In other areas there are large scale changes happening but it remains to be seen what impact these changes will have on shorebirds. For example, in at least one site the local government is paving beaches in order to provide storm surge protection, yet this area is used by thousands of shorebirds that feed on the adjacent mudflats before returning to what used to be a beach for roosting. Perhaps the most obvious site of concern, and one of the most pristine is the Awase tidal flat off the island of Okinawa; home to thousands of Pacific Golden Plover and other shorebirds, which will be lost if development plans proceed there. Sign a petition to oppose the "reclamation" project that would lead to direct shorebird habitat loss at this site visit [http://](http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/save-awase-tidal-flat)



Delegates from across the flyway

www.thepetitionsite.com/1/save-awase-tidal-flat

The presentations from throughout the flyway were interesting, but one highlight was a presentation on Great Knot energetic requirements by Dr. Alexander Andreev from Russia. The presentation gave an overview of the energetic requirements for migrating Great Knot. It highlighted that Great Knot need at least one refuelling stop during their long migration. During southward migration Great Knot can use areas like the Sea of Okhotsk as their only required refuelling spot, but during northward migration these areas in SE Russia are frozen, so the refuelling stop would have to be further south (an area like the Yellow Sea). Without at least one good refuelling stop, Great Knot would not be expected to complete their migration, which is another bit of evidence highlighting the importance of conserving shorebird staging habitat.

Another highlight was Dr. Gombobaatar's presentation on the birds of Mongolia. It was a fascinating glimpse into a remote and beautiful area that supports unique birdlife. Interestingly, there have been a handful of shorebird flag sightings from Mongolia, and Dr. Gombobaatar is aware of Asian Dowitcher, Black-tailed Godwit, Oriental Plover, and Greater Sand Plover breeding in Mongolia, as well as substantial numbers of staging Pacific Golden Plover. There has been very little work done on the shorebirds in Mongolia, and Dr. Gombobaatar is looking to hear from anyone interested in some international collaboration on shorebird research.

In the end participants at these meetings all came away with a much improved understanding of the monitoring activities happening in Japan, Australia, Korea, China, Russia, and Mongolia. There was an agreed understanding of the important role international communication, cooperation, and collaboration can play in waterbird conservation.

Rob Clemens



Quick Bites

Far Eastern Oystercatchers

I am currently coordinating the compilation of the account for Far Eastern Oystercatcher for a forthcoming global review of oystercatchers to be published by the International Wader Study Group later this year.

Does anyone have any breeding records of Oystercatcher from Jilin, Heilongjiang and the middle Amur region?

There are a number of historical specimen records, and

recent sightings of birds especially from Xianghai National Nature Reserve, but so far no confirmed breeding records.

I would be very interested to hear from anyone with information about oystercatchers in this region - all information used will be fully acknowledged.

David Melville
david.melville@xtra.co.nz

Arctic Birds

We would like to inform you that issue # 10 of the "Arctic Birds" bulletin (English version) has become available for download in pdf format at the websites of the Arctic Birds Breeding Conditions Survey (<http://www.arcticbirds.net/newsletter2008.pdf>). Hardcopies will be sent next week to all contributors to the survey database in 2008 and the previous years, as well

as to members of the International Wader Study Group.

Please email Mikhail Soloviev (mikhail-soloviev@yandex.ru) to update your address or if you would like a copy but do not belong to the survey or IWSG mailing lists.

Mikhail Soloviev

Migration on the Net

I am pleased to let you know that I have posted a video on youtube about shorebird migration in Sembilang

National Park. You can see it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIyRsCkVkpU>

Muhammad Iqbal

Broome Bird Observatory: Assistant Warden 2009

Due to staffing changes, the BBO is seeking an outgoing, enthusiastic, and hard-working person to join us as an Assistant Warden for 2009 from May / June to the end of October. The role involves living at the Observatory and working in a small team environment.

It is essential that applicants hold a C class drivers licence (or equivalent) with no restrictions and be immediately eligible to apply for an F class endorsement (requires a minimum of four years licensed driving experience). General terms and conditions include a small weekly stipend, food allowance, furnished accommodation, annual leave and a contribution to relocation if applicable.

Duties include assisting and greeting guests, cleaning and facility maintenance, running the small shop, reservations & tour bookings, conducting bird watching tours (training provided) and assisting with ongoing research.

For more information you can download the Assistant Warden Position Description from the BBO website at www.broomebirdobservatory.com or contact the BBO Management Committee bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au or phone 08 9193 5600.

A paperless Tattler

Receive Tattler via the internet and save trees and money!

Tattler is available on the AWSG website and is freely available for all to read/download (see www.awsg.org.au/tattler.html). If any members would like to receive a news alert when each issue is placed on the webpage (usually before the printed copy is out) they can do so by sending a note to: philip.straw@awsq.org.au.

If you want us to save paper and the cost of printing and postage please include that in your note and you will be taken off the mailing list (but still receive Stilt). Stilt is also available on the AWSG website, except for the more current issues that are only available to members in paper copy.

Phil Straw



Australasian Wader Studies Group

Membership of the Australasian Wader Studies Group is open to anyone interested in the conservation and research of waders (shorebirds) in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Members receive the twice yearly journal *Stilt*, and a quarterly newsletter, *Tattler*. Visit www.awsg.org.au for more information.

Please direct all membership enquiries to:
 Membership Manager
 Birds Australia
 Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester St
 Carlton, VIC 3053, Australia.
 Ph: 1300 730 075
 E: membership@birdsaustralia.com.au

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