

# Tattler



Newsletter for the Asia Pacific Flyways  
& Australian Shorebirds 2020 Project

December 2019

**Special Edition**

**A YEAR  
IN REVIEW**

**Yellow Sea World Heritage Site**

Compiled and published by the Australasian Wader Studies Group  
[www.awsg.org.au](http://www.awsg.org.au)

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## Editorial

2019 has been a most eventful year for the AWSG and the East Asian-Australian Flyway, with some very exciting developments and some very sad moments and more.

It has been decided to produce a special edition of Tattler after more than a year without publication. A 'year in review' takes us through these events.

I think the most encouraging news after a long history of extensive tidal habitat loss across the key staging areas of our East Asian Australasian Flyway is the creation of the first Yellow Sea World Heritage Site nomination through the combined efforts of the Xi Jinping Chinese Government and global support.

After many years of tracking migratory shorebirds from the humble metal band with an inscribed number and return address to round year satellite coverage in real time, the mystery surrounding the movements most of our traditional routes is slowly being unravelled, large due to the advent of miniaturised PTTs (Platform Transmitter Terminals) or Satellite tags. There are still a few gaps in our knowledge about migration routes through some overland routes across eastern and central Asia but it is only a matter of time, and funding, to fill these gaps.

For years, the Oriental Pratincole has been something of a mystery due to its, at times, erratic movements and eruptions as a result of weather, which in turn affects feeding patterns. This year this species has been tracked across a number of disparate breeding sites ranging from Taiwan to India and between.

This is illustrated in the article by Grace Maglio, which not just looks at tracking flight paths and breeding areas but successfully instructs someone exactly where to look for a particular tagged individual, find it and photograph it!

The sad news includes the passing of two of the most influential and dedicated people in the world of migratory shorebirds and their conservation. Lew Young who has been an important figure within the Ramsar bureau, Chief Executive of the EAAFP Secretariat and manager of the Mai Po Wetland Nature Reserve, who passed away in March. Clive Minton the 'Father of Wader Studies' in Australia, the UK, USA was tragically killed in a car accident while I was preparing this special edition newsletter.

In October, Doug Watkins, long time member and recently Chair of the AWSG, took office as the new Chief Executive of the EAAF Partnership at the Secretariat office in Songdo, Ro Korea. Doug certainly has a long history in the Flyway working in a number of roles over the years and was a long-term friend and colleague of Lew Young. We wish Doug every success and look forward to working closely with him over the coming years.

## ***Tattler newsletter: Time for a change?***

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The past year has been an eventful period and change for Tattler after 25 years in a changing world. The question arises as to whether we adopt a new focus for Tattler or go back to the original newsletter format that defined Tattler at its origin.

The first edition of The Tattler appeared in October 1994 as a newsletter with the objective of "increasing the level of communication between wader enthusiasts, researchers and conservationists". Until then 'The Stilt' (in 2006 shortened to 'Stilt') had included news items drawn from regional newsletters and other sources. However, it was felt that a newsletter circulated to a wider audience was required, which would also relieve some of the workload of the editor of the journal.

Copies of The Tattler (title changed to Tattler in 2005) were posted to all members of the AWSG in Australia and many countries in Asia Pacific. Less than two years later, in March 1996, the newsletter played an essential role in promoting the first, and still the largest, international shorebird conference to be held in Australasia titled 'Shorebird Conservation in the Asia-Pacific Region' convened by members of the AWSG committee. This was held in conjunction with the Ramsar Conference of the Parties held in Brisbane in 1996. This event in turn played a role in the launch of the East Asian Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network at a side meeting of the Ramsar Convention of Parties marking the 25th Anniversary of Ramsar in Brisbane\*. The 'network' has since morphed into the East Asian Australasian Flyway Network (EAAF Network) with the formation of the EAAF Partnership in 2006.

\*Conference proceedings available at [www.awsg.org.au](http://www.awsg.org.au) > publications

A lot has happened since the production of the first issue of 'The Tattler'. One of the most obvious has been the increase in the number of short papers and articles due the frequency of publication, large circulation and ease of access by authors. In hindsight this success has resulted in a move away from Tattler solely being a 'newsletter' where many papers received would have been more appropriate for publication in Stilt.

At a recent meeting of the AWSG Committee in November 2019, a decision was made to reverse the current focus on papers and articles of scientific interest in Tattler and to return it to a 'newsletter' format, which in conjunction with the

AWSG website will handle the increase in news items from across the East Asian Australasian Flyway. This will reduce the workload on the editor of Tattler while at the same time provide more material for Stilt which has been languishing due to the decrease in written material and resulted in the number of issues of Stilt from two a year to one a year since October 2015.

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## ***The end of an era for Tattler.***

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Since 1994 we have had three long-serving editors. Phil Straw initiated the idea of Tattler for the reasons mentioned above and carried on as editor until 2007 when one of the AWSG committee was talking to Lisa Gale (later Collins) at the 6th Australasian Shorebird Conference in Newcastle. Lisa showed a keen interest in taking on the role as editor and did a great job changing the style of Tattler for the better. After four years, when Lisa needed to step down as editor for family reasons, Liz Crawford was at hand, and keen to take over the role.

Liz enjoyed editing Tattler and always produced the publication on time, with Phil acting as production editor and chasing up new material every three months from a vast and keen network among the East Asian Australasian Flyway and AWSG members.

Liz's dedication went beyond the call of duty in early 2017 when she took her computer aboard the family ocean-going catamaran with husband Chris and sailed off into the blue yonder. She carried out her duties as editor despite the vessel being de-masted off the coast of Gladstone. After motoring to a harbour for repairs they sailed on through pirate-dominated waters of the Indonesian Islands (under military escort at one stage), then suffered a torn main sail off the Solomon Islands, which was repaired and finally replaced in Port Vila, Vanuatu. At this stage even Liz found it too much to continue with editing Tattler with very poor to non-existent internet coverage and entering the roaring forties in the southern oceans!

Despite a call for a new editor we received no takers and Phil has taken up the role again. This provided circumstances for the decision to revert to the original 'newsletter' format.

## ***Yellow Sea, Bohai Gulf World Heritage Site nomination ratified***

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The Chinese Government is to be congratulated on the nomination of Bohai Gulf as a World Heritage Site in order to protect this essentially important site for thousands, if not millions, of migratory shorebirds that use the site as a critical staging area in the East Asian Australasian Flyway (the world's most threatened flyway) during migration.

### **Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase I) (China)**

The site features an intertidal mudflat system considered to be the largest in the world. These mudflats, as well as marshes and shoals, are exceptionally productive and serve as growth areas for many species of fish and crustaceans. The intertidal areas of the Yellow Sea/Gulf of Bohai are of global importance for the gathering of many migratory bird species that use the East Asian-Australasian flyway. Large gatherings of birds, including some of the world's most endangered species, depend on the coastline as a stopover to put on weight for the final leg of their northward migration to their nesting grounds. A large proportion also stop at the site during their southward migration to their non-breeding grounds as far south as Australia and New Zealand.

The Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of the Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase I) is situated in the largest intertidal wetland system in the world and is one of the most biologically diverse. The site is an irreplaceable and indispensable hub for birds migrating along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, which spans more than 20 countries across two hemispheres from the Arctic to South-East Asia and Australasia. The global importance of the wider coastal area is evidenced by several Ramsar sites, some of which fully or partially overlap with components of the property. Thus, this site is a globally significant example of the shared natural heritage embodied by migratory birds.

### **Area to be protected**

The two components of the site are both along the coast of the Yellow Sea: 1) YS1- the Jiangsu Dafeng National Nature Reserve, the southern section and Dongsha Experimental Zone of Jiangsu Yancheng National Nature Reserve and

the Tiaozini area (totaling 173,110 ha including a buffer zone of 28,271); and 2) YS-2 the middle section of Jiangsu Yancheng National Nature Reserve (95,589 ha including a buffer zone of 51,785). The total area of the two components is 188,643 ha plus a buffer zone of 80,056 ha.

### **Species using the Site**

This site supports some 680 species of vertebrates, including an estimated 415 species of birds, 26 species of mammals, 9 species of amphibians, 14 species of reptiles, 216 species of fish, as well as 165 species of zoobenthos.

The property's tidal flats are of exceptional importance for the conservation of the world's migratory birds, supporting internationally significant numbers of migratory bird species, including Critically Endangered, Endangered and other IUCN Red List species. The Phase I tidal flats are significant for more than 10% of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway populations and provide essential habitat for some of the world's Critically Endangered shorebirds, including the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and the Far Eastern Curlew and endangered Nordmann's Greenshank, which all depend on the tidal flats for their continued survival. The tidal flats also provide important migratory habitat for the Endangered Black-faced Spoonbill, Oriental Stork, Red-crowned Crane and Great Knot; the Vulnerable Chinese Egret, Dalmatian Pelican, Swan Goose, Relict Gull and Saunders's Gull; and several Near Threatened migratory bird species, including the Red Knot, Asian Dowitcher, Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Reed Parrotbill, Curlew Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover and Ruddy Turnstone. Other migratory birds that utilise the site include the Eurasian Oystercatcher, Pied Avocet, Grey Plover, Kentish plover, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Sanderling, Dunlin, Terek Sandpiper, Saunders's Gull and Common Tern.

The site is located in a highly developed region and has been regarded as impossible for a world heritage site listing, compared to other sites which are often located in remote and much less developed regions. Successful inscription of this site in the World Heritage List proves the significant achievement of conservation of

the migratory waterbird habitat along Yellow Sea of Yancheng coast, in particular, in the implementation of national ecological civilization strategies. Under the supervision of national governmental agencies, Jiangsu provincial government and Yancheng Municipal government have implemented a series of comprehensive measures to protect and maintain the integrity of the migratory waterbird habitat, including setting up of national nature reserves, provincial-level protected area plots and municipal wetland park, as well as wetland restoration programs.

Inscription of this site has been a joint effort of both national and international institutions and experts. A flyway approach, through serial nomination, sets examples that allow wide participation of stakeholders, as well as allow

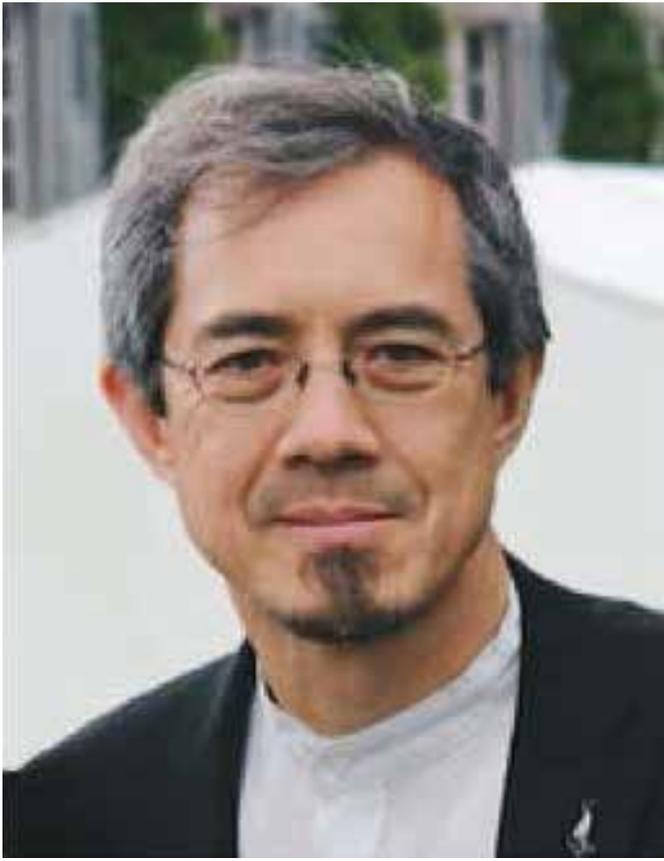
more sites that contribute to the conservation of the East Asia-Australasia Flyway to be added into the serial nomination. Australia played key role in proposing the drafted resolution, which was fully approved by all the members. The nomination received warm welcome from international communities and it also opens international dialogues and cooperation platform for a flyway approach for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

“Yancheng- Yellow (Bohai) Sea Successfully inscribed on the World Heritage List”



## ***The sad loss of Dr. Lew Young***

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**The news of the sudden death of Lew Young, Chief Executive of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Secretariat came as a shock to staff and the huge circle of friends, colleagues and associates.**

Dr Lew Young, EAAFP Chief Executive, aged 60, passed away suddenly on 5 March 2019 while working in Beijing on EAAFP business. Lew was a world-class conservationist in the field of wetlands and migratory waterbirds.

From early days Lew was a very keen ornithologist and his initial international conservation work was in the western Himalayas and China to raise and monitor threatened pheasants' species including leading China's first radio-tracking of a bird species. It is considered that his passion for ornithology began with this work. Lew had a BSc Hons in Physiology from the University of Leeds, followed by an MSc in Ecology at the University of Aberdeen, and a doctorate at the University of Hong Kong in the Department of Zoology.

He worked tirelessly for conservation and the wise use of wetlands throughout his professional career and made a difference in many parts of the world with his commitment, deep knowledge, expertise, and passion for wetlands. He has been one of the most outstanding conservation leaders in the flyway and served as an inspiration to many people from high-level officials, to business leaders, to farmers and to his many colleagues and friends.

One of Lew's key to success is listening to others when seeking advice from within his huge circle of contacts built up over the years. One example was when he was taking over as manager of the WWF Hong Kong Mai Po Nature Reserve in 1990. He had notice that the 'Scrape' (ponds 16/17) was no longer attracting the large numbers of migratory shorebirds it had done in past years, especially as a roost site during very high tides when all mudflats were covered in Deep Bay, particularly during spring migration.

The Scrape was modelled on the brainchild of 'Bert' Axell who created the highly successful 'Scrape' at Minsmere Nature Reserve in the UK and whose work turned around the decline in wader populations in the east of England in the 1960s.

Bert Axell had visited the site some years before during a Churchill Scholarship travel grant to provide advice on the design of the 'Scrape' at Mai Po and management advice at other world significant waterbird wetlands such as the Cota Donana National Park in the south of Spain.

Lew remembered that Phil Straw had worked with Bert Axell at Minsmere after working for Luc Hoffmann (the founding father of Ramsar) in the south of France, before Phil headed out to Australia. Lew asked Phil to come to Mai Po to advise on what needed to be done to restore the values of the Mai Po 'Scrape' for migratory shorebirds.

Lew saw the logic in clearing the overgrown roost sites and shallows which were deterring waders from using the site. As soon as funding was available Lew brought in the necessary machinery to restore the site (despite the concern of some at WWF Hong Kong). The results were of course spectacular with the return of so many shorebirds to Mai Po.

Lew Young went on to develop a strategic vision for the Mai Po reserve demonstrating best practices of wetland management and developing and running a range of education and awareness raising programs for students and public visitors. Mai Po Nature Reserve is one of the model sites for migratory waterbird conservation along the Flyway and the education program at Mai Po has provided professional training on wetlands for thousands of Chinese wetland practitioners. The innovative program to manage fishery production in the reserve has seen Mai Po become an important non-breeding site for the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill. In addition, Lew established Wetland Link International - Asia in 2006 and the Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund in 2005. His achievements and dedicated works are still highly regarded at Mai Po.

As a Senior Regional Advisor for Asia and Oceania at the Ramsar Secretariat during 2008-2018, Lew advised on and supported the strategic development and effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 33 countries in Asia and eight in Oceania.

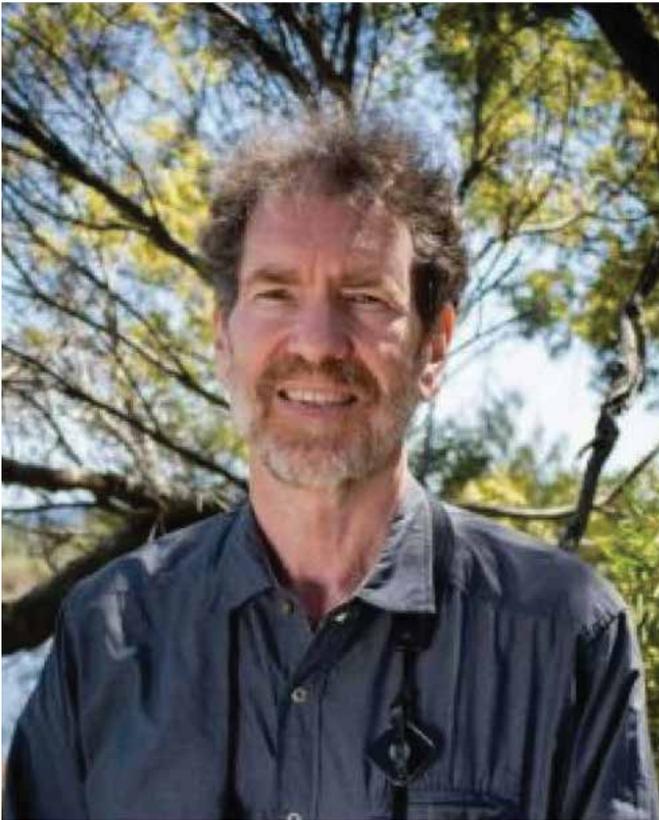
He advised on the identification, designation, and management of Ramsar sites in the region, represented Ramsar at regional and international meetings, and supported Ramsar Regional Initiatives. His efforts were notably focused in Asia, with the EAAFP, and the Ramsar Regional Centre for East Asia. Thanks to his dedication, tens of wetlands in the region were designated as Ramsar Sites.

His last position from March 2018 was as Chief Executive of the Secretariat of the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) based in Incheon, Republic of Korea. With his leadership and expertise, he played a major role in successfully organising the 10th Meeting of Partners held in China in 2018 and managing numerous initiatives considered at the Meeting of the Partners including the finalization of the EAAFP Strategic Plan 2019-2028. His contribution to the EAAFP has been tremendous and the legacy he has left will continue to influence the work of the Partnership.

Lew will be greatly missed by his many colleagues and friends for his enthusiasm, passion and dedication to the promotion of wildlife conservation and ecological issues. His work and memory will live on with those of us who knew him and valued his tremendous contribution to conservation. Our thoughts and condolences are with Lew's family at this very sad time.

***Doug Watkins, Chairman of the Australasian Wader Studies Group, selected as the Chief Executive of East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat.***

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Doug Watkins at Jerrabomberra Wetlands, Canberra, Australia.

On 28 September 2019, the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) announced that Doug Watkins had been selected and appointed to be the Chief Executive of East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat.

Doug is well known to many in his native Australia, as well as many of those representing the 37 Partners of the EAAFP, for his long history of involvement with the study and conservation of migratory shorebirds in Australia since the 1980s, firstly with the Australian Wader Studies Group (ASWG) then on the international scene with Wetlands International.

In 1994 Doug was present with those who initiated the concept of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in Kushiro Japan and 1996 Doug was part of the organising committee of the landmark conference 'Shorebird Conservation in the Asia-Pacific' in the days leading up to the 1996 Ramsar Convention Conference in Brisbane, providing the impetus for the launch of East Asian Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network a few days later.

On that occasion eight countries from the flyway took the significant first steps in publicly recognising 19 wetland sites as critical to the survival of these species. At that time Doug had commenced involvement working with Wetlands International where he stayed until 2013. During that time, he was involved in the lead up to the formation of East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP). This included working with the Australian Government towards the development of the EAAFP concept during the World Summit of Sustainable Development in 2002, later officially established in 2006. He has been an active and motivated player in the EAAFP since.

During his time at the Wetlands International, Doug was involved in many important projects for the conservation of wetlands and migratory waterbirds in the EAAF, including developing the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, implementation of the Shorebird Action Plans together with various stakeholders along EAAF, and leading the development of "Wetland Management Guidelines" with Chinese wetland scientists. He demonstrated his technical expertise from publishing shorebird population estimates and the first listing of sites of international importance for migratory shorebirds across the complete EAAF in 2008. All these works are important knowledge resources from which people in the EAAF are still benefiting.

With the new EAAFP 10-year Strategic Plan adopted during the tenth Meeting of Partners, as well as more development in the coming years, we are delighted to have Doug to lead the EAAFP Secretariat and the Partnership towards a bright future. His unflagging energy and enthusiasm over the years will come in good stead in this challenging role.

Doug takes over from a mutual close friend and colleague, Dr Lew Young, who passed away unexpectedly in March this year while at a business meeting for the EAAFP. I am sure Lew would have happily supported Doug's appointment!

## **EAAFP Secretariat staff appreciation.**

During the seven months between the loss of Lew Young as Chief Executive and the appointment of Doug Watkins, the Secretariat staff managed the day to day running of the Secretariat office in a very professional and efficient manner. Phil Straw called in at the office during a recent visit to Songdo to assist Incheon Free Economic Zone Authority Field Officer, Miyoung Choi, with advice on the environmental management of Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ) and offset options for migratory shorebird habitat during the huge coastal development. The attached photo was taken during Phil's visit and discussions including contact arrangements with the Incheon Black-faced Spoonbill Network (very active local NGO), as well as with translations by the Secretariat staff during interviews with reporters from the local press coverage of Phil's visit and meetings with the IFEZ Commissioner and staff. These produced a positive response and increased commitment to create additional migratory shorebird habitat.

*Translation from Korean press release:*

Incheon Free Economic Zone Authority announced that Philip John Straw who is Australian Wader Studies Group vice chairman visited Incheon Songdo from [22nd to 29th August] for days 8 days with IFEZ (Incheon Free Economic Zone Authority) to advise on Project management of migratory waterbird alternative habitat IFEZ is planning and discussed international cooperation for conservation of migratory birds and their habitat.

Phil Straw is a partner member of ( the CEPA Working Group) of the East Asia-Australian Flyway Migratory Bird Partnership (EAAFP) in G Tower and is not only a coordinator but also a member of the International Ornithological Society, a member of the United Kingdom and European

EAAFP Secretariat staff and interns are to be congratulated for 'holding the fort' in the absence of a Chief Executive, here shown in a photograph during Phil's visit Phil Straw, Vice-chair AWSG, member of CEPA and Shorebird Working Groups of the EAAFP

Bird Researchers Association, and IUCN Species Survival Commission waterbird and Seabird International Groups. Is an expert.

During this visit, he visited a site for the Songdo migratory habitat and two Songdo Ramsar sites, and a migratory habitat inhabiting the Songdo area. It also emphasized its importance. In addition, on the 29th, the last day of departure, a meeting with Lee Won-jae, head of Incheon Free Economic Zone Authority, discussed the area of Songdo migratory habitat, which is planned to be constructed, and how to use it as a natural education and tourism resource.

According to the Incheon Economic Agency, Philip Straw proposed using a wider alternative wetland and shoreline as an improved waterfowl resting place than the currently secured area of wetlands in relation to compensation project of mudflat reclamation.

Incheon Economic Commissioner Lee Won-jae said, "We will do our best to create a sustainable ecofriendly city that balances development and environmental conservation by creating alternative habitats for migratory birds by reviewing the vice chairman's advice.

Meanwhile, the alternative habitat for Songdo migratory birds is to create alternative wetlands in zone 11 and the wetlands, with a total project cost of 1.6 billion won by 2022. Natural wetlands, bird watching, buffer green spaces, and salt marshes are formed.



## Death of a Legend

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### Dr Clive Dudley Thomas Minton, AM, (7/10/1934 – 6/11/2019)



A reflective Clive Minton in 'formal' attire, on the shore of Delaware Bay in 2006 (Chung Yu Chiang photo)

Dr Clive Minton, described as a father figure in global wader studies, was killed in a car crash on 6 November 2019 at Dunkeld in Victoria, Australia. His wife Pat and a family friend were travelling with him at the time and were seriously injured although now in recovery. They were all returning from a short holiday on Kangaroo Island in South Australia.

Clive was a British and Australian metallurgist, administrator, management consultant and amateur ornithologist. Born in England, he attended Oundle School and went on to complete a degree in Metallurgy and a PhD at the University of Cambridge.

Clive was fascinated by birds since his early childhood. He quickly developed into an outstanding amateur ornithologist with an international reputation. Although involved in studies of various species of birds, his main focus became the migratory. He became the founding chairman of the Wash Wader Ringing Group (founded in 1959) and was associated with development of cannon-netting, especially as a means of catching large numbers of waders for banding and demographic studies.

The Group's first catch using the cannon net was in 1967.

Clive Minton moved to Australia as managing director of Imperial Metal Industries Australia in Melbourne, Victoria. There, he revitalised wader studies, in large part through the introduction of cannon-netting to the Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG), which became one of the most active banding groups in the world. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Broome Bird Observatory and was an active member of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, serving on its Research Committee 1980–1988 and as vice-president of the RAOU from 1989–1995.

In 1980-81 the Australian Wader Studies Group was formed as a special interest group of the then Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (now BirdLife Australia) and Clive was elected as the inaugural Chair. Clive continued in this role into the 1990s when he convinced the late Mark Barter to take on the role of Chair. Clive continued to be a key Committee member and actively contributed to the work of the AWSG Committee for 39 years!

Clive Minton has been one of the great movers and shakers of shorebird research in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway (EAAF) and in other flyways over many decades. His interests were diverse; he was a champion of shorebird monitoring, for example leading the first complete counts of shorebirds in north-western Australia and co-leading the monitoring of Corner Inlet (Victoria's premier shorebird site) for nearly 40 years. But he is best remembered for studies involving the capture, banding and release of shorebirds. Clive was the key initiator of the North-west Australia Shorebird Expeditions and, from the early 1980s, Clive led regular, almost annual, wader study expeditions to north-west Australia to catch and study the waders that migrate to and through the coastal strip between Roebuck Bay near Broome, Eighty Mile Beach and Port Hedland in the southern section of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway.

The field work from these expeditions dramatically increased knowledge of the importance of Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach as key non-breeding habitat of many species of migratory shorebirds. These expeditions, along with data collected in south-eastern Australia by the VWSG, have led to major governmental conservation initiatives through the Flyway, including the Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA), the China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) and as a Site of International Importance in the EAAF network of sites.

This work has continued annually or biannually for over 35 years and, through Clive's active encouragement, has involved many people from Asia and Europe. It provided inspiration to young shorebird conservationists in Australasia and from across the EAA Flyway. It has led to the development of the largest morphometric and movement data set for migratory shorebirds in the EAA Flyway. This work led to the establishment of Broome Bird Observatory and continues to be a legacy to the passion Clive had for migratory shorebirds. Clive was also involved in several international wader study expeditions in North America, South America and Russia.

Clive's work was recognised through many distinguished awards, including:

- 1975 - he was awarded the Bernard Tucker Medal for services to ornithology[1]
- 1998 - he was elected as a Fellow of the RAOU
- 2000 - he was awarded the John Hobbs Medal for outstanding contributions to ornithology as an amateur

- 2001 - he was elected a Member of the Order of Australia for 'services to ornithology, particularly in the study of migratory wading birds in Australia'
- 2003 - he was awarded an Australian Natural History Medallion
- 2012 – he was awarded the Eisenmann Medal
- 2013 – VWSG Life Member bestowed at the AGM
- 2014 – Awarded the Citizens United President's Award (New Jersey)

In 2003, British ornithologist Andrew Whittaker commemorated Clive Minton in the species epithet of the Cryptic Forest Falcon (*Micrastur mintoni*). Even these awards do not fully demonstrate Clive's impact. He published or co-authored many scientific publications, an even larger number of less formal reports and newsletter articles to share knowledge with the teams and volunteers he loved to work with, and probably even more emails and letters hounding people into action! His memory was extraordinary, and it is impossible to list all the projects that benefitted from Clive's advice and ability to recall related research or workers that could be helpful. Above all he inspired multiple generations to take up 'shorebirding' as their passion or their career. His impact on shorebird research and conservation worldwide defies measurement.

Clive will always be remembered as a larger than life presence, generous with sharing his knowledge and passion for migratory waders and support for the many volunteers and researchers participating in banding and colour flagging of migratory waders.

He will be greatly missed by all who knew and valued him as he was a most warm and wonderful human being.

Alison Russell-French, Secretary and Acting Chair, AWSG

Tributes continue to pour in from around the world for Clive Minton, founding father of the International Wader Studies Group, via the IWSG attributes and remembrance page for Clive Minton <https://www.waderstudygroup.org/news/tributes-and-remembrances-page-for-clive-minton/>

A private funeral was held in Melbourne and this will be followed by a memorial service of Clive's life on 11 December 2019 at the Sandringham Yacht Club, Jetty Rd, Sandringham, south east of Melbourne. For more details or directions contact Roz Jessop moonbird39@gmail.com

Ed.

## Plotting shorebird migration from early days through a lifetime.

This is perhaps an appropriate moment to have a quick look of where we have come with tracking shorebird migration covering the early days of pioneers such as Clive Minton and the various wader study groups across multiple migratory flyways.

The early days of plotting bird migration involved attaching a metal band (ring) to the leg of a bird back a hundred years ago. The hope was that if someone found the bird dead, or in the case a bird taken by a hunter, noticed the band, they would then return the band to the banding scheme of the country where the bird was originally caught and banded, generally to someone at a research centre or bird observatory which became established across many countries. Alternately, the bird was sent to the banding authority in the country where it was found or trapped/shot. As can be imagined, the 'recovery' rate of banded birds was very low, and any plotting of migration routes entailed the banding of many thousands of birds for any chance of 'recoveries' of banded birds. These resulted in straight lines being drawn across a map between the bander and finder, giving some idea of migration routes

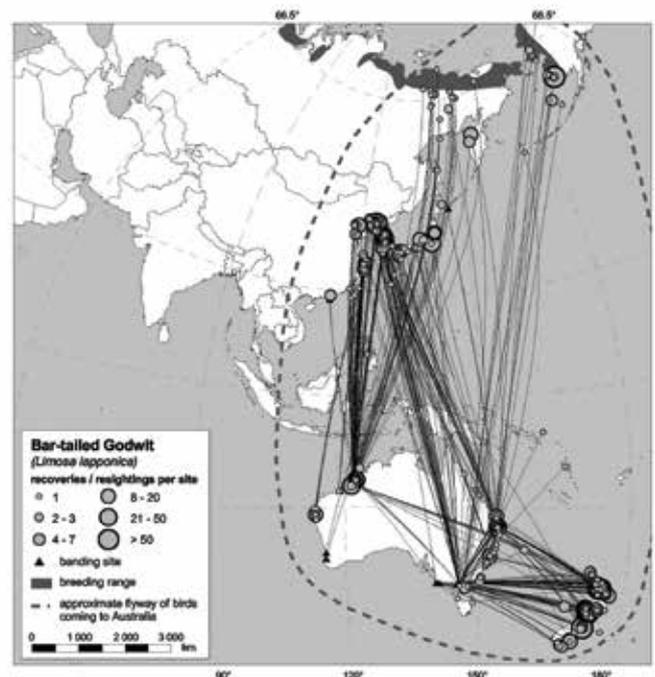
Colour bands were added to metal bands to enable the country of banding of birds to be observed in the field by keen-eyed bird observers. This increased the recorded movements of birds by merely noting the colour of the band along with the place and date of observation. However, a big breakthrough came in the early 1990s when coloured leg flags were introduced, enabling alpha-numeric engraving to be used to identify an individual bird from its unique flag number and flag colour. This enabled the precise date and location of banding to be identified. Any particular bird may be observed by several observers along its migration route providing more information of the route taken by the bird during migration.

Some enthusiastic bird observers spend many hours scanning flocks of shorebirds during bird migration seasons often observing the same bird/s each year. This added to the excitement of seeing a bird from Siberia or one flagged at one of the research centres along the flyway during their annual migration movements each year.

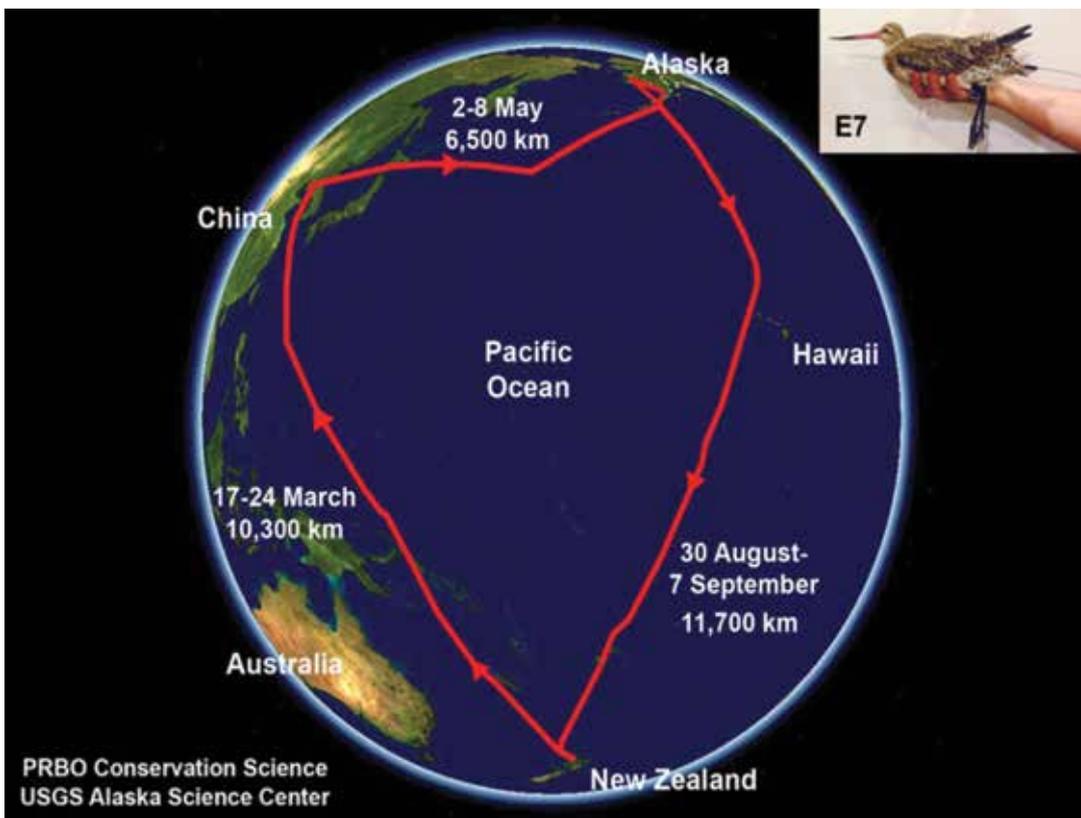
Leaping ahead with technology over time, we are now able to watch the movement of migratory shorebirds in real time through the use of micro satellite transmitters relaying regular plotting of a shorebird's movements in flight, at a stopover site or sitting on its nest!

The most amazing story was in 2007. That of the continuous tracking of the now famous E7 female Bar-tailed Godwit from New Zealand, to the Yellow Sea, onto her nesting grounds in Alaska and eventually back to New Zealand via the Pacific, a round-trip journey of over 21,000 kilometres. This was more than researchers had hoped for (the battery life lasting the distance, not the bird as she had no doubt completed the transglobal journey many times)! This story unfolded due to a combined project between the USGS Science Center in Alaska and the Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre in New Zealand. Of course, our US colleagues had been telling us for years that they thought Bar-tailed Godwits flew non-stop between Alaska and New Zealand and Australia!

Since 2007 a lot more has been discovered due to the development of smaller satellite tags enabling the smallest shorebirds to be tracked across the Flyway. One of the most significant outcomes of these projects is that we no longer have to catch such large numbers of shorebirds which relieves the stress on large numbers of shorebirds having to be caught in nets.



The use of engraved leg flags increased the visual plotting of shorebirds movements a thousand times!



The complete migration route of E7 from New Zealand to nest site and back again with the use of micro satellite transmitters!

## ***The mysteries surrounding the movements of the Oriental Pratincole finally uncovered!***

Grace Maglio takes us up and close to individual birds as they are tracked by the latest and smallest satellite tags, pin-pointing nesting sites for observers to go and find and photograph birds at the nest after some nail-biting moments!

For five years the Australasian Wader Studies Group has undertaken satellite tracking projects on various species of wader, driven by Clive Minton's never-ending enthusiasm and knowledge. This story is a fitting tribute to the man acknowledged as the founding father of the International Wader Study Group and AWSG (as well as many other initiatives of shorebird research and conservation efforts globally).

The story so far.....

On the 8th February 2019, we fitted Satellite Tags, or PTTs (Microwave Telemetry Solar 2-gram Platform Transmitter Terminals), to five Oriental Pratincoles (*Glareola maldivarum*). These birds were caught using a cannon net on Eighty Mile Beach, 42 km south of Anna Plains Station. All birds were also fitted with an engraved yellow leg flag (Table 1)." These are the first Oriental

Pratincoles to be fitted with an electronic device and were targeted because of our almost complete lack of knowledge of their migration route and breeding areas, even though they are the most numerous migratory wader to visit Australia from the northern hemisphere in the non-breeding season.

Prior to 2004, it was thought that the population of Oriental Pratincole in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway was around 75,000 birds. However, in February 2004, during the annual AWSG North West Australian expedition, participants observed an unprecedented, extraordinary number of this species along Eighty Mile Beach and the surrounding plains. As a result, a formal count was organised and through ground and aerial based counts, it was estimated that 2.88 million Oriental Pratincoles inhabited the area that year! This was probably due to the large numbers of Yellow-winged Locusts occurring at the time and unfavourable weather conditions in other parts of northern Australia.

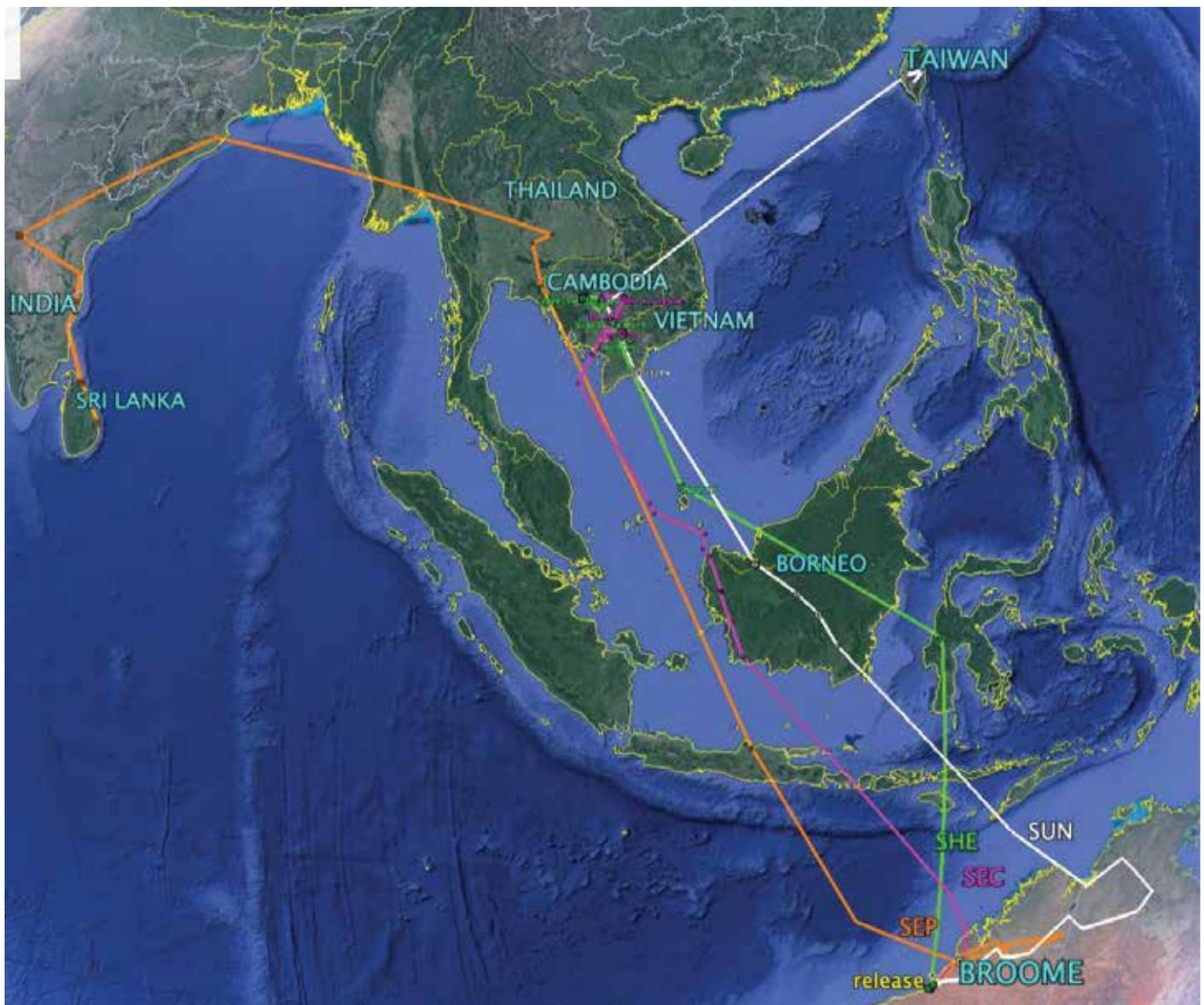
Catching and banding has been regularly undertaken on Eighty Mile Beach and Roebuck

## *The mysteries surrounding the movements of the Oriental Pratincole finally uncovered! (Cont)*

Bay since 1981. Oriental Pratincoles have been banded in the hope that some insight into their movements, both in Australia and during their migrations and breeding, may be revealed. Yet, despite over 620 Oriental Pratincoles being marked in Australia over the years, there has only been one re-sighting of a marked bird. This was made by Chien-Hua CHEN from the Taiwan Wader Study Group of a bird with a plain yellow flag breeding in Taiwan.

This year we have been incredibly fortunate in deploying PTTs on Oriental Pratincoles just at the time when some were setting off back on their northward migration. The majority arrive in Australia in December and were already known to leave, mostly, in February; a shorter time than any other migratory wader species. The results so far have exceeded all expectations (Map 1).

All birds left Australia except SEA whose PTT failed while still on Anna Plains Station.



Oriental Pratincole Tracks February to October 2019

## ***SHE – ‘The Trail Blazer’***

After a brief period remaining on Anna Plains Station within 25 km of the release site SHE had left Australia around February 16th, heading directly north over the sea from Eighty Mile Beach. In the early hours of 18th February signals were picked up from Sulawesi, Indonesia (about 1900km from the release site). By 23rd February, SHE was already enjoying a lakeside view at the largest freshwater lake in South-east Asia, on the floodplains of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve Lake over 4,000 km from the release site. This lake is an important area not only for the flora and fauna of the region but also because it supports almost 50% of the Cambodian human population, who depend on the lake’s resources.

For ten weeks in the Tonle Sap Biosphere, SHE’s movements indicated breeding behaviour with tracks developing a ‘centre point’, characteristic of a nest site. There are breeding records of Oriental Pratincole in Cambodia and in particular on other parts of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve. After 97 days at its Tonle Sap Lake location, SHE started moving south. From around 2nd June SHE seemed to settle in Prey Veng Province, Cambodia, 170 km south east of the first breeding site and once again the tracks formed a ‘centre point’ suggesting another breeding attempt at a different site. A fascinating insight adding to the knowledge of this remarkable species!

**Watch out for the next update as SHE makes its way south!**



SHE Just before release. Credit - Rob Bush

**Table 1: Identification and weights of tagged birds**

PTT ID	Metal ID	Leg Flags	Weight (g)
83590	052 81470	SEA	108
83591	052 81473	SUN	107
83593	052 81476	SEP	110
83595	052 81478	SHE	119
83596	052 81480	SEC	109

Note: All birds left Australia except SEA whose PTT failed while still on Anna Plains Station.

## ***SEP – The Tale of Two Flyways!***

With help from Subbu Subramanya, Centre for Ecology and Environment, Thunghai University.

Known as the Outback Explorer for its movements around the Kimberley shortly after being fitted with a satellite tag, SEP headed toward Central Java around the 5th September. Then onto Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand – an unusual destination for waders, spending their non-breeding season in Australia. What has

become one of the many exciting highlights of this project so far, on 1st April, SEP left Mainland Southeast Asia and flew towards India, with a first known stop in Odisha and so began a remarkable collaboration between the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and the Central Asian Flyway!

By 22nd April SEP had moved across the Indian continent to south western India, on the banks of the Krishna River, within the boundary of Heggur

## SEP – The Tale of Two Flyways! (Cont)

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Village, Bagalkot District, Karnataka. Location data in this area suggested that SEP attempted to breed here. In a project full of firsts, SEP is the first Australian-marked wader to be recorded in this region and the first Australian wader to be recorded breeding in India. A team of researchers led by Subbu Subramanya in India took on the difficult task of looking for SEP and the rest is history!

SEP - One little bird, many conservation possibilities - What a week! In a prime example of collaboration and teamwork. SEP, 'one little bird', ignited the interest and excitement of many people around the world as we watched its migration from North West Australia to Mainland Southeast Asia and then to India. These very movements had the power to connect people and show how working together can drive the protection of a species and ultimately ecosystems.

In brief, after reading about SEP's migration to India, a group of around eight individuals lead by Subbu Subramanya travelled to Bagalkot District, Karnataka on a three-day monitoring expedition. Their mission was to survey the flora and fauna of this area. The hope was to sight SEP during

this three-day expedition and that is exactly what happened!

"As we headed towards the location where SEP was recorded on April 22nd, OPs were more commonly seen. The OPs were flying overhead, screaming as they flew about and many were seen performing broken-wing display, which reminded us to pick our path carefully. I made it a point to look at every OP on the ground with my spotting scope and did not fail to watch almost every OP that was flying, looking at the tip of the tail for the PTT antenna. At 10.05, when I observed an OP in flight with my field glasses, my heart skipped a beat, as I could see the long PTT antenna projecting beyond the tail. As the bird prepared to land on the ground, I pointed-out the bird to the Forest Guard who had accompanied me and asked him not to let the bird out of his sight even for a few seconds. My hands shook, as I took the first photographs and they were all hazy. I emailed Grace at 10.13 (IST): "FOUND YOUR BIRD!!!" (see clear photo of SEP in India).

SEP photographed in India.  
Credit - Subbu Subramanya



## SEC – 'Home' in Cambodia

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Oriental Pratincoles on Anna Plains Station. Credit – Rob Bush

After spending some time close to the release site, SEC took flight north around 26th February, via Roebuck Plains, with its first known stop in Central Java. From around 20th March 2019 SEC was located 40km north east of Phnom Penh in the Prey Veng Province, Cambodia, where agriculture and aquaculture dominate and less than 4% of the original native vegetation remains. This area is known as the 'great green belt' of Cambodia due to the plains in the area flooding during the monsoon season (May to October), depositing silts, which drives the region's high agricultural yields. SEC is probably feasting on the rich insect life in these fertile areas.

After approximately 70 days in this location, and a breeding attempt likely to have occurred, SEC

made a move south on 28th May. From around 30th May SEC was located approximately 90km south east of its Prey Veng location, in the considerably smaller Svay Rieng Province, less than 20km from the Vietnam border, where it remained for approximately 85 days. Although accurate location data does not strongly suggest a breeding attempt further analysis of all location data may give a better indication of SECs behaviour in this region.

From around mid-October 2019, SEC had moved north again and was within the Tonle Sap Lake Biosphere area - SHEs first breeding location.

Next move?

## SUN – Eastern Traveller (with Chung Yu Chang,)

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After a tour interstate to the Northern Territory, as far as east as Newcastle Waters, off the Stuart Highway, SUN headed west again and around 9 March SUN's position was recorded 140km north-east of the Ashmore Islands, approximately 300km off North West Australia's Kimberley Coast. Four days later and another 1450km north-west, SUN was located in Central Kalimantan, approximately 2000km from the release site at 80 Mile Beach in North West Australia. Around 6th April after

approximately 7 days on Mainland Southeast Asia, SUN headed east and although we are unable to determine the exact route taken, this bird travelled approximately 2,030km to a location in western Taiwan. What made this flight fascinating was that had SUN taken a more direct route to this area from 80 Mile Beach, Western Australia and it may well have saved itself around 1,000 kilometres of air travel.

## SUN – Eastern Traveller (with Chung Yu Chang,) Cont

Since reaching Taiwan poor location data has made it difficult to track SUN. From the scarce data received it was assumed that SUN was most likely situated on the dry riverbeds somewhere along the Shoufeng and Hualien Rivers, in Hualien county, where breeding attempts by Oriental Pratincole have been observed in previous years. Historic breeding records seem to show a preference for dry riverbanks in Eastern Taiwan and harvested agricultural fields in Western Taiwan.

The issue of inaccurate location data persists making attempts to confidently locate SUN difficult. What is clear is that SUN had left its Hualien breeding location after approximately 63 days. The last accurate reading shows SUN to be near Tainan City, on 26th June. However, looking at other data it looks likely that the last location SEC may have moved to was in an area in Chiayi County, Western Taiwan. With no location data since the 1st August and taking into consideration poor location data since SUN landed in Taiwan, it

is difficult to know whether the tag has stopped transmitting altogether or whether there is still hope will once again receive signals.



Oriental Pratincole, East Taiwan.  
Credit – Chung-Yu Chang

## Acknowledgements.

The extensive and expensive satellite tracking program we have set up in NWA has only been possible through the efforts and generosity of a large number of people and organizations. It is difficult to know where to start with the formal acknowledgements so I will list them – but not in any particular order of priority.

1. The members of the AWSG NWA 2019 Wader and Tern Expedition and similar NWA expeditions in previous years, are particularly thanked for their efforts in the field in catching, banding and deploying transmitters on a range of species.
2. Landowners are especially thanked for permission to go onto their property to enable us to catch various species in order to deploy the satellite transmitters. In particular we thank Anna Plains Station for giving us the freedom to roam over large areas of grazed grassland when counting and catching target species.
3. AWSG acknowledges the Yawuru People via the offices of Nyamba Buru Yawuru Limited for permission to catch birds on the shores of Roebuck Bay, traditional lands of the Yawuru people.
4. AWSG acknowledges the Karajarri and Nyangumarta people for permission to catch birds to be marked for this project on the shores of 80 Mile Beach, traditional lands of the Karajarri and Nyangumarta.
5. The cost of the satellite transmitters, which cost around \$5000 each, and the satellite downloading costs (around \$1000-1500 per month) have been met by a variety of sources. Private individuals (Charles Allen and Doris Graham) have made most generous individual contributions. Kate Gorrings-Smith and her team of artists involved in The Overwintering Project made a large, generous donation from funds raised during their various public exhibitions. The annual NWA Expedition members, collectively, also provided significant funds each year.



John Stoate, (Anna Plains Station) and Clive during an Oriental Pratincole catch.

Credit – Prue Wright.

## ***11th EAAFP Meeting of the Partners, Brisbane, Australia.***

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The East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) is pleased to announce that it has officially accepted Australia's offer to co-host, with BirdLife Australia, the 11th EAAFP Meeting of the Partners (MoP11) in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia on 14-19 March 2021. The Meeting of Partners brings together all 37 EAAFP Partners every two years to discuss important issues affecting the Partnership, migratory waterbirds, and their habitats.

With the EAAFP being made up of Partners including 18 national governments, 6 inter governmental organizations, 12 international non-governmental organizations and 1 international private enterprise, the Meeting of Partners is an important forum to agree and make decisions on the conservation of migratory waterbirds across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. It is also an opportunity for Partners, site managers, Working Groups and Task Forces to share experiences, coordinate and plan future actions for conserving migratory waterbirds, particularly those identified as threatened, and their habitats along the EAAF.

The 11th Meeting of Partners' host city, Brisbane, Queensland is Australia's most biodiverse capital city. Moreton Bay, an East Asian-Australasian Flyway Network and Ramsar Wetland site, has

very significant social and ecological values with diverse coastal, seagrass, mangrove and wetland habitats. It is one of the largest wintering sites for the IUCN Red Listed 'Endangered' Far Eastern Curlew. Australia became a founding Partner of the EAAFP in 2006 and has been an active and important partner ever since. Australia is currently Chair of the Far Eastern Curlew Task Force and Vice-Chair of the Illegal Hunting, Take and Trade Task Force. To date, Australia has designated 24 Flyway Network Sites, thus playing a leading role in conserving wetlands and migratory waterbirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. This will be the first Meeting of Partners to be held in Australia.

BirdLife Australia is Australia's largest organization devoted to the conservation and research of birds and their habitats. The Australasian Wader Studies Group, a Specialist Group of BirdLife Australia, has been an instrumental member of the EAAFP and has been an international non-government organization partner since 2006. BirdLife Australia's Migratory Shorebirds Program facilitates a range of projects (including the National Shorebird Monitoring) aimed at improving the situation of our shared migratory shorebirds.

## 1st East Asian-Australasian Flyway Shorebird Science Meeting

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The first shorebird science meeting to be held in the East Asian Australasian Flyway will be held at the National Institute of Ecology, Seocheon-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, Republic of Korea (May 5-8, 2020). This meeting will support international efforts to study, monitor, and conserve migratory shorebirds.

Shorebird biologists, wetland ecologists, researchers, practitioners, students, land managers and other professionals working on shorebird conservation from across the EAA are invited to participate in this meeting, allowing interchange and collaboration among shorebird scientists and conservationists across the flyway.

The scientific program will include three days of plenary lectures, symposia sessions, oral and poster presentations, species- or issue-specific workshops and side meetings. The final day will include a bird-watching field trip to the Geum Estuary intertidal area where thousands of migratory shorebirds will be staging.

### Our goals are:

- to promote research that provides an evidence base for monitoring, management, conservation and education/outreach relevant to shorebirds in East Asia and Australasia.
- to provide a structured forum to facilitate, coordinate, and enhance the exchange of shorebird information among interested parties.
- to promote the conservation of shorebirds in East Asia and Australasia.

The call for abstracts for the 2020 East Asian-Australasian Flyway Shorebird Science Meeting is now open. We are inviting three types of submission:

- Standard abstracts to be considered for an oral presentation (15-min talk, plus 5-min for questions), or a poster presentation.
- Proposal for Symposium (total of 2-hours in duration, organised as you wish)
- Proposals for workshops or side meetings.

Themes covered during the Meeting include Breeding Ecology, Migration Ecology, Non-breeding Ecology, Monitoring, Conservation Management. If you feel your submission does not fit into one of these themes, please discuss with Professor Richard Fuller.

**r.fuller@uq.edu.au**

Please submit your abstract to **r.fuller@uq.edu.au** by **31st December 2019**.

The Meeting Science Committee will review submissions and notify lead organizers whether their abstract or proposal has been accepted by **15th January 2020**. We may request that some oral presentations be changed to poster presentations. It is anticipated that conference registration will open on **1st February 2020**, and close **1st April 2020**.