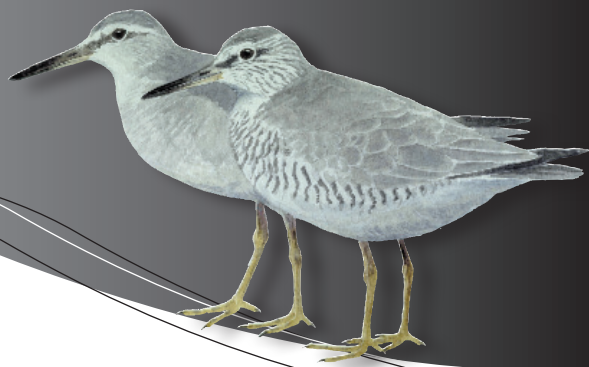


Tattler



Newsletter for the Asia Pacific Flyways

Editor: Liz Crawford Email: tattler@awsg.org.au

No. 32 April 2014

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Editorial

Communication is the key thread linking articles in this *Tattler*. The article on Latham's Snipe habitat highlights the need to publish monitoring data so that it is accessible and credible to those authorities making decisions on development proposals. Many people feel daunted by the prospect of writing scientific papers but the proposed Writeshop will help to put pen to paper. The Chinese International Bird Fair attended by 20,000 people, the Flyway Print Exchange and BirdLife Australia's Farewell Shorebirds campaign are all communicating with the general public to raise awareness about shorebirds. Numerous reports on fieldwork conducted all along the EAAF highlight the importance of healthy habitat in over-wintering areas as well as staging and breeding areas and the consequences of habitat loss, particularly in the Yellow Sea. Stories of shorebird longevity and repeat arrivals at particular sites confirm our obligations to protect their habitat and keep communicating with the broader community.



Tattler is the quarterly newsletter of the Australasian Wader Studies Group. Contributions are welcome and encouraged from all working with shorebirds and their habitats along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway.

Please contact the editor for more information.

Pacific Golden Plover donning breeding plumage in NSW, Australia in March 2014 - preparing for northward migration. Photo Silva Vaughan-Jones

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www.awsg.org.au

A Special Interest Group of BirdLife Australia



Important Latham's Snipe site in Victoria to be impacted by development

Powling Street wetlands in Port Fairy, western Victoria, is one of the most well known sites for Latham's Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*) in Australia, and it is probably also one of the most important. This site regularly supports between 50 and 100 snipe and counts exceeding 400 birds have been recorded by members of the South Beach Wetlands and Landcare Group. This represents greater than 1% of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway population (which is currently estimated at 37,000 birds).

Powling Street Wetlands is a wetland complex, surrounded by an urban matrix, that contains several distinct but complementary components – a single main wetland, a nearby stony, grassy knoll, and surrounding areas of exotic grass that are periodically inundated including three small ephemeral wetlands.

The main wetland was originally identified as a shallow, ephemeral wetland as early as 1852, but has become more permanent over time with construction of storm water infrastructure to the site. Latham's Snipe has made regular use of this wetland since monitoring commenced. This use is thought to be due to the presence of a variety of wetland components that provide a range of habitats for snipe in different seasons and different years. The main wetland is a permanent to semi-permanent swamp with shallow muddy areas for foraging, and fringing vegetation for concealment. The close proximity of a stony grassy knoll provides good roosting habitat amongst the long grass but slightly elevated above the rest of the complex. The surrounding grassland and ephemeral wetlands are periodically inundated and provide alternative foraging options for birds. The township of Port Fairy occurs in a broader agricultural region that contains good nocturnal foraging habitat for snipe within close flying distance, including wet paddocks, drains and nearby swamps and saline marshes. Hence birds generally use the wetland complex by day for roosting and opportunistic foraging, and at night depart the site to forage in the broader region.

Part of the wetland complex, which includes a large portion of the exotic grasslands plus the ephemeral wetlands, occurs on private land zoned residential by Moyne Shire Council. This land, located adjacent to the main wetland, has lain essentially fallow for many years and has been used regularly by the snipe throughout that time.

In 2005, the owner of the land applied to Moyne Shire Council for a permit to build a 32 lot housing estate on the ephemeral wetlands. The Landcare group objected to the proposal on several bases,

the main one being the importance of the site to the snipe population. The group has been fighting the proposal ever since. The proposal has been back and forth between the Council, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and the federal environment department, and has been through various iterations in the wake of each case. The latest iteration of the development proposal plus objections was heard before VCAT in February 2014.

I provided expert evidence on the importance of the site to Latham's Snipe and the likely impacts of the development were it to go ahead. I was questioned by two solicitors each representing the Council and the developer, and the barrister representing the Environmental Defenders Office. I was asked to provide specific information about the snipe's habitat use and daily movement patterns at the site, the effects of human activities and disturbance on snipe, the likely impacts of habitat modification and the broader implications of these for the snipe flyway population. My overall conclusion was that the loss of the adjacent grassland and ephemeral wetlands, which represent important foraging habitat, plus the disturbance caused by increased human activities next to the wetland and predation by domestic animals would substantially negatively impact the population.

In light of my comments plus others made during the hearing, the proposal was further modified to salvage some parts of the ephemeral wetlands for retention in the wetlands estate. However, a permit was issued for the development to proceed, albeit in this modified form with a number of new conditions. Whilst it is satisfying that the tribunal members used my evidence to further modify the development proposal, it is a great disappointment to see yet another wetland site to be carved up in the name of capitalism. And this will add to the 60+ percent of wetlands already lost in south-west Victoria since the mid-20th century.

The disappointing outcome of this case highlights three critical points.

Firstly, the need to have long-term monitoring data and the utmost importance of publishing these. The Landcare group has done a magnificent job of monitoring this site over the last two decades, but the failure to publish these data in a scientific journal or technical report meant that the data were not considered reliable scientific evidence in the eyes of the law.

Secondly, that Australia should look to its own backyard before shaking the finger at other nations for their destruction of waterbird habitat.

Important Latham's Snipe site in Victoria to be impacted by development cont.

Whilst habitat loss is happening at a scary pace elsewhere in the flyway, Australia is not immune to these issues.

Thirdly, Latham's Snipe may well join a host of other declining shorebird species in coming years, which will be exacerbated by this development and the degradation it causes to this important wetland.

I encourage all members and readers to get involved not only in the collection of wader

monitoring data, but to assist where they can in publishing it and making it available to the public, so that the risk of future disasters like this one might be lessened.

More information on the case can be found at <http://www.edovic.org.au/blog/vcat-win-locals>

Birgita Hansen

WriteShop - Past and Proposed

In January 2013, Professor Marcel Klaassen (of Deakin University, Geelong) very kindly agreed to run a workshop for Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG) members on how to write a scientific paper. This workshop was intended to provide members, who were interested in assisting with the analysis and writing up of VWSG data, with some tips and guidelines for constructing a manuscript for *Stilt* or any other scientific journal.

The workshop was held at the BirdLife Australia headquarters in Melbourne. It was attended by 17 people who represented an excellent cross section of the VWSG membership, including active field members, PhD students and two members of the *Stilt* editorial board.

Marcel's key point for the workshop was that writing papers need not be the province of academics alone; many amateurs know things about shorebirds that have never been published before, and writing them up (especially for a supportive journal like *Stilt*) is achievable and even enjoyable.

During the workshop Marcel gave an overview on how to structure a manuscript and the steps to take in preparing to write, as well as the writing (and referencing) pitfalls to watch out for. The most critical thing he wished participants to consider was the question and the structure. Marcel emphasised the need to clearly frame your research question(s) before commencing writing your manuscript. Your question may be framed and re-framed several times, but the idea is to be clear about what you want to find out in order to determine if the data are sufficient to answer the question. He recommended that you develop a clear structure of your manuscript and stick to it. The structure should ultimately guide the flow of your arguments and the logic of your scientific story. Underpinning all this is the need to consult the literature – you should find out what other information has been published that is relevant

to your paper and read as widely as possible. Publicly available search engines like Google Scholar make this much easier for the current generation of researchers than ever before! Check websites like http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_academic_databases_and_search_engines, www.jstor.org and www.bioone.org for access to scientific literature. Also check your regional university library – places like the University of Melbourne have a huge number of resources accessible in the library itself.

He went on to explain the typical structure of a scientific report, from the title and abstract, through to the introduction, methods, results, discussion, acknowledgements, references, and finishing with the supporting tables and figures.

After Marcel's talk, people raised a variety of questions and discussion topics. Some of these included how to target the appropriate audience, when to draw the line on what to include and what to exclude, how to contextualise your research (make your research relevant to as broad an audience as possible), how to choose a good title and how to balance brevity with sufficient detail. After question time, we broke into groups to talk about the papers we might like to lead or contribute to and to discuss specific topics of interest. Marcel, Danny, Simeon and I assisted groups with their data, ideas for manuscripts and questions.

All workshop participants were actively engaged and many had very insightful and interesting questions. The workshop was well received by all participants.

We are now calling for **Expressions of Interest** to participate in a similar workshop in 2014. We will explore the option of holding this workshop in conjunction with the Australasian Shorebird Conference (ASC) in Darwin in September. The exact structure of the workshop will be tailored to meet the needs of attendees, but will also

WriteShop - Past and Proposed cont.

be designed to follow on from topics covered in the previous workshop. People interested in attending this workshop should send their expressions of interest (EOI) to Birgita Hansen at editor@awsg.org.au - this includes people who are not planning on attending the shorebird conference in Darwin. Please include with your EOI where you live (or closest major city), your level of expertise (e.g. amateur seeking new

skills, student wishing to improve existing skills), your area of interest (e.g. writing, framing research questions, data analysis, etc.) and your availability for a potential Darwin workshop.

We would like to thank Golo Maurer and BirdLife Australia for hosting the 2013 workshop.

Birgita Hansen

Conferences

9th Australasian Shorebird Conference 20-21 September 2014

The 9th Australasian Shorebird Conference will be held in Darwin on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September 2014. The conference will be hosted by the Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods at Charles Darwin University's Casuarina campus. We hope you will join us and encourage you to submit abstracts on key issues concerning shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Conference Deadlines:

31 May 2014 Abstract submission deadline

31 July 2014 Early bird registration deadline

Contact: Amanda Lilleyman email: conference@awsg.org.au

For further information & registration go to:

www.awsg.org.au/australasian-shorebird-conference.php

International Wader Study Group Conference September 2014

This year's International Wader Study Group Conference will be held in Haapsalu, Estonia, during the weekend of 26 - 29 September 2014. Haapsalu is located on the Baltic Sea coast.

Further information is available at: <http://www.waderstudygroup.org/conf/2014.php>

First Chinese International Bird Fair 29 March 2014

Fifteen years ago, birdwatching was regarded as an unusual minority hobby in mainland China. Today, there are about 40 birdwatching societies with thousands of regular members all over the country, and numbers are growing rapidly.

The first International Bird Fair held recently in Fuzhou, in Fujian Province in south-east China, was organised by Fujian Bird Watching Society and Fujian Youth Environmental Protection Union. The one-day Bird Fair attracted over 40 bird organisations, both from across China but also including representatives of various BirdLife partners. Chinese organisations included 19 birdwatching or wild bird societies from mainland China, five wild bird societies from Taiwan and several other government and civil environmental organisations based in China. BirdLife partners included the Audubon Society (USA), Bird Studies Canada, the Wild Bird Society of Japan, the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society, Burung

Indonesia, BirdLife Australia, UK (RSPB) and BirdLife International, Cambridge office. The fair was held at the Fuzhou National Forest Park, a popular birding and hiking area and one of the sites where modern ornithology took root in China. It was a great success and was attended by an amazing 20,000 people from all walks of life. They experienced a variety of displays, events and lectures, all featuring different aspects of birds and their ecology.

"China has had an impressive growth in its economy over the last three decades and now we are witnessing an impressive growth in the conservation movement. Most of the birders are from the younger generations who are eager to learn more about nature and conservation. This will surely be a great support to the conservation movement of this big country and make the slogan of 'Beautiful China' come true", said Simba Chan, BirdLife's Senior Conservation Officer for Asia.

First Chinese International Bird Fair 29 March 2014 cont.

Phil Straw was the obvious choice to represent BirdLife Australia at the Fujian Bird Fair, given his long involvement in China since the late 1990s both as an advisor on wetland habitat design and management for migratory shorebirds and more recently representing the AWSG at the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership meetings (since 2006).

From the frustrations expressed by the late Mark Barter, Phil quickly understood that learning Chinese was key to communication with locals during survey work and at meetings. Phil was able to produce PowerPoint presentations in Chinese at the International Wetlands and Management Conference in Taipei in 2000 and has found knowledge of the language invaluable ever since. The Fujian Bird Fair was one example, being kept busy by the thousands of visitors!

BirdLife Australia's stand was particularly popular, featuring a Chinese version of a giant coloured poster showing the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and the various birds' migration routes that pass along it, as they fly from their non-breeding areas in Australia and New Zealand north through China to their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere. In particular, BirdLife Australia's stand highlighted the threats to shorebirds, especially along the shores of the Yellow Sea in China and the Korean Peninsula, where land reclamation programs have resulted in dramatic declines in the populations of a number of species of migratory shorebirds. It is vital that awareness of this issue is raised in China, where development of coastal areas abounds.

To further emphasise China's interest in and importance for birds, a meeting on international conservation for youth took place on the same day as the festival at the Agriculture and Forestry University in Fuzhou. BirdLife Partners from the USA, Australia, Indonesia and the UK gave examples of conservation and education work from their own countries and emphasised the importance of cooperation along the flyway, something the BirdLife Partnership excels at and something that is needed to save the amazing spectacle of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and the birds that use it.

Phil Straw

and extracts from:

<http://birdlife.org.au/media/birdlife-australia-spreads-its-wings/>

<http://www.birdlife.org/asia/news/birdlife-participates-mainland-china%E2%80%99s-first-international-bird-fair>



BirdLife Australia exhibit being visited by some of the 20,000 visitors at the Chinese International Bird Fair at Fuzhou.



Chinese flyway poster produced by BirdLife Australia being presented to the President of the Fujian Bird Watching Society.



Phil Straw (right) and international delegates search for leg flags in flocks of shorebirds on northward migration at the Min Jiang Estuary.



Phil speaking at the presentations at the end of the Chinese International Bird Fair events.

Update on the Flyway Print Exchange: an art project inspired by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

A year ago, in *Tattler* 28 (April 2013), I put out a call for expressions of interest in the art project I was just starting under the auspices of BirdLife Australia – the Flyway Print Exchange.

My plan was to find 20 artists from as many Flyway countries as possible to participate in a print exchange inspired by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. I put out calls through both printmaking and shorebird networks – and was astonished by the response I received. It was fabulous! And so exciting to hear from artists all over the world! The only sad part was having to tell some of the wonderful artists that the project was full. But by July last year the artists were finalized, with representatives from nine of the 22 Flyway countries: Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, India, South Korea, Japan, China and the USA (specifically Alaska)!

The Exchange

Once the artists were chosen, I sent them the paper for their prints and they all got to work, creating a new print inspired by the Flyway. The deadline for prints was the end of 2013 and I can't tell you what magnificent Christmas presents they made, streaming in from all along the Flyway! Each work is an original print, and the techniques are many, including linocuts, woodcuts, etchings, silkscreen prints and digital prints. Some are detailed, others bold, some monotone and others hand-coloured. The variety and skill are inspiring and beautiful.

Print exchanges are unique to the print medium since it is capable of creating multiple artworks that are both original and identical. What it entails is this: every artist creates an edition



Artwork by Ni Jianming, China

(so prints a certain number of the same print), the editions are then compiled, and every artist receives one of every print in the exchange. The artists in the Flyway Print Exchange have kindly donated all money from the sale of the prints to BirdLife Australia's shorebird research. What they will each receive, however, is a full set of the Flyway prints.

The result of the exchange is manifold. It is a literal exchange – with the prints changing hands and being shared – but it is also an exchange of ideas and inspiration. Our disparate group of artists – varying in age and experience, not to mention culture and background – which may never gather together in person, is now bound by this exchange of work. A small community has been created around the works and around the Flyway itself.

Prints Take Flight!

The other dimension to the Flyway Print Exchange is the journey that one of each print is destined to make. This March, as our shorebirds were preparing to launch into the blue, a small and unusual flock joined them. This ungainly flock, of artworks rather than birds, is currently travelling by post, unprotected by any covering. The twenty prints have already braved the Tasman, the first leg of their journey being from Melbourne to Auckland. And they have made it as far as Singapore! From there they fly to Alaska and then back to Melbourne.

The prints will return home weathered and crumpled, marked by addresses, postmarks and stamps. They will bear witness to the physical journey that the Flyway defines. In the final exhibition of the works, to be held in Melbourne



Artwork by Celia Walker, New Zealand

Update on the Flyway Print Exchange: an art project inspired by the East Asian-Australasian Flyway cont.

this September, the weathered works will be exhibited beside their pristine counterparts.

You're Invited!

Once the 'travelling' prints return I will have them photographed in preparation for the exhibition catalogue. In addition to the Melbourne exhibition, I am in discussion with a number of galleries around Australia and in other Flyway countries to take the Flyway Print Exchange travelling! Every stop will be another opportunity to engage the public with stories of the Flyway and its miraculous travelers.

While the exhibition will be enjoyable in itself, it is also both a fundraiser and a tool to raise awareness about the Flyway. Please come and consider buying a print. They are not very large, about 26x27 cm, so will make perfect gifts to send overseas or inexpensive artworks to purchase, frame and enjoy yourself. Bring your family and your friends! All money from sales will go to shorebird research by BirdLife Australia.

You can follow the progress of the project on our facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Flyway-Print-Exchange/175252916007801>. I am currently introducing each artist and their work week by week, as well as keeping up to date with the progress our shorebirds are making up the Flyway, and other Flyway-related matters.

If you have any questions or suggestions for the project, or if you are interested in donating



Prints on passage in the Flyway

to the project to keep it flying (and donations are made through BirdLife Australia and are tax deductible!!), I'd love to hear from you. Please email me at katehal@optusnet.com.au.

I hope to see you all at the Flyway Print Exchange's inaugural exhibition at No Vacancy Gallery, Federation Square, Melbourne. September 8-28 (opening dates and speakers to be announced). Do come and say hello!

Kate Gorringer-Smith

Flyway Print Exchange Co-ordinator

E: katehal@optusnet.com.au

www.kategorringesmith.com.au

Facebook: The Flyway Print Exchange

World Traveller - New Zealand Godwit in South Korea

This picture of Bar-tailed Godwit ZPE was taken on 27 March 2014 by Andreas Kim at Mokpo, South Korea.

The interesting thing is that we first banded this bird at Miranda, North Island of New Zealand, on 17 October 1993 aged 3+ so it is at least 24.5 years old and obviously still migrating and looking pretty good. This is New Zealand's oldest known godwit.

Adrian Riegen

Editor's Note: See *Tattler* 31 (February 2014):14 for the "old birds" banded in North West Australia where three Bar-tailed Godwits are at least 26+ years old.



Bar-tailed Godwit originally flagged in New Zealand in 1993 and photographed by Andreas Kim in South Korea on 27 March 2014.

Farewell shorebirds - using the internet to raise awareness

On a flight that would exhaust even the world's most seasoned travellers, millions of birds leave Australia throughout Autumn on their annual migratory journey, travelling up to 13,000 km on their way to warmer climes.

From 10 April 2014, people who sign up at **farewellshorebirds.org.au** will receive a weekly video webcast from BirdLife Australia. Each webcast will mark the departure of another wave of birds and track their progress as they traverse the great distances from Australia to places including China, Korea, Siberia and Alaska.

Excitement is building across the country with staff from the Broome Bird Observatory reporting some birds have already taken flight, causing quite a stir with their noisy departure.

Six of the 35 species taking flight will be featured through the weekly webcasts tracking their journey. Among the 35 species, one weighs as little as two 50-cent coins while another doubles its body weight to prepare for the migration.

Birds featured include the Curlew Sandpiper—the most threatened of the 35 species, the Red Knot—whose journey stretches the length of the flyway (13,000 km) and shows some of the greatest difference in plumage, the Bar-tailed Godwit—known to fly 11,000 km non-stop from Alaska across the Pacific in 9 days, the Red-necked Stint—the smallest of the 35, weighing as little as 25 g, the Ruddy Turnstone—who flies 10,000 km from SE Australia to Taiwan non-stop, and the Eastern Curlew—the biggest of the 35.

Each webcast will feature Australian bird-loving comedian John Clarke and be anchored by Sean Dooley, author of *The Big Twitch*, editor of *Australian BirdLife* magazine and holder of the Australian Big Year twitching record from 2002 until 2012.

"Many Australians will be amazed to discover how these birds prepare for this incredible flight including many surprising facts—they shrink the size of their liver and stomach to make it easier to fly so far—this and many other fascinating shorebird facts will feature throughout the webcasts," Sean Dooley said.

As well as following the journey of the migratory shorebirds, the webcasts will raise awareness and encourage discussion on important topics including habitat destruction in Australia and on their flight paths overseas.

In their lifetime, migratory birds can travel more than 700,000 km, which is as far as the moon and back. By signing up to the website, nature lovers and twitchers alike can gain a deeper understanding of what makes them travel such vast distances, as well as keep up with what's going on with the birds.

Watch the Farewell Shorebirds teaser at farewellshorebirds.org.au & join the conversation using #FarewellShorebirds on Twitter.

BirdLife Australia
3 April 2014

AWSG's New National Conservation Officer - Dr Golo Maurer

First of all I would like to thank Joan Dawes for her tremendous work as the AWSG National Conservation Officer over the past two years. She certainly has racked up some great wins for shorebirds in this period, leaving me a big pair of shoes to fill. After an extremely productive AWSG State Conservation Officer Workshop on 31 March 2014 in Melbourne, it was decided to review and redefine the AWSG National Conservation Officer position as well as clarifying the AWSG State Conservation Officer positions. As a result of the workshop, the focus of the National Conservation Officer position will be on:

- facilitating communication and knowledge exchange on shorebirds and shorebird-related issues
- providing advice to AWSG State Conservation Officers on how to address State-based shorebird issues (such as submissions, letters to Federal, State and local politicians etc.)
- soliciting BirdLife Australia support from national office or branches in conjunction with AWSG State Conservation Officers, especially for nationally significant shorebird issues



Golo Maurer, AWSG's new National Conservation Officer

AWSG's New National Conservation Officer - Dr Golo Maurer cont.

- providing Shorebirds 2020 and Atlas data to AWSG State Conservation Officers
- advising on prioritising shorebird conservation issues such as submissions under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
- referring potentially suitable candidates to support AWSG State Conservation Officers

I am hoping to be able to communicate with AWSG members regularly through the *Tattler* on any interesting issues I am aware of. I am

also calling on readers to get in touch with me if they are interested in becoming part of AWSG's conservation effort or are aware of any shorebird threats or issues we might be able to address. This includes issues that have not yet made it to public consultation as earlier interventions can be less work and more effective.

Golo Maurer

Conservation Partnerships Manager, BirdLife Australia

Mobile 0467 444 114 Phone 03 9347 0757 ext 234

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Shorebirds Exposed to Residual Oil Spill in Bali, Indonesia

From September until April every year, various species of hawks, sea birds, shorebirds and forest birds migrate to Indonesia from the northern hemisphere. The birds come in their thousands, and often forage near settlements, such as ricefields, port, or ponds that have no legal protection equivalent to the nature reserve. It is not rare in the course of the migration, that migratory birds encounter many threats, like bad weather, missing or reduced temporary habitat, poaching and even pollution.

Indonesia, as one of the migration routes for birds, provides mangrove and mudflat habitat that supports migratory shorebirds. Benoa Harbour located in Denpasar, Bali is one of the locations that is used by shorebirds to rest and forage. At low tide the expanse of mud can reach up to 2 km, providing a large area for foraging by species such as the Lesser Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Grey Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler, Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel.

On 28 January 2014, Yuyun Yanwar, a photographer, identified about twenty individual shorebirds that had been exposed to oil spill residues from a pipeline in the west of Benoa Harbour. Following that information, members of the Indonesian Bird Banding Scheme, Cikabayan Birdbanding Club from Bogor, Anak Burung Birdbanding Club from Surabaya, Bali Birdbanding Club, and the staff of the Natural Resources Conservation in Bali spent a week (from 4 - 10 February 2014), trying to catch, clean and release the birds affected by oil spill residues.

The team managed to capture five individuals affected by oil spill residues, i.e. one Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, two Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, one Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* and one Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*. Once captured, the birds were cleaned and dried, then released.



Greater Sand Plover with oil spill plumage © Yuyun Yanwar



The different colour of plumage between birds with oil spill (left) and normal bird (right). © Yuyun Yanwar

Oil spill residues on birds could become a serious threat for the birds' survival. Birds can probe their feathers and consequently oil could be ingested and become toxic in the body. During the trapping of the oil-affected birds, the party that was responsible for the oil spill cleaned the oil residues from the exposed location.

In addition to the cleansing, teams also tagged birds that were not exposed to oil spill residues. The birds were ringed and flagged with a colour combination specific to Java (black over orange), for migration studies.

Shorebirds Exposed to Residual Oil Spill in Bali, Indonesia cont.

During the 7 days of activities, the team captured 29 individuals from 7 species: two Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*; nine Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*; four Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*; one Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*; one Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*; six Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*; and six Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*.

Acknowledgements

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Pringgo Pradipta. The information about bird rescue: Barbara Callahan from International Bird Rescue, Dr Joost Philippa DVM, Chris Hassel and Roz Jessop.

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Northward Migration from Roebuck Bay, North Western Australia

One of the joys of being involved in migratory bird research is the connections that it creates between people. I have many friends in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) whom I have met through the migrations of shorebirds. Some are people I communicate with regularly by e-mail; some I get to see in Taiwan, China and here in Roebuck Bay.

At this time of year our communications start to warm up somewhat and the e-mails fly back and forth as 'our' birds arrive at their stopover sites and become 'their' birds until the birds are ready to head off once again to their next stopover or to breed. I doubt our excitement and interest bother them one bit!

Engraved Leg Flags (ELF) and individual colour-banded birds are making the migration much clearer to us and shedding light on not just how populations move through the EAAF but how individuals choose to do so.

We have many sightings of birds seen in multiple years at the same site. There are records of birds seen at southern China sites and then northern China sites in the same year, all of which is adding to the fascinating story of migration.

We also get some 'quick' movements between sites. And when there is a great photographer to document the bird then all the better for the story. This season already we have ELF birds seen 8 days and 6 days between Broome and

China but the standout so far is the one below. During one of my regular scanning sessions for the Global Flyway Network and the Australasian Wader Study Group I saw one of 'my' colour-banded birds, Great Knot 2BRYY*. This bird was still on the roost, known to me as Wader Spit, on the northern shores of Roebuck Bay at 16:16hrs on 25 March 2014.



Great Knot 2BRYY* photographed by Dai John at Zhejiang, China only 119 hours after being seen at Roebuck Bay, North West Australia.

I can only assume she (she has had her gender assessed by DNA) left the bay and headed for the Yellow Sea that evening as at 15:00hrs on 30 March 2014 she was photographed by Dai John at Zhejiang, 400km south of Shanghai.

She had moved a minimum of 5,100km in a maximum of 119 hours (one hour short of 5 days) so she was travelling at a minimum speed of 45kph.

She appears to live all her non-breeding season in the north of Roebuck Bay. She has been recorded 55 times there and also she has been seen at Yalu Jiang in both 2010 and 2012. She was caught and banded for the first time in June 2008 as a first-year bird so she is now 7 (in her 7th year of life).

This is just one of millions of birds flowing through the EAAF but it is a great way to bring the wonderful story of migration to people.

Chris Hassell

Note* 2BRYY naming convention means flag on the upper right leg, blue over red bands lower left leg, yellow over yellow bands lower right leg.

Chongming Dongtan National Nature Reserve Report - Sunday 6 April 2014

Greetings from Chongming. Thankfully my arrival this year wasn't greeted with the bird flu outbreak that curtailed much of the banding program last year. In fact the spirits were much higher along with the temperature!

The spring migration catching season started here a week or so before my arrival with only very small numbers and my first day out on the mudflats was Monday 31 March.

Although we only caught 16 birds I considered it a great start as chief-catcher Jing Weiguo was very excited to show me a Great Knot with a yellow leg flag as he knew I had just arrived and this was the first Broome retrap for the season. Fingers crossed for lots more and indeed as I write this at the end of the first week we now have a total of 11 North West Australia retraps, all Great Knots so far. I have to add a big thank you to Clare Morton who gets the banding and resighting summary back to me almost within minutes of my emailing her with the bands. The Reserve crew and the other volunteers just can't believe how efficient our system is when I report back to them with the info so quickly. I tell them the system is called Clare! A Taiwanese man asked me what that stands for.

The catching method used here works remarkably well. Although often only catching 1/2 or maybe 7/8 occasionally in any one operation of the net, the two catchers working independently can bring in 60 plus birds in a 3-hour session. Today we had a particularly good catch of 136 birds. Remarkably about 120 of those were caught in 3 pulls of the net! This great catch also gave us 7 retraps. All but 3 birds were Great Knot plus 1 Bar-tailed Godwit and 2 Grey Plover.

The banders work in a banding shed about a 10-15 minute walk from each catching site. That walk can sometimes be a pretty hard slog through the mud carrying the baskets of birds. However generally the shed is welcome relief from the cold.

At the moment we are normally a team of nine: two catchers, AJ (who visited with Jing), three Taiwanese, one of Professor Ma's students from Fudan Uni in Shanghai, a New York twitcher and myself. It is a great team with everyone working well together. Most of them will depart during the coming week and I believe 1 or 2 more will arrive. All birds get a full process plus a tarsus measurement, feather samples taken and, for most birds, throat and cloacal swabs.

I'm finally getting used to putting on 2 flags! (Black over white flags for Chongming Dongtan).



Jing Weiguo sets off to catch.



Settles down...



And catches!

Our accommodation has improved greatly after last year as the Reserve building has had a renovation and the addition of a great wi-fi system is a real bonus. I also arranged to buy a pushbike this year which Ma Qiang (also a previous NWA Expedition participant) kindly organised. This has been great for getting to shops and around for both myself and other volunteers. It will be left for other volunteers to use in the future.

Scanning opportunities have been a little more difficult with banding everyday plus logistics of transport, drivers and tides. We have seen a few distant engraved leg flags on Great Knot

Chongming Dongtan National Nature Reserve Report - 6 April 2014 cont.

and Greater Sand Plover. The last couple of days before I leave have good tides for one of the most accessible scanning spots so depending on banding team numbers I am hoping to take advantage of those.

I also joined in the counting morning mid week and our team walked a 7 km stretch mostly along the new dyke that is under construction. A hazardous and adventurous outing! Wu Wei (NWA Expedition 2012) led our team of 3 and also succumbed to the mud, so stuck was he that it was only with the welcome assistance of 2 workmen that we got him out (I probably could have helped but really needed to get pictures!) This new dyke is a 27 km behemoth but remarkably should be essentially constructed in one year finishing around September. There will be lots of other works following with the whole project due to end by mid-2016. Primarily it is designed to help control the introduced Cordgrass 'Spartina' which is colonising the mudflats and reducing foraging and roosting habitat to an alarming degree. The area inside the wall will be managed to provide new and improved habitats for migratory ducks, shorebirds, spoonbills etc.

Another advantage will be that much of the count we did this week will be possible by vehicle with a couple of people. This will hopefully improve the accuracy as better tides can be selected without the reliance on lots of Reserve staff which causes all sorts of compromises at the moment. It will also be in comfortable biking distance from the base which will be handy for volunteers.

Banding Totals to 6 April 2014

Species	Number banded
Great Knot	308
Bar-tailed Godwit	15
Dunlin	9
Red Knot	9
Grey Plover	2
Terek Sandpiper	2
Kentish Plover	1
TOTAL	336

Maurice O'Connor

Broome bander - NW Australia

Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling and Red-necked Stint in South Australia

Catching Programme

Between 30 March and 7 April 2014, the Victorian Wader Studies Group (VWSG) targeted several sites along approximately 120km of the south-eastern coast of South Australia. The overall total of 500 birds caught, including 172 Ruddy Turnstone, 164 Red-necked Stint and 150 Sanderling, was a most successful outcome for the visit (see **Table 1**).

A major highlight was a beautiful catch of 45 Ruddy Turnstone at Nene Valley which contained six birds carrying geolocators (plus another one

where the initial geolocator had been retrieved in November 2013, with a new geolocator replacing it). Nene Valley was the place where 30 geolocators had been deployed on Ruddy Turnstone in April 2013. Only four of these had been retrieved prior to this visit.

It was great that 10 students plus teachers from a local school were with us, especially as they had been present when the geolocators were initially deployed and had also provided the funding for one of these.

Table 1 - Birds Banded in South Australia between 30 March 2014 and 7 April 2014

Species	New	Retrap	Total	(Juveniles)
Ruddy Turnstone	101	71	172	(51 = 30%)
Red-necked Stint	146	18	164	(50 = 30%)
Sanderling	134	16	150	(28 = 19%)
Curlew Sandpiper	6	-	6	(6 = 100%)
Double-banded Plover	2	-	2	(1)
Pied Oystercatcher	2	-	2	(-)
Sooty Oystercatcher	2	-	2	(-)
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	-	1	(1)
Red Knot	1	-	1	(1)
Totals	395	105	500	

Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling and Red-necked Stint in South Australia cont.

Geolocators

All six geolocators retrieved from the Ruddy Turnstone have been successfully downloaded by Ken Gosbell. All seem to have given complete migratory paths to and from their breeding grounds in arctic Siberia. All three examined in detail so far appear to have bred successfully in the June/July 2013 arctic breeding season. This corresponds well with the high proportion of juveniles present in the Turnstone population in the 2013/14 non-breeding season in Australia.

Twelve new geolocators were deployed on Ruddy Turnstone at Nene Valley.

Percent Juveniles

The catches in South Australia confirmed earlier data from north-west Australia, from King Island and from last November's visit to South Australia that 2013 was an exceptionally good breeding year for Ruddy Turnstone. In the five catches of Turnstone, the percentage of juveniles varied between 16% and 42%, with a mean of 30%. This is the highest level ever recorded in our intensive studies of Ruddy Turnstone over the last 20 years. The good breeding outcome was very timely as there was almost zero breeding success in the 2012 breeding season.

Sex ratios

Of the 121 adult Ruddy Turnstone caught 69 (57%) were male and 52 were female. In four of the five Turnstone catches males were present in greater numbers than females, while in the fifth catch numbers of both sexes were equal.

This is in marked contrast to the results obtained during the recent visit to King Island (Tasmania)

where females outnumbered males in all catches and the overall male percentage was only 37%. Data from previous years will need to be examined to see if this pattern of sex segregation is significant and occurs regularly.

Acknowledgements

The VWSG is extremely grateful to Iain and Sandy Stewart for hosting the first three days of our visit at Rendelsham and for providing a memorable crayfish feast on our last night there. Paul Feast also extremely kindly allowed us to again use his cottage at Green Point as our base, even though he was away on holiday in the Philippines. And Maureen Christie is again thanked for all the arrangements she made on our behalf and all the recceing she carried out before our visit.

Team Participants

The team was one of the most experienced we have ever fielded during a South Australian visit, with eight cannon-net licence holders present on two of the days.

From Victoria: Clive Minton, Robyn Atkinson, Ken Gosbell, Penny Johns, Roger Standen, Rob Patrick, Vivien Holyoak, Tessa Lamin, Eric Miller, Ila Marks, Heidi Miller, Rod Macfarlane, Helen Vaughan, Yaara Rotman, Jaris Driessen and Roz Jessop.

From South Australia: Maureen Christie, Iain Stewart, Graeme Parkyn, Jeff Campbell, Sarah Campbell and Michael Campbell.

Clive Minton

11 April 2014

Banded Whimbrel found dead in an Indonesian Fish Pond

In late March 2014, Muhammad Iqbal was birdwatching in southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, when he learned from a local person about a banded Phaeopus (Curlew or Whimbrel) that had been found dead in his fish pond about 2 or 3 years ago. The local had kept the band with Chinese characters which he presented to Iqbal. Through Roger Standen, custodian of the AWSG banding database, Chinese bander A.J. confirmed that the bird was a Whimbrel banded at Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve (31°27'N, 121°55'E) on 2 September 2006.

This is a fascinating example of international cooperation and the sad recognition of this bird's final flight.



The Chinese band recovered from a dead Whimbrel in an Indonesian fish pond

Hand-reared Spoon-billed Sandpiper seen in Thailand

A Spoon-billed Sandpiper was snapped in early March 2014 by birdwatcher Peter Ericsson on wetlands at Pak Thale in Thailand and identified as bird 'AA', which was hand-reared, flagged and released in Chukotka, Russia last summer as part of the effort to save the species from extinction.

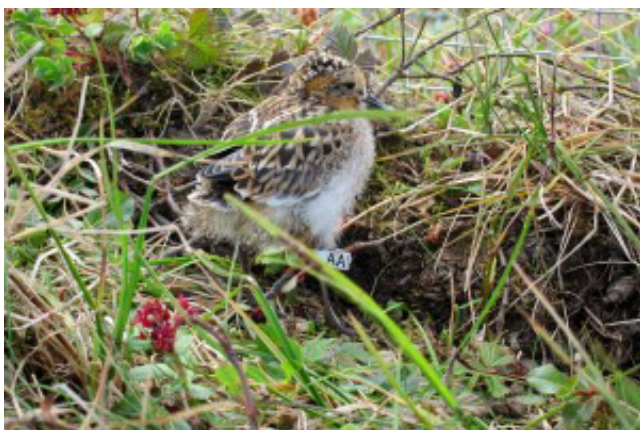
The Spoon-billed Sandpiper is one of the rarest birds in the world and consequently is one of the most difficult to find once it leaves its known breeding area for the winter months. This is the first time an individual hand-reared bird has been identified in the wild by the unique code on its plastic leg flag. Last autumn there were three sightings of Spoon-billed Sandpiper with white leg flags, indicating that they had been reared as part of the head-starting programme, but they were too distant for the codes to be read.

WWT aviculturist Roland Digby, who reared bird AA and many others on the tundra in Russia over the last two years, first spotted Peter Ericsson's sighting on a Facebook site. He said:

"It was so exciting to see Peter's message. We rear these birds for a few weeks till they're ready to fledge and migrate, and then we have to let them go into a world where we know the odds are stacked against them."

"This particular bird always had a strong character. Its flag is AA because it was the boldest and the first to be picked up. It was independent as soon as I'd released it, disappearing off during the day and only returning at night to feed on mosquitoes."

"I last saw it on August 6th last year and never expected to hear of it again, but it's wonderful to hear that it's survived its first migration, found places to safely rest and feed and avoided the bird trappers' nets."



Spoon-billed Sandpiper 'AA' as a chick in the rearing aviary on the Russian Tundra in summer 2013

Hand-rearing is part of a plan to artificially boost the number of Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the wild while conservationists protect coastal wetlands and stop bird trapping along Asia's eastern and southern coasts. Also known as headstarting, last year it increased the number of fledglings leaving the birds' only known breeding grounds by 25%.

Hand-rearing also allows conservationists to fit leg flags to the birds. Reported sightings give a measure of the success of different tactics to save the species and could potentially reveal new information about the birds.

Dr Nigel Clark of the British Trust for Ornithology is a leading wader expert and has been at the centre of efforts to conserve the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. He said:

"This sighting is a fantastic bit of news. It shows that headstarting the birds is working and they are successfully migrating and it's starting to give us more clues that could be useful in future. This is the fifth sighting in Thailand of a bird from the Meinyipil'gyno breeding grounds. Only time will tell if that's a coincidence, so I urge anyone in the region to keep their eyes out for leg-flagged birds and report them if they see one."

Birdwatchers in Asia are asked to particularly look out for and report (to sbsrecords@eaaflyway.net) these Spoon-billed Sandpipers with the following markings:

- Any of eight adults marked with light green flags inscribed with two alphanumeric characters on their left legs. These birds were caught and marked in 2013 as wild adults.
- Any of three juveniles with light green flags inscribed with two alphanumeric characters on their right legs. These birds were also caught and marked in 2013 as wild birds.
- Any of the 16 headstarted juveniles from 2013 which have white flags inscribed with two alphanumeric characters on their right leg
- Any of the 9 headstarted juveniles from 2012 which have light green flags with single alphanumeric character on their right leg
- Any Spoon-billed Sandpiper with any other marking, as there are a few survivors from previous studies.

Sourced on 10 March 2014 from <http://www.saving-spoon-billed-sandpiper.com/2014/03/news/conservation/spoon-billed-sandpiper-still-boldly-going-hand-reared-bird-from-russia-seen-in-thailand-this-week/>

Spoon-billed Sandpiper News Flash

7 April 2014

Chung-Yu Chiang reported on Facebook that he had found and photographed a Spoon-billed Sandpiper on Kinmen Island, Taiwan on 7 April 2014 with a light green flag engraved '8'.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper (left) bearing light green leg flag engraved '8', photographed by Chung-Yu Chiang in Taiwan on 7 April 2014.

Roland Digby wrote: The bird appears to be one of the birds reared in the initial head-starting trials in 2012. It hatched on 14/07/2012, was released on 10/08/2012 and was last seen on the morning of 17/08/2012.

What can be more heartwarming than seeing an impossible mission to save the incredible Spoon-billed Sandpiper taking fantastic shape! We (Roland Digby, Liz Brown, Николай Якушев and many more) collected eggs, incubated those and reared the chicks in the Tundra (Chukotka, far north Russia) and released the Spoon-billed Sandpiper juveniles with tags (each individual carrying a different number) in Russia in 2012 and today one of those birds was sighted by our friend Chung-Yu Chiang in Taiwan! This proves that the hand-reared (head-started) bird has survived in the wintering grounds (2012-2014) and is heading back to the breeding ground to breed (hopefully!)! To know more about the project, please visit : <http://www.saving-spoon-billed-sandpiper.com/the-project/>

Bohai Bay - Global Flyway Network - April 2014

This is Global Flyway Network's 5th consecutive year of complete spring coverage at Bohai Bay on the Luannan Coast, one of the most significant shorebird staging sites in East Asia. Over the next 7 weeks we will be scanning, counting, watching, recording, and scanning some more, as huge numbers of birds stop off here to rest and refuel en route to their northern breeding grounds. Many readers will be familiar with the aims of the project but for anyone that isn't, please check out the website for reports and updates from previous years which should tell you everything you ever wanted to know... <http://globalflywaynetwork.com.au/>

We were welcomed back to Bohai by around 4000 Great Knot and over 1000 Red Knot with numbers of the latter species rapidly increasing following a big arrival of birds on the 13/14 April. As usual for early in the season Eurasian Curlew and Dunlin were plentiful and small numbers of other species are beginning to filter in such as Terek Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone. In the Saltpans up to 10,000 Black-tailed Godwit are present and are now being joined by up to 16 Ruff, 10 Little Stint and increasing numbers of Marsh and Curlew Sandpiper. The first Nordmann's Greenshank of the season was seen on the 14th; this is our earliest record since 2010.

Colour-bands and leg-flags are the primary target and we have seen a wide selection already. Some old friends are here such as two of our regular Bar-tailed Godwit, Y1YLYB originally ringed in Broome and W5YWBB originally ringed in New Zealand. Both of these birds have been seen here every spring since 2010! On Red Knot there are plenty of orange flags (ringed Victoria, Australia) and white flags (New Zealand) which is what we have come to expect as the subspecies *rogersi* pass through the area first.

On our first day in the field we hadn't even made it to the mudflats before we came across an all too familiar issue. Every year we find mist nets set up to illegally catch birds although these are usually targeting passerines. This time we noticed a line of nets set in a saltpan, the first time we have found someone actively trying to catch the shorebirds here. In total we released (alive) 13 birds from the 7 nets (Sanderling, Dunlin and Kentish Plover) over 2 days and, with permission from the Wildlife and Forestry Department, we destroyed the nets and so far have not seen any more.

Ady Boyle and Matt Slaymaker

Sourced from:

<http://globalflywaynetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Update-1.pdf>

North West Australia Wader and Tern Banding Expedition 2014

16 February - 9 March 2014

Introduction

The highlights of this year's NWA Banding Expedition were unprecedented glorious fine hot weather (in the middle of the wet season), and a great catch total (3,830) (**Table 1**). 1,794 of these were at Roebuck Bay, Broome, and 2,036 at 80 Mile Beach/Anna Plains. The retrap rate of 31% at Roebuck Bay was similar to other recent years, whereas at Anna Plains/80 Mile Beach, only 108 of the birds caught (5%) were already banded. This marked difference in retrap rates between our two catching sites is partly because only one banding visit per year is made to 80 Mile Beach whereas banding takes place regularly throughout the year at Roebuck Bay.

Table 1 - NWA Expedition 2014 - Wader and Tern Catch Details

Species	New	Retrap	Total
Asiatic Dowitcher	1	0	1
Bar-tailed Godwit	203	20	223
Black-winged Stilt	7	0	7
Broad-billed Sandpiper	16	6	22
Common Greenshank	1	0	1
Curlew Sandpiper	157	34	191
Great Knot	911	153	1064
Greater Sand Plover	644	142	786
Grey Plover	1	0	1
Grey-tailed Tattler	252	58	310
Lesser Sand Plover	3	2	5
Little Curlew	27	0	27
Oriental Pratincole	48	0	48
Pacific Golden Plover	3	0	3
Red Knot	265	70	335
Red-kneed Dotterel	4	0	4
Red-necked Stint	367	159	526
Ruddy Turnstone	83	21	104
Sanderling	4	0	4
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	23	0	23
Terek Sandpiper	131	7	138
Sub-total	3151	672	3823
Gull-billed Tern	2	0	2
Little Tern	4	1	5
Sub-total	6	1	7
TOTAL	3157	673	3830

Controls

Chinese-banded birds dominated the controls (**Table 2**). Altogether eight Chinese-marked Great Knot were caught plus one from Korea. The Korean bird had already been captured previously three times in north-west Australia.

Geolocators

No new geolocators were deployed in the 2013/14 non-breeding season. However three geolocators put on in previous years were retrieved during the expedition – one each from Red Knot, Great Knot and Greater Sand Plover. The batteries had ceased to operate and so the units had to be sent back to the manufacturer in England for downloading. We have subsequently learned that the Great Knot geolocator successfully provided a complete northward and southward migration cycle.

The Red Knot did not depart from Roebuck Bay until the extremely late date of 16 May. It flew non-stop to Taiwan (5,000km in 5 days) and after a short stopover there and at Bohai Bay, in the Yellow Sea, crossed inland Siberia to its arctic breeding grounds. It commenced incubation on 18 June, only just over a month after it left Broome! Unfortunately the logger failed before the southward migration had commenced.

Surprisingly the geolocator from the Greater Sand Plover also provided some migration information even though it had ceased to function nearly three years ago. The bird followed a similar north-north-westerly migration route to Mongolia to other Greater Sand Plovers given geolocators in Broome in 2010 and 2011. Like many other units the geolocator failed when it reached the China/Mongolia border, on 23 May. It is thought that these failures are caused by the presence of strong electromagnetic fields in that region.

Oriental Pratincole and Little Curlew

At least 50,000 Oriental Pratincole and 5–10,000 Little Curlew were present on Anna Plains/80 Mile Beach during the Expedition. A few were cannon-netted. Very large flocks of Oriental Pratincoles were often present roosting on 80 Mile Beach but the majority of these lifted off and went inland over the dunes on each occasion when twinkling was commenced.

Recaptured Birds

As in previous years, a variety of species which had been banded around 20 years ago were recaptured. A selection is shown in **Table 3**.

North West Australia Wader and Tern Banding Expedition 2014 cont.

Table 2 - NWA 2014 Controls (recaptures of birds banded elsewhere)

Species	Country of origin	Band number	Age at Capture	Recapture Date	Recapture location	Flags	Australian Band
Great Knot	Korea	050-01064*	2+	20/02/2014	Broome (Nicks Beach)	Yellow engraved UKK	062-79632 (already)
Great Knot	China	Illegible**	2+	20/02/2014	Broome (Nicks Beach)	Black/White	062-57846 (already)
Great Knot	China	F130188	2+	22/02/2014	Broome (Eagles Roost)	Black/White	
Great Knot	China	F126088	2+	1/03/2014	80 Mile Bch (9km S of Anna Plains entrance)	Black/White	
Great Knot	China	band missing	2+	2/03/2014	80 Mile Bch (24km S of Anna Plains entrance)	White/Black	063-22317 (added)
Great Knot	China	F127118	2+	2/03/2014	80 Mile Bch (24km S of Anna Plains entrance)	Black/White	
Great Knot	China	F062956	2+	2/03/2014	80 Mile Bch (24km S of Anna Plains entrance)	Black/White	063-22466 (added as Chinese band corroded)
Great Knot	China	F130113	2+	3/03/2014	80 Mile Bch (40km S of Anna Plains entrance)	Black/White	
Red Knot	China	F126519	2+	4/03/2014	80 Mile Bch (41km S of Anna Plains entrance)	Black/White	
Great Knot	China	F055925	2+	6/03/2014	80 Mile Bch (20km S of Anna Plains entrance)	Black/White	063-22871 (added as Chinese band corroded)

Note:

* Korean 050-01064 originally banded as juvenile on 03/09/1997 at Kunsan, South Korea. Previously recaptured at Broome 04/08/2000, 02/03/2005 (flag W6) and 11/03/2011 (flag UKK). Also seen at Broome many times between 2005 and December 2013.

** Originally banded as age 2 on 31/05/2000 at Broome. No details received of subsequent capture, added band or flag change in China.

Table 3 - Oldest Recaptures during NWA Expedition 2014

Species	Band	Date Banded	Banding Location	Age at Banding	Retrap Date	Retrap Location	Minimum Age at Retrap
Bar-tailed Godwit	072-32934	5/03/1994	Broome	2+	24/02/2014	Broome	22+
Great Knot ¹	062-13829	6/03/1996	Broome	1	20/02/2014	Broome	19
Great Knot ¹	062-13844	6/03/1996	Broome	1	20/02/2014	Broome	19
Great Knot	062-44294	28/08/1998	Broome	3+	20/02/2014	Broome	18+
Great Knot	061-90557	12/10/1992	Broome	2	24/02/2014	Broome	23
Greater Sand Plover	051-85866	23/03/1996	Broome	1	18/02/2014	Broome	19
Grey-tailed Tattler	062-08852	16/03/1994	Broome	1	22/02/2014	Broome	21

Note ¹ Both Great Knot caught in the same catch, 18 years apart.

North West Australia Wader and Tern Banding Expedition 2014 cont.

Table 4 - Percent Juveniles in cannon net catches during NWA 2014 Expedition

Species	Number cannon netted	Juveniles	% juveniles 2014	Mean % Juveniles 1996/99 to 2012/13	2013 breeding success
Ruddy Turnstone	104	34	32.7	N/A	Good
Curlew Sandpiper	191	48	25.1	17.0	Good
Greater Sand Plover	784	164	20.9	23.6	Average
Bar-tailed Godwit	223	38	17.0	10.5	Average
Red-necked Stint	526	87	16.5	20.9	Average
Grey-tailed Tattler	310	49	15.8	20.9	Average
Terek Sandpiper	138	21	15.2	13.6	Average
Red Knot	335	28	8.4	17.8	Average
Great Knot	1045	52	5.0	12.4	Average
Broad-billed Sandpiper	22	0	0.0	N/A	Poor

Percent juveniles

The proportion of juveniles in cannon-net catches of the 10 wader species which we attempt to sample each year is shown in **Table 4**. Ruddy Turnstone (33% juveniles) and Curlew Sandpiper (25%) had by far the best breeding outcomes in the 2013 Arctic breeding season. This is particularly welcome as both species had near complete breeding failures in the preceding two Arctic breeding seasons and Curlew Sandpiper numbers have been widely declining over a prolonged period. Five other species had "average" breeding outcomes with the proportion of juveniles in the range 15 – 21%. Red Knot had a relatively poor breeding year and Great Knot an extremely bad one with only 5% juveniles. This is the second consecutive poor breeding year for Great Knot.

Broad-billed Sandpiper appeared to fare even worse with no juveniles recorded in 22 birds caught (three small samples). However in contrast 2012 was an exceptionally good breeding year for Broad-billed Sandpiper. Although these sample sizes are small they represent a significant proportion of the Broad-billed Sandpiper population at Roebuck Bay, where all were caught.

Flag Sightings

Good numbers of Red Knot carrying the Global Flyway Network's colour-band combinations and smaller numbers carrying yellow engraved leg-flags were recorded during systematic scanning on most days when we were catching at 80 Mile Beach. Additionally several Chinese-flagged

birds, mostly Great Knot, were noted. An unusual sighting was a Red Knot carrying an orange flag from Victoria which was seen on 80 Mile Beach.

Participants

A total of 25 people was present in the NWA 2014 team throughout the Expedition with an additional seven people participating for shorter periods. Participants came from Australia (22), Russia (5), Poland (1), China - Hong Kong (1), China - mainland (1), Canada (1) and United Kingdom (1).

Acknowledgements

The AWSG would like to acknowledge the Karajarri and Nyangumarta Traditional Owners for permission to conduct research on their lands and for their participation and help during the Anna Plains leg of the expedition.

The AWSG would also like to acknowledge Nyamba Buru Yawuru Limited for permission to catch on the shores of Roebuck Bay, traditional lands of the Yawuru people. Thanks also to the Yawuru ranger staff at Department of Parks and Wildlife who assisted with several of the cannon net catches at Roebuck Bay.

The West Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife is greatly thanked for funding the expedition participation costs and BBO accommodation costs of Tan Kun from Fudan University in Shanghai and Katherine Leung from Worldwide Fund for Nature, Hong Kong. They also generously loaned a 4WD vehicle for the duration of the expedition and two trailers. George Swann also kindly again loaned his trailer.

Huge thanks are due to Broome Bird Observatory for hosting us for half the expedition and to Anna Plains Station, where we were based for the other half.

North West Australia Wader and Tern Banding Expedition 2014 cont.

John, David and Helen Stoate are especially thanked for allowing us to invade their home and for all the kindnesses and facilities made available to us during our stay. We also greatly appreciated the freedom to roam at will around the 400,000 hectare station to look at birds.

The WA Parks and Wildlife Department and the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme are thanked for providing research and banding permits.

**Clive Minton, Roz Jessop, Chris Hassell,
Mike Dawkins & Prue Wright**
17 April 2014

Some records from the AWSG Leg-Flag Sighting Database

Red Knot

In December 2013, three Red Knot were seen in New Zealand that were from a small sample of 76 birds that had been flagged on Sakhalin Island, east Russia, between 2009 and 2012.

Bar-tailed Godwit non-breeding area

Of 37 individually identified Bar-tailed Godwits that were flagged in Victoria, Australia and subsequently seen in New Zealand, 30 were aged 1 or 2 when banded in Victoria. This reinforces what has been understood by experienced banders, that many of the overwintering Bar-tailed Godwits in Victoria are young birds that eventually make their way across to New Zealand.

Bar-tailed Godwit 'TO' migration

A Bar-tailed Godwit (orange engraved 'TO') that was banded aged 1 at Corner Inlet, Victoria on 23 June 2009 would have stayed in Victoria, or possibly gone to New Zealand (although it hasn't been recorded there), for a couple of years before migrating.

It was first seen overseas at Aphae Island in South Korea, by Andreas Kim and others on 23 April 2011, which was almost certainly its first northern migration.

It returned to Aphae Island the next year on its second northern migration to be seen by Andreas and others on 11 April 2012. It stayed on Aphae Island until 13 May 2012.

In 2013 it again migrated through the same place, first seen on 8 April 2013 and staying until at least 28 April 2013.

This year is its fourth migration and Andreas has reported seeing it again at Aphae Island on 3 April 2014. It was still there on 9 April 2014.



Bar-tailed Godwit with orange leg flag engraved 'TO' at Aphae Island, South Korea on 9 April 2014. Photo Andreas Kim.

This is a wonderful record for this bird showing that every year of its northern migration so far, it has passed through the same staging area in South Korea. How long will Andreas continue to see it in the future? We will have to wait and see.

Curlew Sandpiper

A Curlew Sandpiper, aged 1, banded on 28 December 2013 at Werribee in Victoria, Australia, was subsequently seen by the peerless Clare Morton on 13 March 2014 at Simpsons Beach in Roebuck Bay, north Western Australia. This is a very unusual movement that we haven't seen before. The significance is the early date of this 1st year bird moving northwards within Australia. Plenty of 1st year Curlew Sandpipers move north in Australia in the winter but most don't seem to appear in the north until late April/May (and stay there until August/early September).

Rog Standen

Custodian AWSG Database

North West Australia Wader and Tern Expedition February 2015

The Australasian Wader Studies Group will be returning to Roebuck Bay and 80 Mile Beach from 6 - 28 February 2015 to monitor, catch and band shorebirds. Approximately 150,000 birds at Roebuck Bay and 500,000 birds at 80 Mile Beach make this one of the prime shorebird locations in the world. A large team of 25 to 28 people is being sought. Please contact Clive Minton mintons@ozemail.com.au; Rosalind Jessop moonbird39@gmail.com; mike.dawkins@me.com; Chris Hassell turnstone@wn.com.au; or Prue Wright Prue327@gmail.com Now!

Ruddy Turnstone on King Island, Australia 16 - 25 March 2014

Since 2007 the Victorian Wader Study Group has counted, caught and banded Ruddy Turnstone on King Island, which is located in Bass Strait, between Victoria and Tasmania.

Objectives

The principal objectives of this long-term study are:

- a) to monitor the annual breeding success of Ruddy Turnstones via the percentage of juvenile birds in catches;
- b) to census annually the population of Ruddy Turnstones at all the locations on the west coast of King Island;
- c) to recapture previously banded Ruddy Turnstones for annual survival rate measurement and to put new metal bands and engraved flags on birds caught for the first time; and
- d) to deploy additional geolocators on Ruddy Turnstone and to retrieve geolocators put on previously on King Island.
- e) In addition, Silver Gulls were caught as part of the Deakin University studies into the health and diseases of Ruddy Turnstones on King Island.

Population Count

The total of 604 Ruddy Turnstones showed a further decrease from the 645 in March/April 2013, 686 in April 2011 and 890 in March/April 2010. So the worrying downward trend in Ruddy Turnstone populations, also recorded at other locations in Australia, seems to be continuing. Given that the population this year was also boosted by a record production of young birds in the 2013 arctic breeding season, the decline in the number of adult birds present this year was even more marked.

The geolocator studies have shown that almost all south-east Australian Ruddy Turnstone use the Yellow Sea as a stopover location on both northward and southward migrations. It is thought therefore that the long-term population decline in Ruddy Turnstones is most probably caused by the on-going loss of habitat due to major reclamation activities in the Yellow Sea.

Percentage Juveniles

A record 30.6% juveniles was present in the Ruddy Turnstone catches. This is far higher than any previous level (previous maximum 17.9% in 2008) and a welcome contrast to only 1.2% juveniles in 2013. The arctic breeding season last year was therefore an extremely successful one for Ruddy Turnstones.

An analysis now nearing completion (led by Yaara Rotman of Deakin University) shows that good breeding success in the arctic most strongly correlates with higher than average June and July temperatures in the breeding area. There is only a poor correlation with lemming/predator cycles in our Flyway, and these cycles have also decreased on a world-wide basis in recent years.

Recaptures

As in 2013, just over half (53%) of the Ruddy Turnstones captured were already carrying bands/flags. Some of these dated back to our first visit, in 2007. No birds banded elsewhere were caught during this year's visit.

Geolocators

We were very successful in retrieving seven more geolocators, all in the Manuka area, during our visit. Four were retrieved in one catch. Data has been downloaded from all of these and is currently being analysed. First appearances are that migratory behaviour has been similar to that of previous years, but that, not surprisingly, apparent breeding success (now determined from temperature recorders in the geolocators) has been better than usual.

A further 42 new geolocators were deployed on Ruddy Turnstone. This is the beginning of a new phase of our studies where Deakin University will be looking at how the health, particularly the intestinal parasite load, of Ruddy Turnstones affects their migration success.

Acknowledgements

Enormous thanks are due to all those who facilitated the collection of the data detailed in this report. Our visits to King Island each year are always enjoyable and successful because of the input of so many different people – especially the visiting team from mainland Australia plus local participants from King Island itself. We particularly thank Margaret Bennett and Graeme and Margaret Batey for participation in all our fieldwork activities. We also thank Jenny Marshall for again letting us use her house in Currie as our base. Angus Roberts (the captain of the Searoad cargo ship) again very kindly transported Clive Minton's vehicle and much of the cannon-netting equipment to/from Melbourne. Shelley Davidson again loaned us the Tasmanian Parks Service trailer. Tasmanian Parks Service also provided the permits for our banding activities.

Clive Minton
20 April 2014