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Editorial

This edition of *Tattler* includes some of the most exciting news about the flight of the Bar-tailed Godwit between Arctic breeding grounds and the non-breeding grounds of Australia and New Zealand, and now their return journey via the Yellow Sea. The first birds have since been tracked flying the final leg directly to Alaska.

Once again the AWSG and Birds Korea are working together to monitor the impact of the Saemangeum tidal flats reclamation.

Both of the above topics will be featured in the Australasian Shorebird Conference 2007 at Newcastle University in July. In fact the ASC 2007 focuses largely on issues threatening the East Asia-Australasian Flyway from habitat loss and management challenges to avian influenza.

In the last edition of *Tattler* the Editor asked whether we should continue with the production of the printed version of *Tattler* in light of the increased use of web sites to disseminate up to the minute news. A number of people wrote to the Editor urging for the retention of printed form, at least for members of the AWSG. After lengthy debate it was decided to discuss the future of *Tattler* at the next AWSG Committee meeting in Newcastle in conjunction with ASC 2007.

Which ever decision is made it is time to look for a new editor of *Tattler* as the current one has been in the job since the first issue of the newsletter in 1994 and needs to move on to other things (to do with waders of course). Anyone interested in taking on this role should contact the Editor at the address at the top of this newsletter.

6th Australasian Shorebird Conference 6-8 July 2007

Newcastle University
Australia

“Migratory Shorebirds in a Threatened Flyway”

Just some of the conference topics covered:

- The latest technology will provide some of the most exciting findings about shorebird migration anywhere in the world revealing the secrets of the world's greatest migrant, following previously unknown migration routes between Alaska, Australia and New Zealand, the Yellow Sea and back to their high Arctic breeding grounds.
- A picture of the unbelievable loss of shorebird habitat faced by our migratory shorebirds will be presented with the results of surveys throughout the Asia Pacific region and up to the minute reports of the effects of the world's largest land reclamation of intertidal wetlands.
- Is the story in Australia any more encouraging? The venue for the conference is adjacent to the most threatened shorebird site in Australia with an alarming decline in shorebird populations.
- On a brighter note, management strategies will be discussed at Australian and New Zealand sites as well as those in China and other parts of a complex network of migratory flyways. What hope is there for the future?
- Expanding the involvement of non-government organisations and engaging governments in shorebird conservation in the Asia Pacific region.
- Some facts about avian flu in Australia and overseas.

For full details see program/registration form enclosed with this newsletter or register on-line at www.tasweb.com.au/awsg or at http://www.shorebirdnetwork.org/conferences_threatenedflyway.html

Last call for papers

There is still room for poster papers and time for one or two oral presentations, as well as some funding for delegates presenting from Asia.

The deadline for abstracts of papers or posters has been extended to 30 May 2007 which must be sent to the Conference Organiser, PO Box 2006, Rockdale Delivery Centre, NSW 2216, Australia or philstraw@avifaunaresearch.com.

Saemangeum 2007 Monitoring Program

This is a summary of count data and habitat assessment from the second spring-tide cycle of this year's Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring Program, a joint initiative of the domestic organization Birds Korea and the international Australasian Wader Studies Group. These data and information will be refined further, for publication in the SSMP 2007 Report and in other papers, and can be cited freely by others (with proper acknowledgement and caveats).

Between April 9th and April 19th 2007, a total of fifteen people counted or assisted counting shorebirds within the 40,100 ha Saemangeum reclamation area (until April 21st 2006, comprising the free-flowing estuaries of the Mangyeung and Dongjin Estuaries), Gomso Bay and the Geum Estuary, three adjacent intertidal wetlands on the west coast of South Korea. In addition, two teams of observers also travelled north to Asan Bay (Gyeonggi Bay) on April 16th to locate and photograph two Bar-tailed Godwits (E1 and E8) satellite tracked to Korea from New Zealand.

Data are here summarized from counts at Gomso Bay on April 19th; at the Geum Estuary on April 15th; and within Saemangeum, between April 15th and 18th (including boat-based counts on the 18th).

At Gomso Bay, two full counts were made, with the high tide count on April 19th producing 2,941 shorebirds, comprised largely of Great Knot (1664), Dunlin (720) and Far Eastern Curlew (315). This total compares with just a single shorebird found at the same site on April 15th 2006!

At the Geum Estuary, repeated counts at mainland sites were supplemented by simultaneous counts of both mainland and outer tidal-flat sites on April 15th. A total of 50,560 shorebirds were counted at this time, with most numerous being Great Knot (28,554), Dunlin (13,050), Bar-tailed Godwit (4029) and Far Eastern Curlew (1405), while 9 Nordmann's Greenshank (Endangered) were also recorded.

This total compares with only 45,731 shorebirds counted in the same area on April 17th, 2006, with much of the difference made by the very greatly increased total of Great Knot (only 10,429 in 2006), and lower numbers of both Dunlin and Bar-tailed Godwit.

A second day of research at Yubu Island during a very high tide of 6.7 m on April 18th produced a much larger estimate of 50,000 Great Knot and 9500 Bar-tailed Godwit, as well as 16 Nordmann's Greenshank and 50 Saunders's Gulls (Vulnerable). These latter counts are not included in the totals here, as they were not part of a simultaneous counting effort.

Within the Saemangeum area, land-based counts by four teams were supplemented by a boat-based count on April 18th. In total, 69,441 shorebirds were counted, with 29,801 at the Mangyeung and 39,640 at the Dongjin (this compares with a rather similar total of 71,709 shorebirds counted within the Saemangeum area between April 15th and 17th 2006). Most numerous were Great Knot (6188 at the Mangyeung and 25,727 at the Dongjin) and Dunlin (19,212 at the Mangyeung and 10,678 at the Dongjin). Based on leg-flag observations (including several birds

flagged in northwest Australia and at Chongming Dao in the Yangtze Estuary), it appears that some of this similarity in numbers year to year might be in part the result of Great Knot building in number here this spring earlier than in 2006, possibly due to more favourable weather conditions during migration allowing birds to reach the Korean west coast earlier? The third count cycle, in early May, should be useful in confirming or refuting this.

While Saemangeum remains of considerable international importance to shorebirds, conditions within most of the reclamation area continue to deteriorate, with open expanses of desert-like dried-out sandflats and severe water quality conditions prevalent in many wet areas leading to red algal bloom puddles in muddy areas, dense gravy-brown waters in some bays, and thick scum and dried foam in creeks and channels. The recent tidal range is estimated at only 17 cm, and only one significant area of tidal-flat (lying far out in the Dongjin) appeared relatively healthy, supporting 18,820 Great Knot and 2745 Dunlin on April 18th. Many other areas used by shorebirds in 2006 and in March and early April 2007 are becoming narrower and drier, and some such areas supported significantly fewer shorebirds between the first and second count cycles this year.

While it remains too early to predict how the shorebirds now staging and arriving within the area will fare this spring, it does appear that we are now recording significant displacement of birds from the Saemangeum reclamation area to neighbouring (and possibly other) sites. In the case of Gomso Bay, the near complete absence of Great Knot using the site in 2006 (or in earlier years) suggests that the area will likely be unable to support long-term significant concentrations of the same species in 2007 and beyond. At the Geum, frequent skirmishes between feeding Great Knot have already been observed (including pecking at legs and attempted stealing of food items), as well as foraging in among tide-line garbage (possibly on stranded shellfish). Both suggest that many Great Knot might find it very difficult to acquire the necessary weight and body condition to migrate and breed successfully, especially as it is believed that the species migrates more or less direct to breeding areas from this region in the second half of May.

Considering the region's extreme importance to waterbirds, and the obligations held by South Korea under the Ramsar Convention and under the Bilateral Migratory Bird Agreement signed by Korea and Australia, it is absolutely apparent that the sea-gates must be opened further to restore greater tidal exchange, to reduce water quality problems and to maintain the few remaining areas of healthy tidal-flats (even more so as, one year after seawall completion, there still remains no end-use for any land made by this disastrous project.)

We aim to continue our awareness-raising efforts through mailings to media (domestic and international) and interested parties; through interview (e.g. with a documentary team from MBC on 19th); and through other activities, including a symposium at Wonkwang University (Iksan) on May 4th, and an informal display at the same university between May 1st and 8th.

For further updates see <http://www.birdskorea.org/> or www.shorebirdnetwork.org

AWSG Survey of the Coorong, South Australia, February, 2007.

The Coorong and adjacent lakes forming part of the mouth of the Murray River are listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention because of the diversity of wetland flora and fauna contained in its many habitats. Shorebirds were an important component of this diversity with almost a quarter of a million shorebirds being recorded in the early 1980's. Sadly the number of shorebirds has shown dramatic declines over the last 20 years. The AWSG undertook its annual survey in February 2007 and found that the total number of shorebirds counted was 38,000 – this is the lowest number any count has recorded over the last 26 years. When the number of Banded Stilt and Red-necked Avocet are ignored, the number of migratory (largely) waders is 28,800. Again this is the lowest recorded although it does compare with the previous low of 32,500 in 2001. There were 22 shorebird species observed of which 3 were in numbers of international importance. This represents an 80% reduction in migratory shorebirds since the early 1980's. The decline this year was evident for all major species, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Resident species of Banded Stilt, Red-necked Avocet and Red-capped Plover were also in fewer numbers than last year. Curlew Sandpiper are of critical concern as numbers continue to crash; the 2,171 birds is the lowest ever recorded in the Coorong and only 5% of 1981. While this needs to be put in the context of the flyway population declines, it does highlight the critical deterioration of the Coorong as a non-breeding site. There is some evidence that the Coorong has previously been used as a refuge by a range of waterbirds in times of drought. This does not appear to be the case this year despite southern Australia being in the grip of the worst drought for around 100 years. This is not unexpected given the poor quality of the water and surrounding habitat of the southern lagoon in particular.

The conditions in the Coorong appeared to be much the same as last year with the southern lagoons in poor condition with high salinities and the presence of brine shrimp. The water level, particularly in the southern lagoon, was very low despite the area having in excess of 50mm of rain several weeks prior to our visit. These low levels exposed huge areas of mud/sand flat which were virtually lifeless. The northern lagoons were also lower and although the Murray Mouth was being kept open by dredging, there was no fresh water flow from the Lakes. In fact Lakes Albert and Alexandrina were low and had mudflats exposed. These conditions were due largely to the low flows of the Murray River and high evaporation rates.

The distribution along the length of the Coorong in 2007 confirmed a general movement to the northern lagoons for most species as a result of the poor water quality and high salinity of the area south of Parnka Point. The condition of the Coorong has deteriorated significantly

over the last 5 years largely as a result of the lack of flows in the River Murray over the barrages. It is essential that monitoring the water quality and biodiversity throughout the Coorong be undertaken to provide information for land and water managers to improve this critical situation. A proposed multidisciplinary research program is a step in the right direction.

The 110 km of ocean beach was also surveyed and found that Pied Oystercatchers (368) were at relatively normal numbers while it was pleasing to record 20 Hooded Plovers including several juveniles. One of the surprises was the lack of virtually any Sanderling from this beach or in the vicinity of the Mouth which may be a reflection of the dredging that is certainly changing the beach profile both south and north of the mouth.

A survey of the Southeast Coastal Lakes between the Coorong and Lake George found variable use by waders. All these lakes have been substantially altered over time by drainage and farming practices. The drought has severely affected the usefulness of these lakes for waterbirds. Again, the condition of Lake George was found to be critical with low levels and algal blooms impacting on the food supply for all waterbirds.

The overall impression is that the Coorong continues to suffer from lack of fresh water flows both from the Murray River and into the southern lagoon from drainage. Until the environmental flows from the Murray can be restored, the habitat and hence usefulness to migratory shorebirds in particular will further deteriorate. Obviously the current drought gripping the whole of the Murray- Darling system is exacerbating the situation. Unless conditions can be improved quickly the usefulness of this Ramsar site will become critical.

We would like to thank the many people who helped to gather the information for this survey including locals and those from Adelaide and interstate. Several of the local fishers provided invaluable assistance with their boats and knowledge of the Coorong. A Report is being prepared for the SA Department of Environment and Heritage who we acknowledge for their funding and on ground help.

*Ken Gosbell
Maureen Christie*

Satellite-tagged Bar-tailed Godwits – from New Zealand to Arctic Tundra!

Researchers in Alaska and New Zealand have finally been able to prove that the Bar-tailed Godwit (sub-species *baueri*) flies directly between Alaska and Australia or New Zealand on a single non-stop flight, a distance of 11,000 km, across the Pacific Ocean. Birds stayed on the wing for up to 9.5 days without a rest – surely the longest flight for a land bird. These birds are now on their way back to their breeding grounds using a different route, complete with new satellite transmitters.

Biologists from the USA and NZ recently satellite-tagged a number of Bar-tailed Godwits at their non-breeding grounds in New Zealand. As part of their research Bob Gill, US Geological Survey (USGS) and Nils Warnock of Point Reyes Bird Observatory (California, USA) were looking at movements of shorebirds around the Pacific Basin using the latest technology available. In February 2007 Bob, Nils, Dan Mulcahy (USGS vet) and Nils' son, Noah Warnock, joined Phil Battley (Auckland University) and Rob Schuckard (NZ Wader Study Group) and bird veterinary surgeon, Brett Gartrell from Massey University in the South Island of New Zealand, in a highly successful catching and satellite tagging program. NZ Wader Study Group and Ornithological Society of NZ volunteers also assisted in the program. After all this the waiting began – would the equipment work? When would the birds leave? Would they make stopovers between NZ and the Yellow Sea? But now the waiting is over – the birds have been tracked on non-stop flights between New Zealand and the northern end of the Yellow Sea. The birds will spend several weeks feeding on tidal mudflats before the final leg of their migration back to their breeding grounds in Alaska. Hopefully the satellite transmitters will continue to work until the birds are on their nesting grounds.

We know that most of the godwits need to stop at the Yellow Sea region to gain enough weight to fly to their breeding grounds. They must also have enough reserves to establish nesting territories and lay eggs at a time when there is not much food to eat. How they get there from NZ, and how they behave when migrating from Asia to Alaska was previously unknown. At the time of writing the godwits were still in the Yellow Sea, some at Yalu Jiang, near the North Korean border and some in South Korea and have been observed by the Saemangeum shorebird research team mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter!

Most of the godwits have a large black leg flag with white letters and numbers (e.g. E5, Y7) on the left tibia, some of the birds also have coloured bands. If you find that one of these birds has landed at your local estuary, please tell us about it! We'd love to know anything you can tell us about the bird. You might notice a satellite antenna, which will protrude out behind the bird. Looking for these birds may seem impossible but with enough people looking it is possible to find them.

In the mean time you can follow the progress of these birds and learn more about the project via the project

websites at <http://www.prbo.org/cms/index.php?mid=424> and track the birds' progress at <http://www.werc.usgs.gov/sattrack/shorebirds/> In addition to individual maps, if you have Google Earth downloaded on your computer you may be able to use that to take a more interactive look at the data.

Enjoy viewing their progress on the internet, and good bird spotting in the field!

Phil Battley (philbattley@quicksilver.net.nz)

Bob Gill (robert_gill@usgs.gov)

Nils Warnock (nwarnock@prbo.org)

Asia Pacific Shorebird Network update

As its name suggests, the Asia Pacific Shorebird Network (APSN) is a network, not an independent organisation. It includes hundreds of individuals as well as serving as a vital link between individuals and national and international NGOs such as Asia Pacific chapters of BirdLife International, Wetlands International, WWF, Asian Waterbird Census. The APSN does not cover local news as this is the role of local and national groups, except when issues of international significance needs to be disseminated on an international scale.

The APSN is slowly gaining momentum and increasing its 'News Alert' mailing list on a daily basis as people sign in. If you are not already on the list and would like to be visit www.shorebirdnetwork.org

A major update of the APSN is planned later this month and will include a much larger resource of information on shorebirds and wetlands sites. A profile is planned for every species of shorebird that occurs in the Asia Pacific. Anyone with contributions, especially on populations of rare and threatened shorebird species, are encouraged to contact the editor at: editor@shorebirdnetwork.org.

There is a worrying decline in numbers of many species of shorebirds in the region. BirdLife International are particularly keen to obtain any information on causes in its efforts in the Asia Pacific with assistance through the APSN.

A research web page is planned which will provide useful references on shorebird research in the region to allow shorebird specialists to keep track of research projects and tap in to a network of specialists. However, although many people are on our mailing list we need input from many more to provide a picture of what work is being carried on the one hand and obvious gaps in our knowledge on the other.

The policy of the APSN is not to send attachments or lengthy emails. A headline and an attached link gives the network 'member' to follow up on a story or delete. No details of the address list are available for anyone to see on-line. If anyone has a story to tell or urgent request they must do so through the coordinator (regional coordinators will be coming on-line through key regional groups).

Waterbirds Around the World

“Waterbirds around the World” was officially released at an international ceremony in The Hague, The Netherlands. The book, represents a combination of the work and research of several hundred leading experts and organisations from around the world, and integrates data collected by tens of thousands of globally active volunteers. It provides one of the most comprehensive overviews on topics related to waterbirds and their global migration routes to date.

The conference “Waterbirds around the World” (Edinburgh, UK, 3-8 April 2004), from which this book draws, was one of the largest gatherings ever on the topic - bringing together over 450 waterbird and wetland scientists, policy makers and conservation practitioners from 90 countries. The book, which pulls together this unique global effort, contains over 260 papers and reviews on a number of current and cross-cutting topics related to waterbirds and their conservation such as climate change, infectious diseases and the need for flyway-scale conservation. Papers are available at www.jncc.gov.uk/worldwaterbirds.

The book contains contributions from 453 authors from 59 countries; has 264 papers and reviews relating to 614 waterbird species from 162 countries; and presents new data on 170 Globally and Near Threatened species.

Habitat loss and degradation is driving the declines of many waterbirds

There are widespread declines in the sizes of waterbird populations in most regions of the world caused principally by loss and degradation of wetland (and other) habitats. Conservation responses must urgently address causes of wetland loss and degradation, as well as enhancing monitoring and research so as better to inform appropriate conservation policies.

There is an urgent need to complete national networks of protected sites for waterbirds

Inventories of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have now been published for most of the Old World and are under preparation for the New World.

Flagship species

Measures to protect the habitat of critically threatened ‘flagship’ waterbirds such as the Siberian Crane has direct conservation benefits to a wide range of other globally threatened species.

Globally threatened waterbirds need priority conservation action

Little conservation action is being undertaken for many globally threatened species. The number of globally threatened waterbirds continues to increase. Waterbirds around the world contains new data and information on 170 globally threatened species. There is a need to use this information to assist practical conservation measures.

Record Number of Nordmann's Greenshank

With a population estimate of less than 1000 birds, Nordmann's Greenshank is one of the world's most threatened migratory shorebirds. It was therefore a surprise when a flock of up to 70 birds (possibly 10% of the world population) were observed in Malaysia during a survey at Sungai Nibong (3° 35' N, 101° 04' E) at 6pm on 3 February 2007.

The birds were recorded during a boat survey of shorebird high tide roosts sites as part of the annual Asian Waterbird Census counts in Malaysia by myself, the AWC Coordinator. It was cloudy with light showers during the day, and the light for viewing was generally poor. The areas are believed to be the only exposed mudflats in this region of the coast during the peak tide of the month in an area, with soft mud more than 1m deep along the edge of the mangrove forests. Therefore there was no disturbance by people collecting shellfish. However, fortunately for the team, the birds were disturbed by a passing boat, bringing them to the observer's attention. The site also supported more than 1500+ Common Redshank, 2000+ sand plovers, 100+ Whimbrel and 500 whiskered terns, besides some small numbers of Terek Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint.

There was no way team members could walk on the mudflat and they could only find two locations to stand up to get a clear view to try to identify the birds with water up to my chest! The flock of birds in flight attracted my attention and I saw the birds with slightly up-curved bills with legs not extending beyond to the tail. However, with the poor light condition, I could not see the colour of their legs and bill.

Luckily, I found a large piece of wood on the mud and I could stand on it and use the scope within 50 m of the birds. I got very excited when I found all the birds with clear yellow legs. I couldn't believe my eyes, discovering such a large flock of Nordmann's Greenshank (I believe this is the largest population recorded in the last 20 years, besides was a 60 individuals in the inner gulf of Thailand in Dec 2005 by the Thai birdwatchers)!

However, the birds flew to a much further point before I could get an accurate count. Anyhow, I could relocate the birds at about 100 meter distance and count them carefully, as well as taking some photographs in slightly improved light condition before dark! To my surprise I found one or two of the pictures were good enough for identification purposes.

With the finding of these birds, we can obviously confirm that the West Peninsular Malaysia coast supports a crucial population of the species, with up to 38 recorded on the Peneng coast (Butterworth), 12-14 at Sungai Burung high tide roost (about 25km north of Sungai Nibong) and 15-19 at Kapar power station Ash Pond in central Selangor coast in the last two years.

It is believed that the recent increase in counts of this species in Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar is a result of the increasing number of birdwatchers, bird surveys and improved birding equipment, rather than a growth in the population of the species. This assumption is supported by the lack of previous surveys at Sungai Nibong and Sungai Burung High tide roost sites.

Obituary - Brian Chudleigh 1937-2007

Brian Chudleigh was a keen photographer who loved to photograph shorebirds and is well known for his photographs of New Zealand shorebirds. He has been attributed with compiling the world's most extensive collection of images of New Zealand shorebirds.

"I concentrated on waders because no one had done that before. I also wanted to record what was there before it disappeared" said Brian during a 'farewell' newspaper interview four months before his death. He was pessimistic about the future of many of the species he had photographed. "Some are so close to extinction it's not funny, I think New Zealand is too far gone in terms of its environment to ever turn the tide for many of our birds and insects" he said.

Although dying of cancer, Brian thought himself lucky having had a second chance once before when he underwent a heart transplant in 1993 giving him another 14 years to pursue his love of shorebirds and photography. It was the drugs that had to be taken constantly to prevent the body from rejecting the heart that destroyed the immune system reducing his chances of overcoming cancer. Brian died on 8 March 2007.

Among Brian's achievements was the production of his book *Shorebirds of New Zealand* and contributions to regular articles on shorebirds. The latest was for the *Shorebirds of Australia* due out in June this year (see this newsletter).

It is Brian's fervent wish that his photographs won't be the only way future generations see the native wildlife of his adopted land.

Australasian Wader Studies Group

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

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

Annual subscriptions:	Australia	A\$35.00
	New Zealand	A\$35.00
	Overseas	A\$40.00
	Institutions	A\$45.00



Protection of Philippines Important Shorebird Site

MANILA, Philippines -- Saying that no nation is modern without thinking of the environment, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has signed a measure that would show her government's efforts to carry out a comprehensive plan for a Green Philippines.

As part of the Earth Day celebration in Malacanang, the President announced on Monday that she signed a proclamation establishing a "critical habitat within the 172-hectare coastal lagoon of Las Pinas and Paranaque for Chinese egret and Philippine Duck along with 27 species of other rare and uncommon species of waterbirds."

In an interview, Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes said that it was important to have an area for these birds "so that they could be monitored because they could be source of avian flu and also, for ecotourism."

Asked if bringing the habitat close to Manila would be risky, Reyes said, "No. With the advent of development in the Manila Bay area, it's important that we preserve a certain portion for the migratory birds."

"No nation can aspire to be modern without thinking of our environment... You're part of the economic engine to drive us to first world status in 20 years, but even as we do so, we must not do so on the backs of the poor nor at the expense of the environment," Arroyo said in a speech attended by environment officials and members of the Linis Ganda Eco Aide.

Stressing the need for the young to be aware of the phenomenon in the environment and to help save it, the President directed the Department of Education to make global warming and other climate change phenomenon a part of the science curriculum in public schools.

The four areas of the program are reforestation, preserving the reefs and waterways, scrubbing the lands of pollutants, and energy independence.

Arroyo announced that in her trip to New Zealand in May after the election, she would discuss with its government areas of cooperation to protect the environment. She said that New Zealand has been helping the country in its reforestation program.

"We must think outside the box. Gamitin natin ang teknolohiya at innovation upang wakasan ang pagdepende sa dayuhang langis at paglabag sa kalikasan [Let us use technology and innovation to end our dependence on imported oil and our destruction of the environment]," she said.

The Wild Bird Club of the Philippines started data gathering in the site through trip reports by amateur birdwatchers in early 2003. The WBCP also led staff from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources - National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) in conducting the Asian Waterbird Census for the site in January 2004 and continues to lend assistance up to the present.

Source: Philippine daily Inquirer

North-west Australia Wader & Tern Expedition 2007

10th November to 1st December 2007

Background

The AWSG was formed in 1981 as a special interest group of Bird's Australia. Its objectives are:

- To monitor wader populations through a program of counting and banding to collect data on changes on a local, national and international basis.
- To study the migrations of waders through a program of counting, banding, colour flagging and collecting of biometric data.
- To instigate and encourage other scientific studies of waders such as feeding and breeding studies.
- To communicate the results of these studies to a wide audience through the Stilt, the Tattler, other journals, the Internet, the media, conferences and lectures.
- To formulate and promote policies for the conservation of waders and their habitat, and to make available information to local and national governmental conservation bodies and organisations to encourage and assist them in pursuing this objective.
- To encourage and promote the involvement of a large band of amateurs, as well as professionals, to achieve these objectives

North-west Australia was discovered to be one of the prime locations in the world for wading birds during the first RAOU (Birds Australia) "Expedition" there in August/September 1981. It is now known to have a peak population of nearly 750,000 waders, with a huge variety of species (50, nearly a quarter of the 214 species of waders worldwide). It has also proved to be an ideal place for wader studies with a warm, sunny, dry climate for 10 months of the year (usually!). Furthermore there is easy accessibility to two of the principal wader areas of Roebuck bay, Broome (150,000 birds) and 80 Mile Beach (500,000 birds).

NWA 2007

A series of special expeditions has taken place over the years to undertake comprehensive long-term studies of the waders and terns in N.W. Australia. A further major N.W. Australia Wader and Tern Expedition will take place from 10th November to 1st December 2007.

Objectives:

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

The specific objectives of this Expedition are:

1. Banding. To obtain an estimate of the relative breeding success in the 2007 Arctic breeding season of all the main species of migratory waders. This is achieved by measuring the proportion of juveniles in catches.

a. To catch additional samples of species which are less frequently caught in NW Australia, e.g. Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Greenshank, Oriental Plover, Eastern Curlew, Little Curlew, Oriental Pratincole.

b. To continue the program of putting individually lettered/numbered Yellow leg flags on all the main medium/large migratory wader species caught at Broome. This is to facilitate the collection and calculation of survival rate data in the future. It is also hoped to extend the engraved flag program to some "freshwater" species of waders mist netted at Roebuck Plains.

2. Counting

The annual MYSMA (Monitoring Yellow Sea Migrants in Australia) population monitoring counts will take place at 80 Mile Beach and Roebuck Bay just before the main expedition. A small number of additional counters will be welcome (contact Chris Hassell direct).

Itinerary:

A proposed itinerary for the 3-week period of fieldwork is attached. This can be summarised as;

Broome/Roebuck Bay (including inland locations)	9 days
80 Mile Beach/Anna Plains	9 days
Travel between locations	2 days
Clive Minton, 165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, VIC. 3193. Australia. mintonsoz@ozemail.com.au	

Waterbirds Population Estimates - Fourth Edition.

This publication is a unique source of information on the trends in the world's waterbird populations, offering crucial information on 878 waterbird species, including where individuals live, how many individuals exist and whether numbers are increasing, stable or decreasing. The publication is the result of about 50,000 hours of fieldwork carried out every year by mostly voluntary expert observers in more than 100 countries in Asia, Africa, Oceania, South America and Europe.

The content assists in identification of wetlands of international importance using waterbirds as indicators, it assists in identifying priorities for conservation and research to maintain global waterbird numbers and diversity. However, possibly the most important message from this, and previous editions, is that it identifies gaps in our knowledge of waterbird populations, particularly in the Asia Pacific Region. This provides a strong message to governments and NGOs in the Asia Pacific to assist where possible to extend our network of professional and volunteer observers to provide a greater coverage of important wetlands.

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Arctic Waders Breeding Success Based on Birds Caught in Australia

Introduction

Data is from cannon-net catches from the north-west Australia (NWA) at Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach 250 km to the south, mostly in November 2006, and from Victoria and South Australia in the south east of the country. This year, for the first time, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* data was also collected on King Island, Tasmania, in Bass Strait.

South-east Australia

In the South-east of Australia (SEA) the 2006 breeding season for the eight species monitored in 2006/07 appears to have been the worst in the 29 years for which data has been collected. Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling and Great Knot had almost total breeding failures, and the Curlew Sandpiper result was not much better. The breeding outcome for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint was close to the long-term average. Only Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot had good breeding seasons.

The result for Sanderling (0.5% juveniles) was the lowest ever in the 16 years for which data is available. For Ruddy Turnstone (1.3% juveniles) it was the second poorest breeding season in 17 years of data. Only 1989/90 was worse with no juveniles found in 109 birds caught. Great Knot data is obtained only intermittently in SEA, but clearly a zero juveniles in 37 birds caught (out of a core roosting wader flock) must be an indication of a poor breeding season).

Red-necked Stint (13.6% juveniles) had a better breeding outcome than in the previous two years, which were very poor. However only one of the last five years has had a percentage of juveniles above the long-term (29 year) median. It is most noticeable in the field that Red-necked Stint numbers, which peaked after a series of good breeding seasons in the late 1990s and in 2001/02, have now returned to more normal levels.

Though the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper breeding success (11.5% juveniles) was close to the 26 year median populations are still well above the low levels of five to ten years ago. This was the fifth successive year in which the breeding success of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was at or above the level of the long-term median.

The percentage of juveniles in Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot catches has fluctuated more markedly between years than in most other species in SEA. However 2006 was the third consecutive year in which the Bar-tailed Godwit (the *baueri* subspecies, which breeds in north and west Alaska) has had a breeding outcome above the long-term median (18 years). This has resulted in populations recovering from the lower levels reached in the early 2000s when three of the four breeding seasons in the period 2000 to 2003 had extremely poor outcomes.

Red Knot also had a second successive good breeding year, although not as good as the preceding one. Note that the figures for Red Knot are much higher than for other species because many young birds of this population (the *rogersi* subspecies, which breeds in Chukotka in the far north-east of Siberia) spend their first year in SEA before moving to New Zealand for subsequent non-breeding seasons.

North-west Australia

Overall the 2006 breeding season for wader populations which spend the non-breeding season in NWA was not quite as poor as for SEA birds. Nevertheless it is probably the poorest so far recorded in the nine years for which data is available.

As in SEA, Curlew Sandpipers and Ruddy Turnstone fared poorly (Sanderling was not monitored in NWA this year). In contrast to SEA Red Knot also fared poorly. This is a different subspecies however, being mainly *piersmai* which breed much further north and west in Siberia, on the New Siberian Islands.

The outcome for Great Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit and Red-necked Stint was close to average. Since NWA is the core non-breeding area for Great Knot the breeding outcome recorded there is probably more relevant to the population as a whole than figure for SEA, where the species is only present in small numbers. The Bar-tailed Godwit juvenile ratio in NWA was much lower than that from SEA. However it is a different subspecies (*menzbieri*), breeding in northern Yakutia, along the north coast of Siberia. Though the Red-necked Stint figure for NWA was higher than in SEA both were close to their respective long-term averages.

A number of species which breed further south in Siberia were monitored. Grey-tailed Tattler had an outstanding performance with 28.4% juveniles, the highest recorded in nine years of monitoring this species. This result appeared to be genuine as it was apparent in most of the 11 samples which made up the catch total of 264. In contrast Greenshank appear to have had an almost total breeding failure with no juveniles found in the 70 birds caught. Terek Sandpipers and Great Sand Plovers appear to have had an average breeding year whilst Oriental Plover, which are not regularly monitored, seem to have had a poor breeding outcome.

General conclusions

Most years some species differ markedly from the overall pattern. Of particular interest was the Grey Tailed Tattler in 2006 in NWA. Why should it have bred so successfully when all the other species monitored, from both Arctic and non-Arctic breeding areas, had average to poor breeding outcomes? Why was the breeding success of Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone populations which spend the non-breeding season in SEA so abysmal in 2006? A similar pattern was apparent in other recent years. For example Red-necked Stints stood out from other species in SEA by their very poor breeding success in 2005 and 2006. And, in contrast, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers in SEA had relatively good breeding success in 2003 and 2004.

The relationships between snowmelt date, June and July temperatures and predation conditions in breeding areas and the percentage of juveniles recorded in the non-breeding areas have shown that all these factors can have an effect on breeding outcome. Given the extreme variations apparent in the most recent years further examinations of such data will be made in an attempt to find the principal causes of such divergent results between species.

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