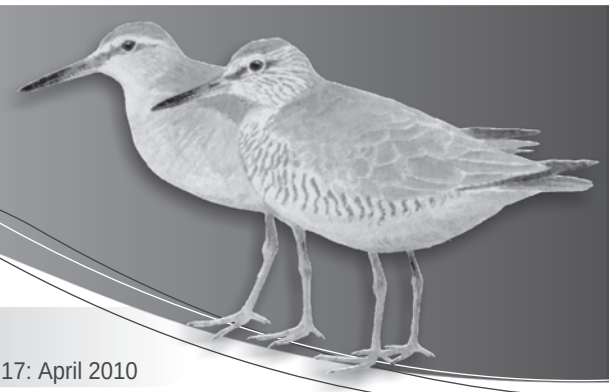
Tattler



Editor: Lisa Gale
Email: tattler@awsg.org.au

Newsletter for the Asia Pacific Flyways

No 17: April 2010

In this issue:

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

Editorial

As technology gets smaller and more reliable, it is becoming possible to track smaller and smaller animals on their journeys around the globe. And as always, the results continue to amaze us. The results from geolocator trials on turnstones is quite significant, not the least having first recovered them from their travelling birds! However, the increasing use of technology for biological studies does not make the amateur observer redundant. Important observations are still made the good old fashioned way—by being in the field and putting in time.

Technology will never replace the achievements gained by people, lots of people, participating in field activities such as counting, banding, recording flag sightings and habitat improvement. But it does provide insight into what the birds are doing when they can't be seen.

Exciting results from geolocator trials on Ruddy Turnstones

We apologise to our members and others for the long time it has taken to provide full feedback on the results of our geolocator trials over the past year on Ruddy Turnstone. Although we retrieved the last three geolocators in early January (as reported in the last edition of *Tattler*) it has taken until now to fully tease out of the stored data the full information on where birds were during the period they were carrying the geolocators.

The exciting results have been well worth waiting for and we detail some of them below.

Extensive trials using dummy geolocators attached via backpack harnesses or via plastic leg flags were carried out in March and early April 2009. These showed that whilst harnesses appeared to be satisfactory on lean Turnstone they became less so as birds put on weight prior to migratory departure. Some individuals on King Island for example reached 190 - 198 g, compared with a fat-free weight of 90 to 100 g. They were so round (like a tennis ball) that harnesses were almost impossible to position securely.

Eight 1.1 g Mark 10 and 10S light-sensor geolocators, supplied by British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge, England, were put onto Ruddy Turnstone in April 2009 - six at Flinders in Victoria and two at Carpenter Rocks in the south-east of South Australia. The geolocators were pre-attached to a specially made Darvic leg flag placed on the left tibia of each bird, with the normal engraved leg flag in its usual position on the right tibia.

The first result came unexpectedly quickly. One bird carrying a geolocator was seen, and photographed, in Taiwan less than three weeks later. Taiwan is the country from which most sightings of our flagged Ruddy Turnstones are reported during northward migration each year.

The first two birds carrying geolocators were seen back at Flinders on 18 October and one was recaptured there on 20th October. The remaining geolocators were eventually retrieved on 8th January. The retrieval of four of the six geolocators applied at Flinders exceeded all expectations. Unfortunately neither of the two birds given geolocators in South Australia has yet been seen again.

Compiled and published by the Australasian Wader Studies Group

A Special interest Group of Birds Australia

www.awsg.org.au

Migration routes of the four Ruddy Turnstones from Flinders (Victoria) to Taiwan.

Initial downloading of the data showed some exciting results, but it has taken weeks of patient delving into the stored data (with the assistance of James Fox, of BAS) to fully reveal everything about each bird's movements.

All four birds flew nonstop 7,600 km from Flinders to Taiwan in just over six days. Three appear to have travelled in the same flock. Birds spent between 8 and 17 days in Taiwan before travelling on towards northern Siberia, through eastern Asia. They all followed slightly different paths and made stopovers at different locations before all the light sensors ceased to collect data as birds entered the Arctic region of continuous daylight in early June.

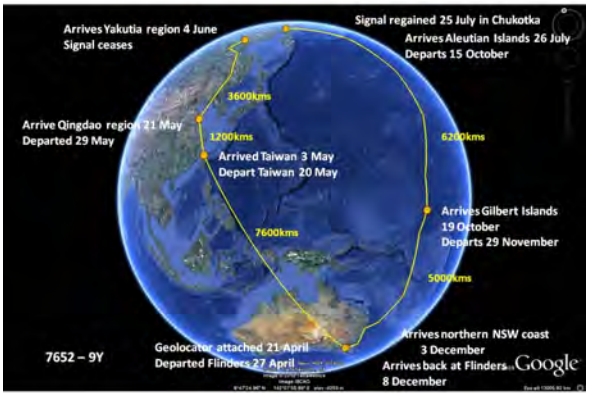
When readings restarted in late July on three of the birds they were all still in northern Siberia. Soon afterwards two of them moved south eastwards, and then southwards before their light sensor stalks failed when the birds were in Korea and in south-east Siberia respectively in early August.

The fourth bird (with engraved leg flag 9Y) had a quite unexpected return migration route to Flinders via the western Central Pacific! It was first picked up moving south-eastwards through north-east Siberia on the 24th and 25th July and it then arrived in the Aleutian Islands, south-west Alaska on 26th July. It remained there for 2 1/2 months, until 15th October, before flying 6,200 km southwards across the Pacific in four days to the Gilbert Islands. It remained there for another six weeks, before making a four day, 5000 km flight to the east coast of Australia, which was reached on 3rd December. Five days later the bird was back at Flinders. All previous recovery and flag sightings information suggested that adult Turnstone usually return to their non breeding areas by late October.

This bird had made a 27,000 km. round trip migration. Surprisingly the apparently circuitous route back was only 1,000 km longer (because it was close to a great circle route) than the path it had used on northward migration.

There has only been one previous record of an Australian-banded or flagged Ruddy Turnstone on a Pacific island - one caught on Guam (south of Japan) in September 2008. However there are precedents for Ruddy Turnstone from south-west Alaska reaching Australia, with three birds banded in the Pribiloff Islands in the mid-1960s subsequently being reported on the east coast.

It is interesting that on some of the longer flights it was possible to calculate the "over ground" flight speed achieved. For the flights from Flinders to Taiwan and the flight back from the Gilbert Islands to Australia the average speed was 50 to 55 km per hour. A higher speed of 65 km per hour was achieved during the flight from Alaska to the Gilbert Islands, indicating possible assistance by tail winds.



Migration route recorded by geolocator for Ruddy Turnstone with leg flag 9Y. This bird departed Flinders (Victoria) 27 April 2009 and returned 8 December 2009 after a journey of 27,000kms.

Spurred by these exciting results from the initial trials of geolocators a further 60 have been applied (or will be applied) in March/April 2010. Ten have already been put on Ruddy Turnstone in South Australia and 38 in King Island. It is hoped that at least a further 12 geolocators will be deployed in Victoria. In addition 30 geolocators have been applied to Greater Sand Plovers at Roebuck Bay, Broome, in northwest Australia and to four Sharp-tailed Sandpipers at Werribee Sewage Farm. The Australasian Wader Studies Group (north-west Australia) and Marcel Klaassen of Deakin University (north-west Australia, King Island and Victoria) have provided some of the geolocators and are now working in partnership with the VWSG.

The 2010/11 wader season is going to be very exciting indeed as we attempt to retrieve geolocators from returned migrants for downloading. Hopefully we should be able to obtain a much fuller picture of the migrations of Ruddy Turnstone which spend the non-breeding season in south-east Australia, as well as some initial data on other species.

Thanks again to the many colleagues who provided advice in the early stages of this project and to the team members in Victoria and SA who were so diligent in catching and re-catching the birds in the field.

Clive Minton and Ken Gosbell

East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership Meeting (MoP4) - Incheon, Republic of Korea

I attended the above Partnership meeting on behalf of AWSG and Birds Australia. Phil Straw also attended which meant that AWSG was able to participate and communicate widely. The AWSG/ Birds Australia were original signatories to the Partnership in 2006 and we have consistently played a significant role in sharing concerns about the health of the flyway and its shorebirds as well as working to promote better communication, leading to improved environmental outcomes. This was our objective in this meeting.

Last year the Partnership appointed the Republic of Korea (RoK) as the Secretariat and Roger Jaensch was appointed the Chief Executive. Several support staff have also been appointed, including Dr Choi Chang-yong as the Scientific Officer. RoK is now also the Chair of the Partnership. The MoP4 was therefore a milestone in many ways and I think that the Secretariat did an excellent job in both the preparations and effective running of the meeting.

The EAAF Partnership is made up of Governments, International NGO's and Inter-government organisations and has the goal that '*Migratory waterbirds and their habitat are conserved for the benefit of people and biodiversity*'. It operates under a framework of agreed objectives and target outcomes. In view of its nature it can become cumbersome but essentially it is the only forum where a relatively small NGO such as AWSG can sit at the same table as governments of the flyway. Hence these meetings are key to presenting issues of concern and to help formulate strategies to address these issues.

A total of 16 Partners attended, 4 potential Partners, 4 Inter government observers and up to 24 domestic observers over the 2 days.

A brief summary of some of the areas covered and important outcomes relevant to our key interests include:

i. Status of Flyway Network sites and a need to increase the number of site nominations.

ii. Potential involvement of the Partnership in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoP10) in Japan 2010.

iii. Under the Objective of '*Enhance flyway research and monitoring activities*' there were several presentations shared including the Asian Waterbird Census (Wetlands International), Monitoring 1000 (Japan) and my presentation on Shorebirds 2020 and MYSMA. Other monitoring is taking place in Korea and China in particular.

iv. As an extension to iii. a proposal was presented by Doug Watkins (Wetlands International) and myself on behalf of AWSG, to enhance existing national and flyway waterbird monitoring programs and include habitat mapping and threat assessments for important sites. The objective of this is to develop a web based 'Decision Support Tool' that would make available the up-to-date information on the status of migratory waterbirds and their habitats. (Copy of proposal available if interested).

The view over Song-do, once an important tidal flat

v. In order to develop the proposal in iv. a task group was established which includes the AWSG. It is anticipated that this group will hold a workshop by midyear to develop these concepts including the better sharing of data.

vi. Waterbird marking. The Australian government raised a need to review waterbird marking protocols in the Flyway. In view of the different waterbird groups (shorebirds, cranes and anatidae) there is not a universal solution. However, the Australian government undertook to consult widely before the next meeting.

vii. Wetlands International reported on the Australian government funded project 'Yellow Sea Ecoregion Collaboration' which aims to collate information on important sites, develop national partnerships and raise local awareness in Korea and China. The AWSG has a small part to play in this program also.

viii. International Action Plans. Birdlife International introduced the international action plans for 3 threatened species: Black-faced Spoonbill, Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Chinese Tern. In view of our shorebird interests the situation of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper is of utmost importance. Christopher Zockler, on behalf of the Recovery Team, made a very powerful presentation advising that there are probably now less than 150 pairs left of this iconic species.

ix. Funding for projects and Partnership activities is

an ongoing problem.

The meeting had one serious downside and that was to look out of the window of the meeting venue in Song-do and see that we were actually located on what was tidal flat no more than 3 years ago. Now it is 'reclaimed' and supports a huge development of high rise buildings. See the photo on the previous page to give you the idea. Further reclamation of Song-do was proceeding apace.

Despite these negatives we can only seek to change criteria and values throughout the flyway by providing alternatives based on scientific facts and the sharing of information and encouraging an effective environmental assessment process. The Partnership is but one way we can attempt to do this; there are many others which the AWSG and many of its members are also making constructive contributions.

If anyone would like more information on any aspect of this meeting or the Partnership in general please contact me.

Ken Gosbell

March 2010

Artificial roost sites for shorebirds in Botany Bay

The NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) is working with the Sydney Metro and Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authorities to create artificial roost structures for shorebirds in Botany Bay, through an Australian Government Caring for our Country grant. This collaborative program has consolidated existing projects and seeks to create new initiatives to protect seabirds, migratory waders and threatened, breeding shorebirds and their sensitive fringe habitats.

The primary objectives of this project are to:

- build and consolidate baseline knowledge of shorebird populations through benchmark biodiversity surveys and threat assessments of critical coastal habitats;
- improve the condition of shorebird habitat through implementing habitat protection, augmentation and restoration works within the Towra Point Nature Reserve RAMSAR site; and
- increase community awareness of shorebird and seabird ecology, threats and conservation status through an educational campaign and active engagement in habitat restoration and protection efforts.

Long-term monitoring records since 2001 have been collected by the NSW Wader Study group and are being entered into DECCW's Atlas of NSW Wildlife database. A brochure on the significance of Towra Point, its shorebirds and endangered ecological communities will be published and distributed to increase community awareness. Signs alerting the public of access restrictions to Towra Spit Island and the sensitivities of nesting Little Terns to disturbance have been erected. A Community Fishing Tackle Clean-Up Day was also held in May 2009 to raise community awareness of the issue of discarded fishing tackle and its impact on shorebirds and marine life.

Two trial artificial roost structures for shorebirds will be installed within the Towra Point Aquatic Reserve in Quibray Bay and at Pelican Point in Botany Bay.

The artificial roosts are 48 posts half of which are joined by a rail. These mimic oyster lease structures the birds are known to use.

These wooden structures are intended to act as supplementary roosts for shorebirds during high tide, when existing structures become partially or wholly submerged, reducing roosting opportunities for the birds. Whilst the current grant provides for the installation of structures at two sites, DECCW has sought the relevant approvals for up to eight sites within southern Botany Bay, contingent on obtaining future additional funds and on the effectiveness of the trial roosts.

In partnership with the NSW Wader Study Group's long-term shorebird surveys, DECCW has monitored Botany Bay's shorebird populations (for their diversity and abundance) in the lead up to the installation of the artificial roost structures to collect baseline data. This monitoring will continue post-installation to determine if and how the structures are being used by the shorebirds, and whether there is a preference for posts over railings.

For further information relating to this project please contact Kylie McClelland, Threatened Species Officer, via telephone (02) 9585 6691 or email kylie.mcclelland@environment.nsw.gov.au

Kylie McClelland

Movements of Grey-tailed Tattlers and Terek Sandpipers in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Critical to the conservation of the many shorebirds that make lengthy migrations between arctic breeding and southern hemisphere non-breeding areas is a detailed knowledge of the routes they take, the locations where they stop to feed, and the times of year when they use those sites. Such knowledge is especially necessary for the shorebird populations where known populations are decreasing or extinct.

Recent studies show that many shorebird populations which spend the non-breeding season in Australia have declined, probably because of habitat loss at stopover sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF).

The Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* and the Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* have similar breeding distributions at broadly the same latitudes in Siberia and their main non-breeding ranges are in northern Australia. There they can frequently be found mixed together at high tide roosts.

The world population of the Grey-tailed Tattler is estimated at 50,000, of which about 90% spends the non-breeding season in Australia.

The Terek Sandpiper has a wider breeding distribution with western populations wintering along the coasts of Africa, the Middle East and India. There are about 50,000 Terek Sandpipers in the EAAF, of which almost half migrate to Australia.

A broad-ranging analysis has shown that most of the shorebirds that breed in the northern hemisphere and migrate to Australia stopover in the Taiwan/China/Korea/Japan region of eastern Asia. In this study the movements of Grey-tailed Tattlers and Terek Sandpipers in the EAAF was examined based on banding recoveries and flag sightings of birds marked in Australia, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia and Russia.

Although in the EAAF the two species have similar breeding and non-breeding distributions, there are significant differences in their migration strategies. Moreover within each species, birds spending the austral summer in north-western Australia have different migration strategies to those from eastern Australia.

Northward migration

Grey-tailed Tattlers seem to remain at their initial stopover location in southeast Asia until they are ready to fly to their breeding areas in Siberia. The main stopover location for Grey-tailed Tattlers from eastern Australia appears to be Japan and this conclusion is supported by mass gain and timing data from Queensland consistent with a 7,000 km direct flight. The migration is later than from north-western Australia, with birds staging in southern China and Taiwan and not reaching Japan until May. Again it appears that birds then fly direct to Siberia.

Terek Sandpipers from eastern Australia occur widely along the southeast Asia mainland, as well as in Japan, on both migrations, but those from north-western Australia initially stage in Taiwan and southern China on north migration, before moving on to Korea. In contrast with the Grey-tailed Tattler that appear to only have one stop on northward migration, the Terek Sandpiper appears to move northwards within southeast Asia, concentrating in Korea and on the Yellow Sea coasts of China in May, before flying on to Siberia.

Southward migration

Marked birds of both species – which must all be adults – start to appear in southeast Asia during the last week of July. Most migrate through the region during August with only a few remaining into early September. The juveniles follow later, reaching northern Australia in October.

Grey-tailed Tattlers from north-western Australia occur over a wider area of southeast Asia during south migration, with proportionately more passing through Japan than on north migration. Birds from eastern Australia again concentrate in Japan. At least some birds, possibly all, make two stops in southeast Asia before a direct flight to Australia. This contrasts with their one-stop northward migration.

Terek Sandpipers seem to change from two stops in southeast Asia going north to one stop going south. However, the latter conclusion is somewhat tentative, being based on only 17 recoveries and flag sightings in July-September. Birds from north-western Australia occur over a wide range of locations during southward migration in southeast Asia, as they do during northward migration, with many records from Korea but none from Japan. There is also a passage of Terek Sandpipers along the southeast Asian mainland coast to non-breeding areas in Malaysia.

Conservation Implications

A striking feature of the routes taken by Grey-tailed Tattlers though southeast Asia is that they largely avoid the coast of mainland China to the north of Hong Kong, and the Yellow Sea. Instead they pass through the offshore islands, such as Taiwan and Japan. This means that Grey-tailed Tattlers are less likely than many other shorebird species to be affected by the huge losses of intertidal habitat which have taken place in the Yellow Sea over the last two decades.

In contrast, Terek Sandpipers make extensive use of the shores of the Yellow Sea where it is likely that

Mixed wader flock at Roebuck Bay, north-western Australia

they have been adversely affected by major habitat loss. Certainly numbers using the Saemangeum estuary complex in South Korea declined sharply after the new 35 km sea wall was completed in 2006.

The AWSG's long-term monitoring program of high tide roost counts in the non-breeding areas – particularly in the stronghold of Grey-tailed Tattlers and Terek Sandpipers of north-western Australia – will eventually reveal the full impact of habitat loss in southeast Asia. Ongoing banding and flagging throughout the EAAF will continue to accumulate data on movements. Moreover the increased use of light-level geolocators and satellite transmitters will lead to a more detailed insight into the migratory strategies of different shorebird populations. Together these datasets will underpin the conservation of Grey-tailed Tattlers, Terek Sandpipers and the many other shorebirds that use the EAAF.

Please contact Clive Minton for more information about this study (mintons@ozemail.com.au).

N. Branson, Y. Shigeta, C.Y. Chiang and C. Minton

New AWSG Committee 2010 to 2012

As a result of the recent call for nominations for the AWSG Committee I am pleased to advise the following results. In accordance with our Rules the new Committee is appointed for the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012. The Committee will be:

David Milton	**Chair (Qld)**
Phil Straw	**Vice – Chair (NSW)**
John Renowden	**Secretary (Vic)**
Brian Speechley	**Treasurer (NSW)**
Danny Rogers	**Chair, Scientific Committee (Vic)**
Roz Jessop	**Editor, Stilt (Vic)**
Lisa Gale	**Editor, Tattler (Qld)**
Ann Lindsey	**Conservation Officer (NSW)**
Ken Gosbell	**International Liaison (Vic)**
Maureen Christie	**Committee Member (SA)**
Chris Hassell	**Committee Member (WA)**
Jon Coleman	**Committee Member (Qld)**
Clive Minton	**Committee Member (Vic)**
Doug Watkins	**Committee Member (ACT)**
Paul Wainwright	**Committee Member (SA)**
Arthur Keates	**Committee Member (NT)**
Heather Gibbs	**Committee Member (Vic)**
Adrian Riegen	**Committee Member (NZ)**
Penny Johns	**Committee Member (Vic)**

To those leaving the Committee in June we say a sincere thank you for your contribution to the committee in various ways over a number of years. We hope that you will remain actively involved with the Group and allow us to utilise your skills in the future as particular situations arise. To the newly elected members, John Renowden, Jon Coleman, Arthur Keates and Heather Gibbs, we say a warm welcome and look forward to your contribution.

I am particularly pleased to welcome David Milton as the new Chair for this period; David has served in several roles on the Committee and brings many skills to the position. I am confident he will have the strong support of all of the Committee. In view of my participation and role in Flyway activities, in particular the Flyway Partnership, David has asked that I continue in this role for the forthcoming term. I would like to sincerely thank all of the Committee who have provided support to me over the last 4 years as Chair; it has been a time of rapid change both in Flyway activities and within Australia, particularly resulting from changing attitudes within the Australian Government.

With the critical decline in shorebirds that we are witnessing in our Flyway, the next two years will pose a number of challenges to the Group and I look forward to the new Committee working together to achieve the objectives we have set ourselves.

Ken Gosbell

Chairman

Report of north-west Australia Wader and Tern Expedition—31st October to 21st November 2009

Special visits to north-west Australia have been undertaken almost every year since 1981 to carry out intensive wader banding and counting studies. Throughout the 28 year period the NWA Expeditions have also fulfilled an important role in training researchers from Australia and overseas in the techniques of catching, banding, ageing and processing (including recording primary moult) of waders and terns.

Catching

The number of birds caught at 80 Mile Beach (632) was less than half the normal level even though the total for the expedition (4282) was the highest ever for a three week visit.

The main reason for the relatively poor catching performance at 80 Mile Beach was that birds were much more spread out than usual. Instead of most waders being concentrated in the section between 10 and 26 km south of the Anna Plains entrance, they were spread right down to at least 60 km south. Also the much wider sandy beaches led to birds not being concentrated along the tide edge.

Some highlights of the catching program were:

- a catch of 90 terns, 70 of which were Roseates, at Coconut Well (12 km north of Broome)
- an excellent catch of 204, including the unusual number (for the tidal shores) of 161 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
- a catch of 1269, including 944 Red-necked Stints, 129 Curlew Sandpipers and 63 Broad-billed Sandpipers (a record for this species for Broome). One of the Broad-billed Sandpipers carried a Chinese band.
- a total of 53 Oriental Plovers in catches at 80 Mile Beach.
- a catch of 689 including 425 Great Knot (4 controls from China) and 171 Red Knot (also including a Chinese control).
- catches at Broome with 25 Whimbrel and another with 25 Eastern Curlew (the largest catch of this species for some years). Unusually large numbers of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers also continued to be caught on the shore.
- a return to Coconut Well produced a catch with 139 Sanderling and 69 Great Knot (including two from China).

For nine wader species the total count exceeded 100; Red-necked Stint 1171, Great Knot 849, Greater Sand Plover 343, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 335, Curlew Sandpiper 287, Red Knot 284 and Bar-tailed Godwit 232. This is probably the largest catch of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers made on any expedition. The totals for Red Knot and Curlew Sandpiper were also good but Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were well down. Grey-tailed Tattler and Terek Sandpiper catch totals were also a little below normal.

NWA 2009 Expedition - Wader and Tern catch Details

Catch Totals	*New*	*Retrap*	*Total*
TOTAL WADERS (28 species)	3643	529	4172
TOTAL TERNS (5 species)	107	3	110
TOTAL Waders + Terns	3750	532	4282

Retraps and Controls

The proportion of waders already carrying bands (12.7%) was similar to recent years. This mainly derives from the high proportion of banded birds in Roebuck Bay with the retrap rate there (13.8%), greatly exceeding that at 80 Mile Beach (4.4%).

The oldest individuals retrapped for each species were Bar-Tailed Godwit (22 years), Great Knot (21+), Lesser Sand Plover (17+), Red Knot (17+), Curlew Sandpiper (16), Grey-tailed Tattler (15+), Greater Sand Plover (15+), Red-necked Stint (14), Sanderling (10+), Little Tern (10+). Ages of 15-20 years are achieved by a small proportion of all the wader species in Australia, but few survive for longer than that. The record in N.W. Australia is held by a Bar-Tailed Godwit (29 years).

We also controlled eight birds originally banded overseas. All were from China – 6 Great Knot, 1 Red Knot and 1 Broad-billed Sandpiper.

Proportion of Juveniles

On comparison with the average % of juveniles in catches during the previous 11 years, almost all the wader populations spending the non-breeding season in north-west Australia had good breeding success in the 2009 arctic summer. Overall it was probably one of the best ever breeding seasons.

It was particularly pleasing that Red Knot (52%) and Great Knot (44%) both had record breeding success – much needed in these two species where populations have declined so markedly in recent years. The Bar-tailed Godwit (28%) figure was also a record and the figure for Curlew Sandpiper (36%) was only marginally less than the previous highest

ever. Even Greater Sand Plover (39%) had a record year. Only for Red-necked Stint was the outcome below average (17% versus 21%).

In contrast Sharp-tailed Sandpiper appear to have had a poor breeding year in 2009 with only 6% juveniles (if the mist-netting sample is excluded, because mist-netting always gives an above average figure). Sanderling breeding success does not appear to have been particularly good (10%).

Passerines

A total of 190 birds of 21 species were caught in several early morning and afternoon mist-netting sessions at Anna Plains Station and the Broome Bird Observatory. Double-barred Finch (58), Brown Honeyeater (29) and Singing Honeyeaters (25) were the most numerous species caught, with 21 Budgerigars probably being the most enjoyable to see in the hand. Other highlights included a group of Grey-crowned Babblers, a Tawny Frogmouth and a Sacred Kingfisher.

Avian Influenza Testing

John Curran again collected faecal samples, on behalf of AQIS, from waders caught at Broome. These will be tested for Avian Influenza and other avian-borne diseases (live viruses and antibodies from previous infections).

Other Matters

Participants

The 2009 team (37 in total) was larger than for many years, with typically 30 to 34 people present at any one time. 25 participants came from Australia and 12 from overseas.

Finances

Costs of the expedition were largely borne by the participants. To date income has been $40,790 and expenditure $37,575, giving a current surplus of $3215. Any surplus will be carried forward to the next expedition.

Acknowledgements

The 2009 team was an extremely strong one and all are thanked for their huge input which resulted in a record catch total. As usual, different members of the expedition took on additional responsibilities with Maureen Christie, as the catering coordinator, carrying out the most difficult task. We greatly thank Broome Bird Observatory (Nik Ward and his team) and the owners of Anna Plains Station (John, David and Helen Stoate) for hosting the expedition and providing accommodation. Our visits would be much less enjoyable if we were not able to live in the excellent surroundings.

Several expedition members greatly assisted in minimising travel costs by making their vehicles available (Maureen Christie, Prue Wright, Chris Hassell, Maurice O'Connor, Pete Collins and Sue Abbotts). The Department of Environment and Conservation (WA) also very kindly loaned a vehicle and trailer. Other trailers were provided by Chris Hassell, George Swann, BBO and AQIS.

DEC WA again funded the participation of two people from China and BBO provided them with free accommodation. AQIS made a generous financial contribution in recognition of help provided in obtaining samples for disease testing.

Next Expedition

For the next expedition to NWA we will be departing from the usual November dates. The next expedition will take place in 2011 - from 19th February to 12th March. We will be aiming for 25 to 28 people in the team, with as many experienced people as possible. year).

Please contact one of the expedition leaders, if you are potentially interested in coming to NWA in February/March 2011.

Expedition Leaders

Clive Minton: mintons@ozemail.com.au
Roz Jessop: rjessop@penguins.org.au
Chris Hassell: turnstone@wn.com.au
Maureen Christie: twinpeppers@icisp.net.au