

Tattler

Newsletter for the Asia Pacific Flyways & Australian Shorebirds 2020 Project

No. 47 April 2018

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Bar-tailed Godwit feeding on small Soldier Crab.
Photo: Ofer Levy

Editorial

This edition of Tattler reflects the ongoing counting, flagging, tracking, and surveying efforts of people up and down the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. All these efforts are leading to a better definition of critical shorebird areas and a greater awareness of the decline in shorebird populations. Research results are putting pressure on governments to implement policies that will conserve vital shorebird habitat, on both small and large scales.

Thanks to digital technology and the internet I am able to continue to edit Tattler while enjoying a cruising lifestyle through southeast Asia. Sadly, I am also witnessing first-hand the widespread plastic pollution of the sea and shorelines as well as extensive reclamation projects converting shorelines into development zones. We have to ensure that staging and stopover sites are preserved along the Flyway, as well as the breeding areas and over-wintering sites.

The power of the internet and digital photography is well displayed in an Opinion piece about shorebirds in decline in the New York times: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/27/opinion/shorebirds-extinction-climate-change.html>

Liz Crawford, Editor

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World Curlew Day 21 April

What are curlews?

The curlews, or more precisely the Numeniini, are a group of 13 shorebird species most well known for their amazingly long bills. Some curve up and some curve down, but all are incredibly well adapted to probing for food in the soft mud of the world's shorelines.

Numeniini occur on all continents except Antarctica. Most of them are long-distance migrants and make huge journeys every year between breeding areas in the boreal/arctic and non-breeding areas in the southern hemisphere. A full list of Numeniini and their whimsical names is as follows: Upland Sandpiper, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Whimbrel, Little Curlew, Eskimo Curlew, Slender-billed Curlew, Long-billed Curlew, Eurasian Curlew, Far Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Marbled Godwit, and, Hudsonian Godwit.



A group of beautiful Bar-tailed Godwits getting ready to migrate from Australia to their arctic breeding grounds. Photo: Micha V Jackson.

One curlew species, the Bar-tailed Godwit, holds the record for the longest single flight ever recorded by any bird – a non-stop 9-day flight of 11,700 km! This unbelievable trip took place from breeding grounds in Alaska to non-breeding grounds in New Zealand over the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean and is known because the bird had been fitted with a satellite transmitter.

Curlews in trouble

Last year, scientists consulted a large group of experts to review the status of the world's curlews. Unfortunately, seven of the world's 13 curlew species are of conservation concern, and some are in very serious trouble due to widespread threats across their global ranges. Some of the threats identified by this group of experts as having the biggest impacts on curlews include: habitat loss in non-breeding areas, disturbance, invasive species, pollution, and climate change... and most of these are getting worse. You can read the full paper [here](https://www.fullerlab.org/happy-world-curlew-day/). Tragically, we have already lost at least one species of curlew – the once-abundant Eskimo Curlew. In his book *North American Shorebirds from 1895*, Daniel Giraud Elliot writes of the Eskimo Curlew: "In the Mississippi Valley this species is the most abundant of the Curlews, and in immense numbers scatters over the prairie in every direction...When feeding about in such large flocks, they keep up a constant low chattering noise, as if indulging in an uninterrupted flow of conversation." But by the early 1900s this species had been effectively wiped out by unregulated hunting. The last time it was recorded with certainty was in 1963, and it is now considered extinct. Devastatingly, we may have lost another curlew species even more recently – the Slender-billed Curlew has not been seen for more than 20 years.

Migratory shorebirds that spend their non-breeding season in Australia follow a route known as the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to complete their annual migrations. One species, the Far Eastern Curlew, is endemic to this flyway, occurring nowhere else on earth. Unfortunately this is one of the curlew species that is declining rapidly and is listed as Critically Endangered by the Australian government. Far Eastern Curlew is one of several shorebirds in Australia that are heavily reliant on the Yellow Sea region as a place to stopover – that is to rest and refuel – during their long migrations. It seems that those shorebird species that are most reliant on the Yellow Sea for stopovers are also the ones that are declining most severely, likely due to a high concentration of threats and particularly severe loss of tidal habitat in this important region.

Micha Jackson, Amanda Lilleyman, Brad Woodworth, Eduardo Gallo Cajiao

Editor: This is an extract from the excellent article presented online:

Source: <https://www.fullerlab.org/happy-world-curlew-day/>

Far Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel Satellite Tracking 2017/2018



Far Eastern Curlew AAD with transmitter at Toorbul, just prior to release

In 2017/18 the Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG) and the University of Queensland (UQ) funded 10 tracking devices for use on Far Eastern Curlew as part of a broader initiative under the Far Eastern Curlew recovery initiative. The idea being to generate detailed data on migration routes and local movements on non-breeding, staging and breeding locations. Another project sponsored by Fudan University in China has also seen us deploy 5 tracking devices on Whimbrel for the same purpose.

For the Curlew, two types of device were purchased for use in Queensland: five devices were sourced from Microwave Telemetry and were standard Platform Terminal Transmitters (PTTs) using Doppler positioning to establish locations. The other five devices were sourced from Ornitrak and use a more accurate GPS positioning capability. All five devices used on Whimbrel were standard PTTs from Microwave Telemetry.

In the 2017/18 season four PTTs were deployed on Far Eastern Curlew at King Street, Thornlands (1), Toorbul (1) and Geoff Skinner Reserve, Wellington Point (2). One Ornitrak device was fitted at Wellington Point. Of these, the device fitted at King Street proved faulty but the remaining four devices are all transmitting as expected. For Whimbrel, five PTTs were deployed at Wellington Point (1) and Toorbul (4), all of which are functioning and transmitting data normally.

Thanks to the many volunteers from the combined QWSG and UQ team whose dedication to the fieldwork required to deploy these devices has resulted in such success. If you have any questions on the project please contact [Jon Coleman](#)

Update 15 April 2018

As of 15 April the Whimbrel have still not departed and are moving locally in the Toorbul and Wellington Point areas.



Eastern Curlew Migration activity to 15 April 2018

Far Eastern Curlews AAD and AAK left Moreton Bay between 6 and 8 March 2018 and took almost identical paths north along the Queensland coast to Cape York. Both birds then headed north, over Papua New Guinea towards Guam before turning westwards towards the coast of Asia. AAD arrived on the east coast of Taiwan on 15 March, taking approximately 7 days from Brisbane. AAK moved further north and staged near Rudong in China, also arriving on 15 March after 7 days of flying.

AAD left Taiwan on 20 March and moved to Rudong, China, then to the North Korean/ Chinese Border for several days. AAD is now near a town called Khabarovsk in Russia, some 8,700km from Brisbane. AAK moved from Rudong, China to Jindo, South Korea for several days and then flew to Jiamusi near the Chinese /Russian border. AAK has remained there for over a week now. This is approximately 8,500km from Brisbane. They are now potentially on their breeding grounds. AAD and AAK have the Microwave Telemetry devices which transmit regularly irrespective of location.

AAH departed after the others and was last recorded on Okinawa Island, Japan. AAH carries the Ornitrak device, which uses 3G to share its data. We therefore now await this bird coming back into range when the data will be uploaded from the device.

AAJ was a sub-adult bird and while we don't expect that one to migrate we will learn an enormous amount about local movements over the coming year as he moves around the local area.

Jon Coleman

Source: <http://waders.org.au/studying-waders/banding-shorebirds/satellite-transmitters-and-geolocators/far-eastern-curlew-and-whimbrel-satellite-tracking-2017-2018/>

Whimbrel takes action to avoid impact of cyclone

Between 6am and 8am on 18 February 2018, cyclone Kelvin crossed the NW Australia coast at 80 Mile Beach and passed over Anna Plains Station (a cattle station which abuts the northern 100km of 80 Mile Beach at 19°15'S 121°29'E) (Figure 1). It had a central pressure of 974hpa and winds that gusted to 155km/h, with sustained wind speeds of 110km/h. The strongest winds were mainly from the north, after the passage of the central eye of the cyclone. A total of 260mm of rain fell at Anna Plains Station over a 36-hour period.



Figure 1: Whimbrel LA's location from 12 February 2017 to 16 February 2018

Avoidance behaviour by a satellite-tagged wader

The AWSG were holding their annual NW Australia Wader and Tern Expedition at this time and the team of 32 people was forced to evacuate to Broome from their base at Anna Plains Station, 36 hours before the cyclone struck. Fortunately, they were still able to monitor transmissions from a 5g Microwave Telemetry platform transmitter terminal (PTT), which had been placed on a Whimbrel at 80 Mile Beach a year earlier.

This transmitter had been originally deployed on 12 February 2017 on an age category 2 (second year of life) Whimbrel at a location of 19° 29'S, 121° 10'E, 41km south of the Anna Plains Station entrance to 80 Mile Beach. This bird (carrying yellow engraved flag LA) had remained close to this location (± 20 km) throughout the last 12 months, having not migrated back to the northern hemisphere. Whimbrels normally do not return to their breeding grounds until the end of their third year of life i.e. when they are three years old (AWSG data; Chapter 10 D. Rogers PhD thesis).

The PTT was on a cycle programmed to send signals for 10 hours then to be silent for the next 48 hours. At 10pm on 16 February 2018 the bird was at 19° 32'S 121° 07'E, a position 51km south of the Anna Plains entrance and 10km south of the Whimbrel's original banding location (Figure 2). Forty-seven hours later, and

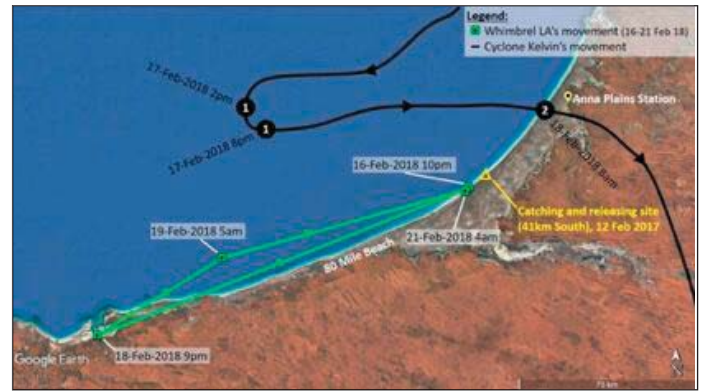


Figure 2: Whimbrel LA's movement before and after Cyclone Kelvin's passage.

some 15 hours after the centre of the cyclone passed over Anna Plains Station, the Whimbrel was 157km further south at 20° 03'S 119° 43'E. This is in the estuary of the de Grey River, about 20km south of Cape Keraudren, the southern limit of 80 Mile Beach. However, at the end of this transmission cycle 8 hours later, and only 22 hours after the cyclone had passed over Anna Plains Station, the bird was already on its way back to its original location having moved 60km north to 19° 46'S 120° 11'E. By the time of its next transmission at 4am on 21 February 2018, the bird was back where it had been just prior to the cyclone's arrival.

It seems clear that Whimbrel LA made a deliberate well-timed significant movement (at least 157km), outside its normal range in order to reduce the effects of the category 2 cyclone. It spent no more than 5 days away (probably only 2-3 days), returning to its regularly used area immediately after the cyclone passed. The data shows how well the bird appears to have been able to time its movements in relation to the movement of the cyclone itself. The journey it made would have taken only 2 to 3 hours as a direct flight under normal conditions. The weather conditions at the location it moved to (200km from the cyclone's track), would have been much less windy and would not have included the abnormal rainfall which occurred at its original location around 50km from the cyclone's track. Additionally, the estuary to which the Whimbrel moved appears to be lined with mangrove forests, which provide more protection than exposed coastal areas.

This raises a question: if there were advantages to the Whimbrel in making this special movement how many other waders made similar movements? It is perhaps fortunate that the northwestern Australian coast, which is particularly prone to cyclones, offers much potential 'room for manoeuvre' for waders, with some 400 km of extensive tidal flats and beaches from Roebuck Bay to at least the de Grey Estuary. It is also of interest that the Whimbrel returned to its original

Whimbrel takes action to avoid impact of cyclone cont.

site so soon after the cyclone passed, raising the possibility that it could detect cues (perhaps infrasound) that it was safe to return.

Interestingly, however, was the lack of movement of a Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascarensis* which spent the non-breeding season in Darwin Harbour, Northern Territory, in 2017/18. An extremely strong cyclone (Cyclone Marcus) (**Figure 3**) passed right over the area where this bird spent most of its time feeding and roosting. Although the cyclone was at this stage classed as category 2, with wind speeds reaching 120-130km/h, the PTT record did not show any indication of the bird moving away. Instead the curlew remained in the marshes in the mangrove forest on the north side of Darwin Harbour until after the cyclone had passed over Darwin at 10:00am on 17 March 2018. That evening it returned to roost at its usual location in one of the lagoons on East Arm Wharf. Next day it had returned to its normal feeding location on the mudflats in this area (A. Lilleyman, pers. com.).

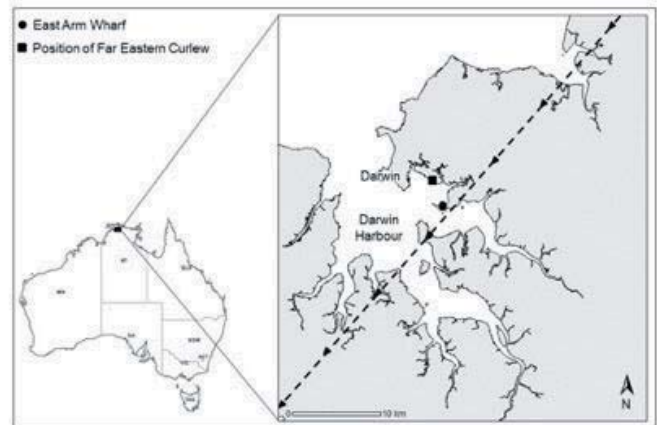


Figure 3. In March 2018, Cyclone Marcus crossed the preferred habitat in Darwin of a Far Eastern Curlew which apparently stayed in the cyclone-affected area.

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Source: Extracted from an article *in press*

Community Conservation of the Far Eastern Curlew

Project Overview

Far Eastern Curlews are the largest of all the world's shorebirds. About 75 per cent of the world's population winter in Australia, so we have a special responsibility to protect them. Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is leading a project titled *Community Conservation of Far Eastern Curlew* to help protect this critically endangered species. This is a 2-year project to be completed by 30 June 2019. Funds have been provided by the Australian Government through the Threatened Species Recovery Fund under the National Landcare Program. Project activities are taking place in 5 locations: Towra Point Nature Reserve (Sydney NSW), Moreton Bay and the Broadwater (Southeast Qld), Hunter Estuary (Newcastle NSW), Shoalhaven Heads (Nowra NSW), and Casuarina Coastal Reserve (Darwin NT).

Project actions

1. On-ground work: undertaken by supervised volunteer teams to engage the community in conservation action and improve the condition and resilience of beach and saltmarsh habitat by controlling invasive weeds and mangroves under licence, closing access and removing marine debris.
2. Community Awareness Events: An annual event in each location to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of Far Eastern Curlews and other shorebirds, and promote

the message that shorebirds should not be disturbed.

3. Shorebird monitoring: bi-annual CVA monitoring surveys uploaded to BirdLife Australia's Shorebird 2020 data portal, plus local data contributions and analysis by BirdLife Australia (BLA).

4. Land Manager and Stakeholder workshop: to connect land managers with the monitoring data, build knowledge of shorebird issues across the flyway, and plan ongoing conservation.

5. Preparation of Guidelines for community restoration of shorebird habitat: web-based fact sheets and case studies distributed by the EAAFP.

Progress Report September 2017-March 2018

1. On-ground work: The CVA project team has liaised with land management agencies to assess each location and prepare Site Action Plans. These have been approved by the land managers and reviewed by BirdLife Australia. To date, 17 on-ground team-days have been completed at 4 of the locations, with the fifth location commencing on 10/4. On-ground work is being monitored via daily site reports and photo points. These are being evaluated at the end of each 6-month stage, so results are not yet available.

2. Community Awareness Events: CVA has hosted four community events at Towra Point, Hunter Estuary, Shoalhaven and Deception Bay. The events included a community marine debris clean-up, a Year 8 geography excursion,

Community Conservation of the Far Eastern Curlew cont.

and two Farewell Shorebird field events with a chance to observe migratory shorebirds through telescopes. The Darwin event was postponed due to a cyclone and will be held on 21 April 2018. In all, 86 people participated in these events, and 12 organisations were involved including University of Queensland, Moreton Bay Regional Council, Hunter Bird Observers Club, Shoalhaven Birders, Shoalhaven City Council, Sutherland Shire Council, NSW Wader Study Group, Georges River Riverkeepers, NSW NPWS, and Local Land Services. CVA produced a factsheet and PowerPoint presentation on Far Eastern Curlew, and BLA provided identification booklets and student handouts. Evaluation surveys are undertaken at all community events. We have had a very enthusiastic response, as shown by the feedback:

- I learned how endangered the Eastern Curlews are and how important our shoreline is to their survival.
- It is wonderful to be a part of this project to help protect and preserve these incredible, critically endangered species.
- Awesome day, combining action to clean the land and education on how to protect endangered species. Having food provided and pick-up were enjoyable bonuses!
- Worthwhile project. Anything that contributes to avoidance of the Eastern Curlew extinction is to be encouraged and applauded.
- Easy to join, friendly staff, visible outcomes and education at the front.

3. Shorebird Monitoring Surveys: CVA teams have undertaken 16 shorebird surveys at 10 locations.

These have been completed with community participants at on-ground team-days and awareness events, and during site assessments. One survey was conducted at night to help Hunter Bird Observers Club ascertain if Tomago Wetlands is used as a night-roost. To date, 125 participants have been involved in these surveys, most of them new to shorebirds. They included 34 students from Hunter River High School. Our assistants from Hunter Bird Observers Club enjoyed the experience of educating young people. Our surveys have counted 2,143 birds in all from 79 species. In total we have counted 280 Far Eastern Curlew, which were present at 7 of the sites. The site with the most consistent Far Eastern Curlew numbers is Shoalhaven Heads, with 48-94 birds across the three counts. The worst site for disturbance is Casuarina Coastal Reserve. Local organisations assisting with the surveys include Hunter Bird Observers Club, NSW Wader Study Group, Charles Darwin University, Larrakia Nation, and Darwin Field Naturalists.

Conclusion: In its first 6 months, the project is building community understanding and conservation of Eastern Curlew and other migratory shorebirds, and engaging volunteers in habitat restoration.

Louise Duff

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4 April 2018

"It's all about the birds"

"It's all about the birds" - a shared pathway in Woollooware Bay, southern part of Botany Bay, NSW

Migratory shorebirds are in serious decline in Botany Bay. Located on the southern shores of Sydney, Australia's largest populated city of over five million people, Botany Bay has seen extensive development since the 1950s with the expansion of Sydney Airport and Port Botany. These developments have resulted in the loss of the most important shorebird habitat along the bay's northern shores and the diversion of the Cooks River and loss of its tidal estuarine mudflats.

The reclamation and dredging of Botany Bay has also resulted in changes in wave action, wave direction and wave energy which have caused increased erosion of the southern shoreline and tidal flats of the Towra Point Ramsar Site, putting further pressure on shorebird populations.

Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Lesser Sand Plover and Pacific Golden Plover have disappeared from the bay while numbers of Eastern Curlew have declined steeply and an important Little Tern nesting site has been lost. A welcome initiative by the Sutherland Shire Council titled *"It's all about the birds"* will help to reverse the loss of shorebird roosting habitat as well as increase public awareness of the need for protection of Sydney's shorebirds.

The project manager of this far-sighted initiative is Brendon Graham, Natural Areas Manager at Sutherland Council. As Brendon points out "as the population booms in Australia's biggest city there is an ever-increasing struggle and competition for space. With urban growth and development in the Sutherland Shire and around the foreshores of Botany Bay there has been an increased demand for a shared recreation path to link the bay with other cycling and pedestrian routes nearby. However, increasing any human activity on the foreshore places threatened

"It's all about the birds" cont.

species, including migratory shorebirds, at further risk".

Creating a unique recreational experience for the community and simultaneously protecting shorebirds and their habitat was the aim of a \$6M Sutherland Shire Council project along the southern shores of Botany Bay, opening in April 2018.



Barge bringing construction materials to the site in Woolooware Bay.

Woolooware Bay Shared Pathway is a 500m link in the pedestrian/ cycleway network. The site is adjacent to a sandy shoal that has been identified as habitat for shorebirds protected under international treaties and listed as endangered under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act (2016). Many shorebirds including Pied Oystercatchers, Sooty Oystercatchers, Bar-tailed Godwits and Grey-tailed Tattlers are known to roost in the project area on old structures including an old oyster-processing jetty. Previous industrial use left the site contaminated and degraded. Rehabilitation for the shared pathway included construction of environmentally friendly seawalls and the establishment of saltmarsh.



"It's all about the birds" has been a constant theme throughout the design and delivery of the project. Once ear-marked for removal, the dilapidated heritage jetty was restored as a reminder of the previous use of the site and to retain roosting habitat for shorebirds. A vital feature of the project includes the construction of an artificial sand island 125m offshore to provide safe shorebird roosting and nesting habitat. Screens to shield birds from cyclists and pedestrians at key locations are also magnificent art pieces with an educational message. Interpretive signage and even bird footprints in the concrete assist in telling the remarkable story of annual shorebird migration.

This project comes at a time when there have been major declines in migratory shorebird populations in Botany Bay due to long-term extensive impacts on the Towra Point Ramsar site on the southern shores of the bay. Loss of island nesting habitat has had a serious effect on breeding success of the Little Tern over recent years with few or no young birds fledging. The same island is also the main roost site for migratory shorebirds in Botany Bay and its erosion has put an increased stress on the shorebird populations which are competing with Little Terns for a rapidly eroding island habitat.

The island that is being created as part of the *"It's all about the birds"* project will do much to relieve the competition for a rapidly dwindling habitat resource. A screened observation platform and interpretative signage with clear views of migratory shorebirds using the new roost site will increase public awareness of the incredible journey undertaken by migratory species between the Arctic and Australia every year.

The project has received support and advice from the NSW and Australasian Wader Studies Groups and support from the Greater Sydney Land Services.

Brendon Graham and Phil Straw

Threat to Ramsar sites in Australia

The world looks on in amazement as the Queensland Government seems set on allowing one of Australia's most important Ramsar sites to be destroyed to allow a developer to build a mega marina. To my knowledge this will be the first time a Ramsar site has been 'sold out' to development by any government since the "Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat" was agreed to at the seaside resort of Ramsar in Iran on 2 February 1971.

The problem

Moreton Bay in Queensland is acknowledged as one of the world's most important sites for the Eastern Curlew and has been recognised as a Ramsar site under an international agreement that protects wetlands.

National legislation and international agreements protect Ramsar sites from negative environmental impacts, particularly against destructive developments within their boundaries. So, when a development was proposed within Toondah Harbour, which would have destroyed a substantial area of Eastern Curlew feeding habitat, it was expected that the Federal Minister would declare the proposal as clearly unacceptable under federal law and reject it outright.

However, a decision on this seemingly straightforward case was delayed an unprecedented number of times before eventually being allowed to progress to the next stage in the assessment process.

Despite significant domestic and international pressure, our national laws have failed to offer swift protection for Eastern Curlews at this

important site. A final decision on this proposal has not yet been made, but the fact that a proposed development within a Ramsar site was not rejected from the outset calls into question the Government's commitment to upholding its obligations under both domestic legislation and international agreements.

The Eastern Curlew

The Critically Endangered Eastern Curlew's population has fallen by more than 80% in the last 30 years as its feeding and roosting habitat in coastal environments comes under increasing pressure from growing human populations

The solution, too late?

The proposed new independent National Environmental Protection Agency would be responsible for conducting transparent environmental assessments and would ensure that Australia meets its obligations to conserve important habitat protected under international agreements.

The independent National Sustainability Commission would ensure that Australia has a robust system of biodiversity monitoring, improving our understanding of migratory species' use of key habitats and ensuring these are not subject to cumulative impacts from multiple projects across the species' range.

Phil Straw

Vice Chair AWSG

Member CEPA Working Group, East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership

Red-capped Plover parents care more for young of the opposite sex

Published in the journal Behavioral Ecology: <https://academic.oup.com/beheco/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/beheco/ary052/4962192>

Abstract

Within some socially monogamous species, the relative contribution of care provided by each parent varies substantially, from uniparental to equitable biparental care. The provision of care is influenced by its costs and benefits, which may differ between parents (leading to inter-parental "conflict") and are expected to change in relation to the needs of young (which vary with age) and potentially to traits such as their sex. If the fitness benefits to parents differ with the sex of offspring, parents may adjust their investment in young of different sexes to optimize their own fitness. We radio-tracked 42 Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus* broods and found that, at least diurnally, females cared for the brood for the first half of brood-rearing, while gradually reducing care. Males contributed little diurnal care early in brood-rearing, then increased care, taking over from females as young approached independence. The sex-ratio of the brood influenced the division of care between parents; male parents attended the brood more when there were greater proportions of female chicks, whereas female parents attended the brood more when there were a greater proportion of male chicks. This is apparently the first recorded case in a precocial bird where each parent's investment in brood care is influenced by the brood sex-ratio. Our results defy unambiguous explanation.

Authors: Daniel Lees, Craig D. H. Sherman, Kristal Kostoglou, Laura X. L. Tan, Grainne S. Maguire, Peter Dann and Michael A. Weston

Nordmann's Greenshank Count in Dongtai - Rudong October 2017

From 18 to 26 October 2017 we did a count of Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* along the coastline of southern Dongtai and Rudong counties in southern Jiangsu Province, China. The areas covered were almost the same as those surveyed in May 2017 (see Zhang & Laber 2017)

and thus the same map is used here (**Figure 1**). Nordmann's Greenshank were recorded opportunistically during other shorebird surveys including the China Coastal Waterbird Census (CCWC) monthly count and author MJ's PhD research.

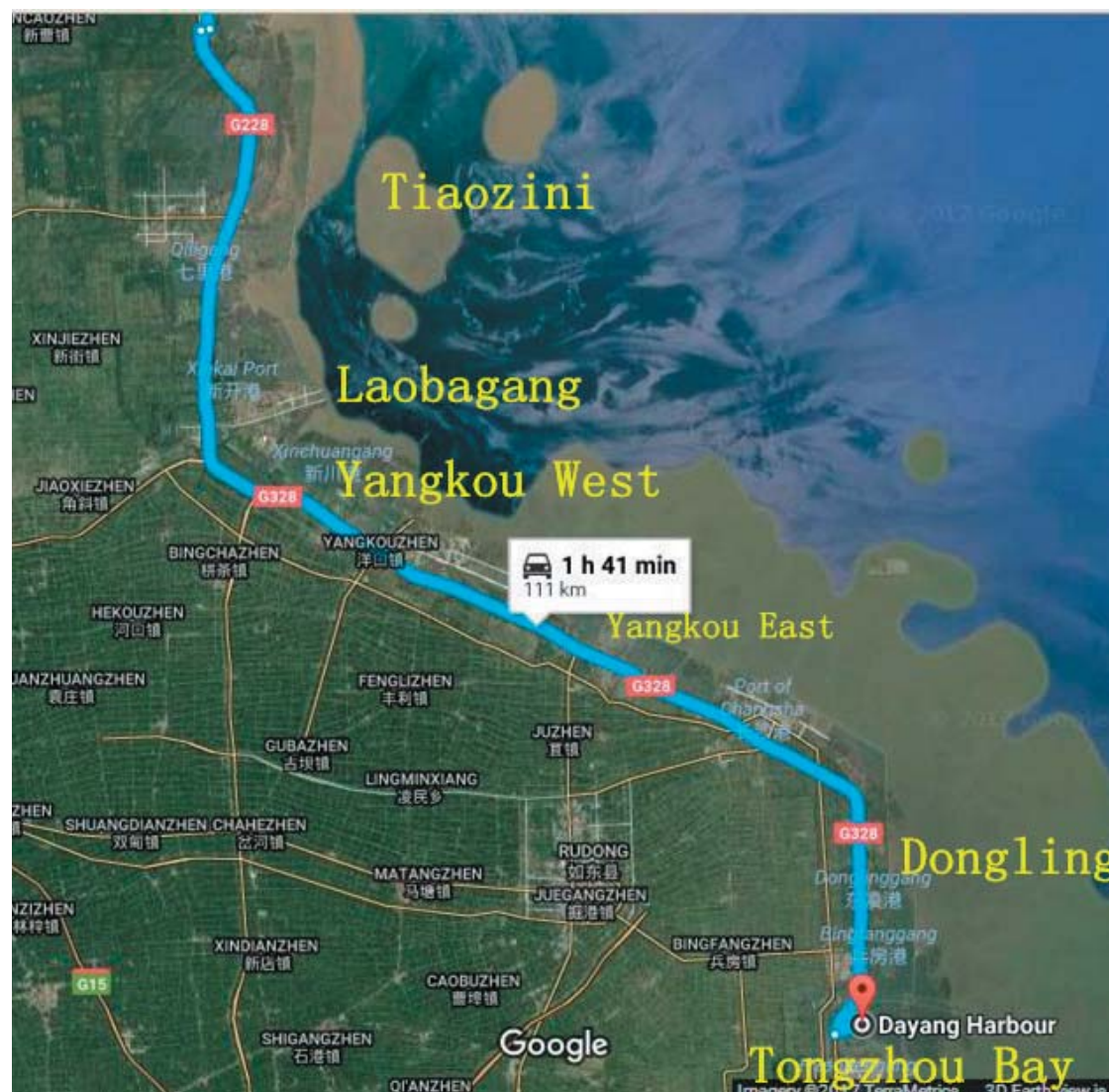


Figure 1. Counting areas included stopover sites along the coast from the Tiaozini Reclamation Area in the north to northern Tongzhou Bay in the south.

Recent studies during southward migration have shown that the largest concentrations of the Endangered Nordmann's Greenshank, with a population estimated at just 600-1000 individuals (Wetlands International 2016), can be found in the Rudong region, where they also undergo an annual wing moult. In particular, the area around Tiaozini in Dongtai supports 800-1000 individuals annually, and counts across the whole study region have exceeded 1100 individuals (see Peng *et al.* 2017 and Bai *et al.* 2015). In addition, spring tides are higher during southward migration in autumn than during northward migration, making counts of high-tide roosting aggregations simpler. Thus, September and October provide the best chance to count this species in the Rudong region.

We are unaware of other systematic counts of this species in this region from 2017 although author ZL observed up to 500 birds at Tiaozini in mid-September. During our count period we had enough time to cover the whole Tiaozini area, with other areas not perfectly but decently covered (**Table 1**). During spring tides the birds could be observed quite well when gathering close to the seawall at high tide. We therefore feel that our count is reasonably reflective of the local population during late October. At this time of year, juveniles have moulted the mantle and scapular feathers into 1st-winter feathers but still retain the juvenile wing coverts and tertials (ZL pers. obs.), thus most of the birds were also able to be aged by author ZL.

Nordmann's Greenshank Count in Dongtai - Rudong Oct. 2017 cont

Table 1. Count details of Nordmann's Greenshank recorded in the Rudong coastal area during 18 to 26 October 2017.

Site (north to south)	Date	Number of NG	Number of Juv./ 1 st -winter
Tiaozini, Dongtai	19 Oct	819	0
Laobagang, Haian	18 Oct	11	1
Yangkou West, Rudong	-----	-----	-----
Yangkou East, Rudong	23 & 26 Oct	1	0
Dongling, Rudong	20 Oct	0	0
Tongzhou Bay, Tongzhou	25 Oct	1	0
Total		832	1

We recorded 832 Nordmann's Greenshank over six days, one of which was identified as juvenile/1st-winter (**Table 1**). This compares with a total of 1110 and 956 individuals recorded in this region by Peng *et al.* (2017) in autumn 2015 and 2014, respectively. The roosting site at Dongling generally supports tens of adults in autumn, so our result of zero individuals from this site suggests that some individuals may have already migrated further south, which may also explain our somewhat lower count as compared with autumn of previous years. Alternatively, this result could indicate that conditions at Dongling have worsened for this species. Nonetheless the total number we recorded is higher than the observations of this species made by author ZL in September (~500) at Tiaozini.

Our observation of just one juvenile is similar to observations made in September, when a single juvenile was observed at Tiaozini and another at Dongling when they were in fresh juvenile plumage, which is easier to age (ZL pers. obs.). Author ZL also observed three Nordmann's Greenshank at Nanhui, southeast Shanghai, between early October and 20th October, two of which were juvenile/1st-winter. Author ZL also observed two adults with two juveniles in Qidong county between Rudong and Shanghai several years ago. Despite these observations of juveniles singly or in small groups, it seems unlikely that juveniles would separate from the large flocks of adults observed around Rudong, and in recent years the proportion of juveniles recorded in the Rudong area has always been low. We suppose this may reflect continuous low breeding success in this species, unless other important sites have yet to be discovered.

With regards to colour-marked birds, Nordmann's Greenshank banded in Thailand and Indonesia are observed most years at Tiaozini, however we did not observe any flags from this region during this period nor are we aware of other reported re-sightings during 2017 southward migration. We did observe two individuals that we presumed to

be from Chongming Island, Shanghai (black over white flags). One of them was checked carefully from various angles but the white below the black flag appeared to be something between a flag and a ring - we believe it most likely to be a broken white flag. No other bands or flags were observed.

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Acknowledgements

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Ruddy Turnstones on King Island, near Tasmania

The Victorian Wader Studies Group visited King Island during 17-26 March 2018, the 20th visit to the island since their long-term study of Ruddy Turnstone commenced in March 2007. The nine member team aimed to: 1) carry out a population count along the entire west coast of the island; 2) evaluate the breeding success of the 2017 Arctic breeding season by measuring the percentages of juveniles in catches; 3) deploy and retrieve geolocators; and 4) facilitate Deakin University's research project on the presence of avian diseases.

1) A **population count** was carried out on the first day (17 March) during high tide. All known sites along the west coast of the island at which Ruddy Turnstone are regularly present were visited. The total count was 689 individuals. Results of the counts since 2008 are shown in **Figure 1**. Although the total number of birds this year has significantly dropped compared to the very high count of 853 birds in Mar/Apr 2017, it is still a reasonably high number (second highest since 2010). The number of birds in the northern part was the highest since 2010, contributing 22% of the total count, while the number in the southern part was the lowest in the last five years. The count in the central part remained similar to previous years comprising 50% of the total count.

It appears that the reduction in population during the early years of the study may have ceased with the population now recovering, particularly as a result of the good Arctic breeding season in 2016 (**Figure 2**).

2) A very poor **number of juveniles** was recorded in the catches in this visit. There were only 4 juveniles among the total of 149 birds caught (2.7%) indicating a poor breeding season for

Ruddy Turnstone in the Arctic summer in 2017. This is rather disappointing after the highest number of juveniles recorded in the previous year (31.0%). **Table 5** gives the percentage of juveniles over the past 12 years. Only data from the February/March/early April visits are included because it is thought that there are still a small number of juvenile birds on migration through King Island, to Tasmanian and New Zealand non-breeding areas, in November/December. The average juvenile percentage for 12 years of the study was 12.3%. This year's result continues to prove that Ruddy Turnstone is a species subject to wide fluctuations in breeding success (**Figure 2**). In the 12 years of the study there have been two exceptionally good breeding seasons (the Arctic breeding seasons of 2013 and 2016) and five years of almost complete breeding failure (the Arctic summers of 2006, 2008, 2012, 2015 and 2017). This extreme variation in breeding success may be related to the Ruddy Turnstone breeding in the higher arctic regions of northern Siberia. Geocator data has shown that the New Siberian Islands are the centre of the breeding area of the turnstones which spend the nonbreeding season in south-east Australia.

3) Ten old **geolocators** (7 on yellow flags and 3 on white flags) were retrieved from this visit. Different flag colours for the geolocators are used each year. The 3 mounted on white flags would have been 2 or more years old and those on yellow flags one year old. Together with the 16 geolocators retrieved in December 2017, the total number of geolocators retrieved in the 2017-18 season is now 26. A total of 42 new geolocators were deployed on this visit. Four of these were deployed on birds with geolocators just retrieved so that consecutive migration tracks may be able to be recorded. A total of 376 geolocators have now been deployed on Ruddy Turnstone on King Island, with 157 retrieved (42%).

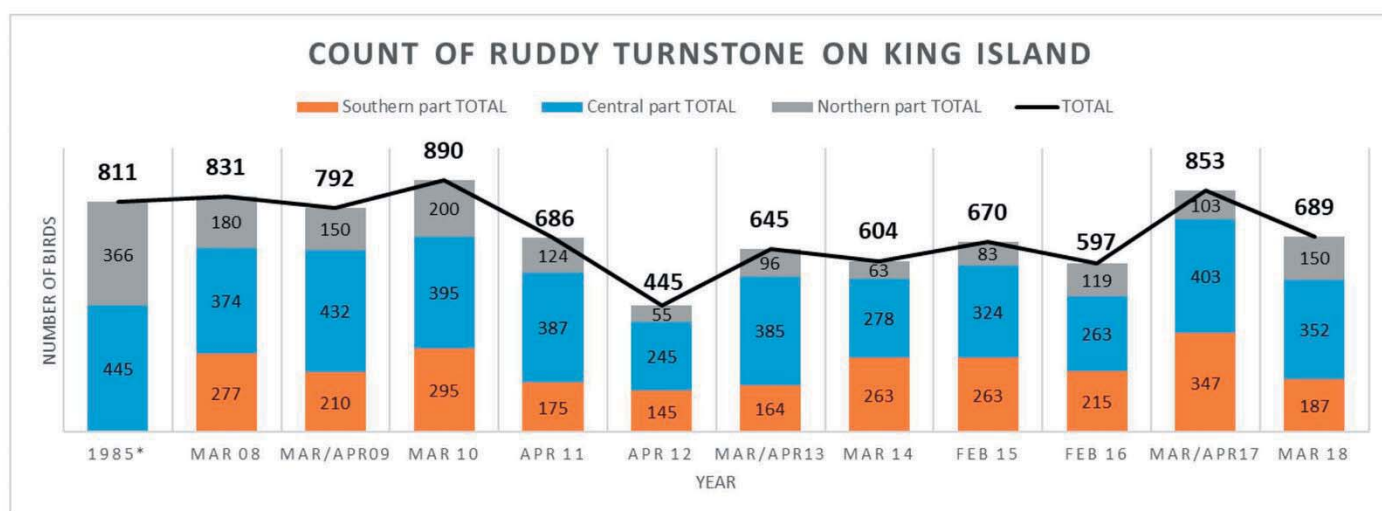


Figure 1. Population change in Ruddy Turnstone on King Island's west coast

Ruddy Turnstones on King Island, near Tasmania cont.

Figure 2: Percentage of juveniles in Turnstone catches on King Island in Feb-Apr period 2007 to 2018

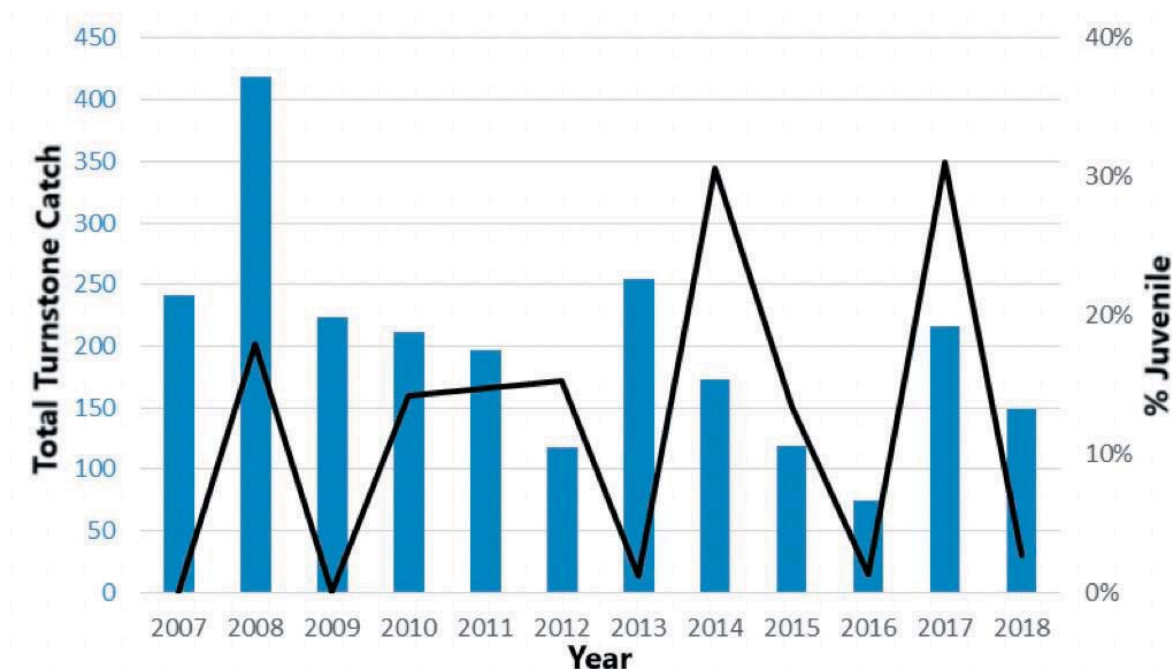


Table 5: Juvenile proportions in Turnstone catches on King Island in Feb-Apr period each year 2007 to 2018

Year	New	Retrap	Total	Juv	% Juv
2007	230	11	241	0	0.0%
2008	354	65	419	75	17.9%
2009	124	99	223	0	0.0%
2010	123	88	211	30	14.2%
2011	122	75	197	29	14.7%
2012	65	53	118	18	15.3%
2013	125	130	255	3	1.2%
2014	81	92	173	53	30.6%
2015	56	63	119	16	13.4%
2016	27	48	75	1	1.3%
2017	125	91	216	67	31.0%
2018	87	62	149	4	2.7%
TOTAL	1519	877	2396	296	12.30%

Note: Only includes Feb/Mar/April catches, **not** Nov/Dec catches.

Poor Arctic breeding years were 2006, 2008, 2012, 2015 and 2017

Very good Arctic breeding years were 2013 and 2016

4) Deakin University collected faecal swabs and blood for the **presence of avian diseases** (or the antibodies from previous infections). Cross analyses have been made with the geolocator data, with a number of papers already published.

The King Island March 2018 Team: Clive Minton, Robyn Atkinson, Rob Patrick, Robert Bush, Gary Matthews, Bretan Clifford, Michelle Willie, Alice Risely and Katherine Leung.

Source: Extracted from *VWSG King Island Trip 17-26 March 2018*, available from the Victorian Wader Studies Group

Seaweed and shorebirds in Western Australia



Sanderling on bank of beach wrack at Two Rocks. Photo by Laurie Boyle.

Large banks of seaweed (beach wrack) are found along the central-west coast of Western Australia and provide an important resource for shorebirds preparing for their northward migration. The stretch of coastline covered in this article is located between Perth (Two Rocks) and Geraldton (Point Moore).

Beach wrack, also known as sea wrack, refers to all-natural material that washes up from the sea into the surf zone and onto our beaches. The majority of beach wrack is made up of seagrass and seaweed. Beach wrack tends to accumulate in large banks at particular places along the coast.

The central-west coast of Western Australia has an abundance of wrack due to ideal growing conditions for seagrass and seaweed. Off shore large sandy lagoons provide calmer waters that give seagrasses the opportunity to flourish and the Leeuwin ocean current brings down warm and nutrient-poor water from the north. Thus, it is no surprise that big swells associated with storms cause so much seagrass and seaweed to break off and wash up on our beaches. Most beach wrack is washed up during winter storms, but occasional summer storms also deposit wrack on our beaches.

Organic matter from the wrack is broken down and disintegrates, becoming food for amphipods (tiny invertebrates). These include sand hoppers, copepods, worms and fly larvae (i.e. maggots), and they are keenly sought after by birds (Payne 2013). This rich food resource explains the presence of large numbers of feeding shorebirds around seaweed banks.

Waves will often wash over banks of beach wrack and create small pools of permanent water behind them. Shorebirds can often be found

wading through these pools. The seaweed banks also provide shelter to the birds from prevailing winds.

Shorebirds most frequently encountered at the seaweed banks are Sanderling *Calidris alba* and Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*. They are the most numerous, with greatest numbers over January, February and early March. Groups of Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus* and Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* are found in smaller flocks. Other shorebird species are generally found as solitary birds or in small numbers such as Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*. The seaweed banks further sustain, be it in smaller numbers, shorebirds that remain along the coast over the Austral winter.

Access to the beach is available near the small coastal towns and it was at these locations that the data was collected (**Table 1**). That leaves large stretches of coastline unexplored.

Depending on the overall amount of beach wrack along the coast the numbers of shorebirds may be considerably higher. Only a complete coastal survey during February/March will clarify the exact size of the shorebird population using this part of the central-west coast of Western Australia. All indications at the moment point to a considerable population of Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone staging here pre-migration.

Reference

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Marcus Singor

Seaweed and shorebirds in Western Australia cont.

Table 1 - Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone numbers along central-west coast of Western Australia

Sanderling				Ruddy Turnstone			
Location	Date	No.	Observer	Location	Date	No.	Observer
Point Moore	7.3.2018	55	Linda Giblett	Point Moore	20.2.2018	42	Linda Giblett
Greenough	5.2.2011	47	Sue Harris	Point Moore	1.3.2018	33	Linda Giblett
Cervantes	18.2.2018	38	Linda Giblett	Point Moore	7.3.2018	14	Linda Giblett
Cervantes	25.2.2018	32	Linda Giblett	Greenough	19.1.2018	18	Linda Giblett
Wedge Is	16.2.2016	315	Bruce Greatwich	Greenhead	21.1.2017	55	Joe Fontaine
Wedge Is	4.3.2017	10	Peter Taylor	Cervantes	17.6.2017	40	Laurie Boyle
Lancelin	2.3.2009	49	Mark Stanley	Cervantes	25.2.2018	42	Linda Giblett
Lancelin	29.1.2011	100	Alan Collins	Wedge Is	16.2.2016	53	Bruce Greatwich
Lancelin	20.2.2018	45	Geoffrey Groom	Lancelin Pt	16.2.2016	71	Bruce Greatwich
Lancelin	3.3.2013	250	Wayne Merritt	Lancelin Pt	14.1.2017	200	Geoffrey Groom
Two Rocks	4.1.2006	100	Laurie Boyle	Lancelin Pt	6.2.2017	80	Peter Kennerley
Two Rocks	4.2.2013	115	Laurie Boyle	Lancelin, Edward Is	6.3.2006	100+	Belinda Forbes
Two Rocks	16.2.2013	50	Laurie Boyle	Lancelin	29.1.2011	60+	Mark Newman
Two Rocks	22.1.2017	94	Ian Pibworth	Lancelin	3.3.2013	150	Wayne Merritt
Two Rocks	27.2.2013	100	Laurie Boyle	Lancelin	5.4.2014	150+	Laurie Boyle
Two Rocks	30.3.2016	66	Geoffrey Groom				
Two Rocks	2.12.2016	70	Ian Pibworth				
Two Rocks	1.3.2017	111	Ian Pibworth				
Two Rocks	31.1.2018	90	Geoffrey Groom				
Two Rocks	27.2.2018	160	Laurie Boyle				

Lesser Sand Plover preening leg flag

On Monday 19 February 2018, while scanning shorebirds for leg flags on an ebb tide on the mudflats near Darling Point, Manly, Queensland, I noticed the arrival of a flock of about 20 sand plovers.

As I approached the birds, some were feeding while others were preening their feathers and bathing in the small pools of water left by the receding tide. From a distance of about 20 m in very good light conditions, I was able to read the engraved letters on the leg flag of a Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*. I later found out the bird was aged 2+ when banded at Manly Boat Harbour on 27 October 2013.

To read the flag, I watched the bird for a short time as it preened its feathers. As the bird was side-on to me, I continued to watch the bird to gauge the extent, if any, of breeding plumage. During the preening, I observed the bird "preen" its leg flag.

On a number of occasions I have observed shorebirds peck at their leg flag but this behaviour was different. It was a deliberate but gentle action as the bird slid its open bill along the top edge of the flag from near its leg to the outer tip of the flag. It did this a few times in an identical way to that of a bird preening a feather. The bird then continued preening its wing and chest feathers before bathing in a pool of water and then starting to feed with its cohorts.

The bird's preening behaviour is consistent with the behavioural observation of a Great Knot *Canutus tenuirostris* preening a leg flag at Roebuck Bay, WA, in March 2008. For a report on that observation, see the short communication authored by Yvonne I Verkuil and Chris J Hassell and published in the *International Wader Study Group Bulletin*, Volume 116, Issue 1, pp. 44-45.

Arthur Keates

"The Worst Expedition Ever"

Now you just have to believe me when I tell you that those words in the title of this piece were actually uttered by Clive Minton. He was smiling, slightly, at the time but he spoke the truth. After about 30 years of venturing to the north-west and dodging bad weather all the way, bad weather had finally caught up with the Australasian Wader Study Group's annual North West Australia Expedition. Of course, everybody knows that February is in the Wet Season up at Broome but miraculously this aspect had never interrupted, to any great extent, any previous expeditions. Surely 2018 would not prove to be an exception.

There was talk of an off-shore low-pressure system that might bring some more rain to the district as it passed by and two recent events (not certain if these were similar) had already rendered the place water-logged. The expedition had already persevered with a flooded Crab Creek Road and a flooded Roebuck Plains as we convoyed to Anna Plains so possibly getting a little wet for a day or two was not considered as too threatening.

Three good productive days out on Eighty Mile Beach had been completed when news came that this low-pressure system might just come a little closer to us than first imagined. A contingency plan that had us packing up our tents and picking straws for places to sleep on the floor of the house was well under way when more news came through. This weather system was now called Kelvin, that is Tropical Cyclone Kelvin, and the predicted trajectory was right over the Anna Plains Station! So, when Plan A fails, revert to Plan B; pack up and shoot through!

This simple plan, however, came with some conditions; a time limit to prepare to move, get out onto the highway and make it across Roebuck Plains before the already flooded roads became impassable. Also decide what to take and what not to take.

Still completely happy and content that we would surely be returning soon, a few days at the most, to continue on with shorebird work where we left off, it was clear that we should leave all the cannon-netting and bird processing gear at least.

With everything we absolutely needed (mostly personal gear and food) packed and ready to go, off we headed like a caravan of refugees fleeing from danger. It was pretty much night time by the time we were out on the highway and most certainly pitch black a couple of hours later as we drove cautiously through the flooded sections of Roebuck Plains. What a relief it was to put

that section behind us and finally arrive at our new accommodation. Of course, hardly any of us knew where we were. It was somewhere on the outskirts of Broome, in an industrial estate, late at night and pelting down with rain. Lovely!

Ultimately all the gear was unloaded and various lights turned on about the place to reveal a complex of buildings with adequate facilities and complete with "dongas" to sleep in. This was to become our home for the remainder of the expedition.

The next day, as weather reports came to light, it slowly dawned that Kelvin was indeed travelling straight over Anna Plains and things would have been particularly uncomfortable for us all had we stayed. As each subsequent day passed it also became clear that we would not be returning to Anna Plains to do shorebird work and we would need to wait until roads were opened again to just go and retrieve the equipment. On top of that, the road to Broome Bird Observatory was completely awash and not good at all for vehicles.



Figure 1. It would have been an interesting time listening to trees hit the roof!

Eventually a team of two vehicles did the trip to Anna Plains and back but combinations of more wet weather and unfavourable tides reduced the opportunities for work around Roebuck Bay. When, finally, good sunny conditions prevailed and access to places was without too much risk, some productive days were again enjoyed. That was until the last two days when the firing box decided to muck-up and a couple of potentially wonderful shorebird catches had to be forfeited. All in all, out of a planned 18 catching days only a paltry 8 days were successful; the worst result ever.

“The Worst Expedition Ever” cont.



Figure 2. Happy shorebird people on a productive day.

It was noted at the time and I need to reiterate here, that the spirit and good humour of the crew was just outstanding. There was certainly more than one frustrated scientist that failed to go home with a mission complete but through it all a great sense of cheerfulness prevailed. Despite all the setbacks, there were still many things to be learned, challenges to be met, friendships to be made or maintained and an adventure to be shared.

I think we all might wear with pride the badge of “worst ever”. For several of the crew that had turned up in 2016 (deemed the “best ever” by Clive Minton) this trip certainly emphasised that bold statement.

Tom Clarke
March 2018

Red Knot Alert

Twenty Red Knot were caught in November 2017 at Thompson Beach, Gulf St Vincent, South Australia. One of these was a retrap of a Red Knot originally banded in New Zealand. The remaining 19 were all flagged with engraved-orange-over-plain-yellow flags on the right tibia.

Observers throughout the Flyway are asked to keep a sharp look-out for this colour combination. We would appreciate observers to note the subspecies. If possible, a photograph would be wonderful – even if it is of poor quality! We are hoping to answer the question of which subspecies of Red Knot use the Gulf St Vincent – *piersmai* or *rogersi*.

The VWSG has been visiting the Gulf St Vincent since 2012. One Red Knot was flagged that year. No Red Knot were caught in the intervening years.

Sightings should be reported to the AWSG website - <http://www.awsg.org.au/reportform.php>, or by email to Joris Driessen at flagging@aws.org.au.

Maureen Christie and the Thompson Beach Team

Vale David Milton
28 April 1958 – 14 March 2018



It is with great sadness that we mourn the passing of David Milton, who died in a tragic home accident.

David was a member of the Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG) as well as Birds Queensland. He was very active within QWSG Committee, becoming the Chairperson for several years. He had also been the Chairperson of the Australasian Wader Studies Group as well as the editor of *Stilt*.

David's great contribution was through his expertise with data. Through his dealings with the QWSG database he made many important and lasting connections with all levels of government, NGOs and consultants, that only helped his beloved waders. I remember David saying to me that you needed facts, data, reports and results, in order, to influence Government and his immaculate handling of our database has shown this to be true over the years. Through this network David helped to establish an on-going relationship between QWSG and the University of Queensland, in particular the Richard Fuller Laboratory. He was also co-author of several ornithological papers.

However, David was not just into the database, he was also a very willing participant in all of QWSG's activities from organising and participating in surveys along the east coast of Queensland and Gulf of Carpentaria, taking part in ID days, where he would quietly lead newbies through the maze that is non-breeding wader plumage, to helping with flagging and banding waders at many a cannon or mist-netting outing.

David and his beloved partner Sandra did not limit their love of birds just to waders, though I believe that they were trying to see all of the world's wader species. They spent many holidays travelling the world to some extreme and exotic places to fill out their world bird list, 6000+! Sandra was chasing Hornbills, whilst David was after Pittas.

We will all miss David for many different reasons, but many for the fact that he was a good man.

David's knowledge of waders and his dedication to their conservation will be sorely missed, but he and his dedication will never be forgotten.

To Sandra, and to her and David's families we send our deepest sympathies and regards.

David Edwards
Chairperson, QWSG

Welcoming a new Partner, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

We are very pleased to announce that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPR Korea) became the 36th Partner of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) on 11 April 2018 and has nominated the Kumya Wetland Reserve [EAAF044] and Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve [EAAF045] as their first two East Asian–Australasian Flyway Network Sites.

In recent years, the DPR Korea has been increasingly active in collaborating with international organizations to identify priority areas for the conservation of migratory waterbirds through survey and monitoring projects along their coastal and inland wetlands. The country has also initiated an inventory of their wetlands which will yield important information on the biodiversity of those areas and the services that they provide for people.

We warmly welcome the DPR Korea as an official Partner to the EAAFP and look forward to working closely with them.

In 2018, the DPR Korea also acceded to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and they have designated the Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve and Rason Migratory Bird Reserve as their first two Ramsar Sites. The Convention will come into force in the DPR Korea on 16 May 2018 when the country will become the 170th Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve is internationally important for supporting globally threatened waterbirds during their annual migration along the EAAF. The reserve has a visitor centre and in recent years, has been developing a programme to raise awareness of the importance of migratory waterbirds and their habitats.

Through joining the EAAFP, the DPR Korea will be able to work closely with EAAF Partners on a variety of programmes to support their efforts to strengthen the work on the conservation of migratory waterbirds and the management of their habitats so as to benefit both people and the environment. This will include efforts along the coast of the Yellow Sea region where large areas of important tidal-flat habitat still remain.

On 16 May 2018, the Chief Executive of EAAFP, Dr Lew Young, will attend the "National Workshop on the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetland" and "World Migratory Bird Day Ceremony" in Pyongyang (DPR Korea), to celebrate the accession of the DPR Korea to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the country's joining as a Partner to the EAAFP.

Source: EAAFP Newsletter No. 52
13 April 2018

Brian McCaffery retires

After 31 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Brian McCaffery will be retiring at the end of April 2018. Brian spent most of his career at the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge in western Alaska, one of the world's most important sites for breeding and migrating shorebirds. One of just two East Asian–Australasian Flyway Network sites in North America, the recognized importance of this refuge is due in no small part to Brian's impressive research and outreach efforts. Brian led numerous studies of the reproductive and migration ecology of shorebirds in Alaska, efforts that contributed to numerous publications and conservation plans, and supported numerous students and researchers from around the world. His scientific rigor,

collegial support, and commitment to his (and our) work helped lead shorebird conservation efforts in Alaska, North America, and around the world. While Brian contributed greatly to our understanding of Alaskan shorebirds, he also played major roles in the conservation of many other taxonomic groups—for example, eiders, salmon, raptors, and passerines - in his roles as non-game biologist, outreach specialist, and later supervisory wildlife biologist on the refuge. Birds and humans alike from throughout the flyways have greatly benefited from his friendship and leadership. Brian will undoubtedly stay busy in retirement, now able to spend more time chasing salamanders along with his wife, Christine, at their new home in Wisconsin. Congratulations to Brian, and, most importantly, thanks.

AWSG Committee for 2018-20

Chair and EAAF Liaison Officer – Doug Watkins

Vice Chair – Phil Straw

Secretary – Alison Russell-French

Treasurer – Birgita Hansen

Stilt Editor – Greg Kerr

Chair Scientific Committee – Danny Rogers

Conservation Officer – Dan Weller

General Committee Member – Marcel Klaassen, Eric Woehler, Chris Hassell, Clive Minton, Maureen Christie, Joris Driessen, Inka Veltheim, Grace Maglio

Co-opted Member – Adrian Riegen (TBC)

BLA nominee co-opted to Represent the CEO – Connie Warren, nominated by the CEO of BirdLife Australia

Contacts

Chair – Doug Watkins - douggwatkins@gmail.com

Secretary – Alison Russell-French - alisonrf@iinet.net.au

BirdLife Australia's annual Congress & Campout at Broome

Broome Bird Observatory to host BirdLife Australia's annual Congress & Campout

Join us for the Congress & Campout and Broome's Bird Observatory 30th birthday celebrations this year, to be held from 8-11 September 2018!

The Broome Bird Observatory is pleased to be the 2018 hosts for BirdLife Australia's Congress & Campout. The Congress will be held at the beautiful Mangrove Hotel, overlooking the internationally important intertidal mudflats of Roebuck Bay, followed by the Campout at the Broome Bird Observatory - the shorebird capital of Australia!

Broome sits at the entrance to the spectacular Kimberley Region of Western Australia and is a haven for wildlife, particularly birds. By mid-February this year, following three tropical cyclones and a deep monsoonal low, Broome has already broken its annual rainfall record... and big wet seasons lead to exceptional birding! With water likely to be on the ground until the next wet season Broome Bird Observatory warden Nigel Jackett says "we're expecting a bumper breeding year for Yellow Chats and Australian Painted Snipe. After the big wet, expect exceptional birding!"

As well as shorebirds on Roebuck Bay the Big Wet will also present good viewing opportunities for waterfowl like Magpie Geese, Green Pygmy-Geese, and Wandering Whistling-Ducks as well as Comb-crested Jacanas and Baillon's Crake.

By September the remaining ephemeral pools are guaranteed to be superb for returning migratory shorebirds, perfectly timed to coincide with the BirdLife Australia Campout and Congress.

Keynote speaker will be shorebird expert and *Australian Bird Guide* co-author Danny Rogers. Roebuck Bay's ecology will be the focus of this year's Congress with a variety of presentations from local experts including Nigel Jackett, Chris Hassell and local ranger groups. Together with visiting specialists, topics will be interesting and varied and cover everything from birds to dolphins, dinosaurs to Night Parrots and mud!

See www.broomebirdobservatory.com to register and find out more.



2018 Australasian Shorebird Conference

Hobart, Tasmania 27-28 October 2018

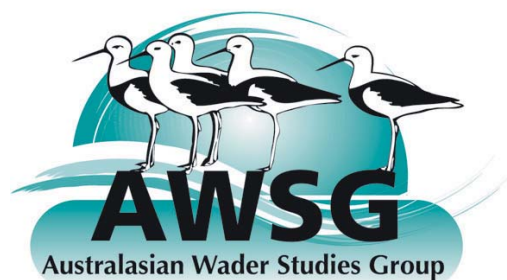
Call for Papers and Posters

The 2018 Australasian Shorebird Conference will be held in Hobart over the weekend of 27 and 28 October. These conferences are held every two years and provide an opportunity for everyone interested in all aspects of shorebird research, conservation and management to exchange information, discuss relevant issues and develop strategies for improving the status of these remarkable birds.

The theme of the 2018 ASC will be: ***"Losing their habitats – conservation and management strategies for migratory and resident shorebirds"***.

If you wish to present an oral paper or poster at the ASC, please email the convenor as soon as possible (details below). The Conference will provide a forum for discussions on all shorebird species, and is particularly keen to see contributions from indigenous researchers and managers.

It is planned to arrange a number of post-conference trips (subject to interest) to visit some of the key shorebird (and other birds) spots in Tasmania. On the weekend preceding the ASC the 4th Bruny Island Bird Festival will be held on Bruny Island, just south of Hobart (see details at <http://www.brunybirdfestival.org.au/>) This is a BirdLife IBA with all 12 endemics species on offer.



In conjunction with the ASC, The Overwintering Project (<https://www.theoverwinteringproject.com/>) will be holding an exhibition of shorebird art at the **Moonah Arts Centre**, 23-27 Albert Road, Moonah from 18 October - 10 November, with the exhibition's Official Opening to be held on Friday 26 October. It is hoped to hold the ASC welcoming reception/icebreaker at the Centre. Further details to follow.

The Conference convenor is Dr Eric Woehler, Chair of BirdLife Tasmania and AWSG Committee Member. If you would like to be included in all further email announcements, Conference information and post-conference trip details, etc, please send an email to eric.woehler@gmail.com or call him on 0438 204 565.

Bar-tailed Godwits by Eric Woehler

