

## **Queensland Wader Study Group Newsletter No 2                      June 1992**

### **Status of QWSG**

The question of how QWSG is finally set up as either an independent, incorporated group or as a special interest group of an established society had been resolved, we thought! The previous decision by the interim executive of QWSG to become independent has now been retracted because of some very persuasive arguments expressed by individuals, and the management committee of the Qld Ornithological Society Incorporated (QOSI).

A problem with becoming an independent incorporated body is that it would lead to fragmentation of groups interested in birds within Queensland. We may end up duplicating our efforts over important conservation issues, not to mention day to day administrative tasks. On the other hand, being independent would have allowed us to pursue our own objectives based upon those adopted by the AWSC; for the study and conservation of waders and allowed us to control our own finances. However, QOSI has now assured us a large degree of autonomy should we become a special interest group within QOSI. Furthermore, QOSI now has the advantage of being able to receive tax deductible donations into a research fund, a fund that is administered by a special committee and will serve to encourage study into birds of Queensland, including waders.

For the QWSG to become a special interest group within QOSI, it would involve a fairly simple change to the constitution of the QOSI and, in effect, mean that people who wished to belong to QOSI and QWSG, or to one or other group, would be free to do so and would pay membership fees accordingly. Our finances would be kept separate and we would retain our own newsletter and membership lists. The objectives of the QWSG would not be compromised, yet both the QWSG and the QOSI should benefit from sharing expertise and a degree of administrative support. In addition, the QWSG would not have the expense of becoming incorporated.

Before a final decision is made on this matter the executive of the QWSG is seeking the opinion of the membership. Those people who have this newsletter but have not become members are still encouraged to express an opinion but we would have to give it less significance. Please indicate your opinion for the future Organisation of QWSG and send this slip of paper back for us to consider. Simply tick your choice. You don't have to indicate your name. Under all three options, QWSG will be maintaining close links with the Australasian Wader Studies Group, and other groups interested in waders and their habitats, in particular the Australian Littoral Society (ALS). No matter what the outcome, we will be sharing much of our expertise with QOSI. (address for mailing is on the membership slip).

### **Activities**

For netting activities, please confirm with Peter Driscoll three days in advance for confirmation of time and place. In the case of weekend trips please confirm at least 1 week in advance. For the wader counts, please ring Kees Hulsman, Ian Gynther, or David Stewart.

#### **Cannon Netting**

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> July:  | Cannon netting at Cabbage Tree Creek mouth (if dredging finished) - high of 1.82 m at 11:24 am - meet at 7:30 am.  |
| Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> August: | Cannon netting at site to be determined - high of 2.06 m at 11:17 am on Saturday - please enquire a week in advance - we may venture to Sth Stradbroke is.             |
| Weekend 15-16 <sup>th</sup> Aug  | Cannon netting on Moreton island - high of 2.15 in at 10:11 am (8.30 on Moreton Is) - involves taking barge on Friday night, returning late Sunday, netting both days. |

N.B. There will be no other netting until October when we will be very active running an Earthwatch program on waders which will include cannon netting around Moreton Bay. Anyone interested in participating in these activities in late September and October is asked to contact Peter Driscoll, preferably before the end of August.

## **Wader Counts (general monitoring)**

Saturday 4th July: High of 1.94 in at 12:25 pm.  
Saturday 1st August: High of 2.06 m at 11.17 am.  
Saturday 26th Sept.: High of 2.21 m at 9.06 am.  
Saturday 10th Oct: High of 2.03 in at 8-.28 am.  
Saturday 24th Oct: High of 2.21 m at 8:00 am.  
Saturday 14th Nov: High of 2.37 m at 11.59 am.  
Saturday 12th Dec: High of 2.56 in at 11.04 am.

## **Wader identification day**

Sunday 2nd August: High of 2.08 m at 12.05 pm. Phone, or be at Lytton high tide roost at 10.30 am.

## **Equipment maintenance day and BBQ**

Saturday 8th August: Midday onwards for part or the whole afternoon at the Environment Centre (Nudgee Beach). We may have a guest speaker in the evening, Mark Barter, Chairman AWSG. We will let you know if Mark can come.

## **URGENT APPEAL**

QWSG now has the use of a 35 hp outboard motor but unfortunately has no boat or trailer. Our activities so often require the use of a boat that we are severely limited by having to use a canoe or rely on other organisations for the occasional use of their boats. DO YOU HAVE a boat or DO YOU KNOW where we could get a boat suitable for the outboard. An aluminium runabout, say 15 ft long, would be ideal. We have some money for long term hire or cheap purchase.

## **We Have Another Net!**

Thanks to Andrew Taplin, we now have use of another cannon net that Andrew was using to capture Magpie Geese. Having more than double the netting capacity and the option of using either or both nets means we can be much more effective.

## **Trip Reports**

Over the last few months QWSG has undertaken three unpublicised cannon netting trips plus a few trips that were notified in the last newsletter. The notified trips including one to Bishop Island in dismal weather (rain or drizzle). Nevertheless, the net was set, not once but twice, and the participants delighted in the opportunity to stand in the rain hunched over in a desperate but vain attempt to keep dry, while they waited to get back to the task of catching waders. We did catch some birds, but it was one of those times that will be remembered for what people, with a purpose, will go through.

The notified trip to Raby Bay was thwarted by the intransigent attitude of a particular landowner. We shall persevere with letters to convince these people of the value of our activities, and hopefully in the future we will be able to work there. Because dredging operations were under-way at Cabbage Tree Creek, this site was also unavailable for another of our notified trips. The fact that two principal roosting sites in Moreton Bay are subject to control by organisations that are poorly informed about migratory waders is indicative of the need for a group such as QWSG. Through our letters and fieldwork we can create a better appreciation of waders amongst government, independent organisations and the general public.

### **North Stradbroke Island**

May was adventure month for the QWSG. We escaped the humdrum of the mainland and tried our hands at some offshore cannon-netting on the bay islands.

We spent a long weekend (May 2-4) at North Stradbroke island and would really have stunk home with our tails between our legs had we not caught something for our efforts over the three days. But, as well as time being on our side, we had the advantage of a second cannon-net, giving us a total net length of 45m to unleash on the birds. With that sort of firepower, no wader at Amity Point was safe!

Supremely confident, we squandered the first day on reconnaissance of the roost site on the Amity sandspit. This groundwork paid off because the following morning we were rewarded with a haul of 40 Pied Oystercatchers. These birds are now among the best dressed in Moreton Bay, sporting the latest fashion in plastic - light blue colour bands on their left legs to complement the more pedestrian metal band on the other leg.

With this catch under our belts, Peter's detonator finger began itching for more. It had to be kept under restraint until the following morning when it broke free and yet again sent both nets rocketing. When the sand finally settled, we discovered the true meaning of pandemonium. Entangled in nylon were over 100 Grey-tailed Tattlers, 15 Whimbrels, a few Curlew Sandpipers and a handful of distinctly unimpressed Silver Gulls. Catching the Tattlers, in particular, was significant because they are seldom netted in Victoria, and very little biological data exists for the species. Some of the birds we caught were in non-breeding plumage, while others were in almost full breeding attire and, judging by their weights, all set to make a late departure northwards. Mark Barter from the Australasian Wader Study Group told us later that some of the Tattler weights were the heaviest on record.

If only every cannon-netting exercise ran as well as this one! (it'd probably all get very boring, right?) Participants on the weekend were Peter Driscoll, Stephanie Tonkin, Gary Harch, Phil Lethbridge, David Stewart, Natasha Taylor, Elizabeth Teakle and Ian Gynter.

## Moreton Island Trip

On the weekend of May 16-17, the Driscoll clan (including Briony who was making her first camping trip), Elisabeth Teakle, Paul Flower, Neroli Holmes, Roger, Margaret Bernard and Andrew Geering, ventured to Moreton island. In great comfort, we travelled on the island in a Mercedes Benz 4WD bus with the Moreton Island Protection Committee and a group of exchange teachers from Canada. Camp was set up at Blue Lagoon.

Saturday morning, we selflessly decided that it was better that Peter went on a reconnaissance trip at 6.00 am by himself, as a large group may disturb the birds. The rest of the day was for R & R. Sam Driscoll inspired most people to go for a swim in the ocean, but yours truly, wary of media reports of schools of sharks off Cape Moreton, went for a swim in Blue Lagoon. There I discovered leeches. Here comes the truth. One attached to my glutimus maximus. That is why Margaret secretly returned to camp for a box of matches, and later, I sheepishly returned, with the backside always to the bushes. Saturday night was early, due to a 4.00 am start on Sunday. Sam revealed his political skills by drawing sympathy because his parents only feed him survival rations, and managed to obtain chips and chocolate.

Sunday morning, we decided to try and band double-banded plovers at Mirrapool. Rain was gently falling. Unfortunately, it was one of those days when the birds refused to cooperate. We could not coax the birds into the netting area. It was suggested that we should drop a loaf of bread on the beach so we could at least trap some sea gulls. In the end, we just fired the nets for the hell of it, so as to satisfy our hunting instincts, as put by Elisabeth,

A fun trip was had by all, despite not trapping any birds. Briony proved herself a 'born camper'. A highlight of the trip was getting good views of 3 Beach Thick-knees. I look forward to the next trip to Moreton island. Cheers, Andrew.

The most recent trip was another visit to **Bishop Island**. Soon, Bishop Island will no longer exist as the Fisherman island Port Facilities are expanded. We caught 18 Pied Oystercatchers but had hoped to catch over twice this many. The birds were extremely wary of some well camouflaged nets which is probably indicative that the Bishop Island site has been used too frequently.

## **As a New Group We Are "Short-Staffed" and Need Help!**

Any new group has its teething problems and one of ours is distribution of the workload. QWSG has come a long way in a short time and there are many opportunities for further involvement in projects, education and conservation issues. Already we have expressed opinions to the Government regarding the conservation of birds and habitat around Moreton Bay and have been effective in gaining better protection for a major roost site for waders on Moreton Island.

If you are keen to participate with some of the operational aspects of QWSG please contact one of the executive. The sorts of opportunities that are available are newsletter editor, conservation officer, equipment officer, wader count organiser and regional support officer. We also need to look beyond Moreton Bay to other parts of Queensland. People out there need to contact us and we can start to develop a much more comprehensive network throughout Queensland.

## Write Something for the Newsletter!

We need help with the writing of future newsletters. As already mentioned, most of the hard labour within the QWSG has fallen upon the shoulders of a few and so any help at all would be appreciated to lighten that load. If you would like to contribute to our newsletter, contact any of the executive members listed. If you wouldn't like to contribute, write something anyway! Trip reports, short articles or interesting sightings you've made or have heard about, or on exciting facts and figures you've come across, would all be suitable items. So start writing now!

## Flag Watch 1992.

The QWSG has become part of an international scheme to leg flag waders and is using **dark green** leg flags on birds caught around Moreton Bay. A special message from Mark Barter of the Australasian Wader Studies Group has been reproduced below. Last year, only Bar-tailed Godwits were being flagged in Moreton Bay but a number of other species will now be similarly adorned with dark green (Mongolian Plover, Large Sand Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Grey-tailed Tattler, Curlew Sandpiper, Red Knot and Great Knot).

We have had two reports of Bar-tailed Godwits, with dark green leg flags, being sighted overseas, one near Christchurch by Sheila Petch and another on Kyushu Island, Japan, by Jeremy Thompson. Jeremy, who is studying waders in Japan, was probably present last year when this flag was applied! Please keep a lookout and report local sightings to Peter Driscoll (#####) and international sightings as specified below.

Special note from the Australasian Wader Studies Group (Mark Barter, March 1992)

**Orange** leg-flagging of waders has continued during the last year in south-eastern Australia (Victoria) with a further 3000 birds being marked. The project is aimed at increasing our knowledge of migration routes in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, at a time when habitat destruction is rampant and populations of some wader species appear to be in serious decline. Such information is essential for the formulation of soundly-based management plans to ensure long term survival of the different wader species.

Allowing for a conservative annual survival rate of 75%, it is estimated that approximately 5500 leg-flagged birds are now flying up and down the Flyway.

Est. numbers of flagged birds of each species are as follows. (\*=flagged by AWSG team in Java)

Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	2600
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	1200
Oriental Pratincole	<i>Glareola maldivarum</i> *	450
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	300
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	300
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	300
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	150
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	150
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	30
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	20

Small numbers of Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* and Terek Sandpiper *Tringa terek* have also been leg-flagged. Additionally, some Bar-tailed Godwit have been flagged **dark green** in Australia (Moreton Bay, see above), and New Zealand has commenced flagging Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit **white**.

Checks on recaptured flagged birds have shown that flag retention is almost 100% over the last year. Details of the flag manufacturing and attachment techniques has been published in the April 1992 Stilt.

Results to date have been extremely encouraging. In addition to the records noted earlier (QWSG), a Bar-tailed Godwit from Victoria and one from New Zealand have been sighted on northwards migration in Japan and two Sanderling have been seen on southwards migration in Japan. Five Red Knot and two Red-necked

Stint have been identified in New Zealand and Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers have been seen on northward migration in Hong Kong. Additionally, very useful information on both northwards and southwards movements within Australia has been obtained. The great majority of flags has been placed on the upper right leg (tibia), but a few are on the lower right leg (tarsus) - especially in the case of the Ruddy Turnstone - and on the left leg. The exact position is not important.

Would you and your colleagues keep a watch for leg-flagged birds, particularly during the migration periods in April/May and July/September and also in the breeding season. Reports of sightings should include species name, place (including latitude and longitude), date and also approximate numbers and species of waders present. The information should be sent to:

Australian Bird Banding Scheme  
GPO Box 8  
Canberra ACT 2601  
AUSTRALIA Tel: (#####) Fax: (#####)

### **Please help by making leg flags in your own home.**

We have to manufacture our own leg flags, which is a simple task of moulding small strips of unplasticised PVC using hot water. It is a job that is best shared among several people but you can work alone, in your own home, and do as much or as little as you like. QWSG will supply the materials and instructions. Please HELP with this important task. Contact Peter Driscoll.

## **Colour banding of Pied Oystercatchers in Moreton Bay**

Over the winter months, QWSG is concentrating on colour banding Pied Oystercatchers in Moreton Bay. Amity Point on North Stradbroke (light blue) and Fisherman Island (yellow) are two locations where colour bands have so far been used but other colours and locations will be chosen. Anyone with information of "catchable" flocks of Pied Oystercatchers is encouraged to contact QWSG. Please be on the lookout for colour banded birds (metal band right tarsus, single colour band on left tarsus) and report your sightings. Over the long term, the project will help to clarify movement patterns of Pied Oystercatchers within Moreton Bay, yield information on recruitment rates, and clarify the relationship between breeding pairs that nest on the ocean foreshores and the flocks that feed and roost within the Bay.

## **The listing of Moreton Bay as a RAMSAR site**

Queensland is now participating in the listing of sites under the "Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat" (RAMSAR). Queensland's first RAMSAR site is likely to be Moreton Bay, largely in recognition of the Bay as an internationally important site for migratory waders. The boundaries are being finalised by the Dept of Environment and Heritage at present in consultation with other departments. The Queensland Ornithological Society Inc. and QWSG hope to have some input into these negotiations.

## **Workshop on waders held in Canberra, April 1992**

The Wildlife Monitoring Unit of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS) recently convened a day long workshop for people involved with wader research or population monitoring throughout Australia. Several speakers gave a thorough appraisal of information on wader distribution within and outside Australia, much of which has been gathered through voluntary efforts of the RAOU, AWSG and VWSG. Current and proposed international agreements on migratory birds were also discussed.

Apart from the invaluable exchange of information and contacts that occurred at the workshop, ANPWS was primarily seeking to clarify its own priorities for future research and decide to what extent it would actively support the voluntary network of organisations involved in counting and banding waders. There are many decisions still left to be made by ANPWS but the workshop is likely to have a significant bearing on all the wader study groups in Australia over the next five years. It will also help to map out the role of these groups in the conservation of waders within Australia and throughout the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. As soon as there is any further news, you will be informed.

## **1992 North-West Australia Wader Expedition**

The Australasian Wader Studies Group is organising another major banding expedition to Broome this year between 19<sup>th</sup> September and 17<sup>th</sup> October. For a wader enthusiast this trip would be a marvellous experience. You don't necessarily have to be there the whole time. Details are in the latest edition of the Stilt (No. 20, April 1992) or can be obtained from Peter Driscoll. If anyone is interested in going to Broome by car in late August to mid September and to participate in some preliminary banding prior to the main expedition time, please contact Peter Driscoll.

## **Wader Survey Project**

The project has had a great start and we offer the following 2 pages as evidence of what some dedicated wader watchers have already achieved around Moreton Bay. We need to start to cover some of the rest of the State. If you know of anyone who could help please let us know. Here is the list of current organisers and sites as given in the first newsletter:

Currimundi	Olwyn Crimp
Golden Beach	Jill Denning
Donnybrook	John Shuttleworth
Toorbul/Dux Ck.*	Jean Tilley
Deception Bay/Oyster Pt.	Julian Bielewicz
Cabbage Tree Ck.	Ian Venables
Luggage Point*	David Stewart
Fisherman Is./Lytton*	Dennis Watson
Manly/Thorntide	Mike & Linda Lewis
Raby Bay/Cleveland*	Sandra Harding
Mirrapool/Swan Bay*	Kees Hulsman
Amity Pt.	Ian Gynther

## **Subscription fees**

It might come as a surprise but we do need money to help with the day to day administration of the QWSG and to cover our costs of producing this newsletter. Many thanks to all of you who have paid already. To everyone else, please send us those fees soon otherwise we will be forced to erase your names from our mailing list. Drastic action, yes, but unfortunately necessary. If your membership slip has a red cross in the box, it means you are not yet a paid-up member of the QWSG and this will be the last newsletter you receive. To prevent such a tragic fate from befalling you, enclose your payment of \$10 (or \$7.50 concession) and send it to the address on the slip, now! A pre-addressed envelope and answer slip are enclosed to make this all less of an ordeal. You can also use the slip for change of address or to correct any of the details on your mailing label.

**Table 1.** Counts of waders at roost sites conducted by QWSG members at locations throughout Moreton Bay since March this year. Counts for 5 species are always given together with the total number of species and birds. For each count, values for 2 extra species (sp. A & B) are given with an alphabetic code for the species after the value (e.g. ec - eastern curlew, w - whimbrel, g - greenshank, rcp - red-capped plover). For all remaining species from each count, the row marked "Other" gives the combined count and the number of species involved (after the dash). The location codes are as follows: AMPO (Amity Point), BERO (Bedroom - Sth Stradbroke Is), CATC (Cabbage Tree Creek), CLRB (Cleveland), DUCR (Dux Ck, Bribe Is), LUPO (Luggage Point), LYTT (Lytton), MAHA (Manly Harbour), MALE (Many-Lota), MIPO (Mirapool, Moreton Is), PEWA (Pelican Waters), REPO (Reeders Point, Moreton Is), REWP (Redcliffe), SNB1&2 (Sandbars - Caloundra), SSBR (Sth Stradbroke - nth), SSTR (Sth Stradbroke - Tiplers), SWBA (Swan Bay, Moreton Is), THMP (Mooroondoo Pt, Thornside), THQE (Queen's Espl Thornside), TOOR (Toorbul).

Site	AMPO	AMPO	BERO	BERO	CATC	CATC	CLRBB	CLRBB	CLRBDUCR	LUPO	LUPO	LYTT	LYTT	LYTT	MAHA	MALE	MIPO
Date	21/3	5/4	17/5	2/5	22/3	17/5	21/3	5/4	7/5	21/3	5/4	21/3	5/4	21/3	6/5	21/3	24/1
No. spp.	5	8	4	3	19	13	14	14	8	4	17	14	14	9	2	4	8
No. birds	1418	2071	308	92	1617	246	1664	4510	527	1300	3153	1763	1745	601	429	50	73
Mongolian Plover					117	6	276	70	31	500	300						3916
Grey-tailed Tattler	1000	1200	162		122		80	3000	106						126		10
Bar-tailed Godwit	300	700	127	55	346	94	338	90	1	500	200	150	780	310	233	40	10
Red-necked Stint					152	1	189	700	171	800	100			12			10
Curlew Sandpiper	8	48			160	9	304	300	91	800	1000	75	90	14			2
sp. A	60w	70w	13po	35ec	426gk	80dbp	96po	85po	75po	500??	300sts	70sts	00tt?	100tt?	37bws	10po	50gk
sp. B	50g	20g	6cc	2po	93lgp	31lgp	89gk	65rt	27rcp	250gk	200gk	50bws	66lgp	27lgp	8g		3rt
Other	33-3				201-12	25-7	292-7	207	25-1	51	353-11	93-8	124-8	69-9	11-4		13-3

  

Site	MIPO	PEWA	PEWA	REPO	REWP	SBN1	SBN1	SBN2	SBN2	SBN2	SBN2	SBR	SBR	SSTR	SWBA	SWBA	THMP	THQE	TOOR	TOOR
Date	16/5	21/3	6/4	16/5	17/5	21/3	6/4	20/3	6/4	18/5	17/5	17/5	17/5	17/5	21/3	2/5	17/5	21/3	21/3	22/3
No. spp.	8	10	8	3	3	6	4	14	10	10	2	2	2	3	7	10	6	8	6	13
No. birds	331	49	14	1904	44	88	9	122	171	125	30	30	30	50	336	261	125	72	119	713
Mongolian Plover	120							15	14					13		71				50
Grey-tailed Tattler								10	50	10							20	7		186
Bar-tailed Godwit								44	44	21	21	21	21	11	124	10	22	17	55	270
Red-necked Stint	40							9		2					25					6
Curlew Sandpiper	3							8												3
sp. A	60lsp	15lgp	4bws	200gk	200th.	20w	3ml	35lsp	19lgp	36dbp	9ec	30ec	80rcp	101rcp	12bws	20gk	45gk	123gk	122w	8
sp. B	50dbp	7w	3w	4betk	18po	15ml	2w	20lgp	15rcp	25ec	9bws	9bws	64lgp	45bws	9ec	6rt	8??	60w	93gk	8
Other	61-4	8-5	5-4		6-1	15-3	1-1	25-8	29-5	31-5	55-3	86	11-2	9-3	4-2	65-7	117-5			

*Examples of wader counts conducted by QWSG this year at a selection of 3 roost sites currently being monitored within Moreton Bay.*

*Information: mp (mongolian plover), gtt (grey-tailed tattler), btg (bar-tailed godwit), rns (red-necked stint), cs (curlew sandpiper), sts (sharp-tailed sandpiper), gk (great knot), bws (black-winged stilt), rt (ruddy turnstone), w (whimbrel), g (greenshank), rcp (red-capped plover), ec (eastern curlew), po (pied oystercatcher). The black column is for counts of remaining species with the number below giving the number of species involved)*

