

Queensland Wader Study Group Newsletter No 4 December 1992

The Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG) is a special interest group of the Queensland Ornithological Society Inc.

QWSG MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON: Peter Driscoll
SECRETARY: Julien Bielewicz
TREASURER: Gary Harch
NEWSLETTER EDITORS: Andrew Geering and Margaret Bernard
COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Ian Gynther, Eddie Hegerl, Kees Hulsman, Kris Kristensen, Michael Lewis, David Stewart, Elizabeth Teakle.

QWSG NEWSLETTER

Contributions to the newsletter should be addressed to A. Geering and M. Bernard. Contributions can also be sent via fax (please forewarn us if you intend to use fax). Newsletters are published in March, June, September and December. Copy deadline for the next newsletter is February 26th, 1993. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the QWSG, nor the Queensland Ornithological Society.

Editorial

Congratulations to all the people that were elected (volunteered or conscripted?) to the QWSG Management Committee at the inaugural AGM. We look forward to a productive term. Thanks go to Kris Kristensen for chairing the AGM, and to Barry Ingham for giving the guest speech.

Thus far, the newsletter has consisted of contributions from only a few people. As editors, we thought it appropriate to give our ideas on what contributions people might like to make to the newsletter. This newsletter provides an avenue through which observations which are noteworthy, but may not contribute towards a scientific paper, may be recorded. For example, we welcome reports of unusual or rare sightings, records of when migratory birds first arrive in or leave from a district, records of the location of wader roosts and notes on bird behaviour. Copies of this newsletter are presently lodged in the Queensland State Library and will be available as a reference for future scientific research. It is also hoped that this newsletter will be a forum for debate on issues related to the conservation of waders. We welcome praise or criticism of government decisions (at local, state or federal levels) which affect the habitat of waders in Queensland. Finally, we like to report on QWSG activities. As you are probably aware, these reports tend to be on the light-hearted side.

Contributions to the QWSG newsletter can be mailed or faxed to us (see page 1 for details). Our fax modem is not always connected, so it is a good idea to give us a ring the night before you send the fax so that we can be prepared. All information concerning bird sightings should also be sent to us.

Newsletters will be sent to you at quarter yearly intervals (ie. March, June, September and December). Updates will also be sent to you at a time between newsletters to keep you, informed of QWSG activities.

Finally, on behalf of the QWSG Management Committee,, we would like to wish you a merry Christmas and a healthy and happy new year. Thank you for your support in 1992.

Pimpama River

The Albert Shire Council has recently approved (October 27) a proposal of Nutri-Metics ,International (Australia) Pty Ltd to develop a site on the Pimpama River at Kerkin Road, Jacob's Well. Planned developments include a marina, town-house estate, nine-hole golf course, sports Centre, theatre, shopping Centre, restaurants and a Nutri-metics Academy of Health and Beauty (manufacturer of products). The Albert Shire Council supported this proposal because they consider that it will direct more money into the community and provide more employment opportunities. Councillor David Power is quoted (*The Gold Coast Bulletin*,

December 1) to have withdrawn his support for the development after further investigation and he believes that the council had incomplete information when making the decision. This development is opposed on both environmental and economic grounds by a number of groups such as the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australian Littoral Society, the Queensland Commercial Fishing Organisation, the Queensland Recreational Sport Fishing Council, the Queensland Oyster Growers Association and local community groups (Save the Pimpama River Campaign).

The Pimpama River area is one of the last unaltered mangrove areas between Brisbane and the NSW border. During development, 47ha of a 67ha forest will be cleared and the river will be dredged. In an interview on ABC Radio 4QR (December 7), Alan Sutherland, a delegate of the Queensland Recreational Sport Fishing Council, said that his Organisation were concerned about the development because they considered that the area was very important as a hatchery for fish and prawns in the Southport/Broadwater area. Local oyster-growers are also concerned that the development will cause higher tidal flows and lower water quality which will decrease their productivity. At a committee meeting (November 30) of the Save the Pimpama River Campaign, an oyster grower said that after the Southport seaway had been breached, his oyster lease had become unviable because of the resultant increase in low tide drainage. Some development because they consider that clearing of mangroves in SE Queensland is already extensive and this poses a serious threat to Waders as mangroves are a critical component Of their habitat.

If you are concerned about the development, please write to the State Government. Furthermore, increase public awareness of the issues by communicating with the media an talking to friends. It is important that all implications of proposed coastal alterations are considered before the development is allowed to commence.
Andrew Geering

QWSG now has a flotilla!

Well, almost. We have purchased an Avon Rover 3-80 Rubber Duck and a 4m. alloy dinghy. Other nautical equipment owned by QWSG include a Redco Tinka Trailer, a. 35 HP Evinrude Outboard Motor, and all standard safety equipment (marine radio, life jackets, flares, spare motor parts etc.). We envisage that the main uses of the boats will be to provide easy access to wader areas for banding and surveys. To use a boat, one person in a party is required to have a speedboat drivers licence, which can be obtained from the Queensland Department of Transport. To obtain this licence, you need to (a) be over 16 years of age (b) be familiar with the boating rules (available from Department of Transport) (c) pass a practical examination and (d) pay \$35:00. Three of us have already obtained a licence using the QWSG boat, and the opportunity exists for others to follow. Either Gary Harch or Peter Driscoll should be consulted if you wish to borrow a boat.

Wader banding in 1992

They say that memories become rosier with time. I have almost forgotten the 4:15 am start that day on Moreton Island, and the flu I suffered after banding in the rain at Cabbage Tree Creek wasn't that bad after all. Overall, this year of banding has been very successful considering that this was our first year. Importantly, we now have a core group of people with experience. Rapid clearing of the net is essential to prevent mortality of waders from stress. We have also learnt a few important tricks, like using shade cloth to cover trapped birds (nb. Jeays Hardware in Sandgate are thanked for supplying shade cloth at cost price).

In addition to metal bands, dark green leg flags were attached to the legs of waders to enable identification from a, distance. A small group of people, who have tolerated burnt fingers and have had their electric frying pans prematurely age, need to be thanked for making the leg flags. These people include Peter Driscoll, Ivell and Jim Whyte, John and Hilary Holt, Dawn Muir, Margaret Bernard and Andrew Geering. There is a constant demand for leg flags, so we still welcome volunteers to make more. Materials and instructions are provided. Table 1 shows the numbers and species of waders that we have banded. The best results were the catches of 105 Grey-tailed Tattlers at Amity Spit, 60 Whimbrels and 53 Eastern Curlews at Moreton Island (Reeders Point and Mirapool), 75 Great Knots and 172 Curlew Sandpipers at Nudgee Beach and large numbers of Bar-tailed Godwit at various locations.

We still have a long way to go to match the efforts of well established groups such as the Australasian Wader Studies Group, who trapped over 5000 birds in a month at Broome this year. We now have 3 operational cannon nets so we should be able to trap more birds, next year. If you ever have had an urge to gain a banding permit, well now is the time to enquire. With the opportunity to band over 100 birds a day, you can quickly acquire a lot of experience. Ring Peter Driscoll if you want to apply for a banding permit.
Andrew Geering and Peter Driscoll

Table 1. Waders from Moreton Bay which were banded by the QWSG during 1992, and by founding members of the QWSG prior to establishment of the group. All birds were trapped using cannon nets. Site abbreviations are: BI (Bishop Is.); AM (Amity Spit); NB (Nudgee Beach); RP (Reeders Point); SH (St Helena Is.); MI (Mirapool Lagoon).

Place	BI	BI	BI	AM	AM	BI	NB	BI	SH	BI	AM	NB	MI	Total	pre	Total
Date (1992)	8/2	7/3	5/4	3/5	4/5	7/6	18/7	1/8	12/10	19/10	23/10	26/10	30/10	1992	1992	Total
Pied Oystercatcher			3	37		16			16				9	81	24	105
Large Sand Plover	1													1	47	48
Mongolian Plover															40	40
Ruddy Turnstone										19		1		1	1	20
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper							3				2	40		46	57	103
Red Knot	1			3						1	1	172		178	17	195
Curlew Sandpiper			3					5		4				12		12
Red-necked Stint							74				1	1		76	184	260
Great Knot	7	13					54				164	7	1	387	304	691
Bar-tailed Godwit															31	31
Black-tailed Godwit													51	53	2	55
Eastern Curlew				4										65		65
Whimbrel	1			95							10			105		105
Grey-tailed Tattler															3	3
Terek Sandpiper	1													1	2	3
Gull-billed Tern	2	1												3	5	8
Little Tern																
Total	12	15	6	37	102	16	131	5	16	24	178	221	61	1029	717	1746

QWSG finances

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING OCTOBER 31, 1992

All financial details have been removed for the on-line publication of the QWSG

All funds are held in a credit union. Most of the above funds have now been spent since the end of the financial year: ie. On the completion of the Earthwatch program and on other capital equipment. The financial statement has been verified by an Auditor
Gary Harch

Wader Sightings

To monitor their migration, coloured leg flags/bands are now attached to waders as well as the conventional metal bands. Normally, the coloured flag/band is attached to the right tibia (ie. the thigh). QWSG is using dark green flags for migratory waders banded in Moreton Bay, and colours used by other wader study groups are orange for Victoria, yellow for NW Western Australia and white for NZ. QWSG is also colour banding different flocks of Pied Oystercatchers in Moreton Bay.(eg. yellow for Bishop Island, orange for St. Helena Island).

Sightings of colour banded waders are shown in Table 2. Interestingly, a Grey-tailed Tattler was recently sighted at Amity Spit, which we believe was banded in Broome this October.

If you see a colour banded/flagged wader, please report it to us, the Newsletter editors. When you make a sighting, could you please attempt to record

- (a) flag/band colour
- (b) position of the flag ie. was it on the tibia (above knee) or tarsus (below knee), right or left leg
- (c) location
- (d) date and time
- (e) time and height of high tide
- (f) description of the location eg. sand spit, mud flat etc.
- (g) what the bird was doing eg. at a roost, feeding
- (h) the number and species of other waders in immediate vicinity
- (i) characteristics of the bird eg. breeding plumage (j) how long the bird was in the district.

We also welcome other interesting sightings of waders in Queensland. Table 3 shows some of the sightings that QWSG members have made.

Andrew Geering -

Wader counts

An important research activity of QWSG is to monitor changes in the number of waders in a district over many years. Peter Driscoll, Ian Gynther, Kees Hulsman and David Stewart are the coordinators of the wader counts. Give one of these people a ring if you would like more information on how or where to collect the data.

Please remember to do the counts on the designated days (see Activities page) and count the birds at the high tide roosts.

Table 2. Sightings of colour banded waders in Queensland. Abbreviations used for birds are: EC (Eastern Curlew); BTG (Bar-tailed Godwit); BITG (Black-tailed Godwit); GS (Greenshank); GK (Great Knot); RK (Red Knot); PO (Pied Oystercatcher); RCP (Red-capped Plover); S (Sanderling); CS (Curlew Sandpiper); STS (Sharp-tailed Sandpiper); RNS (Red-necked Stint); GTT (Grey-tailed Tattler); W (Whimbrel). Abbreviations used for observers are GA (Greg Anderson), CC (Chris Corben); JD (Jill Denning), PD (Peter Driscoll); DG (Don Gaydon); AG (Andrew Geering); IG (Ian Gynther); SH (Sandra Harding); RH (Rod Hobson); LL (Linda Lewis); NIL (Nfike Lewis); JML (John McLean); N4P (Margery Plymire); DS (David Stewart).

¹Numbers in this column are the number of birds which were observed to have colour bands/flags and the location in brackets is- where the bird was banded.

Species	Location	Time & date	¹ Flag/band Colour	Obs	Comments
STS	Luggage Point Brisbane	time (?) 5.4.92	orange flag (Victoria)	DS	Sighted at roost. Total of 1800 waders at roost, of which 70 were STS.
PO	Amity Spit, Nth Stradbroke Is	time (?) 4.7.92	2-light blue band (Amity Spit)	IG	Sighted at roost. This pair were the only PO sighted.
PO	Raby Bay, Brisbane		1-light blue band (Amity Spit)	SH	Another PO had a metal band, but its opposite leg was raised and therefore a colour band could not be seen.
PO	Raby Bay, Brisbane	time (?), 1.8.92	1-yellow band(Bishop Is) 1- light blue band (Amity Spit)	SH	Sighted at roost.
PO	Wynnum, Brisbane	time (?) 8.8.92	1-yellow band (Bishop Is) 1-light blue band (Amity Spit)	CC	A flock of 62 PO were sighted, of which 2 were colour banded. These banded birds were sighted again in the same flock on 15.8.92.
BTG	Luggage Point, Brisbane	time (?) 24.8.92	1 -green flag (Moreton Bay)	JD	32 BITG and 5 other BTG were sighted.
STS	Seven Mile	time (?) 6.9.92	1-orange flag (Victoria)	RH	Flagged bird was observed feeding on Lagoon shoreline with 30 other STS, 2 RNS, 5CS and 3 RNP. Flag on right tibia. No breeding plumage. 1 orange flagged STS was also observed on 10, 15, 25 and 28.9.92 (considered to be the same bird). 700+ STS arrived at the lagoon during September.
STS	Raby Bay, Brisbane	time 20.9.92	orange flag (Victoria)	DG	
STS	Seven Mile Lagoon	time (?)28.9.92	1-orange flag(Victoria)	RH	This bird was different to the one previously sighted as the flag was brighter and askew.
RNS	Seven Mile Lagoon	time (?) 28.9.92	1-orange flag (Victoria)	RH	Flag was attached to the lower tarsus. No breeding plumage.
RNS	Leprosy Creek, Cooktown	1800hrs 29.9.92	1-orange flag (Victoria)	JML	Flag on right tibia. Observed actively feeding with other small waders.
PO	Pebble Beach	8.10.92 time (?)	1-light blue band (Amity Spit)	LL + ML	Group of about 20 PO's
CS	Nudgee Beach, Brisbane	1700 hrs 20.10.92	1-orange flag (Victoria)	MP +PD	Sighted at roost. A total of 5000 waders were at roost, of which 3000 were CS.
GK	Nudgee Beach, Brisbane	1700 hrs 20.10.92	1-green flag (Moreton Bay)	MP +PD	Sighted at roost. See comments for CS.
RK	Nudgee Beach, Brisbane	1200 hrs 25.10.92	1-orange flag (Victoria)	MP PD	Identity unconfirmed. Sighted at roost.
BTG	Bishop Is, Brisbane	10.11.92	2-green flag (Moreton Bay)	PD	Sighted at roost. A total of 2740 waders were at roost, of which 895 were BTG.
STG	Amity Spit, North Stradbroke Is	1030 hrs, 23.11.92	1-green flag (Moreton Bay)	PD +AG	Sighted at roost on sand spit. High tide of 2.4m at 0800 hrs. Waders at roost - 1380 BTG, 430 GTT, 120 CS, 74W, 60 GK, 20 M 10 EC, 4 RCP and 3 S.

GTT	Amity Spit, North Stradbroke Is	1030 hrs, 23.11.92	1-yellow flag (Broome, WA)	PD +AG	Sighted at roost (see comments for BTG).
CS	Hays Inlet		1-green flag (Moreton Bay)	GA	Sighted at northern end of Hornibrook Hwy. Feeding at low tide with groups of CS, STS, BTG, GK and GS.

Table 3: General sightings of waders in Queensland. Abbreviations used for observers are: JD (Jill Denning); GG (Gavin Goodyear); SH Sandra Harding; RH (Rod Hobson); OC (Olwyn Crimp).

Species	Location	Date	Obs	Comments
2 Painted Snipe	Seven Mile Lagoon	3.1.5.92	RH	Both males.
5 Red-kneed Plovers	Brisbane Airport redevelopment area	28.6.92	GG	
1 Grey-tailed Tattler	Raby Bay	1.8.92	SH	This bird was white with a pink bill.
ca. 20 Latham's Snipe	Seven Mile Lagoon	10.8.92	RH	Numbers increased until 1.9.92 when birds dispersed following rain.
Banded Lapwing	Seven Mile Lagoon	ca. 15.8.92	RH	Arrived at this time.
3 Australian Pratincole	Seven Mile Lagoon	20.8.92, 21.8.92	RH	1 adult and 2 juveniles. Only the adult was remaining on 7.9.92.
32 Black-tailed Godwits	Luggage Point	24.8.92	JD	Mantle plumage more heavily marked.
1 Greenshank	Seven Mile Lagoon	31.8.92	RH	Stayed for one day.
70 Eastern Curlew	Near Sanctuary Cove	7.9.92	OC	
ca. 400 Sharp- tailed Sandpipers	Seven Mile Lagoon	7.9.92	RH	1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was present at this site on 20.7.92.
23 Black-tailed Godwits	Seven Mile Lagoon	7.9.92	RH	Recently arrived.
ca. 50 Curlew Sandpipers	Seven Mile Lagoon	7.9.92	RH	Recently arrived.
ca. 20 Marsh Sandpipers	Seven Mile Lagoon	7.9.92	RH	4 Marsh Sandpipers were present at this site on 18.7.92.
3 Red-capped Plovers	Seven Mile Lagoon	7.9.92	RH	Adult pair and a chick.
3 Eastern Golden Plovers	Seven Mile Lagoon	18.9.92	RH	
1 Oriental Plover	Seven Mile Lagoon	22.9.92	RH	This bird was still in residence on 28.9.92.
1 Little Curlew	Manly Harbour	22.9.92		Seen amongst a group of Whimbrel.
8 Painted Snipe	Nathan Rd, Redcliffe	23.9.92		

Trip reports

St. Helena Island (October 12)

The objective of this trip was to band Pied Oystercatchers (affectionately called PO's or large chooks). Our new Avon dinghy was used for the first time and National Parks kindly let us use one of their vehicles for transport on the island.

Like all field trips, a unique set of problems arose on this trip. First of these was that a significant proportion of the PO's did not roost on the beach, but on the grass behind the beach. Digging trenches for the nets required a lot of physical exertion, and to make things worse, we all suffered the unwelcome discomfort of stepping back on one of the many prickly pears that flourish on the island.

An advance party set the nets the day before we trapped. National Parks graze cattle on the island to help keep the grass down. Unfortunately, these cattle could not distinguish grass from detonator wires. When we came back in the morning, we found several holes in the wires which hastily had to be fixed.

Normally, you patiently have to twinkle the birds into the netting area. Not so with PO's. In fact our major problem was that they were roosting on the net. We could not fire the net as we thought that we might endanger their lives. No matter what we did, we could not budge six birds. Eventually we had to approach the birds very closely to unsettle them. Half the flock took off, and we had to be satisfied with catching only 16 birds. One of these was a retrap, which was banded on Bishop Island (yellow colour banded). Orange leg bands were attached to the other birds to identify them from St. Helena Island.

Some interesting points of the trip were the discovery of more wader roosts, including those of Ruddy Turnstones (>200 sighted) and Eastern Curlew. Other bird sightings included ca. 30 Red-kneed Dotterels and 1 Red-necked Avocet, Black-winged Stilt (these three species seen feeding together in a salt pond), Straw-necked Ibis, White-faced Heron, Rainbow Bee-eater, Dollarbird, Brown Quail, Bar-shouldered Dove, White-breasted Woodswallow and Osprey (nesting). One of the rangers mentioned that Pied Oystercatcher fledglings had been observed to congregate in groups of up to 200 at the wader roost.

The trip back home across the bay was particularly rough. Gary Harch chose the short straw and had the stern position on the windward side. The best way to describe his trip is to imagine someone dropping a bucket of water on your head every 10 seconds. I'm sure he can laugh about it now.
Andrew Geering

Earthwatch (October 18 - 31)

QWSG was the principal organising group for a 2 week long Earthwatch program in Moreton Bay. Earthwatch is based in the United States and is an intermediary between non-professional people who wish to participate in field research during their holidays, and researchers who need a willing team of helpers. Earthwatch volunteers pay, their own way, and in exchange, are provided with food, accommodation, and the opportunity to participate in research. The researcher is delighted to have a captive group of workers, but needs to be well organised to ensure that the large labour force is properly utilised and the basic needs of the volunteers are provided for. Earthwatch produces a regular magazine that gives details of over 100 projects that are conducted worldwide.

QWSG gained greatly from this inaugural liaison with Earthwatch. This is evident from the boost in captures for the year (484 with the help of the volunteers) and the additional observations and counts that were made in Moreton Bay. Another more tangible benefit of Earthwatch was the increased cash flow for QWSG, which helped pay for some expensive items purchased this year, such as the boats.

An important aspect of the exercise was the personal benefit gained from cooperating with a group of people who initially were all strangers, but had a common interest. The volunteers had a chance to visit the more enchanting (and revealing) locations around the Bay, to see birds and things that were totally new and help where they were really needed. Those of us in QWSG had the opportunity to mix with a charming and enthusiastic group of people, who mostly had travelled a great distance from the US to work with us. Vivien and Charlie, despite their age (read youth) and the gruelling conditions, were forever helpful and warm hearted. George and Joan were avid bird watchers and their thrill at seeing so many new birds was contagious. Margery had worked with waders in the US and her experience at handling birds was an unexpected bonus. She may become a long term source of information about a different flyway. Robin gave unfailing support and as an Earthwatch employee, gave us a good impression of the spirit and sincerity behind Earthwatch. Patty was another valued participant on the team, as were the two local volunteers, Margaret and George. Hopefully they can both stay in touch and we look forward to seeing them on our regular outings.

Many thanks go to David Stewart and Suzie Coulston who played a major role in the running of Earthwatch, and to Andrew Geering, Gary Harch, Karen Wright and Tony Rowland, who lent a hand when needed.
Peter Driscoll

(Editor's note - Peter Driscoll, as author of this article, did not acknowledge his own tremendous contributions. Peter volunteered a lot of his own time to organise Earthwatch and during the program, spent long hours running around to ensure that everything ran smoothly. Thanks!)

Working Bee (November 21)

A small, but industrious group of us gathered at Nudgee Field Study Centre for a BBQ and work afternoon. The main tasks were to construct holding cages and to paint the wooden boards of the rubber dinghy. Presently, 8 new holding cages are under construction and these are significantly taller than the previous

ones, so now Eastern Curlews as well as Mongolian Plovers will have headroom. The boards of the rubber dinghy have been painted with rescue orange deck paint. This colour may not help your seasickness, but at least the boat will more easily be sighted from the air. Thanks go to Elizabeth Teakle, Paul Flower, Bob and Carol James, Ian Gynther, Peter Driscoll, Margaret Bernard and Andrew Geering for their efforts.

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, David Stewart or Peter Driscoll. All completed count forms should be returned to Peter Driscoll.

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Saturday 23rd Jan.	High of 2.41 m at 10:00 am.
Saturday 20th Feb.	High of 2.33 m at 9:01 am.
Saturday 20th Mar.	High of 2.20 m at 7:51 am.
Saturday 10th Apr.	High of 1.91 m at 11:55 am.
Saturday 24th Apr.	High of 1.90 m at 10:37 am.
Saturday 8th May.	High of 1.90 m at 10:51 am.
Saturday 26th June.	High of 1.93 m at 2:30 pm.
Saturday 24th July.	High of 2.04 m at 1:09 pm.

Cannon Netting

Sunday 10th Jan.	Bishop Island - high of 2.68 m at 10:51 pm - meet at 7:00 am.
Saturday 30th Jan.	Cabbage Tree Ck - high of 1.82 m at 1:45 pm - meet at 9:00 am.
Fri 19 - Sun 21 -Feb.	Moreton Island- high of 2.33 m at 9:00 am on Saturday. Barge leaves on Friday night. Preferably enquire 10 days before.
Fri 19 - Mon 22 Mar.	Amity Spit & Sth Stradbroke Is (tentative) - high of 2.20 m at 7:51 am Saturday - can be one day only - please enquire.

Wader identification day

Saturday 6th Feb.	High of 2.62 m at 9:00 am. Phone, or be at Lytton high tide roost at 8:00 am.
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