

Queensland Wader Study Group Newsletter No 7 September 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 May 31st, 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

This editorial incorporates the Editor's report given at the 1993 Annual General Meeting. Reports from the Chairperson and Treasurer are also given on following pages.

We believe that the objectives of the QWSG Newsletter are to record observations, express opinions, provide educational information, report on previous QWSG activities and notify of upcoming activities. In the first year of operation, it has been important to publicise the QWSG. We have therefore supplied a large number of complimentary copies of the Newsletter to individuals; environmental groups, Government organisations, politicians, and libraries. For example, complimentary copies have been sent to Queensland members of the Australasian Wader Studies Group, wader study groups in other states, RAOU, Australian Conservation Foundation Gold Coast Branch, Nudgee Field Environment Centre, Shortland Wetlands Centre, Beerwah Field Study Centre, CSIRO Division of Wildlife, Minister and Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage, John Oxley Library, University of Queensland Library, Queensland University of Technology Library, James Cook Library and the Queensland Ornithological Society Library. We have received receipts for the Newsletter from the John Oxley Library and the University of Queensland Library. We intend to send a complete set of Newsletters to the Australian National Library. This list is by no means, comprehensive. If you believe that a person or Organisation warrants a complimentary Newsletter, please provide details to Gary Harch who handles the membership list.

In the upcoming year, we plan to make some significant changes to the Newsletter. First and foremost is to change the name and format of the Newsletter, and to have a title page with a logo. The present format was established when the Newsletter was only a few pages in length. As you probably have noticed, the envelopes that the Newsletters are sent in are beginning to bulge. Hopefully, with a new format, more information will be fitted onto a page. Already, we have had suggestions of a new name for the Newsletter. Some of the better suggestions are Wader Watch(er), High Tide Hide, Mudwalker, Estuary Watch and Tidal Watch. We have also had some very good submissions of logos. Thus far, the popular choice for a logo has been a picture of an Eastern Curlew. We believe that the Eastern Curlew is a very good symbol for the Group, as it is the largest and most distinct wader on our shores, it is endangered, and its population in Queensland is probably greater than that found in any other states. An appropriate name for the Newsletter may therefore be Curlew, or even *Numenius*. If any of the names that have been, mentioned strike your fancy, or you have a better suggestion, let one of the committee members know.

Finally, we will allow limited distribution of information from like-minded environmental groups along with the Newsletter. The distribution of material with the Newsletter was the subject of a debate at the annual general meeting, and it is worth quoting some resolutions from the meeting. "The list of the QWSG remains the property of the Group and is not for general distribution. Requests for use of the membership list by other like-minded groups for the purpose of distributing, appropriate information should be decided upon by the QWSG executive. Release of single sets of mailing labels may be considered. It is preferable that material from elsewhere be incorporated into a mailout by the Group, perhaps with financial assistance from other interested parties. As a general principle, the use of the list for distributing, relevant information should be acceptable but use for commercial purposes would need more critical consideration by the executive".

Andrew Geering and Margaret Bernard

Chairperson's report, AGM 1993

The first year of the official QWSG has seen the establishment of a local network of people who are all helping to define the functions and future directions of the Group. It has been an exciting time because we have achieved a lot in one year and built up a momentum that is drawing in more and more people with a commitment to our objectives.

QWSG has been busy monitoring wader numbers, banding and leg-flagging waders, producing a newsletter, seeking grant money, raising the public profile of waders, advocating conservation measures, maintaining equipment and fostering a network of counters. We are continuing a tradition of groups in other states that started up over a decade ago and we need to emphasise our connection with other groups, especially the Australasian Wader Studies Group. We must also be aware of the need to work with other types of non-government organisations and with relevant government departments. What we are doing requires a coordinated effort which is the best way to learn about waders and to protect them. A network of interested people, preferably extending throughout the Flyway, is mandatory if we are to be truly effective.

The big milestone for the year has been the sustained input of counts of waders at roost sites around the Bay. This has established the framework and rationale for continuing to gather these invaluable data. Anecdotal evidence indicates that developments and changes around Moreton Bay have had many adverse effects on waders and their habitats in the past. From now on there will be some irrefutable facts to indicate just how numbers and the local distribution of birds are changing.

Our counters need help to sustain the good work and more and more people are taking an interest. It is because we enjoy watching the birds that we are able to count them for pleasure. This is the key to the success of wader study groups together with the fact that there are challenges and rewards in catching and working with the birds at close range. The knowledge that what is being done is being put to good use scientifically, and in management, are added incentives. The network of participants in the Group goes hand in hand with raising public awareness and general interest in waders, and in encouraging more people to take an active role.

Results from the netting are slowly showing patterns of site fidelity and local movements of birds in the Bay as well as adding to our knowledge of the energetics and timing of migration. Long distance band returns and sightings of leg-flagged birds are slowly helping to fill in the picture. A major review of these data is needed and should be a priority for the Group over the coming 12 months. We have had success at banding Eastern Curlew, Grey-tailed Tattlers, Red Knot, Great Knot and high number of Bat-tailed Godwits. We have also successfully addressed some problems of injury and stress to birds being caught and are generally becoming more skilled and more successful in catching birds. There are many people in Brisbane now who could quite easily take a place on banding expeditions anywhere in Australia and overseas.

We are fully aware of what we need to aim for in tightening up our monitoring of roost sites around Moreton Bay, in reviewing existing data from other parts of Queensland and in establishing a wide network of counters throughout the state. We also need to encourage specific projects into particular aspects of wader ecology or biology through the universities or other institutions.

There have been many good times and delightful moments shared by people on field trips and at our meetings. Also, I imagine there are times when individually we each experience his or her own joy at being associated with waders. The regular trip reports in the newsletter serve to illustrate some of this good feeling and I thank the audience and speakers at the annual general meeting for generating such a positive atmosphere. Support from QOSI has been forthcoming and the arrangement we chose to follow of being a special interest group of QOSI appears to be working satisfactorily.

There are many people I could thank for their contribution and support over the last twelve months but three people have helped me personally the most Andrew Geering, Gary Harch and David Stewart. I am also indebted to the patience of my family who have cheerfully borne the sacrifices I have imposed upon them.

Peter Driscoll

Treasurer's Report, AGM 1993

Our current balance is \$1245:69. However, at the last committee meeting we approved the purchase of a new combined trailer that will carry both the rubber dinghy and the cannon netting equipment. This will cost approximately \$1000, so that leaves us with very little in the bank. We are hopeful of obtaining a new contract from the Department of Environment and Heritage to do more counts and banding, which will help our financial situation. Many thanks to all those who have given donations either directly or indirectly by paying their own way on various trips. That has been the way the group has kept financial. The \$10.00 membership fee only pays for the newsletter and some of the vital insurance costs. We are, always in need of donations to purchase capital equipment and to meet on going expenses. Safety equipment and a well maintained engine and boat is a high priority on our limited resources. Moreton Bay is no place to be with faulty or inadequate equipment.

The good news is that we have been able to achieve so much with the equipment we have.

QWSG FINANCIAL STATEMENT NOVEMBER 1992 - SEPTEMBER 1993.

Financial details of the QWSG have been removed from the on-line publications

New publication

A National Plan for Shorebird Conservation in Australia. By Doug Watkins.

This recent publication prepared on behalf of the Australasian Wader Studies Group (funding from World Wide Fund for Nature) is a significant milestone in the dissemination of practical information which will greatly aid governments, community groups and individuals in understanding the conservation needs of waders throughout Australia. It has been designed to be relevant, concise and factual. The status, population estimates and important sites for individual species are given. There is a state by state appraisal of important wetland areas for waders with an emphasis on the conservation status of each area. Only 21% of the important areas for waders in Australia are fully within conservation reserves. Another 51% lack all recognition of their conservation value.

The work culminates in a comprehensive list of 29 recommendations into what should be done to properly protect the wealth of migratory and resident waders that occur in Australia. Even if you are not making the planning decisions the book is great reference material and is based on years of voluntary monitoring of waders by the AWSG and other groups. It is available for only \$ 10 to each member of QWSG. If you want a copy, please contact Peter Discoll.

Redcliffe Point reclamation

It is proposed that a small but significant area of intertidal feeding area for waders at Redcliffe Point will be land-filled and a car park built in its place. This car park will service an amphitheatre, artificial beach and local shopping centre. The numerous large rocks at the site are atypical of Moreton Bay foreshores and offer an unusual aesthetic and biological setting. A group of Ruddy Turnstones feed here over low tide and roost on the rocks over high tide together with Whimbrel and, on occasions, Wandering Tattler. The latter species prefers rocky sites and can be seen on the rocks at Point Lookout on North Stradbroke Island but is otherwise rarely seen around Moreton Bay. Very few places are suitable for this species, Redcliffe Point being one of them.

All of the foregoing species are migratory, breed in the northern hemisphere and are covered by international conservation agreements. At least two of our resident wader species also use the area, ie. the Pied Oystercatcher and the more uncommon Sooty Oystercatcher.

The feeding area of all these birds extends right back to the existing shoreline and even the revised plan of development, which leaves more of the outer area of rocks, will do little to preserve the major part of the wader feeding area. The birds are unlikely to persist in the area given the extent of proposed habitat destruction and the proximity of people and cars to the rocks on which they now roost at high tide.

Apart from waders, waterbirds (Little Egret), cormorants (Little Pied, Pied and Little Black), Crested Terns, Caspian Terns and Common Terns all use the site. Birds of prey such as the Brahminy Kite and Osprey visit the rocks to rest and to consume prey. The utility of the area for these species is likely to be greatly reduced with much closer human presence.

There have been substantial losses of wader habitat around the foreshores of the Redcliffe Peninsula over the years, especially at Scarborough and more recently at Clontarf. The proposed changes at Redcliffe Point will add to past habitat loss and is further evidence that Redcliffe Shire is losing those natural features that once gave it a character of its own. The foreshore shouldn't be buried beneath concrete and rock walls, it should be nurtured, admired and enjoyed for what it is. It offers an invaluable educational opportunity. The rock platform, as host to a vast array of shell fish, crustaceans and other life is a prime example of a natural asset.

Concern about this proposed development can be expressed to Deputy Mayor Alderman Peter Houston (Redcliffe City Council, PO Box 66, Redcliffe, Qld 4020) or Hon. Molly Robson MLA, (Minister for Environment and Heritage, 160 Ann St., Brisbane Qld 4000).

Peter Driscoll

Green Island dredging

QWSG has commented on the proposed dredging operation for coral limestone on the eastern side of Green Island in Moreton Bay. We are concerned that important intertidal feeding habitat for waders will be lost. Apparently the operation will cover 115ha or over half of the intertidal area on the eastern side of Green Island. The proposed exclusion from dredging of a strip of land to 150m beyond the line of mangroves fringing the island will help conserve habitat of the upper tidal zone but many birds typically feed along the low tide line, which in this case lies much farther out from the mangroves.

The substrate around Green Island is relatively sandy with scattered patches of broken coral and small areas of muddy substrate. Wader species tend to disperse from roosts on the northern and southern ends of St Helena Island to intertidal feeding areas around St Helena and Green Islands. Ruddy Turnstones, Large Sand Plovers, Mongolian Plovers, Eastern Curlews, Pied Oystercatcher and Bar-tailed Godwits all occur in this area together with a range of other species of waders and waterbirds including Lesser Golden Plover, Whimbrel, Grey-tailed Tattler, Greenshank, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Little Egret, Sacred Ibis and Chestnut Teal. This list is far from comprehensive and has been compiled from casual observations.

The points we wish to stress are:

- 1) The area affected by the dredging is currently used by migratory and sedentary species of waders, many of which are listed under international agreements (JAMBA, CAMBA) and require special consideration and protection of their habitats.
- 2) Moreton Bay is in the process of being listed as an internationally important coastal wetland under the RAMSAR Convention and its significance is largely based upon the bird life, notably migratory waders.
- 3) In addition to waders, a number of waterbirds (ibis, egrets, herons) occur around Green Island and feed over the intertidal area.
- 4) The substrate around Green, St Helena, Mud and parts of Peel Island is different from anywhere else in Moreton Bay and is not only a source of limestone but represents significant variation in shoreline feeding habitat for birds. How important this variation is, and whether these areas are vitally important for particular wader species would require further study. Ruddy Turnstones, Mongolian Plovers and Large Sand Plovers are possibly more common in this section of the Bay than elsewhere.
- 5) The area of impact is very large and not only represents a high proportion of the intertidal area around Green Island but is significant on a broader scale, especially in view of the loss of feeding areas and disturbance to the shoreline that is occurring in the Bay generally.

- 6) Green Island is uninhabited and apart from the proposed dredging, disturbance to the bird life is less likely here than over much of the Bay.

Peter Driscoll

Coastal Protection Bill 1993

The Coastal Protection Strategy Green Paper was released for public comment in early 1991. This has now been formulated into a draft Bill, on which comments are sought by 22 October 1993. The resultant legislation will replace parts of the Harbours Act, the Beach Protection Act, and the Canals Act, and it is hoped that it will in fact be capable of meeting the objectives set by the Bill and the intentions expressed in the Green Paper.

The QWSG will be closely following the progress of the legislation. Significant issues relate to:

- ❑ the composition of the Coastal Protection Policy Advisory Council in that it does not include representation from a non-government Organisation;
- ❑ what the State coastal management plan will contain, just principles and policies or maps as well;
- ❑ the timing, and sequencing of the preparation of the regional coastal management plans and the procedure for community consultation;
- ❑ the link with Integrated Catchment Management Plans;
- ❑ the effect Of the Crown being bound in relation to controlling works conducted by State agencies.

Sandra Harding

Update on northern NSW expedition

Arrangements for the QWSG/NSWWSG expedition to the Clarence River estuary on November 13-15 are slowly falling into place. The response from the NSWWSG members has been very good. Ten camp sites are booked for us at the Blue Dolphin Holiday Park at Yamba. This resort is directly across the river from the roost site. Amenities include an indoor kitchen and dining room, outdoor BBQ area, pool, tennis court and beach. Cost is \$5 per person per night. Participants from the NSWWSG will also be staying at this place. If you would like more luxurious accommodation, give me a ring and I will give you phone numbers for some other places.

We will have 5 operational cannon nets, so there is a good chance that a lot of banding will be done. The roost site is inaccessible without a boat, so this trip is an excellent opportunity to see a part of the coast that you would not normally see. There will also be plenty of time to socialise and exchange ideas with other birdos from as far afield as Sydney.

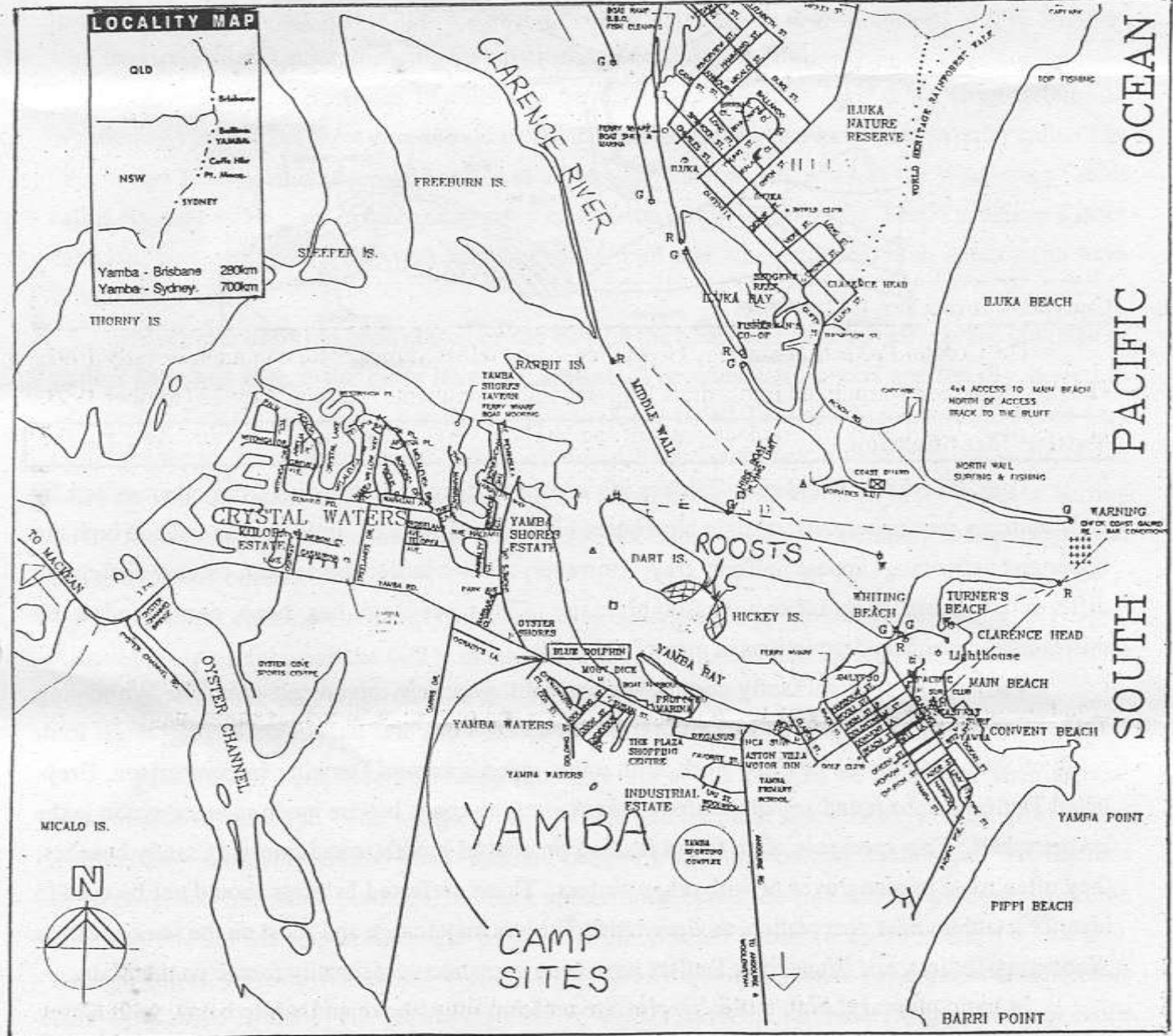
If you are intending to go down to Yamba and have a car with a tow bar, please let Peter Driscoll or I know, as at the moment, we have some logistical problems with transport of equipment.

Andrew Geering

LOCALITY MAP

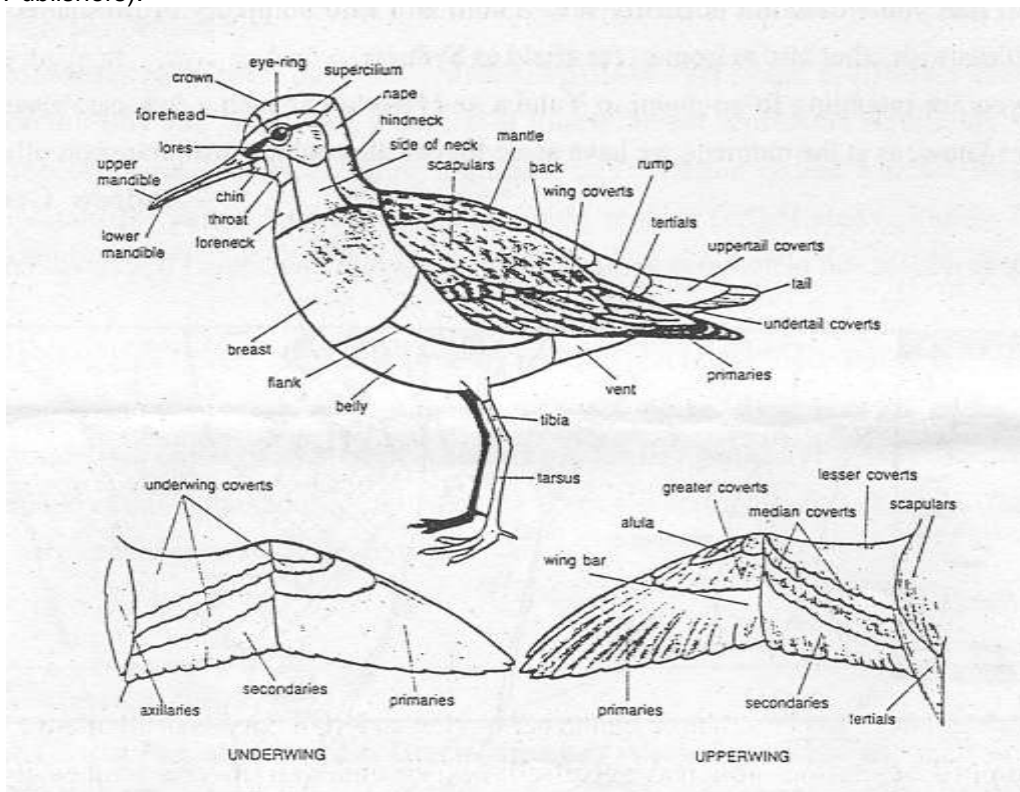


OCEAN
PACIFIC
SOUTH



External features of a wader

The following diagram of a generalised wader is reproduced from *Shorebirds in Australia*, by BA Lane (Nelson Publishers).



Tattler Identification

Grey tailed and Wandering Tattlers are relatively easy to distinguish from other waders by their uniform grey upperparts, straight bicoloured bill and yellow legs. In flight, the tail and both the upper and underwings appear uniform grey. However, the two tattler species can be very difficult to differentiate from each other in basic plumage. This problem has been compounded by misleading inadequate descriptions in many field guides.

Tattlers are predominantly coastal waders, with very few inland records. The Wandering Tattler can usually be found on rock outcrops, headlands or coral islands on the east coast from south of Sydney to the tip of Cape York, with a few records around Darwin. In comparison, Grey-tailed Tattlers can be found anywhere around the Australian coast, but are much more common in the northern half. This species is often found feeding on coastal mudflats and rarely on sandy beaches; they often roost in mangroves or with other waders. These preferred habitats should not be used to identify a tattler under observation, as Grey-tailed Tattlers may forage and roost on the same rocks as Wandering Tattlers, and Wandering Tattlers have been known to occasionally forage on mudflats.

In basic plumage, both tattler species are uniform grey above and white below with a grey breast. In flight, the underwings of both species are dark grey with pale fringes to the coverts, a characteristic shared with very few other wader species. Both species have straight dark bills with a pale base and bright yellow legs. Although very similar, there are some basic plumage and structural differences which enable us to separate most individuals of these two species in basic plumage.

Wandering Tattlers are dark grey above and have a less distinct supercilium than Grey-tailed Tattlers. Under ideal viewing conditions, the uppertail coverts of Wandering Tattlers are uniform and a similar colour to the rest of the upperparts. In fresh plumage, Grey-tailed Tattlers have narrow pale fringes to most feathers on the upperparts and wings, but these quickly wear leaving uniform slate-grey feathers. Under ideal viewing conditions, Grey-tailed Tattlers appear a few shades paler than Wandering Tattlers, and the uppertail coverts are slate grey and narrowly fringed paler. The supercilium on Wandering Tattler begins near the base of the bill and extends back above the eye for only a short distance. It is much broader in front of the eye than behind, where it generally tapers and fades. These two supercilia do not meet above the base of the bill. The Grey-tailed Tattler's supercilium on the other hand is long and prominent in front and behind the eye and

usually meets above the bill. This supercilium appears more pronounced because of the contrasting dark lores. In fresh plumage, the wing tips of the Wandering Tattler extend well beyond the tail at rest, whereas with the Grey-tailed Tattler, the wing tip only reaches the end of the tail.

Once learnt, differences in calls can be very useful for distinguishing Grey-tailed and Wandering Tattlers, but great care should be taken as both species also have some similar calls. The Grey-tailed Tattler call is usually described as a fluty *troo-eeet troo-eeet*, whereas the Wandering Tattler call is six - ten *whee-we-we* in increasing rapid succession on the same pitch. The Wandering Tattler can also, however, have a fluty one or two syllable call and when startled, both species can have similar alarm calls.

Much emphasis has been placed on the bars on the undertail coverts in alternative plumage of tattlers (attained before the birds leave Australia). The undertail coverts are heavily barred in Wandering Tattlers and faintly barred or white in Grey-tailed Tattlers. This character is not very useful for the majority of the time that the birds are in Australia as they are in a basic plumage. Even when present, the bars are difficult to see. There is also considerable variation in the extent of barring on the flanks and sides of the undertail coverts of Grey-tailed Tattlers, which may at times appear to be the undertail coverts.

Another character regularly mentioned in field guides is the length of the nasal groove. Although very useful when the bird is in the hand, this nasal groove is very, difficult to see under field conditions, and then only when the bird is very close.

Ageing Tattlers

Juveniles of both species closely resemble the adults but can be identified with critical examination of plumage. The wing coverts, tertials and scapular feathers of juvenile Grey-tailed Tattlers have dark subterminal bands and are fringed with small buff to white spots. As the bird progresses into immature plumage, the dark subterminal bands are lost and the pale spots become smaller. The tail and uppertail coverts of juvenile Grey-tailed Tattlers are also notched with white. As with adults, juvenile Wandering Tattlers are generally darker and have more uniform underparts than Grey-tailed Tattlers. The upperwing coverts, tertials and scapulars have dark subterminal bands and indistinct buffish-white fringes. As the birds progress into immature plumage the dark subterminal bands are lost and the pale fringes become less distinct.

Aquatic birds and the flu

In recent times, there has been much debate about the role of waders and waterfowl as reservoirs of human pathogens (anon., 1993). I was therefore interested to read a paper in *Intervirology*, a journal of basic and medical virology, which discussed the evolution of influenza A viruses and outlined the role of aquatic birds (ducks, gulls and waders) in this process (Webster et al., 1993). I thought it relevant to summarise parts of this paper.

Influenza A virus infects birds, pigs, horses, sea mammals and humans. Present evidence suggests that all the mammalian strains of influenza A virus derived from the avian reservoir. Most strains of influenza A virus do not cause disease in aquatic birds, which indicates that the virus is highly adapted to living in aquatic birds: viruses cannot normally live for very long periods outside living tissue, and if a virus was to rapidly kill its host, then its own survival may be jeopardised. Molecular evidence also supports the hypothesis that influenza A virus and aquatic birds have had a long association. Avian strains of influenza A virus are not highly variable, unlike human strains, which suggests that these strains have reached some form of evolutionary stasis. A few times this century, influenza A virus has transferred from birds to mammals. An example is believed to be the 'Spanish influenza' which spread worldwide in 1918. The virus was able to transfer from birds to mammals through a small change in its genetic code.

Influenza A virus infects the cells lining the intestinal tract of aquatic birds and is excreted in high concentrations in the faeces. Other aquatic birds, both domestic and wild then acquire the virus from contaminated water. To gain entry into the cell of a bird, the virus has to unlock a 'door'. Avian strains of influenza A virus cannot infect humans because they do not have the correct 'key' to open the 'doors' to human cells. However, by mutation, a change can occur in a specific place of one of the viral genes which results in the production of a 'key' which is specific to humans. It must be emphasised that this change is a rare event, and you are very unlikely to catch the flu from handling birds. Any bout of the flu that you have suffered has almost certainly arisen from contact with other infected people.

Most people, that are infected with the chicken pox virus as a child do not contract the virus again in their life time. This is because the body is able to recognise the virus on the second occasion and can quickly mount a

defence. However, we may contract the flu every couple of winters. This is because new strains of influenza A virus are regularly emerging which are sufficiently different from old strains to be unrecognisable to the body's immune system. A process called genetic re-assortment is thought to be important in the continual emergence of new strains of influenza A virus.

Scientists who analysed the Asian strain of influenza A virus that arose in 1957 showed that 5 genes were the same as those found in the strain that was previously circulating in humans, and 3 other genes were the same as those of avian strains of the virus, that were circulating in aquatic birds. Similarly, the Hong Kong strain of influenza A virus that arose in 1968 contained 6 genes that were the same as those found in the strain that was previously circulating in humans, and 2 other genes were the same as those of avian strains of the virus that were circulating in aquatic birds. In these two cases, it appears that the human strain of the virus changed by acquiring new versions of genes from the 'gene pool' in birds. But if avian strains of influenza A virus do not generally infect humans, and *vice versa*, how does this genetic re-assortment occur? In Italy, scientists have found that pigs are naturally infected with both human and avian strains of influenza A virus. Pigs could therefore be a 'mixing pot' where strains of influenza A virus evolve. China, with its billion and more people, 380 million pigs and, large numbers of ducks in close proximity to each other, would obviously provide an ideal location for the emergence of new influenza viruses.

Ducks and not waders are presently considered to be the primary reservoirs of influenza A virus. Wild ducks which migrate longitudinally appear to play a key role in the evolution of new influenza viruses. However, the epidemiology of the virus is still very unclear and there are probably other reservoirs of influenza viruses that are not yet elucidated. The jumbo jet remains the most important vector of the human flu. Once a new strain of human influenza A virus emerges, whether it be on an Italian pig farm or a Chinese market garden, then the strain can potentially move to all parts of the globe in less than a few months through human movement.

Anonymous (1993). -Waders, egrets and Ross River Fever. Queensland Ornithological Society Newsletter 24(7), 4.

Webster RG, Wright SM, Castrucci MR, Bean WJ, Kawlaoka Y. (1993). Influenza - a model of an emerging virus disease. *Intervirology* 35: 16-25

By Andrew Geering

Author's note: R G Webster is a highly respected international authority on influenza viruses

Activities

Reeders Point, 23-25 July.

This report begins one year earlier on 25th July 1992 at Kgun Lake, Ukon Delta National Park, Alaska, where 5 Bar-tailed Godwit chicks were banded. And yes, 364 days later, one of them turned up in our net at Reeders Point. It was released in good condition with the same band and an additional green leg-flag. It was the first such Alaskan banded Bar-tailed Godwit retrap in Australia. I hasten to add that Peter in consultation with Jeremy and David, had judged the bird to be a one year old before receiving this extra information.

This was my second trip to Moreton Island and the fifth overall. It must rank as one of the most successful with 187 Bar-tailed Godwits, 45 Grey-tailed Tattlers, 1 Whimbrel and 2 Curlew Sandpipers being banded. There were 10 other retraps involving somewhat shorter distances - 8 were from Amity Point and 2 from Mirapool. These important trips to Moreton Island could not happen without additional support. On this occasion it came from QNPWS in the form of transport from the barge at Tangalooma to Reeders Point on the Friday night. Thanks especially to Jane Birget who also helped the next day and successfully persuaded a couple, of innocent bystanders to retreat from the area after they had frightened off the roosting flock.

The firing occurred around midmorning. Prior to this we got an idea of just some of the preparation that Peter usually does himself. Cleaning and loading the cannons was a fairly tedious business. While we worked together, I asked myself, are we really doing this as a form of surrogate hunting? Like all cooperative hunters, we devised a plan, laid the traps, provided camouflage, retreated, and then divided into specialist groups. Peter set off in the boat to chase the game from other potential roosting sites, Andrew and crew withdrew to a concealed firing position, and Jane and I found a vantage point where we could see the birds in the catching area. On this occasion we all experienced that adrenalin rush, followed by that sinking feeling, as a large but flighty flock landed and took off about 4 to 5 times. The importance of roosting, sites was driven home continual attraction to the area despite the disturbance.

Any similarities with hunting soon disappeared after the firing of the net. For all 13 of us, it became a mad dash to the nets and about 40-50 minutes intense work to secure the bird's safety - the overall priority until the

last bird was settled in the holding pen. We then settled in for a long afternoon's banding to be finished just before dark. A well earned glass of port was enjoyed by all that night. Thanks must go to Jeremy Thompson for his fine footwork on clutch and accelerator to get all the gear over and back from the firing site.

This trip did do something to solve the dilemma I continually discuss with Peter. Should we be more regimented or should we continue to operate with a fairly laid back style? It seems to me that we are all getting better at the whole operation and we become a tight unit at the critical moments. No two firings are exactly the same and we will therefore remain on a learning curve for some time.,

Phil Venables

Telescope Day, 21 August

Information, education, technology, carnival atmosphere, danger. These words spring to mind as I sit down to write this article about the telescope day. Now you may think I'm waxing lyrical. What danger could there have possibly been? Well, we were all so thoroughly absorbed with the birdwatching that we were oblivious to the fact that we had set up next to the railway line to the Port. Maybe we were lulled into a false sense of security because the wharfies never work on a Saturday. Wrong! Needless to say we were nearly run over by a train.

It was great to see so many people at this event. I estimate that more than 50 people attended, and all age groups were represented. There was a wide selection of telescopes and binoculars available for testing. Brand names included, Carton, Kowa, Bausch & Lomb, Bushnell, and Meade. Prices ranged from a couple of hundred to two thousand dollars. My main interest was in the telescopes. A popular choice was the Carton Miniscope. Reasons for its popularity included a relatively low price (\$299), light weight, and a good bright image. To me; the image seemed to be better than that provided by other telescopes in the lower price range. With this model, the magnification is set at 20X. With some other models, the magnification can be varied from 20X to 50X through use of a zoom objective lens. However, it appears that the technical tricks required to produce a zoom objective lens often result in a compromise in optical quality at the lower end of the market.

Thanks go to Klaus from York Opticals, and to Gary Harch, for making this day so successful. The range of brands was tremendous and the birds put-on a good show. I hope this activity can become an annual or biennial event. Especially pleasing was the sighting of a green leg-flagged Eastern Curlew. Moreton Island is the only place where we have leg-flagged Eastern Curlew, so this sighting indicates interchange of birds between Moreton Island and Lytton roosts.

Andrew Geering

NB. QWSG members are eligible for a 5 to 15% discount on purchases at York Opticals in Fortitude Valley.

Cabbage Tree Creek, 4 September.

A grey and overcast dawn with high cloud led me to ponder the possibility that this would be my first wet cannon netting expedition. The prospect of wandering around in the mud, sand and rain at Cabbage Tree Creek was definitely not an overwhelmingly enticing thought at 5:30 am on a brisk Saturday morning! However, by the time I left home such fears had been put to rest and as the early morning continued to brighten, so did my enthusiasm.

I arrived late (as usual) at Shornccliffe boat ramp and was greeted by John, Jim and Ivell, who informed me that I was the last person to arrive. Feeling suitably chastised, I climbed into the – inflatable and we headed off across the channel to join the rest of the group.

On Friday night, Peter and some able assistants had moved most of the gear to an area adjacent to the netting site on the high tide. We were thus able to make a good start on Saturday morning with minimal gear haulage and had the nets set by about 10:00 am. Peter, John and Meg returned to the boat ramp to pick up Andrew, Robyn and Fiona, whilst the rest of us enjoyed a welcome break to enjoy a late breakfast/morning tea/early lunch before the real work began in earnest.

Early indications were that there was a large number of birds in the area and we could be in for a big catch. It was feared that some of the birds might try to roost on a small sand spit to the north-west of the area where the nets had been set, so Thomas was placed in charge of gently persuading them to move on. This was to prove unnecessary as the threatening presence of a couple of soaring raptors put the birds up and they eventually settled, very conveniently, in the vicinity of the nets.

After assigning everyone specific tasks to do once the nets had been fired, Peter departed with John and Thomas in the inflatable to get a better view of the flock and net positions from the water. Andrew and I had been left in charge of firing the nets and after about 20 minutes of gentle twinkling and one false start, Peter gave a command to fire the central (large) net. A strong, south-easterly breeze caused some net deflection, but the resulting catch was still a good one - some 265 birds.

The shading and de-netting of the birds went very well thanks to good preparation and assignment of tasks to all group members before the net was fired. Those who were more experienced concentrated on extracting the birds from the net whilst a number of enthusiastic beginners acted as runners. Greg kept an eagle eye (no pun intended!) on which birds went into which horsing cages to make for orderly processing during banding. Details of the catch: 164 Great Knots (including 28 retraps), 44 Red knots (2 retraps including one New Zealand banded bird), 42 Bar-tailed Godwits (5 retraps), 9 Curlew Sandpipers, 5 Little Terns and 1 Grey-tailed Tattler.

Two teams led by Peter and (a somewhat hesitant!) Andrew did a sterling job in banding and measuring the birds. A persistent and at times strong breeze made conditions somewhat unpleasant by blowing copious quantities of fine sand into the lean-to which had been built to shelter the banding teams. During the afternoon, we were treated to some spectacular aerobatics by a Sea Eagle and Osprey engaged in combat.

The last bird was banded and released by about 4:15 pm and the final pack-up and long trek across the mud flats to the channel brought a very enjoyable and interesting day to a close. Thanks to all who assisted - Peter Driscoll, Andrew Geering, Greg Nye, Karen Wright, Fiona Johnson, John Henderson, Jim and Ivell Whyte, Matthew Shaw, Thomas Sattler, Robyn Watts, Meg Mulligan and Tony Rowland.

Tony Rowland

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 trip to NSW in November, call 2 weeks in advance. For the wader counts, please ring Ivell Whyte, the count coordinator. All completed count forms must be returned to Ivell Whyte.

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Sat. 2 nd Oct	High of 2.16 m at 10:09 am.
Sat.. 16 th Oct	High of 2.46 m at 9:47 am.
Sat. 6 th Nov	High of 2.14 m at 1:51 pm
Sat. 4 th Dec	High of 2.32 m at 12:41 pm.
Sat. 15 th Jan	See next Newsletter for height and, time of high tide.
Sat. 5 th Feb	See next Newsletter for height and time of high tide.

Cannon Netting

Sun 17 th Oct	Dux Creek, Bribie Island. High of 2.50 at 10:34 am.
Sat 13 th - Mon 15 th Nov	Clarence River Estuary joint outing with NSWWSG (see article Expedition to Northern NSW).
Sat 20 th Nov	Fisherman Island (tentative). High of 2.06 at 2:10 pm. This trip is dependent on site conditions, as well as arrangements with the Port Authority to participate in filming of a video. Sat 18 Dec is alternative date.
Fri 3 rd - Sun 5 th Dec	Moreton Island. High of 2.32 at 12:41 pm on Saturday.
Sat 18 th Dec	Fisherman Island (tentative). High of 2.25 at 12:46 pm.

Wader identification days

Sun 12th Dec 8-00 am - 10 am. - Lytton high tide roost. High of 2.50 m at 8:31 am

Special workshop on waders. Joint (WSO/Wildlife Pres. Soc./Nudgee Environment Centre

Sat 9th Oct This is more for the novice and there is a cost of \$12:00 to attend (unless you are helping to instruct). From 8:30 am to 12:30 am but if people want to also count the high tide roost at Cabbage Tree Creek they can have a BBQ and stay until 4 pm.

Day outing with QOSI on Coochiemudlow Island - guests of local bird group

Sat 27th Nov 9:00 am - 4pm. Meet at Victoria Point jetty at 8.30 am and bring your lunch, binoculars, telescope and notepad. The morning will be spent on the terrestrial birds and the afternoon on the mudflats looking at waders.

OWSG Christmas Party/Equipment maintenance day

Sun 12th Dec 12.00 noon - ?. Nudgee Environment Centre. BBQ facilities provided. Bring your own eating utensils, meat, salad and drinks.

Wader Watching Cruise, Pumicestone Passage. Australian Littoral Society activity.

Sat 9th Oct Cruise on the *Ferryman*. Cost: \$25 adult; \$22.50 pensioner. Trip leaves from Sylvan Beach Esplanade, Bribie Island, at 9:30, am and returns at 3:30 pm. Booking is essential (bookings close on 6th October).

Waders of the Wetlands. Beerwah Field Study Centre activity

Sun 7th Nov Meet at 11:30 am at the Toorbul end of the Esplanade. Learn about waders, their habitat and behaviour.