

QUEENSLAND WADER

Newsletter of the Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG), a special interest group
of the Queensland Ornithological Society Incorporated.

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About Queensland Wader

Queensland Wader is a quarterly publication of the Queensland Wader Study Group. Contributions should be addressed to The Editors, #####. Contributions can also be sent via fax number (##### (please forewarn the Editors if you intend to use fax). Opinions expressed in Queensland Wader are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the Queensland Wader Study Group, nor the Queensland Ornithological Society.

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The inertia of government and missed opportunities - the sad saga of Raby Bay continues

by Peter Driscoll

The Queensland Wader Study Group wrote to the Redlands Shire Council in December 1993 expressing its concern at the possible fate of a major wader roost on the final patch of land being developed as the Raby Bay Estate. Because the area in question was to be recreational reserve QWSG hoped that the Council might make some long term provision for use of the area by the waders. With an appropriate design, the site could become an attraction and serve to educate the public while helping to sustain the population of waders in Moreton Bay.

Many thousands of birds have been using the Raby Bay area since before the first published records in 1957. Ever since the controversial Raby Bay Estate was commenced the birds have hung on, accommodating the development by using an ever decreasing area of habitat. Even as the local feeding area was eliminated they persisted in coming from neighbouring feeding areas to roost on what was eventually the last patch of claypan and earth debris. Members of QWSG maintained that given their persistence in the past a decision now to give the birds some permanent space would most likely lead to their continued presence.

Our initial letters to the Council were basically ignored, in the sense that in March this year the final stage (stage 15) of the development as orthodox parkland was approved, without our being notified and without any adequate reply to our early letters. QWSG didn't even learn about the approval until enquires were made after the bulldozers started moving in on the birds in August. There was a new Council at this stage and despite the "late hour" several members thought we might be able to move things around and convince the Council and the developer that a unique asset like a wader roost was worth keeping.

It would mean allocating parkland as a roost site. The developer, Civic Projects, would forfeit nothing but it would be a challenge for the Council to do something different and to take a lead in the management of wetlands.

A few Councillors and the developer gave some support to the idea. Sandra Harding, Joyce Harding and myself were motivated enough to try to persuade the Council to act. The State Government was unable to do anything because the area had long been approved for use as part of the Raby Bay development. It lay outside the Ramsar and Marine Park boundaries.

QWSG started a campaign of distributing information and proposing alternative designs. We brought in as much outside expertise as possible to comment on issues and designs and gained support and ideas from several professional ornithologists who carefully considered the situation. NatureSearch 2001, the New Zealand Wader Study Group, and a number of major wildlife and conservation groups in Brisbane expressed to the Council the significance of the issue. We presented a solid case.

I naively thought that if the basic idea was accepted then we could expect a concerted effort from all parties to solve any technical problems that might arise. What happened is not what I expected.

Many questions were raised, particularly by Council officers, and not in the spirit of consultation but more in a mood of confrontation with insurmountable problems. I had hoped we could all work together. In subtle ways, the expertise of QWSG and others was now being questioned.

The following types of arguments were raised against the idea of maintaining the roost site: the possibility of rat and mosquito infestations; there were better places for the birds; a roost site would be out of character in Raby Bay; the birds would be too close to people; people wouldn't want to be restricted in their movements; the birds wouldn't come back and the Council would be left with an "ugly" hole; it would be too expensive to build and maintain. Despite the merits of some of these arguments, QWSG answered them honestly and adequately. The expertise we had to offer was not exploited by the Council. It seemed as though we hadn't adequately convinced them of the benefits to the birds and to the community of what we proposed. I still don't know what else could have done, apart from staging a rally and sitting in front of bulldozers.

The other argument raised by a Council officer was that it was not the responsibility of the Council, that it was a State or Federal responsibility. Of course, no one and no government will be responsible when the birds have left and the evidence has gone.

The Council has deferred a final decision pending other advice! It is supposedly considering use of dredge spoil to create a small island as a roost site. QWSG wishes them every success and would be happy to contribute to any discussions. However, we have not been contacted by the Council for the last 7 weeks, even though we are a well intentioned community based Organisation that was totally involved with the issue.

We maintained that if the Council did not use the existing site it would lose an important option for which there may be no alternative. Using dredge spoil will pose a new set of problems, primarily because it could easily wash away. Meanwhile the developer, Civic Projects, is about to submit their final plans for stage 15 which won't include a roost site.

Raby Bay was a test case. If Redlands Shire showed some initiative then it would be easier for a number of other Councils and bureaucracies around the Bay foreshores to follow suit. Several roost sites that may well be destroyed in the next few years would have had a greater chance of preservation. I lobbied hard and I got plenty of support from other members, but the subtle resistance was also profound and in the end it came from Councillors, the developer and the Council Officers. The State Government was unable or unwilling to exert any pressure on the Council.

The international conservation agree merits on waders and wetlands, the Moreton Bay Marine Park, and other flattering credentials of Government did not make the difference. How often do they?

So why did it come to this? Why is it likely that the birds will be penalised yet again and the integrity of our wetlands will be undermined. Why did Redlands Shire miss an opportunity of setting a precedent for several other sites under threat. In 1996, Brisbane comes under the international spotlight by, hosting the Ramsar Convention but our track record is not good. It is not only the Raby Bay issue that concerns me. QWSG has advocated the need for management of roost sites or appropriate signage at places such as Mirapool, Amity Spit, Dux Creek, Manly Boat Harbour, Fisherman Islands, and Toorbul, with limited success. Even at the Cabbage Tree Creek roost within the Boondall Wetlands Reserve, there are still no signs to protect the roost site.

Local, State and Federal Governments have responsibilities for protecting the environment and they often parade their credentials while avoiding any hard decisions or specific actions. Groups such as ours can express our views and share our knowledge but it often falls on deaf ears. When it comes to meaningful action around Moreton Bay, it is hard to get a good list together, notwithstanding the efforts of Brisbane City Council in its program of wetland reserves.

The message is clear. You can't rely on bureaucracies to take the initiative and if you want some response, be prepared for a long, hard slog. Take care, politicians and many bureaucrats can make you feel that your efforts are leading somewhere. Secretly, they are probably waiting and hoping for you to run out of steam and will wait and wait and wait before taking any action.

I suggest you write to the Mr Paul Field, Deputy Mayor of Redlands Shire, PO Box 21 Cleveland, Qld 4163, and ask why the Council has been so indecisive about protecting an irreplaceable asset, a wader roost of up to 4000 birds, located within a few kilometres of Cleveland.

Green Island - What next?

by Andrew Geering

Has Green Island in Moreton Bay been spared from moral dredging? Certainly the issue has died in the media, which could lead to the impression that the application by Queensland Cement Limited (QCL) to dredge coral at Green Island was refused by the State Government. This is not so. QCL has actually voluntarily deferred the application, in response to increasingly hostile public opinion, to explore alternative limestone resources. However, QCL, and at present the State Government have not ruled out the proposal, and at some later stage, QCL could reapply to dredge coral at Green Island.

After a considerable delay, the Impact Assessment Statement (IAS) prepared by Connell Wagner was released for public comment. The QWSG, through the Queensland Ornithological Society Incorporated, did have its views on the IAS presented to relevant government authorities. Presently, the IAS is being reviewed by Planning and Assessment section of Environment and Heritage (DEH). The outcome of this review will help determine the zoning status Green Island is given in the Moreton Bay Marine Park. If Green Island and its associated intertidal area is made a national park, then it will be off limits to coral dredging.

The IAS makes the following conclusions about the anticipated effect of dredging on waders -

- 1) It correctly identifies the intertidal area of Green Island to be one consisting of coarse-grained sediment shell and coral debris. It notes that this type of substrate supports a special association of birds. The Ruddy Turnstone is found in greatest abundance on these types of flats. As a consequence of the proposed dredging, there would be a selective loss of bird species that are dependent on this type of habitat.
- 2) It is speculated that the composition of birds on the remaining flats will change due to an increase in coral shell sands arising from the dredging process (p. 137 of the IAS). It is implied that this will have a positive impact on Ruddy Turnstone, as it is "noted for its preference for coral substrates".
- 3) They estimate that upon completion of dredging operations at Mud and St. Helena Island, there will be 1647 hectares of coral association substrate remaining in Moreton Bay, and the area that they are going to dredge represents only 7% of this area. They then make the extrapolation that with a 7% loss of habitat it could be expected that the maximum loss of birds that will occur will be 7%. They consider that this is a worst case scenario as "it is expected that some compensation in bird feeding activity is possible and the expected reduction in (coral substrate) bird population would be less than 7%" (PP. 137-138 of the IAS).

I find the conclusions of the IAS misleading and simplistic. The reasons for this opinion are as follows-

- 1) No attempt has been made to estimate the magnitude of loss of coral substrate in Moreton Bay from previous dredging around Mud and St. Helena Island and from urban encroachment along the city shoreline. The estimate of 7% loss of habitat from the proposed dredging around Green Island underestimates the total impact of coral dredging in Moreton Bay on waders, and is meaningless when considered in isolation. Each individual site of dredging may represent a relatively small area, but when considered together, they comprise a very large area. It should be noted that intertidal areas consisting of coral substrate are rare in Moreton Bay.
- 2) A linear relationship between habitat loss and wader populations has been assumed. The so called "worst case scenario" of 7% loss of waders from the proposed dredging may be an underestimate of the real impact of the dredging. The impact may be greater because:
 - preferred feeding area is being removed. The 150 metre buffer zone between the high tidemark and the proposed area of dredging is the area left exposed for the greatest length of time and is generally the least preferred feeding area for waders. Flats need to remain soggy or very shallowly covered at low-tide for most species of wader (Lawler 1994). Likewise, the area that is being left after dredging finishes at Mud and St. Helena Island is the area which remains exposed for the longest period, and is the least preferred feeding area. The usefulness of these areas has been further reduced by the rubble bunds that have formed.
 - larger intertidal areas support more birds per unit area than small areas, and intertidal flats which are adjacent to others support more birds than the same size flat by itself. The management message is that extensive continuous habitat should not be fragmented into isolated patches (Lawler 1994). Dredging around Mud, St. Helena and Green Island is causing fragmentation of habitat.
 - seagrass detritus is a significant primary source of energy in the food chain of the wader. The loss of seagrass meadows as a result of the proposed dredging will reduce the fertility of the remaining intertidal areas.

It is also worth noting that from banding studies conducted by the QWSO, there is reason to believe that Moreton Bay is an important staging area for waders. By this I mean that it is a place where waders stop temporarily during migration to feed and replenish energy reserves before resuming migration. For example, in 1993, the QWSG trapped a New Zealand banded Ruddy Turnstone (one of only 13 ever banded in NZ) at St. Helena Island, and one month later, it was trapped again in New Zealand. Small waders like the Ruddy

Turnstone are considered to be particularly sensitive to habitat destruction along the flyway because they are less capable of flying great distances at a single attempt, and they need several 'stepping stones' along the way. Loss of habitat in Moreton Bay may affect not only birds from this region, but also those from other regions.

Clearly the impact of dredging on the population of waders is quite complicated, and a thorough knowledge of the area is required before an accurate assessment of the impact of dredging can be made. As far as I can ascertain, Connell Wagner, when preparing the IAS, did three surveys of the birds of Green Island - 30 April, and 15 and 21 December 1993. They provided no quantitative data. They also reported seeing such rarities as Black-browed Albatross (in December), Sooty Shearwater, Sanderling, Common Sandpiper, and Lesser Crested Tern (but no Crested Terns!). These sightings are questionable. Overall the data collected on the birds of Green Island seems very inadequate.

It is my opinion that the Green Island reef is of a high conservation value for waders and seabirds and I consider that it should be classified as either a National Park Zone or a Conservation Park Zone. Furthermore, I believe that the reef should be added to the existing area in Moreton Bay covered by the Ramsar Convention. I do not believe that coral dredging should be permitted at Green Island.

Lawler, W. (1994). Conserving shorebird habitat. *Ranger* (Autumn issue), pp. 38- 40.

Win a bottle of wine

The reward for eagle-eyes in the Townsville area is a bottle of wine for spotting the first leg-flagged wader. This prize has been offered by Frank Harrison. The colours to look out for are green, orange, yellow and white, signifying that the waders have been banded in SE Queensland, Victoria, NW Western Australia, and New Zealand/NSW, respectively. White is being shared by the NZWSO and the NSWSG-species banded in NSW, but which are not found commonly found in New Zealand, are being fitted with white leg-flags.

Treasurer's Report

by Gary Harch

Please take careful note of your mailing label: each time you receive a mailing from QWSG your label will show the last day of your current membership. If you are receiving a complimentary copy of the magazine this date will be shown as 31/12/95. I have recorded the date that you first joined thus allowing your membership to last for a full year following that date. Now we are getting a larger base of membership this procedure will help spread the receipt of your subscriptions over the year and everyone gets a full year's membership regardless of when you joined. This procedure has been made possible by a new computer system that I now have.

There are always a number of people who forget to renew their membership. It is an expensive and time consuming process to have to send reminders, so your prompt action, LIKE DO IT RIGHT NOW, would be appreciated. We don't automatically stop sending you the newsletter if you haven't paid up to date - but obviously there will come a time when you will stop getting this newsletter if you haven't paid.

In this newsletter are the statements for the past financial new year. As we go to press the books are being audited, so these numbers are subject to the auditor's report. While we have a balance of over \$3,000.00 most of this is allocated for expenses still to come with the Eastern Curlew Research program outlined elsewhere in this issue. Your subscription only covers the costs of the newsletter plus some small running costs, and this year we relied on research work for the Gov't to give us income to keep everything going.

The budget for the Earthwatch program was always going to be light. The Earthwatch expedition relied on the volunteer work of a number of people throughout the 2 weeks of the expedition. While no money directly came to our group, we gained enormously by using the Earthwatch team to initiate the Eastern Curlew Research program.

The year has enabled us to significantly increase our equipment which has enabled us to continue our research programs. Our assets include two boats, both working well, with a trader specifically designed for our cannon netting gear and the Avon rubber dinghy. Our cannon netting gear has been modified, repaired and improved over the year. A second telescope and tripod has been purchased and also radio telemetry

gear which enables us to track Eastern Curlews fitted with transmitters. Every member of the group is eligible to use this gear and we encourage you to do so.

Inflation and the QWSG!

As noted by the Gary Harch, our treasurer, the membership fees barely cover the cost of production of the newsletter, let alone other costs such as insurance premiums. In response to rising costs, the Management Committee has decided to increase fees to \$12.50 for single membership, \$22.00 for family membership, and \$9.00 for concession. This increase in fees will take effect on 1 January 1995. If you are thrifty, pay now and beat the price hike!

QUEENSLAND WADER STUDY GROUP (QOS Inc.) FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD OF NOVEMBER 1993 TO OCTOBER 1994

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

Note: The costs of the Govt contract covered a wide variety of expenses, not all are shown under the category "Gov't contract" in the expenditure, but appear in other categories. The funding was conditional on completing a report on waders in SE Qld which has been done.

Black-fronted Plovers nesting on Bribie Island

by Linda Cross

On 23rd October 1994, Phil and I visited Bribie Island and Buckley's Hole was the first place on our list. The sky was overcast, there was a light sea-breeze and the temperature was around 20°C. After spending some time on the boulevard side of the Hole checking the number of species and enjoying a view of two Buff-banded Rails, we ventured down towards the passage side of the Hole. Between the Hole and the passage is a depression that holds a small amount of water. The southern end of the depression had some water in it, but the northern end was dry.

A Black-fronted Plover caught our eye and as we admired it, the bird ran off and gave a broken wing display. Our immediate thought was that the bird was either protecting young or a nest. We stood very quietly and patiently waiting for it to move. It then proceeded to move back to the northern end of the depression, and appeared to sit down. We both looked with our binoculars and decided that this was a telescope job.

While setting up the scope a couple of people walked past along the beach and the bird took off again. When it returned we saw it settling down over a chick. Some more walkers disturbed it again, but it did not go far. It was then that we observed that there were two chicks. One of them appeared to be a little damp, perhaps recently hatched? We did not stay any longer as we did not wish to disturb the bird more than necessary.

Pringle (1987) states that the Black-fronted Plover is rare near salt water. As we observed the bird some 18 metres from Pumicestone Passage, we thought that this sighting was of interest.

Pringle, J.D. (1987). The shorebirds of Australia (the national photographic index of Australia), pp. 136-141. Sydney: Angus and Robertson Publishers.

Siberian Great Knot hits Broome

In the April issue of *The Stilt* Pavel Tomkavich reported on his studies of the Great Knot on the spur of the Shchuchy Mountain Range in the vicinity of the Anadyr River, NE Siberia. Pavel was only able to band small numbers of adults and chicks due to the fact that they are widely spaced over a large area in their breeding habitat between 600 and 750 m alt. Most of the 13 adults caught at that time were accompanying chicks and presumed to be males.

Pavel intended to fly in by helicopter this year in an effort to reach the breeding grounds early in the season when the rivers were still frozen and precluded the usual boat journey. His dedication paid off this year when a female that was banded and leg-flagged while incubating, on 16 June, was seen by the wardens at Broome Bird Observatory on 9 September. This is the first Russian-banded Great Knot to be recovered overseas.

(Ibis article is reproduced from *Tattler* No. 1 (October 1994), Newsletter of the Australasian Wader Studies Group)

Mac Twitchers!

If you are a twitcher, and a Macintosh computer user, then I have a piece of software that may interest you. I have downloaded a piece of free shareware from a local bulletin board. It is a Hypercard stack that will help you record your bird sightings. The following notes are provided with the stack: "Birds are automatically indexed by common name, scientific name, and year of sighting on the various list cards. A star after a bird name indicates the first sighting of that species. Enjoy!". There is also room on the card to record comments on the sighting. Copies of this program can be sent to you for \$5.00 (to cover cost of a blank disk and postage). If you have a modem, then I can download this program to your computer via the phone. My address is #####.

Andrew Geering

Our sea...shore worth saving (Ocean Care Day, Sunday 4 December)

Life around the coast of Australia is amongst the most colourful and fascinating found anywhere in the world's oceans.

Yet it is under intense pressure from habitat destruction, overfishing, coastal development and pollution from oil, nutrients, sewage and toxic chemicals. For too long the marine environment has been the Cinderella of the conservation movement. Australians are only just beginning to realise that our sea needs as much attention and care as our land. But all this could, and must change.

With this in mind, **National Ocean Care Day** has been organised for **Sunday 4 December**, focussing on the collective efforts of Australians "Making a Difference Together", the theme for this year's event. In the Brisbane area, a number of events are being organised (see insert).

"If the future health of the seas and the decline in marine wildlife concerns you, you can show it by taking part" said local organiser Bill Foster. Ocean Care Day is an opportunity to promote the actions of groups and organisations around Australia to conserve our marine environment, from SCUBA divers to fishermen, surfers to yachting enthusiasts. It's also an ideal occasion for any concerned individuals to become involved! Bill Foster said.

Ocean Care Day is being coordinated by the Marine and Coastal Community Network (MCCN), as part of the Federal Government's Ocean Rescue 2000 program. Each state and territory has a range of activities, organised by MCCN Co-ordinators. These include underwater clean-ups and surveys, habitat revegetation, beach cleans to surf carnivals. Ocean Care Day, by promoting general community awareness of the threats facing Australia's coastline, will show that - together we can make a difference!

For further details contact Bill Forster on (07) xxx xxxx.

Ocean Dare Day 1994: list of activities and participants

Contact	Organisation	Phone	Activity
Noel Milliner	Redcliffe City Council	(##) #####	Launch of new marine debris signs on bridges and boat ramps around Redcliffe
Mary Patchett	Bayside Environmental Network and Australian Littoral Society	(##) #####	Boat trip into Moreton Bay Marine Park
Bill Foster	Qld DEH and ALS	(##) #####	Beach clean, snorkel trail on Peel Is, Moreton Bay Marine Park
Mary-Anne Pattison	Nudgee Beach Env Edn Centre	(##) #####	Open day at education centre
Andrew Geering	QWSG	(##) #####	Bird-watching tour around Port of Brisbane and David Stewart
Pam Soper	Wide Bay & Burnett Conserv. Council.	(##) #####	Public awareness displays, talks, billy tea, damper and sausage sizzle
Jeff Anderson	Surfrider Foundation, Sunshine Coast	(##) #####	Dune care activities and function at nightclub
Kinta Hofftnan and Greg Curtis	Aleeda Wetsuits	(##) #####	Beach clean-up
Dijana Dijanic	Surfrider Foundation, Gold Coast	(##) #####	Beach clean-up at Coolangatta, tree planting at Greenmount, entertainment at Queensland Hotel
Ian Ward	Surfrider Foundation,	(##) #####	Dune restoration Central Queensland
Neil Mergard	Surfrider Foundation,	(xxx) xxx xxx	Clean-up of Pancake Creek Agnes Waters
Janette Thompson	Mackay Conservation Group	(xxx) xxx xxx	Awareness tour of significant mangrove sites
Ross Grimely	Surfrider Foundation, Thursday Island	(xxx) xxx xxx	Survey of marine environment in Thursday Island Group

A not so new record

A prominent QWSG member and Naturesearcher got a phone call from his dear mum. "There is a beach-washed bird near our house". Excitement could this be a rare pelagic. He followed up on this lead, only to find it was a maggoty racing pigeon. Remember it's the thought that counts!

Restore is a versatile word!

According to our premier, Hon. Wayne Goss, to restore the coastline is to create a marina and a 1000-bed hotel. Hmmm!

The QWSG had the pleasure of having Adrien Riegen talk at the 1994 AGM. Adrien has a long association with waders dating back to 1969, when he saw his first wader, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. About this time he met up with Clive Minton, a pioneer of wader work in England and Australia. Adrien has an admirable ambition to see every species of wader in the world. Thus far he has seen about half Adrien also has a considerable connection with Australia, having worked at Mt. Newman in WA, and participated in the AWSG studies in the early 80's. Adrien now lives in NZ and is chairperson of the NZWSG. The following article is a transcript of his talk to QWSG. Eds.

An overview of the waders of New Zealand

by Adrien Riegen

New Zealand has 58 species of wader, 9 of which are endemics.

Section 1 Endemics and Breeding

South Island Pied Oystercatcher

The total population of this species is 85,000, making it the most numerous native species. The South Island Pied Oystercatcher (SIPO) used to be considered a subspecies of the Australian Pied Oystercatcher, but in HANZAB, it has now been given full species status. All but a handful of SIPO nest on the South Island (SI). The population of SIPO has increased markedly in the last 50 years, and is still increasing. Previously, flocks of 100 were noteworthy, but now flocks of up to 10,000 birds are not considered unusual. The majority of SIPO spend their non-breeding season in the Auckland region.

Pied Stilt

The Pied Stilt is the secondmost common wader in New Zealand with a population of 65,000. It breeds all around New Zealand, but the majority breed on the SI. Winter flocks of 1,000 or more Pied Stilt are common around the Auckland harbours. The Pied Stilt has benefited greatly from farming.

Spur-winged Plover

The first recorded breeding of a Spur-winged Plover in New Zealand occurred at Invercargill, Southland, in 1932. It has now spread to all parts of NZ, even into the parks of Auckland, and its population is increasing rapidly. It is an early breeder, one pair started breeding in May '94 and had chicks in late June on an Auckland motorway cloverleaf.

Wrybill

The Wrybill is unique, in that it is the only bird with a sideways curving bill (always bends to the right). Almost all winter in the Auckland region (92%). The largest flock is at Miranda (50-60% of the population); these were not discovered until about 1940 by the late Dick Sibson and Ross McKenzie. A census of the population on 29 May 1994 put the minimum total at 5,111 individuals. The population is thought to have been stable over the past 10 years.

Variable Oystercatcher

As the name implies, the Variable Oystercatcher occurs in various plumages, from all black to pied (similar to SIPO). It is slightly larger than the SIPO. The Variable Oystercatcher prefers open beaches, and is rarely seen in harbours. Its population is around 1,500-1,700. Threats include beach-users and introduced mammalian predators.

New Zealand Dotterel

There are two populations of New Zealand Dotterel: one in the north of North Island, and the other on Southland Coast and Stewart Island. The total population is less than 1,500 and declining for the same reasons as the previous species. It is long-lived like most NZ endemics. North Island birds nest on open beaches and dunes, and are very vulnerable to cats and stoats. SI birds, considered a separate sub-species, breed only on the mountain tops of Stewart Island. Cats predate on New Zealand Dotterel at night. Males do most of the incubating at night so more males are killed. Sixty birds remain on SI, and of these, only a small proportion are males. The population is declining rapidly, and they may not be saved from extinction.

Banded Dotterel

The Banded Dotterel is widespread in New Zealand, but greatest numbers nest on SI. Movements after breeding are complex, with many wintering in south-east Australia. The population of Banded Dotterel in New Zealand is uncertain, but they are not considered threatened. About 8000 birds were counted in winter.

Black Stilt

The Black Stilts endemic, and is seriously threatened by mammalian predators, loss of habitat and hybridisation with the Pied Stilt. The Black Stilt breeds only on gravel river bed systems in SI. Fifty birds remain, but a heavy captive breeding program is under way. They are difficult to protect on breeding grounds as pairs are scattered. Fences have been put around some nests, but in some cases, they have then deserted these nests and built new nests outside the fence. The question is - do they realise that we are trying to help them, and if so, why don't they playing the game.

Shore Plover

The Shore Plover was once found around the coast of the main islands, but is now confined to South East Island in the Chathams. Transfers were made on several occasions to islands near South East Island, but each time, the birds flew back to South East Island, arriving before the wildlife staff. The population is steady at 120 birds. Birds are to be released on a suitable predator free island near Auckland in spring 1994. All birds except one were banded in 1992 - the odd one being left for photographs.

Chatham Island Oystercatcher

The Chatham Island Oystercatcher is confined to a few of the Chatham islands. Only about 50 birds remain. This oystercatcher may be difficult to save. More predator free habitat needs to be found for them.

Chatham Island Snipe

The Chatham Island Snipe is confined to a few small islands in the Chatham group. It is doing very well on South East Island.

New Zealand Snipe

Sub-species of New Zealand Snipe include those on Auckland Island, Snares Island, Antipodes Islands, Stewart Island (extinct), and Little Barrier Island (extinct). It is still doing reasonably well on predator free islands.

Black-fronted Plover

The Black-fronted Dotterel established itself in Hawke's Bay, Mamawatu and Wairampa. It is occasionally seen in other places.

Section 2 Regular visitors in small or large numbers

Lesser Golden Plover

A shy and weary bird. Over 1,000 visit annually, mostly in the north. It rarely overwinters.

Ruddy Turnstone

The third most numerous wader with 5,000 plus visiting annually. It is well spread around the country. Regularly 500 are found on the Chatham Islands.

Red Knot

The Red Knot is the second most numerous Arctic wader with about 65,000 visiting annually. The actual number may be underestimated, as they form tight flocks 3-5,000 and sometimes as many as 12-15,000. The Red Knot is localised mostly to Parengarenga (far north), Auckland, and Farewell Spit.

Curlew Sandpiper

The Curlew Sandpiper occurs regularly in small numbers each year. Flocks of 20-40 are quite regular. It is seen at all main wader harbours, although it is quite rare at Kaipara Harbour.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper is found in small numbers each year. Flocks of 20-40 are regularly found but more commonly flocks are 3-5.

Pectoral Sandpiper

The Pectoral Sandpiper occurs in small numbers each year. Usually not more than one at each site. Usually seen with previous species.

Red-necked Stint

The Red-necked Stint occurs in small numbers each year. Flocks of 20-40 occur occasionally, but usually the flocks are 3-5. They are seen at all main wader harbours, but particularly at Lake Ellesmere (orange flag sighting from this site).

Eastern Curlew

About 10-30 Eastern Curlew occur in New Zealand each year. Usual sites include Parengarenga, Miranda, Manukau and Farewell Spit.

Whimbrel

Several hundred Whimbrel migrate to New Zealand each year, and both races are found. They are shy and retiring. Flocks of 40+ are regularly seen at a few sites.

Black-tailed Godwit

Most years small numbers of Black-tailed Godwits are seen intermixed with Bar-tailed Godwits. As many as 6-10 are seen together at times.

Bar-tailed Godwit

The Bar-tailed Godwit is by far the most numerous and widespread of the Arctic migrants. Annual counts are 80-90,000. It is found on most harbours and estuaries but the bulk of the population is found in the Auckland region, Far North and Farewell Spit SI. Flocks do not usually contain more than 6,000 birds. They are often found in association with the Red Knot, forming very tight flocks of 10,000 or more birds.

Grey-tailed Tattler

Small numbers of Grey-tailed Tattlers are seen each year, particularly in the Auckland region. They are usually seen with other small waders such as the Wrybill and Curlew Sandpiper. There are rarely more than two at one site.

Terek Sandpiper

Small numbers of Terek Sandpiper are seen in New Zealand each year, particularly in the Auckland region. They are usually seen with other small waders such as the Wrybill and Curlew Sandpiper. They are usually seen in ones and twos, but a maximum of 8 have been seen in one flock.

Section 3 Rare or uncommon visitors

Painted Snipe	1 record at Lake Ellesmere in 1986.
Red-necked Avocet	2 records this century, the last in 1970.
Golden Plover	New to list. One or two records.
Oriental Pratincole	8 records, the last in 1988.
Red-capped Plover	It has bred in NZ. The last record in 1981.
Ringed Plover	2 records, the last in 1985.
Large Sand Plover	Seen almost annually in very small numbers.
Mongolian Plover	Seen almost annually in very small numbers.
Oriental Plover	About 20 records, the last one in 1989.
Red-kneed Dotterel	1 record in 1976.
Grey Plover	Occurs almost annually in small numbers.
Japanese Snipe	About 20 records, the last one in 1988.
Great Knot	About 20 records, the last one in 1993.
Sanderling	Perhaps a regular but rare annual visitor.
Dunlin	4 records, the last one in 1979.
Baird's Sandpiper	4 records, the last one in 1976.
White-rumped Sandpiper	3 records, the last one in 1971.
Western Sandpiper	5 records, the last one in 1985.
Broad-billed Sandpiper	About 8 records, the last one in 1994.
Ruff	About 5 records, the last one in 1987.
Asian Dowitcher	2 records: Lake Ellesmere and Miranda.
Little Whimbrel	Almost an annual visitor.
Bristle-thighed Curlew	3 records, all from the Kermadecs.
Hudsonian Godwit	Not quite an annual visitor.
Upland Sandpiper	1 record from Karaka in 1967.
Wandering Tattler	Almost an annual visitor.
Common Sandpiper	About 12 records.
Greenshank	Annual but rare visitor.
Lesser Yellowlegs	About 10 records, the last in 1985.
Grey Phalarope	6 records, the last in Karaka in 1993.
Red-necked Phalarope	4 records, the last in 1986.
Wilson's Phalarope	3 records, the last in 1984.

Black Stilt Breeding Season 1993-94 and Releases of Captive Stock

by Christine Reed

There were 15 pairs of Black Stilts in the wild last season, 7 of which were pure black X black pairs. There were also another 4 pairs that did not attempt to breed. The total population stands at 52 pure black adults and 27 sub-adults. We artificially incubated 81 eggs at Twizel. Many of these were hatched in captivity. Thirty two young birds, including chicks from captive laid eggs, have been reared for release into the wild in Sept. '94. Of the 35 juvenile Black Stilts, DOC (*Department of Conservation*) released into the wild from the Twizel aviary in September 1993, at least 16 were still alive in February 1994. Rising lake levels have made it difficult to locate more than 10 of these on a count in May 1994. So early results from the first major release of young birds looks very encouraging and our predicted mortality of approximately 50% was reasonably accurate. The wild population did not do very well again this season. Only two chicks fledged and both these have disappeared. Habitat restoration continues as part of Project River Recovery funded by FCNZ, with willows being removed from the Ahururi delta and the planned removal of more from the lower river soon.

Some Black Stilts and hybrids continue to migrate to northern harbours and we have not yet located all wintering areas. So OSNZ and NZWSG members could help this program significantly by reporting any sightings to our Twizel office. Most Black Stilts are colour-banded on the tarsus. The last two seasons we have been using 2 bands on each leg. Prior to that there may be 2, 1 or no bands on a leg. Metal bands are not being used and it is uncommon for existing birds to have these.

(This article is reproduced from the New Zealand Wader Study Group Newsletter No. 3)

Trip Reports

Moreton Island Earthwatch (1-16 October)

by Gary Harch

I was involved for three days with Earthwatch when we first went to Moreton Island. As is usual there was an extremely early morning start, this time to drop someone off at the boat ramp near Cleveland, and then be back to pick up others and the rest of the gear in time to catch the barge to Tangalooma.

We had the (luxury?) of staying in some unfinished staff accommodation; though the hours that were kept throughout this stay meant there wasn't a lot of time for sleeping. Monday afternoon saw us setting nets down at Reeders Point. We finally got back to Tangalooma to spend most of the rest of the night designing and manufacturing harnesses to attach the radio transmitters to 4 Eastern Curlews. The next morning, we were able to fire a net almost immediately because we were particularly interested in just getting enough Eastern Curlew for the transmitting devices. For those who have spent many hours waiting for just the right combination of events in order to fire a net this was a luxury! After initially fitting a dummy transmitter to see if the idea would work, 4 birds were eventually attached with a transmitter. This was a long process to try and get it right. Then after letting them go it was wait and see and listen in with our radio-receiver. Good news right from the beginning - we were able to tell that two of the birds had stayed around and were feeding on the big sandbank out from Reeders Point.

After a long day it was back to Tangalooma to rest and plan for the next day. On the Wednesday some of the Earthwatch people took the chance to see some of the island while three of us headed off by boat back to Reeders Point. Again immediate success. Two of the birds were roosting at the very site at which they had been caught the previous day. We walked several kilometres around to Mirapool and located the third bird which we then tracked as it flew back to Reeders. (Each transmitter broadcasts a unique frequency "beep" approximately every second which enables us to identify individual birds.)

By the time we walked back these three birds were feeding on the sandbank and after a long time we were able to visually locate these three birds. All three birds appeared OK at this stage.

I had to head back to Brisbane that afternoon and somewhere else in this newsletter or an issue to come will be related the adventures of the 4th bird.

Green Island Trip (30 October)

by Andrew Geering

On Sunday 30th October, about twenty QOS/QWSG members assembled at Wellington Point for an adventurous trip to Green Island in central Moreton Bay. The intertidal areas of the island are sought after by Queensland Cement Limited, and we were all keen to do a low-tide census of the birds in the area. The day did not start well because of a misunderstanding, resulting in the non-arrival of the largest and fastest boat.

Consequently, it took 3 trips in the two other boats to ferry everyone to the island. Weatherwise, we couldn't have asked for a better day - no wind, and a warm sunny day. Birds were plentiful, and there were many interesting creatures to be seen in the shallows. I was surprised to see the extent of regrowth of live coral on the western side, the side where most coral was killed during the 1974 floods. It was difficult to reconcile the impact assessment study (IAS) and almost everything we saw on the day. Within 20 steps of the landing point, we saw a mangrove species that the IAS consultants had not been able to find.

The group divided into five, with sub-groups surveying the western reef-flat (led by Julien Bielewicz), the northern reef-flat led by Fiona Johnson), the north-western reef-flat (led by Andrew Geering), the south-western reef-flat led by Peter Driscoll), and the central island area (led by Jan England). The list of birds seen between 11.30 am and 2.00 pm is as follows (the figure in brackets is the number of each species seen): Pied Oystercatcher (25), Grey Plover (3), Lesser Golden Plover (3), Mongolian Plover (16), Large Sand Plover (24), Black-winged Stilt (19), Ruddy Turnstone (29), Eastern Curlew (17), Whimbrel (82), Grey-tailed Tattler (121), Greenshank (20), Bar-tailed Godwit (57), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (23), Red-necked Stint (45), Curlew Sandpiper (13), Australian Pelican (2), Pied Cormorant (23), Little Pied Cormorant (21), White-faced Heron (21), Great Egret (1), Little Egret (5), Striated Heron (5), Sacred Ibis (22), White-bellied Sea-eagle (1), Brahminy Kite (3), Whistling Kite (1), Osprey (1), Chestnut Teal (13), Silver Gull (29), Gull-billed Tern (2), Caspian Tern (2), Little Tern (1), Crested Tern (2), Collared Kingfisher (25), Tawny Grassbird (5), Tree Martin (10), White-winged Triller (2), Mangrove Honeyeater (17), Grey Fantail (5), Mangrove

Warbler (23), Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike (4), RufousWhistler(9),White-throatedWar- bler (2), Welcome Swallow (6), Varied TriNer (1), Silvereeye (2), Leaden Flycatcher (1), Koel (1), Rufous Songlark (1), Brown Quail (1), Bar-shouldered Dove (5), White-breasted Wood-swallow (8). The total is 52 species and 780 birds - not bad for a small speck in Moreton Bay!

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 one week in advance. For the wader counts, please ring Ivell Whyte, the count coordinator on #####. All completed count forms must be returned to Ivell Whyte at #####.

Fewer cannon netting outings have been planned than previously. The regular sites at Fisherman Islands and Cabbage Tree Creek have become less suitable for netting and a change in approach has been called for.

As well as the activities listed, we will mount netting outings "opportunistically" when it seems there is a good chance of success, perhaps at St Helena Island or Cleveland. If you want to be on a list of people to be asked "at the time" to come along, let Peter Driscoll know. There may also be a need to conduct additional trips to Moreton Island to follow up with the Eastern Curlew radio-tracking study.

The weekend outings away from Moreton Bay, listed below, will give us a chance to determine what other options there are for netting.

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

- Sat. 17th December High of 2.36 m at 9:03 am.
- Sat. 14th January High of 2.27 m at 8:02 am.
- 4th & 5th February High of 2.21 m at 12:21 pm. This and the following weekend are the official AWSG summer count days. Please make a big effort to get the count done, preferably on this weekend rather than 11th - 12th February
- Sat. 4th March High of 2.23 m at 11:15 am.
- Sat. 1st April High of 2.16 m at 10: 12 pm.
- Sat. 15th April High of 2.29 m at 9:08 pm.
- Sat. 13th May High of 2.16 m at 7:51 pm.

Cannon Netting

- Fri 2nd - Sun 4th Dec Moreton Island. High of 2.63 m at 9.33 am on Saturday. This will be a follow up trip to the Earthwatch program and will involve fitting more radio transmitters to Eastern Curlew.
- Late Dec -- early Jan Possibility of opportunistic netting (see note above)
- Sat 11 & Sun 12 Feb Clarence River Estuary - joint outing with NSW WSG - late afternoon high tides. Leave early Saturday and arrive back late Sunday.
- Sat 25 & Sun 26 Feb Great Sandy Strait- early morning high tide on Sunday. Leave Saturday to set camp and nets in the afternoon and arrive back Sunday.
- March Possibility of opportunistic netting (most likely 18th or 19th).

Membership form

Post to Rev., Gary Harch, #####
Annual membership: Single, \$10.00; Student/Pensioner, \$7.50; Family, \$18.00.

I/We wish to join/renew		My payment is enclosed:	
Title	Name	Membership	\$ _____
Address		Donation	\$ _____
.....Postcode		Total enclosed	\$ _____
Phone	(home)	Date.....	
	(work)		

Comments/Special skills (eg. Do you want to participate in the regular wader counts? What would you like the group to do?)