

QUEENSLAND WADER

Newsletter of the Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG0, a special interest group of the Queensland Ornithological Society Incorporated

Issue 13

Winter 1995

Everybody should be doing something

by Leanne Bowden and Greg Miller

So said Brett Lane to 20 or so would be cannon netters at the Training Day held at Nudgee Beach Environment Centre on Saturday 27 May. Together with "Never stand in front of a loaded cannon", "Everybody should be doing something" was just one of the more important facts learnt on this "How, When, Where and Why" day.

But of paramount importance, when planning, conducting and participating in a cannon netting exercise, is - **the well-being of the birds.**

The presentation, including an excellent display of books on wader identification and data collection methods, was balanced between theory and practice, the serious and humorous aspects of netting, and emphasised how teamwork spreads the load and reduces the time required.

Theory included:

- the phases of the moon and tides, and how to select the optimum day (ie. when you can set the net and process the birds in daylight hours, and still sleep in!);
- where to set the net, and what happens when projectiles do not travel in the intended fashion;
- how to handle and process the birds (age, sex, moult, measurements, weight, scribing, releasing)
- how the raw data gathered is processed statistically to expose any underlying patterns (eg. the different arrival times of males and females, build-up of weight before migration);
- why the bands and flags are important;
- and finally, why the effort is all worthwhile.

Practice included:

- handling the net, setting it up, and packing it away;
- demonstrations on how the cannons are loaded and fired; and
- cleaning the equipment.

Details of some of the points we learnt to improve the catch, lessen the risk and discomfort to the birds, and gain the maximum information possible follow.

HOW?

- Mark the location for the net and dig a small trench to lay it in;
- Team members spill the net from its bag into and along the trench; then unfurl the net, leaving the back line remaining in the trench-
- it is preferable to walk and work at the back of the roost site if possible, to prevent footprints disturbing the natural sand patterns at the roost site;
- peg the back line at the beginning of the jump ropes;
- a line of team members concertina the net as they walk the front line back to the trench, removing any grot from the net on the way, and lay the net on top of the back line;
- the projectile ropes should be laid straight along the top of the furled net with no twists (to minimise any erratic movement of the ropes in flight) and bunched together beside the cannons;
- once the net is organised, the pegs remain in the same position, but are reattached to the end of the jump rope, rather than the beginning;
- place markers to indicate the danger zone (eg. don't fire if there are birds in this area) and where (it is hoped) the net will land (eg. outer corners);
- if necessary, lay a jiggler line about 1 pace in front of the net. (This will be jerked to move birds away from the danger area prior to firing, if required);
- other team members dig the appropriate number of trenches for the cannons, 1 pace behind the net, opposite to the group of ropes which are shackled to the projectiles. The inner cannon point forward while the

outer cannon point to the outer corners of where the net will land. Ensure that the trench is dug to the front so that the cannon's base sits against a solid base, rather than softly dug sand;

- the elevation and angle of the cannon is normally right if The Leader says it is! Like when one can look straight down the barrel when kneeling three to five paces away from the muzzle, depending upon conditions and situation; or by using a level to determine the exact angle;

- camouflage the net with sand and/ or debris, but bear in mind not to add too much weight; leave a little pile of debris near the cannons so that they can be lightly concealed after loading;

- attach the net ropes to the projectiles, load the projectiles and wire the cannons, **AND IT IS NO LONGER SAFE TO WALK IN FRONT OF THE NET.**

- Uncoil the firing line (and the jiggler line if required) and take to a concealed firing position an appropriate distance away;

- the firer and observers keep in touch.

Everybody should be doing something by radio to determine the right time to fire.

- Decide who will:

- carry and erect the holding cages

- carry and spread The covering material

- extract birds from the net (requires experience);

- run with the birds from net to holding cages;

- manage the birds placed within the cages.

- WAIT and wait and wait chat to your team members now because there'll be no time for socialising once processing begins.

- **FIRE** .. and everyone runs like crazy to ensure the birds are extracted, processed and released as quickly as possible to reduce stress. If the net has reached the water, the leading edge should be lifted quickly. Cover the net with shade-cloth to assist in keeping the birds quiet and still.

TAKE CARE

- NOT TO WALK anywhere where there's a possibility a bird could be hiding and accidentally trampled, eg. covering material, edges of the net and the holding cage.

- As the birds are progressively re- moved from the front of the net, move the shade-cloth back to ensure the weight is distributed evenly.

- Start performing the various measurement tasks and record the details.

- Apply a band to one leg; Provided by the Australian Bat & Bird Banding Scheme through the Australian Nature Conservation Agency; made of non-corroding material; different sizes for different birds; stamped with a number and ANCA's return address. Aids identification and notification if the bird is re- caught or even found dead.

- Apply a plastic flag to the other leg;

We use green, to indicate the bird was banded in Moreton Bay; Victoria uses orange, Broome W.A. = yellow, certain species in New South Wales & New Zealand = white. Provides easy and obvious identification of where the area where the bird was banded, without re-catching.

- Finally release the birds, and spend another few hours cleaning and packing the equipment.

WHEN?

- study tide heights and times.

- select a high tide that allows time to set the net at least 3 hours before high tide, providing the birds with plenty of uninterrupted time to gather at the roost site, together with enough daylight hours to process the birds after the net has been fired.

WHERE?

- Netting should preferably occur on a dry, relatively debris free surface. Reconnoitre the chosen site close to the time of netting, to evaluate the precise position the flock will be in on netting day. Easy!!)

WHY?

- to gain a fuller understanding of migration patterns;

- to monitor the status of each particular species; and

- to collect data that can be used to support reasons for protection of habitat and enhance the survival of the species.

BUT!

Peter Driscoll, who provided comments on the How, When and Where, suggested the addition of one final point.

- When netting day comes around, and new members feel confident because they have carefully memorised the order of all the foregoing steps and processes, just be prepared for the Leader to totally change absolutely everything!

In any event, all who participated in the Training Day were rewarded with new knowledge and a better understanding of how data is collected and used to provide a clearer picture of the life of the birds. It makes the early mornings, long waits, insect bites, aching limbs and back, soggy clothes and dirty hands all worth- while, when you know that you are one of a privileged few who are playing a small part in gathering information that may one day aid the survival of these species in our rapidly developing world.

Queensland Wader Study Group (QOS Inc.) Financial Statements Reconciliation for the months of November 1994 to June 1995

The financial statements have been removed from the on-line publications

Paradise Lost

by Lester Roy

It seems that there must have been some good Little Tern-outs in the Bundaberg region in times past for there is ample evidence of this in museum collections around Australia. Most likely these get-togethers were annual events for it is in the nature of the participants, which still visit the area, to behave this way.

There are some good reasons why these celebrations no longer occur, the principal one being that the special venue and its idyllic setting no longer exists. These events were in fact Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* breeding recorded on Pelican Island, Bundaberg and the celebration would have been one of a close supply of small fish in shallow waters. These small, long-winged, gull-like birds require a nesting site with little or no vegetation just above the high tide level and a surface of bare shingle, beach sand, pebble, or better still, mixtures with a scattering of low grass or beach flotsam, such as seaweed or driftwood. Sheltered islands of this type, close to fish breeding sites are considered to be the ideal. Some ground cover is necessary as bides for chicks, which leave the nest a few days after hatching, and pebble or shell is required to prevent the eggs moving in high winds.

Little Terns are the smallest of the tern family migrating to Australian waters and they are well adapted to feed on small fish and marine invertebrates in shallow waters. The fish breeding connection is vital in nesting site selection as the chicks can only feed on very small items and the recorded preferences are pilchards, sprats and hardyheads.

The previously mentioned venue and the evidence as a consequence of the past activities of amateur and museum egg collectors, who lodged five clutches in Eastern Australian museums. The following information lists the history of the collections:

South Australian Museum

1. Clutch of 2 fresh eggs collected at Pelican Island, Queensland (7 September, 1934), by Ray Watson. Eggs deposited in sand amongst shells above high water mark.
2. Clutch of 3 eggs collected at Pelican Island, Bundaberg (29 September, 1936), by B. Shippard. Nest a mere depression in the sand and nests in large numbers on the island. Incubation slight.

Queensland Musuem

1. No. 0.19069 eggs collected Pelican Island, Queensland (17 October, 1930), by H. Ray. The other 2 clutches were taken in August and October, but unfortunately no year was quoted.

Pelican Island no longer exists and after a lot of map searching, which ex- tended to maps held in all of the usual and some unusual places, the most likely location is as shown on the accompanying sketch. Local Port Authority maps were previously destroyed by rue and no local recorded history mentions it. The ornithological

evidence reveals that it was still in existence in 1936 and since the long point of Barubbra Island disappeared in the 1942 flood, it seems that Pelican Island went with it. The sites on the map, shown as The Fiveways and Sandy Camp, are well known to older local fishermen who frequented the area, one places Pelican Island without any prompting to where I have shown it on the sketch. Considering the course of events, the activities of former egg collectors and fisherman would have had no influence on the ultimate outcome, at least at that time anyway.

The species is currently classified as endangered since many former breeding sites around river estuaries and in similar still water protected sites now have too much human intrusion. Former population levels are not known but recent surveys show the same definite declines.

One significant behaviour of the breeding biology is a marked tendency to faithfulness to the natal site or its close proximity. This habit has been successfully used as a conservation tool around the world by creating suitable sites from dredged soil in former breeding areas. Some of this work has been done in Victoria and New South Wales and reported in "National Breeding Census of the Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* in Northern and Eastern Australia in 1989" (R.A.O.U. Report No. 78, July 1992), showing that of the 51 recorded breeding sites, 4 were on such islands. Of significance, the report found no nests in the approximate 1500 kilometres of coastline between Bowen and Nambucca Heads in N.S.W. In this section of coastline, 36 potential sites which embraced former known ones were inspected.

Chicks and eggs are well camouflaged in good breeding sites and have been trampled by the unsuspecting public on many occasions. Domestic dogs and stray cats have also caused havoc in accessible sites and I have no doubt that foxes would also appreciate the opportunity. The current spate of four-wheel driving around isolated beaches would have little to recommend it, as single nesting is known and particularly difficult to locate.

There will undoubtedly be many people who will abhor the former egg collecting, but it has been proved to have had value, since proof of eggshell thinning in Peregrine Falcons as a result of pesticide use was only discovered by using eggs held in museum collections.

A whole range of barriers and policing has been used to protect some southern breeding sites with reasonable success, but the upshot of it all is that man-made islands and isolated sites provide the most practical solutions to the current dilemma.

Acknowledgments:

I am indebted to the memories of Les Hopton, Dick Poner and Henry Paap, all former fishermen, for the information leading to a reasonable reconstruction of Pelican Island. Other volunteer map searchers in inaccessible places who appreciated what I was trying to establish are similarly thanked.

Count Program Update

by Ivell Whyte

All of the count sheets for the national summer wader count are in - and it's been our best coverage yet here in Queensland.

A big "thank you" to all participants and special thanks to Frank Harrison in Townsville. Frank has taken over as our northern count coordinator. He has spent some time with Clive Minton and we welcome his addition to the QWSG count program. Frank and his Mudskippers team dodged box jellyfish and crocs to manage almost blanket coverage of the Townsville area. They recorded nearly 6000 birds.

All count sheets from Mackay north are now to be returned to Frank Harrison at 416 Albert St Cranbrook 4814.

The Port Curtis Wader Study Group is still very active and the weekend at Boonooroo in February served to reinforce the view that we need to encourage a similar group in the Maryborough region.

Raby Bay as a roost site currently is no more, however negotiations are still continuing with the Redlands Shire Council on the construction of an artificial roost site. Meantime Sandra Harding, Deb and Owen McNamara and Sheryl and Arthur Keates are looking out for alternative roost sites that the waders may currently be using.

Waders, especially the Eastern Curlew, at Dux Creek Bribie Island, are still holding on tenuously despite the roost site being well and truly worked over by earthmoving equipment. Richard Johnson from Gatton has started monitoring the Lockyer Valley and we're looking to extend further westward, so if anyone has contacts in Central or Western Qld, please let us know.

The *Courier Mail* ran an article on the national summer count (featuring a somewhat reluctant yours truly and partner). I thought wader watchers were the only people dedicated or eccentric enough to plod through mud, get eaten alive by sandflies, get wet up to the eyeballs and still come up smiling with satisfaction. That is, until we were asked to accompany Brian William from the *Courier Mail* and his photographer to our count site on Dynah Island at Cabbage Tree Creek.

Now, our journalist friend, having been given the lowdown on the count site came well prepared - old shorts, hat, sandals and sunscreen. The photographer, on the other hand, had only been assigned that morning. He rolled up his smart casual slacks, and in the absence of a spare pair of size 10 joggers, went barefoot.

It was about 38 degrees and the sand on Dynah Island was warm, to say the least. The recently burnt grass tops were very sharp, so our intrepid photographer hotfooted it over to the mangrove foreshore, where the mangrove roots then proceeded to give him curry. There were some good-natured comments as to what *Courier Mail* photographers might like to do to a certain conservation journalist.

For whatever reason, the birds weren't there in their most awesome numbers on the roost but our pair were nevertheless suitably impressed. We all came away from Cabbage Tree Creek in high spirits - the journalist with what he considered a good conservation story, Jim and I with the hope of good publicity for the count program, and the photographer with his photos and one size 6 thong, which he had found. He wore it gleefully on his size 10 foot all the way back to the boat.

Those two men were wetter, muddier, and more tired after their walk, than either Jim or me - but they were possibly still more cheerful. They'd make damned good wader watchers.

Natasha Taylor has taken over some of the load from Peter Driscoll and is now inputting the count data. She has asked that we remember to record start and finish times, as this has been missed on a few of our sheets.

Regular monitoring dates are on the activities page. Please return count sheets as usual to me at #####

Continuing Education Course on Waders

The QWSG is giving a Continuing Education Course at the Kelvin Grove Campus of QUT in October. It will consist of two evenings of lectures on October 4 and 18 and a field day on October 15 at Boondall Wetlands Environmental Education Centre and Nudgee Beach. The plan at present is that several people will give lectures in the evening covering waders and their habitat, biology, migration and distribution in Moreton Bay. We plan to give a segment on identification of waders and the field day will allow this to be experienced by participants at first hand. Some of the conservation issues involved in protecting birds that travel across the globe will be presented, looking at both the international and local aspects.

We will be charging \$70 per head for the course. Our aim is to increase the level of knowledge and awareness of our waders in the Brisbane community. We will need help from experienced wader observers for the field day. As this is a first for us we do not know how many people we might get but I have put a ceiling of 60 participants on the course. If we get this number, we shall need about 10 helpers for the field day with telescopes and expertise.

We are having brochures printed and if you have friends or groups who you think may be interested, please get in touch with me from the last week in July onwards and I shall get some to you. The cost of advertising is all ours, not QUT'S, so all help and enthusiasm will be welcome, as will ideas of groups to target. So far we are considering high schools, local newspapers, sailing, fishing and naturalist groups.

For more information or discussion, contact Dr. Diana O'Connor on ##### or at #####.

North-west Australia Wader Study Expedition 1986 **Saturday 2 March to Saturday 20 April**

This note is to provide information to prospective participants in the next Wader Study Expedition to NW Australia in March/April 1996.

The area is one of the topmost regions in the world for waders (shorebirds) with up to three quarters of a million individuals of 50 species spread between three main locations:

Roebuck Bay/Roebuck Plains (near Broome)
80 Mile Beach/Anna Plains (250 km SW of Broome)
Port Hedland Saltworks (600 km SW of Broome).

Easy accessibility has made the area a prime location for the study of many species of wader previously not studied elsewhere, as well as for the northern populations of species which occur in southern Australia and in other parts of the world. Research has been carried out by a series of expeditions, dating back to 1981, supplemented in recent years by year round data collection by the wardens of (and visitors to) Broome Bird Observatory (set up by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union in 1988).

The 1996 expedition will be the sixteenth to NW Australia and will last for seven weeks - from 2 March to 20 April. Participants are encouraged to come for as long as possible (preferably a minimum of 2-3 weeks). They are also welcome to stay at Broome Bird Observatory outside the 'core' expedition dates - counting of migration departures will, for example, be continuing until the end of April.

The detailed itinerary has been drawn up on the basis of high tide height/time information. Wherever possible the expedition will be at Broome during weekends in order to most easily facilitate the joining or departure of participants. However it is possible to arrive or depart from other locations if this is more convenient. 80 Mile/Anna Plains is only a three hour bus ride from Broome (daily service) and there are good flights to and from Port Hedland (to Perth, Broome and Darwin).

It is intended that around 20 persons be in the field together throughout the seven week period. As in previous years it is expected that between one third and one half of these will be from overseas, with a good variety of countries represented (usually around eight). Participation in the expedition is also being offered to a limited number of delegates attending the international Ramsar Conference being held in Brisbane from 19 to 27 March 1996. There is a possibility that if enough people are interested in travelling to Broome after the Ramsar Conference, then a private plane may be chartered, -an option that may prove cheaper.

More, details on the expedition can be obtained from Peter Driscoll.

New Members

We welcome the following people who have paid up and joined the QWSG since our records have gone onto the new computer system. They are listed in alphabetical order:

Mr. Brian ASHLEY, Mr/s Donald & Lesley BRADLEY, Mr. Rory CHAPPLE, W. Neville COLEMAN, Mr. Colin COLLINS, Ms. Melissa COOPER, Mrs. Ruth CROSSON, Mr. Russ LAMB & Ms. Maria DAM, Mr. John DAY, Mr. John DOBSON, Mr. Ivan FEIN, Drs Andrew & Christine GALBRAITH, Mrs. Sheena GILLMAN, Miss Meredith HALL, Mr. Frand HARRISON, Ms Marie HAYWARD, Mrs. Barbara ISENRING, Mr/s Arthur & Sheryl KEATES, W. Bruce KNUCKEY, George MAUREL, Mrs. Fay McPHERSON, Mr. Andrew NORMAN, Mr. Michael OBERHOFER, Mr. Stuart PELL, Mr. Andrew REIMANIS, Mr. Bruce REINEKER, Mrs. Judith RUDELL, Ms Kira SCHLUSSER, Mr. John STELEY, Mr. Les STRONG, Mr. Scott TEMPLETON, Mr. Peter TIERNEY, Mr/s Harold & Hilary TILTON.

Many thanks to those who have included a donation with their membership joining or renewal fee. This is greatly appreciated as such donations make our ongoing work possible.

Artificial roosts

The QWSG was awarded a grant of \$5000 from the Regional Open Space Scheme of the State Government (Department of Lands and Department of Planning and Local Government) to look at options for artificial roosts at Raby Bay. This grant was augmented by a sum of \$2000 from ANCA. The QWSG employed Wayne Lawler to prepare a report, and the Department of Environment and Heritage and Redlands Shire

Council have collaborated on the project. The report from Wayne is soon to be released, and we are all hoping that the State Government will act upon it. Our thanks go to Wayne as I know he has put much more time and effort into it than he was ever paid to do. The Department of Heritage is interested in us doing a similar project at Pumicestone Passage.

Twitchers rush to join cannon netting trips

A suspected Long-billed Dowitcher, a wader normally resident in the American flyway, was trapped on 18 June by the VWSG at Barry's Beach, Corner Inlet, Victoria. This would be a first record for Australia. I understand that there is still some discussion as to whether it is a Short-billed Dowitcher, a very similar species with overlapping range.

New records from Russia

News from Vladimir & Zekov is that two Red-necked Stints banded in Australia have been recorded in Sakhalin, eastern Russia. One was from Victoria and was hunted by the locals, and the other was sighted by Vladimir with a leg-flag from NW Australia.

New leg-flags

The Japanese are now leg-flagging waders. Birds banded in Hokkaido are being banded with blue leg-flags, and those from the Chiba Prefecture are being banded with light purple leg-flags (brown was used last year). I understand that the leg-flags are manufactured in a different way to ours, but nevertheless, there should be a protruding plastic bit.

Volunteers! Volunteers!

We need volunteers. Yes I know, we're always looking for volunteers - but this is a very special request. A couple of requests, actually.

Firstly, with the Ramsar conference to be held here in March 1996, QWSO is going to need lots of help. We'll need assistance from experienced people for field trips. Helpers will also be needed to man information stands, take field trip bookings, and do general dog's body's work. This assistance will be required not only by the wader study group, but by the convention organisers as well. At this point of time, it's expected that prior training will be given to helpers at the conference in areas where it may be needed. There will be a need for people willing to billet. This type of opportunity - to be a part of showing the world what we're about - doesn't come by often. Let's give it all we've got.

The second request is for an ongoing involvement. Peter Driscoll to date has been maintaining all of the cannon netting equipment. As Peter carries more than his share of the load within the wader study group, we really do need to lighten it for him. What we're looking for is someone - perhaps a retired person - who could check out the equipment, where it's stored at Gary Harch's place at Clayfield after each cannon netting, clean it and reset the charges. If concern about the latter has you hesitating, don't worry. After a training session, it will be a piece of cake. Just ask anyone who attended the training day at Nudgee Beach. Caring for the equipment is a fairly big job but one that would be enormously appreciated.

All offers of assistance can be directed to any of the committee members.

Green Island

An election promise of the ALP is to permanently protect Green Island in Moreton Bay from the clutches of the coral dredgers. We may have had a victory.

Leg flagging of waders in the Asian-Australasian Flyway

by Peter Driscoll

A number of Wader Study Groups in Australia and New Zealand run leg flagging programs as part of their wader banding activities. Banding programs on waders generally help to determine:

- 1) local movements and site fidelity of migratory and resident waders,
- 2) the timing of migration and migratory routes throughout the Asian- Australasian Flyway,
- 3) moult cycles and seasonal weight changes in birds and,
- 4) population trends, age structure, and morphological characteristics of populations.

Leg flagging has the great advantage of telling us something about where a bird has been without the need for catching it twice to examine a band number. Therefore, it is of particular use in determining migration routes (second objective), but also helps us to understand local movements and the timing of migration.

Leg flagging is different from colour banding and requires just one colour band made especially with the side of the band projecting out from the leg for a distance of about the thickness of the band. A normal metal band is also fitted to the bird. The species and colours used in leg flagging are decided in consultation with the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) and the first flags were fitted in Victorian in January 1990. ABBBS consults with the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) to avoid any regional duplication of colours for particular species throughout the Flyway. Any such duplication would seriously undermine the objectives of leg flagging and could lead to misleading information about the movement of birds.

However, authorities need to develop more formal arrangements between countries in the Flyway to

- a) guarantee an efficient exchange of information,
- b) facilitate a rational allocation of colours to the various regions, and
- c) eliminate, the possibility of species being flagged the same colour in different places.

Table 1 gives the colours so far used in parts of Australia and New Zealand and the approximate numbers of each species that have been flagged. The flags have a good retention rate of greater than 90% and show little fading over a 3-4 year period. They are made of a special unplasticised PVC and ICI Darvic colouring. Flags have generally been placed on the right tibia however, in the case of orange flagged Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstones, have been placed on the right tarsus to improve visibility. Some birds have been incorrectly flagged on the left leg and several Eastern Curlews caught in Victoria have purposefully been flagged on both legs.

Leg flag sightings are generally reported through local Wader Study Groups, the ABBBS, the AWB, the Yamashina Institute or other authorities depending upon the country where sightings are made. Each Wader Study Group in Australia and New Zealand lists these sightings in their own newsletters, but also in the Stilt, from time to time. The Stilt is published by the Australasian Wader Studies Group and issues 19,20, 22, 24 and 26 have lists of sightings.

Sightings of leg flagged waders by birdwatchers throughout the flyway are vital for the success of the program. There is no other reason for flagging waders. The information gained is outstripping what we have learned about migration routes using conventional banding. Over 50% of waders being banded in Australia are also being leg flagged. Statistics show that leg flagging gives up to 5 times the return of recovery information as does band recoveries, although the latter gives more specific information. It is essential that more people are on the look out for flags and know what to do with the information.

We desperately need soundly-based management plans to ensure long term survival of the different wader species and leg flag sightings are helping in this task. Apart from the knowledge gained, the general public and the media are attracted to news of birds being sighted in different countries many thousands of kilometres away from where they were banded. Photographic evidence of sightings assists in attracting public interest and helps to highlight links between countries and the need to conserve these precious birds along the entire length of their migration routes.

Table 1. Leg flag colours assigned to particular groups and regions in Australia and New Zealand. The numbers are an indication of approximate numbers of migratory species that have been leg flagged. Additional species are likely to be added to these lists in the future.

N.B. The Oriental Pratincole indicated under A (orange) were leg flagged in West Java, Indonesia.

Colour		Orange	Yellow	Green	White	White
Region (see key to letter codes below)		A	B	C	D	E
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	361	280	32		
<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	414	230			
<i>Calidris alba</i>	Sanderling	243	10			

<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Red Knot	450	540	147		382
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Curlew Sandpiper	2960	1500	217		
<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	Red-necked Sdnt	6299	1940			
<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	Great Knot	5	1920	660		
<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	Greater Sand Plover	3	1290	5		
<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	Lesser Sand Plover	20	100	39	50	
<i>Charadrius veredus</i>	Oriental Plover		+			
<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>	Ladiam's Snipe	22				
<i>Glareola maldivarum</i>	Oriental Pratincole	602	40			
<i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>	Grey-Wied Tattler		650	87		
<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	Broad-billed Sandpiper		170			
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	229	1790	1175		248
<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Black-tailed Godwit		100			
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Eastern Curlew	35	20	112		
<i>Numenius minutus</i>	Little Curlew		15			
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel	16	10	79		
<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Pacific Golden Plover	26	2		300	
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Grey Plover	1	70			
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Wood Sandpiper		10			
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Greenshank	65	20		300	
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Marsh Sandpiper		15		300	
<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	Terek Sandpiper		920			

A: Victoria (orange). Totals for Victoria are up until June 1993 and a further 6,000 birds would have been flagged up until mid 1994. (Victorian Wader Study Group)

B: North west Australia (yellow). Flagging of waders commenced in north Western Australia (Broome, Eighty Mile Beach and Port Hedland Saltworks) in August 1992. About 11,000 migratory waders have been flagged with yellow flags, mostly in September and October 1992, and in March and April 1994, during the AWSG Expeditions to the region. (Australasian Wader Studies Group)

C: South east Queensland (dark green). The numbers are for the period between 19th January 1991 and 23rd January 1995, a total of 2,553 flagged birds, primarily from Moreton Bay, Brisbane. (Queensland Wader Study Group)

D: New South Wales (white). The NSW Wader Study Group mostly flags birds from the Hunter River Estuary and in future is hoping to include the Grey-tailed Tattler, Black-legged Godwit, Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel. (New South Wales Wader Study Group)

E: New Zealand (white - different species to NSW). Flagging has been undertaken in the Auckland region only and future additions to the species being flagged are likely to be the Curlew Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone. (New Zealand Wader Study Group)

N.B. Leg flagging projects were initiated in the Philippines, Taiwan and Malaysia in 1990 but were not continued.

Billeting

Much of the contribution to the Ramsar Conference will be from non-government organisations from many countries, whose participation is voluntary and self-funded. An offer of home stay as an alternative to other accommodation will help maximise the NGO participation by reducing the costs for potential attendees.

If you are interested in the idea of offering someone space in your house for anything from 3 days to two weeks, please let us know. You are not being asked to commit yourself at this stage, but to simply indicate if you would like more information in due course.

Appeal to fund overseas participants at Ramsar

Conservation of migratory waders requires an international effort. Governments have recognised this fact through the creation of bilateral conservation agreements such as JAMBA (Japan Australia Migratory Bird

Agreement) and through the encouragement of wetland reservation by member countries of the Ramsar Convention.

In March 1996, Brisbane will host the 25th Anniversary Conference of the Ramsar Convention, an event that attracts government, non-government and scientific interest and participation and media exposure from all around the world. It is an opportunity for non-government organisations such as ourselves to influence government policy. The Australasian Wader Studies Group is planning a workshop in Brisbane on wader conservation on the weekend just prior to the Convention.

- The more information we have of issues in other countries, the more successful we will be in advocating appropriate conservation policy by governments.
- Also, we can assist other groups and individuals to disseminate information that is critical for the conservation of waders in other countries.
- We can also help by sharing what we know with others and opening up opportunities for exchange of information.

A way of working towards these objectives in the context of the forthcoming Ramsar Convention is to raise funds for overseas experts to attend the Convention and the AWSG workshop. Of particular importance is to assist people in south-east Asia and Russia who could make an invaluable contribution but have no access to sufficient funds to get here. QWSG has discussed with non-government organisations in Japan the prospect of jointly sponsoring participation of two scientists, one from Russia and one from Vietnam. We would like to raise a minimum of \$2000 for this project and we would like you to pledge your financial support.

If you willing to pledge (no money yet please), please return the form below. All we want is to gauge the degree of support that there is for the idea and how much time we would have to divert to fund-raising if the money wasn't forthcoming from an appeal. We have two people in mind whom we could assist and if the appeal goes ahead we could circulate details of their qualifications and the benefits of bringing them to Brisbane. While they are here we would plan public appearances and talks that could also be used to help cover their costs and perhaps raise additional money for the QWSG. Even if half the membership of QWSG and QOSI gave \$5, we would be well over halfway to our goal of \$2000. \$10:00 would even be better.

Cabbage Tree Creek (14 May 1995)

by Stuart Pell

I'd heard all about this cannon netting. Very different from mist-netting bush birds, they told me. Catch hundreds of birds at one go! Easy to extract from the nets! No problems with tiny wrens going half-way through a mist-net hole, turning around, coming back through another hole and getting almost inextricably tangled as a result!

No, none of that. To a bush-bander, it all sounded great. So there I was on the jetty at Shorncliffe at 6:30am, bleary-eyed but keen.

To make it all so much easier, I found that Peter Driscoll and his family-sherpas had trekked all the gear across the night before, and had set up two sets of cannon nets, ready to fire. Oh yes, and I forgot to mention, the weather was brilliant mild, sunny, and with little wind.

The lucky group consisted of four members (Peter Driscoll, Andrew Geering, Fiona Johnson and myself), plus two enthusiastic visitors from the Currumbin Sanctuary (Liz Romer and Nardia Lees), anxious, like me, to experience cannon netting. We chugged across to the net sites by dinghy, enjoying the peace and serenity of the early morning. Andrew and I manned (personed?) the firing-box, while Peter et al. sailed around to view the nets more clearly from off-shore.

A group of Bar-tailed Godwits 'threatened' net 1, but flew off, probably disturbed by a motorised crabber, who we politely encouraged to move on to better pastures. After a while, a useful flock of Pied Oystercatchers settled safely in front of net 1 and the net was fired. The netting consisted of 13 Pied Oystercatchers (including 3 recaptures), 3 Gull-billed Terns, and 1 Silver Gull, which were duly banded and released.

Net 2 proved a little more difficult to accommodate. A mixed flock of Red-capped and Double-banded Plovers settled nearby and were patiently encouraged to within a few feet of a safe firing position. Using a sixth sense, they took flight!

However, the Red-capped Plovers returned and a little later were successfully netted. A total of 7 Red-capped Plovers were banded and released.

By this time, the water level in the return channel was dropping to marginal levels, so the gear was hastily dismantled and stacked into the dinghy, along with six contented banders. To my amazement the navigator found sufficient water to get back to the jetty, and a great day ended.

Yes, it was very different to bush-banding, but just as exhilarating, and with a whole new range of birds to admire. Although numbers banded were not large, they added to the scientific database needed to meet the objectives of the QWSG.

I wonder what it is like when it rains all day, the wind blows, and nothing is netted. Perhaps I'll find out next time!

North Stradbroke Island

by Arthur and Sheryl Keates

On 10 June 1995, we boarded the ferry for Dunwich to join other QWSG members for cannon netting at Amity Point. The other participants were Peter Driscoll, Stephanie Tonkin and Sam and Briony, Stewart Pell and Sheena Gillman who brought along her 2 sons and brother who was visiting from Scotland.

While waiting to board the ferry we saw a pure albino silver gull feeding on handouts. On arrival on the island, a visit to Point Lookout rewarded us with a glimpse of a Humpback Whale on its northerly migration as well as Australasian Gannet.

When we joined the others at Amity Point midafternoon, there were about 30 Double-banded Plovers, 20 Red-capped Plovers, 80 Eastern Curlews and 10 Bar-tailed Godwits as well as Pied Oystercatchers and Caspian and Gull-billed Terns roosting or loafing on the spit and sandbars just off the spit.

High tide was about 6:40pm that night and again at 7:25am the next day. Originally, we had planned to set the nets after 8pm ready for an early start the next day. However, the sight of the birds was too tempting for Peter to resist and the decision was made to set a net in the hope that we might get a catch before sunset.

It was not to be however. In the fast fading light the birds weren't co-operative. Their reluctance to be captured in the name of science was not helped by some idiots in small boats whose apparent idea of fun was firing slingshots at the roosting birds. In the end, we admitted defeat and agreed to set 2 more nets after dinner.

A cold wind caused the temperature to drop on the spit that night. After completing the task, we retired about 11:30pm, agreeing to be in position on the spit before sunrise.

Peter again demonstrated his dedication to the cause by checking the nets during the night and removing the sand blown onto the nets by the relentless wind.

Expectations high, we took up position on the spit before 6am. The sun rose to reveal about 80 Royal Spoonbills and numerous Pied Oystercatchers and Terns at the end of the spit. There were only about 8 Double-banded and Red-capped Plovers and they weren't near the catching areas. Did someone tell them where the nets were set?

The chances of a catch were looking slim. Peter took to the rubber dinghy to try and ease some birds into the catching area of the net near the end of the spit. While there were several Pied Oystercatchers and Terns in the catching area, some others were in danger. After much manoeuvring by Peter and jiggling by Stewart, the order came to fire. The resulting catch, 21 Pied Oystercatchers and 2 Masked Lapwings. While processing the birds, people approached us with a mixture of curiosity and interest in what we were doing. However, 2 fisherman in a 4-wheel drive didn't like being asked not to drive out onto the spit despite the fact that vehicles are now prohibited from the area.

The senseless behaviour of the louts firing slingshots at roosting birds and the lack of understanding of the fisherman sadly indicates there is much to be done to educate people about the wonder of birds, especially waders.

We will long remember the enjoyable cup of tea and scones with strawberry jam for morning tea thanks to Sheena. How civilised it was. We would be easily persuaded to go on future cannon netting outings if Sheena provides similar treats.

After processing the birds, the pair of Beach Stone-curlews seen on the spit the day before again made an appearance. What a fascinating bird they are.

The time soon arrived to pack up the gear and take it back to Peter's camp site.

After a little more birding at Point Lookout we boarded the ferry for Cleveland knowing Peter was booked on the same ferry. But where was he? As the ferry left, we looked back to see the late arrival of the familiar VW with trailer and gear. No doubt there's another story there too.

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 #####.

As well as the activities listed, we will mount netting outings "opportunistically" when it seems there is a good chance of success.

Seabird trips (on behalf of SOSSA)

The Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association (SOSSA) in conjunction with Seaworld do day trips off the Gold Coast to observe seabirds. The boat leaves from Seaworld at a cost of \$50 per person. Trips are monthly, and the next available trip is in September. Please contact Paul Walbridge if you are interested, ph. 07 xxxx xxxx hm, xxxx xxxx wk.

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Sat. 26th August	High of 1.94 m at 9:24am.
Sat. 23rd September	High of 1.97 m at 8:22 am.
Sat. 14th October	High of 2.06 m at 12:46 pm.
Sat. 11 th November	High of 2.24 m at 11:40 am.
Sat. 9th December	High of 2.36 m at 10:45 am.

Cannon Netting

Sat. 5 & Sun 6 Aug	Moreton Island. High of 2.06 m at 4:30 pm on Saturday. (likely to be additional netting in mid to late Aug. and/or early Oct.)
Sun. 29th October	St Helena Island. High of 2.29 m at 1:20 pm.
Sat. 16th December	Tentative and site not determined. High of 1.95 m at 3.49 pm.

Slide Evening

Mon. 28th August	Slides of Diana O'Connor on 1) the Iron Range, Cape York, and 2) trekking in the Andes, featuring Machupichu and Incan architecture. Entrance fee of \$5.00 per head going to the QWSG. Starting 7.30 pm. at the Royal Geographical Society Hall, 112 Brookes St., Fortitude Valley. Parking at the rear. Going on past evenings, this is an event not to be missed.
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QUT Course on Waders

Wed. 4th Oct (evening), Sun 15th Oct (field day) and Wed. 18th Oct. (evening). Formal course organised by QWSG, primarily intended for the general public 6-ut a- wide range of topics will be presented. Enquiries to Diana O'Connor on 07 xxxx xxxx. Experienced people will be needed to help out, particularly on the field day.

Workshop on Waders

Sun. 19th Nov.	Joint QWSG/WPSQ morning workshop on waders at Boondall Wetlands Environment Centre. This workshop is primarily intended as an introduction for people with little or no experience with waders and there will be a fee to attend. However, we will need experienced people to help out. Please enquire late October or early November (Peter Driscoll ##### or-WPSQ).
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Wader Survey of Shoalwater Bay

December or January After the successful joint QWSG/Qld Dept of Environment and Heritage survey weekend in the Great Sandy Strait in February, there is now the possibility of a similar exercise in the Shoalwater Bay/Port Clinton area involving ourselves, local wader groups and enthusiasts on the Capricorn and Curtis coasts, and QDEH. Please enquire in November (Peter Driscoll #####).