

QUEENSLAND WADER

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

Issue 14

Spring 1996

QWSG Annual General Meeting!

- Where:** Stradbroke Room, Moreton Bay Trailer Boat Club (Manly Boat Harbour).
When: 2.30 - 4.30 pm, Saturday 4 November 1995.
Agenda: Reports from incumbent Management Committee.
Election of new Management Committee
Guest talk by Ms. Diane Tarte (Australian Marine Conservation Society) on the role of NGOs in policy formulation and running of the forthcoming Ramsar Conference.
Launch of the artificial roost plans for the Redlands Shire.
Afternoon tea.

More About Ramsar

by Sandra Harding

I attended the Australian Wetland Alliance (AWA) meeting, held in Sydney on the 16-17 September 1995.

The AWA was formed in May 1994 to enable non-government organisations and other interested parties to promote communication and enable cooperation in the conservation of Australia's wetlands. Both the QOSI and AWSG are members of the AWA. Before I describe some of the items discussed, I'll give you the necessary background.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance - the first modern global treaty on the conservation and wise use of natural resources and habitat was adopted in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971 and provides the framework for international cooperation on wetlands between the governments of signatory countries.

In 1974, Australia was the first country to ratify the Ramsar Convention, and now there are more than 80 parties to the Convention. At the 1993 conference in Kushiro, Japan, over 1200 delegates from 72 countries attended. In 1996, the 25th anniversary of its adoption, the Ramsar Convention's triennial conference is to be held in Australia, and Brisbane was selected as the venue.

In Australia, the federal and state governments have established a list of over 42 sites under the Ramsar Convention and have begun to develop wetland policies, programs and committees. However, many Ramsar wetlands are now at risk through lack of proper management.

The AWA is represented by Ms. Diane Tarte, Executive Officer of the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS), on the Australian delegation to the Ramsar Conference. The Australian Government is also developing a Wetlands Policy of the Australian Government and has established a National Wetlands Advisory Committee representing a broad range of stakeholder groups to oversee the development of the policy. Professor Paul Adam, President of the Coast and Wetlands Society, is the AWA representative on the National Wetlands Advisory Committee.

Non-government organisations (NGOS) wishing to attend the Brisbane Ramsar Conference of Contracting Parties must seek the permission of their national government, and attend as observers. The AWA team is yet to be decided. Much of the Conference is taken up with the on-going business of administering to, and implementing the Convention. The success of these international meetings comes from the informal discussions and negotiations that occur in addition to the formal Conference program.

NGO participation in international negotiations requires NGOs to draw closer to each other as the problems we work on are closely linked and need common solutions. Most NGOs find it a challenging balancing act to work for change 'within the system' of the international policy process.

The September AWA meeting covered a range of matters including:

Ramsar National Report

Contracting parties to the Ramsar Convention hold a conference every three years to review developments and achievements over the past triennium and plan for the next triennium. Each party is expected to submit a national report on wetland conservation measures within their sovereign territory to the Conference. This often focuses on conservation of listed Ramsar sites.

NGOs can assist government agencies in the short time before this report is required by the Ramsar Bureau on this issue. A position paper of the AWA will be developed. It may address the need for new Ramsar sites to be listed and/or identify listed Ramsar sites with problems.

Montreux Record

In recent years the extent of change in ecological character of Ramsar sites has received great attention. Based on information provided by the contracting party (only), sites that are undergoing (adverse) ecological change are placed on the Montreux Record. This record is a positive mechanism aimed at drawing attention to the issue and encouraging management to alleviate the problems.

The AWA will be identifying Ramsar listed wetlands within Australia which are in a serious state of degradation, are under threat from development which does not fit the Ramsar 'wise-use' policy, or lack adequate protection because of a failure to formulate and implement management plans. Examples of these sites may include: the Macquarie Marshes (NSW), Towra Point (NSW), Western Port Phillip Bay (Vic), the Coorong (SA), Peel-Yalgorup System (WA) and part of Moreton Bay (Qld).

The Brisbane Initiative

The Brisbane initiative calls on contracting parties to support in principle the proposed East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network and for contracting parties within the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to nominate Ramsar-listed sites for inclusion in the Network. Cooperative flyway programs for migratory waterbirds in other regions have been established. This proposal will form one of the recommendations from the Australian delegation. The AWA may propose that a component of this strategy should be a monitoring program for waders.

AWA Officer

A levy of AWA member NGOs has provided funds, amounting to \$3,350, for a part-time AWA Promotions and Information Officer to be employed. The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) will host the AWA Officer who is expected to be appointed in October. The location of the officer in Brisbane will facilitate AWA involvement in the Ramsar Conference.

Grant from the Federal Government

A grant of \$10,000 was announced by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency representatives to assist AWA member NGOs support and prepare for the Conference. Part (\$5,500) will cover the wages of coordinators of volunteers to be deployed during the Conference and the use of the remainder (\$4,500) will be decided by AWA. Tentative allocation was discussed and included \$3,000 to cover the shortfall in the cost of employing the AWA Promotions and Information Officer until March 1996.

There will be considerable opportunities for NGO involvement pre-conference, at the conference and post-conference. More information will be provided in the next QWSG Newsletter or contact the AWA Promotion and Information Officer at the AMCS (ph. 07 xxxx xxxx).

Artificial roost at Redlands Shire

by Diana O'Connor

Earlier this year the Queensland Department of Lands through the ROSS Scheme (Regional Open Space System) asked QWSG to carry out a feasibility study into the provision of artificial roosts in Moreton Bay. Wayne Lawler was contracted to do the research involved. His excellent report was submitted in August. It outlined the very major roost site losses that have occurred in Moreton Bay, a listed Ramsar site, over the last

decade. Major roosts have been lost or severely damaged at the canal estates of Scarborough and Raby Bay, and at Brisbane Airport (extension), and Clontarf.

The report concluded that there was an acute need for a replacement roost at Raby Bay as the last remnant was destroyed by Stage 15 in March 1995. The roost was regularly used by 4,000 waders, including 500 plus Eastern Curlew and 1500 Bar-tailed Godwits. Surveys of the feeding grounds showed that these two species were now almost absent from this area as a result and numbers of small species were greatly reduced. Redlands Shire Council has now moved to a position of agreement in principle to construction of a replacement roost.

The state of play at present is that our preferred strategy of an artificial roost in Raby Bay close to Ross Canal where the roost was formerly located was not taken up as there were local political problems. However, our alternative strategy to build an artificial roost at Oyster Point near Toondah Harbour and to enlarge the small roost at Empire Point has been accepted in principle. Preliminary agreement to fund the proposal has been made by ROSS if permits are forthcoming from the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage. Construction would commence as soon as practicable (some further engineering considerations require investigation). We are delighted that Redlands Shire Council has agreed to be the proponent of this project at Oyster Point. Thanks also to Jim Whyte for taking Cnr Frank Bradley to see the Cabbage Tree Creek roost which had about 6,000 birds on the day they went. The Council is appreciative of any help we can give as a group in contributing to public awareness of the needs of waders and hence acceptance of this project. Several articles have appeared in the local press and radio about waders in the last month. This has also led to several enquires about our QUT Continuing Education Course in October. We shall keep you posted about developments concerning the roost construction.

Fisherman's Island Roost Site

by Diana O'Connor

The Port of Brisbane Authority has jurisdiction over both Fisherman's Island and Manly Boat Harbour, as well as other shoreline areas of western Moreton Bay. Fisherman's Island of old no longer exists; the coastline has been land-filled, using the largest dredge in the world, in order to provide an area for a new container terminal. During this period of extension the Port Authority has kept wader roost habitat useable in a temporary form. They contracted Peter Driscoll to do research on bird usage from 1991 to the present. The temporary preservation of habitat has been vital and appreciated by the QWSG. However, the Port Authority, through their environment officer Mr. John Dobson, has informed me that they have no plans AT PRESENT to build a replacement roost site in this area that has previously supported 2000 to 7000 waders, comprising 21 species. This may not be their final policy, but other aspects of the development are so well advanced that the prospect of an artificial roost appears unlikely.

I feel it is time for political pressure to be placed on the Port Authority to ensure that they provide an area for a wader roost. I have written to Senator Faulkner and Hon. Tom Barton regarding their policy towards preservation of high tide wader roosts in Moreton Bay. With the Ramsar Conference to be held in Brisbane in March 1996 it would clearly be embarrassing for both the State and Federal Governments if it was evident that the adjoining Ramsar site was being sadly neglected. Yet at present, of the 97 roost sites on the western side of Moreton Bay holding 50 or more birds, 18 % are in immediate danger of destruction¹, 38 % are compromised by erosion and overgrowth with vegetation, and only 7 % are safe at present (Lawler, 1995).

Can you please write to the state and federal environment ministries to alert them of this serious problem of disappearance of roost sites in Moreton Bay. This will help them realise that a public campaign about this issue could occur nearer to the Ramsar Conference if there is no action soon to devise a conservation strategy. Your help is appreciated.

Lawler, W. (1995). Wader roost construction in Moreton Bay: a feasibility study into the construction of migratory wader (shorebird) high tide roosts in Moreton Bay, Qld, using Raby Bay as a case study. Report to the Queensland Department of Lands by the Queensland Wader Study Group.

¹ Including Manly Boat Harbour, Fisherman's Island and Dux Creek (not controlled by the Port Authority).

A Blow Struck for the Hunter's Waders

by David Geering

Finally, after years of watching shorebird high tide roost habitat in the Hunter estuary slowly become degraded, or even lost, moves have been made to restore one of the estuary's most important roost sites.

The sandspit at the base of Stockton Bridge became the major daytime roost in the estuary, being used by thousands of birds, after its formation from dredging associated with the construction of the bridge in the early 1970's. However, over the past ten years the area has slowly been invaded by Bitou Bush, mangroves, and most seriously, Spiny Rush. This has made the sandspit unsuitable as a high tide roost due to the small area of open saltmarsh that remains and the impact on the birds' line of sight, and hence sense of security.

After three reports highlighting opportunities for habitat restoration and construction, outlining the proposed rehabilitation of the sandspit and the impacts of such a rehabilitation project, and input by various interest groups and much tireless work by staff of the Kooragang Wetlands Rehabilitation Project, work commenced at the sandspit on 26 June 1995.

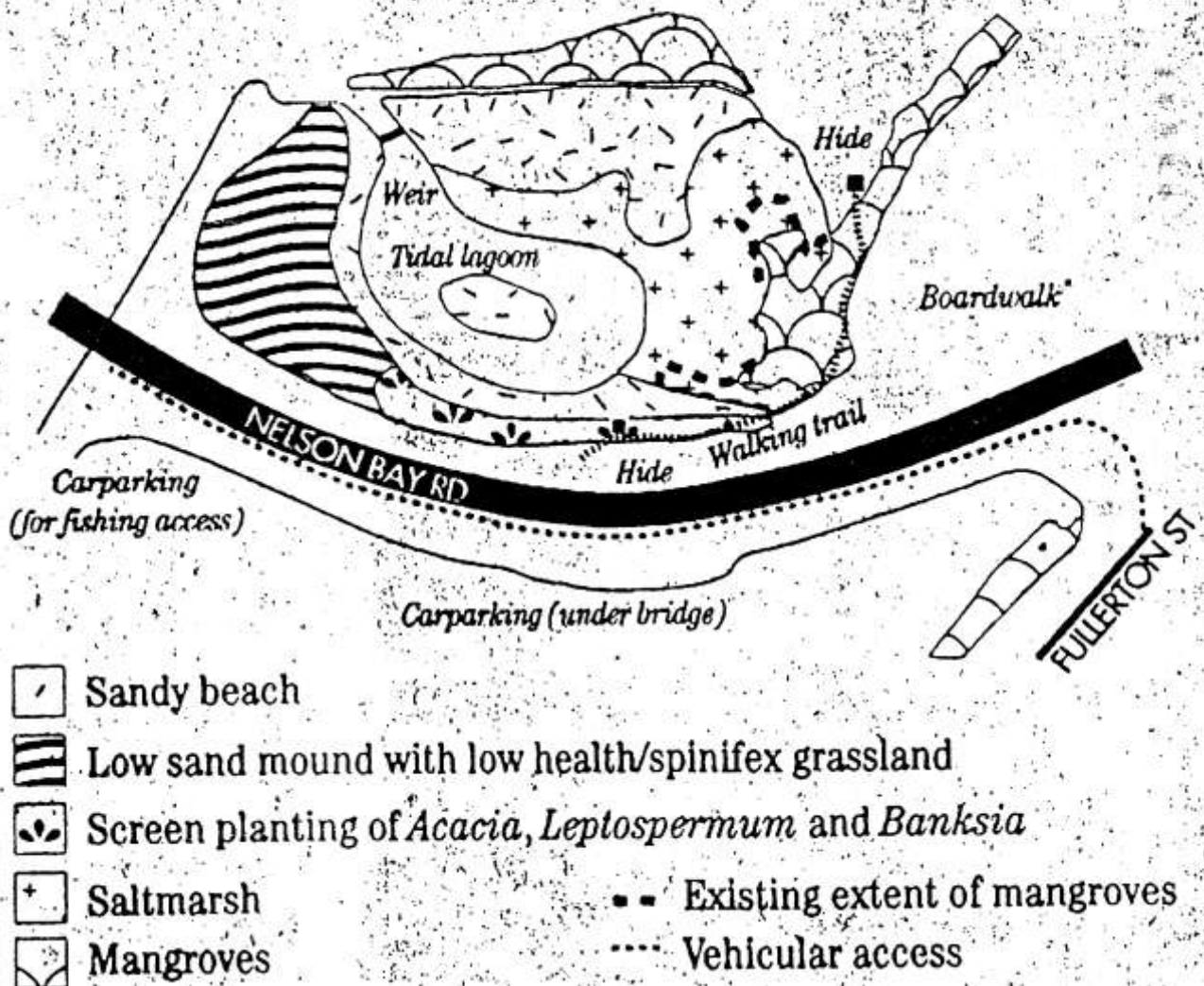
Rehabilitation essentially involves the removal of all Spiny Rush, Bitou Bush and some areas of young mangrove to create an open saltmarsh community and sand spits around a shallow tidal lagoon with a sand island. The lagoon is to be a semi-open system, that will be flushed on tides greater than 1.8m that overtop a weir. This arrangement will create an environment that will greatly reduce the area of weed infestation that will need to be controlled in the future while providing a safe high tide roost for a range of shorebird species.

The sandspit will be serviced by a new roadway on the south-east side of the bridge, a bird hide overlooking the roost site and a mangrove board-walk terminating at another bird hide overlooking the adjacent feeding area. These facilities will be hidden from the birds by a screen of native plants. Interpretive material will be provided on the rehabilitation work, migratory shorebirds and estuarine (including mangrove) ecosystems.

Earthworks are well advanced, with Brambles and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service providing an excavator and bulldozers. The care with which the machinery operators were able to remove weeds while leaving areas of saltmarsh untouched was astounding and will result in a final product superior to that envisaged in the initial plans. Throsby Landcare participants, through the Landcare and Environmental Action Program, are removing large areas of Bitou Bush and Spiny Rush by hand in areas where damage by machinery was unwarranted. The transformation has been miraculous with the area already attracting birds that have not used the site for the last couple of years.

The plans below give an idea of the final development although the final result may differ in detail. (This article is reproduced from NSW Wader News 6(3), 1-2)

KOORAGANG ROOST DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT



A financial injection for the QWSG

The QWSG has been awarded a Queensland Gaming Commission grant of ca \$4,500 to buy a new aluminium dinghy. This boat will replace the old Stessl, which was literally splitting at the seams. To go with this new boat, we have recently purchased a reconditioned 35 HP outboard motor. This again is a replacement for worn out equipment. Karen Wright deserves a large vote of thanks, as she was responsible for preparing the submission to the Gaming Commission.

Stand up and be counted!

by Andrew Geering

Wader counting tends to be a bit individualistic, and so we don't here about it much in Queensland Wader. I feel this is a pity, as data obtained from this activity is as important, and complimentary to that obtained from banding. One of the pleasures I get from counting is seeing the month-to-month changes, and after a days counting, being able to reflect with others about these changes. Peter Driscoll's count at Fishermans Island often rejects mine at St. Helena Island, as these two sites are so close together. When my Pied Oystercatchers have gone, they are nearly always fraternising with the flock at Peter's site, and vice versa.

To encourage communication between counters, I have asked Natasha Taylor, whose job it is to enter the count data, to start a regular column outlining highlights of the previous three months counting. I also invite all you counters to send us any observations you have made that have tickled your fancy. It does not have to be

the first record of a wader in Australia before you feel it is warranted to correspond. We are interested in unusually high numbers of waders, new records for your site (even if the species is common elsewhere), and even colourful displays of breeding plumage. Remember, to get into Natasha's column, you are going to have to return your count sheets promptly.

Wader Watch

by Natasha Taylor

Thanks to all those dedicated people doing the wader counts there are lots of data entered each month. Keep those data sheets coming in. Here are some of the interesting sightings from the last group of counts sheets entered (up till the end of August).

Green leg-flag sightings (banded in Brisbane)

3 Eastern Curlews seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Point on 15.7.95

1 Bar-tailed Godwit and 1 Great Knot seen by Jim and Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek on 15.7.95

1 Eastern Curlew seen by Sheryl Keates at Point Halloran on 17.6.95

1 Ruddy Turnstone seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island on 26.8.95 (N-B. the first sighting/retrap of a locally banded Ruddy Turnstone, and at exactly the same site where it was banded).

1 Bar-tailed Godwit and 1 Great Knot seen by Jim and Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek on 26.8.95

Other leg-flag sightings

1 Pied Oystercatcher with an orange leg-flag (banded in Brisbane) and 4 other Pied Oystercatchers with metal bands seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island on 26.8.95

Interesting sightings

10 Grey Plovers seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island on 1.4.95

1 Sooty Oystercatcher seen by Mike and Linda Lewis at Manly Harbour on 12.6.95

During winter you generally expect low numbers of most species except Double-banded Plover (a winter visitor) and Black-winged Stilts, however there were a few notable records with high counts.

Good numbers of Eastern Curlew (53) seen by Sandra and Joyce Harding and David Milton at Thornlands Road on 17.6.95

Good numbers of Eastern Curlew (50) seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Southport Spit on 16.7.95

Good numbers of Great Knots (100) and Red Knots (500) seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Karumba Point on 14.5.95

Good numbers of Eastern Curlew (62) seen by Sheryl Keates at Point Halloran 17.6.95

Good numbers of Great Knot (576) seen by Jim and Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek 15.7.95

Good numbers of Red-necked Avocet (118) seen by Linda and Phil Cross at Deception Bay on 15.7.95

Good numbers of Eastern Curlew (123) seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Point on 15.7.95

Thank you again and remember to fill in all the information on those count sheet (if you are uncertain about how to fill in the sheets contact Ivell Whyte).

Stop Press!

Two Asian Dowitchers were seen at Manly Boat Harbour roost by Linda Lewis on 23.9.95. These Dowitchers were seen again by Paul Walbridge on 15.10.95. They will almost certainly be here for the summer.

A possible Ringed Plover was seen by Fiona Johnson and Diana O'Connor at Fisherman's Island on 23.9.95. This sighting is currently being assessed by the QOS Records Appraisal Committee.

QWSG Telescope and Binocular Field Day

Where: Lota Creek. Meet in the park opposite the intersection of the Esplanade and Cobar Street (UBD Map 30, B6).

When: Saturday 4 November, 12.30 - 2.15 pm.

Featuring: Numerous makes and models of telescopes for field comparison, ranging from \$100 - 4000. Assistance with identification of waders.

The Asian Dowitcher

by David Stewart

The Asian Dowitcher is a rare wader that breeds in Siberia, Mongolia and Manchuria, and occurs regularly, though in very small numbers, each year in Australia. In Queensland they have been seen on the Cairns Waterfront, in the Great Sandy Straits and at a few sites around Brisbane including Luggage Point, Lytton, Thorneside and Manly. These waders appear to be very site faithful, with birds being seen, in the same area for an entire season. They also tend to occur at the same site year after year (not necessary the same birds), but then suddenly shift to a new site where they will remain for some time.

The Asian Dowitcher is a medium-sized wader, falling between the Great Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit in size (two species that Dowitchers regularly associate with, both at high tide roosts and feeding areas). The bill is black in colour with an inconspicuous small pale base patch on the lower mandible, which can only be seen at close range. In profile, the bill is long and straight with a deep base and tapered to a blunt tip, which is laterally expanded (visible when the bird is in the hand or at close range). The legs are dark grey, though they usually appear black in colour at a distance.

In basic plumage, the feathers of the upperparts have grey-brown centres with sharply demarcated whitish edges. The crown is dark grey-brown, and the nape is slightly paler. The supercilium is white in colour and extends from well behind the eye to the forehead. The rest of the face is grey-brown to whitish on the cheeks, chin and throat. The underparts are predominantly white with a grey wash on the neck and across the breast, which are faintly streaked darker. The flanks are white with obscure vertical barring. The juvenile plumage of the Asian Dowitcher, which is occasionally seen in Queensland early in the wader season (Sept-Nov), is very similar to basic adult plumage, though slightly paler in colour. The feathers on the upperparts are distinctly edged with buff and the underparts are white with a buff wash across the neck, breast and flanks. The neck and breast are also finely streaked darker and the flanks indistinctly barred.

In alternate plumage the upperparts become noticeable darker, with feathers on the mantle, scapulars and tertials being brownish black with narrow chestnut edges. The majority of the wing coverts are slightly paler with chestnut or white edges. The crown and nape are chestnut brown, and the face is deep chestnut in colour, with a dark stripe from the bill through the eye and onto the ear coverts. The chestnut colour of the face extends down on the neck, breast and flanks, usually leaving a pale chin. The belly and undertail coverts are white with brown barring and spotting on the undertail.

When feeding, Asian Dowitchers hold their bill nearly straight down, and continuously jab the substrate in an up and down motion as they walk across the mudflats or through shallow water (up to the belly deep). This distinctive foraging method (often referred to as a 'sewing machine' action) produces a very characteristic profile, with a peaked crown.

Although more closely related to the two other species of Dowitcher, the Asian Dowitcher appears most similar to the Bar-tailed Godwit in plumage, but can easily be distinguished by their smaller size and long straight black bill and dark legs. The upperparts of both adults in basic plumage and juveniles appears slightly darker with a neater pattern of pale edges to the feathers. With Bar-tailed Godwits in the corresponding plumage phase, the feathers on the upper parts have grey-brown centres which shade to pale fringes, producing an overall paler appearance. The supercilium is much more conspicuous in the Asian Dowitcher, extending onto the forehead. In flight, Asian Dowitchers once again resemble Bar-tailed Godwits, with a white back and uppertail coverts with distinct barring. The tail is brownish black with narrow white barring.

The Asian Dowitcher can easily be distinguished from the other two American Dowitchers (Long-billed and Short-billed) by the larger size, predominantly black bill and dark legs. In the other two species, the bill is flesh coloured shading to a darker tip while the legs are either green or yellow-green in colour.

New Cannons for the QWSG

by Tony Rowland

The QWSG has acquired nine new cannons as part of an ongoing program to update and increase the efficiency of its cannon netting operations. They will replace the aging first generation cannons which have been in use for the last three years. Although reliable, the old cannons are relatively complicated to set up, heavy, cumbersome to transport and showing signs of wear and tear.

The design brief for the new ones was for a simpler, lighter unit preferably incorporating an integrated aiming system, yet retaining the strength, durability and reliability of the old units. A tall order indeed!! Peter Driscoll and Glen Morley laboured on the design for many months, finally producing a design which met the criteria and which they believed would work. A prototype was constructed and proved very satisfactory in test firings. Following some fine tuning of the design, Glen produced the final plans and Peter Williams, a self-employed toolmaker, was commissioned to construct the production units.

The end product is a much simplified, lighter two-piece cannon, comprising a barrel and base. They are constructed from heavy gauge drawn steel tubing and plate steel for the barrel and base and marine grade stainless steel for the explosive cartridge. The base incorporates a hemispherical ball-and cup arrangement which allows accurate aiming of the cannon over a wide horizontal and vertical range. Peter Williams incorporated a number of ingenious design refinements during construction resulting in exceptionally easy loading of the explosive cartridge within the barrel.

In order to provide a degree of protection against the corrosive environment in which they are used, galvanising or other method of treatment to prevent rusting will be applied before the cannons are pressed into service.

As they were completed days before Peter Driscoll's departure for overseas, they have not yet been field tested. However, it is envisaged that when commissioned, they will provide the QWSG with an improved cannon netting capability.

The QWSG would like to express its appreciation to Glen Morley and Peter Williams for their assistance with this project.

Another use for greaseproof paper

by Leanne Bowden & Greg Miller

At the respectable hour of 10:00am on Saturday 5th August, seven very clean, energetic people met at Fisherman's Island for a day of fine-weather cannon netting on the Port of Brisbane Authority's reclamation area. Nine hours later, two nets had been fired, 53 birds processed, and all exhausted participants were artfully adorned with patches of sticky, black ... well, let's call it "mud".

The choosing of the first net site, on the edge of a water-filled settling area, was thoroughly entertaining. Whilst we and Diana O'Connor, Lester Roy, Stuart Pell and Karen Wright waited on relatively stable, dry land, Peter Driscoll waded along the shoreline, regularly disappearing to his thighs in the reclaimed substrate.

At the point where his feet finally stayed above the thin layer of sand for longer than five minutes, we deposited the necessary equipment. But the trench dug to hide the net quickly filled with water. Simple solution: fill it in again, unfurl a roll of greaseproof paper, and lay the net on that, to separate the net from the mud. (Diana used a similar method to separate the delicious cake she baked from the cake tin.)

Site two was even more entertaining, Diana remaining the only person who could cross to the stability of the rocky net site, without suddenly breaking through the hexagons of baked mud into the sticky goo just inches below the surface. Karen's bare feet were quickly disguised under a knee-high layer of shiny, black coating.

By 4:00pm, with telescopes focussed on both sites, Peter made the decision to fire over the dry site, and everyone ran like crazy to extract Curlew Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers.

With only approximately 20 birds, it seemed quicker and easier to transport them back to the vehicles for processing, wearing them inside the front of our shirts. An interesting and stimulating exercise! Imagine seven people, chests aflutter with moving lumps, gingerly tiptoeing or crawling across the cracked mud surface, heavy grunts coming from those who struggled valiantly to extract one leg from the gripping mud, hoping that their shoe would still be attached to their foot. But the birds were safe.

Processing was just about complete - Stewart almost successful in teaching the novices how to securely hold birds legs between 2 fingers and one thumb (a task he does well, although he admits he can't perform the similar action of using chopsticks); Lester had the methods of weighing birds perfected - when Dianna took a quick break to look through the telescope, and comment on how large the flock was in front of the first net. Peter was instantly on his feet and counting - three, two, one, fire - and we were on the run again, adding a Bar-tailed Godwit and Great Knots to the data sheet.

Packing up of the equipment was almost successfully performed in the dark, Peter having to return the next day to collect one piece of shade cloth.

Of the 6 species caught, we banded and flagged 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 17 Great Knots, 9 Curlew Sandpipers, 14 Red-necked Stints, 5 Greater and 6 Lesser Sand Plovers.

An additional Great Knot was flagged only, as it was a recapture, banded at the same location (then known as Bishop Island), and recorded as a second year or older, on 3 March, 1991. Evidence that even older birds over winter perhaps?

The day proved to be a valuable exercise, but Peter made one mistake. He said we'd have sore calf muscles the next day - he was wrong. Not only did we have sore calf muscles, every other muscle we knew we had, plus a few we didn't, were sore!

And, our clothes and shoes will never look or smell the same again!

Wader conference - Brisbane, March 1996.

A conference on waders, organised by the Australasian Wader Studies Group, is to be held on the weekend of 16/17 March. This weekend is immediately before the start of the Ramsar Conference, and has been scheduled to allow Ramsar delegates to attend. The objectives of the wader conference are to:

- 1) Focus attention on the serious threats to migratory waders in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway.
- 2) Describe impacts of these threats - actual and potential.
- 3) Develop solutions, drawing on worldwide experience.
- 4) Provide recommendations for action to the Ramsar Conference.

Four half-day sessions will cover threats and impacts, including habitat degradation and loss, hunting, disturbance, effects of habitat loss in non-breeding areas and population monitoring. The second day will cover solutions, including an overview of those developed elsewhere, and the Shorebird Action Plan for East Asian - Australasian Flyway.

Registration (fees to be determined) for the seminar will include a dinner on the Saturday evening, morning and after-noon teas and proceedings of the seminars and workshop.

Expressions of interest are sought from anyone interested in the aims and objectives of the conference. If you would like further information, contact Phil Straw, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, NSW 2xxx or fax xxx xxxx.

Appeal to fund overseas participants at Ramsar

As you may recall from the last newsletter, an appeal has been launched to fund the travel of two scientists from Vietnam and Russia. These people are unable to raise sufficient funds in their own countries to pay for their travel expenses. Our objective is to raise a minimum of \$2000. At the moment we are just seeking pledges of support. We will collect money at a later stage. Currently, we have received pledges amounting to about \$800. Not a bad start, but still very short of our target. So please dig deep into your pockets and support the appeal. Remember, if only half the membership of the QWSG and the Queensland Ornithological Society give \$5 each, then we will be well on our way to raising the money. Pledges can be made on the form at the bottom of the page.

Activities

For netting activities, please confirm with Peter Driscoll (07 xxx xxxx) 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 07 xxxx xxxx. All completed count forms must be returned to Ivell Whyte at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx Qld 4xxx.

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. Please contact Paul Walbridge if you are interested, ph. 07 xxxx xxxx hm, xxxx xxxx wk.

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Sat. 11th November High of 2.24 in at 11:40 am.
Sat. 9th December High of 2.36 in at 10:45 am.

Cannon Netting

Sun. 29th October St Helena Island. High of 2.29 in at 1:20 pm.
Sat. 16th December Tentative and site not determined. High of 1.95 in at 3:49 pm.

Telescope and binocular field day

Sun. 4th Nov. 12:30 to 2:15 pm at Lota Creek (park opposite intersection on the Esplanade and Cobar St.

Annual General Meeting

Sun. 4th Nov. 2:30 – 4:30 pm. Stradbroke Room, Moreton Bay Trailer Boat Club (Manly Boat Harbour).

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 07 xxxx xxxx or WPSQ 07 xxxx xxxx).

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 07 xxxx xxxx).