

QUEENSLAND WADER

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

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The Brisbane Initiative

Introduction

The plight of migratory waterbirds and their remarkable life cycle captures the public imagination. The conservation of waterbirds can act as a focal point for educating the public about the need to conserve key wetland habitats. The extensive biannual migrations that these species undertake and their reliance on this chain of critical sites means that the long-term protection of migratory waterbirds will only be secured through international cooperative efforts.

The need has been recognised through the establishment of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. In addition, a cooperative flyway program for migratory waterbirds in the Western Palearctic region has been commissioned with the recent signing of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, developed under the Convention on Migratory Species.

Recent developments in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway have led to a situation where the region is now ready to face the challenge of conserving these key wetland habitats, and the wildlife they support, in a coordinated manner.

The Brisbane Initiative calls on Contracting Parties (of the Ramsar Convention) 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. The Network proposal also seeks to give international recognition and support to site management bodies and local communities involved in the management of sites of international importance for shorebird conservation. The tenet of wise use of wetlands is a guiding principle in the Network proposal.

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway is a major pathway for migratory shorebirds. The Flyway includes a number of Contracting Parties; Australia, Bangladesh, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, United States of America (Alaska) and Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The following non-contracting parties also form part of the Flyway; Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, North Korea, South Korea, Macau, Mongolia, Myanmar, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand.

A Regional Approach to Conserving the Flyway

To date, the level of consultation between Contracting Parties and other parties in relation to the wise use of wetlands of importance to birds within the East Asian-Australasian Flyway has been largely on a bilateral basis. Prominent examples include the migratory bird agreements of Japan and Australia (JAMBA) and the People's Republic of China and Australia (CAMBA), and agreements between the People's Republic of China and Japan, and Russia and Japan.

While the bilateral approach has been useful in initiating dialogue across borders, it is clear that only a comprehensive approach involving all interested parties within the flyway will be able to successfully ensure the long term conservation of the migratory waterbirds using the flyway. Such a multilateral approach would allow not only a more complete coverage of the flyway, but would also enable other key commitments made under the Ramsar Convention to exchange information and personnel between Contracting Parties to take place more easily. In addition, a multilateral approach to conserving the wetland habitat of migratory waterbirds would realise greater efficiencies in administration for the Contracting Parties.

A multilateral approach to shorebird conservation along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway received endorsement at a workshop held at Kushiro, Japan, in December 1994. Representatives of 17 nations from the region, and interested non-government organisations, were present and outlined their support for this concept in the "Kushiro Initiative".

As part of the implementation of the "Kushiro Initiative", a proposal has been developed for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the conservation of all migratory waterbirds within the Asia-Pacific Region. This proposal, the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, calls on Governments and other interested parties to work together to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitat throughout the flyways. As part of the Strategy, Action Plans are currently under development for the three major groups of migratory waterbird species; shorebirds, ducks and geese, and cranes. The "Kushiro Initiative" also calls for the Action Plans to consider the development of site networks for the species groups. The East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network proposal has been developed as part of this process.

The East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network proposal calls on those Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention located within the flyway to be part of the launch of the Network, by nominating wetlands of international importance to shorebirds for the inclusion in the Network. The interconnectedness of these sites, apparent from the number of shared species that utilise them during the annual cycle of migration, makes the establishment of a formal network with coordinated management imperative.

The Ramsar Convention and the Reserve Network

Article 5 of the Ramsar Convention relates to the need for consultation between Contracting Parties concerning the implementation of their obligations where wetlands and their flora and fauna extend over the territory of more than one Party.

This commitment is further supported by the Kushiro Statement (C.5.1) which recommends that Contracting Parties:

- promote international cooperation through development assistance and management of shared wetland eco-systems, water resources and species;
- promote cooperation with other global and regional conventions and organisations;
- strengthen regional coordination on wetland issues of common concern; and
- establish international networks of wetlands with significant ecological or hydrological links, which require coherent management, and develop joint management programs for shared wetlands.

In recommending the Brisbane Initiative to the Conference, delegates are presented with the option of furthering the aims of the Convention and have the opportunity to respond positively to the challenge of wetland habitat and migratory waterbird conservation within the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

(Information produced by ANCA)

Adventures of a Girl Friday

by Di Harrison

Do not go wader watching with a certain member of the QWSG. Last year he dragged out two innocent police officers and a park ranger to rescue a couple of stranded POMs from the top of the Many Peaks Range. All returned overheated, dehydrated, cut and bruised. In July he annoyed good citizens going about their daily lawful activities in an effort to save a mouse, which was stranded and engulfed amid industrial slurry. Things are getting worse! Last month he press-ganged me into doing the scribing for one of his wader surveys. As if that wasn't bad enough, we then heard high pitched sounds of distress coming from the direction of a sewage treatment plant. Upon investigation we found that the squeals were coming from a dog, unable to climb out and drowning in the pits ghastly contents. All of a sudden, there he is again, can't let nature take its course and he's into rescue mode. A binocular harness was hooked over a rusty star picket and he's telling me to take my top off. He grabbed one sleeve and then ordered me to grab the other cuff and slide down to get the dog. I demanded to know why I had to be the one to go down and he said that he was very concerned that I might get a sore hand! He then added that I would not be able to handle the weight of the two of us plus the hound and that I should "get a move on or it will be too late".

After much strenuous slopping and reaching into the gunge with my legs and free arm, the stupid mutt was dragged out. However, then we had to slide and battle out of the pit, which had sides as slippery as ice. What followed was a scene that would not have looked out of place in the film *Indiana Jones and the Temple*

of Doom. Doom would have been a kinder alternative to what was awaiting us if our anchor had given away!! To add insult to injury, when we finally struggled clear, the pooch (sic) proceeded to shake itself dry, spraying us in all manner of "hob-goblins", and then trotted off without even a bark of thanks.

Our car is still liberally decorated with deodorisers and if we ever give you a lift, DON'T BLAME ME. I tell you, give him a wide berth and don't say that you have not been warned.

(Di is the long-suffering wife of Frank Harrison, our Townsville count coordinator)

Eastern Curlews carry the load!

by Peter Driscoll

In mid 1994, the QWSG began a study funded by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage (QDEH) to develop and trial techniques of harnessing transmitters to Eastern Curlew in Moreton Bay. The Eastern Curlew is the largest wader species and was considered to be large enough to carry the smallest of the existing satellite transmitters or Platform Transmitter Terminals (PTTs).

We used simple radio transmitters for local tracking that were built to be the same size and weight as the smallest PTT. After some initial trials, eight birds were fitted with radio transmitters using a backpack harness. A year later, four of the birds are still wearing them, another unit stopped transmitting a month ago, one unit has been retrieved from a live bird, another from a predated bird and we lost track of the eighth unit last March. Over the 12 months, all 8 birds apparently left the study site for varying lengths of time.

The field trials were sufficiently successful for the QWSO, in collaboration with the QDEH, to gain funding through the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (States Co-operative Assistance Programme) to proceed with use of satellite transmitters. The species begins its northward migration between early March and mid April. We are now planning to fit two PTTs by mid February this year, just prior to the migration, with a view to tracking the route of the birds through Australia and South-East Asia.

The Eastern Curlew is considered a key biological indicator of the health of wader communities. What we learn about the migration route and significant 'stop-over' sites will help with conservation plans for waders in general. To date, band returns and sightings of leg-flagged birds have provided the only information on wader migration to and from Australia.

A maximum of six more Ms may be fitted next year, hopefully in collaboration with Japanese scientists. The number deployed will depend upon the success of the two units this season. The units need to be monitored for a minimum of four months until the birds are settled in at their destination. Also, we need to give the birds as long as possible to become accustomed to the harness and to recover from being caught before they may need to migrate. The third week in February is the latest we can hope to fit the units and have any success.

Cannon netting techniques in relation to capture myopathy

by Natasha Taylor

We are lucky as there are very few cases of injury following cannon netting in Queensland. There have also been no cases of capture myopathy in the past year. However, the January cannon netting day at Cabbage Tree Creek produced a high incidence of capture myopathy in the Bar-tailed Godwits with many of the released birds demonstrating problems. Nine Bar-tailed Godwits were unable to be released and treatment was instigated. Two of these birds recovered and were released at the site of capture two weeks later. The other birds either died or were euthanased due to their deteriorating condition.

Post-mortems revealed varying amounts of muscular damage with secondary kidney complications. Several birds also had liver damage or parasites unrelated to capture. Certainly if a wader develops capture myopathy the likelihood of recovery is low (<50%); prevention is thus the key. To this end I would like to write about procedures of cannon netting and why these methods will not only reduce the incidence of capture myopathy but also other traumatic injuries. Much of the following information has been extracted from a paper I wrote several years ago in *The Stilt* on treatment of capture myopathy.

Capture Myopathy - what is it?

The capture and banding of waders entails some risk to the birds. In the extreme this can mean mortality. Less dramatic but of equal concern is the predicament of birds that can neither stand nor fly off upon release. When these birds do not have broken bones or other obvious injuries they are thought to be suffering from a condition called capture (or stress) myopathy.

Worldwide the capture and banding of waders has shown the incidence of capture myopathy to be as high as ten percent of some catches (Minton 1980). Certain species of waders have an increased propensity and susceptibility to developing capture myopathy. This condition has been reported in Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*), Red-necked Avocets (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*), Whimbrels (*Numenius phaeopus*), Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*), Great Knots (*Calidris tenuirostris*) and Eastern Curlews (*Numenius madagascariensis*).

The clinical signs of affected birds are graded from slight paresis with slight incoordination to paralysis of legs and wings. Affected birds make frequent attempts to stand and rise to their knees using their wings to brace themselves against the ground. During this initial paresis the birds attempt vigorously to escape humans who enter their flight zone (this is a distance of comfort around any animal).

One may ask why the condition only affects certain species while others in the same catch remain unaffected. Are the species affected 'more flighty' and struggle more in the net to escape? Or do prone species have a physiological difference ie. reduced muscle blood supply, fragile cellular membranes, reduced oxygen carrying capacity of the blood ????

Reducing the incidence of capture myopathy

It has been proposed that fat pre-migratory and very thin birds are more afflicted by capture myopathy (Purchase and Minton 1982). The method of capture, the environmental conditions at the time of capture and the total number of the birds captured have also been implicated as factors involved in the condition (Stanyard .P 1979; Minton 1980; Purchase and Minton 1982). Though some degree of stress is unavoidable during capture, this can be attenuated by the method of capture, holding and processing. For example, any increase in the period of holding or processing will likely result in increased stress. Many stress factors can be interpreted by direct observation of the bird's behaviour.

It is important that the size of the catch is kept small and within the limit of the group's abilities. It stands to reason that the larger the catch the longer the processing time and thus the greater the stress on the birds. In general, time is the big factor in the development of capture myopathy.

High ambient temperatures (more than 35°C) have also been reported to increase the incidence of the condition (Purchase and Minton 1982). Although there is no direct correlation with temperature, most problems with birds developing capture myopathy occur on hot days. To keep the birds cool during net removal, moistened shade-cloth should be placed over the net. Shade-cloth should also be placed over the holding cages. Overcrowding in the holding cages not only stresses the birds but increases the temperature. Birds should have enough space in the holding cages to walk.

A bird struggling in the net will use up its vital energy stores making it more likely to develop capture myopathy and cause trauma to its wings (Purchase and Minton 1982; Stanyard 1979). The placing of shade-cloth over the birds in the net quietens the birds down and stops them struggling. The correct technique of removing a bird from the net needs to be learnt by all cannon netting participants so as to reduce trauma and to increase the speed of net extraction. Birds which are traumatised in the net should be processed first as they have an increased likelihood of developing capture myopathy.

The holding cages should be high enough that the birds can stand and move around (Purchase and Minton 1982). There should only one species per cage and overcrowding should be avoided. Bar-tailed Godwits are the most susceptible species that we catch and wherever possible, the holding cages containing them should be placed closest to the processing area for first processing.

It is frightening and stressful for birds to be held by or to hear people. We should not be holding birds unless they are in transport or for immediate processing.

The technique for releasing waders is as important as the capture. It is essential that the birds are placed far enough away and out of sight of people. If a bird is unable to fly or stand, it must be allowed to settle and relax. Many sedentary birds are stimulated into flight by the sight of other birds taking flight (Purchase and Minton 1982). If after half an hour the wader remains sitting, it should be recaptured and treatment

commenced. Entering the flight zone and recapturing of birds with capture myopathy is likely to increase the stress on the bird and thus make the condition worse. In any case, these flightless birds should never be allowed to enter the water. Once in the water the birds float with the tide and are considerably more difficult to recapture.

References

- Purchase, D. and C.D.T. Minton 1982. Possible capture myopathy in Bar-tailed Godwits. *Limosa lapponica* in Australia. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* **34**: 24-26
- Minton, C.D. 1980. Occurrence of 'cramp' in a catch of Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* **28**: 15-16.
- Piersma, T., Biomert, A.M. and Klaassen, M. 1991. Valium against leg cramp in waders. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* **63**: 39-41.
- Stanyard, D.J. 1979. Further notes on curlew cramp and keeping cages. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* **27**: 19-21.

RAMSAR UPDATE

Litter Clean-up

March 3, 1996, has been set as the date for volunteers to clean up all litter at Boondall Wetland Reserve, Wynnum Boardwalk and Lota Creek mouth. Contact Anne Beazley (xxx xxxx) for details of the Boondall clean-up, and John Dobson (xxxx xxxx) for details of the Wynnum and Lota Creek clean-ups. Remember that these three areas are where the QWSG is running the morning walks during the Ramsar Conference. No better way to familiarise yourself with the areas than to help with the clean-ups.

Boondall Field Guides Training Course

John Bowden and Ian Smith of the Boondall Wetland Management Committee will be running a four day training course to get volunteers prepared for conducting the morning and pre-Conference Boondall field outings for Ramsar delegates. The course will be run on Feb. 24-25 and March 9-10, 1996. Depending on their previous knowledge and interest, the field guides will offer either a general flora/fauna perspective of the Boondall Reserve or a specialist perspective of either bush birds, reptiles and amphibians, or flora. Delegates will be asked to indicate their preferences when making their bookings at the Convention Centre. Out in the field, they will then be placed with a guide and no more than nine other delegates, which should provide a reasonably personalised and informative experience. To participate in the training course, contact Mary-ann Pattison at Nudgee Beach Environmental Education Centre (xxxx xxxx).

Volunteers at the Convention Centre

For those people voluntarily working at the Convention Centre during the period of the Conference, there will be familiarisation tours at 10.00 am, 12.00 noon and 2.00 pm. on Sunday 10th March. Meet at the Information Desk, main entrance of the Convention Centre.

For those people voluntarily working at the Ramsar shop during the period of the Conference, there will be introductory sessions on stock control and operation of the electronic cash register on Sunday 17th March at 10:00am, 12:00noon and 2:00pm. Meet on the mezzanine floor of the Convention Centre at the top of escalator (site of the Ramsar shop).

Changing of the guard

We thank Ian Gynther, Brett Lane, Tony Rowland, David Stewart, Natasha Taylor, and Phil Venables for their excellent service to the QWSG last year and welcome Leanne Bowden, Greg Miller, Stuart Pell and Arthur Keates to the Management Committee and look forward to their input and fresh ideas.

Shoalwater Bay

The QWSG successfully completed a census of waders in the Shoalwater Bay area in December 1995. The report is being finalised as this newsletter goes to print, and hopefully we will hear more detailed accounts in the future. Here are a few facts to wet your appetite:

- About 23, 000 waders were counted.
- Numbers of 5 species were inter- nationally significant.
- The Whimbrel count was higher than any other count previously recorded in Australia, according to the *National Plan for Shorebird Conservation*.
- The Terek Sandpiper count was second highest for the country.

Fiona Johnson also reports that the Bay is not a good place to take the family for a swim, as there was an abundance of sharks, sea-snakes and crocodiles!

Wader Watch

by Natasha Taylor

My goodness we have been busy. Thank you to all those busy vegemites doing the hard, hot, wet slog of wader counts over summer. If you see a flag or an interesting sighting on a non wader count day, just write the sighting (with date, location etc) in the notes section of the QWSG count sheet on the next wader count day. That way nothing gets forgotten. Keep those data sheets coming in. Here are the interesting sightings from the last group of counts sheets entered plus what Peter gave me.

Colour codes for leg-flags

Green = Moreton Bay/Pumicestone Passage

Orange = Victoria Blue = Japan

White = New Zealand (some species New South Wales)

Yellow = Northern-western Australia

Green leg-flag sightings in SE Queensland

- 3 Bar-tailed Godwits and 1 Great Knot seen by Jim and Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek mouth on 23.9.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Fred Armbrust at Redcliffe on 23.9.95
- 3 Mongolian Plovers seen by Diana O'Connor and Fiona Johnson at Fisherman Islands on 23.9.95
- 2 Bar-tailed Godwits and 1 Lesser Sand Plover seen by Arthur Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 24.9.95
- 2 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Arthur Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 7.10.95 | Mongolian Plover seen by Andrew Geering at St Helena Island on 14.10.95
- 7 Bar-tailed Godwits and 1 Great Knot seen by Jim and Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek mouth on 16.10.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 1 Mongolian Plover and 2 Great Knots seen by Arthur Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 22.10.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Manly Harbour on 28.10.95 | Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Nandeebie Park, Cleve- land, on 11.11.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit and Great Knot seen by Jim and Ivell Whyte and Melissa Cooper at Cabbage Tree Creek on 11.1.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Peter Driscoll at Fishermans Island on 15.11.95
- 2 Bar-tailed Godwits and 2 Great Knots seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 19.11.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Lytton roost on 19.11.95
- 1 Great Knot and 3 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Arthur Keates at Lytton roost on 3.12.95
- 1 Great Knot seen by Arthur Keates at Redcliffe on 3.12.95
- 1 Great Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Arthur Keates at Wynnum Manly on 17.12.95
- 1 Large Sand Plover seen by Andrew Geering, Arthur and Sheryl Keates at St Helena Island on 9.12.95
- 3 Great Knots seen by Jean Comey and Bev Durrant at Sandstone Point, Bribie Island, on 10.12.95
- 2 Great Knots and 4 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Arthur Keates at Lytton on 17.12.95 | 3 Bar-tailed Godwits and 2 Great Knots seen by Fiona Johnson at Lytton on 31.12.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit and 1 Great Knot seen by Jean Corney and Bev Duffant at Sandstone Point, Bribie Island on 5.1.96
- 4 Ruddy Turnstones seen by Andrew Geering at St Helena Island on 6.1.96
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Fiona Johnson at Lytton on 6.1.96
- 1 Great Knot seen by Jean Comey and Bev Durrant at Toorbul on 6.1.96

Green leg-flag sightings elsewhere in Australia

- 1 Great Knot seen by Phil Venables at Cairns Esplanade on 14.9.95
- 1 Curlew Sandpiper seen by Bo Totterman at East Ballina on 13.12.95

Other leg-flag or band sightings

- 1 Eastern Curlew with orange leg-flag seen by Peter Driscoll at Fishermans Island on 14.8.95
- 1 Caspian Tern with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Caddy's Island, Tweed Heads, on 22.8.95
- 1 Black-winged Stilt with metal band seen by Col Collins at Tallebudgera Creek on 25.8.95 and 24.9.95
- 1 Eastern Curlew with orange leg-flag seen by Port Curtis Wader Study Group at Clinton Ashponds on 3.9.95
- 1 Eastern Curlew with orange leg-flag seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River entrance on 3 - 7.9.95
- 1 Pied Oystercatcher with metal band seen by Arthur Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 7.10.95
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg-flag seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Toorbul on 15.11.95
- 1 Red-necked Stint with blue leg-flag seen by Peter Driscoll at Fisherman Islands on 26.11.95
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg-flag seen by Les Dick, Col Collins, Hilary and Betty Mannes and David Siems at Manly Harbour on 30.11.95
- 1 Common Tern with orange leg-flag seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River entrance on 30.11.95
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg-flag seen by Greg Nye and Paul O'Neil at Shoalwater Bay, central Queensland on 15.12.95
- 1 Greater Sand Plover with orange leg-flag seen by Sheryl and Arthur Keates at Manly Harbour on 17.12.95
- 1 Sanderling with yellow leg-flag seen by Peter Driscoll at Moreton Island on 4.1.96
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg-flag seen by Fiona Johnson at Lytton on 6 and 7.1.96
- 1 Little Tern with a metal band seen by Andrew Geering at St Helena Island on 6.1.96

International sightings of green leg-flagged birds

- 1 Eastern Curlew with green leg-flag sighted in Japan on 12.3.95
- 1 Eastern Curlew with green leg-flag sighted in Japan on 1.4.95
- 1 Great knot with green leg-flag sighted in Taiwan on 5.4.95
- 2 Bar-tailed Godwits with green leg-flags and 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with white leg-flag sighted in Japan on 17.4.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with green leg-flag sighted in Japan on 22.4.95
- 1 Eastern Curlew with green leg-flag sighted in Japan on 4.5.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with green leg-flag sighted in Japan on 9.5.95
- 1 Great Knot with green leg-flag sighted in Japan on 9.5.95
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with green leg-flag sighted New Zealand on 19.5.95
- 1 Great Knot with green leg flag sighted in Japan on 17.10.95

The Asian Dowitcher sightings

- 2 Asian Dowitchers seen by Mike and Linda Lewis at Manly Harbour on 23.9.95
- 1 Asian Dowitcher seen by Mike and Linda Lewis at Manly Harbour on 14.10.95 and 19.12.95
- 2 Asian Dowitchers seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Manly Roost on 28.10.95
- 2 Asian Dowitchers seen by Mike and Linda Lewis at Manly Harbour on 1 1.95
- 3 Asian Dowitchers seen by Fiona Johnson at Lytton on 31.12.95
- 1 Asian Dowitcher seen by Fiona Johnson at Lytton on 6.1.96
- 2 Asian Dowitchers seen by Arthur Keates at Lytton on 17.12.95
- 1 Asian Dowitcher seen by Andrew Geering, Sheryl and Arthur Keates at St Helena Island on 9.12.95 and again seen by Andrew Geering on the 6.1.96.

Other interesting sightings

- 1 Banded Lapwing seen by Di and Frank Harrison and Ben Bright at Cluden Flats on 28.4.95 - a first for Townsville
- 2 Beach Thick Knees seen by Jean Comey and Bev Durrant at Sandstone Point on 16.7.95
- 1 Ruff seen by Frank Harrison at Townsville on 7.9.95
- 1 Ringed Plover seen by Diana O'Connor and Fiona Johnson at Fisherman Island on 23.9.95
- 1 Brolga seen by Jean Corney and Bev Durrant at Bishops Marsh on 14.10.95
- 1 Banded Plover seen by Jim and Ivell Whyte, Melissa Cooper and Janet Brodie at Boondall Wetland on 11 11.95
- 1 Reeve (female Ruff) seen by Richard Johnson at Lake Broadwater north of Dalby on 17.11.95
- 1 Great-billed Heron seen by Greg Nye and Paul O'Neil at Shoalwater Bay, central Queensland, on 14.12.95

Large numbers counted

- Large number of Red Knot (500) seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Karumba Point on 14.5.95
- Large number of Great Knot (414) seen by Frank and Di Harrison at Cleveland Bay on 10.7.95
- Large number of Red Knot (400) seen by Diana O'Connor and Fiona Johnson at Lytton on 23.9.95
- Large number of Eastern Curlew (265) and Whimbrel (370) seen by Jean Comey and Bev Durrant at Toorbul on 26.8.95

Large number of Eastern Curlew (200) seen by Sandra Harding at Thornlands Road on 26.8.95
Large number of Eastern Curlew (196) seen by Sandra Harding and D Milton at Thornlands Road on 22.9.95
Large number of Red Knot (675) seen by Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek mouth on 23.9.95
Large number of Eastern Curlew (120) seen by Diana O'Connor and Fiona Johnson at Lytton second claypan on 23.9.95
Large number of Eastern Curlew (450) seen by Joyce Harding and Polly Cutcliffe at Thomlands Road on 14.10.95
Large number of Bar-tailed Godwit (1800) seen by Jean Comey and Bev Durrant at Toorbul on 14.10.95
Large number of Eastern Curlew (192) seen by Leanne Bowden and Greg Miller at Caboolture River mouth on 14.10.95
Large number of Red Knot (680) seen by Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek mouth on 16.10.95
Large numbers of Red-necked Avocets (241-384) seen by Linda and Phil Cross at Deception Bay Mangrove on 7.10.95, 14.10.95 and 11.1.95
Large number of Bar-tailed Godwit (2000-3800) seen by Lois MacRae at Dux Creek 11.11.95 and 9.12.95 despite extensive development of the area.
Large numbers of Bar-tailed Godwit (2300) and Eastern Curlew (110) seen by Owen and Deb McNamara at Nandeebie Park on 9.12.95
Good number of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (363) seen by Ivell and Jim Whyte at Boondall Wetlands on 10.12.95
Good numbers of Bar-tailed Godwit (800) and Eastern Curlew seen by Joyce Harding at Thornlands Road on 28.12.95

A few reminders on filling in count sheets, please remember, times, tide and wind direction and strength. Please note that you only have to record the total number of people, boats etc. in the immediate vicinity of the roost that may have influenced the number of waders counted. Special thanks to Edward for the huge number of sites (12+) you cover each month. Thank-you again to everyone and I look forward to reading and entering your data sheets.

Fisherman Islands (26 November 1995)

by Glen Collis

I have to admit that the concept of actually catching waders by cannon netting eluded me at first. With an array of feeding areas at any given location, how realistic was it to expect that waders would dutifully settle in the designated catching area? Surely the laws of probability would auger against the reliability of such a technique. I almost expected to see a pyramidal clump of 'bait' strategically positioned within the catching area, with a sign staked to the clump offering 'Free Food', somewhat reminiscent of the old *Road Runner* cartoons. Despite these doubts, borne out of a background of bait-trapping for mammals, I was keen to find out how this technique did in fact work.

So it was with eager anticipation that I arrived at Fisherman Islands on a bright and blue Sunday morn. Peter Driscoll flagged me down at the gate and directed me to a sizeable group of waders in the distance. Also taking part in the day's netting were Arthur and Sheryl Keates, Sandra Harding, Ivell Whyte, Raylene McKay, Peter Beck, Leanne Bowden and Greg Miller.

Peter had reconnoitred the area the previous day and had selected three potential catching sites within the tidal lagoons. After successfully negotiating the maze of tracks, our little convoy came to rest a short hike away from the sites. Our population grew as we were soon joined by Andrew Geering, Margaret Bernard and Daniel Joyce. With many willing hands it was only a short time before all three nets were in place and the group settled down to wait. This we did in the new purpose-built, canvas bird-hide which provided thankful relief from the ultra-violets, with the jungle green fabric providing an interesting contrast to our dunal surroundings.

A small group of Bar-tailed Godwits had already alighted immediately downwind of net 1, but alas, didn't appear to show the slightest inclination of venturing into the catching zone. I subdued my fear that we may not even fire any cannons today and just enjoyed the company as we all waited patiently. Meanwhile Peter and Andrew had ventured off to scout for birds and attempt to coax some towards the nets. After a while their efforts paid off, as a series of flocks comprising Eastern Curlews, Whimbrels, Black-tailed Godwits, Red-capped Plovers and other species settled alongside the restful godwits near net 1.

As the day wore on an unsuspecting flock of Little Terns settled in the catching area of net 1. However, with little indication that any more individuals would follow the terns examples, the order was given to fire. It was certainly an impressive site watching the nets being deployed. Chaos ensued, with bodies going everywhere - human bodies, that is! Yet amidst the apparent chaos there was order, with the birds being expertly removed from the net and quickly deposited into the holding pens. Final tally: 64 Little Terns and 2 (non-breeding) White-winged Black Terns. The identification of the latter two individuals proved a challenge at first, having been caught amongst the somewhat similar Little Terns, however, this dilemma was soon resolved thanks to some accurate speculating by Peter.

With most of the group happily handling and processing the terns, Peter commandeered the remainder of us to check the other two sites. Net 3 was a non-event, but it was hoped to score a few Mongolian Plovers in net 2. Once again, some friendly persuasion was practiced by Peter and Margaret, with Sheryl eagerly awaiting the 'command', along, with Raylene and myself. As late afternoon was fast approaching, it became obvious that net 2 would also not see any active duty.

This disappointment was soon vanquished with the sighting of a blue flagged Red-necked Stint, hailing from the shores of Hokkaido. That a diminutive creature like this stint can accomplish such a feat, successfully navigating phenomenal distances, never ceases to amaze me and is always a humbling experience.

It was certainly a most enjoyable way to spend the day. Yet I am still intrigued by the possibilities of using some form of 'bait'. It was interesting for me to note that birds on the wing appeared to prefer to land alongside waders that had already settled. Although this idea has probably been attempted before, I wonder if a few life-like decoys, positioned either in or around the catching area, might enhance capture rates?

Moreton Island

by Sheryl and Arthur Keates

With some reservations because of the heavy rain during the week, we boarded the barge at Redland Bay for the 3 hour trip to Moreton Island. On the same barge were Diana O'Connor, Karen Wright, Edward Kleiber and Glen Morley, the designer of the latest model of cannons. Ominously, shortly before arriving at Koorungal, it began to rain. We were soon discussing our plans with Peter Driscoll who, with help from Stephanie and Sam, had laid the largest of the cannon nets at Mirrapool where about 1,400 Eastern Curlew roosted. We planned to set 2 more nets and retreat before the high tide forced the waders to fly in. Gary Harch and Tony Rowland were to come over in the QWSG boat.

After a 4am rise we went about setting the nets and erecting the hide nearby. We later learned that rough seas had forced Gary and Tony to return to the mainland. After setting the nets, we were just about to retreat to the hide, when any thoughts of a catch of Eastern Curlew disappeared as 2 fishers disturbed them causing them to desert the catching area. As if that weren't enough, the tide was higher than expected and one of the nets we had set on the spit was clearly going to be inundated. Hastily, we moved it to higher ground without camouflaging it. We were resigned to no success with the third net since the Sand Plovers, Red-necked Stint and Sanderling were staying well clear of it. Peter had seen a yellow leg-flagged Sanderling before our arrival on the island.

Our only chance of a catch was the re-laid net. With some excellent twinkling by Diana, a good sized flock of Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Plover and even a couple of Sanderling walked into the catching area. The firing of the cannon netted about 70 Bar-tailed Godwits, of which 5 were re-captures. Before some interested spectators, the birds were disentangled and quickly processed and released.

By now the large net, which had been set for the Eastern Curlew, was covered by the incoming tide. Peter decided to remove the cannons to ensure they had not been adversely affected by the water. We packed the trailer and returned to Koorungal where some rested while others reloaded the fired cannons and checked the cannons for water damage.

Late in the afternoon, under a threatening sky which produced the only rain for the weekend, we went back to Mirrapool to reconnect the cannons to the large net as part of our plan to catch Eastern Curlew the next day. At the same time we reversed the direction of the firing. In retrospect it was a wise decision.

We 'slept in' Sunday morning, getting up at 4:30am. Soon after arrival at Mirrapool we quickly set the other 2 nets just before the large flocks of waders began to arrive. We retreated to our appointed positions. What a

sight it was to see the thousands of waders flying in. The packed masses of waders along Eastern Beach reminded us of Roebuck Bay, Broome.

After a wait of about 1 hour, the net was fired. The resultant catch was 37 birds, 2 of which escaped before processing. However, the highlight was undoubtedly a recaptured bird resplendent wearing its green leg-flag and transmitter that Peter had fitted late in December 1994. Needless to say, this bird was given the royal treatment. The transmitter was removed from the bird which, when re-released, seemed reluctant to fly away. Instead, it walked quite a distance before taking to the air. We finished processing the other birds and returned to Koorringal where we packed our gear, cleaned up the house and headed off to catch the barge home.

Peter's skills were again demonstrated to a sizeable spectator audience when he faultlessly reversed the reliable Niva and fully loaded trailer with a variety of gear on to the barge. We must have been early, one car arrived after us? It was a successful weekend. We sincerely hope that the exercise is beneficial in the study of the migratory habits of the wonderful waders.

Our thanks to Peter and Stephanie for their hospitality.

Volunteers Required for Ramsar Field Trips

QWSG is responsible for organising the morning field trips for the Ramsar delegates at Nudgee Beach and Wynnum/ Lota Boardwalk from Wednesday 20 to Wednesday 27 March (with exception of Sunday 24) and the supply of "breakfast" to delegates partaking in these activities.

Breakfast will consist of a Poppa-type juice, cereal/muesli bar and a piece of fresh fruit.

VOLUNTEERS - Both sites will need five to six volunteers each morning from approximately 6.15 am. to 7.30 am. Additionally, there is a need for breakfast coordinators and evening support persons.

TASKS - At field site - to take a group of up to ten delegates for approximately one hour around the sites and assist with wader location and identification and/or items of special interest.

- **Evening support persons** - one person for each site to act as liaison between the Field Coordinator and Field Volunteers for last minute changes to the next day's activities. This is a lovely 'do at home - after hours' but vital job!

- **Breakfast coordinator** - this will probably require the collection of supplies prior to the commencement of Ramsar and the daily sorting and delivery of the breakfast package. Two separate volunteers needed.

PROVIDED - a training session and "trial run" at a date to be confirmed. A brochure in all three official languages will also be supplied.

ARE YOU ABLE TO SUPPLY - your time, own binoculars, telescopes and field guides?? If you are unable to volunteer but would allow usage of any of the above equipment, we would be more than grateful for such a generous offer.

CONTACTS - for **NUDGEE BEACH** - Greg Miller xxxx xxxx
- for **WYNNUM/LOTA** and for **BREAKFAST COORDINATOR** - Karen Wright xxxx xxxx

Please remember to complete official volunteer forms but make contact on a personal level to the coordinators to notify them of your special interest.

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 xxxxx. All completed count forms must be returned to Ivell Whyte at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx 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 1996 (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. The trips are monthly. Please contact Paul Walbridge if you are interested, ph. Xxxx xxxx hm, xxx xxxx wk.

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Sat. 9th March	High of 2.13 m at 11:50 am.
Sat. 6th April	High of 2.12 m at 10:53 am.
Sat. 20th April	High of 1.96 in at 10:52 am.
Sat. 4th May	High of 2.09 m at 9:51 am.
Sat. 1st June	High of 2.01 m at 8:42 am.

Cannon Netting

March	No netting due to QWSG commitments to Ramsar.
Sat. 6th April	Tentative (Easter Saturday) - St. Helena Island. High of 2.02 m. at 11:33 am.
Mon. 8th April	Tentative.
Sat. 20th April	Amity Spit, North Stradbroke Island. High of 1.96 m. at 10:52 am.