

QUEENSLAND WADER

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

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What we do for shorebird conservation

by Sandra Harding

Was it all worthwhile? As Conservation Officer for the AWSG, I thought I'd better take an active interest in the upcoming Ramsar Conference; what it all meant I was yet to discover. To begin with, an alliance of groups interested in wetlands was formed, the Australasian Wetlands Alliance (AWA). Initially Wetlands International (then the Asian Wetland Bureau) assisted our formation, and after employment of an officer based at the Australian Marine Conservation Society, we concentrated our attention on Ramsar. The Organisation of voluntary support for Ramsar was a major feat, conducted by the AMCS, but I thought I should concentrate my energies for policy concerns. Max Maddock, from the Shortlands Wetland Centre, drafted an AWA Position Paper, which incorporated comments from the range of member groups.

As delegates, Peter Driscoll, Diana O'Connor and I received two lots of papers a couple of weeks prior to Ramsar to get us started. Of course our prime concern at that time was the workshop "Shorebird Conservation in the Asia-Pacific Region" the weekend before. Then before we were quite ready for it, Ramsar was under way. We commenced on Monday 18 March with an AWA meeting at 10.00 am. In addition to the formal Conference program, a program of additional meetings were necessary. This set out the combined Australian and International Non-Government Organisations (NGO) delegates meetings at 8am and 6pm every day, various lunch time meetings held by the Partner organisations, namely WWF and Wetlands International and meetings of the regional groupings of countries, Australia being in the Oceania group. There was always a number of choices as to where one should be at any one time.

So what next. I decided we needed to identify key wader issues from an Australian perspective to pursue at Ramsar. Our key issues were:

- Loss and degradation of habitat in the north Asian section of the East Asian Australasian Flyway, namely in China, Japan and Korea. Loss of staging sites could mean the extinction of certain species.
- Sites should be nominated for the Shorebird Reserve Network by both Ramsar and non-Ramsar countries.
- Australia should list sites on the Montreux Record. This could be assisted by pressure from other countries.
- Australia's list of sites should better reflect the important shorebird sites. The important sites are listed in the AWA Position Paper. In particular the SE Gulf of Carpentaria should be listed.

We would also be willing to assist in any efforts towards getting more knowledge on ephemeral wetlands.

At the same time as attending the main conference, we were working on contributions to ECO, the NGO newsletter, media releases and conferences and liaising with the international NGO delegates. The AWA Position Paper provided our starting point for statements of policy. One important meeting was the report on our shorebird workshop. It took a while to decipher all our papers - Addendum 11 to Doc 6.15, Doc 6.12, Info 6.5, Resolution VI.23 etc., even finding the right one (the Strategic Plan eluded Peter for a few days) and how to make an intervention. We all felt overwhelmed to begin with, however, once we'd settled into the routine, we only had our increasing tiredness to overcome. I was very impressed with the overall team effort of the shorebird NGO delegates.

I'll briefly outline the main issues and areas of policy addressed. It is no way comprehensive.

1. This conference marked the 25th Anniversary of the Convention by adopting a Strategic Plan for the first time, covering the years 1997-2002. Each Contracting Party is free to choose the extent to which it will implement this Strategic Plan. The Bureau Work Program 1997-1999 follows the same format as the Strategic Plan. An international group of NGOs reviewed the Strategic Plan and prioritised the General

Objectives. In general it was felt that the Convention should focus on strengthening a "bottom- up" approach by educating and empowering local communities and providing support the field level wetland education and conservation/wise use activities at the field level. To improve the amount of money that actually goes to conservation will be a future task to pursue by NGOs and such matters were discussed with Mr Delmar Blasco, Secretary General of the Ramsar Bureau. A budget increase of 25% was adopted, however this was not the optimal budget option which meant a scaling down of proposed activities in the Strategic Plan.

2. In order to emphasise the importance of NGOs, there needs to be built a legitimate role for the NGO. Accordingly, an NGO Pledge of support to Ramsar and Money Pledge were announced at the Conference. NGOs pledge within the limits of their resources, to work together in partnership with the Bureau and Contracting Parties to conduct activities such as community-based education, information and empowerment programs, as well as implementing field-level wetland conservation, restoration and wise use projects. Also NGOs will track our contribution to implementation of the Convention over the next three years, and report achievements to the next Conference of Parties in 1999. Forty-three NGOs signed the pledge. Seventeen NGOs signed the pledge to provide money for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Fund, offering amounts ranging between \$50 and \$250.

3. The Ramsar 25th Anniversary Strategic Plan Fund set a target of at least 25 million Swiss Francs to be committed by all existing and potential Contracting Parties to implement the Convention's Strategic Plan, including the Wetland Conservation Fund. While this was a commendable objective, a number of countries incorporated funding pledges of existing projects and bilateral aid as new funding for the Strategic Plan.

4. Resolution 6.21 on assessment and reporting on the status of wetlands was originally a proposal of the AWA. Having commented on Australia's National Report we discovered that the structure made it difficult to get a coherent view of the status of individual Ramsar sites in a country. Such reports provide the opportunity for Contracting parties to prepare a country-wide "Status of Ramsar Sites" Report. The resolution requests the Bureau review, if necessary and appropriate, the guidelines on preparing National Reports and establish and agreed scientific process for assessing the state of wetlands resources nationally, regionally and globally. A last minute change was achieved which recognised the role of community groups and local NGOs and invited Parties to develop mechanisms by which NGOs may assist governments.

5. Recommendation 6.3 submitted by Australia concerned involving local and indigenous people in the management of Ramsar wetlands. This recommendation urges consultation with indigenous people in national wetland policies and in management planning for Ramsar sites and other significant wetlands. It also urges representation of local and indigenous people on National Ramsar Committees and in the national delegations to future Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to be considered. These particular points originated from the indigenous working group formed by the indigenous NGO delegates.

6. Recommendation 6.4 to establish a network of listed sites along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway called the "Brisbane Initiative" was the most significant recommendation for shorebirds. It calls for the establishment of a network of Ramsar-listed and other wetlands of international importance for migratory shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway managed to maintain their suitability for migratory shorebirds.

7. At the launch of the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network there were 24 sites put forward and the countries represented were Russian Federation, Japan, China, United Kingdom (Hong Kong), Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.

8. Recommendation 6.8 concerning the adoption of strategic planning in coastal zones has incorporated shorebirds in the statement: "Coastal zone planning should incorporate all types of wetlands and associated shorebird and other waterbird roosting areas including, *inter alia*, associated freshwater wetland systems, coastal lagoons, bays, ocean inlets, mangrove, perched lakes, kelp forests, freshwater swamps, and estuaries, as inter- and sub-tidal areas up to six metres deep at zero reference tide mark."

9. Recommendation 6.17 included consideration of Australian Ramsar Sites and calls on Australian authorities to:

- consider prudent and feasible alternatives to proposed major developments within a number of Australian Ramsar sites or their catchment, where those developments would have significant adverse impacts on the Ramsar sites concerned.
- consider providing water to a number of Ramsar sites in inland Australia in greater quantity and with timing more closely related to natural environmental conditions.
- provide adequate resources to reverse threats to Ramsar sites caused by rising saline ground-water.
- institute appropriate public environmental impact assessment procedures, before permitting the introduction into Australia of live exotic species which may become weeds or pests of wetlands.

- consider inclusion of sites in the Montreux Record, where this would assist substantially in monitoring, maintaining or restoring the ecological character of Ramsar sites under serious threat.
- take immediate steps to ensure the long-term conservation of its peatlands such as Wingecarribee Swamp in New South Wales.

It was important that Ramsar was held in Australia and that following Japan, it has been in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway in two succeeding trienniums. Wetland issues now have a raised profile in Australia and the considerable number of Australian NGO delegates and volunteers supporting the Conference has significantly assisted the world wide conservation of wetlands. The AWA is now working towards preparing for the next conference, the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to be held in Costa Rica. In addition to achieving a good presence in Costa Rica, we can continue communicating and coordinating with the international NGOs to improve conservation efforts. It is a good feeling to know that our local conservation efforts are part of a global scene.

Report On The Australasian Wader Studies Group Conference SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION in the ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Queensland Museum

Brisbane 16 & 17 March, 1996

by Leanne Bowden

On the weekend of 16th and 17th March, 1996, members of the Queensland Wader Study Group provided much of the people-power to meet, greet, collect, chauffeur, host, register, direct, feed, serve and entertain, as well as translate for, sell to, wash up for and pack up afterwards for the 150 attendees from 17 different countries and numerous organisations who attended the Shorebird Conservation Conference. Countries represented included Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, United Kingdom and the United States of America. Organisations represented included the Australian Nature Conservation Agency; Australasian, International and Queensland Wader Study Groups; Environment Agency - Japan; Queensland Department of Environment; Queensland Ornithological Society Inc.; Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union; WBM Oceanics Australia; Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network; Wetlands International from Asia Pacific, Indonesia and Oceania; World Wide Fund for Nature from Hong Kong and Japan; and the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology.

The Objectives of the Conference were to:

- focus attention on the serious threats, and their impacts, to migratory shorebirds in the Asia-Pacific Region;
- outline the current conservation status of shorebirds and their habitats in the region;
- discuss options for improving shorebird conservation and, in particular, the proposed Asia-Pacific Shorebird Action Plan and East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network; and
- obtain participant feedback on the proposed Plan and Network, through workshop session.

As well as the above, delegates heard about the biology of migratory shorebirds, habitat loss and alteration in Japan, hunting of shorebirds in Java, disturbance to shorebirds in Europe, the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Network, the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement, and the Kushiro Initiative. Volume 3 of the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, featuring many waders, was also launched by Dr. David Baker-Gabb, Director of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union.

In between all this was morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, with QWSG members darting to and fro - filling urns, carrying trays stacked with scones, jam, cream, biscuits, croissants, bread rolls, chicken, ham and salad and collecting the dirties afterwards. The breaks provided time to socialise with the international delegates, and peruse the poster displays from along the East Asian Flyway. (Did anyone know that the slight delay to lunch was because the St. Patrick's Day March through the city streets on Saturday meant the food vans could not get through to the caterer, and all had to be ferried through the streets by foot?)

And just when everyone thought Day One was over, and there would be time to get home for a quick shower, before the Conference Dinner, Dr Eugenie Syroechkovsky from Russia made a special, additional and interesting slide presentation of his work in Siberia and the Kamchatka Peninsula, narrated with a very dry and enjoyable sense of humour.

The Dinner too, held at the Kurilpa Club, West End, was a success, and no one seemed to mind eating one of our feathered friends, the chicken, for the main course! QWSG members proved just as adept running from

kitchen to table, serving wine and food, clearing tables and hand washing an unbelievable pile of glasses, plates and cutlery, as they are at running to and fro collecting cannon netting equipment and birds to be processed. Dr Pavel Tomkovich from Russia entertained after dinner with a slide show of his research in northern Siberia, the highlight of which was the sight of a Great Knot perched atop a fir tree.

And presumably no one noticed, just prior to the dinner, when half a dozen members went running down the road to The Coffee Club, and came back puffing and panting ten minutes later with folding chairs tucked under each arm. The Kurilpa Club was one dozen chairs short, and through some sweet talking by a QWSG member who fortunately frequents The Coffee Club, they'd agreed to loan us the chairs, but only for 90 minutes. Fellow members were directed to sit on those particular chairs, and be prepared to circulate or grace the walls at the appropriate time!!

Numbers were slightly less on Day Two, but not so the enthusiasm and the humour. Credit must be given to the entrepreneurs on the merchandising outlet too, because there were an awful lot more brand spanking new QWSG, QOSI and RAMSAR T-shirts being worn.

Delegates heard from countries along the East Asian-Australasian Network - Russia flying into their site by Aeroflot helicopter; China trying to save a section on their coastline of which almost 80% is already developed; Japan trying to save a "tidal flat" that to us resembles a concrete jungle; the Philippines attempting to stop local people from planting mangroves to create more solid land; Bangladesh, 80% of which is under the Ramsar definition of wetlands admitting their identification problem, when many delegates asked where in Pakistan Bangladesh was; and Australia, the economically richest country, legislating to protect Moreton Bay.

After lunch, delegates broke into four Shorebird Action Plan Workshops, to discuss (i) Tracking and Colour Marking Protocols, (ii) Training Needs, (iii) Surveying and Population Monitoring and (iv) Communications Options. Each group produced a Resolution to be included with the overall Conference Resolutions.

The Conference also provided the opportunity to gain a personal insight into what caring for shorebirds means across the globe - from pitching tents in snow in the depths of Siberia and hiking through areas where the mosquitoes are as big as the birds; to risking life, limb and the threat of imprisonment to prevent the military building on Korean swamps; to the very difficult task of trying to convince the Asian poor and starving that the wetlands should be protected and the birds left to live.

Overall, the Conference achieved all that it set out to do, plus more, as can be seen from the above, and from the Statement that follows which was prepared by the delegates at the conclusion of the Conference. It is envisaged that a full account of Conference Proceedings will be available later this year. The Statement was presented to delegates of the RAMSAR Conference, held between 19th to 27th March.

Congratulations must go to those who had the vision to conceive such a conference and to organise it. Thanks must go to those who gave up their weekend to attend. Special Thanks must go to those who volunteered so much of their time to make it such a success, and Very Special Thanks must go to the International Travellers without whom there would be no purpose for such an event - the Waders themselves.

SUMMARY STATEMENT of THE CONFERENCE on "SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION"

A Conference entitled "Shorebird Conservation in the Asia-Pacific Region" was held on 16 and 17 March in Brisbane, Australia. The Conference was attended by 145 participants from 16 countries and territories (Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Republic of Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, The Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore and the United Kingdom).

The Conference heard presentations by 23 speakers from 15 countries and territories outlining the conservation status of shorebirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific Region, and describing the serious threats to migratory shorebirds, and the impacts of these threats.

Options for improving shorebird conservation, particularly the proposed Asia-Pacific Shorebird Action Plan and East Asian - Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network were discussed. Workshop sessions were held on four components of the Action Plan to obtain feedback from participants.

The Conference:

- Recognising the growing evidence of declining population numbers for many species of shorebirds in the region, due to habitat loss and degradation, disturbance, pollution and hunting, urged that immediate action be taken to reverse the situation.
- expressed particular concern at the destruction of critically important staging sites for migratory shorebirds in China, the Korean peninsula and Japan.
- welcomed the timely response to the "Kushiro Initiative", which has involved the publication of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, and the development of the Asia-Pacific Shorebird Action Plan and East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network.
- strongly supported the development of the Asia-Pacific Shorebird Action Plan.
- endorsed the development of the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network.
- called on countries at the Conference of Parties of the Ramsar Convention to support the "Brisbane Initiative" being proposed by the Australian Government.
- noted that successful implementation of the Strategy, Shorebird Action Plan and Shorebird Reserve Network requires the cooperation and coordination of national and local Government agencies, inter-governmental agencies, non-government organisations, academic institutions, local people and individuals, both within countries and on a Flyway-wide scale, and called for all to work together for shorebird conservation.
- stressed the need for an effective Flyway-wide communication network to allow all those involved in shorebird management, conservation and research to be well informed.
- recognising the need for improved knowledge of migration routes, recommended that priority be given to analysing existing data and developing cooperative migration studies involving satellite tracking, especially of the eastern Curlew, and the use of marking, particularly leg-flagging.
- recognising the need for improved knowledge of the abundance, distribution and population trends of shorebirds within the Flyway, recommended that additional surveys and counts be undertaken and that a flyway-wide monitoring programme be established.

Complimented the RAOU on the publication of the third volume of HANZAB and its contribution to shorebird knowledge.

Expressed appreciation to the Queensland Museum for making their excellent facilities available and for their cooperation in the running of the Conference.

Expressed appreciation to all volunteers, particularly those from the Queensland Wader Study Group, for their considerable assistance in ensuring the success of the Conference.

The Conference was organised by the Australasian Wader Studies Group, a special interest group of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, with assistance from Wetlands International - Oceania Program.

RAMSAR - One volunteer's perspective

by Raelee Mackay

It's probably an understatement for all of us that Ramsar won't be forgotten too quickly. Life as a volunteer for Ramsar (and the AWSG conference that preceded it) began for me more than a year ago. At this time the wheels of organisation were already turning for many others.

Ivell Whyte is probably known to many of you as a very enthusiastic, intelligent and helpful person. I know her as a lovable, but very cunning mother. She chose a quiet drive on a country outing to casually introduce me to Ramsar. As my interest grew, her real intentions came to light. It appeared that the QWSG had no real options for a display to increase awareness of the group and its activities. Having been involved in the preparation and erection of a similar display for an international conference (with QDPI) just prior, I was naturally full of helpful suggestions.

By the end of the trip we had basically designed the display, and had gone from contemplation to what has become our favourite catch phrase - "We can do it".

Our next most important step was to ensure our ideas were acceptable to the group. Armed with past efforts, rough drafts and WEEVIL (our papier mache masterpiece created for the other conference), we first cornered an enthusiastic Fiona Johnson, then confronted the group. Most seemed a bit dazed, and perhaps somewhat dubious, but basically we received the approval we sought.

The next months were a blur, with most spare moments and the majority of weekends spent battling one complication after another. Many of you probably remember my strained countenance during the "committee processing" of the logo. The hand-painted chart of "Waders of Moreton Bay" became a true labour of love for both Mum & me - from pencilling in all the initial details, to repainting the map and completed birds because the fabric dyes dried a different colour to that first painted. We have learned that with volunteer work, many things are not as easy as they are initially perceived.

The pace really picked up in the new year, as we took on the exciting and financially harrowing task of organising merchandising as well as preparing the display. We never realised the huge volumes of decisions involved - fabric, sizes, colours, styles - and how hard it is to fit in visits to the manufacturer around work.

Final touches to the Cannon Netting poster, design of the brochure and the last minute construction and painting of "Bart" (the Bar-tailed Godwit), our papier mache centrepiece, strained us to our physical and emotional limits. "We can do it" held out, but Mum and I only really pulled through with the patience and loving support of two wonderful husbands, and motivation from each other.

It was amazing, right up to this point, how many other wonderful people were involved in helping us successfully achieve our goal. The number of people in business who donated time, materials and support are too many to list, but were inspiring none the less. The undying support and ideas Fiona gave us really capped off the hours she devoted to the "Flyway Sightings" wall-chart. This rounded off the display perfectly.

It was with very little sleep that we started, then staggered through the eleven days of firstly the AWSG Shorebirds Conference, then Ramsar. We lived on take-aways, PEPSI and chocolate. I am sure many of you can relate to this scenario.

One of the most rewarding moments as a volunteer, was the time I spent helping out at the AWSG Conference dinner. After the initial fluster and nervous anticipation during set-up, it was wonderful to watch how well everyone worked together out in the kitchen. The food preparation team were ever-friendly and helpful. What we volunteers lacked in waitressing skills was more than made up for with our keen attentiveness. There was always someone willing to do what was necessary, from opening wine bottles to serving the next plate and finally washing up and packing. I think that night I felt most proud to be a volunteer and part of the QWSG.

Ramsar began the following day. Those brightly coloured vests that became the trade-mark of the Ramsar volunteers were an item to be worn with pride. Not only did they give us unspoken permission to go most places, they distinguished us as someone just about any delegate could talk with freely. I think the delegates really made the conference the international feast of interest and purpose it was. They helped lift me through some of the "slower" sections, where insufficient sleep made staying awake as an usher a major effort. Having two great volunteer organisers in Kerrie and David, and a score of others always ready to support us made the job more fun than work.

The constant positive feedback throughout and after the conference on the display, and how well the other volunteer's activities were going helped maintain me on the natural high I floated on through Ramsar. Each day seemed pretty long and had its share of hassles. For example, travelling through peak hour traffic to and from the centre, and ending up in Car park 3 when you have a stack of heavy stuff to get up the other end of the centre. However, Ramsar as a whole seemed to fly by and end too soon. We felt quite emotional taking the display down, knowing it was all over and new-found friends would soon be gone.

I had a great time at Ramsar and was so proud to be part of such a successful event. "Thank you" to everyone involved, both directly and indirectly.

I used to think most volunteers were crazy to put themselves to so much trouble just for something they felt strongly about. I guess I've become one of these madmen and discovered the addiction – I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

(Editor's note - the Whyte/Mackay connection and Fiona Johnson deserve special praise. I felt a great sense of pride when I saw the QWSG display at Ramsar. Bart the godwit, the hand-painted chart and the world map with leg-flag sightings were works of art and the hours of preparation were very evident. Many thanks!!)

New members

We welcome Jean Antonieff, Shane Bennett, Peter Berkeley, Janet Broady, Michele Burford, Glen Collis, Tony Cotter, Neils Dreyer, Keith Fisher, Frances Guard, John Martin, Peter and Lynette Reilly, Nigel Roberts and Koji Tagi as new members of the QWSG.

Wader Watch

by Natasha Taylor

I hope that everyone had a great Easter - can you believe Peter putting a wader count on Easter Sunday!!! The silly season for waders is coming to a close. Let's all relax into winter when there are fewer counts and less birds. There are still a few interesting sightings from the first part of the year.

Colour Legend for Leg-flags

Green = Brisbane/Queensland

Orange = Victoria Blue = Japan

White = New Zealand (some species New South Wales)

Yellow = North-West Australia

Green Leg-flag sightings

- 4 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Point, North Stradbroke Island, on 23/9/95.
- 1 Eastern Curlew seen by Edward Kleiber, Diana O'Connor, and Sheryl and Arthur Keates at Mirapool Lagoon on 6/1/96 and 7/1/96.
- 1 Ruddy Turnstone seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island on 3/2/96.
- 12 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Point, North Stradbroke Island, on 11/2/96.
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Chris Pavey at Tony's Bar, Tweed Heads, on 27/2/96.
- 2 Great Knots seen by David Rohweder at Clarence River, NSW, on 28/2/96.
- 2 Mongolian Plovers seen by Arthur Keates at Manly on 3/3/96.
- 2 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Arthur Keates at Woody Point, Redcliffe, on 9/3/96.
- 3 Great Knots seen by Arthur Keates at Woody Point, Redcliffe, on 9/3/96.
- 1 Curlew Sandpiper seen by Russ Lamb at Toorbul on 10/3/96.
- 2 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Sheryl Keates at Nudgee Beach on 10.3.96.
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Arthur Keates at Manly on 17/3/96.
- 1 Great Knot seen by Arthur Keates at Manly on 17/3/96.
- 3 Great Knots seen by Ivan Fein on at Toorbul on 21/3/96.
- 1 Mongolian Plover seen by Arthur Keates at Wynnum on 22/3/96.
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Arthur Keates at Toorbul on 23/3/96.
- 4 Great Knots seen by Arthur Keates at Toorbul on 23/3/96.
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Brett Lane, Tom Tarrant and Nial Moores at Fisherman Islands on 24/3/96.
- 1 Great Knot seen by Brett Lane, Tom Tarrant and Nial Moores at Wynnum on 24/3/96.
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island on the 24/3/96.
- 1 Bar-tailed Tattler seen by Ivell Whyte, Melissa Cooper, Eckhart Kuijken and Matthew at Cabbage Tree Creek mouth on 17/3/96.
- 1 Curlew Sandpiper seen by Russ Lamb at Toorbul on 30/3/96.
- 2 Grey-tailed Tattlers seen by Peter Driscoll at Fisherman Islands on 11/4/96.
- 2 Great Knots seen by Ivan Fein at Toorbul on 12/4/96.
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island on 20/4/96.

Other Leg-flag or Banded Birds Sighted

- 2 Pied Oystercatchers with metal bands, one also had a blue leg-flag (banded in SE Queensland), seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Spit, North Stradbroke Island, on 29/9/95.
- 2 Eastern Curlews with metal bands seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Point, North Stradbroke Island, on 29/9/95.
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg-flag seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Point, North Stradbroke Island, on 11/2/96.
- 1 Oystercatcher sp. with a metal band (banded in SE Queensland) seen by Ian Gynther at Amity Point, North Stradbroke Island, on 16/3/96. Ian reports this as an unusual individual with a combination of both Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher plumage characteristics.
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with a blue leg-flag seen by Edward Kleiber at Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads, on 22/3/96 and 23/3/96 and again seen at Shallow Bay, Tweed Heads, on 23/3/96.
- 1 Large Sand Plover with an orange leg-flag seen by Arthur Keates at Wynnum on 22/3/96.
- 1 Mongolian Plover with an orange leg-flag seen by Brett Lane, Tom Tarrant and Nial Moores at Manly on 24/3/96.
- 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with a blue leg-flag seen by Peter Driscoll at Mirapool, Moreton Island, on 5/4/96.

International Sightings of Birds Banded in Australia

- 1 Great Knot with a yellow leg-flag seen by Mark Barter at Chongming Island on 2/4/96.
- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with a green leg-flag seen by Mark Barter at Chongming Island on 2/4/96.
- 1 Great Knot banded at NW Western Australia recaptured at Chongming Island on 2/4/96.

Other Interesting Sightings

- 1 Beach Thick-knee seen by A. and J. Ruddell at Boyne Beach, Port Curtis, on 7/ 2/96.
- 1 Beach Thick-knee seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River entrance on 27/2/96.
- 2 Latham's Snipe seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed Heads on 8/3/96 (4 Snipe seen on 10/2/96, 18/2/96 and 24/2/96).
- 2 Beach Thick-knee seen by Jean Comey and Bev Durrant at Sandstone Point, Bribie Island, on 10/3/96.
- 1 Peregrine Falcon seen by Frank Bigg at Dux Creek, Bribie Island, on 6/4/96.

Thank you again to all the wader observers and remember to keep the count sheet as easy as possible for me to read and enter. When a leg-flagged bird is sighted it is important to know the other waders and environmental readings at that time - maybe filling in a count sheet would ensure all that data is collected (send it with your regular count sheets).

Count program update

by Jim and Ivell Whyte

To all counters - a big "thank you" once again for your dedication over the last 12 months.

The December survey of Shoalwater Bay, in conjunction with the Department of Environment, was an unqualified success. Previous estimates of wader population sizes of certain species (eg. Terek Sandpipers and Whimbrel) were far exceeded. A similar result was obtained with Stuart Pell's survey of the coastline between Bowen and Cairns. The most significant discovery (in terms of numbers in one area) was in the Burdekin River Delta, where almost 4000 Lesser Sand Plovers were counted.

Our returns for both the national winter and summer counts extended from Cairns to the Tweed estuary and out to the Atherton Tablelands and Dalby. A top effort from everyone!

Several of our volunteers have recently moved to other areas. We're in need of replacement or stand-by counters for a couple of current sites. Ian Gynther has done a great job at Amity Point to date for us, but is unable to continue regular monthly monitoring of the roost site. A roster system of half a dozen volunteers to share the workload would probably be the ideal solution. If you'd like to help with the count program, by spending a day out on beautiful Stradbroke Island a couple of times per year, please let us know.

With continuing rapid development along the coastline of Moreton Bay, it's imperative that we identify and monitor all current roost sites. A major priority for the QWSG in the near future is a survey by boat of the whole shoreline. New sites thus located will have to be monitored, so the group will be needing more volunteer counters.

If we already have your name as a stand-by and haven't talked with you lately, could you please let us know of your current availability. Give us a quick nudge also if you previously expressed interest in involvement in our count program, and we've failed as yet to contact you. We apologise for any oversight.

For those members who would like to be involved, but lack confidence in wader identification skills, our regular counters are always happy to have you accompany them. Our contact number for all of the above is phone/fax/answering machine - (07) xxxx xxxx.

Good counting. (PS Remember the national winter count on the weekend of 29-30 June. It is important to get as complete coverage as possible)

Bird sanctuary or garbage dump??

The battle for Fujimae Tidal Flats in Japan continues. Fujimae Tidal Flat is in Nanyo-cho, Minatoku, in the south west corner of Nagoya City, on Ise Bay. The 120 hectare tidal flat is the only unspoiled tidal flat on the

Ise Bay coastline. It is located at the junction of the Shonai, Shin and Nikko rivers, in the middle of massive Nagoya port facilities and coastal industrial developments.

Fujimae accommodates one of the largest populations of migratory birds of any tidal flat in Japan, comparable in size to those of Yatsu and Sanbanse tidal flats in Tokyo Bay. 60,000 waders and waterfowl of more than 90 species are observed at Fujimae every year. As many as 10-15% of all the Grey Plover, Dunlin, and Bar-tailed Godwit which visit Japan during their migration stop over at Fujimae.

Alas, this tidal flat is on the verge of being 'reclaimed' as a new Nagoya City garbage dump. The Nagoya City is preparing its draft of the Environmental Impact Assessment.

International pressure on Nagoya City to save this important tidal flat is increasing. Following Ramsar, the Acting Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Cr. John Campbell, sent a letter to his counterpart in Nagoya urging him to consider the significant natural heritage values of Fujimae and the importance of this site to waders inhabiting Moreton Bay (see accompanying transcript). Indicative of the Japanese sensitivity to comment from the international community, this letter was printed on the front page of the Nagoya edition of the popular national newspaper, *Asahi Shimbun*.

Nagoya City was to have released an Environmental Impact Report in November 1995. The release of this report has been delayed several times. These delays suggest that technical problems exist in the design of the desired recommendations. Thus there is a window of opportunity of the international community to ask Nagoya City to nominate Fujimae at the 1999 Ramsar Convention. Nagoya City is preparing a bid for the 2005 World Expo and their civic behaviour is under the international spotlight.

Enclosed is a form letter which has been constructed by dovetailing the text of public document of entitled "The 2005 World Exposition, Japan", with text from the 1996 Ramsar Conference in Brisbane. You are urged to either sign this letter and send it away, or used it as basis for your own personal letter. Our Japanese colleagues advise that it is "important to maintain a respectful and formal tone throughout the correspondence ... we feel that politeness and cooperative requests of internationalism will be the most productive policy in this campaign". The media will monitor the number of letters received by the City of Nagoya".

TRANSCRIPT

Mayor Takeyoshi Nishio
Mayor of Nagoya City
Nagoya City Hall
NAKA NAGOYA 460
JAPAN

My dear Mayor,

It is with great pleasure that Brisbane has hosted the 1996 United Nations RAMSAR Convention for the Protection of Wetlands.

Our City has a good record on the protection of tidal wetlands, which includes the expenditure of some \$A8 million purchasing "at risk" wetlands for long term conservation. Consequently, having the opportunity to showcase these impressive areas to international wetland experts through the aegis of RAMSAR has given Brisbane a great boost.

During Ramsar, my office has welcomed delegations of international scientists concerned about the protection of wetland sites of global significance. In particular, a delegation was received concerning the protection of the Fujimae tidal flat in Nagoya. While not having the full details of the proposals nor the potential environmental effects, I would take the opportunity to encourage the protection of high quality wetlands wherever possible.

I am led to believe that many Australian birds, especially species which roost in Moreton Bay in Brisbane, actually migrate to Fujimae tidal flat. The linkages between our two great cities are thereby strengthened by the bond of ecology.

I understand Nagoya will bid for the World Expo in 2005. Brisbane benefited greatly from hosting the 1988 Expo, and in particular by promoting the natural assets of the City such as our bushlands, wetlands and Moreton Bay.

I send my best wishes from our city to you and the City of Nagoya in your bid. Yours sincerely,

JOHN CAMPBELL
Acting Lord Mayor

Great Arctic Reserve

The Great Arctic Reserve, comprising an area the size of Switzerland on the Arctic tundra of the Taymyr Peninsula (north-central Siberia), was created by Resolution 431 of the Russian Government. Establishment of the Reserve has been advocated by a number of organisations involved with shorebird conservation and research. The area is the breeding zone and or/migration stopover site for many of the shorebirds which spend their winter on the Atlantic coasts of Europe and Africa. In summer 1994, expeditions were organised from the Netherlands and other countries to visit Siberia to study nesting shorebirds. Future expeditions are planned.

(This article is reproduced from the 1995 *International Shorebird Survey Report, March*)

ST. Helena Island (Easter Saturday, 6th April)

by Raelee Mackay

There's nothing quite like an early rise (on one of the few weekends for months that one could sleep in) to stir a soul to feelings of martyrdom. A drive across town to Manly's sea breezes gradually cleared the cobwebs, though. At the boat harbour, Peter Beck and I caught up with Margaret Bernard, the only other group member who didn't camp overnight at the Rangers' quarters on St Helena Island. Conversation on our state of mentality in coming out on the Easter weekend kept us busy until Roland Dowling (NPWS Ranger for St Helena) and Matt Pyke (Department of Environment) arrived by boat to take us back with them to St Helena.

St Helena Island is a beautiful place to visit - like a patch of mainland pastoral countryside surrounded by mangroves and pebble/coral beaches. I was almost envying Andrew Geering and Margaret having this as their regular count site, until I thought about how much effort each whole day trip (counting 4 sites around the island) must be. The thought of seeing a few different wader species in breeding plumage (especially the Ruddy Turnstones) was pretty exciting, especially since I'm a relative newcomer and haven't had much to do with these birds.

Most of the rest of the group, comprising Andrew, Peter Driscoll ("PD"), Rhonda Eyles, Melissa Cooper (Brisbane City Council - Ranger for Boondall Wetlands) and Janice Blaik (NPWS Ranger for St Helena) were already setting up a net along a grassy paddock approximately 200 metres from the jetty. Between them and us was a huge flock of our main targets at this site, Pacific Golden Plovers. We stood awhile, not wanting to disturb them, but not sure how to reach the group. The birds soon put up anyway, and PD took off in hot pursuit to follow their course.

Peter Beck, Margaret and I helped with the final net preparations while the others filled us in on the previous night's activities. I was told the moon and scenery looked wonderful over a couple of gin & tonics, but it's not advisable to waste your time setting a net to perfection if the wind is going to whip up the incoming tide overnight and wreck the whole thing. PD had burnt the midnight oil fiddling with the cannons, then most were up early to retrieve and reset the tangled mess of a net.

Back to the saga of the Pacific Golden Plovers. We hastily retreated to a nearby paddock while PD attempted to "twinkle" the birds in. After a quick demonstration of the firing box, Peter Beck was "volunteered" to push the button when ready. Andrew, Janice, Margaret and Melissa moved back past the net, towards the jetty, to help guide the birds in. Fortunately Janice was present to help avert trouble with a rather aggressive tourist who was both annoyed that he couldn't view the ruins on the island without being part of a tour, and "worried" that we were "illegally" netting the birds. It's a shame it was such a serious situation, because it was quite amusing listening to Andrew describing the events with painful diplomacy over the two-way as the tourist ranted, raved and punched the truck door in the background.

Despite a lot of effort, the plovers were determined to stay just out of reach of the net, then finally flew right away. We abandoned this site, before the tide became too full, to check the other nets the group had set up along the beach.

PD decided to take Peter Beck and me around in the group's impressive new boat, while the others went across land by truck. The ideal scenario was for PD to obtain a clear view of the birds from the water so he could radio in a safe countdown. As with most scientific forays, however, theory and practice are not always compatible.

As we rounded a small coral "atoll", we set up a large group of Ruddy Turnstones and Whimbrel roosting there, which headed towards shore and the netting area. Our excitement at having them there was short-lived though, when we realised how difficult it was to obtain a clear view of the net trajectory. Between a choppy swell and the sucking tide it wasn't possible to focus properly on anything onshore. Despite running the boat aground on the atoll to try to obtain a more stable view, the only thing we succeeded in doing was cutting PD's feet to shreds on the coral as he pushed the boat off.

We finally managed to motor to a spot where the view improved; however, most of the extra birds that had just moved to the net site flew back to the atoll. After a safe firing, we hurried in to the beach to help the others. They were already efficiently preparing cages, shade-cloth, and carefully moving the netted birds out of the water.

I'm still not quite sure why I was delegated by PD to organise placement the birds in species groups within the cages. Most of these birds I've only seen in field guides (which don't usually give a great idea of bird size or colour variations). To make matters more interesting, some of the cage compartments weren't fully sealed off, so we had a migration of Ruddy Turnstones through quite a few sections. Fortunately though, the Bar-tailed Godwits and a few others that need to be separated were kept successfully isolated.

The processing was a real education in itself, as it always is. Most of the birds handled the situation really well, with only a few of the Bar-tailed Godwits a bit sluggish in taking off once their details were recorded. Rhonda joined us in the tent and took over from Margaret on leg flagging, and Janice became quite an expert at balancing the awkward, inverted waders to obtain body weight. Melissa, the tireless runner, discovered Bar-tailed Godwits can disappear without a trace very quickly between compartments in the cages!

It was great seeing so many different stages of breeding plumage on the Ruddy Turnstones and Grey-tailed Tattlers, as well as the variation in colour and intensity of markings/barring on the Bar-tailed Godwits and Whimbrels. There was a bit of excitement when some very red legs on a Common Tern left us wondering if we had caught a rare European variation of the species. (Subsequent investigation has revealed the colouration to be a natural variation). However, the lone Pied Oystercatcher that was netted stole the limelight on the day. The resilience and tolerance of these shorebird "chooks" is endearing, along with their unusual fleshy feet and striking colouring. Many amusing stories about these characters were passed around, as the Oystercatcher bore the indignity of being processed with almost abject indifference. He was released with a cheer of admiration from all.

A total of 64 birds were netted, including 15 Whimbrel, 8 Bar-tailed Godwits, 26 Ruddy Turnstones, 3 Grey-tailed Tattlers, 10 Common Terns, 1 Pied Oystercatcher and 1 Red-necked Stint. One Ruddy Turnstone was a retrap with a green leg flag, which was previously banded by us at exactly the same spot on 19 September 1993.

PD hurried off in the boat (into the sunset?) to beat the receding light while we quickly packed up the gear from both sites and headed back to the Rangers quarters. My old arms and leg, were feeling a bit tired and heavy, so. It didn't take much convincing for Margaret and I to stay back and wait for the second boat trip back. A nice hot cuppa was downed with relish while Melissa, Andrew, Janice, Roly and Peter Beck undertook the back-breaking task of carting the gear back by boat to Melissa's Kombi. I'm told that both Melissa and her Kombi will never be the same again after carrying the gear around until the next Monday morning. Margaret and I enjoyed the final boat trip back with thoughts of dinner and Easter eggs to come, as the light was fading romantically in the west.

Many thanks to all who made it both an enjoyable and successful day through their diligence, perseverance and pleasant, cheery attitudes.

Oiled Fauna Workshop, 21-22 February, 1996

by Margaret Bernard

Karen Wright and I attended a two day workshop on the rescue and rehabilitation of oiled fauna. The course was conducted by the Department of Environment and Taronga Park Zoo staff. We thank the Brisbane City Council, who sponsored two people from the QWSG to attend the workshop.

The workshop was designed to provide participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with many aspects of fauna rescue during an oil spill. The content was very practical and informative, including sessions on the effects of oil on wildlife, the care and cleaning of birds, transport and temporary holding, rehabilitation and release. The obvious aim of training people in this area is to increase the survival rate of wildlife during such an event as an oil spill. Overseas experience has shown that training and experience can increase the overall success rate.

Karen and I are very grateful for the opportunity to attend this course and are willing to pass on any references or information to interested persons. A Field Manual was donated to the QWSG library and a video has been produced by the Department of Environment to assist in the, training of other volunteers.

Between Seasons Get Together Saturday 22 June 1996

QWSG members are invited to a "between seasons" get together at Dayboro. Three activities are planned and you can participate in any or all of them depending on what time you want to arrive.

8.00 am: Bird watch in the forest and freshwater wetlands (Sick of waders? Try Spotted Quail-thrush, Painted Button Quail and even a chance of Glossy Black Cockatoo)

11.30 am onwards: Barbecue lunch (BYO meat, drinkies and folding chairs)

3.30 pm: Slide show (it's been an active year with lots of trips to exotic places, so please bring slides of group activities and let Peter Driscoll know if you wish to show any).

Directions are on the map. The venue is at xxxxxxxxxxxxxx (note that the "Refidex" is wrong in this area - ignore it). Please RSVP to Peter Driscoll (xxxx xxxx) by 14 June.

"From Samford or Petrie, drive to Dayboro. Coming from the south, take the first street in Dayboro on the left, or from Petrie, last street on the right on the road to Samford (either way, it's Laidlaw Street), and follow it over the hill and across North Pine causeway. After a further 1 km or so, a junction of three roads is reached (Lees Xing, Armstrongs Creek and Woodward Roads). xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. Past the letterboxes and up the hill is Lot 4. Park in the driveway or along the left hand side of the road before the driveway."

ACTIVITIES

For netting activities, please confirm with Peter Driscoll (07 xxxx 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 xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx 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. 07 xxxx xxxx hm, xxxx xxxx wk.

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Sat. 1st June High of 2.01 in at 8:42 am.

29th or 30th June count High of 1.91 in at 7:28 am (1.93 in at 8:24 am Sunday). This is the AWSG winter weekend. Please make a big effort to do the count. If not this weekend then the following weekend in July, ie. 6-7th July.

Sat. 31st Aug High of 2.18 in at 11:15 am.
Sat. 28th Sep High of 2.26 in at 10:09 am.
Sat. 26th Oct High of 2.30 in at 9:06 am.
Sat. 23rd Nov High of 2.28 in at 8:04 am.
Sun. 15th Dec High of 2.42 in at 1 pm.

Cannon Netting

Sat 20th July Joint outing with Royal Geographical Soc. of Qld Amity Spit, nth Stradbroke Is. High of 1.82 in at noon.
of
3rd-4th Aug Moreton Island. High of 2.06 in at 12.26pm on Saturday.
Sun 1st Sep Cabbage Tree Creek mouth, Shorncliffe. High of 2.16 in at noon.
Sun 29th Sep Fisherman Islands. High of 2.28 in at 10:51 am.
Sat 19-20th Oct Moreton Island. High of 2.11 in at 2.28 pm on Saturday.
Sun 24th Nov Site to be determined- High of 2.35 in at 8:48 am.

Social Day for lunch, slides and watching bush birds!

Sat. 22nd June Renew your acquaintance with birds of the bush in the enchanting forest and woodlands of the foothills of the D'Aguiar Range near Dayboro (see notice on top of this page).

Come along and help with the fine art of net making!

6th &/or 7th July St Colomb's Church Hall, Clayfield (opposite the shops on Sandgate Road and back from 25 Victoria St). Please call Peter Driscoll on xxxx xxxx for details.