QUEENSLAND WADER

QLD WADER STUDY GROUP

Issue number 32 **WINTER 2000**

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

Hong Kong Revisited

by Arthur and Sheryl Keates

In late April last year we had a few days in Hong Kong on our way through to join a birdwatching trip in north east China. Our report of that trip was published in the 1999 spring edition of Queensland Wader.

On 1 April 2000, with QWSG members, Phil and Linda Cross, we left Brisbane for a week in Hong Kong. We stayed at the Royal Park Hotel, Sha Tin, in the new territories. Overlooking Sha Tin Central Park, the hotel is conveniently located being only a few minutes walk to the Sha Tin KCR station making the birding sites we planned to visit readily accessible.

Our trip was planned around the time and height of the tides at the Mai Po-Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site to optimise our chances of seeing the well documented rarities seen in the area, Swinhoe's Egret, Black-faced Spoonbill, Nordmann's Greenshank and the bird we missed last year, Spoon-billed Sandpiper

For our first day, we visited the agricultural area of Long Valley in the morning followed by a walk among the gei wais (fish and shrimp ponds) at Tai Tseng Wai and along the border fence adjoining the Ramsar Site.

As we walked through the vegetable gardens at Long Valley, the passerines had our initial attention. Yellow Wagtails (race *taivana*) and White Wagtails (races *leucopsis* and *ocularis*) were keenly observed by all.

Notable by their absence were the snipe. Last year we continually flushed snipe but it seemed we were too early this year as we saw only one Common Snipe in flight. Of the other waders, we saw Wood Sandpiper (46), Common Sandpiper (3) and Little Ringed Plover (6).

Our afternoon produced many new species for Phil and Linda, including Little Grebe, Eurasian Wigeon, Grey Heron, Green Sandpiper and a solitary Grey Wagtail as well as tantalising but distant views of Black-faced Spoonbill, Common Redshank and Pied Avocet in the Bay.

We left our first visit to Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve until the high tide at Deep Bay had reached the optimum 2m level. Our permits to allow us to go through the border fence and out to the boardwalk hides were waiting for us at the WWF HK centre at Mai Po.

During our four days at Mai Po, we spent hours observing the thousands of waders roosting but undoubtedly our best wader watching was from the boardwalk hides from where we had excellent views of the waders both on incoming and outgoing tides.

(Continued on page 3).

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QUEENSLAND WADER

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Copy Deadline for the next issue of Queensland Wader is August 25th 2000
Contributions should be addressed to:
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Computerised contributions should be in IBM Word, ASCII or Rich Text.

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(Cont. from Page 1)
From the hides at The Scrape, we had excellent views of nearly all species present. We were able to get a good comparison of the Eastern and Eurasian Curlews, the former noticeably richer in colour than the latter with its generally paler all over appearance and white rump. Also, Curlew Sandpipers (including 3 with orange leg flags and 1 with a yellow leg flag) were seen among the flocks of roosting birds. From the Tower Hide, we counted 66 of the endangered Black-faced Spoonbills.

On an incoming tide, the water rushes in forcing the waders closer to the boardwalk hides. This gave us an excellent opportunity to compare Common Greenshanks with the dumpier Nordmann's Greenshank. Of the passing parade, we saw a Great Knot and a Terek Sandpiper with yellow leg flags. In addition, there were the usual Pacific Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Common and Spotted Redshanks, Marsh Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint as well as Ruff, Sanderling and Red-necked Phalarope.

With the notable exception of the Grey Plovers, most species were in advanced breeding plumage. The Great Knot, Pacific Golden Plover and particularly the hundreds of Marsh Sandpipers looked stunning in full, or near full, breeding plumage.

As well as hundreds of gulls and terns, from the boardwalk hides at high tide, we saw Northern Shoveler, Common Shelduck, Garganey and Pied Avocet (550c).

Among the early arrivals as the tide receded were Eastern Curlew, Eurasian Curlew and, on our last day at Mai Po, Asian Dowitcher. For 2 hours, the spectacle unfolds as thousands of waders arrive and start feeding. A pair of Red-necked Phalaropes had our attention until a Spoon-billed Sandpiper was found. All telescopes in the hide were soon focussed on it as it actively fed with Red-necked Stints. The bird was in non-breeding plumage and apart from its bill shape (which wasn't all that obvious from some angles) it could easily be missed by a casual observer. We had imagined the 'Spooner' would use its spatulate bill to feed more in a side to side fashion. However, its feeding pattern didn't differ all that much from the Red-necked Stints around it, except that it appeared to feed more vigorously. A little later we saw another Spooner, this bird showing some traces of breeding plumage.

A distant Swinhoe's Egret, readily identifiable by its heavily plumed head and yellow bill capped off our last visit to the boardwalk hides.

A morning birding around the villages of Sha Po and Kam Tin, just south of Mai Po, rewarded us with 2 wader species not seen elsewhere in Hong Kong, Temminck's Stint and Grey-headed Lapwing.

Given that we saw the big four rarities for which birders go to HK, ours was indeed a successful trip.

For anyone visiting Hong Kong, the following websites for HKBWS and WWF HK provide useful information and we thoroughly recommend David Diskin's "Birding Hong Kong-A Site Guide"-

http://www.wwf.org.hk/en/maipo.htm
http://www.hkbws.org.hk/

Our appreciation to QWSG member Peter Chang for the maps and information he kindly supplied us.

Following is a list of species of waterbirds, waders, gulls and terns seen on our trip:

Little Grebe
Great Cormorant
Purple Heron
Grey Heron
Chinese Pond Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
Striated Heron
Little Egret
Cattle Egret
Great Egret
Swinhoe's Egret
Intermediate Egret
European Spoonbill
Black-faced Spoonbill
Common Shelduck
Northern Shoveler
Eurasian Wigeon
Common Teal
Garganey
White-breasted Waterhen
Common Moorhen
Pied Avocet
Black-winged Stilt
Grey-headed Lapwing
Oriental Pratincole
Little Ringed Plover
Kentish Plover
Greater Sand Plover
Lesser Sand Plover
Pacific Golden Plover

Grey Plover
Ruddy Turnstone
Eurasian Curlew
Eastern Curlew
Whimbrel
Black-tailed Godwit
Bar-tailed Godwit
Asian Dowitcher
Common Sandpiper
Green Sandpiper
Wood Sandpiper
Ruff
Terek Sandpiper
Common Redshank
Spotted Redshank
Common Greenshank
Nordmann's Greenshank
Marsh Sandpiper
Great Knot
Red Knot
Curlew Sandpiper
Sanderling
Red-necked Phalarope
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Broad-billed Sandpiper
Red-necked Stint
Temminck's Stint
Spoon-billed Sandpiper
Heuglin's Gull
Brown-headed Gull
Black-headed Gull
Saunders' Gull
Gull-billed Tern
Caspian Tern
White-winged Black Tern

Habitat Preference of Eastern Curlews at Breeding Site

From EMU Vol 100 March 2000

By Mutsuyuki Ueta[1,3] and Alexcey Antonov[2]

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[3] Corresponding author

Eastern Curlews *Numenius madagascariensis* are a large wader species that breed in north-eastern China to Kamchatka and spend the non-breeding season mainly in Australia (Higgins & Davies 1996). The population size is estimated at 40,000 (P.V. Driscoll pers. comm.), which is decreasing (Close & Newman 1984; Gerasimov et al. 1997). They are listed as near-threatened in the Red Data Book (Collar et al. 1994). Some studies have been published on feeding behaviour at stop-over sites (Piersma 1986; Yi *et al*. 1994) and feeding site selection at non-breeding sites (Congdon & Cattrall 1994) but their ecology on the breeding grounds has been little studied: only general breeding biology (Gerasimov *et al*. 1997) and some qualitative descriptions of their habitat and distribution (Spangenberg 1940; Vinter 1980). In this short communication, we studied the habitat selection of Eastern Curlews in their breeding area.

We studied habitat selection of Eastern Curlews in four sites (Sites A-D) of Khingansky State Reserve (49°N, 130'E) from 25 May to 8 June 1997. We censused four study sites walking on trails, 3-4 km/h in the morning when the curlews were active, and recorded the locations and habitat features where curlews were observed. The study areas are wetlands along the rivers and/or lakes. Site A is mainly wetlands with scattered small groves (17.9 km on the census route), site B is mainly dry grassland with scattered small wetlands (11.8 km), site C is a large wetland about 1-3 km wide (24.0 km), and site D is a wetland with small riparian groves (25.0 km).

We classified the habitats into six types: 'Dry Grassland', 'Sedge meadow' (grassland covered with sedge tussocks), 'Marsh' (where the water oozes out to below knee level when stepped on), 'Sphagnum Bog' (marsh covered mainly with sphagnum moss and some kinds of grass), 'Deep Marsh' (marsh where the water rises above knee level when stepped on), and 'Forest'. In order to show habitat preference of the curlew, the habitat availability and proportion of observed curlews in each habitat was compared. Since it is difficult to measure the surveyed distance of each habitat because habitat was fragmented and we don't have detailed habitat maps in this area, we used the proportion of time spent in each habitat during the total survey time as an index to the habitat availability of the curlews. We recorded the habitat types along the census routes every minute in order to show the distribution of each habitat. The surveyed times of each habitat in each study site are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The time (Minutes) of each habitat surveyed

Habitat	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
Dry Grassland	66	127	14	104
Sedge meadow	55	10	32	77
Marsh	61	15	82	204
Sphagnum bog	97	3	278	38
Deep marsh	38	3	19	19
Forest	19	32	40	0

Results

We observed 24 Eastern Curlews at Site A, 6 at Site B, 15 at Site C, and 22 at Site D. The curlews were mainly observed in sphagnum bogs more often than expected in all the study sites (Fig. 1; Site A: $\Pi^2 = 39.51$ P < 0.001; Site B: Fisher's exact probability test P < 0.001; Site C: $\Pi^2 = 9.88$ p < 0.01; Site D: $\Pi^2 = 94.60$, P < 0.001). However, we observed the curlews more often in the sphagnum bogs with diverse vegetation than in the areas of expansive marsh covered singly with sphagnum moss.

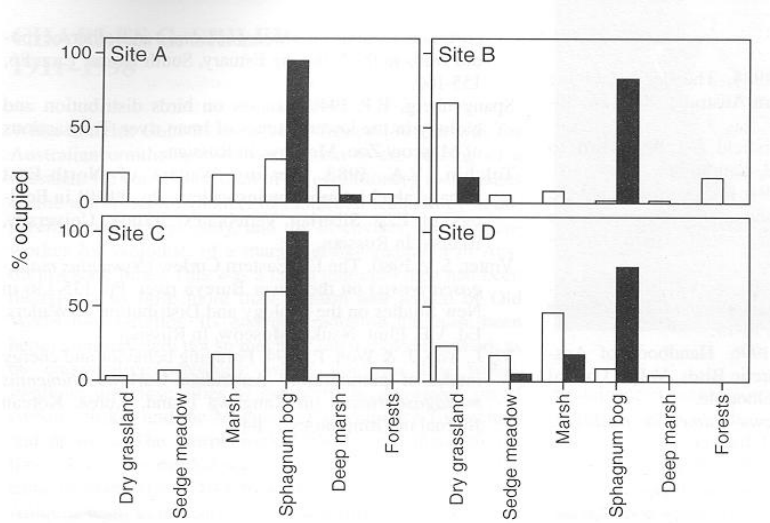


Figure 1 Habitat preference of Eastern Curlews in Khingansky Nature Reserve, Russia. ′ shows % of curlews observed and! shows % of time we surveyed in each habitat.

Figure 2 shows the locations where Eastern Curlews were observed in Site C that has large sphagnum bogs. The curlews were more frequently observed in the mixed vegetation, such as sphagnum bogs with sedge meadows than in the areas of expansive sphagnum bogs. During the survey, we observed curlews feeding on the sphagnum bogs 21 times including three pairs with chicks. We found two curlew nests in 1997 and six nests in 1998. Seven of eight nests were located in dry grasslands, expect for a single nest found at a sphagnum bog in 1998. Six nests were located on small mounds in dry grasslands.

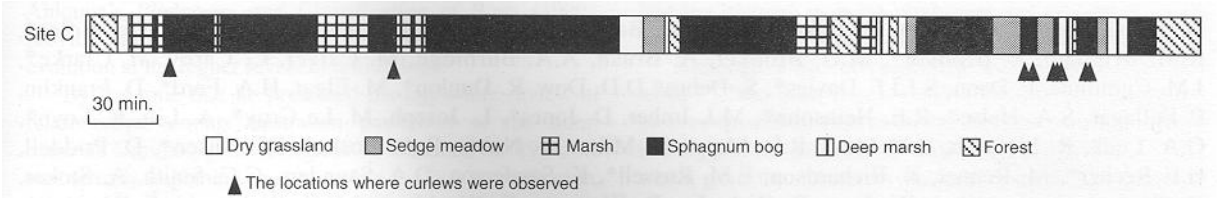


Figure 2 Distribution of habitat and the locations where curlews were observed in Site C

Discussion

Eastern Curlews were observed significantly in sphagnum bogs, especially mixed with other vegetation types. Because the curlews were observed to forage in the sphagnum bogs, the sphagnum bog may be their favored feeding habitat. Vinter (1980) and Tolchin (1983) also observed the curlews on sphagnum bogs.

The nests of the curlews were found mainly on the dry grassland. We found a single nest in a sphagnum bog. On the other hand, Vinter (1980) found a curlew's nest on sphagnum bog, and Spangenberg (1940) found three nests on the edge of sphagnum bogs. In our study area, the water depth increases drastically when rain falls. So, it seems that curlews nest in dry grasslands to avoid breeding failure by flooding water. Eastern Curlews seem to need both sphagnum bogs for feeding and dry grasslands for breeding in the study area. Therefore, the curlews were observed in sphagnum bogs, especially mixed with other vegetation types.

Acknowledgments

We thank P.V. Driscoll, R. Kurosawa and T. Kurosawa for helpful comments on the earlier draft, and those of M. Barter and two anonymous referees. We also thank the Environment Agency of Japan for funding this research.

From EMU Vol. 100, pages 72-74, 2000.

COUNT PROGRAMME

Linda Cross

With the winter months now on the doorstep I have already started getting withdrawal symptoms for the waders and manage to console myself with memories of three recently successful wader excursions.

Feedback on the Boonooroo Campout (see report this issue) suggests we should consider making this a regular addition to our activities. The large number of attendees at the campout and the Toorbul Wader ID Day held at the end of March (see report this issue) supports the view that there is a lot of interest in waders and it is wonderful to see other organisations keen to get involved.

By far my most favourite memories are the ones from the recent trip we took to Hong Kong with Arthur and Sheryl Keates (see report this issue). The excitement of seeing some of our waders in full breeding plumage and sporting leg flags from Victoria (orange) and North West - Western Australia (yellow) can only be understood by those of you who also share a passion for waders. Of course the new waders (13) for our life list was an added bonus.

We have been busy recruiting new counters for the programme and warmly welcome Dennis Stanbridge from Toorbul, who will be doing additional counts at the Toorbul roosts to compliment the data already being collected by Jean Corney. Interested parties at the Boonooroo campout were very quickly recruited by yours truly and put to work at two roosts in the Great Sandy Strait. John Bell from Maryborough is covering Maaroom (north of Boonooroo), taking over from Chris Barnes. We thank Chris for his long contribution to the programme. John Knight and the Hervey Bay Birdwatchers have set up a bird hide on a private property in the area and will be counting a new roost site. These last two sites will add valuable information to our Great Sandy Straits data. We welcome you all and hope we have a long and happy relationship with you.

The winter months bring us that New Zealand wader (Double-banded Plover) to count. They started to arrive as early as 4.3.00 and are now at a number of sites up and down the coast. If you want to get a closer look they have been recorded at Tweed Heads Tony's Island, Manly Boat Harbour, Deception Bay Bermuda Avenue, Caboolture River Mouth, Maroochy River North Shore and Great Keppel Island.

Information taken from count sheets during the last few months about:

Beach Stone-curlew sightings has identified 17 individual birds from 4 sites. Judith Ruddell reports 1 bird at Canoe Point, Boyne Beach, Gladstone in early April, Russell Watson reports 1 bird on 3.3.00, 2 on 30.3.00 and 1 on 5.5.00 at Great Keppel Island, Paul O'Neill and Russell Watson report 3 birds on 5.2.00 and 2 on the 4.3.00 at Sandy Point, Rockhampton and Keith Fisher reports 11 birds at Cairns Airport on 18.3.00 (three groups of 3 and one group of 2). Keith also reported 5 on 21.11.99 and 2 on 19.12.99 (old records).

Sooty Oystercatcher sightings from count sheets identifies 26 individual birds from 8 sites. Fred Armbrust recorded 1 bird at Woody Point, Redcliffe on 7.5.00, Lois McRae and Frank Bigg recorded 2 on 4.3.00, 2 on 2.4.00 and 1 on 6.5.00 at Dux Creek, Bribie Island, Barbara Dickson recorded from 3 to 8 birds between 21.9.99 and 3.4.00 at Wickham Point, Caloundra, Shirley Rooke recorded 3 on 1.4.00 at Maroochy River, Sunshine Coast, Donald & Lesley Bradley recorded 4 at Point Vernon, Hervey Bay on 6.5.00, A & J Ruddell reported up to 6 in early April at Boyne Beach, Russell Watson recorded 1 on 3.3.00 and 1 on 5.5.00 at Great Keppel Island and Jon Wren recorded 1 on 11.2.00 and 1 on 10.3.00 at Darymple Point Bowen.

No breeding records were reported apart from an immature Pied Oystercatcher at Great Keppel Island on 3.3.00, which is possibly the juvenile mentioned in the previous newsletter.

Don't forget to send me your National Winter Counts (3rd June) as soon as you can and remember that there is NO COUNT in July.

Happy counting.

Linda Cross

WADER WATCH *Linda Cross, Peter Driscoll, Joyce Harding*

Leg Flag Banding Legend (colour = where banded)

- Green = Brisbane/Queensland,
- Orange = Victoria,
- Yellow = Northern Western Australia,
- White = New Zealand (some species banded in New South Wales),
- Blue = Japan.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Pete Nichols for his work compiling and sorting a lot of our leg flag information and offering to take over the job of entering the sightings onto the database. Please continue to send you sightings to Linda Cross who will record them for the newsletter and then pass onto Pete.

Green leg flag sightings – Queensland

4 Eastern Curlew – seen by Arthur & Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour (3 with transmitters) on 4.3.00
11 Bar-tailed Godwit – seen by Russ Lamb at Reef Point, Scarborough, Martin Waugh at Amity Point, Arthur & Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour, during Wader ID at Toorbul and Dennis Stanbridge at Toorbul between 3.2.00 and 18.4.00
5 Great Knot – seen during Wader ID at Toorbul, Dennis Stanbridge at Toorbul and by Fred Armbrust at Woody Point between 25.3.00 and 9.4.00
5 Grey-tailed Tattler – seen by Arthur & Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour, during Wader ID at Toorbul and Martin Waugh at Amity Point between 19.3.00 and 5.4.00
1 Greater Sand Plover – seen by Arthur & Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 19.3.00
7 Lesser Sand Plover – seen by Arthur & Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour and during Wader ID Day at Toorbul between 4.3.00 and 25.3.00

Other leg flag sightings and banded birds

Bar-tailed Godwit – 1 with metal band seen by Martin Waugh at Amity Point on 2.4.00 and 1 with orange flag seen by Jan Ibbotson at Norman Point, Tin Can Bay on 4.4.00
Grey-tailed Tattler – 1 with blue flag seen by Keith Fisher at Cairns Airport on 21.11.99, 1 with blue flag and white band on same leg seen by Martin Waugh at Amity Point on 17.2.00, 1 with white flag lower left leg seen by Avis & Bill Gauld and Joyce Hill at Ross Creek, North Rockhampton on 8.4.00, 1 with blue flag and white flag on same leg seen by Avis Gauld and Trisha Ferguson at Ross Creek, North Rockhampton on 13.4.00 and 1 with blue flag seen by Martin Waugh at Amity Point on 4.5.00
Pied Oystercatcher – 2 with metal bands seen by Arthur & Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 4.3.00
Caspian Tern – 1 with metal band seen by Martin Waugh at Amity Point on 4.5.00
Crested Tern – 1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber and June Harris at Hastings Point Lookout, NSW on 29.4.00
Common Tern –18 with orange flag and metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Flat Rock, near Ballina, NSW between 4.3.00 and 25.3.00
Little Tern – 3 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Flat Rock, near Ballina, NSW on 4.3.00 and 25.3.00, 1 with green flag and metal band on right leg and black flag and orange flag on left leg seen by Edward Kleiber at Flat Rock, near Ballina, NSW on 11.3.00, 1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Hastings Point, NSW on 22.3.00, 1 with blue flag and metal band and one with orange flag and metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Flat Rock, near Ballina, NSW on 25.3.00

Interesting sightings

1 Sanderling – Paul O'Neill and Russell Watson at Sandy Point, Rockhampton on 4.3.00
1 South Island Pied Oystercatcher – Arthur & Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 4.3.00 and again on 19.3.00
Broad-billed Sandpiper – 3 seen by Grahame Finnigan at Barron River, Cairns on 22.11.99, 2 seen by Les Thyer & Maureen Cooper at Shellgrit Creek, Mackay on 15.3.00 and 10 seen by Les Thyer & Maureen Cooper at Pioneer River, Mackay on 15.3.00
Common Sandpiper – 2 seen by John Wren at Saltworks Bowen, 1 seen by Russell Watson at Leekes Creek, Great Keppel Island, 2 seen by Keith Fisher at Frangipanni Beach, Cape York, 1 seen by Col Collins at Boat Ramp, Hinze Dam and 3 seen by Keith Fisher at Cairns Airport between 12.2.00 and 18.3.00

Wandering Tattler – up to 2 seen by Barbara Dickson at Wickham Point, Caloundra, 1 seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island, 1 seen by Ivell Whyte at St. Helena Island and 3 seen by Donald and Lesley Bradley at Point Vernon, Hervey Bay between 2.12.99 and 6.5.00

Not waders but of interest anyway

1 Eastern Reef Egret (dark phase) – Lynn Roberts (on the roost) at Empire Point on 5.2.00
1 Ground Parrot – John and Barbara Cummings and Jan Olley at Tin Can Bay Sewage Works on 5.2.00
5000+ Little Tern – Jill Chamberlain at Sandbank No 1, Caloundra on 3.3.00
2 Emu – John Thomson at Kinka Beach, Yeppoon on 2.4.00

Threat to Lake Wollumboola averted

In 1996 a commission of inquiry was undertaken to assess the merits of a large residential proposal for the North Western side of Lake Wollumboola. It was effectively expanding the town of Culburra. The proposal had a high level of opposition and the effects on the lake and its wildlife including 24 species of JAMBA and CAMBA species was thought to be unsustainable. The following extract is from the commissioner of the inquiry to the minister.

The Inquiry, which commenced in 1996, was adjourned to enable the Applicant to prepare a Fauna Impact Study. In 1999 the study was completed and the Inquiry was reconvened in November of that year. The final public hearing session concluded on 16th January 2000.

Impacts to habitat and fauna both on the site and within the adjoining Lake Wollumboola are the major concerns raised in submissions. Responsible Government agencies of DUAP, NPWS, EPA, DLWC and Fisheries are opposed to the proposal. Council raises concerns and calls for a staged approval approach commencing with least sensitive portions of the site. To avoid certain habitat the Applicant reduced the extent of development, however Government agencies remain opposed.

The evidence is that high conservation areas should not be cleared or modified based on likely adverse impact to threatened fauna or threatened fauna habitat. Despite the lengthy Fauna Impact Statement adjournment period the Applicant has failed to demonstrate that threatened fauna will not be negatively impacted. Similarly the Applicant has not demonstrated that the development could occur without adverse impact on the environmental values of Lake Wollumboola and its catchment.

I recommend refusal of the proposal due to its likely unacceptable environmental impacts, including loss of water quality of the important Lake Wollumboola and loss of fauna and habitat of conservation value.

Dr Mark Carleton
Commissioner.

From NSW Wader News, Volume 8, No 2April 2000

First Australian Recovery of a Bird Banded in the People's Republic of China

It is not unusual for the cannon netters of Broome to catch waders carrying foreign bands, but the Great Knot wearing band number F019097 is the first bird to be recovered in Australia after being banded in the People's Republic of China

The Band had been trapped and banded at Chongning Island, Shanghai on 7th April 1996 by Mark Barter, an Australian bander engaged in training Chinese biologists in wader research techniques.

It was recovered at Roebuck Bay, north-western Australia, on 21st November 1999, 3 years 7 months later having moved a distance of 5518km. As the Chinese band was showing signs of wear the bird was rebanded with ABBBS band 062-56 899.

AUSTRALIAN WADER STUDIES GROUP WADER CONFERENCE, 2 July 2000 GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY, BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND

The AWSG will be hosting a one day conference on Sunday 2 July 2000 in connection with the Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress (SHOC). In addition there will be a two hour session on waders within SHOC in the morning of 1 July, followed by a picnic and an excursion to Moreton Bay in the afternoon. There will be a conference dinner on Sunday 2 July. The conference will take place at the same venue as SHOC.

The theme on both days will be long distance migration between the hemispheres. Talks will include such topics as the links between the non-breeding distributions of migratory waders around the world and the macro-environment, the migrations of Red Knots, Great Knots, Bar-tailed Godwits and Eastern Curlews, departures of waders from N.W. Australia, an overview of the role of the Yellow Sea in the East Asian Australasian Flyway, feeding ecology studies, a review of how waders physically prepare for a long distance migration, and the conservation of long distance migrant waders in the East Asian Australasian Flyway.

By special arrangement with SHOC access will be given to the wader session on Saturday 1 July for those who are registered for the AWSG conference on the Sunday (i.e. you cannot register just for the Saturday session). Registration for the AWSG conference will **not** otherwise give any access to SHOC. People wishing to attend any part of SHOC, apart from the wader sessions, should register separately for SHOC. Those registrered to attend SHOC on 2 July **will, however, have free access to the** Wader Conference. AWSG Conference fees will include tea/coffee breaks and lunch on Sunday. There is an additional fee for the Conference dinner. If you are registered for SHOC and wish to attend the outing, dinner or part or whole of the AWSG conference please fill out relevant parts of the AWSG registration form.

Ozaccom Pty Ltd, the official SHOC Accommodation Bureau, will reserve accomodation. Contact details PO Box 164, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4000. Tel 1800.814.611 or + 61.7.3854.1611. Fax +61.7.3854.1507. People wanting more information about SHOC should contact SHOC 2000 Congress Secretariat, Conventions Queensland Pty Ltd, PO Box 4044, St Lucia South, Qld, Australia. Tel +61.7.3870.8831. Fax +61.7.2271.9514. e-mail: shoc2000@convqld.org.au SHOC registration forms can also be found on the internetat http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/shoc

REGISTRATION FOR THE 2000 AWSG CONFERENCE

Please complete and post by 31 March 2000 to Ken Gosbell, AWSG Conference, 17 Banksia Ct, Heathmont, 3135 VIC, Australia.
Please use a separate form for each delegate. Make all cheques payable to AWSG. All payments must be in Australian dollars. A late fee of $15 must be added to registrations received after 30April 2000.

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS.
Title: ____First Name: _____Surname: _____

Address:_____

_____Postcode_____

Work tel: ( )_____Fax: ( )_____ Home tel: ( )_____

E-mail address_____

Name to use on name tag _____

Full (includes wader session on 1 July)	$80_____
Sunday wader conference only	$45_____
Wader Conference dinner Sunday 2 July	$30_____
Late fee (registration after 30/4/2000)	$15_____
TOTAL DUE.	$ _____

Expression of interest for excursion and picnic lunch on 1 July ☐
I am registered for SHOC and will be attending the AWSG conference ☐
Please accept my enclosed cheque payable to AWSG or debit my credit card.
*Bankcard/Visa/Mastercard No.
Name on card (Print)_____
Expiry Date ___/____ Signature_____Date __/__/__
*Strike out whichever does not apply.

WADER IDENTIFICATION DAY REPORTS

QWSG/QOSI WADER ID DAY – TOORBUL 25 MARCH 2000

As we arrived at the countsite it was obvious that the experienced wader people would have their hands full teaching people the finer points of wader identification. We were joined by members of the Caboolture Bird Observers and Toowoomba Bird Club, which increased the group to a total of 54 people.

Weather conditions were favourable allowing excellent viewing of the birds with many in some stage of breeding plumage.

Green leg flags were observed on 1 Lesser Sand Plover, 1 Grey-tailed Tattler, 2 Bar-tailed Godwits and 1 Great Knot.

Having such a large group to assist in identification did not allow time for individual counts of every species.

Birds seen as follows:

20 Black Swan, Little Pied and Pied Cormorant, 2 Little Egret, White-faced Heron, Australian White Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Osprey, Whistling Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, 4 Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, 80 Eastern Curlew, 15 Common Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Knot, 2 Red Knot, Red-necked Stint, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, Pied Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, 1 Grey Plover, Lesser & Greater Sand Plover, Masked Lapwing, 8 Caspian and c90 Little Tern.

Some of the group stopped at Bishops Marsh on the way into Toorbul and noted the following birds of interest. *1 Glossy Ibis, 20 Royal Spoonbill and 3 Brolga*.

Linda & Phil Cross

WADER ID DAY – Lytton-Fisherman Islands 16th April 2000

The original plan to have a wader identification day at Manly Boat Harbour had to be changed due to our inability to gain access to the wader roost site. Instead, we met at the Lytton roost.

Given the time of year, the number of birds was not high, many of them having already departed for their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere. Of the 9 wader species at Lytton, Grey-tailed Tattlers accounted for about half the birds. However, the early morning sun made it difficult to observe them among the dead mangroves. Several Black-tailed Godwits in near full breeding plumage were present and provided observers with a good comparison with the ever present Bar-tailed Godwits. Also in advanced breeding plumage were 3 Common Greenshank.

The hot conditions did not deter observers from deciding to venture further to the Fisherman Islands complex to see what other species were around. The wader ID day soon became a general birding outing. Species recorded were:
*Black Swan, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Chestnut Teal, Australasian Grebe, Little Pied Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Australian Pelican, White-faced Heron, Little Egret, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Cattle Egret, Australian White Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Osprey, Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk, Little Eagle, Brown Falcon, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Grey-tailed Tattler, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt, Red-capped Plover, Black-fronted Dotterel, Masked Lapwing, Silver Gull, Caspian Tern, Spotted Turtle-dove, Rock Dove, Rainbow Lorikeet, Pale-headed Rosella, Rainbow Bee-eater, Striated Pardalote (hd), Mangrove Gerygone, Mangrove Honeyeater, Magpie Lark, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Spangled Drongo, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Australian Magpie, Torresian Crow, Richard's Pipit, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Welcome Swallow, Clamorous Reed-warbler, Tawny Grassbird, Golden-headed Cisticola, Silvereye, Common Mynah, Common Starl*ing.

Sheryl & Arthur Keates

QWSG/QOSI CAMPOUT REPORT – BOONOOROO 11th – 12th MARCH

This combined camp was attended by forty-seven people over the weekend with about twenty of these being day visitors. Attendees came from as far a field as the Gold Coast and Burrum Heads including a group of National Park Rangers from Rainbow Beach and Maryboroough Office, a large group from Birdwatchers of Hervey Bay, the Regional Co-ordinator from Naturesearch, the Project Officer from Coastal Management Hervey Bay City Council and residents of Boonooroo.

After a wet start on Saturday morning the weather was kinder and all enjoyed a good session of wader watching at one of the high tide roosts. Of particular interest at the roost was the large group of (c.50) Grey Plover. The afternoon was spent wader and raptor watching from under the shady trees on the lawn of the attractive Boonooroo Caravan Park followed by a slide presentation in the local hall after bird call in the evening.

Sunday was quite warm, and sunny conditions gave everyone excellent views of the numerous species of waders at the roost.

My thanks to the sixteen people, some from QWSG committee, counters and members who joined me during the week-end to help visitors sort out and identify the different species of waders.

Species seen:

Little Pied Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Great Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Little Egret, Great Egret, Striated Heron, Australian White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Osprey, Pacific Baza, Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Collared Sparrowhawk, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Knot, Red Knot, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Pied Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, Pacific Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Red-capped Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Masked Lapwing, Silver Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Crested Tern and Little Tern.

Linda Cross

More on tally counters and counting

Jill Dening is spot-on when she extols the virtues of hand-held tally counters! I have been using (and losing) them for years now and never do serious fieldwork without one. The most important thing that a tally counter does is take the subconscious element out of counting. It's hard not to have some expectation of how many birds we look at, but by using a tally counter we don't get to see any figure until after we've finished. That way there is no room for doubting our count as we make it and making adjustments as we go. Most people under-count, and I suspect that we therefore expect fewer birds than are really there much of the time (and therefore count fewer). Thoughts anyone else?

The other advantage of a tally counter is that you never have to count up to more than ten. I simply do a click every ten birds (or fifty or a hundred if working truly big flocks). There's no room for getting confused or forgetful this way. For general counting techniques I was taught to count in pairs, and find it much easier than counting singly (especially with flocks in flight). It's amazing how easily a flock can be counted in pairs up to ten, when you click the counter. Give it a try.

Phil Battley,
Griffith University,
Brisbane.
P.Battley@mailbox.gu.edu.au

The Moreton Bay Study - developing water quality management strategies to achieve ecologically sustainable waterways

By Eva Abal and Jane Rogers of the South-east Regional Water Quality Management Strategy

The South-east Queensland Regional Water Quality Management Strategy (previously the Brisbane River and Moreton Bay Wastewater Management Study) is part of an interdisciplinary study of Moreton Bay and its major tributaries. It was initiated by 6 local councils in association with two State departments to address water quality issues which link sewage and diffuse loading with environmental degradation. It is a regional component of a National and State program which seeks to achieve ecologically sustainable use of waterways by protecting and enhancing their health, while maintaining economic and social development.

The Study employs an integrated approach to water quality management. Scientific research, community participation and development of the water quality management strategy were undertaken in parallel. This collaborative effort resulted in the Water Quality Management Strategy, which focuses on the integration of ecological and socioeconomic values of waterways. This integrated process ensured that the scientific results were implemented, and that focused scientific tasks targeted the major issues.

The study has been undertaken in three stages. The first was concerned with scoping the study, the second with Moreton Bay and its estuaries, and the third with the non-tidal catchments of the tributaries of Moreton Bay. This article reports on the study of Moreton Bay and its major estuarine tributaries.

The outcomes of this study include:

- **Water Quality Management Strategy**, which addresses best practice standards and management actions for point source discharges.
- **Receiving Water Quality Model**, a numerical model for analysing management scenarios.
- **Ecological Health Monitoring Program**, which provides a design for monitoring the health of our waterways using ecological health indicators.

Scientific research, conclusions and subsequent actions

Scientific research initially focused on Moreton Bay and its river estuaries as a response to the immediate need of local council's water quality engineers to plan and implement sewage treatment upgrades. This focus on point sources and their impact was designed to serve as a pilot study for a more thorough, longer term study of the upper catchments of the rivers entering Moreton Bay.

Scientific results and findings were regularly provided to various stakeholders (local councils, industry and community) through public meetings and presentations during the course of the Moreton Bay Study. Stakeholders considered scientific information, computer modelling scenarios, community views and issues, and the economic, social and cultural impacts of environmental choices.

Some of the key scientific conclusions to date

Historical trend in water quality (qualitative and quantitative data)

Population growth and changes in catchment use over the past 80 years have resulted in the degradation of water quality in areas of Moreton Bay and its waterways. For example, in the Brisbane River nitrate has increased by 22-fold, phosphate by 11-fold and suspended sediments by 4-fold in the last 50-80 years. Historical and bleak future (increase in population without best practice) scenarios were developed as conceptual models and presented to stakeholders to illustrate changes in the waterways (See Figures 1 and 2). These models promote awareness of, and support the need to, improve and manage the health of high impact areas or "hot spots" in our waterways.

Catchment input into Moreton Bay

Sediments from the catchment are transported and deposited in a muddy patch in the middle of the Bay. This muddy area corresponds with recordings of high total nitrogen, phosphorus and porewater silicate. When this mud is resuspended by wind, waves or tide there is a decrease in light reaching seagrass beds and seagrass dies. At present there are no seagrasses in Bramble Bay (western Moreton Bay) and seagrass beds in Deception Bay (north western Moreton Bay) are disappearing (see Figure 3).

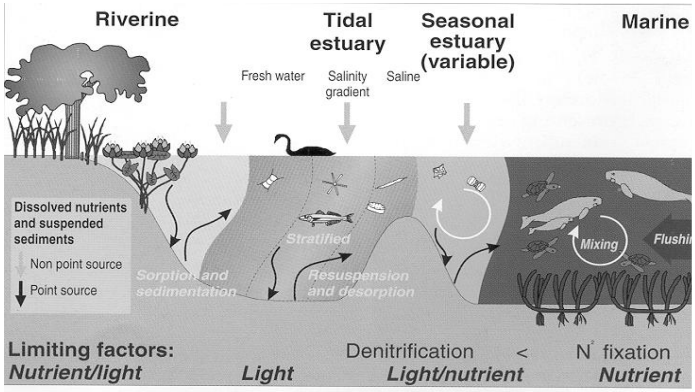


Figure 1. The predicted ecological processes within the lower parts of the tributaries and Moreton Bay circa 1900.

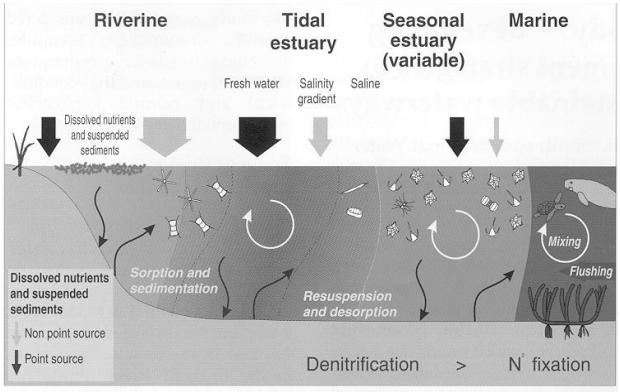


Figure 2. Bleak future scenario of ecological processes resulting from increases in population and no change in management practices.

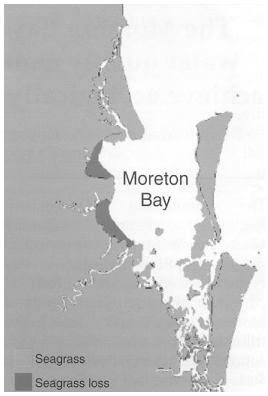


Figure 3 Seagrass distribution on Moreton Bay, dark area seagrass loss.

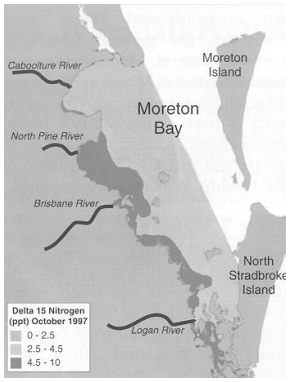


Figure 4 Levels of nitrogen recorded from sewerage plume.

Impacts of sewage

Sewage treatment plants are point source inputs of nutrients. Treated sewage is generally released into river estuaries and mainly consists of nitrogen, phosphorous and bacteria. It may also contain metals and organic compounds.

Most of the sewage and industrial point source discharge goes into the Brisbane River estuary. Distinct areas of sewage impact were detected (using stable isotope analysis ($*^{15}N$, nitrogen) of marine plant tissue) in western and southern Moreton Bay. Additional plumes representing greater sewage impacts were recorded in Bramble Bay and the Brisbane River.

As a consequence of these studies local councils, particularly Redcliffe City Council, Pine Rivers Shire Council and Brisbane City Council, recognised the impacts of their individual wastewater discharges on Moreton Bay. They gave a commitment to upgrade sewage treatment plants and reduce the impacts on Bramble Bay. This effectiveness of a collaborative effort between the various stakeholders in achieving healthy waterways.

Sustainable point source nitrogen loads have been determined for various waterways including Deception, Bramble and Waterloo Bays. Best practice environmental management will be achieved at almost all sewage treatment plants and major industrial discharges. This includes an average total nitrogen concentration of 5 mg/L in treated effluent from Redcliffe Sewage Treatment Plant (Bramble Bay) by 2005 and 10 mg/L from Luggage Point Sewage Treatment Plant (mouth of the Brisbane River) by December 1999. Further improvements to Luggage Point are proposed by 2005.
The Queensland Environmental Protection Agency is examining the feasibility of a load-based licensing system for major discharges to waterways by 1999, and if viable, implement it in 2000.

Limiting nutrients

Nitrogen was found to be the primary limiting nutrient in Moreton Bay and its estuaries. This conclusion was based on bioassay experiments (nutrient additions) on phytoplankton, macroalgae and seagrasses in the Bay. These results highlighted the need for nutrient reduction in sewage treatment plants.
The Water Quality Strategy addresses management actions targeted towards the removal of nitrogen and provides a framework for the management of nitrogen loads over the next 20 years. The Councils have met their commitments for nitrogen removal by upgrading sewage treatment plants. Targeted management actions have led to significant cost savings in waste-water treatment by local governments.

Lyngbya (Cyanobacteria) Blooms

Blooms of Lyngbya majuscule (a cyanobacteria) have been increasing in severity and extent in Pumicestone Passage and northern Deception Bay in recent years. These blooms have ecological (seagrass loss, nitrogen inputs) as well as human health impacts (asthma, eye irritation and dermatitis for fishermen and swimmers). They have been linked to iron inputs into the waterways. A *Lyngbya* task force has been formed. Public meetings facilitated by the Caboolture Shire and Pumicestone Passage Catchment Coordinator have been held with representation from industries and people involved in sediment disturbance. As part of the Stage 3 studies (funded by the Australian Research Council) the *Lyngbya* taskforce will determine the factors which trigger the growth and proliferation of *Lyngbya*, and ultimately determine strategies to control these blooms. The study will also identify toxins found in *Lyngbya* to assess the potential health impacts.

Role of key processes

Sediment processes, such as nitrogen fixation and denitrification have been identified as key processes that help maintain stable and sustainable ecosystems. Measurements to detect changes in the rates of these processes are a key element in the proposed ecological health monitoring program. Some parts of Moreton Bay (eg. seagrass and mangrove areas) exhibit high denitrification as they remove nitrogen efficiently. However the muddy areas are delicately 'poised', with the possibility of a breakdown in denitrification processes. This would release nutrients from the sediments into the water column and affect water quality. Stakeholders have recognised the sensitivity of these muddy areas and studies to address and monitor nutrient fluxes are in place. Stormwater run-off is one of the major sources of sediment for Moreton Bay. Local governments, Queensland Environmental

Protection Agency and the Queensland Department of Natural Resources will integrate and coordinate actions on stormwater management.

Toxicants

Substances such as organochlorine pesticides and heavy metals are toxicants, which potentially cause deleterious effects to humans and biota even when they occur at relatively low concentrations. Although use of many of these substances is now banned in Australia, they still persist in waterways, sediments and biota, as they have high chemical and biological stability and are relatively non-biodegradable. Dieldrin, an organochloride that was used as an insecticide till the early 1990s, was recorded in the water column, sediments and biota from a number of sites in the Study region. Concentrations of dieldrin in all sediment samples, except one collected from the eastern Bay, exceeded the screening level of the ANZECC Ocean Disposal Guidelines Final Draft (1998), and one sample (Breakfast Creek - an urban tributary of the Brisbane River) exceeded the maximum level. As toxicants were identified to be a major concern of the public, additional bioaccumulation and toxicity testing of selected biota are to be undertaken in the upper catchment. The Brisbane River Management Group is conducting a review of the data on toxicants in biota in Brisbane River and Moreton Bay for comparison with criteria for human consumption, and data on toxicants in the ecosystem for comparison with ecosystem health indicators.

Monitoring ecological health

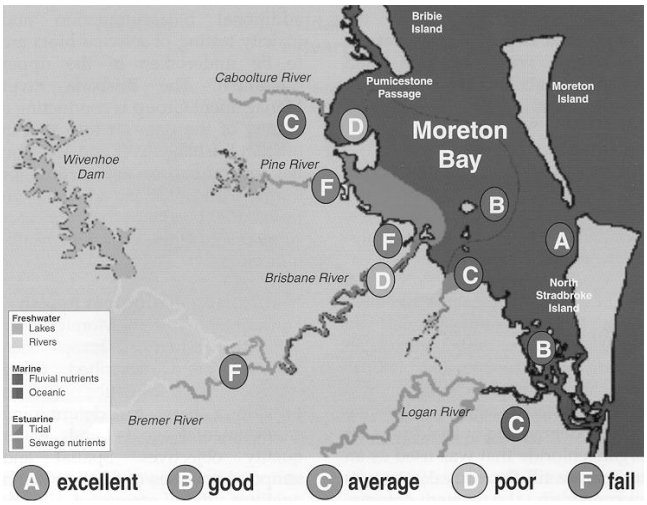
Functional zones in Moreton Bay and its estuaries have been identified and described using specific characteristics which provide a basis for determining environmental goals and water quality objectives. Spatial and temporal analyses of existing water quality data (sourced from universities, CSIRO, Queensland Environmental Protection Agency etc.) were used to design a cost-effective and reliable monitoring program. Ecological health indicators proposed include: changes in key habitats (eg. seagrass and mangrove distribution); changes in key processes (eg. nutrient fluxes, denitrification and nitrogen fixation) and changes in extent of the functional zones (eg. sewage impacted zone increasing).

The monitoring program design and ecological health indicators have been presented to key stakeholders via workshops and newsletters. Local councils and State agencies have given commitments to support a coordinated and integrated monitoring program for the waterways. They have responded positively to workshops and have maintained regular contact and communication with the members of the team designing the monitoring program. A similar cooperative monitoring program will be designed for freshwater and the upper catchments of south-east Queensland in Stage 3.

Summary of results: environmental report card for Moreton Bay and estuaries

The water quality and habitats of western and southern Moreton Bay and adjacent shores are declining, particularly in terms of sediment and nutrient accumulation. Environmental warning signs in Moreton Bay such as seagrass loss, localised harmful algal blooms and localised loss of animal diversity are increasing. “Hot spots" include:

- western Moreton Bay (Bramble Bay, Deception Bay, Waterloo Bay);
- southern Moreton Bay region; and,
- Brisbane River (tidal) and tributaries to lower Brisbane River estuary.



The eastern parts of Moreton Bay are generally healthy, supporting populations of seagrasses, turtles and dugongs.

An environmental report card illustrates the general health of various parts of Moreton Bay and river estuaries of Moreton Bay based on scientific information. This report card is part of the study's recent publications aimed at raising awareness in the general public of the Healthy Waterways Campaign.

Stage 3: Upper Catchment Study

The Stage 3 study is concerned with Upper catchment and rivers issues above the tidal zone. Scientific tasks have been scoped and work began in June 1999. This study along with others funded variously by the Australian Research Council, Queensland Transport, Port of Brisbane Corporation, Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Australia, will provide input into the development of the South-east Queensland Regional Water Quality Strategy.

Thanks go to the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency for sponsoring this article.
Taken from Australian Marine Conservation Society Bulletin Vol 20 No 4

Port of Brisbane Future Port Expansion

By Sandra Harding

The QWSG is participating in the consultation process currently required as part of the impact assessment study for reclamation at Fisherman Islands to meet future Port needs. To date the terms of reference have been prepared, technical studies have started and two meetings have been held with community groups.

The draft impact assessment study is expected to be released and on public display in August-October 2000. QWSG has advised on the need to secure long term high tide wader roosts during the life of the project and after it has been completed (20 years). Concern was raised over the loss of habitat as a result of the reclamation. Of the potential of 270 ha to be reclaimed, 90 ha contains seagrass. There could also be some loss of sea grass from sediments building up against the bund wall. QWSG raised the possibility of varying the line of the bund wall and/or placing rock islands close to the wall that may allow the build up of sediments and formation of intertidal and sub tidal habitat in areas where there is currently no sea grass.

The management of the site should also minimise activity near temporary high tide roosts at peak bird times. This will require active management of the construction work on site. As well the long term management of permanent wader roosts needs to be considered in terms of potential disturbance from recreational activities. QWSG supports the option of two wader roosts, counting the one that is under construction in the area already reclaimed.

Manly High Tide Roost

Currently there has been no agreement between the lessees of Manly Boat Harbour, the Port of Brisbane and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the dumping of dredge spoil from the boat channels in Manly Harbour. There may be some dredging done by the Port with dumping at Mud Island, if the EPA agrees.

As yet it appears that a solution is not forthcoming. The long term protection of this roost will require funding from all three levels of government to enable its dedication as a wader roost. At this stage, it is too easy for governments to avoid responsibility by passing it off to another level.

China northward migration shorebird counts

The Australasian Wader Studies Group, in conjunction with Wetlands International China Program, has just completed the fifth consecutive year of training, surveying and shorebird counting activities in China during northward migration. Results from previous years showed that some shorebird species did not use the Yellow Sea mudflats in large numbers and we decided to visit inland wetlands for the first time choosing the two largest, Poyang Lake and East Dongting Lake, both of which are located on the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. Then we returned to the inter-tidal flats of the Yellow Sea, surveying the coastline of Tianjin Province for the first time before returning for the second year running to the Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve, on the border with North Korea. The activities were carried out as part of the Asia-Pacific Shorebird Action Plan funded by Environment Australia. Brief count results and observations follow:

POYANG LAKE (29° 10' N; 115° 57' E) - 29 April to 2 May
Boat surveys were carried out within the Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve (22,400 ha), which represents 5% of the total area of the Lake. The count totalled 3,535 birds of 22 species, including three species present in internationally significant numbers Wood Sandpiper (1,550), Common Greenshank (404) and Spotted Redshank (371). Reserve staff reported that they had seen more than 3,000 Black-tailed Godwit in October 1999. The logistical challenge of getting around by boat meant that only part of the Reserve could be surveyed. The Reserve, itself, probably carried significantly more shorebirds than we were able to count, whilst the whole Lake can be reasonably expected to have supported tens of thousands of birds. Poyang Lake is best known for the large numbers of cranes and Anatidae present during the winter, when water levels are at their lowest. The region may well also support important concentrations of shorebirds at that time.

EAST DONGTING LAKE (29° 20' N; 112° 55' E) - 4 to 6 May
Surveys were carried out within the East Dongting Lake National Nature Reserve (132,800 ha) by road and boat. The Reserve includes about half of the Dongting Lake system. The count totalled 829 birds of nine species including internationally significant numbers of Spotted Redshank (618). Reserve staff reported that a number of species are common during southward migration and winter, including Dunlin (17,000 during southward migration), Pied Avocet (6,000 in winter) and Northern Lapwing (2,000 in winter). Like Poyang Lake, East Dongting Lake is better known for its crane and Anatidae numbers during winter although the region certainly supports significant numbers of shorebirds at various times of the year. As a first step to developing more information on the importance of inland wetlands in China for shorebirds, it is planned to hold a course in 2001 for staff from inland wetland Nature Reserves with the objective of training them to find, identify and count shorebirds in their own Reserves.

TIANJIN PROVINCE COASTLINE (39° 04' N; 117° 45' E) - 9 to 14 May
The complete Tianjin Province coastline of 70 km in NW Bohai Wan was surveyed. The extensive shrimp ponds and saltworks behind the coast were also surveyed in part. This is the first detailed count of the region and resulted in a total of 73,553 birds of 31 species being recorded. Species present in internationally significant numbers were Red Knot (14,277), Curlew Sandpiper (12,489), Grey Plover (6,493), Great Knot (3,610), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (2,855), Marsh Sandpiper (2,425), Asian Dowitcher (966) and Lesser Sand Plover (357). This is the first area surveyed during the last five years to hold large numbers of Red Knot, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Asian Dowitcher. The significance of these numbers is shown by the fact that during the previous four years, despite a cumulative total of close to 500,000 shorebirds being counted at major sites around the Yellow Sea, only 4,611 Red Knot, 73 Curlew Sandpiper, 379 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and 16 Asian Dowitcher had been seen. Birders have reported large numbers of Red Knot, Curlew Sandpiper and Asian Dowitcher in the Shi Jiu Tuo (Happy Island) area in NE Bohai Wan, indicating that the coast and sub-coastal ponds between Tianjin and Shi Jiu Tuo could hold many more individuals of these three species. One yellow-flagged Red-necked Stint (NW Australia) and two orange-flagged Curlew Sandpiper (SE Australia) were seen.

YALU JIANG (39° 49' N; 123° 57' E) - 16 to 23 May
The coastline length surveyed was about 50 km. This year's count of 92,990 birds of 27 species compared with 151,708 birds of 25 species in 1999, when the count took place from 2 to 9 May. Species present in internationally important numbers were Bar-tailed Godwit (26,169), Great Knot (26,093), Dunlin (22,482), Grey Plover (7,232), Eastern Curlew (731), Broad-billed Sandpiper (723), Lesser Sand Plover (647) Eurasian Curlew (563) and Eurasian Oystercatcher (189). Three Nordmann's Greenshank and one Spoon-billed Sandpiper were seen. The reduction in numbers between years is explained by a halving in the Bar-tailed Godwit and Great Knot populations, with the departure of around 3,000 Eastern Curlew being counter-balanced by the arrival of a similar number of Grey Plover.

Migration was certainly "in the air" during our visit and the excited calling and recruitment flights of birds about to depart on their final flight to the breeding grounds was an emotional experience. A number of flocks were seen commencing migration. Recounts on the final two days of the region surveyed on the first day confirmed that massive departures had occurred in the intervening period. A total of eight Bar-tailed Godwit flagged in NW Australia were seen. This is an interesting change from last year when eight Godwit from SE Australia and New Zealand were observed and only one from NW Australia, this on the last day. The result indicates that the *baueri* race from eastern Australasia passes through the northern Yellow Sea before the *menzbieri* population arrives, perhaps from the west coast of South Korea. The prevalence of *menzbieri* was confirmed by the dominance of white-rumped birds in Bar-tailed Godwit flocks. Two Great Knot flagged in NW Australia were also seen.

Mark Barter,
Chair, Asia-Pacific Shorebird Working Group

BOOK UPDATE

Waders of South-east Queensland

The book currently contains nine chapters comprising of 25 sections. Sixteen authors have been committed to eight chapters. One chapter remains uncommitted.

To date 15 sections, equivalent to 60% of the book sections, have passed through the first editorial phase. Chapters 5, 7 and 8 are the most advanced, with Chapter 8 ready for peer review. The current word count for edited first drafts totals approximately 45,000 words.

Seven of the remaining ten outstanding contributions have been promised for early to mid-July. Finalisation of a number of these contributions has been slowed by author commitments to the SHOC conference / AWSG workshop in late June.

Currently, all edited contributions have been returned to authors and their response is awaited. Following receipt of their response and any resultant amendments, each section will be distributed to the other chapter co-authors. This will enable chapter co-authors to familiarise themselves with the remaining chapter content and allow for an informal “peer review” between co-authors. Significant changes are not expected as a result of this process.

Graphics, illustrations and pictures are being collected to integrate into the body of the book. The choice of a publisher is closer. Also the idea of sponsorship for the book has been discussed.

One point of discussion has been the size of the book, not the amount of content but the actual dimensions. We would like to know your thoughts as to a suitable size for a field guide. Please send your thoughts to:
Lindsay Agnew aggies@ozemail.com.au or gouldian@ozemail.com.au

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members who have joined since the last magazine was printed :

Mr Andrew EACOTT
Ms Jill HARBISON
Mr James MACREADY

Many thanks too to those who have included a donation with their renewal or membership fee. This is greatly appreciated as such donations make on-going work possible.

QWSG WADER COURSE

The QWSG will be holding their very successful wader study course again either in October or early November 2000. So hold a space in your diary, and warn anyone you know that might be interested to look out for details in the next Queensland Wader Newsletter and the Queensland Birds Newsletter.

QLD WADER STUDY GROUP

ACTIVITIES - 2000

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Contact: Linda Cross on 07 5495 2758 or at *xenus@big.net.au*
Completed count forms should be returned as soon as possible to:
Mrs L Cross at 40 Thompson Rd, Bellmere, Qld 4510.

WADER COUNTS DATES (general monitoring) FOR ALL OF 2000

Sat 3rd June	High Tide of 1.97m at 09:51am (NATIONAL WINTER COUNT)
NO COUNT IN JULY	
Sat 19th August	High Tide of 1.89m at 12:00noon
Sat 16th September	High Tide of 2.04m at 11:00am
Sun 15th October	High Tide of 2.23m at 10:41am
Sat 11th November	High Tide of 2.26m at 08:58am
Sun 10th December	High Tide of 2.38m at 08:36am

Counters in the regions of Mackay and the North please choose a date as close as possible to the ones listed above with a tide high enough to push as many waders as possible into their respective roosts.

Wader ID Days

Sunday 17th September at Toorbul.

Meet at 10am onwards for a 2.06m high at 11:40am Brisbane Bar (40 minutes later at Toorbul). Take the Bruce Highway north from Brisbane to the Donnybrook/Toorbul turn-off near the Big Fish. Turn off here and head east over the highway overpass. Continue on this road to Toorbul. Turn right at the T-junction then first left and then right, which brings you onto the Esplanade. Follow this road to the end (approximately 2 kms), we will be on the left.

Contact Linda Cross on 07 5495 2758

Sunday 1st October at Lytton/Wynnum North

Meet from 11.00AM onwards. High tide 11.44AM at 2.13m. We will view waders at the roost and then drive to Wynnum North for lunch and watch the birds feeding as the tide recedes.

To get to Lytton, drive east along Lytton Rd following the signs to the Port of Brisbane, follow Pritchard St from the turn off to Fort Lytton National Park, turn left into Wynnum North Rd, continue to the end of the road and park in the car park. UBD 143 F11.

Bring telescopes/binoculars, lunch, drinks, stools, sunscreen and insect repellent. If you don't have a telescope there will be people there willing to share and to explain what to look for.

Contact Arthur & Sheryl Keates 3398 4898.

Cannon Netting

There are no scheduled cannon netting days planned for the next three months but netting outings are mounted "opportunistically" when it appears there may be a good chance of success, so the regulars will be warned and they will contact those who have shown interest in the past. If a date is arranged you will need to bring food and water, plus sun-screen and insect repellent.

Great Sandy Strait Wader Survey

As the title to this section suggests there is a proposed survey of the Great Sandy Strait for waders, the first part of this survey is set down for Saturday 8th July 2000. The suitable tide means the count will take place in the afternoon. Also the survey is still subject to funding and a finalisation of times and dates. Those wader watchers who took part in the previous survey of this area will be called on first, but experienced watchers should be on stand-by for a call.
Contact Linda Cross on 07 5495 2758 if you have any queries.

Clean-up at Empire Point

Committee is planning a Clean-up Day at Empire Point to tidy up the roost site. This is a chance to help waders while they are away. The clean up is to be held on the morning of Sunday 23rd July. If you can help, please come. Old clothes are necessary. Gumboots if possible. Low tide is at 0750.
Ring Joyce Harding 3372 1424 or Sheryl Keates 3398 4898 for confirmation or details.

Other Conservation Activities of Interest

QWSG is a special interest group of the Queensland Ornithological Society Inc. whose object is *"To promote the scientific study and conservation of birds by all means possible, with particular reference to the birds of Queensland".*
Separate membership is required. Contacts: Dawn Muir, President (07) 3870 8076; Sheena Gillman, Secretary (07) 3372 4089; Treasurer, Lyal Grundy (07) 3355 1050

Monthly Meetings **QOSI -** 7.45pm Queensland Museum Brisbane
1st Thursday each month except January.
Entry via Dinosaur Garden in Grey Street. Doors open between 7.30 and 8.00pm.

QLD WADER STUDY GROUP

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

I/We wish to join/renew: (Single $12; Family $22; Student/Pensioner $9)

Title……Name:……

Address:…… Membership: $……

…… Postcode:…… Donation: $……
Payment enclosed: _____

Phone: (Home) …….. (Work) ……..
Fax / e-mail: ……

TOTAL $……

How did you hear about QWSG ……
What activities do you wish to participate in? WADER COUNTS, FIELD TRIPS, SCIENTIFIC DATA COLLECTION, SURVEYS, CLERICAL, OTHER (specify……)

SIGNATURE: …… DATE:……
