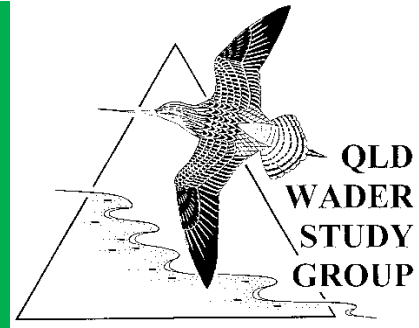


# QUEENSLAND WADER



Issue number 087

March, April, May 2014

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

[www.waders.org.au](http://www.waders.org.au)

## CHAIRPERSONS REPORT FOR 2013

2013 was another very busy, some may say hectic year. Our activities broadly fall into three categories, research, education and conservation/consulting and this year we've been busy on all these fronts.

High quality newsletters, a result of David Edwards commitment to the newsletter cause, continued throughout the year and we continue to get lots of feedback on the quality and range of the articles included. A big thank you to David for continuing to do this role and for consistently producing a record of such quality for so many years.

Deidre Chrzescijanski completed her first full year as treasurer, ably assisted by Sheryl Keates, this is a huge role as it includes membership as well and we are all grateful for the many hours Deidre spends pulling together financial statements and ensuring our finances are managed appropriately.

We've also made some small grants this year to help out with other projects or initiatives and through this have helped support the development and/or reprint of a range of booklets, brochures and other educational and informational materials around the region. Probably our biggest contribution was to the Spoon Billed Sandpiper recovery project. While not an Australian species this bird is iconic for our flyway and the promotion of shorebird issues as a result of this project can only be beneficial to our own objectives.

Finally, as with every year we were involved with, through either providing information on a consulting basis, or by direct interaction through meetings and letters with a whole range of shorebird related issues in 2013, ranging from providing data and highlighting concerns in relation to the Port of Gladstone through to being involved with local councils and councillors throughout the region in relation to matters concerning disturbance or shorebird development. Worryingly we're currently involved with issues for at least three shorebird roosts that are under threat, with Manly being a local and topical issue at the moment as a result of storm damage to the roost early in 2013.

On the flip side to that we also had the opportunity to be involved in the revision of the management plan of the Port of Brisbane artificial roost with work completed by the Port early this year. The collaboration on this was excellent and the work completed by the Ports environmental team and led by Michael Linde and Rachael Attard is already showing results with increasing use of the roost. Thanks to every committee and general member who has been involved in these activities through either highlighting issues, or contributing opinions. Sandra Harding and Arthur Keates spend a great deal of time drafting formal letters in response to these issues, a job most of us would struggle to do in such a professional manner.

Some of the key activities in 2013, in no particular order of priority are highlighted below:

### EDUCATION

Doggie breakfasts, wader ID days and a wader course were features of 2013 with Sheryl and Arthur Keates, Phil and Linda Cross and David and Sandra doing the lion's share of the work and attendance at these events. The wader course in particular was our first for 2-3 years and proved to be very popular and well attended.

This year was the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Moreton bay Ramsar site and coincided with a visit from the Yatsu Higata Nature Observation centre volunteers and our very good and long term friend Hit. The activity schedule for the visit was as always extremely busy and Sheryl worked very hard with Brisbane City Council to ensure the event was successful and enjoyed by everyone involved.

Ivell Whyte and Robert Bush also had major successes this year in the area of education. The new posters, banners and flyers for the group are almost completed and this major overhaul of our educational material has produced a very professional as well as catchy set of material for use at educational events. In addition they were both successful in securing a grant from the Port of Brisbane to develop interactive educational material that can be used in schools as well as for other events.

## **ARC LINKAGE AND OTHER UNIVERSITY AFFILIATIONS**

In 2013 we also made our final payment to the ARC linkage project which makes extensive use of our count data. Despite this we still remain incredibly close to Richard Fuller and his shorebird team at University of Queensland (UQ) and are actively helping with a number of his students projects through a variety of means.

Final grants were made to Tara Neilsen at the University of the Sunshine Coast for her work on factors influencing shorebird occurrence on sandy shores as well as providing similar support for Francesco Bancala at the UQ who is studying feeding and roosting behaviour in shorebirds under the Nigel Roberts Bursary towards their PhD studies and we have issued letters to the local universities to advise that we are looking for nominations for the next round of awards. Peter Rothlisberg and David Milton, along with Andrew Geering continue to ensure applications are validated appropriately and that the requirements of the grant are met each year, before the money is issued.

Another UQ project we were involved with as a partner, in association with the Burnett Mary catchment group, "Birds without Borders" was also successfully piloted in 2013 with help from David Milton. The project was to develop a methodology for monitoring shorebird habitat quality with workshops held at Maaroom this year to pilot the method. Next stages in this project are uncertain, as a result of resourcing and funding but hopefully UQ will now be able to roll the project out formally, following the pilot work.

## **SURVEYS**

2013 was a big survey year and kicked off with one of our most ambitious surveys in many years. The committee are extremely grateful, and also incredibly impressed, with Peter Driscoll's organisation and completion of our first major Gulf survey in many years. A number of parties contributed money for the project including AWSG, Birds Australia and the Miranda Shorebird Centre. The results of this will be published soon but suffice to say, very large numbers of birds were counted demonstrating that the Gulf still remains a critically important site for our shorebirds. Not content with that Linda Cross then organised a Great Sandy survey in December which went flawlessly, and in addition to counting allowed time for discussions with local birders about shorebird issues at Mathiesson Homestead and Turtle Cove, which we will continue to monitor and get involved with.

## **THE COUNT PROGRAMME**

Linda Cross again tirelessly organised and managed the count programme in 2013 with monthly counts across a whole range of sites in Moreton bay and further afield up and down the Queensland coast. Added to this the additional workload of count sheets from two major surveys and data entry to enable us to fulfil a revised set of deliverables requested by the Port demonstrates Linda, and Phil's incredible commitment to the group. Our contract to count the Port of Brisbane was renewed again this year allowing us to continue counting this important location. For the first time, we were requested to produce a report analysing the Port Count data and this will now be an annual deliverable. Peter Driscoll, David Milton, assisted by Linda who completed the data entry ensured that this was delivered on time.

Our count database continues to be one of the most valuable datasets on shorebird numbers available and we receive many requests for use of the data we collect. This is a reflection on the quality of our counters, our count program and the quality of the data entry and every individual involved in counting should be very proud of their contribution to shorebird conservation. Linda is always looking for new counters so if you know anyone, or would like to count your own site please get in touch with her. We are very close to having our online data submission ready to use and this will reduce the amount of manual work Linda needs to do and also reduce the amount of manual checking currently done by Vicki Campbell and data entry done by Joyce Harding. Linda and I will get in touch with some of you for a pilot of the new site early in 2014 and we'll roll it out ahead of the 2014/15 wader season and as always thanks not only to Linda but to Joyce and Vicki for their roles as well. Vicki also continued looking after our merchandise and sales in 2013.

## BANDING AND GEOLOCATORS

I have produced a separate report on banding but thought it worth highlighting that we've continued with fieldwork throughout the year targeting both migratory and non-migratory shorebirds around Moreton bay and have put engraved leg flags on 693 shorebirds of 16 species in 2013 and now have over 2,300 birds leg flagged with 3600 resightings of individually identifiable birds at feeding roosting and migration stopover sites.

More geolocators were put on this year and a further geocator recovered and the results of this and other banding results are shown in the main banding report. Thanks to the many individuals who volunteer for banding, spending long hours in the field, often wading hip deep in water and mud to get birds into position for catching and also to Phil Cross who maintains the database of leg flag sightings, his workload goes up as the group and flag more birds each year! If you're interested in getting involved in banding please contact me for further information.

I could go on forever and have tried to pick some of the bigger highlights of the year and mention some of the individuals involved as a demonstration of just how much we achieve each year. I'd like to finish by taking the opportunity to thank every single committee member and also our non-committee roles such as Phil, Linda and Vicki Campbell who looks after merchandise. Everyone has contributed to the group in many different ways and many things that just seem to happen actually take a great deal of work in the background such as accounting, maintaining meeting minutes and actions and so on. We always like to see new faces on the committee as they bring new ideas and perspectives so I'd encourage anyone who would like to stand to get in touch, now's your chance as we dissolve the committee.

Finally, I have to say thank you to the QWSG members for your support and fieldwork over the last 12 months. Hopefully this brief (or not so brief report) has shown you how important your support, your counts, and your involvement in local issues or education in your local area is for shorebirds. Here's to an equally busy and valuable 2014.

## BANDING UPDATE

Banding in 2013 continued to focus on a joint project between the Queensland Wader Study Group, The Wild Bird Society of Japan (Chiba) and the Port of Brisbane Pty Ltd to retrieve geolocators put on Grey-tailed Tattlers in 2011 so that detailed migration data could be retrieved. Further geolocators were fitted in March and April 2013 with retrieval being a focus at Manly later in 2013. However, catching also occurred at Toorbul and the Manly catches allowed a range of the regular species to be captured for flagging and weighing. In addition, an unprecedented movement of Red-kneed Dotterel to the coast provided an opportunity to mist-net a number of this species for leg flagging during the latter part of 2013. 693 birds of 15 species were caught and leg flagged during 2013.

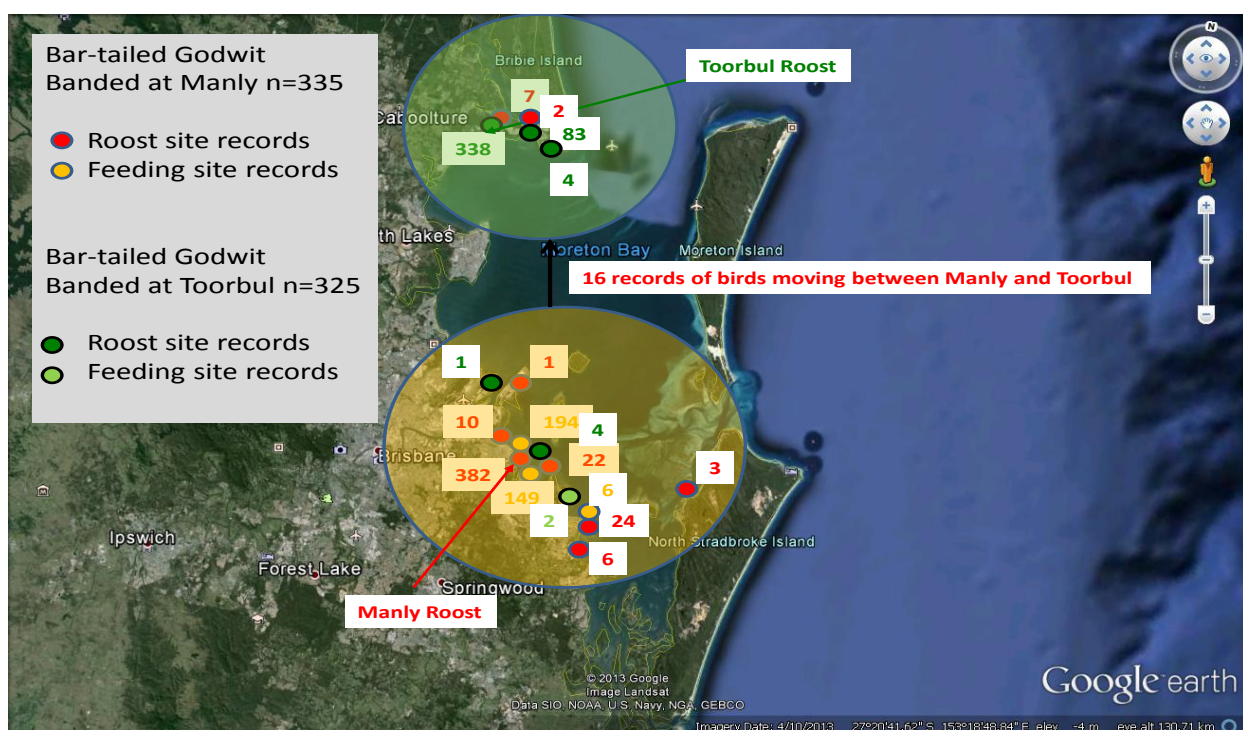
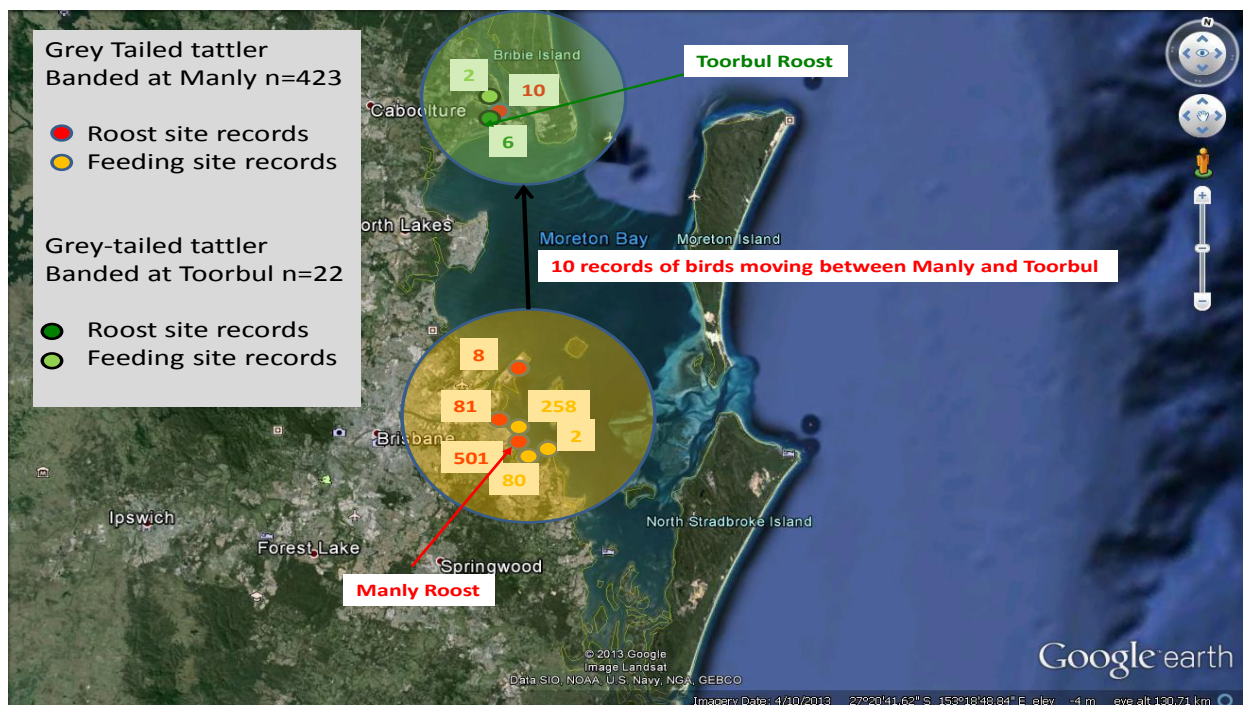
Species	Number new	Number Retrap	Total
Bar-tailed Godwit	298	19	317
Black-tailed Godwit	3	0	3
Black-winged Stilt	5	0	5
Bush Stone-curlew	9	0	9
Curlew Sandpiper	31	10	41
Great Knot	108	18	126
Grey-tailed tattler	101	18	119
Lesser Sandplover	7	3	10
Pied Oystercatcher	2	0	2
Red-kneed Dotterel	24	0	24
Red-necked Avocet	1	0	1
Ruddy Turnstone	1	0	1
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	19	1	19
Terek Sandpiper	12	3	15
Whimbrel	1	0	1

As in previous years, body condition indices were calculated monthly for a number of species and form the comparative baseline for future years of analysis.

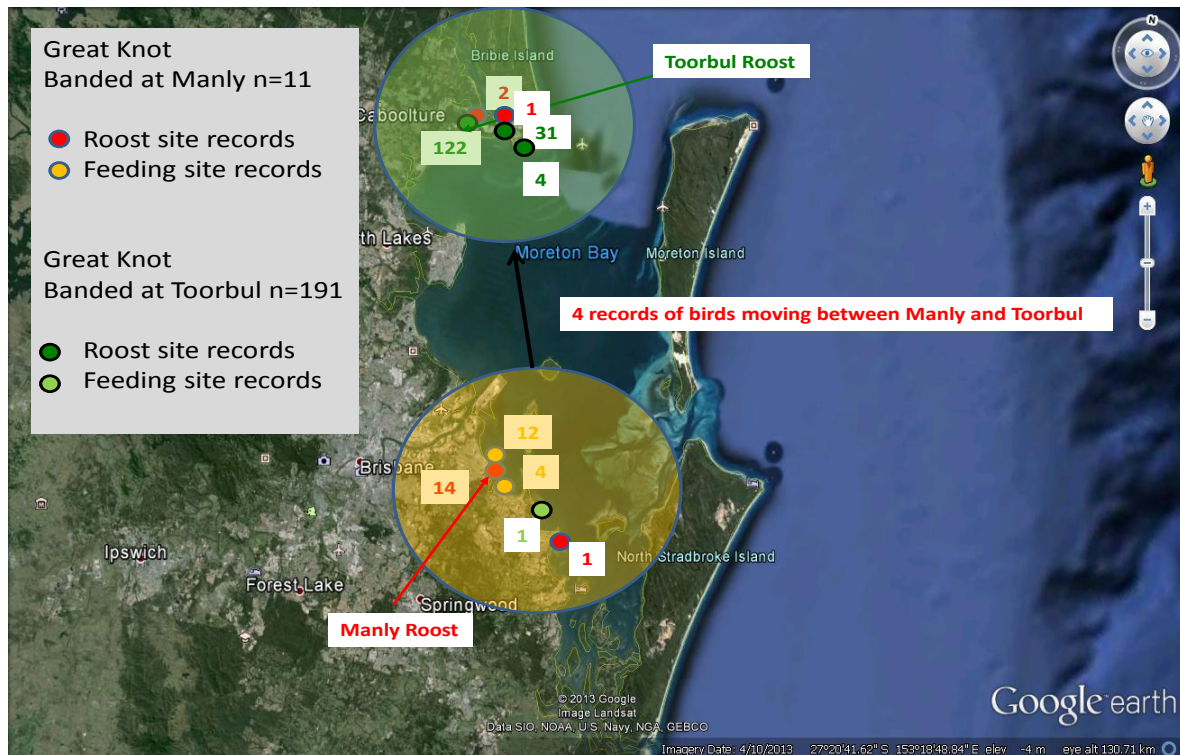
There are now 2367 individually identifiable leg flags that have been placed on shorebirds in Moreton Bay between 2006 and 2013 which have produced large numbers of resightings locally allowing detailed

movement patterns to be built up during the study. Phil's leg flag report provides a summary of leg flag sightings for the year.

The local data continues to show a high degree of faithfulness to Moreton Bay for returning birds with large numbers of birds banded in previous years being recorded back on Moreton Bay. The following three maps show the local movements of Grey-tailed Tattlers, Bar-tailed Godwits and Great Knot respectively banded at Manly and Toorbul demonstrating that in the majority of cases the birds utilise the same roost sites with local feeding sites both within and between seasons. Leg flag sightings to date from both locations show similar patterns with roost and feeding areas being very close together and show that birds banded in the North and South of the bay do not appear to interact with each other on a regular basis while on their non-breeding grounds.

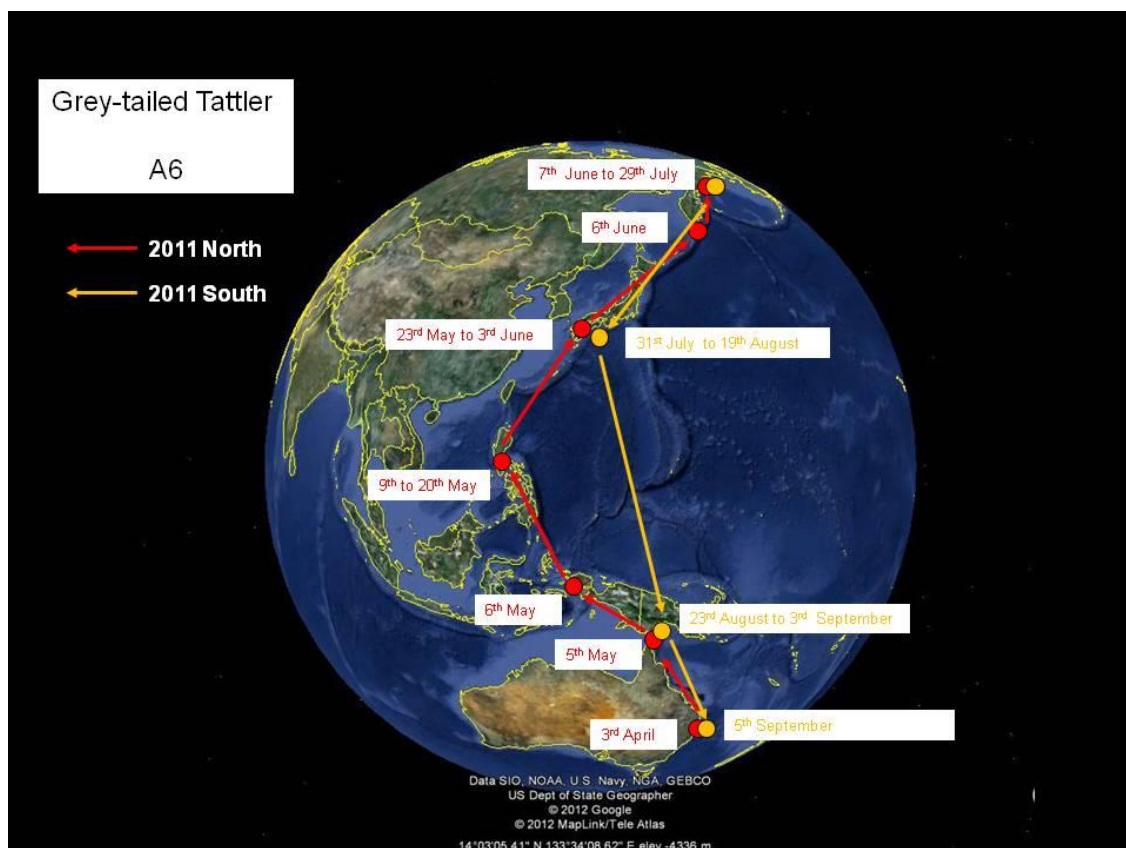




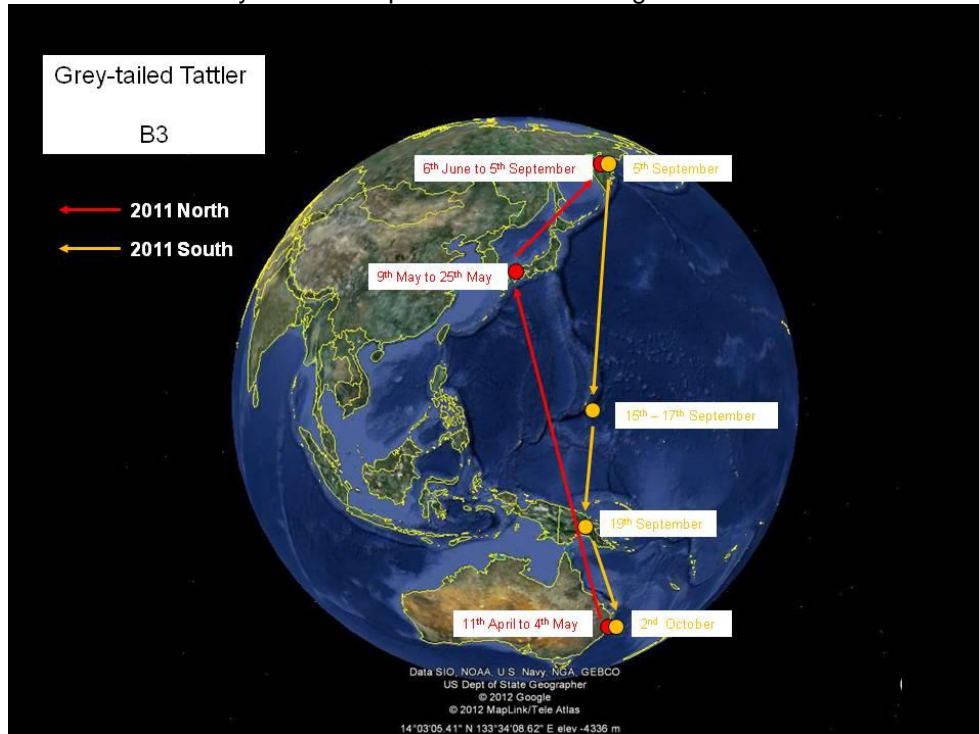


Three geolocators have now been retrieved from tattlers and the data downloaded and analysed, the migration traces are shown below.

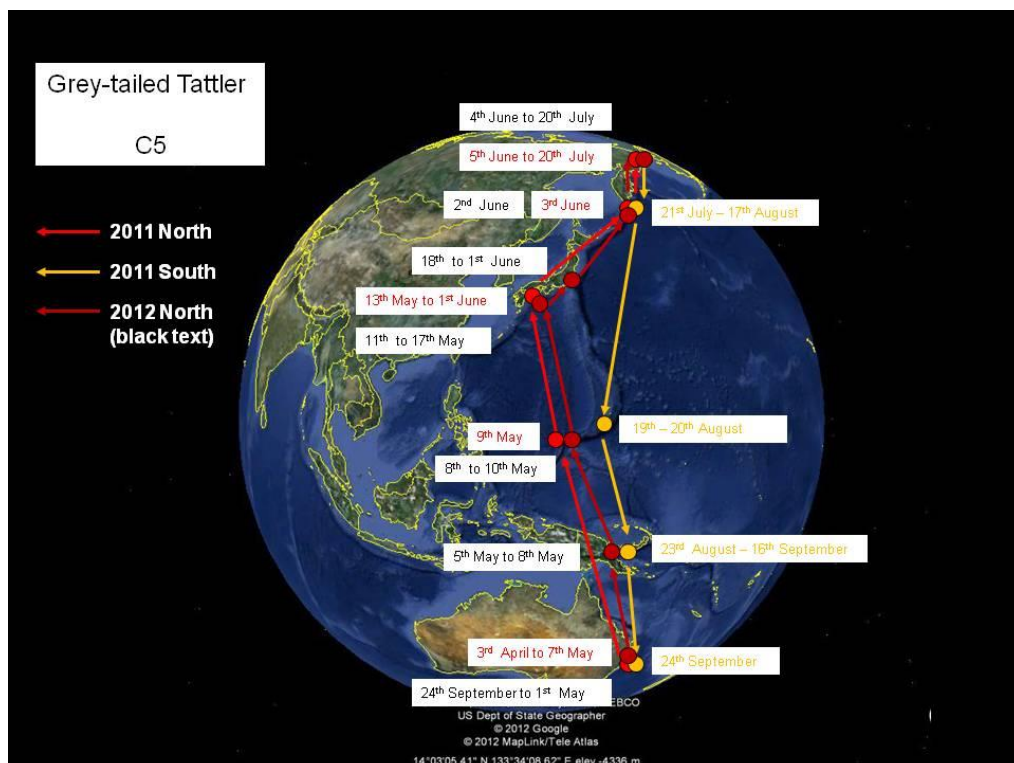
The first of the birds to be recaptured, leg flag **A6**, resulted in a complete migration trace as shown below. The data showed the bird staging on Northward migration in northern Australia, the Philippines, and Japan before breeding on the Kamchatka peninsula. Southward migration was much more direct with the bird staging only in Japan.



The northward migration track for **A6** is unusual when compared to leg flag data, which suggests that Queensland birds fly direct to Japan on northward migration.



The second bird, **B3** took a more expected route, based on available data, leaving Brisbane and flying directly to Japan where it staged for just over 2 weeks before moving to Kamchatka where the bird appeared to breed. Southward migration was also much more direct with only a brief stopover of 2-3 days in Guam with the bird arriving back in Brisbane in early September. This migration track is far more consistent with leg flag data collated for Queensland birds.



The third geolocator had been on the bird **C5** for over two years before retrieval and as a result provided data for two northward migrations and the southward migration between the two, before the battery expired. Again the bird showed a more direct route, expected for Queensland tattlers, but did suggest an interim stopover

near Palau before the Japanese staging area. Of particular interest is the similarity in both timing and stopover locations for this individual suggesting that strong fidelity to sites may be important for more than just wintering and breeding locations.

During 2013 there were many resightings of leg flagged individuals overseas which are shown in the figure below, mainly on Northward migration. The numbers of resightings of Bar-tailed godwit and red Knot in the yellow Sea 42 and 16 sightings respectively show the importance of this area for migratory shorebirds with a number of species recorded on a more easterly migration route staging in Japan on their way North. The 39 records of Bar-tailed Godwit and 4 records of Red Knot in New Zealand reflect the close link between the countries for those two species with many individuals arriving in Australia on Southward migration and then crossing the Tasman Sea to spend the Austral Summer in New Zealand

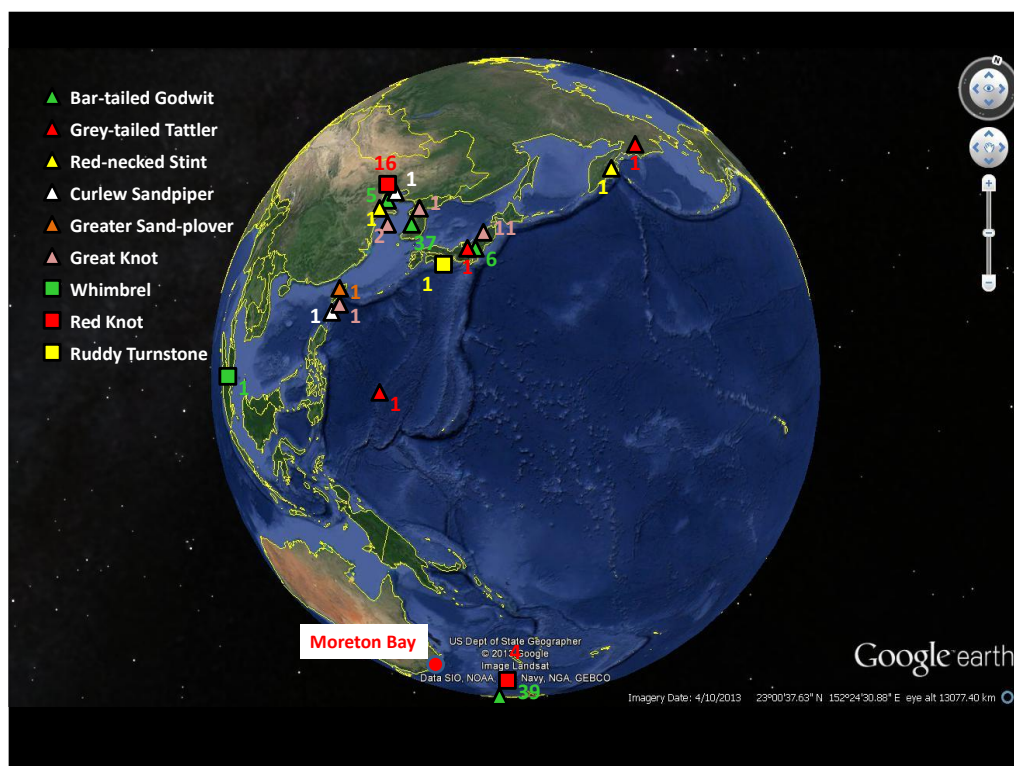


Figure 5.11 Overseas Resightings of leg flagged shorebirds in 2013

As always thanks go to the many people who help with mist netting and cannon netting activities as this would not be possible without that help, often at unreasonable times of the day and often involving excessive amounts of exercise and mud. Many people continue to send leg flag sightings in and these are providing invaluable information on local movements within Moreton bay so thank you and please keep sending them in, even if you can't always read the code on the flag a record of a green flag is still useful and without your support and commitment there would be much less value in continuing to put on leg flags. Finally, as always thanks go to Phil and Linda Cross for maintaining the leg flag sightings databases and dealing with the many sightings and banding records.

By Jon Coleman 31/12/2013

## WEB SITE

The website had a very bad start to the year with a major Malware attack which resulted in the website being taken offline regularly to prevent infection of other websites. This took many weeks to resolve and a lot more security has been implemented around the site as a result of this. Ricki Coughlin of Tasty Pixels who created the site for us helped enormously in the clean-up and the group is very grateful to her for her help and support.

The site continues to grow, catch reports are now added as are blogs and photos for our main events such as surveys and other activities making the site more and more interactive.

Our next major development for the web site is currently being tested and involves a secure logon for members and counters, enabling our members to access their newsletters on line and allowing our counters to enter their data online, significantly streamlining the work done by Linda, Vicki, Joyce and a number of others. While we hoped to have this live by the end of 2013 hopefully we will have the functionality in place in the next couple of months.

By John Coleman



## Great Sandy Strait Survey 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> December 2013

QWSG undertakes a wader survey of the Great Sandy Strait region every two years; the previous survey having been conducted in January 2012. Timing of this survey was problematic and in the end it was brought forward slightly. However, the dates chosen resulted in counters having to contend with quite big high tides. Fortunately, the weather was pleasant during the counts with dry conditions and a southerly wind on Friday, which turned south-easterly on Saturday.

The call went out to all people who had previously been involved in Great Sandy Strait surveys, and also to the local birdwatchers in Hervey Bay for assistance. Thankfully quite a number of the locals in Hervey Bay were keen to assist us, so we decided to count Maryborough and north on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> and south of Maryborough to Inskip Point on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>. This meant that quite a number of QWSG people from Brisbane did not need to survey on both days, however, a few of the group were involved in counts on both days and only David Milton had to enjoy three days of surveying to include two sites on Fraser Island on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

No aerial survey was conducted as Peter Driscoll was needed in Tin Can Bay area to survey sites with his boat. We had a total of 60 sites listed for counting by land and boat. Of the 60 sites, only 53 were completed and one new site (Tandora - Mary River house dam), was added to the database giving us a total of 54 sites surveyed.

The total counts from the December survey were 19,797 migratory and 1,607 resident waders. The Bar-tailed Godwit count was 12,585, representing over 63% of the total migratory species counted. The next largest count was Great Knot (1,461) and Eastern Curlew (1,301), followed by Red-necked Stint (1,085). Of these four species, only two (Bar-tailed Godwit and Eastern Curlew), are in internationally significant numbers. Other birds counted during the survey comprised of water birds (1,178), raptors (40), Silver Gull (130) and terns (9,536). Tern numbers were made up of eight species and of those, 7,053 were Little Tern.

Using the Population Estimates for Migratory Shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway – Bamford et al. (2008), the Bar-tailed Godwit number in GSS is 3.87% and the Eastern Curlew number is 3.42% of their flyway populations. Grey-tailed Tattler numbers (635) were 1.27%, while the Whimbrel count, (904) comes close to significance with 0.9% of the flyway population.

Back in 1990 seven species in the Great Sandy Strait were in significant numbers, but now only three meet the criteria of internationally significant, and the percentage has fallen dramatically for all but the Bar-tailed Godwit. In 1990 the percentage for Eastern Curlew was 15.8%, Whimbrel 3.1% and Grey-tailed Tattler was 15.4%, while Bar-tailed Godwit was 4%.

Four birds with leg flags were sighted on 7<sup>th</sup> December and are as follows:-

- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with blue flag seen at Boonooroo (flagged in Japan)
- 1 Great Knot with black flag over white flag seen at Maaroom (flagged in China)
- 1 Great Knot with yellow flag seen at Maaroom (flagged in NW Western Australia)
- 1 Great Knot with green flag seen at Maaroom (flagged in Moreton Bay Qld)

No breeding records were reported, but two immature Bar-tailed Godwit and one immature Black-winged Stilt were seen at Tandora and two immature Red-kneed Dotterel were seen at Boonooroo.

Some interesting wader totals were as follows:-

275 Eastern Curlew at Boonooroo  
 3,174 Bar-tailed Godwit at Moon Point  
 1,575 Bar-tailed Godwit at Boonooroo  
 8 Black-tailed Godwit at Garnett's Lagoons  
 53 Pacific Golden Plover at Point Vernon  
 59 Common Greenshank at Thangawan Creek  
 5 Latham's Snipe at Garnett's Lagoons  
 420 Great Knot at southern tip Stewart Island  
 17 Red Knot at Maaroom  
 23 Marsh Sandpiper at Maaroom  
 62 Terek Sandpiper at Reef Islands  
 10 Comb-crested Jacana at Garnett's Lagoons  
 2 Beach Stone-curlew at Beck Rd, River Heads.  
 1 Red-necked Avocet at Maaroom

159 Eastern Curlew at Inskip Point  
 1,722 Bar-tailed Godwit at Maaroom  
 1,571 Bar-tailed Godwit at Inskip Point  
 162 Whimbrel at Smooger Point  
 47 Pacific Golden Plover at Boonooroo  
 41 Common Greenshank at Mathiesen Homestead  
 95 Grey Plover at Boonooroo  
 350 Great Knot at Maaroom  
 24 Marsh Sandpiper at Garnett's Lagoons  
 120 Terek Sandpiper at Maaroom  
 10 Sanderling at north spit Fraser Island  
 49 Red-kneed Dotterel at Garnett's Lagoons  
 26 Red-kneed Dotterel at Tin Can Bay Sewage



## Other interesting bird numbers:-

578 Gull-billed Tern at Mangrove Point south  
 1,000 Common Tern at north spit Fraser Island  
 1 Black-necked Stork at Garnett's Lagoons  
 15 Glossy Ibis at Garnett's Lagoons  
 2 Eastern Reef Egret (1 grey & 1 white) at Duck Island

92 Whiskered Tern at Garnett's Lagoons  
 7,000 Little Tern at north spit Fraser Island  
 1 White-necked Heron at Garnett's Lagoons  
 2 Yellow-billed Spoonbill at Garnett's Lagoons

We extend our thanks to the following people for allowing survey teams onto or through their property to conduct the counts. Their cooperation is very much appreciated:

Edith Mathiesen – owner of Mathiesen Homestead at River Heads, Hervey Bay  
 Garnett Bengsten – owner of Garnett's Lagoons at River Heads, Hervey Bay  
 Lindsay & Noela Titmarsh – owners of Tandora on the Mary River, Maryborough  
 Caretakers – of (Hedley Park) Caravan Park at Tinnanbar (access to Kauri Creek roost)

Please note: - Due to lack of space, the species table that appears after this report is not a complete list of all the surveys we have conducted.

My sincere thanks to everyone for their assistance during the survey.

The participants are listed below (I apologise for any omissions).

QWSG Members: - John Bell, Donald Bradley, Lesley Bradley, Jill Chamberlain, Jon Coleman, Ken Cowell, Linda Cross, Phil Cross, Barbara Dickson, Peter Driscoll, David Edwards, Andrew Geering, Marilyn Jacobs, Bob James, John Knight, David Milton, Peter Rothlisberg, Geoff Skoien, Brenda Smith, Graham Smith, Marilyn Sweetnam, Floss Wainwright, Dez Wells and Marion Williams.

Birdwatchers of Hervey Bay Members: - Jane Barnes, Brit Einerman, Bill Gauld.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife (Dept of NPRSR) staff: - Ben Cook, Michael Ford, Jack Hennessy, Wayne Matthews, Moyra McRae, John Schwarzrock

Other helpers: - Chris Barnes, Karyll Butler, Rob Kernot and Stephanie Tonkin.



Some of the waders on Duck Island

SPECIES	Dec 2013	Jan 2012	Oct 2009	Jan 2005	Jan 2002	Nov 2001	Jan 2001	Oct 2000
Bush Stone-curlew			2					
Beach Stone-curlew	3	11	4		1	1		
Aust. Pied Oystercatcher	204	448	103	287	340	170	471	145
Sooty Oystercatcher	6	9		3			3	
Black-winged Stilt	754	255	194	54	144	297	38	53
Red-necked Avocet	1							
Pacific Golden Plover	213	239	129	24	209	274	71	17
Grey Plover	106	195	142	91	74	165	67	208
Red-capped Plover	468	491	157	210	298	116	668	73
Double-banded Plover								
Lesser Sand Plover	489	2099	624	2345	1593	1401	1965	475
Greater Sand Plover	33	1019	310	414	25	45	5	57
Black-fronted Dotterel	6	1	3	1				3
Red-kneed Dotterel	79		5			8		2
Masked Lapwing	76	71	95	40	51	36	40	33
Comb-crested Jacana	10	16	8	3				
Latham's Snipe	5	2			5			
Black-tailed Godwit	10	4	8	43		2		
Bar-tailed Godwit	12585	17076	13727	8869	12991	14227	17575	11066
Whimbrel	904	1746	1419	396	2728	404	1699	418
Eastern Curlew	1301	3110	1865	2279	4994	2032	3678	1355
Terek Sandpiper	239	658	258	130	36	142	195	45
Common Sandpiper							1	
Grey-tailed Tattler	635	1638	2154	696	1260	739	1086	161
Wandering Tattler		6	5					
Common Greenshank	189	241	463	186	650	209	443	342
Marsh Sandpiper	51	4	10	50	88	63	14	28
Wood Sandpiper			1					
Ruddy Turnstone	3	25	19	14	16	14	6	25
Asian Dowitcher								
Great Knot	1461	1182	2082	2094	845	1081	1131	1648
Red Knot	25	201	228	4	24	122	9	126
Sanderling	10						9	
Red-necked Stint	1085	1947	1462	2774	1081	1300	1533	416
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	271	195	318	102	73	89	82	22
Curlew Sandpiper	182	177	194	291	155	202	127	219
Broad-billed Sandpiper			1					
Australian Pratincole			2					
Total migratory waders	<b>19797</b>	<b>31764</b>	<b>25421</b>	<b>20805</b>	<b>27793</b>	<b>23211</b>	<b>31774</b>	<b>16628</b>
Total resident waders	<b>1607</b>	<b>1302</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>1220</b>	<b>309</b>
Total waders	<b>21404</b>	<b>33066</b>	<b>25992</b>	<b>21400</b>	<b>28627</b>	<b>23839</b>	<b>32994</b>	<b>16937</b>
Total migratory species	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>
Total resident species	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Total species	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>
Unidentified Small Wader		820		3	1	300	200	200
Unidentified Medium Wader		615	25		295		1096	
Unidentified Large Wader					650	400	782	
Total Waders	<b>21404</b>	<b>34501</b>	<b>26017</b>	<b>21403</b>	<b>29573</b>	<b>24539</b>	<b>35072</b>	<b>17137</b>
Total roost sites counted	54	48	51	25	30	27	33	18
Aerial count conducted	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No





Taking a rest after completing their count.  
David Milton and Peter Rothlisberg



Bob James, Moyra McRae & Jack Hennessy  
busy entering counts during the boat survey



Dedicated counters Graham and Brenda Smith  
counting knee deep in water at Tin Can Bay

By Linda Cross

## WADER WATCH Phil Cross

The Wader Watch section will not appear in this issue due to the large and important articles which were deemed to be of a higher priority.

We know that this section is very important to many of our members, so we will endeavour to have this section posted on the Web Site as soon as is practical.

As always we appreciate the hard work done by members in reporting sightings so please keep sending them in. And, as usual, everyone, please remember to use the 'Leg Flag Observation Report' form.



## Count Programme by Linda Cross

It is with sadness that I have to report the passing away of Les Thyer from Mackay. Unfortunately Les passed away on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013 after losing his battle with an illness. Les started counting in Mackay in April 1999 surveying Shellgrit Creek, and later adding Pioneer River mouth as an additional site until March 2013 when he became ill. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Dawn and her family.

Due to a lack of space in this edition of the newsletter I have not been able to list much in the 'Interesting sightings' or 'Not waders but of interest anyway', but I will squeeze in what I can.

Thought I might share a couple of interesting records with you even though I am pushed for space. Kelvin and Amelia Nielsen reported a Double-banded Plover at the Cooloola roost on 15<sup>th</sup> December, which is a most unusual and a very late record for this species on our shores.

Two Asian Dowitcher were counted at the Lytton roost on 18<sup>th</sup> January by Arthur & Sheryl Keates, which may have been the same two birds counted at the Port of Brisbane Artificial Roost the next day, and one Asian Dowitcher was seen at the Wader ID Day at Toorbul on 23<sup>rd</sup> January.

Sue Sargent and her team of counters at Bundaberg Port recorded a female Australian Painted Snipe during their survey on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

John Knight reported two Pectoral Sandpiper at Garnett's Lagoons in Hervey Bay on 14<sup>th</sup> December and three Little Curlew at the same site on 12<sup>th</sup> January.

Judith and David Lattaway were thrilled to see a Beach Stone-curlew on the Caboolture River mouth site on 18<sup>th</sup> January, which is a first record for the site. Marion Williams and her group would also have been thrilled to see one Beach Stone-curlew at O'Regan's Creek Westside site (Hervey Bay region) on the same date as this was only the second time recorded there. At Maroochy River sandbar David and Robbie Leslie recorded four Beach Stone-curlew on 17<sup>th</sup> January, Mathew Angus and D, Hannah had two at Tweed River entrance site on 22<sup>nd</sup> January and Michael Strong had three at Kakadu Beach roost on Bribie Island on 2nd February.

During the Port of Brisbane count on 19<sup>th</sup> January a total of 15 Broad-billed Sandpiper were counted at the Artificial Roost, while three more were counted inside the reclamation area at the same time.

Robert Bush, Joyce Harding and Deirdre Chrzescijanski were very surprised to see 77 Grey Plover at King Street mudflat, Thornlands during their surveys on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2013, which is probably the first record for that site.

A Black-fronted Dotterel was observed sitting on a nest with two eggs at Kianawah Road wetland, Hemmant on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

Below are a few other interesting counts.

- 480 Eastern Curlew – Thornlands – 16.11.13
- 2,900 Bar-tailed Godwit – Kakadu Beach roost, Bribie Island – 02.02.14
- 2,773 Bar-tailed Godwit – Reeder's Point, Moreton Island – 20.01.14
- 420 Black-tailed Godwit – Pine Rivers Wetland Reserve – 14.12.13
- 11 Sooty Oystercatcher – Lilly's Beach, Boyne Island – 18.01.14
- 365 Pacific Golden Plover – Shellgrit Creek Mackay – 16.11.13
- 183 Red-necked Avocet – Deception Bay south – 18.01.14
- 708 Great Knot – Bishop (Fisherman Island) – 17.11.13
- 58 Marsh Sandpiper – Maaroom – 18.01.14
- 130 Ruddy Turnstone – Bishop (Fisherman) Island – 19.01.14
- 46 Red-kneed Dotterel – Kianawah Road wetland – 14.12.13
- 2,030 Curlew Sandpiper – Port of Brisbane – 17.11.13
- 228 Red-capped Plover – O'Regan's Creek, Hervey Bay region – 14.12.13

I look forward to sharing your counts with you during the coming year, but your patience will be appreciated as I cut back on the amount of time I work on QWSG matters.

We still need extra permanent and standby counters for the count programme and also the Port count. If you can help in any way please contact me.

**Please send counts to me at our email address as follows: [xenus69@bigpond.com](mailto:xenus69@bigpond.com)**

Snail mail: 40 Thompson Road, Bellmere. Qld 4510 Phone: 5495 2758

Send leg flag sightings to Phil Cross using either of the two above methods.

Happy counting.  
Linda Cross.

### **Interesting wader sightings**

**Please note these sightings are not authenticated records.**

\* = to be submitted to BQ RAC \*\* = to be submitted to BARC

3 Broad-billed Sandpiper – Nudgee Beach – 17.12.13  
2 Broad-billed Sandpiper – Cairns Esplanade – 26.11.13 and 29.12.13  
104 Red-necked Avocet – Trute's Bay, Tweed Heads – 09.11.13  
544 Black-winged Stilt – Lytton roost – 14.12.13  
1 Common Sandpiper – Tweed River entrance – 09.11.13  
1 Common Sandpiper – Kinka Beach sandbar, Yeppoon – 14.12.13

### **Not waders but of interest anyway**

866 Cattle Egret – Trute's Bay, Tweed Heads – 22.01.14  
3,510 Pink-eared Duck – Keong's Dam, Oakey – 26.12.13  
40 Freckled Duck – Kinchant Dam west of Mackay – 29.12.13  
35 Glossy Ibis – Kinchant Dam west of Mackay – 29.12.13  
83 Hoary-headed Grebe – Keong's Dam, Oakey – 26.12.13  
2 Lewin's Rail – Buckley's Hole, Bribie Island – 05.01.14  
5 Spotless Crake – Buckley's Hole, Bribie Island – 22.12.13  
2,330 Common Tern – Maroochy River Goat Island – 09.12.13  
2,500+ Eurasian Coot – Kinchant Dam, west of Mackay – 29.12.13  
250+ Whiskered Tern – Kinchant Dam, west of Mackay – 29.12.13  
132 Whiskered Tern – Luggage Point – 16.11.13

### **COUNT COORDINATOR WILL BE WORKING PART TIME IN 2014**

Please note that starting in 2014 I will be trying to work just two days a week for QWSG. This will mean that emails replies to you might take longer than usual. I need to have some me time from now on and hope you will understand. If you need to contact me urgently I suggest a phone call would be the way to go. If I am not available, then perhaps contact through one of the other QWSG committee should be sought. I thank you for your patience in advance. Linda Cross

## **Wader ID Days**

### **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at Toorbul**

High tide at 13:02 hours (1.02 pm) (plus 30 minutes later for Toorbul 13:32 hours) of 1.86m. Meeting time 12 noon.

Take the Bruce Highway north from Brisbane to the Donnybrook/Toorbul exit. 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 2kms); we will be on the left.

Bring water, food and a chair. It is a good idea to have a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent. Most importantly bring your binoculars or telescopes. Hopefully we can provide the answers to all your questions.

Please contact any of the following people if you have any questions. Phil & Linda Cross 5495 2758. Arthur & Sheryl Keates 3843 1874.

## Wader ID Days Reports

### **TOORBUL WADER ID DAY REPORT 23 JANUARY 2014**

It was overcast with a northerly wind as we arrived at Toorbul, which was a pleasant change after the oppressive heat south-east Queensland had experienced for a few days prior to the outing. In total, thirteen members of QWSG and BQ, along with two visitors made up the group of attendees. In addition to the group, two people travelling around Australia in their motor home also joined us.

Over a hundred Eastern Curlew were spread out along the foreshore in front of the assembly area, with a few showing some signs of breeding plumage. After viewing them we drifted down to the main roost where a large flock of waders awaited us. Before everyone got to the roost something spooked the flock and although most returned we lost about 700 birds, mostly Bar-tailed Godwit, but also included Grey-tailed Tattler and Common Greenshank.

The flock consisted mainly of Bar-tailed Godwit (some with a little bit of breeding plumage), but there was a good variety of other species to show the group. There were only four Black-tailed Godwit in the godwit flock (although c60 were later seen north of the roost site) and just one Red Knot in non-breeding plumage in the flock of Great Knot. It was nice to see some smaller species (although only in small numbers) using the roost, which were Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Lesser Sand Plover, Curlew Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint.

We were toward the end of showing the group all the different species and explaining how to identify them when Phil told me he had something different in the flock and asked me to have a look at it. It was with the godwits and roosting with beak tucked in under the feathers on its back. I was looking at the slight difference in plumage and mentioned to the group that we might have an Asian Dowitcher in the flock, when the bird put it's beak out giving me proof of identity.

Wendy Dunn was next to me and got very excited at the statement, being the first to get to my scope to view the bird. Apparently she had been waiting 20 years to see one. The majority of the rest of the group were new birdwatchers and did not know the significance of the sighting. We explained to them that this was a rarity and that they should all see and identify it as they probably would not see one for a long time. Thankfully we managed to get everyone in the group to put it on their life list.

A few people did a quick count of the waders while others spent quite a bit of time looking at subtle differences of the dowitcher compared to godwit, before the rain came sending us all back to the vehicles for cover. Some people left, but a few stayed and returned back to the roost after the rain stopped. A Grey-tailed Tattler had turned up at the roost along with two Black-fronted Dotterel, which gave us another couple of species to show the remaining attendees.

In the remaining attendees were two BQ members who arrived during the rain. One of them, (Kay McLennan), had not seen an Asian Dowitcher either, so the search was on again for the bird. The birds were roosting and bills hidden, but I found what I suspected to be the bird after remembering some of the differences we had noted. I positioned the scope on the bird I thought was the dowitcher and told Kay to watch and wait. After a long time the bird did eventually reveal the diagnostic long black bill for her.

Numerous birds were observed with leg flags, but only some of them were recorded:

24 Bar-tailed Godwit with engraved green leg flag **ACD, ACL, AEN, AEP, AHZ, ALM, AMA, AMN, ARL, ASS, AWC, AXY, AYD, AYP, BBE, BBM, BBR, BBU, BBY, BCJ, BNK, BNX, BPD** and **BPS**.

2 Pied Oystercatcher with engraved green leg flag **KZ** and **AAU**.

2 Great Knot with green engraved flag **ATV** and **AUD** (Moreton Bay)

1 Bar-tailed Godwit with blue band over white band and yellow band over yellow band. Unable to see flags as bird had one leg up most of the time. (I suspect this is 'Mr Bling', which would have green flag over orange flag and was flagged in Yalu Jiang Nature Reserve, Liaoning Province, China).

#### **Birds seen at Toorbul Roost and environs:**

(16) Black Swan, (2) Australian Wood Duck, (7) Australian Pelican, (1) Eastern Great Egret, (1) Striated Heron, White-faced Heron, (1) Little Egret, (2) Australian White Ibis, (1) Eastern Osprey, (1) Whistling Kite, (12) Australian Pied Oystercatcher, (57) Black-winged Stilt, (18) Lesser Sand Plover, (2) Black-fronted Dotterel, (2) Masked Lapwing, (4) Black-tailed Godwit, (1000+) Bar-tailed Godwit, (79) Whimbrel, (152) Eastern Curlew, (4) Grey-tailed Tattler, (3) Common Greenshank, (1) Asian Dowitcher, (150) Great Knot, (1) Red Knot, (104) Red-necked Stint, (2) Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, (4) Curlew Sandpiper, (3) Little Tern, (1) Gull-billed Tern,



(1) Silver Gull, Galah, Pale-headed Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, Mangrove Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, White-breasted Woodswallow, Australian Magpie, Willie Wagtail and Magpie-lark.

**Bishop's Marsh** had a small pool of water, but was not surveyed.

Linda Cross.

## V-formation Flying

A bird migrating with others in a V formation turns out to be a master of the well-timed flap, able to match the up-and-down path traced by the wing tip of the bird in front of it. Fighter pilots know the benefits of flying in a V formation. Wings create a vortex of whooshing air trailing from their tips, and a rearward plane that keeps one of its wing tips in a vortex from the plane in front gets a boost from the upwash of air and can save fuel. But birds flap their wings, and the vortices spinning off their rising and falling wing tips swoop up and down. For a bird to catch the benefit of another's wing trail, flap timing has to be right.

Sensitive monitoring devices show that northern bald ibises coordinate their wing beats in the ways that scientists predicted would be efficient, says Steven Portugal of the University of London's Royal Veterinary College in Hatfield. When flying in a V formation, a bird tends to flap so that one of its wing tips follows the route taken by the nearest wing tip of the bird in front. The wings don't necessarily rise and fall at exactly the same time. But the follower's wing tip chases the leader's wing tip along the same path and thus catches the vortex's helpful uprush of air.

In contrast, when a bird flies directly behind another, the follower tends to flap out of phase with the leader, so its wing tip is down where the leader's was up. This disconnect helps the follower dodge the substantial downwash of air directly to the rear of a flying bird, Portugal and his colleagues report in the Jan. 16 *Nature*.

Big birds such as ibises, geese and cranes often fly in V formations. But scientists' predictions of the efficiency of that formation depend largely on experience with non-flapping wings. To see whether flapping birds coordinate their wing beats carefully enough to hit the sweet spots in V formations, Portugal and his colleagues worked with Zoo Vienna's project to train captive-bred *Geronticus eremita* ibises to migrate from Austria to Italy. The effort to help the critically endangered birds migrate depended on imprinting the newly hatched chicks to treat human volunteers as their mothers.

When migration time came, the human moms rode in the back of a microlight aircraft shouting for the youngsters to follow. Researchers attached tiny backpacks to the birds that contained equipment that noted the location of a bird and its flapping phase. The researchers then recovered the equipment after a stint of real-world flying.

The study builds on other researchers' work to develop ways to test how birds coordinate their flaps to get a boost from V-flying. "We still don't know if this actually saves any energy, but the new data are certainly consistent with the theoretical predictions," says comparative physiologist Michael Dickinson of the University of Washington in Seattle.

"My strong suspicion is that the effect does not scale well," adds Dickinson, who focuses on flight in much smaller fliers: insects. Even among small birds, he speculates, the wake left by flying may not be very useful. And taking advantage of a flight formation among fast-flapping little birds, he says, "would require superfast reflexes."

This article was written by Susan Milius for ScienceNews.org

## Wader Trivia

Did you know that the term 'sniper' was originally used to describe someone who hunted snipe, a long-billed shorebird of the genus *Gallinago*?

Considered one of the hardest small prey to hit because of its fast and erratic flight, so called snipers, hunted the birds for practice. Someone able to bring down a snipe was considered somewhat of a marksman leading to the recognition of the term by the British army in the 19th century to describe a crack shot taught to target and shoot the enemy from a long distance.

## Other Conservation Activities of Interest



QWSG is a special interest group of the Birds Queensland 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: President, Richard Noske [president@birdsqueensland.org.au](mailto:president@birdsqueensland.org.au)

Secretary, Rae Clark [secretary@birdsqueensland.org.au](mailto:secretary@birdsqueensland.org.au)

Treasurer, Wayne Lock [treasurer@birdsqueensland.org.au](mailto:treasurer@birdsqueensland.org.au)

### Monthly Meetings

Birds Queensland

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday each month except January, when there is no meeting.

Royal Geographical Society Meeting Room, 237 Milton Road, Milton.

Arrive after 7:15pm for a 7:30pm start.

## Electronic Newsletter??

Are you interested in receiving your "Queensland Wader" by email?

If you are interested email me on [gouldian@ozemail.com.au](mailto:gouldian@ozemail.com.au) or the treasurer at [membership@waders.org.au](mailto:membership@waders.org.au)

Please could you use the subject line as "Electronic Newsletter". Editor

## QWSG MERCHANDISE

Should you wish to purchase any of the QWSG merchandise, Contact Vicki Campbell Phone 07 3378 2964 or email [vicki.campbell@cogentia.com.au](mailto:vicki.campbell@cogentia.com.au)

Postage is **not** included in prices quoted.

### Note price reduction on "Shorebirds of Australia"

BOOKS \$35.00 Shorebirds of Australia

METAL BADGES \$5.00 Metal QWSG logo badges.

CLOTH BADGES \$8.00 QWSG logo on rectangular bottle-green or sand background

POLO SHIRTS \$42.00.

Our cotton polo shirts are available.

The locally made shirts are plain bottle or sky with contrast collar in sand, or tri-coloured sand / cocoa / sky and sand / cocoa / bottle.

Men's sizes: SM - XL



## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new member who have joined recently:

Dr Angela WARDELL-JOHNSON, Mrs Jillian PRAEGER, Mr Andrew SEATON

Mr David HANNAH, Ms Margaret OVEREND, Ms Robyn DUFF

Mr Gary KANE & Jo BRAGG

A reminder to members, please let the Treasurer know if you change your email address. If you do please make sure that it does allow delivery and not send downloads to spam.

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 CONTACTS

### QUEENSLAND WADER

[www.waders.org.au](http://www.waders.org.au)

The Official Quarterly Publication of  
Queensland Wader Study Group

#### **MEMBERS of the MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE of the QWSG**

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<b><u>CORRESPONDENCE</u></b>	All correspondence to:		

The QWSG Chairperson,  
22 Parker Street,  
SHAILER PARK  
QLD 4128

#### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Please notify the Treasurer as soon as possible of any change of address so that your Newsletter can be dispatched correctly.

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A receipt will be forwarded if required.

Forward application to:

Deirdre Chrzescijanski  
QWSG Treasurer  
39 Barrinia Street,  
MANLY  
Qld 4179

Members are reminded their membership expires on the date shown on the newsletter address label, and the membership joining/renewal form is now on the back page. **Note:** that your subscription will fall due twelve (12) months after date of joining the QWSG or date of renewal, and only one further newsletter will be sent after expiry of your subscription.

**Copy Deadline** for the next issue of Queensland Wader is **May 18<sup>th</sup> 2014**

Contributions should be addressed to:

David Edwards, The QWSG Editor, 54 Elliott Street, Clayfield, Qld 4011

or E-mail to: [gouldian@ozemail.com.au](mailto:gouldian@ozemail.com.au)

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## Count Activities – 2014

### QWSG High Tide – Monthly Count Program – 2014

Sat 15th Mar	2.29m at 08:48	Sat 16th Aug	2.07m at 13:51
Sat 12th Apr	2.15m at 07:30	Sat 27th Sep	2.16m at 11:12
Sat 17th May	1.96m at 11:10	Sat 25th Oct	2.31m at 10:15
Sat 14th Jun	1.98m at 10:10 Optional	Sat 22nd Nov	2.39m at 09:16
Sat 12th Jul	1.97m at 09:05 <b>National Winter Count</b>	Sat 13th Dec	2.06m at 13:44

**Note: We don't normally have a count in June due to poor high tides and lack of birds. However, there is a reasonable tide and time this year if you wish to do a count. It is optional.**

### Port of Brisbane Count Dates – 2014

Sun 16th Mar	2.30m at 09:21	Meet	07:30	Sun 17th Aug	2.02m at 14:51	Meet	13:00
Sun 13th Apr	2.18m at 08:08	Meet	06:20	Sun 28th Sep	2.14m at 11:50	Meet	10:00
Sun 18th May	1.90m at 12:00	Meet	10:10	Sun 26th Oct	2.32m at 10:54	Meet	09:05
Sun 15th Jun	1.97m at 11:01	Meet	09:10	Sun 23rd Nov	2.45m at 09:57	Meet	08:10
Sun 13th Jul	2.01m at 09:58	Meet	08:10	Sun 14th Dec	1.96m at 14:33	Meet	12:40

The Port of Brisbane is a work site and we are doing the survey for the Port and ourselves. Unfortunately we cannot accept people who turn up on the day for a bird watching day.

## PLEASE CHECK TO SEE IF YOUR RENEWAL IS DUE!

A reminder to members to please let the Treasurer know if you change your email address.



### MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

I / We wish to join / renew: (Single \$15; Family \$25; Student/Pensioner \$10)

Title..... First name: ..... Surname Name:.....

Address:..... Membership: \$.....

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Payment enclosed: \$.....

Phone: (Home) ..... (Work) .....

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How did you hear about QWSG .....

Are you a member of Birds Queensland?.....

What activities do you wish to participate in? (Please circle)

WADER COUNTS, FIELD TRIPS, SCIENTIFIC DATA COLLECTION, SURVEYS, CLERICAL,

OTHER (specify.....)

Would you like to receive your newsletter by E-mail.....

SIGNATURE: ..... DATE:.....

**Please post this form to: QWSG Treasurer, 39 Barrinia St., Manly Qld 4179**

Cheques to be made out to: Queensland Wader Study Group

**Or** Direct funds transfer to:

For a direct credit, please use the following details.

Qld Wader Study Group

BSB: 313 140

Account number: 08305297

Please email this form to: [treasurer@waders.org.au](mailto:treasurer@waders.org.au)