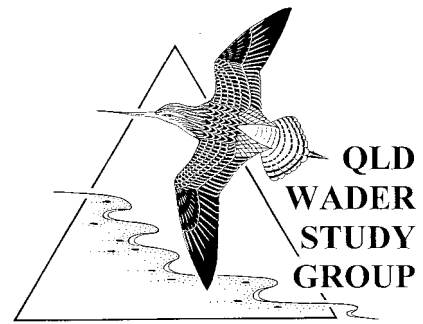


QUEENSLAND WADER



Issue number 018

Summer 1996/97

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

FIVE YEARS OF QWSG

'As our local waders are settling down for winter and all the visiting migrants are preparing to head north, Queensland's fledgling wader study group, the QWSG, is getting well and truly off the ground'. QWSG Newsletter No. 1 March, 1992.

For those of you who like to reminisce, in 1997, QWSG celebrates its fifth anniversary. At the First Annual General Meeting on 24 September, 1992 in the Queensland Museum auditorium, about 50 interested people gathered to discuss and make decisions on matters including objectives; banding, monitoring, other scientific and educational programs; current interest in waders; and intended activities.

Foundation members developed and accepted the following objectives and programs, based upon an inaugural meeting in January 1992:

Objectives

1. to develop and implement plans for wader research in Queensland;
2. to coordinate and encourage censusing, banding, feeding studies and other scientific programs involving amateur and professional skills;
3. to liaise with the Australasian Wader Study Group to assist to coordinate data collected on waders and to develop plans for wader research in Australasia;
4. to encourage and to assist with the publication of results;
5. to formulate and promote policies for the conservation and management of waders and their habitats.

Programs

1. Monitor populations of each wader species and map their feeding and roosting areas on at least a monthly basis;
2. Establish a large-scale banding program of wader species to determine wader movements into and out of specific areas of Queensland;
3. Develop a conservation plan for waders in Queensland and assist those fighting for the conservation of waders and their habitats.

In June, Newsletter No. 2 sought the opinion of members as to whether the QWSG should 'go it alone' or become a special interest group of an established society. December's Issue No. 4 was titled with the majority response - to join with the Queensland Ornithological Society.

Original committee members, count coordinators and helpers in that first year are too numerous to mention, but consist of names that, are well known, either because they are still current, or because they are involved in other environmental activities that do not allow them the time to be involved with Waders as well.

The first year was a busy one - Net Repair/Equipment Maintenance Days in February, August and November, Netting at Nudgee Beach, St Helena, South and North Stradbroke, Cabbage Tree Creek Mouth, Moreton Island and Bishop Island (now reclaimed amidst Fishermans Island) in February, March, July, August, October, November and December; Wader identification days in April, August and October; two weeks running an Earthwatch program in October; guest speakers, Barry Ingham and Mark Barter.

The Wader Survey Project began on Saturday 21 March, with focus on three key, easily identified species, Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed (Godwit and Great Knot).

As can be seen from the contents of this 18th newsletter, to the credit of members, the original objectives are being met.

And so, we continue if Waders could speak, they would undoubtedly thank those who had the foresight, energy and enthusiasm to create the Queensland Wader Study Group.

QWSG CONTACTS

All correspondence to: The Chairperson QWSG.

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Peter Driscoll

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Sheryl Keates

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CARETAKER COUNT COORDINATORS:

Ivell & Jim Whyte

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Diana O'Connor

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Margaret Bernard

Olwyn Crimp

Sandra Harding (Overseas)

Eddie Hegerl

Fiona Johnson

Arthur Keats

Stuart Pell

Nigel Roberts

Ivell & Jim Whyte

Karen Welsh

Editorial

We began the task of editing this, our first newsletter, by perusing all the previous issues we had faithfully filed away. As well, we met with Andrew Geering and Margaret Bernard, who have been the tireless Editors for almost the entire history of the Newsletter, Ian Gynther and Kris Kristensen starting it off. As new editors, we have nothing but praise for all the previous Editors' efforts, because the task of compiling, typing, chasing material and editing is indeed time consuming. We assure you that the changes we have brought to the layout have more to do with the different capabilities of our computer system, rather than our belief that change was necessary.

Object of the Group

The newsletter now carries the object of our Group. This is to serve as a reminder as to why we regularly arise at unforgiving hours to peer through binoculars or carry heavy netting equipment. It is not just to count or catch waders, feed the mosquitoes, or witness some absolutely spectacular dawns, but to aid the long-term survival of just a small number of the species which share our planet.

The Tattler

Previously, we have been enclosing "The Tattler", the newsletter of the Australasian Wader Studies Group, with Queensland Wader. However, at a cost to QWSG. The enclosure of additional documentation with the newsletter disbars us from posting at the cheaper Print Post approved rate, and also requires an envelope. To allow continuation of this service to members, but not offend the Post Office, articles from 'The Tattler' will be included as part of this newsletter.

New Newsletter Section - Count Sites

To complement Natasha Taylor's regular "Wader Watch" section, members are invited to use the forum of this newsletter to share the details of their particular count site with others. All counters will be encouraged to provide full details of their site. This is not just a ploy to ensure there is at least one article available for every issue, but because the variety of sites and writing styles will provide interesting reading, with the bonus of assisting to create a chronicled record of each and every one of the count sites.

Request for feature articles

Many thanks to all those who contributed and assisted with this, our first edition. However, a review of the content of all the past newsletters reveals every member has a hidden talent for "The Pen".

Copy Deadline Autumn-March Edition

This edition of the newsletter has been published late due to the changeover, however, the deadline for the next issue, Autumn - March is one week prior to the beginning of the publication month, which is very close, i.e. 22 February, 1997 (see page 2 for details).

Record of Cannon Netting Activities

Next time you attend a netting activity, be sure to sign the attendance book. This will provide a compact history of activities, as well as give details of names of visitors, who may be potential converts and members.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following people who have joined since the last list was printed in the Autumn 1996 newsletter. Erna Brazier, Annette Cander, Joanne Doyle, Harvey & Jocelyn Clarkson, Rod L. Edwards, Rodney Edwards, Lorraine Forbes, John Harris, Frank Henry, Christine McClintock, Andrew McLean, Chris Smith, Tom Tarrant, Wendy Wilesmith.

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.

FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Nineteen members attended the Fifth Annual General Meeting, held at the Nudgee Beach Environment Centre on Saturday 9th November, 1996.

In the morning prior to the AGM, members participated in a Birdlife survey of Boondall Wetlands and Kedron Brook Canal (commonly known as Schultz Canal, and until recently, officially called Kedron Brook Floodway).

Attendees were provided with a personal presentation on the forthcoming Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan by Olwyn Crimp, Regional Manager (Coastal Management) of the Southeastern Region of the Department of Environment. Olwyn was also able to thank members for their input to the plan, as the information included on shorebirds is a result of the efforts of members of the QWSG.

The election of members was held, with thanks expressed to those who advised they would not be standing for re-election: Gary Harch, Treasurer; Andrew Geering and Margaret Bernard, Newsletter Editors; Ivell and Jim Whyte, Count Co-ordinators; Fiona Johnson, Secretary; and Greg Nye, Librarian. Sandra Harding, the Conservation Officer, is temporarily overseas. All retirees have provided focus, direction and help to the 'multi-legged animal' that the Group has become. Ivell, Jim, Fiona and Margaret will still be Council members, and also have offered to provide support to the incoming officers. Sadly, Gary will be too far away.

Our Treasurer has been collated as Archdeacon for the West of Queensland and will be inducted as the Rector for the Roma Parish on 17th February, a transfer that is a definite vote of confidence in him by the Church. Gary said, and we all know, he had enjoyed being in the Group, which had provided him with an opportunity to reflect theologically on the environment. Gary will be sorely missed (not only because of the storage space he provided for the QWSG equipment!) but for his quick humour and positive attitude.

Greg is now based at Carnarvon Gorge, and no doubt will be able to direct Gary to some of the local non-coastal bird watching spots, extending the count program further inland.

There are three positions vacant, Secretary, Count Coordinator and Librarian.

The Chairperson's and Treasurer's report that follow provide full details of the past year.

Chair's Report - Peter Driscoll

This report was also presented to the QOSI AGM on Thursday 4 December, 1996

Last year was, particularly special for OWSG. Hopefully we have made some sort of difference for the waders we admire. We are at the start of our sixth year, after five years of challenges, learning and good times.

Some very valued members of the original executive have resigned from positions of newsletter editors, treasurer and count coordinators. We will greatly miss their close involvement but they will still be making significant contributions to the Group (Gary may find it a little difficult from Roma but inland waders are desperately in need of representation!).

I want to thank Margaret Bernard, Andrew Geering, Gary Harch, and Ivell and Jim Whyte for their extraordinary efforts in the key positions they occupied. Fortunately, we have got some good replacements. Welcome to the new executive! However, the job of count coordinator is proving a little difficult to fill. If anyone is interested please come forward.

The big event this year of course was Ramsar. QWSG also contributed to the running of a major Australasian Wader Studies Group scientific meeting just prior to the Ramsar Conference. QOSI and QWSG members showed their talents and enthusiasm through their very effective participation in the Organisation and running of both meetings.

The achievement of both meetings will continue to be realised for a long while to come. I feel we all measured up well to our self-inflicted exposure - that's the message I kept getting and continue to get.

At the Ramsar Conference, QWSG maintained the following views in relation to the state of wader conservation in Queensland:

- The list of Ramsar sites in Queensland omits major critical areas of international significance to waders. In particular, the south-east corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Great Sandy Straits, the Burdekin Delta, and parts of the Mackay coast.
- The boundaries of Ramsar sites already listed do not include all areas of importance to waders within that particular region.
- There is a lack of planning for the conservation of waders in Queensland.
- The Queensland Government should nominate sites for the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network and encourage community involvement in the management of such sites.
- There is a need for increased funding of programs with the objective of monitoring the ecological integrity of wetlands and a need for professional planning and coordination of volunteers to undertake these programs.
- There is a lack of funding for satisfactory management of wetlands in Queensland.

QWSG has continued to strengthen its contacts with Japanese NGOs concerned with wader research and conservation, largely as a result of the AWSG Shorebird and Ramsar Conferences. QWSG, with some help from Japanese NGOs helped to finance the visit of two Russian wader researchers to the Conferences.

QWSG has continued with counting, banding and flagging waders and recently undertook a study using 30 radio transmitters to investigate local movements of birds around the mouth of the Brisbane River. These efforts are reaping rewards! They help to raise the public profile of waders, assist the State Government in coastal management, and serve to teach us more about the birds. Our efforts are receiving international recognition with many of the birds we band being recorded overseas.

In 1996, QWSG received two Coastcare grants for the establishment and maintenance of high tide roost sites for waders in Moreton Bay and, with support from the Qld Ornithological Society Incorporated, concluded a review for the State Government into the numbers of waders along the Queensland Coastline.

Other QWSG activities this year have demonstrated our capacity to:

- run short courses on waders
- develop high quality display material on waders
- undertake intensive wader surveys in conjunction with the Dept of Environment (Shoalwater Bay and Southern Moreton Bay)
- run collaborative research projects
- write submissions on a range of conservation issues related to waders
- develop a strategic plan to focus our energies
- generally, advise, educate and engender interest in waders individually or as a group through formal and informal contact with the public and government.

QWSG continues to work closely with its parent Organisation, The Australasian Wader Studies Group. AWSG has also had a big year with a major conference, a north-west Australia expedition, a wader research and training workshop in China, revamping of its publications, and extending its contacts into the Asia-Pacific Region.

We also continue to work effectively as a special interest Group of the Queensland Ornithological Society Inc and I would like to thank the executive and membership of QOSI for their continuing support and cooperation.

It has been a year to remember, and a fitting conclusion to our first five years.

CABBAGE TREE CREEK - ONE STEP FORWARD TWO STEPS BACK!

Ivell Whyte

Cabbage Tree Creek roost site is located at the mouth of Cabbage Tree Creek in the Boondall Wetlands in an area known locally as Dynah Island. Originally formed through dredge spoil dumping, the site comprised a beach and low dunes area and an adjoining sandspit with clear views through to the former shoreline.

Over a period of about 18 months, colonisation of mangroves between the spit and shoreline dramatically reduced the birds' visibility of this shoreline. Weed growth on the dunes rendered them unsuitable as a roost. In addition, movement of the sand spit through wave action into the mangrove growth has left less open area for the birds. All this has resulted in a reduction of birds on the site.

In October 1993, as part of the six hours that it took to complete the first count, I paddled with Greg Nye in a borrowed canoe for five of them. We travelled down Nundah Creek and back across the foreshore to Nudgee Beach with a heavy canoe and an ever-diminishing supply of water to keep it off the mud. After Jim accompanied Andrew Geering and me on a similar muscle taxing trip the following month, he decided a new route was definitely in order. It now takes him only five minutes to row me across the creek in the tinnie from the Shorncliffe boat ramp.

On my initial count and for about 18 months, the species mix was very good (around 23 on average). There were smaller waders including counts of up to 1,600 curlew sandpipers and always a good number of Bar-tailed Godwits, Great Knot and Red Knot. Green leg flags were always evident on the Godwits and Knots. As a number of these birds were flagged on the site during cannon netting it appears that they were showing site fidelity.

In Mid 1995, Boondall Wetlands Conservation Officer, Melissa Cooper, who's now a dedicated member of QWSG, became aware of the conservation problems surrounding the Dynah Island roost site. Following an inspection of the site by representatives of appropriate organisations arranged by Melissa, I submitted a management proposal on behalf of the QWSG to the Boondall Wetlands Management Committee. This proposal requested Brisbane City Council assistance and approval in pruning the colonising mangroves and clearing weed growth.

At this point the bird numbers were diminishing but the site was still being used. The Committee was extremely supportive. Thanks to initial work by Sue Stewart, Natural Areas Coordinator BCC Parks North, we also received Coast Care funding for the clearing.

BCC Parks North applied for the required permits; however, they took over a year to come through. As we waited, more mangroves grew - and the others grew bigger! BCC had to apply for a further permit to prune more of them and that's now being done. Unfortunately, work has been slow, and the result has been less than is required to have the birds return. The recent king tides and storm activity since May last year haven't helped our cause one bit. We're watching the roost site disappear almost entirely.

The Cabbage Tree Creek site is the only roost site for the waders of Boondall Wetlands that isn't threatened by any form of development. Without human intervention and maintenance, however, the site is gone.

ROOST SITES AT THE MOUTH OF THE BURNETT RIVER BUNDABERG

Olwyn Crimp

On 29th December, while on holidays in Bundaberg, I spent a day with family at their holiday camp at Sandy Camp, at the mouth of the Burnett River.

Every year, and on many weekends throughout the year, a number of people who work for the Fairymead Sugar Mill set up camp there. The only vehicle access to the site is through the Sugar Mill property and via locked gates. Therefore, the site is not accessible to the general public except by boat.

I had read the report about Sandy Camp written by Lester Roy on 'Paradise Lost', in the Winter 1995 edition of the Newsletter. He noted that at one time the site must have been a Little Tern nesting site. I recognised the area as I had visited on a number of occasions over the past 20 years and so on this visit, I took the telescope with the aim of assessing the area for shorebird roosts.

Lester referred to an island, called Pelican Island, which he said no longer existed but which, in the 30s, was used as a nesting site by Little Tern. In the report, he included an 1876 map of the area showing the island.

While visiting the site I counted shorebirds on a high tide roost site on an island about 100 metres from shore. Once I got back to Brisbane, I located a recent aerial photo of the site and to my surprise found that the area today resembles the area in 1876 including an island in the location of the supposedly no longer existing Pelican Island. The roost site is located on the south-eastern end of the island. Counts included 44 Eastern Curlew, 32 Whimbrel, 96 Bar-tailed Godwit, 1 Caspian Tern, 2 Crested Tern and 17 other small waders which were too far away for me to reliably identify. I did not see any Little Terns. The site of the 30's Little Tern roost site is roughly in the same position as the 1996 shorebird roost site. As the birds left the roost site, they flew down the channel and settled out to feed on the exposed roost sites.

My family have never taken much notice of the dull birds in the area but were interested when I explained the birds' migratory pattern. Since my visit, they have located a pair of binoculars and an old bird book and are busily taking note of the coming and going of the birds. With the aid of a tinny they have found another roost site over on the inside of the spit toward the ocean entrance. They have been visiting the area regularly for over 20 years and were able to describe the great changes in the area during that time. The sand bar that showed on the 1876 map didn't exist when they first arrived (Lester wrote that it disappeared in the 1942 flood). They have watched it grow, extend and become vegetated to the extent that today it is considerably longer than the spit shown in the 1876 map. They remember times when there were large flocks of birds feeding on the tidal flats and how the tidal flats have accreted and eroded over time. They have watched the dynamics of the estuary over a considerable period of time, while fishing or sitting in the shade with tinnies or cup of tea in hand. I envied them this - there own private bit of -paradise free of charge.

STRATEGIES and GOALS

Leanne Bowden

An Executive Committee meeting was held on 2nd June, 1996 to discuss future goals and strategies for the OWSG. Discussion was held on a wide range of topics, including: Moreton Bay Roost sites and Zoning Plan, other regions and site promotion; ponded pastures; inland wetlands; links between AWA and AWSG, International issues; the Count Program, the Banding Program; special surveys; research projects, the Newsletter; publication of a book; displays; courses; media; interpretative facilities; budget and finances; equipment and equipment use.

The topics discussed were divided into four programs with specific objectives:

Research & special projects:

To generate authoritative statistically valid information on the status distribution and migration of waders;

Conservation:

To provide authoritative input to public consultation information processes related to the impacts of human activities on waders;

Liaison and communication:

To ensure that the efforts of members in generating authoritative information on waders is disseminated in places and in a manner that will achieve their effective conservation;

Finance and membership:

To ensure that the QWSG has the financial and human resources to implement its programs.

A table of key purposes and commitments within each of the programs follows and all Group members are encouraged to offer assistance wherever and whenever possible.

The terminology of the objectives is slightly different from the original 1992 objectives however, the intent is still the same.

It is envisaged that from this plan the Queensland Wader Study Group will become the leading authority on waders in Queensland, able to supply information to all parties who require the information for beneficial purposes for the well-being of waders.

SHARE YOUR SKILLS

WADER COURSE

"Introduction to Waders in Australia and Moreton Bay"

11th, 16th, 18th March, 1997

Another commitment decided at the Goals and Strategy meeting was to plan and organise at least one educational course per year. The Publicity Officer, Diana O'Connor, has been busy arranging this objective, and requires the assistance of members at the lectures, Tuesdays 11th and 18th March, to register attendees, sell merchandise, arrange supper and generally provide support, but more particularly, on the Field Trip Day, Sunday 16th March, to provide telescopes and assist with wader identification. For information, the flyer is enclosed, and registrations should be forwarded to Ms K. Berg, Royal Geographic Society of Qld, 112 Brookes Street, Fortitude Valley Qld 4006.

DAWN WALKS

Biennial Festival of Music

May, June 1997

The Queensland Ornithological Society has offered to host Dawn Walks during the Biennial Festival of Music. Volunteers from QWSG are sought to assist on walks to identify bird species, but in particular, their calls, at the Manly Mangrove Walk at 6:00am on Friday 30th, Saturday 31st May and Sunday 1st June. High tides are at 3:40am, 4:45am and 5:49am. They are anticipating three ornithologists with a group of 35 music lovers. *This could be a morning of cultural, creative conviviality, creating avante garde art from an amalgamation of avian acoustics.* If you are able to offer assistance, contact Ms Jan Bell, Secretary of the QOSI, phone xxxx xxxx.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Sunday 2nd March

There are 33 waterway catchments in Brisbane. What we do in our backyards effects at least one of these catchments. This ultimately effects the water quality in the Brisbane River and Moreton Bay. By cleaning our waterways, we are caring for our river and Bay - and our visiting and resident Waders. Volunteer your skill to clean up Dynah Island. Contact.- Greg Miller 07 xxxx xxxx.

COUNT PROGRAM

Ivell & Jim Whyte

Monitoring of wader numbers provides information on changes in shorebird populations and their movements within a particular area.

The efforts of the dedicated people who give their time to regularly monitor their allocated sites is, of course, rewarded by their enjoyment in observing these wonderful birds in their natural habitat. But have you ever wondered how much of a part each individual wader counter plays?

Data is a powerful tool in influencing decisions by Governments. Without the data being recorded by individual counters and the efforts of those who collect and collate the information, the overall 'picture' on numbers and movements of waders in the Australian section of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway would be total speculation.

The valuable data that you've painstakingly recorded on roosting waders on your count site may be the only chance of protecting another wader roost site against development or other threats.

In addition, the count data provided by QWSG Counters has formed part of the basis of a review of waders in coastal Queensland by Dr Peter Driscoll for the Australasian Wader Studies Group. Regular monitoring data was used together with results of surveys between Bowen and Cairns by Stuart Pell and in the Sandy Straits and Shoalwater Bay areas by QWSG members in conjunction with the Department of Environment.

The review put into perspective the number of waders in different parts of Queensland. this provided information on sites significant to the waders and thus assists in identifying areas in need of protection to ensure wader survival.

Using count information provided by QWSG, the Department of Environment is updating an official register on waders in Queensland. The register is an important management and conservation tool. Conservation officers are assisted in managing natural resources by being in a position to gauge the significance of particular areas based on species information.

So, counters - if every you wonder if its all worthwhile - the answer is, 'Definitely Yes!'.

Beginning with this newsletter, we'd like to familiarise all members with the sites that are being counted. We'd like to see newsletter contributions from all of you about your site and the changes that have occurred during the period that you've been counting.

In the next newsletter, we'll include a list of counters, their sites and their phone contact numbers. Should anyone wish to accompany one of the counters to hone identification skills or simply to see what happens on a typical count day, please give one of the counters a call. You'll find them very obliging and proud of their sites and 'their' birds.

On the home front, we stepped down as Counter Coordinators at the last Annual General Meeting and are currently care-taking the position. In the short term, please continue to send your count sheets to us and we'll inform you of your new coordinators and their contact details as soon as possible.

Our thanks and sincere appreciation are extended to all of you for your efforts and support during the last three years.

Good birding!

WADER WATCH

Natasha Taylor

Hello again to wader watch. As you my or not know, I'm also the wader study group veterinarian. The cannon netting trip on 25 November 1996 at Fisherman's Island produced an interesting finding. I was presented with a Lesser Golden Plover with a fracture to the head of its right femur (top of the leg). Radiographs (X rays) taken and the subsequent post-mortem revealed a shot gun pellet. The bullet had gone through the right hip muscle, fractured the head of the femur with the pellet then lodged under skin on the back. The bird had been shot at least 2 weeks prior to cannon netting. Doesn't this make you wonder what some people do for sport!!?

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

Green Leg Flag Sightings

1 Curlew Sandpiper. B. James, Toorbul 30-3-96

1 Great Knot. B. James, Toorbul 21-4-96

1 Bar-tailed Godwit. E. Kleiber, Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads 6-7, 7-7, 9-7, 11-7, 12-7, 18-7, 19-7, 21-7, 23-7, 29-7, 2-8, 3-8, 4-8, 6-8, 8-8, 9-8, 10-8, 11-8, 14-8, 16-8, 18-8, 20-8, 21-8, 22-8, 23-8, 24-8, 26-8, 3-9, 5-9, 6-9, 7-9, 8-9, 10-9, 12-9, 14-9, 15-9, 16-9, 21-9, 24-9, 25-9, 29-9, 30-9, 5-10, 13-10, 16-10, 18-10, 19-10, 20-10, 4-11, 17-11 and 3-12, 1996

1 Bar-tailed Godwit. E. Kleiber, Shallow Bay, Tweed Heads 13-7-96, 1-8-96, 1 5-8-96, 28-9-96

2 Bar-tailed Godwit. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 3-8-96 and 11-8-96

1 Curlew Sandpiper. J Corney, Toorbul 31-8-96

1 Bar-tailed Godwit. J & I Whyte, R Edwards & G Collis, Cabbage Tree Creek mouth 31-8-96

1 Curlew Sandpiper. A & S Keates, Pine River 31-8-96

1 Bar-tailed Godwit. E Kleiber, Lilies Island, Tweed Heads 7-9-96

2 Bar-tailed Godwit. E Kleiber, Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads 22-9-96, 26-9-96

1 Red knot. D Geering, Kooragang Island 22-9-96

2 Bar-tailed Godwit. E Kleiber, Tweed River entrance 23-9-96, 27-9-96

1 Bar-tailed Godwit. A & S Keates, Pine River 29-9-96

1 Greater Sand Plover. M Hayward & TTarrant, Manly Boat Harbour 12-10-96

1 Bar-tailed Godwit. M Hayward & T Tarrant, Manly Boat Harbour 12-10-96

1 Curlew Sandpiper. M Hayward & T Tarrant at Manly Boat Harbour 12-10-96

1 Great Knot. M Hayward & T Tarrant at Manly Boat Harbour 12-10-96

1 Curlew Sandpiper. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 20-10-96

3 Bar-tailed Godwit. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 20-10-96
 1 Lesser Sand Plover. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 20-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Fisherman Island 23-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. J Corney, Toorbul 24-10-96
 1 Great Knot. J Corney, Toorbul 24-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Luggage Point 25-10-96
 1 Curlew Sandpiper. P Driscoll, Luggage Point 25-10-96
 2 Great Knot. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 26-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 26-10-96
 1 Lesser Sand Plover. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 26-10-96
 1 Greater Sand Plover. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 26-10-96
 1 Curlew Sandpiper. P Driscoll, Fisherman Island 26-10-96
 2 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Mirapool, Moreton Island 27-10-96
 1 Eastern Curlew. P Driscoll, Mirapool, Moreton Island 27-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Fisherman Island 27-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Fisherman Island 27-11-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Wynnum Manly 27-11-96
 2 Great Knot. P Driscoll, Wynnum Manly 27-11-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Luggage Point 2-12-96
 2 Great Knot. P Driscoll, Luggage Point 2-12-96
 2 Lesser Sand Plover. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 13-12-96
 3 Bar-tailed Godwit. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 13-12-96
 1 Ruddy Turnstone. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 13-12-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 13-12-96
 2 Red Knot. M Hayward, Manly Boat Harbour 24-12-96
 1 Curlew Sandpiper. M Hayward, Manly Boat Harbour 1-1-97
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit. M Hayward, Manly Boat Harbour 1-1-97
 4 Bar-tailed Godwit. P Driscoll, Mirapool, Moreton Island 1-1-97

International Leg Flag Sightings

1 Great Knot with metal band seen by Jin Young Park at Cheonsu Bay, Republic of Korea 8-4-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with green leg flag seen by Jin Young Park, Cheonsu Bay, Republic of Korea 8-4 & 12-5-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with yellow leg flag seen by Jin Young Park at Cheonsu Bay, Republic of Korea 12-5-96
 1 Black-tailed Godwit with yellow leg flag seen by Jin Young Park at Cheonsu Bay, Republic of Korea 12-5-96

Other Colour Leg Flags and banded bird Sightings

1 Pied Oystercatcher with metal band. B James, Toorbul 21-4-96
 2 Caspian Terns with metal bands. B James, Toorbul 21-4-96
 1 Pied Oystercatcher with metal band. E Kleiber, Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads 10-8-96, 11-8-96, 16-8-96, 14-8-96, 22-8-96 3-9-96 and 10-9-96
 2 Caspian Tern with metal bands. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 11-8-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg flag. E Kleiber, Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads 6-9-96, 7-9-96, 8-9-96, 11-9-96 and 12-9-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with orange leg flag. E Kleiber, Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads 7-9-96, 16-10-96, 17-10-96, 18-10-96 and 19-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with blue leg flag. E Kleiber, Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads 7-9-96
 1 Curlew Sandpiper with orange leg flag. E Kleiber, Tony's Sandbar, Tweed Heads 7-9-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with orange leg flag. E Kleiber, Shallow Bay, Tweed Heads 7-9-96
 1 Pied Oystercatcher metal band. E Kleiber, Tweed River entrance 15-9-96, 18-9-96, 22-9-96, 2-10-96, 6-10-96 and 28-10-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler blue leg flag. E Kleiber, Tweed River entrance 27-9-96, 28-9-96, 29-9-96, 30-9-96, 1-10-96, 2-10-96, 7-10-96, 8-10-96, 9-10-96, 10-10-96, 11-10-96, 12-10-96, 13-10-96, 15-10-96, 16-10-96, 17-10-96, 18-10-96, 19-10-96, 20-10-96, 24-10-96, 25-10-96, 28-10-96, 29-10-96, 31-10-96, 29-11-96, 30-11-96, 7-12-96 and 8-12-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with metal band. E Kleiber, Tweed River entrance 5-10-96,
 1 Osprey with metal band. E Kleiber, Tweed River entrance 8-10-96
 4 Common Terns with orange leg flags. E Kleiber, Tweed River entrance 8-10-96
 1 Greater Sand Plover with orange leg flag. M Hayward & T Tarrant, Manly Boat Harbour 12-10-96
 1 Terek Sandpiper with orange leg flag. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 20-10-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg flag. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 20-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit with orange leg flag. J Corney, Toorbul 24-10-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with a blue leg flag. A & S Keates, Acacia Court 26-10-96
 1 Bar-tailed Godwit orange leg flag. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 26-10-96
 1 Greater Sand Plover orange leg flag. A & S Keates, Manly Boat Harbour 26-10-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg flag. A Keates, Wellington Point 26-10-96
 1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg flag. P Nicholls, Manly Boat Harbour 27-10-96

- 1 Bar-tailed Godwit white leg flag. P Driscoll, N Taylor and D Stewart, Mirapool, Moreton Island 1-1-97
1 Little Tern with dark blue flag on left leg and dark green above light green on right leg. Marie Hayward at Manly Boat Harbour 1-1-97. This bird was banded on the 26-1-96 at National Park in Gippsland, Victoria.

Interesting Sightings

- 1 Peregrine Falcon seen by Frank Bigg and Lois MacRae at Oux Creek, Bribie Island 1-6-96
1 Peregrine Falcon seen by Frank & Di Harrison, A. Applemand & J. Maddy at North Cleveland Bay 6-7-96
1 Latham's Snips seen by Jill Chamberlain at Ewen Maddock Dam, Caloundra 18-8-96
1 Artic Tern seen by C. Barnes and E. Zilimann at Maroom 22-9-95
1 Beach Thick-knee seen by Edward Kleiber and Grant Watson at Tweed River entrance 3-10-96
2 Beach Thick-knee seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River entrance 10-10-96, 27-11-96
1 Beach Thick-knee seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River entrance 12-10-96, 24-11-96
1 Wood Sandpiper seen by Jill Chamberlain at Ewen Maddock Dam, Caloundra 20-10-96
1 Beach Thick-knee seen by Ian Watson at Tweed River entrance 20-11-96

Amongst the huge number of sightings did anyone note the orange leg flagged Bar-tailed Godwit and its recording at three sites over two months. Victoria band very few Bar-tailed Godwits - could this be the same bird? A bit unusual for it to be on the move at this time of the year. Any feed back or questions are welcome. Happy counting.

COUNT SITES

This article is the first of a series of descriptions of each of the sites regularly counted as part of the Count Program. All Counters are encouraged to share the details of their sites with other members, providing details of history of the survey, general description of the site, site access, any problems encountered regularly, completeness of the count, changes noted over time and any other relevant information.

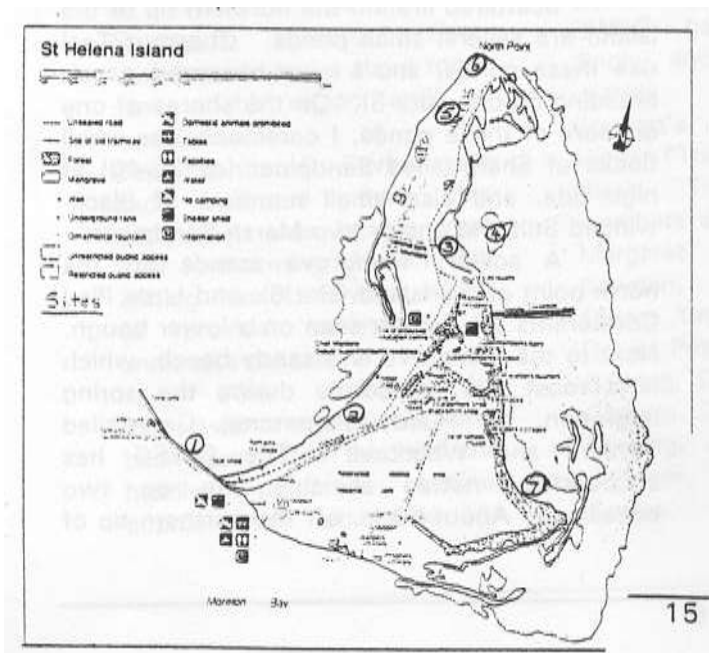
St Helena Island - Andrew Geering

The site / count for the Queensland Wader Study Group is St. Helena Island. I am privileged to be counting this site as it is a place of remarkable diversity and beauty. The down side is its relative inaccessibility. No count is a simple event, but usually takes the whole day, from 7.00 am to 5.00 pm., Luckily the National Park Rangers have been very supportive, and commonly make special trips on their boat just to pick me up or drop me off in Brisbane. Counting St. Helena Island is also a strenuous job, as I have to lug my telescope some 6 kilometres around the island, often through rank grass. The mosquitoes and sandflies can also be extremely irritating. Ranger Paul Duncombe, a fellow with a laconic sense of humour, often jokes that the mosquitoes are so big that they need take-off clearance from Brisbane Airport, and sometimes they pick you up a carry you away!

I am told that St. Helena and Mud Islands arose from a larva flow that once occurred from the ancient shield volcano in northern NSW. The soil on the island is therefore a rich krasnozem, and prior to European colonisation, the island was covered in dry rainforest. In the 1860's, a prison was built on the island, which was not used for convicts, but criminals from the young colony. To foil escape attempts, virtually all the forest was chopped down to eliminate hiding places. Some rainforest has regenerated on the southern escarpment, but it is generally weed infested. The prison finally closed in 1932, and wood from the structures was taken away. The remaining beach rock used in the walls is decaying quickly, and today only ruins of the prison exist, which to me are reminiscent of Port Arthur. A policy of stabilisation, rather than renovation of the ruins has been chosen, and in 80 years, given the present rate of weathering, the ruins may no longer exist.

In warmer times, a fringing reef flourished around the island. Today, some corals still survive, but generally growth and diversity are now limited due to cooler temperatures and increased water turbidity. Extensive coral death also occurred after the 1974 flood. The eastern side of the fringing reef has also been extensively dredged to supply the limestone needs of the QCL plant at Darra, and bunds of coral rubble similar to those around Mud Island, but less prominent, have formed on this side of the island. The dead coral/coarse sand substrate of the intertidal area of St. Helena Island is a relatively rare substrate within Moreton Bay and supports a special association of waders.

For the purpose of my count, I have divided the island into four zones, each containing one or more roost sites (see associated map).



The first roost site is encountered as you disembark from your boat at the causeway (site 1). Like the prison, the causeway was built out of the fragile beach-rock, and is now in a state of disrepair. Large tides like those experienced recently are washing the causeway away, and in the next few months, a breakwater is being built on the southern side to help prevent this erosion. Joined to the causeway is a modern wooden jetty. Numerous terns and gulls roost on the rails of this jetty. Crested Terns and Silver Gulls are ever-present. In the winter months, small numbers of Lesser Crested Terns intermingle with their larger relatives. In late summer, (February to March), large numbers (150+) of Common Terns also roost on the jetty, presumably temporary visitors during northward migration. Next to the jetty is a picketed swimming compound that was used by prison officers to protect themselves from sharks, attracted by offerings of offal in order to deter prisoner escape. The old pickets are now a favoured roost site of Ruddy Turnstone. Remnants of an older jetty are used by Pied and Little Pied Cormorants, which may be seen sunning themselves.

To the immediate north of the causeway is a sandy beach, which is another major roost site, used by Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Grey Plover, Lesser and Large Sand Plovers and Pied Oystercatcher. Behind the beach is a small flat of samphire and saltwater cooch. On high tides, this area is inundated, forming a pond. This area is a favoured roost site for Lesser Golden Plover, and small numbers of Red-necked Stint can also be seen feeding along the edge of the pond. The Lesser Golden Plover alternatively roost at a site in pasture between the northern end of the beach and the road leading to the ruins (site 2). Often the only sign of these plover is heads poking through the long grass.

Of all the roost sites on the island, the causeway site is the only one subject to significant human disturbance. Larger boats disembark at the causeway, and smaller dinghies often land on the beach at high tide. The beach is also used recreationally by people at the picnic area. Utilisation of the roost by waders is dependent on the extent of disturbance by people, and also on wind and tide conditions. In periods of dry weather and small high tides, the claypans of the island dry up, and the causeway becomes the most significant roost on the island. North of the causeway is also often very sheltered in windy periods, and becomes a preferred roost site. There is interchange of birds between the roost at the causeway and the roost in the large clay-pan north of the ranger's house.

The next roost site counted is the clay-pan north of the ranger's house. During the walk to this area I commonly see Sacred Ibis and Masked Lapwings in the paddocks. Some Pied Oystercatcher occasionally roost on the new tram-line (it is not functional yet), and during spring, they stake out breeding territories in the paddocks. The homestead roost site (site 3), as I have named it, is a large clay-pan behind the mangroves which is filled during king high tides. Water generally stays in the claypan through most of the year, and only rarely have I seen it completely dry. Large numbers of Curlew Sandpiper can be seen wading through the shallow water and continue to feed throughout the period of high tide. Bar-tailed Godwit, Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt and Grey Plover roost at this site. The preferred area of the Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel is the samphire flat at the northern end of the clay-pan. Both these species are easily frightened and take to flight, sometimes appearing to alight at another clearing in the mangroves further east of the homestead roost (site 4). I have been unable to gain access to this site, and I am not sure of its importance as a roost site, although I suspect that it is not important, perhaps due to absence of any dry ground and the closed space.

There is also interchange of Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel between the homestead roost and the one at the clay-pan at the south-east corner of the island. In past years I have seen Royal Spoonbill at the homestead roost site, but not recently. Large numbers of Chestnut Teal have also been observed at this site. Small numbers of Great and Little Egrets are commonly seen, and at the last count, I also saw Intermediate Egrets together with the former two species in a part of a nearby paddock inundated by an extremely high tide. The fourth egret species in Australia, the Cattle Egret, intermingle with cattle grazed on the island. Interestingly, the homestead roost site is the place where several rarities for the island have been observed. Occasionally, small to quite large flocks of Red-necked Avocets are found here. I have also seen small numbers of Red-kneed Dotterel and Black-fronted Plovers, which is unusual given their preference for freshwater wetlands. The homestead roost is where an Asian Dowitcher was observed during the summer of 1995-96. Both Red and Great Knots are rare on the island; the coral/coarse sand substrate of the intertidal area is poor feeding habitat for these species. However, on a small number of occasions when tides have been very high, large flocks of Great Knot (150 +) have been observed at either the homestead or causeway roosts. It seems that these birds are using these roost sites when their normal roost sites (probably along the urban foreshore) are unavailable because of high water levels.

The next site I count is the area which covers the northern tip of the island. This area includes several small ponds, a sandy beach and mound of coral rubble (formed by the mining operations) in the inter-tidal area. On the open grassy paddock, next to the radio transmitters and behind the beach, Pied Oystercatcher can be found in large numbers (100+) at high tide. Recently, numbers have not been this great, and I suspect it is because of ongoing modifications to the Port of Brisbane, which temporarily may have created superior feeding or roosting habitat for this species. I have not thoroughly investigated this hypothesis, but large numbers of Pied Oystercatcher have been recorded at the Port when numbers have been small at St. Helena Island, and vice versa. The northern tip of the island is also a place I have observed nesting of Pied Oystercatcher.

Scattered around the northern tip of the island are several small ponds. Chestnut Teal use these ponds, and I have observed a pair breeding on one (site 5). On the shores of one or more of these ponds, I commonly see small flocks of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (ca 20-40) at high tide, and also small numbers of Black-winged Stilt and one or two Marsh Sandpiper.

A solitary Mangrove stands off the north point of the island (site 6), and Little Pied Cormorants are usually seen on a lower bough. Next to the Mangrove is a sandy beach, which is a roost site, especially during the spring migration, for Ruddy Turnstone, Grey-tailed Tattlers and Whimbrel. The QWSG has successfully netted at this site on two occasions. About 50 m. off the northern tip of the island is a mound of coral rubble, and on smaller high tides, this is exposed and provides a roost site for Lesser and Large Sand Plovers, Pied Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Little, Lesser Crested and Crested Terns, Silver Gull, and Pied and Little Pied Cormorants. The one other notability of the northern end of the island is an Osprey nest on one of the radio transmitters.

The final roost site I count is the long clay-pan, found below the eastern escarpment, which runs nearly the whole length of the island. Although small numbers of waders and waterfowl can be found along most of the clay-pan, the great majority of waders roost at the southern end (site 7), where there are some exposed fingers of higher land. The composition of waders roosting at this site is much like that at the homestead roost site.

Large numbers of Whimbrel (100 +) are commonly found at this site, and during the spring migration, good numbers of Grey-tailed Tattler are also found. Numbers of Common Greenshank and Marsh Sandpiper are also significant.

Thus, concludes my wader count; a good day's exercise. Unfortunately for the general public, most of St. Helena Island is restricted access, and permission to go to the above-mentioned sites must be obtained from the National Parks Rangers. If you would like to see the island, contact me as I am happy to take one or two people with me on my counts. I can also assist you with communication with the rangers if you would like to obtain special permission to explore the avifauna of the island yourself.

ACTIVITY REPORTS

Birdlife Survey, Kedron Brook Canal & Boondall Wetlands - Saturday 9th November, 1996

WATCH THIS SPACE!

Reports from those involved in the survey would be welcomed & appreciated for inclusion next edition.

Special wader survey of Southern Moreton Bay - Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th November, 1996.

Leanne Bowden

One of the Conservation objectives proposed at the Strategies and Goals meeting held in June 1996 was achieved in November 1996 when OWSG members undertook a weekend survey of Southern Moreton Bay.

Very little is known about roost sites in this region, and, as representatives of the Department of Environment had indicated that this information was lacking from their forthcoming Moreton Bay Zoning Plan, DoE were willing to provide assistance to undertake the task.

With apologies for those whose names may have been missed from this brief and hastily prepared outline, approximately ten boats and twenty-five people were involved in the Survey. DoE provided its versatile barge, the Spoonbill, as well as the Alecutus and a tinny, along with staff and rangers, Olwyn Crimp, Gary Solward, David Maguire, Dan Crouch, Neville Smith and Craig Bradley; QWSG had its aluminium dinghy, and there were private vessels including Ernie Stewart's 'Osprey', Gordon Harris' 'Tringa' as well as the Dawn Treader. QWSG members and others included: Margaret Bernard, Leanne Bowden, Jill Chamberlain, Olwyn Crimp, Meryl & Ben Dobe, Peter Driscoll, Andrew Geering, Dave Graham, Bruce Graham, Dave Hannah, Joyce Harding, John Harris, Fiona Johnson, Arthur & Sheryl Keates, Deb & Owen McNamara, Greg Miller, Diana O'Connor, Peter & Lyn Reilly and Tony Rowland, as well as Dave & Bruce Stewart from AMCS.

With some people only available Saturday or Sunday, Peter had devised a roster of people involved, lists of groups, description of areas to be covered and a plan for Saturday's survey. Sunday's survey was planned around Saturday's results.

A full report is being prepared and will be included in a future edition.

Many thanks to everyone who gave their time to be involved in this project.

Individual Members' Impressions: Southern Moreton Bay 16th-17th November

Other members' impressions of their involvement in the survey would be both welcomed and appreciated for inclusion in the next edition. Andrew Geering

I'm sorry wader enthusiasts, but my lasting impression of the southern Moreton Bay survey was the wonderful hospitality of Ernie and Sheyne Stewart, and their luxurious boat, or should I say launch, that we travelled in. On Saturday morning, we arrived at Sanctuary Cove at a civilised time in the morning to join the Stewarts, and the hospitality began immediately with a nice cuppa tea and a discussion of the task ahead. We then set off along the south arm of the Coomera River, passing small flocks of waders, numerous raptors, including an Osprey perched on a beacon eating a small fish wrapped in its talons, and a Jabiru alighting on Coomera Island (which surprisingly still exist despite Mr. Gore's best efforts). I was mildly amused to see a plaque at the Sanctuary Cove wharf celebrating the accomplishments of free enterprise and acclaiming the government which nourished this system so well. More canal estates near the Pimpama River mouth are in the planning stage, and one of our main aims of the day was to see exactly what waders use this area.

About noon we dropped anchor south of Jacobs Well, and as was typical of the style of the weekend, had a delicious lunch. We then lowered the dinghy, and motored towards the mouth of the Pimpama River. The first site for inspection was a canal estate in the process of construction, which was largely devoid of vegetation. In a small cove of one of the canals, we found a roost site which had good numbers of Terek Sandpiper. We continued along the bank of the estate, hopped ashore, and to my delight, found a pair of Banded Lapwings. These Lapwings were fairly territorial, and it wouldn't have surprised me if they were nesting, although I couldn't find a nest. We then continued on and in a bend of the river, found a medium sized roost at which there was good numbers of Common Greenshank.

Several things struck me about this area. It was curlew country. We came across numerous small cooch grass flats, which commonly had one or two Eastern Curlews. It seemed that there were numerous potential roosting sites for these birds, and they were thinly distributed over the area. There were also small flocks of Whimbrel along the banks, and if you looked up into the old mangroves, you often saw individuals perched on dead branches. The other eye-opener of the area was the good numbers of Terek Sandpipers. We came across one large Grey Mangrove, and following a closer inspection, found a small flock of Tereks lined up on an overhanging bough. In my opinion, this is one of the most beautiful sites a wader-watcher can see. It's anyone's guess how many birds we missed that were roosting in this fashion.

Having finished our count, we headed back to the boat and afternoon tea. It was at this stage we caught up with Peter Driscoll, who was experiencing the opposite extreme in wader-watching. We took pity on Peter, who had battled thirty knot winds in the OWSG dinghy, and invited him aboard. We then motored on past Jumpinpin and moored near Short Island. Our wader-watching did not stop at this point, as there was a pair of Beach Stone Curlews on the shore of the island. We were also interested to see the movement of Eastern Curlews as they flew from one staging area to another as the tide changed. We settled down for the night, had a BBQ and a bottle of red wine, discussed waders, especially unusual ones, then retreated to the cabin and fell asleep with waves gently lapping at the bow.

The following day we made a beeline to Jumpinpin sand-spit and the very large roost site there. We arrived early and walked around the sand dunes and ocean beach before settling down to watch incoming waders at high tide. A highlight of this area for me was the small flock of Sanderling, which conveniently intermingled with Red-necked Stints so we could easily compare size and colour. There's no mistaking them. This roost was large by any standards, and at peak high tide, contained closed to 2000 birds. We also ran into the DOE boat Spoonbill, and Gordon Harris's Tringa, who were also counting this site, so it will be interesting to compare numbers.

After finishing counting Jumpinpin, we leisurely cruised down the lee of South Stradbroke Island and the north arm of the Coomera River, counting the odd bird that we saw. So ended a very enjoyable and informative weekend. It will be interesting to look at all the results compiled, as my hunch is that fairly significant numbers of some waders, especially Terek Sandpipers and Eastern Curlew, reside in this area.

Radio Tracking Activities - Peter Driscoll

Local tracking of waders

Since late November 1996, CQWSG has deployed 30 radio transmitters using a variety of attachment techniques and transmitter sizes on 10 species of wader including 7 Pacific Golden Plovers, 6 (Grey-tailed Tattlers, 3 Eastern Curlews, 3 Great Knots, 2 Greater Sand Plovers, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 1 Grey Plover, 1 Ruddy Turnstone and 3 Bar-tailed Godwits. Twenty-seven of these individuals have been monitored for varying lengths of time (usually over several weeks or more), and several are still being tracked.

The purpose has primarily been to establish local movements of birds with particular reference to the use of high tide roost sites under the control of the Port of Brisbane Corporation (PBC), which has funded the project. Greg Miller has been tireless in his efforts to track the birds and has made a major contribution towards the success of the project.

We are also getting an indication of the effectiveness of different attachment techniques (harness, gluing and leg mount) and a re-evaluation of how well we are counting a complex of roost sites within several kilometres of the mouth of the Brisbane River. The data are supplementing information gained from banding and counting. Species are displaying different patterns of movement on and off their feeding grounds and responses to changing conditions on roost sites and supra-tidal feeding areas. The results will be particularly relevant to the provision of artificial roost sites for local flocks and for understanding habitat requirements of waders - in Moreton Bay generally. Results of the project will be given in a report to PBC, articles in Queensland Wader and a scientific publication.

International tracking of Eastern Curlews

With money provided through the State and Federal Governments, QWSG is conducting a joint research project with the Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ) into Eastern Curlew migration. There will be a major deployment of WSSJ and QWSG satellite transmitters early in February in Moreton Bay upon the arrival of WBSJ representatives. This visit will not only involve joint fieldwork and the start of the year's program of satellite tracking, but will assist in project planning for the years to come. Representatives from the State Government and the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme will be meeting the WBSJ representatives. In preparation for the deployment of satellite transmitters, further trialing of harnesses has been underway in Moreton Bay over the past few months with assistance from the Port of Brisbane Corporation (see above).

Fisherman Island, Sunday 24th November, 1996

Leanne Bowden & Greg Miller



(With thanks to 'Peanuts', from whom we filched this cartoon)

It seems not much will keep enthusiastic cannon netters from participating in a day's activities.

Every time I awoke during the night, it was raining. When the alarm went off at 4am, it was still raining. I rolled over to go back to sleep "Peter'll call it off, it's too wet", I dreamed. Greg encouraged 'me out of bed. I rang Peter to prove my dream was true - I got the answering machine. 5am, and we arrived at Fisherman's Island, to an empty car park. 'He's called it off, and we must've missed his call' I dreamed. Within five seconds, vehicles drew up behind us: Nigel Roberts and Melanie Kee; Peter Driscoll; Jeremy Thompson, Steve Harrop and Andreas Suhbier; John Harris, Lil Spadijer, Christine McClintock, Nancy and Margaret.

Dream on, Leanne!!

We split into two groups, just as Ken Jones and Karen Wright arrived, followed closely by Diana O'Connor. Two nets were set, one on the relatively sandy edge of Bund 3, the other in the middle of the mud cracked base of Bund 1. It continued to rain, and even got cold.

Whilst Peter both twinkled and directed twinkling, others observed the activities through telescopes and binoculars across the moonscape that is the reclamation site. Peter's Niva chortled between the bunds, Jeremy's yellow parka providing a dot of colour in the middle of the grey brown mud pan.

We fired first within the cracked mud bund, which proved to be a bit of an experience for those not accustomed to the uneven depth of stride required to traverse the unstable landscape. Bird in hand, in shirt, in hat, we transferred 13 Golden Plover, 6 Curlew Sandpiper, 2 Greater Sand Plover, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and 19 stints from net, to holding cage, and finally out to the northern bank to organise processing.

When the other net was fired, the half dozen people who ran to help found 1 lonely Grey Plover, which, incidentally, has the kick of a mule when being transported.

The birds had more in store for them than the usual weighing, measuring, banding and flagging. Whilst Jeremy undertook the banding process, Christine, who is doing post doctoral research at the University of Queensland, took blood samples as part of her research into what viruses our feathered overseas visitors might carry. Despite this, we all munched on our lunches while processing occurred! Meanwhile Peter attached small radio transmitters to 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and 2 Curlew Sandpipers, medium transmitters to 7 Pacific Golden Plover and 2 Greater Sand-plover and a large transmitter on the Grey Plover. The transmitters are part of the Radio Tracking programme financed by the Port of Brisbane Corporation and were the first birds to receive their cargo. Details of the results and further work will be provided in another feature.

And so 12 hours later, the day started as it began, with rain, but never-the-less, it had been a successful day.

Christmas Party Boat Cruise, Sunday 8th December, 1996

Greg Miller

QWSG Members were well represented at the WPSQ/ONARR Christmas Conservation Group Batty Boat Trip to Indooroopilly Island on Sunday 8th December. Fortunately, most members were conspicuously wearing QWSG T-shirts, otherwise they would have been unrecognisable to each other in such a pristine condition.

Normally they only begin to see each through half-awake eyes early in the morning, moving through to blinding rain or baking sun, bodies hidden under all manner of protective proofing, hairstyles crammed into hats or left to flatten with water or flap in the wind, while they wait for the boom that calls them to action. Then they pass each other in a blur of activity, followed by deep concentration during processing, until, by the end of the day, they're so caked in mud, dirt, sweat and sunscreen they're too weary to recognise each other anyway. Still, the smiles and enthusiasm on the well scrubbed faces were definitely the same.

Members sat around awkwardly at first, unused to such relaxation and unlimited time for conviviality. However, before long, they and their partners mingled successful with members of other Conservation groups and the general public, munched on beef patties and sausages skilfully half-burned to perfection, served on bread rolls with a wide selection of salads, followed by desserts fit to fill any appetite. Oh, and they bought drinks too.

For Wader Watchers, accustomed to grey coloured feathered flyers of varying shapes and sizes with names that have nothing to do with their features, it was a change to discover they only had to recognise three species of reasonably distinct flying furry mammals: the Grey-headed, Black and Little Red Flying foxes. The early rain having cleared away, the critters performed on cue, flying out en masse in a spectacle befitting our subtropical climate.

Dr Les Hall provided his usual detailed, enlightening presentation, educating QWSG members about other creatures that fly and live in proximity to the water, but who also run the gauntlet of human interference to their lifestyle.



P.S. For those of you who missed the trip, the next Batty Boat trip leaves from Mowbray Park on Sunday 23 February, and Helen Younghusband on (07) xxxx xxxx would be only too happy to provide the details.

NEWS FROM AWSG

The following items have been reproduced from 'TheTattler' No-9, October 1996, newsletter of the Australasian Wader Studies Group, with the permission of their Editor, Phil Straw.

Membership of the AWSG is available to anyone interested in the study and conservation of waders. Members receive the Group's biannual journal 'The Stilt' and quarterly newsletter 'The Tattler'. Application for membership should be forwarded to: The Secretary, AWSG

'Wader biology and movements' - Albany Congress

The second international congress involving waders to be held in Australia in one year! The Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress held at Albany 5-9 October included a large segment on waders, titled 'Wader Biology and Movements' with nine papers being presented

Alan Baker's mitochondrial DNA work suggests a clear sister-taxon relationship between the enigmatic Plains Wanderer and the seedsnipes of South America. This split can be best attributed to post-Gondwanaland dispersal as the ancestor was driven out of Antarctica by ice sheet formation about 50mya. In contrast to this the closely related species and subspecies of caladrine sandpipers is very much shorter. The entire diversity of sandpipers probably evolved 20 mya, whereas Pleistocene vicariance events within the last mya - 10,000 ya seem to account for the well differentiated subspecies of migrant waders that now overwinter in the southern hemisphere.

Les Underhill's paper looked at the impact of the (usually) three-year cycles of lemming in the Siberian tundra and attempted to show how these factors, operating on a three-year cycle, impact the annual cycle of the Curlew Sandpiper.

Clive Minton presented an analysis of all recoveries of waders banded in the Australasian-East Asian Flyway, together sightings of colour-flagged birds. This together with weight data suggests that waders undertake leaps of 5,000 kms or more non-stop during the migration between Australia and New Zealand and return. A 'refuelling' stop in southern Russia is theorised but has yet to be proven. Such a site would be important for birds to reach breeding condition before reaching breeding grounds in suboptimal conditions and again before making the first major leg on the southward's migration. This data was the foundation for conservation initiatives now being promulgated, including the Australasian- Fast Asian Flyway Shorebird Reserve Network launched in Brisbane in March 1996.

Adaptive variation in the foraging behaviour of Grey Plovers and Whimbrels in tropical and south temperate latitudes by **Jane Turpie**, FitzPatrick institute of Ornithology, South Africa, looked at the size variation in the diet and foraging behaviour of a fixed-method forager, the Grey Plover and a versatile forager, the Whimbrel. Broader diversity of prey types consumed by Grey Plovers were attributed to limitations imposed by obligate visual foraging, whereas the flexible foraging behaviour of Whimbrels allowed them to concentrate their efforts on the most profitable prey. Factors influencing densities on feeding grounds were also discussed.

David Rohweder's paper - Nocturnal habitat use and foraging behaviour of Pacific Golden Plover in northern NSW covered foraging differences during day and night when feeding habitat and prey varied markedly. the magnitude of change in habitat use appears to be related to prey and habitat ". For example, plovers feeding on polychaetes in muddy or seagrass sites tended to move to other sites at night to forage on larger (more active) prey, particularly soldier crabs on sandier habitats. Those that fed on soldier crabs during the day also fed on the same prey at night. Artificial light sources appeared to improve nocturnal food intake. Radio telemetry was used to determine movement between feeding and roosting sites which has major implications on management of wader habitats.

Jim Lane talked about the nesting of Banded Stilts at Lake Baflud within days of heavy rains caused by Cyclone Bobby. The data collected during this event added immensely to the poorly understood nestling behaviour of this species.

Radio tracking of Eastern Curlews carried out by **Peter Driscoll** provided useful information on the differences of roosting and feeding behaviour during night and daylight hours. The use of radio transmitters the size of satellite transmitters suggests that birds could be tracked between wintering and breeding grounds using satellite technology and cooperative work between flyway countries.

Why We Need to Take A Closer Look at Waders

Waders use some of the most threatened habitats - **wetlands**. Most migratory waders feed in estuarine wetland habitats which have been used as landfill sites and for housing, industrial and port development. Despite the fact that the importance of wetlands has been recognised by government and conservation groups over the past twenty to thirty years, more wetlands are filled in or degraded every year. Recent threats include large parts of Botany Bay near Sydney, Port Philip Bay near Melbourne and Moreton Bay near Brisbane, to name just a few. This is despite the fact that all of the sites named are at least partly 'protected' under the Ramsar Convention.

The wader population of Botany Bay has been monitored by members of the AWSG on a regular basis since 1976, on a monthly basis between 1976 and 1978 and again between 1983 and 1985 otherwise twice yearly. The data from these counts were useful in illustrating the trends in population fluctuations over the years. As would be expected, the numbers of some species of waders declined as certain parts of the Bay were filled in for development. Sites were also degraded through erosion from modified wave action as a result of dredging. Regular wader counts, on the other hand, have shown that artificially created beaches can provide productive wader feeding habitat as well as roost sites.

The data from AWSG counts illustrated the importance of Botany Bay for migratory waders. Although this did not stop the loss of habitat, as a result of the construction of a new runway, it did illustrate the need to create alternative habitat as compensation. A study by the RAOU demonstrated that the creation of wader feeding and roosting habitat was feasible.

Two hundred and one areas of national and international importance for waders, on the 1% of the Australian population criteria, were identified by Doug Watkins in *A National Plan for Shorebird Conservation* in Australia published by the AWSG. Ninety percent of these are of international importance for at least one species.

As Watkins pointed out, information is not complete for any of the States and Territories. The Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia have the lowest level of information.

Many important sites are not monitored on a regular basis at all. An example is the Gulf of Carpentaria which accommodates a large proportion of non-migratory waders visiting Australia as shown in counts by aerial surveys by Stephen Garnett in 1987.

So far, we have concentrated on major wader sites. If we consider the cumulative importance of many small estuaries it will be found that a considerable number of waders are involved. These wetlands may well become more important as some of the major sites become degraded or disturbed. Basically, we cannot afford to lose more wader feeding habitat without a loss in waders.

While a large number of waders are lost to hunting in East Asia, we are without doubt causing a reduction in the wader population in Australia by reducing the carrying capacity of our wetlands. We just have to prove it!

Regular counts of waders at the many significant sites requires a large force of dedicated volunteers. Some of the more remote sites in the Northern Territory, Queensland and inland Australia are best tackled, in the initial stages, by expeditions such as those which put Broome on the international wader map. Such expeditions are costly and time consuming and will probably not eventuate without financial or logistic support from government or corporate bodies.

Peak Migratory Counts -v- Stable Summer/winter Populations

The AWSG are currently counting waders twice each year at as many key wader sites as possible. These are conducted in February, when most birds have reached their non-breeding grounds and before early migrants have started their return journey. The second count is made about the first week in July when winter populations appear to be most stable.

Wader populations vary from year to year depending on the rate of perdition in the breeding grounds and to some extent on how many are collected by hunters along the way. They will also be influenced by the habitat, and therefore food resources, available to them during migration. This applies to all countries along the flyway where waders stop to 'refuel' including various parts of Australia.

To gain a perspective of the carrying capacity of major wetlands it is important to estimate the number of waders present during peak migration to determine if foraging area and food accessibility is influencing the numbers of waders able to feed at a particular site. We also need to know whether the loss of habitat is having an impact on the number of waders reaching our shores.

Birds which are not able to secure large enough reserves of fat may either fail to migrate past a particular point or attempt to migrate under-weight with a high risk of mortality on the way.

We have long recognised the fact that flyway sites outside Australia need careful monitoring during migration. However are we paying enough attention to migratory sites in Australia? I think not.

Wader Counts - Are They Accurate Enough?

Regular counts of waders at key sites provide an indication of population trends over a period of time. The more frequent the counts and the longer the monitoring continues the better the indication of what is happening to the wader population at any given site. This holds true only if counts are relatively accurate. But just how accurate? Accurate enough to detect significant changes?

The error in counting varies between one observer and another. However, the error of any one experienced observer is generally constant. If the same observer counts the waders at the same site each time the error in the counting should give a fairly accurate estimation of population variations.

Whether the counts are 10% out does not matter as much as using the same observers. Obviously, if one observer over estimates by 10% and another under estimates by the same amount the population of waders would appear to vary by 20% on the same day. Even this would not present a problem if an error factor is taken into account. Counts where errors are not constant are a big problem.

The knowledge of roost sites used during various tides (such as spring and neap tides), and being able to access the sites, will make a big difference to effective assessment of a particular wader population.

The truth is that counts at some sites vary more to do with changing observer and/or an observer's ability to access most sites, and different biases between observers, than the changes to the size of the wader population.

To solve this problem, we need regular counts carried out by regular teams of observers who know each others biases and who can approach the count sites in the same manner each time. We are in actual fact sampling a population not counting all the waders in a region.

To do this observers should compare their results at the same site under the same conditions where possible.

Activities 1997

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Sat 22 & Sun 23 Feb AWSG summer count. High of 2.33m at 9.38 on Saturday
Sun 23 March High of 2.24m at 9.07am
Sun 20 April High of 2.1 1 m at 7.53 am
Sat 24 May High of 1.92m at 10.37am
Sat 28 & Sun 29 June AWSG winter count. High of 1.98m at 4.13pm on Saturday

Contact: Ivell Whyte. Completed count forms must be returned to Ivell Whyte

Cannon Netting

Sun 9 March Fisherman Islands - High of 2.58 at 9.45am
Sun 6 April St Helena Island - High of 2.42m at 8.33am

Contact: Peter Driscoll three days in advance for confirmation of time and place. In the case of weekend trips, please confirm at least one week in advance. As well as the activities listed, netting outings will be mounted "opportunistically" when it seems there is a good chance of success.

Other Activities

Sunday 2 March Volunteers wanted to clean up Dynah Island. (See page 9) Contact: Greg Miller
Tues 11 March Course on Waders (See page 9 and enclosed flyer)
7.00pm - 9.15pm Lecture at Royal Geographic Society Hall, 112 Brookes Street, Fortitude Valley
Sun 16 March 1.30pm Field Trip, Venue to be decided. Members and their telescopes required to assist with identification
Tues 18 March Lecture as above
Contact: Diana O'Connor
Sat 5 April St Helena Island Excursion. Numbers will be limited and there will be a charge for boat transport. (Note Cannon Netting on the Island next day.)
Contact: Andrew Geering

Other Conservation Activities of Interest

Monthly Trips Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association (SOSSA) Seabird trip
In conjunction with Seaworld, day trip departing from Seaworld, Southport Spit to observe seabirds. Boat leaves early morning, cost \$55 per person. The trips are monthly.
Contact: Paul Walbridge

Sat 22, Sun 23 Feb QOSI. Spicers Gap
Contact: Julian Bielewicz

Wed 5 March Australian Marine Conservation Society AGM. (Details not available at time of printing)
Contact: AMCS

Thursday 6 March 7.45pm QOSI General Meeting - Qld Museum Photographing Birds & Magpie Behaviour
Contact: Julian Biefewicz 07 3283 4921

Sunday 9 March	QOSI. Lockyer Valley Wetlands <u>Contact: Dawn Muir</u>
Saturday 1 5 March	7.30am, Wildlife Preservation Society of Old. Meet at Boondall Environment Centre for birdwalk at Boondall Wetlands for bush birds and Nudgee Beach for Waders <u>Contact: Garth Innes</u>
Sunday 23 March	Full day boat trip, Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld 'Sunday on the Bay', organised by Batty Boats, including BBQ lunch. \$35 Adults. Contact: Helen Younghusband
28-32 March EASTER	QOSI. Campout at Imbil <u>Contact: Dawn Muir</u>
Thursday 3 April	7.30pm QOSI General Meeting - Old Museum
Friday 30 May	6.00am Manly Boardwalk) QOSI/ Biennial Festival of Music
Saturday 31 May	6.00am Manly Boardwalk) Leaders required
Sunday 1 June	6.00am Manly Boardwalk) <u>Contact: Jan Bell</u>
Thursday 1 May	7.45pm QOSI General Meeting
Thursday 5 June	7.45pm QOSI General Meeting Peter Driscoll - Radio Tagging Eastern Curlews

ENROLMENT FORM

INTRODUCTION TO WADERS IN AUSTRALIA AND MORETON BAY

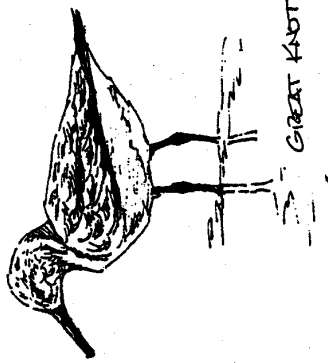
Title:.....
 First Name:.....
 Surname.....
 Address:.....
 Postcode:.....
 Contact phone:.....
 Organisation (if applicable):.....

AMOUNT DUE \$
 I enclose a cheque
 - make payable to Qld Wader Study Group and mark 'not negotiable'

VENUE

Royal Geographical Society
 112 Brookes Street, Fortitude Valley
 Parking behind the hall

DATES & TIMES
 Lectures:- 11 & 18 March 1997
 7.00 - 9.15pm
 COURSE FEE \$70



FIELD TRIP

Sunday, 16 March 1997
 1.30pm at a High Tide Roost

A field trip will be held at a suitable site where waders are roosting to observe as many species as possible with telescopes with the help of members of the Wader Study Group. Participants should wear old clothes and bring lunch.

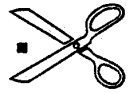
CLOSING DATE

7 March 1997

ENQUIRIES

Re enrolment Ph: 3252 3856
 Fax: 3252 4986

Re course Dr Diana O'Connor
 Ph/Fax: 3369 8154



INTRODUCTION TO WADERS (SHOREBIRDS) IN AUSTRALIA AND MORETON BAY

This course offers a unique opportunity to learn about a special group of birds that regularly migrate to our shores, flying up to 25,000 km every year to and from Arctic regions. They range from tiny 24gm birds to the world's largest wader of over 1kg, the Eastern Curlew. They arrive to feed over summer at our doorstep in Moreton Bay, where most people are oblivious to them.

During this course you will be introduced to the fascinating aspects of the biology and conservation of these birds and experience them first hand in Moreton Bay, while learning how to identify the various species.

The course will focus on the field identification, biology, ecology and conservation of this group of birds and also on Moreton Bay as an internationally significant site for waders. There will be an appraisal of the various features of the coastline that determine broad scale distribution of waders in Australia.

CONTENT

Specifically topics will include:

- Definition of waders and habitats
- Field identification
- Determinates of general and local distribution
- Migration and the Asian/Australasian flyway
- Threats
- International conservation agreements.

DESCRIPTION

Seventeen species of resident waders and 36 migrant species occur in Australia; in total, about 3 million birds. They feed from muddy and sandy substrates in coastal and inland wetlands of Australia. The majority breed in far northern regions of Siberia and Alaska, and travel the Asian/Australasian flyway twice a year on migration. From September to April each year most species can be found in intertidal habitats, such as Moreton Bay, and we have an ideal opportunity to study these species and help to develop multinational conservation programs. They face increasing pressures from burgeoning human populations and habitat destruction in South-East Asia, and also in Australia.

QWSG MERCHANDISE

Should you wish to purchase any of the QWSG Merchandise, items may be purchased at QOSI meetings held 1st Thursday of the month at the Queensland Museum OR ... contact Ivell Whyte (07) 3802 0757. Postage is not included in the prices quoted.

Coffee Mugs: \$8.00
Bottle Green ceramic
Embossed in gold with QWSG logo and "Protect Your Wetlands"

Polo Neck Shirts: \$30.00
Maroon, Bottle Green, Jade, Royal Blue, Natural
S, M,L,XXL, XXXL



QUEENSLAND WADER STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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SURFACE
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5 Stanmere Street, Carindale Qld 4152

OBJECT OF THE QUEENSLAND WADER STUDY GROUP

To promote and participate in the study and conservation of waders and their habitats and to influence government policy and public opinion for the well-being of waders.

