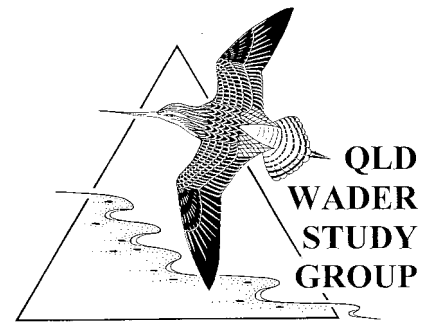


# QUEENSLAND WADER



Issue number 021

Spring 1997

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

THE SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE QUEENSLAND WADER STUDY GROUP  
WILL BE HELD  
AT 2.00PM ON SATURDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1997  
AT THE  
NUDGE BEACH ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

All QWSG members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting, to meet their fellow members and nominate a new Committee.

## EVER WONDERED WHERE THE MEMBERSHIP IS?

Have You ever wondered about those other members, how many there are and where they come from? Delving into the database managed by Arthur and Sheryl Keates reveals the following fascinating facts. As the data is changing regularly, with some information not always available, the figures are approximate only (i.e. don't check the addition!!).

Our total number of membership records (including complimentary and couples) is 217.

Complimentaries include other Wader Study groups to keep them informed e.g. Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria; other environment groups including our parent body QOSI, Birds Australia, Wildlife Preservation Society Qld, Moreton Island Protection Committee; Government agencies such as CSIRO, Environment Australia, Greening Australia, Department of Environment and Brisbane City Council; and libraries for archive and research purposes, eg National and State, Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Queensland.

The status of the membership includes 98 going by the title of "Mr", 24 by Mrs, 25 by Ms, 3 by Miss, 13 Mr and Mrs couples, 32 organisations, 13 Doctors, 2 Professors and 1 Venerable. Forty-nine of these members are known to have joined in the foundation year of 1992, followed by 34 in 1993, 19 in 1994, 29 in 1995, 26 in 1996 and 40 in,1997.

Overseas members are few, with 1 in USA, 1 in Malaysia, and 1 in New Zealand. Interstate members cross the continent with 3 in WA, 8 in Victoria, 1 in Tasmania, 4 in ACT and 8 in NSW.

Not surprisingly, the "Rest" are Queensland members, the majority of which live in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Ipswich, Bribie and North Stradbroke Islands. More than 25 live on the shores of Moreton Bay. Almost all major provincial cities and towns on the east coast are represented: Maryborough, Gladstone, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Bowen, Townsville and Cairns.

However, members are not restricted purely to the coast. They live in mountains: Toowoomba, Blackall Range and D'Aguijar Range, an odd place called Silkwood, and even as far west as Roma.

Revealing confidence in the longevity of the Group, one member has paid to the year 2001 and 2 have paid up to 2000.

Unfortunately, 37 members are non-financial. Please check your mailing label for the date to which you are financial. REMEMBER - to be a nominee, proposer or seconder for membership on the QWSG Management Committee, you do need to have current membership.

So, there you are! We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM.

All correspondence to: The Chairperson, QWSG,

**CHAIRPERSON:**

Peter Driscoll

**TREASURER:**

Sheryl Keates

**SECRETARY:** Vacant

**NEWSLETTER EDITORS:**

Leanne Bowden & Greg Miller

**COUNT COORDINATORS:**

Linda & Phil Cross

**COUNT DATA ENTRY:**

Natasha Taylor

**CONSERVATION OFFICERS:**

Andrew Geering

and Greg Miller (

**LIBRARIAN:**

Dave Stewart

**PUBLICITY OFFICER:**

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**COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

Margaret Bernard

Olwyn Crimp

Sandra Harding

Eddie Hegerl

Arthur Keates

Stuart Pell

Nigel Roberts

Karen Welsh

Ivell Whyte

Jim Whyte

Members are reminded their membership expires on the date shown on the newsletter address label.

Annual subscription rates:

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Receipt will be forwarded with next edition of Queens/and Wader.

Forward Application to:

Mrs S. Keates, The Treasurer, Queensland Wader Study

**ABOUT QUEENSLAND WADER**

QUEENSLAND WADER is a quarterly publication of the Queensland Wader Study Group. Deadline for submission of material is one week prior to beginning of publication month: Autumn - March; Winter - June; Spring - September; Summer - December.

Contributions should be addressed to The Editors, Queensland Wader.

Computerised contributions should be in IBM Word or Wordperfect.

Opinions expressed in Queensland Wader are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the Queensland Wader Study Group, nor the Queensland Ornithological Society.

Advertising rates are \$15.00 for one quarter column and \$20.00 for a third of a column. -

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**From the Editors**

Many thanks - to everyone who provided material. Unfortunately, by popular demand and postal limitations, we can't fit everything in, but we'll catch up in December. However, one article we'd really like to see in December is a Count Site Description!!!

Copy Deadline Summer - December Edition

The deadline for the next issue is one week prior to the beginning of the publication month, December, i.e. 24 November, 1997 (see page 2 for details).

## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE - The Editors

### Committee Meetings

A 2-hour 45-minute meeting was held on Tuesday 15 July with 13 members in attendance.

- Items discussed:
- purchase of CD burner
- further courses: time required for publicity, further assistance, short as opposed to long courses.
- merchandising of Avocet design t-shirts.
- Empire Point update: need for new Section 86 application, and Coastcare Grant application.
- Gateway Ports Forum: impacts on Luggage Point, FAC boundaries, public consultation process.
- Treasurer's report: items to be purchased - CD burner, UHF radios, cannons, small net, electronic scales; need to sell rubber duck.
- Conservation: Cairns foreshore; Poned Pastures, Senate Submission.
- Grants: Gaming Commission not submitted; possibility of Coastcare.
- Projects: Coastnet; newsletter, count programme.0
- AGM: 29/11 date selected.

The next meeting will be held in September.

### Grant - Guide to Waders of Moreton Bay

A Sub-committee has been formed to manage completion of this project.

### Other Meetings

Attended by members on behalf of QWSG:

16 June; 15 & 31 July: Brisbane Area Gateway Study Community Consultation Program for the Strategic Plan - Greg Miller

17 June, 15 July, 12 August: Boral Impact Assessment Statement, phasing out Brisbane R. dredging - Greg Miller

14 August: QOSI Council - Greg Miller

July, August, September: Boondall Wetlands Management Cttee – Greg Miller

16 August: Moreton Bay Alliance Meeting – Joyce Harding & Andrew Geering

20 August: Brisbane Port Corporation - Peter Driscoll, Greg Miller, Nigel Roberts.

### More Member Profiles

The following profiles commenced in QW19 March, almost completes the current Committee, perhaps in time to introduce new members following the AGM on 29 November.

#### *Leanne Bowden, Newsletter Editor and Greg Miller, Newsletter Editor & Co-Conservation Officer:*

Leanne and Greg discovered QWSG through Leanne's work as Personal Secretary to Pat Comben when he was Environment Minister in 1992. With both of them already having a personal interest in "all things environmental", Pat's well-known interest in ornithology was contagious, and Leanne soon found herself asking Pat if she and Greg could attend some of the interesting activities she was scheduling into his busy itinerary. Their first activity was a net repair day in early August and oddly enough, they were inspired to join, already being members of QOSI. After attending AGM's, equipment maintenance days and Wader ID sessions, 1995 became the year of more full commitment, with involvement in cannon netting at Yamba NSW and, Fisherman's Island, participation in the QWSG/DoE Survey of Great Sandy Strait, gaining their own count site at Caboolture River mouth, and, mysteriously, membership to the Committee. In 1996, the count site changed to Brisbane Airport, and somehow, even more mysteriously, they became newsletter editors.

Both Leanne and Greg are members of the QOSI, the Royal Geographical Society and Council members of the Brisbane Branch of WPSQ. Greg is also Conservation Officer for QOSI and Vice-President of the Kedron Brook Branch of WPSQ.

Greg has recently graduated from Griffith University with a Bachelor of Science in Australian Environmental Studies, and is undertaking whatever environmental consultancy work comes his way. Leanne is a temporary employee with the Department of Environment and is studying part-time at the University of Queensland for a Bachelor of Arts, in Government, Geographical Sciences and Planning.

***Peter Driscoll, Chairperson:***

As one of the prime instigators of QWSG's creation in 1992, Peter was aware that such a group was "ready to happen", based on the level of interest in this State, and the need to fill the vacuum. He has been Chair of the Group since its formation, is continually nominated to stay in the role, and in fact, it's difficult to imagine a QWSG without him as the driving force. He has an "A" Class Banding Authority with Cannon Net endorsement from the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS), part of the Commonwealth Government's Environment Australia Dept. Peter is the person nominated as responsible for handling the bands for the QWSG in its registered project with the B&B Scheme - "Monitoring of Wader Populations in Queensland". He is also a regional organiser for the banding scheme, and regularly counts at Fisherman Island and Moreton island.

In a past life, he helped form the Brisbane Branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, and later became involved with the Rainforest Conservation Society, particularly the Wet Tropics campaign.

His most recent passion takes him up with the birds - flying.

In real life, Peter's a Consultant Biologist, having graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Science with Honours, and obtaining a PhD in Zoology from the University of Queensland.

**Publicity**

The Eastern Curlew Satellite Tracking Project has had another appearance, in the Courier Mail 19 June, 1997. The Moreton Island Protection Committee featured it in their newsletter Vol 19 No 2 May/June/July August 1997.

A Display was held at the Lowlands Festival, Osprey House on 16 August.

**NEW MEMBERS**

We welcome the following new members who have joined since the last list was printed in the Winter: June 97 newsletter:

Leith Bowden, Peter Chang, R Cohen, Wendy Dunn, Gary Emmett, Jan England, Ron Todd,  
James Tyson, Loreena Shonhan, Klaus Uhlenhut, Valma Watt, Martin Waugh

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.

**EASTERN CURLEW TRACKING PROJECT – Peter Driscoll**

The following is a brief update on the progress of Eastern Curlews fitted with satellite transmitters in Moreton Bay Queensland last February (1997), written for the Australian Wader Study Group's Newsletter "The Tattler".

The work is being undertaken by the Wild Bird Society of Japan and the Queensland Wader Study Group with support from the Queensland Department of Environment. The project is funded by the Governments of Australia and Japan, and assisted by the Japanese telecommunications company NTT. American and Japanese PTTs are being used.

Since the time of the last Tattler, very little long-distance movement has been recorded. Signals from seven of the nine transmitters that were working at the time of the last report are still coming in, however battery life is nearing an end. After working well, one of the transmitters suddenly stopped signalling about 3 weeks ago and may have fallen off the bird, as it is designed to do. Another transmitter was working very poorly and has now stopped, possibly because of too little power. The theoretical battery life on all but two transmitters is close to finished.

To summarise the status of the birds, six are in Moreton Bay and signals from five of these remain clear and regular. Signals from the sixth bird have not been received for 3 weeks.

A seventh bird remains on the south east coast of New Guinea where she has been since mid-March but signals are generally weak and intermittent.

Kylie and Mia, who made it to China and Russia are still in the region. Kylie remains on the south eastern coastline of Russia, east of Khabarovsk and opposite the southern end of Sakhalin where she has been for about three months. Her signal is weak and seems to have failed altogether over the last two weeks.

Mia is on the Chinese coastline just north of Shanghai where she has been since late June after being on the breeding grounds in the Arum Region in Russia for about 7 weeks. Her signal remains strong and reliable.

## NEWS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BIRD AND BAT BANDING SCHEME

The following article has been reproduced with permission from the Editor of "FLIGHTLINES" Newsletter of the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme ", Number 20 - July 79.9 7.

### ENVIRONMENT – AUSTRALIA

#### Fate of A. Bird

On 7 April 1997 the Banding Office received the following message from the Australian Federal Police:

Subject: Deceased wildlife

Persons: A. Bird (no further details)

Information: On 3 April Det Sgt Steven Kaipa from Madang CID, Papua New Guinea, contacted the Australian Federal Police. Kaipa explained that some of his officers had located a bird carrying a Canberra contact number at Saidor, south of Madang. After some initial confusion it was established that it was indeed one of the feathered variety, to which was attached an aerial and a leg tag.

Kaipa stated that as per instructions on the leg tag he had contacted Wildlife Australia and spoken to a Peter Driscoll. Mr Driscoll requested the police to forward the personal belongings of A. Bird to Canberra. Due to financial restrictions, Madang PPC advised contact with LO [Liaison Officer], who subsequently undertook to forward these to Canberra through the diplomatic bag.

In depth investigations by Royal PNG Constabulary personnel, Madang, revealed that A. Bird was travelling to Siberia (economy) and was the subject of a migratory study. Unfortunately, A. Bird appears to have experienced undercarriage problems, landing just short of Madang. Local police on instructions fed A. Bird with crab meat in an attempt to keep it alive.

Unfortunately, A. Bird succumbed to injuries and passed away on Easter Monday, being accorded full RPNGC police honours and buried in the confines of the Madang Police Station.

Task: For information of Peter Driscoll – Wildlife Australia. Personal belongings of A. Bird will be forwarded on receipt from Madang. [message ends]

\*\*\*\*\*

A. Bird, alias Eastern Curlew 101-06459, had been banded, leg-flagged and fitted with a satellite transmitter at Moreton Island, Queensland on 10.2.97, by Dr Peter Driscoll of the Queensland Wader Study Group. It dropped out of the sky at Saidor on 11.3.97 and was picked up exhausted and suffering from a damaged leg. Despite receiving most tender care, it died some days later. The satellite transmitter has been forwarded to the Banding Office by diplomatic bag.

06459 was one of several Eastern Curlews (*Numenius madagascariensis*) to be caught up in Cyclone Justin shortly after take-off from Moreton Bay on northward migration in February. Other birds banded at the same time delayed their departure until after the cyclone, and two Eastern Curlews carrying satellite transmitters have since been tracked to their breeding grounds in Russia.

The recovery of the bird caused a flurry of international communications and liaison involving the Australian Embassy in Port Moresby PNG, the ABBBS office in Canberra, Peter Driscoll in Brisbane, the Australian Federal Police, the Royal PNG Constabulary, and several PNG citizens who had discovered and cared for the bird on its arrival at Saidor. Notwithstanding some existing difficulties between the Australian and Papua New Guinea governments, the interest, goodwill and helpful cooperation between all involved could not have been greater. It is possible that the unfortunate bird was responsible for an improvement in international relations as well as increasing our knowledge of the migration strategies of Eastern Curlews.

From the Courier Mail Thursday, June 19, 1997

## Researchers track a long-distance traveller

By BRIAN WILLIAMS - environment reporter. From the Courier Mail Thursday, June 19, 1997

EASTERN curlews are being tracked by satellite in an effort to identify and protect their migratory paths from Moreton Island to northern China and Russia.

Numbers of the curlew – the world's largest wader - have been dropping steadily as they come under pressure from pollution and hunting in Asia.

Biologist Peter Driscoll said the tracking had shown that the curlews could fly long distances, with 'one of the 15 birds being followed flying 6500km non-stop at an average speed of 57kph.

The bird, named Mia by the researchers, flew 11,069km from its summer roost on the southern tip of Moreton Island to breeding grounds north of Manchuria in China.

The tracking of the eastern curlews also had shown that the birds make a considered, rather than lemming-like, migration north.

At the Ramsar conference on wet-lands in Brisbane in March last year, 13 nations signed an agreement to protect crucial sites.

Moreton Bay and the Great Sandy Straits off Fraser Island are the most popular non-breeding destinations, with populations of about 6000 each.

Dr Driscoll said that of the birds fitted with transmitters in March, six returned to Moreton Bay apparently because they had insufficient body fat to make the journey.

The research demonstrated the importance of summer roosting sites in Australia and especially Moreton Bay.

If the birds did not have sufficient opportunity to fatten for migration, breeding might not occur.

One bird, named Kylie, was tracked to a site north of Vladivostok, in Russia.

Dr Driscoll said the birds' journey had been fraught with danger because they ran into Cyclone Justin off north Queensland. One flew into the cyclone and disappeared in the Coral Sea, while another was found dying in northern Papua New Guinea.

Dr Driscoll said the birds made a large initial first flight that took them about two thirds of the way. This was followed by two flights of about 1800km each, interspersed with 10-day rests.

"The amazing thing is that some got a long way into the northern hemisphere and then must have decided it wasn't on and began working their way back." he said.

Six birds have returned to the bay off Brisbane.

"We'd always assumed that once they moved, they would simply keep striving to get to the breeding grounds," Dr Driscoll said.

"It's now apparent these birds know what their limitations are and bail out when they feel they have had enough. They are not fools. They have contingency plans."

There are believed to be about 30,000 curlews worldwide, and nesting pairs are each expected to have about three young, who will independently follow their parents back to the southern hemisphere.

Research was conducted by the Queensland Wader Study Group and the Wild Bird Society of Japan with funding from each nation's government. Nippon Telecommunications and Telephone Company supplied five transmitters.

## Brisbane Gateway Port Concept Plan (BGPCP)

*The Brisbane Gateway Port strategy is the largest project ever proposed for the Moreton Bay area. The plan, based around the mouth of the Brisbane River, includes 7320 hectares of industrial/transport complex (note map) and major transport corridors webbing across Brisbane and into South East Queensland. The plan is grand, yet the process is flawed as, to date, planning has ignored most environmental considerations by disregarding basic planning concepts of wise use and best practice. Thus, the chances of causing significant environmental damage to the central Moreton Bay region seem guaranteed.*

### **Basis of BGP Concept**

Creation of Australia's premier port facility plans to utilise the synergisms of an expanded Brisbane Port Facility and Brisbane Airport, together with the establishment of a dynamic and extensive manufacturing sector and cargo handling facility. This port would handle most of Australia's international cargo, ranking with Singapore, Hong Kong and Rotterdam. Served by vessels carrying up to 3500 TEU (Twenty Foot Container Equivalents) it aims to throughput 28.5 million tonnes of freight (an increase of 60% on 1994/95 throughput) including 430,000TEU/annum (approx. double 1994/95).

Brisbane Airport expansions includes the completion of the second runway and the cross-runway extension. Other expansions include major hotels, a shopping centre, professional business centres and various entertainment areas; Rail upgrading may include an under-river train tunnel; an area job potential increase from 20,000 jobs to 66000 (10% of Brisbane's jobs) by 2011.

That's just some of the sales hype, but what does it mean for the waders? Well consider 'A KEY POINT TO NOTE: -from the record of the Pinkenba public workshop of 15 July 1997 attended by 48 members of the public:

**'A "desirable" industry is one which will contribute to the economy through high value adding potential with high wage employment creation'**

The only other sentence on the entire page adds:

**'The term does not infer desirability from an environmental or community viewpoint'.**

I invite readers to consider how planning can ignore environmental and community values while achieving a real contribution to the economy.

### **Environmental Cost of the BGP Concept.**

The environmental cost will vary considerably depending on the construction and operation methods designated. From the beginning, the BGP plan contained very limited environmental considerations. No funding was allocated to environmental aspects such as, surveys, literature reviews or consulting experts with local knowledge. No environmental representative was appointed to the Steering Committee. The BGP area abuts littoral wader habitat included in international agreements such as Ramsar, JAMBA and CAMBA and the Moreton Bay Marine Park, however the planning process fails to reflect its responsibilities to consider the environmental impacts inherent in the BGP concept.

This attitude was reinforced by publishing a map of 'Areas of Ecological Value or Development Potential' in which the Luggage Point Claypan was designated 'Major potential development areas' and the mangroves along Luggage Point, Juno Point, down to Serpentine Creek mouth are 'Areas for further investigation'. Most readers will recognise the importance of the Luggage Point roost site. The significance of the mangrove forest associated with the claypans would be obvious to most casual observers. But apparently not to at least one of the Major Stakeholders who regards the area only as future business address. The question of 'What will happen to the Luggage Point tidal flats feeding area and associated waders?' is just one of many questions left unanswered by this entire concept and process.

Juxtaposed with the above situation are statements such as:

**'Liveability will be enhanced through improvements in air and water quality, noise and waste minimisation and effective management of hazardous industries. Heightened awareness of the ecological, heritage, recreational and industrial values of the area will help integrate these communities with the broader Brisbane community.'**

Does the concept team really know the secret of driving thousands of trucks through an area while enhancing the air quality and noise levels? Does their heightened awareness of the ecology allow them to plan its destruction so as to enhance it?

Mention must be made of their ability to integrate some of Brisbane's oldest communities with 'the broader Brisbane community'. Possibly few citizens of Hamilton, Pinkenba, Balmoral, Wynnum North, Lytton, Lindum or Cannon Hill were aware that they are somehow separated from their fellow Brisbanites. Nonsense like this may be OK in certain planning groups, but gains the BGP concept no advantage when exposed to the real world, in particular with those residents to which it refers. Yet BGP publishes this as information that will somehow aid the public understanding of the BGP's intentions. Perhaps it does!

### Some Hope Though

Following the public consultation process, the BGP announced a belated (mid-August) offer of one environmental representative on the steering committee. This position will be assisted by a twelve-seat working committee drawn from the many stakeholder interest groups. QWSG has been allocated a seat on the working committee. The time frame is extended from the end of August 1997 to just beyond September 1997. The challenge now is to overcome, in a very short period, the myriad of poor decisions, inherent in the BGP plan, that are destructive to the environment and local communities.

However, this does not mean that QWSG members cannot play their own part in protecting waders and wader habitat. Please express your views in writing to the driving forces of this process, your BCC councillor, your State and Federal politicians and also the Environment Ministers. Please note that the BGP is a section of the Queensland Dept. of Economic Development and Trade which, in turn, is a section of the Queensland Premier's Dept., so why not also include the Premier in your list of contacts to make before the waders of the Brisbane River mouth area fly only in our memory? Time is running out.

*In May, 1997, when it seemed there would be no opportunity for a representative to participate on the Gateway Ports Reference Group, Sandra Harding (Conservation Officer for AWSG, current QWSG Committee Member and past QWSG Conservation Officer), prepared the following document, highlighting QWSG's Issues of Concern.*

Over the last 20 years the Port of Brisbane has been developing and expanding into the Ramsar area of Moreton Bay. Recently a Gateway Ports Project has been unveiled that significantly expands the area likely to be influenced by industrial development at the mouth of the Brisbane River.

Our major concern is the security of high tide roosts in Moreton Bay. There have always been a number of high tide roosts in the vicinity of the Brisbane Port. As the Port has developed the birds using the Fisherman Islands area have had to move to new roost sites. This is not satisfactory and a proper investigation should be conducted to decide the best areas for wader roosts and these areas should then be protected and enhanced accordingly. There may well be a number of other roost sites affected by the Gateway Ports project depending on its extent. This whole area is of major significance in Moreton Bay.

Watkins (1993) lists Moreton Bay as the third most important site in Queensland for waders and it is arguably the second most important site. QWSG has been lobbying to protect high tide roosts in Moreton Bay since 1993. The management plan to provide the protection for Moreton Bay warranted by its listing under the Ramsar Convention, (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat) is still awaited. During this time QWSG has provided input on the Moreton Bay Zoning Plan, Port of Brisbane Land Use Plan, Coastal Protection Bill and the Wetland Strategy reminding the Queensland Department of Environment of the need to protect wader roosts. The long-awaited Zoning Plan for the Bay has not been finalised.

Coastal development continues to threaten wader roosts in the whole of Moreton Bay. While Moreton Bay remains unmanaged, QWSG has carefully investigated high tide roosts, including a study into the construction of artificial roost sites and securing Coastcare funding for development and maintenance of high tide roosts. QWSG also maintains ongoing monitoring of wader populations in Moreton Bay and elsewhere along the Queensland coastline.

The Ramsar listing of Moreton Bay does not even include the critical areas for roost sites as these areas are above high tide or are freehold. However, waders at these sites should also be protected through JAMBA (Australia - Japan Migratory Bird Agreement) and CAMBA (Australia - China Migratory Bird Agreement).

There is still no zoning or management plan for Moreton Bay to ensure wise use of this Ramsar site. The Gateway Ports project is now being worked up without the needed environmental framework to appropriately guide the development. It is questionable whether, the State Government can make sensible decisions concerning Moreton Bay without first establishing the parameters within which decisions can be made.



It would appear that the State Government is not willing to recognise the environmental values of the area for the sake of having no restrictions on future development potential and overlooking environmental impacts.

In addition to the main issue of high tide roosting areas, other environmental impacts, the effect of which are still unknown, have not been investigated but will affect wader habitat. These include polluted runoff, (particularly considering that the Moreton Bay Water Quality Management Strategy is still in its early stages) and loss of feeding areas through land reclamation and filling of wetlands.

The Commonwealth Government is remiss in not being more vigilant and taking a leading role on the appropriate status and management of Australia's Ramsar sites.

#### Reference

Watkins, D (1993) A National Plan for Shorebird Conservation in Australia. Australasian Wader Studies Group, Royal Ornithologists Union and World Wide Fund For Nature, Victoria.

## **Moreton Bay Alliance Meeting – 16 August 1997**

Joyce Harding

*On Saturday, August 16 at a meeting of the Moreton Bay Alliance a proposal put forward by the Moreton Bay branch of the Australian Marine Conservation Society of Australia should be of interest to the Queensland Wader Study Group.*

It has been proposed that the establishment of a "Moreton Bay Authority" be initiated within the community. State and Local Governments to co-operate and apply an ecosystem management approach to the problems of Moreton Bay.

### **Some of the Problems of Moreton Bay**

Continuing decline in the water quality and biological integrity of western and southern Moreton Bay.

Seagrass loss, reduced fish stocks, localised loss of animal diversity and harmful algal blooms.

Fisheries assessments for the bay reveal declining fish stocks.

Wetlands of international importance for shorebirds and essential habitat for fisheries, turtle and dugong are being degraded or lost.

Continuing urban, commercial and industrial development in the catchments feeding Moreton Bay will compound the significant environmental harm being caused to the ecological integrity of the Bay.

The currently fragmented and disorganised planning for development and conservation by State and Local Government, statutory authorities and the private sector is a major contributing factor to the deteriorating state of the Bay.

### **A Solution**

To facilitate better integration and co-ordination of government planning and regulatory functions a forum should be established as a statutory authority to plan for the management of the Bay and its catchment. It could provide guidance for coastal management, the use of natural resources and the conservation of areas of significant natural and cultural heritage, eg. RAMSAR site.

### **Recommendation**

That the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments initiate a joint feasibility study into the establishment of a Moreton Bay Authority. A community advisory committee to be established to assist this feasibility study.

## **Risk to Waders at Nudgee Beach**

*Under the heading "Wildlife in danger", the Northern News carried the following story on its front page and in the editorial. QWSG Committee Members are aware of this situation and are assisting where possible.*

**NORTHERN NEWS, THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 1997,**

### **Ecologist calls for Nudgee Beach probe**

FISHING and crabbing at Nudgee Beach could be threatened unless the State Government took urgent action, an ecologist has warned.

Consultant ecologist Sue Quinnell said an urgent investigation was needed into the cause of a decline in living organisms.

However, a scientific panel commissioned by Environment Minister Brian Littleproud has recommended a study to substantiate Ms Quinnell's findings.

Ms Quinnell, who said she detected the problem about a year ago, said something had contaminated the sediment at Nudgee Beach, putting at risk wader bird, fish and crab populations.

"We need to look for the cause urgently, the effect is well established," she said.

Boondall Wetlands Management Committee chair-woman Anne Beasley said she was anxious to find out what the cause was.

Ms Quinnell said the State Environment Department; seemed to be hoping the problem would go away.

She had briefed the Federal and State Oppositions on the issue.

A spokesman for Mr Littleproud said Ms Quinnell's advice had to be compared to that of the Government-appointed scientific panel which included representatives from Queensland and Griffith universities.

"We do consider it an urgent matter," he said.

Member for Nudgee Neil Roberts said Mr Littleproud was duplicating Ms Quinnell's research at a cost of about \$80,000.

In State Parliament last month Mr Littleproud said the scientific panel would look at two samples, one taken in July and another scheduled for this month.

"Until reliable data is available ... it is not possible to indicate whether the reported decline is the result of natural fluctuations in population numbers or the result of human influences such as polluted runoff," he said.

Departmental analysis of Nudgee Beach sediments found no significant concentrations of chemical contaminants, he said.

## Our Say - Warning must spur some quick action

### **SCIENTIFIC opinion is bound to differ.**

However, in the Nudgee Beach case there appears to be a stubbornness on the State Government's part in not accepting a consultant ecologist's findings.

Sue Quinnell has stated that there has clearly been a decline in marine organisms and there is an urgent need to investigate the cause.

Surely, no responsible scientist would make such grave claims without a thorough study?

Let's hope that the Government heeds Ms Quinnell's plea for urgent action and speeds up its current investigation into her findings so that a cause can be found and addressed.

But if the Government-appointed scientific panel rejects that there is a problem, does it end there?

We believe Ms Quinnell has based her findings on exhaustive research, and is justified in sounding the alarm bells.

For the sake of the environment, and our future, the right course of action must be taken.

What do you think?

## Ponded Pastures – the Latest Developments

Andrew Gearing

The second round of public consultation on ponded pastures has just been completed. In the first round of consultation, a discussion paper on the practice was released, to which I responded on behalf of the QWSG. The Ponded Pastures Steering Committee then released a Policy Options Paper in April 1997, and again requested community feedback, including feedback from us. After considering the responses, the final task of the Committee will be to make recommendations to the State Government on a ponded pastures policy. The Policy Options Paper (POP) is quite hefty and hard to summarise, but I'll do my best. The Steering Committee has quite clearly stated from the beginning that they believe that Ponded Pastures are desirable, and the question is not whether they should be allowed to exist or not, but what kind of controls should be implemented.

In the POP, ponded pastures have been categorised according to their location (coastal versus inland) and the type of ponded pasture practice (eg. utilisation of a natural or artificial wetland, or creation of new wetlands by formation of banks below or above high tide, or across a waterway). Existing wetlands with the potential for ponded pastures are also categorised according to whether they are modified or not. Recommendations have been provided for each of the categories of ponded pasture. It has been proposed that control of ponded pastures be based on a mixture of voluntary regulation, as well as that implemented by existing legislation. No new legislation specific for ponded pastures has been proposed.

Legislative control of ponded pastures will depend mostly upon:

1. The outcome of environmental impact assessments (EIA), implemented under the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act. EIAs will only have to be done if either a) the relevant local council has declared ponded pasture species weeds under the Local Government Act or the Rural Lands Protection Act, or b) the council and/or State Government has declared the area a place of high conservation value.
2. Issue of permits provided under the Harbours Act, the Water Resources Act or the Fisheries Act when banks are built below the high tide mark or across inland waterways.
3. Provisions outlined in the Wetlands Strategy; a policy document presently being developed by the Queensland Department of Environment. The Wetlands Strategy has arisen because of the federal pressure on states to propose measures to conserve wetlands. The National Wetlands Program is a response of the Federal Government to the Ramsar Convention, which encourages the development of national wetland policies. All newly created ponded areas will be classified as artificial wetlands and will be covered by the Wetlands Strategy.

A major recommendation of the Ponded Pastures Steering Committee is the formulation of ponded pastures guidelines, which will be a document that will outline all the steps the grazier has to take before developing ponded pastures, including all their legislative requirements. Economic, social and ecological considerations, as well as practical considerations concerning establishment of the system (eg. engineering requirements), and requirements for maintenance and monitoring (continuing compliance with permits), will be described. Three months after an intensive education and awareness program, it has been recommended that the moratorium on ponded pastures should be lifted, and the guidelines should be developed in a period of no longer than 12 months after the resumption of ponding.

There have also been several other recommendations for investigations to be done by State Government departments (eg. DPI, DNR, DOE) concerning:

1. The present extent and location of ponded pastures, and the location of wetlands and catchments of high conservation value which need to be protected.
2. The benefits and costs of ponded pastures to primary producers, and the impact of this practice on marine, coastal and inland environments and their associated industries.
3. The legality of existing banks in littoral areas and the ecological impacts of either keeping, removing or modifying them.
4. The effects of ponded pastures on human and animal health. I can only assume that there were concerns that ponded pastures may be places of breeding of mosquitoes or other pathogens and parasites.

Somewhat disappointingly I thought, there was not a strong recommendation for research to be done on the use of native species in ponded pastures. The weediness of exotic species is one of the main ecological problems of the practice. The only vague recommendation was that funding bodies should be notified of the need for research on use of native species. For the other areas of investigation, recommendations have been made that agencies such as the DPI should be directed to do the research. The weediness of ponded pasture species is such a problem that some local councils such as those of the Cardwell and Johnstone Shires are in the process of declaring *Hymenachne amplexicaulis* a P2 category plant under the *Local Government Act*.

Let's hope that the practice of ponding pastures is practiced responsibly in the future. I also hope that the State Government expeditiously identifies and nominates wetlands and catchment pastures moratorium is lifted. There areas of high conservation value, should at least be strong controls of and does this before the ponded development in these areas.

## LIBRARY NEWS – David Stewart

The QWSG library is now kept at one central locality (my house), and all enquiries by members are welcome. It is planned to produce an inventory of the library for the next Queensland Wader. Before this inventory can be compiled, it would be appreciated if anyone with QWSG books or publications let me know what they have. The library is also missing many key wader references, some of which have already been requested in the past two months. If anyone has unwanted wader related books or other publications, donations to the library would be greatly appreciated by the group, and hopefully put to a good use.

## Australian Environment on-line COAST NET – Nige Roberts

Plenty of potential from this activity. That's the prediction from the QWSG CoastNet desk.

Since our first virtual steps onto the Web I have discovered that CoastNet is still finding its feet and its early days. At present it is still very much a framework on which information is yet to be strung. To-date I have spent my weekly time slots getting to know the system and introducing the QWSG on it. There has been a little interest shown by some of the other CoastNetters to our introduction and I have corresponded with a couple of them. There appears to be a fair range of NGO involvement with the range of participants including WPSQ, ATCV, and Land Care groups and others such as Native Fish Australia.

Through discussions with others in the QWSG the next step will be to get a list of wader sites from across Qld and put out a call for counters. We can also request information from people who may already know of good wader sites or of sites that are being disturbed or in danger of being lost. We also intend to investigate the role the system could play in displaying our monitoring information and the mapping of wader distributions.

I intend to implement this input from QWSG data however, there is a place for any interesting bits of information such as conference proceedings, public addresses, hot issues like proposed development in a wader habitat area or even something you found which is humorous. If anybody has such information, so I can get it on the net, you need to e-mail it to.

Some of the other features of the system may be of interest to particular members however, some are not fully operational yet. There is a Coastal Atlas facility that promises geographic data bases to produce 1:250 000 map sheets of the coastal zone, a Marine Program which details protected areas and policy, a National Marine Information System which can be of help with finding information on marine and coastal issues and also a Data Directory containing over 3000 coastal datasets (metadata) on everything from environmental monitoring data to a comprehensive listing of tide gauge data for Australia.

As the QWSG co-ordinator I intend to review as much of this information as my time will allow and present it in this spot in the newsletter. However, everyone with internet access is encouraged to have a look at the information themselves and get involved. The web address is <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/coastnet>

## CAIRNS FORESHORE - Peter Driscoll

*Concerns have been raised by BOCA members in North Queensland regarding the possibility of the foreshore retaining wall being relocated 30 metres farther out, and thereby significantly decreasing feeding and roosting area for waders within Trinity Inlet, particularly at certain times of the tide.*

The Cairns foreshore is home to a significant number of migratory Palaearctic waders (shorebirds) every summer. These birds breed in far northern regions of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and travel to and from the Cairns area every year through several countries.

They are the subject of international conservation agreements between Australia and Japan, and Australia and China. They figure prominently in assessing wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, to which Australia is a signatory.

Mid last year, QOSI and QWSG produced a report to the State Government reviewing all available information on the distribution and numbers of waders along the Queensland coastline. Counts of over 2000 waders have been recorded for the Cairns Esplanade, including very high numbers of Whimbrels. Wader densities are high from the Barron River to Bessie Point. The Cairns Harbour area generally offers good Wader habitat in a region relatively short of such conditions.

To the north of Cairns, there is a long stretch of open coastline with few waders and estuaries beyond Port Douglas also have few birds. Guard and Garnett (1982) noted that waders were more abundant in Trinity Inlet than anywhere else to the north of Cairns until Princess Charlotte Bay. Whimbrels and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers occur around Cairns in numbers that are four and five percent of their respective Queensland totals.

For many thousands of kilometres from Townsville to the tip of Cape York, Trinity Inlet is one of very few important sites for waders and as such is regionally a very important site for waders. It requires appropriate recognition of these features and adequate protection from ill conceived reclamation proposals.

Australia is obliged to protect waders and their habitats for their own sake, for the sake of our coastal ecosystems and for the benefit of people throughout the region. Only with international good will and a coordinated approach will waders survive the coming decades of environmental change. Australia must demonstrate leadership in protecting migratory waders.

Cairns is a major destination for both tourists and waders. It is ideally suited to demonstrate our good will towards the fauna which we share with the region. The birds can be readily observed along the Cairns foreshore where they attract many people from overseas interested in birdlife.

The birds could be better presented as a tourist attraction to demonstrate our links with countries in Asia and as acknowledgement of their awesome feats of migration, which too few people know about.

It is inconceivable that waders in Cairns should be jeopardised by any plans to reclaim foreshore lands. Any such development will detract from available feeding habitat, impact upon the birdlife and diminish what is an irreplaceable tourist attraction.

We are strongly opposed to changes along the Cairns Esplanade that will impinge upon feeding and roosting habitat for waders and jeopardise a major natural asset of the city and an attraction that can only increase in its value to both local and international community.

Due recognition and appropriate measures to conserve intertidal flats around Cairns is needed. They are as an important an ecosystem as the neighbouring coral reefs and rainforests, and in relation to international fauna, even more important.

## **BART on DISPLAY – OSPREY HOUSE** – 16 August ,1997 – Gary Fisher

Approximately 2000 visitors enjoyed the Tinchi Tamba Wetlands, Brisbane Forest Park, events and displays that were on show throughout Downfall Creek Environmental Centre, Pumicestone the afternoon and evening. Other displays included Passage and Pine River Catchment, various wildlife arts and pottery, aboriginal artefacts, recycling projects and Hughies Worm Farm. During the afternoon, John Bowden conducted guided walks of the area, separated by some lively music performed on his didgeridoo. Ric Natrass entertained guests as they viewed a panorama of the river from the lookout.

Birds were observed through field scopes located at the lookout and the birdhide, which also included displays of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and wader identification.

Pine Rivers Mayor Yvonne Chapman officially opened the festival with a speech reinforcing the need for the preservation of wetlands, so visitors from far and wide can appreciate the birds and wildlife in this beautiful environment.

Many thanks to Jim and Ivell Whyte (and Bart, a hit with kids and adults alike). They were kept busy answering questions regarding the group's activities. There was a good response with regard to membership application forms (Ivell informed me that they ran out!) and they also attained modest sales of literature and promotional items.

Gary is President of the Osprey House Management Advisory Committee

## **COUNT SITES**

This non-existent article is the one 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.

## COUNT PROGRAMME - Phil and Linda Cross

Counters have certainly kept us busy during the last three months supplying plenty of count sheets for their sites.

Mike and Linda Lewis, who count Manly Boat Harbour on a monthly basis have increased their monitoring and now send additional counts each month. Arthur and Sheryl Keates regularly count Lytton, but Arthur just can't resist going down to Manly Boat Harbour and filling in another count sheet! You're definitely addicted Arthur. By far the most active counter is Edward Kleiber on the Gold Coast. Edward has 13 sites which he regularly monitors on and off designated count days, some as often as twice a week. Now that's what you call "an addiction". If anyone else out there has the same addiction we will be more than happy to process the extra count sheets, (even if it's not your count site).

The annual winter count brought a mixed response from counters. A few chose to do their counts on Sunday 29th June and others the following weekend. There were plenty of complaints about the weather from most of the counters around Moreton Bay who did their count on Saturday 28th.

An afternoon thunderstorm came through bringing driving wind, rain and cold conditions, making counting difficult for yours truly at our Deception Bay sites. At one state we had great difficulty seeing anything through the driving rain. One counter wrote "Regrettably had to abandon count as soon as we started due to high wind suddenly coming in with driving rain which rendered the optics inoperable!" By the time we reached our third count site the light was fading. There were quite a number of other counters who braved similar conditions to monitor their sites. It is sheer dedication to waders or bordering on madness, we wonder.

Whatever the reason - you all deserve a pat on the back. Well done!

It was surprising to note that there are still quite a number of birds overwintering in Australia, with particularly good quantities of birds at Boonaroo and Manly Boat Harbour. As we write this article, information received in relation to waders at Manly Boat Harbour indicates that there is evidence of birds returning from their northern hemisphere breeding grounds (Red Knot and Curlew Sandpiper).

By the time you receive this newsletter, wader numbers should be increasing, so clean up those scopes and binoculars and keep those count sheets coming in.

### **WADER IDENTIFICATION ASSISTANCE:**

Mike and Linda Lewis, who count Manly Boat Harbour, have offered their assistance to members in relation to wader identification. Numbers will be limited to 3 or 4 people at a time to join them. If you are interested, contact Mike or Linda for more information.

### **WADER IDENTIFICATION DAYS:**

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we will be holding regular wader identification days at various locations.

**Manly Boat Harbour:** Arthur and Sheryl Keates will be at Manly Boat Harbour at 9.00am on Saturday 4th October.

**Toorbul:** This is one of the most pleasant spots to watch waders with shady trees inviting you to set up your chair and scope and watch them. We'll be viewing birds on an incoming tide at 12 noon on Saturday 22nd November. See Activities for details.

### **QWSG MERCHANDISE:**

We now have stock of Simpson and Day Field Guides for \$20. The book is the fifth edition with 19 colour plates replaced and two others modified. More images have been added, particularly of younger birds. Field information text entries have been rewritten or modified for a third of the species. Some 154 extra or replacement black-and-white drawings are included. There are changes to 180 distribution maps. The taxonomy adopted follows Christidis & Boles (1994, RAOU Monograph 2).

Some colours and sizes in Polo neck shirts are becoming scarce, so contact us soon if you don't want to miss out.

### **Counter Survey:**

Survey forms were included in the QW19 March newsletter, and two more counters have responded. Please remember to send your survey form in as soon as possible.

HAPPY COUNTING.

## WADER WATCH - Natasha Taylor

Only a few records of flagged birds over the winter months. But spring is nearly here. I've had in my care over several months a Pied Oystercatcher from Moreton Island. It arrived in April nearly dead from starvation and unable to stand from an old fracture to the tibiotarsus which had mended at 90 degrees. With some fancy orthopaedic work by Cathy Wilson and myself it is ready to go back to Moreton Island. I wish you well.

### **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**

3 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Gary Fisher at Osprey House, Pine Rivers 22-1-97, 8-2-97, 22-3-97, 19-7-97

1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Gary Fisher at Osprey House, Pine Rivers 27-1,29-1,5-2, 12-3, 26-3, 9-4, 7-6, 1-8, 2-8,6-8-97

2 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Gary Fisher at Osprey House, Pine River 19-2-97

5 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Gary Fisher at Osprey House, Pine River 19-3-97

1 Eastern Curlew seen by Lindsay Agnew at Amity, North Stradbroke Island 12-4-97

1 Whimbrel seen by Lindsay Agnew at Amity, North Stradbroke Island 12-4-97

3 Grey-tailed Tattlers seen by Lindsay Agnew at Amity, North Stradbroke Island 12-4-97

1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Lindsay Agnew at Amity, North Stradbroke Island 12-4-97

1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Lindsay Agnew at Manly Boat Harbour 25-4-97

1 Bar-tailed Godwit seen by Edward Kleiber at Tony's Sandbar, Tweed River 3-5-97,10-5-97, 5-6-97, 11-6-97

4 Great Knots seen by Gary Fisher at Osprey House, Pine River 7-6-97, 19-7-97

2 Great Knots seen by Gary Fisher at Osprey House, Pine River 1-8-97

5 Great Knots seen by Gary Fisher at Osprey House, Pine River 2-8-97

2 Grey-tailed Tattlers seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour 29-6-97

2 Bar-tailed Godwits seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour 29-6-97

### **Other Leg Flag Sightings and Banded Birds**

1 Grey-tailed Tattler with blue leg flag seen by Lindsay Agnew at Manly Boat Harbour 25-4-97

1 Silver Gull with one metal band and 2 plastic (light blue over a blue) bands seen by Edward Kleiber at Tony's Sandbar Tweed River 2-5-97

1 Capstan Tern with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Kerosene Inlet entrance, Tweed River 10-5-97

1 Silver Gull with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tony's Sandbar, Tweed River 10-5-97

2 Crested Terns with metal bands seen by Edward Kleiber at Kerosene Inlet entrance, Tweed River 12-5-97

1 Crested Tern with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Hastings Point, NSW 15-6-97 -

1 Crested Tern with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tony's Sandbar, Tweed River 26-6-97

2 Pied Oystercatchers with metal bands seen by Arthur and Sheryl Keates at Manly Boat Harbour 29-6-97

## ACTIVITY REPORTS

### **Cannon Netting - Moreton Island - 21/22 June 1997 - Nige Roberts**

*Cannon Netting was carried out on Moreton Island for the first time since the epic effort to capture Curlew for the satellite tracking program.*

The bunch of enthusiasts included Peter Driscoll, Stephanie & Briony Tonkin, Melanie Kee, Phil Batley, Peter Venables, Sam Venables, myself and Dave Stewart (who decided to join us on the Saturday). If I have forgotten anyone - apologies.

Two possible sites had been selected, Reeders Point (on the Island's southern tip) and the Little Sandhills area (on the Western Beach). Half the group went with Peter to check out the sand hills and would meet up with us later. I took the others down to Reeders. Just as we approached the roost on foot, the weather came in and we were drenched, scopes and all. We observed that in the wild weather the Eastern Curlew moved off the water's edge and dispersed into the dune grass in a disorganised attempt to get out of the wind and rain. Based on the numbers of birds around, Reeders was selected as the cannon netting site.

Our main target species looked as if they were to be Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey-tailed Tattler and Whimbrel. There were some small flocks of Sand Plovers and Great Knots about as well.

Three nets were set that afternoon in readiness for Sunday. We camouflaged them heavily to try and avoid the wary eye of the Curlew. A brief birding trip over to Mirrapool completed Saturday's activities. Whilst with Peter and Dave, Phil thought he saw an Arctic Tern over at Mirrapool but given his uncertainty at the time he wouldn't say it definitely was. Joined by the Moreton Is. Rangers on Sunday we made a successful catch consisting mostly of Bar-tailed Godwit, a couple of Tattlers and one (blind?) Curlew. We had hoped for more Curlew, as we had seen a couple on the previous day sporting the latest in wildlife satellite transmitters. It would have been a major success for the project if we could have retrieved one of these birds.

With the cannon netting completed Melanie, Phil and I waved the rest of the group off and settled in to a few extra days of well-earned rest, staying at Peter and Stephanie's marvellous house. For bird watchers with a bit of spare time it is a most rewarding place. In the forested areas, a few of the birds that were abundant and crowding to get in front of our bino's included Brown Honeyeaters, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Mangrove Honeyeater, Silver Eyes, Golden Whistler and Noisy Friarbirds. Around the coast there was just so much to see.

On the Western Beach during low tide, I came across a Green flagged Curlew and also one wearing a transmitter. The exposed flats were a haven for wader, terns, herons, ducks, egrets, ibis, spoonbills etc. etc. On the Eastern Beach we counted 21 pairs of Pied Oystercatchers and 4 individual birds (5 birds carried metal bands). We also saw small flocks of Great Knot, Double-banded Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Sanderling and a Red-capped Plover with a chick. Amongst the large flock of Crested Terns, where Phil had seen his Arctic Tern, we saw what we first thought was a Common Tern with a yellow leg flag. Phil later checked his identification and it was in fact a White-fronted Tern which had been part of a group of 100 or so that were banded on the Chatham islands near New Zealand!

Raptors are also hard to miss around the Island and we saw plenty of Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kite, Osprey and White-breasted Sea Eagle. From the spectacular summit of Mt Tempest, we also saw what later turned out to be a Brown Falcon after a check with the HANZAB. For me the highlight came as we were waiting for the barge on our last day. Phil spotted a juvenile Southern Giant-Petrel amongst the wrecks at Tangalooma - what a spectacular bird to see bobbing around in the tropics!

### **Amity Point - Stradbroke Island- 26 July 1997 - Leanne Bowden**

A very positive day was held at Amity - not only because we successfully fired two of the 3 nets set, catching 38 Double-banded Plover in one and 7 Eastern Curlew in the other, without injuries to man or beast, but because Amity is such a public place, we spent a lot of time educating many of the very interested passers-by, on the migratory habits of waders.

Seven people participated all day, Leanne Bowden, Phil Cross, Peter Driscoll, Kath & Andrew Gosden, Arthur & Sheryl Keates, Melanie Kee and Nige Roberts, and Dan Crouch stayed for the morning.

We met at Amity Spit on Saturday morning. Nigel and Melanie, Kath and Andrew had camped as strangers the night before, not knowing they were all there for the same reason. Other than Peter, who came by boat, "Wader-go", laden with all the equipment from Moreton Island, the rest came by Redland Bay barge.

Three nets were laid along the length of the spit, the first for the curlews and the next two for the hoped-for double-bandeds. So as not to be defeated, the beach around the net was adjusted with much effort, primarily to ensure that the perfect habitat for plovers was present - right in the catching area. What a ritual it must have looked! Firstly, members knelt around the net (Were they praying?), before they carefully swept all the non-catching area level, so as to conceal any hiding holes. Next, they strategically jumped and stepped in the catching area to produce depressions just perfect for hiding holes before skilfully strewing seaweed and other seashore detritus around the area, as a source of camouflage. Then, the job done, they turned to walk away.

And guess what? Their habitat worked! Immediately! So immediately in fact, that most attendees missed seeing it, because the birds flew in as soon as their backs were turned. Keen to get back to their cars, morning tea and the shade of the trees in preparation for the expected 2 hours wait to high tide before any activity would occur, they missed it.



Sharp eyed Nige, walking with Leanne, was the only one to give a backward glance, and casually comment "You know, I think we've got a catch already". Their eyes locked with sudden recognition of the truth in what he'd just said.

Put that cuppa on hold! Gasp, shock, alert Peter! Push Dan away from his telescope to start monitoring, connect the firing box, orientate Peter into which net was which, get over our disbelief that this was truly happening. Peter's mouth dropped "We'll have to fire, you know, they're in perfect position, this may not happen again!" Send Dan running up the beach to find the others, charge the firing box – and down came 2 crows and the little birds ran away, over the embankment, and out of firing range. "Darn", says Peter.

Much coaxing later, they did return, and 1 net was fired to capture 38 lively specimens.

Catching the Curlews was not so easy.

Whilst we waited, we explained the virtues of cannon netting to a variety of passers-by, and we won ourselves two helpers. Young Lindsay's dad, passing by the spectacle in his Shark boat, quickly contacted his son, recalling how Lindsay had broken a VCR tape and almost worn out the machine playing his tape recording of the Brownie's Coastwatch that featured QWSG cannon netting. He just loved watching the birds. Granddad Martin Waugh escorted him to join us, where he joined Peter in the boat, later helping with the processing. He was an amazing child, delicately transferring the birds from holding cage to processor, and eagerly setting them free, occasionally with a kiss goodbye!! And Granddad provided the glue for the bands, has become a member and will help count Amity. Not bad for an afternoon's work!

Meanwhile, back to how we caught the birds - the Curlews sat at the end of the Spit and the Oyster Catchers sat on the net. "Use the Jiggler", radioed Peter from his vantage point in the boat. They enjoyed that, pecked at the little white tapes as they flipped and twisted. The afternoon dragged on. "How long will it take to process 38 plovers, Peter?" we delicately enquired, but Peter was his usual persistent self, when it comes to catching Curlew.

Then horror of horrors, a speed boat laden with "the family" roared up to land right in the midst of the birds, putting them all up. Peter was port to starboard with them instantly - and - we won ourselves a convert! The boatload moved to moor near us, and one of the boaties sauntered over to utter "I like birds, what are you doing?" So, we told him, and he wanted to help. It was 2 hours before we could actually fire, and he oscillated between us and his mouth-watering family BBQ, beer and cricket game. To see the dismay on his face and hear his shout of "No, No, No" when yet another boat tried to pull in at the Spit, just as he had earlier done, was extraordinary. We had to hold him back, he was so upset. There was no doubt in any of our minds that this particular boat captain would never recklessly disturb roosting birds again. He helped act as runner when the birds were extracted and grinned from ear to ear as he carried his treasure to the holding cage.

So, all went well. We explained about Waders and Netting to a number of interested people, we definitely converted one, we gained a new member and we finished with enough time to load up "Wader-go" and wave Peter goodbye as he motored over to Moreton, silhouetted against the setting sun.

Some Statistics: \*'

16 of the 38 Double-bandeds were retraps, 10 previously trapped in 1994, 3 in 1996 and 3 trapped in 1994 and 1996! The 10 bands from 1994 had to be removed because of wear. 5 were in full breeding plumage and 9 nearly full. Their Head to Bill length ranged from 45 mm to 59.5mm, the most frequent length being 46.5. Their weight ranged from 50 to 66.5 grams, an average of 59 grams.

Of the 7 Eastern Curlew, 3 were male and 4 were female. The boys ranged from 735 to 790 grams, Head to Bill between 195 and 215mm. The biggest boy didn't even match the littlest girl - ranging from 810 to 895 grams, Head to Bill 229 to 246mm.

## **Manly - Wader Identification Day - 17 August 1997 - Arthur & Sheryl Keates**

As a follow up to the wader identification day at Toorbul earlier in the year, another ID day was held at Manly Boat Harbour.

A fine sunny morning greeted the 37 people, mostly QOSI or QWSG members, who attended.

As expected, given the time of year, the number of birds was not high. However, observers were not disappointed with the variety of species recorded. Twenty telescopes aided good sightings of the 15 species of waders present. The highlight of the morning was, for most, the double-banded plovers looking resplendent in their breeding plumage.

Another wader identification day has been set down for Saturday, October 4. It is expected that both species and numbers will be higher at this peak migration time.

The 39 species recorded were:

little pied cormorant, pied cormorant, little black cormorant, darter (heard), Australian pelican, white-faced heron, great egret, striated heron, Australian white ibis, brahminy kite, osprey, pied oystercatcher, black-winged stilt, pacific golden plover, red-capped plover, double-banded plover, lesser sand plover, masked lapwing, bar-tailed godwit (including 2 birds with green leg flags), whimbrel, eastern curlew (including 1 bird with green leg flag), common greenshank, grey-tailed tattler, ruddy turnstone, sharp-tailed sandpiper, curlew sandpiper, silver gull, gull-billed tern, caspian tern, lesser crested tern, crested tern, crested pigeon, galah, collared kingfisher (heard) welcome swallow, tree martin, Richard's pipit, Torresian crow and Australian magpie.

## **PRESS RELEASES FROM QUEENSLAND ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTER** Hon. Brian Littleproud

### **28 July 1997: DENIGRATION OF MORETON BAY UNJUSTIFIED; MOTIVES QUESTIONED**

Those denigrating Moreton Bay at the weekend appear to be motivated more by politics than a concern for the environment or facts, Environment Minister Brian Littleproud said yesterday

"People have allowed themselves to be used by a southern Laborite in concert with Queensland Labor's environment spokesman in a politically irresponsible attack claiming the whole of Moreton Bay is at risk environmentally," he said. "The area where the media circus gathered yesterday at Nudgee Beach comprises only a small part of the Bay, and allegations regarding the environment there have been previously addressed, and are continuing to be.

"As I said earlier this year, tests there had shown no evidence of chemical contaminants in concentrations likely to have harmful effects on human health or aquatic organisms. "Levels of contaminants present are typical of Australian urban waterways and in significantly lower concentrations than might be regarded as of concern elsewhere.

"Toxicity testing commissioned by the department at the National Research Centre for Environmental Toxicology of sediments from a wide area including Nudgee Beach and Nundah creeks and offshore of Nudgee Beach confirmed this.

"A scientific panel including marine scientists from the Queensland Museum and universities reviewed the biological data for the area and confirmed there was evidence a so-called 'environmental event' has occurred over the past two years, causing losses to the populations of some aquatic organisms. It was not possible to determine the cause of this, but a temporary recovery did occur. "

Mr Littleproud said the department had been working with university and environmental groups on establishing a macro-fauna study in this and other areas to look further at the situation and provide baseline data.

"I am advised the study will take account of temporal variability of macro-faunal communities, and sampling of sites is occurring now and will be repeated in Spring," he said.

Mr Littleproud said in general terms issues such as that in the Nudgee Beach area were being addressed through the Brisbane River Management Plan and the Water Quality Strategy for the river and associated waterways. The former is now out in draft form for public consultation, and a draft for the latter will be released later this year.

"The Water Quality Strategy will be a critical adjunct to the management plan and will focus on water quality standards to be achieved in different sections of the waterways," he said.

The Brisbane River Management Group chaired by Mr Littleproud is also in the process of appointing a Reference Group to look at management issues for the river and associated waterways. It will comprise representatives from conservation and environment, business and industry, local government tourism and recreation.

Mr Littleproud said he was unaware of the reason for allegations by Labor spokesman Mr Welford that the National Registration Authority (NRA) for agricultural and veterinary chemicals was waiting on him for information about bifenthrin, a chemical which had been linked to the situation at Nudgee Beach and other areas.

"This is pure fiction: the NRA is not waiting advice from me. The NRA has been briefed on all scientific investigations conducted on the Nudgee Beach issue and has stated that it will respond appropriately if any substantial evidence is produced that indicates bifenthrin or any other registered chemicals is implicated in environmental problems," he said.

## **24 July 1997: SURVEY OF OPINIONS OF BRISBANE RIVER, WATERWAYS AND BAY**

Increased control and management of commercial activities as well as reduction of pollution have rated highly in a survey on the Brisbane River and associated waterways.

The survey of 850 south-east Queensland residents was conducted by Reark Research on behalf of the Brisbane River Management Group (chaired by Environment Minister Brian Littleproud) and the Moreton Bay Wastewater Management Study (chaired by Cr Ann Bennison of Brisbane City Council).

"The changes most people would like to see occur are increased control and management of commercial activities (53%), reduction of pollution (52%) and increased recreational opportunities (19%)".

The survey will be used to refine the draft Brisbane River Management Plan, which is now out for public discussion, and the water quality discussion paper due for release next month before release of the first draft Water Quality Strategy in November.

The survey also found that only 20 per cent thought the quality of water in the Brisbane River and associated waterways to be good, 46% thought it moderate and 30% poor; whereas 74 per cent believe the water quality in Moreton Bay to be moderate to very good.

Industrial waste, rubbish dumping and dredging were seen as the most likely causes of a decline in water quality.

A ranking of "function or uses" showed: environmental significance 84%, water supply 73%, scenery and landscape 66%, Brisbane River as a symbol or landmark 66%, land-based waterside recreation 65%, tourism 61%, recreation on the water 56%, setting for cultural events 55% and dredging 21%.

The survey also found that 88 per cent were satisfied with current levels of access to the waterways, 82 per cent satisfied with opportunities for recreation, tourism and entertainment, and 73 per cent satisfied with levels of access to transport on the Brisbane River.

## **NEWS FROM AWSG**

The following items have been reproduced from "The Tattler" No 12, September 1997 with the permission of their Editor, Phil Straw. This Newsletter of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway is produced by the Australasian Wader Studies Group. Membership of the A WSG is available.

## **Banded Stilts confirmed breeding in Lake Eyre**

Lake Eyre is the largest saltlake in Australia (930 000 ha) and has for many years been suspected of being an important nesting site for the Banded Stilt. However, finding even huge flocks of birds on this inland sea is no mean feat and the area is visited irregularly at best.

Clive Minton has confirmed breeding on the Lake during a flight over the area on 11th July 1997. Clive estimated 17,000 chicks in creches in Lake Eyre North, many of which were approaching flying stage of development.

Clive was unable to determine which island the birds had nested on but suspected an island which had been taken over by Silver Gulls. Silver Gulls are a well-known predator of Banded Stilt chicks and eggs and have moved in on colonies in the past as soon as the peak nesting, therefore densest nesting, period of the stilts is past.

## **Brisbane Proceedings - at last!**

As Proceedings go, those of the 'Shorebird Conservation in the Asia-Pacific Region', Brisbane, March 1996 are out in good time, although it was hoped that they would have been out much sooner. The extra wait has meant that some papers have been updated since the conference. Previously unpublished information from much of The Flyway countries and the first comprehensive assessment of wader distribution of coastal Queensland is included. Papers published cover Part I Biology of Migratory Waders, Part II Status of Shorebirds and Important Sites, Part III Threats and Impacts on Shorebirds, Part IV Frameworks for Flyway Conservation and Part V Asia-Pacific Shorebird Action Plan.

The Proceedings will be available within the next couple of weeks. All delegates at the conference will receive their copies (price was included in the conference fees) as soon as the mail system allows. Extra copies have been printed and are available for AS25 plus \$7 postage and packing within Aust \$15 surface overseas (airmail rates o'seas on request).

## **Your Views on Jet Skis**

The Sunday Mail (6/4/97) reports that jet ski "cowboys" and irresponsible boat owners are traumatising Victoria's Port Phillip Bay dolphins, according to the head of a research institute. A further article (13/4/97) reported that the Queensland Government was introducing tighter controls on personal watercraft. Jet skis would be restricted in speed and the distance they must keep from swimmers, the shoreline and non-powered craft in the water - sailboats, canoes and rowing boats.

What are the issues for shorebirds?

Jet skis have the tendency to operate in sheltered waters, often pristine places.

What are appropriate controls to avoid disturbance to shorebirds? Distance to birds (30m), speed (6 knots), noise?

Jet skis create excessive noise.

Jet skis create wave wash.

Disturbance to birds at roost and feeding.

Application of regulations to control to minimum distance to shoreline, does this include sandbanks and low tide feeding flats?

Can the speed of jet skis be adequately policed?

Any information and observations on this issue would be helpful to the development of a policy on jet skis.

Sandra Harding, Conservation Officer, AWSG,

## **Japan Adopts Colour-Flagging Protocol**

In consultation with the Wetland International - Oceania and the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, the Japanese Bird Migration Research Centre started flagging with a two-flag system from 3 May 1997. The system is in accordance with the draft Protocol for Colour Flagging of Migratory Shorebirds in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway, February 1997. It has been decided that the Central Japan region will use a Blue/White flag combination and a Blue/Orange flag combination will be used in the Southern Japan region.

The colour marking of migratory shorebirds undertaken in Tokyo Bay during northward migration in 1997 will use a Blue flag on the left tibia and a White flag on the left tarsus and the metal band will be attached to the right tarsus.

The marking site will be the mouth of Obitsu River south-west of Chiba.

There is also plan to colour mark shorebirds at Yatsu Tidal flats using a site specific colour combination using colour bands. The marking at Yatsu will be Mauve bands on the right tibia and left tibia and a metal band under the mauve ring on the right tibia.

If Yatsu uses colour flags, then the marking details will be the same as at the mouth of Obitsu River.

The scheme of flagging sites in Hokkaido, where flagging has been done only in the southward migration, will be made clear in due course.

Tokyo 3 May 1997

Dear friends,

We have been flagging some two thousand waders in Japan since 1992. Up to now, there have been two flagging sites in Hokkaido and another two in Tokyo Bay. Since the launch of the East-Asia Australasia Migratory Shorebird Flyway Network, more and more people are starting to recognise the importance of international link for the protection of birds.

This is why we have decided to shift the Japanese flagging system to the two-flag system of the draft Protocol for Colour Flagging. We hope that more and more people on the flyway will be interested that we can get as many flag sightings as possible throughout the flyway for the sake of the protection and conservation of the endangered sites of the birds and the life of the birds themselves.

Please give information of sighting the above Japanese colour marked waders to the Bird Migration Research Centre as shown below.

Yoshimitsu SHIGETA Minoru & Yoshimitsu SHIGETA,  
Bird Migration Research Centre, Yamashina Institute for Ornithology

### **Isahaya Bay Still Under Siege**

The Ministry of Agriculture still refuses to open gates in the seawall, which cut Isahaya Bay off from the sea on April 14th, nor has the Environment Agency strengthened their weak-kneed stance. The Bay continues to die apace.

At a seminar held in Isahaya on July 6th which brought together representatives of the now 90-strong "National Dietmembers Association to Consider Isahaya Bay" with well-known water quality and other experts, the Wild Bird Society of Japan, Nagasaki Chapter, noted that approximately 700 waders, including Black-bellied Plover, Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Black-tailed Godwit, are presently remaining in Isahaya Bay. Normally at this time of year there are few if any waders here, and at sites in nearby Saga no waders have been observed." Unfortunately, regular observation was not carried out in previous years, so it is not clearly known whether this is a normal phenomenon, but it may be that these birds were unable to obtain sufficient nourishment to migrate to their breeding grounds. What is without question is that migrants arriving from breeding grounds in the fall will find little or nothing to eat at Isahaya Bay unless the gates are opened soon enough for the benthos to recover.

The only encouraging aspect is the massive support on the national level for opening the gates and reviving the tidal flats while discussions are held with a view to finding a way to let the bay live and solve the problems which the Isahaya Bay Land Reclamation Project is supposed to solve. A petition fielded after the gate closing has already collected well over 40,000 signatures. An English version is available - please contact Maggie Suzuki, see below. One problem the project is clearly not solving is flood control. Extremely heavy rains have been falling on Kyushu for the last 5 days, and flooding has not been prevented as predicted by the authorities. Meantime, international pressure continues to mount. WWF-Japan reports that His Royal Highness Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh sent a letter to the Japanese government on May 26th asking them to prevent damage to Isahaya Bay's ecosystem.

On July 26th, Daniel Beard of the National Audubon Society of the United States and representative of the "American NGO Alliance to Save Isahaya Bay," received from the U.S. Department of State an answer to their June 12th letter alleging that the Isahaya project violates the US - Japan bilateral migratory bird convention. Mr. Peter O. Thomas of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs states that "We agree that the situation is very grave, the issue has been passed to our Legal Adviser for analysis, We will follow-up on this question. The actions of your alliance on this issue are greatly appreciated and are representative of the key role of NGOs in our efforts to better manage our global environment."

Japan Wetlands Action Network also sent letters alleging violations to relevant government offices in China, Russia, and Australia as well as to the United States.

We urge our colleagues along the East Asian / Australasian Flyway to pursue the issue with their respective governments, supporting our claim that the Isahaya Bay Land Reclamation Project violates these bilateral migratory bird agreements.

### **Information needed re: Review of bird migration - western & central Pacific Ocean**

Janet Williams and I are preparing a review of bird migration over the western and central Pacific Ocean for a symposium on bird migration across large ecological barriers to be presented at the XXII IOC in 1998. We will cover the geography of migrations, species involved and orientation as determined from census, banding, visual and radar observations. We also will touch briefly on conservation issues. We would be grateful for information, including major and minor publications, useful general references, work in progress, or unpublished work, that would pertain to this topic. We are particularly interested in migration between eastern Asia or Alaska and islands in the Pacific, Australia, New Zealand or Hawaii. Movements between the Asian mainland and Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Borneo, Indonesia, or New Guinea are also of interest, especially for migrants other than shorebirds. All work used in the review will be acknowledged and, if appropriate, cited. If available reprints would be appreciated. Please send information by e-mail, fax or mail to: Dr. Timothy. C. Williams Department of Biology, Swarthmore College

### **Artificial Swamp for Latham's Snipe**

As part of the site remediation of the 2000 Olympic Games and a Millennium Park (at Homebush Bay, Sydney) an important wetland for Latham's Snipe had to be constructed. Due to the fact that the existing wetland was on a site contaminated by a rubbish tip it had to be excavated, therefore destroying the site. So as not to disturb the birds during this season, the construction of an alternative wetland was started at a nearby site. The new wetland will include areas of rank grassland and sedges, shallow ponds and a muddy substrate. The planting of vegetation has started and should be established by mid-August, ready for the return of the snipe. However, to allow the invertebrate population, on which the snipe feed, time to establish two other wetlands will be manipulated to provide temporary feeding habitat.

In parallel with the Homebush Bay project, a feeding ecology study will be carried out in the Hunter Estuary (near Newcastle, NSW) to determine diurnal and nocturnal movements of this species. It is also hoped to collect more details on habitat preferences for the final design of the Homebush wetland.

## **ACTIVITIES - 1997!**

### **Wader Counts (general monitoring)**

|                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Sat 20 Sept      | High of 2.26m at 12.01pm |
| Sat 18 Oct       | High of 2.41m at 10.54am |
| Sat 15 Nov       | High of 2.48m at 9.51am  |
| Sat 20 Dec       | High 2.08m at 1.31pm     |
| Sat 17 Jan, 1998 | High 2.23 at 12.17pm     |

Contact: Phil & Linda Cross. Completed count forms should be returned to Mr and Mrs Cross

### **Cannon Netting**

Sun 5 Oct Fisherman Islands - High of 2.10m at 11.28am  
 Contact: Peter Driscoll (07) 3289 0237 three days in advance to confirm time and place. For weekend trips, please confirm at least one week in advance. As well as listed activities, netting outings are mounted "opportunistically" when it appears there may be a good chance of success.

### **Other Activities**

Sat 4 Oct 9.00am Wader identification Morning — Manly Boat Harbour  
 High Tide 2.11m at 10.53am. Meet 9.00am at car park east of Royal Qld Yacht Clubhouse.  
 UBD Map 164 A6.  
 Contact: Arthur & Sheryl Keates

- Sat 22 Nov 1.00pm Wader Identification Afternoon — Toorbul  
Bring: telescope, hat, chairs, insect repellent and lunch.  
Directions: Take the Bruce Highway north from Brisbane to the Donnybrook/Toorbul turnoff near the Big Fish. Turn off here and head east over the highway overpass. Continue on this road to Toorbul. Turn right at the T-junction then first left and then right, which brings you onto the Esplanade. Follow this road to the end, we will be on the left.  
Contact: Phil & Linda Cross
- Sat 29 Nov ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Nudgee Beach Environment Centre  
Activities from 10.00am. 2.00pm AGM  
Contact: Peter Driscoll

### **Other Conservation Activities of Interest I**

*Please note: This listing is as a "goodwill" gesture to other groups with similar interests with their permission. However, QWSG may not always be up-to-date with changes. Please check the contact to ensure accuracy.*

- Monthly Trips Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association (SOSSA) - day trip to observe seabirds. In conjunction with and departing from SeaWorld, Southport spit, Boat leaves early morning, cost \$55 per person.  
Contact: Paul Walbridge
- Sat 20, Sun 21 Sept WPSQ Kedron Brook, Other Groups and BCC Sunset to Sunset  
Kedron Brook Water for Wildlife Festival along entire length of Kedron Brook
- Sun 21 6.30am Meet at Nudgee Beach Environmental Education Centre for "Mangrove Sunrise"  
guided wader walk  
9.00am Fundraiser breakfast available at NBEEC  
Contact: Greg Miller or Wildlife Queensland
- Fri 14,15,16 November WPSQ - Moreton Island Camping Weekend  
Tents & kitchen provided. Excursions. BBQ Saturday night. \$65  
Contact: Karen Welsh
- Saturday 3 December 7.30am WPSQ - Waderwalk at Wynnum, Meet at Manly Boat Harbour  
\$5 includes breakfast at Fig Tree Point, Lota  
Contact: Greg Miller