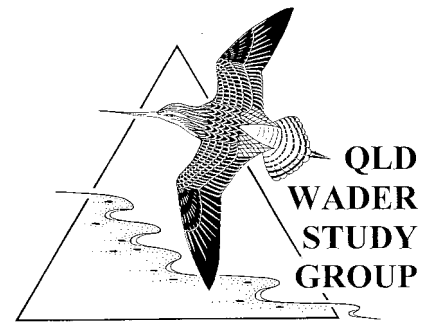


# QUEENSLAND WADER



Issue number 022

Summer 1998

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

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## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT FOR 1997 - Peter Driscoll

It has been another busy year for the Queensland Wader Study Group. We have been involved in a number of projects and activities and there are more to come next year. The executive had somewhat of a face lift at the end of last year but we have held up well and those who left, or stepped back a little have remained good supporters of the Group and its objectives.

Members that were new to the executive have been most diligent. Who could not notice the influence of Sheryl Keates as Treasurer, Leanne Bowden as Newsletter Editor, Greg Miller as Conservation Officer, and Linda Cross as Count Co-ordinator? Linda is now handling the merchandise as well. Arthur Keates and Phil Cross have ably assisted their respective spouses. Also, David Stewart has been playing his part as the new Librarian (you will see the results in due course).

After another year of often routine activities, it is gratifying at the end of 1997 to see the culmination of some of our work in past years.

"Shorebird Conservation in the Asia-Pacific Region" has just been published. It is the result of the workshop that was organised by the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) in Brisbane in March last year. Without extensive local support from QWSG the workshop would not have been the success that it was. The proceedings have been edited by Phil Straw (NSW) and are available from Linda Cross for \$25.00.

Redlands Shire Council is on the verge of receiving all necessary permit approvals from the Dept of Environment and Dept of Primary Industries for the construction of an artificial roost site at Empire Point. It has been a long hard battle but it seems we are finally getting somewhere with the help of a Coastcare Grant. Also, our second Coastcare Grant for the maintenance of the Dynah island roost site has just been finalised. Through the efforts of Ivell Whyte and Greg Miller, issues relating to the preservation of wader habitat in the Boondall Wetlands is still high on the agenda.

We have also had a successful year satellite tracking Eastern Curlews and are poised to deploy more transmitters next year using the Dept of Environment Grant and assistance from the Wild Bird Society of Japan.

I believe QWSG has had a positive influence on the current State Government proposal to nominate the Great Sandy Strait as a Ramsar site. The area is truly deserving of international status and QWSG has now conducted two major high tide counts of waders in the region, the latest being just a few weeks ago. These data will contribute to better protection of waders in what will hopefully be a new Ramsar site.

We have also done well this year in raising public awareness of waders and promoting their conservation through comments and submissions to government, thanks to Sandra Harding, Greg Miller and Andrew Geering.

Late last year, under guidance from Leanne Bowden, QWSG formulated its object statement: *"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."* I think we are beginning to achieve a good balance in our efforts at research, public promotion of waders, and conservation. We are also having an influence outside of Queensland. Government agencies and NGOs in other States and countries are encouraged by our efforts.

The AWSG just held an important executive meeting in Melbourne resulting in renewed enthusiasm and a new direction. AWSG now has a draft object "To promote the conservation of waders and their habitats through research and conservation programmes in Australia, and to encourage and assist similar activities throughout the East Asian-Australasian Flyway." The AWSG has refocused more on the Flyway. QWSG can complement AWSG activities by publicly advocating and promoting waders in Queensland, running the Queensland count and banding programmes and forging international links dealing with birds that migrate to Queensland wetlands.

What does next year hold? Just a few things come to mind. They include continuation of current projects on roost sites in Moreton Bay and satellite tracking of Eastern Curlews. It is likely that the count programme will be improved and form a major part of a re-vamped AWSG programme. We have a book to design, write and publish on waders in South East Queensland, a banding manual to complete (thanks to Phil Venables), and we are about to embark upon a three-year fieldwork programme in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

I couldn't forget to mention another course on waders, identification days, banding and leg flagging and a general streamlining of our operating procedures. We are expecting another good year ahead which will hopefully result in better chances for the conservation of waders and their habitats.

Peter Driscoll

**CHAIRPERSON:**

Peter Driscoll

**LIBRARIAN:** Dave Stewart

**TREASURER:**

Sheryl Keates

**COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

Lindsay Agnew

**SECRETARY:** Vacant

**NEWSLETTER EDITORS:**

Leanne Bowden & G Miller

Margaret Bernard

**COUNT COORDINATORS:**

Linda & Phil Cross

Sandra Harding

**COUNT DATA ENTRY**

Natasha Taylor

Eddie Hegerl

Arthur Keates

**CONSERVATION OFFICERS:**

Andrew Geering

and Greg Miller

Rob Mancini

Stuart Pell

Karen Welsh

Ivell Whyte

Jim Whyte

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

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

Annual subscription rates:

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Receipt will be forwarded with next edition of Queensland Wader.

Forward Application to:

Mrs S. Keates, The Treasurer, Queensland Wader Study Group

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Contributions should be addressed to The Editors, Queensland Wader, E-mail:

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. -

## NEW MEMBERS

*We welcome the following new members who have joined since the last list was printed in the Spring: September 1997 newsletter:*

Rex Bartlett, Jan Bedwell, John Bell, Lionel Bloss, Ronald Brinkley, Margaret Clark, Dorothy Cosandey, Brian Eunson, Ruth Kemp, Julie Meles, Pauline Parker, Jelena Popov.

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.

## VALE - NIGEL ROBERTS

**Sadly, we lost one of our committee members in late October.  
Our sympathies go to his family, friends and colleagues.**

Nigel was involved with the Group since its formation in 19.92, and he was the youngest committee member. His youthfulness and humour, combined with his academic qualifications and experience, played an integral part in our activities and planning.

Over the last year, Nigel's name appeared throughout Queensland Wader - in the list of committee members; as attending meetings on behalf of the group; in his own articles on Coastnet, his Master's work, involvement in field trips; and included as a participating member in most other field reports.

Nigel's work with the Radio Tracking project around Moreton Bay and his involvement with the fitting of Satellite transmitters to Eastern Curlew on Moreton Island in February, helped the Group achieve a fuller knowledge of wader behaviour.

As well, he was great fun to be with and mixed well with the range of personalities that constitute the QWSG.

He was also a willing worker on field trips, making light of 3.30am risings, setting nets in the rain and mud at Fishermans Island, or during magnificent sunrises at Stradbroke Island, or spending hours and hours waiting for the optimum moments or windows of opportunity that is essential to research.

Now he has chosen where he wants to be and may he rest in peace.

He will be sadly missed, but we will never forget the contribution he made to our lives and our work.

## News from the Committee – Leanne Bowden

### **Committee Meetings**

Meetings were held on Tuesday 16 September and Tuesday 18 November, with 13 members in attendance.

#### **Items discussed:**

Correspondence – comment required on Gold Coast Waterways Plan

Finance - Eastern Curlew tracking transmitter purchase; donation from BCC staff to continue Nigel's work

Newsletter - count data and data analysis.

Count program - feedback, training, photographing sites.

Merchandise - ID books, Avocet shirts and Polo shirts.

Conservation – Jetski disturbance; Nudgee Beach Benthic Fauna problem, Brisbane Gateway Port ; sediment contamination at Manly Boat Harbour; Dux Creek; Cairns foreshore; Moreton Bay Zoning Plan, offence to disturb birds; 7<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Conference Costa Rica May 1999; risk of all western Moreton Bay roost sites being lost to development and/or contamination.

Grants - display boards

Projects - Coastnet; Empire Point; Wader Book; Cannon Netting Manual.  
 Forward Plans – Eastern Curlew tracking in February; Survey in Queensland Gulf.  
 Other - AGM equipment maintenance; QWSG representation on QOSI; Licences.

The next meeting will be held in January 1998.

### Other Meetings

Attended by members on behalf of QWSG:

Oct, Nov: QOSI Council - Greg Miller, Stuart Pell

Oct, Nov: Boondall Wetlands Management Cttee - Greg Miller, Ivell Whyte

November: Moreton Bay Alliance Meeting - Joyce Harding

November: AWSG meeting in Melbourne - Peter Driscoll and Sandra Harding

5/6 December: Coastcare Community Conference, Ewen Maddock Dam Conference Centre - Greg Miller, Leanne Bowden.

### Publicity

21 \_ September: WPSO Kedron Brook Water for Wildlife Festival. G Miller, L Bowden, A & S Keates led an early morning Wader Walk at Nudgee Beach, G Miller, L Bowden, J & I Whyte joined the displays and activities in Kalinga Park.

19 October: Cairns Urban Landcare - Walks and Talks program. G Miller & L Bowden joined with Birds Australia North Queensland Group on Cairns foreshore to present a talk on waders and assist with identification.

5 November: Maryborough - Public Information evening at DoE offices, P Driscoll, G Miller.

7 December: Kelly's Beach (via Bundaberg) OceanCare Day, L Bowden & G Miller.

Neville Coleman's book - Seabirds and Others of the Great Barrier Reef, Australasia, South Pacific and Indian Ocean. QWSG is included within a listing of Associations and Clubs who "have contributed vast amounts of information, observations and sightings, and assisted ' scientists (ornithologists) and national park personnel in catching and banding sea birds. This is in order to track migration paths, piece together their natural histories and participate in endeavours to save important wetlands, breeding sites and feeding grounds

## 6th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 29 November 1997

Leanne Bowden

About 30 members attended the AGM held at Nudgee Beach Environment Centre (NBEC) on Saturday 29 November. Despite the heat, the trailer was scrubbed, scraped, de-rusted and painted, now you need sunglasses to look at it! Material for new holding cages was cut ready to sew and frames prepared for stitching in. A big thank you to everyone who came to help and who even took work home with them. Reports were presented from the President, Treasurer and Conservation officer.

Thanks to Mary-Ann Pattison, for approving the use of the NBEC, and Ann Beasley, "Everything to do with Nudgee Beach" for providing her key. Their continuing support of the QWSG is invaluable.

### Farewells

Many thanks to Diana O'Connor and Olwyn Crimp, both of whom chose not to stand for re-election.

Diana has toiled as Publicity Officer for many years, and was responsible for many of our successful Training Courses.

Olwyn's qualifications and ability to explain government policy have been a great help in providing better understanding of management practices.

### Welcomes

Lindsay Agnew: Lindsay's life is full off conservation. He has a Bachelor of Science from Griffith University, is employed in the Natural Environment Group, Brisbane City Council and he has also recently been elected to the QOSI Committee. A discoverer of QWSG through QOSI, his motivation to join was the appeal of activities in which he likes to participate - data collection on a regular basis, community education and participation in conservation issues. He is a regular counter at Wellington Point.

Robert Mancini: Robert will be able to contribute to QWSG, education and awareness from a totally different direction. As a wildlife artist, graphic designer and illustrator, his passion for the environment is reflected in

his art. He has just won an award from the "Queensland Wildlife Artists Society for the Best Water Colour, two Bar-tailed Godwits, and his pastel of Crested Terns was Highly Commended. The visual richness of his paintings will show the uninitiated just how beautiful waders really are. Robert arrived in Queensland from Victoria at the beginning of 1997, saw an ad in the Wynnum Herald for the Wader Course, completed the Course and joined up immediately. He has had an interest in birds for a very long time, both from a scientific and subject matter point of view, and has been a member of BOCA and RAOU>

## CONSERVATION REPORT - Greg Miller and Andrew Geering

Conservation of wildlife is a many faceted operation and this particularly applies to the QWSG. Fundamental to the development of any conservation management strategies is a sound knowledge of the biology of the species in question. QWSG continued to address this issue in 1997 in scientific studies including the monthly high tide roost counts, netting/banding program within Moreton Bay and the first year of the satellite tracking project. The QWSG cooperated with government departments (in particular the Dept of Environment) to complete special surveys, (the second survey of the Great Sandy Strait) and projects (satellite tracking).

QWSG is increasingly aware of the effects on waders of an expanding human population. Human impact ranges from large scale loss of wader habitat through development to subtle changes resulting from recreational use of our coastline. Where possible QWSG has provided input into the formation of legislation and has participated in consultation processes offered by both government and private companies, including the Brisbane Gateway Port Environmental Working Committee, Boral Brisbane River Dredging Working Committee and also at various public meetings and field trips associated with these processes.

Public education by QWSG includes another successful Wader Course organised by Diana O'Connor, the popular Wader ID Days organised by Phil and Linda Cross and Arthur and Sheryl Keates, and also QWSG members addressing various groups on aspects of wader lifestyles and requirements. QWSG was represented during the year on various committees and functions as noted in the newsletter. Members of the group regularly network with interested parties locally, intrastate, national and internationally.

This is achieved only by the effort, dedication and enthusiasm of QWSG members. 1997 will be remembered as an outstanding year in Queensland wader history and we look forward to a future of ongoing achievements, the fruition of current projects and the satisfaction of reflecting on our successes. We thank all those members, and also non-members, who participated in enhancing wader bird sustainability.

In conclusion we ask you to consider the similarities between wader conservation efforts and the wader species *Arenaria interpres* they both act locally, are represented in most wader regions globally and endeavour to leave no stone unturned.

The Queensland Government is considering requesting the Commonwealth Government to nominate areas of the Great Sandy Strait to the List of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The Convention aims to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain.

Listing highlights the international significance of the region to the rest of the world and brings the assurance of Government to manage the area to maintain the values for which it is listed.

The 93,160 hectare area being considered stretches from about Urangun in the north to the southern end of Tin Can Bay, and across to the western coast of Fraser island from Moon Point southwards.

Great Sandy Strait meets most of the recommended criteria to be used in identifying wetlands of international importance. From an ornithological viewpoint, the most important criterion internationally is that the area regularly supports 20,000 waterfowl, and regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterfowl. In fact, it is considered the third most important site in Australia for migratory shorebirds.

A draft proposal was announced and released to the public on 13 October so that local residents and interested people could express their views and comment on the document. A copy was provided to the committees of QOSI and QWSG, to give them the opportunity to comment.

QWSG provided supportive and informative comments on the proposal. The consultation period has been extended until 31 March, 1998 to allow interest groups to peruse and have further input into the final proposal and detailed maps of the site. Initial comments received were generally supportive and have provided a sound basis for the final document.

## **The Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan - In Place a Last – Olwyn Crimp**

The Zoning Plan for the Moreton Bay Marine Park has finally been approved and took effect from 1 December 1997.

The Moreton Bay Marine Park was comment in December 1993. As well as approving gazetted in February 1993 and a draft Marine the Zoning Plan, the State Government has also Park Zoning Plan was released for public amalgamated the Moreton Bay Marine Park with the Pumicestone Passage Marine Park and named the amalgamated park, the Moreton Bay Marine Park. Although a final zoning plan has been a long time coming, it promises to go some way toward protecting shorebirds and their habitat within the Bay, further in fact than any Australian multiple-use marine park.

A zoning plan is a bit like a town plan over water in that it allocates all areas of the park into a particular zone. The purpose of the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan is to "provide for the ecologically sustainable use of Moreton Bay Marine Park and to protect its natural recreational "cultural heritage and amenity values". To achieve this purpose the Park is divided into a number of zones ranging in levels of protection. There are five zones:

- general use,
- habitat,
- conservation,
- buffer, and
- protection.

For each of the zones there are activities that can be undertaken without permission and others which require permission.

When considering whether permission should be given the Chief Executive (the Director-General of the Department of Environment or his delegate) must be satisfied that the proposed activity:

- "will not have an unacceptable environmental impact on the zone; and
- is consistent with the maintenance of the biological diversity and ecological function of the marine park; and
- will not cause a loss of vegetation essential to the marine park 's productivity; and
- will not prejudice the natural condition and amenity of the marine park. "

The Chief Executive also must consider:

- the effect the activity might have on natural tidal flushing and shorebirds particularly international migratory bird species, and their habitat and the need to protect shorebirds and their habitat; and
- cumulative impacts of small-scale developments.

Much of the shorebird habitat has been zoned for conservation or protection. This includes all of Pumicestone Passage except for a small area adjacent to Golden Beach, Banksia Beach and Bongaree; the entire South Passage area including the Moreton, Boolong, Maroom and Amity Banks, Mirapool and the Rous Channel, the reef around Peel and Bird Islands and most of the southern Bay from Russell island south.

In addition to being given protection within zones, the Zoning Plan specifically addresses shorebird conservation. All public authorities exercising their statutory powers in the park must consult with the Chief Executive about any proposal or action that may affect the value of the Marine Park to shorebirds. Everyone is required to restrain his/her dog in a way that will prevent the dog from causing undue disturbance to shorebirds in the Park.

It will be an offence to navigate a boat, hovercraft or personal watercraft (e.g. a jetski), or drive a vehicle through a group of feeding or roosting shorebirds on land, or take off in an aircraft through a group of feeding or roosting shorebirds or generally cause undue disturbance to shorebirds or their habitat.

In all zones except the General Use Zone, permission is required to operate an aircraft below 500 feet. No permission is required above 500 feet except where the operator wishes to land or take off from a place other than a constructed airport, airstrip or helipad.

Issues of concern for the QWSG have included the use of hovercraft and jet-skis. The Zoning Plan bans the use of hovercraft in all of Pumicestone Passage. Hovercraft and jet-skis can be used for private purposes anywhere in General Use and Habitat Zones with no permit required. In Conservation Zones they can only be used privately without a permit in defined navigation channels; Any other use of hovercraft or jet-skis, whether commercially or privately will require a permit.

High levels of protection have been given to the major dugong and turtle feeding grounds through declaring these areas as Turtle and Dugong Designated Areas with the expressly stated purpose of conserving sea-turtle and dugong populations. In these areas, a person cannot operate a speedboat on the plane or operate a boat, hovercraft or jet-ski in a way or at a speed that could reasonably be expected to result in the striking of a dugong or turtle. Turtle and Dugong Areas cover the South Passage banks and channels, the north-western side of Peel Island, the eastern side of Lamb Island and an area along the western side of North Stradbroke Island east of Macleay Island.

There are many other important activities covered in the Zoning Plan. The Department of Environment will have brochures and general information available in the new year. Copies of the actual Zoning Plan can be obtained from the Government Printer.

Of course, the Zoning Plan will only be effective in conserving and managing Moreton Bay if resources are provided for its implementation.

## **SATELLITE TRACKING OF EASTERN CURLEWS DURING THE NORTHWARD MIGRATION FROM MORETON BAY** – Peter Driscoll

Peter has provided the following precis from his interim report for the first year of tracking. The project will continue in February 1998, with QWSG members working with Wild Bird Society of Japan members. The venue has yet to be decided, as the topography at Mirapool has changed since February last year.

The primary objective of the project was to provide a better understanding of the migratory pathways of Eastern Curlews leaving Australia on the northward migration. The results so far have clearly met this objective with the first ever example of tracking of a migratory wader from an over-wintering site in the southern hemisphere onto the breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere. Furthermore, the same bird has subsequently been tracked back to Queensland to the Broad Sound, where the transmitter may have been lost from the bird's back. This final record was within 700 km of documenting a complete return journey of 20,000 km.

Over 1500 location records at various levels of reliability have been received from 12 birds that were tracked for at least some distance.

Major features of the results are:

- The first seven birds to leave departed between 11th and 21st of March while Cyclone Justin was still active between the Coral Sea, the south east of PNG, and the coast of Queensland. Four of these birds returned to Moreton Bay, one of them after a few days and a short journey to the Great Sandy Strait, two of them by mid-April after journeys into the Coral Sea and the south east coast of PNG, and one of them by mid July after a long stay on the south east coast of PNG and then in Princess Charlotte Bay.
- Two of the five birds that left after the Cyclone (between 25th March and 6th April) returned to Moreton Bay after flights to the north coast of PNG and into the Western Pacific Ocean (periods of 25 and 48 days respectively).
- The remaining three were recorded much farther into the northern hemisphere as follows:
  - Josh undertook a flight of a minimum distance of 6500 km at an average speed of nearly 60 kmph to near Taiwan before the signal ceased. It is hoped that the harness detached from the bird upon breakage of the "weak link". However, the bird's fate will never be known.
  - Mia was recorded throughout an almost complete return journey that involved long stays on the Chinese coastline and a six week-long stay in the Arum River basin in Russia where

- there are breeding records of Eastern Curlew. Six weeks is conceivably long enough to breed. She appears to have flown single legs of over 6000 km on both northward and southward migrations.
- o Kylie also made it to Russia, to the east of Mia but not as far as "known" breeding grounds on Kamchatka Peninsula. Even though signals, have been received from about the same location since then, the birds fate is unknown. She may have continued on without the transmitter attached.

Of particular scientific interest are the data on flight distances and speeds (energetics of migration), the behaviour of birds in returning early to their over wintering site, the locations and periods of stay along the route, and the flight routes themselves.

The project has yielded good results that in some respects have exceeded expectations. Much more should be learnt from the tracking to come in 1998 and 1999. The collaborative efforts of all parties involved and particularly the link between QWSG and WBSJ have proven fruitful

## **Moreton Bay Alliance Meeting, - 22 November 1997 – Joyce Harding**

On Saturday 22 November, I attended the meeting of the Moreton Bay Alliance. Some of the points raised were:

The Bayside Environmental Committee is forming a number of local groups within the organization to deal with specific areas of concern - Lota Creek among others.

A hide has been opened at the Wynnum Board – Friends Walk, named the Ian Venables Bird Hide. Efforts are being made to remove concrete channelling from Wynnum Creek and realign the natural water course.

Friends of Stradbroke Island and the Stradbroke Management Group have completed an environmental study of the Point Lookout area and hope to get funding for a management plan.

An interesting "Work for the dole" scheme giving work experience to young people 18-24 years of age is up and running. Community groups can access this workforce of teams of 7 persons on application.

Bayside Branch of Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) are concerned about a proposed housing development by Deflin at Thornlands abutting the Thornlands roost site. Also of concern is the intention of State Government to sell off unallotted state land within Redland Shire to developers. This land is part of the land previously declared nature reserve or not included as residential.

The Bayside Branch WPSQ announced a plan to survey dugong by distributing information sheets and questionnaires to boat users.

A Brisbane Gateway Port area study Draft Strategy for the Dept. of Economics and Trade (Nov,97) prepared by Maunsell Pty Ltd was tabled. This paper is obviously based on economics with the environment as secondary.

It has been reported that the Couran Cove Resort, South Stradbroke Is. originally touted in the development stages as being environmentally conscious is beginning to cut corners. As economics comes in the door so environment goes out the window.

A number of environment organizations have sent a letter to the Ministers for the Environment and for Primary Industries in relation to coral extraction by QCL and the damage done to the reefs in the Bay. QCL does not wish to repair this damage before withdrawing their operations from the Bay. As Moreton Bay is a Ramsar Site, wetlands of Mud and St Helena Islands should be protected and efforts made to rehabilitate the areas degraded by mining.

Two proposals were put forward:

1. to ban dogs from supplementary or mid-tide sites used by waders; and
2. to ban unguarded propellers on all boats in Moreton Bay to reduce strikes killing turtles and dugongs.

Moreton Bay is a declared Ramsar Site and of great importance to migratory waders. The organizations of the Moreton Bay Alliance are involved in keeping the Bay in a suitable condition for the waders of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway so should have our support whenever possible.

## **Meeting of the Committee of the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) Melbourne, .16 November 1997**

Sandra Harding



I attended this meeting as the Conservation Officer for the AWSG. Peter Driscoll, Vice Chair of AWSG (and Chair of QWSG) also attended. Thank you to QWSG for assisting my travel to Melbourne. Conservation and research activities on waders in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway are the central objectives of the AWSG.

Two Queensland items of discussion were the:

**Great Sandy Strait Ramsar nomination to the List of Wetlands of International Importance.**

This nomination will be only the fifth site for Queensland. The other sites that are Ramsar listed are Moreton Bay, Bowling Green Bay, Shoalwater/Corio Bays and Currawinya Lakes. Ramsar listing of Great Sandy Strait will give the area recognition of its significance as a site supporting migratory waders in excess of 20,000. The maintenance of this wetland for its special ecological values will have great benefits for the local community and tourists visiting the area.

**Expedition to Karumba to count the waders in the Gulf of Carpentaria.**

Natural Heritage Trust funding has been obtained to carry out this expedition. Peter Driscoll is considering the time needed, methods of transport, people needed and time of year to best conduct the survey.

Future directions for the AWSG

**Population Monitoring** - The AWSG started in 1980. Since 1985 volunteer population monitoring of about 40 sites in Australia has been conducted. This program has been reviewed by Peter Driscoll and recommendations made to Commonwealth government. There is a need to develop a more thorough count program to include replication of counts and comprehensive counts of waders in a closed system of wader roosts. This program will be further developed and appropriate funding sought from the Commonwealth.

**Expeditions** - North-west Australia expeditions have provided training opportunities and much valuable research. Doug Watkins, the Shorebird Officer raised the need for expeditions to other countries in the East Asian-Australasian-Flyway to catch birds, count and look for colour flags. This will help the understanding of migration systems in the flyway.

**Wader banding** - In addition to the North-west banding work, the Victorian Wader Study Group has banded and flagged considerable numbers of waders. This data can indicate survival rates and breeding success. There is interest in expanding this program for certain species in Queensland. Considerable debate was given to the issue of the co-ordination of leg flagging throughout the flyway. As only 6 colours are recognisable in the field, there is a need to go to double leg flagging. Japan, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia and Russia could be leg flagging in the near future.

**Atlas of Australian Birds** - Birds Australia (RAOU) will be undertaking a repeat of the Atlas project. This may assist in identifying leg flag sightings and the distribution of inland and resident wader species.

**Conservation** — In March 1996, the Brisbane Ramsar Conference was held. The Australian Government prepared a National Report on the status of Ramsar sites in Australia. It is now time to evaluate the management and nomination of Ramsar sites in time for the next Ramsar Conference in May 1999. I will co-ordinate this review for all the States. I will also maintain a register of wader conservation issues which will include mining at Roebuck Bay, WA, ponded pastures, OLD, cotton growing in the Cooper Creek, OLD and disturbance by jetskis. This is to ensure that appropriate actions are occurring on these issues. In 1993 the AWSG prepared the National Plan for Shorebird Conservation in Australia which recommended sites for protection. Compliance with this report will also be addressed.

## The Cairns Esplanade (City Beach) Project Visit 19 October 1997 – Greg Miller

Following requests for support from Cairns wader enthusiasts, both QOSI and QWSG responded by contributing towards our, Greg Miller (representing QOSI as their Conservation Officer this time) and Leanne Bowden (QWSG), rapid return trip to Cairns. The focus of the trip was to show the flag and support the local "Cairnsians" who are facing the possible loss of one of Australia's best - shorebird watching venues. Yes, the Cairns Esplanade is being seriously (considered for development, consisting, in these early stages, of a South Bank type development in the southern corner and the construction of a seawall 30m out on the tidal flats.

This would obviously affect the waders, however uncertainty exists to what extent. Elderly locals recall the seashore, prior to the seawall, as being a white sandy beach that has since been covered in silt washed down Trinity Inlet. Press articles quote a local councillor referring to this area as "the most unattractive

eyesore" and some tourists seem to agree.

The project is scheduled for public consultation, however, the polling reports 85% of residents support the concept and the Cairns City Council (CCC) councillors are awaiting the new CBD Development Control Plan which is expected to contain a Citybeach element. Also in the pipeline is the Trinity Inlet Management Plan (which, I noted, proposes "deepening" the tidal flats to enable a junior sailing area and just a fortnight ago the 'Cairns Cityport Project – Initial Advice Statement' arrived in my mail. Each of these planning initiatives may impact on the wader populations, however aspects of each appear to be mutually exclusive so all three can't be completed in their current form... but it may only take one to impair wader sustainability. Therefore, the esplanade's waders will require serious representation just to maintain the status quo.

In the wader's favour is the fact that over 70 people attended a Cairns Urban Landcare "Walks and Talks" programme on the esplanade on the morning of Sunday 19 October.

The QOSI/QWSG address covered the wader lifestyle, satellite tracking results and the importance of Trinity Inlet to shorebirds and waders in particular. Also, I discussed with a council representative the recent growth in attention being paid to Cairns stormwater control. Stormwater (and its contents) is increasingly recognised as capable of seriously impacting both benthic fauna and wader birds, so whatever CCC can achieve to modify the effect is welcome.

As the plane turned to fly south I could see the Cairns foreshore and this reconfirmed the importance of this small area of estuarine flats in a coastline of rocky foreshores and shell grit beaches. As it decreased into the distance and haze, I knew the issue was also still with me and will be as the Cairns birds negotiate on behalf of the waders... and QWSG will support them in this endeavour. Our thanks to QOSI and QWSG for contributing to this valuable visit.

## **Birding-Aus Electronic Mail Message**

Keith & Lindsay Fisher

Hi all, -

We thought you might like to know what's happening in North Queensland. Birds Australia North Queensland Group in conjunction with Cairns Urban Landcare Group held a field trip on October 19<sup>th</sup> to publicise the return of the waders to the Cairns foreshore Esplanade. Two members of QWSG flew up from Brisbane to help out with display material and talks. Over 70 people turned out including members of BOCA and many more people walking along the Esplanade stopped off to listen or view the display. The main thrust of the morning was to publicise the importance of the Cairns mudflats and the role they play in the East Asian—Australasian Flyway.

The tide was perfect and the birds obliging. Good numbers (for Cairns) of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, " Curlew Sandpipers, Black and Bar-tailed 'Godwits, Red-necked Stints were present. Numbers in brackets are from a count conducted the day before. The highlight of the morning was the appearance of an Asian Dowitcher almost at high tide, it hung around long enough for most people to see it before flying off with a group of Bar-tailed Godwits.

List of 43 Species, 1564 Waders

Australian Pelican, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Australian White ibis, Royal Spoonbill, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Black-tailed Godwit (46), Bar-tailed Godwit (183), Whimbrel (16), Eastern Curlew (65). Common Greenshank (18), Terek Sandpiper (5), Grey-tailed Tattler (16), Asian Dowitcher (1), Great Knot (36), Red-necked Stint (478), Great Knot (131) Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (476), Curlew Sandpiper (66), Pied Oystercatcher (1), Pacific Golden Plover (4), Red-capped Plover (1 1), Lesser Sand Plover (6), Black-fronted Dotterel (1), Masked Lapwing (25), Silver Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Little Tern, Rock Dove, Peaceful Dove, Pied imperial-Pigeon, Rainbow Lorikeet, White-rumped Swiftlet, Helmeted Friarbird, Varied Honeyeater, , Magpie-lark, Willie Wagtail, Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, House Sparrow, Welcome Swallow, Common Myna.

## **LIBRARY NEWS and CATALOGUE - Dave Stewart**

If you have any publications owned by the Queensland Wader Study Group, could you please let me know so they can be registered.

Jeremy Thompson has generously donated all of the research articles he used for PhD research to the QWSG library. These articles will be categorised and entered into a database for future reference by the QWSG members.

It is also hoped that future editions of the "Queensland Wader" will include a 'small wader related "recent publications" section, which will draw our attention to recent articles in the scientific and the more mainstream literature. This recent publication will eventually build in to an valuable data base for wader research.  
David Stewart,

## Journals

**Alarm Call** (Newsletter of the Port Curtis Wader Study Group) No. 1-5

**Asian Wetland News** Vol 1, 2:2, 3:1, 4:1

**Interwader East Asia / Pacific shorebird study programme:** Annual report 1984, 1985 and 1986.

**Corella** Vol 2: 4 & supplement, 3:-4-5, 4:1-5, 5:2-5, 6:1-4

**Memoirs of the Queensland Museum** Vol 29:2, 30:3, 33:1, 34:1, 36:1

**New Zealand Wader Study Group Newsletter** NO. 1-4

**NSW Wader Study Group Newsletter** Vol. June 1991, October 1991, January 1992, April 1992, July 1992, 4, 5, 4:1-4, 5:1

**NSW Wader News** Vol. 5:2-4

**Queensland Wader Study Group Newsletter** No. 1-8

**Queensland Wader** No. 9-17

**The Ramsar Newsletter** "Conservation on Wetlands" No. 22

**The Sunbird** Vol 5:2-4, 6:1, 3-4, 7:1-4, 8:1-4, 9:1-4, 10:2-4, 11:1-4, 12:2-4, 13:1-4, 14:2-4, 15:1-4, 16:1, 3-4, 17:1

**The Emu** Vol 80:1-4 & supplement, 81 :1-2, 4, 82:2-4 & supplement, 83:1-2, 4, 84:3

**The Queensland Naturalist** Vol 26:5-6, 27:1-6, 28:1-6, 29:1-2

**The Stilt.** No. 26-28

**The Tattler** No. 1-8

**Victorian Wader Study Group Bulletin** No. 6 and 15

**Wader Study Group Bulletin.** No. 76

## OTHER NEWSLETTERS

**Bulletin of the Australian Littoral Society Waves** (Newsheet of The Marine & Coastal Community Network)

**Ocean Care News sheet** (Marine & Coastal Community Network)

**Moreton Island Protection Committee Inc.** Newsletter

**Bulletin of the Australian Marine Conservation Society**

## REPORTS AND BOOKS

**Recommended band size list:**

Birds of Australia and its territories. Australian bird and bat banding scheme

**Conservation of migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats in the East Asian-Australasian flyway: An international workshop and symposium.** Kushiro, Japan 1994.

**Conservation on Wetlands: Strategic plan - Objectives & actions 1997-2002.** RAMSAR Convention 1996.

**Conservation on wetlands: Resolutions & recommendations.** RAMSAR Convention 1996.

**Project Egret Watch: Information Handbook** Amended January 1993. Hunter Wetlands Trust, Shortland Wetlands Centre.

**The Australian Bird Bander's Manual 1989.**

Australian bird and bat banding schemes: Australian National Park and Wildlife Service.

**Willawong Technology Assessment Report 1995.**

Brisbane City Council

Driscoll, P.V. 1995. Development of telemetry techniques for tracking movements of Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*). Report prepared for the QLD Dept. of Environment and Heritage.

**Driscoll, P.V. 1996.** The distribution of waders along the Queensland coastline. Report prepared for the QLD Dept. of Environment and Heritage.

**Hawkins, A.F.A and J.R. Howes 1986.** Preliminary assessment of coastal wetlands and shorebirds in south-west Peninsular Malaysia. Interwader Publication No. 13.

**Hayman, P., J. Marchant and T. Prater 1986.** Shorebirds: An identification guide to the waders of the World. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Pell, S. and W. Lawler 1996. Wader Communities along the north-east Queensland coast (Bowen to Cairns). Report prepared for the QLD Dept. of Environment and Heritage.

**Swennen, C., J.R. Howes, N. Ruttanadukul, E. Stikvoort and S. Ardseungnurn 1986.** Evaluation of coastal wetlands in South Thailand: A joint project between Interwader and Songkhla university: Evaluation of the littoral ecosystem at three sites in South Thailand in 1985. Final report.

**Interwader** Report No. 1.

**Walraven, E. 1992.** Rescue and rehabilitation of oiled birds: Field manual. Taronga Zoo

## COUNT SITES

*The following 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.*

### BOWEN SALTWORKS

Jon Wren

**LOCATION:**

Central Queensland Salt Ltd, Bowen

Lat 20.00°S Long 148.05°E

**CONTACT:**

Permission required from the Manager to enter property

**HISTORY:**

The Saltworks were first developed in the 1920's and have played an important part for conservation as well as economic benefit to the community.

1984-1990: conducted wader counts for AWSG

After 1990: undertaken wader counts for QWSG.

**SPECIAL NOTES:**

In the summer months, temperatures on the saltworks can be quite extreme. No shade is available until entering the mangrove area, and sensible measures, plus drinking water, are required.

**SITE PLAN:**

The area adjacent to the Bruce Highway has the evaporative ponds for salt production. Not much activity here. The next area has the storage ponds for water, the closer to the evaporative ponds the higher the salinity factor. Provides excellent habitat for waders and other water birds. Behind the storage ponds, we enter an expanse of mangrove bordered on the western side by dry paperbark and acacia scrub with a track that leads to the sea pump. Honeyeaters and Warblers and various other bush birds.

**GENERAL DETAILS:**

Sunscreen, aeroguard check and we are off. On entering the saltworks, the first bird to be observed are the Red-capped Plovers scurrying mouselike over the large dikes that separate the ponds, now and again Red-necked Stints also get mixed up in the small flocks of 20 plus. Overhead Welcome Swallows give a mellow call in their search for food with a Nankeen Kestrel observing the activity while perched on a power pole that carries electricity to operate the pumps.

In my introduction I mentioned that the evaporative ponds do not have a great deal of bird activity. I recall a number of years ago that they had recently harvested the salt and some ponds were reshaped which left a fairly muddy mess. On this occasion, the mess proved beneficial, as Lesser Sandplover and Greater Sandplover had decided to rest behind the large clumps of mud that had been disturbed by the equipment. Of course, I took full advantage of the situation in comparing these closely identical species. It's amazing what you can pick up when you have each bird almost standing next to one another.

After about two hundred metres you start to enter the storage ponds area and this is where the majority of wader activity occurs. Small dikes separate each pond and, in some instances, you can traverse them completely, but beware that many have had washouts and have fallen into disrepair that makes them impassable. By panning along these dikes with a telescope you can pick up many a flock of Sharpies (Sharp-tailed Sandpipers), Curlew Sandpipers, Golden Plovers and to a lesser degree, Grey Plovers. The birds will be found to the roosting or feeding along the shallow edge of the pond. A scope' is essential if you are trying to identify the plovers or look for leg bands. We have been successful in spotting two waders with leg bands.

As you walk towards the mangroves the ponds on the right are much larger and deeper with a sand bar present on the far edge that proves to be a good roosting area for Caspian and Gull-billed Terns plus the Pelicans. It was in these ponds that I have observed 500+ Red-necked Avocets back in the early 90's. I have not witnessed them since in such great numbers but still observe flocks of up to 100 plus. Along the edges Marsh Sandpiper, Greenshank, Whimbrels and the lone Eastern Curlew.

Ahead of these ponds is another large pond but this one is dotted with dead trees that will provide roosts for cormorants, darters, ibis and herons. This pond proves important to the resident duck population also. A lone tree that exists at the end of a spit had supported a nest belonging to a White-bellied Sea Eagle but this has fallen victim to too much attention and all that remains is the mess of fallen sticks beneath the tree that reflects on its more glorious past.

To the left the mangrove area starts and is bordered by long ponds with dead trees providing good roosting sites. In the distance, a large power pylon aims at the sky and directly on top of this metal tower sits an Osprey on its nest with a commanding view. On 1 June 1990, the North Queensland Electricity Board (NORQEB) provided a steel offset cradle structure that was fitted to the cross member. Previously the birds had built their nest on the crossmember but after countless blackouts due to the nest interfering with the power supply, NORQEB adopted a conservation attitude by allowing expenditure for the construction and fitting of the steel cradle. On 6 June, the birds were adding to the nest after NORQEB staff had lined the base with some large branches. Since that time, they have nested every year, plus NORQEB got a pat on the back for showing initiative in protecting the environment.

If you haven't already applied your aeroguard as you enter the mangrove area, there will be more slapping and swearing and, of course, the birds all flee. Great views of Mangrove Warbler, Varied Honeyeater and Flycatchers can be had in this area. The path takes you some 400 metres along mangroves before breaking into dry scrub land and then onto a path that leads to the sea pump.

Mid-year, we had a visit from the Whitsunday volunteers who had just finished a Wader identification Workshop with Frank Harrison. He brought them to Bowen so that they could put their newly acquired skills to be test. While the saltworks was not a hive of activity with waders at that particular time, we did visit some areas close at hand that provided a good selection of large, medium and small waders.

## COUNT PROGRAMME – Phil and Linda Cross

Since the last newsletter we have been fairly busy and we are progressing slowly to meet our aims.

We visited and photographed the following count sites:

**Maroochy River Sites** with Jan Bedwell and Shirley Rooke; ' i-\*\*\*\*\*'

**Dux Creek, Bribie Island** with Frank Bigg -

**Pine Rivers Wetlands and North Shore** with Glen Collis

**Macleay Island** with Meryl Dobe

Diana O'Connor and /an Watson sent us photographs of their sites at **Brays Lagoon and Trutes Wetlands**.

We welcome the following people to the Count Programme:

All in the Cairns area - Keith and Lindsay Fisher, Grahame Finnigan, Andy Anderson, Eleanor Duignan, Max O'Sullivan and John Malings.

They are counting two new sites, Cairns Airport and Barron River Mouth, as well as helping count Cairns Esplanade with Dawn and Arnold Magarry.

Chris Smith along with Cliff and Peg Whiteoak have joined Jan Bedwell and Shirley Rooke on a roster system to count three sites on the Maroochy River.

We also have a new site in the Maroochy River, Goat Island, which new member Brian Eunson and his son James will count from their canoe.

Jill Denning, Frank Bigg and Don Cameron have investigated two sites along Poverty Creek, Bribie Island which hopefully will be counted on a regular basis in the future.

Also on Bribie island, Trevor Ford has joined Lois MacRae and Frank Bigg count the Dux Creek site. Peter Chang with the help of Jim Tyson will be counting Pine Rivers Wetlands and Pine Rivers North Shore, taking over from Glen Collis.

Glen will be working in Mareeba, Far North Queensland for three years. The area will be totally new to Glen. We have assured him that there are plenty of waders and sites in the north to check out, so he shouldn't get withdrawal symptoms. We thank you Glen for your work counting Pine Rivers and glad to hear that you will continue to support the count programme from north Queensland. We wish you well and look forward to catching up with you in the not-too-distant future.

New member Martin Waugh will alternate with Michelle Burford and Peter Rothlisberg counting Amity Point. Peter and Lyn Reilly will cover two new sites - Sovereign island and the north of South Stradbroke island. Our thanks to the following standby counters who helped us during the November counts covering for others who were on holiday and unable to do their regular sites - Olwyn Crimp, John Harris, Robert Mancini, Greg Nye and Jim Tyson.

We met with some other counters during the survey of the Great Sandy Strait early in November. Edward Kleiber, who covers a number of sites in the Tweed Heads area, Paul O'Neill covering Yeppoon / Rockhampton, Donald and Leslie Bradley counting Point Vernon Rocks, Hervey Bay and Eric Zieman who counts Boonooroo and Maroom with Chris Barnes.

**Wader Identification Assistance:** Edward Kleiber has offered his assistance to members in relation to wader identification. The site will be the NSW Lower Tweed Estuary roosts and numbers will be limited to three people at a time. If you are interested, contact Edward.

#### COUNT DAYS - 1998

Please take particular note of the general monitoring days listed at the back of the newsletter. We draw your attention to:

NATIONAL SUMMER COUNT - which is to be on Saturday 14 February.

You will also note that there are two counts in March.

Please ensure you mark all these dates on your calendar for 1998.

(Editorial Apologies in advance: If you discover an error in the day/date when

You're noting the information in your own diaries -just give us a call to confirm the correct timing, or check the tide book for a match.)

We remind members (particularly those wishing to be involved in counting waders) that twenty responses have been received covering quite a number of sites ranging from Thornlands through to Hervey Bay. Counters for these sites have indicated that they would be happy for members to join them. Please direct all enquiries to us, or see us at QOSI monthly meetings.

We take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the count programme during the year and look forward to receiving many more count sheets from long-term and new counters in 1998. We wish all of you and your families a very Merry Christmas for 1997 and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Phil and Linda Cross

#### WADER WATCH – Natasha Taylor

No news from Wader Watch this issue, whilst data input information is awaited. However, the leg flag colours are left here for your information, in case you're lucky enough to see a wader with an unusual coloured leg flag.

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

## ACTIVITY REPORTS

### Introduction for Cubs - Saturday 13 September, 1997 -Arthur Keates

When joining QWSG, Loreena Shonhan enquired about getting the Boondall Cub Scout Pack involved in waders. So, together with Phil and Linda Cross, we met Loreena, 18 cubs and a few parents at Deception Bay to show them the waders of Moreton Bay. On arrival at the esplanade just before 8am, 2 hours after a relatively low high tide of 1.68 m, the intertidal flats were exposed and some waders were feeding while

others were loafing, including about 150 red-necked avocets. A planned short talk was put on hold while we took the opportunity to show them the waders before the tide receded too far. To cubs showing varying degrees of interest, we pointed out pied oystercatcher, whimbrel, eastern curlew, common greenshank, bar-tailed godwit, red knot and curlew sandpipers. Identifying waders can be confusing enough for many bird watchers, let alone 8- to 10-year-olds. Flying overhead were osprey, white-bellied sea-eagle, brahminy kite and whistling kite. We talked generally about waders, explained a little about their migratory habits and research work of wader study groups. It is hoped the cubs learned a little from their outing about the marvellous waders we are fortunate enough to have in our front yard. Who knows, we may have been talking to future members, indeed office bearers, of QWSG.

### **Manly — Wader Identification - 4 October 1997 – Arthur Keates**

Just over 40 people, mostly QOSI or QWSG members, turned up for a wader identification day at Manly Boat Harbour. By 9am when we started, the early morning clear blue sky had clouded over and a gale-force south easterly wind was blowing, causing the temperature to be well below normal.

As expected, both the species and number of waders recorded was higher than the wader ID day here in August. Despite the difficulties presented by the wind, observers were rewarded with good views of the birds. Species not seen in August were Greater Sand plover, Terek Sandpiper, Red Knot and Great Knot, but of course the Double-Banded Plovers seen then were absent having returned to New Zealand. Many of the birds seen, particularly Pacific Golden Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler and Red Knot had strong traces of breeding plumage. Three species (Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit and Great Knot) were sighted with our own green leg flags while a Grey-tailed Tattler with traces of breeding plumage wearing a blue (Japan) leg flag was seen. '

### **Fisherman Islands - Sunday 5 October - Leanne Bowden**

After experiencing what seemed like gale-force conditions the previous day, the impending threat of rain and a 5.00am start, Sunday's netting expedition resulted in People 6 - Birds 23, not to mention fine weather all day.

The attendees [first-timer Rob Mancini, second-timer David Edwards (but on his first occasion, 3 nets were set and none fired!) and long-term timers (can't say "old" Leanne Bowden, Peter Driscoll, Arthur and Sheryl Keates and Greg Miller] painstakingly processed 19 Greater Sand plover, 8 Lesser Sand plover, 2 Curlew sandpiper and 4 Red-necked stint.

One of the Greater Sandpipers had been previously trapped at Fisherman Island, and s/he was still wearing the band and green flag that were attached on 5 August, 1995.

The morning started beautifully, with a lovely dawn over the pond filled bunds, where 50 Chestnut teals, 100 Avocets, 50 Sharp tailed sandpipers and 1 Marsh sandpiper enjoyed their breakfast, although they did become slightly perturbed when a fox skirted the shoreline and a cat appeared on the horizon.

After 7.30am, when we'd finished setting one extremely large net with 4 cannons and one with 2 cannons in Bund 2, some of us were able to retire to the sheer luxury of a thoughtfully placed semi-derelict construction site "caravan", to spend the waiting time between net-setting and net-firing.

Unfortunately, Rob was not able to partake of this rare treat, he chose to depart with Peter on twinkling brigade in the Niva. It wasn't long before they abandoned the vehicle, and Peter spent most of the time crawling on his hands and knees, or artfully skating and sinking into the quagmire that is the essence of Fisherman Island, whilst Rob remained strategically positioned in the mud in the middle of the bund, where he stood, sat, lay on his back, stretched, sat and stood again, but he kept the birds away from such a desirable spot.

Basically, the day went something like this:

- 7.45 birds start arriving around the nets
- 10.00 they all took off - black shouldered kite above
- 10.10 they all landed in Bund 1, Rob positioned at the other end of Bund 2
- 10.15 Peter joined the birds in Bund 1, generally having a good time clapping his hands, walking, falling, sliding (he discovered that keeping weight distributed evenly over 2 feet at all times prevents sinkage).
- 10.30 they all came back to Bund 2, minimal numbers chose the catching area
- 11.30 Peter was on his hands and knees, begging the birds to move into the catching area. Rob was on his back, asleep.
- 11.50 Many birds in both nets, but too many in danger

- 12.10 Try the jiggler, and lots left  
 12.25 Maximum birds in safe position in the big net catching area  
 12.30 Fire

Although there were only 23 birds, we took until 4.15pm to finish processing, because we all took the opportunity to gain experience from Peter in the intricacies involved with the measuring and banding tasks.

A rough estimate of some of the birds present in Bund 2 included: 20 pelican, 37 Pied Oystercatcher, 1200 Lesser & Greater Sandplover, 400 Red-necked stint, 400 Curlew Sandpiper, 100 Golden Plover, 15 Sharp tailed sandpiper, 5 Ruddy Turnstone, 4 Red Knot, 42 Eastern Curlew, 15 Silver gulls, 61 Little Tern, 30 Gull billed Tern, 15 Caspian terns. Arthur and Sheryl's eagle eye also spotted 1 Mongolian plover with a band, and a green-flagged Curlew sandpiper and Sandplover.

### **Great Sandy Straits - Saturday 8 November, 1997 - Leanne Bowden**

A request from the Maryborough Office of the Department of Environment (DoE) culminated in a snapshot survey of the Great Sandy Strait on Saturday 8 November. 47 people, which included 32 QWSG members, 13 DoE staff and 2 recruits from a Public Talk given in the Maryborough DoE office on Wednesday 5th, divided into about 15 teams to count high tide roosts.

In the previous week, Peter Driscoll and Greg Miller had undertaken a more detailed survey of the Strait, to check known sites and discover new sites, in readiness for the group survey.

The information gained will be used within a feasibility context for a future Marine Park proposal. It was also timely, because the data gathered was also incorporated within the QWSG submission to the Queensland Government supporting the proposal to nominate areas of the Great Sandy Strait to the List of Wet/ands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

#### **Attendees:**

##### **QWSG Members:**

Eric Anderson, Margaret Bernard, Leanne Bowden, Don & Leslie Bradley, Karyll Butler, Linda & Phil Cross, Maria Darn, Peter Driscoll, Gary Emmett, Paul Finn, Gary Fisher, Andrew Geering, Sandra Harding, Joyce Harding, Cyril Hembrow, Bob James, Rob Kernot, Ed Kleiber, Russ Lamb, Noela Marr, Greg Miller, David Milton, Diana O'Connor, Peter & Lyn Reilly, Roy Sonnenburg, David Stewart, Jim Tyson, Karen Welsh, Eric Zillman.

##### **DoE & Others:**

J. Bell, Kelly Biles, Michael Ford, Nicole Gatt, Rod Hobson, Alison Hopkin, Moyra McRae, Su Olsson, Paul O'Neill, Steve Rowe, Ted Smith, Mary Starky, Maryann Tamvakis, Peter Tierney, Kai Yeung. '

### **Moon Point Team, GSS Survey - Andrew Gearing**

The first QWSG trip to the Great Sandy Straits in February 1995 is one I remember fondly and I therefore jumped at the opportunity to go back there for a second survey.

We all assembled at Boonooroo Caravan Park at 10.00 am on the Saturday for a briefing on where people were to count. My group comprised Margaret Bernard, Paul O'Neill, Kie Yeung, Moira McRae, John Flecker, Rod Hobson, Michael Ford and we were assigned Moon Point, a place half way up the coast of Fraser Island, and the northern most point in the survey. Special instructions were given to pay special attention to the numbers of Bar-tailed Godwit and Eastern Curlew, as Peter Driscoll and Greg Miller had done low tide counts in the previous week, and by using the species ratio on the feeding flats, the total numbers of all species could be determined by extrapolation from the numbers of these two core species.

We were transported to Moon Point on the quite sizeable DOE boat, and then exchanged this for a small inflatable dinghy to do the close shoreline work. It did not take us long to find our first roost. All was going well until the birds took fright from a hovering raptor. Unfortunately, this disruption was only a sign of things to come, as at almost every roost site we visited, the birds were flighty and our count was interrupted mid-way. One amusing diversion at the first site was a duel between a Willy Wagtail and Red-capped Plover, with the former being the aggressor. We then continued south along the coast to Puthoo Creek mouth where we found our second major roost. We estimated numbers of Bar-tailed Godwit and Eastern Curlew at this site to be 500 and 900, respectively. Further in along the creek at what used to be timber loading wharf we found a flock of 71 Common Greenshank. We also motored past a group of old *Avicennia marina*, which were laden with about 300 Grey-tailed Tattler.



After a fairly successful day, we headed back to Boonooroo to meet up with the others and enjoy a group BBQ. Our counts seemed fairly typical of the whole area, as many groups noted very large flocks of both Bar-tailed Godwit and Eastern Curlew. The area is curlew heaven! No particularly rare sightings were made, although Edward Kleiber saw two birds with orange leg-flags and Roy Sonnenburg *et al.* witnessed the amazing event of a Peregrine Falcon capturing a Bar-tailed Godwit, which was in turn pirated by a White-bellied Sea Eagle. David Stewart counted every grain of sand on a sand-bar off Inskip Point, on which he was marooned for three hours waiting for Peter to return and collect him.

Overall, the weekend was highly enjoyable and I hope the data collected was beneficial. I hope the trip can become an annual event.

Leanne Bowden and staff from DOE for organising the weekend.

### Wader Id Day - Toorbul - Saturday 22 November 1997 - Linda Cross

Thirty-four people turned up for this identification day. Some very keen people arrived well before the listed start time, and a few came from as far away as the Gold Coast and Ipswich. Waders started to arrive at the roost from 1.40pm and continued to build up until high tide at 3.30pm. Early in the afternoon, the assembled birds were disturbed when a Peregrine Falcon swooped over the roost. Two bar-tailed godwits were sighted adorned with green leg flags and the highlight of the day was a solitary grey plover. Many thanks to the experienced wader watchers who turned up to impart identification knowledge and skills to the rest of the attendees. Fourteen species of waders were seen at Toorbul and three at Bishops Marsh.

## PRESS RELEASES – FROM QUEENSLAND ENVIRONMENT MINISTER - Hon Brian Littleproud

### 10/11/97 ZONING PLAN RELEASED FOR MORETON BAY MARINE PARK

The Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan covers an area from Caloundra, around Bribie Island including Pumicestone Passage, around Stradbroke islands to the Gold Coast Seaway. Development of the plan over several years has addressed many issues including fishing and trawling, dredging, threatened species, development and obligations under the international Ramsar Wetlands convention.

Mr Littleproud said the plan would be implemented progressively in conjunction with an extensive community information and education campaign.

**Dredging:** The area around Green Island will become a Conservation Zone where dredging will not be permitted. Mr Littleproud said dredging would not be compatible with a Conservation Zone, the purpose of which includes conservation of the zone's natural resources and natural condition as far as possible, and to ensure only ecologically sustainable use.

"An early end, hopefully around Christmas, is also expected to coral extraction at Mud and St Helena islands, which have been zoned General Use and Habitat zones," he said.

**Threatened species:** The interests of several species have been taken into account in the plan: the endangered loggerhead turtle; the vulnerable green and hawksbill turtles, dugong, humpback whale, little tern and beach thick knee; the rare eastern curlew and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin.

Under the plan a Special Management Area has been introduced for the conservation of sea-turtle and dugong populations, primarily to reduce the incidence of injury or mortality caused by boats and other craft such as jet skis. The area will primarily cover areas of seagrass over the Moreton and Amity banks and the reef adjacent to the northern side of Peel Island. Hovercraft will be banned in Pumicestone Passage.

**Conservation of shorebird species such as the eastern curlew and little tern have also been addressed in the plan, with provisions to prevent undue disturbance to the birds and their habitat.**

**Fishing:** This has been a contentious issue in developing the plan, particularly with regard to perceived conflict between recreational and commercial fishing in Conservation Zones. This is to be addressed through Management and Zonal Advisory Committees under the Fisheries Act.

The plan does not allow for trawling in the Conservation Zone. The main effect of this restriction will be to limit trawling on the Moreton and Amity banks of the South Passage area. This has been supported by the Queensland Fisheries Management Authority and the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Authority.

**Other issues include:**

Six areas have been zoned 'Protection', including Flinders Reef, north-west quadrant of Peel Island Reef, Willets Islets, Swan Bay, Tripcony Bight and McCoys Creek, with the major effect of prohibiting fishing and collecting, particularly recreational line fishing and spear fishing.

The Marine Park extends southwards to the Gold Coast Seaway including sections of the Broadwater subject to numerous development applications. Apart from one Protection Zone area, where only minor works are permitted, the remainder is Conservation Zone where major works may be permitted if a public interest requirement is met. For the area between Jacobs Well and the Coomera River, some proposed developments are outside the Marine Park, while others will need to be modified to meet zoning plan requirements.

**To protect shorebirds from undue disturbance, dogs will need to be controlled or restrained, and vehicles, boats and other craft will be required to ensure minimum disturbance when near feeding or roosting shorebirds.**

Funding this year for management of the Marine Park is nearly \$1 million.

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**21/10/97 TWO NEW BOATS LAUNCHED FOR WORK IN BAY AND RIVERS**

Two new vessels will improve compliance monitoring of extractive dredging operations in Moreton Bay and nearby areas.

A The seven-metre Limosa and the five-metre Tattler were purchased in the region at a total cost of \$100,000 for the Department of Environment and will be based at Cleveland. A third larger vessel is also being built.

Funds were allocated from \$850,000 in dredging royalty payments towards the vessels and employment of three additional departmental officers.

"This is apart from the more than \$2 million allocated towards Moreton Bay Marine Park in the past two State budgets," Mr Littleproud said. "These funds are used in planning and management to ensure ecologically sustainable use of the Marine Park.

"The new vessels will help departmental officers in monitoring the compliance of dredge operators with permit conditions issued for extractive removal of sand and gravel from tidal waters.

**ACTIVITIES – 1998**

**Wader Counts (general monitoring)**

Sat 20 Dec 97	High Tide 2.08m at 1.31 pm
Sat 17 Jan 98	High Tide of 2.23 at 12.17pm
Sat 14 Feb 98	High Tide of 2.29m at 11.15am NATIONAL SUMMER COUNT
Sat 14 March 98	High Tide of 2.25m at 10.15am
Sun 29 Mar 98	High Tide of 2.24m at 10.23am
Sat 25 April 98	High Tide of 2.35m at 8.24am

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

**Cannon Netting**

Sun 28 Dec 97	Dynah Island, Nudgee Beach. High Tide of 2.34m at 08:36 am.
Sun 1 1 Jan 98	Fisherman islands. High Tide of 2.43m, at 08:37am.
Mid-January 98	Possibility of opportunistic netting.

**Contact:**

Peter Driscoll 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 10 Jan 98 Wader identification Morning  
7.00am — Manly Boat Harbour. High Tide of 2.36m at 07.49am.  
Meet at car park east of Royal Old Yacht Clubhouse. UBD Map 164 A6  
Contact: Arthur & Sheryl

**INTRODUCTION TO WADERS IN AUSTRALIA & MORETON BAY**

This workshop is pitched at both beginners and people with some birdwatching experience, but little experience with waders (shorebirds).

Tue 10 Feb 7.00 - 9.30pm LECTURES (supper included)

Tue 17 Feb Royal Geographical Society of Queensland, 1 12 Brookes St, Fortitude Valley.

Sun 15 Feb 10.00am - 2.00pm FIELD OUTING  
Experienced Members required to assist with identification and telescopes Lytton and Manly  
Cost: \$70.00

Sat 28 Mar Wader Identification Morning  
Weather permitting, i.e. no rain, there will also be a Telescope and Binocular display by York Optical  
7.30am - Manly Boat Harbour. High Tide of 2.5m at 09.39am.  
Meet at car park east of Royal Qld Yacht Clubhouse. UBD Map 164 A6  
Contact: Phil & Linda Cross

**Other Conservation Activities of Interest**

Please note: This listing is as a "goodwill" gesture to other groups with similar interests with their permission. However, OWSG 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

**Monthly Meetings**

Queensland Ornithological Society Inc. (QOSI)  
7.45pm Queensland Museum Brisbane - 1st Thursday each month except January.  
Entry via Dinosaur Garden in Grey Street. Doors open between 7.30 and 8.00pm.  
Contact: Dawn Muir, President

Wed 18 Mar 10.30am QOSI/QWSG - Bush birds and Toorbul Waders  
High Tide 1.91m at 12.17pm  
Contact: Linda Cross

Wed 1 Apr 11.00am QOSI/QWSG - Bush birds and Toorbul Waders  
High Tide 1.96m at 12.39pm  
Contact: Linda Cross

**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 24gram birds to the world's largest wader of over 1 kilogram, the Eastern Curlew. They arrive to feed over summer at Brisbane's 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.

Specifically topics will include:

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

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 East 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 throughout the flyway.