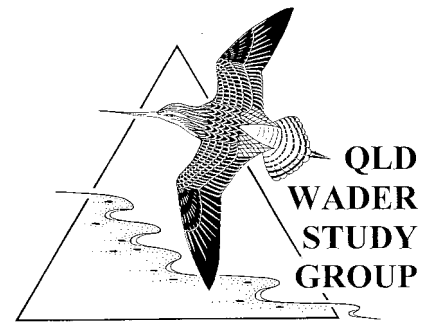


QUEENSLAND WADER



Issue number 023

Autumn 1998

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

FLY - CURLEW - FLY

Year two of a joint Australian/Japanese government project to conduct a satellite tracking survey to clarify the migration route of the Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascarensis*, began in earnest at the end of January 1998. The project was initiated following discussions at the 8th Conference of the Japan—Australia Migratory Bird Protection Agreement (JAMBA) in 1995. Since 1994, QWSG had been trialling methods of fitting radio transmitters to Curlews using radio transmitters and harnesses, and on 10 February 1997, Year 1 of the project began with 15 transmitters attached.

Some excellent tracking results from 1997, reported in previous editions of Queensland Wader, give us hope for similar success this year.

The combination of continued funding from the Japanese and Australian Governments, support from the Queensland government, and enthusiasm and voluntary hard work from members of the Queensland Wader Study Group and the Japan Wild Bird Society, resulted in transmitters being fitted to nine Eastern Curlews at Mirrapool, Moreton Island on Saturday 31 January, 1998.

Such a task requires a lot of planning, organising, good management and good luck. It turns hair grey, deepens worry lines and makes fingernails shorter. The project also depends on full support, something that Queensland Wader Study Group members never fail to provide, be it from being directly involved to maintaining membership to attain shared goals.

To quote words directly from Yozo Tsukamoto from the Wild Bird Society of Japan - "Another Curlew Day! Thanks to the dedicated members of QWSG. Hope that some of the Eastern Curlew will show up in Japan... Never forget the Moreton Island venture and the nice people" and from Peter Driscoll, Chair of QWSG - "Sharing the experience making it even more unforgettable. Thank you everyone for your whole-hearted participation. I feel we bridge some gaps between ourselves, including our Japanese friends. As for the Curlews, aren't they magnificent! I hope what we put them through somehow has its rewards for them especially".

Wetlands constitute an important environmental link between the Northern and Southern hemispheres, and millions of migratory birds who annually make the return journey depend for their survival upon the concerted wetland conservation action by the many countries along their flyway.

On almost the eve of World Wetlands Day - 2nd February - QWSG played a role in gaining knowledge that may help to protect such habitats.

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Peter Driscoll

TREASURER:

Sheryl Keates

SECRETARY: Vacant

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Leanne Bowden & G Miller

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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. -

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE - Leanne Bowden**Committee Meetings**

A meeting was held on Tuesday 20 January with 14 members in attendance.

Items discussed:

- Projects - Planning and logistics for location, transport, catching and fitting of transmitters to Eastern Curlew for tracking project; budgeting for NHT Gulf of Carpentaria
- Finance — payments ratified
- Conservation - SEQ Region Wader Management Plan; Broadwater Dredging; Moreton Bay Zoning Plan
- Grants - display boards have been received
- Projects - Coastnet; Empire Point; Wader Book; Cannon Netting Manual.

The next meeting will be held in March.

Other Meetings and Events

Attended by members on behalf of QWSG:

- QOSI Council - Stuart Pell
- Moreton Bay Alliance Meeting - Joyce & Sandra Harding
- Clean Up Australia Day – Jim & Ivell Whyte, Andrew Geering & Margaret Bernard assisted the Dynah Island Nudgee Beach Clean Up campaign.

Publicity

- Article by Greg Miller in Brisbane City Council's Summer 1997 Regenerator newsletter entitled "Migratory birds arrive for the summer".
- Article in Geo Australia magazine January/February 1998 Vol 20 No 1 entitled "Frequent Flyers – Our migratory birds have remarkable stamina" featuring a very young Peter Driscoll photographed by Clive Minton.
- 4 February - Peter Driscoll addressed the Brisbane City Council's Natural Environment Group about Eastern Curlew Tracking.
- 21 February - Greg Miller was one of 20 guest speakers at the Redland Shire Council's Weekend of Wildlife Conference. His talk "Shorebirds of Moreton Bay" was included in the Wet Wildlife segment. Other speakers who recognised the importance of Redland Shire's waders included the Mayor Cr Eddie Santagiuliana; Darcelle Hegarty, Senior Environmental Planner; Adrian Caneris, Conservation Officer Wildlife; and Simon Baltais WPSQ.
- 26 February - Greg Miller gave a presentation to visiting Japanese delegates at the signing of the Twin Wetlands celebrations between Boondall Wetlands and Yatsu Tidal Flats, Tokyo Bay.
- 28 February – Leanne Bowden included Curlew tracking in a talk to Eprapah Creek Landcare Group Inc.
- Ongoing displays: Ivell Whyte maintains the constant displays at Osprey House and Boondall Wetlands

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members who have joined since the last list was printed in the Summer: December 1997 newsletter:

Steve & Joanna Allard, Edwin Chappel, David Connolly, Trevor & Kym Ford, Joan Gocher, Elizabeth Hall, Lorraine Harbison, Karen Hedstrom, Ross & Robyn Jones, Frances Kelly, Kate Maguire & Family, Warrick McCorkell, Lyn Moorfoot, Virginia Ridgley, Tim Siggs, Nicola Udy, Ian iWatson, Brad White & Ms Lin Welch

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.

GULF OF CARPENTARIA SHOREBIRD SURVEY PROJECT

BACKGROUND:

In 1995/96, the Queensland Wader Study Group undertook a consultancy with the Department of Environment for an overview survey of shorebirds in Queensland. The survey highlighted the Gulf of Carpentaria as Queensland's most significant shorebird site for most species.

However, this work and previous work has been general in nature producing data of relatively coarse accuracy, yet it is recognised that:

- the Gulf is a major site, not only for Queensland and Australia, but for the Flyway as a whole and is important for the maintenance of populations of many species; and
- understanding the migratory movements in and out of the Gulf would greatly enhance our understanding of movements of birds to and from southern and eastern parts of Australia and New Zealand.

Accordingly, the Department of Environment approached, and was successful, in obtaining funding under the Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) program in the context of the National Wetland Program, for a project to be undertaken by the Queensland Wader Study Group "that will place scientists on the ground in the Gulf and lead to the establishment of banding sites and bases for telemetry studies."

As well, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) have recently supported research on shorebirds in the Gulf and are "happy to be associated with any collaborative project which could be used to further surveillance activities of our target list diseases".

Some relevant information from the actual project proposal follows.

"The Gulf of Carpentaria attracts the largest number of shorebirds of any site in Queensland, and is one of the most important shorebird sites in Australia. The project will

- a) provide a more detailed understanding of the precise mix of species using various parts of the Gulf,
- b) yield information on the timing of migration and seasonal use of the Gulf during peak periods of migration,
- c) determine the significance of the Gulf for shorebirds during the northern breeding period.

The aim of the project is to extend previous broad-based aerial survey work by placing scientists "on the ground" in the Gulf to study shorebirds in further detail. The project will be conducted by:

- a) surveying areas for shorebirds from the air and from the ground/water,
- b) mapping important intertidal feeding and high tide roosting areas, and
- c) catching shorebirds and fitting them with leg flags, and radio or satellite transmitters to determine local or international movement patterns.

information obtained will be useful in the event of the Queensland Government deciding to nominate the Gulf of Carpentaria to be a marine park, a Ramsar site, or a site designated under the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network.

Previous Population Estimates for the Gulf of Carpentaria

An early "aerial reconnaissance of the coastline between Karumba and Broome was made in mid-August 1981, before the main influx of migrating birds (Minton 1981). A particularly high concentration of waders was noted from Karumba to Point Parker at a density of 263 birds per km of coastline. Highest numbers were within 100 km of the mouth of the Norman River (near Karumba). Another significant concentration on the south coast of the Gulf was close to the mouth of the Roper River (NT).

Guard and Garnett (1982) also report on high numbers of waders in the Gulf. Near the mouth of the Smithburne River and at Fitzmaurice Point counting had to be done in units of 10,000 with Black-tailed Godwits being the predominant species. From the NT-Old border westward, the highest numbers were between Point Parker and Karumba. Garnett and Carruthers (1982) report on a February aerial inspection of the coast from Cairns to Gove when highest numbers were being seen south of the Nassau River. There were reasonable numbers on the southern side of Mornington Island. Overall, the aerial counts for 1981 and 1982 differed considerably.

A February 1983 aerial survey (Garnett 1983) revealed 167,920 birds, including very large numbers of Black-tailed Godwits and grey Plover and significant numbers of Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Little Curlew and Greenshank. Garnett (1986) looks at seasonal changes in wader numbers in the Gulf and presents some useful information on the relative number of different species taken from counts at different times of the year. In a summary and interpretation of earlier results, Garnett (1987) makes the point that more than 85% of birds in both summer and late winter to early spring, were found along muddy coastline fringed by mangroves. Birds congregated near the mouths of the rivers with the largest catchments.

Garnett (1987) gives an average summer account for the Gulf coastline, as defined here, of 171,500 waders. However, in certain years and during migration periods, recorded numbers are much higher. A total estimate of around 200,000 waders seems an adequate compromise between a lower average summer value from aerial counts of all waders, and the peak values that have been reported for individual species and waders generally.

Sites and features

In addition to the very high summer density of waders in the Gulf of Carpentaria, the area is almost as important an arrival place for waders migrating into Australia from Asia as is the Broome-Port Hedland area of Western Australia. Also, there are large movements of birds into, around, and out of the south east Gulf in September (Lane 1987, 1988, Watkins 1993). Roost sites were located by Lane (1988) and Garnett (1989). In most cases, the birds are roosting on sandy beaches or muddy shores. Where sand is not as prevalent, such as along the coast between Karumba and Gore Point, they tend to roost along muddy shores where there is a break in the coastal strip of mangroves or, where the mangroves are continuous, most roost behind them on the shores of tidal creeks flowing across wet open saline flats (Lane 1988).

Lane also noted that birds undertook movements of up to ten kilometres between their roosts and their feeding areas.

Species

With the one exception of the Grey-tailed Tattler, all the 23 species with total coastal numbers of more than 800 are represented in the Gulf by more than four per cent of their State totals for Queensland. Other species with low percentage representation are Bar-tailed Godwit (4%), Eastern Curlew (5%) and Whimbrel (8%). All four species are more abundant in south eastern and eastern coastal regions of the State. The species with greater than 50% of their numbers occurring in the Gulf are Broad-billed Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Sandpiper, Red Knot, Red-necked Stint, Great Knot, Greater Sand Plover, Red-capped Plover and Curlew Sandpiper.

Other waders are common in freshwater and grassland habitats in the Gulf (Garnett 1989). They include Red-kneed Dotterel (probably thousands), flocks of over 5,000 Little Curlew (see also Garnett and Minton 1985), Black-fronted Plover (occasionally very common), and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. There may be over 100,000 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (more than half the world population) for short periods on wetlands inland from the Gulf as they prepare for northward migration (Garnett 1986, Starks and Lane 1987, Garnett 1989). Flocks of thousands of Oriental Pratincole visit the dry grasslands irregularly and small numbers of Australian Pratincole occur here throughout the year. Painted Snipe may occur around the wet season swamps of the Gulf in larger numbers than expected and another 4,000 Black-winged Stilts are likely to occur here also (Garnett 1989).

Information lacking

Both Garnett (1983) and Lane (1988) refer to the peculiar difficulties of getting a good estimate of numbers for the region, particularly during migration periods. The problems are due to a combination of restraints on aircraft movements, generally difficult access, features of the tide, and changes in the local movements and distribution of birds often because of variation in the condition of neighbouring freshwater habitat. Consequently, very little precise information is available about the distribution and fluctuation in wader numbers in the Gulf."

CURRENT STATUS:

The shorebird survey of the Gulf of Carpentaria was to take place this month, March 1998. To augment the equipment already on hand, i.e. Peter Driscoll's ultralight and the QWSG's boat, Peter had managed to obtain some additional funds from Pasminco Century Project, who have mining interests in the Gulf area, to obtain an Argo. Our bright red Argo, a 6-wheeler All-Terrain Vehicle, arrived in February, and is the ideal vehicle to tackle the mudflats and wide wetland expanses that are the Gulf.

However, the months of logistical and financial planning to transport people and equipment to Karumba have been severely "dampened". At the time of going to print, newspaper reports carry details of "The Big Wet", mapping the Gulf area in a shade which designates rainfall as "Very much above average" and the Premier is expected to announce an emergency funding package for the residents of the isolated, flood-stricken Gulf of Carpentaria.

Peter, his Ultralight and very little else, are in Croydon, having moved from Georgetown. Mark and Jim from Victoria, with a car QWSG boat have got to Georgetown but have been stopped by the Einasleigh River. The Argo is in Karumba.

They all hope to meet up in Croydon, and somehow make it through, using Charter flights and the boat to get to Karumba.

WE WISH THEM GOOD LUCK!!

EMPIRE POINT PROJECT - Leanne Bowden

In November 1996, following Wayne Lawlor's August 1995 completion of "A Feasibility Study into the Construction of Migratory Wader High Tide Roosts in Moreton Bay, Old" funded under the Queensland Government's Regional Open Space Scheme (ROSS) and supplementary funding from the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, Queensland Wader Study Group received Coastcare Funding to construct a roost site at Empire Point.

The 1995/96 Coastcare Application provides a description of the project.

"As part of the project for replacement of a major wader roost site that was destroyed by the canal estate development at Raby Bay, we want to enhance the benefit of a secure and permanent roost site for the birds. Detailed justification, costing and planning for the roost site is given in a feasibility study prepared on behalf of QWSG and supported by Redland Shire Council and various community groups. All of the major roost sites south of the Brisbane River in Moreton Bay are not secure for use by the birds into the future. So that this situation does not persist, it is important to educate people and provide secure roosting areas."

Peter Driscoll, as Project Leader, has battled with bureaucracy, delays, permit applications and driven hundreds of kilometres to attend meetings and on-site inspections for measurements and calculations. Other members involved have been Joyce Harding, Greg Miller and Sheryl Keates.

Firstly, there were arrangements to transfer tenure of the land from the State Government to the Redland Shire Council; then there was the Department of Environment's Section 86 permit under the Beach Protection Act, to obtain approval to carry out works below high-water mark, which constitutes a marine hazard. This required preparation of plans by the Redland Shire Council's engineer. Then there was Moreton Bay Marine Park approval; then the effects of Native Title. However, one of the biggest hurdles was the permit from the Department of Primary Industry Fisheries and Forestry, to remove marine plants i.e. cut mangroves.

Now, most of the required permits are in place, and before too long, construction should commence.

SUCCESSFUL WADER WORKSHOP - 10,15 & 17 February

Andrew Geering

Despite previous successes in running workshops on waders, there was a bit of reluctance this year to hold another one. We thought we may have exhausted the reserve of people that were interested in attending such courses. How wrong we were. Final attendance was 29, but as per usual, one week before the beginning of the workshop, bookings were less than half this number. There always is a last-minute rush. Participants were varied, including people from the Brisbane and Gold Coast City Councils, the Queensland Department of Environment and other state departments, tertiary students, and many others with a keen desire to learn about the birds.

This year, the content changed slightly from that of previous years. On the first night, Greg Miller and I spoke. My talk was on the taxonomy and identification of waders, and Greg's talk was an overview of wader habitat. On the second night, Jeremy Thompson talked on feeding and migration strategies, Peter Driscoll talked on the Eastern Curlew, and Olwyn Crimp talked on conservation and management of wader habitat. We also conducted a field excursion to the Manly and Lytton roosts on the Sunday between the two lecture nights.

Overall, I think, the workshop was well received. We now have a core group of people experienced in running the workshop, and I think this experience shows. As the convenor, I had very little to worry about. The QWSGers present just knew what was needed to be done. Every year there are small improvements to the course. This year, I think one of the improvements was holding the field day between lecture nights and not at the end of the course. I found it very satisfying to have been on the field trip and actually observed different feeding strategies, and then had the opportunity to listen to Jeremy's talk the following Tuesday in which he explained the reasons for these differences in behaviour.

I think, the quality of our presentations is slowly improving, due partly to an improving slide library, and I think we have also improved our handouts. We should not become complacent. We need to continue to improve our teaching aids, and put more information into slide format. I think we also need to consider compiling our handouts into some kind of a booklet which can be handed to participants at the beginning.

I do not think the price of \$70 was unreasonable – in fact I think it is pretty good value considering that the workshop includes about 10 hours of tuition, as well as supper on the lecture nights. We must remain innovative with our advertising, as it is important that we continue to reach new audiences.

There are many people to thank. Firstly, I would like to thank Diana O'Connor. This was our first year without Diana at the helm. Diana pioneered the course, and we continue to use her successful model. Again, Diana made important contributions.

Secondly, I would like to thank Leanne Bowden and Margaret Bernard. In the early stages it was great having both their enthusiasm and great organisational skills to get things kicking along, and also to help things run as smoothly as they did.

Thirdly, I would like to thank all the speakers - Greg, Jeremy, Peter and Olwyn. The good reputation of the course has partly been earned by the high quality of information given in the talks.

Finally, I would like to thank all the other volunteers. The Whyte stamp of quality is always evident with the display material.

After a slight accident, Bart the Godwit has had an identity crisis and has become a Great Knot, but I think he is on the mend. Yet again the field day was one of the great strengths of the course. For every two or three participants, there was one telescope and one expert tutor. Hidden teaching talents of people like Arthur and Sheryl Keates, Phil and Linda Cross, Dave Edwards, Greg Nye and Garth Innes came to the fore. Linda's students stood out above the crowd, soon spotting new birds for the rest of us strugglers. To others that I have accidentally neglected to mention, thank you.

An additional note from Leanne - Unfortunately, I did not actively harangue people during the supper break to sign our guest book and provide input on how they heard of the course or what they thought of it, and with a late finish, many had to rush away after the last speaker. Our advertising campaign included articles in local Bayside papers, Verandah magazine; flyers in QWSG & QOSI newsletters, on walls at Griffith University, posted to around 40 environmental groups and coastal SEQ local governments; on the QOSI website, provided throughout the Department of Environment and the Brisbane City Council.

What I did glean from the 16 who signed the book, was that they heard of it through QWSG, QOSI, NPAQ, RGSQ, Boondall Wetlands, DoE, BCC, GCCC, Verandah, Local Paper and a Friend. Comments included *"Excellent! What could be more interesting! Thoroughly enjoyed field trip. Well-structured and organised Great – good balance - loved the field trip ~ thanks. Very informative. Enlightening. Excellent. As above!!"*

Moreton Bay Alliance Meeting -21 February, 1998

Joyce Harding

This meeting was attended by Sandra and Joyce Harding representing Queens/and Wader Study Group

The Moreton Bay Alliance meeting held on 21st February 1998, discussed various environmental issues and their effects on Moreton Bay. Officers of the Department of Environment gave a presentation on the Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan 1997 which invited many comments both favourable and unfavourable. Actual borders between zones were of concern particularly in regard to the protection of dugongs and turtles. Bribie Island Environment Protection Association (BIEPA) was also very concerned about the continued housing developments on Bribie Island. Pollution of Pumicestone Passage is related to the increased population on both Bribie Island and the mainland. Increased pollution, acid sulphate soils and algae build-ups will affect the waders in the Passage and the rest of Moreton Bay.

The Alliance is proposing to work on a proposed 'Log of Claims' for Moreton Bay to be placed before the major political parties before the next election. Concern was expressed on the continued expansion of the Port facilities. A new runway into the Bay to accommodate more aircraft is also believed to be on the transport agenda. The western shores of Moreton Bay are under increasing threat from many sources.

The impacts of past coral dredging by Old. Cement Limited (QCL) in Moreton Bay is being monitored by Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) Moreton Bay Branch in relation to restoration work. Damage to mangroves, foreshore erosion and sediment deposition on live coral are some of the impacts being monitored.

Moreton Bay, a Ramsar site and in the East Asian/Australasian flyway is of great importance to waders. We support the Moreton Bay Alliance in its efforts to maintain the future integrity of the Bay.

IDENTIFICATION NOTES – GOLDEN PLOVER – Dave Stewart

For many years the Lesser Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) migrating to Australia was considered a subspecies (*P. d. fulva*) of a wider ranging species, which had a second subspecies occurring in the Americas (*P. d. dominica*). With the use of multivariate statistical analysis applied, no evidence of hybridisation or clinal variation in plumage between the two subspecies could be found, supporting a minority view that they should be treated as separate species (Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva* and American Golden Plover *P. dominica*) (Connors 1983). Although today they are generally considered separate species, these two species are very similar requiring considerable care in separating them.

For a small proportion of birds (approximately 7 %) specific identification may not be possible (Connors, 1983).

The Pacific Golden Plover breeds from north-west Alaska to Yamal Peninsula in Siberia, migrating to Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and many of the tropical and sub-tropical islands in the western Pacific Ocean during the non-breeding season.

The American Golden Plover, on the other hand, breeds in the arctic and sub-arctic tundra between Boffen Island (Canada) and northwest Alaska, migrating to South America during the non-breeding season. However, there have been a few possible though unacceptable records of the American Golden Plover on the east coast of Australia south of Ballina, though they may occasionally occur in Queensland.

The Pacific Golden Plover is a medium-sized plover with a distinct upright stance and long wings which protrude beyond the tail when the bird is standing, typically with 2-4 primaries being visible beyond the longest tertial feathers (a more detailed appraisal of primary projection can be found in HANZAB, 1993). In basic plumage the upperparts are brown with most feathers being fringed with buff spots. The face is pale buff with broad buff supercilium. The underparts are white with a golden-brown wash with darker mottling on the breast and neck. Before departing for the breeding grounds in March or April, some birds begin moulting into alternate plumage. In this alternate plumage the buff speckling on the upperparts become brighter and more pronounced and the forehead and face are black. The neck, breast and abdomen are black shading to white with variable black mottling on the undertail coverts. The flanks are white, producing a white band which extends up the side of the neck and joins with the white supercilia and meeting across the forecrown. This white band separates the folded wing from the black breast when the bird is at rest.

The American Golden Plover is very similar to the slightly smaller Pacific Golden Plover, though they are some subtle differences including a fuller body appearance with a proportionally shorter and heavier bill and longer wings, typically with 4-6 primaries being visible beyond the longest tertial feathers. In basic plumage, the American Golden Plover appears paler and greyer than Pacific Golden Plovers with the upperparts being brownish-grey with dull yellow or off-white fringing to the feathers (similar to the Grey Plover *P. squatarola*). There is prominent off-white supercilia and the underparts are white with a grey wash across the breast. As in the Pacific Golden Plover the alternate plumage is a striking combination of black with gold mottling on the upperparts and mainly black face and underparts. The American Golden Plover can be separated from the Pacific Golden Plover in alternate plumage by the black breast and abdomen extending down to the undertail coverts which are only lightly spotted or banded with white. When at rest there is no white band separating the folded wing from the black breast, due to the flanks being black. There is a bulbous white patch on the sides of the breast which extends up onto the neck and face to the supercilia and join across the forecrown forming a distinct white band.

References:

Connors, P.G. 1983. Taxonomy, distribution, and evolution of Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica* and *Pluvialis fulva*). *The Auk* 100:607-620.

HANZAB, 1993. Marchant, S. & P.J. Higgins (Eds.) 1993. Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic birds. Volume 2 Raptors to Lapwings. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

COUNT PROGRAMME – Phil and Linda Cross

We start the new year with a welcome to David Edwards onto the count programme. David enrolled in last year's Wader Course and was virtually hooked straightaway. After completing the course, he tagged along with Arthur and Sheryl Keates on monthly counts of their three Lytton sites, and also attended the wader identification days the group held.

After some words of encouragement, we suggested that he was ready for his own site, and asked him to tag along with Peter Chang to the two Pine Rivers sites. David came back to us the very next day impressed with the Pine River Northside site. He has now completed his first count of the site on the National Count Day recording 13 species of waders totalling 994+ birds

We hope that he will continue to have many enjoyable and rewarding hours of counting. He will of course continue to improve his knowledge of waders at the same time.

We once again remind members (particularly those wishing to be involved in counting waders) that you too can achieve the same results as David. Most of our counters are willing to give you personal tuition (after the count of course), at their respective count sites.

We currently have a shortage of people to cover sites on a permanent and standby basis. Although we are not quite at the desperate stage, it soon could be. If you really want to be involved with the count programme, PLEASE GIVE US A CALL AND WE CAN DIRECT YOU TO THE NEAREST COUNTER AND THEIR SITE. We are waiting for your call!

The National Summer Counts have started to roll in and bird numbers look very good. There are quite a few reports of Bar-tailed Godwits with evidence of breeding plumage, some quite strong. Only 2 reports of Greenshank and Lesser Sand Plover with some breeding plumage evident, but it's early days yet.

We have selected general monitoring days through to September, giving you plenty of notice to mark your calendar and keep the dates free. We remind you that there are TWO counts for March. The AWSG NATIONAL WINTER COUNT is set down for 13 June and ask counters to note that we will need your count sheets for this day returned to us immediately.

THERE IS NO COUNT DATE SET DOWN FOR JULY.

We do have something planned for July though. We have decided to hold an equipment maintenance day during that month, (much cooler than the AGM day!). This 11th July event at Nudgee Beach, listed under ACTIVITIES will be a social get together for committee, counters and members. It will be a BYO picnic lunch. We don't get a chance to have a social event very often, so come along and join us. We look forward to meeting you.

It's been a long warm humid summer, and although it's been rewarding having lots of waders back on our shores, I (Linda) for one look forward to the coming cooler months, especially while standing in the mangroves counting birds!

Don't forget, were waiting for those calls from prospective counters!!!

Happy counting.
Phil and Linda Cross

WADER WATCH - Linda Cross, Peter Driscoll, Joyce Harding

Thanks to Natasha Taylor who has been painstakingly and diligently entering count data for QWSG for quite some time. However, family duties and other voluntary commitments have increased and Wader Watch information is now being supplied by not 1, not 2 - but 3 people!!

Leg Flag Banding Legend (colour = where banded)

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

Green Leg Flag Sightings

55 Bar-tailed Godwit - Arthur Keates, Edward Kleiber, Greg Miller, Diana O'Connor, and Ivell Whyte at Cabbage Tree Creek, Jackson Creek Point, Lytton, Manly Harbour, Mirapool, Pine Rivers Brays Lagoon and Toorbul, between 9-11-97 and 21-2-98.

13 Great Knot - Chris Barnes, Arthur Keates, and Edward Kleiber at Manly Harbour, Maaroom (Great Sandy) and Toorbul, between 11-10-97 and 8-2-98.

12 Eastern Curlew - Peter Driscoll, Joyce & Sandra Harding, Arthur Keates and Edward Kleiber at Manly Harbour, Mirapool and Thornlands, between 10-1-98 and 21-2-98. Two still carrying transmitters fitted in February 97.

3 Curlew Sandpiper - Peter Chang & David Edwards, Arthur Keates, at Manly, Lytton and Pine Rivers Northside, between 10-1-98 and 14-2-98.

17 Lesser Sand Plover - Arthur Keates, Edward Kleiber, at Manly Harbour & Mirapool, between 10-1-98 & 21-2-98.

4 Large Sand Plover - Arthur Keates at Manly Harbour, between 10-1-98 and 21-2-98.

6 Ruddy Turnstone - Andrew Geering and Arthur Keates, at Manly Harbour and St. Helena Island, between 8-2-98 and 21-2-98.

1 Grey-tailed Tattler - Arthur Keates at Manly Harbour on 21-2-98.

Other Leg Flag Sightings and Banded Birds

Grey-tailed Tattler - 1 with light blue leg flag seen by Chris Wiley at Manly Harbour 20-9-97; 1 with blue leg flag seen by Edward Kleiber at Toorbul 9-11-97; 1 with blue leg flag seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River Entrance from 2-12-97 to 13-2-98.

Pied Oystercatcher - 1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tony's Sandbar, Tweed River on 19-12-97; 2 with metal band seen by group on Wader ID Day at Manly Harbour on 10-1-98.

Little Tern - 1 with metal band seen by group on Wader ID Day at Manly Harbour on 10-1-98; 1 with metal band on top of blue band, on left leg, and dark green band on top of light green band on right leg, seen by group on Wader ID Day at Manly Harbour on 10-1-98 and again by Arthur Keates at Manly Harbour on 25-1-98. This bird was banded on 26-1-96 at Lakes Entrance.

Great Knot - 1 with metal band seen by group on Wader ID Day at Manly Harbour on 10-1-98.

Silver Gull - 1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River Entrance on 20-1-98 and 23-1-98; 1 with metal band on right leg and light blue band on left leg seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River Entrance on 22-1-98 and 23-1-98.

Pied Oystercatcher - 1 with metal band seen by Arthur Keates at Manly Harbour on 25-1-98; 1 with metal band, 1 with metal and white band and 1 with metal and light blue band seen by Edward Kleiber at Mirapool on 1-2-98.

Lesser Sand Plover - 1 with orange flag seen by Arthur Keates at Manly Harbour on 8-2-98.

Crested Tern - 1 with metal band seen by Andrew Geering at St. Helena Island on 14-2-98.

Interesting sightings -

Broad-billed Sandpipers have been recorded at Cairns Esplanade, Cairns Airport, Barron River (Cairns) and Dux Creek Bribie Island.

Asian Dowitchers have been recorded at Boonooroo (Great Sandy Strait).

Little Tern (nesting) has been recorded at Cairns Airport and Corio Bay.

Little Stint has been recorded at Barron River (Cairns). 2nd record for Cairns.

Beach Stone Curlew (nesting) recorded at Corio Bay.

COUNTSITES

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.

BRISBANE AIRPORT SITES - Greg Miller

QWSG members Greg Miller and Leanne Bowden count the three wader sites located on the foreshores of the land that surround Brisbane Airport.

Two sites, Serpentine Creek and Jackson Creek Point, are in proximity to creek mouths, while the other is on the southern bank of the Kedron Brook Floodway. While none of these sites contain large numbers of birds, the significance of these sites is the position they occupy between Dynah Island and Fisherman Island. If the Dynah Island site continues to erode

Page 12 missing If you have it forward a scan to Editor

NORTHERN NEWS

NORTH QUEENSLAND - CAIRNS - Keith and Lindsay Fisher

Hi all; Not much to report from here as we have had over 400mm of rain in the last six days (that's over 15½ inches in the old money). However, we have also had the highest tides of the year 3.2m, this pushed the Bar-tailed Godwits up onto the parkland behind the Esplanade mudflats. This morning (26/2) 157 BT Godwits were foraging in the grass, many coming into their reddish breeding plumage. Also with them was 31 Masked Lapwings and 24 Great Knots roosting on the grass. Many of the Lesser and Greater Sandplovers are also in their breeding plumage. Birds Australia and BOCA will be waving the waders goodbye March 15th on the Cairns Esplanade with speakers and identification problems sorted out by experts. We hope the waders will continue to have a place to return to, not a Luna Park entertainment centre as suggested by one of our well-informed residents, get rid of that stinking mud!

NORTH OF THE EQUATOR – A TALE OF THREE JAPANESE WETLANDS - Greg Miller

During the last week of February 1998, a delegation from the Yatsu Higata (tidelands) visited Brisbane to conclude the formalities of twinning Yatsu Higata (tidelands) with Boondall Wetlands. Both are Ramsar sites, Yatsu since 1993 and Boondall since 1996. Yatsu is also designated as a Special Protection Area of the National Wild-life Protection Areas.

Yatsu is a 40-hectare tidal area situated in Narashino City at the top of Tokyo Bay some 20km east of Tokyo. While both Yatsu and Boondall are wetlands and both support wader populations they are very different wetlands.

Originally Narashino tidal lands were extensive, some 15km long and 2-3km wide. Within the last 30 years this area has been highly modified by landfill to the point that only the 40ha of Yatsu remain. Yatsu is no longer on the seashore but 5.5km inland and is landlocked except for two canals joining it to Tokyo Bay. However, it still holds up to 10,000 birds of usually about 20 species (173 species have been recorded) in the northern winter and is therefore an important wader area for this region of Japan. A green flagged Bar-tailed Godwit was seen in Yatsu on 5th and 11th May 1996. While possibly the same bird, it is proof not only of the wader migration relationship between Moreton Bay and Yatsu but also that Yatsu still functions as a wader staging area.

Both Yatsu and Boondall while still carrying significant wader populations have suffered declines in recent years and neither face a secure wader future. Therefore, each requires special attention with ongoing monitoring and analysis.

Going! Going!...Gone !!

Japanese governments continue to ignore domestic and international pleas to save their few remaining wetlands and wader habitats. On the 28th January 1998 the decision to close off yet another wetland to the tide was made. Yes, Japanese conservationists lost the 15 year long fight to save Fujimae Tidal Inlet. This tidal flat is recorded as recently supporting 12,000 birds in the northern spring, but no tidal flush means no benthic fauna and therefore no waders. The Ishaya project will change a viable wetland into a 1,100 ton/day rubbish dump for Nagoya City. In approximately 10 years this fill will be full and further areas will be sought to fill.

Going? Going?...Gone??

Next on the Japanese threatened wader habitat list is Sanbanze.

Situated a few kilometres west of Yatsu this 1,200ha tidal area forms the mouth of the Edo River. The proposed land fill will cover 800 ha of Tokyo Bay's premier tidal habitat. Since 1974 some 135 bird species have been recorded here with the January to April population rising to 170,000 birds, including 7,500 Little Terns and significant numbers of Ruddy Turnstones, Frey-tailed Tattler, Lesser Sandplover and Bar-tailed Godwit, heading south to Australasia. This proposal ignores the ecological significance of the area, environmental best practice and the production of seafood valued at 2 billion per annum.

The similarities here to our own Brisbane Gateway Port project keeps your appreciation of our Japanese wader enthusiasts' situation

ACTIVITY REPORTS

The Perfect Cannon Netting at Dynah Island - Sunday 28 December 1997 - Olwyn Crimp

Peter Driscoll, John Harris, Warrick McConkell and myself went cannon netting at Dynah Island. Having been cannon netting at Dynah Island in September 1996, it was with a feeling of masochism that I volunteered for Dynah island again. Last time it was a 5:00 am to 7:30 pm marathon which took me several days from which to recover.

This time however, things were different as the timing was perfect. When I arrived at 5:30 am. Peter already had the net set. He had arrived around 4:30 am. We rowed (Peter rowed - we just took in the scenery) across Cabbage Tree Creek coming in along a channel through the mangroves at the back of the roost site. When we arrived the birds were already sitting in the perfect position for firing. We fired the net and had all the birds in the holding cages and were having a cup of coffee by 7:30 am.

The new net with a smaller mesh size is much less stressful on birds such as godwits and knots. They don't become entangled and so can be removed from the net rapidly and with no injuries.

We captured 34 bar-tailed godwits and 10 great knots. Eight of the godwits were recaptures - all with green (Moreton Bay) leg flags except for three which had lost their coloured leg flags.

One of the last of the godwits banded exhibited capture myopathy being unable to fly immediately upon release. It recovered before we left. We had deliberately banded the godwits first as they are much more prone to capture myopathy than are great knots. The more stressed they are during handling and removal from the nets and the longer they are left in the holding cages, the more likely they are to suffer capture myopathy.

All the birds caught were adults (three years of age or older) and all were most of the way through the moult stage with between 7 and 9 new primary feathers. The godwits were around half males and half females.

A flock of around 40 common terns and 6 pied oystercatchers were roosting at the far end of the beach so John took the opportunity to take some photos. We packed up around 11:00 and were able to load everything directly into the boat because it was only 2 ½ hours past the high tide. We floated the boat across the flats to the channel with no effort. A far cry from lugging loads of nets, cages, cannons etc across more than a kilometre of tidal flat which we had to do last time I was there.

I was home in time for lunch. Unbelievable! It was Warrick's first time out with OWSG. I'm hoping that like the rest of us, he has been bitten by the "mad bird" bug and will be unable to resist spending his future precious weekend free time lugging gear across mudflats, crouching in mangroves for hours on end in >30°C and humidity approaching 100%, covered in Rid and sunscreen, listening to the mossies whine and being sand-blasted by 25kt winds all for the pleasure of holding one of the delicate and beautiful birds. It beats the hell out of going to the gym.

Wader Id Day - Manly - Saturday 10 January 1998 - Arthur & Sheryl Keates

The rain fell as about 20 keen wader watchers arrived at Manly – Boat Harbour just before 7 am for another wader identification outing. However, after a short wait the rain eased and we made a start under the overcast sky. Fortunately, only one heavy shower disrupted our observations.

A total of 1734 birds were recorded comprised the following 23 species:-

piebald oystercatcher, black-winged stilt, Pacific golden plover, red-capped plover, lesser sand plover (including 3 with green leg flags), greater sand plover (including 1 with green leg flag), masked lapwing, black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit (including 1 with green leg flag), whimbrel, eastern curlew (including 1 with green leg flag), common greenshank, grey-tailed tattler, ruddy turnstone, red knot, great knot (including 4 with green leg flags), sharp-tailed sandpiper, curlew sandpiper (including 1 with green leg flag). Red-necked stint, silver gull, caspian tern, crested tern and little tern.

Of most interest for the day was the little tern that seemed unconcerned by our close scrutiny of the bands and leg flags it was wearing. On its left leg it had a metal and a blue band while on its right leg it had a dark green and a light green leg flag. All bands and flags were on the tarsus. Information since obtained from the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme reveals the bird was banded at The Lakes National Park, Victoria on 26 January 1996. The bird had moved at least a distance of 1271 km since being banded. We can also report that the bird was recorded again 2 weeks later.

Cannon Netting Fisherman Islands - Sunday 11 January 1998 - Olwyn Crimp

Another successful banding day was undertaken at Fisherman Islands (at the Port of Brisbane). Two nets were fired with 45 grey-tailed tattlers, 1 curlew sandpiper, 14 Mongolian plovers and 2 great sand plovers measured, weighed, banded and leg flagged. Two of the grey-tailed tattlers were recaptures from Moreton Bay.

The nets were set on Saturday afternoon. One was set to fire over the bund wall into one of the reclamation ponds. The grey-tailed tattler like to sit along the inside rock wall. The Port of Brisbane Corporation staff levelled the top of the wall during the week to allow the net to fire over it.

The other net was set inside one of the dry reclamation paddocks. Digging holes in this paddock is quite a challenge. The paddock is used to dewater material dredged from the Brisbane River navigation channel and contains fine silts and clays. It is basically "black goop" which sticks to you and dries rock solid. Plovers and terns, however, find it a wonderful place to roost at high tide.

On Sunday, there was quite a turn up of people including Peter Driscoll, John Harris, Andrew Geering, Margaret Bernard, Joyce and Sandra Harding, David Milton, Anita Leahy, Fay O'Mara, Sarah Munro, Warrick McConkell and David Edwards. Louise Hardman and Bruce Taylor from northern NSW came along to gain experience toward obtaining banding licences.

The net over the bund wall was fired first. Several intrepid bird banders scrambled down the wall, jumped into the pond and pulled the net up onto the rocks to ensure the birds didn't drown. None of the birds were tangled in the net so were retrieved from the net and put into holding cages within five minutes. The holding cages were then taken back to a location near the second net and the birds were banded whilst a close eye (telescope) was kept on the other net. None of the grey-tailed tattlers suffered any injuries and all flew off immediately upon release. The new net is much gentler on tattlers and godwits as they do not become entangled.

As the area in which the second net was set is expansive, it is pretty much a gamble as to where to place the net. Most of the plovers settled down to roost outside of the firing range and even with some encouragement they were not keen to move into range. After waiting for as long as possible, the net was fired over the small number within range and 17 birds were caught.

The plovers being smaller than godwits and tattlers did become entangled in the net. Three of the birds were slightly injured. These birds were released without being measured, weighed and banded in order not to stress them any further.

Having caught both Mongolian and great sand plovers, it was a great opportunity for those of us who have trouble telling them apart to compare them at close range.

Whilst we would have liked to have captured more plovers, it was still a very successful banding day.

Moreton Island - Wednesday 28 January - Sunday 1 February 1998 - Leanne Bowden

Thursday 29 January: 7 people + 3 Curlew = 2 transmitters fitted

Friday 30 January: 16 people + 0 Curlew = 0 transmitters fitted

Saturday 31 January: 14 people + 11 Curlew = 7 transmitters fitted

GRAND TOTAL: 16 people + 3 days + 9 transmitters = perfect success

Spurred on by the success of the 1997 tracking results, yet aware of the difficulties of catching curlews, everyone was both eager and apprehensive on their arrival on Moreton Island.

On Wednesday, Peter, Edward and Barry arrived successfully in the QWSG's boat Wader-go, but not so Jeremy, Roy, Ueta-san and Yozo. They were treated to a couple of mishaps. Firstly, a broken-down Tangalooma Flyer, which required them to be transported by bus to Scarborough to use another boat, and then they found the vehicle they were to use had been left securely locked, with the keys inside! Nevertheless, they all made it to Mirrapool, and set up the one net that Peter had brought over with him.

When the rest of the crew arrived at 10.45am on Thursday via the Hawkins Moreton Venture from Whyte Island to Reeders Point, bringing with them the Niva, Trailer, Equipment, food and a chief food organiser, they were met with the news of an 8.40am firing that had resulted in 3 curlews being caught, and 2 transmitters already attached. There were congratulatory hugs all around and warm greetings for Ueta-san and Yozo from members who had participated with them the previous year.

Karen immediately took over food duties, and with all hands-on deck, soon the fridge was stacked with goodies, sandwiches made, watermelon sliced, kettles boiled and vegetables chopped in readiness for the evening's meal.

The afternoon saw all 16 of us out at the lagoon setting all 4 nets. Out came the greaseproof paper, lots of seaweed for camouflaging and making false lines, shovels to carefully remove the top layer of the substrate surface so that it could be laid back down over the buried net as further disguise, pen and pencil to record net locations and firing direction. Nets were unfurled, ropes untangled, cannons buried. The hide was erected, footprints were flattened, the firing lines buried. All the while, we had to carefully avoid two red-capped plover's "nests" - just 2 little eggs flat on the sand, the parents darting around madly to encourage us away from the area.

Then it was home for dinner - a stir fry and rice delight - and a sit and chat in the sweltering heat and humidity. By late evening, all available beds and straight lengths of floor space were occupied with bodies, dreaming they were not actually in an oven and that 50 curlews would be theirs for the taking in the morning.

But not so! At 7.30am Friday morning, Arthur and Sheryl, Leanne and Greg entered the hide to be in position for the 8.55am High Tide of 2.61metres, and they didn't come out until 12.30pm! Peter, Jeremy, Roy and Edward took up strategic positions around the sandhills, the others hid amongst the trees. At 8.10am, 1 Curlew arrived and surveyed the scene, then came 3 more, then a large flock from the north east. Some Godwits flew over, but decided not to land. By 8.20am there were 15 curlew and 16 pied oyster-catchers between nets 1, 2 and 3, and by 8.35am there were more than 100 curlew and 40 oyster-catchers. However, they were flighty, coming and going and looking unsettled. At 8.45, about 500 curlews lifted, circled and only half that number returned. 9.15 saw slight rain, and birds near net 2, but the oystercatchers were too near the net. At 10.45 there was more light rain, and at 11.30, half the birds lifted, although there didn't seem to be any reason why - no raptors, no one breaking the skyline, no unwelcome visitors. The birds still stayed in close proximity to the nets, but just not quite close enough, so at noon, Roy went swimming. He squirmed his way into the lagoon, crawling slowly along with just his head above the water and eased along towards the birds, hoping to gently twinkle them closer to within firing range. However, at 12.25, perhaps because all the birds decided it was time to return to the feeding banks, they all lifted, taking our high spirits with them.

Not to be deterred, we went home for lunch, and returned in the afternoon to shift one of the nets. Under Peter's direction, we lay it right along the water's edge, the net curved to follow the natural bends of the water and sand interface, with the back plates and cannons actually in the water. Camouflaged with seaweed that extended beyond the length of the net, it was difficult for even us to detect that there was even a net there. The other 3 nets had to be re-camouflaged too, because those pesky oyster-catchers just love picking at things, and they'd pecked holes through the greaseproof paper, and one bird had even gone to an awful lot of effort to completely extract and expose almost a metre and a half of orange rope.

Overnight, it bucketed rain accompanied by jarring bolts of lightning and at 6.00am Tony and Roy departed on the barge back to Brisbane. When we arrived at the hide, it was sagged down with water and covered with frenzied midges. The rain had made the nets weightier, washed away some of the camouflage and submerged our shoreline net more than we wanted. Anticipating high tide at 9.38am of 2.6 metres, we entered the hide (or should I say "sauna") at 7.30am and smothered ourselves in insect repellent. The rain drizzled down, requiring the roof to be constantly relieved of the excess water.

However, the change of weather conditions altered the types of species of birds that were present around the lagoon on the previous day. Whereas yesterday it was predominantly curlews and oystercatchers, today there was everything. Red-necked Stint ran around the hide along with red-capped plover, welcome swallows and tree martins whilst overhead Fork-tailed swifts and White-throated needletails soared. By 8.40am, there were about 400 red-necked stint and 75 curlew sandpiper spread around the lagoon. There were far fewer oystercatchers. Between 9.00am and 9.35am, we saw 15 bar-tailed godwits, some chestnut teal, 14 red knot, 10 whimbrel, 6 sandplover and 3 ruddy turnstone move through the area. No Eastern Curlew landed anywhere near nets 2, 3 and 4, but they did choose to land in front of net 1, our submerged net, and the furthest from the hide. It is still a miraculous thing to see how they can skilfully avoid the catching area; it really is as if they know. At 9.30am there were 200 curlew crowded together just outside the net 1 catching area. Yet more still landed, and they just somehow bunched up more, spreading away from the net towards the grassy verge between the lagoon and the sandhills, rather than take up the roomy space that was the catching area.

By 10.30am there were around 500 curlew in the area, and there was no doubt that some were in the right place, they just could not all squash in avoiding that prime space.

At 11.15am on Saturday 31 January, Peter gave the countdown to fire, and fire we did, catching 11 curlew. Then the processing began. The hide was brought over and holding cages erected. With only 11 birds, there were two holding cage cubicles available for each bird. This meant they could be removed from one, measured, weighed, have a green flag and band fitted, and be evaluated for their fatness and fitness to wear a transmitter, before being placed in the other set of holding cages.

All of the 11 birds were of good weight, so there was no difficulty selecting the 7 who were to wear the transmitters. Fitting of the harnesses, and sewing the final stitch to keep the transmitter into position was undertaken by Ueta-san and Peter, each checking the fitting to ensure there was enough space left to allow the bird some freedom and comfort, with room to fatten a little more before migration.

Once a transmitter was fitted, the bird was set free, to the click of many cameras. They all flew away beautifully. We anxiously await the information we'll receive from the backpacks they're carrying.

MESSAGES FROM YOZO

TO PETER 9/2/98:

"Ueta-san and I would like to thank you very much for your cooperation and hospitality you and the QWSG members have extended to us during our stay on Moreton Island. It was another fabulous experience for us in that beautiful remote environment.

Particularly beautiful, it appears, since we have got our job done thanks to your dedicated fieldwork. I do hope that those curlews with PTTs will bring us good data as they will head north. Thanks also for the unexpected gifts or our society and ourselves. (a drawing of Stilts by Rob Mancini). After having it framed, I will bring it to the Research Center. The stay in Brisbane with the Bob's (Rob Mancini) family is another unforgettable memory. It was pity that I missed to see the Jeremy's family (Jeremy Thompson).

Would you please extend our best regards to the QWSG members whom we enjoyed so much working together when you have a chance? Back in Tokyo, it seems like the things of the distant past that I was in Australia a few days ago.

TO ARTHUR and SHERYL KEATES - 18/2/98:

"It was another fabulous and successful trip to Moreton Island thanks to you all. One exciting after-the-EC-venture story. After we said good-bye to you, Ueta-san jumped into the sea and enjoyed a moment of swimming at the boat mooring area. I was sitting on the shore starting writing a letter to Microwave Telonics on my mobile computer to ask for payment arrangement. Ed was right next to me sitting and relaxing in the shade. A peaceful moment it was. We were waiting for Peter to come back and pick us up, you know.

Soon after Ueta-san was back to the shore, "Shark!" shouted Ed. I looked at the off-shore looking for the big triangle fin on the surface, resulting in finding nothing to my disappointment. The shark in fact swam past closer to the shore, closer than where Ueta-san had been a few moments ago. He and Ed saw the shark which Ed admitted was a small shark about one meter or so. Still, it was THE SHARK, alright.

"The shark is swimming toward you!!" Ed loudly warned a group of five guys in the water each having a can of beer in hand. They were about 10 or so meters away from us. You can imagine how quickly they were dashing and splashing to the beach, can't you? They stood on the shore in a strangely silent, tight circle, stared at the sea for a while, and then immediately took off saying a short word of appreciations to us. They looked so serious and that made me almost chuckle. Ed explained that many Australians were shark-phobia. I just nodded. He quickly added, "snake-phobia, too."

On the way back to Brisbane, we spotted dolphins. As you no doubt recall, it was fine, beautiful sun-shine, blue sky. And even waves looked friendly. However, recalling the all-soaked wet experience on the last boat trip, Ueta-san and I were well prepared this time. Our backpacks were all carefully wrapped up waterproofed. Further, covered by large nylon sheet to doubly make sure.

Perfect and satisfied. Then, I noticed that Peter calmly watched us do our convincing preparation. He must have known what was ahead of us. All across the bay there was no splash at all! Not a drop of salt water on either the backpack cover or ourselves!! A little disappointment after all, since we expected some calculated excitements....."

ACTIVITIES -1998

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

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
Sun 24 May	High Tide of 2.16m at 07.57am
Sat 13 June	High Tide of 1.81m at 11.25am AWSG NATIONAL WINTER COUNT
NO COUNT IN JULY - but see Activities below for something else to do	
Sat 15 Aug	High Tide of 2.02m at 3.41pm
Sat 12 Sep	High Tide of 2.09m at 2.10pm

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

Cannon Netting

Sun 26 Apr	Venue to be decided. High Tide of 2.32 at 9.13am
Sat 23 May	Venue to be decided. High Tide of 2.19 at 7.02am
Sun 21 June	Venue to be decided. High Tide of 1.99 at 06.38am

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 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 Old Yacht Clubhouse. UBD Map 164 A6
Contact: Phil & Linda Cross
- Sat 16 May Wader Identification Day
11.30am - Toorbul. High Tide of 1.74m at 12.21pm (40 mins later at 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 30 May Wader Identification Afternoon.
12 noon - Manly Boat Harbour. High Tide of 1.7m at 12.51 pm.
Meet at car park east of Royal Old Yacht Clubhouse. UBD Map 164 A6
This event will be advertised by Brisbane City Council as part of activities leading up to WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY on Friday 5 June.
Contact: Greg Miller
- Sat 7 1 July 9. 00am Equipment Maintenance Day and Social Get together
Nudgee Beach Environment Centre, 1588 Nudgee Beach Road, Nudgee Beach
BYO Picnic Lunch, binoculars, insect repellent, suntan cream, enthusiasm, clothes that don't matter.
Buy Radox and Dencorub for use on Monday.
Contact: Linda & Phil Cross for more details.

Other Conservation Activities of Interest

QWSG is a special interest group of the Queensland Ornithological Society Inc. Whose object is "To promote the scientific study and conservation of birds by all means possible, with particular reference to the birds of Queens/and". Separate membership is required.

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

Please note: This listing is as a "goodwill" gesture to other groups with similar interests with their permission. However, OWS G 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
- Wed 18 Mar 10.30am **QOSI/QWSG** - Bush birds and Toorbul Waders
High Tide 1.91 m at 12.17pm
Contact: Linda Cross
- Sun 29 Mar **WPSQ Bayside** - Moreton Bay Cruise on the Cat O Nine Tails to celebrate Seaweek and launch the Dugong Watch Project - includes speakers and stops on bay islands.
Six-hour trip departing from Manly Boat Harbour.
Contact: Doreen Pyne or Simon Baltais
- Wed 1 Apr 11.00am **QOSI/QWSG** - Bush birds and Toorbul Waders
High Tide 1.96m at 12.39pm
Contact: Linda Cross

The Future of Wetlands and Opportunities for Queensland Wader Study Group at the next Ramsar Conference of Parties

The UN's Comprehensive Assessment of the Freshwater Resources of the World predicts that by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will be suffering water stress, and that the risks of conflict over water will be greatly raised. The natural functions of wetlands assist in providing and regulating fresh water supplies. Recognising the fresh water crisis will be a major theme at the next Ramsar Conference.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of wetlands by national action and international cooperation as a means to achieving sustainable development throughout the world." There are presently more than 100 Contracting Parties to the Convention, which have designated nearly 900 wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, covering a surface area of nearly 63 million hectares.

Australia has 49 Ramsar sites. Four are in Queensland, with three significant to waders and shorebirds - Moreton Bay, Bowling Green Bay and Shoalwater and Corio Bays. Great Sandy Strait is also under consideration for listing.

In March 1996, in Brisbane, QWSG participated along with other conservation groups including the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) and the Australian Wetland Alliance (AWA) in the Ramsar Conference of Parties (CoP).

A position paper on wetland issues in Australia was prepared. Important progress was made on the role of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (not just those groups identified as "Partners") in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention. A greater role for NGOs was recognised to be needed in the 1997-2002 Strategic Plan and the Ramsar Bureau work programs and budgets.

QWSG members contributed to a range of interventions during the proceedings of the Conference. Matters addressed included: national reporting on the status of wetlands; coastal zone planning; conservation of peatlands and inclusion of some Australian Ramsar sites on the Montreux Record.

The QWSG can promote the conservation of wetlands, both marine and fresh by supporting the Ramsar Convention and attending the next Ramsar COP. In the East Asian—Australasian Flyway, QWSG and AWSG contribute significantly to the promotion and conservation of shorebirds and their habitat. Similarly, the International Wader Study Group provides specialist advice to Wetlands International. Wetlands International is a partner NGO to the Ramsar Convention.

The next conference, the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties is to be held in Costa Rica in May 1999 with the theme of "People and Wetlands - A Vital Link". The Conference provides the opportunity for NGOs to influence the policy of the Convention. QWSG members can again take up the opportunity provided by the Ramsar CoP to contribute to the conservation of Queensland's wetlands and wetlands world-wide.

You can support QWSG participation at the Ramsar CoP in Costa Rica.