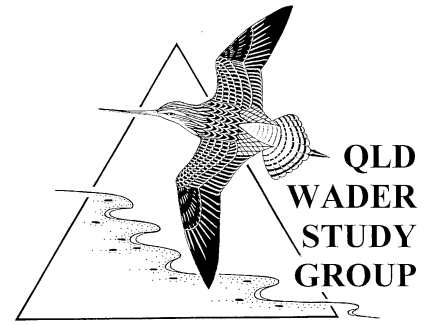


QUEENSLAND WADER



Issue number 33

SPRING 2000

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

Radio-tracking in the Tropics: Great and Red Knots in Roebuck Bay, NW Australia

A problem for wader researchers is the inability to reliably relocate individual birds on extensive mudflats. Colour-bands enable you to recognise a bird if you see it, but what if it is mixed in with ten thousand other birds? How about at night, when you can't see anything at all? Often, the best you can do is presume that the behaviour of an individual bird is the same as the average bird you encounter during observations. But most of us have no clues about how birds behave at night. Radio-tracking can be the solution for many of these problems, at least in studies of movements or habitat use. A bird can be located without having to be seen, and can be located from a decent distance. Ornithologists, however, do tend to sleep during the night if at all possible, which limits the information that radio-tags can give you. That is, unless you have *automatic receiving stations*. I was recently in the enviable position of using exactly such devices, 14 of them in fact, to study pre-migratory Great and Red Knots.

From late January to early April I co-led (with Danny Rogers from Melbourne and Theunis Piersma from The Netherlands) a research project on the behaviour and ecology of the two knots in Roebuck Bay, Broome, in Australia's tropical north-west. With up to 14 people (from Australia, England, The Netherlands, South Korea and America) working concurrently, it was not a minor undertaking. We used automatic receivers owned by Theunis Piersma, which he has tested and used on the extensive sand-flats of the Dutch Wadden Sea. They are not overly tricky things – an aerial, interface, "mobile telephone" receiver, and a palm-top computer, all in a box – but they utterly transform your data collection! (They are expensive, however – the combined value of the units was over \$100,000). The knowledge that even when it's raining so heavily that you wouldn't dare take optics outside, or when the mosquitoes are so voracious that you wouldn't dare be out, you are still recording data, is most reassuring. That was the scene for much of our expedition; January, February and March were all twice as wet as usual, and the mosquitoes were consequently abundant and annoying.

Our aim was to use radio-tracking to determine the daily movements of about 25 Great and 25 Red Knots during the migratory fuelling period. Roebuck Bay is one of the key sites for these species in Australia, and its huge variation in tidal range (from 60cm to 10m) makes it challenging for both birds and biologists. On top of the radio-tracking, we made detailed studies on prey availability, foraging ecology, roost choice, moult and physiological preparation. The first step was to catch birds to attach transmitters to. We did this by cannon-net in late February and early March. Getting a radio-transmitter was probably the last thing the birds wanted, and it was actually almost the last thing they got. First we banded them and took full external biometrics, gave them a detailed assessment of the amount of moult undergone in different feather tracts, and then turned back to technology again. One of Theunis' co-workers ran an ultrasound machine, which enabled him to estimate the thickness of the breast muscle and the size of the stomach. The development of non-invasive techniques such as this greatly increases the information you can get from a bird without having to kill it. A sample of preen gland wax was then rubbed onto a cotton wool bud from the preen gland (the chemical composition of the waxes changes markedly around migration), then the bird received its transmitter (a 1.5g unit glued to trimmed back feathers). Finally, the bird was colour-banded with an individual code. Once released, the data gathering began!

Continued on page 3

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QUEENSLAND WADER

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Queensland Wader Study Group

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Computerised contributions should be in IBM Word, ASCII or Rich Text.

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From Page 1:

We spaced the radio-receivers evenly along the northern shore of Roebuck Bay, mostly on 3m high aluminium aerials. Two units we mounted on 6m high towers erected in the mangroves adjacent to the mudflats. We took one unit by boat to Bush Point, 35km to the SW, and put others in or around the town of Broome. The range of the receivers proved to be about 700m, and this was sufficient to record feeding or roosting birds much of the time. For some individuals we have them on record about 70% of the time for 6 weeks! This coverage is virtually unheard-of in free-living waders on big mudflats. The recordings don't give us precise locations, but for the scale we worked on (10km of coast) that was sufficient. Because the receivers work 24hr a day, and record whether or not a particular bird is present, we ended up with around 5 million data points. You could argue that as even blank records are informative, this makes my most recent publication, based on a sample size of 13, seem rather light-weight.

We had to use a variety of transport types during the expedition. Four-wheel drives were essential, as the only road to our base at Broome Bird Observatory had two semi-permanent puddles 100 m long and thin to thigh deep blocking them. The pindan soil in the puddles wreaked havoc with the brakes of the vehicles we used, boosting the repair bill. Four-wheel drives are less use on mudflats (as we inadvertently discovered), and we resorted to a dirty, dangerous and unreliable mini-hovercraft, and a 6-person, much cleaner and much safer version, to sample inaccessible mudflats and to do large surveys on. It was on one of these surveys along the eastern shore of Roebuck Bay just south of Crab Creek that we had one of our most exciting wader finds – a flock of 410 Asian Dowitchers. Some of the Dutch contingent also had a surprise when they explored up the same creek in a boat, finding about 160-200 Redshanks. Both these counts far exceed the Australian records, and were in places that probably no ornithologist has even gone. We don't know whether the counts are unusual or regular. The boat was used to get to a tower with a receiver, but also became a mobile hide for night-vision work. The boat had to be in position as the tide receded, and it would be stranded there for the rest of the low tide period. There were two problems with this. One was that the birds tended to follow the tide out, so the key species were only ever near the boat for a couple of minutes in a feeding period. The other problem is that the mosquitoes would travel a kilometre out over the mud simply to keep the researchers company. I was very glad to never join in the fun.

We had other bits of fun during the work, such as cyclone Rosita, which passed fairly innocently well offshore in late April, before turning 120° overnight and heading straight for Broome. It hit during the night about 50km south of Broome, destroying a resort lodge south of Bush Point. There were predictions of a tidal surge of 5m on top of the 8.5m high tide that night, but fortunately the cyclone was late arriving and the tide had receded a little. How the birds coped with 120km/hr winds we will never know, but the waders seemed OK. We had brought in the equipment only the week before, though our final tall tower out in the mangroves survived fine.

The results of the expedition will take up to a year or more to get analysed and written up, but already some findings are clear. As we expected, there are big differences in bird movements on spring and neap tides (related to the area of available mudflat for feeding and whether birds are forced off the mud or even off the beaches at high tide). There are also different roosts used at night and day; one that is used only during night is the tourist haven Cable Beach. Seeing 10-15,000 massed waders by moonlight on a surf beach is not the typical expectation of wader watching in Broome. A particularly intriguing finding was how different the departure schedules of Great and Red Knots are. In addition to the radio data, daily migration watches from late March until the end of April showed that Great Knots left as expected mainly from late March into early April. Red Knots, by contrast lingered, and lingered, and kept on lingering right through March. We kept resighting banded, fat, red birds long after our equipment had to be taken down. Our data will not be as good as with Great Knots, but sightings after we left of Red Knots departing over Broome Bird Observatory in early to mid-May challenges what we believe about where these birds are heading. Could they be taking an entirely unknown path towards the New Siberian Islands?

The success of the expedition was due to the dedication and involvement of a large number of people (too many to list here), and our funding bodies. It was certainly not a cheap trip, without the following, we wouldn't have been able to pull it off: National Geographic Society, Ian Potter Foundation, George Alexander Foundation, Stuart Leslie Fund, Australian Bird Environment Foundation, a Pioneer Grant to Theunis Piersma, Charles Sturt University and Griffith University.

Phil Battley, Australian School of Environmental Studies, Griffith University, Nathan, Qld 4111.
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**A Personal Account of the Third Conference of the Australasian Wader
Studies Group (AWSG),
Held on July 1st and 2nd, 2000 at Griffith University, Brisbane.**

As I drove away from this year's conference (I have attended all three) in a state of mild euphoria, I asked myself what it is about these conferences that I find so compelling. Why have conferences at all in this age of fast and sophisticated communication? Why not settle for reading research and news in *The Stilt* and *The Tattler*? Can't researchers communicate by e-mail? From a personal viewpoint, I have to conclude that it gets down to personal networking for better outcomes. There is no substitute for sitting across the table from a complete stranger, who offers a crumb of an idea, or a new line of contact, which can mean the difference between solving and not solving a shorebird question. I have attended each conference with my mouth closed and my ears open. The message I send to amateur wader watchers like myself is this: next time you hear of an approaching wader conference, register. The knowledge you gain will be well worth the cost, and you will have a good time.

Griffith University is a good venue for conferences, with plenty of parking, a variety of meeting rooms with all the appropriate electronic presentation equipment, as well as adequate dining facilities. As the AWSG Conference was a mere sideline to the bigger and longer Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress (SHOC), all facilities were stretched, and yet coped well. The catering was only average. Both times that I was not early in the queue for refreshment breaks, I missed out on food. I also thought that the food for the Sunday night dinner was poor value and surprisingly uncreative. The caterers could have done better. However, I left the dinner thinking not of the food, but of the stimulating and informed discussion in which I had taken part.

A Saturday afternoon field outing for 30, organised by the Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG), toured of parts of Moreton Bay - a Ramsar site and wader habitat. The practical value of this trip was limited by a number of factors, none of which was avoidable. Firstly, it was winter, and most of the migrants were absent in the Northern Hemisphere. Secondly, the tide was low, and it was thus pointless to take visitors to a wader roost. Thirdly, Peter Driscoll, QWSG Chairman and the one person with the best knowledge and overview to present issues to visitors, was struck down by a bad case of 'flu, and was sorely missed. Nonetheless it was clear that everyone enjoyed the outing, and indulged in some heavy networking. I had made the picnic lunch and afternoon tea, and made sure that no one left hungry. In addition to wader feeding areas, we visited the new artificial wader roost at Empire Point, and discussed its features and limitations.

And so to the papers presented, and those who presented the papers. A study of the program reminded me that wader research in this country is still confined to a relatively small number of individuals. Twelve presenters delivered seventeen papers of a high standard, on a wide range of subjects, of which long distance migration was dominant. Some presenters had travelled a great distance to inform us of their work, and for this we were grateful. PhD students, the lifeblood for the future of wader conservation, gave papers on their ongoing work. We learned more of AWSG's ongoing activities in the Flyway, as well as that of the Shorebird Reserve Network. All papers were well disciplined for content and timing. The program ran to schedule, watched over by a series of capable chairpersons, until the final paper, presented by the Grand Old Man of wader work in this country, Clive Minton. Clive is a gifted raconteur, who presented the latest developments in the current saga of Banded Stilt breeding in inland Australia, accompanied by blow by blow dramatic photos of chick and egg predation by Silver Gulls. So great was Clive's hold on his audience, that when the final bell rang, a desperate member of the audience called out, "Extension!", and Clive was permitted, by unanimous agreement, to carry on.

I heartily congratulate the AWSG and QWSG people who conceived and organised this marvellous conference, which provided another step along the path to better wader knowledge in Australia and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Jill Denning

Potential Sites for Nominations to the Shorebird Site Network

In March 1996, an international program was established to protect migratory shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, known as the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network. The Network is an international cooperative effort supported by both government and non-government organisations. To date the Network includes 25 sites from 9 different countries.

The Australasian Wader Studies Group is seeking to increase Australian sites on the Network. In Queensland, Moreton Bay is currently the only site listed. The following sites in Queensland have been suggested for nomination:

- SE Gulf of Carpentaria
- Great Sandy Strait
- Broad Sound. – Shoalwater Bay
- Karumba Plains
- Mackay area
- N Great Barrier Reef
- Horn Island (Thursday Island)
- Lake Numalla (Cunnamulla)
- Ross River mouth (Toolakea)

To help bring about the nomination of these sites, site managers need to be made aware of the importance of these sites to waders and to the network of sites that wader's need. The AWSG would like to hear from any local groups who are working on the conservation of these sites. Nomination of a site to the network will gain support for the management of the site and ensure greater recognition for the whole Shorebird Site Network. Please contact Sandra Harding (AWSG Conservation Officer) if you are interested in lobbying for the listing of a site. (Ph: (H) 07 3390 2179; E-mail. pitta@gil.com.au).

GREAT SANDY STRAIT SURVEY

By Linda Cross

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service approached us to once again survey the waders in the Great Sandy Strait. This was to be our third survey of the area, with the difference being that this survey of the birds would be conducted during winter. The two previous surveys were done in February (summer) 1995 and November (spring) 1997. The date chosen for this survey was 8th July.

Peter Driscoll, using his ultralight, did high tide aerial survey counts the week prior to the 8th July to locate and ascertain which roosts were being used by the birds. With the number of over-wintering birds expected to be lower than the previous spring and summer counts, ground counts could also be reduced.

As with the two previous surveys, teams included a balance of experienced and novice counters, which was made up of 16 QWSG members, 12 QPWS and 8 other helpers. Paul Finn, Melinda Laidlaw and myself conducted low tide surveys on the three days during our stay at Boonooroo and Marroom and we also held an identification training session with QPWS staff and affiliated volunteers on the 7th July at the main roost in Boonooroo. We also held a Shorebird Information Session and slide show on the evening of the 8th for the purpose of educating the residents of the area.

We could not have asked for better weather conditions. Apart from the fog rolling in on a couple of mornings hampering the low tide counts, the skies were clear with just a slight breeze on the main count day. A total of 24 sites were counted covering areas from Inskip Point, in the south, to Moon Point, Fraser Island in the north.

Below are the roost counts of all three surveys QWSG has conducted.

Species	July 2000	Nov 1997	Feb 1995
Black-tailed Godwit		8	3
Bar-tailed Godwit	2818	13294	13359
Whimbrel	201	1227	1819
Eastern Curlew	1035	5259	4059
Marsh Sandpiper	4	55	25
Common Greenshank	2	363	432
Terek Sandpiper	8	576	234
Grey-tailed Tattler	286	3036	1832
Ruddy Turnstone	10	34	22
Asian Dowitcher			2
Great Knot	67	722	1522
Red Knot	22	67	269
Red-necked Stint	107	1328	2298
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper		161	109
Curlew Sandpiper	9	205	479
Beach Stone-curlew	2	3	3
Pied Oystercatcher	225	105	366
Sooty Oystercatcher	1		
Black-winged Stilt	207	53	234
Pacific Golden Plover	23	36	75
Grey Plover	5	67	222
Red-capped Plover	279	137	735
Double-banded Plover	41		6
Lesser Sand Plover	89	734	1630
Greater Sand Plover	12	323	280
Black-fronted Plover	12		2
Masked Lapwing	45	11	37
Total migratory waders	4739	27495	28671
Total resident waders	771	315	1377
Total waders	5510	27810	30048
Total migratory species	17	19	19
Total resident species	7	5	6
Total species	24	24	25

Another Beach Stone-curlew was seen during the count day, which was not included in the roost counts above. David Edwards saw it at Carlo Boat Ramp, Rainbow Beach area.

When looking at the estimated flyway population (30701) of Eastern Curlew, this species has a high ratio of over wintering birds in the Great Sandy Strait.

The total of other birds counted at the roosts was 1186. This was made up of Cormorant, Pelican, Egret, Spoonbill, Ibis, Duck, Gull, Tern and Black-necked Stork species. Of interest here was a Black-necked Stork seen at Puthoo Creek on Fraser Island by Andrew Geering, Paul Finn and Melinda Laidlaw. Sighted during low tide counts was one Black-necked Stork at Tawan on 7.7.00 and an orange leg flag on a Bar-tailed Godwit at Poona on 7.7.00, both seen by myself.

One of the local residents, Suellen Redenbach, lives right next to the main roost at Boonooroo and has shown a very keen interest in the birds. Needless to say it didn't take me long to invite her to join us on the count day and set the bait waiting for a bite. Well she is hooked and has already spotted an orange leg flag on an Eastern Curlew (see wader watch). Suellen is just waiting for her scope to arrive before she starts counting for us. Also baited and hooked are Steve Winderlich (Senior Ranger with Maryborough District Office EPA-QPWS) and his partner Anne O'Dea who are offering to count the waders at Tuan. I am confident that I will be formally welcoming all three of them to the count program in the next newsletter.

My thanks to everyone involved who made this survey a success and special thanks to Joyce Harding for entering all the data.

PLEASE NOTE: FUNDING PERMITTING, THE NEXT SURVEY OF THE GREAT SANDY STRAIT IS PLANNED FOR THE WEEKEND OF 21 AND 22 OCTOBER. PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDER NOW.

Artificial Roost Site At Dux Creek

This is to update you on what we've been doing towards the eventual relocation of the Dux Creek waders.

Last week we had the official opening of the new artificial wader roost at Verdoni Street, Bribie Island. Although I haven't seen it myself, I understand that there is quite a good story on the front page of one of the local papers. I gave the journalist the text of my address so that no mistakes would occur, but it seems that I have been elevated to "founder" of the QWSG, instead of founding member. Sorry, Peter!

QWSG has been involved in discussions with Pacific Harbour since last year, trying to resolve the relocation of waders. Whilst I have been the constant link, Peter Driscoll and Linda Cross have also been involved. Without Peter's input, we would not have got anywhere, because at the outset I was in danger of being discredited because I don't have the professional qualifications to back up my arguments. Peter, although terrible busy, has had vital input, and nowadays I try to bother him only when absolutely necessary.

Following consultation (which is ongoing) with DPI, EPA, Caboolture City Council (both employees and elected members), DNR and QWSG, Pacific Harbour has, mainly through the efforts of its environmental consultant, Peter Scott, developed a plan of management for the waders in the central & southern part of the Pumicestone Passage. This was a requirement of Caboolture Council. The plan is now ready in draft form, and we are examining it. We are also looking at possible sites for building artificial roosts in the southern passage. Pacific Harbour has lodged \$100,000 with Council to go towards the plan and the roost construction.

Some of you will be aware that the actual building of an artificial roost is the smallest part of the process. The biggest part is getting all the approvals, getting the ideas across to the many people who need to play a part in the process. Pacific Harbour is working towards this at present, and I am helping wherever I can.

We began our relationship with Pacific Harbour as one of caution and mistrust. I was the bloody woman who kept popping up and exposing holes in the environmental reports which went from Pacific Harbour to Council. They were the people who were going to destroy the biggest wader roost in the Passage. A change of personalities at the top gave us an opportunity to have more fruitful discussions. I can now report that we are involved in a true joint exercise where each party respects and values the other, and where things are getting done. I believe strongly that in such joint exercises there must be benefits for each side, not necessarily mutual benefits. I want waders successfully relocated, and I want Pacific Harbour to be seen as a good corporate citizen for assisting towards that goal. I don't regard profit as a dirty word, and wish Pacific Harbour well.

The first roost, which was opened last week, is small. It was a roost-building exercise, and has PR benefits for Pacific Harbour. It is at the front door of the Pacific Harbour development. The opening was not as big an event as I would have expected. If I had been running it for Pacific Harbour, I would have taken much greater advantage of the opportunity for some PR. The local federal parliamentarian, Mal Brough, opened the roost, and, as well as myself, speakers were Graeme Marshall (Manager) and Peter Scott (Environmental Consultant). Both men are very good to work with, as is Warren Russell, the man directing the bulldozer. To reach this roost, birds will need to fly about 1km along the canal, and then do a right dog-leg. Don't laugh, waders do funny things like this, and it might just work. And it might not. In any case it will be used by other waterbirds. But the cost of this roost was borne entirely by Pacific Harbour, and it did not come out of the \$100,000 bond. Warren said that the building exercise was absolutely marvellous for him, to prepare him for the building of more roosts when we get the approvals. One of the reasons this roost was built so quickly was that it did not require as many approvals as others will require, the land tenure meant that it was possible, and the bulldozers were there building a bridge, so it was practical to get it built during those works.

When we began discussions back in the old days, it was deemed out of the question to include any land at Pacific Harbour for a roost site. What a long way we have come. Passage beachfront, which has accreted on the north headland of Dux Creek following installation of revetment walls, is now one of the proposed sites for an artificial roost. This suggestion came from Pacific Harbour themselves. We are developing plans now for a roost shielded by environmental park plantings and water on the landward side, with boardwalk and viewing areas for the public. The more we talk, the better it gets. These fellows have really got their hearts in this project now, and are loving the idea that they will be doing something environmentally good. I assure you that I am not saying that cynically.

From a wader viewpoint, the North Headland roost site would have the advantage of being close to the old Dux Creek roost, close to the feeding grounds, and would offer shelter from the prevailing SE winds. The nearest other such sheltered roost is several kilometres north at Poverty Creek.

We are also working towards modifying the current Toorbul roost, to expand it southwards behind the line of mangroves on council grassed land. Another very real possibility is at the southern mouth of Bullock Creek, on un-allocated state land, where waders have been seen roosting.

If anyone has any questions, just ask. I am so grateful to Peter and Linda for giving their time to this matter which means so much to me, but most of all I have to say that none of this would have occurred had it not been for Trevor Ford. When Trevor arrived in our region about four years ago, he was appalled by our attitude of acceptance that the loss of the Dux Creek roost was inevitable, and that there was not a thing we could do about it. I heartily confess to having laid down to die over the issue. Trevor, with no help from anyone, collected data, and presented them to Council with arguments in a document subtitled, "A Curlew's Lament". I guess it got me going. Trevor has played little part since then, because he is seldom in the country, but his kick start was vital, and I would be glad if people recognised that.

I will copy below the text of my address last week, so that you can be assured that I did not say anything controversial on QWSG's part.

Regards,
Jill

Welcome everyone, and thanks for coming.

This is a first for me. I have successfully avoided public speaking all my life. My natural habitat is a flooded mangrove swamp, lugging around a telescope, tripod, binoculars and various other paraphernalia. I stand here out of natural habitat, and out of my comfort zone. But I do it with pride, because I have achieved a personal goal. I have succeeded in engaging with a developer to search for a solution to a perceived environmental problem.

The Queensland Wader Study Group, of which I am a founding member, and Pacific Harbour have joined in an informal partnership, have pooled their resources, in the hope of finding a solution to the gradual loss of habitat of migratory shorebirds in the Pumicestone Passage. We are learning from each other. Mutual respect, understanding and trust have been established and are growing. Once the Pacific Harbour fellows got the hang of the problem the shorebirds were facing, they threw themselves into our joint venture with such enthusiasm that I was heard to say that we could do with a few more people like them in the environment movement. I congratulate Pacific Harbour on having the vision to adopt such a positive role.

The Pumicestone Passage is very precious to me. How we, as a species, behave in its catchment, affects the well-being of every creature which lives in the Passage. It affects the lives of the 12,000 migratory shorebirds which use the Passage every year.

Even as I speak, somewhere in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, which extends from Siberia to Australia and New Zealand, migratory shorebird habitat is being reclaimed, degraded or eroded. Our federal government has recognised the importance of the conservation of migratory shorebird species and their habitat by becoming a signatory to several international conservation treaties.

The Verdoni Street roost is only our first artificial shorebird roost in the Passage. It is small, it is perhaps further upstream than we would like. Thousands of birds will have to learn to use another roost, and this roost alone cannot possibly satisfy their needs. This artificial roost might or might not be successful. Over time, the shorebirds will tell us if it is successful, and if it isn't, we can make changes to improve it. We have plans to construct other, bigger roosts in better situated locations nearby. With the greater vision, understanding and cooperation of key state government departments and local government, we can meet the challenge to get those roosts built, and be proud that we have all, working as one, done something worthwhile to secure a future for the shorebirds of the Pumicestone Passage.

First Returning Migrating Waders

Hi Birders,

Today we observed our first returning migrating waders for this season at Adelaide Penrice Saltworks. A mixed flock of 800+ Calidrids comprising Red and Great Knots, Curlew and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Red-necked Stints all looking tired and feather worn with many showing partial breeding plumage. Also two Eastern Curlew, one Whimbrel, 10 Bar-tailed Godwits and numerous Greenshanks. A flock of 86 Pied Oystercatchers were also interesting.

Many hundreds of Silver Gulls are nesting over nearly all of the available islands in the area and appear to have exploded in numbers compared to previous years. They are becoming a real problem competing for available food with most of the other water birds in the area!

From: The Amytornis. Sent: Sunday, July 30, 2000 Via: BIRDING-AUS: Waders

Banded Stilts under Threat at Lake Eyre: Update Bulletin No 3.

Silver Gulls in the immediate vicinity of the Banded Stilt nesting colony at Ibis Island, Lake Eyre have been removed, and the good news is that so far, they have not returned in any significant numbers and are no longer causing an immediate threat to the Stilts.

The Banded Stilts are likely to commence hatching out in the next week. The colony estimated to be at least 7 days established was located on the 4th of July. Banded Stilts have a 22 day incubation period and so it appears that at least 18 days have passed since egg laying commenced. It is possible that hatching may correlate with the approaching full moon.

Currently there are also about 20,000 nesting pairs of Silver Gulls at Lake Eyre. The assumption being made by the National Parks and Wildlife (NPW), the South Australian State Govt. wildlife management agency, is that these Silver Gulls are unlikely to fly the distance across the open shallow lake to the Banded Stilt colony from their five existing colonies, (16.3km to the existing closest gull colony to as far as 33.5km to the most distant). There are some birders including myself that are not too confident about this assumption and believe that the Gulls have the potential to cover these distances particularly when motivated by the need to find increased food sources for their colonies when gull hatching occurs. And to limit this threat a more direct response would be to target these five existing large concentrations of Gulls at least until the Stilts fledge.

It must be said however that the NPW are doing a good job with limited resources and should be applauded for their rapid response so far. Their current plan is for the Gull Control Team to return to Ibis Island next Monday or Tuesday and remove any gulls in the immediate vicinity of the nesting Stilts. And then, determined by the observed feeding behaviour of the more distant Silver Gulls when the Stilts hatch, further strategic targeting of gulls may be undertaken.

This is a minimum response but should ensure that the Stilts hatch successfully without further harassment from gulls. The critical period for the Stilts will now occur after hatching. This is when the chicks normally enter the water and swim away in small groups (creches) usually shepherded by only a few adults. It is at this stage that the young stilts are particularly vulnerable to predator attacks. The NPW intends to monitor the movement of these creches and if the Stilts are attacked, a response targeting the Gulls will be initiated.

Thank you to all those who directed their concerns about the Banded Stilt threat to the Premier, the Minister of Environment and Heritage and to the relevant Government authorities. So far so good. It appears that this response has provided a constructive environment for the authorities to make the difficult decisions required so far. Please consider a further response if an uninformed public debate erupts over this necessary action to control gulls at Lake Eyre however to this point in time there has been little if any criticism levelled and it appears that the general public has a high level of understanding about this serious problem.

Banded Stilt under threat at Lake Eyre; Update Bulletin No 4.

Please find following an update relating to the Banded Stilt threat caused by Silver gulls at Lake Eyre in South Australia. Previous notes were posted on the 07, 10 & 15/07/2000.

During the period from Monday 17 July, to Saturday 22 July 2000, the South Australian Government through their wildlife management agency, National Parks and Wildlife (NPW) recommenced a project to protect Banded Stilts breeding at Ibis Island, Lake Eyre from attacks on the colony by Silver Gulls. Gull attacks on Banded Stilts ceased soon after the control work resumed, however up to 50 gulls were found to move in most days and this required constant follow up action.

The good news is that on Monday, Banded Stilt chicks were observed nestled under adults near the north eastern corner of the colony indicating that hatching commenced during the previous night (the evening of the lunar eclipse). Throughout the week, clutches of Stilt chicks emerged in ever larger numbers with separate waves of synchronous hatching spreading south within the colony. By Friday, more than 60% of the nests had chicks and it appeared that most scrapes at the southern end of the colony contained eggs chipping out. This event is now proceeding without much harassment from Silver Gulls.

At about 10:50 hrs (CST) on Wednesday, the first two groups of Banded Stilt chicks emerged from samphire shrubs at the west side of the colony. Appearing as highly mobile white fluff balls accompanied by several chattering adults, they moved in short rapid almost dotterel like bursts of motion across the 100 metres of muddy shoreline to the surface of the lake. Almost immediately these chicks commenced feeding with the adults while slowly moving west out over the shallow water. By about 15:00 hrs young stilts accompanied by a few adults were moving onto the lake at a rate of about 60 chicks per hour (CPH) and had increased to nearly 400 CPH by 11:00 on Thursday morning. The rate of departure continued to increase during the warmer period of the day and ceased during the evening. By Saturday morning, 22 July large masses of chicks were departing in compact groups of more than 60 each, and accurate counting was almost impossible.

Meanwhile daily observations from the air indicate that chicks are spreading out across the lake to the south and west moving at a speed of about 3.5km per day. By Saturday morning, some chicks were observed up to 9.1km from the colony.

However a problem now rapidly emerging is that the Banded Stilt chicks are moving directly towards the largest known Silver Gull concentrations at Lake Eyre. These Silver Gulls (20,000 plus nesting pairs) are currently incubating eggs and many observers, including the author of this report, fear that the gulls may display a more aggressive and competitive feeding behaviour when their eggs hatch.

So far this third Banded Stilt breeding attempt at Lake Eyre appears to be a success. There is an average of about 3 chicks per clutch getting to the lake and mostly without harassment from Silver Gulls. This improved situation is due in no small part to the rapid and direct intervention of the NPW Silver Gull control team, however the powers at be will not agree to extending the exclusion area to more than a 10km radius of Ibis Island unless significant gull attacks are observed by monitoring from the air.

Of concern is that aerial monitoring of Banded Stilt chicks may not expose predator behaviour by gulls because;

- a) The Silver Gulls may not be feeding at the same time to coincide with the monitoring flight.
- b) The presence of a low flying aeroplane in the vicinity will probably disperse any gulls before observers are in range to see what is happening.

To protect the young Banded Stilts now dispersing across the lake, it is imperative to expand the operation to target all large gull concentrations in the area. The reasons are these:

1. During the past week, more than 10,000 additional Silver Gull nests were discovered in three separate new colonies. These sites are located less than 15 kilometres from the current position of the dispersing chicks and more seriously are in their current direct path. These Gulls are not being targeted at this time.
2. Silver Gulls will be hatching soon and compared to the current situation allowing humane destruction of the gulls, the greater presence of young will present a major animal welfare problem.
3. When their young emerge, the Silver Gulls at the three closest concentrations to the stilts will require more available food and their feeding behaviour will become more aggressive.
4. The Silver Gull concentrations at Lake Eyre are likely to discourage further breeding attempts in the area this season.
5. At current population levels, Silver Gulls will continue to cause a major threat to Banded Stilt breeding events in eastern Australia, and will require expensive ongoing management. It is predictable that the gulls currently at Lake Eyre will be the core menace and should be controlled while they are easily identified and accessible.
6. A study carried out in the 1980's by Mr Ian Temby of colour marked Silver Gulls at Mud Islands in Port Phillip Bay, Victoria proved that that Silver Gulls regularly move 50km or more to feed at rubbish dumps around the city of Melbourne.

The comments from concerned observers expressed to the South Australian Government authorities about the plight of the Banded Stilt appear to have provided a positive and constructive environment for correct decisions to be made. It should be acknowledged that the current success of this Banded Stilt breeding event is in no small part, due to the rapid action of NPW. However, the minimalist control strategy deployed so far is still placing the welfare of the young stilts at risk. The stakes are too high to consider this occasion just a learning event for the future!

Summing up the current picture, the story is mostly good news but, the fluff balls are not out of the lake yet so to speak! The immediate threat to Banded Stilts from Silver Gulls has been reduced due to direct intervention by the Government, but as one observer has pointed out, if they get this wrong, the Banded Stilt faces annihilation, not decimation. It is that serious. A further update will be posted when more information comes to hand.

WADER WATCH *Linda Cross, Peter Driscoll, Joyce Harding*

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.

Only two reports of leg flags on waders, both are orange flags on birds sighted in the Great Sandy Strait. Sightings should improve as the birds start to return from the Northern Hemisphere.

Eastern Curlew – 1 with orange flag seen by Suellen Redenbach at Boonooroo on 9.8.00

Bar-tailed Godwit – 1 with orange flag seen by Linda Cross at Poona on 7.7.00

Other leg flag sightings and banded birds

Double-banded Plover – metal band seen by Martin Waugh at Flinders Beach, North Stradbroke Island.
4 on 5.6.00, 2 on 6.6.00, 3 on 8.6.00, 2 on 9.6.00 and 1 on 20.7.00

Caspian Tern - Quite a number reported, as listed below.

1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River Entrance on 12.5.00

1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tony's Island on 21.5.00

1 juvenile with orange flag and metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River Entrance on 21.5.00

1 with orange flag and metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Terranora Broadwater on 30.5.00

1 with Metal band seen by Martin Waugh at Amity Point on 5.6.00

1 with orange flag and metal band and 1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Wave Break Island on 6th, 21st and 28.6.00

1 with metal band seen by Arthur Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 22.7.00

Crested Tern – 3 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Tweed River Entrance on 15.5.00

1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Hastings Point Lookout on 16.7.00

1 with metal band seen by Edward Kleiber at Hastings Point Lookout on 18.7.00

Interesting sightings

1 Ruff – (unconfirmed sightings) Dennis Stanbridge at Toorbul on a number of occasions between 31.3.00 and 8.4.00

1 Little Curlew – (unconfirmed sightings) John Knight at Mathieson Homestead Great Sandy Strait on 11 and 12.4.00; 2 Little Curlew – (unconfirmed sighting) John Cummings and Kelvin Nielsen at Cooloola, Great Sandy Strait on 19.8.00

1 Common Sandpiper – Jon Wren at Dalrymple Creek Bowen on 9.5.00

Not waders but of interest anyway

1 Brown Booby – (immature bird) Jan Bedwell & Shirley Rooke at Maroochy River North Shore on 2.6.00

2 Black Kite – Ian Watson at Trutes Wetland on 3.6.00

10 Glossy Ibis – Jean Corney at Bishops Marsh on 3.6.00

13 Yellow-billed Spoonbill – Jill Chamberlain at Ewan Maddock Dam on 20.8.00

1 Cotton Pygmy Goose – (male bird) Jean Corney at Bishops Marsh on 3.6.00, also seen by Dennis Stanbridge on numerous days following. The bird was still at the site on 17.6.00

25 Lesser Crested Tern – Ivell & Jim Whyte at St. Helena Island North and 8 at St. Helena Island Pier on 3.6.00

8 Lesser Crested Tern – Arthur Keates at Manly Boat Harbour on 22.7.00

2 Lesser Crested Tern – Martin Waugh at Amity Point on 2.8.00

1 Australian Gannet – Eddie Kleiber at Wave Break Island, Gold Coast on 21 and 28.6.00

1 Buff-banded Rail – Phil & Linda Cross at Dux Creek on 6.8.00

19 Brolgas – (includes 2 juveniles) John Thomson at Young Avenue Kinka Beach on 19.8.00

1 Great Crested Grebe – Ian Watson at Lake Kurwongbah 1.7.00

2 Black-necked Stork – Dennis Stanbridge at Bishops Marsh on 3.4.00 and 1 on 19.4.00

1 Black-necked Stork – (sub adult) Keith Fisher at Cairns Esplanade on 22.4.00

1 Black-necked Stork – Linda Cross at Tawan on 7.7.00

1 Black-necked Stork – Andrew Geering, Paul Finn and Melinda Laidlaw at Puthoo Creek, Fraser Island on 8.7.00

1 Black-necked Stork – Les Thyer at Pioneer River, Mackay on 14.8.00

2 Black-necked Stork – John Thomson at Young Avenue Kinka Beach on 19.8.00

1 Spotless Crane, 1 Baillon's Crane, 1 Buff-banded Rail – Trevor Ford at Buckley's Hole, Bribie Island on 24.8.00

COUNT PROGRAMME

Linda Cross

I start this article with an apology regarding count site areas where Double-banded Plovers can be regularly found. I was reminded that they are also found at Geoff Skinner Reserve, Wellington Point, Wave Break Island, Gold Coast and Boonooroo and Inskip Point in the Great Sandy Strait. Martin Waugh reported that he has also found them at Flinders Beach on North Stradbroke Island, with the biggest number being 72 sighted on 20.7.00. Martin has also noted metal bands on 4 birds. Another record of big numbers of this species has come from Eddie Kleiber with 116 sighted at Wave Break Island on 19.7.00. Recent records from some of the August count sheets report most birds in breeding plumage and still at many of the sites on count day. Trevor Ford reports 6 still on site at Dux Creek on 23.8.00.

There could be some migratory waders on the move already as I have had the following reports. John Knight notes an increase in the number of Eastern Curlew in the Great Sandy Strait. Trevor Ford has seen a Latham's Snipe at Buckley's Hole, Bribie Island on 21.8.00, and Trevor also reports the first sighting (since March/April) of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (5) at Dux Creek on 23.8.00. Jean Corney reports the return of Marsh Sandpiper (2) at Bishop's Marsh on 19.8.00 and Phil and I had Red-necked Avocet (4) at Deception Bay on the same date.

As the birds start to filter back remember to take a close look at the legs for flags on your next count and be sure to record it on the count sheet. Please supply as much information as possible, particularly which leg it is on and the position of the flag.

The following Beach Stone-curlew sightings have been reported:

2 at Black Soil Creek, Townsville seen by Dezmund Wells on 11.12.99 and 1 on 19.1.00 and 2 on 7.5.00. 3 at Cairns Esplanade seen by Keith Fisher on 22.4.00. 2 at Puthoo Creek, Fraser Island seen by Andrew Geering, Paul Finn and Melinda Laidlaw on 8.7.00. 1 at Carlo Boat Ramp, Rainbow Beach area seen by David Edwards on 8.7.00. 5 along the tidal flats in the Doughty Creek area, Bowen seen by Jon Wren on 18.7.00 and 6 in the same area one week later. 1 at Kings Beach Creek, Bowen seen by Jon Wren on 23.7.00. 1 at Leekes Creek, Great Keppel Island seen by Russell Watson on 18.8.00.

Sooty Oystercatcher sightings from the following sites:

1 at Lammermoor Beach Yeppoon seen by John Thomson on 9.4.00. 1 at Dalrymple Creek Bowen seen by Jon Wren on 10.4.00. 2 at Mathieson Homestead, Great Sandy Strait seen by John Knight on 12.4.00 and 1 on 24.6.00, and 1 seen at same site by John Knight and Arthur & Sheryl Keates on 8.7.00. 1 at Saltworks Bowen seen by Jon Wren on 13.6.00. 2 at Leekes Creek, Great Keppel Island seen by Russell Watson on 18.8.00. 5 at Wickham Point, Caloundra on 7.5.00 and 4 seen at the same site on 3.6.00 and 4 again on 21.8.00, all seen by Barbara Dickson.

Breeding records are as follows:

Only 3 records:

Masked Lapwings. Nest with 3 eggs seen by John Bell at Maarrom on 4.6.00 and 3 chicks (2 weeks old) seen by Frank Bigg and Lois MacRae at Dux Creek on 19.8.00.

Red-capped Plover nest with 2 eggs on the Maroochy River north shore recorded by Jan Bedwell and Shirley Rooke on 18.8.00.

In the last two newsletters there has been articles from Jill Denning and Phil Battley regarding the use of a hand tally when counting. We purchased a dozen prior to the Great Sandy Strait Survey and offered them for sale to QWSG counters for cost price. I have not had any feedback from those who purchased them and used them during the weekend, however, I have to tell you all that I found it invaluable when counting a large number of Bar-tailed Godwits at the Tuan count site. Although I still believe my manual head counts were reasonably accurate, I did find that by using the tally you did not have to remember your figure (particularly if in the hundreds) and it gave you the opportunity to concentrate on the birds themselves. I would certainly recommend counters give them a try. If you are interested, the price for QWSG counters is \$16.50 (postage and packing extra).

Happy counting. Linda Cross

Potential Sites for Nominations to the Shorebird Site Network

In March 1996, an international program was established to protect migratory shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, known as the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network. The Network is an international cooperative effort supported by both government and non-government organisations. To date the Network includes 25 sites from 9 different countries.

The Australasian Wader Studies Group is seeking to increase Australian sites on the Network. In Queensland, Moreton Bay is currently the only site listed. The following sites in Queensland have been suggested for nomination:

- SE Gulf of Carpentaria
- Great Sandy Strait
- Broad Sound. – Shoalwater Bay
- Karumba Plains
- Mackay area
- N Great Barrier Reef
- Horn Island (Thursday Island)
- Lake Numalla (Cunnamulla)
- Ross River mouth (Toolakea)

To help bring about the nomination of these sites, site managers need to be made aware of the importance of these sites to waders and to the network of sites that wader's need. The AWSG would like to hear from any local groups who are working on the conservation of these sites. Nomination of a site to the network will gain support for the management of the site and ensure greater recognition for the whole Shorebird Site Network. Please contact Sandra Harding (AWSG Conservation Officer) if you are interested in lobbying for the listing of a site. (Ph: (H) 07 3390 2179; E-mail. pitta@gil.com.au).

New Law for Migratory Birds

A new national law came into force in Australia in July relating to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation (<http://www.environment.gov.au/epbe/index.html>). The Act requires that developments that are "likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance" be subject to a "rigorous assessment and approval process". Two of the matters identified in the Act as being of national environmental significance are migratory species and Ramsar-listed wetlands. While State/Territory Governments already have impact assessment procedures, this Act will bring greater involvement of the national government in issues relating to these two matters.

AWSG members are encouraged to take an interest in the new national law. The Act provides a new opportunity to advocate for the needs of migratory shorebirds during development approval processes.

It can be anticipated that the Act will greatly increase the demand for site-specific information on migratory shorebirds. The AWSG needs to be able to respond to this challenge and the Committee is presently working to have a new shorebird count database developed.

Members in Australia can contribute to making the new Act work to its fullest extent by "watching" important wetland sites in your local area. Please contact Sandra Harding (AWSG Conservation Officer) if you are concerned about developments at important wetlands for migratory shorebirds (Ph: (H) 07 3390 2179; E-mail. pitta@mail.gil.com.au).

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new member who have joined since the last magazine was printed :
Suellen Redenbach

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.

Age structures and late departures in NW Australia

The AWSG had a most successful 'mini- expedition' to NW Australia for 3 weeks in May/June this year. The objectives of the expedition included the study the age composition of the waders, which had remained behind after the breeding birds had departed for Siberia. 1700 waders were caught, including good samples of all the main species and a bonus of useful numbers of other species such as Whimbrel, Asiatic Dowitcher, Pied Oystercatcher and Lesser Crested Tern. Of the medium to large waders (Bar-tailed Godwit, Great Knot, Red Knot), birds up to 3 years old were still present. Of the smaller waders (Red-necked Stint up to Grey-tailed Tattler) almost all birds present were only one year old. Plumage and moult patterns were determined and will be useful in ageing birds at other seasons when 'adult' birds are also present. Unexpected finds included **a**) fat, adult, full breeding plumage Red Knots still present in significant numbers until the middle of May, when flocks were seen to depart in the usual NNW direction (these could have been birds whose normal departure was delayed by the 'Easter cyclone'), and **b**) a significant proportion of first year Terek Sandpipers and Greater Sand Plovers had high weights also and departed, presumably northwards, in the second half of May. This is another illustration of the recently emerging phenomenon of partial but significant northward movements by birds in their first year. Further examples of this included the capture of two Victorian Red Knot and the sighting of four orange-flagged Curlew Sandpipers and an orange flagged Red-necked Stint from Victoria (all presumably spending their winter holidays in NW Australia).

An added part of the enjoyment this year in NW Australia was the huge number of breeding water birds on Roebuck Plains and at Anna Plains Station following the record wet season. At Anna Plains, a lake 70km long and up to 29km wide was still present, and had up to quarter of a million nesting water birds (waders, terns, egrets, ibis, grebes, pelicans and most surprising of all, 700 pairs of Nankeen Night Herons). We were surprised to find (though it is mentioned in HANZAB) that Red-kneed Dotterels prefer to nest under bushes! It was also amazing to see all the newly hatched Gull-billed Tern chicks with skink tails projecting out of their mouths because the skinks were too long! This is also mentioned in HANZAB! It was wonderful to be back again at Broome Bird Observatory with the happy friendly atmosphere and enthusiasm restored. The new facilities manager (Bill Rutherford) and the Ornithologist (Adrian Boyle) make a great team and are supported by 4 superb assistant wardens (2 young couples sharing the duties of the 2 assistant warden positions!).

Clive Minton

From The Tattler No 24 – July 2000

Red-necked Stints on migration in Mongolia

In May/June 2000 we conducted fieldwork in eastern Mongolia. We did not see very high numbers of migrating shorebirds. *Calidris temmincki*, *Tringa erythropus*, *Tringa glareola*, *Pluvialis fulva* and *Calidris ruficollis* were the most obvious migrating shorebirds. We tried to catch *C. ruficollis* to get morphometric data and an idea about the turnover-rate, but catching was not very successful (9 birds: 8 *C. ruficollis*, 1 *Limicola falcinellus*).

One of the *C. ruficollis* had an Australian band on its left leg: 035-10394. Bodymass: 43g. We caught it on the 2.6.2000 at the lake Hadjin Zagaan Nuur (49° 42.186N, 115° 41.777E).

We were very happy to see some *C. ruficollis* with these wonderful orange and yellow flags. Three birds with orange flags on right leg were seen at 31 May 2000 at Hadjin Zagaan Nuur. From 1 June to 4 June we checked every day and saw 2 flagged birds on 1 June, 3 birds on 2 June and 2 birds on 3 and 4 June; always 700 to 1000 birds were at this lake.

On 6 June we saw two flagged birds in a flock of 90 birds at Galuth Nuur, one with an orange and one with a yellow flag. Back at Hadjin Zagaan Nuur one orange flagged bird was seen on 8 and 9 June. One hundred shorebirds were left at this lake. The next day all *Calidris ruficollis* disappeared out of this area.

At Hadjin Zagaan Nuur we assume that we saw the same individuals every day. We coloured the belly of the caught birds, yellow. After one week one of these birds was still at this site.

If you want more information, please contact us,

Christiane Ketzenberg, Institut fuer Vogelforschung, "Vogelwarte Helgoland"

An der Vogelwarte 21, D-26384 Wilhelmshaven, Germany.
E-mail: christiane.ketzenberg@ifv.terramare.de

[From Clive Minton: The Red-necked Stint was banded by the VWSG on the 1 April 98 in the very SE part of mainland Australia - Barry Beach about 200km SE of Melbourne].

"The Day of Yatsu Higata" 2000

Yatsu Higata is a site in the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network and is located on the northern edge of Tokyo Bay in Japan. The site has a large Nature Centre visited by over 60 000 people per year. Part of the action taken by Yatsu Higata since joining the Network has been to develop links with the Moreton Bay Shorebird Network Site in Australia. In 1998 the site management agencies (Narashino City and City of Brisbane) agreed on a Wetland Affiliation and in 1999 developed a 5-year action plan for the wetland exchange program.

On the 11 June 2000 Yatsu Higata had its annual "Day of Yatsu Higata". The major event was the launching of a shorebird education project for schools. The launch involved sending messages with bird-carvings of Red-necked Stints to the other sites in the Shorebird Site Network. The messages proposed the formation of a "Children's Shorebird Information Network". This Network intends to serve children on the wetlands in the Flyway to communicate via mail and the Internet on the shorebirds. The messages and the carvings were made by the Elementary schools of Narashino and Brisbane. Mr. Doug Watkins of Wetlands International-Oceania is assisting to develop the project.

The second part of the activities was a symposium to promulgate and enhance the international activities between Narashino and Brisbane. This symposium was very successful with a keynote speech by Ms. Ivell Whyte of the Queensland Wader Study Group on the Boondall wetlands situated on the edge of Moreton Bay. Mr. Doug Yuille from Brisbane City and Mr. Des Sandy, an Aboriginal Elder from Brisbane, also participated in the activities.

Hit Akutsu, Chairperson for the Event Committee Japan Yatsu Higata (Tidal Flat) Nature Observation Center.
Tel/Fax: +81-47-454-8416/+81-47-452-2494

Clive Minton awarded Hobbs Medal

Clive Minton has recently been awarded the John Hobbs medal by Birds Australia (Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union). This is presented annually to an amateur ornithologist and is in recognition of Clive's work over the past 22 years in leading studies of waders and terns in Australia. Clive was also made a Fellow of the RAOU in 1998.

Congratulations from all in the QWSG to Clive.

SAD NEWS

The QWSG was very saddened to hear that Cliff Whiteoak lost the battle with his illness and passed away on Friday 5th May. Cliff along with his wife Peg, Geoff & Betty Shelton formed part of a roster group counting four sites in the Maroochy River.

Although the majority of QWSG did not know Cliff he was a very active member of several Sunshine Coast organisations. A keen all round naturalist and an avid amateur ornithologist, Cliff played a significant role in the Birds Australia ABC count from 1989 to 1995 and a similar role with his wife Peg when they shared the role of joint area co-ordinators for NatureSearch 2001. In recent years he played a major role in the Rhythms of Life with the Queensland Biodiversity Association setting up a new database. He was President of his local Progress and Ratepayers Association and member of the Sunshine Coast Bird Observers Group.

The level of involvement Cliff gave to these and other organisations will most certainly be missed.



ACTIVITIES - 2000

Wader Counts (general monitoring)

Contact: Linda Cross on 07 5495 2758 or at xenus@big.net.au
Completed count forms should be returned as soon as possible to:
Mrs L Cross at 40 Thompson Rd, Bellmere, Qld 4510.

WADER COUNTS DATES (general monitoring) FOR ALL OF 2000

Sat 16 th September	High Tide of 2.04m at 11:00am
Sun 15 th October	High Tide of 2.23m at 10:41am
Sat 11 th November	High Tide of 2.26m at 08:58am
Sun 10 th December	High Tide of 2.38m at 08:36am

Counters in the regions of Mackay and the North please choose a date as close as possible to the ones listed above with a tide high enough to push as many waders as possible into their respective roosts.

Wader ID Days

Sunday 17th September at Toorbul.

Meet at 10am onwards for a 2.06m high at 11:40am Brisbane Bar (40 minutes later at Toorbul). Take the Bruce Highway north from Brisbane to the Donnybrook/Toorbul turn-off 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 (approximately 2 kms), we will be on the left.

Contact Linda Cross on 07 5495 2758

Sunday 1st October at Lytton/Wynnum North

Meet from 11.00am onwards. High tide 11.44am at 2.13m. We will view waders at the roost and then drive to Wynnum North for lunch and watch the birds feeding as the tide recedes.

To get to Lytton, drive east along Lytton Rd following the signs to the Port of Brisbane, follow Pritchard St from the turn off to Fort Lytton National Park, turn left into Wynnum North Rd, continue to the end of the road and park in the car park. UBD 143 F11.

Bring telescopes/binoculars, lunch, drinks, stools, sunscreen and insect repellent. If you don't have a telescope there will be people there willing to share and to explain what to look for.

Contact Arthur & Sheryl Keates 3398 4898.

Cannon Netting

There are no scheduled cannon netting days planned for the next three months but netting outings are mounted "opportunistically" when it appears there may be a good chance of success, so the regulars will be warned and they will contact those who have shown interest in the past. If a date is arranged you will need to bring food and water, plus sun-screen and insect repellent.

QWSG WADER COURSE

The QWSG will be holding their very successful wader study course again either in November 2000 or in the New Year 2001. At the moment we are having trouble finding a date for lecturers, helpers and a suitable venue. We are trying to hold the course on just one day this time and the 18th of November 2000 could well be the date, so hold a space in your diary, and warn anyone you know that might be interested. This date will be too soon to put details in the next Queensland Wader Newsletter. However, keep an eye on future issues of Queensland Wader and the Queensland Birds Newsletter.

If you are interested please contact Andrew Geering geerina@dpi.qld.gov.au or phone (07) 3376 1241.

AGM of the QWSG

As above trying to find a date that suits as many people as possible is proving difficult. Check the next issue of Queensland Wader for the date.

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 Queensland".

Separate membership is required. Contacts: Dawn Muir, President (07) 3870 8076; Sheena Gillman, Secretary (07) 3372 4089; Treasurer, Lyal Grundy (07) 3355 1050

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.



MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

I/We wish to join/renew: (Single \$12; Family \$22; Student/Pensioner \$9)

Title.....Name:.....

Address:.....

..... Postcode:.....

Phone: (Home) (Work)

Fax / e-mail:

Membership: \$.....

Donation: \$.....

Payment enclosed: _____

TOTAL \$.....

How did you hear about QWSG

What activities do you wish to participate in? WADER COUNTS, FIELD TRIPS, SCIENTIFIC DATA COLLECTION, SURVEYS, CLERICAL, OTHER (specify.....)

SIGNATURE:

DATE:.....