

Come and meet us:

- 17th-18th May 2014. Norfolk Bird Fair: www.norfolkbirdfair.com
- 15th-17th August 2014. British Bird-watching Fair: ww.birdfair.org.uk
- 23rd-24th August 2014. Dutch Bird Fair: www.dutchbirdfair.nl/
- 5th-7th September 2014. Falsterbo Bird Show: www.sofnet.org/fbs
- 22nd-23rd November 2014. North-west Birdwatching Festival Martin Mere WWT: www.wwt.org.uk

Forthcoming talks:

- 17th May 2014 11:30 Norfolk Bird Fair: Mannington Hall, Norfolk, NR11 7BB www.norfolkbirdfair.com
- 21st May 2014 13:00 The Cinema, WWT Wetlands Centre, Slimbridge GL2 7BT www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge
- 25th May 2014 Neotropical Bird Club AGM: Cley Village Hall, Cley-next-the-sea NR25 7RJ www.neotropicalbirdclub.org
- 11th September 2014 North Bucks RSPB local group: The Cruck Barn Milton Keynes MK13 9AP www.rspb.org.uk/groups/northbucks
- 3rd November 2014. Sutton Coldfield RSPB local group: Bishop Vasey's Grammar School, Sutton Coldfield B74 2NH www.rspb.org.uk/groups/suttoncoldfield

Funding and donation news:

BirdLife Australia: Beach nesting birds programme, specifically for the Hooded Plovers.

350AUD – 30/09/13

Audubon California: Protect a Western Snowy Plover Nest project.

\$35.00 – 05/03/14

Audubon Texas: Galveston oil spill clean up appeal.

\$35.00 – 26/03/14

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Spoon-billed Sandpiper captive breeding programme.

£3,260.56 – 31/03/14

BirdLife Australia: Beach nesting birds programme, specifically for the Hooded Plovers. Phase 2 latest.

£307.32 / £1,000.00

The end of the beginning

Welcome to this the very first *Wader Quest* newsletter. We are distributing this issue widely to a variety of interested parties but future issues will only be available to those who become sponsors. Details of our rates and categories of sponsorship and how to sign up are to be found on page two. We hope that you will enjoy reading this issue and that our modest rates will tempt you to become a sponsor, if you have not already done so. For a very small amount of money each year you will be helping us to help wader conservation projects across the world.

Winston Churchill famously said "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. It is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

This summed up our sentiments exactly when the adventure of travelling the world came to an end, but somehow we felt that it was, in the same way, just the beginning of something greater and more permanent.

Many of you will already know about our travels around the globe in search of waders of all shapes and sizes in a variety of habitats.

The purpose of this effort was initially simply to raise funds to support the WWT Spoon-billed Sandpiper captive breeding programme but as the project



© Elis Simpson

Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*

progressed it became clear to us that there was much more to do.

Last August, in addition to raising funds for the Spoon-billed Sandpipers, we started doing the same for the Hooded Plovers of Australia, assisting BirdLife Australia with a small donation made while we were in the country, and we continue to raise funds for them today (Hooded Plover appeal; page 2).

We travelled to many wonderful places and saw many wonderful waders from the tops of great mountain ranges like the Andes in Peru where we saw Diademed Sandpiper Plover, to below sea level at the Salton Sea in California where we saw

our first Stilt Sandpipers.

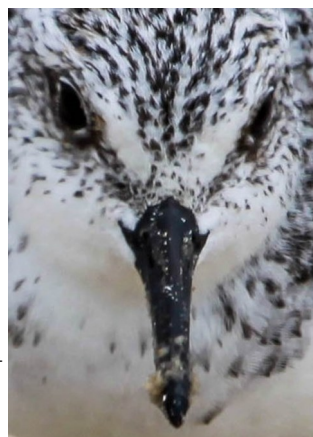
In the end we saw one hundred and seventy-five species across six continents, visiting all nine flyways. The original plan was to stop there; we had wanted to raise £3,000 for the 'spoonies' and we passed that figure with one day to spare.

But things had changed, we didn't want to stop and so *Wader Quest* was formally turned from a fund raising event to a charity which will continue to raise funds for wader conservation and raise awareness about the problems these birds face throughout the world.

Featured wader: Sanderling *Calidris alba*



© Elis Simpson



Founder Sponsor rates



African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*

Sponsorship Category	Rate per annum	Benefits
Founder* Ordinary Sponsor	£5.00	Quarterly e-newsletter
Founder Family** Sponsor	£7.50	Quarterly e-newsletter
Founder Club Sponsor	£10.00	Quarterly e-newsletter Permanent*** link to website
Founder Corporate Sponsor	£20.00	Quarterly e-newsletter Permanent*** link to website Permanent*** small advert with thumbnail Logo on correspondence and displays

* Founder Sponsors are deemed to be those that join and pay their subscription up to and including the date of the AGM to be held in May 2015 (date to be announced); thereafter annual sponsorship rates will be reviewed.

** Two or more members of the same family living at the same address.

*** Permanent means for the duration that the sponsorship is fully paid up.

Our fees are very low so we need to offset this with large numbers of sponsors. Try to encourage your family, friends, clubs, societies and employers to join too, it is a modest outlay and if enough people support us, together we will be able to make a useful contribution to conserve the world's waders.

How to become a sponsor:

- On the new look *Wader Quest* website www.waderquest.org simply click on the 'Donate' button in the right hand column where it says BECOME A SPONSOR HERE! Under the sponsor links. This will take you to a paypal page where you can make a payment from your PayPal account or with a

credit or debit card. Go to the JOIN US page to be reminded of the categories and rates and please also use the contacts box at the foot of the page to confirm your application.

- Send a cheque made payable to *Wader Quest* to *Wader Quest* c/o 20 Windsor Avenue, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, MK16

8HA, UK (£ sterling only please).

- In cash or by cheque at one of our talks or visit our stand at one of the events we are attending. (For dates see front page — sorry, we are not able to process card payment directly at this stage although we hope to be able to in the near future).

Hooded Plover appeal

The Hooded Plovers of Australia are beach lovers; the problem they face is people are too. This wouldn't necessarily be a problem if all the people that used the beaches were considerate to their neighbours' needs, but they are not always.

As a result the breeding success of these beautiful birds plummeted to a dismal 5%; the bird was heading for extinction. BirdLife Australia launched a beach nesting birds campaign and over the course of six years, with funding from the Australian Government, using an army of willing and caring volunteers, they raised this rate to a staggering 50%, a great testament to the effort that went into achieving this.

Sadly at this point in 2013 the Government decided that it no longer felt that the project fitted into their guidelines for support and the funding was axed.

Wader Quest heard about this shortly before the British Birdwatching Fair and,

after receiving the go ahead from BirdLife Australia, started raising funds for the project. It was short notice and we cobbled together a poster and started asking for help. The response was very good and by the end of the three days we had collected £112.49 or 190 Australian Dollars (AUD) not bad for an ad-hoc appeal. We were due to visit Australia in September and so we decided that while we were in Melbourne we would take our humble offering to the BirdLife offices and deliver it personally.

In South Africa we collected another 63AUD from the good folk there and added our own contribution to bring the total up to the equivalent of 300AUD.

In Australia we gave a talk at the Broome Bird Observatory and as a result a lady gave us a further 50AUD.

We enjoyed a splendid day surveying a 'Hoody' beach with Renee Mead who then took us to handover the donation of



Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis*

350AUD to Grainne Maguire at the BirdLife offices.

Since returning we have continued to raise money for the 'Hoodies' and have reached £307.32 of a new target of £1,000.

To donate to the Hoodies you can do it with cash or cheque at talks and events, with a cheque by mail or through the website by locating the 'Donate' button with 'Help a Hoody here!' under it.

What do we mean by 'waders'?

We are based in the UK so what we refer to as waders may be more often called shorebirds where you are, but to us they are one and the same thing. In order to avoid confusion however these are the birds that we are referring to; the Charadrii.



Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* - Miranda Shorebird Centre, New Zealand

Jacanae — jacanas
 Rostratulidae — painted-snipes
 Dromadidae — Crab Plover
 Haematopodidae — oystercatchers
 Ibisrhynchidae — Ibisbill
 Recurvirostridae — stilts, avocets
 Burhinidae — stone-curlews, thick-knees
 Pluvionidae — Egyptian Plover
 Glareolidae — pratincoles and coursers
 Charadriidae — plovers
 Pluvianellidae — Magellanic Plover
 Scolopacidae — snipes, sandpipers, phalaropes
 Pedionomidae — Plains Wanderer
 Thinocoridae — seedsnipes
 Chionidae — sheathbills



Wader Quest World Watch

November 29 - 30 2014

This is a world-wide, wader watching weekend extravaganza.

The aim is to get birders who love waders across the world out and about to see as many wader species as they can on the last weekend of November. We would like them all to send us their lists and we will collate them to see what the world-wide weekend total is and then next year, who knows, maybe we will be able to beat that total?

So what is this event all about? Well, the plan is that people will see this as an opportunity to be involved in raising awareness about how wonderful and diverse waders are, and all too often how precarious their situation is, by simply going out and looking at them.

We would like to encourage those who are taking part who are already wader lovers to drag people out with them who are not necessarily hooked on waders and try to get

them to see what a splendid group of birds they are.

We would especially like participating birders to introduce young birders to the joys and challenges of wader watching too, after all the future of these birds will be in their hands one day.

It would also be appreciated, but certainly not a condition of participation, if people would get sponsored locally and then donate what they raise to *Wader Quest* so that we can better support wader conservation projects around the world.

However, the most important thing is that we simply want people to have fun so if none of the aforementioned ideas are things that participants feel they are able to do, then we just want them to go out and enjoy looking for these magical birds and let us know what you have seen and where.

The ultimate aim is to draw attention to

waders so that the problems they are facing throughout the world become as universally appreciated, as the plight of the rainforests are today.



The incredible E7

A satellite tag was implanted into a female Bar-tailed Godwit known affectionately to the scientists who fitted it as E7. Unbeknown to all concerned this elegant bird was to be catapulted to fame, but more by luck than judgement. The transmitter was fitted to tell scientist where the Bar-tailed Godwits of New Zealand stopped over on their journey back to Alaska. In this case our lady stopped at the Yalu Jiang Nature Reserve on the Yellow Sea which is more or less what was expected of her. She then went on and returned to Alaska. This though is when things started to go into the realms of fantasy for the scientists. The battery that was fitted to the transmitter had a supposed life of some six months, just enough to get it to the breeding grounds, but unbelievably this battery just kept going and going.

Eventually E7 left her breeding area and her transmitter was still sending signals. The scientists, some utterly amazed, others not so as they had suspected as much already, watched as the bird flew a staggering 11,000kms in one flight of over eight days, non-stop back to New Zealand.

This shot E7 into the record books as the longest distance recorded in a single flight



© Elis Simpson

Not E7 but another incredible Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica baueri*

by a bird and the incredible thing was the discovery was made more or less by chance due to a battery outlasting its normal lifespan.

We didn't see E7 when we visited new Zealand, more's the pity but she is still alive albeit with only one leg now and a crooked

neck. She's no longer travelling back and forth between Alaska and New Zealand though, she has retired to the Maketu estuary and is often seen on the Pukehina Spit. The last sighting that we know of was by Tim Barnard on the 7th of February seven years and one day after her banding date.

Wader Quest in southern Africa — Sue Oertli

In October 2012 I was introduced to Rick and Elis Simpson and their *Wader Quest* initiative by my brother Peter Sharland. He and his wife Jenny had spent Christmas 2011 birding with the Simpsons in Ubatuba, Brazil and attended the Bird Fair in England in August 2012 where the idea of a visit to South Africa in August 2013 for *Wader Quest* took root. No additional encouragement was needed on my part to help with the planning of the trip especially after seeing the Sharlands' photos of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper taken at Pak Thale in Thailand on their Christmas 2012 visit.

Armed with an ambitious target list of 28



©Sue Oertli

African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis*

waders to photograph, and raised awareness of the plight of this critically endangered wader garnered through *Wader Quest*, Peter and I planned the 17 day trip (using Johannesburg as a base), to include a 9 night stay in Botswana and the Caprivi region of Namibia where some of the more difficult to find wader species like Lesser Jacana, Rock Pratincole, Long-toed Lapwing & African Snipe could be photographed.

The road trip of close to 5000 kilometres over the 17 days included a boat trip on the Chobe River from Kasane, Botswana on a specially modified 8 seater boat, with rotating seats and mounting brackets for cameras allowing wonderful close up photographs of 7 wader species in a morning. The trip concluded with 2 boat trips from Drotsky's Cabins on the Okavango Panhandle in Botswana for Lesser Jacana and African Snipe. The team was also able to photograph the nomadic Burchell's Courser at Garingboom Guest Farm in the Free State Province before the Botswana leg and Double-banded Courser near Sasolburg in the Free State afterwards. Include an evening lecture by *Wader Quest* and a 2 night stay in Cape Town for Black Oystercatcher, White-fronted Plover and Chestnut-banded Plover and *Wader Quest* left sunny South Africa with another 19 species added to the world wide wader tally.



©Sue Oertli

Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*

The visit by Rick and Elis provided the inspiration for me to start monitoring and photographing all the waders within a 100 kilometre radius of my home this year, an ongoing project which hopes to document 40 species of wader and has raised additional funds from birding friends and family for *Wader Quest* conservation efforts.

Peter, Jenny and Sue not only planned this road trip they also sponsored our involvement in it. Since leaving South Africa they have also set up *Wader Quest South Africa*, from where a huge portion of the money raised for the 'Spoonies' emanated — Ed.

Atlantic forest sandpiper.

Whilst living in Brazil Elis and I enjoyed doing voluntary conservation work with a group of kids who were living right on the forest edge. They had a basically utilitarian approach to the forest and its denizens. Gradually as we worked with them we saw a change to a more caring and respectful attitude. These youngsters knew their forest birds well, some of them had eaten a vast majority of them at one time or other, so it was very unusual on our forest walks for Elis and I to hear someone ask for help with identification.

On one occasion exactly that happened and I turned to see the boy and two or three of his friends not looking into the trees around us, but along the track at a puddle.

Following their gaze I was dumbstruck to see a Pectoral Sandpiper seeking something to eat dashing from one side of the puddle to the other chasing flies. The kids had never seen anything like it in their lives. I told them of the bird's identity and then had the opportunity to tell them about migration and how this tiny bird had flown down to their neighbourhood all the way from the Arctic tundra. The children were wide eyed with admiration for this bird and asked question after question about how it ended up in their forest, some of which I could not, in all honesty, answer.

After we had returned from our walk one of the little darlings pointed out that the bird, which is known in Portuguese as

maçarico-de-colete (massariko gee coletch) had a bit of a pot belly and then made an observation that had the group in stitches; "just like Rick!"

From that moment on my nickname in the group was *maçarico*, and I tell you what, I couldn't have been happier!



Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Inland wader watching – Simon Nichols

Manor farm is the new kid on the Milton Keynes block; a set of gravel extractions lying just north of the town at Old Wolverton. The plan is to turn the area into a floodplain forest, luckily for us land locked wader watchers, it also provides a haven for waders on their spring and autumn migration.

Milton Keynes has good inland wader heritage, in the 1980's and 90's nearby Willen Lake used to draw in the cream of the crop with regular double count figures of species and individuals, mouth watering flocks of Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers, often in their fresh summer garb as they stopped off at these important inland wader restaurants. Alas the good old days are exactly that now, the water levels stopped being dropped and the waders stopped coming.

Step up in 2000 and a new area earmarked to become a flood plain, Manor Farm. At that time it was just a set of fields

next to the River Ouse which runs along its north side. Nothing more was heard of Manor Farm until a Common Redstart was found in 2003, not the most auspicious of starts for what has become the centre of wader activity in North Buckinghamshire. It was in 2008 when the newly excavated



Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

gravel pits started getting their first taste of things to come with a Common Greenshank and 4 Dunlins hitting the headlines, not a great start but constant vigil over the next 7 years and up to the present day it has yielded some great surprises; 28 summer plumage Black-tailed Godwits that dropped in early one May morning, Little Stint feeding alongside a Wood Sandpiper as the sun set, over 30 *tundrae* race Common Ringed Plovers all feeding together in a long drawn-out flock after a sudden rain shower, watching from dawn and seeing a Sanderling fly in, closely followed by 3 *tundrae* Ringed Plovers to join the flock of 9 Dunlin already onsite. Then, as recently as two weeks ago on 4th April, a Spotted Redshank in transitional plumage feeding alongside a winter plumage Grey Plover whilst a summer plumage Bar-tailed Godwit flew in, bathed and then continued its northerly migration. Inland wader watching boring? No!

Spoon-billed Sandpiper captive breeding programme – WWT Conservation Breeding team

The Spoon-billed Sandpiper has recently been ranked 11th on the world list of Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered species by scientists from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). After dramatic declines across the Spoon-billed Sandpiper's breeding and migratory range, an international effort was launched in 2011 to prevent the extinction of this iconic species.

We at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) have been working alongside partners to not only headstart Spoonies on the Russian tundra but to also raise birds in captivity with the goal of providing a source of extra Spoonies for the Russian conservation effort in the future. It's thanks to support through financial assistance and advocacy from organisations such as *Wader Quest* that such an ambitious task can be

made a reality.

An important component of the conservation of this species has been education. Incredible success has been achieved through working with communities in Myanmar and Bangladesh to reduce their hunting pressure. The work of the team at *Wader Quest* who has spoken to over 700 people, including schools, clubs and societies is hugely important if we are to protect this species, not only on the breeding grounds but all along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, 8,000km of which the Spoon-billed Sandpiper uses as part of its annual migration.

So, a big thank you to Rick and Elis Simpson at *Wader Quest* whose support has been a big help to us, not only financially but also through their work spreading the word of the plight of the Spoon-billed

Sandpiper around the world.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*

For more information on WWT's work on Spoon-billed Sandpiper see <http://www.saving-spoon-billed-sandpiper.com/>

A passion for waders

In Brazil we lived in a picturesque coastal town surrounded by wonderful, verdant Lowland Atlantic Forest. I spent 90% of my time birding and guiding in this sometimes claustrophobic, dense habitat. I always felt such an uplifting of the spirit when I visited the south of Brazil, and the wide coastal pastures and beaches with horizon to horizon skies.

Waders epitomize these wonderful landscapes in which they can be found; wild, windswept and mostly deserted places. The evocative sound of curlews in the brooding moorland, the rasps of stints as they race over the diminishing waves that feebly spend the last of their energy on the sand, fluting migratory plovers flying high overhead and, if you are lucky enough to be close to a whirling flock of red knot, the flurry of their collective wing beats indicate that you are in a very special place, at once wild and exhilarating, but for how long will these places exist?

Can we really stand by and watch all

this disappear? My grandson may not be old enough to appreciate these things yet, but will they be here when he is? What price progress and ever growing economies? Draining wetlands and land grab in the intertidal zones may provide a better standard of living for an expanding human population, but how much poorer will people's lives be without these wonderful little avian miracles that will surely be lost as a result?

Wader Quest was born of our passion for these hardy, record-breaking, little birds that continue to impress us with their feats of endurance. The huge variety to be found within this group of birds is breathtaking and some of the spectacular habitats in which they live, often at the edge of existence itself, confound our understanding and often leaving us simply asking, how?

If you do not already have an admiration for these sometimes dowdy little birds, which at first can appear dull and uninteresting due to us encountering

them often in non-breeding garb, then take some time to watch a sanderling tirelessly running up and down the beach, or marvel at the great flocks as they swirl and pirouette in unison across the sky. Then stop and consider that each is a tiny living being that unaided travels thousands of miles in often difficult and dangerous circumstances and yet somehow survives despite everything that nature and man can throw at them. Put simply, in a nutshell, these guys are phenomenal!



Contact details



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For postal address please send email to 07birding@gmail.com

Wader Quest is a non profit, UK based, small charity dedicated to raising awareness about, and funds to support, wader conservation projects worldwide.

Current Trustees: Rick Simpson (Chair), Elis Simpson (Treasurer), Martin Simpson (Secretary), David Lindo, Rachel Walls and Lee Dingain.

Next Trustee meeting: AGM 4th May 2014. (Venue TBA).

