

Forthcoming talks:

- 22nd October 2014 19.00 hrs. London
Natural History Society: Isis Education
Centre, Hyde Park, London,
- 24th October 2014. 11.00 hrs. British
Trust for Ornithology: Seminar Interna-
tional Wader Conservation, The Nunnery,
Thetford Norfolk IP24 2PU
- 3rd November 2014 19.30 hrs. Sutton
Coldfield RSPB local group: Bishop
Vasey's Grammar School, Sutton Cold-
field B74 2NH www.rspb.org.uk/groups/suttoncoldfield.
- 9th December 2014 20.00 hrs. Milton
Keynes Natural History Society: The
Cruck Barn Milton Keynes MK13 9AP
- 15th January 2015 19.30 hrs. East Berks
RSPB Local Group: Methodist Church
Hall, King St. Maidenhead, Berks. SL6
1EA

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Wader Quest celebrates its 2nd anniversary with World Watch



Wader Quest World Watch

November 29 - 30 2014

On November 1st 2014 Wader Quest will be two years old. We have come far since those shaky beginnings, finding our feet along the way and realising that we have an opportunity to make a difference. These are humble beginnings but over time we hope the charity will flourish and be capable of making a significant contribution to wader conservation funding around the world.

We celebrated our first anniversary in Antofagasta in Chile having just seen the majestic Andean Avocet and the dainty Puna Plover, by then we were approaching the end of our travels and thinking about the next phase in our story. At the time we didn't really know where we would be the next year much less what we would be doing, but there was one thing we were determined would happen and that would be to recognise November every year in some sort of celebration of our inception.

Our first idea was to have a formal world wader event where



Andean Avocet *Recurvirostra andina* — Elis Simpson

people across the planet would celebrate waders but we left our planning too late and this has now been done so we adjusted our idea slightly and while it still encourages people to go out and look at waders, it is in a much less formal way with the emphasis on having fun and introducing others, particularly youngsters to take an interest in this exciting and vulnerable group of birds.

You will already know that this event is called Wader Quest World Watch and we would like to encourage you to set aside one or even both days of the last weekend in November to go out and look at waders.

For our part we will contact all our friends around the world on every flyway and ask them to join in the fun and would ask you, our sponsors, to do the same.

**Don't forget to make a note in your diary
Here's what we'd like you to do**

- Select a good wader watching spot, or more than one if you like, and make a note in your agenda to visit it or them on 29th and/or 30th November.
- See how many wader species you can see during that weekend wherever you may be in the world (even if you can't get to a wader hotspot!) and send us your list so we can collate a Wader Quest worldwide weekend list (send to waderquest@gmail.com).
- See if you can get others who may not be wader lovers, especially young birders, to join you and introduce them to the joys and challenges of wader identification.
- Get sponsored to raise money for Wader Quest projects (not a requirement to participate).
- If you are a photographer, send us your best photos from that weekend and we will select some of the best to create the Wader Quest 2016 calendar.
- Above all, have fun and enjoy some quality wader watching!

Landowner involvement in Mountain Plover conservation and research in Nebraska — Angela Dwyer



Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus*
— Colin Woolley

Mountain Plovers are small ground nesting birds associated with the shortgrass prairie ecoregion of the Rocky Mountain West in the U.S. Since the 1920's, native shortgrass prairie has diminished as much as 52% due to conversion of grassland to cropland agriculture, diminished fire frequency, destruction of prairie dog towns and bison population decline. As a result, Mountain Plover populations have declined since the 1960's at a rate of approximately 3% per year. However this bird has adapted to the changing landscape by nesting in cultivated croplands. Nonetheless, dwindling plover populations are a concern as groups seek to prevent the plover from being listed on the Endangered Species List.

In Nebraska Mountain Plovers



Mountain Plover chick *Charadrius montanus*
— Colin Woolley

represents only 5% of the total U.S. breeding population, and is listed as state-threatened. Conservation efforts are led by the Nebraska Prairie Partners (NPP), a collaboration between the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and Nebraska Game and

Parks Commission, and working with private landowners. The occurrence of plovers on croplands, and the general rarity of this species, has led to a proactive response to work with private landowners to protect nests without inhibiting farming operations.

To conserve nests, landowners allow RMBO biologists to access their fields, search for nests and mark them with brightly colored stakes so they can be avoided during farming operations. To promote landowner involvement, Landowner Incentive Payments are awarded to landowners that protect nests from accidental tillage. This incentivized program has been instrumental in recruiting landowners to join the program. When the payments were introduced 2006, landowner participation more than tripled (19 to 63 farmers!).



Mountain Plover chick *Charadrius montanus*
— Colin Woolley

Knowing that landowners are involved in conserving this rare species, NPP conducted studies to understand how the species is responding to nest-marking. We first examined nest survival by marking known plover nests on croplands and placing unmarked "dummy" nests in random locations. The results indicated a 79% nest survival for marked nests and only a 30% nest survival for the "dummy" nests. Further studies then examined chick survival to determine the efficacy of the nest-marking program; results indicated a



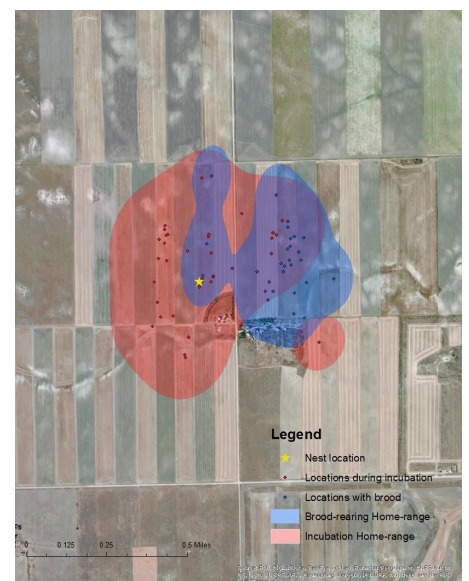
Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus*
— Colin Woolley



Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus*
— Colin Woolley

52% chick survival rate. Higher than that of other Mountain Plover chick survival on croplands elsewhere, thus validating the time and expense necessary to save this imperiled species.

In recent years we have been examining the movements of these birds on their breeding landscape; in 2014 we tagged 6 adult Mountain Plovers with GPS tags and tracked their movements during incubation and brooding to understand habitat use. In addition we placed geolocators on 6 adults to track their movements and stopover use during migration and winter; the geolocators will need to be recovered in 2015 to collect the data. Fortunately these birds are quite site-faithful and often return to the same breeding area for nesting. In general conservation efforts are lacking during migration and winter for many species. In 2015, we hope to collect the data from tagged adults returning from their long winter trek.



Mountain Plover brooding and incubation ranges — Colin Woolley

Angela is a Wildlife Biologist at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA. www.rmbo.org

Little Curlew tracking project by AWSG – update.

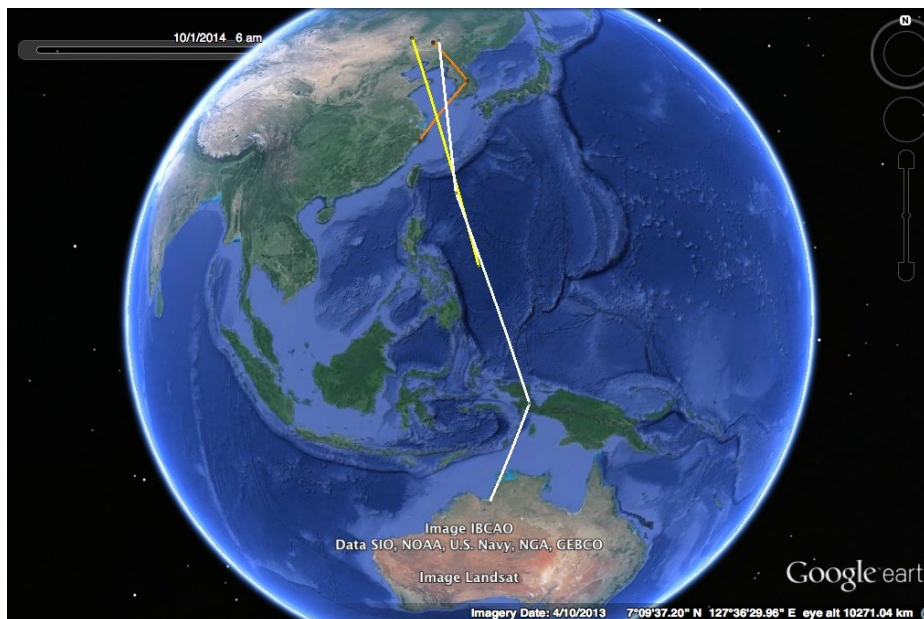
Inka Veltheim has sent an update about the three tagged Little Curlews that we followed on their journey north in the last newsletter and on the website.

All three Little Curlews are now on their way south once again heading back to Australia; incredibly one of them, LC131947 (BB), has already arrived having flown non-stop from the Daursky Marshes in Russia.

Only one of the three birds carrying transmitters LC131945 (BD) made it as far as the breeding grounds in Siberia. After it left there it travelled back to the Daursky Marshes where it stayed for two months departing from there on the 24th of September and three days later was fixed over the Pacific Ocean 300km east of the Philippines.

BB only got as far as the Daursky Marshes on its way north where it remained for three and a half months before flying non-stop to Australia, over 7,000km, arriving in Australian territory around the 30th of September.

LC131943 (BC) seems to be the odd one out with regard to migration patterns. On the way north it was all over the place, even heading south for a time although in the end it also reached the Daursky Marshes. It remained there for three months leaving between the 14th and 16th of September when it headed to South Korea and then



These are the southbound traces of the three birds 131945 (BD) yellow trace; 131947 BB) white trace; LC131943 (BC) orange trace. - Inka Veltheim.

went south west ending up in China.

On the northward journey BD and BB seemed to follow more or less the same route, albeit two weeks apart. Coming south they look like they are doing the same, but much closer together in terms of timing.

It'll be interesting to see if all three end up in the same place and return to where they were tagged earlier in the year.

For more information about the Australian Wader Studies Group visit the website <http://www.awsg.org.au/>

Project updates



The Hooded Plover appeal has now concluded. This project started at last year's British Birdwatching Fair when we launched an appeal to raise some cash for the BirdLife Australia beach nesting birds programme. We presented them with 350AUD when we visited Melbourne later in the year and then decided that we would set a new target of an additional £1,000 to donate by the beginning of the breeding season in 2014. On the 17th of September we sent £1,128.50 to BirdLife Australia. As with the Spoon-billed Sandpiper project we exceeded our target thanks to a very positive and generous response from the public.



The Magellanic Plover appeal is coming along slowly, we do need to get more donations as the costs are outstripping the donations at present. Chris Lamsdell our

ringing consultant has ordered the nets which should be on their way to Chile soon. We still have to cover the cost of the poles which will need to be steel and not aluminium as the winds are so strong in Patagonia and the expenses of the team in the field. We feel that this is vital work and will be the beginning of further studies into this enigmatic species.

We received our first request for help from a small conservation project too. This is particularly exciting news for us as that is what we really set out to do, help small projects. The Anak Burung Birdbanding Club under the supervision of the Indonesian Insritute of Sciences has requested a number of colour rings in order to ring and study Javan Plover and White-headed Stilts.

Some wing and tail measuring equipment also requested has already arrived and the rings are on thier way.

We have since received another request for assitance from a group in Peru. This is a very pleasing development and we hope

this will encourage others to do the same. However we are currently devising an application form to make the process more straightforward and clear to applicants and Wader Quest alike. We will be relying heavily on Chris Lamsdell's experience and knowledge in this field to guide us through its complexities.



From bottom to top; Wing measures (medium and small), tail measure and packing sent to Indonesia — Iwan Londo

Blast from the past: Slender-billed Curlews at Merja Zerga – Ashley Banwell

The Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* is now a critically endangered species and has the unfortunate distinction of being the rarest bird in Europe. It used to winter around the Mediterranean areas, latterly Morocco and Greece.

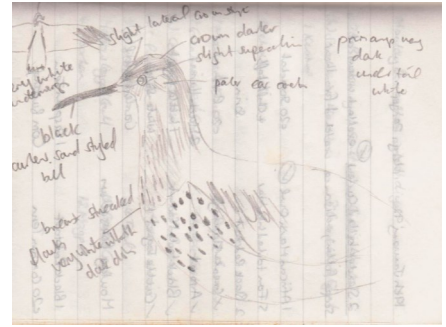


Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*
- Ashley Banwell

The last verified records were in Greece in April 1999 and in Oman in February and August 1999. At the last-known regular wintering site, Merja Zerga in Morocco, there have been no verified records since 1995. The latest verified record ever of the species comes from Kiskunság National

Park, Hungary in April 2001, which was found by a good friend of mine János Oláh.

The 19th February 1992 proved to be a very significant day's birding for me - my chance to see what was to become an extinct species little did I know twenty odd years later I would be looking back and thinking it was actually a smart move to go when I did, even in my fledgling international birding career I had been wanting to visit Morocco for a few years to try and see the last twitchable Slender-billed Curlews. In previous winters many British birders had visited Merja Zerga and come away with sightings of the Slender-billed Curlews, finally in 1992 I had my chance. Merja Zerga was our first destination on our two week trip and soon we were watching 2 Slender-billed Curlews walking around on a roughly ploughed area, one of which was slightly injured. I was able to watch them for over an hour with views good enough to fill my new Nikon Spacemaster telescope which was on its maiden voyage. Just 3 winters later it had



A page from Ashley's field notebook—Ashley Banwell

stopped returning undoubtedly it had been killed somewhere along its migratory route.

Ed: That was the year that I was planning to visit; for one reason or another that trip never happened, nor did it the following year, not the next. After that the Slender-billed Curlews never returned to Merja Zerga, extinction loomed and now, sadly, has probably actually occurred - Ed.

British Birdwatching Fair 2014

Once again Wader Quest was present at the British Bird Fair. This is, make no doubt about it, a very expensive weekend, but in the past we have always judged that the exposure was worth the financial strain. We are pleased to announce that this year, for the first time, Wader Quest took more at the fair than it spent on being there. This did not include our hotel, petrol and personal expenses but did include all the display material and the stand itself.

We were pleased with the stand which had much more focus this year now that we have a more positive idea of what we are trying to achieve, last year we were still trying to invent ourselves somewhat. Now that we have found our direction it is much easier to persuade people to come along on the journey with us. One drawback that we haven't overcome was that last year our posters warped a little in the damp air, we thought we'd avoided that this year, but sadly it's back to the drawing board with that. The problem is that we don't feel we can splash out on all those fancy display

items at this stage, so we'll just have to make do and mend.



Annette, Rick and Elis on the stand

This year we had the assistance of Annette Cuniffe who came over from the USA to be at the BBF. She helped out on the stand, especially when we had to go to meetings and give our talk, and in addition brought and sold some lovely scarves that she had hand knitted especially for Wader Quest. She also brought a model that she had fashioned of a Hooded Plover nest with three eggs. In addition Peter Cooper who we met at the Norfolk Bird Fair presented us with a model of a Hooded Plover to sell.

The talk we gave was on the Friday morning so we really didn't expect too many people to attend, but we were greatly encouraged by the turn out. It seems that our name is beginning to spread and in a positive way! This year our 20 minute talk was about what we had done since last year with a much greater emphasis on wader conservation starting with the problems we encountered on our travels.

We held a raffle as usual which was well

subscribed to. First prize of a copy of the BTO Atlas which had been kindly donated by them went to Mirabel Helme; Second prize a signed copy of The World's Rarest Birds donated by Wildguides and signed by the authors and artist (we took it to Sweden for Erik Hirschfeld to sign) was won by Allan Archer who is one a very supportive sponsors and trustee; third prize was a copy of UK 500 Birding in the fast lane by James Hanlon which was donated by trustee Chris Lamsdell was won by Roberta Goodall.

We were also very pleased with the response to the prize draw for those that signed up as a sponsor at the BBF. The prize was a pair of Opticron Trailfinder 8x42 binoculars donated by Pete Gamby of Opticron and the lucky winner was Brayton Holt, who greatly deserved to win as he endured the talk!!

Whatever happens business wise, it is always fun to be at the bird fair meeting people from all over the world.



David Lindo selects the raffle prizes winners watched by fellow trustees Lee Dingain Rachel Walls and Rick Simpson
— Elis Simpson



2014 BBF stand — Elis Simpson

Double-banded Plover— Nicolas Dillon

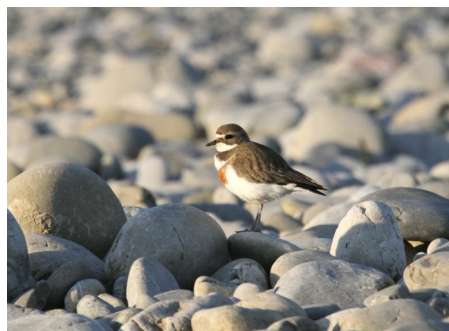


Male Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus* - Nicolas Dillon

It's the 23rd of September and I'm sitting in a large boulder strewn riverbed just minutes from my home and studio in the South Island, New Zealand. I'm a wildlife artist with a special fondness for shorebirds and have my spotting scope focused on a beautiful pair of Double-banded Plovers also known as Banded Dotterel.

The female of the pair has just laid her first egg of the season, she will lay two more over the next few days to complete her clutch of three. It's the first really warm evening this Spring, the sun is low and bathes the boulder landscape in a rich golden light. The male bird poses for me atop a small rock nearby, relaxed yet watchful of his mate. I get out my drawing gear and make some quick lines in the sketchbook then open up my watercolour box and try to capture some of the colour and light of the moment.

The pair arrived back to the river in early



Female Double-banded Plover
Charadrius bicinctus - Nicolas Dillon

August, most likely having overwintered on the East Coast of Australia, a rare East – West migration carried out by some of the population. Other birds will have wintered further north in New Zealand or perhaps on my local coastline. There has been a slow

decline in Banded Dotterel numbers in recent times. Years ago in my region, Marlborough, they would have nested widely across the flat plains surrounding my home. Originally dry and stony sheep grazing pasture with low stock numbers it



The imperilled Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus* nest - Nicolas Dillon

was suitable breeding territory. Farming intensified and then in the 1980's the wine industry started expanding and with the increased global demand for Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc the stony pastures have become busy vineyards. Consequently the dotterels along with South Island Pied Oystercatchers now breed solely in the braided riverbeds or down on the sea coast.

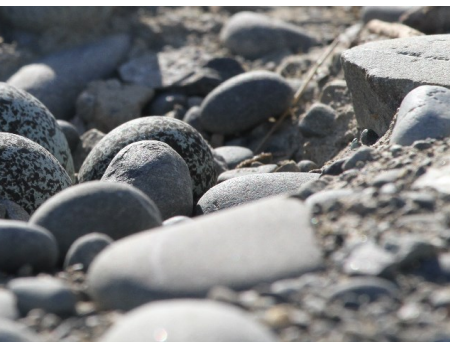
There has been a similar pattern elsewhere in the country. Dairy farming returns have escalated, dry country farms have been heavily irrigated turning pastures into lush green grass unsuitable for a small ground nesting wader.

The braided river systems further south are key breeding areas for rare endemic waders such as the Wrybill and Black Stilt and also the Black-billed Gull and Black-fronted Tern all of which are critically endangered. Every year these birds struggle against the odds during the breeding season. Nature throws the possibility of

spring floods wiping out all nests, introduced mustelids take eggs and birds, and man in 4WD vehicles can also cause havoc.

Unfortunately my pair of Banded Dotterel has placed their small scrape in the median strip of a temporary track used by gravel trucks. Luckily for now it seems the trucks have ceased using it, but they may resume work at any time and the track also provides easy access across the riverbed for recreational vehicles. The chances of them successfully raising this brood looks doubtful to say the least. This story is reflected around the world of course in similar ways, our waders and shorebirds are increasingly threatened. Thanks to the efforts of many passionate people the plight of these beautiful birds and their fragile existence is being highlighted.

As the light fades I observe the female Dotterel, she has a gentle expression and I wonder where her fortunes will lie this season. The surrounding rocks radiate the last of the day's heat. The male bird, which had flown off to the river's edge to drink and feed returns, and stands back on the rock where I had made my initial drawings. I fix a few last details in the sketchbook



before he takes over his duties on the nest. I leave them to the gathering dusk and head home to the studio.



From the Nicolas' sketchbook;
Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*
- Nicolas Dillon

Wader Quest South Africa's wader count for World Shorebirds' Day – Sue Oertli



Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* - Sue Oertli

Wader Quest South Africa took part in World Shorebirds Day on 6th September in the North-west Province of the country at a dam called Roodekoppies, 25 kilometres north of Brits. With a capacity of 103 million cubic meters of water, the dam hosts an excellent selection of fresh water fish such as Largemouth Bass, Kurper and Carp.

The 6th September found us inching our way through hundreds of fishermen partici-



Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* — Sue Oertli



Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus* - Sue Oertli

pating in a major weekend fishing competition at the dam and our hearts sank as we tried to record the waders we could see foraging between the fishing lines, camping tents and canoes that packed the shoreline.

We recorded 10 species of wader with 57 African Jacanas along the water margins. 68 Blacksmith Lapwings were added in the surrounding habitat together with 8 African Wattled Lapwings and 48 Crowned Lapwings. A single Spotted Thick-knee was seen roosting far away from the crowds and 2 Black-winged Stilts, 3 Wood Sandpipers, 6 Ruff, 14 Three-banded Plovers and a single Little Stint spent the day in the flooded grassland margins of the dam where it was relatively quiet.

I would like to thank a birding colleague, Mrs Amanda Walden, for her sharp eyes

and assistance on the day of the count. We eagerly await the return of the migrant waders like Curlew Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit and Grey Plover to the region.

The 23rd September was a beautiful spring morning on the Gauteng Highveld as the Wader Quest South Africa team headed out to Marievale Bird Sanctuary in search of returning Curlew Sandpipers. This RAMSAR site (see www.ramsar.org) near Springs is a hotspot for waders and it did not disappoint.

After a short delay to battery jump start the car with the help of an earth moving grader and its helpful assistants we soon picked up Pied Avocet, Little Stint, Ruff, Three-banded Plover, African Snipe, African Jacana, Common Greenshank, Black-winged Stilt, Wood Sandpiper, 3 species of



Little Stint *Calidris minutus* - Sue Oertli

Lapwing and roosting Spotted Thick-knee.

The wet land has recently had the problematic, encroaching reed beds cut back & it now provides excellent wader habitat and photographic opportunities.



Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* - Sue Oertli

Although we could not locate any Curlew Sandpiper on the day, we feel sure that the next couple of months will turn up a few "mouth-watering" sightings - possibly a Black-tailed Godwit or another Broad-billed Sandpiper? Here's holding thumbs.

Inland wader watching UK – Simon Nichols

We left our wader news from Manor Farm in North Buckinghamshire at the end of May with Rob Hill finding a Red Necked Phalarope; who would have thought he could pull bigger and better things out of the bag? But more about that later.

June continued where May finished off with the local waders beginning to settle down and breed - the Eurasian Oystercatcher pair had 2 young by the 9th June and up to 5 pairs of Little Ringed Plovers were on territory, a great showing for these summer visitors, Manor farm being one of the best locations in Bucks to see this species. Common Redshank and Northern Lapwing were also sitting on nests, with over 10 pairs of the latter being successful while 2 juvenile Common Redshank were seen on the 23rd June were thought to have been locally bred.

It also started turning autumnal on the 23rd with the first 2 returning non-breeding Green Sandpipers being noted as well as a juvenile Common Ringed Plover which definitely didn't breed onsite, but we wonder where it did come from?

It then settled down to business as usual with the Green Sandpiper numbers building up through July as well as the first returning Common Sandpipers, 6 of the each were

the highest totals recorded in July, it wasn't until 24th When Rob found a Wood Sandpiper that things started to heat up and a few other goodies started to filter through, with Ruff, Dunlin and more Common Ringed Plovers being found. The Wood Sandpiper was a Juvenile and stayed



Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*
- Elis Simpson

until the 30th. As August started we were seeing diminished numbers of Little Ringed Plover as post breeding dispersal took hold, but anticipation was rife as we looked at what was turning up around the country.

A typical August day, in this case the 5th,

produced Ruff, 3 adult Dunlin, 2 Common Ringed Plover, 4 immature Little Ringed Plovers, 1 Common Redshank, 7 Green Sandpipers and 4 Common Sandpipers just to give you a snapshot of the numbers that were passing through

August 10th and a late evening call from Rob, "Er... you better get down here, I think I have a Pec!" Pectoral Sandpiper is good anywhere in the UK, but for land locked Bucks? It's a miracle! luckily it stayed all that evening and the following day to allow the keenest listers to connect; what a stunning bird and knowing its come all the way from Siberia somehow makes it even more exciting.

The month started to calm down after that, but had enough to keep the avid patch watcher happy, with Black-tailed Godwit on 24th, Little Stint on 25th staying until the 26th when it was joined by another Black Tailed Godwit, 2 more Ruffs and a Common Greenshank, not bad for a small former quarry in North Milton Keynes. The month and this report ended with Ruff numbers at 4, Common Greenshanks 2 and 2 Dunlins joining the flock.

We cant wait to see what September and October brings; Buff Breasted Sandpiper anyone...?

Prizes received; keep them coming! (Please!)

Following our appeal for prizes we did exceptionally well. We had already received four pairs of Trailfinder 8x42 binoculars from Opticron the first of which we offered in a prize draw for new sponsors signing up at the British Birdwatching Fair.

We received three books to give as raffle prizes at the fair, the BTO Atlas, The World's Rarest Birds and UK500 Birding in the fast lane.



Mirabel Helme receiving 1st prize in the BBF raffle; BTO Atlas — Elis Simpson

At the Falsterbo Bird Show we had a second copy of The World's Rarest Birds donated and signed by Erik Hirschfeld, and a copy of Central and Eastern European Wildlife by Gerard Gorman, donated by Bradt Books.

We also have a copy of Facing Extinction

given by Debbie Pain, a copy of Bird identification and field craft by Mark Ward donated by Barbara Simpson, a fantastic Ibisbill print from Steve Cale.



Third prize in the BBF raffle went to Roberta Goodall; UK500 Birding in the fast lane
— Elis Simpson

A big thank you to all those who contributed, these prizes make a huge difference to the amount of money we can raise at events..

We will continue to attend events throughout the year, so, if you are an author, artist, jewellery maker, jigsaw designer, bird travel company, app producer, optics manufacturer or have any other ideas for items that would be great prizes and feel inspired to donate them to Wader Quest to further our cause then we would be happy to hear from you.



We offered a pair of Opticron Trailfinder binoculars in the prize draw for sponsorship sign-ups at the BBF. Here is the winner Brayton Holt using them in his garden.

Lapwings; a personal passion - Rick Simpson

My love affair with lapwings goes back to when I started birding. It was the discovery of a Northern Lapwing in a book when I was just a wee lad that made me want to see one above all else in the world. They have been a constant delight throughout my birding life ever since.



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* a national treasure, but apparently not destined to be national bird - Henrietta Pringle

We know of course that they are in serious trouble in the British countryside with half of them gone in the last thirty odd years. It is ironic that it is farming that has pushed this

gorgeous bird to one side in the race for bigger yields and greater profitability and yet this bird is known as the 'farmer's friend' due to its diet which comprises many of the things that destroy crops and roots. Some friend the farmer turned out to be for lapwings. Those few farmers that do tend their land sympathetically are to be congratulated, the rest need to understand that they have some responsibility as the self-styled custodians of our land to protect our natural heritage as well as make profits.

It is with dismay that I note that, in the voting for National Bird, the lapwing does not appear within the top twenty candidates, falling behind pheasant, a bird that was introduced just for folk to shoot and swallow a migrant that spends most of its life elsewhere.

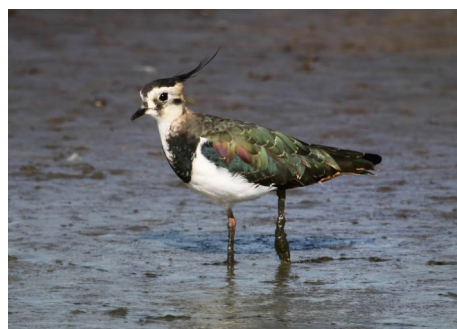
A national bird should surely reflect the culture of a country and therefore its selection necessarily warrants a bit more thought on the part of voters than is currently going into this election. I'm sure people are ticking off the first few birds they can think of some may even be hard pressed to name six birds! This decision will be an enduring legacy and whilst I'm sure that the robin is likely to be a worthy victor, I still believe that the lapwing should be at least in the final six.

But why? Well let's consider its merits in terms of its cultural heritage. It appears regularly in many of our great works of literature, Shelley, Brönte, Caxton, Green, Joonson, Chaucer all knew and wrote about this bird and not just in passing, its inclusion is quite deliberate and usually described with some understanding of its

habits with Shakespeare even referring to its precocial nature by describing people as 'running with egg shell on their heads'.

There is a veritable plethora of local names for this bird that are still used today and probably more that are not, this bird is much loved and known from the tip of Cornwall and beyond, to the far reaches of Shetland and many places owe their name to the presence of this bird.

Do you like Easter eggs? Well as you enjoy munching through them next year spare a thought for the lapwing which was almost driven to extinction in this country due to



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* British racing green with oily sheen to complete the picture - Elis Simpson

the over collection of its eggs in Spring. It was this association with Easter that introduced the egg to the festivities and created this huge industry.

It was this collection of eggs that gave the Lapwing another less palatable distinction, it has its own Act of Parliament, The Lapwing Act of 1926 which was brought in to protect the lapwing from this wholesale plunder.

So what else makes me feel this bird is so worthy, well, how many of you can remember British Racing Green? It was the colour our racing cars were painted to distinguish them on the track and guess what? The lapwing has a British Racing Green back complete with oily sheen to boot!

So there you have it, the humble and overlooked lapwing. On a more serious note, if it were our national bird, would we not work harder to save it from its decline?



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* displaying, surely one of our countryside's most evocative experiences - Elis Simpson

 QUIZ
NIGHT

Wader Quest fundraising Quiz Night:

19:00 hrs. 10th January 2015

£10.00 per head includes Fish 'n' Chip supper, tea and coffee.

Simpson Village Hall, Hanmer Road, Simpson, Milton Keynes, MK6 3AD

Email waderquest@gmail.com for further details

Protecting Black-tailed Godwit nests in The Netherlands – Astrid Kant

Astrid Kant lives in The Netherlands and has been passionate about waders for 25 years. Here Astrid tells the story of what was going wrong in The Netherlands and how, in her region she managed to change things.



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* chicks
- Astrid Kant

To begin with the conservation of Dutch waders, was a frustrating hobby for a few volunteers who saw that modernising Dutch agriculture meant that the birds were finding it hard to breed successfully losing their eggs and chicks. There was no place left for wader chicks to hide, feed, grow and fledge and numbers were declining.

In Holland the farmers used to mow the grass in mid-June, the chicks of Black-tailed Godwits had plenty of time to find sufficient insects to grow and develop; a godwit chick can fly at 25 days old.



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* chicks with farmer and Astrid

Nowadays the farmers mow their grass the end of April. It is amazing to see how the date of mowing gets earlier by the year resulting in nests and chicks being destroyed by the machinery. Incredibly, this year they even started mowing in mid-April due to the mild winter so most godwits didn't even have time to lay their first clutch! Over the years I saw so many nests being destroyed with both eggs and chicks being killed that I decided I must do something about it. My passion for these godwits was so strong that I was determined that I would never give up trying to bring about change to protect them.

In the beginning the number of farmers who were willing to co-operate or even listen was small; they really didn't understand what I was trying to do. They must have wondered about "That strange woman, who

is always talking about godwits and telling us what to do".

Finally I helped the farmers to recognise the godwits, I showed them how to find their nests and locate the families with chicks. In the end my enthusiastic approach seemed to convince them particularly among the younger farmers who were keen to help the godwits. In Holland farmers receive compensation for the loss of income providing the measures that are taken are successful and this of course helped my cause. I visit my thirty farmers more than six times each spring and with



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* chicks with Astrid and farmer

them find all the godwit nests I can, we then place indicator sticks to mark them and leave an area around it unmown to give the chicks a chance to find sufficient insects to enable them to fledge. When the farmers are mowing I travel with them to look for escaping chicks and try to save them from the deadly machinery.



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* being weighed - Astrid Kant

I have written a book for farmers and volunteers about the breeding biology and protection of the Dutch meadow birds called "Weidevogels" (Meadow birds) I'm afraid it is only available in Dutch though.

Weidevogels



Astrid's book cover

I give many lectures on godwits and their conservation all around the country. It is uphill battle as modern agriculture and godwit conservation are not easy bed fellows but finally, in Vijfheerenlanden, the place where I work, the number of godwit nests has been increasing in recent years. They have found more than 180 nests and many chicks had reached the important 25 days fledging date.

I have colour ringed big chicks for the last seven years. I have over 250 chicks and it is gratifying to see that about half of them are still alive and returning to the region.



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
- Elis Simpson

So, with hard work and determination, it is possible to convince farmers to look after their godwits, they are now proud of their new offspring as they take ownership of the returning colour ringed godwits and refer to them as 'their godwits!'

They herald the next generation, a new breeding cycle! 'Let's go for it!'

Wader hotspot: Frampton Marsh RSPB reserve – Toby Collett RSPB warden

RSPB Frampton Marsh is one half of the RSPB's Lincolnshire Wash Reserves that sit either side of the town of Boston and River Witham. It is ideally situated adjacent to The Wash and managed in such a way that it has become the best reserves for waders that the RSPB has in its considerable suite of reserves. Not bad considering Frampton was only complete as it looks now in 2009! So what makes us a bona fide wader magnet? Location, management and a touch of luck, though from experience the harder you work, the luckier you get. The RSPB run an internal 'competition' called the Golden Welly – waders recorded feet down on areas of managed wetland. This is a fun monthly wader competition to make sure we are constantly thinking about and tweaking what's on offer to our long billed and long legged feathered friends. This is a competition which the reserves here have won for three years running. Monthly high counts of 29 species in September 2013 and 2014 are the highest for any reserve while our annual total in 2012 and 2014 of 33 is unrivalled. A good day in May can give the best daily counts with up to 25 different species being possible.

So how do we do it? Dynamic management is the way forward and RSPB Frampton is at the forefront of this process. This has been possible due to the set up of the reserve, allowing us to rotationally dry out scrapes, providing a diversity of habitats and various management options. We have recently planted a seed rich crop in South Scrape. This will attract hundreds, if not thousands, of ducks in winter to feed and



RSPB Frampton Marsh – Elis Simpson

scrape and hopefully witness an absolute wader frenzy. We also have the possibility of a 'double draw down' where we dry the scrape out from June, have it dry-ish in August then re-flood it and expose it again

necked Phalarope. 2014 highlights have included Lesser Yellowlegs and White-rumped Sandpiper and previous years have seen both Oriental and Collared Pratincole, Black-winged Stilt for 2 consecutive years, Baird's Sandpiper, two November records of White-rumped Sandpipers and Pectoral Sandpiper recorded in 5 consecutive months. If Carling did wader reserves, RSPB Frampton would be better!



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
— Elis Simpson

when flooded the decaying vegetation will be the food source essential for millions of benthic (mud dwelling) invertebrates to feed on. These, specifically bloodworms, are the key food source for waders on the reserve. We have recently chisel ploughed some areas of south scrape too, breaking up the scrape floor to provide movement of invertebrates through what was once compacted soil. This in turn will allow waders to probe more easily to find them, win win all round. Next Autumn we will expose the invertebrate rich mud on south



Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* – Elis Simpson

in September. A long shot but if you don't shoot you don't score.

Highlights from this September were 30+ each of Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper, 3



Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris baridii*
— Elis Simpson

Pectoral Sandpipers, 150 Ruff, 11 Spotted Redshanks, Temmincks Stint and Red-



RSPB Frampton Marsh visitor centre
— Elis Simpson

Ed: If you have a particular reserve or wader watching site that you want to share with Wader Quest, then feel free to send us an article with your own pictures, if you have them.

Indeed if you have any articles stories, news, projects, information or photos you want to share, feel free to send them to us on waderquest@gmail.com and we will include what we can. Submissions may be edited.

Wader Quest invades Europe

Since the last newsletter Elis and I have been very busy, lots of exciting things have happened for Wader Quest and many more are planned for the future.

In August we attended the British Birdwatching fair at Rutland Water. As usual it did not disappoint and we had a high old time meeting and greeting old friends and new and it was a resounding success for us in every way (full round up on page 4).



Our Dutch Bird Fair stand — Elis Simpson

This was closely followed by our first venture into Europe with Wader Quest. When we had been travelling none of the planned ideas to see birds on our own continent came to fruition so when the opportunity to visit there came up this year we took it gladly.

The Dutch Bird Fair is nothing like as big as in the UK and instead of having huge marquees to house the stands they have individual tents and stalls, we had one of the latter. These stalls are a little open to



Anne Keyser holding her pin badge and Rick holding her donation (in the envelope) Dutch Bird Fair - Elis Simpson

the elements and as the weather was not great at times it all got a bit worrying when the wind blew the rain onto the stand. Nevertheless we had a splendid time there and met some very interesting people, one of which Anne Keyser came to the stand especially to make a donation of €50.00. for the Hooded Plover Appeal for which she was rewarded with a Hoody Pin, we are nothing if not generous!

From there we drove up to Denmark where we were due to have a rest, a bit of a break while staying with friends but it turned into a busman's holiday when we were asked to give a talk at our friend's daughter's school about the work we are doing. Not that we minded, in fact it was a

very enjoyable experience with the children taking an active interest in the talk which they all understood perfectly in English, very impressive as the age group was from 11 to 16..



Busman's holiday — Elis Simpson

We then moved on to Sweden and the Falsterbo Bird Show and we were very pleased to take up the offer of a pre-show dinner from Erik Hirschfeld. A big surprise for us was that our friend and fellow trustee David Lindo had also been invited as he was travelling with two young people who were representing the Extramadura region of Spain, Vanesa Palacio and artist Gorka Gorospe. Also at the dinner, apart of course from Erik, were the show organiser Nils-Arvid Andersson, Niklas Aronsson, Per Undeland and Lars and Ragnhild Jonsson.



L-R back: Niklas, Gorka,, Elis, Nils-Arvid, Per. Head of table: Erik Hirschfeld. L-R front: David, Vanesa, Lars, Rick and Ragnhild.

The show itself was great fun. Our stand was a little more sheltered than that which we had in The Netherlands being under the stand of one of the horse arenas. We were delighted too that Erik and Lars who were working together on a stand were our immediate neighbours, this proved very handy on the few occasions where a translation was required or some useful information about waders in Sweden was sought.

We were first invited to come to the show when in 2013 at the BBF two ladies who became known as the 'lovely ladies' as I did not know their names until we got to



The two lovely ladies Anne (L) and Eva and the not so lovely Rick. Anne has become a life sponsor of Wader Quest - Elis Simpson

the show itself, came to the Wader Quest stand and afterwards to the stand. They



Our Falsterbo Bird Show stand — Elis Simpson

invited us to the show to give a talk and promised a free stand into the bargain. How could we resist? Well of course we couldn't and indeed didn't!

As an added bonus we had the pleasure of meeting Richard Crossley for the first time and enjoyed talking to him very much.



Richard, Rick and Lars — Elis Simpson

Overall we did very well on our first sojourn into Europe and would definitely be tempted again if finances and time allow. In fact we were sorely tempted to attend the Portuguese Bird Fair in Setúbal but neither of these conditions were met meaning that we sadly could not go.



Rick with Erik Hirschfeld who showed us much kindness and generosity during our stay in Sweden — Elis Simpson

On the return journey we had a stop over in The Netherlands where we stayed with Astrid Kant who has been working with farmers to protect and save Black-tailed Godwits for many years and has written a book on the subject. (see page 9 for her article about saving Black-tailed Godwits from early mowing practices in The Netherlands.)

Trustee news.

Wader Quest currently has eight Trustees:

- Chair: Rick Simpson
- Secretary: Rachel Walls
- Treasurer: Elis Simpson
- Board members: Allan Archer, Lee Dingain, Chris Lamsdell, David Lindo, Oliver Simms.

At the meeting held in the British Natural History Museum, London on September 28th we received notice that Martin Simpson is to step down from the board due to an imminent move abroad. We would like to place on record our gratitude to Martin for stepping into the breach to enable the charity to exist in the initial stages and we wish him the best of luck for his new life based in Thailand.

We are pleased to welcome Oliver Simms who we feel will bring a youthful perspective to the discussions about the future of the charity in his capacity as a former committee member of the Next Generation Birders club.

We are equally pleased to announce that since the meeting Allan Archer has accepted our invitation to join us, his business experience at the BTO will be vital in guiding our decisions as we grow.

Corporate Sponsors



Wader Quest Contact details

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African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* - Elis Simpson

Funding and donation record

BirdLife Australia beach nesting birds programme:
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:
£3,526.06 – 31/03/14

BirdLife Australia: Beach nesting birds programme:
£1 128.50 – 17/09/14

Anak Burung Birdbanding Club: Celluloid colour leg rings and measuring equipment:
£70.81 – 29/09/14

Wader Quest Magellanic Plover project. Latest:
£257.37 / £2,000