

## Forthcoming talks:

19th January 2015 19:15 hrs.  
Cheltenham Bird Club: Bournside  
School, Warden Hill Road, Chelten-  
ham, Gloucs. GL51 3EF

6th February 2015 19:30hrs.  
St Vincent's Roman Catholic  
Church, Tatton Street, Knutsford.  
WA16 6HR

10th February 2015 19:00 hrs.  
The Parks Trust: Howe Park Wood  
Education & Visitor Centre, Chaffron  
Way, Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes.  
MK4 3GG

11th March 2015 19.00 hrs.  
Powick Parish Hall, Powick,  
Worcester, Worcs. WR2 4RT

## Inside this issue:

- Weeting Heath Nation- 2  
al Nature Reserve's  
Eurasian Stone-  
Curlews
- Wash Wader Ringing 3  
Group
- WWRG cont'd 4
- The Shore Plover that 4  
found its way home
- Waders in Working 5  
Wetlands: Shorebird  
Extravaganza
- Project updates
- Garden Route Shore- 6  
bird Project South  
Africa
- Garden Route cont'd 7
- WHSRN: Thirty years of 7  
shorebird conservation
- WHSRN cont'd 8
- Team Wader Quest 9  
South Africa.
- Northern Lapwing 10  
red listed
- Bristle-thighed 11  
Curlew
- Wader Quest Anni- 12  
versary World  
Watch — 29th &  
30th November
- Events and news 13
- Two minute teaser
- Trustee news, con- 14  
tacts and sponsors

## Editor's diatribe — Rick Simpson



Sooty Oystercatchers *Haematopus fuliginosus* of the race *ophthalmicus*. Broome, Western Australia  
— Elis Simpson.

Firstly I'd like to start by wishing you all a wonderful and wader filled 2015 and wish you all success in whatever you are endeavouring to do in the coming year.

2014 was a bumper year for Elis and me. It started with us finishing off the travelling that we started way back in 2012 with trips to The Gambia, India and back to Thailand. It had been a bumpy road along the way and although we have been sorry to put away our passports we were pretty glad we were able to rest for a while.

Mind you we didn't rest for long as in March we finally decided that Wader Quest should become so much more than just rushing around the world looking at waders; there was the serious issue of wader conservation to be looked at. That is why we decided to set up our wader conservation charity and decided too that we would keep the name Wader Quest as many people had already become familiar with it. We are now on another quest, a quest to help protect the world's waders.

In order for us to raise funds for our chosen projects we needed to come up with some new ideas. We finally handed

over the money to the WWT (£3,526.06) which we had raised through *JustGiving* and now were on our own.

Our first big goal was to complete the pledge to raise a further £1,000 for the BirdLife Australia Hooded Plovers and in order to do so opened up a number of avenues to raise funds.

We started a charity shop, but this was not a high street charity shop, it was a mobile one where we sold the items donated to us at car boot sales. We also decided to ask people to support us by becoming sponsors at a very reasonable rate; this was well received and brought us yet more much needed income. We also continued with our various lines of merchandising the most popular of which seem to be the Wader Quest Collectables enamel pin badges.

In order to register as a charity the Charities Commission told us we need to reach an annual turnover of £5,000. We thought it very unlikely that we would achieve this in our first year so applied instead to be recognised by the HMRC as a charity for tax purposes enabling us to claim Gift Aid.

To our immense surprise and delight we sailed through the £5,000 barrier in October just six months through the financial year. A quick call to the Charities Commission saw us being told we now had to show that it was sustainable, so frustratingly we still have not been able to register: but we will.

We were pleased to have been able to finance the first of our purchases for wader conservation projects and also to take on a fantastic group of Trustees to help us steer through the future that lies ahead.

Our first Anniversary World Watch went as well as we had expected and gives us reason to hope it will be even better in 2015 (see page 9).

So, it has been an eventful year not least as it was full of events such as the Norfolk and British Bird Fairs, The WWT Martin Mere Bird Watching Festival and a trip to Europe for the Dutch Bird Fair and the Falsterbo Bird Show. Now we look forward to what 2015 might bring.

We wish to thank you all for your support in 2014 and look forward to sharing many stories and successes with you all in 2015.



## Norfolk Wildlife Trust Weeting Heath National Nature Reserve's Eurasian Stone-Curlews – Darrell Stevens



Eurasian Stone-Curlew *Burhinus oedicus* with chick - Laurie Webb

NWT Weeting Heath NNR, which is owned and managed by Norfolk Wildlife Trust, has long been known as a favourite Breckland breeding site for the Eurasian Stone-Curlew. It also provides the opportunity for visitors to view breeding birds which in turn helps take the pressure off other sites in Breckland. Some Stone – Curlews can be site faithful - returning to the same area to breed each year - while other birds are more transient and move between different breeding locations. The RSPB has been conducting a colour ringing scheme on Eurasian Stone-Curlews for many years and each individual *pullus* is ringed with a different colour ring com-

bination allowing for individual identity in the field.



Eurasian Stone-Curlew WHI/G, B, BTO found to be 23 years of age – Matt Twydell



Eurasian Stone-Curlew chick showing its unique ring combination – Matt Twydell

The RSPB has a team of Stone-Curlew wardens which patrol nest sites in the Brecks carrying out nest monitoring and ringing. NWT Weeting Heath NNR is one of the best monitored reserves in Breckland with many long term monitoring projects in place; many of these projects have been conducted for over 25 years. The data from all these projects is accumulated in an annual report, and all data is held in a long term database. This contains a great deal of information about the population and vegetation dynamics on the heath and forms the single most important grass heath data set available for a single site in the Brecks. Part of this database is the large accumulation of breeding stone curlew records for the site.

The 2014 breeding season shaped up to be a good one for the nature reserve with six birds fledging and ringed. Each year the warden makes a note of the col-

our ring combinations of returning birds which are then logged in the database. During this process a single male bird was recorded from pair 2 on compartment 4, which is situated in front of the public viewing hides. The male's ring combination was WHI/G, B, BTO. He last nested on the nature reserve in 2011 on compartment 5 and had not been seen since in subsequent years. When the ring combination was put into the database, we discovered the bird was a 23 year old male who was ringed in 1990. This makes him the oldest bird recorded since the RSPB started the stone curlew ringing project. This year he turned out to be part of one of the most successful pairs of birds on the nature reserve and helped to fledge three chicks.

He was witnessed attacking and killing a grass snake in April with his partner for nearly 15 minutes before they both dragged it out of the warden's view. You can watch the footage here:

<http://youtu.be/Ox6IHV4HORs>

A different pair attempted to kill a mole and feed it to their chick at the start of the summer. In all the years of Stone-Curlew monitoring at NWT Weeting Heath NNR this type of behaviour has never before been recorded.

This year a new type of ring combination was tried out on chicks, which included numbered flags: so keep an eye open for them on your travels.



NWT Weeting Heath – Rebecca Worsfold

Darrell Stevens: Brecklands Reserves Manager

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

[www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)



Eurasian Stone-Curlew taken from an unusual angle using the Weeting Stealth Cam – Norfolk Wildlife trust.



## Wash Wader Ringing Group – Ruth Walker



Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquatus* - Ruth Walker

The Wash Wader Ringing Group (WWRG), which has been operating since 1959, monitors the waders (shorebirds) on both the Norfolk and Lincolnshire sides of the Wash Estuary on the east coast of England. The group primarily concentrates on eleven species (Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Common Ringed Plover, *Charadrius hiaticula*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Grey (Black-bellied) Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*), with colour ringing or flagging projects undertaken on the last five of these. Studying the birds helps us to understand the importance of the Wash to bird populations as well as providing information on population changes, migration patterns and the origins of the birds using the area. The results of the studies carried out on the Wash have been published in numerous scientific papers and have helped to inform conservation priorities and management options for this internationally important wetland habitat.



Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*  
- Ruth Walker



Dunlin *Calidris alpina* being ringed  
- Elis Simpson

Ringing with WWRG can be many things; hard-work, fun, tiring, rewarding, finger-numbingly cold, mesmerizingly beautiful and challenging to name but a few but it is never dull. The core group of regular attendees are joined each trip by 'newbies' which always helps to make the trips interesting and varied. As is often the case, this year we welcomed visitors from far and wide including France, The Netherlands and America (a member of staff from the Delaware Shorebird Project that some WWRG members volunteer with each spring).

Fieldwork was carried out throughout 2014 and there were many highlights; the following is a short summary of a few of my favourite moments.

The year started on a high note with over 400 Sanderlings (my favourite wader) being

caught in January. Incredibly, 61% of these were already ringed! It was particularly interesting to catch a good sample of wintering birds as the majority of Sanderling are caught in the summer or autumn when the flocks are a mix of resident and passage birds. In February, a freshly deceased, ringed Eurasian Oystercatcher found on the beach turned out to have been ringed as an adult on the Lincolnshire side of the Wash in August 1982! Incredibly, in the intervening 32 years it had never been recaptured. At a minimum age of 34 years, this bird was older than some members of the team! As it was found in such good condition, its legacy will be to become a Group decoy and hopefully help us to catch more birds in the future.



Colour-ringed Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* feeding - Ruth Walker

March saw the Group make a nice catch of Eurasian Oystercatchers (including one that at 30 years of age was older than the cannon net licensee) and Ruddy Turnstone as well as re-sighting 40 colour marked birds, including two Black-tailed Godwits that had originally been ringed in Iceland, one as a chick in 2011 and one as an adult in 2000. A mist netting session in April included a small catch of Dunlin, a few of which were of the *schinzii* race that we don't normally see in April. Also in April, I spent a fascinatingly gory weekend helping to make new decoys out of waders found dead on beaches; including the aforementioned oystercatcher. (Continued on p4.)



Moment of release for a Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* - Elis Simpson



## WWRG Continued



Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Red Knot *Calidris canutus* and Sanderling *Calidris alba*  
- Ruth Walker

In the summer, the fieldwork programme comprised an eight day trip in August and a six day trip in September, with catching on both sides of the Wash. Hurricane Bertha

came to say hello during the early part of the August trip which made life interesting for a couple of days! Despite this, 2,500 birds were ringed during the two trips. Notable recaptures included two Icelandic and one French Red Knot, one Finnish Eurasian Curlew and a Dutch Common Ringed Plover. The most surreal trip of the year for me was the October visit that saw the team make a small cannon net catch on a beach, set mist nets in a terrific thunder storm on the marsh (and then go on to make a nice catch that evening) and attempt to colour ring re-sight in dense fog!

For more information about WWRG (including full trip reports), see the website [www.wwrg.org.uk](http://www.wwrg.org.uk) or follow us on Facebook.



Setting up after the thunder storm along the windswept coast line of The Wash - Ruth Walker

To obtain a copy of the recently published 2012-13 biennial report (for just £6 including p&p), or to request to join WWRG on a fieldwork session, email [enquiries@wwrg.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wwrg.org.uk).

## The Shore Plover that found its way home – Rick Simpson



Shore Plover *Thinornis novaeseelandiae* OG-YR at Peacock Springs October 2013 – Elis Simpson

On 4th January 2012 a Shore Plover hatched from its egg in the Peacock Springs Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust captive breeding aviaries near Christchurch on the South Island of New Zealand.

In March of the same year he was adorned with the colour rings Orange Green – Yellow Red (OG-YR) so that he could be identified. He was not however destined to languish in captivity, the good folk at Peacock

Spring had other plans for him. When he was fully fledged in April he was transported to Mana Island off the west coast of North Island not far north of Wellington and released; joining the flock of birds that had been released there previously.

Sadly, poor little OG-YR didn't seem to like it much on Mana so he decided to leave and find somewhere better to live out his life. He flew from the island to Plimmerton, on the North Island

mainland on 22 September.

Later on in September his peregrinations had taken him to the Ashley River on the South Island only 20 km from where he was hatched! He had travelled some 310 kms in just 8 days. He seemed unable to control his urge to move on and in early November he was seen feeding alongside some Wrybills at Lake Ellesmere further to the south beyond Peacock Springs.

At the end of November, one of the aforementioned good folk at Peacock Springs was doing her early morning routines when she noticed a Shore Plover running up and down outside the captive breeding cages. She assumed one of the birds had escaped but upon checking out the rings on the bird's legs she discovered that it was OG-YR.

Clearly he had decided that life in a cage at Peacock Springs was preferable to life in the wild, far less dangerous and a constant supply of delicious mealworms, so OG-YR volunteered himself to the captive breeding programme and has lived back in Peacock Springs ever since.

OG-YR had travelled some 400km to find his way back home and in the 2013/14 breeding season he paired up and bred successfully doing his bit for the captive breeding programme.

Story related to us by John Dowding. DM Consultants.  
<http://dmconsultants.co.nz/>

## Waders in Working Wetlands: Shorebird Extravaganza 29 April – 5 May 2015 – Donna Dittmann and Steve Cardiff



Come and visit, explore, and enjoy southwestern Louisiana during our *First Annual Shorebird Extravaganza*! The festival will be based in the rural community of Jennings, Louisiana, in the heart of “Cajun Country.”

Our festival's focus is to share our area's spectacular shorebird densities and diversity during spring migration. At least 30 species regularly occur inland, with an additional five that can be found on coastal field trips. Located at the southern terminus of the Central Flyway, shorebirds funnel through this area, stopping to rest and refuel on their journey northward to the breeding grounds. Although shorebird migration is already underway as early as late February, migration peaks during late April-early May and continues into early June. We have chosen extreme late April-early May because overall diversity is greatest then, with relatively early transient species (e.g., American Golden Plover, Buff-breasted and Pectoral Sandpipers) overlapping with relatively late ones (e.g., Hudsonian Godwit, White-rumped Sandpiper). Early May is also the time period when we have held our Shorebird

Blitz, the annual census of shorebirds in southwestern Louisiana's “working wetlands” (water-based rice and crayfish agriculture). During the one-day Blitz single parties have tallied over 47,000 individual shorebirds in their survey area.

The festival will also offer guided field trips to see regional specialties of the longleaf pinewoods (including Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow), the Atchafalaya Basin, the largest river basin swamp in the U.S. (for Swallow-tailed Kite and Swainson's Warbler), and the Cameron Parish coast (for coastal breeding shorebirds such as American Oystercatcher and Wilson's Plover, as well as other Gulf Coast specialties such as Clapper Rail and Seaside Sparrow. At this time of year there is also the chance that a late cold front will cause a grounding of migrants (a “fallout”) on the coast. So, mark your calendars and join us in southwestern Louisiana this spring.

Information will be available here (check back as site is developed): [http://www.snowyegretenterprises.com/Snowy\\_Egret\\_Enterprises/Shorebird\\_Extravaganza.html](http://www.snowyegretenterprises.com/Snowy_Egret_Enterprises/Shorebird_Extravaganza.html)

Festival registration opens 1 March 2015 – register early for best choice of trips and workshops – festival may fill fast.

Donna L. Dittmann & Steven W. Cardiff  
Avian Events Support Team  
[yellowrailsandrice@gmail.com](mailto:yellowrailsandrice@gmail.com)



Steve Cardiff, Donna Dittmann and Rick Simpson in search of Hudsonian Godwit: Louisiana 2013 – Elis Simpson

During our travels for Wader Quest Donna and Steve helped us locate many of the species of waders to be found in Louisiana – Ed.

## Project updates



The Magellanic Plover appeal has reached the half way mark! With a generous donation from the Gay Birders' Club and the Wader Quest Quiz Night proceedings we have managed to top the £1,000 mark. At the same time we have already disbursed some of that money in the purchase of mist nets for the project which have now been delivered to Ricardo Matus in Chile. We are still looking at how best to proceed with this project with the option of perhaps obtaining some

geolocators to study the Chilean birds' movements.



Night takings.

Following on from our first provision of equipment to Indonesia, we have now funded and sent some mist nets to the Centro de Ornitología y Biodiversidad (CORBIDI) and these nets have already been in action.

The Grants Fund continues to be supplied by Sponsorship money and also had a share in the Quiz



Nets supplied by Wader Quest in use by CORBIDI in Peru - Eveling Tavera Fernandez



## Garden Route Shorebird Project South Africa – Selena Flores

With breathtaking scenery, magnificent wildlife, and diverse cultures, coastal South Africa is a sought-after destination. Thus, the Garden Route Shorebird Conservation Project has been initiated over the last year, a collective effort between the Nature's Valley Trust and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology (University of Cape Town). The project is being conducted for an MSc by Ms. Selena Flores, an American wildlife biologist specializing in coastal bird conservation, with Dr. Mark Brown (Director, Nature's Valley Trust; University of Kwa-Zulu Natal) as research supervisor, and Dr. Peter Ryan (Director, The Percy FitzPatrick Institute) as academic supervisor. This research focuses on examining the effects of human disturbance on two shorebird species, the White-fronted Plover and African Black Oystercatcher, in a high-use region of South Africa's Southern shore.

Western Cape waders follow the unfortunate global trend of shorebird decline, with human encroachment as the influential factor. Though previously endangered African Black Oystercatcher numbers have increased in the last decade, due to banning vehicles on beaches (a measure directly related to their recovery), as well as an invasive mussel species providing an additional abundant food source, there is still cause for concern with coasts being the fastest developing regions. White-fronted Plover populations have decreased ~40% since the 1980s, with an alarming 60% reduction in the Cape Peninsula and complete disappearance in



African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* — Mike Bridgeford

other developed areas, reinforcing that habituation and other adaptations cannot overcome the consequences of the wide spectrum of disturbance on breeding (Ryan 2013).

Vastly different than their Northern Hemisphere counterparts, Southern shorebirds have greater longevity, with lifespans expected around 20 years. With long-lived birds, noticeable population decline is delayed — and presents a dire

warning, indicating a prolonged issue. Shorebirds are losing their nesting habitat and not breeding successfully, with new pairs or individuals not often seeing a chance to breed. These species also do not travel far to appropriate habitat (i.e. <1km to new nest sites), thus will be hard-pressed to find suitable areas in fragmented pockets of shoreline (Lloyd 2008).

Despite being crucial habitats for a variety of wildlife and providing ecosystem services, coastal habitats remain largely unprotected. There is a widespread lack of monitoring and enforcement of regulations (i.e. dogs on leads, delineation of bird breeding areas outside of protected reserves/national parks), as well as very little by way of awareness campaigns (informative signage, nest exclosures, etc.).

The magnitude and manners in which people affect beaches on the Garden Route have also never been thoroughly studied. Our research examines how much of shorebird breeding success and survival has to do with human activities on the coast. We are doing this by monitoring oystercatcher and plover nests, to see which ones are successful, which are not, and why. We will also determine a “buffer zone” — how far people and dogs need to be from a nest or chicks, so they are not in danger of abandonment, exposure, trampling, or predation. During the 2014-15 austral summer, we have been gathering baseline data of demographics and general rates of breeding success from Plettenberg Bay through Nature's Valley, areas that experience high density of summer visitors. (Cont'd on p7)



White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* — Mark Brown

## Garden Route Shorebird Project South Africa – Cont'd

This will allow us to determine more specific research questions to address in the coming breeding season, for the highest potential conservation impact.

These particular shorebirds aren't currently endangered, but face a multitude of risks that will cause them to be in the near future. If development and disturbance continue at the current, rapid rate, they soon will see further decline, substantial enough to increase concern levels and necessitate mandated protection. This research aims to develop a proactive approach to conservation, thinking ahead to what might happen if we don't address these issues preemptively. This project will also connect scientists to both the community and environmental agencies. Our results will be used to make recommendations to those driving our community, ensuring beach protection is balanced with human activity to sustain our beautiful coast. This is of paramount



White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* — Elis Simpson



African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* — Minke Witteveen

importance, with the ecological and economic importance of coastal areas, especially in the Garden Route. Tourism is the main lifeblood of this region, and it is experiencing a steady increase in the birding-related and ecotourism industries. Another goal of the project is to develop a strong citizen science component, so the scope of shorebird monitoring can expand throughout the entirety of the Garden Route. Other forms of outreach will involve engaging the community with awareness programs, and offering school activities.

For more information and to discover how to get involved, please see the following resources:

<http://www.gofundme.com/ShareTheShores>  
<http://www.facebook.com/NaturesValleyTrust>  
<http://gardenrouteshorebirds.tumblr.com>  
 Contact: Selen Flores,  
[selenaflores@gmail.com](mailto:selenaflores@gmail.com)

### Cited Sources:

Lloyd, P. (2008) Adult survival, dispersal and mate fidelity in the White-fronted Plover, *Charadrius marginatus*. *Ibis* 150:182–187.

Ryan, P.G. (2013) Medium-term changes in coastal bird communities in the Western Cape, South Africa. *Austral Ecology* 38:251–259.

## WHSRN: Thirty years of shorebird conservation throughout the Americas – Rob Clay

During the mid-1980s, scientists from around the Americas were documenting worrying declines in the populations of many wader species (or “shorebirds” as they're known in the Americas), which prompted the development of a framework for an international strategy to protect shorebirds and their habitats. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN, pronounced “whiss-ern”) is that conservation strategy, formed in 1985 and officially launched in 1986. This grass-roots, voluntary network of public and private partners works to protect the most important breeding, stopover, and wintering habitats for shorebirds throughout the

Americas. To date, WHSRN site partners at 90 sites in 13 countries are conserving more than 13 million hectares (32 million acres) of shorebird habitat throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The idea for an international “series of protected areas linking key sites” for shorebirds throughout their range was first proposed by Guy Morrison of the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) in 1982 at an International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) symposium. The original concept, for totally protected “sister parks,” arose from the CWS South American shorebird atlas work conducted by Morrison and Ken Ross, as well as through the



Sanderling *Calidris alba* — F. Felix

International Shorebird Surveys coordinated by the Manomet Observatory (now the



## WHSRN: Thirty years of shorebird conservation throughout the Americas – cont'd



Teaching people to appreciate shorebirds at bird festivals is one way to gain long-term political support for the preservation of their habitat.  
- WHSRN

Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences). The concept was further developed into a plan by Morrison and other researchers, including J.P. Myers, first at the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences and then at National Audubon Society. This plan was then adopted by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in 1985, who pledged to collaborate with the World Wildlife Fund-US in advancing the network, soon joined by other organizations including National Audubon Society, CWS and Manomet. With the designation of Delaware Bay in the US as the first site within the Network in 1986, WHSRN took a first step towards becoming a hemispheric system of linked reserves to protect important shorebird habitats.

Nearly 30 years later, WHSRN has remained faithful to its mission of conserving shorebirds and their habitats through a network of key sites across the Americas. This has been made possible through a set of guiding principles, which are:

- Site-based conservation is the centerpiece for accomplishing WHSRN's mission within the larger ecological context of each site.
- Site designation and conservation action are based on the appropriate application of the best available information.
- Traditional and local ecological knowledge and cultural practices are recognized, valued and respected.
- Integration and collaboration at local, national and international scales with other conservation groups and programs enhances WHSRN's capacity to achieve its vision.
- Communication and voluntary partnerships are key to an effective network and achieving common conservation goals.

WHSRN works to:

- Build a strong system of international sites used by shorebirds throughout their migratory ranges.
- Develop science and management tools that expand the scope and pace of habitat conservation at each site within the Network.
- Establish local, regional and international recognition for sites, raising new public awareness and generating conservation funding opportunities.
- Serve as an international resource, convener and strategist for issues related to shorebird and habitat conservation.



Puna Plover *Charadrius alticola* Chile  
— Diego Luna Quevado

WHSRN is managed by an Executive Office, headquartered in the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, a 45-year-old Massachusetts-based research center dedicated to working with partners to solve complex environmental and sustainability challenges. Institutionally, the WHSRN Executive Office is a pillar of Manomet's Shorebird Recovery Program, which endeavors to reverse shorebird population declines through scientific research, habitat conservation, and educational workshops with land managers, resource users, and decision-makers.

Overall direction for WHSRN and oversight of its progress in achieving its mission and vision is provided by a Hemispheric Council, which leads the development, implementation and evaluation of strategic plans. The Council is broadly representative of each of the major geographic regions in which the Network operates. In Argentina, Canada, the US and northwest Mexico, national/regional councils design and implement activities that contribute to the achievement of the Network's mission.

WHSRN's success to date, helping to conserve more than 13 million hectares of shorebird habitat, has been based on a simple but effective approach of building local (site-based) capacity for shorebird conservation, as the only way to achieve durable results. Implementing such a simple



Aerial view of Rio Gallegos Estuary, Argentina.  
- Charles Duncan

approach can be surprisingly challenging, requiring a difficult balance between leadership and empowerment, intercultural relationships (not least between "the north" where most of the resources are, and "the south" where many shorebirds winter), and the need to constantly adapt to changing political and economic situations. But the biggest challenge of all is to work effectively together across all sites that are key for shorebird conservation in the Americas. As the world has become more and more globalized, the WHSRN model has become even more relevant as a mechanism to foster international collaboration across sites and to deliver shorebird conservation across political borders.

Looking ahead, the most significant challenge to both the future of WHSRN and that of shorebirds in general, is the lack of connection between local and global action. Without tackling the powerful global drivers of threats to shorebird populations, we will only continue to firefight the ever more frequent threats at sites. If the changes at global and political levels are not inspired by, and delivering at local levels, conservation efforts will remain intention and not impact. WHSRN and its network of partners have the opportunity to help bridge this divide. Doing so is crucial to the success of shorebird conservation efforts.

Rob P. Clay  
Director, WHSRN Executive Office  
For further information, see:  
<http://www.whsrn.org>



Magellanic Plover *Pluvianellus socialis*  
— Jean Van Kam



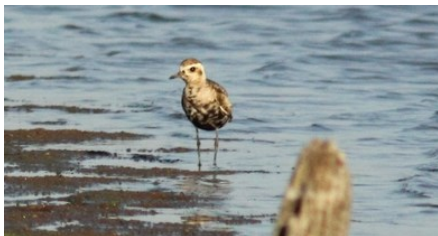
## Team Wader Quest South Africa; in search of the last few waders of 2014 – Sue Oertli



Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus* taken back in January 2014 at the beginning of the challenge. - Sue Oertli

The Wader Quest team, based in Johannesburg South Africa, spent the last three months of 2014 searching for waders that were expected to return for the summer to the Greater Gauteng region.

On Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October a Pacific Golden Plover was located at Borakalalo Nature Reserve, an excellent wader hotspot 60 kilometres north of Brits.



Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*  
Borakalalo nature Reserve  
- Sue Oertli

A few days later a birder participating in the Greater Gauteng Birding Challenge located a Pectoral Sandpiper at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, a RAMSAR site near Springs.

Reports surfaced on Facebook of a Green Sandpiper sighted at Rietvlei Nature Reserve outside Pretoria but 6 visits to the



Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*  
Marievale Bird Sanctuary  
- Sue Oertli

location by the team over the course of the last 3 months of the year proved fruitless, and the bird remained elusive for the rest of 2014.

Fortunately the year ended on a high note when 2 additional waders were found at Mkhombo Dam on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December. A single Grey Plover (a rare vagrant to inland waters here in South Africa) and a



Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*  
Mkhombo Dam - Sue Oertli

Curlew Sandpiper were photographed but both waders proved very skittish so photos were only possible from about 50 meters away.

To summarize the year then - 26 waders were photographed in the Greater Gauteng region out of a possible 40 species identified. Notably absent were Chestnut-banded Plover, Caspian Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Water Thick-knee and Greater and Lesser



Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*  
Mkhombo Dam  
- Sue Oertli

Sand Plover, these waders were all recorded in the region in 2013.

The wader Quest South Africa Team wishes all those involved in the project a wader rich 2015 and much success for the fund-raising initiatives planned to protect and cherish all the vulnerable and threatened waders around the world.

### The Wader Quest South Africa Team Johannesburg , Gauteng, South Africa.

The WQSA team have been very generous in their support for Wader Quest and we are very grateful for their continued enthusiastic and selfless support — Ed.



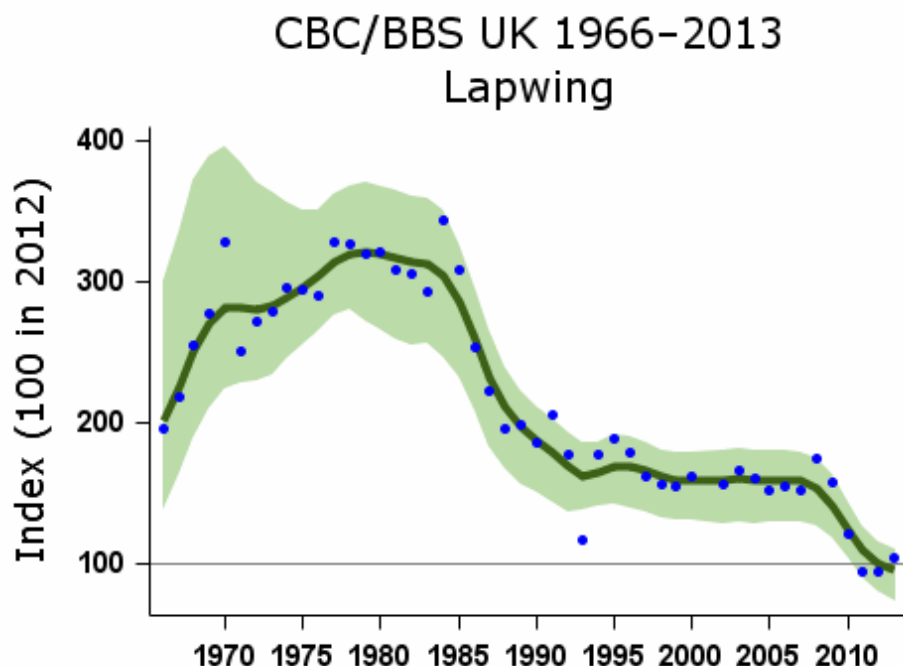
Jenny and Peter Sharland  
- Peter Ericsson



Sue and Owen Oertli  
- Kim Oertli



## Northern Lapwing red listed as a bird of highest conservation concern – Rick Simpson



Graph supplied by the British Trust for Ornithology.



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*.  
- Elis Simpson

In the last issue of *Wader Quest The Newsletter*; Volume 1 Issue 3 I pontificated about my favourite wader; Northern Lapwing. I extolled its virtues as a contender for the UK's national bird, which sadly is not going to happen. But there is a very serious cloud hanging over this species as a British breeding species as can be seen in the graph above.

Although the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Common Bird Census shows some increases early on, Northern Lapwings have been declining on lowland farmland from the mid 1980s. In England and Wales national surveys showed a 49% population decline between 1987 and 1998. In Northern Ireland population declines of over 50% in 15 years parallel similar declines in grassland areas throughout Wales and south-east England. The Breeding Bird Survey map of change in relative density between 1994-96 and 2007-09 illustrates that decreases have been most noticeable in lowland regions

and the south; although some increase may have occurred in some upland and northern regions of Britain.

Winter numbers counted by the Wetland Bird Survey, mainly at coastal sites, and omitting some big concentrations inland, increased in Britain during the 1980s and early 1990s, but are now, in line with breeding numbers, decreasing steeply;



A winter flock of Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* - Elis Simpson

these birds are mainly of continental origin.

Northern Lapwing is one of the most strongly declining bird species in Europe since 1980, in all regions. The 2009 review moved this species from amber to the UK red list, for which it qualifies on the strength of its UK decline.

BirdTrends figures show that between 1967 and 2012 Northern Lapwing populations saw a 56% decline, between 1987 and 2012 a 57% decline, and between 2002 and 2012 a 37% decline.

The middle figure spanning 25 years is the one that is used to determine the conservation status and being more than

50% Northern Lapwing qualifies for the red list of conservation concern.

So why is this happening? Well it seems that as farming practices have changed they have compromised the welfare of this beautiful species that has personified the British landscape for so long. There are no longer the mixed farms, (monoculture being the preferred farming method in recent decades), wetlands are being drained for agricultural use, the annual cycle of growing and harvesting has become confused with some crops being harvested in Spring instead of Autumn and grasslands being cut earlier and earlier, meaning that lapwings cannot successfully breed.



A declining sight, Lapwings on British farmland  
- Elis Simpson

Northern Lapwing breeding numbers are being maintained by habitat management on reserves such as those owned and run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) but it would be unreasonable to expect farmers to follow practices carried out on these reserves so the general decline still continues.

Perhaps though we could take a leaf out of the book of Astrid Kant in the Netherlands (also mentioned in the last issue of the newsletter) and get volunteers to engage locally with farmers to locate and protect individual nests that still remain on the farmland, thus slowing down, if not halting this saddening decline in one of our most recognisable and beloved wading birds.

Thanks to Paul Stancliffe of the BTO for providing statistics and graph showing Northern Lapwing declines in the UK.



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*.  
- Elis Simpson



## Bristle-thighed Curlew - Liam Curson



Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* Anchor Point, Kenai Peninsula, Alaska — Ian Davies

You might confidently state that you know everything there is to know about curlews, much as I once did. So they have long bills, melancholy calls and a rather unfortunate habit of being extinct. Curlews are predictable birds, right? All *Numenius* live their lives probing into mud and soft ground, making marshes sound evocative, and desperately, futilely hoping they're not the next species to get snuffed out by man's remarkable antipathy for the family. Or so you might think...

The curlew I'm thinking of is certainly rare, but it doesn't probe aimlessly around on mudflats to pass away those long winter months. This crazy rule-breaker probably doesn't even know what a mudflat is, preferring a life away from lugworms and lead-grey skies, it takes a winter vacation, to the rocky coasts and coral atolls of the Pacific. In an Order where epic bird migration is the norm, this species is still remarkable, completing a 4-6,000km flight, direct over the Pacific, in one fell swoop. Lady A's and Gentlemandarins, the Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*)!

The name is somewhat peculiar, but pleasantly straightforward. It has, wait for it, bristly looking feathers on its thighs. In a world of constant bafflement, we should take some small relief that at least one bird, on the face of it, is sensibly named. However I, personally, must admit shocking disappointment in whoever came up with this moniker. Really, it was an atrocious choice. 'Bristle-thighed' says nothing meaningful, nothing interesting. If I were a 19th-century biologist, and I should have

been a 19th-century biologist I'll have you know, this would be the "Egg-thieving Bandit Curlew". But more on that later...

First though, the life cycle of the world's most intriguing bendy-billed wader. New Hampshire Public Television NHPTV lists its breeding habitat as "hilly inland tundra in Alaska", and it apparently eats "insects, seeds and berries". They incubate for about 25 days and the chicks, like most waders, will happily fend for themselves. However, mummy curlew is not what we'll call maternal, migrating before her babies have even fledged. All is not lost though, as devoted dad will look after them, right up until they're ready to migrate. He's the Rhea of the north really, bless him.

Then, one day, they all fly south, on one of the most awe-inspiring migrations of any bird. 6,000 miles or so, direct across the Pacific, no stops until making landfall on a volcanic island in the middle of the ocean. A well-earned sabbatical is then taken, getting some quality R&R on their luxurious, pineapple-infested wintering grounds... beats Morecambe Bay any day.

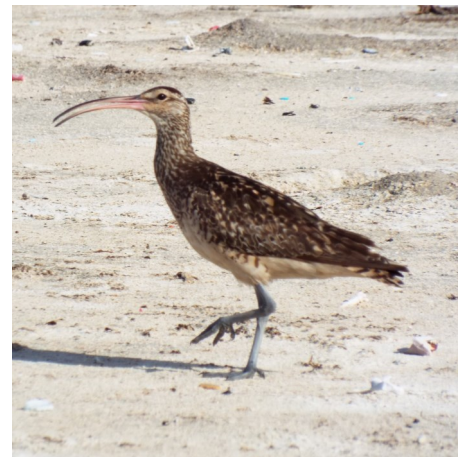
But what really makes this bird unique is what they do when they get there. Like most of us, they treat Hawaii and Samoa as places to let their hair down, or in their cases give their wings a well-earned rest. Unlike any other wader, anywhere in the world, they become completely flightless when they moult! They have to run around, with the same clockwork-toy motions of a courser, which is completely adorable.

But there's a dark side to all this, before you get too devoted to the cutesy-curlew...

Behind that melancholy expression and plaintive whistle, you'll find the calculating mind and utter remorselessness of a cold-blooded egg thief. Again, the ONLY waders in the world with pretensions to be a magpie, which is pretty cool.

You want to know how they do it? Of course you do, it's ingenious! The clever Curlew will pick up a rock in its beak, and repeatedly bash it against the unfortunate egg. The only wader (and one among a mere handful of birds), recorded to use tools! Move aside New Caledonian Crow! Bristle-thighed Curlews also use the igneous rocks of Pacific Islands for crabs, in this case flinging the poor crustacean against a rock with a shake of the head. A bit like a Song Thrush with an anvil but altogether more violent. Vicious things, those curlews.

However, for all their fantastic idiosyncracies, making them the most unique curlew (in my opinion the most unique wader) in the world, the Bristle-thighed does share one unfortunate attribute with its cousins. It's rarity. You would never expect a species with such a limited niche to be abundant, but it has declined to extent where the world population is thought to number just 10,000 individuals. Introduced predators, such as dogs, cats and pigs, are thought to be one of the main threats to this species, which as you would expect is rather vulnerable in the winter. It is also hunted for food, particularly in the more remote Pacific Islands, but this must have been happening for thousands of years, so it probably has a minimal impact by itself. Reassuringly though, Birdlife International states that "most breeding and wintering sites are well-protected", so the future seems reasonably optimistic. Just as well, because I for one can't wait until the inevitable holiday to Hawaii and the chance to see these remarkable birds!



Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* Laysan Island — Forest and Kim Starr.



## Wader Quest Anniversary World Watch – 29th & 30th November 2014



Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* and Red-necked Avocets *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*. Australia - Steve Merrett

We celebrated the first of our wader watching events to celebrate Wader Quest's anniversary in November calling it simply World Watch (Wader Quest started officially in November 2012)



Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*  
Anguilla - Jackie Cestero

We were thrilled by the response we had with 58 submissions from 19 countries and a total of 116 species being seen between us. Full list of species and participants can be seen here:

<http://www.waderquest.org/p/wader-quest-world-watch.html>

This was a marvellous first effort and gives us something to build upon for next year when the event will take place on the 7th and 8th of November – make a note in your diary and join in the fun.

One observer in Thailand amassed an incredible 57 species while other observers who may not have amassed huge lists



Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea*  
Vietnam - Thomas Lameris

made significant contributions with the few that they did; like the couple in Louisiana who sent in just one species, American Woodcock seen in their own back yard. This

turned out to be the only record we had of that species!

This idea that small contributions can make a difference parallels our philosophy with regard to wader conservation; many small local efforts really do add up to a



Magellanic Plover *Pluvianellus socialis*  
Chile - Ricardo Matus

significant contribution. You should never suppose that your efforts are not worthwhile, every single bird, or patch of habitat that is saved or managed is a like piece in the jigsaw which, when every piece has been joined together, becomes a complete picture with rigidity and strength. This is exactly what Wader Quest aims to achieve,



Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*  
South Africa - Peter Sharland

to bring small projects to the fore and create a strong army of them working in unison towards the same goal; wader conservation.

We would like to thank everyone who took part and supplied us with photographs and their lists, without them this whole thing quite simply would not have happened. We hope that next year we will be able to improve on our list and bring the joys of wader and shorebird watching to a wider group.



Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*  
UK – Elis Simpson



## Recent Wader Quest events and news

Since the last newsletter we have been busy; not withstanding the fact that Christmas and New Year slowed things down a bit.



Talking to Milton Keynes Natural History Society — Elis Simpson

We have given a number of well received talks to the London Natural History Society, Sutton Coldfield RSPB local group and the Milton Keynes Natural History Society. This last talk was a bit different from normal as we had recently given a talk to the North Bucks RSPB local group at the same



The Martin Mere Northwest Bird watching Festival stand - Elis Simpson

venue with a cross over of members, we gave a talk about the plovers of the world called *Plover Lover's World of Delights*.

In November we gave a talk again this year at Martin Mere Wildfowl and Wetland Trust when we attended their excellent Northwest Bird Watching Festival. Once again this was a marvellous event which we thoroughly enjoyed and hope to be able to attend annually.

As a departure from our normal fundraising activities we attended our local town's Christmas Lights celebration and, as the weather was a bit cold, did a brisk trade in the scarves that Annette Cuniffe had



Christmas Lights stand - Elis Simpson

brought over for us at the Bird Fair. We were ably assisted by Martin Simpson and Fleur Warakorn Wan who braved the cold to help us out despite the fact that they were moving to Thailand the very next day!

In addition to this we accepted a kind offer to run a quiz night in aid of Wader Quest. The quiz mistress was Patricia Hodges who volunteered her services free of charge. The night was well attended with nearly 70 participants and we raised £475.00



Quiz mistress Patricia Hodges asks the questions at the Quiz Night - Elis Simpson

During the months of October and November 2014 we held another Prize Draw for sponsors who signed up during those two months and the lucky winner was James Hudson.

Thanks again to Opticron we were able to send James a pair of Trailfinder binoculars as his prize which he can be seen using to search for waders (we hope).



James Hudson, using the binoculars he won. Photo supplied by James Hudson.

## Two minute teaser — Rick Simpson

C	T	A	E	M	G	Y	P	H	D
B	A	L	A	I	L	L	S	M	M
A	A	L	P	I	N	A	R	M	A
T	B	I	I	L	A	M	A	E	R
A	T	S	R	D	W	U	P	L	I
N	L	U	N	D	R	D	A	A	T
I	T	P	T	I	I	I	A	N	I
M	U	M	I	N	G	I	S	O	M
U	N	F	S	M	I	N	U	T	A
C	A	N	U	T	U	S	M	O	N
A	C	U	M	I	N	A	T	S	C

In the grid on the left there are hidden eleven specific names of *Calidris* waders and the word *Calidris* too; see if you can find all of them.

I don't want to make it too easy, but here are the eleven species using their English names.

Baird's Sandpiper

Calidris

Dunlin

Little Stint

Pectoral Sandpiper

Purple Sandpiper

Red Knot

Sanderling

Semipalmated Sandpiper

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Spoon-billed Sandpiper

Western Sandpiper

## 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.

Next meeting 25th January 2015 — Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust London Wetlands Centre, London.

**Errata:** There are a number of errors that were overlooked in Vol 1 Issue 3: Later copies sent out have these corrections already made.

Page 1: In the text referring to our first anniversary the birds seen at Antofagasta were Andean Avocet and Puna Plover not Andean Lapwing and Puna Plover as stated.

Page 3: In the first paragraph we referred to the BirdLife International beach nesting bird programme, this should have read BirdLife Australia beach nesting bird programme.

Sorry for any confusion these errors may have caused.



## Wader Quest Contact details

Website:

[www.waderquest.org](http://www.waderquest.org)

Email:

[waderquest@gmail.com](mailto:waderquest@gmail.com)

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/WaderQuest?fref=ts>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/waderquest>

LinkedIn:

[https://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=244810450&trk=nav\\_responsive\\_tab\\_profile\\_pic](https://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=244810450&trk=nav_responsive_tab_profile_pic)



White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* and Sanderling *Calidris alba* - Elis Simpson



Gay Birders' Club



Enabling contact between LGBT birders

**Limosa**

GUIDED BIRDING & WILDLIFE TOURS SINCE 1985



## Funding and donation record

- BirdLife Australia beach nesting birds programme: £187.83 (350AUD) - 30/09/13
- Audubon California: Western Snowy Plover Nest project: £20.94 (\$35.00) - 05/03/14
- Audubon Texas: Galveston oil spill clean up appeal: £20.94 (\$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: colour leg rings and measuring equipment: £70.81 - 29/09/14
- Centro de Ornitología y Biodiversidad Peru: Mist nets: £133.14 - 29/11/2014
- Wader Quest Magellanic Plover project. Latest: £1,023.71 / £2,000 - 15/01/15

**Total raised and donated to wader conservation by Wader Quest: £5,762.60**