

Forthcoming talks:

10/11/2016 Colchester RSPB local group. 19.45 Shrub End Community Hall, Shrub End Road, Colchester, CO3 4RH

06/12/2016 Wigan RSPB local group. 19.45 St. Anne's Parish Hall, Church Lane, Shevington, Wigan. WN6 8BD

14/12/2016 Watford RSPB local group 20.00 Stanborough Centre, 609 St. Albans Road, Watford, Herts. WD25 9JL

09/01/2017 Stockport RSPB local group 19.30 Stockport Masonic Guildhall 169-171 Wellington Road South, Stockport, SK1 3UA

11/01/2017 Worcester and Malvern RSPB local group. Powick Parish Hall, Powick, Worcester, Worcs. WR2 4RT (Plover Lover's World of Delights)

18/01/2017 Leeds RSPB local group. 19.30 Friends Meeting House, 188 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, LS2 9DX

22/02/2017 Friends of Linford Lakes Nature Reserve. Linford Lakes Nature Reserve, Wolverton Rd, Milton Keynes MK14 5AH

03/03/2017 West Midlands Bird Club (Solihull). 19.30 Guild House, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands B93 0LN

Inside this issue:

Wader Quest news	2-7
IWSG conference	8
The Flock	9-11
Banded Dotterels	12-13
Uitkerkse Polders	14-15
The Curlew Walk	16-17
Latham's Snipe	17
Wing Threads	18-19
Black-tailed Godwits	20-21
Snowy Plovers	22
Raining Knots and Godwits	23-24
Waders in Art Szabolcs Kókay	25
Inspired by Waders	26
Photo gallery	27
Magellanic Plover update	
Contact details and sponsors	28

The Inspiration of Waders — Editor's reflections

Ever since the stone-age equivalent of Banksy started defacing the inside of his living quarters by depicting the world around him, waders have been inspiring humanity.

Back in Ancient Egypt the hieroglyphs depict the Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* as a symbol of the people of Egypt. In some eras it represented the people of the lower Nile an obvious choice as Lapwings winter in the delta there. From the 18th Dynasty forward, the lapwing was often portrayed with human arms in the act of giving praise. This has been interpreted to mean 'All the people give praise.' It is easy to imagine why the Lapwing would be used to represent 'the people' as the Ancient Egyptians probably saw plenty of them.

Coming a bit closer to the present day, but not much, we have the wader inspired Easter Bunny story. But how so? I hear you ask, where does a wader fit into a bunny bringing chocolate eggs? Well, it goes back to Pagan times. Before there were Biologists, Zoologists and Ornithologists to tell them any different the Pagans noted that the forms created by the hares often, in the springtime, also contained eggs. Without too much investigation they put two and two together and came up with five deciding that the provider of the eggs was, on the evidence before them, the hare.

Whether as a result of this or not, the hare was a Pagan symbol of fertility so when the Christians came along they were happy to adopt the story of a Leporid producing eggs, but spurned the idea that it was the hare due to its connection to Pagan fertility and morphed the hare into a cuddly un-Pagan, nothing-to-do-with-fertility-in-any-way-whatsoever bunny. Of course they may have missed the point a bit when it comes to the fertility bit, I mean rabbits do breed like... well, rabbits!



"O CURLEW, cry no more in the air..."

Words: W. B. Yeats / Photo: Elis Simpson

In Elizabethan times the great bard himself William Shakespeare was inspired in his writings by no less than the Lapwing. It's precocious habits had been noted and this trait was used to indicate in Hamlet that Osric was precocious with the phrase uttered by Horatio to Hamlet '*This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.*'

Art however was slow to pick up on the possibilities of waders. If you check out any work by one of the 'Old Masters' landscape painters that depict an estuary you will see many ships blasting seven bells out of each other, poor fisher folk going about their business but not a wader will you see, it almost appears that the estuaries were devoid of them in those days; surely that cannot be the case. The only birds at all that you will see will be the child-like vs of gulls and the odd L shaped duck.

There is one exception that I found in a painting by van Goyen, where a bird low over the water could, just *could*, be a Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* that has been flushed by an approaching boat full of men.

However of course, of late many more people are able to express the beauty of waders through the medium of art as you will see from the first in a

new series of articles 'Waders in Art' by the artists themselves; the first can be found on page 25.

Poetry too has paid homage to the waders. Inevitably it was the Eurasian Curlew's *Numenius arquata* calls that drew attention rather than its drab looks. You won't find many articles written about the curlew that don't contain the word evocative. With its tremulous call epitomising the seemingly barren landscapes in which it is found the cries of the curlew fill them with a sense of melancholy. Poor old W. B. Yeats was so moved by this sound, as it reminded him of a lost love, that he wrote '*O curlew cry no more in the air..*'

It is even possible to say that the discovery of the New World was inspired by waders. It is said that a large flock of land birds overflying Columbus' trio of ships led him to believe he was close to discovering the New World, or what he thought was the East Indies. Seeing the vast flock of birds flying over he concluded, quite reasonably, that they would be heading for land and that following them was a good plan. So it was then that he came across one of the West Indian Islands. Admittedly if he had not seen the birds and continued on the course he was heading he would have bumped

Editors reflections — cont'd

into the Americas sooner or later. But what would these birds have been? Well, the description was of a vast flock of them, the like of which we imagine when talking of the Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius*, but that species was a terrestrial species and were never known to fly out over the ocean in their vast flocks. There are two candidates which have migration routes that cross the Atlantic from Canada to South America; American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, which still does this to this day and Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis* which sadly is now extinct. It would be a cruel irony indeed if it were the Eskimo Curlew which directed the

Europeans to the Americas since it was they that shot them in vast numbers and degraded their habitat until they were all gone.

It is also true to say that it was a wader that inspired the creation of the Guinness Book of Records. The inspiration for a book of records came when Sir Hugh Beaver, the Managing Director of the Guinness Brewery in the 1950s, joined a shooting party in County Wexford. An argument ensued about which of the game birds was the fastest when a Eurasian Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* flew by at a great rate of knots. The members of the hunting party couldn't find the answer anywhere and later the idea of collating such miscellaneous facts to settle pub arguments became the Guinness Book of Records.

More recently on the pages of a previous issue of *Wader Quest the newsletter*, Trustee Oliver Simms wrote an article entitled 'Waders with the power to inspire' about how it was this group of birds, above all others, that sealed his obsession with birds. Now, in this issue, Alexia Fishwick continues this theme in an article entitled 'Inspired By My First Wader Roost' (page 26).

It was also a wader, and once again that old favourite the Northern Lapwing that inspired me to become a birder when still a small child. A picture of a pair in a book filled me with such enthusiasm to see one for real

that I never looked back.

It was naturally a wader that inspired the creation of Wader Quest. In this case it was the plight of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper that inspired Elis and I to embark on our world quest for waders and it was witnessing the problems that waders are facing along the way that inspired us to create the charity Wader Quest as it stands today.

There is no collective noun for a mixed aggregation of waders. Given all that has been written here I put it to you that when you come across a multitude of them swirling as one living being over the estuary, describing impossible turns and manoeuvres, flashing from dark to light as they go, that, referring to them as a flock is inadequate. That collective noun is suitable for a bunch of random sheep on a hillside or an unruly gang of pigeons in a town square, but surely not noble or expressive enough for our majestic waders. What about those who call them a murmuration, usurping the noun for starlings? That is just plain wrong.

Henceforth, and from this day forward, let it be known that such magical gatherings of the birds that have been inspiring us since we came down from the trees, should, I humbly submit, be respectfully referred to as.....

An Inspiration of Waders.



American Golden Plover — Elis Simpson

Wader Quest news

August through to November is the busiest time for Wader Quest with many events happening one after the other. Apart from working out the logistics of who will attend and how, we have to maintain a suitable level of merchandising to make it all worthwhile and write a number of short talks suitable for each occasion.



The 2016 BBF Wader Quest stand — Elis Simpson

British Birdwatching Fair 19th–21st August

Another successful and enjoyable event as always, we had great fun meeting friends old and new and launched our latest appeal for the Thai Salt Pans receiving much support

from other organisations and individuals who offered to help.

An inspired idea from Ian Dearing saw us buying a number of chocolate eggs and filling a jar inviting people to guess the number within. In the end the prize of a pair of Opticron binoculars was won by Anastasia Smith who visited the stand with her brother



Penny Insole, Nicholai, Anastasia and Steve, Rick Simpson and Andrew Whitelee — Elis Simpson

Nicholai and dad Steve.

We also held a competition to identify some Charadrius plovers with each

correct answer sheet entering a prize draw. This draw was won by Ali Hillyer who received her prize of a pair of Opticron binoculars at the Plover Appreciation Day event in Norfolk. (See Plover Appreciation Day on page 3)

We were also greatly pleased when Chris Packham (UK Wildlife TV presenter) and his retinue arrived at the stand unannounced. We had time to tell him about what we do, mentioning the Thai Salt Pans appeal of course, and his parting shot was "Great, I like people who stick up for the underdog!"



Andrew Whitelee, Rick Simpson, Chris Packham and Elis Simpson — Tina Lindsay

Wader Quest news — cont'd

We also ran a prize draw to be made from those that signed up at the bird fair, the prize being a fabulous signed print by Richard Allen of the Pectoral and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers plate from the Birds of the Western Palearctic Concise Edition. The winner was Sarah Harris from Norfolk.



Sarah Harris with her Richard Allen print prize
— Nick Moran

Falsterbo Bird Show 2nd-4th September

This bird fair in southern Sweden did not disappoint again this year. It is always a really pleasant weekend made all the more



The Falsterbo Wader Quest Stand — Elis Simpson

enjoyable this year in that we were able to spend a few days with our friends Anna and Eva beforehand.



Lars Jonsson surrounded by his posters
— Elis Simpson

Highlights for us were giving the talk and seeing old friends Erik Hirschfeld and Lars Jonsson, the latter signing some posters for us to bring back to help raise some much needed funds.

Another interesting development was being able to take people's payment via a mobile phone through a system called SWISH, we hope that comes to the UK sooner rather than later.

International Wader Study Group Conference 9th-12th September

With great regret we were unable to attend this meeting this year but fortunately Dan Rouse was able to attend and she has written a summary for us on page 8.

Spurn Migratory Bird Festival 10th-11th September

This event was attended for us by Andrew Whitelee who was ably assisted by Oliver Simms. It was the first time Wader Quest has been represented at the Spurn festival and we will certainly look to do so again if we can. One of the highlights of the weekend was a Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* turning up at Spurn.



The Spurn Wader Quest Stand
— Andrew Whitelee

Plover Appreciation Day 16th September

This year we celebrated Plover Appreciation Day at Titchwell only, not needing to visit Snettisham in order to see Eurasian Golden Plover. The RSPB once again allowed us to have a team in the Parrinder hide to help people find plovers and other waders. They also erected a gazebo for our display stand near the visitor centre but alas, although it was tenaciously guarded over by Ian Dearing all day, no-one braved the elements which once more turned against us for this event, to see what we had to offer.



Ian Dearing gallantly holding the fort in the wind and rain — Elis Simpson; Plover pic — Nik Borrow

The definite high point of the day was when the winner of the Plover Lover competition at the BBF Ali Hillyer came to collect her prize, a pair of Opticron binoculars, which she put to immediate and good use looking for the plovers. Which included Eurasian Golden, Grey *Pluvialis squatarola*, Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Northern Lapwing.



Ali Hillyer accepts her Opticron binoculars from Rick Simpson — Elis Simpson

Scottish Ornithological Club Conference 23rd-24th September

Andrew Whitelee stepped into the breach again for this event, our very first in Scotland where Andrew works as a freelance wildlife conservationist and spends much of his time. He was joined for this event by Wader Quest volunteer Penny Insole and they had a successful weekend raising our profile north of the border.



Penny Insole & Andrew Whitelee — Elis Simpson

Wirral Wader Festival 1st-2nd October

A man in a police uniform, wearing a cap and a lanyard, stands next to a young boy. The boy is wearing a green and black jacket. They are both smiling and holding a white certificate or document together. The background shows a blue display board with various photos and text.



A man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue jacket, is painting a landscape on a large easel. He is using a brush to apply paint to the canvas. The scene outside the window shows a wet street with a red brick building and a sign that says "PUSH BAR TO OPEN". The painting on the easel depicts a landscape with a body of water and a distant building.



MAJOR WADER HOT SPOTS IN THE BRITISH ISLES



Wader Quest news — cont'd

Norfolk Bird Race On Tour (NBROT)

On yer bike! Fundraising bike ride, from Aberdeen to Cley in Norfolk.

It's that man Andrew Whitelee again. Not content with; arranging the Norfolk Bird Fair to raise money for Wader Quest; allowing us to cajole him, with fellow conspirator Ian Dearing, into becoming a Trustee; volunteering to represent Wader Quest at events to which we were unable to get (even driving from Scotland to Spurn and back) he has now set off on a marathon bike ride to raise funds, not just for Wader Quest, but also the Bird Observatories Council (who will be the beneficiaries of next year's Norfolk Bird Race)!

The latest is that he has reached England having travelled some 270 miles. He has set himself the goal of raising £1,000; thus far he has raised £290 which means he has raised £1.07 per mile. In the process he has had two punctures and a buckled wheel, not to mention a bent spanner, closed bridges and howling gales to contend with.

And yet he perseveres.



Andrew's trusty steed — Andrew Whitelee

country to the other was not punishment enough, Andrew has decided that he will not do this in luxury, he is camping along the route for the most part; this is no cushy number.

STOP PRESS: A recent turn of events has changed things rather. Andrew suffered a minor accident where he was knocked off his bike by a car. This has resulted in him having to rest for some days which means he will not be able to complete the ride as planned. However, Andrew being Andrew, he will not be defeated, so, he'll complete the last

follow. Please continue to support Andrew despite this set back so all his pain and suffering does not go unrewarded. All Andrew wants is to raise a decent amount of money for two things he feels passionate about. He feels that he has let everyone down, despite the accident not being his fault, let's show him that he couldn't be more wrong. Wader Quest for one appreciates everything he is doing and has done for us and we hope you'll show your support too by continuing to support him: Here is the JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/n>

Norfolk Bird Race on tour.

October 2016

Dates and venues



Andrew's route — Rick Simpson

Andrew's route will take him down the east coast of Scotland and then England. He hopes to visit some of the bird observatories along the way and also perhaps see some birds (particularly waders of course of which he has now seen 19 species).

As if cycling from one end of the



Andrew's luxury accommodation; a tent in the rather amusingly named Tentsmuir forest — Andrew Whitelee

Wader Quest news; 3rd Wader Conservation World Watch

Wader Conservation World Watch 5th-6th November

This year sees our third event of this kind; WWCW3.

Originally created to celebrate Wader Quest's birthday, on the 1st of November 2012, we celebrate by holding an event on the first full weekend of November in each year and that event is a world-wide wader watching extravaganza. At least that is what we hope it will be and that, dear freinds, largely depends on you.

Many of you will have been with us last year and know all about this project, but for those of you who weren't and don't, it is a simple act of going out to look at waders, wherever you happen to be in the world and then to send us a list of what you have seen. There is no need to count and send numbers, we like to keep things simple, but if you normally count the birds you see then we will certainly not try to stop you doing so.

Once we have all the data we will publish a list of the waders we have seen together around the world and a roll of honour including the names of all participants. It doesn't matter if you see nothing unusual or rare, or even if you only see one species from a moving car, it is the taking part that is of primary importance.

And why is it so important? The idea behind all this is that we are celebrating wader conservation and conservationists. A lot of work is carried out by professionals and volunteers alike protecting and studying these birds with a view to reversing the worsening conditions under which many of them struggle to survive. We can't all be out there doing the field work, but it is important, we think, that those who do, should know that those of us who can't, appreciate what they are doing and are aware of the dire situation facing many wader species.

By going out and looking at waders you are saying:

I am aware and I care.

If you want to copy the poster on this page and share it with friends, colleagues or fellow club members please do, if you can't copy it write to us and we'll send you a pdf (waderquest@gmail.com)

Last year for the first time we produced a *Wader Quest the newsletter* special about the event, it was so well received that we intend to do the same this year.



**WADER CONSERVATION
WORLD WATCH**

5TH - 6TH NOVEMBER 2016

A celebration of wader conservation and conservationists

Show you care!

SEE AS MANY WADER SPECIES OVER THE WEEKEND AS YOU CAN;

TELL US WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN - waderquest@gmail.com;

WE'LL COMPILE A COLLECTIVE WORLD SPECIES SEEN LIST;

**YOUR NAME WILL APPEAR ON A ROLL OF HONOUR ON THE
WADER QUEST WEBSITE;**

**YOU'LL RECEIVE a WADER QUEST E-NEWSLETTER SPECIAL EDITION
ABOUT THE EVENT WITH YOUR BIRDS AND NAME IN IT.**

**SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE AND SOLIDARITY FOR THE WORK
WADER CONSERVATIONISTS EVERYWHERE ARE DOING
SIMPLY BY WATCHING THE BIRDS THEY HELP TO SAVE!**

WADERS NEED LOVE TOO!

In 2015 we spent the two days in Lincolnshire (Saturday) and Kent (Sunday). This year we'll be doing something different.



Red Knots overflying Eurasian Oystercatchers in Cumbria — Hayden Hurst

called Hayden Hurst got in touch and said he'd be running a new wader festival with the Cumbria Wildlife Trust and that he thought it would be interesting to hold the event on WCWW weekend. He invited us to attend and run our event from the **Walney Wader Festival**. (see page 7) how could we refuse? Well of course we couldn't and didn't. So for the WCWW this year we will be in the north-west of England and hoping that the weather is a little kinder to us this time.

Northwest Birdwatching Festival 12th-13th November

The busy season will then close with our annual trip to Martin Mere for the WWT Northwest Birdwatching Festival.

Earlier in the year a young man

Wader Quest news; Walney Wader Festival

Wader Conservation World Watch

Wader Quest, one of our partners in protecting wading birds, is conducting a 'Wader Conservation World Watch' during the festival.

This is an international effort to record wading birds from all corners of the planet, and is being coordinated from South Walney. Make sure you let Wader Quest know which species you have spotted on the day, and your name can be added to the global list!



SealCam

SealCam will be broadcasting LIVE throughout the event! Look at the monitors to see what our grey seals are up to! One tip: seals feed in the water at high tide, so the best time to see them hauled out on SealCam is at low tide.

Please remember that seals are extremely sensitive to disturbance, and for this reason there is no access to the spit.

Directions and Booking

How to find us
South Walney Nature Reserve,
Barrow-in-Furness LA14 3YQ.
Grid reference: SD 225 620

Directions by car
From Barrow-in-Furness follow signs for Walney Island. Cross Jubilee Bridge onto the island and follow the brown signs turning left at traffic lights. Follow this road for about 1km/0.6 miles then turn left down Carr Lane. Pass Biggar village and follow the road to South End Caravan Site. Follow the road for a further kilometre until the nature reserve is reached.

Directions by bicycle
The nature reserve is 5km/3 miles from National Route 70 Walney to Wear (W2W) and National Route 100 The Bay Cycleway.

Directions by public transport
Buses run from Barrow-in-Furness to Biggar.

Contact us

For bookings and enquires phone 01539 816300, or email mail@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk

Follow us #WaderFest



Cumbria Wildlife Trust
Plumgarth, Crook Road,
Kendal, Cumbria LA8 8LX
Telephone: 01539 816300
Email: mail@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk

www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk

Registered in England as Cumbria Wildlife Trust Limited,
a Company Limited by Guarantee No. 00724133
Registered Charity No. 218111. All profits, unless
otherwise credited, copyright Cumbria Wildlife Trust



Walney Wader Festival



Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 November,
South Walney Nature Reserve

Two days of wading bird celebration,
observation and conservation



Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Welcome to the first Walney Wader Festival!



This weekend event seeks to encompass the essence of winter wildlife on our stunning South Walney Nature Reserve.

We will be celebrating the magnificent array of wading birds and coastal wildlife found right here on our doorstep.

If you love coastal wildlife, the Walney Wader Festival has it all – guided walks, bird watching talks from experts, practical workshops, family activities, competitions with prizes, and more!



Photography credits: Black-tailed godwit, Anna Lewis; Curlew, Anna Lewis; A dull grey oystercatcher, Tom Marshall; Curlew, Dennis Waters; Idunnae gull, David Moore; Green shank, David Moore; Grey plover, Neil Aldridge; Redshank, David Moore



Programme for Saturday 5 November

At South Walney Nature Reserve

11.00am	Opening ceremony
All day	Photography competition
All day	Wader painting competition for kids
11.30am – 1.00pm	Wildlife activities, arts and crafts
11.30am – 1.30pm	Guided nature reserve walk
1.00pm – 3.30pm	Seal family fun workshop (Booking advised as places are limited)
1.30pm – 3.30pm	Guided nature reserve walk
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Wildlife activities, arts and crafts
3.30pm – 4.00pm	Judging and prizes for kids painting competition

At Foulney Island Nature Reserve

12.00 – 4.00pm Stranded on Foulney Island

A must for any keen naturalist... Our reserve staff will lead you across the causeway to Foulney Island and guide you around the nature reserve.

Meanwhile the tide will rise, bringing vast flocks of wading birds in to roost. You will be cut off, and entirely immersed in nature.

When the tide recedes our guides will escort you safely back to the mainland.

BOOKING ESSENTIAL and places are limited.

Programme for Sunday 6 November

At South Walney Nature Reserve

All day	Photography competition
11.00am – 12.00pm	South Walney warden talk
11.30am – 1.30pm	Guided nature reserve walk
12.00pm – 1.00pm	RSPB South Lakeland talk
1.00pm – 3.00pm	Wading bird identification workshop (Booking advised as places are limited)
1.30pm – 3.30pm	Guided nature reserve walk
2.00pm – 3.00pm	Wader Quest talk
3.30pm – 4.00pm	Judging and prizes for photography competition

Wader photography competition



We are running a festival photography competition with a pair of Opticon binoculars worth £99 up for grabs!

The instructions are simple: take a great wader photo at either South Walney or Foulney Island nature reserves on 5 or 6 November, submit your picture, and be in with a chance to win!

Judging and prize giving will take place from 3.00pm at South Walney Nature Reserve. Entries can be submitted in person at South Walney, or by posting on Twitter with the hashtag #WaderComp

www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk

Protecting Wildlife for the Future



International Wader Study Group conference report — Dan Rouse

September saw wader enthusiasts, from all over the world, flock to Cork, Ireland for the International Wader Study Group (IWSG) conference.

The conference itself was held in the Trabolgan Holiday Village, a very enthusiastic place to say the least – not what you'd expect from a conference! The first day on the Friday gave the attendees the chance to meet each other and catch up with old friends over a pint. In the evening, everyone got together for a meal which was then followed by a talk from the ever talented Killian Mullarney about aging waders in the field. The talk was truly helpful and the skills learnt have been tested out already. Killian also spoke about his illustration work which has been featured in popular books such as the Collins Bird Guide and The Sound Approach books.

Saturday was a day of knowledgeable and fascinating talks. The day started off with breakfast before the attendees made their way over to the conference hall ready for the AGM to begin. The conference is split into sub-categories with talks featuring in each, Saturday's categories were; Moults, Nest Detection, Genetics, Migration and Stop-over Ecology and Understanding the Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. My personal stand-out talk from Saturday came from Jesse R. Conklin entitled 'Verifying the ecological subspecies in Bar-tailed Godwits using neutral genetic markers.' The talk discussed the ranges of the five sub-species of Bar-tailed Godwits and their flyways. The talk also went into details about the migration routes and breeding grounds of each sub-species and whether there is a genetic difference between these sub-species.



One of the talks in progress — Dan Rouse

After the talks and lunch it was then time for the planned excursions to Cork Harbour and Courtmacsherry Bay, both places are fantastic places for waders with conference attendees being able to test their skills, we even came across a couple of colour-ringed birds which were closely



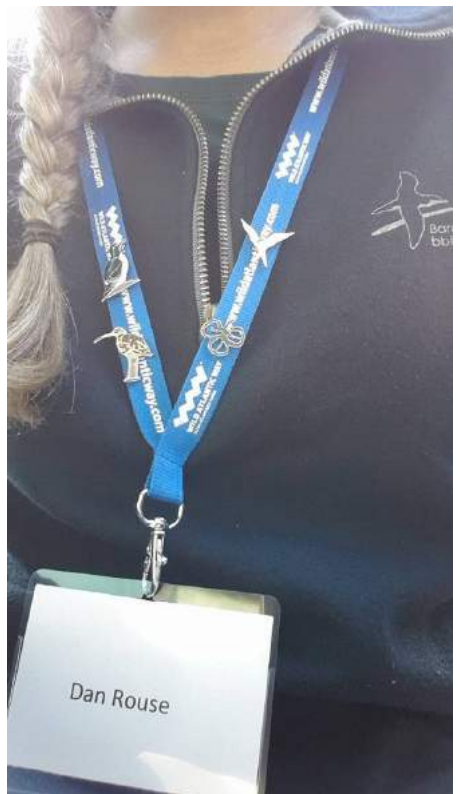
Group shot of delegates at IWSG 2016 conference Ireland — Dan Rouse

scrutinised and the data was then sent to the appropriate authority.

Sunday was a day filled to the brim with amazing talks from inspiring people. The topics of the day were; Phenology, Population dynamics, Breeding ecology, Ecology and spatial patterns, and Foraging ecology. There were so many interesting talks that it's hard to pin down a couple of stand-out ones. But, the talks focusing on waders in Iceland were truly fascinating as they focused on different species that were using roughly the same areas and looking into different aspects of their behaviour; all these birds use the same areas but for a variety of reasons. First was José A. Alves discussing the understanding of variation in wader survival rates, followed by Verónica Méndez on the benefits of Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* wintering in Iceland. This talk was of particular interest to me as I see thousands of Eurasian Oystercatchers on the Burry Inlet each winter. Seeing the data which has been collected from the breeding grounds of a partially migratory population was illuminating. I am now scanning the legs of all Eurasian Oystercatchers on the Burry Inlet searching for the colour rings. The last in the 'Iceland series' was Camilo Carneiro looking into the population and individual flexibility among Eurasian Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*. Being long distant migrants it was interesting to see how geo-locators provided a lot of data for this project. They showed the routes and dates of departure of tagged Eurasian Whimbrel and with the difference in climate in the 2015 season compared with the 2016, it provided a lot of interesting statistics. Camilo will have a poster at the BOU conference in Warwick, UK in March 2017 which will feature his research. The rest of the day consisted of more talks and lunch, then the conference close.

The conference close really brought

to light how amazing this group of people is and just how important the work every one of them does is, especially as it's focused across the globe with everyone working towards one cause – protecting and conserving waders. We were also informed of next year's conference location, which is Prague in the Czech Republic, and we got to see some of the details which have started to be planned and it all looks truly amazing. For my first IWSG Conference, I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to share the experience with, and can't wait to reunite with everyone next September.



www.danrouse.org.uk

I can't believe you don't have a full set of Wader Quest pin badges Dan! - Ed.

Eury the Spoon-billed Sandpiper

Eury The Spoon-billed Sandpiper children's story book is now available and can be purchased at events and talks (see schedule on front page) or via Wader Quest at £7.99 + p&p please apply via email waderquest@gmail.com

"I read the "Eury" book, and I'll read it to my daughter - I'm sure she'll be moved by the story like I was. She's always loved all animals, and has a particular soft spot for baby birds. I particularly appreciated the sympathy toward the birds on their migrations - for everything they have to go through from one place to another. It's a refreshing change from the emphasis on only the scientific aspects of birds, seeing them as sensitive fellow creatures" - Alicia Mottur, Belgium.



The Flock; A New Zealand shorebird conservation initiative — Ray and Ann Buckmaster

Pūkoro Mirānda Naturalists' Trust (PMNT) has been involved in advocacy for and education about shorebirds since it was established just over 40 years ago.

New Zealand is at one end of the East Asian Australasian Flyway. Each year fewer migratory shorebirds are returning to us at the end of their Arctic breeding season. The major reason for this is that for most species there is a necessary re-fuelling stop on the mudflats of China and the Korea Peninsula during both their northern and southern migrations. Over the past 50 years there has been massive reclamation of mudflats in the Yellow Sea resulting in dramatic loss of places where the birds can rest and feed. The most significant species for NZ are the Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, with an annual decline of 2%, and the Red or Lesser Knot *Calidris canutus*, which is suffering from a 5% fall each year.

However, it is not all bad news. Our long term advocacy has resulted in the development of partnership arrangements such as that with Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve in China. In addition, we have a growing relationship with China, South Korea and, more recently, North Korea. Most significantly, earlier this year a Memorandum of Arrangement for protection of shorebird habitat was signed between China and New Zealand. This should be particularly beneficial to the red knots because, as a result of the MoA, a sizeable and significant part of Bohai



Vice Minister Chen Fengxue and the Director of the Department of Conservation, Lou Sanson
— Ray Buckmaster

Bay, crucial to the survival of the species in this flyway, is now protected from development.

PMNT is also active on the home front and there is a real need to be so. New Zealand, like many island groups, has many endemic species and, of the endemic shorebirds none are doing well. One, the Variable Oystercatcher, is in recovery. The

remainder are moving towards extinction.

The plight of our Arctic migrants and our endemic and native shorebirds is well known in NZ birding and conservation circles. But there is a real need to raise awareness outside of these circles. Generally if you are aware then you will care.

PMNT has been actively involved in reaching out beyond the birding community

The Flock; A New Zealand shorebird conservation initiative — cont'd

in a number of ways. We have recently developed an education resource which is available online at www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/education. Consequent to that we now also have an outreach educator who is busy engaging with schools within travelling distance of the Shorebird Centre. We have long had an effective programme for visiting schools and other groups which takes advantage of the fact that the Centre is located near what is probably the best place in NZ to see the birds.

For the past six months PMNT has also been trying something less conventional as a way of engaging with a larger audience. Conservation is a serious business but that doesn't mean that it can't also be fun. The inspiration for this initiative was a large art installation on Ainsdale Beach, Lancashire, in the UK, where 600 gaily decorated shorebird cutouts were assembled last World Shorebirds Day. It was a fabulous art installation which attracted considerable media attention and provided a grand opportunity for people to learn a bit more about shorebirds.

PMNT decided to adopt that idea but to give it a kiwi twist. We christened the enterprise The FlockNZ as an acknowledgement to the original UK initiative.

First we had to have a trial run so we made this small flock of shorebirds using slightly oversized replicas of Bar-tailed Godwits, oystercatchers and knots which we planted on the shore of the Firth of Thames



Godwits with their big brother — Ray Buckmaster

under the statue of one of their big brothers. They looked pretty good and we imagined the impact of a more sizeable gathering of birds. It seemed to be just the thing to engage the interest of schoolchildren, especially, and so it turned out. Because the idea could be tailored to fit many parts of the NZ curriculum it also had great appeal for their teachers.

The appeal is not confined just to the young. The dignitaries involved in signing the Memorandum of Arrangement were also delighted to get involved in the Flock project.

On looking back it is now obvious that we had initiated something similar to a franchise campaign, a conservation kitset. All of the ways of getting involved were available on line at www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/theflock

There were templates for the initial species of the Flock, suggestions as to the best materials to use, mostly recycled, and ways to cut out the shorebird replicas. Community workshops, dads and

grandparents have been happy to get involved producing shorebird replicas for school groups.

The real pay-off comes from the fact that involving schools, and community groups in producing their own flocks of birds naturally inspire curiosity about the real birds. That is a great opportunity for us to promote the amazing stories of our shorebirds and the threats they face. To that end we have sent speakers into dozens of schools and community groups to give them the message.

We are now six months into a 12-month campaign and it is good to look back on the progress that has been made. More and more schools are getting involved. At first it was only the schools around the Shorebird Centre. However, with the aid of the internet it spread further afield within New Zealand. More distant conservation groups took up the challenge and started to work with the schools in their regions.



Notable amongst these was the Braid Rivers group of mid-Canterbury in the South Island. <http://braid.org.nz>. The braided rivers are the breeding place for a number of critically endangered endemic shorebirds, as their poster demonstrates, and their wing of The FlockNZ emphasises these species. They launched their Flock on World Shorebirds Day and it now pops up in unlikely places from airports to traffic islands. This Flash Flock Phenomenon takes a bit of pre-arranging with the local authorities but it is great at catching the eye of the passer by providing great photo ops and also has a pay off in terms of attracting media attention.

More recently the Flock concept has crossed the Tasman. A FlockOz is now building in the Adelaide region of Australia, noted for its shorebirds. It isn't exactly a pandemic, with just one overseas country involved, but we remain hopeful of this possibility as there is considerable worldwide interest in our blog.

www.theflocknz.blogspot.co.nz



Ainsdale Beach, Lancashire, UK — Sefton Coast

The Flock; A New Zealand shorebird conservation initiative — cont'd

Our Arctic migrants are just starting to return as I write. The celebration of this return provides many display opportunities for the Flocks, as does the period when they depart our shores.

We do have one mega-display coming up, largely due to the efforts of ardent conservationist, Jim Eagles. Jim lives on the Devonport Peninsula which is part of Auckland City. All of the ten schools there are busy fledging plywood birds for the Flock as are local senior citizens organisations, art groups and churches. In mid-November some 2500 birds will go on display on a local reserve which should be an awesome sight.

One aspect of The Flock phenomena that has been developing is the use of parts of it as a diorama. New Zealand endemics grew up without mammalian

predators and lack predator wariness. It is a simple but effective scene to set up.

Our rarest shorebird, the Black Stilt



Range of stilt hybrids — Ray Buckmaster

Himantopus novaezelandiae, has such a low population that hybridisation threatens its continued existence. This is easily represented.

We have been really thrilled with the enthusiasm of the children involved. They do get it. That is great as we do need the next generation to be conservationists. The decline in shorebird populations will continue to play out during their life time. Even those species that are now common could become rare and unusual.

At this half way stage the project has exceeded our wildest expectations. It has been fun and we are looking forward to more



The children of Ruru's class, Oropi, Bay of Plenty, North Island — Jim Eagles

challenges and excitement in the next six months.

We sincerely hope that as the UK was the inspiration for this idea that The Flock phenemon will take off here again.

Wader Quest hoped to start the ball rolling at the Wirral Wader Festival but simply didn't have the time, skills or resources required to do so. If anyone in the UK has the facilities and expertise to help us set up a FlockUK project then we'd be very pleased to hear from them, details of what is required can be found on <http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/theflock> — Ed.



Wybills *Anarhynchus frontalis* and predators — Ray Buckmaster

World's oldest Eurasian Oystercatcher

A Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, that had been ringed as an adult on 3rd March 1972, has been resighted on 1st August 2016 in the Netherlands. That is forty-four years, four months and twenty-nine days later which makes this individual at least forty-six years old.

According to the BTO the average lifespan of this species is twelve years so this one has done extremely well to survive all the challenges that life in the modern world has thrown at it.

The previous record was achieved in 2010 when a bird was found to be forty years, one month and two days old. If that bird were to be still alive today and reported it would be even older than this record holder.

Another example of a Eurasian Oystercatcher of advanced age was found on 15th October this year. It was found at Schiermonnikoog, again in the Netherlands, but this time as a corpse, so no possibility of it challenging for the record in future.

This bird was found by Klaas van



Eurasian Oystercatcher — Elis Simson

Dijk during a high tide count of the Wadden Sea on the saltmarshes of the island of Schiermonnikoog and carried an aluminium ring with the details Arnhem 5.189.298. The ring was quite worn, but nevertheless the inscription was still very readable.

It had been ringed originally as nestling on the island of Schiermonnikoog on 14th July 1985, thirty-one years and three months before being found dead; the cause of death is unknown but the bird was found to be moulting its primaries.



Eurasian Oystercatcher corpse — Klaas van Dijk

The Banded Dotterel of South Bay, Kaikoura, NZ: The Empty Nest Syndrome

— Ailsa Howard

The Banded Dotterel or Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*, is the most common of New Zealand's small shore plovers. Because of its widespread distribution, it is thought by many to be doing OK, and when New Zealand has so many vulnerable species to research and protect, it tends to be a species that people overlook. It's perhaps also because of its extraordinary knack of camouflage it doesn't usually make it into the public eye. Every now and again, from spring to early autumn you may see one scuttling along the beach with a start-stop, bobbing motion... until you get your eye in. Then you see almost a dozen pairs on our beach, and their determination for success in nesting, and that the odds just might be against them without a bit of help.

Firstly a little about the bird known as Banded Dotterel, or Tuturiwhatu, in New Zealand where it is endemic, although some members of the species fly to Australia for a winter holiday. Its name refers to its two dark bands, one narrow, one wide, which are obvious in breeding plumage, particularly in the male.



Spot the dotterel nest. These two people probably haven't. — Ailsa Howard

Its strongholds are our stony coastlines, and the braided river systems which are a dominant feature of New Zealand's South Island landscape. Braided rivers are rocky riverbeds which spill from steep mountains and hills. In flood events, rocks and gravel are carried in the water and deposited lower down as the flow loses speed, so when water recedes, extensive gravel beds are left behind. The Banded Dotterel's nesting preference is on these open gravels, or in similar open gravels on our gravel beaches.

I live in Kaikoura, a wildlife mecca on the East Coast of the South Island, world famous for having whales, dolphins, and pelagic birds just offshore. It also has the



South Bay Beach — Ailsa Howard

perfect beach gravels where banded dotterels love to nest. In Spring of 2013, I found my first nest on South Bay beach, and over the next two weeks, I quietly observed its progress. I was charmed. The little bird (he didn't seem to have a partner) was so carefully camouflaged, and attentive to his nest. I became very excited about the possibility of it hatching. One day, arriving at the beach, I realised it had been washed away.



The first dotterel nest I encountered: a male sitting on his eggs — Ailsa Howard



And the nest. 3 speckled eggs on open gravel, with a subtle flotsam lining — Ailsa Howard

Over the remainder of that season, and the next, I followed four more nests. In each case, the nest progressed well, then suddenly eggs and nest disappeared, well before time was up. It seemed obvious to me that predation was having a profound effect on the breeding of the banded dotterel, so together with our local Forest and Bird Branch, we hatched a plan – a five year study, quantifying nesting success and doing what we can to improve nesting outcomes.

This is our second year of study. Last year we found and followed the progress of twenty nests, and from these only one chick fledged. Two other chicks, from a different nest that we hadn't found, also fledged from the beach. This season we have put some discreet predator trapping in place (catching nine rats so far), and are on the verge of installing a couple of trail cams in hope of confirming the identity of the predator/predators and also installing further signage to let beach users know the birds are there. Of course at a beach which is a popular holiday destination, disturbance is a fact of life. Quad bikes race up and down the beach, dogs are two a penny, but a quiet campaign of advocacy is making a difference, and it is heartening to see people changing behaviour. Many people are interested in the vulnerable little birds trying to nest on the beach. I am hoping as we bring in more

The Banded Dotterel of South Bay, Kaikoura, NZ: The Empty Nest Syndrome — cont'd

volunteers, we will be able to make a greater difference.



Banding underway — Ailsa Howard

So here we are, a work in progress, with a strong commitment to ensure our Banded Dotterels have the best outcomes possible. Of our ten nests found so far this season, four have failed, one to a savage storm. A tiny chick has hatched from somewhere outside our marked nests and is running up and down the shoreline with two attentive parents.



Non nesting female having a moment to herself — Ailsa Howard

We have banded all of the chicks we have found in our study, and have colour banded seven of our breeding females so far. This makes following chicks, and re-nesting attempts a lot more straight forward. With such a relatively small number of nests, we are beginning to get information about site and partner fidelity, but we are also able to study the particular temperaments and behaviours of the individual pairs. Some pairs consistently keep their eggs or chicks longer than the others and these pairs seem to show greater vigilance, courage when chasing away predatory birds, but most of all team work with both partners staying close to eggs or chicks, rather than just one or the other.

New Zealand's endemic birds developed without mammalian predation, but our natural river environments have increasingly become home to introduced and



A pair of Banded Dotterels staking out a nest — Ailsa Howard

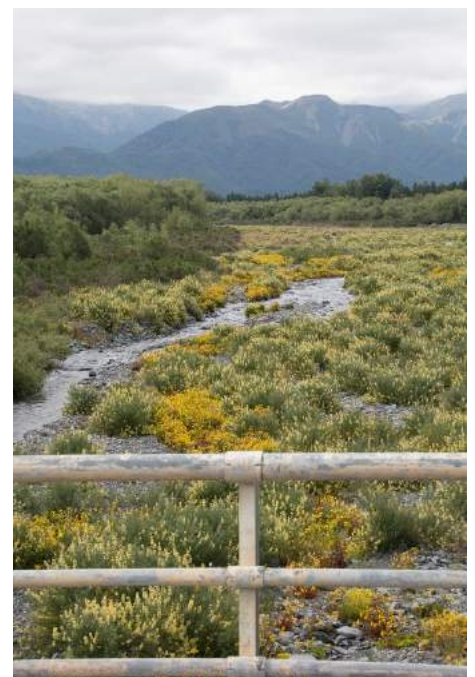
predatory cats, ferrets, stoats and hedgehogs, weed species that lock up the opens gravel and hide predators, and water issues that stop the natural cycles of riverbed flushing.



Team work is integral to nesting success. — Ailsa Howard

New Zealand's conservation budget is comparatively small for the land and species it has to care for, and it's difficult to fully manage ecosystems on the scale of our riverbeds. Hence the populations breeding on coastal beaches become increasingly important for the species. It's important to get the word out to other communities that have them too. It seems that the nests of

banded dotterel are particularly vulnerable to predation, so we must be vigilant and committed for this little shore plover!



South Island Braided River. Exotic weeds have left little open gravel for nesting and make the perfect hiding place for predators.

— Ailsa Howard

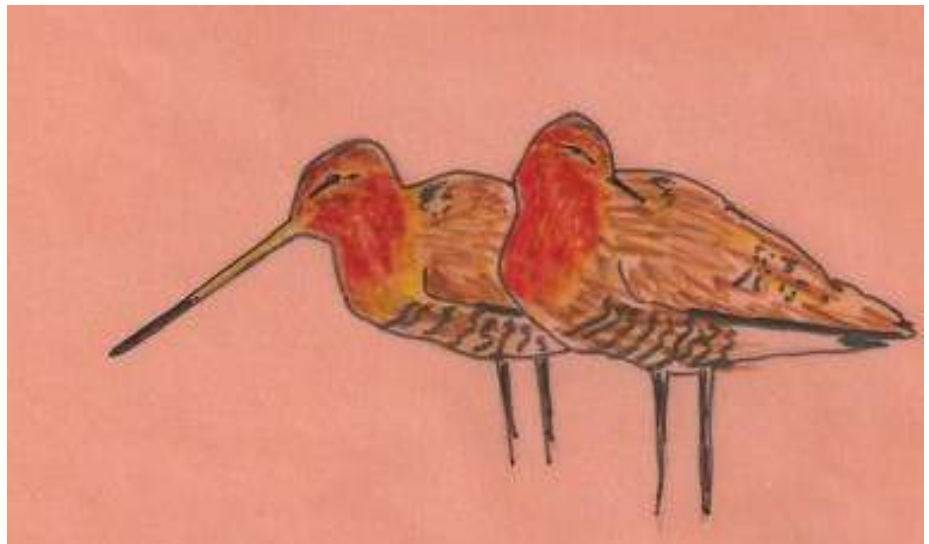
Waders (and birders!) love the Uitkerkse Polders — Alicia Mottur

Lying just south of the outskirts of Blankenberge on Belgium's coast, the Uitkerkse Polders are a hotspot for breeding waders in the spring, and an internationally renowned stopover for migrants and a wintering ground for Arctic breeding waterfowl. If possible, get a good map and try tackling the network of roads throughout the area by bike; you can find bikes for hire in Blankenberge, as long as you make sure to reserve well in advance. The terrain is flat and there are few cars (even if, like me, you seize up at the very idea of having to pedal next to a speeding vehicle), and you'll find it much easier to stop at a moment's notice to investigate each pond, puddle and ditch on your way. Also, since the area covered by the Polders and adjoining sites of interest for waders (the Meetkerkse Moeren and Ter Doest, among others) is quite extensive (at least 10 km²), you'll be more able to thoroughly explore the area in a weekend's birding than if on foot (I speak from experience!).

Possibly the first character who will greet you in the Polders won't be a wader though. The watery roadside ditches and reed beds provide nesting places for Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and the lines of fence posts are popular spots for the singing males. I always say, there's nothing like a singing Sedgie to kick off your day.



Northern Lapwings — Alicia Mottur



Black-tailed Godwits — Alicia Mottur.

As you make your way through the bucolic landscape, the wet meadows either side of the roads provide the setting for spectacular displaying Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, looping the loop as they make death-defying dives on their butterfly wings. Another pair of flickering wings by a pool could turn out to be a male Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, courting his future missus. Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* and Pied Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* pass the time feeding and resting in the meadows, often mixed with a few Greylag Geese *Anser anser* or even lingering Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*. Occasionally a Brown Hare *Lepus capensis* comes lolloping across the grass, startling a loafing Eurasian Oystercatcher out of its nap.



Eurasian Oystercatchers — Alicia Mottur



Common Redshank — Alicia Mottur

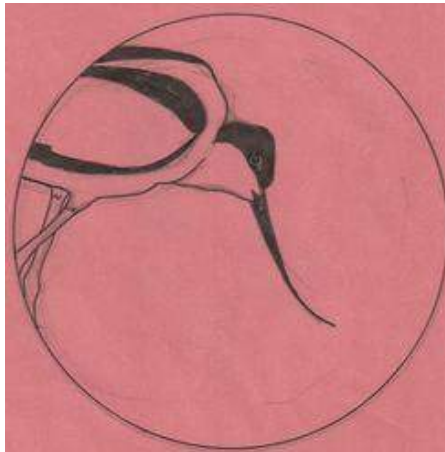
There are a number of hides throughout the Polders, as well as a visitor centre, open year-round. One of these hides is the "Wulphut," named after the Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata*, in Dutch,

explore the deeper water of the pond. One of the omnipresent Sedge Warblers may be chattering away just outside the hide, and if you're lucky you might even spot a Reed

Raining Knots and Godwits — Rick Simpson

Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*. Though I didn't manage to see any while I was there, other species of waders commonly observed in spring in the Polders are Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Ruff *Calidris pugnax*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*.

While watching from the Wulphut, I enjoyed the spectacle of a pair of Black-tailed Godwits splashing and bathing in the pond, taking advantage of their elegant legs to get belly-deep in the water. A Common Sandpiper picked along the edge of the pond, camouflaged against the muddy vegetation, bobbing its hind end. Meanwhile, Lapwings displayed here too. An annoyed-looking Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* stood motionless by a puddle. At one point, a graceful wader



Pied Avocet—Alicia Mottur

suddenly appeared along the pond's edge, stalking daintily for morsels through the shallow water. My first thought was "Greenshank!" but it flittered away before I could be sure. I certainly hope the same

thing doesn't happen to you...

Finally, if you're in the area for two or more days, try making a detour to the nature reserve "De Fonteintjes" near Zeebrugge, just east of Blankenberge. If you're into warblers as well as waders, this string of fresh-water ponds protected from the sea by a range of willow-covered dunes is a great place to see some. In just the two hours I spent by the ponds I recorded Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (singing from the willows!), as well as Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* in the scrubby vegetation between the ponds and the coast road. If you have time, take a snack and stake out an undercover spot to catch a glimpse of that impossible Cetti's Warbler taunting you from the bushes!

Did you know?

The world's smallest wader, the Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* is a bird that we always think of as being an 'American' wader but it has been found nesting for the first time across the Bering Strait in north-eastern Russia.

The species was first seen there in 1986, and has been regularly recorded since 2005. In 2015 it was believed to be breeding but it wasn't until this year when three pairs were seen, two of which were later observed with chicks.

There are a number of what are traditionally thought of as American species that nest in the same region of Russia; Long-billed Dowitcher, Western, Baird's, Pectoral and Rock Sandpipers to name but a few.



Least Sandpiper — Elis Simpson

Wader Conservation World Watch

Wherever you happen to be in the world

5th & 6th November

Waders need love too!

The Curlew Walk — Mary Colwell-Hector

As I write this, Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* are beginning to gather in increasing numbers around the UK's coasts as another breeding season is done and dusted. As the daylight gets noticeably shorter it is time to wait out the winter months amongst marshy pools and seaweed. The first sight of curlews strutting around the seashores is as much a sign that winter is on its way as their lovely calls over meadow and moor are a herald of approaching spring. The great curlew pendulum swings back and forth between coast and inland, anchoring them and us in the rhythms of the natural world.

Five months ago in early April I watched the first arrivals sending their breeding calls over the high moorland plateau of Glenwherry in Northern Ireland, an area of bog and rough grazing dominated by the towering form of Sleimish Mountain. The old farmers there will tell you that curlews always come back to breed on the slopes of Sleimish around the feast day of St Patrick, 17th March. The teenage Patrick was thought to have been kept as a slave there in the 7th Century, tending his master's sheep before he escaped and went on to great things. These Northern Irish curlews were the first ones I saw over the following six weeks as I undertook a 500 mile curlew walk to find out why they are disappearing.



Peat for sale — Mary Colwell

500 miles is a long way to walk for curlews. The Proclaimers sang loudly that they would do it for the love of a girl (in fact 500 and 500 more – which is heroic). I expect many people would find that more understandable. But how else could I see for myself the places they are doing well and the areas where they should be but are now absent? I also wanted to meet face to face the heroes and heroines who are battling to



Eurasian Curlew — Mary Colwell

save this magnificent wader from oblivion. Certainly driving, but even cycling, seemed too fast to really take in the land and its character, and it is definitely more difficult to have those *ad hoc* chats that can so often be rich encounters. Walking it had to be and a line between Sligo on the west coast of Ireland and Boston in Lincolnshire comes in at about 500 miles.

April 21st was my official start date, chosen because it is the feast day of the little known Saint Beuno (pronounced Bayno), a 7th Century Welsh abbot who once blessed curlews because one saved his prayer book from the sea. Beuno wanted curlews to be forever protected, which might make him the first ever conservationist. It is also the birthday of John Muir, my all-time nature-loving hero, who died in 1916 and who founded National Parks. So off I set on a bright sunny morning from the leisure centre in Enniskillen and left myself open to fate.

For the nitty-gritty of what I saw and found out you'll have to wait for the book, which I am feverishly writing at the moment, but here is a quick overview. In a nutshell, Ireland, especially Southern Ireland, is a disaster zone. In the 1980s it is thought there were around 12,000 pairs of curlews breeding in the bogs, wet fields and river flood plains of this very beautiful land. As of July 2016, according to BirdWatch Ireland,

there are officially, around 120 pairs left, and breeding success is almost zero. A fall from 12,000 to 120 pairs in 30 years is catastrophic by anyone's standards. The stripping of the vast peat bogs to fuel power stations is the biggest threat, followed by intensive farming and an increase in forestry. Perhaps most worrying is that there seems to be very little public or political will to do anything. It is now possible for farmers to get special payments to leave land alone if curlews are found to be breeding, but it is a feeble



Peat harvesting — Mary Colwell

(though welcome) step forward when the birds are in such dire straits.

Over in Wales things are not much better, there are most likely fewer than 800 pairs in the whole country (a 10 year old figure). But at least curlews have the political muscle and the resources of the RSPB behind them in the UK. Joint projects with the

The Curlew Walk — cont'd

National Trust and the BTO in Wales are also underway. The heartening thing about Wales is that curlews are very loved. The Welsh, particularly in the west, are very proud of their Celtic roots and the strong relationship with the land that endured for so many generations. Regaining that sense of connection will be vital if the birds are to flourish.



Mary in Anglesey, North Wales — Mary Colwell

The snappily named RSPB Trial Management Plan is happening at the moment in 6 paired sites throughout the UK, including Wales and N Ireland. This project is monitoring the effect of habitat management and predator control over 5 years and we are now at the end of year 2. It will be interesting to see what they find. All the trial



Eurasian Curlew — Mary Colwell

management plan areas however are in the uplands, lowland curlews it seems are largely forgotten. As I walked through lowland England I barely saw a curlew. In Shropshire the news is very bad indeed. In the Stiperstones area, once a hotspot for curlews, 21 nests were monitored this year by ornithologist Tony Cross - not one chick lived to a week old. The same was true last year – out of 12 nests monitored, not a single chick fledged, all the eggs and young were predated mainly by foxes.

Curlews are holding their own in some places, namely the moorlands of National Parks in the north of England, some areas of Scotland and - an inconvenient truth

– on grouse moors.

In summary, the future for curlews across the British Isles is not looking good. For them to recover we will need predator



Eurasian Curlew — Mary Colwell

control and habitat management across large areas and I wonder who will fork out the money – and even if that did happen how can we ensure it is a long-term sustainable solution? It seems to me we have some big decisions to make if we want curlews to return as an everyday bird of moor and farmland – but I wonder if we are prepared to do what it takes.



Mary completes her walk — Mary Colwell

Latham's Snipe tracking project — news brief

The Latham's Snipe Project in Australia has had its first successful recovery of a geolocator placed on a Latham's Snipe that has migrated north and returned.

The bird was found very close to the spot where it was fitted with the locator a year ago in Port Fairy in Victoria. The locator seemed to be in good condition and the bird healthy.

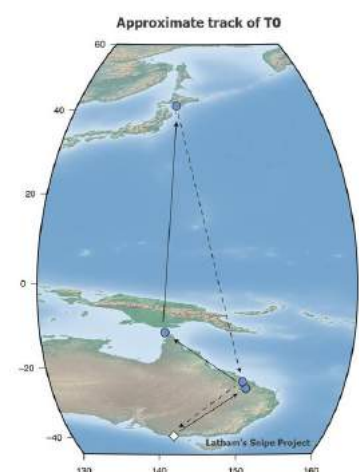
The snipe left Port Fairy in February 2016 and spent about two months in south-east Queensland before flying to Cape York region in April. From there the bird flew direct to Hokkaido in Japan and arrived around early May. The bird spent May-August somewhere in southern Hokkaido. In late August it flew direct from

Hokkaido back to south-east Queensland in three days, where it spent about a month presumably staging before returning to Port Fairy on 26 September.

In all fourteen geolocators have been placed on Latham's Snipes so it will be interesting to see how many more are recovered and what routes the birds take.

This year the team will be deploying more geolocators and radio transmitters as well as hoping to recover more geolocators.

For more information or to become involved as a volunteer or student on the project contact Birgita Hansen b.hansen@federation.edu.au —Ed.



Wing Threads – Flight to the Tundra — Amellia Formby



Wing
Threads

Flight
to the
Tundra



Since April of this year, I began learning to pilot a microlight aircraft with the intention of flying the migratory path of the Red-necked Stint, travelling the length of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) from Australia to Siberia, to raise awareness for shorebird conservation.

The idea to fly to Siberia first came to me when I was driving to Bunnings. My friend Carl had been talking to me a few nights previously about how he and his brother had always wanted to fly around Australia in a microlight to raise money for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. I was surprised to hear from Carl that flying a microlight was relatively simple to learn and didn't cost the earth as I had assumed. These facts settled themselves in my mind and over the coming days I found myself daydreaming about learning to fly. So there I was several days later, waiting at the traffic lights outside of QEII hospital in Perth, when the thought popped into my head – 'I could fly a microlight to Siberia following the migration path of the shorebirds'. It left me stunned. Straight away I knew the idea was big and inspiring and I could do it if I chose to. That was in March 2015. It would be another year before I was brave enough to share the idea with people who could help me see it become a reality.

My background is in science and the arts. I live in Perth and work as a technician in The School of Animal Biology at



Milly in her borrowed flying suit
— Gordon Marshall



Red-necked Stint — Elis Simpson

The University of Western Australia, but am originally from Gippsland, Victoria. In 2014, I completed a research project on the behavioural ecology of Black Swans for my MSc majoring in zoology at The University of Melbourne. Prior to studying zoology, I worked as a tapestry weaver for over seven years at the Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW) in South Melbourne. Funnily enough, it was while at the ATW that I first discovered shorebirds through collaboration with artist, John Wolseley in 2010. John had invited my fellow weavers and I to the unveiling of his public mural 'Wild Cries Wild Wings of Wetland and Swamp' in Melbourne Square. The book *Invisible Connections* was launched at the same event and I bought a copy. Learning of the birds' migratory feats fascinated and astounded me. Soon after, I joined the Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG) and my passion for shorebirds was strengthened through many an expedition to band and flag shorebirds around Victoria. Earlier this year I was privileged to be a part of the annual Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG) banding expedition to 80-Mile

Beach and Roebuck Bay in north-west Australia. It was here that I witnessed the breathtaking sight of hundreds of thousands of shorebirds carpeting 80-Mile Beach, as far as the eye could see. The thought that this migratory phenomenon could one day be spoken about in past tense reminiscences like those of the Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius*, was the deciding factor that gave me the courage to commit to experiencing the journey of the shorebirds firsthand.



Wing Threads – Flight to the Tundra — cont'd

So in April of this year, I found myself at Sky Sports Flying School in York - about two hours drive east of Perth - learning to fly a microlight with my flight instructor, Gordon Marshall. As fate would have it, the microlight model I am learning to fly just happens to be called the XT 912 Tundra; manufactured by Airborne Airsports. In addition to this fortuitous coincidence, there are many parallels between the microlight and the Red-necked Stint, which make them the perfect flagship duo. First, the Red-necked Stint is the smallest of the shorebirds in the EAAF weighing only 30g. Likewise, the microlight is the smallest of the ultralight aircraft, weighing only 220kg with a maximum take-off weight of 450kg. Being an open-cockpit aircraft, I will also be exposed to the elements during flight and being able to fly at all will be largely dependent on prevailing wind conditions. Last, you wouldn't think a small aircraft like a microlight could make a long distance journey such as this, but it can - if you put some extra fuel on board, just like the Red-necked Stint. Fitted with ferry tanks, a microlight can achieve distances over one thousand kilometres in a single flight, effectively doubling their range.



Milly's camp site at the flying school.
— Milly Formby

As I write this, I have thirteen hours of flight training under my belt. Gordon tells me I will need five hundred to one thousand hours of flight training to gain the kind of experience required to safely undertake an international flight of this scale. What I find incredible is that I will have to practice flying for several years, build up hundreds of flight hours, learn to navigate, and be reliant on safety equipment, radio communications and



Milly in her training aircraft — Gordon Marshall

a ground crew just to achieve what newly fledged shorebird chicks are capable of doing at only 8-weeks of age!

My plan is to first do a cross-country flight from Melbourne to Broome at the start of 2019, arriving at Roebuck Bay just before the birds depart on their northward migration at the end of March. I then intend to complete the international flight from Broome to Siberia in 2022, departing Broome with the shorebirds in March/April and arriving on the Arctic tundra in early June at the start of the breeding season.

Throughout the journey, I intend to capture my experiences on film to create a documentary. Shorebirds are a living example of how we are all linked to one another through a global ecology - their migration path is a thread that ties people living along the Flyway together. Therefore, it is not just the story of the shorebirds I would like to tell, but also of the people that they share their lives with. This theme of threads is also reflected in the stitched fabric wing of the aircraft itself and my past history working with thread as a tapestry weaver. In this way, *Wing Threads – Flight to the Tundra* unites my three main passions in life – shorebirds, flying and the creative arts.

You are invited to join me for every flap of the way by following Wing Threads – Flight to the Tundra at

www.wingthreads.com. Wing Threads is also on Facebook (search for @wingthreads) and Twitter (@milly_formby). A big thank you to Rick and Elis Simpson, and Wader Quest for their generous support as project partners.

A copy of this Pied Oystercatcher artwork by Milly Formby will be given by the artist as a Prize in a draw for Australian entrants to the Wader Conservation World Watch this November 5th & 6th. Australian draw organised by Grace Maglio — Ed.



Pied Oystercatcher artwork — Milly Formby

Observations of Black-tailed Godwits — Richard Smith

I'm a bit obsessive when it comes to Black-tailed Godwits. I just love watching them and it has become an obsession since I started logging their colour rings as part of Operation Godwit. I'm lucky enough to live less than a five minute drive to a major moulting site at Gilroy 'Godwit Field' in West Kirby where we regularly get 2,000 or more from mid-July to the end of October. I must spend a total of at least 100 hours there during that period just watching them. Mad? Yes! But they are just so fascinating. In this article I share some of my observations.

Why here?

Probably the question most asked by passers-by and visiting birders at Gilroy, and it's a very good one. Gilroy isn't the most obvious place to host internationally important numbers of wetland birds being bordered on one side by a busy housing estate and the other a heavily used cycle track and footpath. However, the field itself is largely unvisited and the great attraction for the godwits is the large area of shallow water making an ideal



Just part of the large flock at Gilroy, August 2016 — Richard Smith

an hour or so. They fly low and you can hear the whoosh of the wings as they come over - flock after flock. Sometimes they circle before landing and at other times they come straight in but it causes great excitement for the birds already on the ground with a great deal of noise made. It's a wonderful sight. Leaving can be similarly spread out, usually preceded by a lot of preening and walking around. Ones and twos leave first then suddenly a couple of hundred will jump into the air and be off. Unpredictable as always sometimes half the flock will decide not to go at all and stay for several more hours, other times the whole flock will leave in one spectacular mass.

Activities

A quick visit to Gilroy may give you the impression that all they do is sleep. They certainly do a lot of that but look closer and you will always see some movement with birds preening, scratching, walking and feeding. They also have what I call activity sessions when the whole flock becomes very vocal whilst they have a mass wash and preening session with birds constantly walking in and out of the water. They also have three other activities at Gilroy:

1. Sky Search. An amusing behaviour they have is to put their head on one side whilst looking up at the sky, presumably to search for raptors. Their vision is monocular (i.e. each eye has a separate field of view, unlike our own binocular vision) so they need to do this for one of their eyes to view the sky fully, but it looks very comical.
2. Wing Stretch. This seems to be an infectious behaviour as when one or two birds do it the whole flock often follow. They stretch both wings fully above them so the whole flock suddenly flashes white. This can

occur at any time but becomes more frequent as the time to leave for the estuary approaches.

3. Heads Up. This happens very quickly with the flock seemingly fast asleep then in a split second they all have their heads up with neck fully stretched. Obviously this is due to a perceived threat but more often than not it's a false alarm and heads go back down almost as quickly. If it's a real threat then what they do next depends on what it is, which brings me on to the next section.



An activity session with birds preening and washing in the water, August 2016 — Richard Smith

Disturbances

"Those BL***Y powered para-gliders again" I muttered as the birds disappeared into the distance. The godwits absolutely hate them and one has only to appear on the horizon for them to take flight and fly in the opposite direction. Luckily, this year they have so far been absent but they have been one of the worse causes of disturbance both at Gilroy and over the Dee estuary and north Wirral as a whole over several years. You would think a low-flying, noisy, helicopter would have the same effect but that isn't the case. When the Golf Open was at Hoylake a couple of years ago the helicopter landing field was just a few hundred yards away with low flying helicopters coming right over the Gilroy field.



Black-tailed Godwits and Red Knots *Calidris canutus* leaving Gilroy — Elis Simpson

wader scrape of just the right depth. They like an uninterrupted flight path and there are no tall trees nearby, it is also sheltered and obviously free of tides with the constant movement that entails. The closeness of the estuary is crucial and it is less than a five minute flight to the rich mud south of West Kirby Marine Lake when they feel hungry, and back again when they want a nice safe place to roost.

Comings and Goings

The comings and goings of the godwits are surprisingly difficult to predict, but to cut a long story short they are usually at Gilroy several hours either side of high tide, often being there over eight hours during the day - we have no idea what they do at night! The most exciting time is when they come in from the estuary. They fly in in groups of around two to three hundred over a period of

Observations of Black-tailed Godwits — cont'd

Yet the godwits hardly reacted. The difference between something that looks like a large bird of prey and something that looks like a flying brick!

You get to know what bird of prey is about by their reaction. A Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* really scares them whilst Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* are ignored. Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* get the whole flock into the air but they soon come back down again, I was lucky enough to have a Red Kite *Milvus milvus* overhead last year and they reacted in the same way as with a Common Buzzard. Of the birds that are a potential threat Carrion crows *Corvus corone* are the most numerous. Although the Godwits don't like them they are obviously not that scared of them, if a Crow flies low overhead some Godwits will take to the air but rarely the whole flock, and if one lands nearby in the field they just walk away from it. Last year I saw a Crow deliberately single out a godwit and chase it across the field, it didn't catch it but you can certainly understand their nervousness when they are nearby.



Black-tailed Godwits at Golroy — Richard Smith

Other disturbances are perhaps more unexpected. One spring we had an 'Angry Coot' which quite clearly did not like Godwits on its territory and would charge at them. We loved that Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* as it got the Godwits walking around so we could see their legs and hence the colour-rings! Quite often we get Common Moorhens *Gallinula chlorops* having territorial disputes through the middle of the flock with the Godwits hastily getting out of the way as the Moorhens chased each other. Geese and horses blunder their way through the flock so they have to move. You wouldn't expect Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* to cause a disturbance but they are so flighty they fly up in a panic at absolutely nothing - which in turn disturbs the Godwits.



A horsey disturbance! Note the 'heads up' posture of the birds in the bottom of the photo August 2016 — Tanny Robinson

Noise

Black-tailed Godwits talk to each other. That's the only way I can describe it and when you get two thousand birds chatting away that's quite some noise! They are at their loudest when they have an 'activity session', it's a bit like the sound a large flock of starlings make - but louder and more musical. They make a different sound when about to leave for the estuary, much more of an urgent call repeated several times - you can almost imagine them saying "let's go, let's go, let's go".

In spring, whilst they 'talk' to each other, we sometimes hear snatches of their display song - exciting to hear when you think the next time they will utter that song will be in the wilds of Iceland.

Flock Position Fidelity

"I see YNRX* is in the usual place". (For those not familiar with the Black-tailed Godwit codes YNRX means the rings are Yellow over Black on the left leg and Red over a White

ring with an engraved X on the right leg). After several days of this it dawned on us that the same colour-ringed individuals were in the same place day after day. It was three years ago when we first noticed this phenomenon and the day I'm writing this, at the end of August 2016, YNRX, along with several other colour-ringed birds, is still in its favourite position in the field. We don't know why they do this or what significance it has, but it seems pretty remarkable behaviour.

Further Reading:

Richard writes a blog called *Dee Estuary Birding* www.deeestuary.co.uk where you will find many interesting blogs including many about the Godwits of Gilroy — Ed.



YN-RX in its normal place - can you spot it? The four birds in the foreground are juveniles. August 2016 — Richard Smith



Black-tailed Godwits over Gilroy — Elis Simpson

Little things matter: tiny plovers return to breed after being nursed back to health — Brent Lawrence

In the world of wildlife conservation, little things matter.

In this case, the “little things” we’re talking about are five tiny orphaned snowy plover chicks that were released back into the wild exactly three years ago today (June 26th, 2016). Happy anniversary!

The five abandoned Snowy Plover *Charadrius nivosus* chicks and another adult male received care at the Oregon Coast Aquarium in July 2013 after their parents were lost or injured when the eggs hatched. The chicks were from Bandon State Natural Area and the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area.

The next year the plovers were back, their tiny legs adorned with bands to help identify them. This time they were older, stronger and ready to breed. At least two of the Snowy Plovers nested with mates, providing more tiny plovers to go forth and multiply.



Snowy Plover chicks — USFW

These small things matter too, because Snowy Plovers are listed as threatened under the 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA) — USA. (Near Threatened — IUCN Red List category)

In the business world it’s called ROI – return on investment. For biologists, it’s called conservation. Either way, we call it making a difference.

“When population levels sink to the



Snowy Plover — Elis Simpson



Red over Green left leg, Yellow right leg — USFW



point of needing protection under the ESA, every individual’s capacity to contribute to recovery is magnified,” said Dan Elbert, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist in the Newport, Oregon, field office. “It has been very satisfying to see these individuals return to the wild and further enrich a growing breeding population.”



Snowy Plover — Elis Simpson

The western Snowy Plover is a native shore bird that lives on the beach year-round. Recent counts indicate about 450 adult birds are in Oregon, an increase from a record low 28 birds in 1992. The main reasons for their decline were loss of habitat, predation, and human-related disturbance. Snowy Plovers need flat continuous areas of sand with no grass. They used to inhabit



Adult male Snowy Plover with foot injury — USFW

Oregon’s beaches up and down the coastline, but developments and beach grass have destroyed much of their habitat and increased predator numbers. Recovery efforts since the 1990s have dramatically increased the population in Oregon.



Snowy Plover sheltering in a footprint — Elis Simpson

Just yesterday, yet another injured adult Snowy Plover was brought in to the Oregon Coast Aquarium for care and rehabilitation. The bird ended up losing a toe due to human trash on the beach, but it is expected to recover and be released in the coming weeks.

So as you’re out walking the beaches in the Pacific Northwest, watch out for these tiny birds and pick up litter. And remember ... **every one of these remarkable little birds matter.**

Used by kind permission of Brent Lawrence; first published July 26, 2016 on USFWS Pacific Region website. Brent Lawrence is a Public Affairs Officers for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Regional Office, which is based in Portland, Oregon — Ed.

Raining Knots and Godwits — Rick Simpson

It was cold, bitterly cold. We trudged from the car park at RSPB Snettisham to the high tide spectacular viewing point. There was a cutting wind coming from the north but the birds did not seem to feel it as we did. The sky was clear except for a diffuse dark ridge of cloud on the western horizon and the sun was climbing behind us to the east yet its light did not penetrate the cold to provide any sort of warmth. Except for the cold, these were pretty much perfect viewing conditions for the wader spectacular that Snettisham has to offer. The birds that we had come to see formed several huge roosting flocks in the cradle of the estuary spread out before us.

Suddenly they were up with a thunderclap of simultaneous wing beats and alarm calls. The reason? A passing Marsh Harrier had done us the favour.

At first they dashed headlong, low over the water as one, then the wave action began and a myriad white dots merged into one living being, thousands upon thousands of birds and twice as many beating wings.

Suddenly the squadron leader banked and a millisecond later the next followed suit, and the next, then the next as a ripple rolled down the flock. The hitherto white birds, now dull grey-brown had all but disappeared against the low cloud on the horizon then, as if by magic, they just as suddenly reappeared.

They spiralled upwards like laughter in an empty room, the godwits now separating and flying higher than the knots, but still in one homogeneous block. As they shot skywards they formed a towering biomass of life which suddenly collapsed like a burst balloon full of water and they flowed out across the surface of the sea forming a living stream. Next they turned through 180° and sped back towards the beach having taken on a tubular form, they performed a victory barrel roll like half of the double helix in the DNA belonging to some unimaginably immense being.

They circled once, then again, gaining height in a blizzard of thrashing wings, flickering from dark to light like a fancy illuminated bill board in Time Square. The form morphed from globular mass to undulating string recalling a massive



Suddenly they were up with a thunderclap of simultaneous wingbeats — Elis Simpson

caterpillar traversing the estuary.

They then rode up to form a dancing cobra whose head breathtakingly disappeared down its own throat to form a darting arrow as though they had been shot from Cupid's bow towards the very heart of the estuary.

At last the frantic flight began to wane; the birds became more relaxed and formed now a gliding cloud over their chosen roost spot.

Then, as with an unexpected April shower, it started to rain knots and godwits as they tumbled and wiffled out of the sky. Plunging vertically downward they pulled up at the last moment to cruise in level flight over the heads of their fellow acrobats that had alighted before them. Finding a space they swelled the front of the flock as they landed and settled slowly into a sizzling pancake of excited birds. Slowly they cooled and became still and quiet once more, it was as though this miracle of natural finesse had never happened at all.

We were privileged to witness several performances of this display, and each time it was different, an infinite number of shapes and forms were painted like a fresco in the vaulted ceiling of the cathedral skies above us.

Just sitting there, in awe of this exuberant demonstration of the power and beauty bestowed upon the natural realm

around us, it became clear to me that a world that did not contain such events would be an impoverished one indeed.



They spiralled upward like laughter in an empty room — Elis Simpson

Each of those birds will soon be risking everything to return to their breeding grounds to try against the odds to replace themselves before they die, simply to maintain their species. This basic need is becoming less and less achievable as places for them to breed, stop over on migration and pass their non-breeding period get scarcer or degraded.

For a species as successful as ours has been, you'd have thought there could be a little room for compassion and care for our fellow travellers through time and space wouldn't you? But the cleverer we get it seems that the innate nature within us is somehow blotted out. Technology, growing



At first they dashed heading low over the water as one, then a wave action began... — Elis Simpson

Raining knots and godwits — cont'd

economies and personal gain are trump cards that render all other considerations redundant.

And yet we fight on and mornings like these are what inspire us to do so. In the end we may not win, but that does not mean that each battle is not worth fighting with everything we have.

The tide was now dropping and the birds were beginning to leave and spread across the expanding mud as the sea inhaled, sucking its lapping edge back towards its heart. At that moment I heard the noise of an approaching jet engine, or so I thought, but was startled when not ten feet above my head another squadron comprising mainly of of knots flew from their roost site on the pits behind me to join the joyous celebration of life, to be lived for another day, out over the estuary.



An inspiration of waders over the Wash — Elis Simpson

Astounding numbers of Buff-breasted Sandpipers in Bolivia

The Asociación Civil Armonía Conservación de Aves en Bolivia has named the Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* its bird of the month. The Buff-breasted Sandpiper is Near Threatened (IUCN Red List).

Barba Azul Nature Reserve is the only Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) location in Bolivia and is a stop-over point for the Buff-breasted Sandpipers on their migration from the Arctic regions of Russia, Alaska and Canada to their wintering grounds in southern South America.

During a recent survey at the reserve there were found to be an astonishing one thousand six hundred and eighty individuals. This figure represents the highest ever recorded in one survey.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper — Elis Simpson

Common Ringed Plover titbits



Common Ringed Plover — Elis Simpson

A Common Ringed Plover *Chardrius hiaticula* which was present on the Bight, Dawlish Warren, Dorset on the 19th and 20th of August 2016 was found to be only the third record of a Canadian Common Ringed Plover in the UK, the others were at Ferrybridge in Dorset and St. Kilda off the Scottish coast. This bird was ringed as an adult at Dufour Point, Bylot Island, Nunavut, Canada. On the 8th of July 2016.

Of course there is no way of knowing how old this bird is since it was ringed as an adult, but the longevity record for a Ringed Plover is twenty-one years, eleven months and twelve days from ringed to resighting. It was ringed as a nestling 10th July 1993 at Broomfield Farm, Arkholme, Lancashire and was seen alive on the 22nd June 2015 at Melling also in Lancashire. Less than a kilometre away.

Waders in Art — Szabolcs Kókay



'Alone.' Eurasian Curlews and a single Slender-billed Curlew by Szabolcs Kókay.

I have seen Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* back in 1996 in Hungary. That was the one but last record for the country; I twitched that long-staying bird. The memory has faded, but I can clearly remember that special, pear-shaped body that stood out from the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* flock.



Slender-billed Curlew museum specimen in the field — Szabolcs Kókay.

Then in 2001 news came of another bird observed in the Kiskunság area, not far from my home. I only received the news days later, but immediately rushed to the site and covered a huge area on foot, trying to

relocate the bird. No luck.

A few years later I came up with the idea of this painting, and went back to the exact location of the 2001 observation, and



Field sketches of Eurasian Curlew — Szabolcs Kókay.

used the vegetation for the background. I could sketch and photograph Eurasian Curlews there as reference and I also took a museum specimen of a Slender-billed Curlew and was able to study it in the field.

Non birders might find the title of the painting a little misleading, but there's no need for any explanation for birders.



Field sketch of Slender-billed Curlew based on the museum specimen — Szabolcs Kókay.

This is the first in a series designed to showcase some of the amazing artwork depicting waders that can be found and is a result of several favourable comments made by readers on seeing artwork added to the photographs that have adorned previous issues of the newsletter. We will be featuring a different artist each issue who will also write a short explanation either of the story behind the painting or perhaps the techniques used in creating it; we will leave that up to the artists themselves — Ed.

Inspired by my first wader roost — Alexia Fishwick

Snettisham, Norfolk. February 2016

This October will end my first year of birding. My knowledge and experience is still modest and there are moments when it all feels very daunting. But I am sure that I will carry on birding because I love it and I feel so happy when I'm doing it.

I still think a lot about my first Wader Roost encounter in Snettisham, Norfolk February 2016. I am still utterly enchanted by it.

Getting up early that morning had already begun to make me excited even though the day ahead was to be one big unknown for me. My guides had hinted that we were off to see something special. I really had no idea about what I was about to witness. My feelings were a special concoction of anticipation and expectation.



Red Knots arriving — Ruth Miller and Alan Davies

My guides, the amazing Alan Davies and Ruth Miller from 'Bird Watching Trips, with The Biggest Twitch', had already described what we were hoping to see. Their faces lit up when talking about it, and as ever, I could tell that their love of sharing the joys of birding meant that this was no ordinary morning. Their planning as usual was flawless. Bird-guiding professionalism and



An inspiration of waders over Snettisham — Ruth Miller and Alan Davies

expertise at its best. Add a certain amount of birding karma and you could know for sure that this was exactly the team to be with.

The weather and the light were perfect. A natural stage was set for a drama to begin. Crisp, serene and a promise of orange pink warmth to come, most welcome after the cool, dramatic purples and violets of dawn.

The beginning, middle and end then merge into one amazing show for me. High enchantment and wonder filled the theatre, set against the backdrop of a desolate marsh. Starting gradually then building into a crescendo and before our very eyes, thousands of birds began to move. The incoming tide was forcing the birds to set off into the air. The waders needed to leave the sea and find another place to be.

Dart shaped wings, sickle-shaped

wings, beady eyes, thousands of eyes with a compulsive synchronization. Soft hues of grey and fawn, shards of silver, sprinkled sequins of gold. Each feathered body precise, and seemingly more beautiful than the next. So many types of birds filled the sky. Avocets with their grace, Dunlins with their intuitiveness, Plovers and their confidence, Knot and their seamlessness. All of this flew both in front of me and then over my head.

The sky with its morning spectrum of colours became a collection of ribbons. That's how it felt. The whispered wind caused by all those energized wings blew past my face. The sounds of the breeze whispers put me into a state of wonder.

The arrival of a Peregrine Falcon added high voltage charge to the spectacle. Apprehension and magnificence. The ethereal beauty that so suits waders had been interrupted by the hot beauty of an expert hunter.

I had no idea that any of this ever happens. I'm only now properly appreciating the lives of waders. Then I was intrigued. Now I am captivated.

My morning of wonder will stay with me and in me, and I know that I need to do it all again. Then again and again, because it will always be different and it will always cast new spells over me.

Waders have such subtle beauty. For me, the subtlety heightens their sublimity and magic.

So my advice would be to go soon and seek out this thrill. Surely it is a genuine natural wonder, a wonder that is near to your doorstep. Make those steps. Go and let those thousands and thousands of waders inspire you and bring an unexpected delight into your future.



Snettisham sunrise — Ruth Miller and Alan Davies

Wader Photo Gallery — send us your favourite wader photos



American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*
- Bruno Neri; Brazil



Greater Thick-knee *Esacus magnirostris*
- Jaysukh Parekh 'Suman'; India.



Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*
- Ailsa Howard; New Zealand



Grey-breasted Seedsnipe *Thinocorus orbignyianus*
- Tommy Pedersen; Chile



Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
- David Jackson; UK



Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*
- Elis Simpson; UK



Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americana*
- Becky Bowen; USA



Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
- Linda Buckell; England

Magellanic Plover update — Rick Simpson

The good news is that our flagged bird 181 with a geolocator fitted has returned to its breeding site near Punta Arenas in southern Chile.

Ricardo Matus, who has been doing the ringing of the birds there, was able to catch the bird and remove the geolocator. This will now be sent to Ron Porter in the USA who will retrieve whatever information he can from it. We should soon have an idea of where this bird has spent its non-breeding season.

So far this is the only tagged bird to have returned and is now paired with 191 who has now been fitted with a geolocator for the season to come.

The bad news is that Last year's juveniles 186 and 188 have not returned so far. Ricardo will visit Tierra del Fuego soon to see what the situation is with 190.



Magellanic Plover - Ricardo Matus

FRIENDS OF WADER QUEST AND SPONSORSHIP RATES

Friends of Wader Quest:

Individual	£5.00
Family	£7.50
Life	£200.00

Sponsors:

Club	£10.00
Corporate	£50.00

Wader Quest Trustee news.

Chair: Rick Simpson

Secretary: Rachel Walls

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Elis Simpson

Board members: Allan Archer, Ian Dearing, Lee Dingain, Sue Healey (Events), Chris Lamsdell (Ringing), Oliver Simms and Andrew Whitelee.

Last meeting: 25th September 2016

Next Meeting: (AGM) 10:30 20th November 2016: London Wetland Centre.



Email: waderquest@gmail.com
Website: www.waderquest.org

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/waderquest>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WaderQuest?fref=ts>

CORPORATE SPONSORS



Limosa
GUIDED BIRDING & WILDLIFE TOURS SINCE 1985



CLUB SPONSORS

