

**Forthcoming talks: All 'Wader Quest' unless otherwise stated.**

11/09/2018 **Friends of Welney**  
 20/09/2018 **Mid Nene RSPB local group**  
 05/10/2018 **Leigh Ornithological Society**  
 17/10/2018 **Bangor Birdgroup**  
 18/10/2018 **Bristol Ornithological Club**  
 19/10/2018 **Southport RSPB local Group** (Plover Lovers' World of Delights)  
 06/11/2018 **East Lancashire Ornithologists' Club** (Confessions of a Bird Guide)  
 07/11/2018 **Trent and Lower Derwent Derbyshire Wildlife Trust** local group  
 12/12/2018 **Worcester and Malvern RSPB local group** (Sea Pies and Tobies; Oystercatchers of the World)  
 18/01/2019 **Southport RSPB local Group** (Confessions of a Bird Guide)  
 22/01/2019 **London Bird Club** (New Moon On the Wane - The Curse of the Curlews)  
 31/01/2019 **East Grinstead RSPB local group**  
 04/03/2019 **Teeside Bird Club**  
 20/03/2019 **Valiant Nightjars, Aldbury** (Confessions of a Bird Guide)  
 25/03/2019 **Newbury District Ornithological Club**

For a more complete listing with times and venue details visit our [Talks page](#) on the website.

If we are giving a talk near you come and meet us.

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## What have we been up to?— Rick Simpson

This is traditionally a quiet time of year for Wader Quest, talks end in May or June and most events don't start again until the Bird Fair in August. But, we have had plenty to keep us occupied. In including the now annual Bolton Castle Curlew Festival (see pages 6-7).

Behind the scenes though it has been frenetic with lots of projects coming together some of which we hope to launch at the Bird Fair this year.

All being well we will have two new pin badges for our growing band of Wader Quest collectables. We had hoped to have them earlier for the Curlew Festival (there may be a hint of what is to come there) but we are nothing if not sticklers for accuracy. We have been holding out to get the pins as perfect as they can be, given the restrictions placed upon us by the designers and manufacturers. We require detailed intricate features but this can be difficult with the small size (25mm) of the pins. However we are now happy with the designs and the actual results will be seen soon.

Another project that is reaching its conclusion is the launch of the new Wader Quest book - *An Inspiration of Waders*.



Wader Quest mobile against the setting of the magnificent Bolton Castle. See page 6 — Elis Simpson

It should be at the printers in time for us to have copies with us at the Bird Fair (see page 9).

In addition a lot of work has been going on to get our new website ready by the Bird Fair. This has been done by Trustee and Friend of Wader Quest, Allan Archer, who has been beavering away in between all his other wildlife volunteering roles to get it ready. He hopes that it'll be up and running by mid-August, his problem is that in order to do so, he is relying on

us to provide him with the content! We will do our best not to let him down.

Another Trustee and Friend of wader Quest working away on our behalf is Andrew Whitelee who, together with his partner Penny Insole, is preparing our application to the charities commission register. It is a complicated and lengthy process and we are only too pleased that they have agreed to take this task from us. Andrew and Penny also represent Wader Quest in Scotland at events and also take the time and trouble to travel to attend meetings when they can.

Preparations for the BBF are coming on. Our attendance is arranged and paid for. We are pleased to be giving a talk again this year, although the early Friday time slot may mean a reduced audience. We are also looking forward to having a new volunteer with us in the person of Dan Rouse, who will certainly brighten up the Wader Quest stand with her presence. We also wish to thank



Fuerteventura's majestic coastline. See page 22 — Elis Simpson

**Total raised by Wader Quest to date: £23,101.67**



## What have we been up to?— cont'd

Opticron for their help with producing the posters for the stand.

Recently Elis and I had the opportunity to travel for the first time since 2014 and we visited Fuerteventura. It is an interesting place not just for the birds that are present there, but also because it is where the type specimen of the Canarian Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewoldi* was taken (see page 22).

Elis was able to get some time behind her camera, something she has been craving for some time and I enjoyed simply being in the field again watching birds such as Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* dashing about the arid desert and Eurasian Stone-Curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus* skulking in the sparse vegetation avoiding the heat of the day.

One thing that did spoil the enjoyment a little though was the realisation that no matter where you go, people are willing to flaunt the rules with no regard for the wildlife around them if it suits them. We were watching coursers on an area designated as a reserve for wildlife where the rare Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* lives and on each occasion that we visited we came across someone either where they shouldn't be or, doing something they shouldn't such as riding quad bikes across the desert, walking dogs (on a lead until we passed when I saw the owner looking furtively back at us before releasing them from their leash into the desert right where we had not long since been watching coursers), joggers, walkers and even camouflage clad hunters were encountered. Sometimes I wonder how any wildlife manages to survive at all with all this going on around them.

We have been active too in disbursement from the Reserve and Grants funds. At the end of April the Anniversary



Eurasian Stone-Curlew — Elis Simpson

Grant was awarded to Cienaga de San Juan de los Cayos in Venezuela (see page 10).

We have also supported two projects to address some of the problems that the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* is facing in the UK. The first of these is the Scottish workshop 'Whaups up' (Whaup is a Scottish name for the Curlew) to take place in September. Elis and I are unable to go but we assisted with a donation to help fund the event and Andrew Whitelee and Penny Insole hope to be representing Wader Quest in our place.

The other Curlew project is the Curlew Country South Cumbria (CCSC) for which we provided funds for a banner, a roller banner and some business cards to help with

their awareness and fundraising activities. We wish both of these projects well.



Wader Quest sponsored roller banner for Curlew Country South Cumbria — Fiona Clucas



Quad bike in Houbara territory — Elis Simpson



'This is the CCSC mural at Damson Day in the Lyth Valley. Children were invited to take part in painting an 8ft x4ft mural on paper, the theme... 'All life in The Lyth', inspired by the landscape, Damson orchards, wildlife and farming in the valley. We had children as young as three joining in and a retired farmer too. It was very popular.' — Fiona Clucas

## What have we been up to?— cont'd

We were also proud to be partners in the project to supply food to Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris* in China. A study showed that the substrate where thousands of migratory birds were about to descend, in



Great Knot — Elis Simpson

order to feed up to continue their journey north to breed, was dangerously devoid of sustenance for them. An ambitious project was set in motion to introduce factory farmed clams (so as not to denude other natural stocks elsewhere) in what was dubbed the world's biggest bird table. Although it was just a fraction of the funds needed, Wader Quest donated £1000 to help with this project (see page 18).

We were also pleased to be able to continue our links to the Natures Valley Trust projects in the Western Cape of South Africa. This project is helping beach nesting birds such as White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* and African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* by producing information booklets and other paraphernalia, to raise awareness among the



White-fronted Plover — Elis Simpson

population that most uses the beaches, of the value of the birds that share it with them.

And lastly, Elis and I had the pleasure of visiting Southend Girls School to deliver some binoculars that we had purchased from Opticron for use by the pupils attending the extracurricular Nature Club run at the school. Doing so reminded us how it would be so much better if learning about the world around us were part of the mainstream education system, not something that has to be crammed in between eating your lunch and the next lesson.

An amusing thing happened at this talk. Whilst in full flow covering some point or other about wader migration it occurred to me that it'd be interesting for the girls to hear

about how the adult and juvenile birds migrate separately and not in family parties as one may possibly have supposed. I had asked out loud for Elis to remind me should I forget saying 'remind me to say something interesting about wader migration'. Fortunately I didn't need reminding, and remembered to tell the girls all about how the parent birds leave the juveniles to find their own way for their first migration.

At the end of the talk I asked if there were any questions in the customary way. One enthusiastic hand shot up demanding attention. I asked what the young lady would like to ask and she said, and I quote 'You said you were going to tell us something interesting!' I was crushed!

**Come and see us at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water 17<sup>th</sup>—19<sup>th</sup> August**

**Marquee 7 stand 67**

**Attend the Wader Quest talk; *New Moon on the Wane—The Curse of the Curlews***

**11.30 - 11.50 Friday morning in the Merlin Lecture Theatre (replaces AWBC)**

**We will also be launching some exciting Wader Quest developments including;**

**a book - *An Inspiration of Waders*,**

**two new pin badges (species to be announced at the fair),**

**and our new website.**



## New Website Waders/Shorebirds URGENT Photo Appeal — Allan Archer

This is an **urgent** appeal to photographers.

If you have photographs of any of the following species that you would be willing to donate to Wader Quest for use on the website (and maybe in the odd Wader Quest newsletter) please let us know by emailing

**allanarcher@talkwildlife.net**

Allan will contact you to arrange receipt of the photographs.

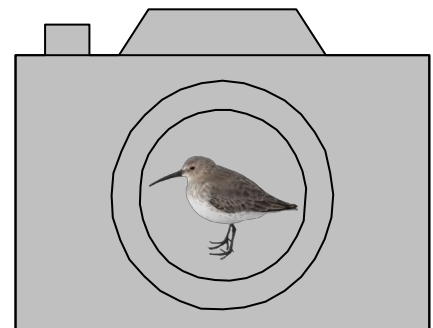
All photographs will be credited to the photographer and, if he or she has one, a link to his or her own website.

Bronze-winged Courser  
Burchell's Courser  
Indian Courser  
Jerdon's Courser  
Somali Courser  
Temminck's Courser  
Three-banded Courser  
Grey Pratincole  
Madagascan Pratincole  
Oriental Pratincole  
Small Pratincole  
Caspian Plover  
Forbes's Plover  
Javan Plover  
Long-billed Plover  
Madagascan Plover  
Mountain Plover  
Southern Red-breasted Plover  
Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe  
White-bellied Seedsnipe  
Barred Buttonquail  
Black-breasted Buttonquail  
Black-rumped Buttonquail  
Buff-breasted Buttonquail  
Chestnut-backed Buttonquail  
Common Buttonquail

Hottentot Buttonquail  
Little Buttonquail  
Madagascan Buttonquail  
Painted Buttonquail  
Quail-plover  
Red-backed Buttonquail  
Red-chested Buttonquail  
Spotted Buttonquail  
Sumba Buttonquail  
Worcester's Buttonquail  
Yellow-legged Buttonquail  
Amami Woodcock  
Bukidnon Woodcock  
Javan Woodcock  
Moluccan Woodcock  
New Guinea Woodcock  
Sulawesi Woodcock  
Fuegian Snipe  
Giant Snipe  
Great Snipe  
Imperial Snipe  
Latham's Snipe  
Madagascan Snipe  
Noble Snipe  
North Island Snipe  
Snares Snipe

Solitary Snipe  
South Island Snipe  
Subantarctic Snipe  
Swinhoe's Snipe  
Wood Snipe  
Bristle-thighed Curlew  
Little Curlew  
Tuamotu Sandpiper  
Upland Sandpiper  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper  
Western Sandpiper

# THANK YOU!



## Correction: Wader Quest the newsletter April 2018 p11

It doesn't matter how many times you check something and ask others to check for you, it seems something always slips by.

Thankfully none of you are so pedantic as to have taken us to task on the fact that in some copies of the April newsletter, before the error was spotted, we

had labelled the photo at the top of page 11 depicting Black-winged Stilts as Curlew Sandpipers! I hope this doesn't mean no-one actually reads the newsletters! The caption should read;

'Black-winged Stilts — Ornitocampero'.



## Blast from the past; second documented record of Rufous-chested Dotterel in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil — Rick and Elis Simpson

Rufous-chested Dotterel *Charadrius modestus* is an austral migrant that arrives in Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil annually in reasonable numbers in. It leaves its breeding grounds in March or April and most return there again in August or September.

Outside Rio Grande do Sul it is an uncommon winter visitor as far north São Paulo state. Hitherto though there has been just one previous record in the state of Rio de Janeiro. This bird was seen by Jorge Nacinovic in June 1993 at Maricá some 200km to the east of Paraty where the following observation took place along the Rio de Janeiro coast.

On June 27th 2011, while we were living in the seaside town of Ubatuba just over the border into São Paulo state, and working as bird guides, Elis and I arrived at Paraty marsh with a client David Bates, and noted that the tide was very high and that there was no mud visible. As this was unlikely to produce any of the hoped for waders we were preparing to leave when Elis noted a plover feeding on a adjacent grassy area and drew it to my attention. We immediately recognised it as a Rufous-chested Dotterel, a bird with which Elis and I had become familiar in Rio Grande do Sul, and many of



Rufous-chested Dotterel in breeding plumage photographed in Chile — Elis Simpson

differ from those individuals which we encountered in the south, which were noticeably more wary and did not allow close approach. This could be because they are from a population that breeds where there is little human contact: similar to some Arctic bred first winter *Calidris* sandpipers that have no fear of man and allow close approach.

We returned to Paraty on July 5th with another visitor, Oliver Simms, and found that the bird was not on the grassy area as before. We relocated it on a small section of beach that was visible from a petrol station along the BR101 from Paraty to Ubatuba. This time the bird was feeding on mud in



Rufous-chested Dotterel and Semipalmated Plover on the muddy mangrove foreshore — Elis Simpson



Rufous-chested Dotterel, in winter plumage, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil — Elis Simpson

which we had been observing and photographing there just two weeks previously.

This bird was very approachable, much more so than those we found in Rio Grande do Sul. An explanation of this may be found in the fact that distinct populations of Rufous-chested Dotterel differ in their migration habits. Some migrate long distances whereas others appear to remain fairly close to their breeding grounds. The difference in the reaction to human presence of this individual may suggest its origins



Elis, Rufous-chested Dotterel (arrowed), Black Vultures *Coragyps atratus* and coastal skyline — Rick Simpson

front of a small patch of mangrove in the company of 18 Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus*. Although it did not interact directly with this group it remained close to them at all times.

Both habitats fall within the typical range for the species and we encountered the species in Rio Grande do Sul on both coastal pasture and sandy beaches, especially near fresh water outlets.

We were particularly keen to have a photograph that included Elis, the dotterel and the location as some might have suggested that we had fabricated the record using photos from Rio Grande do Sul from whence we had recently returned having been photographing the same species — Ed.



## Bolton Castle Curlew Festival — Rick Simpson

Once again we had the pleasure of attending the Bolton Castle Curlew Festival in the Yorkshire Dales.



The event was hosted and organised by Tom Orde-Powlett. The Art exhibition was organised by Fiona Clucas and Karen Lloyd who are the founders of Curlew Country South Cumbria.

The art exhibition was very interesting with a variety of different styles on display.

The weekend was replete with opportunities to get out onto the moors with Curlew Safaris and Guided Walks to see birds and especially the moorland waders such as the Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, European Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* and of course Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata*, all of which had young.

There was a series of talks, one of which was given by myself, entitled: *New Moon on the Wane — The Curse of the Curlews*. For those of you with an interest in such things, I am well aware that a new moon cannot be on the wane, it has already waned. It refers to the scientific name *Numenius* which is purported to mean new moon, an assertion that I refute in the talk. To know more you'll need to book us to come and give you the full version of the talk in which we talk about the Curlews, and Whimbrels of the world.

Other talks were given by; Robin Ward, International Wader Study Group: *The origin, migration and phenology of curlew populations using Northern England*.

Kirsty Brannan, RSPB: *Seasons amongst the curlew — helping farmers conserve birds in the Upper Thames*.

Tara Challoner, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust: *Nidderdale AONB Curlew and Wader project*.

Andy Heath, Independent Predator Control Contractor: *Predator Control as a*



Bolton Castle — Elis Simpson



Tom Orde-Powlett gives a talk about Curlew Conservation on the Bolton Castle Estate surrounded by the art exhibition — Elis Simpson



Karen Lloyd reads poetry in the lunch hut on the moor — Elis Simpson

## Bolton Castle Curlew Festival — cont'd

*Conservation Tool in Caithness.*

Philip Merricks, Elmley NNR: *Successful Wader Conservation in lowland England and Lessons Learned.*

Mark Wilson, BTO: *Understanding Predation, Working for Waders and The Wensleydale Project.*

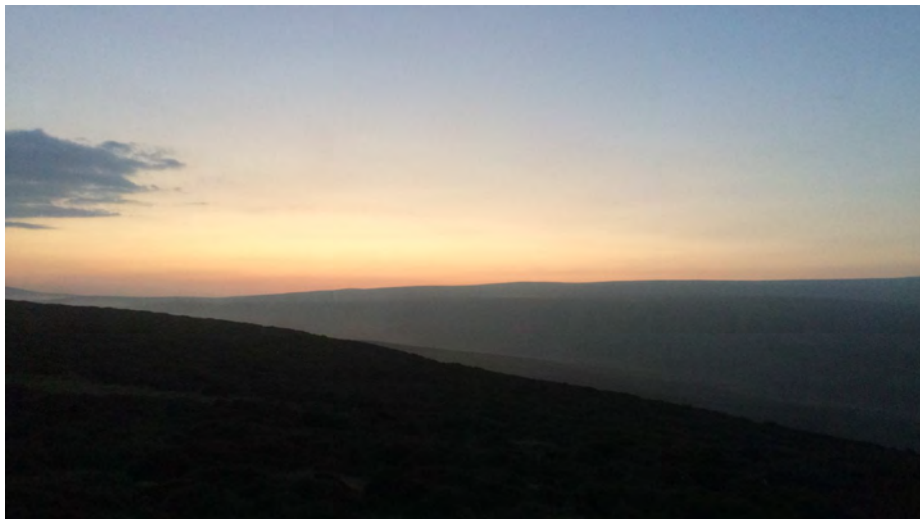
Mary Colwell: *500 Mile Walk, Conferences and What Next?*

An evening of song and poetry celebrating Curlews and other waders is something to relish, but when it occurs on top of a moor, as dusk falls, it becomes an experienced you'll not soon forget. If you get a chance to come along next year, do so, it is a great experience.

There was also song at the evening on the moor with traditional and new songs and even a song sung by all in Icelandic.

Music was to feature in an fascinating way with the team of Peter and Liz Cowdrey of Planet Birdsong. They devised an interesting activity where the song of a Curlew was slowed down eight times and played back. You were then asked to imitate the sounds of the slowed down Curlew and your voice was recorded. This was then speeded up eight times and played back. It was extraordinary how much most of the recordings sounded like a Curlew making its classic bubbling call. The activity took the form of a competition and right up to the death a member of the public with no connection to the event at all was a clear winner. That was until Mary Colwell took her turn. I suppose it was only fitting that her imitation of the curlew could have been the curlew itself, there must be some deep spiritual connection there.

Throughout the weekend children were invited to show their artistic skills by contributing to a mural under the watchful eye of artist Fiona Clucas. Great fun was had by all in the Great Chamber where the Wader Quest and Yorkshire Dales Moorland Group stands were also housed.



Sunset over the moor — Elis Simpson



Curlew Festival mural; a work in progress with Fiona Clucas and budding artist Cressida — Elis Simpson



Curlew chick on the moor — Elis Simpson



Wader Quest stand in the Great Chamber of Bolton Castle — Elis Simpson



## Waders in poetry; Sanderlings — Barbara Hickson

At the recent Bolton Castle Curlew Festival we met some very interesting people and especially enjoyed an evening on the moor with song and poetry, not to mention a barbeque. One of the poems that we enjoyed was the following by Barbara Hickson who has become a Friend of Wader Quest .



Sanderlings *Calidris alba* - Elis Simpson;

### Sanderlings

a gang of them    like giddy children  
 scamper along the shore  
 chasing waves out  
 being chased back  
 short legs tantivying  
 black beaks prodding  
 they pather in shallows  
 interrogate bubbles    searching  
 for crabs    worms    anything  
 racing ahead    switching direction  
 nifty as fish  
 bright as a flurry of snow

## Polynesian Tattler up a Chinese mountain — Rick Simpson



Grey-tailed Tattler — Lao Lin

Polynesian Tattler is an alternative name for the Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa* (formerly *Heteroscelus*) *brevipes*.

Grey-tailed Tattlers breed in Siberia along highland streams, rivers and on shingle shorelines. In winter they can be found across south-east Asia and Australasia on a variety of coastal habitats from rocky platforms, through mangroves to mudflats.

On migration they are mainly coastal too but a few will travel overland and the habitat for these inland migrating birds is described in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World Vol. 3* as 'inland wetlands, such as paddyfields'.

This photograph was taken by Lin Jiansheng (or more often called Lao Lin a well-known birding guide) and sent to us by Lin Zhang who has recently published a book on the waders of China (in Chinese only I'm afraid). It depicts a Grey-tailed Tattler on a mountain stream (probably very similar to its breeding habitat). The shot was taken in

August, the bird is an adult in breeding plumage, and it was taken at Huanggang Shan, the peak of the Wuyi Mountain Range, the highest in south-east China where a road goes to the top and water flows alongside it to form a small stream; and that is where this Grey-tailed Tattler stopped on its migration.

The interesting thing is that it was taken at an altitude of about 1900m. The peak of the mountain is above 2100m, where there are Alpine meadows in which Lin Zhang tells us he has seen a few waders including Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. He also said that some satellite tagged waders also have been shown to fly over the mountain from their first coastal stop in south China to the next coastal stop in north China on their return journey to breed.

Please also note that even the tops of mountains are not free of human detritus with a discarded newspaper here masquerading as a rock in front of the bird.

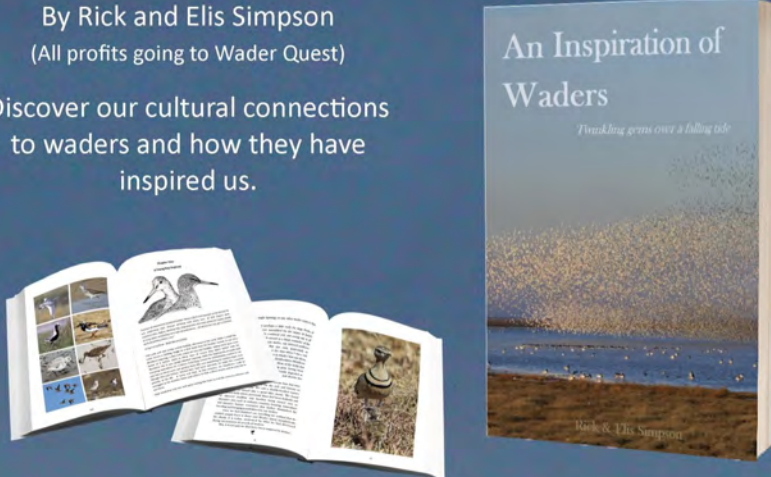


**An Inspiration of Waders will be available at the Bird Fair.  
Come to Marquee 7 stand 67 and get your copy.**

**A NEW BOOK FROM**  
**WADER QUEST PUBLISHING**

By Rick and Elis Simpson  
(All profits going to Wader Quest)


Discover our cultural connections  
to waders and how they have  
inspired us.




*'There are few facets of human culture that have not been affected in some way by these incredible birds, we depict them in art, we write songs and poems about them, we study them and eulogise about them. We have created myths and legends to explain the unexplainable, drawing them into our lives and using them as foils, villains and heroes, some to be dismissed as gun fodder while others may be placed among the gods. They are beautiful, graceful and entertaining, but their status is not born purely of our imaginings, they have proved themselves to be among the most resilient and durable species in the world of birds with feats of endurance that make your eyes water.'*

- Rick Simpson; *An Inspiration of Waders* 2018

ISBN 978-0-9955146-1-4  
RRP £9.99

Poster kindly printed by 



This book looks at the cultural connection we have with waders and how they have inspired us down the centuries.

It looks at how the authors have been inspired by waders and how other waderologists have likewise been inspired. It looks at some of the myths and legends surrounding this interesting group of birds plus their place in art, music and literature. Waders have inspired many things in human history from hieroglyphs to voyages of discovery, many of which are featured. Some waders themselves have proved to be inspirational and their stories can be found within this book.

The underlying purpose of the book is to encourage the use of a suggested new collective noun for a mixed or unidentified flock of waders over an estuary (no prizes for guessing what it is).

Three appendices cover other collective nouns for waders, a ditty about the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and information about Wader Quest.

The foreword is by Keith Betton; Hampshire County Recorder, former Council Member of the RSPB and currently Vice President of the BTO.

If you can't make it to the Bird Fair contact [waderquest@gmail.com](mailto:waderquest@gmail.com) for your copy (£9.99 + p&p)

## Cienaga de San Juan de los Cayos, Venezuela, a place for shorebird conservation; Wader Quest 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Grant recipient — Sandra Giner



Cienaga de San Juan de los Cayos — Sandra Giner

The Cienaga de San Juan de los Cayos is a coastal lagoon located in Venezuela's western coast, in Falcon state, separated from the sea by a sandbar with mangroves and bordered by coral reefs in the eastern sector. The lagoon connects with the sea through the tidal pipes in the sandbar and receives fresh water from the floodplain of the Tucurere River, creating a lagoon of about 400 ha. The climate in this area is characterised by two seasons, one rainy and the other drought, with the highest rainfall during October, November and December while the driest months are February, March and April. The landscape includes sandy beaches with reef areas, lagoons and natural salt pans. The dominant vegetation is

mangroves associated with halophytic grasses and dry forest.

The lagoon is part of the Wildlife Reserve of Tucurere that depends on environmental government agencies. Also, it is recognised as an IBA (VE009) by BirdLife for its importance to water bird conservation, with a diversity of 45 species, mainly migratory. In addition, this wetland is a recognised stopover site for migratory birds of the Western Hemisphere that arrive during the autumn migration, and in the spring migration when they return to their breeding territories. Among the more abundant water birds in the lagoon are the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*, Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Scarlet Ibis *Eudocimus ruber*,

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*, Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*, Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Cayenne Tern *Thalasseus acuflavidus eurygnatha*, Royal Tern *T. maximus* and Least Tern *Sternula antillarum*.



Least Sandpiper — Elis Simpson



Shorebirds at Cienaga de San Juan de los Cayos, Venezuela — Sandra Giner

Shorebirds are among the most abundant groups of water birds in the lagoon, with 28 registered species, 20 of them hemispheric migrants. The most abundant species are the Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Western Sandpiper *C. mauri* and Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla*, large groups of Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, Willet *Tringa semipalmata* and Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* can also be observed. Other frequently seen species, although not as abundant, are Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria*



## Cienaga de San Juan de los Cayos, Venezuela — cont'd

*interpres*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus* and there is one report of Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*. Among the resident species are American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*, Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia*, Snowy Plover *C. nivosus* and Collared Plover *C. collaris*. Wilson's Plover reproduces from March to July on the shores of the lagoon, nesting in the ground between the remains of wood and the halophyte vegetation.



Marbled Godwit — Sandra Giner

The lagoon offers large foraging areas, as well as resting areas. Most of the birds are found mainly on the lagoon shore where the water is shallow; there, shorebirds can be observed feeding on invertebrates present inside the substrate, such as polychaetes, crustaceans and molluscs, as well as insect larvae. In addition, shorebirds can be observed in lower abundances looking for prey on the shores of the beach and on the reefs when the tide is low.



American Oystercatcher — Sandra Giner

This place characterises for having shorebirds throughout the year. Even during the boreal summer migratory species can be seen. On the other hand, the frequent sights of resident species such as Wilson's Plover and



Collared plover — Sandra Giner



Wilson's Plover nest — Sandra Giner

Snowy Plover make it a potential site to be included in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. Currently, the level of threat to this place is low, the biggest problem being the solid waste observed on the lagoon shore, mainly washed away by tides and floods.



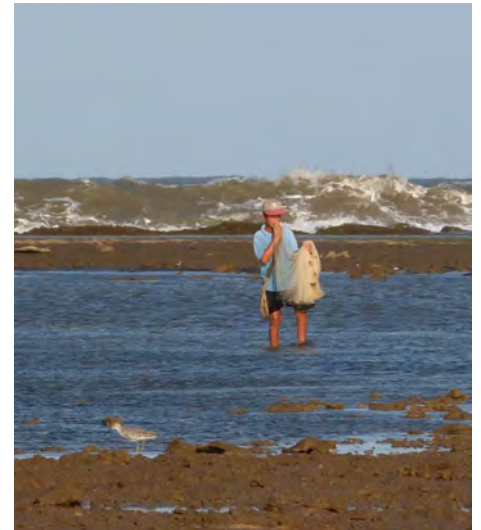
Semipalmated Plover — Elis Simpson

Currently, only the fishing community from nearby towns use this lagoon. However, this place has great potential, the lagoon attractive landscape and the great diversity of waterfowl easily observed provide remarkable characteristics for its conservation through the development of sustainable activities such as ecotourism, which would create another source of livelihood for nearby communities. For this reason, it is necessary to sensitise the community about the importance of this place to bird communities, especially migratory species. It is also essential to train the officials



Hudsonian Whimbrel — Elis Simpson

responsible for the management of this reserve on the importance of this site for migratory and breeding shorebird species, and to develop adequate regulations for the use of the area. The objective of this project is to promote the conservation of birds and their habitats through the characterisation of the use of these habitats by the birds and the training of neighbouring communities interested in developing nature tourism activities as a sustainable and alternative source of income that guarantees the conservation of their habitats in the long term.



Shorebirds and child fishing at sea- coral reef side — Sandra Giner

I have already received the funds for the Shorebird Conservation project in the Ciénaga de San Juan de los Cayos, Venezuela from Wader Quest. Thank you very much for supporting us with this award. I am already planning the first field work, which will be in September. I will be making a census of the shorebirds and characterising their habitats, in the period of migratory species arrival, they use this lagoon as a stopover site where they feed before flying to the wintering territories. Also, I talked with the director of the House of Culture of the town, who offered me his spaces to carry out the workshops, the first will be aimed to the teachers and young people in San Juan de los Cayos. Now, I am preparing the materials that I will present, a poster and the printing of an identification brochure for shorebirds of Venezuela.

Sandra Giner  
Laboratorio de Biología y Conservación de Aves  
Centro Museo de Biología de la UCV  
Instituto de Zoología y Ecología Tropical  
Facultad de Ciencias  
Universidad Central de Venezuela



## Featured Wader Photo: Oriental Plover — Dave Bakewell



Photographer: Dave Bakewell  
Species: Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*  
Location: Near Kamunting, Perak, Malaysia

Date: 19th April 2018  
Equipment: Canon EOS 7D Mark II & EF100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM

Details: 1/500 sec, f/8, ISO 800

Although Oriental Plovers *Charadrius veredus* winter in their thousands in Northern Australia, the species is a scarce migrant through Borneo, and no more than an occasional visitor to Peninsular Malaysia (with fewer than 15 records all told). Mostly occurring during northward migration, many probably go undetected due to their preference for grassland habitats, which are rarely visited by birders.

Despite having seen the species in Hong Kong and Singapore, Dave Bakewell had yet to set eyes on one in his adopted country of Malaysia, and it was high on his 'wanted' list. He takes up the story:

This had all the makings of a classic twitch; a bird I REALLY wanted to get on my Malaysia list; imprecise directions; last seen 7

days previously; limited time available, and family in tow!

Strategy 1: Drop family off at nearby supermarket with instructions to "Take all the time you need and buy whatever you fancy!" Immediately go and scour the target area, or at least what I thought was the right area - for as long as I felt I could get away with, all to no avail.

Strategy 2: Pick up family and tell them that there are really nice birds to see from the car, and that it would be fun (I didn't mention that we'd have the windows down, so it would also be HOT!).

Ask long-suffering wife to help me navigate to a new, unsearched area, and begin by helpfully pointing out nearby aforementioned 'nice' birds.

Then it begins to rain, and it's coming INTO the car. Windows reluctantly wound up!

Strategy 3: "Just a few minutes more - you can sleep if you like - we'll JUST have a look over here... PLEASE let me wind down the window a little bit...it's only water." "Hang on - I think that's IT!"

Tensions immediately vanish, "There are TWO!" - Euphoria sets in, and everyone's happy (Well, I am, and no-one else is complaining, that's good enough for me); it stops raining (well, almost), and then the birds start walking TOWARDS the car! My daughter even takes a glance up from her book to look. It doesn't get much better than this!



Oriental Plover— Elis Simpson

Ed - Interestingly Oriental Plovers are also rare in New Zealand (19 records) despite so many wintering in Australia.

While Elis and I were travelling in 2013, an Oriental Plover turned up at Port Waikato on North Island; the 18th record.

We were in close contact with our friends Brent Stephenson and Sav Saville of Wrybill Birding Tours (Wader Quest corporate sponsors). We discovered that this was a new bird for them both, despite them being NZ big listers. They decided they would twitch the

bird and we decided to go with them as it was on the way (more or less) to Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird centre, our next destination.

It was a good job we did go with them as without their 4x4 we would have had a long walk indeed across the dunes.

The bird was there when we arrived but it immediately flew off. It returned shortly after, much to everyone's relief, when it gave stunning close up views from the 4x4 hide in which we were ensconced.



## One-Day Workshop: The Status and Future of Farmland/Lowland Curlew in Scotland — Mary Colwell and Mike Smart

The current status, future and conservation of the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* in Scotland will be discussed at this one-day workshop which is now accepting registration.

Both breeding and wintering populations of Curlew are declining at an alarming rate throughout the British Isles and the species has recently been added to the Red List of endangered species and is considered Near Threatened, having already vanished as a breeding bird from large parts of the lowlands. Changes in farming practices, predation and human disturbance are the most commonly highlighted factors. This workshop will bring together various interested parties (farmers, landowners, field workers, conservation professionals, planners) to hear what is happening in different nesting areas in Scotland, specifically in farmed/lowland landscapes, and to find practical ways to conserve and extend the range of this genuinely iconic and widely-loved species.

The day will consist of a series of short presentations on Curlew projects, followed by targeted panel discussions on specific issues, where the audience will be encouraged to take part. Practical ideas and solutions will be recorded and distributed after the meeting. A simple buffet lunch will be provided.

We would value your presence at this workshop, which is a vital step towards reversing the declining trend of Curlews in Scotland. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Please use the link below to register your attendance. An agenda will be sent out in August. We hope to see you there.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/scottish-lowlandfarmland-curlew-workshop-tickets-46527402714>  
Curlew Forum; Mary Colwell – mary@curlewmedia.com & Mike Smart – smartmike143@gmail.com



The workshop will take place on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018; Battleby House, Redgorton, Perth PH1 3EW



## From the library

The Eurasian Dotterel  
*Charadrius morinellus*

*'Being a kind of bird as it were of an apish kind, ready to imitate what they see done, are caught according to foulers gesture: if he put forth an arme, they also stretch out a wing: sets he forward his legge, or holdeth up his head, they likewise doe theirs; in briefe, whatever the fouler doth, the same also doth this foolish bird untill it be hidden within the net.'*

(William Camden 1551 – 1623)



Eurasian Dotterel — Elis Simpson

## Wirebirds on the up — Keith Betton

After years of decline, the St Helena Plover *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* is now increasing again and as a result of conservation action one of the world's rarest waders is now more secure. Indeed its IUCN status has recently been improved from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable. In April this year I visited St Helena and took time to find out about the species' recovery.

St Helena is a small island of 121 square kilometres in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean about 1,600 kilometres west of Angola. It is one of 14 United Kingdom Overseas Territories and has a human population of just 4,500. It is one of the most remote islands in the world. Locally the St Helena Plover is known as the Wirebird, and that is what I will call it here. It is a special bird and no other wader has been awarded such celebrity status! It features on St Helena's flag, coat of arms, stamps and coins. Settlers first arrived to this British colony in the 1600s and the Wirebird was seen by them – although apparently not recorded by Charles Darwin when he visited on HMS Beagle in 1836.

Taxonomically the Wirebird is closely related to Kittlitz's Plover of sub-Saharan Africa, but it is larger and has longer and thinner legs (hence the name Wirebird). It has the smallest range of any Charadriiform and is found on only 30 square km of the island due to the availability of suitable habitat. Breeding pairs are predominantly found in two main habitats: dry, mid-altitude pasture and semi-desert areas. In these areas the grass or other broad-leaved herbs are low in height and with some bare ground. They also like open views to help early detection of



St Helena Plover or Wirebird *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* — Keith Betton

approaching predators. Wetter upland pastures are avoided, perhaps because of more difficult feeding conditions encountered in taller, denser vegetation on steep slopes.

The birds feed on ground-living insects which they catch using a run and grab technique. The nest is also on the ground and the simple scrape in the soil has a thin lining of dry grass stems and rootlets. These are used to cover the clutch of two eggs when an incubating adult leaves in response to disturbance. Like a number of other plover species, Wirebirds defend their nests by

luring predators away. They run a short distance away as soon as the threat is detected, and then pretend to have a broken wing in order to draw the predator away from the nest.

### Threats to the Wirebird

Over the last 500 years the settlers and people visiting the island have brought domestic animals such as goats and cats, and along with these there have been unintentional introductions of pests such as rats. One of the pests is the Common Myna, which was introduced in 1815 in the hope that it would control cattle ticks. It is now the commonest bird on the island and at certain sites it will take Wirebird eggs.

Most of the native flora and fauna of St Helena has now disappeared and much of the land has been adapted for agriculture. As a direct result of the habitat changes and increased predation the Wirebird has been on a steady decline for much of the last forty years. There are no detailed counts going back over the centuries, but we do know that the population declined at an alarming rate after the 1970s. The St Helena National Trust has taken a keen interest in the species and from surveys we know that in the late 1980s there were 450 birds, declining to 350 in the late 1990s. In 2006 only 22 adult birds were found and as a result in the following year the species was categorised as Critically Endangered.

These declines were caused by a mixture of factors. The effects of feral cats



Wirebird distraction display — Keith Betton



## Wirebirds on the up — cont'd

and rats on the Wirebird have varied between different sites, but in some areas more than 80% of nests have been destroyed. So In 2011 a programme of removing these introduced animals commenced. This has made a huge difference to the birds' success rate.

But potential habitat loss has also been a recent issue. In a bid to boost tourism receipts the UK Government decided to finance the building of an airport on St Helena and the first commercial flight landed in October 2017. The airport footprint includes areas that have regularly been used by Wirebirds over the years, but the RSPB, in partnership with the St Helena Government and St Helena National Trust established mitigation areas for the birds to nest and feed and although some key habitat was lost the effect seems not to have been negative. A wind farm has also been built across one of the main breeding areas, and despite a series of huge turbines right by many nesting pairs there appears to have been no obvious negative effect.

Another current development is the creation of the new 'Wirebird Hills' hotel and golf course at Broad Bottom. This site contains one of the five most important breeding areas for Wirebirds and once again the RSPB and St Helena National Trust are working with the developer and their consultants to ensure that enough undisturbed and suitably managed habitat is retained.

Vegetation surveys have also supported the results of previous studies



Wirebird incubating eggs — Keith Betton

which suggested that the continual decline in birds may also have been associated with degradation of the Wirebird's favoured grassland habitat due to reduction of livestock numbers. So another part of the conservation initiative has been to improve pastureland to provide benefits both for the birds and the island's farmers, and over 150 hectares of habitat have benefitted from this.

Communication with the island's residents has also been important, but

despite this being the island's "national" bird, too many of them get hit by vehicles when they occasionally stand in the road. Indeed last year three were killed in just one week. There are now warning signs to alert people to take care – but sadly some people are always in too much of a hurry.

### Recent results give fresh hope

Having told you about the problems – here is the good news. Wirebird numbers have been steadily improving since the recovery work started and the latest census, carried out in January 2018, found about 620 adult birds!

This survey, which covers 31 locations around the island, has been carried out annually since 2006. Numbers of adults, juveniles, chicks and nests have been recorded and it is clear that results have improved greatly since the conservation intervention started. Wirebird numbers in locations that have been under active predator control and pasture management have shown the greatest increases despite a recent drought which has affected breeding success in some years. So, for now, the Wirebird is enjoying a revival.

This is one of the UK's rarest breeding birds, and yet only a handful of UK citizens have seen it, and only a few more have ever heard about it. So congratulations to the St Helena National Trust and the RSPB for putting in the work to save this bird – and thank you to the UK Government for paying



Wirebird using feet to cover eggs with vegetation — Keith Betton



## Wirebirds on the up — cont'd



Wirebird nest with two eggs covered — Keith Betton

for it. If the UK doesn't look after its endemic birds nobody else will.

### How to see a Wirebird

There are two ways to reach St Helena. Occasionally cruise ships pass through the area, but the easiest way to travel is to fly from Johannesburg. Flights are weekly, arriving on Saturdays, but additional flights are being planned. The airport is called Jamestown.

More details:

<https://www.flyairlink.com>

Although you can easily find Wirebirds on some of the grassy areas on the island near to the Millennium Forest and

Airport, I recommend joining a tour organised by the St Helena National Trust. That way you are helping to fund the bird's conservation.

More details:

<http://www.sthelenaisland.info/st-helena-national-trust/>

*Keith Betton is a media consultant and writer. His latest book Behind More Binoculars was published in November. He is a keen world birder having seen over 8,200 species in more than 100 countries. Keith has a passion for Africa and is Vice President of the African Bird Club. In the UK he is heavily involved in bird monitoring in Hampshire where he is County Recorder. He has been a Council Member of the RSPB and the BTO, and is currently Vice President of the latter.*



St Helena flag — <http://sainthelenaisland.info/>



St Helena 5p coin — Keith Betton



St Helena 60p stamp — Keith Betton



Wirebird road sign — Keith Betton



Wirebird nesting habitat with wind turbines — Keith Betton



Wirebird St Helena emblem — Keith Betton



## Waders in India; a new book — Harsh Vardhan

Migratory birds leave India by the end of March or early April to settle in their breeding grounds further north, a region far larger even than the size of India. At that time only resident species can be observed in our region. These commence courtship and breeding activities as the Indian monsoon hits the country, around early June and lasting for couple of months.

Among all migratory bird species, waders are conspicuous by their presence in various parts of India even after their migration back home should be over. Surprise observations can be made. For example a Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* was found loitering on the western periphery of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, India, at the end of April until early May, 2018. It was based at the sewerage outlet of a resort and was observed feeding on micro organisms. When flushed it took off to settle at a distant place within the same water body. I observed it for two days and it appeared to have become very tame.

Another surprise, came from Chandlai lake, south of the city of Jaipur in the form of a Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. It was a single bird photographed by Kishan Meena, a colleague who lives in same region. It was observed for two days on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2018. He shared the photo with me through Sumit Bari, who runs a Birding Trail each month in Jaipur.

The Phalarope appeared to be in breeding plumage. I told my colleagues that the bird by that time (June) should have been at its breeding habitat up north but ironically was stationed around Jaipur. What was the reason? Was it so engrossed in procuring more food that it forgot to fly back with a group of other waders? Or it had other ideas?

That is the mystery of migratory birds. However, vital input came from Jaipur-based Harkirat Singh Sangha, who is presently finalising a book, *The Waders of the Indian subcontinent*. He confirmed in an email, that it was indeed a female Red-necked Phalarope in almost 90 per cent breeding plumage (the buff stripes on the back are incomplete).

The Red-necked Phalarope remains confined to western coastal areas in India during the winter. Its inland occurrence – some 700 miles away from coast – was a surprise in itself. It so happens that the same species had been spotted by Harkirat and myself at a fresh water pond south of Sambhar Ramsar Site about eighteen years ago.

Harkirat's book will include eighty-three species of wader. It will have



Wood Sandpiper — Harsh Vardhan



Red-necked Phalarope — Kishan Meena

illustrations as well as photographs. When asked to summarize about this first ever document on these species, Harkirat stated:

*'It is going to be a 'fact book' summarizing all the published and unpublished information available on the waders of the Indian subcontinent.'*

Harkirat is a serious amateur birdwatcher in India and has to his tally several records of uncommon species that he has discovered in the course of his thirty years in ornithology.

Harsh Vardhan is the organiser of Indian Birding Fair and can be reached via email: [birdfair1@hotmail.com](mailto:birdfair1@hotmail.com). The 2019 Indian Birding Fair will take place as usual at Man Sagar lake in Jaipur on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February.

Harsh is trying to secure twinning projects with other lakes outside India, so, if you know of a lake near you that would be interested in twinning with Man Sagar, contact Harsh direct and tell him you read about the idea in the Wader Quest newsletter. — Ed



## A Great “Thank you” from the Great Knots and other shorebirds! — Great Knot Food Drop team

Thanks to your generous support many Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris*, Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* and other shorebirds have been able to continue their migration from the Yellow Sea to their Arctic breeding grounds.

Great Knot is an endangered shorebird endemic to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway which feeds principally on small clams. During northward (spring) migration in 2018, they faced potentially serious food shortages at two of their main staging sites in northeast China. Surveys in March and April 2018 revealed that prey stocks were very low – apparently associated, at least in part, with severe cold weather during the 2017/18 winter.

If shorebirds are unable to put on sufficient fat to fuel their migration we know from studies elsewhere that this results in increased mortality.

In view of the endangered status of Great Knots, and the on-going population decline (the bird is listed as ‘critically endangered’ in Australia) the local community decided to provide supplementary food for the birds to help them on their migratory journey.

The small clam *Potamocorbula laevis*, which is widely distributed along China’s coast, is a major food of the Great Knot and an important item in the diet of a number of other shorebirds, including Bar-tailed Godwits.

Farmed clams were sourced from deep water sub-tidal areas in the Bohai where harvesting would not take food away from other shorebirds.

The clams were then dispersed over tidal flats from a boat at high tide.



Farmed Clams — All photographs on this page supplied by the Great Knot Food Drop team

Response from the birds was immediate – as soon as the tide dropped birds quickly found the food supply and began feeding.

Many thousands of birds benefitted from the supplementary feeding (up to 13,000 were present at one site on one day).



Highest bird numbers were usually seen on the second day after spreading clams as ‘word spread’ about food. By day three most of the food had been consumed and numbers dropped off until the next delivery.



Birdwatchers in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere will now play a vital role by reporting marked birds so that researchers can assess the long-term success of the project. Hopefully birds seen at the feeding sites will be seen later this year at their non-breeding areas – confirming that they successfully completed their migrations.

### THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Sponsors were the SEE Foundation, Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists’ Trust, BirdLife Australia and Wader Quest. Administrative support was provided by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society.





## Hooded Plover entanglement — Andrea Dennett

The Bellarine Friends of the Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis* (FOHP, based on the Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria, Australia) had some success this season with three fledglings for the stretch of coast between Point Lonsdale and Ocean Grove.

This season, for the first time in living memory there was a successful fledging on the Ocean Grove Spit in mid-March. In the last three seasons hoodies have been nesting along this stretch, however, no-one can recall the last time there was a fledgling from this beach.

This is a very busy stretch of beach, between tourist towns, Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove, close to the Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club and the Dunes Restaurant, so, a steady flow of the full range of beach users from swimmers, surfers, walkers, joggers and dog walkers.

The local land managers, Barwon Coast Committee of Management, enacted a 'Temporary Exclusion Zone' (No people, no dogs) to give the pair the best possible chance of raising their chicks.

Two chicks hatched in early February and all was well until day 20 when chick guardian, Liz handed over to me that not only were we one chick down but one of the parents was limping and appeared to have an entanglement around one foot. We contacted Dr Grainne Maguire of BirdLife Australia's Beach Nesting Birds team (BLA BNB), under whose auspices we volunteer; Barwon Coast's Brett Diehm was able to take photos of the entanglement and sent them off to Grainne for her opinion.



Disentanglement under way — Barry Lingham

It was decided that intervention was required before the material bound around the foot and toes cut off circulation. A plan was made to capture and treat the parent early the next morning which was promising to be a busy and warm Saturday!

Local Ocean Grove vet Charles El-Hage was able to meet us on the beach and Renée Mead (BLA BNB team) & Grainne sprung into action.



Adult Hooded Plover with entangled right foot — Brett Diehm

With Barwon Coast Committee of Management staff Warren, Brett & Hayley and local volunteers, Margot, Suzanne, Elizabeth & Barry assisting with site management, the hoodie was captured, (the poor bird could only hop so it was a slower process than usual but after a few attempts Renée had success!)

When Charlie looked at the foot, it became clear that it was human hair wound tight around multiple toes. The hair had dug in under the skin but the toes still had circulation and there was only minor swelling. We had got to this in time! Charlie removed the hair and treated the wound.

Grainne and Renée took advantage



UU after the disentanglement — Brett Diehm

of the opportunity to band and flag the bird and it now has a white leg flag with the letters 'UU'.

All that good work was almost undone when a silver gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* attacked UU almost immediately after release.



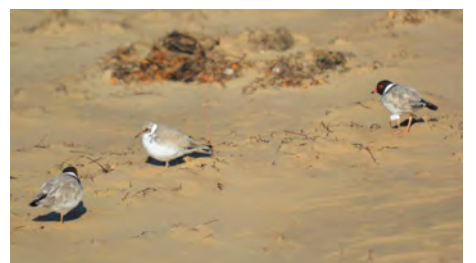
Fortunately, the hoodie was able to



Silver Gull chasing UU — Barry Lingham

escape and avoid further attack. A great job to all involved!

UU was observed using both feet



UU and family — Brett Diehm

without a limp later that day and the pair's chick fledged a little over two weeks later much to the relief of the volunteers!

STOP PRESS: It has now been established that UU is a male.

Andrea Dennett is the Volunteer Coordinator for Bellarine FOHP - Ed



## Waders in The Gambia — Denise and Chris Lamsdell

Just now when the days are long, bright and hot, winter seems far away. If a little winter sun is what's needed in the cold, short winter days then it's the perfect time to start thinking about a winter visit to the Gambia. A visit during the dry season, from October to March, provides an excellent opportunity for any birder, with a fondness for waders, to observe a wide range of birds along the banks of the Gambia, its tributaries and more localised ponds. Our visit was during February. Those hoping to see Egyptian Plover usually time their visit for November/December when their numbers peak.

We visited various sites in search of waders each summarised below.

### Kotu Creek

Is situated on the outskirts of Banjul. The bridge at Kotu Creek is the place where the bird guides hoping for customers have their base. It's important to choose a registered official guide (look for the dark green polo shirt and emblem) if a guide has not been booked in advance. Here it is also possible to hire a small boat and take a guided trip around the waterway. There are also some small, easily accessible sewage ponds that are often neglected, but do provide opportunities to get close to birds.

### Lamin Rice Fields

These can be found near the famous Abuko reserve and they offer a confined area where it is possible to walk along the raised banks and easily see sandpipers as well as large wading birds among the paddies. Here we saw our first Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* and Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis*.

### Tanji Reserve

This is some 30 miles from Banjul and sited right on the beach. The best place for shorebirds is close to the brackish lagoon.



Senegal Thick-knee — Denise Lamsdell



Black-headed Lapwing *Vanellus tectus* at Tendaba — Denise Lamsdell



Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* at Tendaba — Denise Lamsdell

Here we began our wader watching with and gulls. some familiar species. Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* were all present with the bonus of additional large wading birds, terns

### TuJereng

This is an area of grass interspersed with small shallow ponds, adjacent to the beach, which held the usual familiar wader mix with the bonus of Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Great Snipe, *Gallinago media* Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*. Of



## Waders in The Gambia — cont'd

course African Jacanas *Actophilornis africanus* are also present here, and just about any other place where fresh water persists in the soaring temperatures.

### Kartong

Kartong is some 60 miles from Banjul, it's worth looking around the reed fringed pools along the track to the beach. We didn't find anything new here in terms of waders but the rails were very interesting. We did find a White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* on the beach. There were more waders along the river on the border between Gambia and Senegal, include Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*. Again it is possible to hire a boat here.

### Darasalami

These wetlands provide another wader watching opportunity and the ponds at Abuko attract many birds that visitors may view from the hide or from the footpath.

### Tendaba

A road trip, up river, to spend a few days at Tendaba allows not only a chance to explore the mangrove swamps by boat, but also to look for coursers and thick-knees in arid farming areas. Their most unusual feature, for birds classed as waders, is that they inhabit deserts and similar arid regions. There is also a large area north of the camp that floods in winter that held wading species. Our guide, with his local lads, had built an observation tower there.

### Travel details

There are a number of other good wader locations, which can be identified through various trip reports or through Gosney's Finding Birds in The Gambia.

[www.easybirder.co.uk/Gambia\\_birds\\_book.html](http://www.easybirder.co.uk/Gambia_birds_book.html)



Kittlitz's Plover at Tujereng  
— Denise Lamsdell



African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus* at Darasalami — Denise Lamsdell



Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii* at Tendaba — Denise Lamsdell

Our guide had people out in the field to find these difficult species whenever possible enabling us to make best use of our time in the high temperatures. We were fortunate that our lodge booked **Ebrima Njie** of Bird Life Africa (Gambia and Senegal) for our trip and his expertise has proven invaluable in finding and identifying birds. Direct contact details are as follows - Bird Guide - Ebrima Njie Email: [birdlifeafrica2002@yahoo.com](mailto:birdlifeafrica2002@yahoo.com) Phone: +220 9841959 <https://birdlifeafrica.wordpress.com/>

Accommodation was with **Farakunku Lodges**. Farakunku is midway between Banjul and Kartong. Heather and Moses will be pleased to look after all aspects of accommodation, planning and booking of guides and drivers.

You need only tell them the focus of your visit and they and your guide will do the rest.

<http://www.farakunku-lodges.com/>

We were amazed that our bespoke visit with our own itinerary, guide, driver and vehicle was much less expensive than we would have had to pay for two places in an organised group trip as part of a party of 8 or 10, with which we would have expected to miss some of the species that we saw. Real consideration should be given to making your own arrangements, as we did, if you want to visit the Gambia. We saw a total of 283 species. Waders are just part of the Gambian avifauna that comprises 576 species, but to get a full spread of species a trip further up river, beyond Tendaba, is a necessity.



## Hunting Ghosts between the Desert and the Deep Blue Sea — Rick Simpson



Ghost of a Canarian Black Oystercatcher on a Jandía shore — Elis Simpson

The strong wind, from which the island derives its Spanish name, *Fuerteventura*, buffets me as I sit on a craggy outcrop overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The wind carries with it the wash of the waves that leap and fizz over the rocky platforms below me. I gaze past them at the ocean, the wind scarring the wave tops which appear to bleed white blood as they break into foam and between them the shearwaters cut their path gaining lift from their movement and form.

Behind me there are arid plains and mountains in which I have seen majestic bustards, swift coursers, dashing pipits and buzzy finches. In the *barrancos* which have been cut through the plains by the occasional deluge I have seen an endemic chat and a small vagrant bittern. I have even seen a Eurasian Stone-Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* illuminated by a full moon; but it is the ghost of a bird that haunts me here.

Out of sight over the horizon are other islands, but they are beyond where the ocean kisses the sky. Indeed, I am closer to

Africa here than I am to Tenerife, the largest island in the archipelago. Further still, beyond the ocean, are the Americas. I am reminded of how Columbus must have gazed westward thus and wondered what lay beyond. I have been there, to where his imagination and later he himself travelled, but it is a bird that he could have seen and which I cannot that occupies my thoughts.

In the swirl and shriek of the wind and the whoosh and gurgle of the waves I fancy I hear the cry of an oystercatcher, but it is an eerie cry, not that of a living bird, more the lament of a long lost bird-soul. The spectral piping is gone in an instant, chased away by a wave hitting a cavity in the volcanic rock recalling the report of a collector's gun; I hear the ethereal piping no more.

Were I able to transport myself back to a time before the collector, before the Spanish colonization and Columbus, before the Portuguese, French, Moors and European slave traders, before the Phoenicians and even the cave dwelling

Mahos from Africa, what would I see? What would I hear? What would I feel?

I'd feel the wind certainly, and hear the incessant waves, but would I see the rocks pock-marked with what the Spanish colonisers of Fuerteventura were to call the *cuervo marino*; the sea raven? Probably not, there were unlikely to have been huge numbers of Canarian Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewoldoi* even at their peak. They would perhaps have occurred in small groups or pairs but habitat availability would have limited the numbers even then; either way, now there are none.

I find myself at the southern tip of Fuerteventura on the Jandía peninsula which was once a kingdom and now forms part of the municipality of Pájara. This is where the type specimen of the species Canarian Black Oystercatcher (formerly a subspecies of African Oystercatcher *H. moquini*) was taken by Edmund G. B. Meade-Waldo on the 7th of April 1888, although the exact location I do not know. This individual was a breeding



## Hunting Ghosts between the Desert and the Deep Blue Sea — cont'd

female and two well-developed eggs were found within her unfortunate corpse. The skin, which is now labelled 1905.12.22.323, resides in the British Natural History Museum at Tring, in the Extinct and Endangered Birds collection..

Two years later, almost to the day on 6th April 1890 on Graciosa, the same collector took another bird, now dubbed 1905.12.22.322. This was another female and one of a pair, the male, was collected by Canon Henry B. Tristram. The last of the three skins languishing in the collection at Tring is 1939.12.9.25, a male, and this was collected by David A. Bannerman on the 3rd June 1913, 105 years before my visit to their former haunts and that proved to be the last material evidence of the species we have.

In 1985 an expedition was carried out to search for any remaining individuals; none were found and indeed local knowledge asserts that they were gone by around 1940.

What caused the demise of these birds? One can only speculate, a suggestion formed on the basis of some knowledge of other all black oystercatchers. Most black oystercatchers are primarily rock dwellers and eschew beaches, except perhaps outside the breeding season. Life was hard for the colonists of the island which is mainly desert with few food resources. This means that there would have been a great reliance on the coast, which may have provided food in the form of marine fare such as shellfish, the very items that the oystercatchers themselves would have needed for their survival. This competition between birds and man and their attendant rats, cats and dogs inevitably ended, as they always do, with the birds coming off second best. With not much else to eat the oystercatchers may well have been on the menu too, as would their eggs.

I shook myself from my musings to take in the scene before me once again and wondered how it might have been and how, had things been different, I would have heard the calls of those beautiful birds for myself.



A parcel of Canarian Black Oystercatcher spectres — Elis Simpson

What was this that I was feeling? Was it a sense of loss, a longing for what might have been? Was I feeling cheated? Was it regret for what has taken place, a story that I had no hand in? In case I whispered a heartfelt apology to the souls of a bird departed that I cannot see but that I can nevertheless feel, deep within me.

A tear coursed down my cheek, I swiftly wiped it away and blamed the wind catching the corner of my eye.

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Were there ever this many Canarian Black Oystercatchers on this beach? — Elis Simpson



## Waders in art — Peter Elfman

My passion for nature and birds has always been deep. I am autodidact and have never attended any art courses. I mostly work in watercolours and sometimes in oil.

I like sketching birds and other animals while I watch them in the field and I think the sketching is very important for the understanding of the balance, structure and anatomy. I think all birds are fascinating although my favorites are perhaps raptors, owls and waders.

I was selected 1991 as "Bird painter of the year" in Sweden. During the last 20 years my paintings have been featured in exhibitions in Sweden and abroad several times a year.

I have been elected 12 times for the juried, prestigious exhibition "Birds in Art" at the Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin, USA. My paintings have also been selected for the Museum's "Birds In Art Tour" in USA. Woodson Art museum has purchased two of my paintings for their permanent collection. "Birds in Art" is the biggest exhibition for bird art in the world. It is a "World Championship" in bird art where top artists from around the globe show their art. I am a signature member of Society of Animal Artists SAA in USA and I have been selected 5 times to their juried annual exhibition "Art and the animal".

I sometimes work with illustrations for nature information and books. I'm also a field trip leader for the local ornithology club in southern Sweden.

*Although I am certain none of you will need the birds illustrated identified, here is a translation of the Swedish names to English:*

**Tofsvipa;** Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*. **Kustpipare;** Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*. **Skärfläcka;** Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. **Småspov;** Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*. **Kustsnäppa** (plural *Kustsnäppor*); Red Knot *Calidris*



Tofsvipa — Peter Elfman



Kustpipare — Peter Elfman



The last light (Skärfläcka) — Peter Elfman



## Waders in art — cont'd



Småspov — Peter Elfman



Kustsnäppor — Peter Elfman



Myrspov — Peter Elfman

*canutus*. **Myrspov**; Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*.

Peter was born in 1966 and now lives in Vaggarp north of Lund, Sweden. He is a wildlife artist, illustrator and MSc in Chemical engineering and currently works at Emmace Consulting AB at Medicon Village in Lund.

He is not the first artist hailing from Sweden to adorn these pages and hopefully won't be the last. It seems that there is a rich seam of wildlife

art talent among the Swedish population. —Ed  
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## Wader Quest forthcoming events — Rick Simpson

# WADER CONSERVATION



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## Wader photo gallery — send us your favourite wader photos



American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*  
- Knut Hansen, USA



Variable Oystercatcher *Haematopus unicolor*  
- Matt Jones; NZ



Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*  
- Elis Simpson; UK



Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*  
- Mike Bridgeford; South Africa



Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*  
- Denise Lamsdell; The Gambia



Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*  
- Ailsa Howard; NZ



Ruff *Calidris pugnax*  
- Julian Bhalerao; UK



Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*  
- Jacqueline Cestero; Anguilla



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*Wader Quest the newsletter*

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Edited by Rick Simpson.

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