

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

06/11/2018 **East Lancashire Ornithologists' Club** (Confessions of a Bird Guide)  
 07/11/2018 **Trent and Lower Derwent Derbyshire Wildlife Trust** local group  
 26/11/2018 **Dursley Birdwatching and Preservation Society** (Confessions of a Bird Guide)  
 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**  
 26/02/2019 **Milton Keynes Parks Trust** (An Inspiration of Waders)  
 04/03/2019 **Teeside Bird Club**  
 13/03/2019 **Emmerson Garden and Environment Group** (Subject to be announced.)  
 20/03/2019 **Valiant Nightjars, Aldbury** (Confessions of a Bird Guide)  
 25/03/2019 **Newbury District Ornithological Club**  
 11/04/2019 **Gravesend RSPB local group** (Plover Lovers' World of Delights)  
 12/04/2019 **Loughborough RSPB local group**  
 17/04/2019 **Tonbridge RSPB local group**

For complete listing with time and venue visit our [Talks page](#). If we are giving a talk near you come and meet us.

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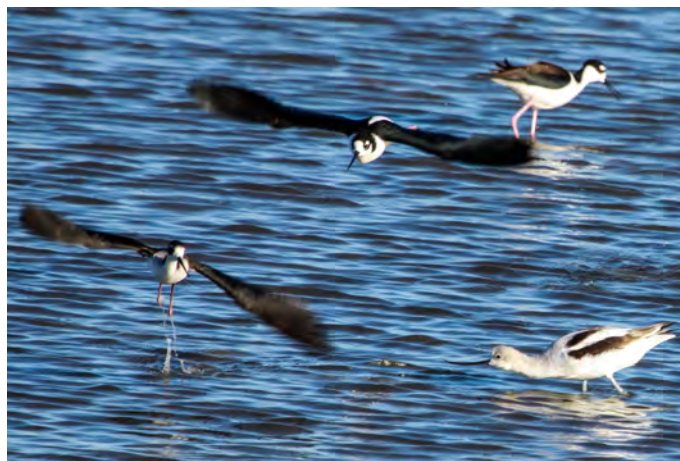
## Openers — Rick Simpson

Welcome to another Wader Quest newsletter. As always we hope that you'll find it interesting and informative.

Producing a quarterly newsletter, largely written by other people, doesn't sound too big a task on the face of it, and indeed I confess that it is one of the most enjoyable jobs that we have to perform in our Wader Quest duties. Not only is it a good way of keeping ourselves informed about what is going on in the world of waders, it also keeps us in touch with others in the wader conservation world. We also take great pleasure from the many positive comments we receive about the newsletters. It shows that at least some of you are reading it, making all the effort worthwhile.

Over the last year or so our domestic situation (being carers for my two nonagenarian parents) has been gradually eroding the time we have available for Wader Quest. Since the outset, Elis and I have largely carried out all the tasks required by a small charity, but this is now becoming impossible as the charity goes from strength to strength.

It is for this reason that Elis and I wish to express our profound thanks to three of our



American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* and Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* — Elis Simpson

Trustees who have taken it upon themselves to offer help with various Wader Quest tasks that were not going to happen without some additional man-hours being put in.

We have been meaning to apply for registration to the Charities Commission for some time. This is an involved and complicated process. Fortunately for us Andrew Whitelee, a Trustee, who represents us in Scotland, and his partner Penny Insole volunteered to take this on. They did so with little or no help from us and have recently submitted the application, which, had they not stepped in would

still be sitting in the ever growing 'to do' tray on my desk. When this process is finally completed, it will make a huge difference to the status of Wader Quest as a charity, and will greatly enhance our reputation. The contribution that Andrew and Penny have made cannot be overstated.

Many of you will have noted by now that the website has changed, and very much for the better. An overhaul of the site was long overdue and we made a couple of half-hearted attempts to do so ourselves. We gathered lots of help for ideas and content from various sources, but, in the end, we just didn't have the time to devote to it. Up stepped Allan Archer, also a Trustee, who volunteered to build the site. The result is what you see ([note new website address www.waderquest.net](http://www.waderquest.net)) and I hope you'll agree that Allan made a magnificent job of it. Getting the site up to this level and standard, ready for the launch at the Bird Fair, was some feat. All that remains now is for Elis and I to learn how to edit the pages to take some of the pressure back off Allan, and find some time to sit down and get them filled. In time, we hope to



Puna Snipe *Gallinago andina* — Elis Simpson

**Total raised by Wader Quest to date: £23,935.56**

## Openers — cont'd

make the Wader Quest website the go-to website for all things to do with waders. In addition to thanking Allan for all the long hours he has spent building the site, we should also mention the many photographers who have donated their work to supplement Elis' own library. Since we are not in a position to get out and about very often to top this up, the need for images from other sources has become more pressing.

Wader Quest is growing, I am very glad to say, but with this success comes more work. We enjoy the personal touch that we have engendered with our Friends and Sponsors and intend that this should remain the same. However keeping track of everyone and reminding them that annual subs are due has been something of a haphazard affair. We have tried one or two methods of sending out reminders, including adding the reminder to the e-mail going out with the newsletters. This we have found to be most unsatisfactory as the percentage of renewals from them has been low, whereas, a dedicated e-mail has had a much better response. The need for a dedicated Membership Secretary to manage our database of Friends and Sponsors, and who would send out timely reminders as necessary, was evident.

Once again, one of our Trustees stepped up to help, this time it was Ian Dearing who has kindly taken on this task, so we hope that from now on things will be a bit tighter in that respect. Ian will continue with the personal touch, avoiding e-mails starting 'Dear subscriber'.



Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* — Elis Simpson

We have had, since our inception, over 400 subscription sign ups. The current number of subscribers though is around 280, which shows we have not maintained a very good renewal rate. This, we feel, has been a failing brought about by the methods of reminders being sent out that we have been employing and we hope that Ian will be able to maintain people's interest much better than we have done before.

That then brings us on to a 'vacancy' in the Wader Quest line up. Each month we have to 'do the books'. This we do with a fair degree of success, I have to say, but the financial side is now also growing and perhaps is getting beyond our comfort zone. It is therefore, we feel, time we asked for help.

What we are looking for is someone with some club Treasurer experience or a background in banking or finance who would be willing to become the Wader Quest Treasurer. This would, by necessity, mean being co-opted onto the Board of Trustees. That in turn means committing to three Trustee meetings and an AGM each year. Ideally such a person would live in the South-East region of the UK facilitating attendance at the meetings.

If you think this is something you would be able to help us with, then please drop us an e-mail to [waderquest@gmail.com](mailto:waderquest@gmail.com) and we'll take it from there.

The other big change that has taken place has been how you receive this newsletter. Previously, we have been sending you a massive pdf to clog up your inbox causing some people problems. With the advent of the new website we are now able to embed the newsletters on the site and therefore, as you will have noticed, the emails coming to you will not have a pdf attached any more, rather a simple message with a link to the latest newsletter on the website. We hope that this suits you all and is seen as an improvement in our practices.



Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* on a Florida beach at dawn — Elis Simpson



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

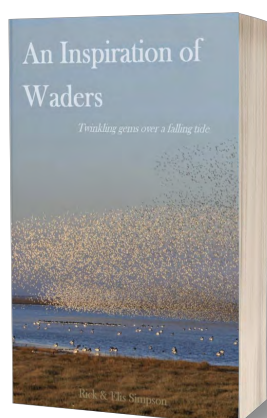
Since the last newsletter in July, we have been through one of our busiest periods of the year, which starts in earnest during the build-up to the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water. It was another bumper Bird Fair year for us, with the ever growing interest in what we are doing being the most gratifying thing to come from the event.

Our talk, despite being on the Friday morning, was packed out with standing room only at the back. As I stood there watching the auditorium fill, it dawned on me that there were a great deal of other interesting things these good people could be doing and they had therefore chosen to come to listen to the Wader Quest talk; the responsibility was daunting.

The title of the presentation was *New Moon on the Wane - the Curse of the Curlews*. The talk outlines how each of the waders we know as curlews is suffering declines and why; quite a lot to fit into a 20 minute talk! The comments we received (and overheard) afterwards were all very positive about the talk, but not so positive about what is happening to our curlews, so we obviously got the message across.



Our sales were up on last year, which was also very rewarding, especially as the launch of the *An Inspiration of Waders* book went well, with several copies sold, despite not having had the opportunity to



The Wader Quest stand at Bird Fair 2018 with Rick Simpson and Dan Rouse — Elis Simpson

advertise much in advance due to uncertainty about whether they'd be printed in time.

Last year we had a raffle, which although it made us plenty of money, much of it was then spent afterwards on sending the prizes to the winners. This year Elis suggested we have a Tombola instead, that way people would be able to take their prizes with them if they won. Whilst the financial reward on this was down on the raffle, we spent no money afterwards sending out prizes and in all made a greater profit. Allan Archer, Oliver Simms and Dan Rouse helped out at the stand from time to time to allow us time to get away, which was much appreciated.

We also launched two new pin badges at this event, the Black-fronted Dotterel *Elseya melanops* and the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. Both proved very popular although stories on the internet that we had run out on day 1 were

greatly exaggerated (although we did have to dash home Friday evening to top up the stock just in case).

We also launched the 2019 Wader Quest calendar which is available to Friends and Sponsors for just £3 while other mortals will pay £5. This is still exceptional value as the photos in this year's calendar are superb. With Christmas coming we are also making a multiple buy offer of two for £8 or three for £10—members 2 for £5 and 3 for £6! — all plus post and packing.



The British Bird Fair is always closely followed by the Falsterbo Bird Show, an event to which we were first invited by Anna Carter and Eva Hjärne, who have since become firm friends and with whom we stay when to go each year. As the expenses are met by Elis and myself, this is greatly appreciated. The event would not be viable if Wader Quest had to show a profit and cover all expenses. However it is a most enjoyable event, the people are so friendly and it is a chance for us to give a talk and spread the word still further. There are also interesting raptors, and other migrants, overflying the show ground during the day.



## What have we been up to?— cont'd



Falsterbo Bird Show — Elis Simpson

The next event was the Severn Wader Festival held at the WWT Slimbridge Wetlands Centre mainly organised by Scott Petrek of the WWT and Roberta Goodall a WWT volunteer and Friend of Wader Quest. This event, in its second year, was very enjoyable. We have always had a great relationship with the WWT, which started when we raised money for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Captive breeding programme in 2012. This is the reason that Wader Quest exists at all, so our two organisations, although greatly different in size and structure, are forever linked (whether they like it or not! – Ed.). Due to the timing of this event we were not able to celebrate Plover Appreciation Day at Titchwell RSPB reserve this year, which was a real shame as we always enjoy visiting that reserve.



Later in September Andrew Whitelee and Penny Insole represented Wader Quest at the Scottish Curlew Conference. Elis and I were unable to go so it was great to have two such dedicated people, upon whom we could rely, to fly the flag. Many interesting things came from the event as you can read on pages 14-15 of this newsletter.

The last day of September saw us at the Migratory Birds event at the Naze Centre in Essex hosted by the Essex Wildlife

Trust, together with Ian Dearing. We gave the *New Moon on the Wane* talk again at this event.

The Wader Quest talk has been on the road a fair amount already this speaking season with visits to the Friends of Welney in Norfolk, Mid Nene RSPB local group in Northamptonshire, Leigh Ornithological Society in Greater Manchester, Chelmsford and Central Essex RSPB local group. This week we completed a three day run starting with the Bangor Bird Group in Gwynedd, Bristol Ornithological Club and finally Southport RSPB local group in Merseyside. The latter, being a return visit, featured the talk *Plover Lovers' World of Delights* which



focuses on the British regular plovers and some of their equivalents around the world.

At the Bristol event we were greatly pleased, and indeed privileged, to meet Don Taylor, the author of *Waders of Europe, Asia and North Africa*, a book that is always within reach by my desk.



Don Taylor with Rick Simpson — Elis Simpson

The end of October saw the Wirral Wader Festival, the original British wader festival take place. This is now in its 5th year and was centred at the Hoylake Sailing Club premises on Hoylake seafront. There are more details on page 5.

Back in Scotland Andrew and Penny again represented Wader Quest at the Scottish Ornithologists Club Conference held this year at the Macdonald Aviemore Resort, on the same weekend as the Wirral Wader Festival. Andrew and Penny were able to have a Wader Quest stand at the event which they put to good use, recruiting new members and selling merchandising, from

pin badges to the new book *An Inspiration of Waders*. Andrew tells us that one lady at the conference returned to the stand specifically to buy the 2019 Wader Quest Calendar as she had so enjoyed using the 2018 one this year (see 23 for details of how to obtain yours).

Wader Conservation World Watch 5 will also soon be upon us and we are counting on your help again this year to build the numbers of participants. The main aim of the project is to get as many people aware as possible about the problems waders are facing, and for them to demonstrate that they care, simply by going out and watching waders. If you are in a position to join in yourself, please do so and also encourage at least one more person to do so too. If you want to organise an event as an individual or as an organisation please let us know. Send us a logo if you have one to add to the website page.



The last event of the year, the North-west Bird Watching Festival at Martin Mere WWT Wetland Centre, will take place on the 24th and 25th of November marking the end of our busy events season,

Lastly there will be an AGM held on the 2nd of December at 11.00hrs. This will be preceded by a short Trustees meeting at 10:30. The venue will be at Linford Lakes Nature Reserve, Milton Keynes, MK14 5AH. As always everyone is welcome but we would appreciate it if you'd let us know beforehand if you are likely to attend so we can forewarn the venue organisers of numbers.

### Talks available for your club or society

Wader Quest

Plover Lovers' World of Delights

Confessions of a Bird Guide

**New** – New Moon on the Wane – The Curse of the Curlews

**New** – An Inspiration of Waders

**New** – Sea Pies, Smudgies and Tobies; The World's my Oystercatcher

More details and how to book;

<http://www.waderquest.net/events/talks/>



## Wirral Wader Festival 27th & 28th October — Rick Simpson

This was the first time that we have used the venue at the Hoylake Sailing Club. This new venue has a lot of merit being right on the sea front near to where the Hoylake promenade high tide roost occurs. It has filled rolls (locally called batches) and drink available both alcoholic and non alcoholic including warm beverages — vital when the north wind blows. The area in which the stands were set up (the bar) has large windows overlooking the beach and enough space to accommodate the number of stands that we generally attract. Also, for the faint hearted like ourselves, there was enough space to set up a couple of telescopes indoors to watch the action on the beach.



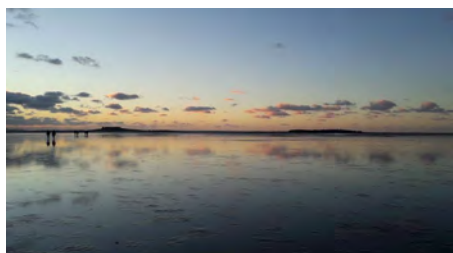
Karen Leeming DEVW and festival committee chair — Sheila Ryde

This year we had the usual stands with the RSPB, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens, ourselves and a display from the World Museum Liverpool, in the form of mounted wader specimens, plus the ever popular Tombola.

The children, and young at heart adults, were catered for with badges and pom-pom pet waders available to make.

Local art and crafters in the form of David and Val Fielder presented their wares and Philip Snow, a well known artist and illustrator of birds, also had a display featuring mainly waders with originals and prints for sale.

The outside events were held, as always, at the Hoylake promenade and Red Rocks in West Kirby. There was a walk to Hilbre Island on Saturday and a walk around the reserve at Red Rocks on Sunday. At West Kirby the live Wader Cam was also set up in the Wirral Sailing Centre for people to view



Evening walk to Hilbre Island — Cheshire Wildlife Trust



View from the sailing club window — Rick Simpson

the roosting waders on Little Eye Island at high tide.



View from Red Rocks towards Hilbre Island with a line of roosting waders just off shore — Sheila Ryde

As always the success, or otherwise, of these high tide roosts is dependent upon the birds, the presence of which is governed by the tide, which, in turn, is dependent on the weather. A lot of variables, all beyond the control of even the most influential committee. The dates are chosen to link the highest tides, which fall at around lunchtime, at the weekend. This of course limits the options. Once the date is decided the rest is up to the weather. This weekend we had fairly good on-shore winds which normally would push a tide further up the beach. However, in this case, the amazingly good (if cold) weather was produced by high pressure, which has the effect of suppressing the tide. The result was that at Hoylake the roost was not spectacular, with around 2,000 birds being seen each of the two days. The species involved were Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Red Knot *C. canutus*, Dunlin *C. alpina*,

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*.

At Red Rocks they had more success with 6,000 birds being present on both days with a similar selection of species.

Wader Quest was represented by Rick and Elis Simpson, and Gail and Phil Pickett. Due to some nasty illness going around volunteers were thin on the ground so we were very pleased to have Gail and Phil along. Phil made an excellent job of the Tombola stand and Gail was assigned to badge making in the craft section.



Rick and Elis Simpson with Katy van Woerdekom RSPB Area Manager at the Wader Quest stand — Sheila Ryde



Gail and Phil Pickett at the Tombola stand — Rick Simpson

## Waders in poetry; Curlew, On Fields Below Bolton Castle — Karen Lloyd

They sing up the sky like water  
are fluting and stippled,  
wings tensile, sprung  
in the recurve of an archer's bow.

Contouring the field edge  
they riffle air, are trembling,  
floating things. Long decurved  
bills mapping their place on the ground.

The female drops to a nest -  
or where a nest once was.  
Last week I watched her confer  
a speckled blessing on the lid of sky,

on her fledgling pair  
beginning long-toed journeys  
out of and into tall grass,  
learning worms, beetles, grasshoppers.

The farmer booked his slot -  
the contract mowers came at night,  
cutting silage field by field.  
This week, two pairs,

trying to find the young  
that were not there to find.  
The true cost of our food -  
the loss of a curlew's song.



The fields below Bolton Castle — Elis Simpson

## Wader Quest conservation in action — Rick Simpson



Javan Plover chick — Iwan Londo

One of the first projects we were able to assist was that of the Anak Burung Birdbanding Club which was working in collaboration with Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI) in Indonesia in 2015. Their project, led by Iwan Londo, was to colour ring both Javan Plovers *Charadrius javanicus* and White-headed Stilts *Himantopus leucocephalus* in order to study their movements, work that had not been previously carried out.

Indonesia is on the East Asian — Australasian Flyway and as such has some important stop over and staging habitats for migrant waders.

However this study was focussed on discovering where the Javan Plovers and White-headed Stilts, that bred at just one of these habitats, Wonorejo, Surabaya, spend their time away from the breeding grounds.

To study this birds have been ringed so that they can be easily recognised with colour rings that have been supplied by Wader Quest along with measuring equipment.



## Brìdean; Bride's Bird, the Oystercatcher — Rick Simpson

St Bride stumbled breathlessly onto the beach, her breast heaving with the effort of outrunning those who were giving chase. Her throat burned as she gulped down air. Her heart was thumping solidly and fast, pounding in her inner ear. Her villainous pursuers, she knew, were not far behind and meant to kill her. She set off along the strand but now found it frustratingly hard to gain purchase in the soft sand making her strides more laboured and slowing her pace.

Eventually exhaustion overcame her as the strength was sapped from her legs, with each passing stride she grew weaker until, in despair, she sank to her knees, she could not continue, all was lost.

Resigned to her fate she laid down on the sand, which felt warm on her back. She gazed into the wide blue heavens that were punctuated only by a passing packet of oystercatchers. She offered up a prayer. This was not a prayer asking for deliverance, but one thanking God for the many joys she had experienced in her saintly life.

The oystercatchers looked down and saw the scene below them. Something made them pause in their flight, they had been heading for the far headland. They circled around. Instinctively they knew they had a purpose. They descended to the beach and began to cover the prone Saint with seaweed from the tide line until she could be seen no longer. This done they strutted to the head of the beach to watch over the scene.

St Bride's would-be assassins burst onto the beach with an aggressive cry, but their enthusiasm for the chase dwindled rapidly. They could not see their quarry, just a small gathering of oystercatchers standing quietly at the top of the beach. They stood surveying the scene, somewhat bemused. Surely, they thought, the Oystercatchers would have flown away or be in alarm if St Bride had been that way. Frustrated, they assumed that St Bride had either doubled back and escaped them or entered the sea where she had drowned. They turned and left leaving St Bride unharmed to live another day.

St Bride was relieved and thanked God for sparing her. She did not forget the Oystercatchers for the part they had played in her salvation. She blessed the birds and said that henceforth they would carry the sign of the cross on their back in remembrance of the day they saved her life.

The Oystercatcher's cross is made up of the white of its rump and tail base stretching onto the back and the white wing bars.

This story, dramatised here, is one of the many myths and legends that surround



St Bride and her Oystercatchers — Cathy Myhill

St Bride, variously known as Bhrighde, Brighid, Brigid, Brigit (among other versions), in connection with Oystercatchers. These would be, of course, Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* since it was Ireland and Scotland in which she dwelt.

Versions of this story also include Jesus himself being hidden from the soldiers of Herod and also an Oystercatcher covering his feet when he was footsore and tired. The stories connecting St Bride and Jesus come from mythology that said she was carried from the Isle of Iona, in the Inner Hebrides, to Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, to be mid-wife to Mary at the birth of Jesus.

Another tale tells how St Bride was lost at sea and was guided to shore by the calls of Oystercatchers and thereafter, if anyone was in trouble at sea she would send her emissaries, the Oystercatchers, out to guide them safely back to shore and, for this

reason, the Oystercatcher is called *Gille-Bhrighde*, or Servant of Bride in Gaelic.

Yet another story which is portrayed in the picture above, involves some children who went to sleep on a boat on the shore. The tide came in and swept the boat away. Some Oystercatchers heard the children crying so they flew as fast as they could to tell St Bride. She walked on the water and brought the boat, and its frightened occupants, safely ashore.

*Waders such as the Oystercatcher have been part of the landscape as long as we have, indeed longer, so it is no surprise that they inspire myths and legends such as these, if you would like to find out more about how we have been inspired by these wonderful birds this and other examples are to be found in An Inspiration of Waders, the new book from Wader Quest – Ed.*



## Ten years birding and conservation efforts in Dongtai-Rudong — Zhang Lin & Jing Li



An inspiration of waders at Rudong — Hu Zhenhong

Birders living in Shanghai, a major city on the east coast of China, don't have very good wader watching opportunities. On the other hand Jiangsu Province north of Shanghai has a long coastline and provides a much better chance to find waders but to cross the mighty Yangtze River is a big problem. Only after the spring of 2008, with two new bridges available, did visiting the Jiangsu coastal areas regularly become possible.

In July 2008, Lei Ming, a teacher from Jiangsu Police Institute based in Nanjing, one of the founders of Jiangsu Wild Bird Society, was dispatched to work temporarily in a police station in Nantong area, in southeast Jiangsu. With the hope of exploring some potential good coastal sites for

waterbirds, he requested to work and stay in the police station of Yangkou Fishing Harbour in Rudong county, Nantong. The police station is located on an old seawall and at that time it was 7km from the new seawall. Where the new seawall meets the old one, it's convenient to watch the open mudflat out of the new seawall while also looking for some passerines in the woods along the old one. July is still early for passerine migrants but once he got there, he found huge numbers of waders. The entrance to the mudflat is a track paved with bricks, used by local fishermen to drive tractors down to carry back heavy loads, especially hard clams. At high tide, many waders are pushed to gather around the track and it was fairly easy

to watch them very well.

Zhang Lin, a key member of Jiangsu Wild Bird Society, a freelance birding guide living in Shanghai, who was the first to join in a voluntary project called China Coastal Waterbird Census and was coordinating the



Winter gulls roosting in Yangkou Fishing Harbour — Zhang Lin

count in Shanghai, decided to stay with Lei Ming and watch waders everyday. Shanghai is closer than Nanjing so more Shanghai birders were inspired to join in, including Jing Li.

In July, the major finds included large counts of Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* which were common species and also many resightings of colour-marked birds from Australia. When the wader people in Australia sent the banding histories (many of



Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* and wind turbines (and plover sp.) — Luke Tang



## Ten years birding and conservation efforts in Dongtai-Rudong—cont'd

these resightings were the only ones from outside Australia), they also found that some sat-tagged Bar-tailed Godwits breeding in Alaska reached Rudong's coast. This raised wader people's interest as it seems to be a very good wader site. Not surprisingly, Zhang Lin found some uncommon species such as Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* in its remarkably dark breeding plumage.

Lei Ming had to leave at the end of July, before he could make any more exciting observations, especially, on Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea*.

One day in mid-August, with a spring tide, Zhang Lin noticed a few unusually red Red-necked Stints *Calidris ruficollis* approaching. Within the first ten minutes, all birders were confused and couldn't believe their eyes to see so many critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpipers, they had been day dreaming about such things for some time. At that time it was quite difficult to even see just one Spoon-billed Sandpiper anywhere in China, and then it would usually be in non-breeding plumage or just a little bit in transitional plumage. To see a few in full breeding plumage seemed impossible. But there they were, the day dream had just come true, when six individuals were seen within 20 -30 metres.

The news was released. Lei Ming came back in August to watch them. Many other birders and photographers came too.



Photographing Spoon-billed Sandpipers has become very popular — Li Dongming

Besides other regional waterbird specialties such as Saunders's Gull *Chroicocephalus saundersi*, Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* and Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*. Many woodland species were also recorded, including the only record of Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* for eastern China after a thunderstorm. (There has since been another record — Ed.)

Then Zhang Lin started to explore more areas north and south of Yangkou Fishing Harbour. As far as waders were concerned it was not so successful, as the



Spoon-billed Sandpiper made from clam shells by Rudong students — Zhang Lin

progress of the seawall construction at the other sites was slower than that in Yangkou, limiting access to the mudflats by car. On foot, only small areas could be covered. Take Tiaozini, a site north of Yangkou for example, in the 90's, Mark Barter did surveys there without seeing any Spoon-billed Sandpipers, although 200,000 waders of a number of species were recorded.



Reclamation plan to turn Tiaozini into China's Saemangeum — Zhang Lin

Seawall construction is to form coastal reclamation areas, in which various kinds of industries are developed. Within a few years, a huge chemical industry zone was built at Yangkou, and waders lost their best high tide roost. Meanwhile, outside the seawall, on the mudflat, an introduced invasive species called Smooth Cordgrass (*Spartina*) grabbed all the mudflat close to shore and waders moved to another town southeast of Yangkou. Within the reclamation area in this town the main industry is aquaculture. Sometimes Spoon-billed Sandpipers and many other small waders can be seen roosting in small ponds and that has attracted many photographers, who, with mega lenses have even recorded some digits

on a metal band on the legs of Spoon-billed Sandpipers. These were banded mostly in Southern Chukotka, with one single bird banded in Sakhalin recorded one spring.



Latest roosting ponds — Zhang Lin

Besides birdwatching, birders are well aware of the threat waders are facing--habitat loss due to reclamation and Smooth Cordgrass. Jing Li, whose hometown is in Nantong, established the NGO called Spoon-billed Sandpiper in China (SBSinChina), and expanded her network among local contacts, trying to raise locals' awareness on conservation. The East Asian-Australasian



A little *Spartina* invading the mud — Zhang Lin

## Ten years birding and conservation efforts in Dongtai-Rudong—cont'd

Flyway Partnership's Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force (SBS TF) started to gather international wader experts to come to help surveying and attending meetings with forestry authorities. Zhang Lin and Jing Li gave up monitoring Shanghai for the China Coastal Waterbird Census and focused on Yangkou instead, to provide frequent updates to decision-makers.

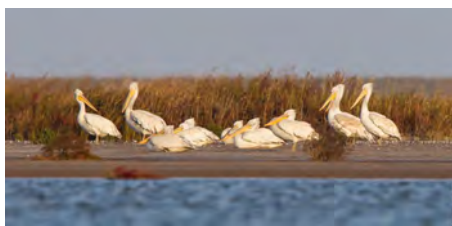
Besides counting, by collecting photos from many Chinese photographers, Zhang Lin gradually realised the reason that many Spoon-billed Sandpipers were being seen, especially in autumn, is that the adult do their full moult here. In the field it is almost impossible to track a certain individual to witness its whole progress of moult, as it flies in and out of the seawall every 12h with the tide cycle.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper — Tomas Lundquist

The SBS TF in Russia decided to do another banding project, using engraved flags. Besides banding, they also introduced 'headstarting', which proved to be very successful. Among the first eight adults banded with lime flags numbering 01 to 08, Lime 01 was recorded by Zhang Lin in late August near Yangkou. It was recorded annually at its breeding ground and at Yangkou, and thus we know that it probably starts and finishes its full moult in Rudong, as do almost all other individuals.

Although many birders and wader experts from China and abroad visited Yangkou, and SBSinChina tried hard to get local communities involved, not much interest was shown by local governments and no conservation success was gained. Yangkou gradually lost its fame as the best birding spot in Rudong area. The peak count of Spoon-billed Sandpipers in autumn fell from 100+ in early 2010's to 30 nowadays. There has been no record of Lime 01 since the autumn of 2016, although it was reported on its northward migration in South Korea by Nial Moores. The breeding ground of Saunders's Gull became solar panels and aquaculture ponds, ironically still displaying a sign saying 'Saunders's Gull nature reserve'.



Dalmatian Pelicans — Luke Tang

While, with the new seawall at Tiaozini built, it replaced Yangkou as the best birding spot, not just for waders but also many other waterbirds. Maximum counts of Spoon-billed Sandpipers here reached 144 in September 2014, and the number of Nordmann's Greenshanks doing full moult exceeded its population estimate! Almost the whole East Asian population of Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, large concentrations of Black-faced Spoonbill, Far Eastern Curlew, Great Knot (the latter two are not common now, and are listed as Endangered) pass here. This site used to be within Yancheng Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis* National Nature Reserve. Due to coastal development, it was wiped out of the nature reserve. With more and more evidence that it's critical for many bird species, including immature Spoon-billed Sandpipers spending their summer there, it is included in a recent nomination of World



Great Knot — Daniel Pettersson

Heritage, although some of the key areas are not included.

Zhang Lin now monitors Tiaozini together with another site called Dongling, south of Yangkou, for China Coastal Waterbird Census. Yangkou is only occasionally watched. Among all the main wader sites, Dongling is the last to lose its natural high tide roost, of course again due to reclamation. Before that, surveying here required a long walk and wading through water and thus it was not much visited by birders. But the regular counts show its importance for waders too, different to that

of Yangkou and Tiaozini. For example, it supports the largest flock of Far Eastern Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus osculans* along the Chinese coast in winter. In late August, Zhang Lin counted almost 4000 Broad-billed Sandpipers *Calidris falcinellus*.



Jing Li scanning on a windy day—Zhang Lin

SBS TF has been carrying out banding and sat-tagging of Spoon-billed Sandpipers in recent years led by a leader of Spoon-billed Sandpiper study in China designated by the central forestry authority. SBSinChina and China Coastal Waterbird Census team were sadly not invited to join them, although we are trying hard to collect as many resightings as possible from hundreds of photographers every year.

Since July 2008 the Dongtai-Rudong bird list has grown to more than 390 species. Many of them are new records for Jiangsu Province. We welcome wader enthusiasts to birdwatch and count waders here, before we witness again a sharp decline of certain species' populations, as happened in the last decade.

You are welcome to share with us your bird sightings, especially resightings of colour-marked birds, via e-mail or upload them to some online database such as ebird. Your photos are also welcomed.

Zhang Lin has published *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of China, Vol. 2, Shorebirds* based on his experience gained especially in Rudong area and is now doing the next volume on gulls, terns and skuas (sadly both are only available in Chinese).

<http://www.shanghaibirdingtour.org/> - Ed.



## A Wondrous Shorebird This Way Comes—Becky Bowen

Every once in a blue moon, a magical rare bird finds its way, by accident or natural disaster, to this remote corner of the world. An example of which is this juvenile Ruff *Calidris pugnax* photographed by my friend Roger Adamson on September the 5th, 2018, at Virgin Creek Beach near the town of Fort Bragg, four hours of driving time north from San Francisco.

Roger went to the beach when he was alerted by photographer Lisa D. Walker-Roseman, who had spotted a sandpiper she could not at first identify. There was good reason for confusion. According to records, this was only the seventh sighting of a Ruff in Mendocino County. They are seen in central and eastern California during fall migration, but seldom on the Northern California coast.

The bird was young and gregarious, at least with other shorebirds. It hung around with Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* Western Sandpipers *Calidris mauri*, and Least Sandpipers *Calidris minutilla* for a few days, then flew some 6 kilometres north to Ten Mile Beach where it joined Black Oystercatchers *Haematopus bachmani*, Western Snowy Plovers *Charadrius nivosus*, Baird's Sandpipers *Calidris bairdii*, Sanderlings *Calidris alba*, and more Western Sandpipers.



Ruff; Mendocino Coast, California, USA — Roger Adamson

When it was spotted on the Save Our Shorebirds Ten Mile Beach survey September the 9th, it was sound asleep on open sand next to four napping Western Sandpipers.

It was no wonder the bird needed rest. Ruffs breed in Northern Eurasia and

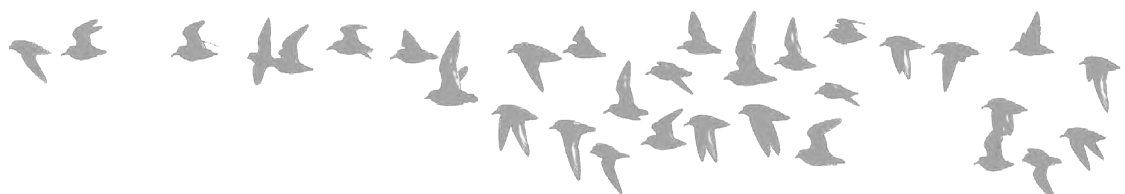
winter principally in Africa. Like many shorebirds, the juvenile was making the trip on its own. It's one of the great mysteries of migration: how do you migrate for the first time up to 20,000 kilometres without somebody to show you the way? How do you know where to go? How did it get here so far off-course?

The Ruff was gone after seven days of rest and refuelling, and we were left wishing the bird could tell us its story. By its presence, it really was talking to us. We only hope we humans are smart enough to listen — and learn.

*Save Our Shorebirds* is an on-going Mendocino Coast Audubon Society volunteer conservation programme founded in 2007 in partnership with California State Parks. Please visit us at [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)



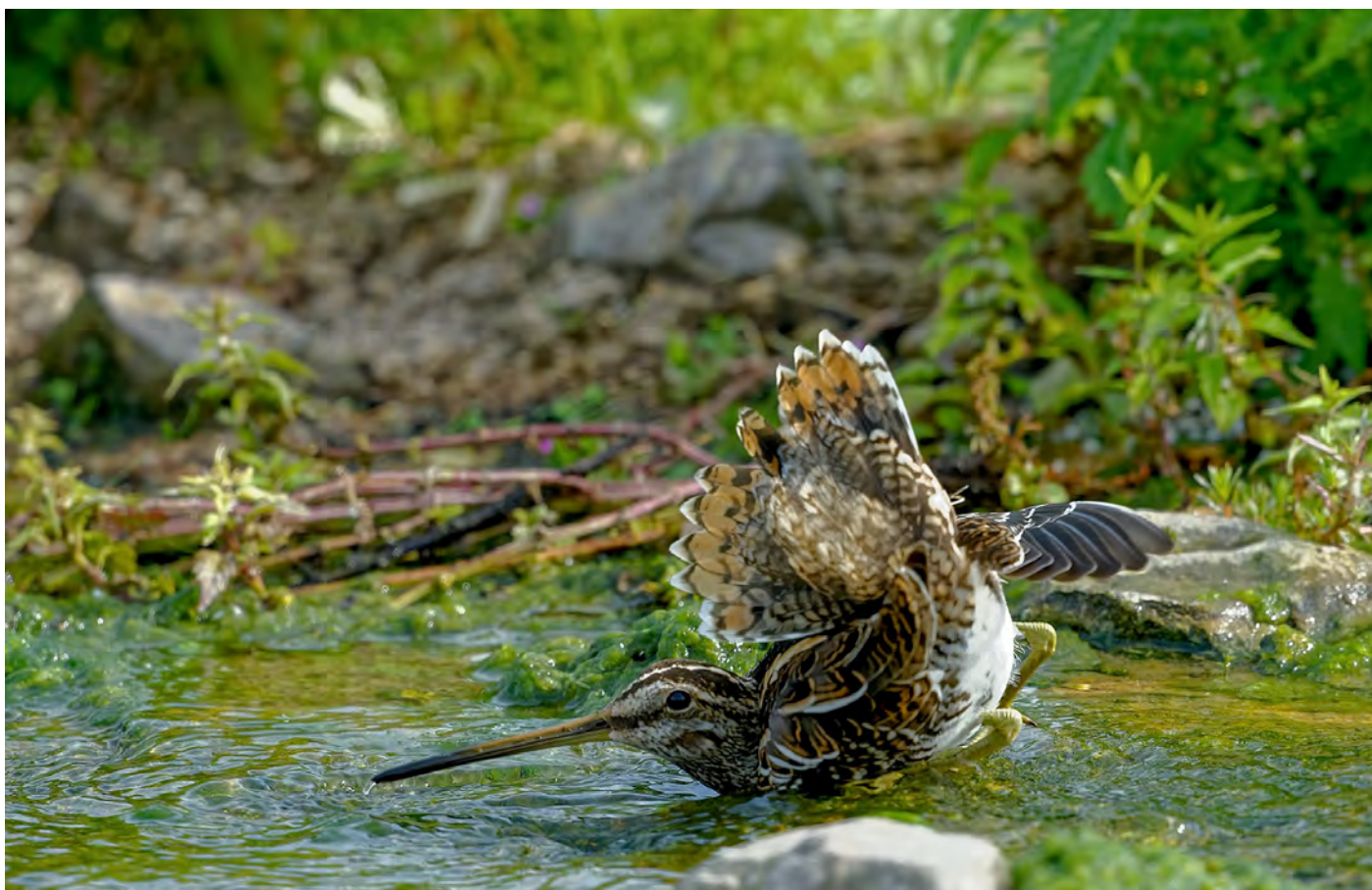
Ruff; Mendocino Coast, California, USA — Roger Adamson



WADER CONSERVATION WORLD WATCH5; 3RD & 4TH NOVEMBER 2018



## Featured Wader Photo: Common Snipe — Roger Byng



Photographer: Roger Byng  
Species: Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*  
Location: Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust,

Slimbridge Wetland Centre, Gloucestershire, England.  
Date: 19th April 2018

Equipment: Nikon D700 & 500mm f/4 with 2x teleconverter  
Details: 1/400 sec, f/11 ISO 1400

I had been using the D700 whilst my D500 camera was in for repair and I had been photographing small birds.

I suddenly came across this Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* that was

feeding in a shallow water flow when a wagtail *Motacilla* flew in, startling it. The Snipe took on this defensive pose and I quickly lifted the camera and took the shot handheld.

Ideally I would have chosen a higher shutter speed and no tele-converter but the opportunity to take the photo was unexpected and I just had to go with what I had, or miss the shot altogether.

## From the library

From: *British Game* by Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald. Published in 1946 as part of the New Naturalist series by Collins of London

'The Great Snipe [*Gallinago media*] has sixteen tail feathers, the Common Snipe [*G. gallinago*] fourteen, and the Jack Snipe [*Lymnocryptes minimus*] twelve. The number of tail feathers is commonly regarded as diagnostic, but the number in the Common is by no means constant. I have shot Common Snipe with sixteen tail feathers, and I have shot Common Snipe (all by the way, melanistic, the so-called 'Sabines's Snipe') with twelve feathers. On the other hand, I have never seen a Great Snipe that had not sixteen feathers, nor a Jack Snipe that had not twelve!'



Common Snipes — Elis Simpson



## An update from San Juan de los Cayos — Sandra Giner

I was doing fieldwork in the lagoon of San Juan de los Cayos between September the 25th and 30th. I travelled with two students, Daniela Galvis and Victor De Oliveira, who were my field assistants and a driver of the car.

We went to San Juan de los Cayos where the main body of work was carried out along the shore of the lagoon and on the reef beach, outside the lagoon bar. The highlight of the trip was registering the second record of Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* for Falcón state. The first was also one I observed in the same lagoon in 2015.

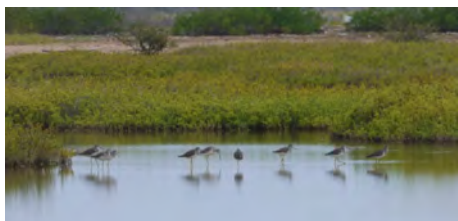


Low tide at the sea-reef shore beside San Juan de los Cayos lagoon — Sandra Giner

During the trip we registered 18 species of wader, most of them on the mudflats. The exposed surface of the muddy plain is very broad, and at this season the low tide is higher leaving the exposed surface of the reef very small. Both places are used by waders, but in the mudflat the diversity and abundance are higher than at shore reef.

We counted 531 waders, 97% on the mudflat in the San Juan de los Cayos lagoon. We watched the Marbled Godwit for two days feeding in shallow water at the sea-reef.

I could not do the training I had planned on this trip because the municipal



Greater Yellow-legs resting in shallow water in the San Juan de los Cayos lagoon — Sandra Giner

representative of culture, with whom I talked in July and was in contact with the teachers, did not get back to me in time. Despite sending the information and trying to contact him several times, we could not get organised for September. However, more recently I met with him in San Juan de los Cayos, and we discussed my project and the community's training. He offered me the House of Culture



Marbled Godwit; second record for Falcón State — Sandra Giner



Daniela and Victor surveying the lagoon — Sandra Giner



Willet and small waders (peeps) feeding at tidal mudflat — Sandra Giner

as a venue and put me in contact with the local teachers who co-ordinate the environmental activities in the three schools of the town. I talked to these teachers and agreed to do the training in February. Now we are working together on that.

*This is the project which was awarded the Wader Quest Anniversary grant of £1,000 plus £500 worth of optical equipment donated by Opticron—Ed.*

## Whaups up? Scottish Curlew Conference — Andrew Whitelee

Penny Insole and I were representing Wader Quest at the first ever Scottish Curlew Conference. The event, organised by Mary Colwell and her team is the 4th in a set of national conferences on the plight of the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*.

Alan Lauder, chair of the Irish Curlew Task Force, opened proceedings of a session that set the scene on the current state of Curlew in Scotland. Alan explained that our task for the day was to *'listen to those that bring their own views and experiences and to engage positively and with an open mind'*. Then afterwards, once we left the conference our tasks were to *'not take the Curlew for granted'* and most importantly to *'take action!'*

This was followed by Lewis MacDonald, MSP, and species champion for the Curlew who talked eloquently about the importance of Curlew to Scotland. The comment *'It will be a measure of our success as a nation who cares about its environment if we can turn it around for the Curlew'*, seemed to find resonance around the room.

Chris Wernham, BTO was next and provided us with the statistical and scientific evidence for what we already know, Curlews are in decline like never before and we need to do something about it, and quickly. Alastair MacGugan, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), and the Working for Waders collaboration gave a talk that explained the current Curlew declines within in the context of waders in Scotland (nearly all Scottish wader species are in decline, but only Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* is declining faster than the Curlew).

David Douglas and Irena Tomankova, RSPB, presented the findings of



Eurasian Curlew — Elis Simpson

some trial management schemes undertaken across the UK. Various Curlew sites were chosen and trial management and predator control measures were applied. The trials are ongoing, with two more years of a five year study to complete, but so far the best results have come from plots that had both habitat enhancement measures along with predator control.

Being a bit of a geek, I was particularly interested in the talk by Bob Swann, of the Highlands Ringing Group, on his work with winter populations of Curlew using geolocators. I was fascinated to find that the Curlews I watch on the Moray and

Beaully Firth are very site faithful, both in using Scotland as their wintering grounds, and also in their choice of Fennoscandian breeding locations.

Post-break, the focus moved to Curlew conservation, and was kicked off by Davy McCracken, Scottish Rural College, who gave an excellent talk on agri-environment schemes asking whether they could work for Curlews. The answer seems to be yes, as long as the schemes are focussed and targeted correctly.

There were also talks by Brendan Callaghan, Forestry Commission, on forestry and Curlew, and by James Higgins-Pearce, BTO, on agriculture to wind farms and how to identify problems and test solutions. Both these talks emphasised that we need to know more about Curlew populations so that we can avoid putting new forestry or wind farms in areas that may be detrimental to breeding Curlew.

Dave Parish, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), presented the findings of their research on predator control and predator exclusion. My favourite talk of the day however came from Martin Kennedy, a farmer in Perthshire. His passion for farming and wildlife shone through in his talk, sprinkled with humour and a genuine love of the denizens of the land he and his family farms. Approximately 73% of Scotland's land is under some kind of farming regime, so it is imperative that farmers are involved in the process from beginning to end, consulted and engaged with in any land management changes.



The subject matter of the Wader Quest presentation entitled *New Moon on the Wane—The Curse of the Curlews* — Andrew Whitelee

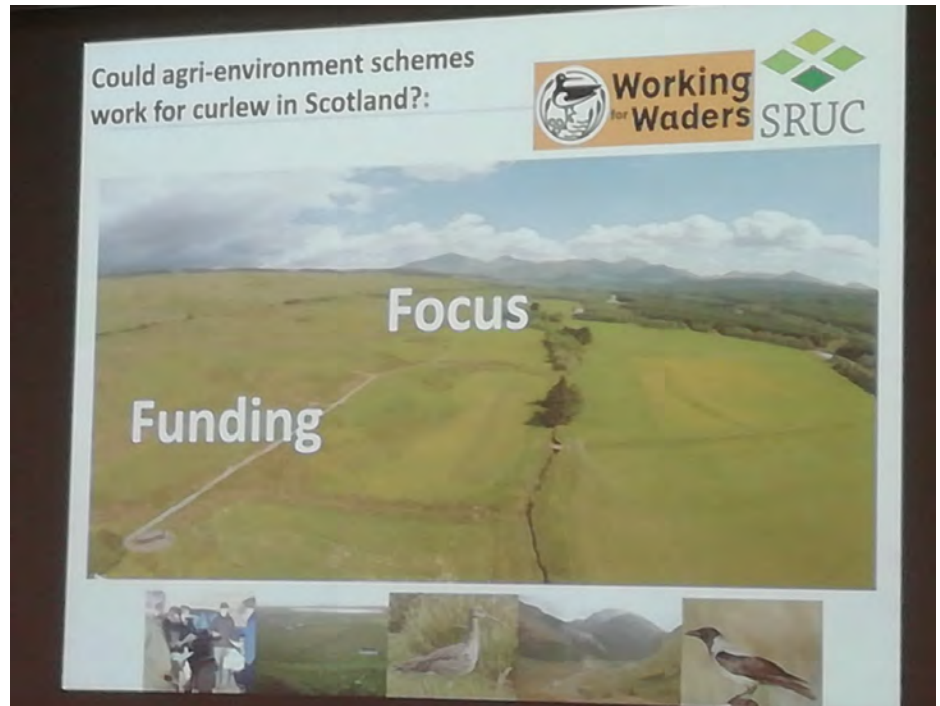


## Whaups up? Scottish Curlew Conference — cont'd

After the break, came the case studies. We heard from Alan Leith, RSPB, about the current Curlew situation in Orkney (a traditional stronghold of the species), Patrick Laurie, farmer and journalist, about the decline of Curlew in Galloway and Geoff Hilton, WWT, who gave a summary of the findings and actions of the previous Curlew conferences in Ireland, England and Wales. The morning was brought to a close by Steve Redpath, Aberdeen University, with his take on the need to avoid conflict and promote cooperation with all parties needing 'trust, respect and humility' in order to succeed.

By lunchtime I will admit to feeling pretty despondent and dejected at the plight of, not only Curlews, but waders and UK wildlife in general. An excellent SNH buffet helped to lighten my mood, followed by some very productive, positive and frank discussions in the afternoon workshops. In the session I attended, we discussed the moral and ethical difficulties of predator control. The group recognised that predator control will have to be part of any short-term conservation solution but without habitat management and enhancement we would only be treating a symptom of wader declines. The feedback from other workshop groups seemed to be broadly similar, immediate action was needed to halt the decline, coupled with longer term work to rebuild populations.

The group also discussed the need for further research and how to make the general public 'care' about waders the way they care about other species such as raptors or badgers. The latter is something I am particularly interested in and think it's an area where Wader Quest can, and indeed already does, contribute in a significant way.



A slide from the presentation by Davy McCracken — Andrew Whitelee

The conference had a variety of attendees from organisations as diverse as RSPB, BTO, WWT, SNH, GCWT, Wader Quest, Forestry Commission, Scottish Gamekeepers Association, Scottish Land and Estates, colleges, universities, ecological consultancies, farmers, journalists, landowners and individuals with a love of Curlews, with delegates coming from as far afield as Cornwall and Orkney. The fact that people, who traditionally may have had opposing viewpoints, were in the same room, united by a common cause, is a great starting point for discussion. From a personal perspective, I think Working for Waders are

doing a great job up here in Scotland. Collaboration rather than confrontation has to be the way forward in addressing the decline of Curlew, other wader species and wildlife in general.

However, without a political driver I'm unsure how far we can get. We are in austere times and there are many worthy causes clamouring for our hearts, minds and money. Governments need to take species decline seriously and provide the political and financial motivators to galvanise the nation into action.

I'll leave the last word to Mary Colwell, the driving force behind the conference, who closed the proceedings with these words 'we have to do something to stop the decline because once the Curlew is gone we will miss it'.

### Did you know?

*'The Scottish name for the curlew is whaup and this name has also been given to an evil spirit in Ayrshire that goes about under the eaves of houses after the fall of night, having a long beak resembling a pair of tongs for the purpose of carrying off evil doers.'*

An extract from *An Inspiration of Waders* by Rick and Elis Simpson all proceed from the sale of which go to Wader Quest See page XX for more details of this and the Eurasian Curlew pin badge and how to obtain them — Ed.



Andrew, Mary Colwell and Penny sporting their new Eurasian Curlew Wader Quest pin badges. Insert the badge enlarged — Andrew Whitelee



## Why are Wader Chicks so Cute? — Rick Simpson



Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*; Norfolk, England. June 2012 — Elis Simpson

Well, there is one thing for sure, they have not evolved this way just so we humans can look at them and go ‘ahhhhhh’ in a gooey and insipid way!

Wader chicks are among the most adorable of all chicks in the avian world. Those bald and blind nestlings of passerines or the less than elegant squabs of pigeons, even the elegant raptors, start life as ungainly monsters; don’t even get me started on owls!

Baby birds come in two forms, those that can pretty much fend for themselves right out of the egg, and others that cannot. Each of course has a technical name, the waders and other birds that come in the category of being mobile and self reliant to some extent soon after hatching are called **precocial**. This word is similar to precocious and, much in the same way that a precocious child will often behave in a way that is unusually advanced for his or her years, a precocial chick is advanced in its maturity at hatching. Those that are not are called **altricial** and the chicks are more or less helpless at hatching. These two terms

basically refer to the amount of support that they need after hatching from their parents.

This ability to fend for themselves, to a large extent, is what makes the headstarting programme for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and other waders possible. The eggs can be hatched in captivity

and the chicks will feed themselves, with no adults around at all. Once they are strong enough they can then be released into outdoor holding pens where they can wander freely, feed and fly in a fairly natural, if restricted, environment, free from the threat of predation and eventually released into the wild to take their chances with the wild birds.



Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*; São Paulo, Brazil. October 2013—Elis Simpson



## Why are Wader Chicks so Cute? — cont'd

**Nudifugous** and **nudicolus**, which refer to whether or not the chick remains in the nest, should not be confused with the previous two expressions; Nudifugous being those that leave the nest almost immediately, like our wader chicks, and nudicolus refers to birds like thrushes, herons and the like, where the young stay in the nest for some time and are, at the same time, by dint, altricial, relying on their parents for their sustenance.

So, when a wader chick hatches, once it has dried and found its feet, providing its siblings have reached the same stage, it will often then leave the nest *en famille* never to return.

To achieve this the birds must have good vision and mobility hence their big eyes and often ungainly feet and long legs which are some of the factors that elicit the 'ahh' factor we bestow upon them.

Another facet of their character is that they are little balls of fluff, to all intents and purposes. They will not be kept warm all the time by their parents, so they have to emerge from the egg with insulation, hence the fluff. They would be unable to develop true feathers within the confines of the shell, to do so the egg would have to be so large that the female would be unable to lay it.

Apart from being fluffy they are almost always intricately patterned, this of course adds to their attractiveness, but again this is not its purpose. This mottling and streaking is naturally designed to camouflage the birds so that, if they sit still in suitable habitat, they will be rendered all but invisible to predators.



Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus*: Orange Free State, South Africa. September 2013  
— Elis Simpson

With the possible exception of ducklings, wader chicks are undoubtedly the most attractive bird chicks you will come across. Perhaps the most adorable chick of all though is the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, there is little that comes close to the cuteness of this little mite.



24 hour old Spoon-billed Sandpiper; the cutest chick on earth? — Paul Marshall WWT



At first glance all you can see is this adult Bush Thick-knee *Burhinus grallarius*. But look again, at the adults feet are two well-hidden chicks that you would never notice if the adult was not there. Queensland, Australia. September 2013 — Elis Simpson

### Did you know?

Not all wader chicks are fully precocial, the most extreme example of this is the Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*. Uniquely among waders they lay a single white egg at the end of a tunnel, which they dig with their considerable bills. The young will be fed crushed crab in the tunnel and then the chick will move to the tunnel entrance where small, dead crabs will be fed, then live ones gradually gaining in size. However the young will continue to beg for food even once they have fledged and able to feed themselves.



## News from the Field; China Expedition Spoon-billed Sandpiper — Guy Anderson; on behalf of the Jiangsu SBS research team



Spoon-billed Sandpiper Yellow HT; September 2018 — Guy Anderson

The spoony survey and ringing team has now finished fieldwork in Jiangsu, China for this year. Through the fog of sleep deprivation and jet-lag emerges the realisation that we got loads achieved this year. We caught 15 spoonies, 13 of which were unringed and so now sport individually coded small plastic yellow leg flags. This will be a major contribution to our efforts to understand individual migration patterns, estimate annual survival rates and population sizes.

Releasing a box-full of spoonies, and hearing them whirr off into the dark humid night air was particularly satisfying. As was seeing them over the next few days, scuttling around on the mudflats; hyperactive little clockwork birds, probing, pecking and dabbling around shallow pools on the mud for whatever tiny food items they could find (we still know very little about what spoonies eat and what use that bizarre bill for; those are questions for the future).

We spent a lot of our time scanning flocks of waders out on the mudflats, looking for spoonies and estimating the ratio of flagged to unmarked birds out there. Once we have more resightings of marked birds from elsewhere along the flyway over the next few months, we will be able to use these data to make another formal estimate of global population size. But Kane's photo of 6 spoonies in that keeping box is likely to be in the order of 1% of the whole population.



Yellow AU; September 2018 — Guy Anderson



Jiangsu survey and catching team, next to our ringing base camp, September 2018 — Guy Anderson



## News from the Field; China Expedition Spoon-billed Sandpiper — cont'd

Take care with that box!

Our flock scanning has told us already that Tiaozini, the best site for spoonies in Jiangsu, has around 200 individuals staging and moulting there this year. So the statements from the Chinese authorities earlier this year that Tiaozini is planned to be included within the boundary of China's first application for a Natural World Heritage Site in the Yellow Sea is to be



Yellow EU; September 2018—Guy Anderson

warmly welcomed. The flag sightings and flock scan data we have been collecting also tell us that we have a very significant proportion of the world population staging and moulting across all our Jiangsu study sites. But not 100% by any means. Maybe about half? So, where are the rest? The fieldwork team in Russia, earlier this summer, fitted 3 satellite tags to adult spoonies on the breeding grounds in July, in the hope that they might reveal one or more moulting areas elsewhere. ...and it looks like those tagged birds have delivered the goods. Two of them stayed in the same location for well



Six Spoonies in a box — Kane Brides

over a month, and must have gone through their main annual moult there. So, where were they? North Korea! This is potentially a huge step forward, if we really have found a second key moulting area for spoonies. It is hoped that future ground surveys will be able to count them there.

For me, this brings home just how essential international cooperation for spoonies is, and will continue to be. The partnership between conservationists and researchers in Russia, China, all the other range states in East and South-East Asia, and a host of countries worldwide, is working hard, and well, together to understand these birds and so help their countries look after them all along the thousands of miles of their flyway.

As we packed our muddy and dust covered gear for the journey home from China, one of the relentlessly cheery and enthusiastic students from our research partner, Nanjing Normal University, gave me a thumbs-up and said 'see you next year, right?' Now, that's the spirit that will help save spoonies!

Spoon-billed Sandpiper banding and flagging work in China is a collaboration between Nanjing Normal University, BTO, RSPB and WWT.

*The Captive breeding programme at Slimbridge had some success with a fledged bird this year, which unfortunately met with an unavoidable and untimely accident — Ed.*



Scanning for spoonies, Jiangsu Province, China, September 2018 — Guy Anderson



## Lancashire Wildlife Trust Marine Litter Critter Project — Gail Pickett



Crosby library Litter Critter installation created in partnership with Sally Tapp of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust — Gail Pickett

I'm lucky enough to live on the Sefton coast, a vast stretch of mobile sand dunes and sandy beaches where, in the cooler months flocks of waders make shimmering inspirations in the sky.

Sadly the summer visitors and day trippers, are less appreciative of this precious environment than the hungry waders, and often leave huge volumes of waste, presumably in the expectation that it will be removed by the 'litter fairies'.

This litter then has to be gathered in beach cleaning exercises, but once this is done, what are we to do with all this rubbish?

Well, someone came up with a great suggestion. How about making it into Marine Litter Critters?

The thought behind this idea was to create various models, litter critters, and then, use these to decorate an installation illustrating a regenerating seabed. The seabed in question is that in the Irish Sea

that, after many years of over fishing and dredging, has now been declared a marine nature reserve, which hopefully will become a thriving seabed full of native wildlife once more.

Once the seed was sown, the idea grew and it was decided that a film should be made of the process, showing the evolution of the installation, using the time-lapse photography technique.



Formby Library home school children getting stuck in.... — Gail Pickett



## Lancashire Wildlife Trust Marine Litter Critter Project — cont'd

I worked in partnership with Sally Tapp the Lancashire Wildlife Trust's Marine community engagement officer, who regularly holds events along the coast to show people the variety of life living both under the water and on the shore, including under the muddy surface.

Four weeks of hard graft in workshops, which were held over the beginning of the school holidays at three very supportive local libraries along the coast followed. The libraries concerned were Bootle, Formby and Crosby, where some library staff joined in as well, and it was at Crosby that we housed the final installation. The library staff helped to erect the marquee frame, ferry things around and painted some plastic bottle fish. After much gluing, sewing and painting, we had plenty of marine creatures to place in the installation, which was basically a gazebo frame to hold a net from which the creatures could be suspended.



Crosby Library staff getting involved in Marine Litter Critters — Gail Pickett

There was just one snag; we had no net. Luckily the Internet led me to Ghostfishinguk - an organisation of volunteer divers who collect lost/abandoned nets which are sometimes used to make a nylon thread used in carpets/clothing. After a few e-mails, a perfectly sized net arrived and, as you can hopefully see in the pictures, performed sterling service representing the surface of the sea.

Filming done, we held an open day with tea and cake for the people who helped



Crosby library Litter Critter installation — Gail Pickett

us make the creatures and left the creatures in their new environment for a week before, regretfully, having to take it all down; a sad moment for us..

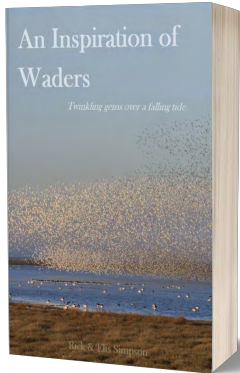
Most of the rubbish was collected from the local beaches – mostly Formby – some other things I've had for a while as I like to keep random 'might be useful' items I find. Quite a few items were *papier mâché* – I made the shapes which the children then painted. I also covered plastic bottles in newspaper so that they too could be painted. Our only proviso for this event was that people tried to make the litter critters look like the fish and creatures that we get off our coast rather than anything more suited to the tropics.

The sea potatoes were made from net bags that are used in cockle 'harvesting' and stuffed with old duvet filling. The sea potatoes were popular, partly at least, I think, because of the name. It was decided that the collective noun for sea potatoes should be a roast, and I think more people will now be able to identify them out on their beach strolls, if nothing else. The basking shark is an old sleeping bag and was moved about on a small wheeled cabinet the library had in their own 'might come in useful' stock.

I'd like to thank Fred for sending the net and thank you too to anyone helping to remove litter, of whatever kind, from our waters and beaches everywhere.

**Wader Quest Shop — Christmas is coming!**

## **Books from Wader Quest Publishing**



### ***An Inspiration of Waders***

by Rick and Elis Simpson

RRP £9.99

**Special offer just £8.50 for Friends and Sponsors**  
all proceeds go to Wader Quest

Discover our cultural connection to waders and find out how waders have inspired the authors, other people's careers, art, literature, poetry, music, myths and legends, and how inspiring some of these birds really are.

Find out too about collective nouns for waders and why 'An Inspiration of Waders' is the right collective noun for these inspiring birds.



### ***Eury the Spoon-billed Sandpiper***

by Rick and Elis Simpson. Illustrated by Megan Tadden

RRP £7.99

**Now just £7.50**  
all proceeds go to Wader Quest

Follow the adventures of Eury the Spoon-billed Sandpiper from when he was just an egg to being a proud father himself. Join him on his amazing journey from north-eastern Russia to south-east Asia and back again on his first migration south to escape the cold Siberian winter. See what hazards these little birds have to face just to survive each day. There are many natural dangers like foxes and gulls, but many more problems are caused by human beings, what the little birds call 'the creatures that walk upright'.



## Wader Quest Shop — cont'd

### Wader Quest 2019 Calendar (A5)



£5 each  
or  
2 for £8  
or  
3 for £10



### New pin badges launched at Bird Fair £2.00



plus;  
just launched  
Redesigned Ruddy Turnstone badge

old badges are no longer available to purchase through Wader Quest



Post and packing charges will be applied to all items in the Wader Quest shop

**Wader Quest forthcoming events — Rick Simpson**

# **WADER CONSERVATION**



## **WORLD WATCH**

**3rd & 4th NOVEMBER 2018**



**A** Go out and see waders wherever you are in the world.



**B** Send us an email telling us what you have seen and where.



**C** Find your sightings on the species list and roll of honour.

**STAND UP FOR WADER CONSERVATION AND SAY:**



# **I CARE**



**THE NATURAL HOME FOR WADER LOVERS**

**WADERS NEED LOVE TOO!**

**waderquest@gmail.com**



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



Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*  
- Dave Jackson, UK



Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*  
- Martin Eayrs; Peru



Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*  
- Elis Simpson; Thailand



Little Stint *Calidris minuta*  
- Mike Bridgeford; South Africa



Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*  
- Donna Martin; USA



Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*  
- Nick Truby; UK



Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*  
- Julian Bhalerao; UK



Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*  
- Mark Stokeld; UK



# WADER QUEST; THE NATURAL HOME FOR WADER LOVERS

**Waders need love too!**

## 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/Publicity: Elis Simpson

Membership Secretary: Ian Dearing

Board members: Allan Archer (Website manager), Lee Dingain, Sue Healey, Chris Lamsdell, Oliver Simms and Andrew Whitelee (Scotland).

Last meeting: 19th July

Next Meeting : 10:30 2<sup>nd</sup> December: venue Linford Lakes Nature Reserve, Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK14 5AH — AGM to follow at 11:00 please advise if you wish to attend; waderquest@gmail.com

Email: [waderquest@gmail.com](mailto:waderquest@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.waderquest.net](http://www.waderquest.net)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/waderquest>  
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Edited by Rick Simpson.

