

**Confirmed talks by Rick and Elis Simpson: all 'Wader Quest' unless otherwise stated.**

08/05/2019 (19.45) **East Surrey RSPB local group**  
 15/05/2018 (19.30) **Walsall RSPB local group**  
 18/05/2019 (11.15) **Pensthorpe Bird and Wildlife Fair**  
 10/06/2019 (19.30) **Burbage Bird Club**  
 17/08/2019 (11.00) **British Bird Fair** (Wader Questing in Peru)  
 10/09/2019 (20.00) **Reading RSPB local group** (Confessions of a Bird Guide)  
 01/10/2019 (14.30) **York Ornithological Club**  
 01/10/2019 (19.30) **York RSPB local group** (Plover Lovers' World of Delight)  
 07/10/2019 (19.30) **Sutton Coldfield RSPB local group** (New Moon on the Wane—The Curse of the Curlews)  
 08/10/2019 (20.00) **North East London RSPB local group**  
 14/10/2019 (18.00) **Titchwell RSPB local group**  
 26/11/2019 (20.00) **Mid Herts Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust local group**  
 05/12/2019 (19.30) **Solihull RSPB local group**  
 21/02/2020 (19.15) **Marylebone Birdwatching Society**  
 02/04/2010 (19.45) **Sevenoaks RSPB local group**  
 14/04/2010 (tba) **Shoreham District Ornithological Society**  
 29/04/2020 (19.30) **Huntingdonshire RSPB local group**  
 07/05/2020 (19.30) **Sheffield RSPB local group**

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

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## Opening gambit — Rick Simpson

The financial year is over and, despite a slow-down in activity on our part, the revenue has continued to come in at a steady pace (see summary on page 2). In our first full financial year in 2014/15 we turned over £9,150.74. The following year it decreased to £8,706.68 but has steadily increased since then; 2016/17 13,626.55; 2017/18 £14,034.88 and last year £15,743.65. This will be increased we hope by the rise in the fees for Friends and Sponsors this year. Inevitably some people will not want to double their contribution from £5 to £10, by any standards a 100% rise is dramatic, but we still feel that the fee of £10 for a year is a modest outlay for most, and should not put too many people off. Thus far we have been greatly encouraged by the reaction of our Friends who have been the first to pay this increase. Some too will be bound to have missed the reminders to change the standing order and rate rises, we will deal with those as they come in. But let us take this opportunity to remind you again:

**IF YOU HAVE A STANDING ORDER FOR YOUR FRIEND OF WADER QUEST SUBSCRIPTION, PLEASE NOTE THE INDIVIDUAL FEE IS NOW £10 AND FAMILY £15.**

Although the change over to a new Membership Secretary is taking longer than anticipated due to technical complications, please do look out for emails from [@waderquest.net](#) in future. In some cases these may end up in your junk mail box.

Once more I have to report that we are still only close to getting our registration from the Charities Commission. A few further tweaks to our planning and constitution

## NEW FRIENDS OF WADER QUEST AND SPONSORSHIP RATES FROM 6TH APRIL 2019

### Friends of Wader Quest:

Individual	£10.00
Family	£15.00
Life	£200.00

### Sponsors:

Club	£20.00
Corporate	£50.00

should see this completed very soon.

We will, despite trying to cut back a little on our activities due to family commitments, be attending a new event this year. The [Pensthorpe Bird and Wildlife Fair](#) will take place on May 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> at Pensthorpe Natural Park, Norfolk NR21 0LN.

At the event we will be giving a talk entitled *Awash With Waders* about the waders to be found in and around The Wash between Norfolk and Lincolnshire in the UK.

In addition we are booked in at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland and expect to have our usual stand in Marquee 7 stand 67. We have been lucky again this year and have been given a talk slot in the Saturday at 11.00am; *Wader Questing in Peru* is the title.

Before either of these however we are attending the Spring Migration event at The Naze Centre, in Essex. It is a one day event on Sunday 28th of April and our two presentations will be *British Wader Migration* and *The Deceitful Lapwing*.



Later in the year we will hopefully be back in Falsterbo for the Bird Show there, and rounding off our year again at the Martin Mere Birdwatching Festival in November.

We should not forget too the Wader Conservation World Watch WCWW6 which this year falls on the 2nd and 3rd of November.



Events that Wader Quest will be attending at which our wonderful volunteers will be running the stand are the annual Wirral Wader Festival on the 31st of August and the 1st of September at Burton Mere RSPB reserve where Gail and Phil Pickett will be attending and the Scottish Ornithological Conference at where Andrew Whitelee and Penny Insole will be our representatives once again this year, details to follow.

## Total raised by Wader Quest to date: £33,185.50

## The financial year results 2018/2019 — Elis Simpson

2018/19

Income	Friends/ Sponsors	Donations	Sales	Charity Shop	Red Bubble	Other	Total	Turnover
April 6-30	530.00	348.41	310.49	0.00	3.05	0.00	1191.95	1191.95
May	100.00	88.11	249.96	165.45	0.00	0.00	603.52	1795.47
June	50.00	44.72	172.00	63.40	0.00	450.00	780.12	2575.59
July	37.50	53.00	110.80	0.00	0.00	0.12	201.42	2777.01
August	460.00	380.95	1606.99	259.00	3.95	0.00	2710.89	5487.90
September	132.50	171.97	1028.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	1332.65	6820.55
October	597.50	212.37	546.20	0.00	14.06	2.97	1373.10	8193.65
November	152.50	150.50	686.00	0.00	5.08	155.00	1149.08	9342.73
December	105.00	838.87	164.00	0.00	10.31	49.95	1168.13	10510.86
January	225.00	216.50	288.99	40.00	24.48	0.00	794.97	11305.83
February	527.50	447.00	87.50	0.00	0.00	0.24	1062.24	12368.07
March	490.00	2194.08	502.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3186.08	15554.15
April 1-5	82.50	12.00	95.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	189.50	15743.65
Total	3490.00	5158.48	5848.11	527.85	60.93	658.28	15743.65	

Expenditure	Grants	PayPal/ebay	Postage	Mechandising	Events	Office	Other	Total	Running total
April 6-30	1547.69	1.89	0.00	499.48	0.00	1.59	0.00	2050.65	2050.65
May	213.00	3.51	19.92	27.39	22.99	14.73	40.00	341.54	2392.19
June	265.92	1.01	5.53	1244.00	0.00	14.73	0.00	1531.19	3923.38
July	68.50	3.45	6.95	821.00	313.32	14.73	158.77	1386.72	5310.10
August	0	7.92	50.73	859.43	143.03	41.73	0.00	1102.84	6412.94
September	1417.98	2.70	23.37	120.94	0.00	128.05		1693.04	8105.98
October	0	11.98	4.27	1791.90	0.00	167.13	0.00	1975.28	10081.26
November	872.87	59.56	21.67	66.96	22.50	88.22	425.00	1556.78	11638.04
December	0.00	5.36	68.72	12.29	0.00	13.14	0.00	99.51	11737.55
January	1455.37	3.50	20.24	412.00	0.00	14.73	0.00	1905.84	13643.39
February	500.10	6.70	14.78	0.00	0.00	13.14	0.00	534.72	14178.11
March	1493.30	2.09	8.81	0.00	2.40	98.14	0.00	1604.74	15782.85
April 1-5	2430.30	5.68	0.00	0.00	622.00	13.14	0.00	3071.12	18853.97
Total	10265.03	115.35	244.99	5855.39	1126.24	623.20	623.77	18853.97	

These are the financial results for Wader Quest for the financial year 2018/19.

These results clearly show a deficit of £3,110.97 and this is part of the reason we felt that we needed to increase our regular income (*i.e.* subscriptions) in an effort to reduce this unsustainable situation. Fortunately we have built up a healthy reserve for the grants and donations we might need to make, to ensure that one of our main remits can still continue, *i.e.* funding wader conservation. However, the running costs are increasing as we grow. We still do not pay anyone a salary or expenses

although we need to show, in the latter case, that we could if required to do so. The exception to this is that we do purchase tickets for volunteers at the British Bird Fair where we need more help than elsewhere.

In the above tables there are a number of items under 'other'. In the case of income this includes a large payment from Leica to sponsor the printing of the current batch of *Eury the Spoon-billed Sandpiper* books. On the expenditure table these include bank charges and the purchase of the copyright of the artwork for the *Eury* book, from the artist Megan Tadden. Having

the copyright means we can use the images as we wish and has facilitated the giving of permission to have the book translated and printed in Chinese for distribution to schools along the Spoon-billed Sandpiper's flyway.

By way of explanation of two other headings shown on the tables; the 'Charity Shop' is the sale of donated items at car boot sales and other events, '[Red Bubble](#)' is an on-line platform for selling merchandising such as T Shirts and other bulky items. This means we don't have to purchase and store stock, which can lead to a surplus of unsold items in some sizes *etc.*

## **New Subscription rates applicable from 06/04/2019 — The Trustees**

**Our subscription rates have risen on the 6th of April to coincide with the financial year.**

**If you have a standing order please remember to change the rate on or after 6th April.**

### **THE NEW RATES**

#### **FRIENDS OF WADER QUEST**

Individual £10.00

Family £15.00

Life £200 (no change)

#### **WADER QUEST SPONSORS**

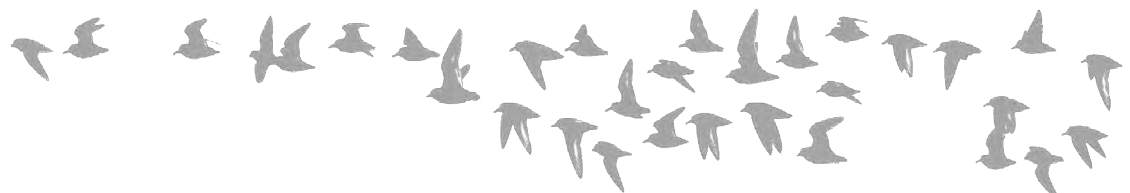
Club Sponsor subscriptions £20.00

Corporate Sponsors £50.00 (no change)

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You can also show your support for Wader Quest by joining our

**WADER CONSERVATION WORLD WATCH6; 2nd & 3RD NOVEMBER 2019**





## The Sands of Change: Series 1 Episode 2— Nature Valley Trust

*'These stories were written in order to make our coastal work, namely the shorebird component of coastal impact programme, more accessible to the lay-person. This is the person to whom the jargon of scientific work does not resonate but they do indeed still care for our environment and the animals that live in it. So we use a social media platform to bridge the gap, to share the plight of the shorebirds in a way that appeals to everyone. With this out the box idea we try to connect people emotionally to shorebirds, and of course to spread awareness in that way. Everyone loves a good soapy!'*

*These stories are written mainly by the interns and staff of NVT who work on the shorebird programme. We grow to know each and every pair of shorebirds that nest on Nature's Valley and Lookout beach very well and try to make it a bit easier for them to fledge their young. We are with the nests from egg to fledge, constantly monitoring and so we get very well acquainted with the social structure and general behaviour of the adults. The stories are based on true events*



*with a little bit of imagination added here and there to make it a palatable read.'*  
- Brittany Arendse NVT.

[We loved this idea of connecting with the local community through story-telling so decided to serialise the stories.]



Taryn the White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* has been a fighter ever since she came to Lookout Beach in the 2014-2015 season. Ringed in December of 2014,

she was named after *The Taryn*, a boat which washed up in her favorite nesting spot in a storm. She tends to keep her life private before arriving at Lookout beach,

but it can be assumed that she moved there in order to find a mate and start a family.

Unfortunately, this has proven to be much more difficult than she expected.



## The Sands of Change: Series 1 Episode 2— cont'd

Finding a mate was the easy part; soon after Taryn moved to Lookout, she met a gorgeous unbanded male to settle down with – easily the sexiest male plover on the beach! To her dismay, however, the pair was unable to find a territory of their own, as the beach was already divided up into established properties for other birds. Not one to give up on her new home, Taryn decided to simply live on the borders of the other territories, and hope that the other residents did not mind the intrusion. This strategy sadly didn't work for the 2014-2015 nesting season, in which she and her mate lost several nests to hungry Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicus* in the Birdsign territory.



Taryn — NVT



Sideburns — NVT

When they returned for the next breeding season, however, the original owners of the territory, Pinky and Frenchie, would not allow them to stay in the area. Instead, the pair tried Poortjies Lagoon Beach and the Sandspit 1 territories, but were then chased away by Mr. And Mrs. Bacon, the pair nesting there. Towards the end of the season, Taryn attempted to settle down in the Grassy territory, but was once again removed by the original inhabitants, this time the Plains (previously Bamboo) pair. Discouraged, she and her mate ended the season again without a single successful nest, but were determined to persevere. The pair did try again during the 2016-2017 season in Sandspit 1, but they were again removed by the Bacons after another nest failure. Taryn finally fought for a place in the Grassy territory beside two other pairs, but again was not able to raise a family with her mate. Frustrated, the pair was determined to turn the season around.

In early January, Taryn laid two small eggs, one of them too small to live in, or so we thought, in the north side of the territory. However, on 4 February, the second egg hatched, revealing a beautiful baby named Clover. The pair were so excited to be parents, working hard every day to keep little Clover safe and healthy. Now, after fighting for three long years, Taryn finally has the family that she has always wanted, including a little chick who soon will be learning to fly. Taryn hopes that this is the beginning of a successful life with her new family.



Clover as few day old chick — NVT



Clover as a fledgling — NVT



## The migrations of Common Sandpipers — Ron Summers



Common Sandpiper — Ron Summers

There is increasing concern about the decline in numbers of Afro-Palaearctic migrant birds that breed in Europe. One of these is the Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, which declined across Europe by 21% during 1980-2009. As with many migrant species, there have been population studies on the breeding grounds, and one found that the long-term decline was due to a reduction in adult survival. It was stressed that there was a need to understand more about the migrations and non-breeding areas of Common Sandpipers, as this may help to understand the decline.

To investigate this little known aspect of the annual cycle, breeding Common Sandpipers in Highland Scotland were fitted with geolocators. From the data on the tags of ten birds that were recaptured on return, it was found that the median date of departure from Scotland was 9 July. Short movements were made within the British Isles in order to accumulate migratory fuel, which was used to reach southern Iberia, where most birds staged before continuing to West Africa, arriving there on 28 July (median date). One bird did not stage and completed the journey in a single flight, but only as far as

northwest Africa. Therefore, different migration strategies were involved.

Six of the ten birds spent most of the non-breeding season (October–February) on the coast of Guinea-Bissau, where the *Archipelago dos Bijagós* is one of the most important wetlands for waders in West Africa. Surveys have estimated that one million waders winter on the intertidal mudflats of Guinea-Bissau, including tens of thousands of Whimbrels and Common Sandpipers in the mangroves.

The other tagged Common Sandpipers spent the non-breeding season in Sierra Leone, Guinea, the Canary Islands and Western Sahara. The southward migration from Scotland took an average of 17.5 days (range 1.5-24 days), excluding the initial fuelling period.

The first northward movement from Africa was on 12 April (median date). Staging occurred in either Morocco, Iberia or France and arrival in Scotland was on 2 May. The northward migration took 16 days (range 13.5-20.5 days), similar to the southward journey.

In terms of determining possible causes for the decline in numbers of Common Sandpipers, loss of habitat in the

main wintering sites is unlikely. Although the area of mangrove has been depleted in West Africa, the scale of loss (about 5%) seems insufficient to account for the decline in sandpiper numbers. Further, rice fields are expanding (some at the expense of mangroves), providing feeding areas for water-birds. Meteorological data suggest that the weather during the southward migration is unlikely to be a problem because most migrated with tail-winds. However, some birds experienced strong cross-winds or head-winds during the northward migration to the breeding grounds (Figure 1), so these unfavourable winds may be an issue, as may be increasing drought in northwest Africa. A major limitation of our study was the fact we obtained data only from birds that returned, whereas obtaining information on those that failed to return would be more illuminating. This will require tags that are more sophisticated than geolocators.

The study was carried out by members of the Highland Ringing Group and fuller details were published in Summers, R.W., de Raad, A.L., Bates, B., Etheridge, B. & Elkins, N. 2019. Non-breeding areas and timing of migration in relation to weather of

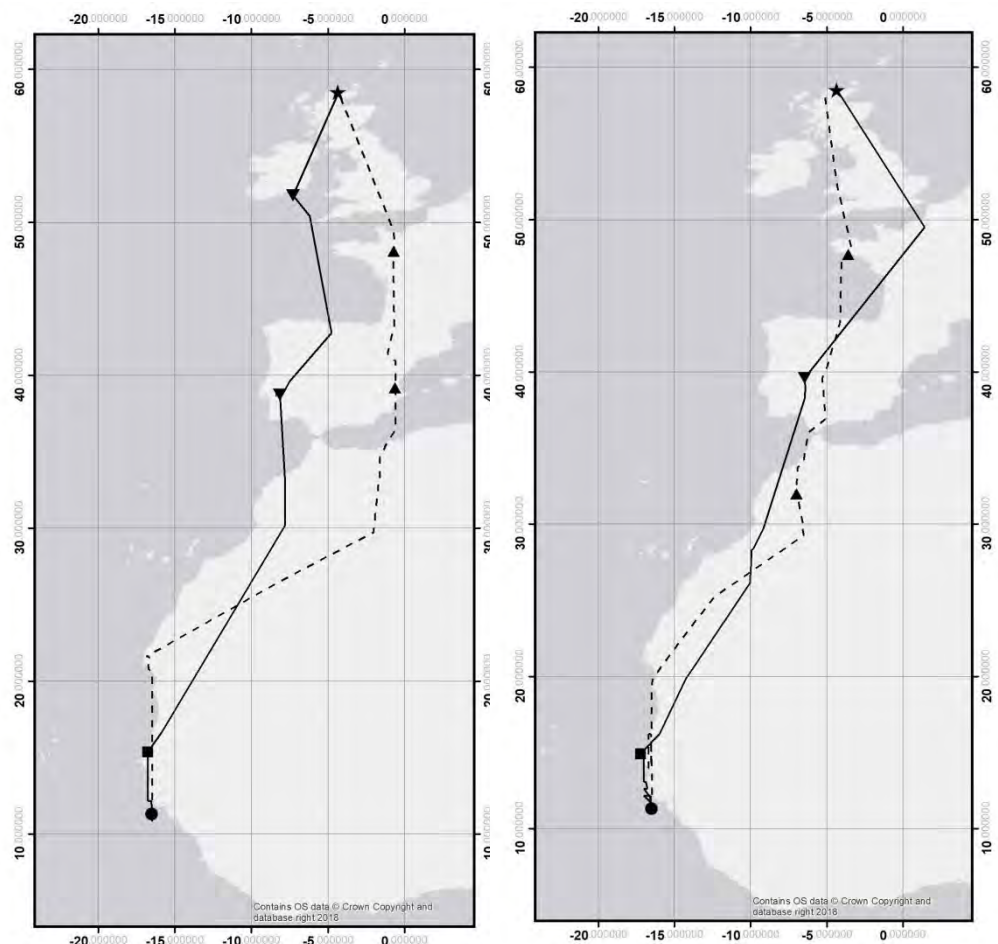
## The migrations of Common Sandpipers — cont'd

Scottish-breeding  
Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos*.  
Journal of Avian Biology doi:  
10.1111/jav.01877.

Figure 1. Contrasting migratory routes by two Common Sandpipers. The solid lines show southward tracks and the dashed lines northward tracks. Also shown is the breeding area in the Highlands of Scotland where the birds were tagged (stars), southward and northward staging areas (southward and northward facing triangles), locations in July-August (squares), and wintering areas in Guinea-Bissau (circles). The left bird appears to have been drifted eastward by west winds on the northward migration. Reproduced from Summers et al. (2019) with permission from Wiley.



Common Sandpiper—Elis Simpson



## Book Review — Rick Simpson

Somebody once wrote, rather generously I felt; '*There isn't much that Rick Simpson doesn't know about waders*'. Well Phil Holland has proved (if proof were needed) that they were wrong. It turns out that there is an awful lot I don't know about this species pair. This book could equally have been entitled '*Everything you ever wanted to know about *Actitis* Sandpipers but were afraid to ask*'. It is thorough, covering all aspects of sandpiper life, from egg to death.

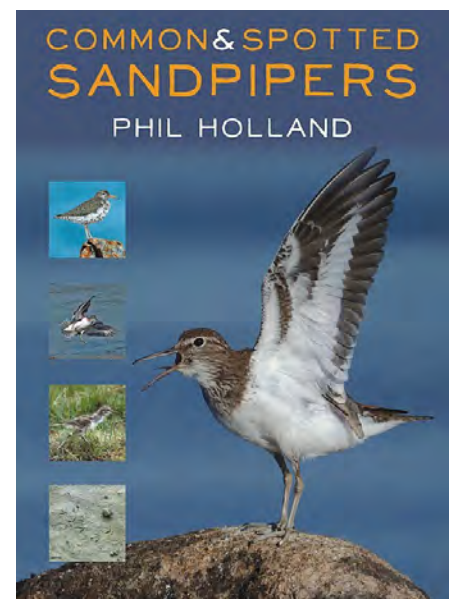
From my personal perspective, the style of the book is very readable. Scientific facts and figures are presented in bite sized, easily digestible, chunks. These sit comfortably alongside opinion and freely admitted guess work. The latter is, however, clearly based on a sound understanding of the birds concerned, and not mere conjecture. Science deals with facts, but in this book Phil Holland helps you read between the lines and decipher what it all means.

Despite being factual with scientific base, it is by no means a dry read, with some light hearted observations and

anecdotes; I warmed to the idea of a sandpiper laughing as it flies away, having duped you with its broken wing display.

Although I read through this book from start to finish, hungry for the knowledge contained within, it will work equally well as a reference book, or something to dip into when the mood strikes. If you wanted to know about sandpiper predation, for example, there is a very clear chapter on that. It is broken down into general issues, predation on adults, eggs, chicks and away from the breeding area. Strategies for predator evasion are covered too, and all in clearly labelled sections. In the section of this chapter concerning 'Competition', the largest part is by far the paragraphs concerning 'People', reflecting the impact we are having on our bird populations

Who'd have thought that two species, which were once considered one, could be so very different in some vital respects? Their differing breeding strategies are a revelation, while so many other facets of their lives are rather parallel



and some identical. If you want to find out more, then you will need to read this book. If you are like me you will find it both interesting and educational. I know I will be dipping into this book time and again.



## Featured artist; Heidi Lots, Artist of two worlds



Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* — Heidi Lots

We met Heidi Lots at the British Bird fair in 2018. She lives in Germany and is a self-taught wildlife artist native to Argentina - South America. The desire to raise awareness and help the conservation of Argentinean birds is the inspiration that makes her paintings live and fly around the world.

Her name is Heidi, and she comes from the mountains; where herd of goats wander among the rocky outcrops, and a broad diversity of birds overfly in the intense blue sky. This girl of German descent spent all her infant vacations enjoying nature, not far from home, living mainly on the fish, berries and freshly squeezed milk available in the environment. She could almost be the girl in the children's fiction bearing her name by Swiss author Johanna Spyri, but this Heidi is a self-taught artist, native to Villa General Belgrano, province of Cordoba, Argentina who would like to leave a mark on the world with her art.

Her mother used to silence the

whole family with a short whisper 'Shh, look!' when she saw a bird nearby. Her father sealed these precious moments with his brushstrokes creating wonderful memories and landscapes. Heidi would sit next to her father imitating him with a brush in her hand, but it was the birds that stole her concentration. Who could imagine that these typical scenes of childhood could evolve and reappear, strengthened, some day in the future?

Growing up she chose an administrative career and worked in positions in which creativity and a love of nature were useful and valued. She had the good fortune to collaborate in the 70.000 ha Villavicencio's Natural Reserve as part of her work with Danone, potentiating her interest for conservation and the painting of birds. Since 2015 she has been living in Germany and enjoying the opportunity to devote herself to art and her family. Her artistic entrepreneurship *Lots Nature* has a special fuel which beats to the rhythm of the heart of a hummingbird and the power

of the wind upon which condors soar.

In Argentina one can find every environment on the planet Earth, this is reflected in a privileged diversity of birds that reaches around 1000 species. The marriage of Rufous Horneros *Furnarius rufus*, architects by nature, dress each year a new lamp post or fence with its emblematic nest that resembles old wood-fired oven. The Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*, or *Tijereta* as it is known by the Argentinians, plucks up his courage with his precious tail to defend the territory in the presence of larger adversaries. The Red Knot *Calidris canutus rufa* flies more than 14,000 km from the Arctic to spend the summer on the south beaches of Argentina. And the Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri*, graces glamorous Argentina's inhospitable Antarctic, but for much longer, who nows? How much does the world know of the existence of these natural wonders of the wild hideout at the end of the world? Who wouldn't desire to be enchanted by these birds in the comfort



## Featured artist; Heidi Lots, Artist of two worlds — cont'd

of their own home whilst leaving them to enjoy the freedom of life in the wild? How to help birds in danger so that they continue to colour the landscape? Painting merely to decorate definitely does not satisfy Heidi's aspirations. That is why *Lots Nature* puts Argentinean birds at its heart and somehow Heidi brings her two worlds together. Each artwork is a challenge to reflect real details of the bird and its environment. Heidi is determined to showcase through her watercolours, worldwide, the amazing avifauna from her land. Moreover, from the sales of these paintings she contributes to conservation of Argentinean birds through collaboration with organizations and other interested parties her motto being 'Art for Conservation'.

In 2015 Heidi started to paint birds with graphite because the colour added a level of complexity to which she hadn't previously dared to aspire. However her self-taught spirit and high level of rigorousness invited her to undertake the challenge as a kind of apprenticeship. This is how she grew in confidence and started adding colour to the pictures and consequently fell in love with watercolour. She said: '*Colour is a must to show the birds as they are. Watercolor does not allow mistakes, it has almost no possibility of correction. In addition, water, the soluble medium, can become unmanageable if it isn't used in its proper measure.*' The thing which Heidi enjoys most is to achieve the vibrant colours to be found in nature with



Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana* — Heidi Lots

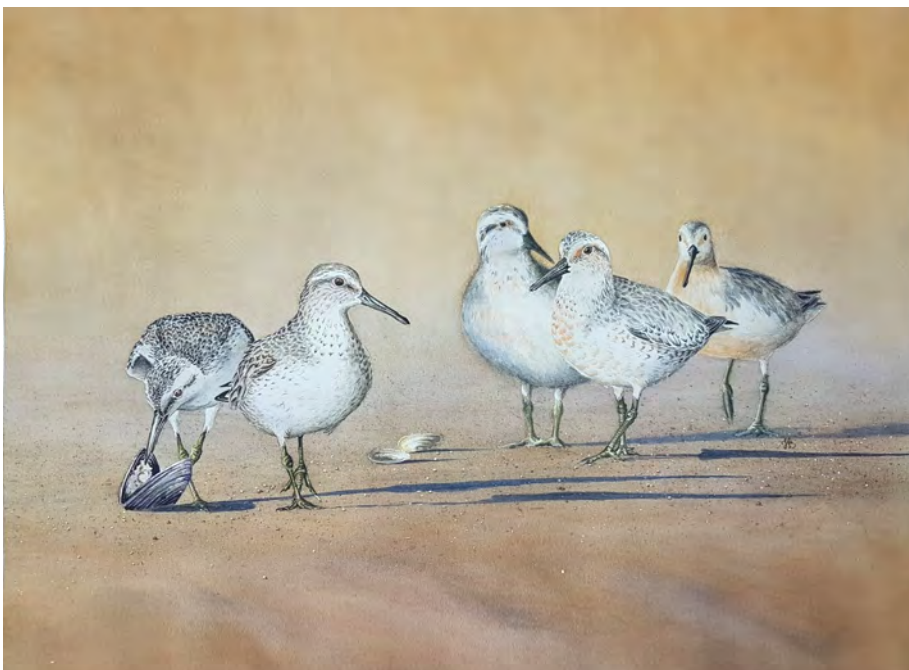
watercolors, which leads the observer to approach the painting and wonder how the work is done.

As birds need two wings to fly, two legs and two sharp eyes to hunt their prey, this near children's fiction wildlife artist works hard to fulfil her two purposes to leave a mark with art. Her realistic style

and engagement has aroused interest in a short time at national and international level. Her birds have already flown to exhibitions like Fabriano in Acquarelo in Italia, Watercolour Biennale India and to the Ornithology Museum Heineanum in Germany. Her decision to show the precious feathers from the end of the world is taking colour and flight. In 2018 she was invited to two solo exhibitions in the Argentinean General Consulate Frankfurt and currently in the Zoo Karlsruhe exhibiting more than 25 paintings in 3 halls.

On the other hand, the collaboration with her art accumulates support and appreciation of the organizations involved. Donations of paintings to support the Argentinian bird conservation projects or the creation of the Mar Chiquita National Park where many birds make their home; the current development with Aves Argentinas of reusable bags printed with *Lots Nature* Illustration proves her compromise. Heidi's conservation purpose is the necessary complement to transform a project into her passion. So, the objects that stole her concentration in childhood have now become a powerful entrepreneurship working to preserve them.

*'Each watercolor contains a great learning and at the same time a challenge. The process begins with long hours devoted*



Red Knot *Calidris canutus rufa* — Heidi Lots

## Featured artist; Heidi Lots, Artist of two worlds — cont'd

to reading, observation and conversations with specialists. This is how the Red Knots aroused my admiration for the shorebirds time ago. With them I understood the vicissitudes they make to leave behind 14,000 km from the Arctic to spend the summer on the south beaches of Argentina. Such effort is a clear inspiration for my brushes and watercolours.

Without challenge, no painting. So, many waders meet that requirement. Their vestment in my native country (Argentina) is usually grey, opaque and unattractive because they stay in the non-breeding moult! How to achieve an attractive painting with that garment? That is called challenge and an example that best represents it is my Wilson's phalarope painting named "Curiosity" that opens this article'.

[Facebook: LotsNature](#)

hlots@hotmail.com



Red Knots in flight — Heidi Lots

## Ruddy Turnstones feeding on flies at top of wall — Jaysukh Parekh 'Suman'

On the 2nd December 2018, when I was returning with my son Nirav after photographing the birds from Jakhau salt pan, I saw some very strange feeding behaviour of Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*.

Generally these birds are found near the sea, walking or running, constantly turning stones, in their search for food. But here were three birds walking on a roof of a building near in the coastal area.

The birds were feeding on the roof, but, in addition, they were feeding on what might have been 'May flies', which were clinging on to the vertical face of the wall. To do this they ran along the roof and leaning over the side, they would extend their necks downward and take the flies with their bills. In this way they consumed the vast majority of the flies that were within their reach, leaving a relatively clear area of about 25cm along the top of the wall. To reach the other flies the Turnstones would have had to have hovered in the manner of a sunbird, but this they were not seen to do.

I don't know if 'May flies' are a regular food choice for Ruddy Turnstones elsewhere but I have never seen them doing this before.

It is matter of conjecture as to why these birds left a huge nearby feeding area and selected this prey and feeding technique.

'May flies' are abundant at this time of year and cling to everything including walls, windows, plants, and even humans.



Ruddy Turnstones feeding on roof showing cleared area near the top — Jaysukh Parekh 'Suman'  
Insert: Ruddy Turnstone feeding on 'May flies' — Jaysukh Parekh 'Suman'



## White Eurasian Curlew — Brian Clasper

While trying to count Black grouse in Upper Teesdale in late February. I was amazed to realise, what I thought was a distant gull flying with 2 Eurasian Curlew, was in fact a leucistic form of Curlew. In the 45 minutes I observed it, the bird was definitely holding territory in a small sheep field surrounded by dry stone walls. Indeed it was aggressive to all who deemed to approach.



White Eurasian Curlew defending territory  
— Brian Clasper



White 'leucistic' Eurasian Curlew — Brian Clasper

## Other White Waders and aberrant waders — Rick and Elis Simpson

The white curlew seen and photographed above is by no means unique. A quick look at the internet and many examples of white waders can be found. We have seen a white Curlew in Cumbria while attending the Walney Wader Festival (see photo). We have also been sent some examples by friends such as the Shore Plover from John Dowding in New Zealand and the Senegal Thick-knee in The Gambia from Gary Waddington (see photos).

It was once common for all abnormally white birds to be called 'albino' but in fact albinism in the wild is extremely rare. Those that do exist do not do so for long it seems, poor eyesight being one factor determining their lack of survival. But more recently a more enlightened term 'leucism' started to come to the fore and is now liberally used for all birds with aberrant white feathering. But, you'll be disappointed to hear, it isn't as simple as that.

Hein Van Grouw at the British Natural History Museum, has studied abnormal plumage and wrote a paper for *Dutch Birding* in 2006 called *Not every white bird is an albino: sense and nonsense about colour aberrations in birds*.

In this article he starts by debunking the 'albino' label, especially those labelled as 'partial albino' which he says is not even possible by definition, but then goes on to explain that there are various types of 'leucism'. To muddy the waters still further

he then lists and describes other conditions which can, and do, result in aberrant feathering. It would be difficult to explain them all here but here is his list; 'brown'; 'dilution' ('isabel' and 'pastel'); 'ino'; 'schitzochroism' ('grey' and 'phaeo'); 'melanism' ('eumelanism' and 'phaeomelanism'). The final section is termed 'differently coloured' and is a general term for other inheritable plumage aberrations such as 'grizzle' and 'acromelanism'.

The paper is definitely worth a read and can be found [here](#).

An interesting aberration story here is that there was once a species known as Sabine's Snipe *Scolopax sabinii*. The first known example of this was shot by the Rev. Charles Doyne on August 12th 1922 in Portarlinton County Laois (formerly known as Queen's County). It was subsequently described by N. A. Vigors as a new species and he called it *Scolopax sabini*. His reasons for giving it full species status were the colour (all dark), the fact that it had only 12, instead of 14, tail feathers and the two outer toes being 'united to the base a short distance', shorter tail and stouter tarsi. Following this discovery several other specimens were obtained, and it was later decided that these were simply melanistic forms of the Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* until melanistic Wilson's Snipes *Gallinago delicata* were found in North America.



Eurasian Curlew, Walney Island, Cumbria, UK  
— Elis Simpson



Shore Plover *Thinornis novaeseelandiae*  
— John Dowding



Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis*  
— Gary Waddington

## Waders in poetry — Karen Lloyd

### Knot, Solway; Tide Incoming

Out there beyond the edge of things  
snow shifts slow auroral  
above an incoming tide

between sea and cloud prismatic colours  
form  
and from the tide's meniscus  
a white line breaks

and lifts into a lucent swirl.  
For a moment only the knot swim  
through snow-air

then fall again funnelled down by the tide's  
loadstone a shining murmuration  
creators of their own weather



Red Knots *Calidris canutus* — Elis Simpson

## From the library

### British Waders in their Haunts

S. Bayliss Smith.

Published 1950.

'To call the Dotterel an anachronism is hardly complimentary, but that is what it really is — a courageous survivor of the fauna that repopulated this land when it was recovering from the effects of the last of the Ice Ages. The very few pairs that still nest in Britain are confined to the inhospitable tops of the Cairngorms Grampians, and other isolated ranges of the central highlands, and, in England, very sparingly to the high fells of the Lake District. Botanists are familiar with the restriction of plant forms to particular zones where the temperature and climatic conditions impose their limitations. The Dotterel is a bird with similar restrictions, and just as Alpine plants descend from their cloudy heights the further north we go, so with the Dotterel. In the far north, in Finland, Sweden and Norway, the Dotterel comes down to earth, and though it favours a plateau with a certain elevation, it will



quite happily nest near sea-level.

But here, if we wish to interview this bird, we must climb above the three-thousand-foot contour in the central highlands before we reach its haunts, and there in the wind-swept uplands, amongst

the lichen-covered granites, we may find its nest, and, if we are fortunate, we may even stroke the bird as she sits there, for the Dotterel is absurdly confiding, a trait which has all too often been the cause of its undoing.'

## We will be at the British Birdwatching Fair again this year

Rutland Water August 16th to 18th

Marquee 7 Stand 67

### Talk: Wader Questing in Peru

Osprey Marquee: Saturday 17th — 11.00 am





## Black Oystercatchers — Rick Simpson

There are, around the world, twelve species of oystercatcher. Half of them are black-and-white and the other half are all-black. In the all-black section there is, however, one species that can't seem to decide exactly what it is.

You will witness during this article that there is sometimes a strong argument for capitalising bird names. This is controversial and grammatically speaking incorrect but sometimes it really does help clarify things. In this case this has partly come about as the powers that be have changed the official English name of some birds. For example, what was once known as the American Black Oystercatcher is now just Black Oystercatcher, so if we were not to capitalise its name, we could be referring to any, or all, black oystercatchers. There is a Pied Oystercatcher in Australia which is one of the world's six pied oystercatchers. Anyway, you get my drift.

So this is an article about black oystercatchers as opposed to pied oystercatchers.

Unlike their black-and-white counterparts, black oystercatchers are typically denizens of rocky, coastal habitats, while the pied species tend to inhabit areas with a soft substrate, at least when breeding, although often feeding at more rocky places on occasion in some cases.

In the Americas all oystercatchers have yellow eyes (elsewhere they are always red), including the all-black oystercatchers, of which there are two species; Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani* and Blackish Oystercatcher *H. ater*. Both are typically sedentary, but they do show some movement outside the breeding season.

Some authorities consider these two forms to be conspecific, although their ranges do not overlap. In common with the pied American Oystercatcher *H. palliatus*, these two species show a brown back contrasting with their head and neck. The only other American oystercatcher is the Magellanic Oystercatcher *H. leucopodus* of South America which does not show this feature, the back being concolourous with the head and neck.

Due to their preference for rocky coasts black oystercatchers naturally have rather linear ranges. In the case of the Black Oystercatcher they occur along the Pacific coast of North America from the Aleutian Islands, south, as far as Baja California. Where rocky coasts are absent, the bird is also absent, however, stragglers (probably roving juveniles) turn up away from their preferred rocks; on jetties for example. One



Black Oystercatcher: Oregon, USA — TiffanyBoothe/FriendsofHaystackRock

incredible record is of an individual which was found a long way from the coast, and sea-level, at high altitude (3,435 feet), in the Washington Cascade mountain range in mid winter. The bird was reported as being in distress, which is hardly surprising as it probably had a combination of altitude and home sickness, and must have been suffering from acute lack of suitable food. The bird was captured, but what its eventual fate was I could not tell you.

The IUCN status of Black Oystercatcher is Least Concern. It has a population of between 8,900 and 11,000 individuals and is showing an increase in its overall population size.

Our experience of this species has been limited to one sighting, and that at a distance. We were watching a Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa incana* from a cliff top in California and, as we did so, a flash of black and red crossed our line of vision. A Black

Oystercatcher flew from a fissure in the rocks far below us and settled on a flat rock to rest and preen. It was shortly joined by a second. When they were still they were ridiculously hard to find, even with that vibrant red bill - as you can see from the accompanying photo. We never did get particularly intimate views of this species.



Nearly invisible Black Oystercatchers: California, USA — Elis Simpson

The Blackish Oystercatcher of South America ranges from northern Peru south to Tierra del Fuego along the Pacific



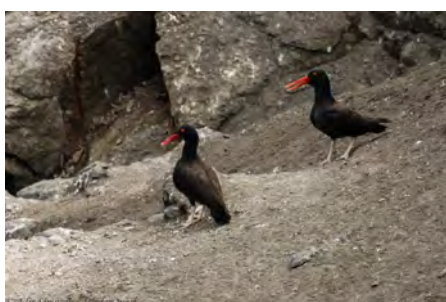
Blackish Oystercatcher: Antofagasta, Chile — Elis Simpson



## Black Oystercatchers — cont'd

coast and south from central Argentina to Tierra del Fuego, on the Atlantic coast and the Falkland Islands. Some movement north occurs on both coasts outside the breeding season. There are very many more Blackish Oystercatchers than its northern counterpart so it is of no surprise that it is also considered to be of Least Concern with between 22,000 — 120,000 individuals.

At Pucusana, in Lima, Peru, where they are called *Pilpilén negro*, while waiting to see Humboldt Penguins *Spheniscus humboldti* we observed a pair of Blackish Oystercatchers interacting with a Belcher's Gull *Larus belcheri*, which didn't get the best of the encounter, being driven off by the oystercatchers. (See photos below)



'And don't come back!' — Elis Simpson



Shellfish collector with Blackish Oystercatcher Antofagasta, Chile — Elis Simpson

Although in some cases the Blackish Oystercatcher's penchant for rocky shores can afford some protection from disturbance, in Chile we witnessed the birds in direct competition with people for the shellfish on a rocky ledge by the sea.

In Europe and Africa the species pairing involves the now extinct Canary Island Black Oystercatcher *H. meadewoldoi* from the Canary Islands and the African Oystercatcher *H. moquini* in southern Africa.

The Canary Island Black Oystercatcher has, in the past, been considered conspecific with the African Oystercatcher and indeed, with Eurasian Oystercatcher *H. ostralegus*, some even lumping all three together. Obviously we have not seen these birds alive in the wild, but we did get the chance to visit their former habitat at the type locality in Fuerteventura which was a moving experience (see article *Hunting Ghosts between the Desert and the Deep Blue Sea* in [Wader Quest The Newsletter Vol. 5 Issue 2 July 2018](#)).

We also had the opportunity to look at the skins in the extinct and

endangered collection at the British Natural History Museum (BNHM), bird collection at Tring. It is sad to note that the first known specimen (which has since disappeared) was only collected in the 1850s, and, although sightings were reported by locals until 1940, the last confirmed sighting was the specimen we saw, which had been shot in 1913 by E. G. B. Meade-Waldo.



Canary Island Black Oystercatcher (BNHM)  
— Elis Simpson

There have been few specimens collected, suggesting the bird was never very common, it was reportedly already uncommon in the mid 19th Century. It is likely that competition for shellfish with humans, with the accompanied disturbance to nesting areas, which rendered this species extinct.



Ghostly Canary Island Black Oystercatcher on a Fuerteventura beach — Elis Simpson

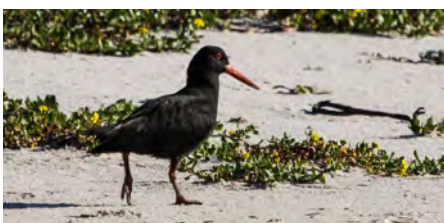


## Black Oystercatchers — cont'd

The African Oystercatcher, known as *Swarttobie* in Afrikaans, breeds along the Atlantic coast of southern Africa from northern Namibia south to the Cape of Good Hope and from there east to eastern Cape Province. Numbers have increased (around 6,670 individuals) and the range is spreading north so the species is of Least Concern. This growth is largely due to better coastal protection, particularly the banning of vehicles on beaches and a colonisation by an alien mussel species, which has proved to be to the liking of the oystercatchers, thus improving the food supply.

One interesting fact about this species is that many juveniles hatched in South Africa migrate north to 'nursery' areas in central and northern Namibia. After two or three years, they return from whence they came and never migrate north again.

We first came across this species when we were looking for another penguin, this time the African Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*. We had somehow got hopelessly lost on our way from the airport to our guesthouse. Fortuitously though, we spotted a sign for Simon's Town. We knew this was where the famous Boulders Beach was to be found, and there, we'd have the chance to see the penguins. We therefore headed for that location, making the most of our navigational failure. We saw the penguins, but the icing on the cake was that we also came across our first African Oystercatcher on a rock in the bay.



African Oystercatcher: Cape Province, South Africa — Elis Simpson

There are no black oystercatcher species in Asia. However in Australasia there is another species pairing; the Sooty Oystercatcher *H. fuliginosus* of Australia and the Variable Oystercatcher *H. unicolor* of New Zealand.

The Sooty Oystercatcher, Least Concern, population 4300-4000 individuals and increasing breeds around the entire Australian coastline, except for a few small sections in the north and south-west. Unique among black oystercatchers this species has been divided into two subspecies. *H. f. fuliginosus*, which occurs along the southern coasts from the Abrolhos Islands in the west round to Queensland in



African Oystercatcher at Boulders Beach, Cape Province, South Africa — Elis Simpson

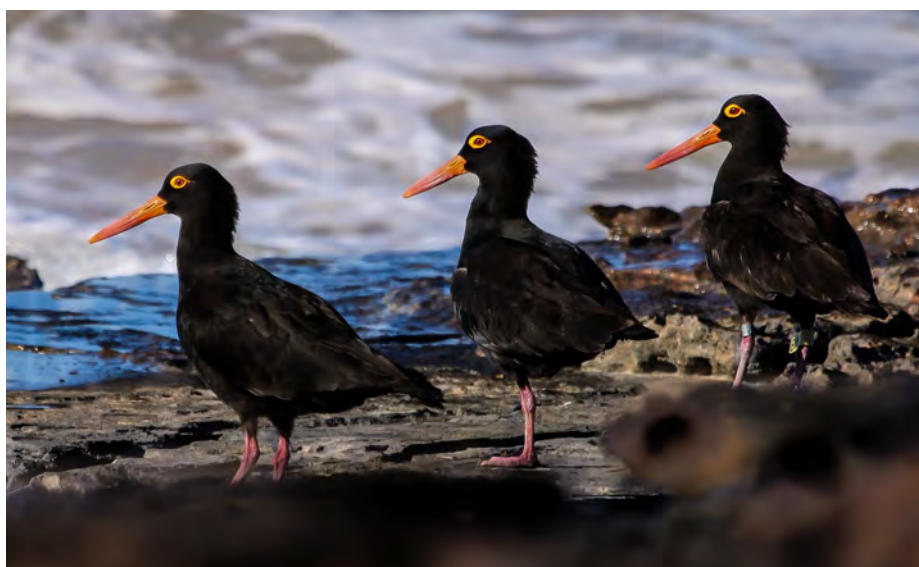


Sooty Oystercatcher *fuliginosus*: Victoria, Australia — Elis Simpson

the east and *H. f. ophthalmicus*, which can be found around the northern coast from Shark Bay in the west to Queensland in the east. The difference in the two subspecies is easiest to see in the orbital ring colour which is yellowish to orange

in *ophthalmicus* and red *fuliginosus*.

We had come across the handsome *ophthalmicus* form in Broome in Western Australia, but our visit to Victoria was our only chance for the nominate form. We wanted to see them both, if we could, just in case they were later split and, let's face it, visually they show greater difference to each other than the two American species. I will not soon forget the occasion when we found our birds as I managed to trip on a rocky, volcanic outcrop, crashing to the ground. My knee still bears the scars to this day. Momentarily I passed out and coming round I saw stars and heard Elis fussing and worrying, not about me you understand, but about the camera which I had deftly deposited into a handy rock pool as I fell.



Sooty Oystercatcher *ophthalmicus* : Western Australia, Australia — Elis Simpson

## Black Oystercatchers — cont'd



Variable Oystercatcher: Waikato, New Zealand — Elis Simpson

Variable Oystercatcher (Least Concern) is so called because this species displays a variable amount of white on the underparts. It is therefore perhaps not a true black oystercatcher at all, having, as it were, a foot in both camps.

Although its English name is quite apt, the scientific name, *unicolor*, given to it by J. R. Foster in 1844, is less so. Only some 70% of the 4000 odd population are truly unicoloured. The scientific name was based on the original specimen, which was all black. In early days the two forms were considered separate with the intermediates being hybrids.

As with all of New Zealand's birds these birds have a Maori name, in fact two Maori names; *Tōrea tai* and *Tōrea pango*. *Tōrea* is a generic name which just means oystercatcher, *Tai* means coast (SIPO is *Tōrea tuawhenua*, *tuawhenua* meaning inland) and *pango*, black.

Called VOC for short by local birders, in its most extreme pied form, of

which around 20% of the population is comprised, VOCs can resemble the South Island Pied Oystercatcher *H. finschi* (locally known as SIPO). One distinction between the two species though is that the border between the black and the white on the breast is more mottled, not as clean cut, and

is inconsistent in its extent, in VOCs than it is on SIPOs.

About 10% of the population are intermediate and this gives rise to the nickname 'smudgies'. The further south you travel, the greater the proportion of all-black individuals becomes.



Variable Oystercatcher: Waikato, New Zealand — Elis Simpson



## Black Oystercatchers — cont'd

It is not only the variation in colouration of Variable Oystercatchers that differs from other black oystercatchers. This species generally chooses to breed on sandy beaches and dunes, only visiting rocky shores outside the breeding season much in the same way that the pied oystercatchers do.

The Variable Oystercatcher's range is coastal New Zealand, on both north and south islands and contains around 4000 birds. Our first sighting was on a rocky platform near Kaikora, which we found

while killing time before our booked pelagic trip. These birds were of the all-black variety. We saw our first pied individuals on North Island at Foxton Beach.

So there you have the run down on black oystercatchers, next time we'll take a closer look at their pied relatives, which are equally fascinating.

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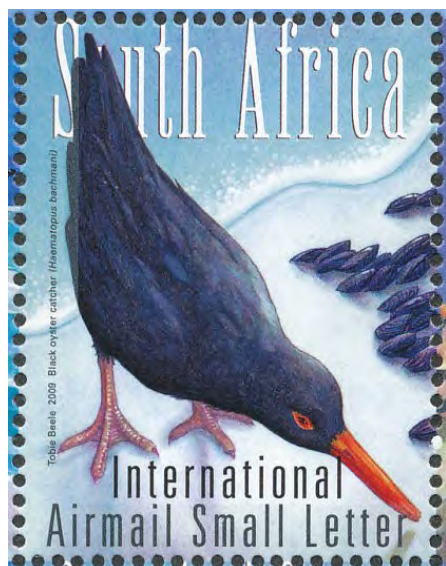
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Oystercatchers in general, lend themselves well to being used as emblems on logos. The pied oystercatchers feature in a number of cases, especially the Eurasian Oystercatcher. The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society in California has the Black Oystercatcher on its very attractive logo.



Across the world bird images on stamps have been very popular and among those there are a number of black oystercatcher images. Some are perfectly apt, and understandable, like this example of African Oystercatcher from South Africa.



However I don't think you'd have much luck finding an African Oystercatcher in land-locked Uganda despite the species appearing on one of their stamps.



Other equally puzzling selections for bird images on a national stamps concern the Black Oystercatcher, which appears on a stamp from Romania, and below that, from the Oceanic Island of Palau.



Rather more in tune with local avifauna are these two depictions of Blackish Oystercatcher which appear on the stamps from the Falkland Islands.



Last, but by no means least is this stamp from New Zealand showing the Variable Oystercatcher in the black form.



## Featured Wader Photo: Kentish Plover — Tomas Lundquist



**Location:** Tiaozini mudflats in Jiangsu, Eastern China

**Species:** Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

**Date:** 28 April 2010

**Equipment:** Canon EOS 1D Mk3, Canon 500mm/f4 IS USM + 2x converter (1000 mm)

**Details:** 1/1000 sec, f/11, ISO 400

*'I was in the area in search of Spoon-billed Sandpipers *Calidris pygmaea*.*

*In order to get decent shots, and also to minimize disturbing the birds, I positioned myself really low in the mud on the flats, such that the waders moved and fed*

*quite calmly at a distance of about 50 meters. All of a sudden a Kentish Plover appeared in front of me, feeding actively. I managed to get a couple of shots of this quick bird, before it moved on.'*

See more stunning photos on Tomas' website [www.tomaslundquist.com](http://www.tomaslundquist.com).

## Kentish Plover: What's in a name? — Rick Simpson

I suspect that most birders are aware that the Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* gets its English name from where it was collected, Kent, a county in the southeast of England. It was so named by a gentleman called John Latham in 1801 after a specimen was sent to him from there. Unaware that Linnaeus had described the bird previously as *Charadrius alexandrinus* (this after the town in Egypt where his specimen came from) called it *Charadrius cantianus* (*cantianus* being Medieval Latin for the county of Kent).

The history of this bird's connection with Kent is not a happy one I'm afraid, as is so often the case where birds come into contact with humanity.

The only regular colony of British, mainland breeding, Kentish Plovers occurred not just in Kent, but also in neighbouring Sussex. In the mid 1800s there were reportedly plenty of them. However, a

Doctor Plomley gave this information to William Yarrell who did no more than announce their whereabouts in his first edition of *A History of British Birds* (1804).

Up to then the birds had been considered rare visitors, few specimens from Britain were known in collections. However, once the word was out, the floodgates opened and every collector wanted a British Kentish Plover. Needless to say it wasn't just adults that were required, the chicks and eggs were also eagerly taken. Collectors visited Kent every season to get hold of these precious birds.

Eventually the birds gained protection in 1904. Shortly after that Dr Norman Ticehurst reported that as many as forty pairs were breeding at Dungeness. Things were looking up for these outpost pioneers of the Kentish Plover clan.

However, a decline took hold

despite the abatement of shooting and Witherby reported in the *Handbook of British Birds* that the last breeding date as 1931 (although H. G. Alexander reports one probable 1933). It seems that although the shooting had stopped, egg collecting had not, and the rarer the species became, the more sought after the eggs were. This, coupled with the development of the area with roads, housing, plus a railway across the breeding territory, the birds' stood no chance.

Since that time there have been one-off breeding reports, the last of which was in Lincolnshire in 1979.

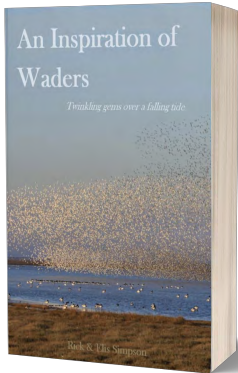
Is there any prospect of them returning? Will climate change reverse their withdrawal from the north? It seems unlikely even though some species are moving north, these birds need peace and quiet; where in our modern times would they find that along our coasts?



## Wader Quest Shop

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

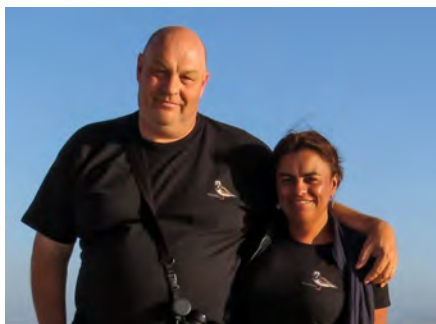
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## Need a speaker for your club or society? — Rick and Elis Simpson



Rick and Elis Simpson

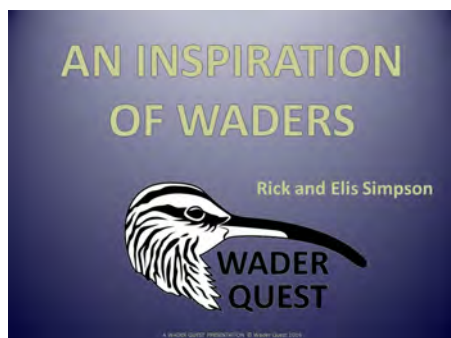
On our first visit to any group we like to give the Wader Quest talk to introduce who we are, what we do, and little of why we do it. All talks are two halves of 45 minutes each but can be flexible.

### Wader Quest:



For those who have not heard of Wader Quest this talk introduces the organisation through the beauty and diversity of the waders to be found around the world; some of which are quite surprising. The presentation is liberally scattered with stunning photos and information about the birds and includes some amusing personal anecdotes from Rick and Elis' travels to see waders. It is both entertaining and informative while emphasising the acute crisis that is facing wader conservation and how we can all help to combat it.

### New — An Inspiration of Waders:



Based on the book of the same name by Rick and Elis Simpson (all sales income goes to

Wader Quest), this talk explores how waders have inspired people, the arts, culture, myths and legends and how they are, in themselves, a most inspiring group of birds. The final act is to suggest a collective noun for the mixed or unidentified clouds of waders such as we see over our estuaries in winter.

### Plover Lovers' World of Delights:



Plovers at home and abroad. Looking at British plovers and some of their equivalents around the world with some insights into their natural history and place in our lives.

### New — Sea Pies, Smudgies and Tobies; The World's my Oystercatcher:



There are twelve species of oystercatcher in the world, half are black-and-white the other half are all black, however, one species can't make up its mind. We'll explore the fascinating world of oystercatchers and our connection to them.

### New — New Moon on the Wane — The Curse of the Curlews:



Curlew species are declining across the world, two are probably already extinct. We look at why this is happening and talk about each of the species in the genus *Numenius*.

### Confessions of a Bird Guide:



If you have ever wondered what your bird guide thinks of you this is your chance to find out; based on the book *Confessions of a Bird Guide* by Rick Simpson. Explore what it means to be a bird guide and how the clients are viewed. Lavishly illustrated by Elis' photos of wonderful mainly Brazilian birds.

### Talks in preparation - all available soon, please ask for more details.

**Wader Quest goes 'down under'** Wader Questing in Australia and New Zealand; **Wader Quest goes 'Latin'** Wader Questing in South America; **Wader Quest goes 'across the pond'** Wader Questing in the USA; **Wader Quest goes 'to the land of smiles'** Wader Questing in Thailand (and the UAE); **Wader Quest goes 'on safari'** Wader Questing in Africa; **Wader Quest goes 'to the land of the tiger'** Wader Questing in India.

~

Rick Simpson is a self employed speaker and writer who, with Elis, gives talks to clubs, groups and societies. At these talks Rick and Elis also actively promote Wader Quest, raising funds and awareness and have, to date, raised a total of £9,159.96 at these presentations. In that time they have also recruited 111 Friends and Sponsors. All this activity for Wader Quest is done on a voluntary basis with no cost to the charity.

At some talks Rick receives, and retains, a fee from the organisation concerned, this covers expenses and is taxable. All proceeds from donations, recruiting and sales remain with Wader Quest. In addition Rick pays £50 a year as an advertising fee to Wader Quest so that the talks can be promulgated here, and on the website. This agreement has been reached between Rick and Elis Simpson, the Trustees and the Charities Commission.



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



Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*  
- Anne Johnson; UK



Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*  
- Mike Bridgeford; south Africa



Andean Lapwing *Vanellus resplendens*  
- Elis Simpson; Peru



Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*  
- Dave Jackson; UK



Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*  
- Gary Prescott; Peru



Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii*  
- Jaysukh Parekh 'Suman'; India



Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*  
- Julian Bhalerao; UK



American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*  
- Jacqueline Cestero; Anguilla



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## Wader Quest Trustee news.

The Trustees would like to make it known that they are looking for some help with the aTreasurer position for Wader Quest.

The role would involve checking monthly accounts as provided by the Trustees, possibly some banking although that is usually not the case, Creating and sending Gift Aid requests to HMRC on a six monthly basis. Producing and presenting annual reports on finances of the charity for the AGM and summaries of present position for Trustee meetings (three a year plus AGM).

The role requires that the incumbent be a Trustee of the Charity and, as such, will be required to attend at least two meetings per annum.

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Edited by Rick Simpson.

