

Forthcoming talks:

16/02/2016 Milton Keynes Natural History Society. (Waders of Milton Keynes) 20.00 Cruck Barn Alston Dr, Milton Keynes MK13 9AP

16/03/2016 Walsall RSPB local group. 19.30 St. Mary's Primary School, Jesson Road, Walsall. WS1 3AY

14/04/2016 Gravesend RSPB local group. 19.30 North Fleet School for Girls, Hall Road, Gravesend, DA11 8AQ.

17/05/2016 York RSPB local group. 19.30 Temple Hall, York St John University, Lord Mayors Walk, York. YO31 7EL

11/10/2016 Macclesfield RSPB local group. 19.45 Macclesfield Methodist Church, Westminster Road, Macclesfield, SK10 1BX

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

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Happy New Year to all the Friends, Sponsors and supporters of Wader Quest.

We hope that 2016 will be a fantastic and productive year for you all.

What a year 2015 was for Wader Quest, our first full year as a charity!

We started the year with one logo and ended it with a completely new one. Reluctant as we were to lose the original logo, to which we had become rather attached, as we had created and lovingly displayed it around the world. However it was time to get serious, so we decided to seek outside help from a graphics company to revamp it. Several attempts later and we were getting nowhere with no design ideas that any of the Trustees really liked. I got frustrated and, following advice given at one of the Trustees' meetings, decided to try for a completely new look. I designed the whimbrel logo and sent it to the graphics firm to tidy up and the result is what you now see on our displays and paperwork. As the design is also our own it made the decision to ditch the old one so much easier and it got unanimous support from the Trustees.



On January the first 2015 we had 85 'members'. At the time these were all referred to as sponsors, but, we felt that this didn't accurately reflect the relationship that we wanted to have with our supporters. It was felt that the name gave rather too much emphasis to the financial side of the relationship and less to the feeling that we are a group of like-minded supporters of wader conservation. It was therefore decided that Ordinary, Family and Life Sponsors would become Friends of Wader Quest instead while Club and Corpo-

rate Sponsors would remain unchanged. As 2015 closed we had 165 Friends and Sponsors, almost doubling our size. We are of course very pleased with this growth in support and hope that the momentum will not be lost in the coming year.

2015 also began with no wader festivals having ever been held in the UK, this we felt we had to address, and, just like buses, you wait for ages and then two come along at once! The year ended with two wader festivals having taken place The Wirral Wader Festival and The Wash Wader Festival both of which Wader Quest were instigators of and in which we were centrally involved.

Wader Conservation World Watch went well too, despite the disappointment of not getting any sightings of Spoon-billed Sandpiper or Magellanic Plover, two of our star birds. This disappointment was slightly tempered by the sighting of Black Stilts by stalwart supporters Colin and Jo Gould who just happened to be on a birding trip in New Zealand at the time; lucky coincidence for us. The number of contributions more than doubled from 70 to 182, a vast improvement and one we hope to exceed again this year with a bit of hard work and networking among our worldwide contacts.

The mobile charity shop continued to bring us revenue throughout the summer so we are grateful to everyone who contributed unwanted items for that project, we did have a hiccup with accommodation for the storage which we hope to resolve soon.

With regard to sales of Wader Quest merchandising we were pleased to continue our good relationship with Lars Jonsson who once again let us have some

of his magnificent posters that he had signed to sell to raise funds. These posters are tremendously popular and we hope to perhaps get some more if both he and Wader Quest are able to attend the Falsterbo Bird Show again in 2016.

During 2015 we gave 13 talks to a collective audience of over 600 people spreading the word about Community Wader Conservation. We are very pleased to see that we are not the only ones who are championing this cause as more and more conservation organisations draw on the pool of communities and volunteers that are willing and able to help. Mind you we did discover that although this has become more and more critical in the modern world of conservation where wader populations are in crisis and conservation organisations cannot hope to get everything done without this support. It is by no means a new idea, just take a look at the quote at the top of the last page of the newsletter to see what I mean.

Elis and I, plus all the Trustees wish to thank everyone who has helped us make 2015 a successful year for Wader Quest.



Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*
— Elis Simpson

A summary of Wader Conservation November — Rick Simpson



It all started with the idea for a festival in the UK which came from Elis' head one day when we were writing about some shorebird festivals in the USA. We realised that the UK had no such thing, so Elis innocently said "we should organise one" without perhaps realising how much work that may entail. Naturally I thought this was a splendid idea and with equal naïvety thought about where and when to best do this.

We had two ideas for a where this could happen. The Dee Estuary in the Wirral, which is a magnet for waders and already had an active group of wader enthusiasts working there (Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens DEVW) and the Wash in Norfolk where we already had contact with the Wash Wader Ringing Group (WWRG). So we sent out emails to both in the hope that one may take up the idea. In the end, they both did!

We made contact with the DEVW through Karen Leeming who suggested we should make a presentation at a meeting where she had assembled people from the Wirral Council, Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT), RSPB Dee Estuary Burton Mere Reserve, and the Wirral Park Rangers who listened to the ideas we had and enthusiastically warmed to the concept. Soon a committee was formed with Karen (DEVW) taking the lead with Lynn Greenstreet and Matt Thomas (Wirral Rangers), Sarah Bennett (CWT), Dan Trotman (RSPB) with the addition of Sheila Ryde (DEVW) joining us as scribe and minute taker. Elis and I committed to monthly meetings too ably assisted by Sue Healey who is our Event Co-ordinator making a core committee of nine people. Our suggested date of the 14th and 15th of November was accepted and adopted by the group. Elis and I were

constantly delighted by the enthusiasm and effort that every one of these people put into this event and we were pleased that we had chosen the Wirral for the first ever wader festival in the UK.

At the same time we heard back from the WWRG through our old friend Ruth Walker a prominent member of the group and a Friend of Wader Quest. Although they were excited about being involved, they could not commit to organising the event, which we had planned perhaps to be at Snettisham RSPB Reserve, but they suggested we should contact the RSPB office there to see if they were interested. They were and a meeting with Carrie Carey confirmed this interest when we joined Matt Merritt (Bird Watching Magazine) on a visit to both Titchwell and Snettisham. The Wash Wader Festival was to take place on the 28th and 29th of November but instead of Snettisham it would, for logistical reasons, be at Titchwell.

With the proposed Wader Conservation World Watch (WCWW) which was to take place on the 7th and 8th of November, and our annual visit to Martin Mere Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) Northwest Birdwatching Festival on the 21st and 22nd, we had an event planned for every weekend in November and after consulting with Matt Merritt who agreed to support the idea, Wader Conservation November was created. Matt offered to publicise events of the run up to November and make the November issue of Birdwatching Magazine (which is a Founder Corporate Sponsor of Wader Quest) a wader special even creating the Wader Conservation November logo.

So everything was in place, work went on throughout the year to plan and execute these events which all took on a character of their own.

Wader Conservation World Watch



This event was summed up in detail in the recent Wader Quest newsletter special. If you didn't receive a copy then please get in touch and we'll email you one.

It is worth noting the main achievements again though;

Together 182 observers
Saw 124 species seen
In 33 countries
On 9 flyways
On 6 continents

It was very pleasing to improve on last year's totals and have organisations making the weekend into an event in some cases. The most important thing for us though was that we had so many people who were prepared to go out and look for waders in order to stand up and be counted in support of wader conservation.

We also carried out a prize draw from the entries, the winner of which won a Lars Jonsson wader poster signed by the artist. The winners were Mike and Rose Clear of New South Wales in Australia who kindly sent us a photo of them selves with the poster when it arrived. We were especially pleased that they won as they are signed up Life Friends of Wader Quest and have become friends via the correspondence that we exchange



Mike and Rose Clear with their Lars Jonsson poster.

We felt that the event was a success and greatly look forward to doing it all again this year on the 5th and 6th of November, mark it in your diary now.

A summary of Wader Conservation November — cont'd



The Wirral Wader Festival

The Wirral festival got up a great head of steam with the committee working flat out to make it as successful as possible, but the one thing you cannot plan for is the weather.

The weather forecasters' stories of gloom and doom on the eve of the weekend came to pass but, despite amber warnings with 'don't leave home unless you have to' rhetoric, a good number of people ignored all attempts by the met office to scare them and they ventured forth to the Wirral Wader Festival.

The main venue was Wirral Country Park at Thurastaston and there were three satellite sites where waders roost; New Brighton Marina, Hoylake Promenade and Red Rocks at West Kirby.

At the main venue at Thurastaston Wader Quest had a stall in the lecture theatre along with Robert Parkin an artist and conservationist, Matt Merritt of Birdwatching Magazine and a fine display of mounted wader specimens brought along from the Liverpool Museum by Tony Parker (in addition we had a couple of specimens lent to us by the British Natural History Museum).

In the main part of the building there were stalls, exhibits and entertainment including the RSPB and CWT and also wader watching walks with Alan Davies and Ruth Miller which were enjoyed by those that participated despite the rotten weather. For the book collectors among us there were also two second hand book sellers. Browsing through their shelves is a frustrating experience when you are, as I am, an impecunious book lover. There was an exhibition called "Creatures in the Mud" where some of the invertebrates that waders feed upon were in a live display.

A children's painting competition was ably run by Sarah Spruce of the RSPB with some

fantastic entries; all the paintings were displayed at Martin Mere the following weekend. The first prize in each age group on both days was a pair of Savanna binoculars kindly donated by Opticon.

Both days started slowly but by lunchtime there were folk passing through, a slow but steady trickle. On the Saturday many were people who were simply sheltering from the rain, but from our point of view, and with the stalwart assistance of regular Wader Quest volunteer John Davis, we sold a good number of raffle tickets because the range of prizes was attractive to everyone, not just birdwatchers. Sales of our other goods however were patchy except for the perennially popular wader pin badges.

We had the idea that we should get as complete a record of the events as possible, this being the first wader festival of its kind in the UK and so we enlisted the help of Elliot Montieth a young photographer in the region to act as festival photographer recording the event. The weather confounded that plan making life very difficult and very wet for him as he was travelling by bike!

We were donated three pieces of artwork over the weekend, these we will sell in order to raise funds for Wader Quest. One of these pictures was a print of a Barn Owl painting that Rob Parkin gave to us and the other two were pencil originals by Gail Pickett who, together with her husband Phil, is a Founder Friend of Wader Quest. These drawings are absolutely tremendous, one of a Common Snipe and the other of a Common Redshank, you will find these and Rob's print on the website if you are interested in purchasing one to help us raise more funds.

I confess I was worried about the talks due to an apparent lack of potential audience, but once the chairs were set up, as if by magic, people appeared out of the woodwork to fill them. Wader Quest opened the talks with an overview of Community Wader Conservation.

We were followed by a very entertaining talk by Matt Thomas one of the Wirral Country Park Rangers. His talk was about photographing waders and he talked about some of his field craft techniques and travels after waders. The photographs were stunning and we hope that one or two will adorn future Wader Quest publications and calendars.

The last talk of the day was by none other than Alan Davies and Ruth Miller talking about their Birdwatching Trips venture,



Matt Thomas holding forth - Elis Simpson

showing us some of the amazing places they visit and the birds they see there.

Sunday followed much the same pattern but the wind being the main problem instead of rain. However the talks were again all very interesting. The first was by local wader expert Allan Conlin who went through some of the key ID features of British waders to a captivated audience.

This was followed by an equally enthralling talk about wader food, or benthos (organisms that live under, in or on the sea bed) to give it its technical name delivered by Dave Clare. We learnt a lot about what lived where and how this affected their suitability as prey for waders and also what the effects of man's activities was upon them.



'Creatures of the mud' being closely examined - Elis Simpson

Lastly we were treated to talk by Scott Reid who spoke about why he loves digiscoping using his iphone. The most memorable sequence of footage was not of a wader though but a sequence of a Wryneck catching ants in slow motion.

There were events happening at three other venues too where there were high tide roosts at West Kirby/Red Rocks, Hoylake and New Brighton Marina but the weather really



DEE ESTUARY
VOLUNTARY
WARDENS



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust



A summary of Wader Conservation November — cont'd

affected them as they were all outdoor events, even so each of them reported a good number of visitors when the wind and rain allowed.



A wind and rain swept Hoylake Promenade
- Elliot Monteith

There will be another Wirral Wader Festival in 2016, the first meeting will take place shortly to decide on some details such as when and where, so watch this space for details as they emerge. But, whatever happens from now on, we can honestly say that Britain is now no longer devoid of wader festivals, and hopefully this will be the first of many.

Thanks to everyone who made this festival happen and to the people who braved the elements to come and visit us.

Northwest Birdwatching Festival Martin Mere

Although not strictly a Wader Conservation November event we included it as we were going to attend anyway and the WWT had kindly agreed to let us display the Wirral Children's competition winners all weekend at the event. Prizewinning entries can be seen on page 5.

The Wash Wader Festival



Once again the weather did its worst with a maelstrom hurling itself across the Norfolk coast most of the weekend. The carefully laid plans to have a couple of gazebos set up near the RSPB Titchwell reserve centre were scuppered and we ended up setting up our stall in the Parrinder hide. This was a duel edged sword. From the very positive side of things we were at least set up where we could see waders, help point them out and discuss them with visitors, on the other hand we were not in a position to meet and greet people in the way that we had hoped and distribute our wader check lists which we

hoped to gather again as the people left.



Wader checklist for Titchwell - Winter

Location	Reserve	Beach
Species		
Avocet	✓	
Oystercatcher		✓
Lapwing	✓	
Golden Plover	✓	
Grey Plover	✓	✓
Ringed Plover	✓	
Redshank	✓	✓
Greenshank	✓	
Green Sandpiper		
Curlew	✓	✓
Black-tailed Godwit	✓	✓
Bar-tailed Godwit		✓
Common Snipe	✓	
Jack Snipe		
Turnstone	✓	✓
Knot	✓	✓
Sanderling		✓
Dunlin	✓	✓
Ruff	✓	

Name WADER QUEST

The WWRG were also left out in the cold a bit setting up their information on a café table outside the centre, they did a great job



Volunteer Ian Dearing putting on a brave face
- Elis Simpson

of getting people's interest and we had our own volunteers there with them. On Saturday we had Ian Dearing and on Sunday Andrew Whitelee and Penny Insole, all of whom were greatly praised by RSPB staff for their method, enthusiasm and bravery in the face of the weather conditions.

We also had an artist in residence at



Andrew and Penny who thoughtfully brought tea to the troops in the Parrinder hide - Elis Simpson

Titchwell, this time it was Dan Bradbury who came along to help us. During the time he had with us in the Parrinder hide he created a wonderful Pied Avocet painting in his own inimitable style.



Dan painting his Pied Avocet - Elis Simpson

The RSPB held a photographic competition for photographs of waders taken over the weekend. We formed part of the judging team and the winner with his photograph can be found on page 6.

Considering everything we had a great weekend and enjoyed the company of many birders in the Parrinder hide. I hope that we will be able to join forces with the RSPB again next year for another event on an RSPB reserve somewhere where there are plenty of waders to be seen.



The WWRG team Ruth Walker, Robert Pell, Lysbeth Muirhead & Sam Franks - Elis Simpson

Wirral Wader Festival children's painting competition winners.

The children's painting competition was held on both days at the Wirral Wader Festival and in two age groups meaning there were four first prize winners. Each received a pair of Opticron Savanna compact binoculars, an excellent starter model for up and coming birders. These binoculars were kindly donated by [Opticron](#). Runners up won 'goodie bags' from the RSPB.



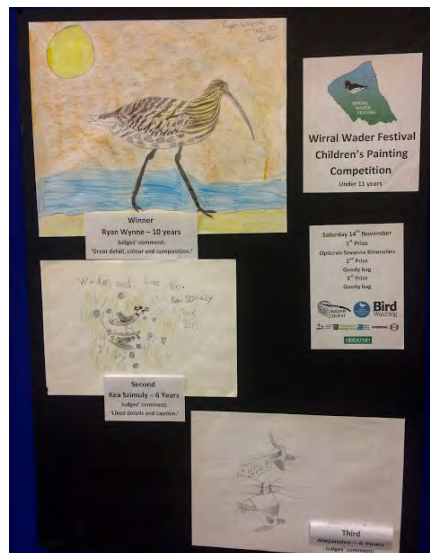
Saturday 11+ winners. 1st Linxie Jian, 2nd Leah Wynne.



Linxie Jian using her new binoculars in her local park.



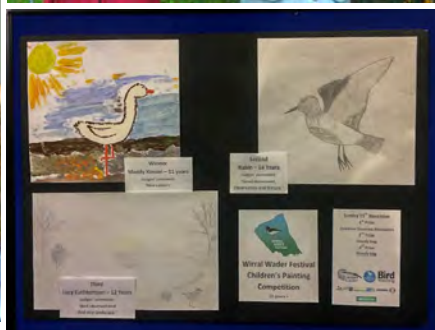
Leah Wynne receives her runner-up prize from competition organiser Sarah Spruce.



Saturday under 11 winners. 1st Ryan Wynne, 2nd Kea Szimuly, 3rd Alejandro (no surname supplied).



Ryan Wynne with his winning picture and prize (above) and using his new bins with sister Leah (below.)



Sunday 11+ winners 1st Maddy Kinson, 2nd Rubin (no surname supplied), 3rd Lucy Cuthbertson.



Sunday under 11 winners. 1st Molly Durno, 2nd Libby Moore, 3rd Annabelle Blacksidge.



Molly Durno with her prize.

There was an amazingly high standard of entries on both days and the judges found it hard to choose between them.

The competition was organised by Sarah Spruce of the RSPB who has had a lifelong passion for wildlife which, after obtaining her BEd, resulted in her taking posts teaching at Chester Zoo and then later for the RSPB at Fowlmere in Cambridge. She said "I feel it is vital to connect children with wildlife in positive ways to inspire them to become conservation minded adults". Making art has also been a lifelong interest of hers and she is increasingly absorbed with the depiction of wildlife in her own art. She runs adult art classes and has a FaceBook page - [West Wirral Art Classes](#).

The judges with Sarah were Marion Tuffrey and Rob Symington both involved with the [National Exhibition of Wildlife Art](#) and Robert Parkin a wildlife artist and conservationist.



The Wash Wader Festival wader photography competition winner.

During the Wash Wader Festival, affectionately dubbed 'Waderfest' by the RSPB staff, there was an open competition held for photographers. The subject matter was of course to be waders and the photographs had to be taken at Titchwell during Waderfest.

This was a tough assignment due, as already stated, to the dreadful weather conditions that prevailed for almost the entire weekend. There were one or two short breaks in the cloud and this allowed the winner, John Walker, to take the stunning portrait of a Ruddy Turnstone.



Wash Wader Festival wader photograph competition winner John Walker with his prize, a very attractive sculpture of three sandpipers kindly donated by the RSPB.



The judges commented thus: *We chose this picture partly because it shows the bird exhibiting natural behaviour, this is good for two reasons; firstly it is interesting to see a bit of action with the bird going about its daily toil to survive rather than a stiff portrait in a guide book pose; secondly because the bird is clearly not stressed by the presence of the photographer. The photo is taken in good light with a pleasing highlight in the eye. The narrow depth of field makes the bird stand out with no distractions. The colours are mostly of subtle hues which contrast strongly with the bright orange legs.*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* has a wide distribution and can be seen on every permanently inhabited continent of earth depending on the season. Breeding across the Arctic from Alaska, through the Palearctic to north-east Canada (*A. i. interpres*) and across the Canadian Arctic (*A. i. morinella*). Outside the breeding season they frequent coasts; South America and some Pacific islands (*morinella*), Western Europe and north Africa (Greenland and north-east Canadian populations), to southern Africa and Madagascar, across coastal tropical Asia and south to Australia and New Zealand.

Victorian Coastal Awards — Renee Mead

Extract from 'Word about the Hood' the newsletter of the BirdLife Australia Beach Nesting Birds Project

The Beach-nesting Birds team had to brush off the sand to attend the Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence at the National Gallery of Victoria in mid October. The Coastal Awards are to recognise outstanding efforts by individuals, groups, businesses and schools in protecting Victoria's coastal and marine environments.

The BNB Project was a finalist in both the Community Engagement and Education categories, for the Biennial Count and the 'Bringing the Coast to the Classroom' education program. After an anxious wait and watching other worthy nominees, the

BNB program won the award for Education!

The award was presented by Victorian Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville.

We are very lucky for this to be our third award since the program started in 2006, in the third different category, which shows just how diverse this project is. In 2007, we won a Victorian Coastal Award for Species Protection and in 2011, we won in the Natural Environment category.

Congratulations to this hard working and very effective team, two of whom, Renee and Grainne, Elis and I had the pleasure of meeting in person when we visited Australia.

Wader Quest has raised £1,315.80 in support of the Hooded Plover one of the



L-R: Renee Mead, Grainne Maguire, Meghan Cullen (BNB team) James O'Connor (BirdLifeAustralia's Head of Research) and Hon Minister Lisa Neville. — A.Carbines

species that this fantastic team are protecting. — Ed.

Iceland awaits — Graham Appleton

When Jenny Gill and I reach Iceland in the middle of April this year we shall do so at the same time as the first few Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*. We will have flown for only three hours but the godwits might be in the air for up to 48 hours, having taken off from staging areas in The Netherlands or the British Isles. Between 1% and 2% wear colour-rings, thanks to the efforts of ringers in Iceland, Spain, Portugal, France the UK and Ireland, and some individuals have been contributing data to an ever-growing database of movements for twenty years.

April weather in Iceland can vary markedly; it may be mild enough for new arrivals to think about visiting their territories but frost often constrains flocks to stay together on estuaries, making it easier to look for old friends wearing colour-rings. We'll be making daily visits to Grafarvogur, a small estuary in the Reykjavik area, and every other day we will take a trip to the Southern Lowlands or to the Mýrar-Borgarfjörður complex of western Iceland, to look for these birds and record their dates of arrival.

The Reykjavik area benefits from the warm waters of the gulf-stream that clip the southwest corner of Iceland. Within the city limits, the small estuary of Grafarvogur, constricted by port, housing and road development, provides a particularly sheltered and relatively frost-free muddy haven for Black-tailed Godwits and other waders, geese, ducks and gulls. The Southern Lowlands form the historic heartlands of the range for Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits but large spring flocks include many birds that have just arrived in the country and which will move on within a few days or even hours. The Mýrar coastline, in the west, is made up of many small inlets and islands, affording sheltered bays in which muddy sediments settle. As well as being



RW-OX – newly arrived in the Southern Lowlands in 2014 — Lilja Jóhannesdóttir

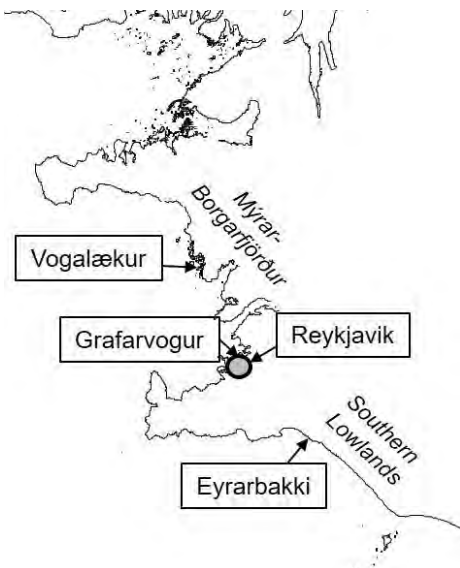
attractive to Black-tailed Godwits in April, this is an important area for other waders, especially Knot in May. The main site for colour-ring observations is at Vogalækur, visited by as many as 1,100 birds at a time. On a spring tide this is the first area to uncover, with perhaps a dozen colour-ringed birds spotted within a few minutes, as they pour off the roost and onto the mud-flat. Some of the best ring reading opportunities have been provided in the worst of weather; in the twenty-minute gaps in a near-blizzard, for instance, with wind rocking the car from side to side.

As individually-marked birds have been observed year after year, patterns have started to appear and we have learned when to expect some of our old friends, such as YL-LL (yellow lime on left, lime lime on right), a large and strikingly pale female that spent many winters in Cork Harbour, in Ireland, and LW-OX, often one of the first colour-ringed bird of the year to appear. There is variability of timing, due to the very different spring migration seasons, but there also appears to be a predictable order of arrivals. These individual stories have built into a recent paper (Gill et al 2015) which shows that it is the new recruits, not established members of the breeding population, that are changing the timing of spring migration for *islandica* Black-tailed Godwits. This paper forms the basis of one of a series of WaderTales blogs: [Why Is Spring Migration Getting Earlier?](#)

Although new birds arrive in the Reykjavik area, migration seems more real on the

south coast, where only 900 km of sea separate Iceland from the UK. Here, coastal pools, such as the complexes at Landeyjasandur, Stokkseyri and Eyrarbakki are focal points for newly arrived Black-tailed Godwits, wisps of Snipe and flights of ducks. Eyrarbakki beach, in particular, is a great place to witness visible migration. From a vantage point by the abandoned harbour you can observe newly-arrived waders, Meadow Pipits and White Wagtails feeding on the beds of tide-rack, whilst looking south you can pick up parties of geese, swans and waders from way out at sea, with Arctic Skuas too.

Watching a flock of newly-arrived godwits at Eyrarbakki, it is possible to imagine the forces that are influencing the actions of the birds. A flock of sixty godwits may have made the journey from the south coast of England, the Netherlands or Ireland but, now in Iceland, their individual priorities are different. The pools offer a suitable roosting spot, sedge-beds in which to feed and fresh water for drinking and bathing but, despite these attractions, some birds are eager to continue. For those heading for western areas, the muddy estuary of Grafarvogur is only an hour or so further on, for local birds there may be the draw of the territory and for farmland specialists there may well be rich pickings just ten kilometres inland. A new flock may land as a group but it is not unusual for some birds to continue or for there to be what looks almost like 'discussion' as birds circle, almost land and then circle again.



Iceland awaits — cont'd

then circle again.

Individual histories provide fascinating insights. On 16 April 2008, the number of birds on the pools at Eyrarbakki grew from 4 to 170 over the course of an hour, as birds came in off the sea and started feeding enthusiastically around a marshy pool. The flock included GY-LW and RW-OX, the first ringed on the Wash in 1998, would be observed next day in Vogalækur, 90 km away in western Iceland, whilst the second would be back on Grafarvogur on the eighteenth, where it had been ringed in 2002.

As we search for colour-ringed birds in Iceland, wader enthusiasts around the UK, in the Netherlands and Ireland are doing the same. We hear tales of marked birds that have been forced to stop off on Scottish islands and there is always the tantalizing potential of establishing a new record for the shortest duration between pre-migratory and post-migratory sighting for an individual. There's all the romance of satellite tracking individual birds on migration but without the expense – and with a lot more birdwatcher engagement.

References:

Gill, J.A., Alves, J.A., Sutherland, W.J., Appleton, G.F., Potts, P.M. & Gunnarsson, T.G. 2014 *Why is timing of bird migration*

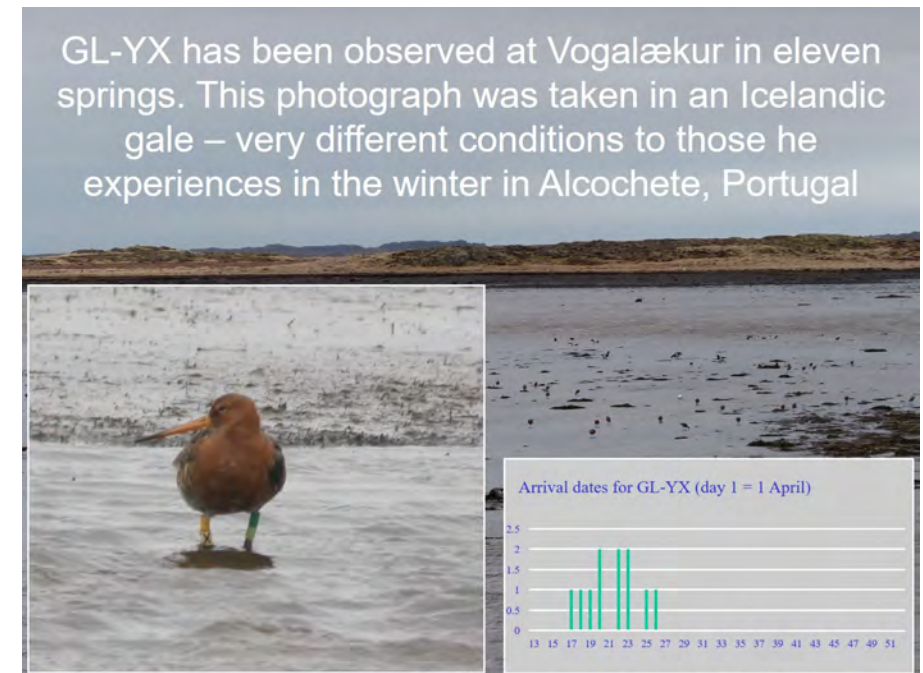


Photo - Jennifer Gill

advancing when individuals are not? Proceedings of the Royal Society B., 281, 20132161

Graham writes a fantastic blog called WaderTales which celebrates waders and

wader research. Many of the articles are based on previously published papers, with the aim of making wader science available to a broader audience — Ed.

WaderTales can be found at:

<https://wadertales.wordpress.com/about/>

The future of suitable habitat for Eurasian Whimbrel and Far Eastern Curlew in Darwin Harbour, Northern Territory, Australia — Amanda Lilleyman

The plight of waders belonging to the Numeniini tribe has been recognised across the flyways of the world, and scientists and wader lovers are desperately working to reduce further declines of these species. Most of the time, the threats to these birds seem out of the hands of those that watch waders routinely; however, the ever-useful tool of monitoring can reveal unknown trends and document new use of roost sites. While stopping the destruction of tidal flats in the Yellow Sea may not be achievable for some, monitoring of waders has helped us learn a great deal about species' population status and regional trends. Monitoring of waders at a roost on the non-breeding grounds of Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia has revealed some new insights into the local populations of Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*.

Darwin Harbour in the Top End of Australia is a macrotidal tropical estuary with



Far Eastern Curlew, terns and pelicans roosting in the dredge pond at high tide — Amanda Lilleyman

The future of suitable habitat for Eurasian Whimbrel and Far Eastern Curlew in Darwin Harbour, Northern Territory, Australia — cont'd

up to two thirds of the harbour's foreshore fringed by mangroves. Supratidal salt pans back these stilted forests and provide roosting (and some foraging) habitat for waders. Eurasian Whimbrel, Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper all make use of these mangrove forests for roosting, while the larger Far Eastern Curlew wait out the tide in the salt pans or move to roosts nearby. One such roost is available at all tide heights as it is an artificial pond used for dredging activities and managed by Darwin Port. Being a port site, it is restricted access to the public, thereby creating a roost with relatively few human disturbances. This site is particularly attractive to the birds and they all arrive as the incoming tide forces them out of mangrove trees and salt pans. This roost has become popular over time (7 years of monitoring) and more birds, particularly Eurasian Whimbrel and Far Eastern Curlew are exploiting the muddy ponds where they can stand in shallow water. Being close to the mudflats where these birds forage, this site provides a roost that is not overly taxing on a bird's daily commute.

Like elsewhere in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, the coastline of Darwin is being developed – mostly for port and mining-related activities – and this threatens the habitat available to waders. But waders, seemingly adaptable have made use of these anthropogenic developments and this port



Far Eastern Curlew and one Red-capped Plover — Amanda Lilleyman.

site can support over 1000 birds, and regularly attracts nationally important numbers of waders, including 0.1% of the flyway population of Eurasian Whimbrel and Far Eastern Curlew. The coastal pressures on habitat used by these birds are driving local government to manage waders in Darwin Harbour; this includes the availability of roost sites to continue to support the waders.

There is a need for the creation of more artificial roost sites in the Darwin region as the port dredge ponds will not be around forever. If new roosts are established while the current dredge ponds are secure then birds could learn about the new habitat

available to them. However, managers considering the development of another roost site in the harbour would need to understand the effects of sea-level rise on mangroves and salt pans. The geographical positional of Darwin, with the large relatively shallow Arafura Sea to the north rising faster than other areas, means that sea-level rise may have an impact on waders sooner here than at other important sites on non-breeding grounds. Darwin Harbour also experiences monsoonal and cyclonic climates, which can dramatically alter the coastline and the mudflats where waders make a living.

With this knowledge on local wader populations gained from monitoring of a roost that is still in the establishment stages, we can start to understand how these birds respond to artificial habitat in a tropical estuary. The waders of Darwin could make use of more roost sites that are available at all tide heights – this is just one step forward in protecting Eurasian Whimbrel, Far Eastern Curlew and other waders from this group of highly threatened birds.



Eurasian Whimbrel plus a mix of other waders roost in the dredge pond at high tide — Amanda Lilleyman

Amanda Lilleyman is a PhD Candidate at Charles Darwin University, studying habitat use and community ecology of migratory waders in Darwin Harbour. Her favourite waders are Bar- and Black-tailed Godwits, but with more Far Eastern Curlew in the general area, this large species is creeping up the list.
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Wading in, personally, on the new tide of extinction — Mike Clear

Perhaps, something of the delight and the sense of reward in being able to confirm that the surviving Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis* chick, from a hatching of 3, had fledged, is captured in this brief report extract sent to fellow shorebird volunteers, recently;

Today, the Hoodies obliged very handsomely. They were on the north side of the creek. No rewards for guessing how they made it there. In order to cross the creek myself, I approached them in such a way as to gently herd them, and as I expected they took flight, as one, across the creek landing about 25metres, in spite of the very gloomy day onto glistening sand, on the other side. It's a terrific sight, and for now anyway, the juvenile off-spring of N2 and K3 is in good shape to take the Hoodies into another generation. Someone may, but we have no memory of a Hoodie fledging at Berrara Beach. This is something worth being excited about.

My wife and I formally joined the New South Wales (NSW) South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program during the 2008-2009 nesting season. Our formal involvement was prompted by the vandalising of a Hooded Plover nest, at the height of the summer holiday season, the night before hatching was due. This was almost within sight of our coastal home, and we were devastated. It raised a number of important conservation issues and questions for us and I'll return to these, shortly.

Over some years prior to our formal registration in the program, we had been interested in the local threatened shorebirds, such as the Hooded Plover, the Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus lomgirostris* and Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*, and from time to time we reported our sightings to the local National Parks office. Yes, and in those early days we even confused the Red-capped Plover *Charadrius*



Sooty Oystercatchers over Berrara Creek NSW
- Marco McCue



Hooded Plover adults & Juvenile (centre) near protective debris Berrara Beach NSW
- Marco McCue

ruficapillus on our local beach for a Hoodie. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service are charged with responsibility for the Recovery Program.

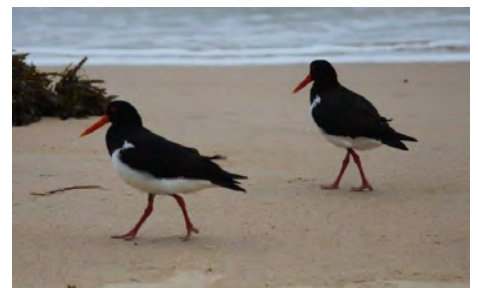
In NSW, Australia, the eastern Hooded Plover *T. r. rubricollis* is critically endangered. Until recently the Hooded Plover in the state of NSW was protected by the state based Threatened Species Conservation Act, but it did not attract national endangered species status. This was due to the larger populations in other (non-overlapping) parts of Australia, particularly in Western Australia. In 2014 Birdlife Australia successfully made the case for national recognition under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, of *Thinornis rubricollis rubricollis*, Hooded Plover (eastern), as an endangered subspecies. This was important recognition of the need to strengthen the conservation efforts for this shorebird species. The numbers of Hooded Plovers in the south and far south coast regions of NSW are very low. There are about 50-60 of a total population in south east Australia of 1,412.

Often, as no doubt many readers will appreciate, the experience of monitoring a threatened shorebird is an emotional roller coaster. This is felt in the joy of finding a nest or seeing a hatching and the despair at the loss of chicks and so on. My wife and I endeavoured to capture something of this in a children's book we wrote, based on our early experience of monitoring.

Our interest in Wader Quest, was prompted when we noticed in our Birdlife Australia literature that Wader Quest had raised funds and donated to assist the recovery of Hooded Plover in Australia. In the midst of disappointments at the conservation challenges and significant losses experienced in our area, the idea of a gift from afar of this kind came as a source of encouragement to

us.

We also wanted to understand some of these conservation issues in a more global context. We've marvelled at the glimpses we get of oystercatchers, plovers and other waders in different parts of the world. These



Pied Oystercatchers Berrara Beach - Marco McCue

come to us through a number of contributors to the Wader Quest Newsletters, not least through the captivating photographic work of Elis Simpson. Reports on various projects tucked away in different parts of the planet are an important source of learning, and ideas about how we can better understand what we do, here.

Conventional wisdom and biblical exhortation is that we not build our homes on a foundation of sand. In Australia, where we like to think of ourselves as, naturally, bush lovers, paradoxically an overwhelming majority of the population is coast hugging and urbanised. We live along the coastline as close as possible to an ocean view and the promise, that if we can't live on the beach or see it, at least we can get to it whenever the sun shines.

I think this paradox is significant in understanding the plight of our Hooded Plover. If the bush narrative of the quintessential Aussie wasn't just a cultural legend, but rather a daily reality, then maybe we'd have a stronger knowledge and

Wading in, personally, on the new tide of extinction — cont'd

awareness of the importance of protecting threatened species and biodiversity. We might simply pay more attention. Our dubious honour of being one of the highest global contributors, on a per capita basis, to threatened species numbers might be something we would want to change.

Extinction has a very scientific meaning and resonance. It is, however, potentially very personally and socially germane to each

of us. Firstly, in a very real sense our health and well being depends on biological diversity. We all have a reason to protect threatened species, because as a race our own survival depends on this. Secondly, the loss of a particular species of fauna (or flora) in our own neighbourhood, raises questions about ourselves, about our caring and 'hospitality', and our attentiveness to, and relations with the world around us.

Endangered shorebirds can school us in ways we might not, just now, fully appreciate. They can teach us about community, about caring and about hope. These are all qualities we may need more than ever as stress on our ecosystems, for example, from climate change and population pressures, with the consequent loss of fauna and flora, challenge our dominant way of life.

This is not so much the 'canary in the coalmine', but an outdoor contemporary symbol of potentially, even greater importance, the Hoodie on our beach.



Hooded Plover - Elis Simpson



Hooded Plover nest - Elis Simpson

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Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Japan — Rob Edmunds



Buff-breasted Sandpiper — Rob Edmunds

(*Calidris ruficollis*) as they stopped off to feed during Autumn migration.

I reached a dark muddy bank covered with pebbles mid-river and then crawled along on my stomach to a sheltered place within 20 meters range of the bird where - against the sun and strong wind and just using a digital camera - I took two photos.

Though I had never seen the species before, my first impression was 'this is a Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*)!'.

However, I knew that this North American species was a very rare bird in Japan and feeding in dark wet mud alongside a big river seemed to be the wrong habitat.



Rob Edmunds with his method of transport — Rob Edmunds

It was just after 4pm on 23rd September 2014 and I had cycled to one of my favourite birding points in Gifu City, along the Nagara River - one of the biggest rivers in Japan. The sun was starting to lower in the sky and there was quite a strong crosswind. I noticed a small wader huddled down against the wind with some other waders feeding near it, Dunlins (*Calidris alpina*) and some Greenshanks (*Tringa nebularia*).

I had to get nearer, this meant taking off my shoes and socks, rolling up my trousers and wading through the shallows of the river which was, at the time, a small creek popular with small waders such as Red-necked Stint



Buff-breasted Sandpiper (left) and Common Greenshank — Rob Edmunds

The mantle feathers reminded me of a turtle dove and it had a very dark, prominent eye and the overall colour was beige with some areas on the head and sides, a darker apricot.

It had a black bill that was slightly curved and long yellowish legs. I knew it wasn't a female Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*).

Suddenly, a Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) flew down and chased among all the waders. All of them rose into the air and flew off. For just a few seconds, I could keep my binoculars on my bird and I saw that it was all a uniform brownish colour with no white in the plumage. Then; gone forever!

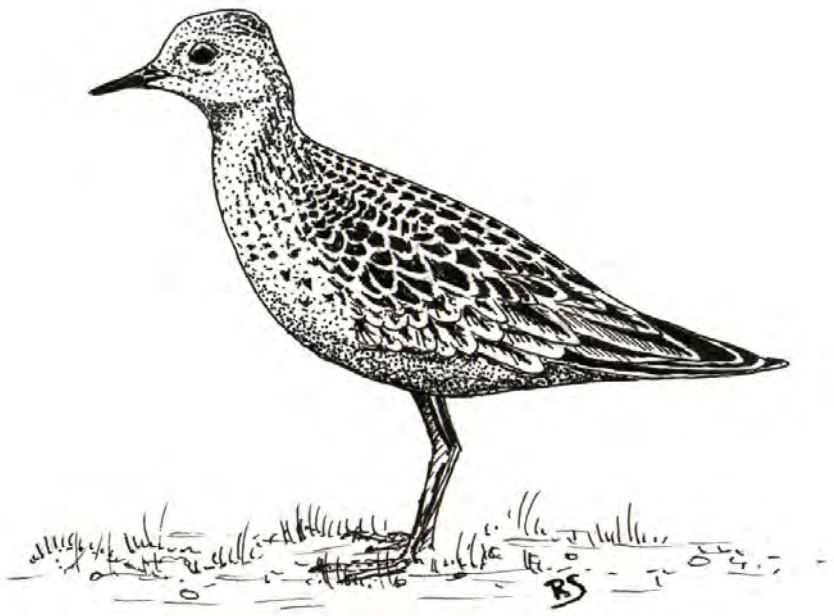
Ian Davies, a researcher at Cornell Lab of Ornithology has worked in the field studying waders - including Buff-breasted Sandpipers on their breeding grounds and told me that my bird is an adult due to the dark centres to the mantle feathers contrasting with the

Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Japan — cont'd

worn covert feathers.

Keen to know just how rare this bird is in Japan and being unable to get any information locally I referred to Mark Brazil's books *The Birds of Japan* (1991) where he describes it as an accidental with only two records prior to 1953. Since then, just a further 10 times, the last being in Chiba Prefecture in 1988. There will have been some more records since then, no doubt - perhaps three a decade - but, as far as Gifu Prefecture is concerned, this record is a first. The Prefecture is the same size as the whole of Yorkshire so I have the same feeling as a birder finding 'a First for Yorkshire!'

Sadly after my exciting find, this area has been dramatically altered. The shallows no longer exist. They have dug a deep water channel there. The natural banking with small willow bushes has been covered with concrete and tetrapods have been liberally sprinkled along to form piers jutting out into the river as damage control to protect against flooding. So sad and misguided. The photo of the site shows an overall view of where the Buff-breasted Sandpiper was seen. The bird was positioned feeding along the shoreline on the island in the centre of the channel. In the left foreground is the deep channel that has been made which was shallow enough to cross before. Also in the



Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) — Rick Simpson

foreground you can see the straightened bankside with piers of tetrapods. On the far bank you can see the construction / destruction going on as the bank gets covered over with yet more concrete.

Rob teaches Science English to Applied Biology students at Gifu University in Japan and is originally from Swansea in the UK — Ed.



The now modified site of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper sighting — Rob Edmunds

Community Wader Conservation in action; The Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group — Nick Ledgard

The Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group (ARRG) is a voluntary organisation that aims to protect rare and threatened braided river birds and their habitat in the local Ashley-Rakahuri river. The Group, which was established in 1999, looks after the birds and their habitat through year-round public awareness campaigns, environmental advocacy, habitat management and predator trapping. Results are determined by an annual bird population survey plus monitoring of breeding success.

The birds. Nesting among the stones of the Ashley-Rakahuri riverbed are three key endemic braided river species: the ngutupare / Wrybill (*Anarhynchus frontalis*), the tarapuka / Black-billed Gull (*Larus bulleri*), and the tarapiroe / Black-fronted Tern (*Chlidonias albostratus*). All of these birds have as high or higher conservation threat status than most kiwi species, with the Black-billed Gull now listed as the most critically endangered gull in the world. Other threatened native species nesting on the Ashley-Rakahuri are the tuturiwhatu / Double-banded Plover (*Charadrius bicinctus*), the poaka / White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) and the torea / South Island Pied Oystercatcher (*Haematopus finschi*).

Braided rivers. These are globally uncommon and New Zealand is considered a hot-spot, with Canterbury holding 59% of its braided river area, making the province a global epicentre of braided river ecology. In the highly modified Canterbury Plains little remains of the pre-human natural environment. The welcome exception to this large-scale habitat loss is the extent of braided rivers, which, in spite of such challenges as weed invasion and water and shingle extraction, still retain much of their original endemic environment. The most obvious component of this ecosystem is the birds.

While small compared with the more well-known Canterbury braided rivers, the Ashley-Rakahuri is important for its biodiversity, with a number of threatened braided river bird species breeding within the confines of the study area. The river's smaller size makes it a more feasible project for environmental management. In turn, the experience of the group provides valuable lessons that can be up-scaled for similar



Lower Ashley River, Canterbury New Zealand; a classic braided river — Photo supplied by ARRG

initiatives on bigger rivers.

Public awareness. The Group conducts a number of activities to raise public awareness of the threats to braided river birds and their environment. The main challenge for this work is that the general public frequently perceive braided riverbeds as an “empty” environment where such recreational activities as off-roading, fishing, dirt biking etc are ‘harmless’. The Group focuses on teaching about the unique braided river environment and why that is so important to New Zealand’s, and especially Canterbury’s, environmental and conservation resource. Away from the coast, there is nowhere else in New Zealand where

endemic and highly threatened river birds still exist in their original habitat so close to major urban centres.

Activities used to ‘get the word out’ include school visits (using a specially prepared Powerpoint address), library and other public displays, guest speaking at a variety of community groups, and making submissions to local and regional authorities on issues and activities that impact on the braided river environment. During the 2014-15 breeding season there were 35 awareness improving events. Where nesting colonies/areas are identified, warning signs and physical barriers are erected to minimise bird disturbance. A close liaison is

Community Wader Conservation in action; The Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group — cont'd

maintained with other environmental organisations such as DOC, Environment Canterbury, Braided River Aid and Forest and Bird.

Predator trapping. This is the Group's biggest single activity, making use of 6-8 volunteers year-round. The group purchases Timms traps to control possums and feral cats but makes its own DOC 200 box traps for stoats/ferrets/rats/hedgehogs etc. Trap lines are managed throughout the monitored area with volunteers checking each line on at least a fortnightly basis. In spring, when the birds start breeding the predator trapping is intensified to form a barrier around each nesting area. Recent analysis of data gathered since 2004 shows a statistically significant decline in predator trap-catch.

Funding. In the past major funding has come from the usual range of large donors (eg., WWF, Lotteries). However in more recent years the Group has become sufficiently well known to be able to rely on local donations, fund raising efforts such as sausage sizzles and the sale of predator traps, and a small amount of local business sponsorship.



Checking traps with a Black-billed Gull colony in the background - Photo supplied by ARRG

Monitoring. This focuses on the September to January breeding season, during which the Group's annual survey is carried out, plus breeding birds are closely



Wrybills are the 'icon' bird of braided rivers
- Photo supplied by ARRG

followed to determine productivity.

In November each year the annual survey of bird populations is carried out on the managed part of the river. Results reflect an overall improvement since surveys were initiated in 2000. The trend lines over 15 years are positive for all six species, with numbers of Wrybill, Black-fronted Tern, Banded Dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*) and White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) all having increased significantly, while those for Black-billed Gull (*Chroicocephalus bulleri*) and South Island Pied Oystercatcher (*Haematopus finschi*) are not statistically significant. It is pleasing to note that none of these species show a decline in numbers.

Breeding data since records began in 2004 have been analysed for wrybills and black-fronted terns, but not for black-billed gulls, as colony presence on the river has been so variable. Although the numbers of Wrybill chicks have increased (not significantly), productivity (fledged chicks/pair) has declined due to the increased number of pairs breeding. The productivity trend for Black-fronted Terns has been positive, although this is not statistically significant.

Conclusion. Results suggest that the birds are at least 'holding their own' on the Ashley-Rakahuri river, which is not the case in most

other braided rivers. In a paper, 'Population trends in Black-fronted Terns on the Ashley river, N. Canterbury', Monks et al (in *Notornis* 60(2) 2013), wrote that actions by the Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group may have contributed to the increasing tern numbers on the river over the last 11 years, and concludes that 'This is a better situation than in other low-flow rivers and justifies continued management of birds breeding in the riverbed.' The Group's ability to quantify



Erecting a riverbed sign
- Photo supplied by ARRG

the consequences of its work is a major reason why it reached the finals in the Government's 'Protecting our Biodiversity' section of the 2015 Green Ribbon Awards.

Nick Ledgard is Chair of the Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group Inc (ARRG) as well as BRaid Inc. (Braided River Aid). ARRG solely concerns itself with birds on the local river, whilst BRaid acts as an umbrella outfit trying to facilitate bird management on all of Canterbury's braided rivers.



Wrybill nest containing two eggs
- Photo supplied by ARRG

Introducing the Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project (BSCP) — Sayam Chowdhury

The first specimen of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmeus*) was collected in the mid-19th century from Bangladesh, which still retains the record for the highest single count anywhere in the world – 202 birds in 1989 from Moulevir Char. Since then a count of more than 100 has never been recorded and numbers have fallen over the years.

Mindful of its current global status and being motivated to play a significant part in the battle to save this species, I, along with my friends in Bangladesh, took up the challenge to save the last remnants of this species, with a small grant from The Explorers Club. Since then regular surveys have been conducted throughout the winter season in all historical and possible sites of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper with support from different international organisations and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force. In March 2010 the team counted a minimum of 25 Spoon-billed Sandpipers on Sonadia Island at Cox's Bazar, and 23 on Domar Char on the central south coast. These were the



Spoon-billed Sandpiper — © BSCP

habitats including mudflats, sand dunes, mangroves, sand bars, lagoons, salt pans and beaches. It was declared an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) by the Government of Bangladesh in 1999. Apart from the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Sonadia also supports the endangered Nordmann's Greenshank (*Tringa guttifer*), as well as other threatened or vulnerable species such as Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*) and Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*).

While working on Sonadia Island, we encountered shorebird hunting. Eight hunters claimed to have captured a total of 22 Spoon-billed Sandpipers between October 2009 and April 2010, although they primarily targeted larger shorebirds such as Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) or Eurasian Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*). Since September 2010, a series of surveys have been conducted to identify hunters and alternative livelihood options for them on Sonadia Island. After a solid year of

October and December 2011. Alternative livelihood options taken up include seed and fertilizers for watermelon cultivation, fishing boat, net, livestock, grocery and tailoring (sewing machine) shops. Among these



— © BSCP

alternatives, the watermelon cultivation was the most successful one. Ex-hunters who cultivated watermelons have earned almost double the amount they used to make by trapping birds.

Village Conservation Groups (VCG) of the five villages on and around Sonadia Island are now monitoring these activities, and ex-hunters repay a small percentage of the income generated by the alternative livelihood to their VCG. The respective VCGs will then use this money for further hunting mitigation and shorebird conservation awareness within these villages. The entire process is being monitored and guided by the Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project.

Ex-hunters who have taken alternative livelihood support strongly agreed to protect birds from any sort of threat including hunting and habitat destruction, and assist nature conservation movements in their villages. Also a few of them took specific



— © BSCP

highest counts since 1997 from Bangladesh! After the series of surveys we can now say that Bangladesh is still an extremely important wintering ground for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. We identified Sonadia Island as the key wintering site, and with Domar Char, as passaging sites in Bangladesh. Based on more recent work, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper numbers on Sonadia Island increased in November to 26 (26 in November 2012 and 22 in November 2013) reduced to 20 in January (16 in January 2013 and 20 in January 2014) and again increased in March to 26. These counts indicate that the Sonadia Island is not only important for wintering Spoon-billed Sandpipers, but is also significant for passaging individuals (which possibly winter in Nan Thar, Myanmar).

The 4,916 ha Sonadia Island is in the Cox's Bazar district on the SE coast of Bangladesh and comprises a wide variety of wetland



— © BSCP

background work, we finally signed conservation agreements with 25 active shorebird hunters of the island between

Introducing the Bangladesh Spoon-billed Sandpiper Conservation Project — cont'd



Mixed flock of waders — © BSCP

responsibility to guard and to monitor bird hunting activities at nearby shorebird sites, and these newly ex-hunters are visiting these sites one day every week by rotation.

Along with monthly monitoring of shorebirds on Sonadia Island, BSCP conducts surveys in previously unsurveyed areas such as the Sundarbans (2012). As part of the new area search BSCP carried out a detailed survey around Sandwip, Chittagong between 3 and 11 February 2015. A total of 35,000 shorebirds of 24 species were counted including 21 Spoon-billed Sandpipers. This new site is equally important as Sonadia Island in Cox's Bazar and may support up to 100 Spoon-billed Sandpipers. Further surveys are now being conducted in order to understand more about the site and the Spoon-billed Sandpipers.

We are confident that bird hunting has stopped on Sonadia Island after our conservation agreement scheme and the number of large waders appears to be

increasing with the halt of the hunting. Future actions will include a massive awareness campaign in five targeted villages of Sonadia Island, monitoring activities of ex-hunters and engaging them for further motivation. In addition, regular monitoring of shorebirds including wintering, passaging and



Sayam Chowdhury and Md Foysal surveying the shore — © BSCP

over-summering Spoon-billed Sandpipers will be carried out on Sonadia Island, Sandwip Island and new areas will be searched throughout the Bangladesh coast.

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Sayam U. Chowdhury
Conservation Biologist
Dhaka | Bangladesh
Assistant Coordinator
Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force

This year's Norfolk Bird Race is to benefit Wader Quest

The annual [Norfolk Bird Race](#) will take place this year on the 30th of April.

The race was created and is organised by Andrew Whitelee to raise money for wildlife organisations and is run in conjunction with the [Norfolk Bird and Wildlife Fair](#) (21st & 22nd May 2016)

In 2015 the money raised was given to the BTO and this year we are pleased to

announce that the beneficiary of this event will be Wader Quest!

So, we would like anyone who enjoys bird racing and who wishes to support Wader Quest in a different way to get a team together and go bird racing in Norfolk.

Putting his money where his mouth is Andrew has committed 10% of the profit from his company [Verdant Wildlife](#) for 2016

to Wader Quest if his team wins the race and 20% if they don't! So, get a team out there and beat Andrew's team to make more money for wader conservation by being the winning team.

For full details of how to enter a team and find out more about how to enter go to the website www.norfolkbirdrace.com or email Andrew at andrew@verdantwildlife.co.uk.

Ups and downs of Hooded Plover Community Wader Conservation on the Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria, Australia — Andrea Dennett

As Hooded Plover (*Thinornis rubricollis*) signage continues to disappear from the beach, the lives of three tiny Point Lonsdale chicks hang in the balance.

Local volunteers are angry and exasperated by the actions of a vandal who systematically removes all signage relating to the Hooded Plovers which are currently breeding on the Point Lonsdale back beaches.

The endangered Hooded Plover faces many threats as they attempt to nest on Australian surf beaches. High tides, foxes, ravens and dogs off-lead, all take their toll. But the Point Lonsdale pairs are also up against a threat of a more sinister kind - wilful destruction of vital signage which denotes the presence of nests and chicks on the beach.

The vandal defaces nest and chick update signs at the beach access points and has removed several signs advising beach goers of the location and progress of each plover pair. These signs and updates are a critical

season but when we have to replace or repair signs as well it makes this quite an onerous task,' said Felicity Thyer who co-ordinates the volunteer group at Point Lonsdale.

BirdLife Australia's Dr Grainne Maguire adds that 'the volunteers give so much of their time and themselves to help these birds; something that comes completely without personal gain and with much sacrifice. They give up their summers, brave the heat and wild gales, and it's hard physical work at times. The vandalism is so demoralising and motives for such vandalism are quite unclear given the volunteers work so hard to ensure beach users won't lose access to the beach, but instead to work towards coexistence'.

The City of Greater Geelong (COGG) signage relating to dog regulations on the beach has also been removed by a vandal, creating confusion regarding the dog regulations along this stretch of beach. At this critical time when there are tiny flightless



Deborah Evans and Felicity Thyer with one of the Point Lonsdale Beach signs — Kate Smallwood

send the message to all that 'it takes a village to raise a hoodie'. A small group of very dedicated volunteers led by Kate Smallwood and Robin Spry, created the 'Take the Plover Pledge' poster and spread this widely among over 28 businesses in the main streets of Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale for display during December and January. Kerleys Real Estate agency put together 200 info packs for their summer coastal rentals and they will include Birdlife hoodie brochures and magnets. The plan is also to provide Queenscliff Coastal Holidays with dog leads for their rentals, and the local Surf Life Saving Clubs with posters for their loo doors! Media coverage has been excellent including the Take the Plover Pledge poster appearing in the current issue of the Borough of Queenscliff's newsletter.

Andrea Dennett is the Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Bellarine Friends of the Hooded Plover — Ed.



Now you see me! - Steve Smithyman



Now you dont! - Andrea Dennett

part of protecting this nationally threatened species, whose camouflage and secretive behaviours give beach goers no warning they are near to the defenceless chicks hiding on the beach, or to the camouflaged eggs on the sand. The general beach going public have come to rely on the presence of these signs as cues to adapting their behaviour and giving the birds the space they need to survive. At Point Lonsdale space there is a shortage of space due to the popularity of the beach; the birds' chicks cannot survive without it.

There is currently a Hooded Plover family with three chicks at Point Lonsdale as well as another nesting pair. Birdlife Australia volunteers responsible for installing and updating the signs are frustrated by the vandalism. 'Volunteers regularly check on the progress of these birds during the breeding

chicks on the beach, off-leash dogs pose a major threat and we desperately need the signage in place to get the birds across the finish line!

Friends of the Hooded Plover volunteers request that beach goers please report any suspicious behaviour to the COGG or to the police. We need to come together as a community to help the things that make our coast special and unique.

On a more positive Community Wader Conservation note:

Friends of the Hooded Plover (FoHP) Bellarine have been very busy after Robin Spry successfully applied for a grant from the Queenscliff Point Lonsdale Community Enterprise). This grant was used to raise awareness among the local townships and to



Of Kenyan Crab-Plovers and Terek Sandpipers — Colin Jackson

It has to be one of my favourite sights – standing at neap high tide on the bird hide platform at Mida Creek, Kenya. The hide is 3m above the sand and just tucked into the edge of the mangroves 260m from the main shore and only 60-80m from the high tide roost site of up to 10,000 waders and terns. It's particularly stunning when the tide is in the late afternoon and you have that magical golden evening sunlight behind you that seems unique to the Kenyan coast at the end of a hot day and as temperatures are cooling. The tide is pouring in but, being a neap tide, isn't going to reach very far and the Crab-Plovers (*Dromas ardeola*), Terek Sandpipers (*Xenus cinereus*), and sandpipers, stints etc. all know it and are not in a hurry to go anywhere but rather to chill out over high tide while their food source is being replenished by the incoming tide. The Lesser Crested Terns (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) with their scraggy black caps contrasting with their glowing golden bills just add to the splendour of the mass of trilling and peeping waders mostly in delicate shades of grey and brown. Better still in March or April when the rusty brick reds of Curlew Sandpipers (*Calidris ferruginea*) in breeding plumage and bold black and chestnut face masks and breast bands of the sand plovers are smouldering among the drabber non-breeders who will wait another year before adorning themselves in the same way. It really is just stunning.



Wader counting Mida — Colin Jackson

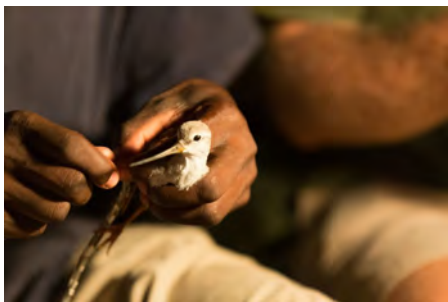
Mida Creek... one of the legendary wader watching sites in East Africa and my 'local

patch' where I together with others in A Rocha Kenya have been watching, counting, catching, ringing and studying waders for coming up to 18 years. Prior to that David Pearson, the ground breaker of East African wader research would travel the 700+ kms from Nairobi on the overnight train followed by a two-hour drive just for the weekend to mist net and ring waders at Mida – and through the 70s and 80s ringed several thousand of them. These data sets are currently forming the basis of my PhD thesis looking specifically at the moult and migration strategies of Greater (*Charadrius leucoschultzei*) and Lesser Sandpipers (*C. atrifrons*) and Terek Sandpipers. From all of David's ringing there was just one recovery – a Lesser Sandplover to south-western Pakistan. Then in 2008 we had a real surprise of a Terek Sandpiper we'd ringed in November 2003 being caught breeding in north-west Finland – a tiny outlier population and very unexpected. At the start of the PhD one of the things we did was to start



Mida waders — Steffen Foerster

Of Kenyan Crab-Plovers and Terek Sandpipers — cont'd



Ringling a Terek Sandpiper at Mida
— Craig Mercer

to colour-flag the three study species. Over a thousand birds later we finally had our first (and only so far) recovery of a flagged bird – a Greater Sandplover in April 2015 on the north-western coast of India no doubt en route to the breeding grounds in Kazakhstan or western Mongolia. There is still a vast amount to learn about our Kenyan wader populations.

Counts have been carried out annually in January as part of the National Museum coordinated waterbird counts that are done all over the country on major wetlands. On the north coast A Rocha Kenya coordinates and runs the counts that take in seven wetland sites around Watamu / Malindi and the Tana River Delta including the other legendary wader site for Kenya, Sabaki River Mouth (which we have been counting almost



Crab Plovers — Tasso Leventis

monthly for several years now also). Supported by Turtle Bay Beach Club and Tana Delta Dunes Lodge a group of 10-20 volunteers carry out counts of all the sites and submit the data to the museum for passing on to Wetlands International. Up to 60 to 70 volunteers can help with the other inland counts which include world famous sites such as Nakuru National Park (where a healthy buffalo population always adds 'fun'



Wader ringing — Matt Brandon

to the wader counts along some stretches of the lake shoreline...) and Lake Naivasha.



Greater Sandplover WH (inset enlargement of leg flag) — A Rocha Kenya

In 2013 the Kenya Bird Map project was initiated that, whilst is much more than just waders, because of the stimulating and motivating birding protocol based on an atlas grid system that challenges atlasers to find as many species as possible, invariably it will mean that in order to increase their species list, atlasers will hunt down wetland sites so as to find waders to record. This can only add to broadening our knowledge of distribution, status and migration timing of our waders and wetland birds.

Wader conservation is definitely alive and well in Kenya – there are huge amounts needed to be done for sure, but we are working on it. If visiting Kenya please get involved and contribute to the Kenya Bird Map project at the very least – or time your visit to coincide with the January waterbird counts. Skilled wader watching volunteers

are always a blessing. (And if anyone is watching waders in the Middle East or north and east of that, please keep an eye out for Greater Sandplovers with orange flags, Lesser Sandplovers and Terek Sandpipers with white flags – and let us know about it).

A Rocha Kenya is a Christian conservation organisation that is one of 20 national A Rocha Organisations around the world. Its main activities focus around scientific research, community conservation and environmental education; more information at <http://www.arocha.org/en/a-rocha-kenya/>



Terek Sandpipers — Tasso Leventis

Milton Keynes Parks Trust Youth Rangers make chick shelters for local breeding waders — Rick Simpson

We first came across the idea of supplying chick shelters for ground nesting birds in Australia where BirdLife Australia, with the help of hundreds of dedicated volunteers, provide these shelters for the Hooded Plovers (*Thinornis rubricollis*) through the Beach Nesting Birds Programme. These shelters are cheap, simple to make and are effective.

The main purpose of the shelters is to protect the chicks from the elements; wind, rain and sun can all prove fatal to tiny vulnerable chicks. They also provide a certain amount of protection from predators, especially those in the sky.

In the UK, the emphasis on protection from the weather is different from that on the southern beaches of Australia. It is unlikely that British waders are going to be troubled too often with scorching sun, but wind and rain are definitely on the cards with the potential for hail too.

Last year we started talking to the Milton Keynes Parks Trust (MKPT) about their plans to bring some of the sites in the area, which were formerly great wader hotspots locally, especially in the autumn migration period, back to their former glory. There are few locally breeding waders these days.

A relatively recent colonist is the Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) which has started nesting much further inland in the UK and, let's face it, North Buckinghamshire is about as far from the coast as you can get. Little Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius dubius*) and Northern Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*) still nest in small numbers and hopefully the shelters, together with the



We gave a short interactive presentation at the beginning of each session — Elis Simpson

plans to re-establish breeding habitat for them, will increase their numbers. It is also hoped that Common Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius hiaticula*) may stay to breed on shingle banks that will be provided. Less easy to encourage will be the return of both the Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) and Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*).

In 1992 a book (kindly lent to me by Martin Kincaid of the MKPT) was written covering 25 years of research at a local gravel pit, which is today known as Linford Lakes, which states in the chapter about breeding waders written by John Phillips that there were about three pairs of Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*), four pairs of Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), nine pairs of Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and six pairs of Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) breeding at the site. It went on to say that 'Linford is one of only three breeding sites in Buckinghamshire for this declining but attractive wader.' Today there are no redshanks, lapwings or either species of plover!

Martin Kincaid is the Trust's conservation officer for the area and he is determined to bring the site, and others in the area back to their former glory as far as attracting breeding and passage waders is concerned.

The Parks Trust Youth Rangers are a group of young people who have an active interest in wildlife and its conservation, some may be thinking of a future career in the field and get useful hands on experience from the activities that they undertake and which will hold them in good stead certainly helping to enhance their CVs.

It was Martin who invited us along to talk to the Rangers on the day that they made the chick shelters to be used around the Trust's reserves. The idea of us attending was to give the young conservationists some background about what they were doing and why they were doing it.

There are two separate groups which meet once a month, one group in the morning, the other in the afternoon, Elis and I attended both sessions that day and made a short interactive presentation at the start of each, after which the serious business of shelter production started.

Both groups did really well with 39 shelters being completed by the end of the day.

We will be following the development of the wader conservation programme by the Parks Trust, offering whatever help we can and hopefully soon we'll be able to report the first successes and even provide heart warming photos of wader chicks using the shelters that the Youth Rangers have built for them.



Common Redshank — Elis Simpson



The finished product — Elis Simpson

Recent disbursements made from the Wader Quest Grants Fund.

18/12/2015 £95.73 (AUD200.00)

BirdLife Australia Silent Shorebird Crisis Appeal.

07/01/2016 £199.85 (R\$1,125.00)

Conectando os Pontos (Brazil).

30/10/2015 £350.00 Opticron IS70 (18-54 eyepiece) telescope and Opticron 10x50 Discovery binoculars.

Nature's Valley Trust, Western Cape, South Africa.

17/12/2015 £55.39 Celluloid colour rings

Anak Burung Birdbanding Club, Indonesia.



Nature's Valley Trust team (L to R) Alex Cook, Selena Flores, Twan Slagter and Craig Midgley — Selena Flores

Wader Photo Gallery — send us your favourite wader photos



Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
- Jim Dickson; UK



Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
- David Lindo; USA



Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
- Grace Maglio; Australia



Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus*
- Roberta Goodall; Namibia



Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*
- Tomomi Kawasumi; Japan



Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
- John Walker; UK



Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*
- Yung-Ki Ju; South Korea



Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis albus*
- Martin Eayrs; Argentina



Tawny-throated Dotterel *Oreopholus ruficollis*
- Elis Simpson; Chile

The original call for Community Wader Conservation?

As true today as it was when it was written 65 years ago.

"It is to me the most striking instance of what bird-protection can and should, be, not a matter of Acts of Parliament and schedules hung on police station walls, but a combined effort of people living in their own countryside to save, it may be for one year only or it may be for posterity, some portion of the beauty of our marshlands which our forefathers too often allowed to perish".

Lt.-Col. J. K. Stanford, O.B.E., M.C. August 30th 1950.

Wader Quest Trustee news.

Wader Quest currently has eight Trustees:

- Chair: Rick Simpson
- Secretary: Rachel Walls
- Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Elis Simpson
- Board members: Allan Archer, Lee Dingain, Sue Healey (Events), Chris Lamsdell (Ringing), Oliver Simms



Sponsors required for the Norfolk Bird Race — 30/04/2016

Would your company like to sponsor the Norfolk Bird Race or one of the teams participating?

If so please contact Andrew Whitelee for more details andrew@verdantwildlife.co.uk

FRIENDS OF WADER QUEST

Wader Conservation World Watch

5th & 6th November 2016

Stand up and be counted; show you care!

Friends of Wader Quest:

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Life	£200.00

Sponsors:

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