

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

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**
 02/04/2020 (19.45) **Sevenoaks RSPB local group**
 14/04/2020 (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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And now for the news you've all been waiting for...

It is with great pride that we are finally able to announce that

Wader Quest is now Registered Charity (England and Wales) No. 1183748

Our thanks go to the Trustees and in particular Andrew Whitelee who has toiled tirelessly to bring this about.

See page 2



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Total raised by Wader Quest to date: £32,279.66

Charity isn't a number... but it helps — Andrew Whitelee

As Wader Quest's most distant Trustee (Inverness is a long way from Newport Pagnell, London and Norfolk), I was looking for a task that I would be able to carry out to benefit Wader Quest which I could do from my remote location. To that end, volunteering to get Wader Quest through the Charities Commission registration process seemed like a good idea when I suggested it back in April 2018. Little did I realise at the time that it would take fourteen months!

I wouldn't want to suggest that the application process has been easy, far from it. There have been many times when the frustration of not being able to get the wording correct on some part of the application has left me feeling like we would never be successful.

However, the application process has helped us focus on what our values, as a charity, are and how we intend to best achieve them. With all organisations that grow organically, there can be a real danger of introducing systems that are less than streamlined, and then just living with them.

This is because the short-term effort of changing them can seem more difficult than dealing with the slight inconvenience they present. The help and guidance that the Charities Commission gave us during the process has led us to analyse all aspects of how we operate and come out the other side a more robust organisation, better suited to achieve our aims and serve our members.

The email informing us that our application had been successful arrived at 11:26 on 6th June 2019 (the day of the D-Day celebrations); I think it's fair to say I nearly cried. I immediately rang Rick and Elis Simpson who were driving to a meeting about the Wirral Wader Festival at the time. I told Elis the good news and she screamed something unintelligible down the phone at me (it may well have been in Portuguese for all I know) and I could hear Rick shouting in the background. Wader Quest has always been Rick and Elis's labour of love and to hear how much it meant to them was really rather humbling. I think it's important to

emphasise here that this really has been a team effort, and although I was the bloke typing the application up, each trustee has contributed to the debate and documentation process and, without their input, this would not have been possible.

I would also like to extend our thanks to those that sent letters to support our application; Humphrey Sitters (International Wader Study Group - IWSG), Katherine Leung (Wetland Conservation Consultant WWF - Hong Kong) and Mark Brown (Nature's Valley Trust, South Africa). Also our gratitude goes to Yvonne Verkuil (IWSG) for her helpful comments and direction to relevant scientific conservation papers.

Why is it important that Wader Quest became a registered charity? I'm sure everyone has their own thoughts on gaining charitable status, but for me, I hope it gives us more credibility and makes people realise we are here for the long haul and are serious about our mission to help waders throughout the world.

Wader Quest news — Rick Simpson

Recent grants/donations: Some time ago we made an appeal for funds to help the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST) to raise money to rent some salt pans at Pak Thale, which were under the threat of development, with a view to purchasing them later for permanent protection. This would ensure that they would remain available for the winter visiting Spoon-billed Sandpipers and many thousands of other migratory waders and water birds. It turned out, after sufficient funds had been raised that renting wasn't possible after all because the two landowners couldn't agree; one was in favour of the plan, the other was not. Consequently, the money that had been realised (that did not include the money Wader Quest had collected) was placed into a savings account.

The BCST then sent a proposal to buy that land to the Rainforest Trust, which agreed to support the purchase project. However, the Rainforest Trust's support fell short of the purchase price, although this had been lowered through negotiation. This shortfall was partially made up with the previously saved money but was still not quite enough.

At that stage we added the Wader Quest donation to their funding effort to help secure this vital reserve and contribute towards the shortfall which we are pleased



The Pak Thale salt pans with Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris* and other water birds - Elis Simpson

to say has now been made up and the purchase is due to go ahead. That is not the end of it of course, running costs will be involved, especially as the BCST is making plans to manage a further 25 ha of adjacent salt pans, in addition to the 8ha purchased, with a view to preserving their habitat for the foreseeable future.

At one stage we had planned to perhaps use the money we had collected to help pay for a new hide that is being built at Khok Kham, but that has been funded without our assistance and is going ahead. It



Hide construction at Khok Kham - Auywat Jearwattanakanok

Wader Quest news — cont'd

should be ready for birders to use by this autumn.

More recently we heard about a project that had taken place in Broome, Western Australia, with the enticing title of Shorebird Quest. It turns out it was not a rival charity vying for the wader world's attention but in fact, an elaborate project to promote the waders and other shore life of Roebuck bay through an extremely ambitious project; the details of which can be found on page 18. After the event the Theatre company concerned wanted to promote the idea by making digital media available. We were glad to make a contribution towards this as the expectation is that the event will happen again, perhaps elsewhere in Australia and who knows, maybe elsewhere as well? It was such a tremendous success in getting people who had previously not even considered the shore life in their area, to sit up and notice. That, surely, is something that the organisers can be proud of, and promote, to be used elsewhere to good effect

Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* that breed in Iceland are something of an enigma as far as their wintering grounds are concerned. A collaboration between the Highland Ringing Group and wader ringers in Iceland plan to put an end to this uncertainty by colour ringing Purple Sandpipers in north-eastern Iceland and fitting them with geolocators. Some have already been proven to remain in Iceland during the winter thanks to ringing recoveries, but the same method also demonstrated at least one bird migrated to Newfoundland in Canada.

With this in mind breeding adults will be captured and fitted with 0.65g geolocators on the tibia. Additionally, they will be colour ringed to allow for in-the-field data to be collected as well as the data provided by the geolocators of birds that can be recaptured the following breeding season. Wader Quest's contribution to this study was to purchase ten geolocators at a cost of



A giant illuminated wader puppet; part of the Shorebird Quest project in Broome, Western Australia
- Ben Houston Photography

£1296.00 (see page 33 for full report)

We received a suggestion for Sayam Chowdhury in Bangladesh that we might be interested in a project designed to study the Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola* in the Himalayas. We were put in touch with the Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation (SMCR) in Nepal who subsequently made an application for a grant.

It was difficult in the extreme to provide them with the equipment they needed so, in this instance, it was decided that the grant would be financial, £1,000.

The current project is being carried out to collect information about the status, distribution and habitat ecology of the Wood Snipe. At the same time, they would be attempting to increase conservation awareness among concerned local stakeholders to minimize the threats to Wood Snipe. This provides an important first step to document the species in the remote Himalayan landscape and will be helpful for Government and non-government agencies to develop conservation policies and

strategies to assure the species' long-term conservation.



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

The big news at home for us is obviously the **Charity Commission registration**, but it has led to some changes in our approach and rules governing our organisation.

One of those is the need for the **AGM to be attended by a minimum of 30 members or 1/3rd** of our membership, which is rather higher. With this in mind, to make it more attractive, we decided to make an event of the occasion in Cley, Norfolk (details on page 5) in the hope that some of you will come along and support us. The event is to be called **Wader Quest Inspiration of Waders Day and AGM** and we hope to bring positive messages from various speakers to lift our spirits in these days of gloom and doom. There will be loads about waders, unlimited free tea, coffee and biscuits and who knows? Maybe some cakes too.

We will need to monitor the numbers that attend and therefore 'tickets' will be issued through a device called Eventbrite (follow the link on the announcement on page 5) but we will have tickets available the good old-fashioned way, via email info@waderquest.net and at events such as Bird Fair. To Friends and Sponsors (maximum two representatives of each organisation) entrance will be free but non-members may attend for £5. If they then join Wader Quest on the day the entry will be refunded to them.

We will of course bring the Wader



Purple Sandpiper - Ron Summers



Wood Snipe project poster - SMCR

Wader Quest news — cont'd

Quest stand with all our wares and we will also bring along our second-hand books to sell at ridiculously low prices. Furthermore, we hope that other organisations will come along with a display too, especially our Sponsors.

At this stage we don't have a full line up of speakers, but of course you can expect a lively presentation from Rick Simpson called *An Inspiration of Waders*.

The AGM itself will be short and will take place just after lunch.

A number of interesting speakers have been invited to talk and the whole affair promises to be a positive, wader-filled festival of fun, come along and be inspired by waders and of course find out a bit more about the nuts and bolts of Wader Quest at the AGM.



For those of you who will be going to **Bird Fair** we will be unveiling our **four new pin badges**, the identity of which will remain a secret until then. What I can tell you is that we have seen the samples and they are four stunners, which will look great in any collection. This year though we will be careful to take sufficient numbers to prevent us having to return home for more supplies after the first day. We were quite caught out by the popularity of our pins last year.

There will also be two new **Wader Quest Collectables earrings** to join the Northern Lapwing and Hooded Plover. The two new species are also pins, so their identity cannot be disclosed yet either.

There will be items that have been donated to us to sell to raise funds for sale, as well as the second-hand wildlife books.

We have been granted a **talk** at the event again this year, always a real honour. This year we will be in the **Osprey Lecture Marquee** which has a larger capacity than our marquees in previous years. For this reason, we hope that as many



of you who will be there at **11.00am on Saturday** will attend as possible so we don't end up with a half empty auditorium. The talk will be **Wader Questing in Peru** and will be about some of the waders we encountered in Peru during our Wader Quest travels, and the trials and tribulations we had in finding them.



You will see on page 36 that we are once again celebrating our anniversary in November with our **Wader Conservation World Watch (WCWW6)** and also making another **Anniversary Grant** (page 6), so, if you know of any deserving causes that could use **£1,000** to help waders, then encourage them to get in touch.

Needless to say, we also would like you all to go out and find some waders on the weekend of the **2nd and 3rd of November** and let us know what you see to liven up our **WCWW6** event. Don't forget, your name, birds and photos will appear in the **special newsletter** resulting from the event (see website for details).



Eury the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in Chinese. Our children's book has now been translated into Chinese and production of 2,000 books is underway. These will be distributed to schools along the Spoon-billed Sandpiper's migration route within China.

This is the realisation of a dream for us, as this was the original purpose for which the book was written. We hope that we may be able to follow this success in the languages of the other countries along the Spoony's flyway and wintering grounds.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the Spoon-billed Sandpiper in China team, in

particular Jing Li and Zhang Lin who have been organising the development and keeping us apprised of events as they happen.

We have included here a sample of the page about Wader Quest. It is quite something and indeed rather exciting, to see Wader Quest written in a different script.



“涉禽观察”是位于美国的一个慈善组织，致力于提升人们对于勺嘴鹬及其他涉禽所面临的危机认识。这些涉禽中有许多种类进行长途迁徙，其所依赖的关键停歇地点正面临发展的威胁。该组织另一个关键目标是希望：所调查的濒危物种小型种群都能获得保护及研究项目中，尤其是在当地社区参与的项目。

网站: www.waderquest.org
电子邮箱: waderquest@gmail.com

(The bit in inverted commas, I think. Ed.)

With all the publicity surrounding the tragic population decline of the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, it is almost inconceivable that the French government are considering reopening the shooting season for this species.

Wader Quest does its best to remain apart from political wrangling, especially when it is partisan and divisive, stirring up intense feelings of animosity on both sides. It is also now our policy not to get involved in petitions of any kind. However, a recent letter sent to the French Ministry for the Environment urges them not to put Curlews back on the quarry list and Wader Quest was pleased to be asked to be a signatory to this letter.

The re-opening of shooting in France during the non-breeding season will impact British breeding Curlews. We know that Curlews from the UK over-winter in France from ringing recoveries. The argument that the winter visitors in France are mostly from a different region, where decline is not proven, holds no water and anyway, how could someone with a bird in his or her sights be able to distinguish from which populations his or her proposed victim hails? The shooting of Curlews was banned by the European Birds and Habitat Directives - except in France where it was allowed for cultural reasons. A moratorium banning all shooting of Curlew was put in place in France in 2008; but this was amended in 2012 to allow shooting on the coast, which is where the vast majority of Curlews spend the winter, so really not much of a concession.

We hope that common sense prevails and that the strong lobby to continue hunting in France is defeated so that Curlews, wherever they may breed, will again be given a chance to get through the winter unscathed on the French coast.

Wader Quest 2019 AGM event 27th October

Wader Quest Inspiration of Waders Day and AGM

Come along and be inspired.

This year, for the first time, we are holding an event to support our AGM.

It will take place on the 27th of October at Norfolk Wildlife Trust Cley Marshes Visitor Centre

There will be a number of speakers talking about a variety of wader related subjects.

Free tea, coffee and biscuits will be on tap.

Come and buy your Wader Quest goodies and meet the team.

Second-hand wildlife and science books will be on sale.

Doors open at 10.00; talks start at 10.30

Lunch 12.00 (Bookable in the centre on the day)

AGM at 13.00

Talks resume 13.30

Close at 15.00

Free entry to Friends of Wader Quest and Sponsor representatives (2 per Sponsor)

£5.00 for non-members: redeemable if becoming a Friend or Sponsor on the day.

Bookable via [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) / info@waderquest.net / at Bird Fair

2019 Anniversary Conservation Grant

Applications are invited from individuals or projects for this year's £1,000 Wader Quest Anniversary Grant.

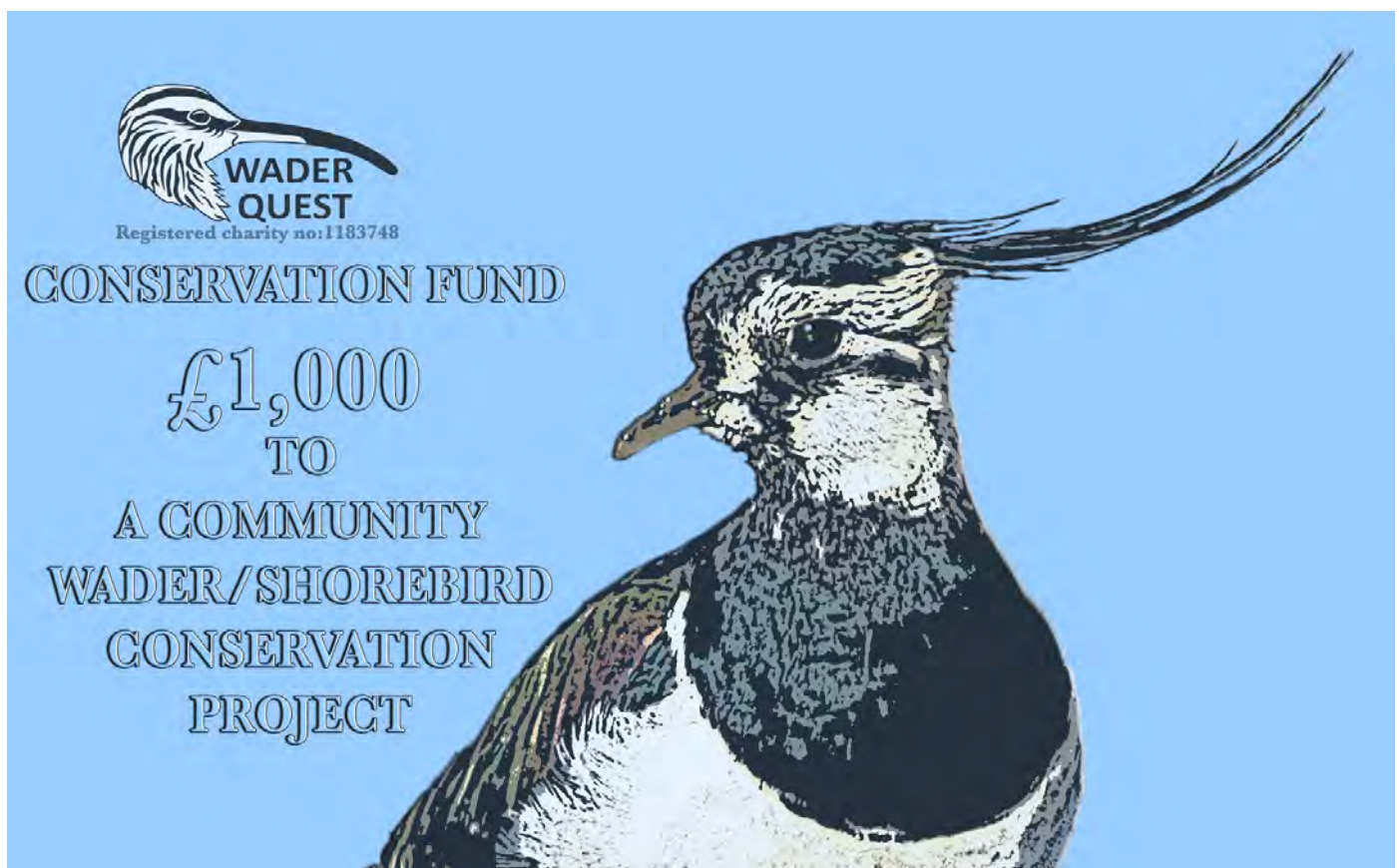
Write to info@waderquest.net for more details on how to apply.

Projects should ideally be directed to one or more of the following funding priorities:

- Investigating the status of Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable or Near-threatened wader species
- Attempting to further the knowledge of current Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of significant importance to waders, through breeding surveys and conducting systematic counts
- Investigating potential new IBAs or ornithologically little known areas for waders
- Conducting ecological studies of little-known wader species
- Educational programmes, especially aimed at school children and youth to conserve and protect waders and their habitat

Priority will be given to projects:

- Conducted by Nationals of the country where the activity will take place
- Containing an educational element, that engage with local communities and/or have an element of long-term sustainability of the project, such as training of local counterparts or raising awareness of wader conservation within the wider community
- Providing an improvement in the understand of the conservation needs of a under studied wader species through research



A decision will be made and announced during the Wader Conservation World Watch weekend, our anniversary celebration event, which this year falls on the 2nd and 3rd of November. The Wader Quest Grants Committee decision will be final and, unless initiated by Wader Quest, no further correspondence will be entered into regarding the decision. Details of the winning project will be published in the resulting *Wader Quest The Newsletter* special after the event.

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

A reminder for those still to pay 2019 subscriptions

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

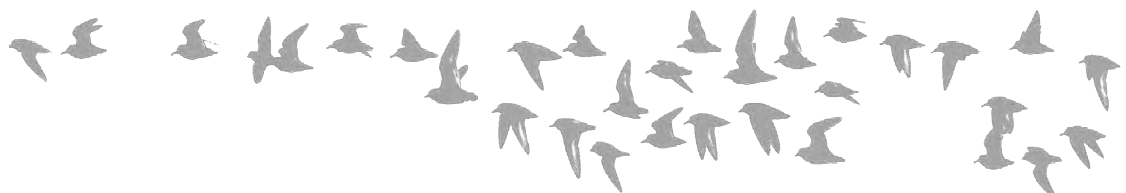
Club Sponsor subscriptions £20.00

Corporate Sponsors £50.00 (no change)

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 3 — Nature Valley Trust

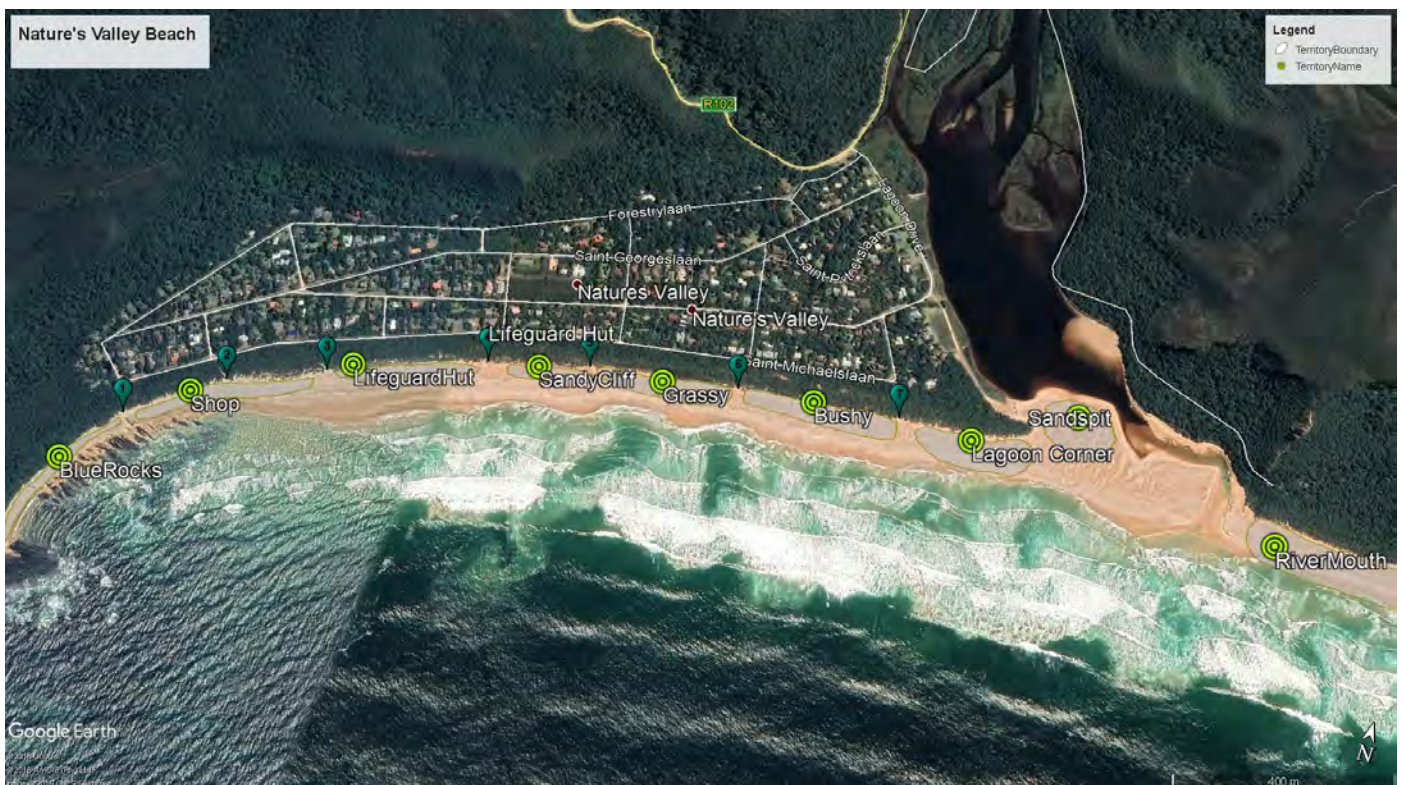
'These stories were written in order to make our coastal work, namely the shorebird component of coastal impact programme, more accessible to the lay-person. This is the person to whom the jargon of scientific work does not resonate but they do indeed still care for our environment and the animals that 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 storytelling so decided to serialise the stories.]



Pearl and Ed at Nature's Valley Beach have never been the most conventional couple around. In fact, they almost weren't a couple at all. During the 2014-2015 and

2015-2016 breeding seasons, Ed was actually paired with another female named Peggy, who was given her name after getting tangled with fishing line and losing

one of her feet. They were happy together, and even raised chicks during both seasons. Unfortunately, disaster struck when Peggy disappeared at the end of their second

The Sands of Change: Series 1 Episode 3 — cont'd

season together. Unable to find his mate and fearing the worst, Ed was unsure of what he would do during the 2016-2017 season.

His questions were answered, however, when he met Pearl. Originally from the Blue Rocks territory. Pearl was a beautiful female who was almost completely white, earning her the name Pearl. Although her previous mate, Fred, was a great father and owned a beautiful territory in the Blue Rocks area, she simply was not happy with him. With Peggy's very convenient disappearance, she knew that it was her chance to start a new life with a new mate.

Ed fell in love quickly, and the pair was soon happy in the Shop territory for the 2016-2017 season. There, they raised two beautiful chicks to fledglings, and thought that they had both finally found happiness, despite not being sure on the identity of the chicks' father. Unfortunately, life took a turn for the worst for the pair when their youngest fledge began to act oddly. Soon, his head was puffy, wings weak, and his breathing very laboured. Although the pair wanted to help, they knew that there was nothing they could do to save their fledge.

One day, as the family was foraging on the beach, two NVT researchers spotted the sick fledge, and tried to take him to a rehabilitation centre for treatment. As hard as the researchers tried, though, they were not able to save the fledge. Pearl and Ed were sad to see their fledge taken away, but were happy that he was not instead eaten by one of the hungry gulls who knew he was sick. They vowed to keep their other fledge safe and healthy for the rest of the season, and to try to raise another fledge next season.

But what happened to Fred, the lonely ex-mate of Pearl? Check back in a later episode in Series 2 of the Sands of Change to find out!



Ed - NVT



Pearl with chick - NVT



The fledgling that didn't make it - NVT

Nature's Valley Trust 2018/2019 season update — Brittany Arendse



White-fronted Plover F152 'Guppy' - NVT

For the Nature's Valley Trust (NVT) Shorebird team Summer in Plettenberg Bay always starts off with immense excitement and hope for our little plovers and oystercatchers. We dedicate 6 months of our year to helping our feathered friends make the best of their breeding period and trying to make conditions just right for them to raise a big family on the sandy shores.

In a seashell, we apply simple nest management of a 30-diameter rope enclosure with lots of signage, to create awareness and a little bubble for our birds to thrive in. At least until the eggs hatch and all chaos breaks loose because the fluffy babies have decided to run around and explore the wonders of the sandy beach. With not a care in the world, unless mom or dad says otherwise, they leave the enclosure to hang out around the surf, seeing what the wet sand is hiding for their next meal. It is all very

wonderful to witness and watch these little guys grow up in front of our eyes.

Of course, the conspicuous, African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* has a very different strategy after hatch. These big babies hide in the nearest bush and expect mom and dad to serve them beak and foot for the next 40+ days. What a life!

On Lookout beach, we have various shorebirds nesting over summer, such as, Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus*, Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiaca*, Water Thick-knees *Burhinus vermiculatus*, White-fronted Plovers *Charadrius marginatus* and African Black Oystercatchers. Last season even Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* have joined the very dangerous Kelp Gull colony to try and raise some young – it didn't work out well. But that is nature, survival of the fittest – in this case death is necessary to learn to make better choices next time. As researchers we

cannot interfere with these natural process as it has a function in the systems and an important one at that. We focus on human impacts on our shore breeding birds, that which we can control and should minimise, especially with growing coastal settlement increasing the pressures we exert on our coast and its wildlife.

The plovers and oystercatchers attempt their breeding in a quieter and less populated section of this beach. Lookout is home to 10 pairs of plovers and 5 pairs of oystercatchers. Our ten pairs of plovers laid 72 eggs across 38 nests. A mere 20 of those eggs hatched and a shocking 6 of those 20 chicks made it to fledge. This leaves us with a breeding success of 8.3% which is the lowest we've had since our first season (2015-2016: 10.9%) of the #ShareTheShores programme.

Our three main causes of loss (all of which have doubled since last season)

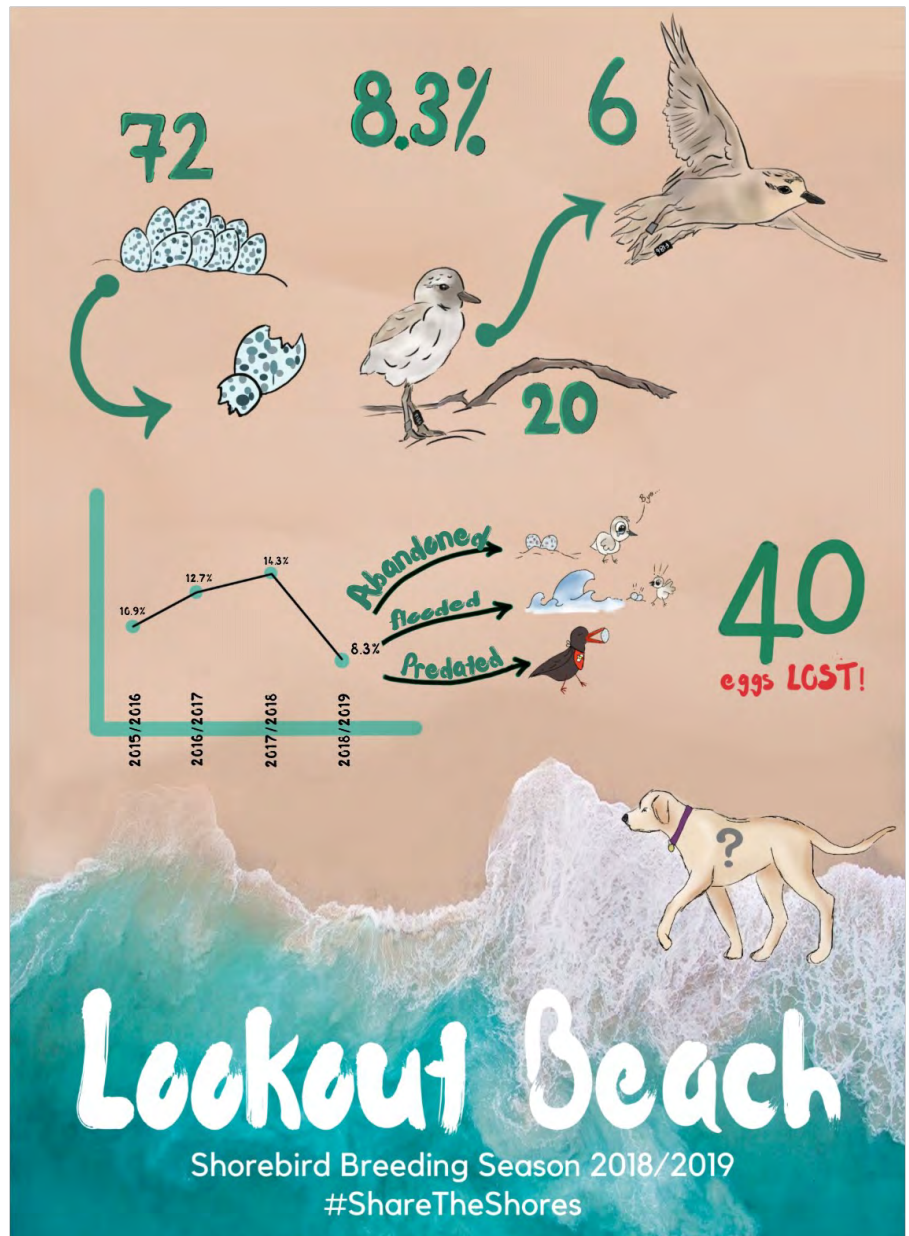
Nature's Valley Trust 2018/2019 season update — cont'd

were abandonment, predation and flooding. As mentioned above we cannot do anything about natural losses, nor should we necessarily. Flooding occurs periodically with spring high tides, and even a normal high tide can wipe out a poorly placed nest.

Predation has increased, and we suspect mainly due to African Black Oystercatchers doing much better and moving into the area. Predation is of course also a natural phenomenon occurring in most natural systems, however plover parents don't often both spend extensive time off the nest and will fiercely fight for their clutch. We are saddened to think that the dog issue on Lookout is still a prevailing one that indirectly affects plovers; scaring them off their nests and resulting in egg death due to overheating, predation etc. Additionally, most likely this is the cause for abandonments of three nests, all of which were situated in the high foot traffic areas. Just these three causes have resulted in a loss of 40 eggs, that is 56% of eggs laid.

We will continue to do our best for the birds of Lookout beach, and we hope that the enforcement that was agreed upon 2 years ago will with this coming season be implemented on beaches. Fortunately, the news from Nature's Valley was much better.

We had a successful shorebird season on Nature's Valley Beach for the breeding season. Some may recall an amazing 12% increase to 30.5 % in breeding success from the 2016/2017 to 2017/2018 seasons. This season we have kept breeding success constant at 30%, with our six pairs scraping 21 nests that produced 40 eggs and 18 chicks. Twelve of these chicks fledged and we have had some sightings of them on the beaches in the area. It seems that we have reached a relatively stable high for the population on



White-fronted Plover F175 'Kami-Daisy' - NVT

Nature's Valley Beach and this was largely due to our amazing Nature's community, working together to #ShareTheShores. We appreciated all the support on the beach, where many are adhering to the new dog regulations and also taking it upon themselves to educate their peers. We look forward to our next breeding season where we will do our best to make beaches even more hospitable for our wildlife. We hope you will continue to #ShareTheShores with us every day.

Note: We compile a fun little clip with an update for the season on Nature's. you can meet our pairs who called our shores home in Nature's Valley this season and all the little chicks who made it to fledge.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?>

Featured artist — Russ Heselden

I first became interested in waders back in the seventies, when in my early teens I used to get home from school on a Friday, snatch a hurried meal and then cycle from Folkestone to Sandwich Bay after dark so I could stay the weekend at the Bird Observatory. In the early days I was still sorting Bar-tailed *L. lapponica* from Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, and used to spend hours lying on my stomach on the beach with my tiny Greenkat telescope popped up on a pile of sand (I couldn't afford a tripod), making field notes on the birds which landed on the foreshore as they flew in from across Pegwell Bay. I remember being struck by the variety of the plumage; the waders rarely looked exactly as they did in my Heinemann guide, especially in early summer when calidrids in particular could be a bit bewildering. Highlights included triumphantly seeing my first Kentish *C. alexandrinus* and Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* on the same April day in 1979. Later, as a fledgling bird ringer, I was involved in occasional wader netting both at Sandwich Bay and, for one memorable long weekend, with the Wash Wader Ringing Group at Terrington Marsh in Norfolk. The opportunity to actually handle the birds was a revelation; it opened my eyes to details that were hard to see in the field and showed me that no two birds were alike. I began to appreciate waders as individuals, something that I now try to emphasise in my sketches and paintings. They remain my favourite group of birds and I find myself returning to them again and again as subjects.

Fast forward to the present; I'm fortunate enough to have been living in Norfolk for the last quarter of a century. There are many places for a wildlife artist to get up close and personal with waders and although I admit to occasionally chasing the odd rarity, I've spent a lot of time over the years sitting patiently in hides just waiting for suitable subjects to approach. Despite the popularity of the north Norfolk coast it's still possible to have a hide at Cley or Titchwell virtually to yourself at certain times of the year, though at others it can feel as though you're battling through an assault course of oversized camera lenses. There's always something to see, and even a quiet day provides opportunities to have a really close look at common species such as Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Ruff *Calidris pugnax*.

My usual approach is to snaffle a corner seat so that I have a good view in



Dunlins - Russ Heselden

two directions. You never know what you're going to see when you open the flaps, which adds to the excitement. I normally spend quite a bit of time simply looking, seeing what's about and searching for something that will be fun to draw. Sometimes it will be an interesting grouping of birds; at other times I might be grabbed by the way the birds are moving, the shapes they make, their reflections in the water or simply an individual in a plumage that I haven't studied before. Before long I'm reaching for my sketchbook.

When I first started painting birds from life, I took the easy route,

predominantly opting to draw sleeping individuals because they could be relied on to stay in the same pose for an extended period of time! Waders are great for this, and when I'm teaching people this is still where I encourage them to start. Even if a raptor spooks everything the birds will quickly return and settle back into familiar positions. This is how I sketched the individual preening Dunlin *Calidris alpina* that I was later able to group together to make a painting (see picture above). Later I learned that even if a wader is on the move it will continue to strike similar poses over and over again; the trick is to have several

Featured artist — cont'd

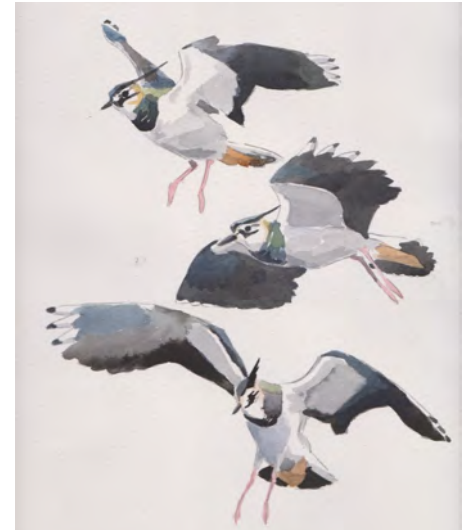
half-finished sketches on the go and then keep adding to each as the opportunity allows. It takes a lot of practice and inevitably you end up with many uncompleted drawings, but it works as a technique. Flying waders are a real challenge – fun to draw, but not for the faint-hearted. With these I tend to draw lightly, only beginning to strengthen lines when they start to look 'right'. It feels great when one works out first time, but I have a lot of abandoned efforts in my sketchbooks. When a sketch is beginning to work I will sometimes emphasise the stronger lines with an ink fineliner, or add watercolour washes to get more of a feel for the light. The two pages of Lapwing sketches (to the right) were completed after I'd got my eye in following a couple of hours of less successful drawings which I didn't want to include here!

Field sketching really forces you to look closely at waders and is one of the best ways get familiar with a species. It was a skill that was drummed into me in those formative years at Sandwich Bay. In those days just about everyone seemed to have a pocket notebook and used it constantly. Producing little field sketches, no matter how basic, was something that everybody did. I remember reading, in his 'Little Black Bird Book', how Bill Oddie used to go out with a series of pre-drawn outlines of birds in his notebook. Inevitably, due to not having prepared every possible outline, he'd end up with a carefully labelled silhouette of



Northern Lapwings - Russ Heselden

a bunting with a note next to it saying, 'This was actually a duck'. However, some people elevated the art of the illustrated field notebook to a high level. Now I rarely see many people using them - it's a lot easier just to resort to a camera, or digiscope a bird with a smartphone. For an artist though, field sketching is what brings the understanding of movement and form that can make a painting come to life. It's usually very easy to tell when someone has painted directly from a photograph. The finished piece can seem rather static, with birds in odd 'frozen' poses or with an over-emphasis on individual feathers. I used to find that



Northern Lapwings - Russ Heselden

this 'deadening' of the image sometimes happened to me when I got home after a day's drawing and tried to reproduce my experiences on canvas. What I was trying to put down as a finished painting almost always lacked the liveliness of the original field sketches; the spark was being lost as I attempted to reproduce the image. Then I hit on the technique of field painting in acrylic and taking the half-finished effort back to the studio to overwork with oils. Since the whole thing starts off as a direct field painting it's much easier to keep it looking fresh and alive.

I tend to select a subject - a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, say, or a particularly obliging Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* - and initially produce two or more pages of field sketches in pencil. I do this no matter how familiar I am with the species; it's the equivalent of doing stretching exercises before you go for a run. I use a Leica telescope with a hide-clamp; it can be quite a strain continually switching from one-eye-with-a-telescope to two-eyes-close-sketching mode, and if I ever come into money I'd like to try out the new Swarovski BTX scope which looks like it might make things considerably easier!

As I progress I may or may not get an idea for something that would make a good composition in a more finished painting. This is when I will start to rough out the idea on a painting board. I make these myself; they are pieces of MDF, cut to a range of sizes, which I have primed with a mixture of white household emulsion and chalk powder. Acrylics dry on this surface almost instantly, which is great as mistakes



A fling of Dunlins in flight - Russ Heselden

Featured artist — cont'd

can be easily painted out. I will often rough out more than one idea, then select the most promising one for working up at home. It's easy to get distracted though; the constant comings and goings on a freshmarsh ensure that you have to keep looking up and checking to see what other species have dropped in.

Usually, other people in the hide ignore an artist at work. Maybe they are too focussed on the birds; maybe it's just the usual British reserve kicking in. If they do pass comment, it's inevitably during the early stages before the painting has started coming together. A good friend of mine, a well-known and usually incredibly mild-mannered wildlife artist, was once painting quietly at the village end of the boardwalk at Cley Reserve. The same passer-by kept returning, pointing out where the artist was going wrong and offering helpful suggestions on how the painting could be improved. After a couple of hours of this my friend snapped, hurled a torrent of abuse at the critic and then in turn hurled the painting over a fence at some surprised cows. In a similar vein I was once painting a group of Common Redshank at Brancaster. Behind me a well-to do mother was having a fierce argument with a truculent child. Eventually she said *'Oh for heaven's sake, Jocasta, I'm going to the car. Go and stand next to the man'*. Thirty seconds later, when I realised that I had a small and very angry child standing next to me, it dawned on me that I was 'the man'. She was there for a full ten minutes before her mother came back. She didn't speak for the whole time; she just stood, arms folded, glaring accusingly at both me and the canvas. The Redshanks weren't bothered but the painting certainly suffered as a result. I never finished it.

I enjoy the fact that waders can be depicted in a variety of settings, giving a very different mood. The two Sanderling *Calidris alba* paintings accompanying this article illustrate this nicely – one showing a small flock flying in on a stormy day and the other a single bird pattering along the foreshore on a calm, still morning. Both, I hope, communicate movement and the overall 'feel' of the species. Looking at each painting I am immediately transported back to the day on which I did the original sketches, and I hope that the sense of 'place' is felt by other people too.

Some of my paintings end up at the Birdscapes Gallery in Norfolk (though I am always looking for other places to exhibit ... anyone?) and there is a wider selection on my website. However, the first



Sanderlings - Russ Heselden

Featured artist — cont'd

place to see them is usually my Facebook page (Russ Heselden Wildlife Artist), where I post things as soon as they are completed. I can easily be contacted through either site. I am always up for accepting commissions, though these have to be of species I know well – don't ask me for a Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* or Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea*, unless one turns up at Snettisham!



Common Snipes - Russ Heselden



Pied Avocets in flight - Russ Heselden

Russ Heselden is a wildlife artist based in mid-Norfolk. He sketches from life and

works mainly in oils. See his website www.russheselden.co.uk



Northern Lapwings - Russ Heselden

The community of San Juan de los Cayos discovers shorebirds — Sandra Giner



Migratory shorebirds in the San Juan de los Cayos lagoon - Gabriela Carrera

The conservation of shorebirds and their habitats depends a great deal on citizen participation or community conservation. Particularly in coastal areas, the habitats used by shorebirds coincide with environments used for different anthropic activities, from the recreational use of beaches to the development of urban complexes and structures for aquaculture and salt extraction.

The community of San Juan de los Cayos on the eastern coast of the Falcón state, Venezuela, depends on fishing in the lagoon, the river Tucurere and offshore, as well as the planting of various fruit trees and the raising of cattle in the inner plains. Beach tourism, very intensive in other communities of this region, is reduced in this locality. Ecotourism is an underdeveloped economic alternative on the eastern coast of Falcón, despite the diversity of marine and terrestrial landscapes, coupled with biological diversity, especially birds, which would be of great appeal to enthusiasts of the observation of wildlife.

In this locality the diversity of aquatic birds includes herons, ibises, pelicans, flamingos, terns and, especially, shorebirds. This makes it especially attractive for birdwatchers and photographers keen to record the wildlife and landscapes of the area. Other eco-friendly activities could also be possible here and it is for this reason it is important that the local communities value these environments and their biological diversity.

Shorebirds are little understood among the coastal communities of Venezuela, mainly because they are not very conspicuous blending with the substrate where they move, in contrast to other very colourful and striking birds such as flamingos and ibises, which are much better known. In



Teaching about bird diversity in the wetlands of San Juan de los Cayos - Gabriela Carrera



Wetlands and shorebirds conservation workshop participants - Gabriela Carrera

The community of San Juan de los Cayos discovers shorebirds — cont'd

order to raise awareness as to the importance of this town for the conservation of shorebirds and the potential of these wetlands for ecotourism, in February a workshop was held for teachers and students of secondary education in schools of San Juan de los Cayos.

In this workshop we talked about several topics, such as the characterisation of the wetlands present in the surroundings of San Juan de los Cayos, specifically in relation to the Wildlife and Fishing Reserve of Tucurere (RFSRP Tucurere); its importance for birds and fish and invertebrate fisheries; migrating shorebirds; their monitoring and conservation and the potential of these wetlands for nature tourism. A field trip was made with the participants of the workshop where they were taught the use of binoculars and telescopes and to observe and identify different species of shorebirds present in the lagoon, on the beach and in the reef conglomerates. They used the instructional material they received about the shorebirds of Venezuela, which included a poster with information on the species of the genus *Charadrius*, an infographic on the migration of shorebirds, and a photographic guide of the species present in the country.

The response of the participants was very stimulating, they were very motivated by the knowledge that they acquired regarding the potential of the ecosystems for ecotourism. Teachers and students alike showed great interest in learning about shorebirds, including the fact that their local wetlands are used as a stopover site by migrating, an odyssey carried out annually by these birds. During the field trip they were keen to learn identification skills; the young people especially showed enthusiasm by asking about, and learning to recognise, the species we observed. At the end of the workshop, they expressed a new perspective and understanding of the value of this wetland for conservation, and its potential as an alternative economic source of nature tourism.

Teachers from six municipal schools from San Juan de los Cayos, Boca de Mangle, Los Taparo and El Cerrito attended, who were motivated to develop activities to observe birds in the lagoon of San Juan de los Cayos and in other wetlands including within of the RFSRP Tucurere. The links established with the community will allow the development of future activities aimed at promoting activities among schoolchildren related to the conservation of shorebirds and their habitats and through the festival of migratory birds.



Shorebird identification key in use - Gabriela Carrera



Learning about the use of bird guides for the identification of species - Gabriela Carrera



Pair of Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia cinnamominus* (male right, female e left)- Gabriela Carrera

The Shorebird Quest — Theatre Kimberley

Shorebirds - small, brownish birds on vast, smelly mudflats - do not capture the imaginations and hearts of most people until their story is learnt. Eyes widen as the unaware are told of the more than 20,000 km long journeys that the birds undertake each year to their breeding grounds in the Northern Hemisphere, and back to the Southern Hemisphere to 'overwinter'. They do not glide. They flap their wings the whole way.

Some species weigh less than a Tim-Tam biscuit (*that's like a Penguin biscuit to Brits Ed.*). Many species will fly for days without stopping for food, water or sleep.

On May 4th of this year, in the remote outback town of Broome, Western Australia, a community puppetry and theatre piece was born. Presented by Theatre Kimberley and titled *The Shorebird Quest*, the show celebrated the migratory shorebirds of Roebuck Bay and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. It tells the story of the productions star - a 4m tall, illuminated Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* puppet named 'Curtis the Curlew' - following his migration journey from Siberia to Broome.



Eastern Curlew - Nigel Jackett

Inspired by photographs from the 1993 Meme McDonald production, *Waderbird Odyssey*, *The Shorebird Quest* is one of Theatre Kimberley's largest collaborative works in over twenty years. It is a co-creation between Theatre Kimberley, Broome Bird Observatory, Parks and Wildlife Services' Yawuru Rangers, Nyamba Buru Yawuru Country Managers, five Broome schools and the local community. Several hundred young people were a part of the creation of *The Shorebird Quest* - as singers, puppet makers and performers. As custodians of the future of our planet, these young people now carry forward a deeper knowledge of migratory birds and the international ecosystems that they rely on.

The remote town of Broome is perhaps most famous for its pearling history and beaches, but to birdwatchers it is



Curtis the Curlew; a giant illuminated Eastern Curlew puppet - Ben Houston Photography

known as 'the Shorebird Capital of Australia'. For wader enthusiasts it is synonymous with the Broome Bird Observatory and the Australasian Wader Study Group who, under the guidance of Clive Minton, have been conducting cannon netting expeditions to the Northwest since the early 1980's.

The town sits adjacent to the Ramsar-listed mudflats of Roebuck Bay where massive 10m tides expose more than 175 square kilometres of mud on low tides. This mud is chock-a-block with benthic fauna and is one of the, if not the, richest

mudflats in the world. This fantastic feast attracts more than 120,000 waders to the bay annually.

The bay also has a long and rich human history with the Traditional Owners, the Yawuru, living alongside it for tens-of-thousands of years. The tale of 'Curtis the Curlew' has been researched and co-written with Parks and Wildlife Services Yawuru Rangers and Yawuru Country Managers.

'As Rangers, we talk about the curlew as being threatened, endangered and vulnerable but don't always get the chance to explain why. We see this show as a fun



Children in the choir - Ben Houston Photography

The Shorebird Quest — cont'd

and entertaining way to teach people about why the health of Roebuck Bay is so important and why we have to be considerate to migratory shorebirds like Curtis,' said Yawuru Country Manager Johani Mamid.

The aim of *The Shorebird Quest* is to showcase how incredible these birds and these mudflats are, and why it is vital we look after them. And to do so in a way that will connect with people who may not otherwise have any interest in shorebirds or their conservation.

Shorebirds are truly citizens of the world. Using 'airline announcement' voiceovers translated into English, Russian, Korean, Mandarin and Yawuru was one of the ways the project attempted to illustrate the international nature of these travelling birds.

It will take international cooperation and communication across all cultures to ensure their numbers do not continue to decline. In the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, populations have rapidly declined largely due to habitat destruction. Mainly, the reclamation of intertidal mudflats.

The 'stage' for the show was 65m of intertidal mudflat adjacent to Town Beach - heavily compacted from historic use - on the shores of Ramsar-listed Roebuck Bay.

A dark, new-moon night and a low-tide saw the mudflat glitter with the reflections of giant illuminated puppets, storytelling, dance, and original music



A giant illuminated Eastern Curlew puppet; part of the Shorebird Quest project in Broome, Western Australia - Ben Houston Photography

performed by local musicians and school choirs. A crowd of over 2,500 brought picnic blankets and chairs and came to watch the magic unfold in the natural amphitheatre and beauty of Town Beach at night.

'The Shorebird Quest celebrates the unique biodiversity of Roebuck Bay, bringing luminous life to the stories of creatures that exist in its water and its mudflats. It's an extraordinary synthesis of art, science and community and just like the migratory birds that travel across the globe to visit Roebuck Bay, it forges new

connections between people and places,' said writer and puppeteer Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman.

The Shorebird Quest features original music co-written by musical director Jaime Jakkett of the Austral-Canadian band Belle Miners and former warden of the Broome Bird Observatory. The music was performed live by choir students from Broome Primary, Cable Beach Primary, and St Mary's Primary, as well as the community adult choir, Broometime Singers, alongside local musicians.

'It has been a joy to fuse together my love for composing and shorebirds, and such an honour to hear the songs that Hayden Khutze and I had written being brought to life,' said Jaime Jakkett.

'As a shorebird enthusiast, it was delightful for me to hear young children able to say that the shorebirds visit Roebuck Bay each year to feast on the 'benthic life'. Not only did they learn the music and perform it with so much energy and vibrancy, they also enthusiastically demonstrated their understanding that it is vital to protect the bay for its cultural and ecological values.'

The response from the community, and from people who would ordinarily have no interest in shorebirds was staggeringly positive. The show sparked or reignited a fierce pride in Roebuck Bay and the shorebirds that call it home.

It is the wish of *The Shorebird Quest* team to see the production carry on in the Broome community and beyond, perhaps even touring the flyway as Meme



Children in the choir - Ben Houston Photography

The Shorebird Quest — cont'd

McDonalds production did in the early 90's. Maybe it is through the arts, complementary to the depth of understanding achieved by science, that we can connect across our cultures to conserve and celebrate these incredible creatures.

If you wish to view a snippet of the show, there is a 5-minute clip here featuring The Benthic Boogie: <https://youtu.be/MXa4E4vHqPQ>

This project was made possible with support from the Australian Government's Building Better Regions Fund; the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program, supported by Royalties for Regions; Healthway, promoting the Act-Belong-Commit message, and the Broome Community.



All the above images are from *The Shorebird Quest* - Ben Houston Photography

AWSG North-west Australia Satellite Tracking Project - Summary (Feb-Jun 2019) — Katherine Leung, Grace Maglio & Inka Veltheim



First Oriental Pratincole fitted with 2g satellite transmitter - Tom Clarke

This is the fifth year that the AWSG's North-west Australia Wader and Tern Expedition team has fitted satellite transmitters on migratory waders. Five 5g transmitters were put on to Little Curlews *Numenius minutus* with the hope for more success to compare to the previous studies in 2013 and 2015; and five 2g transmitters were, for the first time in history, deployed on Oriental Pratincoles *Glareola maldivarum*. Meanwhile, the two satellite transmitters which were deployed on Eurasian Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* during the 2017 NWA Expedition are still transmitting.

Oriental Pratincole **History in the making** Grace Maglio

Prior to 2004, it was thought that the population of Oriental Pratincole in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway was around 75,000 birds. In February 2004, during the annual NWA expedition, participants observed an unprecedented, extraordinary number of this species along Eighty Mile Beach and the surrounding plains. As result a formal count was organised. Through ground and aerial based counts, it was estimated that 2.88 million Oriental Pratincoles inhabited the area that year. This was probably due to the plague proportions of grasshoppers occurring at the time and unfavourable weather conditions in other parts of northern Australia.

Catching and banding has been

regularly undertaken on Eighty Mile Beach and Roebuck Bay since 1981. Oriental Pratincoles have been banded in the hope that some insight into their movements, both in Australia and during their migrations and breeding, may be revealed. Yet, despite over 620 Oriental Pratincoles being marked in Australia over the years, there has only been one recorded resighting. This was made by Chien-Hua CHEN from the Taiwan Wader Study Group of a bird with a plain yellow flag breeding in Taiwan. As a result of this knowledge gap, we have prioritised studying the movements of Oriental Pratincoles.

Normally when one deploys an electronic tracking device on a bird in the non-breeding area, it initially depicts the normal daily home range of a bird as it moves between feeding and roosting areas. This was very much the case with the five Little Curlew, which were fitted with satellite transmitters at Eighty Mile Beach in North-west Australia in mid-February. However, Oriental Pratincoles fitted with similar transmitters on 8 February exhibited markedly different behaviour. These are the first Oriental Pratincoles to be fitted with an electronic device and were particularly targeted because of our almost complete lack of knowledge of their migrations and breeding areas, even though they are the most numerous migratory wader to visit Australia from the northern hemisphere in the non-breeding season.

We have been incredibly fortunate in deploying satellite transmitters

on Oriental Pratincoles just at the time when some were setting off back on their northward migration. The majority arrive in Australia in December and were already known to leave, mostly, in February; a shorter time than any other migratory wader species. Maybe further data will give us some idea of why such an early departure is favoured by this species.

SHE – First one to depart Australia

SHE's first signal, away from Australia, was detected in the early hours of 18 February. By 23 February, SHE was already enjoying a lakeside view at the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia - on the floodplains of the Tonle Sap Lake over 4,000km from the release site. This lake is an important area not only for the flora and fauna of the region but also because it supports almost 50% of the Cambodian human population, who depend on the lake's resources.

After ten weeks in the Tonle Sap Biosphere, we are confident that SHE's movements in this area indicate breeding behaviour. The tracks have developed a 'centre point', which indicate a nest site. There are some breeding records of Oriental Pratincole in Cambodia and in particular on other parts of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve.

After 97 days at its Tonle Sap Lake location, data shows that SHE started making moves south. From around 2 June SHE has been in Prey Veng Province, 170km south east of its breeding site.

AWSG North-west Australia Satellite Tracking Project - Summary (Feb-Jun 2019) — cont'd

SEC – Also to Cambodia

After staying 'close to home' for just over 2 weeks, (Feb 8 – 25), SEC began its migration around 26th February, via Roebuck Plains, before heading overseas in a more north-westerly direction towards Borneo. SEC remained in the West Kalimantan Region, Borneo, for approximately 11 days. Around 12 March there was a brief stopover at Pulau Serasan, (Serasan Island) - part of the southern group of Islands making up the Natuna Regency, Indonesia. Between 14 and 15 March, SEC travelled a distance of approximately 850km to 23km off the coast of the Vietnam-Cambodian border.

From 20 March and 190km from this previous location, SEC was located 40km north east of Phnom Penh in the Prey Veng Province, Cambodia, where agriculture and aquaculture dominate and less than 4% of the original native vegetation remains. SEC has not migrated any further since then, remaining for over 70 days in the Prey Veng Province in Cambodia. This area is known as the "great green belt" of Cambodia due to the plains in the area flooding during the monsoon season (May to October), depositing silts, which drives the region's high agricultural yields. SEC is probably feasting on the rich insect life in these fertile areas.

After approximately 70 days in this location, with breeding likely to have occurred, SEC made its initial move south on 28 May. From around 30 May SEC has been located approximately 90km south east of its Prey Veng location, in the considerably smaller Svay Rieng Province, less than 20km from the Vietnam boarder.

Engraved Leg-flag	Departure date from Australia (approx.)
SHE	18 February 2019
SEC	26 February 2019
SEP	4 March 2019
SUN	8 March 2019
SEA	Transmission ceased 9 February 2019

With all four Oriental Pratincoles having left Australia to the north-west by the second week of March, to reach Mainland South East Asia by the end of March, it is clear these birds are tracking much further to the west than all our other migratory waders; once they have gone past Indonesia.

However, no sooner than it had

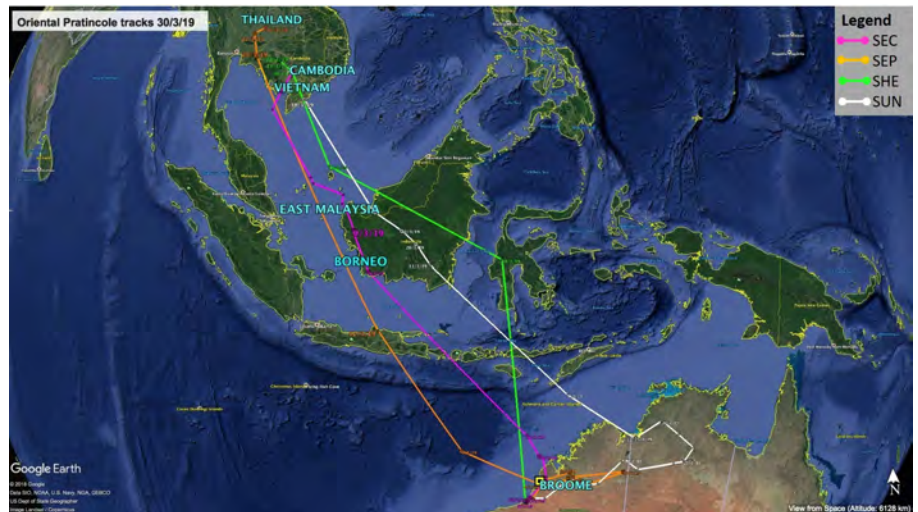


Fig 1: Tracks of Oriental Pratincole from Australia to Mainland South East Asia – 30 March 2019

gone all quiet, and we had started speculating that all four birds had become relatively static near possible breeding areas, two of the birds 'exploded' into life and moved long distances in diametrically opposite directions!!

SUN – History repeats in Taiwan

Around 6 April after approximately 7 days on Mainland Southeast Asia, SUN headed east and although we are unable to determine the exact route taken, this bird travelled approximately 2,030km to a location in western Taiwan. What makes this flight fascinating is that had SUN taken a more direct route to this area from 80 Mile Beach, Western Australia, it may well have saved itself around 1,000 kilometres of air travel.

Chiayi County, Taiwan, is where SUN was located from approximately 9 to 12 April, probably hawking for insects over the sugar cane, rice and corn fields that surround the Ba-Chang River. This is close to our only previous report of a flagged Oriental Pratincole (in 2008). Bad weather in Taiwan may have affected the performance of the satellite tag for a week, as the next location reading was on 18 April, 132km east of the Chiayi County location in Shoufeng township, Hualien County on the eastern coast of central Taiwan.

With only inaccurate location data available over the next few weeks we assume that SUN is most likely situated on the dry riverbeds somewhere along the Shoufeng and Hualien Rivers, where breeding attempts have occurred in previous years. Historic breeding records

seem to show a preference for dry riverbanks in Eastern Taiwan (and harvested agricultural fields in Western Taiwan).

SEP – The first Australian wader breeding in India.

Not to be outdone, the fourth Pratincole with a transmitter moves to India. On 22 March, SEP had reached Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Thailand – also an unusual destination for waders, spending their non-breeding season in Australia. It was therefore a great surprise when around 1 April, SEP left Mainland Southeast Asia and flew towards India.

On 6 April, SEP was in the coastal plains of Odisha. This is approximately 1,815km north-west of its Thailand location. Unlike the remote and isolated coastal plains of 80 Mile Beach, Kendrapara District, where SEP was located, consists of predominately agricultural allotments (legumes, rice and jute), with many small villages nearby. However, a similarity does exist in the frequent weather events, including cyclones, floods and drought that occur in both regions.

On 22 April SEP took flight again and flew right across the Indian continent to south western India. Here it set up camp on the banks of the Krishna River, within the boundary of Heggur Village, Bagalkot District, Karnataka. It seems to be making short local movements suggesting it is going to breed in that area. Not surprisingly, SEP is the first Australian-marked wader to be recorded in that region and the first Australian wader to be recorded breeding in India.

AWSG North-west Australia Satellite Tracking Project - Summary (Feb-Jun 2019) — cont'd

The Oriental Pratincole, Australia's most numerous migratory shorebird and is proving to have a very wide breeding range. Breeding populations are reported as occurring from Vietnam in the south to Russia in the north and from Pakistan in the west to Japan in the east.

Their adaptability and ability to utilise modified agricultural land and various water sources most likely contributes to their healthy populations. Yet we have very little knowledge about the movements and breeding habits of Oriental Pratincoles overwintering in Australia.

With this project so far, we have gained a small but significant insight to their northward movements and their choice of breeding sites.

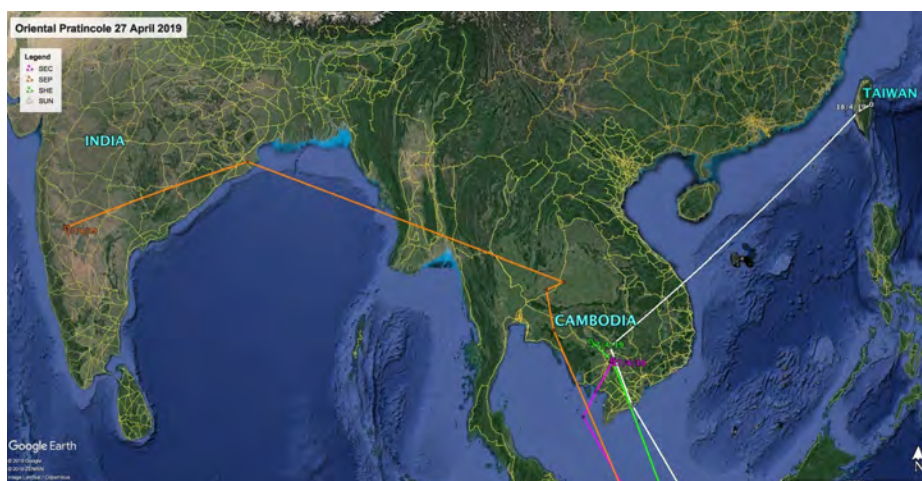


Fig 2: Tracks of Oriental Pratincole from Mainland Southeast Asia – 28 April 2019

Bird ID	Distance from 80 Mile Beach re-lease location (approx.)	Approximate time in breeding location (days)	Breeding Location
SUN	4800km	59	East Taiwan
SEP	6350km	55	South-west India
SHE	4000km	97 total	West Cambodia
SEC	3840km	70 total	South-east Cambodia

Little Curlew **The Third Attempt** Inka Veltheim

By comparison, the Little Curlew results are not encouraging. Two of the transmitters have failed before the birds departed from Australia. But we are getting some results from the other three birds.

The first bird to leave Anna Plains 80 Mile Beach, was LL, which flew past Roebuck Bay just after midnight on 5 April. It then flew a further 2,000km and landed on the island of Maluku, Indonesia on the morning of 7 April. This track is further east than migration paths of Little Curlews in previous years (2013 & 2015) and may be due to tropical cyclone Wallace tracking across the sea between Australia and Indonesia. Unfortunately, this transmitter has not transmitted since then. It is unclear what may have happened to the transmitter or the bird.

LU, the next Little Curlew to depart Anna Plains, flew to Guangdong Province, mainland China in one direct, 5,000 km, flight. The last fix of this bird at 80 Mile Beach, Australia, was on 14 April, and the first fix on migration was on 16 April. LU



Little Curlew LS with satellite transmitter shortly before release - Olivia Gourley

also appeared to be using agricultural fields. About a week after its first stopover, LU moved approximately 1,300 km further north and stop-over in the buffer zone of Yancheng National Nature Reserve.

The third bird, LS, departed Australia on 23 April. This individual initially flew to Roebuck Plains and back in March. It

reached the coast of China on 28 April, having flown non-stop from Australia, similarly to LU. These individuals are about 170 km apart, and LS is near Mianlin, in an agricultural area adjacent to a river.

Unfortunately, no transmission was received on LS and LU since 14 May. The failure rate for tracking of Little Curlew

AWSG North-west Australia Satellite Tracking Project - Summary (Feb-Jun 2019) — cont'd

proved to be high in the 3 years experiences (2013, 2015 and 2019). Different strategy, such as using lighter transmitter, change in attachment method, will have to be carefully investigated if further study is to be pursued.

Eurasian Whimbrel Breeding ground reached again Katherine Leung

Both Whimbrel KU and LA reached their breeding ground by early June.

Whimbrel KU was on its 3rd northward journey since we've deployed satellite transmitter on it in Feb 2017. This year, it departed Broome on 25 April (3 days later than previous year) after spending 205 days for the non-breeding season in Australia. KU made stops along its way at Sumbawa Island in Indonesia for a day, and then at Manila Bay in the Philippines for about 4 days. KU used to make a single flight from Broome directly to China in the previous 2 years. The reason why it has changed its tactic is unclear. KU then travelled another 1,033km and landed on Shantou city in Guangdong Province on 6 May. KU's landing area is more towards the south-west comparing to previous 2 years. KU gradually "hopped" along the coast of Guangdong Province towards its familiar stop-over site for the past 2 years in Putian, Fujian Province.

LA was a 2nd year young bird when we deployed the satellite transmitter in Feb 2017. It is now on its 2nd northward migration to the breeding ground. LA left Eighty Mile Beach a day later on 26 April (2 days late compare to previous year) after spending 201 days within a 10km section of Eighty Mile Beach at 40-50km south of Anna Plains Station entrance. LA kept the same practice as previous year and made a direct 4,901km flight to reach the coast of Fujian Province on 2 May after 6 days. LA spend its time on both Fujian mainland coast and Kinmen Island (outlying island of Taiwan) in the same bay.

LA progressed sooner than KU and continued heading north to arrive the same stop-over site as previous year in Panjin, Liaoning Province on 15 May. Before KU arrived Panjin, LA has already left and flew north-east to arrive Magadan, Russia on 26 May (2 days earlier than last year). Maximum speed recorded was 48km/h!

KU arrived at rice paddies area in Panjin on 23 May. KU abandoned its familiar stop-over site 25km south near Yingkou where it has spent 11 and 6 days

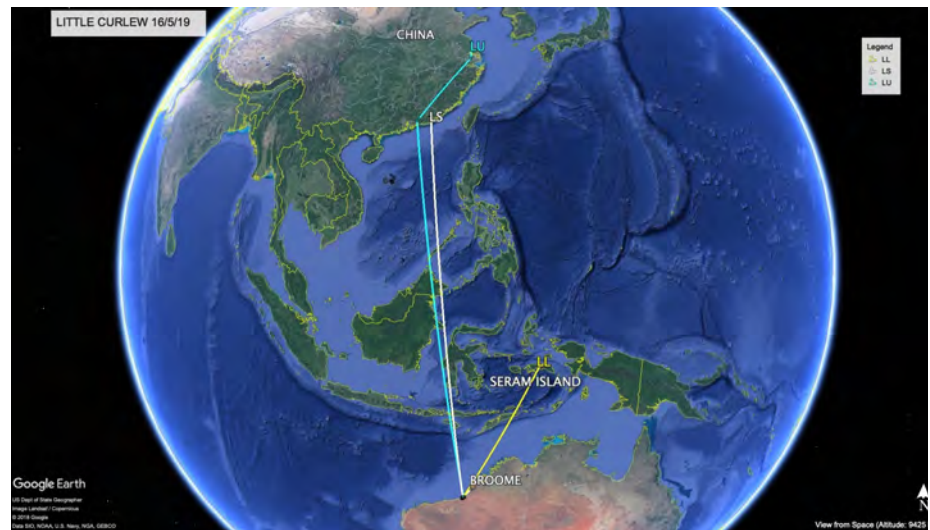


Fig 3: Migration tracks of Little Curlews

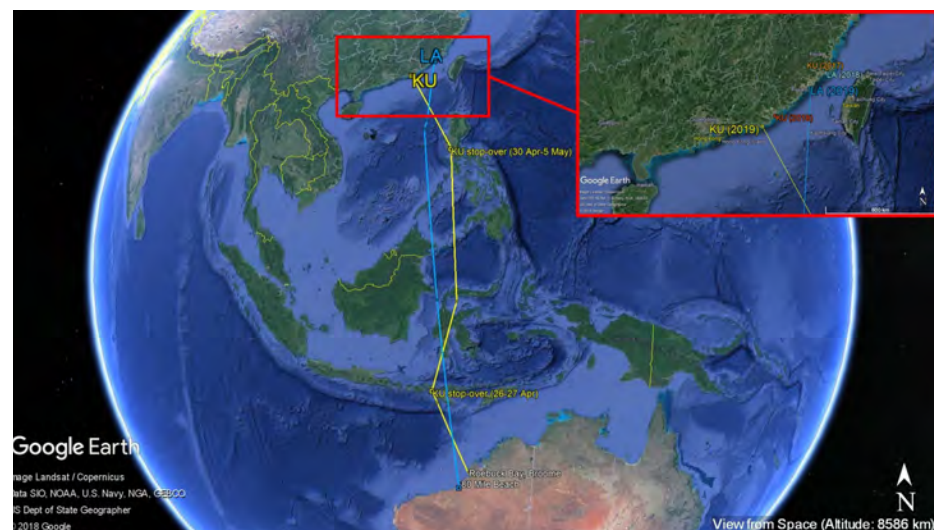


Fig 4: KU and LA's migration tracks to southern China



Fig 5: Stop-over sites around Panjin and Yingkou by the Whimbrels in 2017-2019

AWSG North-west Australia Satellite Tracking Project - Summary (Feb-Jun 2019) — cont'd

respectively in 2017 and 2018. Yet KU didn't stay long at Panjin like the previous 2 years and departed on the same day. As per Liaoning Meteorological Bureau website, rainfall in Panjin and Yingkou had been very low and drought condition had impact on agriculture activities. It is possible that the shallow water rice paddy habitats were not available to these birds this year. KU carried on migrating north and arrived Heilongjiang Province on 25 May.

LA reached breeding ground less than 24 hours earlier than KU. A few stops were made along the shore of Magadan before LA's making its final leg of 470km to breeding ground in Chukotka on 31 May. Although LA failed to breed in 2018, apparently it had gained much knowledge about the breeding ground. After reaching Chukotka, LA stopped at two locations where it had stayed last year. Location data indicates LA might have nested successfully this year.

KU stayed in Heilongjiang for only



Fig 6: Whimbrel KU and LA's migration tracks to the breeding ground

4 days before departing on 29 May to Russia. The transmitter captured its departure at 17:00 in the evening with minimum speed of 47km/h. A brief stop-over was made at the boundary of Amur

and Sakha on 31 May before KU made a direct 1,516km flight to reach the Arctic Circle, landed only 50km south of its nesting site in 2017 and 2018. KU is currently nesting in the same site again.

Leg Flag (track colour)	No. of days since transmitter deployment	No. of days since departing Australia (2019)	Distance travelled (2019)
KU (yellow)	856 days	66 days	10,191 km
LA (blue)	868 days	65 days	10,719 km

Wader news from around the world in brief — Rick and Elis Simpson

NORTH AMERICA

Western Sandpipers Eat Goo

New research has taught us something fairly unbelievable about what Western Sandpipers *Calidris mauri* eat to help them on their northward migration along the western coast of North America.

Dr Robert Elner has spent some time watching Western Sandpipers on the Fraser River estuary, more than twenty years to be precise, and he observed that although some waders followed the ebbing tide all the way out to feed, some of the smaller ones did not. They remained in an area further up the mud flat and went no further. This puzzled him, as well it might.

What he observed, was that the area where the Western Sandpipers were feeding was covered with a green slime and he wondered if this had something to do with their choice of feeding spot.

Determined to find out, he observed the birds closely and found that they seemed to be slurping up the goo. Investigating further he discovered that the



Western Sandpiper - Elis Simpson

stomach content of the Western Sandpipers almost entirely consisted of the green slush and there were, contrary to expectations, few crustaceans, molluscs and other invertebrate food stuff.

He asked Prof. Peter Beninger to study the mouthparts of the Western Sandpiper very closely and he discovered that they have feathery tongues and that within these feathery filaments were lodged many particles of the goo.

So what is this goo? Well, it is technically called Biofilm.

Biofilm is made up of things called Diatoms which create their own food from

sunlight; carbohydrates and omega 3 fatty acids. They also secrete a sticky substance which binds them together and to the mud so they can withstand the ebb and flow of the tide water. The Western Sandpipers use their feathery tongues to slurp this stuff up and it provides them with sufficient energy to fly on north for another 1000km to their breeding grounds in the Arctic.

Full story and more information here:

<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/features/slime-shorebirds-and-scientific-mystery/>

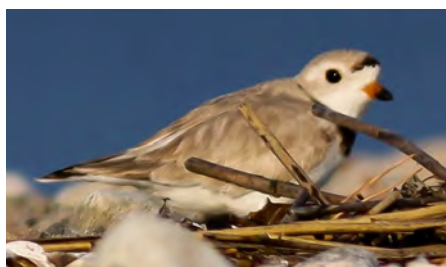
Jersey Shore Town Cancels 2019 Summer Concert Series to Protect Piping Plovers

An annual summer concert series in a Jersey Shore town has been cancelled to protect a pair of Piping Plovers *Charadrius melodus* which are Near Threatened and federally protected.

The nest was discovered the first week of June at Sandy Hook's Beach E, which has traditionally been used for the Sandy Hook Foundation's summer beach concert series.

Wader news from around the world in brief — cont'd

Because noise disturbs Piping Plovers the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decrees that concerts cannot take place within 1,000 meters of the nest, and so legally the concert series had to be cancelled.



Nesting Piping Plover - Elis Simpson

AUSTRALASIA/ASIA

Floating Wader Roost Rafts

The needs of migrating waders are simple; food and rest. Whilst these are easy to understand it is not always easy for birds to find the required amounts of either or both.

The need to feed is obvious, long migrations use much energy, but not enough attention has been paid in the past to the importance of rest. When not engaged in feeding migrating birds need to conserve their energy. Each unnecessary flight caused by disturbance uses this valuable energy and if it happens too often may cause the individual bird to abandon their migration or worse still die trying. These necessary roosting sites are being lost, mainly due to development and human recreational activities causing some populations to decline. This gradual erosion of suitable habitat is likened to a death by a thousand cuts. Small changes in many places cumulatively result in big changes across the board.

With this in mind BirdLife Australia in partnership with BirdLife International, Woodside, the Partnership for the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership and Seochoen have come up with a solution; the floating

roost raft.

Most artificial roost sites developed until now have been earthworks, but these floating roost sites would provide a cheap, low-impact, adaptable and effective alternative. The rafts are constructed from adapted floating, long-line oyster bags, which rise a fall with the tide, providing suitable roost sites in all conditions.

A number of trials are underway at three sites: Port Phillip Bay in Victoria; the Hunter River Estuary in New South Wales; and the Geum Estuary in South Korea.

Early reports suggest that these floating roost sites have been very successful, with a variety of waders, terns, ducks, cormorants and herons all taking advantage of them.

Click [here](#) for further updates and more information.

ASIA

Globally important mudflats in the Yellow Sea awarded World Heritage Listing

The mudflats of the Yellow Sea are vitally important for more than 17 globally threatened migratory shorebirds.

The Yellow Sea is in the middle of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. This is a migration route used by the largest diversity and highest numbers of waders and other birds in the world. This important World



Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* a species, the entire population of which, utilises the Yellow Sea mudflats - Elis Simpson

Heritage listing announcement came from Baku, Azerbaijan recently and will help to protect important areas of coastal wetland habitat in the Yellow Sea region. After many years of 'reclamation' and conversion to industrial land there is precious little of this habitat still remaining.

China has recently shown a willingness to participate in global conservation by announcing a moratorium on coastal reclamation and now securing this World Heritage listing for the Yellow Sea ecosystem.

EUROPE

Military base Eurasian Curlew eggs collected for headstarting

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Natural England have come together in a project to save some Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* eggs from destruction. The eggs will be used as part of a headstarting project to boost the species' numbers in parts of lowland Britain.

In the past these eggs have simply been destroyed under licence as Curlews present a risk to aircraft using military runways; although it has not been made clear what happens to the adults which are a threat immediately, and not in the future, as the eggs are.

The eggs were taken to Slimbridge WWT, Gloucestershire, to be hand-reared and released into the Severn Vale. WWT

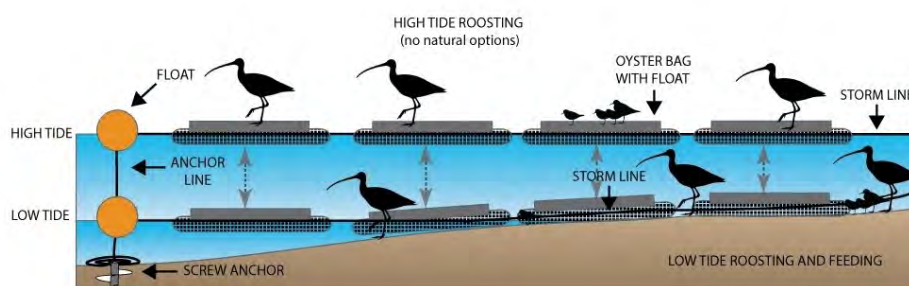


Eurasian Curlew - Elis Simpson

conservationists will 'headstart' the curlews, by hatching the eggs in incubators, then protecting the chicks in outdoor aviaries until they fledge. They will then be released at specially selected sites.

Game bird releases associated with predator increases

New research from the British Trust for



Floating roost raft graphic - BirdLife Australia

Wader news from around the world in brief — cont'd

Ornithology (BTO), has confirmed that which has been suspected for some time, that the release of gamebirds such as Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* and Red-legged Partridges *Alectoris rufa*, by commercial shooting concerns appear to be aiding the population growth in avian predators that feed upon them.

It is estimated that 50 million gamebirds are released into the British countryside each year. These birds are reared and liberated to support commercial shooting concerns. This quantity of birds has a biomass of approximately 46,000 tonnes, which, when compared to the remaining UK breeding avifauna's biomass, around 19,500 tonnes, is colossal. All of these birds need to eat and shelter putting them in direct competition with native birds, although habitat management for them does have positive impacts for some species of bird. But it is the growth in predator numbers associated with areas where gamebirds are released that is of concern. Despite predator control at release sites, predator numbers have been seen to increase more quickly in these areas than elsewhere.

A recent study by the BTO found that there was an association between released gamebirds and increased population growth of avian predators such as Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and



Common Pheasant - Elis Simpson

corvids *Corvus* spp., although further studies would be required to establish exactly what this relationship is.

Red-wattled and Grey-headed Lapwings in Western Europe

At first, it would seem fairly obvious to some at least, that a Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* turning up in the Netherlands was likely to be an escape. After all they are largely non-migratory in habits with some seasonal movements at extremes of their range. But read on.

The bird in question had worn and faded upperparts which might suggest that it had recently spent its time in a hot and



Red-wattled Lapwing - Elis Simpson

sunny place, and it was of the subspecies that dwells closest to Europe in the Middle-East *V. i. indicus*. It was first seen on Texel, a well-known migration hot spot, but it moved to Ameland where it was relocated a few days later. In themselves these details are not much to go by, however it transpires that this bird had previously been seen elsewhere and importantly between where it was found in the Netherlands and where it might just have come from in the Middle East. It had also been seen in Bavaria, Germany, and in Belgium and rather more excitingly on the Adriatic coast of Croatia. Again, this does not prove the bird is not an escape from a collection somewhere, but it surely means it needs to be properly assessed before being dismissed entirely.

Prior to this there had been a Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* seen in Norway and Sweden in the spring.



Grey-headed Lapwing - Elis Simpson

This too could have been an escape but the fact that a second bird (based on differences in plumage) appeared, again in the Netherlands, a week after the Red-wattled Lapwing had departed may suggest otherwise; these birds are rare in captivity in Europe. In 2018 there had been another seen in Turkey which may add weight to the argument for genuine vagrancy, but then it may just mean that one unhappy lapwing collector is having a very bad year indeed.

Africa

Third record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Mozambique

In 2018 Mozambique played host to continental Africa's first and second Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata*. The story behind their finding was though, far from routine.



Two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Macaneta
- J. R. Nicolau / Uneath Safaris

On the 4th of February a bird was seen, photographed and identified as a Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* at Macaneta, Maputo Province, Mozambique. A fortnight later the same bird, at the same location, was re-identified as being Africa's first Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. During the days that followed, in poor weather, a bird was seen and photographed and was assumed to be the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. But this time, it turned out that the bird was in fact a Pectoral Sandpiper. What were the chances of both being at the same site at the same time; especially since the first record for Mozambique had only been in 2017 despite numerous records across southern Africa previously?

On the 2nd of March it was therefore even more surprising that not one, but two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were located, again at the same location. Then the whole thing became rather bizarre as the next day not only were there two Sharp-

Wader news from around the world in brief — cont'd



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper - Gary Allport



Two Pectoral (left) and two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers at Macaneta - Michael Mason

tailed Sandpipers together, with them were two Pectoral Sandpipers; all four together forming a mini flock.

After that date only one Pectoral Sandpiper was seen, which was last seen on the 31st of March. The two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers became one on the very same day and that singleton was last seen on the 16th of April.

Instrumental in all of this, especially the correct identification of the birds and finding the second Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, was Gary Allport. So it was a great co-incidence that on the 21st of February 2019 it was he who found the third record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at exactly the same spot. But, as this was very likely to have been one of the previously seen individuals probably only the two individuals were involved in these three records? Incredibly there were up to two Pectoral Sandpipers again at the same spot from the 23rd of January to the 23rd of March, a Great Snipe *Gallinago media* on the 21st of March, which Gary found sitting in the middle of the road on his way to the sire in the dark, and a



Great Snipe - Gary Allport

pair of Long-toed Lapwings *Vanellus crassirostris* in late March.

Sources: [Hakai Magazine](#), [NBC New York](#), [BirdLife Australia](#), [BirdGuides](#) and Gary Allport [BirdLife International](#).



Long-toed Lapwing - Elis Simpson

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

Featured Wader Photo: Asian Dowitcher — Ayuwat Jearwattanakanok



Location: Samut Maneerat salt pans, Samut Sakhon, Thailand
Species: Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus*

semipalmatus
Date: 5 August 2018
Equipment: (camera, lens, converter

etc) Canon 7D Mark II + Tamron 150-600 mm
Details: 1/160, f/6.3, ISO 800

While looking for the rare River Tern *Sterna aurantia* that had been reported from Samut Maneerat salt pans without much luck, I came across a big flock of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* coming to feed and roost in a certain salt pan in the evening. On the following day, I decided to go and wait for

them to come back to the same area by lying low on the ground with my camera. The godwits showed up as expected as well as a small flock of Asian Dowitchers. I was surprised to find that one bird even had a metal ring on its leg. After posting my photos on the Facebook group called 'Shorebird leg-

flag sightings in the EAAF - highlights photos reports etc', I received a reply that the bird was ringed in Nalabana Island, India in 2016. It's the first time I've found a bird that was ringed in India here in Thailand. This bird has shown an interesting linkage between the EAAF and the Central Asian flyways.

Long-staying Asian Dowitcher at Jamnagar, India — Yashodhan Bhatia

I was at ease on the morning of 31 Dec 2018 with a large mug of coffee over the desktop at about 10 am checking out the mails. It had been a hectic week at the year-end as Gururaj Moorching and Rofikul Islam were in Jamnagar to complete their Big Years. I received a picture on my whatsapp and a call followed immediately. It was from Rajdeepsinh Jadeja. He was with Bishnoi K. N., and had called to confirm the id of a bird. When I saw it I could not believe my eyes. He had found a big rarity. It was Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*. In 15 minutes flat I was at the site. I was viewing my lifer at a favourable distance and all this on the last day of the year making it more memorable! Asian Dowitcher is an elegant wader, a bit

capricious to identify at one go. For sure, it needs a second view to distinguish correctly even for an experienced birder. We observed this specimen constantly feeding in very shallow waters of an abandoned saltpan. The saltpan consisted of a fine layer of algae on the moist mud on its southern side and a pool of shallow water in the rest of the part, probably providing this wader an ideal habitat to forage.

The bird was very deliberate in feeding. It was probing persistently in the mud with its bill. Most of the time it foraged by wading through the water, which was tarsus high, sometimes though it foraged in slightly deeper waters about the height of its tibia. It also preferred to walk on the algae



Photo1 - Rajdeepsinh Jadeja.

covered moist mud to feed. Here, the complete profile of the species was visible. (Photo1.)

Long-staying Asian Dowitcher at Jamnagar, India — cont'd

Precisely described as 'Snipe-billed Godwit' in *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, Vol 2 it shows a marked similarity to snipes with a long bold supercilium, dark loreal line and an almost similar forehead structure, which lead to a relatively long bill. The bill is straight, dark and single coloured of constant width, but slightly swollen at the tip, which is visible only in close-ups. (Photo2.)



Photo2 - Yashodhan Bhatia

The anterior view of crown on the forehead forms an obvious grey-brown 'V' between the eye-strips (Photo3.)



Photo3 - Yashodhan Bhatia

Legs are long and toes are dark grey-black with black slightly long nails. (Photo4.)



Photo - Yashodhan Bhatia

The face, neck and the breast are slightly streaked or mottled grey-brown with a white

belly. Flanks are also barred grey-brown. Feathers on upperparts and wing coverts are darker grey-brown containing dark brown shaft and a contrasting, neat, pale border on feather fringes.

Almost like Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* in jizz and size, Asian Dowitcher is easily confused with the former in non-breeding plumage. Here, it was with a group of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* and was clearly smaller in size. The difference was apparent through binoculars and scopes. It mixed freely with Black-tailed Godwits while feeding or roosting.

The typical feeding behaviour of Asian Dowitcher is what makes it apart from similar looking waders. The long bill is used for probing in the moist mud in fast vertical motion, like a sewing machine. It always feeds by poking; sometimes the bill is penetrated deep into the mud, just up to the nostrils and withdrawn a few seconds later with a worm or a crustacean. (Photo5.)



Photo5 - Rajdeepsinh Jadeja.

Feeding is almost continuous, usually in knee-deep waters and also on exposed mud. Scurrying, it covers more ground than godwits while foraging. It seems to feed mainly on marine worms by pulling them out of the moist mud. (Photo6.)



Photo6 - Rajdeepsinh Jadeja.

Small crustaceans and molluscs were also consumed by jabbing, but it foraged for them in knee-deep waters. In one of the photographs, we were able to capture it with a small fish. (Photo7.)



Photo7 - Rajdeepsinh Jadeja.

Rather alone, Asian Dowitcher was more comfortable roosting near or between the groups of godwits. (Photo8.)



Photo8 - Yashodhan Bhatia

A water level which was touching its tibia was ideal for it to roost. It also tended to bathe or preen in between bouts of sleep. An occasional stretch exposed the under-wings and axillaries, which were white with almost no markings. It looks most gorgeous when it stands upright and stretches the neck to scan the situations and the surroundings. (Photo9.)



Photo9 - Yashodhan Bhatia

Long-staying Asian Dowitcher at Jamnagar, India — cont'd

Although generally silent while feeding, it gives a soft flight call when in flight. The take off was sudden like snipes and godwits when alarmed. Once, I was able to photograph the Asian Dowitcher along with a flock of Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* while it was landing. This displayed the tail with twelve feathers, each bearing dark grey bars almost even as the white ones. The rump showed streaks of grey-brown. (Photo 10.)

Interestingly I came across a text in *100 Birds and how they got their names* by Diana Wells, where she writes that the name Dowitcher comes either from Deutsch (doicher) or Duitsch (doi-ch), because Germans and Dutch Americans used to eat them as delicacies!

We found this individual in a saltpan at Bedi port, 4 kms outside Jamnagar town. Out of the three dowitchers the world over, Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* and Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* are Nearctic species. Asian Dowitcher is the only species which migrates along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, wintering between tropical and equatorial regions. It is interesting to learn, however, that this Asian Dowitcher has reached Jamnagar in western Gujarat which lies in Central Asian Flyway. This is a case of a rare vagrant. In this region, previously it has been recorded at Pirotan Island and Narara beyt in Marine National Park (Gulf of Kutch) and also at Khijadia Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar. These were the glimpses, probably, as the bird was identified but was not approachable. So we don't have good photographs from this area. This one being very near to the road has endured human presence. (Photo11.)

It was a very good find and sighting all in all. Being very close to the town, the area is easily accessible. The bird was spotted just off the main road, so it is not apprehensive and was very much used to human presence. It was watched from dawn to dusk by some or the other birders and or photographers every day since it was been found. It was hoped that it would stay and leave for subarctic summer destination to breed only after acquiring the breeding colours. Sadly the bird departed in late April having only begun to acquire its breeding finery. (Photo12.)

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Photo10 - Yashodhan Bhatia

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Photo11 - Rajdeepsinh Jadeja.



Photo12 - Yashodhan Bhatia

South Gujarat Waders Exploration Project — Saswat Mishra, Dr Pragnesh Patel, Dr Anand Patel

After years of exploring habitats such as the forests, grasslands, and wetlands of South Gujarat, in February 2015, one of our team members, Dr. Anand Patel started exploring the coasts of the region. Initially the areas were near Valsad and its adjoining localities.

To start with, in the first two years of exploration, Dr. Anand recorded birds like Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and several plovers.

After 2017, we began to explore, with Dr. Anand Patel, in the hope of new possible sites around this coastline for many more wader species. We divided our area of exploration and started exploring every month.

In October 2018, Saswat Mishra and Dr. Pragnesh Patel started exploring the coast lines of Daman and Umargaon respectively.



Eurasian Curlew - Birds of Gujarat

COASTAL DAMAN

At Daman, Saswat found species like Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*, Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, and Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* in huge numbers.



Terek Sandpiper (foreground) with Common Greenshanks - Birds of Gujarat

Saswat observed that after December all these waders may have been selecting new resting grounds, as they were not visiting their regular areas at Daman. There were a few notable sightings of Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Caspian Gull



Wader Flock – Birds of Gujarat

Larus cachinnans, and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. The first ever record of Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*, a rarity for the South Gujarat region, was found here on a beach on November 2018, along with many Eurasian Curlews and Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*.



Crab Plover - Birds of Gujarat

UMARGAON COAST

After November, Dr Pragnesh Patel explored a new place near the Umargaon Coastal area, he observed Eurasian Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlews, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*. He also got the first ever records of Grey Plover



Kentish Plover - Birds of Gujarat

Pluvialis squatarola and Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* in their respective breeding plumages.

The area is a delta system with freshwater from the river adding to the high tide making it impossible to survey when the tide is in. After the tide vanishes, this patch attracts a huge number of waders, most common seen among these are Curlew Sandpipers, Dunlins and Kentish Plovers.

VALSAD and Outskirts

Dr. Anand Patel continued his exploration and got beautiful waders species like Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* Great Knot, and Dunlins etc. Over these years of exploration, Dr. Anand believes this coast line can be home to many more waders and possibly some vagrants over the years to come!



Common Redshank - Birds of Gujarat

Other possibilities can be prevailed by some further pelagic exploration and more stunning images of the birds of the region can be found here: www.birdsofgujarat.co.in

A study of the non-breeding movements of Icelandic Purple Sandpipers — Ron Summers, Gunnar Þór Hallgrímsson, Bozena Kalejta-Summers and Guðmundur Örn Benediktsson.

The Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* is a medium-sized wader that breeds across Arctic/alpine regions from eastern Canada to central Siberia. Whilst many aspects of its biology are well known, there are still some topics that have not been fully described or are restricted to a single study.

Iceland lies at the centre of both the breeding and wintering ranges for Purple Sandpipers, and has large populations throughout the year. During the migration and wintering seasons, populations from other breeding areas visit, so that the composition of the population in Iceland varies seasonally. Whilst there is evidence that some of the Icelandic breeding population is resident, there is also the possibility that some migrate to other countries. Canada has been suggested because there has been a ringing recovery there.

Given the importance of Iceland to Purple Sandpipers and uncertainties of some aspects of their biology, a study was started in 2019. One of the aims was to gain more data on the movements of Icelandic Purple Sandpipers outside the breeding season.

The initial part of the study was carried out in northern Iceland in June 2019.



An adult Purple Sandpiper with colour rings and geo-locator on right tibia - Ron Summers

Encounters with nests were made by chance when the sitting bird was disturbed, usually from a distance of a few metres. One bird that nested under rocks left its nest at a greater distance than usual, allowing us to watch the bird back to the nest. Our encounters with Purple Sandpiper broods were usually initiated by the attendant adult who would fly towards us and give alarm calls. When we sat quietly nearby, the adult would return to the chicks which were then



A Purple Sandpiper brooding its newly-hatched chicks in the nest (one is just visible) - Ron Summers

spotted. Adults at nests and when attending broods were trapped and, along with chicks, were given unique permutations of colour



A Purple Sandpiper chick - Ron Summers

rings so that subsequent sightings of these birds could be made, both within the study area at other seasons and elsewhere. In addition, 12 geo-locators were deployed on breeding males. Geo-locators are small (0.65g) data loggers that collect data on light and time, from which approximate latitudes and longitudes can be estimated twice per day. The data are archival, so geo-locators need to be retrieved in order to download and analyse the data. We chose adult males for marking because they alone attend the broods after the eggs hatch, and adults with broods are easier to find than nests.

On-going work will involve year-round counts in north Iceland to describe the season pattern of numbers, and to note any birds that were ringed as breeding adults or chicks. Next summer, we will attempt to recover as many geo-locators as possible to determine their whereabouts during winter.



Our team marking and recording data from a Purple Sandpiper. From left to right: Ron Summers, Bozena Kalejta-Summers and Gunnar Þór Hallgrímsson - Anon passer by.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to Jónína Sigríður Þorlákssdóttir and Þorkell Lindberg Þóraninsson of the Northeast Iceland Nature Research Centre for facilities and permission to carry out the studies. We are also grateful to the Eider-down farmers for permission to visit their lands. The geo-locators were kindly provided by Wader Quest.

How does cold weather affect waders?— Rick Simpson



Lapwings in the snow - Elis Simpson

On a cold winter's day in Norfolk 1991, as I walked along the inner shore of Blakeney Point, I was distressed to find large numbers of dead waders. The cold weather period had been both severe and prolonged and it made me ponder on how these birds were affected by such conditions.

There was a cold weather period in March of this year too, brought about by what was known in the UK as 'The Beast from the East', as I'm sure those of you who live in the UK remember. It was feared there would be a mass die-off among waders around our coasts as a result. Thankfully this did not appear to happen, however there were a few reports of birds that were found dead. For example, a report from the Wash Wader Ringing Group indicated that six dead Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, three Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, two Red Knots, *Calidris canutus*, and singles each of Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* were found along the tide line at Snettisham. This was a higher number than would normally be expected in the same area under normal conditions. In addition, a ringing recovery report showed that an observer had found twenty dead Common Redshanks with a single Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and a Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* of which three Redshanks were ringed as were the godwit and the plover.

Cold weather of course affects all wildlife badly (with the exception perhaps of generalist scavengers, which may actually benefit from the number of dead animals and birds upon which they can feed) and many more will succumb during cold or prolonged spells of bad weather. So how do freezing temperatures affect waders?

The main obstacle waders have to overcome is maintaining their food intake. Their prey species become more difficult to access as they become less active or move deeper into the sand or mud to escape the cold themselves. The seashore rarely freezes

but if it does a layer of ice can form on the surface and this will naturally make it impossible for birds to probe in the frozen substrate.

If waders are unable to find food in the usual way, alternative strategies need to be employed. The ability to change diet or food source is a definite advantage. Those waders that can do so have a greater chance of survival than those that cannot. For those that cannot adapt in this way the choice is simple; stay put and hope to survive on stored fat reserves until the crisis is over or move on to find warmer parts where feeding is possible.

The first choice is a risky one. Smaller waders such as Red Knots may be able to last only four or five days while larger birds such as curlews or oystercatchers may be able to last for over a week. But these reserves of fat are not universal by any means.

We traditionally think of birds putting on fat in readiness for the exertion of migration. However, in the northern, colder regions, birds also put on a reserve over the winter to protect them against periods of famine. Interestingly birds of the same species that winter further south, in Africa for example, do not have these fat reserves, they are unnecessary as these warmer seashores are most unlikely to freeze. Intriguingly though, one of the most northerly wintering waders, the Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* does not develop a fat reserve despite being one of the smaller waders. The reason for this is that their chosen habitat, where they search for a



Purple Sandpipers in Iceland - Elis Simpson

variety of prey on rocks, among the seaweed in the swell of the sea, rarely freezes over.

The alternative solution to staying and waiting out the cold snap is to move to where the temperature is warmer. But this is by no means simple. The risks involved in moving are great. Firstly, birds might use up their fat reserve by moving, only to find that the area affected by the cold snap is so large they cannot reach beyond its grip. Alternatively, they may move on and find greater warmth, but the locality may be of inferior quality and not provide the food intake required. They may also find the perfect environment in which to feed, only to discover that the area, being so rich in food, is at carrying capacity; put simply there is no room at the inn. In this case they have to move on as birds already in residence are likely to be stronger and more dominant. Thus, when moving from their normal feeding sites which they know, they will be entering the unknown and may well wander into situations that are dangerous because of hunters or natural predators.

It has been shown that young birds are particularly susceptible to starvation in cold weather and that is probably due to their lack of experience and dominance, leading to them not securing sufficient nutrition. These considerations also apply to adult birds that are less well developed and/or fit, making them more vulnerable to cold spells.

Smaller birds in general are more likely to die in cold weather. They have a lower surface area-to-volume ratio and find it harder to maintain their body heat. Whether it be due to species, sex, development, in this instance, size does seem to matter.

Whilst our garden birds can be helped through these prolonged bouts of cold weather, birds such as waders that inhabit rather more remote and wild places and that have specialist feeding needs, are beyond our help and really do have to rely on their natural abilities to survive.

Waders in poetry — Kerry Darbshire

Messengers of Spring

In pairs they returned
from winter marsh like ghosts

to sink their new moon beaks
deep into turf soft as rain

tease out earthworms, tread nests,
raise chicks in beds of greening fields.

This blossom month has almost gone
without the calling I remember

driving home the mile-long track
curlews shy as hares would startle, run

then rise, their reed-thin legs
tucked to tail, seashore wings opening

and closing like pages of forgotten hieroglyphs,
their lonely courleee haunting a star-heavy sky.

In *Curlew Calling Anthology* 2017 (Karen Lloyd)



Redmire Moor (Graphite) - Fiona Clucas

From the library - Manual of British Birds; Howard Saunders (1899)



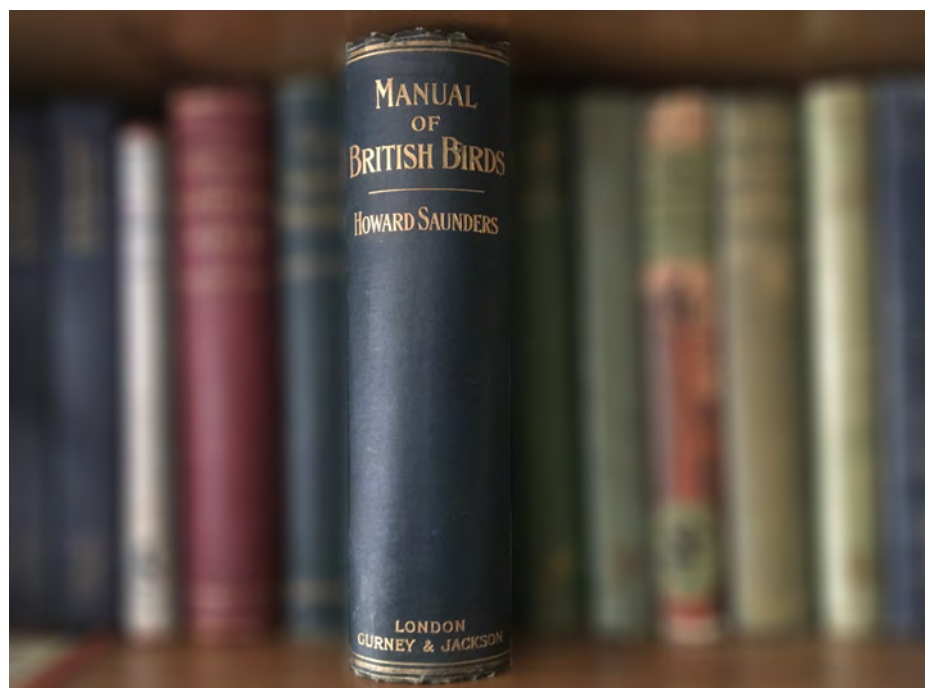
THE AVOCET.

RECURVIRÓSTRA AVOCÉTTA, Linnæus.

This remarkable bird was formerly a regular summer-visitor to England, and bred in considerable numbers in suitable localities, such as the coasts and estuaries of the Humber district, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Reclamation of fen-land gradually circumscribed its haunts, and moreover a large colony at Salhouse appears to have been destroyed in consequence of a demand for Avocet's feathers for

dressing artificial flies; while the collection of its eggs also contributed to the decrease of the species, and nesting in England had probably ceased by 1824. Small parties still arrive in spring, and occasionally in autumn, but the former are never allowed to breed, for

the amasser of "British-killed" specimens offers inducements to the local gunners far exceeding the amount of any fine and costs that would be imposed under the wild birds' Preservation Act in the event of the offender's conviction.



Wader Conservation World Watch

WADER CONSERVATION



WORLD WATCH

2nd &/or 3rd NOVEMBER 2019



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



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



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

STAND UP FOR WADER CONSERVATION AND SAY:



I CARE



THE NATURAL HOME FOR WADER LOVERS
WADERS NEED LOVE TOO!

waderquest@gmail.com

Wader photo gallery — send us your favourite wader photos



Rock Sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis*
- Chris Miller; USA



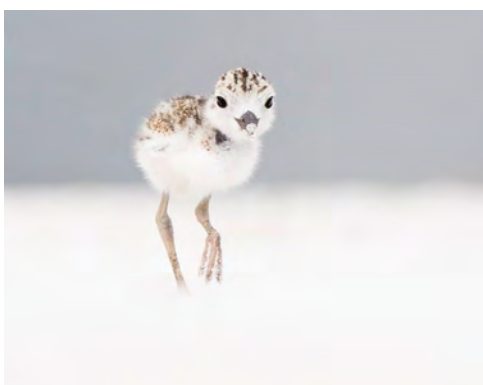
Indian Stone-Curlews *Burhinus indicus*
- Elis Simpson; India



Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus*
- Aravind Venkatraman; India



Two-banded Plover *Charadrius falklandicus*
- Martin Eayrs; Argentina



Wilson's Plover chick *Charadrius wilsonia*
- Teresa Hedden; USA



Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
- Jaysukh Parekh 'Suman'; India



Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*
- Phillip Edwards; USA



Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*
- Stein Ø. Nilsen & Tone Malm; Norway



WADER QUEST

THE NATURAL HOME FOR WADER LOVERS



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Rates effective from 06/04/2019

Wader Quest Trustee news.

Voluntary vacancies at Wader Quest;

1) Recent resignations mean we now have vacancies on the Board of Trustees.

2) We are seeking a Chairperson for the new Grants Committee, a non-Trustee position.

Anyone interested in offering their service for either of the above email info@waderquest.net

- The Trustees wish to extend their thanks to Andrew Whitelee for his effort in securing the Charity Commission number for Wader Quest.
- Next Trustee meeting; 26th Jan 2020. Venue TBA. 10.30am start.

Email: info@waderquest.net or waderquest@gmail.com

Website: www.waderquest.net

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/waderquest>

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

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Edited by Rick Simpson.

Wader Quest the newsletter

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