

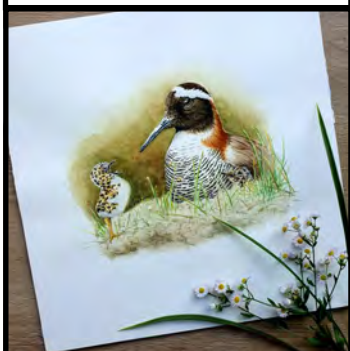
Confirmed talks by Rick and Elis Simpson: all 'Wader Quest' unless otherwise stated.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak all talks have been cancelled up to and including at least September 2020.

Events for 2020

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak all events have been cancelled up to and including at least September 2020.

Get this wonderful artwork for your home or office in an online auction. See pages 4-5 for details of how to bid.



Inside this issue:

- 1: Editorial
- 1-2: Wader Quest News
- 3: New book; A Quest for Waders
- 4-5: Online artwork auction details
- 7: Long-billed Curlew project update
- Aggression in Eurasian Curlews
- 8: Wader Quest Brasil beach project
- Mythical bird remembered
- 9: Waders in Warming Tundra
- Captive breeding and headstarting
- 10: Benthos
- Wattled Waders
- 11-13: Sands of Change - S2: Ep 4
- 14: From the library
- 15: Featured Photo: Bronze-winged Jacana
- 16-19: World wader news in brief
- 19: Waders in Poetry
- 20: Lars Jonsson poster
- 21: Grant application and subscriptions
- 22: Contact details and sponsors

Editorial - Rick Simpson

Welcome to the July Newsletter which you will already have noticed has got a new look to it.

Previous newsletters have been full of interesting articles about waders or shorebirds from around the world, and that will continue of course, however the newsletter was getting longer and longer and we do understand that not everyone wishes to read every article in full. The layout involved much scrolling down through pages to find the items that are of specific interest. In order to make the searching less cumbersome we have decided that we will have an abstract of the full articles to whet your appetite for the contents, with a link to a pdf of the full article should you wish to find out more.

We will still have our regular items such as the fun *Sands of Change* stories of the lives and loves of the White-fronted Plovers from South Africa (p11), *News in Brief* (p16) and other regulars like the *Waders in Poetry*, *From the Library* (p14) and *Featured Photo* (p 15) will all continue unchanged for now. In addition, we will be adding links to the blogs that have been posted since the last newsletter in case you missed them.

Your thoughts and comments on the new layout would be very welcome and don't forget we are always looking for contributions from anyone who has a wader story to tell or has an article about waders that they would like to share with our readers.



White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*
- Elis Simpson

Wader Quest news - Rick Simpson

COVID -19 continues to dominate all our lives and although we are seeing a relaxing of the regulations with regard to lockdown, we are far from out of the woods yet. Along with everyone else Wader Quest has been experiencing many changes in the way we do things. Our income stream from talks and events has inevitably dried up but we are in a more fortunate position than many charities in that we do not have the expense of paid staff that we have to budget for. Therefore the lack of income has been somewhat balanced by the lack the expense that attending events incurs as well as the number of requests for help with projects also drying up, most of them being on hold for the time being, with staff and researchers on furlough.

There is though, light at the end of the tunnel. At least now, the restrictions on getting out and about to visit places where waders frequent, places that were beyond the reach of most of us during lockdown, has reduced although there are limitations on use of hides and other amenities. Rick and Elis are preparing a new talk that would be suitable for virtual group meetings. It won't be the same as the normal talks they give but will hopefully still be entertaining and informative enough to continue to attract new Friends and Sponsors. Plans are also afoot to hold the AGM this year as a virtual meeting, in line with many other organisations and with the approval of the Charity Commission (CC) and the governance of the charity still continues with the Board of Trustees (BOT) and Executive Committee (EC) continuing their work at online meetings. What the future of Wader Conservation World Watch will be remains to be seen, but the changes in travel to birding sites means that things may be less affected than they could otherwise have been during a lockdown situation. However, there are warnings of further lockdowns, in the UK at least, if a spike in COVID-19 cases occurs this winter and November could be right in the thick of any such spike should it happen.

The BOT has recently co-opted a new Trustee, and we warmly welcome Ray Heaton who has had fifteen years' experience as a Trustee of the Zoological Society of London, his experience there will be very useful in driving forward future policies and plans. We have a vacancy for another Trustee, and we would actively encourage any ladies who would like to join our primary governing body with a view to keeping us on the straight and narrow to join Elis Simpson as our only female Trustee at present. We are of course an equal opportunities charity, therefore anyone is free to apply.

Recently we held a vote among Friends and Sponsors on the subject of converting the charity into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). There are many benefits to doing so and the vote was carried with 100% of those responding, approving of the change. This change will formally be applied for once the reports and accounts for 2019/20 financial year have been submitted to the CC. The accounts for last year are being scrutinised and will hopefully be signed off soon.

Wader Quest news - cont'd

The EC has held its second meeting (members shown on back page). Following the first inaugural meeting, many of the key players were heavily involved in COVID related work and had been unable to commit to the charity. However, as things have eased we can now announce that Louise Hathaway has taken up the post of Treasurer and a seat on the EC, Corinne MacGarvey has taken over the responsibilities as Membership Secretary and taken a seat on the EC, any queries regarding Friend or Sponsor details should now be directed to her on membership@waderquest.net.

Sadly we no longer have the services of Andrew Whitelee who has left Wader Quest, but he leaves behind much good work that has helped to improve the organisation, his greatest gift being the time and trouble he spent, together with Penny Insole, in gaining Wader Quest recognition as a registered charity with the CC. Both the BOT and EC wish to place on record their thanks for all he has done for Wader Quest. In light of Andrew Whitelee's departure, Andrew MacGarvey has stepped into the breach and become the chair of the EC. He was previously the Secretary of the committee and so we are looking for someone who may wish to join the EC in that capacity to help with the smooth running of the EC and its meetings.

Bird Fair has, as you no doubt all now know, been cancelled for this year, however a Virtual Bird Fair (VBF) has been put in place. We were keen maintain our presence so have opted to take part as a virtual exhibitor. This year we have developed and produced four new pin badges, the identities of which will be revealed at the VBF. We have already had a number of pre-orders despite the collectors not knowing what species are involved, which is a testament to the quality and accuracy of the pins which now number 24 in total and are sought after by collectors of pin badges and wader lovers alike.

We are also excited to be launching the new Wader Quest Publishing book, *A Quest for Waders* with a foreword by Dominic Couzens. This tells the story of how Rick and Elis Simpson dreamt up the idea of Wader Quest, a plan to raise money for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper captive breeding programme, and how their travels to see waders lead them to want to do more. All proceeds from the sale of this book will go to Wader Quest, Rick and Elis have devoted much time and energy in producing this book and are waiving any author's fee or expenses to help raise money for Wader Quest and the projects it supports.

The last thing to report here is that we have a new IT team in place. The website was set up originally by Allan Archer when he was a Trustee. When he left to take up full time employment, we have been unable to make much progress on building on his excellent foundations. With Jack Delabye and Richard Parkes joining us on a voluntary basis, we hope that development of the site will begin in earnest.

Wader Quest Publishing
New for 2020 Bird Fair
'A Quest For Waders'
 By Rick and Elis Simpson
 Foreword by Dominic Couzens

'I was hooked by the prologue.'
 - Debbie Pain:


'A must-read for all birders.'
 - Iolo Williams

'A brilliant read.'
 - Tim Appleton MBE

'Fascinating book.'
 Rebecca Armstrong

£9.50
 + p&p

sales@waderquest.net



See next page .

Announcing!
4 NEW
Wader Quest Pin Badges
for 2020



Can you guess what they are?

£2
 + p&p

ID's revealed on launch day 18th August

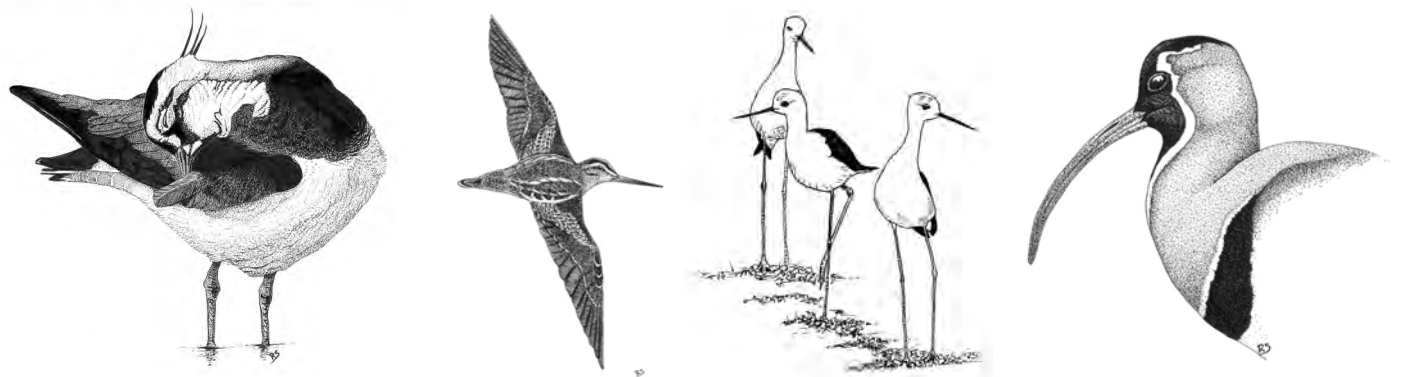
available from 18th August.
Order yours now to avoid disappointment
sales@waderquest.net



See page 6.

New Wader book - A Quest for Waders

A new book from Wader Quest Publishing by Rick and Elis Simpson. This book chronicles the journeys they made to see waders around the world, and the parallel journey of Wader Quest from fundraiser to Registered Charity.



Foreword by Dominic Couzens

**Original artworks throughout by Rick Simpson
Photographs of most species seen by Elis Simpson**

'This is a cracking read whether you're a waderphile or not. Ticking, dipping, ducking, diving, it's all here as Rick and Elis go through their version of a mid-life crisis to set up Wader Quest. A must-read for all birders.'

- Iolo Williams: Naturalist and T. V. presenter.

'Rick and Elis' enthusiasm ripples through this book. what they have achieved, bringing waders to the forefront of peoples minds alongside their conservation is second to none. A brilliant read which, like their beloved waders, will have you probing deeper into this amazing family.'

- Tim Appleton MBE: Founder of Birdfair Rutland Water and Creator of Rutland Water Nature Reserve.

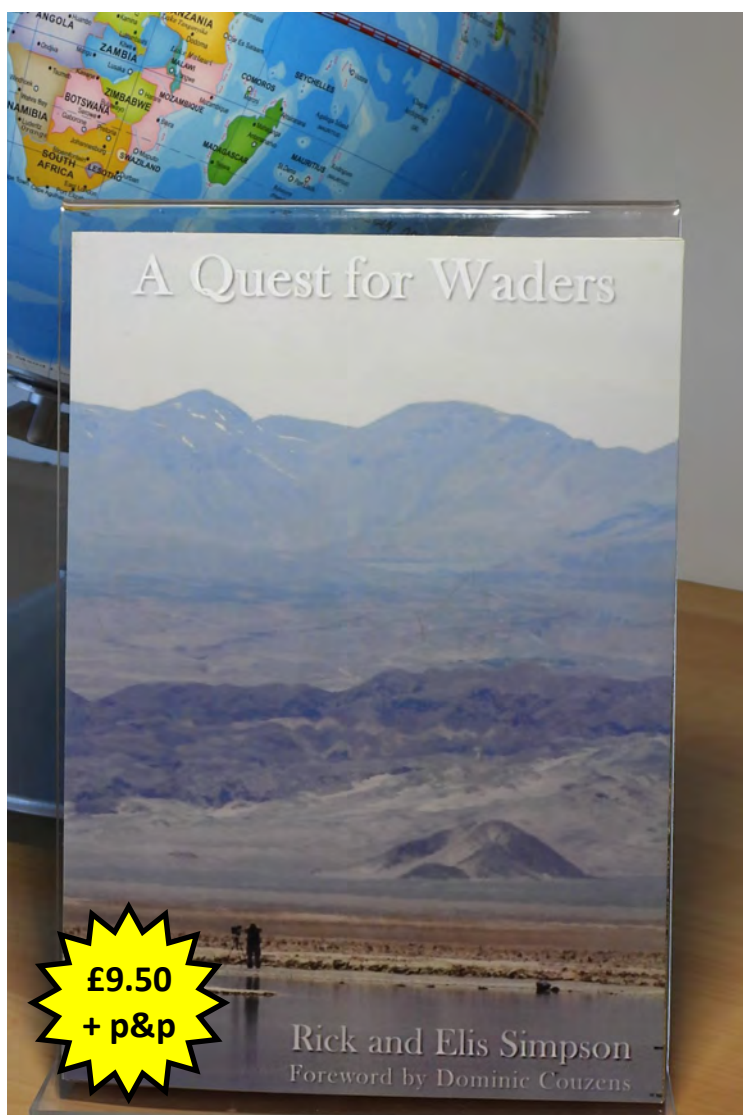
'I was hooked by the prologue. The tragedy of extinction was brought home to me on seeing, in Morocco in 1990, three of the last few slender-billed curlews to exist. Thanks to the commitment of conservation organisations from around the world and support of people like Rick and Elis the spoon-billed sandpiper has a fighting chance of making it.'

- Debbie Pain: Conservationist and scientist.

'Waders are one of the most threatened groups of birds, with several species on the brink of extinction and many more suffering serious declines. This makes Rick and Elis Simpson's Wader Quest - a charity dedicated to protecting waders and highlighting their plight - important and necessary. This fascinating book tells the story of how the organisation grew from their quest to see all the world's waders, before it was too late.'

- Rebecca Armstrong: Editor of Birdwatch magazine.

To be launched at the Virtual Bird Fair



Online Auction

Heidi Lots' original watercolour artwork available by auction,
40x40 cm unframed watercolour

Diademed Sandpiper Plover with 2 chicks

50% of the sale price goes to Wader Quest

The auction will be held from

00.01 hrs. Monday 3rd of August - 24.00 hrs. Sunday 9th of August

all bids over the £150 reserve price in increments of £5 will be valid

How to bid

To bid go to the special

[Auction Facebook page](#)

To make your bid simply do so in the comments under the image on this specially created facebook page.

(If you do not have a facebook account or wish to keep your bid private you can tell us your bid via email [sales @waderquest.net](mailto:sales@waderquest.net); messages must reach us by the close of the auction - see times above)

When the auction closes we will contact the highest bidder to arrange payment and shipping (shipping from Europe is not included in the bid price).

So get bidding and own this superb artwork.

'One of my aims in life is to show, and contribute to the conservation of, the amazing wildlife from my country [Argentina] with my art. This Diademed Sandpiper-Plover with its chicks, lives in very extreme temperatures in the high altitude grasslands of the Andes Mountains. That makes it enigmatic, and difficult to study. Hence my desire to contribute to the conservation of these and other amazing waders' - Heidi Lots



New Wader Quest pin badges

Announcing!
4 NEW
Wader Quest Pin Badges
for 2020



Can you guess
what they are?

£2
+ p&p

ID's revealed
on launch day
18th August

available from 18th August.
Order yours now to avoid disappointment
sales@waderquest.net

Four new exciting [Wader Quest Collectables pin badges](#) will become available at the **Virtual Bird Fair** joining the 20 designs already produced.

All previous pins are still available so here is your chance to buy the whole set and start your wader pin badge collection.

[Contact sales@waderquest.net to place your order now.](mailto:sales@waderquest.net)

Intermountain Bird Observatory Long-billed Curlew Project Update - Heather Hayes

It has now been over a decade since the Intermountain Bird Observatory (IBO) began delving into the lives of the charismatic Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americana*. Our project began in 2009 with the initial objective of assisting the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in simply monitoring a local population of nesting curlews in southwestern Idaho. But after the discovery of a fatally shot curlew lying in the road during the first day of surveys, we were about to learn there would be nothing “simple” about the dangers these shorebirds face.

Our long-term monitoring efforts coupled with historical research have revealed an alarming local decline of curlews on public lands across southwestern Idaho. In particular, curlews breeding within the Long-Billed Curlew Habitat Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in Middleton, Idaho have sustained an estimated population decline of ~95% since the late 1970's.

Currently, our data suggests there are less than 100 breeding individuals remaining within the ACEC. This is especially devastating as this area used to hold the densest known breeding population of Long-billed Curlews in the United States!

As with any migratory species, threats can be found range-wide throughout their entire annual life cycle. For nesting curlews, threats include predators, human disturbance, changes in agricultural practices, habitat loss, as well as illegal shooting. They may also face additional issues revolving around water, including changes in agricultural practices and drought while on the wintering grounds.

In 2013 we began deploying satellite transmitters on breeding curlews in SW Idaho to better understand when and where curlews are at greatest risk... [Read more](#)



Male (tagged KM) on left and female on right, protecting chicks that are hidden in the grass
- Heather Hayes

Territorial defence by Eurasian Curlews - Ron Summers

During the non-breeding season, Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* occupy single ownership territories in the inter-tidal zone, providing exclusive feeding areas across the low tide period. To defend their territories against other Curlews, owners use two common forms of aggressive behaviour. At the mutual boundary of two territories, neighbours come together and walk side-by-side over several metres, occasionally lunging at and pecking pieces of seaweed in an act of re-directed aggression. After several minutes of re-asserting their boundaries, the two birds part. However, if a non-territorial bird intrudes into a territory, the territory owner will chase off the intruder by either walking, running or flying towards the intruder, who retreats. The success of such chases is often followed by the bubbling call by the territory owner.

Neither of these two types of territorial defence involves physical contact, thereby avoiding possible injury, such as damage to the bill. This does not mean that fights do not occur. If an intruding bird contests a territory or attempts to create a territory between two existing territories, a fight can develop... [Read more](#)



Two female Curlews parallel-walking at their mutual territorial boundary - Ron Summers

Wader Quest Brasil: Waders as a tool for the conservation of their habitat - Karina Avila

On the southern coast of the state of São Paulo in south-eastern Brazil, there is a beach that at first glance is not very different from other beaches in the region: many tourists in high summer, motor vehicles, paragliders, street vendors *etc.*

However, a stretch of this beach has a peculiar characteristic: it is protected by indigenous lands and has an extensive and well-preserved Atlantic Forest fragment. This makes this beach still retain some of its primitive features, such as the dunes covered by creeping vegetation and small streams that flow into the sea.

It is on this beach that waders can find refuge. Here we can see numerous flocks of Semipalmated Plovers *Charadrius semipalmatus* feeding on inter-tides and also Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* feeding at the mouth of the streams, American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* resting on the warm sand near the dunes, and the Sanderlings *Calidris alba*, Red Knots *Calidris canutus* and other species foraging in the back-and-forth of the sea's waves.

We can also observe resident waders such as American Oystercatchers *Haematopus palliatus* and Collared Plover *Charadrius collaris* which like to make their nests in the restinga dunes.

Although not a place with a huge concentration of birds, this beach is very important because it is on the migratory route of several species that go to southern South America. It is, in fact, one of the few beaches in the state of São Paulo that is reasonably extensive and does not suffer so much from the pressure of human development. Since August last year, we have been studying the diversity and seasonal abundance of the waders that frequent this beach, taking us to the surprising statistics of having 22 species and more than 4,000,000 individuals.

This study further reinforced our idea of conservation in this place. Thus, we began to join forces with different sectors to protect the waders during their passage through the beaches of Peruíbe. The biggest challenge was the presence of cars, because the population was used to using this stretch of beach to go to the neighbouring municipality. In fact, before the existence of a road, the beach was the only alternative for this purpose. One of the victims of car traffic was a Red Knot of the subspecies *rufa*, which was run over while resting to replenish its strength before resuming its flight north. It had been ringed at Reeds Beach, North, New Jersey in 2016.

We saw it was time to take action... [Read More](#)



Red Knot before the incident (above) and after being run over on the beach of Peruíbe on 6th May 2018 - Pedro Behne

A mythical Māori bird is gone, but its name still lives on (albeit in an extinct bird!) - Rick Simpson

This is a story that would sit well in the pages of [An Inspiration of Waders](#), our last book where we investigated how waders have inspired, among other things, myths and legends. This is the story of the Hakawai, a mythical bird among the Māori people.

This bird was said to have been seldom seen but was more frequently heard at night when its unearthly calls would send shiver down the spine of those who heard it. This was partly because of the strangeness of the call, but also as it was supposed to be a portent of war or some other bad event. The Hakawai was believed to be one of eleven tapu which were sacred birds of Raka-maomao, a wind god. It was said that the Hakawai only descended to earth at night, spending their days in the firmament. It was believed to be a large bird, like a colourful, giant (reputed to be the size of a Moa) bird of prey.

To find out how this mythical creature is connected to New Zealand Snipes, both extinct and extant and also, strangely, to the Australian Plains-wanderer and the South American Seedsnipes... [read more.](#)



Hakawai melvillei - Derek Onley

How are waders being affected by a warming tundra? - Rick Simpson

You could be justified for thinking that rising temperatures would result in an increase in the abundance of insects. You could further surmise that this would be a positive advantage, providing a good source of food for young waders. The logical conclusion therefore would be that the chicks emerging from the Arctic should be stronger and healthier than ever, enabling them to develop more quickly. But does this change to a warmer climate and the natural cycles that follow, such as earlier springs and melting of the permafrost, really mean things are better for Arctic breeding waders?

Apparently not. Studies have been carried out to examine the effects of these changes in juvenile Red Knots *Calidris canutus*.

It is true that a warming tundra does increase the length of the flying season for insects, however that does not necessarily mean the same is true for the all-important flightless insects, as their emergence is related to the timing of the thaw. These flightless insects are what wader chicks depend upon to grow. If this emergence and the resulting glut of food does not coincide with hatching dates, the results can be far from positive for the young birds.

When it comes to raising young birds in the Arctic, timing is crucial, and the knock-on effect of miss-timing can impact negatively on the wellbeing of young, developing Red Knots...

[Read more.](#)



Juvenile Red Knot - Elis Simpson

Captive breeding and headstarting explained - Rick Simpson

When a species is in trouble and on the brink of extinction drastic measures may have to be taken. Captive breeding and headstarting are last-resort weapons available in the conservationists armoury. Here we explain captive breeding and headstarting. These tools have been used by conservationists on a range of species. These species include Shore Plover, Black Stilt, Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Eurasian Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit.

Captive Breeding

So, what is captive breeding?

This works by taking eggs from the wild as a one-off action where the birds will go on to lay a second clutch thus not interrupting the breeding season entirely.

The taken eggs and their resulting chicks are then kept in captivity and form the basis of a breeding population safely monitored in captive conditions. The idea is to create a safety net for the species. Should the wild population die out, then the species is saved.

In addition, if the captive breeding population grows, it will reach its capacity and surplus numbers can be returned to the wild.

Headstarting

And what is 'headstarting'?

This is taking eggs from the wild birds each breeding season. The wild birds should re-lay a second clutch. The taken eggs will be hatched in captivity.

In the wild only 3 chicks survive to adulthood out of every 20 eggs laid. In the headstarting programme this is increased by as much as 5 times. Survival chances rise from 15% to 85%.

Hatched birds will be protected by being kept in a predator free environment. This is possible as the birds hatch being able to walk and feed themselves without the need of their parents' nurturing.

When the birds are able to fly they are released back into the wild to join the wild population to migrate and hopefully return to breed...

[Read more.](#)



Shore Plover, part of a captive breeding programme in New Zealand - Elis Simpson

Benthos; aka wader food - Rick Simpson

What exactly are all those waders eating out there on the mudflats with such enthusiasm? The answer is benthos, aka wader food.



Benthos: the flora and fauna found on the bottom, or in the bottom sediments, of a sea or lake.

There are two types of benthos:

Zoobenthos: comprises the animals belonging to this group.

Phytobenthos: comprises the plants belonging to this group.

They can be subdivided by size:

Macrobenthos: Visible organisms of a length greater than 1mm. Includes [polychaete](#) worms (worms with bristles like lugworms etc.), [bivalves](#) (seashells with two halves like cockles, oysters, clams and mussels), [echinoderms](#) (star fish, sea urchins etc.), [sea anenomes](#), [corals](#), [sponges](#), [sea squirts](#), [turbellarians](#) (flatworms), [crabs](#), [lobsters](#) and [cumaceans](#) (comma shrimps).

Meiobenthos: Organisms that are between 1mm and 0.1mm in size. Includes [nematodes](#) (roundworms), [foraminiferans](#), [water bears](#), [gastrotriches](#) (hairybacks), [copepods](#), [ostracodes](#) (seed shrimps).

Microbenthos: Organisms under 0.1mm in size. Includes [bacteria](#), [diatoms](#) (algae), [ciliates](#), [amoeba](#) and [flagellates](#).

They can also be divided by their location:

Endobenthos: living buried, or burrowing in the sediment

Epibenthos: living on top of the sediments

Hyperbenthos: living just above the sediment

Wader bills have developed to take advantage of all forms of benthos as prey... [Read more](#)

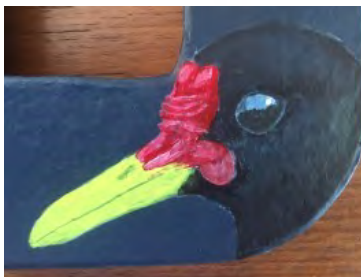
The World's Wattled Waders - Rick Simpson

A number of wattled waders have evolved displaying spectacular caruncles to adorn their heads. Principle among these birds are the lapwings (Vanellidae) but a number of jacanas (Jacanidae) show flamboyant face furniture too.

A caruncle is a small, fleshy protuberance displayed by an bird or animal. It is not an abnormality but part of their normal physical make up. In birds they take many forms such as wattles, lappets, combs and snoods. The word derives from the Latin word *caruncula* which is the diminutive of the word *caro* which means, flesh.

There are 11 species of *Vanellus* lapwing that have caruncles in varying degrees, of which the White-crowned Lapwing (right) is one of the most spectacular...

[Read more.](#)



Wattled Jacana and White-crowned Lapwing - Rick Simpson

The Sands of Change: Series 2 Episode 4 — Nature's Valley Trust

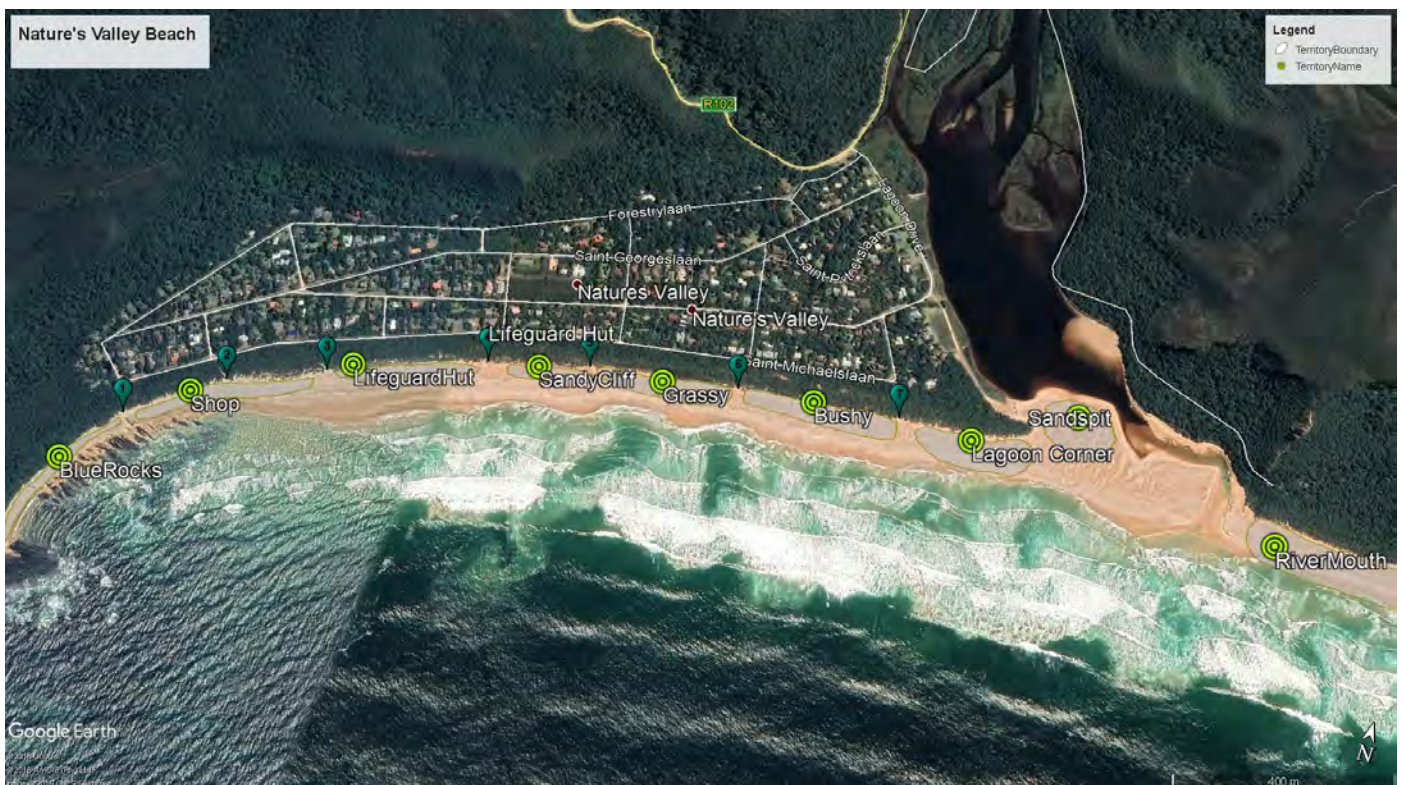
'These stories were written in order to make our coastal work, namely the shorebird component of coastal impact programme, more accessible to the lay-person. This is the person to whom the jargon of scientific work does not resonate but they do indeed still care for our environment and the animals that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

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



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

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



Horror, shock and disbelief. These are but a few of the emotions felt on the beach this week, when it became clear that the tides had brought an unfavourable gift to the beloved beach of Nature's Valley. Whilst out on a survey our intrepid researchers came across them. Their rounded edges, their nearly see-through appearance, their great numbers. There was no mistaking what these tiny intruders to our beach were. Nestled happily between the debris washed up on the sands they lay. Nurdles.

On 10 October 2017 a cargo of nurdles got swept into the ocean at Durban Harbour, entering the South African waters. Although

The Sands of Change: Series 2 Episode 4 — cont'd

not toxic in their raw form, as soon as they enter the environment, pollutants (such as herbicides or pesticides) attach to them. They never disintegrate and break up into smaller pieces and pose severe dangers to both animals (fish, birds, filter-feeding whales, etc.) and humans.

Heart-wrenchingly, our researchers dropped to their knees and, with frantic exertion, they began collecting these deadly plastic particles, knowing all too well the dangers these little spheres can hold to our beloved shorebirds and other marine wildlife.

From the dunes above our beautiful un-banded White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* heroine looked on in despair, realising that with the coming of these toxic plastic pellets, so very easily mistaken for food, the tides may be changing once more against her and her companions.

This came as quite a blow seeing that the past weeks have been filled with happiness and joy for our darling courageous heroine. She had found love once more with a beautiful un-banded male. Her little fledgling had left the nest and she has been proudly walking on the beach, knowing he would do well on his own. Little did our researchers know that the sands were conspiring, and that all of these new changes seen in our heroine's life would culminate into something quite special!

Distraught, but not downtrodden at the news of the nasty nurdles, our resilient researches took to the beach again and, this time, were in for a much cheerier surprise! Between some twigs and leaves they saw that our heroine had provided the seemingly subjugated shores with a gift of her own. This time it was welcomed with open arms for there between the sands, which can so often bring anguish and desolation, lay two beautiful eggs. The researchers rejoiced, knowing full well the importance of this precious little clutch for they knew it signalled a new beginning for our un-banded female and her new un-banded male. Yes, the winds may blow and the tides may bring misfortune but our researchers knew, just as we know now, that we can but wait and see what the sands have planned for this happy expectant couple.

What of the other Plovers calling Nature's Valley beach their home? We know by now that the sands are bound to slowly cover up the secrets being kept by our beaches. This has certainly been the case in the past weeks as there has been a mysterious and pin-dropping silence from our other shorebirds based on Nature's Valley beach.



The nurdles - NVT



Fledge in early days - NVT



The little fledge - NVT

The Sands of Change: Series 2 Episode 4 — cont'd

Ed and Violet have been scarce. He was spotted once, while the only sign of Violet was her footprints softly disappearing in the sand. We can but hope that all is still well with this union and that Violet has not become yet another name on the ever-growing list of Ed's ex-lovers who have come to an abrupt and puzzling end.

What of Wilma and her love affair? When last we left her it was uncertain if she had abandoned the faithful and fatherly Fred for a more adventurous young lad, recently named Edwardo. In the weeks past she has been spotted, a male figure never far behind as she forages close to the water's edge. Is this our little yearling sticking close to his more mature new lover? He seemed to be smitten with Wilma a few weeks ago when researchers first learnt of this union between Wilma and Edwardo. Perhaps this figure has been Fred after all? Wilma has been faithful to him before and may have come to her senses, returning to her one true love after a brief dalliance with her youthful suitor. With the light dimming and the birds moving off quickly, our researchers soon realised that they would need to apply some patience and see what will happen next in this lovers' triangle!

While the sands are sometimes reluctant to reveal their secrets, we hope the wind will be blowing in our favour over the coming weeks. Whispering softly across the landscape and betraying the secrets the sand holds so dear. For now, it seems we are, as is often the case, left with so many unanswered questions. How will the dreaded nurdles impact our shorebird community? Will our un-banded heroine and her new family be able to withstand the blows often dealt by the sands and persevere against all odds? Where are Violet and Ed and will she ever be able to tame his wild ways? Will Eduardo win the heart of Wilma and send dear sweet Fred swiftly on his way?

The sands are conspiring, the tides are being troublesome, the wind is forever whispering and revealing more to us. We can but wait, anxious and excited, to find out how the lives of our daring shorebird community will be shaped by their surroundings.



The un-banded plover lovers - NVT



Where have Ed and Violet gone? - NVT



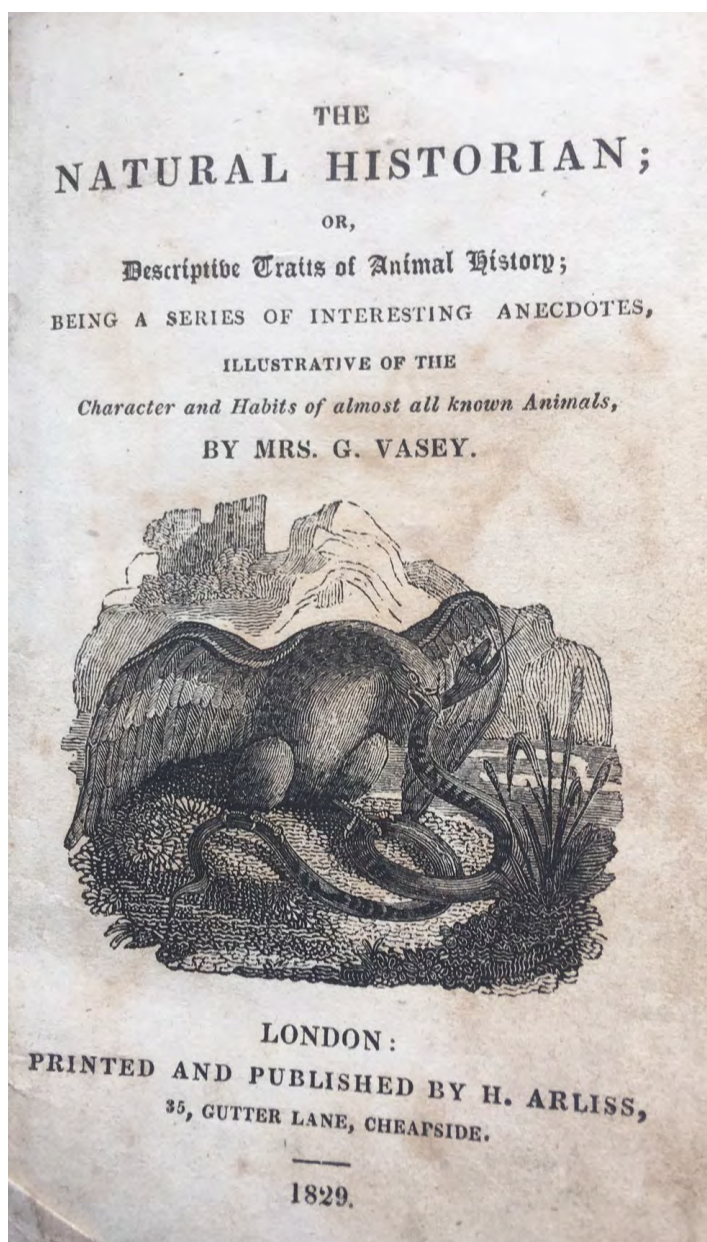
Wilma - NVT



Edwardo - NVT

From the library - The Natural Historian; Mrs. G. Vasey (1829)

'The lapwing may be rendered very familiar. A gentleman who was in possession of one, put it in his garden, where it picked up such food as the place afforded, till the winter deprived it of its usual supply. Necessity compelled it to draw nearer to the house, by which it became familiarized to occasional interruptions from the family. He soon grew more familiar; as winter advanced he approached as far as the kitchen, but with much caution, as that part of the house was generally occupied by a dog and a cat, whose friendship however, the lapwing at length conciliated so entirely, that it was his regular custom to resort to the fireside as soon as it grew dark, and spend the evening and night with his two associates. As soon as spring appeared he discontinued his visits to the house, he betook himself to the garden; but on the approach of winter he had recourse to his old shelter and friends, who received him very cordially. Security was productive of insolence; what was at first obtained with caution, was afterwards taken without reserve; he frequently amused himself by washing in the bowl which was set for the dog to drink out of, and while he was thus employed, he shewed marks of great indignation if either of his companions presumed to interrupt him. He died in the asylum he had thus chosen, being choked with something that he picked up from the floor.'



WADERS NEED LOVE TOO! JOIN US FOR OUR 2020 WADER CONSERVATION WORLD WATCH - 31st October & 1st NOVEMBER

Whether or not this event will take place is still uncertain because of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

If it does go ahead observers should only take part if it is safe for them to do so and they are acting within whatever local or national regulations are in place.

Protect yourself, your family, the wider community and the health workers who are on the front line helping to save lives under unprecedented pressure.

See page 28 or [WCWW webpage](#) for details



Featured Photo — Bronze-winged Jacana chick; Sunil Singhal



Photographer: Sunil Singhal.

Location: Abhera wetland, Kota, Rajasthan, India.

Date: 31 August 2013.

Species: Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*.

Camera: Canon 7D.

Lens: Canon 600 mm F/4 L, IS II USM.

Details: 1/6000 - f/4 - ISO 160.

There were several nests of Bronze-winged Jacana and other water birds in this water body, which is full of lotus flowers. One particular jacana had two chicks who were

regularly moving about on lotus flower leaves for feeding, mother was watching nearby. Another Jacana nest was very close to it but the eggs in that nest not yet hatched.

Ed:- This image and many more of Sunil's incredible wildlife images can be found under his name on the [Oriental Bird Images website](#).

Over confident? - Rick Simpson

The photograph above struck me the instant that I saw it. Apart from the obvious quality of the photograph, the light and of course the cuteness of the subject, it has a sense of 'what happened next?' about it.

The confidence with which this chick is striding out, with those impossibly huge feet it possesses, seem to me to suggest imminent and unforeseen circumstances are about to overtake the little mite. What will happen when the chick puts its full weight on that front foot so confidently thrust forward? Is there a hidden lily leaf to support the bird that we cannot see?

The wet underside of the chick indicates that it does not spend its whole time safely out of the water atop the lily leaves, but unless they have evolved with the

ability to walk on water, I suspect this little bird is about to get a bath.

Not that this would be a problem for the chick, they are great swimmers and indeed they are very much at home in the water itself, even using it to conceal themselves in moments of danger.

Jacana chicks the world over can submerge themselves, clinging to something beneath the surface of the water with just their bill protruding to allow them to breathe. Thus, they avoid attacks from would-be predators as they remain out of sight of predators both aerial and terrestrial; though not a lot of use against carnivorous fish I suspect.

Sunil mentions in his piece about the photo that the bird's mother was close at

hand. But I wonder was this in fact the bird's father? In most cases the role reversal of the Jacanas means that it is the males which rear the young, but not always. In circumstances where there is only one pair in a given locality the female will often lay two clutches of eggs leaving the male to deal with the first clutch and then raising the second brood independently. In cases where there are multiple birds the female will mate with more than one male and in each case leave him to fend for the resulting brood.

Sunil mentions a nest of eggs nearby. This is probably under the guard of another male since whilst females are territorial, the males are not, so the proximity of another nest close by would suggest that a single female was responsible for both nests.

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



Hooded Plovers of the nominate subspecies *T. c. cucullatus* - Elis Simpson

Australia - Hooded Plover subspecies

A study of the two discrete populations of Hooded Plovers *Thinornis cucullatus* in southern Australia has revealed differences enough to suggest that they are different subspecies. The study confirms the distinctness of populations, which are separated by the Nullabor Plain/Great Australian Bight.

Western birds are genetically distinct, larger and have darker plumage than those in the east. They also differ in many habits. The birds in the east tend to be resident, moving around very little whereas the western birds are nomadic. One reason for this is their breeding strategy, which in western birds is nomadic, breeding when and where conditions are favourable, sometimes semi-colonially, while eastern birds nest seasonally in solitary pairs.

The authors of this study suggest that the status of subspecies should be reinstated for the species with *T. c. cucullatus* in the east and *T. C. tregellasi* in the west.



Wilson's Phalarope - Elis Simpson

Brazil - New wader species for the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil

First records of three species of wader in the state of Minas Gerais, southeast Brazil have been reported in the Brazilian journal *Atualidades Ornitológicas*, in the March/April 2020 edition. Although these are not new records as such, having been observed between 2002 and 2006 they have not, until now, been listed for Minas Gerais. The species species concerned were; Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*, and Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*. They were recorded in artificial habitats such as dams and temporary lagoons, in addition to floodplains and marginal lagoons along the Rio Grande.



Purple Sandpiper - Gunnar Hallgrímsson

Iceland - Purple Sandpiper geolocator retrieval

Ron Summers reports regarding the work started in 2019 on Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* in Iceland. The dreaded virus has stopped researchers from getting to Iceland this summer, when they had planned to retrieve the geolocators attached last year. Tantalising, a local bird photographer obtained pictures of a Purple Sandpiper carrying a geolocator in the study area. Hopefully the team will manage retrieval in 2021, although, given an annual adult mortality of about 20%, there will be fewer birds returning.

The photograph shows one of the birds with its geolocator (orange on right tibia), tantalisingly taken this summer back on its breeding grounds in Iceland.



Captive Shore Plover - Elis Simpson

New Zealand - Shore Plover losses

Mana Island off the west coast of North Island in New Zealand has been successfully used as a home for introduced Shore Plovers *Thinornis novaeseelandiae*. This was first done in 2007 but the project suffered a setback when an introduced rat wiped out half the population and the rest dying off subsequently. Conservationists avoided reintroducing the plover again until the pest situation was resolved and in April and May this year they tried again. 29 young birds were transported to the island, some having been given ministerial approval to travel during the Covid-19 lockdown. The Department of Conservation in New Zealand now tells us that the entire population has now disappeared and as they were not tracked their whereabouts is unknown. It is believed that some would have been killed by predators such as the Morepork *Ninox novaeseelandiae*, whilst other may have flown to the mainland. Three survivors have been tracked to Plimmerton beach on the mainland thanks to the colour bands that were fitted to them. The plan is to recapture the survivors, return them to Mana Island and keep them captive for a month instead of the usual week to try to establish site fidelity. They will also be fitted with radio transmitters which may help to discover their whereabouts should they abscond again.

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



Latham's Snipe - Ed Dunens

Japan/Australia - Latham Snipe declines

The Wild Bird Society of Japan carried out a survey of breeding Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* in 2018 and estimated a population of around 35,000 individuals.

In the boreal spring of 2020 a survey on fewer sites but using the same calculations has revealed a huge drop of 42% in that number, which is now estimated to be around 20,000.

There seemed to be no tangible reason for this decline at the Hokkaido sites suggesting that the drought and major bushfires in south-east Australia over the austral summer of 2019-2020 have impacted on the breeding population.

Birgita Hansen of the Latham's Snipe project wrote 'Never has the need for the nationally coordinated surveys been so strong.' so the forthcoming national surveys in Australia will be critical in determining the extent of the population decline there. This will then shed light on the effects of the recent bushfires on populations at important non-breeding sites. She encourages everyone to set aside the surveys dates of **September 26, November 21 and January 23** and to take part.



Young Black-winged Stilt on Fuerteventura - Elis Simpson

UK - Black-winged Stilts breed in the UK

Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* returned to breed for the first time after a gap of 30 years in 2014. 2017 was a bumper year for them with 13 young birds fledging. Their usual site fidelity gave us great hope that they would continue to be breeding birds in the UK. However, this year's hatching of two chicks on WWT Steart Marshes on the 9th of July is the only record this year that we know of. As Steart Marshes are only 6 years old, this is a great achievement and shows what can be done and how quickly new wetlands can become attractive to wildlife. It is believed that this nesting is the most westerly breeding of the species ever.

To protect the young birds, in addition to the parents choosing a fenced off, effective site to conceal their young, the staff at WWT have placed bird deterrents on nearby posts to deter predators which may otherwise threaten the young birds. Fingers crossed that these two little birds beat the odds and fledge and, who knows, come back and breed at the place of their hatching.



Juvenile Western Snowy Plover - Elis Simpson

USA - Snowy Plovers up against it in California State Parks

Western Snowy Plovers *Charadrius nivosus nivosus* have benefitted from the restrictions of beach use by vehicles since they were shut due to COVID-19 lockdown regulations since March the 29th this year. The birds have expanded their nesting area proving that undisturbed beaches are vital to this endangered bird's survival. However, their cause has not been helped by the allegations, confirmed by the State Parks, that parks staff, the very people who should be protecting these birds, tried to interfere with nesting attempts by 'scuffing out scrapes' made by the plovers as part of their pre-nesting activities and installing flagging to deter them expanding into new areas, which may be a violation of Federal Law. These actions may have violated the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Conservationists are urging State Parks to implement the wildlife protection measures that are recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Coastal Commission. These recommendations are put in place to try to avoid the annually occurring plover deaths due to being runover and include decreasing the number of vehicles using the beach, prohibiting night driving and making seasonal plover habitat closures permanent.

(Continued on next page.)

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



Western Snowy Plover - Elis Simpson

(Continued from previous page.)

In another attack on Snowy Plovers, this time on Huntingdon Beach, where they have been enjoying some sanctuary, due to the rCOVID-19 restrictions, and have created more nests and eggs than ever before recorded at that site in fenced off areas.

The birds were doing unusually well until, one night, someone tore down the fencing and notice boards, stole the protective cages covering on three of the nests and destroyed the eggs in the nests, some of which were just days from hatching.

Losing clutches is not alien to ground nesting birds, and it is hoped that they birds will try again. In the meantime, night time patrols will be increased to try and prevent any such thing happening again.



Piping Plover - Elis Simpson

Two incidents of vandalism on Piping Plover nest sites in Maine.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* is a Near Threatened North American plover that depends for its survival on the goodwill of human beings. Mostly those human beings are caring and considerate towards their needs, some even working to create safe havens for them. Following some 35 years of conservation, Maine's population of Piping Plover has grown from 15 breeding pairs in 1986 to 89 pairs in 2019. However as always humanity can be relied upon to provide individuals who can destroy all the hard work and care in a single mindless act of vandalism, and in this case two such acts.

The first incident took place near Goosefare Brook in Saco. There, during the night of the 4th of July, the fencing surrounding the nesting enclosure was destroyed. As a result, the adults and chicks abandoned their nest, and one of the chicks was found dead.

The second incident took place in Old Orchard Beach on the same night. A nesting enclosure housing a nesting pair of adults was deliberately dismantled, and a nest with three eggs was temporarily abandoned.

Like many beach nesting birds Piping Plovers come up against the activities of humans, encounters in which the plover invariably come off second best but Piping Plovers have benefited from species management by conservationists, including installing symbolic fencing around nests, leashing dogs, posting caution signs, reducing predation and asking beachgoers to modify their activities near birds and fenced areas. It is a real shame that so much, long term effort can be overturned in one act of mindless vandalism.



Piping Plover - Elis Simpson

Global - Expansion of Bahía Blanca Estuary in Argentina

In 2016, the Bahía Blanca Estuary in Argentina, was designated as a site of Regional Importance in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). Now the executive office of the WHSRN has announced that an additional 981 hectares have been added to the site.

The Bahía Blanca Estuary is a site of Regional Importance as it plays host to more than 20,000 waders or shorebirds each year, and more than 1% of the biogeographical populations of the Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*, Two-banded Plover *Charadrius falklandicus* and American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*.

For some years now, the Department of Biology, Biochemistry and Pharmacy at the Universidad Nacional del Sur (Departamento de Biología, Bioquímica y Farmacia de la Universidad Nacional del Sur) and the Management Consortium of the Port of Bahia Blanca (Consortio de Gestión del Puerto de Bahía Blanca (CGPBB)), have been working together with several local organizations towards the inclusion of a further 981 hectares in this WHSRN site. The success of this proposal was confirmed recently on the 5 June, with the approval of our Hemispheric Council.

The newly incorporated zone represents a sector that is of key ecological importance and highly sensitive. It includes the mouth of the principal source of fresh water into the estuary (75% approximately), the Sauce Chico River, which attracts large concentrations of shorebirds and other water birds of conservation value.

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



Piping Plover - Elis Simpson

Asia - White-faced Plover resurrected as full species by IOC

The International Ornithological Committee (IOC) has recently updated its list of world birds. In that list the White-faced Plover *Charadrius dealbatus* has been reinstated as a full species. Wader Quest has always treated the White-faced Plover as a full species although until now it has been also considered among other things, to be a subspecies of Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*.

This species has had an interesting taxonomic history. It was first described in 1870 by Swinhoe as *Aegialites dealbatus*. Since that time however, it seemed to get progressively more overlooked until it reached a stage where the literature surrounding this group of birds ignored it completely. Indeed, the specific scientific name that was allocated to it by Swinhoe, *dealbatus*, was usurped and given to a subspecies of Kentish Plover in the east of its range. Now that the bird has been 'rediscovered' and the name *dealbatus* has been returned to its rightful owner, the subspecies of Kentish has been allocated the subspecific name *ninhonensis*. There are presumed to be precious few White-faced Plovers and we know little about them. It is reasonable to assume therefore that they are highly endangered, although the lack of details makes even assessing their status impossible. As a result, they are classified as Data Deficient at this time. Let's hope more can be found out about them before the bird disappears altogether.



Canary Island Oystercatcher skin at BNHM - Elis Simpson

Macronesia - Canary Island Oystercatcher may not be a species.

A recent study into the taxonomic status of the Canary Islands Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewaldoi* sequenced DNA from four specimens of this extinct species and compared them to African Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini*, Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and an old unidentified extralimital 'black' oystercatcher specimen from The Gambia. The researchers discovered that the specimens from the Canary Islands were most closely

related to the Eurasian Oystercatcher and in all likelihood were either a dark morph of that species or possibly a subspecies.

The mystery black oystercatcher from The Gambia turned out to be an extralimital African Oystercatcher. This is interesting because other all dark oystercatchers have been seen on the coast of Africa in that region, specifically in both 1970 and 1975. One theory was that these were from the Canary Islands, while a second theory suggested they were African Oystercatchers, stragglers from much further south. Neither of these possibilities seem even remotely likely given the circumstances; the Canarian birds having not been seen for thirty years, and in the case of the African Oystercatchers the vast distance from their known range and their non-migratory habits. It was assumed that their identity would never be known, and indeed for those individuals it will not, however the Gambian bird makes it most likely that they were in fact extremely out-of-range African Oystercatchers.

Waders in poetry; Sharing the space - Karen Izod

It's another curlew.
I could spend my life sitting
watching that slow wade
across this tidal expanse.

You saw the ecology of it all,
how that particular shape of the bill
meant it could probe the settlings of the sand,
excavate to a different layer.

A message for living you thought
sharing the space; living at the surface,
surviving from the depth. Its rising note
plucking a shiver from the brilliant light.



Eurasian Curlew - Elis Simpson

(price includes p&p in UK. Outside UK please ask.)
sales@waderquest.net



Guidelines for applications for Wader Quest Grants

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
- 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.

Download Application form [here](#) and send to applications@waderquest.net

Wader Quest's Subscription Policy has Changed

Previously subscriptions became due on the anniversary of joining Wader Quest.

To streamline administration of the membership of both Friends and Sponsors the due date will now be on the 1st of January each year.

You will have received an email from the Membership Secretary explaining how this affects your personal subscription.

Your co-operation in making this necessary change is greatly appreciated.

Here is a reminder of the current rates.

FRIENDS OF WADER QUEST

Individual £10.00

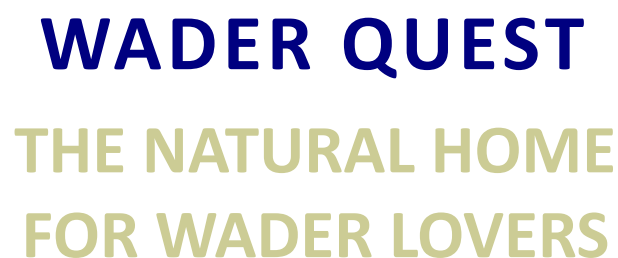
Family £15.00

Life £200

WADER QUEST SPONSORS

Club Sponsor subscriptions £20.00

Corporate Sponsors £50.00



Wader Quest is a registered charity in England and Wales No. 1183748

Wader Quest

Rates effective from 06/04/2019

Next AGM: 25th October. Venue and time tba.

Website: www.waderquest.net

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

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

Instagram: [@wader.guest](#)

JOIN HERE

MAKE A DONATION HERE

CORPORATE AND CLUB SPONSORS

The copyright of all photographs and artwork in this newsletter belongs to the named photographer or artist unless otherwise stated.

Please seek permission from the copyright owner before using them.

All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Wader Quest.

Edited by Rick Simpson with thanks to Penny Insole for proof reading.

