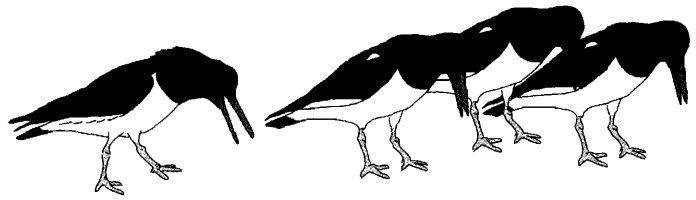


NOTES & NEWS



NW Australia Wader and Tern Expedition 2004

The Australasian Wader Studies Group ran its 23rd expedition to NW Australia during three weeks in January–February 2004, part of the period when adult Arctic-breeding waders complete primary moult and start changing into breeding plumage and putting on weight prior to migration. Regular banding took place at the usual locations, Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach. The aims were to fill in a major gap in the moult and weight datasets and to monitor reproductive success via the proportion of juveniles.

This was one of the most successful NW Australia expeditions in terms of achieving its objectives. Adequate samples were obtained for all ten of the main target species as well as useful data on several others. Almost twice the usual catch for a three-week expedition, 2,838 waders of 27 species, were caught (1,684 at Broome and 1,154 at Eighty Mile Beach). At long last, AWSG met a long-standing objective by catching 250 Oriental Pratincoles as well as an unbelievable count of 2.88 million (see the paper by Humphrey Sitters and others elsewhere in this issue for a full account of this historic event).

By the end of the expedition, more than half the adult waders caught had completed their primary moult. Several species, especially Greater Sandplover, were already showing large amounts of breeding plumage in late January and this was even more evident by the second week of February. Weights were also beginning to increase, particularly in Great Knot and Greater Sandplover. This, and the advanced breeding plumage, suggests that many Greater Sandplovers may depart from NW Australia in the first half of March even though very few have actually been seen leaving at this time during routine migration departure watches.

The proportion of birds aged as juvenile in the catches provides an indication of the breeding success of each species in the preceding Arctic breeding season (2003). Some tentative conclusions from these data made on the basis of a comparison with similar data from previous years and with data from Victoria for some species in the same 2003/04 non-breeding season are given below:

- ✦ Overall most wader populations spending the non-breeding season in NW Australia had only moderately successful breeding success in 2003. In a number of species the 2002 breeding season was more successful.
- ✦ Migratory species with the highest percentage of juveniles were Greater Sandplover (24%), Terek Sandpiper (19%) and Great Knot (16%). This is the second successive year of reasonably good breeding success for Great Knot after a series of much less productive years. The figure for Greater Sandplover is about average – almost always the proportion of juveniles is above 20%.
- ✦ The proportions of juveniles in Red-necked Stint (10%) and Curlew Sandpiper (7.4%) were low and very much

lower than the corresponding figures from Victoria for the same 2003/04 season. A marked difference has also been observed in some previous years. This suggests that the population spending the non-breeding season in the two areas come from different regions of the Siberian Arctic.

- ✦ It seems that the breeding success of Red Knot (3.2% juveniles) and Ruddy Turnstone (0%) was very poor in 2003.

This NW Australia expedition conformed to an established pattern with about 50% participants coming from countries other than Australia (Australia 14, UK 8, Taiwan 2 and USA 1) whilst considerable support was also given by Broome-based members of the Northwest Wader Study Group as well as Broome Bird Observatory staff.

Report provided by: Clive Minton, Peter Collins, Humphrey Sitters, Rosalind Jessop and Chris Hassell

NW Australia Wader and Tern Expedition 2005

Hard on the heels of the successful AWSG expedition to NW Australia in Jan/Feb 2004 come plans for a further expedition from 12 February to 6 March 2005. Part of the purpose of these expeditions is to provide training in wader study techniques and to encourage sharing of expertise between wader people from a wide variety of backgrounds and parts of the world. All who are interested in taking part in the 2005 expedition are encouraged to communicate with any of the joint leaders:

- ✦ Clive Minton, 165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Victoria 3193, Australia
mintonsozemail.com.au
- ✦ Rosalind Jessop, Phillip Island Nature Park, PO Box 97, Cowes, Victoria 3922, Australia
rjessop@penguins.org.au
- ✦ Peter Collins, RMB 4009, Cowes, Victoria 3922, Australia
moonbird@waterfront.net.au
- ✦ Humphrey Sitters, Limosa, Old Ebford Lane, Ebford, Exeter EX3 0QR, UK
hsitters@aol.com
- ✦ Chris Hassell, PO Box 3089, Broome, WA 6725, Australia
turnstone@wn.com.au

WeBS Publication

The latest publication from the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), *The Wetland Bird Survey 2000–01 Wildfowl and Wader Counts*, summaries wildfowl and wader count data collected across Great Britain and Northern Ireland during 2000–2001 and previous years (from 1969 for waders).



WeBS is the monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterfowl in the UK and aims to provide basic conservation data on populations and wetland habitats. These are used to assess the size of waterfowl populations, trends in numbers and distribution, and to identify important sites. WeBS continues a tradition begun in 1947. Each month, 3,000 volunteer counters participate in synchronised counts in all types of wetland. WeBS is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology, The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Copies of *The Wetland Bird Survey 2000–01* publication as well as earlier volumes can be purchased from: WeBS Secretariat, WWT, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, GL2 7BT, UK, and Natural History Book Service, 2–3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN, UK.

Eastern Africa – WBMS now on-line

Following the official launch of the Wetlands Biodiversity Monitoring Scheme (East Africa) at the National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi in November 2003, WBMS is now on-line. Check out <http://www.wbms-ea.org/> for a report of the launch and read about why the WBMS is needed, its aims and what it does.

Pablo Canevari Memorial Award for 2004

The Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences has recently announced that the winner of the Pablo Canevari Memorial Award for 2004 is Xicoténcatl Vega Picos, Director of Conservation at Sinaloa, México, for Pronatura Noroeste Mar de Cortés, and Associate Professor of Ecology and Sustainable Development at ITESM Campus Sinaloa.

Pablo Canevari was the first director of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), a scientist and skilled illustrator who died suddenly in March 2000 of cancer. The annual award recognizes and supports with a cash prize a Latin American individual or organization that demonstrates an outstanding commitment to shorebird conservation – as did Pablo Canevari himself.

Xicoténcatl Vega – “Xico” to his many friends and associates – is recognized for his work in shorebird research and conservation in NW México and has been the moving force behind the nomination and designation of two WHSRN sites in Sinaloa state (Playa Ceuta and Bahía Santa María). He has played a key role in delivering training workshops in Sinaloa and Baja California, including four for WHSRN, and one for the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture (PPJV) of the United States. Working with the PPJV, Xico has participated in a trilateral project to identify the wintering grounds of Marbled Godwits *Limosa fedoa* using methods such as stable-isotope analysis to link their breeding and wintering grounds.

These and other aspects of Xico’s tireless work have helped create broad political support for shorebird and wetland conservation. He has not only been “acting locally” but has also been “thinking globally” building links in the interests of shorebird and wetland conservation, with academic, governmental and non-government organizations in the U.S., Canada, and even Spain.

Source: <http://www.manomet.org/WHSRN/>

WHSRN news and links

The Western Hemisphere Reserve Network (WHSRN) web site (<http://www.manomet.org/WHSRN/>) brings news about the Network as well as links to related websites.

The recently developed Long-billed Curlew range-wide survey and monitoring guidelines developed by USFWS, USGS and University of Montana research biologists are now available on the Region 6 Mountain-Prairie web site (http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/birds/longbilled_curlew/). For further information contact Suzanne Fellows (suzanne_fellows@fws.gov).

The latest issue of *International Shorebird Survey Annual News* (March 2004) is now available as a PDF file via the WHSRN website. This includes a plea for volunteers to reinstate surveys at former sites where coverage has lapsed. Recruitment is encouraged through the WHSRN General Audience PowerPoint Presentation (also available via the website). This allows anyone to use it to publicise the WHSR Network and is an approach worthy of consideration by other organisations involved in promoting shorebird conservation.

Taxonomic titbits from the BOU

Two recommendations on wader taxonomy have recently come from the British Ornithologists’ Union’s Record Committee (BOURC). Morphological, behavioural and molecular studies indicate that the Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* is better placed as a member of the genus *Calidris* (Jehl 1968. *San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist. Memoir* no. 3; 1973; *Wilson Bull.* 85: 115–146; Borowik & McLennan 1999. *Auk* 116: 1107–1117). Therefore the Stilt Sandpiper becomes *Calidris himantopus* on the British Ornithologists’ Union’s species list. Stilt Sandpiper is moved to follow Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* pending a comprehensive phylogenetic analysis of the genus *Calidris* and closely related taxa.

BOURC’s second recommendation relates to the Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* for which it suggests that the correct spelling of the specific name is *macularius* (David & Gosselin 2002. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* 122: 257–282).

The BOURC’s full report can be found at <http://www.bou.org.uk/recTSC.html>

USFWS withdraws proposal to list the Mountain Plover as a threatened species

Over the past four years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, working with state fish and wildlife agencies and private landowners, has established that the status of the Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus* is better than previously thought and that it is unlikely to become endangered for the foreseeable future. It has therefore withdrawn its proposal to list the Mountain Plover, a grassland bird of the Rocky Mountains, as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

In reaching this decision, USFWS considered new information that in some areas croplands provide alternative nesting sites. They also found that local declines are not reflected in state-wide estimates throughout the range, suggesting that the total population has not changed significantly in the past decade. New information from several state and federal



agencies shows that suitable nesting habitat (occupied black-tailed prairie dog sites) is more abundant than previously thought. Moreover a variety of conservation efforts initiated for Mountain Plovers and other species of the high plains have benefited the plover population, which is currently estimated at 5,000–11,000 individuals.

For further information visit the mountain-prairie region website at: <http://www.mountainprairie.fws.gov>

2004 Red Knot Expeditions in the Americas

There must be few migratory wader enthusiasts unaware of the large international effort given in recent years to unravelling the problems of *rufa* Red Knots in the West Atlantic flyway. Like the AWSG NW Australia expeditions, these studies have provided rare opportunities for waderologists from around the world to come together in the field to work, learn and share experiences. In February 2004, biologists with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program led a team from the U.S., Chile, Argentina, Holland and Canada to Bahia Lomas, Tierra del Fuego, at the southernmost tip of South America. The object was catching and colour banding Red Knots, foraging studies and sampling the invertebrate fauna. Expedition members also continued efforts to assist Chilean officials in their efforts to seek international recognition for Bahia Lomas, where over 80% of the *rufa* population winters.

Part of the work in Tierra del Fuego consisted of aerial shorebird surveys by Guy Morrison and Ken Ross who reported that knot numbers had remained roughly the same as in February 2003. This was very good news because of fears that the population had crashed. Numbers passing through Delaware Bay (USA) in May 2003 were only half those the previous year and there had been a similar reduction on the breeding grounds in Arctic Canada. Exactly why half the population never made it to the breeding grounds in 2003 remains a mystery.

At the time of writing, international teams are gearing up to study the spring stopover of Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, Semi-palmated Sandpipers and other species in Delaware Bay. The question on everyone's minds is: "Will the knots make it to the Arctic this year?". We will soon find out. For up-to-date news, check out the Delaware (<http://shorebirds.skalar.net/index.html>) and New Jersey (<http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensphome.htm>) websites.

News from the Asia-Pacific Flyways

Waterbird News, launched in 2003 at <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/waterbirdstrategy/News.htm>, provides information on the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy as well as news and announcements on waterbird conservation in the Asia-Pacific region generally.

At the time of writing, the *Waterbird News* page reports on:

- ✎ the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 21 and 22 July 2003.
- ✎ Doug Watkins provides a brief report on three waterbird meetings held in Japan and Australia in December 2003. These commenced with the bilateral Migratory Bird Agreement meetings between Japan and Australia, China and Japan, and China and Australia in Tokyo, followed by the Australasian Shorebird Conference and the Shorebird Working Group meetings in Canberra.
- ✎ A national Shorebird Workshop for Indonesia held at Palembang and Sembilang National Park over 13–16 October 2003.
- ✎ The Second China National Waterbirds Workshop held over 4–6 November 2003 at Dafeng, Yancheng National Nature Reserve.
- ✎ Announcement of the recent translation and publication of the Shorebird Study Manual (Howes and Bakewell 1989) into Bahasa Indonesia. For copies of this publication or CD, please contact Wetlands International Indonesia Office, PO Box 254/BOO, Bogor 16002, Jl. A. Yani 53–Bogor 16161, Indonesia; admin@wetlands.or.id

International Woodcock & Snipe Workshop

The Sixth Woodcock & Snipe Workshop was held in Nantes (France) from 24 to 28 November 2003. Forty people from 12 countries attended. There were 24 talks of which most (15) related to Woodcock. Topics covered included: reproduction biology, migration, behaviour, monitoring, survival rates and hunting bags. Presentations on the Woodcock population of the Azores, African Snipe in Kenya and Jack Snipe in the Northern Urals led the participants to look at problems on a large geographical scale.

The Woodcock and Snipe Specialist Group holds workshops about every four years. The previous one was held in 1998 in Czempin, Poland.

Source:

http://www.wetlands.org/networks/Wood_Snipe/WSSG6.htm

Ramsar Sites Database now online!

Wetlands International manages and develops the Ramsar Sites Database under contract to the Ramsar Convention Secretariat. The Ramsar Sites Database is now accessible online at <http://www.wetlands.org/RSDB/default.htm>. Wetlands International hopes that this resource will be used by many interested people and will provide useful data on designated wetlands around the globe in order to promote their conservation.

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