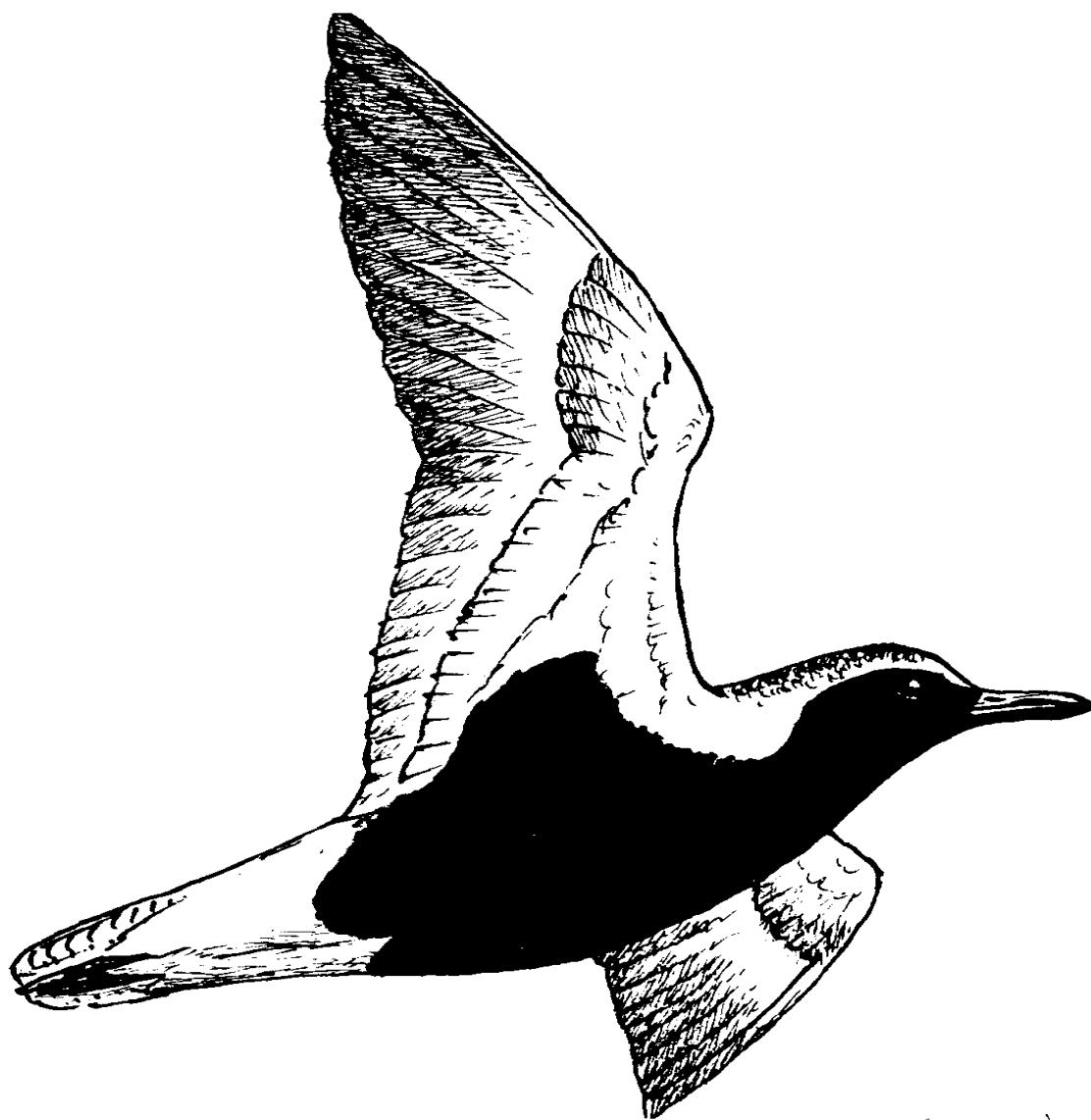


# VWSG BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF THE VICTORIAN WADER STUDY GROUP

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# ***VICTORIAN WADER STUDY GROUP INC.***

## ***MISSION STATEMENT***

The principal aim of the Victorian Wader Study Group is to gather, through extensive planned fieldwork programs, comprehensive data on waders and terns throughout Victoria on a long-term basis.

This scientifically collected information is intended to form a factual base for conservation considerations, to be a source of information for education of a wider audience, to be a means of generating interest of the general community in environmental and conservation issues, and to be a major contribution to the Australian, Flyway and Worldwide knowledge of waders and terns.

## ***FORMATION/BACKGROUND***

The wader banding fieldwork, which led to the formation of the Victorian Wader Study Group, commenced in December 1975. The Group was formally named in late 1978 and incorporated in 1986.

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Public Officer: Dr. Clive Minton

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This bulletin is usually published on the date of the Annual General Meeting and contains reports and cumulative records of fieldwork of the Victorian Wader Study Group with articles, field notes and other material. Contributions are welcome. Please consult the editor or assistant editor on questions of format. Line illustrations are reproduced from the AWSG journal *Stilt* with permission of the editor.

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**VWSG WEB SITE [www.vicnet.net.au/~vwsg](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~vwsg)**

*Our web site is maintained by Roger Standen*

# **Summary of VWSG Activities to July 2009**

**Clive Minton**

## **Introduction**

This was another very satisfactory year for the Victorian Wader Study Group. Success was not just in the numbers caught and the quality of the birds banded and flagged, but also in the new data generated on migratory movements and a further year in the long succession of measurements of annual breeding success (from the proportion of young birds in catches). This report gives details of the various components of VWSG activities and the results obtained in the past year. A selection of highlights is incorporated in this report.

## **Banding**

The total number of birds caught in 2008 (5928) was slightly higher than in the previous year (5613). As in other recent years the variety was good, with more than a hundred birds of eight different species being caught. Red-necked Stint (3590) as always topped the list. The proportion of Red-necked Stint in the total birds caught has decreased in recent years, partly because catching has been more focused on other species but also because Red-necked Stint populations have decreased in the last five years as a result of relatively poor breeding success.

The high catch total of 642 Ruddy Turnstones was aided by an exceptionally productive visit to King Island in March 2008 when 419 were caught. A good total of 391 Sanderling were caught during our South Australian visit and 347 Curlew Sandpiper which was much higher than usual because of the exceptionally good 2007 breeding season. It was also pleasing that we comfortably exceeded our minimum catch targets for oystercatchers with 176 Pied and 136 Sooty overall in 2008.

The first half of 2009 has followed a similar pattern to 2008, with only modest numbers (2422) being caught but with excellent quality. 459 Ruddy Turnstone and 386 Bar-tailed Godwit were the leading species. But Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher have been harder to catch in 2009 and, to mid August, the totals have only reached 95 Pied and 63 Sooty.

## **Data loggers**

The Group has long been anxious to take advantage of new techniques to further its migration studies. It took part, in conjunction with the Queensland Wader Study Group, in putting back-pack satellite transmitters (weighing 26 g) on eight Eastern Curlew way back in 1998 – see VWSG Bulletin 23. Whilst it was exciting to follow the daily movements of these birds after they set off on northward migration back to their southeast Siberian breeding grounds, the general conclusion was that the results were not typical of normal migratory behaviour. This was probably because the transmitters lead to flying inefficiencies due to their interference with air flow over the upper surface of the bird.

Early in 2009 information was received on the successful deployment of data loggers, weighing only one gram, being used in North America on passerines weighing as little as 50 grams. These geo-locators have a light sensor and electronic memory which record the time of dawn and dusk each day. This information enables the position of the bird on the earth's surface to be calculated. The data is stored in

the logger and so the bird has to be recaptured, and the device removed, before the information can be obtained.

We were fortunate to be able to obtain, at short notice, eight data loggers from the UK manufacturers and, after extensive trials, decided to deploy these, by attachment to a leg flag, on Ruddy Turnstones in Victoria and South Australia. Ruddy Turnstones were selected partly because they are so robust but also because we have no information at all yet on the breeding locations (Arctic Siberia or Alaska?) of the birds which visit southeast Australia.

The loggers were applied in April 2009 and we now anxiously await the resighting of returned birds in September/October/November. Attempts will be made to recapture as many as possible. It was pleasing that one of the birds carrying a geolocator was seen, and photographed, on northward migration through Taiwan just a couple of weeks after the geo-locator had been put on at Flinders ocean beach, Victoria.

### **Recoveries**

The main means of obtaining information on the movements of birds in the past came from banded birds found by other people elsewhere in Australia, and more particularly, throughout the Flyway. Only a very small percentage of banded birds was subsequently recovered (0.1-1.0 per cent, depending on species). Reports came in from members of the general public, hunters, and occasionally other bird banders.

These days almost all recoveries stem from recaptures of birds by other banders (there now being more in the Flyway) and from the resighting of birds carrying engraved leg flags, which enable birds to be identified individually. We've only just started using this technique on migratory waders (other than Ruddy Turnstone which we started several years ago) in Victoria. It has already produced some quick dividends, with one young Bar-tailed Godwit unexpectedly crossing the Tasman Sea to New Zealand in March 2009 only a few weeks after it was flagged. The use of engraved leg flags will be widened to include other medium/large waders in Victoria later in 2009.

Highlights of the recoveries of waders banded in Victoria reported during the year were a Bar-tailed Godwit caught at its nest in Alaska and ten Red Knot recaptured in the same catch in New Zealand (in October 2008). South Australian-marked Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling again produced a nice series of recoveries, the most unusual being a Ruddy Turnstone in Guam (an island in the Pacific, south of Japan). And the engraved flagged Ruddy Turnstones from King Island produced a bonanza of recoveries in Taiwan on northward migration in both 2008 and 2009 (full details of the latter were not available in time for this report).

### **Flag sightings**

Undoubtedly the most significant development in VWSG activities in the last 20 years was the decision in 1990 to employ coloured plastic leg flags to identify all birds marked in Victoria. The rate of generation of movement information rose by a factor of at least 20 times. The rate of reporting of flag sightings is still increasing annually as more and more observers in the Flyway are aware of them and know to whom they should be reported. The past year saw an incredible increase from 1101 to 2361 sightings of Victorian flagged waders, most being seen outside of Australia. The detailed report included later in this Bulletin is well worth reading in detail to see just

how much information has arisen from flagging activities, in some cases from relatively few individual birds of a species being marked.

Perhaps the highlight for the year was no less than three different Bar-tailed Godwits carrying an orange flag from Victoria being seen in the 2009 breeding season on their breeding territories on the North Slope of Alaska. A Whimbrel seen in Korea was also nice, given how few have been flagged by VWSG.

In terms of numbers of flag sightings the most surprising relates to huge numbers of Red Knot (158) seen in China during northward migration. It now appears that the majority of Red Knots visiting Australia concentrate in one small area in the northwest of the Yellow Sea in May each year. The area is rapidly being reclaimed for industrial development and with the imminent loss of the prime habitat of this key staging area there are fears for the future of the Red Knot population.

Many resightings of Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone flagged in South Australia are received each year. But it is Bar-tailed Godwit which continue to amaze. There have now been a total of 163 sightings deriving from just 11 Bar-tailed Godwits flagged in South Australia. All were marked as juveniles and most subsequent sightings have been in New Zealand. But now these birds have matured, overseas sightings are being received as birds reach breeding age. Last year one was reported from Korea and this year there have been two reports in China and one on its breeding grounds in Alaska. A Pacific Golden Plover seen in Japan was also our first overseas flag sighting of this species.

A further welcome development is the increasingly frequent reporting of overseas flagged birds in southeast Australia. For instance in the past year five different species (Grey Plover, Common Greenshank, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone) originally flagged at Chongming Dao, in China, have been subsequently sighted in the VWSG's study areas.

### **Breeding success**

This was the lowlight of the year – not because we failed to catch adequate samples but because of the extremely poor breeding success which our waders had during the 2008 June/July Northern Hemisphere breeding season. It was probably the worst breeding season overall that we have recorded in our 31 years of monitoring. Only one of the six species for which we obtained adequate catch samples had an above average breeding output (see article later in this bulletins for details). In three species there was almost total breeding failure with Ruddy Turnstone (0.7% juveniles) being the worst. Almost certainly there was an extremely unfavourable combination of weather factors and predation right across the main Arctic breeding areas in Siberia in boreal summer 2008. The only exception was the Bar-tailed Godwit, where our population breeds in Alaska, which had a good breeding outcome.

There were noticeable effects on population levels of most species and these will continue to show up in the future unless there is a marked reversal of breeding success in 2009.

### **Terns**

Breeding terns in Victoria had another “middlin” year in the 08/09 season. The large Caspian Tern colony in Corner Inlet was completely washed out in storms in December. The number of pairs of Crested Terns rose again at The Nobbies, but the

overall Victorian total (4250 pairs) was still lower than the peak of 5060 pairs in the 06/07 season. Breeding success was quite good and 3128 chicks were banded. Fairy Terns continue to nest totally unsuccessfully in both Corner Inlet and Westernport each year. It is difficult to understand how population levels can be maintained with such regular complete breeding failures, due mainly to storm tides but also to predation.

A continuing crop of tern recoveries, and more especially flag sightings, continues to be received each year. This year produced no surprises. But it was nice to have a further ten sightings of Caspian Terns from southeast Queensland. It is also amazing that we continue to receive each year a few sightings of orange-flagged Common Terns from the east coast of Australia, considering that no new ones have been flagged for ten years.

### **Equipment**

Because of the generous financial support we have received in recent years from Coast Action/Coast Care in the Gippsland region (for equipment) and from DSE Yarram (for Corner Inlet-related activities) the Group has been able to maintain its equipment in first class condition and to add to it appropriately. No longer do we have to rely on insufficient and inadequately performing portable radios for example! And we have a range of nets of different mesh size and overall area so that we always have the right type of net for each situation. The latest addition to the portfolio was an 8m by 8m “spit net”. This can be set on a very narrow spit but fired out far enough to catch birds which may be standing on the tip of the spit and even in the shallow water beyond that. It was actually christened in January 2009 with a catch of over 200 Roseate Terns on a small coral quay on the outer Barrier Reef some 200 km off Gladstone in Queensland. Rod McFarlane and Paul Buchhorn do a meticulous job in regularly checking our equipment to make sure it is in tip-top order. Similarly Graeme Rowe puts an enormous amount of time into repairing electrical faults and renovating electrical equipment.

A significant part of our good catching success in recent years can be attributed to the much higher quality of equipment we are now able to employ.

### **Finances**

VWSG's finances are in a very healthy state. Although our operating expenditure and capital expenditure in the past year exceeded our income from subscriptions and investment interest, the shortfall was more than made up by a further generous donation from Coast Action/Coast Care, by contributions from DSE and DPI for assisting in their projects, and through the generous donations of 14 different VWSG members. We are thus able to continue to maintain the same annual subscription rate (\$20 per person) which has applied for many years.

### **Acknowledgements**

As always, a huge number of different people have facilitated the VWSG's successful activities in a wide variety of ways. These range from land owners giving permission for access, through financial support, to the help provided by members in terms of taking part in fieldwork activities and in carrying out the many, many other behind the scenes jobs which are necessary. This year we have also included in this Bulletin a list of some of the activities which our members get up to when they are not doing VWSG-related work! During the past year or so 86 different members, out of a membership list of 196, have taken part in fieldwork – some many times.

Enormous thanks are due to everyone for their contributions to another enjoyable and productive year.

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## HAVE YOU SEEN?

By Roz Jessop

### RED-CAPPED PLOVERS WITH ENGRAVED LEG FLAGS?

In 2008 Deakin University commenced a banding study of Red-capped Plovers at Cheetham Wetlands and Truganina Swamp, west of Melbourne – near Altona and Altona Meadows. Dr Mike Weston and students have flagged over 30 Red-capped Plovers on the upper leg with an orange leg flag engraved with two letters. They would greatly appreciate any sightings you may make.

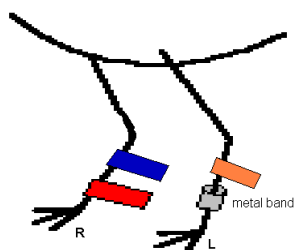
Please send details (including date and place) to  
Dr Mike Weston, Deakin University,  
221 Burwood Hwy, Burwood, 3125.  
Email: [m.weston@deakin.edu.au](mailto:m.weston@deakin.edu.au)

Mike and his post graduate students would also like to acknowledge the generous support of the VWSG in helping with the manufacture of the flags – especially Doris Graham.

Thanks, Mike Weston.

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### HOODED PLOVERS, OYSTERCATCHERS OR GREY WADERS WITH FLAGS?

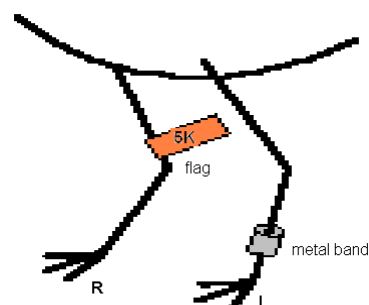
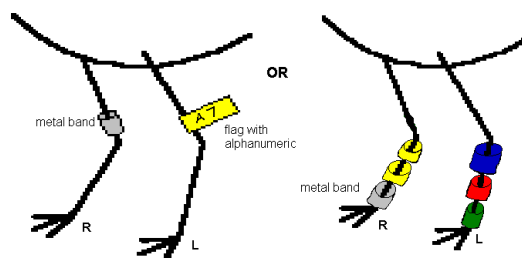


#### Hooded Plover with colour bands or flags?

Phillip Island Nature Park has an ongoing study colour flagging Hooded Plover chicks on Phillip Island. Any sightings of colour marked Hooded Plover should be sent to Roz Jessop [rjessop@penguins.org.au](mailto:rjessop@penguins.org.au)

#### Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers with colour bands or flags?

Any sightings of Pied and Sooty oystercatchers with colour bands or flags should be sent to Roz Jessop [rjessop@penguins.org.au](mailto:rjessop@penguins.org.au)



#### “Grey” waders and terns with engraved or plain flags or colour bands?

Any sightings of grey waders or terns with engraved flags or plain colour flags should be reported to Clive Minton [mintons@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mintons@ozemail.com.au)



## Total Number of Waders Caught – VWSG 2008

Species	New	Retrap	Total
Bar-tailed Godwit	269	20	289
Whimbrel	1	3	4
Ruddy Turnstone	498	144	642
Great Knot	1	0	1
Red Knot	5	0	5
Sanderling	262	129	391
Red-necked Stint	2743	847	3590
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	278	4	282
Curlew Sandpiper	307	40	347
Pied Oystercatcher	114	62	176
Sooty Oystercatcher	69	66	135
Black-winged Stilt	6	0	6
Red-capped Plover	6	0	6
Double-banded Plover	47	2	49
Masked Lapwing	5	0	5
<b>15 Species</b>	<b>4611</b>	<b>1317</b>	<b>5928</b>

Table prepared by Helen Vaughan and Clive Minton



*Bar-tailed Godwit bathing – Alice Ewing*

## Total Waders Caught by Species 1975 to December 2008 – VWSG

Species	New	Retrap	Total
Latham's Snipe	347	14	361
Black-tailed Godwit	4	0	4
Bar-tailed Godwit	4265	553	4818
Short-billed Dowitcher	1	0	1
Whimbrel	47	6	53
Eastern Curlew	814	72	886
Marsh Sandpiper	2	0	2
Common Greenshank	510	62	572
Terek Sandpiper	37	1	38
Grey-tailed Tattler	38	3	41
Ruddy Turnstone	3759	1331	5090
Great Knot	682	89	771
Red Knot	4887	735	5622
Sanderling	4220	1591	5811
Little Stint	8	0	8
Red-necked Stint	111910	30901	142811
Long-toed Stint	1	0	1
Pectoral Sandpiper	2	0	2
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	9149	424	9573
Curlew Sandpiper	25193	4821	30014
Cox's Sandpiper	1	0	1
Broad-billed Sandpiper	5	0	5
Pied Oystercatcher	2566	1331	3897
Sooty Oystercatcher	861	293	1154
Black-winged Stilt	44	0	44
Banded Stilt	486	0	486
Red-necked Avocet	368	5	373
Pacific Golden Plover	265	25	290
Grey Plover	160	23	183
Red-capped Plover	680	185	865
Double-banded Plover	3684	1003	4687
Lesser Sand Plover	115	11	126
Greater Sand Plover	31	3	34
Black-fronted Plover	57	4	61
Hooded Plover	29	2	31
Red-kneed Dotterel	136	11	147
Masked Lapwing	187	3	190
<b>37 Species</b>	<b>175551</b>	<b>43502</b>	<b>219053</b>

Table prepared by Helen Vaughan and Clive Minton

## New and Retrapped Waders Caught Each Calendar Year by VWSG

Calendar Year	New	Retrap	Total
* 1975	9		9
* 1976	616	4	620
* 1977	482	12	494
* 1978	1296	42	1338
1979	7436	486	7922
1980	6121	1206	7327
1981	4561	869	5430
1982	3774	796	4570
1983	2875	628	3503
1984	4272	1045	5317
1985	4073	1051	5124
1986	7144	2057	9201
1987	5350	1559	6909
1988	8019	2697	10716
1989	5437	1584	7021
1990	4094	1950	6044
1991	3224	850	4074
1992	4652	861	5513
1993	8831	2588	11419
1994	4839	1753	6592
1995	2708	625	3333
1996	5263	1035	6298
1997	4366	1050	5416
1998	8083	1408	9491
1999	6515	1591	8106
2000	10350	2594	12944
2001	4839	1320	6159
2002	10421	2162	12583
2003	8495	2854	11349
2004	5110	1224	6334
2005	6320	1893	8213
2006	6676	1467	8143
2007	4689	924	5613
2008	4611	1317	5928
<b>Totals to end 2008</b>	<b>175551</b>	<b>43502</b>	<b>219053</b>

Average annual total for 1979-2008 = 7220 (\*excluded)

Table prepared by Helen Vaughan and Clive Minton

## Total Waders Caught Each Six Months

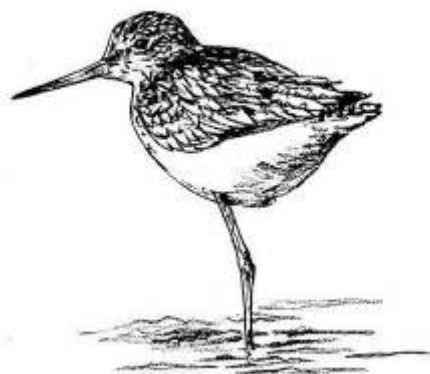
### 1979-2008 - VWSG

Calendar Year	January to June	July to December	Total
1975			9
1976			620
1977			494
1978			1338
1979	4289	3633	7922
1980	4127	3200	7327
1981	2113	3317	5430
1982	2394	2176	4570
1983	2882	621	3503
1984	2654	2663	5317
1985	3972	1152	5124
1986	5000	4201	9201
1987	3135	3774	6909
1988	5235	5481	10716
1989	3854	3167	7021
1990	1661	4383	6044
1991	2376	1698	4074
1992	3357	2156	5513
1993	5287	6132	11419
1994	2789	3803	6592
1995	1521	1812	3333
1996	1802	4496	6298
1997	1913	3503	5416
1998	5568	3923	9491
1999	4142	3964	8106
2000	5987	6957	12944
2001	3851	2308	6159
2002	8174	4409	12583
2003	3033	8316	11349
2004	1288	5046	6334
2005	5003	3210	8213
2006	5192	2951	8143
2007	3646	1967	5613
2008	3812	2116	5928
<b>Totals to end 2008</b>	<b>110057</b>	<b>106535</b>	<b>219053</b>

Table prepared by Helen Vaughan and Clive Minton

## Location of Waders Caught in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania

	To Dec 2007	2008	Total
<b><i>Victoria</i></b>			
Werribee	61343	1609	62952
Western Port/Flinders	55670	1614	57284
Queenscliff/Swan Bay	31024	472	31496
Anderson Inlet (Inverloch)	22228	0	22228
Corner Inlet	26747	851	27598
Sandy Point/Shallow Inlet	1930	208	2138
Laverton	956	0	956
Mud Islands	753	0	753
Killarney Beach	426	0	426
Geelong (Point Henry/ Belmont Common)	257	0	257
Bendigo SF	143	0	143
Seaford Swamp	98	0	98
Braeside/Croyden	79	0	79
Gippsland Lakes	40	0	40
Toowong	10	0	10
<b><i>South Australia</i></b>			
Canunda/ Carpenter Rocks/ Brown Bay/Beachport/Coorong	11204	740	11944
<b><i>Tasmania</i></b>			
King Island	307	434	741
<b>Total</b>	<b>213215</b>	<b>5928</b>	<b>219143</b>



Numbers of waders processed by the VWSG each month to December 2008.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	TOTAL
Latham's Snipe	51	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	106	99	35	61	396
Short-billed Dowitcher	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Black-tailed Godwit	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
Bar-tailed Godwit	566	725	777	99	24	652	127	286	77	334	276	501	4444
Whimbrel	3	0	41	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	3	0	53
Eastern Curlew	16	148	19	0	22	18	13	75	175	124	180	100	890
Common Greenshank	42	135	122	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	176	60	572
Marsh Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Terek Sandpiper	17	2	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	12	39
Grey-tailed Tattler	31	0	1	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	41
Ruddy Turnstone	364	587	1667	793	39	23	77	63	75	138	597	540	4963
Great Knot	196	83	26	0	0	30	21	6	16	116	74	130	698
Red Knot	853	391	302	201	2	430	469	139	85	1000	532	284	4688
Sanderling	376	1654	1772	385	0	0	1	5	0	265	414	463	5335
Little Stint	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	8
Red-necked Stint	2643	1584	6781	2503	546	749	1032	816	992	2005	3457	3685	26793
Long-toed Stint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Pectoral Sandpiper	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1817	815	237	2	0	0	0	16	635	547	625	2651	7345
Curlew Sandpiper	1515	1410	1717	231	223	128	266	479	273	1139	923	1395	9699
Broad-billed Sandpiper	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
Pied Oystercatcher	112	218	405	515	635	812	597	290	146	38	15	59	3842
Sooty Oystercatcher	6	70	83	165	201	323	235	80	0	1	0	0	1164
Black-winged Stilt	1	9	0	0	0	0	1	12	0	4	2	15	44
Banded Stilt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	151	151
Red-necked Avocet	39	0	0	0	0	0	3	67	76	46	47	89	367
Pacific Golden Plover	40	27	60	2	0	0	0	0	0	28	62	65	284
Grey Plover	14	14	4	6	0	9	0	0	2	92	42	1	184
Red-capped Plover	42	85	62	118	210	110	77	28	12	22	24	12	802
Double-banded Plover	0	2	211	296	757	956	1053	963	1	0	0	0	4239
Lesser Sand Plover	54	5	13	7	3	2	2	0	0	1	15	12	114
Greater Sand Plover	21	3	6	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	33
Black-fronted Dotterel	0	7	1	0	11	16	7	9	2	0	4	8	65
Hooded Plover	0	0	1	1	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Red-kneed Dotterel	0	10	0	20	0	44	11	17	12	8	23	1	146
Masked Lapwing	5	6	92	14	4	13	4	1	1	5	21	19	185
Cox's Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	8827	8040	14401	5362	2679	4338	3998	3353	2687	6056	7553	10323	77617

**Numbers of Waders Leg Flagged in Victoria (orange)**

<b>Species</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Total</b>
Latham's Snipe	0	0	0	0	40	0	110	56	70	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	278
Black-tailed Godwit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
Bar-tailed Godwit	0	1	157	6	64	0	43	173	16	84	388	324	196	80	208	256	223	320	186	268	2993
Whimbrel	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	4	18	0	1	44
Eastern Curlew	0	0	8	0	73	88	87	4	37	35	91	27	18	18	38	0	20	0	0	0	544
Marsh Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Common Greenshank	0	0	21	21	51	0	1	109	131	19	0	0	0	1	41	24	0	12	0	0	431
Terek Sandpiper	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	13
Grey-tailed Tattler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
*Ruddy Turnstone	0	99	188	37	35	1	194	129	194	372	75	54	34	22	20	154	1	31	328	497	2465
Great Knot	0	0	2	0	4	0	3	36	31	21	21	53	38	78	3	20	3	28	36	1	378
Red Knot	0	0	302	26	88	1	52	59	295	289	175	334	377	681	54	176	246	274	248	5	3682
*Sanderling	0	0	163	0	191	1	47	328	148	342	51	118	36	37	26	140	64	104	506	261	2563
Little Stint	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	6
Red-necked Stint	0	799	1259	2516	2282	1661	1384	3065	1434	3224	4215	6038	2570	5792	5839	3489	4502	3363	1727	2754	57913
Pectoral Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	0	4	250	111	71	21	69	145	155	474	212	105	18	670	1068	421	299	329	285	276	4983
Curlew Sandpiper	146	462	367	1255	808	839	469	753	270	633	770	1162	417	373	517	51	164	524	94	308	10382
Cox's Sandpiper	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Broad-billed Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Black-winged Stilt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	14	0	0	0	6	26
Banded Stilt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	151	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	152
Red-necked Avocet	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	27	0	0	46	0	6	0	56	0	0	0	0	140
Pacific Golden Plover	0	10	10	1	0	0	0	6	0	10	13	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	64
Grey Plover	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	22	0	0	21	0	24	1	2	9	0	5	0	91
Red-capped Plover	0	0	0	0	0	19	0	0	29	3	10	2	2	12	4	6	10	1	1	6	105
Double-banded Plover	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	40	24	98	3	90	19	46	18	21	10	45	422
Lesser Sand Plover	0	0	0	14	6	8	9	13	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55
Greater Sand Plover	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Hooded Plover	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Black-fronted Dotterel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Red-kneed Dotterel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Masked Lapwing	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	2	5	4	1	12	1	1	1	5	37
<b>32 Species</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>1375</b>	<b>2729</b>	<b>3992</b>	<b>3739</b>	<b>2656</b>	<b>2475</b>	<b>4881</b>	<b>2867</b>	<b>5554</b>	<b>6053</b>	<b>8538</b>	<b>3735</b>	<b>7895</b>	<b>7844</b>	<b>4870</b>	<b>5565</b>	<b>5030</b>	<b>3428</b>	<b>4433</b>	<b>87805</b>

\*Includes Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling flagged with orange (only) in the south east of South Australia between 1993 and 1998.

### Numbers of Waders Leg Flagged in South Australia (orange/yellow)

<b>Species</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Total</b>
Latham's Snipe	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Grey-tailed Tattler	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bar-tailed Godwit	0	0	0	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	11
Ruddy Turnstone	234	226	73	193	76	141	74	258	84	141	1500
Red Knot	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	11	0	0	12
Sanderling	63	420	2	315	328	76	220	250	506	244	2424
Red-necked Stint	126	383	22	319	163	93	174	465	54	90	1889
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	0	2	0	27	7	73	27	21	0	15	172
Curlew Sandpiper	24	11	0	190	13	2	103	8	21	33	405
Pied Oystercatcher	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Banded Stilt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	334	0	0	334
Pacific Golden Plover	0	2	0	0	1	0	16	13	0	0	32
Red-capped Plover	0	0	1	7	5	0	7	4	1	0	25
Double-banded Plover	0	0	4	5	1	0	0	27	2	0	39
Black-fronted Plover	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Hooded Plover	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Masked Lapwing	0	0	0	0	4	2	2	4	1		13
<b>Total</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>1062</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>1395</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>6867</b>

Table prepared by Helen Vaughan and Clive Minton



**VWSG FIELDWORK PROGRAM**
**January to December 2009**

DATE	PLACE AND OBJECTIVES	HIGH TIDE	
*Fri 2 Jan to Mon 5 Jan	Queenscliff - Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and Red-necked Stint	0509 to 0614	1.53 to 1.47
Wed 7 Jan	Flinders Ruddy Turnstone	0726	1.38
*Sat 31 Jan to Sun 1 Feb	Werribee SF -(Stay at Cocoroc Hall, Werribee) -Small waders	c. 0700	?
*Thurs 5 Feb to Mon 9 Feb	Corner Inlet -Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and small waders	0751 to 1036	2.58 to 2.32
*Fri 13 Feb to Sun 15 Feb	Westernport – Stockyard Point, GMH Drain & Yallock Creek Small waders	1500 to 0555	2.85 to 2.89
Sat 28 Feb	Sandy Point - Sanderling	1530	1.44
Tues 3 March	Flinders - Ruddy Turnstone	1733	1.54
*Sat 7 March to Sun 8 March	Barry Beach -Small waders and Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers	0741 to 0827	02.53 to 2.47
*Wed 11 March to Wed 18 March	South Australia - Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone		
Thurs 26 March to Fri 3 April	King Island - Ruddy Turnstone	1242 to 1602	1.22 to 1.57
Sat 11 April	Flinders - Sooty Oystercatchers	1337	1.61
Sun 12 April	Stockyard Point-- Pied Oystercatcher	1522	3.05
Sun 26 April	Fairhaven (French Island) - Pied Oystercatcher	1400	2.91
Sat 9 May	Fairhaven, French Island - Pied Oystercatcher	1317	2.89
Sun 10 May	Roussac's, Charles Hall Road (Corner Inlet) - Pied & Sooty Oystercatcher	1339	2.42
Sun 24 May	Rhyll - Pied Oystercatcher	1229	2.82
Sun 7 June	Barry Beach - Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher	1209	2.34
Sat 20 & Sun 21 June	West Corner Inlet Count - East Corner Inlet Count - (Nooramunga NP)	0827 to 0932	2.29 to 2.32
Mon 22 June to Thur 25 June	Corner Inlet (Nooramunga NP) - Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot	1044 to 1405	2.36 to 2.52
Thur 9 July	Stockyard Point - Pied Oystercatcher	1435	2.89
Sat 25 & Sun 26 July	Barry Beach & Roussac Point - Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher	1434 to 1526	2.48 to 2.55
Sat 22 Aug	Rhyll - Bar-tailed Godwit	1415	2.91
Sat 12 Sept	AGM (Clive & Pat's house) 10am – 10pm, 10am Equipment maintenance, 4pm AGM 7-10pm Talks, Small charge to cover meal costs applies		
Sun 20 Sept	Stockyard Point - Pied Oystercatcher	1342	2.76
Sat 24 to Sun 25 Oct	Queenscliff - Bar-tailed Godwit & Red Knot	0452* to 0527*	1.59 to 1.52
Wed 4 Nov	Mud Island - Caspian & Crested Tern	1324	1.32
Sat 21 Nov	Sandy Point - Sanderling	1526	1.35
Thur 26 Nov	Mud Islands - Caspian & Crested Tern	12.30 Low tide	0.54
Sat 12 Dec	Yallock Creek -Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper & Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	0857	2.66
Tues 15 Dec	Mud Islands - Caspian & Crested Tern	1153	1.25
Mon 21 Dec	Clonmel Island, Corner Inlet - Caspian and Crested Tern	1559	2.00
Tues 22 Dec	The Nobbies - Crested Tern chicks (Meet at 08.00am)	Low tide 10.25	0.52
Wed 23 Dec	Rhyll - Bar-tailed Godwit	0605	2.84
Mon 28 to Wed 30 Dec	Werribee SF Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1051 to 1230	0.85 to 0.82

# Recoveries of Waders Banded in Victoria

Clive Minton, Roz Jessop and Maureen Fitzgerald

When sorting through hard copies of recovery reports received from the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme during the past year it was amazing to discover that every 'grey' wader (i.e. excluding oystercatchers) reported away from its banding area had been as a result of banding activities at the recovery locations. Traditionally, recoveries of marked birds were received from a variety of sources – found dead by members of the general public, killed by hunters and only occasionally caught alive by another bander. This pattern has changed over the years because the expansion in the number of banding locations has resulted in many more "controls" (recaptures by other banders). Also the amount of hunting of waders in the Flyway – never large – has gradually reduced with birds now being systematically killed for food probably only in parts of Indonesia and Siberia. Almost no recoveries are now received from members of the public. This is a world-wide trend, possibly associated with the lesser amount of time that people may spend outdoors, and in the case of waders, walking along less populated beaches. Reports of dead birds on tide lines within Australia have always been very low, probably because corpses are quickly predated or high temperatures lead to their rapid decomposition.

One consequence of the changed pattern of recoveries is that it is now even more significantly biased towards locations where other banding activities take place. This has to be taken into account in any analysis of recoveries.

## Bar-tailed Godwit

Band No.	Banding Details			Recovery Details		
	Age	Date	Location	Date	Location	Movement/ Age
073-24101	Juv	7/2/06	Corner Inlet	14/4/08	Chongming Dao, CHINA	8212 km N
073-36565	Juv	25/3/08	Barry Beach	29/11/08	Miranda, Firth of Thames, NEW ZEALAND	2532 km E
073-57216	Juv	14/4/07	Manly Harbour, Queensland	7/2/09	Corner Inlet	1381 km SW
071-83858	Adult	24/3/92	Barry Beach	9/2/09	Barry Beach	Min. age 18 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> years
072-63120	Juv	27/2/99	Corner Inlet	14/2/09	Miranda, Firth of Thames, NEW ZEALAND	2493 km E
073-36916	Juv	9/2/09	Barry Beach	29/3/09	Kaiaua, Firth of Thames, NEW ZEALAND	2530 km E
072-64977	Juv	17/6/00	Corner Inlet	20/6/09	Nome, Alaska, USA	12,208 km NNE

This is the best crop of Bar-tailed Godwit recoveries in any year. All records were of live recaptures by banders. The bird in China would have been on its first migration back to its breeding grounds, at age 3. The three birds caught in New Zealand all fall into the pattern of young birds first visiting Australia before moving on to NZ. This normally occurs in September, at the beginning of a bird's second year. However 073-36916 crossed the Tasman Sea in March, within seven weeks of it being banded. It was recognised by its engraved flag "orange 95". This is the first "dividend" from our widened use of engraved leg flags in Victoria. The male Bar-tailed Godwit caught at its nest near Nome in Alaska was the longest movement recorded for this species by banding (12,208 km). However a Victorian-flagged Bar-tailed Godwit was seen in Alaska, several years ago, which had moved over 13,000 km.

## Red Knot

051-93923	Juv	14/7/98	Barry Beach	18/10/08	Miranda, Firth of Thames, NEW ZEALAND	2532 km E
052-02536	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	5/9/99	Werribee S.F.	"	"	c. 2680 km E
052-24252	Juv	25/7/02	Corner Inlet	"	"	2493 km E
052-29543	Juv	5/2/06	"	"	"	"
052-29693	Juv	"	"	"	"	"
052-29721	Juv	"	"	"	"	"
052-38633	Juv	23/1/05	"	"	"	"
052-38865	Juv	22/10/05	Queenscliff	"	"	2687 km E
052-38924	Adult	"	"	"	"	"
052-51577	Juv	22/2/07	Corner Inlet	"	"	2493 km E
052-51792	Juv	14/6/07	"	29/1/09	"	2493 km E
052-51542	Juv	11/1/07	Queenscliff	23/5/09	North Bohai Bay, CHINA	8794 km N
052-24516	Adult	13/10/02	"	25/5/09	"	"

All of the above recoveries were birds recaptured by other banders. Ten were in one catch by the New Zealand Wader Study Group at Miranda. All but one of the birds which moved to New Zealand had been banded as "immature" in Australia – a well established pattern. Three had been caught originally in the same catch, in Corner Inlet on 5/2/06. The adult had been banded on passage in October – a route through south-east Australia used by some Red Knot returning from their Siberian breeding grounds to their non-breeding areas in New Zealand. The recaptures near Bohai in the northwest of the Yellow Sea in China were in the same area from which many flag sightings were reported (see flag sightings report). Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle estimated 50,000 Red Knot to be gathered there in May 2009.

## Red-necked Stint

Japan 2Y59809	Juv	25/8/05	Torinoumi, Miyaga, JAPAN	30/12/08	Werribee S.F.	8470 km S
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Amazingly no VWSG banded Red-necked Stint were recovered in the past year. This is in marked contrast to the large (many hundred) number of flag sightings reported.

It was nice to catch this Japanese-banded bird at Werribee S.F.

## Curlew Sandpiper

042-53412	Juv	3/11/07	Queenscliff	26/7/08	Broome, WA	3121 km NW
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This is a good illustration of a young bird which has moved northwards within Australia for its first winter. No other Curlew Sandpiper recoveries were reported in the past year.

## Pied Oystercatcher

Location seen	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
Batemans Bay Cullendulla Bch												1	1
Broadwater								1					1
Jerusalem Creek								1					1
Pambula											1		1
Wallagoot Lake								2			3		5
<b>TOTAL NSW</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>
Brown Bay											1		1
Cape Banks Lighthouse	3						2					1	6
Glenelg River Mouth												1	1
Green Point	1											1	2
Livingstone Bay				2		2							4
Nene Valley			1	1	2	4							8
Pether Rock	1												1
Piccaninnie Ponds			2										2
Port MacDonnell							1						1
Robe												1	1
Stony Point	1	2	2		2	1	1	1				3	13
<b>Total South Australia</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>40</b>
Foochow Beach Flinders Is.											2		2
Patriarchs Inlet Flinders Is.											2		2
Sawyer Bay Flinders Is.											1		1
King Island Whistler Point		1											1
King Island Bungaree		1											1
King Island Manuka							6	2					8
King Island Whalebone		4											4
Stanley Godfreys Beach	1												1
<b>Total Tasmania</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>
Glenelg Estuary Nelson	1												1
Port Fairy East Beach						2							2
Port Fairy Mills Reef						1							1
Portarlington			1										1
Queenscliff Sailing Club	1												1
Werribee North Spit			5				1						6
Barralliar Island											1		1
Churchill Island							1						1
Hutchinson Beach Phillip Island							1						1
Kitty Miller Bay Phillip Island							1						1
Thorny Beach Phillip Island							3	1					4
Rhyll Phillip Island		4					9		6		2		21
N.W. French Island				1									1
Stockyard Point						1	50		3				54
Toora Beach						8	20						28
Port Albert							1						1
Shallow Inlet	2												2
Mallacoota								1					1
Mallacoota NP Quarry Bch											2	1	3
Wingan Inlet										1			1
<b>Total Victoria</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>132</b>

Two hundred and four Pied Oystercatcher sightings were reported over the last 12 months to the end of July 2009. Many of the sightings reported from NSW and SA were of birds that are now resident in these areas. Birds recorded from King and Flinders Islands seem to be mainly birds that undertake seasonal movements between wintering areas in Victoria and breeding sites on the islands, while a few others are resident in areas such as Manuka all year and are seen there on a regular basis including in winter.

## Sooty Oystercatcher

Location	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total
Cape Banks Lighthouse											1		1
<b>Total South Australia</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Marshall Bay Flinders Island											1		1
King Island Whistler Point		1											1
King Island Naracoopa		6											6
King Island Quarantine Beach		1											1
King Island The Springs		1											1
<b>Total Tasmania</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>
Flinders Ocean Beach			8		8								16
Flynn Reef Phillip Island								1					1
Summerland Beach Phillip Island		1		2				2					5
Thorny Beach Phillip Island						1	1	1					3
Kitty Miller Bay Phillip Island				1									1
Woolshed Bight Phillip Island							2	1					3
Kanowna Island					2	3							5
Norman Bay Wilson's Prom							1						1
Picnic Bay Wilson's Prom							1						1
Toora Beach						6							6
<b>Total Victoria</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>

Fifty three sighting of Sooty Oystercatchers were reported over the last 12 months. Most of the above birds were identified by individual colour band combinations. Thanks to all those who sent in sighting.

# Recoveries of Waders Banded in South Australia

Clive Minton, Roz Jessop, Maureen Christie and Iain Stewart

## Introduction

The two main study species in the southeast of South Australia – Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling – again dominate the recoveries. There are a wide variety of recovery reports, mostly from the usual locations in the Flyway. Most of the Ruddy Turnstone recoveries derive from sightings of birds marked individually with engraved leg flags. Sanderling recoveries however derive from a range of different human activities (hunting/photography/banding).

## Bar-tailed Godwit

Band No.	Banding Details			Recovery Details		
	Age	Date	Location	Date	Location	Movement/ Age
072-82027	Juv	21/10/02	Port MacDonnell	11/1/09	Invercargill, NEW ZEALAND	2456 km SE

This bird, recognised by its unique flag combination (orange/orange), had been seen regularly in the Invercargill area since 2003/04. The movement of juvenile Bar-tailed Godwits from south eastern Australia to New Zealand in later years is a well established pattern.

## Ruddy Turnstone

052-52032	Adult	28/2/08	Nora Creina	27/7/08	Hebei, CHINA	8779 km N
052-38650	Adult	16/3/05*	Port MacDonnell	16/8/08	Chi-Ku, TAIWAN	7134 km N
052-29902	Adult	4/3/06	Nene Valley	"	"	7117 km N
052-49647	Adult	17/4/06	Nora Creina	5/9/08	Han-Pao, TAIWAN	7125 km N
052-22250	Adult	6/8/06*	Port MacDonnell	5/9/08	"	7223 km N
052-51623	Adult	6/3/07	"	8/9/08	Tujan, GUAM	5747 km N
052-22244	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	6/8/06*	"	28/3/09	King Island, Tas.	337 km SE
052-03817	Juv	11/12/00	"	21/3/07	"	333 km SE
"	"	"	"	30/3/09	"	"

\*Seen or recaptured locally several times between the original banding and this recovery.

This is another great series of Ruddy Turnstone recoveries. The overseas reports all resulted from the reading of individually marked engraved leg flags. Taiwan seems to be particularly favoured as a migratory stopover location by Ruddy Turnstones from southeast Australia. The above four records relate to birds on southward migration. Further sightings during the northward migration period in 2009 have not yet been formally submitted and "processed" and so will appear in next year's Bulletin.

The recapture of a Ruddy Turnstone in Guam, by a U.S. team monitoring avian born diseases, was a first. Most of the Ruddy Turnstone occurring on islands in the Pacific are from Alaska, but one can't rule out that this may have been a bird from Siberia following a rather easterly route back to Australia.

The two birds caught in King Island are further examples of the interchange between the Ruddy Turnstones in the southeast of South Australia and those in King Island.

## Sanderling

042-53248	Adult	4/3/07	Brown Bay, Port MacDonnell	6/8/08	Chayvo Bay, RUSSIA	10060 km N
042-54400	Adult	27/2/08	"	"	"	"
041-91698	Adult	6/2/95	"	"	"	(Min. age 15 years)
042-44700	Adult	15/3/09	"	17/8/08	Ishikawa, JAPAN	8332 km N
042-46431	Juv	5/3/06	"	"	"	"
042-44835	Juv	15/3/05	"	6/9/08	"	"
042-46375	Adult	5/3/06	"	13/5/09	North Bohai Bay, CHINA	8660 km N

This was another great year for Sanderling recoveries. Unfortunately the three in Russia were birds killed by hunters at their stopover location on southward migration through the Sea of Okhotsk. The three reports from Japan all came from close observation/photography of birds on the shore where the metal band numbers could be read! 042-44700 was also seen in the same area on southward migration in September 2006 and August 2007. 042-44835 had also been seen previously elsewhere in Japan, in August 2005. Note the age (minimum 15 years) of 041-91698.

## Red-necked Stint

A Chinese-banded Red-necked Stint was caught in the southeast of South Australia in late April 2009, but banding details have not yet been received.



*Eastern Curlew at Wader Beach – Broome WA (Alice Ewing)*

# Recoveries of Waders Banded on King Island, Tasmania

Clive Minton, Penny Johns, Maureen Christie and Mavis Burgess

The annual forays by the VWSG into King Island, started in March 2007, have been a resounding success in every way. This is especially so in terms of the large number of recoveries and flag sightings of Ruddy Turnstones which have been generated. Information on the movements of Turnstones has more than doubled in this period compared with what was known previously. Nearly all this information has been derived from resightings of Ruddy Turnstones marked individually with engraved flags.

## Ruddy Turnstones

Band No.	Banding Details			Recovery Details		
	Age	Date	Location	Date	Location	Movement/ Age
052-52354	Adult	12/3/08	King Island	10/5/08	Yalu Jiang, CHINA	9081 km N
052-52203	Juv	9/3/08	King Island	20/4/08	Nene Valley, SA	346 km NW
				29/4/08	"	
				17/7/08	Lake Bonney, SA	
				11/3/09	Nene Valley, SA	
				12/3/09	"	
				15/3/09	"	
052-51908	Adult	24/3/07	King Island	13/8/08	Matsusaka-Shi, JAPAN	8389 km N
052-52039	Adult	9/3/08	King Island	5/4/08	Hanbou, TAIWAN	7494 km N
				17/4/08	"	
				18/4/08	"	
				22/4/08	"	
				23/4/08	"	
				16/8/08	"	
052-51694	Adult	20/3/07	King Island	2/9/08	Eyre, WA	1796 km N
052-51765	Adult	22/3/07	King Island	4+5/9/08	Han-Pao, TAIWAN	7537 km N
052-52256	Adult	11/3/08	King Island	9/9/08	Port MacDonnell, SA	363 km W
052-52312	Juv	10/3/08	King Island	17/5/09	Bohai, CHINA	9130 km N
052-52357	Adult	12/3/08	King Island	30/5/09	Mai Po, HONG KONG	7577 km NNW
052-51724	Adult	20/3/07	King Island	25/8/07	Tsu, Mie, JAPAN	8380 km N
				17/4/08	Han-Pao, TAIWAN	7509 km N

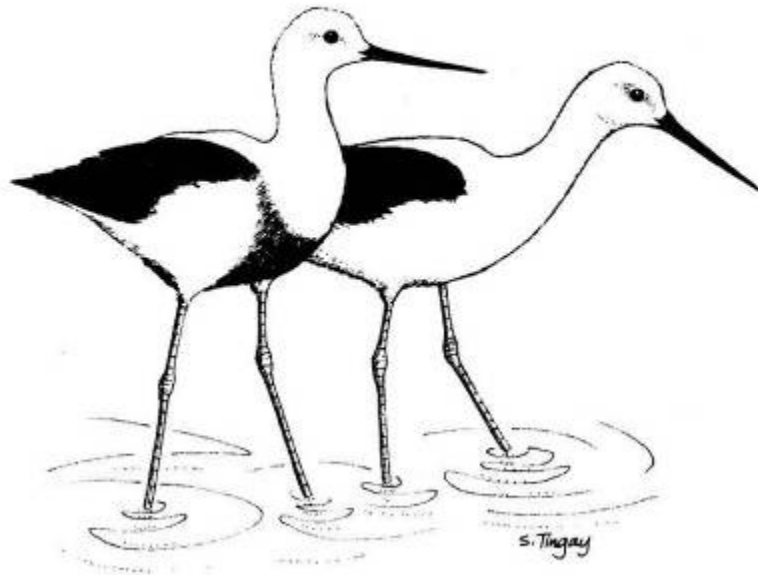
This is a really diverse range of recoveries to be reported in just one year. Overseas there were three in Taiwan, two in Japan, two in mainland China and one in Hong Kong. There were also two which further illustrated some link between the South Australia and King Island Ruddy Turnstone populations. A surprising report from Eyre on the south coast of Western Australia illustrated the rather circuitous route which some birds may take on their way back from their Northern Hemisphere breeding grounds to King Island.

There are two particularly interesting overseas recoveries. 052-52039 used Taiwan as a stopover location on both northward and southward migration in 2008. 052-51724 was reported on



southward migration through Japan in August 2007 and was in Taiwan on northward migration in April 2008.

We have had informal reports of a huge further batch of King Island banded and flagged Ruddy Turnstones in Taiwan this year, with some particularly exciting individuals being resighted in different years and different migrations. Details of these will be included in next year's Bulletin.



# Sightings of Waders Leg-flagged in Victoria

## Report Number 16

Clive Minton, Roz Jessop and Heather Gibbs

Species	Australia (total)	WA	QLD	SA	NSW	NT	Tas	VIC	New Zealand (total)	NI	SI	China (mainland)	Korea	Hong Kong (China)	USA	Japan	Russia	Malaysia	Indonesia	Total Overseas
Black-tailed Godwit	0												1							1
Bar-tailed Godwit	46	2	29		15				330	208	122	50	112		30	7				529
Whimbrel	0															1				1
Eastern Curlew	3		2		1							2	2			1				5
Common Greenshank	1				1															0
Ruddy Turnstone	12			11			1													0
Great Knot	9	1	4			4						4	2			1				7
Red Knot	56	38	5	8	1	4			862	785	77	158	3			3				1026
Sanderling	2	1		1								3				6	2			11
Red-necked Stint	64	28	1	12	3	2	8	10				364	4	29		4	15	2	2	420
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	6	1	3	1	1							12		1						13
Curlew Sandpiper	75	65	3	7								55		10						65
Pied Oystercatcher	1						1													0
Grey Plover	0											1	1							2
Double-banded Plover	0								4		4									4
Lesser Sand Plover	0												2							2
	275	136	47	40	22	10	10	10	1196	993	203	649	127	40	30	23	17	2	2	2086

There has been another, almost unbelievable, fantastic crop of sightings of Victorian-flagged birds reported during 2008. The total (2361) more than doubled from that of 2007 (1101). All of this increase resulted from flag sightings made outside Australia, in Asia and in New Zealand. This is the result of the ever-growing number of people in the flyway who are now systematically searching for flagged birds and efficiently reporting them.

The biggest increase has been in New Zealand (from 643 to 1196) and in mainland China (from 44 to a massive 649). But significant increases in the number of flagged birds seen also occurred in Russia (5 to 17), Japan (5 to 23) and Alaska (3 to 30). The last of these was mainly due to a partial resumption of searching for flags on the coastal assembly points used by Bar-tailed Godwit before their flight back to Australia and New Zealand across the Pacific. A selection of flag sightings are given for most species below, together with relevant comments.

### Black-tailed Godwit

30/04/2008	1	Simpoo, Korea	Gillian Vaughan	8428 N
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It is amazing that the flow of flag sightings of Black-tailed Godwits in Asia is still continuing in spite of only four ever having been flagged in Victoria. Some of the previous sightings have also been in Korea, which seems to be favoured by this species on northward migration.

## Bar-tailed Godwit

10/06/2009	1	Kokolik River near Point Lay, Alaska, USA	Daniel Rizzolo and Kelly Overdvijn	12706 N
25/06/2009	1	Ikpikpuk River, Alaska, USA	Joe Liebezeit and Steve Zack	12976 N
3/07/2009	1	North Slope, about 500m west of the Dalton Highway, Alaska, USA	Jesse Conklin	13108 N

There were 529 flag sightings in the past year compared with 457 in the previous year. The main increase was 50 sightings in China compared to none the previous year. The other increase, already mentioned above, was in Alaska. Three extremely valuable sightings of birds on their breeding territories on the North Slope are detailed in the table above. New Zealand again produced the largest number of flag sightings (330) with approximately two-thirds of these being in the North Island and one third in the South Island.

Of the 46 sighting within Australia, 29 were in Queensland and 15 in New South Wales – almost all being birds on their return migration southwards to Victoria in September/October. However some records relate to a few birds which have clearly changed their non-breeding area away from Victoria.

## Whimbrel

5/05/2008	1	Shingomori, Kashima-shi, Saga-ken, Japan, Japan	Kazuhisa Oue	8058 N
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This is only the second sighting of a flagged Whimbrel from Victoria. Last year's report contained one seen in Korea and now we have a bird in Japan (both seen in May 2008). Only 43 have been flagged by VWSG.

## Eastern Curlew

27/03/2009	1	Saga, Japan	Nobuhiro Hashimoto	8061 N
14/03/2008	1	Gangwon-do Gangneung-si (co-ords approx), Korea	birdpix@paran.com	8586 N
6/06/2009	1	670 GyeongPo-Dong, Korea	Jae-hong Hwang	8588 N
18/04/2008	1	Yalu Jiang Site 2, China (mainland)	Adrian Riegen	8914 N
18/04/2008	1	Yalu Jiang Site 2, China (mainland)	Gillian Vaughan and David Melville	8914 N

There was a welcome increase in reports of flagged Eastern Curlew (from 1 to 8). The 5 overseas sightings are detailed above. Note the early date (14<sup>th</sup> March) of the report from Korea. This species is the first to leave on northward migration each year (around March 7<sup>th</sup>) and some birds clearly fly non-stop to Korea/Japan. Three sightings within Australia relate to birds seen in August-September, in Queensland and northern New South Wales, probably on their way back to Victoria.

## Common Greenshank

15/10/2006	1	Reedy Island mudflats, near Tuross Head, NSW	Bill Nelson	499 NE
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Amazingly few flag sightings have been received of Common Greenshank even though 431 have now been flagged. The bird listed above was probably on its way back on southward migration to Victoria.

## Ruddy Turnstone

There were no reports of Victorian leg-flagged Ruddy Turnstone outside of Australia in the past year. Most flag sightings related to birds moving to South Australia.

## Great Knot

8/07/2007	1	Yumesu Reclaimed land, Konohana-ku, Osaka-shi, Osaka, Japan, Japan	ARITA Hachiro	8142 N
19/04/2008	1	Shell Fish Harbour, Korea	Nial Moores	8447 N
5/05/2008	1	Namyang,Kia, Korea	Danny Rogers	8551 N
23/07/2008	1	Rudong, jiangsu, China (mainland)	Zhang Lin and Lei Ming	8233 N
9/05/2009	1	Yalu River - Ashponds, China (mainland)	Nigel Milius	8915 N
10/05/2009	1	Yalu Jiang Site 3, China (mainland)	Wendy Hare	8914 N
15/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell & Adrian Boyle	8997 N

Another good crop of leg flag sightings was received, both from overseas (7) and within Australia (9) even though this species is only caught and flagged in modest numbers (total 377). The overseas reports are detailed above. Note that two relate to birds seen in July during their southward migration. Within Australia, four were seen in the Northern Territory, four in Qld and one in North-western Australia (again, all birds on southward migration in the September-early November period).

## Red Knot

There was an amazing increase in Red Knot sightings to 1026 from 429 the previous year. Numbers seen in New Zealand nearly doubled, from 359 to 862. In contrast to Bar-tailed Godwits, the majority (90%) were in North Island, whereas the split is more even (2:1) in Bar-tailed Godwits. There was also a huge increase in the number of Red Knot reported from China (24 to 158). All but two of these were in the Bohai Bay / Hebei province area on the north-west side of the Yellow Sea. Red Knot are a species which typically, worldwide, tends to form heavy concentrations in just a few locations, both when on migration and in the non-breeding areas. There is considerable concern for their future welfare with the majority of the flyway population apparently concentrating in this one area of the Yellow Sea during northward migration. Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle reported 50,000 present there in May 2009. Much of the intertidal habitat is being lost to industrial development.

There were also 56 sightings of Red Knot flagged in Victoria elsewhere in Australia, particularly in north-west Australia. Some of these birds were clearly on southward migration back to Victoria but others seem to relate to birds which had changed their non-breeding area.

## Sanderling

28/05/2008	1	Chaivo bay, northern Sakhalin Island, Russia	Andrej Y. Blokhin & Ivan M. Tiunov	10050 N
4/08/2008	1	Chaivo Bay, Northern Sakhalin Island, Russia	Andrej Y. Blokhin & Ivan M. Tiunov	10057 N
13/08/2007	1	Yoshino River Estuary, Tokushima, Japan	Tadashi Kasai	8086 N
13/08/2007	1	Artificial Is. In Hakata Bay, Fukuoka, Fukuoka, Japan, Japan	HATTORI Takurou	8112 N
26/08/2007	2	Sanbanze Tidal Flat, Funabashi, Chiba, Japan	NAGASHIMA Mitsuru	8209 N
12-13/09/2007	1	Fukuda-chou, Iwata-shi, Shizuoka, Japan	IMAI Atsushi	8113 N
24/08/2008	1	Kumozu River mouth, Mikumo, Mie, Japan	Naotaka Adati	8121 N
25/05/2008	1	Shuanglong River estuary, northern Bohai Bay, China (mainland)	Yibin Zhang & Zhijun Ma	8782 N
18/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell & Adrian Boyle	8997 N
28/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Adrian Boyle	8997 N

There was another good crop of overseas sightings with two birds in Russia, six in Japan and three in China. These seem to be the areas of the flyway used for the main stopover of Sanderling on northward and southward migration. This year four of the records relate to birds on their way northwards and six for birds on their way south. It is probable that most of the birds

which make a stopover in China/Japan/Korea also make a stopover in northern Sakhalin or the western shores of the Sea of Okhotsk.

### Red-necked Stint

16/08/2008	1	Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia	Karim Madoya et al	5696 NW
23/08/2008	1	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia	Karim Madoya	5734 NW
7/09/2008	2	Wonorejo Wetlands, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia	Yuwana Peksa /Anak Burung	4641 NW

There was a huge increase in the number of flag sightings reported for Red-necked Stint (420) compared to the previous year (91). All of this increase relates to overseas flag sightings, with the number in mainland China increasing dramatically (from 13 to 364). The Red-necked Stint also spreads itself out over Asia more widely than most other species and this year there were sightings from seven different countries. The number of sightings in Russia also increased markedly (from one to 15); similarly in Hong Kong (four to 29). Sightings in Malaysia and in Indonesia (two) are not very frequent and details of these are given in the table above.

The huge increase in sightings in China is greatly influenced by two most productive flag sighting periods. Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle made 30 sightings of Victorian-flagged Red-necked Stints in the period 16<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> May near Bohai Bay and Paul Holt made an incredible 247 sightings between 14<sup>th</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> August (2009), seeing a maximum of 44 different birds on one day (2<sup>nd</sup> August). The site was a reclamation area near Tianjin in the north-west region of the Yellow Sea. Unfortunately this temporary food bonanza, and a lot of the previously used mudflats, will disappear in the next year as it is developed into an industrial park.

### Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

3/08/2008	1	Jing Qu, Dagang, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8977 N
6/08/2008	1	Caihongqiao Pools, Hangu, coastal Tianjin, North-east China, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	9016 N
27/08/2008	1	Tianjin Harbour Industrial Park pools, south of Tanggu, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	9001 N
21/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8997 N
22/05/2009	1	Zero Point Bridge Pond Zhuidong, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	9001 N
23/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8997 N
17/07/2009	1	Tianjin Harbour Industrial Park pools, south of Tanggu, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	9001 N
24/07/2009	1	Complex of pools between Lujuhe & Haibin Yuchang, Tanggu, coastal Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8997 N
26/07/2009	1	Complex of pools between Lujuhe & Haibin Yuchang, Tanggu, coastal Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8997 N
29/07/2009	1	Pools between Lujuhe & Haibin Yuchang, Tanggu, coastal Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8997 N
1/08/2009	1	Pools between Lujuhe & Haibin Yuchang, Tanggu, coastal Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	9001 N
3/08/2009	1	Pools between Lujuhe & Haibin Yuchang, Tanggu, coastal Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	9001 N
1/05/2009	1	Mai Po, Hong Kong (China)	Katherine Leung	7245 NW

This was also a bumper year for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper sightings overseas with 13 compared to two in the previous year. All were in China, 12 in the north-west part of the Yellow Sea and one in Hong Kong. Most were the result of the fieldwork efforts of Paul Holt, Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle mentioned above.

## Curlew Sandpiper

Curlew Sandpiper is another species with a huge increase in flag sighting reports overseas in the past year (65 compared with 7). Amazingly, all of these were in China – 55 in mainland China in the north-west of the Yellow Sea and 10 in Hong Kong. Again most of these observations were made by Chris Hassell, Adrian Boyle and Paul Holt in the Yellow Sea, or were reported through Yu Yat Tung at Mai Po marshes in Hong Kong.

These data make an interesting comparison with Red-necked Stint in the Bohai/Tianjin area. For Curlew Sandpiper 19 were seen on northward migration and only slightly more (25) on southward migration. Figures for Red-necked Stints observed by the same people at the same locations over the same period were 30 and 254. These figures are a further illustration that many Curlew Sandpipers return southward by a different route, further west, than they use on northward migration.

Of the 75 sightings of Victorian-flagged Curlew Sandpipers within Australia 28 were recorded in north-west Australia. All but two were on southward migration. It is probable that most Curlew Sandpipers overfly the northern coast of Australia after they leave south-eastern Australia on northward migration.

## Grey Plover

10/05/2008	1	Okgu, Korea	Adrian Boyle and Chris Hassell	8430 N
11/05/2008	1	Yalu River - Ashponds, China (mainland)	Wang Tao	8915 N

Only 91 Grey Plover have been flagged in Victoria and there have been few overseas sightings. It was pleasing therefore to have two almost simultaneous reports, one of a bird in Korea and the other at the north end of the Yellow Sea in China.

## Double-banded Plover

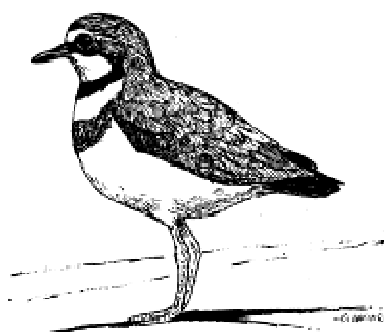
16/10/2008	1	Waiau River, SI	Frances Schmechel	2413 E
25/10/2008	1	the confluence of the Routeburn & Dart Rivers, north of Glenorchy, SI	Mary Thompson, Audrey Eagle & Lesley Gowans	2076 SE
30/10/2008	1	Big Beach, Shotover River near Queenstown, SI	Dawn Palmer, Helen Clark and Alice Wilkins	2111 SE
22/11/2008	1	Ashley River Estuary, Christchurch, South Island, SI	Jan Walker	2397 SE

These sightings are all in the central region of South Island New Zealand, which is the origin of most of the Double-banded Plovers that come to Australia in the winter.

## Lesser Sand Plover

30/04/2008	1	Geum Barrage, Korea	David Milton	8442 N
15/05/2008	1	Geum Barrage, Korea	Adrian Boyle and Chris Hassell	8442 N

It is amazing to receive these records, which may refer to the same individual, when only 55 have been flagged in Victoria, all in the 1990s.



# Sightings of Waders Leg-flagged in South Australia

## Report Number 9

**Clive Minton, Roz Jessop, Maureen Christie, Iain Stewart and Heather Gibbs**

164 sightings have been reported in the past year of waders leg flagged with the orange/yellow combination in the south east of South Australia. This compares with 138 in the previous year. The main increase was in overseas reports – 93 compared with 61. This reflects the ever-growing enthusiasm and effort going into leg flag sightings throughout the flyway outside Australia. A summary is given in the table below. The majority of overseas flag sightings are also detailed subsequently for each species.

Species	Australia (total)	Vic	WA	SA	NT	Tas	NSW	QLD	New Zealand (total)	SI	NI	China (mainland)	Taiwan (China)	Hong Kong (China)	Japan	Russia	Korea	USA	Total Overseas
Bar-tailed Godwit	1							1	20	17	3	2						1	23
Ruddy Turnstone	22	1	5	6	7	3			0			3	3				3		9
Red Knot	0								13	1	12	2							15
Sanderling	34	25	8				1		0			5		1	14	7			27
Red-necked Stint	3		1	2					0			7							7
Curlew Sandpiper	14	2	11	1					0			6		1					7
Pacific Golden Plover	0								0						1				1
Double-banded Plover	0								1	1									1
	74	28	25	9	7	3	1	1	34	19	15	25	3	2	15	7	3	1	90

### Bar-tailed Godwit

3/09/2008	1	near Cape Avinof, Alaska, USA	Daniel Ruthrauff	11102 N
9/05/2009	1	near Yalu Jiang, China (mainland)	Mr BAI Qing Quan	8808 N
9/05/2009	1	Dandong, Liaoning, China (mainland)	Zhijun Ma	8807 N

We continue to get a wonderful crop of Bar-tailed Godwit flag sightings. All are derived from just 8 juveniles flagged in November 2004 and three in late 2001. There have now been an amazing total of 163 different sightings of these birds. Most have been in New Zealand, but as the surviving birds mature they have now started migrating through Asia to their arctic breeding grounds. In the past year we had an exciting sighting in Alaska, and two sightings (probably just one bird) in China.

### Ruddy Turnstone

5/05/2005	1	Seosin, Gyeonggi-do, Korea	Choi, Young-ju	8465 N
4/05/2007	1	near Gunsan, Korea	Kim, Tae Young	8347 N
27/05/2009	1	Maehiang-Ri tidal flat, Hwasung-kun, Kiongkido, Korea	Kyu-Sik Shim	8457 N
28/07/2008	1	Rudong, Jiangsu, China (mainland)	Lei Ming	8092 N
17/05/2009	1	Zuidong, near Tanshang, Heilong Province, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8636 N
22/07/2009	1	Complex of pools between Lujue & Haibin Yuchang, Tanggu, coastal Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8852 N
4/09/2008	2	Han-Bou, ChangHwa County, Taiwan (China)	Shih-Hui Lui	7197 N
5/09/2008	1	Han-Bou, ChangHwa County, Taiwan (China)	Shih-Hui Lui	7197 N

Last year all the overseas sightings were in Taiwan, so it is pleasing that this year we have evidence of mainland China and Korea also being used as stopover locations. It is interesting that

five of the nine sightings overseas relate to birds on southward migration. In most species flag sighting patterns are dominated by birds on northward migration.

Seven sightings in the Northern Territory and five in NWA all relate to birds on southward migration. This is further evidence that this part of Australia is an important stopover location for our turnstones on southward migration, but not apparently on northward migration (when they probably overfly the region).

## Red Knot

18/05/2008	1	Shuanglong River estuary, northern Bohai Bay, China (mainland)	Yibin Zhang & Zhijun Ma	8636 N
17/05/2009	1	Zuidong, near Tanshang, Heibei Province, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8636 N

The Red Knot pattern of flag sightings follows closely that of Bar-tailed Godwit. From only 13 flagged in South Australia, there have now been 31 subsequent sightings. Again most have been in New Zealand but birds have now matured to the age when they migrate and this is reflected by two sightings in China (probably relating to only one bird). Whereas flagged Bar-tailed Godwit sightings in New Zealand are fairly evenly split between North Island and South Island, in Red Knot North Island sightings predominate (with 12 out of 13 in the last year).

## Sanderling

22/05/2008	1	Astokh Bay, Northern Sakhalin Island, Russia	Andrej Y. Blokhin & Ivan M. Tiunov	10094 N
23/05/2008	2	Astokh Bay, Northern Sakhalin Island, Russia	Andrej Y. Blokhin & Ivan M. Tiunov	10094 N
28/05/2008	3	Chaivo bay, northern Sakhalin Island, Russia	Andrej Y. Blokhin & Ivan M. Tiunov	10053 N
15/08/2008	1	Kleje Strait, Chaivo Bay, NE Sakhalin Island, Russia	Andrej Y. Blokhin & Ivan M. Tiunov	10053 N
28/07/2007	1	Ishikari Beach, Ishikari, Hokkaido, Japan	Yoshinao Takahashi	9035 N
2/08/2007	1	Mouth of Takase-river, Rokkasho, Aomori, Japan	MIYA Akio	8774 N
7-9/08/2007	1	Yotsugoya, Nishi-ku, Niigata-shi, Niigata, Japan	CHIBA Akira	8559 N
13/08/2007	1	Takiguchi, Shirahama-cho, Minamibouso-shi, Chiba-ken, Japan	kenichiro FUJITA	8107 N
14/08/2007	1	Kujiyukuri-hama, Mikawa, Asahi-shi, Chiba-ken, Japan, Japan	Toshikazu SAITO	8197 N
19/08/2007	1	Estuary of Natsui-river, Iwaki-shi, Fukushima, Japan, Japan	YOSHIDA Masaaki	8347 N
25/08/2007	1	Chiyosaki beach, Suzuka-shi, Mie-ken, Japan	KIMURA Hiroyuki et al.	8109 N
28/08/2007	1	Shiratsuka Beach, Tsu, Mie, Japan	IMANAKA Mineo	8100 N
29/8 to 4/9 2007	1	Fukiage-beach, Kaseda, Minamisatsuma-shi, Kagoshima-ken, Japan	KOZONO Takuma	7794 N
30/08/2007	1	Yamachi-beach, Kuriya-cho, Tsu-shi, Mie-ken, Japan, Japan	WATANABE Shinichiro	8097 N
2/09/2007	1	Ichinomiya River Estuary, Chosei, Chiba, Japan	Toshiki Bando	8161 N
4/09/2007	1	Machiyaura beach, Tsu-shi, Mie, Japan, Japan	NISHI Norio	8099 N
9/09/2007	1	Chiyosaki beach, Suzuka-shi, Mie-ken, Japan	ABE Masami	8109 N
17/08/2008	1	Takamatsu beach, Kahoku-shi, Ishikawa-ken, Japan	Mr. OHNO Ichiro	8103 N
20/05/2009	3	Zuidong, near Tanshang, Heibei Province, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8636 N
24/05/2009	2	Zuidong, near Tanshang, Heibei Province, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8636 N
5/05/2008	1	Mai Po Marshes, Hong Kong (China)	Yu Yat Tung	7253 NW

Sanderling again produced more flag sightings than any other species – 27 overseas and 34 elsewhere in Australia. The overseas recoveries again contain many from Japan (14) and Russia (7), but there are also another five from mainland China and one from Hong Kong. As in previous years (and as in Ruddy Turnstone) there are rather more sightings in Asia on southward migration (15) than on northward migration (12). Eight records of birds in north-west Australia on southward



migration in the September–November period further confirm that this area is extensively used as a stopover location by Sanderling on southward migration.

### Red-necked Stint

4/08/2008	1	Tianjin Harbour Industrial Park pools, south of Tanggu, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8856 N
5/08/2008	1	Tianjin Harbour Industrial Park pools, south of Tanggu, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8856 N
19/05/2009	1	Bohai Oil Rig Site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8855 N
25/07/2009	2	Tianjin Harbour Industrial Park pools, south of Tanggu, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8856 N
30/07/2009	2	Tianjin Harbour Industrial Park pools, south of Tanggu, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8856 N

Six of these 7 records in the north-west corner of the Yellow Sea in China are the result of the assiduous searching for flags which tour leader Paul Holt carries out in this area annually. Much industrial development is currently taking place there, with considerable loss of intertidal habitat and some nearby impounded lagoons. In due course this is likely to have a serious effect on some species of small waders, and also on the Red Knot which favour the same area (on northward migration only).

### Curlew Sandpiper

27/04/2008	1	Mai Po Marshes, Hong Kong (China)	Yu Yat Tung	7253 NW
16/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8855 N
20/05/2009	1	Zero Point Bridge Pond, Zhuidong, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8860 N
21/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8855 N
22/05/2009	1	Zero Point Bridge Pond, Zhuidong, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8860 N
23/05/2009	1	Bohai oil rig site, China (mainland)	Chris Hassell and Adrian Boyle	8855 N
19/07/2009	1	Tianjin Harbour Industrial Park pools, south of Tanggu, Tianjin, China (mainland)	Paul Holt	8856 N

This species also favours the north-west corner of the Yellow Sea as a migratory stopover site. Six of the seven records in mainland China and Hong Kong relate to birds on northward migration but only one on southward migration. Past data suggests that many Curlew Sandpipers have an elliptical migration path, returning southwards on a more westerly track than when they are travelling northwards.

### Pacific Golden Plover

13/09/2007	1	Kaminoshima, Inashii-shi, Ibaraki-ken, Japan	TAKATA Noriyuki	8222 N
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This is our first overseas sighting of a leg-flagged Pacific Golden Plover. With the sighting being on southward migration in September in Japan there is no indication yet on where our Pacific Golden Plover breed – Siberia or Alaska.

### Double-banded Plover

10/01/2009	1	Lake Ellesmere, Canturbury, South Island, SI	Grant Bawden	2786 SE
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South Island New Zealand is the main breeding area for those Double-banded Plovers which cross to south-eastern Australia for the winter.

# Sightings of Waders Leg-flagged on King Island, Tasmania

Clive Minton, Roz Jessop, Maureen Christie,

Mavis Burgess and Heather Gibbs

The flagging of waders, mostly turnstones, on King Island started in March 2007, and has produced a huge excellent crop of subsequent sightings of leg-flagged birds, mainly Ruddy Turnstones seen in Taiwan during northward migration in April and May. Full confirmed details of this year's sightings there have not yet been received from ChungYu Chiang, the energetic co-ordinator of wader activities for the Taiwan Wader Study Group. These sightings will be published in next year's bulletin. Below are details of three other flag sightings reported during the past year of birds marked by VWSG on King Island.

## Ruddy Turnstone

27/05/2009	1	Maehiang-Ri tidal flat, Hwasung-kun, Kiongkido, Korea	Kyu-Sik Shim	8737 N
4/09/2008	1	Han-Bou, ChangHwa County, Taiwan (China)	Shih-Hui Lui	7521 NW

The sighting in Korea of a bird on northward migration in May 2009 was the first King Island marked turnstone to be reported there. The sighting in Taiwan was of a bird on southward migration. Sightings in Taiwan are much less frequent on southward than on northward migration.



*Ruddy Turnstone (Photo: Prue Wright)*

## Red-necked Stint

29-30/09/2007	1	Katsuura, Fukudu-shi, Fukuoka-ken, Japan, Japan	KOHNO Kimiko	8316 N
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Only 60 Red-necked Stints have been banded and flagged on King Island, all in March 2007. It is nice that these have resulted in a sighting in Japan. Sightings of Red-necked Stints in Japan on southward migration are more frequent than birds on northward migration.

# Sightings of Waders Leg-flagged elsewhere and then seen in Victoria, South Australia or King Island, Tasmania

**Clive Minton, Roz Jessop, Maureen Christie and Heather Gibbs**

## Victoria

Species	Flagging location	Resighting Details		
		Date	Location	Movement
Bar-tailed Godwit	Brisbane	22/06/2009	Clonmel Island, Corner Inlet	1391 SW
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Chongming Dao	22/10/2008	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	8080 S
Curlew Sandpiper	Chongming Dao	1/09/2008	Stockyard Point, Westernport	8141 S
Red-necked Stint	North-west Australia	23/03/2009	Killarney Beach, Port Fairy	2912 SE
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	North-west Australia	22/10/2008	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	3040 SE
Curlew Sandpiper	North-west Australia	11/01/2009	Point Cook, Altona	3046 SE
Curlew Sandpiper	North-west Australia	16/01/2009	Lake Borrie Pond, Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	6764 N

There were 45 sightings in Victoria during the past year of waders leg-flagged elsewhere in Australia (33), overseas (2) or in parts of Victoria away from the main flagging areas (10). Details above are the overseas birds and those from Queensland and North-west Australia.

The Bar-tailed Godwit from Queensland was almost certainly the same individual as recaptured in Corner Inlet in February 2009 (see Recoveries section). It is pleasing that the intensive wader banding now taking place on both northward and southward migrations at Chongming Dao in the mouth of the Yangtze estuary in China is now producing a variety of leg-flag sightings around Australia. North-west Australia is a stepping stone for many species of waders on their way to/from non-breeding areas in south-east Australia.

## South Australia

Species	Flagging location	Resighting Details		
		Date	Location	Movement
Common Greenshank	Chongming Dao	10/10/2008	North survey site 2 (in the Coorong)	7671 S
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Chongming Dao	23/09/2008	Stony Point, Port MacDonnell, SA	7974 S
Grey Plover	Chongming Dao	8/02/2009	Seven mile beach, near Coffin Bay, SA	7465 S
Red Knot (2 birds)	North-west Australia	21/02/2009	Thompson Beach, SA	2358 SE
Red-necked Stint	North-west Australia	20/04/2009	Nene Valley West, SA	2767 SE
Curlew Sandpiper	North-west Australia	4/11/2008	Coorong National Park (Lake Alexandrina side of the Coorong Barrages) 318080E - 606109N, SA	2486 SE
Red-necked Stint	South-west Australia	13/04/2009	Nene Valley West, SA	2338 SE

A total of 53 waders flagged elsewhere in Australia and three flagged in China were seen in South Australia during the last year. Details are given above of the three Chinese birds, three records of birds from North-west Australia and one from South-west Australia.

The Common Greenshank, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Grey Plover from China are a further illustration of the information we are now deriving on the movements of a wide variety of species from the large wader banding and flagging program which has been carried out at Chongming Dao in China over the last five years. The four birds (three records) relating to North-west Australia are a further indication of its use as a stopover site for birds on migration to/from south-eastern Australia. It is unusual for a bird from south-western Western Australia to come so far eastwards, although there are previous examples of an interchange between the Red-necked Stint populations in the two areas.

## King Island, Tasmania

Species	Flagging location	Resighting Details		
		Date	Location	Movement
Ruddy Turnstone	Chongming Dao	18/11/2008	Surprise Bay, King Island, Tas	8275 S
Ruddy Turnstone	North Is, New Zealand	19/11/2008	Whalebone Beach, King Island, Tas	2718 W
Ruddy Turnstone	North Is, New Zealand	27/03/2009	Manuka, King Island, Tas	2719 W
Ruddy Turnstone	South Australia	23/09/2008	Manuka, King Island, Tas	393 SE
Ruddy Turnstone	South Australia	17/11/2008	Burgess Bay, King Island, Tas	395 SE
Ruddy Turnstone	South Australia	26/03/2009	Currie, below Golf Course, King Island, Tas	396 SE

There were six sightings of Ruddy Turnstone on King Island during the past year which carried flags put on elsewhere. One, seen by Penny Johns, Robyn Atkinson and Laura Stenzler in November 2008 had been marked originally at Chongming Dao in China. Two other sightings, probably of the same bird, were of a Ruddy Turnstone marked in North Island, New Zealand. What was probably the same bird was also seen there in March 2008 (see last year's Bulletin). There were three South Australian birds recorded, further illustrating that there is some interchange between the turnstone populations on King Island and in the south east of South Australia.



*Whimbrel – Alice Ewing*

# Tern Breeding and Banding Report 2008/09

**Clive Minton, Roz Jessop and Susan Taylor**

This is another of the annual reports on tern breeding activities, and tern banding, at the locations along the Victorian coast between the Gippsland Lakes and western Port Phillip Bay which have been monitored annually by the VWSG for 30 years. This continuous record, published in the VWSG Bulletins, becomes increasingly valuable with time.

## Caspian Tern

Location	Breeding pairs	Chicks banded
Mud Islands	25	16
Corner Inlet	Not known	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	?	16

There was a slight increase in the number of breeding pairs at Mud Islands and 16 chicks were banded – the largest number for many years. Unfortunately, for the first time ever, it was not possible to monitor the number of pairs breeding in Corner Inlet. By the time the first main visit was made on 23<sup>rd</sup> December the nesting colony in the usual area at the west end of Clonmel Island had been washed out, by a storm tide on 13/14<sup>th</sup> December. Unusually the birds did not attempt to re-lay. A visit earlier in December had found many pairs of Caspian Terns incubating eggs and it was roughly estimated that about 50 pairs were present.

## Crested Tern

Location	Breeding pairs	Chicks	Banded adults	Sightings of colour-banded adults
Mud Islands	1050	641	223	132 (449)
<i>The Nobbies</i>	3000	2474	67	-
Corner Inlet	200	13	-	--
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4250</b>	<b>3128</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>132 (449)</b>

There was some improvement in the nesting season in 08/09 compared with the poor outcome the previous year. The number of breeding pairs at The Nobbies increased to a more normal level (3000 pairs) and they had good breeding success, with 2474 chicks being banded. The figures for Mud Islands were similar to the previous year. At Corner Inlet 200 pairs nested in December on the west end of Box Bank – a location only used twice over the last 30 years. Unfortunately the colony was abandoned in the third week of December, probably because of extremely unfavourable weather conditions, and only 13 chicks were reared. The overall number of breeding pairs (4250) was still below the record of 5060 in the 06/07 season.

The recapture of breeding adults carrying bands and the re-sighting of colour-banded adults which were breeding was continued in the 08/09 season. Most of this activity was at the Mud Islands colony. About 10% of the breeding Crested Terns at Mud Islands displayed a pronounced pink (roseate) blush to the neck, chest and underwing.

## Fairy Terns

Only six pairs of Fairy Terns nested at Rams Island, Western Port, and they were again washed out by a storm tide. No re-nesting was attempted there or at Tortoise Head on the south-west tip of French Island. It is five years since there was successful breeding of Fairy Terns at Rams Island (information from Murray Bouchier, Friends of French Island).

No Fairy Tern nests with eggs were located in Corner Inlet this year. Birds had been prospecting and making scrapes in mid-December near the north-east end of Dream Island but these activities have been halted by extreme storm tides in mid-month. Normally Fairy Terns persist in re-laying up to two or three times in a season after breeding failures. But, for unknown reasons, no further nesting attempts appeared to take place anywhere in the Corner Inlet complex in the 08/09 summer.

### **Gippsland Lakes**

Repeated reccies by Mike Dawkins in the December/February period failed to locate any significant roosting collections of Common or Little Terns. It is now eight years since the regular VWSG cannon-netting of these species there became impractical due to the lower tern populations and catching sites becoming less suitable.



*Crested and Lesser Crested Terns and Noddies at Michaelmas Cay  
(Photo: Digger and Lauren Jackson)*

# Tern Recovery Report 2008/09

## Clive Minton and Roz Jessop

Listed below are recoveries of terns which have been reported since the last VWSG Bulletin was prepared. Only recoveries of birds which have moved more than 100 km, or where the elapsed time between banding and recovery is more than 15 years, are included. Sightings of flagged terns are given in a separate report.

### Caspian Tern

Band	Banding Details			Recovery Details		Km. Moved
091-50418	Chick	15/1/08	Clonmel Island, Corner Inlet	10/12/08 (Injured, but recovered & released)	Rainbow Beach, Qld.	1545 km. N

The southern Queensland coast is the main destination of those Caspian Terns which leave Victoria for the winter. This bird was recovered in Hervey Bay, near Fraser Island, which is the northern limit of the main winter range. Only one banded/flagged bird has been reported north of there – at Townsville (see last year's Bulletin).

### Little Tern

Band	Age	Banding Details	Recovery Details	Km. Moved
041-10431	Adult	9/3/91 Ocean Grange, Lakes N.P	Retrapped at nest 5/1/09 Lake Cayola, NSW	388 km. NE

There was only one Little Tern recovery reported during the past year. This is mainly because the VWSG have only banded small numbers of Little Terns in the last eight years compared with the much larger numbers cannon-netted in the Gippsland Lakes in the 1990s. The above recovery is yet another example of the interchange between Little Terns in Victoria and New South Wales. Most of these relate to breeding New South Wales birds which were caught when they visited Victoria in March, after the breeding season.

### Crested Tern

#### Banded at Mud Islands, Port Phillip Bay.

Band No.	Date banded	Date recovered	Location recovered	Method of recovery	Km. Moved/ Longevity
073-49823	10/12/07	29/6/08	Cape Conran	Found dead	312 km. E
072-23628	19/12/92	14/7/09	Apollo Bay	Found dead	108 km. W
073-32936	18/12/05	14/7/09	Apollo Bay	Found dead	108 km. W

There were only three recoveries during the last year of Crested Terns from the Mud Islands colony which had moved more than 100 km. Breeding numbers and breeding success at this colony has been lower in recent years and this has resulted in fewer chicks being banded. Movements westwards to Apollo Bay are less frequent than movements eastwards along the Victorian coast and up into New South Wales. Note that one of the Apollo Bay birds was 6½ years old when recovered.



### Banded at The Nobbies, Phillip Island

Band No.	Date banded	Date recovered	Location recovered	Method of recovery	Km. Moved/ Longevity
073-54601	7/1/08	7/7/08	Mooloolah River, Qld.	Caught in fishing gear (died)	1513 km. NE
073-13976	23/12/02	3/8/08	Swansea, Tas.	Found dead	524 km. SE
073-48989	15/1/07	9/12/08	Bermagui, NSW	"	493 km. NE
073-52470	22/12/08	8/3/09	Raymond Island, Vic.	"	239 km. E
073-51496	24/12/08	18/3/09	Marlo, Vic.	"	309 km. E
073-52137	22/12/08	6/7/09	Sussex Inlet, NSW	"	616 km. NE
073-96292	22/12/08	14/7/09	Apollo Bay, Vic.	"	128 km. W

The seven recoveries of birds from The Nobbies largely conform to the usual pattern. Four relate to chicks banded in December 2008, with two of these on their way eastwards along the Victorian coast by March and one up in its non-breeding area on the New South Wales coast in July. The fourth had travelled in the opposite direction, being in Apollo Bay in July – an unusual movement.

The recovery of a one year old bird at Bermagui in New South Wales in December is a further illustration that many birds remain in their non-breeding areas in their first summer and do not return to their natal area until they are two or more years old. The recovery in Queensland, 1513 km. from The Nobbies, is at the northern end of the range of wintering areas used by Victorian Crested Terns.



*Clive Minton – “tern banding” at the Barrier Reef, Queensland (Photo: Penny Johns)*



# Sightings of Victorian-flagged Terns 2008/09

**Clive Minton, Roz Jessop, Heather Gibbs and Susan Taylor**

A further 20 sightings of Victorian leg-flagged terns have been reported in the last year. Most of these are published in detail below; only relatively local movements have been omitted.

## Caspian Tern

### Banded at Mud Islands, Port Phillip Bay

28/03/2009	1	Swansea, NSW	Maureen Goninan	849 NE
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### Banded at Clonmel Island, Corner Inlet

18/09/2008	1	Toorbul, near Bribie Island, QLD	Graham Smith and Brenda Smith	1420 NE
4/10/2008	1	Toorbul, near Bribie Island, QLD	Dez Wells and Deborah Metters	1420 NE
1/11/2008	1	Toorbul, near Bribie Island, QLD	Dez Wells and Deborah Metters	1420 NE
7/12/2008	1	Mathieson Homestead, near Hervey Bay, QLD	John Knight	1587 NE
24/01/2009	1	Toorbul, near Bribie Island, QLD	Dez Wells and Deborah Metters	1420 NE
24/01/2009	1	Kakadu Beach, Bribie Island, QLD	Jill Denning and Michelle Marrington	1420 NE
31/01/2009	1	Toorbul, near Bribie Island, QLD	Dez Wells and Deborah Metters	1420 NE
1/02/2009	1	Fishermans Island, Moreton Bay, QLD	Linda Cross	1391 NE
28/02/2009	1	Kakadu Beach, Bribie Island, QLD	Michael Strong	1420 NE
16/03/2009	1	Manly Harbour, QLD	Arthur and Sheryl Keates	1381 NE

It is notable that all but one of this year's flag sightings were in Queensland. This is the main non-breeding/wintering area for Victorian Caspian Terns. Because most of the sightings were in the October-February period when adult birds would be back on their breeding grounds in Victoria, the sightings probably relate to immature non-breeding birds. Altogether 133 of the 194 sightings of flagged Caspian Terns reported over the years have been in Queensland.

## Common Tern

31/03/2008	1	Salty Lake, Broadwater National Park, NSW	Bo Totterman	1123 NE
12/04/2008	1	South Ballina Beach, NSW	Bo Totterman	1144 NE
13/01/2009	1	Noosa River Sandbanks, QLD	Jill Denning and Dorothy Pashniak	1385 NE
8/04/2009	1	Flat Rock Beach, North of Ballina, NSW	Steven McBride	1152 NE

These are all old birds flagged in the Gippsland Lakes when the VWSG carried out a special project there in the 1990s. These birds breed in the northern hemisphere (2 recoveries in central Siberia in the breeding season) and return to Australia for each boreal winter. The bird reported in Queensland in January had obviously changed its non-breeding area, but the other three could all have been on passage down the east coast on their way back from an austral summer in Victoria.

## Little Tern

18/02/2009	1	Tweed River Entrance, QLD	Laurel Allsopp	1221 NE
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This bird would also have been banded in the Gippsland Lakes in the 1990s. Most of the Little Terns banded by the VWSG breed in the northern hemisphere (Japan / Korea / Taiwan) and come to Victoria during the northern hemisphere winter. This sighting, in February, suggests this bird did not come as far south as Victoria in the 08/09 season.

## Crested Tern

14/02/2009	1	Port Adelaide River, SA	Janine Sleep	682 NW
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This is probably a further sighting of the bird first seen at that location on 31/01/2008. It is unusual for a Victorian-bred bird to move into South Australia, and the timing of the sighting suggests it is breeding there.

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## Become a volunteer shorebird warden this summer

Malcolm Brown



If you were a Hooded Plover chick just hatched on a beach in the Mornington Peninsula National Park you would most likely die in a matter of days. You would have less chance of surviving than an emperor penguin chick in Antarctica, one of the coldest most hostile places on our planet.

In the summer of 2008/2009 over 100 Hooded Plover eggs were laid in the Mornington Peninsula National Park with only six (6) chicks surviving.

However, having a sympathetic informed person present on Hooded Plover breeding beaches will go a long way to protecting these endangered little birds.

This summer on the Mornington Peninsula we are running a program allowing volunteer "wardens" to spend a day on the beach with a Hooded Plover chick to help protect them in the first few weeks of their life. **YOU CAN HELP.** Bring a book to read, a towel to sit on, food, water, binoculars and sun screen. To register contact me on **0403 997 831** or Birds Australia on **1300 730 075**. You can email **hoodedplover@aapt.net.au** or search **Myspace** for **Hooded Plover Friends** under **people**. This significant work is very easy to do and will make a big difference to a Hooded Plover chick.

# **South Australian Team Report – August 2008 - July 2009**

**Maureen Christie**

*Friends of Shorebirds SE*

## **Little and Fairy Tern**

Little Tern visit the coast of the Lower South East of South Australia in small numbers. For the last five summers a small number of pairs have nested here, with three young fledged in 2006/7 and five or six fledged 2007/8. The 2008/9 breeding season began well, with single pairs of Little Tern nesting at Port MacDonnell and Piccaninnie Ponds and three pairs of Little and two pairs of Fairy Tern nesting at Danger Point. Unfortunately early hopes were soon dashed. All nests at Danger Point were lost to the tide. The first clutch of two eggs of the Port MacDonnell pair disappeared. A single chick from the second clutch survived at least a week, but its ultimate fate is not known. The Little Tern originally banded by David Paton at the Murray Mouth, in November 2006, was again one of a pair at Piccaninnie Ponds and once again made two unsuccessful breeding attempts. First seen at Piccaninnie Ponds on 28/12/2006, it has now made a total of five breeding attempts, all of which have been lost to the tide.

A second colour flagged Little Tern was seen three times this year. Originally banded as an adult at Danger Point on 5/3/2007, it was a member of the breeding colony there on 9/12/2008. After the failure of this colony, it was seen at the mouth of the Glenelg River on 6/1/2009 and at French Point on 13/1/2009.

Unfortunately a colony of Fairy Terns nesting at Fosters Point on Lake George was deserted a few days after it was discovered on 6/1/2009. However, on 27/1/2009 a similar sized flock was discovered breeding at Cowie Island, Beachport. This is a relatively safe breeding site, rarely visited by people. It is hard to judge how many chicks may have fledged but hopefully it will have been somewhere between 50 (conservative) and 80 (optimistic). In a colony of 60 – 100 adults this would seem to be a good result! 76 chicks were banded.

Effort was also put into monitoring and protecting Hooded Plover and Oystercatcher nests, with Jeff Campbell co-ordinating the protection of all beach nesting waders/terns.

## **Counting**

Our President, Jeff Campbell is count organiser. He reports that the November 2008 biennial Hooded Plover count covered all beaches likely to hold Hooded Plover from the Victorian border to Robe. Some sections of rocky beach, etc., not generally suitable for Hooded Plover, were not covered. Although he does not have complete figures from previous surveys, those figures that he does have show a remarkable similarity with the 2008 counts.

Summer and winter AWSG Population Monitoring Programme (PMP) counts have also been completed. Winter counts of grey waders in the coastal sites were again exceptionally low, with no grey waders at all recorded at the PMP Carpenter Rocks site. Winter counts of 200+ Double-banded Plover and 660 Red-necked Stint on Lake George and 400+ Red-necked Stint, 370 Double-banded Plover and small numbers of Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot and Common Greenshank on Lake Bonney SE once again point to these lakes being used as overwintering sites. Evidence continues to grow of Hooded Plover use of the lakes system over winter with 9 on Lake George and 13 on Lake Bonney SE.

We participated in the AWSG annual summer count of the Coorong and Coastal Lakes. This summer, in response to a request from Shorebirds 2020, we also counted additional coastal sites. We continue to work with Shorebirds 2020 to help resolve anomalies in

historical data and to map count sites. A Shorebirds 2020 workshop to train counters is to be conducted within our region next summer.

### **Banded Stilt**

As a group, we continue to be deeply involved with recording Banded Stilt activity in the Coorong, and tracking them as they move around the continent. With water entering Lake Eyre this year the flock in the Coorong was closely monitored in the hope of recording the flock's expected move north. Ultimately the flock remained in the Coorong. Copulating Banded Stilt were observed near Woods Well on 13 June, but no other evidence of breeding was detected. Commencing late June, Clare Manning, Ranger Ecologist for the Coorong, has organised regular searches to be conducted by DEH staff stationed at Noonameena.

At last report the Banded Stilt were still in the Coorong – we now have records of a sizeable flock being present regularly since July 2005 (the main exception being when they all moved to Coorangamite, Vic, in August, 2006).

### **Banding and flagging**

A highlight of our year was banding Fairy Tern for the first time. This is discussed in the section on Tern at the beginning of this report.

Our main target continues to be overwintering turnstone as well as departure weights. This is the second consecutive winter that there have been almost no turnstone on our beaches. Overwintering numbers are determined by the breeding success of the previous year. 2007 was a successful year for turnstone with 19.4% juveniles found in the summer population. With approximately 500 turnstone in the lower South East over summer this would suggest that there should have been 100 overwintering in 2008. But regular surveys of the coast between Piccaninnie Ponds and the Cape Banks Lighthouse, as well as Beachport and Nora Creina, found fewer than 20. Ultimately 60+ were found on Lake Bonney SE in mid July 2008. It will take time to learn how the turnstone move about the lake and a planned catch there in August did not eventuate. By contrast, the 2008 breeding year was unsuccessful - there were only three juveniles among the 197 turnstone caught in SA in March/April 2009. Not surprisingly we have not found sufficient turnstone to target for a winter 2009 catch.

This year we only had two successful turnstone catches - both in April. The primary aim of the catch on 23<sup>rd</sup> April was for the Victorian contingent to attach 2 data loggers to adults about to depart on northern migration. The final catch was on 28<sup>th</sup> April. Once again the date of catching increased the value of the data collected - we have now caught 225 turnstones in April, a worthwhile contribution to the total VWSG tally of 830.

For the first time this year, SA has had an engraved flag colour and code for Oystercatchers. The first black engraved white flag was put on a chick at Piccaninnie Ponds on 6.1.2009. To date we have flagged 3 Pied and 4 Sooty, and a further 2 Pied were flagged at Pether Rock by the Victorian team. All three Oystercatchers flagged in May in Livingston Bay have been resighted. All remain within 10kms of the banding site. The juvenile Sooty Oystercatchers has been the most adventurous, first going west to Cape Banks Lighthouse, then east to Blackfellows Caves! The chick banded in January at Piccaninnie Ponds was seen on 13 April at Livingston Bay – almost 50km to the west.

Although we may have banded few waders for the period, we received a welcome number of recoveries and flag reports. These are discussed in separate articles, but I would like to mention here several sightings that aroused considerable excitement in our group. A Chongming Dao flagged Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was seen at Stony Point on 23 September, not far from where two had been seen in September 2006. The two Red Knot sightings in May 2008 and May 2009 on mainland China relate to the small winter catch of juveniles at Lake George on 12/6/2006. The majority of the 13 sightings in New Zealand would also be from this catch. And a series of 'firsts' for us – the first SA flagged Golden Plover seen

overseas (Japan 13/9/2007) and our first overseas retrap, a Chinese banded stint caught at Gerloff Bay on 23/4/2009.

### **Ruddy Turnstone engraved flags**

This project has been supported by funding from The SA Wildlife Conservation Fund Research Grants Programme. To meet our obligations to this group, a report has been prepared. Roz Jessop will also present a paper at the AWSG conference in Hobart in September. The first engraved flags were put on in November 2004. The report was based on monthly visits from Piccaninnie Ponds to Nora Creina from then until August 2008. Most adult and second year birds remained site faithful with at least 95% of adults and 82% of second year birds remaining at the same site throughout the austral summer. Over 88% of adults returned to the same site the following year. First year birds were more mobile with between 47% and 84% remaining at their flagging site throughout the austral winter.

This project continues, with 166 engraved flags being added this year, giving a total of 1002 used in SA. However, this does not represent the total number of flags in the field. I estimate that 128 flags have been replaced on retraps, reducing the total number of engraved flagged turnstone to 874. There are also many illegible flags remaining in the field. All new codes are now 3 alphas, thereby increasing the difficulty of reading a complete combination.

It is planned that this project will continue indefinitely – just not at such an intense level. So please all continue reading (and reporting) engraved flags.

Last year a trial was commenced on a new type of flag. The material is bi-coloured red with white engraving. Eighteen turnstone have a red flag over metal on the right, and an engraved orange over yellow on the left. Obviously the individual can be recognized if either of the codes is read, but, to help assess the flags observers have been asked to try and read both flags, and make an evaluation of how they compare. Both engraved flags have three alphas. To date there has been insufficient resightings to make a firm judgement, but it is interesting to compare the condition of flags on two retraps. Both were originally flagged on 26/2/2008. Both were retrapped on 15/3/2009. Both engraved orange flags had deteriorated to such an extent that the numbers could no longer be read and they were replaced. The red flag on the adult turnstone had minor damage whilst the red flag on the juvenile was in perfect condition.

### **Pick Swamp monitoring**

Friends of Shorebirds SE in partnership with Birds SE is into the third year of a long term bird monitoring program. Bryan Haywood is co-ordinating this project in his role as Chair of Birds SE, but he is also a member of our group.

### **Grants**

A grant from the Federal Government Volunteer Grants program has allowed the purchase of a second Kowa spotting scope. We now have one scope in Mount Gambier and another with the Beachport team. This grant also provided funding for materials for chick shelters. This, together with various other funding has meant that we have a good supply of chick shelters and fencing materials in readiness for next breeding season. The grant also included \$2,000 to be used to cover fuel expenses on regular monitoring outings.

### **Predator control**

Our group is involved with the Department of Environment and SE Natural Resources Management Board with a Caring for Our Country project for Predator Control – which will undertake extensive coastal fox and cat control during 2009/10. Our main commitment is to monitor how successful the project has been in improving conditions for beach nesting birds – quite a challenge with the project already started and only 18 months to gather data.

### **Public relations work**

The group continues to provide input into various forums, with both Jeff Campbell and me representatives on various committees. Press reports and radio interviews are conducted as the opportunity arises. A very successful family day at Piccaninnie Ponds Conservation Park was organised by the local DEH to celebrate World Wetlands Day on 1 February. An estimated 150 people attended and it is hoped that a similar event will be held next year.

Birds SE and Friends of Shorebirds have been assisting the SE National Resource Management Board with creating an addition to their website devoted to fauna – including 100 bird species. Not surprisingly, we were responsible for providing data on waders. Jeff contributed all of the shorebirds plus the ibis and the two herons. Go to <http://se.nrmSPACE.com.au/nrmfauna/> (note there is no www.!).

### **Vale**

Foundation member of Friends of Shorebirds SE, Brian Mitchell, died after a long illness on 27 February, 2009. Brian was a committed conservationist long before this was a fashionable stance. Our sympathies are extended to Non and her family.

### **Conclusion**

The South Australian Team has had a successful year. Modelled on the successful VWSG working bee cum social gathering cum formal meeting formula, our Annual General Meeting was held in February.

Thank you to the members of the group who have worked hard to produce these results. Normally I hesitate to name individuals in a report such as this, but would like to make an exception to thank Wendy and David Trudgen for taking on entering all catch data sheets for both South Australian and King Island catches. Thank you too, to the members of both the Regional and District Offices of the Department of Environment and Heritage who have provided encouragement and practical help. Thanks to Heather Gibbs and Roz Jessop for helping with the Turnstone report.



*Fairy Tern at breeding colony Fosters Point, Lake George. (Photo: Wendy Trudgen)*

# **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TEAM CATCHES 01/08/08 TO 31/07/2009**

DATE	PLACE	Sanderling	Ruddy Turnstone	Red-necked Stint	Curlew Sandpiper	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Banded Stilt	Other		TOTALS
28.09.2008	Gerloff Bay									*
06.01.2009	Piccaninnie Ponds							**1	Pied Oystercatcher	1
20.01.2009	Canunda							**2	Red-capped Plover	2
28.01.2009	Cape Banks Light							**1	Pied Oystercatcher	1
31.01.2009	Port MacDonnell							**1	Little Tern	1
24.02.2009	Cowie Is, Beachport							**76	Fairy Tern	76
24.03.2009	Beachport							2	Sooty Oystercatcher	2
07.04.2009	Gerloff Bay									*
14.04.2009	Nene Valley									*
23.04.2009	Gerloff Bay		27	5						32
28.04.2009	Nene Valley west		30	22						52
26.05.2009	Livingston Bay							2	Sooty Oystercatcher	3
								1	Pied Oystercatcher	
Sub Totals			57	27				86		170
B/F	1.12.00 – 30.7.08	26	376	368	18	107	334	73		1302
	TOTALS TO DATE	26	433	395	18	107	334	159		1472

\*net set, no catch made.    \*\* chicks/'runners'

# **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TEAM CATCHES - Month Waders Caught in 1/12/200 TO 31.07.2009**

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTALS
Ruddy Turnstone	5		1	225	38	16	46	61	39	1	1		433
Red Knot				1		12							13
Sanderling		17	2	2				5					26
Red-necked Stint		34	34	93	4	20	49	67	27	43	1	23	395
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper									6	101			107
Curlew Sandpiper						2	7	6		3			18
Pied Oystercatcher	3			1	1						2	8	15
Sooty Oystercatcher			2	3	2								7
Banded Stilt	185	149											334
Red-capped Plover	3	4	1	4				5		1		1	19
Double-banded Plover			4	1		4		2					11
Black-fronted Dotterel			3										3
Hooded Plover				1								3	4
Little Tern	11												11
Fairy Tern		76											76
TOTALS	207	280	47	331	45	54	102	146	72	149	4	35	1472



*Fairy Tern Colony on Cowie Island, Beachport  
(Photo: Maureen Christie)*



**Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* catching on  
King Island, Tasmania.  
March 26 to April 2, 2009**

**Clive Minton**

**Summary**

A total of 827 Ruddy Turnstone were counted just prior to migration in March 2009, slightly less than the 855 counted in March 2008 but considerably more than the 400-500 seen in November 2008 and February 2009.

No juveniles were caught during the visit indicating that Ruddy Turnstones had a poor Arctic breeding season in 2008. About 44% of birds caught already carried bands. Most of these birds were caught at the site where they were banded indicating a high degree of site faithfulness between years. As in previous years there were quite marked differences in the proportion of each sex in the catches at different locations.

Weight gain was not as high as previous years. This could result in birds departing up to two weeks late on migration which could prejudice their breeding success in the Arctic this year.

Information on flag sightings are beginning to build a picture of Ruddy Turnstone migration from King Island. Sighting locations include Taiwan, Japan, China, South Korea and New Zealand.

**Background**

This was the third annual week-long visit to King Island to catch and band Ruddy Turnstone. It was timed to be rather later than in 2007 and 2008 so that pre-migratory weight data close to the likely departure dates could be obtained.

Special visits were made during the past non-breeding season to look for engraved leg flags on returned birds. Penny Johns, Robyn Atkinson and Laura Stenzler went in November 2008 and Roz Jessop, Maureen Christie and Jean Haywood in February 2009, collecting over 150 flag sightings between them.

**2009 Visit**

For the third consecutive year we were blessed with excellent weather – sunny skies, no rain, little on-shore wind and with unusually high temperatures for the last two days. This enabled our fieldwork to follow the planned schedule.

A count of all the main Turnstone locations along the 60 km. west coast of the island was carried out on the first day (26 March), after our arrival on the early morning flight. Cannon-netting was then undertaken on each subsequent day, including the morning of 2 April before our late afternoon departure. During this period the opportunity was also taken to count Ruddy Turnstones at sites not visited on the 26 so that the eventual count total was comprehensive for the whole west coast of King Island.

The VWSG also participated in a public presentation on the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup> March, organised by Heather Colman, a member of the King Island Natural Resource Management Group.

**The Count**

The number of Turnstones counted at each location is given in Table 1. The total of 827 compares with 855 counted in March 2008. Seal Rocks and Lavinia Beach were not counted but only a total of nine birds were seen at these locations in 2008. In contrast only 413 birds were counted by Penny, Robyn and Laura in November 2008 and 459 by Maureen, Roz and Jean in March 2009. It is unclear if the additional birds in March arrived from further south to fatten up for migration or were elsewhere on the island. During November 2008 and March little food was available along the west coast due to persistent westerly winds.

This slight reduction in population can probably be attributed to the lack of juveniles this year, following a disastrous breeding season in the Arctic in June/July 2008.

## Catching and Banding

### a) Catches

In the week or two before the VWSG visit severe storms had caused considerable disruption of the accumulated seaweed at many of the Turnstones' favourite feeding locations along the west coast of the island. Seaweed present at the time had been thrown up on to stony and grassy areas way above normal high tide levels and had dried out completely. Maggots present at the time in the seaweed had been washed away (and presumably made good fish food!) and little in the way of turnstone food had yet started to accrue in newly formed banks of fresh seaweed. This problem was most apparent on the exposed shores in the Manuka area whereas in some of the more sheltered bays some old seaweed had been preserved and food was more plentiful.

Six catches were made, at five different locations (Table 2). However several times we failed to catch in nets which had been set, including all day on 29<sup>th</sup> March. But the total of 223 Ruddy Turnstone caught (and this year no waders of any other species) was close to the 2007 total, though only just over half the high level achieved in 2008 (419).

### b) Controls and Retraps

The most valuable feature of the 2009 catches was the large number of retraps of birds marked in previous years. The total of 99 retraps represents 44% of the total catch.

As in previous years most of the recaptured birds were at the same location as they were originally banded. There seems to be a strong degree of site faithfulness of Ruddy Turnstone when they are on King Island.

Two birds originally banded in South Australia were caught, and one of these had previously been recaptured on King Island in March 2007. In addition a Ruddy Turnstone carrying a flag put on in New Zealand (white) was also seen, probably the same bird as seen at the same location on King Island in March 2008.

### c) Percentage Juveniles

No juvenile Ruddy Turnstones were caught (or seen) during the 2009 visit (Table 2). This is similar to the situation in 2007 and markedly different from 2008 when 17.9% of the catch was juveniles (Table 3).

This result indicates that the breeding season in the Arctic in June/July 2008 was disastrously unsuccessful for the Ruddy Turnstone population which visits King Island for the non-breeding season. A similar situation was found in turnstone catches in Victoria this year and only a very low proportion of juveniles was found in catches this season in South Australia. It thus appears that the poor breeding in 2008 affected all the breeding areas from which turnstones come to south-eastern Australia.

Marked fluctuations in breeding success from year to year are experienced by most birds breeding in Arctic regions. But to have two virtually completely blank years in the last three is most unusual and it will certainly have some affect on turnstone population levels in the near/mid future. Fortunately turnstones are relatively long-lived birds with adult annual survival rates probably exceeding 80 – 85%. (One of the objects of this study is to obtain an accurate figure for annual survival.)

Information from Russian scientists suggests that most of the important factors which affect breeding success were negative in many parts of northern Siberia in June/July 2008. Snow melt was late, average temperatures were low, unusually late snowfalls occurred at the time of wader incubation/hatching, and the number of predators present was large (survivors from the excellent breeding conditions for them in 2007). Let us hope a more favourable combination of these factors occurs in the forthcoming Arctic summer of June/July 2009!

### d) Sexes

As in previous years there were quite marked differences in the proportion of each sex in the catches at different locations (Table 2). Figures range from only 27% males in the catch at Stokes Point on 30<sup>th</sup> March to 60% males in the catch at Manuka Central two days previously. Overall the proportion of males (46%) was below 50%, whereas it had been just above 50% in the previous two years. We will be investigating further in the future whether the sex ratios are consistent at each location from year to year or whether they are more random in nature.

#### e) Weights

All turnstone captured have full biometric (and moult) data recorded. Turnstone weights increase markedly in the weeks prior to departure on northward migration. Figure 1 shows the mean weights of all adult Ruddy turnstones caught in March and April in King Island, Victoria (mostly Flinders) and the south-east of South Australia, up to the end of 2008.

At the beginning of March the Ruddy Turnstone populations in all three areas are relatively lean, close to the typical fat free weight of 90 – 100 grams. The graph shows that although all populations start putting on weight in early March the birds on King Island do so the most rapidly, with the South Australian birds appearing to be the slowest to gain weight. Average weights before takeoff reach 160 – 170 grams in all three locations. But the timing of reaching this departure weight varies markedly.

The mean weights of the catches at the different locations on King Island in late March/early April 2009 are given in Table 2. Whilst the weights at three of the catch locations were close to the levels which would have been predicted from Figure 1, the weights of birds at Manuka were markedly lower (120 grams on 28<sup>th</sup> March compared with 154.8 to 167.0 at these three other locations on 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> March). These low weights at Manuka are probably a direct result of the complete loss of seaweed containing maggots in the storms earlier in March. The other three locations all have some more sheltered bay areas where accumulations of rotting seaweed had been less affected.

A second catch in the Manuka area four days after the first catch showed that the mean weight had gone up 17.9 grams, equivalent to around 4% per day (Table 2). Furthermore four of the five individuals recaptured had gained between 13 and 17 grams, again close to 4% per day (Table 4). So it looks as though they were by then on course for achieving the target take-off weight by mid-April, meaning that they should be able to get away satisfactorily. However running up to two weeks late on migration could potentially prejudice their breeding success in the Arctic this year.

Some remarkably high weights were found in the birds caught at Stokes Point on 30<sup>th</sup> March. Four birds weighed more than 190 grams, the heaviest being 198 grams. This corresponds to an increase of 100% above their average fat free weight. They are the heaviest turnstone I'm yet aware of anywhere in the world. It indicates that they could certainly fly to Taiwan/China/southern Japan non-stop from King Island, probably taking about five days.

#### Recoveries and Flag Sightings Away from King Island

There has been a continuing flow of reports overseas and elsewhere in Australia of turnstones marked on King Island, plus a few captures or sightings on King Island of turnstones marked elsewhere. These are shown in Figure 2. Full details and a more in depth analysis will be presented in a future report.

However it will be of great interest to everyone to know that we've already had some exciting sightings of our flagged birds in Taiwan this northward migration. ChungYu Chang and his dedicated team of volunteers in the Taiwan Wader Study Group have been out in the field regularly throughout April scouring roosting and feeding wader flocks for our marked birds. Between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April they had 33 sightings of flagged turnstones, including nine from King Island on which they could read the engraved flag. They also had others from King Island where they could not get close enough to read the flag details. Two of the birds had been marked during this year's visit to King Island, only a few weeks earlier. Two had been banded as juvenile birds in March 2008 and were thus making their first northward migration, at age 2.

The best record related to 052-51886 (originally marked XO, but replaced with EA when recaptured this year on King Island). It had originally been banded at Currie Golf Course on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2007. It was seen twice in early May 2007 in Taiwan and then on southward migration in Taiwan in early August 2007. It was again seen on northward migration in Taiwan in April 2008. And now it has been seen three more times, between 14<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009, again using Taiwan as a stopover location during northward migration. This is the fourth migration season in which this bird has been recorded there. Let us hope we can continue to keep tracking this individual in future years.

[STOP PRESS. In this morning's emails there is the sighting of another of this year's King Island birds in Taiwan, on 1<sup>st</sup> May. It had been banded at Stokes Point.]

#### The Future

Although the cost of week-long King Island visits can be up to \$1000 per person, (airfare plus accommodation plus vehicle hire plus food/drink) we still hope to continue these most successful and valuable Ruddy Turnstone studies in the future. It would be nice to continue to make visits specifically to search for engraved

leg flags as well as the usual week-long catching programme during the pre-migratory weight gain period. We shall be looking to see if some financial support can be obtained to make these visits less expensive for volunteers, so that we can maintain this project as a long term study – monitoring turnstone populations and annual breeding success and gradually building up data to facilitate an annual survival rate analysis.

### Acknowledgements

As always, these visits to King Island could not take place without the help and support of a large number of people. The local people on King Island have been most generous in their assistance and help through each of the three years of our study. I won't single out individuals for specific mention – they are included in the lists below – except for Angus Roberts, who arranged the vital free shipping of Clive Minton's Land Cruiser and all the cannon-netting and banding equipment to/from Melbourne. And we must also again mention Mavis and Nigel Burgess, who triggered this turnstone study in the first place, and who help in a myriad of generous ways before, during and after our visit. Accommodation was once again rented in Currie – Jenny Marshall very kindly moving out of her spacious home so that the VWSG team of 12 could be accommodated for the week (with the help of two people being billeted with Graeme and Margaret Batey). Participants self funded the hire of a second vehicle and cover their own costs for rent, food and petrol.

### The 2009 Team

Clive Minton, Roger and Annabel Richards, Robyn Atkinson, Prue Wright, Meg Macmillan, Ila Marks, Eric Miller, Heidi Miller, Margaret Rowe, David and Jean Wilbraham.

### Local Participants

Nigel and Mavis Burgess, Graeme and Margaret Batey, Don Robertson, Margaret Bennett, Mick Johannson, Heather Colman and Eric Woehler.

**Table 1. Counts of Ruddy Turnstone on King Island 26/3 to 2/4/09**

Note: Seal Rocks and Lavinia Beach were not counted.

<b>Location -Listed from south to north along west coast</b>	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>Total Birds counted</b>
Stokes Point		90
Stokes Point to Surprise Bay		40
Surprise Bay (including Denby Beach)		80
Dripping Wells		40
Ettrich Beach		0
Miller Bay		0
Currie Golf Course		96
Currie Harbour		14
Dirty Bay		22
Manuka		200
<i>South Manuka</i>	67	
<i>Central Manuka</i>	68	
<i>Whalebone (North Manuka)</i>	65	
South Porky Beach		40
Unlucky Bay		20
North of Bungaree Creek		35
Duck Bay – Island Point		15
South Whistler (nr. Duck Point)		80
Whistler Point		55
Lighthouse area		0
<b>Total all sites</b>		<b>827</b>

**Table 2. Ruddy Turnstone Catch Details, King Island, Mar/Apr 2009**

Date	Place	New	Retrap	Total	(Juvs)	♂	♀	%♂	Mean Weight	Weight Range
28.3.09	Manuka Central	34	14*	48	(-)	29	19	60	120	98 - 143
30.3.09	Stokes Point	21	23	44	(-)	12	32	27	167	143 - 198
30.3.09	Currie Golf Course	29	30*	59	(-)	23	36	39	154.8	129 - 179
31.3.09	South Whistler Point	29	15	44	(-)	25	19	57	164.8	149 – 190
1.4.09	Manuka North - Whalebone	9	16	25	(-)	14	11	56	137.9	118 – 158
2.4.09	Manuka Central	2	1	3	(-)	3		0	151.3	137 – 163
<b>Total (6 catches)</b>		<b>124</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>(-)</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>46</b>		

(44%)

\*Includes one from South Australia

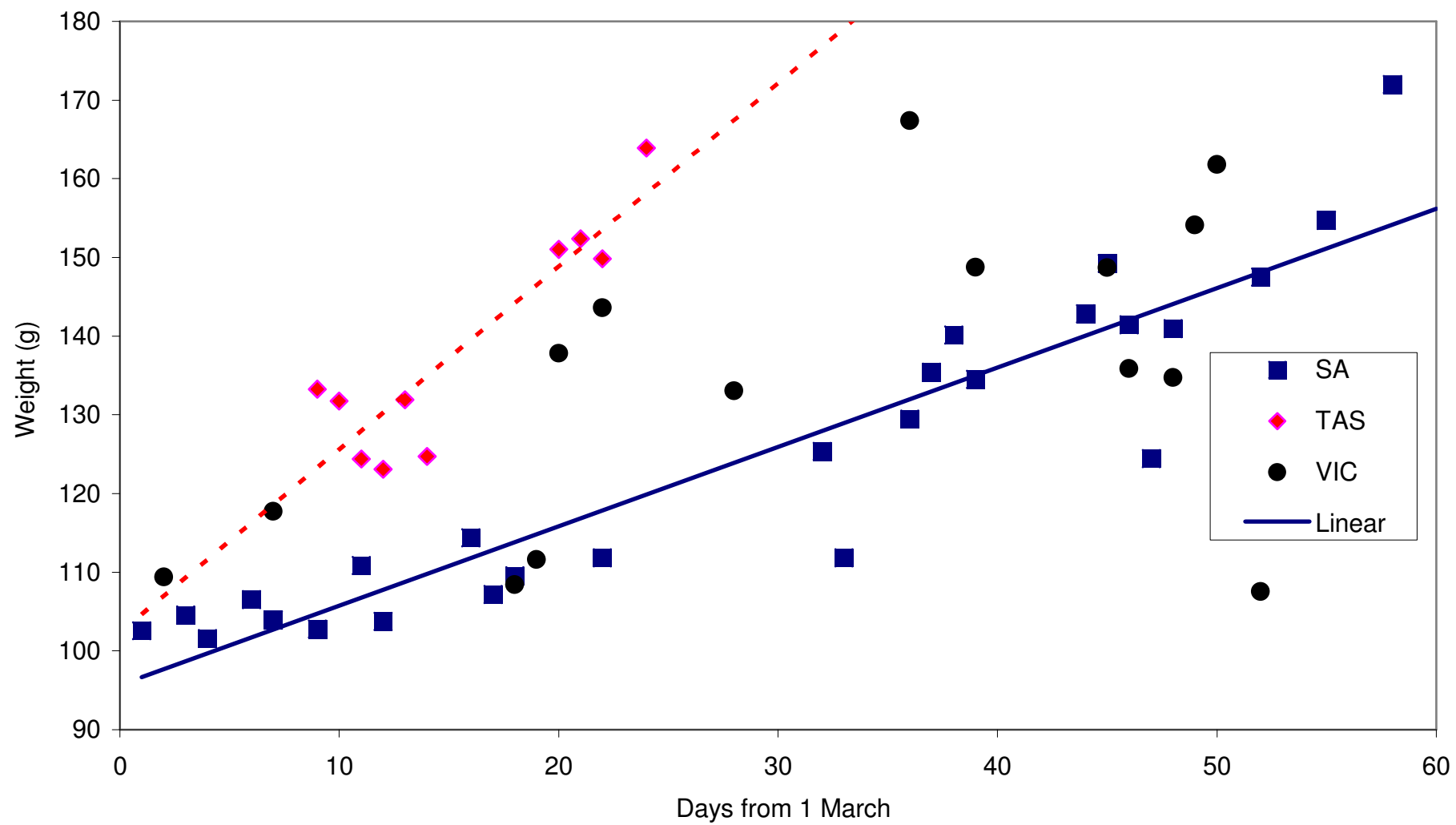
**Table 3. Ruddy Turnstone Catch Totals on King Island 2007-09**

	New	Retrap	Total	Juveniles
2007	230	11	241	0
2008	354	65	419	75
2009	124	99	223	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>883</b>	

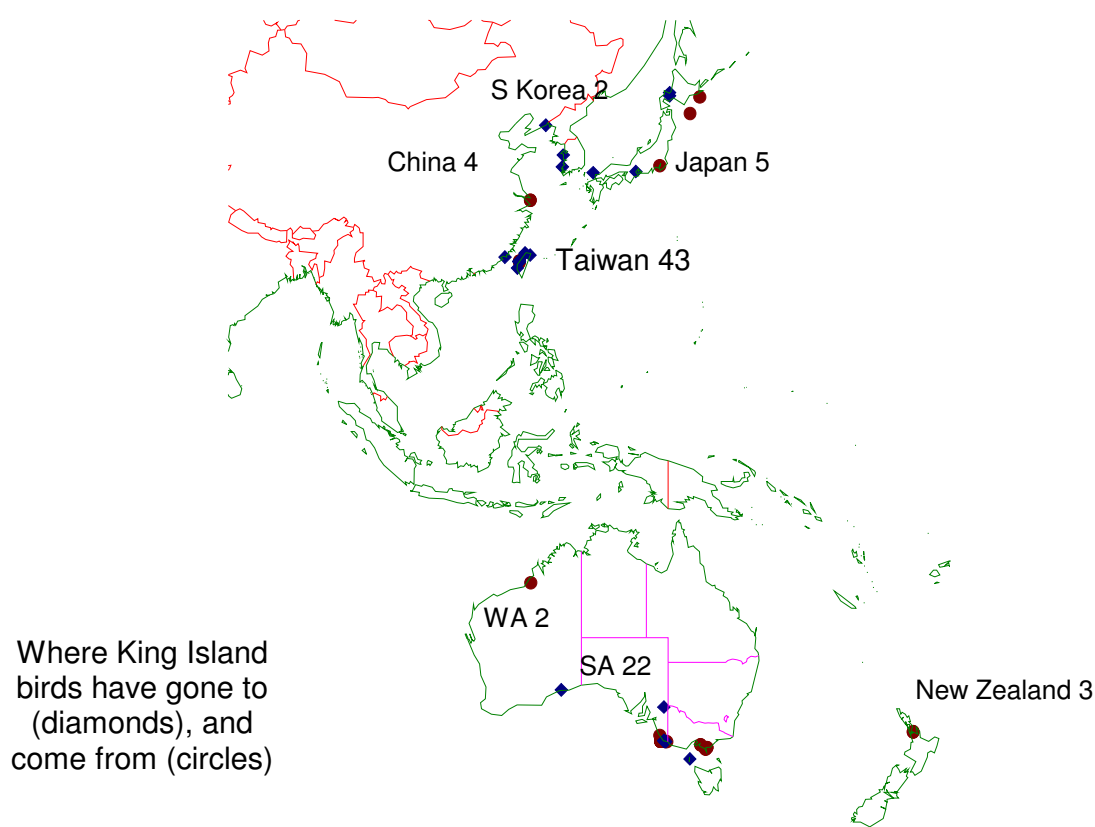
**Table 4. Weight Changes on Ruddy Turnstone banded & recaptured during visit**

Engraved flag	Capture		Recapture		Change
	Date	Weight	Date	Weight	
AY	28/03/2009	108	1/04/2009	125	+17g. in 4 days
AL	28/03/2009	102	1/04/2009	118	+16g. in 4 days
AW	28/03/2009	132	1/04/2009	132	Nil in 4 days
AJ	28/03/2009	109	1/04/2009	125	+16g. in 4 days
BM	28/03/2009	124	2/04/2009	137	+13g. in 5 days

**Fig. 1 Weight gain in Ruddy Turnstone (March-April)**



**Figure 2 – Movements of Ruddy Turnstone to and from King Island**



## Travelling Bird

Clive Minton

We've recently received further reports from Taiwan of sightings of the engraved-flagged Ruddy Turnstone 052-51886. This bird has had such an amazing history of sightings, since it was first marked in March 2007 at Currie, on King Island, that it is worth publishing these for the interest of all those involved in VWSG wader banding.

The banding, resighting and recapture history of this bird is detailed below.

Banded	24.3.07	Currie, King Island
Resighted	4+8.5.07	Taiwan
	3.8.07	Taiwan
	17.4.08	Taiwan
Recaptured	30.3.09	Currie, King Island
Resighted	14.4 to 21.5.09	Taiwan (seen 7 times over 37 days)
	21+22.8.09	Taiwan

It was originally given engraved leg flag X0, but this was replaced by EA on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009 because the original flag was becoming illegible.

This bird has now been seen in Taiwan on northward migration in 2007, 2008 and 2009. It has also been seen on southward migration in Taiwan in August 2007 and again in August 2009. Thus this bird has been seen in Taiwan in five of the six migration seasons which have occurred since it was originally banded. One of its stopovers lasted for more than five weeks.

All the sightings in Taiwan were at the same location and were made by members of the Taiwan Wader Study Group. They were subsequently reported to us by its leader Chung Yu Chiang.

Let us hope we can find this bird in King Island again in future austral summers and that it also stops over in Taiwan on each future migration when commuting to its breeding grounds, which are presumably in northern Siberia.

## **VWSG Conservation Report 2008/09**

### **Doris Graham**

This year has been a very interesting one for me, with several different types of task as our Conservation Officer.

With Climate Change gaining significance and because of its likely effects on all our lives I have attended several meetings of various lengths focussing on the coasts of Victoria. Some of these effects will be seen and will have disastrous consequences for wader habitat.

I have expanded my knowledge of the ecology of Western Port and enjoy very much the contacts I have made by attending the bi-monthly meetings of the Western Port Catchment Committee. I became the VWSG representative on this committee in August 2008.

#### **Summary of current situation of projects detailed in 2008 report:**

##### **Tasmania: Ralph's Bay development.**

The fight still goes on to save Ralph's Bay headed by the Save Ralph's Bay Inc. a community action group. Your help is needed and could make a real difference—interstate, and international interest/assistance is always considered.

This shallow, tidal, windswept Bay just 12 km SE of Hobart is prime habitat for hundreds of Pied Oystercatchers, the largest single group of this species in Australia, of many Hooded and Red-capped plovers and other migratory waders such as Red-necked stints and Curlew Sandpipers. The Bay is recognized as of international importance.

Walker Corporation (WC) submitted plans in March 2004 to construct a canal estate development and large marina on about half of this Bay over the area previously declared a Conservation zone. The Government introduced legislation to make it a "Project of State Significance", meaning that the Resources Planning and Development Commission (RPDC) would assess the project and make a recommendation to the Government. If their project is approved WC expects to pay \$600,000 for a large chunk of this irreplaceable Bay.

Legal processes are expected to continue for over 12 months. There is still massive ongoing community opposition. Full details at [www.SaveRalphsBay.org](http://www.SaveRalphsBay.org)

Even a short letter/email from you will still help.

It would be another Saemangeum story if the proponents succeed.

##### **Port of Melbourne channel deepening.**

Dredging has now been completed – to date effects are:

- rocks dislodged and uncollected at the Heads still tidal-rolling in the deep channel between the heads continue to damage unique Mosses and Corals
- there has been no breeding of anchovies this year, which will affect the food chain especially of Little Penguins from St Kilda and Phillip Island,
- further monitoring for water purity and fish species and stocks, will reveal any long term effects on the Biodiversity of the Bay.

##### **Hovercraft manufacture and mangrove "pruning" at Lyall Inlet, Western Port.**

Project was rejected by the Commonwealth, and would have been rejected also by the appropriate State Government authority had it been passed by the Federal. It has not been re-submitted.



### **Maintenance dredging of Toora Boat Ramp Channel.**

Project not yet approved as investigation of dredge-spoil placement still in progress.

### **Port Fairy—subdivision of Powling St, Wetland.**

Project approved by Moyne Council, 19/12/2007, then with over 120 submissions objecting was sent to VCAT 21/01/2008 and on 21/11/2008 rejected. No further application has been made. This wetland is very important for Latham's Snipe which is protected under EPBC Act and JAMBA Convention and Ballion's Crake.

## **Activities in 2009**

### **Submissions:**

#### **Werribee River Regional Park:**

In 2006 the State Government announced the "Great Parks for a Livable City" initiative. Funding was committed for three new parks of which the Werribee River Regional Park was one.

Land was obtained from Melbourne Water when their method of treatment of sewage was transferred from a land to a lagoon-based technique. This demanded less land and a 230ha section was designated for the development of a Regional Park extending from the mouth of the Werribee River into Port Phillip Bay, along its west side to the Princes Freeway.

We first commented on the "Have your Say" document, in 2006, with the help of Clive Minton, our Chairman, who has been a member of the Werribee Treatment Plant (WTP) Wildlife Consultative Committee, now the Biodiversity and Conservation Committee, for many years. Clive considers that the WTP manages nature conservation on the site very well.

However we were all concerned that opening this fragile area to human use could have disastrous effects on its wildlife if not well designed and managed.

The main aspects that concerned us were:-

- maintenance of the Ramsar criteria as a wetland of international importance in providing habitat for local and migratory birds'. Those particularly important in this area of the WTP are waders such as Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and marsh waders such as Latham's Snipe as well as the Orange-bellied Parrot in salt-marshes, and those passerines that use the cliffs for nesting such as Fairy Martins, and, Nankeen Night Herons and Swamp Harriers that use the ledges for roosting.
- access to the WTP all along the Park's western boundary to be strengthened.
- a bridge to be placed at least 2 km upstream from the Bay.
- maintain and develop an area on the western corner of the river mouth for conservation and as a roost for seabirds, waterbirds and shorebirds.
- speed limits for bicycles, pedestrians to have right of way.
- no dogs allowed.
- care be taken as to where bird hide(s) are put.
- fishing to be restricted to certain areas.
- vegetation along the banks be protected especially reeds and saltmarsh.
- the K-cliffs, which are listed in the National Heritage register, be heavily protected.
- educational trails and camp site to be strictly monitored.

This year for the first time more information about progress has become available. On June 27 a "Free Park Discovery Day" was held in the centre of the Park and a draft Regional Park Master Plan released which was then open for community comment. I attended this gathering to improve my scant knowledge of this interesting but obviously fragile Park and to

meet some of the 70 people interested in the construction of the park which has many different habitats including the ocean, river, wetlands, grasslands, saltmarsh and forest.

Many good things had been acceded to e.g.

- two strictly “conservation” areas designated as “Maintenance admittance only” have been created, i.e. the triangle at the mouth of the River classified as the “Saltmarsh” and further up river the “Riparian” Conservation Zones,
- bridge from Werribee South moved two km upstream,
- bridge to be constructed to prevent access of large boats and to account for strong and considerable depth of tidal flow,
- main activity area to be within road access about 1 km into the Park from the highway, and the only area where picnic shelters, BBQs, toilets and playground will be constructed,

Decisions yet to be made—

- ideally no dogs in the Park,
- no mountain bikes allowed and no jet skis on the river
- camping and educational facilities to be used by booking only and strict rules adhered to for example no access only to defined areas which will need careful monitoring.
- whole park should be closed at dusk, except for school camping area when in use.

Local Werribee people are thrilled to have this community park so near. We hope they will therefore take great care of such a biodiverse but fragile area.

### **The VWSG becomes “The Educator”**

At the launch of the Group now called the Western Port Catchment Committee (WPCC) which Roz was unable to attend and at which I presented an overview of the work of the VWSG I was asked if the VWSG would be the Educator at one of the monthly Community Markets at Gembrook. We would be their guests and they would provide us with a free space and set up a stall, table and chairs for us, and give us some time on the local radio.

With some trepidations and warnings from Clive as to its value from our point of view I agreed to do this and “dived into the unknown” on the condition that Graham Beal who lives in the area would assist me. Luckily he agreed, had been to this market several times and assured me that it was well known locally, with a very good reputation—almost to being “famous”, and usually attracted up to well over 100 people each month.

Its purpose is to promote “Sustainable Living” and as such has been going for several years. All stalls must be involved in sustainable lifestyle activities, sell or teach on the spot hand crafts including wood and leather work, and bread and cake making. Situated in the railway yard of Buffing Billy it also attracted tourists from the little train and had shelter from rain storms that enveloped us periodically.

Much appreciated was help from Tess and Angus Lamin, Heather, Brain, Dominique and Amy Gibbs who came off the train. We spoke with many people, dispersed flyer-type literature about waders/shorebirds to each of the 35 stalls, and generally worked hard enticing people to our display of posters and photos of waders. Several teachers said they would investigate putting the waders into their curricula. Four families expressed interest but so far have not joined us in the field!!

We have not repeated this exercise as would have had to pay stall costs would be incurred for a second visit, but both Graham and I felt it was a worth while effort to spread some knowledge of our birds to a wider than usual audience.

Our thanks to Roz for designing two great VWSG posters and as above to the VWSG members for their help on a very cold, windy day. My personal thanks to Graham for supporting me, giving up the whole of his Saturday to be there, introducing me to some of his contacts and generally bringing fun and much birding knowledge to the day.

The next question is should we do more of this type of education to outsiders about the needs of our birds in this era of Climate Change?

## **Conferences and meetings attended:**

### **Coastal Ecology and Management Conference, 4-5th April 2009.**

Held at the Anderson's Inlet Angling Club designed to give local coastal volunteers and people working in local environmental projects a snapshot of marine ecology and processes, the unique nature of our coastline and ways they can make a difference. Bruce Atkin was the Coast Action/Coast/Care facilitator.

Topics included Cultural Heritage and Native Title Acts, "The Unique South", beach-nesting birds, coastal geology, identification and control of weeds, revegetation, fox control, coastal management and the law, and the importance of saltmarsh. The day ended with superb underwater photographs being shown after Saturday evening dinner.

### **Victorian Coastal Forum 23rd April 2009.**

This was organized by the Victorian Coastal Council (VCC) at Docklands, to examine, significant coastal issues through key speakers and panels of experts with much time for discussion. Major sessions were devoted to Climate Change and to Population and Growth with a final Forum to try to blend what was spoken and matters brought up in Question times.

Speakers were from the VCC, CSIRO, ACF and Western Port Greenhouse Alliance as well as Victorian politicians and public servants from appropriate Departments, plus a Wellington Shire Councillor and the Director Executive of the National Sea Change Task Force.

### **Barwon Heads**

A tour to the beach identified coastal landforms, sand movements, revegetation projects, beach habitats used by birds, crabs including the Hairy Stone Crab - what a beautiful tiny creature?

### **Western Port forums**

*Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds* forums – Hastings and Phillip Island.

The Central Coastal Board (CCB), in partnership with the Arthur Rylah Institute, has initiated and successfully obtained Commonwealth funding for the new Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds project. The project hopes to:

- establish the relative importance of high tide roosts and feeding areas
- map key habitat areas to inform site managers
- understand the future impact of sea level change on waterbirds
- target social research to determine the level of community understanding of waterbirds and the main threats
- develop management programs for selected threats and key sites.

Other partners such as the VWSG and Bird Observation and Conservation Australia are contributing data collected on shorebirds over 30 years of count data. Birgita Hansen – VWSG has been appointed the project officer. Roz Jessop in her dual role as a member of the CCB and waderologist gave a talk on Western Port's shorebirds at both forums.

#### *Western Port Community Capacity Building forum*

A number of members also attended a Community Capacity Building forum for Western Port hosted by the CCB held at Hastings on 15 June 2009 and MC'd by Roz Jessop. The forum was well attended by community groups, government agency representatives and research institutes. Consisting of presentations in the morning, a panel session after lunch and a choice of concurrent workshops in the afternoon, the forum allowed participants time for in-depth discussion and information sharing regarding Western Port's key biodiversity assets, the current state of knowledge and work being undertaken. Staff from the CCB are following up on the outcomes from the forum.

You can find out more about the CCB at:

<http://www.ccb.vic.gov.au/index.htm>

I would be interested to hear from anyone who could assist with our conservation jobs. It is very interesting to hear what projects are being proposed that will potentially be very damaging to our shorebird habitats and also interesting to find out how the planning processes operate.

I would particularly like to thank Clive and Roz for helping me with the preparation of submissions.

My contact numbers are:

9482-2112 and [grahamdm@melbpc.org.au](mailto:grahamdm@melbpc.org.au)



*Rod McFarlane and Jon Fallaw transporting cannon netting equipment at Rhyll  
(Photo: Doris Graham)*

## News from King Island - July 2009

### Nigel Burgess

The Pied Oystercatchers started to come back during early July. We have a resident 8 at Manuka – next weekend 16 - next weekend 35. We can't see a lot of bands as they are mainly on the grassy flat- no doubt feeding on worms and with the grass, we cannot see their legs. Those I.D'd have been mainly banded in Victoria.

Sooty Oystercatchers changed from the resident 2 at Manuka to 6 last week. Naracoopa has increased it's numbers from 2 to 8 with visitors at the same time.

There are odd Fairy Terns at some of the sheltered bays on the west coast, with the usual compliment of Crested Terns on the East coast at Sea Elephant River mouth. Double-banded Plover are in groups up to 100 on the west coast- scattered birds on the open East coast beaches. Many have changed into their travelling clothes.

The temporary fence around the Fairy Tern colony at Yellow Rock Beach was a success in that it kept the off road vehicles outside.

I have tried this at Cowper Point and Sea Elephant river but there they were driven down. The publicity of the fence at the fence at Yellow Rock in the local newspaper must have had some effect.

In the Boxthorn along the Manuka foreshore I have trapped a 5.5 kg Tabby Tom cat and a 4Kg Black female and 6 assorted Tabby cat at Naracoopa.



*Sooty Oystercatcher feeding – King Island (Photo: Mavis Burgess)*

## **Report on the National Bird Banding Centre of China Shorebird Banding Workshop**

Cangzhao City and Huanghua Port, He Bei Province

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2009

### **Birgita Hansen**

In late July, the National Bird Banding Centre (NBBC) of China (part of the Beijing College of Forestry) held a shorebird banding and flagging workshop near the coast of the western Bo Hai sea. The aim of this workshop was to engage banders from different wader banding stations around China and to provide training and guidance for people participating in wader banding activities. Two AWSG / ABBBS representatives were invited to attend the workshop and assist with training of Chinese banders. Mr ChungYu Chiang from Taiwan and I attended the workshop in this capacity. Our specific role was to provide instruction relating to flagging (especially the production of flags), and in the identification, ageing and sexing of waders.

I arrived at Beijing International Airport in the afternoon of Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July and was met there by NBBC representatives Mr Jinde (Kinder) Shu and Mr Liu Dongping, who also met ChungYu at a similar time. From Beijing, we were driven approximately 3 hours south to the Yangfan Hotel in Cangzhao City, in the province of He Bei. We joined a small group of workshop officials for dinner, including Professor Meng Derong of Cangzhao College, who runs bird catching and banding activities in the region. Chinese dinners are a lively affair, and as it was the first get-together for some of the participants there was much toasting and many speeches. The Chinese share everything at the dinner, both food and wine. Plates of food are selected by each person at the table and wine (or beer) is only consumed when a speech and/or a toast is made. One does not "help yourself", but instead waits to drink with others. It is a lively and engaging aspect of the culture, and enjoyable to be a part of, even if there are language barriers.

On the Monday (27<sup>th</sup>) morning, Dongping took ChungYu and me to a local park / lake for some sightseeing and bird watching. The parks are very busy with people, especially women, children and senior citizens. There are many groups of musicians that play stringed instruments, with people sitting around watching. There are also patches of production cropping, the most common being corn and plantation seedlings. Unfortunately, birds are few and far between in these areas, owing to the vegetation in the park being comprised of only a few tree species planted in orderly rows. Virtually no undergrowth exists in these environs and therefore, the dominant bird species are those that occur in the open, namely Barn and Red-rumped Swallows, Eurasian Tree Sparrow and the Magpie. We were fortunate to see a Yellow Bittern in the some reeds in a less-disturbed part of the park, and also a Green-backed Woodpecker and a Chinese Bulbul. ChungYu and I spent the afternoon first in discussion with NBBC people advising them on flag making materials and describing what the process involved. We then worked together to collate our presentation material and coordinate the workshop topics we intended to cover.

The workshop commenced with a dinner on the Monday night, which was attended by all workshop participants and officials from the NBBC including the Director Lu Jun, and Vice Directors Qian Fawen and Hou Yunqui. Also in attendance was the Mayor of Cangzhao City. Other attendees at the conference were the banding groups from Jiuduansha Wetland National Nature Reserve and Chongming Dongtan Birds National Nature Reserves of Shanghai, including Ma Qiang and AJ (AJ participated in the NWA 2008 expedition with Jin Weiguo). Banding representatives were also present from Shengjinhu Lake National Nature Reserve in the province of Anhui, Tumuji National Nature Reserve of Inner Mongolia and Haixing Wetland Nature Reserve in the province of Hebei.

The official opening ceremony was held on the morning of Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July. A panel of officials was seated at the front of the audience and each member gave a speech. The proceedings for the workshop were outlined and the formalities conducted. Once the official



opening was complete, I gave my presentation on wader catching in Australia, with Mr Qian interpreting for the audience. In this presentation I gave a slide show in which I provided an overview of the cannon netting process, which is unfamiliar to many Chinese banders (as cannon netting is not used in China). This presentation contained a selection of photographic material donated by group members like Chris Hassell and Clive Minton, and also Jan van der Kam and ChungYu. Unfortunately, I received few questions, perhaps because much of the material I wished to cover was diluted in order to allow a clear translation. In future, I think more written information (with Mandarin translations) is necessary with the photos, to make the messages about catching and banding clearer.

Next, ChungYu gave his presentation about banding activities in Taiwan, where methods are more similar to those employed in China (namely mist netting). ChungYu covered catching techniques and went on to talk about the flyway, about the key catching sites in Taiwan, a brief overview of some of the data collected (e.g. total numbers caught) and a summary of the species captured, including some identification characteristics. He briefly covered the situation in Korea, including the reclamation of Saemangeum, and the wader counting from there.

The last presentation of the session was from Professor Zhang, who gave a long and detailed talk about waterbird identification and their key characteristics. It is unfortunate I do not understand the language as I think some very interesting and useful points were made in this talk. A lunch break was taken and then the talks re-commenced with presentations from other banding stations, including one from AJ about Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve. During this time, I assisted Kinder Shu, Miss Dai Ming and another group member shopping in Cangzhao for solvent cement (which proved extremely difficult to find). The final product was an unlabelled brown reagent bottle containing a liquid Tetrahydrofuran. This liquid was nevertheless an adequate substitute for the solvent cement we use in Australia. The afternoon session was used to make flags, from the cutting of the Salbex to clipping of flags. Many people were enthusiastically involved in the flag making and I assisted people with the flag-making process.



*Flag making: Left to right Professor Meng, Miss Hou and Dongping making blanks.*

The second day (Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July) we moved to Bishuilanan Hotel in Huanghua. Mist nets were already in place south of Huanghua and being monitored by students of Professor Meng. Mist nets were also placed at another site just to the north of the town. At both sites

nets were set over shallow shrimp ponds. A selection of different net types was erected, all being made of the material used in passerine nets. A small number of 8-shelf nets were also erected. In all a line of 28 nets was placed across the ponds. A similar number were already at the southern site.



*Mist netting: Nets being erected over shrimp ponds at Huanghua.*

Late afternoon, we processed birds caught earlier in the day. We went back to the hotel for dinner and then returned to the mist net sites in the evening. During the processing, ChungYu and I spent some time conferring over the species caught, attempting to work out the key characteristics for ageing these birds. The main species captured were Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint and Kentish Plover. The sandpipers proved to be the trickiest to age, with breeding and retained juvenile plumage being (surprisingly) difficult to differentiate at times.



*Leg flagged Long-toed Stint*

The next day (Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July), we started the day with an early morning net session and then returned for breakfast. After



breakfast, ChungYu and I gave a combined talk which provided a detailed overview of ageing, moulting and sexing waders. We focussed much of our discussions on birds commonly caught in the area, and outlined key characteristics for ageing different groups of species. We provided a detailed photographic record of juveniles and adults of different species, including Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover and Kentish Plover. It was a long session with both of us talking (ChungYu translating for me) and answering questions, and engaging in discussion with the audience throughout the session. The talk seemed to be well received, and it also seemed to get quite a few people thinking about moult when it came to the next field session that evening and the following morning. Throughout the field sessions, ChungYu would provide most guidance about ageing and moult, as I circulated amongst people trying to instil a philosophy of improved bird welfare and careful wader handling.

Prior to the evening meal and field session, we had a trip to two different shrimp ponds inland that were better suited to a greater variety of waterbirds. The first had a large mudbanks containing many roosting birds including Black-tailed Godwit, Eastern and Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Eurasian and Black-faced Spoonbill, Grey Heron, Little Egret, and Black-headed and Black-tailed Gulls. The second ponds (more within the agricultural areas) were accompanied by adjacent areas of partially regenerated salt marsh/dry mud flats. In this marsh/field area, Oriental Pratincole, Kentish Plover and Black-winged Stilt breed. In the ponds we saw many Grey Herons and Little Egrets, mixed flocks of small, medium and large waders (including three stint species, Red-necked, Long-toed and Temminck's) and several Purple Herons plus an Oriental Stork. Gulls and the ubiquitous Little and White-winged Black Terns were also there in considerable numbers.

The next day (Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July), we had another early morning field session, breakfast and then Mr Qian gave a seminar about the management of banding operations including regulation of banding activities by NBBC. It included information relating to catching, transporting and processing birds. The NBBC considers itself the regulatory body for all banding and flagging activities, in a similar fashion to the ABBBS, and wants all activities large and small to go through the centre for prior approval. The afternoon was used for a visit to the port, where coal is transported in and out of China, and where a large coal-fired power station operates. We then moved inland to the agricultural areas to look for waterbirds amongst the freshwater ponds and drains.



*Mud flats: This is the closest I came to the Yellow Sea.*

One last banding session was conducted that night and the following morning – it was clear by this stage that messages we had delivered during the workshop had been understood by some workshop participants. More birds were being aged and moulted correctly, and some safety issues for the birds had been taken on board, including the processing of long-legged and wetted or slightly injured birds first. It was inspiring to see those small changes take place over only a few days and there is much scope to continue to improve upon that new-found knowledge. The Chinese banders are very enthusiastic but also good listeners and quick to learn. I hope that with the information shared during that workshop, we will have a sound basis upon which to continue to pass on knowledge and experiences from both Australia and Taiwan for the betterment of Chinese shorebird monitoring.

The last day (Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August) we moved back to Cangzhao for the closing ceremony, which was attended by the mayor. ChungYu and I gave our own closing speeches outlining our impressions of the workshop. We both felt that the workshop had been an excellent opportunity to bring together wader banders from around the country and to share the experiences from different parts of the flyway, as well as benefit from the skills of other workshop participants. I took the opportunity to extend an invitation to all workshop participants to travel to Australia and join our wader banding activities.

The people whom I met and worked with in Cangzhao and Huanghua were incredibly welcoming, friendly and helpful. They went out of their way to ensure mine and ChungYu's needs were fully met, and despite the absence of strong English-speaking skills in a lot of the participants, they would all make the effort to communicate where they could. We all had a lot of fun toasting each other at the dinner table, and sharing jokes and tales where we could. Moreover, I am most grateful to ChungYu whose vast experience and knowledge taught me a lot about the species we saw, especially species that I have little to no experience with (e.g. Long-toed Stint and Kentish Plover). ChungYu is an outstanding shorebird and an incredibly talented, helpful and friendly person. I consider it a great privilege to have worked so closely with him.

China is an amazing place, but full of contradictions. Technology is well advanced and construction progresses at a rapid pace. Massive high-rise buildings to accommodate the huge population adorn the landscape, some rising suddenly out of the smog and agricultural fields. New cars zoom around. The fast train has a large, elevated track which carries it across the countryside at speeds over 350kmh. Yet, the majority of the non-city dwelling peoples live in what look to a foreigner as shacks and shanty-towns. People are everywhere, standing or sitting on roadsides, or outside their homes or stores, often in the gutter, on the bare ground or on whatever seat happens to be lying around. Millions of bikes and scooters, old trucks, three-wheeled utes and even mule-drawn carts are interspersed amongst the new Audis and Volkswagens. People drive pretty much where-ever they like and road rules are only loosely observed. Street sweepers work endlessly with straw brooms, clearing dirt and stones from gutters that have no drains. When it rains, the water accumulates in massive pools in the road, in driveways, in parking lots, and in underpasses.



*Shrimp farm: One of the huts that the shrimp farmers live in.*

The south-western lowlands of the Bo Hai catchment are completely modified, so much so that no representative of the former landscape exists. Plant diversity is poor, a characteristic common across the entire region from Beijing to Huanghua. These parts of China are described locally as a “green desert”, with the majority of the landscape being clothed in mixed production cropping, and orderly plantations of beech or fruit trees. No remnant vegetation exists in this landscape, not even roadside or wetland remnants. Waterways are massively degraded, often being channelised or straightened, always turbid and always devoid of intact riparian vegetation. Many are regulated with dams, locks and weirs. Most are diverted in some fashion. Many mudflats are in various stages of reclamation, usually gradual encroachments on the edges by shrimp ponds and industry. As a result, waders tend to use artificial ponds, usually the shrimp ponds which are probably rich in invertebrate fauna and quite shallow. And always present is a thick blanket of pollution, making it difficult to see more than several hundred metres on some days. Only when it rains heavily does the sky clear and usually only for a day. Nevertheless, there are many magnificent sights in China well worth visiting and a clear day only accentuates their majesty.



*Waders on shrimp ponds in Huanghua.*

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the NBBC for funding my visit in China. And I am greatly appreciative of the AWSG for sending me to China as a representative of Australian shorebird studies and for financing the flights. I have established a number of Chinese contacts which will be of benefit in maintaining the lines of communication between China and Australia. These will add to the relationships forged by earlier visits by people like Chris Hassell, Adrian Boyle, David Melville and Mark Barter. Chris and Mark in particular are well known and respected among many of the Chinese banders. I hope that through careful planning and fortuitous funding opportunities that we will be able to invite some of the Chinese wader banders to Australia and give them the opportunity to experience shorebirds in another part of the flyway. In conclusion, I think these collaborative arrangements are invaluable for knowledge transfer and international flyway cooperation, and I hope to see them continue in the future.



*Squillions of people (Chinese and foreigners) crowd the top of the Great Wall, which is overshadowed by a hideous Hollywood-style Olympics sign.*

*Dr Birgita Hansen is a long term member of both the VWSG and AWSG, she is currently a Postdoctoral Research Assistant at Monash University & Project Officer, for the Central Coastal Boards Envirofund project "Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds" – employed through the Arthur Rylah Institute, D.S.E.*

# **Wader Breeding Success in the 2008 Arctic Summer, Based on Juvenile Ratios of Birds which spend the Non-breeding Season in Australia**

**Clive Minton, Rosalind Jessop, and Chris Hassell**

## **Introduction**

Monitoring of the proportion of juveniles in wader populations in two different parts of Australia, 3,000 km. apart, was again continued during the 2008/2009 non-breeding season. This systematic long-term data collection program was commenced in south-east Australia (SEA) in the 1978/1979 season and in north-west Australia (NWA, Broome and 80 Mile Beach) in 1998/99. The results of the monitoring program have been published annually in *Arctic Birds* (Minton *et al.* 2000, 2008), ever since the second edition in 2000.

Breeding productivity is assessed using the percentage of juvenile birds in cannon-net catches of waders in the November/March period, when populations in the non-breeding areas are relatively stable. There are many potential shortcomings to this method of assessing reproduction rates (Minton *et al.* 2005), but at present it is the main method which is employed to obtain a measure of breeding success over a prolonged period on a wide range of wader species. It is not claimed that the figure obtained is other than an *index* of annual breeding success. But it should enable valid comparisons between years to be made and any longer term trends to be identified.

It is also recognised that these measures are obtained on average some six months after birds fledge and that other events in this period (including their first migration) may have variable effects between years. Nor are the figures necessarily an absolute measure of recruitment for the whole population of a species in the Flyway as different segments or age groups may migrate to different areas. Marked examples of the inhomogeneity of the distribution of juveniles in non-breeding areas occur in Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit with many of the juvenile birds of the New Zealand populations spending their first non-breeding season in SEA. This has the effect of magnifying the proportion of juveniles in SEA e.g. it averages more than 50% in Red Knot in SEA whereas it is normally less than 5% in North Island New Zealand (Adrian Reigen *pers.com.*).

This paper presents the data collected in the 2008/2009 season on a range of wader species in SEA and NWA. These figures are a measure of the breeding success in the 2008 Northern Hemisphere summer.

## **Methods**

The fieldwork program in 2008/2009 closely followed that of previous years. Only birds caught by cannon-netting are included. The collection dates were the same as used previously except that Ruddy Turnstones caught in King Island between 28<sup>th</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009 were also included. The normal cut-off date for data is the 21<sup>st</sup> March but the visit to King Island took place rather later this year. Our flag-sighting and recovery data show that Ruddy Turnstones do not start leaving there until the end of the first week in April. In any case no juveniles were caught so the figures could not have been affected by adult departures!

As in other recent years the SEA data was collected at various places along the coast of Victoria, on the south-east coast of South Australia and on King Island, Tasmania (Ruddy Turnstone only).

The data in NWA was collected during the three week annual expedition in November and an intensive four day catching program in February.

No mist-netting data is included in this year's report. Too few waders were mist-netted in NWA for meaningful figures to be obtained.

Note that two measures of the norm for breeding success are given for SEA. In Table 1 the *median* of the long term dataset is given, together with the number of years for which data exists. In Table 3 the *average* of the mean percentage juvenile figures for the last 11 years is given. This also facilitates a comparison with the NWA data, where datasets are still too short for medians to be an accurate measure.

## Results

Adequate samples were obtained in the 2008/2009 season for five of the six species monitored annually in SEA. Red Knot were scarcer than in any previous summer of the 30-year monitoring period and it proved impossible to catch samples at either of the two (only) locations where the species was present. It was also a struggle to build up an acceptable total of Curlew Sandpipers as they were much less numerous than in the previous year. The catch sizes and totals, and the number of juveniles, for SEA are given in Table 1.

Satisfactory catch samples were obtained in NWA for all the main study species, both Arctic and non-Arctic breeders, except Ruddy Turnstone (Table 2). Additionally a good sample was obtained in the 2008/2009 year for Sanderling and Whimbrel, species which are not able to be caught in most years and so which are not therefore part of the portfolio of regularly monitored species.

Great Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were noticeably lower in NWA in 2008/2009, particularly at 80 Mile Beach, and consequently the numbers of each caught were lower than in the preceding year. The number of Curlew Sandpiper caught was also greatly reduced after the bumper year in 2007/2008.

## Discussion

### *South-east Australia (SEA)*

The overall outcome of the Northern Hemisphere 2008 breeding season for the migratory wader populations which are monitored annually in SEA was probably the poorest of any of the 30 years for which data has been collected. Only Bar-tailed Godwits, which breed in Alaska, had an above average outcome, whether measured by median or mean percentage juvenile figures. Red-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper productivities were only slightly below the norm but Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper figures were exceptionally poor. Indirect evidence (low overall population, complete absence from areas frequented by juveniles) suggest it was also a poor year for Red Knot breeding success.

It is now five years since Red-necked Stint (Table 3) had an above average level of breeding success. Count data shows that their population has declined significantly from the extremely high levels of the late 1990s/early 2000s, when a series of exceptionally good breeding seasons occurred.

Curlew Sandpiper continued their roller coaster ride with good and bad years alternating. The relatively poor outcome this year followed an exceptionally productive 2007 breeding season. A sustained period of above average breeding success is badly needed to reverse, as opposed to halt, the long downward trend in numbers of this species.

Sharp-tailed Sandpipers had their worst breeding outcome for 20 years. The long run of above average breeding success which this species experienced between 2002 and 2007 seems to have come to an abrupt end with only 3.6% juveniles in the 2008/2009 summer populations. Overall numbers of Sharpies are, however, still at much higher levels than they

were between the late 1980s and early 2000s, as a result of the extended breeding bonanza period.

Sanderlings quite regularly seem to have extremely poor breeding outcomes, but these are partly offset by occasional exceptionally good breeding success years. The 2.9% juveniles in 2008/2009 is the sixth time in the 18 years of data collection that the figure has been below 3%. Ruddy Turnstone fared even worse with only 0.7% juveniles - just three juveniles in 396 birds caught in 12 catches. This is the lowest ever figure for Ruddy Turnstone and is the second really bad breeding outcome in the last three years. Turnstones populations are noticeably reduced in Victoria, the south-east of South Australia and in King Island.

The sole good breeding outcome for SEA wader populations in 2008 was Bar-tailed Godwit. The figure was particularly good when measured against the long-term median. Four of the last five years have now had an above-average percentage of juveniles. One result is that the over-wintering population in 2009 at the main habitat in Victoria (Corner Inlet) was high and has only been exceeded in three of the last 28 years. Catch data has shown that over-wintering birds are predominantly one- and two-year old birds with just a small number of three-year-olds.

The overall conclusion is that the 2008 breeding season was universally poor in the regions of the Siberian Arctic from which waders come to spend the non-breeding season in SEA. In contrast the Bar-tailed Godwits, which come from Alaskan breeding grounds, experienced a good breeding season.

#### *North-west Australia (NWA)*

The outcome of the 2008 breeding season for waders which travel from Arctic Siberia to spend the non-breeding season in NWA was the worst since regular monitoring commenced in 1998/1999. All six Arctic-breeding waders showed poor or very poor breeding success. Although the Ruddy Turnstone sample was too small to obtain a realistic measure, this species also probably had a very poor breeding year.

The result for Great Knot (6.3%) was the lowest since 2004 and the Bar-tailed Godwit figure (3.7%) was the lowest since 1998. Whilst it is tempting to attribute this to the major loss of feeding habitat at Saemangeum in South Korea and other parts of the Yellow Sea in China, it is not possible to separate any such effect from the clearly widespread effects of poor weather conditions throughout the Siberian Arctic breeding region in the 2008 summer.

The Red-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper figures were similar to each other and close to the figures obtained for these species in SEA. It would appear that the outcome of the breeding season in 2008 was more uniform than usual over most of the area in Arctic Siberia from which wader populations come to both NWA and SEA. Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling also seem to have had disastrous breeding seasons, again similar to the populations of those species which go to SEA. The Red Knot sample was only small but again suggested low breeding success.

In marked contrast, wader populations breeding in non-Arctic regions of Siberia and southwards into north-west China appear to have had a generally good breeding outcome for 2008. Grey-tailed Tattlers (37.9% juveniles) appear to have fared exceptionally well, the figure being higher than in any of the previous ten years of monitoring. This exceptionally high figure was exhibited in almost all the 11 individual catches.

Little Curlew seem to have been the exception amongst these less northerly breeding waders. In all previous years in which they have been sampled they have shown an exceptionally high proportion of young birds (30–57%). A complete breeding failure, as the 2008/2009 figures suggest, is therefore unexpected. It is unfortunate that a second catch

was not made to check for extreme sampling inhomogeneity (or even incorrect age classification?).

Whimbrel and Common Greenshank are caught too irregularly for any datum to be obtained on what is the norm for these species. In absolute terms the percentage juvenile figures appear low. On the other hand in most years when samples have been obtained no juveniles at all have been caught. So the figures could indicate a good outcome for these species in 2008. This is supported by an exceptional number of one year old Whimbrel still present in NWA in the Austral "winter" of 2009.

### **Conclusion**

The 2008 breeding season for wader populations which visit NWA and SEA in the non-breeding season was the worst ever recorded in these long-term monitoring programmes. No detailed examination of snowmelt and weather conditions, and predator levels, has yet been made by us but it is likely that an extremely unfavourable combination of these occurred widely across the Arctic breeding regions of Siberia in the Northern Hemisphere summer of 2008. The only previous comparable summer was in 1992 when widespread breeding failures occurred right around the Arctic regions, mainly because of a 2 deg. C. lowering of temperature by the cloud and ash cover from the recently erupted Mount Pinatubo in The Philippines (Ganter and Boyd 2000). But in that year somehow the Sanderling population which visits SEA managed to breed quite successfully.

In contrast breeding conditions in 2008 in Alaska for the SEA population of Bar-tailed Godwit and in the more central regions of Siberia for a range of other wader species seem to have been quite favourable. Grey-tailed Tattlers in particular had a record breeding year.

As we assemble these figures and write the text of this paper the 2009 breeding season will be unfolding across the Arctic. As always we shall be most anxious to commence our monitoring programs next November to find out what happened. Let us hope it is a big improvement on 2008 – it can't be worse!

### **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork programs which are necessary to generate sufficient data each year in SEA and NWA for an accurate assessment of breeding success are extensive and demanding. Without the tenacity, perseverance, and considerable physical effort of a great many people these extremely valuable long-term datasets could not have been obtained. Each year we face again the daunting task of keeping the program up to previous levels of achievement. It has only been done, and can only be continued, by the dedicated efforts of the large number of wader banders who take part in cannon-netting activities in SEA and NWA each summer. Huge thanks to everyone who has been involved.

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**Table 1.** Percentage of juvenile/first year waders in cannon-net catches in south-east Australia in 2008/2009

Species	No. of catches		Total caught	Juv./1st year		Long term median* % juvenile (years)	Assessment of 2008 breeding success
	Large (>50)	Small (<50)		No.	%		
Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	8	3	2564	376	<b>14.7</b>	13.8 (31)	Average
Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>	0	4	80	8	<b>10.0</b>	10.0 (30)	Average
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	3	1	270	78	<b>28.9</b>	18.6 (20)	Very good
Red Knot <i>C. canutus</i>	0	1	1	1	(-)	52.1 (17)	?
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	3	9	396	3	<b>0.7</b>	9.3 (19)	Very poor
Sanderling <i>C. alba</i>	1	2	172	5	<b>2.9</b>	12.4 (18)	Very poor
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper <i>C. acuminata</i>	2	2	224	8	<b>3.6</b>	11.1 (28)	Very poor
All birds cannon-netted in period 15 November to 28 February except for Red-necked Stint, Ruddy Turnstone, and Sanderling, for which catches up to 21 March are included. King Island Ruddy Turnstones, 28 March to 2 April, are also included.							
* Includes the 2008/2009 figures							

**Table 2.** Percentage of juvenile/first year waders in cannon-net catches in north-west Australia in 2008/2009

Species	No. of catches		Total caught	Juv./1st year		Assessment of 2008 breeding success
	Large (>50)	Small (<50)		No.	%	
Great Knot <i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	5	5	797	50	<b>6.3</b>	Poor
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	5	7	454	17	<b>3.7</b>	Poor
Red-necked Stint <i>C. ruficollis</i>	1	13	317	32	<b>10.1</b>	Poor
Red Knot <i>C. canutus</i>	0	7	33	4	<b>12.1</b>	Poor
Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>	3	9	283	28	<b>9.9</b>	Poor
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	0	3	7	0	<b>(0)</b>	?
Sanderling <i>C. alba</i>	0	3	43	0	<b>0</b>	Very poor
Non-Arctic northern migrants						
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	6	10	541	147	<b>27.2</b>	Good
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	0	10	110	17	<b>15.4</b>	Average
Grey-tailed Tattler <i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>	0	11	153	58	<b>37.9</b>	Very good
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	0	5	45	2	<b>4.4</b>	?
Little Curlew <i>Numenius minutus</i>	0	1	49	0	<b>0</b>	Very poor
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	1	1	79	3	<b>3.8</b>	?
All birds cannon netted in period 1 November to mid-March						

**Table 3.** Percentage of first year birds in wader catches in south-east Australia 1998/1999 to 2008/2009

Years Species	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	Average (11 yrs)
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	6.2	29	10	9.3	17	6.7	12	28	1.3	19	0.7	12.7
Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	32	23	13	35	13	23	10	7.4	14	10	15	17.5
Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>	4.1	20	6.8	27	15	15	22	27	4.9	33	10	16.8
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper <i>C. acuminata</i>	11	10	16	7.9	20	39	42	27	12	20	3.6	18.9
Sanderling <i>C. alba</i>	10	13	2.9	10	43	2.7	16	62	0.5	14	2.9	16.1
Red Knot <i>C. canutus</i>	(2.8)	38	52	69	(92)	(86)	29	73	58	(75)	(-)	53.1
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	41	19	3.6	1.4	16	2.3	38	40	26	56	29	24.6

All birds cannon-netted between mid November and third week in March (except Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper to end February only). Averages (for last 11 years) exclude figures in brackets (small samples) but do include 2008/2009 figures

**Table 4.** Percentage of first year birds in wader catches in north-west Australia 1998/1999 to 2008/2009

Years Species	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	Average (11 yrs)
Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	26	46	15	17	41	10	13	20	21	20	10	21.7
Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>	9.3	22	11	19	15	7.4	21	37	11	29	10	17.5
Great Knot <i>C. tenuirostris</i>	2.4	4.8	18	5.2	17	16	3.2	12	9.2	12	6	9.6
Red Knot <i>C. canutus</i>	3.3	14	9.6	5.4	32	3.2	(12)	57	11	23	12	17.0
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	2.0	10	4.8	15	13	9.0	6.7	11	8.5	8	4	8.4
Non-Arctic northern migrants												
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	25	33	22	13	32	24	21	9.5	21	27	27	23.2
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	12	(0)	8.5	12	11	19	14	13	11	13	15	12.9
Grey-tailed Tattler <i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>	26	(44)	17	17	9.0	14	11	15	28	25	38	20.0
Little Curlew <i>Numenius minutus</i>	57	33	-	36	30	-	(40)	-	-	47	0	33.8

All birds cannon-netted in the period 1 November to mid-March. Averages (for last 11 years) exclude figures in brackets (small samples) but **include** 2008/2009 figures

# **What does the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands mean for Shorebird Conservation?**

**Ken Gosbell, Chairman AWSG**

The tenth meeting of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands known as the Conference of Parties (COP 10) was held from 28 October - 4 November 2008 in Changwon City, Republic of Korea (ROK) under the theme "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People." More than 2000 participants (representing 158 contracting governments, international organization partners of the Ramsar Convention, UN agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations) attended. COP 10 adopted 33 resolutions on wetlands, including those focused on climate change; biofuels; extractive industries; poverty eradication; human health and well-being; enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies; and promoting international cooperation on the conservation of waterbird flyways.

This was a meeting of governments who have signed on to this Convention whose broad aims are to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain. This requires international cooperation, policy making, capacity building and technology transfer. Australia was one of the first countries to sign the Ramsar Convention and currently has 65 Wetlands of International Importance listed under the Ramsar Convention covering approximately 7.5 million hectares. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) is the Administrative Authority for the Convention in Australia and seeks advice from NGO's including AWSG on some matters.

Birds Australia and AWSG were represented at Ramsar by Danny Rogers, Doug Watkins (Wetlands International), Alison Russell-French and me.

One of the most important pre-Ramsar Meetings was the East-Asian Coastal Wetlands Symposium, hosted by the ROK's Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs (the Korean ministry now most responsible for the conservation of coastal and intertidal wetlands), and organized by the successful collaboration of the Getbol (Tidal-flat) Forum Korea, BirdLife International and the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat. There were a number of important contributions to this Symposium including the Report on the Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring Program (SSMP) 2006-2008 (which can be downloaded from [www.birdskorea.org](http://www.birdskorea.org)) and the Monitoring Yellow Sea Migrants in Australia program, jointly presented by AWSG and Birds Korea. This was one of a number of presentations given by the SSMP team during the COP 10, reporting that the reclamation of Saemangeum had caused substantial decreases in shorebird abundance at Saemangeum; that these had not been compensated for by increases in shorebird numbers in other Korean sites; and that the declines in Saemangeum have coincided closely with a decline in the numbers of migratory shorebirds reaching north-western Australian non-breeding grounds. These findings received a good deal of media attention within and outside of Korea.

Of the 33 resolutions adopted at the Ramsar COP, three are of special note here: Resolution 13 on the 'Status of Sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance'; Resolution 21 'Guidance on Responding to the Continued Spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1'; and Resolution 22 'Promoting International Cooperation on Waterbird Flyways'. The latter Resolution is particularly relevant to shorebird conservation as it strongly encourages parties and other governments to actively support and participate in relevant international plans and programmes for the conservation of shared migratory waterbirds and their habitats; urges parties to identify and designate as Ramsar sites all internationally important wetlands for waterbirds on migratory flyways; urges parties, other governments and relevant organizations urgently to enhance their efforts to address the root causes of the continuing decline in waterbird

status; and urges the governing bodies of flyway initiatives to share knowledge and expertise on best practices in the development and implementation of flyway-scale waterbird conservation policies and practices. There was a positive response from the Government of the ROK giving important commitments relating to the future protection of intertidal wetlands. We await evidence of how these commitments will be translated into action.

In order to underscore the importance of the Yellow Sea as a critical region within the East Asian – Australasian Flyway, Wetlands International launched a wonderful book on the Yellow Sea by photographer Jan van de Kam and other authors titled 'Invisible Connections'. This book provides a visual celebration of the journey these fantastic birds make along this flyway and the critical need to preserve the tidal flat systems that support them; it can be downloaded for free (60MB) from <http://www.wetlands.org/NewsandEvents/NewsPressreleases/tabid/60/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1570/Default.aspx>. It was an important contribution to the Ramsar Meeting and will be a useful reference for the future.

While progress was made within the context of the Ramsar COP 10 for improved recognition of the importance of wetlands, in particular tidal flats, it also highlighted the extensive work remaining to be done in terms of education and awareness of communities and governments along flyways. Australia, through organizations like the AWSG and VWSG has an important part to play in this.



*Wader signs at Shoalhaven River mouth NSW.  
(Photo: Roz Jessop)*



## The Estuaries of Britain

### Graham Beal

On a visit to England this year I came across an article in The Chesham & District Natural History Society Bulletin. It was a summary of a talk that John Wyatt had given in May 2001. Here are some excerpts that I thought might interest VWSG members and that I think are relevant here also.

"Britain's estuaries provide one of the richest habitats for many Waders and Wildfowl. The mix of salinity and fresh water give rise to an array of plants and plenty of food for birds. Morecombe Bay, North West England, forms extensive cockle beds which attract Eider Duck *Somateria mollissima* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, whereas in Northern Ireland on the east coast of Strangford Lough the estuary has a large rocky section in the middle. The River Severn on the other hand, with its bore causing a rush of water, provides little food and is one of the few sites where a barrier would stem the flow and in time vegetation would grow attracting birds. The Wash on the East coast of England (East Midlands) is a magical place in winter when 180,000 Knot *Calidris canutus* can be seen.

Why are birds attracted to estuaries? One reason is the availability of food. On the mudflats there are 35,000 hydrobia shells per square metre, these are 5-6mm in length, about the size of wheat and make ideal food for small waders. Likewise sandhoppers and other crustaceans occur along with lugworms and ragworms. So many different birds seldom seem to squabble on the mudflats but appear to feed in perfect harmony; it is because their beaks differ in shapes and sizes. The Curlews *Numenius arquata* and Godwits *Limosa Sp.* with their long bills feed on lugworms and ragworms whereas Dunlins *Calidris alpina* eat hydrobia and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* prefer sandhoppers which are often found under stones and amongst seaweed.

Many birds breed here and some years ago Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* bred solely around estuaries, but can now be located breeding up to 70 miles inland (approx. 105 Kms). When breeding they lose their "wedding ring" white circle around the neck.

Where rivers and estuaries meet the sea, a special type of habitat is formed. This is the saltmarsh, an area colonized by specially adapted plants which from small beginnings create their own land. These plants are adaptable to salty conditions. One of the first plants is a bright green alga *enteromorpha* which helps trap silt from the sea. The glasswort sprouts from the mud and soon eel grass (*Zostera*) and cord grass (*Spartina*) form saltmarsh. It took 25 years for two species of spartina to produce a fertile different plant *Spartina angelica*. This plant is now abundant and has become a problem, resulting in various towns that were once coastal being no longer near the sea!"

John went on to talk about Pagham Harbour on the South Coast of England and its birdlife. Redshanks *Tringa totanus* breeds here and can be seen all year round. He also explained how the ground must be clear of vegetation for Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* to breed. For awhile none bred in the Harbour because of marauding Foxes. An Island was created to attract them back, but unfortunately one fox now swims across causing a problem!

A rarity, Wilson Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, a vagrant from North America arrived 11 years ago, but unfortunately on the 10<sup>th</sup> day was taken by a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, much to the annoyance of the "Twitchers"!

Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* with their black tipped orange bills and legs, increase in numbers in the winter, whereas the Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* with a black bill, no wing bar, yellowish legs and yellow eye ring is a summer visitor arriving from Africa in March to breed and leaving in October.

John also mentioned that as a boy most farms had ponds and almost all had Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* with their distinctive drumming noise when flying. Drumming, also called bleating, is a sound produced by Snipe as part of their courtship display flights. The sound is produced mechanically (rather than vocally) by the vibration of the modified outer tail feathers, held out at a wide angle to the body, in the slipstream of a power dive. Alas they are now largely an estuarine bird and seldom seen on farms.

He also explained how to sex Curlews: the male's bill is slightly shorter as are its legs; therefore the females can dig deeper for Ragworms.

The Flow country in Scotland's Caithness and Sutherland area is still the largest breeding ground for Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* with 800 pairs.

### **Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, inland breeding success**

Also while in England I visited one of my old birding haunts, Tring Reservoirs, Hertfordshire. These consist of Startopend, Marsworth and Tringford. I was interested to see Common Terns feeding here and when I visited another Reservoir, 2 kms away (Wilstone) was surprised to find several pairs to be nesting on manmade rafts with birds arriving from the previous reservoirs, with beaks full of small fish.

These reservoirs are popular fishing spots well stocked with several species of fish carp, tench, bream, perch, roach and introduced North American Catfish. Tringford is a trout fishery.

Here is an excerpt from the Friends of Tring Reservoirs newsletter:

"Common Terns *S. hirundo* are a regular sight in the summer months, from around mid-April, after they return from their winter quarters on the western seaboard of the Iberian Peninsula and down through Africa. They can be seen plunge diving for small fish, which makes up most of their diet.

Terns commonly nest on beaches, but because of a lack of suitable nesting sites, they didn't breed locally. After FoTR was set up in 1993, a 'home made' tern raft was constructed and floated out on to Wilstone, to provide these inland birds with an artificial beach, which had the added benefit of keeping the birds' eggs safe from a number of predators including foxes, mink and magpies. Rafts had also been put out at College Lake and Common Terns began breeding. Terns first bred successfully on the Wilstone raft in 1994 and one chick was ringed by the local Ringing Team. Eventually this old raft sprang a leak and the terns had stopped using it by 1998, although they didn't breed on it again.

In 2004 two new rafts were launched. The new rafts were built by some of our members, together with the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust and volunteers, and were positioned in the south west corner. A pair of Common Terns took to the new rafts very quickly and successfully nested that year; three chicks were ringed in May. A shelter was also placed on the raft as protection against predators. But again, they didn't breed on it after that year.

Two of the rafts were repaired in 2006, and in late April 2007 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) launched two new rafts. The Trust worked in partnership with Venables, a local Hertfordshire company, to design and build the rafts. They are a pioneering design, using plastic modular floats, which fit together like a jigsaw, to create a three metre square floating platform. In addition, outrigger boards were added to prevent predators like mink from getting onto the rafts. Foot high weld-mesh fences around the raft will prevent the tern chicks from falling off the rafts. A thick layer of 'Gucci-gravel' – a specially designed mix of gravels - was spread over the top of the rafts to provide the perfect conditions for the terns to breed. Finally shelters, consisting of roofing ridge tiles, were placed on the rafts to provide refuge for the tern chicks from the summer sun and predatory birds.

Despite all this work over the years, Common Terns only seem to have bred at Wilstone when they were given a new raft! So, with another new raft, the terns bred once more. 2008 was the most successful year so far and the Common Terns raised about twelve chicks, of which seven were ringed.

This year 13 chicks were ringed and there were five small chicks, three scrapes with two eggs and 1 scrape with one egg. They also bred successfully at four other inland locations using rafts.

I was also interested in the Waders that pass through Wilstone. It is approximately 80kms from the nearest coast to the east. The southerly autumn migration has started and here are some sightings from August this year.

Tues Aug 4 Two Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, early, departed 6.00. am

Wed Aug 5 Four Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, one Redshank *Tringa totanus*, one Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, one Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* & three Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus*. And a rare visitor on Fri 7 an adult Sanderling *Calidris alba*.



*Little Tern breeding area at Minsmere (Suffolk, UK) with electrified fence*  
(Photos: Roz Jessop)





## Corner Inlet 22 -25 JUNE 2009

### Prue Wright

A group of intrepid cannon netters gathered at Rosemary Davidson's lovely house at Yanakie for the annual winter Corner Inlet catches on Sunday evening as usual the numbers meant we expanded up the hill to also fill the Hatten's house. After an enjoyable evening around the fire, with a glass or two of red wine, we retired early to bed for the 0600 hour departure on Monday.

Parks Victoria provided the boats to take us out to the barrier Islands. We departed from Mann's Beach and with the great boat skills of Swampy and Brian, we and our equipment, were all out on to the west end of Dream Island, to catch Oystercatchers. Susan Taylor and Graeme Rowe provided information on where the birds had been roosting, gained from the count the day before. Careful studying of the tide tables had a net set to catch the birds in the slightly higher tide from the day before. Twinklers were despatched in boats and the rest waited in the hide for the tide to do its work. We enjoyed the sunshine and calm weather. The tide also enjoyed the benign conditions, and cut enormously. There was no chance of the birds coming anywhere near the catching area, or resetting the net, as there was far too much roosting area available. We packed up. Clive and Susan went off in the boat and had a very pleasant afternoon observing a flock of 3000 Godwit and Red Knott on the east end of Clonmel. The boats returned us early to Mann's Beach, and the disappointment of not catching was ameliorated by the beautiful weather, and the spare time it gave us. The crew from both houses gathered at Rosemary's to enjoy a sumptuous three course meal. Margaret Rowe and Rosemary put a lot of effort into catering for the group, which is indeed appreciated. After supping on green ginger wine, we sat down to a steaming bowl of pumpkin soup. This was followed by apricot chicken and all the healthy vegetable options, and just to make sure we would not wake up hungry, this was topped off with a lovely rich chocolate pudding. Clive ate cantaloupe. It goes without saying that a couple of bottles of wine were also emptied.

Tuesday again heralded a 0600 start. The sun was just rising as we boarded the boats at Robertson's Beach for the east end of Clonmel. Clive and Susan had marked the previous day's tide line (the night tide was considerably higher). We set two nets, (a two cannon large mesh, and a three cannon small mesh net). The boats were again sent off, and the hide filled with people. This time the aim was for Susan and Hazel Watson to twinkle the birds up by wading casually up in the water. A huge flock of 3000 birds eventually arrived and settled on the spit too far from the catching area, the twinkling was going very well until a sea eagle put all the birds off. They returned, completely covering the net, safety zone as well as the catching area. A clever twinkle by the boat almost cleared a gap in the danger area, but never quite enough to fire. The birds lifted again, and after flying around for a while again came in for a landing, this time the decision to fire was made very quickly, before they could again move into danger. We rushed to a very full net. Doris did a sterling job manning the keeping cages as the birds kept on arriving from the net.

130 Red Knott  
7 Great Knott  
176 Bar-tailed Godwit - 13 were retraps

The majority of the birds were 1st year birds (approx 80%), with several sporting near full breeding plumage. There has only been one previous Corner Inlet catch with more than 100 Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit and that was on 5 February 2006 – 113 Bar-tailed Godwit and 233 Red Knot. There have been 11 catches with more than 100 Bar-tailed Godwit. This was indeed a very useful catch and all Bar-tailed Godwits are now carrying individually marked leg flags, which we hope will produce sightings in New Zealand once the birds cross the Tasman. The team worked very well to complete banding before darkness.

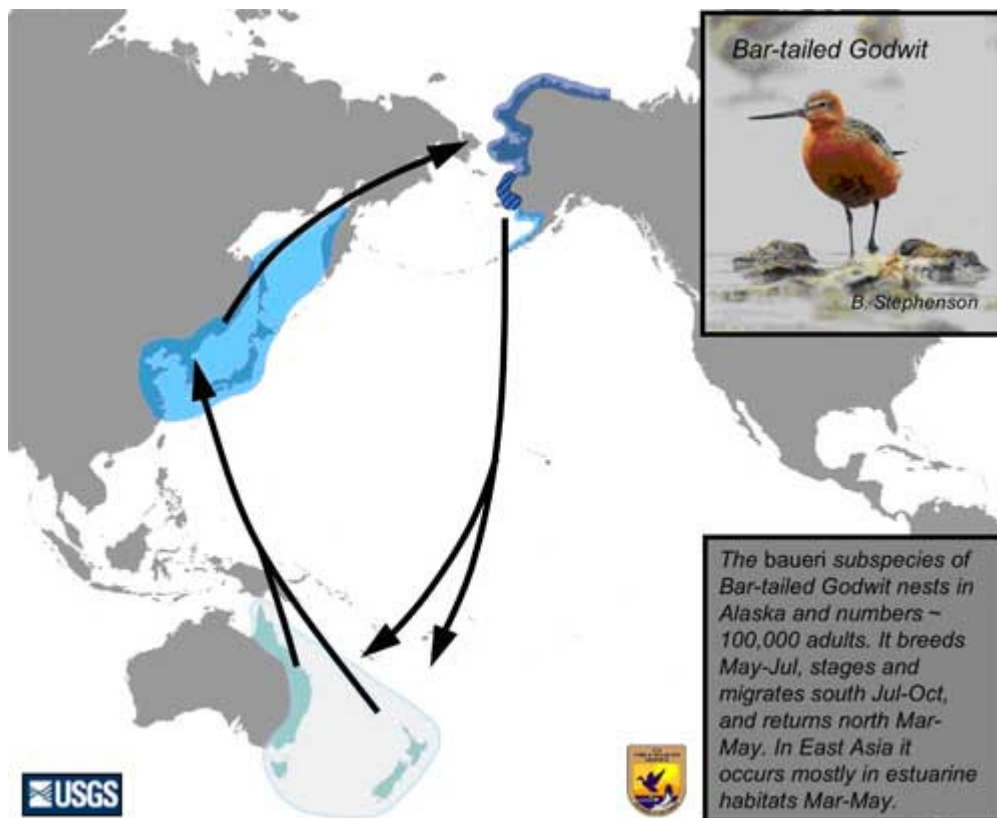


Wednesday we were able to sleep in a little, and left Rosemary's at dawn for Port Albert where we were transported to the west end of Clonmel. The geography of the island was extremely flat, and the previous night's tide had washed almost over the whole area. After much discussion a net was set, and we waited. Oystercatchers settled on the farthest point of the island, but could not be encouraged to enter the catching area. Decoys were placed in the partially flooded catching area, without success. By the time the hide was almost flooded, it was declared another victory to Oyks.

Thursday saw us arrive at McLoughlin's Beach to head for the east end of Dream Island. This time we set 2 large nets. We had the extra advantage of Dave Cropley's hovercraft for twinkling. 70 plus birds were twinkled to Dream Island, they were reluctant to move to the catching area, however we later put the decoys out, and a couple of oyks snuggled up beside them. The net was fired just before an inquisitive Soot Oyks could walk into danger.

11 Pied Oystercatcher - one retrapped Pied was first caught in '95 as an adult.  
9 Sooty Oystercatchers

A successful winter catching period was achieved. The weather was unusually mild and calm. Again we thank Rosemary and the Hatten's for the use of their places at Yanakie, and the Parks people in Brian, Swampy and Steve for their wonderful boat skills and all their cheerful help with equipment and logistics. Thank you to all who attended.



*Bar-tailed Godwit migration as determined by satellite tracking – source: United States Geological Survey web page*

## Shorebirds 2020 Update

**Rob Clemens, Jo Oldland, Ash Herrod, and Chris Purnell**

Shorebirds 2020 programme is going well with an estimated 500 to 1000 counters surveying 155 shorebird areas last year, with additional less methodical counts done at over 225 other areas. This included 33 shorebird areas in Victoria, and many repeated counts over summer especially in the Bellarine Peninsula. We would like to thank the members of the VWSG who conducted counts and passed them on to us this year. The nationwide collection of shorebird count data and the increasingly powerful picture that count data is painting would not be possible without the incredible efforts from the VWSG and other similar organisations. If you would like to participate please contact us.

[shorebirds@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:shorebirds@birdsaustralia.com.au)

### **From the executive summary of the 2009 report:**

Shorebird populations continue to decline according to reports released this year from northwest Western Australia, Queensland, and the Coorong. Similarly reports of habitat loss throughout the flyway have continued, and a recent review by Birds Australia found evidence that 21 shorebird species are decreasing in at least one area in Australia. As shorebird numbers and available shorebird habitat continue to decline, it is critical that we are able to increase the confidence with which we can report national population changes. In this past year significant steps were made toward meeting the objectives of the Shorebirds 2020 Program, and if continued these steps will provide the required data, resources and capacity to adequately inform on required steps for shorebird conservation and management.

Resources were also developed over the last year which will increase the programs capacity to reach out to and train more volunteers, communicate with the large expansion in the numbers of people involved, and accurately manage increasing volumes of data. Training workshop materials, summary information on shorebirds, and a variety resources increasingly available on-line this year have increased the quality of information available to counters, the public as well as resource planners and managers.

Last year analysis revealed that statistically significant declines in shorebird species populations (50% over 5 years for some species) could be obtained if around 150 areas were monitored around the country. Additional analysis done this year based on this past summer's data suggests that monitoring at 113 areas may yield sufficient statistical power (80%) to detect "national" trends of: 25-52% change in five years for 19 shorebird species and 50-80% change for seven species in ten years.

There are, however, a number of challenges to face in order to meet the long-term project objective of obtaining reliable population trends for shorebirds in Australia, namely: 1) the base of volunteers involved and trained in shorebird monitoring needs to grow significantly to ensure sustainable participation levels; 2) population trends will not become available unless the consistency of counting methods used each year are increased at many areas; 3) funding for the Shorebirds 2020 Program needs to be secured into the future.

Considerably more work is required in order to ensure that enough trained observers are able to participate in counts. Outreach and training workshops done in the last year have increased participation in many areas, but in some areas the burden of expanded count coverage has fallen on the same dedicated (and overworked) volunteers. If this project is going to be sustainable in the long term, new counters will need to be added rather than simply increasing the work load of existing counters in these areas.

Once sufficient participation is achieved, population trends can only be identified if observers collect data within each shorebird area consistently from now on. This ensures that differences in counts reflect changes in the numbers of birds, not changes in the way an

area was counted. These steps and others needed to meet objectives will require long-term funding.

## **Summary of achievements in year 2**

- 'Shorebird Conservation in Australia' Supplement to Wingspan 2002 successfully updated and reprinted as a Birds Australia Conservation Statement. This new publication will serve as an important education and awareness raising tool regarding shorebird conservation.
- Shorebirds 2020 Conservation website [www.shorebirds.org.au](http://www.shorebirds.org.au) successfully redesigned to become the primary communication and education resource for the Shorebirds 2020 Program.
- Further improvements and vetting of the Australian Shorebird Count Database and the successful development of an online data entry interface. The online data entry interface will save significant amounts of time in data processing and is crucial to the long-term sustainability of the program <http://data.shorebirds.org.au>.
- 174 community volunteers took part in the first four shorebird training workshops held from Oct 08 – March 09 (as part of Caring for Our Country Community Coastcare grant).
- Over \$6500 of count support & coordination funds were distributed in WA, SA, NSW and Vic.
- Outreach and training resources were developed including: a Shorebirds 2020 newsletter; six PowerPoint presentations for use in training workshops, a Shorebirds 2020 brochure, and a revised shorebird count data sheet.
- 2000 Shorebird ID booklets and 1000 ID sheets were reprinted to be made available to likely new counters.
- Statistical analyses were conducted to determine if the shorebird areas visited in the summer of 2008-2009 would have sufficient power (80%) sufficient to detect long-term population changes (of varying magnitudes and time frames) in shorebird species.
- Analysis was conducted on shorebird data to investigate the declining abundance of shorebirds at non-coastal wetlands in southern Australia. A comparison of counts from the 1980's compared to 2008/09 summer count totals suggest that in southern Australia, shorebird numbers at non-coastal wetlands have decreased by nearly 80%.
- Mapping of shorebird areas, count areas and shorebird habitat within a national GIS data set continued. New detailed mapping concentrated on NW Western Australia (WA), Shark Bay (WA), Gulf of St Vincent (SA), Eyre Peninsula (SA), Kangaroo Island (SA), King Island (Tas), as well as some areas in Victoria and NSW. The mapping of fixed count areas is seen as a critical step in ensuring future counts cover consistent areas on the ground.
- GIS shapefiles now include 241 'shorebird areas', 1450 areas of feeding or roosting habitat, and 2019 'count areas'.
- Successful counter training and capacity building workshops held at Broome, Western Australia. Shorebirds 2020 participants gained confidence and renewed interest in shorebird monitoring. The survey conducted as part of the training resulted in a more complete count of the area than has ever been achieved previously. Participants then returned to their local areas and became more active as volunteer coordinators and mentors.
- Successful survey and mapping of shorebird distribution and abundance in Shark Bay, Western Australia. This also provided a training and awareness raising activity for volunteers from southwest Western Australia.

- Over 150 extractions were made from the shorebird count database for a variety of stakeholders including: existing counters, consultants and state or local government organisations.
- A project was completed in Gulf of St Vincent, South Australia which included: counter & mentor capacity building, shorebird surveys, and regional mapping of the distribution and abundance of shorebirds within a GIS. Funded by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Board with Shorebirds 2020 support, this project resulted in Shorebird count data being collected to national standards from all the known shorebird habitats within the Gulf of St Vincent. A report including an overview of historic count data in the region, threats to shorebirds in the gulf, and identification of knowledge gaps is available upon request.
- Successful application for a two year Caring for Our Country Community Coastcare grant to expand the capacity of the Shorebirds 2020 Program to recruit and train more shorebird counters and better support counting efforts nationally.



*Oystercatcher in a nesting box (Photo: Digger and Lauren Jackson)*

## Publications and Presentations using VWSG data

Compiled by Roz Jessop

### NEWSLETTERS

#### Members made contributions to the following:

- “**The Tattler**”, Newsletter for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Copies can be downloaded from the AWSG web page <http://www.awsg.org.au/>
- “**VicBabbler**”, quarterly newsletter of the Birds Australia – Victoria Regional Group of Birds Australia.

#### Papers of interest:

Kearney, B., Haslem, A. & Clemens, R. 2008. Report on population monitoring counts 2007 and summer 2008. *Stilt* **54**: 54-68.

Minton, C., Jessop, R., Hassell, C. & Christie M. 2009. NWA Wader & Tern Expedition, 8 to 29 November 2008. *Stilt* **55**: 51-56.

Minton, C. Jessop, R. and Hassell, C. 2009. Breeding success of Arctic Waders in 2006. Based on juvenile ratios in Australia in the 2006/07 austral summer. *Arctic Birds*.

Wainwright, P. & Christie, M. 2008. Wader surveys at the Coorong and S.E. Coastal Lakes, South Australia, February 2008. *Stilt* **54**: 31-47.

The VWSG Web site was regularly updated by Roger Standen

[www.vicnet.net.au/~vwsq](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~vwsq)

## News of Members and Friends of the Group

### Rosemary Davidson

*Many members of the Group participated in other shorebird projects:*

Participants in the Delaware Bay Shorebird Project (USA) this year were Clive Minton (13<sup>th</sup> visit), Susan Taylor (8<sup>th</sup> visit) and Robyn Atkinson. This project studies the movement of Red Knot through Delaware Bay from South America on their passage to the Arctic breeding grounds in May. Clive, Susan and Robyn also participated in the Whimbrel satellite tracking project in Virginia.

Participants assisting Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service with the *Long Term Study of Roseate Terns on the Swains Reef on the outer Great Barrier Reef* including counting and banding were Clive, Susan, Prue Wright, Penny Johns, Alice Ewing and Rod McFarlane. Roseate Terns are listed on JAMBA.

Clive, Roz Jessop, Prue, Mike Dawkins, Doris Graham, Heather & Dominic Gibbs, David and Jean Wilbraham, Naoko Takeuchi, Inka Veltheim and Maureen Christie participated in the AWSG expedition to NWA.

Geoff and Joan McDonald made their second visit as Assistant Wardens at Broome Bird Observatory during July and August. Roger Standen and Malcolm Brown also volunteered last year.

Clive and Pat Minton participated in a major passerine banding project in late November and early December 2008 at Ngulia in Tsavo National Park in Kenya. This project has been operating for 30 years. Birds migrate to this area from Europe and Russia and over 20,000 birds were caught in mist nets in 10 days!

Ken Gosbell, Danny Rogers, Penny and Doris participated in the Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring Programme (SSMP) survey on the west coast of Korea in April/May 2008.

Mark Barter continued with his surveys of waterbirds in China, where he spends several months each year.

*Members who attended international meetings:*

Ken Gosbell and Danny Rogers attended the International Ramsar COP meeting in November 2008 on behalf of the AWSG. They presented the findings of the SSMP study carried out from 2006 to 2008 and the complementary study of MYSMA (Monitoring Yellow Sea Migrants in Australia) carried out in northwest Australia and Queensland.

*Some members of the Group are either working towards or have recently received higher degrees:*  
Mike Dawkins completed his MSc at Charles Sturt University on the *Common Terns in Australia and their flyway*.

Birgita Hansen was awarded her PhD by Monash University in April: for her Thesis "*Population genetic structure of Leadbeater's possum and its implication for species conservation*". Findings and management recommendations are being incorporated into the updated Leadbeater's Possum Flora and Fauna Guarantee Action Statement, to be published by DSE.

Inka Veltheim has started a PhD with the University of Ballarat. Her study looks at *Movements, habitat use and population ecology of Brolga, Grus rubicunda, in south west Victoria*. Inka will be using satellite tracking to follow their seasonal movements. Some members of the VWSG have assisted with attempts to cannon net the brolgas- so far unsuccessful!

April Reside is halfway through her PhD on *Predicting the vulnerability of Australian tropical savannah birds to climate change* at James Cook University, Townsville and working in collaboration with CSIRO.

Alice Ewing is hopes to submit her Master's Thesis on the survival rate of four species of waders in NW Australia at the end of 2009.

Heather Gibbs is studying for a PhD at Deakin University on *The effects of climate change on breeding in Australian birds*.

Patrick-Jean Guay was awarded his PhD at the University of Melbourne. His thesis is titled *Behavioural Ecology and Conservation Genetics of the Musk Duck (Biziura lobata)*, and involved investigating their mating system and using genetics to estimate movement across the Nullarbor Plain. He is now working at Victoria University.

Roger Richards completed a Graduate Diploma of Ornithology at Charles Sturt University in 2002. Roger's assignments included: The Reproductive Performance of Australian Seabirds; Behaviours of the Tawny Frogmouth and a review of the Biology and Ecology of the Osprey and the White-bellied Sea Eagle.

Nicole Schumann is continuing her post-graduate project on seabirds of Bass Strait Island.



*Career changes:*

Nigel Burgess has retired after a lifetime of service with Parks Tasmania on King Island.

Pete Collins is working at the Alice Springs Desert Park.

Gavin Jackson is Corporate Services Manager for Birds Australia.

Roz Jessop has taken on a new role as the Senior Environment Co-ordinator at Phillip Island Nature Park.

Naoko Takeuchi is now working as a professional passerine mist netter for Monash University.

*We extend our sympathy to:*

The families of Brenda Murlis and Sally Symonds.

Janet Limb and her family on the death of Janet's husband, George.

Ken, Annie and Danny Rogers who lost their home at St. Andrews, and Ken and Carlene Gosbell whose holiday house at Marysville was destroyed in the disastrous bushfires in February.

*Congratulations to:*



Lauren and Digger Jackson on the birth of their son **Lochlan Matthew Jackson** on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

Tim Gale and Liza Collins on their marriage. They currently live in Mareeba, Queensland.

Doris Graham who celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with a party at the Minton's.

Xenia Dennett who achieved her goal of 700 species before she turned 70.

David Hollands on the publication and launch of "Frogmouths and Nightjars of Australia".

Brian Martin who cycled from Perth to Wonthaggi in a fund raising event.

Prue Wright who completed a 35 day trek in Nepal.

*Other news:*

Iain and Sandy Stewart and Penny and Murray Johns have recently visited Lake Eyre which is partly flooded. Stewart Monckton used the Group's data on Sharp-tailed Sandpipers in a VCE project.

VWSG members Penny Johns and Sally Symonds together with Tim Dolby have edited the soon to be released book, "Where to See Birds in Victoria." Danny Rogers and Will Steele contributed the chapter on the Western Treatment Plant.

*We welcome the following members who have joined the Group over the past 18 months:*

Margaret Bennett, Nigel and Mavis Burgess, Don and Joyce Gillespie, Graham Hancock, Peter Johnstone, Bruce Lavender, John and Susie Lyons, Nuno Oliveira, Kim O'Riley and Kailash Willis.

International field work participants included Jingle Fan from the Taiwan Wader Study Group, Nuno Oliveira from Portugal and Hazel Watson from the UK.

Please provide updates to Rosemary Davidson [rosiedavidson@iprimus.com.au](mailto:rosiedavidson@iprimus.com.au)

## **Vale Brenda Murlis 19 March 1922 – 9 July 2009**

Born in Leicester, UK, Brenda's lifelong love of the outdoors and wildlife was instilled early. She and her sister and three brothers were born in and had the run of a city park the size of Melbourne's Botanic Gardens with a lake at one end and the ruins of an abbey at the other whilst their mother ran the kiosk.

She joined the airforce during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and was trained as an electrician, (which came in handy later in the VWSG.) In 1953, she emigrated to Melbourne with husband Mick and daughter Vivien. Two more daughters followed and as the youngest started school, Brenda joined the Bird Observers Club and The Ringwood Field Naturalists Club (RFNC). She was a member of both organizations for more than 40 years and became the first woman president of the RFNC.

Ever a people person and a busybody, Brenda became an active, committed member of dozens of organizations over the years, including running a Sunday School, and helping run a hospital kiosk, yearly Christmas card shop, church fete stalls and endless local charity stalls selling the jams, cakes and craft items she made. She sang in the church choir, and visited new arrivals at the migrant hostel where she made a number of lifelong friends.

When Clive Minton advertised for people interested in Wading Birds to join a new group, Brenda, who had long wanted to recognize these birds, better joined the VWSG at the preliminary meeting in 1979. She became the founding secretary/treasurer, and when several years later the AWSG was formed she became the founding secretary/treasurer of that too. Now in her 60s, she went eagerly up to Broome on the second expedition in 1982, camping rough in the dunes along Roebuck Bay and 80 Mile Beach at Anna Plains.

Suitable keeping cages for the new group were impossible to obtain so Brenda made all the keeping cages out of hessian for the first 10 years. These rotted and needed replacing regularly so she was thrilled when shadecloth proved a viable alternative. All the keeping cages in Australia were made by her in the years prior to 1998 so they are all at least 11 years old and most are still going strong. (Look after them because she won't be making any more!)

Brenda was one of the earliest people to prove the value of children as participants (especially as "runners") by successfully bringing her grandson Jamie on field trips from the age of three.

Perhaps most of all, Brenda is remembered for her constant smile, "can do" attitude and general friendliness. She delighted in welcoming new members and visitors and sharing her knowledge with them. She corresponded until her death with a number of people worldwide whom she had originally met, welcomed and led on birding trips during their holidays in Australia. Each year, for many years, she led a field excursion for the RFNC teaching about the wading birds at Werribee Sewerage Farm and Cheetham Wetlands.

Brenda retired from active membership of everything to care for Mick during his final illness before succumbing to Alzheimers' in her last years.

All in all, a long life and a really useful one! Well Done Brenda.

**By Vivien Holyoake**



**Vale Sally Symonds 5th October 1935 - 4 October 2008**

Sally Symonds, a very involved member of Birds Australia, died in Melbourne on 4th October 2008 from cancer. Sally, with her sense of humour, her infectious enthusiasm for life, her sense of adventure, and her thoughtfulness had a wonderful effect on all who had the great fortune to meet her.

Sally was born in the U.K. but had lived in Australia with her family for about 35 years. They first had a weekend retreat and later lived at Healesville for some years. She became a volunteer at the Healesville Sanctuary stimulating her long interest in Australian wildlife and its conservation. Noting that there was not a book on the history of Healesville, Sally, with her inimitable style, set about writing one, "Healesville, History in the Hills", 1982. She later wrote a history of the sanctuary, 'Healesville Sanctuary, A Future for Australia's Wildlife', 1998.

After Sally became a member of Birds Australia she was on the committee of BA Vic group and was the Editor of VicBabbler. She was an active and much loved member of the VWSG, on overnight camps often entertaining us hugely with her tales of her ten years she spent in India. Sally loved camping and was active in many bird and environment groups from monitoring the birds on Albatross Island in Bass Strait to her involvement with the River Keepers, a Yarra River monitoring group. She was on the committee with me to organize the Birds Australia Newhaven Art Exhibition in 2006 and has been the co- editor with Tim Dolby and myself of a book, Where to Find Birds in Victoria due out in 2009. Tim and I greatly valued her wise counsel.

Sally was also a volunteer at the Malthouse Theatre, helping run the bookshop there, and was a great support to her daughter and grandchildren in Sydney. Writing poetry was something she found fulfilling and below is one she wrote after a VWSG expedition. We extend our sympathy to her daughter Mandy, her grandchildren, Cameron and Katelyn and her sister and brother-in-law Daphne and Henry Bosch who are also BA members.

***By Penny Johns (First published in VicBabbler December 2008).***

**Sally and the VWSG**

Sally's enjoyment of the outdoor life, her wish to make a contribution, her fascination with the natural world, particularly birds, and her friendly and sociable nature made the VWSG a natural fit. It is not a group for grumps!

Sally was always eager for any job, one of her frequent comments to Clive was, "I am very happy to be just a foot soldier". Being patient, a sharp observer and a careful listener she was an excellent twinkler.

Any expedition in which Sal' participated was guaranteed to be fun. As well as being a calming influence she frequently entertained us with stories. Like amusing tales from her 10 years in India or the time she was marooned for an extra 10 days on a Bass Strait Island after counting Albatross.

Sally had written two books and she also wrote poetry. Her books were on the history of Healesville, where she lived for ten years, and the history of the Healesville Sanctuary where she was a volunteer guide.

She was a co-editor of "Where to See Birds in Victoria", published by Allen and Unwin, it will be launched at Birds Australia in November this year. Being a good observer and a careful editor her contribution was invaluable.

Sally had also been the editor for five years, and co-editor for three of Vic Babbler, to which she brought style and professionalism.

She was an intrepid and keen traveller. Just before she became ill for the last time she had been in Scotland viewing the Puffins, something she was determined to do.

Sally's diverse interests, her empathy, her love of people, her curiosity and infectious enthusiasm for life was reflected in her wide circle of friends, many of whom are members of the VWSG. She was an active member and will be greatly missed.

***By Penny Johns***

# **VWSG Financial Report**

## **Rosemary Davidson and Clive Minton**

In the 2008/09 financial year VWSG's general expenditure (i.e. other than on special projects) of \$8806.41 exceeded "normal" income of \$6932.31.

These figures were similar to the previous year. Subscriptions, bank interest and generous member donations made up the bulk of the income. As usual, the printing of the Annual Bulletin was the largest item of expenditure. But considerable funds were also expended on maintaining the Group's cannon-netting and banding/processing equipment in good order and on on-going operating costs. New items of expenditure in the past year were geolocators (data-loggers) and payments for DNA laboratory work to sex Oystercatchers. There was also an increased number of engraved leg flags made (for Bar-tailed Godwits, for the first time).

We were saved from an expected increase in the costs of firing the cannon nets when Orica "found" one more bag of the black powder they had kindly been storing for us in their magazine at Tocumwal, New South Wales. This is the last of the free black powder which was given to the VWSG in the mid-1990s by the Department of Defence (saved from dismantled old ordinance).

The financial viability of the Group was again facilitated by a generous grant from Coast Action/Coast Care, by a contribution from the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment for assisting in the catching of waders for the attachment of radio transmitters, and via a contribution from the Department of Primary Industry for making birds available for Avian Influenza testing.

The VWSG also acted as a vehicle to assist with an Envirofund Grant for Spartina eradication, and this resulted in a small net contribution towards our costs.

Because of the worldwide financial crisis, the majority of the VWSG's cash reserves were moved into a government guaranteed interest-bearing account, for added security. We may well revert to the arrangement which existed previously, which was simpler to operate, once the financial crisis has fully passed.

Overall the VWSG's finances are in a healthy condition, very much as a result of the generous external financial support received in recent years.

# Victorian Wader Study Group Inc.

ABN 12 724 794 488

## Income & Expenditure Statement for the year ended 30 June 2009

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Subscriptions	2,205.00	Printing Bulletin	1,655.50
Bank Interest	4,015.31	Postage, photocopying, stationary & phone calls	173.90
Sale of copies of "Shorebirds"	160	Incorporation Fee	39.70
Surplus from AGM food	92	Bank Charges	20
		Ethics Permit South Australia	65.00
Donations: M. Gibbs, A Gutowski, D. Howard, P. Jenkins, D. Thomas, M. Anderson, R. Standen, T. Ireton, B. Clifford, P. Park, I. Kluger, D&J Gillespie, M. Dawkins, M. Bennett.	460	Purchase of Geolocators	680.00
		Payment for Oyc sexing	517.50
		Purchase of "Shorebirds" for resale.	130.00
		Gifts of appreciation	254.65
		Miscellaneous expenses	99.00
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$3,635.25</b>
	<b>\$6,923.31</b>	Equipment	
		Trailer Expenses	171.90
		Radios and batteries	998.12
		Geolocator expenses	76.56
		Darvic, colour bands & engraved flags	998.00
<b>Grant &amp; Contracts</b>		Firing Box and circuit tester	542.00
Envirofund Grant for Spartina		Glue, grease etc	208.20
Eradication in Andersons Inlet-	50,000.00	New cannons & repairs of old cannons	1,614.39
Coast Action/Coast Care - Equipment grant	4,000	Black powder	75
DPI -Influenza sampling	400	Netting	380.00
DSE Capturing shorebirds for radio transmitters (Queenscliff)	3,000	Stools, windbreaks, spade	107.00
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$5,171.17</b>
	<b>\$57,400.00</b>		
		Payment to DSE for Spartina eradication	\$49,000.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$57,400.00</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>\$57,806.42</b>
Cash Balance 1/07/2007		Cash Balance 30/06/09	
Petty Cash	24.10	Petty Cash	11.80
Westpac Com. Solns, Account	1,029.06	Westpac Com. Solns, Account	1,220.11
		Westpac Maxi Bonus Account	35,080.53
Macquarie Account	32,171.63	Macquarie Account	3,438.24
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>\$33,224.79</b>	<b>Net Total</b>	<b>\$39,750.68</b>

## WWSG MEMBERSHIP LIST

### August 2009

Bev & Geoff Abbott  
 Richard & Margaret Alcorn  
 Charles & Jocelyn Allen  
 Malcolm Allen  
 Terri Allen  
 Mark Anderson  
 Peter Anton  
 Allen Archbold  
 Robyn & Steve Atkinson  
 Mark & Terry Barter  
 Graham & Jenny Beal  
 Margaret Bennett  
 Rob & Gail Berry  
 Malcolm & Judy Brown  
 Paul & Anna Buchhorn  
 Mavis & Nigel Burgess  
 Bill Bygott  
 Margaret Cameron  
 Aiden Campbell  
 Jeff & Sarah Campbell  
 Mervyn & Ann Chappel  
 Rob Clemens  
 Maureen Christie  
 Allan Clarke & Marj Reni  
 Bretan Clifford  
 Pete Collins  
 Mike Connor  
 Dave Cropley  
 Rosemary Davidson  
 Michael Dawkins  
 John Dawson  
 Julie Deleyev  
 Xenia Dennett  
 Jill Denning  
 Barbara Dickson  
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 Dianne Emslie  
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*And landowners on whose property the group operates in Victoria*

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