

*Angela*

# VICTORIAN WADER STUDY GROUP



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## STUDY GROUP

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BULLETIN NO. 5

JANUARY 1982

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EDITORIAL

The last six months of the Group's activities have seen a number of significant improvements in the quantity of data collected on some species. As well, the wader population on Anderson's Inlet was finally sampled, with a catch of 982 Stints. Group members also participated in the first ever National winter wader count of the Australasian Wader Studies Group, and the highly successful north-west Australia wader studies expedition.

In this period we had a number of recoveries, including a Curlew Sandpiper in south eastern Siberia - the group's first Russian recovery. The value of colour dyeing Double-banded Plovers has been vindicated by three separate sightings of "buttercups" in the South Island of New Zealand. Closer to home, the South Australian Ornithological Association Wader Study Group, using their new cannon-net, made their first catch at ICI saltfields just north of Adelaide and caught a Stint which had been banded at Werribee by us!

Valuable information on pre-migratory weight increases of Double-banded Plovers was obtained in August, and a record total of 281 were caught during the period March-August 1981. In September, substantial numbers (206) of Sharptailed Sandpipers were caught, adding considerably to knowledge of arrival in arrested moult and the commencement of moult. By October, the moult of a considerable number of Stints had been recorded in preparation for retrapping in early 1982 to gauge the speed and duration of moult. As well, 23 Eastern Curlews were caught at Queenscliff after a long wait, the largest number in a single catch ever. November saw the success at Andersons Inlet, as well as an interesting small catch of Godwit and Oystercatcher at Yallock Creek on Westernport Bay, all of which were juvenile birds. At Werribee, 32 Rednecked Avocets were caught, and preliminary analysis of their measurements is proving most interesting. The December catch of 79 Great Knot at Queenscliff more than doubled the number of this species banded in southern Australian. Fifteen Lesser Golden Plover caught at Altona in December was also a first. The disappointment of the period was the failure to make any really good Curlew Sandpiper catches - only 49 with 706 Rednecked Stints at Werribee Spit on 31 October and only 63 with 394 Rednecked Stints at Yallock Creek on 20 December. Curlew Sandpipers appear to have had a poor breeding season in 1981 with only a very low percentage of juveniles recorded so far (c.2%, compared with c.20% for Rednecked Stints).

This issue of the Bulletin contains two articles about Oystercatchers. They illustrate the value of counts in elucidating distribution of birds and identifying areas of particular importance to species (Corner Inlet yet again!). The contribution of feeding studies to understanding birds' behaviour is also illustrated. Both papers suggest directions for future research. Ralph Keller is to be thanked for his realistic portrayal of the two species. Also included is Ken Rogers' analysis of the measurements of the Eastern Curlews caught at Queenscliff in October, which identifies parameters which should be measured on this species in the hand.

It is hoped that all members will participate in the National Wader Count to be held on the weekend of 6 and 7 February 1982, and will continue to support the Group's field programme.

WADER BANDING DETAILSCATCHES IN VICTORIA - JULY TO DECEMBER 1981

	<u>NEW</u>	<u>RETRAP</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Pied Oystercatcher	13	-	13
Lesser Golden Plover	15	-	15
Doublebanded Plover	128	11	139
Redcapped Plover	2	-	2
Rednecked Avocet	32	-	32
Ruddy Turnstone	1	-	1
Eastern Curlew	23	-	23
Bartailed Godwit	38	-	38
Red Knot	47	1	48
Great Knot	77	2	79
Sharptailed Sandpiper	264	14	278
Rednecked Stint	2124	355	2479
Curlew Sandpiper	128	42	170
	<u>2892</u>	<u>425</u>	<u>3317</u>

The above birds were caught at Werribee (1563), Anderson's Inlet (982), Westernport Bay (492), Queenscliff (165), Altona (115).

VICTORIAN WADER CATCHES  
1975 to 31 DECEMBER 1981

	<u>NEW</u>	<u>RETRAP</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Pied Oystercatcher	139	34	173
Sooty Oystercatcher	1	-	1
Masked Lapwing	15	-	15
Grey Plover	9	-	9
Lesser Golden Plover	38	4	42
Redkneed Dotterel	44	-	44
Hooded Plover	9	-	9
Mongolian Plover	12	1	13
Double banded Plover	509	22	531
Redcapped Plover	252	73	325
Blackfronted Plover	3	-	3
Blackwinged Stilt	6	-	6
Rednecked Avocet	49	-	49
Ruddy Turnstone	58	-	58
Eastern Curlew	26	-	26
Greytailed Tatler	3	-	3
Greenshank	1	-	1
Terek Sandpiper	4	-	4
Latham's Snipe	26	-	26
Bartailed Godwit	282	-	282
Red Knot	227	13	240
Great Knot	107	2	109
Sharptailed Sandpiper	1406	25	1431
Little Stint	1	-	1
Rednecked Stint	13125	2016	15141
Longtoed Stint	1	-	1
Curlew Sandpiper	4166	429	4595
Sanderling	2	-	2
	<u>20521</u>	<u>2619</u>	<u>23140</u>

28 species

LOCATIONS OF WADERS CAUGHT BY VWSG  
IN VICTORIA TO DECEMBER 1981

Werribee	16,657
Westernport Bay	2,932
Queenscliff	1,318
Anderson's Inlet (Inverloch)	988
Corner Inlet (off Mann's Beach)	886
Altona (Point Cook)	198
Seaford Swamp	98
Mud Island	35
Seaspray (Lake Reeve)	18
Point Lonsdale	10
	<u>23,140</u>

Totals include both newly banded birds and retraps

ANNUAL WADER BANDING TOTALS BY VWSG IN VICTORIA

<u>CALENDAR YEAR</u>	<u>NEW</u>	<u>RETRAPS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
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
<u>Total catches in Victoria</u>	<u>20521</u>	<u>2619</u>	<u>23140</u>

WADER CATCHES IN OTHER STATES IN WHICH  
VWSG HAS PARTICIPATED

		<u>NEW</u>	<u>RETRAPS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Tasmania (Hobart)	Nov 1979	1244	83	1327
Sth Aust (Adelaide)	Feb 1980	815	5	820
N.S.W. (Newcastle & Botany Bay)	Mar 1981	906	15	921
West Aust (Broome)	Aug/Sept 1981	1183	6	1189
		<u>4148</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>4257</u>

If these birds, handled during joint operations with local groups in other States, are included the VWSG has now been involved in the catching of 27,397 waders.



A PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF PIED AND SOOTY OYSTERCATCHERS IN VICTORIA.

The Pied Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralaegus*) and the Sooty Oystercatcher (*H. fuliginosus*) are assumed to occur commonly along most of the Australian coast. Little work has been published on the status of these species in Victoria. In New South Wales, the Pied Oystercatcher is considered to be endangered due to human pressure on beach nesting sites; that is, "faced with extinction [in N.S.W.] if the present adverse environmental pressures acting on them continue unchecked." (Hermes, 1980). There is no estimate of the total number of birds in that state.

With the present upturn in interest in waders, a number of surveys have taken place in Victoria which enable estimates to be made of the population and distribution of both species of Oystercatcher in this state. One is the October 1980 survey of sandy ocean beaches for the Hooded Plover, in which data was collected in many areas on the total number of waders of all species. The other is the February, 1981 survey of waders in Victoria, which was a part of the first national count of the Australasian Wader Studies Group. Whereas the former concentrated on ocean beaches, the latter was for the large part confined to marine embayments.

This paper attempts a preliminary review of the populations and distributions of the Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher in Victoria based on the data generated in these surveys. It must be stressed that it is only preliminary, and written primarily to suggest directions for future research.

The methods employed in the October 1980 survey are briefly detailed in Lane (1981), whilst those for the February 1981 survey are discussed in Martindale (1981, a, b).

Results from both surveys for the Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. These give a total population for Pied Oystercatchers of 1285 birds, and for Sooty Oystercatcher of 311 birds. These figures are not considered to be wholly accurate, for the following reasons;

1) In the time elapsed between the two surveys (i.e. four months) movement between bays and ocean coasts may have occurred. Evidence for movement comes from observed flocking in the winter months at Werribee and Queenscliffe (pers. obs.) and at Westernport (Loyn, 1975)

2) It is known that Sooty Oystercatchers and to a lesser extent Pied Oystercatchers breed on offshore islands (see Corella, Sea-bird Island Series, 80 - 100.). These islands were not covered in either survey. Summers and Cooper (1977) in a review of the status of the Black Oystercatcher in South Africa, observed that most of the population occurred on off-shore islands. It is quite probable that substantial numbers of Sooty Oystercatchers occur on Victoria's offshore islands.

Notwithstanding this, the overlap in areas covered by the two surveys (which has been allowed for as much as possible) and the lack of data from parts of the coast in the October survey, a number of conclusions can be validly drawn.

Firstly, Sooty Oystercatchers have a much more restricted distribution than the Pied Oystercatcher. Additionally a much larger proportion of its population occurs in Corner Inlet (78% c/f 65%).

Both these figures underscore the immense importance of Corner Inlet for coastal wader populations.

The correlation between mainland distribution and the frequency



Table 1 Distribution of numbers of Pied Oystercatchers in Vic.

AREA	OCT '80	FEB '81	MAX. POSS.
SA Border Warnambool	18+	68	68
Warnambool Port Phillip Bay	0		+
Port Phillip		120	120
Mornington Peninsula Back beaches	+		+
Westernport		124	124
Phillip Island Inverloch	+		+
Anderson's Inlet		7	7
Inverloch <sup>+</sup> Shallow Inlet	3		3
Wilson's Promontory	1		1
*Shallow Inlet <sup>+</sup> Corner Inlet	147	823	823
+McLoughlin's Beach <sup>+</sup> Lakes Entrance	2	19	19
Lakes Entrance <sup>+</sup> Snowy River	8		8
Snowy River Mallacoota	91	21	91
Mallacoota NSW Border	20		20
TOTAL	273	1182	1285

\*NB Counts from Oct '80 survey not included in total for Corner Inlet/Shallow Inlet due to probable overlap.

+Feb '81 Figure = Gippsland Lakes only, some overlap, so not included.

of literature records for Sooty Oystercatchers breeding on offshore islands adjacent to these areas (Corella, 1980 Vol 4(4) Seabird Island Series 80-100), suggests that mainland populations may be stocked to a large extent with birds originating from these islands. Further investigation is obviously necessary to clarify this point.

Pied Oystercatchers were recorded in larger numbers on more isolated less populated beaches. Despite similar geography, beaches used heavily for human recreation held much fewer of this species (i.e. Cape Otway ~ Shallow Inlet). This appears to point to the adverse effects of human useage of beaches. Better quantification of this result is desirable. Investigation into the precise causes of reduced populations on such beaches would greatly aid in the formulation of management options to eleivate detrimental effects.

Considine (this issue) has summarized some of her findings for Sooty Oystercatchers on Victoria's ocean coast, and a study on their ecology inside Corner Inlet and on offshore islands would further increase our understanding of the requirements of this species in Victoria.

The elucidation of these aspects of Victorian Oystercatcher populations can be achieved through a combination of banding studies, counting and feeding ecology research. Such studies can be guided by the preliminary findings of these two surveys.

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BRETT LANE.

Table 2 Distribution of Numbers of Sooty Oystercatchers in Vic.

AREA/DATE	OCT '80	FEB '81	MAX. POSS.
SA Border+ Warnambool	1	1	1
Warnambool Port Phillip	1		1
Port Phillip		2	2
Mornington Peninsula Back beaches	1		1
Westernport		1	1
Phillip Island Inverloch	10		10
Anderson's Inlet		1	1
Inverloch+ Shallow Inlet	9		9
Wilson's Promontory	36		36
*Shallow Inlet Corner Inlet	1	242	242
+McLoughlin's Beach Lakes Entrance	1	1	1
Lakes Entrance Snowy River	1		1
Snowy River Mallacoota	8	2	8
Mallacoota NSW Border	4		4
TOTAL	73	246	319

+Feb '81 was of Gippsland Lakes only, so not all Oct '80 area covered.

\*Counts from Oct '80 survey not included in total, as overlap probably occurred.

FIGURE 1; DISTRIBUTION OF PIED OYSTERCATCHERS IN VICTORIA

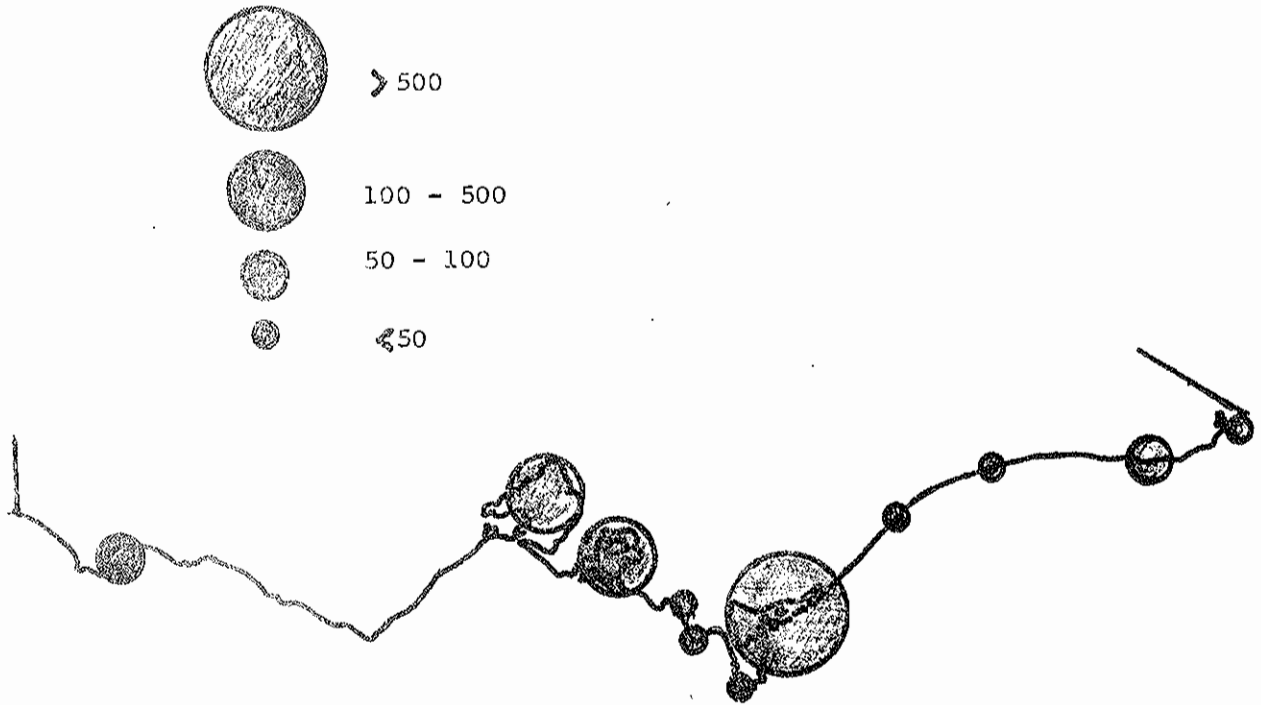
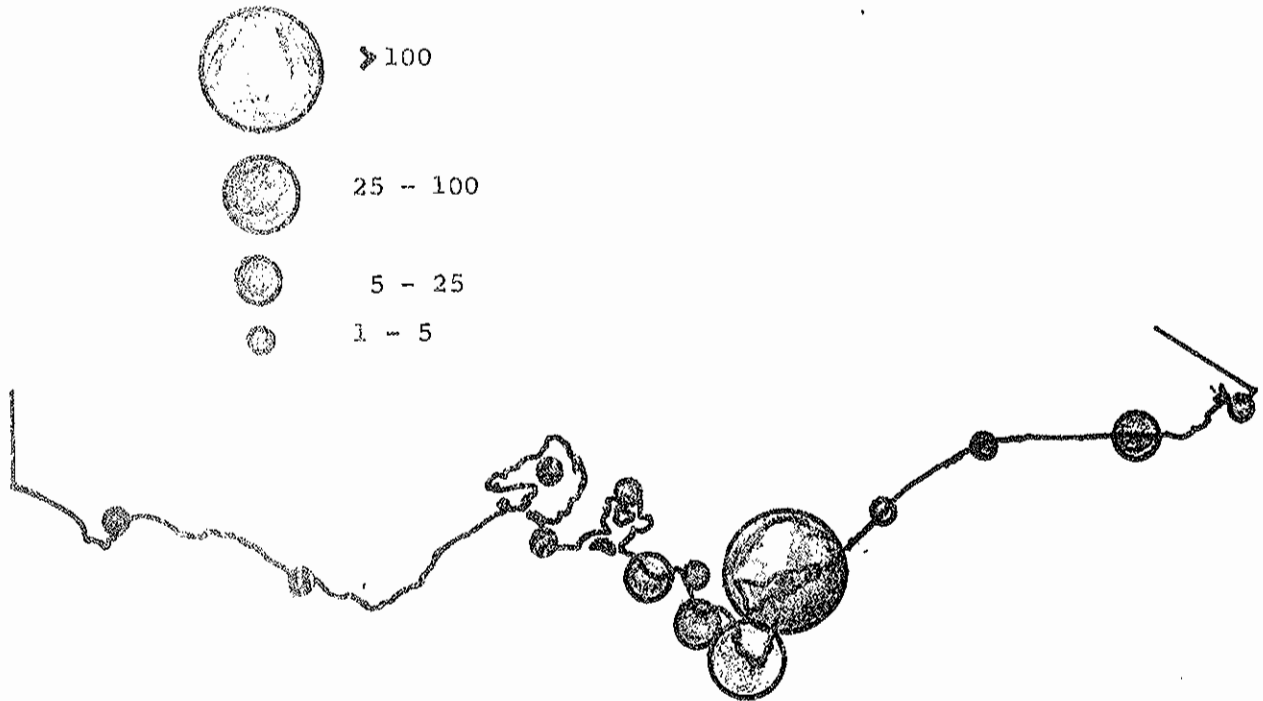


FIGURE 2; DISTRIBUTION OF SOOTY OYSTERCATCHERS IN VICTORIA



NOTES ON THE SEASONAL MOVEMENTS  
OF THE SOOTY OYSTERCATCHER (HAEMATOPUS FULIGINOSUS)  
IN SOUTHERN VICTORIA

It is likely that seasonal changes in food supply make some areas better than others for breeding and wintering, and food supply and breeding requirements are the ultimate causes of migration (Hale, 1980). An assessment of the relative importance of different areas to waders requires an understanding of the movements between areas and the ways in which these areas and their associated habitats are used.

During 1979, while studying the feeding behaviour of the Sooty Oystercatcher (*Haematopus fuliginosus*) at Phillip Island and Wilsons Promontory, it became apparent that localised movements within Victoria occurred (Consideine, 1979). In Victoria, Sooty Oystercatchers are more commonly associated with rocky shores, although large numbers can be found in sandy habitats (e.g. Corner Inlet). It appears that rocky shores are the favoured breeding habitat and the majority of Victorian birds breed on offshore islands from September to January (R.A.O.U. Nest Record Scheme and P.Dann, pers. comm.).

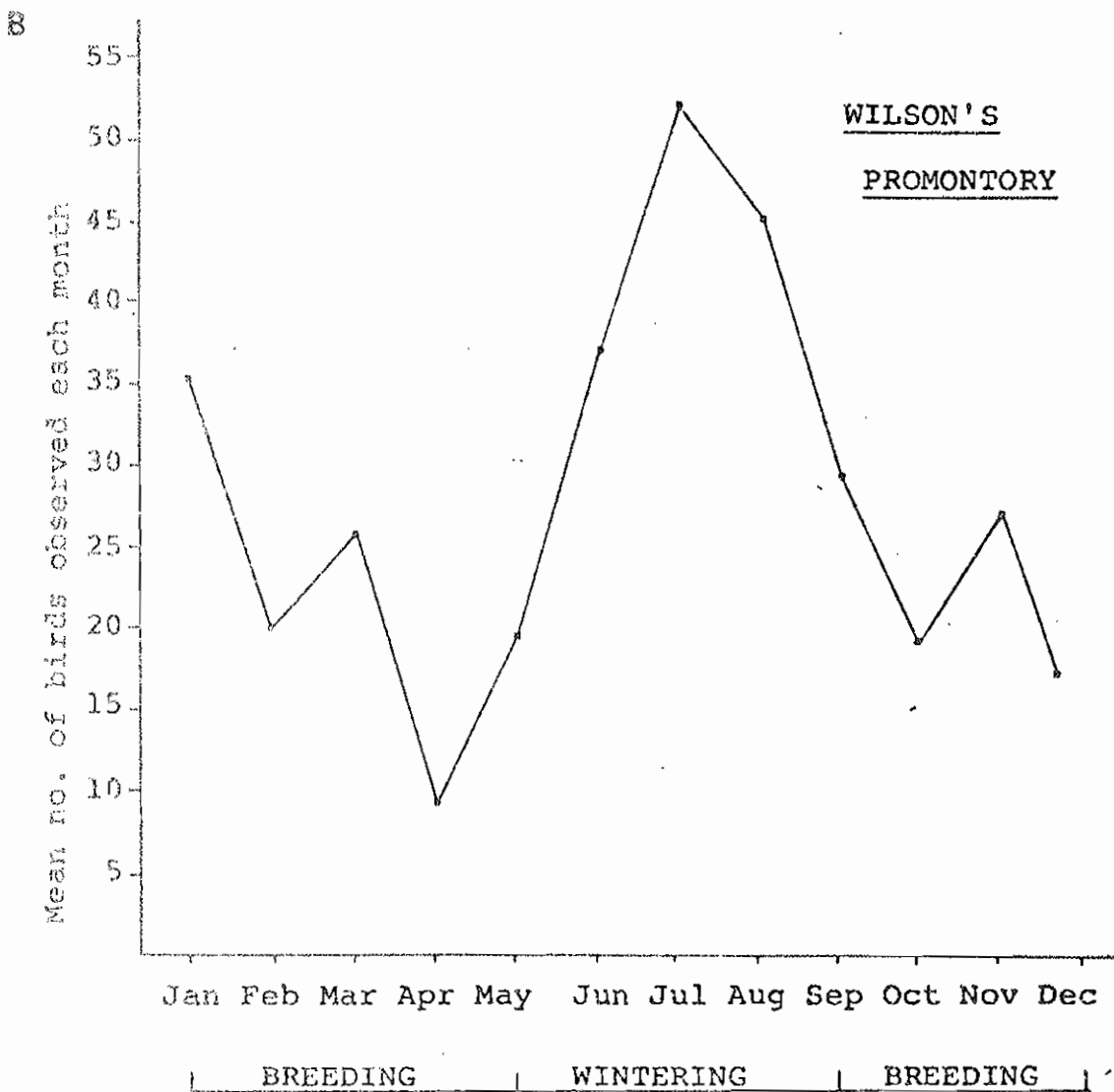
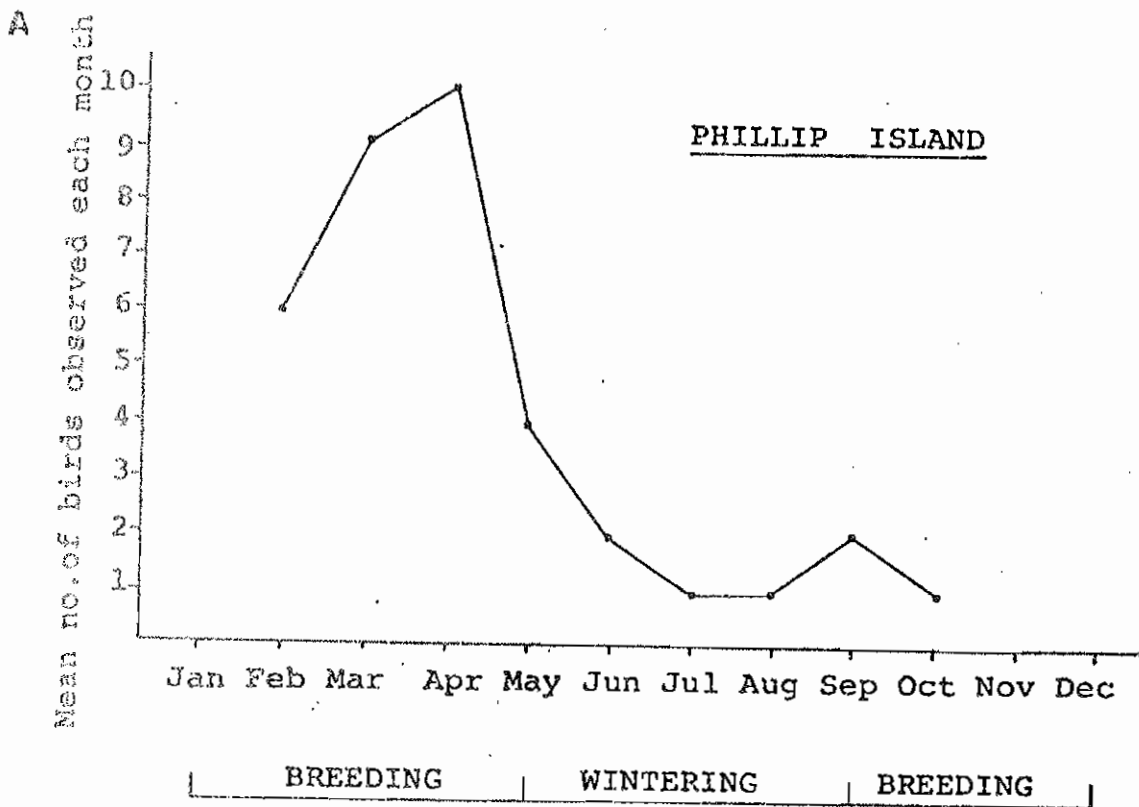
From January to October in 1979, counts were made every month at Phillip Island (Figure 1A). The number of birds increased from February to a peak of ten birds in April. During this time the adult birds were in pairs (some with fledged young) and actively defended territories on rocky shores. Most adults observed between February and April were in moult. In May, with the moult presumably completed, the birds left Phillip Island. About this time the birds were seen in loose flocks in other regions of south - eastern Victoria. Isolated birds were found in winter at Phillip Island, but not for more than a few days at a time at any one locality.

R. Cooper (unpublished) undertook monthly counts at Wilson's Promontory from 1965 to 1971. His data, plus personal counts were combined to indicate a seasonal pattern of abundance (Figure 1B). Here the reverse trend to Phillip Island was found. The numbers reached a maximum between May and September with lower numbers present in summer. In winter the birds at Wilson's Promontory were in flocks of up to 25 individuals. Thus it appears that Wilson's Promontory provides a wintering area for birds from other localities such as those at Phillip Island.

What would be the advantages of such seasonal movements? During the feeding study it was established that the food of the Sooty Oystercatcher consists primarily of intertidal invertebrates. They preferred to feed on rocky shores taking hard - shelled invertebrates almost exclusively. In June at Wilson's Promontory they also took sandhoppers (*Orchestia* sp.) from sandy beaches. Estimates of food intake indicated that it was more beneficial to feed on rocky shores (11 grams dry wt./hour) than on the sandy beaches (4 grams dry wt./hour).

At Phillip Island in summer, and at Wilson's Promontory in September, the birds fed on rocky intertidal platforms and roosted when the rocks were covered by the tide. At the former location they did this independantly of the time of day and duration of exposure of the intertidal zone. At Wilsons Promontory in September there were spring low tides resulting in maximum exposure of the intertidal zone

FIGURE 1 ; Monthly variation in the number of Oystercatchers present at Phillip Island (A) and Wilsons Promontory (B).



during the day and their behaviour there may have been a consequence of this. However, in June at Wilson's Promontory, the intertidal zone was exposed for only short periods during the day and the birds were devoting a much higher proportion of the day to feeding. They were exploiting rocky intertidal shores when uncovered by the tide, and when forced off the rocks by the rising tide moved to the backs of sandy beaches and fed on the less profitable sandhoppers. The compilation of time ~ energy budgets suggested that the Sooty Oystercatchers had difficulty obtaining sufficient food from the rocks in June at Wilson's Promontory and the sandhoppers provided an auxiliary food source when rock shore invertebrates were unavailable.

In winter it was noted that the feeding behaviour of Sooty Oystercatchers was affected by temperature, daylength and tides.

a) Temperature: Periods of low ambient temperatures cause an increase in metabolic rate of a bird and thus increase energy requirements (Evans, 1976).

b) Shorter Day Length: this results in less time available for visual detection of prey. On rocky shores it was apparent that the Oystercatchers were using visual cues to detect prey. Visual cues were also used to a lesser extent on sandy beaches. Experiments carried out on captive birds in Europe indicate that the Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralaegus*) feeding on hard shelled invertebrates, fed less successfully at night than during the day (Drinnan, 1958; Hopleston, 1971; Hulscher, 1974).

c) Tides: At Phillip Island in winter, there are relatively fewer hours of daylight in which rocky shores are exposed (Figure 2). This reduced access to their feeding grounds during daylight would make it more difficult for birds to obtain their food requirements at this time.

Of the three variables mentioned, the last two are probably the most significant as they restrict the time available for efficient feeding in the more profitable habitat. In winter, Sooty Oystercatchers have increased energy demands due to decreased ambient temperatures, but at this time they do not have to expend energy on breeding or moulting. The main difficulty for the Sooty Oystercatcher in winter is thus the reduced availability of its food resource during daylight hours resulting from the annual changes in daylength and tides. During this time they were unable to gather sufficient food from rocky shores. Locations such as Wilson's Promontory provide extensive areas along the back of the beach to feed. Although these areas appear to provide less food per unit time, they were necessary in winter for the birds to supplement their food intake from rocky shores. Similar areas of wide sandy beaches supporting large numbers of sandhoppers were not available at Phillip Island. Thus it appears that birds the Sooty Oystercatchers which occur on Phillip Island during the Spring and Summer months move to areas like Wilsons Promontory to survive the winter.



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MARGARET T CONSIDINE.

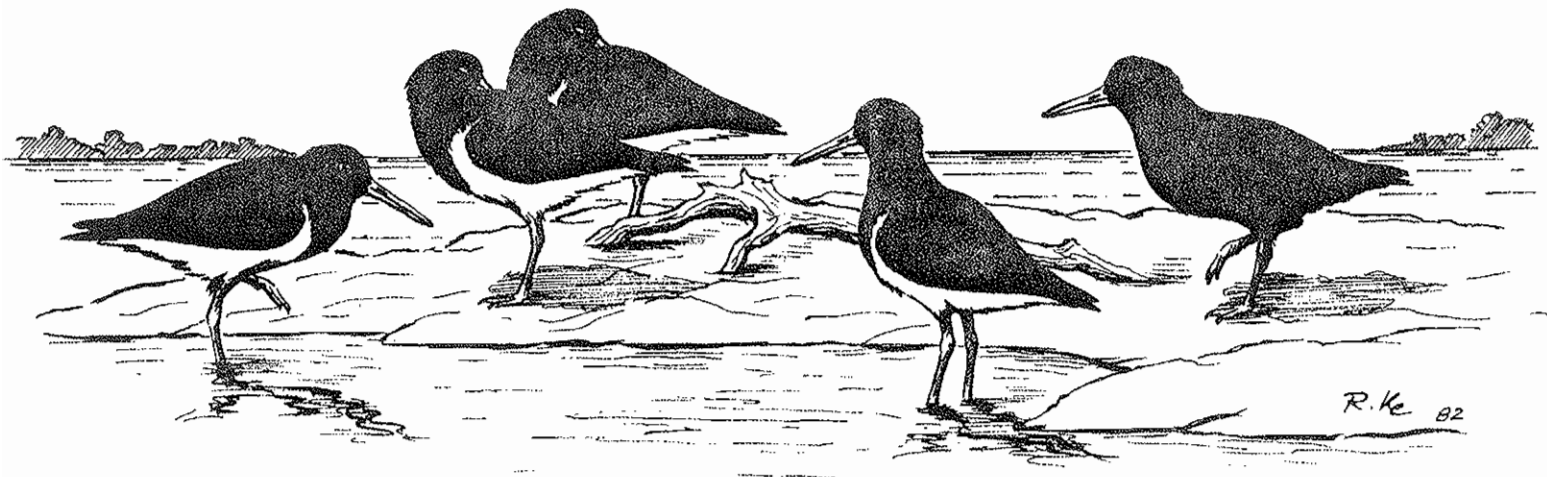
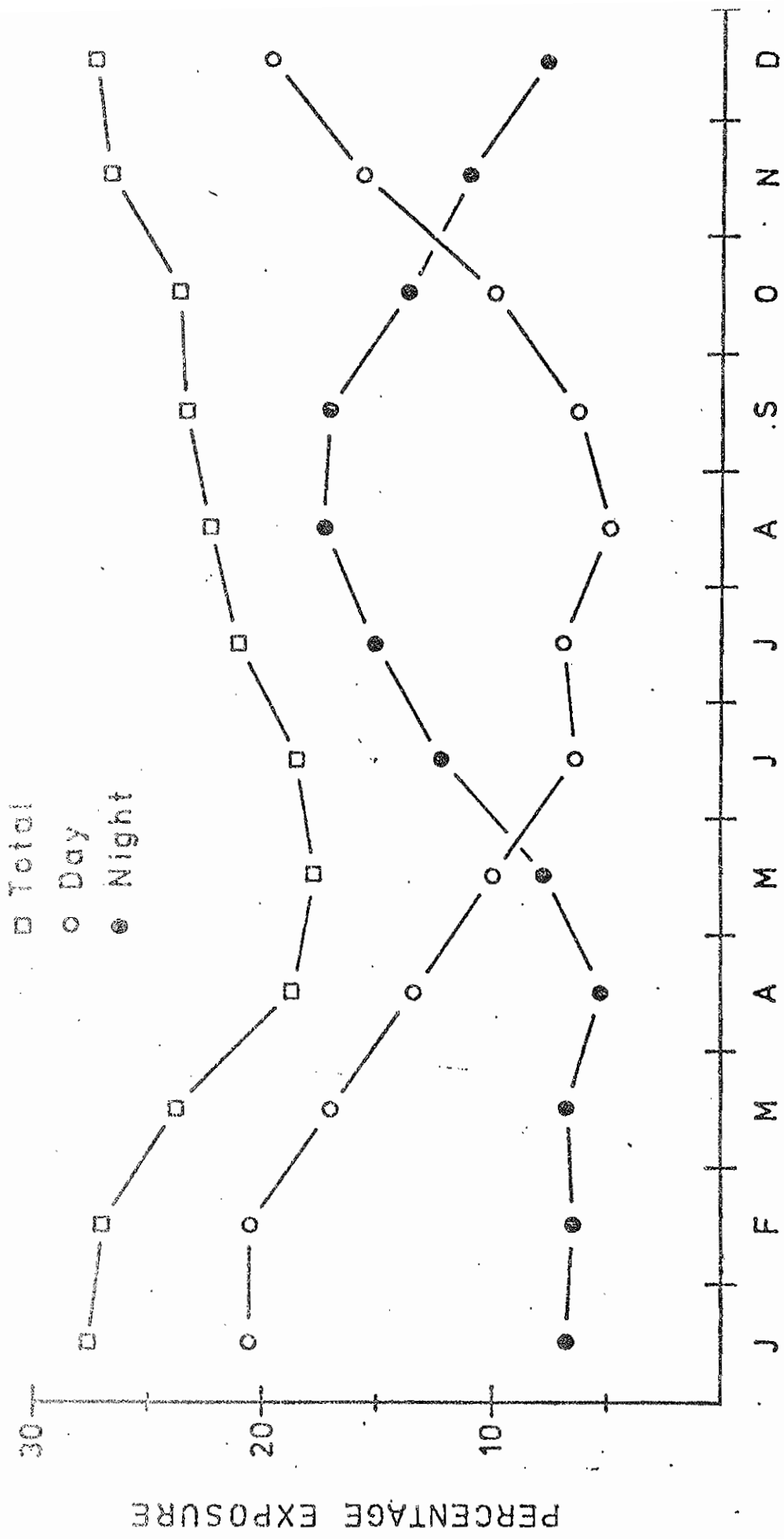


FIGURE 2 : Percentage exposure to air of the mid-littoral zone (0.6 m above datum) at San Remo (Phillip Island vicinity) during each month. (Parry, 1977).



RECOVERIES OF BANDED BIRDS

The original banding details are on the top line and the recovery details on the lower line. Local retraps and recoveries are not included. Werribee = The Spit and/or the adjacent sewage farm.

Mongolian Plover

051-00202	Adult	28.12.76	Stockton, Newcastle NSW	(S.G. Lane)
	Recaptured	2.1.82	Mann's Beach, Corner Inlet	830 km SW

This bird, recaptured 5 years and 5 days after banding, appears to have changed its "summering" location - an unusual event for most species. This is the first recovery in Australia of a Mongolian Plover away from its banding location.

Double-banded Plover

The bird banded as a breeding adult (female) in 1977 at Lake Tekapo, New Zealand, and subsequently seen at Pt Wilson, Werribee, in June 1979 (recognised by individual colour bands), was again present at the usual location during the 1981 breeding season - the fifth successive year. See VWSG Bulletins Nos 2 and 4 for full details of previous sightings.

Rednecked Stint

032-17608	Juvenile	11.3.79	Werribee	
	Recaptured	8.11.81	Adelaide Saltworks, SA	650 km NW

This bird was caught in the first cannon net catch of the wader group in South Australia - a nice reward to the VWSG for assistance given in construction of their new equipment. There had been an earlier (Feb 1980) sighting at Adelaide Saltworks of a Rednecked Stint colour dyed at Werribee.

032-45232	Juvenile	15.11.81	Inverloch, Vic	
	Recaptured	10.1.82	Hobart, Tasmania	500 km SSE

Recaptured only seven weeks after banding, this bird shows that southward passage of juvenile birds was still in progress in mid-November.

Curlew Sandpiper

041-00221	Adult	8.3.80	Werribee	
	?	25.5.80	Habarovski Region, Chegdomyn, U.S.S.R.	9500 km N.
			(51°07'N, 133°02'E)	

This is the first recovery in the U.S.S.R. of an Australain-banded Curlew Sandpiper. The location, which is south of the breeding range, corresponds well with the date of recovery as birds normally arrive on their breeding grounds in early June. Only 12 weeks had elapsed between banding at Werribee and recovery in the USSR. The bird weighed 81 gm on 8 March - a 53% addition to the average fat free weight - and probably departed from Werribee in mid-March. This recovery also fits in well with earlier recoveries of Curlew Sandpipers in China and Hong Kong in April/early May.

FURTHER SIGHTINGS OF COLOUR-MARKED BIRDSColour dyed (and colour banded)Double banded Plover

Three birds colour dyed and colour banded (both) at Pt Wilson (Werribee) and Pt Cook (Altona) between 23/5/81 and 15/8/81 were reported in South Island, New Zealand, as follows:

- a) Lake Ellesmere, near Christchurch - 5/11/81 to at least 2/12/81. Seen by Colin O'Donnell, N.Z. Wildlife Service.
- b) Lake Ellesmere, near Christchurch - 24/11/81. This was a different bird to that above (yellow dye much more extensive). Seen by Colin O'Donnell, N.Z. Wildlife Service.
- c) Cass River Delta, Lake Tekapo - 19/11/81. Identified as a male bird by Ray Pierce, who has studied the breeding waders in this area for several years.

These three reports from the central region of South Island, New Zealand, are the first of Australian-banded Doublebanded Plovers. Distances from Werribee are between 2,000 and 2,200 km ESE. All birds were first recognised by the yellow plumage dye, but the coloured leg bands were also observed subsequently. In view of the excellent results from the 1981 colour marking programme this will be continued in 1982.

Also a bird colour dyed at Werribee in May 1981 was observed (in a flock of 380) at Spectacle Ponds, Altona, on 5/8/81 (movement 30 km NE). This is the first local movement we have recorded.

Colour-bandedPied Oystercatcher

- 8/8/80 Rhyll, Phillip Island Kim Lowe  
One bird from Werribee (blue band - moved 82 km SE) out of flock of 22.
- 1/8/81 Long Island Point, near Hastings, Westernport Kim Lowe  
Out of 36 birds one was from Werribee (blue band - moved 67 km ESE) and one was from Rhyll (orange band - moved 17 km NNW)
- 12/12/81 Tortoise Head, French Island Brett Lane  
One bird from Rhyll (orange band - moved 5 km NNW)
- 12/12/81 Rams Island, Westernport Brett Lane  
One bird from Werribee (blue band moved 82 km SE) and one from Rhyll (orange band - moved 5 km NE)

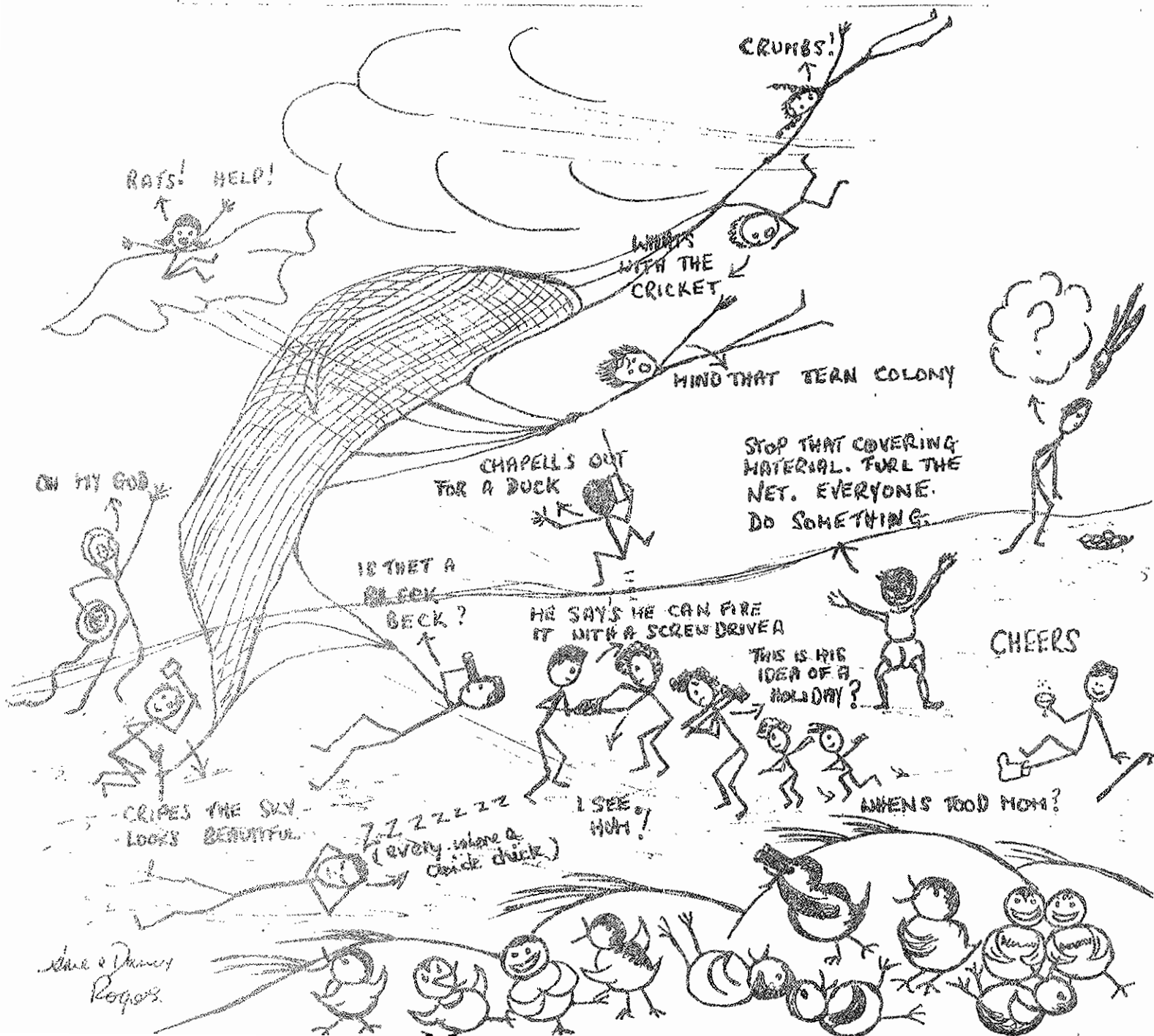
Sooty Oystercatcher

- 1/8/81 Long Island Point, Hastings  
A bird banded as a pullus (unfledged chick)  
at Seal Rocks, Phillip Island, on 4/1/80  
was identified by its (black, right) colour  
band. Movement was 27 km NNE.

Kim Lowe

The above sightings of colour marked birds further illustrate  
the widespread movements of Pied Oystercatchers of up to  
100 km. within Port Phillip and Westernport Bays (see VWSG  
Bulletins 1-4).

A PICTURE OF DREAM ISLAND



DREAM ISLAND

A deserted island, the height of summer, endless beaches, a modicum of birding, no cars, balmy seas, and barmy people. What a vision, what happiness, with what anticipation did various and sundry make their way to a mystic, unnamed island in Corner Inlet on New Year's Eve.

The magic continued, no-one arrived late. This was in no small part due to "late" having no meaning as our leader had failed to hire the Queen Mary in the belief that we could ferry selves and stuff in a couple of recently excavated coracles. These resolutely refused every effort to start or continue and showed every inclination to sink when they did. We overcame this by throwing chattels from one to the other so that, for the most part, the journeys were accomplished with the cargo in the air. This way we survived to pitch our tents in a little haven of peace and tranquillity amongst the dunes.

At this stage, euphoria was rife and, with unwonted keenness and efficiency, the nets were set. Midnight saw one lonely three-legged beast wandering round the camp site looking for revellers eager to share his hopes for the coming year. He ultimately returned to his lair with curses and lamentations, the former of which bore fruit as his curses were answered. That night the wind howled and the tents came. Two tents were blown down and only the virtuous slept.

Birding brings us close to the mysteries of nature. The morning recce party discovered that, however well man camouflages, God does it better. Two feet of the incoming tide made the catching area invisible both to waders and to man. Were we deterred? Never. We moved the nets, the cannons, the cables, the pegs, the keeping cages, the covering material, the hide, and our guardian angel, Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all. Some of the weaker brethren complained that the wind had not dropped and, if they stood up, they got blown over, whilst, if they kept low, they got sand blasted. This sign of frailty persisted throughout. A hardy member of the group, with perhaps more natural covering than most, commented that there was no cause for complaint until the bone was exposed by the stripping of its outer covering. The lesser endowed reached this point.

Re-setting the nets in an area of low dunes was a delight. Like Muslims responding to the Muezzin, we bowed low towards Mecca from whence the wind came, and enjoyed humility and sand. Some thought, in their ignorance, that the sand walls we built were to provide a shelter for birds in the catching area; the better informed had similar intentions, but were more selfishly directed. Do not misunderstand me, relative to what came later we were basking in rejuvenating zephyrs. Sufficient to say, the job was done and we waited patiently for the birds who, of course, went somewhere else. The afternoon tide being lower, they went to where the nets had been set for the morning.

The human spirit rises over such adversities. With an undiminishing supply of water, and a rapidly diminishing supply of the gift of Bacchus, we prevailed. We even invented a new dish, having no choice, sand. Not much nutritional value, grinds the teeth, but very good roughage. Adding to our joys was the pitter-patter of little feet thundering about. One particular guy and guy-rope had a mutual fascination, until the latter was ripped out of the tent. "Great days and jolly days" as Newbolt so wisely says. A sentiment, incomprehensively, not shared by the owner of the tent, which adopted a list to port, or was it sweet sherry?

Something went wrong the next morning; we caught some birds. Distressingly, the catch provided some ornithologically useful information, rather against the spirit of our achievements, if not our intent. We were, incidentally, refreshed by torrential rain while processing. Having proven success, we did the obvious thing, we moved Uncle Tom Cobley and his friends half a mile to a better (sic) place. Rather than risking a catch on the afternoon tide, an expedition was made, with what arrogance, to examine ringing sites on an adjacent island. This showed that we were camped in the wrong place as the "new" island had no birds.

At 6 am the following morning, after an hour's wait, the hide flooded. The failure of the firing box preceded this and the aquatic salvage of equipment succeeded. Periscopes and bathyscopes are on order; watch for an increase in subscriptions.

We had of course to move Uncle Tom Cobley and friends, again, but only about half a mile. Now we showed our class, we set nets in an area where the ground was invisible from six inches above it for the blowing sand; an epic boat trip got us some batteries; and an imaginative exercise with fuse wire and plasticine constructed a firing box. Waiting for the right moment was terrible, partly because the period was so long. But we were on top of the game, we knew the island, the tides, the birds and the weather.

Rather than move UTCAA (just for practice you understand) and having fortified ourselves with a few choruses of "Eternal Father" and other suitable spiritual reinforcements, some intrepid souls risked the terrors of the deep to ring tern and gull pulli. On arrival at one colony the following exchange ensued:

Person A: "Here's a chick"  
 Person B: "There's a chick"  
 Person C: "Everywhere's a chick-chick"

The return journey was much safer as there was one fewer passenger.

But now came the big moment; after adversity, bad luck, and failure, we were set. The twinklers were twinkling with grace and effectiveness. The birds recognised the delights of the catching area. We were agog with anticipation when, apparently spontaneously, a net went off before they had reached it. "What happened?" was the reasonable question. "The triumph of incompetence over endeavour", was the unspoken reply. We caught six terns, rather than 600 waders.



After this, things started to go wrong. We ran out of grog, the elastic broke on the coracles, Uncle Tom Cobby and his friends put on weight, and we cooked our remaining food only to find ourselves sacrificing mastication to instant rescue by a pair of bemused fishermen. Possibly worst of all, life returned to normal and the wind dropped once we reached the mainland. Absolute lunacy but fun. Of such stuff are memories and dreams made.

KEN ROGERS

EDITOR'S NOTES:

- 1) The author is apparently suffering from dementia since he appeared to enjoy himself. Changes will be made to the VWSG constitution to ensure that such characters no longer obtain membership.
- 2) The author's chronology and facts are wrong. He omitted one catch, a complete day, and 15 carries of what he condescendingly calls "Uncle Tom Cobby and friends"
- 3) The author offers a prize of a ceramic pot to anyone who can identify the characters in the accompanying cartoon. To what ends do some people go to see their names in print?
- 4) Those present (names can be deleted on payment of a fee) were:
 

Uncle Tom Cobby et al	John Bowden-Perry
Heather Connor	Annie Rogers
James Connor	Danny Rogers
Mike Connor	Ken Rogers
Robin Connor	Maryam Rogers
Jeff Davies	Ira Savage
Alexandra Djurovick	John Starks
Brett Lane	Phil Starks
Clive Minton	Julie Strudwick
- 5) Written expressions of interest for another trip next year will be considered. See Note (1).
- 6) The author omitted one further fact - he was the culprit who, despite much practice with and opportune usage of a screwdriver on past occasions, experienced a momentary lapse in his prodigious abilities and accidentally fired the net too soon.

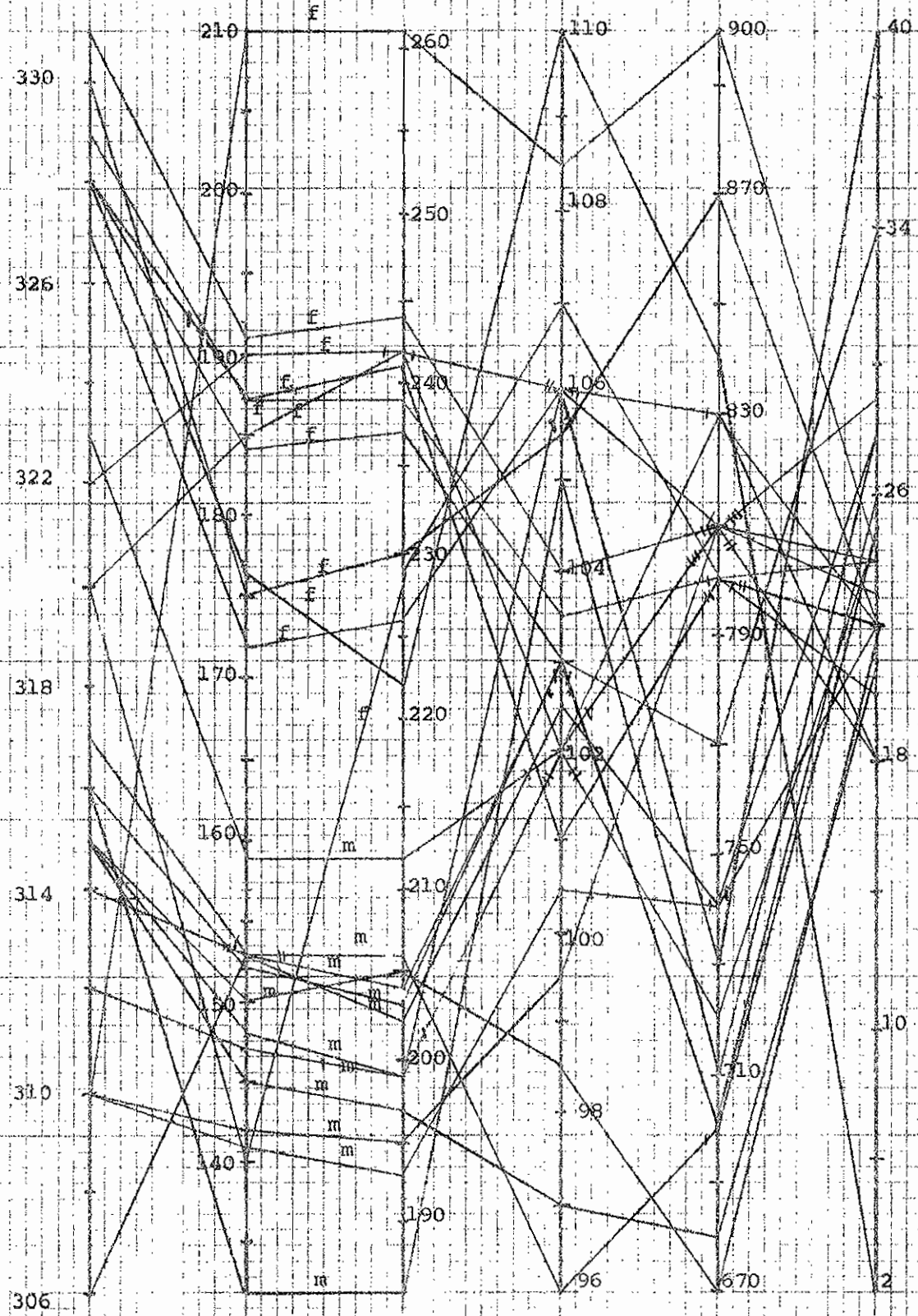
THE FACTS - CATCHES ON DREAM ISLAND, CORNER INLET

		<u>NEW</u>	<u>RETRAPS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
2.1.82 (a.m.)	Rednecked Stint	154	9	163
	Curlew Sandpiper	52	2	54
	Mongolian Plover	19	-	19
	Turnstone	13	-	13
	Large Sand Plover	9	-	9
	Sanderling	6	-	6
	Sharptailed Sandpiper	1	-	1
		<u>254</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>265</u>
2.1.82 (p.m.)	Mongolian Plover	21	1	22
	Sanderling	5	-	5
	Large Sand Plover	2	-	2
	Pied Oystercatcher	1	-	1
	Curlew Sandpiper	1	-	1
	Rednecked Stint	1	-	1
		<u>31</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>32</u>
3.1.82	Rednecked Stint	2	-	2
	Little Tern	4	-	4
		<u>6</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6</u>

Totals for Corner Inlet visit

	<u>Wader Total</u>	<u>Previous VWSG Total to 31/12/81</u>	<u>Previous Aust. Total to 30/6/80</u>	
Rednecked Stint	166			
Curlew Sandpiper	55			
Mongolian Plover	41	13	322	
Turnstone	13	58	121	
Large Sand Plover	11	-	10	
Sanderling	11	2	3	
Sharptailed Sandpiper	1			
<del>Rednecked Stint</del>	1	-		
Sharptailed Sandpiper	1	-	1	
	<u>254</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>265</u>	
2.1.82 (p.m.)	Mongolian Plover	21	1	22
	Sanderling	5	-	5
	Large Sand Plover	2	-	2
	Pied Oystercatcher	1	-	1
	Curlew Sandpiper	1	-	1
	Rednecked Stint	1	-	1
		<u>31</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>32</u>

FIGURE 1 : SIMULTANEOUS PLOT OF BIOMETRIC, WEIGHT AND MOULT DATA FOR EASTERN CURLEWS.



Wing Length (mm)      Bill Length (mm)      Total Head Length (mm)      Tarsal Length (mm)      Weight (gr.)      Mould Score

## MOULT, BIOMETRICS AND SEXING OF THE EASTERN CURLEW

On 18th October 1981, twenty ~ three Eastern Curlews (Numenius madagascariensis) were caught by cannon-net at Swan Island, Queenscliff by the Victorian Wader Study Group. This is the largest catch of this species ever taken in Australia, only 28 birds in total having been banded over fifteen years. Prater (1977) gives bill lengths for only 4 males and 4 females, as well as gross biometric data for 23 unsexed adults and 22 unsexed juvenile birds. The catch at Queenscliff adds significantly to our knowledge of this species, particularly its south-eastern Australian population.

### Sexing

Measurements of bill length, total head length, tarsal length, wing length and weight were taken for each bird. Primary moult was also recorded. Females are known to be larger than males (Prater, 1977). There was insufficient data to establish an objective sexing criterion, based on rigorous statistical analysis. Subjective analysis of the data using Prater's findings as a guide revealed that a sex could be assigned to each bird with some confidence. The graphical presentation shown in Figure 1 made possible the simultaneous examination of all the data. The figure also indicates the assigned sexes. It was concluded that:

- ~ bill and total head length gave good separation of the sexes.
- ~ wing length gave substantial separation with a degree of overlap.
- ~ tarsal length and weight gave a considerable amount of overlap between the sexes.

### Moult

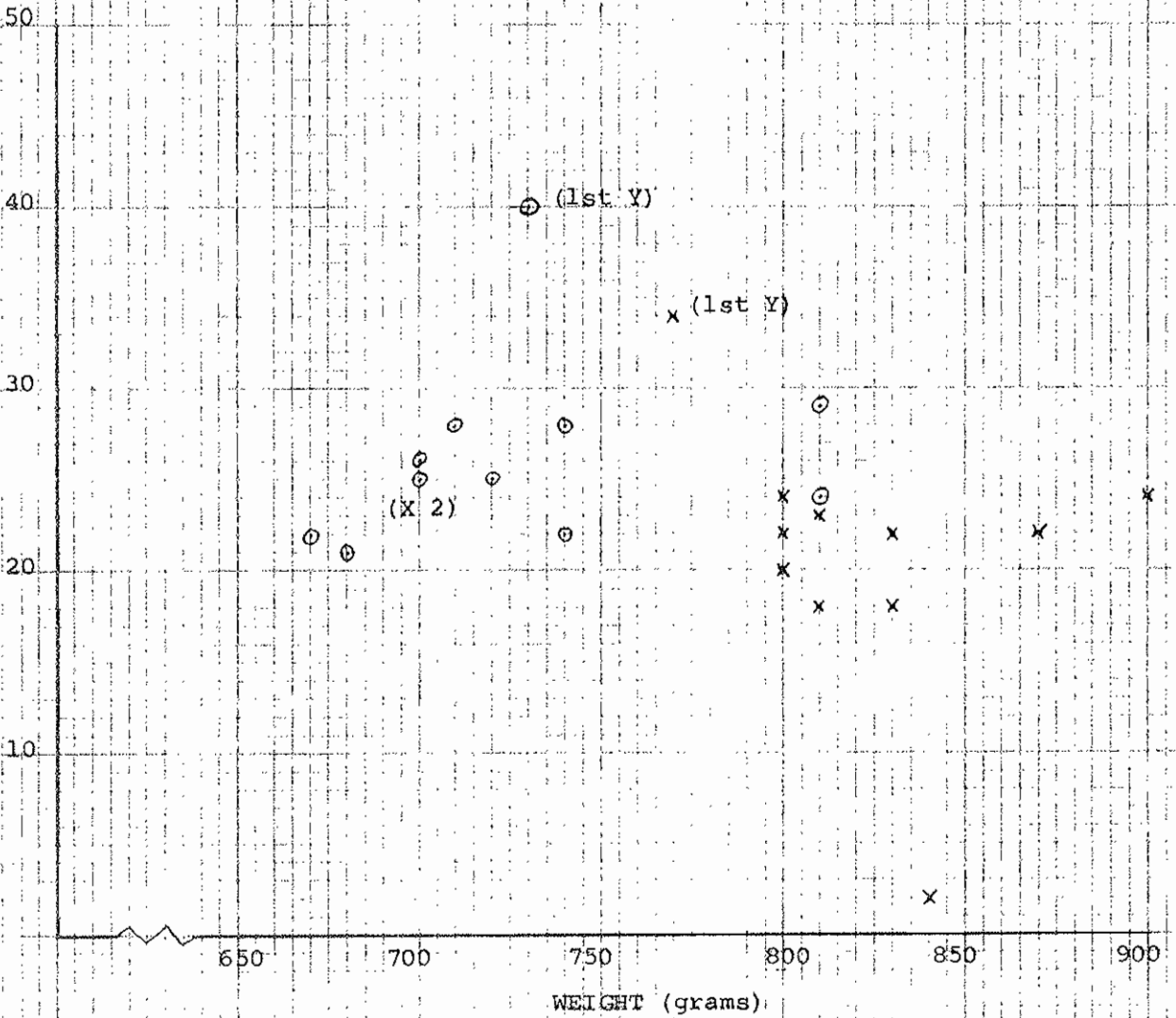
Moult scores using the method of Snow (1965) were calculated for each bird and plotted against weight, as shown in Figure 2. This shows:

~ a tendency in each sex for the heavier birds to be more advanced in moult. Statistical examination showed this tendency to be significant with at least 95% confidence. This is consistent with another large wader species, the Bar-tailed Godwit (Rogers and Minton, in prep.).

~ that the moult of the two first year birds (aged on plumage characteristics), one of each sex, is significantly in advance of that for adult birds, being 5.7 and 5.5 standard deviations above the mean for males and females respectively (see Table 1). (Moult score in Table 1 was calculated this way as distinct from the more usual median, since with the small sample it is more likely to be indicative.)

~ that the moult in adult males was more advanced than in adult females. The difference is not statistically significant. More data is needed to determine whether the difference is indicative of an earlier arrival in males, as is common with better known wader species (see, for example, Pearson, 1981) or arises by chance.

FIGURE 2 : MOULT SCORE VERSUS WEIGHT



### Biometric Parameters

Means and standard deviations for adult birds of each sex were calculated rejecting the wing length of one female (at 310 mm) and bill length of another female (at 140mm) as atypical and probably being measurement or recording errors.

The results are summarized in Table 1.

### Conclusions

A sample as small as this does not lend itself to detailed and conclusive analysis, but the preliminary results allow some conclusions to be drawn.

Total head length is likely to provide the single most effective sexing criterion. As a minimum, wing lengths should also be measured to provide a supplementary criterion (for particular samples) for the few cases where total head length is insufficient. Bill length is also a useful parameter for determining sex, though not as discriminating as total head length. Tarsal length shows too much overlap to be useful.

The first priority for further work is the development of a seasonally invariant sexing criterion which will allow a proper analysis of seasonal moult and weight changes. To this end, more samples are needed. The results presented here however, provide for the first time, an indication of the sexual dimorphism in this species, and point-in-time estimates of seasonally variant parameters. The consistency of the moult results with respect to those of other species lends some support to their credibility.

### References

Pearson, D J (1981) The wintering and moult of Ruffs (Philomachus pugnax) in the Kenyan Rift Valley. Ibis, 123.

Prater, A J; Marchant, J H; Vourinen, J. (1977) Guide to the identification and ageing of Holarctic Waders. British Trust for Ornithology. Guide No. 17.

Rogers, K G & Minton, C D T (in prep.) Morphometrics of Australian Bar-tailed Godwits.

Snow, D W (1965) The Moult Enquiry fourth report, June, 1965. Bird Study, 12: 135-142.

KEN ROGERS

TABLE 1 : BIOMETRICS AND MOULT OF EASTERN CURLEW , 18TH OCTOBER, 1981

PARAMETER	MALES			FEMALES		
	No. Obs	Mean	S.D.	No. Obs	Mean	S.D.
WING(mm)	12	314.1	4.27	10	327.3	3.56
BILL(mm)	12	147.9	7.18	10	185.7	10.8
TOTAL HEAD (mm)	12	200.1	6.84	11	237.5	10.8
TARSUS (mm)	12	101.3	3.05	11	105.1	2.75
WEIGHT (g)	12	725.8	44.8	11	823.6	36.4
MOULT SCORE	11	25	2.65	9	21.4	2.30

V.W.S.G. VISIT TO NEW SOUTH WALES,  
MARCH 1981 ~ A PERSONAL VIEW

Once again the V.W.S.G. decided to move to fields afar to gain more knowledge of wading birds which migrate to this country, and those which are resident and are peculiar to certain areas. Our Destination? Botany Bay, Sydney and Stockton and Kooragang Island, Newcastle, New South Wales.

18/3/81 The initial rendezvous on 18/3/81 was at Bob Moore's house, Kurnell Beach, Botany Bay. Bob is a close friend of Berrice Forest. John Bowden-Perry, Ian Savage and myself were the first to arrive. Soon after us, people came from everywhere; Woolongong, Canberra, Melbourne, Newcastle and the close surrounding towns. We all settled in where space permitted in Bob's spacious backyard. There was plenty of shelter, and lots of varied horizontal sleeping appliances to kip down on.

The program started in earnest with a visit to a potential catching site at Hale Street on Botany Bay, at 5 pm for a prospective cannon-netting session the following morning. We arrived at this spot after cheating the highway code; the cavalcade took a short cut over the centre road strip between two posts conveniently spaced by persons unknown, thus saving a long trip round.

At this site, to my horror, we had to witness many flights landing on this coastline; the first as nature intended it and the other as we humans have painstakingly tried to copy. The first we enjoyably watched, the other; Sydney Airport runway, we just tolerated, since we had an important task in hand.

It was concluded between the visitors and the local experts that it was a good thing for tomorrow morning at the break of dawn. The equipment was left in the sandhills. With the aid of Sydney's night life we navigated back to Bob's house for a late tea, and off to bed in preparation for an early rise in the morning. Strange smells emanated from the various cookers that night; it smelt like Chinatown gone beserk. The mossles did not make it any better either.

19/3/81 We were up at the crack of dawn and down to Hale Street with even more helpers. With the equipment laid out on the sand spit and the twinklers out with the radios, the weather and the prospects looked good. A small catch was made (see list). A bit of excitement came our way when the Sydney Airport rescue boat passed us on its routine tour of duty, pushing up some waves which were something like a king tide. Many fancy (and I mean fancy) moves were made to retrieve our equipment and waders. But all ended well. Incidentally, we lost one projectile, and having fired in the general direction of the nearby runway, we had second thoughts about reading the evening newspapers.

Having packed our gear, we had a second destination to go to and cannon-net; Towra Point. Here, we came lock stock and barrel. As we had plenty of time to rendezvous with the two power boats at Dolls Point we decided to pick up that traditional habit once again ~ food, which always seems to get in our way!

On arriving at Dolls Point and having dined, those present caught up with their notes and records and discussed wading in general. But not for long! Our illustrious leader brilliantly decided there was



work to be done. That beautiful beach between us and the sea, I'm sure, put us in two minds, particularly when we spread the nets on the sand for inspection and other waders came along for thoughtful inspection too. Under the cool of the trees, the equipment was prepared for our late afternoon catch and bundled up into suitable sizes for power boat storage. The boats later arrived and everything and everyone that could be, put aboard. Two trips later, we found the ideal spot to set the nets at the end of Towra Point.

Everything was at the ready, with plenty of time for the tide and the waders. The very enthusiastic pursued a bit of bird observing. Lists of birds were logged by Julie Strudwick, a persistent writer. We all think of and love the Silver Gull, but in this particular case we developed reservations in this very late catch (which ended up under torch light) due to the enthusiastic participation of this delightful bird. We did get our Bar-tailed Godwits ~ many sore fingers later!

Our return to Dolls Point at 9 pm was very exciting and not too many of us remained dry. We were thankful for the skill of our two boat captains.

Bed back at Bob Moore's mansion was gratefully received. We had a bonus to the dinner's culinary delights from the Kurnell oil refinery, which released some aromatic smells in our direction. My son Ian who loves exploring, found the spot where Captain Cook first landed. Some of us visited this spot and the Museum, and to our surprise found that one of his crew stepped ashore first. He might be recorded by a twist of fate as being the first recorded wader in Botany Bay.

20/3/81 Our third and final catch was made at the Caltex Terminal at Port Botany not far from our first catch. The spot proved to be perfect (see wader catch list). The day became hot as we settled into the routine; nets and cannons in place and twinklers out with their radios. The prize of this catch was the Black-tailed Godwit, plus eight other species.

Bar-tailed Godwits were the most caught in Botany Bay. That afternoon with everything packed into the the trailer, we headed for Newcastle. Thanks must go to Bob Moore for putting up with us ~ a great gentleman.

My trips through cities are always scary ones; I can get lost on an empty dinner plate. It is here that I have to thank Julie Strudwick who guided me both ways through Sydney.

The trip to Newcastle was a very hot one. The trailer behind my Kombi Van caused it to overheat. I finally ground to a halt at the Gosford freeway Interchange. Clive, who had gone ahead to Newcastle, was contacted and came to the rescue post-haste. He took the trailer in tow. We took off into the night, Clive in front and Julie close behind. My van rode faulty for the first 30 km. but then came good. We arrived at our digs in the early hours of the morning.

21/3/81 We seemed to be in bed only five minutes when it was into breakfast, and then on our way to the first catch at Stockton Bridge, Kooragang Island, on the Hunter Estuary. This spot is a familiar place for Fred vanGessel, the Newcastle leader. The three catches over two days were excellent. I was interested in Fred's way of processing birds, I took photographs of each stage of the procedure ~ a different one to the Victorian technique. The hosts at Newcastle were par excellent to us. We had a most enjoyable party at one of the members' homes; a house built on a vantage point overlooking the

sea. We counted 45 ships at anchor with their lights on. It was quite a spectacle.

We Victorians regretfully said our farewells to the wader enthusiasts in the North and returned to the South ~ each in our individual ways.

I am sure we all gained something from each other as we worked together on this very interesting project.

IRA SAVAGE

VISIT TO N.S.W. - CATCH DETAILS

			<u>New</u>	<u>Retrap</u>	<u>Total</u>
19.3.81 (morning)	Hale St,	Bartailed Godwit	24	-	24
	Botany	Curlew Sandpiper	1	-	1
	Bay	E. Golden Plover	1	-	1
			<u>26</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>26</u>
19.3.81 (evening)	Towra Pt.,	Bartailed Godwit	53	-	53
	Botany Bay				
20.3.81 (morning)	Caltex, Botany Bay	Bartailed Godwit	108	9	117
		Curlew Sandpiper	78	2	80
		Rednecked Stint	15	-	15
		Redcapped Plover	9	-	9
		Double-banded Plover	4	-	4
		Great Knot	2	-	2
		Red Knot	1	-	1
		Black-tailed Godwit	1	-	1
		Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	-	1
			<u>219</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>230</u>
21.3.81 (morning)	Stockton	Sharptailed Sandpiper	326	2	328
	Bridge,	Bartailed Godwit	23	-	23
	Newcastle	Curlew Sandpiper	9	-	9
			<u>358</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>360</u>
22.3.81 (1st catch)	Stockton	Sharptailed			
	Bridge, Newcastle	Sandpiper	238	2	240
22.3.81 (2nd catch)	Stockton	Bartailed Godwit	12	-	12
	Bridge, Newcastle				
<u>6 CATCHES - GRAND TOTALS</u>			<u>906</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>921</u>

N.W. AUSTRALIA WADER EXPEDITIONS

The Australasian Wader Studies Group organised an expedition to North West Australia in late August/early September 1981 involving aerial and ground wader surveys and cannon netting. Ten people from Victoria participated.

Parts of the Gulf of Carpentaria and much of Australia's north-west coast were covered and over 1,100 birds caught in Roebuck Bay near Broome (see Table). The information obtained revealed that areas of the north coast of Australia are rich in waders, particularly Godwits and Knot (see Table). Over 40,000 Great Knot were counted in the Roebuck Bay/Eighty Mile Beach area, by far the most found anywhere in the world.

Another expedition is planned for 17 August to 10 September, 1982, with the main periods of field work on 17-25 August and 2-10 September. As many people as possible are needed to make this expedition a success, and build on last year's work.

Anyone interested in finding out more details about costs, timetable and aims or the activities of the AWSG should contact the AWSG Co-ordinator at RAOU Headquarters (tel: (03) 370 1272). A full report will appear in the AWSG Bulletin "The Stilt" subscriptions to which are \$3.00 per year.

DETAILS OF WADERS CAUGHT/PROCESSED AT BROOME

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>CATCHES ON ....</u>			<u>TOTAL CAUGHT</u>	<u>TOTAL PROCESSED</u>
	<u>30/8/81</u>	<u>1/9/81</u>	<u>2/9/81</u>		
Grey Plover			1	1	1
Mongolian Plover			1	1	2
Large-billed Plover	7	15	30	52	50
Turnstone	8	6	20(1)	34(1)	34
Greytailed Tatler	30	53(1)	43(1)	126(2)	125
Terek Sandpiper	13	19	6	38	38
Bartailed Godwit		1	97(1)	98(1)	99

revealed that areas of the north coast of Australia are rich in waders, particularly Godwits and Knot (see Table). Over 40,000 Great Knot were counted in the Roebuck Bay/Eighty Mile Beach area, by far the most found anywhere in the world.

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N.W. AUSTRALIA WADER EXPEDITION 1981 - WADER COUNT DATA

SPECIES	N. SIDE OF ROEBUCK BAY (BROOME - CRAB CREEK) 31/8/81 *	S. SIDE OF ROEBUCK BAY (BUSH/SANDY POINT) 31/8/81	TOTAL ROEBUCK BAY 31/8/81	80 MILE BEACH # - CAPE MISSISSY TO CAPE				KERAUDREN		TOTAL 80 MILE BEACH (220 km)	GRAND TOTAL BROOME TO S. OF 80 MILE BEACH
				CAPE MISSISSY TO ANNA PLAINS (23 km) AIR ***	ANNA PLAINS TO 18 km S (18 km) GROUND †	NEXT 25 km TO S. (EXIT TRACK) (25 km) GROUND ‡	NEXT SECTION TO WALLAL DOWNS (65 km) AIR §	WALLAL DOWNS TO CAPE KERAUDREN (95 km) AIR ¶			
Beach Thick-knee	1		1							1	
Pied Oystercatcher	20	50	70		2	5	10	5	22	122	
Sooty Oystercatcher	11		11							11	
Grey Plover	60	300	360			13	20	10	43	403	
Lesser Golden Plover	8		8							8	
Nongolian Plover	2		2							2	
Large Sand Plover	1,500	800	2,300		85	800	1,500	400	2,785	5,085	
Oriental Plover	100	300	400		3	250	500	100	853	1,153	
Redcapped Plover	100	50	150	200	1,900	450	1,000	200	3,750	3,900	
Blackwinged Stilt	100		100							100	
Ruddy Turnstone	150	150	300	50	4	15	30	10	59	419	
Eastern Curlew	250	600	850		25		20	5	100	1,010	
Whimbrel	100		100							100	
Greytailed Tattler	800	50	850		4	40	100	20	164	1,264	
Common Sandpiper	20	10	30							30	
Greenshank	40	500	540		120		20		140	680	
Terek Sandpiper	300	5	305		1	120	200	50	371	676	
Blacktailed Godwit	500	500	1,000		100				100	1,100	
Bartailed Godwit	6,000	4,000	10,000	5,000	700	400	1,000	200	7,300	17,800	
Red Knot	1,200	3,000	4,200	3,000	5,800	1,900	3,500	1,000	15,200	20,400	
Great Knot	7,000	10,000	17,000	1,000	5,100	2,100	3,600	1,000	21,800	39,800	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	3	5	8							8	
Red-necked Stint	3,500	500	4,000	550	5,200	6,900	11,000	3,500	27,600	32,150	
Curlew Sandpiper	1,500	1,500	3,000	150	7,900	4,150	7,000	2,100	22,150	25,300	
Sanderling	10	150	160		2				2	162	
TOTAL	23,175	22,470	45,645	3,600	26,946	17,143	29,500	8,600	102,439	151,684	

\* Count of 31/8/81 modified where appropriate by maximum totals for each species recorded in period 27/8 to 4/9/81. Approx. 9,000 birds on Broome beaches, remainder on beaches towards Crab Creek.  
 \*\* Results of three aerial surveys on 28, 29 & 31/8/81. Species apportioned based on ground count of 1,020 birds at mouth of Post Office Creek, Lagrange Bay, on 31/8/81. Distribution of numbers between sites was 100 Port Smith, 2500 Lagrange Bay, 1000 Cape Bossut to Cape Faubert and Cape Faubert to Cape Mississey.  
 \*\*\* Aerial count of 15,000 adjusted to 20,000 in view of evidence of underestimating compared with ground counts and survey starting 6 km short of Cape Mississey. Proportions of each species based on ground observations from Anna Plains.  
 † Aerial survey gave count of only 10,000 - carried out at same time.  
 ‡ Aerial survey gave count of only 11,000. Carried out earlier and some may have flown north into ground count area subsequent to aerial survey. Species apportioned by reference to ground count further up 80 mile beach.  
 § Aerial survey totals not altered because of possibility that some birds may have flown north into ground count area subsequent to aerial survey. Species apportioned by reference to ground count further up 80 mile beach.

N.W. AUSTRALIA WADER EXPEDITION 1981SUMMARY OF WADER SURVEYS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DISTANCE</u> <u>(km)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>WADERS</u> <u>SEEN</u>	<u>DENSITY</u> <u>(Waders</u> <u>per km)</u>
22/8	Karumba to Pt Parker (S. of Mornington Island)	235	61,800	263
23/8	Bayley Point (S. of Mornington Island) to Roper River	525	5,270	10
26/8	Darwin to Kununurra * (via Wyndham)	630	7,120	11
27/8 } 29/8 }	Bigge Island to Derby	840	1,040	1
26/8	Derby to Broome	330	1,317	4
27/8 to 4/9	Broome to Bush Pt/ Sandy Pt (Roebuck Bay)	65	45,645	702
"	Bush Pt/Sandy Pt to Port Smith	50	0	0
"	Port Smith to Cape Missiessy	80	3,600	45
"	Cape Missiessy to Cape Keraudren ("80 mile beach")	220	102,439	466
		<u>2,975 km</u>	<u>228,231</u> waders	<u>Av. 77 waders</u> <u>per km</u>

\* Repeat survey on 28/8, but at low tide, gave count of only 1,500

DAVID ROBERTSON

The VWSG is very sorry to be saying goodbye to David Robertson, its founder and one of the joint convenors. David has been appointed Chief Veterinary Officer (Hygiene) for South Australia and is moving to Adelaide in January 1982.

David and Minnie arrived in Melbourne in 1974 after having spent two years in Singapore and eight years in Hong Kong. They immediately set about looking for appropriate sites to band waders on Port Phillip Bay and after several unsuccessful attempts in the Altona area they finally discovered the potential of the North Spit Lagoon at Werribee for wader mist netting in January 1976. Regular mist netting visits were made throughout the year from then onwards with a total of about 1600 waders being caught up until October 1978 (after which additional personnel and the cannon netting technique were also introduced). These catches provided extremely valuable data and a nucleus of experience and interest in wader studies which ultimately lead to the formal foundation of the Victorian Wader Study Group. Considerable perseverance, mainly against the regular adverse windy conditions at Werribee, was necessary to achieve such results and the Group owes a great deal to David for his enthusiasm and leadership in these earlier years. David has also taken an active part as the first editor of the Bulletins of the VWSG.

The Group thanks David for all he has done for it in the past and wishes him and Minnie a happy, enjoyable and successful wader banding future in South Australia (where, incidentally, the local group recently made a cannon net catch of nearly 1000 Knot).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements have been made in some earlier VWSG Bulletins, and also verbally at VWSG Annual General meetings, but it seems timely to repeat some of these. Without the help and co-operation of those individuals and organisations listed below, and many others, the successful study programme being undertaken by the VWSG would not be possible. Our grateful thanks go to the following:

- a) the MMBW for permission to band waders on their farm at Werribee, and to use the shearing sheds at Beach Road as a base;
- b) the Government/private owners of land who have granted permission for us to band waders at Pt Wilson (Dept of Transport and ICI Australia), Queenscliff (the Army), Yallock Creek (various farmers);

- c) various companies/organisations which have assisted with the equipment and consumable items including ICI Australia (electric detonators and the loan of a firing box), IMI Australia (black powder and the manufacture of various hardware), the Fisheries & Wildlife Dept in Victoria and the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research in Canberra (provision of the two cannon nets), the Fisheries & Wildlife Dept of Victoria (loan of boats for counting/banding operations in Corner Inlet) and the Victorian Museum (loan of stuffed birds);
- d) David Purchase, the head of the CSIRO banding scheme, for considerable assistance in many ways and for the provision of metal and colour bands through the CSIRO banding scheme;
- e) VORG, BOC and RAOU for the help and co-operation of their members, especially in the bi-annual comprehensive wader counts;
- f) various members of the Group for special assistance including Joy Pagon (who writes up all the banding schedules), Julie Strudwick (who processes all the retraps), Ira Savage (who personally made all the keeping cages and also loans his trailer to the Group), Brenda Murlis (who made most of the bird bags and has now taken over as Treasurer from Julie Strudwick) and Kevin Bartram (who drew the Doublebanded Plover used on the front cover of the VWSG Bulletin).

All Group members and everyone else who has helped in the field work are most gratefully thanked for their efforts.

P.S. We badly need some new/additional "covering" material. Would anyone with old dust sheets/ground sheets/tarpaulins etc. - preferably at least 10' square - please make them available.

#### CONSERVATION SUCCESS

In July 1981 a team of VWSG members spent a morning clearing the vegetation from the centres of two small islands at the end of the North and South Spits at Werribee in order to re-create a habitat suitable for Fairy Terns to nest in.

A visit on the evening of 19 January 1982 revealed that 50 pairs of Fairy Terns were nesting on one of the islands - the island not used for nesting since the summer of 1978/79 because of the ingress of vegetation. This is probably the largest colony of Fairy Terns ever to nest at Werribee - certainly in recent years - and is a good illustration of the benefits of proper habitat management ("ornithological engineering" on a small scale). Breeding success appeared to be good with 30 chicks located as well as a further 22 nests still with eggs.



VWSG INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
1/7/81 TO 30/11/81

<u>INCOME</u>	\$	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	\$
Membership Fees	370.00	Bank Fees	10.86
Subscriptions to/sales of Bulletin	51.00	Returned Cheque	10.00
Donations	25.00	Postage	37.18
Insurance (stolen net)	253.60	Photocopying	3.75
Hire of equipment	62.00	Stationery	31.25
		New equipment	335.90
		Printing Bulletin	87.58
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 761.60</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>\$516.52</b>
Cash at Bank, 30/6/81	279.33	Cash at Bank 30/11/81	641.25
Cash/cheques in hand	172.79	Cash/cheques in hand	55.95
	<u>\$ 1213.72</u>		<u>\$ 1213.72</u>

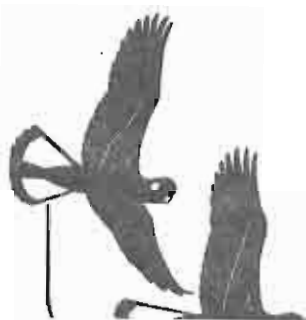
WESTERNPORT COUNT DATES - 1982

<u>Date</u>	<u>High Tide</u>	<u>Height</u>
Feb 6th	0917 hrs	2.5 m
April 24th	1309	2.8
July 24th	1548	3.1
October 2nd	1150	2.3
Dec 4th	1500	2.6

All welcome, no experience necessary. A good opportunity to learn.  
If interested in participating please notify -

Peter Dann  
PO Box 403, Cowes, Phillip Island 3922  
Tel: (059) 568395 (all hours)

A D V E R T I S E M E N T



## Andrew Isles

### Natural History Books

BOOKS BOUGHT & SOLD

TOTAL INCOME	\$ 761.60	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$516.52
Cash at Bank, 30/6/81	279.33	Cash at Bank 30/11/81	641.25
Cash/cheques in hand	172.79	Cash/cheques in hand	55.95
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	1500	2.6

NUMBERS OF WADERS "PROCESSED" BY WWSG IN VICTORIA IN EACH MONTH TO DECEMBER 1981

"Processing" includes measuring wing length, bill length (where appropriate) and weight; also recording full details of primary wing feather moult (if any). Additional wing moult data has been gathered on some birds which were not fully processed. The table below will be used to plan fieldwork, with the objective of obtaining usable samples (preferably on at least 50 birds) of data for each month of the year for all the main study species.

	<u>J</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Pied Oystercatcher	1	-	51	28	30	29	-	-	2	2	9	18	170
Sooty Oystercatcher	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Masked Lapwing	-	-	9	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	13
Grey Plover	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	9
Lesser Golden Plover	2	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	25
Redkneed Dotterel	-	-	-	20	-	1	4	-	12	1	5	-	43
Hooded Plover	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Mongolian Plover	-	-	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Doublebanded Plover	-	-	3	9	136	229	10	144	-	-	-	-	531
Redcapped Plover	1	12	18	102	66	29	27	-	8	4	8	2	277
Blackfronted Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Blackwing Stint	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6
Rednecked Avocet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	45	2	49
Ruddy Turnstone	1	-	22	27	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	4	56
Eastern Curlew	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	3	26
Greytailed Tatler	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Greenshank	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Terek Sandpiper	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4
Latham's Snipe	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	26
Bartailed Godwit	-	-	-	1	-	4	-	-	34	-	33	205	277
Red Knot	18	21	55	34	-	-	-	-	3	13	33	63	240
Great Knot	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	91	109
Sharptailed Sandpiper	294	103	20	2	-	-	-	1	368	65	197	204	1254
Little Stint	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Rednecked Stint	868	253	2127	1590	42	113	141	72	359	571	2168	1404	9708
Longtoed Stint	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Curlew Sandpiper	331	168	503	59	-	3	4	16	81	100	440	467	2172
Sanderling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
													<u>15024</u>

The majority of the 1327 birds caught in Tasmania (Nov 1979), 820 birds in South Australia (Feb 1980), 921 birds in New South Wales (Mar 1981) and 1189 in West Aust (Aug/Sept 1981) were also processed.

VICTORIAN WADER STUDY GROUPDATES FOR FIELD WORK - JAN. TO APRIL 1982

		<u>TIME OF HIGH TIDE (SAT.)</u>
Jan 23-24	: Werribee *	1330
Feb 6-7	: Summer Wader Count	1215
Feb 20-21	: Werribee *	1145
March 5-8 (Fri-Mon)	: ? Coorong, South Australia (with S.A.O.S. Wader Group)	
(Labour Day weekend)	(Provisional - subject to recce on Feb 6-7 count)	
Mar 27-28	: Queenscliff	1330
April 24-25	: Werribee	1530

\* Dates when mist netting at Werribee is planned to take place, in addition to cannon netting

All dates, except that marked, are weekends. Normal meeting time will be 5 hrs before high tide, at the shearing sheds ("Werribee Hilton"), Beach Rd., Werribee Sewage Farm. However when mist netting is probable, the team will normally meet at 5.30 pm on the Friday evening.

Please phone CDTM, or one of the other contacts below, a few days before each planned fieldwork to advise whether you are available and to obtain final information on rendezvous time/location. The programme is subject to change depending on recce information, availability of personnel etc.

CONTACTS (A note new phone number)

Clive Minton	-	568.1017 (home)	
		267.5800 (office)	
		Address: 10 Omama Rd., Murrumbena 3163	
Julie Strudwick	-	375.2346 (home)	370.1272 (RAOU office)
Brett Lane *	-	51.4594 (home)	370.1272 (RAOU office)
Ira Savage	-	052-216253 (home)	
Berrice Forest	-	786.9717 (home)	
Peter Dann	-	059-56 8395 (home)	
Brenda Murlis	-	874.2860 (home)	
John Dawson	-	787.2082 (home)	781.2791 (office)
Ken Rogers	-	879.2394 (home)	602.4233 (office)
Anthony Roberts	-	45.1534 (home)	410221 Ext. 346 (office)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

Mrs Brenda Murlis  
 Treasurer  
 Victorian Wader Study Group  
 34 Centre Road  
 VERMONT VIC 3133

I would like to join/renew membership of the Victorian  
 Wader Study Group as a \* Full/Country/Associate/Interstate/  
 Student member. Enclosed is cheque/money order for \$.....  
 in payment of membership fee for the year ended 30 June 1982.

Full membership	\$10 per annum	} 1 July to 30 June
Country, Interstate, Student, Associate		
membership	\$ 5 per annum	

\* cross out whichever is not applicable

NAME .....  
 (please use block letters)  
 ADDRESS .....  
 .....Post Code ....  
 TELEPHONE .....  
 (please include STD prefix)  
 SIGNATURE .....