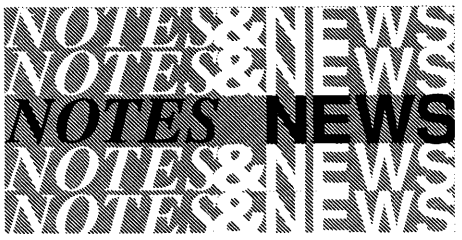


## COLONIAL WATERBIRD SOCIETY

As of January 14, 1999, **CWS** has officially changed its name to **The Waterbird Society**. This name change reflects a broadening of our interest beyond colonial-nesting birds. The society's focus will be expanded to include the biology and ecology of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other water birds, whether colonial or not, since many important questions and methodologies are relevant to all aquatic birds. Already an international society, **The Waterbird Society** welcomes membership from all countries, recognising that many of these species have widespread distributions and the ecological questions and conservation issues must be viewed from continental, if not global, perspectives. Please visit our web page at: *http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/CWS/*

In addition, starting with volume 22, *Colonial Waterbirds* will become Waterbirds, expanding its focus from colonial seabirds and wading birds to all waterbird subgroups, including ducks, shorebirds and solitary seabirds. Emphasis will be on papers that illuminate general principles of waterbird biology across subgroups, major advances concerning individual subgroups, or comparisons of subgroups. The journal will also focus on rare or little known species. Papers may be on ecology, physiology, behaviour, population dynamics, evolution, management or conservation, with a preference for papers of interest to a wider spectrum of the waterbird community. For instructions to authors or to submit papers, please contact: Professor David Duffy, Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit/Botany, University of Hawaii, Honolulu HI 96822 USA. E-mail: dduffy@hawaii.edu or david_duffy@sprynet.com

*Rene Navarro*

## COLOUR-RINGED SANDERLING IN THE EAST-ATLANTIC FLYWAY

More than 160 Sanderling *Calidris alba* were caught and individually colour-ringed from 1996-1998 as they passed through the Wadden Sea of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. All birds were ringed with a metal ring on the left tibia, a blue ring on the right tibia and two colour-rings on each tarsus. First results show high site fidelity of Sanderling to their spring staging area between years. Many Sanderling stop over for several weeks with numbers peaking during the last week of May. From information provide from ringing, counts, biometrics and departure of birds at the end of May in a NNW-direction, one can assume a similar or mixed migration pattern as already known for Nearctic and Palearctic Knot *Calidris canutus* in the Wadden Sea. As a theory, some of the British wintering Sanderling stop over in the Wadden Sea in April and May, they are accompanied in May by African-wintering Sanderling with both populations probably migrating to Greenland and Svalbard. Direct links to Siberia are lacking or very few.

Klaus Günther would appreciate receiving any records, past or present, of the above mentioned colour-ringed Sanderling including information relating to their departure on migration e.g. direction and date. Records linking these birds to Siberia are especially of high interest. Please report any information to: Klaus Günther, WWF, Norderstr. 3, D-25813 Husum, Germany; guenther@wwf.de

## LAPWING PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR

Dave Parish is interested in the geographical variation in the parental behaviour of the Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and would be most grateful if anyone could help by reporting their observations. He is trying to quantify the variation in intensity of anti-predator displays of adults protecting eggs or chicks. Therefore any of the following information would be of interest. When the nest/young are approached - to within 10m - (by a human or predator), do both adults respond or just one (male or female?) and do they disappear, circle overhead, dive-bomb the intruder or perform the broken wing display (or any ground display). The basic location of the site will also be needed. Any information received will be acknowledged and contributors will be kept informed of progress. Please send any information to: Dr Dave Parish, The Game Conservancy Trust, Scottish Lowland Research Project, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Dundee, Dundee, DD1 4HN.Tel: 01382 344 864. E-mail: Dparish@biolsci.dundee.ac.uk

## INTERNATIONAL BREEDING CONDITIONS SURVEY OF ARCTIC BIRDS
### *REQUEST FOR INFORMATION*

In 1998, the International Breeding Conditions Survey of Arctic Birds was launched after a preceding pilot stage. This joint project of International Wader Study Group and Wetlands International aims at collating information on environmental conditions on breeding areas of arctic nesting waterfowl. The simple and up-to-date environmental data obtained from many arctic localities primarily by means of distributing questionnaires among arctic field workers can give insights into ecological processes acting at wide scale, and also provide valuable information for the conservation of sites and species.

During the pilot stage (1996-98) questionnaires were revised on the basis of comments provided on the pilot form, and a database of International Wader Study Group and Wetlands

International's Goose and Swan Specialist Groups was established at Moscow State University, Russia. Initially, the survey focused on waders and wildfowl due to their dominant role in most arctic bird communities. Now, while still having the main emphasis on these bird groups, the database also allows the accumulation of data on other groups of arctic terrestrial birds, as their responses to the changing environment often have much in common. The progress report on the pilot stage appeared in the December 1998 issue of the Wader Study Group *Bulletin.*

We have already started the circulation of a two-part questionnaire with the primary aim of collecting data on breeding conditions during the 1998 field season. The first section of the form aims to summarise general information on environmental conditions and locations where field studies have been undertaken. The second part is produced in different versions for different parts of the arctic and is available on request. It enables provision of more detailed information on the presence and breeding success of individual species. There are three versions of Part 2, one for Greenland, Iceland, Svalbard and Scandinavia, one for Alaska and Canada, and one for Russia. The database is continually being updated, and we are interested in completed forms not only from the recent field season, but also from previous years including from expeditions that may already have published material elsewhere. Eventually, on completing the initial organisational stage, access to the data will become available to all for both research and conservation purposes, on request and/or via the Internet. Contributors will receive an annual newsletter summarising information on breeding conditions for birds in the arctic.

If you would like to participate, forms can be sent by mail or electronically, as a Word for Windows document, from either of the addresses below. If you request the electronic form you can also return it by e-mail to <soloviev@soil.msu.ru> after entering the necessary data. We would greatly appreciate feed-back and completed forms from those active in arctic bird studies, for this is the principal way of achieving real progress with this project.

*Pavel Tomkovich, Zoological Museum, Bolshaya Nikitskaya Str. 6, Moscow 103009, Russia. E-mail: tomkovic@1.zoomus.bio.msu.ru*
*Mikhail Soloviev, Dept. of Vertebrate Zoology, Biological Faculty, Moscow State Univ., Moscow 119899, Russia. E-mail: soloviev@soil.msu.ru*

## WADER BREEDING CONDITIONS IN THE RUSSIAN TUNDRA IN 1998
### *A SUMMARY*

In a recent posting to the e-mail listserver *Waders-l*, Pavel Tomkovich provided a summary of wader breeding conditions in Russian Arctic in 1998 compiled on the basis of information from correspondents at 30 sites. It is a result of the activities of the Working Group on Waders in the CIS, as well as a contribution to the International Breeding Conditions Survey, aimed at collating similar information on a circumpolar scale (see above).

A late spring and cold conditions prevailed once again over most of the tundra regions of Russia. However, several reports, mainly from north-central Siberia, indicated average or early dates for phenological events. Extensive spring flooding, which was recorded on the southern Yamal and western Taimyr Rivers as well as the Anabar and Lena Rivers, undoubtedly influenced distribution, numbers and timing of bird breeding on these floodplains. Cool and dry summer weather followed, except sites on Yamal, Taimyr, the Anabar River and Wrangel Island where the summer was warm.

Peak lemming numbers were recorded in two sites: on Yugorsky Peninsula, NE European Russia (Siberian Lemming *Lemmus sibiricus*), and close to the Kolyma Delta, Yakutia (Collared Lemming *Dicrostonyx torquatus*). Moderate lemming numbers were found at the coastal Yana Delta. A small increase in numbers took place near the Pechora Delta, and possibly in the southern part of the Lena Delta and certainly on Wrangel Island. At all of the other 26 sites lemmings were either rare or not seen at all, but voles, (*Microtus, Clethrionomys*) were numerous in seven southern sites. Arctic Foxes *Alopex lagopus* and Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* actively bred only near the Kolyma Delta and on Wrangel Island. All over the rest of the Russian tundra area Arctic Foxes were found breeding only occasionally. Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* nested only on Yugorsky, on Wrangel and possibly near the Kolyma.

Almost unanimously, correspondents considered wader breeding results as being good in areas west from the Yenisey. Further east breeding output was scored mostly as 'low'; however, some data indicate rather good breeding at the Anabar, coastal Yana Delta, near the Kolyma Delta and on the western part of Wrangel. The situation on the mainland eastward from the Kolyma is not clear, but it has always been patchy.

Some increase in lemming numbers can be expected on the Kola, Yamal and Taimyr Peninsulas and the Lena Delta, with peak numbers on Wrangel and possibly on NW Taimyr in 1999. As a result, quite high wader breeding output can be predicted for West and Central Siberia as well as for Wrangel. High predation rates will possibly result in few young being raised by birds in eastern Yakutia.

*Pavel Tomkovich, Zoological Museum Moscow Lomonosov State University Bol. Nikitskaya Str. 6, Moscow 103009, Russia.*
*E-mail: tomkovic@1.zoomus.bio.msu.ru*

## SIBERIAN BREEDING SEASON
### *AN AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSION*

Early results, from NW Australia and from Victoria, on this component of the population monitoring programme point to a generally poor breeding season for the high Arctic breeding waders (excepting Red-necked Stint) and a good breeding season for waders breeding further south. Thus there seems to be a low (less than 10%, and often less than 5%) population of juveniles in populations of Red Knot, Great Knot, Curlew Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone. In contrast there appear to be good numbers of juveniles (10-60%) of Greater Sand Plover, Oriental Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Little Curlew. An unexplained deviation from this pattern is the Red-necked Stint which has been showing 20% juveniles in NW Australia in October and an exceptional 40% in a catch of 1,300 birds in Victoria in late November.

The main population monitoring catches are scheduled for December/February. It will be interesting to see if these confirm the early impressions and if the results are consistent throughout Australia.

*Clive Minton, reprinted from* The Tattler

## FIFTH ALMOST-ANNUAL WESTERN SANDPIPER WORKSHOP

The fifth Western Sandpiper Workshop was held on the 5 - 6th December 1998, at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver. Members of the Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* Research Network were assembled to update each other on their work. Forty-two participants discussed breeding, migration and survival strategies, physiological ecology, and conservation issues with 24 speakers from Alaska, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Wisconsin, Virginia, Mexico, Panama, and Ecuador. Below are some themes from the meeting: There was an Alaskan invasion, with seven persons representing three ongoing breeding biology studies of Western Sandpipers. Julie Neville is working at Brett Sandercock's PhD site near Nome, Brian McCaffery and Dan Ruthrauff are studying a dense population in the central Yukon-Kuskokwim delta, and Doug Schamel is working at Cape Espenberg, on the northern coast of the Seward Peninsula. There are many commonalities, but also intriguing differences in breeding biology among these sites. Jon Bart and Paul Cotter presented updates on large-scale survey design proposals and international population data base proposals.

Sherman Boates condensed his 25 years of fascinating work on Bay of Fundy mud into a mere hour and a half (or perhaps two hour?) talk, highlighting the dietary side of a shorebird's life and providing a polychaete perspective on this topic. In a complimentary talk, Ron Ydenberg's "Cross-hemispheric Peregrinations of Peeps and their Predators" suggested that considering predation risk is essential for any integrated theory of shorebird migration and biology.

Terri Sutherland, Bob Elner and Pippa Shepherd, used a short-term exclosure experiment to detect a surprisingly selective impact of feeding Western Sandpipers on certain classes of invertebrates in the meiofaunal size-range (<500 microns). Curious minds now want to know about the influence of meiofauna on sandpiper habitat preferences. Katie O'Reilly explained how Western Sandpipers use stress management techniques throughout their annual cycle. Tony Williams and Oliver Egeler presented evident that sandpipers make adaptive trade-offs between using saturated and unsaturated fats as storage and energy sources.

Horacio de la Cueva, Patrick O'Hara, Bryan Watts, and Ben Haase compared aspects of survival season (a.k.a. wintering) biology of Western Sandpipers along a latitudinal gradient ranging from northern Baja California through Panama to Ecuador. One interesting difference is that at more southerly sites, a higher proportion of first-year birds fail to prepare for spring migration, and remain on the non-breeding grounds throughout their first potential northward migration and breeding season. Colin Clark, an avid birder in a league by himself, updated the group on his progress towards producing a dynamic state variable model of Western Sandpiper life history. Colin is putting to good use everything that everyone else learns about this species!

A mini Dunlin *Calidris alpina* symposium included presentations by Lesley Evans Ogden on her PhD study on shorebird use of farmlands in the Vancouver area. Peter Sanzanbacher, now at Oregon State with Sue Haig, presented his plans for studying an entirely non-coastal wintering Dunlin population in the Willamette Valley.

Finally, there was a greater emphasis than at previous workshops on conservation questions. Ben Haase described his initiative to bring shorebird awareness into schoolrooms in Ecuador. The group enjoyed an update on Laura X Payne's work, which has progressed from her map-making Masters' to a PhD level analysis of relative concentrations of migrant shorebirds in the US on spring and fall migration. The meeting closed with discussion of the Canadian Shorebird Conservation Plan currently under development, as presented by Rob Butler and Dov Lank (see WHSRNews below).

The Western Sandpiper research network is an affiliation of persons interested the biology of *Calidris mauri* and related topics. We organise a more or less annual meeting and maintain an e-mail listserver to distribute timely information to members. For copies of this years' meeting program, on paper or electronic, or other information, contact Dov Lank, Department of Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University,

Burnaby BC V5A 1S6, or dlank@sfu.ca.

*Dov Lank*

## WHSRN NEWS

*The following is a sample of the contents of the January issue of WHSRNews. Copies can be obtained from: Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, PO Box 1770, Manomet, MA. 02345, USA or it can be found on the Web: http://www.manomet.org/WHSRN.htm.*

**Canadian Shorebird Conservation - Plan From draft Executive Summary**

Two-thirds of Canada's shorebird populations show downward trends according to survey data. Canada has a particular responsibility with respect to shorebirds. For many species, more than half of their breeding range occurs in Canada. Canada's national biodiversity strategy calls on government and other stakeholders to attack the causes of biodiversity loss at their source and prevent further endangerment of species.

The aim of the Shorebird Plan is to maintain and enhance sustainable populations of Canada's shorebirds throughout their range. It thus recognises the need to collaborate internationally as well as locally. It will be based on science and promote the conservation of shorebirds through partnerships that protect and enhance habitat and provide greater knowledge and understanding for effective management.

For highly migratory species such as many shorebirds, we cannot sustain populations in Canada if effective conservation is not occurring in other parts of their range. This recognition led to the establishment in 1985 of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). The Canadian Shorebird Conservation Plan will take advantage of the framework provided by WHSRN for collaboration and communication among those involved in shorebird conservation throughout the hemisphere.

*Gary Donaldson, Wetlands International. E-mail: gdonaldson@wetlands.org.*

**Western Sandpiper Study**

During the spring of 1998, Brian McCaffery initiated a long-term study of breeding Western Sandpipers on Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. On an 18 ha study plot at the refuge's Kanagayak field station, 42 Western Sandpiper nests were located and a total of 55 adult sandpipers were trapped at their nests. Each bird received a metal band above the joint on the left leg and a single colour band on each of the other three leg segments (lower left, upper right, lower right), for a total of three colour bands per bird. Colours used include red, green, blue, orange, yellow, white, and mauve. Brian would welcome details of any observations of these birds. He can be contacted at: brian_mccaffery@mail.fws.gov.

**Aerial surveys in Texas**

We conducted the second year of aerial shorebird surveys on the texas Gulf Coast on early April 1998, about 10 days prior to the peak of migration on the upper coast. Our purpose was to determine if there was a larger build up of shorebirds on the lower coast before the peak on the upper coast. We flew at approximately 100 foot elevation and counted birds from each side of the plane. Areas surveyed included all refuges on the coast, most of the coastal state management area and one Nature Conservancy tract. No areas were surveyed in Mexico.

A total of 95,800 shorebirds were seen during the count compared to about 42,000 in 1997. New areas were surveyed but the coast was not flooded as it was in 1997. Because this year‹s survey was conducted about 10 days prior to the upper coast peak period, surveying later would likely have increased the observed numbers substantially. We concluded that there did not seem to be a build up of shorebirds in the lower regions of the coast before the upper regions at this time of migration.

Of the areas surveyed, Bolivar Flats, a WHSRN International Shorebird Site had the most shorebirds with about 15,600 birds. Bolivar Flats is one of the premier shorebird spots on the coast, especially considering its small size. The next highest area was the Laguna Madre side of Pagre island with 12,230 birds. Brazoria NWR, another International WHSRN Site, had 12,050 shorebirds followed by Laguna Atacosa NWR with 11,545 shorebirds.

*Richard Speer, USFWS. Tel: +?? 409-849-7771.*

**Piping Plover back from brink**

At the turn of the century, feather, egg and sport hunters pushed the Piping Plover to the verge of extinction. After hunting was banned in 1918, the bird‹s population grew, peaking in the 1940s. Then another decline occurred due to human disturbance of its vulnerable breeding habitat on open beaches. In 1986, when the Atlantic Coast population was estimated to have dropped to 790 pairs, the Piping Plover was placed on the Federal Endangered Species List. Today, thanks to major efforts by government agencies and citizen groups to place fences round nesting sites and increase public awareness, the bird's Atlantic coastal population (the nation's largest) is up to 1,195 pairs and further increases are anticipated.

## MEADOWBIRDS IN NIEDERSACHSEN

Meadowbird populations were surveyed at least once in the 1980s and once in the 1990s in 9,412 km$^2$ in the north-western part of Niedersachsen, a region rich in meadow breeding waders in northern Germany.

These surveys are now published in a 266 page publication by Arbeitskreis

Feucht-wiesenschutz Westniedersachsen E.V. 16 pages of introduction are followed by more than 200 pages of documentation. Each meadow site is presented by a map and tables of meadowbird populations and conservation status.

Finally, trends are summed up, and proper conservation measures are recommended. Oystercatcher increased, whereas small decreases (10%) were found in Lapwing and Curlew. Dramatic decreases were found in Snipe (878 pairs 1985-1990, 428 pairs 1991-1997), Black-tailed Godwit (2646 pairs 1985-1990, 1767 pairs 1991-1997), Redshank (586 pairs 1985-1990, 448 pairs 1991-1995).

Wiensenvögel im westlichen Niedersachsen (entirely in German) can be ordered from: NABU Osnabrück, Am Schölerberg 82Y, D-49082 Osnabrück, Germany, by sending cash or a Eurocheque for DM 20. Fax: 0541/ 57528

*Ole Thorup*

## REVIVAL OF THE U.S.-JAPAN MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY

The Convention between the U.S. and Japan for the Protection of Migratory Birds and Birds in Danger of Extinction and their environment (MBT) was signed in 1972, and put into force in 1974, representing the third bilateral agreement regarding migratory birds entered into by the United States. The Convention reflects an expansion of scientific knowledge regarding long distance avian migrants and other shared bird populations, as well as a concern for their conservation. In particular, it covers 190 species of migratory birds common to both Japan and the U.S. However, Japan and the U.S. have met only three times since ratification of the treaty, most recently in 1981. Due to the long delay since the last meeting, many new opportunities exist between Japan and the United States to share information, exchange research results, establish joint ventures, provide guidance and advice, and better collaborate on migratory bird issues of mutual conservation concern. A formal discussion is scheduled to take place under the auspices of the MBT on February 3-4 in Tokyo. The meeting will address, in part, reestablishing relations with Japan, and redefine future cooperation and collaboration between the two countries‹ bird programs, review an Alaskan-East Asian Australasian Shorebird migration proposal, targeting Dunlin, and look at opportunities for collaboration regarding the East Asian Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network, and assess opportunities for collaborating with Japan on migratory bird educational curricula, including the U.S. Shorebird Sister School Program.

*Kent Wohl*

## SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

The 2000 Southern Hemisphere Ornithological Congress will be hosted by Birds Australia (RAOU) during the 27 June - 2 July, 2000 at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. You are invited to assist in advancing the knowledge and conservation of birds and their habitats. The programme will include a symposium on Wader Migration Studies. Further information can be obtained from the Secretariat: Conventions QLD Pty Ltd, PO Box 4044, St Lucia South, QLD 4067, Australia. Phone: +61 7 3870 8831 Fax: +61 7 3371 9514. E-mail: shoc2000@convqld.org.au

## CHATHAM ISLAND OYSTERCATCHER CENSUS

The Chatham Island Oystercatcher *Haematopus chathamensis* is listed internationally as endangered and is one of the New Zealand Department of Conservation's 'category A' species , or highest priority for conservation action. Past counts between 1986 - 1996 have estimated the population to be between 65 - 120 adults, including 30 - 44 pairs. Because only one or two people conducted these counts, they occurred over limited areas and/or over relatively long periods (6 - 13 weeks) increasing the likelihood for undercounting or double counting birds and missing areas where birds might be located. This census is the first to be conducted over all four known breeding islands of the Chatham Island Oystercatcher in a relatively short time-frame (1 week).

Chatham Island Oystercatchers are endemic to the Chathams archipelago, are non-migratory, and almost strictly coastal in their distribution. Breeding pairs are fairly sedentary and display strong territorial defence behaviours during the breeding season. As with most other Oystercatcher species they do not begin breeding until at least two years of age.

A census for Chatham Island Oystercatchers *Haematopus chathamensis* was conducted during 13 to 18 December 1998. Approximately 310 km or 96 - 97% of the coastline and 100 km (100%) of Te Whanga lagoon on main Chatham, Pitt, Southeast/ Rangatira, and Mangere was covered, mostly by foot and quad-bike. A total of 35 people participated in the census on the four islands, including DoC staff and contractors, CI landowners and residents, the Taiko team members, and other DoC volunteers.

We counted a total of 141 adult CI Oystercatchers, including 34 confirmed breeding pairs and seven additional possible breeding pairs. This is about 20 - 40 more Oystercatchers than in any previous census or estimate. Seventy percent of the breeding pairs were on Chatham Island, with 15% on Pitt Island. The remaining 15% were on Rangatira and Mangere Islands.

The majority of Oystercatchers (79% of individuals and 74% of the breeding pairs) were located in areas we broadly defined as associated with rocky wave-cut platform or other rocky coastline or

outcrops; however, 30 individuals and nine breeding pairs were located along sandy beaches (or in one case the lagoon edge). Only one Oystercatcher was seen along Te Whanga Lagoon, all others were seen along the coastline.

*Frances Schmechel*

## OIL SPILL THREATENS CRAB PLOVER

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East Web site (http:/2l/ www.osme.org/) brings worrying news of an oil spill off Umm al Quwain, United Arab Emirates. Four thousand tons of fuel oil on its way to a UAE port leaked from a sunken barge following a collision with its tug c.20 km off Umm al Quwain on 7 January 1998. Most of the oil washed onto the white sand beaches or entered the mangrove-lined lagoons during a strong onshore wind, causing significant environmental damage. The complex of lagoons and islands at Umm al Quwain and its inshore islands are registered as an Important Bird Area (IBA) being home to several rare and locally endangered species, including the country's largest wintering flock of Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* (300+ birds) and one of the only known wintering flocks in Arabia of Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*. Over 10,000 shorebirds of 25 different species feed and roost on the mudflats from July-March. The area has not been fully surveyed for its wildlife, although it has been recommended for full protection as a wildlife sanctuary; recommendations thus far ignored by the Umm al Quwain government.

## SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

### Background

At an international meeting at Kushiro, Japan in December 1994 it was agreed that there was an urgent need for multilateral co-operation for the conservation of migratory waterbirds in the Asia-Pacific region. The meeting recognised that a suitable international legal framework to develop conservation plans did not exist and called on Governments and non-government organisations to work in partnership to develop a regional conservation strategy. In response the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, for the period 1996-2000 was drafted. The Strategy was discussed and refined at international meetings in Japan and Malaysia and then launched during the Brisbane Ramsar Conference in March 1996.

Implementation of the Strategy, through separate Action Plans for shorebirds, cranes and Anatidae, is being co-ordinated by Wetlands International with core funding from Environment Australia and the Environment Agency of Japan. Four international consultative committees (the Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee and the Shorebird, Crane and Anatidae Working Groups) have been established to oversee the implementation of these conservation initiatives for migratory waterbirds.

The Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Shorebirds in Asia Pacific: 1998-2000 has been prepared by the Shorebird Flyway Officer, in conjunction with the Shorebird Working Group, to provide guidance on priority actions that need to be undertaken by Government agencies, site managers, researchers and non-government organisations. The prime focus of the Shorebird Action Plan is the establishment of a network of well-managed, internationally important shorebird sites in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Action Plans for the other flyways within the Asia-Pacific region (Central Asian and West Pacific) will be developed in future years. Over the past three years Wetlands International has worked to develop the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network, which was formally launched in March 1996 during the Brisbane Ramsar Conference and promoted through Recommendation 6.4. The Network now embraces 21 internationally important sites in nine countries within the Flyway. The Action Plan sets specific goals for additional sites, training needs to ensure that the Network can effectively conserve migratory shorebirds and improving the knowledge base on migratory shorebirds in the Flyway.

### Membership of the Shorebird Working Group

The Group currently consists of seven members drawn from the government and non-government sectors. Our desire to keep the Group to a manageable size has required careful selection of members to ensure an effective mix of skills and regional representation. Countries represented are Russia, China, Japan, The Philippines and Australia. It is hoped to add a representative from south-east Asia in the near future. In the case of NGO members, priority has been given to drawing them from national and regional shorebird committees.

### Meetings and progress

We are very fortunate that Environment Australia has agreed to provide funding for the first three meetings of the Group. This support has enabled us to have two meetings to date and has been instrumental in allowing us to move forward.

At our first meeting, which was held at Chongming Dao (Shanghai, China) in April 1998, the major business concerned discussion and approval of the draft Shorebird Action Plan. The need to obtain significant funding was identified as the key success factor. At the meeting we also had the benefit of contributions from observers from South Korea, Singapore and a number of Chinese organisations.

In June 1998, the Australian Government approved a total of A$ 900 000 (US$560 000) over three years as its contribution towards implementing the Shorebird Action Plan. Very importantly, the funding enables the Shorebird Flyway Officer

(Doug Watkins, located at Wetlands International - Oceania, Canberra, Australia) to work full-time on shorebird-related activities for the next three years, as well as providing financial support for the priority activities in the Action Plan.

The second Group meeting was held in Nagoya, Japan, in late January 1999. With funding now assured, we worked on detailed implementation of the Action Plan and developed a programme for wide dissemination of information about the Action Plan to regional Governments, international and national NGOs, international conventions and others with an interest in shorebird conservation. Our discussions benefited from participation by observers from a number of Japanese organisations.

The next meeting is planned for late November 1999 in a south-east Asian country.

**The future**

The Shorebird Action Plan alone will not ensure shorebird conservation in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. In developing the Action Plan we were very aware that available funding was limited and the actions, and targets, developed took this into account through rigorous prioritisation. Thus, the Action Plan describes the minimum level of activity required just to get started on the immense task of ensuring the long-term conservation of migratory shorebirds and their habitats in the Asia-Pacific region.

We recommend that the Action Plan be employed by government agencies, shorebird site managers, non-government organisations, researchers and individuals as a guide to how they can use their resources effectively for shorebird conservation. It is very important that a comprehensive suite of complementary activities be developed to support Action Plan priorities.

It is encouraging to see that a number of supporting activities have already been undertaken or are planned. These include shorebird surveys in Vietnam, Thailand, South Korea, Japan and Australia to identify important shorebird areas, training and survey activities in China and Mongolia, and a Dunlin migration project which includes a schools education component.

**Further information**

Copies of the Shorebird Action Plan (as an attached Word 6 file of 6 A4 pages) can be obtained by e-mailing me, or Doug Watkins, the Shorebird Flyway Officer, at doug.watkins@ea.gov.au. Those interested in more information about shorebird conservation activities in Asia Pacific, or who wish to explore how they can contribute, should contact Doug Watkins by e-mail, or at: Wetlands International „ Oceania, GPO Box 636, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia. Tel: +61-2-6250 0780. Fax: +61-2-6250 0799

*Mark Barter, Chair, Asia-Pacific Shorebird Working Group, 21 Chivalry Avenue, Glen Waverley VIC 3150, AUSTRALIA. Voice/fax: +61-3-9803 3330. E-mail: barter@world.net*

## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION - WATERBIRD POPULATION ESTIMATES (THIRD EDITION)

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands identifies wetlands of international importance using several criteria. The number of waterbirds using a site is one of the most widely used and objective of these criteria. If the number of waterbirds using a site regularly exceeds 20,000 individuals or 1% of a population, the site qualifies under the Ramsar Convention as being of international importance.

In order to apply the '1% criterion', published estimates of waterbird populations are required. The first edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (Rose & Scott 1994) was a milestone which greatly facilitated the identification of wetlands of international importance using the 1% criterion. A second edition appeared in 1997, and to maintain a triennial cycle of revision (in line with the Triennial Conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention) work has recently started on the third edition.

Anybody with knowledge of numbers of any waterbird species is invited to contribute to the current revision. Unpublished information is particularly valuable, and I will also be grateful for reference to any sources which may have been missed. If you have a copy of the second edition of Waterbird Population Estimates, the tables which comprise the bulk of the book will provide a basis for comment. I will be grateful for the opportunity to send the tables relating to relevant species to anybody who is willing to contribute and who does not have a copy of the earlier edition. All contributions will be fully acknowledged, and contributors will be sent a copy of the book. Please let me know if you think you can help.

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## SURVEY OF MIGRATORY SHOREBIRDS IN THE GULF OF THAILAND: THEIR CURRENT STATUS AND THREATS.

We have obtained a grant from the International Nature Management Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Nature Management of the Netherlands, to carry out an eight-month survey project of migratory shorebirds in the Inner Gulf of Thailand. The Inner Gulf of Thailand is known to be Thailand's most important shorebird site.

Wader surveys during 1984/85 found up to 20,000 shorebirds of 36 species passing through or wintering in this area. Since then, however, large intertidal areas have been lost due to coastal erosion and reclamation for

expansion of urban and industrial areas (especially in the vicinity of Bangkok). No detailed surveys have been undertaken since these 84/85 counts by INTERWADER, but the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand has expressed great concern over the threats and local development proposals (further expansion of industrial estates in the intertidal areas). The present new project will survey the intertidal areas in the Inner Gulf of Thailand afresh, by aerial survey and intensive ground visits. The project will be carried out by Ms. Nicole Grenfell (previously Broome Bird Observatory, Australia) in collaboration with the members of the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand.

A comparison will be made between the 1999 results and those from the INTERWADER surveys in 1984/85 to assess the impact of the developments on the migratory shorebirds. The East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Network will be promoted, with the suggestion to include part of the Inner Gulf as a new network site. A poster (in Thai) will be prepared to increase local awareness on the importance of the intertidal mudflat areas for shorebirds and fisheries. Results will be discussed in a local workshop with participants from industry and relevant government agencies. A report will detail the findings.

*Contact person: Ms. Nicole Grenfell (WI-TP). E-mail: apaul@ratree.psu.ac.th*

## HAS THE TIDE TURNED IN FAVOUR OF FUJIMAE?

On 5-6 December Japan Wetlands Action Network (JAWAN) held its most successful Symposium so far. During the Symposium guest speakers from the Republic of Korea presented the shocking plight of tidal flats on their west coast. Although a 55,000 hectare reclamation project at Yongsan was cancelled in July 1998, due to vigorous campaigning by the robust citizens' movement and conscientious scientists in that country, the world's largest reclamation project at Sae Man Keum is still on course. This involves landfilling of 400 square kilometres of tidal flats and shallows!

However the presentation which attracted the most attention was a non-scheduled, but nevertheless official statement, by Kobayashi Hikaru of the Japanese Environment Agency's Planning Department concerning Fujimae tidal flats. Bulletin readers will recall that the Nagoya City officials want to create a huge garbage tip on the flats. In response to national and international concerns Nagoya City decided it would create new intertidal flats to compensate that which would be buried under the garbage.

The Environment Agency questioned the wisdom of the planned Fujimae landfill project (for use as a rubbish tip) and stated that the Environment Agency deems unacceptable the experimental intertidal flat the Nagoya City was planning to compensate for the lost habitat which would be caused by the landfill. This statement was backed up by the Director-General of the Environment Agency on 8 December. Nagoya City must submit its application for permission to landfill the site to the Ministry of Transportation, which must take into account the Environment Agency's opinion of the project's Environmental Impact Assessment. On 12 December the Transportation Minister commented that his Ministry would not approve the application if the Environment Agency disapproved of the Environmental Impact Assessment. To top it off, on 18 December, the Environment Agency delivered to Nagoya City and Aichi Prefecture, the report of a panel of experts, convened by Environment Agency to look at the project. The report strongly recommends that the Fujimae Tidal Flat garbage landfill plan be withdrawn and an alternative site found. This is the first time the Environment Agency has issued such a report to a local government. The Governor of Aichi Prefecture responded with a suggestion that all the government agencies concerned - the prefecture, Nagoya City, the Environment Agency, the Ministry of Transportation, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare, which governs waste disposal - should sit down and talk it over. Conservationists are cautiously welcoming this proposal.

The Environment Agency has in fact, been sending signals to the Nagoya City for several years that it considers Fujimae Tidal Flat an inappropriate site for a garbage dump; Fujimae has been on the Environment Agency's list of potential sites for designation as a national Wildlife Protection Area for several years, and the Environment Agency's Inventory of Shorebird Staging Sites, published in the Autumn of 1997, makes it clear that Fujimae hosts the highest numbers of shorebirds in the country (after Isahaya Bay was cut off from the sea).

*Maggie Suzuki (Extracted from Japan Environmental Monitor).*

## A NEW LOOK AT MONITORING SHOREBIRDS IN AUSTRALIA

Monitoring of shorebird populations provides important information on the conservation status of those populations. It may also be an indicator of the health of their wetland habitats. The aim of monitoring is to be able to detect changes over time. While this sounds fairly straight forward, in fact it requires very careful scientific design, and a highly disciplined approach to collecting data, if it is to be scientifically credible. Monitoring must be based on comparisons of statistically valid estimates for which there are also estimates of variance. So far, shorebird monitoring programs in Australia and elsewhere have not been particularly good at achieving this. In 1997, a review of 14 years of data from the AWSG's Population Monitoring Program concluded that the data gave little real insight into population trends, despite the large effort put into collecting data by AWSG observers.

This was largely because the survey methods had varied so much from one year to the next. The Wetlands Unit of Environment Australia is supporting a project to develop a shorebird monitoring methodology which, if viable, will greatly improve our capacity to monitor the status of our shorebird populations.

In December, the Wetlands Unit held a one-day specialist workshop in Canberra to discuss population monitoring for shorebirds. The task given to the fifteen workshop participants was to prepare a brief, against which a consultant could develop a standardised methodology for monitoring shorebird populations. One of the constraints set by Environment Australia was that, whatever form the methodology takes, it must be useable by skilled amateur observers, such as the Wader Study Groups. The workshop was a great success, and reached agreement on a range of design parameters. The next step will be to develop those ideas into a formal brief and find a consultant. All going well, a draft methodology will be ready for a field trial this winter, with a follow-up trial in the summer of 1999-2000.

*Tom Scotney, Senior Project Officer, Wetlands Unit, Environment Australia.*

## RED KNOTS WITH INDIVIDUAL COLOUR–RING COMBINATIONS

As part of a long term study on the ecology of Red Knots, *Calidris canutus islandica* and *C.c. canutus*, the wader–group of the Netherlands Institute of Sea Research (NIOZ) on Texel, The Netherlands, has started colour–ringing of this species. In August and September 1998, 300 Knots were colour–ringed in the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea and we planned to ring here at least 300 birds per year in the next years. Every Knot is marked individually with four colour–rings, one yellow flag and a metal ring. The colours used are white, red, yellow and blue. There are always two colour–rings on the left and two on the right tarsus. The metal ring is always on one of the tibia. The yellow flag is the marker of our scheme and can be on the tarsus as well as on the tibia. In the latter case, the flag is on the opposite site of the metal ring. If the yellow flag is on the tarsus, its position with respect to the colour–rings is of importance: over, in between or under the two colour–rings.

Anybody who has seen a Red Knot with a yellow flag and colour–rings is requested to sent us this observations (position of rings and flag, place and date). Observers will get information on the date and place of ringing, including the other observations of the bird(s) in the same season. We are also very interested in additional information as the type of the area where the bird was observed (at a high tide roost or at the feeding area), the size of the flock in which the bird was seen, the number of birds that could be checked for colour–rings and the extent of breeding plumage of the bird. Observations of Red Knots with a yellow flag of which the colour of the rings could not be determined are also of importance, especially in combination with the total number of Knots that were checked. As we ringed both the subspecies wintering in western Europe (*C. c. Islandica*) as the one wintering along the western shores of Africa (*C. c. canutus*), Knots with a yellow flag can theoretically show up in many coastal areas of Europe and Africa.

Please sent your observations to:

NIOZ wader–group,
Bernard Spaans
Postbox 59
1790 AB Den Burg, Texel
The Netherlands

Or via e–mail: spaans@nioz.nl

## LAUNCH OF THE AFRICAN-EURASIAN WATERBIRD AGREEMENT CELEBRATED BY POSTAGE STAMP

Since 1989, the Duch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (Min. of LNV) is the stimulating force behind the development of the African Waterbird Agreement. In 1995 the AEWA was concluded during a diplomatic conference in the Netherlands and the Min. of LNV provided the Interim Secretariat for the AEWA. To celebrate the coming into force in 1999 of the Agreement, the Dutch Postal Service issued a special stamp picturing the AEWA map, long distance migrants and the Waddensea. The idea for the special stamp was initiated by our group's Chairman, Gerard Boere. The official launch of the stamp was on 29 January 1999, when the Deputy Minister of LNV, Mrs Geke Faber received the first printed sheet.