

The Tattler

Newsletter for the
East Asian-Australasian Flyway



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produced by the Australasian Wader Studies Group

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Contents

Editor's note	1
Australasian Shorebird Conference 2005	1
Alaska Hosts International Shorebird Expedition	2
Self-funding Volunteers help in Kamchatka	3
Action Plan for Dunlin	5
Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation work 2004	6
Australian Painted Snipe surveys 2004/2005	7
Saemangeum - World's largest golf course	8
EAAF Shorebird Action Plan Update	9
Southern Gulf of Carpentaria Wetlands Forum	11
Volunteers needed for NSW coastal surveys	11
Request for flag ID	12
Court halts Isahaya Bay Project	12

Editor's note

This edition of *The Tattler* marks its tenth anniversary. The first edition in October 1994 resulted from a need for a communication medium for shorebird conservationists and researchers in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. As a result of advances in technology the majority of readers of *The Tattler* are now able to read it in an electronic format instead of on paper, either receiving it as an attachment by email or by downloading it from the AWSG website. In an electronic form, you are able to see photographs in full colour instead of black and yellow! While electronic copies cost us nothing to send out the cost of printing and posting paper copies is between \$2.20 and \$3.30 each, depending on where you live in the Flyway!

The point of this note is to gauge the feelings of our readers regarding paper versus electronic copy. If you are happy to receive an electronic copy instead of paper copy you will be added to our email mail-out list and receive *The Tattler* as an attachment. Alternatively, if you don't like attachments we can send you a brief email message (including the list of contents of the current issue) informing you that the current issue is available online (via a direct link to our website) and you can download it at your leisure. If you currently receive paper copies

and are happy to receive electronic copies you will help to keep our costs down and avoid the need to raise membership fees. To make the change contact The Editor by email at tattler@optusnet.com.au or visit our website: www.tasweb.com.au/awsg/.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

AUSTRALASIAN SHOREBIRD CONFERENCE 2005

The Ornithological Society of New Zealand, in association with the Australasian Wader Study Group and the New Zealand Wader Study Group, is hosting the **Australasian Shorebird Conference 2005** (ASC) in Nelson, New Zealand in December 2005.

The meeting will run 11-13 December, with an optional field trip to the Farewell Spit Ramsar Site on 14/15 December. The Conference follows the Australasian Ornithological Conference which will be held in Blenheim, New Zealand on 6-10 December 2005.

To register interest in the ASC, visit www.osnz.org.nz/conference.htm or write to: Sue Bell, 35 Selmes Road, RD 3, Blenheim, New Zealand.

With 65 flights a day, Nelson is easily reached from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. It is planned that there will be ground transport available for those attending the Australasian Ornithological Conference immediately prior to the ASC (in Blenheim).

Nelson, at the top of the South Island, offers long sunny days, easy access to three national parks, alfresco dining, famous wines and much more! A wide range of accommodation is available ranging from simple backpackers' hostels to 5-star lodges. For further information about Nelson and its accommodation see: <http://www.nelsonnz.com>

Alaska Hosts International Shorebird Expedition

Brian J. McCaffery (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge)

Robert E. Gill, Jr. (U. S. Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center)

Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*) and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (*Calidris acuminata*) are both extraordinary migrants. The Godwit is thought to undertake the longest single-flight over-water migration in the bird world, up to 11,000 km from Alaska to New Zealand. Juveniles (but not adults) of the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper perform a bizarre "dog-leg" migration, heading east from the nesting grounds in the central Siberian Arctic to staging grounds on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, before turning back to the southwest en route to wintering areas in Australia. In September 2004, we moved a step closer to addressing our questions on the biology and physiology of these migrations, through hosting an international team of shorebird biologists on a joint reconnaissance expedition in the Yukon Delta Wildlife Refuge, Alaska.

In 2005, the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat (SPRS) will sponsor a major international expedition to Beringia, the region where Asia, Russia and North America converge around the Bering Sea. The expedition's shorebird biologists, led by Ake Lindström of Lund University, Sweden, will be collaborating with the U.S. Geological Survey's Alaska Science Center (ASC) and the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (YDNWR) on migration studies of the Bar-tailed Godwit and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

To maximize the efficiency of fieldwork in 2005, shorebird ecologists and conservationists from Sweden, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States gathered on the Yukon Delta refuge's Bering Sea coastline from 2-13 September 2004 for reconnaissance and pilot studies. This expedition enabled our international guests to understand shorebird habitats across the Delta and evaluate logistic requirements, study sites, and field protocols in anticipation of the 2005 expedition. The reconnaissance was partially funded through a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Challenge Cost Share Memorandum of Agreement between the Service and Drs. Lindström and Martin Green of Lund University. In addition, the Alaska Science Center provided substantial financial, logistic and personnel support.

Participants joining us in the reconnaissance included Lindström and Green, Marcel Klaassen

from the Netherlands Institute of Ecology and Dr Anne Dekinga from the Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, Phil Battley from New Zealand's University of Otago, Nils Warnock from Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California, Sarah Jamieson from Canada's Simon Fraser University, and Warren Lee Long from Wetlands International. Pilots and boat drivers from the Yukon Delta refuge very ably transported the group and equipment to the mouth of the Tutakoke River for a 10-day field program, with overnights at the refuge's two permanent coastal field stations. Anne Dekinga was also able to visit and assess shorebird research potential at Egegik Bay, 600 km to the southeast along the Alaska Peninsula.

Highlights included the unseasonably pleasant weather over the full duration of fieldwork, though we're confident that our foreign colleagues didn't mind having to wait until 2005 to get a more representative sample of fall conditions in the eastern Bering Sea. The mild weather allowed Phil Battley to locate 2 of his individually colour-marked godwits from New Zealand, and 3 others were spotted 135 km farther south by a second refuge crew working on our ongoing study of godwit productivity. The Tutakoke River team successfully captured and flagged five juvenile godwits during nocturnal mist-netting, and well over 100 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were captured and sampled as part of a collaborative investigation of their migration physiology. Expanding the taxonomic scope of the fieldwork, Anne Dekinga conducted preliminary sampling of benthic invertebrates, and found the flats to be more productive than any he had ever encountered. The overall goal of the reconnaissance was met, and the ambitious effort planned for 2005 appears feasible and potentially very productive, hopefully leading to many years of further collaborative work.



Left to right: Nils Warnock, Bob Gill, Martin Green, Ake Lindström, Phil Battley, Marcel Klaassen, Anne Dekinga, Patrick Snow, Sarah Jamieson, Brian McCaffery

Self-funding volunteers help in Kamchatka

A group of international volunteers joined Dr Yuri Gerasimov (Kamchatka Institute for Ecology and Nature Management, Far-East Branch Russian Academy of Science) on an expedition to the west coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula to monitor shorebirds during the southward migration in August 2004. The group of volunteers comprised Dr Falk Huettmann (University of Fairbanks, Alaska), Steve Kendall (US, Alaska), John Geale (Canada, currently residing in NZ), Rob Schuckard (NZ), Dick Veitch (NZ), Ken Gosbell (Australia) and Warren Geeves (Australia) who also co-ordinated the volunteer participation. Three other Russians joined the expedition -Alexandre and Katya Matsyna (Nizny Novgorod) and Sasha, who was our hunter-protector for potential bear interactions. The group met in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka on 1 August, travelled by road (550 km) to Esso (in about the centre of the Kamchatka Peninsula), then took a one-hour helicopter flight to the study site on the Moroshechnaya River estuary, arriving on 7 August. An extensive range of fieldwork was carried out over the next 15 days, following which we returned by helicopter to Esso and finally to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka on 24 August. Most of the group returned home later that week.

The main objective of the expedition was to contribute to the general baseline knowledge of the Moroshechnaya Estuary (56° 50' N, 156° 10' E), the most northern Shorebird Network Site in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The Moroshechnaya River is one of the largest of the many rivers along the west coast of this spectacular peninsula. It is in a virgin state, 270 km long and has a catchment area of over 5400 km². The estuary itself is over 20 km long and up to 2 km wide near the mouth. The maximum tidal range while we were there was over 5 m and the tidal flow reaches many kilometres upstream from the mouth. Extensive mudflats along the riverbanks and sandy beaches along the Sea of Okhotsk are exposed during low tide, creating very important feeding areas for shorebirds during both northward and southward migration. Some shorebirds also feed on the numerous berries that grow on the tundra. The actual river estuary is separated from the Sea of Okhotsk by a 1.5 – 2 km wide sandspit. During autumn migration, the spit is also an important feeding place for shorebirds. The tundra located on the east coast of the estuary has a large number of

small lakes surrounded by swampy ground. (Gerasimov and Gerasimov, 2000).

Shorebird data have been collected from this area from 1970-1990, with detailed studies in 1989 and 1990 (Gerasimov and Gerasimov, 2000). Additional population monitoring was carried out by Falk Huettmann and Yuri Gerasimov from 13-20 August 1999. (Huettmann, 1999). The specific objectives of the current expedition were in summary:

- (i) Documenting southward migration counts of shorebirds and their use of mudflats, beaches and tundra-like habitat.
- (ii) Collecting blood samples from Dunlin to provide information on subspecies utilising this area through DNA analysis and comparison with samples from Chukotka and Alaska.
- (iii) Collecting feather samples for future isotope studies as a supplement to objective (ii).
- (iv) Collecting faecal samples from shorebird populations for study of Avian Influenza. Moroshechnaya is a first staging area for shorebirds after leaving the breeding areas and will form a useful baseline study.
- (v)

Population Monitoring - A total of seven surveys were carried out from the spit mouth approx 10km south along the river bank and ocean beach (SOFO). Most numerous shorebird species encountered were Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Red-necked Stint (*C. ruficollis*), Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*), Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), Great Knot (*C. tenuirostris*) and Mongolian Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*). Small numbers of Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), Far Eastern Curlew (*N. madagascariensis*), Black-tailed Godwit (*L. limosa*), Red Knot (*C. canutus*) were recorded with incidental sightings of Grey-tailed Tattler (*T. brevipes*), Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*), Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*), Spotted Redshank (*T. erythropus*), Long-toed Stint (*C. minuta*), Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*), Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*), Wood Sandpiper (*T. glareola*), Marsh Sandpiper (*T. stagnatilis*), Grey Plover (*P. squatarola*) and Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*).

Mew Gull, Slaty-backed Gull and Black-headed Gull were the most common Laridae, Aleutian Tern

and Common Tern the most common Sternidae, and Long-tailed Jaeger and Parasitic Jaeger the most common Stercorariidae. Bean Goose, Green-winged Teal, Pintail, Greater Scaup and Black Scoters were the most common Anatidae.

Moroshechnaya Estuary 16/8/04			
<i>Gaviidae</i>		Dunlin Total	6994
Red-throated Loon	6	Great Knot Total	226
<i>Anatidae</i>		Red Knot Total	40
Bean Goose	13	Eastern Curlew	6
Anatidae (unidentified)	5	Whimbrel	2091
Green-winged Teal	18	Black-tailed Godwit	22
Eurasian Wigeon	4	Bar-tailed Godwit	1458
Pintail	105	<i>Stercorariidae</i>	
Greater Scaup	3	Parasitic Jaeger	9
Black Scoter	12	Long-tailed Jaeger	5
White-winged Scoter	4	<i>Laridae</i>	
Red-breasted Merganser	3	Black-headed Gull	572
Common Merganser	12	Immature Large Gull sp.	236
<i>Charadriidae</i>		Gull unidentified	736
Pacific Golden Plover	3	Herring Gull	13
Mongolian Plover	150	Slaty-backed Gull	621
Ruddy Turnstone	8	Glaucous Gull	29
Oystercatcher	25	Mew Gull	714
Greenshank	4	Tern unidentified	1
Common Sandpiper	1	Common Tern	38
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	1	Arctic Tern	4
Red-necked Stint	506	Aleutian Tern	22

In addition Falk Huettmann, supported by the team, carried out Distance Sampling surveys to obtain density estimates for Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) on the coastal tundra.

Banding - Mist netting was undertaken in low tundra depressions around base camp where a total of 11 nets were erected. A total of 227 birds were captured and fully processed. On 9 August 2004 the first yellow over black leg flag (Kamchatka Peninsula) was attached to a Dunlin! (See photo). The following is a summary of the birds captured:

Dunlin 123 (predominant juvenile)
 Red-necked Stint 85 (all juvenile)
 Mongolian Plover 11
 Red-necked Phalarope 1
 Great Knot 5 (all juvenile)
 Whimbrel 2

Blood samples are used for genetic differentiation between the sub species of Dunlins and were obtained from about half the processed Dunlins. Several subspecies have been recorded in

Kamchatka while their southward migration has rarely been studied. The blood samples will be analysed by Dr. Liv Wennerberg in Norway. Faecal samples were obtained from most species to test field methods of obtaining samples to study Avian Influenza. These samples will be analysed by the Australian Animal Health Laboratory.

Flag Sightings - The team was very pleased to observe the following leg flags from other parts of the flyway.

ORANGE (Victoria, SE Australia) - 1 Red Knot
 YELLOW (NW Australia) - 6 sightings on Bar-tailed Godwit (assessed to be 4 individual birds).
 WHITE (New Zealand) - 7 sightings on Bar-tailed Godwit (assessed to be 2 individual birds). This is the second report from Kamchatka during southward migration. At 2nd October 1992, a white flagged bird was shot in southern Kamchatka (52°30'N 156°23'E). Either a small portion of the *baueri* population from Alaska is following the Russian and Asian shores on southward migration or a small portion of the *menzibieri* population from NE Russia is also hosted in New Zealand. This last assumption seems to fit the regular number of yellow flags that is annually reported from the North Island of New Zealand and a record of a white flagged Bar-tailed Godwit from 80 mile Beach (NWA). Yellow flags had been seen earlier on migratory Bar-tailed Godwits in Kamchatka and Russian Far East by Yuri Gerasimov and Falk Huettmann, e.g. in August 1999.



The Team at Moroshechnaya. L to R. Rob. Schukard, Steve Kendall, Ken Gosbell, John Geale, Warren Geeve, Katya Matsyna, Yuri Gerasimov, Falk Huettmann and Sacha.. Dick Veitch absent at this stage. (Photo Ken G.)

In addition it is of interest that we recorded a total of 66 species while on the Estuary. Other interesting sightings included Brown Bears, Beluga Whales, Harp Seals and a Steller's Sea Eagle. With several species of salmon running in the river there was never a shortage of food!

The expedition was judged to be a resounding success in terms of international co-operation and the scientific results obtained. The group will write a Report of the expedition and publish some of the results in *The Stilt* in due course. The group of international volunteers would like to thank Yuri and his family for their hospitality and help during their stay. The Kamchatka Peninsula is among Russia's most scenically spectacular regions with its 200 plus volcanoes in varying stages of activity. This, combined with its unique vegetation and wildlife, added to the enjoyment of the participants. There is much to be done in terms of understanding the use of this vast area by migrating shorebirds and we would encourage the AWSG to support future work in this area.

*Ken Gosbell
Rob Schuckard
Falk Huettmann
8 September 2004*

References:

Gerasimov, Yu. and Gerasimov, N.N., The Importance of the Moroshechnaya River Estuary as a Staging site for Shorebirds. *The Stilt* 36 (2000): 20-25.

Falk Huettmann, Sea of Okhotsk Study. *The Tattler* No. 21, October 1999.



Dunlin with yellow over black flags banded at the Kamchatka Peninsula. Photo John Geale.

[If you are interested in taking part in research expeditions in the Asia Pacific region as a Self Funding Volunteer register your interest with the Editor (contact details at the top of page 1)]

Action Plan for Dunlin

Science Action Plan for the Dunlin in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

The Dunlin is one of the most numerous shorebird species within the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, breeding in Alaska and the Russian Far East and migrating to East Asia during the non-breeding season. Much of the habitat they use during the non-breeding and migration periods is under very serious threat from reclamation, degradation, pollution and human disturbance.

The Science Action Plan summarises knowledge of the Dunlin subspecies' population sizes and their breeding ranges, and the species' non-breeding distribution and migration staging sites. It also describes the major threats to populations and their habitats.

Ten major gaps in our knowledge of the species have been identified and potential actions to fill these gaps, involving surveys, banding studies and population monitoring activities, are proposed in order to build upon the existing information base for Dunlin. As a result, sound conservation programmes can be developed to maintain and increase population sizes and secure important habitats.

It is hoped that the Action Plan will be endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Shorebird Working Group and regional governments and, thus form the basis for directed research work on this species which is listed as a species of High Concern under the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan.

Mark Barter

Please report all flag sightings

The success of flagging programs relies entirely on observers sending in their observations. It is important to send in all of your sightings of colour flags even if you see what appears to be the same bird each time! Please send sightings (species, how many birds in the flock, exact location and date) to Clive Minton email: mintons@ozemail.com.au or post to 165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris VIC 3193, Australia.

A summary of Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SBS) conservation work in summer 2004:

Information from: Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, Jr.

- 1) Surveys and monitoring in the breeding grounds (Chukotka) were continued in May-August, 2004 (more details below).
- 2) Monitoring observations in Korea, arranged by local NGO with involvement of an expert from Japan and Russia, is now going on (September, 2004)
- 3) A project proposal has been approved by German Foundation to organize an expedition for monitoring and survey work in key SBS sites in India in January 2005. Team of 10 scientists from Russia, Japan, India, Nepal and UK will go and look for SBS wintering grounds and study their feeding ecology.
- 4) Questionnaire for SBS Recovery Team members is ready and will be distributed in October 2004.
- 5) The work on the development of the draft species Action Plan will be started in autumn 2004.
- 6) Work on the creation of an SBS web-site has started.

Preliminary results of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Breeding Grounds Survey, Chukotka, 2004.

1. Surveys in two locations in Chukotka breeding grounds were made in May-August 2004: a) continuation of the monitoring of key SBS breeding site around Meinopil'geno (Koryak coast, South Chukotka) and b) survey in the new area – Provideniya coasts of Chukotka Peninsula – one of the key potential SBS areas.
2. At all three known SBS breeding areas around Provideniya Bay (all sites known in SE Chukotka peninsula since the XIX century and up to 1993) no SBS were seen during the 2004 breeding season. One of these sites has habitats heavily damaged by military installations. It is likely population decline had happened here as well as in other parts of the species range already visited by us.
3. We surveyed 90 % of the Southern Chukotka peninsula coast (about 300 km on the map but about 1000 km of coastline) and found

two more proved breeding sites and one most likely site with total of 4 breeding pairs and 1-2 more likely breeding. We also checked about 30 sites selected from the Landsat 7 imageries and found nothing there. So total estimate for the area is about a maximum of 6-8 pairs currently breeding.

4. The breeding season in Meinypil'geno monitoring plots (South Chukotka) was very poor due to a high flood in the lagoons, and predation. Total number of breeding pairs recorded, was lower than in the season 2003, but that could be partly due to a lower observational effort in the survey.
5. Breeding success in Meinypil'geno: nests surviving – 50%; 1.65 young hatched/breeding pair; about 60% of hatched chicks fledged, finally about 0.8 young fledged/nest.
6. The number of pairs breeding close to Meinypil'gyno village had decreased in the year 2004, a stronger impact than in untouched areas, and the breeding failure near the village was higher, possibly due to influence of humans and dogs.
7. None of 30 color flagged young in 2001 and none of 80 color-flagged young marked in summer 2003 was seen around the marking place. It could mean high dispersal but also low survival in young birds.
8. Total of about 70 more SBS ringed in two locations with metal rings and color flags (pale green for South Chukotka and pale blue for North).
9. Consultations with Chukotka administration regarding improvement of local conservation measures and support of future SBS conservation work were made in Anadyr'.
10. Public lectures were arranged for local people in 4 villages and a presentation made for the attention of the decision makers in the capital of Chukotka - Anadyr - with special focus on SBS conservation.

Some results of work on other waders during same expedition:

- 1) Finally found good breeding spot for Red Knots in Chukotka peninsula and learned more about the breeding habitats. Red Knots breed there on dry gravel coastal plains, which is somewhat different to what was thought before (only mountain tundra).

- 2) Found most northern breeding sites for Great Knots and the place where both Red and Great Knots breed side by side.
- 3) Found breeding color-marked Japanese Grey Plover (caught on the nest); Red-necked Stint with orange flag (demonstrating breeding) and American Semipalmated Sandpiper with red flag.
- 4) New breeding spot for the Long-toed Stint near Providenia – the most NE record (about 300 km from previous one near Anadyr). About 12 pairs breeding in human transferred tundra.
- 5) New breeding records of the Semipalmated Plover, proving expansion of the known range of this American species is occurring in Asia. Good numbers of broods mixed with Ringed Plover without any indication of interactions of these two species.
- 6) Total of about 100 waders of 12 species were flagged (in addition to 70 SBS ringed)
- 7) The biggest breeding concentration of Grey Plovers for Chukotka was discovered in the gravel coastal plains of Provideniya region.
- 8) New data were obtained to contribute to the delineation of the Asian breeding range of Baird, Rock, Western and Pectoral Sandpipers, Temminck Stint, Tattlers and Mongolian Plover.
- 9) First records of Buff-breasted Sandpiper for Southern Chukotka peninsula.
- 10) Breeding success for most waders was moderate to high in Provideniya region and moderate to low in South Chukotka around Meinypil'geno township.

Our survey team in 2004: Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovskiy, Jr., Mr. Ivan Taldenkov, Mr. Ivan Stchirenko, Ms. Elena Kazanskaya, Dr. Alexandr Artyukhov, Dr. Elena Lappo (all from Russia), Phil Palmer (UK), Manfred Lieser (Germany), Tuomo Yakkonen (Finland).

For more information please contact the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Team:
Dr. Evgeny Syroechkovski, Jr.
e-mail: rgg@eesjr.msk.ru

Australian Painted Snipe surveys 2004/2005

The Painted Snipe project, run by the Threatened Bird Network of Birds Australia, aims to increase our understanding and knowledge of this enigmatic wading bird. National surveys are planned for this coming spring and summer. The spring survey will be held on the 16-17 October 2004, while the summer survey is scheduled for the 15-16 January 2005.

The project maintains a database that gathers all reported sightings of Painted Snipe, as well as habitat and behaviour information on each sighting (if it was recorded). Since April 2004, only a scattering of reports have been received from around the country. Three reports from Queensland: singles at Porcupine Gorge in May, Harvey Bay in July and Lake Samsonvale in August. Exciting news from Western Australia with up to 15 recorded at Lake Eda (east of Broome) from August into September. In Victoria a female was seen near Pyramid Hill in September, on a wetland that has only been 'wet' for two days!

After many dry years and limited opportunities for snipe, this year's wetter conditions in south-east Australia hold great promise for an increased number of birds occurring at more sites. Bool Lagoon in South Australia and the southern NSW and northern Victorian Riverina are just some places that are shaping-up to be good for Painted Snipe once the water levels begin to recede.

To take part in Painted Snipe surveys or for more information and survey forms, contact Ian Hance, Andrew Silcocks or Chris Tzaros at the Birds Australia National Office, on (03) 9882 2622, or email: tbn@birdsaustralia.com.au

Saemangeum to become the World's largest golf complex?

After months of official silence regarding the catastrophic Saemangeum Reclamation Project, the following editorial has recently appeared in the Korea Times.

The Saemangeum Reclamation has always been defended in some quarters as necessary to "increase rice production" - WBKEnglish has in turn repeatedly pointed out that there is actually a rice surplus in South Korea, and that the water that was supposed to be used to irrigate the new rice fields is far too polluted: it is apparent that there is now an old-fashioned land-grab in process. Everyone who cares about the environment they live in, and about the 400,000 shorebirds that currently use the hugely important Saemangeum tidal-flats and shallows, must let the Korean Government know that there can be no justification for this latest plan...

"The Korea Times -

Change of Saemangeum Project: Construction of Golf Range Should Be Prohibited

The Saemangeum reclamation project is again drawing concern because its original purpose is likely to change, to the apparent detriment of the environment surrounding the region.

Holding jurisdiction over the area being reclaimed, North Cholla Province plans to build the world's largest golf complex there with 540 holes in order to increase its tourism revenues. The provincial government, which has already forwarded the plan to the central government, is confident in its ability to increase its wealth with the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo.

But the construction of the golf complex is certain to invite strong resistance from not merely environmental activists but also an increasing number of the general populace as the entire reclaimed area will be polluted from toxic chemicals used to protect the golf course lawns.

Environmental and other civic activists have resisted the Saemangeum project as the construction of a 33-kilometer breakwater

connecting the two counties in the province will destroy nature around the area.

Because of their protests, the project was suspended in July last year by a lower court's ruling. But the Seoul High Court allowed the project to resume in January.

The government launched the mammoth reclamation project in 1991 in a bid to create a large amount of arable land and a huge reservoir to help increase the incomes of residents living in the two countries and their surrounding areas.

The project is scheduled for completion by 2011 at what the government estimates will cost some 3.5 trillion won. But many critics of the project contend that the total expenses will reach more than 6 trillion won.

The provincial government is set to start building the golf complex as soon as the entire dyke is constructed in 2006. Less than 3 kilometers are now being built for the completion of the world's longest breakwater.

As situations have changed from the start of the project, the central government is considering using the reclaimed land for purposes other than the original one such as building an environmentally friendly high-tech industrial estate which will further increase the incomes of the people in and around the region.

Strictly speaking, taxpayers have more of a right to decide how to use the reclaimed tidal land than the provincial government because the project is being financed with their precious money.

There is no reason to construct the golf complex, which will further destruct the environment around the region. Against this backdrop, the provincial government ought to drop the controversial plan immediately."

Please - help us protest!

Charlie and Nial Moores, Kim SuKyung
wbkenglish@aol.com

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Shorebird Action Plan

October 2004 – Quarterly Update

To submit news on Shorebird conservation in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, or for enquiries on the Shorebird Action Plan please contact Warren Lee Long at Wetlands International – Oceania.
Email: warren.leelong@deh.gov.au Tel: +61 7 6274 2890

Development of the Network:

(Action 1) Fujimae-Higata at Nagoya, Japan, held a very successful dedication ceremony to celebrate joining the Shorebird Site Network on 19th September during Nagoya's Environment Day celebrations. After the 17 year campaign by the *Save Fujimae Association*, and the subsequent Ramsar listing of Fujimae, joining the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network brings greater international attention and assistance to Nagoya's conservation efforts. Since the famous Fujimae campaign saved Fujimae from garbage filling, Nagoya City Mayor, Takehisa Matsubara, has helped implement garbage incineration for the city, and hopes Nagoya will eventually become a 'nil-garbage' producer.

Kumagawa Estuary, Yatsushiro City, is planning a dedication ceremony for 14th November. New nominations are being prepared for 4 sites in China, 5 in Queensland, 3 in South Australia, and 2 in Victoria.

(Actions 1, 3) Warren Lee Long (Shorebird Flyway Officer) and Ward Hagemeyer (Head of Species Conservation Program, Wetlands International) presented a set of proposals to the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) 10th biennial meeting (14-16th September) to enhance integration and synergy of conservation activities between the Arctic and non-Arctic regions of global waterbird flyways. We will follow up on several new opportunities to enhance the shorebird site network and exchanges on site management, education and research with the Arctic region (breeding areas) of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

(Actions 1, 3) The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) has recently undergone a substantial restructuring with a new strategy and slate of items to be implemented in the coming year, and a 7-person WHSRN-US Committee has volunteered to lead on some of the new WHSRN initiatives. Synergies with the East Asian-Australasian Flyway are being explored much further now, with Kent Wohl, Bob Gill and

Warren Lee Long occupying positions on committees in WHSRN and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to assure cross-flyway integration and collaboration.

(Action 3) Review of the Shorebird Action Plan is continuing alongside reviews of the Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, to enhance the framework for supporting, facilitating and implementing conservation efforts for migratory waterbirds beyond 2005. In case we do not reach you during this review, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions on how to improve waterbird/shorebird conservation across the flyway. Please contact Warren Lee Long, Shorebird Flyway Officer, before August: warren.leelong@deh.gov.au

Appropriate Management of Network Sites:

(Action 4) A report on shorebird training and surveys in the Yellow Sea, China during the April-May 2004 northward migration, was submitted by Mark Barter to Wetlands International - Oceania. This report highlights the special significance of Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve for Bar-tailed Godwits (subspecies *baueri*), Eurasian Curlew (subspecies *orientalis*) and Little Curlew. The Northern Jiangsu Province coast, Jioazhou and Laizhou Bay surveys resulted in a total 106 000 shorebirds counted from about 30% of the saltpan- and 70% of available coastline-habitat – which indicates that extremely high numbers of shorebirds potentially use these coastal areas during northward migration.

(Action 5) Development of wetland networks and education centre linkages is the focus of workshop planned during the 10th Anniversary celebrations of the Kushiro-Kooroogang Sister Wetlands Program. The Wetland Centre Australia hopes that the workshops will lead to a 5-year implementation program and eventual guidelines for other wetlands to establish exchanges between wetlands across the flyway.

(Action 7) The Australian Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds takes a further developmental step as the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage incorporates comments on the issues paper into a draft plan. The Draft Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds will be distributed to stakeholders for comment in the near future.

Download the Issues Paper and the Factsheet for the Consultation Process at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/shorebirds/index.html#contacts>

(Action 10) The Waterbird Strategy Calendar for 2004 is available at

<http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/waterbirdstrategy/Calendar.htm> If you are aware of other events appropriate to the Flyway, please send information to Dr. Taej Mundkur (Asia Pacific Waterbird Strategy Coordination Officer) taej@wiap.nasionet.net

(Action 10) Lessons from The Shorebird Site Network, and experiences of network sites in Japan, were presented at the Japanese Ornithological Conference at Nara on 20th September. Discussions following these presentations highlighted the need for greater networking and sharing between site managers and governments within the Shorebird Site Network to improve national and local conditions and tools for conservation of wetlands and waterbirds.

Increasing the Information Base:

(Actions 4, 9, 11, 13) The international shorebird expedition on Moroshechnaya Estuary, Kamchatka, Russian Far East, in August was a great success. The first colour leg-flags applied to several species at Kamchatka (Yellow / Black), are being observed already at sites in Japan. See a special Kamchatka article in this *Tattler* issue for summary results of the species marked, daily counts of shorebird use at the site, and sampling for population genetics and avian influenza research. Yuri Gerasimov led the local support staff and team of 7 foreign shorebird experts from USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and participants funded their own travel and expedition costs for the 14-day field program.

(Action 12) Spoon-billed Sandpiper research and conservation experts are seeking to develop a Spoon-billed Sandpiper Taskforce this year, and will soon distribute a questionnaire to seek feedback on potential members and key contacts. See Evgeny Syroechkovski's report in this *Tattler* issue on the achievements for Spoon-billed Sandpiper work this year, which include:

- Continuing breeding ground surveys and studies at Chutkotka,
- Co-ordinated monitoring in South Korea by local NGO, with Russian and Japanese experts during the southward migration of 2004
- German Foundation funding was obtained to support surveys for non-breeding habitats and feeding ecology in India, South Asia
- Development of the Draft Species Action Plan has commenced,
- Promotion of SBS research and conservation issues in Chukotka, Korea & Japan, and

- A Spoon-billed Sandpiper website is now being developed.

(Actions 13, 9) Reconnaissance expedition for "Beringia 2005" on the Yukon Delta Wildlife Reserve (3-15th September 2004), was a huge success, and has delivered several viable options and logistic solutions for the 2005 Beringia field program. Co-ordinated by Brian McCaffery and Bob Gill, the American, Dutch, Swedish, Canadian and New Zealand scientific team in the Yukon Delta located excellent sites for elucidating questions on migrations and trans-oceanic flights of Bar-tailed Godwit, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Dunlin.

In the Yukon Delta Wildlife Refuge, Phil Battley resighted 5 of his cohort of individually-marked godwits which flew from New Zealand in March 2004. Brian McCaffery, Bob Gill and Phil Battley are working to develop a flyway-wide framework for management and research on Bar-tailed Godwits.

Marcel Klaassen (The Netherlands), Ake Lindström and Martin Green (Sweden) obtained very rewarding shorebird numbers (using traps and mist nets) for pilot samples on genetics and migration physiology of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Dunlin and Long-billed Dowitcher. With Anne Dekinga (The Netherlands) they expect next year's longer stay within the Beringia Program to include feeding studies and fuelling rates.

Sarah Jamieson of Simon Fraser University (Canada) also further developed her PhD research plans for examining differences between the moult schedules of male and female Dunlin.

(Action 14) "Maps of Internationally Important Sites for Shorebirds in Australia" is available as a consultation draft at <<http://www.wetlands-oceania.org>>. Your input is particularly needed to refine the boundaries of the internationally important sites, and collect some key ecological information on the sites such as key feeding and roosting areas.

Upcoming Activities:

(Action 3) Meetings for the Shorebird Working Group, Migratory Waterbird Conservation Committee and a WSSD (World Summit for Sustainable Development) Type 2 Partnership introduction will be held between 15th and 19th November in Soesan City, South Korea. These meetings will review the conservation framework and discuss options for international cooperation beyond the current 5-year term.

Southern Gulf Birds and Wetlands Forum

The inaugural (hopefully) *Southern Gulf Birds and Wetlands Forum* held in Karumba on May 5th and 6th was a great success attracting 70 participants from a range of backgrounds including land holders, traditional owners, industry, government and the broader community. The forum was an important step in raising awareness of the values of important wetlands in the Southern Gulf and building support for their conservation and wise use. The forum was convened by WWF Australia in collaboration with the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group and the Southern Gulf Catchments Ltd and supported by the national Shorebird Conservation Project with funding from the Natural Heritage Trust.

Topics for discussion at the forum included the birds and wetlands of the Southern Gulf, challenges for the management of Gulf wetlands and approaches to conservation. Speakers presented information on a range of values and issues including for example, shorebirds and waterbirds of the Gulf, weed and feral pig invasions, the intensification of the grazing industry, water impoundment/extraction and climate change. The second day ended with a field trip to Muttonhole Station and Delta Downs and was followed by a barbecue hosted by the Kurtijar people. Overall, it was rewarding experience for many participants and a great opportunity for people to network. WWF is currently collating proceedings that will include the presentations and these will be distributed to participants.

The wetlands of the Gulf are the most important environmental asset in the region and critical to the sustainability of the prawn and fin-fish industries, recreational fishing, tourism, and to grazing, as well as to the health and lifestyle of Indigenous communities. It is also clear that the pressures on Gulf wetlands are increasing and that managers face extraordinary challenges. Without concerted efforts to manage these important wetlands, it is likely that their health will decline along with the biodiversity they sustain and the ecological services they provide. With this in mind, the Forum workshopped the idea of developing a *Strategy for the Management of Important Wetlands in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria*, hopefully to be developed and led by the two regional natural resource management organisations.

Volunteers needed for NSW coastal shorebird surveys

The New South Wales Wader Study Group is involved in two major coastal surveys this season involving up to 200 volunteers. One of these is the "Beach Nesting Bird Survey" which started out as an extension of the 1994 biennial Hooded Plover survey, co-ordinated by Birds Australia. The NSW survey now covers all beach nesting birds along the entire NSW coastline. The second survey "Adopt an Estuary" is aimed at collecting information on the numbers of shorebirds using the 130 or so estuaries in coastal NSW and plotting the feeding and roosting sites. Volunteers are needed for both of these surveys.

Beach Nesting Bird Survey

This survey will cover all NSW beaches (with the exception of the highly populated beaches in Sydney) and will involve counts of all beach nesting birds including the Hooded Plover, Beach Stone-curlew, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers and Red-capped Plovers.

Volunteers will be equipped with a map of each beach they have chosen to walk, together with simple instructions and data sheets on which to record birds seen during the survey and whether the birds appeared to be nesting or not.

Adopt an Estuary

The second survey is longer term and will include counts of shorebirds at all of the NSW coastal estuaries. We are looking for individuals or teams of volunteers to conduct a count or series of counts at each estuary. We will issue observers with maps for use in the field and ask volunteers to mark roost sites and shade in any areas where shorebirds are observed feeding.

You can help

If you would like to be involved in either of these projects you are asked to contact the State Co-ordinator in the first place and he will put you in touch with the Regional Co-ordinator for the area you are interested in. Write to:

State Co-ordinator,
Shorebird Surveys
P.O. Box 2006
Rockdale Delivery Centre
NSW 2216

Email: wadersnsw@optusnet.com.au

Request for flag ID

A mystery colour flag combination of yellow/dark-green on a Dunlin was recently seen by members of the Taiwan Wader Study Group in Changhua, Taiwan. No-one on our flyway seems to know who flagged this bird and Dr. C. L. Gratto-Trevor (Pan American Shorebird Program co-ordinator) is not aware of such a combination either. However there is a possibility that it is a bird flagged with a white/dark green flag combination and the white flag has been discoloured. Rapid changes in colours from white to yellow have been reported from Japan (Shigeta pers. comm.) and Australia (Straw pers. comm.) We have also received several reports that white flags on the tarsus change to yellow in Taiwan, including those on Grey-tailed Tattlers.

It is assumed that the "yellow/dark-green" Dunlin was in fact one of the birds flagged in Tainan, Taiwan with white/blue flags and the flags were encrusted and the colours changed to yellow/dark-green. The position of the flags and metal ring, the shape of the flags were all similar with what we used in Tainan.

Weiting Liu

Email: kentish.plover@msa.hinet.net

Taipei Bird Fair & Conference

The Wild Bird Society of Taipei is holding an "Asian Wetland Management and Administration Conference" at the Guandu Nature Park of Taipei. Besides speakers from Taiwanese groups representatives from Japan, two Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, France and Australia will be speaking at the conference. The event is being planned in association the sixth annual Taipei Birdwatching Fair 6-8 November 2004 at Guandu Nature Park. This year's theme for the fair will be "IBAs: the Power of Conservation"

The Taipei Birdwatching Fair is the largest such event in Asia.

Court halts Isahaya Bay project

The Saga District Court on Thursday issued a provisional order to suspend reclamation work at Isahaya Bay in response to a request by a group of 106 fishermen who claim the work violates their fishing rights.

Presiding Judge Yoshiyasu Enoshita said the work should be suspended until the suit, filed by a group of coastal residents and local fishermen in November 2002 demanding discontinuation of the work and compensation, is decided by the court. The reclamation work is a central governmental project off the shores of the Ariake Sea.

The judge acknowledged the causal relationship between the work and environmental changes in the sea and the damage to local fishing, saying, "Although it would be going too far to say that the work is the sole cause, it has been proven that the work has had some effect."

In response, the central government suspended the work shortly after 10 a.m.

According to the fishermen's lawyers, it is the first time a court has directly ordered the suspension of a central governmental project.

According to the request, the annual catch of fish for four prefectures along the shores of the Ariake Sea--Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki and Kumamoto--has dropped from 88,000 tons to 25,000 tons, a more than 70 percent decrease, due to the construction of a dike in 1990 and the closing of drainage gates in the bay in 1997. In addition, the seaweed harvest was dramatically reduced in fiscal 2000.

The central government, meanwhile, denied in court that the reclamation work had caused the declining fish catch by saying it had already begun to decrease in the early 1980s before the work had begun. It also claimed that changes in currents and red tides were caused by abnormal weather.

[Information forwarded by Simba Chan, Wild Bird Society of Japan, from website of Yomiuri Shimbun (27 August 2004)]