

# Australasian Wader Studies Group

*A special interest group of Birds Australia*

## NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA

## WADER and TERN EXPEDITION

2012

**18<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

### JOINT LEADERS

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Chris Hassell, PO Box 3089, Broome. WA. 6725. Australia. Ph. 61-8-9192 8585 <a href="mailto:turnstone@wn.com.au">turnstone@wn.com.au</a>	Maureen Christie, Carpenter Rocks. SA 5291. Australia Ph: 61-8-87380014 <a href="mailto:twinpeppers@icisp.net.au">twinpeppers@icisp.net.au</a>

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## North-west Australia Wader & Tern Expedition 2012

18<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012

### Background

The AWSG was formed in 1981 as a special interest group of Birds Australia. Its objectives are:

- To monitor wader populations through a program of counting and banding to collect data on changes on a local, national and international basis.
- To study the migrations of waders through a program of counting, banding, colour flagging and collecting of biometric data.
- To instigate and encourage other scientific studies of waders such as feeding and breeding studies.
- To communicate the results of these studies to a wide audience through the *Stilt*, the *Tattler*, other journals, the Internet, the media, conferences and lectures.
- To formulate and promote policies for the conservation of waders and their habitat, and to make available information to local and national governmental conservation bodies and organisations to encourage and assist them in pursuing this objective.
- To encourage and promote the involvement of a large band of amateurs, as well as professionals, to achieve these objectives

North-west Australia was “discovered” to be one of the prime locations in the world for wading birds during the first RAOU (Birds Australia) “Expedition” there in August/September 1981. It is now known to have a peak population of nearly 750,000 waders, with a huge variety of species (50, nearly a quarter of the 214 species of waders worldwide). It has also proved to be an ideal place for wader studies with a warm, sunny, dry climate for 10 months of the year (usually!). Furthermore there is easy accessibility to two of the principal wader areas of Roebuck bay, Broome (150,000 birds) and 80 Mile Beach (500,000 birds).

### NWA 2012

A series of special expeditions has taken place over the years to undertake comprehensive long-term studies of the waders and terns in N.W. Australia. A further major N.W. Australia Wader and Tern Expedition will take place from 18<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

This document is intended to provide relevant information to prospective participants. A large number of people will be needed if a satisfactory team is to be available throughout this 3-week period. You are strongly encouraged to participate. Details of how to contact the expedition leaders are given at the front of this note.

### Objectives:

The fieldwork program will, as usual, principally consist of regular banding and appropriate counting of waders and terns at two locations (Broome and 80-Mile Beach).

The specific objectives of this Expedition are:

To obtain an estimate of the relative breeding success in the 2011 Arctic breeding season of all the main species of migratory waders. This is achieved by measuring the proportion of juveniles in catches.

To catch additional samples of species which are less frequently caught in NW Australia, e.g. Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Greenshank, Oriental Plover, Eastern Curlew, Little Curlew, Oriental Pratincole.

To continue the program of putting individually lettered/numbered Yellow leg flags on all the main medium/large migratory wader species caught at Broome. This is to facilitate the collection and calculation of survival rate data in the future. The use of engraved flags has also been extended to some "freshwater" species of waders mist netted at Roebuck Plains.

### **Itinerary:**

A proposed itinerary for the 3-week period of fieldwork is attached. This can be summarised as;

Broome/Roebuck Bay (including inland locations)	8 days
80 Mile Beach/Anna Plains	9 days
Travel between locations	2 days
Rest day	1 day

### **Costs**

Participants will be responsible for the costs of travelling to join or leave the expedition at Broome or 80-Mile Beach.

When in N.W. Australia costs for participants will be:-

a) a charge of **\$32 per day** to cover the cost of food, gas, laundry, other consumable items (electrical fuses, batteries etc.) and other equipment costs/ overheads.

b) a charge of **\$270 per week** for local transport costs (hire of 4WD, fuel, servicing of other vehicles).

c) camping or accommodation costs at Broome Bird Observatory. **Accommodation bookings should be made directly with the BBO; a deposit may be required** PHONE: +61 8 9193 5600 E-mail [bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au).

d) "use" charge at Anna Plains of **\$10 per person per night** (expedition will pay to the station on your behalf but we need to cover the cost). We hope to be able to use one of the buildings at the Anna Plains homestead as our base (as usual).

The above charges (a) and (b) and (d) are collected periodically by the expedition "treasurer". Cash or cheques are equally acceptable (no credit cards). BBO accepts credit cards for charges under item (c) above. All participants, other than local residents, will be expected to be full members of the team, residing at the one location. "Self catering" is not permitted.

### **Travel**

Broome is easily reached by air (direct from Perth, Darwin, Melbourne or Sydney). Connections from Queensland (Brisbane or Cairns) usually go via Darwin. Buses also run from Perth and Darwin.

People are strongly encouraged to come for **the whole period of three weeks**. This maximises efficiency with everyone becoming fully integrated into the team. It maximises enjoyment and benefits, and enables everyone to contribute as well as to learn. It also leads to a more effective team if changes in personnel are minimal.

Would all participants please ensure that the expedition leaders are aware of your specific arrival and departure details well in advance (contact methods are at the front of this document). All participants will be met on arrival. BBO is 25 km away from Broome.

### **Membership of AWSG**

Membership of AWSG is a pre-requisite. As a member of AWSG you will receive a copy of the formal published report on the expedition and be able to follow other research results from throughout the flyway in the AWSG publication *Stilt* and in the periodic newsletter *Tattler*. An application form is attached at the end of this document.

### **Climate**

February is in the “wet” season in N.W. Australia with day temperatures reaching 35°C and night temperatures of around 25°C. Sunshine averages 10 hours per day. There is often a fresh afternoon sea breeze. Humidity may be very high and some rain can be expected.

### **Clothing**

Light clothing (T-shirt and shorts) is ideal for daytime wear if you are not sun sensitive - otherwise bring a light long sleeve shirt and slacks. As we often get hot and sweaty or sandy/muddy and wet it is necessary to plan on using two sets of clothes each day.

Bring your swim wear – there is a pool in Broome and at Anna Plains. You may be able to go swimming in the ocean if the stinger season has finished – variable with weather conditions.

It may also be necessary to have a little warmer clothing as a tropical storm can drop the temperature significantly. A tracksuit or sweater is ideal. Although it is not uncomfortable getting wet in such a warm climate a lightweight waterproof top is advisable.

There are good laundry facilities in Broome, and these are visited every day (communal laundry bag so put your initials on your daks!) when we are based at this location (one of our shared tasks). At 80 Mile Beach we are also able to use laundry facilities at the station so daily washing of clothes is practicable. However, note that drying clothes in the wet season can be a problem, so bring enough changes.

Light footwear only is necessary. Because we frequently have to run into the edge of the sea when the net is fired and wade around in mud and water on inland waters on Roebuck Plains/Anna Plains, one set of footwear should be “old” i.e. suitable for regular inundation. If you are planning on going bush bird banding appropriate enclosed protective footwear is essential.

Razors, mobile phone, camera battery & laptop recharging - 240 volts electricity is available at the BBO and at Anna Plains station. Don't forget your adaptors!

### **Catering**

All the main cooking utensils will be supplied by AWSG or loaned to the expedition by the BBO. All food is purchased communally and participants are expected to help in menu planning, food purchase, cooking, washing up and taking clothes to the laundromat (when in Broome) on a rostered basis (about one day in every four days). Please send any menu suggestions to Maureen – they need to be easily prepared, reasonable cost and practical for around 25 people.

Those having special dietary requirement such as vegetarians, diabetics, celiacs etc, or if you are allergic to any particular food please contact Maureen Christie [twinpeppers@icisp.net.au](mailto:twinpeppers@icisp.net.au) as soon as you know you are coming so that your requirements can be weaved into the menus and appropriate food ordered. Please note that as Broome is only a small town and food choices are limited.

### **Other Things to Bring**

Everyone needs to bring sleeping equipment and a tent or mosquito net for Anna Plains. A light sleeping bag or even just a cotton sleeping bag liner may be sufficient. Foam rubber or an inflatable bed, plus pillow, are highly desirable.

Tents need only be light 1 or 2 person models. You can purchase cheap tents at Coles supermarket in Broome. Some people prefer to sleep entirely in the open or under a mosquito net. However, there is a risk of heavy rain in February.

At Broome you can book an air-conditioned room at the Bird Observatory or you can camp. At Anna Plains most people prefer to camp on the lawns of the house but there are some beds in the house.

A wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen/blockout are essential. Make sure your hat can be retained in a strong breeze. Sunglasses are needed to reduce glare, especially on 80 Mile Beach which has white sand.

A torch should always be used when walking around at night due to the presence of snakes, scorpions and centipedes that hunt at night (other small animals not people!). It is also useful for mist-netting (also bring a head torch & pocket knife if you have them).

Binoculars, telescope, camera and small tripod etc are, of course, all desirable. Anyone wishing to purchase a field guide (eg overseas people visiting Australia for the first time) are strongly recommended to obtain either the newest "Field Guide to the Birds of Australia" by Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight, or "Field Guide to the Birds of Australia" by Ken Simpson and Nicholas Day or Morcombe (compact). THESE FIELD GUIDES MAY BE PURCHASED AT THE BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY.

### **Health**

NW Australia is a very healthy area and climate. The domestic water is clean and potable. Mosquitos and sandflies can be a problem, especially after spring tidal series. Repellents ("Rid" is the most popular) can be purchased in Broome. If purchasing elsewhere they should contain the chemical DEET. Flies are very occasionally known to occur in plague proportions so a "hat net" can be a lifesaver.

Because we visit farmland it is wise to ensure that your anti-tetanus protection is current. If you have not been vaccinated/had a booster within the last five years please consult your doctor on the desirability of having one BEFORE coming to Broome.

The mosquito borne Ross River Fever occurs throughout Australia - and preventative injections are not available - but its incidence is low. Long sleeved shirts and trousers should be worn in the early evenings and mornings and when frequenting areas such as the mangroves. Mosquito repellent with DEET should be worn. Prevention is better than cure.

Crocodiles have been seen at the Crab Creek mangroves, so if bird-watching keep your eyes open.

You are strongly advised not to walk around bare foot on any grassed or irrigated areas due to the presence of hookworm. Always use footwear when outside – flip-flops or thongs will do for casual wear. You are also encouraged to wear flip-flops or thongs when in the shower to prevent the spread of tinia (athlete's foot).

### **Travel Insurance**

If visiting from outside Australia you **must** have a travel insurance policy to cover remote areas and transport by the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Australian residents **must** have ambulance cover for remote areas. If you should need ambulance transport, even a short ride could be expensive (starting at \$800). The cost of ambulance services is not covered by Medicare scheme. Nor is it covered if you are holding a Healthcare card, Pharmaceutical or Pensioner Benefit Card.

We are in remote areas and costs could be substantial. You need to ensure that your travel insurance/health cover caters for possible **evacuation by the flying doctor service** as well as **ambulance cover suitable for remote areas** – no limit on km travelled.

### **Contacts**

During the expedition participants can best be contacted through BBO. The expedition will be based there when in Broome and will be in almost daily contact when at 80-Mile Beach. Postal Address:

Broome Bird Observatory, PO Box 1313, Broome, W.A. 6725. Australia.  
PHONE: +61 8 9193 5600  
e-mail [bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:bbo@birdsaustralia.com.au)

Expedition members can make phone calls out from the BBO (pre-purchased phone card preferred) and from a pay phone from Anna Plains station. Mobile phones work at the BBO but can be erratic – you can text all the time but voice calls will depend on weather conditions – reception for calls is about 20-40% of the time but some days there is no reception. A walk along the beach towards Broome often improves reception.

E-mails, other than those strictly related to the Expedition, are discouraged at the BBO. However e-mail cafes are available in Broome. In general, reception at BBO is not strong enough for wireless internet. No e-mail service at Anna Plains.

### **Conclusion**

It is always a great challenge trying to undertake expeditions during the hotter season in NW Australia. It is essential that we have a large and experienced team available to cope with the expected conditions. A team of 25-28 people is considered the optimum. Usually half the expedition participants are from outside Australia.

Previous wader banding or expedition experience is not essential. What is important is the readiness to work hard (when required) and be a contributor to the team (lazy/loners won't fit in!). It is a wonderful opportunity to mix with, and learn from, others with different backgrounds and experience.

Would anyone receiving this "brochure" (sent to recent expedition participants and others who have already expressed interest in coming) please try and indicate, to one of the expedition leaders, their likely availability and intentions for 2012 **as soon as possible**. This doesn't need to be a firm commitment at this stage - just an indication of the most likely/desirable situation. Such information will greatly assist the leaders in planning – especially in obtaining an even cover throughout the period and in securing appropriate transport etc. So please take action now just to give us an idea. Then in due course, advise us of specific details and travel arrangements. We hope to see you on NWA 2012.

**Joint Leaders**

<p>Clive Minton, 165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, VIC. 3193. Australia. Phone 61-3-9589 4901 <a href="mailto:mintons@ozemail.com.au">mintons@ozemail.com.au</a></p>	<p>Rosalind Jessop, RMB 4009 Cowes. VIC. 3922. Australia. Ph 61-3-5952 1857 <a href="mailto:moonbird@waterfront.net.au">moonbird@waterfront.net.au</a></p>
<p>Chris Hassell, PO Box 3089, Broome. WA. 6725. Australia. Ph. 61-8-9192 8585 <a href="mailto:turnstone@wn.com.au">turnstone@wn.com.au</a></p>	<p>Maureen Christie, Carpenter Rocks. SA 5291. Australia Ph: 61-8-87380014 <a href="mailto:twinpeppers@icisp.net.au">twinpeppers@icisp.net.au</a></p>

## N.W. Australia 2011 - Locations Schedule

18<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012

### DAYLIGHT SAVING DOES NOT APPLY

From 1 January 2008, the Broome chart datum changed, giving a 0.86 m increase in recorded tide height over previous years.

Date	Tide time	Tide Height	Location
<b>Sat 18th</b>	0757	6.11	<b>Arrive Broome</b>
Sun 19th	0927	7.00	Broome
Mon 20th	1008	7.91	"
Tues 21st	1042	8.65	"
Wed 22nd	1112	9.20	Travel to 80 Mile Beach
Thurs 23rd	1141	9.54	80 Mile Beach
Fri 24th	12.07	9.70	"
Sat 25th	1233	9.71	"
Sun 26th	1258	9.57	"
Mon 27th	1322	9.29	"
Tues 28th	1346	8.87	"
Wed 29th	1410	8.32	"
Thurs 1st	1436	7.68	"
Fri 2nd	1509	6.97	"
Sat 3rd	1630	6.28	Travel to Broome
Sun 4th	1346	5.11	Broome - REST DAY
Mon 5th	0924	6.70	Broome
Tues 6th	0952	7.58	"
Wed 7th	1022	8.44	"
Thurs 8th	1051	9.20	"
Fri 9th	1122	9.81	"
<b>Sat 10th</b>	1152	10.22	<b>Depart Broome</b>

Catching Days  
Broome 8  
80 Mile Beach 9



## Application for Membership

NAME:.....  
ADDRESS:.....  
.....  
.....Postcode.....  
TEL/FAX:.....  
EMAIL:.....  
INTERESTS:.....  
.....

### I enclose:

1) \*Subscription to AWSG: \$ \_\_\_\_ .00

2) Tax-deductible donation: \$ \_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_

.....  
TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_

\*Note: To vote in AWSG elections you must also be a member of Birds Australia.

Please pay in Australian currency (*Cheque / Money order / Bankcard / Visa / Mastercard*). Card No:

-----  
Expiry Date:.....

Signature:.....Date:.....

Send payments to:

**AWSG Membership**

Birds Australia  
Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street,  
Carlton VIC 3053  
Australia. Ph 1300 730 075

Tick here for more information about Birds Australia

## OBJECTIVES

The AWSG was formed in 1981 as a special interest group of Birds Australia. Its objectives are:

- To monitor wader populations through a program of counting and banding to collect data on changes on a local, national and international basis.
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- To encourage and promote the involvement of a large band of amateurs, as well as professionals, to achieve these objectives

## ABOUT BIRDS AUSTRALIA

Birds Australia (the former RAOU) is Australia's senior bird conservation organisation and the nation's largest scientific society concerned with wildlife.

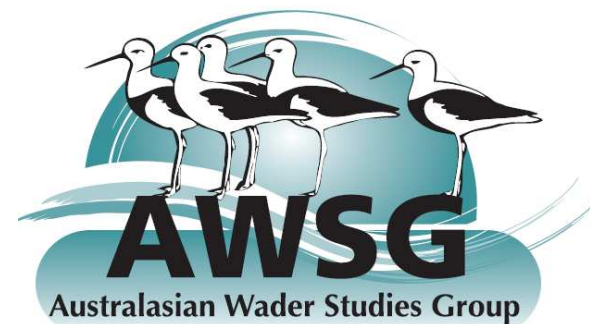
### **BA Mission**

*Birds Australia works to facilitate research, conservation and enjoyment of native birds and their habitats in the Australasian region.*

Enquiries about Birds Australia should be directed to the Birds Australia National Office,  
Birds Australia  
Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street,  
Carlton VIC 3053  
Australia. Ph 1300 730 075  
[www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)

# Australasian Wader Studies Group

A Special Interest Group of



## Birds Australia

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### **AWSG Mission**

*To ensure the future of waders and their habitats through research and conservation programs in Australia and to encourage and assist similar programs in the rest of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.*

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*Your subscription entitles you to **Stilt**, the twice-yearly journal issued in April and October, as well as our quarterly newsletter **The Tattler**.*

**General correspondence:**

Ken Gosbell, AWSG Chair, 17 Banksia Court, HEATHMONT, VIC 3135, Australia.

**Subscription/membership enquiries:**

AWSG Membership,  
Birds Australia  
Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street,  
Carlton VIC 3053  
Australia. Ph 1300 730 075

*The Stilt* contains research papers, expedition reports, notes on sightings and behavioural observations, reviews and project updates.

**Editorial correspondence:**

Dr Rosalind Jessop, RMB 4009, Cowes. Victoria. 3922. Australia.

[rjessop@penguins.org.au](mailto:rjessop@penguins.org.au)

*Tattler* contains topical news items and a calendar of shorebird events and notices.

**Editorial correspondence:**

Lisa Collins [lisacollins@wildmail.com](mailto:lisacollins@wildmail.com)

**Web:** [www.awsg.org.au](http://www.awsg.org.au)

*By becoming a member of the AWSG you are contributing to the conservation of global biodiversity and our natural environment.*

## PROJECTS

The **Hooded Plover Count Program** began in 1980, and is held every two years as a census of this threatened species in south-eastern Australia during the breeding season. Volunteers are sought to count Hooded Plovers and other waders and terns by walking selected beaches.

The **National Wader Count Program** aims to monitor wader populations by counts at wetland sites over Australia twice a year, in summer and winter. More sites and counters are needed.

The **North-West Australia Wader Expeditions** are held approximately every two years to band samples of waders on the north-west coast of Western Australia, one of the world's most important wader staging and non-breeding areas. Expeditions include a strong international component. Calls for interest in participation are regularly published in *Stilt* and *The Tattler*.

**Publications.** As well as its journal and newsletter, the AWSG publishes important reports such as:

*A National Plan for Shorebird Conservation in Australia*, by Doug Watkins (1993, RAOU Report 90), lists areas of national and international importance for 43 species of waders, using Ramsar criteria, and identifies necessary actions that must be undertaken to conserve waders adequately in Australia.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

*Membership of the AWSG is open to anyone interested in the conservation and research of waders (shorebirds) in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway.*

*Annual Subscriptions (as of 2008) are:*

Australia/New Zealand:	A\$35.00
Elsewhere:	A\$40.00
Institutions:	A\$45.00

## DONATIONS

Donations of time, effort and money are vitally important for our research program. All monetary donations of over A\$2.00 are tax-deductible when paid through the Birds Australia Research Fund. All officers of the AWSG are unpaid, and our community survey projects are carried out by volunteers. Your participation in our ongoing wetland and wader monitoring programs is encouraged.

## BACK ISSUES AND REPORTS

All numbers of *The Stilt* are available as back issues. Enquiries should be made to the Secretary.

AWSG reports may be purchased from Birds Australia. Please call the BA National Office, or email: Penny Johns [pjohns@optalert.com](mailto:pjohns@optalert.com) for details regarding prices and availability.