

The Stilt - Bulletin of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Number 45 (April 2004)

RESEARCH:

HUETTMANN, F. (2004). **Findings from the 'Southward Shorebird Migration' expedition to Aniva Bay (Sakhalin Island) and Iturup (Kurile Islands), August 2003.** *Stilt* 45: 6-12. (Biology and Wildlife Department, Institute of Arctic Biology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks AK 99775-7000, USA; EM: fffh@uaf.edu)

The Sea of Okhotsk has a long coastline which is poorly surveyed for migratory shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF). Earlier surveys identified some migration hotspots but left other areas uncovered. Here a summary is given for the southward migration during August 2003 for southern Sakhalin Island and for Iturup Island on the Kurile Island Chain. No relevant migratory shorebirds were found at the Yushnow-Sakhalinsk Sewage Lagoon. Findings for Aniva Bay confirm its wider importance for general shorebird migration along the EAAF in the southern Sea of Okhotsk. It encompasses a high diversity of species, including important numbers of Grey-tailed Tattler, from Japan, the tropical Asian mainland and the entire flyway. All shorebird sightings in Aniva Bay suggest a high turn-over rate of migratory shorebirds. Iturup Island offered a variety of potential habitats such as estuaries, beaches with exposed sand, some small mudflats, rocky cliffs, swamps and grasslands for resting shorebirds on migration but these carried only small numbers of a low variety of shorebird species. Some flocks of migratory Red-necked Phalaropes were seen offshore. It is unlikely that the southern Kurile Islands plays a major role for a larger land-based shorebird migration in August. Reasons for the lack of shorebirds on southern Kuriles are unknown, but could be attributed to the relatively young geological history of this island chain, the volcanic habitats, and the lack of substantial mudflats and associated benthos.

ANTONOV, A, & F. HUETTMANN. (2004). **On the Southward Migration of Great Knot in the Western Sea of Okhotsk: results and conclusions from coordinated surveys of Northern Sakhalin Island and Schastia bay, 2002.** *Stilt* 45: 13-19. (Khingansky Nature Reserve, Amur Province, Russia; EM: hingan@amur.ru)

The Sea of Okhotsk is little known to the western world. Great Knots (*Calidris tenuirostris*) are reported to occur in the area but the exact migration across this region is not well understood. We report here on two simultaneous migratory shorebird surveys made in 2002 during southward migration in the southern Sea of Okhotsk region. This is the first time that coordinated surveys have been carried out in the region, allowing spatial consistency and extent of migratory shorebirds to be addressed. Schastia Bay, near the Amur Estuary (Russian mainland), presents one survey area, the second survey area is located c. 350 km away on northern Sakhalin Island. It was found that the majority of migratory Great Knots were juveniles. Birds occurred in waves through August and September but seemed to peak in early August. When corrected for survey effort, Great Knots preferred mudflats which have a high organic content and which are located close to the saltwater edge. Sandy shores, as located on northeast Sakhalin, were not used. Our findings indicate the existence of a broad migration flyway located in the study area.

SKEWES, J., C. MINTON & K. ROGERS. (2004). **Primary moult of the Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* in Australia.** *Stilt* 45: 20-32. (13 Waterloo Street, Heathmont, Vic. 3135, Australia; EM: jennysk@melbpc.org.au)

Primary moult data for Ruddy Turnstones caught in the north-west and south-east of Australia were analysed to establish timing and pattern of moult in the three discernible age classes: first-year, second-year, and adult birds. Moult scores were converted to the Primary Moult Index (PMI) described by Underhill and Summers (1993). Three methods were used to estimate timing and duration of primary moult. Plots of the median and range of the PMI were drawn for all age classes. A small

number of birds retrapped while still in the same moult cycle was used to calculate the rate of PMI increase and thus estimate duration. The maximum likelihood model of Underhill and Zucchini (1998) was applied to the data for adult birds, thus providing a rigorous estimate. These estimates are compared with others from the same species in different parts of its range. First-year birds either moulted no primaries (54%), moulted all primaries (11%), or did a partial moult of inner primaries (35%). The last is unusual as partial primary moults of waders are usually of outer primaries. Moults in the second year were later for birds that had moulted primaries in their first year. Plots of median PMI against time give a useful indication of the progression of primary moult in the population but give only subjective estimates of moult parameters (start date and duration). Same moult sequence encounters give parameter estimates but with large standard deviations because sample sizes are inevitably small. Underhill and Zucchini (1998) models are to be preferred. Adult moult parameters are compared with those for the species in other parts of its range. The spread of start dates of primary moult is significantly higher in southern Africa and significantly lower in Scotland than it is in Australia. Primary moult starts earlier and ends later in southern Africa than it does in north-west and south-east Australia. The mean duration of primary moult in Scotland at 74 days is shorter than it is in southern Africa (119 days), north-west Australia (93 days) and south-east Australia (119 days).

GERASIMOV, Y. (2004). **Southward Migration in 2003 of Shorebirds at the Penzhina River mouth, Kamchatka, Russia**. *Stilt* 45: 33-38. (Kamchatka Branch, Pacific Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Sciences, Rybakov 19a, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, 683024, Russia; EM: bird@mail.kamchatka.ru)

Daily observations of the southward migration of shorebirds at the mouth of Penzhina River were conducted over 31 days from August 11 to September 10, 2003. Two methods of shorebird counting were used each day: a 5-6 hour count on mudflats along a fixed 10 km shoreline length and a count of shorebirds flying over the study area. The survey complements the 2002 survey made over the 30 days preceding August 11 and confirms the great importance of the Penzhina River mouth for shorebirds during southward migration. A total of 307,181 individuals of 24 species were counted. Most numerous were Dunlin (302,820), Red-necked Phalarope (1,858), and Red-necked Stint (1,810). We could not obtain reliable counts of night-migrating species (especially Common Snipe and Long-toed Stint). It was expected that most of four late-migrating species would pass through the Penzhina River mouth during this later survey period: this was confirmed for Dunlin but not for Long-billed Dowitcher, Pacific Golden Plover, and Grey Plover.

JAENSCH, R., J. MCCABE, J. WAHL & W. HOUSTON. (2004). **Breeding by Australian Painted Snipe on the Torilla Plain, Brigalow Belt coast, Queensland**. *Stilt* 45: 39-42. (Wetlands International, c/- Queensland Herbarium, Mt Coot-tha Road, Toowong, Qld. 4066, Australia; EM: roger.jaensch@epa.qld.gov.au)

We document the discovery in April 2003 of six birds and a nest with eggs of the Australian Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis australis* at Torilla Plain on the Brigalow Belt coast of Queensland, Australia. The nest was on a muddy islet in a shallow freshwater wetland with marshy margins, at the landward edge of a tropical marine plain. There have been relatively few reports of this species in central Queensland.

SITTERS, H., C. MINTON, P. COLLINS, B. ETHERIDGE, C. HASSELL & F. O'CONNOR. (2004). **Extraordinary numbers of Oriental Pratincoles in NW Australia**. *Stilt* 45: 43-49. (Limosa, Old Ebford Lane, Exeter EX3 0QR, UK; EM: hsitters@aol.com)

On 7 February 2004 we made an extraordinary count of 2.88 million Oriental Pratincoles at Eighty Mile Beach, NW Australia. This compares with the previous estimated population in the whole East Asian-Australasian flyway of just 75,000. We suggest that a combination of unusual weather and feeding conditions led to this

concentration and that the population has always been much more numerous than previously supposed, with most occurring unrecorded in the vastness of outback Australia.

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS:

ISLAM, M.S. (2004). **Discovery of a nest of the Great Thick-knee in Bangladesh.** *Stilt 45*: 50-51. (IUCN Bangladesh Country Office, House 11 Road 138, Gulsham 1, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh; EM: sazed@iucnbd.org)

TURNER, J.R. (2004). **An encounter with Wood Sandpipers in the Tanami Desert.** *Stilt 45*: 51-52. (13 Cloud Street, Novar Gardens, Adelaide, SA 5040, Australia; EM: turners@senet.com.au)

CONNOR, M. (2004). **Unusual feeding sites of Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* on Lord Howe Island.** *Stilt 45*: 52-53. (19 Pamela Grove, Lower Templestowe, Vic. 3107, Australia; EM: maconner@unimelb.edu.au)

REPORTS:

MINTON, C., P. COLLINS, H. SITTERS, C. HASSELL & R. JESSOP. (2004). **NWA 2004 Wader and Tern Expedition. 24 January to 14 February, 2004.** *Stilt 45*: 54-59. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintons@ozemail.com.au)

MINTON, C., R. JESSOP, P. COLLINS, C. HASSELL, & L. BEASLEY. (2004). **Sightings of Waders and Terns leg-flagged in N.W. Australia: Report No. 8.** *Stilt 45*: 60-70. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintons@ozemail.com.au)