

The Stilt 46 (October 2004)

RESEARCH:

BARTER, M. & Q. XU. (2004) **Northward Shorebird Migration Surveys in 2004 at Three Yellow Sea Sites in Jiangsu and Shandong Provinces**. Stilt 46: 2-8. (21 Chivalry Avenue, Glen Waverley, Vic 3150, Australia; EM: markbarter@optusnet.com.au).

The shorebird surveys conducted in late-April and early May focused on three previously unsurveyed regions of intertidal areas, near-coastal salt works and mariculture ponds in northern Jiangsu and Shandong. A total of 33,628 shorebirds was counted in northern Jiangsu, 19,286 in Jiaozhou Wan and 53,463 in Laizhou Wan. The principal species in the saltworks were Spotted Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Contrary to earlier experience large numbers of Red-necked Stints were found on intertidal areas in Jiaozhou Wan. Bar-tailed Godwit represented 59% of the identified birds counted in Laizhou Wan, making the region the second most important discovered for this species in the Yellow Sea. The development of shorebird-unfriendly saltworks with plastic-lined evaporators will be of concern if these replace the widespread conventional saltworks which support hundreds of thousands of birds around the Yellow Sea. We also found extensive conversion of saltpans to fishponds in northern Jiangsu. More information on possible trends in saltworks design and conversion to fishponds should be obtained in order to assess the significance of these threats to important shorebird habitat. Levels of human disturbance in all three regions were very high, especially on the intertidal areas. Conversion of intertidal areas and near-coastal wetlands to saltworks and mariculture ponds was widespread and ongoing.

BARTER, M. & A. RIEGEN (2004). **Northward Shorebird Migration Through Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve**. Stilt 46: 9-14. (21 Chivalry Avenue, Glen Waverley, Vic 3150, Australia; EM: markbarter@optusnet.com.au).

Comprehensive shorebird counts of the Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve, located on the Chinese coast in the northern Yellow Sea, have been conducted three times during northward migration: in late-April, early-May and mid-May. Highest numbers occurred in late-April (166,000) with marginally fewer being present in early-May (153,000); the lowest numbers occurred in mid-May (93,000) when many birds had left for the breeding grounds. The most common species encountered, based on total numbers recorded over the three counts, were Bar-tailed Godwit, Great Knot, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Eurasian Curlew and Eastern Curlew. Although 34 different shorebird species were recorded over the three periods, these six species comprised more than 96% of the total counted. Such dominance by a few species is unusual in the Yellow Sea. Yalu Jiang is the second most important region in the Yellow Sea, after the Saemangeum area, for shorebirds during northward migration, supporting around 1,000 birds km⁻² of intertidal area. The Reserve is the most important site yet discovered in the Yellow Sea for Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew and Eastern Curlew, the second most important for Grey Plover, the third for Great Knot and the fourth for Dunlin. It is estimated that approximately 44% of the *baueri* breeding population were present at Yalu Jiang during the late-April count. The timing of movements through Yalu Jiang, and the n. Yellow Sea, is related to the accessibility of the breeding areas. The more southerly breeding species pass through by mid-May, while those breeding at higher latitudes migrate later.

JAENSCH, R. (2004). **Little Curlew and Other Migratory Shorebirds on Floodplains of the Channel Country, Arid Inland Australia, 1999-2004**. Stilt 46: 15-18. (Wetlands International, c/- Queensland Herbarium, Mt Coot-tha Road, Toowoong, Qld. 4066, Australia; EM: roger.jaensch@epa.qld.gov.au)

New information is presented on occurrence of five species of migratory shorebird, some in substantial numbers, in floodplain wetlands of the Channel Country, in arid

inland Australia. Until recently. Little Curlew and Oriental Pratincole had rarely been recorded in this bioregion.

KRAAIJEVELD-SMIT, F.J.L., C. MINTON, R. JESSOP & P. COLLINS. (2004). **Age Structure, Biometrics, and Molt of the Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris* in North-West Australia.** Stilt 46: 19-26. (Leiden University, Section Animal Ecology, Institute Biology Leiden, Postbus 9516, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands; EM: kraaijeveld@rulsfb.leidenuniv.nl).

A total of 230 Pied Oystercatchers *Haematopus longirostris* have been caught in North West Australia (NWA) over the past thirteen years by the Australasian Wader Studies Group. This paper discusses the age structure, biometrics and molt of these birds. A comparison is made with Pied Oystercatchers from Victoria (southern Australia) in relation to these characteristics. Of the NWA birds caught, 73% were adults, 11% second year, 15% first year, and 1% were unaged. The proportion of second and first year birds varies considerably across years. Sexing criteria were developed for birds in all three age classes, based on bill length. Females have significantly larger bills, head-bills and wing lengths compared to males in all age classes. Females are also heavier than males, but this difference is not significant. The adult sex ratio is male biased, but over-estimated at 71%, whereas this bias does not occur in first and second year birds (41 % and 51 % respectively). First and second year birds had smaller wings and weighed less than adult birds. Adult weights appear to increase from February to May and decrease from July. Adults start their primary molt in October and the molt duration is around 150 days. Molt for second year birds does not seem to be restricted to this period, with moulting birds being recorded in January, February, April, and July to October. The most striking differences between oystercatchers from NWA and Victoria are (1) NWA birds have relatively smaller body sizes and relatively much larger bills, (2) molt duration in NWA is approximately 20 days longer, and (3) immature birds in NWA do not have a particular moulting period whereas in Victoria moulting in immature birds occurs two months before the adults start moulting.

ROHWEDER, D.A. (2004). **Survey of Shorebirds in the Bellinger River Estuary, Northern New South Wales.** Stilt 46: 27-30. (P.O. Box 401, Alstonville, NSW 2477, Australia; EM: sandpiper_ecological@bigpond.com).

The population of migratory and resident shorebirds in the lower Bellinger River Estuary was surveyed between September 2002 and March 2003. A total of seven high tide surveys at monthly intervals and one low tide survey were conducted. Population estimates were derived for each survey by sampling all known high tide roosts during a single period. The maximum population estimate was 189 individuals in February 2003. Fifteen species of shorebird were recorded during the survey, including four species listed on the *New South Wales Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. The migratory shorebird population was dominated by four species: Bar-tailed Godwit, Pacific Golden Plover, Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel. *Calidris* sandpipers were uncommon and occurred in small numbers only. The survey provides baseline data that can be used to manage shorebirds and their habitat in the estuary.

MINTON, C., R. JESSOP, P. COLLINS, H. SITTERS & C. HASSELL (2004). **Juvenile Percentages of Migratory Waders in the 2003/04 Australian Summer.** Stilt 46: 31-34. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintonsozemail.com.au).

Data are presented on the age composition of primarily cannon net catches in summer 2003/04 in both south-east Australia (SEA) and north-west Australia (NWA). NWA juvenile percentages were low whilst those in SEA were more mixed with some species having high, and others with low, percentages. Annual monitoring of age proportions will continue in both NWA and SEA.

MINTON, C. & D.I. ROGERS (2004). **More on Oriental Pratincole Numbers.** Stilt 46: 35. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintonsozemail.com.au).

ROGERS, K.G., J.R, WILSON, M.A. BARTER & D.I. ROGERS (2004). **Indices of Wader Breeding Success on the Non-Breeding Grounds**. Stilt 46: 36-38. (36 Ninks Road, St Andrews, Vic. 3761, Australia; EM: kenrogers@hotmail.net.au).

CLARKE, A., B. MUIR, S. ELSCOT & J. LANE (2004). **Banded Stilt Breeding Attempt at Lake Disappointment**. Stilt 46: 39. (Department of Conservation and Land Management, P.O. Box 51, Wanneroo, WA 6065, Australia).

REPORTS :

GUOZHONG, C., P. COLLINS, D. MELVILLE & Q. FAWAN. (2004). **Report on the First Sino-Australia Flagging Workshop at Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve, China, April 2002**. Stilt 46: 40-47. (National Bird Banding Center of China; EM: bird.vz@fee.forestry.ac.cn).

The first Sino-Australia Migratory Shorebird Capture and Colour Flagging Workshop, organised by the National Bird Banding Center of China, was held in Dong Gang, China, from 22 to 30 April 2002. Two Australasian Wader Studies Group members lectured on leg flag manufacture and application, wader identification, feeding and roosting habits, data analysis, and sexing by measurement and cross checking by internal examination. Counting waders and searching for leg flags as well as turnover rates and timing of migration and bird welfare were also discussed. In the field, 42 separate leg flag sightings were made, 12 from north-west Australia, seven from south-east Australia, 14 from New Zealand, two from Japan, and one from an area as yet unknown. A three-year old colour banded Great Knot from a study in north-west Australia was also seen. Although catching conditions were not ideal due to the full moon, mist net sessions were conducted on three nights and 94 waders caught; these included one bird that had been banded at Comer Inlet in Victoria, only the second overseas band recovery of a Bar-tailed Godwit banded in Victoria. Counts were made whenever possible and over 1,000 each of Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Great Knot, Dunlin and Bar-tailed Godwit were seen.

BEASLEY, L., C. MINTON, R. JESSOP, P. COLLINS, M. CHRISTIE, & I. STEWART. (2004). **Sightings of Waders Leg Flagged in South Australia - Report No. 2**. Stilt 46: 48-50. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintons@ozemail.com.au).

MINTON, C., R. JESSOP, P. COLLINS, M. CHRISTIE, I. STEWART & J. VELTHEIM. (2004). **Sightings in 2003-04 of Waders Leg-Flagged in South Australia - Report Number 3**. Stilt 46: 51-53. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintons@ozemail.com.au).

BEASLEY, L., C. MINTON, R. JESSOP & P. COLLINS. (2004) **Sightings of Waders Leg-flagged in Victoria: Report Number 10**. Stilt 46: 54-64. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintons@ozemail.com.au).

MINTON, C., R. JESSOP, P. COLLINS & I. VELTHEIM. (2004). **Sightings in 2003-04 of Waders Leg-Flagged in Victoria: Report Number 11**. Stilt 46: 65-77. (165 Dalgetty Road, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193, Australia; EM: mintons@ozemail.com.au).

HARDING, S. (2004). **Identifying and Managing Threats to Waders on the Central Queensland Coast through Cooperation between the Community and Local and State Governments**. Stilt 46: 78-85. (336 Prout Road, Burbank, Qld. 4156, Australia; EM: pitta@gil.com.au).

SKEWES, J. (2004). **Report on Population Monitoring Counts, 2003**. Stilt 46: 86-92. (13 Waterloo Street, Heathmont, Vic. 3135, Australia).