

MORE ON OLD BIRDS

The short article on old birds in 'The Tattler' No 2 stirred one of our senior bird banders into action, Bill Lane, the 'Grand Daddy' of bird banding in NSW. Bill was responsible for the banding of the 18+ year old Little Tern at Kooragang Island, Newcastle recently retrapped by David Geering. The first adult Little Terns banded in NSW were probably those banded by Bill Lane in 1964 who noticed that a high percentage of birds remained in non-breeding plumage. This led to the suspicion that these birds bred in the northern hemisphere and migrated south during the northern hemisphere winter. This was only recently proven correct with one of these birds being recovered nesting in Japan.

Early banding of Curlew Sandpipers at Canada Bay, Sydney in 1959 and at the Entrance, NSW was carried out by Bill Lane and his colleagues. However Bill would like to know who banded the first waders in Australia? which he thinks go back to two Red-necked Stilts in 1954/55. Before Bill's retirement to Coffs Harbour he was very active on the bird banding scene and would rarely pass up an opportunity to band birds, especially if it was a species he was unfamiliar with. Photographs of Bill in a tiny dingy several miles off-shore catching Albatross, with wing-spans longer than the boat, are just some of the early impressions of Bill. Second only to his banding 'tick list' is his offshore island 'tick list'. Bill and some of his younger proteges were responsible for contributing to the seabird island series published in 'Corella' visiting islands around some of the most inhospitable coastlines Australia has to offer. Visits to numerous islands, to document the breeding colonies of seabirds, and other birds, including waders were invariably associated with hair-raising landings on rocky shores which didn't always have dry endings.

Bill's outstanding contributions to our knowledge and conservation of birds has recently been recognised by the NSW and ACT groups of the RAOU when he was awarded the inaugural John Hobbs' Medal in Sydney on 25 March 1995.

BREEDING CONDITIONS IN RUSSIAN TUNDRA - Pavel Tomkovich (from the Annual Report of the Russian Working Group on Waders)

Late spring was cool, but the weather conditions were good in general for breeding waders, according to reports on 55 areas of Russian Arctic from Kola to the Chukotsky Peninsula. The prediction of peak numbers of lemmings in some regions of Siberia proved correct. High densities of Arctic Fox, Snowy Owl and jaegers were present in these regions. However lemming numbers declined in many areas resulting in predators switching from lemmings as prey to birds eggs and chicks. This led to a lower than expected success rate during the wader breeding season. Large numbers of predators

and low numbers of lemmings in 1995 will result in a lower than average success rate, according to predictions.

WA NEWS - Mike Bamford

The biggest news concerns Hooded Plovers. The weekend of 26-27 January was selected for a count and one group of members targeted salt lakes in the region of Esperance; known for large numbers of Hooded Plovers in summer. The result a flock of 1,570 (not a typing error) on Lake Gore and another 400 birds on other sites throughout the South-West. As is normal for Hooded Plovers on this side of Australia, 85% of sightings were on lakes, 13% in estuaries and only 2% on beaches. A comprehensive report on the WA Hooded Plover survey is being prepared by coordinators Phyllis Bentley, Max Bailey, Brenda Newbey and Alan Jones for the June issue of WA Bird Notes.

Cyclone Bobby, which isolated Western Australia for a while by severing road and rail links across the Nullarbor Plain, benefited some waders. Inland lakes which have been dry since 1975 are now overflowing and Banded Stilts were on eggs within a fortnight. Scientists from the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management are monitoring their progress. (See 'Banded Stilts Quick of the Mark', this newsletter).

The banding arm of the WA Wader Study Group has stretched its nets recently. While 63 birds in a cannon-net might not seem impressive, it was a pleasing result at a site not 50m from rush-hour traffic on Perth's main freeway. We hope to use the site regularly.



BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORT

Broome's shorebirds were in the limelight again last year with "Talk to the Animals", a national TV program filmed here in early December. An 04.30 start with mist-netting in the mangroves, turned up a 12 year old White-breasted Whistler along with Yellow White-eyes, Sacred Kingfisher and Dusky Cerygone. Then it was off to film the masses of shorebirds at their high tide roosts. The film crew were greatly impressed, as in no time they had spectacular footage of Roebuck Bay wildlife.

It seems that shorebirds are fast becoming a popular attraction to the general public, as we met the same film crew only a week later in Melbourne on the first weekend of our holidays. The VWWSG were cannon-netting Eastern Curlew at the Gurdies, Westernport Bay and "Talk to the Animals" were filming the catch. It seemed to us (having escaped the joys of setting up the net), to be a perfect catch. It was very clear, calm morning and 40 Eastern Curlew were roosting quietly on the saltmarsh as Clive fired the net over them. It felt strange to be fitting orange leg-flags, after so many yellow ones (north-west Australia's flag colour) and to be