

The tour involved presentations by Drs Driscoll and Zikov illustrating the important link between Russia and Australia with Japan. Evening talks at visits to each site were attended by local wetlands groups and representatives of the media. Information was exchanged about Russian, Australian and local research and conservation efforts. An overview of shorebird and Littler Tern banding was presented by Shigeta Yoshimitsu of the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology at the Tokyo meeting.

It is hoped that the tour will result in a greater awareness by the Japanese people of the international importance of local wetlands and the need for international cooperation for the conservation of shorebirds and their habitat. The link between Australia and Japan was demonstrated by the presence of colour-flagged Bar-tailed Godwits from Queensland and New Zealand during the tour and observations of colour-flagged waders by members of all groups who attended the visits at the various sites.

Japan has lost great expanses of tidal flats during the last few decades due to development.

Banded Stilts complete the job

Research work by Jim Lane, Grant Pearson and other officers from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in Western

Australia has continued at the Banded Stilt breeding locations in the Goldfields. The ABC Natural History Unit also made a follow up visit in late May to film chick creching and fledging.

Overall it appears that breeding success was good with and excellent survival rate of young birds to fledging. Mark Lambie, the ABC cameraman, reported "tens of thousands" of well grown chicks on the western end of Lake Ballard. It seems that although the chicks could swim and feed in the normal metro deep water during their first few days after hatching they preferred to gradually make their way down to the shallow parts of the lake, 30 kms away, for the bulk of their fledging period. There they marched around on the wet mud or very shallow water picking up minute items of food - thought to be too small to be the traditional brine shrimps.

In contrast the accompanying adults, which had greatly reduced in numbers as the chicks gradually coalesced into hundred strong groups, seemed to find feeding unsatisfactory. They thus periodically left the chicks and flew to deeper water, presumably to feed on the now abundant supply of brine shrimps.

In contrast to Lake Torrens in 1989 there has apparently been no 'second round' of breeding at Lake Ballard. Plenty of adults are still present on the lake however and some excited gatherings and even copulation have been observed, and so a further nesting event may occur.

A small nesting colony (5000 pairs) did form on nearby Lake Marmion and at least 2000 chicks were seen in June, but nesting success was probably lower than at Lake Ballard due to the regular presence of a Wedge-tailed Eagle and a Peregrine Falcon at the colony.

Considerable success was achieved in banding and colour-flagging chicks, with nearly 1000 birds being marked altogether. It was reasonably straightforward to catch chicks in a handnet from a moving boat. When birds were still in family parties it was necessary to only catch part of the brood. This precautionary procedure was also followed with larger groups of chicks. It does incidentally provide yet another contrast between Banded Stilts and other waders. Banded Stilts do not defend their young and do not carry out agitated distraction displays such as the "broken-wing trick" like other waders.

A further aerial survey is planned for mid July to see if any further nesting attempts have been made and to log the numbers of adult and juvenile birds still present. The water levels are holding up well, which is encouraging.

Would everyone in Western Australia, please keep a lookout for banded/flagged birds? Please also monitor, by regular counts, the return of birds to traditional non-breeding areas as they leave the drying salt lakes in the future.

Clive Minton, Jim Lane & Grant Pearson

オオシシキ by any other name- Sniping in Hokkaido

As an adjunct to an ecological study on migratory shorebirds in the Hunter estuary, conducted by Shortland

Wetlands Centre for the Kooragang Wetlands Rehabilitation Project, I was recently fortunate enough to spend a month, from mid-May to mid-June, in Hokkaido, Japan studying Latham's Snipe. My family and I were accompanied during the first week of the trip by Mike Weston of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union and the AWSC. Mike, incidentally, is quite an impressive sight in a suit. It is hoped that the RAOU and the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, in conjunction with the Wildbird Society of Japan and the Japanese