

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE ...

Migratory waders

By *JIM LANE*

CALM got off to a flying start in March and April this year as more than 1.5 million migratory waders prepared to leave the Australian continent for their breeding grounds in eastern Russia.

Aerial surveys, ground counts and radar studies conducted by members of the Fifth North West Australia Wader Studies Expedition showed that more

than 180,000 of these birds departed via Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach alone.

Even more impressive is the number of birds on return migration which will funnel through this remote stretch of the Western Australian coastline during spring and early summer.

Previous work by the North West Wader expeditionaries has shown that the Broome — Port Hedland coastline is of critical

fly in

importance to a large proportion of Australia's "transequatorial migratory waders"; both as a southward-passage feeding area for birds "in transit" and throughout the southern summer for numerous species which do not move on.

The area regularly holds more than a half-a-million waders (more than 30 per cent of the national total) and is probably used by many more individuals on migration, making it the most important area of wader habitat in Australia and the seventh most important in the world.

Australia has international obligations to protect these species and the habitats they use.

The Japan-Australia Migratory Birds Treaty, which came into force in 1975 requires both countries inter alia to "endeavour to establish sanctuaries and other facilities for the management and protection of migratory birds" and to "take appropriate measures to

preserve and enhance the environment of (migratory) birds . . .".

Essential for the fulfilment of these obligations is an understanding of the numbers, distribution and migratory pathways of wader populations.

The North West Wader Expeditions, which began in August 1981, have played a leading role in the development of such an understanding.

Conducted by scores of volunteer wader enthusiasts from around Australia, with low-key technical and logistical support from former Wildlife sections of CALM, the North West Wader Expeditions have provided a convincing demonstration of the way in which valuable studies can be undertaken in a highly cost-efficient manner through the close operation of government and public.

They deserve continued support.

Footnote: A full report of the Fifth North West Wader Expedition is contained in "The Stilt" No. 6, Autumn 1983, published by the Australian Wader Studies Group of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union.

SOCIAL FUNCTION

A wine bus tour has been arranged for Nov. 17 by the Social Club.

A bus, courtesy of Hammersley Wine, will carry 40 people to Houghtons for a barbecue after the wine tasting tour.

A barbecue pack, wine bread and salads are included in the charge of \$8 for members and \$14 for non-members.

The social club has also bought a cricket bat. The bat is kept in Mapping by Chris Simms.

The upcoming Christmas season is the next period given consideration by the Social Club. Preliminary plans include a staff Christmas party at the South Perth Yacht Club and a children's Christmas party.

Further details will be in the next issue of CALM News.