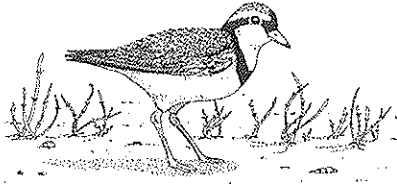


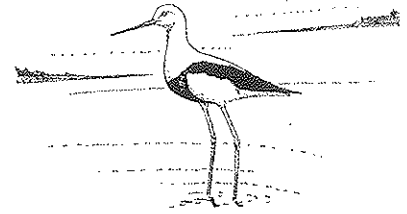
## FAUNA

### SHOREBIRDS - OBSERVERS NEEDED

Bill Rutherford



*Black-fronted plover*



*Banded stilt*

December 2007 saw the launch of the 'Shorebird 2020' programme by Birds Australia in partnership with WWF Australia and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. It is a continuation of the long running national shorebird population monitoring scheme which is one of the longest running shorebird monitoring schemes in the southern hemisphere and among its many achievements boasts continuous records from Tasmania dating back to the 1960s. As such it forms the national database for many decisions relating to the protection of wetlands and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

But before we go further – what are 'shorebirds'? They used to be called 'waders' and they are seen feeding around the edges of coastal beaches and shorelines, estuaries and mudflats, or inland lakes, lagoons and dams. Birds such as plovers, curlews, sandpipers, stints, stilts, avocets, oystercatchers, dotterels and others – but not gulls, terns or ducks – fit in this category. Many of them undertake extraordinary migratory journeys.

#### Shorebird research in south-west WA

Many questions relating to shorebirds in Australia are still to be answered and we here in WA are ideally suited to deliver some of the answers. One of the great unknowns of shorebird ecology in Australia is the role the lakes of the arid interior and wheat growing regions, both salt and fresh, can play in the annual life

cycles of both migratory and non migratory species.

Observations from the Peel-Yalgorup system suggest that many of the sharp-tailed sandpipers that use the Ramsar site as their non-breeding home during the austral summer, move away when summer rains occur inland in the wheatbelt and beyond. This is also true of many of our resident species such as the black fronted dotterel, black-winged stilt and red-capped plover.

Observers based in the inland areas are uniquely placed to answer this question and indeed a group of intrepid observers based in the Katanning area has recently discovered small concentrations of migratory shorebirds on the lake systems of the inland Great Southern region.

Other big picture questions that need to be answered with shorebirds in the southern half of WA relate primarily to the conservation of their muddy land and estuarine habitats on the Swan Coastal Plain and estuaries on the south coast.

Recently one long-standing question relating to the movements and site use over time of the south-west's most important shorebird site, the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar site, has been answered. Until this year shorebird experts have not been able to say with any certainty where the many thousands of migratory shorebirds that use the Lake McLarty part of the Peel-Yalgorup system go after this freshwater wetland dries out usually, in early February. Some birds move back onto the Peel Inlet

using Austin Bay and the Yunderup mudlands for feeding, but not all of them. Where the rest went was poorly understood. This situation changed recently with the third sighting of a leg-flagged shorebird, this time a curlew sandpiper (the previous two being red-necked stints that had been banded and flagged in December 2007 during the 'Shorebird 2020' workshop). These sightings not only help with the conservation of these birds in the south-west but also highlight the role community and volunteer groups can play.

#### About 'Shorebirds 2020'

The main goal of the 'Shorebird 2020' project is to "continue, and where possible improve, the existing shorebird population monitoring scheme" and as such offers a great opportunity for people to help with this highly important national monitoring scheme. The primary objectives of the program are to collect data on the numbers of shorebirds in a manner that can be utilised to aid their conservation and management, specifically long and short-term population trends, and explore what may be causing those changes. Further, the project will seek to understand the relationship between habitat quality and threats to the distribution and abundance of shorebirds.

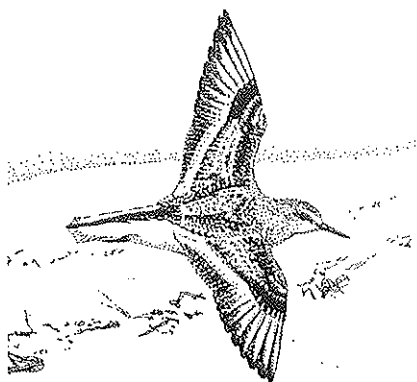
#### How you can help - shorebird monitoring volunteers needed

We want to hear from anyone with an interest in shorebirds and

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*continued from page 16*

## Shorebirds



*Sanderling*

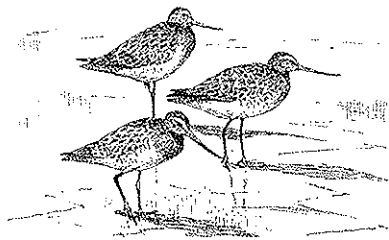
shorebird conservation, or who would like to learn more about these amazing birds. In particular we are looking for volunteers to assist with biannual national population monitoring counts at sites throughout Australia. People with limited shorebird experience need not feel daunted as we will be supporting volunteers with a shorebird identification toolkit, workshops and regional mentors.

**We especially need help at Albany, Kalbarri, wheatbelt reserves and Vasse-Wonnerup.**

To register your interest and learn more about this exciting project, please contact Jo Oldland or Rob Clemens at Birds Australia national office on (03) 9347 0757, or Bill Rutherford at Birds Australia WA on (08) 9383 7749.

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*Bill Rutherford is WA Shorebird Conservation Coordinator at Birds Australia WA. Illustrations from "The Atlas of Australian Birds".*



*Bar-tailed godwits*

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