



# Australasian Wader Studies Group

*A special interest group of BirdLife Australia*

## NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA

### WADER and TERN EXPEDITION

**2019**

**Saturday 2nd to Sunday 24th February 2019**

#### JOINT LEADERS

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# Australasian Wader Studies Group

## North-west Australia Wader & Tern Expedition 2019

**Saturday 2nd February to Sunday 24th February 2019**

### Background

The AWSG was formed in 1981 as a special interest group of BirdLife Australia. Its objectives are:

- To monitor wader populations through a program of counting and banding to collect data on changes on a local, national and international basis.
- To study the migrations of waders through a program of counting, banding, colour flagging and collecting of biometric data.
- To instigate and encourage other scientific studies of waders such as feeding and breeding studies.
- To communicate the results of these studies to a wide audience through the *Stilt*, the *Tattler*, other journals, the Internet, the media, conferences and lectures.
- To formulate and promote policies for the conservation of waders and their habitat, and to make available information to local and national governmental conservation bodies and organisations to encourage and assist them in pursuing this objective.
- To encourage and promote the involvement of a large band of amateurs, as well as professionals, to achieve these objectives

North-west Australia was “discovered” to be one of the prime locations in the world for wading birds during the first RAOU (BirdLife Australia) “Expedition” there in August/September 1981. It is now known to have a peak population of nearly 750,000 waders, with a huge variety of species (50, nearly a quarter of the 214 species of waders worldwide). It has also proved to be an ideal place for wader studies with a warm, sunny, dry climate for 10 months of the year (usually!). Furthermore there is easy accessibility to the principal wader areas at Roebuck Bay, Broome (150,000 birds) and 80 Mile Beach (500,000 birds).



## 80 Mile Beach Marine National Park – established 29<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

- The Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park is the 13th marine park declared in Western Australia
- The Park has 3 sanctuary zones, 1 recreation zone, 7 special purpose zones and 1 general use zone
- For more information about 80 Mile Beach Marine Park:
- <http://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/park/eighty-mile-beach>.



The area between Wirkinmirre (Willie Creek) and Warrawan (Barn Hill) are the traditional lands of the Yawuru people. We respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional owners of the land on which we will be conducting research, the Yawuru people.

The areas around Anna Plains Station are the traditional lands of the Karajarri and Nyangumarta people. We respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional owners of the land on which we will be conducting research, the Karajarri and Nyangumarta people.

### **NWA 2019**

A series of special expeditions has taken place over the years to undertake comprehensive long-term studies of the waders and terns in N.W. Australia. A further major N.W. Australia Wader and Tern Expedition will take place from:

### **Saturday 2nd February to Sunday 24th February 2019**

The timing of the tides means that in 2019 the expedition will begin on a Saturday and end on a Sunday. Participants are of course still welcome to arrive early or stay afterwards if they wish, please would all persons plan to participate in the **full** expedition.

This document is intended to provide relevant information to prospective participants. A large number of people (25-28 ideally) will be needed if a satisfactory team is to be available throughout this 3-week period. You are strongly encouraged to come and take part. Details of how to contact the expedition leaders are given at the front of this note.

## Objectives:

The fieldwork program will, as usual, principally consist of regular banding and appropriate counting of waders and terns at two locations (Broome and 80 Mile Beach). This year additional effort will again be put into scanning for leg flags and colour bands, particularly at 80 Mile Beach.

The specific objectives of this Expedition are:

- To obtain an estimate of the relative breeding success in the 2018 Arctic breeding season of all the main species of migratory waders. This is achieved by measuring the proportion of juveniles in catches.
- To catch additional samples of species which are less frequently caught in NW Australia, e.g. Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Common Greenshank, Oriental Plover, Eastern Curlew, Little Curlew and Oriental Pratincole.
- To continue the program of putting individually lettered/numbered yellow leg flags on all the main medium/large migratory wader species caught at Broome and, several species at 80 Mile Beach. This is to facilitate the collection and calculation of survival rate data in the future and to enhance the information obtained from flagged birds seen overseas.

## As a participant:

What you are expected to gain...	What you are expected to give...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hands on experience of cannon netting and wader banding</li><li>• Be part of the team of one of the world's most long-lived wader research programmes (Commenced 1981 – 38 years)</li><li>• Wonderful opportunity to mix with, and learn from, a team of both local Australian and overseas participants with different backgrounds and experience</li><li>• Unique bird (and other wildlife) watching experience in remote NW Australia (300+ species on Broome Bird Observatory's list)</li><li>• Experience of living on an active cattle station (Anna Plains) – 400,000 hectares.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your readiness to work hard under sometimes hot and humid weather conditions</li><li>• Your willingness to live with, learn, share and be a contributor to the team</li><li>• Your financial contribution to the running of the Expedition and wader research in NW Australia and the EAA Flyway.</li></ul>

## Itinerary:

The proposed itinerary for the 3-week period of fieldwork is attached. This can be summarised as:

Broome/Roebuck Bay	6 days
80 Mile Beach/Anna Plains	11 days
Travel between locations	2 days
Rest days	2 days

A typical catch day consists of net and keeping cages setting at the start of the day, followed by the catch and processing of birds on the beach. In the afternoon, participants are expected to help with

gear maintenance and data entry on a rotation basis, or to enjoy their free time birdwatching and exploring the surrounding area before the communal dinner. Presentations/talks from participants will occur on some evenings after dinner.

### Costs:

The Expedition has been a financially self-sustained programme over the past years mainly relying on financial input from each of the participants and generous support from the Western Australian Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions.

The financial input from each participant not only contributes to the daily living and transportation expenses during the 3-week period, but also directly contributes to the expenses on consumable field equipment such as black powder and electric fuses for cannons, engraved leg flags and even part of the purchase costs of satellite transmitters, and satellite data downloading costs, to further research on wader migration.

Participants will be responsible for the costs of travelling to join or leave the expedition at Broome or 80 Mile Beach.

When in N.W. Australia costs for each participant will be:

Item:	Cost:
a) Daily cost of food and catering service	\$26 per day
b) Daily supplies, laundry and consumable field equipment cost	\$20 per day
c) Transport costs (hire of 4WD, fuel, servicing and cleaning of vehicles)	\$43 per day
d) Accommodation at Anna Plains	\$10 per day
e) Accommodation at Broome Bird Observatory	Pay separately**

**\*\*[Accommodation bookings should be made directly with the BBO; a deposit may be required PHONE: +61 8 9193 5600 E-mail [broome@birdlife.org.au](mailto:broome@birdlife.org.au)]**

Items a-d will be collected before commencement of the expedition where possible. Payment amounts will be notified to participants with banking details attached about 3 weeks prior to the start of the expedition. Payment can be made by bank transfer in AUD. A non-refundable deposit may be imposed for late withdrawals, as some communal supplies will need to be ordered in advance. Those who cannot use bank transfer, i.e. overseas participants, can pay with cash at the start of the expedition. Queries regarding finances should be directed to Prue Wright [Prue327@gmail.com](mailto:Prue327@gmail.com).

BBO accepts cash, credit or direct debit cards for charges under item (e) above (a small surcharge applies to credit card payments).

All participants, other than local residents, will be expected to be full members of the team, residing at the one location. "Self catering" is not permitted.

### Travel:

Broome is easily reached by air from Perth and Darwin. Flights from Melbourne, Adelaide or Sydney usually go via Perth during February. Connections from Queensland (Brisbane or Cairns) usually go via Darwin or Perth. Buses also run from Perth and Darwin.

People are strongly encouraged to come for **the whole period of three weeks**. This maximises efficiency with everyone becoming fully integrated into the team. It maximises enjoyment and benefits, and enables everyone to contribute as well as to learn. It also leads to a more effective team if changes in personnel are minimal.

Although the expedition will formally start on a Saturday (February 2nd) participants are welcome to arrive earlier. The main "briefing" for the team will take place that evening.

Would all participants please ensure that the expedition leaders are aware of your specific arrival and departure details well in advance (contact names are at the front of this document). All airline or bus travellers will be met on arrival at Broome airport. BBO is 25 km away from Broome and there is no public transport to BBO.

### **Membership of AWSG:**

You are encouraged to join AWSG if you are not already a member. As a member of AWSG you will be able to follow other research results from throughout the flyway in the AWSG publication *Stilt* and in the periodic newsletter "*Tattler*". An application form is attached.

### **Climate:**

February is in the "wet" season in N.W. Australia with day temperatures reaching 32-35°C and night temperatures of around 25°C. There is still much sunshine even though it is cloudier than in the dry season. Heavy thundery showers occur almost daily in February, and there can even be a cyclone (as in February 2018). Humidity may also be very high.

### **Clothing:**

Light clothing (e.g. hiking gear) is ideal for daytime wear. Light long sleeved shirt and long trousers should be worn in the field. Several sets of clothing are required to cater for the tropical environment and the high chance of getting sandy and muddy.

Bring your swim wear – there is a pool in Broome and at Anna Plains. You may also be able to go swimming in the ocean depending on the stinger situation (deadly jellyfish – see <http://www.broome.wa.gov.au/comm/jelly.htm>) – variable with weather conditions.

It may also be necessary to have some warmer clothing as a tropical storm can drop the temperature significantly. Although it is not uncomfortable getting wet in such a warm climate a lightweight waterproof top is advisable and an umbrella can be helpful!

There are good laundry facilities in Broome, and these are visited every day (communal laundry bag so put your initials on your clothing!) when we are based at this location (one of our shared tasks). At 80 Mile Beach we are also able to use laundry facilities at the station so daily washing of clothes is practicable. However, drying clothes in the wet season can be a problem, so bring enough changes of clothing – please avoid denim jeans and other slow drying materials.

Light footwear only is necessary. Because we frequently have to run into the edge of the sea when the net is fired and occasionally wade around in mud and water on inland waters on Roebuck Plains/Anna Plains, one set of footwear should be "old" i.e. suitable for regular inundation. If you are planning on going bush bird banding appropriate enclosed protective footwear is required.

### **Catering:**

All the main cooking utensils will be supplied by AWSG or loaned to the expedition by the BBO. All food is purchased and organised communally by an out-sourced catering organiser. Participants are expected to help in some basic food preparation, washing up (about one day in every four days) and taking clothes to the laundromat (when in Broome) on a rostered basis.

Please bring your own water bottle (about 500ml to one litre). Extra water will be taken in the field to replenish your bottles. A small plastic lunch box to hold your snack/lunch to bring to the field. Cool boxes will also be provided to keep lunches cold.

Those having special dietary requirements such as vegetarians, diabetics, celiacs etc, or if you are allergic to any particular food please contact Prue Wright as soon as you know you are coming so

that your requirements can be weaved into the menus and appropriate food ordered. Please note that as Broome is only a small town, food choices are limited.

### **Other Things to Bring:**

Everyone needs to bring sleeping equipment, a tent or mosquito net, and a towel. A light sleeping bag or even just a cotton sleeping bag liner may be sufficient. Foam rubber or an inflatable mattress, plus pillow, are highly desirable. You can purchase cheap tents (may not be water-proof) at Coles supermarket in Broome. It is very humid and can rain **very heavily**, so you would need a good quality, rain-proof tent.

Tents need only be light 1 or 2-person models. Some people prefer to sleep entirely in the open or under a mosquito net. However, there is a risk of heavy rain in February.

At Broome you can book an air-conditioned room at the Bird Observatory or you can camp.

At Anna Plains most people prefer to camp on the lawns of the house but there are some beds in the house.

A wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen/blockout are essential. Make sure your hat can be retained in a strong breeze. Sunglasses are required to reduce glare.

A torch should always be used when walking around at night due to the presence of snakes, scorpions and centipedes that hunt at night (other small animals not people!). A head-torch is useful for mist-netting at night.

Binoculars, telescope, camera and small tripod etc are, of course, all desirable. Anyone wishing to purchase a field guide (e.g. overseas people visiting Australia for the first time) are strongly recommended to obtain either the newest "The Australian Bird Guide" by Peter Menkhorst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin, "Field Guide to the Birds of Australia" by Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight, or "Field Guide to the Birds of Australia" by Ken Simpson and Nicholas Day or Morcombe (compact). THESE FIELD GUIDES MAY BE PURCHASED AT THE BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY. Mobile phone / notepad apps are also available for some of these books in the iTunes store on the web.

### **Health:**

NW Australia is a very healthy area and climate. The domestic water is clean and potable. Mosquitos and sandflies can be a problem, especially after spring tidal series. Repellents ("Rid" is the most popular) can be purchased in Broome. If purchasing elsewhere they should contain the chemical DEET. Flies are very occasionally known to occur in plague proportions so a "hat net" can be a lifesaver.

Because we visit farmland it is wise to ensure that your anti-tetanus protection is current before leaving home.

The mosquito borne Ross River Fever occurs throughout Australia and preventative injections are not available, but its incidence is low. Long sleeved shirts and trousers should be worn in the early evenings and mornings and when frequenting areas such as the mangroves to avoid being bitten. Mosquito repellent with DEET should be worn. Prevention measures are highly recommended.

Crocodiles have been seen at the Crab Creek mangroves, so do not go bird watching alone at this location. Ask Chris Hassell for advice before going to the mangroves.

You are strongly advised not to walk around bare foot on any grassed or irrigated areas due to the potential presence of hookworm. Always use footwear when outside. Flip-flops or thongs will do for casual wear.



## **Travel Insurance:**

Overseas visitors are required to have travel insurance. We are in remote areas. Evacuation by air ambulance and possible transfer to a major hospital can be very costly. Australian participants should check that their ambulance cover is appropriate for Western Australia.

## **Contacts:**

During the expedition participants can be contacted through BBO

Postal Address:

Broome Bird Observatory,  
PO Box 1313,  
Broome, W.A. 6725.  
Australia.

PHONE: +61 8 9193 5600

E-mail: [broome@birdlife.org.au](mailto:broome@birdlife.org.au)

Mobile phones work at the BBO but can be erratic – you can text all the time but voice calls will depend on weather conditions – reception for calls is about 20-40% of the time but some days there is no reception. A 10-15min walk along the beach towards Broome often improves reception.

In Broome there are many options for email and internet access, such as the Broome Library. In general, cell phone reception at BBO is not strong enough for internet but does occasionally work. At Anna Plains there is mobile reception at various places around the station.

If you purchase a sim card for use in Australia it is **strongly recommended that you** get a **Telstra card** as other options will not work, especially at Anna Plains.

## **Conclusion:**

It is always a great challenge trying to undertake expeditions during the hotter/wetter season in NW Australia. It is essential that we have a large and experienced team available to cope with the expected conditions. A team of 25-28 people is considered the optimum. Usually half the expedition participants are from outside Australia.

Previous wader banding or expedition experience is not essential. What is important is the readiness to work hard (when required) and be a contributor to the team. It is a wonderful opportunity to mix with, and learn from, others with different backgrounds and experience.

Would anyone receiving this “brochure” please try and indicate, to the Expedition leaders, their likely availability and intentions for 2019 **as soon as possible**. This doesn’t need to be a firm commitment at this stage, just an indication of the most likely/desirable situation. Such information will greatly assist the leaders in planning, especially in obtaining an adequate cover throughout the period and in securing appropriate transport etc. So please take action now just to give us an idea. Then in due course, advise Roz Jessop of specific details and travel arrangements. You may also forward this brochure to other people who may be interested.

We hope to see you on NWA2019!

Joint Leaders:

Clive Minton, Rosalind Jessop, Mike Dawkins, Chris Hassell, Prue Wright and Katherine Leung



## *N.W. Australia 2019 - Locations Schedule*

### **Saturday 2nd to Sunday 24th February 2019**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Tide time</b>	<b>Tide Height</b>	<b>Location</b>
Saturday 2 February	09:46	7.20	Arrive Broome
Sunday 3 February	10:25	7.80	Travel to 80 Mile Beach
Monday 4 February	10:58	8.28	Cannon net
Tuesday 5 February	11:28	8.65	"
Wednesday 6 February	11:56	8.91	"
Thursday 7 February	12:22	9.06	"
Friday 8 February	12:47	9.14	"
Saturday 9 February	13:12	9.13	"
Sunday 10 February	13:38	9.01	"
Monday 11 February	14:06	8.76	"
Tuesday 12 February	14:35	8.39	"
Wednesday 13 February	15:09	7.91	"
Thursday 14 February	15:55	7.37	"
Friday 15 February	17:28	6.90	Day off
Saturday 16 February	07:26	6.22	Travel to Broome
Sunday 17 February	09:09	6.92	Day off
Monday 18 February	10:02	7.83	Cannon net
Tuesday 19 February	10:42	8.68	"
Wednesday 20 February	11:20	9.38	"
Thursday 21 February	11:55	9.88	"
Friday 22 February	12:30	10.14	"
Saturday 23 February	13:04	10.14	"
Sunday 24 February	13:37	9.87	Depart Broome

#### Catching Days:

Broome – 6 days

80 Mile Beach – 11days