



40+ Years Commitment to the East Asian Australasian Flyway



*ELEVENTH MEETING OF PARTNERS TO THE PARTNERSHIP FOR EAST ASIAN – AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY
Meeanjin/Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, 12-17 March 2023*



Australasian Wader Studies Group



- **Who are we?**

- Australasian Wader Studies Group formed in 1981
- A Special Interest Group of BirdLife Australia
- Our mission is to co-ordinate and focus studies on shorebirds in Australia and throughout the East Asian – Australasian Flyway
- We are a founding Partner of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership

- **Our Mission**

- Monitoring and Research
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Advocacy
- Data management



Monitoring Yellow Sea Migrants in Australia (MYSMA)

- North-western Australian coast is the most important region for shorebirds in Australia, and perhaps the most important non-breeding area in the EAAF
- MYSMA is a long-term program of repeatable, spatially explicit counts along the most shorebird rich 100km+ of coastline.
- Also do surveys of entire NW Australian coast at about 7 year intervals.
- Summer counts (usually between 200,000 to 300,000) identify trends in >25 migratory shorebird species – a valuable barometer of flyway health



Monitoring Yellow Sea Migrants in Australia



- Winter counts are an index of annual breeding success of ~20 migratory species
- Data are important in local conservation, including establishment and zonation of marine parks, control of roost disturbance.

Eighty Mile Beach



Roebuck Bay

NW WA Shorebird and Tern Expedition

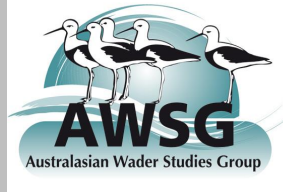


- AWSG NW WA Expedition takes place each year in February at Broome, Roebuck Bay and Anna Plains
- Activities include canon and mist netting for banding, leg flagging, attaching satellite transmitters and monitoring of condition of shorebirds
- Generally involves 2-3 weeks
- Self-funded volunteer activity
- Generates a valuable means of data on shorebirds movements and health
- Appropriate ethics documents and banding permits are obligatory and obtained from relevant authorities



Exmouth Gulf Project

- New joint BirdLife Australia and AWSG shorebird project to survey shorebirds in Exmouth Gulf
- AWSG providing technical and scientific support
- Satellite transmitters to be attached to selected shorebirds
- Sites selected in October 2022 for canon netting and mist netting trials
- First trial conducted in February 2023



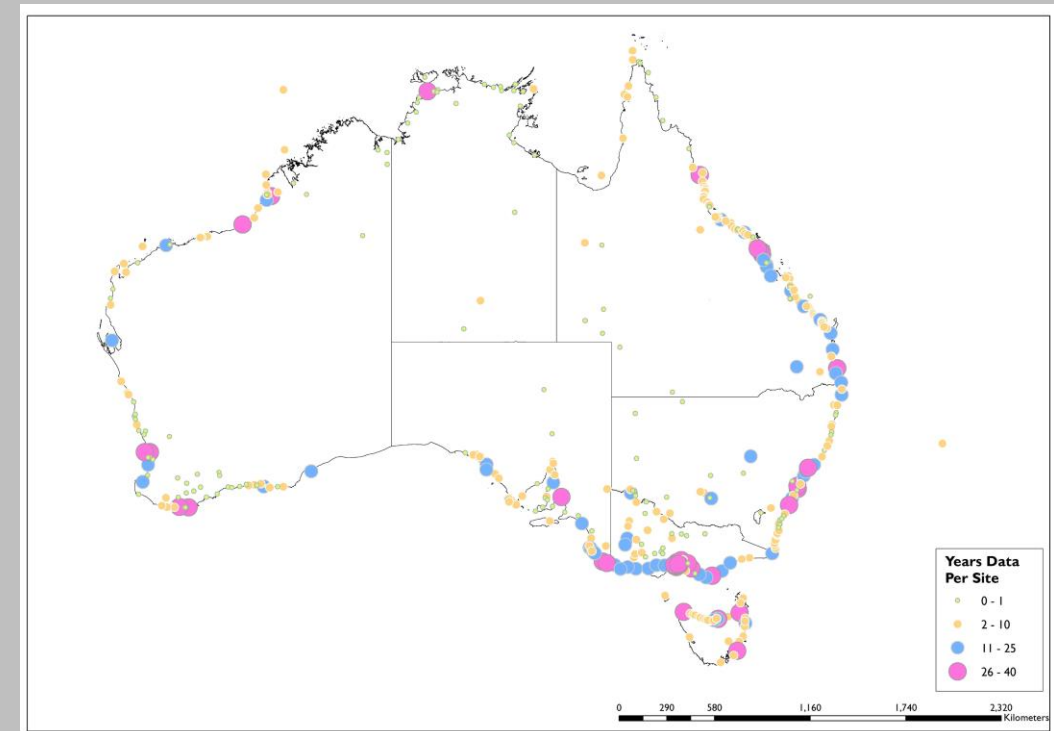
National Shorebird Monitoring Program



- BirdLife Australia and AWSG shorebird monitoring program
- Previously known as Shorebirds 2020 program
- Counts are held nationally and between Jan 2017 and Jan 2022 volunteers did approx. 13,025 surveys in 266 shorebird areas (about 16,780 hours)
- Data from the counts is included in database



Images courtesy of Dan Weller



Oriental Pratincole and Latham's Snipe Projects

Oriental Pratincole Project

- AWSG project using satellite transmitters to track the migration of OP visiting NW WA since 2019
- 5 transmitters deployed and information showed flights to India and Cambodia on northward migration.
- Significant funding to the project from donations from Kate Gorringer-Smith's "Overwintering Art" project through AWSG
- 2022 – around 10,000 OPs seen in Anna Plains area of NW WA but catching difficult due to weather
- Looking to engage with landowners re location of OPs



Latham's Snipe Project

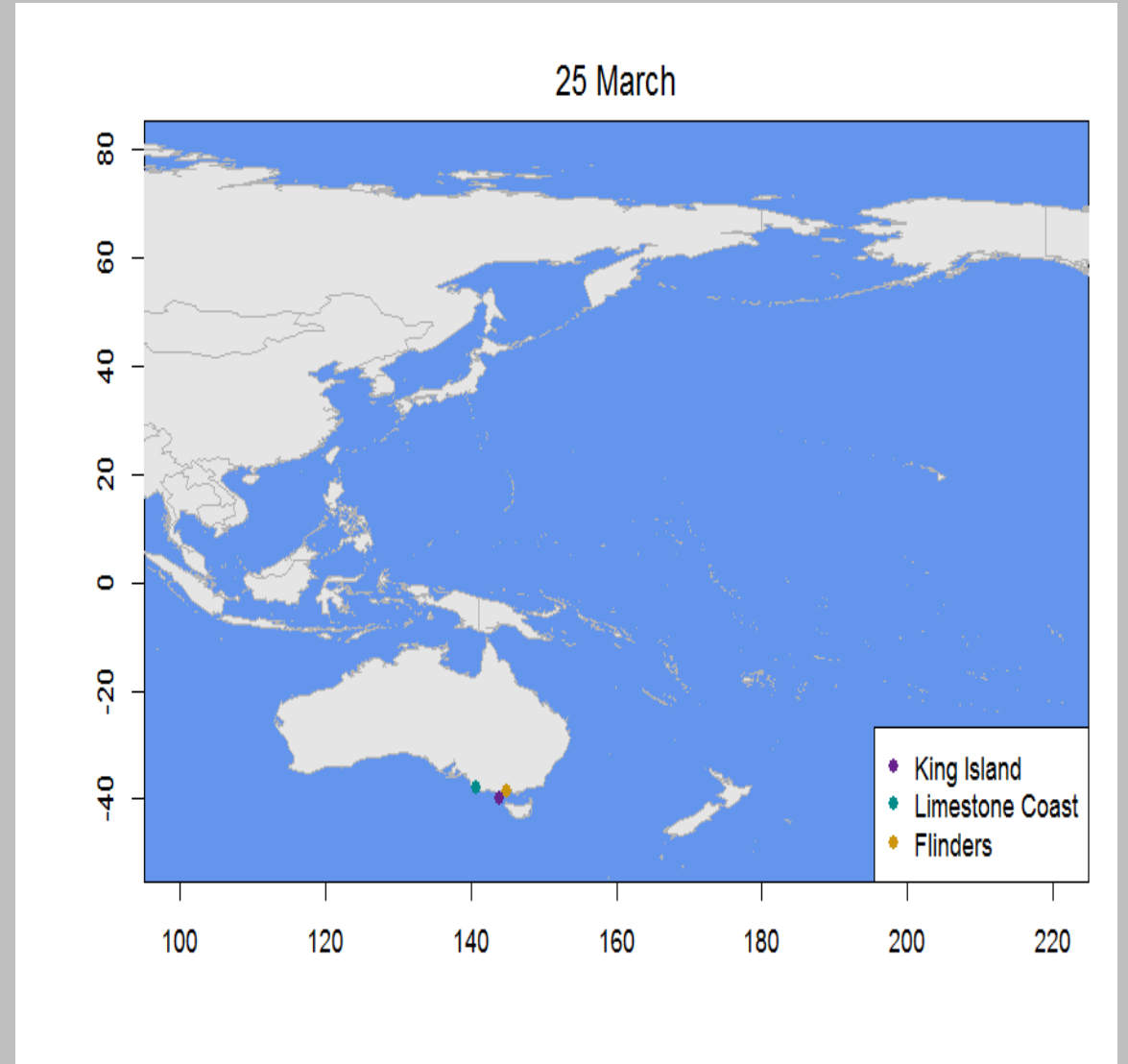
- Established to determine population sizes and trends, important stopover (staging) sites, key migration routes and important habitats in Australia
- Population monitoring via observational surveys
- Movement tracking via capture-based research at multiple scales



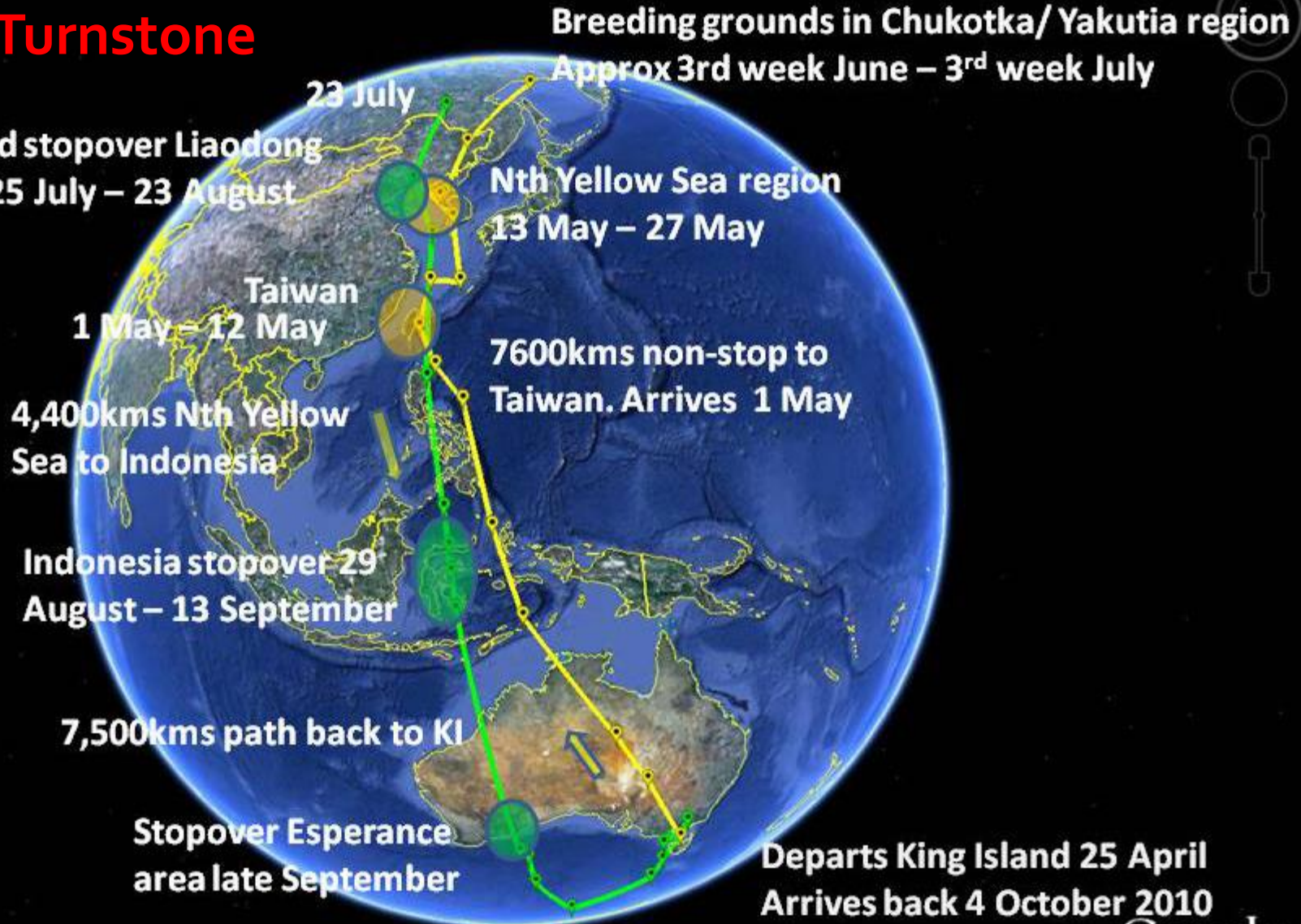
Geocator Program

Geocator program in SE and NW Australia including long term program on King Island (Tas)

- A program of deployment and retrieval of geolocators on a range of species in SE Australia and NW Australia managed by VWSG and AWSG for 13 years.
- Over 1,500 geolocators have been deployed over this period.
- Ruddy Turnstone a major focus in SE Australia with almost 900 loggers deployed.
- The majority of these are associated with a long-term project on King Island where a longitudinal study spans 12 years.
- Outcomes include a more detailed understanding of migration, timings and tracks, breeding locations and ecology as well as the impacts of climate change and habitat changes.



Ruddy Turnstone



King Island _ KU

© 2011 Europa Technologies
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
US Dept of State Geographer
© 2011 MapLink/Tele Atlas
5°30'39.33" N 129°05'33.79" E elev -5267 m



Advocacy and Collaboration

- AWSG has contributed to numerous development proposals affecting shorebirds with representations to governments on proposals impacting shorebirds
- Toondah Wetlands – AWSG and BirdLife Australia representation on behalf of concerned scientists to Australian Government Minister to oppose the development
- Beachwrack harvesting proposal along 100kms of South-east South Australian coastline AWSG submission to review of the EPBC Act
- Collaboration with GFN on monitoring in Bohai Bay China
- Collaboration with Deakin University on database management

Case Study - Beachwrack

- Significant adverse impacts on Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone
- AWSG, BirdLife Australia and Friends of Shorebirds South-East (FOSSE) appealed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.
- The management of the fishery has been redesigned and conditions simplified.
- Part of Rivoli Bay SA is completely closed to harvest and there is now only one type of 'seasonal closure' which runs from 1st September to 15 May
- During this time Australian Kelp Products can harvest in what were 'seasonal closure' areas on 8 days per month.
- Within these areas harvesting will be by hand (assisted by a mechanical winch).
- Gear/operators will be restricted to 2 4-wheel drive utilities each with a trailer GVM of 3.5 tonne



Case Study - Saemangeum Monitoring Project



- Joint project with Birds Korea, 2006 – 2008
- Monitored northwards migration in Saemangeum region (Republic of Korea) to assess impacts of tidal flat reclamation on the largest staging site for shorebirds in the EAAF
- Joint project provided significant data on both Saemangeum and Geum estuaries and assisted in protection of the Geum Estuary
- Serious shorebird declines reported in scientific literature, popular media and in targeted presentations at Ramsar COP 2008 to raise awareness of the effects of tidal flat loss on shorebirds

Communication

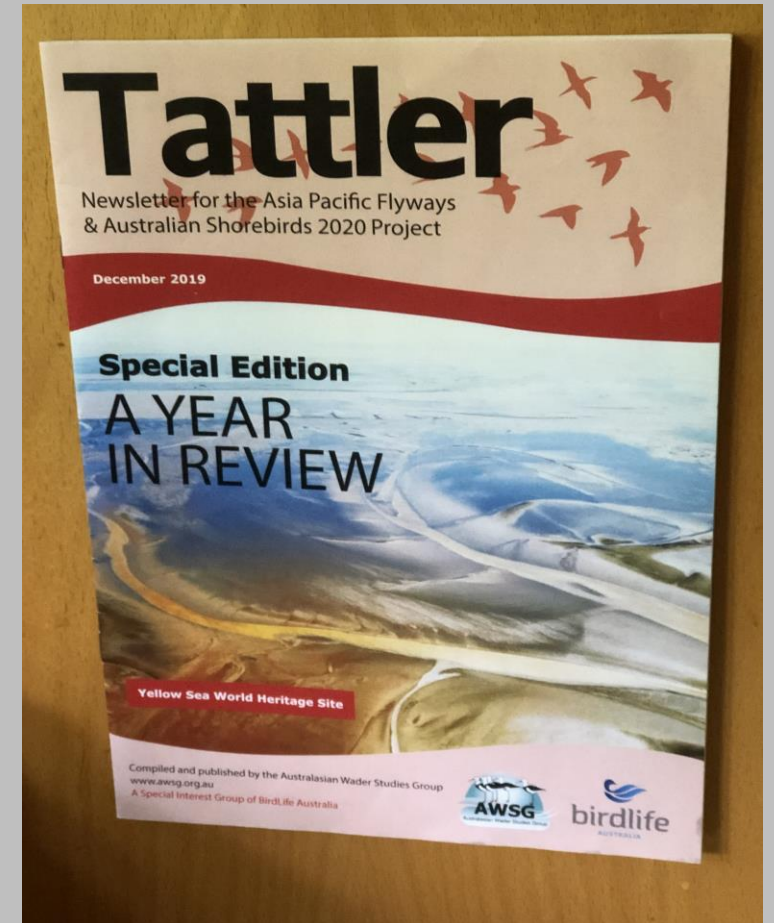


Stilt

- A Journal of the AWSG for the EAAF containing papers, reports and articles about waders within the EAAF
- It is one of the major publications dedicated solely to waders

Tattler

- An AWSG newsletter for the EAAF and the National Monitoring Program
- First edition appeared in 1994 to increase communication between wader enthusiasts, researchers and conservationists





Australasian Shorebird Conference (ASC)

- Convened by AWSG every 2 years but ASC12 held in October 2022 after a 4-year break due to COVID
- First time held as a virtual conference and great range of speakers and presentations
- The Conference theme was “Global Strategies Local Actions”
- Mark Barter Award not in 2022 as no travel required.
- Presentations reviewed what has happened in the Flyway since ASC 11 in 2018
- The virtual format allowed a wider participation with speakers from China, Japan, Malaysia, the US, New Zealand and Australia
- Abstracts of the presentations will be published in ***Stilt***

Mark Barter Award

- AWSG initiated Mark Barter Award to honour the enormous contribution he made to the knowledge of shorebirds in the East Asian- Australasian Flyway over many years
- Mark provided monitoring, training and education focussed on the Yellow Sea region
- The Award seeks to encourage development of a young person(s) who have demonstrated an interest in shorebird work.
- It sponsors an appropriate delegate from an East-Asian country to the Australasian Shorebird Conference.
- The Award has been operative since its initial inception at the Darwin Conference in 2014.



Database Management



- Shorebird data collected over many years but in need of appropriate management
- With AWSG support, University of Deakin developed database (Birdmark) to incorporate AWSG, VWSG and QWSG data
- Birdmark portal specifically designed to record resighting of colour marked waders in the Flyway
- Will advance management and reporting on leg flag sightings
- Supports multiple different languages
- *Help Guides* can be accessed for submitting observations
- Reporting of marked shorebirds essential for ongoing conservation and scientific research on population dynamics, movements and site use.

Acknowledgements

- The Charles Allen Foundation for its financial support for the Gold Sponsorship
- BirdLife Australia
- Roz Jessop – photos of Broome and Exmouth Gulf
- Danny Rogers – photos of Broome and Roebuck Bay (MYSMA) and Saemangeum slide
- Maureen Christie – photos of Beachwrack
- Ken Gosbell – photos of Mark Barter, Ruddy Turnstone dispersal from King Island Tasmania, and Google map of Ruddy Turnstone migration
- Jan van de Kam – Slide 2, shorebirds in flight.

