

NEWSLETTER

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Editorial

Well, here it is - our very first online Newsletter! If you are reading this, then you have successfully downloaded Newsletter Number 110 for March 2013.

We are confident that producing and distributing the newsletter this way will deliver a saving of nearly \$2000 per annum - worthwhile in a budget of \$25,000 overall.

A small number of people have still not provided us with an email address. We would appreciate it if you did, so that we can send you an email when the newsletter is published. Just send it to <info@absa.asn.au>

Until then, we will send you a paper copy, though the printing will not be as good as you are used to, as it will be printed on a home printer. We will slowly improve the online experience with clickable links etc as we learn more.

In this issue, we also devote some space to an update from the ABBBS, and hope to continue to provide this communication between ABBBS and banders in between the infrequent FLightlines.

Heard Island

Here is a 12 minute film and stills of the birds of Heard Island - well worth a watch.

<www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRldsCJnNHE>

AGM 2013

A reminder that the Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held at 12.30pm on 23 March 2013 at:

The Environment Centre, Nathan Campus,
Griffith University,
Brisbane, Qld.

Full details of the program of the AGM and Scientific day are on a leaflet posted with the March edition of *Corella*.

We hope to see you in Brisbane!

More travels of Little Tern 041-36223

Subsequent to the sightings listed in 'Banding Snippets' that appear in this issue of *Corella* [37(1)], Little Tern 041-36223 was sighted back at Lake Wollumboola on 8 February 2013. It was again photographed, this time by Richard Brown (see below).



This Little Tern is turning into an avian celebrity!

Darryl McKay

Albatross Breeding at 62+!

A Laysan Albatross known as "Wisdom" – believed to be at least 62 years old – has hatched a chick on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge for the sixth consecutive year. Wisdom was first banded in 1956, when she was incubating an egg in the same area of the refuge. She was at least five years old at the time.

"Everyone continues to be inspired by Wisdom as a symbol of hope for her species," said Doug Staller, the Fish and Wildlife Service superintendent for the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (Monument), which includes Midway Atoll NWR.

Staff and volunteers stationed on Midway are responsible for monitoring the health of the beautiful seabirds that arrive every year by the hundreds of thousands to nest. Upon the seabirds' arrival, field staff monitor them and gather information for one of the longest and oldest continuous survey data sets for tropical seabirds in the world.

Wisdom has worn out five bird bands since she was first banded by U.S. Geological Survey scientist Chandler Robbins in 1956. Robbins estimated Wisdom to be at least 5 years old at the time, since this is the earliest age at which these birds breed. Typically, they breed at 8 or 9 years of age after a very involved courtship lasting over several years so Wisdom could be even older than 62.

Bruce Peterjohn, chief of the North American Bird Banding Program at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, MD, said Wisdom has likely raised at least 30 to 35 chicks during her breeding life, though the number may well be higher because experienced parents tend to be better parents than younger breeders. Albatross lay only one egg a year, but it takes much of a year to incubate and raise the chick. After consecutive years in which they have successfully raised and fledged a chick, the parents may take the occasional next year off from parenting. Wisdom is known to have nested in 2006 and then every year since 2008.

"As Wisdom rewrites the record books, she provides new insights into the remarkable biology of seabirds," Peterjohn said. "It is beyond words to describe the amazing accomplishments of this wonderful bird and how she demonstrates the value of bird banding to better understand the world around us. If she were human, she would be eligible for Medicare in a couple years yet she is still regularly raising young and annually circumnavigating the Pacific Ocean. Simply incredible."

from U.S. Geological Survey.

Full article URL:

<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3504#.URt_qt1_ehV>

Shorebird Recovery Program

Petition by Dr Mike Clear

This is a formal request to relevant state and local government. It petitions them to reaffirm, maintain and where possible enhance support for the Shorebird Recovery Program and the legal, scientific and policy framework that underpins it. Unlike many petitions this is NOT intended to stop something. Rather, it is calculated to redouble support for a vital government program (NP&WS) that gives effect to the New South Wales Government's Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

Signing this petition is both an act of solidarity for front-line volunteers and workers, and the tested methods utilised in the Shorebird Recovery Program. It is also a way to tell politicians and policy-makers the importance of maintaining biodiversity wherever it is threatened.

Protection of threatened shorebird nesting on our coast depends on the good work of National Parks, Local Councils and very importantly local communities all working together. This is a remarkable strength of the South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program.

Data collection by trained volunteers and NP staff, and research in conjunction with Birdlife Australia, support the value of the on-ground measures. They produce negligible restrictions and require a very small behaviour change by beach-goers in order to assist in protecting threatened shorebirds. Temporary fencing and signage for example, play a crucial role in protecting beach-nesting birds.

This is a frontline community endeavour. Trained local community volunteers work, in many cases daily throughout the nesting season, to monitor nesting shorebirds and erect and maintain temporary fencing to protect nests. As appropriate they may also speak with beach-goers to raise awareness of the reasons for any minor restrictions that might be caused e.g. by temporary fencing and dog control policies.

Volunteers who are regularly speaking with people on our beaches will readily appreciate the potential for carefully managed eco-tourism.

In this context temporary fencing and signage can provide a focal point for education at the same time as it protects shorebird nesting, and safeguards beach-goers from accidentally damaging the well camouflaged nests. It can enhance the appeal of and the interest in, local regions.

Sign this petition to indicate your support for the Shorebird Recovery Program, its volunteers and the measures it employs to protect threatened species.

To reaffirm support for the Shorebird Recovery Program, visit: <https://www.change.org/en-AU/petitions/to-reaffirm-support-for-the-shorebird-recovery-program>

Macquarie Island Eradication Program

In the last year, Keith Springer and his team have been scouring World-Heritage-listed Macquarie Island for something they hope not to find - rabbits, rats and mice. It is now more than eighteen months since aerial baiting climaxed a seven year program to rid the island of these destructive pests. It is thought that perhaps five rabbits remain, and these will continue to be the target for further hunting. Hunting will get more and more difficult as time goes by and the vegetation recovers.

Mr Springer said "I am pleased by the lack of rodent sign and I'm pretty confident the rats are gone because we know they take the bait well and we spread enough bait for all the target animals to access some. But mice eradications have failed on much, much smaller islands. We don't fully understand the reasons for this, but there is a pattern that when rats are present, the success rate of mouse eradication decreases...'. Baiting continues around the huts and station buildings, and near the island's coastal caves. Rodent detection dogs will be used to continue monitoring for stragglers. Final success will be declared after two years, allowing time for any that were missed to breed up to detectable numbers.

Already, there have been signs of recovery of spider populations, insects, and vegetation and, of course, birds. The article in "Australian Antarctic Magazine" says: "Populations of some bird species are slowly increasing, with the island's burrowing petrels being the main beneficiaries. In particular, blue petrels, previously restricted to breeding on offshore rock stacks due to rat predation, have begun to breed again on the main island. Likewise, grey petrels have shown increased breeding success and have fledged greater numbers of chicks; both positive indicators even in these early days. In the first breeding season since baiting finished, Antarctic terns are now breeding on the island's cobblestone beaches in far greater numbers than previously, when they were restricted to less accessible rock stacks."

This program, if deemed successful in a few years, "will have set new benchmarks in island eradication, for its size, multiple species, remoteness and challenging environment."

Derived from the article in "Australian Antarctic Magazine", December 2012.

Electronic ID from sound files

I guess we've all been waiting for this to come - a program (for PCs) that will analyse a sound recording and identify the bird calls within it. See <<http://www.soundid.net>> You need to feed the program a set of sound files, and then it sets to with astounding speed.

We would appreciate any feedback from members who have used this program. Tell us about its accuracy, its ease of use etc. Or write a full review of it for all the other members.

Hooded Plover Rescue

A heartening story from BirdLife International: <http://www.birdlife.org/community/2013/02/hooded-plover-rescue-in-oz/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=hooded-plover-rescue-in-oz>

Monitoring threatened species takes on many forms — not only keeping an eye on populations or nesting attempts, but also looking after the individual birds themselves.



Recently, at Point Roadknight, Anglesea, in Victoria, Geoff Gates, one of BirdLife Australia's volunteers, noticed a Hooded Plover — marked with 'KM' on its leg-flag — in a bad way. It was hopping on one foot and having trouble keeping up with a small flock of six other Hoodies. Geoff watched the bird for 15 minutes, but he could not see what was troubling it. Photos revealed that something tight was caught around its ankle, cutting into the bird's flesh and restricting its movement.

Geoff immediately contacted Grainne Maguire, the Beach-nesting Birds Project Manager, and they hatched a plan to rescue KM.

Within minutes of arriving at the beach, Grainne had quickly and skilfully separated KM from the rest of the flock, which made it easier to trap the injured bird. With KM in the hand, the nylon fibre tangled around its leg was easy to see, and Dr Liz quickly removed the offending strand, applied antiseptic ointment to the wound and administered an antibiotic injection.

The bird's metal identification band was then removed from the injured and swollen leg, and a new band was fitted onto the bird's healthy leg.

With the ordeal over, KM was released — accompanied by an indignant squawk — and flew straight back to the flock. Watching through binoculars, Grainne and Geoff were both glad to see that although KM was limping a little, it was, nevertheless, using its injured leg.

Anyone visiting Point Roadknight over the next few weeks should keep an eye out for KM and let us know how it is faring.

Birds of Paradise Project

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology in the USA has published extraordinary and comprehensive video of the Birds of Paradise, in all their glorious plumage, and performing their stunning mating dances.

See this footage on the website of the project:
<www.birdsofparadise.org>

AUSTRALIAN BIRD & BAT BANDING SCHEME UPDATE

A new issue of 'Flightlines' will be issued to all active banders in the next few weeks. Below is an extract of some interesting recoveries and changes to species numbers used by the ABBBS.

GROUND PARROT SPECIES SPLIT

The Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*, species 311) has now been split into two new species, with the Eastern form retaining the original species number. All data for these species must use the new species numbers below:

Eastern Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*), species number 311 – all Eastern Australian populations
Western Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus flaviventris*) species number 8030 – all Western Australian populations

More information on the basis of this split is given in:

Murphy, S.A., Joseph, L., Burbidge, A.H. & Austin, J. 2010. A cryptic and critically endangered species revealed by mitochondrial DNA analyses: the Western Ground Parrot. *Conservation Genetics* 12, 595-600. DOI: 10.1007/s10592-010-0161-1.

BILL BOARD

The oldest Black Flying-Fox and Shy Albatross were recovered since the last issue of Flightlines. These lifespan records illustrate the value of long term programmes such as the ABBBS, and the critical importance of submitting your complete and correct banding records at the time of banding. After all, who is going to find you 20 or 30 years after the fact?

Band 280-01731 was placed on a pullus Shy Albatross (*Thalassarche cauta*) on 31 March 1982 at Albatross Island, Tasmania by Nigel Brothers. The bird was recovered beachwashed and partially decomposed at Salmon Rocks, Flinders Island, Tasmania, 286km from the banding site, 30 years 8 months and 9 days after banding. This is the oldest Shy Albatross on record.

You can query the maximum movement and time elapsed between banding and recovery for all species via our public access web portal:

<<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/abbs/abbs-search.html>>

Mapping plant communities.

O.Maguire et al. Using high resolution digital aerial imagery interpreted in a 3-D digital GIS environment to map predefined plant communities in central-southern New South Wales. Cunninghamia 12(4): 247-266

Abstract: Aerial photo interpretation of high resolution airborne imagery (ADS40) was used in a three-dimensional (3-D) digital GIS environment to map native plant communities..... NSW VCA plant community types form part of the NSW *BioMetric* vegetation type dataset underpinning NSW natural resource management (NRM) planning frameworks. This region was previously devoid of detailed vegetation mapping. In addition to developing a novel method for mapping plant communities, the use of ADS40 imagery allowed for capture of multiple attributes in each map polygon..... Such data informs multi-attribute models used in conservation planning, providing utility beyond that of a singular plant community map. A total of 546,150 hectares of native vegetation in 100 native plant communities was mapped across the study area (Coolamon, Cootamundra, Junee, Lockhart, Narrandera, Tarcutta, Urana, Wagga Wagga and Yanco Ariah Park, Wallarobie Range and Yoogali). Exotic pine plantations and native species plantings were also mapped. Remnants of greater than one hectare were captured through on-screen GIS digitising. Themapping was independently assessed using random blind validation points as having a user accuracy of 87%. This level of accuracy demonstrates the applicability of the methodology for mapping open forests, woodlands and open woodlands of south-eastern Australia and probably other vegetation elsewhere. Such accurate mapping provides end users with confidence when using vegetation maps in environmental assessment and land use planning.

Want to Know about Petrels?

An extensive blog on Petrels is by Darren Naish is on the Scientific American website. Go to:

<<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/tetrapod-zoology/2012/03/12/world-belongs-to-petrels-part-i/>>



Westland Petrel (*Procellaria westlandica*), by Mark Jobling* (* Licensed under the "Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License.")

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