

It has been busy since the last update. People arriving, people leaving, a conference and we saw some birds too.

The team doubled in size with the arrival of Theunis Piersma, Sytze Pruikma from the Netherlands and Bob Gill from Alaska. They joined us in the field for a few days before attending the Seminar on 'Shorebirds and Coastal Wetlands Conservation in the Yellow Sea Eco-region' on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. Organised by WWF China, the aim was to gather together concerned parties from China and further a-field to discuss the problems facing this site and try to find realistic solutions. Other participants included an advisor to the Chinese Government from the Academy of Sciences, various staff from WWF China, various State Government officials, various biologists from Chinese Universities including Miss Yan Hong Yan (who we work so closely with), Phil Battley from New Zealand and numerous media outlets. Day one was spent hearing talks from many and varied participants about the area and shorebird research while the second morning was spent in the field giving the participants the opportunity to see the site. After a brief stop in the salt pans to see impressive flocks of Curlew and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers we went to Nanpu to view birds feeding on the mudflats. As well as the 1000's of Red Knot we saw a single Nordmann's Greenshank and, to the delight of the guys from WWF Hong Kong, a Curlew Sandpiper with white over yellows flags. From here we went to Zuidong to see the continuing devastation and the mud-pumping boats the sea-wall building and the 'desert' of dry mud that was once salt pans with feeding and roosting shorebirds. The two days seemed to go well and we hope that some of the ideas raised can be acted upon before it's too late ... time will tell.

Unfortunately Ady was unable to attend as he left us on the 16<sup>th</sup>. We are very jealous of his trip to Alaska and are putting extra hours in the field trying to find something really good to get back at him. It just doesn't feel normal here without him.

Albo-plover is still present but has only been seen a couple of times recently as we aren't spending as much time scanning on the roosts. Nordmann's Greenshank numbers increased again, this time to at least 9 individuals. Marsh Sandpipers have moved on dropping from 10s of thousands of birds in the Salt pans to just a few scattered individuals. They have, however, been replaced by Curlew Sandpipers which, unlike last year, seem to be prefer the Salt pans to the mudflats every mornings we drive to the mudflats we see impressive flocks wheeling over the pans.

Red Knot scanning has been very good with large numbers of birds to look at. Our new tactic of walking out on to the mudflats and observing feeding birds has been particularly productive. In the last few days however, many appear to have departed. Numbers have halved and sub-species scans have shown a very noticeable swing in favour of *piersmai* birds. This is line with our data of the last two years as *rogersi*, that are predominately from New Zealand and South east Australian non-breeding areas, head off to their far east Siberian breeding grounds of Chukotka before *piersmai* (predominately from north West Australia) head to their New Siberian Island breeding grounds. We are also seeing more birds that were marked in Broome so there seems to have been a late influx as well.

Birding away from the mudflats has been limited. A couple of visits to 'Tree Lane' (a new one we've found where the trees are still standing) have produced Black-naped Oriole and Grey-sided Thrush as well as a selection of migrant warblers and flycatchers. Black Drongo have arrived and a second wave of Amur Flacons caused panic among the shorebirds with over 30 recorded coming in off the sea on the 13th.

One thing that will decrease in quality now Ady has left is the standard of photographs accompanying these updates...just normal ones from now on.



A day at the Mudflats. Nanpu (left) and the future of Zuidong (right)



Lanceolated Warbler ... not bad for a 'digi-scoped' effort. I take it all back, who needs Ady!



Cleverly camouflaged? Kentish Plover nest

Matt and Chris