

Hi all

I am sending this from my desk back in Broome. But we wrote it in our last days at Bohai bay.

Avid followers of our adventures in China may have noticed that these updates have not been quite as regular as they were in 2010. That is because we have been so busy out in the field collecting data and this year we have surpassed last years total observations and all in a week less!

Chris and Matt were the sole remaining members of the team and the final week provided some excellent opportunities for scanning. Many of the *rogersi* Red Knot, predominately from New Zealand and Victoria, left early in the week leaving us with much reduced numbers but a much higher proportion of birds from North-west Australia. Colour-band-tastic! The weather was good and we took advantage of the early morning light by walking out to the birds as they fed on the mudflats. This was very successful especially on the 29th when between us we saw 50 (that's right ... 50!!) different colour-band combinations in 3 ½ hours. On the 30th we got another 40. 30 of these were different to the previous day equalling 70 individually identifiable Red Knot in 2 days – that would be a successful couple of days in Broome, let alone 6400km away from the banding site! It's a shame we have to leave as so many birds are still here and the scanning has been great but this time last year many of the birds had already left. The bad weather in the Philippines delaying their migration or less mudflat area here to feed on putting back departure??

Many of the other shorebird species have now moved on with just small numbers remaining in the area. The exception, however, is Sanderling which are still very numerous on the mudflats and nearby shrimp ponds with several thousand present. A few Red-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper are holding on but the majority have left. Nordmann's Greenshank and albo-plover have both been absent this week.

Other birding opportunities have yet again been limited although we have made it out a couple of times to the zoo and 'tree lane'. Highlights have included our first record of Yellow Bittern, numerous Thick-billed Warblers and a scattering of late migrants such as Siberian Blue Robin, Arctic Warbler and various Flycatchers. It's a bit less than last year but our season total of 219 species includes some very cool birds.

One thing we forgot to mention in the last report was in relation to the Seminar, we had a famous Friesian musing with us, Sytze Pruiksmā. He performed his original compositions for the audience after 2 talks and was extremely popular with the audience. He was invited there and then to return to a Beijing Birdwatchers Society meeting! And we would like to reiterate how important this meeting was and thank WWF-China for their hard work in organising it.

And while we are on thanks we would like to say an enormous thank you to Miss Yang Hong Yan (Nicky) who does a huge amount of work for us before and during our trip and the reason for the success of our field work is down to her brilliant organisation and constant help. Her husband Mr. Chen Bing also helps us greatly when he is in the field with us. And finally to our driver Zhao who gets us every where on time and in one piece and always with a smile on his face (almost!). His family also fed us a fantastic meal near the end of our stay.

So, to sum up 2011 with some numbers... Between us we have spent 51 days in the field. We have had 3349 sightings of bands/flags from 17 banding areas on 13 Species (see table at end). We have scanned over 71 000 Red Knots and identified them to sub-species.

FLAGGED IN	NUMBEROF SIGHTINGS	KNOWN INDIVIDUALS
BOHAI BAY	97	0
CHONGMING DONTANG ELF	114	37
CHONGMING DONTANG PLAIN	340	0
CHUKOTKA	32	11
DANNY NWA	36	1
HONG KONG	23	7
JAPAN	7	0
KAMCHATKA	3	0
KING ISLAND	2	0
NEW SOUTH WALES	2	0
NWA COLOUR BAND	452	190
NWA ELF	319	102
NWA PLAIN	482	0
NZ COLOUR BAND	230	102*
NZ ELF	375	138
NZ PLAIN	175	0
QUEENSLAND	7	1
SAKHALIN	4	4
SAUNDERS GULL	9	2
SUMATRA	4	0
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	35	0
THAILAND	47	0
VICTORIA	654	0
	3449	493

Monday the 30th was out last day so this will be the last news from the field for 2011. A report will be available on the GFN website in due course and, all being well, we will be back here next year to continue building on the information already gathered.

Cheers
Matt, Chris, Ady.



The main author of these reports has been Matt. Here he is being his usual sensible self while Professor Piersma and Mr. Hassell mess around.



Ady doing the international sign language for 'I can see a Grey Plover with a blue over orange flag'



Chris wondering how he can sabotage a pipe.



Here it looks a bit like Jan van de Kam is taking a close-up photo of Theunis putting his boots on ... the 2 photos were actually taken a couple of weeks apart.



Sytze entertaining the attendees of the seminar and Bob Gill wears shorts, whatever the weather.



And of course, who could forget Zhao ... our trusty driver, always ready to spring into action and take us to the birds



Dangerous nest site of Kentish Plover.



Skulking birds like Lanceolated Warbler have little places to skulk when they are in the salt ponds.



Siberian Stonechats will sit up in plain view whatever the circumstances