

GFN fieldwork season on the Luannan Coast, Bohai Bay 2014, Update 5.

Another 10 days? Already? Time flies when you scan shorebirds on the Luannan Coast. Once again, we have had it all since the last update... lots of Knot, elusive Knot, migrating Knot, close Knot & far Knot. We have squinted at distant wobbly Knot through the heat haze and we have sat in the apartment, rain running down the windows, wishing we were out scanning Knot!

The season is starting to draw to a close. There comes a day when you notice that some species just aren't here anymore. There is no grand exodus, they drift away gradually but it's not until many have left that it really sinks in. You suddenly realise that you haven't noticed a Great Knot for a few days or that the Thai-flagged Godwit you see every day has disappeared. This year we have been doing some evening scanning and have seen a few birds leave, small flocks of ten to 100 birds departing to the north. Many Curlew Sandpiper and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, a few Broad-billed Sandpiper and some Red Knot among other species. While many birds depart there is still plenty here of interest and maybe there is more to come as we have heard of some record late shorebird migration down in Broome. Some Red Knot are still leaving Roebuck Bay, are these birds really going to make it all the way to Siberia in time to breed? The latest record of Red Knot migration was May 16th but yesterday (May 26) BBO saw 20 Red Knot migrating! Here in Bohai, Red-necked Stint are numerous as are Sanderling and Red Knot with mostly *piersmai* birds remaining but the search for any Spoon-billed Sandpiper continues...

Every year is slightly different here. Sometimes we work out on the mud or sometimes, like late-May 2013, we had amazing scanning in the saltponds. This year is a bit of a mix with the birds moving around and spread out a little more than usual. Still, we are picking up plenty of flags and, our main focus – Broome colour-bands. We have had some excellent scanning in the last couple of days including one morning with 67 individual colour-band combinations seen. We are rapidly approaching the totals of previous years both in numbers of sightings and individuals. We are also getting close to our 20 000th flag/band sighting for Luannan!



Part of a flock of 22 000 Red Knot on the mudflats at Nanpu (Adrian Boyle)

We were joined in the field by Adrian Riegen from New Zealand who spent a few days with us scanning. We see so many birds from New Zealand it is great that one of the main Red Knot ringers from there can come and see 'their birds' in a whole new setting. New Zealand has a vested interest in some reserve status being attributed to this site as a considerable proportion of 'their' Red Knots pass through here. If the Luannan Coast strip of inter-tidal mud is destroyed then it won't only be noticed by a lack of Red Knot in NWA. So the more people that get to come here and enjoy the birds here is a bonus as it keeps the profile of this critical site high. Just in the last week, Google Earth has updated the images for this area for the first time since we started visiting the area and the differences are striking as industrial development closes in around us. For those of you with a scientific interest in the mudflat loss around the Yellow Sea go to [THIS LINK](#) for a comprehensive paper on the subject.

As usual there have been plenty of other birds around to act as an occasional distraction. Lanceolated Warbler is typically a skulking species but at this time of year we sometimes encounter them on the bare mud banks of the salt pans. Here there is little opportunity to skulk and sometimes they allow excellent views. The first Thick-billed Warbler of the season was seen just after the last update went out and now they are daily birds as are Arctic Warblers. One of the surprises of the season was a Kamchatka Leaf Warbler in a bushy area in the salt pans that we have never birded before. Although in appearance it is nearly identical to Arctic Warbler (with which, until recently, it was considered conspecific) it does sound different and, conveniently, this bird was singing allowing recordings to be made to confirm the ID. The same area also held Tiger Shrike and Black-winged Cuckoo Shrike along with a host of commoner migrants and is a site we will certainly be checking regularly from now on!

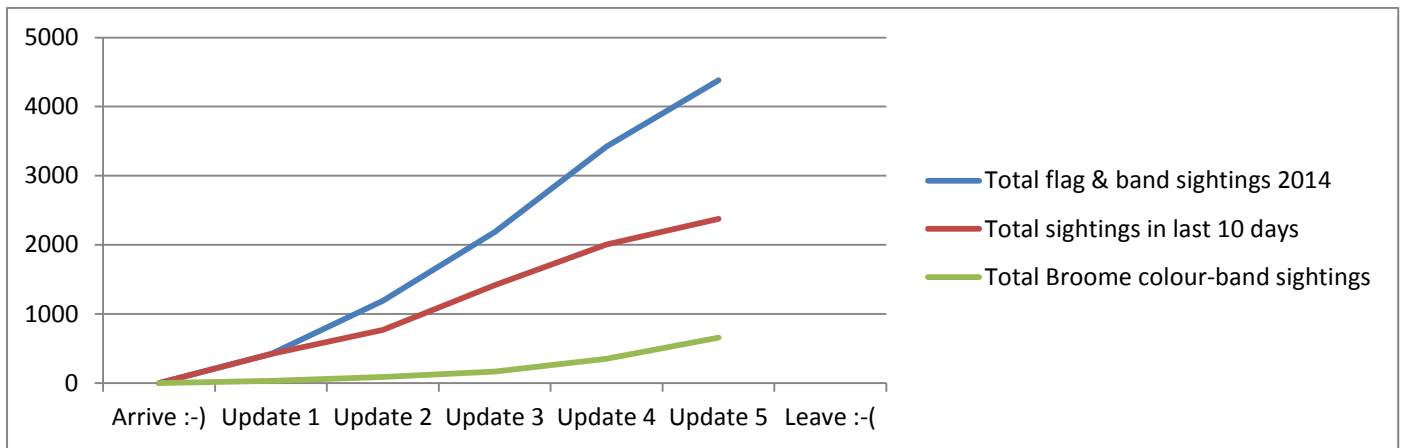
We are nearing the end now with one last push for sightings. Check back soon for the last update of the season.

Bohai Team 2014

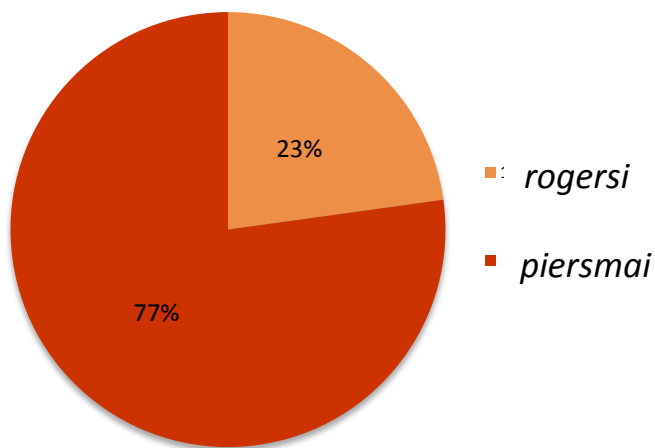


Red Knot (Adrian Boyle)

The numbers so far...



Red Knot sub-species ratio - Update 5



Number species seen so far:

206

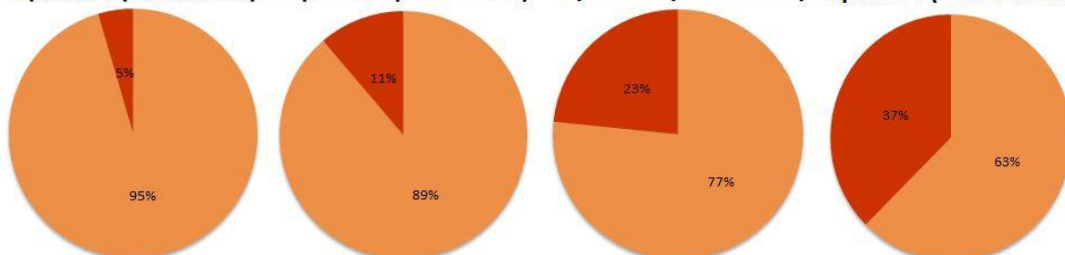
Flagging regions:

19

Flagged species:

17

Update 1 (3680 birds) Update 2 (5291 birds) Update 3 (7225 birds) Update 4 (10378 birds)



Red Knot and Sanderling (Adrian Boyle)



Engaging the locals



Scanning



Calmly setting a disagreement and the GFN roadside rescue service



Zhao, our trusty driver and our surprisingly reliable field car



A skulking Lanceolated Warbler, an Arctic Warbler and below, a roosting Grey Nightjar (*Matt Slaymaker*)



Other Wildlife of the Bohai area, Toad sp. and Hedgehog (*Adrian Boyle*)

To learn more about our work here as well as see reports and updates from previous field seasons in Bohai check out the Global Flyway Network website ... <http://globalflywaynetwork.com.au/>

