

GFN fieldwork season on the Luannan Coast, Bohai Bay 2014, Update 6.

Well, that's it ... all over for another year. There were highs, there were lows. We came, we saw, and we scanned a lot of birds.

Just as the last update was going to press we enjoyed some of the best scanning of the season. On almost identical dates to last year we had some great views and a whole lot of colour-bands – over 200 sightings in just three days. Somewhere during this highly productive scan-fest we surpassed 20 000 flag and band sightings for Bohai, a fantastic achievement and a very complete and useful five-year data set. A few days later we reached 5000 sightings for the year, a new record for us. A few more days and we broke our annual colour-band record and when counting up number of individual birds were pleased to see another increase on previous years! It has been a highly successful trip!

Numbers of shorebirds continued to wane. During some evening outings we witnessed some migration with Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper all departing in good numbers. Soon, there were just Red Knot and Sanderling left on the mud and their numbers have tailed off during the last week. As we prepare for our own migration there are just a couple of thousand widely scattered Knot remaining. The best shorebird of the week was a Pectoral Sandpiper in the salt pans, this is a rare bird in the flyway and our first record here at Bohai.



Migrating Ruddy Turnstone and Asian Dowitcher (Adrian Boyle)

Spartina is a genus of grass that grows in coastal ecosystems in many parts of the world. Some species are invasive and have been known to take over tidal mudflats having serious implications on both the wildlife and the livelihoods of those who rely on an area for food and work. Here, on the Luannan coast, there was a small patch by the sea wall at Zuidong but in recent years this has spread rapidly and now can be found over 5 km away at Nanpu our main study area and posing yet another threat to the Red Knot habitat. Last week we started a trial to try and control the spread while it is still manageable. Next year we will see the results and hopefully continue the work in the remaining patches. A big thanks to David Melville and Ying Chen for initiating and organising this work.

In other mudflat news, we have had a whole spring season without fishing nets. The dispute over fishing rights was settled some time ago but apparently, the locals considered it too late in the season to be worthwhile setting up the nets. From our point of view, there has been no noticeable effect on the bird's behaviour. As we have said in previous years, a mudflat with fishing nets and happy local fishermen is so much better than a mud-free industrial zone.



Ady takes on the *Spartina* (Ginny Chan)

The main passerine migration is behind us now but there have still been a few birds passing through when we have had a chance to look. Black-naped Oriole and Black Drongo are still recorded with a few warblers and flycatchers. A couple of trips to 'Tree Lane' were productive with Schrenk's Bittern and many Yellow Bittern seen during a pleasant evenings birding and a relaxed finish to a busy but productive spring.

This concludes our fieldwork season on the Luannan coast for 2014. As usual, we have plenty of people to thank particularly Lei Ming and Nicky for their organisation which starts long before we arrive. Thanks to all our visitors and fellow scanners this season, we have enjoyed sharing the site and the birds with you. We would also like to thank everybody for reading, even those who just skip through to look at the pictures! We appreciate you all taking an interest in our work here and this wonderful site which is so important to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. We hope it doesn't change too much and that at least some of us will be back in 2015 to do it all over again!

Projects like this don't happen without considerable funding. GFN would like to acknowledge Birdlife-Netherlands, WWF-Netherlands, WWF-China (Beijing Office), Beijing Normal University and the Australasian Wader Studies Group. And of course, we (the main Bohai Team) thank Prof. Theunis Piersma for his inspiration, continuing encouragement and support. Theunis' position as Chair in Global Flyway Ecology is possible with considerable in kind support from the University of Groningen and the NIOZ Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research.

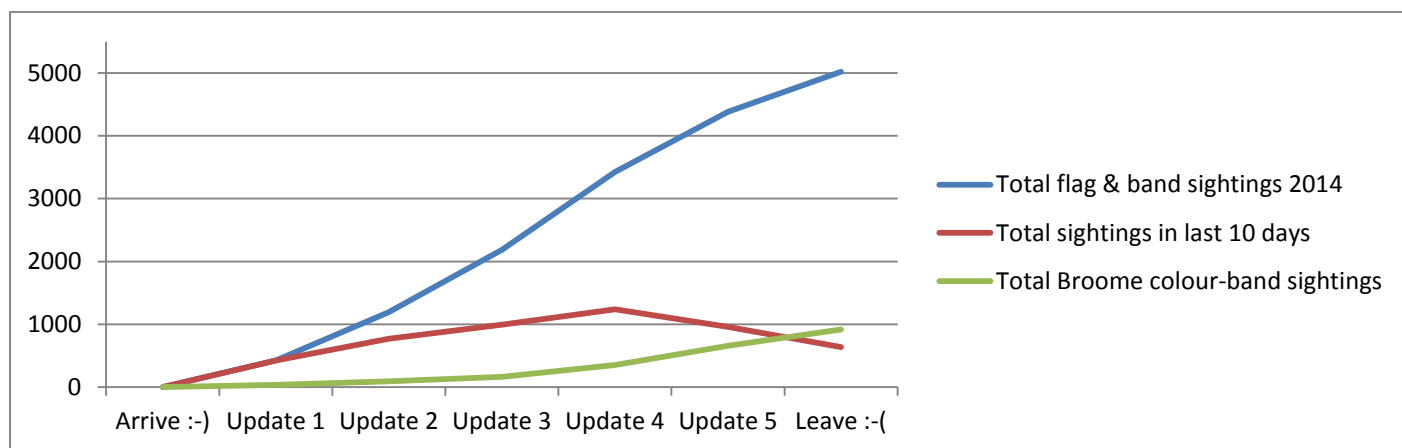
Thanks again and happy shorebirding to all,

Ady, Chris, Ginny & Matt

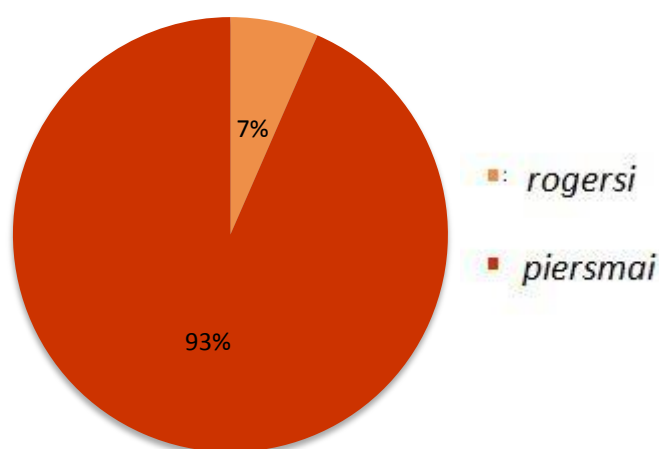


Left; Record shot of Pectoral Sandpiper (bird on right) in late evening light (MS) Right; Yellow Bittern (AB)

The numbers so far...



Red Knot sub-species ratio - Update 6



Number species seen so far:

209

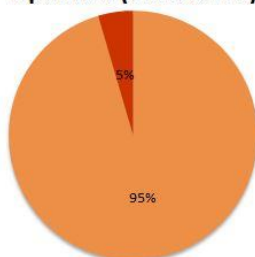
Flagging regions:

20

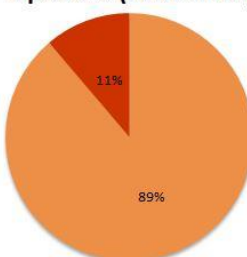
Flagged species:

16

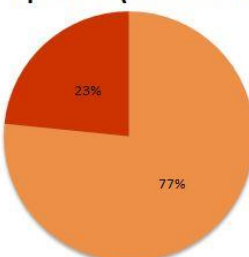
Update 1 (3680 birds)



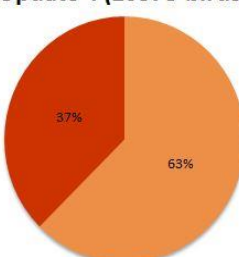
Update 2 (5291 birds)



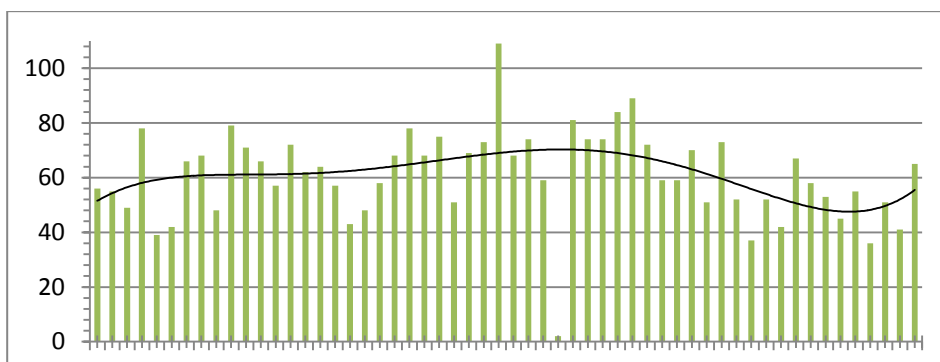
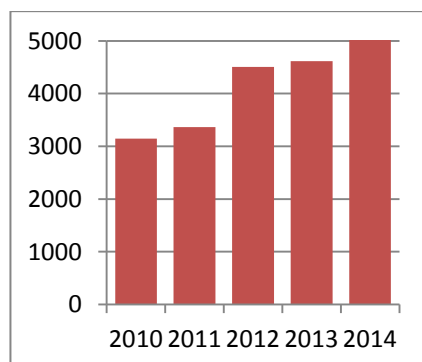
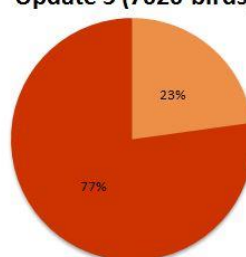
Update 3 (7225 birds)



Update 4 (10378 birds)



Update 5 (7020 birds)



Left: Annual number of flag and band sightings. Right: number of bird species seen each day during the season (no prizes for guessing the day when it rained from dawn to dusk!)

As usual, the official season report will be compiled and available soon...



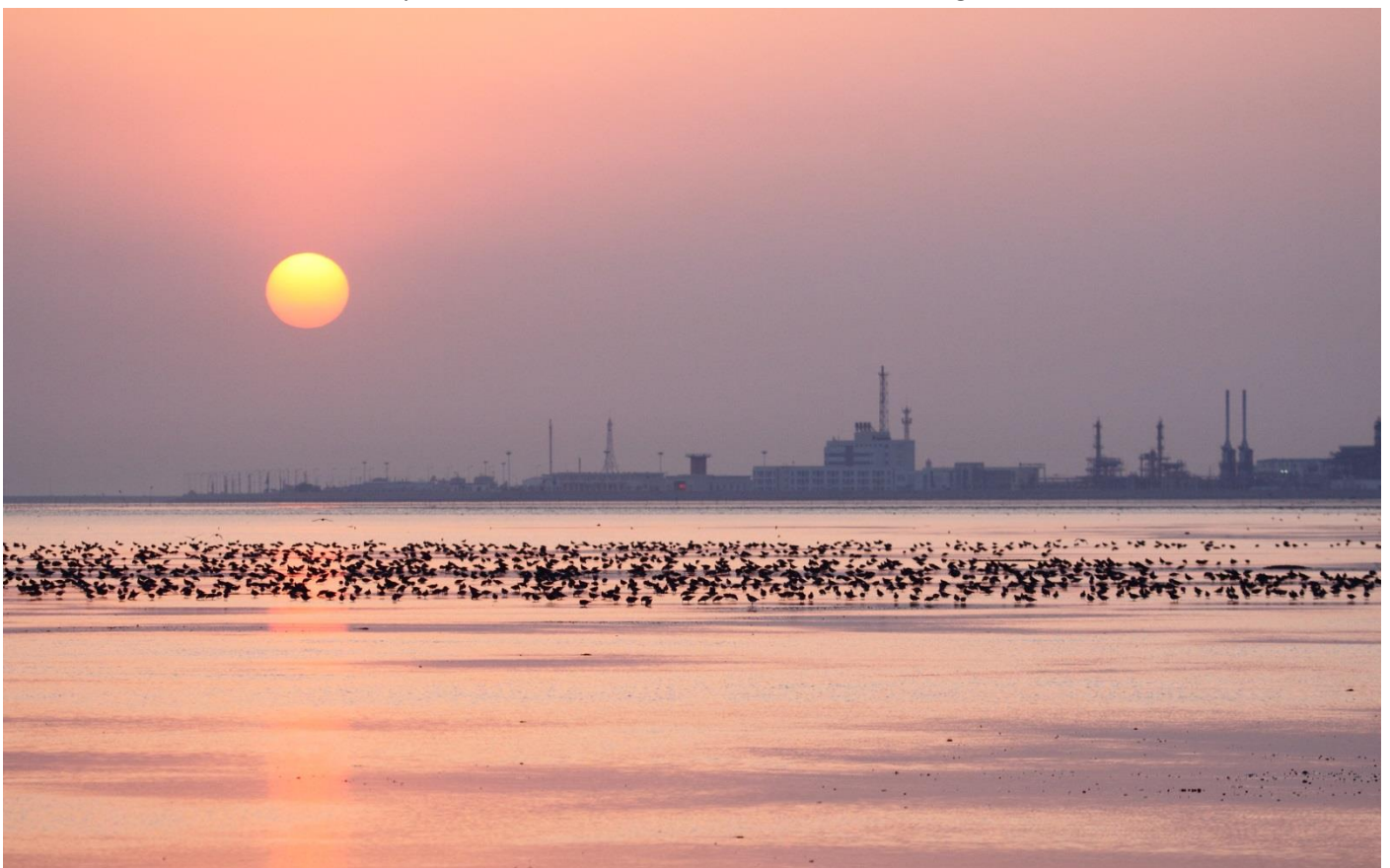
White-winged Tern (*Adrian Boyle*)



Reed Parrotbill (*Adrian Boyle*)



It has been a busy season and we are all exhausted, we need to go home for a rest!



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/>

