

Update 2 – Team in full swing

As more Red Knots started to arrive Luannan, GFN team 2021 is now in full swing with two more team members, Tong Mu and Rainy Cai joining us from the beginning of May. Tong and Rainy have spent 2 field seasons in 2018 and 2019 at Nanpu studying shorebirds and carrying out mud sampling, so I would say they are the best help I can get!

Great Knot

Since the previous update, the team has made more attempts at Zuidong to record colour bands and flags on Great Knot before their anticipated departure in early-mid May. Highest count of 5,516 Great Knot was recorded on 28-Apr during a co-ordinated count with Beijing Normal University.

Unfortunately, we only had limited success scanning Great Knots with increased number of visitors along the shore during the Labour Day golden week holiday plus disturbance from all sorts of bird of prey, even though it was just an Osprey hunting for fish!



Left: Tong “chasing” Great Knots at the tide line (photo by Wei Zhang). Right: One of the six Pied Harriers patrolling the mudflat on 1-May (photo by Tong Mu).

Red Knot

Red Knot number started to build up in the last week of April, then reached 6,000 on 2-May. Xiao Liu and me recorded our first colour banded Red Knot from NW Australia on 22-Apr in the rain. Up-to-date we have only recorded 28 colour banded Red Knot individuals, so we are still waiting for the NWA birds to arrive.



Left: Watching Red Knots landing on the mudflat as the super moon fall at 5am. Right: Red Knots start feeding as soon as they land on the mudflat (photo by Katherine Leung)

I was especially delighted to resight 1GNCN on 30-Apr. A photographer sent me the photos of this bird at Ruian mudflat in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province on 18-Apr, which Chris feedback immediately that it was the first time this bird was recorded away from NWA. 1GNCN was recorded on 9-Apr at Eighty Mile Beach, NWA before its northward migration. There has definitely been an increase in awareness of shorebird colour bands and flags among Chinese birders and photographers in recent years, allowing us to discover more stop-over sites and build up the life history of individual bird in the “old-fashioned” way (see another example from Chris earlier <http://globalflywaynetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Red-Knot-quick-move.pdf>).



Above: Excellent photo of 1GNCN, i.e. flag at position 1 on left tibia, Green (Green) and Black (Niger) colour bands on left tarsus; C (Carmine) and Black (Niger) colour bands on right tarsus in Zhejiang (photo by Mr. Jianyue Song).

Salt ponds

We have had some nice birding and scanning opportunities along the road at the salt ponds this year. There were usually one or two ponds with low water level every day with thousands of birds present. On one occasion we observed 19 species of shorebirds at the corner of a single pond, including a dozen of Ruff in various plumages.



Left: Scanning on the road side. Right: How many shorebirds species can you find in this photo? (photo by Katherine Leung)

But a true “star shorebird” of the salt pond show up on 7-May. After we finished scanning at the Nanpu seawall, we received news about a Pectoral Sandpiper spotted near Beipu village. This was only the third time this species was recorded during GFN spring field work in the past years. The bird remained at the same spot for most of the day and was enjoyed by several birders travelling to see it from Tianjin and Beijing.



Above: The Pectoral Sandpiper (left) chased off any Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (right) entering its territory, it was however not bothered by Marsh Sandpiper or Black-winged Stilt (photo by Tong Mu).

Global Big Day

As per the “tradition” of GFN Bohai Team, we take part in the Global Big Day event to record as many species as possible on 8-May. From 05:30 to 19:20, we visited eight birding spots as well as carrying out our daily scanning work. While we missed a number of common bird species around the sites, our final result was still very rewarding 114 species.



Left: Naumann’s Thrush on Nanpu seawall. Right: Seizing the last twilight to add another species for the Big day (photo by Rainy Cai)

Thanks for reading! More in a couple of week time. Katherine Leung 9-May-2021