

Mr John Stoate

In science and conservation the accolades go to those that devise clever science and the tireless field workers who make it happen. And that's fair enough. However, there are another set of people who have a hand to play and as they are not at the forefront they seldom get the praise they deserve. They are the owners and managers of the land that science takes place on. In this particular instance I am talking of Mr John Stoate. John died on Thursday March 17 2022 at the age 93.

John was the owner of Anna Plains Station from when I first arrived in Broome in 1996 having purchased the station lease in 1993. He managed the station on his own until in 2006 but, as he aged and his eyesight started to fail his son David and his family, partner Helen and children Tim and Joanna came to manage it with him. David and Helen continue to run the station.

Anna Plains Station is adjacent to the world famous 80 Mile Beach and the incredible shorebird and benthos diversity that the areas holds. This beach holds a deep fascination for shorebird and benthos biologists. That so much knowledge has been gained about the site is down to the ever-helpful Stoate family. They allow us, in our droves, on to the station. We sometimes number 40 people and 9 cars, we camp, we use the freezer space, we 'borrow' the mechanic, we drive everywhere looking at, counting and trying to catch birds. Mud expeditions take huge trailers down to use as mobile laboratories and park them on the grass! 'Yes sure that's fine'. That was pretty much John's standard response. He was always so positive and open to any request we might come up with and we as the individual researchers and the science as a whole are very lucky for that and also for David and Helen continuing that tradition.

That John and Clive Minton had a close relationship was without doubt important but, John never hesitated to welcome researchers when Clive wasn't there. I will miss seeing the 2 of them filling each other's glasses and engaging in enthusiastic and loud! conversation (neither had the best hearing as they got older.)

John even managed to conjure up a plane for us. Twice. Once after the 1997 flood when Janet Sparrow and I as new wardens of the BBO got the opportunity to fly over the immense flooded areas of Anna Plains and Walyarta. And, once in 2003 when 3 million Pratincole were feeding on the station and roosting on the adjacent 80 Mile Beach. Nothing was too much trouble.

This is my personal thanks to John but I am certain many shorebird and mud researchers from around the world would have the same memories of John that I do.

Thanks John, Rest in Peace.



John, Clive and Oriental Pratincole. Pat Macwhirter