

# Notes & News

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## PROJECT NEWS

### Avian influenza and migratory waterbirds

Wetlands International is keen to improve our understanding of the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza, especially of the H5N1 strain that has already caused numerous human deaths and widespread loss of poultry in the Asian region and is believed by the World Health Organisation and others to be a forerunner for a human flu pandemic in the near future.

With growing concern about the possible role of migratory species in contributing to the spread of the virus, Wetlands International is committed to improving access to existing information on migratory routes of waterbirds globally, to establish a global network of serological testing of wild birds and to develop risk assessments to support national actions to ensure human health, to sustain the poultry industry and the conservation of wild birds and their habitats.

Wetlands International provides information on avian influenza and wild birds on our website. Information is being updated regularly: <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/Avianflu/default.htm>. A Powerpoint presentation to the European Union in September by Wetlands International can be viewed online, others will be added soon.

We recognise that practical measures to limit the risk of spreading the virus should focus on the control of movements of domestic poultry and their products and on improved bio-security practices in poultry production enterprises. We are keen to undertake this work in partnership with interested governments, international bodies, conventions, non-government organisations and interested experts at the global, flyway and national scales.

*Dr. Taej Mundkur*

*Wetlands International Focal Point on Avian Influenza  
taejmundkur.wi@vsnl.net*

### The IWSG Colour-Marking Register: recent developments

The number of reports of colour-marked birds that have been received by the IWSG colour-marking register has increased over the past few months. This is partly due to timing; autumn typically sees large numbers of waders passing popular birding sites and colour-marked birds from breeding, passage and wintering studies are commonly seen. In addition, the number of birds reported appears to have increased with the development of an online reporting form.

The website [www.ring.ac](http://www.ring.ac), which has been developed by the BTO and EURING, enables reports of ringed, including colour-marked, birds to be reported by members of the public. Reports of colour-marked waders are then passed to the WSG colour-marking register. Recently, about 80% of wader sightings have been reported via the website. As with other reports that are received by the IWSG colour-marking register, details are forwarded to the ringer. If you receive one of these reports via the colour-marking register, please reply to the observer with details of the scheme and, if possible, the individual bird.

Many thanks to all of the ringers who have replied to observers; much of the continued success of the colour-marking register is dependent on good communications between ringers and observers.

International Wader Study Group Colour Marking Register: [wsg@bto.org](mailto:wsg@bto.org)

*Mark Collier,*

*IWSG Colour-marking Register, The Nunnery,  
Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, UK.*

### Proposed Asia-Pacific Shorebird Group: taking a flyway approach

Interest in the research and conservation of shorebirds in Asia-Pacific has been growing over the past 25 years, especially recently, due to worrying declines in shorebird populations and extensive loss of habitat throughout their flyways. To date, much of the research has been undertaken by international and national NGOs, wader studies groups, and bird banders across the region. As a result of years of training programs and shorebird surveys, there is increased professional expertise and growing interest in shorebird conservation and research.

Until now there has been no dedicated membership group that represents shorebird research and conservation across the Asia-Pacific. Such a group would give a sense of 'ownership' to all members in the region and include all of the countries in the Asia Pacific Region, from Russia and Alaska in the north, through the flyways to southern Asia (potentially including the Indian sub-continent), Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island countries.

A proposal to form an Asia-Pacific Shorebird Group will be presented at the major shorebird conferences at Tainan in Taiwan (24–27 November 2005), Nelson in New Zealand (11–13 December 2005) and Colorado in the USA (27 February–2 March 2006). Discussions we have had with a range

of shorebird specialists in Russia, China, Australia, New Zealand and the USA, as well as with some members of the International Wader Study Group, have shown that there is broad interest in considering this matter.

#### *What would the group do?*

An Asia Pacific shorebird group would provide a network of specialists from across the flyway, able to contribute to a flyway approach to the study and conservation of shorebirds. Key collaborative activities for the group could include:

*Training.* This will be an important activity of the group. Today there are many centres of expertise, so that training programs can be conducted at any one of many sites in the Asia Pacific region, by experienced trainers from within the region.

*Education.* This important role of the group will occur at a local level in each country as well as being linked with education centres throughout the region. Targets of education will include schools and the general public.

*Research.* Helping with research on shorebirds would be extremely important. Already a number of projects are underway, e.g. at universities in Beijing, Shanghai and Taiwan, and others are planned. These would benefit from a network of keen shorebird enthusiasts to help with surveys and banding/flagging programs. One urgent case is the reclamation at Saemangeum in South Korea but every country in the region would benefit from co-operative research programs.

*Co-operation with other groups.* It will be important to work in close association with other international groups with similar interests, often at the same wetlands; such special interest groups include IUCN, Birdlife International, and Wetlands International. It is anticipated that potential members of this new group will also be members of existing national and local bird and conservation groups. The existence of an Asia-Pacific Shorebird Group will also greatly assist in promoting and supporting shorebird conservation under the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy and the proposed Flyway Partnership.

#### *Who would be involved in the group?*

Members would be people who want to become more involved in flyway efforts to study and conserve shorebird populations. It is anticipated they will include: Members of existing shorebird (wader) study groups (e.g. Taiwan Wader Study Group, Australasian Wader Studies Group, New Zealand Wader Study Groups, International Wader Study Group, Americas Shorebird Research Group); International and local NGOs; Wetland education centres; Wetland nature reserves; Research institutes (university research groups).

You are encouraged to register your interest in being part of this group by emailing Phil Straw at: [pstraw@optusnet.com.au](mailto:pstraw@optusnet.com.au) or write to him at: PO Box 2006, Rockdale Delivery Centre, NSW 2216, Australia.

*Phil Straw, Lew Young,  
Weiting Liu, Doug Watkins,  
Yuri Gerasimov*

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### Shore Plovers head south

*“The Shore Plover is one of several threatened New Zealand bird species which are being saved from extinction through reintroduction to mammalian predator-free islands. Their spectacular recoveries, following such drastic intervention, are renowned conservation successes worldwide.”*

*Ali Stattersfield,  
Head of Science, BirdLife International*

One of New Zealand's rarest waders, the threatened Shore Plover *Thinornis novaeseelandiae*, is set to spread its wings at a new offshore island location off the South Island early in 2006. The Department of Conservation (DOC) and its partners in the Shore Plover Recovery Programme are gearing up to transfer 10–30 captive-bred birds to the new site each year, for approximately five years. This follows closely the success of the previous transfer program to an island off the East Coast of the North Island which is free of introduced predators such as cats and stoats.

That release program came to a close earlier this year because the site now has a self-sustaining and increasing population currently comprising about 80 birds. This follows the release of more than 160 birds there over the past seven years. It will now be managed as a very valuable established population by preventing introduced predators from accessing the island and monitoring population health.

As with the only other previous (though unsuccessful) transfer of Shore Plovers at Motuora Island in the Hauraki Gulf near Auckland, the birds to be transferred south will be raised at DOC's Mount Bruce Wildlife Centre and the Isaac Wildlife Trust in Christchurch. DOC currently has seven pairs at Mt Bruce, and the Isaac Wildlife Trust has three pairs. The current wild population of the Shore Plover is approximately 200 birds. The recovery program has a ten-year goal of maintaining or establishing Shore Plovers at five or more locations with a combined population over 250 birds. If achieved, this will mean increased insurance for the species against extinction and down-listing from Endangered on the IUCN Red List to the lower threat category of Vulnerable.

Currently there are populations at South-East and Mangere islands in the Chatham group, and at an undisclosed island location off the East Coast of the North Island. This island is privately-owned and its location is not publicised to respect landowner wishes. Two male birds remain in the wild at Beehive Island near Motuora Island. In the absence of any female Shore Plovers there, the two males are to be captured and taken to Mount Bruce where they will become part of the captive breeding program for the planned transfers south.

[http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2005/08/shore\\_plover.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2005/08/shore_plover.html)

## RAMSAR NEWS

The Caribbean state of Antigua and Barbuda has joined the Convention on Wetlands as its 146th Contracting Party. The new Party's obligatory first Wetland of International Importance has been designated as “Codrington Lagoon” in Barbuda. This large saline lagoon of 2,650 ha is very rich in waterfowl, particularly Ardeidae, migratory shorebirds and

Laridae. Sea turtles nest on the adjacent beaches, and there is an important lobster fishery in the lagoon.

The Czech Republic includes two additional Ramsar sites in the Montreux Record, which is a record of Ramsar sites where “changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference”. The two sites, “Mokradý dolního Podyjí (floodplain of lower Dyje River)” and “Poodří”, are part of the “Trilateral Ramsar Site Floodplains of the Morava-Dyje-Danube Confluence” shared by the Czech and Slovak Republics and Austria. The reason for the Montreux listing is that both of these Ramsar sites are in danger because of the planned construction of the Danube-Odra-Elbe channel. Over the coming months, Czech officials and Ramsar Secretariat staff will be working together to resolve the problem with the object that the sites will eventually be removed from the Montreux Record.

Morocco has designated 20 new Ramsar sites, in all parts of the country from the Atlas Mountains to the seacoasts of both the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Morocco now has 24 Wetlands of International Importance covering a surface area of 272,010 ha. Brief site descriptions of the new sites can be seen at [http://ramsar.org/wn/w.n.morocco\\_20.htm](http://ramsar.org/wn/w.n.morocco_20.htm).

Austria has designated two very interesting mire sites for the List of Wetlands of International Importance. One of them, in Tyrol in the west of the country, is part of a mire ecosystem which may become a collaboratively managed trans-boundary Ramsar site with German Bavaria just to the north of Innsbruck. The other is a mosaic of varied wetland types along a small valley in the south, in Carinthia or Kärnten near Klagenfurt.

New Zealand has designated its sixth Wetland of International Importance. Manawatu river mouth and estuary (c.200 ha) on the southwest coast of North Island retains a high degree of naturalness and diversity, and is important as a feeding ground for migratory birds. A high diversity of fish is supported, including some that are threatened, and the site has high-value fisheries. Archaeological signs of the semi-nomadic Mōa hunter culture date from 1400–1650 AD, and present Iwi groups in the area, chiefly the Rangitane, Muaupoko, and Ngāti Raukawa, support Ramsar designation.

Trinidad and Tobago has designated two new coastal Wetlands of International Importance and (with Nariva Swamp) now has three. “Buccoo Reef / Bon Accord Lagoon Complex” (1,287 ha) includes several under-represented wetland types such as coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove forests. As the major tourist attraction in Tobago, the reef continues to be adversely affected by intense tourist activity and pollutant discharges. “Caroni Swamp” (8,398 ha) is an extraordinarily important wetland near the capital of Trinidad, Port of Spain, since it is ecologically diverse, consisting of marshes, mangrove swamp (5,996 ha), brackish and saline lagoons, and tidal mudflats in close proximity. A total of 20 endangered bird species have been recorded in the site. Caroni Swamp is important economically for oyster and fish harvesting, for hunting and for ecotourism.

The Republic of Kenya has designated its fifth Wetland of International Importance, Lake Elmenteita (10,880 ha). Located in Kenya’s southern Rift Valley, this shallow saline, alkaline lake provides a favourable environment for diatoms and the blue-green alga *Spirulina platensis*, which lie at the base of the food chain of several bird species. An average of around 610,000 birds of 450 species (80 waterfowl) has been counted in the area during the annual census. The lake acts

as an important dispersal area for Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*, hosting an average of 28.5% of its world population. Local inhabitants depend on the hot springs around Chamka for their domestic freshwater supply, subsistence irrigation and water for livestock. The nomadic Maasai also use the area as a grazing and salt-licking site for their livestock. The local community has formed various conservation committees and has established the Greater Lake Elmenteita Conservation Area as a community sanctuary and the Lake Elmenteita Community Ecotourism Project.

Vietnam has designated its second Ramsar site. “Bau Sau (Crocodile Lake) Wetlands and Seasonal Floodplains” (13,759 ha) is a freshwater complex and includes Vietnam’s last remaining lowland semi-evergreen forests representative of the Indo-Chinese region. It is a key habitat for 50 very rare IUCN red-listed species like Siamese Crocodile, Asian Arowana, Black-shanked Douc, Asian Elephant, Wild Gaur, Yellow-cheeked Crested Gibbon and Smooth-coated Otter, 131 endemic fish and 6 species of turtles, tortoises and terrapins.

The Republic of Moldova has named its third Wetland of International Importance: Unguri–Holosnita (15,553 ha). The site includes high rocky, crumbling-sloughing slopes and narrow flood-land of the Dniester River’s left bank, in the northeastern part of the country near the border with Ukraine. The Dniester includes wide, shallow segments here with little islands, small rivers and short creeks feeding the stream and forming steep canyons. Fluvial forests are formed by poplar associations with an admixture of willows, ash and elm, with riparian willow formations. Photographs and a map can be seen at: [http://ramsar.org/wn/w.n.moldova\\_unguri.htm](http://ramsar.org/wn/w.n.moldova_unguri.htm)

Niger has added five new Wetlands of International Importance to its previous total of seven. La mare de Dan Doutchi (25,366 ha) and La mare de Tabalak (7,713 ha) are both significant permanent lakes, La mare de Lassouri (26,737 ha) is a semi-permanent wetland, the Oasis du Kawar is a large (368,536 ha) complex of oases, and the Gueltas et Oasis de l’Aïr is an enormous (2,413,237 ha) complex of permanent and temporary streams, oases and marshes. All five sites perform extremely important roles in the lives and livelihoods of their local populations.

## ROYAL DUTCH SHELL’S SAKHALIN II OIL AND GAS PROJECT

You may already have heard of the Sakhalin II project off the coast of Sakhalin Island, in the Russian Far East, because of legitimate concerns over the impacts of a drilling platform and pipelines on the critically endangered Western Grey Whale. What most birders may not know is the size of the development and the number and range of bird species which will be affected, including ‘Korean specials’ like Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Nordmann’s Greenshank, raptors like Steller’s Sea Eagle, and seabirds including Long-billed Murrelet and Aleutian Tern.

The Sakhalin II project has five major components:

- 1) An offshore rig and undersea pipelines in an area of sea-coast used not only by the Critically Endangered Western Grey Whale, but also by over a million migrating waterfowl and a million seabirds;
- 2) A connected onshore processing facility near a nature reserve and in a wider area of forest and wetland which

holds breeding Nordmann's Greenshank (Endangered and declining) and breeding Dunlin (an endangered subspecies nesting only on Sakhalin, with a population recently estimated at only 900 individuals);

- 3) A pipeline with an area 33–66 m wide cleared of vegetation along its length and with fencing, running for c. 800 km, crossing 1,103 watercourses (194 of which support either periodic or more major fish spawning), and 60% of it through genuinely natural habitats (wetlands, meadows and forests);
- 4) A massive amount of support infrastructure, upgrades and construction (roads, bridges, culverts) along the length and to key areas of the pipeline, with 40 km of extra road also being built along the beach in a key shorebird area, known also for colonies of Aleutian Terns;
- 5) And in the far south of the island, linked by the pipeline to the rig in the north-east, a natural gas and an onshore loading facility right on the coast, and right next to an estuary.

This last wider area apparently supports nesting and wintering Long-billed Murrelets (Near-threatened), breeding White-tailed Eagles (Near-threatened) and 10–15 pairs of wintering Steller's Sea-Eagles (Vulnerable), breeding Yellow-breasted Buntings (Near-threatened), 10,000–15,000 Whooper Swans (more than are found here in the whole of Korea each winter!) and flocks, yes flocks, of Spoon-billed Sandpipers (Endangered). This highly charismatic and threatened species is occasionally seen on coast in flocks up to 200 individuals (!) which make them among the largest flocks seen anywhere in the world (with previous highest counts globally being 215 in the Nakdong estuary in September 1970, and 185 at Saemangeum in 1998 – both highly threatened wetlands in South Korea).

Already Sakhalin is apparently suffering from frequent oil-spills; recent images show some streams (that support salmon and likely support breeding Stellers Sea Eagle) are becoming turbid and lost to wildlife due to pipe and road construction; huge tracts of once remote forests are being opened up; disturbance to nesting, staging and wintering waterbirds is surely increasing dramatically. It is obvious that the project really presents very clear potential threats to several already threatened and declining bird species, and that such issues have yet to be addressed by the media or by Royal Dutch Shell or by those funding the project.

There remains at least some possibility that these impacts can be reduced. Already several aspects of the project have been heavily criticized; some parts have been modified or even suspended; and some of the funding has already been frozen. Although the project comes at a time when the oil-guzzling world resents paying record-high prices, Sakhalin II is attracting strengthening and growing opposition.

For more information about Sakhalin II from groups deeply involved in the project, please go to:

<http://www.sakhalin.environment.ru/en/>

<http://www.pacificenvironment.org/russia/sakhalin.htm>

[http://www.sakhalinenergy.com/about/abt\\_eshia\\_eia.asp](http://www.sakhalinenergy.com/about/abt_eshia_eia.asp)

Nial Moores,  
Director, Birds Korea  
[spoonbillkorea@yahoo.com](mailto:spoonbillkorea@yahoo.com)

## WADERS AND PUBLICITY

### New Shorebird Migration Poster

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage, with funding from the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust, has recently published a new poster on shorebird migration. The Poster provides a general overview of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway with an emphasis on those migratory shorebird species that regularly visit Australia. The aim of the poster is to raise awareness of the importance of conserving migratory shorebirds and their habitat in Australia and throughout the Flyway. The poster can be downloaded as a pdf file from the Department's website: [www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/waterbirds/shorebird-poster/index.html](http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/waterbirds/shorebird-poster/index.html).

### Feathers, Flyways and Friends

If you are looking for education material on waders, check out the Feathers, Flyways and Friends site: <http://www.wetlands.org.au/shorebirds/index.htm>, a collaborative project between shorebird educators along the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. It not only contains lots of easily digestible information on various aspects of shorebird biology and many useful links, but also a shorebird sliding puzzle and a shorebird memory game, which are not only entertaining but also rather addictive.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group Meeting, February/March 2006

The first Shorebird Science in the Western Hemisphere Meeting designed to connect shorebird biologists across the Western Hemisphere will be held at the University of Colorado campus in Boulder, Colorado, between 27 Feb and 2 Mar 2006. Additional details of the meeting, including the venue, abstract and symposium submittal deadlines, science program, travel awards, etc. are posted on the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan website:

<http://www.fws.gov/shorebirdplan/ScienceMeeting.htm>

There are several planned symposia, including the inaugural meeting of The Shorebird Research Group of the Americas (contact Rob Butler, [Rob.butler@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Rob.butler@ec.gc.ca) or Stephen Brown, [sbrown@manomet.org](mailto:sbrown@manomet.org)), and a focused symposia on the 'Movements of shorebirds: patterns, causes, and conservation implications' (Nils Warnock, [nwarnock@prbo.org](mailto:nwarnock@prbo.org)). In addition, there will be six species-specific symposiums, including symposia on the Long-Billed Curlew (Lew Oring, [oring@cabnr.unr.edu](mailto:oring@cabnr.unr.edu)), Black Oystercatcher (David Tessler, [david\\_tessler@fishgame.state.ak.us](mailto:david_tessler@fishgame.state.ak.us)), Buff-Breasted Sandpiper (Rick Lanctot, [Richard\\_Lanctot@fws.gov](mailto:Richard_Lanctot@fws.gov)), Snowy Plover (Sue Thomas, [sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)), Hudsonian Godwit (Jim Johnson, [Jim\\_a\\_johnson@fws.gov](mailto:Jim_a_johnson@fws.gov) or Brian McCaffery, [brian\\_mccaffery@fws.gov](mailto:brian_mccaffery@fws.gov)) and Western Sandpiper (David Lank, [dlank@sfu.ca](mailto:dlank@sfu.ca)). In addition to these symposia, there will be general paper and poster sessions.

If you are interested in submitting an abstract for a general paper and poster session, or one of the organized symposia, please submit it to both the Scientific Program Committee Chair (Stephen Brown, [sbrown@manomet.org](mailto:sbrown@manomet.org)) and the Symposium Organizer by 15 December 2006. There are also

travel awards available for non-USA or Canadian scientists and students of all countries to attend the meeting. Application deadlines for these awards are 15 November. Finally, there will be awards for best student paper and poster.

Please mark your calendars now and plan on attending.

Questions about meeting arrangements should be addressed to:

- Rick Lanctot, Overall Meeting Coordinator:  
*Richard\_lanctot@fws.gov*, telephone: 1-907-786-3609;
- Brad Andres, Boulder Logistics Coordinator:  
*brad\_andres@fws.gov*, tel. 1-303-275-2324 and
- Stephen Brown, Science Program Committee Chair:  
*sbrown@manomet.org*, tel. 1-508-224-6521.

### **World Wetlands Day 2 Feb 2006: Wetlands as a tool in poverty alleviation**

Wherever you live, you do not have to look far to see the degradation and loss of wetland ecosystems and the services they provide, yet, if properly managed, wetlands can be a vital lifeline for the poor. This is especially true for the rural poor, who comprise three-quarters of all poor households worldwide. Wetlands are a primary source of rural income, and they can become vitally important when other sources of income fail.

We hope that wherever you are, you will join us in developing this focus in your country for WWD 2006. We have decided this year to produce three posters, each 60 × 40 cm. They will use three images – a paddy field in Asia, fishing in the Neotropics, and a floating market in Africa – to represent some of the services that wetlands provide that can play a role in the alleviation of poverty. Each poster will have the common slogan ‘*In the face of poverty . . . wetlands are lifelines*’ as well as a sub-theme unique to each. We will also have a set of three stickers based on the designs of the posters. See [http://ramsar.org/wwd/6/wwd2006\\_list.htm](http://ramsar.org/wwd/6/wwd2006_list.htm) for more information.

*Sandra Hails, Ramsar Secretariat*

### **NEW BOOKS**

#### **The saltmarsh creation handbook: a project manager's guide to the creation of saltmarsh and intertidal mudflat** by A.S. Nottage & P.A. Robertson.

This handbook is a joint RSPB/CIWEM (Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management) publication. It presents practical guidance on the restoration and creation of coastal saltmarsh and associated intertidal mudflat to help those involved in the planning and delivery of such schemes to successfully realise their goals.

Following an introductory overview, the handbook covers issues arising in the project-planning phase. Site selection, scheme design, formulation of management plans, funding considerations, the current legal and planning context, the regulatory framework and the process of environmental impact assessment are addressed.

The handbook then describes the practical techniques available to restore and create saltmarsh. It covers the engineering operations necessary to produce suitable site conditions and the establishment techniques employed to optimise/enhance site development. The case studies presented reflect the evolution of the approach from simple, small-scale, single function schemes to sophisticated, large-scale, multiple-function projects and illustrate how the practical techniques

described have been applied to site-specific circumstances. Technical terminology has been kept to a minimum to make the text accessible to the widest possible audience (hopefully everyone with an interest in the subject). Plates and figures have been widely used to illustrate the subject matter and extensive reference has been made to other publications in the field, relevant recent and on-going research projects and other sources of useful information.

The book is available from CIWEM (<http://www.ciwem.org/publications>) at £29.99 + £4.95 p&p.

### **...AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST!**

#### **Migrating sandpipers and perseids in Nova Scotia**

On an early morning in August, (3:30 to 4:50 a.m. on 12 Aug) I heard about 14 individual flocks of outward-bound, migrating shorebirds (sandpiper species) passing near overhead. It took about two minutes for each group to pass, from the time I first heard them approaching, “twittering” and “piping”, out of the north-west until they moved beyond my hearing in the south-east. The time interval between flocks varied from about four to ten minutes.

I could easily track their flight path without seeing them visually. It was a neat experience! On this occasion I was comfortably reclining in an easy chair watching for and recording perseid meteors. The sky was fairly clear; the passage of thin patches of cloud or fog-like haze would dim or obscure sections of sky for a few minutes but I could see most of the stars down to the 4th and 5th magnitude for most of the time. Using the direction of bird sounds I could easily track a flock as it passed against the background of constellations. Although there was some variation, each flock's track was basically similar. It came up under the watchful eyes of Draco (the dragon), through or above the Little Dipper, across Cassiopeia and Perseus, and above the frightened flight of the Pleiades fleeing from Orion. Finally, as they cleared the watchful eye of Taurus, the flock “peeped” their way under the bright glow of Mars before their sounds faded into the south-east. I wished the pipers well as they began their non-stop flight to north-eastern South America.

This is not an uncommon event around this time of year at my location at Horton Bluff. It usually occurs on various nights in August, on a change of weather, when a cold front moves through, or a high pressure weather cell builds in behind a departing low. On other occasions the pattern of events has been much the same. Flybys last two or more hours as wave after wave of sandpipers in small horsefoot-shaped groups go over. Most often it is dark but occasionally it has begun while still light (this is when I've been able to follow them visually). The behaviour is quite different from the undulating, direction changing, low-elevation flights one sees during the high-tide period when sandpipers are waiting to feed again. I've come to consider that these are the final shorebird migration flights that leave the province for a non-stop flight to South America (Suriname).

Oh, by the way, I did catch sight of a few perseid meteors, too. Nothing spectacular, about 26 perseids and 2 sporadics (other random meteors) during the observing period. The pipers certainly provided the main attraction during the time spent. Increasing haziness and growing daylight ended the observation session.

*Sherman Williams, Avonport, Nova Scotia*