

Satellite Tracking Report from North-West Australia 2019

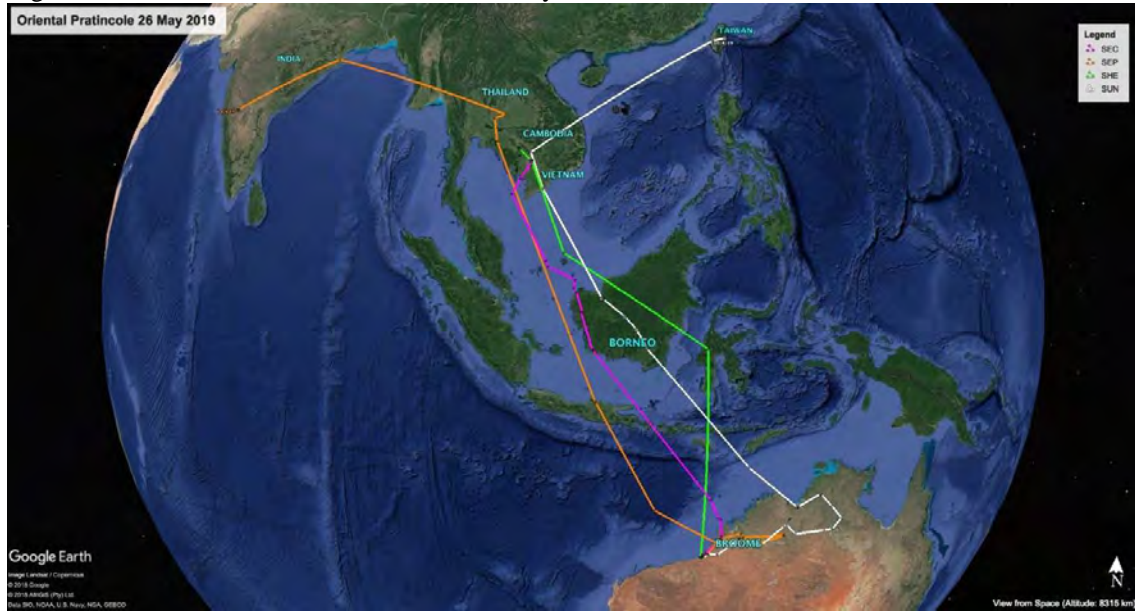
Number 12

27.05.19

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE BREEDING ECOLOGY – The next great unknown (by Grace Maglio)

Another folder to add to the Oriental Pratincole -“we don’t really know” file are breeding details. What we do know is, they breed in loose colonies from April to June and the nests are usually a shallow depression, on the ground, comprising of usually 2-3 eggs. Other details seem to be unknown but believed to be similar to the Collared Pratincole: Incubation 17-21 days, chicks semi-precocial, fed by both parents, leaving the nest at around 2-3 days and fledged at around 25 – 30 days. All four birds remain in the same location and presumably busy with breeding activities.

Figure 1: Tracks of Oriental Pratincole – 26 May 2019



Distance from release location 26 May

Bird ID	Distance from 80 Mile Beach release location (approx.)	Approximate time in current breeding location (days)	Location
SUN	4,800km	38	East Taiwan
SEP	6,350km	34	South-west India
SHE	4,000km	93	West Cambodia
SEC	3,840km	68	South-east Cambodia

SUN - A lesson in patience (with input from Chung-Yu Chiang) - The weather cleared, the weather turned and the data continues to struggle to get through. With bad weather persisting since the last report, we are still waiting for accurate location data. However, once again this week, information we have received gives hope that SUN is still active in this area.

Figure 2: SUN - Last accurate reading 18/4/19, approximate location Hualien County, Taiwan.
Note the location of 2018 breeding location recorded by Chung-Yu Chiang



SEP - The tale of two flyways (with input from Subbu Subramanya) - After an excitement packed fortnight, all has calmed. SEP remains on location and with the rest of the colony will hopefully get on with the task of breeding successfully. Information of SEPs progress/movements will continue to be shared with the team in India, which will be used to help reinforce the plans for a conservation reserve and Ramsar Site in this region.

Figure 3: SEP - Heggur Villages, Bagalkot District, Karnataka, India



SHE - Will SHE stay or will SHE go - Approaching week 13 in the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve and we remain confident the continued short local movements were signs of breeding behaviour. Normally Oriental Pratincoles return to Northern Australia around late October, the floodplains and agricultural activities in this region make ideal habitat for an extended stopover, so we wait for SHE to make the next move.

Figure 4: SHE - 13 weeks in the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve



SEC – Keep us guessing - SEC has been in Prey Veng Province for ten weeks. Short local movements continue to be identified and it is difficult to be sure whether a breeding attempt has already occurred or is yet to happen. Once again, similar to SHE's location, this area is ideal habitat for Oriental Pratincoles, with abundant water, fertile soils and agricultural activities providing a presumably healthy population of insects for birds to feast on.

Figure 5: SEC – 10 weeks in Prey Veng Province, Cambodia



Whimbrel – Continue north (by Katherine Leung)

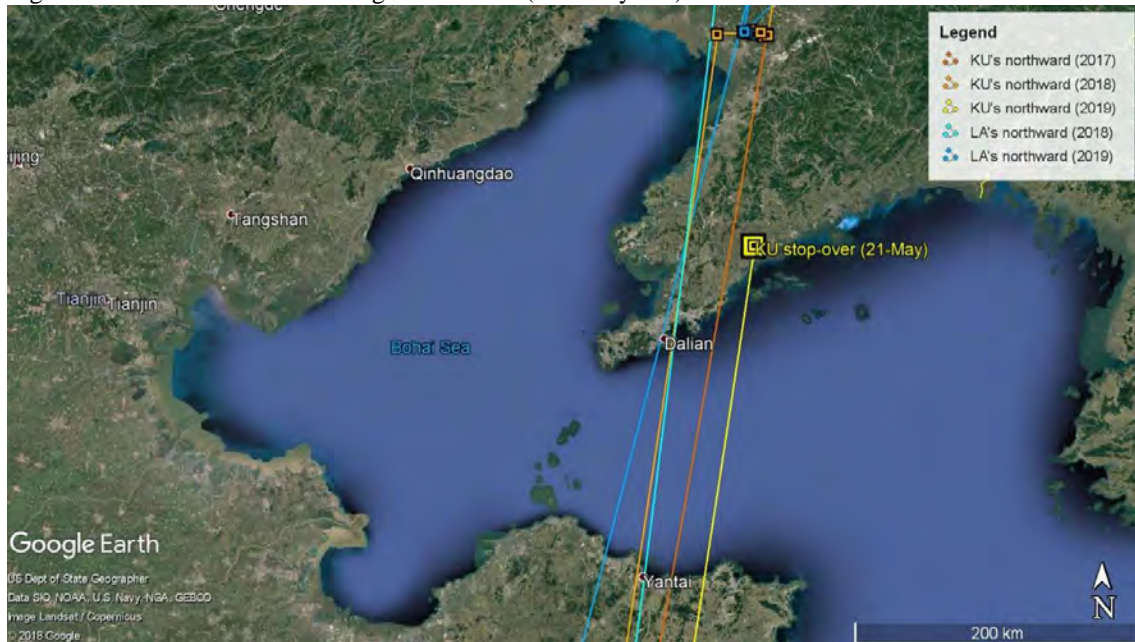
Both Whimbrel KU and LA progressed rapidly to the north in the past week, LA had even reached Russia.

KU departed Putian, Fujian Province on 18 May evening after 4-days stop-over. On 21 May, Chinese bird-watcher and waterbird surveyor ZHANG Lin was on a ferry trip from Dalian, Liaoning Province to Yantai, Shandong Province. Besides some Streaked Shearwaters and migrating raptors (falcons and harriers), he also saw a flock of Whimbrel migrating north near Dalian. That was the day when transmitter signals show KU was migrating across the strait to arrive Dalian! Similar migration pathway was also observed on Whimbrel LA and other Whimbrels carrying transmitters under a tracking project by Prof. Ma Zhijun's team at Fudan University.

Photo 1: Migrating Whimbrels crossing the “Bohai Sea strait” (by Zhang Lin)

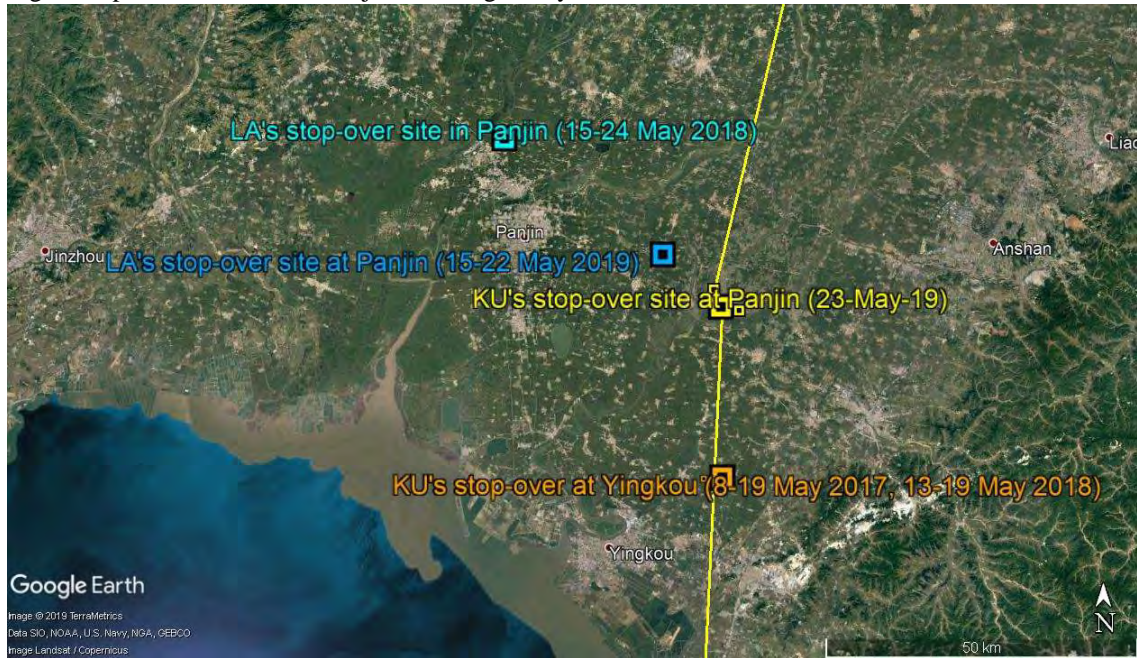


Fig 7: Whimbrel KU and LA's migration tracks (various years) across the “Bohai Sea strait”



Just after one day, KU arrived at rice paddies area in Panjin close to where LA stopped-over earlier. KU has abandoned its familiar stop-over site 25km south near Yingkou where it has spent 11 and 6 days respectively in 2017 and 2018. Yet KU didn't stay long at Panjin like the previous 2 years and departed on the same day as it arrived on 23 May. As per Liaoning Meteorological Bureau website, rainfall in Panjin and Yingkou had been very low and drought condition had impact on agriculture activities. It is possible that the shallow water rice paddy habitats were not available to these birds this year. KU carried on migrating north and arrived Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province on 25 May.

Fig 8: Stop-over sites around Panjin and Yingkou by the Whimbrels in 2017-2019



LA was progressing even quicker than KU. Before KU arrived Panjin, it has already left and flew north-east to arrive Magadan on 26 May. Maximum speed recorded was 48km/h! LA arrived Russia 2 days earlier than last year, will this lead to better breeding success compare to previous year?

Fig 9: LA's migration track from China to Russia in 2018 and 2019

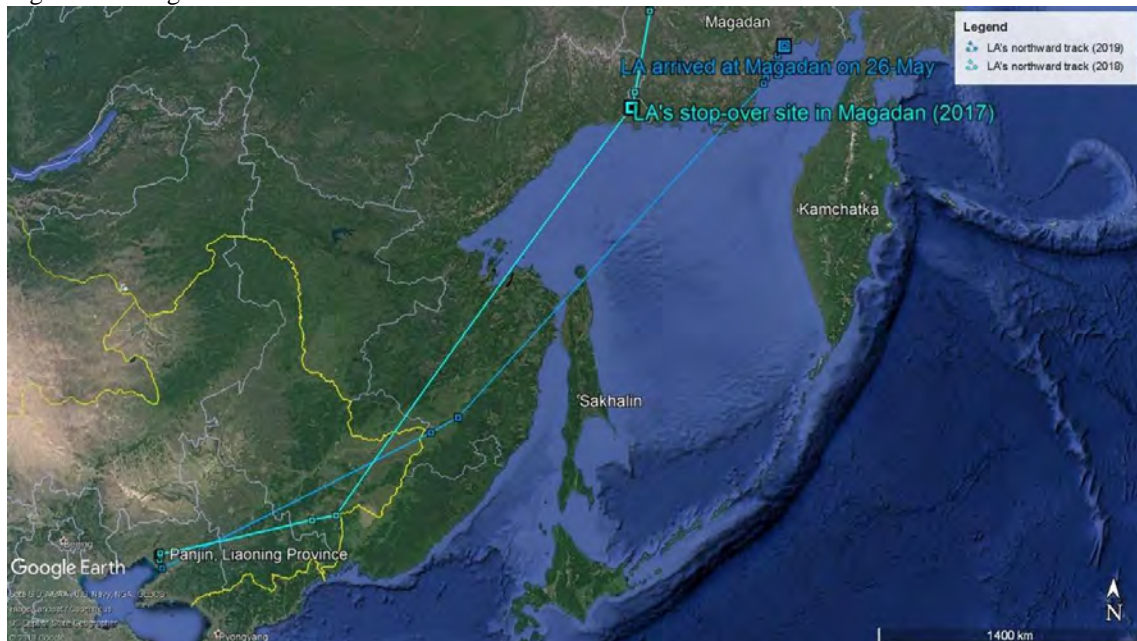


Fig 10: Migration tracks of KU and LA (as of 27 May 2019)



Migration summary of Whimbrels (as of 27 May 2019):

Leg Flag (track colour)	No. of days since transmitter deployment	No. of days since departing Australia (2019)	Distance travelled (2019)
KU (yellow)	822 days	32 days	7,768 km
LA (blue)	834 days	31 days	10,147 km

Little Curlew – Another bad year (by Katherine Leung)

Unfortunately, no transmission was received on LS and LU since 14 May. The failure rate for tracking of Little Curlew proved to be high in the 3 years experiences (2013, 2015 and 2019). Different strategy, such as using lighter transmitter, change in attachment method, will have to be carefully investigated if further study is to be pursued.

Eastern Curlew (by Amanda Lilleyman)

Update has been sent out in an email via Roz Jessop on 24 May 2019.