

Satellite Tracking Report from North-West Australia 2019

Number 15

08.05.19

These satellite tracking reports on waders from North-west Australia were initiated earlier this year to keep Expedition participants, and other interested parties, fully in the picture on the results, on an ongoing basis, of our deployment of satellite transmitters on four species of waders in NWA during the February AWSG NWA 2019 Expedition. The reports were initially circulated every one or two weeks, when especially interesting and ever-changing news was being developed by the transmitters on Oriental Pratincoles. Since the Pratincoles settled on their breeding areas in April most movement information was generated by the satellite transmitters on Little Curlew and Whimbrel, together with the information provided by Amanda Lilleyman on Eastern Curlew (from Broome and elsewhere). In recent weeks with almost all birds on their breeding grounds fresh news has been scarce. This report will bring everyone up to date as of the fourth week of July. Reports will be circulated in the future whenever there is a significant amount of news, but intervals are likely to be rather longer during the slow southward migration compared with the very rapid northward migration.

The Oriental Pratincoles have all now moved away from their breeding locations. The Indian bird in India has moved the furthest. We have been speculating about what the birds might do in the long period before they are due back in Australia (December). Excitingly it seems possible that they all may be breeding again. Presumably they have moved location because of changes in their originally selected nesting habitat. It would be absolutely fascinating if we could prove that this has occurred. Further weeks of tracking results will help but Grace is also trying to get in touch with people who may be able to visit the current locations and check the situation.

Unfortunately, as indicated in the previous report, we now no longer have any transmitters working on Little Curlew.

The two Whimbrel are amazingly still giving us information, with the transmitters now in their thirds year. One seems to have bred successfully and the other may have done so. They should be starting their southward migration from their NE Siberian breeding grounds in the near future.

No update has been received recently on the Eastern Curlew carrying satellite transmitters. At last report, most were at their Yellow Sea stopover locations, presumably depositing large amounts of fat to cover their migration back to Australia, usually accomplished in a single non-stop flight of around 9,000km. With the first returning Eastern Curlew migrants regularly arriving back in late July, even on the south coasts of Australia, they should be on their way shortly.

(Contributed by Clive Minton)

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE

REPORT NO. 15

20/7/19

Grace Maglio

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE

Going through the motions...

Phase 1 - Fit birds with 2-gram Microwave Telemetry Inc. Satellite Tags at Anna Plains Station ✓

Phase 2 - Birds begin northward migration ✓

Phase 3 – Birds reach breeding grounds ✓

Phase 4 – Birds leave breeding grounds and predict breeding success ✓

Phase 5 – Birds begin southward migration ✓ - NO, WAIT – WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?!

From previous satellite tagging programs we presumed the usual scenario, once the birds reached their breeding grounds, (we hope) breed successfully and then commence southward migration.

This is where the tracks are becoming interesting, in the last report **SHE and SEC** were both located short distances south from their breeding sites. Not only have these birds remained in their respective second sites, both tracks are appearing to form a centre point. With the egg to fledge time for the Oriental Pratincole thought to be from 42 to 51 days, the question of a second breeding attempt is being considered. There are species of migratory passerines able to raise more than one brood of young in a season and this often is related to site fidelity (Hoover [2003](#)). A second breeding attempt in a migratory shorebird and the attempt occurring in a different location would add a whole new level of knowledge (and excitement) for this amazing species.

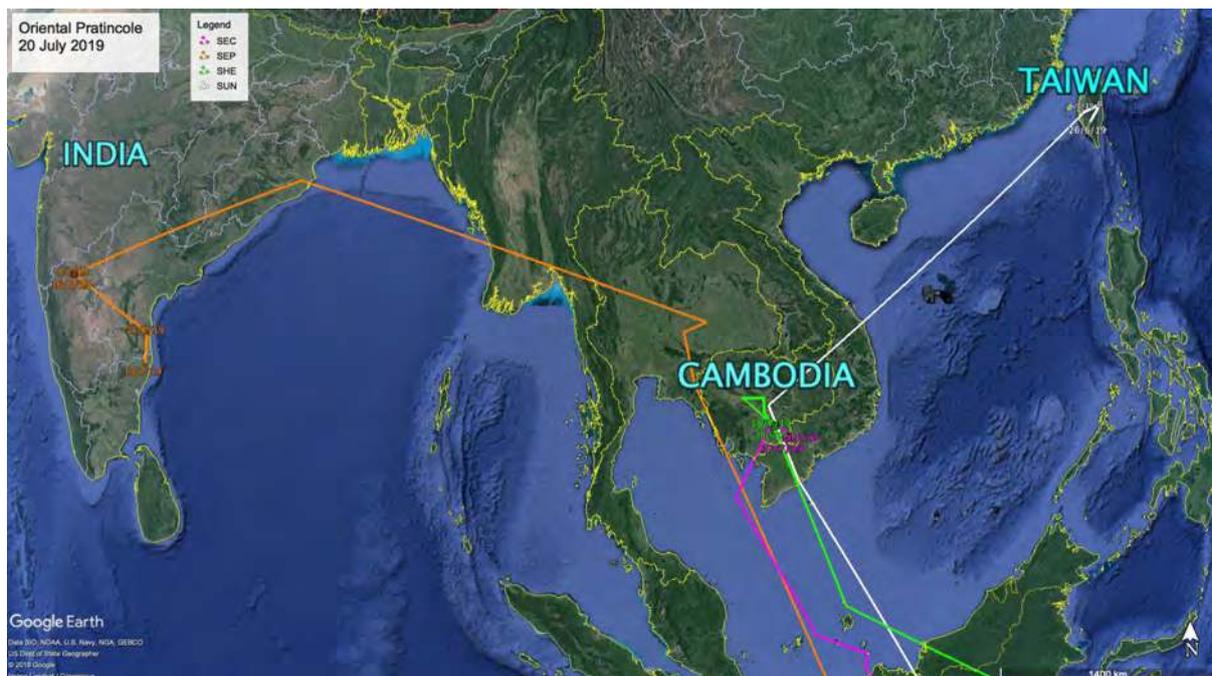


Figure 1 – Tracks of Oriental Pratincole 20/7/19

Migration details/facts so far - 20/7/19

Bird ID	Distance from 80 Mile Beach release location to breeding grounds (approx.)	Approximate time in breeding location (days)	Breeding Location	Distance from breeding site. 20/7/19
SUN	4800km	66 total	East Taiwan	130km south west
SEP	6350km	88 total	South-west India	585km south east
SHE	4000km	97 total	West Cambodia	170km south east
SEC	3840km	70 total	South-east Cambodia	90km south east

SHE (PTT 83595) – Tonle Sap Lake to Prey Veng Province, another great place to raise some chicks or just hanging out??

Around 2 June SHE reached Prey Veng Province, only 170km south east of the Tonle Sap Lake breeding site and incidentally less than 20km from SEC’s breeding site. What is becoming increasingly interesting at this site is that there seems to be a centre point developing in the tracks in this location, especially when considering both accurate and less accurate data. SHE has been at the Prey Veng site for approximately 49 days and we eagerly await more data and are attempting to make contact with colleagues in the area for local knowledge.



Figure 2 – SHE –Prey Veng Province

SEC (PTT 83596) – Down by the river, respite or reproduction?

It is now around 50 days and SEC is staying close to the Waiko River in Svay Rieng Province, less than 20km from the Vietnam border. As mentioned, similarities in tracks from recent breeding locations have us entertaining the idea of a second breeding attempt for SEC.

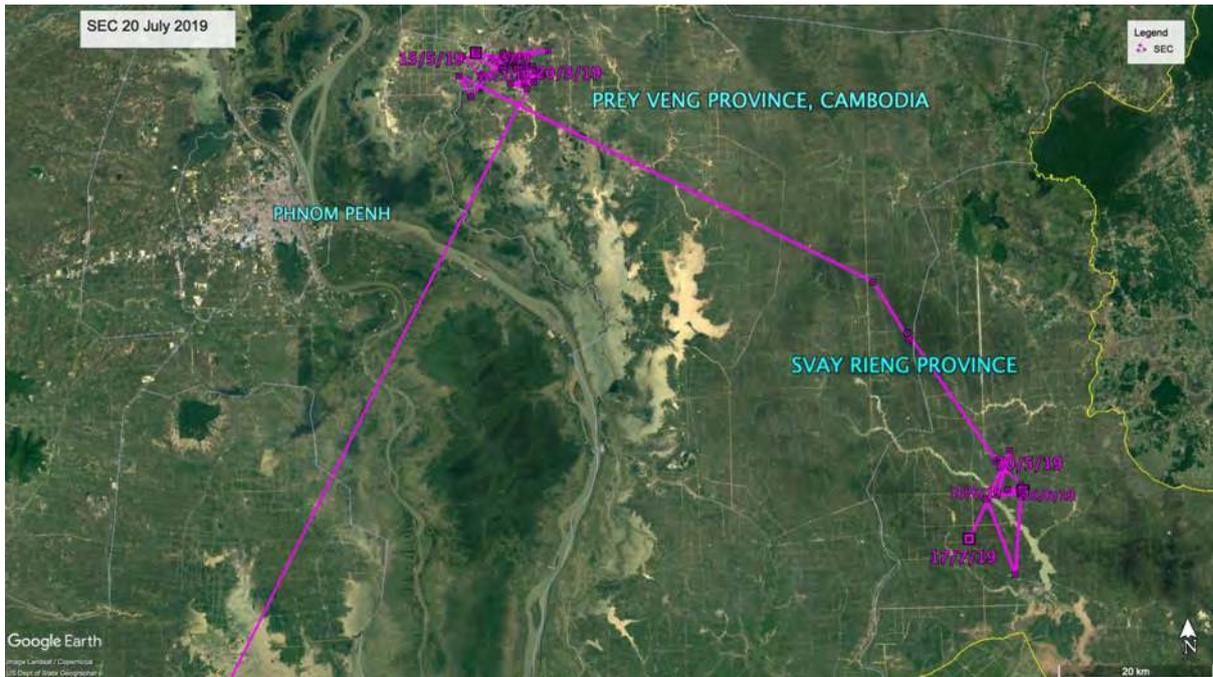


Figure 3 – SEC –Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia

SUN (PTT 83591) – Hanging in there.
By Grace Maglio and Chung-Yu Chiang

The issue of inaccurate location data persists making attempts to confidently locate SUN difficult. What is clear is that SUN had left its Hualien breeding location after approximately 63 days. The last accurate reading shows SUN to be in Qishan District on 26 July however, looking at other data it looks likely that current location is within 5 to 10km of its first Taiwanese stopover site near Tainan City. This area is another known breeding site for Oriental Pratincoles, and we hope for more substantial data in the next week or two to help us better understand SUNs movement.



Figure 4 - SUN – Last accurate reading 26/6/19, Qishan District, Taiwan.
Marked area marks probable location

SEP (PTT 83593)

By Grace Maglio and Subbu Subramanya

Around 13 July, after approximately 88 days on the breeding grounds in the Bagalkot District, SEP started movements south. As of the 19 July SEP was 30km west of Chennai, approximately 580km south east of Almatti Dam where it was found by Subbu and the team.

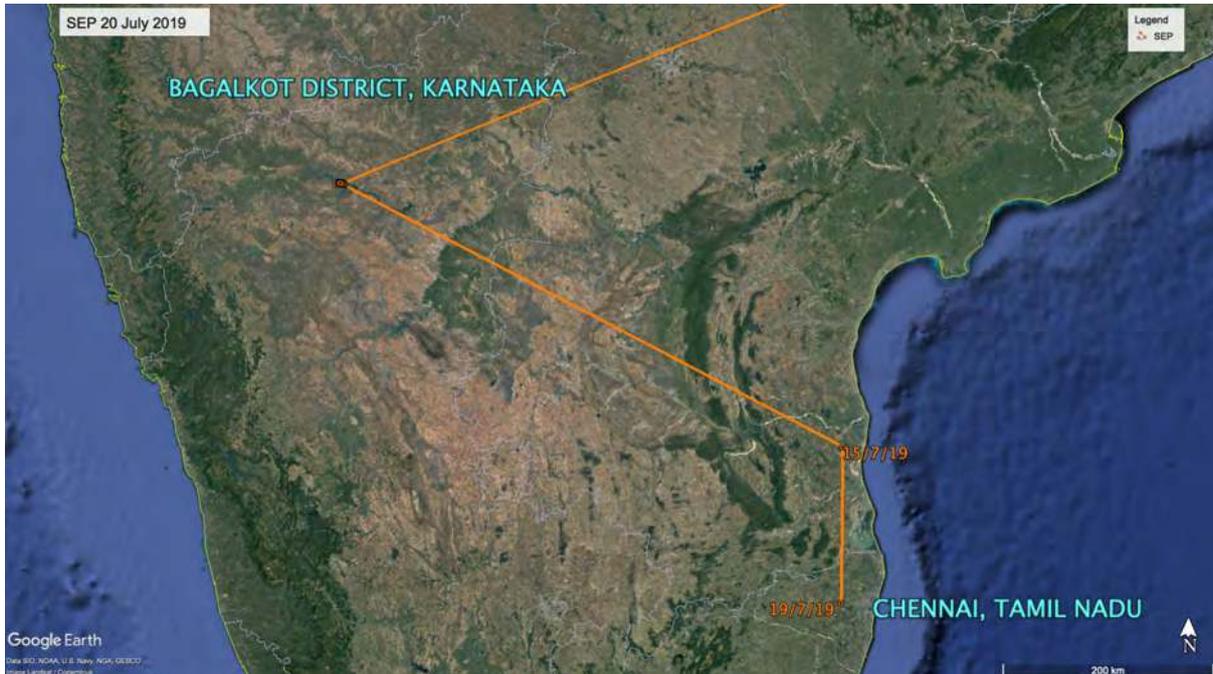


Figure 5 –SEP approx. 30km west of Chennai, India.

Reference:

Hoover, J. P. (2003), DECISION RULES FOR SITE FIDELITY IN A MIGRATORY BIRD, THE PROTHONOTARY WARBLER. *Ecology*, 84: 416-430. doi:[10.1890/0012-9658\(2003\)084\[0416:DRFSFI\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1890/0012-9658(2003)084[0416:DRFSFI]2.0.CO;2)

Whimbrel
REPORT NO. 15
20/7/19
Katherine Leung

KU - definitely bred, still around nesting location

LA – could be, it's movement pattern is different from KU: only 3 weeks around the nesting site then moved to different area each week

Both birds likely to leave the Arctic in the coming week so I suggest an update next weekend.