

Satellite Tracking Report from North-west Australia 2019

Number 2

12.03.19

This is the second comprehensive report on the satellite transmitters deployed on waders in north-west Australia (NWA) during the February 2019 AWSG Wader and Tern Expedition.

The highlight is again the performance of the Oriental Pratincoles. All four have now left Australia on northward migration. The leading bird has now been in Cambodia for over a week and settled by the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, where it could well stay to breed. The other three are still on migration through Indonesia and Borneo. All four Oriental Pratincoles left Australia from the north-west.

The birds could very well complete their migration in the next ten days or so. It will be particularly interesting to see where the individual breeding locations are.

The Little Curlew are still mainly feeding on the grazed grasslands of Anna Plains Station and adjourning occasionally to the nearby coastal beaches/mudflats of 80 Mile Beach. Whilst most birds have ranged around for up to 50km or more, the movements of one bird are rather circumscribed and it may be that this is in fact a reflection of a bird we have lost and/or a transmitter which has been shed.

It is possible that some or all of these four birds will move back to Roebuck Plains, near Broome, before their main northward migration. However, the feeding conditions at Anna Plains Station are so good this year that birds may remain there right up until they depart on northward migration, probably in April.

The two Whimbrel are still gyrating around their respective territories in Roebuck Bay and on 80 Mile Beach. Their departure is likely to be in the third week of April.

We've been able to include a detailed report on the Eastern Curlew this time, having just received such information from Amanda Lilleyman, who is coordinating this National Project from Charles Darwin University. Hopefully these birds will start moving northwards back towards their breeding grounds in the near future as most Eastern Curlew usually depart NWA before the end of March. The satellite tracking maps attached show how consistent most of the birds have been in frequenting the relatively small part of Roebuck Bay which they have been using.

Acknowledgements

The extensive and expensive satellite tracking program we have set up in NWA this year has only been possible through the efforts and generosity of a large number of people and organizations. It is difficult to know where to start with the formal acknowledgements so I will list them – but not in any particular order of priority.

- A. The members of the AWSG NWA 2019 Wader and Tern Expedition are particularly thanked for their efforts in the field in catching, banding and deploying transmitters on a range of species.
- B. Landowners are especially thanked for permission to go onto their property to enable us to catch various species in order to deploy the satellite transmitters. In particular we thank Anna Plains Station for giving us the freedom to roam over large areas of grazed grassland when counting and catching target species.
- C. AWSG acknowledges the Yawuru People via the offices of Nyamba Buru Yawuru Limited for permission to catch birds on the shores of Roebuck Bay, traditional lands of the Yawuru people.
- D. AWSG acknowledges the Karajarri and Nyangumarta people for permission to catch birds to be marked for this project on the shores of 80 Mile Beach, traditional lands of the Karajarri and Nyangumarta.
- E. The cost of the satellite transmitters, which cost around \$5000 each, and the satellite downloading costs (around \$1000-1500 per month) have been met by a variety of sources. Private individuals (Charles Allen and Doris Graham) have made most generous individual contributions. Kate Gorringer-Smith and her team of artists involved in The Overwintering Project made a large, generous donation from funds raised during their various public exhibitions. The annual NWA Expedition members, collectively, also provided significant funds. However, it will still be a year or two before we can repay all current debts.

(Contributed by Clive Minton)

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE
Report No. 2

SUN (PTT 83591) - Our Interstate traveller has left the country.

At the time of report number 1, SUN was positioned 60km north west of the Legune Airport. SUN reached this location around the 25 February. Legune Station is a 3000km² cattle station which also contains the Legune Coastal Floodplain, a site of conservation significance (including an important and significant shorebird site), between the Victoria and Keep Rivers in the Northern Territory. SUN remained in this area until 8th March (figure 1).

Around the evening of 8th March SUN left this site and commenced migration with the next position being recorded 140km north-east of the Ashmore Islands, travelling approximately 700km between the times of 18:38 on 8 March and 20:12 on 9th March.

At the time of this report (11/3/19) SUN was located 900km from the release site (figure 2).



Figure 1 – SUN - Legune Coastal Floodplain use



Figure 2. SUN – Movement patterns 8th February to 9th March 2019

SEP (PTT 83593) – From outback explorer to city living (well, almost).

During the last reporting period SEP spent its time exploring the remote outback of North West Australia. On March 4th or 5th, SEP ended its outback tour. SUNs next land-based location was in the Pati Regency, Central Java, only 8km east from the city of Pati, this location is 1790km from the release site.



Figure 3. SEP – Movement patterns 8th February to 9th March 2019



Figure 4. SEP – from the remote outback of Northern Australia to a populated area in Central Java.

SHE (PTT 83595) – Our first world traveller foraging and roosting on Tonle Sap Lake, a UNESCO Biosphere reserve).

SHE remains on the floodplains of Tonle Sap Lake where SHE has been for 15 days, (from the 23/2 – 10/3/19). This lake is the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, an important area not only for the flora and fauna of the region but this lake also supports almost 50% of the Cambodian human population, who depend on the lake's resources.

SHE remains approximately 4000km from the release site at the time of this report.

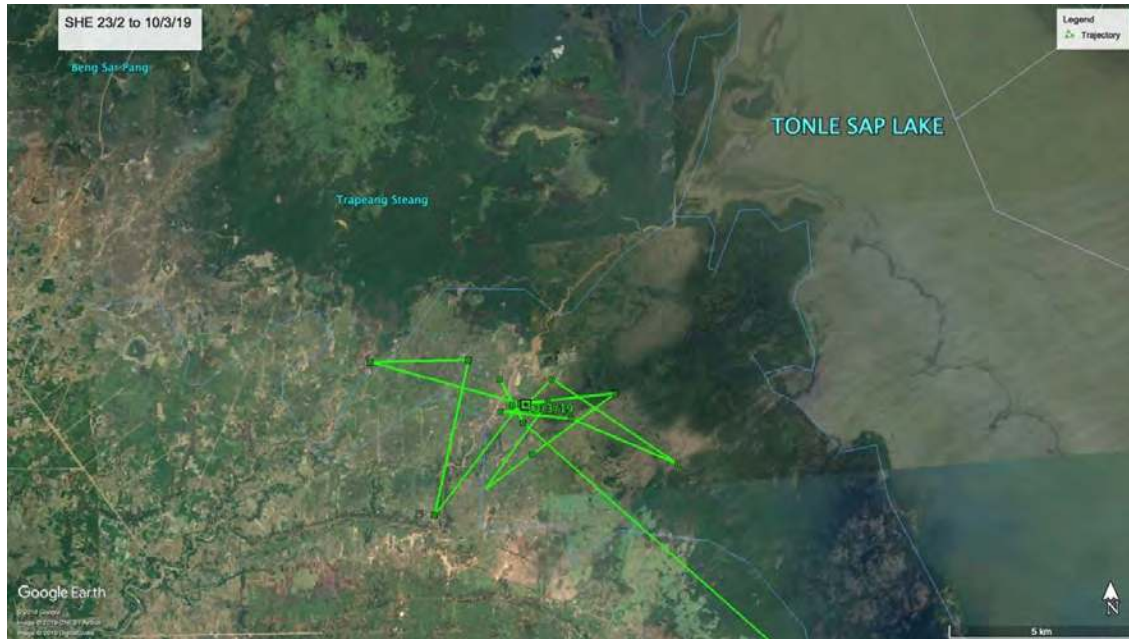


Figure 5. SHE – utilizing the floodplains of Tonle Sap Lake.



Figure 6. SHE – migration path 8th February to 9th March 2019

SEC (PTT 83596) – In West Kalimantan, “The Province of a Thousand Rivers”

After staying ‘close to home’ for just over 2 weeks, (Feb 8 – 25), SEC began its migration around 26th February, via Roebuck Plains, before heading in a more westerly direction towards Borneo. At the time of the last report, SEC was located in the south west corner of Borneo, 5km north of Air Hitam Village. On 3rd March and a further 330km north, SEC was in the Landak Regency, 45km north east of Pontianak, the capital of the West Kalimantan Province.

At the time of this report SEC is located approximately 2500km from the release site.

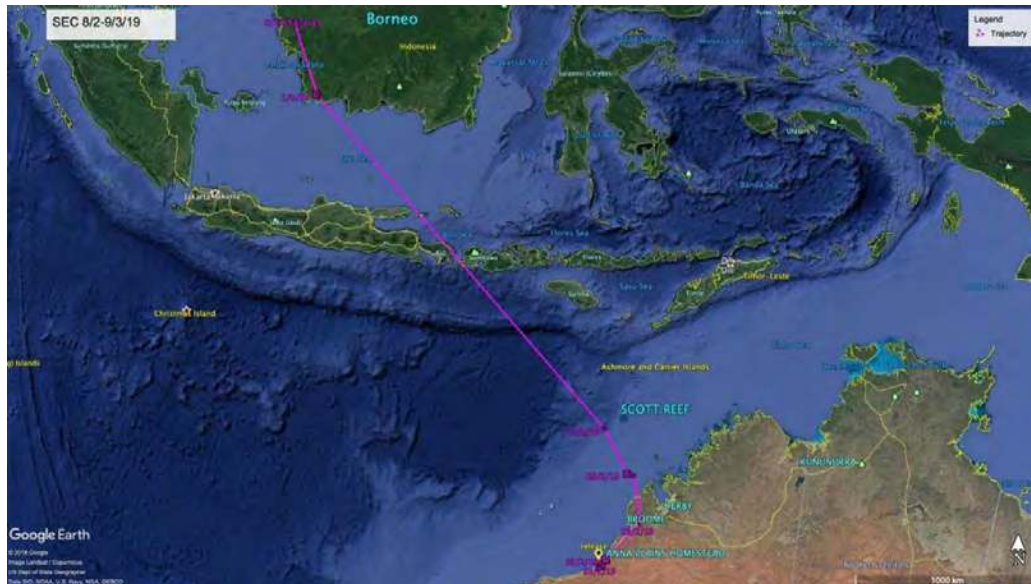


Figure 7. SEC distance travelled 8 February to 9 March 2019 27/2 – 1/3/19

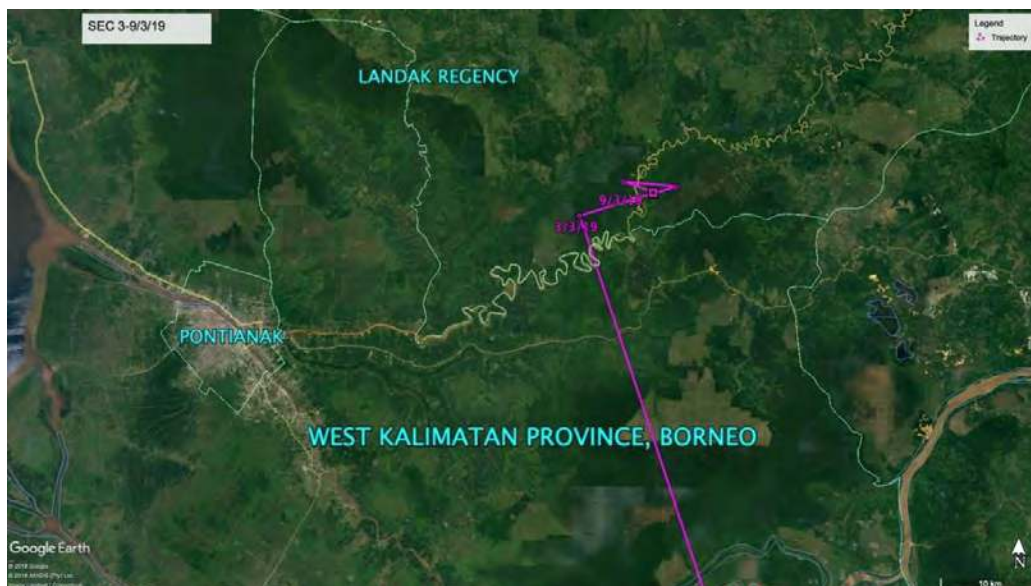
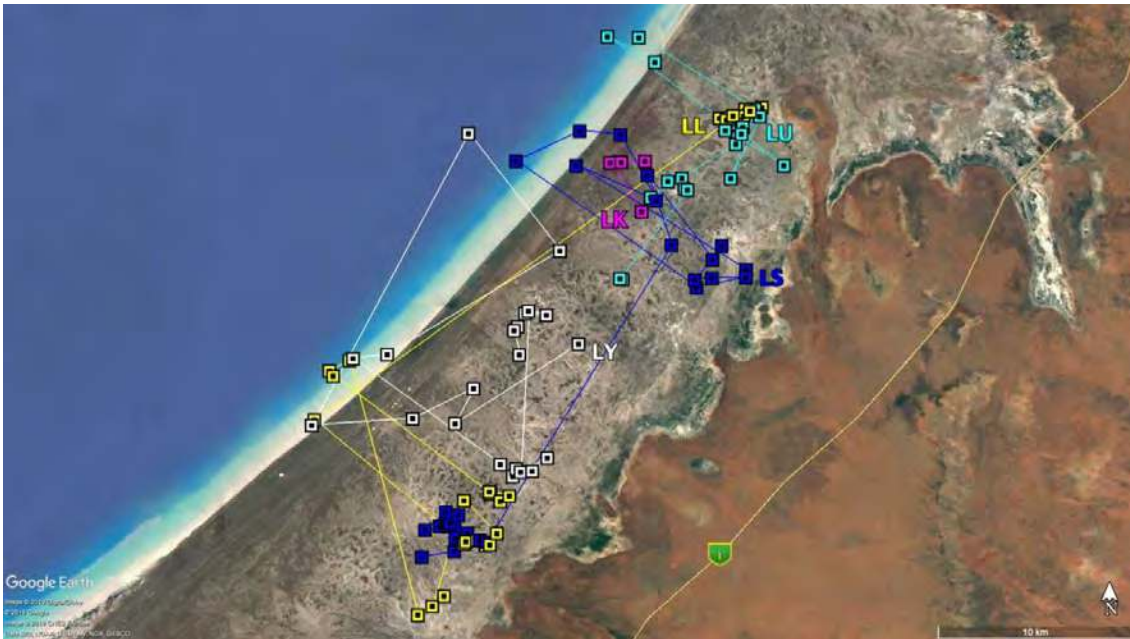


Figure 8. SEC – Landak Regency

LITTLE CURLEW

Report No. 2

No change to movements. LK (PTT 83634) looks like it's back on line - last fix 8th March. However, the movements are very restricted and the error margins for most fixes would still put the bird/PTT in around the same location. So, we can't be certain it is back on and moving. May have to wait until the next download before reporting further on this one. In the last report I mentioned we may have lost that bird/PTT as it hadn't transmitted for a while and because the movements were very restricted.



WHIMBREL

Report No. 2

KU and LA are both demonstrating high site fidelity as in previous years: KU are constantly using the mudflat near Crab Creek (east of Roebuck Bay) and Dampier Creek (west of Roebuck Bay); while LA remains at its favourite section of 80 Mile Beach 45-48km south of the Anna Plains Entrance.



Australasian Wader Studies Group Far Eastern Curlew

Update # 2

By Amanda Lilleyman Amanda.lilleyman@cdu.edu.au

<http://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/strategic-planning-for-the-far-eastern-curlew>

Update for fortnight 20/2/2019 – 7/3/2019

In addition to the four Curlew tagged on 18th February, the AWSG tagged a further four Curlew on Wednesday 20th February 2019 at the 'Campsite' roost in Roebuck Bay as part of the annual North West Australia Wader and Tern expedition.

So that is eight tagged Curlew in North West Australia! What an incredible achievement!

Unfortunately, one of the tags (tag ID 180115; ELF 19) isn't working so we have not had any data transmitted from that bird.

Here are the movements of all seven birds in Roebuck Bay for the last fortnight. You will notice that most of the movements are within similar areas. Birds seem to be moving from the mudflats along Crab Creek to saltmarsh 'out the back' of the mangroves. A few birds made further movements to roosts west of the Broome Bird Observatory.

The naming of the Curlews: WADER WOMEN

Who are the Wader Women?

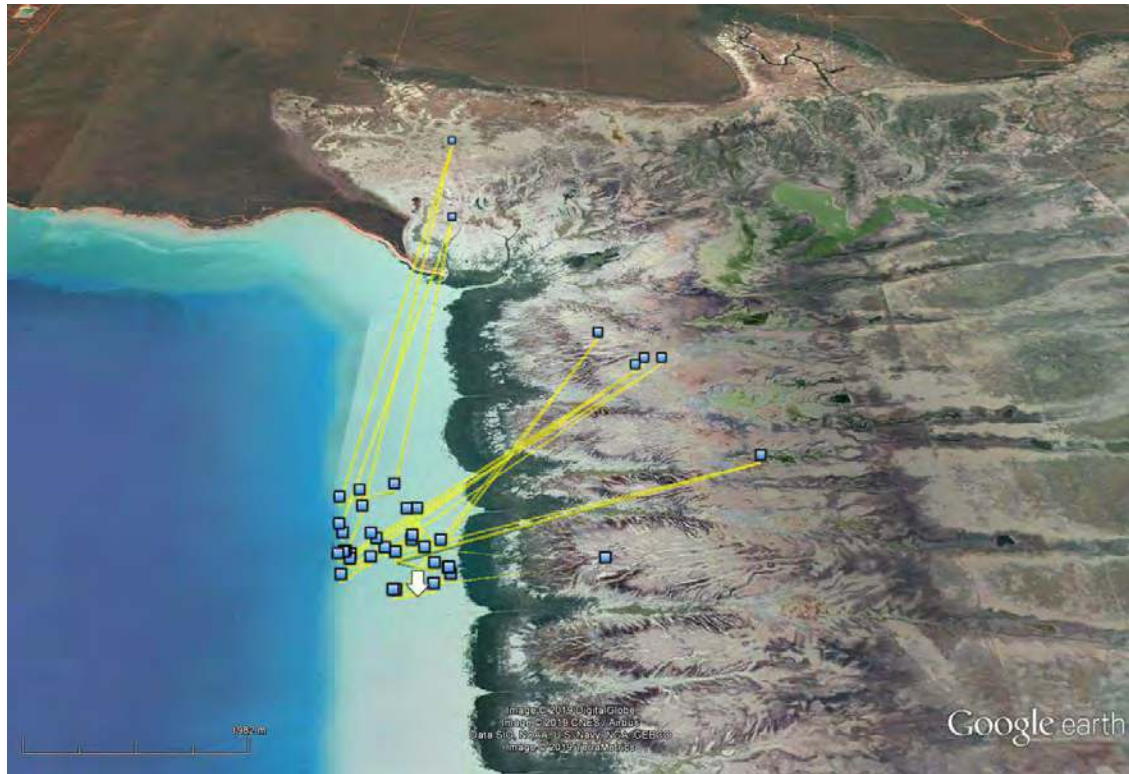
The Wader Women are women that I have had the pleasure of working with while researching these incredible shorebirds. The Wader Women are an inspirational bunch that have helped me at various stages of fieldwork, writing, analysis and in discussions and decision making. These Wader Women are just a few special people from the shorebird community that have left an impression on me and I have been fortunate enough to have their support and encouragement, so I wanted to name our tagged Curlew after them. If we had more tagged birds, then we could name each bird after all the amazing volunteers that work so hard in this area.

Our tagged Wader Women are: Grace Maglio, Micha Jackson, Roz Jessop, Prue Wright, Maureen Christie, Birgita Hansen, Inka Veltheim. Thank you!

Thank you to all the people that have been involved so far and continue to be involved in this shorebird journey.

Note that these maps are the raw maps of unfiltered data points.

Yellow ELF 16 = GPS tag 17006 – GRACE



Yellow ELF W2 = GPS tag 17008 - MICHA



Yellow ELF 17 = GPS tag 180111 - ROZ



Yellow ELF 43 = GPS tag 180112 - PRUE



Yellow ELF = GPS tag 180113 – MAUREEN



Yellow ELF26 = GPS tag 180114 – BIRGITA



Yellow ELF 13 = GPS tag 182226 – INKA

