

AWSG ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE TRACKING PROJECT
REPORT NO. 22
12/3/2020
Grace Maglio
And they're off.... AGAIN

I start this report with an apology to all who have been following this amazing project; it has been too long between reports. I am fully responsible for the delay and I will ensure updates are issued fortnightly once again.

This project continues to produce fantastic results. We still have three birds with functioning Platform Transmitter Terminals (PTTs), SHE and SEC are currently on location on their 2019 breeding sites, and from the data it seems they have returned to the exact location. Despite continued infrequent transmissions, we have enough information to confidently locate SEP in Sumatra at the time of this report.

Also when looking at Australian movements since the commencement of this project, the birds seem to utilised very similar areas for both years only expanding around 200km either side of their 2019 range (Figure 2).



Figure 1 – Tracks of Oriental Pratincoles SHE, SEC and SEP February 2019 to March 2020

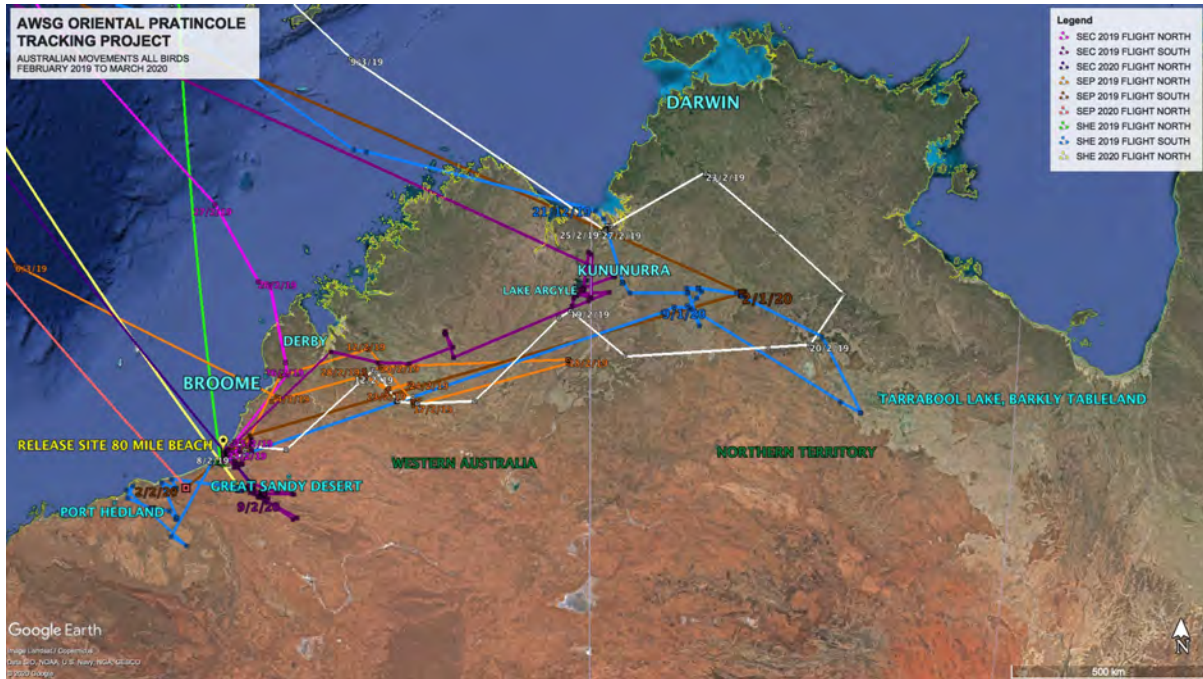


Figure 2 – Australian tracks of all Oriental Pratincoles February 2019 to March 2020.

**Note white tracks recording SUN's movements in February 2019 not listed on the legend, (PTT failure shortly after reaching Taiwan).

SHE (PTT 83595) – The first to leave the Australian shore once again!

In February 2018 SHE left Australia around the 16th February, 8 days after being fitted with a PTT, ten days before any of the other birds in this project. This year SHE took flight over Eighty Mile Beach, 15km south of the initial release site, towards Java around the 4th February.

The tracks leading to this year's northward flight are as follows –

Return to Australia on the 21st December 2019 via the Legune Coastal Floodplain, 103km north of Kununurra. From around the 23rd of December to the 9th January 2020, SHE remained in the Northern Territory, reaching as far as the northern fringes of the Barkly Tableland. SHE then headed southwest toward Eighty Mile Beach and from the 16th to the 31st January was located further south, approximately 1600 km around the area near Marble Bar and Port Hedland before heading back towards Anna Plains station and leaving Australia around the 4th February.

The next accurate location data on the 7th February positioned SHE over the South China Sea 130 km east of the Malaysian coast, by the 13th February SHE was once again in Cambodia 130 km west of the 2019 Tonle Sap Lake breeding site. On the 15th February data showed SHE at the actual 2019 breeding site until around the 23rd February with a short flight 160km north west to the nearby province of Banteay Meanchey returning to its Tonle Sap breeding site on the 26th February. SHE remains at this site at the time of this report and is currently 4000 km from the 2019 release site.

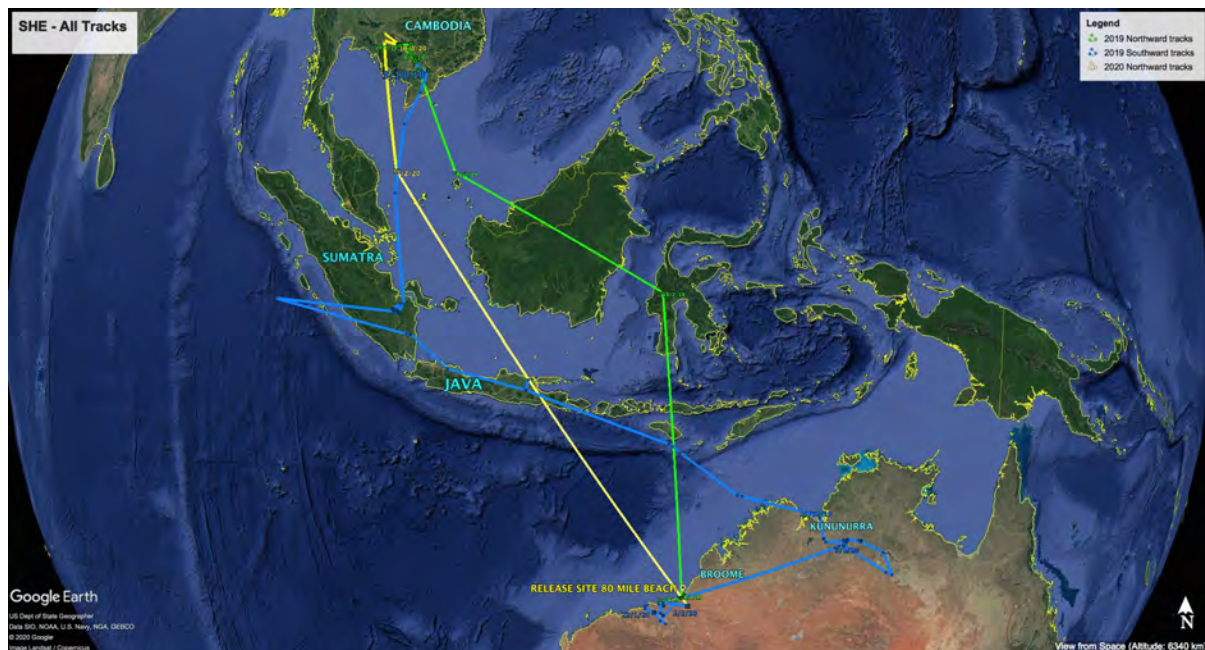


Figure 3 – SHE - all tracks since being fitted with a PTT, February 2019. One complete migration and northward flight for 2020 depicted by the yellow line.

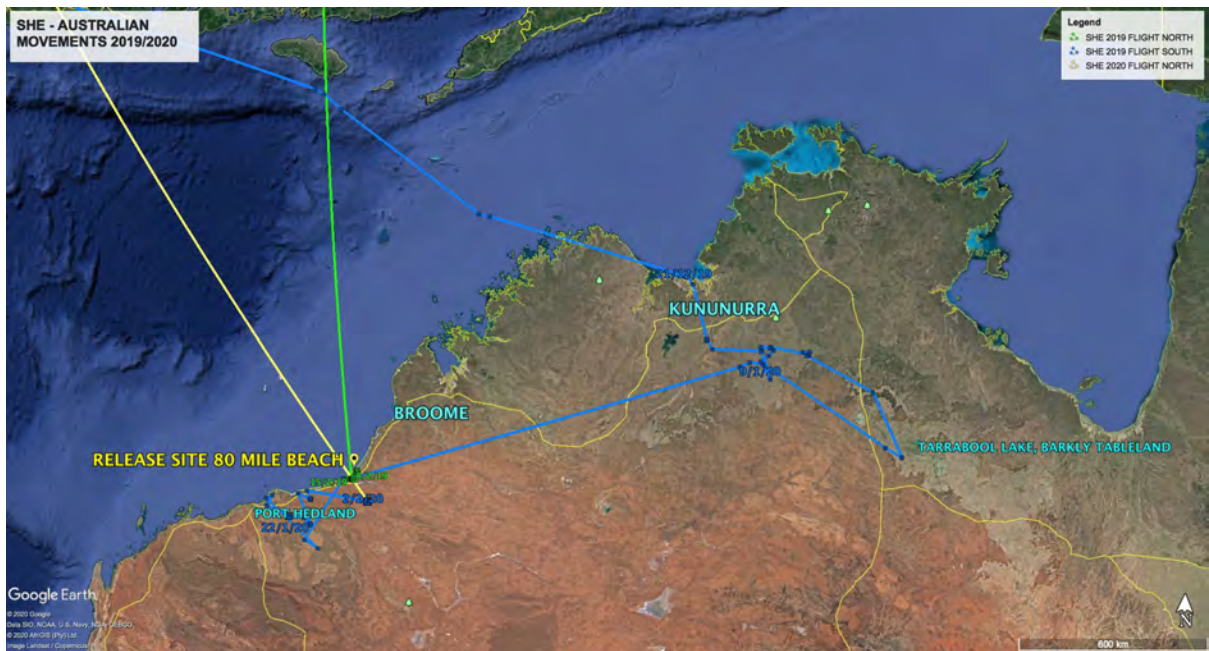


Figure 4 – SHE 21/12/19 – Australian movements, leaving for the 2020 northern flight from (almost) the same location (yellow track).

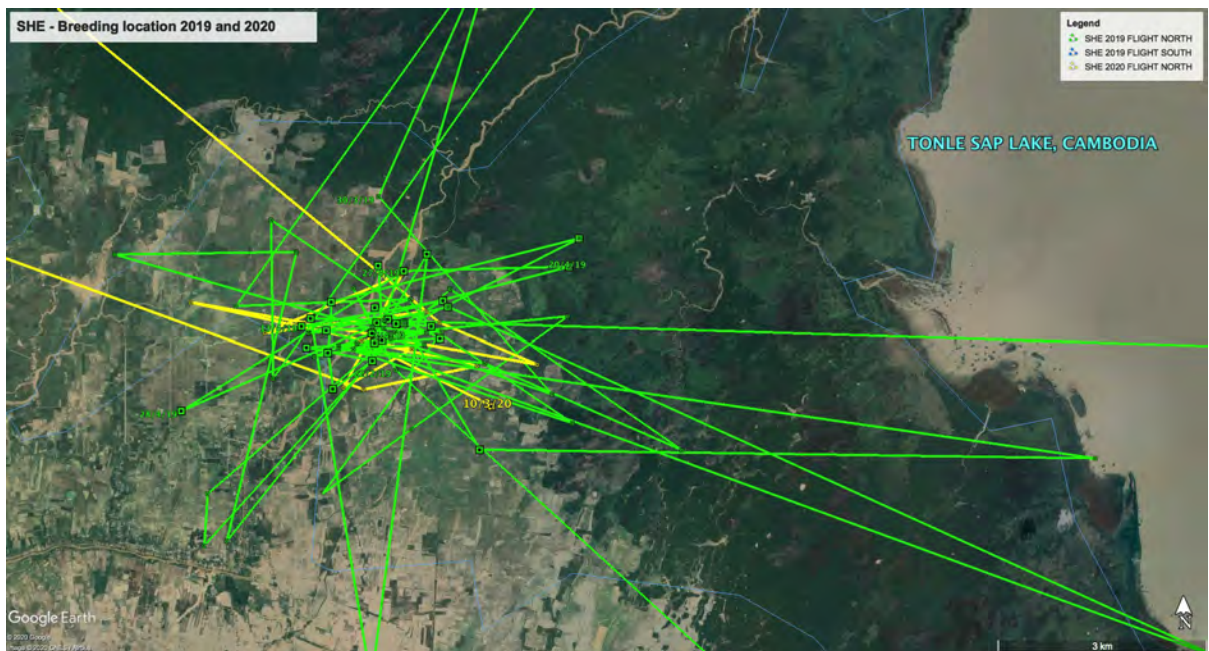


Figure 5 – SHE – Creature of habit?? Likely to attempt breeding in the same location as 2019. Green tracks mark movements of 2019, Yellow marks the movements so for 2020.

SEC (PTT 83596) – Back in the Prey Veng Province.

After arriving back in Australia on the 9th December, SEC remained mainly around the banks of Lake Argyle approximately 80 km south of Kununurra until the 7th January. The next five days or so SEC was spent in the region between Mt House and Mornington Stations, situated between Lake Argyle and Derby before heading south with data positioning SEC on Anna Plains Station from around the 14th January, around 15 km from the 2019 release site. SEC remained within the Anna Plains and Mandora Marsh and then further south towards the Great Sandy Desert before embarking on its next flight north around the 18th February, flying almost directly over the release site and towards Java. The next accurate reading on the 27th February finds SEC 7 km east of the tin mining town of Sungai Lembing in the Kuantan District in Malaysia. Further flights north and SEC reaches its 2019 breeding site in the Prey Veng Province, Cambodia 35 km east of Phnom Penh, around the 8th March remaining in this area at the time of this report and is 3870 km from the 2019 release site.

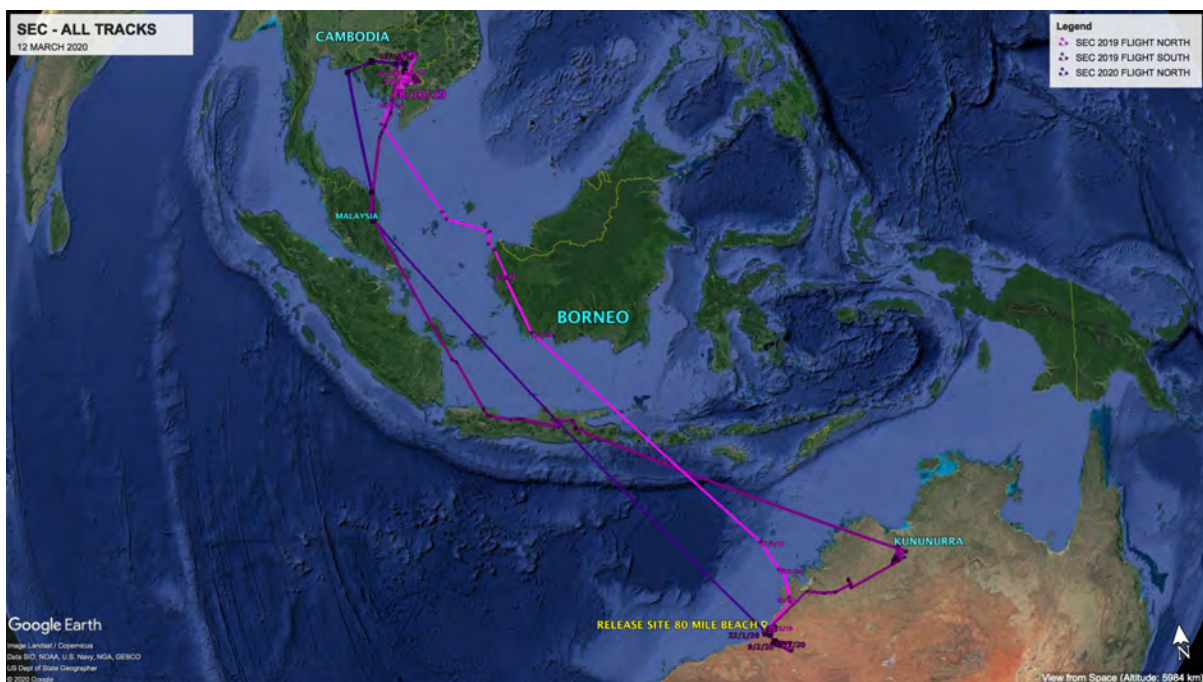


Figure 6 – SEC - all tracks since being fitted with a PTT, February 2019. One complete migration and northward flight for 2020 represented by the dark purple line.



Figure 7 – SEC, Australian movements... recovering from its long flight on the banks of Lake Argyle and hen south towards Anna Plains Station.

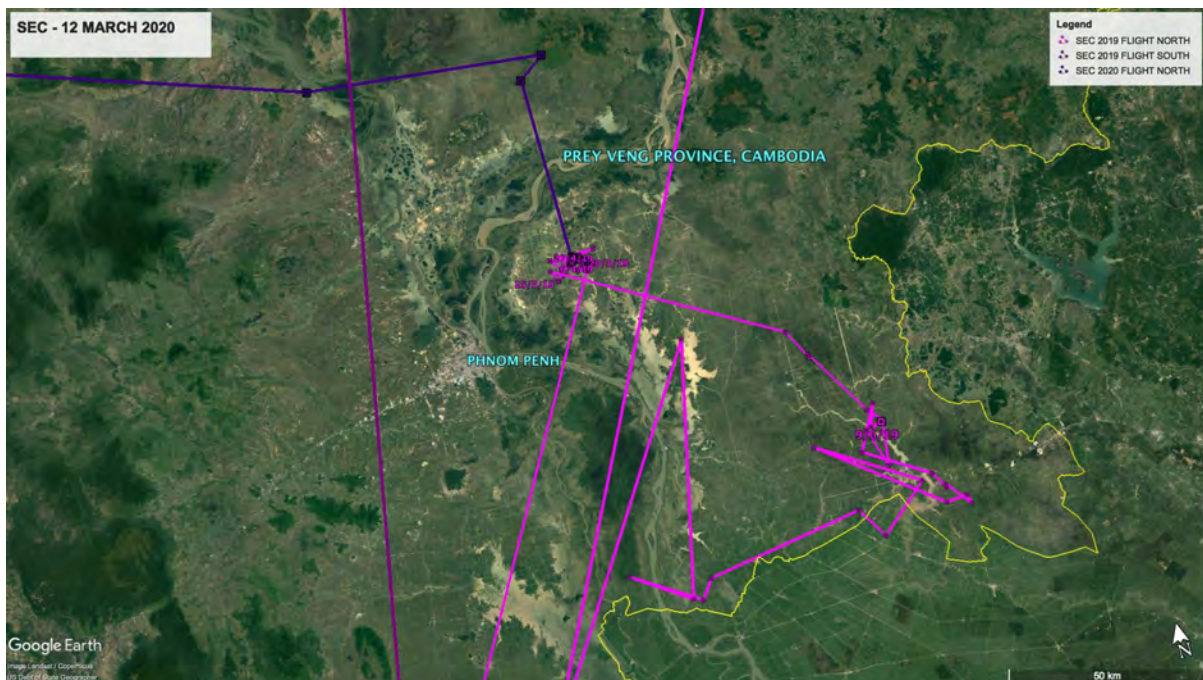


Figure 8 – SEC, recently arrived back to its 2019 breeding location in the Prey Veng province of Cambodia.

SEP (PTT 83593) –Never Say Die - AGAIN

By Grace Maglio and Subbu Subramanya

With hopes of a return to India, limited data continues to taunt the team and have us wondering how much longer before the PTT stops transmitting signals altogether. The first accurate reading received in Australia after the 2019 breeding season was received on the 2nd January 2020. On the 24th January SEP was situated 75 km north east of the Eighty Mile Beach release site then 121 km south west of this on the 2nd February. Inaccurate readings suggest that SEP may have ventured as far south as Warroora Station 15 km southwest of Coral Bay in Western Australia around the 9th February, further analysis is needed to determine how accurate these signals were. However what can be confirmed is that on the 12th March SEP was located 3130 km from the Eighty Mile Beach release site in Sumatra, 33 km west of Bengkalis in the Bengkalis Regency.

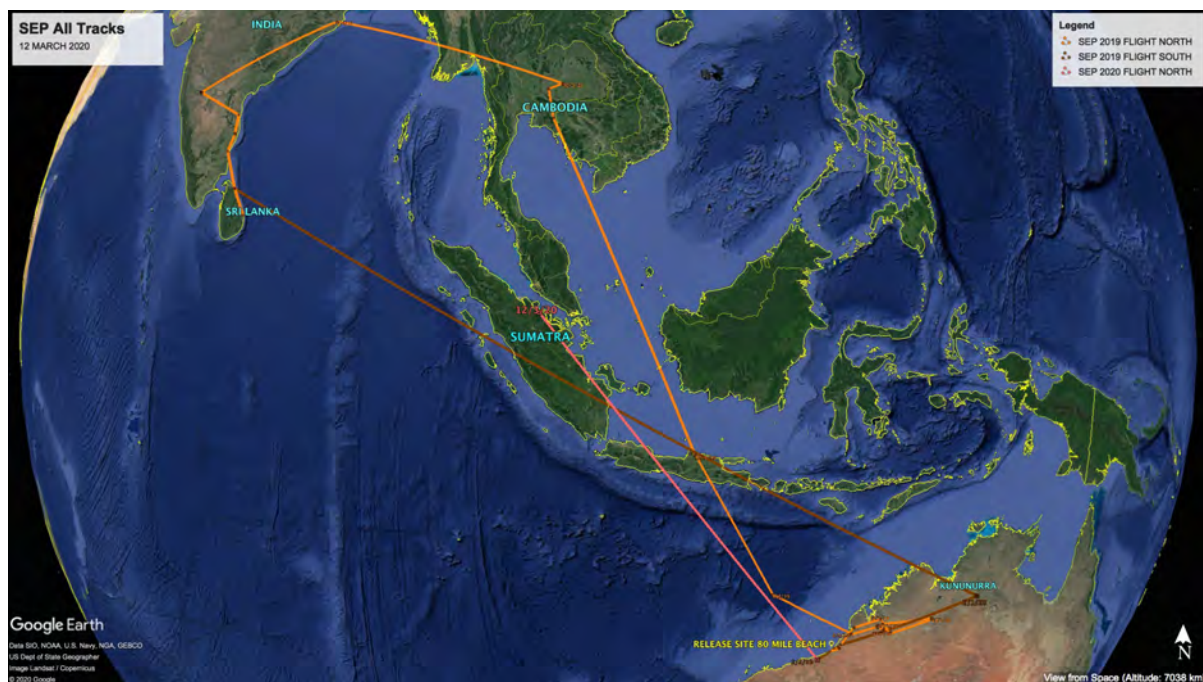


Figure 9 – SEP - all tracks since being fitted with a PTT, February 2019. Limited data overall but one complete migration and northward flight for 2020 represented by the salmon coloured line. Last known location, Sumatra.

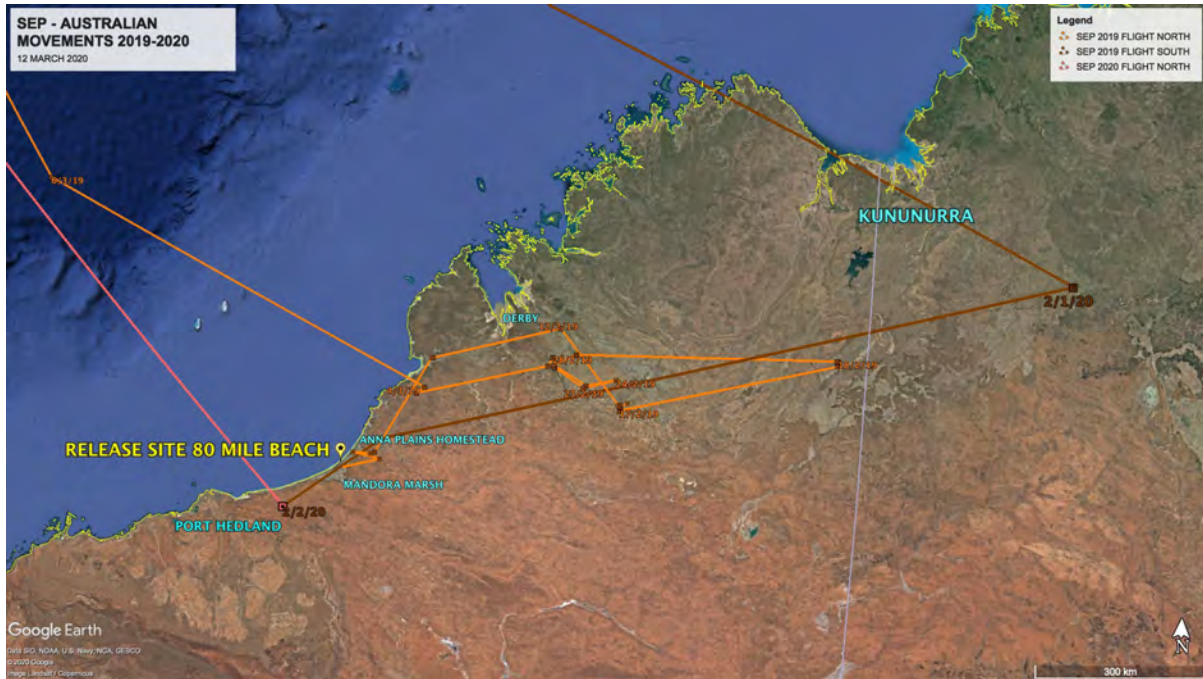


Figure 10 –SEP – Australian movements for 2019 and 2020 tracks derived from accurate readings.



Figure 11 – SEP – Located in Sumatra on the 12th March 2020.

SUN (PTT 83591) – The Journey ended in Taiwan.
By Grace Maglio and Chung-Yu Chiang

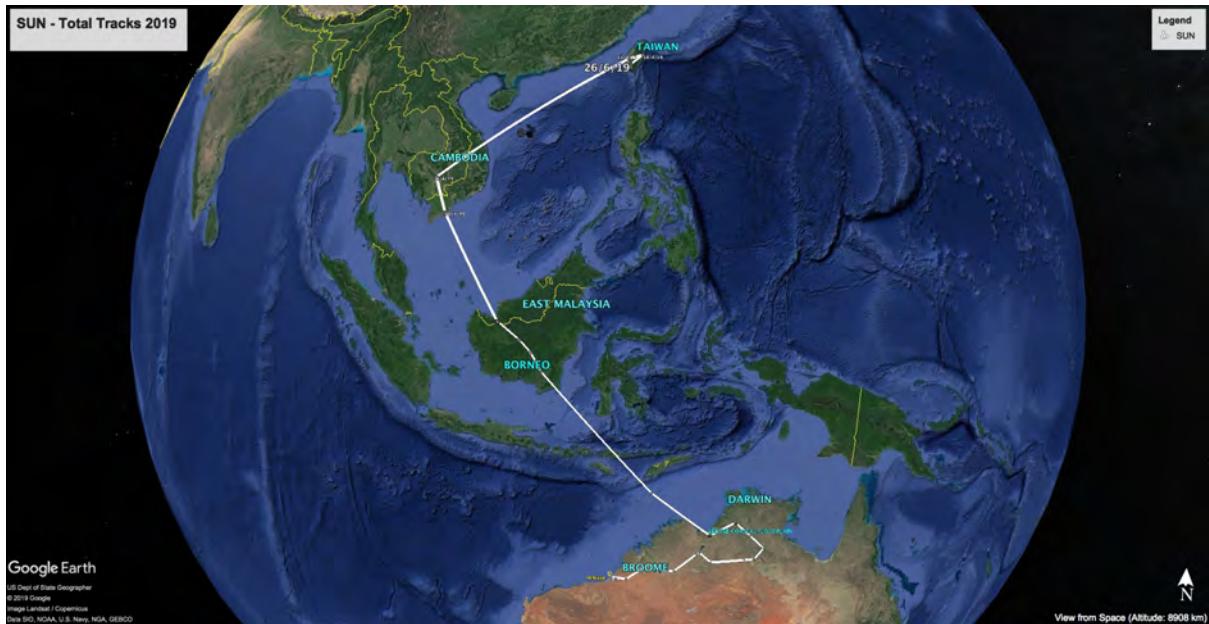


Figure 12 - SUN – 2019 tracks to Taiwan before unexplained signal failures.



Photo 1 – Oriental Pratincole in west Taiwan (Credit: Chung-Yu Chang)