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Status and Conservation of Shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

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THIS publication comprises the proceedings of the Australasian Shorebirds Conference held in Canberra in 2003. It is No. 18 of Wetlands International Global Series and International Wader Studies 17 of the International Wader Study Group. Although publication was delayed, the papers in this proceedings remain an important contribution to international shorebird conservation. Eighteen of the 25 papers are about Australian and New Zealand shorebirds, while the remainder are mainly from Southeast Asia. Topics include managing human disturbance of plovers on Australian beaches, conservation of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus* in Russia, shorebird studies in Taiwan, and threats from marine farming in New Zealand.

Shorebirds are a highly threatened group of birds. Many undertake long-distance migrations from breeding grounds north of the Arctic Circle to Tasmania, New Zealand and Patagonia in the Southern Hemisphere. Others nest and feed on beaches which are the preferred breeding, hunting and loafing grounds of large numbers of humans.

Migratory waders rely on wetlands and intertidal habitats along their migratory pathway as place to rest and fatten before flying on. These are also habitats valued by humans as places to find food, including waders. Wetlands and intertidal habitats throughout the world are threatened by development, including dams on the rivers which feed their productivity (e.g., on the Yangtze River), aquaculture, land fill for urban and industrial expansion, and pollution. Loss and degradation of migratory stopover habitats has critical impacts on migratory waders, as does the loss of breeding habitat through development and global climate change.

The future of migratory shorebirds, as for much of the world's biota, is not bright, but some of the most important wintering and migratory areas for these birds are in developed countries, including importantly Australia. Protection of these habitats may not stop overall global decline, but it can mitigate some of the effects of threatening processes north of the continent. Australian conservation biologists need to be informed about the status of migratory waders, and of our own endemic species, the threats they face and the international efforts being made to conserve these birds. This proceedings is an excellent starting point to become informed. It is informative, the papers generally well-written and edited, and the cost (\$25) is small these days for a technical publication.

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