

Grey-tailed Tattlers – a fresh look



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Grey-tailed Tattlers – a fresh look

- The study is based on a small but readily accessible population in Port Stephens
- Supplemented by observations in Japan
- Many undocumented behaviours have been observed
- Also some observations which contradict the literature
- Today's presentation:
 - Progress to date
 - A case study

Observations which contradict the literature

Reported behaviour	Actual behaviour
“Prefers to roost in mangroves” X	Prefers to roost on artificial structures (jetties, sea walls) or on rocky points. Uses mangroves when conditions are poor or there is disturbance.
“Changes diet to crabs at migration time” X	Eats crabs all year around, very frequently. NB crabs may be less abundant in winter in SE Australia.
“Diurnal” X	Several records of nocturnal feeding in Japan during migration.
“Occurs at coastal wetlands except when breeding” X	Numerous, widespread and frequent records of birds at inland rivers in Japan during migration.

Previously Undocumented Observations

- Behaviour of individual birds
- Intra-species behaviour
- Inter-species behaviour



Previously Undocumented Observations

Behaviour of individual birds

- Sprinting across mudflats and sandbanks
 - A behavioural change, seen during migration and lead-up
- Foot-paddling
 - Repetitive gentle tapping of foot onto the mud by foraging stationary bird
- The “sky-watch” manoeuvre
 - Intermittently turn head sideways to look upwards



Previously Undocumented Observations

Intra-species behaviour

- Agonistic
 - Aggression between individual birds at staging sites in Japan
 - Flying off with food, possibly to avoid competition
 - Running off with food, possibly to avoid competition
- Social interactions
 - Allo-preening by 2 birds in Port Stephens
 - A courtship display? (by 2 other birds in Port Stephens)

Inter-species behaviour

- Raptors: mutual disinterest
- Aggression to other shorebirds during migration

A case study: Allo-preening

13 March 2014

- Part 1
 - Two birds walked away from a larger group, and stood together
 - They began to move their heads in unison
 - This continued for ~20 minutes



Two poses during the pair's
“choreographed head motion”



Allo-preening

13 March 2014

- Part 2
 - Began to allo-preen → this continued for ~10 minutes
 - Stood very still for a couple of minutes then began feeding very actively before rejoining the others



Images taken during the pair's
allo-preening episode



What's Next?

- Continue to make observations locally and during migration
- Investigate nocturnal foraging activity in Australia especially in the lead-up to migration
- Identify the range of prey items taken in Port Stephens (already in progress)
- Investigate seasonal changes to foraging behaviour (e.g. timing, prey items, pecking rate)
- Collect/collate observations made by others elsewhere

Questions?

