



# NEW ZEALAND WADER STUDY GROUP

*In association with*

Miranda Naturalists' Trust

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## COMMENTS

The number of wader flag sightings around New Zealand has been quite staggering. Bar-tailed Godwits from 13 different banding regions have now been recorded. Each record helps clarify the migration and movement strategies of the birds so we encourage people to keep looking for flags and reporting them.

Phil Battley, Rob Schuckard and David Melville have been leading two other projects, which involve colour banding Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and Turnstone in the Auckland region and South Island around Nelson, Canterbury and Southland. One aim is to monitor movement of these birds within New Zealand particularly as they arrive from the breeding grounds and young birds that stay for a year or so. The results are already quite fascinating and Phil has written about these studies in OSNZ's Southern Bird No.23 but hopefully we can see an update in a future NZWSG News.

Avian Flu continues to make the headlines around the world with migratory birds often accused of being the carrier and whilst that might be partly true, we are in danger of tarring all migratory birds with the same brush when that is probably unjustified. In 2004 and 2005 the NZWSG has assisted the Epicentre at Massey and MAF with catching Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and Wrybill, which are then checked for viruses.

On 22 October 2005 we caught around 300 Red Knot at Miranda and a handful of Bar-tailed Godwit. Cloacal swabs were taken from some 265 of these birds by Wlodek Stanislawek from MAF in Wellington, which will now be screened for viruses. Samples taken over the past two years have all returned negative results. We will keep you informed on the results of these latest samples when they become available.

It is very unlikely that these birds would carry the virus to New Zealand as they generally live almost exclusively by the sea on the inter-tidal flats well away from domestic poultry and ducks, the main carriers, and in an environment that is generally free of pathogens. And being such long

haul migrants it is hard to imagine any but the fittest, healthiest birds completing such a long flight.

There seems little chance that 'our' waders would bring the avian influenza virus to New Zealand. If the virus does arrive here it is far more likely to be brought by human travellers or imported food.

Highlights of the most recent knot catch were eight retrapped Red Knots all caught in previous years at Miranda, one of which was caught as an adult in 1990 making it at least 18 years old now and the oldest New Zealand banded Red Knot. Five Victorian banded Red Knot were also caught, all of which were banded as 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year birds. This adds further to the evidence that young Red Knot start their Australasian lives in Australia before moving across the Tasman to become New Zealanders!

## FLAG SIGHTINGS REPORT

This report covers all flag sighting in New Zealand between June-July 2004 and 15.10.05. There has been so much new information worthy of sharing that is rather a long but hopefully interesting report.

### Total Flagged Birds

A total of 3767 waders have been fitted with white leg flags in the Auckland region since 1991 including:

Red Knot	1970
Bar-tailed Godwit	1228
SIPO	452
Turnstone	110
Golden Plover	5
Curlew Sandpiper	2

Since the last flag report (NZWSG News 19 (August 2004)) Bar-tailed Godwit from another eight new banding regions have been reported here for the first time. These sightings are giving us a much greater understanding of their migration.

**Bar-tailed Godwit**

There are over 1500 flag sighting reports from New Zealand and overseas of New Zealand banded birds with approximately 750 of these recorded during this period. Of particular interest are the birds from South Australia and Chongming Dao, more on them later.

*White flags from Auckland region*

A total of 570 sightings have now been reported since 1992, with 168 in this reporting period. As expected large numbers are recorded at Miranda, the main flagging site, where a maximum of 26 were seen on 21.11.04. Away from the banding harbours white flags were seen at the following sites in New Zealand

09.12.04 - 20.03.05	1	Maketu Bay of Plenty	T Barnard
04.01.05	1	Ohiwa Harbour Bay of Plenty	T Barnard
05.03.05	2	Matahui Pt - Katikati Bay of Plenty	P Agnew
12.03.05	1	Ohiwa Harbour Bay of Plenty	J & B Groom
16.01.05	1	Avon Heathcote Est Canterbury	T Crocker
23.05.05	1	Avon Heathcote Est Canterbury	C Reid
06.10.04	1	Bell's Island Nelson	W Cook/D Cooper
12.10.04	1	Nelson Haven Nelson	P Field
13.02.05	1	Rabbit Island Nelson	D Melville etal
12.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
13.03.05	1	Motueka Sandspit Nelson	D Melville
30.09.05	1	Bell's Island Nelson	W Cook
20.01.05	1	Walker Island Rangaunu	P Battley
28.12.04	1	Wanganui Est Taranaki	I Sutherland
23.02.05	2	Raglan Harbour Waikato	P Battley/S Moore

Not a great many but adult godwit are the most likely to be flagged, and they are more likely to be site faithful. New

recording sites were Maketu, Matahui Point, Avon Heathcote, and the Nelson sites.

**From Overseas:**

*White flags seen in Alaska:*

The 'Beringia 2005' studies meant there were several people looking for flags and colour bands in Alaska on a regular basis particularly at a site known as Tern Mt on the edge of the Yukon-Kuskokwin Delta (YKD). To summarise those Tern Mt sightings there were 11 records between 21.8.04 - 09.09.04 and 21 records between 01.08.05 - 25.09.05.

The only other record from Alaska was two white flagged birds seen along with a Nelson colour banded bird and three orange flagged birds (see Miranda News for details).

03.08.05 2 Aphrewn R. Tutakoke YKD Alaska  
ARiegen/D Melville/J Conklin

Observers in Alaska were, A Hoffmann, D Laczik and K Sebe, who put in a tremendous effort in difficult conditions to sort out all the flag and band combinations they saw and the rest did what they could! P Battley, J Conklin, S Connors, D Melville, A Riegen, and H Swensen

*White flags seen in China:*

Three records all in the Yellow Sea region on northward migration. The June record is very late, so perhaps it was not a full breeding adult.

09.06.04 1 Zuidong Tangshang China Yang Hong Yan



08.05.05	1	Qilihai, South of Beidaihe China	Paul Holt
13.05.05	1	Yalu Jiang China	Cao Lei/Wang Tao

#### *White flags seen in South Korea:*

Six records all but one being on northward migration. The bird seen during southward migration on 02.08.04 at Saemangeum may be from another breeding population and not from Alaska as it is quite likely that some of the *menzbieri* sub-species from Siberia do reach New Zealand.

02.08.04	2	Saemangeum S.Korea	T Heinicke, J Steudtner, N Moores
10.04.05	1	Ersari - Hongsung South Korea	Kim Hyun-tae
13.04.05	1	Ersari - Hongsung South Korea	Kim Hyun-tae
17.04.05	1	Geum R. Est.S. Korea	N Moores, P Nebel, J MacLennan
18.04.05	1	Ersari - Hongsung S.Korea	Jo Jung-jang, Lee Hae-soon
24.04.05	1	Mokpo City S. Korea	Jo Jung-jang

Interestingly or sadly there were no white flag sightings from the whole of Australia! This adds to the belief that Bar-tailed Godwit from New Zealand not only migrate non-stop from Alaska to New Zealand but also migrate northwards from New Zealand straight to Asia. The same is not the case with Australian flagged birds that are regularly seen in New Zealand.

#### *Orange flags from Victoria*

A good crop of sightings from Victorian flagged birds with 446 since 1992 and 261 in this period. Far too many to record individually but they were seen at 42 sites covering the whole country including one from the Chatham Islands, the first record from there. This strongly indicates that young birds banded in Victoria move to New Zealand, still as young birds, and then wander around before settling on a favoured non-breeding site.

#### *Green flags from SE Queensland*

With no banding in this region since 1999, understandably there are fewer green flags seen each year. Only 73 sightings since 1993 and 25 in this period.

A selection from the 16 well scattered sites where green flags were reported

26.09.04	1	Karaka Manukau H.	G Vaughan/I Southey
29.09.04	1	Manawatu Est Manawatu	I Saville
11.10.04	1	Bell's Island Nelson	W Cook/D Melville
13.11.04	1	Waikiri Creek Kaipara H.	T Moore
19.11.04	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	J Geale
28.12.04	2	Motueka Sandspit Nelson	C Miskelly
03.01.05	3	Kiwi Esplanade Manukau H.	G Pulham/R Clough
04.01.05	1	Ohiwa Harbour Bay of Plenty	T Barnard
05.01.05	1	Jordan's Kaipara H.	G Pulham/S Chamberlin
07.02.05	1	Clifton Beach, Whitford Auck.	T Habraken/K Bond
13.02.05	2	Rabbit Island Nelson	D Melville etal
11.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
18.03.05	1	Pakawau Nelson	R Schuckard
16.09.05	1	Avon Heathcote Est	S Petch/J Walker/F Moniz
17.09.05	1	Big Sand Tapora Kaipara H.	G Vaughan/I Southey
07.10.05	1	Totara Ave Nelson	D Melville

#### *Yellow flags from NW Australia*

Just 26 reports since 1993 and only 6 in this period, which probably represents just four birds. These are quite possibly the sub-species *menzbieri* from Siberia distinguished by their

whiter rumps. It would be worth trying to record rump colour on any yellow flagged godwits seen in future.

16.01.05	1	Mangere Sewage Ponds Manukau H.	G Pulham/R Clough
19.01.05	1	Jordan's Kaipara H.	G Pulham/S Chamberlin/J Simmons
05-08.03.05	1	Avon Heathcote Est Canterbury	S Petch etal
24.04.05	1	Walker Island Auckland	G Pulham etal
11.06.05	1	Mangawhai Spit Auckland	G Pulham/G Gorbey

#### *Green/Orange flags from Yalu Jiang, China*

A remarkable 111 sightings have been reported since the first ones were banded in April 2002 including 57 in this period alone from 14 sites including this selection.

16.12.04	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley
20.12.04	1	Omaha North Auckland	G Pulham/J Simmons
20.12.04	1	Waihou - Thames Firth of Thames	P Battley
04.01.05	1	Ohiwa Harbour Bay of Plenty	T Barnard
05.01.05	1	Jordan's Kaipara H.	G Pulham/S Chamberlin
10.01.05	1	Clark's Bay Manukau H.	P Battley
12.01.05	2	McLeod's Beach Kaipara H.	G Pulham/J Simmons
18.01.05	1	Kowhai Beach - Houhora Far North	P Battley
20.01.05	1	Paua - Parengarenga Far North	P Battley
26.01.05	1	Manawatu Est Manawatu	B Stephenson
12.02.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
23.02.05	2	Raglan Harbour Waikato	P Battley/S Moore
24.02.05	1	Kawhia Harbour Waikato	P Battley/S Moore
01.03.05	1	Omaha North Auckland	G Goreby
06.03.05	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley
13.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	S Wood
14.03.05	1	Totara Ave Nelson	D Melville
30.09.05	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley

#### *Orange/Yellow flags from South Australia*

Very few godwits have been banded in South Australia and before this reporting period there was just one sighting of a bird in Awarua Bay, Southland. Then on 02.12.04 Brent Stephenson saw three at Lake Grassmere, Marlborough. There are no subsequent records from there and they were perhaps pausing briefly after crossing the Tasman from South Australia where they were banded just eight days earlier. One was seen at the Avon Heathcote Estuary near Christchurch on 03.01.05, rising to three on 08.02.05 after which one or two were seen there during each month except June.

There has been a total of 38 reports from Awarua Bay, Avon Heathcote Est, Brookland's Lagoon, Bell's Island - Nelson, Nelson Haven, in the South Island and Ohiwa Harbour, Little Waihi, Maketu, Matahui Pt - Katikati, in the Bay of Plenty and one record from Mangawhai Est, north of Auckland in the North Island. Determining how many birds are involved is always difficult but we know they were young birds when banded in South Australia and so are likely to stay in New Zealand for about three years before returning to the Arctic to breed. During this time they are quite likely to move around the country as other colour banded birds are showing. It is quite likely that after a period in the Avon Heathcote Estuary one or more set out on a 'tiki' tour of New Zealand's mudflats. One turned up in Nelson on 24.06.05 and has been seen there at least eight times since with two on 08.09.05. One turned up in the Bay of Plenty at Ohiwa Harbour on 12.03.05, then at Little Waihi on 20.03.05 and Maketu on 28.03.05. Was this the same bird



seen four days later on 01.04.05 at Mangawhai? Perhaps the same bird moved south again on 10.08.05 to Katikati in the Bay of Plenty.

Although there are 38 sightings from 11 sites it is quite possible that only four birds are involved, the original Southland bird and the Grassmere trio.

#### *Green/White flags from Nelson*

Since the last report many more godwits have been flagged in the Nelson region and whilst last time none had been seen in New Zealand outside Nelson that is no longer the case. Although at least 126 sightings are recorded, 112 have been in the Nelson region and only six in the rest of New Zealand with four from the Kaipara Harbour between 30.09.04 and 13.11.04 and two from the Manukau Harbour possibly representing just two birds

Overseas sighting include:

Queensland	1
China	2
Japan	2
Alaska	3

There are many more sightings of colour banded Nelson birds but they are not covered here.

**The following colours are all new records since the last report.**

#### *Black flags from Alaska*

A few godwits were fitted with a single black flag with a two-digit code etched in white plus a radio or satellite transmitter while on the breeding grounds of Alaska in June 2005. Although it appears the transmitters have failed at least two of the birds have made it to New Zealand. Both were seen at Karaka on the Manukau Harbour where the honours for finding them went to two of our finest 'flag hunters', Tony Habraken and David Lawrie with the birds being seen on 17.09.05 and 09.10.05.

It is a relief for all involved in the transmitter project that at least two birds with transmitters completed the migration south to New Zealand but a great pity the data about their flights was lost.

#### *Blue flags from Hokkaido, Japan:*

Just three sightings in New Zealand probably just one bird.

13.01.05	1	Bell's Island Nelson	W Cook/H Heinkamp/D Cooper
12.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
23.04.05	1	Bell's Island Nelson	W Cook

#### *Blue/White (cut) flags from Yatsu Tidal Flats, Japan*

The latest addition to the colour range with just one sighting so far. These flags have been cut on a diagonal angle. Just another thing to look for but well worth the effort.

10.10.05	1	Parengarenga Far North	P Battley/N Milius
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#### *White/Black flags from Chongming Dao, China:*

A new banding site and already there have been 36 reports from five New Zealand regions from Auckland to Southland with a maximum of two birds at one place. Chongming Dao, close to Shanghai is the southern most point in Asia where godwits reaching New Zealand have been flagged.

#### *Orange/Green flags from NSW:*

Small numbers have been flagged in NSW. The first bird on this list was one of 15 caught on 02.05.04 on the Hunter Estuary. It was also fitted with a radio transmitter and the aerial was visible to the observers.

10.12.04	1	Walker Island Kaipara H.	G Pulham/S Chamberlin
26.03.05	2	Big Sand Tapora Kaipara H.	G Vaughan et al
24.04.05	1	Karaka Manukau H.	T Habraken
07.06.05	1	Karaka Manukau H.	I Southey
20.09.05	1	Karaka Manukau H.	P Battley

#### *White/Orange flags from South Korea:*

The following record is the only South Korean flagged godwit to be seen outside South Korea and yet again the honour goes to one of our finest flag hunters, Gwen Pulham.

11.03.05	1	McLeod's Beach Kaipara H.	G Pulham/J Simmons
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#### **Red Knot**

The knot migration story continues to be full of gaps. In spite of hundreds more flag sightings and many more kilometres of the Asian coast searched during migration we still don't have a clear understanding of the routes and staging sites used. That said, a better picture is building of Red Knot in New Zealand and, as with the Bar-tailed Godwits, the colour banding is revealing, or at least confirming, theories we had about their movement within New Zealand. Again details will have to wait for a future edition of the news. Or you can see more on Phil Battley's web site [www.nzshorebirds.com](http://www.nzshorebirds.com).

A total of 830 Red Knot flag sightings have now been recorded with an impressive 401 in this period alone.

#### *White flags from the Auckland Region:*

103 new sightings have been reported including our second from NSW and three more from Taiwan. Most sightings are from the banding areas the rest from just four North Island sites and one in the South Island.

#### *Rest of New Zealand:*

19.09.04	1	Parengarenga Far North	T Habraken et al
29.10.04 – 27.11.04	1	Manawatu Est Manawatu	S Saville
02.12.04 – 02.01.05	1	Little Waihi Bay of Plenty	T Barnard
19-20.01.05	4	Parengarenga Far North	P Battley
13.02.05	6	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
12.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
13.03.05	3	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
19.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
27.03.05	3	Walker Is - Rangaunu Far North	T Habraken/C Matthews

#### *White flags seen in Australia:*

Just two from the whole of Australia adding further to the evidence that young birds stage in Australia (see other

colours) but adults travel more directly to and from New Zealand, or at least stage in sites rarely visited by flag hunters (or anybody else for that matter!) such as the Gulf of Carpentaria.

22.10.04	1	Penrhyn Rd Est, Botany Bay NSW	R Gardner
23.09.05	1	Mathieson Hsd - Gt Sandy Str QLD	
			J Knight/B & A Gould/P Royally

#### *White flags seen in Taiwan:*

It is very encouraging to get three more sightings from here probably representing two birds.

06.04.05	1	Han-Bou, ChangHwa	Taiwan Wader Study Group
11.04.05	1	Han-Bou, ChangHwa	Taiwan Wader Study Group
21.04.05	1	Tseng-Wen Est, Tainan	Cheng-feng Lee

#### *White flags seen in South Korea:*

Getting flag sightings from South Korea is proving difficult so there may well be more which will hopefully surface one day. I spent only two days during August 2005 in South Korea but Nail Moores and I still managed to pick up a white flagged knot in a flock of 40 birds along with orange and yellow flagged birds.

16.08.05	1	Saemangeum Estuary S. Korea	A Riegen/N Moores
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#### *White flags seen in Russia*

These are most exciting as they are the first Red Knots to be seen in the expected breeding range of 'our' birds. Like so many places waders are found this is another very remote and rarely visited (ornithologically speaking) part of the world. Rob Schuckard from Nelson joined a Russian expedition to the region in June 2005.

28.06.05	1	Koliuchinskaya Gulf- Chuckchi	I Taldenkov
29.06.05	2	Koliuchinskaya Gulf- Chuckchi	I Taldenkov

#### *Orange flags from Victoria:*

601 orange flag sightings have been reported in New Zealand since 1991 with over a third (215) in this period alone. Compare this to the 21 white flag sightings in Australia and just one in Victoria! The orange flag sightings are not listed here but they come from 24 roost sites from Parengarenga in the north to Nelson in the South, and include a second record from the Chatham Islands.

06.02.98	1	Te Whanga Lagoon Chatham Islands	M Bell
09.12.04	1	Te Whanga Lagoon Chatham Islands	C Miskelly

#### *Green flags from SE Queensland:*

A total of 36 sighting since 1993. As with the godwits no new knots have been flagged for six years in SE Queensland but there are still a few about with the latest listed below.

08.10.04	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley
13.10.04	1	Big Sand Tapora Kaipara H.	P Battley
17.11.04	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley
05.01.05	1	Jordan's Kaipara H.	G Pulham/S Chamberlin
27.02.05	1	Clark's Bay Manukau H.	T Habraken
12.03.05	2	Karaka Manukau H.	D Lawrie/I Southey/T Habraken
02.04.05	1	Karaka Manukau H.	T Habraken
02.10.05	1	Karaka Manukau H.	T Habraken

#### *Yellow flags from NW Australia*

A total of 121 sighting since 1995 with 40 new sightings in this period, all but four from the Auckland Region. The

others from the Far North and Nelson. It is still puzzling why birds from NW Australia should come all the way across to New Zealand.

02.01.05	1	Motueka Sandspit Nelson	D Melville
18.01.05	1	Kowhai Beach - Houhora Far North	P Battley
27.03.05	1	Kowhai Beach - Houhora Far North	T Habraken
28.03.05	1	Walker Is - Rangaunu Far North	T Habraken/Chris Matthews

#### *Blue flags from Hokkaido, Japan*

Just 11 records since 2003 and four in this period. Hokkaido is the closest part of Japan to the Sea of Okhotsk where some Red Knots are known to stage on their way south.

30.09.04	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley
04.11.04	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley
11.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
05.09.05	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley

#### *White/Black flags from Chongming Dao, China:*

A new banding site but already we have 33 records since November 2003 and 30 of them in this period. In the early days of our banding we had at least 10 banded Red Knot recovered from this part of China all having been taken by hunters. As hunting has virtually stopped so have the recoveries, however some New Zealand Red Knot obviously still pass through there on the way north and are being flagged rather than hunted. 22 of the 30 sightings are from the Auckland Region the others as follows.

18.09.04	1	Parengarenga Far North	T Habraken/D Davies etal
15.10.04 – 26.12.04	1	Manawatu Est. Manawatu	S Saville
19.01.05	1	Parengarenga Far North	P Battley

#### *White/Orange flags from South Korea:*

Five records but only one in the past year.

26.03.05	1	Big Sand Tapora Kaipara H.	G Vaughan etal
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## **Turnstone**

The third most common Arctic migrant in New Zealand but one we still know so little about. What migration route do they use? Where to they stop en-route? Do they move around much in New Zealand? We still don't know and while admittedly the white flags are hard to see, few of any other colour are seen either. A few Turnstone have now also been colour banded and remarkably one of these was seen and photographed in South Korea on its way north in 2005.

#### *White flags from Auckland Region:*

110 Turnstone have been flagged in the Auckland region, these have generated a total of 70 sightings but only 17 in this reporting period. One more has been added from South Korea but still none have been seen in New Zealand away from the banding sites.

The four records from South Korea are also the only overseas records. With so few records it is hard to draw any conclusions regarding Turnstone movements either within New Zealand or elsewhere on the Flyway.

P Battley and T Habraken are the only observers to report white flagged Turnstone in New Zealand during this period with P Battley seeing a maximum of eight on several occasions at Miranda.

One of the South Korea sightings was during southward migration the other three on northward migration.

05.09.97	1	Dongjin Est Korea	Jin-Young Park
10.05.01	1	Mankyung Est Korea	T Habraken /K Gosbell
11.05.03	1	Mokpo city Korea	Jeong-sik Lee
14.05.05	1	Mokpo city Korea	Park Jong-gil

#### *Orange flags from Victoria:*

A total of 10 sighting since 1997 and four in this period. The Kaikoura record is the second from there. The previous one was seen on 26.12.02.

12.03.05	1	Kaikoura Canterbury	N Allen
27.02.05	1	Clark's Bay Manukau	T Habraken
13.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
13.10.05	1	L Ellesmere Canterbury	C Hill

#### *Orange/Yellow flags from South Australia:*

A total of 12 sightings from the Far North to the Far South but just 4 in this period

11.11.04	1	Miranda FoT	P Battley
08.02.05	1	Fortrose Southland	P Battley/S Moore
13.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
27.03.05	1	Walker Is - Rangaunu Far North	T Habraken

#### *Yellow flags from NW Australia*

Just two sightings and only one this time.

13.03.05	1	Farewell Spit Nelson	R Schuckard
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#### *White/Green flags from Nelson Region*

Three sighting all from the same site.

01.02.05	1	Bell's Island Nelson	D Melville
22.02.05	1	Bell's Island Nelson	D Melville
17.03.05	1	Bell's Island Nelson	D Melville etal

## SIPO

#### *White flags from Miranda:*

A total of 44 sightings but only three in this period although one did move to the Kaipara Harbour. None have been flagged since January 2003.

27.12.04	1	Tapora Kaipara	G Pulham etal.
17.03.05	1	Kaiaua Firth of Thames	P Battley
07.04.05	1	Miranda Firth of Thames	P Battley

## Curlew Sandpiper

#### *White flags from Karaka, Manukau Harbour:*

Only two flagged but neither reported since 03.01.04

## Pacific Golden Plover

#### *White flags from the Auckland Region*

Gwen Pulham and John Simmons were at Jordan's Farm on 24.10.05 well before high tide looking for leg flags and colour bands on waders as they came into sub-roost at Jordan's Beach. 26 Pacific Golden Plover turned up and three were sporting white flags. This is very exciting news as we

have only banded five Pacific Golden Plover in the last 26 years three of which were caught on 13 February 2005 at Jordan's. As little is known about this species we decided to flag them in the hope that they may be seen again somewhere, sometime. To get all three back at the banding site is great news. It is the first evidence that at least some Pacific Golden Plover return from breeding to the same non-breeding site in New Zealand. A great pay off for all the effort people like Gwen and John put into looking for flags.

## WADER NEWS IN BRIEF

### *White flagged Godwit in Tonga*

Ted Wnorowski was in Tonga during October 2005 and as usual he went in search of birds including waders at every opportunity and was very pleased to find a good selection of waders at Malia Bay and the Airport on Tongatapu Island and also on Pangaimotu and Fafa Islands. Several species appear to be new records for Tonga.

Of particular interest to us was his Bar-tailed Godwit sighting. Only 38 birds seen, 26 of which were juveniles and one white flagged adult bird. This is the first white flag sighting from the South Pacific and only the second New Zealand Bar-tailed Godwit record from the region, the previous one being a godwit found dead in Vanuatu in 1999. Tonga is on a pretty straight bearing from Alaska to New Zealand so there is a good chance the godwits had stopped short of the final destination. This is further evidence that godwits do fly directly from Alaska to New Zealand down the Pacific.

Ted's records included the following:

#### **Tongatapu Island - Malia Bay - mudflats near Kolovai village - 19-24.10.05 (high and low tides, 3 roosting sites):**

Bar-tailed godwit - 38  
(including 26 juvs and 1 adult with WHITE FLAG)  
Turnstone - 87  
Red knot - 2  
Pectoral Sandpiper - 1  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper -3  
Red-necked Stint - 2  
Wandering Tattler - 9  
Pacific Golden Plover ~100  
Terek Sandpiper - 1

#### **Tongatapu Island - International Airport 15.10 and 23.10.2005**

Bristle-thighed Curlew - 1  
(seen at same spot on both dates)  
Pacific Golden Plover - 47 +

**Pangaimotu Island 15-19.10.2005 (high and low tide)**

Pacific Golden Plover - 13  
 Wandering Tattler - 3  
 Turnstone - 9  
 Sanderling - 7

**Fafa Is - 17.10.05**

Siberian Tattler - 2  
 Pacific Golden Plover - 8  
 Sanderling - 3  
 Turnstone 5

**Saemangeum – South Korea**

En-route from Alaska to New Zealand in August this year I had a short stopover in South Korea, which enabled me to visit Saemangeum on the west coast of the country, the site of the major reclamation project that has featured in previous editions of Miranda News.

I was keen to see this area for myself while it still exists as a tidal estuary system. At present construction work on the sea wall is halted due to a court injunction on the development, so the sea wall is still not completed. However, a significant part of it is built and although the tide still gets into the bay the tidal flow is considerably restricted which must be affecting the whole ecosystem in the region.

Although it was quite early in the migration season many arctic waders had already reached this far south. I was very fortunate to meet up with Nial Moores who lives in South Korea and works tirelessly for wader conservation and environmental issues and never misses a chance to point out to Korean people the environmental damage being done, as I found when we were looking at a plan of the reclamation on the new sea wall. He is something of a lone voice in a country that has yet to seriously start embracing environmental protection and conservation measures.

Nial has a web site well worth visiting on which you will find all the latest news regarding Saemangeum, and much much more. <http://www.birdskorea.org>

We spent two days checking just about every wader site in the area, which involved some 400 km of driving, it really is a huge area.

Combined total of waders seen on 15-16 August 2005.

Great Knot	15000
Black-tailed Godwit	4-5000
Terek Sandpiper	1400
Mongolian Dotterel	700
Grey Plover	500
Greenshank	350
Bar-tailed Godwit	250
Whimbrel	200
Red Knot	100
Far-eastern Curlew	100
Redshank	75
Broad-billed Sandpiper	65
Eurasian Curlew	40
Curlew Sandpiper	30
Wood Sandpiper	25
Red-necked Stint	20
Pacific Golden Plover	20
Oystercatcher	10
Marsh Sandpiper	8
Grey-tailed Tattler	8
Long-toed Stint	7
Common Sandpiper	5
Pin-tailed Snipe	5
Green Sandpiper	4
Little Ringed Plover	2
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	2
Dunlin	1
Turnstone	1
Kentish Plover	1

We also saw a few flagged birds, including one white, one orange and one yellow flagged Red Knot in a flock of 40. A yellow flagged Terek Sandpiper and two yellow flagged Bar-tailed Godwit from NW Australia were also seen.

A very big thank you to all observers who have sent in flag sightings including 176 different people who have now sent in sightings of Bar-tailed Godwit flags. Please keep looking and recording and send them to Adrian Riegen at [Riegen@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Riegen@xtra.co.nz) or ph/fax (09)-814-9741. Happy hunting.

Adrian Riegen



## Movements of Overseas Flagged Bar-tailed Godwits to New Zealand

