



NEW ZEALAND WADER STUDY GROUP

In association with

Miranda Naturalists' Trust

Newsletter No 9

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Compiled by Adrian Riegen

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NEWS IN BRIEF

World's oldest Curlew Sandpiper

The Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG) recently recaptured two 18.5 year-old Curlew Sandpipers at Werribee Sewage Farm near Melbourne. These are the oldest recorded in Australia and, indeed, the world.

Migrant from Finland

Many of you may have seen this on the TV news, read about it in the papers, or heard it on the radio. On 24 January 1997, a Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) with a band from Finland was caught during a banding expedition by Clive Minton and the VWSG to the Lakes National Park in Victoria. This is the first bird of any species from Finland to be recovered in Australia. The bird had been banded at the nest in Finland in June 1996. To reach Victoria, the tern would have travelled down the west coast of Europe and Africa, then eastwards through the Southern Ocean. The bird covered at least 26,000 km, the longest distance between banding and recovery site of any banded bird from any country. An impressive record!

NW Australia Expedition

Clive Minton is planning an extended expedition to Broome, 80 Mile Beach, and Port Hedland for August - October 1998. If you are interested in being involved, contact Adrian Riegen.

Clive, who's motto is 'Have cannon net, will travel', is currently catching knots with an international group in Argentina, Brazil, USA, and Canada as the birds move north on migration.

Wader Banding

The Wader Study Group has been working hard to catch knots at Miranda during February and March. There is an added reason this year to make a big effort to catch them. Mark Barter of the AWSG is going to the Shanghai region of China, and Chongming Island in particular, with the aim of counting and surveying waders with the local Chinese scientists as the birds migrate through that region. We are keen to get some recoveries from that part of the flyway. However, three attempts at Miranda have not been successful.

Net placement has been good, but the main problem has been the South Island Pied Oystercatchers (SIPO), now at full strength at Miranda with upwards of 10,000 roosting on the shellbanks. They are the first to arrive at the high tide roost and, once settled, will not move over for any other species. This forces the knots and godwits to seek other roost sites further up the shellbank.

On two of our attempts, we caught 68 and 92 SIPO. With many new members, these catches were very useful training.

The third attempt deserves a write up, for it shows the dedication to the cause. With newly trained people, we tried yet again on March 8th. Because of the early high tide, the nets had to be set before the afternoon high tide on the 7th. Roz Holland and myself arrived at 13.00 and spent 3 hours setting up. A very good job was done. The weather was improving and birds came in to roost that afternoon, which lifted our confidence. As the tide on the 8th was at 07.30 am, we needed people in position by 0600. Several people needed to spend the night on the shellbank, however, to avoid disturbance at first light.

Paul Harrison, Brian Chudleigh, and myself stayed the night out there. Crossing at low tide around midnight, we still needed to build a shelter. As we put the finishing touches to our hide/tent, the heavens opened. Unfazed, we crawled inside and tried to get comfortable on the hessian covering material. The rain continued through the night, with an impressive thunder storm on the Coromandel. By 0400 we were feeling damp but stuck it out. Recalling stories of Tom Barton spending a night out in the rain on Ponui Island made us feel better. At first light Stephen Davies and the rest of the team arrived, having driven through floods, and were amazed that we were still out on the shellbank and raised questions about our mental state.

A decision had to be made as to what to do. On looking at the catching area we saw that it was full of birds. Yes, of course, they were SIPO! The knot were further up the beach. A great deal of effort would have to be made to get the knot into the catching area. With no sign of a break in the weather and the well-being of the birds in mind, we

abandoned the attempt without a net being fired. The task of packing up the very wet gear and getting it through waist-deep water to the mainland was made easier as Paddy Stewart and Gwen Pulham tackled it with relish.

We had survived, as had the knots, and on the drive back to Auckland the weather steadily improved. Such is the lot of a wader bander!

Adrian Riegen

FROM THE TATTLER #10 JANUARY 1997

Red-necked Stints: Two population theory reflected in tundra breeding success rates.

It looks as though reported patchy breeding success of waders in the Arctic may be used as direct proof of migratory connections of some wader populations. Just two examples come to mind. If non-breeding Red-necked Stints (*Calidris ruficollis*) in NW and SE Australia belong to different breeding populations, as Clive Minton suggests, then you may have different proportions of juveniles in these two parts of Australia as a result of bad breeding in Chukotka but quite successful breeding in Taimyr and possibly in mountains near the Lena Delta.

Another example is the Bar-tailed Godwit. The population in northern Yakutia (*Limosa lapponica menzbieri*) had a very bad breeding season, while it seems that Alaskan Bar-tailed Godwit (*L. l. baueri*) were breeding quite well. If this is the case, then Bar-tailed Godwit will have few or no young birds in Broome, but reasonably good numbers in eastern Australia and New Zealand. You can try to check this!

Pavel Tomkovich, Moscow

This article helps to explain why numbers of Arctic waders fluctuate from year to year in New Zealand. The winter counts undertaken by the Ornithological Society may help to confirm these findings from the breeding grounds.

It is not so long ago that any news of breeding success or failure in Siberia would take years to filter this far south. With better communications we are now getting this information in the same season.

If you are interested in knowing more about waders in Australasia and, indeed, the whole flyway then you might like to consider joining the Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG) based in Melbourne. As a member you receive two issues a year of their journal 'The Stilt' which is full of interesting studies in the region, and four issues of 'The Tattler' which has all the latest news from the flyway.

Contact AWSG Membership, 415 Riversdale Rd,

Hawthorn East, VIC 3123. Fax +61-3-9882-2677 or [Email: membership@raou.cam.au](mailto:membership@raou.cam.au)

FLAG SIGHTING UPDATE

Since the last update in NZWSG News No 5, April 1995, there have been at least 130 sightings of 270 flagged birds, although many of these sightings undoubtedly are of the same individuals.

Miranda and the South Manukau produced the most records. This is probably due more to the number of observers in these areas than to the number of flagged birds. Tony Habraken continues to produce a flood of records. Elaine Ward, who watches her local Manukau patch of Conifer Grove on a regular basis, has turned up a remarkable number of sightings. There is no substitute for regular and careful observation.

Below are listed the most significant records. Many white flag sightings are not included as they occur at sites where the birds are flagged, but we are still keen to receive them, so keep looking.

Orange = Victoria

Green = Queensland

Yellow = North West Australia

White = New Zealand

BAR-TAILED GODWIT - WHITE FLAGS

A total of 523 have now been white-flagged in New Zealand at four locations.

Date Seen	Qty	Location	Observer
Manukau Harbour			
19.05.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
19.05.95	1	Seagrove	T Habraken
13.09.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
08.12.95	1	Conifer Grove	E Ward
27.12.95	2	Kidd's	T Habraken
14.01.96	1	Kidd's	B Mom
13.11.96	1	Airport	T Habraken
16.11.96	5	Kidd's	T Habraken
24.11.96	2	Pollok Spit	T Habraken
21.12.96	3	Conifer Grove	E Ward
01.01.97	2	Conifer Grove	E Ward
21.01.97	2	Conifer Grove	E Ward
13.02.97	3	Conifer Grove	E Ward
22.02.97	1	Conifer Grove	E Ward
13.03.97	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
Firth of Thames			
26.03.95	6	Miranda	T Habraken

04.01.96	16	Miranda	K Woodley
17.11.96	3	Waihuo River	T Habraken/ CR Veitch
22.12.96	24	Miranda	D Lawrie et al
14.03.97	1	Mataitai	T Habraken

Kaipara Harbour

26.11.95	1	Tapora South	D Watkins
20.01.96	2	Jordan's	S Davies
29.09.96	1	Tapora South	G Grant
24.11.96	6	Jordan's	A Riegen
05.01.97	2	Tapora South	A Riegen
12.03.97	5	Papakanui Spit	G Pulham

South Island

01.02.94	1	Farewell Spit	A Crossland
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Overseas

17.04.95	1	Sone Tidal Flat Japan	Shin Ichi Hanawa P Driscoll
01.05.95	1	Sone Tidal Flat, Japan	
06.04.96	1	Gannosa, Hakata Bay	via Nial Moores

BAR-TAILED GODWIT - ORANGE FLAGS

Very few godwits with orange flags are seen in New Zealand, unlike the knots. This indicates that few godwits arrive in New Zealand via Victoria.

Manukau Harbour

27.12.95	2	Kidd's Manukau	T Habraken
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Firth of Thames

09.11.96	1	Miranda FoT	K Woodley
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BAR-TAILED GODWIT - GREEN FLAGS

A steady stream of green-flagged godwits indicates, as would be expected, that Queensland is a staging point for godwits bound for New Zealand.

Manukau Harbour

19.05.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
27.12.95	3	Kidd's	T Habraken
08.03.96	1	Wiroa Island	R Clough
24.03.96	1	Kidd's	P Agnew
20.10.96	2	Kidd's	D Lawrie
24.11.96	1	Pollok Spit	T Habraken

Firth of Thames

17.11.96	1	Miranda	D Lawrie
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Manawatu Estuary

04.05.96	1	Foxton Beach	J Moore
02.06.96	1	Foxton Beach	A Riegen et al

Coromandel

30.01.97	1	Matarangi	B Woolley
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BAR-TAILED GODWIT - YELLOW FLAGS

These sightings are the most interesting, and rather unexpected as few godwits are known to travel between NW and SE Australia and, so, on to New Zealand. With one on the Kaipara 12/3 and two on the Firth of Thames 16/3 we can be sure at least 3 are in the country at the moment.

Kaipara Harbour

12.12.93	1	Jordan's	S Hayes
12.03.97	1	Papakanui Spit	G Pulham

Firth of Thames

20.10.96	1	Miranda	D Lawrie et al
09.11.96	2	Miranda	K Woodley et al
03.03.97	2	Miranda	S Davies
16.03.97	2	Miranda	D Lawrie et al

KNOT - WHITE FLAGS

671 knots have been white-flagged in New Zealand. White flags can be harder than other colours to see on knots in non-breeding plumage, which may account for the relatively few sightings.

Manukau Harbour

04.03.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
24.10.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
17.10.96	1	Clark's Bay	T Habraken
24.10.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
03.11.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
21.01.97	1	Conifer Grove	E Ward

Firth of Thames

17.03.96	2	Miranda	T Habraken
17.11.96	1	Waihuo River	T Habraken/ CR Veitch
03.01.97	8	Miranda	S & J Rowe

Kaipara Harbour

20.01.96	2	Jordan's	S Davies
08.01.97	2	Jordan's	A Riegen

KNOT - YELLOW FLAGS

As far as we are aware, no knots flagged in NW Australia have been seen in the Eastern States which makes these sightings even more interesting. One wonders which way they got here.

Manukau Harbour

18.10.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
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Firth of Thames

09.11.96	1	Miranda	S & J Rowe et al
22.12.96	1	Miranda	T Habraken et al

KNOT - ORANGE FLAGS

The large number of orange-flagged birds in New Zealand shows the strong link for knots between Victoria and New Zealand.

Manukau Harbour

01.01.95	2	Kidd's	T Habraken
04.03.95	2	Kidd's	T Habraken
13.09.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
19.12.95	1	Kidd's	S Davies
13.09.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
27.12.95	1	Kidd's	D Lawrie
30.09.96	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
23.10.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
29.10.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
27.10.96	1	Kidd's	C Minton
26.10.96	2	Kidd's	T Habraken
17.10.96	1	Clark's Bay	T Habraken
23.10.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
29.10.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
12.11.96	1	Mangere	R Clough
15.12.96	1	Kidd's	T Habraken/ D Lawrie

Firth of Thames

14.01.96	1	Miranda	N. Green
17.11.96	1	Miranda	D Lawrie
03.01.97	3	Miranda	S & J Rowe

Kaipara Harbour

02.01.95	3	Jordan's	D Lawrie
20.01.96	1	Jordan's	A Riegen
21.01.96	2	Tapora	T Habraken
03.11.96	1	Tapora North	N Green

Northland

21.01.97	1	Waipu Cove	G Pulham
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KNOT - GREEN FLAGS

Manukau Harbour

13.11.96	1	Airport	T Habraken
15.12.96	1	Kidd's	T Habraken/ D Lawrie

Firth of Thames

03.01.97	1	Miranda	S & J Rowe
14.03.97	1	Mataitai	T Habraken

SOUTH ISLAND PIED OYSTERCATCHERS - WHITE FLAGS

White flags are only fitted to SIPO at Miranda. We are interested to see if there is movement within the Auckland region.

Manukau Harbour

19.01.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
19.03.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
19.05.95	1	Kidd's	T Habraken
30.06.95	1	Airport	R Clough

Firth of Thames

26.03.95	1	Miranda	T Habraken
29.04.95	2	Miranda	A Riegen
26.02.96	1	Miranda	T Habraken

Canterbury

09.01.95	1	Avon-Heathcote	A Crossland
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Coromandel

24.04.95	1	Colville	B Woolley
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TURNSTONE - WHITE FLAGS

64 turnstones were flagged at Kidd's in October. The one seen at Taramaire on 19.10.96 was before the birds were flagged at Kidd's, so must be one of the few flagged at Miranda in the past.

Manukau Harbour

15.12.96	4	Kidd's	T Habraken
23.02.97	2	Kidd's	P Cuming et al
13.03.97	6	Kidd's	T Habraken

Firth of Thames

19.10.96	1	Taramarie	P Agnew et al
09.01.97	1	Miranda	THabraken

TURNSTONE - ORANGE FLAGS

This is the first orange-flagged turnstone to be seen in New Zealand.

Manukau Harbour

23.02.97	1	Kidd's	P Cuming et al
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TURNSTONE - GREEN FLAGS

Firth of Thames

19.10.96	1	Taramarie	P Agnew et al
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Kaipara Harbour

06.01.97	1	Tapora South	D Melville et al
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Any articles for this publication or any bird sightings of banded or flagged birds should go to -

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