



# NEW ZEALAND WADER STUDY GROUP

*in association with*

Miranda Naturalists' Trust

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## SHORE PLOVER ON THE KAIPARA HARBOUR

On December 17, 1994 I visited Jordan's Farm on the south-east Kaipara to view waders in preparation for a cannon netting visit planned for the next day. Many birds were present including thousands of Lesser Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits. One Tattler, 20 Pacific Golden Plover, 35 Banded Dotterel, 40 Turnstones, and more than 200 South Island Pied Oystercatchers also were seen. A single Wrybill was an early arrival from the south.

At a mud pan adjacent to a local river, my attention was attracted to a small plover about the size of a Banded Dotterel but stockier and not so inclined to be so upright when alert. Other birds were roosting on the pan, but this one was apart from them. The bird displayed a black face mask reaching from just above the eyes to below the chin (where the chin was neatly demarcated from the uniformly white under parts). The mask extended as a thin band around the nape. Above the mask was a distinctive halo of white. The crown was patterned and predominantly dark brown. The mantle and closed wings showed the same colouration and patterning as the crown.

When the bird flew, the uniform brown-grey rump extended to the central tail: the outer tail feathers and outer parts of the rump were white, and a white wing bar could be seen. The eye was dark. The shortish bill was mainly venous red and black tipped. The legs were orange-red but not so dark as the bill. The bird called several times - a high-pitched chip. Sometimes it bobbed at the knees.

Hard though it was to believe, the bird clearly was a handsome Shore Plover. With a population of about 130, the species is confined to South East Island in the Chatham Islands group.

Then I recalled that a small number of Shore Plovers had been released a month or so earlier on Motuora

Island in the Hauraki Gulf, about 35 kilometres from Jordan's and on the other coast. Sure enough, when the bird was found the next day it was observed to be wearing colour bands that allowed it to be identified as a male that had been released on Motuora Island.

On the second day, several observers had the chance to view the bird and it was Pam and Des Agnew, Tom Barton, and Paul Harrison who finally recorded the band combination.

Two things were note-worthy about the bird observed at Jordan's Farm. It showed no inclination to associate with Banded Dotterels or Wrybills. Also, whereas the species favours rock platforms on South East Island, the bird was attracted to a shelly mound with short grass adjacent to open mud, which it sometimes visited.

I was interested to read later in H.A.Best's article in "Reader's Digest Complete Book of New Zealand Birds", that the species lived on sandy beaches, especially near river-mouths, when formerly it was found on the mainland.

Stephen Davies.

Footnote: The Shore Plover was still at Jordan's Farm on 5 March, 1995

## FAREWELL SPIT - A WADER WATCHER'S PARADISE

Farewell Spit is a fascinating place for waders even if it is not such an easy place to see birds at close quarters. I well remember some years ago being told by Dick Veitch while we were watching specks in the distance, that if I really wanted to see waders properly Miranda was the place. In many ways he was quite right, if a little biased.

Farewell Spit is some 22 kilometres long and two kilometres wide of exposed sand dunes interspersed with sand pans. Along the south side there is dense scrubby vegetation leading into the salt marsh, tidal flats.

In summer there are some 35-45,000 waders with a lesser number in winter. One never sees all these birds at once but from certain vantage points it is possible to watch large flocks flying in from the tidal flats on to the sand pans as the tide comes in. This is a truly lovely sight especially when it is accompanied by the birds calling and the noise of their swift flight.

The largest single flock of mostly godwits and knots that we ever counted was 10,002. Usually the flocks range from 2-6,000.

The weather is the predominating factor in Farewell Spit bird-watching apart from the distance one has to walk. It is extremely rare to have a day without wind and if you should do so the reflected heat from the sand can become uncomfortable and the shimmer distorts telescope and binocular viewing.

Usually the wind is between 15-20 knots with occasionally 40 knots or more and once the wind gets up, the sand also gets off the ground and the birds are seen through a sandy haze.

So far some 31 wader species have been seen on Farewell Spit. Some of these are of course single sightings such as the Great Knot and Lesser Yellowlegs, but others such as Terek Sandpiper, Large Sand Dotterel and Tattlers turn up with considerable regularity.

Whimbrels and curlews are really wary. Frequently the first one sees of them are birds flying in the opposite direction, though by getting to know their haunts and habits good views can sometimes be had.

However, you don't want to let any of the above put you off for Farewell Spit is a wild and wonderful place and as we can't get back fast enough each time, it must have something.

**Jenny Hawkins.**

## REPORT ON FLAGGED BIRD SIGHTING FROM AROUND NEW ZEALAND

For several years now leg-flagging of waders has been carried out around the country and along the flyway in general. Australia has been particularly active in this field with many thousands of waders being flagged. This has resulted in banding being an important aid to

studying the movements of waders both here and overseas. Details of the Australian flagging can be seen in various editions of "The Stilt".

Colours used are:

Orange	= Victoria
Dark Green	= Queensland
Yellow	= North West Australia
White	= New Zealand (only Auckland so far)

This report shows each species that has been flagged for which there are subsequent sightings in New Zealand. The sightings have been split into species and colours and into localities or regions. The Auckland region is split into the three main harbours, not for parochial reasons but just that there are many more sightings from the Auckland region and at present the only white flagging to be done, has been in this region.

## SOUTH ISLAND PIED OYSTERCATCHERS (SIPO) - WHITE FLAGS

159 white flags have been placed on SIPO, only at Miranda on the Firth of Thames. In the future yellow flags will be used on the Kaipara Harbour. Yellow flags are used in north-west Australia but there is little chance of a Pied Oystercatcher making it from there to New Zealand. We hope to see if there is any movement between the harbours in the Auckland region. Yellow flags will stand out far more than white on SIPO, so we are expecting more sightings.

### SIGHTINGS TO DATE

There has been a total of 16 sightings from all sites. 12 of these sightings come from the Firth of Thames.

Date	Qty	Location	Observer
<b>Firth of Thames</b>			
01.05.93	1	Miranda	F. Nieuwland B. Seddon
27.06.93	3	Taramarie	D Lawrie
05.01.94	1	Miranda	T Habraken
13.05.94	1	Kaiaua	E Ward
22.05.94	3	Miranda	T Habraken
19.06.94	3	Miranda	A Riegen

There have been just four sighting away from Miranda all on the Manukau Harbour

<b>Manukau Harbour</b>			
17.04.93	1	Kidd's (Karakā)	T Habraken
04.07.93	1	Conifer Grove	T Habraken
01.06.94	1	Conifer Grove	E Ward
19.03.95	1	Kidd's (Karakā)	T Habraken

## LESSER KNOT - WHITE FLAGS

382 white flags have been placed on Lesser Knots on the Firth of Thames and Kaipara Harbour, and in 1995 a few were flagged at Pollok's Spit on the Manukau Harbour.

There have been a total of 9 sightings from all sites, 3 of which were from the Manukau Harbour, none of which were flagged there.

### Manukau Harbour

02.08.92	1	Gordon's Rd	T Habraken
29.05.93	1	Puhinui	T Habraken
01.03.94	1	Pollok's Spit	T Habraken

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There has been one sighting from the Firth of Thames. It is interesting to note that there is only one sighting from this area in spite many of them being flagged there. It is possible that, as they form such tight flocks at Miranda, flags are hard to see.

### Firth of Thames

25.02.95	1	Miranda	T Habraken
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The other main flagging site is at Jordan's Farm on the Kaipara Harbour but there is only one sighting from there, probably for much the same reasons as the Firth of Thames, although far fewer observers visit the Kaipara.

### Kaipara Harbour

02.01.95	1	Jordans	P Agnew
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There have been 2 white-flagged sightings from other North Island sites.

### Other sites

29.12.92	1	Paua (Parengarenga)-Far North	P Agnew
21.10.93	1	Waipu Est - Northland	R Pierce

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There has been one white-flag sighting from the South Island.

### South Island

14.03.94	1	Farewell Spit	P Battley
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## WHITE-FLAGGED SIGHTING FROM INTERNATIONAL SITES

As yet there has been only one sighting. This tends to enforce the view of the many knot movements from Victoria to New Zealand but not visa versa.

### Australia

30.09.93	1	Altona Beach Victoria	Rohan Clarke
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## LESSER KNOT - ORANGE FLAGS

Orange-flagged knots all come from Victoria and there have been many sightings throughout New Zealand. There have been a total of 56 sightings from all sites this representing a very good recovery rate. The Manukau has produced the most with 23 sightings some being the same bird, but at both Kidds and Polloks three were seen together.

### Manukau Harbour

25.10.91	1	Mangere	R Clough
06.05.92	1	Seagrove	T Habraken
20.06.92	3	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
42.08.92	1	Gordons Rd	T Habraken
02.08.92	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
02.08.92	1	Waiuku	T Habraken
01.01.93	1	Mangere	R Clough
09.01.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
03.03.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
09.05.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	D Lawrie
07.06.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
30.10.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	P Agnew
01.02.94	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
01.03.94	3	Pollok's Spit	T Habraken
04.03.94	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
10.04.94	2	Seagrove	T Habraken
01.01.95	2	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken

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There have been 17 orange-flag sightings from the Firth of Thames.

### Firth of Thames

06.01.91	1	Miranda	G Eller
31.03.92	2	Miranda	S Rowe
27.40.92	2	Miranda	B Woolley
27.04.92	2	Miranda	B Woolley
05.09.92	1	Miranda	P & D Agnew
30.09.92	1	Miranda	P & D Agnew
31.10.92	1	Miranda	B Seddon
02.01.93	1	Miranda	S & J Rowe
03.01.93	1	Miranda	B Seddon
13.09.93	1	Miranda	K. Woodley
27.09.93	1	Miranda	K. Woodley
01.05.94	1	Miranda	T Habraken
06.06.94	1	Miranda	T Habraken
14.10.94	1	Miranda	K. Woodley

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There have been 14 orange-flag sightings from other sites in the North Island, the Manawatu Estuary proving to be a good source of flagged birds.

### Other places

26.10.91	1	Manawatu Est	J Moore/S Creswell
27.10.91	1	Manawatu Est	R Slack et. al.
30.10.91	1	Port Whangarei	R Pierce
30.10.91	1	Port Whangarei	NZNBS
25.10.91	1	Manawatu Est	W Chelley

26.10.91	1	Manawatu Est	D Medway
01.02.92	1	Manawatu Est	R Guest
20.07.92	1	Manawatu Est	R Slack
02.11.92	1	Mangawhai - Northland	R Parrish
22.11.92	1	Ruakaka - Northland	R Parrish
16.10.93	1	Waipu Est - Northland	P. Agnew
21.10.93	1	Waipu Est - Northland	R. Pierce
24.10.93	1	Foxton Beach	P & R Slack
22.11.93	1	Waipu Est - Northland	S. Davies

There have been 2 orange-flag sightings from the South Island.

**South Island**

25.02 & 28.11.92	1	Lake Ellesmere	C Hill
14.03.94	1	Farewell Spit	P Battley

**LESSER KNOT - GREEN FLAGS**

Green-flagged birds are banded in Queensland by the Queensland Wader Study Group. While they are a newer group than the Victorian Wader Study Group and have flagged far fewer birds, there have been 7 sightings of their birds from within New Zealand. The Brisbane - Moreton Bay area is on the most likely direct flight path for knots flying to and from New Zealand, other than those that come via Victoria. There have been several banded bird recoveries between Queensland and New Zealand (see previous newsletter for details).

There have been 2 green-flagged sightings from the Manukau Harbour.

**Manukau Harbour**

07.06.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
01.01.95	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken

There has been one green-flagged sighting from the Firth of Thames.

**Firth of Thames**

04.03.95	1	Miranda	P Agnew
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There has been one green-flagged sighting from the Kaipara Harbour.

**Kaipara Harbour**

02.01.95	1	Jordans	D Lawrie
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There have been 2 green-flagged sightings from other North Island sites.

**North Island**

21.10.93	1	Waipu Est - Northland	R Pierce
23.10.94	1	Manawatu Est	C Miskelly

There has been one green-flag sighting from the South Island.

**South Island**

25.02.94&14.03.94	1	Farewell Spit	P Battley
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**LESSER KNOT - YELLOW FLAGS**

Yellow-flagging has only been carried out in the Broome to Port Hedland region of Western Australia. This one sighting in New Zealand is very interesting because no yellow-flagged knots have been seen in south-east Australia, and indeed in all the years of banding in New Zealand, S.E. Australia and N.W. Australia, there have been no recorded movements between N.W. Australia and S.E. Australia or New Zealand. It is something of a mystery as to which way this bird travelled to New Zealand

30.01.95	1	Miranda	
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K. Woodley

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT - WHITE FLAGS**

248 white flags have been placed on Bar-tailed Godwit since December 1990 on the Kaipara Harbour and the Firth of Thames and from those there have been 67 sightings. The bulk on the Firth of Thames (36) and on the Kaipara (17). The sighting from Farewell Spit is of interest and of course the celebrated one seen four months after flagging, in Japan. That one was seen with orange and green flagged birds in the same flock. There is no doubt that flags are easier to see on the longer legged Godwits, as counts of 6 and 7 in a flock show.

There have been 8 white-flag sightings on the Manukau Harbour.

**Manukau Harbour**

19.05.92	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
20.06.92	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
16.01.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
03.03.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
13.05.93	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
14.02.94	1	Conifer Grove	E Ward
15.02.94	1	Conifer Grove	E Ward
01.03.94	1	Conifer Grove	T Habraken

There have been 36 white-flag sightings on the Firth of Thames.

**Firth of Thames**

14.05.93	1	Taramarie	Joanna Pierre
03.10.93	1	Miranda	S. Davies
13.09.93	1	Miranda	K. Woodley
18.10.93	5	Taramarie	K. Woodley
16.01.94	1	Miranda	T Habraken

06.02.94	6	Miranda	A Riegen
23.04.94	1	Miranda	B Heather
01.05.94	2	Miranda	T Habraken
13.05.94	2	Miranda	K. Woodley
22.05.94	4	Miranda	T Habraken
11.09.94	7	Miranda	P Agnew
25.02.95	5	Miranda	T Habraken

There have been 17 white-flag sightings on the Kaipara Harbour.

**Kaipara Harbour**

05.06.93	1	Papakanui Spit	G Pulham
19.06.93	1	Marietahei	S Davies
26.06.93	2	Jordans	S Davies
26.06.93	1	Haranui Rd	T Habraken
16.10.93	3	Jordans	S.Davies
12.12.93	7	Jordans	S.Davies
18.12.94	1	Jordans	A Riegen
02.01.95	1	Jordans	P Agnew

There has been one white-flag sighting at other North Island sites.

**North Island sites**

24.10.93	1	Foxton Beach	P & R Slack
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There have been 4 white-flag sighting in the South Island.

**South Island sites**

25.02.94	1	Farewell Spit	P Battley
14.03.94	2	Farewell Spit	P Battley
15.01.95	1	Farewell Spit	P Battley

There has been one white-flag sighting at an international site.

**International site**

01.04.92	1	Ariaka Sea - S Japan	J Thompson
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**BAR-TAILED GODWIT - ORANGE FLAGS**

All Orange flagged Bar-tailed Godwit are from Victoria and to date there are three sightings from the Manukau Harbour.

**Manukau Harbour**

19.07.92	1	Kidds (Karaka)	T Habraken
28.08.92	1	Mangere	A Tennyson/G Taylor
08.08.93	1	Puinui Creek	P Agnew et al

There has been one orange-flag sighting at Miranda.

22.09.92	1	Miranda.	P & D Agnew
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There has been one orange-flag sighting from the South Island.

24.06.93	1	Farewell Spit	W Cook
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**BAR-TAILED GODWIT - GREEN FLAGS**

All green-flagged Bar-tailed Godwit are from Queensland and to date there are two sightings.

**Manukau Harbour.**

20.11.94	1	Kirks	B Woolley
18.02.95	1	Pollok Spit	T Habraken

There have been 3 green-flag sightings.

**Firth of Thames.**

13.09.93	1	Miranda	K. Woodley
23.04.94	1	Miranda	B Heather
22.05.94	1	Miranda	T Habraken

There have been 2 South Island green-flag sightings.

**South Island**

08.02.94	1	Brooklands - Christchurch	J Pierre
01.04.94	1	Brooklands - Christchurch	J Pierre

A possible yellow flagged Bar-tailed Godwit was seen on the Kaipara.

12.12.93	1	Jordans	S Hayes
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**RED NECKED STINTS – ORANGE FLAGS**

The first orange-flagged bird to be seen in New Zealand was one at Lake Ellesmere near Christchurch.

22.12.90	1	L Ellesmere	K Harrison
18.04.91	1	L Ellesmere	K Harrison/S Petch
26.10.92	1	L Ellesmere	C Hill
29.10.92	1	L Ellesmere	S Petch
29.12.92	1	L Ellesmere	S Petch

**TURNSTONE - GREEN FLAG**

This bird was caught before being seen and was a bird originally banded in New Zealand, subsequently retrapped in Queensland.

17.10.93	1	Miranda	NZWSG
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This is a complete account of all known flag-sightings in New Zealand and New Zealand flagged birds seen overseas. We are very grateful to at least 34 observers who sent in the 175 sightings. If you have any sightings not on this list please let the editor know and or send the details to the Banding Officer, Department of Conservation, PO Box 10-420 Wellington.