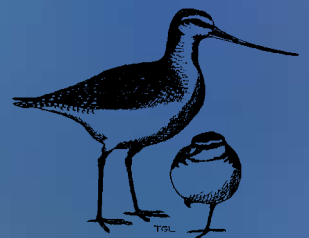




Birding Mangere
Return to Saemangeum
Proposed Shorebird Centre Expansion



November 2010 Issue 79

Upcoming Events note the times!

January 19 - 25

Residential Field Course:

February 12 Saturday

Yalu Jiang Report Launch - 10 years of study at Yalu Jiang will be presented to NZ and Chinese Government officials. An important step in trying to protect the number one site in Asia for Bar-tailed Godwit

March 6 Sunday 9am

Autumn Migration Day: Hightide 08:30 so birdwatching FIRST then TALK at 11 a.m

Guest Speaker: Mark Bellingham - 'State of the Firth of Thames' Dedicated to the New Zealand Ramsar 40th Anniversary Cel-

eburation which is promoting the importance of Coastal Wetlands during March.

March 19-20 Sat-Sun

Photographic Course with Bruce Shanks.

May 21 Sunday 9 a.m.

Annual General Meeting:

Birdwatching FIRST as early tide TALK 11 a.m

Guest Speaker: Dr Robert Hoare - The Ghosts on the Coast and other Mythic Moths of Miranda

June 19 Sunday

OSNZ - Firth of Thames, Wader Census: Ph Tony Habraken 09-238-5284 for details

Contact the Centre for details of these events. 09 232 2781

Front Cover: Students at Kaurilands School welcomed back the godwits this year, along with many others. See article page 16.

Back Cover: We first spotted this bird in an estuary on the Omokoroa Golf Course, took some photos and to our delight discovered it was a Black Fronted Dotterel. It was feeding in the same small area for 6 weeks before it disappeared, probably south to Hawkes Bay or beyond (we hope). Photo Alan Fox


We Want You!

I apologise that this "November" issue of the News has come out so late, we are still looking for a new editor, and if anyone is interested in, or has questions about the role please contact me at gillianv@actrix.co.nz.

We are lucky in this issue to have an article from council member Phil Hammond, reading it will show you where waders can be seen around Mangere, including the old sewage pond area. This is an article that should be of interest not only to Aucklanders, but to those with a few hours to wait at Auckland Airport, as the area can be quickly reached from the airport.

Also in this issue Keith Woodley discusses his return to Saemangeum, this is important to us as the Saemangeum picture is one potential future for the Yalu Jiang site, and the drop in population of the Great Knot could be mirrored by our godwits if we are not careful. This is one reason for the special event that is being held in February 2011, see the details above.

The deadline for the next issue of MNT News is 20 Jan, I look forward to your contributions!

Gillian Vaughan 

From the Blackboard
25 November 2010

Arctic Migrants

Bar-tailed Godwit	3000
Black-tailed Godwit	1
Red Knot	600
Turnstone	25
Golden Plover	20
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1
Curlew Sandpiper	2
Red-necked Stint	2
Semi-palmated plover	1

New Zealand Species

Pied Oystercatcher	
Wrybill	
Banded Dotterel	
NZ Dotterel	
Variable Oystercatcher	
Black-billed Gull	
Red-billed Gull	
White-fronted Tern	350
Caspian Tern	
Pied Stilt	500
Royal Spoonbill	4

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The Newsletter of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust is published four times a year to keep members in touch, and to bring news of events at the Miranda Shorebird Centre and along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.

Birding Mangere Waterfront

Phil Hammond

This is not going to be a history of Mangere Sewage Ponds. Although that would be an interesting article there are other members who are more qualified to write that. It's also not written for people who know the area well. Rather this is intended to be a guide for people who are not familiar with the area, or the later developments in it, to



help them to look for birds. A map is on page 5 and areas are numbered, except Mahunga Drive and Oruarangi Road, for which directions are given.

1. Mahunga Drive

When approaching Mangere from the northwest, coming down the south-western motorway take the Mahunga Drive offramp; most birding is to the west (right turn) but you might like first to turn left and drive about 100m until you are about to leave the waterfront. There is a grass verge on the northern side of the wire fence in front of industrial premises where on smaller tides, or on incoming bigger tides, godwits, stilts, a few knots and gulls often gather.

I have seen a Black-tailed Godwit among the bar-tails, as well as several hybrid stilts, and it's a good place to look for Black-billed Gulls. If you see some gulls roosting on the shore line and others swimming in shallow water the swimmers are the first to look at for black-billed field marks (more careful examination is required with juveniles of course).

2. Kiwi Esplanade

The major attraction here are the thousands of South Island Pied Oystercatchers (SIPO) that roost on the lawns at high tide in winter opposite Banbury Place. Picking out the Variable Oystercatchers (VOC) among the thousands of SIPO is always interesting, especially finding the pied versions of VOC, and it's a good place to see the difference in size between the two. Even in summer some of the SIPO don't make the journey south to migrate and will be present. On rare occasions when the grass is short and wet enough big flocks of mixed godwits and knots also roost here.

The rocky foreshore is always worth checking for Black-billed Gulls, the resident Reef Herons or vagrants, and at low tide spoonbills can sometimes be seen wading in shallow water swishing their bills from side to side sifting tiny food items.

3. Ambury Farm Paddocks

At the end of Kiwi Esplanade is a locked gate, the paddocks behind

are public and are part of Ambury Farm Park. These paddocks sometimes hold mixed flocks of godwits and knots but you probably won't see them from the gate and will have to walk up the hill a bit. If you approach Ambury Farm from Ambury Road instead, the paddocks to your left usually hold SIPO, sometimes in their thousands at high tide in winter.

Spoonbills also occasionally roost in these paddocks, and it is always worth checking for more unusual species as well; I saw a Cattle Egret among the cattle behind the children's area a few years ago.

4. The "Long" And "Small" Shell Islands

These are a major attraction for wader enthusiasts. They are reached by going through Ambury Farm Park from the Ambury Road entrance. Go through the main entry gates and carry on in a straight line until you come to closed gates. Park at the side of the road and walk in a straight line with large paddocks to your left and



Photo Ian Southey



Above: A Chestnut Teal was seen in the canal area in 2010. It spent some time displaying to the locals before it disappeared. Photo Ian Southey



Above: Hybrid Stilts are regularly seen from the Big Shell Island. Black Stilts are not unheard of. Below: SIPO line up in formation at Kiwi Esplanade. Photos Ian Southey



farm buildings and small paddocks on your right, you will then come to another closed gate but with double kissing gates to the side, once through them you are faced with wide tracks to left and right, take the left and walk another 200m or so until you come to an intersection at which you turn right and then after another 200m or so you will come to a hide.

Now in front of you are the "small" and "long" shell islands. Don't walk onto these as NZ Dotterel and other natives breed here.

In winter it's not uncommon to see 2,000 or more Wrybill (about half the world's population) roosting here at high tide with other waders. In summer when the arctic migrants have arrived mixed flocks of thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots are often seen. When these large flocks are present there will almost always be something unusual, and sometimes a rarity among them.

On some days however there are hardly any birds here; if it's high tide they are likely to be at one of the other nearby roosts and you will need to walk to your left. There is a small creek to be negotiated, if it's a big tide at its highest you probably need to walk back and around this (see map) on smaller tides you can probably use the stepping stones to cross.

5. The "Big" Shell Island

This is to the east of the hide and can be reached by crossing the creek described above or walking in from the other direction from the carpark on the corner of Creamery and Greenwood Roads. Again don't climb over the wall and go onto the sanctuary island, natives including NZ Dotterel also breed here.

The eastern side of the island holds more than 200 Royal Spoonbills in winter and eight or nine in summer when the rest are away breeding. On top of the island big flocks of arctic migrants as well as a lot of Black-

backed Gulls, Caspian Terns, and stilts are often present and in winter the big flock of Wry-bill are sometimes here as well as overwintering godwits and knots. A hybrid stilt or two are often seen, and rarely an all black one.

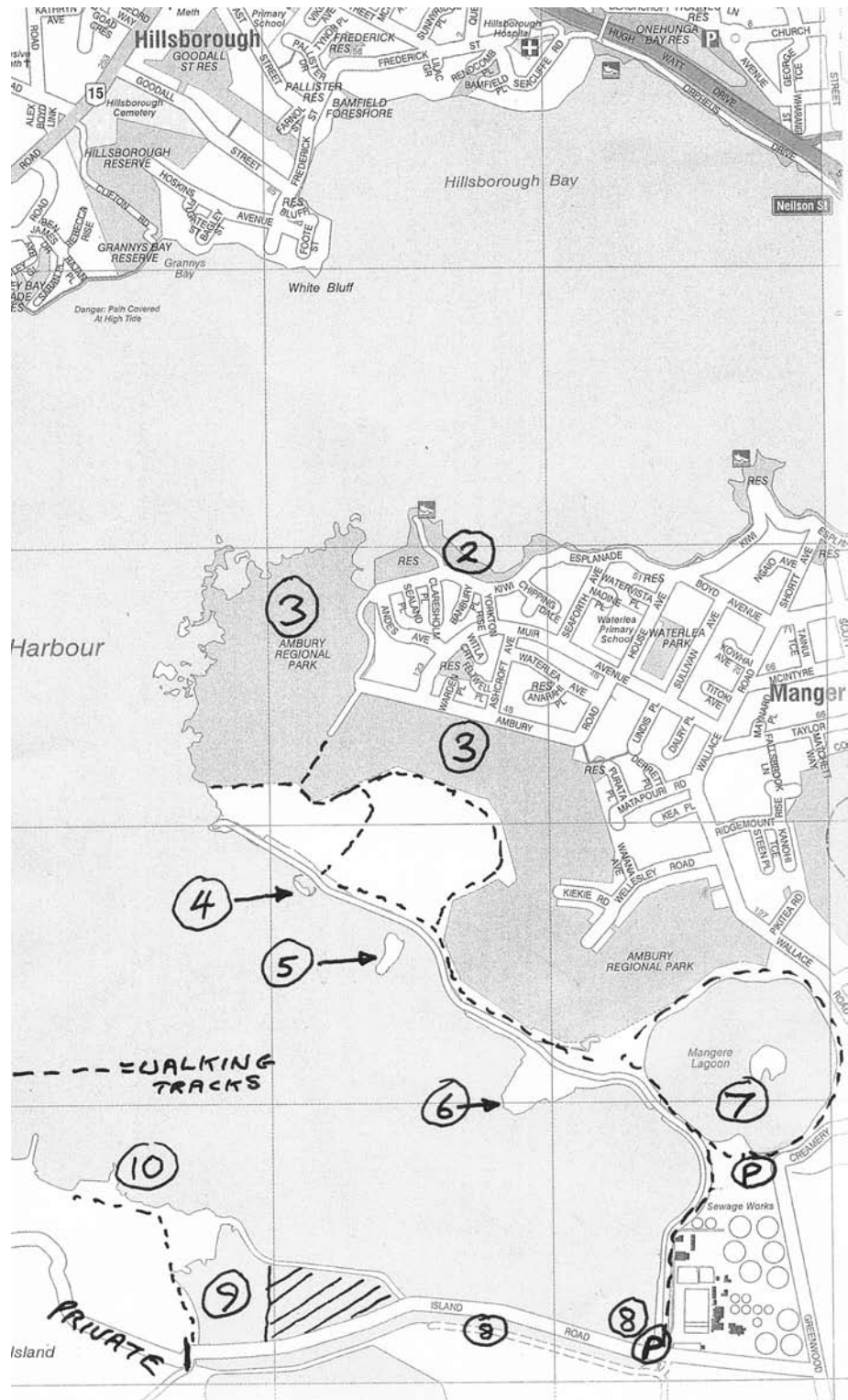
As the tide drops godwits and knots sometimes move to the mud to the left (on smaller tides they may roost through high tide on the mud) and it's a good place to look for bands and flags.

6. "Radio Mast"

Walk another 200 to 300m to the east (towards the treatment plant) and you will come to a triangular peninsula with a wire mesh fence across the base of it. This land once had a tall radio mast on it, hence the colloquial name, but it was removed a few years ago.

This is another major wader roost and its surface has been enhanced by Watercare with advice from ARC and big numbers of waders are often here at high tide. Watercare have recently built an earthen mound on the public side of the fence so that birders can see and count the birds better but here and at the shell islands you really need a scope.

Great Knot, Greater Sandplover, Semi-palmated Plover, Grey Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, and Black-tailed Godwit have all been seen here or on the shell islands in the last couple of years, often challenging to find in a big mixed flock. Curlew Sandpipers are more common on the southern side of the harbour but last year one was around this foreshore and two or more Sharp-tailed Sandpipers are present here or on the shell islands most years.



I usually start at the shell islands and then move to the radio mast, if the bulk of the birds are not in one place they will be at the other. If you are only going to the radio mast and not the hide the radio mast is more easily reached by parking in a car park on the corner of Greenwood and Creamery roads and walking in from there.

7. The Lagoon (or crater)

This is a short walk from the Greenwood and Creamery Roads carpark mentioned above. Three or four years ago this was a great birding spot for feeding waders on rising and falling tides and on smaller tides roosting around the edges, but in recent years it's a waste of time for birders (unless you are looking for Greenfinches and Pukekos), the waders have abandoned it at all tide stages.



8. The Causeway (Island Road)

To get to this spot turn into Island Road from Greenwoods Road, drive past the Watercare works until the road becomes a causeway with mud (or at high tide, sea) on your right and a canal on your left.

The canal is fresh water, well "fresh" might be a misnomer but it's not salt, and so it's a good place to look for the fresh water wader Black-fronted Dotterel, Dabchick are usually present and naturally there are plenty of ducks. Most of the ducks are Mallards or Mallard/Grey Duck hybrids (some have strong Grey Duck plumage on their heads but orange legs and or blue or turquoise speculums gives them away). Grey Teal, parrie, shoveller, and plenty of swans are usually present but Scaup only rarely.

This canal is always worth checking for more scarce or even rare birds. Last year we had up to eight Brown Teal for some months and a Chestnut Teal was present for a few days.

The best time to look for Black-fronted Dotterels is about two hours after high tide when Watercare lowers the water levels. As with Curlew Sandpipers, stints are more common on the southern side of the harbour but in 2005 I saw a Red-necked Stint feeding in this canal, it's the only one I've seen at Mangere and the only time I've seen one feeding in fresh water anywhere, it was in almost full breeding plumage.

The other side of the causeway is salt water and the rock embankment near the works is a good place to sit and watch waders come increasingly close as the tide comes in; mornings are best, in the late afternoon you are looking into the sun. It's also a good place to watch Wrybill feeding with heads turned to one side.

When you drive down Island Road just as the road becomes causeway there is a place to park on your right and a track heading north along the foreshore, this is an alternative route to the "Radio Mast" and the shell islands. The causeway is more peaceful on weekends or evenings, during the week trucks are hurtling up it every few minutes.

9. Storage Basin

This is on the right hand side of the causeway just before Puketutu Island and most of the time it holds hundreds of ducks and sometimes spoonbills, it's also worth checking for rarities. A few years ago a NZ Falcon was seen in the trees on the edge of this pond for a couple of months.

Just before the storage basin is an area of wasteland with fresh water puddles, and also good for Black-fronted Dotterels. The optimist in me says this is great habitat for a rarity like Common Sandpiper or perhaps even NZ's first Wood Sandpiper!!! No luck yet but I usually at least glance as I drive by and sometimes stop for a minute to give it the once over.

10. Puketutu Island

Part of the island is presently an industrial site and part private property-, birders are not welcome, but part of it has been purchased for a future park which will surely have great potential.

You can walk around

a track on the eastern and northern sides and scarce egret species have been recorded on the rocks here in years gone by.

I occasionally walk around here at low tide, if I feel like an hour or two of lazy birding, sit quietly on the foreshore and watch spoonbills and waders feeding, it's the sort of place that you never know what might turn up.

11. Oruarangi Road and Stonefields

If you drive along Greenwoods Road, turn right into Ascot Road and carry on to Oruarangi Road there is, just before Oruarangi Creek, a carpark and toilet on your right, (toilet locked weekends). The amount of windscreen glass on the tarseal of the carpark suggests this is not a place to leave your car with valuables visible.

From this carpark there is a wooden footbridge over the creek and a footpath around the waterfront leading to another hide and the Stonefields Reserve.

This hide is rarely if ever used by local birders, there are no waders to see from it and the only birds seen here are very common species that can be seen on the side of the road anywhere.

However the track does pass some wetlands and the area is probably somewhat "under-birded". I've seen a White Heron both in paddocks from this track and down in Oruarangi Creek. It's another of those places where most days you'll see no birds of interest but something of real interest might turn up, especially after big westerly storms.


There are other good birding spots between here and the airport including in industrial areas and some interesting factory roofs further east up the harbour where waders roost on roof tops, but that's another story. 



Photo Ian Southey

Return To Saemangeum

Keith Woodley

In October I was invited to speak at a symposium on migratory shorebirds held in Mokpo, South Korea. A number of speakers from around the world were hosted by the Korean National Parks Service and Shinan County. Prior to the symposium, several field trips to Saemangeum and the Geum River were organised.



The sealed road dips and ends; now there is just coarse sand and tire tracks coiling out on the flats.

Swathes of low, thick vegetation extend either side, and disappear into the grey haze. The greens and dark mauve of these salt tolerant colonisers are virtually the only splashes of colour in a landscape otherwise devoid of tone. Along the distant channel edge, among the lines of thin posts marking fish traps – for some people continue to eke out a meagre existence from this place – a few curlew and a pair of Greenshanks forage. There then comes a sound that, in an instant, transports me back to previous visits here. Two F-16s roar off the end of the runway behind us and disappear into the murk above,

their flight loud and intrusive where not so long ago substantial flocks of shorebirds shared these skies. But no more, for here near the edge of the largest remaining US air base in Asia, the Saemangeum seawall begins.

Further up the estuary lies the great spit at Okgu where, just four years ago, 60,000 Great Knots swirled in spectacular formation. But there are few if any Great Knot using this place now. For this area too is a swathe of thick vegetation. Seven or eight large fishing dinghies are moored along what remains of the tidal channel, the catch from one being loaded onto a truck. This activity too, is but a tiny echo of what was once a thriving fishing community for which the Saemangeum development repre-

sented catastrophe. Of 1207 fishing boats active at the time of the seawall closure in 2006, fewer than 100 remained active by 2007. 'In April and May 2008, many of these boats were broken up and even set on fire. The shellfish industry is also in collapse, and overall, some 90 per cent of the 20,000 local people who formerly depended on Saemangeum's fisheries have lost their livelihoods.' (SSMP 2008).

But despite the mass destruction of habitat within the two estuaries of Saemangeum, there is still plenty of bird activity here – for the moment. A small dark cloud of birds whirl and swing over the distant river channel – a thousand or so Common Teal being harassed by a Peregrine. A Grey

Wagtail alights briefly on the roof of an old concrete bunker on the stop bank beside us. Immediately above us we watch a Hobby hawking for dragonflies, a spectacle that continues for over half an hour. Further up the river on a bar along the opposite channel are a dozen or so Black-faced Spoonbills with three Great Knots foraging around them. There is also shorebird activity on the densely vegetated spit immediately below us – a snipe flushes briefly and two Wood Sandpipers pass by and land among the vegetation. But there is no



Once were mudflats, cycling on the mudflats at Simpo, in the background is what was once an island.

longer suitable habitat here for most shorebirds, and nothing we see today in any way approaches the spectacles of massed flocks of birds that once occurred here.



The plans for the Saemangeum Estuary

Even allowing for the fact that this is the time of southward migration, when fewer birds make use of this place, it remains but a shadow of its former status – one of the most important sites in the entire flyway.

Furthermore habitat destruction here is by no means over. Work is due to begin building the inner dykes along the river channels to complete the land ‘reclamation’ process.

The next stop on our tour is a temple on the south bank of the Mangyeung, above which a lookout tower offers a panorama of Saemangeum. For visitors unaware of the ecologi-



The old Seawall at Okgu. This is the site where a flock of 80,000 Great Knot were seen, and recorded on video, in flight

cal costs, there is ample evidence of just how impressive is the scale of this development. There are still large expanses of water and tidal flats to be seen on these estuaries, for the rivers still flow. But even from this great distance one can see how vegetation is establishing in many formerly tidal areas. On the northern side of the Mangyeung, as well as along both sides of the Dongjin behind us, a few small settlements sit among vast areas of rice fields – an indication that development is no recent phenomenon here. These areas too were once tidal flats that succumbed long before Saemangeum began.

From here we head west, to Simpo at the end of the peninsula that divides the two estuaries. Here along the edges of what remains of the tide, we find an array of birds - egrets and herons, Dunlin, Kentish Plover, a few Great Knot, several Bar-tailed Godwit (including a juvenile); curlews, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Lesser Sandplover, and a dozen or so distant Black-faced Spoonbill.

But over the flats on which we stand, now hard, coarse sand, the tide no longer flows. If it does still flow elsewhere within Saemangeum, it does so on an artificial cycle – one quite unpredictable for estuarine fauna. For instance, during most of the 2008 survey period for the SSMP, sluices in the seawall were left open which produced a tidal range of about 1.3 m, compared with about 0.25 m in 2007. However both these levels are nowhere near the natural tidal range during spring high tides of over 7 m prior to the seawall closure in 2006. Moreover the tides in 2008 peaked two to three hours later than tides outside the seawall, and submerged extensive areas of tidal flats, especially in the outer Mangyeung. Yet would this not be beneficial to some benthic fauna? Well yes and no. During very low spring tides in both April and May the seawall sluices remained

closed. These closures were apparently attempts to control increasing water pollution, but resulted in previously sub-tidal mudflats being exposed for periods of four to five days. This, along with changes in salinity, are likely to have been the main factors associated with broad-scale benthos die-offs on the lower tidal flats of Saemangeum. (SSMP 2008)

At Simpo, apart from a few scattered shell fragments there is little to indicate benthic life. Vegetation is starting to establish here and there, and as if to emphasise just how different this area now is, two cyclists slowly make their way towards the base of the spit – the going smooth and firm for them.

It is past 3.30 when we finally cast off and head across the Geum to Yubu. The south bank of the channel is lined with ships and bulk cargo facilities, and out in the stream we pass a number of dredges. Beyond them lies the low humps and flat spits of Yubu Island, the most important single shorebird site remaining in South Korea. The tide is still several hours off high, but already several hundred Eurasian Oystercatchers are sub roosting just upstream from our landing place. The long concrete jetty is familiar from past visits, so too the thick lines of flotsam – floats, bottles, plastic of all descriptions – along the outer beach. Along the surf line scurry a dozen busy Sanderlings. From the northern edge of the island extend vast mudflats where we can see distant curlew and Kentish Plover, along with several hundred Dunlin and a sprinkling of Grey Plover. Later, once the tide has advanced, there are many small birds working along the edge of the flats, among them two Spoonbill Sandpipers, one of them a juvenile. It is heartening indeed to know that at least one juvenile is in the population at this stage. Yet this is quickly tempered once one remembers just how precarious is the

continued existence of these singular birds.

Saemangeum was once the most important staging site in the world for Spoonbill Sandpipers. In the 1990s counts of nearly 300 were made. Now with the total world population estimated to be between 150 and 300 pairs, counts from the three year SSMP reveal a harrowing trend: from 34 in 2006, to 31 in 2007, to only 3 in 2008. Elsewhere in Korea the data is similarly stark: on the Nakhdong Estuary, where once “several hundred” were recorded, there are now less than 10 annually following construction of a barrage. (SSMP Report 2008) So the juvenile bird foraging forty metres away from us bears poignant significance; will it survive to be an adult? If so, will it witness the end of its kind?

While the Geum estuary currently appears to be free from the threat of large-scale mudflat destruction, the shadow of Saemangeum a few kilometres to the south lies across here too. Local fishers have noticed signs of deterioration in the mudflats here, apparently the result of

increased silting and changes to sea currents following closure of the seawall. ‘Declining yields of shellfish, particularly immature bivalves, have been reported even as harvesting intensity by humans has increased as former Saemangeum fishermen seek new harvesting grounds in the Geum Estuary.’ (SSMP 2008)


The Geum Estuary is now Korea’s premier shorebird site, with 14 species occurring in internationally significant numbers in 2008, and a further five in numbers of staging significance; the Geum remains the most important non-breeding site in the EAAF for Eastern Oystercatcher, and the most important staging site in the EAAF for Nordmann’s Greenshank. It is also important for Great Knot, the other species to be most negatively affected by habitat destruction at Saemangeum. Specialists in feeding on small bivalves, and restricted entirely to foraging with the intertidal area, the percentage of the world population supported by Saemangeum fell from 22.7% in 2006 to less than 3.2% in 2008. The Geum Estuary is now the most important site in Korea for these birds,

so changes in the intertidal area may spell further bad news for them. Conservation of this area must remain a very high priority.

The symposium was a welcome opportunity to revisit these places that were last seen in 2007. The invitation arrived at relatively short notice, but any opportunity to speak about shorebirds to any audience anywhere around the Yellow Sea must be taken. It was particularly interesting to see this part of the world at a different season. All my previous visits to both Korea and China have been from mid-April to early May. At that time rice fields are still being prepared for sowing, which means much of the landscape is bare earth, usually under grey skies. This time the sky was clear for much of the time, and rice was either already harvested or about to be. So everywhere there was much activity in a landscape of greens and tawny yellows.

My thanks to the Korean National Park Service and the government of Shinan County for supporting this visit to Korea.

Further Reading:

Moores N., Rogers D., Kim R-H., Hassell C., Gosbell K., Kim S-A & Park M-N. 2008 The 2006-2008 Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring Program Report Birds Korea publication, Busan. 




The Birds Korea Blueprint 2010

<http://www.birdskorea.org/Habitats/YSBR/BK-HA-YSBR-Blueprint-2010.shtml>

Written in two languages the Blueprint 2010 is a collection of articles and recommendations based on the understanding that biodiversity underpins the functioning of the ecosystems on which people also depend for life and livelihood. The Blueprint’s focus is the conservation of avian biodiversity of the South Korean part of the Yellow Sea.

While much of the detail in this 160 page collection is based around work in South Korea it is also a pulling together of knowledge from other parts of the flyway, there are articles about MNT, and our work in Yalu Jiang and North Korea, there is also details about the Red Knots at Bohai Bay. In addition to the shorebird sections there are sections on Seabirds and Marine areas as well as conservation on islands. It ends with a series of recommendations for conserving avian biodiversity.

While recommendations made include the gathering of strong scientific data they focus on building communication and relationships, for example building the Millennium Development Goal of Environmental Sustainability and the target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss into national planning and statements,

The pdf is a large download, however the book can also be read online without downloading the whole file at once. 

Notes on discovery of first recorded breeding of Bay-backed Shrike in the UAE

Nigel Milius

My wife, Miranda council member Wendy Hare, and I were travelling from New Zealand to the UK to work for the northern summer and decided to have a few days birding in the United Arab Emirates on route. Neither of us had been to the area before, and, whilst we had been told June wasn't going to be the best



Adult Bay-backed Shrike. Photo Mike Barth

time of year (few birds and very hot!), this was when it fitted and we were determined to make the best of the opportunity. Our first couple of days we were guided by ex-pat birder Steve James who not only found us lots of good birds but also gave us plenty of information on where we might find other species in the four days we had on our own. He also suggested we bought a cheap mobile phone and told us not to hesitate to phone him should we be struggling to find the sites or the birds, a very kind offer and one of which we were to avail ourselves on a regular basis!

So it was that on the morning on June 7th we found ourselves at Masafi Wadi looking for Streaked Scrub-warblers. Having eventually found a couple which had given us reasonable views, we started to make our way back to the car. There was a shrike perched in a low acacia tree which we took to be a Southern Grey Shrike as we had seen several of these, both at this site and elsewhere. As it was perched, we thought it would be a good chance to get the scope on it and have a better

look. The bird was a youngster but didn't look at all right for a Grey. However, neither of us are very familiar with any Shrikes; maybe Southern Grey's do look very different to adults? Maybe they do have rufous tails? We had probably passed these birds on our way out without giving them a second glance as the only new bird here was going to be the scrub-warbler which we were intent on finding.

On consulting the field guide the ID was straightforward, we were watching an adult and 2 fledged, but young, Bay-backed Shrikes (*Lanius vittatus*)! We watched them for 20 minutes or so, through the scope and (mostly) bins as they were moving about over an area probably about 80 meters across, sometimes

perching, sometimes on the ground. The adult was catching insects and feeding them to the youngsters, though the youngsters were also catching their own. All three were very active. The mottled juveniles still had traces of down visible, and one seemed to show the remnants of a gape. Both were begging for food.

This was a nice find (though at this point we didn't know how nice!), it was a lifer for both of us and not a bird we even had on our "might see" list. However, as it was obviously breeding, it presumably wasn't that uncommon right? Given that Steve had been both meticulous and comprehensive with the information he had given us, it was curious that he hadn't mentioned the species as possible here, so we decided to phone him.

Steve was a little excited by our news! Yes, that was what we were looking at! No, they hadn't been recorded breeding here before (or anywhere else in UAE for that matter)! It was not even a very common bird pass-



Juvenile Bay-backed Shrike. Photo Mike Barth

ing through the country on migration (about 16 previous records all up, though spring 2010 had seen an unprecedented total of 3 being seen in the country). Its normal range is the Indian sub continent, the nearest regular population being in SE Iran, although there is one breeding record from neighbouring Oman in 2004. He asked us if we had a GPS (no) and if we could try to write a description of the site. We had a digital camera with us, and though the birds were too flighty to photograph with our equipment, we were able to take a few shots to show exactly where we were at Masafi Wadi (a wide, dry valley with a veritable rabbit warren of side valleys and twisting tracks), built a couple of small cairns to mark the site, and endeavoured to make notes on how to find the spot. This was all e-mailed through to Steve that afternoon and quickly circulated around the local birding community. We were delighted to hear that on the following and subsequent days, several birders were able to get out there, follow our directions, and find and photograph the birds!

It was fantastic that the technology available to us enabled us to get the information out so quickly so that others were able to both enjoy the birds and confirm the record, the rarest bird we've ever found by a country mile, and the icing on the

cake of an extremely enjoyable few days! I'm heartily glad we didn't listen to those who said June was a terrible month to go birding in the UAE. 🐦



Ramsar Turns Forty

Gillian Vaughan

"In 1971 New Zealand joined other nations at a convention in Ramsar, Iran, to formulate plans for protecting the world's wetlands. At that time the world's remaining wetlands were fast disappearing under an ever-increasing demand for agricultural land and industrial sites. These changes were occurring at an alarming rate without recognition of the important roles wetland ecosystems play in providing freshwater and natural resources for use. The meeting resulted in the development of the Ramsar Convention for the Protection of Wetlands which is celebrated by World Wetlands Day, on 2nd February each year." (from Ramsar Wetlands" www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/about-doc/concessions-and-permits/conservation-revealed/ramsar-wetlands-lowres.pdf)

New Zealand acceded to the Ramsar Convention in 1976, with Farewell Spit and Waituna Lagoon and currently has six Ramsar sites,

- Farewell Spit at the top of the South Island,
- Firth of Thames in the Hauraki Gulf,
- Kopuatai Peat Dome on the Hauraki Plains,
- Manawatu Estuary near Foxton,
- Awarua Waituna Lagoon in Southland,
- Whangamarino wetland in the northern Waikato.

If you'd like to know more about these sites visit the DoC link above.

In 2011 the Ramsar Convention celebrates its fortieth anniversary. Around the world plans are underway to celebrate this, Ramsar are

keeping up to date with these at www.ramsar.org, then go to activities and 40th Anniversary.

In New Zealand, a 'Ramsar Celebration Committee' has been created with representatives from the Department of Conservation, Fish & Game, the National Wetland Trust, Forest & Bird and previously Auckland Regional Council and Manukau City Council. Plans are

underway to use the anniversary as a chance to raise the profile of wetlands. As part of this the committee has planned a wetlands type event or theme each month. March has been designated to celebrate Coastal Wetlands and MNT is happy to assign our March Farewell to the Birds event as our contribution to the Ramsar celebrations. The speaker will be Mark Bellingham, who will address the issue of the current state of the Firth of Thames.

As further details of Ramsar events are available MNT will make them known to our members, for those who wish to keep even further up to date I recommend visiting the website of the National Wetlands Trust www.wetlandtrust.org.nz/ramsar.html.

World Wetlands day is held each year on February 2nd, commemorating the signing of the convention on wetlands. The lead agency around the country for this event is Fish and Game (visit www.fishandgame.org.nz and search for World Wetlands Day). For those more local to Miranda the National Wetlands Trust are also planning a celebration, details will be on their website closer to the day. 🐦



from the Chair

Gillian Vaughan

I advised those who attended the recent open day that council would present the reasons why we are looking at a building expansion, and what areas we were looking to change and expand. Eila Lawton has written an article elsewhere in this issue, I would urge members to read it and contact me if you have any



comments or concerns. A general plan of the expansion has been produced, but the drawings are not yet at the stage where it is appropriate to publish them. I expect they will be published in a later issue of the newsletter.

Sibson Award

It gives me great pleasure to advise members that Jimmy Choi, a PhD candidate at Massey University, is the first recipient of the Sibson Award. The main aims of his work are to look at the two Bar-tailed Godwit subspecies that stage at Yalu Jiang during northward migration, first estimating the numbers and turnover rates of the two subspecies and second comparing their staging ecology, including their stopover duration, degree of pre-supplemental moult, habitat use, food choice and foraging efficiency.

Jimmy's work at Yalu Jiang coincides with the Trust's work at this, the main northward staging site for New Zealand's godwits. We'll look forward with some anticipation to the outcomes of his research. One of the requirements of the award is that the successful applicant either writes an article for MNT News, or presents at a Miranda event, so members will have the chance to see the outcomes of his research.

This is the first year of the Sibson Award, my hope is that in future we will attract applicants of the same high quality as we have in this inaugural year.

Centre News

Shorebird Guide

Last summer the Trust employed Kristelle Wi who spent much of her summer at the hide talking to tour-

ists, showing godwits and knots to those that passed by and sharing information about their migration. We are lucky to have her back this summer, she will once again be spending time at the shellbanks and hide area, in addition this year she will be taking on the responsibility for predator trapping. To date she has trapped a number of mustelids, stoats, weasels and ferrets. It is hoped that with the extra trapping the NZ Dotterels, Variable Oystercatchers and Black-billed Gulls will have more breeding success.

The funding to employ Kristelle this season came from the ASB Community Trust Environment Fund. I would like to thank Alister Harlow for the work that he put into gaining this funding.

In the October and November period both Keith and Maria have been absent from the Centre for reasonable lengths of time, having Kristelle present as well as our usual reliable volunteers has made the transition much easier. I would like to thank those volunteers who have taken the time to be at the Centre over this period.

Carpark and Hide

The new carpark near the hide is now operational, however when parking there you will still need to take your valuables with you. Disappointingly there have been incidents of vandalism within the gate and Council has decided to put a combination lock on the gate. If the gate is locked on your arrival please head up to the Centre for the combination.



Birding After the open day, no matter how we looked the Semi-palmated Plover would not appear, it was seen again a few days later. Photo: David Lawrie

Currently the only way over the car-park fence is to use one of two stiles, the Department of Conservation has committed to installing a kissing gate shortly. They are also looking to re-align the track from the Centre to the hide, a welcome development which should mean people end up on the correct side of the electric fence.

John Rowe has erected a short fence which goes around the hide which should stop over enthusiastic bulls from attempting to push it over, making holes near the door or leaving presents for bird watchers sheltering from the rain. There is a large crossing point on this fence, and it can be taken down easily if there are numerous people about. If you do open the fenceline please close it when you leave.

Events

The Welcome to the Birds was held on October 31st. The speaker was Julian Fitter who spoke about Biodiversity in New Zealand. With some amazing pictures Julian led us through a picture of New Zealand, from the plants to the insects and of course the birds. The talk ended with an animated discussion around sustainability. Following the talk many of those attending headed for the shellbanks where the birds put on a show.

With reference to the new building plans, I was sitting at the back of the centre and noticed at least seven groups of people who were not aware of the open day and came to the Centre during the time Julian was speaking.

The Working Bee was held the day before the open day, with very limited attendance. We have decided to move the Working Bee back to be run in conjunction with the Potluck Dinner to encourage support. We are also planning to institute a regular email reminder of events. Please remember to put your email on your

renewal notices if you wish to receive these.

Courses

The Photography Course with Bruce Shanks was held in September and was well subscribed. This was the first course run by Brigid Glass, our new course convenor. Unfortunately both the New Zealand Dotterel Course and the Wader ID were cancelled this year, for different reasons.

The Dotterel Management course is aimed at those who are either working or volunteering in Dotterel protection. Much of the support for the course comes from government and councils. It is expected that in the future the course will be run again.

The Wader ID course was also cancelled due to a lack of participants, however this is likely to have been caused by the new Shorebird Counting workshop that is being run in conjunction with OSNZ this year. It was noted at the June Census that the number of experienced counters seems to be decreasing and this is one way in which we hope to increase the skill base. It is hoped that out of this weekend we can begin to establish a set of material that can be used around the country. The counting course is now full with a waiting list.

Local News

Aquaculture

The government's approach to aquaculture seems to have been to begin making decisions with very little in the way of consultation, and at this point it appears that there will be a large increase in the amount of aquaculture in the Firth and the Hauraki Gulf. Council is keeping communication channels open with other organisations and individuals to see if there is a place for us to make comment on this issue, however I have little hope that this will occur.

Internationally

EAAFP


David Lawrie has taken on the role of International Liaison for the Trust and has been keeping in contact with staff from the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership. Aram Lee was here from the Partnership office in Seoul, and took most of her time from her holiday to work with David, she visited Miranda and several shorebird sites on the Manukau Harbour and met with representatives of the Department of Conservation where the issues facing Yalu Jiang were discussed.

David will be attending the meeting of the flyway partnership in December in Cambodia, I'd like to thank David for the work he is doing raising the profile of Miranda and Yalu Jiang at the international level.

New members of the flyway partnership include Bangladesh and Thailand, although we have raised it with them to date the NZ Government has refused to join.

Yalu Jiang

Construction on the new sea wall along the reserve boundary continued over the course of the summer. In mid-October we had word that the local government has applied to central government to change the boundaries of the reserve to allow for further development. The area that they have applied to have removed from the reserve is the area we know as Site 2, where most of the godwits will congregate around high tide.

Adrian Riegen and I are currently working on a report about the importance of the area which we hope to be able to present to the Chinese Government before their decision on the reserve is due. The details of how this will be presented are still being determined, however an event will be held of February 12 at the Shorebird Centre. Please join us! 

Why are we considering an extension to the Shorebird Centre?

Eila Lawton

'So the plan to set up a bird-watchers' lodge at Miranda was finally established... Thus begins Stuart Chambers' entry for 1974 in 'The Story of the Miranda Naturalists' Trust'. Building actually began in 1989. By completion in 1993, the facility



was considerably more than just a place for birdwatchers to stay. Displays, a 'schoolroom', a shop, a library were all included.

17 years later, recent visitors to Miranda may have seen a proposed plan for an extension to the Centre. The Trust's activities and influence have developed far beyond that early vision and have outgrown the facilities provided by the present much-loved building.

Few of us are aware of just what a typical year holds for Miranda. Come to stay for a quiet weekend in winter and you may well wonder why an extension might be needed. Even a busy Open Day, with the Sibson Room overflowing and the courtyard and verandah crammed with people at lunchtime and you might say 'Well, that's only 4 times a year'.

So why is the Council suggesting the addition of a new auditorium, a specialised display area and shop space, more accommodation, a better kitchen, an office, and more?

Miranda Shorebird Centre is now recognised as the most important regional facility focused on education, research and protection of New



It's a familiar picture in this magazine, the Centre full of Chairs for a talk, display panels pushed to one side. Photo David Lawrie

Zealand's shorebirds. The Centre is also recognised by the Hauraki Gulf Forum as a strategically located asset, especially when looking at the development of tourism in the area. We play an important role internationally in our East Asian-Australasian Flyway work.

The Centre now hosts around 20,000 visitors annually. These include overseas and local tourists, national and international politicians, school groups, university students, community groups. They come to learn about the shorebirds and our other areas of interest, they come to see the displays, they come to see the birds, they come to carry out research, they come to use the toilet facilities, they come sometimes just because the Centre's there and they are driving past – and so they learn about the birds.

They come to celebrate their weddings, their anniversaries, to have a week in the peace of this marvellous shoreline. They come to catch and band birds. They come to attend international and national conferences (small ones). They come for meetings. They come to buy Christmas presents or our great choice of natural history books – and so they add to our income,

and they learn a little more about our birds and our fragile world.

They come for our annual field course, for the Dotterel Management course, the art courses and the rest. They come and run their own weekend courses in rug-making and goodness knows what else. 20,000 of them... and did you sign the visitor book last time you called in? Did we count you?

The current buildings comprise a large multipurpose room which has kitchen and bathroom facilities, and an undivided area which contains the shop, displays and a lounge and dining area for those staying in the Centre. There is a separate classroom which can seat up to 20 people and also houses the Trust library. This room is also the Trust office and storage space. The Centre accommodates

up to 24 people with two self contained flats and four bunkrooms.

When a group comes, even a moderate sized one, the displays must be pushed back and chairs set out so the group can be seated for their introductory talk. Anyone staying in the Centre must make their way through the group, or wait, to get to the kitchen, etc. If there is only one staff member, the shop is open to view but unattended. Over half the displays are of course then hidden from view. Three groups a day equals three lots of furniture moving.

The manager's office is a desk and a filing cabinet in the Wrybill Room. When there is a course or a meeting on there, the office is virtually out-of-bounds, at the very least difficult to access, and its use intrusive. Floor space for the requisite chairs and tables is regularly shrinking as yet more boxes of 'stuff' decorate the floor – there is nowhere else for them.

The Wrybill Room does have a certain cachet as the 'laboratory' where the now-famous E7 received her transmitter implant. But as a place to carry out the research into shorebird feeding in the Firth? No water, dreadful lighting – and anyway, there may be bird banding on the next morning and overflow people will be sleeping on mattresses on the floor... Oops, be careful not to spill the alcohol you are pickling those specimens in on those books from the library!

So what development is under consideration?

The council is working with an architect who has generously volunteered his professional services. The proposed development is designed to cater for the increased number of people who visit the centre, community functions that are held there, and the many training courses that have become a feature of the Trust programme. It includes an office and secure storage space, adequate

kitchen facilities. Laboratory space would allow us to host much-needed research into the ecology of the Firth of Thames, as well as providing better facilities for educational visits.

At the centre of the development is an auditorium to seat 200 people. This would give us the ability to deliver presentations to twice the number of people that the present facility can accommodate. The space is designed to allow versatile use, including classroom working space and seating people for meals and other functions. The auditorium would be set up with a permanent sound system and projector display equipment.

It is envisaged that this versatile space would make the Centre even more attractive for local and regional functions.

It is suggested that the current main building be extended to allow a separation between the area occupied by people staying at the centre and casual visitors to the centre. The current display area which includes a mural, display cases, collections and interpretive panels would be extended to approximately double the existing size.

Adjacent to this area we plan to have a shop and office area. It will be possible to close this area off outside business hours, which is not possible in the current open plan arrangement.


A further development under consideration is a coffeebar/café, probably to be run as a franchise. There is a dearth of such provision in the area, and there are regular queries as to whether we provide food and coffee.

The additional accom-

modation would be in the form of self-contained units like the existing Whimbrel. These are more popular, and accommodation is a good income generator.

To support the increased facility it will be necessary to review the current location and number of water tanks. The sewage system will need to be renewed and extended and an electricity line that currently runs over the property will need to be re-routed or installed underground.

The proposed extension is a big development and needs careful consideration. Increased facilities would allow us to enhance our present activities and grasp new opportunities. They would generate more income. Managing the use of the building would be streamlined. There would also be a greater area to be maintained. Presently we are open 364 days per year. We scrape by with one full-time, one part-time staff, a paid cleaner, and the admirable team of volunteers who contribute in many and varied ways.

I believe MNT's role will continue to expand, as it has done in unthought of ways over the last 17 years. We can make choices as to the directions that growth will take us, but I do believe we should seriously consider this development proposal. We have outgrown our present facilities. 



and after an event or talk it can take some time to get the displays set up again. Photo Chris Thompson



Inspired by Janet Hunt's book, E3 Call Home, some children at Kaurilands School have made some delightful posters to welcome the godwits back to our estuary, the Matakana Estuary. They are now displayed in 3 places at Sandspit, along with the flight path map and a recent Listener article.



In the cities and towns, and out in the field and the godwit's return is noticed.

Matakana Estuary and the children of Kaurilands School weren't the only ones celebrating the arrival of the godwits. Motueka welcomed the godwits back on September 14, unfortunately a few days before their godwits showed up, however school groups put lots of time and effort into the project. You can see the details at <http://www.motuekaonline.org.nz/news/stories/130910s2.html>. Christchurch did their now traditional welcome back to the godwits by ringing the bells on October 2nd, giving the city something to celebrate. Welcome to the Birds were also on at Foxton and Bay of Plenty, as well as at Miranda. If you know of any other events that were held please let me know.

Less well publicised, but perhaps even more enthusiastic, were the people out in the field documenting the shorebirds return. It all started in September....

From: Tony Habraken
Sent: 5/09/2010 11:24 p.m
Subject: new arrivals at Miranda 4.9.10

Hi all,

Today at Miranda.

Signs of early arrivals, at least one godwit showing signs of stress – very light and keely, unable to tuck carpels away and very hungry. Interesting that primaries were not drooping suggesting it may have arrived in last 48 hrs (guessing that it may take that long to get them back up).

Numbers are up also (835) from previous visit (560), though from Miranda this is not always a good indicator considering Piako's ability to skew things a bit.

However there is at least one colour-banded bird not seen since January and another who's combo was only part read (3 of 4 colours) but I'm 95% sure of its other code. Both of these bird's condition did not stand out as indicating they'd just arrived and I suspect they may have arrived some days earlier. The result of an easy trip or quick initial recovery?

Knot have also started arriving, one was being harangued by godwit while I was there, very light in condition, tetchy, very worn breeding plumage, upper and lower and carpels pointing out with a flat back appearance and very hungry, primaries slightly drooped. There were also other odd birds in similar worn BP especially upper (very black and only odd new scapulars) which I suspected may have been here longer than a day or two also, showing no signs of stress, though did feed thru-out the rise and falling tide. Of note was one orange flagged and no birds from our last catch were present in the flock of 60 birds.

Other birds - Golden Plover (1) with a lot of colour, though thin not emaciated or stressed signs. Keith had sighted this bird on Thursday so would be in keeping with how the above are presenting, thus another useful indicator that things did start during last week.

Any other changes today?
Tony

From: Jesse Conklin
Sent: 27/09/2010 5:54 p.m
Subject: Re: Godwit departure 16 Sept

Well, I received the package from Bob (Gill). Right on time, Foxton gained 60 godwits over the weekend, going from 77 to 137.

To date, I have gained back about 100 godwits, which is more than half of what I sent off in March. However, by count of color-banded birds, I'm only at about 35% (21 so far of about 60). Just 2 of 7 datalogger birds are back, with only one datalogger between them.

About 4 or 5 of the newbies had droopy wings, and I still have seen no sign of the start of wing molt. But I only got wing photos of 9 marked birds today, and only one of those was one of last week's flock. So the other 5 early birds could have conceivably got started without me, but my photos don't show any un-banded at score 2-4. Naturally, there are non-migrants at every conceivable stage of wing molt. Only a few of the new birds were interested in foraging as the tide dropped; most were happy to sleep, including a couple that flopped down right on the sloppy mud.

Knots are up to a whopping 4. I seemed to have lost CPJ, but replaced him with CEW.

Anyone else out lately?
Jesse

...and it'll start again next September!



Predator Control 2005- 2009

Keith Thompson

A predator-tracking programme and small-scale trap-monitoring conducted from 2003-5 by Dr John Perrott established that mammalian predators were common within the 28ha Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve. It was decided that a more comprehensive predator control programme was needed to provide better protection and to establish the full extent of the mammalian threat.

A grant to do this was obtained from DoC, trap locations were experimented with during the summer of 2006 and a network was consolidated in July, to be ready for the spring breeding season.

24 Victor snaptraps were purchased in 2006, with the intention of targeting rats in key locations with a denser trap network. There was concern about using these uncovered, even when mounted vertically on stakes, because of possible risk to birds and the public. Some were trialled in improvised covers, but trap maintenance became time-consuming. It was decided to stick with the multi-purpose Fenn traps, even though this reduced the potential for rat catches.

It was soon established that some traps were much more likely to be visited by predators than others so these were baited more frequently from egg-laying until the end of 2006 then again during the breeding season of 07-08.

After the first year of operation, a revised trap pattern was adopted. Several of the traps near the road were removed, as stock damage had been high and catch rates low. Traps on the foreshore shellbanks were re-located to more effective sites. Fenn and Timms traps were also installed at the Centre to protect the Banded Rails that had been nesting there. Due to stock damage, and vandalism (including the disappearance of several traps), extra traps and covers were purchased in mid-2007 and ex-

isting traps cleaned and serviced for the 2008 breeding season.

Full monitoring and pest control was continued until November 2008, when Jenni Hensley resigned her position as Assistant Manager. Limited operations, the Centre and shellbanks, were continued until May 2009.

Conclusions

46 rats, 7 stoats and 4 cats were caught during the 2006-7 period; 38 rats, 6 stoats and 5 cats during 2007-8. Several hedgehogs, rabbits and possums were also removed from the Fenns. The number of hedgehogs surprised us and we considered a special trial using smaller eggs to see if we could increase the catch, however, the capacity to run this was not available. Another useful study would be to try to establish whether stoats are operating within breeding territories or whether the shellbanks just represent overlapping feeding ranges.

There were many instances of traps having been triggered without catching anything. Stock interference accounted for some but not all of these. Had it been possible to run weekly checks at all locations, the tally of catches would very likely have been higher. Even so, the monitoring programme demonstrated a significant presence of predators, with trap-catches occurring more frequently during the bird breeding season and an indication of higher predator numbers closer to the shellbanks.

In addition a better rat catch would have been achieved with 50-100m spacing. 12 tracking tunnels deployed in September 2007 and October 2008 confirmed that rats are more abundant closer to the shellbanks.

An unexpected problem was the difficulty experienced in maintaining the monitoring schedule. When the project was planned, monitoring was to have largely been carried out by students as part of their coursework, but

this arrangement fell through when the staff member changed institutions. Jenni Hensley offered to assist, and by making use of visiting overseas student volunteers and a roster of two or three trustees, the programme was maintained and we are pleased with the outcome. We have gained a lot of insight into predator activity and have developed a much clearer understanding of what we need to do to better protect shorebirds, especially those breeding on-site.

Future

With this experience behind us, the Council is convinced that on-going pest control is needed at Miranda, Kristelle Wi is now running the current programme. We also wish to improve further our understanding of pest ecology along the foreshore, so that trap locations can be better targeted and the number of traps needed to achieve good control minimised.

In addition, we know that good saltmarsh habitat is quite rare now along the coast and want to do more to improve the quality of our coastal vegetation. To date, we have accepted that stock grazing has advantages in restricting the development of vegetative cover for predators, but stock do seriously damage the saltmarsh vegetation, particularly by heavy pugging. We wish to integrate vegetation management operations with the direct methods of pest control. We do regular weed control on the outer shellbanks, but aggressive sward-forming weeds like the exotic sedge *Carex diandra*, which competes with the saltmarsh plants, also needs to be targeted in some areas. We would also like to better protect some of the best saltmarsh areas from stock damage including the high-diversity places with the uncommon *Mimulus repens*. We have thought about trialling one or two small enclosure plots, but have yet to discuss these ideas with the landowner and DoC. Whatever new management plan we come up with, we would like to see a better balance between predator control operations, grazing activity and support for the native saltmarsh vegetation.

Keep up-to-date with events
visit
www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz



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Bequests



Remember the Miranda Naturalists' Trust in your will and ensure that our vital work in education and protection of the migratory shorebirds can continue. For further information and a copy of our legacy letter contact the Shorebird Centre.

Situated on the Firth of Thames between Kaiaua and the Miranda Hot Pools, the Miranda Shorebird Centre provides a base for birders right where the birds are. The best time to see the birds is two to three hours either side of high tide. The Miranda high tide is 30 minutes before the Auckland (Waitemata) tide. Drop in to investigate, or come and stay a night or two.

Accommodation

The Shorebird Centre has bunkrooms for hire and two self-contained flats:

Per bed / night member \$ 15.00

Per bed / night non-member \$ 20.00

Hire of Sandpiper member \$ 50.00

Hire of Sandpiper non-member \$ 60.00

Hire of Whimbrel member \$ 50.00

Hire of Whimbrel non-member \$ 70.00

For further information contact the Shorebird Centre, RD3 Pokeno 2473

Phone /Fax (09) 232 2781 Email: shorebird@farmside.co.nz

Help support the Trust's efforts to educate and promote awareness.

Membership of the Trust entitles you to:

Four Miranda News issues per year.

A discount on overnight accommodation

Invitations to Trust Events

The right to attend the AGM

The right to vote for council members

Membership Rates :

Ordinary Member - \$ 40.00

Family Member - \$ 50.00

Overseas Member- \$ 50.00

Life Member, under 50 - \$ 1200

Life Member, 50 & over - \$ 600

Want to be involved?

Friends of Miranda

A volunteer group which helps look after the Shorebird Centre. If you'd like to help out contact Keith. Helping out can be anything from assisting with the shop, school groups or meeting people down at the shellbanks. Regular days for volunteer training are held. Contact Maria for details.

Long term Volunteers

Spend four weeks or more on the shoreline at Miranda. If you are interested in staffing the visitor centre, helping with school groups or talking to people on the shellbank for a few weeks contact Keith to discuss options. Free accommodation is available in one of the bunkrooms. Use of a bicycle will be available.

Firth of Thames Census

Run by OSNZ and held twice a year the Census days are a good chance to get involved with ongoing field work and research.

Contribute to the Magazine

If you've got something you've written, a piece of research, a poem or a great photo send it in to MNT News. If you want to discuss your ideas contact Gillian Vaughan, gillianv@actrix.co.nz.

Help in the Miranda Garden

While our formal gardening program has ceased if you do have some spare time while around the Centre please feel free to do any garden maintenance you can see needs doing!

Become the Editor

This one's not always on the list but if you are looking to be in the middle of the information loop and take on a bigger role in the Trust then MNT News is looking for a new editor. Contact Keith or Gillian if you'd like to discuss the details.

