



Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust

Owner and operator of:

Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre
Firth of Thames, New Zealand

Media release
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Future brightens for knots and godwits

Today the future has brightened for the red knot and the bar-tailed godwit, New Zealand's 2015 Bird of the Year, says Keith Woodley, Manager of the Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre.

DOC Director-General Lou Sanson and Vice-Minister Chen Fengxue, the Chinese Minister responsible for the State Forestry Administration signed a Memorandum of Agreement this afternoon to protect migratory shorebirds and their habitats. Also, the Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust launched "The Flock" to build support for its conservation activities both in New Zealand and internationally.

"Habitat loss in the Yellow Sea has been a major concern, but now we know two important sites will be permanently protected," explains Keith. "Godwit and knot populations are declining. To protect these birds we must protect their habitats, both here in New Zealand as well as in East Asia where they stopover during migration."

In late 2015, the bar-tailed godwit and red knot were added to the IUCN's Red List of threatened species, along with several other of New Zealand's Arctic migrants. Twenty years ago 65,000 red knots would come to New Zealand each year. Now less than 35,000 make the trip. The red knot population is declining about 5% a year, while godwits are declining more slowly, about 2% a year.

The agreement signed today will help protect two sites in the Yellow Sea that New Zealand birds use on their annual migration to their arctic breeding grounds.

"The loss of these sites would have threatened the survival of the two species," explains Keith. "The first site is a seven kilometre coastal stretch near Luannan in Hebei Province, which is important for red knots. The second site is the Yalu Jiang Nature Reserve in Liaoning, where up to 70% of all New Zealand godwits stop off to refuel.

"The signing of the Agreement is an exciting step following on from the Trust's long engagement with China. The Trust has played a major role in identifying the migratory routes of shorebirds and the habitats in Asia critical to their survival, and advocating for their protection.

"We began visiting the Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve 17 years ago, studying the birds in China and gaining a better understanding of the habitats they use during migration. In 2004 we established a sister-site relationship with Yalu Jiang, in recognition of the site's importance to our birds.

“Local actions are equally as important for protecting the future of these birds, particularly managing roosting and feeding habitats. That is the story we will be telling through ‘The Flock’,” says Keith.

The Flock was launched today at the Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre, following the signing of the Agreement. The Trust is creating The Flock to help spread the message about the threats facing our shorebirds, and the actions needed to protect them. These decorated birds will be seen in increasing numbers around the country over the course of the next 12 months.

“We’d like to thank the New Zealand and Chinese governments for the step they have taken today to protect migratory shorebirds. It will keep the birds coming!”

ENDS

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About the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists’ Trust

The Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists’ Trust is an independent conservation organisation that has focused on protecting shorebirds for over 40 years.

The Trust works in partnership with Ngāti Pāoa (who are the tangata whenua of Pūkoro Mirānda), the Department of Conservation, Fonterra (through the Living Water partnership), and others to manage the Ramsar site at Pūkoro Mirānda on the Firth of Thames, one of New Zealand’s most important shorebird habitats.

The Trust runs the Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre, where it educates school groups, the public and interested organisations about local and international shorebirds, their habitats and the natural history of the area.

It has successfully advocated for inter-governmental agreements that protect shorebirds and their habitats. And with North Korean partners, it started the first regular shorebird surveys in North Korea, helping to understand how shorebirds use the Yellow Sea.

About The Flock

The Flock will be a mobile display of individually decorated shorebirds that aims to raise awareness about the challenges facing New Zealand’s endemic and arctic migratory shorebirds, what is needed to protect them, and how individuals can support and participate in the Trust’s activities.

We are inviting people to help us create the flock and find places for it to roost. For more information please visit www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz



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(Incorporated under the Charitable Trusts Act 1957)