

Pukorokoro Miranda News

Journal of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust

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Helping hands for our birds

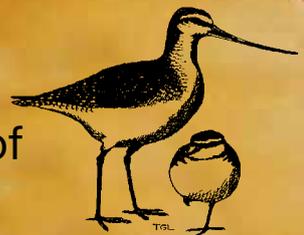
China and NZ sign agreement to protect waders

Trust set to buy Findlay Wildlife Reserve

Spectacular launch for The Flock



Special report to mark issue 100: the history of the trust as told in the pages of its magazine





Trust raises the funds to buy reserve

A successful appeal to members for funds, plus grants from Foundation North and Waikato Regional Council, have cleared the way for the Trust to buy the Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve, **reports Jim Eagles.**

A decades-old vision for the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust to be able to own and manage the 27ha Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve has at last become a reality.

It took just five days and 53 donations – including one of \$5000 – for an on-line appeal to members to produce the last \$20,000 needed to buy the block from the Findlay/Lane family for the agreed price of \$400,000.

That appeal is now continuing with the aim of building up a fund to allow the Trust to, as chair Gillian Vaughan put it, 'develop it to its full ecological potential.'

The purchase became possible when Waikato Regional Council added a grant of \$200,000 on top of the \$180,000 earlier promised by Foundation North.

Appropriately, the regional council chair, Paula Southgate, announced the grant during the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between our Department of Conservation and China's main environmental organisation, the State Forestry Administration, to work together to protect the migratory shorebirds we share and their habitat.

In making the announcement she said the nature of the land purchase, involving partnerships with PMNT, Foundation North, DOC and Living Water, was exactly the sort of project the regional council liked to support. 'We believe partnerships with locals and like-minded organisations are the best way to achieve our shared goals.'

That left a shortfall of \$20,000



PIONEERS: (from left) Robert Findlay Snr, Robert Findlay Jnr, Allan Lane.

Statement from the Findlay/Lane family

Five generations of our family have spent time under the big, bold skies and in the clear light of the Limeworks shorefront. We have watched the Pukorokoro stream mouth go from having its own boat wharf to being a trickle, the arm of the shell bank grow ever longer, the colourful plains of glasswort stretch ever further and developed a deep appreciation of the wonders on our doorstep.

Our father Allan Lane passed on to us the stories of the amazing journeys of the birds as we skipped, hopped and ran to try to keep up with his long-legged, stilt-like strides. Dad was raised by his uncle, Robert Findlay Jnr, who was 'interested in everything that walked, crawled, galloped, flew or swam'. He, in turn, was raised by Robert Findlay Snr, one of the first four European settlers to the area. The Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve was named after both of these men who welcomed the birds and the people who came to look at them. However we also acknowledge that we are only the most recent of a much longer history of custodians of this special place.

During our time, we have been honoured to have worked together with the Trust, as kaitiaki of the shorebirds and their habitat, for now more than 40 years, to ensure its stories are told. So while it is with some sadness that we pass the land into new ownership, we feel that the Trusts' dedicated and caring hands will provide the best possible situation for its future. We are thankful for the funding bodies and your organisation that this land will continue to be treasured, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in new ways in its next chapter.

Cover: Director-General of DOC Lou Sanson (front left) and Chinese Vice Minister Chen Fengxue (next to him) join other dignitaries in displaying birds they've made for The Flock. Photo / Jim Eagles

and soon afterwards Gillian used the Trust's website and its Facebook page to launch an appeal to raise the balance of the purchase price and build up a fund for the land development.

In doing so she pointed out that 'PMNT doesn't often ask for donations but this is something that is really important to keep the birds coming. This is one of the most important pieces of land for shorebirds in the Firth of Thames.

'Just in sheer numbers of birds, it regularly supports 40 per cent of the Wrybill population as well as internationally important numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots. It's the key access point for recreational birdwatching and scientific study of the shorebirds of the Firth of Thames.

'There is great saltmarsh habitat running on to the land. It is part of an internationally important geo-preservation area with the southern end of the chenier plain visible here.'

Gillian said the Lane family had been 'great guardians of this piece of land, protecting it and allowing it to be used for birdwatching, education and scientific study. We now have the opportunity to build on that legacy and ensure the site will always be a safe home for shorebirds.'

She added that while it was great news that the purchase price had been reached 'it is crucial that the Trust also has the funds to develop the land to its full ecological potential, fostering the indigenous plant life and making it an even better roost for shorebirds.'

Anyone who wasn't able to be contacted about the appeal via the internet and would like to help realise the Trust's vision for the land can make a donation to the appeal by:

- Posting a cheque to the Trust at the Shorebird Centre, 283 East Coast Rd, RD3 Pokeno, 2473, along with a note giving your name and address and specifying that it is for the land appeal.

- Pay a donation into the Trust's account at the BNZ 02-0290-0056853-00, and email admin@miranda-shorebird.org.nz letting us know.

- Go to the Trust website and make a donation through PayPal from your credit card.

All donations over \$5 will be acknowledged by a receipt and will be tax deductible.

At the time of going to press the fund had reached \$22,635 from 71 donors. 🐦



FUNDRAISER: Alister Harlow with his scope on the Manukau Harbour.

The man who found the \$400,000

Raising the \$400,000 needed to buy the Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve was a personal triumph for Alister Harlow, the man who prepares the Trust's applications for funding.

As he stands smilingly behind the till at the Shorebird Centre, doing one of his regular weekend stints running the place, Alister Harlow may not look like a magician, but there's no doubt he has the ability to conjure up money.

Alister is a Chartered Accountant, who practised in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea after he qualified, but these days from his home in Hillborough runs an organisation you've probably never heard of, the New Zealand Roadmarkers' Federation.

The Federation represents the companies that paint all those white and yellow lines that help keep us out of trouble on the road. Formed in 1969, it does research on ways of making the road markings stand out better, provides training to ensure roadmarking is done to the required standard and liaises with local and central government.

But when he's not doing that Alister puts most of his energy into his love of natural history which, he says, started at an early age. 'Growing up in Whangarei, my parents were always interested in outdoor things. There was a Junior Naturalists' Club and from

an early age my siblings and I would trundle down on a Friday night and see films and listen to talks.

'Then I got involved with David Crockett, who was a school liaison person for environmental issues, and we did beach patrols, endless walking along West Coast beaches, eating sandwiches . . . having picked up hundreds of dead birds with no place to wash your hands . . . and putting the bag of birds carefully downwind.'

A slight link to Miranda began in the 80s when at the weekend Alister and a group of friends would cycle down from Auckland and camp. 'Not for the birds but because there were hot pools. But I can remember that on the corner where the building is now there was a sign which said "Future site of Miranda Shorebird Centre".'

Then, in the 90s, he started working as a DOC volunteer at places like Little Barrier and Tirititiri Matangi and discovered the various conservation projects in the area, including Miranda, 'which I got more involved with mainly because it was more accessible.'

Alister served a few terms on the

Council but soon decided he was more interested in doing things than attending meetings and instead became the Trust's fundraiser.

Most months he travels down to man the centre 'to keep in touch with what's going on. It's an interesting balance because it recharges the batteries, but there's so much to do that I come home quite exhausted.' And the fundraising is even more demanding. 'Oh, it would take hundreds of hours, I don't really think about it that way, but it does take a lot of work.'

Prior to getting involved with PMNT he hadn't actually done any fundraising 'but as an accountant you're involved with money, money, money, how to get it, how to spend it and how to record it, so it does follow. I think it happened because I was on the council when there was talk of the next stage of the building project and I could see there was going to be a need to raise funds. And then, when the building didn't go ahead, I began to think, well, hang on, with all these opportunities out there, why aren't we going out asking them for money in the meantime anyway.'

The Trust has, he notes, been fairly successful in persuading funding organisations to support its projects, and there are several reasons for that.

'The Trust has a very good reputation, it's got a long history, it's a

safe pair of hands, there's never been a blot on its record, which is not always the case with eco projects. It has always had a consistent core group of people running it so there has been a continuity in its activities. The chairs of the council have always been the right people for the right time. And, of course there's Keith Woodley, he's been a key part of keeping the whole thing together, another case of the right person at the right time.'

But, even with those advantages, asking for money is still a complex business. First there's the matter of identifying suitable projects. Then, even more important, is how the Trust will carry the project through. 'A few years ago we did have some difficulties because all the implementation was loaded on Keith and in the end there was too much for him to do. So before we go ahead with an application now we look very carefully at how we're going to do it if we do get the funding.'

Finally, making a successful application involves looking at the funders: 'What do they want out of it and what sort of projects will they fund.'

When it came to applying for the funds to buy the Findlay Reserve, the Trust's chances were greatly boosted by couple of happy coincidence. 'The southern boundary for Foundation North is Pukorokoro Stream. And the boundary for the Waikato Regional

Council is south of the escarpment north of Kaiaua township. You'd have to say that if you could choose where you'd like the boundaries to fall this is pretty much how you'd have done it and it's worked out well for us.'

Alister says a lot of effort over the years has gone into developing good relationships with those two organisations in particular. 'I have been conscious that at some stage we would have something big, like the land purchase or the building, so it was a good idea to work through a couple of smaller applications to build up the relationship. We've done a few things with them like the boardwalk, pest control and the summer shore guide so now they feel comfortable that we can do things and work with them.'

Then, of course, there's all the work that has to go into the application itself. 'It's incredibly time consuming,' Alister says. 'There are just so many steps, you've got to provide so much information, there are dozens of emails and you've got to be relentless to keep it on the timetable. You've got to report back on time because if you miss once you're going to have a problem.'

In the case of the regional council the information required – much of which was provided by Keith – had to include 'the ecological value of the site, its geological significance, historical heritage, engagement with iwi, whether there were any Treaty of Waitangi claims on the site, the trust's plan for the land in future, all of that.'

'Then in addition we had to provide details of the land title, the QE2 covenant, the Profit a Prendre covenant - which granted the MNT 50 years to gather flax and to erect a small dwelling - the financial accounts, the sale and purchase agreement, the valuation from a valuer and the district council valuation . . . and I'm sure I've missed a few.'

It was, Alister says, 'the most complex funding application I've handled so far, not least because it involved more than one funder, and it's also the biggest by a long way. Up to now we've probably put through \$100,000 so this takes us up to the half million mark.'

For that reason, it has also been the most satisfying application. Indeed, when Alister was first asked to talk about his fundraising work, at first he demurred, then said, 'Oh, well, perhaps when we've got the money for the land. . . ' And now we have. 

What's on at the Shorebird Centre



29 May, Annual General Meeting

11am Speaker Pip Wallace on 'The Nature of Protection: biodiversity law and planning'. Pip is Convenor of the Environmental Planning Programme at Waikato University and has a background in environmental law. A keen conservationist, she has recently been investigating disturbance of birds in coastal areas, using the NZ Dotterel as a case study,

and looking at the effectiveness of the law in managing species in fragmented landscapes. Birdwatching from 2pm.

12 June, OSNZ Wader Census

All welcome. Contact Tony Habraken (09 238 5284) for details.

8-10 July, Printmaking from Nature Course with Sandra Morris

Details from the Centre.

9-24 July, Bird Painting

Bring children to the Centre to paint a bird for The Flock.

27 August, Working bee and potluck dinner

10am-2pm working bee for the Centre and grounds. **2.30pm** high tide.

5pm Potluck dinner and speaker Emma Williams on 'Once Bittern.'

1-2 October Australasian Shorebird Conference

At Unitec in Auckland, not the Centre, but the Trust is involved in hosting the event and there will be lots of great speakers and displays.



ALL SMILES: Vice Minister Chen Fengxue enjoys a joke with Association Conservation Minister Nicky Wagner as they check out the waders under the watchful eye of Keith Woodley. Photo / Bruce Jarvis

Chinese minister's amazing speech on protecting wader habitat in the Yellow Sea

Hopes for seeing wader habitat at Bohai Bay properly protected were hugely boosted when the Vice Minister in charge of China's main environmental agency not only came to the Shorebird Centre to sign an agreement on protecting coastal wetlands but also gave an enthusiastic speech on the creation of reserves, writes **Jim Eagles**.

'What an incredible day,' said Shorebird Centre manager Keith Woodley afterwards. 'I would never have believed I'd see a minister in the Chinese Government visiting us here and talking about creating reserves at Bohai Bay. Unbelievable.'

The incredible day he was talking about occurred when Chen Fengxue, the Chinese Vice Minister responsible for the State Forestry Administration, China's main environmental agency, visited the Centre to join the Director-General of our Department of Conservation, Lou Sanson, in signing a Memorandum of Arrangement to work together to protect areas used as roosts by our migratory waders.

That in itself was memorable enough. But there was much more to celebrate. During a roundtable discussion, Vice Minister Chen, speaking through an interpreter, said the signing of the agreement was not the end, just the start, of a new era of co-operation between China and New Zealand aimed at protecting 'these small birds that fly non-stop between our two countries, forming a bridge between us and connecting us as people.'

And – the bit that amazed Keith - he also spoke of the reserve at Yalu Jiang, so crucial to the Bar-tailed Godwit, and the recent creation of a new reserve in an area vital to the Red Knots, covering 7km of the coast at Luannan on Bohai Bay, and said 'we must do everything possible to protect birds in these areas'. Then he seemed to suggest – it was difficult to be clear exactly what the interpreter was saying – that China was looking at creating further coastal wetland reserves as part of its commitment to work with New Zealand 'to keep the bridge open'.

Vice Minister Chen then led the Chinese delegation, which included several top environmental officers, in each enthusiastically painting a cutout godwit or knot and planting it in a beside Widgery Lake for The Flock project (see next story).

The fledgling flock was probably the highlight of the day with a host of visiting dignitaries from the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Fonterra and its \$20 million Living Water programme, the Chinese Embassy in Wellington, Waikato Regional Council

and Waikato Conservation Board all eager to create their own birds.

Indeed, when Associate Minister of Conservation Nicky Wagner arrived in the late afternoon to host a dinner for Vice Minister Chen, nothing would do but spare birds had to be found so she and local MP Scott Simpson could each paint their own.

After all that support the leaders of the Trust were understandably ecstatic. Chair Gillian Vaughan, in her speeches to the roundtable and the official dinner, underlined the fact that the Trust had been working for greater protection for the birds since at least 1994 and it was wonderful to see it coming to fruition.

Deputy chair Adrian Riegen, who established the New Zealand link with the East Asian-Australasian Flyway at a meeting in Japan in 1994, spoke of the years of work tagging birds and following their movements, which had led to the signing. Adrian also paid a special tribute to DOC technical advisor Bruce McKinlay who, he said, had driven the process of developing the present climate of co-operation between New Zealand and China. 'I've

been waiting 20 years for someone like him to come along.'

Director-General Sanson paid tribute to the work done by the Trust over many years for migratory birds. But he also gave much of the credit for the Memorandum of Agreement to two diplomats, Wang Lutong, China's Ambassador to New Zealand, and John McKinnon, New Zealand Ambassador in Beijing, who had 'put in a huge effort to make it happen'.

'It is, he noted, 'particularly appropriate that we should be signing the agreement on a day when some of these godwits and knots will actually be leaving here to fly direct to China. Hopefully the agreement will allow us to turn the situation of the birds around so they can continue to fly that route.'

Even the birds seemed to join in the general euphoria because, when the party moved to the hides, there was a flock of 500-1000 godwits and a few hundred knots parading across the mudflats. As the tide gradually rose several hundred godwits took to the air with migration chatter floating across the flats and without looking back or circling in salute they were away.

About half decided Taramaire looked inviting and peeled off to rest a little longer in Aotearoa. But two skeins of godwits adjusted their course to a bearing of 320°, the great circle route bearing needed to reach the Yellow Sea, and climbed to cross the Hunua Ranges. Adrian reckoned he could sense the birds' internal Navman saying: 'Keep straight for seven days and 10,000km then your destination will be on your right.' The perfect end to an incredible day.

But the Trust's growing international connections didn't stop there. Not long after the signing, Craig Habermeier political and economic counsellor at the United States Consulate in Auckland, visited the Centre seeking information on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Apparently he met with our Alaskan guest speaker Lee Tibbitts late last year and she got him enthused about getting the US to play a greater role in helping its migratory birds. A few days later Council member Estella Lee brought the Chinese Consul-General in Auckland and her two deputies down to see the Centre and to receive a briefing from Keith Woodley on migratory birds and the issues they face. 



BIRD POWER: (clockwise from top) The Vice Minister and the Director-General add their birds to The Flock; Bruce McKinlay celebrates by planting a bird; Keith Woodley hongis with the Vice Minister; Waikato Regional Council chair Paula Southgate draws the council logo on a bird.

Photos / Sarah Vaughan, Bruce Jarvis, Jim Eagles



GROWING FAST: The Shorebird Centre flock. Can you spot the kokako?

Photo / Ray Buckmaster

The Flock takes off across the country

A British idea of using a flock of brightly painted cutout birds to publicise the amazing stories of our shorebirds and the threats they face has really taken off in New Zealand, reports **Jim Eagles**

A flock of multi-coloured shorebirds is rapidly spreading across the country as part of a Trust plan to put the spotlight on our marvellous migratory waders.

Since being launched at the signing of the Memorandum of Arrangement. The Flock at the Shorebird Centre has passed the 100 mark. The latest contribution came from a Birds NZ Youth Camp, whose efforts included a bar-tailed stilt and a kokako.

In addition, flocks are developing in places like Devonport and Christchurch, Nelson and Tauranga, as well as around the Firth of Thames.

Ray Buckmaster, who spotted the British idea on Facebook, explains, 'The Flock campaign is a splendid way for children and their families to get involved in actions to change the world, if only in a small way, by making birds and adding to the power of The Flock. Of course if you can have a bit of fun so doing it is even better!'

To give people an idea of what it was all about, Ray cut out and Ann painted a selection of birds, starting with Bar-tailed Godwits, Red Knots, South Island Pied Oystercatchers, and later added Wrybills . . . and The Flock was launched.

The Trust set up a subcommittee and it organised a set of instructions on how to make the birds, a publicity leaflet, a strong social media presence, an e-newsletter . . . and things just started taking off.

Assistant manager Louisa Chase spoke to Kaiua School, and later Mangatangi and Waitakaruru, all of which enthusiastically agreed to participate. Alex Eagles-Tully, who does the Godfrey Godwit children's page for the



YOUNG ARTIST: Sameera from Kaiua School finishes her bird.

magazine, went to Oropi School near Tauranga and the senior class picked it up. Jim Eagles approached Devonport School, where he lives, and principal Melissa Bennett said the whole school would make this 'fabulous initiative' its project for the fourth term.

The idea has even been spontaneously adopted by our Facebook followers. Rochelle Marshall, who lives in Nelson, had for some time wanted to do something about the declining local shorebird population. 'Then I saw The Flock on Facebook and thought "this is it". My workmates have supplied me with the timber and labour for the birds and now I am slowly painting them with help from my sister. '

Ann mentioned The Flock to Audrie McKenzie, a longtime caterer for the field course who is now principal of Wainoni School in Christchurch, who said, 'Wow. Yes.' Louisa was contacted by Avon Heathcote Estuary Trust in Christchurch, which runs a successful farewell to the Birds event, saying they want to be involved. BRaid, the South Island braided rivers support group, decided to join in by creating flash mobs of Wrybill, Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns to pop up in various towns. Ray wrote to the EnviroSchools network which happily agreed to pass the details to its schools.

And so The Flock has started to grow. Subcommittee members are now approaching other schools and groups interested in participating and there is already sufficient support to suggest that our flock will be a lot larger than the English one from which it sprang.

The plan is to have a few big gatherings, probably starting with the Shorebird Centre's Welcome to the Birds on October 23. In addition, local clusters of birds in places like Kaiua and Devonport are being talked about.

- Anyone interested in joining in, approaching their local school, or helping in other ways can contact Louisa at the Centre (09 232 2781 or shop@miranda-shorebird.org.nz).

- The instructions for making birds are on our website at www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/flock.

- The Flock is also on Twitter at #TheFlockNZ and there's a blog at <http://theflocknz.blogspot.co.nz/>

- Next school holidays, 9-24 July, children can come to the Centre and paint their own bird for The Flock.



SPECIAL VISITORS; (from left) a Little Whimbrel and a Great Knot.

Photos / Kevin Lin, Phil Battley

An impressive line-up of migrants this season

The summer season just ended produced a remarkable number of special birds including a Little Whimbrel, Whimbrel and two Eastern Curlews, several Black-tailed Godwits and a Great Knot, reports **Keith Woodley**.

The undoubted highlight among the rarities here this season was the Little Whimbrel. First spotted during the field course in January it was seen periodically up until early April.

While there have been a number of records of this species at Pukorokoro Miranda, this bird was unusual in that it stuck around, whereas usually they are seen only once or twice before disappearing. Nevertheless, it did prove elusive for a number of birders keen to see it. This species is not a mudflat specialist, also being found in habitats like grasslands and freshwater, so it could not be counted on to turn up at a high tide roost. Complementing the appearance of this rarity were the two other members of the curlew family present here for much of the season, a Whimbrel and two Eastern Curlews.

Also unusual this season was the number of Black-tailed Godwits. Every other year or so we get one vagrant of this species, but this year there was one record of four. By early April three were being regularly seen on the Stilt Ponds, including one coming into rather smart breeding plumage.

At first glance it may seem tricky to separate them from Bar-tailed Godwits, yet it can be surprisingly easy. They just look different, being generally longer legged than bar-tails and with straight bills. But it is the overall colouration that most alerts me to their presence. Bar-tails are paler and browner, with distinctive patterns on their upper parts where most feathers are pale edged, with dark streaks down the middle. The same area on a black-

tail is a more uniform greyish brown with little patterning, so it lacks the contrasts. The cheeks on a black-tail also tend to be darker grey than the more pale bar-tails, a feature that can really stand out even if it is a sleeping bird in the middle of the godwit flock.

Similar principles apply when looking for the Hudsonian Godwit, one of which has been seen off and on throughout the season. It too has a more uniform greyish tone on its upperparts, although it is shorter-legged than black-tails, and has an upturned bill similar to bar-tails. Both the vagrant godwits have a black tail and white rump that clearly distinguishes them from bar-tails. Of course the serious birder seeking confirmation that it really is a Hudsonian, will wait patiently for the bird to lift its wings. Then the black feathers of its 'armpit' offers the diagnostic proof.

In recent years a solitary Marsh Sandpiper has been resident here but this season it was joined for a time by a second bird, with some breeding plumage, which meant the two could be readily differentiated. Their favoured location was the area at the north end of the Stilt Ponds, where it was not unusual to also spot the two Pectoral Sandpipers. Then in early April there was a report of a Great Knot.

When added to the usual list of migrants seen here – Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Turnstone, Pacific Golden Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint – the list of species for this season is rather impressive. 

Recent sightings at Pukorokoro

Arctic Migrants

400	Bar-tailed Godwit
500	Red Knot
1	Hudsonian Godwit
4	Black-tailed Godwit
	Little Whimbrel
	Whimbrel
2	Marsh Sandpiper
3	Curlew Sandpiper
2	Pectoral Sandpiper
5	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
52	Pacific Golden Plover
1	Red-necked Stint
9	Turnstone

New Zealand Species

2600	Wrybill
4	NZ Dotterel
200	Banded Dotterel
	White-fronted Tern
	Hybrid Black Stilt
2000+	SI Pied Oystercatcher
6	Variable Oystercatcher
500	Black-billed Gull
400	Pied Stilt
50	Royal Spoonbill
6	Caspian Tern

New educator eager to connect children with nature and the outdoors

Krystal Pennell has just been appointed as the Trust's first part-time educator and will start work later this month.

The Trust's aim in making the appointment is to increase the number of school visits to the Centre and to spread its conservation message to a younger generation.

Krystal, who lives in the Karangahake Gorge with her husband and two dogs, has worked as a primary school teacher for over 10 years and recently began 'to establish myself as an artist, drawing detailed illustrations of birds.'

The role at PMNT, she says, 'offers me a unique opportunity to combine my passions - New Zealand flora and fauna, in particular, birds - and educating young people. In a rapidly changing world, it is more important than ever that our children connect with nature and the outdoors. I am looking forward to helping children and their teachers to explore and appreciate the unique environment that is Pukorokoro Miranda.'

The education project is funded by the Dinah Francis Gavin Bequest.

Godwit ebook

An ebook version of Keith's *GODWITS: long-haul champions* is now available from Amazon for \$14. It's at www.amazon.com/Godwits-Zealand-World-Birds-Voyage/dp/0143011936

Banding abandoned

This year's banding programme has had its ups and downs and the most recent sessions had to be abandoned without a cannon being fired.

On 13 February a plan to catch Red Knots and godwits around the Stilt Ponds attracted a near-record turnout of banders but couldn't go ahead because there was water over the catching area. On 12 March, Adrian called things off the day before to avoid wasting volunteers' time because the target Wrybills were displaying little interest in roosting on the shellbank. On 25 April Gillian was in charge of cannon netting and banding at the Birds NZ Youth Camp at the Centre but, again, the birds refused to co-operate.



NEW EDUCATOR: Krystal Pennell.

Centre upgrading

Longterm efforts to upgrade the Shorebird Centre are continuing. New bunks are in the Curlew room and new bedding and linen has been purchased.

For the high jump

Longtime member Lynda Underhill celebrated her 90th birthday by jumping off Sky Tower and brought photos to the Farewell to the Birds to prove it. Lynda is keen to see others have a go because, 'If you're over 85 you don't have to pay. I didn't know that.'

In the headlines

PMNT has continued to get good publicity during the past three months. Keith's report to the Council on publicity from the Bird of the Year ran to two

pages and covered 21 items including television, radio and newspapers.

Gemma White, from DOC's Thames office, who organised the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement, reported that it was covered by WTV, a Chinese language TV station in Auckland, the Newswire agency - which sent out several stories - and four local papers. DOC Director-General Lou Sanson also did phone interviews with Radio NZ and Newshub. Kennedy Warne gave the event a good plug on RNZ's Nine-to-Noon programme.

Report from South Korea

Andreas Kim, who has been monitoring migratory shorebirds in South Korea for many years, gave a fascinating account of his experiences.

The sheer numbers of birds, the range of species and the ease with which he is able to see the birds - even to read the numbers on metal bands - made it understandable why he considers conditions at Miranda 'difficult'.

But unfortunately he also had to report that, as elsewhere around the Yellow Sea, there has been continued loss of coastal habitat. Andreas' plea at the end of his talk was for New Zealand to put pressure on the Korea Government to halt the destruction.

Back to North Korea

Following the successful wader survey in the Democratic Peoples' Republic of



REPORT FROM SOUTH KOREA: Andreas Kim.

Photo / Jim Eagles

Korea last year, a team of four from the Shorebird Centre - David Melville, Bruce Postill, Adrian Riegen and Keith Woodley - has headed for North Korea to continue the work. The survey will be done in conjunction with the Nature Conservation Union of Korea which has been looking for wader sites along nearly 200km of the west coast.

Adrian says the team doesn't know what it will see 'but we are always hopeful of finding an important staging site for Red Knots from New Zealand'.

This is the only systematic wader survey done in the DPRK so by the time it is finished in another year or two it will have developed the first extensive picture of key wader sites in the country. 'The challenge then,' says Adrian, 'will be to help ensure the most important staging sites are well protected for the future.'

Afterwards Keith and Bruce will visit the South Korean capital Seoul to meet the New Zealand Ambassador, who is accredited to both Koreas, and investigate possible sources of support.

A full report of this year's expedition, which is being funded by Living Water, will appear in the next *PM News*.

More information panels

Keith and Adrian have developed three new information panels for use in the Centre and to support talks elsewhere. The latest panels cover the importance of tidal flats, threats to migratory birds in the Yellow Sea and a mobile display about PMNT. Funding came from the Chisholm Whitney Family Trust.

THAT'S NORTH KOREA; Adrian Riegen points to North Korea, where he and Keith Woodley were shortly heading, on one of the new information boards the two have produced
Photo / Jim Eagles



Birds star on Instagram

Pukorokoro Miranda's birds are showing off on Instagram, adding to the Shorebird Centre's social media presence. Check them out via the Instagram app at @pukorokoro_miranda_birds or on the internet at www.instagram.com/pukorokoro_miranda_shorebirds.



Our Instagram account is being managed by Sarah Vaughan (at left), who helped with the Bird of the Year campaign and is also contributing to The Flock project. Sarah lives in Wellington but family links bring her to the Centre several times a year.

People like Janie Vaughan, Ian Southey and Ann and Ray Buckmaster have been providing fabulous photos for Instagram but, Sarah says, 'there's always room for more. We would love to see your photos too.'

You can share pictures on Instagram using #PukorokoroMirandaBirds or if that's too tricky email them to Sarah at vaughansarahjane@gmail.com.

Volunteer shore guide

At the Farewell to the Birds a presentation was made to Dai Stacey (at right), who came on holiday from Wales and volunteered to work as a shore guide for a month, doing a wonderful job.

Dai discovered the Centre in 1998 when he visited brother-in-law, Will

Perry, PMNT's long-serving secretary, and his family.



Back home in Wales Dai has had years of involvement in wildlife conservation. Since retiring last summer he has had the time to do even more volunteer work and began to wonder if he could do the same in New Zealand? 'After a few emails it appeared the answer was yes and I headed south.'

During his time here Dai saw lots of birds, from Moreporks in the Bay of islands to Bitterns at Whangamarino, but most of his time was spent out at the hides helping visitors. 'I learnt a lot, I shared a lot and what I gave I received back in the enjoyment and enthusiasm of the visitors. It was a memorable stay and I hope to follow the birds back next summer.'

Another migrant

This summer's contract shore guide, Rachel Hufton from the UK, has completed her term but liked New Zealand so much that she has found a job as ecologist with Forest & Bird's Makarora project in the Southern Alps

Back on track

The K2K cycleway, which will link Kaiaua with Kopu as part of the very popular Hauraki Cycleway, appears to be back on track.

Work got underway last month on the first stage, which will run from the Kopu Bridge to the Pukorokoro Miranda Bridge a few hundred metres south of the Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve. To get the project started the Thames Coromandel and Hauraki District Councils are each providing \$1 million while the New Zealand Transport Agency will put a clip-on for the Piako River Bridge. Once funding is received for the rest of the trail it will continue as far as Kaiaua village.

Tighter security

A recent robbery at the Shorebird Centre has led to a decision to tighten security. A woman came into the centre saying there was a fire round the back and amid the ensuing confusion the cash register with a small cash float was stolen. The Trust will have to buy a new till and is also looking at security cameras, a safe and other measures.

The little club that does

The story of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust
as told through the pages of the first 100 issues – or
maybe that should be 132 issues – of its magazine



Adrian Riegen wrote, in a report on last year's highly successful delegation to China, 'We have been there right from the very beginning in 1994, when a DOC senior manager asked me, "What little club did you say you belong to?" That would be the little club that can and did and does.' That visit, of course, culminated in the little club's latest achievement, hosting the signing of a Memorandum of Arrangement between New Zealand and China on the protection of shorebird roosts (photographed above by Bruce Jarvis) which brought ministers, senior officials, the chair of Waikato Regional Council, the chair of Ngati Paoa Trust Board and other dignitaries to the Shorebird Centre to acknowledge the work of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust.

A century of shorebirds

Jim Eagles outlines the story of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust as told through the pages of its newsletter which – officially, if not in reality – celebrates its 100th birthday with this issue.

Officially this is the 100th issue of the magazine now known as *Pukorokoro Miranda News*, newsletter of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust, the primary organisation for shorebirds in New Zealand. Reaching the magic number of 100 is always a milestone worth celebrating, be it a person, an organisation or a magazine. But, as is usually the case with this Trust, there is more to the age of the magazine than meets the eye.

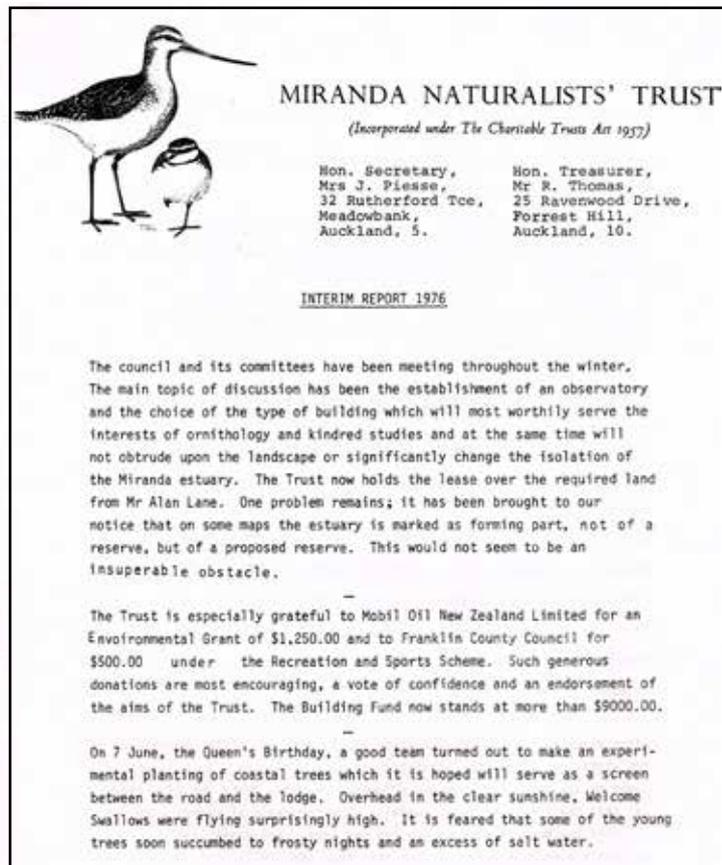
Issue No 1 of the Trust's newsletter was produced under the editorship of Stuart Chambers in November 1990 and the No 100 on the cover of this issue dates from that. But searching through the archives reveals that the Trust was putting out newsletters long before then.

The organisation was formally established in 1975 and its first publication seems to have been a Bird Report 1975, put together by Dick Sibson, Beth Brown and Sylvia Reed.

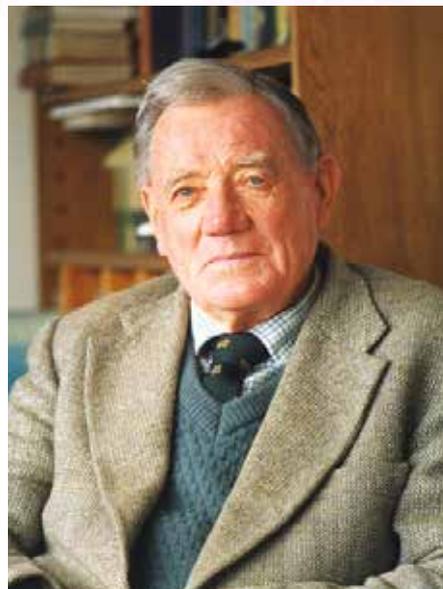
Newsletters followed the next year when Dick Sibson, the chair for most of the Trust's early years, began a series of regular reports to members. Written in his delightful elegant prose, and scattered with pieces of dry wit, the first one covered the continuing discussions about building an observatory, tree planting around the proposed site at the limeworks, the Trust's successful participation in Conservation Week and bird sightings.

Indeed, it's worth emphasising at the outset of this story, that all the newsletters contain a lively mix of interesting bird sightings and successful events, stimulating speakers and reports on working bees, the continued development of a highly successful shop and visits from interested groups. Please take that for granted as this summary focuses on the main themes.

In the early days there were generally two of these newsletters annually. An Interim Report and an Annual Report, containing bird lists and reports from the Council on its activities. They were typed up and duplicated, usually running to 10-12 pages, with no illustrations apart from the familiar Bar-tailed Godwit and Wrybill logo.



BEGINNINGS:
(at left) This was arguably the first newsletter issued by the Trust; (below) Dick Sibson and Beth Brown put together the first publications.



The one early exception came when a report from John Brown – who took the chair for most of the first year while Dick went on an extended overseas trip after only a month in office – which included a sketch of a two-storey observatory the Council hoped to build in the old limeworks area. This vision created a lot of interest but the

following year the Council had to report that the plan had 'encountered a series of setbacks' with the Wildlife Service and Franklin County Council.

But the Council was not discouraged and in 1978 the Annual Report was headed 'A Real Step Forward', and told of the construction of a 'robust and roomy shelter' built on the

remains of the limeworks building using material from the old storeshed. In addition, a Public Works shed across the road was converted into accommodation for birdwatchers. 'Much remains to be done,' the newsletter noted. 'But many a zealous birdwatcher has spent nights in much rougher surroundings.'

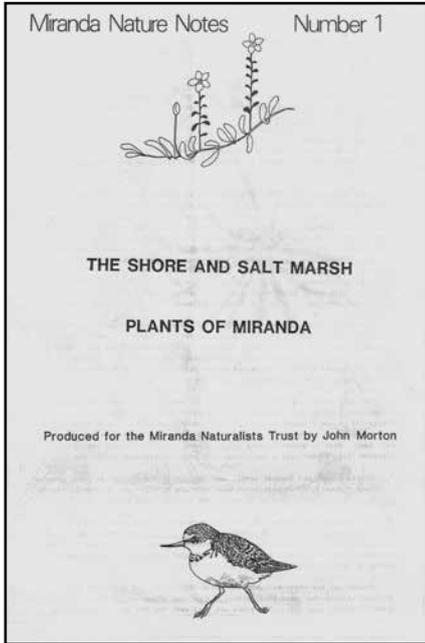
Unfortunately the two 1979 reports were a bit less optimistic. The hut had been broken into and was getting little use. 'To spend more money on equipping it or to leave valuable or even simple gear in it at the present would be clearly unwise and inviting trouble.'

In 1980 the big news was the resignation of Dick Sibson, with the job of chair being taken by Brian Ellis, and the role of newsletter editor going to Beth Brown. But members were also able to read about a successful Open Day, the highlight being a visit to Pukorokoro Pa where Lady Eileen Fox gave a talk on its history, and the formation of the Miranda Banders, led by Dick Veitch, which 'pioneered the catching of gregarious migratory waders by means of cannon-nets'.

The following year the title, Newsletter, was used for the first time. The first issue under this new banner reported a plan for a picnic day at the limeworks to help newcomers to identify the birds and lamented the fact that that the hut had become 'an all too accessible and desirable haven for rats'.

After that it is no surprise to read shortly after that the Trust had acquired a bach in Kaiiua. An advertisement says, 'Members wishing to stay at Kaiiua should make all arrangements with the Booking Officer, Mrs Betty Binning.'

During the 1980s the Trust was putting a lot of effort into publications.



It produced a short series of booklets called *Miranda Nature Notes* including *The Shore and Marsh Plants of Miranda* by John Morton (at left), *Shorebirds of the Miranda Coastline* by Rod Hay and *A New Centre for Environmental Education* by Mel Galbraith.

But the biggest development on the publication front occurred in 1983 with Stuart Chambers becoming editor of the newsletter.

Instead of using a duplicator, Stuart took his stories, plus a few photos and drawings, to the offices of the *Hauraki Herald* in Thames. There it was typeset into columns, pasted into a magazine format, photographed on to a metal plate and printed.

As a result the six-page Newsletter for May 1983 had a much more professional look to it, with photos of oystercatchers in flight, the proposed observatory site at the limeworks, a Cuvier Island Bellbird (a female having been sighted at Whaharau Regional Park) and Noel Cusa's wonderful Shorebirds of Miranda poster which is still used today.

Subsequent issues were equally lively with several photos



HISTORY: (from top) the first publication to be called the Newsletter; Stuart Chambers brings a new look; a place to build a home.

Stuart Chambers: 'the newsletter is the trust'



A NEW BEGINNING: Newsletter No.1 reports on the opening ceremony for the first stage of the Shorebird Centre.

For most people the Pukorokoro Miranda Trust is, and always has been, the newsletter. This has communicated Miranda's facts and functions, raised funds, generated grants and bequests, and overall kept the membership together. It has been the Trust's visible sign for those who never visit the centre or the coast. Without it there would be no Trust as we know it today. The end result from the 1982 upgraded newsletter has been a visible centre near the Miranda coast as well as a presence away from it.



So what do the newsletters over their 40 year span tell us? They show us first and foremost how an idea inspired by a handful of bird-watching hobbyists reached a conclusion. This small group, who wanted nothing more than an observatory and basic accommodation on the coast, where birds were highly visible, eventually achieved their goal. But the newsletters go further to tell us this goal has been expanded. As well as being an organisation for birdwatchers, it now caretakes the flyway the birds travel on. And as well as its educational role the Trust has assumed a political one and become an important advocate for the salvation of the Yellow Sea's mudflats. More recently, as the newsletters show, the centre has become a place where local and overseas politicians meet to solve the common problems of our wading birds.

Let's keep the magazine coming for the benefit of Trust members and the birds alike.

Stuart Chambers, Editor 1983-90, Chair 1986-91

of birds – particular excitement being generated by a Ringed Plover (some years later identified as actually being a Semi-palmated Plover) which spent seven months at Access Bay – the launch of the Trust's own t-shirts and sweat shirts, a birding plan of the coast from Waitakaruru to Wharekawa and reports of several successful events. But on the main objective of the Trust, the establishment of an observatory, there was little progress. Chair Brian Ellis acknowledged in his annual report, 'It has been a disappointment to hard-working council members over the years that this aim has not been accomplished, but it has never been lost sight of.'

Then, in 1986, Brian Ellis surprised members by announcing at the annual meeting that after seven years in the chair he was stepping down. Stuart Chambers was elected to replace him and also continued as newsletter editor.

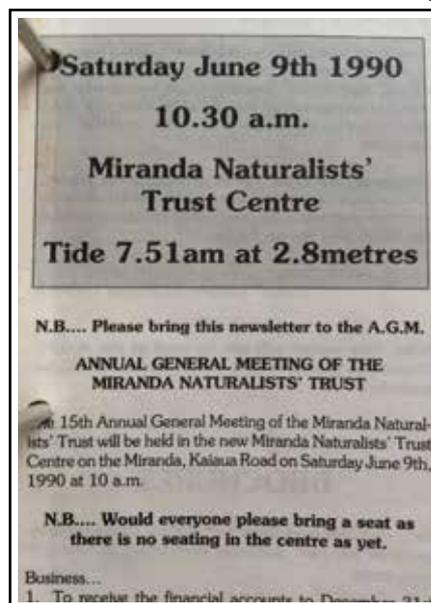
There were early indications that the Trust was about to move on the building front with a report that after continuing legal difficulties with building on the limeworks land, it was looking to buy a site elsewhere. Sure enough, the Newsletter for August 1987 announced the purchase of a one hectare block on the western side of the coast road.

Further progress followed quickly with architect Paul Smits completing

the design of the proposed Centre, which he estimated would cost \$450,000, the Kaiiua bach sold and fundraising underway. But, although the next few issues naturally have a heavy emphasis on fundraising, other news was not forgotten, including reports of a Queen Elizabeth II Trust open space covenant being placed on the Limeworks land and mangroves rapidly encroaching into Access Bay.

By December 1989 the newsletter announced, 'Members will be excited with the knowledge that the Trust has at last let a building contract with a Katikati building firm to start the observatory-educational centre at Miranda.' The next issue was able to carry a photo of building underway. And the one after that ran a proud announcement that the 1990 AGM would be held in the Centre (though, as the advertisement at left shows, chairs were in short supply).

The Newsletter for September 1990 was for various reasons the beginning of a new era. It announced that the opening ceremony for the new building would be held on 29 September, reported the completion of Widgery Lake, paid for by Monty Widgery in memory of her late husband Desmond, and marked the end of the old unnumbered newsletters. Adrian Riegen recalls, 'It was my suggestion that we number the newsletters to



Chris Thompson: confessions from the editor



CHANGES: Chris Thompson gave the magazine a new masthead and a fresh look.



In 1996 I became the editor of *Miranda News*. I was already on the Miranda Trust Council. I recall going into one of our council meetings, led by the chairman John Gale, and coming out wondering how I had agreed to become the new editor. John had a very persuasive way, making people almost believe they had come up with the idea in the first place. His style worked well for the Trust, though, and he excelled at soliciting much-needed funding from various sources.

Taking over from Stuart Chambers was slightly daunting as he had been doing such an admirable job. His final issue changed the format from a folded newsletter to an A4 magazine, and included colour. However, Stuart, and also Centre Manager Keith Woodley, were very supportive.

As with many club magazines, a working-bee was organised in someone's lounge to do the enveloping and labelling. One of my great pleasures was to open the boxes delivered from the printers and get the first look at the final version. I recall one such evening. Des picked up a copy and quickly searched through for an article he had written. His face fell. 'You've printed the photo of the bird upside-down!' I looked at the picture – bird in flight, wings out-stretched – and had to admit that actually it did look better the other way round. If I felt bad then, I was about to feel a whole lot worse. Des grabbed another magazine, then another. 'It's the same in all of them!' he exclaimed. Yes, Des, all 800 copies are identical.

At a council meeting the topic of photo-shopping came up and the opinion was expressed that we should assure readers that we did not digitally alter any of our pictures. Confession time from the editor. John Rowe had given me a great photo taken from the roof of the cottage when he was up there doing one of his innumerable repair jobs. I felt it was perfect – looking down on the Shorebird Centre with Coromandel in the background – apart from the telegraph pole stuck in the middle. So I removed it. Because I could. I wonder how many people noticed?

I wonder how many people noticed my faux pas with a bird name? A frantic phone call from the Centre: 'Late breaking news! We have to get this into the magazine! A rare bird has been seen at Miranda!' Not a bird I was familiar with, and in my haste I did not check, I reported our new arrival as an 'Asiatic Dowager'. Keith quietly informed me that no, an elderly wealthy Asian lady had not taken up residence at Miranda. I thoroughly enjoyed my time as editor and thank all those people who sent me stories and pictures.

Chris Thompson, Editor 1996-98

transformed by Stuart into a magazine (see above). Issue 21, in May 1996, had 44 pages, more than twice the usual size, it had a glossy colour cover, a sharp contrast to the usual black and white, and its name had changed from *Miranda Naturalists' Trust Newsletter* to *Miranda Naturalists' Trust News*.

The special issue included John Gale's annual report which told of another year of good progress including the emergence of a closer relationship with the Department of Conservation, greater involvement with international ornithological issues, further development of the Centre with the construction of the verandah and improvement of the display space and a growth in membership numbers to a record 762.

Subsequent issues were a little smaller and had to forgo the use of colour but they retained the glossy

magazine look, including full page photos on the cover. No 23 also carried a note that Stuart and Alison Chambers were now in the Far North, putting all their efforts into establishing the Aroha Ecological Centre near Kerikeri, and after producing 40 issues as editor Stuart felt it was time to step aside. While he felt the magazine was in good shape 'a change now . . . will revitalise it and I am sure it will go from strength to strength.' The new editor was Chris Thompson from Rothesay Bay in Auckland (see box).

Chris quickly made her mark as editor, introducing a new masthead, and a list of birds From the Blackboard, which continues today. The magazine also had plenty of exciting news to report. The 1997 Farewell to the Birds was attended by the Conservation Minister who unveiled a

plaque recording the Firth of Thames as an East Asian-Australasian Flyway Network Site. The Minister announced that DOC was seeking to extend its land holdings in the Miranda area and that he would be writing to his Japanese counterpart to raise concerns about the loss of coastal wetlands used by migratory birds.

Another chapter was written in the ongoing saga of the hides with the latest one being demolished by a cyclone and a photo showing a group of members, led by Adrian Riegen, splashing across a creek to retrieve one of the sections. The breadth of trust activities was well illustrated by another photo of Council members modelling a new range of polo and sweat shirts.

Underlining the word 'naturalist' in the Trust's name, one issue had a cover story on native orchids and the next

reported on a field trip to Waharau Regional Park where short-finned eels, koura, puriri moths, fantails on clematis blossoms were among the highlights.

Meanwhile the Trust was looking to expand. In the February 1998 issue John Gale was advising members of the need to provide the manager with better accommodation and considering purchasing the adjoining property with its sharemilker's cottage. By the next issue a fullscale fundraising campaign was underway. By the August issue John was able to report that the Trust was in a position to complete the purchase while a page of photos showed a team of volunteers renovating the cottage ready for Keith to move in.

However, the next magazine also recorded that career commitments meant Chris had resigned as editor and, as John put it in his appeal for someone to take over the role, 'If there is someone with a literary bent and the motivation to carry on the tradition of excellence we have come to expect, we would be delighted to hear from them.'

The new editor was Henry Grant (see box), a prominent radio journalist, whose arrival was marked spectacularly when his first issue had a colour photo of a Wrybill on the cover. The next issue reverted to black and white with a Keith Woodley drawing of shorebirds. But then colour returned, with a photo of a Variable Oystercatcher and chicks on the cover and three more colour pages inside, and continued thereafter.

John Gale retires

Meanwhile there was significant news to report with John Gale, chair for the past six years, standing down at the 1999 annual general meeting, to be replaced by David Lawrie, previously the treasurer. In his final address John was able to celebrate 'outstanding progress' during his time in the chair which was 'the result of a splendid team effort'. The Trust, he said, was in good shape and his greatest fear for the future was of the Miranda area being despoiled by 'environmentally insensitive coastal development' and he hoped 'MNT will be involved in opposition to any such schemes'.

In the following issue, David introduced himself and also announced that the Council had decided to launch what is now the highly successful Miranda Field Course, to publish Stuart Chambers' history of the first 25 years

of the Trust and to further mark the 25th anniversary with a series of notable speakers.

There was also a report from Robert Gill, in Alaska, on an expedition into the Yukon-Koskokwim Delta, a noted departure point for migratory birds, to look for flags. The 34 flagged birds sighted, he said, came from southeast Australia (14), northeast Australia (10) and New Zealand (10).

The highly successful field courses began in 1999 and the first issue of 2000 focussed around the second, whose participants included one Gillian Vaughan. The calendar of events also announced that the 25th birthday speakers would be the now familiar names of Bob Gill, Pavel Tomkovich and Theunis Piersma.

The next few issues naturally focussed on the birthday celebrations. Henry used his radio skills to produce a lengthy interview with Pavel and the speeches by Bob and Theunis were well covered. The magazine also carried reports on visits by Green Party leader Jeannette Fitzsimons, Conservation Minister Sandra Lee.

One important piece of news was that Cathay Pacific was providing a travel grant to allow Adrian Riegen to join Mark Barter from Australia surveying waders at Yalu Jiang and Adrian later gave a detailed report on

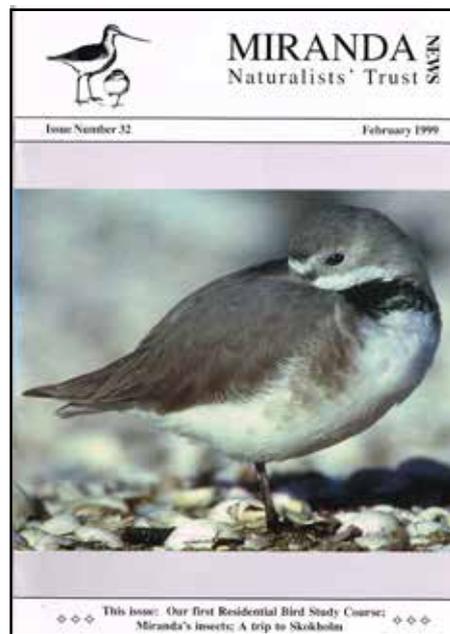
his findings marking the beginnings of the Trust's significant involvement in China in general and Yalu Jiang in particular. To further underline the increasing internationalisation of the Trust Birdlife International held a highly successful Pacific Partnership meeting at Miranda and Tony Habracken joined the annual spring migration count in South Korea.

The cover story for issue No 44, in February 2002, featured a beautiful Brian Chudleigh photo of a rare migrant, the Ruff, which brought scores of keen birders to Miranda. Inside there was news of a different sort as Henry Grant announced that he was reluctantly handing over the editorship. Elsewhere there were appeals for someone to take over the job.

The person who responded was Gillian Vaughan who was to continue in the job until February 2012 – like Stuart putting out an amazing 40 issues – even though for the last few years she was also chair of the trust (see box overleaf). Her first issue centred around two very different migrants both making their first visits to Miranda. From the northern hemisphere came celebrity naturalist David Bellamy who gave a stimulating address. And from the Waipu Spit came a juvenile Fairy Tern who provided the first confirmed sighting of this endan-

Henry Grant: in-depth interviews

Henry Grant, Editor 1999-2002, brought his skills as a radio journalist to the magazine, with features like an interview with Pavel Tomkovich, from Moscow, an authority on Arctic birds including our Red Knots.



Gillian Vaughan: the Trust takes the world stage



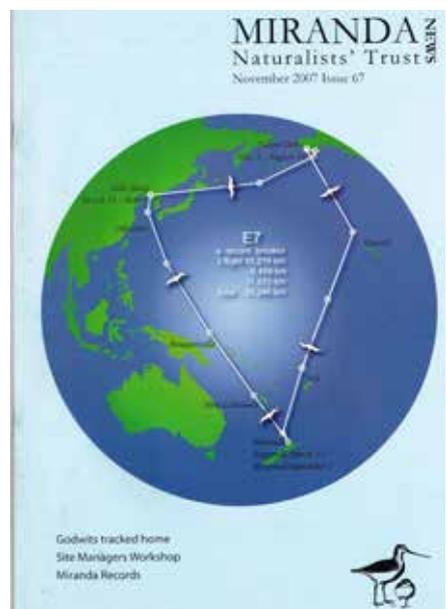
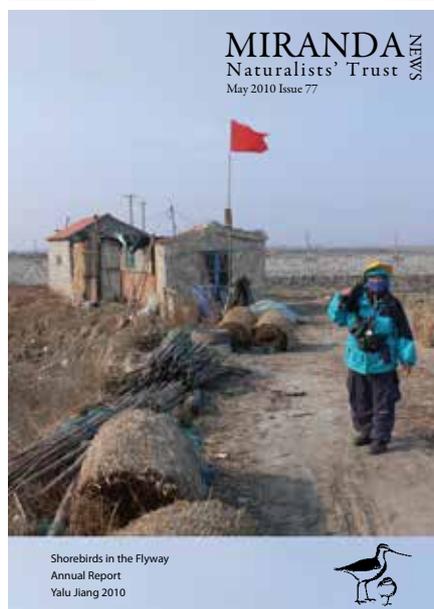
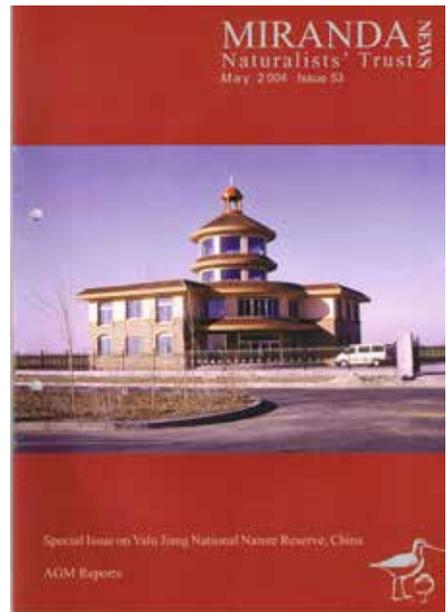
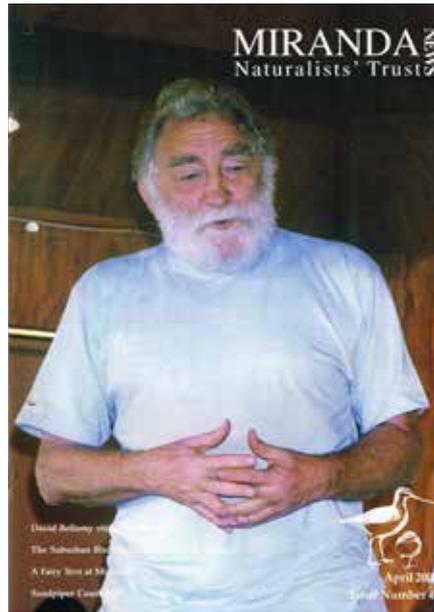
I distinctly remember sitting in the Sibson Room one afternoon with Keith Woodley, back in the old days when the comfortable chairs were

right down at the kitchen end of the centre, and I uttered words that I now understand to be very dangerous: 'Well if you can't find anyone else to do it let me know and I could give it a try.' Within seconds I was, much to Henry Grant's relief, appointed editor of *Miranda Naturalists' Trust News*.

I therefore didn't come into the role with a well-defined view of what I wanted the magazine to be, and I think that shows clearly in the first few issues (particularly the two where I gave Keith 13 pages to write about his birding trip to Costa Rica). What I did bring was a sense of enthusiasm for all things bird-related (which is why Keith got those 13 pages).

After a slightly rocky start I began to have lots of ideas, most of which didn't really pan out. One plan was to head to the library every few months and find the latest research, then write a few paragraphs so readers would get up to date information. What I discovered was that being the editor wasn't about going out and writing articles, it was more like being the spider in the middle of the web, trying to spin the threads wide enough to touch all that's going on, then drawing people in by asking them to contribute. The role wasn't really about telling people what they didn't know, it was about helping to share stories as widely as I could.

After a few years my basic plan for each issue settled down: I wanted to have all but one article focused on the Trust, Shorebird Centre activities, shorebirds or the natural history of the local area. In some issues one of these areas would dominate; for example, during the satellite tracking program those birds got a lot of pages. I'm



ON THE COVER: (clockwise from top left) David Bellamy at the Shorebird centre; a special report on the Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve; the amazing flight of E7; Estella Lee on a sea wall in China.

sure I didn't get the balance right with every issue, but I hoped that most readers would be able to find something of interest in most issues. The one 'other' article didn't always happen but it was good to have room for a wildcard article like one on the New Zealand Storm Petrel.

The articles I was asked for copies of were somewhat unexpected. I thought the satellite tracking details to be the most popular. But in fact articles on Black-billed gulls, seabird migration and reading colour bands were the most requested, while one on avian influenza probably led to the most comments.

Probably my favourite cover

was of Estella Lee on a sea wall in China, in part because it's a great photo, but also because I will always remember sitting in our rooms at Yalu Jiang putting that issue together, with the whole group picking the best shot for the cover and Adrian critiquing the magazine for me as it started to come together.

There's honestly too many names to thank people for all the help they gave me over the years, so I'll just quickly just say thanks to everyone, then single out one person— thanks for taking over Jim.

Gillian Vaughan, Editor 2002-12,
Chair 2010-present.

gered species in the Firth of Thames since 1987.

The magazines over the next few years reflected something of a change of tone for the Trust. There was less emphasis on the need for building work, though in 2002 the Trust did purchase the 11ha Mizen property, on the western side of the coast road roughly midway between the Centre and the Limeworks, to preserve it from development. There was also a modest increase in staffing from 2003, with Jenni Hensley being employed two days a week as an assistant to Keith and, when she resigned in 2008 Maria Staples-Page took on the role.

The emphasis locally went on to conservation work. The Trust got funding allowing it to take over the coastal predator-trapping work commenced by Ecoquest students and it launched the annual New Zealand Dotterel Management Course, Wader-ID Course, Sandra Morris' art courses and, a bit later, Bruce Shanks started the photography courses.

The magazine includes stories about the unveiling of the giant oystercatcher sculpture, Torea Mangu, at Kaiaua and chair David Lawrie representing Trust at the launch of the Ngati Paoa Trust, aimed at unifying the various factions and creating a governing entity for the iwi.

There were many important visits, including one by Prime Minister Helen Clark, and numerous excellent talks, notable among them a presentation by John Dowding on the challenges facing the Wrybill. A couple of issues later Ian Southey added an article on the threats to the Black-billed Gull. There was also much discussion of aquaculture plans for the Firth of Thames.

But the main thrust was into a major strengthening of overseas links. Adrian Riegen went counting Red Knots at Bohai Bay for the first time. Subsequently the magazine carried a report from Chris Hassell on a significant number of New Zealand banded or flagged Red Knots being recorded there. There was great excitement over the arrival at Miranda of a godwit flagged at Yalu Jiang which was increasingly recognised as the key stopover site for our godwits.

In 2004 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Trust and Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve – an event marked by a special

issue on Yalu Jiang – and the Trust's work counting waders at the reserve took on real significance. Chinese students began to arrive to study conservation at Miranda. A plaque marking this sister-site relationship was unveiled in the grounds.

There was huge concern, reflected in several major articles, about the catastrophe for shorebirds created by the Saemangeum reclamation project in South Korea. Ironically, not long afterwards MNT was invited to attend the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on conservation between New Zealand and South Korea.

Enter North Korea

In 2007 Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters took up a request from the Trust to ask the North Korean authorities about the possibility of a team of birders being allowed in to gather information about migrants and, possibly, an unknown major Red Knot stopover site. Two years later this actually happened, a team of David Lawrie, Adrian Riegen and Tony Habraken went to North Korea, and the magazine carried a detailed report on this groundbreaking first joint shorebird survey there.

Research became increasingly important. Phil Battley joined the Trust Council after moving to Kaiaua to commence his major research project into migratory birds and Gillian ran an interview about his work. The magazine reported in detail on the publication of a highly significant paper, 'Crossing the Ultimate Ecological Barrier: evidence for an 11,000km-long non-stop migration from Alaska to New Zealand by Bar-tailed Godwits' by Robert Gill, Theunis Piersma, Adrian Riegen, Gary Hufford and Rene Servranckx.

In May 2007 there was a detailed report on the glorious opportunities opened up by satellite tracking of birds along with a photo of the soon-to-become famous E7 with her transmitter. And in November there was a cover story showing this amazing bird's 28,248km round trip from New Zealand to Alaska via China, then direct back to New Zealand. A couple of years earlier, Adrian had reported on his own flight to the godwit breeding area in Alaska, and in 2008 Keith wrote a detailed story about the beautiful, lonely place E7 had come from. Subsequently Keith incorporated

information from his work at Miranda plus visits to Yalu Jiang and Alaska, and elsewhere, into his highly successful book, *Godwits: long-haul champions* which was published in 2009.

Around this time Gillian, who was heavily involved in a lot of the activities she was recording in the magazine, started looking for someone to take over the editor's job, explaining that, 'Much as I've enjoyed being the editor of *MNT News* for the past seven years (wow, seven years, how did that happen?) I've decided it's time to move on. I feel both that it's time for a new voice and that there are other jobs in the Trust I would like to take on instead.'

The nature of one of those other jobs became apparent soon afterwards when in 2010 David Lawrie stepped down after 11 years as chair – though staying on the Council – expressing the hope that 'I have helped in developing a legacy than can continue into the future and that at some time in the future the work of the Trust will receive the due recognition from the Government that it so richly deserves.'

Gillian was elected to replace him as chair but, unfortunately no one had been found to take over the magazine so she found herself doing two demanding jobs.

Yalu Jiang Report

The next few issues of the magazine demonstrated just how much was going on. The Council was considering extended the Centre to include an auditorium. Gillian and Adrian were working on a major report summarising the result of years of bird counts at Yalu Jiang. The Trust was putting a lot of work into developing a website to expand its reach around the world.

A delightful child's poster on the cover of issue No 79 highlighted the Trust's efforts to make children more aware of shorebirds. An article introduced Kaiaua local, Kristelle Wi, who took on the job as summer shorebird guide and over the years gradually expanded her role to predator control, helping run the Centre and even represent the Trust overseas. A story by Gillian explained how research using light geo-locators was revealing more about Red Knot migratory flights. Phil Battley wrote an article on Bohai shorebird surveys which showed Red Knots reaching crisis point. A new hide was built opposite the shellbank.

With all that, and the usual courses

Jim Eagles: all that exciting news to report

I hugely enjoyed my 50-plus years in journalism. I've always loved the business of meeting interesting people or digging out significant information and then writing about it in a way others could – hopefully – understand and appreciate. Since joining the *NZ Herald* as a cadet reporter I've owned and edited community newspapers, edited regional dailies and business newspapers, written about politics, economics and local government, covered fires, murders and terrorism, and at the end had the great pleasure of editing the *Herald's* Travel section, and I've loved all of it.



So when I reached an age when I had to think about retiring I wasn't concerned about leaving the *Herald* – which was no longer much like the paper I started my journalism career on half a century before – but I was worried about how I would cope without my daily buzz of excitement. Imagine my relief when I was asked if I'd like to become the editor of both the *Miranda Naturalists' Trust News* and *Dawn Chorus* when I retired. I didn't take much persuading. And editing those magazines has been an absolute joy.

Instead of all the unpleasantness, trivia and gossip that now seem to obsess the mainstream media, I've been able to report on serious environmental issues, fabulous people and fascinating birds. The stories I've been lucky enough to cover in the 16 issues of *PM News* that I've put out so far have been simply wonderful.

Early on there was John Dowding telling us about the campaign to protect our New Zealand Dotterel from the oil spilled by the wreck of the *Rena*. I was able to run a cover story celebrating the fact that a Shore Plover, extinct on the New Zealand mainland for 140 years, spent a summer at the stilt ponds. We spread the rather moving news that the magnificent E7 was living in retirement just down the coast at Maketu.

I've been able to report on events like a cannon netting exercise which caught three Sharp-tailed

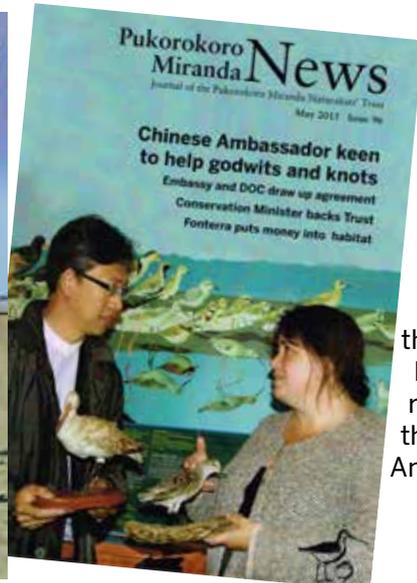
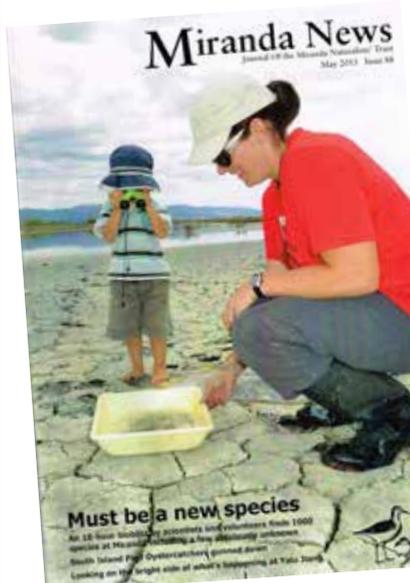
Sandpipers and a Curlew Sandpiper as well as over a hundred of those delightful, trusting Wrybills; the fantastic Bioblitz where we found well in excess of our target thousand species; and the exciting campaign which saw the Bar-tailed Godwit crowned as New Zealand's Bird of the Year. Being editor allowed me to approach Ngati Paoa, find out at first hand why they wanted the historic name Pukorokoro restored to the area, and to see it actually come to pass.

I was able to watch, fascinated, the genuine shock on the face of the Chinese Ambassador when, while standing on the foreshore beside the hides, he learned that habitat loss in his home region of Bohai Bay is the main threat facing our Red Knots. Subsequently I've also been able to report on the increasing efforts by the Chinese authorities to protect the migratory birds that we share, including creating new reserves and, most recently, the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement.

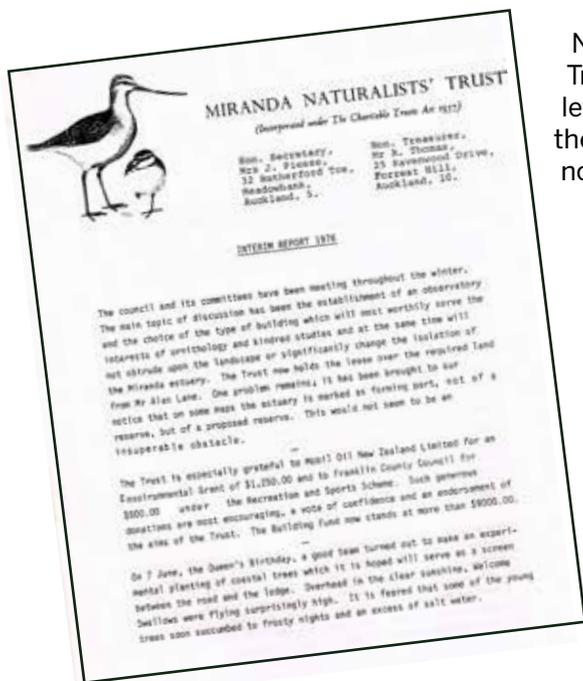
Above all I've marvelled at the global reach of this tiny voluntary organisation, based in an obscure rural corner of a little country at the bottom of the world, which regularly sits round a table with representatives of the most populous nation on earth, has gained entry to reclusive North Korea, hosts leading experts from Russia, the United States and Europe and produces research that is received with respect by authorities around the world.

On top of all that, I've actually learned enough about shorebirds to point some of them out to visitors and share their amazing stories, I've managed to band a Wrybill, note down a few flag letters and contribute in a small way to the great global research effort, I've seen some marvellous birds – even participated in a rare bird report on a Greenshank – and I've met lots of extraordinary, talented and dedicated people. I can't imagine a better way to spend my retirement.

Jim Eagles, Editor 2012-present



GOOD NEWS:
(from left)
the bioblitz;
E7's happy retirement;
the Chinese Ambassador at the Shorebird Centre.



NOT SO DIFFERENT: The Trust's first newsletter (at left) and the latest issue of the magazine (at right) may not look the same but they still do the same job.



by Ray Buckmaster, the amazing thousand species Bioblitz, masterminded by superscientist Peter Maddison and, more recently, the decision to buy the reserve from the Lane Family.

Building, though not ignored, continued to have a lower priority. There were on-again, off-again talks about upgrading the Centre. The two hides were 'munted' – in Maria's colourful turn of phrase – in another storm and once more rebuilt by Adrian and a team of volunteers.

Instead, the magazine reflected the Trust's growing influence in the flyway, in China, North Korea and at home. There was a story about the Red Knot finally being named a New Zealand native . . . and promptly being declared nationally vulnerable. Richard Fuller from the University of Queensland gave a disturbing talk on his collation of flyway bird counts which showed collapsing numbers.

On a more positive note, the cover story on No 89 celebrated the amazing achievements of Keith Woodley during his 20 years at the Centre. And the cover story in No 91 commemorated the equally remarkable E7 who at that time was living in retirement at Maketu (but may have since passed along).

After prolonged haggling over wording, the Chinese authorities formally accepted a report on a decade of research on migratory birds at Yalu Jiang by PMNT research teams – marked in a special issue – and this, in turn, seemed to result in a greater interest in conserving shorebird habitat. That issue, No 92, also saw the Trust agree to shoulder the cost of printing

the magazine in full colour which hugely enhanced its visual appeal.

The improved relationship with China saw Ambassador to New Zealand, Wang Lutong, visit Miranda with his wife and young son, and his discovery that the main threat to the Red Knots lay in Bohai Bay, where he comes from, seemed to produce a breakthrough. At the same time a meeting in Devonport with new Conservation Minister Maggie Barry also won her support on the need for action to protect the knots. This led to Director-General of Conservation Lou Sanson leading a team, including Adrian, to China, which got better access, a more positive reception and seemed to make real progress. Soon afterwards Ambassador Wang and Minister Barry visited the Centre to announce before a barrage of television cameras that the Chinese were giving formal protection to key roosting areas in Bohai Bay.

Meanwhile a Trust team made the first of a planned series of visits to North Korea, hoping to find the missing major stopover site for Red Knots, and among other things made the first officially recorded sightings of knots in North Korea.

Bird of the Year

2015, which marked the Trust's 40th birthday, was declared the Year of the Godwit and the magazine reported on special speakers like Pavel Tomkovich, Lee Tibbets from Alaska and Theunis Piersma who added their prestige to the occasion. The birthday celebrations ended in grand style when the Bar-tailed Godwit was voted Bird of the Year in the annual poll run by

Forest & Bird.

Towards the end of the year Maria Staples-Page resigned as assistant manager and was replaced by Louisa Chase who brought fresh energy and new ideas to the shop and the Trust's work on the local scene.

As reported elsewhere in this issue, 2016 has got off to a great start with Chinese Minister Chen Fengxue, Director-General Lou Sanson and a parade of other dignitaries visiting the Centre to sign a Memorandum of Arrangement between the two countries on conservation of migratory birds.

The Flock

The Trust used the occasion to launch an exciting new campaign to create a flock of cutout godwits, knots, oystercatchers and Wrybills with the aim of attracting the attention of youngsters and their parents to the magic of migratory birds.

And during the ceremony the chair of Waikato Regional Council, Paula Southgate, announced that it would be providing funding to enable the Trust to buy the block of land where it all started more than 40 years ago . . . which rather took things full circle.

All of which underlines the face that, while there might seem to be a big divide between that first duplicated newsletter and the professionally printed issues produced today, they both do the same job of linking together a dedicated band of folk working to ensure that the marvellous birds that migrate to New Zealand from the furthest corners of the world are able to continue to come here so we can marvel at their stamina, skill and beauty.



INVADERS: Divided Sedge (at left) and Pampas Grass (right) are threats to biodiversity. Photos / Ray Buckmaster

Beware the threat of those swinging invaders

The natural biodiversity of the coastal strip at Pukorokoro Miranda is under threat from highly successful invasive species such as Divided Sedge and Pampas Grass, writes **Ray Buckmaster**.

It is possible to put a number value on the biodiversity of a living community, which is great, because it allows us to monitor for improvement or deterioration over time.

The classic example of a highly biodiverse community is the tropical rainforest. A single hectare might include a vast number of plant species. This is hugely diverse but not very productive in a commercial sense.

By contrast, low biodiversity is the default position for most agricultural systems because they are managed for productivity. A highly productive pasture consists of vast numbers of a single species, such as a particular cultivar of Perennial Rye Grass, ideal for cattle.

Greater diversity produces a more stable and resilient community. Different plant species use their environment in different ways and if there is a resource not being fully utilised then there is a gap available for another species in the community. The natural tendency is for a community to become more species-rich over time until it achieves a stable state.

The progressive development of a living community is known as succession, and stages of this process can be seen getting underway on the edges of the mudflats. The initial harsh conditions permit only one plant species to live there, Glasswort. However, the success of the Glasswort improves conditions, sediment accumulates around the plants raising the land level slightly and decreasing the period that the surface is under estuarine water. This allows other plant species to es-

tablish and a gradual transition to salt meadow from salt marsh is underway.

The endpoint of this process, its stable state or climax, can only be guessed at. Succession on most of the coastal strip is being held in a sub-climax situation through grazing.

However, this does not always apply. There are regions of the coast where biodiversity may take a dive, not from the direct intervention of man, but due to the arrival of invasive weeds with the potential to modify the communities to which they introduced themselves. They often thrive because they have arrived without the species that controlled them in their country of origin. Sometimes they will prove to be better adapted to the conditions than a native species.

A species that has been in the country for a long time is the Divided Sedge (*Carex divisa*). It is widely present as one of a number of species in the drier areas of the coastal strip. However, it is at its best in lower, damper, flood-prone areas where it totally smothers other species. There are many hectares of Divided Sedge monoculture in the coastal strip. Landcare has included it in a list of aggressive weeds that change the nature of estuarine habitats.

Pampas Grass is starting to make an appearance on our estuarine edges and also has the potential to destroy the vegetational sequences found there. There are two South American species (*Cortaderia selloana* and *C. jubata*). There are also five endemic *Cortaderia* species which are collectively known as toetoe, but only one is found around

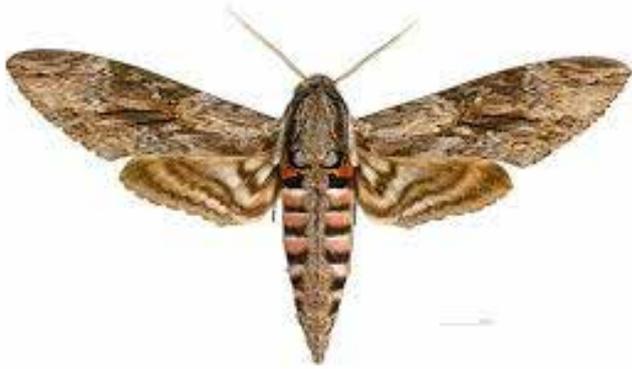
Pukorokoro Miranda (*C. splendens*). The flower stem of this iconic plant has many uses, not least as the framework for tukutuku panels whose woven patterns use three other native plant species, harakeke, kiekie and pingao.

Pampas is establishing to the south of Ray's Roost, adjacent to where a new White-fronted Tern colony established this summer, and if left it could become a problem. A single plant can grow to a clump several metres in diameter requiring a bulldozer to remove it. These make excellent rat habitat.

Its powers of reproduction are also awesome. One flower-head can produce 10,000 seeds with the potential to travel 20km. *C. jubata* occurs in New Zealand only as a female plant but it doesn't need pollination to produce viable seed. Both species are increasing their range in New Zealand. They were declared pest plants in 2001 and can no longer be sold.

Removal of plants before they have flowered is easily done with a spade and they are also susceptible to spray. Of course if you are keen to take action you do need to be able to distinguish the invading pampas from the native toetoe. There are many differences but probably the best test is to tug on a leaf: a toetoe leaf will not snap readily whereas pampas will.

Pampas grass may look beautiful but its invasive tendencies mean it's not the best plant to have in your front garden. And in the UK it carries another risk: its presence in a garden is evidently urban code for 'swingers live here'. You have been warned. 🐦



DELICATE BEAUTY: (clockwise from top left): The Convolvulus Hawk-moth; the Crimson-speckled Footman; Dutchman's Blush; the hard-to-find *Meterana pansicolor*. Photos / Birgit Rhode

A paradise for lepidopterists

RJB Hoare, of Landcare Research, offers an introduction to the fascinating moths and butterflies of the Pukorokoro Miranda coast, where new species are constantly being discovered.

Lepidoptera, or moths and butterflies, are amongst the most well-loved of insects. There are over 200,000 known Lepidoptera species worldwide, of which 90% are moths.

In Europe, detailed study of the insect fauna dates back to the 18th century and to the birth of modern scientific nomenclature in the publications of Linnaeus. There, butterflies and moths have been pursued, collected and reared, described and named, drawn, painted and photographed by many eager students both amateur and professional, and the fauna of most European countries is extremely well known.

New Zealand, with its small population and much shorter history of entomological studies, presents a wonderful opportunity and challenge to the student of Lepidoptera.

Amongst the estimated fauna of 2000 or more species, many have not been scientifically named; indeed, many have barely been seen since they were originally described new to science, and the life histories and

foodplants are still unknown for many species, including some very common ones.



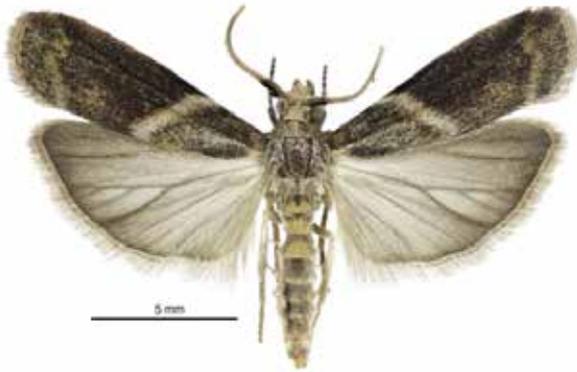
LOVELY: A Convolvulus Hawk-moth.

Coastal areas, such as the salt-marshes, coastal grasslands and mangroves of the Firth of Thames, have not been as well studied entomologically in New Zealand as the richer forest habitats, but contain many interesting specialist moths. Mangroves play host to a species of Grey-brown Knot-horn Moth, whose caterpillars tie together the young leaves. This is *Ptyomaxia trigonogramma*, the species name referring to the dark triangular mark

present on the forewing of many specimens. It is considered a native moth, also occurring in eastern coastal Australia, which shares our mangrove species *Avicennia marina*.

A related knot-horn has caterpillars that feed on the saltmarsh herb *Samolus repens* (Sea Primrose). This beautiful pinkish-tinged moth was first discovered by well-known bugman Ruud Kleinpaste at Pukorokoro Miranda in 1980; it can often be found flying amongst its host-plant by day and has been colloquially referred to as the Dutchman's Blush after its coloration and its discoverer. Meanwhile, it lacks a full scientific name, as it was new to science when found and no-one in New Zealand has worked on this group of moths; it belongs to the essentially Australian genus *Vinicia*, but may be an endemic New Zealand species.

On the shrubs and climbers at the Shorebird Centre a number of interesting species breed. The Corokia bushes are host to an attractive Scallop-winged Looper Moth, *Horisme suppressaria*,



SPECTACULAR: (clockwise from top left) Copper butterfly; endemic owllet moth *Bityla defigurata*; Scallop-winged Looper Moth; Mangrove-loving Knot-horn Moth *Ptyomaxia trigonogramma*. Photos / Birgit Rhode, Jerome Albre

which is quite a local species. In the Muehlenbeckia vines live larvae of our native copper butterflies of the genus *Lycaena*; it is suspected that these frequently fall prey to introduced paper wasps and would naturally have been more common in the past.

Classification of the copper butterflies is the source of some confusion, and it is believed that the common coastal species around Auckland, which we once referred to as Rauparaha's Copper, *Lycaena rauparaha*, should really be called *Lycaena salustius*, based on the original 18th century colour illustration of that species by William Jones.

Also in the Muehlenbeckia live larvae of *Bityla defigurata*, an interesting endemic species of owllet moth. The adult moths, which overwinter in outhouses and woodpiles, are dark brown and glossy, and have a habit of scuttling rather than flying when disturbed; it is no coincidence that they are closely related to a northern hemisphere moth colloquially known as the 'mouse moth' because of its similar behaviour and colour.

There is even a little caterpillar that lives inside the leaves of Muehlenbeckia making a tunnel or leaf-mine; this is *Zapyrastra calliphana*; the adult that hatches from the mine is a beautiful

metallic coppery moth with silver and white markings, but is very tiny (about 4 mm long).

Out on the exposed saltmarsh where its host-plant glasswort (*Sarcocornia*) grow abundantly, another owllet moth, *Ectopatria aspera*, breeds. This is a native species that also occurs in similar habitats in Australia. The adult is a rather dull greyish moth; but the green caterpillar is remarkable for its ability to survive inundation by salt water at high tide.

Many other owllets (family Noctuidae) have been found at Miranda; some probably breed in the immediate vicinity on herbaceous plants and weeds (e.g. the common garden species, *Graphania mutans* and *G. ustistriga*); others are probably wanderers from nearby bush remnants, or possibly from the Hunua Ranges; examples of these are the beautiful emerald green Mahoe Stripper Moth (*Feredayia graminosa*) and the rather scarce ochre-brown *Meterana pansicolor*, whose larvae feed on lacebark (Hoheria).

It is sometimes surprising to learn that even quite small moths can make long journeys, carried high in the air by weather systems. New Zealand receives a regular 'rain' of Lepidoptera from Australia, especially in the after-

math of tropical cyclones, and certain species that are naturally migratory in habit turn up year after year here, often in spring or autumn. Coastal areas, whether east or west, are good sites for finding these migrants, some of which can establish colonies in New Zealand for a shorter or longer period.

Two of the best-known migrants, not infrequently found at Miranda, are the spectacular Convolvulus Hawk-moth (*Agrius convolvuli*) and the delicately patterned Crimson-speckled Footman (*Utetheisa pulchelloides vaga*).

The Convolvulus Hawk-moth may sometimes be seen hovering in front of flowers at dusk, using its extremely long tongue to suck nectar from the florets. The garden perennial Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) is one of its favourites.

The Crimson-speckled Footman has a butterfly-like flight and can often be seen by day, especially where its host-plants, members of the borage family such as Echium, are abundant, as at Miranda.

I have mentioned just a few of the many interesting moths and butterfly species to be found around Pukorokoro Miranda. New species are being added to the list each year and doubtless many more discoveries await us. 

The 41st Annual General Meeting of Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust will be held at the Shorebird Centre at 11am on Sunday 29 May



Annual Report from the Chair

A very happy 40th birthday year

Chair **Gillian Vaughan** reports on a highly successful 40th year for the Trust, which saw deeper relations with China and DOC, huge support from Living Water and the Bar-tailed Godwit named Bird of the Year.

Each year the job of writing the annual report for the Trust's AGM in May gets harder and harder, because each year we seem to pack more into the January to April period, making writing a report about last year seem nearly impossible. But looking back to 2015 has been surprisingly gratifying.

We had time at the start of the Trust's 40th year to acknowledge the members who built the organisation and in so many ways are the Trust. We then saw key shorebird people from around the world coming to speak to us, significant engagement with North Korea and China, both overseas and in New Zealand, with great support from the Department of Conservation, including two visits from Maggie Barry, the Minister of Conservation. The Bar-tailed Godwit became Bird of the Year, helping our profile and raising awareness of the issues shorebirds face. David Lawrie made an amazing commitment to tweet about godwits nearly every day for the whole year. Publicity through the year was high, and many of the links are available on our website.

We've set a high bar for the team organising the 50th anniversary and I'm looking forward to seeing what they come up with. I have no doubt that the Trust will still be doing natural history and shorebird conservation, education and advocacy when that milestone rolls around.

Although dominated by our Year of the Godwit events, 2015 also saw the day-to-day activities of the Trust continue: the Shorebird Centre's floor was resurfaced, new furniture bought for the Sibson Room, we got a new set of bunk beds and a permanently mounted data protector was installed in the Wrybill Room as part of on-going efforts up update the Centre. A renovation to the cottage bathroom made the cottage comfortable again.

Long term staff member Maria Sta-



CELEBRATIONS: Conservation Minister Maggie Barry, DOC Director-General Lou Sanson and Chinese Ambassador Wang Lutong visited the Centre the day after the Bar-tailed Godwit was named Bird of the Year.

bles-Page decided it was time to move on and was replaced by Louisa Chase who is bringing a new skill-set to the role. Trish Wells was the shorebird guide as the year started and Rachel Hufton was filling the role as it ended. Kristelle Wi still appears at the Centre but these days most often as a caterer. As always volunteers were essential to keeping the place in good shape, with John and Stella Rowe painting the outside of the centre for the third time.

We received some amazing funding through the year, led by grants from Living Water (a DOC-Fonterra partnership) and a bequest from Dinah Francis Gavin. The bequest is targeted at education and it funded the completion of a new education kit and will support the part-time educator we have recently hired. The support from Living Water has allowed us to purchase a replacement set of telescopes, as well as funding our work in Asia last year and this year. Smaller donations and bequests were also received and our thanks go to all of those who have made contributions to the work we do.

The support the Trust has received

from the Living Water partnership, not just in terms of funding but in helping us to work out possibilities and build relationships with partners in New Zealand and China, has been amazing. I thank the Living Water partnership staff who have been so encouraging of the Trust and our aims.

The underlying theme of the year was to fund the purchase of the Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve. Alister Harlow and Keith Woodley put much effort into putting our funding applications together, and the Lane family was very patient, and I am so pleased that we have now confirmed the necessary funding from Foundation North and Waikato Regional Council, topped off by \$20,000 from our members.

No annual report would be complete without thanks to Centre manager Keith Woodley and the members of the Trust Council. Keith has fingers in every pie and each member of the Council brings something unique to the role. The Trust's achievements are really the work of the individuals willing to do the work, and my thanks go out to them.

The 41st Annual General Meeting of Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust will be held at the Shorebird Centre at 11am on Sunday 29 May



Treasurer's Report

New look for the accounts

The Trust has new auditors this year, Staples Rodway, which means some changes in our accounts, reports treasurer **Charles Gao**. As a result the accounts have not been finalised in time to be published in the magazine and will look a little different when they do appear. They will be published on the Trust website as soon as they have been finalised and will also be distributed at the Annual General Meeting. The following report will give members an indication of the Trust's financial performance during 2015 but the specific figures must be regarded as provisional until approved by the auditors.

The 2015 financial year included a number of special activities which impacted on the financial position. Among these were:

- The 40th Birthday Celebrations, including a successful birthday luncheon that brought back lots of good memories; a series of international speakers who brought a global perspective on the threats to waders to a nationwide audience; a shorebird photo competition; and a Year of the Godwit poster competition for school students.

- The Bar-tailed Godwit was crowned as New Zealand Bird of the Year for 2015.

- The website was upgraded, including provision for online payment of member subscriptions and donations as well as improved arrangements for payment of online shop purchases.

- The Trust's relationship with China was strengthened through official visits to the Centre from Chinese Ambassador Wang Lutong, Minister of Conservation Maggie Barry, Department of Conservation officials led by Director-General Lou Sanson and representatives of Fonterra's Living Water programme.

- Lots of new fixed assets were acquired for the Centre including furniture – notably 10 Swiss craft units – a data projector and 12 Hawke Spotting Telescopes, and the Curlew Room was upgraded.

When the accounts are presented you will notice the presentation of the 2015 Statement of Financial Performance and the Statement of Financial Position looks different to the previous year. This is because the new auditors, Staples Rodway Auckland, have adopted a summarised

style to reflect the accounts with breakdown details shown in the Notes to the Financial Statements.

Main points

I will outline the most significant aspects of the 2015 Financial Statement here to provide more information about PMNT's financial performance (all figures are GST-exclusive unless otherwise stated).

The Trust recorded a deficit of \$12,121 in the 2015 financial year compared with the surplus of \$27,253 last year. This is primarily due to the unspent portion of the following grants which have to be reflected under Current Liabilities in the Statement of Financial Position:

- Unspent portion of the Dinah Francis Gavin bequest \$40,108 (GST-inclusive) for developing the education resource kit and employing a part-time education officer.

- Unspent portion of the \$5,634 grant (GST-inclusive) from the Chisholm Whitney Family Charitable Trust for upgrading the Centre's interpretative display panels.

Income

The main points on the income side during the 2015 financial year are:

- Shop sales slightly improved, increased by \$4,864, while shop purchase was in line with the previous year's figure level.

- General donations were considerably lower than the previous year.

- The Trust received bequests of \$13,215 from F Murray and \$12,614 from K Haslett.

- A grant of \$10,230 was received from EAAFP towards bird surveys in North Korea in May.

- Membership subscriptions will hopefully improve as a result of the online payment facility.

- The field course surplus of \$9,861 is as good as last year's though the presentation is different. The new auditor has set up separate codes for field course income and field course costs while in the previous year's accounts there was only one code for the field course surplus.

- Income from school visits, tours and lectures dropped sharply, by \$2,413, however, the investment in an education kit and a part-time education office will hopefully attract more students to visit the Centre in 2016.

- A consultation fee of \$19,000 came from the DOC-Fonterra Living Water partnership to fund our bird survey activities in China and North Korea and Living Water also provided \$13,914 for the telescope upgrading project.

Expenditure

On the expenditure side, total expenses were up by 32%, or \$51,363, reflecting an increase in activities undertaken during the 2015 financial year, the main points of which are detailed below.

Operating expense increased by 52% due primarily to:

- Education expenditure, including the development of the education kit at \$1,993, and the purchase of educational accessories, at \$1,398, a set of light-weight pre-focused binoculars and some tripod heads, at \$1,235, plus expenditure on a workshop held for teachers to review the kit.

- A Sibson Awards Scholarship of \$1,000 awarded to Rachel

The 41st Annual General Meeting of Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust will be held at the Shorebird Centre at 11am on Sunday 29 May

Withington which is reflected in the closing balance of the Sibson account term deposit.

•The inclusion of field course costs of \$8,487 which, as explained, were reported differently last year.

Depreciation

Depreciation expenses increased significantly, by \$8,902, due to the purchase of 12 spotting telescopes which have been given a depreciation rate of 48%, or \$6,336 for the year.

Repairs and maintenance expenses increased by 115%, mainly due to \$9,597 for the Centre floor re-sealing.

Publicity and travel expenses increased by 102%, mainly due to the \$17,479 cost of the annual bird surveys in China and North Korea.

Administration expenses increased by 87%, primarily composed of \$8,473 spent to bring international speakers to New Zealand to celebrate PMNT's 40th anniversary and \$1,233 for the website upgrade to provide for online subscription, donation and online shop payments.

The Trust also made some cost-effective changes in suppliers such as the new broadband provider, Light Wire, which resulted in a lower monthly charge and a bigger data allowance.

Equity adjustments

I should also draw attention to two adjustments in the Trust's Equity from the previous year. An anonymous donation of \$20,000 received in 2012 for the Centre building project has been reallocated to Unspent Donation under Non-Current Liabilities and a bequest of \$10,000 received from Eila Lawton in 2014 for a Coastal Enhancement Project has been reallocated to Unspent Bequest under Non-Current Liabilities.

My thanks to all the volunteers who assisted in the Centre's daily operations, the events held nationwide for our international speakers' speech, joined the Bird of the Year 2015 campaign and social media promotion via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, also to the Centre staff, Keith, Maria, new centre assistant Louisa Chase and summer shore guide Rachel Hufton.

Minutes of the 40 Annual General Meeting of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust held at the Shorebird Centre On Sunday 24 May 2015 at 10.05am.

PRESENT: Chairperson (Gillian Vaughan), Secretary (Will Perry), and 54 others.

APOLOGIES: Charles Gao (Treasurer), Simon Fordham, Morag Fordham, David Lawrie, Grahame Brind, Kathy Brind, John Charteris, Gillian Burrell, Estella Lee, Nancy Payne, Russell Thomas, Brian Woolley, Bev Woolley, Ashley Reid, Sue Reid, Trudy Lane, Colleen McKerrow, Wendy Hare, Nigel Milius, Trish Wells.

Apologies accepted (Gillian Vaughan / David Stonex).

MINUTES: The minutes of the 39th AGM held on 25 May 2014 had been published in PMNT News.

The minutes were approved as a correct record (Bruce Postill / John Rowe).

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES: See Chairperson's Report

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

Gillian Vaughan's report from the chair was published in PMNT News with the comment "Every year has its own highlights" and these included:

- Getting members of Department of Conservation (DOC) to Yalu Jiang
- Meeting New Zealand's Ambassador to China at Yalu Jiang
- PMNT delegation's visit to North Korea
- Yalu Jiang survey report launched in China
- Rebuilding the hide that had been dismantled by a storm
- Living Water project in conjunction with DOC and Fonterra

Gillian also paid tribute to the departing Kristelle Wi and her replacements, Charmaine Stanley and Trish Wells, who have assisted Keith Woodley and Maria Stables-Page through recent summers. Gillian also expressed thanks to the several volunteers who have given their time to help the staff to run

the Shorebird Centre.

Gillian added that there is a Sale and Purchase Arrangement between PMNT and the Lane Family for the purchase of the Lane block of land that includes the Robert Findlay Reserve. PMNT has asked Alister Harlow to apply for funding to cover this purchase. The chairperson's report was received (Gillian Vaughan/Betty Seddon).

Matters arising from Chairperson's Report:

1. Proposed Land Purchase: David Stonex asked about the price of the Lane Family's block of land. Gillian answered that it was expected to be \$400,000. Stuart Chambers asked whether it was necessary for PMNT to own the land. Gillian responded that, while it was not essential, it would be better for the land to be owned by PMNT than by other potential purchasers. Stuart remarked that the block of land is protected by a covenant. David Stonex asked what the Trust was planning to do with the 11ha block that it already owns. At this point, Gillian invited DOC's Greg van der Lee to address the meeting.

Greg advised the meeting that Fonterra and DOC are sharing the coordination of a \$20 million community investment fund sponsored by Fonterra to protect sensitive water catchments. There are five key catchments identified for this-Living Water project and one of them is the Firth of Thames. PMNT is a key community group that is identified by the Living Water project as a valuable partner in helping to protect the Firth of Thames. DOC has recently sent a request for invoice to PMNT for \$19,000. DOC is not able to spend Living Water funds directly on land or structures but is able to apply funding to organisations such as PMNT for projects that may include building structures on land owned by those organisations.

Stuart Chambers asked what sort of structures were envisaged. Greg replied that they could be observation towers

The 41st Annual General Meeting of Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust will be held at the Shorebird Centre at 11am on Sunday 29 May

or board walks or improved access for disabled persons.

Gillian Vaughan commented further that the \$19,000 will be used for sending PMNT people to China and Korea to perform shorebird survey and advocacy work.

2. Stella Rowe and David Stonex expressed praise for the continuous improvement of the Pukorokoro Miranda News magazine, a sentiment shared by the meeting.

3. Betty Seddon expressed thanks to Gillian Vaughan for doing such a great job as Chairperson.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Charles Gao's Financial Report was published in PMNT News. Charles Gao continues to be based in Blenheim and is fortunately willing to continue as PMNT Treasurer. Gillian advised that any queries about the accounts should be addressed to Charles via email or to Gillian herself. Gillian spoke to some of the issues in Charles's report:

1. An apparent drop in shop sales compared with the previous year may not be as dramatic as it seems because there have been some errors in coding shop transactions at least during the last two years. More robust training of volunteers should reduce the number of coding errors.
2. The Trust is always looking for opportunities for funding applications.
3. Important activities include building relationships with organisations such as DOC and Regional Councils.
4. Previous trips to flyway sites, for example China and Korea, have often

been at delegates' own expense. The Trust wants to be able to provide funding so that our people do not have to pay for these trips themselves.

Comments on Treasurer's Report: Phil Hammond commented that book sales had declined worldwide and so it would not be surprising that there were reduced book sales at the Shorebird Centre.

The Financial report was adopted (Ann Buckmaster/Phil Hammond) that the Financial Report be adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Secretary – William Perry elected unopposed.

Treasurer – Charles Gao elected unopposed.

Council - Emma Pearson stepped down due to family commitments. Ten sitting members were nominated, David Lawrie, Adrian Riegen, Gillian Vaughan, Wendy Hare, Estella Lee, Trudy Lane, Ray Buckmaster, Ann Buckmaster, Bruce Postill and one new nomination, Cynthia Carter. They were elected unopposed.

Auditor: Lance Fielder of Gyde Wansbone has stepped down as Auditor. Staples Rodway were appointed as the new auditor (Gillian Vaughan/Bruce Postill). Gillian pointed out that there would not be a particular individual person performing this role but that it would be shared by staff at Staples Rodway.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: The meeting approved a recommendation from the Council that Membership Sub-

scriptions for the year commencing 01.01.2016 be increased as follows: Single Member - \$50.00 (increase of \$5), Family Member - \$60.00 (increase of \$5), Overseas Member - \$65.00 (increase of \$5), Life Member under 50 - \$1,500 (increase of \$200), Life Member over 50 - \$850 (increase of \$100) (Phil Hammond/Cathy).

GENERAL BUSINESS:

1. Pukorokoro - Keith Woodley reported that the Geographical Board has recommended to the Minister that the district known as Miranda be renamed Pukorokoro Miranda.

2. Climate Change – Does the Trust make submissions on important environmental issues such as Climate Change? Gillian responded that David Lawrie frequently makes submissions, for example to Auckland Council regarding the Unitary Plan. The Trust has not made a specific submission on Climate Change. If a Trust member wishes to present a draft submission to PMNT Council then it will be considered by the Council.

3. Cycleway – Chris Thompson and Betty Seddon asked for an update on the Cycleway that will go past Kaiaua and the Limeworks. Keith Woodley replied that it is at the consent stage and that the Trust has insisted that sensitive roost sites (particularly Tara-maire and the Stilt Pools) be avoided. Gillian Vaughan added that the South Kaiaua roost site is likely to be less well protected. Phil Hammond commented that an enhancement to the cycleway would be laybys to enable observation of birds in the paddocks to the west of the road and cycleway.

4. Accommodation at Shorebird Centre – Stuart Chambers suggested that one of the two existing flats be upgraded to Motel Room style accommodation. Keith Woodley commented that there are no immediate plans for upgrading the flats.

5. Toilet facilities – Martin Day suggested toilet facilities at the shellbank/hide area. Gillian Vaughan commented that the Trust is not interested in providing such facilities.

The meeting closed at 10.43am.

Agenda for the 41st Annual General Meeting of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust

Apologies for Absence

Minutes of the AGM held on 24 May 2015

Matters arising from the minutes of 24 May 2015

Chairperson's Report

Treasurer's Report

Election of Officers (Treasurer, Secretary, Auditor, 10 Council Members)

Subscriptions for the year ending 31 December 2017

General Business

GODWIT TIMES

Hello. This is Godfrey Godwit reporting to you from Alaska where I have just arrived. Although most of my feathered friends and I have gone north there are some new kinds of birds to be found back in New Zealand. Lots of kids have been making life-sized replicas of shorebirds in a fun way to let everyone know that we need help. You can be part of the shorebird art craze that is sweeping the country. Here is how . . .

If you go to <http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/flock-A3-patterns.pdf> you can print out a life-sized outline of your favourite shorebird.

Cut the shape out, then use it as a template (as in the top photo). You might need to get someone to help you with the cutting out. Some people cut the bird shapes out of plywood with a bandsaw (like the tireless Ray Buckmaster in the second photo) while others use old real estate signs made from thick plastic or cardboard which can then be laminated (as in the third photo).

You don't have to be an amazing artist to create your own shorebird. Anything goes! Now is your chance to let the Van Gogh, Picasso or McCahon in you go wild. You could paint, draw or decorate your bird however you like. The amazing Ann Buckmaster knitted a jersey for her oystercatcher. You can paint on paper and stick it on the bird shape, colour the bird and draw patterns, stick eyes, bling (as in the bottom photo), feathers and beaks, or have a modern art bird.

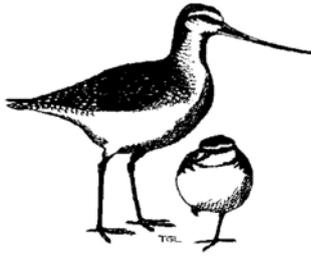
If you want to you can put a message on your bird like the Chinese Vice-Minister Chen Fengxue did – he wrote in Chinese that his bird was a 'sky ambassador' – or put your name, your school, the year and a message on the back. For more ideas go to <http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/flock-how>.

Send a photo of your birds to the editor at eagles@clear.net.nz and you could win a book for yourself or your school library.

Your friend
Godfrey



PUKOROKORO MIRANDA NATURALISTS' TRUST



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MirandaShorebirdCentre

Shorebird Centre Manager:
Keith Woodley
Assistant Manager
Louisa Chase

Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust Council

Chair: Gillian Vaughan
gillianv@gmail.com
09 298 2500
Deputy Chair and Banding
Convenor: Adrian Riegen
riegen@xtra.co.nz
09 814 9741
Secretary: Will Perry
home 09 525 2771
emlynp@actrix.co.nz
Treasurer: Charles Gao
charlesgao69@gmail.com
021 2674 919

Council members: David Lawrie
(Immediate Past Chair), Estella
Lee, Wendy Hare, Bruce Postill,
Trudy Lane, Ann and Ray
Buckmaster, Cythia Carter.

Magazine

Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust publishes *Pukorokoro Miranda News* four times a year to keep members in touch and provide news of events at the Shorebird Centre, the Hauraki Gulf and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. No material may be reproduced without permission.

Editor: Jim Eagles
eagles@clear.net.nz
(09) 445 2444 or 021 0231 6033

See the birds

Situated on the Firth of Thames between Kaiaua and the Miranda Hot Pools, the Pukorokoro 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, especially around new and full moons. The Miranda high tide is 30 minutes before the Auckland (Waitemata) tide. Drop in to investigate, or come and stay a night or two.

Low cost accommodation

The Shorebird Centre has bunkrooms for hire and two self-contained units: Beds cost \$20 per night for members and \$25 for non-members. Self-contained units are \$70 for members and \$95 for non-members. For further information contact the Shorebird Centre.

Become a member

Membership of the Trust costs \$50 a year for individuals, \$60 for families and \$65 for those living overseas. Life memberships are \$1500 for those under 50 and \$850 for those 50 and over. As well as supporting the work of the Trust, members get four issues of PMNT News a year, discounts on accommodation, invitations to events and the opportunity to join in decisionmaking through the annual meeting. You can join at the Centre or by going to our webpage (www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz) and pay a subscription via Paypal, by direct credit or by posting a cheque.

Bequests

Remember the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust in your will and assist its vital work for migratory shorebirds. For further information and a copy of our legacy letter contact the Shorebird Centre.

Want to be involved?

Friends of Pukorokoro Miranda

This is a volunteer group which helps look after the Shorebird Centre. That can include assisting with the shop, guiding school groups or meeting people down at the hide. Regular days for volunteer training are held. Contact Louisa Chase at the Centre for details.

Long term Volunteers

Spend four weeks or more on the shoreline at Miranda. If you are interested in staffing the Shorebird Centre, helping with school groups or talking to people on the shellbank for a few weeks contact Keith Woodley to discuss options. You can have free accommodation in one of the bunkrooms and use of a bicycle.

Firth of Thames Census

Run by Birds NZ (OSNZ) and held twice a year, the census days are a good chance to get involved with field work and research. This year's are on June 12 and November 20. Ask at the centre for details.

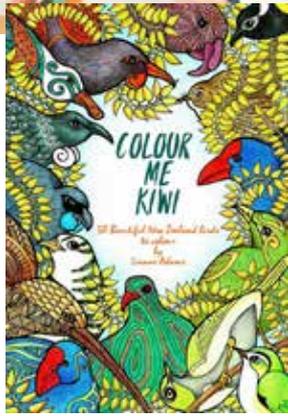
Contribute to the Magazine

If you've got something you've written, a piece of research, a poem or a photo send it in to *Pukorokoro Miranda News*. If you want to discuss your ideas contact Jim Eagles at eagles@clear.net.nz.

Help in the Shorebird Centre Garden

We can always use extra hands in the Miranda Garden, be it a half hours weeding or more ambitious projects. If you do have some spare time please ask at the centre for ideas, adopt a patch or feel free to take up any garden maintenance you can see needs doing.

NZ's best nature books

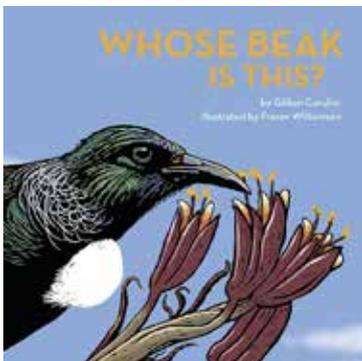
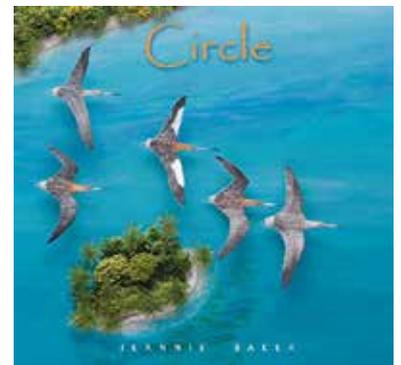


Join the countless others, young and old, who have rediscovered the pleasure of colouring in with *Colour me Kiwi*. This delightful book has 30 beautiful native birds to colour by Kiwi artist Lianne Adams. Designed and made in NZ. \$25.90.

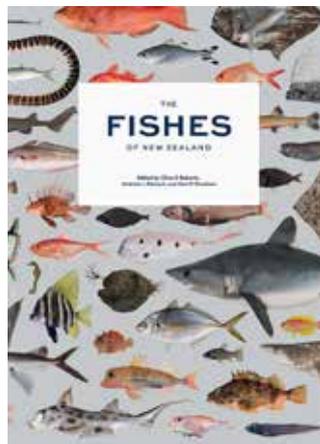
The Shorebird Centre Shop is widely acknowledged as having the finest collection of natural history books in the land. Of course a good many are about birds. But we cover a much wider range than that. There are also some wonderful children's books. And a marvellous selection of New Zealand gifts.

If you can't find the time to visit the Centre, go to our online shop at <https://shop.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/> or ring 09 232 2781.

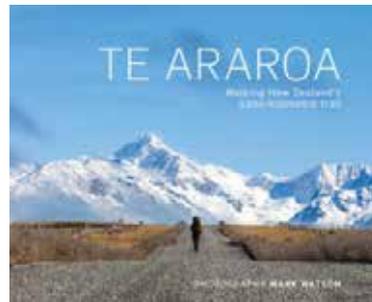
Circle by Jeannie Baker, a brand new release telling the story of the Bar-tailed Godwits' amazing migration, written for 5-8-year-olds. \$29.90



Whose beak is this? by Gillian Chandler. \$14.90



Fishes of New Zealand 4-volume set from Te Papa Press, \$250



Te Araroa: Walking New Zealand's 3,000km trail. Photography by Mark Watson, \$49.90

The delightful children's series by Ned Barraud and Gillian Chandler. \$19.90 each



NEW IN THE SHOP: Birds of New Zealand Vintage Bunting \$21.90 for a 4m length. Perfect for parties and Christmas for the bird lover in your family!