

Pukorokoro Miranda News

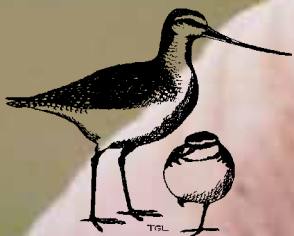
Journal of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust

February 2017 Issue 103

Plans for more roosting space

Trust invited to join in
wetland development

Lots about knots...
including
the perfect
courting
outfit



Young busker plays in aid of shorebirds

Twelve-year-old Matthew McFadden is so keen on waders that he went busking in Queen St, Auckland, to raise money for the Shorebird Centre.

Matthew, who attends Balmoral Intermediate, got a homework assignment allowing him to design his own challenge to help others and, having played the guitar for three-and-a-half years, he decided to go busking.

‘I decided to raise money for the Shorebird Centre because my Grandad, Brian McFadden, has taken me there quite a few times and I really enjoyed seeing the godwits and finding out about their migration journey. I think it’s amazing how they fly from New Zealand to Alaska and back.

‘I was there with Brian just before Christmas and spotted a dotterel through a telescope, and was sad to read that the Southern NZ Dotterel might be extinct in four years.’

Matthew researched the Auckland Council busking rules and got a Street Performance Licence online. Then his Mum and Dad took him to Queen Street and he went busking.

‘I played for over half an hour and played blues, rock and metal songs, including songs by Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Iron Maiden. I was nervous at first but ended up enjoying it a lot.’

The Council’s rules didn’t allow him to say that he was busking for charity but the next time he visited the Centre with his Grandad he took the money he collected. ‘I am pleased that the money I raised is going towards a good cause.’

You can see Matthew in action at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-6HUWPX1FNo>

Change at the Centre



Assistant manager Louisa Chase has decided to move on after being the mainstay of the shop for about a year. She has been temporarily replaced by Kristelle Wi (at left) who, of course, has filled various roles



BUSKER: Matthew McFadden in action with his guitar.

at the Centre over many years. The Trust will probably advertise for a permanent replacement later this year.

Tasman connection

PMNT is helping to facilitate a link between the Aboriginal people of Australia’s Gulf of Carpentaria and Ngati Paoa as the traditional guardians of two areas important to migratory birds. The idea was suggested by Roger Jaensch, former CEO of the EAAPF, who is now working in Queensland. As a first step the Trust organised a

meeting with Ngati Paoa representatives who were generally in favour of the idea but needed to report back. The next step may be to arrange a visit so the two groups of kaitiaki can meet.

Chinese visit

Representatives of the State Forestry Administration, China’s main conservation department, visited New Zealand in December and were hosted by PMNT. As well as the centre the delegation inspected the Watercare operation at Ambury with particular



A HOPEFUL SIGN: Hauraki District Council has put up an excellent sign on the seafront reserve at the southern end of Kaiaua asking people to try and avoid disturbing the migratory birds which often roost there in summer. Kevin and Janie Vaughan, who have a bach opposite, have for many years done their best to explain to dog-walkers and picnickers why the birds need a bit of rest to build up their stamina for the flight home. Sadly they've only had mixed success and quite a few earlier signs have been removed. This sign will be put up each year when the Arctic migrants are here so hopefully both it and the birds will be left in peace.

attention to the roosts created as part of the redevelopment of the sewage treatment system.

Thieves strike again

Thieves have once again been targeting vehicles left in the carpark at the hides.

Over the summer period a worrying number of vehicles have been broken into and robbed. In one case a touring group of overseas birders had passports, cash and credit cards taken leaving them extremely distressed. Summer shore guide Wendi Lane has had her car broken into twice even though it was empty of anything to take.

Presumably in an effort to broaden the number of victims the thieves

have also been taking the signs the Trust puts up in the car park warning visitors not to leave valuables in their cars. These have been replaced several times and at the time of going to press were once again in place.

It is possible that those involved are also behind a rash of burglaries and thefts around the wider district.

PMNT has been in touch with local Police and the regional crime prevention team to discuss what can be done to deter the thieves and, where possible, someone has been stationed in the carpark over the summer.



Successful courses

The latest Wader ID and Miranda Field Courses were both fully booked with a waiting list and got rave reviews from participants. Philip Moll (whose photos of the Field Course are on pages 6-7) said, 'It was way beyond expectation with many topics supporting my wildlife interests including benthic surveys, fish traps and simply counting and recording birds.'

Educator's new baby



Educator Krystal Glen, who did a wonderful job of establishing contact with schools and getting our message across to pupils, has completed her initial contract. Krystal has now given birth to a baby boy, Floyd Cedar Glen, who arrived on 2 December at 7.21pm, weighing in at 8 pounds 4 ounces, or 3.75kg, and is progressing well.

The future of the educator role is on hold for the moment while longterm funding sources are explored. 🐦

What's on at the Shorebird Centre

5 March, Autumn Migration Day

10am Researcher Rachel Withington reveals what Wrybills eat when they're visiting the Firth of Thames. Birdwatching good from 11am.

14 May, Annual general meeting

11am Your chance to have a say in the running of the Trust. Guest speaker, Eugenie Sage, Green Party environment spokesperson. Birdwatching good from 8am.

June 18, Firth of Thames Wader Census

Details from Tony Habraken (09 238 5284). High tide 1.30pm.

14-16 July, Print Making Workshop

With Sandra Morris. Details from the Shorebird Centre.

12 August, Winter Pot Luck Dinner

10am-2pm Working bee. **6pm** Dinner and guest speaker Sonam Tashi Lama on the conservation of Red Pandas in Nepal.

NB Some of these dates are different to those in the calendar which were incorrect.



BANDING: (from left) Sophie Futter meets a knot on her first time out banding; Ning Hua, who has worked at Yalu Jiang, discusses a godwit moult with Gillian Vaughan and Ann Buckmaster. Photos / Jim Eagles

Knots and godwits in the net

At last, after several unsuccessful attempts to band Red Knots and Bar-tailed Godwits, cannon netting on the shellbank has proved successful.

It wasn't a big catch, partly because the firing had to be rushed for fear of birds getting too close to the net, and partly because there was a problem with one of the lines, but six Red Knots and 51 Bar-tailed Godwits was a lot better than recent tallies.

There was a good turnout of 26 people, including several youngsters and a number of newcomers, in spite of the need for an early morning start. The weather was favourable, though the wind got up briefly, and by the time banding started conditions were calm and sunny.

There was a slight hiccup at the outset when a New Zealand Dotterel nest was discovered where banding chief Adrian Riegen wanted to put the second net so he only set one. 'Godwits and knots came into the bay more than four hours before high tide so they must have fed well in the night,' Adrian noted.

'Being a very big tide it came in very quickly and birds started to pour into the catching area and amid fears

they would soon be in danger we made a decision to fire quickly before the catching area became full of birds. In the end we had a modest catch.'

Of the six knots caught one was from Australia and the others were all new. Of the godwits, 48 were new and three were retraps from New Zealand: BTB - Banded 19 February 2014 aged two-plus and has been seen 30 times at Miranda since; BTC - banded at the same time as BTB and seen 14 times at Miranda and once at Yalu Jiang; BXU - banded at Miranda on 28 December 2014 and seen 10 times at Miranda. All the birds were banded, flagged, weighed and measured.

A smiling Adrian commented afterwards that the day had gone very smoothly, it was great to see new young people joining in and the dotterel was only briefly disturbed from its nest-sitting 'so all in all a good result'.

Among those helping out was Ning Hua, one of Prof. Zhijun Ma's students who has worked at Yalu Jiang with David Melville and is in Auckland for three months study at university.

Afterwards she enthused over 'the wonderful day in Miranda', how nice it was 'to see so many people interested

in shorebirds' and how well organised everything was.

'Your efforts to get more and more people involved in shorebird conservation are invaluable,' she said in a message to PMNT the next day, 'since conservation is never an issue of one person or one generation but of all of us. Afterwards I couldn't stop thinking what our nature reserve or me personally can do based on Miranda's success. This will take some time to figure out but we'd better start with what we can do first: e.g. publish my unpublished experiment data.'

There was less success a few weeks later with the cannon netting done as part of the Pukorokoro Miranda Field Course.

'As usual,' Adrian reported resignedly, 'the waders insisted on roosting in the Stilt Pools even though they were up to their bellies in water rather than the nice dry shellbanks.'

As a result attention shifted to South Island Pied Oystercatchers at Taramaire and there was a good catch of 159 SIPO. Unfortunately there were no retraps among them but all went smoothly and the course participants enjoyed the experience 🐦



WELCOME VISITORS: Black-tailed Godwits and friends at the hides.

Photo / Keith Woodley

An interesting crop of visitors

Four Black-tailed Godwits, three Pectoral Sandpipers, a Greater Sand Plover, two Far Eastern Curlews, a Whimbrel, a Fairy Tern, a New Zealand Dabchick and a Shining Cuckoo have been among the amazing list of birds to visit Pukorokoro in recent months, writes **Keith Woodley**.

A flock of four waders among the birds massed at Pukorokoro Miranda would usually attract little attention. Nor should a flock of three birds. But if they are Black-tailed Godwits and Pectoral Sandpipers the records become very interesting indeed. Both species have been recorded here with remarkable frequency in recent years, but normally only individuals. So the four black-tails photographed in front of the hide in October was a good record.

Two pectorals were regularly being seen by early December and this too was a good record. So when, a few days before Christmas, a group of young birders on a quest to see as many species as possible in 24 hours reported seeing three, I was somewhat sceptical. They were adamant, and rightly so, as shortly afterwards confirmation was received that three Pectoral Sandpipers were indeed here.

Coincidentally, the same species featured in a story published in the *NZ Herald* during the field course, reporting on research recently published in *Nature*. After migrating over 10,000 km from southern South America to breeding grounds in the Arctic you would think a male would be interested in taking it easy. Yet male Pectoral Sandpipers were tracked flying huge distances to mate with numerous females spread through 13,000 km of the breeding range. High summer in the

Arctic means 24 hours of daylight and for these sandpipers sleep appears to be a low priority, with birds catching brief naps of a few minutes or even seconds.

Researchers suggest ‘nomadic movements may allow males to display and sire offspring at multiple sites within a single breeding season. Sexual selection may then favour high-performance males that are able to reduce sleep to compete locally and to fly long distances between breeding sites, leading to a population with unrestricted interbreeding and without local adaptation and speciation.’

A more infrequent Pukorokoro record was a Greater Sand Plover seen in early January. One or two birds usually occur somewhere in New Zealand each summer, from a population breeding in western China, southern Mongolia and southern Siberia, and migrating to Australia. In non-breeding plumage it is nondescript, somewhere in size between NZ Dotterel and Banded Dotterel. Overall grey brown above and white below, two features help distinguish it: a large bulky bill with bulbous tip, and long legs that give it a lanky appearance.

Two Far Eastern Curlew were reported early in the season, with no further records until one appeared on the shell bank towards the end of the field course. This bird stuck around at least until 25 January. A Whimbrel was

Recent sightings at Pukorokoro

Arctic Migrants

c5200	Bar-tailed Godwit
c1000	Red Knot
1	Marsh Sandpiper
31	Pacific Golden Plover
13	Turnstone
7	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
3	Pectoral Sandpiper
2	Red-necked Stint
1	Curlew Sandpiper
1	Lesser Sand Plover
1	Greater Sand Plover
1	Esatern Curlew

New Zealand species

1500	Wrybill
1150	SI Pied Oystercatcher
6	New Zealand Dotterel
48	Banded Dotterel
3	Royal Spoonbill
	Black-billed Gull nesting!
	Caspian Tern
	White-fronted Tern
	Pied Stilt
2	Hybrid Black Stilt
	Variable Oystercatcher

also recorded by a number of visitors.

All of these were in addition to the usual line up of Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstone, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint.


Species diversity increased another notch with the appearance of a male Fairy Tern. Its colour bands revealed it to be from Mangawhai to where, after a couple of days on the Firth, it returned to see in the new year.

Meanwhile out on the shell bank the Black-billed Gulls abandoned any further breeding attempts after being washed out in the big tides of mid-December. Variable Oystercatchers proved more resilient.

Early one morning in mid December I encountered yet another rare species for this area: a New Zealand Dabchick on the Bittern Pools diagonally opposite our southern boundary. It was the first record since a bird seen on Taramaire Stream in July 2013. But this latest one did not hang around as this was the only sighting.

Usually Kingfishers disappear from the coastline around late September, presumably seeking nesting sites inland, before reappearing from late February. So the persistent call from the power lines near the Centre in late December immediately drew my attention. Though late in the season their flight behaviour suggested pre-breeding courtship, and second clutches have been recorded in February. However, I have since seen no evidence of a nesting attempt.

This season's theme of high species diversity continued into the Field Course. The mist netting session usually takes place at Miranda Orchards and most years the number of species caught has been modest. Last year there were eight but this year there were a record 14. For many participants Grey Warbler, Fantail and the four Kingfishers were exciting catches, as were the two new species for the course, Welcome Swallow and Yellowhammer. But the undoubted highlight was a Shining Cuckoo, only the second caught since courses began in 1999. The most challenging species to cope with was a Tui, also the second record for the course, with its aggressive demeanour and fearsomely sharp claws.

Finally, to add yet another species to the season, a pair of Spotted Doves have taken up residence around the Centre and cottage. 



WHAT'S IN A NAME: Dr Hemi Whaanga explains the complexities of traditional Maori names for birds to PMNT members. Photo / Jim Eagles

When is a Tui not a Tui?

Use of Maori names for birds is slowly spreading – for instance, many people now refer to Riroriro rather than Grey Warbler – but, as Dr Hemi Whaanga, a senior research fellow at the University of Waikato told the mid-winter potluck dinner, choosing the right name can be trickier than you might think.

Hemi and colleagues at the university and Canterbury Museum are involved in the Nga Pae Project which aims to identify the traditional Maori approach to naming birds and so to develop a modern naming protocol.

To do that they first looked back at early manuscripts and records, and talked with kaumatua, to identify the names recorded for different birds.

They found over 900 names covering 149 of the surviving bird species, 30 extinct birds and around half of the species that have arrived since 1850. In other words many birds had more than one name. That Grey Warbler, for instance, has at least 17 names including Hirorirori, Koriroriro, Nonoroheke and Whiringa a tau.

But that was nothing compared to the New Zealand Robin, these days often referred to as Toutouwai, for which they found 34 names. Or the Bellbird, increasingly now called Korimako, for which they located 33 names including Para, Rearea and Titapu.

Even more striking was what they discovered about the Tui – a name that has completely eclipsed the colonists' title of Parson Bird – because their research indicates that Tui was not among the 14 traditional names


which included Takahe (today applied exclusively to another species), Kokotea, Pikari and Tute. In fact, it seems, historically the bird was most commonly called Koko.

In some cases, Hemi explained, the multiplicity of names was probably the result of those who recorded them misunderstanding or mis-hearing what they were being told.

But it was also because Maori often had different names for male and female birds, names vary by region and they sometimes reflect the flowering and fruiting seasons (for example, when the native fuchsia was flowering female Tui could be called Kouwha).

It was mildly disappointing to an audience of wader enthusiasts to learn that many shore and seabirds are among the species which seem not to have had traditional names. One which does is the New Zealand Dotterel, also known by many birders as Tuturiwhatu, which Hemi reported to have 15 alternatives.

But, though some longstanding waders may not have Maori names, many high-profile recent arrivals do. The Australian Magpie, for instance, is called Makipae in some areas and Timohina in others; the Blackbird is sometimes known as Manu Pango; and the European Starling can be called Turingi.

Once the Nga Pae project is completed there should be an agreed process for giving Maori names to all our birds, new and old, and any other species still languishing unnamed. 



GUIDES; (clockwise from left) Wendi Lane, Joy Gough and Tansy Bliss.

Phptos / Keith Woodley, Jim Eagles

Warm welcome for visitors to the hides

Visitors to the bird hides have been well cared for this summer with a great team of guides in action. PMNT's official Summer Shore Guide, the ebullient Wendi Lane, has regularly been joined by the likes of longtime volunteer Joy Gough; former Thames DOC officer Tansy Bliss who is now based on the Chatham Islands; and Dai Stacey, a birding enthusiast from Wales, who once again headed south to volunteer at the hides and plans to do the same again next year 'because I enjoy it so much.' Here is what **Wendi Lane** calls her 'Tales from the Bird Hides'.

Where to begin? That is a tough one as I have met so many wonderful new people, seen so many new birds and hugely enjoyed catching up with the regulars that I share my office with (birds and people). Basically, I am one lucky lady to be working here.

I have learned many things. One of the biggest lessons is that you have to be very carefully what you say around birders. For instance, one day I innocently observed, 'Oh, look, there's a cute little stint.' Very quickly an Aussie next to me said, 'Now, do you mean a Little Stint or a Red-necked Stint?' Oops! That is how I learned that there is a bird called a Little Stint which has only been seen in New Zealand three times. So now the phrase, "Oh, look, a tiny stint," can be heard instead.

Another expression I've come to love and use whenever I can is 'Schiefschnabel' which is German for the Wrybill. I just love the word. Schiefschnabel! Wonderful. And speaking of them, I am really enjoying watching the ever-growing flock of Wrybills on the mudflats.

I have also watched with fascination the constant changes to the shellbank. During the supermoon tides in November it went through a couple of

particularly dramatic transformations.

The first big tide washed over the lowest part of the bank, extending it considerably, and flooded the Black-billed Gull nesting colony.

The next day's super tide was even higher. Virtually all the shellbank to the right of the catching area disappeared and when the sea eventually receded the low area was even bigger. Even more impressive was the way the bank had been extended all the way to the edge of the Pukorokoro Stream where the current will presumably mean it can't go any further.

It will be interesting to watch what

happens in the future. Will the bank curl around and cut off the mudflats to create more land? Will it extend inwards and come closer to the hide. Watch this space!

Elsewhere the movement is in the other direction. The high winds in January blew the old hide off its foundations and – not for the first time – it rolled off in one piece in the direction of the Stilt Ponds.

Right, I am off down to the hide for another day hanging out with the birds. There is a Far Eastern Curlew which has been impressive to see. Hopefully it will be there today too.



ON A ROLL: The old hide turned upside down.

Photo / Jim Eagles



OPENING CEREMONY: The Devonport Flock was officially opened by all those present yelling enthusiastically, 'The Flock has landed.'
Photo / Alex Eagles-Tully

Helping our birds to make lots of new friends

PMNT's The Flock project, which uses the fun experience of painting cutout shorebirds as an opportunity to tell people about the real birds' amazing stories and the threats they face, has been incredibly successful. **Jim Eagles** reports on his experience.

A few weeks after the Devonport Flock had brought 2500 painted shorebirds and thousands of humans to Windsor Reserve a bundle of around 30 postcards arrived in my letterbox at home from the pupils of St Leo's School.

Each was addressed to Mr Eagles of Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust, bore a handmade stamp and had a picture of a shorebird on the front. Each also had a delightful individual message about how much the children had enjoyed taking part in The Flock and learning about shorebirds. They said things like:

'Thank you for making the wooden birds and organising the paint. They looked beautiful and everyone loved them. – Leah'

'It was amazing learning about godwits but the most enjoyable part was learning how far they fly non-stop. – Jacob'

'Thank you for visiting our school. I found out that female birds are bigger than male birds, that the wrybill's beaks curve and I really enjoyed learning about godwits and E7. – Katie.'

'I was sad to hear that some of the shorebirds might become extinct. – Elise'



'I hope you are able to come back and talk more about shorebirds next year. – Jacob'

I mention their comments to give an indication of the effect The Flock project has had on thousands of children and adults around the country.

With the Devonport Flock alone we got to visit all 10 schools on the Devonport Peninsula and talk to more than 1500 pupils and, as those postcards demonstrate, the message about how wonderful our shorebirds are and how important it is to protect them really got through.

That means, of course, that the message also got into more than 1500 homes. I know that because we saw hundreds of families being brought to the reserve to see their children's birds. I've also had joking complaints from a lot of parents that 'Thanks to you we're not allowed to let our dog off the lead on the beach in case they chase the birds' and 'After hearing you the kids have decided that the cat is not allowed out at night in case it kills a bird'.

We got a further taste of what the children think at the opening ceremony when, instead of the usual politicians and celebrities, pupils from each of

These are the Bravest Birds



We see them glide high in the sky
Their drained bodies flying by.
These are the bravest birds.

These astonishing birds travel far,
From Alaska to New Zealand
The birds have done eight days so far.
These are the bravest birds.

Think of these birds who travel tirelessly
Through rushing winds, over raging seas,
Watching a horizon that seems never ending,
The rain pelting down, making everything unfocused.
These are the bravest birds.

Their brown and grey feathers fall
Among the sky's own rays.
Our eyes sting from the light
As we watch in perfect silence.
These are the bravest birds.

All the birds have flown up and are gone.
The lonely clouds float leisurely by.
We never get tired of watching the birds.
As they leave we silently hope
We'll see them again next September.
These ARE the bravest birds.

By Sophia Walker and Sophie Spooner (above).

the participating schools were invited to talk about shorebirds to the huge crowd gathered for the occasion.

The ceremony was launched by 11-year-olds Sophia Walker and Sophie Spooner from Devonport School who took turns reciting their poem *These Are The Bravest Birds* (above).

Then followed some more amazingly moving speeches and poems all delivered with great passion. 11-year-old Seongjun Yoon, from Wilson School, who has difficulty with verbal communication was so eager to have a say that he used his iPad held to the microphone to deliver the message: 'I love birds. We should care for them.'

Seven-year-old Olive Upstan from Vauxhall School gave a speech about the godwits' amazing migrations and how it had inspired The Flock. She concluded: 'Now these godwits are art and they're telling people to take care of godwits, making sure they take care of the beaches, not building factories on the beaches and making sure you're putting rubbish in the rubbish bins, not

throwing or dropping rubbish because that means you're not taking care of the godwits. Just remember, godwits are really amazing birds. They can fly for many days. Just think about it. So please, please take care of our special godwits.'

The final speech came from 11-year-old Thomas McCutcheon of Hauraki School, who turned up on crutches and stunned the crowd with a thunderous oration, delivered while standing on one leg, about the threats to all our shorebirds, ending with the call, "So how are these birds becoming endangered and what can we do? One big issue that is threatening these birds is pollution. As you know, Auckland's



A SUPER FRIEND: Look out for Spiderbird.

population is growing at a really fast rate. The building of more houses and roads causes more carbon footprints and more rubbish flying into the sea. Make sure you hold onto your rubbish and try to minimise the use of your car. Another issue is us, humans, and domestic animals. Shorebird eggs look so much like rocks and sand you might just step on one. A way you can stop this is to try to stay away from nesting areas, keep pets on leashes and use paths provided rather than just running down the sand dunes. Rodents such as weasels, rats and mice are a problem too. They steal the bird's eggs and eat them. We need to lay down traps to stop these rodents. These are serious matters and we need to take them more seriously. Shorebirds are awesome and we need to stop them from becoming extinct. Join me in saving the shorebirds.' The huge applause from the crowd suggested those present were happy to do just that.

In addition, having all those beautiful birds - and, as the photos demon-



FOREIGN AID: One of many visitors who bought and painted a bird for the Devonport Flock.

strate, some of them were incredibly beautiful - on show for 10 days created a spectacular exhibition which attracted lots of local publicity and drew in huge numbers of visitors.

Those who served as guardians to the birds – including Gillian Vaughan, Adrian Riegen, Wendy Hare, Trudy Lane, Bruce Postill, Ray and Ann Buckmaster, Joy Gough, my wife Chris and I – had the chance to talk about waders with thousands of people from around New Zealand and, thanks to the cruise ships visiting Auckland at the time, the four corners of the world.

Dozens of people told us that after hearing our message they intended to visit the Shorebird Centre and a few already have. There must have been tens of thousands of photos taken and

shared on social media around the globe. Adrian saw some Chinese tourists sharing video of the painted birds live via WeChat to friends in China.

A couple from Melbourne told me their visit to the display was ‘the highlight of our cruise so far’. 11-year-old Canadian Lucas Nielsen, who has become something of a media star because of his friendship with a false killer whale in the Vancouver Aquarium, bought a bird, decorated it with the Canadian flag and glued on a coin with the image of a loon, then gave it to The Flock . . . and later told his many followers about the experience. A gay couple from the US bought a bird, painted it together and left it for The Flock ‘to celebrate our honeymoon’. The stories could go on . . .

We gave out piles of brochures on PMNT and The Flock. Several people particularly asked for links to the on-line information so they could organise flocks in their own communities. A number of teachers said they planned to take the project to their own schools.

So many people wanted to paint birds that we quickly exhausted our original stock, got lots more lasercut and by the end had sold those as well.

A four-day Shorebird Film Festival – extended from the original one day by popular request – attracted enthusiastic audiences. The Navy Band sent a brass quintet to serenade our birds.

When I first proposed leaving the birds there for 10 days lots of people said they would be wrecked the first night. But when we pulled them out at





TRIUMPHANT: Ann and Ray Buckmaster, Chris and Jim Eagles celebrate the success of the event.

the end not one had been vandalised.

There were also fears that public interest would fade after a couple of days. But at the end a number of passersby came up to ask if they could be left a bit longer. And a worrying number wanted it to be an annual event.

Overall, as Adrian commented enthusiastically, the event allowed PMNT to pass its message on to thousands of people we would otherwise never have reached, stretching all the way up to former Prime Minister John Key who painted a couple of birds for us. 'If our message stays with just 10 per cent of those we talked to,' he said, 'that's still a huge reservoir of extra support for our waders.'

All of that, of course, is just from the Devonport Flock. The wider Flock

has also popped up in other places all around the country, at dozens of schools and community events, from Waiheke and the Chatham Islands to Waimakariri and Twizel. Over the festive season birds from The Flock landed on a float in the Port Waikato Christmas Parade and appeared in a display at the Paeroa A&P Show. And it hasn't stopped yet. Project coordinator Ray is planning something special for the Farewell to the Birds on 5 March and other guest appearances are in the offing. When it is all over, consideration is being given to maybe selling some of the birds to raise funds for the Trust.

The message has also spread offshore with flocks springing up in South Korea and Australia and who knows where else it may roost. The Flock blog

at last count had a total of 3036 visits including; New Zealand 1558, Russia 323, United States 297, France 187, UK 130, Australia 129, South Korea 87, Ireland 46, Singapore 31 and Germany 21 . . . so maybe before long we'll hear of a Flock Rossiya.

As Ray observed, looking back, perhaps the most exciting development is that The Flock has become 'a free and independent entity. It may have been conceived at our Shorebird Centre but it continues to grow of its own accord and is now found in many parts of New Zealand and overseas. Shorebirds are the most threatened of the bird groups and The Flock is succeeding in getting that message across both nationally and internationally. It's wonderful to have played a part in launching it.'



Images from the Field Course

Photographer Philip Moll did this year's Pukorokoro Miranda Field Course, had a fantastic time and couldn't stop taking pictures. You'll find more of his superb photos on the blog at his website www.creativemomentsimages.co.nz/







MORE ROOSTING AREAS: The lower-lying areas of the Coxhead farm (outlined in yellow) could be transformed into wetlands and wader roosts adjacent to the Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve. Photo / Living Water

Trust asked to join wetland project

PMNT is considering whether to accept an invitation to join a new trust which would develop and run a planned big new area of wetlands and shorebird roosts just over the road from the Stilt Ponds, reports **Jim Eagles**

PMNT has been invited to join in a project to transform 23ha of low-lying land across the road from the Findlay Wildlife Reserve into wetlands and roosting sites for waders.

Coming hard on the heels of the Trust acquiring the 27ha Findlay Reserve – for which a restoration plan is being developed – the proposal opens the way for a much-needed expansion of the roosting areas available for birds in the Pukorokoro-Miranda area.

However, at this stage nothing has been finalised and those involved are still seeking further information. For PMNT, in particular, the proposal clearly has major implications which we need to carefully consider before responding further.

The basic proposal is that neighbouring farmers Gary and Adrienne Dalton – who also run the Te Whangai Trust which has provided training

opportunities for hundreds of young people – will buy the 63ha Coxhead property, which runs along the lower reaches of the Pukorokoro Miranda Stream, from October 2018.

As soon as that sale goes through 23.5ha of low-lying land will be

bought from the Daltons by the Department of Conservation.

The suggestion is that a trust should be set up to run the land made up of PMNT, Ngati Paoa, Te Whangai Trust and the Dalton Family Trust.

The Living Water Partnership be-



GROWING: Gary and Adrienne Dalton in the Te Whangai Trust's nursery.



FUTURE WETLAND: A plan showing the 23ha of land on the banks of the Pukorokoro Stream intended to be purchased by the Crown and turned into wetland.

tween DOC and Fonterra has agreed to provide funding to cover subdivision costs and the development of a restoration plan. Some of the initial restoration plan costs will also be covered but the proposal envisages the new trust applying for further funding to cover development and running costs.

The Daltons have also suggested creating a living memorial incorporating a new visitor centre and training establishment on their adjoining land opposite the northern end of the Stilt Ponds. Their vision is for this to be:

- A cafe to serve locals and visitors to the area.
- A training centre where locals can acquire skills needed to work in the hospitality and tourism industry.
- A viewing platform from which visitors can view both the birds and the local area including the site of the historic Pukorokoro Pa and the Miranda Redoubt.
- A memorial which will allow Ngati Paoa to tell the history of the area, including the invasion by HMS Miranda in 1863, and to commemorate local whanau whose forebears lost their lives defending their land.

•A centre able to provide sustainable funding for the hospitality training, Te Whangai's environmental mitigation activities and PMNT's work to protect and maintain wader habitat in the area.

The plan was publicly announced late last year by Living Water, a programme to restore five catchments including Miranda, which Fonterra is committed to funding to the tune of \$20 million over a 10-year period.

North Island programme lead Tim Brandenburg said the Living Water Partnership was now in its fourth year and it was looking to ramp up the size of its projects.

In this case, he said, 'the idea is to try to extent the amount of habitat available to the wading birds and other wetland birds but also to improve the water quality of the Miranda Stream.'

An initial explanatory meeting was also held late last year involving the Living Water Partnership, the Daltons and Te Whangai Trust, PMNT and Ngati Paoa, and further discussions are planned early this year.

The Daltons, who are the key figures in the proposal, said they see

the project as combining improved habitat for the birds, a chance for local young people to get involved in the burgeoning tourist industry, a platform for creating better understanding of the area's history and a facility which could serve as a focal point for the wider community.

'We also see it as being a sustainable business which will create a continuing source of income for the partners, including the Naturalists' Trust, so their work can become self-supporting.'

Meanwhile, the first step in the trust's plan to restore the Findlay Reserve, cleaning out the culvert which drains the Stilt Ponds, has gone extremely well. Manager Keith Woodley said the water had been flowing well and water levels on the ponds, which have been consistently high, have returns to normal levels.

Further steps, which may include the creation of more roosting areas in the ponds and maybe even another outlet to the tidal creek north of the old hide, are waiting on additional research and some will probably require resource consents from Waikato Regional Council. 🐦



RED KNOTS: One bird in breeding plumage, the other in non-breeding.

Photo / Phil Battley

Mystery of Red Knot site still unsolved

Good progress has been made in recent years protecting the key Red Knot stopover site on the Luannan coast, reports **Adrian Riegen**, but we still don't know if there are other major stopover sites and numbers are probably still declining.

There has been a flurry of activity since 2014 when Bruce McKinlay, the DOC representative for the EAAF Partnership, decided more should be done to protect Red Knots, particularly in Asia during their northward migration when time is critical and they must be able to refuel quickly and get to the breeding grounds in time for the short summer.

The return journey can be a little more relaxed perhaps, but still requires good staging sites along the way.

In the 1990s and early 2000s we assumed Red Knots refuelled at sites all around East Asia, but as more work was done surveying the coast of the Yellow Sea mudflats it became clear there were very few site suitable for large numbers of Red Knots.

The two most important shorebird staging sites in the early 2000s were Saemangeum in South Korea and

Yalu Jiang in China. Several thousand Red Knots were regularly seen at Saemangeum, until it was destroyed in 2006, but Yalu Jiang did not suit Red Knots and very few have ever been seen there. This was a bit of a puzzle as Yalu Jiang is very important for Great Knots which, like Red Knots, feed predominantly on small bivalves that are swallowed whole and crushed by the gizzard. Where, then, were the Red Knots stopping off while migrating through Asia?

On my first visit to China in 2000, I boarded a train with Chen Kelin in Beijing, bound for Dandong and Yalu Jiang. The train stopped at Tianjin and Mark Barter joined us as we headed east and told of finding a flock of 25,000 Red Knot close by, on the Bohai coast, while working with Yang Hongyan, or 'Nicky', a Chinese student who was studying Red Knot.

At that time there were thought to be around 220,000 Red Knots on the flyway, so it seemed they had found 10% of the population, but where were the rest? As the years went by we kept thinking there would be a mega site somewhere in the Yellow Sea, like Saemangeum had been for Great Knot, before the reclamation destroyed it, where we would find vast hordes of Red Knots. But we were running out of places to look.

Could they be in North Korea where little was known about what shorebirds species and how many could be found there? We have now done three surveys in North Korea and found a total of 38, so it's not looking good. Maybe this will change during our survey in 2017.

In 2010 the flyway population of Red Knot was re-estimated to be only 110,000, a 50% decline, which

is matched by OSNZ/Birds NZ count data from over the past three decades. Paul Sagar's 1999 paper in *Notornis*, based on national wader count data between 1984-1993, estimated the New Zealand population of Red Knot to be 58,637. The only year in that period when less than 42,000 were counted was 1993 with 33,054. Was this a sign of things to come?

Not initially, as counts in 1994 and 1995 were both over 60,000, but they were the last big numbers. The national count data was a bit patchy for several years after 1993 but the key Red Knot sites were counted every year and by 1996 the number was down to <38,000. Since 2000 the annual November counts have ranged from around 25,000 to 42,000 with a mean of about 33,000.

Massive reclamations were taking place in the Yellow Sea from the mid 1990s or even earlier, so it is likely habitat was being lost for refuelling Red Knots and still is. Hopefully the numbers have stabilized around the 30,000 mark, or perhaps lower if the provisional count of 27,000 nationally in November 2016 is anything to go by.

The long term trend shows a continued decline and now that the Red Knot is classed as a New Zealand native species it is perhaps one of our most threatened. Surveys around the Yellow Sea and in particular the Bohai, the western part of the Yellow Sea and especially the Luannan coast have shown that the Luannan coast is indeed Red Knot central, accounting for 50% or more of the flyway population most years. With the Global Flyway Network (GFN) taking an active part monitoring the shorebirds on that coast, particularly those carrying flags and bands, Chris Hassell and the Bohai team have gathered a huge amount of data on Red Knots since 2007.

Armed with this information Bruce McKinlay took up the challenge of seeing what could be done to better protect the Luannan coast. This led to Lou Sanson, Gary Thompson, Bruce and myself spending a week in Beijing in November 2015, meeting government officials to push this case and to look at ways for the New Zealand and Chinese governments to jointly protect migratory waders.

A Memorandum of Arrangement was written up and signed at

Pūkoro Mirando in March 2016 (see PM News 100).

While we were at the meetings in Beijing we asked who would have the most influence in getting the Luannan coast protected and were told the Governor of Hebei Province. Imagine then our delight when on 18 October 2016, at the Beidaihe Coastal Wetlands and Waterfowl Protection Seminar, the Hebei Governor Zhang Qingwei announced that the Luannan Caoheidian wetlands area would be protected.

It is not clear just what will be done but this has to be a step in the right direction and we should congratulate the Governor and all those people and organisations like Wetlands International-China and GFN, that have been working so hard for this.

The work researcher Nicky has been doing in the Bohai for at least 16 years has proved to be very valuable and she pointed out to reporters at the seminar that there are many issues, one of which is the salt extraction works along the Luannan coast.

Salt ponds are very valuable for shorebirds as a place to feed in the shallow waters and a place to roost when high tide inundates the adjacent mudflats. However, the saltworks are not so profitable these days and the risk is the ponds will be filled in possibly to build more factories. This would be a disaster as the salt ponds are an integral part of the ecosystem that is

essential to the shorebirds.


Of course these saltworks are man-made but the shorebirds have lost so much natural habitat in the form of mudflats over the past decades that they need every possible resource they can find and saltworks fit the bill admirably and so will need protecting. Challenging times for the birds and the decision makers.

Protecting this small piece of coast for shorebirds will be a huge task as the area all around is very heavily modified, oil fields in the adjacent sea continue to be exploited and the risk of pollution from the vast industrial areas close-by is an ongoing threat.

If the Luannan coast does hold around 50% of the Red Knots, where are the rest and what can be done to protect them?

Wetlands International-China organised a major survey of Chinese shorebird sites around the Yellow Sea in April 2016 when only 5,040 were counted on the Luannan coast, with the next best count being at the Yellow River Delta where 2,321 were counted. It is possible that Red Knots occur on the Jiangsu coast north of Shanghai where offshore sand islands exist, although this is another area ripe for development.

I hope there is better news regarding the future of Red Knots to report later this year or next.

There's more information at: <http://globalflywaynetwork.com.a> 



STOPOVER SITE: Red Knots taking a break from their long migration flight on the Luannan Coast with oil rigs behind. Photo / Adrian Riegen



SPECIAL BIRDS: (from left) The Red Knots EAR and EBB are among a special group of flagged birds that have done much to improve knowledge of their species. Photos / Phil Battley

Flags and bands offer the best hope for finding where the knots go

The search for other key Red Knot roosting sites, besides Luannan, is most likely to be resolved by the work of banders in places like New Zealand and the growing number of birdwatchers and photographers in countries such as China and Korea, writes **Adrian Riegen**.

The efforts of PMNT and other such groups to fit engraved flags and colour bands to Red Knots have always been aimed at identifying important staging sites for the birds in East Asia. Now that so many more people in East Asia are becoming interested in bird watching, or at least photographing them, we hope to receive more flag sightings and this is beginning to happen.

To date the Luannan coast and surrounding parts of the Bohai have provided (thanks to the Global Flyway Network team in particular) all but 15 of the New Zealand engraved flag sightings from around the Yellow Sea and Japan.

The 15 sightings not in the Bohai are of only nine individual birds. In spite of there being a lot more people looking these days, no other site has come close to the Luannan coast where there have been 1,291 sightings of 448 birds.

Since 2005 we have fitted 1,026 Red Knots with white engraved flags each with a three-letter code: 932 were flagged at Miranda, 81 at Foxton, 12 at Whitford and one at Karaka.

Of the 1,026 flags deployed 934 have been seen at least once. To date there have been 6,650 sightings by 127 people, although Tony Habraken has provided almost 50% of these on his own and just over 50% with other observers, which is a phenomenal effort. All but seven of his sightings are in New Zealand. Tony alone has recorded 60% of all the New Zealand sightings.

What have we learnt from these engraved flags? Results depend hugely on where observers are along the flyway and how active they are. The most intensively monitored site where Red Knots occur in Australia is around Roebuck Bay and 80 Mile Beach in Northwest Australia, where thousands of flag and band sighting and retrapped birds have been recorded. But for all that only two of our engraved flags have been seen there.

Bohai and Luannan Coast

By far the most important site for New Zealand Red Knots on migration is the Bohai and mostly the Luannan coast. The 448 birds seen there have built

up a fascinating picture of migration movements and timing.

They are seen in the Bohai from early April through to early June, and as they are in full breeding plumage while there, it is possible to identify the subspecies in many cases.

It was generally thought that the knots in New Zealand were the *rogersi* subspecies and, while this is mostly true, we now know that more of the *piersmai* subspecies make it to New Zealand, whereas they were thought to be mainly in northwest Australia. At least 71 of those seen in the Bohai have been identified as *piersmai*. We will look at the New Zealand Bohai connection in more detail another time.

Northwest Australia

The Red Knot with letters ATK was in Roebuck Bay in May 2007, presumably on its way north, having been banded at Miranda aged three-plus six months earlier in November 2006. It was also seen at Merimbula in NSW in November 2010 during southward migration and was last seen on the Manukau Harbour in April 2011.



FLAG BEARERS: (from left) Over the years EAY and AKU are among the birds banded in New Zealand which fly the flag for knots around the world. Photos / Phil Battley

The other bird, CEC, banded aged two or three at Foxton in November 2009 and seen on 80 Mile Beach in February 2012. The only other sighting of this bird is from the Saltpans of Luannan in May 2013. From the lack of sighting it is fair to assume that NW Australia is not a major migration route for New Zealand Red Knots.

Gulf of Carpentaria

Only six birds have been seen in the Gulf, which is a little disappointing as it is an important Red Knot staging and non-breeding site. On expeditions there in September 2012 and March 2013 we had hoped to find many more, as some people believe it is a major staging site for New Zealand Red Knots during northward and southward migration.

AXY has been seen 17 times but the most interesting sightings are Luannan coast in May 2012 and then in the Gulf on 28 September 2012. It was back at Luannan in May 2013 and has been seen in New Zealand several times until March 2016.

BNZ was seen several times in New Zealand until November 2011 and on the Luannan coast in 2009, 2010 and 2011. The most interesting sightings were in the Gulf on 18 March 2013 and Luannan on 5 May 2013. It hasn't been seen in New Zealand since 2011. Is it now spending the non-breeding seasons in the Gulf?

CCY has not been seen in New Zealand since 2009 but was in the Gulf

in March 2013, so perhaps it too no longer makes it back to New Zealand or if it does then it remains undetected.

CEM has been seen 16 times, mostly at Foxton where it was banded in November 2009. Interestingly it was seen at Foxton on 27 March 2012 and in the Gulf on 18 March 2013, a year later but nine days earlier.

Southeast Queensland

Only two Red Knots have been sighted in the area in spite of some dedicated observers and the fact that the region around Moreton Bay holds good numbers of Red Knots. It is somewhat surprising more have not been seen, especially during southward migration, as is the case further south in NSW.

Newcastle, NSW

By far the best sighting returns in Australia come from Stockton Sandspit near Newcastle where eagle-eyed and dedicated observers, Liz Crawford and Chris Herbert watched the site almost daily for several years during southward migration. They recorded 129 sightings of 37 different birds, the best result outside the Bohai.

The birds were seen in September and October with most only staying a week or so before heading back to New Zealand we assume. In some cases we know they did as these example show: AAA was seen at Stockton on 18 October 2011, Miranda 23 October 2011 (five days later), Stockton 28 October 2015, Miranda 29 November 2015.

AAH, AAN and ARK did similar things. AYT was seen at Stockton on 4 and 7 October 2013 and at Karaka, Manukau Harbour on 11 November 2013.

There are more examples but the picture is quite clear that the Newcastle area is an important staging site on southward migration. Quiet a few of the birds seen at Stockton were also seen in the Bohai in the same year or following year.

Victoria

At least 683 sightings of 125 Red Knots with Victorian engraved flags have been recorded in New Zealand, but in return only three New Zealand birds have been seen in Victoria. This is mainly due to lack of people in Victoria looking for flags, but when they do look they find some very interesting birds. All three seen there were banded at Foxton in the Manawatu during Phil Battley's geolocator studies.

EBD was seen at Corner Inlet on 15 October 2016 where many of the Victorian flagged knots are banded, that have since been seen in New Zealand. EBD has not been seen back at Foxton as of 30 January 2017.

EEE was seen at Corner Inlet on 26 September 2015 and was back at Foxton on 30 October 2015. It was seen in the Bohai in May 2016 and is back at Foxton for the 2016-2017 summer.

EEV was also seen at Corner Inlet September 2015 and was back at Foxton on 12 December 2015.

Taiwan

Four birds have been seen in Taiwan during northward migration.

AWE was seen there for two days in April 2011 and was on the Luannan coast in May 2011. The Taiwan stop may be a brief one before heading to the Bohai. **BDE** was also seen in the Bohai in years before its Taiwan sighting. **CMH** was banded at Karaka on 7 February 2016, seen in Taiwan on 4 April 2016 and then in the Bohai from 23 April to 9 May 2016.

Russia

Four flags have been seen in Russia, other than at Pavel Tomkovich's study site at Menypilgyno in Chukotka.

ATP was shot on 18 May 2015 in a remote area of Kamchatka where the others were seen but allowed to live.

There was an expedition to Kamchatka in July–August 2016 to monitor southward migration and the keen observers, including members from Australia, saw two of our birds, of which – one **EAR** from Foxton – was still carrying its geolocator attached in 2013 that we had failed to retrieve. What could that microchip tell us if only we could catch it again.

Within New Zealand

Surprisingly few Red Knots have been seen away from the banding sites, apart from in the Auckland region where it is well known they move regularly between the Manukau Harbour, Kaipara Harbour and Firth of Thames, (but discussion of that can wait for another time). Three have been seen at Maketu in the Bay of Plenty where few knots are found at the best of times.

AKU, nicknamed 'Fatty', (see picture on page 19) was banded at Miranda on 22 October 2015 but has been seen at least 32 times at Foxton since 2 February 2006 and was still being seen in March 2016.

The Nelson area is also very good for Red Knots and has produced the most birds flagged from Miranda with 11 individuals seen. **ABT** was seen at Farewell Spit in March 2007 but was back in the Auckland region in 2010 and 2011. **ALT**, **AMV**, **AVV**, **AZB**, **BJH** & **CLK** have all returned to the Auckland region where they were banded. **BHX** was seen at Miranda for a year after banding and has been seen once on Farewell Spit and several times on the Luannan coast.


CPU was seen on Farewell Spit

in January 2010 but had moved to Foxton in March 2010 and was seen again there once more in March 2012. Considering the huge resighting effort that is put in at Foxton it is a mystery as to where **CPU** is most of the time. Maybe it commutes to Farewell Spit where reading engraved flags is apparently rather challenging with so much heat haze and wind.

The value of the engraved flag sightings in identifying important staging sites is clear and will hopefully help in the protection of the relatively

few important sites. Red Knots being specialist feeders are found at far fewer staging and non-breeding sites than Bar-tailed Godwit, which makes them more vulnerable to habitat loss.

None of this story could be told without the dedication of many people: those who catch the knots to band and flag them, and those who spend countless hours scanning flocks of knots looking for these flags, all keen to help unravel the mysteries of these epic long haul migrants.

I thank them all very much. 



FLYING THE FLAG: Adrian Riegen (above) looks justifiably delighted to have another flagged Red Knot to release after the latest banding session (below) at Pukorokoro Miranda.

Photos / Jim Eagles





From the Chair

All hail our wonderful volunteers

Chair **Gillian Vaughan** is reminded what a terrific job the Trust's volunteers and staff do to make sure the Centre runs smoothly even at the busiest times, the organisation continues to prosper and the work for the birds keeps advancing.

After spending a couple of hours on the desk at the Shorebird Centre earlier this year I've come away with a renewed respect for the work our staff and volunteers do.

As Keith drove off to pick up a new long term volunteer from the bus stop at Waitakaruru, there was a large family group in the kitchen dining area, people were streaming back from the hide as the tide started to drop, others were arriving for a look, the phone rang with a question about whether we had a book in stock and there were urgent discussions about how to find the Marsh Sandpiper. And that was just the first ten minutes.

We went on to offering recommendations on where to see birds on the Coromandel, discussions about the Black Kite on Orams Road and directions to Ambury Regional Park for Aucklanders keen to see shorebirds closer to home.

It can be easy to forget in mid-winter just how busy the place can get in January. The advocacy work the Trust does with the general public is in full swing at this time of year and there is a great energy to the place that goes with that. Some of that energy comes from the visitors but to me it seems much of it comes from the interactions of our regulars, staff and of course our volunteers.

We've had some great volunteers through this summer and their presence, along with that of the Shorebird Guides, has meant that the visitor experience down at the hide and at the Centre has been great, allowing visitors to get great looks at the birds and to learn a lot about them. Having volunteers around also makes it a lot easier to get jobs done at the Centre, whether it's the washing or sitting down to work on a project.

And while raving about our volunteers I'd also like to acknowledge the work of the volunteers behind the scenes: people slogging through spreadsheets, posting on Facebook and Twitter, maintaining the website, orga-




HELPING HANDS: Dai Stacey comes from Wales to volunteer as a Summer Shore Guide. Photo / Jim Eagles

nizing another Flock display, organizing or tutoring on the field course and all those other things that help keep the place ticking over but aren't necessarily seen when you walk through the door. Many of these jobs are done by council members, but at the same time many aren't. If you've been thinking about getting involved as a volunteer then I'm sure that Keith and Kristelle would love to hear from you.

Wanted: Volunteer to run the Trust's Instagram feed

The volunteer running the Trust's Instagram account has had to step down from the role, if you'd like to take control of the PMNT Instagram account and help build awareness of the need for shorebird and coastal conservation then contact Gillian at gillianv@actrix.co.nz. If you'd like to have a look first go to: www.instagram.com/pukorokoro_miranda_shorebirds/

The negative part of the summer has been the targeting of the hide carpark by thieves. This is immensely frustrating for those broken into as well as the staff at the Centre. Both Keith and Kris have been spending a lot of time on the phone with the police and, following their advice, we are also recommending a more leisurely approach to birding: park at the Centre and walk down to the hide. If you do park at the carpark please don't leave any valuables in the car.

Finally, to end on a more upbeat note, the 19th annual Field Course was just held (Bev Woolley you have a lot to answer for) and was, as usual, inspiring, motivating, exhausting and a lot of fun. Best of all, for the first time since he started giving his lectures on the status of shorebirds in the East Asian Australasian Flyway David Melville was able to end on a positive note, going through some of the positive changes the Chinese government is starting to make. There's a long way to go and a lot of work to do – but change is afoot. 

GODWIT TIMES

Happy New Year

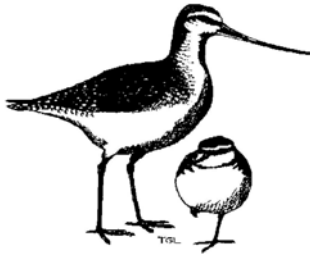
Well, it is that time when migratory birds such as godwits and knots, like Rhianna here, put on their fancy feathers to show they are ready for breeding. This is Rhianna's first year playing the mating game and she asked me if I would design her an extra special outfit to help her find her perfect partner. I decided to go for a modern twist on the Egyptian look with a touch of the swinging 60s thrown in. Some of my mates say it is a bit OTT but I think they are just jealous. However, I am having a touch of creative block trying to sort out the colour scheme. If you could please post me your coloured creations I will send a prize out to whoever comes up with the design chosen by Rhianna.

Thank you for your help.

Bye for now
Godfrey Godwit



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Lee, Wendy Hare, Bruce Postill,
Trudy Lane, Cynthia Carter, Ann
and Ray Buckmaster, Jim Eagles.

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.

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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 18 and November 12. 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.

Put some waders in your life

Buy a superb godwit tile
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Woodley for just \$19.90



Find birds
anywhere
in NZ
with
these
special
bird
watching
maps.
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the full set.**

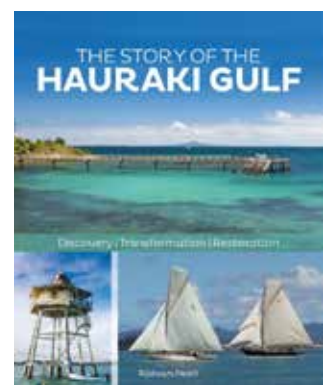
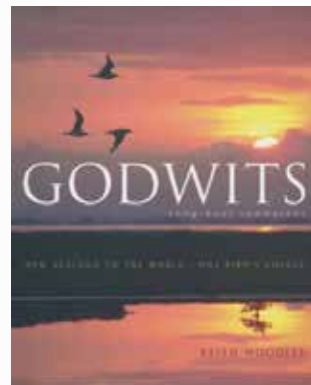


If you can't find the time to visit the Shorebird
Centre go to our online shop at
<https://shop.miranda-shorebird.org.nz/>
or ring 09 232 2781.



These beautiful shorebird stickers
will look great on your bag, laptop,
tablet, smartphone cover, book,
scope ... or anywhere else
\$1.50 each or \$8 for the set of six

Two classic books for nature lovers



Keith Woodley's *Godwits: longhaul champions*, which was out of print, is on sale at the Shorebird Centre for \$49.90. Raewyn Peart's *The Story of the Hauraki Gulf* has sold out at most outlets but we still have it in stock for \$89.90.