



# NEW ZEALAND WADER STUDY GROUP

*In association with*

Miranda Naturalists' Trust

Newsletter No 15 - April 2000 -

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## COMMENT

The year 2000 got off to a good start with new cannon nets and other equipment needed for wader banding being purchased with the aid of a grant awarded to the NZWSG. This enabled several interesting catches to be made which will be highlighted in this newsletter. Most important though has been the visit of Pavel Tomkovich from Moscow, more about his visit will appear in the MNT news 37. We were able to make several catches of arctic waders during his stay and to look more closely at the differences in the Red Knots which he is sure come from two breeding populations, one from the Chukotka Peninsula, which we have assumed for some years, and one from the New Siberian Islands. More studies are needed to clarify this but the recovery of two of our Red Knot in Yakutia adds weight to this idea.

Pavel also visited the Nelson and Farewell Spit area in the South Island where Rob Schuckard is setting up a wader study group. Pavel spoke at a public meeting organised by Rob which about 100 people attended. This was a wonderful response and certainly helped to raise the awareness of waders in the Nelson region and the threats they face, which are increasing as the population of the area increases and more people turn to the coastal areas for recreation.

## WADER RECOVERIES

Of particular interest were two Red Knot recovered in Yakutia, Siberia. The recovery site was on a direct route from China to the New Siberian Islands which as mentioned above are likely to be one of the breeding grounds for Red Knot wintering in New Zealand. These two recoveries help to support this view.

C-45469 an adult banded at Jordan's - Kaipara H. on 23.02.89 by NZWSG and C-46826 an adult banded at Jordan's-Kaipara H. on 07.03.93 by NZWSG.

Both were recovered in Yakutia - RUSSIA, 68 40N - 143 30E on 30.05.99, some 12,000 Km from the banding site, 10y 3m and 6y 2m respectively later, by E Syroechkovski. The birds had been hunted.

At long last we have the first recovery from Victoria of a New Zealand banded Red Knot.

C-54669 an adult banded at Jordan's-Kaipara H. on 29.11.97 by NZWSG was caught and released at Rhyll, Phillip Is, VIC, 38 18S - 144 45E on 09.10.99, 2680km and 1y 1m later by VWSG.

C-55186 an adult banded at Miranda FoT 06.02.00 by NZWSG was caught and released Karaka-Manukau 01.04.00, 60km and 0y 2m later by NZWSG. This is the second Red Knot to have moved from the Firth of Thames to the Manukau Harbour at this time of year, prior to northward migration.

## WADER CATCHES JANUARY TO APRIL 2000

With new netting equipment we were able to make three catches at Miranda during the summer. The first was during the Miranda Bird Study Course on 11 January when 90 Pied Oystercatchers were netted. This was a good sized catch and allowed the course participants the chance to learn how to measure, weigh, record moult and other biometric data on these easy to handle birds. Two of the birds were already banded, the most interesting of which was a bird H-18326 banded at Miranda on 21.02.1981 by Dick Veitch (who was helping on this catch) and the Miranda Banders. This bird is now at least 20 years old and the oldest Oystercatcher we have handled.

The next catch on 6 February was of 72 Red Knot including 5 retraps all from Miranda between 1990 and 1999, 10 Bar-tailed Godwits and a Pied Stilt. All except the Pied Stilt had a white leg flag placed on the right tibia, some of which hopefully will be seen along the flyway during their northward migration.

On 11 March again at Taramaire with just a very narrow window of opportunity to make a catch before the tide rose too high, 85 Bar-tailed Godwit and 15 Red Knot were caught. With Pavel Tomkovich on hand, more useful observations were made about the possible origins of both species.

Three night time mist net catches were also made at Karaka on the Manukau Harbour. The catch on 1 April was particularly interesting as 30 Red Knot were caught,

mostly very heavy birds with five weighing over 200g and one bird weighing in at 220g, probably the heaviest ever caught in Australasia. With a lean weight of 110-120g this bird must have doubled its weight. Two Turnstone were also caught, both were retraps and one from just 28 days earlier. It had increased its weight from 160g to 188g, a weight gain of 1g per day. The last bird to be caught that night was a Wrybill, a perfect end to Pavel's visit.

### BANDED PIED STILT

Several people observed a colour banded (WY - YY) Pied Stilt at Miranda on the open day in March. It had been banded as a chick on 22.09.91 at Brookby in South Auckland.

### OLDEST BLACK STILT

On 31.07.99 Gwen Pulham and other observers found a Black Stilt at Hedley's on the Kaipara Harbour with colour bands. It was banded as a chick back in the summer of 1982-83 on the Ahuriri River in the Mckenzie Country by Ray Pierce. This bird was then seen back on the Ahuriri River in the last week of August 1999. At 17 years this is the oldest known Black Stilt.

### WRYBILLS IN THE RAIN

On 8 July 1999 Margaret Wignall and I visited Taramaire in the hope of recording coloured leg band combinations on individuals in the Wrybill flock. The high tide was at approx 14:10, so acting on a tip-off from Tony Habraken we arrived at 1100 and observed as Wrybills dribbled in to the roost site and jostled about, providing good views of both their legs.

The weather was fine and slightly overcast with no wind. By 12:30 some 2000+ Wrybills were spaced out over all the available shellbank. They were by now in 'roosting mode' quite settled and all standing on one leg.

At 12:35 the heavens opened and it rained heavily for 20 minutes, during which time each bird in the entire Wrybill flock placed both their feet on the ground, making leg-band recording an easy matter. Within minutes of the rain ceasing, they reverted to their one-legged stance.

I have never before encountered such (observer friendly) behaviour from a roosting wader species.

Gwen Pulham

### FLAG SIGHTING UPDATE

Since the last update in NZWSG News 12, November 1998, there have been many more sightings of flagged birds, although some of these are likely to be of the same

individuals. Sighting came from a good range of sites and below are listed some of the more significant records. Many white flag sightings are not included as they occur at sites where the birds are flagged, but we are still keen to receive them, so please keep looking.

Orange = Victoria Green = Queensland Yellow = North West Australia White = New Zealand Yellow on SIPO = Jordan's

### RED KNOT - WHITE FLAGS

1320 knot have now been white-flagged in NZ mostly at Miranda and Jordan's. Of particular interest are those from northeast China and Queensland, the first from both regions.

Date	Qty	Location	Observer
<b>South Island</b>			
18.03.00	2	Farewell Spit	R Schuckard/ P Tomkovich
<b>Overseas</b>			
16.04.99	4	Karumba - Qld	A Riegen
09.05.99	2	Yalu Est-China	J Wilson
03.09.99	1	Manly H, - Moreton B, QLD	T Tarrant
05.09.99	1	Manly H, - Moreton B, QLD	D Connolly

### RED KNOT - YELLOW FLAGS

More birds from NW Australia, but there are very few sightings from Australia's Eastern States, although this may have more to do with knots being in places with few observers. The two at Miranda were caught (see Newsletter #13). The one in the Chatham Islands is quite extraordinary and the first from the western hemisphere! It was seen along with an orange flagged Red Knot.

### Firth of Thames

20.12.98	1	Miranda - T Habraken
06.01.99	2	Miranda - A Riegen et al
14.11.99	1	Rangipo - W Perry
26.02.00	1	Taramaire - T Habraken
07.03.00	1	Limeworks - A Riegen

Any articles for this publication or sightings of banded or flagged birds should go to:

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