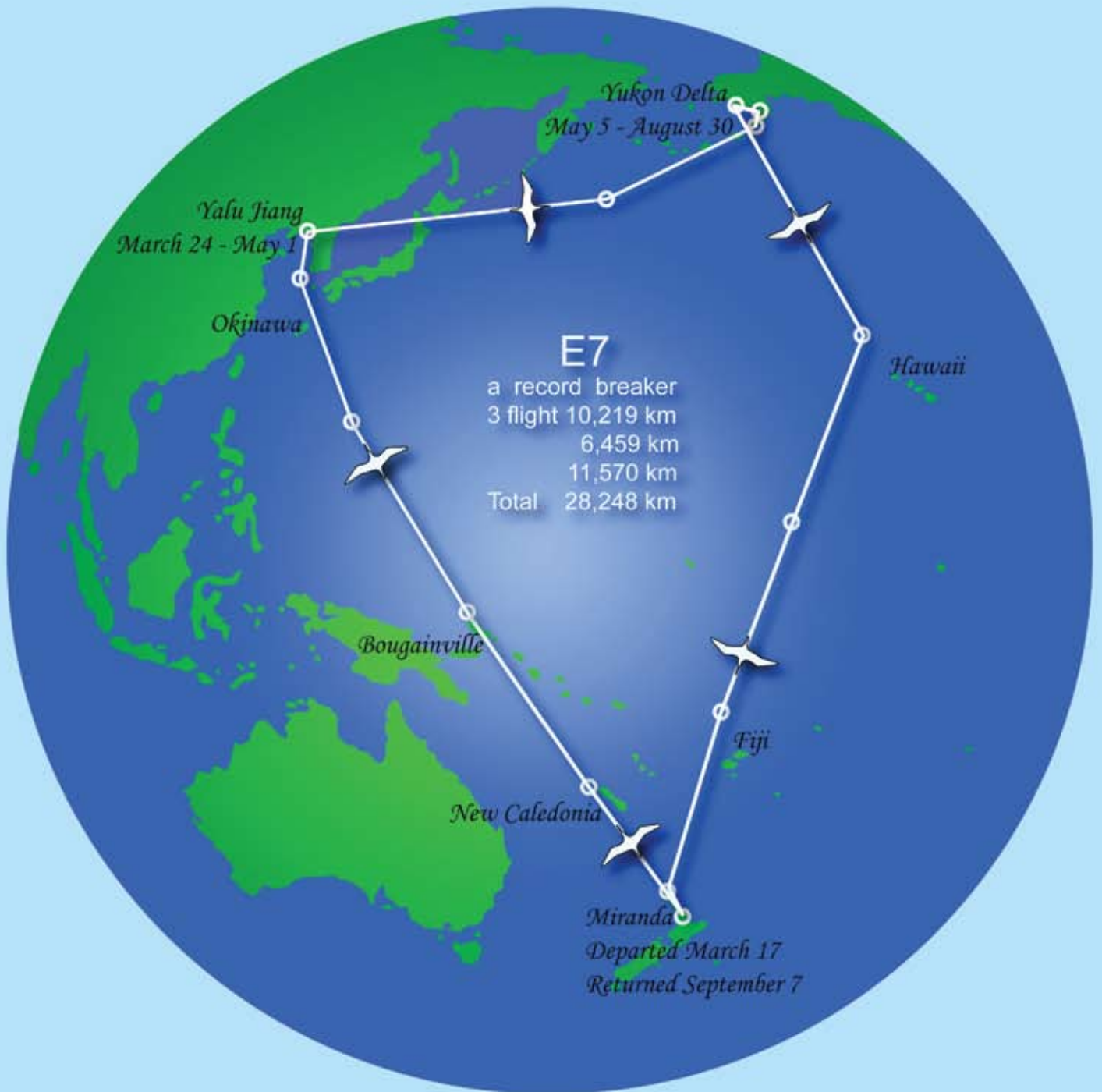


MIRANDA

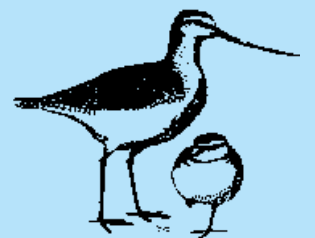
Naturalists' Trust

November 2007 Issue 67

NEWS



Godwits tracked home
Site Managers Workshop
Miranda Records



November 2007 Issue 67

From the Blackboard
15 November 2007

Upcoming Events

- November 18 2007**
OSNZ Firth of Thames Census
Contact the centre for meeting time.
Contact the centre for times. This census is designed to match up with census dates elsewhere in the flyway and to compare numbers between Nov and Feb, it is believed that all the arctic migrants may not have arrived by November.
- January 21 - 27 2008**
The 10th Miranda Field Course.
See Page 16 for details.
- January 28 2008.**
Miranda Field Course Reunion!
See page 16 for details.
- February 2 World Wetlands Day**
We just thought you should know!
May 11 1pm AGM,
Note the time. High tide is at 11am so come and go birding first.
- February 24 2008**
OSNZ new February Census.
June 22 OSNZ Winter Census.
Contact the Centre for details.

Cover: E7's journey, from when she left New Zealand in March to when she returned to our shores in September. Graphic Adrian Riegen

Back Cover: A New Zealand Dotterel in the salt-marsh area near the hide. Photo Gillian Vaughan

A word from the editor

When it comes to looking at the international scale I don't really connect with the big picture. I suspect that many of us don't. Usually once words like "conventions" and "stakeholder" and "NGOs" come up I glaze over. I feel like I should be interested, that this is worthy, and that I should be paying attention. But I don't, and most of the time this doesn't matter. There is enough to do of the things I really enjoy, counting birds, reading colour bands, teaching people to identify birds; all of which is important. And yet.

There are levels surrounding the work the Trust does. Without groups like Wetlands International our work in China never would have happened. Without the work done as part of the Ramsar Convention we would all be working as individuals. And while I've known that for a while now I'm really only starting to get a feel for how they connect. Christine Prietto's talk on Spring Migration Day was a view into how one organisation has taken the big picture and made it work for them at a local level. And in starting to understand what they have done I realised how much work Miranda people including, but not limited to, David Lawrie, Keith Woodley and Adrian Riegen are doing.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them, Christine, and all those working on various committees and boards and councils etc. who read this, for doing the work that you do, and for giving us a context for our individual contributions to feed into.

Gillian Vaughan

Arctic Migrants

Bar-tailed Godwit	3000
Hudsonian Godwit	1
Red Knot	3000
Turnstone	4
Red-necked Stint	4
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	14
Little Tern	2

New Zealand Species

Pied Oystercatcher	
Wrybill	
NZ Dotterel	
Banded Dotterel	
Variable Oystercatcher	
Black-billed Gull	
Red-billed Gull	
White-fronted Tern	
Caspian Tern	
Pied Stilt	
White Heron	
Spoonbills	

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Bar-tailed Godwit

The Migration Story Continues

An update to Miranda News 66

Adrian Riegen

In Miranda News #66 we followed the satellite tagged godwits that made their way to the Arctic with their transmitters working. When we left the story the birds had made their way to the coast after the breeding season, here they were refuelling for the journey south. The transmitters were not expected to keep working for so long but keep working they did, so we wondered whether the batteries would last long enough to successfully track their southward migration. It seemed possible if they left early.



Brian Chudleigh

E7, nicknamed “Miranda” by Britain’s *Sunday Telegraph*, had already become something of a legend after her northward non-stop flight, flying from Miranda to the sister site of Yalu Jiang in China. In the process she set a record for the longest non-stop flight by a land bird yet recorded, 10,219 km, although Z4 came a close second with a flight to Shandong in China of 10,209 km. It was fitting therefore that E7 was the first to leave Alaska, head south and make it back to New Zealand.

This great project was made possible by funding from the Packard Foundation in America. One of the principle aims was to track migrating godwits through Asia and determine whether they might come into contact with carriers of Avian Flu then carry it to Alaska from where it could potentially get to the lower 48 states. The good news is that godwits and most other migrating shorebirds live on the edge of the sea with very little

chance of coming into contact with infected birds.

Summary of Satellite Tracked Bar-tailed Godwits

All dates and figures shown below are approximate and, in time, will be checked for accuracy.

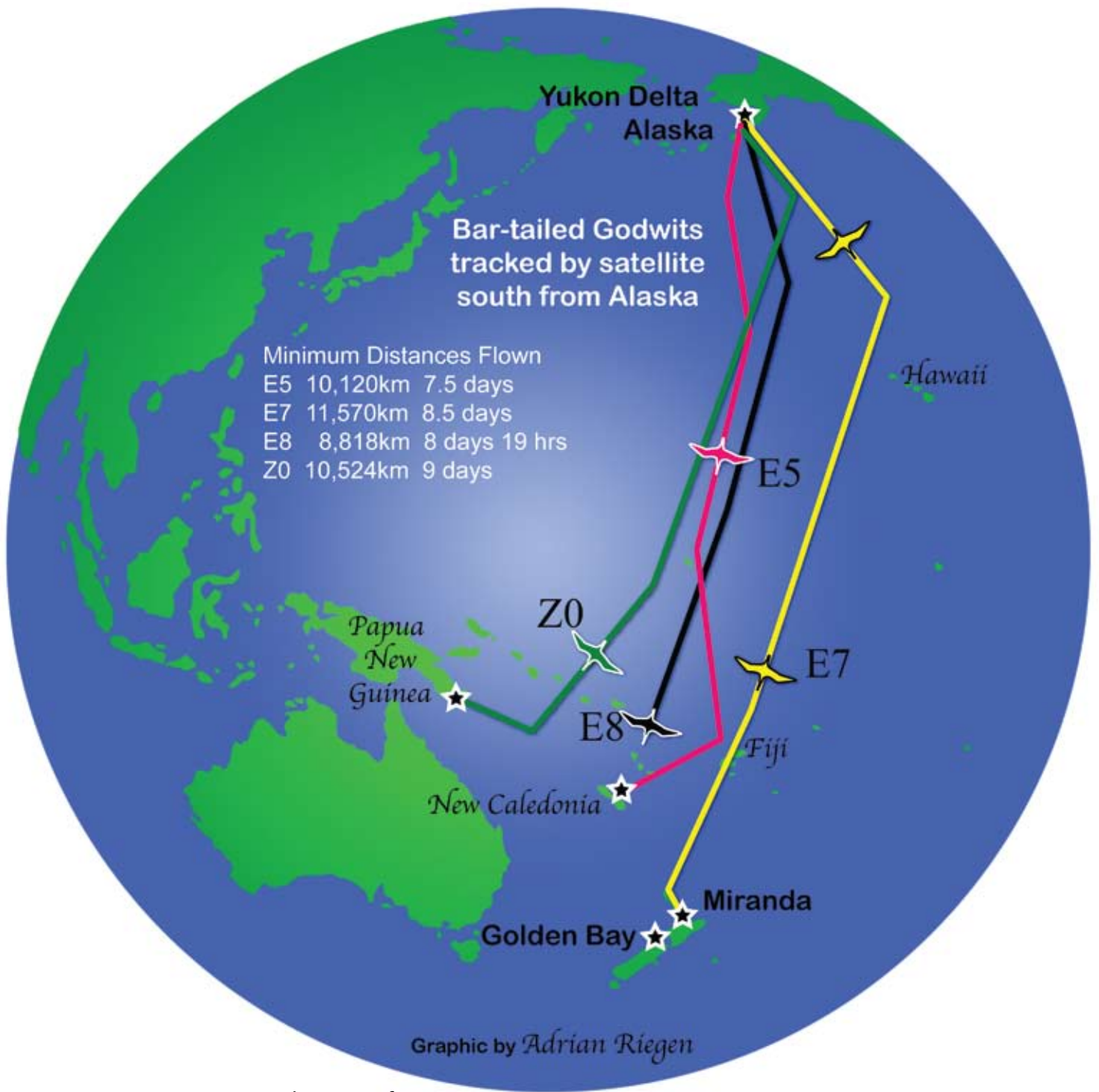
E7 – Female

She finally left the breeding grounds at Manokinak and flew 155 km south to Cape Avinof and the Kuskokwim Shoals on 18 July; she stayed there for 41 days.

She left Cape Avinof early on the morning of 30 August, NZ time, and headed south

towards the Alaska Peninsula. Not stopping she flew on out over the Pacific, southeast toward Hawaii before turning southwest for a straight run down towards Fiji and on towards Cape Reinga. The transmitter was on near Cape Reinga, but switched off leaving us waiting, for what seemed like days but was in fact about 36 hours, until another signal was received. This showed she was back at the Piako rivermouth on the Firth of Thames, the very spot she had left on March 17 to fly north. She probably

Approximate distances of E7’s migration flights	
Miranda – Yalu Jiang	10,219
Yalu Jiang – Alaska Peninsula	6,459
Alaska Peninsula – Manokinak	778
Manokinak – Cape Avinof	155
Cape Avinof – Piako	11,570
Total	29,181



Approximate distances of E5's migration flights

Miranda - Tsushima	9,334
Tsushima - Changdo	190
Changdo - Geum Estuary	270
Geum Est. - Cape Avinof	6,151
Cape Avinof - Port Heiden	452
Port Heiden - Cape Avinof	458
Cape Avinof - Port Heiden	490
Port Heiden - Cape Avinof	445
Cape Avinof - New Caledonia	10,037
Moved north in New Caledonia	82
Total	27,909

Approximate distances of Z0's migration flights

Golden Bay - Incheon	10,169
Incheon - Yalu Jiang	335
Yalu Jiang - Bristol Bay	6,154
Bristol Bay - Cape Avinof	402
Cape Avinof - PNG	10,524
Total	27,584

arrived Friday night, 7 September, after at least 11,570 km and 8 days 12 hours non-stop flying. She set a new record for the longest non-stop flight by a land bird, eclipsing her northward flight by 1,351 km. Of course as godwits fly in flocks she was not the only one to achieve this feat but it must be remembered she was carrying an extra 25 grams of weight inside her.

The battery finally stopped regular transmissions on 14 September while still at Piako. On that day Tony Habraken and I reached the roost, by boat down the Piako River, where we spent about one hour viewing from the boat before the tide turned. The mud was too soft to walk across and the rocking boat was not an ideal platform to look for leg flags. 3-400 godwits were using this roost tucked away on the edge of the mangroves and although we were sure E7 was amongst them she did not reveal herself. E7 has provided more information about Bar-tailed Godwit migration than any other godwit in history and yet she has been seen only once since her capture on 6 February, at Miranda on 9 March by Jan van de Kam and Jan Louis. E7 continues to



transmit occasionally, the latest being 18 October from Piako.

E5 – Female

No details of E5's movements were documented in the last Miranda News. A brief summary of her travels shows that, like E7, she spent most of her time after capture at the Piako rivermouth before finally departing northwards on 31 March. She flew 9,334 km non-stop to the island of Tsushima between Japan and South Korea, not an ideal looking place for godwits but she stayed there for two weeks before flying the 190 km to more suitable habitat at Changdo in southern South Korea. She stayed at Changdo for 34 days before flying on to the Geum Estuary near the Saemangeum reclamation. Only 12 days was spent at the Geum before she departed for Alaska on 8 June. Flying a similar track to all the others she reached the Yukon- Kuskokwim Delta (YKD) five days and 6,152 km later.

She did not appear to head inland to breed but stayed around the Cape Avinof area until 13 July when she went 'walkabout' down to Port Heiden on the Alaska Peninsula, a distance of 452 km. It was a short 'walkabout' as she flew back to Cape Avinof two days later.

On 27 July she again flew to Port Heiden but four days later she was back at Cape Avinof, another 900 km round trip.

This time she stayed at Cape Avinof until 21 September when a small window of opportunity opened to allow her and many other godwits to escape the worsening Alaskan weather. With a strong tail wind she headed south into the Pacific. After seven days flying and almost within sight of Fiji (and Suva's mudflats) she turned east and headed for New Caledonia, arriving there on 29 September having flown 10,037 km in seven and a half days. The east coast of New Caledonia does have some tidal flats,



which she found, although after several days she moved further north from where the last regular transmission was received on 12 October. An odd transmission on 17 October had her still in New Caledonia.

We will have to wait and see if she makes it back to Miranda later this summer.

Z0 – Female

Z0 appears to have bred in the Bristol Bay area of Alaska, an area where Bar-tailed Godwits have not been known to breed. She left there quite early in the breeding season, on 25 June, and flew the 400 km to Cape Avinof, where she stayed for 90 days. She departed on 22 Sept NZ time (a day after E5) and flew south across the Alaska Peninsula, out towards Hawaii, then swung westward to pass well west of Laysan Island and continued towards Vanuatu. At this point she appeared to be heading for north Queensland, however when she was some 1,000km north of New Caledonia she turned northwest towards Papua New Guinea and land-

Approximate distances of E8's migration flights

Miranda – South Korea	9,769
South Korea - Russia	8,157
Russia – North Yukon	1,527
North Yukon – Cape Avinof	414
Cape Avinof - Port Heiden	420
Port Heiden – Cape Avinof	415
Cape Avinof – Mid Pacific	8,818
Total	29,520

ed there on 2 October. She was still there on 25 October.

E8 – Female

Having arrived on the north YKD too late to breed after her detour to Siberia, E8 flew to Cape Avinof on 21 June and stayed there for 50 days then on 30 July flew 400 km south to Port Heiden on the Alaska Peninsula. She stayed there for only two days before flying the 400 km back to Cape Avinof where she stayed for a further 65 days.

E8 departed from Cape Avinof on 9 October NZ time with a good tail wind and was travelling at about 80 kph for the first 1,000 km. By 16 Oct NZ time she was some 8,818 km into the flight and approaching New Caledonia when the batteries finally gave out. On 18 October one signal put her 700 km north of the last fix but that was a poor signal with little meaning.

Z4 – Female

Z4 is another bird not covered in the last report but she also made it to Alaska. Z4 stayed in Golden Bay from 2 February till 19 March and then set off north on a 10,209 km flight to Shandong in China. After seven days flying, averaging 60 kph, she rested for eight days. Her next stop was Yalu Jiang 356 km to the north where she spent 26 days. On



30 April she set off in an easterly direction until well past Japan, then turned northeast towards the YKD. She arrived there after seven days flying on 6 May. She flew at least 7,482 km, which was 2,165 km more than

the great circle route, but she had taken advantage of favourable winds along the way.

She is unlikely to have bred successfully as she moved back to the coast at Cape Avinof on 11 June.

She stayed at Cape Avinof for 76 days before flying the 460 km down to Port Heiden on the Alaska Peninsula on 28 August. After only a day she flew northeast 165 km to Egegik also on the Alaska Peninsula. After three days she went back to Port Heiden, but four days later was back to Egegik, then two days later back to Port Heiden! She was still there when the batteries finally expired around 4 October.

Z5 – Male

The back-pack solar powered transmitter appears to have dropped off this bird while he was on the Siberian tundra sometime around mid-July, but the transmitter continued sending signals from the same place until at least mid-September.


Y3 – Female

She has stayed at Farewell Spit or close by since being captured in Feb-

ruary, obviously not in a hurry to go anywhere. The latest transmission was on 24 October.

Throughout the summer I hope people will make a special effort to find and check on the wellbeing of all the birds that were fitted with transmitters in Golden Bay and at Miranda. Of particular interest will be E5 and Z0 who stopped in New Caledonia and PNG; will they continue on to New Zealand in due course? Only time and hours of observations will tell.

Once again we have been very privileged to be part of this wonderful experience. It has been exciting to see this fascinating story spreading around the world, reaching the Tehran Times in Iran and at least one primary school class north of London that has followed this story with great interest all the way.

Our special thanks go to Bob Gill and his crew at USGS in Alaska, Nils Warnock at PRBO in California and the Packard Foundation who helped fund the project and to everyone out there looking for the flagged godwits and promoting the conservation of these astonishing birds. 

Approximate distances of Z4's migration flights:

Miranda – Shandong	10,209
Shandong – Yalu Jiang	356
Yalu Jiang – Yukon Delta	7,482
Yukon Delta – Cape Avinof	152
Cape Avinof – Port Heiden	460
Port Heiden – Egegik	165
Egegik – Port Heiden	165
Port Heiden – Egegik	165
Egegik – Port Heiden	165
Total	19,309

Update: On 15/11/07 Jesse Conklin and Sarah Lovibond saw E7 at the Thames roost. Apparently she looked "just like any other godwit".

Chairman's Report

David Lawrie

As I sat down to write this report on 22 October 2007 I received a phone call advising that John Brown had died earlier that morning. John was one of the organising committee that established the Miranda Naturalists' Trust in 1975 and served for a time as the first chairman. John and his late wife Beth were very involved in Ornithological activities since about 1960.



John and Beth were introduced to ornithology by Ross McKenzie at about the same time that Ross took me under his wing and the three of us developed our interests at similar times. John and Beth at that time had a bach at Clarks Beach where I was living and we often spent weekends checking out the birds on the Manukau mudflats and in particular trying to unravel the mysteries of Smudgy Stilts, a project that Ross McKenzie had us working on at the time.

John was a practical man and it gave him much pleasure when the building at Miranda was commenced and in the early times he was often there lending a hand, always offering helpful advice. He was a regular attendee at open days and special events, right up until the time of his illness approximately 3 years ago. He was also still active on his ornithological activities, having a regular wader census beat and was assisting with the monthly beach patrols until he became too ill.

I know that John was proud of the legacy that had developed at Miranda from the initial ideas of an overnight accommodation base which was the original starting point for the Trust 30+ years ago. We will all miss his elder statesman overview of the Trusts' activities and our best wishes go to his family.

Building Extensions:

Following my report in the previous edition of the newsletter relating to the discussions over the possible building upgrade for the Centre I received a very generous offer from one of our members to assist. This

was from Rod Smith, an architect from Katikati, who has offered his services to assist the Trust in considering the building options and we look forward to his input in the near future.

External Advocacy:

During a recent meeting of the Council of the Trust we were discussing the role that the Miranda Naturalists' Trust should be adopting in our activities. The original intention of the founders of the Trust was that it would be a site specific facility, over time our role has gradually expanded with our work with migratory shorebirds and we are now noted on a world wide basis for this continuing work.

The Council was trying to rationalise whether we should be expending so much effort on national and international advocacy or whether we should be confining our activities and concentrating on the Firth of Thames and its protection.

The outcomes of that discussion were that without the migratory shorebirds the Miranda Shorebird Centre would have little meaning and the unofficial mission statement that has been adopted of "Keep the birds coming" has real relevance for the work that the Trust is undertaking. To achieve that mission statement it was considered necessary for the Trust to be active with national advocacy pushing for the protection of shorebird habitat throughout New Zealand and indeed throughout the flyway and on that basis the work that is currently being undertaken in China and internationally was considered to be relevant.

During those discussions however there was some surprise at the amount of advocacy work that is currently being undertaken by individual members of the Trust Council and the wider membership. The Council requested that I make this work more widely known as it is often overlooked how active the Trust has become on a national and international basis. The bulk of this advocacy work is currently being undertaken by Adrian Riegen and Keith Woodley although I have also been giving talks on a regular basis. I am also aware of other Council members and members who have been actively promoting shorebird work. The Trust also has allies in this work, such as the Manawatu Estuary Trust which has been undertaking work in establishing an interpretation centre near Foxton Beach. The Christchurch City Council has adopted the arrival of the godwits as a cause for celebration and an event to look forward to each spring. It is only from the continuation of these advocacy activities that the powers that be will recognise the value of estuaries and the roosting and feeding areas that are so important for these international migrants.

At the same time the Council was mindful that work still needs to be undertaken with endemic species such as Wrybill and that this should not be lost sight of in the euphoria that follows the success of the godwit tracking project. The Council is therefore looking at ways to increase pressure on the Department of Conservation and other agencies to protect the breeding areas of the Wrybill in the South Island braided river systems.

Volunteers:

The Council has been considering the role of volunteers over recent months and how we can enhance the experience for these important people in the continuing running of our organisation.

A small committee has been formed to be responsible for the running of the volunteer programme. It is headed by Jenni Hensley who will be in charge of volunteers and their organising. She will be assisted by Gillian Vaughan, Liz Pascal, Terry Wyatt and Wendy Hare. This small group will be developing a roster of volunteers to not only assist at running the Centre but also the other activities that volunteers can undertake on behalf of the Trust.

One of the first tasks will be to develop a programme where volunteers will be present at the roost regularly throughout the summer. They will provide interpretation for casual visitors throughout the high tide period. If you would like to assist in these activities contact Jenni with your details as it is always better to have too many volunteers than not enough.

At the same time it is intended to retain the Centre minder volunteer programme and on that basis Gillian Vaughan is running regular monthly workshops to provide the necessary background skills to assist in that undertaking and other tasks around the Centre building.

Christine Prietto:

The guest speaker at the spring migration day was Christine Prietto, who is the chairperson of the Hunter Wetlands Trust and also the Australian non-Governmental Ramsar CEPA Representative.

Christine gave a very interesting talk on the work undertaken at Hunter Wetlands and how that Trust was formed and operates. Their history is similar to that of Miranda. For details see the next page.

On the Monday following the open

day Christine, Keith Woodley and I met representatives of the Department of Conservation from Head Office and the Waikato Conservancy to discuss the role of both Government and non-Government representatives in the workings of Ramsar and in encouraging the New Zealand representatives to take a more active part and a greater interest in Ramsar activities. It is hoped that the impetus gained from Christine's visit will provide a stimulus for more active participation by the New Zealand Government in meeting its international obligations in terms of the Ramsar convention. The Trust believes that this is imperative for the protection of the habitats of migratory shorebirds.

Godwit Migration:

The enthralling story of the godwit migration has been covered more fully in this and previous editions of the newsletter. The great media and general public interest in migratory shorebirds is providing an opportunity for the Trust to push the message about the importance of protecting the estuarine areas around our coast lines. A general advocacy role is something that members throughout New Zealand can also use to enhance the value of estuarine areas.

One disappointing aspect of the godwit story is that our application for funding to the ASB Community Trust to prepare the educational godwit migration DVD was unsuccessful. While we always knew that the application was pushing the boundaries of the criteria for funding we believed that as an advocacy tool the DVD would have fulfilled most of the other criteria of the community trust.

The Trust Council still believes that this is a worthwhile project and is looking at other avenues of funding.

Other Activities at the Centre:

There have been a number of recent activities at the Centre. The New Zealand Dotterel Management Course on 11-13 September

was highly successful and over subscribed. This clearly indicates that the organisations arranging beach minders have become aware of the value of the Trust's training programme and are ensuring that minders and volunteers have an opportunity to attend.

The success of the course is largely dependent on the skills, knowledge, and ability to transmit information of Dr John Dowding. The Trust is grateful to him for providing his expertise.

The field sketching course run by Sandra Morris in October was also fully subscribed indicating that the short courses run by the Trust can be successful even allowing for the distance from major urban areas. The success of the course also demonstrates the high regard in which Sandra Morris is held in the art community and the ease with which she can communicate her skills to attendees.

The next upcoming course is a wader identification weekend on 10 and 11 November. This is a chance for people who have trouble identifying small brown waders to gain some basic techniques to assist in separating the members of this difficult group of birds.

Chinese Visit:


We have recently received advice that a 10 person delegation from China will be visiting Miranda some time at the end of November into early December. This group appears to be relatively high ranking Chinese officials from the area surrounding Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve but also includes some of the Reserve staff. This relatively large group will provide some logistical problems for the Trust and if there are people who could assist with transport over that time it would be appreciated if you could advise Keith at the Centre.

During the visit we intend to unveil a memorial stone that some of you may have noticed near the front steps of the Centre. This is to commemorate

the signing of the sister site relationship with Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve in April 2004. The opportunity is also being taken to involve the local Maori community in this ceremony as the godwit/Kuaka has special significance for Ngati Paoa and Ngati Whanaunga.

Research Proposals:

Keith Thompson the recently elected Council member comes from a research background and has provided new impetus to the Trust's intentions to undertake research in the Firth of Thames area. Keith with his botanical background has also advised of the dangers of *Carex divisa* which is increasingly occupying the estuarine areas of the limework site and is also present around the pond outside the Centre building. Keith has brought to the Council's attention the paper written by D C Strahan from the University of Waikato titled "The Plant Ecology Of Miranda Wetland: Restoration Options". This provides some alternatives to try to restore or retain the specialised salt marsh habitat around the limeworks sites and indeed along the foreshore. There has been a tendency in the past to concentrate on the birds and not pay any consideration to the vegetation and we are grateful to Keith for bringing that oversight into focus.

Keith also provided us with a short paper on perspectives of research at Miranda and provided several courses of action to further this difficult task. He has identified that much of the research that has been undertaken in the Miranda area is operational, collecting data about what is present now rather than being strategic and looking to identify long term trends. We look forward to the implementation of Keith's recommendations. This may provide a whole new aspect to Miranda's activities and we will look for people interested in assisting in the implementation of these projects, helping the Trust to earn the title of 'naturalists' rather than being m  y a bird watching

organisation.

Spring Migration Day: Christine Prietto

Using Ramsar at the local level

Wetlands, both local and international, were the theme at the Spring Migration Day this year. Guest speaker was Christine Prietto from Australia's Hunter Wetlands Centre who spoke on using the Ramsar Convention at the local level. The Hunter Estuary near Newcastle has been a Ramsar site since 1984 with an extension in 2002.

Of the around 5,000 ha of wetlands a 45 ha site, the Shortland Wetlands, is owned and managed by the local community. Part of the way that was accomplished was by listing it as a Ramsar site and using the links to the international structure, the dedicated convention, and the commitment to support wetland conservation as a focus for the organisation.

The Shortland Wetlands is run by the Hunter Wetlands Centre Australia (HWCA) and is a community gateway to the nature reserve. They introduce people to wetlands do and advocacy work for wetland conservation. They have focused on the education aims of Ramsar, trying to produce "a shallow but meaningful experience" which can lead into the "down and dirty experience" for those that want to learn more.


As part of this the HWCA took a leadership role in the Australian Wetlands Alliance. Initiated in 1995 this is a national network with more than 40 organisations as members. Working as a group gives those organisations a greater pull than they would have had individually.

Ramsar meets every three years, CoP (Conference of the Parties) 7 was in Costa Rica where the Communication and Education program (CEPA) was launched. From this the HWCA worked on the National Communication Education and Public Awareness Action Plan task force, and Christine accepted the role of National Ramsar CEPA Focal point.

CoP 8 in Valencia focused on recognising cultural aspects of wetlands through the Ramsar list, previously sites were only listed due to species and places, now they could be listed for their cultural values. At HWCA they developed a Ramsar communications strategy for the Hunter Region, helped establish the NSW Ramsar Manager's Network and took on the role as a co-ordinator for Wetland Link International.

At the CoP 9 meeting in Kampala in 2005 an education professional was appointed to the scientific panel for the first time. Ramsar then initiated the first meeting of wetland centres in Asia, under the banner of Wetland Link, at Maipo, Hong Kong where getting locals involved was stressed. At HWCA Christine took on the new defined role with the scientific community.

CoP 10 will be in Korea, where significant issues are likely to be climate change, human health, agriculture, cultural values, CEPA and the role of NGOs. Australian wetland centre are hoping to have a booth at the meeting to showcase their work. Given Korea's recent bad record with regard to coastal wetlands it is expected to be an interesting visit.

Throughout her speech Christine emphasised that confidence is important to NGO's, that having a clear message can increase the organisations accomplishments, and that being a part of a wider community can bring strength to the organisation at home in terms of funding, projects, and community support. The HWCA went from nearly closing their doors to being a vital part of both worldwide wetlands conservation and their own community. In their day-to-day activities the HWCA runs a school education programme and holiday programmes, guided walks, and activities for children. 

Shorebird Network Site Managers Workshop: Brisbane, September 2007

Keith Woodley

In 2001 Bruce Postill and I attended the inaugural workshop for Australasian Shorebird Network Site Managers at Philip Island. The second workshop was held in Brisbane on 18-20 September 2007. John Gumbley, DoC Waikato, and Mike Ogle, DoC Golden Bay, represented each of the New Zealand sites, I was also invited to attend.

The workshop was organized by Wetlands International and the Australian Department of Environment and Water Resources, and hosted by the Port of Brisbane. Funding came from the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia, which covered all expenses of the three New Zealand delegates.

Objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- Update staff involved in management of Network sites in Australia and New Zealand on the launch of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) Partnership
- Enable staff at Network sites to gain a better understanding of their role in the conservation of migratory shorebirds in the EAAF.
- Build the capacity of staff at Network sites to understand the importance of their sites in the Flyway context and the Flyway-wide issues for shorebird conservation.
- Enhance collaborative links for knowledge and skill transfer between staff among Network sites.
- To identify how Network sites could be involved in the new Australian Shorebird Monitoring Project (Shorebirds 2020) and access site management training and new awareness materials.

Managers from 10 Australian sites attended while other organizations represented were Wetlands International, Birds Australia, the AWSG, the QWSG, Queensland Environment Protection Agency, the Com-

monwealth Department of Environment and Water resources (DEW) and the Port of Brisbane.

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership

In November 2004, representatives from twenty-one Governments, inter-Governmental organisations and non-government organisations met in South Korea to discuss future regional cooperation for conservation of migratory waterbirds. They agreed that a United Nations partnership model would enhance collaboration between Governments, inter-governmental organizations and non-government organizations and contribute towards achieving the objectives of Millennium Development Goals as set by the U.N.

The new Partnership provides a flyway wide framework for promoting dialogue, cooperation and collaboration between a range of stakeholders including all levels of governments, site managers, multilateral environment agreements, UN agencies, development agencies, industries, academic institutions, non-government organisations, community groups and local people to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitats.

Key advantages of the partnership are:

- Links water bird conservation activities more strongly to “sustainable development and new global agendas” (e.g. Millennium Development Goals).

- Is more relevant to the priorities of developing countries.

- Develops greater commitment from all countries in the Flyway.

- Builds on the strengths developed in the Action Plans to deliver a program for all migratory water birds rather than for separate species-groups.

The partnership now encompasses 95 sites, 49 of which are shorebird sites.

Under the Water Bird Strategy, developed in 1994 at Kushiro in Japan, separate site networks were established for shorebirds, Anatidae (ducks and other waterfowl) and cranes. With only shorebird sites in New Zealand the situation here was simple compared with East Asia where all three species groups occur. The partnership now encompasses 95 sites, 49 of which are shorebird sites. Significant sites in the Flyway now stand at 700, 400 of which are for shorebirds.

Birds Australia

Two current projects of Birds Australia were discussed at the workshop.

Identification of Important Shorebird Habitat

This project has three phases:

- a review of what is known about migratory shorebirds,
- the identification and mapping of important shorebird areas, and
- testing to determine if additional

criteria should be used to identify "nationally significant" sites for migratory shorebirds.

Results so far have provided a much-improved picture of shorebird use of sites in Australia by identifying site-complexes, sites and sub-sites as well as feeding and roosting areas within those sites. Where possible, every migratory shorebird site has been mapped to show the kind of shorebird use, type of habitat, and potential threats. It now looks likely a similar project will be started for the Firth of Thames.

Shorebirds 2020

This is a national project designed to conserve migratory shorebirds through increased population monitoring and identification of population trends and key threats to survival. Efforts are under way to mobilize as many people as possible over the next few years to become involved in regular shorebird surveys.

Australian Government

The Australian Government is working with state and territory governments to establish a more systematic and strategic approach to management of Australia's Ramsar wetlands. A template for establishing the ecological character of a site was outlined at the workshop by the DEW. Ecological character is the combination of the ecosystem components, processes, benefits and services that characterize the wetland at a given point in time. Changes to the ecological character of the wetland outside natural variations may signal that uses of the site, or externally derived impacts on the site, are unsustainable and may lead to the degradation of natural processes, and thus the ultimate breakdown of the ecological, biological and hydrological functioning of the wetland.

The framework is designed to help wetland managers, consultants and researchers describe the ecological

character of their wetland, and establish a standard method for assessing and monitoring wetlands in Australia.

The template could be applied to wetlands in New Zealand, on the Firth of Thames certain aspects of it are already being applied in the context of the Muddy Feet Project. A relative risk assessment model has been used to identify stressors impacting on the Firth of Thames Ramsar site and point sources for those stressors. The next stage in this project is to develop an integrated management plan to be implemented by all the agency stakeholders around the Firth, including regional and district councils and DoC.

Site Reports

Presentations from each site manager identified the key features of their site, its ecological importance and any management issues. Workshop sessions then worked on a risk assessment for each site and used a template to assess management effectiveness.

All Australian sites faced significant threats and management challenges. Of the New Zealand sites, Farewell Spit came out of the exercise extremely well. This was partly due to its remote location and strictly controlled access. The Firth of Thames did not do quite so well with decline in bird numbers, mangrove expansion, intensive farming practices and the possible contraction of intertidal feeding areas all reducing its ecological values. The lack of a currently active management plan also lowered its overall score. However, phase three of the Muddy Feet project, could substantially improve this position.

Presentations


The two participants from DoC gave presentations about Farewell Spit and Firth of Thames. I gave presen-

tations on our relationship with Yalu Jiang and the satellite tagging programmes. Needless to say, interest in E7 was extremely high throughout!

Port of Brisbane

Field trips were made to two roosting sites in the port area of Moreton Bay. The Port of Brisbane, within its long term expansion project has developed an extremely effective high-tide roost with viewing hides. Active management of the roost has set a high benchmark for similar projects. The attention to detail in both roost design and control of water flow was most impressive. Indeed the entire operation of the port is a model to admire, complete with the venue for the workshop - an elaborate visitor and function centre. They also have on board a very impressive community relations manager who does a fine line in spin.

Best line of the workshop, referring to the 1.7 kilometre long reclamation currently under way to expand the port:

"Here at the Port of Brisbane we are making Moreton Bay more precious by making it smaller." 

World Wetlands Day February 2nd 2008.

There are a few events that are already scheduled for World Wetlands Day.

A release of Brown Teal into Tawharanui Regional Park just north of Auckland.

The National Wetlands Trust has their annual bus trip, this year they are visiting the South Waikato Peat Lakes. Check out www.wetlandtrust.org.nz for details and contacts.

from the MANAGER

Keith Woodley

High tide was still several hours away but a small flock of godwits had already begun to roost in front of me. I was a long way out on the flats, standing on the shell fan that extends over 100 metres from the southern edge of the new shell bank. With only a faint breeze and good light, conditions were excellent for filming - but the TV3 news crew were still somewhere outside the Limeworks gate.



As I waited my mobile rang. Lee Tibbits was on the line from her office in Anchorage with news of the bird. "Two hours ago she was 480 km north of Miranda just to the east of North Cape." The bird of course was E7 and it was Friday 7 September.

The television reporter and cameraman appeared on the shore and made their way out to me. Their experience of Miranda mud was a knee-high one. But they achieved one of their objectives and got good footage of godwits. The other part of their mission was of course thwarted by the fact that E7 had yet to arrive. Nevertheless the story made the news that night. (Many people subsequently confirmed to me that I had appeared on television. I really felt I was a mere stand-in for the true star who was still in the process of getting here!) And it was a story the crew had really earned, not just in negotiating the mud, but also through the extremely sensitive encounter the cameraman had with the electric fence as they were departing.

The performance of E7, together with that of the transmitter battery that just kept on keeping on long after its expected expiration, was astonishing. It was largely due to her that, in the days and weeks that followed, Miranda was a buzzing place. Public and media enquiries poured in. Countless visitors arrived seeking information on the whereabouts of E7. But alas, the story was always the same: "We know where she is but no one has seen her!" The area

she frequents at the mouth of the Piako River is remote and difficult to access. Indeed, since her release at Taramaire in the small hours of 7 February to this day in mid-October we know of only one sighting of her, in March 2007 at Miranda. This despite the fact we know more about her than any other individual bird - her entire migration route, where she stopped and for how long. She is now a worldwide star - appearing from the Hauraki Herald to the BBC website and the front page of the Tehran Times - albeit a shy and retiring one.

Coincidental with the enthralling journey of E7 and its attendant publicity the reach of Miranda has continued to spread around the country and abroad. This year I have given presentations in China, Korea and Australia. Closer to home were talks in Thames, Ngatea, Tauranga (twice) and Invercargill. At time of writing further talks are scheduled for Tauranga, the Kapiti Coast and Rotorua. An inevitable outcome of this has been frequent absences from the centre; indeed, there was a period in September where a sighting of the centre manager was in danger of receiving similar status to a rare bird report. But I have not been alone in broadcasting the Miranda message. Adrian Riegen has spoken at Whakatane and Ohiwa Harbour, Kerikeri and Herne Bay, Papakura and Howick. David Lawrie has spoken to Rotary Clubs in Pukekohe and Tuakau.


Of course my involvement in this

Miranda outreach programme would not be possible without key assistance at the centre. In particular I must acknowledge Jenni who has done the bulk of the relieving duties, sometimes at short notice. Her support has been invaluable, along with that of all the other volunteers who have assisted.

A group of young men from the refugee centre in Mangere provided a particularly interesting (and interested) audience one afternoon in October. They came from a diversity of places - Sudan, Afghanistan, Chad, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Iraq. They were all enthralled by the story of these migrating godwits. Even more so when it was pointed out to them that the same species could be found at certain times of the year along the coast of West Africa, in East Africa, around the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, and along the coast of Pakistan. Of even greater interest to the two fellows from Chad were the inland records, albeit rare ones, of Bar-tailed Godwit between Nigeria and Sudan.

At the time of writing we are still waiting to have a stile installed along the hide trail. As part of a grazing lease negotiated with DoC, the farmer has installed fencing along the frontage of the old Access Bay site. Unfortunately this crosses the trail at the point where it leaves the "fennel forest". The department has undertaken to install a stile and it is anticipated this will be done very soon.

I have long expressed the view that in living at Miranda one seldom lacks variety. A case in point was the couple who arrived at the centre one afternoon to report a human skull on the beach opposite the centre. I subsequently went out to investigate and found it lying near the bottom of the beach about 200 metres north of the centre. It was close to the most recent tide line, but the beach itself was otherwise completely clear with no other objects anywhere in view. It certainly looked like it had been in the water for some time. I notified the police who retrieved it for forensic examination.

The basic concept of a bird hide is that it conceals the viewer from the birds in view. What if, however, the watchers are themselves being watched? And those doing the watching are also inside the hide? This was the case during October in the Miranda hide when occupants found themselves under scrutiny from four juvenile swallows. The hide had received increasingly regular patronage from visitors as September rolled into October, so the persistence of the adult swallows in their chosen nest site was quite remarkable. 



Watching the Watchers, the gapes are still easily visible on these nearly fledged swallow chicks, a few days later they were gone, presumably successfully. Photo Janie Vaughan

Notes from the Centre:

Plastic Bags

For all our good intentions sometimes we just need plastic bags to put the shopping in. If you've got some clean dry plastic bags that you've been collecting consider dropping some in at the Centre on your next visit!

Recycling

There is no curbside recycling at Miranda, but we do collect items that can be recycled. If you can take some home please ask at the counter and we'll point you in the right direction.

Shags - Spotted!

Small numbers of Spotted Shags are occasionally seen along the east coast of the Firth of Thames, they are more common, but still not often recorded in big flocks, along the west coast. It was a surprise therefore when for two days at the end of September a flock numbering around a thousand was seen feeding close in to shore, records came from Kaiarau, Taramarie and the shellbanks.



A portion of the flock feeding off Kaiarau, at times they came in quite close to shore. Photo Janie Vaughan

Miranda Records

1 July 2006 - 30 June 2007

A LIST OF SELECTED SPECIES

Most of these records are taken from the records book at the Miranda Shorebird Centre, however some records have had to be left out as the observers names were omitted. All records are kept but only a selection are published here. Please write your name clearly with your records. If you would like to contribute records from Miranda but don't know where the sightings book is then either ask at the desk or email your records to shorebird@xtra.co.nz. Thank you to all those who have contributed

Note: Figures preceded by 'Summer' or 'Winter' refer to OSNZ Census totals for the entire Firth of Thames. Summer census 26/11/06 winter census 10/6/07.

Note: Rare birds in this report may not yet have been considered by the OSNZ Rare Birds Committee.

Fluttering Shearwater:

430 off the coast at Kaiua 9/6 (GRV, J&KV, ICS).

Gannet:

12 on 15/09 out from the hide (KW).
4 on 21/01/2007 out from the hide (GRV).

Black Shag: Summer 26. Winter 107.

Pied Shag: Summer 223. Winter 657.

Little Shag: Summer 6. Winter 25.

1 on 04/07 on shellbank (KP).

Little Black Shag: Summer 2. Winter 12.

5 on 4/07 at the shellbanks (KP).
5 on 16/10 at the Shellbanks (NM).
14 on 14/06 (KW).

Spotted Shag:

1 off Kaiua on 9/06 (J&KV).

White Heron: Summer 1. Winter 4.

1 seen regularly from July to October (many observers including ID, KW,

PFB, SR, AMH, SM, NM, BK). 2 on 15/2 (BK), then one from March to May.

Cattle Egret: Summer 0. Winter 35.

White-faced Heron: Summer 136.

Winter 547.

Reef Heron: Summer 1. Winter 1.

1 on 9/06 north of Kaiua (J&KV).

Bittern: Summer 0. Winter 2.

1 flying along MSC boundary on 22/10/2006 (KW). 1 near Waitakaruru on 14/12 (Henk Gaasbeek). 1 on 20/2 flushed from Widgery Lake (Mikael Kall, Sweden). 1 near the old Miranda Hall 20/03/2007 (MT). 1 flushed from Widgery Lake on 6/06/2007 (KW).

Spoonbill: Summer 0. Winter 14.

Seen regularly off the limeworks shellbanks and in the fields. Maximum numbers: 8 on 16/7 (WNCP). 9 on 18/5 (BS). 13 on 14/06/2007 (KW).

Black Swan: Summer 421. Winter 209.

Canada Geese: Summer 0. Winter 48.

1 on 22/10 on the Stilt Pools (KW).

Paradise Duck: Summer 60. Winter 54.

Mallard: Summer 535. Winter 2051.

Grey Duck: Summer 14. Winter 0.

New Zealand Shoveler: Summer 0.

Winter 70.

Grey Teal: Summer 3. Winter 353.

150 on 4/06 (AMH).

Harrier: Summer 13. Winter 41.

New Zealand Falcon:

1 on the Miranda Road near Mangatangi 28/10 (Pat and Nev Yates, Queensland).

Pukeko: Summer 20. Winter 274.

Banded Rail: Summer 1. Winter 0.

1 record from Widgery Lake 18/07 (KW). 1 in mangroves of Access Bay 3/10 (NM). 1 on 28/10 (AMH, DAL). 1 juvenile on Widgery Lake on 10/12 (JH). 2 adult and 3 juveniles on Widgery Lake on 18/01 (Don Taylor). 1 at Limeworks Gate on 15/2 (BK). 1 adult and 2 large young on Widgery Lake 5/03 (KW). 1 at Limeworks 21/3 (D & M Stacey). 2 in mangroves of Silt Pools 18/5 (BS).

South Island Pied Oystercatcher:

Summer 1630. Winter 7517.

Departures were observed from 11/07 with 2 small groups leaving (17 & 21) (KW). More departures were recorded in the afternoon of 18/07, 21/07 (KW), and on 8/08 (JH).

Variable Oystercatcher: Summer 85.

Winter 135.

Records throughout the year of a pair near the hide.

Pied Stilt: Summer 419. Winter 3166.

580 on the stiltponds 5/07 (KP). 120 on 27/07 (KW&PFB). 30 at Karito 21/1 (AR). 50 on 18/03 (AMH).

Black Stilt/Smudgies: Summer 0. Winter 1.

2 dark hybrids on the stiltponds on 16/7 (WNCP) 1 very dark hybrid at Karito on 27/01 (DAL).

Banded Dotterel: Summer 0. Winter 285.

26 on 27/7 (KW&PFB). 5 on 27/12 (KW). 47 at the Shellbanks 3/2 (S&JR). 63 on 15/2 (BK). 3 on 19/3 (PFB & KW). 2 on 29/4 (AMH). 56 on 12/5 (AMH). 18 on 18/5 (BS). 76 on 4/6 (AMH).

New Zealand Dotterel: Summer 12.

Winter 32.

Regular records of between 1 and 4 seen on the shellbanks throughout the year, 1 count of 7 on 1/07 (ID) and 8 on 12/5 (AMH).

Large Sand Dotterel: Summer 0. Winter 0.

Several records of a single bird on the shellbanks from 15/2 (BK) to 31/3 (AMH). Many observers.

Wrybill: Summer 97. Winter 1700. 2000 on shellbanks 4/7 (KP). 2800-3000 on shellbanks 27/7 (KW&PFB). 80 on 1/10 (AMH). 200 on shellbanks 3/10 (NM). 300 on shellbanks 16/10 (NM). 40 on 28/10 (AMH/DAL). 76 on 30/12 (WNCP). 11 at Karito on 20/01 (AR). 1000 on 4/3 (AMH). Records of approx 2000 from 18/3 to 4/6 (AMH).

Pacific Golden Plover: Summer 62. Winter 0. 1 record at the limeworks on 7/09 (KW) increasing to 7 on 25/9 (SR). Several records of a single bird at the limeworks in October and November (SR, BHS, KW). A flock recorded at Karito 125 on 20/01, 121 on 21/1 (AR) and 126 on 27/1 (DAL). 2 at the shellbanks 3/2 (S&JR). 40 at the shellbanks on 15/2 (BK) 105 on 18/2 (KW). 1 on 21 March (D & M Stacey).

Spur-winged Plover: Summer 182. Winter 268. 120 at Taramaire on 5/07 (KP).

Turnstone: Summer 19. Winter 0. First record of 3 on 16/9 (AMH), increasing to 11 on 3/10 (NM). High counts of 16 on 27/12 (KW) and 21 on 15/2 (BK).

Red Knot: Summer 5950. Winter 3. High count of 4000 on 1/10 (AMH).

Curlew Sandpiper: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 on 30 and 31/12 (WNCP & Robin Mulder, Netherlands). Single records on 15/2 (BK), 31/3 and 29/4 (AMH).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper: Summer 5. Winter 0. 3 on the stiltponds 7/9 (KW). 8 on 27/9 (SR). 10 on 3/10 (NM). 11 on 7/10 (Otto Sathoald, Austria) 13 on 22/11 (KW). 11 on 15/2 (BK). 5 on 16/3 (JVDK & JL) 1 on 19/3 (PFB & KW).

Pectoral Sandpiper: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 on 16/10 (KW).

Red-necked Stint: Summer 5. Winter 0. 2 on 26/10 (BS) 6 on 27/11 (KW). 8 on 15/2 (BK). 6 on 19/3 (PFB, KW). 3 on 4/6 (AMH).

Whimbrel: Summer 14. Winter 0. 1 on the shellbanks, 3/10 and 16/10 (NM). 1 on 21/5 (BS).

Bar-tailed Godwit: Summer 8667. Winter 802. 150 on 5/7 (KP) 506 on 27/7 (KW, PFB). 1271 on the stilt ponds 6/09 (KW), 2100 on 1/10 (AMH). 43 juvenile were recorded on 16/10 (NM) 61 juveniles in 800 birds and 85 juveniles in 960 godwits 28/10 (AMH, DAL). E7 seen 9/3 (JVDK, JL). 200 departing on migration at 3:30pm and 70 at 4:30pm on 16/3 (JVDK, JL). 17 seen departing on 19/3 (PFB, KW).

Black-tailed Godwit: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 on 27/07 (KW, PFB). 1 on 16/9 (AMH). 1 seen regularly through November (KW).

Hudsonian Godwit: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 seen regularly from 1/7 to 21/5. (Many observers including ID, NM, KW, PFB, PH, WNCP, GRV, ICS, BK AMH DAL) 2 seen on 4/3/07 (Iain Sinclair, South Africa).

Siberian Tattler: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 seen regularly from 23/9 to 29/4 (numerous observers include PH, BK, JVDK, JL AMH, GRV)

Marsh Sandpiper: Summer 1. Winter 0. 1 individual seen on 22 and 23/11 (KW).

Terek Sandpiper: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 seen from 20/11 to 21/5 (numerous observers incl PH, KW, WNCP, BK, PFB, BS)

Arctic Skua: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 seen off Kaiaua on 9/6 (GRV, J&KV, ICS).

Black-backed Gull: Summer 150. Winter 272. 58 at Taramaire 5/7 (KP).

Red-billed Gull: Summer 45. Winter 1262. 20 at Taramaire on 5/7 (KP).

Black-billed Gull: Summer 552. Winter 335. 60 at Taramaire 5/7 (KP). 200 on 16/9 (AMH). 50 on 18/3 (AMH).

Caspian Tern: Summer 73. Winter 207. 12 on the shellbanks 4/7 (KP). 130 at Taramaire 12/8 (PFB). 72 on 18/5 (BS). 216 on 14/6 on (KW).

White-fronted Tern: Summer 172. Winter 119.

Fairy Tern: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 first year bird seen on 1/10 (PFB & SM) seen for several days afterwards.

Little Tern: Summer 0. Winter 0. 1 seen regularly from 27/12 to 21/3 (many observers including KW, WNCP, Robin Mulder, Netherlands, S&JR, BK, AMH D & M Stacey).

Spotted Dove: 1 north of Kaiaua on 9/6 (J&KV)

Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo: 30 on Mangitangi Road 3/6 (ND).

Shining Cuckoo: 1 Access Bay 3/02/2007 (S&JR).

Kingfisher: 6 at shellbanks 5/07 (KP).

Pipit: 1 at hide 16/10 (KW).

Goldfinch: 200 on 18/5 (BS).

Redpoll: 18 on 18/5 (BS).

Rook: 31 on West Canal Road, Waitakaruru 29/11 (ICS).

Contributors:
PFB Phil Battley
ID Igor Debski
ND Nola Dyson
AMH Tony Habraken
PH Phil Hammond
JH Jenni Hensley
BK Bruce Keeley
DAL David Lawrie
JL Jan Lewis
NM Nigel Milius
SM Sue Moore
WNCP Will Perry
KP Ken Pickett
AR Ashley Reid
S&JR Stella and John Rowe
BHS Betty Seddon
ICS Ian Southey
BS Barry Stevens
MT Michael Taylor
JVDK Jan van der Kam
GRV Gillian Vaughan
J&KV Janie and Kevin Vaughan
KW Keith Woodley

Compiled by Gillian Vaughan 

Rapid depletion of Totara fruits by Tui

David Medway

Numerous Totara (*Podocarpus totara*) trees, planted mostly during the 1930s, are growing throughout Pukekura Park in central New Plymouth. Among them are many mature female trees that, individually, bear varying amounts of fruit mainly from February to April in each year.



I have seen New Zealand Pigeons (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), Tui (*Prosthemadera n. novaeseelandiae*), Silvereyes (*Zosterops l. lateralis*), House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*), and an occasional Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) eating Totara fruits in the park. Over a period of three days, 4-6 February 2002, I observed all seven species, including at least 12 Tui at a time, significantly reduce the number of ripe and ripening fruits on a heavily-fruiting tree.

On 1 April 2004 at 2pm, while observing birds in the park, I heard Tui calling loudly nearby. I soon found them feeding on the fruits of a large Totara. I could see numerous fruits on the tree. These fruits were mostly light-yellowish in colour, but there were also some reddish ones. One New Zealand Pigeon was in the tree eating fruits during the whole time I was there, as well as three Starlings which frequently visited the tree and also fed on them.


My first count of feeding Tui was eight, a short time later I counted 12, and then 16. As time went by, the number of Tui visiting the tree increased. The feeding birds were making a lot of noise as they flew to and from the tree, and when they were in nearby trees. Perhaps the

noise they made was what attracted other Tui. By about 3.30-4.00pm many more Tui were feeding in the tree than when I first arrived. It was difficult to count the Tui accurately because there was a great deal of coming and going between the Totara and adjoining trees. Nevertheless, at about 4pm, two counts produced a total of at least 31 Tui, of which, at one point, about 28 were feeding in the tree at the same time. It was a wonderful sight to see so many Tui in an urban park feeding in the same tree at the same time, with all the associated activity and high noise levels.

I frequently saw Tui picking fruits off the Totara as they hung upside down from a twig by one foot only. On one occasion I saw a Tui drop a fruit it had picked, and then let go its grip and catch the fruit in mid-air before it had fallen far. There were very few whole Totara fruits on the ground beneath the tree, so the Tui must have been very adept at swallowing nearly all of the fruits they picked. When the Tui were not in the Totara they were in immediately adjoining trees where they looked for insects and made a lot of noise.


This feeding activity continued until about 4.45pm when there was a quite sudden and noticeable decline in the number of Tui visiting the To-

tara. Shortly afterwards, the remaining birds also deserted the tree. It was still quite light at the time, although getting duller, so decreasing light was not the reason for the cessation of activity. The reason became apparent on inspection of the tree through binoculars. When I arrived at 2pm, numerous fruits were obvious all over the tree. By about 4.45pm, very few fruits were still readily visible. I do not know how long Tui had been feeding at the Totara before I arrived, but they virtually stripped it of fruit during the three hours I was there. There is little doubt that the Tui deserted the tree because they had effectively exhausted it as a food source.

Many Totara seeds must be scattered widely by Tui. Beveridge (*Proceedings of the New Zealand Ecological Society* 11(1964): 48-55) found that the most active dispersers of podocarp seed, including Totara, in central North Island native forests are Tui, New Zealand Pigeons, and Bellbirds (*Anthornis m. melanura*). He concluded that seed of most podocarp species is distributed beyond 40m from the parent tree, primarily by birds. Burke (*New Zealand journal of botany* 12(1974): 219-226), in a study of podocarp regeneration on Mt Tarawera, observed that Totara seeds had been dispersed up to 4.8km from the nearest adult trees. 

The Miranda Field Course

The 10th Miranda Field Course will run on 21-27 to January 2007. The field course is currently full but a waiting list is being run. Contact the Centre for details.

A field course reunion is being planned for January 28th, Auckland Anniversary Day. If you're a previous field course participant or tutor come along! Bring something for a potluck lunch, high tide is around noon. Contact Keith at the Centre or Eila, elawton@actrix.co.nz, for details. 

A salt marsh plant *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*

Eila Lawton

Life on the edge of the sea is harsh for plants. Exposure to sun and wind is high. There are frequent dunkings with salty water, then infusions, occasionally inundations, of fresh water. Over millennia, a community of plants has evolved that could cope with such conditions, each species with adaptations that allowed it to occupy a certain niche in the available habitat.

As the ridges of Miranda's chenier plains gradually form new land, the 'usual suspects' seed or creep into their traditional positions in the resulting wetland known as salt marsh.

The plant that occupies perhaps the harshest spot, right on the edge of the salty creek we walk along on the track down to the hide, is *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*, commonly known as glasswort. What's in a name? Quite a lot, in this case.

Sarcocornia is botanical Latin for 'fleshy horn', which is an accurate description for the way the leaves are arranged. Pairs are fused together around the stem, joint above joint. The whole thing is swollen with the water it holds as its protection against desiccation when exposed to the sun. A taste will demonstrate the high level of salt in the plant tissue; this allows the


maintain its water balance via osmotic pressure when the salty tide floods in. *Quinqueflora*? That means 'five flowers', so get down close during the summer flowering period and check if the tiny flowers really are tucked in groups of five into the axils or joints of the tubular leaves.

The common name glasswort is a carry-over from an English name for the closely related *Salicornia* (salty horns!), which was actually used, at least to the 14th century, in the manufacture of glass because of the high mineral content of its ashes. Another common name is samphire – and that one helps to trace the plant's age-old distribution along many shorelines. It has made a crunchy addition to salads, fresh or pickled, for many a poor fisher family and so has been named for St Peter or, in French, St Pierre (say that quickly to get samphire),

the patron saint of all fishermen. You won't need much salt in your salad if you try it, though.

In New Zealand the plant occurs on the edges of muddy inlets and on rocky shores around both main islands and the Chatham Islands. It is native to New Zealand but also occurs in Australia.

There is a lovely colour variation through the glasswort field. Some say this is just a matter of different clones; others suggest the reddish or violet tones are a sign of chemical stress – possibly to deal with toxic levels of salts.

Very few creatures can cope with the salty nature of this plant, but at least one insect, the noctuid moth *Ectopatria aspersa*, has been identified with it, so it is worth looking for a green caterpillar up to 30mm long. 



New Council Member - KEITH THOMPSON

I am a community/ecosystem ecologist and I have taught and researched stuff like botany, ecology, sustainability, environmental science and environmental technology during my nearly 40 years in tertiary education, 28 of them at the University of Waikato. I've studied wetlands all my life and this passion has taken me to five continents, including Africa and Antarctica. I'm more interested in how they work – and how to keep them working, rather than what they look like.

I am a trustee of the NZ National Wetland Trust and also of the Te Kauri-Waikuku Trust – set up by the



Hamilton Junior Naturalist Club, where I was Supervisor of Junat activities for 15 years. I am also a member of the Advisory Committee for the Waikato Regional Environment (which means I get to put the boot in with Environment Waikato counsellors occasionally!).

Currently I suppose I could call myself something like a 'superannuated environmental and educational consultant'! I do things for farmers, local government, conservation interests, educational bodies and various community groups. To keep myself occupied (Ha!), beyond my technical and research work, I give talks and lectures and things but I have a particular interest in running educational fieldtrips, usually to wetlands - like I've brought students to Miranda for well over 20 years. My other passion is photography, but I don't do digital – there aren't enough pixels to satisfy me yet! 🐦

Why am I a Volunteer? - TERRY WYATT

I first started birdwatching in mid 1981, when my husband and I took our 3 sons on a trip to Darwin, via the Ghan train and Uluru, then via Mt Isa to Townsville and back to Melbourne. It seemed like a good activity to have when travelling in those parts, and it was. I have birdwatched ever since, but often there have been times when I have hardly looked at a bird for months on end.

In recent years I have been extravagant, and been on birding trips in Australia, twice, and in the Shetlands Island in 2003. I have known about Miranda for some years, and been a non-active member. In January 2005, I attended the field course, and during that year I built a house at Kaiaua – my peace and quiet place where I weave and get away from

work in Auckland. I have been a volunteer at Miranda now for the last 12 months.

I was trained by Keith over a series of days at the weekend, with me making lots of mistakes on the famous till, and Keith picking up the pieces. I am now usually confident to be in the centre on my own, but there always seem to be notes I have to leave for Keith to tell him about things I was not sure about. I am usually in the centre one day a month over a the weekend.

With the new plans to have volunteers on the shellbanks over the summer to help visitors, I am being encouraged to take part, and am assured that my very basic bird identification skills will be fine. I talked to

some visitors from Europe down at the shellbanks a few weeks ago and was able to help them – the point is that I know very little, but I know more than the average visitor! There is always someone with more knowledge who can be contacted on the phone, at the centre, or next day if people have hard questions.

I find birds a fascinating part of the natural world, and migratory birds are particularly interesting. The work done by the experts associated with Miranda is important and there are always things that the interested amateur, those with little knowledge, or beginners, can do. I feel that I am doing my little bit to save the habitats that the migratory birds need, and I meet great people, and am in a beautiful place at the same time. 🐦

What about you?

Do you know something about birds? Something about Miranda? Share your knowledge with our visitors – any level can be a help – from spending some time in the shop and giving people preliminary info and directions on finding the birds for themselves, to taking guided walks

on the history, geography, geology and botany, as well as the wildlife of the area.

We are hoping to have volunteers present at the hide for most suitable weekends this summer. Eventually we hope to run a series of guided walks.

If you would like to help by looking after the shop or being directly involved in these activities contact us. It can be as little as two hours of your day – or you can give us a day or a weekend and have a little break at the centre – free accommodation to volunteers! 🐦

All of the NZWSG News are now available online at www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz



MNT People:

Shorebird Centre Manager:

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Deputy Chairman, and Banding

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Adrian Riegen (Deputy Chairman)

William Perry (Secretary)

Ashley Reid (Treasurer)

Eila Lawton Emma Stanyard

Len Taylor Estella Lee

Phil Hammond Sue Reid

Wendy Hare Gillian Vaughan

Keith Thompson

John Gale (Ex officio)

Bequests



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

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

Accommodation

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

Per bed / night member \$ 12.50 Hire of flat member \$ 40.00

Per bed / night non-member \$ 17.50 Hire of flat non-member \$ 50.00

For further information contact Keith at the Shorebird Centre, RD3 Pokeno
Phone /Fax (09) 232 2781

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

Membership of the Trust entitles you to: **Membership Rates:**

Four Miranda News issues per year.

Ordinary Member - \$ 35

A \$ 5 discount on overnight accommodation

Family Member - \$ 40

Invitations to Trust Events

Overseas Member- \$ 40

The right to attend the AGM

Life Member, under 50 - \$ 1050

The right to vote for council members

Life Member, 50 & over - \$ 525

Want to be involved?

Friends of Miranda

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

Long term Volunteers

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

The Miranda Garden

If you want an excuse to stay at Miranda for a couple of week nights free of charge, come and help a small team of gardeners maintain the gardens. It is satisfying and worthwhile work in the outdoors. We make the time enjoyable especially when we down tools at high tide and go and watch the birds on the shell banks. If interested phone Keith on 232 2781 who will put you in touch with a gardener!

Firth of Thames Census

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

The Magazine

Never forget you are welcome to contribute to the MNT NEWS!

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

