

Well there is lots going on in the world of migrating birds with a mix of good old fashioned observations (scanning and migration watch) and modern technology (the Platform Terminal Transmitters PTT's) on the 'GFN' Great Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits.

6 Great Knots are sending signals from China and 2 are sending signals from Australia. One of these is in the Northern Territory (1,000km north east from Roebuck Bay, where we banded it) and the other is at 80 Mile Beach (200km south from Roebuck Bay) it would seem these 2 will remain in Australia this dry season.

All the Great knots did a single flight from Roebuck Bay to the coast of China except one that stopped in Vietnam. The general strategy has been a single long flight then short stays of less than one day but up to 11 days before the next leg northward of between 500 and 1,800km. 4 birds are in Yalu Jiang on the China/North Korea Border, a site that gets 10's of 1,000's of Great Knots.

A few examples: one bird did a direct flight to the south coast of China of 4,600km then spent 11 days there before flying 1000km taking a very brief stops of 1 or 2 days 'hopping north again for 700km then another very brief stop before the final hop of 450km to Yalu Jiang.

Another did the single leg to the Chinese coast did 2 very short stops and then after a 10 days stop went the final 1,800km to Yalu Jiang.

One bird only made 1 stop it went 5,200km and then after 7 days zipped the other 1,200 to Yalu Jiang. It will be interesting to see if this apparently 'strong bird' leads up to the breeding grounds.

All birds have travelled at about the mid 40km's per hour during the big leg from Roebuck Bay to China.

1 bird was transmitting as it left Roebuck Bay on migration and this gives us very good timing, direction and speed of the initial leg of its journey. It left at 1800 on April 7<sup>th</sup> (it was no doubt logged in the observational data of the BBO team at migration watch.)

<https://www.facebook.com/broomebirdobs>

The Bar-tailed Godwits with PTT's left later than the Great Knots and have experienced some head and cross winds. 3 of them have stopped in the Philippines and 7 are in china. 1 is still in Roebuck Bay.

The first leg of the birds that got to China were between 4,600 and 5,200km.

The most interesting aspect of the godwits is that I saw a flock of 55 Bar-tailed Godwits exhibiting pre-migration behaviour at a roost on the afternoon of April 11<sup>th</sup>. In this flock were 3 colour-banded birds and 2 of those had PTT's on! I wrote to Lee saying these birds would migrate that night and when she checked the data; sure enough, they had left at 6PM that evening. And just to add to the mix it was the BBO "public Migration Watch' day and 72 people watched a flock of 130 bar-tails head out at 6PM! I am afraid they were fairly distant so no images of antennas trailing behind migrating birds! But I am pretty certain our 2 birds were in that flock.

What a great mix of field observation and modern technology.

This was the first time we have had 2 PTT birds apparently in the same flock. And a question I am always asked is 'when they leave together do they stay together'. 'I don't know' I was the honest answer.

These 2 didn't stay together the whole way one stopped in the Philippines after a flight of 3,430km while the other went all the way to China in a 4,800km leg. The Philippine site only has narrow

mudflats but 3 suitable looking river mouths for a godwit to feed at and only a low population of people nearby.

2 other godwits are just 80km south of this site on the west coast of the island of Mindoro. This also looks a very suitable stop-over location. It has mudflats, river mouths, mangroves and aquaculture ponds which potentially offer good roosting opportunities.

One of the birds at this site I find particularly interesting. Initially it landed on an island 125km due west of its current location. That site is a rocky coast with no mudflats and completely unsuitable. So the bird went somewhere with mudflats! A very sensible thing to do. This says to me, that the bird 'knew where it was' it didn't go north or south or west as there is nowhere suitable (close by) for it to feed at so it went due east to where it 'knew' there was suitable habitat. Another PTT bird is on the same mudflat but it got there in a direct flight.

Interesting stuff.

Note: All distances and flight times in this update are preliminary. Further statistical analysis will be done at a later stage.

So all information in this document is approximate.

The GFN PTT Team



Big blokes with small godwits. These birds are now in China and the Philippines.