

It is hardly news that shorebirds connect things. Sites, countries, continents, people.

One such example would be Red Knot 3YLRY.



May 9 2022 Nanpu, China

This image was taken by Xiao Liu and Mr Liu, yesterday. Mr and Xiao Liu have been the 'drivers' for GFN since 2015. And in 2015 when we parked on the seawall before 4AM Xiao Liu would go to sleep! Understandably. Mr Liu would clean the van or collect reeds for Mrs Liu to wrap delicious sticky rice in. Now? Well, now they are the main field workers! As the various GFN team members worked with them and spent many hours a day for over 50 days per spring season we became firm friends, despite the language barrier. And with our encouragement they became more and more interested in the birds and knowledgeable of the sites. We brought them a bird book, they brought binoculars and then a telescope and started to hone their skills.

With the advent of COVID-19 and that the international GFN team members couldn't get out of our countries or, in to China the Liu's stepped up and joined in scanning with Katherine Leung, Rainy Cai, Tong Mu and various students in 2020 and 2021. The lack of a language barrier furthering their knowledge on the birds.

And so to 2022 when no GFN regulars at all can get to Nanpu it is over to the Liu's. They send me (via Katherine) records every day when they have not been in lockdown themselves. That, to me, is wonderful.



And so, to more connections. When I look up 3YLRY in my db I can add the east Coast of Australia and New Zealand to the mix.



April 19 2011 Tapora, Auckland, New Zealand

3YLRY was banded in Roebuck Bay August 1 2010 as an age 2. Meaning it was hatched in the summer of 2009, almost certainly 10,000 km north on the New Siberian Islands. And then, as many young Red Knots do, it arrived in Roebuck Bay around October 2009 spent about a year here and then set off for New Zealand. The first resighting of the bird after capture and marking was April 17 2011. My hunch it would have got there in December 2010 (based on other such movements). I would suggest it didn't migrate north that year or, if it did, it didn't go all the way to the breeding grounds (see later dates for its time at Stockton Sandspit) as it was record again in Auckland on August 20 2011.

It certainly migrated in 2012 as it was seen by the GFN team on May 9 2012 (note yesterday's date!)

Then it was recorded back in Roebuck Bay. A rare route for adult Red Knot but, maybe as a bird on its second veer southward journey it was still working out the best strategy? It was seen twice 17 days part on 2 different (but close) beaches by 3 experienced observers so I am confident it was really there.

Then recorded again at Nanpu in 2013 and back in Broome. On one of the same beaches.

Then Nanpu 2014. Then it seems to have decided passing through Roebuck Bay was more trouble than it's worth and has staged in Newcastle, New South Wales 100 km north of Sydney. It was seen 4 times over 9 days that year.



Stockton Sandspit, Newcastle, NSW October 20 2014

Late-April 2015 back in Nanpu. October 15 back in Newcastle.



Stockton Sandspit, Newcastle, NSW October 16 2015

2016, 17 and 18 back in Nanpu. October 21 2018 back in Newcastle.



Stockton Sandspit, Newcastle, NSW October 21 2018

2019 and 2020 back in Nanpu. November 14 2020 seen again in Auckland.

2021 Nanpu....

2022 Nanpu and back to the beginning of this story.



I assume the bird spends the majority of its non-breeding season at an unwatched mudflat somewhere in New Zealand and that it goes through Newcastle every southward migration but, is not always recorded.

The bird is 13 years old and has been recorded 49 times (and counting) over 10 consecutive years.

Thanks to the many observers involved and to the photographers Ian Southey, Chris Herbert, Ray Burton and Xiao Liu.

Chris Hassell

10 05 2022