



THE
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(INCORPORATED)

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Godwit Discussion

While checking the Alaskan Bar-tailed Godwits for flags and bands last October, two Aramoana godwit spotters overheard a discussion amongst these godwits about life in general and their holiday in New Zealand. Although our godwit language is not that good, we could pick the gist of the conversation. About 300 birds after having a good feed on the edge of the harbour, slowly started to walk back to the mud flats. From what we understood, the conversation went something like that:

“Hi Bau, how was the trip?”

Bau: Hi Annabelle. Not bad, apart from the usual strong head wind, especially vicious this time, approaching New Zealand. But all the same, I’m happy to be here. Nice place.

Annabelle: Tell me, do you know what those people are doing here, watching us? I They use binoculars and telescopes and stay motionless for hours. Is it just our pretty faces?

Bill: I’m Bill and I couldn’t help hearing. I have been told there are also people at Warrington and Miranda using sheets of paper and making sketches of us. A great uncle of mine used to tell me about it years ago back home where one guy always used very large sheets of paper. I understand it has to do with these bands on our legs. Look at Yvonne over there.

Yvonne: Are you admiring my legs? This nice jewellery was fitted by some people up North. I have no idea why they did that.

Harry: I’m not so sure about that jewellery. I don’t have it and am not that fussed about it. I have an acquaintance in New Zealand who is still very annoyed about it. They bird-handle you while still on the nest and put this stuff on your legs. I am not



sure how accurate that rumour is, since this acquaintance is the rather hoiti-toiti type, you know, always immaculately dressed in pure white.

Chuck: I heard about that too, Harry. But I understand they are having their revenge, by walking in very muddy water on purpose, just to annoy these people. They can't see the jewellery most of the time and when they can, it's faded beyond recognition. Serves them right. I don't like the colours anyway.

VOC voice of Hangi in the distance: (one of us speaks fluent VOC): You don't know what you're talking about. Have a look at mine. Rather pretty, I'd say!

Annabelle: I don't agree at all. Have a look at that red one. Clashes horribly with your legs.

Bill: Chuck, have you ever come across that distant cousin of yours, Igor, again?

Chuck: Yes, very briefly, last week. Went back to Broome. His wife Lappy wants to go there every year, because it is much warmer. But give me New Zealand, especially the Southern end. Reminds me of home, cooler and nice. And you have here a better choice, food-wise. I might go to Awarua tomorrow. I like those oyster-flavoured bits and pieces.

Bau: By the way, Chuck, where is Jimmy? He usually is the first one here. Has he arrived yet?

Chuck: He was, of course, again the first one to arrive at the Kaipara Harbour. He was in that endurance race, but went with a few of his cronies a bit further. They carried on to Australia, Victoria I understand.

Yvonne: Interested in their orange jewellery, I suppose.

Johnny (Jr): Excuse me, but have you all ever wanted to stay the summer in New Zealand, anyone of you?

Timousy: Never, Young'un. It's nice here for an extended holiday, but we are going home soon. Aren't we Yvonne?

Yvonne: Too right. I am already missing the tundra at the Yukon.

Bill (shouting): Watch out, that annoying harrier is there again. Let's get away.

Johnny (Jr): Why? What harm will he do to us? We outnumber him and are far better flyers.

Chuck: Keep quiet and start flying. All of us, let's go to Blueskin Bay and see how Val is doing!

The regular godwit spotters at Aramoana watched the 300 godwits disappearing over the spit, still chattering away, flying strongly against the wind.

The two regular spotters (one of whom might be Peter Schweigman, ed.)

Ornithological Snippets

On the morning of 21 April 2007, Abby Smith and some colleagues saw 5 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** circling and calling above the town of Owaka. The local DOC person says that there are about 17 living there now, up from 8 or so a decade ago. Might we have a breeding population in Owaka?



Programme 2007

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street at 8 p.m. Please be on time: the door will be locked after 8 p.m.

Wednesday, 23 May	Indoor Meeting Topic: A Visit to Svalbard	Speaker: Graeme Loh
Wednesday, 27 June	Indoor Meeting Topic: Fernbirds	Speaker: Bruce McKinlay
Wednesday, 25 July	Indoor Meeting Topic: Orokonui Bird Counts	Speaker: Derek Onley
Wednesday, 22 August	Indoor Meeting Topic: Urban birds in Dunedin: species and possible impacts of domestic cats	Speaker: Yolanda van Heezik

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