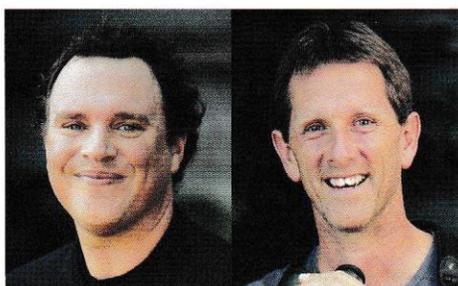


Hardy shorebird "raises the bar" with its non-stop trans-Pacific migration



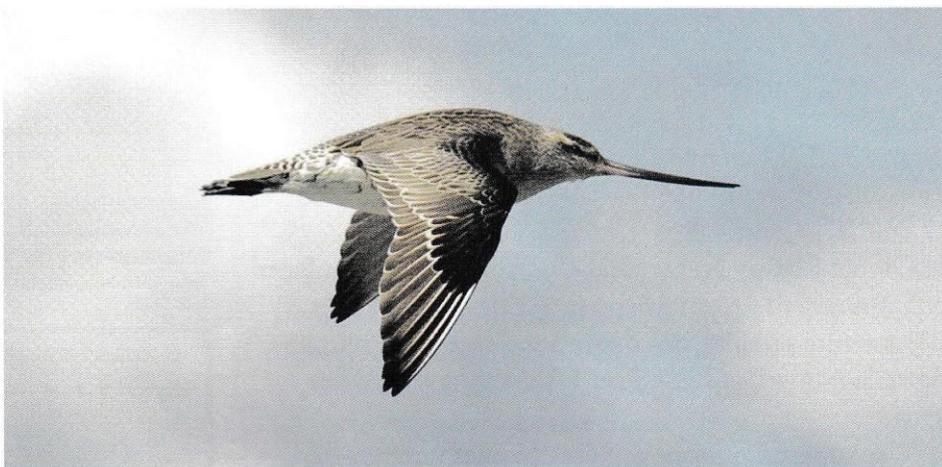
Bar-tailed Godwits/Barges rousses Photo: North & South Photography

BY JODY ALLAIR AND PETE DAVIDSON



There are few birds anywhere in the world that can match the migration prowess of the Bar-tailed Godwit. Each fall, these elegant shorebirds fly non-stop across the Pacific Ocean from Alaska to New Zealand - a trip that covers more than 11,000 km and takes 8 to 11 days! Their return flight in spring follows a different route: an 8000-km flight from New Zealand to the Yellow Sea shores in China and the Korean Peninsula, where they stop to refuel for a month or so before the final 6000-7000-km leg to breeding grounds on the Alaskan tundra.

In late 2019, a collaboration between Birds New Zealand, Massey University, the Global Flyway Network, and Birds Canada initiated an ambitious project using satellite transmitters to track the migration of Bar-tailed Godwits from New Zealand to Alaska and



Bar-tailed Godwit/Barge rousse Photo: North & South Photography

back again.

This super-migration has been documented once before. The main focus of our current project is to locate the crucial intertidal flats these birds use to fuel their long-haul migrations. The loss of intertidal flats in the Yellow Sea is believed to be the main threat to this Bar-tailed Godwit population.

Another goal is to increase awareness of one of the most incredible animal migrations in the world. The Global Flyway Network interactive map brings the voyage to life by showing the birds' movements in real time!

By the time of writing in late October 2020, 5 Bar-tailed Godwits had returned to their winter home at Pukorokoro

Miranda, New Zealand; 2 were in New Caledonia; and 2 were in Australia. The bird that flew the farthest, a male, covered an estimated 12,200 km over 11 days without stopping. This incredible journey broke the previous world record for non-stop avian flight (set by another Bar-tailed Godwit in 2007), making the front pages of global mainstream media. Truly awe-inspiring!

You can learn more at: globalflywaynetwork.org/flyway/east-asian-australasian-flyway

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