

Sandspit SOS Inc Newsletter
Spring 2015



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Godwits

New Zealand has reached a memorandum of understanding with China to protect the habitat of a well-known migratory bird - the godwit.

The bar-tailed godwit (kuaka) was recently declared Bird of the Year by Forest and Bird NZ. It has the longest migratory route of any bird in the world flying a round trip between Alaska, New Zealand and China each year, covering about 30,000km.

During its China stop, the godwit inhabits wetlands covering about 320,000 hectares in about six areas across three provinces. These areas will be set aside from development and protected in perpetuity.

Conservation Minister Maggie Barry says they are very special birds and hailed the arrangement as wonderful news. A miracle of nature, it is a mystery as to how a bird that weighs just 100g can fatten itself sufficiently to make such an arduous journey.

Until 2014 godwits regularly roosted at Sandspit on the only high tide roost in the estuary. Since the marina development commenced, no roosting godwits have been seen.



SSOSI welcomes any photographic evidence of godwits roosting at high tide at Sandspit on the shellbank or in the lagoons in the 2015/16 season, from their arrival in mid-September to departure late March. Juveniles, sick and elderly birds remain in the area over winter.

Mangroves

Mangroves are often a source of considerable discussion and many fictions concerning them are circulated. What we do know is that they tend to thrive in estuaries where sediment from farming and estuary development is deposited (for more information see: www.whangateauharbour.org/2015/03/09/1276/) Mangrove seedlings should be removed where they germinate on shellfish beds and high tide roosts used by wading birds.



The rules for removal of seedling mangroves are very clear. The correct Council officer needs to be informed of intentions at least three days before any intended seedling removal. Juvenile seedlings, less than 60cm high with no branches or reproductive components, may be removed by hand pulling only - no tools should be used. Seedlings may not be removed from under larger trees. All pulled seedlings must be discarded away from the marine environment. Larger mangroves may only be removed after a resource consent has been approved by Council.

Shellfish monitoring

Two samplings will take place this year. Kelston Boys High School will sample Rainbows End shellfish beds on November 25th (save day 26th) and Kaurilands Primary School will sample Sandspit shellfish beds on December 8th, weather permitting. Every year results of this scientific survey are sent to Auckland Council and Ministry of Primary Industries. The annual sampling is Auckland Council supported and supervised by Dr Roger Grace. Cockles are a major source of wading bird and fish diets.



Sediment is their greatest enemy.

If you wish to help with this fascinating and valuable data collection please contact Frances Hall 027 2331 449.

Deans Island

Despite a clear Council sign requesting that no dogs go towards the island in order to protect the endangered banded rail, some owners are still allowing their dogs access to Dean's Island. Please respect the sign and help the community protect the banded rail.

Kumarahou

September this year saw a spectacular

blooming along Sandspit Road of the local endemic and threatened kumarahou (*Pomaderris hamiltonii*).



SSOSI is investigating the propagation and planting of this valued small tree in other areas of Sandspit. Kumarahou's greatest enemies are fertiliser and zealous road side spraying and so-called 'tidying'.

Shining cuckoo

At the same time as the kumarahou flowers the shining cuckoo (pipiwharau) arrives back from the Solomon Islands. This fascinating bird lays its eggs in the nests of the grey warbler (riroriro). Like most migrants the shining cuckoo tends to be site faithful and protecting the grey warbler from predators also protects the shining cuckoo. Google the calls of the grey warbler and shining cuckoo's very distinctive song.

Restoration of Sandspit Reserves

Brenda Steele, Rodney Local Board Chairperson, visited Sandspit on 23 October to view the work undertaken by SSOSI members in restoring the Brick Bay Drive and Sandspit foreshore reserves. The projects are supported by grants from the Auckland Council Environmental Initiatives Fund. Following a briefing on what has been achieved, and what is planned for the future (as outlined in the Wildlands Ecological Management Plan for the Sandspit Reserves), Brenda walked around the area to see the completed work first hand. She commented positively on the improvements already undertaken and thanked SSOSI for its ecological contribution to Sandspit.