

## GFN meets New Zealand's Minister of Conservation

Theunis Piersma (Global Flyway Network) visits New Zealand's Minister of Conservation, the Honourable Maggie Barry (Wellington, 8 December 2015)

At her invitation, through the Pukorokoro-Miranda Shorebird Centre, on 8 December 2015, Theunis Piersma, representing Global Flyway Network, visited Minister of Conservation Ms Maggie Barry in the 'Beehive', New Zealand's characteristic Parliament Building in Wellington. The meeting of an hour was also attended by Mr Scott Simpson, Member of Parliament for Coromandel and Chair of the Local Government and Environment Select Committee, and Mr Brent Beaven, Private Secretary to Hon. Maggie Barry.

On the table were the considerable conservation problems faced by the two marathon shorebird migrants for which New Zealand is the main nonbreeding destination, the Red Knots *Calidris canutus* and the Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica baueri*, and the ways that synergies between interests and activities of the New Zealand government and the international consortium of shorebird workers represented by Global Flyway Network (with Piersma in the role of 'scientific cheer-leader', and the Pukorokoro-Miranda Shorebird Centre and Massey University Palmerston North as the local partners) could help address the issues.

Ms Barry emphasized her commitments to both the diplomatic route taken to help the Chinese government achieve protection status for key staging areas in the Yellow Sea, with a focus on the Luannan coast in Hebei province, China, and the conservation of key intertidal areas in New Zealand. Theunis Piersma shared his enthusiasm about this commitment of the New Zealand government at national and local level (with Mr Simpson presence marking this for the Firth of Thames area), and confirmed the great importance of the Luannan coast for especially the red knots from New Zealand. He also shared experiences from the recent visit of the King of the Netherlands to Chongmin Dongtan near Shanghai and his plea for coastal wetland conservation (indicating the opportunity for New Zealand and the Netherlands sharing their efforts with China) and elaborated on the recent work by Global Flyway Network (now entirely funded from Dutch and Chinese sources) on the ongoing satellite tracking of bar-tailed godwits and the great opportunities of this technique for relevant remote observation and outreach to the general public.

The question of Minister Barry as to what the New Zealand government could do to help elicited an animated discussion on the needs and opportunities for renewed tracking using colour-marking and satellite-based techniques (of both bar-tailed godwits and red knots), the possibilities to do this work in an international context (with the Pukorokoro-Miranda Shorebird Centre and Massey University as local partners) with shared governmental and private financial support. Piersma offered help on all fronts and we also discussed the possibility of implementing a real-time 'follow-the-godwits' website modelled on the very successful King of the Meadows website developed in The Netherlands for the following of sat-tagged black-tailed godwits.

We ended the meeting with a review of the cultural cartography of red knots migration by Janet Essley and Lee Tibbitts (produced for and by Global Flyway Network), which peaked the interest of Ms Barry who is also Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage.



The 'Beehive'



At the end of the meeting, Mr Scott Simpson at left, Mrs Maggie Barry in the middle



Looking at Janet Esley's and Lee Tibbitts' cultural cartography of red knot migrations, produced for and by Global Flyway Network