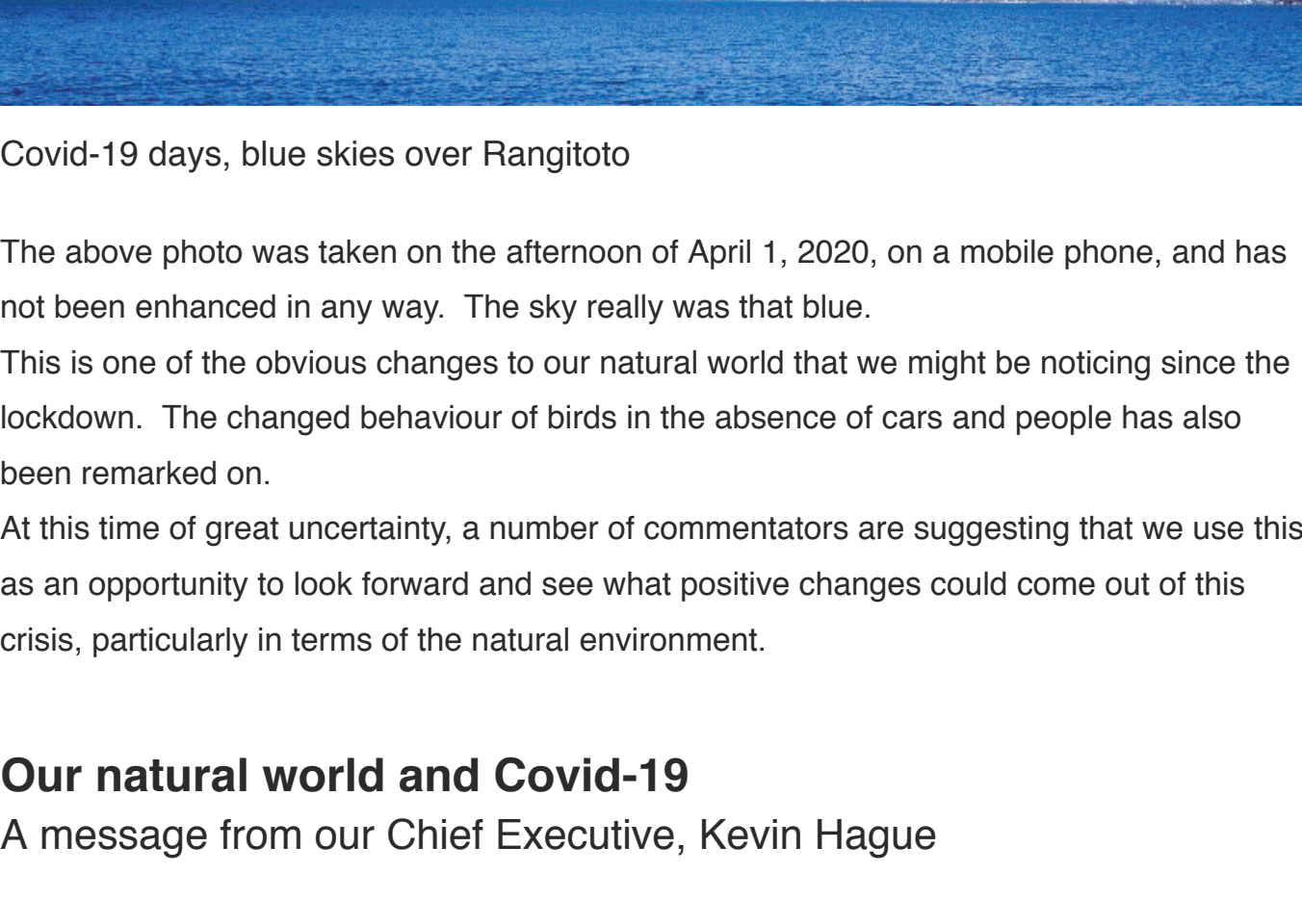


North Shore Branch News April 2020



Covid-19 days, blue skies over Rangitoto

The above photo was taken on the afternoon of April 1, 2020, on a mobile phone, and has not been enhanced in any way. The sky really was that blue.

This is one of the obvious changes to our natural world that we might be noticing since the lockdown. The changed behaviour of birds in the absence of cars and people has also been remarked on.

At this time of great uncertainty, a number of commentators are suggesting that we use this as an opportunity to look forward and see what positive changes could come out of this crisis, particularly in terms of the natural environment.

Our natural world and Covid-19

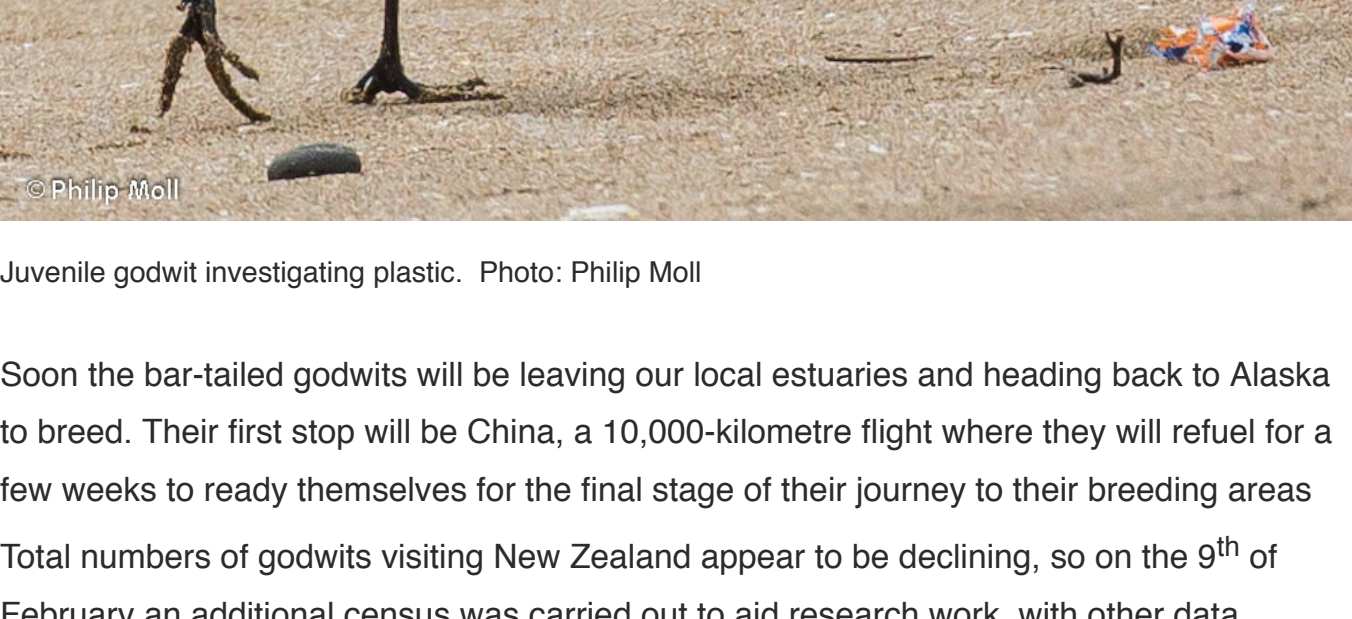
A message from our Chief Executive, Kevin Hague

If history teaches us anything about how major change can occur, it is that times of great crisis can spark the innovation required.

This Covid-19 pandemic is a dreadful thing, bringing suffering, illness and death to so many people around the world. But if there is a silver lining to be found in such destruction, it is that the inertia of the business-as-usual extractive economy has also been destroyed.

The economy will need to be rebuilt, but it can't be the same as it was.

We have the opportunity to build an economy that serves nature, rather than the other way around. Forest & Bird will be working with all our partners in the community, in government and in business, to build that sort of economy. Forest & Bird has been around for almost a hundred years. In all that time we have never faced a crisis like Covid-19. Yet now, just at the point where nature has reached breaking point, we have the opportunity to act to fundamentally change things for the better. We need your help to take it.



Juvenile godwit investigating plastic. Photo: Philip Moll

Soon the bar-tailed godwits will be leaving our local estuaries and heading back to Alaska to breed. Their first stop will be China, a 10,000-kilometre flight where they will refuel for a few weeks to ready themselves for the final stage of their journey to their breeding areas

Total numbers of godwits visiting New Zealand appear to be declining, so on the 9th of February an additional census was carried out to aid research work, with other data collected in Alaska, China and Australia. Our numbers appear steady in Shoal and Ngataranga Bays so far. I was pleased to record a good number of juvenile godwits in Shoal Bay amongst the adults during our regular summer count pre -Christmas, after the initial arrival of the godwits during September.

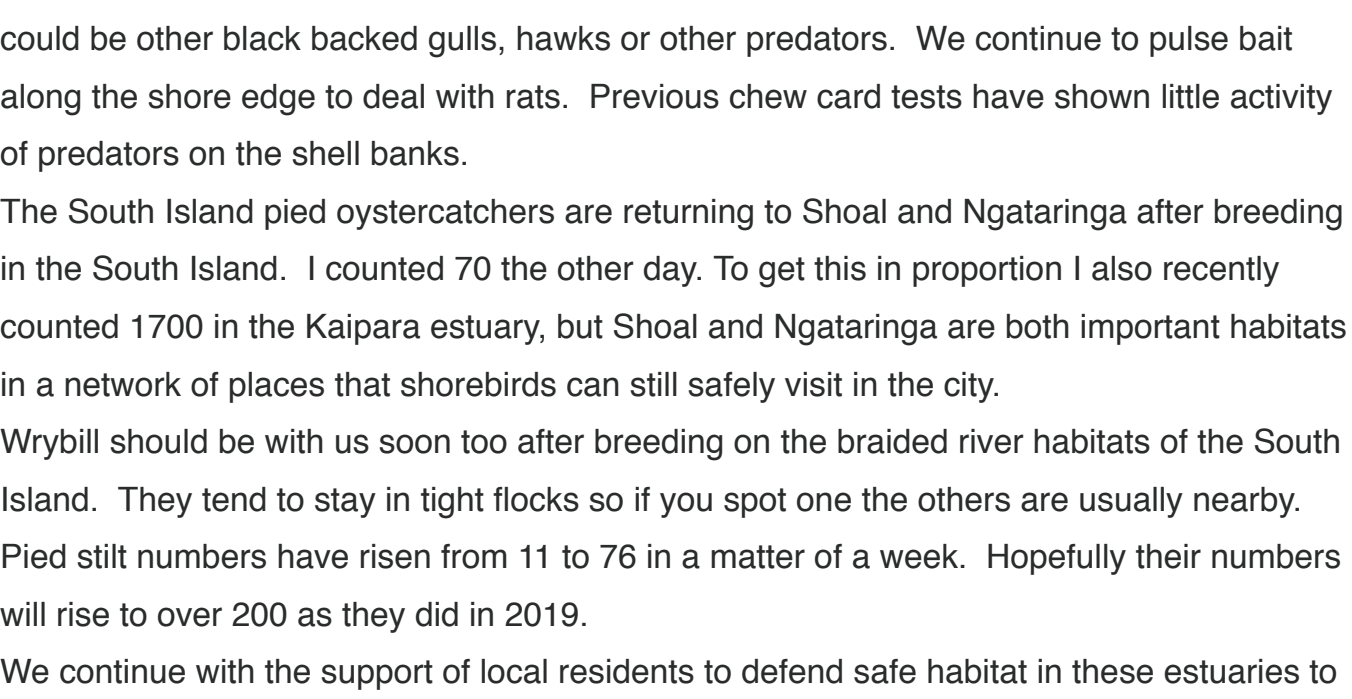
It appears that good numbers of juveniles were recorded all around New Zealand indicating a successful previous breeding season. Tracking of some of these juveniles, a project involving the Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird team, will gain more information about the places they visit in New Zealand before they too migrate after about three years. We will be looking out for these banded and flagged birds locally.



NZ dotterel Photo: Philip Moll

During 2019 New Zealand dotterel were finally forced out of their long-time roost site on the grassed area between Akoranga Drive and Warehouse Way. We are unsure where these birds have re-located to. They have been recorded on that site for many years but now development has completely taken over this safe roost area overlooking the estuary and their feeding and nesting areas on the motorway edge of Shoal Bay. This may affect nesting success on the shell banks next season. Banded dotterel also shared this roost site at high tides.

The good news from Ngataranga Bay is that two pairs of New Zealand dotterel are successfully rearing three chicks between them. These should be fully fledged soon. This follows a previously successful season with two chicks fledged at that time. A variable oystercatcher pair also have two chicks that are so far doing well and are fiercely protected from hawks and black-backed gulls by the parent birds.



South Island pied oystercatcher roosting site Ngataranga Bay Photo: Philip Moll

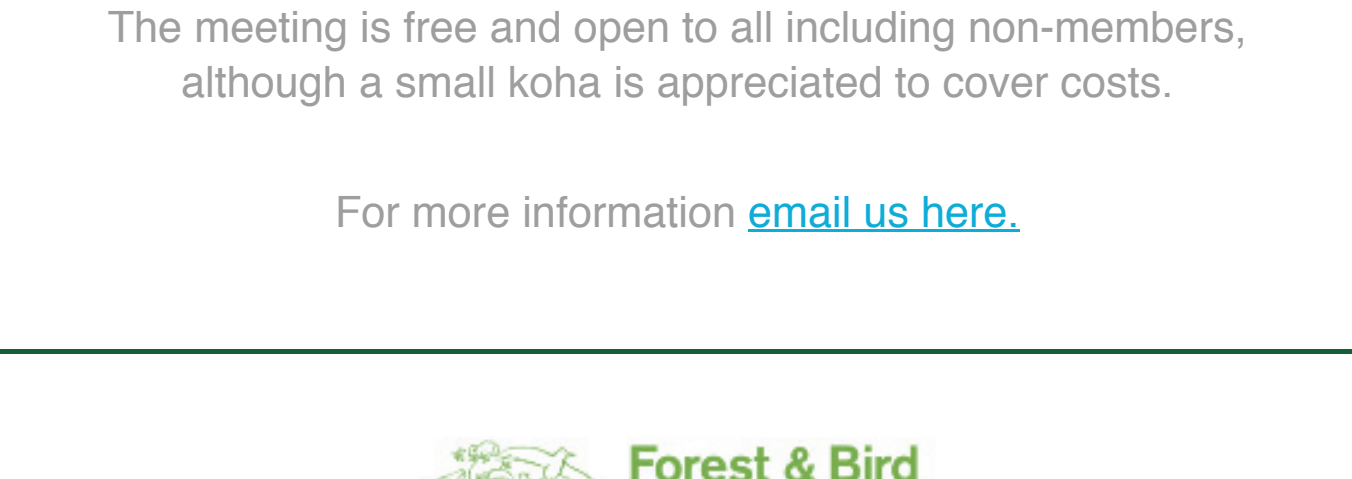
The variable oystercatcher pair I have been observing since 2012 on the shell banks of Shoal Bay have successfully reared another chick. Nearby was a dotterel nest with three eggs but those eggs disappeared. It wasn't helpful that a pair of black backed gulls also set up a nest nearby, but they were not successful at breeding either.

The timings of high tides this season were kind to the birds. Watching nests with eggs disappear under high tides is not a pleasant experience. So, the culprits removing eggs could be other black backed gulls, hawks or other predators. We continue to pulse bait along the shore edge to deal with rats. Previous chew card tests have shown little activity of predators on the shell banks.

The South Island pied oystercatchers are returning to Shoal and Ngataranga after breeding in the South Island. I counted 70 the other day. To get this in proportion I also recently counted 1700 in the Kaipara estuary, but Shoal and Ngataranga are both important habitats in a network of places that shorebirds can still safely visit in the city.

Wrybill should be with us soon too after breeding on the braided river habitats of the South Island. They tend to stay in tight flocks so if you spot one the others are usually nearby. Pied stilts numbers have risen from 11 to 76 in a matter of a week. Hopefully their numbers will rise to over 200 as they did in 2019.

We continue with the support of local residents to defend safe habitat in these estuaries to keep the birds coming back. Availability of food is the important draw card, along with not too much disturbance from increasing recreational interests. More about that another time. Philip Moll, March 2020



AGM Notice

The Annual General Meeting of Forest & Bird North Shore is scheduled for Monday 4 May at 7:30pm. At this point, we are not sure whether this meeting will go ahead or what form it will take. We will let you know.

Our monthly public meetings are cancelled until further notice due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We will let you know when these meetings can be resumed.

Public meetings

When: First Monday of the month at 7:30 pm

Where: Takapuna Senior Citizens' Hall, The Strand — through the courtyard at the rear of the Takapuna Library

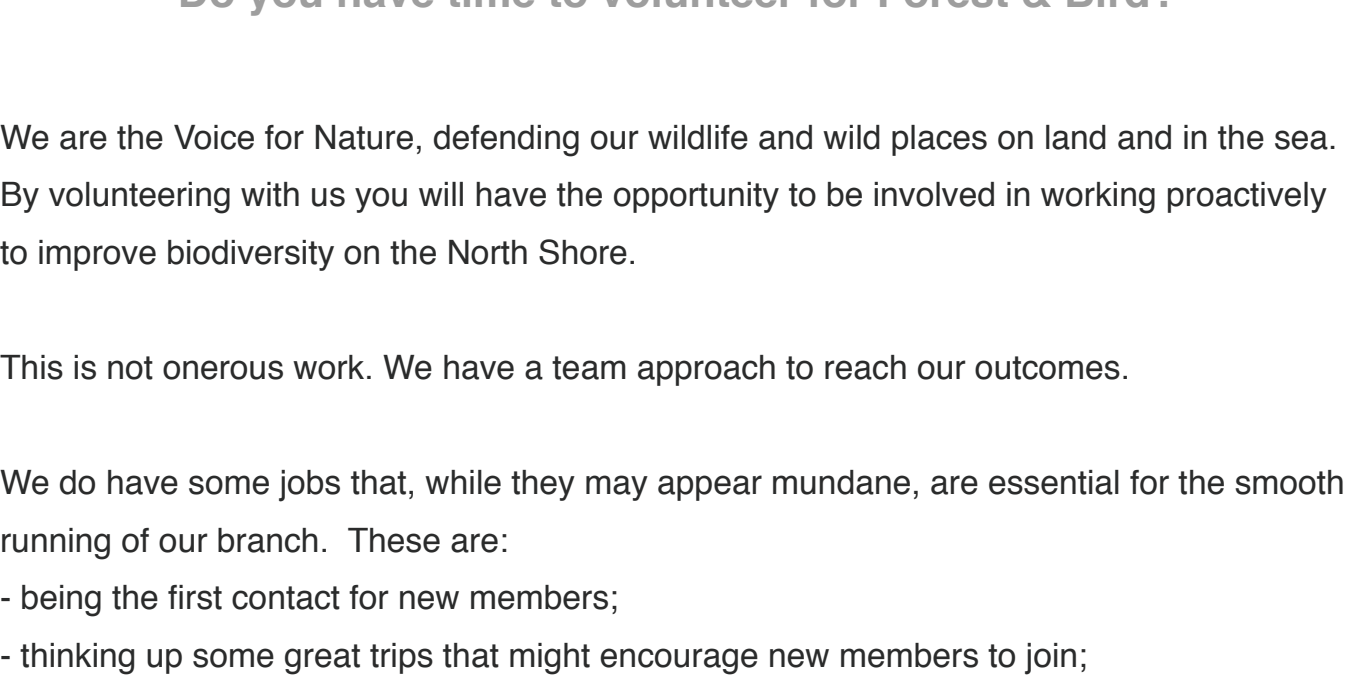
The meeting is free and open to all including non-members, although a small koha is appreciated to cover costs.

For more information [email us here.](#)



March/April 2020 Update

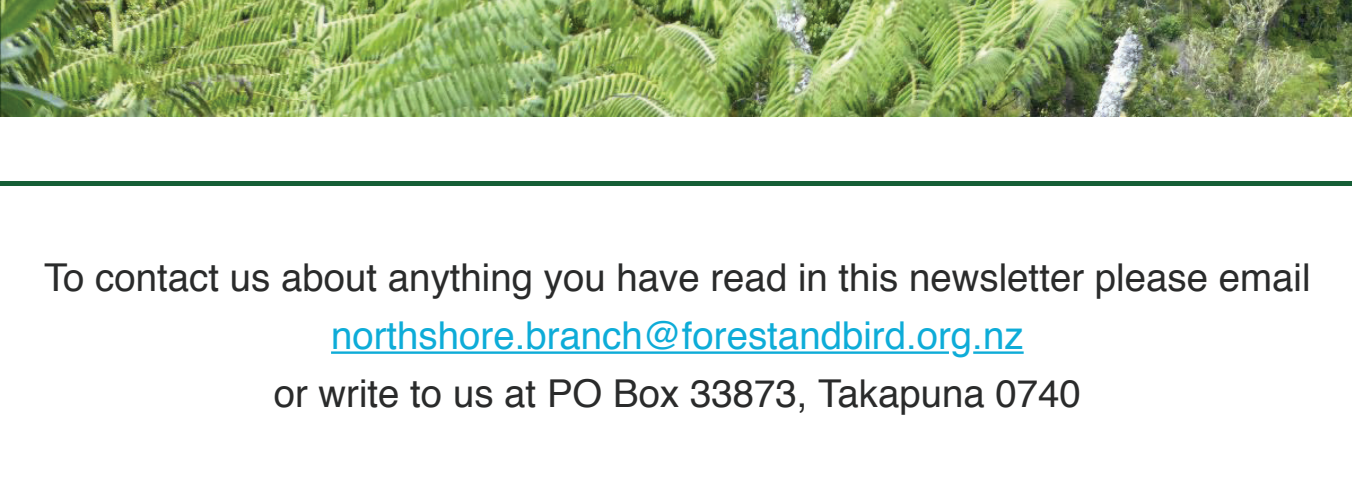
It's been a busy start to the year for the Forest & Bird Youth Auckland team, recruiting at university club days and meeting to discuss our plans for the 2020 planting season at Hosking reserve. We also hosted successful Seabird Sandcastles and NPSIB presentation events. These promoted submissions towards the government's National Plan of Action for Seabirds and National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) respectively. This update is going to focus on our NPSIB event which saw a crowd of over 30 gather at the Sustainable Coastlines Flagship and listen to a presentation by NPSIB expert Sally Gepp. With the NPSIB setting objectives for the management and restoration of indigenous biodiversity and with public submissions having closed on March 14th we hope our event and Sally's talk encouraged submissions that will benefit NZ's unique flora and fauna.



After Sally's presentation we ran an activity, assigning people different community roles, ranging from farmers and DOC workers to oil prospectors and government employees. Everyone was asked to collaborate and determine the fate of a hypothetical piece of land with both natural resources and vulnerable biodiversity — it's always inspiring to see what people can think of when asked to see the world from a different point of view.



What's on at Tuff Crater



All Tuff Crater working bees, weekly and monthly, are cancelled until further notice. We will let you know when these can be resumed.

Monthly working bee

We run a working bee at 9:00 am on the second Saturday of each month except January. To receive regular updates for Tuff Crater Saturday events please join our [mailing list](#).

Weekly working bee Thursday 9:30am

Anne Denny and Paul Pyper run a half-day working bee every Thursday from 9:30am. Meet new people and enjoy working in the great outdoors! Sign up to the [mailing list](#) to learn more.

For more news and information about Tuff Crater:

Join our Pest Free Tuff Crater Facebook Page [@PestFreeTuffCrater](#)

Do you have time to volunteer for Forest & Bird?

We are the Voice for Nature, defending our wildlife and wild places on land and in the sea. By volunteering with us you will have the opportunity to be involved in working proactively to improve biodiversity on the North Shore.

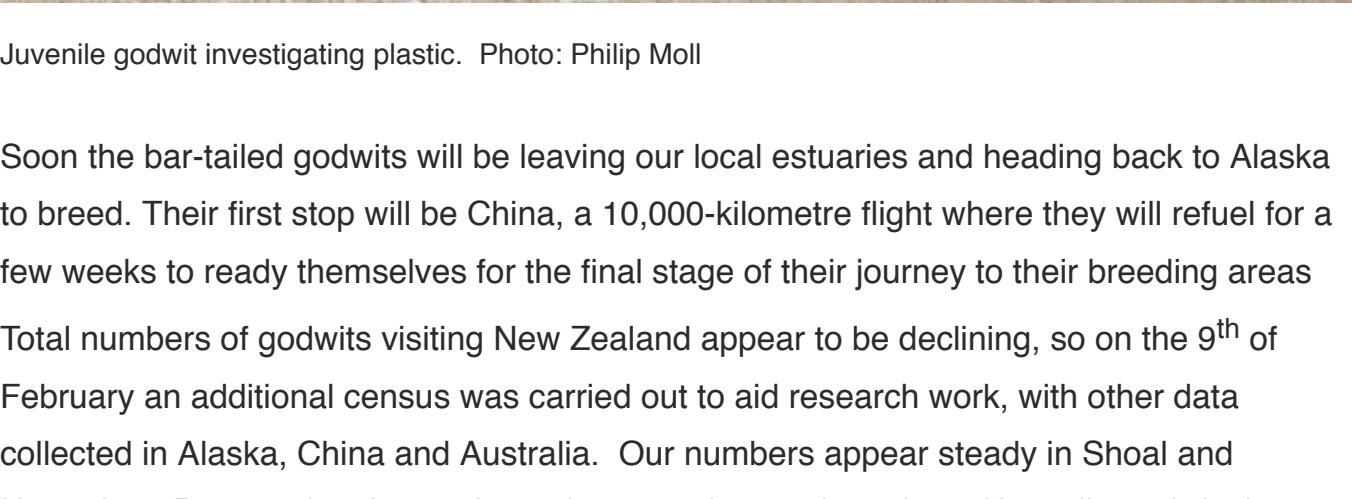
This is not onerous work. We have a team approach to reach our outcomes.

We do have some jobs that, while they may appear mundane, are essential for the smooth running of our branch. These are:

- being the first contact for new members;
- thinking up some great trips that might encourage new members to join;
- being a marine advocate;
- being tech-savvy.

These are unpaid positions, as at a Branch level none of us get paid to be the voice for nature. We are able to offer training regarding the above positions, and by attending our monthly committee and public meetings you will quickly upskill on the issues that we are working on at any one time.

So, if you have a passion for the cause and some time to spare, please [email us](#).



Finally, a poem of this time, by Ngāti Hine/Ngāpuhi writer Nadine Anne Hura, courtesy of The Spinoff.

[Rest now, e Papatūānuku](#)



To contact us about anything you have read in this newsletter please email northshore.branch@forestandbird.org.nz or write to us at PO Box 33873, Takapuna 0740

Forest & Bird is New Zealand's independent voice for nature. Our mission is: 'To defend New Zealand's wildlife and wild places - on land and in our oceans'