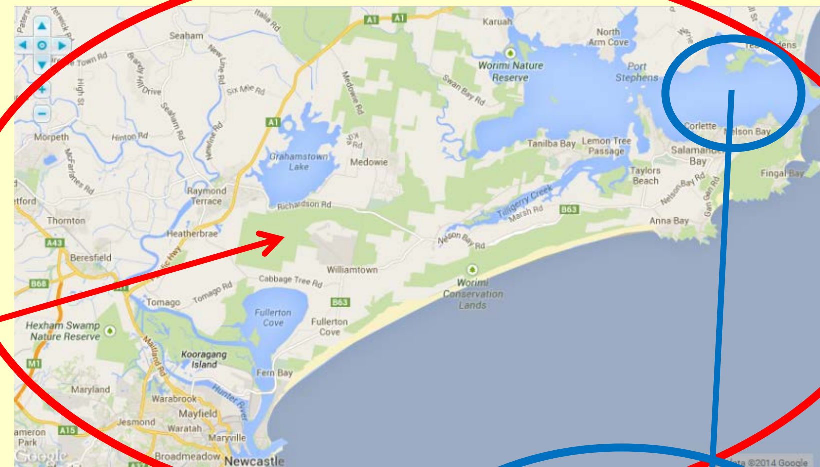

Australia-Japan Connection
Kiashi-shigi (Grey-tailed Tattler)
Alan Stuart
Newcastle, Australia
May 2014

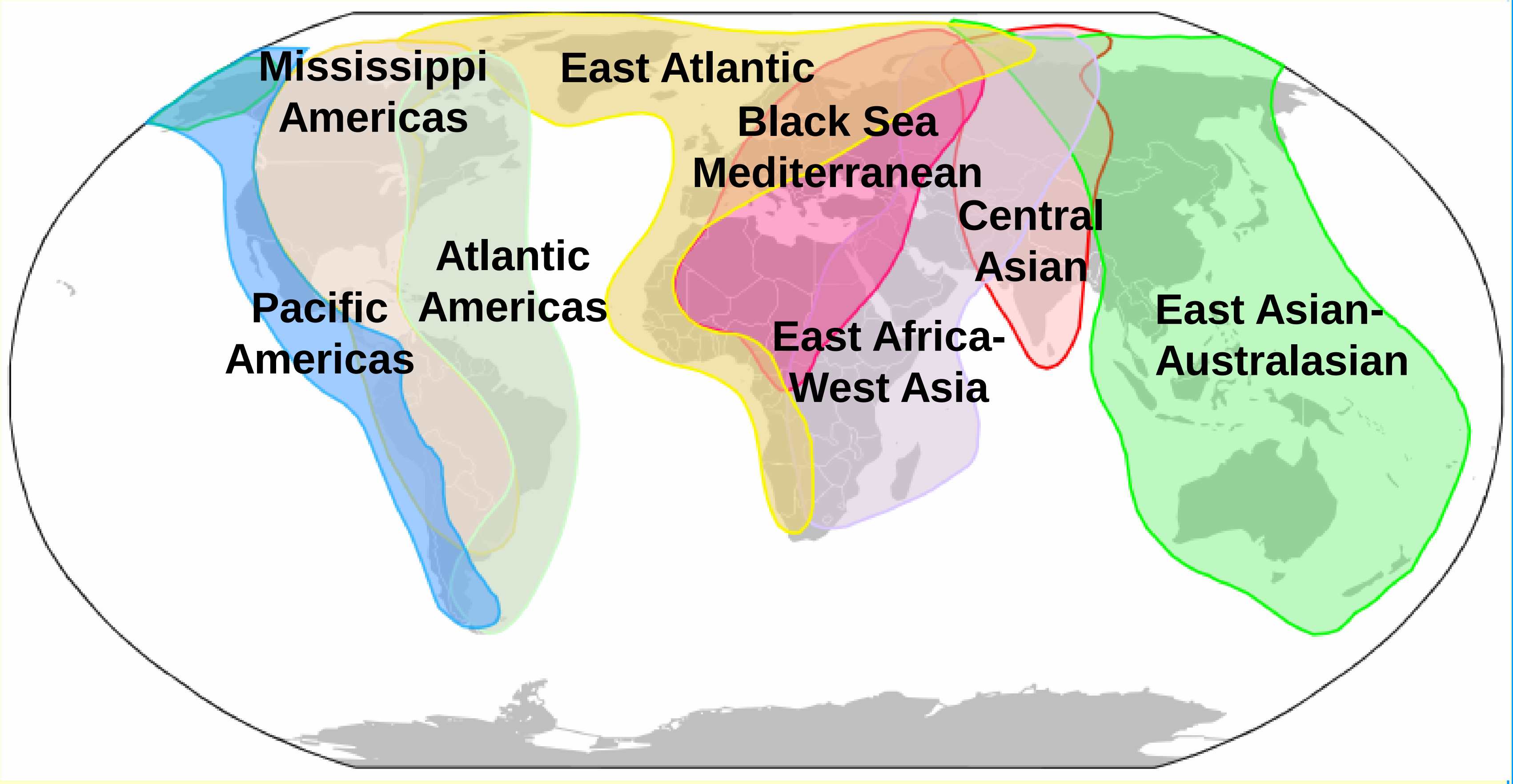
# Shorebirds in Newcastle/Port Stephens

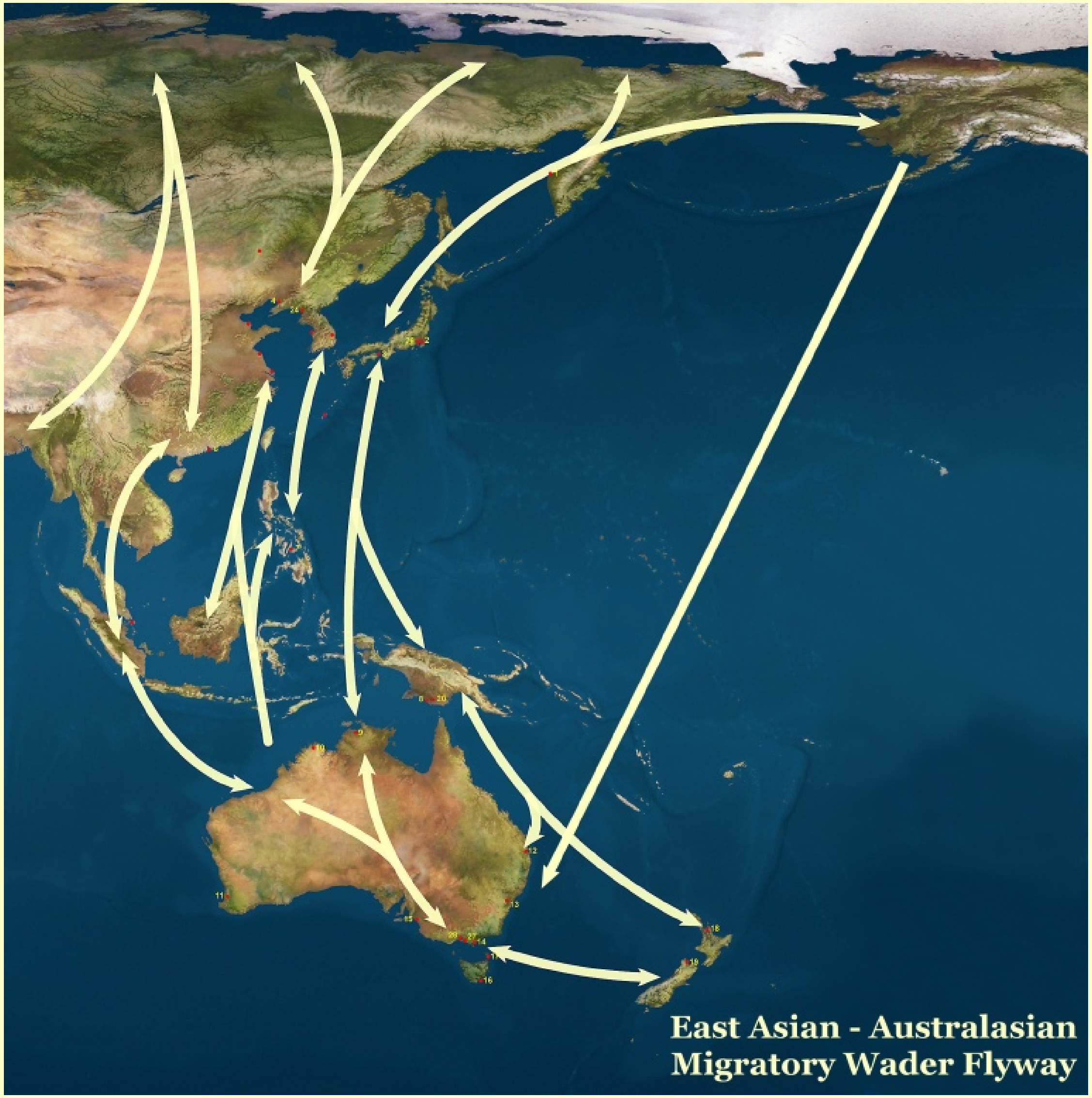

- 48 shorebird species
  - Including 36 species which migrate
- We have the most shorebirds within ~1,000 km distance and there are many opportunities to study them

# Shorebird Migration

# World flyways for migratory shorebirds



# East Asian - Australasian Flyway

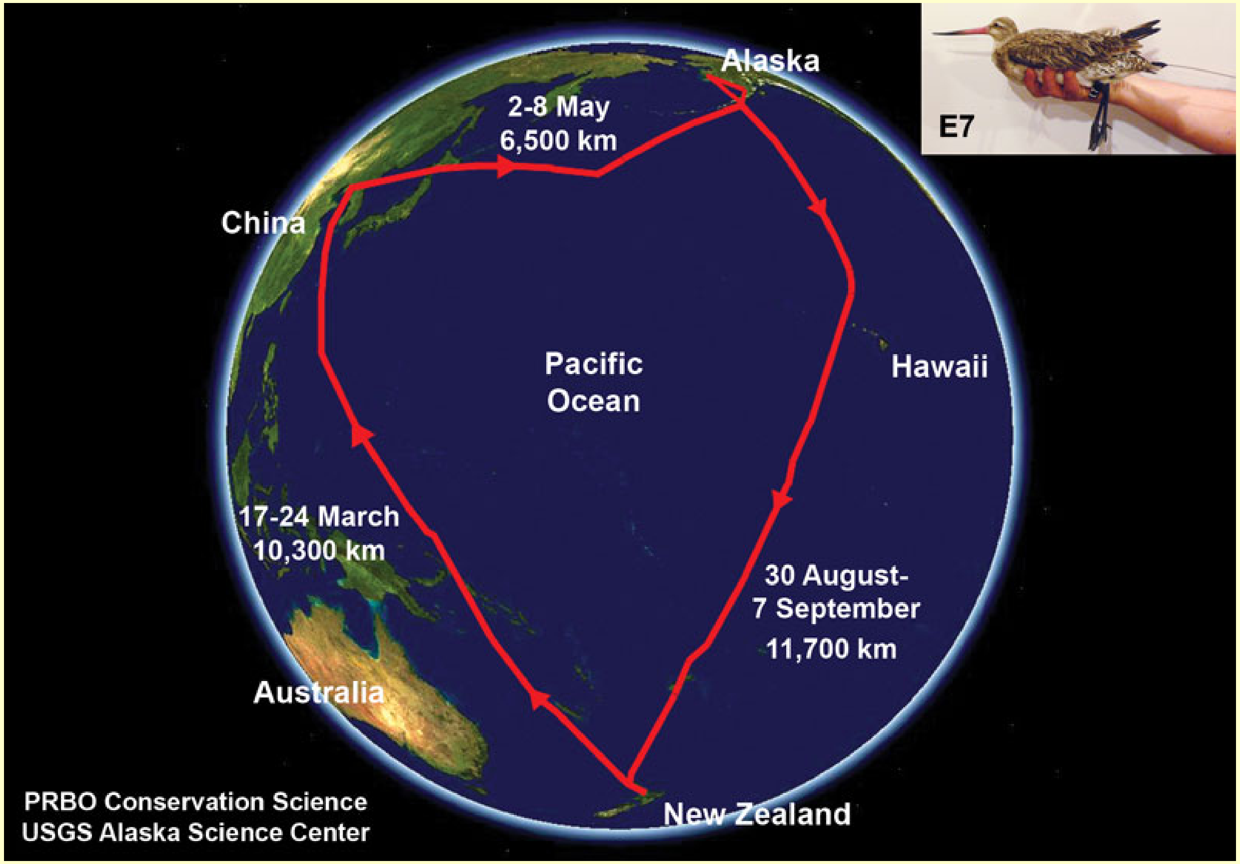



*Birds breed in Siberia, North China and Alaska in June and July*

*Stopover at staging sites mostly in the Yellow Sea*

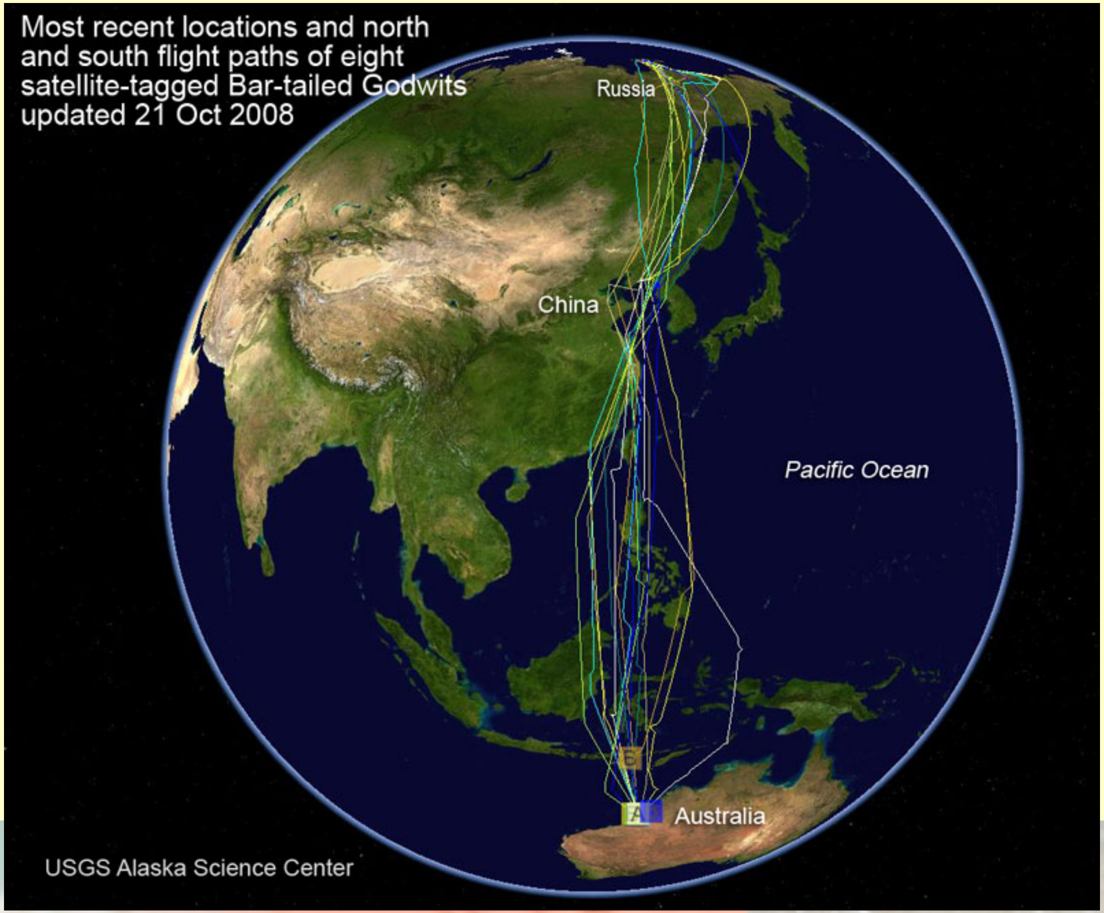
*Migrate south to Australia & New Zealand*

# Bar-tailed Godwit satellite tracking



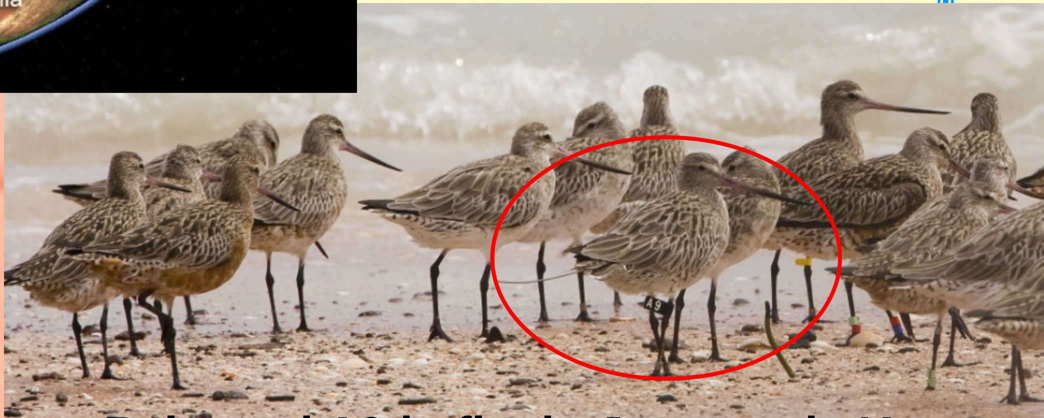

- In 2007 NZ scientists fitted 16 Bar-tailed Godwits with satellite transmitters
- Birds flew non-stop to Yellow Sea, then non-stop to Alaska
- One godwit E7 flew non-stop 11,600 kilometres from Alaska to NZ in 9 days
- Total round-trip 30,000km! (for a 250-350g bird!)

# Bar-tailed Godwit tracking 2



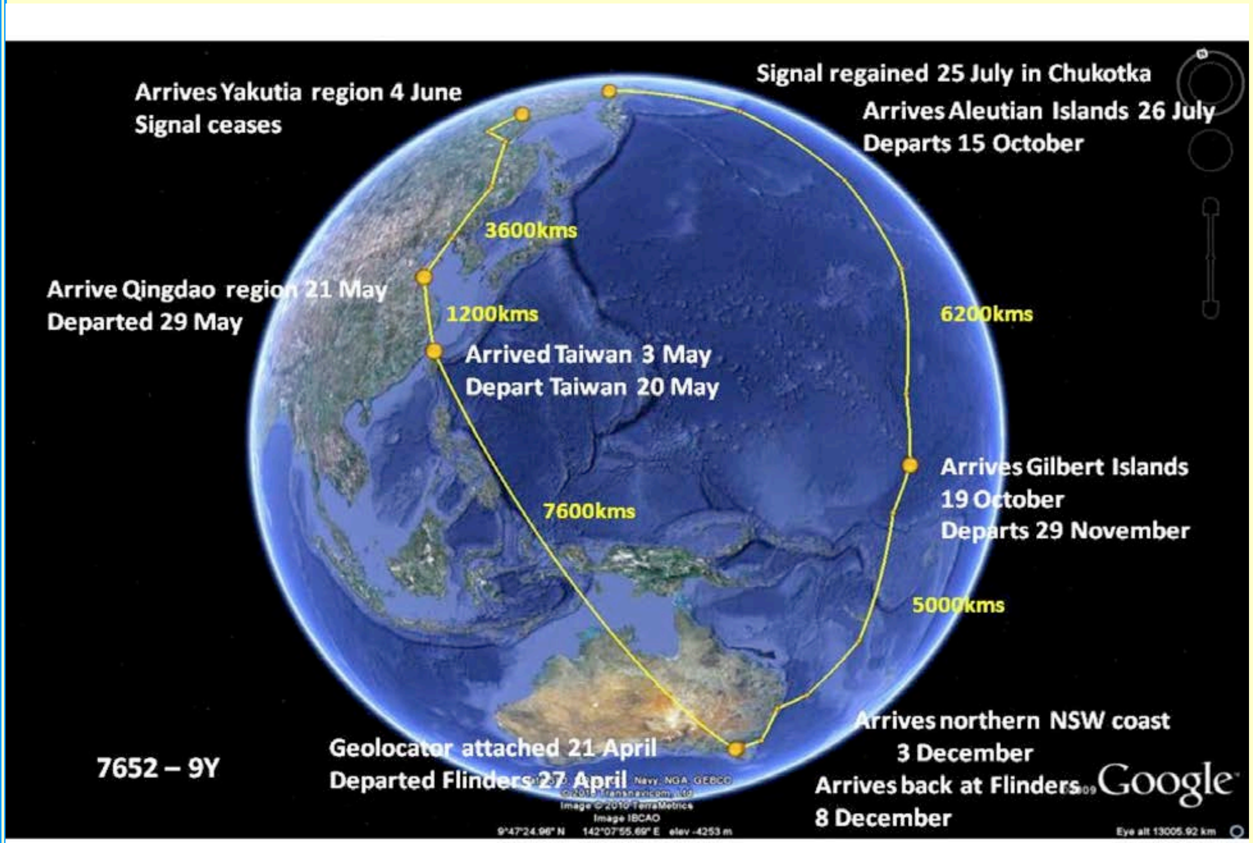

- 15 godwits fitted with satellite transmitters at Broome in Feb 2008
- Birds flew nonstop to Yellow Sea, spent 6 weeks there, then departed for Alaska and Siberia
- Returned to Broome later that year

A7 in the hand: Adrian Boyle



Released A9 in flock: Jan van de Kam

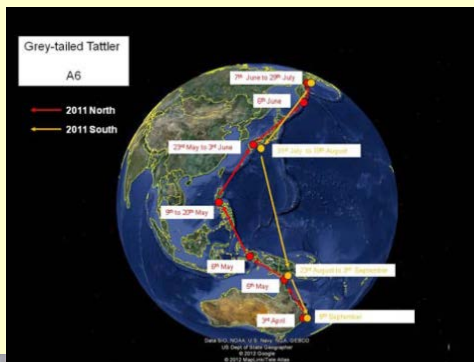
# Ruddy Turnstone satellite tracking

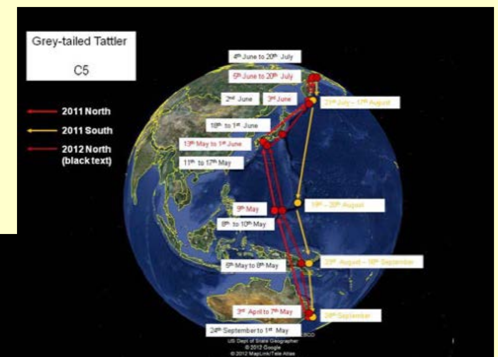


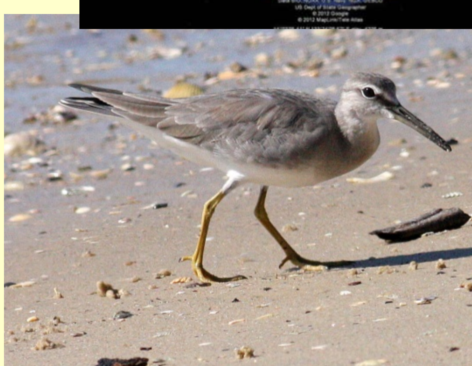

- In 2009, satellite transmitters were fitted to some Ruddy Turnstones in southern Australia
- Birds flew non-stop to Taiwan, then on to their breeding grounds in 2 further stages
- Return via Gilbert Islands
- This bird weighs just 100-130g!

# Grey-tailed Tattlers

- Unlike most of the other shorebirds which visit Australia, Grey-tailed Tattlers migrate through Japan rather than the Yellow Sea
- They visit Japan in spring (mainly in May) on their way to their breeding grounds …. then stop again in summer (mainly in August) on their way back
- Non stop, long distance flights by a bird weighing just 125g!
- Tattlers live for >20 years, so they fly >500,000km in their lifetime!

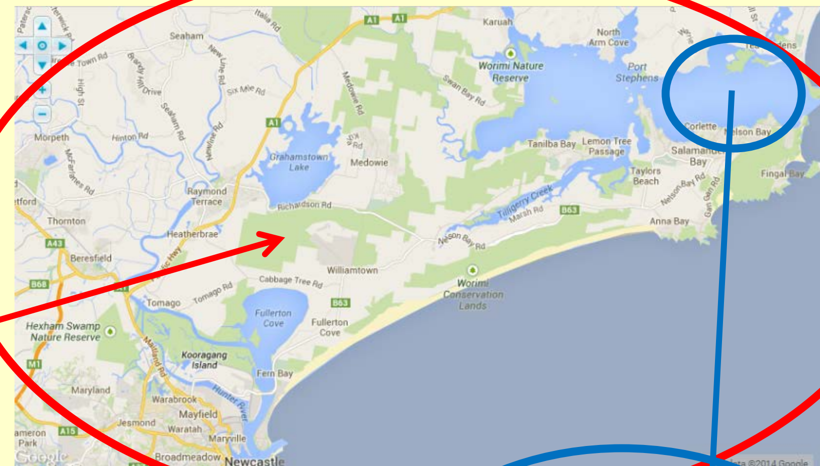



# Shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary

# Shorebirds in Newcastle/Port Stephens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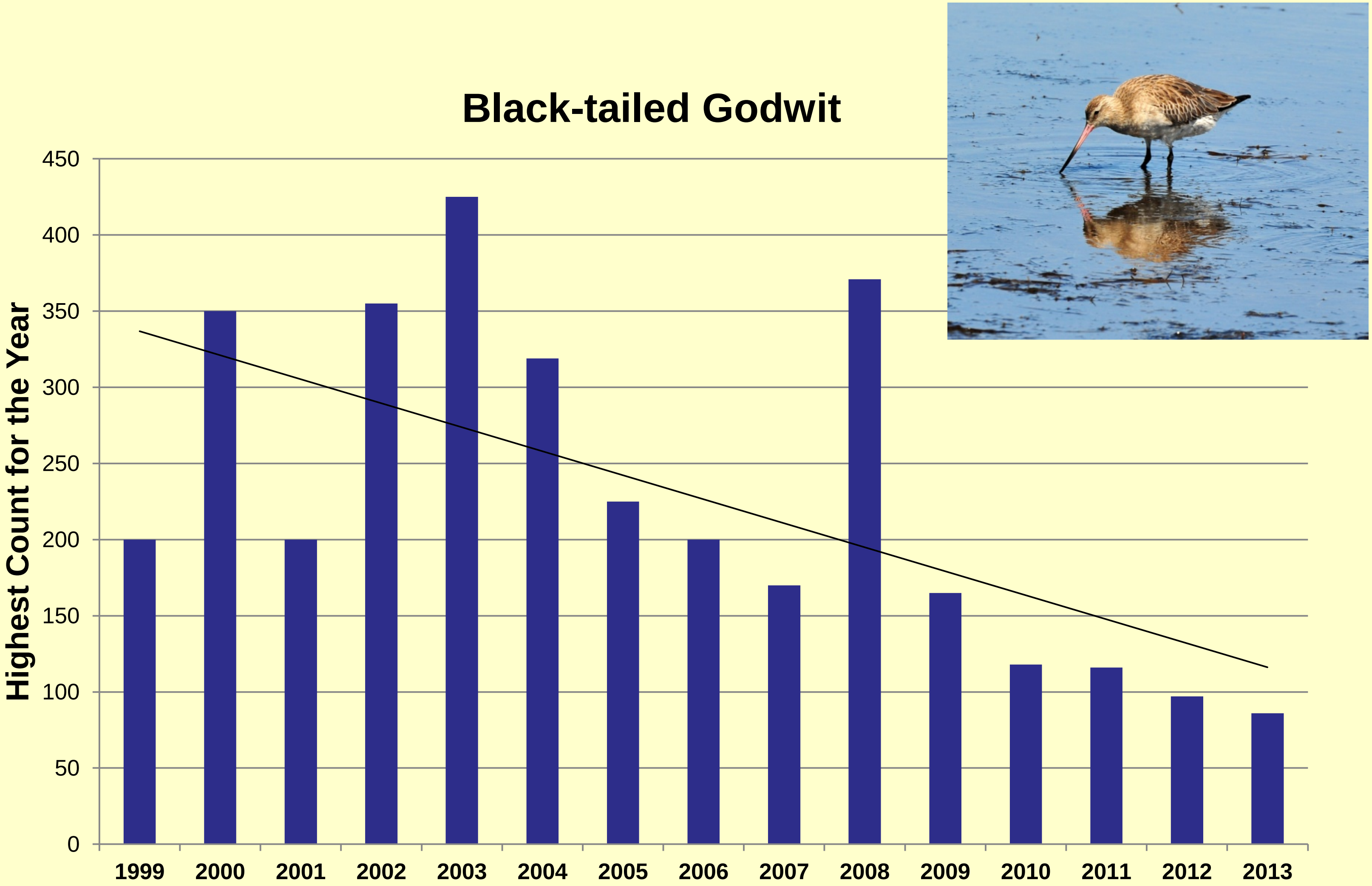
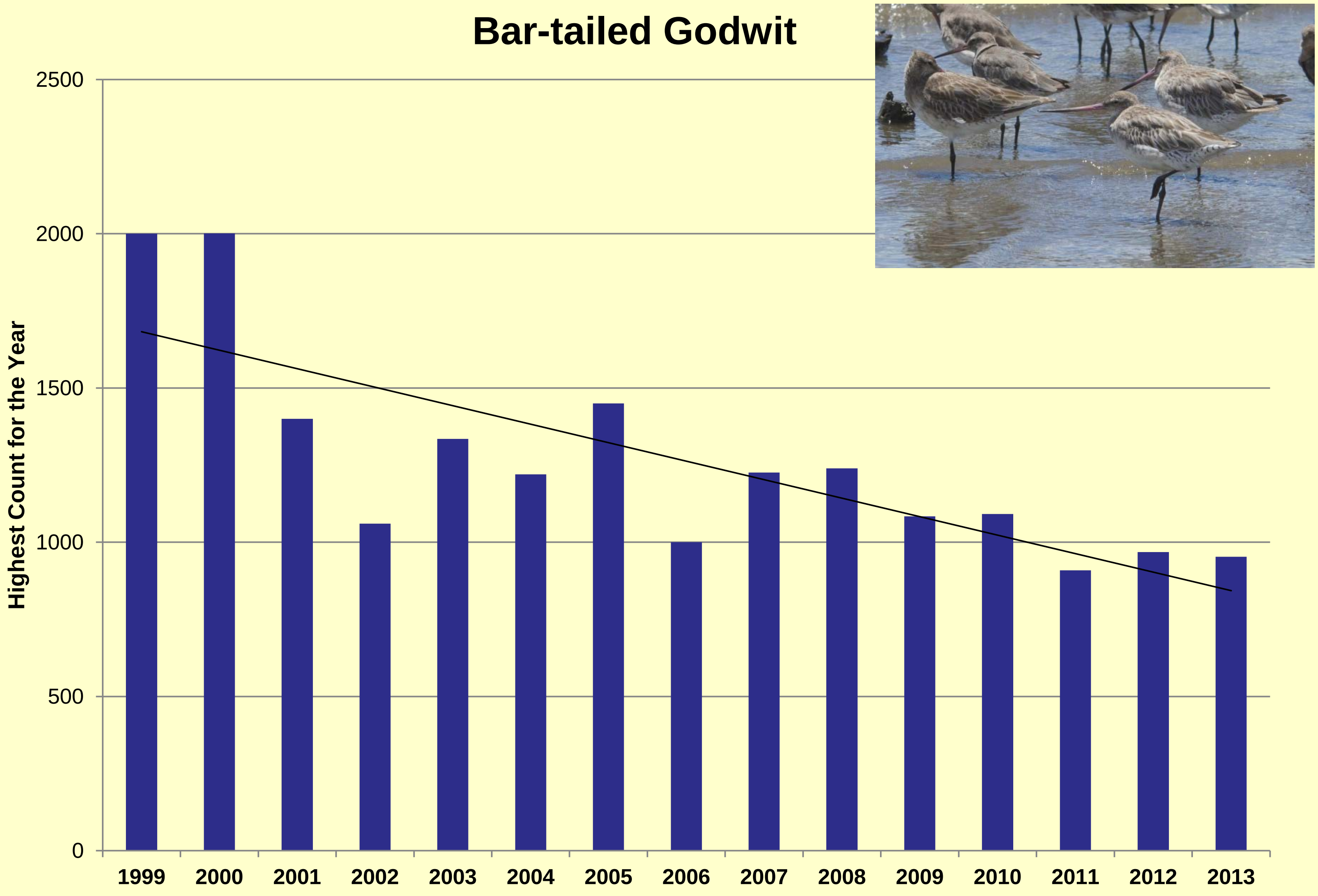
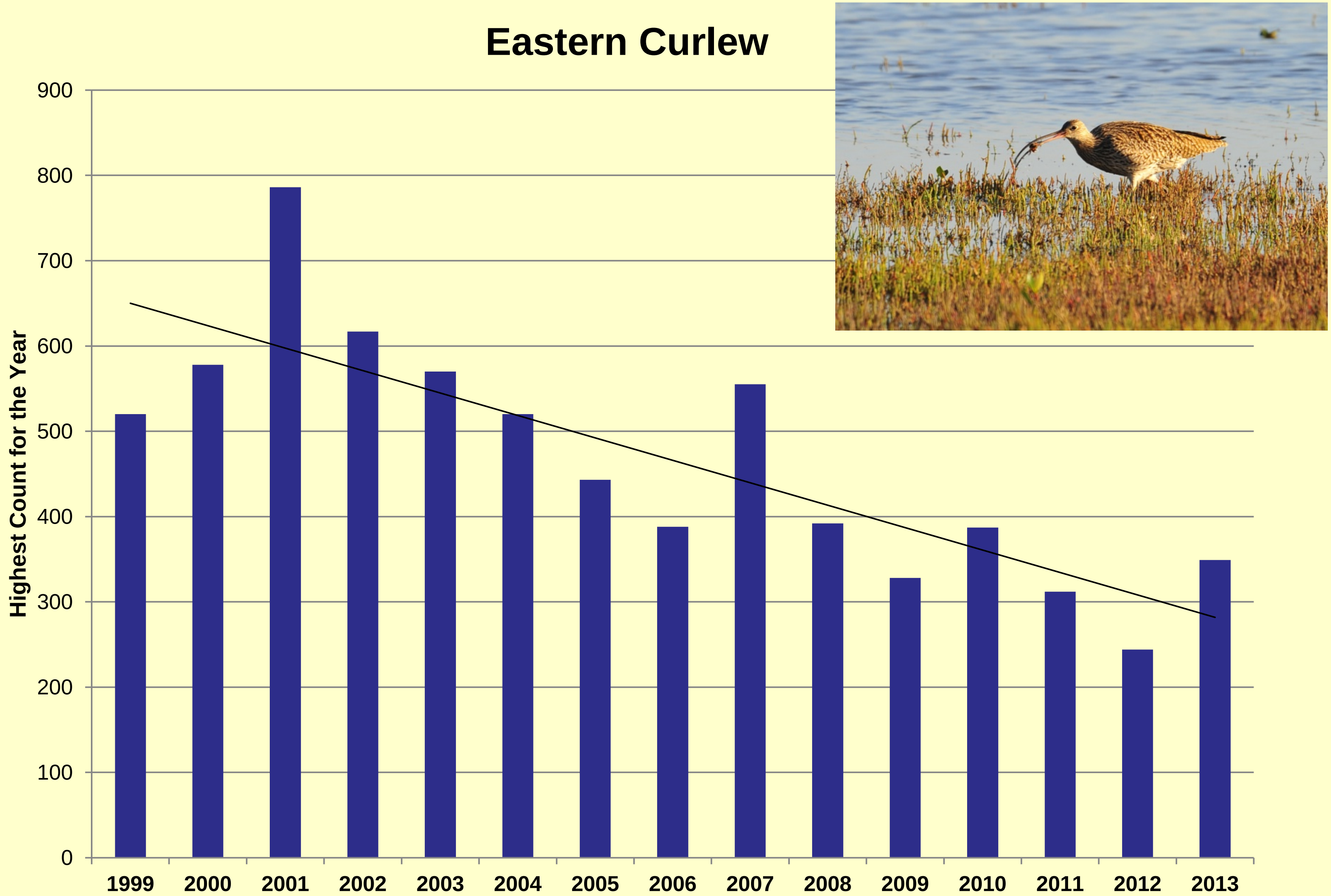
# Shorebirds in the Hunter Estuary

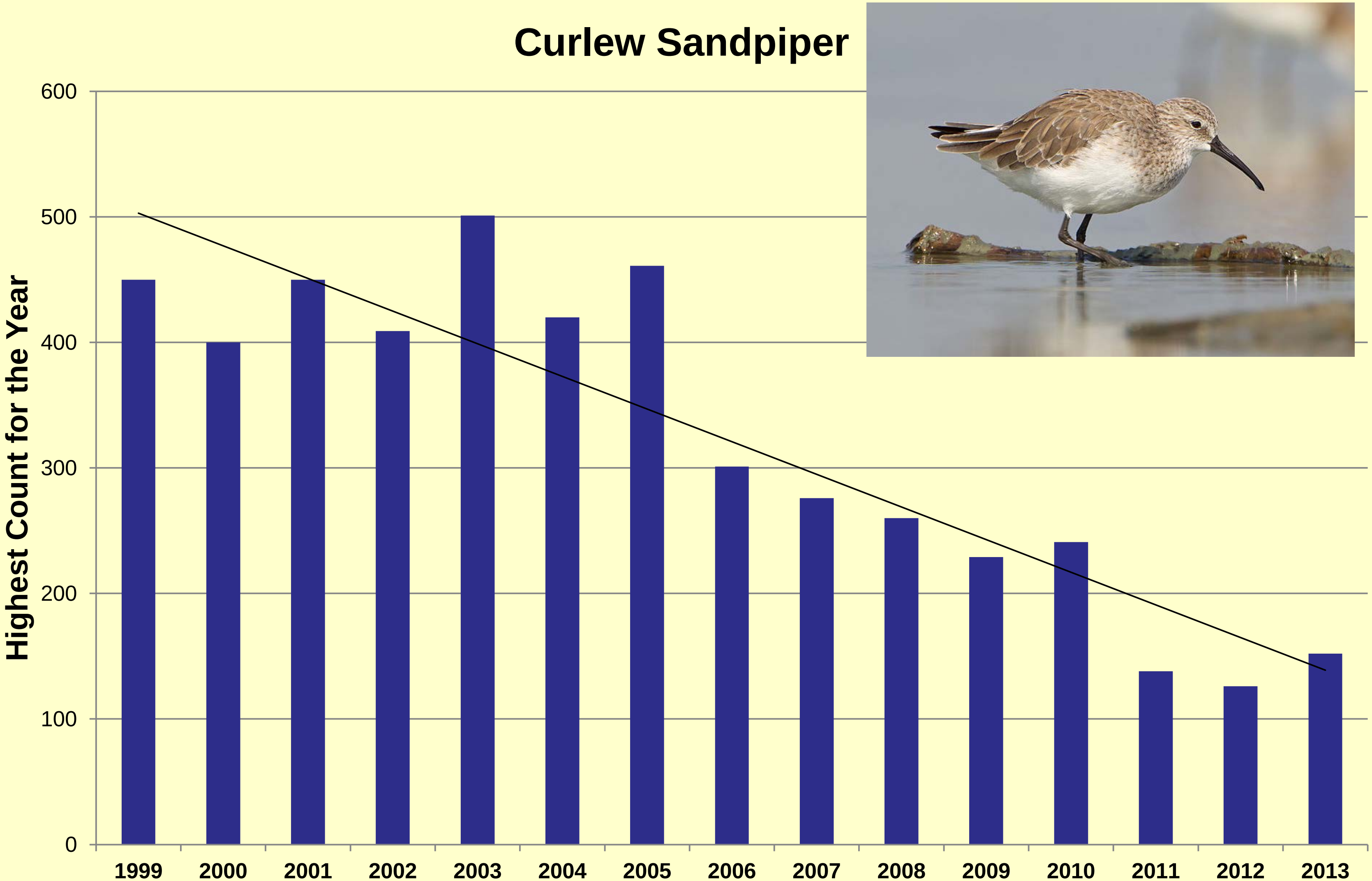
- By far the most important estuary in south-east Australia
  - 5,000-10,000 shorebirds each summer
  - Includes 2,000-5,000+ migratory shorebirds
  - >5,000 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers in 2013/14
- Monthly monitoring at all roost sites since 1999
  - 6 teams go out on one day each month
  - Simultaneous records of all waterbirds → accurate numbers
  - We can compare with 1969-73, 1982-84 and 1993-95 results
- Many migratory shorebirds are in serious decline

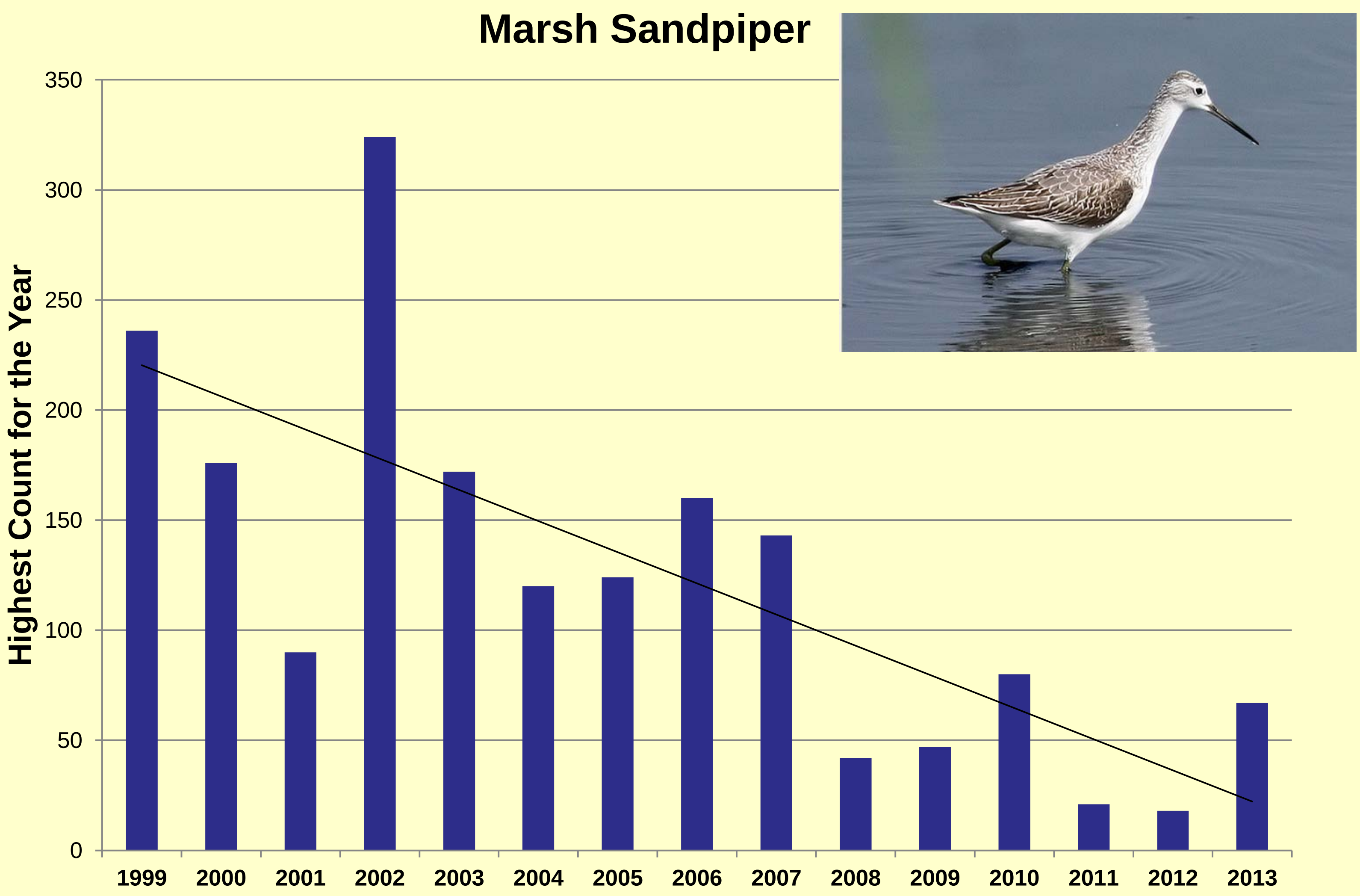

Black-tailed Godwit
Highest Count for the Year
450
400
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013


Bar-tailed Godwit
Highest Count for the Year
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013

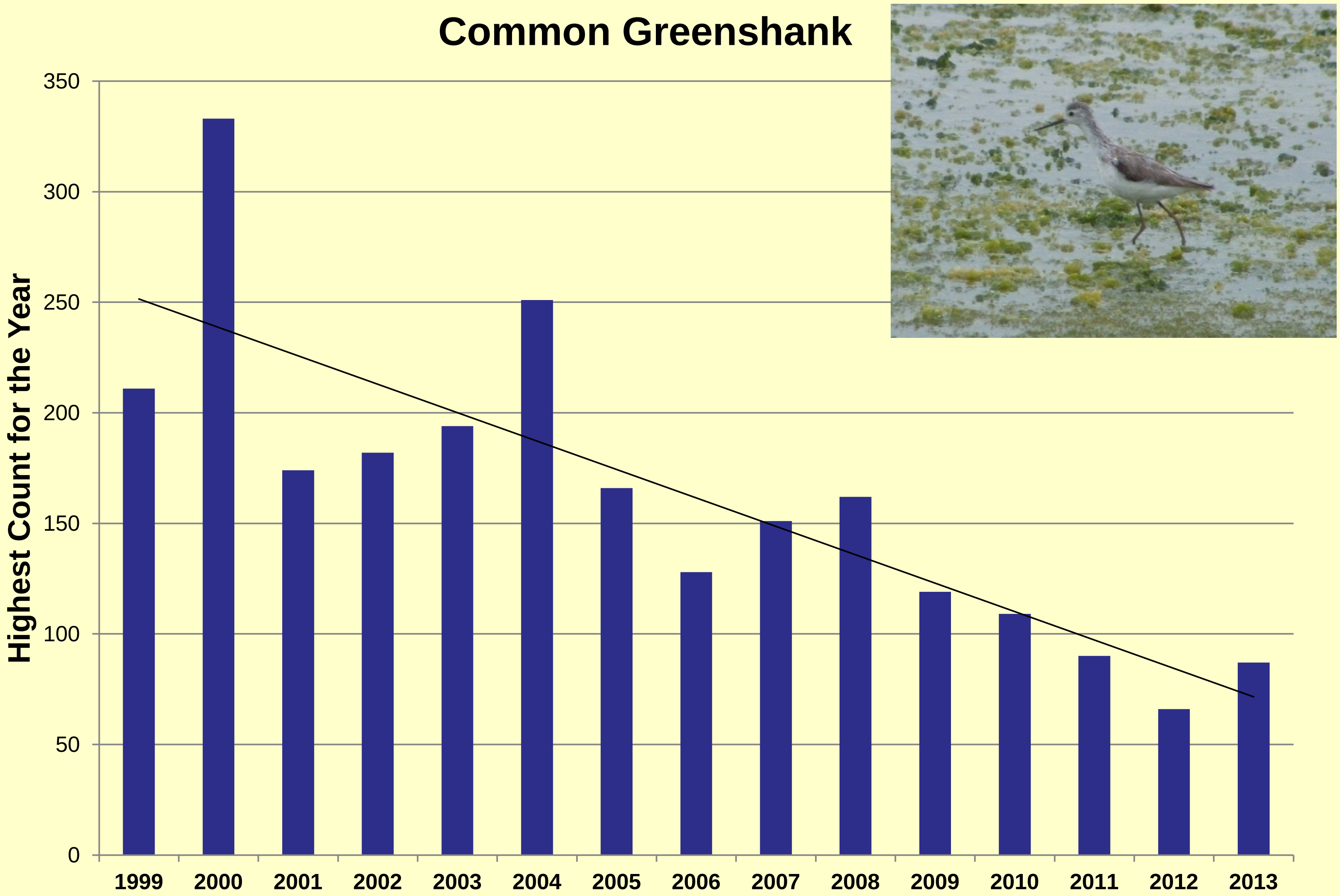


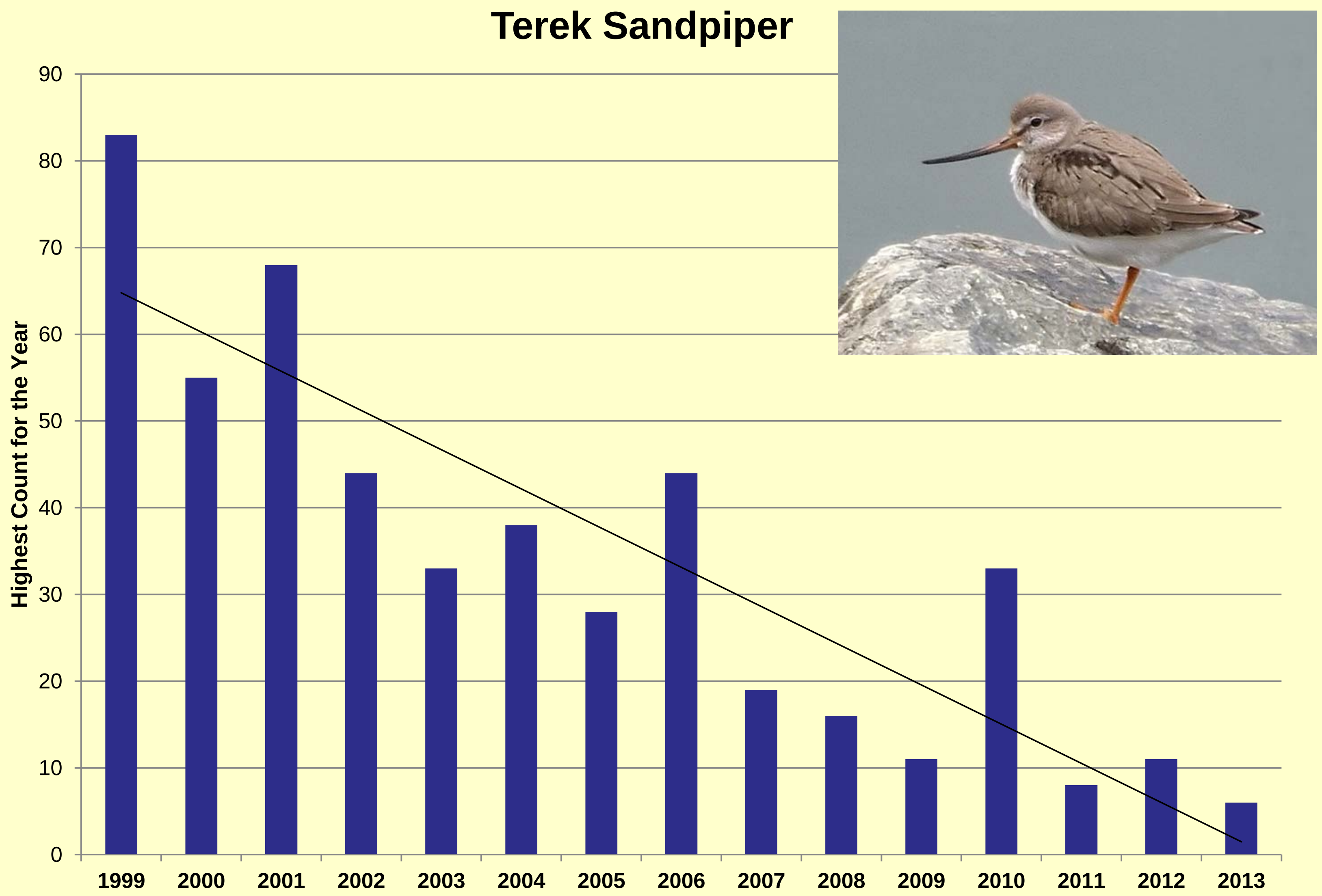
Eastern Curlew
Highest Count for the Year
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013


Curlew Sandpiper
Highest Count for the Year
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013



Marsh Sandpiper
Highest Count for the Year
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013


Common Greenshank
Highest Count for the Year
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013


Terek Sandpiper
Highest Count for the Year
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013

# But .... there is some positive news

- Recently, 2 major wetlands have been rehabilitated
  - Tidal inundation restored after 30-50 years of absence
- Tomago Wetlands 450 ha



- Hexham Swamp Nature Reserve (900 ha )



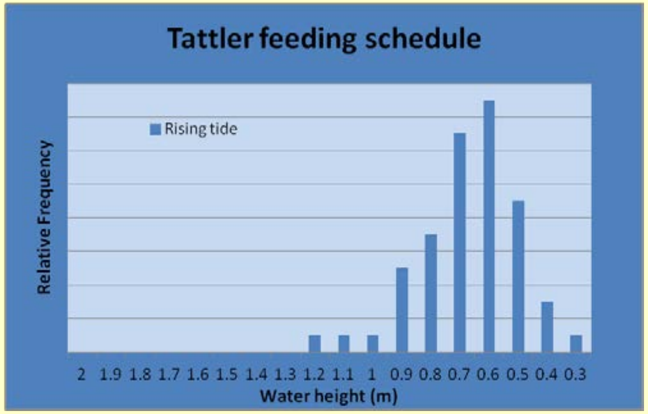
# Kiashi-shigi (Grey-tailed Tattler)

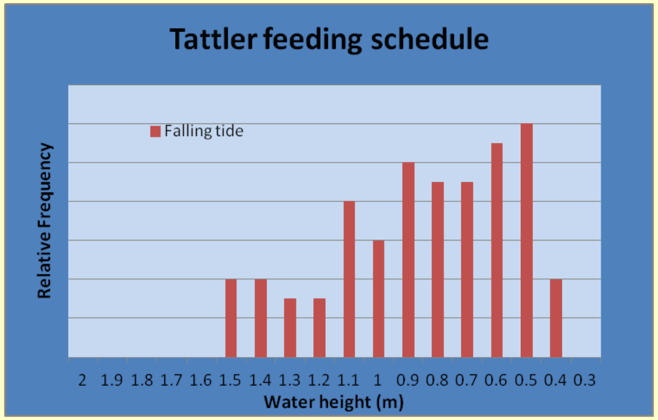
# About my research project on tattlers

- Grey-tailed Tattlers have many behaviours that are different to other shorebirds, for example …
  - Their migration route is different
  - They often roost and feed away from other shorebirds
  - They ignore birds of prey
- Much of their behaviour has not been studied closely …
  - Their interactions with each other and with other species
  - Their feeding patterns
  - Courtship
- On this visit, I am comparing Grey-tailed Tattlers behaviour in Australia with their behaviour in Japan during migration

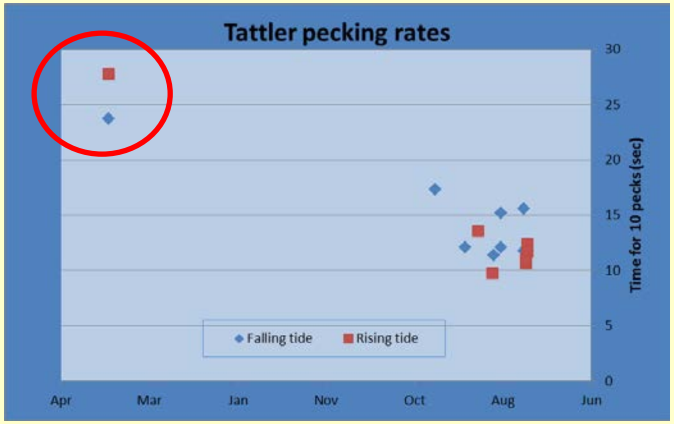
# Some things we want to find out ….

- Do tattlers change their feeding schedule during migration?



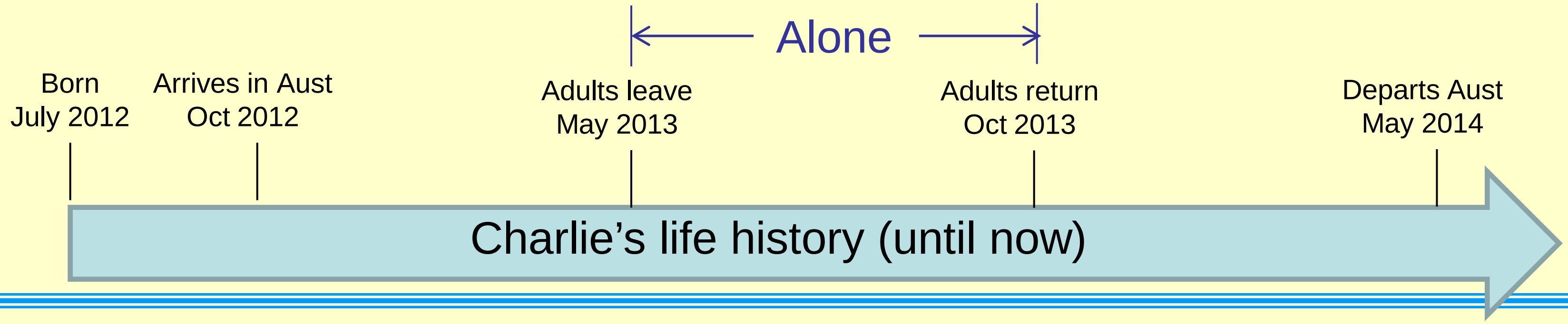

- Do tattlers change their feeding behaviour during migration?



# Charlie the Grey-tailed Tattler

- Charlie was ~3 months old when he arrived in Port Stephens in October 2012
- Throughout the Australian summer he associated with a small group of adult birds on a beach in Port Stephens
- In May 2013 the adults flew north to their Siberian breeding grounds, leaving Charlie to spend winter <u>alone</u>
- The adults returned in October 2013 – and so Charlie had some friends again!
- Charlie is now 22 months old, and indistinguishable from other adult Grey-tailed Tattlers. Charlie and the other adults are now on their way to Siberia – with a long stopover in Japan

***Perhaps he is here now?***



October – very worn plumage

November – fresh moult

November – slim and handsome

March – breeding plumage starting to appear

April – fattening up for migration