

## Bartailed Godwit

### Bandstertgriet

#### *Limosa lapponica*

The Bartailed Godwit has a fragmented breeding distribution from Finnmark across Siberia to Alaska. The latitudinal breeding range is narrow, confined to typical tundra, shrub-tundra and forest-tundra (Hayman *et al.* 1986; Rogacheva 1992). In the nonbreeding season, the nominate race occurs along coasts from Denmark to southern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula to Bombay (Hayman *et al.* 1986). The estimated population size on the eastern Atlantic flyway is 815 000 birds; the vast majority occur in northwestern Europe and western Africa, especially the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, with *c.* 500 000 birds (Rose & Scott 1994).

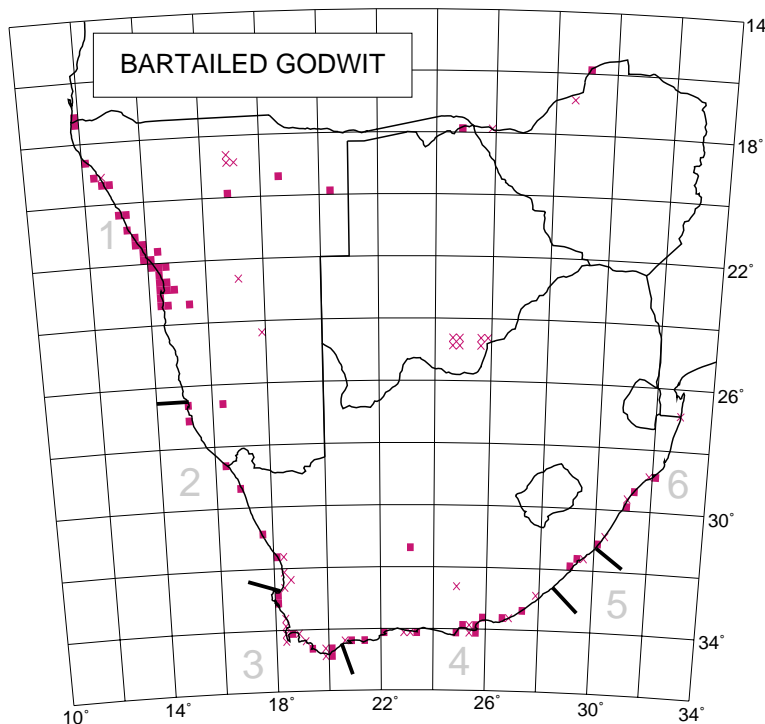
It is a coastal wader in southern Africa; inland records are mostly of passage birds on southward migration (Dowsett 1980). There are two concentrations: Summers *et al.* (1987a) recorded 2082 in northern Namibia, Kunene River (1711BB) to Sandwich Harbour (2314AD), and 237 in the southwestern Cape Province, Olifants River mouth (3118CA) to Cape Point (3418AD). The estimated population for southern Africa is 2600 birds (Summers *et al.* 1987a).

It occurs mainly at sheltered inlets, e.g. Walvis Bay Lagoon (2214CD), Sandwich Harbour (2314AD), Langebaan Lagoon (3318AA), and estuaries with large expanses of intertidal sand or mud, e.g. Berg River (3218CC) and Swartkops River (3325DC) (Underhill & Whitelaw 1977; Martin & Baird 1987; Underhill 1987a; Velasquez *et al.* 1991). On sheltered coastlines in central Namibia and the southwestern Cape Province, it sometimes feeds at washed-up kelp.

The models show high reporting rates in some coastal sections during the austral winter. The median number at Langebaan Lagoon during winter was 17% of the median summer count; it is possible that Bartailed Godwits commence breeding aged three years, overwintering twice in southern Africa (Summers *et al.* 1995).

There is one recovery from 75 birds ringed in southern Africa: from the Swartkops River estuary in July 1971 to Iran in November 1972. A first-year bird ringed in October 1991 in the Po River Delta, Italy, was recovered at Mile 108 (2131BC), Namibia, in February 1993 (SAFRING).

It is the only scolopacid, not currently treated as a vagrant, that was unknown to Stark & Selater (1906). The first records



Recorded in 101 grid cells, 2.2%  
Total number of records: 1034  
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.8%

were from Durban (2931CC) in March 1912 and Walvis Bay in October 1918 (Chubb 1915; Rudebeck 1963). The next records were in November 1939: single birds occurred at Rietvlei (3318CD) and Zeekoeivlei (3418BA) and 74 birds at Langebaan Lagoon (Broekhuysen & Meiklejohn 1941). These authors argued that it was unlikely that the species could have been overlooked if it had occurred regularly, and that 1939 must have been a year of unusual range expansion southwards.

Unlike most irruptions, this one did not fade out. The colonization of southern Africa provides a rare example of the rapid establishment of a new migratory pattern. Although the number of Bartailed Godwits involved is small, their conservation depends on the protection of the inlets and estuaries where they occur.

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