

Bird holds distance record

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A little godwit is in a class by herself -- not nearly extinct but No. 1 for longest recorded non-stop flight for her trip from New Zealand to North Korea.

The female bird, dubbed E7 by scientists monitoring her with an implanted tracking device, took off from the Coromandel Peninsula in New Zealand on March 17 and landed a week later at Yalu Jiang in North Korea, The Times of London said Monday. She averaged 35 miles per hour on her 6,341-mile flight at altitudes of up to 1.2 miles high.

E7 actually wasn't the only bar-tailed godwit making the long-distance trek, only the first to be officially measured. There are about 70,000 godwits in New Zealand. Their closest rival is the Arctic tern, which makes a 12,000-mile round trip annually.

Researcher Phil Battley of New Zealand's Massey University, who was in Korea Sunday tracking the godwits, said there is "no evidence they did anything except fly."

Why do the godwits cross the sea? To find mates, the researchers say. They stop in the mudflats of North Korea for several weeks to rest up before heading to breeding grounds in Alaska.

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