

# Shorebirds and the East Asian – Australasian Flyway





# An Introduction to Shorebirds (Waders)

**Shorebirds are among the most spectacular migratory species in the world, flying the longest non-stop flight of up to 11,000 km. Many travel a round trip of 20 – 26,000km each year between Australia, New Zealand and their breeding grounds in northern China, Siberia, Far East Russia and Alaska.**

**The route they travel along, known as the East-Asian Australasian flyway, passes through more than 22 countries from Australia and New Zealand in the south, heading north through Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, Korea, China and Mongolia.**



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## Far Eastern Curlew



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## Curlew Sandpiper



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**Great Knot**



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## Terek Sandpipers



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## Bar-tailed Godwit



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**Red-necked Stint preparing for its long flight**





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**These long distance migrants spend 4 -6 weeks in the Yellow Sea region fattening up (refueling) to enable them to reach the breeding grounds in Siberia**



## They have bill shapes to suit their diet

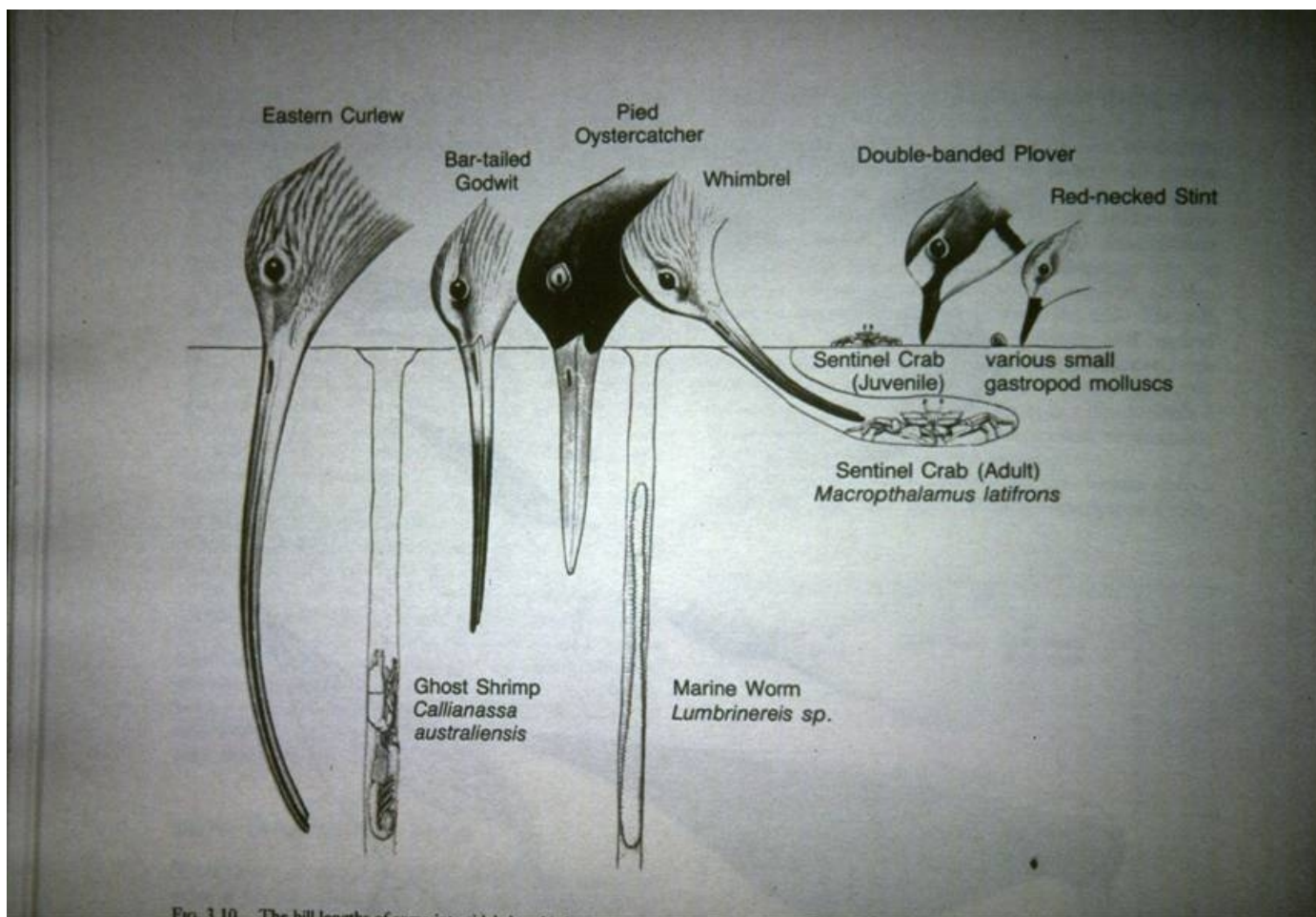


FIG. 3.10. The bill lengths of some intertidal waders.



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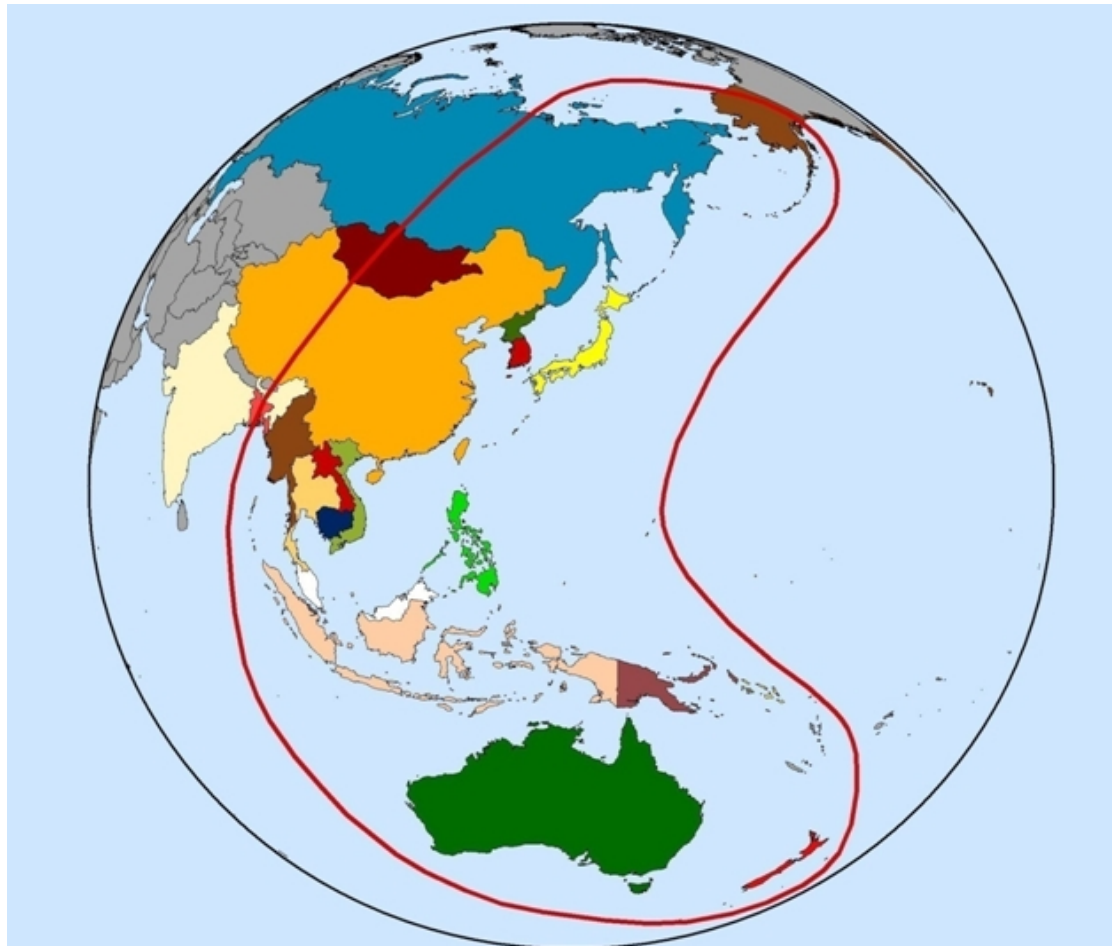
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# East Asian - Australasian Flyway (EAAF)





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# Migration routes

through  
the East  
Asian-  
Australasian  
Flyway





# Shorebirds under Threat

- q **Twenty per cent of shorebird species that regularly migrate along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway have been officially classified as globally threatened with substantial population decline.**
- q **Migratory shorebirds travelling to the non breeding regions such as New Zealand and Australia share their flyway with nearly half of the world's human population. These birds and the habitats on which they depend are particularly under threat from rapid economic development and population growth in east and south-east Asia.**
- q **As the human population continues to increase, overlap between human activities and shorebird habitat – coastal beaches, bays, estuaries, mudflats, inland lakes, lagoons and dams intensifies.**
- q **The loss and degradation of breeding, feeding and roosting habitats for shorebirds are the key issues facing these birds along the flyway.**



# Shorebirds under Threat

Threats to shorebird habitat include:

- ∅ loss (reclamation) of coastal and inland wetlands
- ∅ changes to wetland hydrology
- ∅ invasive weeds
- ∅ introduced predators
- ∅ human-related disturbance
- ∅ climate change





## Some More Facts

- q **Over 80% of wetlands in east and south-east Asia are classified as threatened, with over half under serious threat (International Wader Study Group Conference, Cadiz, Spain 2003).**
- q **20% of the shorebird species (19 species) that regularly use the East Asian - Australasian Flyway have been officially classified as globally threatened with substantial population decline**
- q **48% of migratory shorebird populations with sufficient data are in decline (International Wader Study Group (Conference, Cadiz, Spain 2003).**



# Why are Shorebirds so important?

- q **Shorebirds are sensitive indicators of change in their environment and can provide early warnings of environmental problems, including those caused by climate change and deteriorating habitat quality.**
- q **Other important reasons for protecting shorebirds include:**
  - m **The economic benefit to local communities through nature-based tourism**
  - m **The ecosystem service they perform by helping to maintain a balance among benthic communities**
  - m **International Agreements such as Ramsar and bilateral Agreements between Australia, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.**





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