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# Godwit stuns experts with four-day round trip to Norfolk

By Katy Prickett  
BBC News, Norfolk

4 October 2023



Clive the bar-tailed godwit being released ahead of his attempted migration to Mauritania

**A migratory bird has "stunned" experts by flying a round trip of more than 2,000 miles in four and a half days.**

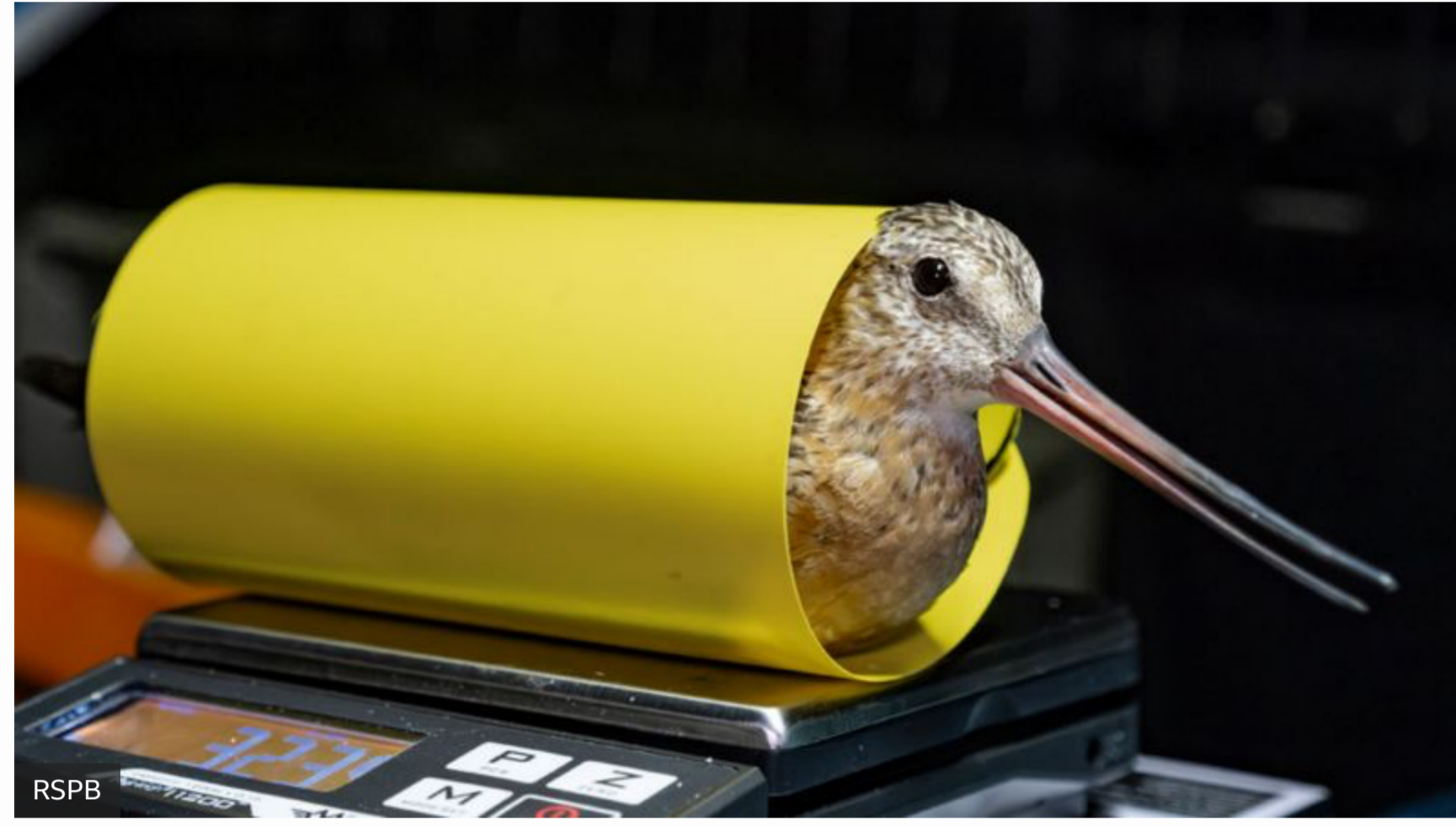
The bar-tailed godwit flew from [The Wash in Norfolk](#), via Birmingham, North Wales, Ireland, France, the Bay of Biscay near Spain and back again.

Ornithologist Nigel Clark said the journey revealed the bird's migrations were "a lot more complex than we ever imagined or would have predicted".

It was tracked using a GPS tag in a project the RSPB said was a UK-first.



"It is absolutely incredible what this project is already revealing about the increasing hazards faced and choices birds have to make on their long and challenging migrations," said Dr Clark, from the Wash Wader Research Group (WWRG).



Tagging revealed its route took it to Birmingham, North Wales, the Irish Sea, Ireland, the Atlantic, France and the Bay of Biscay near Spain before returning to The Wash



It is also hoped the project will learn about the role of England's east coast wetlands, which recently joined the UK's Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites

The bird, named Clive in memory of the group's founder, was one of five bar-tailed godwits tagged in the project, which is supported by the RSPB, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and Natural England.

When it set off, the team believed it was heading for Mauritania in West Africa, about 2,500 miles away.

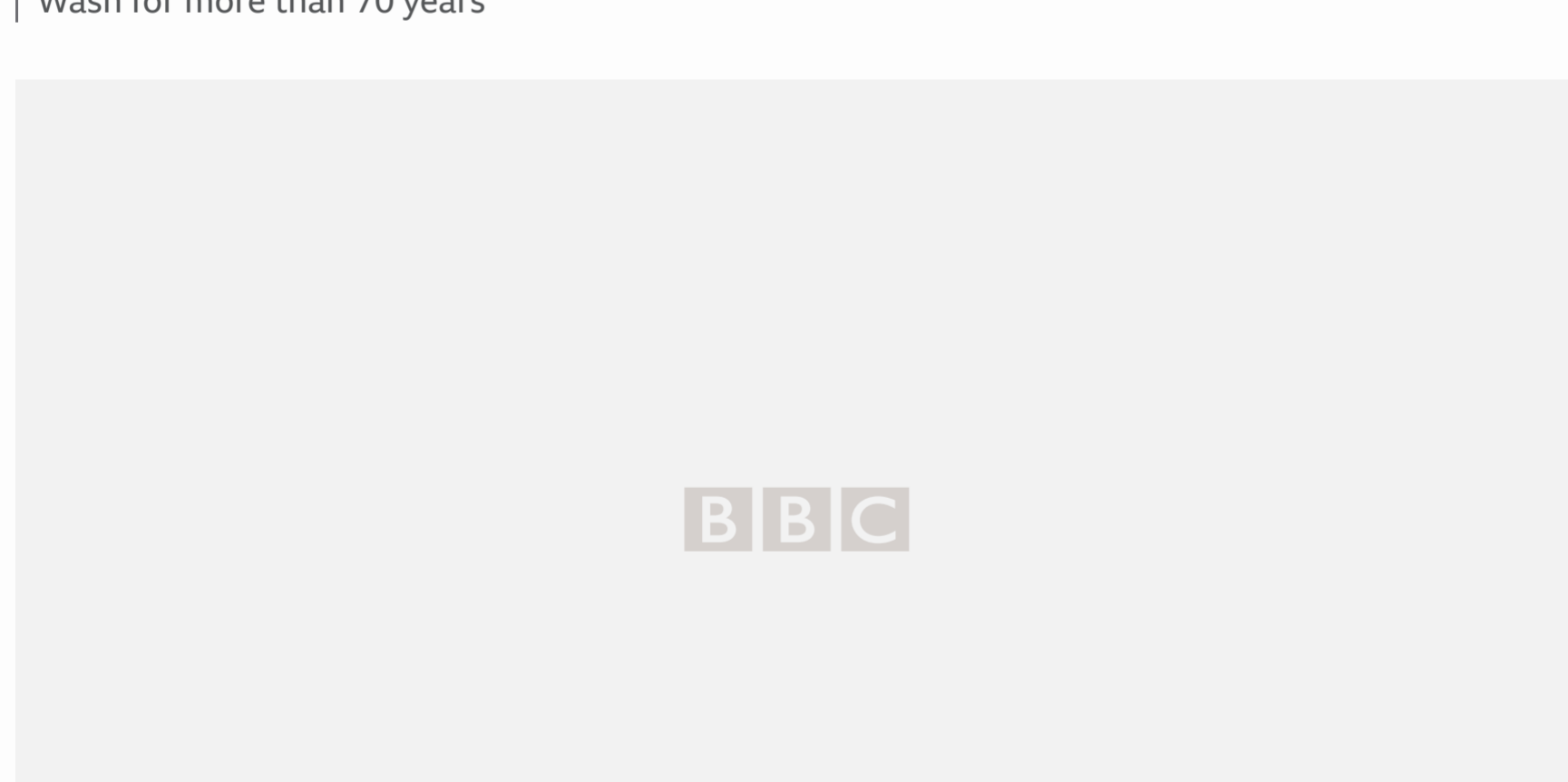
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Instead it flew an "incredible loop" back to where it started which "stunned the team", the RSPB said.

Experts believed the bird was trying to navigate around a rapidly approaching unseasonable storm.



The volunteer-run WWRG is a charity which has been researching and monitoring birds using The Wash for more than 70 years



Five bar-tailed godwits were tagged using non-invasive technology in a project the RSPB said was a UK-first

The project is an attempt to learn more about the journeys of the UK bar-tailed godwits, as well as the [role of the network of England's east coast wetlands](#).

These critically important sites sit on the East Atlantic Flyway, one of just eight "superhighways" for migratory birds around the globe, used by millions of birds each year.

"For some - like the bar-tailed godwit - we don't know much about where they go when they're not here," said Dr Guy Anderson, migrants recovery programme manager at the RSPB.

The bird is expected to remain on The Wash for a few weeks to fatten up before another migration attempt.

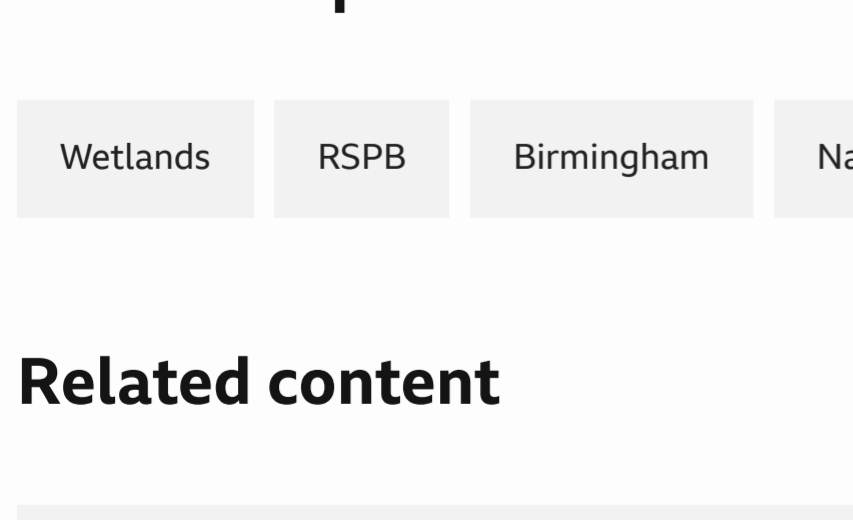
Dr Clark said: "The fact that Clive has returned to The Wash and the rich feeding areas of the East Coast Flyway goes to show just how important these coastal wetlands are for their survival."

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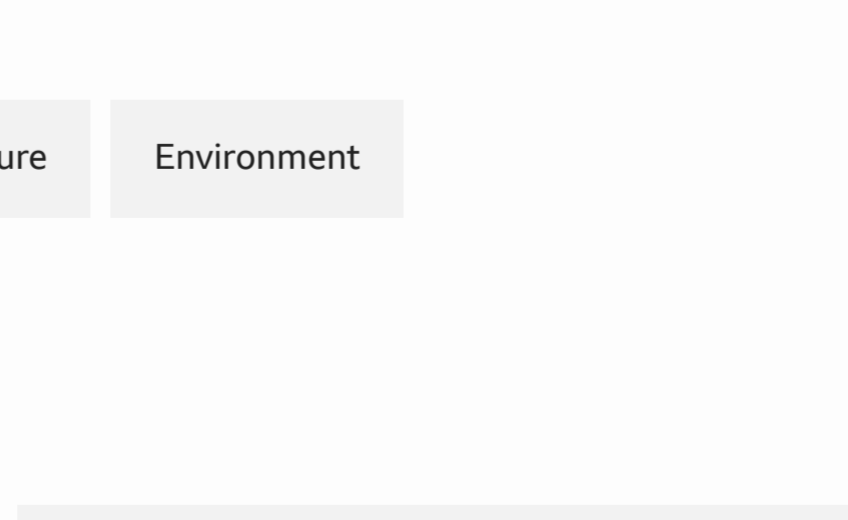
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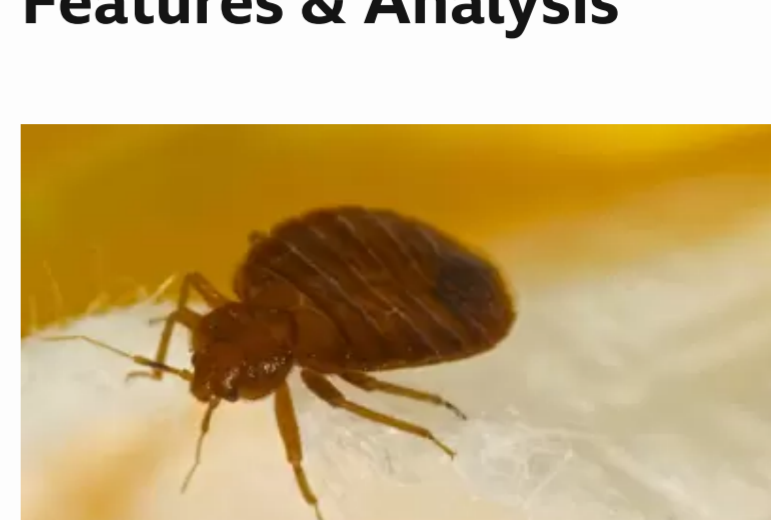
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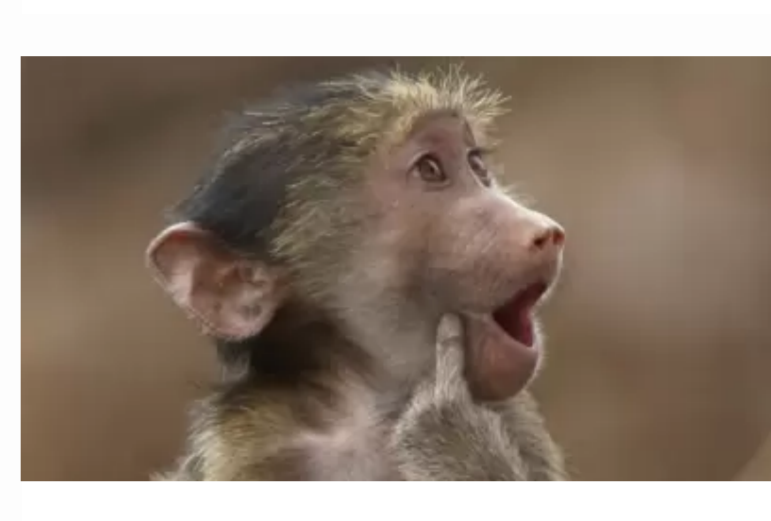
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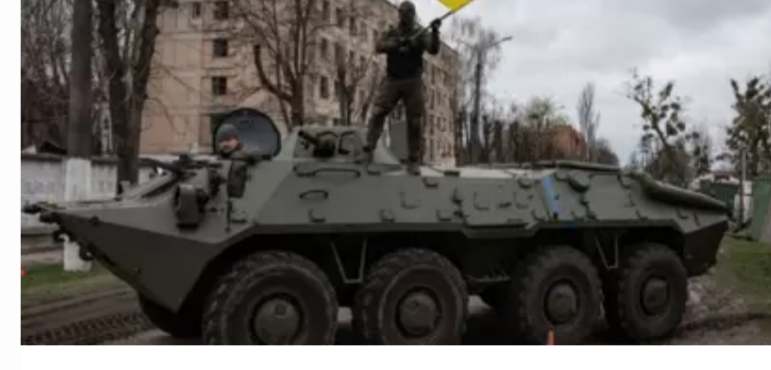
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