

## KEEPING TRACK OF BIRD MOULT OVER THREE DECADES

### *The New Zealand Moulting Recording Scheme 2009-2011*

We have been systematically recording the patterns of plumage moult in New Zealand birds through the OSNZ Moulting Recording Scheme for thirty years now! As a result, we have accumulated through the Scheme 3270 moult records for 130 species (Table 1). Half of these records (52%) are for birds in active moult, the rest are for non-moulting birds. Most of the records (64%) are from live birds. We have added 103 new records since my last summary report in 2009 (*Southern Bird* 39, pp. 6-7), covering 16 species, all of live birds in active moult. I am particularly grateful to John Stewart and Ros Batcheler for providing recent records. No new species were added to the records since the last report, but there are some interesting and valued records amongst them (e.g. Bellbird, Kingfisher, Saddleback, Spotted Dove, Stitchbird, Tomtit and Whitehead). The list continues to be headed by House Sparrow (603 records) and Silvereye (496 records), followed further back by Greenfinch (106 records) and Chaffinch (97 records).

Can I reiterate my clarion call once again – all moult records are welcome, and especially needed are those of native species. There are frequent opportunities to contribute to the scheme by anyone handling birds - banders, beach patrollers, bird researchers, in fact any of us!

**Table 1. Summary of moult records received to date**

<i>Species</i>	<i>In moult</i>	<i>Not in moult</i>	<i>Alive</i>	<i>Dead</i>	<i>Total</i>
Bellbird	19	6	25	0	25
Bittern, Australasian	0	1	0	1	1
Blackbird	36	33	58	11	69
Bunting, Cirl	3	2	5	0	5
Chaffinch	45	52	95	2	97
Creeper, Brown	1	0	1	0	1
Cuckoo, Long-tailed	0	7	2	5	7
Cuckoo, Oriental	1	1	0	2	2
Cuckoo, Pallid	0	1	0	1	1
Cuckoo, Shining	0	8	0	8	8
Curlew, Bristle-thighed	0	3	0	3	3
Curlew, Eastern	2	1	0	3	3
Dotterel, Banded	23	43	0	66	66
Dotterel, New Zealand	5	13	1	17	18
Dove, Spotted	6	0	3	3	6
Duck, Grey	2	0	2	0	2
Dunnoek	20	18	36	2	38
Falcon, New Zealand	8	8	0	16	16
Fantail	26	33	56	3	59
Fernbird	1	0	0	1	1
Gannet, Australasian	37	1	6	32	38
Godwit, Bar-tailed	13	72	1	84	85
Godwit, Black-tailed	0	1	0	1	1
Godwit, Hudsonian	0	3	0	3	3

Goldfinch	21	14	24	11	35
Greenfinch	71	35	103	3	106
Gull, Black-backed	17	3	2	18	20
Gull, Black-billed	4	1	2	3	5
Gull, Red-billed	47	1	37	11	48
Harrier, Australasian	39	10	1	48	49
Heron, Great White	0	1	1	0	1
Heron, White-faced	3	1	1	3	4
Kaka	13	75	76	12	88
Kea	1	0	0	1	1
Kingfisher, New Zealand	13	8	11	10	21
Knot, Lesser	9	49	1	57	58
Magpie, Australian	48	6	44	10	54
Mallard	15	13	27	1	28
Mollymawk, Black-browed	2	36	0	38	38
Mollymawk, Shy	5	26	0	31	31
Morepork	1	11	3	9	12
Myna, Common	17	0	2	15	17
Noddy, White-capped	1	0	0	1	1
Owl, Little	1	0	0	1	1
Oystercatcher, Pied	5	0	1	4	5
Oystercatcher, Variable	2	0	2	0	2
Parakeet, Red-crowned	5	2	6	1	7
Parakeet, Yellow-crowned	1	1	0	2	2
Penguin, Blue	4	2	2	4	6
Petrel, Black	0	2	0	2	2
Petrel, Blue	0	4	0	4	4
Petrel, Common Diving	3	5	0	8	8
Petrel, Cook's	0	2	0	2	2
Petrel, Grey-backed Storm	0	10	10	0	10
Petrel, Grey-faced	1	1	0	2	2
Petrel, Kerguelen	1	3	0	4	4
Petrel, Westland Black	0	1	0	1	1
Petrel, White-faced Storm	2	3	0	5	5
Petrel, White-headed	4	0	0	4	4
Phalarope, Grey	0	1	0	1	1
Pheasant	4	3	4	3	7
Pigeon, Cape (Cape Petrel)	0	2	0	2	2
Pigeon, Chatham Island	1	0	0	1	1
Pigeon, Feral (Rock Dove)	47	12	53	6	59
Pigeon, New Zealand (Kereru)	36	5	9	32	41
Pipit, New Zealand	0	1	0	1	1
Plover, Pacific Golden	20	47	0	67	67
Plover, Shore	8	23	0	31	31
Plover, Spur-winged	1	14	0	15	15
Pratincole, Oriental	0	2	0	2	2

Prion, Antarctic	1	0	0	1	1
Prion, Broad-billed	1	1	2	0	2
Prion, Fairy	0	87	0	87	87
Prion, Lesser Broad-billed	1	0	0	1	1
Prion, Salvin's	1	0	0	1	1
Pukeko	0	3	1	2	3
Quail, Brown	1	1	0	2	2
Rail, Banded	0	5	4	1	5
Redpoll	16	43	59	0	59
Robin	20	30	48	2	50
Rosella, Eastern	1	1	0	2	2
Saddleback (Tieke)	3	1	2	2	4
Sanderling	2	0	0	2	2
Sandpiper, Curlew	2	4	0	6	6
Sandpiper, Pectoral	4	12	0	16	16
Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed	1	9	0	10	10
Shag, Little	0	1	1	0	1
Shag, Pied	1	1	0	2	2
Shag, Spotted	6	1	0	7	7
Shearwater, Flesh-footed	0	2	0	2	2
Shearwater, Fluttering	11	0	0	11	11
Shearwater, Hutton's	2	1	1	2	3
Shearwater, Short-tailed	0	1	0	1	1
Silvereye	255	241	483	13	496
Skua, Arctic	2	0	0	2	2
Skua, Brown	1	0	0	1	1
Skua, Long-tailed	2	0	0	2	2
Sparrow, House	429	174	599	4	603
Spoonbill, Royal	2	0	0	2	2
Starling	22	17	32	7	39
Stilt, Black	5	4	0	9	9
Stilt, Pied	7	27	0	34	34
Stint, Red-necked	2	12	0	14	14
Stitchbird (hihi)	25	7	32	0	32
Swallow, Welcome	1	1	0	2	2
Taiko, Chatham Island	0	3	3	0	3
Tattler, Siberian	1	0	1	0	1
Tattler, Wandering	2	8	0	10	10
Teal, Brown (Pateke)	9	28	2	35	37
Teal, Campbell Island	2	11	13	0	13
Teal, Grey	0	1	1	0	1
Tern, Black-fronted	3	1	0	4	4
Tern, Caspian	2	0	0	2	2
Tern, Fairy	1	0	0	1	1
Tern, Little	2	0	0	2	2
Tern, White	2	0	0	2	2

Tern, White-fronted	10	6	0	16	16
Tern, White-winged Black	2	0	0	2	2
Thrush, Song	14	14	20	8	28
Tit, Black	4	2	6	0	6
Tomtit	11	1	12	0	12
Tui	8	18	21	5	26
Turnstone	11	18	0	29	29
Warbler, Grey	27	3	29	1	30
Weka	2	1	3	0	3
Whimbrel	1	3	0	4	4
Whimbrel, Little	3	2	0	5	5
Whitehead	9	0	9	0	9
Wrybill	9	34	1	42	43
Yellowhammer	2	1	2	1	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1685</b>	<b>1585</b>	<b>2100</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>3270</b>

To facilitate comparison, Table 1 is arranged as in the previous report (2009). The 3270 records received so far are mostly in a format based on the British Trust for Ornithology's Moulting Enquiry that began in 1960. This asks observers to complete – as far as possible – records for moult across the entire plumage, although some observers have concentrated on the wing and tail moult alone, or parts thereof. With native species especially, it is important to gather as much information as possible, so do please try and complete the whole moult card if you can. If time does not allow that, then please get information on wing and tail moult. If you run low on card supplies, photocopies of the cards and forms are fine. Please write to me if you need supplies of the *N.Z. Moulting Card* for recording data on birds in active moult, or the *Summary Form for Birds Not in Moulting*, (or contact your Regional Representative). Non-moulting birds include both those in old plumage (worn and faded) and those in new plumage (fresh without wear) and the state of plumage ('old' or 'new') needs to be stated on the card or record form. Remember that you can record useful moult information on birds at any time of year - and potentially from every bird you handle (live or dead). And please don't be too daunted by the apparent complexity of the moult card – it is meant to facilitate accurate records, and many OSNZ members who have persisted through the learning phase have ended up contributing many valued records to the Scheme! We look forward to receiving further moult records from you over the forthcoming year.

Ben Bell – April 2011