

Birds New Zealand – OSNZ  
National Wader Census  
June - July 2017  
November - December 2017 & January - February 2018  
Summary compiled by Adrian Riegen

**Winter Census 2017**

A total of 113,155 waders of 20 species were counted during the June - July 2017 wader census, (Table 1), down from 124,744 in June - July 2016. There was good national coverage other than the key Far North site of Rangaunu, which was not counted. Numbers of over wintering red knot were down from 1,763 in 2016 to 1,150 in 2017 and bar-tailed godwit numbers were down considerably from the 9,997 in 2016 to 7,033 in 2017. South Island pied oystercatchers were also down by over 4,000 from 77,951 to 73,172 in 2017 but the wrybill numbers were up slightly from 4,675 to 4,718. Variable oystercatchers continue their steady recovery with this count of 3,636 being the highest winter count.

Rarities included, 2 sanderlings, 1 black-tailed godwit, and 3 grey-tailed tattlers.

**Summer Census 2017**

A total of 134,880 waders of 25 species were counted in the November - December 2017 wader census, (Table 2), up from 128,236 in 2016. National coverage was very good with no key sites being missed. The red knot numbers were up by almost 3,000 since 2016 but still lower than 2015. Of most concern is the bar-tailed godwit count, which was down again to a new low of 71,527. The lowest since 2006, which was a year without complete coverage. The Parengarenga count was lower than expected and not all birds may have been found there. This is a worrying trend for our most numerous Arctic breeding species. Turnstone numbers showed an improvement from the 992 in 2015 and 1,712 in 2016 to 1,934 in 2017. Another species slipping away from New Zealand shores is the red-necked stint with just 24 counted this summer. It is not so long ago that 24 would have been a single count in the Manukau Harbour or Southland. This summer has seen a major influx of Pacific golden plover, although the census does not tell the whole story as the count on the Firth of Thames was 24 but over the summer a maximum of 129 were counted, with the majority being juveniles. Following the winter trend the variable oystercatcher numbers were up again to 2,275.

Uncommon waders included, 2 marsh sandpipers, 1 pectoral sandpiper, 2 grey-tailed tattlers, 2 Hudsonian godwits, 3 black-tailed godwits and 4 sanderlings.

NOTE: Species listed in the following tables are arranged in the order they appear in the fourth edition of the OSNZ checklist.

Table 1. Total Count June - July 2017

Species	2017	2016	2015	2014
Red Knot	<b>1,150</b>	1,763	1,214	947
Sanderling	<b>2</b>			
Curlew Sandpiper	<b>2</b>			
Red-necked Stint	<b>5</b>	8	7	64
Eastern Curlew	<b>1</b>			
Whimbrel	<b>2</b>	10	4	3
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>7,033</b>	9,997	7,781	8,816
Black-tailed Godwit	<b>1</b>			
Hudsonian Godwit		1		
Grey-tailed Tattler	<b>3</b>	1		
Marsh Sandpiper		1	1	1
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>322</b>	206	159	362
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>3,636</b>	3,145	3,270	3,014
South Island Pied				
Oystercatcher	<b>73,172</b>	77,951	77,886	79,381
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	<b>15</b>	3	11	20
Pied Stilt	<b>14,181</b>	17,841	15,506	17,282
(Black Stilt/Hybrids)	<b>21</b>	8	17	23
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>777</b>	1,041	1,083	780
Banded Dotterel	<b>5,334</b>	5,993	5,482	5,860
Lesser Sand Plover		1		
Wrybill	<b>4,718</b>	4,675	4,112	4,108

Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>97</b>	128	101	162
Shore Plover		1	3	2
Spur-winged Plover	<b>2,683</b>	1,970	1,696	1,975
<b>Total</b>	<b>113,155</b>	124,744	118,337	122,822

Table 2. Total Count November - December 2017

Species	<b>2017</b>	2016	2015	2014
Red Knot	<b>30,947</b>	27,338	34,226	28,940
Sanderling	<b>4</b>	3	7	3
Curlew Sandpiper	<b>2</b>	6	9	15
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<b>15</b>	16	6	3
Pectoral Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	2	1	3
Red-necked Stint	<b>24</b>	134	95	79
Far Eastern Curlew	<b>7</b>	7	5	3
Whimbrel	<b>28</b>	45	13	24
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>71,527</b>	72,702	74,838	74,989
Black-tailed Godwit	<b>3</b>			
Hudsonian Godwit	<b>2</b>			
Wandering Tattler		1		2
Grey-tailed Tattler	<b>2</b>	1	1	
Marsh Sandpiper	<b>2</b>	1		2
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>1,934</b>	1,712	992	1,562
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>2,275</b>	2,493	2,306	2,278
South Island Pied				
Oystercatcher	<b>18,978</b>	17,291	15,484	16,625
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	<b>10</b>	9	10	4
Pied Stilt	<b>5,325</b>	3,818	5,471	4,367
(Black Stilt/Hybrids)	<b>5</b>	2	8	3
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>266</b>	112	253	75
Grey Plover		1	2	1
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>497</b>	522	649	483
Banded Dotterel	<b>664</b>	613	521	530
Greater Sand Plover		1	2	
Wrybill	<b>273</b>	102	216	141
Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>16</b>	18	23	7
Spur-winged Plover	<b>2,073</b>	1,286	1,880	1,206
<b>Total</b>	<b>134,880</b>	128,236	137,020	131,350

There was incomplete nationwide coverage in January - February 2018 but counts from, Lake Wairarapa, Nelson, Marlborough and Southland were received. Numbers for Southland and Nelson are compared with the November - December 2017 counts in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Nelson Region

As counts at other major sites in New Zealand were not conducted in February 2018 it is not known if the increased numbers of knot and godwit in the Nelson area is due to influxes from overseas or movements within New Zealand or a combination of both.

Species	Feb.18	Nov.17
Red Knot	13,304	8,505
Sanderling		2
Red-necked Stint	7	7
Whimbrel	25	1
Bar-tailed Godwit	17,960	15,455
Turnstone	745	373
Variable Oystercatcher	630	625
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	23,240	5,517
Pied Stilt	582	69
Pacific Golden Plover	28	2

New Zealand Dotterel	1	
Banded Dotterel	1,433	44
Lesser Sand Plover	1	
Spur-winged Plover	32	44

Table 4. Southland

Species	Feb.18	Nov.17
Red Knot	50	30
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	6
Bar-tailed Godwit	1,678	956
Black-tailed godwit		1
Turnstone	233	247
Variable Oystercatcher	67	61
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	1,042	1,648
Pied Stilt	128	63
Pacific Golden Plover	22	69
New Zealand Dotterel	3	
Banded Dotterel	97	4
Wrybill	1	
Spur-winged Plover	58	30

Tables 5 and 6 show sites with > 2,000 waders counted during winter and summer censuses.

Table 5. Sites with >2,000 waders in June - July 2017 & 2016 in numerical order

	2017	2016
Manukau Harbour	<b>28,497</b>	32,137
Kaipara Harbour	<b>18,923</b>	22,468
Farewell Spit	<b>11,671</b>	14,451
Firth of Thames	<b>11,630</b>	18,588
Golden Bay	<b>5,739</b>	3,801
Tasman Bay	<b>4,848</b>	5,162
Kawhia Harbour	<b>4,420</b>	3,569
Tauranga Harbour	<b>2,232</b>	3,035
Lake Ellesmere	<b>2,085</b>	(1,542)
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	<b>(1,725)</b>	2,572
Ohiwa Harbour	<b>(1,967)</b>	(1,968)

Table 6. Sites with >2,000 waders in November - December 2017 & 2016 in numerical order

\*Tauranga was only a partial count

	2017	2016
Manukau Harbour	<b>26,971</b>	21,460
Kaipara Harbour	<b>26,216</b>	29,402
Farewell Spit	<b>19,156</b>	17,389
Firth of Thames	<b>12,917</b>	8,752
Tasman Bay	<b>6,953</b>	6,368
Golden Bay	<b>4,536</b>	4,564
Rangaunu Harbour	<b>3,971</b>	2,905
Lake Ellesmere	<b>2,991</b>	(1,714)
Tauranga Harbour	<b>*2,828</b>	6,871

Kawhia Harbour	<b>2,487</b>	2,736
Ohiwa Harbour	<b>2,245</b>	2,034
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	<b>2,240</b>	(1,999)
Ruakaka/Waipu	<b>2,180</b>	(259)
Whangarei Harbour	<b>2,120</b>	4,762

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