

Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the OSNZ Records Appraisal Committee 2008-2010

COLIN M. MISKELLY*

Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, P.O. Box 467, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

R. PAUL SCOFIELD

Canterbury Museum, Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch 8013, New Zealand

PAUL M. SAGAR

National Institute of Water & Atmospheric Research, P.O. Box 8602, Christchurch 8440, New Zealand

ALAN J. D. TENNYSON

Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, P.O. Box 467, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

BRIAN D. BELL

ELIZABETH A. BELL

Wildlife Management International Ltd, 35 Selmes Road, Rapaura, RD3, Blenheim 7273, New Zealand

Abstract We report Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) decisions regarding Unusual Bird Reports received between 1 Aug 2008 and 31 Dec 2010. Among the 58 submissions accepted by the RAC are the 1st New Zealand records of streaked shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*) and straw-necked ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*), 2nd records of great shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*), semipalmated plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) and Franklin's gull (*Larus pipixcan*), and 3rd records of little stint (*Calidris minuta*) and black kite (*Milvus migrans*). Other notable records included the 1st oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus optatus*) from the Kermadec Islands, a New Zealand dabchick (*Poliiocephalus rufpectus*) near Nelson, and 2 records of Stewart Island shag (*Leucocarbo chalconotus*) near Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury.

Miskelly, C.M.; Scofield, R.P.; Sagar, P.M.; Tennyson, A.J.D.; Bell, B.D.; Bell, E.A. 2011. Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the OSNZ Records Appraisal Committee 2008-2010. *Notornis* 58(2): 64-70.

Keywords extra-limital; first record; New Zealand bird; vagrant

INTRODUCTION

The Ornithological Society of New (OSNZ) initiated a process to assess reported sightings of vagrant or extra-limital bird sightings in 1974 (Kinsky 1975). For the next 36 years, submitted Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) were assessed by the Rare Birds

Committee (RBC), with acceptance of records a prerequisite for publication of confirmed sightings in *Notornis* and books published by the OSNZ. In Jun 2010, the OSNZ Council ratified terms of reference for a Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) to replace the RBC. The name change was to clarify the role of the committee in assessing extra-limital records that could include common species beyond their known range. New Zealand has many

Received 4 May 2011; accepted 4 Jul 2011

*Correspondence: colin.miskelly@tepapa.govt.nz

endangered (*i.e.*, genuinely 'rare') species (Miskelly *et al.* 2008), and the name change was also to reduce ambiguity of the role of a committee that is not involved in threatened species management, other than assessing any reported sightings of rare taxa beyond their known range.

We here report RAC decisions made on UBRs received between 1 Aug 2008 and 31 Dec 2010, following on from the last report of the Rare Birds Committee (Scofield 2008). For most reported sightings, support by a majority of the 5 RAC members is required for the record to be accepted. Unanimous support is required for 1st records for New Zealand, or for reported sightings of endemic species otherwise considered extinct. Additional members were co-opted to assess any sightings submitted by RAC members.

Many of the birds reported here were present for much longer than the single day typically listed. For example, the Franklin's gull (*Larus pipixcan*) was seen at multiple sites around South Auckland between at least 6 Sep and 25 Oct 2009 (<http://www/birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=164> viewed 5 Aug 2011), not just on 11 Oct. It is not the role of the RAC to maintain records of the earliest and latest dates that each reportable bird was seen. For significant sightings (e.g. 1st, 2nd or 3rd sightings for the country), we encourage the observers who first found or identified the vagrant individual(s) to submit a relevant short note for publication in *Notornis*, which should include information on the length of time that the birds were present.

The RAC convenor (CMM) maintains a database of verified sightings of vagrant birds in New Zealand. Information from this database is presented below (sourced as "C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*") if it conflicts with or augments information from Gill *et al.* (2010). Each UBR is also given a number whereby the first 4 digits represent the year the record was received and the last 2 digits the chronological sequence of receipt within that year. These are given under each entry for each species. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow Gill *et al.* (2010).

DECISIONS ON SUBMITTED SIGHTINGS

Accepted records of species vagrant to New Zealand

Chestnut-breasted shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

A female at Bromley Oxidation Ponds, Christchurch on 16 Feb 2006; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/04). After a major influx in 1983-86, and few records in the 1990s (Heather 1987; Gill *et al.* 2010), chestnut-breasted shelducks were recorded about once per annum from 2000 (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Australian wood duck (*Chenonetta jubata*)

A female at Bromley Oxidation Ponds, Christchurch



Fig. 1. Great shearwater off Kaikoura, 14 Feb 2010. Photograph by Gary Melville, Albatross Encounter.

on 12 Feb 2009; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2009/20). Five previous records accepted (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*)

A male at Bromley Oxidation Ponds, Christchurch on 30 Mar 2010; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/10). A male at Mangere Water Treatment plant 8-20 May 2010; Phil Hammond (UBR 2011/03). About 18 accepted records, most from the Manawatu Estuary (Gill *et al.* 2010; C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Providence petrel (*Pterodroma solandri*)

One east of North Cape on 21 May 2005; Steve Wood (UBR 2008/15). Fourth record for New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Streaked shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*)

A female found dead on Kawhia Beach, Waikato on 26 Feb 2006 by Derek Christie (reported by Paul Scofield); NMNZ specimen OR.029195 (UBR 2011/17). First record for New Zealand of a species that occurs annually off the Australian coast (Scofield *et al.* 2011).

Great shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*)

One offshore from Kaikoura on 14 Feb 2010 (Fig. 1); Gary Melville (UBR 2010/04). Second record for New Zealand (Gaskin *et al.* 2009).

Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

An immature off Moturua I, north of Coromandel, on 22 & 28 May 2010; Richard Hooker (UBR 2010/07). This species probably reaches New Zealand every year (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Greater frigatebird (*Fregata minor*)

At least 1 adult male and 1 adult female at Raoul I, Kermadec Is, from 24 Dec 2008 to 6 Feb 2009; Gareth Rampley (UBR 2009/05). An adult male at Farewell Spit on 27 Feb 2009; Rob Schuckard (UBR 2009/04).



Fig. 2. Straw-necked ibis near Tarras, 24 Feb 2009. Photograph by Brent Stephenson.



Fig. 3. Little stint at Lake Ellesmere, Mar 2010. Photograph by Peter Langlands.

There are about 15 previous records from New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

One at Appleby, Richmond, on 28 May 2009; Peter & Charmaine Field (UBR 2009/17). This species is expected annually in New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Straw-necked ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*)

One near Tarras, central Otago, on 23-24 Feb 2009 (Fig. 2); Erik Forsyth (UBR 2010/05). First record for

New Zealand of an abundant Australian species that has strayed twice to Norfolk I (Lindsay 1963; Wakelin 1968).

Black kite (*Milvus migrans*)

One at Wanaka Airport on 20 Dec 1996; Peter Tyree, reported via Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/20). This becomes the 3rd of 6 records (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)

One at Forest Hill Crossing Road, Southland, on 15 Jun 2008; Jamie Wood (UBR 2008/19). An infrequent straggler to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

One at Kirks farm, Manukau Harbour 18 Apr to 18 Jun 2006; David Lawrie (UBR 2009/02). Fourth accepted record from New Zealand (Brown 1975, 1979; Habraken 1980).

Little stint (*Calidris minuta*)

One at Lake Ellesmere, 1-26 Mar 2010 (Fig. 3); Steve Wratten (UBR 2010/06). Third record from New Zealand, with all 3 being from Lake Ellesmere (Crocker *et al.* 2002).

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

A male at Kaiapoi Oxidation Ponds 13-22 Feb 2004; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/08). About 14 records accepted from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Little whimbrel (*Numenius minutus*)

One at Nine Mile Beach, Charleston, on 26 Sep 2010; Kerry-Jayne Wilson (UBR 2010/13). Possibly an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Wandering tattler (*Tringa incana*)

One at Brooklands Lagoon, North Canterbury, on 1 Dec 2007; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/11). Probably an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Common sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

One at Washdyke Lagoon, South Canterbury, on 4 Mar 2010; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/09). One at Tomahawk Lagoon, Dunedin, on 26 Sep 2010; Robyn Pickering (UBR 2011/01). About 30 accepted records, with 7 from the South I (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Marsh sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*)

One at Lake Grassmere, Marlborough, on 6 Feb 2010; Peter & Charmaine Field (UBR 2010/15). Probably an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Lesser yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*)

One at Charlesworth wetland, Avon-Heathcote Estuary on 31 Oct 2002; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2009/22). There are 18 accepted records from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

One at Ahuriri Estuary, Napier, on 22 Jun 2010; Sharon Walker & John Andrew (UBR 2010/08). This is the 12th accepted record for New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Semipalmated plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

One at Miranda on 13 Nov 2010 (Fig. 4); Graham Saunders (UBR 2011/06). This is the 2nd accepted record from New Zealand, though the 1st 'ringed plover' seen in the Firth of Thames in 1970-71 may have been this species (Gill *et al.* 2010). All 3 birds were seen at Miranda. There are unverified reports of what is presumed to be the same bird on the Manukau Harbour during late 2010 & early 2011.

Greater sand plover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*)

Two at Awarua Bay, Southland, 6 & 8 May 2008; Paul Jacques (UBR 2008/10). This species is almost certainly an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Pomarine skua (*Coprotheres pomarinus*)

One at Long Bay Beach, Auckland, on 28 Sep 2009; Gary Setterfield (UBR 2009/18). This species is an uncommon though regular visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Franklin's gull (*Larus pipixcan*)

One at Bruce Pulman Park, Papakura, on 11 Oct 2009 (Fig. 5); Graham Saunders (UBR 2011/07). This is the 2nd accepted record from New Zealand (Onley & Schweigman 2004). An earlier record from Raoul I, Kermadec Is in Veitch *et al.* (2004) has not been submitted to the RAC.

Whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybridus*)

One at Bromley Oxidation Ponds, Christchurch, on 15-17 Dec 2005; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2009/21). One at Travis Wetland, Christchurch, on 16 May 2007; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/05). One at North Kaipara Head on 1 Oct 2009; Shane McPherson (UBR 2010/11). These are the 6th to 8th accepted records (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

One at Spider Lagoon, South Canterbury, on 13 Dec 1996; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2009/23). Probably an annual visitor to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus optatus*)

One on Raoul I, Kermadec Is, on 10 Dec 2010; Sian Potier (UBR 2011/19). First record from the Kermadec Is (vide Veitch *et al.* 2004). There are about 32 previous records from New Zealand (C.M. Miskelly, *unpubl.*).

Fan-tailed cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*)

One found dead at Maungaturoto, Northland, on 7 Oct 2010; John Dekker (NMNZ specimen OR.029289; UBR 2011/02). Sixth accepted record



Fig. 4. Semipalmated plover at Miranda, 13 Nov 2010. Photograph by Neil Fitzgerald.



Fig. 5. Franklin's gull at Papakura, 11 Oct 2009. Photograph by Neil Fitzgerald.

from New Zealand, and the 1st since 1999 (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Barn owl (*Tyto alba*)

Two at Church Road, Kaitia, on 5 & 23 Apr 2008, Kevin Mathews and Suzi Phillips (UBRs 2008/14 & 2009/16). A pair of barn owls has bred at this site since Apr 2008 (Hyde *et al.* 2010). There are 10 previous records of barn owls from New Zealand, 4 at or near airfields or ports (Gill *et al.* 2010).

White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*)

One on Kapiti I on 24 Oct 2010; Colin Miskelly (UBR 2011/18). A regular straggler to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

Fairy martin (*Petrochelidon ariel*)

Two at Tawharanui Regional Park, North Auckland, on 22 Mar 2008; Suzi Phillips (UBR 2008/13). Twelve previous records accepted from New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

ACCEPTED EXTRA-LIMITAL RECORDS OF NEW ZEALAND BREEDING SPECIES**Cape Barren goose (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*)**

Four near Cape Reinga on 5 Feb 2009; Rob McColl (UBR 2009/11).

New Zealand dabchick (*Poliiocephalus rufopectus*)

One at Whakapuaka, Nelson, 30 May to 13 Oct 2010; Peter & Charmaine Field (UBR 2010/14). Fourth record for South I since 1987; all have been in Nelson or Marlborough (see Heather 1988 for the original sighting).

Fiordland crested penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*)

A subadult 15 km north of Kaikoura on 11 Jul 2008; Lindsay Rowe & Paul McGahan (UBR 2008/18). A subadult in moult 10 km north of Kaikoura on 9 Feb 2009; Lindsay Rowe & Mike Morrissey (UBR 2009/13).

Black-bellied storm petrel (*Fregatta tropica*)

One offshore from Kaikoura on 30 May 2009; Gary Melville (UBR 2009/12).

Red-tailed tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*)

An adult dead at Manukau in Dec 2007; Brian Gill (Auckland Museum specimen LB13700; UBR 2008/09). An adult at Tawharanui Regional Park, North Auckland, on 24 Mar 2008; Detlef Davies (UBR 2009/14).

Stewart Island shag (*Leucocarbo chalconotus*)

One bronze phase at Ataahua Point, Lake Ellesmere, on 26 May 2009; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/15). One bronze phase at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 13 Dec 2010; Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/16). These are the northernmost confirmed sightings of Stewart Island shag, although an unidentified *Leucocarbo* shag was seen at Godley Head, Lyttelton on 15 Dec 2003 (Rare Birds Committee 2005).

Nankeen night heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)

Four along the upper Whanganui River on 20 Oct 2008; Peter van Dyk (UBR 2008/16). Nankeen night herons have been breeding on the Whanganui River since at least 1994 (Marsh & Lövei 1997); sightings from the Whanganui River are not required to be submitted to the Records Appraisal Committee.

New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus*)

Three at Riversdale, Wairarapa, 10-11 Nov 2011; Peter & Ruth Reese (UBR 2011/12). The birds were possibly breeding; the sighting helps to document

the continuing spread of New Zealand dotterels south from Hawkes Bay.

Black noddy (*Anous minutus*)

One at Te Werahi Beach, Far North, on 5 Apr 2009; Dan Hawthorn (UBR 2009/09).

Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*)

An adult at Paua, Parengarenga Harbour, on 23 Feb 2008; Detlef Davies (UBR 2009/15).

Eastern rosella (*Platycercus eximius*)

Up to 7 at Victoria Park, Christchurch, 26 May 2009 to Dec 2010; Phil Crutchley and Andrew Crossland (UBR 2011/13).

Rock wren (*Xenicus gilvoiventris*)

Two at Rameka Stream, Takaka on 31 Jul 2008, and 1 at upper Ada River, St James Walkway on 12 Mar 2009; Barry James (UBR 2009/24).

Bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*)

At least 1 adult male plus another bird north of Matakana, North Auckland, on 12 Jul 2010; Jack Dalgleish (UBR 2010/09).

Cirl bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*)

A juvenile on Motuora I, Hauraki Gulf, on 22 Feb 2009; John Stewart (UBR 2009/08).

In addition to the sightings reported here, 3 additional UBRs of unidentified birds were submitted, all of which were considered to refer to common species (UBR 2008/17 = Cape Barren goose in Canterbury; UBR 2010/02 = starling [*Sturnus vulgaris*]; UBR 2010/12 = sulphur-crested cockatoo [*Cacatua galerita*]).

ACCEPTED RECORDS OF SPECIES LIKELY TO HAVE ESCAPED FROM CAPTIVITY OR OTHERWISE NOT CONSIDERED TO BE NATURAL VAGRANTS**Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*)**

Two females on Tiritiri Matangi I on 1 Jan 2009; Duncan Watson (UBR 2009/01).

Red-vented bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*)

Two at Mt Eden, Auckland, 25-26 Jun 1990; Mike Turner (UBR 2011/14).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

Some of the following records are likely to have been genuine, but were insufficiently documented to be accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee. A few were considered to be misidentifications.

Chestnut-breasted shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

Belmont Regional Park, 18 Jan 2010 (UBR 2010/01). Re-identified from photographs as an immature paradise shelduck (*T. variegata*).

King shag (*Leucocarbo carunculatus*)

Three at Point Howard, Wellington, 1 Nov 2009 (UBR 2009/19). Considered likely to have been juvenile spotted shags (*Stictocarbo punctatus*).

Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*)

One reported from the Clutha River at Albert Town, Central Otago, 14 May 2000 (UBR 2008/12).

Wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*)

One reported from Queenstown, 6 Feb 2008 (UBR 2008/11).

Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)

One reported from Lady Alice I, Chicken Is, Oct 2004 (UBR 2009/03).

Brolga (*Grus rubicundus*)

One reported from Mossburn, Southland, 8 Mar 2008 (UBR 2009/07).

Lesser yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*)

One reported from the Karama estuary, 28 Jan 2009 (UBR 2009/06).

Ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*)

One reported from Pearl Creek, Appleby, Richmond, on 3 Jun 2009 (UBR 2010/16).

Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

One reported from near the Waimakariri River, Canterbury, on 11 Aug 2010 (UBR 2010/10).

South Island kokako (*Callaeas cinerea*)

One reported from the upper Inangahua Valley, 21 Mar 2007 (UBR 2009/10).

DISCUSSION

Between Apr 2008 and Dec 2010 the Rare Birds Committee, and then (from Jun 2010) the Records Appraisal Committee, received 70 Unusual Bird Reports. Other than 3 UBRs of 'unknown' birds where the RAC was asked to provide an identification, and 1 decision yet to be finalised, 56 of 66 submitted UBRs were accepted (85%).

The acceptance of reported sightings of streaked shearwater and straw-necked ibis brings the number of bird species recorded naturally from New Zealand since 1800 to 345 (Miskelly *et al.* 2008; Gill *et al.* 2010). Of these, 16 are considered extinct, including 3 since 1960 (South Island snipe [*Coenocorypha iredalei*], bush wren [*Xenicus longipes*], and South Island kokako [*Callaeas cinerea*]). In addition, 36 introduced species are currently considered established in the wild in New Zealand, making the current avifauna 365 species (including 26 migrant species and 131 vagrant species).

Of the 131 vagrant species, 42 (32.1%) are waders (Scolopacidae, Rostratulidae, Recurvirostridae,

Charadriidae or Glareolidae), 40 (30.5%) are seabirds (Sphenisciformes, Procellariiformes, Phaethontidae, Sulidae, Fregatidae, Laridae or Sternidae), 26 (19.8%) are waterfowl or wetland birds (Anatidae, Podicipedidae, Pelecanidae, Anhingidae, Ciconiiformes, Gruiformes), 12 (9.2%) are non-passerine land birds (Accipitridae, Falconidae, Cuculidae, Tytonidae, Apodidae or Coraciidae), and 11 only (8.4%) are Passeriformes. These ratios were similar to those for the 32 species recorded as vagrant to New Zealand in 2008-10, with 11 (34.4%) wader species, 9 (28.1%) seabird species, 5 (15.6%) waterfowl or wetland species, 6 (18.8%) non-passerine land birds, and a single passerine (3.1%).

Of the 32 vagrant species recorded in 2008-10, 14 species (43.8%) were holarctic breeding migrants, 13 species (40.6%) were Australian species, 4 species (12.5%) were Pacific-breeding seabirds, and a single species (great shearwater) breeds in the South Atlantic.

ERRATA TO PREVIOUS REPORTS

The following errors were published in Rare Birds Committee reports between 2005 and 2008:

UBR 22/05

The correct date for the Snares crested penguin (*Eudyptula robustus*) seen on Pitt I, Chatham Is was Feb 2003, not Feb 2005 (*cf.* Scofield 2005). The date was given correctly by Miskelly *et al.* (2006), but they transposed the UBR numbers for 2 Snares crested penguins seen on the Chatham Is (20/05 and 22/05), thereby adding to the confusion. The correct information for these 2 records is: UBR 20/05, an immature Snares crested penguin photographed by Vince Neall on Mangere I on 5 Feb 2005; and UBR 22/05, an adult Snares crested penguin photographed by Damon Hunt at Flower Pot, Pitt I, in Feb 2003.

UBR 56/04

The correct date for the white-throated needletail (spine-tailed swift) seen on Chatham I was 16 Nov 2004, not 1 Dec 2004 (*cf.* Scofield 2005).

UBR 52/05

A bird seen at Kaipara Harbour by Ted Wnorowski on 25 Jun 2005 was a lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*), not a marsh sandpiper (*cf.* Scofield 2006).

UBR 47/06

The scientific name for Arctic tern was incorrectly given as *Sterna hirundo* in Scofield (2008). The record was submitted as a common tern (*S. hirundo*), but was determined by the RBC as being of an Arctic tern (*S. paradisaea*).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the many Ornithological Society of New Zealand members and associates who submitted records for assessment. Ian Saville and Andrew Crossland assisted with some of the assessments reported here; both have since been appointed as full members of the Records Appraisal Committee by the OSNZ Council. We thank them both also, plus 2 anonymous reviewers, for their comments on this manuscript.

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