



July 2017 Amokura 119

(Published in February, July and October of each year)

MEETINGS of the Northland Branch of the O.S.N.Z. are held each month on the second Thursday, for the period FEBRUARY to DECEMBER. TIME: 7-30p.m.

VENUE: Founders Room, Alzheimer's Society, 148 Corks Road, Tikipunga, Whangarei.
COST: A donation of \$3-00 per person per meeting is requested toward the cost of Hall hire, supper and the production and distribution of "Amokura".

ALL WELCOME

PROGRAMME TO October 2017

AUGUST

- 10 MEETING – 7-30p.m.
- 5 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
- 15 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

SEPTEMBER

- 14 MEETING – 7-30p.m.
- 2 & 30 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
- 19 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

OCTOBER

- 12 MEETING – 7-30p.m.
- 28 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL – Date to be advised.
- 17 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE	Anne McCracken	438-1145
SECRETARY	Ruth Crockett	435-0954
TREASURER	Kevin Hayes	437-6470
REGIONAL RECORDER	Tony Beauchamp	436-2224
REGIONAL REPORTER	Vacant	
AMOKURA EDITOR	Hilton Ward	946-0074

Previous Issues of Amokura - <http://www.osnz.org.nz/regnews.htm>

MARCH

The Northland Region AGM was held at the March meeting with the positions above elected.
Also of note –

- Regional Recorder:- Tony Beauchamp
- West Coast Beach Patrol:- Prue Cozens
- East Coast Beach Patrol:- Janet Snell
- Whangarei Harbour Census:- Tony Beauchamp

Kaipara Harbour Census:- Janet Snell
Bird Recovery:- Prue Cozens

Heather O'Brian then presented a very interesting slide show of birds that needed naming. Most of the photos were of birds some distance away or at odd angles which made identification difficult. This show caused much interesting discussion that was enjoyed by all. All birds were identified.

APRIL

As there was no guest speaker we had general discussion around sightings.

MAY

This was a most interesting meeting where Steve Tonnie talked about the Marunui Conservation Trust. This is a private trust that owns and manages a large block of land on the South side of the Brynderwyn Range near Mangawhai. Founded in 1987 and is the largest QE2 conservation trust in Northland. Their Mission : To preserve all flora and fauna.

JUNE

Anne McCracken gave us all an update on some of the more interesting discussion that came out of the Birds New Zealand Annual Conference.

Such as:

- The council will seek artists designs for a new logo for Birds New Zealand as we move into more modern times.
- Next year the conference will be at Waitangi in Northland. Les Feasey will be the convener.
 - Council awarded Janet Snell a Meritorious Service Award as follows. Thank you Janet and well done.

Note that the next Kaipara Census will be on November 18th. Contact Janet Snell if you can help.

Dayna Davies and Wendy Ambury then gave an account of their big day counting birds and also some of Dayna's youth camp experiences. See her story below.





Birds New Zealand
MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD
2017

Janet Snell

This award is given in recognition of Janet's contributions to ornithology and to the work of the Society, including

- dedicated and tireless service as Regional Representative for both the Northland and Far North Branches since the 1990's
- after moving south, she encouraged the Northland members to assist the Far North branch who were experiencing a period of low membership
- actively participating in many field projects, including shag colony surveys, Beach Patrols, Whangarei Harbour Census, North Kaipara Census, NZ Dotterel and Pouto Lakes Surveys, Fairy Tern trust member and often camped out during these field events

President

Stories - Adventures – Yarns – Sightings

Scott Brooks from Ngunguru has been having a really interesting time observing the Godwits at Te Maika Spit over the past months.

Ngunguru observations by Scott Brooks

28th February 2017

Our local Whimbrel having a pow-wow with 2 Bar-tailed Godwits this morning about their imminent departure sometime in the next couple of weeks. Also on the small sandspit in front of Ngunguru School this morning were 24 Godwits, 12 Banded Dotterels, 8 NZ Dotterels, some Variable Oystercatchers and a few Red-billed Gulls.



16th March 2017

I was at Ngunguru School Sandspit this morning with David Thomas checking out the Bar-Tailed Godwits when we noticed one of them had an orange flag with 'HUS' on it. I've been watching the Godwits for the last few months now and none of the 34 I've seen over that time have had flags or bands. So possibly this one is a new arrival that is having a pitstop before they do their massive migration north.



I sent the details to Adrian at Miranda Shorebird Centre and he replied saying it's the first time this Godwit has been seen in NZ. And he confirmed it was definitely flagged in Victoria, Australia. This bird is 1.25 years old. Hatched July 2015
23rd March 2017

Was watching our local Whimbrel yesterday when I saw it nearly straighten it's top bill out. I know Bar-Tailed Godwits have this flexibility in their upper bill and have seen this on several occasions but wasn't aware any other NZ birds did this. From researching this ability is called 'Rhynchokinesis' and is an ability possessed by some birds to flex their upper bill or rhinotheca. This is only known in some cranes, shorebirds, swifts and hummingbirds.



26th March 2017

Most the Bar-Tailed Godwits that roost on the Ngunguru Sandspit departed yesterday on their epic journey to the top of the Northern Hemisphere (Alaska, China etc) to breed and raise their chicks. There are still a few left that aren't yet breeding age birds, who will over-winter here till the others return in September. The local Whimbrel is still here as well at the moment.

For those of you who read my post about the Godwits leaving and were wondering what the Whimbrel bird was that I mention, here's a shot I took recently of the stunning local Ngunguru Whimbrel. These are a scarce bird in NZ with only about 70 whimbrels occurring in New Zealand annually (they migrate

from the Asia area), so to have one in Ngunguru is very fortunate - and apparently there was even 2 of them here the year before.



27th March 2017

Awesome so many people seem interested in these fascinating birds. The most Godwits I've seen during 2017 spring/summer roosting at Ngunguru was 34. So while most have now migrated there was still 6 there this morning and the Whimbrel. This included 1 coloured up godwit (they turn dirty orange when they're breeding) who wasn't here the other day so assume it flew off and has come back (and will probably leave again shortly).

3rd April 2017

Another great session today hanging out with our local Whimbrel in Ngunguru at it's high tide roost. Had a couple of Bar-Tailed Godwits to keep it company.



Shore Bird Count at Ngunguru - 11th February 2017

A Shore Bird count at Ngunguru sand spit and lower estuary was undertaken by a group of 5 enthusiasts on Saturday February 11th. The count is part of a seasonal inventory of shore birds in New Zealand conducted by the Ornithological Society and for the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society and takes in the highlighted areas on the map. This count recorded a total of 251 birds. This is only similar numbers that the same period in previous years.

The weather was fine with slight South East wind. At high tide the birds were gathered on the beaches.

At lower tide levels, the birds are out feeding on the sand/mud flats and it's more difficult to get an accurate count.

Variable Oyster catchers (indigenous, regionally significant) are the usually the most abundant birds sharing our bit of coast; total – 49 including a number of juveniles stood still to be counted this February. Still down on the average of 61. They were spread about over all areas of Te Maika Spit, Pi Manu and the Ngunguru foreshore. Bar Tailed Godwit (20) with one Whimbrel keeping them company. New Zealand dotterels (indigenous, nationally vulnerable) are also resident and 24 were counted. The average being 22. Of note was the 14 Banded Dotterel on Te Maika. Black Backed Gull – A very high number (58). Red Billed Gull (25). Caspian Tern (4) Welcome Swallow (8) Pipit (5) White Faced Heron (2). Mallard hybrid (3). White Fronted Tern (4). Sparrow (2). Skylark (2). Pied Shag (8). Myna (2).

With 19 species counted today we are fortunate to share our beaches and estuary with so many species indigenous and native birds. Please be aware of the birds, and give them a wide berth, when walking along the beaches or crossing the dunes.



The next photos clearly show a dog foraging on the sandspit along the collapsing bank on the Ngunguru side. The photo after that is of an Oystercatchers nest under that bank. Nests such as this will be disturbed by foraging dogs. Now that Pi Manu (The Sandspit) is Department of Conservation land no dogs are allowed there.

Thank you to everyone: Hilton Ward, Adrian Gilbert, Scott Brooks, Darlene Buckley and Malcom Pullman





Ocean Beach - 15th April

Heather O'Brian and Anne McCracken visited Ocean Beach where they observed this Pipit and a Blue Long Tailed Butterfly.



Fairy Tern News

Summary of breeding results for 2016 - 2017 season.

(2015 – 2016 season in brackets)

TOTALS	Eggs laid: 19 (14)	Eggs hatched: 7 (7)	Chicks fledged: 6 (4)
Waipu	Eggs laid: 2 (2)	Eggs hatched: 1 (2)	Chicks fledged: 1 (2) <i>(Infertile eggs replaced with 2 eggs from Papakanui. One failed to hatch. The other hatched and fledged but has since been lost)</i>
Mangawhai	Eggs laid: 4 (5)	Eggs hatched: 4 (3)	Chicks fledged: 4 (2) <i>(One egg failed to hatch. Replaced with egg from Papakanui via Te Arai; hatched and fledged successfully)</i>
Te Arai	Eggs laid: 2 (1)	Eggs hatched: 1 (0)	Chicks fledged: 0 (0) <i>(Infertile eggs replaced with 2 eggs from Papakanui. One transferred to Mangawhai. Remaining one hatched and disappeared.)</i>
Pakiri	Eggs laid: 0 (0)	Eggs hatched: 0 (0)	Chicks fledged: 0 (0)
Papakanui	Eggs laid: 13 (6)	Eggs hatched: 1 (2)	Chicks fledged: 1 (0) <i>(5 Infertile eggs, 2 eggs lost, 4 transferred to Te Arai, Mangawhai and Waipu. 2 relocated to the infertile pair at papakanui. 1 hatched and fledged.)</i>

A rather disappointing season with only 5 chicks confirmed as surviving. Elaine Lagnaz. The warden team leader, has seen 13 New Zealand Fairy Terns on the Kaipara recently, including 2 of the chicks from Mangawhai.

Some observations from Janet Snell's trip around East Cape



Lake Rotorua – 15th Feb 2017:

Scaup – 500 plus. Black Swan, Red Billed Gull, Mallard Duck.

Whakatane River – 15th Feb 2017:

Pied Shag – 37. Black Backed Gulls – 35. Red Billed Gulls. Little Shags – 3. A few Grey Ducks, Black Shag – 1

Owhiwa Harbour – 16th & 17th Feb 2017:

Heard Banded Rail, Heard Morepork and Shining Cuckoo. Birds seen: Black Backed Gull, Fantail, Red Billed Gull, Sparrow, Pied Stilt, Variable Oystercatcher, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Weka, Black Shag, Spur Winged Plover, Pukeko, Banded Dotterels, Swallow, White Fronted Terns, Caspian Tern, New Zealand Dotterels.

Waiotahi River Outlet – 18 th Feb 2017:	Pied Shags – 36, White Faced Heron – 8, Black Backed Gulls – 46, Weka
Lottin Point – 20 th & 21 st Feb 2017:	Black Backed Gull, Magpie, Red Billed Gull, Pied Shag, Pigeon, Kingfisher, Morepork (Heard), Skylark, Tui.
Te Araroa Camp – 23 rd Feb 2017:	Red Billed Gull, Little Shag, White Faced Heron, Paradise Duck, Grey Duck, Spur Winged Plover, Grey Warbler, Pied Shag, Myna, Pied Stilt, Sparrow, Canada Geese, Starling, Magpie, Chaffinch, Black Swan.
Anaura Bay – 24 th & 25 th Feb 2017:	New Zealand Dotterel, Kingfisher, Bellbird, Red Billed Gull, Black Backed Gull, Pied Stilt, Fantail, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Tui, Canada Geese, Thrush, Sparrow, Silvereye, Myna, Grey Warbler, White Fronted Terns, Greenfinch, Whiteheads
Mahia Peninsular – 27 th & 28 th Feb 2017:	Australasian Harrier, Kingfisher, Pukeko, Pied Stilt, Turkey, White Faced Heron, Magpie, Variable Oystercatcher, Blackbird, Pheasant, Myna, Yellowhammer, Goldfinch, Grey Warbler.
Hinemaiaia River in one small patch of bush halfway between Taupo and Turangi 5 th Mar 2017:	Fantail, Californian Quail, Bellbird, Silvereye, Grey Warbler, Tomtit, Whitehead, North Island Robin.

Something we noticed from our observations was the lack of Blackbirds seen. The most enjoyable birding experience was the walk in the bush following the Hinemaiaia River and seeing so many of these little birds with the exception of the Robin of which we only saw one.

Janet Snell

Little Black Shags Fishing at Pahi – May 20th

The tide was about $\frac{3}{4}$ in as I looked out the window I noticed a flock of Little Black Shags come flying low across the water and all land in the little bay just below the house. I counted 42 as they all settled on the water in a tight group. They soon began swimming together quite fast in a tight group keeping their heads under water, chasing small fish towards the shore.

All I could see at this point was the black, wet shiny backs of all the shags moving through the water. The shags were having a feast swallowing the fish and taking off again, heads under water moving back and forth very fast. Then they all turned together towards a pile of chopped branches partly submerged and took off at high speed twisting and turning like a group of synchronized swimmers obviously chasing small fish again. The shags at the back of the group kept flying and landing in the front of the group. I guess to get the first pick of the delectable morsels swimming in terror trying to evade their enemy, and all of the shags having great success at catching these little fish.

Then a single spoonbill flew in. It took great interest in the shags activity and proceeded to fish at the back of the group of shags. It too caught little fish in its bill and continued to follow the shags sweeping its bill continuously to and fro through the water and seemed determined not to miss out on any of the left overs. This fishing frenzy lasted about 15-20 minutes. The shags soon took off to another part of the water front with the spoonbill in hot pursuit. After another foray in the bay the shags took off all together heading south past the wharf.

I was told by a local resident that at this time of the year you often see much bigger flocks, up to 100 or more of Little Black Shags fishing in the bay by the wharf.

The spoonbill continued its fishing along the waterfront in peace and quiet.

Janet Snell

photos from Heather O'Brien, one of our members – she was surprised to see no gannets which are normally present in numbers at a 'boil-up'. also were present: caspian terns, white fronted terns, little black shags. We think these are all fluttering shearwaters. All these photos taken from the shoreline.

Heather O'Brien – Waipu Cove - May 5th

At Waipu Cove yesterday there was an amazing "boil up."

Kahawai chasing bait fish, birds chasing bait fish. They were all over the bay and at one stage they were very close to the shore.

Lovely to see.



Dayna's Adventures

OSNZ Young Birders Camp (Part 1)

Day 1

Urupukapuka held a lot of surprises! Our bags were checked for mustelids, rodents, plague skinks & argentine ants – we didn't want to accidentally introduce these to the pest free island!

On arrival, we were met with a chorus of bird song and curious birds such as saddleback, tomtit, white head, tui, fantail, North Island Robin & more. We were taught 5-minute bird count methodology and put this into practise while on the island. Back at camp, we quickly got used to the cheeky Weka

wandering around however their calls were a little harder to differentiate with kiwi at night. We listened to various kiwi and were soon able to identify them.



Day 2

We travelled north west to 90 mile beach, an exquisitely wild beach that ran further than the eye could see. On the beach patrol we came across multitudes of birds e.g. Blue Penguin, Black Backed Gull and Skua. On our return journey, we stopped in at Awanui where we photographed a colony of 141 Royal Spoonbills resting in trees. (I'd been chasing one in Ngunguru to get a photo for months!) That evening we waited at night in the long grass focussed on a lonely stump – a barn owl emerged – not very impressed with its audience it promptly flew off.



Day 3

While the rest of the crew went on a pelagic from Tutukaka, I stayed at camp and spent time with several mentors – those one on one sessions were amazing! I learnt the correct way to band birds, this is something I would like to take further and do in my future! My fellow birders found the pelagic rewarding. Some of the things they sighted were black petrel, campbell albatross and flesh footed shearwater amongst others! George Hobson shared the following photographs. That evening the team were exhausted!



Day 4

It's amazing after a few short days just how close those 11 strangers had become, how much I had learnt in their fellowship, with the help and support from all the mentors that contributed. I will forever be grateful for their generosity and would like to say a special thank you to Anne – as I feel without Anne's help I wouldn't have had this amazing opportunity.



Sightings Count Sheet

Bird	Number	Place	date	Name
Pied Oystercatchers	41	Whananaki North	22-May-17	Ruth & David Crockett
Male Chaffinch	1	"	"	"
Red Billed Gulls	9	"	"	"
Pied Shag	1	"	"	"
Spur Winged Plovers	15	"	"	"
Black Backed Gulls	3	"	"	"
Banded Dotterel	2	Johnson Pt Reserve	13-May-17	Heather O'Brian
Blue Duck	1	Kepler Track	5-Jun-17	Anne McCracken
Northern Royal Albatross	4 ~ 5	Tairoa Head	7/06/2017	"
Southern Royal Albatross	1	"	"	"
Northern Giant Petrel	2	"	"	"
Black Petrel	2	"	"	"
Otago Shags	Lots	"	"	"
Yellow Eyed Penguins	12	"	"	"
Brown Creepers	6	Kepler Track - Rainbow Reach	5-Jun-17	"
Dunnocks	3	Dunedin	7-Jun-17	"
Bellbirds	2	Dunedin	6 & 7 Jun 17	"
Little Blue Penguin	1	Tairoa Head	7-Jun-17	"

NATIONAL WADER CENSUS - NORTH KAIPARA

Compiled by Janet Snell

Date: 12th November 2016

Tide Height: m

Time:am/pm

Weather: Variable winds.

	Borcks	Onetri	Ngamotu Coffee Point	Batley - Tanoa	Tinopai	Pahi- Whakapirau	Ruawai	Tainuihae- Kellys Bay	Okaro Creek	TOTAL
Black shag							2			2
Pied shag					1	12	2			15
Little black shag										
Little shag					1					1
White-faced heron					16	2	20	43		81
White heron										
Reef heron										
Royal spoonbill					3				NOT	3
SI pied oystercatcher					8	4	10	157		179
Variable oystercatcher					5	99		1	COUNTED	105
Pied stilt					20		10			30
NZ dotterel										
Banded dotterel		ROOST	NOT							2
Wrybill										
Pacific golden plover		NON								
Spur winged plover										
Turnstone	EXISTENT	SURVEYED	SURVEYED							
Lesser knot										
Grey duck										
Asiatic whimbrel										
Bar-tailed godwit				1100+			22			1122
Black-backed gull				5	1	10	12			28
Red-billed gull										2
Caspian tern							2			2
White-fronted tern				95		34	16	12		157
Canada Goose				2						2
Little tern										
Cattle egret										
Black swan										
Paradise Shelduck										29
Mallard/Grey Duck							4	6		15
TOTAL	0	0	0	1285	143	106	83	158	0	1775

PARTICIPANTS: P. Cozens, P. Smith, J. Snell, J. Hawken, J. Hudson, J. Pyke, P. Yardley,

June 2017 Harbour Counts

Date

17/06/2017

tide height

2.4 Marsden

	Site	tide	point	saturated
		Ruakaka estuary	Waipu Estuary	Whangarei harbour
1	Banded Dotterel	0	6	84
2	Bar tailed godwit	0	4	258
5	Black-tailed Godwit	0	0	0
6	Curlew Sandpiper	0	0	0
7	Far eastern curlew	0	0	0
9	Red Knot	0	0	16
11	New Zealand dotterel	3	29	48
12	Pacific Golden Plover	0	0	0
14	South Island pied oystercatcher	0	12	1032
15	Pied Stilt	4	14	548
16	Red-necked Stint	0	0	0
17	Sharp tailed sandpiper	0	0	0
18	Spur Winged Plover	0	13	34
20	Turnstone	0	0	0
21	Variable oystercatcher	97	130	321
22	Asiatic whimbrel	0	0	0
23	Wrybill	0	0	0
26	Black shag	0	0	0
27	Black-backed gull	70	15	859
28	Black billed gull	0	0	0
29	Caspian tern	0	3	10
31	New Zealand fairy tern	0	0	0
32	Australasian gannet	0	0	0
37	Little Black Shag	0	2	0
38	Little shag	0	3	0
39	Little tern	0	0	0
40	mallard	0	0	23
42	Paradise shelduck	0	0	0
43	Pied Shag	2	54	28
47	Red billed gull	20	11	3482
48	Reef Heron	0	0	1
50	Spoonbill	0	27	48
58	White Faced Heron	2	4	62
59	White Fronted tern	4	9	1
63	White Heron	0	0	0
64	Little Egret	0	0	0
65	Cattle egret	0	0	0
66	Shore plover	0	0	0
67	Grey Plover	0	0	0
68	Black swan	0	62	12
69	Glossy ibis	0	0	0
70	Crested tern	0	0	0
71	Australasian bittern	0	0	0
72	Goose	0	0	0
73	Oriental Dotterel	0	0	0