



Birds New Zealand  
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*Birds New Zealand*

*Otago Region Newsletter 8/2018 August 2018*

### **Ornithological Snippets**



On 20th July at Allan's Beach Janet Ledingham found another **Variable Oystercatcher** family comprising 2 all black birds and a pied one, with one of the adults being banded.

Tom Waterhouse reports that there were 5 **Great Crested Grebe** at Katiki Reservoir on 10th August, all adults.

The **Black-billed Gulls** in Balclutha were starting to occupy their colony from the first week in August, with about 400 birds present. There are also several hundred **Red-billed Gulls** in the area, so it will be interesting to see how many stay to breed this year.

Suzanne Schofield counted 79 **NZ Pigeons** at Kaitangata on 12th August – they were feeding on willow buds by river over a stretch of 1-200m.

Jane Forsyth saw and photographed an abnormal **Silvereye** at Lake Hawea township on 20th July. It had an elongated upper mandible and anomalous coloration, but was associating with normal birds.



Finally on 25th July the Otago Daily Times reported massed gatherings of **Starlings** at Shiel Hill, Dunedin.

Any interesting reports to [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)

compiled by **Richard Schofield**

## Notices and Business

### Don't forget Special eBird talk



We are pleased to welcome members of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to Dunedin. They are visiting here for a large international conference on databases of biodiversity being held at the Museum. They generously offered to speak to us and help us get up-to-date on the features of eBird. So we have scheduled an extra Special Indoor Meeting on Wed 29th August at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room. The team members will speak on “The eBird Enterprise - Engaging the Global Birding Community for Science, Conservation, and Fun.”

Hope a goodly number of you can make it (it's the 5th Wed of the month so shouldn't clash).

We use eBird mainly to record our own bird sightings and data from our projects, and as a consequence of this eBird collects vast amounts of data that can be used for science and conservation. eBird can generate graphs, maps, and detailed analysis tools to help scientists better understand patterns of bird occurrence and the environmental and human factors that influence them.

Steve Kelling and Jessie Barry have always had a personal interest in birds and bird watching, and their careers have lead them to develop Internet applications that engage bird-watchers in citizen science projects focused on birds. Steve is head of the eBird team at Cornell Lab of Ornithology that is, among other things, developing unique computer science strategies

to analyze the distribution and abundance of wild bird populations. Jessie is Program Manager for the Macaulay Library section of eBird and looks after audio collections and the smart phone ID interface, Merlin.

**Mary Thompson**

## **Guided Bird-watching Walk at Dunedin Botanic Garden, 10 – 11 am Sunday, 9th September**

Birds NZ suggested this event as a follow-up to the Bird Identification Hort Talk I am giving the previous Friday lunchtime. The Botanic Garden people are happy to promote this Guided Birdwatching Walk with newspaper advertising as well as Facebook etc. Could any Birds NZ members with Facebook or Twitter also advertise this event. Thanks.

Thanks very much to those folk who have offered to be guides for this event. Given the lack of booking, we have guesstimated about 40 visitors with up to 10 people per group. This should be a fun activity and we will meander around the lower garden for up to 1 hour, helping people to spot birds and identify them. If you would like to help – the more the merrier – let me know [maryt@actrix.co.nz](mailto:maryt@actrix.co.nz) or phone 464 0787

If this event is a success and popular, then the Botanic Garden is likely to include in their programme 4 seasonal Bird-watching Walks lead by Birds NZ. This could be an excellent way to increase our profile and enthuse more people about birds.

**Mary Thompson**

## **EBird news**

### **Taxonomic Update**

Anyone who has used or visited eBird in the last few days (hopefully everyone!) will have noticed a few changes, mainly in the species order. Once a year a taxonomic update takes place in eBird – usually this is relatively minor, involving species which have been “lumped” or “split. This may mean your list totals vary slightly, especially if you have travelled widely. This year has also seen some significant changes to the taxonomic sequence, so for example gulls and pigeons have been brought forward, while herons and raptors have moved further down the list. There may be some discrepancies in the short term, while the changes bed in (one or two of us have inadvertently seen Mallard/Mexican Duck!), but these should sort themselves out soon, so don’t panic! **Richard Schofield**

## **Pelagic Bird Tour**

Fierce Elegance Charters, is running a pelagic bird trip from Carey's Bay on 6 October.

*"The coastal waters off Dunedin host an incredible variety of pelagic species. You won't want to miss our trip on 6 October to see many different species of pelagic birds including albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, shags, terns and gulls. Joining us is renowned ornithologist Peter Langlands who is a staunch conservation advocate and actively involved in habitat protection for birds."*

**Saturday 6 October | 8am – 1pm. (Weather day 13 October)**

Tickets \$120, spaces limited to 12.

Email for bookings [fierce.elegance@xtra.co.nz](mailto:fierce.elegance@xtra.co.nz)

<https://www.facebook.com/fierceelegancecharters/>

**Andria Scott**

## **Contributions to this Newsletter**

I can't guarantee that it will stay that way but my email seems to have decided that contributions to this newsletter over 1mb are as important as the rugby results, the latest Trump tweets and the trials of being a Hollywood megastar and consequently now deems to make them available for publication. Last month's request to keep contributions below 1mb seems no longer necessary. So everyone out there who has contributions over 1mb that they couldn't organise to send in this month (hence surely the slimness of this month's newsletter) can now send them to me for the September edition.

**Derek Onley**

## Programme 2018

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

- Wed August 22** Indoor Meeting. Bruce Robertson on “Why we are banding silvereye in the Botanic Garden.”
- Wed August 29** Special Indoor Meeting. Steve Kelling and Jessie Barry from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, on “The eBird Enterprise- Engaging the Global Birding Community for Science, Conservation, and Fun.”
- Wed September 26.** Indoor Meeting. Nic Rawlence on “Taxonomy and biological heritage of NZ birds.”
- Wed October 24.** Indoor Meeting. Denise Martini on “Evolution and conservation of the endangered New Zealand Kaka.”
- Wed November 28.** Indoor Meeting. Luke Easton on “Anti-predator behaviour of NZ Robins.”
- Sun December 2** Summer Wader Count. High tide 12.42pm. Counters are needed at Aramoana, Hoopers, Papanui Inlets and Blueskin Bay. Please confirm participation with [peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz](mailto:peter.schweigman@xtra.co.nz)

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Many thanks to all who contributed.

Contributions for the next newsletter by 19th September please.