

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington Region Newsletter

OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

June 2017

<http://osnz.org.nz/> and <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>

Greetings

The most notable event on the avian calendar in the last three months was the Annual Birds New Zealand conference at Te Anau, held over the Queen's Birthday weekend. A summary of the conference is included in this newsletter and further information will be included in the upcoming Birds New Zealand magazine. Changes to the organisation are being investigated to increase membership. The Annual Youth Camp, now in its third year is becoming a central feature of the programme to attract younger members to Birds New Zealand. This newsletter contains a report from George Hobson who attended the Youth Camp in the Bay of Islands, in April. The 2018 Camp will be held in Rakiura / Stewart Island.

Regards

Geoff de Lisle, Wellington Regional Representative, Birds New Zealand (OSNZ)

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

WHERE and WHEN

Meetings are held at Te Papa's collections building, 169 Tory Street. Go up the steps/ramp and across the carpark.

First Monday of the month, 7.45pm.

Monday 3rd July

'Tracking penguins through the winter'. Dr David Thompson, Sea Bird Ecologist, NIWA

Monday 7th August

Colin Miskelly will talk on his recent survey of petrels in Dusky Sound.

Monday 4th September

Michael Szabo will talk on his recent trip through the Pacific on a Heritage Expedition tour.

Birds New Zealand Annual Conference – Wellington 2019

The annual Birds New Zealand Conference will be held over Queens Birthday weekend in 2019. Further details will be forwarded to members on a regular basis. There will also be a request to members to help with the running of this event.

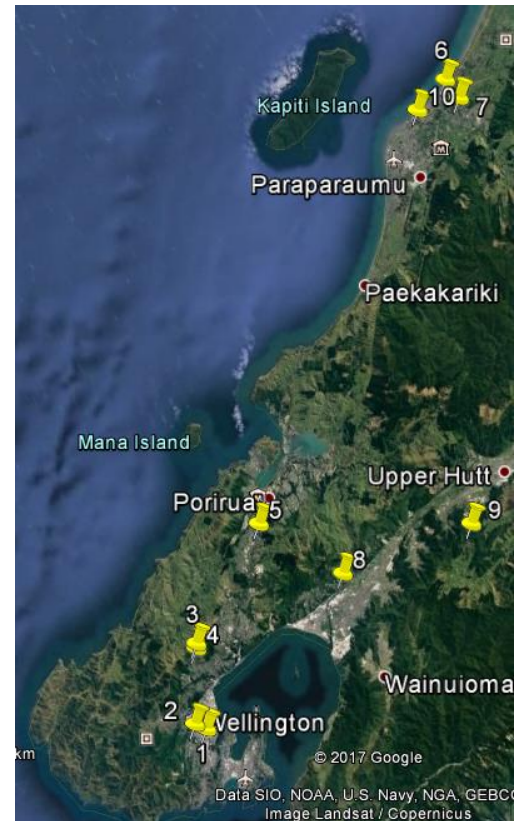
Report of Monthly Meetings

Backyard Bird Observations

The April meeting was devoted to members summarising the bird observations made in their backyards. Results were presented by 10 members whose locations are shown in the map. They covered a range of different habitats - central and urban Wellington City, Tawa /Linden, the Kapiti Coast, Melling in the Hutt Valley and semi-rural Upper Hutt.

Members used a range of different procedures for recording birds on their property. Colin Miskelly records on a calendar on a monthly basis for every species he observes but does not routinely include the number of each species. Importantly he enters his monthly records into eBird. Dallas Bishop also records her observations on a calendar and has since 2015 has recorded daily observations. Increasingly these records include the number of each species.

A number of factors affected what species were recorded in the various properties. For example, kaka were observed in the 4 Wellington City backyards (1-4) but not on any of the other properties. This highlights the effect of Zealandia as a source of bird species not commonly seen in the remainder of the Wellington Region. Forest birds, whitehead and tomtit were only recorded on the Upper Hutt property which is immediately adjacent to the Waitako Reserve. A more detailed summary of these records will be provided at a later date.

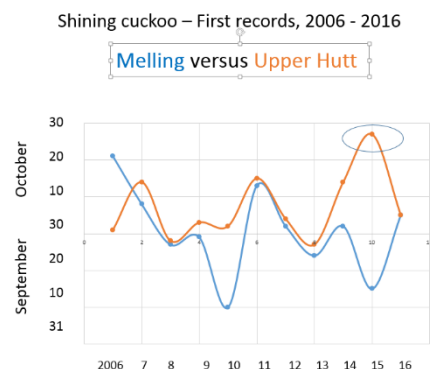
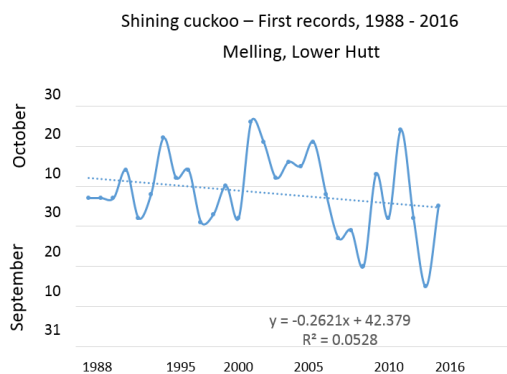


Alan Munro summarised his shining cuckoo observations recorded at his Melling home between

1988-2016	Mean	Range
No. of observations/season	29.6	8-70
First record/season	8 th October	15 th September to 31 st of October
Last record/season	3 rd January	22 nd November to 1 st of February

1988 and 2016. The table is a summary of his observations and the two graphs demonstrate annual variation in first records for the season. The graph on the right compares 10 years of records from Alan's home in Melling and Dallas Bishop and Geoff de Lisle's

property in Upper Hutt highlighting the value of combining backyard observations to address questions such as the migration of shining cuckoos.



Megan Jolly, Veterinary Resident, Wildbase, Institute of Veterinary, Animal & Biomedical Sciences, May meeting.

There are a large number of different species of coccidia which are generally host specific. They are unicellular parasites which often infect the intestine. A large proportion of birds are infected with coccidia but under natural conditions they seldom cause overt disease. However, where there are stressors such as overcrowding, quarantine for translocation or habitat changes, coccidia can cause clinical disease, even death. Megan Jolly, a veterinarian from Wildbase, Massey University summarised her investigations on coccidiosis in Takahe, including the diagnosis and treatment of this disease. Enumeration of coccidia (oocysts) in faeces is a commonly used method to diagnose coccidiosis, to assess the need for treatment and to evaluate drugs used for treatment. An interesting and important finding of Megan's studies is the finding of some clinically normal Takahe with high levels of coccidia in their faeces. Takahe with high levels of coccidia in their faeces are treated with Baycox (Bayer, **toltrazuril**) yet Megan's studies indicate that more work is required to assess the efficacy of this drug in Takahe. Megan finished her talk with a summary of the activities of Wildbase at Massey University which is devoted to the study and treatment of disease in wildlife. Recently Wildbase has moved into a new, purpose built facility devoted to wildlife diseases.

http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/centres-research/wildbase/wildbase_home.cfm

Call for applications: Birds NZ Student Travel Grants for the 2017 Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC)

Birds New Zealand is offering financial support to students planning to present at the upcoming Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) held in Geelong from 8 to 11 November 2017

All details and an application form are available on <http://www.osnz.org.nz/AOC-Student-Travel-Grant>. Applications close on 1 August 2017. For AOC details and online registration go to <https://aoconference.wordpress.com/>.

Regional Representative: Geoff de Lisle (04) 527 0929 or osnzwelly@gmail.com

Regional Recorder: Nikki McArthur nikki.mcarthur.101@gmail.com

Birds New Zealand Regional Roundup: Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929
osnzwelly@gmail.com

Shag Survey - Geoff de Lisle

Mist netting – Matu Booth, manager@ngamanu.co.nz

Kapiti Island News

Visitors to Kapiti Island will notice some changes at Rangatira where the DOC staff are stationed. The Whare has been painted in colours chosen to reflect its earlier life. It was built in the early 1880s and is famous for previously being the home of Richard Henry one of the early wardens. Richard Henry was a pioneer in the conservation of birds in New Zealand and his efforts to save Kakapo and Kiwi from the predation by stoats in Fiordland. Throughout its history



it has undergone a number of changes with the veranda being removed and subsequently replaced, changes to the windows, re-piled and raised, and the chimney largely removed. The other notable change on the Island has been the upgrading of the Wilkinson track. This is work in progress - new culverts are being installed and the track is being upgraded with large amounts of gravel.



On the avian front there has also been some interesting changes on Kapiti thanks to a couple of falcon. Large piles of kereru feathers are evidence of their work. Hugh Robertson reported seeing the falcon and evidence of kereru kills at Wharekohu at the south end of the island. The picture (below) of kereru feathers was taken at Rangatira. There is also evidence of a pukeko being a casualty to the

falcon. The presence of falcon has changed the behaviour of kereru and kakariki at Rangatira. Prior to the falcon, kereru and kakariki were seen in large numbers feeding on the grass at Rangatira. This feeding is now not without considerable dangers and this activity has diminished.



One of the falcon was seen by Leon Berard (DOC) harassing / attacking the lone magpie at Rangatira. This bird has now disappeared.

The above photograph was taken on the beach at Rangatira. The larger bird is most likely a female and the smaller bird a male.

Brown Booby – Kapiti Island

On the 16th of April on a day trip to Kapiti Island Peter Hodge observed a brown booby, flying close to the beach at Rangatira. On the same day, Dallas Bishop and I saw the same bird, however we did not see Peter. We were staying on the island as volunteers for DOC. On return to the mainland we learnt that Peter had also seen the brown booby. A joint Unusual Bird Report has been submitted to the Rare Birds Committee and their judgement is pending.

Features of brown boobies can be seen in the accompanying photographs which were taken on Kapiti.

- Dark chocolate brown
- Sharply cut off at mid –breast from white under surface of body
- Centre of underwing white
- Legs yellow or greenish yellow.



Photograph, Dallas Bishop

Similar species, juvenile gannet.

In recent years there have been a number of reports of brown boobies, especially in the northern parts of the North Island. Seen regularly at the Murawai gannet colony.

Other sightings of Brown Boobies from the lower North Island and South Island includes
Cooper's Lagoon, Canterbury, 1987
Foxton Beach, 2004
Rabbit Island, 2012

Brown Booby in Wellington Harbour

First sighted by H. Secker perched on rock between Ngauranga and Petone. Seen again on 11th of May, 1975 on the Petone foreshore, 30th of May at Mahina Bay and as late as 13th of June. Found dead at Worser Bay on June 20th. This was the 4th specimen from New Zealand. Peter Gaze, Notornis (1975) 253-255.

Geoff de Lisle.

Bird Snippets

Southern Giant Petrel white morph, Cook Strait **Michael Szabo** » Mon Mar 27, 2017
A photo of a white morph Southern Giant Petrel photographed over Nicholson Trench in

Cook Strait last week on 23rd March has been posted on the "New Zealand Birders" Facebook page
BirdingNZ.net

Royal Spoonbills: Woburn, Lower Hutt, **MJSee**
» Wed Mar 29, 2017

Between 1 and 6 Royal Spoonbills have been perching downriver of the Ava rail bridge in Lower Hutt. I have seen them in passing on the morning (7.30am) and evening (4.30 - 5pm) train commute to Wellington, and was able to confirm their presence using a telescope about 4 weeks ago.

Sometimes they're on a downed willow tree midstream, at others on shingle that becomes visible when the tide retreats. I've seen them most often at mid to high tide, and noticed them in January. They're often surrounded by a flock of Black Backed Gulls and some Paradise ducks

Wellington City biodiversity, **Colin Miskelly** »
Wed Apr 05, 2017

Red-crowned parakeet on my morning commute, opposite home in Mt Cook (1 km from top of Tory St). BirdingNZ.net

Several black Fantails - Mana Island
CMKMStephens » Mon Mar 27, 2017

Went on a day trip to Mana Island, organised by Friends of Mana Island (I'm a member), despite the mediocre-to-terrible weather on Sunday 26 March.

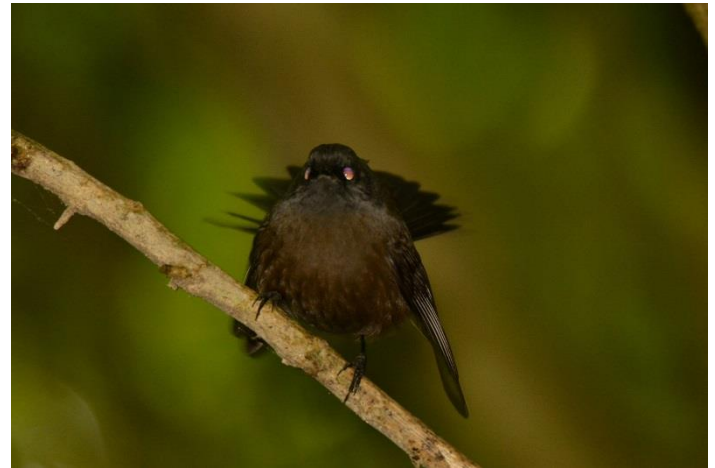
Having never seen a dark morph fantail, I was surprised to see not one, but several. Apparently dark morphs are less common in North Island, so perhaps this is noteworthy. Only managed to get a few ok photos from a distance of the dark morphs, and blasted one in the forest straight in the face with the flash. The 'normal' fantails were more obliging.

The overall population of fantails also seemed to be very high, and certainly more noticeable than my previous trip in October 2016, but it may have been that most of the island's population were congregating at the beach to eat the flies on the seaweed.

By the beach - this one was chasing a 'normal' fantail

Other points of note

- Large raft of c.100 Fluttering Shearwaters in the strait.
 - Australasian Harriers numerous and flying low. Several startled by my presence.
 - Ridiculous numbers of starlings.
 - Takahē doing well. Met about 14 individuals including 2 juveniles.
 - Gecko life is phenomenal. Never been anywhere else comparable yet.
- BirdingNZ.net



Photographs, Christopher Stephens

Colin Miskelly » Tue Mar 28, 2017 Interesting to see that black fantails are 'back' on Mana Island. I have visited several times per year since 1992, and they were reported regularly in the late 1990s, including a family group (black adult and fledglings) on at least one occasion. The last record I have was one on 28 Sep 2000. I did not see any during an overnight trip last August, when I undertook bird counts over much of the island.
BirdingNZ.net

CMKMStephens » Tue Mar 28, 2017

I didn't see any (black) fantails on my previous trip back in October either. BirdingNZ.net

berle » Thu Mar 30, 2017

During my time on Mana between September and December last year we would fairly consistently see a single black fantail feeding near the boat shed. I don't recall noting any in other parts of the island. BirdingNZ.net

Black-fronted dotterel, Waikanae Expressway
Alan Froggatt, ~15 Apr, 2017

Seen on the western edge of the second new pond alongside the Expressway south of the interchange on Te Moana Road, Waikanae.

Lone Bar-Tailed Godwit Pauatahanui, **ledzep**
Tue Apr 25, 2017

One lone Godwit at Motokaraka Point with a good variety of other birds including at least 14 Spoonbills feeding at low tide. Banded Dotterels near the bird hide on the left from the main entrance. Fernbirds heard calling near the main entrance following their release earlier in the week. BirdingNZ.net

Jim_j » Tue Apr 25, 2017

Yes Fernbirds also heard and seen in several spots this morning right across the reserve - fingers crossed for a successful translocation!. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington Kakariki

Iain_Thorpe » Tue May 02, 2017 1:14 pm

I saw two red-crowned Kakariki in Dasent Street, Karori at dusk last night. Locals tell me that they roost in the large palm tree there and are seen regularly. BirdingNZ.net

Kaka Hazelwood, South Karori, Rosemary Heather, 7 May, 2017

My son-in-law reported that while taking his dog for a walk in the morning seeing 8 kaka in a bare-leaved deciduous tree.

Unid birds Berhampore Wellington, **ledzep** »
Sat May 20, 2017

I hate these "what birds is that" mysteries but I'm reporting it here in case it is something interesting and others want to check it out. Friends who are reasonably bird educated (they know the difference between Kakas and NZ Pigeon and Kakariki and Rosellas etc) report a flock of 5 parakeet type birds in their garden, Berhampore Wellington (a few km from the zoo in Newtown). White underparts with brownish-red breast sharply defined from white lower parts. Light brown back. Slightly larger than blackbird with long tail like a parakeet. They couldn't identify them from NZ or Australian bird books. I have no idea - leaning towards cage escapees. I've told them to get a photograph next time. I'll report back if the mystery is solved. BirdingNZ.net

Cook Strait Pelagic Trips

The trip scheduled for the 13th of May was cancelled due to adverse weather and sea conditions, but is being re-scheduled for early August. Members booked on the cancelled trip will be offered places on this re-scheduled trip. If any places become available on this trip I will let members know by email.

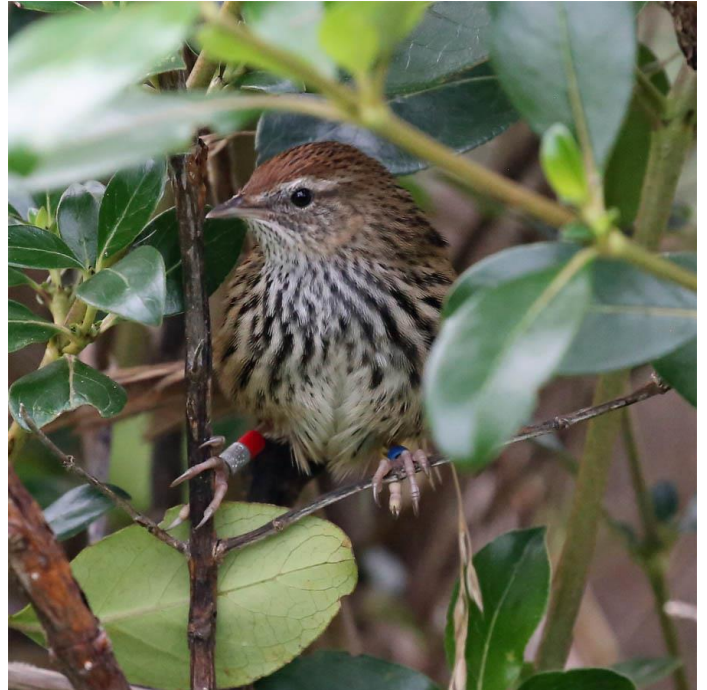
The second trip took place on June 18th. Good weather conditions and a great selection of albatrosses made for a highly successful trip. A full report of the pelagic trips will be included in the next newsletter. Given the very positive feedback from members these trips will become a regular feature of Wellington Birds New Zealand.

Fernbird Translocation to Pauatahanui - update

Pauatahanui Inlet. Twenty two birds were released into the reserve in April and have subsequently been reported by a number of people. Birds New Zealand will help in a post release survey which will take place later in the year when the fernbirds have paired up and formed territories. Please submit your fernbird observations to eBird as well as reporting them to pauatahanuireservecommittee@outlook.com.

ledzep » Sun May 07, 2017

Found two pairs of Fernbirds this morning at Pauatahanui. As seen in the photos, colour band on the leg of one of the pairs red on right leg and blue on left leg. One of the other pair birds had blue and yellow on the right leg. Very hard spotting the bands on the birds, as is getting a photo, but it is good to see them at Pauatahanui wildlife reserve. BirdingNZ.net



Photograph, Duncan Watson

Using Gene Drive to Produce Only Male Offspring - Could Eventually Eliminate a Pest Species, Predator Free by 2050: Engineering a Solution

Professor John Knight, University of Otago,
7.30 pm Friday July 28th 2017, Aro Valley Hall, 48 Aro St Wellington.
Entry by gold coin donation, Another Aro Valley Restoration Project initiative

Prof John Knight will also speak at Carterton Events Centre
@ 7.30 pm on Thursday 27th July 2017

The gist of gene drive is adults that are fully fertile but only producing male offspring will drive this character through the entire population and ultimately cause it to crash. Mice are considered a good species to try this on initially as, being small, they are hard to trap and reinvade pest free areas more easily than any other pest species. The effect of gene drive would be gradual. Predators such as stoats and ferrets that depend on the diminishing target species for food will slowly reduce in numbers so prey switching to birds should be minimised.

Today we rely on poisons, traps, disease and shooting to reduce pest numbers. There are always a number of bait shy, trap shy and disease resistant animals that survive and help the population recover, requiring the whole pest eradication process to start again. With gene drive a species could be humanely taken to extinction.

Mynas at Karori?!

Recently there has been some discussion on BirdingNZ.net on records in eBird of mynas being present in Karori. The following is the response from Nikki McArthur who is the eBird reviewer for the Wellington Region.

Nikki McArthur » Tue Jun 06, 2017

I have only just caught up with your post regarding these myna records, thanks very much for bringing them to our attention. I agree with Jake and suspect these are ID or data entry errors that have crept through eBird's data filters. I am the eBird reviewer for the Wellington Region, so have placed these Wellington City myna records "under review" and have requested additional documentation (photos or a description of birds seen) from the original observers. As long as these records remain "under review", they will no longer be visible on the eBird species map, and if no supporting information is forthcoming, they will eventually be invalidated, and will never re-appear.

FYI, I can confirm that the remaining myna records for the Wellington area are credible, namely:

- A single bird that was present in the suburb of Tawa from ca. 1988 - 1993, and was reported by multiple local OSNZ members over that time*
- A bird, or birds present in Lower Hutt between 2003-2005, based on two reports by local OSNZ members at the time*

There are also a number of records for the southern Wairarapa, however many of these are historical, dating back to the 1930s. There are two exceptions, one record from Greytown from 2016, and another from Martinborough (two birds that I saw right outside my tent in the local campground) in Feb 2017.

If you are ever browsing eBird and notice any other odd-looking bird records for the Wellington Region I would be grateful if you could either PM me or post details on BirdingNZ. That way, we can keep tidying up these erroneous records and ensure the Wellington Region eBird dataset is as accurate as possible. BirdingNZ.net

Te Anau Birds New Zealand Conference -3-5 June, 2017



A most successful Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) conference was held over Queen's Birthday weekend. There were two days of lectures, including contributions from Wellington members – Colin Miskelly presented his findings of a recent survey of petrels in Dusky Sound, Fiordland; Johannes Fischer summarised his Taxonomic information on the South Georgian Diving petrel from Whenua Hou (Cod Fish Island); Graeme Taylor reviewed

the successful recovery of the Chatham Island petrel; and Ian Armitage gave an update on the digitisation of the beach patrol records. The abstracts of the conference are available on the Birds New Zealand website - <http://www.osnz.org.nz/publications/Conference%20Abstracts>. For those who were unable to attend the conference some of the talks will be repeated, in an expanded form at upcoming Wellington Birds New Zealand monthly meetings.

A series of workshops were held on Sunday morning. The banding / mist netting workshop was over subscribed and highlights the widespread interest in Birds New Zealand in gaining skills and experience handling birds. The eBird workshop run by Nikki McArthur concentrated on extracting data from eBird. There are now large numbers of observations in eBird which contain valuable information bird distribution in New Zealand.

Eglington Valley Field Trip

While the temperatures struggled to get much over zero, the weather on the Monday when the field days were held, was beautifully fine. There were a number of options for the field trips. Dallas and I went on a trip up the Eglington Valley with Lloyd Esler our driver, raconteur and very knowledgeable guide. While the mohua and rock wren were elusive there were a number of avian highlights complemented by some spectacular scenery. Numerous riflemen were present



Two kea appeared at the carpark at Monkey Creek. They were busy attempting to remove windscreen wipers and any other fixture that might yield to their substantial beaks. Fortunately the "tourists" were well behaved and not feeding them. A generous faecal sample showed evidence of seeds but no exotic foods sourced from tourists.



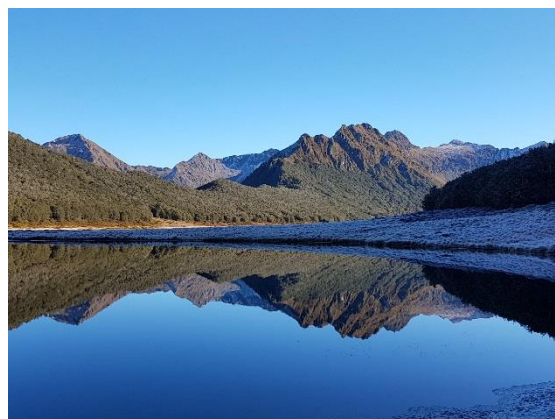


Other field trips included a trip to the Kepler track, a visits to Pomona Island a pest-free island on Lake Manapouri, the Murchison Mountains and the wetlands at Awarua Bay which is principal the wintering ground for South Island New Zealand dotterel. Geoff de Lisle

Murchison Mountains Field Trip

Ian Armitage reports.

“Led by three local Dept. of Conservation staff a field party of Birds New Zealand members attending the annual society conference were thrilled and greatly privileged to be able to make a visit for about 5 hours into Takahe Valley in the Murchison Mountains in Fiordland National Park on Monday 5th June. The weather was clear and calm but it was also bitterly cold, about -10 deg. C. What an incredibly beautiful and pristine part of New Zealand. Scrub and tussock on the valley floor were covered with heavy hoar frost and the lake was partly frozen. The group which included three Wellington members travelled by helicopter across Lake Te Anau, landing near Lake Orbell (altitude 890 m) quite close to where takahe were rediscovered by Dr. Geoffrey Orbell in 1948. The DoC staff were keen to make a transmitter and health check on one bird but although it was located it couldn't be caught. An enjoyable tramp along the nearly 2 kilometre scenic northern shoreline of Lake Orbell led us to another pair of birds and this time one was caught. Named ‘Hunua’, she was raised at Burwood Takahē Breeding Centre, near Te Anau in spring 2014, banded on 10th March 2015 and released with several others into the



Lake Orbell, Murchison Mountains



Murchison Mountains on 17th December 2015. A health check made by DoC staff showed that she is in good condition and has increased in weight since release from 2.51 Kg to 2.6 kg. We enjoyed good opportunities to view ‘Hunua’ and when released she took off “like a rocket” into the nearby forest! Only two other bird species were seen during our visit, one lonely scaup and a pair of paradise shelducks, both on Lake Orbell. Not surprisingly because of the winter conditions the beech forest is quiet and no bush species were seen or heard.” Photographs, Ian Armitage.

Birds New Zealand Youth Camp Trip Report

George Hobson reports

During the April school holidays, myself and 11 lucky teenage birders got the amazing opportunity to head up to the Russell Peninsula, and spend a week going to some fantastic birding locations in the upper North Island.

Day One: 9.30am I arrived at Wellington airport, checked in my bags and on the plane, Auckland bound it was.

After a pleasant flight our plane arrived in Auckland, and on the runway were about 20 NZ Dotterels!! What an awesome welcome.

Shortly after meeting up with everyone at the baggage carousel, we boarded our two vehicles and started making our way up north, with very little traffic!

Our first stop on our way to Russell was Waipu Estuary, which is a fantastic birding spot south of Whangarei – and after 10min of scanning we picked up a **Fairy Tern** on the mudflats, having a snooze. After everyone else had caught up and got a good view through the scope, we moved on to our second spot, a couple of ponds with the possibility of Little Grebe, but no luck.

We arrived at our accommodation just in time for our (fantastic!) dinner and a short presentation about Urupukapuka Island (aka Project Island Song) which we would be visiting the next day.

Day Two: Our alarm went off at 6.00am signalling it was time to get up and get ready for breakfast - however after getting changed we heard a different call, a tick... **Fernbird!** So we scurried down to the reed area across the road, 3 fernbirds all calling from the reeds. What a great start to day 2.

After breakfast we piled into our two vehicles and embarked on the short drive to the ferry, where we would leave for Urupukapuka Island, a pest free island in the Bay of Islands. We did a quick biosecurity check and on board it was.

On the ferry a couple of us keen ones spent the trip scanning the horizon for any sea birds, and bingo – we each got a couple of Buller's Shearwaters, along with some Fluttering Shearwaters.

After about a half hour of smooth sailing we arrived on the Island. Making our way off the beach, we had a brief introduction to today's plan, split off into groups and made our way into the Island to do 5 Minute Bird Counts.

We all learned some new skills on these counts and got to practise the things we already knew. On the island we saw Saddleback, Whitehead, Swallow, Tomtit and many more interesting birds.

We made our way back down to the wharf perfectly in time to catch the ferry back.

It was a bit more windy this time, so we actually had really great views of both Buller's and Fluttering Shearwaters from the back of the boat, as well as a short glimpse of multiple Bottle Nosed Dolphins!

Day Three: The alarm went off just before 6 that morning, because we had a plan! We wanted to find some Banded Rails on the nearby Boardwalk that went straight through some mudflats – and boy we were in luck. 9 Banded Rails later we headed back for breakfast.

Wednesday was a packed day, first we headed up north to the Waitangi Wetlands, where we found multiple NZ Dotterels, Oystercatchers, Kingfishers and best of all, a single Reef Heron! The day was going well so far!

Piling back into our vehicles, we settled in for the long drive... to Ninety Mile Beach where we would commence our beach patrol.

About a three hour car ride later, we made it to the beach. Without even getting out of the car I spotted our first bird washed up on the beach – after inspection of it, it was decided it was a skua.

After that exciting discovery, we split off into our teams and started walking the beach. Among the birds found were a Little Penguin and Black-backed Gull. After meeting back up, we collected all the specimens, had a bite to eat and set up some scopes for a bit of seawatching – we got good views of both Fluttering and Buller's Shearwaters, and I saw a live Skua flying along the horizon!

Satisfied we'd finished at the beach, we made a move to a nearby sewage pond, where we had a quick scan, but nothing much other than many Paradise Shelducks and Mallards – onwards!

Stopping for some dinner we were prepped for our last and potentially most exciting stop of the day... a farm in Kaitaia for... **Barn owls!!** Arriving just on nightfall, we were directed by Kevin to clamber down the side of the hill, to sit entirely still (in the slightly wet grass) and wait, and wait, and wait, and finally a white figure glided silently into the tree in front of us.

Just like that, we were headed back to Russell.

Day Four: 5.45 am, our alarm went off and we headed down to the boardwalk. We found the rails and the fernbirds. Breakfast time.

After breakfast we started the drive to Tutukaka, where our boat would launch.

After resting up on the long drive from Russell to Tutukaka, we were ready to go – so we made our way onto the boat. Once onboard, we had a quick safety briefing, and started to out of the harbour.

We got out of the harbour and instantly found a massive raft of Fluttering Shearwaters surrounding a fishing boat, hoping for a meal of fresh fish. No luck for them today.

After about 45 minutes of sailing we reached the sugarloaf, a couple of large rock islands where a decent number of gannets nest, and, most excitingly Grey Ternlets, but not this time.

Making it to our chumming spot, luckily we had plenty of chum to attract sea birds, and it worked! Within minutes we had 3 Black Petrels circling the boat.

Once the chum started, we had Flesh-footed Shearwater, Fairy Prion, Black Petrel, Campbell Albatrosses and most excitingly, NZ Storm Petrel.

After a few hours of chumming, we started to head home. However there was one more birding stop, the Sugarloaf. As we approached there were about 25 little grey birds hawking over the surface of the water, getting closer..... GREY TERNLETS!!

Day Five: Our last day on camp.

Headed up for brekkie where we were informed of the plan: Practise some 5 min bird counts around the campsite.

After teaming up, we started on our rotation of the 4 count stations. The most interesting birds recorded were Fernbird and Brown Teal.

About an hour later, we all congregated back in the main room, had a chat about the birds we saw, handed in our count sheets and onto the Auckland bound van it was.



But wait! We couldn't finish off the day without one last birding stop, even in the pouring rain – Marsden Point for a Bittern hiding in the bushes, which almost everyone caught a glimpse off through binos.

In no time at all we were back at Auckland airport, and I was on a plane back to Wellington.

So, massive thanks to Geoff and OSNZ Wellington for sponsoring my trip, and Sharon and her team for organising such an amazing camp. Photograph, Black-browed mollymawk, George Hobson.



Standing on one leg

Many bird species throughout the world spend long periods standing on one leg. The two most common theories for standing on one leg are to reduce muscle fatigue or to regulate heat loss. A recent study from the USA (Chang & Ting, 2017) has provided mechanical evidence that flamingos can support their body on one leg with little active muscular force. Through the use of cadaveric flamingos they demonstrated that the birds could passively support their weight on one leg without any muscle activity and adopt a stable joint posture seen in live flamingos. In contrast, the cadaveric flamingos could not be stably held in a two-legged pose. The authors concluded that flamingos stand for long durations on one leg with little need to expend energy. This finding is in contrast to the observational studies of Anderson



and Williams (2009). They showed that while flamingos prefer resting on one leg to two regardless of location, the percentage of birds resting on one leg is significantly higher among birds standing in the water than among those on land. Furthermore, they demonstrated a negative correlation between water temperature and the percentage of flamingos standing on one leg indicating that standing on one leg aids flamingos in regulating their body temperature. A New Zealand study (Harker & Harker, 2010) also investigated the questions of why birds stand on one leg. Their observational study included mallard, pied stilt, black swan, white-faced heron as well as flamingos. In contrast to other studies on flamingos where higher temperatures were experienced, the New Zealand study observed an increased in the proportion of flamingos and pied stilts standing on one leg increased as the temperature increased (8 to 18°C). A possible explanation for these findings was standing on one leg is associated with sleeping. Harker and Harker speculated that unipedal behaviour may be associated with unihemispheric slow wave sleep where the bird can at the same time sleep and still be aware of potential threats such as predators. Photograph, one-legged pied stilts, Albert Lake, Melbourne, Australia, May 2017.



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Harker, T. D., & Harker, R. F.. (2010). **Why do birds stand on one leg? – A pilot study of exotic and native New Zealand birds.** *Notornis*, 57(4), 173-177. Lena H. <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/system/files/Harker%20%26%20Harker%202010.pdf>

Te Papa Blog



A new bird for New Zealand – Cox's sandpiper

Posted 8 May 2017 by [Colin Miskelly](#) & filed under [Biodiversity](#), [Birds](#), [Photography](#), [Research](#), [Science](#) The latest addition to the New Zealand bird list is a legendary shorebird so rare that there are times when it is likely that none exist anywhere in the world. Bird expert Colin Miskelly introduces the Cox's sandpiper. Sandpipers are small wading birds that separate people with a serious interest in bird identification

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