

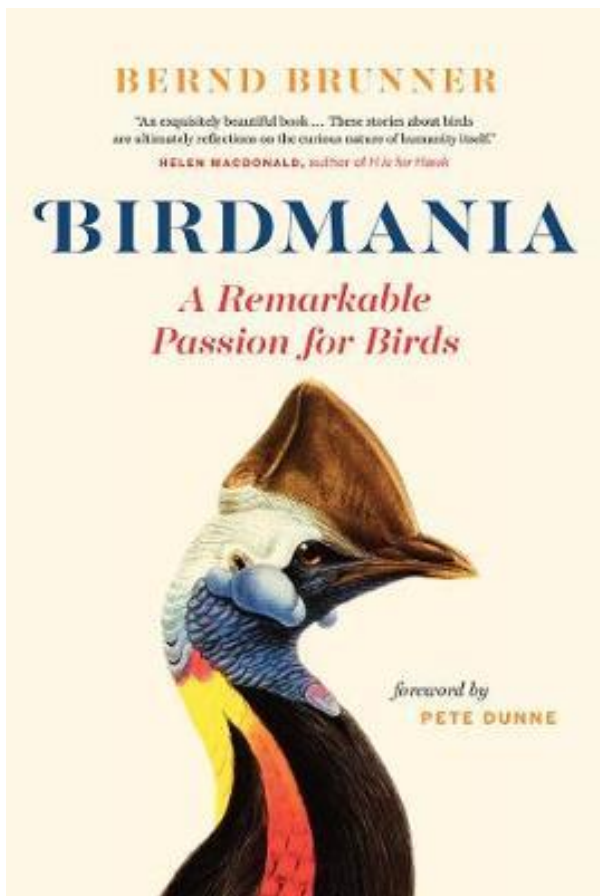
Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 1/2019 January 2019

Books of ornithological interest added to Dunedin Public Libraries' collections in 2018

As kingfishers catch fire : books & birds, by Alex Preston & Neil Gower
Australasian eagles and eagle-like birds, by Stephen Debus



Birdmania : a remarkable passion for birds, by Bernd Brunner

In addition to well-known enthusiasts, such as Aristotle, Charles Darwin, and Helen Macdonald, Brunner introduces readers to Karl Russ, the pioneer of "bird rooms" and lover of the Australian budgerigar, who had difficulty renting lodgings when landlords realised who he was; George Lupton, a wealthy Yorkshire lawyer, who commissioned the theft of uniquely patterned eggs every year for twenty years from the same unfortunate female guillemot who never had a chance to raise a chick; Ambrose Pratt who leaves us a beautiful example of a devoted relationship between a lyre bird and an Australian hermit; Mervyn Shorthouse, who posed as a wheelchair-bound invalid to steal an estimated ten thousand eggs from the Natural History Museum in Tring; and

Tibbles the 19th century cat, who belonged to the lighthouse keeper on Stephens Island in New Zealand, and who collected many of Lord Walter Rothschild's bird samples.

Birds art life death : a field guide to the small and significant, by Kyo Maclear
 The birds at my table : why we feed wild birds and why it matters, by Darryl Jones
 Birds in pictures, by Markus Varesvuo
 Birds new to science : fifty years of avian discoveries, by David Brewer
 Birds New Zealand : beauty like no other. 2nd ed., by Paul Gibson
 Birds of the Photo Ark, by Joel Sartore
 Birdstories : a history of the birds of New Zealand, by Geoff Norman
 Bowland Beth : the life of an English hen harrier, by David Cobham
 Far from land : the mysterious lives of seabirds, by Michael Brooke
 How to be an urban birder, by David Lindo
 The hunters : the precarious lives of New Zealand's birds of prey, by Debbie Stewart
 The meaning of birds, by Simon Barnes
 Mrs Moreau's warbler : how birds got their names, by Stephen Moss
 New Zealand birds in pictures, by Kimball Chen
 North on the wing : travels with the songbird migration of spring, by Bruce M. Beehler
 Papa Goose, by Michael Quetting
 A parliament of owls, by Mike Unwin & David Tipling
 The ravenmaster : my life with the ravens at the Tower of London, by Christopher Skaife
 The seabird's cry : the lives and the loves of puffins, gannets and other ocean voyagers, by Adam Nicolson
 The secret life of the owl, by John Lewis-Stempel
 Songs of love and war : the dark heart of bird behaviour, by Dominic Couzens
 Waiting for the albino dunnock : how birds can change your life, by Rosamond Richardson
 Wilding : the return of nature to a British farm, by Isabella Tree

Alan Baker

Ornithological Snippets



Shining Cuckoo numbers for the summer received a significant boost on 2nd January when Maureen Howard saw and photographed up to 5 at Whare Flat folk festival.

A visitor from the opposite direction was a **Brown Skua** at Nugget Point on 11th January. Meanwhile Colin Miskelly came across a dead **Grey-backed Storm Petrel** among tussock above Route Burn falls on 21st December. The bird was a fledgling and appeared to have been killed by a stoat. Colin suggests this adds to the evidence that the species breed in the area. The ODT reported on 26th November **Otago Shag** chicks being blown off their nests and on to the rocks.

<https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/north-otago/infant-otago-shag-chicks-blown-nests>.



Other unfortunate seabirds included a juvenile **Grey Petrel** found by Derek Onley and Nic Beckworth on Warrington beach on 2nd December and a **Northern Giant Petrel** at Aramoana by Adrian Hall on 7 January.



There have been a few interesting waders on the Catlins River Estuary at Cabbage Point. A **Grey-tailed Tattler** present on 2nd December was accompanied by a 2nd bird on 9th January, while a single **Wrybill** there on 2nd had become 3 on 8th January, when Sharon Roberts visited; she also saw 1 **Turnstone**. Nic Beckworth also found a **Turnstone** and 2 **Wrybill**



at Warrington in December.

On 1st December Janet Ledingham obtained a series of photos of the white-headed **Blackbird** at the corner of City Rd and Queens Drive. She



also forwarded these photos of a leucistic **Tui** from somewhere in the Sounds. In a similar vein, an albino **Chaffinch** was reported at Beacon Point, Wanaka, by Philip Munns on 1st December.

Reports

to cluthaphotos@gmail.com.

compiled by **Richard Schofield**

Latest Tomahawk Scaup Scoop

Up to 26 scaup and then 42 were on Tomahawk Lagoon through spring and summer 2018-19.

In spring, 26 scaup were frequently seen, often in two groups that separated and rejoined. Two couples appeared to be mated pairs. There was conflict between the pairs, calls and rushing lunges. On 14 November a female scaup with nine ducklings swam from NE into Raupo Cove, where night calls come from. 21 November, four adult scaup far out in lower lagoon. Upper lagoon had 16 adults and 24 ducklings. There was a female with seven ducklings, a male and female with 4 ducklings, a female with 2 ducklings, a group of 12 adults surrounding another nine ducklings. Similar numbers in summer.

In summer a probable nest site was found under overhanging carex, with two pairs fighting over it. Scaup fly low over other carex sites. On December a ginger feral cat, possibly pregnant, was stalking scaup near carex. It ran into a concrete cave.

Paradise shelducks are already moulting. Four tame paradise shelducks were released by the Wildlife Hospital, according to Eric the Canadian who lives nearby. They are imprinted on people, too much like pets.

Andrew Austin

Bird Scaring Venue Planned at Tomahawk

A proposed noisy commercial venue operating until after midnight would disturb birds of Tomahawk Lagoon, with Dunedin City Council (DCC) releasing their decision about Friday January 25 2019.

Limited Notification of Application for Resource Consent, Application number LUC-2018-219, was secret for a long time. Only a few near neighbours were notified and given rights to object. Three opposed. Seven gave consent, including government departments administering land. Some near neighbours are empty sections with no houses yet. Birds and the lagoon are near neighbours, and no one asked them. By early December, word was out and opposition spread beyond Tomahawk.

Where? Go to lower Tomahawk Lagoon outlet. Look NE to the old cottage under hillside macrocarpas. It is Lochend Farm, 261 Tomahawk Rd. Below it are large old buildings just above shore, and close to remnant bush protected by QE11 covenant. Access is the paper road past the old railway wagons and along the NE shore. New owners, Mark and Julie Caldwell of Lochend Limited, intend turning the old buildings into a venue for “weddings and other special events.” Nearby and opposite shores are heavily used by birds for feeding, nesting, sleeping, and moulting. The venue’s main intended season is summer late into Saturday nights, when 700++ Paradise Shelducks are moulting on that shore and opposite shore by the famous fallen tree. Plus all the other birds who do not need noise, loud music, and convoys of 30 to 40 vehicles including buses running until after midnight. Development intended includes upgrading shore road for increased traffic, plus landscaped outdoor areas and a car park. A digger widened the shore road and dug in the raupo channel long before we knew anything. Lochend Ltd intends repeated gatherings of 150 people with outdoor music, lights, and vehicles until after midnight. For “no more than eight days in any calendar month,” which could mean eight days sequentially or two parties per week over a four week month. No restriction on how many events per day.

The venue would disturb birds and people. It is offensive to biodiversity so close to a significant wetland that is a Wildlife Management Reserve. DCC are going to approve it, according to DCC planner, John Sule. The same DCC who publicise Dunedin as a wildlife capital, and promote Wild Dunedin Festival when we show people lagoon birds. Where is Otago Regional Council (ORC) on this, the same ORC who pretend to care about the already degraded lagoon water quality?

Some 56 bird species use Tomahawk Lagoons. Lochend Ltd’s proposed venue and increased traffic access is on lower lagoon shoreline. Most rare vagrants and migratory birds are first seen at lower lagoon, and frequently only there. More paradise shelducks moult at lower lagoon (700++) than anywhere else in Tomahawk. Many birds feed, nest, and raise young there. White herons are often only at lower lagoon, including very close to Lochend. Little owls nest in a stone wall directly behind the building intended as a venue, and in macrocarpas in front of it. More wading birds nest at lower lagoon than upper lagoon, where such nests are usually absent. All these birds live there day and night. Then there are rare ones.

That intermediate egret from Australia, who was tired and needed a rest. Twice, a white winged black tern from Asia, which hawks insects.

The bittern is gone since 2011, driven out by invasive development on its territory and noise. It's home is now an illegal shed and household trash incinerator. There was a field where I could hear bittern from inside my house, and see paradise shelducks and spur winged plovers with chicks from my door. Long gone now.

“DCC planner Melissa Shipman... recommended the Lochend proposal be granted subject to conditions...no more than 150 guests from 9am to 9pm and 75 at other times...no outdoor music after 9pm and none at all after midnight. Guest and staff vehicles...should be restricted to 25 kmh...” (ODT 28/11/18). Lochend Ltd claims this makes their business unviable. Lochend applied for “...inside music turned off at midnight and all guests would leave at 12.30am.” Neighbours were already complaining about Caldwell's excessive speed past their houses on the access road, including towing wheelie bins behind a 4WD. I have watched their vehicles and guest cars driving the shore road at estimated 60kmh, as loudly calling shore birds and ducks flee. Easily photographed from the outlet with a big lens.

According to the Resource Consent Notice, “the application includes an assessment of environmental effects.” No it doesn't, as clearly stated by Lochend Ltd's consultant planner Allan Cubitt saying there was not at the DCC hearing on 14/12/18. Responding to opposition about noise and environment, “planner Allan Cubitt...thought acoustic and ecological surveys were not required, he said” (ODT 15/12/18). He rejected conditions recommended by DCC planners, said they made the business unviable.

DCC told me I couldn't object, because it's a limited notification. Opposition spread. At the hearing 14/12/18, a petition was presented from 38 Tomahawk residents. Neighbours Paul and Johanna Clark presented a succinct opposing submission, ranging from disturbance to people and wildlife to inevitable overcrowding and excessive traffic.

Dr Pascal Sirguy voiced opposition at the hearing and in a brilliant lay submission supporting Clark's, ranging over social and environmental issues. He spoke of noise in a “natural amphitheatre” reflected off the lagoon and into hill suburbs above. He presented a petition from 25

people in Spencer St opposing the plan, who should have been notified and allowed to submit on the application. DCC reserved their decision.

I talked with Chairman of Otago Peninsula Community Board, Paul Pope, who is interested. I had long talks with locals. On 21/12/18, I talked with DCC planner John Sule, who did his best to advise me. He said DCC's decision was due out 21/1/19 or 25/1/19. DCC's decision will be on their website, but I don't have internet. Then 15 work days are allowed to appeal against it. DCC treats it as a "controlled activity."

He said, "You can't appeal it unless you're a notified neighbour."

"DCC has to grant it. It will be approved. DCC has to approve it, subject to conditions," John Sule said.

"It's complicated, lots of people don't understand it," he said. I understand it, a deliberate tactic for developers and DCC to deny our rights to participate in our community. He advised waiting to read the decision and DCC conditions, and get legal advice before further opposition.

Hopefully, common sense prevails within a mad system and DCC's conditions stop Lochend Ltd's plan. We need to watch this, for the lagoon and birds.

Andrew Austin



Godwits at Hooper's disturbed by a Harrier. 2 December.

Paul Smale

Notices and Business

More Information on the New Zealand Bird Atlas, 2019 - 2024

You will have seen a brief article about the Bird Atlas in the latest Birds NZ magazine. I have recently received a discussion document about the design of the NZ Bird Atlas scheme and I thought you would like a bit more information about how planning for this exciting new national Birds NZ project is progressing.

Extract from letter from Birds NZ President, Bruce

The New Zealand Bird Atlas aims to measure nationwide patterns in bird distribution and abundance over a five-year period between 2019 and 2024. The bird distribution data we collect will build on our two previous Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand schemes, providing a unique, 45-year, national-scale view of how bird distribution has changed in New Zealand since the late 1960s. In addition, the bird abundance data collected will provide the first ever nationally-comprehensive picture of spatial patterns in bird abundance for New Zealand. For these reasons, the New Zealand Bird Atlas will act as a significant information source that will help guide conservation decision-making in New Zealand for decades to come.

The key important innovation over previous Atlases is that eBird will be used as the primary data collection tool. The New Zealand Bird Atlas will aim to collect multiple “complete checklists” for each habitat within each 10 x 10km squares over all NZ. Counts can be by transects, areas, 5 minute bird counts - whichever is most appropriate. Individual observers or teams will enter their data using eBird, preferably via the eBird smartphone app. or via the eBird website. eBird’s “explore data” pages can provide field observers with real-time updates on survey coverage and recent survey activity.

The scheme will be launched at the 80th Anniversary New Zealand Birds Conference in Wellington, Queen’s Birthday weekend 2019.

The Otago Branch is very excited about this new project and we will plan several ‘atlasing’ field trips later in the year: suggestions for areas to explore are welcome. But of course, data from your local patch is equally important to include.

Mary Thompson

Wild Dunedin Writing Competition.

Win \$1000 for 250 words about a memorable moment observing nature.

Entries close 14 Feb 2019.

See <http://www.wilddunedin.nz/a/ykr0vGp>

EBird news

In response to regular queries as to which kind of redpoll we have in New Zealand, Russ Cannings has provided the following summary.



"In regards to eBird, "we're working on it". It's obviously a confusing and somewhat controversial situation in NZ. Read:

<https://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=6453&start=10&highlight=lesser+redpoll> for more, but put simply the majority of redpolls introduced to NZ were likely to have been Lesser (*cabaret*) though this was in the days before they were considered a different species from Common (*flammea*). Some commons appear to have also got into the mix so the stock isn't apparently genetically pure. Even so, some recent studies suggest that all redpolls interbreed significantly in various parts of their circumpolar range which could lead to a big "lump" (which would help and simplify our NZ conundrum!)

It may be that eBird will lump them all anyway, but moving forward eBird NZ will probably stick with lesser (and will look at converting old common records) as that's probably closer to the mark than Common.

Hopefully this helps a little bit."

Richard Schofield

Paul Scofield has covered this issue fully back in a December post on the same forum (ed)

Post by Paul Scofield » Tue Dec 11, 2018

The species status of redpolls is confused both in NZ and in Europe. Some have suggested that the NZ population are hybrids of *flammea* & *cabaret*, some have questioned this. What we do know is that both taxa were probably introduced and both phenotypes certainly exist (although I freely admit that most look substantially like Lessers) however that is only part of the issue.

The papers of Fennell et al 1985 remains the most up to date assessment of the situation in NZ

[https://www.notornis.osnz.org.nz/system ... s_32_3.pdf](https://www.notornis.osnz.org.nz/system...s_32_3.pdf)

I quote “Some differences do occur between the Redpolls of other New Zealand regions but little is known (Fennell & Sagar 1985). The environment may influence population characteristics but, equally, differences between New Zealand and British Redpolls may be due to the founder effect of a limited genetic input into the New Zealand population. A study of biochemical differences between the two populations might provide further information.” This seems to support the conclusion that 1) things are complicated and 2) NZ birds are not classic “Lessers”

There have been several genetic studies of redpoll elsewhere but the most important recent study is here:

https://www.colorado.edu/lab/taylor/sites/default/files/attached-files/mason_and_taylor_2015.pdf

This is a complex issue but it can be summarised here:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mec.13244/abstract?campaign=woletoc>

<http://www.10000birds.com/are-redpolls-just-one-species.htm>

and

<http://www.10000birds.com/enjoy-your-redpoll-ticks-while-they-last.htm>

So the upshot of this and several other papers is that there is probably only a single genetically defined species of redpoll. If so this taxons correct taxonomic name would be *Carduelis* (or *Acanthis*) *flammea*.

The AOU voted on part of this issue (Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea* and Hoary Redpoll *A. hornemanni* into a single species) in 2017 see [url]<http://checklist.aou.org/assets/proposals/PDF/2017-B.pdf>

and

<http://americanornithologypubs.org/doi/pdf/10.1642/AUK-17-72.1>

Rather bizarrely they concluded “Despite the genetic and genomic data, however, we recommend treating *A. cabaret* as a separate species” a conclusion I find really very odd given the data and the fact that they accepted half the argument. Some have suggested that this proves that the

AOC committee is now heavily influenced by twitchers as this conclusion enables US twitchers to potentially add an extra taxon to their lists.

Sure we could add both putative taxa and a generic “Common/Lesser *Acanthis* ” to all NZ eBird filters but ultimately it may be futile if the lumping occurs as Mason & Taylors results suggest because eBird would clean these records up when the lump is official by calling them all Redpolls *Acanthis flammea*.

Nomenclature is the process (not the science) of giving a name to birds. Nomenclature is based in part on the sciences of taxonomy and phylogenetics but also combines a dash of interpretation and experience and a pinch of bloody-mindedness. Remember many phylogeneticists could not give a toss what birders call a particular bird taxa. They are driven by investigating the processes by which animals evolve not the size of their lists.

Some of these processes, such as introgression, make it impossible to humanly define a species and Redpolls are a brilliant example of such a case.

Twitchers that try to inflate their lists by jumping on the bandwagon of the latest papers conclusions have to understand that just because a paper is published does not mean it is correct nor that this is the final word on a subject. Also remember that what things are called determines whether anyone cares about their survival - the most responsible thing to do as a conservationist is to be conservative – if a taxon may be distinct treat it so and if it may not be distinct wait until multiple studies conclude the same thing.

Programme so far for 2019

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

Wed 27 February Indoor Meeting. Sara Larcombe on “The latest about the kakapo conservation programme.”

Sat 9 March Field trip to Styles Bush, Otago Peninsula. We have been asked to carry out a species survey this patch of restored private bush; meet at 32 Matariki Street at 9.30 am. Carpool leaving Anderson Bay carpark, Shore St at 8.30 am. Let Mary know if you intend to come, or for other transport arrangements.
Phone 464 0787 or email maryt@actrix.co.nz

Wed 27 March Indoor Meeting to be announced.

Wed 24 April Indoor Meeting. Kristina Smiley on “Hormonal regulation of avian bi-parental care; a study using zebra finches.”

Sat 27 April Tomahawk Lagoon Bird-watching, 10 to noon; our event for Wild Dunedin Festival; we plan to have telescopes to let the public see birds close-up and to help identify them, etc.
Contact Andrew if you can help; phone 454 5830

If you would like to talk at an Indoor Meeting, or if you have suggestions for speakers or topics, please let Mary know.

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com
Many thanks to all who contributed.

Articles, photos etc for next newsletter please by 20th February