

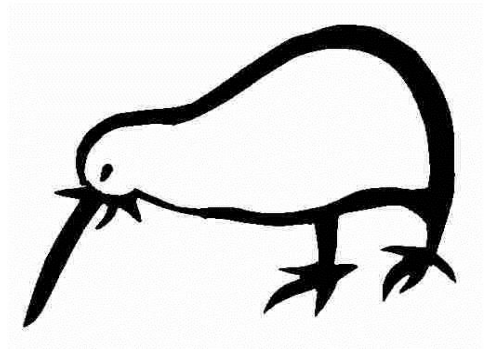
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Issue 38

April 2014

Photos:
Detlef Davies (DD)
Les Feasey (LF)
John Zaeschmar
Gary Little
Patrick Miller

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BIRDS NEW ZEALAND FAR NORTH REGION NEWSLETTER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

After 10 years as Regional Representative for the Far North, I have handed the position over to Les Feasey. We hope this will be a welcome change and produce new ideas, new venues for meetings and topics for birding activities. Les is an excellent photographer as will be evident from the pictures in this and the last issue. For the time being, I will stay on as Newsletter Editor and the other officers on our Committee remain the same. Although we have not had an organised wader count yet this year, there has been reasonable field activity among members both in the region and further south.



This **Erect-crested Penguin** was found on the rocks at Deep Water Cove near Cape Brett on 22nd February by those on an Ecocruz boat tour in the Bay of Islands. As it was being harassed by Black-backed Gulls, it was taken into care by the Bird Recovery Centre in Whangarei from where it was released in Otago after completing its moult. This species breeds on the Bounty & Antipodes Islands, well south of the Chathams. Photo: John Zaeschmar.

The Far North Regional Officers are:

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Regional Recorder Laureen Alston, 48a Riverview Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8747 lm.alston@kinect.co.nz	Treasurer Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8058 godbert@xtra.co.nz

RECENT EVENTS

13th Jan – Whangaroa Pelagic. See report on page 6.

15th April – Far North AGM. See Minutes on page 3.

PROGRAMME

Meetings will start at 7.30 pm unless otherwise stated, members \$2, guests \$3.

Wednesday 14th May – Indoor meeting, Paihia Village Hall.
Speaker – Robert Webb from the Whangarei Bird Recovery Centre.

Wednesday 11 June – Indoor meeting, Paihia Village Hall
June – Wader count. Date & details to follow by email.

Monday 16 June – Whangaroa Pelagic – afternoon to evening trip. Details to follow by email.

Wednesday 16 July – Indoor meeting, Christian Centre, Mangonui. Topic TBA.

Wednesday 13 August – Indoor meeting, Paihia Cruising Club. Topic TBA.



A very satisfied-looking NZ Pigeon photographed from Gary Little's window in Herekino

RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Compiled by Detlef Davies

These records cover the period from January to April 2014 unless otherwise stated. Contributors include Anthea Goodwin (AJG), Detlef & Carol Davies (DD, CD, DCD), Les Feasey (LF), Gary Little, Isabella & Derry Godbert (IG), Jenny Atkins, Kevin Matthews (KM), Gerald Messenger (GM), Patrick Miller, Ecocruz, Paihia, Sav Saville. **WP = Whangaroa Pelagic on 13 Jan.** **3KP = Three Kings Pelagic 7 – 10 March.**

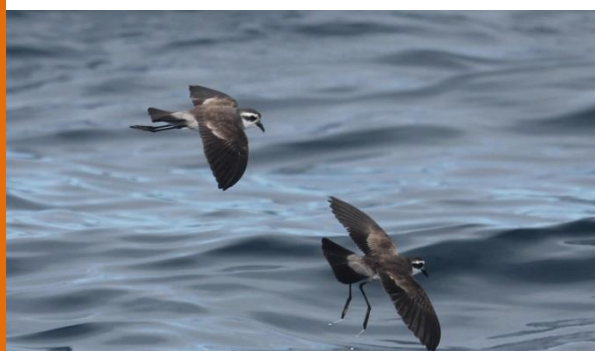
North Island Brown Kiwi – reported only from the usual sites.

New Zealand Dabchick – recorded from Lake Waiporohita & Lake Rotokawau east of Rangiputa.

Australian Little Grebe – 2 on Lake Rotokawau east of Rangiputa, 1 Lake Waiporohita, 6 on Lake Owhareiti 5 April (DD, LF).

Wandering Albatross – many on 3KP

White-capped Albatross – many on 3KP



White-faced Storm Petrels – very numerous on recent pelagics 13 Jan 2014 (DD)

BULLER'S ALBATROSS – breeding birds on Three Kings with fluffy chicks

Campbell Albatross – adult on 3KP

Albatross sp – one distant on WP, the only albatross that day:

Buller's Shearwater – 2 off Cable Bay on 30 March, common on pelagics.

Flesh-footed Shearwater – common on pelagics

Short-tailed Shearwater – 2 on WP

Fluttering Shearwater – often in some numbers off Cable Bay & Tokerau Beach, 75 around Howe Rock 2 Feb, lots on pelagics.

Hutton's Shearwater – at least one on WP.

Little Shearwater – 2 on WP

White-chinned Petrel – 2 on 3KP
Black (Parkinson's) Petrel – Only 1 on WP, many on 3KP
Fairy Prion – many on pelagics
Cook's & Pycroft's Petrel – 10+ on WP, few were Cook's, 1 or 2 Pycroft's.
BLACK-WINGED PETREL – few on 3KP
MOTTLED PETREL – a surprise sighting on 3KP of this southern species
Grey-faced Petrel – one well-grown chick in a burrow at Barbecue Beach, Moturoa Island on 25 Jan. Not a single one either on WP or on Three Kings trip.
White-faced Storm Petrel – 100 - 150 on WP, many on 3KP.
NEW ZEALAND STORM PETREL – 3 at chumming site or WP, several on 3KP.



Dead imm White-tailed Tropicbird - Great Exhibition Bay (Patrick Miller). Another was found in Oct 2011. Wouldn't a live one be nice . . .

Wilson's Storm Petrel – several on 3KP
Little Penguin – 6 on WP, no doubt others have been seen.
ERECT-CRESTED PENGUIN – one at Deep Water Cove (BOI) on 22nd February – see front page.
White-tailed Tropicbird – one found dead at Great Exhibition Bay on 21 April (Patrick Miller)
Australasian Gannet – 74 at the Ninepins 12 Jan, 90 diving at a 'work-up' Howe Rock 2 Feb (LF)
Little Black Shag – 45 in Mangonui Harbour on 15 April (AG)
White Heron (Great Egret) – 1 Unahi Wharf 7 Jan (DD), 3 present later (KM).
Little Egret – 1 at the Three Kings on the pelagic was very unusual.
White-faced Heron – one feeding 2 hungry youngsters at Mill Bay, Mangonui
Reef Heron – singles at Ahipara in January, Taipa in March, Waitangi in April, 2 Aurere Beach 22 Feb.
Australasian Bittern – Occasionally heard booming at Skudders Beach Wetland Reserve, Kerikeri.
AUSTRALIAN PELICAN – None in the Far North for a while but recent reports from the Wairoa River south of Dargaville.



Mute Swan – Lake Owhareiti, 5 April 2014 (LF)

Royal Spoonbill – 12 Unahi Wharf 7 Jan, 7 Rawene Oxidation Ponds 5 April
Black Swan – c.115 on Lake Owhareiti 5 April
MUTE SWAN – 1 on Lake Owhareiti with the Black Swans (DD, LF), very unusual in Northland.
Banded Rail – Juv found dead at Taumarumaru Reserve on 29 Jan, probably killed by stoat (GM)
Spotless Crake – sometimes heard from Marsden Cross track
Grey Duck – One with 6 young ducklings on Lake Ngatu 13 Jan (KM), up to.20 Lake Waiporohita, c.30 Lake Rotokawau (nr Rangiputa).
Australasian Shoveler – c.10 Lake Rotokawau east of Rangiputa, c.10 Rawene Oxidation Ponds 5 April

Grey Teal – 40+ at Lake Rotokawau (nr Rangiputa), 10+ Rawene 5 April
Brown Teal – 1 or 2 along Marsden Cross track after dark on several dates (CD)
Banded Dotterel – 3 Aurere on 22 Feb, 6+ Tapuaetahi 7 Jan
New Zealand Dotterel – Nesting at Tapuaetahi in early Jan; pair with 2 chicks Cable Bay 31 Jan. Post-breeding flock at Waitangi reached 44, often on the marae grounds or the golf course, 48 in Kowhai Beach 18 Jan & 94 there on 9 March (LF), 17 Aurere 22 Feb. Many other ones & twos, including 1 at Aroha (unusual).
Lesser Knot – 360 Kowhai Beach 18 Jan & same number there on 9 March (LF), many in breeding plumage.
Wrybill – 5 Tokerau Beach 17 March, 2 there on 30 March
Pacific Golden Plover – 4 Kowhai Beach 9 March (LF).
Turnstone - flock 47 at Kowhai Beach on 9 March (LF)
Bar-tailed Godwit – 73 at Aurere Beach 22 Feb (AG), 1500 Kowhai Beach 18 Jan, c.480 there on 9 March (LF), many reported to be in breeding plumage.
White-fronted Tern – some reports of over 100
Caspian Tern – 16 at Te Haumi, Paihia, 1 or 2 in other usual places
GREY TERNLET – c.100 at the Three Kings
POMARINE SKUA – adult on 3KP



Knot & Godwits Kowhai Beach (LF)



LONG-TAILED SKUA – sub-adult on 3KP

Kaka – pair reported from Whakaangi area

Shining Cuckoo – no reports, did they leave early?

Morepork – Chick from nesting box roosting with adult at Taumarumaru Reserve 7 Jan, 3 in ponga grove there 14 Jan (GM).

New Zealand Pipit – Reports from several coastal sites

Fernbird – reported from Skudders Beach Wetland Reserve, roadside at Otangaroa Road & Whangae River.

Whitehead – c.10 on Moturoa Island from Barbecue Beach eastwards, 25 Jan.

Tomtit – 2 males together Diggers Valley Road, Herekino, no other specific reports but no doubt in usual sites.

Far North AGM – 15th April 2014 – Minutes

The meeting opened at 7.15 pm. Present were Detlef and Carol Davies, Isabella & Derry Godbert, Laureen Alston, Anthea Goodwin, Russell Thomas, Leslie Feasey, Peter Ladd, Agnes Cave.

1. Apologies for absence received from: Kerry & Jane Walshe, Robin Booth, Verna Brevig, Pauline Stephinson, Susie Lindauer, Jocelyn Campbell, Bill Campbell, Kevin Matthews.

2. Minutes of last AGM in May 2012 & matters arising. These were read by Detlef, it was noted that there had been no meeting in 2013. Accepted as true record, proposed DD, seconded IG.

3. Regional Representative's Report and overview of the last 2 years. Detlef described the various indoor meetings and their subject matter, field meetings, wader counts, beach patrols, pelagics and other activities which the Region had undertaken since May 2012. As this spanned 2 years, Detlef will produce a typed up report this time. Proposed acceptance DG, seconded AG.

4. Regional Recorder's Report. Laureen has been keeping a database of records for the region for some time with the help of her son. Some members present indicated a wish to see these records and Laureen will try to make them available soon. Les mentioned some recent sightings from Far North beaches and estuaries.

5. Treasurer's Report. Isabella produced the most recent accounts showing a balance of \$237. This is very low but our annual contribution is due at the end of May in the sum of \$350. With the proposal (to follow) that Les Feasey will take over as RR, we propose to put a third name on the list of signatories. ANZ have offered the facility of internet banking. Accounts & proposals accepted, moved DD, seconded LF.

6. Change of Regional Representative. After 10 years as Regional Rep, Detlef has stood down and proposed that Les Feasey take over. Les is keen, he gave an oral profile of himself and expects to have time to devote to the wellbeing of the Region, having been active recently with shorebird counting and gaining experience. Detlef moved, Derry seconded and Les was elected the new Regional Rep. Detlef offered his continued assistance and will stay as Newsletter Editor for the time being.

7. Far North officers for 2014 - 2015. Laureen indicated that she would like there to be someone to take over from her in the not too distant future but was prepared to stand again for the time being. Moved DD, seconded DG. Isabella will stay on as Treasurer, moved DD, seconded CD. Carol will stay as Publicity officer, moved IG, seconded PL.

8. Program & venues for the next 3 months. Les has already made enquiries about possible venues for meetings. As he lives in Opua, these are near to him and include the Paihia Cruising Club which will be available from August and Paihia Memorial Hall can be used in the meantime. Robert Webb has been approached as a potential guest speaker – he recently cared for the Erect-crested Penguin found in Deep Water Cove. Craig &/or Brad from Bay Bush Action are also likely candidates.

9. Material for April newsletter. A program of events will be put together for the newsletter. Other material – photos, articles - is welcome and Detlef hopes to get this ready for the end of the month.

10. Any other Business. Detlef mentioned support for Les – there will be material which he can take care of, a data stick will be made available with various electronic files – email lists of members, full contact details, wader count result sheets, membership forms, etc etc.

Carol mentioned the recent ideas for making penguin and kiwi boxes for burrows, morepork nest boxes and weta 'motels'. This was a project already run in other regions and involved schoolchildren – Bunnings were interested and would provide materials. 2 local schools had shown interest and Anthea would like Mangonui Primary School to take part.

Meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

FAR NORTH SHOREBIRDS

Text & photos - Les Feasey



Keith Woodley's seminal work "Shorebirds of New Zealand" is a "lyrical account of the many shorebirds found here - those living and breeding in the same area year after year, those that migrate within New Zealand, and those whose migrations link the hemisphere". He talks of godwits, red knots, New Zealand Dotterels, turnstones, and pied stilts, pied and variable oystercatchers, golden plovers, royal spoonbills, spur winged plovers, and wrybills. Keith is the full time manager of the Miranda Shorebirds Centre on the Firth of Thames.

We in the Northland are fortunate to have almost all of these same birds in abundance in their seasons to watch and enjoy. Godwits, red knots and turnstones can be seen in large numbers in season in Parengarenga, the Houhora area, and at the admittedly somewhat inaccessible Walker Island. New Zealand Dotterel have a protected breeding site on the Karikari Peninsula that can be reached after a good walk. Royal Spoonbills are easily accessible close to Awanui. I live in Opuia, and at the Te Haumi beach area and the Waitangi area I've regularly seen pied stilts, pied and variable oystercatchers, New Zealand Dotterel, white faced herons, and other shorebirds that stray there from time to time.

The unique feature of our sparsely populated landscape is that many of these birds can live out their life cycles with rarely a glimpse of a human being. This avoids the accompanying dangers, but denies us in the Northland from participating in the benefits. As Keith Woodley so amply demonstrates with the Miranda Shorebird Centre, and as studies of the pelagic birding tours in Kaikoura show, huge numbers of benign and kindly disposed visitors and tourists could participate in Northland birding and strengthening the local economy with their tourism. As the following table shows, the shorebird numbers in New Zealand's Far North are quite significant.

	Parengarenga	Houhora	Walker
	Harbour	Area	Island
Godwits	5000	1500	2000-3000
Red Knots	1500	350	1000
Turnstones	350	100	50

The above figures are estimated averages. The OSNZ in the Far North is in the unique position of being able to marshal the resources of the community to make these sites and other sites regular stops for visitors to the Far North, and promote the objectives of the Society. It will be fun to do so as with all our birding tours, we will end up with more stories to tell around the campfire – OK – over a glass of wine then. Who knows, there might even be a book in it somewhere. Keep birding, and share your stories.



WHANGAREI BIRD RECOVERY CENTRE

Les Feasey

The Whangarei Native Bird Recovery Centre provides help, treatment and rehabilitation for injured and ill native birds, and has been doing so since 1992. Robert and Robyn Webb, who have over 30 years experience in working with birds run the centre with a small group of volunteers. I met Robert in January, and he showed me considerable courtesy in allowing me some rare opportunities to photograph birds from close quarters. He had kiwis, moreporks, hawks, wekas, and the famous erect crested penguin which Detlef mentioned on the front page.



Robert Webb with a Morepork, one of many the Centre has received this season. Some of their operations include:

- Rescuing, caring for and rehabilitating 1200 birds each year;
- Running education programs for about 6000 school children who visit the centre each year;
- Lecturing groups of adults about the Centre and its conservation work;
- Fostering environmental awareness in Northland's communities;
- Helping save the kiwi in conjunction with the Department of Conservation programs.

You can visit their website on:
<http://www.nbr.org.nz/aboutus>

Guests at the Centre – Harrier, young Morepork & the Erect-crested Penguin 'rescued' from Deep Water Cove (Les Feasey)



'Goodbye – I'm heading home soon!!'

WHANGAROA PELAGIC – 13th January

Detlef Davies

Brian, Carol and I left the harbour 7 am with Blair McLeod, Derek Bettesworth, Michael Szabo and Peter Mathisen. Calm, little breeze, wind NW backing SW. Overcast at first, sun later. As we cruised towards the harbour mouth about 10 graceful **White-fronted Terns** and a **Caspian Tern** patrolled the calm waters & one **Little Penguin** slithered under the surface. Before we reached Stephenson Island there were 5 more **Little Penguins**, more terns & the first couple of **Fluttering Shearwaters** & a **White-faced Storm Petrel**; also 5



Hutton's Shearwater 13 Jan 2014 (DD)



New Zealand Storm Petrel – now regular on Whangaroa Pelagics 13 Jan 2014 (DD)

Gannets. We slowed down to check for Cape Barren Geese but saw none this time, on the rocks was a large flock of **Red-billed Gulls**.

As we headed northwards out to sea, we diverted for a brief scan of the usual raft of **Fluttering Shearwaters** & among them were a few **Short-tailed Shearwaters**. **Buller's Shearwaters**, **White-faced Storm Petrels** & **Fairy Prions** became common. Only one **Black Petrel** was seen all day, **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** seemed fewer than normal and 2 **Little Shearwaters** gave brief views from the rear as usual. We were at the chumming site from 9.50 to 11.10 during which time there was a constant movement of common seabirds round the stern of the boat. 3 **New Zealand Storm Petrels** gave us great pleasure & good photography but no albatrosses came to see us this time. A close **Hutton's Shearwater** on its own was interesting and **Cook's** &/or **Pycroft's Petrels** numbered around 10, some definite **Cook's** & 1 or 2 suspected **Pycroft's**.

A very distant albatross was probably a **Wanderer**. Coming back, we spent a little more time with the large feeding shearwater flock containing a few of both **Short-tailed** and **Hutton's**. the day had also produced a few Flying Fish & Sunfish; we returned c.1.30 pm.

THREE KINGS PELAGIC – 7 to 10 MARCH

Although no Far North members were on board this year, this is an exciting annual expedition which should be of interest. Sav Saville reports as follows:

The annual Wrybill Birding Tours Three Kings pelagic took place over last weekend (7 - 10 March). With both Brent and Steve Wood absent the hopes were high for northern mega-rarities to grip them off.....no such luck!! The crew was mostly made up of old hands and comprised Tim Barnard, Phil Hammond, Ian Southey, Igor Debski, Neil Robertson, Richard Atkins, myself and skipper Tank Barker aboard the good ship Demelza. The weather was beautiful, with clear blue skies and a slight, mostly southerly, breeze - so not the conditions that we really wanted at all!!



Mottled Petrel (a Far North rarity) Photo: Southern oceans, Nov 2011 (DD)

*We did see some good birds, but mostly of southern origin – several **Wilson's Storm-petrels** (including 3 together), a **Mottled Petrel** and a magnificent **Snowy Albatross** were both new birds for these trips, several **NZ Storm-petrels**, a sub-adult **Long-tailed Skua**, an adult **Pomarine Skua**, a couple of **White-chinned Petrels**, about 100 **Grey Ternlets** at the Three Kings, lots of **NZ Wandering Albatross**, heaps of **White-capped Albatross**, a smart adult **Campbell Albatross**, breeding **Buller's Albatross** with huge fluffy grey chicks at the Kings, encouragingly high numbers of **Black Petrel** and a few **Black-winged Petrel** - but not a single Grey-faced Petrel and no White-naped or Kermadec Petrels, nor anything else from the warmer waters to the North. 21 species of tubenosed seabirds were seen in total.*

*We had great fish (to see and to eat!) Hapuka, Gemfish, Trevally, Terakihi, Snapper, Kingfish, Sunfish, Flying Fish, Blue and Mako Shark, Skipjack and Albacore Tuna, a jumping Marlin - plus Tank failed to land a big Mahi-mahi (though we probably shouldn't mention that...). **Bottle-nosed** and **Common Dolphins** were seen, and 5 or more **Bryde's Whales** put on a show at the end of day 3.*

So a good time, but no major rarities - the biggest surprise was a **Little Egret** which flew over the boat between islands at the Three Kings.

We will be doing the same thing again next year at roughly the same time, hopefully with a return to normal service and White-naped Petrels common enough to ignore (?!), so if you are interested please drop me a line.

Sav Saville – sav@wrybill-tours.co.nz

BIG TWITCH BY THE 2 REGIONAL REPS

Detlef Davies & Les Feasey

The outgoing and incoming RRs decided to go on a rarity-hunt today, 26th April, having connected with news from Birding Net (<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9>) - New Zealand's very first Buff-breasted Sandpiper had been found on the sandy spit at South Head on the southern side of the mouth of the Kaipara Estuary a couple of weeks earlier and a Crested Tern, a vagrant from Australia, had been in the Waipu area for some time. After the original sightings, news on whether the birds were still present was sparse until news of continued sightings came through a couple of days earlier. The timing of the tides was crucial as the South Head site involved the crossing of a lagoon a couple of hours either side of low tide only. As if this was not enough, there was also a gate 5 kms before the parking area which is sometimes locked and a bombing range nearby which is sometimes active.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper (LF)



Buff-breasted Sandpiper (DD)

So DD headed round to LF and we motored away at 7 am, reaching Waipu c.8.45 and made our way towards the river mouth laden with optics, tripods and cameras. We walked past numerous oystercatchers, NZ Dotterels, Banded Dotterels, Pied & Little Shags, glanced at a distant flock of Spoonbills but concentrated on terns. Crested is slightly smaller than Caspian with a greyer back and long dull yellow bill. We scanned the main beach, searching among flocks of other birds but without success. Looking in the other direction, upriver, produced hundreds of Black Swans and c.25 Spoonbills but no Crested Tern.

It was time to continue south for the early afternoon low tide and we planned to try Waipu again later. Even then we got to the Kaipara site, c.38 kms north of Helensville after 12.30. Having ascertained that no bombing was on today's agenda and the gates were open, and finding the tide low enough to cross the lagoon (the Waionui Inlet), we walked the 600 m or so to the sandy area where the wandering Buff-breasted Sandpiper had made its home after somehow taking a wrong turn over the Pacific – its usual winter range is the prairie region of central South America. As we paddled over we met Simon and Morag Fordham who had made similar plans to us; good news as there were more of us to search the quite wide area of pingau-covered dunes and shallow pools.

We spread out and after c.20 minutes Morag called out – yes, she had found it! For the next 20 minutes or so we all enjoyed watching this little speciality and got reasonable photos. Thanks Morag! Although the books describe it as quite tame, we found it wary, perhaps through disturbance by walkers and vehicles.

As we crossed back to the 'mainland' we found the water level even lower. It was time for another attempt at the Crested Tern and Simon & Morag made the detour to Waipu before returning to Auckland. We got there before 5 pm but again the Crested Tern eluded us. So we returned home with the cup half full. Oh well, there may be another chance!

PERU NEXT YEAR?

For those interested in seeing tropical birds in spectacular quantity, North Peru is a very good choice. We have 3 week and 2 week tours departing in June 2015 and again in October 2015 and in conjunction with our ground agent in Tarapoto, have put together various other options with a combination of other interests including other wildlife, archaeological sites, trekking, mountain biking and opportunities for children.

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