

# APTERYX

Issue 40

**December 2014**

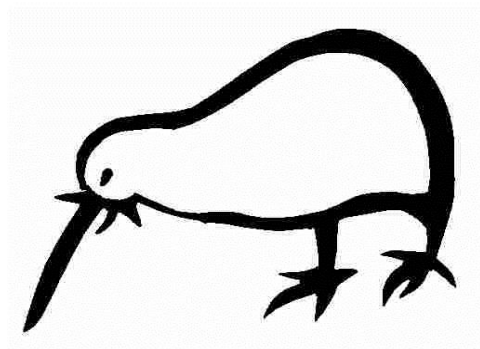
**Photos:**

Detlef Davies (DD)

Les Feasey (LF)

Gerald Messenger (GM)

Carol Davies (CD)



## BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

**FAR NORTH REGION NEWSLETTER**

**ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND**

[www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)

### EDITOR'S COMMENTS

It's January now but most of this newsletter refers to events and news up to the end of 2014. Several events which were scheduled to go ahead in December have been postponed because of the unsettled weather including shorebird counts, Ipipiri census and one pelagic from Whangaroa. These will be reported fully in the April issue.

We are pleased to see that Far North region has featured well in the latest issue of Birds New Zealand (formerly 'Southern Bird'). It contains a report, also in this newsletter, of Tim Baigent's Far North Science and Technology Award – and we welcome Tim as a new Far North member. Also featured is Les's article on Orongo Bay near Russell where the photo of a Weka with a chick, featured in his Regional Roundup was taken. And we got a good plug in Northland's Roundup!



Two Morepork chicks under Dad's watchful eye –



Landing Road, Kerikeri (DD)

### The Far North Regional Officers are:

<b>Regional Representative</b> Les Feasey, 54 Oromahoe Road, Opua 09 402 8917 <a href="mailto:lfeasey@mac.com">lfeasey@mac.com</a>	<b>Treasurer</b> Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8058 <a href="mailto:godbert@xtra.co.nz">godbert@xtra.co.nz</a>
<b>Regional Recorder</b> Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 <a href="mailto:detlefdavies@yahoo.com">detlefdavies@yahoo.com</a>	<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 <a href="mailto:detlefdavies@yahoo.com">detlefdavies@yahoo.com</a>

## RECENT EVENTS

**Wed 3 September** – Whangaroa Pelagic. See report on page 6.

**Thurs 11 September** - Combined Far North and Northland meeting at 7:30 pm at 148 Cork's Road, Tikipunga, Whangarei. Les and Detlef were guest presenters, Les speaking on Graham Taylor's paper 'Changing our Understanding of Oceanic Seabirds' and Detlef on 'Seabirds seen on Pelagic trips out of Whangaroa'.

Beach Patrols took place on **7<sup>th</sup> Oct** and **7<sup>th</sup> Dec**.

**Sat 8 November** – Met at the Christian Centre and Gary Little gave a great talk on his experiences in Alaska.

**Thurs 13 Nov** – Les Feasey & John Haines counted waders at Kowhai Beach – to be reported in April as a comparison with a later visit in January.

**Fri 12 December** – Social gathering at the Christian Centre in Mangonui where 8 of us had a chat about bird-related subjects and updated each other on recent experiences.

**Various dates** – many members and friends have been counting Red-billed Gulls at known breeding sites, to assist with the national census. The most adventurous trip was on 18<sup>th</sup> December when Les, Kevin, Lisa and Carol took off from Kaitia Airport to fly over the Three Kings Islands to try and get a count there. See report on page 8. This is likely to be repeated in 2015 along with more detailed breeding bird counts.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Wader Count – Parengarenga and Kowhai Beach

By the time this goes to print, one or perhaps both these events are likely to have taken place and will be reported in the April issue. However, Parengarenga is difficult to organise and if visits are planned, details will be given by email.

### Ipipiri Census, Eastern Bay of Islands.

This is also likely to have taken place prior to printing.

**Whangaroa Pelagic** – we have reserved a date in March but are dependent on a fishing cancellation.

Dates and arrangements for meetings and other activities will be given by email.

## UPDATED RESULTS: MONITORING LANDBIRDS IN EASTERN BAY OF ISLANDS

CJ Ralph

This article featured in the August 2014 issue of Apteryx but Table 2 was inadvertently omitted. You should refer to page 4 of that issue:

(<http://osnz.org.nz/sites/osnz.org.nz/files/regional-newsletters/Far%20North%201408.pdf>) and the first paragraph of the section marked 'Results' is repeated below as it refers to this table. This summer's count was just completed in mid-January, and the exciting results will be forthcoming soon.

### RESULTS

A total of more than 10,000 birds have been counted (Table 2), with the commonest being the Tui with almost 2,000 individuals, and had a marked increase over the past five "austral" years. The native species, the Silvereye, Grey Warbler, and the ubiquitous introduced Common Myna, all scored more than 1,000 birds. The Welcome Swallow, and three introduced birds, had 400-500 individuals counted. Overall a surprising almost 50 species were tallied, many of them with many individuals seen. Two species are yet to be confirmed were interesting, as Bellbird (possibly present only a few kilometers away on the Cape Brett Peninsula and to the south at Waipiro Bay) and Fernbird (present in several locations around the bay) were heard by good observers on the counts. It would be informative if more individuals were observed by more people visiting the islands.

For more information or to participate, contact CJ ([cjralph@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cjralph@xtra.co.nz)) or Les Feasey ([lfeasey@mac.com](mailto:lfeasey@mac.com)).

**Table 2. Number of birds observed by species and austral year (AY)** (– refers to January).

Species	Species Code	AY 2009	AY 2010	AY 2011	AY 2012	AY 2013	AY 2014	TOTALS
Tui	TUI	211	317	201	387	309	539	1,964
Silvereye	SILV	198	359	91	205	123	196	1,172
Grey Warbler	GRWA	218	165	126	214	166	149	1,038
Common Myna	COMY	140	277	180	172	65	181	1,015
Welcome Swallow	WESW	104	77	58	76	66	128	509
Blackbird	BLAC	160	50	26	100	76	56	468

Species	Species Code	AY 2009	AY 2010	AY 2011	AY 2012	AY 2013	AY 2014	TOTALS
House Sparrow	HOSP	85	145	14	53	10	157	464
Chaffinch	CHAF	100	25	51	121	78	46	421
Fantail	FANT	73	98	18	66	68	74	397
Yellowhammer	YELL	53	39	59	59	37	25	272
Kingfisher	KING	55	43	30	54	21	52	255
Goldfinch	GOLD	26	95	18	29	12	53	233
Red-billed Gull	RBGU	15	184	1	8	3	20	231
Tomtit	TOMT	4	3	27	30	49	71	184
Pukeko	PUKE	41	22	5	22	20	47	157
Song Thrush	SOTH	31	32	10	41	8	13	135
Black-backed Gull	BBGU	15	38	10	16	17	19	115
Pied Shag	PISH	7	2	1	40	22	40	112
Shag species	SHAG		106			1		107
Skylark	SKYL	28	11	8	20	10	20	97
Hedge Sparrow (Dunnock)	HESP	26	12	9	16	25	8	96
Variable Oystercatcher	VAOY	15	37	2	21	3	18	96
Eastern Rosella	EARO	7	35	3	14	15	15	89
Greenfinch	GREE	5	42		22	6	14	89
Shining Cuckoo	SHCU	9		22	18	26	3	78
European Starling	EUST	22	11	16		15	11	75
gull species	GULL			34	2	3		39
Brown Quail	BRQU	10			18		9	37
New Zealand Dotterel	NZDO	3	4	1	12	2	13	35
Ring-necked Pheasant	RNPH	9	4	6	4	4	5	32
Harrier	HARR	5		2	5	2	7	21
Pipit	PIPI	3		1	2	7	3	16
North Island Robin	NIRO	3	2	4		3		12
Little Shag	LISH	2	7					9
Spur-winged Plover	SWPL		1			1	7	9
New Zealand Pigeon	NZPG	2	6					8
White-billed Magpie	WBMA			3	5			8
White-fronted Tern	WFTE	1	4	1		2		8
California Quail	CAQU	3		2	1			6
Gannet	GANN	1	3			1	1	6
Paradise Shelduck	PASH	2			2	2		6
Redpoll	REDP		5					5
Banded Rail	BARA						2	2
Bellbird	BELL				1	1		2
Caspian Tern	CATE	1					1	2
Fernbird	FERN				2			2
Brown Teal	BRTE		1					1
Duck species	DUCK				1			1
Morepork	MORE			1				1
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>1,693</b>	<b>2,262</b>	<b>1,041</b>	<b>1,859</b>	<b>1,279</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>10,137</b>

C. John Ralph. Moturoa Island, Private Bag, Paihia (cjralph@xtra.co.nz)

## RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Compiled by Detlef Davies

These records cover the period from September to December 2014 unless otherwise stated. Contributors include Les Feasey (LF), Detlef & Carol Davies (D&CD), Anthea Goodwin (AJG), Isabella & Derry Godbert (I&DG), Kevin Matthews, Gerald Messenger (GM), John Haines (JH). **WP = Whangaroa Pelagic on 3<sup>rd</sup> September.**

**North Island Brown Kiwi** – Regularly heard and sometimes seen in the forest south of Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri (I&DG). Often heard Richmond Road, Mangonui (Steve & Maria Lange per AJG)

**New Zealand Dabchick** – 2 Lake Waiporohita 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Australian Little Grebe** – 1 Lake Ngatu & displaying pair on pond by 373 West Coast Rd on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept (D&CD)

**Wandering Albatross** – adult & imm feeding by boat on WP.

**NORTHERN ROYAL ALBATROSS** – adult seen well on WP (DD, LF et al), new species for these trips.

**White-capped Albatross** – 4 on WP, perhaps 6 or more.

**Northern Giant Petrel** – 2 sightings on WP, possibly same bird.

**Fluttering Shearwater** – 50+ on WP

**Little Shearwater** – c.20 on WP, as spooky as ever but familiar winter seabird.

**Fairy Prion** – 100+ on WP.

**White-faced Storm Petrel** – 100+ on WP.

**Grey-faced Petrel** – 3 on WP.

**Cape (Pintado) Petrel** – one of Snares Island race seen well on WP.

**Common Diving Petrel** – c.50 often giving close views, on WP.

**Little Penguin** – 3 inshore on WP. Occupied burrow near top of ridge at Taumarumaru Reserve on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct (GM).

**White-fronted Tern** – some well out at sea on WP, c.30 high on rocks at Motutara, otherwise many coastal records.

**Reef Heron** – one at Taipa on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**White Heron (Great Egret)** – 5 perched on mooring posts near the boat ramp at Unahi Road on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**AUSTRALASIAN PELICAN** – none in our area but worth reporting that Gwenda Pulham saw 2 in Kaipara Harbour from the Port Albert wharf on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Royal Spoonbill** – c.50 at the Unahi Road roost on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Grey Teal** – pair with 11 ducklings on the little pond by no. 373 West Coast Road on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Brown Teal** – several sightings by the swamps along the Marsden Cross track (D&CD) & the Orongo Bay area, where they have bred (LF).

**Grey Duck** – reasonably pure birds recorded from Lake Waiporohita, Lake Ngatu & the little pond (above).

**Weka** – now regularly heard and seen in many places in the Russell area, especially near Orongo Bay Holiday Park where they are often fed.

**Brown Quail** – 4 in Puketū (by road to Kaeo) 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** – Only count received was of 700 on Kowhai Beach on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. We hear that birds normally roosting at Rangaunu are moving further up the coast as Walker Island is now nearly washed away and East Beach is frequently disturbed.

**Lesser Knot** – c.137 on Kowhai Beach on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. (LF, JH)

**Ruddy Turnstone** – 54 Kowhai Beach on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. (LF, JH)

**New Zealand Dotterel** – evidence of increased numbers and widespread breeding, e.g at Mahinepua. 3 disturbed by dogs on Taipa Beach on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. 11 Kowhai Beach 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. Flock forming at Waitangi towards end of December.

**Wrybill** – 4 in breeding plumage on Tokerau Beach (end of Dick Ulrich Road) on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Variable Oystercatcher** – 14 on Kowhai Beach 13<sup>th</sup> Nov, a typical breeding number for this locality.

**South Island Pied Oystercatcher** – c.30 on the mud at Taipa on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Red-billed Gull** – Counted at many sites for the census.

**Shining Cuckoo** – seems to have been a good season for this species which tends to stop singing after the end of December.

**Morepork** – Breeding at Taumarumaru Reserve where assisted by nest-box scheme (GM).

**New Zealand Pipit** – well-known for being tame along our northernmost coast – taking crumbs at picnic area at Tapotupotu Beach on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct (GM).

**Fernbird** – Recorded from usual sites including Skudders Beach Wetland, Otangaroa Road & Whangae River near Opuā.

Nestling Morepork in box at Taumarumaru (GM)



## AWARD TO TIM BAIGENT

Les Feasey

Tim Baigent of Kaitaia College won the Birds New Zealand Science and Technology Award for the best study of birds in the Far North in 2014. He was presented with a pair of binoculars, donated by Hunting and Fishing (Far North), and a year membership in Birds New Zealand, at a ceremony at Kaitaia College on 31 October, 2014.

The topic of Tim's study was the ratio of male to female kiwi on Little Barrier Island. Several obstacles had to be overcome. Access to Little Barrier Island is restricted. The terrain is inhospitable. The study had to be conducted at night, because that is when kiwi emerge to feed, and when they call. The female call is not as loud as the male call, so adjustments had to be made. Weather and surf noise affect the range of the kiwi call, and only some of the listening posts were available during the period of the study. In spite of these obstacles, Tim was able to document his results with great precision. With this kind of stamina and tenacity, Tim will be right at home as a Birds New Zealand member.



**Present at the Award from left were Allan and Lesley Baigent, Les Feasey (OSNZ), Tim Baigent, William Tailby (Principal, Kaitaia College), Mike Bryan (Principal Science Teacher, Kaitaia College), Kevin Matthews (OSNZ Kaitaia)**

Birds New Zealand members study birds and their habitat use within New Zealand. Activities are organised on both a regional and national basis with 17 regions providing a local network for members to engage in bird studies. Scientific journals, OSNZ publications, and web sites publish the results of these studies to members and select Organisations. Birds New Zealand contributes to the conservation and management of birds by providing this information, from which national policy can be shaped and sound management decisions can be derived.

The Hunting & Fishing New Zealand team is passionate about the outdoors. There are now 34 stores under the banner of Hunting and Fishing from a single store in Palmerston North in 1986. Kiwis with interests in birds, fish or game or a great outdoors experience can depend on the team members whose knowledge, experience and know-how will support your adventure. Hunting and Fishing in the Far North is proud to support the initiative to expand student awareness of birds, and immerse our High School students in the grandeur of the great outdoors.

## BEACH PATROLS

Les Feasey

Isabella and Derry Godbert have been doing beach wreck patrols for over 30 years in the Northland. During that time they have seen significant changes in the birds that are beach wrecked in the Far North, mostly on Ninety Mile Beach. There have been fewer beach wrecked birds.

The patrol usually starts with a drive up the beach from West Coast Road to about Hukatere road, where beach patrollers are disbursed at 5-10 kilometers till we run out of people. We typically cover 20-30 kilometers. The typical density of birds Isabella and Derry have found is about 1.5 per kilometer, or about 30 birds. We have had fierce winds and rough seas over the past 2 months yet on our October patrol we found 3 birds. As Janet Snell remarked in her September Regional



Roundup, what's up with that? We did find a dead whale, 4 dead seals, and a more dead than alive baby seal. We also found a single, lonely, very hungry red knot, alive but tattered. Hopefully, it is now with its peers.

Here are Isabella and Derry with a beach wrecked albatross. Thanks, Isabella and Derry for your contributions, your patience, persistence and good humour during more than 30 years of beach wreck patrols.

## WHANGAROA PELAGIC – 3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER

Detlef Davies

Day trip with John & Maggie Turner, Les Feasey, Nigel Milius, Wendy Hare & Alan Cordery. Left harbour at 8 am & headed NNE to usual chumming area. Cold at first with a little cloud cover, became warmer & sunny; NW breeze.

**Bottlenose Dolphin** – a pod seen in the harbour, came towards us & moved out of the harbour mouth alongside us, great views, probably c.20.

**Red-billed Gull** – few in the harbour, rafts of c.80 and c.150 beyond Stephenson Island.

**Black-backed Gull** – c.30, some in harbour, few further out at sea than usual.

**Pied Shag** – one at harbour mouth.

**White-fronted Tern** – at least one in harbour, flocks of 6 and 10+ well out at sea in early afternoon.

**Fluttering Shearwater** – 7 and c.20 respectively with the Red-billed Gull rafts; about another 25 in course of day.

**Fairy Prion** – many seen throughout day, from just beyond Stephenson Island to early afternoon, up to 10 at once during chumming, probably 100+ during day.

**Common Diving Petrel** – frequent during day, probably c.50.

**White-faced Storm Petrel** – Fairly common during day, c.100 estimated.

**Northern Giant Petrel** – adult early on which flew by once, bill had faint reddish spot, plumage mid-brown with paler face.

**CAPE PETREL** – one of Snares Island race flew by close.



**Little Penguin** – one well past Stephenson Island, one further out & one before harbour mouth on way back.

**White-capped Albatross** – at least 4 seen, another 3 distant albatrosses were probably this species also.

**NORTHERN ROYAL ALBATROSS** – an adult came past twice, quite close but not in view for long. New for these pelagics.

**Wandering (Gibson's) Albatross** – 2 seen, one of which sat on the water for a long time feeding on our chum. 2<sup>nd</sup> bird was an imm with white patches in centre of inner wings.

**Little Shearwater** – more seen today than on previous trips, probably c.20. Always spooked by boat while still some distance away but managed a few photos.

**Grey-faced Petrel** – 3, all brief.

**Northern Giant Petrel** – one in afternoon, perhaps the same bird as earlier.

**BRYDE'S WHALE** – blow seen at long range after moving from first chum spot, approached nearer & seen at surface a couple of times.

Returned to harbour c.4.15 pm.



LITTLE SHEARWATER (DD)

## A DAY AT TANGATAPU

Les Feasey

A group of 12 birders from the Eastern Bay of Islands turned up at 9:30am on Saturday, 25th October 2014 for the Bird Identification and Awareness Workshop organized by John Booth and Sandra Scowen. Lindsay Alexander and Chris Richmond, with contributions from a knowledgeable set of participants, described the 5 minute bird count protocol, and we proceeded to put it into practice at the last remnant forest by the bridge. We birders were flushed off the road by a constant stream of holiday traffic, and attempts to raise a Banded Rail in the swamp alongside the road with a somewhat dodgy recording proved fruitless, so we entered the Whangamumu Track.



The Workshop team (LF)

Chris Richmond recounted to the group the history of the Tangatapu Wetlands restoration project. Vic and Barb Turner donated the land, which had previously been dairy land, to the Group. Plantings in 2013 and 2014 have already produced flowering manuka trees for beekeepers, and most importantly, the flock of breeding Fernbirds has increased from 5 pairs to an estimated 20 pairs. We saw Fernbirds in abundance. Work has been done to remove the kikuyu grass and restore native vegetation, and plantings have already been made for reforestation

of the hillside above the wetlands.

We ambled up the DoC Whangamumu Track for a bit, and stopped to compare notes. Birds seen or heard to this point (the E-bird reference):

Tangatapu Wetlands Area, Far North District, NZ-NTL

Oct 25, 2014 9:20 AM - 12:20 PM

Protocol: Travelling 3.0 kilometer(s)

Comments: Wetlands conservation group on Whangamumu track

## 16 species

Paradise Shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*) 2  
Brown Quail (*Coturnix ypsilophora*) 3  
Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) 2  
Pukeko (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) 1  
Shining Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*) 1  
Sacred Kingfisher (*Todiramphus sanctus*) 1  
Tui (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) 2

Grey Warbler (*Gerygone igata*) 3  
New Zealand Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) 2  
Tomtit (*Petroica macrocephala*) 3  
Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) 2  
Fernbird (*Megalurus punctatus*) 5  
Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*) 5  
Eurasian Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) 1  
Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) 2  
European Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*) 2

## FLIGHT to the THREE KINGS

You could be forgiven for thinking that a census of one of New Zealand's most familiar birds would not inspire you particularly, until you discover that one of the Red-billed Gull's largest breeding colonies is on the Three Kings islands c.55 kms WNW of Cape Reinga. On 18<sup>th</sup> December the Flying Doctors Service provided a Cessna 8 seater plane to fly a group of us – Les, Kevin, Lisa and myself, over the Three Kings to get an idea of the size of the colonies. Both viewing and photography of the birds was



Carol Davies



Gannet colony high on Three Kings (CD)

difficult and we got the impression that Gannets were far more numerous than the gulls. We saw some very distant whales on the sea. The islands looked nicely forested and it would be exciting to land there by helicopter. This trip was partly funded by OSNZ and it remains to be seen whether the more detailed survey in 2015 will permit this.

## PERU IN 2015?

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. In conjunction with our ground agent in Tarapoto, we have put together various other options with a combination of other interests including other wildlife, archaeological sites, trekking, mountain biking and opportunities for children.

[detlefdavies@yahoo.com](mailto:detlefdavies@yahoo.com)  
[www.birdingnorthperu.com](http://www.birdingnorthperu.com)

[www.birdersrest.com](http://www.birdersrest.com)

## OTHER TOURS FOR BIRDING ABROAD

In the course of our travels abroad, we are gathering much useful information about bird sites and local guides who would be well able to arrange birding or wildlife tours without the necessity to use large, expensive tour companies. Very often a group of 4 or 6 people could easily arrange an economical trip arranged almost entirely in the destination country.

Contact us for information on Fiji, India, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Europe, parts of Africa, Madagascar and a number of other places. A group of us wanting to do a birding cruise might get a good price by block-booking places on the ship. We are open to all such ideas.

**NEW !!!** Chance to join us on a 12 day trip round Indonesia in late April – includes Bali, Flores, Kalimantan & Sumatra!

