

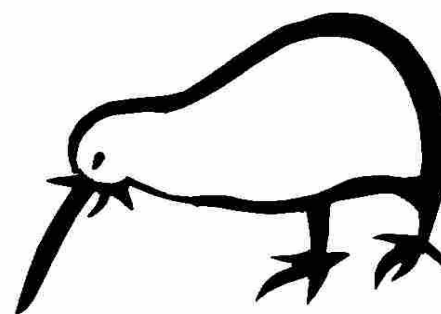
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Issue 44

October 2016

Photos:

Les Feasey (LF)
Detlef Davies (DD)
Kevin Matthews (KM)
Wayne Morris



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

www.osnz.org.nz

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

We have not produced a newsletter since February this year so there is quite a lot to report. We have had several meetings at Les's house in Opuia and topics discussed and reported are set out on pages 2 & 3.

There have been some wader counts, beach patrols and some interesting projects launched and another Far North OSNZ prize has been awarded to a youngster for an excellent study project. With summer on the way, we hope that some scheduled dates for day pelagics will be graced with some calm weather.

We welcome Alan and Sheryn Luckman from Kaeo as new Far North members.

Our region will be hosting the 2018 annual Conference and AGM for the first time, see page 6.



AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN – Kaimaumau, 27 Feb (Kevin Matthews)

The Far North Regional Officers are:

Regional Representative Les Feasey, 54 Oromahoe Road, Opuia 09 402 8917 lfeasey@mac.com	Treasurer Isabella Godbert, 67 Waipapa West Road, Kerikeri 09 407 8058 godbert@xtra.co.nz
Regional Recorder Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 detlefdavies@yahoo.com	Newsletter Editor Detlef Davies, 180 Landing Road, Kerikeri 09 407 3874 detlefdavies@yahoo.com

RECENT MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Les Feasey

29 April - Indoor meeting at Les's house. Began as usual with a delicious meal, then a general chat about recent sightings of interest, local news on conservation and relevant topics and plans for future events. Just 5 of us tonight.

15 May - Beach Patrol – results of findings on page 8.

3-6 June – Annual Conference & AGM of Birds New Zealand in Napier. Les attended this event and presented the Far North news at the Regional Reps' meeting on the Friday. There followed 2 days of scientific presentations and a choice of field trips on the Monday.

10 June - Meeting in Scenic Hotel, Paihia. Isabel Castro and Stephen Marsland made a presentation of the bird-related research that was being conducted at Massey University. 32 people were present to hear the talk, which included topics relating to Acoustic Recording and Monitoring.

2 & 30 July - Beach Patrols – results of findings on page 8.

29 July - Indoor Meeting and Far North AGM at Les's house

Present were Les Feasey (R.R), Detlef Davies, Derry and Isabella Godbert, Anthea Goodwin, Lois Wagener, Heather Rogers, Cynthia Mathews, Ngati Kawa Taituha, Craig Salmon, Brad Windust, Dean Baigent-Mercer and Stella Kake.

Apologies were received from Russell Thomas, Susie Lindauer & Carol Davies.

Our guest, Ngati Kawa, Chairman of Waitangi Marae gave a presentation about his attempts to improve water quality in the Far North through Regional Council. He also talked of plans to replant the Waitangi Forest in native trees.

A brief AGM of the Far North Branch was held.

A poll of Office Holders revealed that they were all happy to stand again, so a motion to that effect was put and unanimously approved.

Isabella presented the financial report. There is \$2233.50 in the bank account having paid \$200 for meeting expenses and we had received \$350 from OSNZ since our last meeting. Accounts were approved

A request had been received asking us to hold the OSNZ 2018 AGM.

Lois moved that those who are here vote on hosting the AGM/Conference OSNZ 2018, this was unanimously approved.

Detlef announced that the next newsletter would hopefully be ready in October rather than August as he will be abroad for several weeks – contributions welcome.

Meeting closed at 9.07 p.m.

15 August - Beach Patrol – results of findings on page 8.

1 September – Indoor Meeting at Les's

Present were Les, Lois, Anthea, Peggy, Isabella, Derry, Cynthia, Brian, Tom, Margaret. Apologies were received from Detlef, Carol, Susie and Russell.



BARN OWL (ex-Kaitaia, LF)

Dinner started at 7:15pm as some people were late arriving. After a sumptuous repast the meeting started at 8:00pm. There had been a number of requests for a Red-billed Gull survey recap so Les tried out the new projector and screen. The setup needs some refinement but the results were interesting, and if we could have seen the photos, they would have been great.

News on the Barn Owl situation, the Channel-billed Cuckoo, the Little Egret and White Heron up at Awanui, and the beach wreck of prions were discussed. Biz Bell is looking for volunteers to help with Black Petrel surveys on Little Barrier Island, a rare opportunity, and a couple of other offers have arisen.

14 October 2014 – Indoor meeting at Les Feasey's place.

Present were Les, Detlef, Susie, Tom and Margaret, Isabella, Lois, Anthea, Heather, Don and Angela Armitage. Apologies were received from Alan and Sheryl, Carol Davies and Ian Wilson.

Tribute

Les Feasey paid tribute to Peter Ladd, a regular member of Far North OSNZ and keen worker in Kiwi conservation, who had passed away on 1st October. The same day the Society lost Brian Bell, a well-known and illustrious OSNZ member who had played a huge part in saving New Zealand's rarest species over many years, and was honoured for his contributions. He is especially remembered for his work with Chatham Island Black Robins.

Correspondence

Items of interest have been emailed to members and were not read. Claudia Mischeler is seeking assistance for the Black-billed Gull survey but there are no reported nesting sites in the Far North.

Sightings.

A Weka has been seen just south of Mangonui following rumours of them being seen in the area.

Lois reported seeing a Barn Owl on the Awanui straights. Les gave a short history of Barn Owl in the Far North. He had talked to a geneticist who thought that having a population originating from only 2 birds put their long term survival at risk. If other alleles from vagrants reaching our shores were added to the mix, the chances of Barn Owl survival would increase. Apparently 2-3 clutches of 2-4 eggs in each clutch were being produced each year from the original pair.

General Discussion.

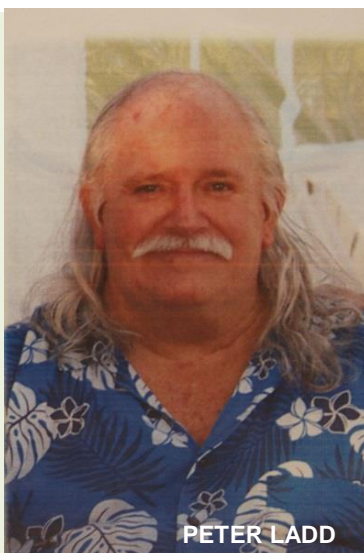
The Far North OSNZ 2016 Science Fair prize of a fine pair of binoculars donated by Hunting and Fishing had been won by Jack Kinghan, from Bay of Islands International Academy. A photo and write-up is on page

The Kaitia Department of Conservation and Taipa School hosted a presentation on birds in the Taipa area.

Cuckoo sightings – the first hearing of the Shining Cuckoo was 8th September by Anthea. There were several Shining Cuckoo records from 10 September onwards. Les had heard a Long-tailed Cuckoo from his deck and Don and Angela said they had heard one at Orongo Bay.

A review of known Bittern locations revealed that Tom and Margaret had a nesting pair in Okiato, Don and Angela had one on their property in Orongo Bay, Russell, Kevin had reported one at the back of his farm and one other pair in Kaitia, & the Beach Patrol crew had seen two birds in flight at Aurere area, Taipa.

The meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.



PETER LADD



BRIAN BELL

RECENT REPORTS and SIGHTINGS

Compiled by Detlef Davies

These records cover the period from March to October 2016 unless otherwise stated. Contributors include Les Feasey (LF), Anthea Goodwin (AJG), Isabella & Derry Godbert (IG), Kevin Matthews (KM), Detlef & Carol Davies (DD, DCD), Don & Angela Armitage (D&AA), Tom & Margaret Pasco (TMP), Gerry Messenger (GM), Bill Campbell (BC), Patrick Miller (PM), Lois Wagener, Paul Rogers, Maria Lange, Wayne Morris, Ray Wiblin.

North Island Brown Kiwi – male & female calling below house in Richmond Road, Mangonui mid-October (Maria Lange per AJG). Numerous at Marsden Cross throughout (12 seen 29 Oct), juvs in October. 54 counted in Waitangi Forest Kiwi call survey.

New Zealand Dabchick – Recorded on Lake Waiporohita, Lake Ngatu & Lake Rotokawau East.

Australian Little Grebe – flock of 18 flushed on Lake Rotokawau East (Karikari) on 5 June (maybe a mixture of both species) (PM), also on the Dabchick lakes.



NORTH ISLAND BROWN KIWI – Oihi Road, Purerua, 29 Oct (DD)

WHITE-CAPPED ALBATROSS – 1 off Kowhai Beach during inshore gale on 10 July (DD).

Albatross sp. – 2 off Kowhai Beach on 10 July, probably White-capped (DD).

NORTHERN GIANT PETREL – 1 on fishing trip out of Whangaroa 11 Oct (LF).

Giant Petrel sp. – 1 off Kowhai Beach during inshore gale on 10 July (DD)

Buller's Shearwater – c.300 on Whangaroa fishing trip; some seen from land, e.g Cable Bay, Tokerau Beach.

Sooty Shearwater – 2 Whangaroa fishing trip (LF)

SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER – 1 Whangaroa fishing trip (LF)

Flesh-footed Shearwater – 4 Whangaroa fishing trip (LF).

Fluttering Shearwater – c.190 Whangaroa fishing trip, often seen in distance (sometimes 100s) from Cable Bay, Tokerau Beach, Kowhai Beach, etc.

LITTLE SHEARWATER – one off southern end of Henderson Bay (from headland) on 10 July (DD).

Common Diving Petrel – one dead on Kowhai Beach 10 July, c.30 on Whangaroa fishing trip, many in scattered pairs.

Black (Parkinson's) Petrel – 2 on Whangaroa fishing trip 11 Oct (LF).

Fairy Prion – 40 found dead on beach patrol (KM, IG).

White-faced Storm Petrel – 3 on Whangaroa fishing trip.

Storm Petrel sp. (not White-faced) – 1 Whangaroa fishing trip.

Little (Blue) Penguin – first calls for season in Mangonui Harbour 22nd April, at least 2 boxes in use & loud calls heard; 3 found dead in July & Aug; few foot-prints on 90 Mile Beach, 4 on fishing trip 11 Oct (LF).

Australasian Gannet – many coastal & offshore records.

Black Shag – regular sites include Lake Waiporohita where all 4 common shags can sometimes be seen together.

Pied Shag – 7 in colony at entrance to Whangaroa Hbr.

Little Black Shag – 15 Mangonui Harbour 21 Aug.

White Heron (Great Egret) – 1 at Unahi Road 8 July, 10 Sep, 8 Oct.

LITTLE EGRET – One at Unahi Road 8 July (KM). The rarest of these egrets.

CATTLE EGRET – up to 10 Mangonui Hbr in August (BC), 38 Unahi Road 8 July, 64 there on 8 Oct, other dates also (LF, KM).

CATTLE EGRETS (LF)



REEF HERON (LF)



White-faced Heron – an albino (or leucistic) at Pakaraka on 6 June (PM).

Reef Heron – 1 Pink Beach, Taumarumaru Reserve chest-deep in water 8 March, often 1 or 2 by roadside rocks in Mangonui, 3 at Unahi Road 8 July, 1 Pukenui wharf 10 July, also at Taipa and Cable Bay.

AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN – 1 Kaimaumau 27 Feb (KM) and one at the back of Kevin's farm; another pair in Kaitaia, 2 at Aurere on 2 July (LF, KM), 1 visible from a garden in Pukewhai Road, Kaingaroa on 8 Oct (DCD), 1 in flight over Skudders Beach Wetland, Kerikeri, 28 Oct (DCD).

A breeding pair at Okiato (TMP), one at Orongo Bay (D&AA). An encouraging selection of sightings of this nationally endangered species.

Royal Spoonbill – up to 600 at the Unahi Road roost during the winter, 80 on the Houhora mudflats, 7 in Waitangi Estuary.

Black Swan – 79 on Houhora mudflats on 12 June; 2 over Mangonui Hbr 29 June (GM) – unusual there.

Grey Duck (Pacific Black Duck) – pair on pond at Bittern site in Kaingaroa 8 Oct.

Grey Teal – 2 Lake Waiporohita 31 March.

NEW ZEALAND SCAUP – 1 Lake Waiporohita 19 March (DCD).

WEKA – Anthea reported that Wekas had been seen near Mangonui; also a report, backed up by a photo, of one at Opuia recently. Report of 1 in Kerikeri.

Spotless Crake – 2 heard Marsden Cross 29 Oct.

South Island Pied Oystercatcher – 30 at Waitangi Estuary seen regularly over winter (LF)

Variable Oystercatcher – 37 Kowhai Beach (incl 6 pairs) 10 July. Flock of 35 at Waitangi Estuary over winter.

Pied Stilt – 750 photographed at Houhora mudflats on 12 June (LF).

Banded Dotterel – reported from Kowhai Beach & Taipa estuary; no doubt in many other places.

New Zealand Dotterel – reported from many places; 10 counted on beach at the end of the next road leading north from Kerikeri Inlet Road after Reinga Road; counted from Skudders Beach on 29 Oct, perhaps a new site (DCD).

Spur-winged Plover (Masked Lapwing) – flock of c.60 at Bonnets Road oxidation ponds 8 July.

Wrybill – 28 on Tokerau Beach 31 March (DCD), 10 very tame ones there 10 July.

Bar-tailed Godwit – 5 on 90 mile beach on 26 Oct. 300 at Houhora mudflats on 26 Oct (IG, LF) No reports of any high counts but there must be more than this.

Arctic Skua – Light phase adult & juv harassing terns off Cable Bay on 31 March (DCD); 1 on Whangaroa fishing trip on 11 Oct (LF).

Red-billed Gull – estimated flock of 1500 birds at Bonnets Road oxidation ponds on 8 July.

Caspian Tern – Pair regularly seen on Ninety Mile Beach during beach patrols (IG).

White-fronted Tern – many coastal records, c.20 by bridge by SH10 at Waihapa Bay.

KAKA – 3 in Diggers Valley Road, Kaitaia on several dates between August & Oct, one still present as we go to print (Wayne Morris); 1 at Pairahi Road, Kaingaroa 19 Sept (Daniel Kimber per GM).

New Zealand Pigeon – 2-3 pairs seen regularly at Oromahoe (LF)

SPOTTED DOVE – one on wires by SH10 north of Kapiro Road, 8 Oct (DD).

Shining Cuckoo – Recorded from 8 Sept, then quite numerous, no August ones reported.

LONG-TAILED CUCKOO – heard calling this spring in Opuia and Orongo Bay (LF, D&AA)

CHANNEL-BILLED CUCKOO – one found dead at Spirits Bay (Ray Wiblin). ID by Te Papa, Wellington.

Morepork – pair copulating Landing Road, Kerikeri in Oct.

BARN OWL – one seen along Awanui Straits (Lois Wagener); Les reported that 2 or 3 clutches of up to 4 eggs were being laid each year and sightings were becoming more frequent; however a few have been found dead. They seem to all originate from the same pair, limiting genetic diversity.

New Zealand Pipit – Regular sightings on beach patrols.

Fernbird – Regular sightings at Skudders Beach Wetland & Otangaroa Road off SH10. Common at Orongo Bay.

Tomtit – common in Puketi, often around the HQ.

New Zealand Robin – now often heard and seen from Manginangina Boardwalk, Puketi, where they may be displacing Tomtits.

KOKAKO – One singing in canopy over Waihoanga Gorge Track, Puketi in evening of 21 Oct (Paul Rogers); worth listening for anywhere in Puketi now.

Whitehead and **Saddleback** – no specific reports or counts but hopefully news from the eastern Bay of Islands will be forthcoming during the summer.



KAKA – Diggers Valley Road (Wayne Morris)

CONFERENCE & AGM – BAY OF ISLANDS – 1 to 4 JUNE 2018

Detlef Davies

While at the 2016 Conference & AGM in Napier in June, Les volunteered our region to host the annual Conference & AGM in the Far North in 2018. This event moves venue every year but has never been held in the Far North before. In 2017 it will be in Invercargill. It should be exciting to hold it up here; never before will so many birders be present in our area at the same time! This will need a lot of advance preparation. Les's thoughts on the matter so far are as follows (with some input from me):

Paihia is considered the best location as it has the best facilities (although the Turner Centre in Kerikeri might be OK if it were not so far from accommodation and eating places). In comparing the Copthorne Hotel in Waitangi with the Scenic Hotel in Paihia, Les thought that the latter was more convenient, being closer to hotels and restaurants, although it is smaller than the Copthorne.

Al Frescoes and 360 Degrees in Paihia might be good choices of eating places for those arriving on Thursday night for the Regional Reps' meeting on the Friday, and for the Friday night meal.

We need good conference facilities for the Scientific Days and plenty of volunteers to help for those days, assisting at registration on the Friday night, producing programmes, announcing speakers, helping at tea and lunch breaks, organising field trips, etc.

Monday is the Field Trip day and our ideas include:

- Bus trip up to Ninety Mile Beach via Houhora Tavern and Unahi, also dune lakes for grebes and wader roosts if possible.
- Urupukapuka Island to see the translocated birds like Saddleback & Whitehead & others.
- Pelagic out of Whangaroa – we would need to find a boatman; winter weather might be a problem however.
- Puketi Forest walk.

It may seem a long time yet but put those dates in your diary now.

PROGRAMME & PELAGIC DATES 2016 - 2017

Detlef Davies

Events for the summer period will be communicated by Les to members by email. We expect to be arranging shorebird counts and some forest birding. It is 9 years since the Society last ventured into Warawara Forest to look for Riflemen and we are seeing signs of Kokako spreading from the core of Puketi Forest into more accessible areas.

However, we have set dates for day pelagic trips out of the Bay of Islands as some pre-planning is involved. Our boatman is Kit Staff who sets sail from Doves Bay Marina. In order to assist in filling the boat, we have fixed dates to coincide with guests who have booked to come to us for bird tours and these are as follows:

Monday 14th November – 3 places reserved so far

Tuesday 13th December – 7 places reserved so far

Thursday 29th December – 4 places reserved so far

Cost will depend on the number of people. In addition I will soon announce 2 days in January when we propose to stay one night moored off the Cavallis which will enable us to spend much more time in the best seabirding area a reasonable distance out at sea.

Please contact me to reserve places – Detlef Davies, 09 407 3874 or 0211464237.



Checklist S31997277

Location

Whangaroa, Far North District County,
Northland, NZ

Date and Effort

Tue Oct 11, 2016 8:30 AM

Protocol: Traveling
Party Size: 3
Duration: 7 hour(s), 30 minute(s)
Distance: 38.624 kilometer(s)
Observers: [Leslie Feasey](#)

Species

16 species (+1 other taxa) total

4 Little Penguin 2 different pairs.

1 Northern Giant Petrel

2 Parkinson's Petrel (Black Petrel)

4 Flesh-footed Shearwater

300 Buller's Shearwater

Groups of 10-20 flying north in a continuous stream.

2 Sooty Shearwater

1 Short-tailed Shearwater

190 Fluttering Shearwater

Large flock over a workup. Steadily moving south as the workup moved.

30 Common Diving-Petrel Pairs spread out from off-shore for several miles. Never concentrated but numerous

3 White-faced Storm-Petrel

1 storm-petrel sp.

2 Australasian Gannet

7 Pied Shag

A small colony at the entrance to Whangaroa Harbour.

1 Parasitic Jaeger

145 Red-billed Gull

Flock feeding over a workup close to Stephenson's Island. About 20 Fluttering shearwater also.

8 South Black Backed Gull

2 White-fronted Tern

Are you submitting a **complete checklist** of the birds you were able to identify?

Yes

This is Les's E-Bird entry for his 'birding while fishing' trip on 11th October. If you haven't tried keeping your records and sightings on E-Bird, contact us and we will get you started. Note that it is an American product and you may have to change some of the names. The Parasitic Jaeger is better known in New Zealand as the Arctic Skua.



BEACH PATROLS - 2016

Isabella Godbert

DATE	15 MAY	2 JULY	30 JULY	15 AUG	26 OCT
DISTANCE	48 kms by	6 kms	12 kms	39 kms	35 kms
	car	walking	car	car	car
BEACH	90 mile	90 mile	90 mile	90 mile	90 mile
Wandering Albatross					1
White-capped Albatross					1
Bullers' Albatross				1	
Southern Giant Petrel			3		
Fluttering Shearwater		1	1		1
Sooty Shearwater					1
Hutton's Shearwater					1
Common Diving Petrel		2	8		
Prion sp.			1		
Salvin's Prion			6	1	
Slender-billed Prion			8	1	
Fairy Prion			18	2	
White-headed Petrel			1	2	1
Australasian Gannet					2
Southern Black-backed Gull	1				
TOTAL	1	3	46	7	8

Patrollers: Isabella & Derry Godbert, Les Feasey, Anthea Goodwin, Lois Wagener

BARN OWL UPDATE

Les Feasey

Four dead barn owls have been reported in Northland in the the 6 week period around late July and August, 2016. They are found at Brass Road, Wireless Road, Donald's Road in Kaitaia area and Tangiteroria, west of Whangarei, by a Fulton Hogan road maintenance crew. In addition, a live barn owl with a dislocated wing in poor condition was rescued by Kevin Mathews from Peria. Noel Hyde from Wingspan drove from Rotorua to Kaitaia, resuscitated the bird and took it back to Rotorua. Wingspan now has two females and a male.

Kevin reports that a barn owl with a broken wing was recovered in 2008, and a breeding pair was discovered in 2008. Nesting boxes were installed in the locality but don't appear to have been used. Trail cameras have been installed at the original breeding site (with some misadventures), and it is fairly reliably observed that they have two (perhaps three) clutches a year, and 2-4 eggs per clutch. Using this information, one can conservatively calculate that over 300 eggs have been laid. How many of these have actually fledged and grown to adulthood and are breeding is a subject of speculation until a more rigorous survey is done. Given that 5 birds were discovered over a short period of heavy rain, one suspects that the population is well established.



SCIENCE FAIR PRIZE - 2016

Les Feasey

Jack Kinghan of the Bay of Islands International Academy won the Far North Birds New Zealand prize for 2016. His study, Comparison of Backyard and Forest Birds compared the bird species found in his back yard with those found in Puketi Forest.

Jack (supported by his mother) made 6 trips to the Puketi Forest and six observations of birds in his back yard and compared the results. Jack won a fine pair of binoculars donated by Hunting and Fishing Kerikeri for his efforts.

This is the third year Hunting and Fishing and Birds New Zealand have donated a prize for the best Science Fair bird study. Previous winners were Tim Baigent of Kaitia (2014) and Max Hart of Kerikeri (2015).

Bay of Islands International Academy is a small culturally diverse publicly funded school with a passion for educational excellence. It is located in Te Tii in the Kerikeri area.

Birds New Zealand (the Ornithological Society of New Zealand) has 17 branches throughout New Zealand and is committed to the study and enjoyment of birds.



PLASTIC INGESTION IN SEABIRDS

Lauren Roman, a researcher from the University of Tasmania investigating the ingestion of plastics by seabirds, recently spent time in New Zealand analysing seabirds stomach contents. She worked in space provided to her by Matt Rayner, Land Vertebrates Curator at Auckland Museum.

I spoke to Matt recently and he said that the contribution from OSNZ members had been considerable, and Lauren had hundreds of samples to analyse. She wasn't able to dissect all of the specimens submitted and will be returning to New Zealand in January 2017 to continue her work. The results of her work to date indicate that Broad-billed prion and Thin-billed Prion had ingested plastics, but Fairy Prion seemed to be clear of plastics. Kevin Mathews and Isabella Godbert from the Far North contributed a collection of seabirds gathered from beach wreck patrols.

“We’ve had a gutful of this rubbish”

The population level effects of plastic ingestion in Australasian seabirds.

Lauren Roman, PhD Program in Quantitative Marine Science, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania.

Seabirds are the world’s most threatened groups of birds, with nearly half of the world’s species experiencing population declines, and 28% are globally threatened. According to the IUCN red list, of the 66 Australasian Procellariiformae (tube-nosed) seabirds; including albatross, petrels, prions and shearwaters, almost 40% are threatened with extinction. Understanding the threats to seabirds in their environment is critical to planning effective conservation and management strategies for these species if we hope to manage and reverse these trends.

Beach-wrecked Fairy Prion



During September 2016, I travelled from Hobart to New Zealand to collect and necropsy seabird carcasses that had been collected by volunteers over the past 12 months. Bird carcasses were collected from across New Zealand by the Ornithological Society of New Zealand from 90 Mile Beach in the north, collected by Leslie Feasey, down to Invercargill in the south collected by Lloyd Esler and Phil Rhodes. Carcasses were also provided by Wildlife Management International, Auckland Museum, Te Papa Museum, Holistic Vets and a number of individual collectors. Hundreds of individual carcasses spanning 20 seabird species were collected, ranging from the tiny Diving Petrel (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*) to the large White-capped Albatross (*Thalassarche steadi*).

The timing could not have been better for collecting seabird carcasses. During August 2016, persistent winds and storms west of Auckland caused a mortality event (often called a ‘wreck’) of prions, which are small, plankton feeding seabirds. Prions are one of the seabird groups we are particularly interested in, as they are a species we don’t often receive in large numbers, but those we do receive often have plastic ingestion. This seabird wreck presented the perfect opportunity to examine the prevalence of plastic ingestion among prions. The wreck event affected mixed species of prions, predominantly Fairy Prion (*Pachyptila turtur*) and Slender-billed Prion (*Pachyptila belcheri*), with a small number of Salvin’s Prion (*Pachyptila salvini*), Antarctic Prion (*Pachyptila desolata*) and Broad-billed Prion (*Pachyptila vittata*), with a total of about 300 beach-washed prions collected.

We found plastic ingestion among all prion species examined, all shearwater species examined, some petrels and to our surprise, none of the albatross. Salvin’s and Slender-billed Prions took the cake for the most birds affected with greater than 2/3 individuals containing ingested plastics. The highest number of items we observed in a single bird was a sub-adult male Slender-billed Prion which had ingested 21 pieces of hard plastic. An adult male Short-tailed Shearwater (*Ardenna tenuirostris*) took out second place with 19 items (mostly hard plastic). The largest item we found was a piece of blue balloon, also ingested by a Slender-billed Prion.

Of the 13 birds we examined from Far North 90 mile beach (we didn’t finish them and will be back in January to finish!), we necropsied 11 Slender-billed Prions, an Antarctic Prion and a Common Diving Petrel. The Antarctic Prion had ingested one item of plastic and 9 of the 11 Slender-billed prions had ingested plastic, ranging from 1-9 items per bird.

We are grateful to the Australian Wildlife Society and their contributors for their funding to be able to do this trip. We are also grateful to the collectors throughout Australia and New Zealand, as we could not do this valuable research without their contribution. For those who would like to follow the progress of this study, we have a facebook page which we regularly update with photos and information about seabirds and plastic ingestion. You are welcome to follow the progress of this study at: <https://www.facebook.com/seabirdsdebris/>



Some Far North members have a reputation for wandering far from home ground and I guess Carol and I are 2 of them. In May and June we returned to the continent of our origin for a few weeks and explored some regions we had not visited before. One of these was Spitsbergen, which at a latitude reaching 80 degrees north, contains the most northerly town in the world, Longyearbyen. We sailed from Aberdeen, which for Carol had a 'feelgood' factor in being only an hour north of her former home town of Dundee.

ATLANTIC PUFFIN



This was a repositioning exercise for the ship 'Ortelius' which runs expedition cruises in the Polar regions north and south of the Atlantic Ocean; so it was a one way journey travelling via Fair Isle, Jan Mayen Land and the extensive pack-ice well off the eastern coast of Greenland. The UK company Wildwings had chartered half the berths on the ship for birders like ourselves.

Fair Isle which lies between the Orkneys and Shetlands welcomed us with warm sunshine and some well-populated seabird cliffs, with many Guillemots, Razorbills, Puffins, Fulmars and Kittiwakes. There was also some late passerine migration with Wheatears, Redstarts and Bluethroats.

Jan Mayen Land is a cold isolated island well north of the Arctic Circle and although there were some interesting seabirds, it was too rough to land there. Two days later we were in the amazing seascape of pack-ice from where we enjoyed Glaucous and Ivory Gulls, Brünnich's Guillemots, Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas; also Ringed and Harp Seals.

The long journey north-eastwards from here produced some good cetacean sightings, particularly Northern Bottlenose Whales and Fin Whales, one Minke Whale; also Hooded and Harp Seals; finally as we approached Spitsbergen, well north up its west coast we encountered our first Walruses. It was calm as we explored the sheltered fiords backed by steep cliffs and we found flocks of Common and King Eiders, Red-throated Divers, Black Guillemots, skuas, Purple Sandpipers & Grey Phalaropes. On the zodiac landings we were able to approach many species more closely, particularly a rocky hillside colony of hundreds of Little Auks. It was from the ship that we watched our most wanted species, the

IVORY GULL



WALRUS with juv Ivory Gull

magnificent Polar Bear, an adult and a well-grown young; however the ship could not get nearer than about half a kilometre.

After 2 days around the coast of Spitsbergen we arrived at Longyearbyen and had some time to wander around the town and seashore before boarding our flight to Oslo.

POLAR BEAR



BIRDING OVERSEAS

We offer birding and wildlife tours designed, arranged and led by ourselves to North Peru and to Indonesia. We also assist other small tour operators by advertising their tours and where possible to offer small groups to join them.

Hugh Buck from Dumfries, Scotland operates [Buckbird Journeys Limited](#) (a codeshare partner) and runs tours to some very remote and exciting places.

[Heritage Expeditions](#) offer top quality expedition cruises to the NZ Subantarctic Islands and offer discounts for group bookings.

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.

BIRDERS REST FAR AND WIDE – YOUR LOCAL BIRD TOUR OPERATOR – offers the following:

2017 Departures

15 APRIL – SUMATRA – 2 weeks Way Kambas & Kerinci US\$ 4100 - singles \$4400

29 APRIL – BALI Extension – 5 days Bali Barat & Bedugul US\$ 1450 - singles \$1650

4 MAY – CENTRAL INDONESIA – 2 weeks Flores, Borneo, Java US\$ 4000 - singles \$4350

www.birdersrest.com www.ecolodgesindonesia.com

5 MAY – CHINA: SICHUAN & YUNNAN – 3 weeks ([Buckbird Journeys Ltd](#))

21 AUGUST – N PERU – Barbet special (4 day pre-tour) US\$950

21 AUGUST – N PERU (Tarapoto to Cajamarca) – 3 weeks US\$5100 – singles \$5450

10 SEPT – NE PERU – Chaparri & coast extension – 5 days US\$1200

14 SEPT – N PERU (Chiclayo to Tarapoto) – 2 weeks US\$4100 – singles \$4400

29 SEPT – SAN LORENZO DEL MARANON extension 4 days US\$ TBA

www.birdersrest.com www.birdingnorthperu.com

21 SEPT – THE ULTIMATE COLOMBIA – 3 weeks ([Buckbird Journeys Ltd](#))

1 DEC – SUBANTARCTIC ISLANDS (Snarres, Auckland Is, Campbell & Macquarie Is) 13 days

21 DEC – SUBANTARCTICS – repeat expedition cruise – 13 days.

www.heritage-expeditions.com

2018 Departures

Peru and Indonesia tours are likely to be repeated in 2018.

3 FEBRUARY – SOUTH INDIA & THE ANDAMAN IS. – 15 days ([Buckbird Journeys Ltd](#))

4 MARCH – 'THE HEART OF AFRICA' (Central African Republic) – 8 days ([Buckbird](#))

Maybe attach Uganda?

27 JUNE – SIBERIA'S FORGOTTEN COAST – Kamchatka to Anadyr cruise (2 weeks)

www.heritage-expeditions.com

25 AUGUST – MONGOLIAN SNOW LEOPARDS – (2 weeks) ([Buckbird Journeys Ltd](#))



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