

*Newsletter of the Northland Region of the  
Ornithological Society of New Zealand - trading as **Birds New Zealand***

## **February 2016 Amokura 115**

(Published in February, July and October of each year)

**MEETINGS** of the Northland Branch of the O.S.N.Z. are held each month on the second Thursday, for the period FEBRUARY to DECEMBER. TIME: 7-30p.m.

**VENUE:** Founders Room, Alzheimers Society, 148 Corks Road, Tikipunga, Whangarei.  
**COST:** A donation of \$3-00 per person per meeting is requested toward the cost of Hall hire, supper and the production and distribution of "Amokura".

**ALL WELCOME**

### **PROGRAMME TO July 2016**

#### **FEBRUARY**

AMOKURA 115

- 11 MEETING – 7-30p.m. Speaker –.
- 20 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
- 16 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark)

#### **MARCH**

- 10 MEETING – 7-30p.m. Speaker –
- 19 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
- 15 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark)

#### **APRIL**

- 16 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
- 7 MEETING – 7-30p.m. Speaker –.
- 12 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **MAY**

- 14 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
- 12 MEETING – 7-30p.m. Speaker –.
- 17 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **JUNE**

- 9 MEETING – 7-30p.m. Speaker –.
- 18 WEST COAST BEACH PATROL
- 14 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

**REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**  
**SECRETARY**  
**TREASURER**  
**REGIONAL RECORDER**  
**REGIONAL REPORTER**  
**AMOKURA EDITOR**

<b>Janet Snell</b>	<b>438-5737</b>
<b>Ruth Crockett</b>	<b>435-0954</b>
<b>Kevin Hayes</b>	<b>437-6470</b>
<b>Tony Beauchamp</b>	<b>436-2224</b>
<b>Vacant</b>	
<b>Hilton Ward</b>	<b>946-0074</b>

**Please note:** There are links in this PDF that will take you to other sites and files. These can only be accessed via the internet or contacting the responsible person directly.

## OCTOBER

### LOCAL HAPPENINGS

We had an interesting meeting. Tony Beauchamp held us all with two interesting presentations. The first being about kukupa and tui on Kawau Is and their relationship to the vegetation change from pohutukawa to pines over time.

The second presentation was about the rare native Hochstetter's frog. Hochstetter's frog (*Leiopelma hochstetteri*) is a primitive frog native to New Zealand, one of only four surviving species belonging to the taxonomic family Leiopelmatidae. They possess some of the most ancient features of any extant frogs in the world. He explained how little was known about this frog at the time of his study of them in a stream in the Brynderwin range. With photographs he explained the fascinating eight day larval stage through to a nine millimetre emerging frog. Complete metamorphosis takes ninety five to one hundred and five days. It is unknown how long they can live.

## NOVEMBER

After the usual formalities the meeting continued with discussion about the Red Billed Gull survey with encouragement to report new colony sites. Pat Miller plans to continue counting the local colonies with his kayak.

We then viewed a collection of trail camera videos presented by Hilton Ward. Particularly interesting were the videos from Ian Skipworth showing an Australasian harrier attacking two Pateke on a small pond on his Ngunguru property. The hawk was no match for the ducks that threw water up distracting the hawk as it approached near. The Pateke dived under the surface under the water screen. This was repeated several times until the hawk gave up. When it was all clear the clutch of ducklings came out of cover and populated the pond with the parents.

Other interesting videos were from Hilton and Melva Wards collection from their property at Ngunguru. Particularly interesting were the shots of the bittern, banded rail, white faced heron, kiwi visiting its hole, tui bathing and a silvereye party at the birdbath.

## DECEMBER

The December meeting started early. As usual for this meeting attendees brought a plate and all tucked into food and conversation celebrating another year.



### Other News

Birds New Zealand does need young birders coming through the ranks. Here is a way to encourage new young members.

[Young Birders New Zealand](#) is a new organization started by a small group of 11-15 year olds who love birds!

- We want to encourage other young kiwis to get involved in birding!
- We have set up a new website and online magazine aimed at kids. The mission of Young Birders NZ is to “Foster New Zealand’s young birders” and let them reach their full birdy potential, also “Ensuring that the brilliant art of bird-watching never disappears in New Zealand by reuniting young kiwis with nature”.
- Our goal is to support, encourage and inform the young birding community of New Zealand and we would also love to be able to organise meetings and trips for our members.
- If you know any young people that might be interested in this please don't hesitate to tell them about us.
- We are currently trying our hardest to make good links with bird people all over the country. We have YouTube, G+, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and our website. If you would like to follow us or join, please either email us on [youngbirdersnz@gmail.com](mailto:youngbirdersnz@gmail.com) or subscribe via our website [www.youngbirdersnz.wix.com/youngbirdersnz](http://www.youngbirdersnz.wix.com/youngbirdersnz) (you can also find us on social media).

### WHO are WE?

[Amber](#): I'm a YBNZ Founder, Nelson Lakes birder, Wetland and Wild river bird lover, plus wanna-be bander and Ornithologist!

[Michael](#): I'm a co-founder of Young Birders NZ and particularly enjoy tough ID challenges such as waders!

[George](#): I'm a Zealandia youth ambassador and I really love bird photography!

[Oscar](#): I'm an advocate of all our birds, especially Kokako, I'm also training to be a guide on Tiritiri Matangi!

### National Wader Count and Studies

Notes from Birds New Zealand 26th January 2016.

Follow the link for the full article.

<http://www.osnz.org.nz/national-wader-count>

The distribution and abundance of wading birds has been studied in New Zealand since the formation of the Ornithological Society. At selected sites such as Firth of Thames and Manukau Harbour, annual locality counts provided a census of wader flocks both in summer and winter.

In 1983, it was decided to extend these counts to all the major estuaries and harbours in New Zealand. Flocks of waders were counted annually in November and June. This provided information on the

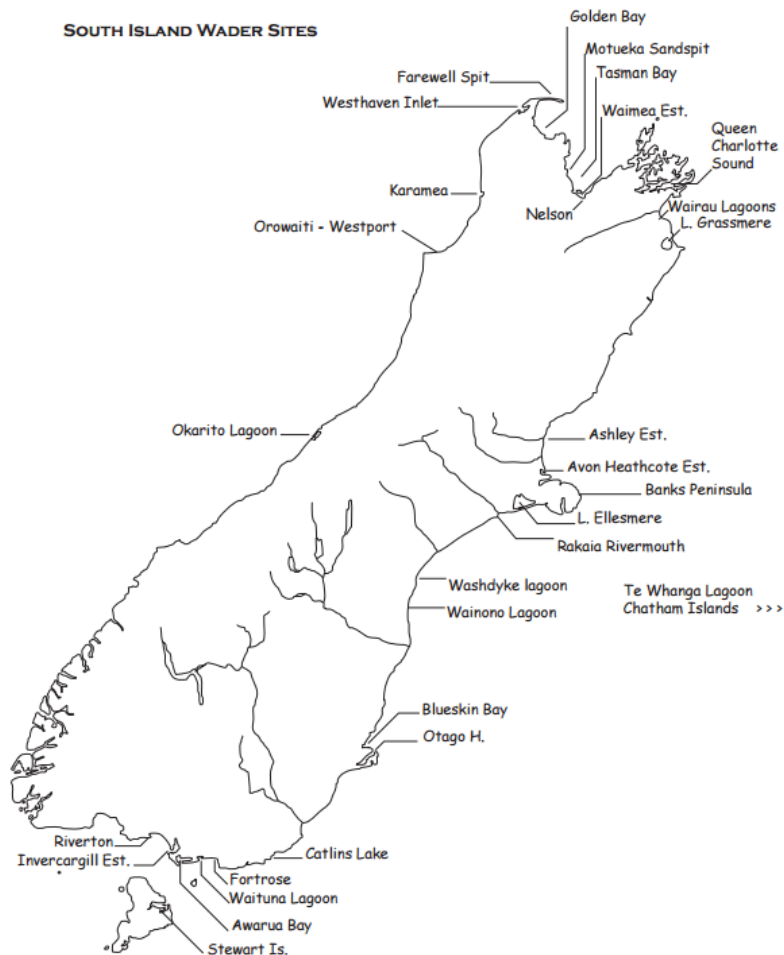
numbers of Arctic migrants that summered in New Zealand and how many remained over the winter. It also enabled counts of New Zealand waders that formed flocks in the winter, e.g. South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Wrybill and Pied Stilts. The national wader counts were conducted at all sites until 1994. Today, the counts are continuing at a selection of key sites to monitor long-term trends in the wader populations.

New Zealand wader sites are shown on the following maps:

[North Island](#)

[South Island](#).

There is much more in the article, including the census reports.



***Shore Bird Count at Ngunguru*** - 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015 A Shore Bird count at Ngunguru sand spit and lower estuary was undertaken by a group of 5 enthusiasts on Saturday November 13<sup>th</sup>. The count is part of a seasonal inventory of shore birds in New Zealand conducted by the Ornithological Society and for the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society and takes in the highlighted areas on the map. This count recorded a total of 82 birds. Much lower than usual.

The weather was partly cloudy with a light northwest breeze. At high tide the birds gather together on the small beaches. At lower tide levels, the birds are out feeding on the sand/mud flats and it's more difficult to get an accurate count. The godwits occupied their usual roost spot on Te Maika spit for this time of the year. This count had a much reduced 13. Hopefully by the February count numbers will be better. Variable Oyster catchers (indigenous, regionally significant) are the most abundant birds sharing our bit of coast; 35 stood still to be counted this November. The lowest count since 2009. The average is 68. They were spread about in pairs over all areas of Te Maika Spit and Pi Manu. New Zealand dotterels (indigenous, nationally vulnerable) are also resident and 11 were found around the tip of the sand spit and further down the main sand spit beach. This is our lowest dotterel recording with 11. The average being 21. Other birds seen include: Whimbrel (2) Black Backed Gull (5). Red Billed Gull (4). Caspian Tern (1) Pied Shag (2) Starling (1) Welcome Swallow (5) Myna (1)

We are fortunate to share our beaches and estuary with so many species indigenous and native birds. Nesting birds are sensitive to disturbance by people and dogs, so between now and February please be aware of the birds, and give them a wide berth, when walking along the beaches or crossing the dunes.

Thank you to everyone:  
Hilton Ward, Darlene and  
Chris Buckley, Gina  
Williams and an interested  
visitor from the UK,  
Jennifer Mackenzie-Brown  
who took part in this wader  
bird count.

Submitted by: Hilton Ward  
15<sup>th</sup> November 2015



Judi Gilbert managed these great shots of the two Whimbrels below.





Jan Doak caught these two Whimbrels below on Te Maika Spit at Ngunguru in January.



### **Labour Weekend – Camping and Birding with Janet Snell and Karen Miller**

Over Labour weekend, October 24<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> 2015, Karen and I in Karen's car headed for the Puriri Bay DOC camp on the peninsular south of Bland Bay for a camping / birding weekend.

The rain held off all the way there then the heavens opened. We ate lunch in the car then erected the tents and spent most of that afternoon in our respective tents resting and reading. We rigged a large

tarpaulin from the back of Karen's car and over her tent which gave us a good dry space to have our tea.

The rain eased after tea so we walked to the northern end of Puriri bay to check the Shag colony in an old Pohutukawa tree overhanging the water. We counted 2 Little Shags, 6 Pied Shags and two nests occupied. Not as many shags as Julie and I counted the previous year....then early to bed, more reading and hoping the rain would be gone by morning.

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> we woke to a fine morning and drove to Rawhiti where there seemed to be a lack of birds. 12 Black Billed Gulls and 32 Red Billed Gulls. We walked a little way around the coast near Rawhiti but found no sightings of any shags but did find a camp ground where we could stay one day. We walked over to Oke Bay for lunch and a swim. One small lunch time drama – my boiled egg rolled away down the sand-hill to be rescued, washed and eaten for lunch and I live to tell the tale. Lunch was followed by a swim in the coldest water ever! Very refreshing to say the least. Karen eventually made the grade and spread her body horizontally for a second then upright again with the words "I'm numb all over!"

We moved on and stopped at the entrance to the Whangamumu whaling station where DOC have done a lot of planting over the swampy area by the road. We followed a track round part of the area where we saw Paradise Ducks and heard Fernbirds.

On to Parekura Bay where we had a good count and variety of birds. The interesting counts being 18 New Zealand Dotterels, and 21 White Faced Heron. We walked down a bush track to Jacks Bay. On the beach we spoke to a local who said there was a shag tree around the rocks. The tide and evening were coming in so decided we would have to check the area another time.

There were heaps of Gannets diving off Oakura close to the shore which we could see from the Puriri Bay side. We called into Taupiri bay and checked the Pied Shag colony there where we counted much the same number as earlier in 2015. Back at Bland Bay we counted 40 Variable Oyster Catchers and 23 Red Billed Gulls.

On the way home we called into Helena Bay and counted 48 Black Backed Gulls, 2 Caspian Terns, 2 Red Billed Gulls, and 4 Little Shags in a dead tree on the cliffs near the car park.

Although we did not find any new shag colonies over the weekend we saw a great variety of birds.

## **Piwakawaka** By Melva Ward

I wrote an article published in the October 2015 issue of Amokura about my dear friend *Pi* who knew how to get me to go to the compost bin and open it so the vinegar flies flew out for him.

Sadly, on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015 he passed away. I found him lying on the ground beside the blueberry bushes. It was 6 years since he first introduced himself to me. Unofficial, but it is a very old age for a Fantail according to my recent research on their longevity. It is very quiet in the garden now.



## **January Beach Patrol**

On January 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, a few days after the easterly storm of January 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Vivian, Marion and I decided to do a beach patrol between the Ruakaka River mouth, Uretiti Camp and the Waipu River mouth.

14 species were found and 446 were identified. Some were brought home for a second opinion and Prue

Cozens identified these for us. Mostly the birds were reasonably fresh with a few that had been on the beach for a while. Marion, from One Tree Pt also found a few in a stretch from Ruakaka Surf Club towards the Uretiti day park.

There were probably more birds that were washed up but have since covered with sand so were missed. The found birds were:

Blue Penguin	1	Gannet	3
Fairy Prion	5	Diving Petrel	5
Cooks Petrel	3	Black Petrel	1
Flesh Footed Shearwater	1	Wedge tail Shearwater	1
Bullers Shearwater	1	Sooty Shearwater	2
Little Shearwater	2	New Zealand Storm Petrel	1
Fluttering Shearwater	17	Tasmanian Short Tail Shearwater	1

3

### EAST COAST BEACH PATROL – SUMMARY – Code NE

Compiled by P. R. SMITH – Period JUL to DEC 2015

MONTH	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC.	TOTALS
FROM	Ruakaka Riv	Ruakaka	Ruakaka Riv.	Ruakaka Riv.	Ruakaka Riv.	Ruakaka Riv.	
TO	Uretiti Tip	Sth of tip	Sth of Tip.	Sth of Tip	Sth of Tip.	Sth of Tip.	
DISTANCE	7.5km	8.5 km	8.5 km	8.5 km	8.5 km	8.5 km	
PATROLLERS	M.Robinson	Michael S. J Snell	P. Cozens J Hudson	A. McCracken P. Cozens	J. Hawken K. Miller	D. Snell V. Lowe	
Wandering Albatross							
Royal Albatross							
Black-browed Mollymawk							
White-capped (shy mollymawk)							
Grey-headed Mollymawk							
Buller's Mollymawk							
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross							
Flesh-footed Shearwater						1	<b>1</b>
Buller's Shearwater				1		1	<b>2</b>
Sooty Shearwater							
Short-tailed Shearwater							
Fluttering Shearwater	1		6	2		5	<b>14</b>
Hutton's Shearwater							
Little Shearwater							
Common Diving Petrel	<b>2</b>		1				<b>3</b>
Black Petrel							
White-chinned Petrel							
Kerguelen Petrel		NO					
Cape Pigeon							
Antarctic Fulmar							
Northern Giant Petrel		PATROL					
Fairy Prion	1					1	<b>2</b>
Thin-billed Prion							
Antarctic Prion		DONE					
Broad-billed Prion							
Lesser Broad-billed Prion							
Prion sp			1				<b>1</b>
Blue Petrel							
Pycroft's Petrel							
Cook's Petrel							
Black-winged Petrel							
Mottled Petrel							
Grey-faced Petrel							
White-headed Petrel	1						<b>1</b>
N.Z. Storm Petrel				1			<b>1</b>

Blue Penguin					1	3	4
Australasian Gannet			3	2			5
Pied Shag							
Tui							
Petrel Sp.							
Variable Oystercatcher							
Southern Black-backed Gull	1			1			2
Red-billed Gull					1		1
Caspian Tern							
White-fronted Tern							
Blackbird			1				1
Mallard							
Australasian Harrier							
Spur-winged Plover						1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>39</b>

## Recent Sightings By Members

Bird	Number	Place	date	Name
Chaffinch	2	21 McMillan Ave, Kamo	9-Oct-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Dabchick	3	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	2-Nov-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Welcome Swallow	4	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	2-Nov-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Spur Winged Plover	2	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	2-Nov-15	Ruth & David Crockett
White Faced Heron	2	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	2-Nov-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Black Shag	1	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	2-Nov-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Pipit	5	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	2-Nov-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Paradise Shellduck	2	Lake Waro, Hikurangi	2-Nov-15	Ruth & David Crockett
White Faced Heron	23	Parekura Bay, Bay of Islands	25-Oct-15	Janet Snell & Karen Miller
Tomtit	1	Bush behind Puriri Bay, Whangaruru	26-Oct-15	Karen Miller
NZ Scaup	2	Quarry Gardens Lake	9-Nov-15	Karen Miller
Wood Pigeon	8	47 Silverstream Rd. Feeding in loquat tree	8-Nov-15	Karen Miller
Weka	1	Jacks Bay, Bay of Islands	25-Oct-15	Karen Miller
Greenfinch	3	47 Silverstream Rd. Feeding on borage	November	Karen Miller
Shining Cuckoo	1	2 McMillan Ave, Kamo	29-Sep-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Kereru	2	2 McMillan Ave, Kamo	29-Sep-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Grey Warbler	1	2 McMillan Ave, Kamo	6-Oct-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Kereru	1	2 McMillan Ave, Kamo	6-Oct-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Greenfinch (Male)	1	2 McMillan Ave, Kamo	6-Oct-15	Ruth & David Crockett
Kereru (Every day)	2	31 Takahe St, Tikipunga	27-Sep-15	Pauline Smith & Kevin Hayes
Kereru	4	71 Tatton Rd, Maungatapere	19-Sep-15	T Toohill
Kereru	1	43 Silverstraem Rd, Maunu	8-Oct-15	Karen Miller
Grey Ducks (2 Pair)	4	71 Tatton Rd, Maungatapere	7 <sup>9</sup> th Oct 15	T Toohill
Black Shag	1	Ruawai Flats	20-Sep-15	Janet Snell
Red Billed Gulls	200	On rocks & bank by Pataua footbridge	30-Sep-15	Janet, Mikey & Kathy
Kereru	4	Paparoa Rd, Pahi	24-Sep-15	Janet, Jean & Vivian Iowe
Royal Spoonbills	6	Tameterau	30-Sep-15	Janet & Mikey

Variable oystercatchers	6	Johnson Pt	2-Oct-15	Janet & Mikey
Fairy Tern	2	Johnson Pt	2-Oct-15	Janet & Mikey
Godwit	79	Johnson Pt	2-Oct-15	Janet & Mikey
NZ Dotterels	4	Johnson Pt	2-Oct-15	Janet & Mikey
Little Shag	1	Johnson Pt	2-Oct-15	Janet & Mikey
Royal Spoonbills	25	One Tree Pt	6-Oct-15	Janet & Mikey