

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington Region Newsletter

OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

September 2016

<http://osnz.org.nz/> and <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>

Greetings

2016 is rapidly drawing to a close and it is time to start preparing a list of speakers for our 2017 meetings. I have a few ideas for possible speakers and some ideas from members but would welcome more suggestions. The February 2016 meeting will stick with tradition and have short talks from local members. Volunteers for speaking at this meeting are most welcome, otherwise I will have to try some gentle persuasion. Each year we endeavour to have one speaker from outside the Wellington Region for which we will contribute to their travel expenses. Thus your suggestions do not have to be limited to Wellington-based speakers.

An increasing feature of the newsletter is the incorporation of data from eBird, including distribution maps. Of particular note are the increasing number of historic records being lodged in eBird. Joanna McVeagh and Nikki McArthur are to be commended for entering into eBird the records from RDH Stidolph's diaries, and Helen Griffiths and Annette Harvey for entering 10 years of bird count observations from Whareroa Farm and the Paekakariki Escarpment.

Geoff de Lisle

Regional Representative, OSNZ (Birds New Zealand), Wellington

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

WHERE and WHEN

October Monday 3rd. Colin Miskelly, Te Papa, 21 years of bird counts in Zealandia/Karori Sanctuary: from unfenced water reservoir to fully-fledged eco-sanctuary
Ben Bell, Temporal changes in birds and bird song detected in Zealandia sanctuary, Wellington, New Zealand, over 2011-2015

November Monday 7th. Ian Armitage "In the wake of Scott and Shackleton – a short adventure in the Antarctic".

December Monday 5th. Duncan Watson & a supporting cast. A pictorial review of birds of southern Africa.

Meetings are held at Te Papa's collections building, 169 Tory Street. Go up the steps/ramp and across the carpark.

First Monday of the month, 7.45pm.

Report of Monthly Meetings

July Monday 4th. Nikki McArthur (Wildlife Management International Ltd), Our Natural Capital: Monitoring changes in Wellington City's bird community between 2011 and 2015. Nikki's talk was a summary of 5 minute counts carried out by the Greater Wellington Regional Council between 2011 and 2015. The five minutes counts were carried out at 100 stations in forest habitats throughout Wellington parks and reserves. Each year, two five-minute counts were carried out in November or early December. Up to 33 different species were detected each year which included some native species ranked either Nationally Threatened or At Risk under the New Zealand threat classification system. Most frequently encountered native species were in descending order, silvereyes, tui, grey warbler, fantail and shining cuckoo, while most commonly encountered introduced birds were blackbird, chaffinch, starling, house sparrow and dunnock. The

survey has revealed a number of fascinating observations. For example, tui are now widespread across Wellington City and were encountered in all 100 count stations. In marked contrast, bellbird have a very limited distribution around Zealandia and were found in ~10% of the count stations. Of the native species introduced into Zealandia, kaka have been the most successful in utilising habitat in surrounding parts of Wellington City. In monitoring Wellington City's bird community, Nikki also utilised the observations recorded in eBird. As would be expected, morepork were not recorded in the 5 minute counts but were in eBird. Details of the survey can be found at the following website. <http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Our-Environment/Environmental-monitoring/Environmental-Reporting/Wellington-City-bird-monitoring-report-2015.pdf>

August Monday 1st. Johannes Fischer, Birds of Borneo. In this talk Johannes described some of the bird life he encountered during his stay on Borneo while volunteering in an orangutan conservation project. Borneo is the third largest island in the world and a biodiversity hot spot. Over 600 bird species have been observed in Borneo, including over 50 endemics and 4 endemic genera. The island is undergoing significant and rapid change with a large amount of deforestation. Subsistent hunting and illegal harvesting of hornbills are additional threats to the bird life. Johannes's bird observations included transect and river counts based on visual and acoustic observations. From two years of observations 275 different species were recorded, including 18 endemics. Further information, including photographs of Johannes's stay can be found on his website <http://gottatwitchemall.blogspot.co.nz/>

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305725431> The little-known confusing calls of Black Partridge *Melanoperdix niger*
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305725243> Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* exhibiting signs of the pigment deficiency %27dilution%27

September Monday 5th. Ralph Powlesland, Weka – how come the population of this flightless species is thriving in the Marlborough Sounds? Ralph started banding weka in the Marlborough Sounds in 2007. The investigations intensified in 2009 when he became a resident in the Sounds. His study adult birds were individually identified using alpha-numeric bands and visited twice a day. An important finding of Ralph's study is that in the Sounds weka can successfully rear young without predator control. This occurs in the presence of harrier hawks, stoats and feral cats but not ferrets, which are not present in the Sounds. Poorly managed pet dogs can be a major problem preying on weka. The healthy population of weka in the Sounds is in great contrast to the situation in the North Island where weka struggle to survive in the presence of predators.



Photo, Juvenile weka; one of two juveniles at the Trig, Kapiti Island being raised by parents. Note, brown eye compared to red eyes in adults. September, 2016

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Birds New Zealand Regional Roundup: Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929 osnzwelly@gmail.com

Shag Survey - Geoff de Lisle

Mist netting – Matu Booth, matu1@paradise.net.nz

Bird Snippets

White heron returns to Lower Hutt, **Charlotte** » Sun Jul 03, 2016

Was down there this afternoon and he as showing well, after he'd climbed out from behind the picnic table. BirdingNZ.net

Note, first reported in 2016 on BirdingNZ.net at the Hutt River mouth on 22 May by Somesbirder.

NZ Falcon Western Hills Wellington, **ledzep** » Mon Aug 01, 2016

Great views of a Falcon on Sunday morning on the Skyline walkway above Khandallah as I was heading towards Mt Kaukau two other ladies were walking south and as we neared a Falcon came from the north behind them flying low over the hillside. Maybe it has learnt that humans flush up small birds. It's the 4th or 5th time I've seen Falcons along this route, either low over the hillsides or flying high above the hills. The big flocks of Starlings that were here a few weeks ago have all disappeared. Kakas in the bush near the Simla Crescent entrance to Mt Kaukau walkway. BirdingNZ.net

Falcon, Maungaraki, Kath McIndoe August 3, 2016.

Falcon photographed in kowhai tree in a suburban garden, Jacaranda Grove, on the 3rd and 13th of August.

Wellington City biodiversity, **SomesBirder** » Mon Aug 08, 2016

Today I briefly saw two goldfinches on the pavement near the Grand Arcade in Willis Street; surprising for a location that usually has nothing but sparrows, starlings, and feral pigeons.

Blue reef heron at Pukerua Bay, **rogerandmavis** » Sat Aug 13, 2016

Sighted this reef heron just past the Pou at the start of the Pukerua Bay walkway on Thurs 11th Aug. BirdingNZ.net

Jim_j » Sat Aug 13, 2016 The most reliable spot to sight the bird is about 2/3rds of the way along the road along the beach where the old gun emplacement is (a grassy mound covering a concrete bunker) - on most days it is round the rocks there (high or low tide). Can take a few minutes to spot as it blends in well and can be hidden by rocks. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity, **ledzep** » Wed Aug 10, 2016

There are often a couple of Little Black Shags sitting on the ropes by the Hikitea near Te Papa on the

corner of Wellington waterfront. Last Thursday 4th Aug I saw 6 birds there. There's often one or two Little Shags along the Esplanade, and occasionally a Pied Shag and a Spotless Shag. BirdingNZ.net. Photo, Duncan Watson.



Wellington City biodiversity, **ledzep** » Fri Aug 19, 2016

Flock of 4 Goldfinches on Queens Wharf near the helicopter pad at lunchtime. Several small groups of Fluttering Shearwater out on the harbour. And a Bellbird calling in Botanic Gardens around the Lady Norwood rose garden area. BirdingNZ.net

Falcon, Taita, Hutt Valley, Rosemary Heather, 19th August, 2016

Reynolds Street Taita (1.00pm). Falcon observed for ~15 minutes in a neighbouring park at the top of a Norfolk pine. Blackbirds in adjacent gardens screamed alarm calls.

Falcon, Woburn, Lower Hutt, Allen Heath, Saturday 3rd Sept, 2016, 11.00am

Falcon flew by at suburban, Wai-iti Crescent.

Wellington City biodiversity **ledzep** » Sat Sep 10, 2016

Wonderful to see and hear a Falcon calling repeatedly flying high above the centre of Ngaio (heading vaguely in the direction of Tinakori Hill where they nested last year). I don't need to go to Boundary Stream or Okarito or Whangamomona to see them - right here a km or two from where I live. BirdingNZ.net

Re: Wellington City biodiversity, **c0nz** » Mon Sep 19, 2016

Saw two Little Blues just off Frank Kits park today. BirdingNZ.net

Blue Penguin off Te Papa, **ledzep** » Mon Sep 19, 2016

A Blue Penguin swimming near the wharf by Te Papa and Hikitea at lunchtime. BirdingNZ.net



A detailed analysis of the 2016 survey has yet to be completed by Landcare Research scientists. Preliminary analysis of data 1 week post survey was carried out on 4065 forms, 568 of which came from the Wellington / Wairarapa region. A total of 146,335 birds (105 species) were reported from throughout New Zealand. An interesting finding was a decrease by 55% compared to the previous year in the number of silver-eyes.

Eastbourne / Pencarrow Lakes Banded Dotterels

Baring Head and the Eastbourne coast, including the Pencarrow Lakes outfall, is one of the largest breeding colonies of banded dotterels in the Wellington region. In previous years iwi, volunteers, Hutt City Council and the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) have controlled access to the nests in this region and instituted a control programme to reduced predation of birds by feral cats, hedgehogs and rats. In the 2015/16 breeding season there were four banded dotterel nests on the Eastbourne foreshore. Four of five chicks successfully fledged.

MIRO (Mainland Island Restoration Operation) has undertaken to monitor banded dotterels at Pencarrow Lakes over the next four years. Ideally, they wish to monitor the birds twice a week. They have one (tightly controlled) key to Burdan's gate to access the Lakes. They have requested help with banding, nest monitoring, adult and chick monitoring (contact Geoff de Lisle).

Updates – 2016

August 25

Sally, Ned and Rob wish to advise those with an interest in the wellbeing of Muritai and Pencarrow Lakes coasts banded dotterels that the 2016-17 nesting season is officially open with our discovery this morning of the first clutch of eggs at the Lake Kohangapiripiri nesting site.

Of note also was a flock of 15 to 20 dotterels, in flight, which landed further to the east. So hopefully prospects are good for a successful breeding season.

George Hobson Sep 04, 2016

About a week ago I went out to have a look at the Bandies in Eastbourne. There were 14 males and 5 females, which is a nice number for around there as far as I know. They're really friendly and so provide awesome photo opportunities if you sit still and wait for them to come to you. BirdingNZ.net

Photo, George Hobson

Andrew Crossland » Sun Sep 04, 2016



Comment: Andrew commented on BirdingNZ.net; considerable caution should be exercised when observing nesting birds. Having birds leave the nest for more than 10 minutes can lead to the eggs being adversely affected with death of the chicks. He recommends we should always remember that 10 min rule, get the shots, have an intimate experience with a wild bird, then retreat and let mum or dad get back to sitting on the nest.

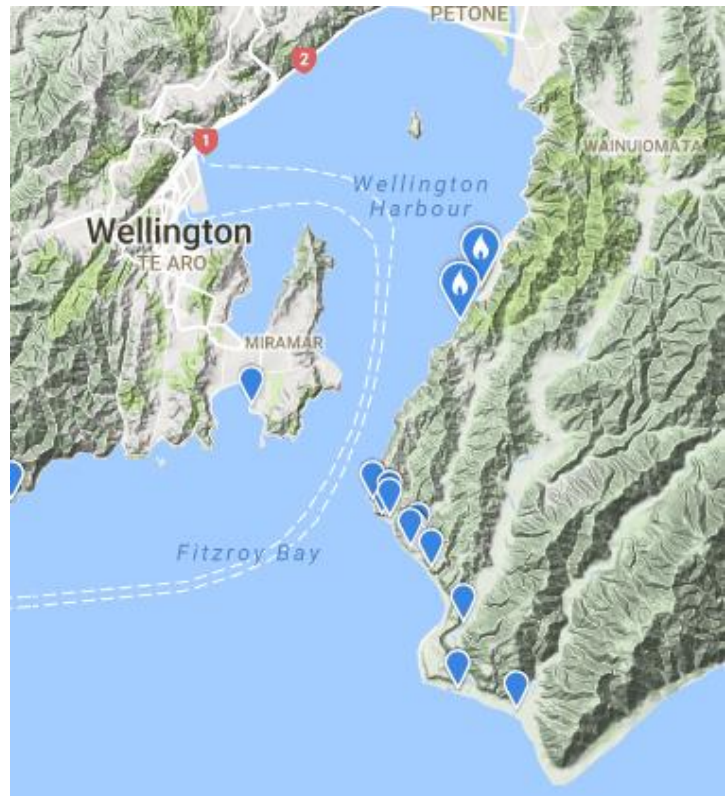
24 September

MIRO reports; There have been two nests found at the Lakes blocks but one was destroyed by sheep and the other probably by the severe southerly storm. Breeding season in the region is late this year, almost a month later than normal. The reason for the late season may be the cold spell of weather we have recently experienced. Currently, only 6 pairs of banded dotterels have been observed at the Lakes block. Currently there are two nests on the foreshore in front of Eastbourne. More nests will need to be found before the first banding session will be carried out.

Wellington Region, Banded Dotterels

Other areas in Wellington where banded dotterels recorded in eBird in 2015/16
Pauatahanui Inlet, Waikanae Estuary, Peka Peka Beach & Otaki River Estuary

R.D.H Stidolph recorded banded dotterels at the Gollans Stream outlet (outlet of Pencarrow Lakes) and at Baring Head in November, 1924. Ebird records.



Banded Dotterel sightings – 2015/16 (eBird)

New Zealand Today

<http://www.osnz.org.nz/sites/osnz.org.nz/files/1607%20NZ%20Today%20South%20Island%20Birds%20Article%2BAd.pdf>

Ebird Update – Nikki McArthur reports

EBird has just published an interesting article online describing the usefulness of adding your historical bird observations and survey data into eBird, together with some useful hints and tips on how to go about it:
<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/historickonza/>

In the Wellington region we have several people who have been doing this in recent weeks, for example, Helen Griffiths and Annette Harvey have recently added almost 10 years of bird monitoring data from Whareroa Farm and the Paekakariki Escarpment, filling in two previously blank areas on our eBird bird distribution maps.

Joanna McVeagh and myself are also slowly entering 50 years' worth of bird observations collected by founding Birds NZ member R.H.D. Stidolph. Mr Stidolph's records alone have greatly increased the historical 'depth' of our Wellington eBird dataset. Our earliest Wellington region eBird record is of huia seen on Mt Misty in the Orongorongo Ranges in January 1902. BirdingNZ.net

Mana Island bird recovery

Colin Miskelly » Sun Aug 21, 2016

The following was first reported on BirdingNZ.net

<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=5996>

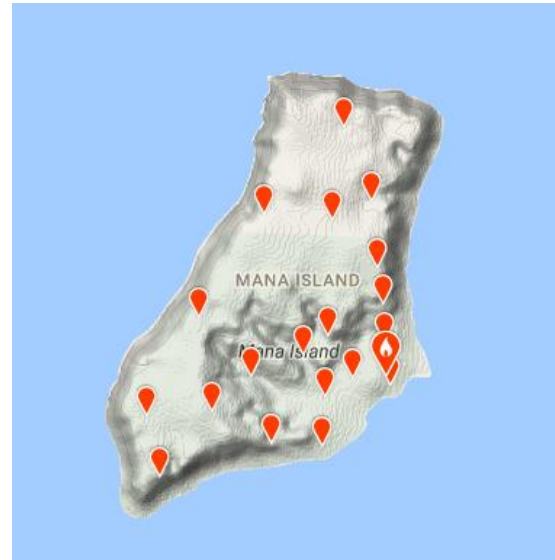
I was on Mana Island (off Wellington west coast) over the weekend as part of a Friends of Mana Island working-bee weekend. I was mainly monitoring diving petrels and other translocated petrel species, but was so struck by the numbers of bellbirds on Saturday (which was fine and calm) that I made time today to complete 20 x 5-minute bird counts covering most of the island. The four most frequently recorded species were yellow-crowned parakeet (mean of 5.8 per count) followed by bellbird (5.65), tui (2.25) and whitehead (1.4). None of these four species was resident 20+ years ago, though tui visited seasonally when the flax was in flower. They have recovered of their own accord as the revegetation progressed, while the other three species have been reintroduced. To my knowledge this is the only site where translocated bellbirds have thrived (and there was no supplementary feeding).

The most unexpected sighting for the weekend was a girl bunting during a 5-minute count - only the second I have seen on the island during regular visits since 1992.

Why was the translocation successful?

With the exception of a (in 2010) small tui population, Mana ticked every box for a potentially successful bellbird translocation. Advantages over previous translocations included absence of all introduced mammals (contrast with Waiheke, Waitakere, Moturoa, Whangaparaoa [1983-84], and Hamilton), and a 3km water barrier to reduce dispersal (contrast with Karori plus all other mainland sites) - as well as having extensive shrub-forest habitat.

Almost all mammal-free restoration islands already had bellbirds naturally, and so there hadn't been previous opportunities to find out how bellbirds fared when released in such prime habitat + location. It was noticeable in



Ebird - locations of counts

the early days on Mana that the outermost scrubby patches on the peneplain (the flat top of Mana) were used by females in the virtual absence of males, which were thought to dominate the better habitat/food sources on the slopes and sheltered valleys. It is only in the last couple of years that both sexes have become conspicuous throughout the island. If the good habitat continued to and beyond a fence, then maybe too many females would have been lost, ramping up competition and aggression among the males and exacerbating the harassment of the few remaining females (i.e. the scenario reported from Karori).

Was there any indication that non-translocated bellbirds reached Mana Island?

Bellbirds did occasionally reach Mana Island. I summarised known sightings in a review of the ecological restoration plan published in June 2010:

"Bellbirds have apparently reached Mana Island on at least four occasions, but have not established a population. Known records include one on 27 or 28 Apr 1996 (Maree Hunt), one seen and another heard between 9 Sep and Oct 2005 (Tony Henry and Di Batchelor), one seen on 4 Jan 2008 (Grant Timlin, it had been heard for 2-3 weeks previous), and one

heard 30 Jun 2008 (Grant Timlin). The sex of the birds seen was not recorded."

There were no bellbirds known to be present when birds from Kapiti Island were released in May 2010 (with a top-up of additional females in 2012). While it is possible that a few natural immigrants have recruited to the population, I have no doubt that their establishment on the island is due to translocation.

Colonisation of Tawharanui by bellbirds

In 2004 a predator proof fence was established followed by an aerial poison drop on the Tawharanui peninsular, on the east coast, north of Auckland city. The sanctuary was naturally colonised by bellbirds the following year from offshore islands and a thriving, self-sustaining population has been established.

The Karori Community Mural, Karori Road

The mural was developed by the artists Ruth Robertson Taylor and Ian Taylor in collaboration with school students from Cardinal McKeefrey, Makara Normal, Karori Normal, Karori West, Samuel Marsden Collegiate and St Theresa's. Advice and guidance was given by the Mural Steering Committee which was made up with representatives from the

wider Karori Community. Inspiration for the mural came from the local bird life and the former Karori resident, the artist E. Mervyn Taylor. A notable feature of Mervyn Taylor's work was his woodcuts including many of birds.



"As an artist I aspire to become a craftsman, as a craftsman I aspire to become an artist"

Mervyn Taylor





Pied shag – Zealandia, September, 2016

Cuckoo Reports – Cuckoo Migration Project

Michael Anderson <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NZCuckoo/>

It is that time of year again!. Spring is coming and so are the cuckoos. I'm still collecting reports of the first cuckoo arrivals, so remember to report it when you hear the first one of the season.

Here are the reporting forms. Thanks!

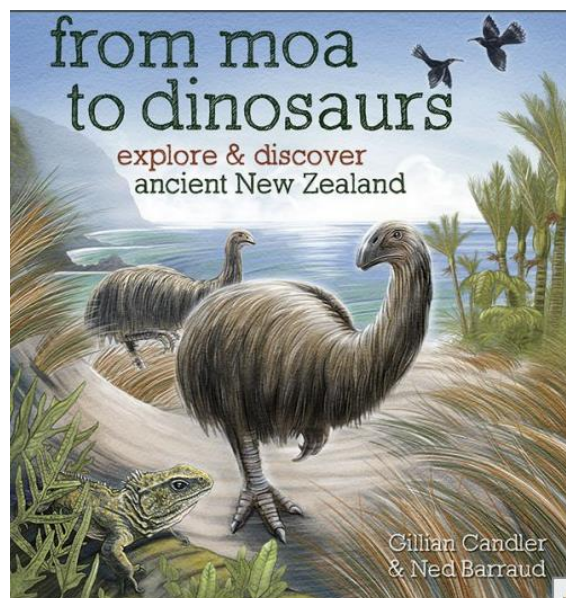
Long-tailed Cuckoo spring migration form <https://goo.gl/BACFRI>

Shining Cuckoo spring migration form <https://goo.gl/cxRqPH>

“from moa to dinosaurs, explore & discover ancient New Zealand”

On Tuesday 20th of September, Gillian Candler (Wellington Birds NZ member) and Ned Barraud launched their new book, *“from moa to dinosaurs”* at the Lower Hutt public library. This is the 5th book written by Gillian and Ned on the natural world of New Zealand. The book contains an up-to-date view of the ancient world of New Zealand fauna.

The publisher’s description is, *“This highly informative book is aimed at children from pre-schoolers up and anyone curious about New Zealand's ancient past and the animals that have lived here.”*



Takahe

DOC ranger Glen Greaves reports that Takahe numbers have reached 300, for the first time in more than 50 years. It’s a milestone for the endangered bird, which has been the subject of a marathon conservation effort following its dramatic rediscovery in 1948.

Photo, Dallas Bishop, Sept. 2016, Kapiti Island. Juvenile bird on left, Mahia (female) hatched December, 2015

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ourchangingworld/audio/201817903/takahe-back-from-the-brink>

Deformed beaks

Recently there have been posts on BirdingNZ.net of deformed beaks in sparrows and silvereyes. During the last year there have been at least four reports of beak deformities in house sparrows. Three of the cases have been observed in the Wellington region, two pictured below and a third from Wainuiomata. Do these observations constitute an increase in this condition? The question has arisen as to whether the cases seen in New Zealand are comparable to Avian Keratin Disease, an outbreak of beak deformities, first identified in wild birds in Alaska.



House sparrow. Adult female with deformed upper mandible. Wellington airport, July 2016. Image © Paul Le Roy by Paul Le Roy. NZBirdsOnLine



Sub-adult male with deformed lower mandible. Whitby, Porirua, Wellington, September 2015. Image © Barry Insull by Barry Insull NZBirdsOnLine

Avian Keratin Disease

In 1998 wildlife officials in Alaska were first alerted to avian keratin disease by the reports of single, Black-capped chickadees with grossly deformed beaks. These reports came from 2 widely separated areas of Alaska and prompted the initiation of a multi-faceted study (Handel et al., 2010). The results of this study are briefly summarised;

- The annual prevalence in Black-capped chickadees in South Central Alaska averaged $6.5\% \pm 0.5\%$, based on the reports of 2160 cases.
- Deformed beaks were reported in 29 other species based on only 435 cases.
- Abnormalities had a widespread geographical distribution.
- A low prevalence was recorded in Black-capped chickadee nestlings and juveniles (<6months), suggesting that this is either a latent developmental or an acquired condition.
- Deformities appear to affect primarily the keratin layer of the beak and may result from an abnormality of the layer called the rhamphotheca. This is a thick layer that covers the bone and in most birds is hard and heavily cornified, consisting of heavily packed keratinized cells.

A parallel study was also carried out on beak deformities in North Western crows at 6 sites in Alaska (Van Hemert & Handel, 2010). Based on 186 birds captured in 2007 and 2008 the prevalence of deformed beaks in North Western crows was $16.9 \pm 5.3\%$. Deformed beaks were also found British Columbia and Puget Sound, Washington. The

similarities of deformed beaks in North Western Crows and Black-capped chickadees suggest the possibilities of a common cause.

Big Garden Beak Watch – British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)

In December 2010 the BTO initiated a citizen science project, the Big Garden Beak Watch. This is an ongoing survey of beak deformities observed in gardens throughout Great Britain and Ireland. The BTO has an army of 40,000 volunteer bird watchers who participate in a number of projects, including the survey of beak abnormalities. A recent summary reported on beak abnormalities of 900 cases which were observed in 36 different species. When the figures were expressed as a “beak deformity rate”, the highest rate was recorded in rooks, followed by Blue Tits and Blackbirds. Interestingly, most individuals reported that birds with beak deformities were in good condition and behaved much like normal-billed birds. There are some similarities between the beak deformities in Great Britain and those in North America.

Virus associated with avian keratin disorder in Alaskan birds

There has been an ongoing search for the cause of avian keratin disorder since it was first described in the 1990s in Black-capped chickadees in Alaska. A wide range of causes have been associated with beak deformities, including environmental contaminants, nutritional deficiencies, trauma and infectious agents. Recently a study was carried out using next generation DNA sequencing of samples from Black-capped chickadees with avian keratin disorder (Zylberberg et al., 2016). The study revealed a picorna virus which was shown to be present in all 19 Black-capped chickadees with avian keratin disorder but only 2/9 birds with normal beaks. The virus was also found in two North Western crows and two red-breasted nuthatches which had avian keratin disorder. These results indicate the virus identified is a candidate for the cause of avian keratin disease but viral challenge experiments will be required to demonstrate with certainty that it is the cause of this disease.

References

- BTO, Big Garden Beak Watch, <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/about/background/projects/bgbw>
- Handel, C. M., L. M. Pajot, S. M. Matsuoka, C. Van Hemert, J. Terenzi, S. L. Talbot, D. M. Mulcahy, C. U. Meteyer, and K. A. Trust. 2010. Epizootic of beak deformities among wild birds in Alaska: An emerging disease in North America? *Auk* 127(4):882-898. (11.9mb PDF high resolution) or (719kb PDF lower resolution)
- Van Hemert, C., and C. M. Handel. 2010. Beak deformities in North western Crows: Evidence of a multispecies epizootic. *Auk* 127(4):746-751. (976kb PDF) [Online Supplement](#). (134kb PDF)
- Zylberberg M, Van Hemert C, Dumbacher JP, Handel CM, Tihan T, DeRisi JL. [Novel Picornavirus Associated with Avian Keratin Disorder in Alaskan Birds](#). *MBio*. 2016 Jul 26;7(4). pii: e00874-16. doi: 10.1128/mBio.00874-16

Te Papa Blogs

What prions are and why we should care, 8 July 2016 by [Alan Tennyson](#).

The answer is that prions are one of the most abundant seabirds in the southern oceans, with an estimated 95 million individuals. The huge numbers of prions at sea explains why they are so commonly washed up on our beaches – when they die, their corpses float and so are driven ashore by winds and currents. In a newly published article, the 135 or so New Zealand’s prion colonies have been reviewed. [Jamieson, S.; Tennyson, A.; Wilson, K.-J.; Crotty, E.; Miskelly, C.; Taylor, G.; Waugh, S. 2016. A review of the distribution and size of prion colonies throughout New Zealand. *Tuhinga* 27: 56-80 .](#)
<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2016/07/08/what-prions-are-and-why-we-should-care/>

10,000 images on New Zealand Birds Online, 15 July 2016 by Colin Miskelly

The 10,000th image loaded on [New Zealand Birds Online](#) might seem an unlikely image to celebrate, but it has an astonishing back-story. It is a well-camouflaged clutch of four eggs, laid by a tiny wading bird (red necked stint) that doesn't even breed in New Zealand. The image was taken by Russian biologist Sergey Golubev on the remote Putorana Plateau in northern Central Siberia.

<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2016/07/15/10000-images-on-new-zealand-birds-online/>

Two new birds for New Zealand – Herald petrel and red-footed booby, 28 September 2016 by Colin Miskelly

The two new birds were discovered within 2 days of each other during a Heritage Expeditions voyage to the Kermadec Islands in March, 2016. Both birds have been accepted by Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee.

<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2016/09/28/two-new-birds-for-new-zealand-herald-petrel-and-red-footed-booby/>

NZBirdsOnline

Visits to the website quietly ticked over the 1.5 million mark earlier this month. Use has been fairly static so far this year at an average of about 1750 visits per day since January. Colin Miskelly

Unusual Bird Observations – Chris Robertson, 4 July, 2016

Last week I noticed 2 tui feeding avidly on green skinned apples still hanging on a tree a couple of sections north of our house in Wadestown. They carried on this foraging behaviour for at least half an hour, indicating a regular activity. This was confirmed with binoculars as many of the apples showed signs of peck damage. A cautionary tale for orchardists perhaps

Recent visits to Auckland have produced another couple of unusual observations.

On the grassed area between the road and the beach at Mission Bay, produced an event between a Black-backed gull and a House sparrow. The sparrow was one of a group feeding on bread and other scraps from nearby picnic group. The BBG landed and caught the HS in its bill and without any other actions or activity with the captive proceeded to swallow it whole and alive before flying off.

At a small cafe on the slopes of Mount Eden, tables were set outside on a verandah. Unattended food was immediately foraged by a waiting crowd of House sparrows. Interestingly one of the flock had a damaged and crippled leg which meant it was usually at the back of the mob while foraging at the table and plates. Sugar for coffee and tea was in the long paper sachets one finds at cafes. Again a learned Behaviour was revealed as the injured bird selected a sugar sachet and flew off with it to a nearby bushy area. Over an hour 4 removals were noted. Of interest was the sugar sachets were all of brown coarse coffee sugar crystals - an obviously learned activity as there were 3 types of sachet to choose from (each differently coloured). One of the waiting staff confirmed that it was a regular occurrence, especially if there were no customers on the verandah, and the propensity to choose the brown sugar.

Similarly observed chasing for sugar at the Chocolate Fish in Evans Bay, where foraging by sparrows was for spilled grains of sugar on the tables. The Chocolate Fish however restricts the activity by having sugar pourers rather than sachets.