



Birds New Zealand
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Birds New Zealand

Otago Region Newsletter 2/2019 February 2019



photo Nick Beckwith

If this were one of those "old fashioned" magazines that turned up in your mailbox, assuming you'd paid the subscription on time, then this photo of a Gannet diving into the surf at Warrington beach would surely be on the front cover. Several other photos by Nick appear later in this newsletter.

Ornithological Snippets



photo Stuart Kelly

It's been fairly quiet this month. Single **Fiordland Crested Penguins** were reported from Nugget Point on 29th January, and at Katiki Point on 12th February. 43 **Black-fronted Terns** were roosting on the river in Balclutha on 15th February, while an **Arctic Skua** was seen from Taiaroa Head on 18th (the only other Otago sighting so far this season was at Katiki Point on 14th January). Sharon Roberts saw lots of **Sooty Shearwaters** offshore at Jacks Bay on 28th January, along with 2 **Peafowl**



nearby, and 2 **Grey-tailed Tattlers** at Cabbage Point. A returning **White Heron** was at Tomahawk Lagoon on 12th & 19th February, and one was reported from Saint Leonards on 15th. The only passerine on offer this month is a leucistic **House Sparrow** at Mosgiel, seen and photographed by Robert Budd.

The following two pieces are related by **Maree Johnstone**.

Members may have noticed a photo of a **Paradise Duck** family taken by Stephen Jaquier at Burkes Inlet and published in the ODT in November 2018. A few days later the male bird was dead on the road. The female duck carried on with family duties for a few more days until tragedy struck once again; four ducklings were squashed by traffic. Very soon after that a male bird joined the group and remained with the family for some time. Thankfully the birds changed their resting spot from the roadside verge on SH88 to the northernmost end of Burkes Inlet; this with a little help from me. Every time I drove past, I stopped and chased them from the verge back into the inlet. Happily, the four remaining ducklings survived to adulthood

Over the last 6 weeks or so a **Kingfisher** has been visiting my neighbour's garden and is easily seen from my kitchen and dining room windows. On sunny days it patiently sits in the branches of a cherry tree above grass dotted with daisies, clover and dandelions. It's preying largely on bees with an occasional cicada. Very occasionally another **Kingfisher** appears in the garden, but I have never seen them hunting from the same tree.



photo Nick Beckwith

From Warrington Spit, Nick reports that "at one stage there were at least 9 young **Variable Oystercatchers**, a few days ago there were at least 5 or 6



young birds still there. A few might not of made it but I might of missed them".



and also from Nick, Bar-tailed Godwits at Warrington, getting ready to leave to the Yellow Sea in a few weeks time.

Otago Summer Wader Count 2nd December 2018

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour west	Harbour east	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Total 2018	Total 2017	Total 2016
Pied Oystercatcher	11	176	46	100	12	56	71	133	607	724	270
Variable Oystercatcher	42	5	3	3	21	3	0	12	89	137	45
Pied Stilt	21	7	2	0	0	1	7	3	41	82	97
Banded Dotterel	3	7	0	0	0	0	10	5	25	15	43
Spur-winged Plover	21	3	11	14	0	7	0	23	79	95	30
Bar-tailed Godwit	0	413	110	0	0	0	633	292	1448	2017	1723

Weather at the time of counting was pleasantly dry and warm with a light to moderate nor-easterly. It's a thrill to see 10 banded dotterels at Hoopers Inlet.

The winter count will be on Sunday 30th June. Please send count results to mareej@kinect.co.nz **Maree Johnstone**

eBird News

Further to the note in last month's newsletter, it has been decided that all flammea (i.e. "Common") redpolls entered into eBird (including historical records) will be converted to the cabaret (i.e. Lesser) Redpoll. Therefore, by now, virtually all redpolls on the NZ ebird database will show up as Lesser and all regional checklists will show the Lesser option only. The only exception might be when an observer has carefully identified a bird to the flammea taxa and provides evidence (e.g. Photographs/DNA/field notes, etc.) - this will be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Reasons for this change:

- 1) Lesser Redpoll appears to be the predominant taxa occurring in NZ based on phenotypic appearance
- 2) While a small number of genetic sampling studies suggest some flammea (Common) genes out there in the population, this is likely fairly minimal
- 3) Most eBird users are not aware of the complexities of redpoll

identification or the complicated history of redpolls in NZ which makes having two available options quite confusing/annoying for most.

4) The conservative option of "redpoll sp." was considered, however it made more sense to use a full species designation since this is unquestionably a well-established member of NZ's breeding avifauna.

5) This is a non-native introduction so let's not get too ruffled about this right?

It is unfortunate that this will contradict what virtually all NZ fieldguides put forward, but hopefully most field observers will rightly assume that the only redpoll taxa available on the list must be the same one mentioned in the guide. (Contributed by Russ Cannings.)

Notices and Business

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Subscriptions 2019 – reminder!

The annual membership subscriptions were due 1 January 2019. It is all too easy to overlook this during the Christmas New Year period, There are heaps of us who have forgotten to pay!! Remember that you can pay subs by direct banking online. Or ask your RR for a printed form. Thanks.

Mary Thompson, Regional Representative

Birds NZ Student Research Scholarships

Doing research in ornithology? Check out the Birds NZ webpage for MSc/PhD scholarships; applications due 30 March.

2019 New Zealand Bird Conference and the 80th Annual General Meeting of Birds New Zealand, 1 -3 June 2019

This is the 80th celebratory conference so should be a great one. This is the first where our own Bruce McKinlay will be chairing as President of Birds NZ. Our Birds NZ conference is the annual premier New Zealand conference for the communication of new research findings on New Zealand birds and for providing opportunities for discussion and networking for professional ornithologists, students and others who are interested in birds and their habitats.

There will be several keynote lectures of a diversity of topics, including Wellington birds, Auckland Islands, old bones and ancient DNA, genetics and taxonomy, physiology and reproduction, and seabirds. Field trips

include Zealandia, Kapiti Coast, Te Papa Bird Collections and a pelagic cruise.

It will be held at the Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington between 1 to 3 June 2019 (Queens Birthday Weekend).

Travel Option

Richard Schofield is thinking of driving up, birding on the way and from the ferry; he would like a couple of passengers; this might be a good travel option for students; so contact Richard if you are interested cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Online registration and full details are available on Birds NZ website. Register before 1 March for early-bird discount!
Deadline for Abstracts for the conference is 19th April.
Full details on website, or ask Mary for a printed version.

Pelagic Trip, 16 April

Richard Schofield is hoping to organise a pelagic trip from Port Chalmers on Tuesday 16th April and would love to hear from members who are able and keen to join with him and his guests on this trip. Contact Richard at cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Birding Trip to North Peru



This trip is a bit further afield and planned for June. Detlef Davies of Northland Birds NZ has been running birding trips to Peru for 8 seasons. He is wondering if Otago members might be interested in this trip. For further details contact detlefdavies@yahoo.com

Programme 2019

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

- Wed 27 February** Indoor Meeting. Sara Larcombe on “The latest about the kakapo conservation programme.”
- Sat 9 March** Field trip to Styles Bush, Otago Peninsula. We have been asked to carry out a species survey this patch of restored private bush; meet at 32 Matariki Street at 9.30 am. Carpool leaving Anderson Bay carpark, Shore St at 8.30 am. Let Mary know if you intend to come, or for other transport arrangements.
Phone 464 0787 or email maryt@actrix.co.nz
- Wed 27 March** Indoor Meeting. Bruce Spittle on “Encounters with moa?”
- Wed 24 April** Indoor Meeting. Kristina Smiley on “Hormonal regulation of avian bi-parental care; a study using zebra finches.”
- Sat 27 April** Tomahawk Lagoon Bird-watching, 10 to noon; our event for Wild Dunedin Festival; we plan to have telescopes to let the public see birds close-up and to help identify them, etc.
Contact Andrew if you can help; phone 454 5830
- Sat 11 May** Field Trip. Global Big Day for eBird. Teams will be heading to Otago hotspots; to join a team contact Mary maryt@actrix.co.nz or phone 464 0787.
Carpooling will be arranged.
- Wed 22 May** Indoor Meeting. Rachel Hufton on “Birdlife of the Makarora Catchment.”

- Wed 26 June** Indoor Meeting. Warren Jowett on “Confessions of two birding tour guides.”
- Sun 30 June** Winter Wader Count. High tide at 13.44 at 2m. (14 July back-up weather day) We need counters for harbours and estuaries around Dunedin area and Catlins. New counters most welcome. Please contact Maree Johnstone to be allocated to a team.
mareej@kinect.co.nz
- Wed 24 July** Indoor Meeting. Nick Beckwith slideshow on “Birds of my neighbourhood.”
- Wed 28 August** Indoor Meeting. Speakers from the International Penguin Conference.
- Sun 15 Sept** Bird-watching Walks. Dunedin Botanic Garden, 10 am to 11 am. We will be guiding groups of 10 or so, helping members of the public to spot and identify birds. Please let Mary know if would like to help maryt@actrix.co.nz or phone 464 0787
- Wed 25 Sept** Indoor Meeting. Bruce McKinlay on “Birds of the Dunedin Town Belt”, when he will up-date us on our project and findings so far.
- Wed 23 October** Indoor Meeting. Francesca Cunninghame on “The Galapagos Hawk”.
- Sun 24 November** Summer Wader Count; High tide 14.42, 2.2m
- Wed 27 November** to be announced

Newsletter editor: Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com
Many thanks to all who contributed.

Articles, photos etc for next newsletter please by 20th March