

Birds New Zealand – OSNZ  
National Wader Census  
June - July 2018  
November - December 2018 & January - February 2019  
Summary compiled by Adrian Riegen

**Winter Census 2018**

A total of 112,725 waders of 18 species were counted during the June - July 2018 wader census, (Table 1), down from 113,155 waders of 20 species counted in June - July 2017. There was very good national coverage with all regular sites counted. Numbers of over wintering Red Knot were up from 1,150 in 2017 to 2,341 in 2018. Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were down considerably again from 7,033 in 2017 and 9,997 in 2016 to 5,216 in 2018. This is a worrying trend and the lowest winter count on record when all sites were counted. Turnstone numbers were down from 322 in 2017 to 137 in 2018. South Island Pied Oystercatchers were also down by over 4,000 from 73,172 in 2017 to 69,105 in 2018 but the Wrybill numbers were up slightly again from 4,675 in 2016 and 4,718 in 2017 to 5,325 in 2018. Variable Oystercatchers were down slightly from 3,636 in 2017 to 3,307 in 2018. The 2017 count being the highest winter count on record.

Rarities included, 1 Great Knot, 1 Black-tailed Godwit, 1 Eastern Curlew and 3 Whimbrel.

**Summer Census 2018**

A total of 123,922 waders of 25 species were counted in the November - December 2018 wader census, (Table 2), down from 134,880 counted in 2017. National coverage was very good with no key sites being missed. The Red Knot numbers were encouragingly up again in 2018 to 33,563 but still lower than the 2015 count of 34,226. In danger of repeating myself, of most concern is the Bar-tailed Godwit count, which was down yet again to a new low of 65,345, the lowest summer count with complete national coverage. The Parengarenga count was lower than expected and not all birds may have been found there and no count was received from Maketu, which normally holds between 600-1,000 godwits. This continues to be a very worrying trend for our most numerous Arctic breeding species. Turnstone numbers were down again from 1,934 in 2017 to 1,497 in 2018. Red-necked Stint numbers were up again but only 53 were counted this summer, still well down on historic numbers. This summer has seen another major influx of Pacific Golden Plover, although the census does not tell the whole story, as once again the count on the Firth of Thames was lower than the number seen around the Firth all summer. They did choose to roost in paddocks on some big tides meaning they were easily overlooked. Following the winter trend the Variable Oystercatcher numbers were up again to 2,679.

Uncommon waders included, 1 Greater Sand Plover, 1 Grey Plover, 3 Pectoral Sandpiper, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 1 Grey-tailed Tattler, 2 Eastern Curlew, 5 Sanderling and a once common bird, the Curlew Sandpiper, with just 1 seen.

NOTE: Species listed in the following tables are arranged in the order they appear in the fourth edition of The Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand.

Table 1. Total Count June - July 2018

Species	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Red Knot	<b>2,341</b>	1,150	1,763	1,214	947
Great Knot	<b>1</b>				
Sanderling		2			
Curlew Sandpiper		2			
Red-necked Stint	<b>10</b>	5	8	7	64
Eastern Curlew	<b>1</b>	1			
Whimbrel	<b>3</b>	2	10	4	3
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>5,216</b>	7,033	9,997	7,781	8,816
Black-tailed Godwit	<b>1</b>	1			
Hudsonian Godwit			1		
Grey-tailed Tattler		3	1		
Marsh Sandpiper			1	1	1
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>137</b>	322	206	159	362
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>3,307</b>	3,636	3,145	3,270	3,014
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>69,105</b>				
Oystercatcher		73,172	77,951	77,886	79,381
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	<b>6</b>	15	3	11	20
Pied Stilt	<b>18,621</b>	14,181	17,841	15,506	17,282

(Black Stilt/Hybrids)	<b>6</b>	21	8	17	23
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>865</b>	777	1,041	1,083	780
Banded Dotterel	<b>5,100</b>	5,334	5,993	5,482	5,860
Lesser Sand Plover			1		
Wrybill	<b>5,325</b>	4,718	4,675	4,112	4,108
Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>93</b>	97	128	101	162
Shore Plover			1	3	2
Spur-winged Plover	<b>2,587</b>	2,683	1,970	1,696	1,975
<b>Total</b>	<b>112,725</b>	113,155	124,744	118,337	122,822

Table 2. Total Count November - December 2018

Species	<b>2018</b>	2017	2016	2015	2014
Red Knot	<b>33,563</b>	30,947	27,338	34,226	28,940
Sanderling	<b>5</b>	4	3	7	3
Curlew Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	2	6	9	15
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<b>15</b>	15	16	6	3
Pectoral Sandpiper	<b>3</b>	1	2	1	3
Red-necked Stint	<b>53</b>	24	134	95	79
Far Eastern Curlew	<b>2</b>	7	7	5	3
Whimbrel	<b>18</b>	28	45	13	24
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>65,345</b>	71,527	72,702	74,838	74,989
Black-tailed Godwit		3			
Hudsonian Godwit	<b>1</b>	2			
Wandering Tattler			1		2
Grey-tailed Tattler	<b>1</b>	2	1	1	
Marsh Sandpiper		2	1		2
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>1,497</b>	1,934	1,712	992	1,562
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>2,679</b>	2,275	2,493	2,306	2,278
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>13,578</b>	18,978	17,291	15,484	16,625
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	<b>11</b>	10	9	10	4
Pied Stilt	<b>4,683</b>	5,325	3,818	5,471	4,367
(Black Stilt/Hybrids)	<b>44</b>	5	2	8	3
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>220</b>	266	112	253	75
Grey Plover	<b>1</b>		1	2	1
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>547</b>	497	522	649	483
Banded Dotterel	<b>278</b>	664	613	521	530
Greater Sand Plover	<b>1</b>		1	2	
Wrybill	<b>348</b>	273	102	216	141
Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>27</b>	16	18	23	7
Spur-winged Plover	<b>1,001</b>	2,073	1,286	1,880	1,206
<b>Total</b>	<b>123,922</b>	134,880	128,236	137,020	131,350

There was incomplete nationwide coverage in January and February 2019 but counts from, Lake Wairarapa, Nelson, Canterbury and the West Coast were received. Numbers for Nelson and Canterbury are compared with the November - December 2018 counts in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Nelson Region

Species	<b>Feb.18</b>	Nov 18
Red Knot	<b>7,641</b>	9,728
Sanderling		3
Red-necked Stint	<b>4</b>	3
Whimbrel	<b>5</b>	1
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>14,303</b>	13,670
Turnstone	<b>640</b>	313
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>759</b>	536
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>25,275</b>	3,312

Pied Stilt	<b>625</b>	98
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>26</b>	13
Grey Plover	<b>1</b>	1
Banded Dotterel	<b>1,058</b>	58
Greater Sand Plover		1
Lesser Sand Plover	<b>1</b>	
Wrybill	<b>1</b>	
Spur-winged Plover	<b>6</b>	20

Table 4. Canterbury

Species	<b>Feb.19</b>	Nov.18
Red Knot	<b>7</b>	12
Sanderling	<b>1</b>	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper		7
Pectoral Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	2
Red-necked Stint	<b>18</b>	33
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>1,575</b>	2,076
Hudsonian Godwit	<b>1</b>	
Turnstone	<b>7</b>	21
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>163</b>	129
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>3,718</b>	831
Pied Stilt	<b>8,386</b>	1,966
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>7</b>	27
Banded Dotterel	<b>2,431</b>	116
Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>3</b>	5
Wrybill	<b>110</b>	253
Spur-winged Plover	<b>270</b>	320

Tables 5 and 6 show sites with > 2,000 waders counted during winter and summer censuses.

Table 5. Sites with >2,000 waders in June - July 2018 & 2017 in numerical order

	<b>2018</b>	2017
Manukau Harbour	<b>33,400</b>	28,497
Firth of Thames	<b>13,590</b>	11,630
Kaipara Harbour	<b>13,449</b>	18,923
Tasman Bay	<b>8,322</b>	4,848
Farewell Spit	<b>7 277</b>	11,671
Golden Bay	<b>6,030</b>	5,739
Kawhia Harbour	<b>3,421</b>	4,420
Tauranga Harbour	<b>2,987</b>	2,232
Lake Ellesmere	<b>2,142</b>	2,085
Lake Wairarapa	<b>(1,789)</b>	2,288

Table 6. Sites with >2,000 waders in November - December 2018 & 2017 in numerical order

\*Tauranga only partially counted in 2017

	<b>2018</b>	2017
Manukau Harbour	<b>24,662</b>	26,971
Kaipara Harbour	<b>21,650</b>	26,216
Farewell Spit	<b>18,592</b>	19,156
Firth of Thames	<b>9,096</b>	12,917

Tasman Bay	<b>6,634</b>	6,953
Tauranga Harbour	<b>5,101</b>	*2,828
Rangaunu Harbour	<b>4,478</b>	3,971
Ruakaka/Waipu	<b>4,045</b>	2,180
Ohiwa Harbour	<b>2,725</b>	2,245
Golden Bay	<b>2,531</b>	4,536
Parengarenga Harbour	<b>2,172</b>	(1,134)
Avon-Heathcote Estuary	<b>2,093</b>	2,240
Lake Ellesmere	<b>(1,924)</b>	2,991
Whangarei Harbour	<b>(1,844)</b>	2,120
Kawhia Harbour	<b>(1,819)</b>	2,487

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