

# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

## OSNZ - Birds New Zealand

March 2019

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



### Greetings

There are two major events on the Wellington Birds New Zealand 2019 calendar; the Birds New Zealand Conference over Queen's Birthday weekend and the start of the new Atlas Scheme. Information on the new Atlas scheme was recently published in the March issue of the Birds New Zealand magazine. The Wellington Region over the next three months will plan how the new scheme will be managed in our region. Importantly, the new scheme will provide local members with the opportunity to participate in a National Programme which will help guide local and national conservation policy for many years. Training will be provided on the operation of the scheme and bird identification. There is likely to be a need for helping our neighbouring regions which have large areas and small Birds New Zealand membership.

2019 is turning out to be a busy time for bird translocations in the Wellington Region, rifleman to Zealandia and fernbird and white-faced storm petrels to Mana Island. These translocations will provide Wellington members with not only further opportunity to see these birds but also helping with post translocation monitoring by recording band combinations.

Regards

Geoff de Lisle

Wellington Regional Representative, Birds New Zealand (OSNZ)

### Birds New Zealand Conference – Queen's Birthday Weekend – Update

- Registrations for the conference now exceed 100 and include many from the Wellington Region.
- Keynote presentations for the Conference include a talk on the latest, record Kakapo breeding season, Auckland Islands and the launch of the new Birds New Zealand Atlas Scheme.
- The proposed Cook Strait Pelagic trip associated with the Conference is now fully booked. If you have missed out on this trip a further Cook Strait Pelagic trip will be organised for later in 2019.
- A request will go out to Wellington members to help with the running of the Conference. Help required includes, running the registration desk, guiding field trips, and helping with visual aids.

There is still plenty of time to register for the Conference and details are available on the Birds New Zealand website;

<https://www.osnz.org.nz/NZ-Bird-Conference-2019>

If members have any questions regarding the Conference please contact Geoff de Lisle ([osnzwelly@gmail.com](mailto:osnzwelly@gmail.com)).

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Wellington Harbour Survey Geoff de Lisle, Stuart Nicholson [osnzwelly@gmail.com](mailto:osnzwelly@gmail.com)

Mist netting – Matu Both, [manager@ngamanu.co.nz](mailto:manager@ngamanu.co.nz) Nga Manu, Waikanae

Ross Pickard [ross.pickard@hexagon.si.com](mailto:ross.pickard@hexagon.si.com) Wellington Zoo

## Upcoming Monthly Meetings WHERE and WHEN

WHERE and WHEN:

The meeting is held on the first Monday of the month at Te Papa's collections building, 169 Tory Street. Go up the steps and across the parking area to the door.

**April Meeting, Monday 1<sup>st</sup>** An update of the Whenua Hou Diving Petrel project: Responses to invasive predator eradication and interactions with unrelated species groups. Johannes Fischer.

A short Annual General Meeting for the Wellington Branch of Birds New Zealand will be held prior to Johannes's talk.

**May Meetings Monday 6<sup>th</sup>** Birds of Remutaka Forest Park and the use of acoustic monitoring, Susan Ellis

**June Meeting – There is no meeting in June as the Birds New Zealand Conference will be held over Queen's Birthday weekend, 1-3 June.**

### February Meeting – Member's night

**Sandy Winterton, Wellington Banded dotterel.** Sandy summarised his three years of study of banded dotterels nesting at Moa Point by the airport. Each year at least one banded dotterel fledged which is very gratifying considering the location of the nests in an area with considerable amount human activity.

Summary: 3 years, 7 nests, 5 chicks raised.

2016: 2 chicks fledged.

2017: early nest 3 hatched, none fledged. Late nest, 3 hatched, 2 fledged by one foot female.

2018: two early nests, raided by SBBG, 1 fledged. Two late nests, one-foot female, 3 eggs raided when due to hatch. Three hatched, one died immediately, outcome of the other two unknown.

**Ian Armitage, Progress in the digitising of Beach patrol control observations.** Ian summarised the progress in this project whereby all 27,874 records covering over 400,000 birds will have been entered twice into the database and any inconsistencies reconciled. On completion of this project the database will be available for interested parties to access the data and use it for bird studies.

**Owen Hughes. Kingfishers** – Owen showed a variety of pictures of kingfisher which demonstrated the confusion between the New Zealand sacred kingfisher (*Todirapnphus sanctus vagans*) and other blue kingfishers such as the common or Eurasian kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*).

**Stuart Nicholson. "Search for the 5<sup>th</sup> Kingfisher"** Stuart recounted his conversations with his mother-in-law and his investigations of her diaries (1978-81) which documented her birding observations in Pakistan and Kashmir. A couple of examples of the observations are shown below from the eBird submissions lodged by Stuart.

**Location** Haleji Lake, Sind, PK ( [Map](#) ) ( [Hotspot](#) ) **Date and Effort** Wed Mar 21, 1979 4:30 PM

Party Size:2, Duration:2 hour(s), Distance:10.0 kilometer(s) Observers:[Stuart Nicholson](#)

Comments:

From 5 Year Diary of Peter Tovey: " ... drove around the lake ... Saw moorhens, whimbrels, etc. etc. [sic] ..."

From letter of Marjorie Tovey 25Mar79: "We couldn't stay the night because Dad hadn't got a permit ... arrived about 4.30 and had a couple of hours there... It was too late in the season for the migratory birds anyway. The last have gone by the beginning of March they said, flamingos & duck. A chap took us right around the lake - nearly 11 miles [17 km] & we saw enough to want to go back. Oh Stu, you would have gone crazy [lists species] ... cement lookouts all around the lake looking over the swamplands & mini lakes adjacent to the big one ..."

**Species** 9 species (+1 other taxa) total

X **Eurasian Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*, "... and the smaller Indian moorhen." ID based on Roberts 1991.

X **Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*, "... Coots in large flocks & flotillas, ..."

X **Western Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* "Saw the Purple Moorhen in hundreds, a lovely purple-blue bird with red bill & frontal shield & legs, a bit like our Pukeko [*Porphyrio melanotus*]." Common per Ali 2002 & Roberts

X **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus* "... stilts, ..."

X **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* "... and my friend the Jacana but still only in winter plumage (he's impressive in breeding plumage & I spotted him in Kashmir you remember)." ID based on Roberts

1 **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* "... one whimbrel (I wondered if he had missed the migratory bus). I thought 'a whimbrel - it can't be surely' but when I got back and studied the brochure on the lake, sure enough, they are mentioned as being there." See also Roberts 1991

X **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* ",,, snipe,..." ID based on Roberts 1991.

X **cormorant sp.** *Phalacrocoracidae* sp. "... shags, ..."

X **Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus* "... pelicans out on the lake island & in the water ..." ID based on quantity and date in Roberts 1991.

X **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* "Pied Kingfishers which we never see on the canals these days ..."

**Location** Dal Lake, Srinagar County, Jammu and Kashmir, IN ( [Map](#) ) ( [Hotspot](#) )

**Date and Effort** Mon Sep 11, 1978 Party Size: 2 Observers: [Stuart Nicholson](#)

Comments: From Marjorie Tovey letter 11Sep78: "In daylight & with Jack [manager and owner of their houseboat] in a small punt the next day before we went into the city we could see that the lake widened out into a large one, just a bit further up & very quickly we discovered that it was very beautiful with the mountains all around us, & as we idled along between the gardens & amongst the drooping willows everywhere, Kingfishers of 3 varieties flashed about everywhere ... There's no doubt that Kashmir is the home of Kingfishers [in Pakistan region]."

### Species 3 species total

- X **Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* " ... emerald & turquoise in the wee one
- X **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* "the big blue one"
- X **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* "black & white ... It's the first pied ones I have seen since coming back in 1973 [first tour 1949 to 1964, based in Sind]. They seem completely to have disappeared from Sind - such a disappointment."

**Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop.** A short summary of their recent trip to Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) where they joined a team run by Dick Veitch to search for native frogs. Unfortunately no frogs were found but lots of birds were seen.

### March Meeting - - Birdstories, Geoff Norman.

Geoff Norman's talk focused on the stories behind the illustrations of his new book, Birdstories which was published in 2018. The illustrations are a major feature of the book and include a fine selection of historical pictures as well as a number of modern paintings of birds. One source of pictures was the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) it is the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives.

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/> The amount of information available through the BHL is staggering with 55 million pages of content and 125,000 illustrations. Much of the content is freely available for publication in books such as Birdstories. In his research for the book Geoff visited various collections in the United Kingdom including the Natural History Museum, the Zoological Society and the World Museum in Liverpool.



Birdstories comes highly recommended. Please note the discount offer to Birds New Zealand members ends on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 2019. Order online at <https://www.pottonandburton.co.nz/> and enter the coupon code **BIRD18** at the shopping cart to receive your **10% discount!**

## White-faced storm petrels re-introduction to Mana Island

Friends of Mana Island in conjunction with the Department of Conservation and the local iwi, Ngati Toa are playing a major role in the restoration of the fauna and flora of Mana Island. The transfer of white-faced storm petrels marks another chapter in this process. A transfer of 48 white-fronted storm petrels from Rangatira Island, in the Chathams to Mana Island on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February was the result of a considerable amount of planning. In February 2018 Brian Bell (then FOMI president), Cathy Mitchell, manager of the project and Gramae Taylor (DOC) visited Rangatira to build relationships with the stakeholders and work out the procedures for the transfer. The chicks for transfer on Rangatira were



carefully selected by Cathy Mitchell and colleagues on the basis of their weight and wing measurements. After the 800km journey to Mana Island the chicks were placed in artificial burrows. They were fed sardine smoothies daily until they fledged. All but one of the birds appear to have successfully fledged and "gone to sea". The last of the chicks left the



burrows and the island in early March. The expectation is that the white-faced storm petrels will stay at sea for 3-4 years before hopefully returning to Mana Island to breed. One of the currently unanswered questions is whether the translocated birds will be “hard wired” to return to the feeding grounds of the Chatham Island white-faced storm petrels or whether they will feed closer to Mana Island? The outcome of this question will likely be a major determinant as to whether a new colony of white-faced storm petrels establishes on Mana Island.

A further 200 chicks are planned to be translocated to Mana Island over the next two years.

The project is funded and supported by Friends of Mana Island’s major sponsor OMV New Zealand Ltd.

Pictures: (previous page) Top right, white-faced storm petrel artificial burrow with a colour-coded brick indicating the bird in this burrow is being fed, Middle right; 7-8ml of sardine smoothie, Bottom left; bird in the hand; (this page) Top right; caravan used for feeding, next to the artificial burrows used by the white-faced storm petrels,



### New Zealand White –faced storm petrels- *Pelagodroma marina maoriana*

Length 20cm, weight 45g. There are five subspecies of white-faced storm petrels which are widespread in temperate and subtropical parts of the Atlantic, Indian and South Pacific Oceans. The largest breeding colonies of New Zealand white-faced storm petrel are in the Chatham Island (840,000 pairs on Rangatira) and north-eastern North Island (Hongiora, Alderman Islands, 10,000 pairs). After breeding they go to the eastern Pacific and have been observed off Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands.

### Cutting out Sugary Drinks for Kids?



The juvenile tui in this picture is on its second day of feeding from the sugar water container. Previously it had been incessantly begging to be fed with sugar by its parent. The juvenile tui is recognised by the yellow gape and the lack of a white neck tufts (poi). These appear after 6 weeks of age.

Geoff de Lisle, Dallas Bishop

Note: Daria Erastova will present at the 80<sup>th</sup> Birds New Zealand Conference the findings of her studies on the feeding of sugar water to native birds.

## Judi Lapsley Miller

Kaka has been chosen as the bird to headline the 80<sup>th</sup> Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Conference and AGM to be held over Queen's Birthday weekend. The picture of a kaka that appeared in the December issue of Birds New Zealand magazine was one of Judi's fine photographs. Judi is a fine art photographer whose work is inspired by the natural world. Many of her notable pictures have been taken at Zealandia where she is a volunteer. Of particular note are her studies of kaka. Recently she has taken a wonderful series of photographs of the takahe chick at Zealandia. Examples of Judi's work can be seen on her website <https://www.artbyjlm.com/>

Judi is very keen to encourage photographers of all abilities and has developed a series of weekly photography challenges. These can be found on the website <https://www.artbyjlm.com/aob2019.html>

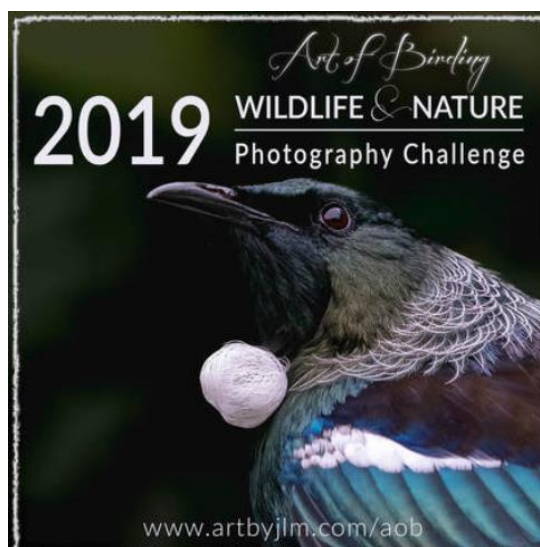
The challenges emphasize a combination of fine-art and photography. An example of one the challenges is taken from the one on week 3

### MOBILE PHONE MAGIC (CREATIVE)

*Week 03: 14 Jan 2019*

*Using your phone camera, experiment with creative effects. There are a million apps out there that can turn an ordinary photo into something engaging. Look for Distressed Effects, Tiny Worlds, ... or perhaps try out a clip-on lens. If you don't have a phone camera, use the widest lens you have and try for a different perspective*

Judi encourages participants to post images on social media, including a public Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/aobphotochallenge/>.



## Bird Snippets

### Pauatahanui Inlet

**imogen** » Tue Jan 08, 2019

Arrived at Thorpe Hide yesterday around 12pm and immediately heard 3 buff-banded rails calling. I only saw one, but what a corker. It ran across the pools towards one of the other calling birds, skulked about for a few minutes and then disappeared. BirdingNZ.net, Photo – Imogen Warren



**. imogen** » Tue Jan 08, 2019 Good views also of fernbirds including this one that was catching food, dropping down to a nest and then coming out with waste. BirdingNZ.net



Photo – Imogen Warren

### Waterstone Lake, Paraparaumu

**Rosemary Heather**, Jan 11, 2019, 3, domestic duck, 39 mallard, 2 black swans, 2 Canada geese, 2

Dabchick; On land, swallows, sparrows, pair of paradise ducks, 1 Tui (flying).

### Two Falcons: Maungaraki, Lower Hutt

**Charlotte** » Sat Jan 12, 2019 2:11 pm

Happy to report early evening yesterday we heard and saw two Falcons (male and female) in a thermal over the bush behind our house. We've heard them intermittently over the past couple of weeks, but this was the first sighting for the new year. BirdingNZ.net

### Two Falcons: Maungaraki, Lower Hutt

**boneywhitefoot** » Tue Jan 15, 2019 4:28 pm there are 3 breeding pairs that I know of between Belmont and Jubilee Park. BirdingNZ.net

**Paul Sagar** » Wed Jan 23, 2019

Spent 17-21 Jan visiting family at Maungaraki and saw at least one falcon each day, cruising across the valley over Dowse Drive. Great to see. BirdingNZ.net

### Pauatahanui –fernbird

**Geoff de Lisle & Dallas**

**Bishop** Sat Jan 12, 2019

More evidence of fernbird breeding at Pauatahanui. A different band combination to that seen by Imogen on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January.



### Rifleman Days Bay

**Jim\_j** » Fri Jan 18, 2019 7:35 pm

Numerous Rifleman on track between Port Howard and My Lowry today - I can't hear them anymore but my daughter described it as almost background noise!

Thanks to her spotted several groups although all were moving rapidly through the bush. A few tomtit, tui and bellbird but other highlight were two morepork roosting together close to where the Cheviot road track meets the main ridge track. BirdingNZ.net

## Spotless crane Pauatahanui

David Cornick The accompanying picture was one of a number observations of spotless crane at Pauatahanui. The presence of spotless crane and banded rail at Pauatahanui most probably reflects a successful predator control programme being carried out by Forest and Bird on the reserve.



Photo- David Cornick

## Rifleman Days Bay

ledzep » Sat Feb 16, 2019 2:27 pm  
Found a pair of Rifleman today right by the sign at the junction of Kereru Track and Main Ridge Track heading towards Hawtrey. GPS -41.285970 174.919356. They were low down in the bush about 1 metre away from me. BirdingNZ.net



Photo – Duncan Watson

## Not all snow white petrels are snow petrels

Colin Miskelly » Sun Mar 03, 2019

I have just returned from Mana Island, where one of the staff there asked if I could identify a mystery bird that had been picked up (desiccated) on the beach a few weeks ago. Fortunately I knew what a Cape petrel skull looked like. BirdingNZ.net  
Photo – Colin Miskelly



## Juan Fernandez petrel, Cook Strait

Colin Miskelly » Sun Mar 24, 2019

A group of us were fishing north-west of Mana Island this morning when a Juan Fernandez petrel flew past. I had seen it in the distance and picked it as a large Pterodroma, and was surprised when it approached closer and banked to reveal its pure white underwing with no noticeable carpal bar. Sorry no photos (I had an albacore on the line).

Other birds much as expected (white-capped mollymawk, flesh-footed shearwater, Buller's shearwater, sooty shearwater, fluttering shearwater, gannet, southern black-backed gull and white-fronted tern). No marine mammals seen

Great find Colin ... but did you land the fish

Ha! I think that was one that a mako got half of while I was distracted. But the action was fast and furious (5 albacore on 5 lines at the time), so our planned 2-night trip was curtailed as the chilly bins were full. Colin. BirdingNZ.net





## The Waikanae River Master Conservation Plan Hui

Otaihanga Boating Club, 19 Makora Road, Otaihanga, Paraparaumu

Tuesday March 5<sup>th</sup> 2019

Phil Palmer and Geoff de Lisle represented Wellington Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) at a hui on the development of a Waikanae River Master Conservation Plan. This hui was organised by the Kapiti Coast District Council and the Waikanae Estuary Care Group in part response to issues associated with whitebaiting and other activities on the Waikanae Scientific Reserve, including disturbance of birds nesting on the foreshore. The Minister of Conservation, Eugenie Sage was unable to attend the meeting but did produce a statement which was presented by a DOC official. The most significant part of her statement was the announcement that the Waikanae river had been chosen by DOC as one of their 14 priority river catchments across New Zealand. Work on these catchments will be focused on improving their ecological integrity and resilience to restore them to 'a healthy functioning state' in partnership with others. Importantly, as part of the 14 priority river catchment initiative funding will be available from DOC to improve the ecological state of the Waikanae River.

This meeting brought together over 17 groups with an interest in the Waikanae River and included DOC, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Kapiti Coast District Council, DOC, iwi, Wellington Birds New Zealand and a number of different community groups. Each group presented a short summary of their interest in the Waikanae River. There has been an impressive amount of work done by community groups in restoring the Waikanae River through weeding, planting and predator control. However, significant issues affecting the river remain and include managing the recreational use of the river, water extraction, river flows, shingle removal and other measures for flood control.

The success of the meeting will depend on whether representatives from the interest groups can collaborate to produce a Conservation Plan for the Waikanae River. Access to DOC funding associated with the 14 priority river catchments will depend on such a plan which is broadly accepted by the different interest groups.

Wellington Birds New Zealand has an important role to play in the restoration of the Waikanae River by producing quality data on the number and distribution of birds on the river and the Scientific Reserve.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2019/waikanae-river-chosen-for-priority-restoration/>

## East Harbour Banded Dotterels

The MIRO managed banded dotterel project has just completed the survey of the 2018/19 breeding season. The survey sites for this project are the Eastbourne foreshore and the beach and areas at the outlet of Lake Kohangapiripiri, the lake closest to the lighthouse. Banded dotterels also nest on the area at the outlet of Lake Kohangatera. A summary of the breeding success at the two study sites will be summarised in a future newsletter. At the Eastbourne site there were a large number of failed nests. The causes of nest failures were

due to predation by cat(s) which was observed by a trail camera, and possibly by human interference. Most of the Eastbourne nests have been on the beach at the southern end of the seawall. This year there were two nests, northern end of the seawall with one of them on the beach in front of the RSA.

When the banded dotterels on the Eastbourne beach and at the outlet of Lake Kohangapiripiri finish breeding they move to the outlet of the next lake, Lake Kohangatera. They form a flock which will eventually leave this area for their wintering grounds. The picture (above) was taken on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, 2019 at the outlet of Lake Kohangatera. The flock



contained 61 birds, including at least 8 flagged birds which had been present at Eastbourne or Lake Kohangapiripiri during the 2018/19 breeding season. The location of their wintering grounds still requires clarification. At least some of the birds fly to Lake Wairarapa and a flagged bird was seen there on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February by George Hobson, Nikki McArthur and Paul Shortis. Unfortunately the 3 letter unique identifier was not able to be read. They were carrying out a survey of the birds on Lake Wairarapa from the Tauherenikau delta to the Oporua floodway and observed 330 banded dotterel.

<https://ebird.org/newzealand/view/checklist/S53000679>

On the 15th of March the flock of banded dotterels were still present at Lake Kohangatera. The expectation is that the majority but not all of the birds will at some stage leave for their wintering grounds. )

## Help Wanted

Over the next six months please look for flags on banded dotterels. If possible record the three letter unique identifier. These white flags can be difficult / challenging to read. A telescope or telephoto camera is a useful aid. Even if you cannot read the letters, observations of flagged birds will be valuable. Last year flagged dotterel were seen at Pauatahanui inlet and Lake Wairarapa.

Please send observations to Geoff de Lisle

[osnzwelly@gmail.com](mailto:osnzwelly@gmail.com)



## Wellington Harbour Survey

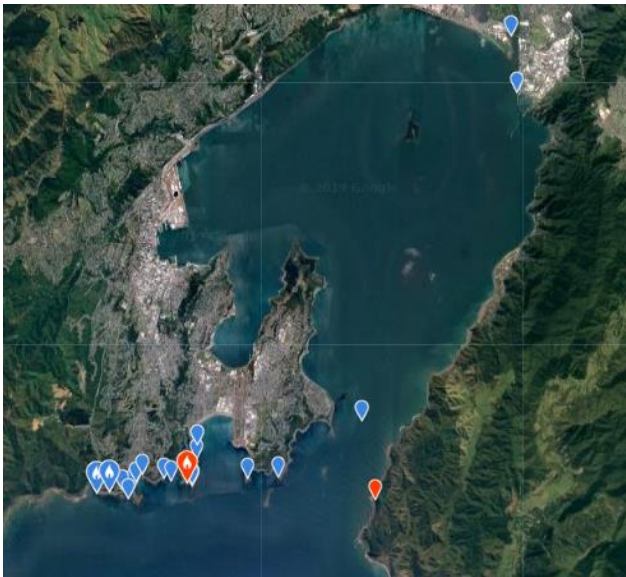
The Wellington Harbour survey started in August 2018 with all the birds counted on the second Sunday of each month. The harbour is divided into 17 sections (Pencarrow sewer outfall to Owhiro bay road end) with each section surveyed by a different observer. The harbour will be surveyed for 2 years. People wanting to help with the survey should email Geoff de Lisle [osnzwelly@gmail.com](mailto:osnzwelly@gmail.com). This includes people who can help on an occasional basis. Training will be given for people who are not experienced in identifying birds.

An interesting observation from the March survey was the observation of large numbers of white-fronted terns in the sections in the outer harbour (Pencarrow on the east side of the harbour and Point Dorset to Te Raekaikau on the western shores) with 795 recorded in one section. Accompanying the white-fronted terns were 7 black-fronted terns which were spread over three different sections. The picture is of a white-fronted tern on the left and a black-fronted tern on the right. The black-fronted tern is slightly smaller and



has an orange bill and feet legs. Black-fronted terns nest on the shingle riverbeds on the eastern South Island from Marlborough to Southland. After the breeding season (October – January) some of them move to the North Island, especially the Waikanae estuary. Ebird records for Waikanae include 180 black-fronted terns seen on 1 June 1942 and 168 on the 30 May 1991. In recent years only smaller numbers have been recorded.

The map shows the black-fronted dotterels recorded in eBird in Wellington Harbour showing that the majority being from the outer parts of the harbour. The maximum number of birds recorded was 17 seen in 2004 as well as 15 in 2003. The majority of the observations were recorded between February and April.



### Rifleman translocation to Zealandia

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March Zealandia announced on Facebook that over the next month they were going to transfer 60 rifleman from the Wainuiomata Mainland Island area to Zealandia. The translocation of rifleman was originally planned for 2017 but was postponed because of insufficient numbers of birds in Wainuiomata. The Wainuiomata Mainland Island was established in 2005 and is part of the water collection area. This is an area of podcarp forest which has never been logged. The area is managed by the Wellington Regional Council and has an intensive programme to manage predators for the protection of fauna and flora. This translocation is supported by the Greater Wellington Regional Council, the Wellington City Council, Taranaki Whānui, Department of Conservation, and Ngāti Toa Rangatira.

Successful translocations of rifleman include reintroductions of birds from Whenua Hou (Codfish Island) to Ulva Island and from Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) to Tiritiri Matangi Island.

In the Wellington region rifleman can be found in the East Harbour Regional Park (Days Bay/Eastbourne), and Remutaka and Tararua Forest Parks. Interestingly they do not occur on Kapiti Island.



## Translocation – Fernbird to Mana Island

2019 is proving to be a busy year for bird re-introductions in the Wellington region. In April there is a planned introduction of fernbirds to Mana Island. The birds will be sourced from Rotokare just out of Eltham, in Taranaki. This is a 230 hectare, fenced reserve which contains a 17.8 hectare lake. Rotokare was the source of fernbirds for the translocations to the Pauatahanui Reserve in 2017 and 2018. The translocation to Mana Island will be managed by Kevin Parker who also managed the transfers to Pauatahanui. The news from Pauatahanui is very encouraging with unbanded birds being recorded on multiple sites of the reserve. The presence of unbanded birds is evidence of successful breeding as all the transferred birds were banded. Furthermore, two different pairs were observed in early January feeding young which suggests that they may be raising a second clutch as the breeding season starts in August/September.

## New Signs

Multiple signs (left) have been erected on the East Harbour foreshore to remind dog owners that the area is used by little penguins for nesting. Dog attacks on penguins are a serious and continuing problem in New Zealand. In March this year a dog attacked a penguin on Himatangi Beach resulting in the permanent loss of an eye. The bird will be unable to survive in the wild and has been transferred to the Napier Aquarium. In February there was a report from Mahia Peninsula of a little penguin being killed by a dog.



DOC in Dunedin has launched the Lead the Way programme as an initiative to reduce the adverse effects of dogs on beaches.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2019/little-penguin-loses-eye-in-dog-attack/>

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2019/reminder-to-control-dogs-to-protect-penguins/>

## Channel-billed cuckoo report, Wellington

Colin Miskelly » Fri Mar 08, 2019 I have this evening been sent an email reporting a possible channel-billed cuckoo heard in Karori:

**"A few weeks ago my partner and I heard a bird call that we both thought sounded a lot like a channel-billed cuckoo. I am Australian and I am familiar with this bird's call.**

**We heard it again a few days ago and are very confident it is a channel bill."** BirdingNZ.net

### **Channel-billed cuckoo New Zealand records**

*The first New Zealand record of channel-billed cuckoo was a bird shot in Invercargill in December 1924. The second was a bird at Ngataki, Aupori Peninsula October 1986 to January 1987. Three were found dead in October-November 1996 at Ocean Beach, Raglan; Te Pahi, Far North; and Pukerua Bay, Wellington. The last confirmed sighting was one at Mangawhai Heads in October 2002. Details of a bird seen on Motiti Island in January 2007 have yet to be submitted to the Records Appraisal Committee of Birds New Zealand. NZBirdsOnline.*

Note; An Oriental cuckoo was found in Upper Hutt on 1/12/2018 and reported in the March issue of the Birds New Zealand magazine. A rare Asian straggler but more common than Channel-billed cuckoo. Heather & Robertson, The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand.

## Are rhubarb leaves toxic to birds?

The leaves of rhubarb are well known to be toxic to humans and other mammals because they contain high levels of oxalate. The question arises as to whether they are also toxic to birds. Recently the rhubarb in our garden was eaten to ground level and the guilty suspects were thought to be either possums or California quail. We actively trap possums and in February caught a record of 7. California quail visit our garden in late spring / early summer and in recent years have arrived with chicks. The photograph is taken of California quail on our deck in January. A remarkable feature of California quail is the the chicks fledge (are able to fly) at just 10 days of age. The chicks in this picture still have down feathers but were able to fly, a feature which no doubt is very advantageous in avoiding predation. In the last couple days our rhubarb patch has once again been devastated. This time there is no doubt as

to the guilty party as the California quail were caught in the act of feasting on our albeit already heavily predated rhubarb . Are rhubarb leaves are toxic to California quail? Will they suffer any adverse effects from our rhubarb leaves? There are reports of chickens eating rhubarb leaves with little or no adverse effects. There is also a suggestion that the levels of oxalate in rhubarb vary and there are times when the leaves are not toxic . How do birds know which plants are poisonous, is it just a matter of taste? Geoff de Lisle, Dallas Bishop



## Ancient connection between New Zealand and Madagascan Birds.

The following is the abstract of a publication which demonstrates a genetic relationship between the recently extinct New Zealand Adzebills and Madagascan wood rails and Afro-Madagascan flufftails. A link is provided below for access to the paper. A reader friendly summary can be found at the following link [https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/02/190221110359.htm?utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=ScienceDaily\\_TMD\\_1&utm\\_source=TMD](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/02/190221110359.htm?utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=ScienceDaily_TMD_1&utm_source=TMD)

**Mitochondrial Genomes from New Zealand's Extinct Adzebills (Aves: Aptornithidae: Aptornis) Support a Sister-Taxon Relationship with the Afro-Madagascan Sarothruridae** Alexander P. Boast 1,2,3,4,\* , Brendan Chapman 5 , Michael B. Herrera 2,6, Trevor H. Worthy 7 , R. Paul Scofield 8 , Alan J. D. Tennyson 9 , Peter Houde 10, Michael Bunce 11 , Alan Cooper 1,2 and Kieren J. Mitchell 1,2,\*

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### Abstract:

*The recently extinct New Zealand adzebills (Aptornithidae, Aptornis spp.) were an enigmatic group of large flightless birds that have long eluded precise taxonomic assignment as they do not closely resemble any extant birds. Adzebills were nearly wingless, weighed approximately 16–19 kg, and possessed massive adze-like reinforced*

*bills whose function remains unknown. Using hybridisation enrichment and high-throughput sequencing of DNA extracted from subfossil bone and eggshell, near-complete mitochondrial genomes were successfully assembled from the two Quaternary adzebill species: the North Island Adzebill (Aptornis otidiformis) and South Island Adzebill (A. defossor). Molecular phylogenetic analyses confirm that adzebills are members of the Ralloidea (rails and allies) and are sister-taxon to the Sarothruridae, which our results suggest comprises the Madagascan wood rails (Mentocrex, two likely sp.) in addition to the tiny (<50 gram) rail-like Afro-Madagascan flufftails (Sarothrura, 9 spp.). Node age estimates indicate that the split between adzebills and Sarothruridae occurred ~39.6 Ma, suggesting that the ancestors of the adzebills arrived in New Zealand by long-distance dispersal rather than continental vicariance. This newly identified biogeographic link between physically distant New Zealand and Afro-Madagascar, echoed by the relationship between the New Zealand kiwi (Apterygiformes) and Madagascan elephant-birds (Aepyornithiformes), suggests that the adzebill's near relatives were formerly more widespread. In addition, our estimate for the divergence time between the two Quaternary adzebill species (0.2–2.3 Ma) coincides with the emergence of a land-bridge between the North and South islands of New Zealand (ca. 1.5–2 Ma). This relatively recent divergence suggests that North Island adzebills are the result of a relatively recent dispersal from the South Island, from which the earliest (Miocene) adzebill fossil has been described.*