

The Role of the Scientific Committee in Birds New Zealand

From time to time members have asked what is the role of the Scientific Committee in Birds New Zealand? What does this committee do, and why, who are its members, and to whom does it report? This note aims to answer these questions.

The Scientific Committee was established by Council many years ago to ensure that any studies conducted on birds that are endorsed or funded by the Society, and are undertaken by members of Birds New Zealand, are scientifically robust and meets the standards suitable for future publication.

The Scientific Committee is an important pillar in the governance of Birds New Zealand. It supports the implementation of two prominent objectives of the Society, namely, "To encourage, organise and promote the study of birds and their habitat use particularly within the New Zealand region", and "to promote the recording and wide circulation of the results of bird studies and observations".

Examples of long-term research that have been reviewed and endorsed by the Scientific Committee are National Wader Counts, National Banding Scheme, Beach Patrol Project Scheme and Moult Recording Scheme. The Scientific Committee regularly reviews funding applications and makes recommendations for new projects to be financed from the Projects Assistance Fund, Scholarships, or the Birds New Zealand Research Fund. The committee has no oversight over private studies conducted by individuals, or groups of individuals.

The Terms of Reference of the Scientific Committee are:

1. To ensure the scientific rigour of studies undertaken by the Society.
2. To oversee the establishment of a national database for the Society.
3. To generally oversee Society studies of New Zealand birds and their habitats.
4. To ensure the appropriate and effective dissemination of information about the New Zealand birds and their habitats.
5. To provide critical assessment and overview of the Society's schemes and projects to ensure that they have clearly defined purposes and contribute effectively to knowledge of New Zealand birds.
6. To maintain effective contact and appropriate collaboration with the Scientific or Research Committees of similar societies in the South Pacific Region.
7. Generally, to do all such things as are considered by the Committee or Council to be conducive to the attainment of any or all of the foregoing terms of reference.

The Scientific Committee comprises six members of the Society, five of whom are scientists having professional knowledge and experience in ornithological research. Mr. Graeme Taylor, of Wellington, presently leads the committee. Other members are Ralph Powlesland, Paul Sagar, David Melville, Ilse Corkery and the President (an *ex officio* member). The committee aims to replace one member annually with suitably skilled new members. People who are interested in joining should contact Graeme for advice.

The Scientific Committee reports to Council annually on its activities. It may make recommendations to changes in the manner of its working and to the Terms of Reference.

Ian Armitage
Vice-President