



*Newsletter of the Northland Region of the  
Ornithological Society of New Zealand - trading as **Birds New Zealand***

## **July 2019      Amokura 125**

(Published in February, July and October of each year)

**MEETINGS** of the Northland Branch of Birds New Zealand are held each month on the second Thursday, for the period FEBRUARY to DECEMBER.      **TIME:** 7-30p.m.

**VENUE:** Founders Room, Alzheimer's Society, 148 Corks Road, Tikipunga, Whangarei.

**COST:** A donation of \$3-00 per person per meeting is requested toward the cost of  
Hall hire, supper and the production and distribution of "Amokura".

Or you can pay an Annual fee of \$30.00 to the Northland Branch bank account **12-3099-0614160-00**.

Payment Due after the AGM

**Be sure to include your *Surname* and the word *Sub* in the details.**

**ALL WELCOME**

### **PROGRAMME TO October 2019**

#### **JULY**

- 10 MEETING – 7-30p.m.  
WEST COAST BEACH PATROL – Contact Prue Cozens Ph. 09 4377760  
16 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **AUGUST**

- 8 MEETING – 7-30p.m.  
WEST COAST BEACH PATROL – Contact Prue Cozens Ph. 09 4377760  
13 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **SEPTEMBER**

- 12 MEETING – 7-30p.m.  
WEST COAST BEACH PATROL – Contact Prue Cozens Ph. 09 4377760  
17 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **OCTOBER**

- 10 MEETING – 7-30p.m.  
WEST COAST BEACH PATROL – Contact Prue Cozens Ph. 09 4377760  
15 EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**

#### **SECRETARY**

#### **TREASURER**

#### **REGIONAL RECORDER**

#### **REGIONAL REPORTER**

#### **AMOKURA EDITOR**

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**Hilton Ward**

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Previous Issues of Amokura - <http://www.osnz.org.nz/regnews.htm>

This issue is dedicated to Karen Miller who sadly passed away on Friday 29th at Potter Home after a long illness.

Karen has been a keen birder since she was very young, and her enthusiasm for all things birding will be missed at our monthly Birds NZ meetings.

**FEBRUARY** - It has been a wonderful birding month with some interesting sightings. The last page of the mag will have some links to some interesting newsy bits that others have posted online.

Dai Morgan attended the February meeting and thanked those that contributed to the Urban Bird Survey over the summer.

Also here are some dates to note:

Kaipara Count – November 16<sup>th</sup>

Whangarei Harbour Count – November 17<sup>th</sup>

Ngunguru Shorebird Count – July 6th

### **Shore Bird Count at Ngunguru – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019**

A Shore Bird count at Ngunguru Sandspit and lower estuary was undertaken by a group of 8 enthusiasts on Saturday 23rd February. The count is part of a seasonal inventory of shore birds in New Zealand conducted by the Ornithological Society and for the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society and takes in the highlighted areas on the attached map. This count recorded a total of 419 birds across 23 species. This total is in much higher than recent years mostly due to there being 107 White Fronted Terns counted. It is normal to see larger numbers of Terns in February on Pimanu but 107 exceeds all previous. Nice to see 24 Bar Tailed Godwits back and colouring up prior to their long flight to the Arctic and breeding. Counted in two separate flocks were 62 Greenfinches with another 12 on the Ngunguru foreshore. We have not seen this before. The average being 9.

It was a calm cloudy day with a light southwest wind and a massive three metre tide.

Thank you Judi and Adrian Gilbert, Wendy Ambury, Dayna Davies, Scott Brooks, Janet Snell, Gina Williams and Jennifer Wilson-Stewart

Report by Hilton Ward

The count included:

24 Bar-tailed Godwit	3 Caspian Tern	2 Spur Winged Plover
19 Banded Dotterel	4 Little Black Shag	18 Black Backed Gulls
38 New Zealand Dotterel	7 Mallard / Hybrid	75 Greenfinch
37 Variable Oystercatchers	39 Red Billed Gulls	2 Little Shag
2 Whimbrel	20 Starling	3 Myna
1 Blackbird	2 Thrush	2 Skylarks
5 Pied Shag	2 Pipit	6 Welcome Swallow
107 White Fronted Tern	1 Sparrow	



Whimbrel Photo by Scott Brooks. Taken on the Ngunguru Sandspit



The above photo taken on the Ngunguru Sandspit by Hilton Ward has White Fronted Terns, Caspian Terns Oystercatchers and a Banded Dotterel



On February 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Hilton and Melva Ward hosted the Ngunguru School Year 3 and 4 students at The Ngunguru School Wetland Classroom on their property. The first day there were 24 kids and 40 plus the second day. Five stations were set up with the children rotating every 30 minutes. Each station was managed by an “Expert”

The programme for the day was:

**ACTIVITY STATIONS:**

1. Wetland Plants and Water Quality  
- Adaptations and Functions of Wetlands and testing quality of the water (Heidi on Wednesday & Wendy Symmans on Thursday - middle of boardwalk)
2. Wetland Birds - Identifying 6 different birds that are likely to live in the wetland, their footprint and sound. (Helen on Wednesday and Anne McCracken on Thursday)
3. Migratory Fish and life in the wetland - Pull in fish traps, Life cycles, (Hilton - middle of boardwalk)
4. Exploring Kauri Forest structure- Forest floor, Understory, Canopy, Emergent. Kauri dieback and protection of Kauri Forest (Kayla Raines S.W.A.T. on Wednesday and Heidi on Thursday- walking group- starts by spraying shoes, and walks in)
5. Te Ao Maori in Wetlands (Pataka)- Storytelling/ waiata. Using plants as fibre, medicine (kawakawa tea), food- bracelet (Matua Rod)



We were thankful to have Anne McCracken manage the bird station on one of the days and Wendy Ambury who took the children into the bush where they learnt about Kauri dieback and our trees. Hilton managed the fish station where traps were emptied and fish discussed. Several eels were caught which was a delight to see along with Giant and Common Bully's. One of the stations dealt with the importance of wetland plants. A memorable time was had by all. Of special note on the day was a Visit on the 21<sup>st</sup> by an Australasian Bittern. It stayed for some time and everyone got to see it.







## MARCH –

11th March 2019

This morning while watching the calm incoming tide on the Ngunguru Estuary I noticed a White Faced Heron fishing along in the shallows. With each step one foot extended forward disturbing the bottom in the hope that a fish would emerge. Within a metre swam Little Shag. It followed and stayed close to the Heron as it moved upstream. Wow, I thought. Smart Little Shag. It knows how to get breakfast from the Heron's shuffling. I drove further on and up just before the Ngunguru Library observed another little Shag doing exactly the same. My phone won't take photos anymore and I did not have my camera with me. Interesting behaviour though.

Submitted by Hilton Ward.

Our AGM was held at the March meeting. All existing officers were re-elected to the same positions. This was followed by Heather, Anne and Janet's report on their Poutu Lakes observation trip. Of particular interest were the Black Billed Gulls on lake Humuhumu. On the other lakes they observed Dabchicks and Skaups.

This was followed by interesting reports from the other members of their summer birding activities.

## Three Kings Islands Seabird Pelagic Report - 17 - 20th March 2019 by Scott Brooks



1 White-Capped Mollymawk and Black Petrel

On Sunday 17th March 2019, six very keen birders and 2 crew headed out of Whangaroa on a four day 3 Kings Islands pelagic seabirds adventure. Onboard were Steve Wood, Tim Barnard, David Thomas, Harry Boorman, Me (the trip organiser) and Les Feasey (co-organiser). The trip nearly didn't happen due to a couple of late boat cancellations but Les somehow managed to secure a last minute boat, and with very favourable fine weather conditions and warm sea temperatures forecast we set off with great anticipation.

We left Whangaroa Harbour and were farewelled by 2 Arctic Skuas, and then picked up 2 Cape Barren Geese on

nearby Stephenson's Island, before heading out to the fabled 'Gardens' area with steep drop off and depths of 1000m+. We were interrupted along the way for about 20 minutes while Steve powered in a 220kg Blue Marlin! which we released. After that excitement it was back to birding with a lot of the expected seabirds



for the area being picked off as we travelled. Conditions at the Gardens, our first chum spot of the trip, were great with a 10+knot wind and about a 1 metre swell. We got our first (of many) White-Naped Petrels which gave a great show and was the first lifer for some on board. Along with the regulars species we also had Storm Petrels (NZ and White-faced), plenty of Black-winged Petrels, Pycroft's, and some big Albatross. And it wasn't long before 2 major bird species showed up including 4 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, and a Kermadec Petrel, all of which provided us with great views. After the chum we headed for the sheltered Tom Bowling Bay for the night.

Day 2 we woke up before sunrise to find 2 Common Diving Petrels had landed on the

back of the boat. After releasing the birds we headed off to the 3 Kings Islands on an unexpectedly calm day with little swell and not much wind. Along the way there we had a great fly-by from our first Long-tailed Skua just off the back of the boat, and not long after we had our first whale sighting. When we arrived to the rugged, stunning 3 Kings Islands we went to the Northern Buller's Mollymawk breeding colony on a rock island which had some adults and a few big fluffy chicks, with more adults swirling around overhead. Then we headed to West Island where we saw 60+ Grey Ternlets roosting, and then our next major bird of the trip – the Black Noddy (that had been reported a few days earlier) which was amongst a big group of Fluttering Shearwaters and Red-Billed Gulls. We then headed out to a 400m chum spot nearby which brought in some of the usual seabird suspects but due to the calmness of the day there wasn't really a great numbers of birds. We then tried a couple more chum spots with similar results. On the way between the chum spots we had 3 more whale sightings which we've narrowed down to either Sei or Bryde's Whales. As we headed to a semi-sheltered cove on the main island for the night the wind and swell finally began to pick up with a few more seabirds appearing. As soon as we arrived at the cove we put some lines down and quickly gathered a great selection of fish for dinner. Throughout the night we could hear Black-winged Petrels on the island.

On day 3 we were again up before dark to head off to our major chum spot for the trip out at the famous King's Bank with it's sharp drop-offs and other undersea features making for fantastic seabird (and fish) territory. Along the way we spotted 3 more Long-tailed Skuas. When we got to the chum spot conditions were a firm 15 knot easterly and 1 to 1.5 metre swell – perfect conditions for seabirds. And the Kings Bank didn't disappoint with excellent numbers of seabirds joining us not long after the chum was out, and numbers increasing greatly throughout the 4 hours with seabirds swirling around everywhere. Amongst the usual range of birds we had 2 more Kermadec Petrels (including a pale morph), along with more Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, and our first 2 Wilson's Storm Petrels. And then from the back of the chum David called out a stunning 'Gould's Petrel' which swept it's way towards us giving a great show and coming very close to the back of the boat - everyone had fantastic views. During the chum the wind picked up to 20 knots plus,

2 White Naped Petrel



3 Kermadec Petrel



the swell rose more and the birds just keep on coming. WHAT AN AMAZING SPOT! Sadly after approx 3.5 to 4 hours of chumming we had to head off to get back to Tom Bowling Bay for the night.

On day 4 we stopped again at the 'Gardens' on our way home for a 2 hour chum in 15 knot easterly winds and 1.5 metre swells. Another great range of birds in large numbers including 20 NZ Storm Petrels, more Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and another Kermadec Petrel. Then Harry picked up our last major for the trip – a White Tern going past just off the back of the boat. A great last epic bird for a fantastic trip.

Over the 4 days we saw a massive 34 seabird species (including 23 tube-nose species) - a great result, and a great adventure had by all onboard.

Here's the full list of seabirds we saw on the trip (with numbers in brackets being how many we saw at any one time), as well as other bird and marine life seen along the way.

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SEABIRDS:

- Northern Royal Albatross – 1 (1)
- Wandering Albatross (Gibson's) – 20 (7)
- White-capped Mollymawk – 17 (3)
- Buller's Mollymawk – 29 (8)
- GOULD'S PETREL – 1 (1)
- KERMADEC PETREL – 4 (1)
- Grey-faced Petrel – 29 (1)
- White-naped Petrel – 28 (1)
- Black-winged Petrel – 130+ (2)
- Cooks Petrel – 80+ (2)
- Pycroft's Petrel – 5 (1)
- Black Petrel – 325+ (70)
- WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER – 19 (3)
- Sooty Shearwater – 1 (1)
- Flesh-footed Shearwater – 53 (5)
- Buller's Shearwater – 300+ (10)
- Fluttering Shearwater – 1,250+ (400)
- Little Shearwater – 1 (1)
- Fairy Prion – 18 (3)
- New Zealand Storm Petrel – 40 (16)
- White-faced Storm Petrel – 7 (2)
- Wilson's Storm Petrel – 4 (2)
- Common Diving Petrel – 13 (2)
- LONG-TAILED SKUA – 5 (3)
- Pomarine Skua – 1 (1)
- Arctic Skua – 8 (2)
- WHITE TERN – 1 (1)
- BLACK NODDY – 1 (1)
- Grey Ternlet – 85 (60)
- Caspian Tern – 2 (1)
- White-fronted Tern – 45 (10)
- Black-backed Gull – 20 (3)
- Red-billed Gull – 1,200+ (500)
- Gannet – 2,200+ (600)

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Other birds seen on the journey:

- 5 x Pied Shag
- 1 x Little Shag
- 3 x Black Shag
- 2 x Cape Barren Goose
- 4 x Variable Oystercatcher
- 2 x Kingfisher
- 6 x Bellbird (3 Kings sub-species)

- 2 x Red-crowned Parakeet
- 1 x Fantail
- 5 x Harrier
- 1 x Starling
- 2 x Swallow
- 3 x Silvereye
- 4 x Myna

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Marine life seen on the journey:

- 1 x Blue Marlin caught by Steve - 220kg tagged and released
- 1 x Marlin seen jumping
- 8 x Whales (either Sei or Bryde's - to be confirmed)
- 30+ x Bottlenose Dolphin
- 15 x Common Dolphins
- 1 x Yellowfin Tuna. Was hooked but taken by big Mako
- 1 x Tuna seen leaping from water
- 1 x Sunfish
- 1 x Seal
- 3 x Sharks

**Note:** - If you are able visit Scott's Facebook post by following the link on [Northland Birds](#) Scott regularly organises pelagic birding trips out past the Poor Knights Islands. If you are interested in going message Scott on Facebook.

#### **APRIL –**

At our monthly meeting Dai Morgan presented his analysis of the 2018 Whangarei Urban Bird Survey. The survey involve a considerable number of five minute counts over much of the Whangarei area. (228 count stations)Especially that which is nearer the bordering bush. The analysis demonstrated the relationship of bird numbers to habitat comparing urban and into the bush and also the relationship of bird numbers to pest numbers.

**MAY –** Heather O'Brian presented a slide show at the May meeting of her wonderful photos of birds from the Australian Gold Coast.

**JUNE –** Congratulations to Ilse Corkery for being nominated onto the OSNZ Scientific Committee.

At the meeting John Ballinger gave a talk on the Hen Harrier conservation project Ilse and he were doing in Ireland. Of special interest from the project is a clear understanding of the ecological change through the ages of land modification from the glacial age to humans. A bonus was a little sight-seeing photo show around some of the top birding spots there.

Tony Beauchamp asked for any sightings be reported to him of Banded Dotterels roosting at night, Wrybills and Turnstones.

## **Stories - Adventures – Yarns – Sightings**

19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 from the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society.

Bright and early one morning recently, a local spoke to two visitors all kitted out with equipment for bird watching. One was from Rotorua and the other was an Aulander. Both were waist deep in water off School Beach studying the birds gathered above the waterline. Hugely excited to be so close to 37 New Zealand Dotterel/Tuturiwhata, 3 Wrybill/Ngutu Parore and other species. Elated by their special experience.

Locals have been spotted too, quietly checking out this year's visiting birds and the welfare of the resident birds over the Tutukaka Coast's busy summer.



## A Facebook post from Ngunguru School

Coastal Kaitiakitanga - Ngunguru School & Tutukaka Coast

Our Year 7 & 8 students had a special day on Kukutauwhoa Island last week. April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Cam from Tutukaka Landcare, Hilton Ward and Dayna Davies shared their valuable knowledge and work with us as we supported in the placing of five new Grey-faced Petrel nesting boxes.

All we need now, are some residents and the word has it that courting has begun 😊. How exciting!



## Links to videos interesting sightings –

- Matuku feeding – Ian Skipworth of Ngunguru posted this interesting clip of Matuku feeding on a small bush pond at his place near Ngunguru. Follow the link. <https://youtu.be/6z7pNS0yV0g>



- Wary Pukeko at Old Mill Ln, Ngunguru – Video by Hilton Ward <https://youtu.be/ODTzry-JYao>





- Spotless Crake at Old Mill Ln. Ngunguru. [https://youtu.be/uk\\_11m\\_CxB0](https://youtu.be/uk_11m_CxB0)



Below is a long overdue photo for our mag is this one of Heather O'Brian going to a lot of trouble photographing Piwakawaka chicks in their nest at Melva and Hiltons place in Ngunguru.





## Sightings Count Sheet

date	Bird	Place	Number	Name
Mid January	Reef Heron	Upper Ngunguru River	1	Janet Snell
Dec 18~Jan 19	Kaka	Herekino area	1	Hugh Snell
Late January	NZ Wood Pigeon	End of Forest View Rd, Kamo	1	Murry & Jessie Dyer
Early February	Ruru - Male & female	Close by takahe St in early evening	2	Pauline Smith
31-Jan-19	Pipit	Running over hot sand dunes and stopping on cooler sandstone. (Needs Jandals)	1	Pat Miller
12-Mar-19	Kukupa	Takahe Street		Pauline Smith & Kevin Hayes
13-Mar-19	Little Black Shag	Dave Culham Dr near the dog park and mangroves	20 ~ 25	Pat Miller
2-Mar-19	Long Tailed Cuckoo	Heard in evening at the Quarry Gardens	1	Heather O'Brian
9-Apr-19	Kukupa - Feeding on Cabbage Tree berries all week	Tyealmere Grove, Maunu	3	Anne
17-Mar-19	White Faced Heron (In breedig plumage)	Ngunguru Estuary by the school	1	Paulene Smith & Kevin Hayes
"	Variable Oystercatcher	"	1	"
"	Red Billed Gulls	"	33	"
12-Apr-19	Kukupa	Old Mill Ln perched on the power line	1	Melva Ward
25-Apr-19	Grey Warbler	Tealmere Grove, Manu	4	Anne McCracken
8-May-19	Kukupa	Taheke St, Tikipunga	4	Paulene Smith & Kevin Hayes
21-Mar-19	Pipit	Spirits Bay Camp Ground	6	Janet & Donna Snell
21-Mar-19	NZ Dotterel	Spirits Bay Camp Ground		Janet & Donna Snell
24-Mar-19	Royal Spoonbill	Te Hapua Waterfront	120	Janet & Donna Snell
5-May-19	South Island Pied Oystercatcher	Pahi Waterfront		Janet Snell