



Birds New Zealand
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Otago Region Newsletter 8/2019 August 2019



Forest and Bird Pelagic Trip 18 August 2019

Is that you again Graeme?

photo Nick Beckwith

Snow on the mountains, Black ice on the deck of the Vivienne J. Lets go to sea. Well it was not really that tough once at sea. Winters are not what they used to be!

Several absences; Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns; have they gone inland already? And no Gannets, though I have been seeing them from the prion fence.



We did see: Southern Black-backed Gull, Red-billed Gull, White-fronted Tern, Salvin's Mollymawk, Buller's Mollymawk, Shy Mollymawk, Black-browed Mollymawk, Southern Royal Albatross, Northern Royal Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Otago Shag, Spotted Shag, some prions probably fairy, some distant shearwaters possibly Buller's, and an unidentified petrel.

I told people to look out for banded albatross, but we missed it though Tess found a Northern Royal with Black/White/Red - metal on right when reviewing her photos. It is unusual to have a Northern Royal follow the boat. A Taiaroa bird.

Almost no wind, but some swell and bright sun. We went all the way out to the ridge between the Papanui and Saunders Canyons. We fed the birds there and on return at the "19 fathom line" ten km off Taiaroa. Almost the same list of species at both places.



At that 19 fathom line, as the flat fish trawlers know it, we struck feeding groups of Red-billed Gulls, up to 500 birds with fish disturbing the surface occasionally. The skipper said it used to be rare to get schooling fish such as barracoota in the winter. We only had glimpses of the fish.

Entering the harbour at 1pm we saw a couple of scruffy albatross chicks exercising their wings on Taiaroa Head. photos **Nick Beckwith**



Graeme Loh

Polaris Water Sampling voyage 23 July 2019



Species	Max number of individuals
Salvin's Mollymawk	6
Buller's Mollymawk	50
Shy Mollymawk	3
Black-browed Mollymawk	5
Chathams Mollymawk	1
Southern Royal Albatross	10
Northern Royal Albatross	1
Wandering Albatross	1
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross	1
Southern Giant Petrel	1
Northern Giant Petrel	1
Cape Petrel	49
Grey Petrel	3
Westland Petrel	2
White-chinned Petrel	1
Grey-faced Petrel	1
Prion species	1
Otago Shag	1
White-fronted Tern	1
Southern Black-backed Gull	2

A lone Pipit in a cloud of mist 42 kilometres from land. Might have been a skylark but the one call it made settled me on pipit. It was not seen on the return voyage. The land was not in sight all daytime.

These records have been entered into ebird classic (not atlas) **Graeme Loh**

Ornithological Snippets

Peter Reese counted 60 **SIPO** at Malaghans Rd near Arrowtown on 24th July, with 66 there 2 days later. Tying in with other sightings reported last month, an immature **Great Crested Grebe** was at Lake Tuakitoto on 8th Aug, following a further report of an adult at Katiki Reservoir on 4th Aug by Nick Dunckley. A single **White Heron** was at Tomahawk Lagoon on 8th August.

A **NZ Falcon** at Balclutha Airport, first seen by Suzanne Schofield on 3rd July, was last observed on 29th. Francesca Cunninghame reports that on 29th July a **Karearea** glided past only a few centimetres above the bonnet of the car as she drove slowly up her parent's driveway on Signal Hill, Dunedin. They have recorded more sightings of these birds flying over the property in the last three years than in the 32 years prior. On 24th July Bob Cunninghame heard **Morepork** calling when at home not long after dark. The calls were coming up from lower down the Signal Hill/North East Valley slope



She also notes that when driving to Invercargill on 19th June she stopped at the side of road near Woodlands and an **Australasian Harrier Hawk** was dropping out of the sky straight down with its talons out. She was wondering what it had seen in the long grass. As the harrier approached the ground a large black **domestic hen** erupted up towards the harrier flapping and clucking madly, the harrier backed off awkwardly and then raced away to hide in a woodpile. An interesting interaction. Does anyone else have any records of harriers taking chickens?

Interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield

Notices and Business

eBird News

Atlas We are almost at the end of the first winter period of Atlas fieldwork. Around 28% of Otago squares have been visited, though obviously coverage varies from square to square. The top two species in terms of distribution so far are Blackbird and Chaffinch, found in 79 and 77 squares out of 96. One interesting observation is that NZ Falcon has been reported in more squares (16) than Black-billed Gull (12), and pleasingly the vast majority of these have been on complete counts.

We have rescheduled the Atlas field trip for Saturday 1st September. It will again be based around Outram, so if you are interested in taking part, please contact either Mary or myself.

Taxonomic Update As you may have read, the annual taxonomic update has just taken place, and there a few changes that are relevant to New Zealand. The most obvious one is that Red-billed Gull is no longer regarded as a separate species, and has been “lumped” with the Silver Gull, and shows on the checklist as such. You have the option of submitting your records as Silver Gull, or if you wish to retain Red-billed Gull as a subspecies, you can either use the “Show Subspecies” function, or else select “Add Species” when you are submitting a checklist.

Other changes include Morepork, which has been split from Southern Boobook, and now appears as Morepork, and NZ Robin, which has been split into North Island and South Island Robins – an instant tick for many of us. Also Little Shearwater & Subantarctic Little Shearwater are now regarded as separate species.

All your relevant records should be automatically be updated, but if this is not the case you can do it manually using the “Change Species” option in “My eBird”. For those who are not subscribed to the eBird newsletter, all the details can be found at

https://ebird.org/news/2019-ebird-taxonomy-update?utm_source=Cornell+Lab+eNews&utm_campaign=9392f0e1e1-ebird+enews+august+2019&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-9392f0e1e1%20Stewart%20Island%20ShagNZ%20PigeonFernbird%0b-315643065

Finally, a couple of time-saving tips. When looking at the Atlas effort map in “Explore Data”, you can zoom in to the relevant area, & then click the grid square to show the square details; however if you want to investigate further, right click “View all grid square data” then “open link in new tab”. This means the map stays zoomed in if you want to look at a nearby square, rather than resetting to the whole of NZ.

And this is not specific to the Atlas, but when searching for a species for any reason, type in the first letters of the names to get a short list of candidates. So for example “hosp” for house sparrow, “nzfa” for NZ Falcon (or Fantail), “bbgu” for Black-Billed Gull etc. And the same process works for the scientific names, if they trip off the tongue more easily.

Richard Schofield

Birds NZ Youth Camp, Oct. 5 -11, 2019, at Aka Aka, Waikato.

An introduction to project birding; planning, fieldwork, analysis, and write-up of results. A focus on swamp birds. For further information on applications email Ian at iansouthey@yahoo.co.nz



Sue M & Graeme L ended up going to Andersons lagoon and doing a coast walk of the Spotted Shag colonies (instead of editing his seabird account for this newsletter?). Great he said but need to do it on a lower tide. Some birds are incubating but most are still slowly building nests.

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 28 August** Indoor Meeting. Speakers from the International Penguin Conference.
- Sun 1 Sept.** Atlas Field Trip. We will try to cover several 10km squares near Outram. Meet 197 Balmacewen Road, leaving 9 am to car pool or at Outram, Four Square Store at 9.30 am. Let Mary know if you plan to come. 464 0787 or maryt@actrix.co.nz
- 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. Contact: Suzanne Middleton smiddleton7@yahoo.co.nz ph 022 2601 8579 if you can help
- 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.
- Sun 6 October** Atlas Field Trip. Survey areas to be confirmed.
- Wed 23 October** Indoor Meeting. Francesca Cunninghame on “The Galapagos Hawk”.
- Sun 3 November** Atlas Field Trip. Survey areas to be confirmed.
- Sun 24 November** Summer Wader Count; High tide 14.42, 2.2m
- Wed 27 November** to be announced
- Sun 1 December** Atlas Field Trip. Survey areas to be confirmed.

Many thanks to all who contributed. Articles, photos etc for next newsletter to Derek Onley, derekonley@yahoo.com by 18 September