



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

## **February 2020 Amokura 127**

(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 JULY 2020**

#### **FEBRUARY**

- 13** MEETING – 7-30p.m.  
WEST COAST BEACH PATROL – Contact Prue Cozens Ph. 09 4377760
- 15** NGUNGURU SHOREBIRD COUNT – Meet at Te Maika Rd, Ngunguru 1:00pm
- 18** EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **MARCH**

- 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)

#### **14**

#### **APRIL**

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

#### **MAY**

- 14** NO MEETING  
WEST COAST BEACH PATROL – Contact Prue Cozens Ph. 09 4377760
- 19** EAST COAST BEACH PATROL (Meet at the Kensington Carpark 12:30pm)

#### **JUNE**

- 11** 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)

#### **REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**

#### **SECRETARY**

#### **TREASURER**

#### **REGIONAL RECORDER**

#### **REGIONAL REPORTER**

#### **AMOKURA EDITOR**

**Anne McCracken**

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**Tony Beauchamp**

**Vacant**

**Hilton Ward**

**438-1145**

**437-0085**

**437-6470**

**436-2224**

**946-0074**

## **OCTOBER -**

At the meeting Tony Beauchamp gave an update on the Bird Atlas with encouragement to get birding. This was followed by Heather O'Brian presenting more of her excellent and interesting photos. This time it was Cattle Egrets, Wood Ducks and Spoonbills.

## **NOVEMBER –**

Something a little different. Prior to our meeting we all gathered at the Lake Road Pond in Whangarei to observe the large number and variety of water fowl at this relatively new urban pond. We counted eighteen species on the evening and also noted that there were five active Grebe nests.

## **DECEMBER**

As usual the Christmas get together was just that. Folk brought a food plate to share and it was a delightful feast.







## JANUARY

No meeting in January but plenty of action from keen birders. Read on.

### Regional Roundup November 2019: Northland Branch

The highlight for the team doing the October 5MBCounts on the Te Whara Track, Bream Head was seeing a flock of 13 kaka flying about. Also seen were many North Island Tomtit, Kukupa/Kereru, and 1 North Island Robin. Two Whitehead were heard.

At our 14th November evening meeting/field-trip BirdsNZ members observed 18 species at the newly formed Lake Rd pond. Several members have revisited since and species of note on the 24th November were: Australasian Little Grebe 6 established nests-3 pairs now with chicks; NZ Dabchick 3 pairs – still attempting to build nests in the now very limited nesting sites, with one pair observed mating; Australasian Shoveler 3 males 1 female with 4 chicks; Pateke/Brown Teal 4; Scaup 2 males 1 female; also present: pied stilts, paradise shelducks, mallards, pukeko, spur-winged plovers (aprox 70 counted on the 14th); White-Faced Herons and a harrier attempting to predate ducklings being stoutly defended by a mallard that repeatedly launched herself from the surface at the harrier.

Shorebirds observed at the Ngunguru Beach and Sandspit count on the 16th November were: Bar-Tailed Godwit 32; NZ Dotterel 10; Variable Oystercatcher 33; Black Backed Gull 11; Red Billed Gull 16; Caspian Tern 1; White-Fronted Tern 2; Littler Black Shag 1; Pied Shag 4; Mallard 1; Paradise Shelduck 2.

At the South Kaipara census on the same day Bar-Tailed Godwits were counted at only one of the 4 sites observed: 641 at the Battley site. At the Ngamotu site were: Variable Oystercatcher 8; Pied Stilt 14; Pied Shag 12; Black Backed Gull 4; White-Faced Heron 28; Paradise Shelduck 25; Mallard 76; Grey Teal 7.

On the 17th November at Johnsons Point a flock 16 Caspian Terns were counted. Also that day Bar-Tailed Godwits counted during the Whangarei Harbour Shorebird Census were: Skull Creek 3,800; Johnson's Point: 87; Ruakaka River: 26.

Also at the our November meeting concerned members reported that they have heard very few if any Shining Cuckoo calls and concluded that the calling rate of Shining Cuckoo this spring season has been very sparse and limited in Northland.



## Stories - Adventures – Yarns – Sightings

### Lake Road Pond by Scott Brooks

This Australasian Little Grebe pair were pretty damn pleased with themselves after just laying an egg on their floating island nest this morning. I had gone for a look at the lake today to try and count how many grebes were actually there and got to see this which was very awesome. Not long after they laid the egg they were back to the business of finishing off the nest.

After doing a count I found 15 Australasian Little Grebe on the lake which is pretty impressive considering there's estimated to only be a couple hundred of them in New Zealand. Most were paired off and there were 4 nests (couldn't tell if there were other eggs as they had birds sitting on the nests). And there were 4 NZ Dabchicks as well who seemed to be doing courting routines.

<https://www.facebook.com/scott.brooks.357622/videos/10156997393543423/>

The pond is a really busy place and well worth a visit. Another note from Scott Brooks states ...

Just been watching 8 Australasian Little Grebes on a small lake in Whangarei. It's the most I've seen at one location so was awesome to watch them going about their business. Most were paired off and calling to each other, and one couple were busy building a floating nest. There were also 4 NZ dabchicks, a bunch of other waterfowl species (many with young in tow) and some pied stilts."



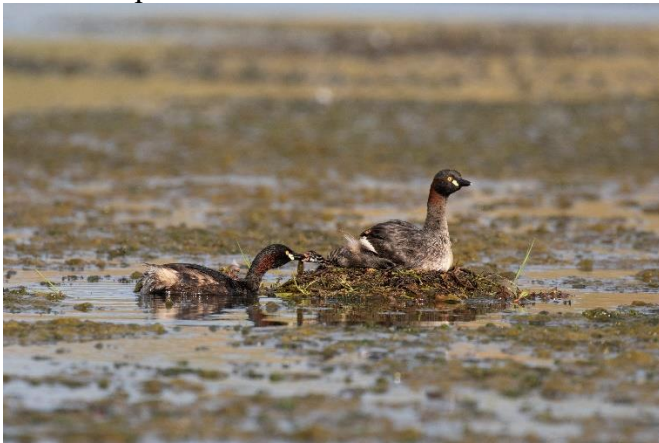




Here's the Australasian Little Grebe pair busily getting back to finishing off building their floating nest within minutes of laying their egg.

<https://www.facebook.com/scott.brooks.357622/videos/10157002619553423/>

And more photos from Heather O'Brian below from the same pond.



Little Grebe feeding chicks above



Pateke, Dabchick and Scaup above



New Zealand Dabchick

## Sightings Sheet

date	Bird	Place	Number	Name
8-Nov-19	Bittern	Awhitu Regional Park Wetland	1	Hilton Ward
8-Nov-16	Mātātā	Awhitu Regional Park Wetland	2	Hilton Ward
2-Nov-19	Dunnock	1	Western Hills Trig	Heather O'Brian



## Taurawhata Grey Faced Petrels

It was a lesser season for the Oi at Taurawhata this year. There was no predation. The season started with about nineteen active burrows but ended with much less as burrows were abandoned. Even after eggs were laid but pre hatching. There will have been more but we do know of four that have fledged and one not quite there yet. On a night visit I managed the following shots of an adult in a burrow.



## Australasian Gannet – Startup Colony

Well, The Gannets know about the decoys and sounds. Some think it is real. We wait. We have videos of a gannet offering weed to a decoy and another doing a bit of one sided bill fencing. After two seasons deployed and being beaten up by frustrated Gannet visitors we decided they needed a bit of a touch up. One had even had an eye knocked out.





## Cuckoos

There have been a few shining Cuckoo spotting. Hilton and Melva Ward managed this photo of a juvenile Cuckoo.



Dayna Davies also photographed a Grey Warbler pair feeding a Cuckoo chick in Pacific Bay Tutukaka

# November Ngunguru Shorebird Count Results.

This count has been entered into the New Zealand Bird Atlas under the six area headings

OSNZ REGION	Northland			Ngunguru			
YEAR	2019				Hilton Ward		
MONTH	November	Tide Height, Time, Weather					
CENSUS DATE	16-Nov-19	2.6m	10:30am				
	TIDE TIME >	11.02am at Marsden Pt					
	LOCAL SITES >	Sandspit - NW	Sandspit - NE	Ngunguru Shore	Papaka Rd	Te Maika Rd	Te Maika Spit
	SITE TOTALS >	20	62	30	43	8	18

## SPECIES v TOTALS

Banded Dotterel							
Bar-tailed Godwit	32		32				
Black Stilt/Hybrid							
Black-fronted Dotterel							
Black-tailed Godwit							
Curlew Sandpiper							
Far-eastern Curlew							
Grey-tailed Tattler							
Lesser Knot							
Marsh Sandpiper							
New Zealand Dotterel	10	5	5				
Pacific Golden Plover							
Pectoral Sandpiper							
Pied Oystercatcher							
Pied Stilt							
Red-necked Stint							
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper							
Spur-winged Plover							
Terek Sandpiper							
Turnstone							
Variable Oystercatcher	33	10	12	9			2
Whimbrel							
Wrybill							
<b>OTHERS</b>							
Eurasian Blackbird	8				8		
Black Shag							
South Black Backed Gull	11	1	10				



Black-billed Gull							
Caspian Tern	1		1				
Chaffinch							
Fairy Tern							
Gannet							
Goldfinch							
European Greenfinch	3						3
Grey Duck							
Grey Warbler							
Harrier Hawk							
Sacred Kingfisher	2				2		
Little Black Shag	1			1			
Little Pied Shag							
Little Tern							
Mallard	1			1			
Common Myna	4				2		2
Paradise Shelduck	2	2					
Pied Shag	4	1		3			
Australasian Pipit							
Pukeko							
Quail							
Red-billed Gull	16			8		8	
Reef Heron							
Ring neck Pheasant							
Royal Spoonbill							
Silvereye							
Shining Cuckoo							
Skylark	4	1	1				2
House Sparrow	16				10		6
European Starling	9				9		
Thrush	5				5		
Tui	7			2	5		
Welcome swallow	9		1	5			3
White-faced Heron							
White-fronted Tern	2				2		
Wood Pigeon							
Yellowhammer	1			1			

## Harry - The Kiwi



Harry was released at Tawapou on the Tutukaka Coast some time back and his transmitter needed replacing. Even with a transmitter he eluded all and time was running out on its battery. He was finally caught and in the nick of time. Here is Dayna Davies holding him and preparing to attach another transmitter.





## Scott Brooks

### Northland 24hr Record - 88 Bird Species

13 January at 14:01

Over the weekend me and my 10 year old son Zef completed a 24hr Whangarei District birding 'Big Day' to see if we could break the Northland region bird record. We tied it in with one of my summer late afternoon pelagic trips on Saturday and then carried on through a chunk of the next day.

We kicked off at 5pm way out the back of the Poor Knights Islands when a Pycrofts Petrel, a Gray-faced Petrel and a Flesh-footed Shearwater all showed up at once. We added a bunch of other seabirds after that (though a couple less than hoped for due to the super calm



conditions on the ocean) as well as a few land birds on the PK Islands. When we got back to shore in Tutukaka at approx 10.30 we added Morepork, as well as Little Blue Penguin which we heard calling from a nearby nesting area. By the time we got to bed at midnight for a quick sleep we were on 25 species.

We were back up at 4am to head into a local bush and wetland area in Ngunguru where we saw the butt of a NI Brown Kiwi scurry into undergrowth and heard another calling nearby, as well as hearing numerous Banded Rails, a Spotless Crake and several Fernbirds. As the sun rose we headed to the local shorebirds feeding area for the usuals including a lone Whimbrel. A quick visit to the local poo ponds gathered a bunch of waterfowl, bush birds and most of the common urban bird species.

After cleaning up in the Ngunguru area we were on 64 species – we then headed into Whangarei and a bit south to the Marsden Point/ Ruakaka areas to visit various species specific locations we had scoped out earlier. Then by early afternoon we arrived at the Waipu Wildlife refuge where we picked Fairy Tern, more shorebirds and a Reef Heron which graciously dropped in just as we arrived.

For the end of the day we took a big detour out to Whangarei Heads and after a blistering hot walk up the bream head track we thought we were going to miss our last 2 hoped for species. After half an hour looking we had all but given up when right on cue, 10 minutes before 5pm, a Whitehead flew in calling into the trees above, and a NI Robin dropped right down on the ground in front of our feet. An awesome way to finish an excellent 24 hour adventure.

We ended up with a new Northland Region record of 88 birds in total, all based within the Whangarei District itself. Me and Zef had done a lot of pre-planning for the day and explored a great range of locations over the last couple of months which has been a great way to learn what's around our local area. On the day we found nearly all the birds we'd expected to find apart from the ol Shining Cuckoo, with Zef finding over half of the birds species.

We had an awesome time and felt completely knackered, but very very satisfied with the result after the 24 hours were up. Thanks for being such a great birding buddy Zef  
Sightings Count Sheet  
PS – On January 9<sup>th</sup> Scott also spotted three Wimbrel at Ngunguru



Heather O'Brian was lucky to find this Kingfisher hole in a Puriri tree. She managed to get a bunch of great photos of the parents feeding the chick a variety of morsels including maggots, a skink, Weta, Huhu beetle, cicada, stick insect, spider





