



Birds New Zealand
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Otago Region Newsletter 3/2020 March 2020

Otago Birds NZ Response to Covid-19

I have decided to **cancel the March Indoor Meeting** in the light of the government's recommendations to minimize unnecessary social contacts. It is disappointing as we had some interesting topics and speakers lined up. However, I believe it is the prudent thing to do and for the benefit of the wider community. In a small community such as Dunedin it is quite easy to inadvertently come into contact with someone who has recently returned from overseas or their family members or friends.

At this stage, I think the Atlas Field trips can continue to be held as we won't be close in confined spaces. However, if you feel you are at risk, may have had contact with someone with Covid-19, or are unwell, please do not go on the field trips.

We do not know yet whether the Wild Dunedin Festival events will be cancelled; at this stage we still plan to hold the Tomahawk Birdwatching event on 18th April; if you can help please contact Andrew or me.

We will keep you informed via the next newsletter of other decisions regarding upcoming events.

Mary Thompson, Regional Representative

Ornithological Snippets

The most exciting report of the period was a probable **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, seen by Jane Forsyth on the Upper Bridle Track at Haast Pass on 20th February. There has been a veritable spate of **Marsh Crane** sightings recently, with five sightings by three different observers at Lake Hayes between mid-February and early March, while another was photographed at Tautuku Estuary boardwalk on 5th March. The latter is the first record I am aware of from the Catlins – unless anyone else knows differently.

The **Otago Shag** colony in Oamaru numbered around 2000 birds on 1st March, and a similar number of **Spotted Shags** were observed at Nugget Point on 6th March; rather more unexpected was a single bird of the latter species at Lake Hayes on 21st February, seen by Peter Reese. Maree Johnstone reports that twice this month she has seen a pair of **Pied Shags** in Shag Inlet, Burke's, Otago Harbour.

Finally, after travelling to Sutton Salt Lake on 1st March for excellent views of **NZ Pipits** (among other things), the compiler saw another one by the airfield in Balclutha the following morning; later in the week Suzanne Schofield saw three at the same location.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com **Richard Schofield**

eBird News

There are various resources available for help with Atlassing, & eBird in general. Everyone (hopefully) will be aware of birdatlas.co.nz, which contains all the basic hows and whys of the project. The associated [facebook page](#) has regular updates on progress, and stories associated with the Atlas. Another helpful site, which concerns eBird generally, and that I have fairly recently discovered, is the [eBird community discussion group](#), which is open to anyone to post questions and queries about using the system, and gets replies from general users, reviewers, and also eBird central. It's naturally US oriented, though it covers some interesting topics about using the platform. It also deals with the app quite frequently (a lot of which is over my head!) Of course, if you have specific queries about the Atlas scheme, you can contact the eBird team via the bird atlas site, or else you can get in touch with me, and I'll do my best to help.

The sharp-eyed among you may have noticed that the Atlas grid lines on the submission map now show for subsequent checklists, rather than just the initial one of a session. (You may even have noticed that they weren't there previously!)

All being well, we will have another Atlassing trip on **Saturday** 4th April, returning to the Taieri Mouth area. Please phone me (03 418 4415) if you're interested in coming.

Richard Schofield cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Otago Branch

Subscriptions for 2020

The annual membership subs were due on 1 Jan 2020. There are about 20 people who have forgotten to pay and some of these have been active members for years – it is easy to overlook during summer! Soon you will be removed from mailing list so please don't let this happen.

Town Belt Counts

If you have any counts from last Spring, please email them to brucejmckinlay@gmail.com

Atlas Weekend Field Trip, Makarora, 25 – 27 April 2020

This is a great chance to do some birding a bit further afield and I hope a good number of you will take up the challenge.

We have booked two chalets at the Wonderland Makarora Lodge for the ANZAC long weekend. These have single beds, kitchenette and bathroom, catering for 5-6 people each chalet. There is also space for camping and possibly cabins to book individually. Cost for accommodation works out at about \$100 for the weekend plus a contribution to food and travel.

The plan is to drive to Makarora on the Saturday, surveying several Atlas squares on the way, spend the Sunday surveying areas over to Haast, etc and back home on Monday via a different route covering more squares. There should be some good birding.

Please let Mary know if you are interested or would like to confirm a place now (numbers are limited). maryt@actrix.co.nz

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ)

Birds NZ Youth Camp

Birds New Zealand's "Youth Camps" are a fantastic opportunity for young people to get a hands-on experience and develop skills in bird ecology! Last year two of our young members attended the camp in Marlborough and had a great time. If you know of young folk interested in birds please pass this information on to them.

The next Youth Camp is planned for **19-25 April 2020 in the Napier area**.

Students aged 13-17 and keen to join the camp, should send their application in as soon as possible!

For more details contact Angie Denby: [angelden908@gmail](mailto:angelden908@gmail.com)

UPDATE

The organising group has sent out a letter this week to those who had expressed interest, indicating it may be postponed, due to Covid-19. However, if you are interested, contact Angie.

Birds NZ Conference and AGM, 30 May to 1 June, Christchurch

The annual meeting of Birds NZ is being held in Christchurch at the Commodore Hotel at Queen's Birthday Weekend. This is a great chance to get to a conference, as it is close. There will be two days of presentations on recent research and a variety of field trips, including atlas trips, bird banding, and a behind-the-scenes tour of the bird collection at the Canterbury Museum.



ADVISORY LETTER:

2020 NZ BIRD CONFERENCE - COVID-19 VIRUS PANDEMIC

Council is circulating this letter to all members of the Society and to presenters to provide advice in the event of possible postponement of the 2020 NZ Bird Conference in Christchurch because of the Covid-19 virus pandemic, and at the same time we wish to provide advice for refunding registration fees.

1. Refunds

If you are unable or do not wish to attend the conference, a full refund will be made for cancellations of individual registrations advised up to 1 May 2020. From 1 May 2020, no refunds will be made. In the event of cancellation and consequent re-selection of field trips, refund of the price difference will be made after the conference.

Council is continually monitoring advice from the Ministry of Health concerning the Covid-19 virus pandemic and will act in accordance with this. As at 13 March 2020, the Ministry of Health does not recommend altering arrangements for public events. However, the situation and the Ministry's response to it is changing all the time.

If a situation occurs where an official government recommendation is made to postpone, or cancel, public gatherings, the Society will postpone the Canterbury conference to a later date and will make full refunds of all registration fees that have been paid for the conference and field trips.

2. Disclaimer

In the event of other unforeseen circumstances (industrial or otherwise) that disrupt the conference, the organisers accept no responsibility. The information on the conference website and in the printed material is correct at the time of publication. However, the conference organisers reserve the right to change information if required and to adjust the conference programme accordingly.

In consultation with Regional Representatives, Council will consider when a future conference will be held in Christchurch if the NZ Bird Conference is not held this year because of the Covid-19 virus pandemic. At this stage no decision has been made on this point.

For more information please refer to the Ministry of Health website for "COVID-19 Advice for public events and mass gatherings." <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/> Information on this website is updated regularly.

Bruce McKinlay
President

14 March 2020
www.birdsnz.org.nz

Bird Atlassing March 1, 2020

Five birders: Mary Thompson, Rowena East, Ivan Lin, Wen Qing Ng and yours truly met at Bunnings' carpark at 9 am then drove to Outram to meet Richard. As we had three cars between 6 of us we split into pairs and continued on SH87.



We did counts on side roads off SH87, Mt Gowrie, Rocklands, and Young before meeting at the Sutton Salt Lake turnoff at 12.30pm. The predominant bird counted was the redpoll, large groups flying from the tussock grasses as we approached. As expected other finches and magpies were well represented.

Before reaching the salt lake we had lunch as we sat on some very comfortable flat rocks. It was sunny, warm and windless and somehow two white-faced herons looked quite out of place in these surrounds.



As we walked around the loop track, every so often we we'd see a pipit, (six in all) each commanding its own patch of rocks. These birds looked as though they belonged here.

Before heading homeward a few more counts were done around the Sutton area, mainly Marcus Road.

A most enjoyable day was had by all.
Certainly by me anyway.



NZ Pipit Wen Qing Ng

Maree Johnstone

Bird books added to Dunedin Public Libraries' collections in 2019



Behind the binoculars: interviews with acclaimed birdwatchers, by Mark Avery & Keith Betton

Birding without borders: an obsession, a quest, and the biggest year in the world, by Noah Strycker

BirdNote: chirps, quirks, and stories of 100 birds from the popular public radio show

Birds in the ancient world, by Jeremy Mynott

Birds in their habitats: journeys with a naturalist, by Ian Fraser

The brilliance of bird: a New Zealand birdventure, by Skye Wishart & Edin Whitehead

The complete guide to Australian birds, by George Adams
Curlew moon, by Mary Colwell

The eastern curlew: the extraordinary life of a migratory bird, by Harry Saddler

The everyday guide to British birds, by Charlie Elder

The 50 best birdwatching sites in New Zealand, by Liz Light

The handbook of bird families, by Jonathan Elphick

Homing: on pigeons, dwellings and why we return, by Jon Day

The kiwi: endangered New Zealand icon, by Matt Elliott

Owl sense, by Miriam Darlington

Parrots of the world, by Steve Brookes

Penguins in the wild: a visual essay, by Joe McDonald

The robin, by Stephen Moss

Saving Jemima: life and love with a hard-luck jay, by Julie Zickefoose

Seafarers: a journey among birds, by Stephen Rutt



A short philosophy of birds, by Philippe J. Dubois and Élise Rousseau

A sparrow's life's as sweet as ours: in praise of birds and seasons, by Carry Akroyd and John McEwen

A sweet, wild note: what we hear when the birds sing, by Richard Smyth

Swifts and swallows, by Mike Unwin

Twelve birds of Christmas, by Stephen Moss

Vulture: the private life of an unloved bird, by Katie Fallon

Waddle: a book of fun for penguin lovers, comp. Lloyd Spencer Davis

Warblers & woodpeckers: a father-son big year of birding, by Sneed B. Collard

Why do birds suddenly disappear? : 200 birds, 12 months, 1 lapsed birdwatcher, by Lev Parikian

The wonderful Mr. Willughby: the first true ornithologist, by Tim Birkhead



Alan Baker

Programme 2020

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

Wed 25 March Indoor Meeting. **CANCELLED**

Sat 4th April Atlas Field Trip. Taieri Mouth area. Phone Richard if interested 03 418 4415.

Saturday 18 April Tomahawk Lagoon Bird Watching, 10am to noon

This is our event for Wild Dunedin Festival; we plan to have telescopes to let the public see birds close-up and to help identify them, etc. Contact Andrew if you can help; phone 454 5830

Wed 22 April Indoor Meeting. Karthic will present "Birds through the lens" - Screening of two short-documentary films on conservation of endangered species - Yellow-eyed Penguins and Southern NZ Dotterels. This will be a special treat.

ANZAC weekend (25-27 April) Atlas Weekend Field Trip.

We will stay at Makarora on Sat and Sunday nights, surveying squares during travel there and back, as well as over to Haast, etc. Further information in Branch News or contact Mary for more details and to confirm a place on the trip.

Wed 27 May Indoor Meeting. Susan Walker from Landcare will present "Insights for native bird conservation from the Bird Atlas projects".

Offers and suggestions for talks or topics for Indoor Meetings would really be appreciated, please contact Mary maryt@actrix.co.nz

Please send all contributions for the April newsletter to:
Sue Odlin sodlin@gmail.com

Many thanks to all who contributed.
Final date for copy for next newsletter: **15 April**