

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)



OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

March 2020

<http://osnz.org.nz/> and <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>

Greetings

Dallas and I have recently spent 6 days on Mana Island as volunteers for DOC. This was a glorious period of practise self-isolation made even more enjoyable by not having newspapers, radio or TV to remind us of the virus. However, during that time the country was starting to shut down which was having major affects on Birds New Zealand activities. The Annual Birds New Zealand Conference and AGM and the Youth Camp were cancelled. Subsequently local activities have had to be cancelled including the Wellington monthly meetings and the planned Cook Strait pelagic trip scheduled for the 4th of April. Further restrictions will occur during the 4-week lock-down period such as the cancellation of the monthly Wellington harbour survey.

Geoff de Lisle

Upcoming Monthly Meetings WHERE and WHEN

Monthly meetings are cancelled until further notice.

Lost Gold - ornithology of the subantarctic Auckland Islands *Notornis* special issue, March 2020

We regret to advise members that distribution of this special issue to members has been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, we are pleased to inform you that pdf copies of the 19 papers/chapters in the special issue have been published on the [Notornis website](http://notornis.org.nz/). Please note that you will need to login (with your Birds New Zealand username and password) in order to view these papers. Colin Miskelly

Meetings Summaries

February 2020 – Member's Night

George Hobson, Birds New Zealand Youth Camps, 2019. In recent years Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) has made some major initiatives especially designed to support youth interest in birds. One of the initiatives has been holding Youth Camps. George summarised the activities of the two Youth Camps he attended in 2019. The Marlborough branch hosted the camp and provided a wide and varied programme, including visits to Bancroft Falcon Trust, a day trip to Blumine Island, Marfells beach, Lake Elterwater and the Wairau lagoon. These visits were complemented with evening talks. A second camp, a swampbird camp, was held on the lower Waikato River. The highlight of this camp was the trapping of a bittern. George was particularly grateful to the organisers of both camps.

Rodrigo Salvador introduced the meeting to the Journal of Geek Studies. Rodrigo is the Editor in Chief of this journal which is “a place for sharing knowledge and geekiness. The journal publishes original articles that manage to join these topics, creating a discussion on any scientific topic based on anything geeky”. Rodrigo gave an number of examples of papers published in the journal including “Bird Diversity in Heavy Metal Songs”

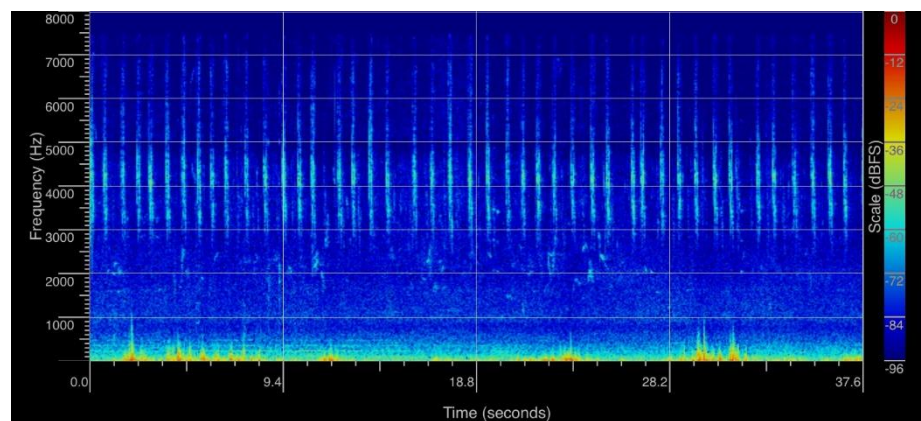
(<https://jgeekstudies.org/2019/09/01/bird-biodiversity-in-heavy-metal-songs/>). The study involved analysis of 145,716 songs from 6,359 bands, spanning 368 different metal (sub)genres. The most metal bird was the raven. I strongly recommend metal fans to read the article. Other articles of interest can be found on the Te Papa blog site – <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2019/08/22/how-james-bond-got-his-name-ornithologist-to-superspy/> <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2019/06/14/moa-vs-superman-poignant-extinction-lessons-via-a-1970s-comic/> <https://jgeekstudies.org/>

Owen Hughes, New Zealand’s first survey of bird of bird distribution ~ 1906. Owen described the survey of birds carried out by James Drummond with the biologist TW Kirk and the help of the Department of Agriculture. The survey was based on the replies to thousands of circulars sent throughout New Zealand. The questions in the circular related to “our bird’s present position”. The responses revealed that “all the birds had been accounted for except one. The missing bird is the native quail (*Coturnix novae-zealandiae*), which fell in thousands before the great grass fires that swept through the land as settlement advanced”. James Drummond had an overly optimistic view of the lack of adverse effects of human settlement in New Zealand.

Stuart Nicholson, Sonograms for Seniors – seeing what you can’t hear. With advancing years, the hearing of many of us is deteriorating, especially the higher frequencies. The classic example is the failure to hear the high frequency calls of rifleman. Stuart’s talk showed how sonograms can aid the identification of birds. In his talk Stuart showed sonograms of birds he had recorded. An example of one of Stuart’s sonograms (sparrow) is shown below. The recording app that Stuart uses is SpectrumView from Oxford Wave Research (<https://oxfordwaveresearch.com/products/spectrumviewapp/>).

The process Stuart uses is as follows;

- Record 38 s worth, close to bird, low background noise
- Write down time*
- Write down species seen and/or heard
- Write down location
- Go home and upload to PC
- Research species if unknown
- Complete file name per standard format (viz.)
- Store all in one folder
- Search using File Manager search



April 2020 – Kate McInnes, Tales of a wildlife vet. Kate graduated with a Batchelor of veterinary science from Brisbane University in 1992. After 5 years in large animal practice Kate developed an interest in New Zealand, its environment and fauna. Her initial roles were not as a veterinarian with DOC but as a volunteer and as a participant in programmes such as the kakapo conservation programme. Kate’s current role is as a veterinarian with the part-time help from a further vet in DOC. An important part of Kate’s work is to focus her efforts on the species with the highest conservation values. For example, she has been heavily involved with health issues of the kakapo. An outbreak of erysipelas, a bacterial disease resulted in the deaths of three juvenile kakapo among a group of 19 translocated birds. Subsequently kakapo are now routinely vaccinated against erysipelas. More recently Kate was heavily involved in the aspergillosis outbreak associated with the current record breeding season. Kate stressed the importance of the help she receives from multiple people and organisations including Massey University Wildbase, veterinary departments associated with zoos and the Ministry of Primary Industries.

Regional Representative: This position is currently vacant. osnzwelly@gmail.com

Regional Recorder: Peter Hodge peter.hodge@gmail.com

Birds New Zealand Regional Roundup: Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929

osnzwelly@gmail.com

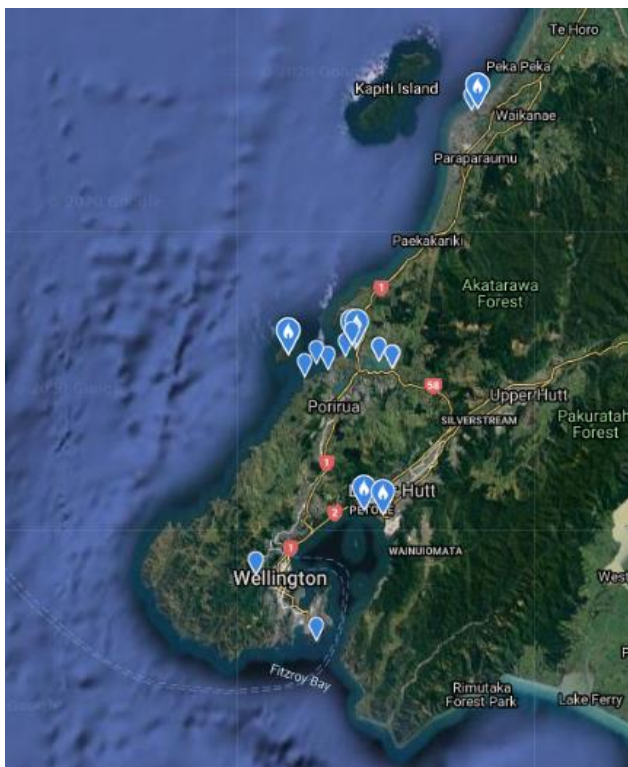
Wellington Harbour Survey Geoff de Lisle, Stuart Nicholson

Mist netting – Matu Both, manager@ngamanu.co.nz Nga Manu, Waikanae

Ross Pickard ross.pickard@hexagonsi.com Wellington Zoo

Shore Plover translocation – Mana Island 2020

Shore plover (*Tuturuatu*, *Thinornis novaeseelandiae*) is a small, stocky plover, the same size as a banded dotterel. Distinguishing features include “a distinctive black (male) or dark-brown (female) face mask that extends down to cover the neck and throat. A white strip circles the head above the eye.” Prior to the arrivals of Europeans, shore plover were recorded in the South Island as well as the Chatham Islands. They disappeared from the South Island by the 1870s which was soon after the arrival of cats and Norway rats. In the Chatham Islands they remain on Rangatira (South East Island) having disappeared from Chatham, Pitt and Mangere. Over the last 30 years extensive efforts have been made to establish new populations of shore plover to ensure survival of the species. A small population has been established on Mangere Island as well a captive rearing programme at the Pukaha National Wildlife Centre at Mount Bruce and the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust at Peacock Springs, Christchurch. The captive shore plovers can produce 20-40 juveniles which have been used since 1994 to establish new shore plover populations. Release sites include Motuora Island, Waikawa / Portland Island, Mana Island and Motutapu.



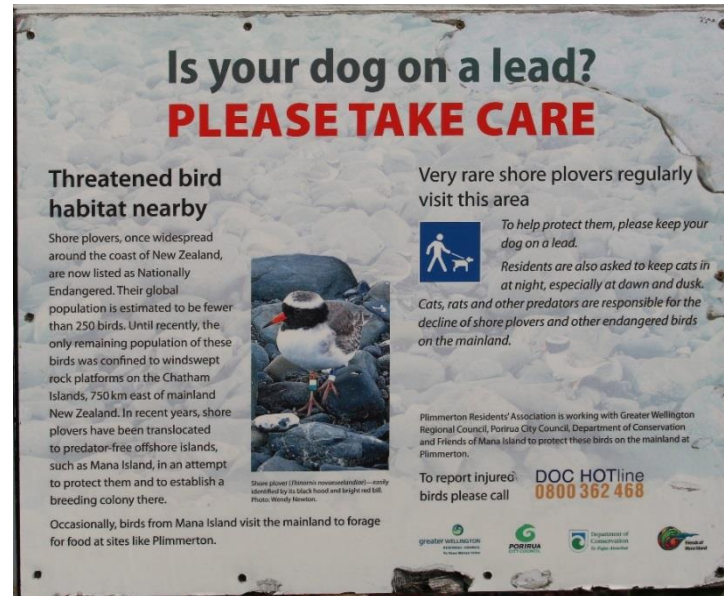
The first series of translocations to Mana Island included the release of 174 birds between 2007 and 2012. A breeding population was established with 10 breeding pairs recorded in the 2010/11 breeding season. In June 2011 major changes were noted in the shore plovers with the population of ~35 birds being observed on the shore at Plimmerton, opposite to Mana Island. Regular movements between Mana Island and the mainland occurred along with a decline in the population. The decline in the population was due to a single Norway rat. By the start of the 2011/12 breeding season the number of breeding pairs had reduced to 4. The offending rat was poisoned in December 2011 (Dowding & O'Connor, 2013). In 2014 DOC decided to remove the remaining birds on Mana Island.

The map (left) are the shore plover eBird observations from 2007 to 2014. The marker by “Wellington” represents a bird observed on the Otaki beach, Kapiti Coast..

The notice (right) was erected during the first transfers and is by the Plimmerton fire station, an area where the Mana Island birds were frequently observed.

In February this year a new, DOC funded and managed programme of translocation of shore plover to Mana Island was initiated with the transfer of 18 birds to the island. These birds were produced at the captive rearing facility at the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust, Peacock Springs, Christchurch. The trust is a privately owned, charitable trust which carries on the work established by Lady Diana Isaac since 1977.

On arrival at Mana Island in February the shore plovers were housed in an aviary (pictured) to acclimatise them to their new environment and to be fed prior to being released. Following the release many of the birds left the island. By March 23rd only two shore plover remained on Mana Island. These two birds spend time on the beach by the boatshed and also on the roof of the Lockwood (pictured, bottom left). Shore plover have been seen at Breaker Bay and the mouth of the Hutt River (pictured top left). Note, each shore plover is uniquely



colour banded. If you see banded birds please record your sightings and send them to Melody McLaughlin at DOC, mmclaughlin@doc.govt.nz

A further lot of 9 shore plover are currently in the aviary and will be released in April. The second lot of shore plover were reared at Pukaha National Wildlife Centre, Mount Bruce.



<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288316243> Reducing the risk of extinction of a globally threatened shorebird Translocations of the shore plover *Thinornis novaeseelandiae* 1990-2012

<http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/shore-plover>

Heather B; Robertson H; Onley D. (2015) The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand, Penguin Books.



East Harbour Banded dotterels – where do they go in winter?

The MIRO led study of banded dotterels on the beaches of Eastbourne and Lake Kohangapiripiri (Pencarrow Lakes) has just completed observations of a fourth breeding season. This project includes the banding and flagging of chicks and adults. The adults are captured while nesting and the chicks are caught before they fledge. All birds captured are marked with a metal band and the adults and larger chicks with a white flag (picture). The white flag has a unique identifier of 3 letters. Birds banded as adults generally return in future breeding seasons to the location where they were banded / flagged. At the end of the breeding season the banded dotterels leave the beaches of Eastbourne and Lake Kohangapiripiri. Where they go for the winter is still much of a mystery.



What we know so far.

- Many of the birds from Eastbourne and Lake Kohangapiripiri at the end of the breeding season first move to the beach in front of Lake Kohangatera, the other Pencarrow Lake. At Lake Kohangatera they form a loose flock of 50 plus birds which also includes birds that have nested in this area. This year we have again seen this pattern repeated. In previous years most, but not all of the flock at Lake Kohangatera leave the area for parts unknown.
- A small number of birds have been seen on Petone beach. This appears to be a temporary resting spot for them.
- One of the places banded dotterels go is the Pauatahanui inlet. On March the 13th 27 banded dotterels were observed on the mudflats of the Pauatahanui reserve and included two flagged birds. Both these birds were banded at the Eastbourne beach. During this breeding season one of the flagged birds attempted unsuccessfully to breed on the Eastbourne beach. The other bird has not been seen previously this breeding season.
- After the breeding season large numbers of banded dotterels have been recorded on Lake Wairarapa. On the 5th of March this year Paul Shortis, Dallas Bishop and I counted 153 birds on the mudflats at the outlet of the Oporua spillway, Lake Wairarapa. No flagged banded dotterels were seen. In previous years a flagged bird has been seen on Lake Wairarapa but it was too distant to read the unique label. In June 17th 2017, 294 banded dotterel were seen on Lake Wairarapa by Nikki McArthur and Darren Lees (eBird record).

Help wanted! When coronavirus prevalence reduces to a level to allow less restrictive birding keep an eye out for flagged banded dotterels, they may be anywhere. If possible, record the letters on the flags. If this is not possible, an observation of a flagged bird is still valuable information. Send observations to Geoff de Lisle osnzwelly@gmail.com Geoff de Lisle

Taupata – Black-backed gulls



Taupata (*Coprosma repens*) were extensively planted on Matiu / Somes Island during the re-forestation programme. On the 6th of March 2020 Dallas and I noticed black-backed gulls, especially immature birds feeding on the ripe berries. We also observed numerous

accumulations of seeds which we assume are the regurgitations of partially digested taupata seeds.



Photo Dallas Bishop

White-faced storm petrel – Mana Island

A second transfer of white-faced storm petrels to Mana Island occurred in February. In this transfer 99 chicks were transferred from Rangatira (South East Island), Chatham Islands to Mana Island. The chicks were fed until they fledged and left their burrows. The following Friends of Mana Island (FOMI) Facebook entries document their arrival and eventual departure.

February 19th FOMI facebook. The white faced storm petrel chicks have all had their first feed on Mana Island today after an 800 km trip. And they are resting in their individual burrows. They are super cute!

February 19th FOMI facebook. Today is the day! The white-faced storm petrel chicks are arriving this afternoon from the Chathams/Rekohu. They will be fed sardine smoothies by hand until they fledge, within the next 3 weeks. Our feeding team is on Mana Island, ready to care for these precious seabirds.

February 24th FOMI facebook. And they are taking flight! Five white faced storm petrel chicks fledged last night. They will be out at sea feeding. Go well little birds. We hope to see you back in a few years to breed on Mana

February 27th FOMI facebook Another 3 white faced storm petrels left Mana last night. Tonight 16 have their tunnels unblocked so



they can fledge. See video - When the skewers are pushed down it shows the bird has been out of the tunnel for a nosey around

February 28th FOMI facebook Good news update from our white faced storm petrel feeding team on Mana Island. 30 bird total have fledged. 12 last night.

February 29th FOMI facebook 40 of these beautiful white-faced storm petrels have now 'flown the coop'. Ten left Mana last night.

4th March FOMI facebook - The countdown is on. Just 30 birds still to fledge. It's going well with the white faced storm petrel feeding team. Lots of birds went last night on the breeze

7th March FOMI facebook – Just 9 WFSP left to fledge. Going great!

8th March FOMI facebook - Just two white faced storm petrels left to fledge. Tonight could be the night.

11th March FOMI facebook - Mission accomplished! All the white-faced storm petrels have fledged. Go well little birds! We hope to see you again in a few years time when you come back to breed. A big thank you to everyone involved. A wonderful team effort!



Pied Shag – fishing net entanglement

On the 12th of February an immature pied shag at the outlet of Lake Kohangatera was observed entangled with a fishing net. This bird was alert to such an extent that it avoided a number of attempts at capture. Dallas and I saw the bird again on the 20th of February and the bird was still alert. A disturbing number of pied shags become entangled in fishing gear, including fish hooks. One wonders in this case whether the bird was cut out of the nest without attempting to disentangle it. Geoff de Lisle

Variable oystercatcher plumage

The attached photograph of variable oystercatcher was taken in March on the beach at Lake Kohangatera (Pencarrow Lakes). The bird in the middle is a juvenile with grey legs and a darker tip to the bill. In contrast to its accompanied parents neither has pied plumage. The question arises as to the genetics of plumage in variable oystercatchers.

Allan Baker (1973) studied the inheritance of plumage colouration in variable oystercatchers by examining 57 broods and 108 chicks. He recognised a black (melanistic) phase, a pied phase and an intermediate phase with a wide range of plumage variability. The best genetic model for his observations was a major gene W which is modified in the heterozygous condition. In this model the pied condition is homozygous dominant (WW) and the all black (melanistic) phase is the homozygous recessive (ww). The intermediate plumage phase (Ww) are likely to be affected by other genes.



This model does not seem to fit the family of variable oystercatchers in the above picture. Neither of the adults appear to have any evidence of white plumage and seem to be black (melanistic) birds (ww) rather than extreme intermediate phase (Ww) birds. More recent studies, using molecular DNA methods on the genetics of variable oystercatchers appear to be focused on the taxonomy of *Haematopus* sp.

Reference Baker AJ (1973) Genetics of plumage variability in the variable oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*) Notornis 20:330-345. http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/system/files/Notornis_20_4.pdf

Bird Snippets

Albatrosses in Island Bay, Wellington

Michael Szabo » Thu Jan 09, 2020

At least 10 albatross followed a local fishing boat as it approached Island Bay in Wellington at 9am this morning. One Southern Royal Albatross and two White-capped Albatross followed the boat into the bay itself. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity

CMKMStephens » Sat Jan 25, 2020

I finally both saw, and photographed Long-tailed Cuckoo/koekoeā, up above Stokes Valley. It turns out that right now, there are heaps either side of the ridgeline between trigs B0N9 and B0NW. BirdingNZ.net

Spotless crakes – Pauatahanui Reserve

Dallas Bishop, Geoff de Lisle, 4th Feb, 2020

There were a number of reports (Imogen Warren, Raewyn Empson, David Cornick and others) in February of spotless crake being seen in the Pauatahanui reserve. Most of the sightings were near the Thorpe hide. .



Northern Giant Petrel + Arctic Skua, Wellington Harbour

Michael Szabo » Tue Jan 28, 2020 12:58 pm

I saw this Northern Giant Petrel wheeling around just a hundred metres from the ferry terminal yesterday from

Matiu/Somes Island ferry at about 11.30am. I haven't seen one that close to the city before:

[https://scontent.fpmr1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/ ... e=5E9017C1](https://scontent.fpmr1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/...e=5E9017C1)

Also notable was this Arctic Skua flying past near the tip of the Miramar Peninsula: [https://scontent.fpmr1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/ ... e=5E90E1F8](https://scontent.fpmr1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/...e=5E90E1F8) BirdingNZ.net

Cook Strait birds 1st Feb

berle » Sun Feb 02, 2020

On Saturday 1st Feb I led a morning trip out to the trench with Cook Strait Fishing Charters and a group of keen birders and photographers, many of whom hadn't done a pelagic trip before. I had been wanting to do another for a while so it was a great opportunity to show some others what's off our coast. It was fantastic to see everyone's reactions when the seabirds came in, particularly the first royal albatross. Some had never seen an albatross before so I enjoyed the opportunity to introduce them to a different side of birding in New Zealand.

Weather-wise we were very lucky, with the wind easing in the morning and kicking up again just when we began to head back. There was a decent southerly swell which unsettled a few stomachs but I think that's already been forgotten and people are keen to go out again. There were high numbers of seabirds, particularly albatross, during the trip which kept everyone excited.

George Hobson was our on-board seabird ID advisor, so he can correct me if I've missed anything below. During the trip we saw:

Antipodean albatross (1x; all brown with white face)
Northern and Southern royal albatross (around a dozen)
Northern giant petrel (1x)
White-capped albatross
Buller's albatross
Salvin's albatross (most common by far)
Flesh-footed shearwater
Buller's shearwater
Sooty shearwater
Cape petrel
Westland petrel
White-chinned petrel
WF storm petrel (~3), BirdingNZ.net

Dabchick – Brown Owl, Upper Hutt

Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle, 2nd & 9th of March

Two adults feeding a juvenile – pictured. Dabchicks have bred at the duck pond previously but were not present in June 2019. .



Dabchick – Te Papa

Tim Park & Hugh Robertson, 6th March, 2020, reported on eBird.

Three dabchick in the marina in front of Te Papa. Present from at least 8.59am to 2.09pm.

Possible white-throated needletail, Johnsonville, Wellington

Michael Szabo » Fri Mar 06, 2020

I have just heard of a sighting of a *possible* White-throated Needletail yesterday in Johnsonville: "Larger than a Welcome Swallow, agile flight. BirdingNZ.net

White-throated needletails, (spinetailed swift) are reported to be the fastest flying bird at 170km/hr in horizontal flight. They are a migratory bird which breeds in Central Asia. Most white-throated needletails occur in Australia between October and April, which is when most New Zealand records have occurred. NZBirdsOnline

<http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/white-throated-needletail>

The following are two recent reports of white-throated needletails in New Zealand.

White-throated needletail and tree martin, Farewell Spit Lighthouse

Michael Szabo » Sat Dec 14, 2019

Steve Wood reports seeing a White-throated Needletail and a Tr Martin flying around near the Farewell Spit Tours hut by t Farewell Spit lighthouse this morning during the annual FS wad survey. BirdingNZ.net. Unusual Bird Report submitted.

Steve Wood » Thu Feb 13, 2020

Between 15:15 - 16:00 hrs on my Lower Moutere property, I treated to a rather special sighting of 80+ (conservatively) but c

be as many as over 100+ birds, circling in a relatively tight spiral, approximately 150 meters high, heading in a SW direction.

It started off with at least 12 birds feeding over the garden trees tops (50m) and occasionally witnessing two birds chasing each other in tight formation. They hung around for 5+ minutes and whilst searching for them, to hopefully reappear, I noticed the large "swarm" of birds up higher.

I checked as many individuals as possible with a pair of borrowed Binoculars from the neighbour and were all of this species. BirdingNZ.net



Brown teal (pateke), Beach, Mana Island

Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle, 19th March, 2020
Brown teal feeding on the beach by the boathouse on Mana Island. Note, many of the ponds of the wetland are dry. Brown teal are often found on the ponds when they are full.

Falcon, Khandallah, Wellington

andyf » Sat Mar 14, 2020

Yesterday morning an NZ Falcon perched on a dead pine outside our window.

I could see a pale chin and moustache stripes with a speckled underneath.

We live above the junction of SH 1 and 2.

It sat there for a minute or two then flew off with a kek-kek-kek to the north

Fernbird - Updates

Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve. Fernbirds were released in April 2017 and 2018 in the reserve. The release site is denoted with a white star. Shortly after their release fernbirds were found throughout the reserve, including the area north of Gray's road. Breeding has occurred each spring since their release. Fernbirds are currently found throughout the reserve. On the 25th of February David Cornick observed a bird outside the reserve, between Ration Point and Motukaraka Point (Blue arrow). The picture displays the habitat where this bird was observed.

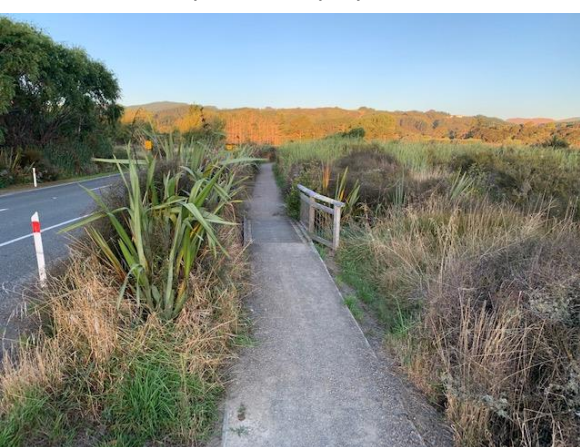
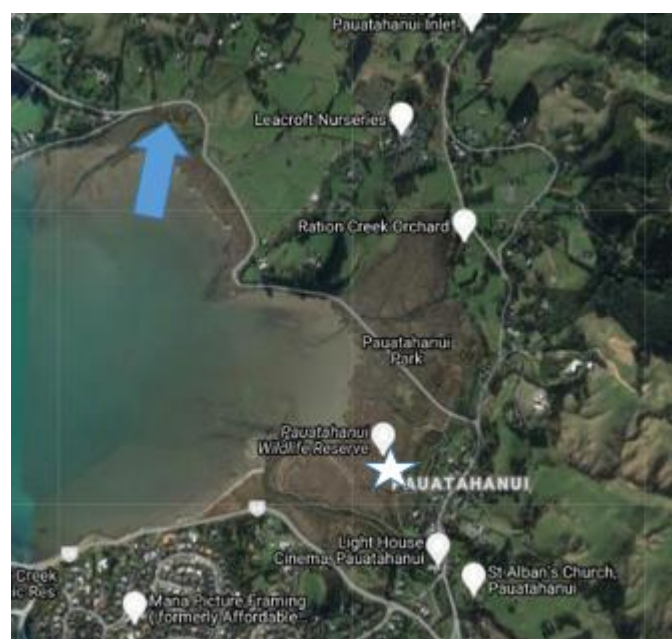


Photo – David Cornick.



Mana Island

In April 2019 40 fernbirds were released at the Waikoko wetland on Mana Island. These birds were colour banded with unique combinations so that individuals could be identified. Since their release 29 of the fernbirds have been seen. They have spread throughout the island. A number of unbanded birds have been seen which is evidence of successful breeding. The number of newly bred birds cannot be accurately identified, however

over a 5 day period in January 10 unbanded birds were recorded. These birds were found throughout the island and is almost certainly a conservative estimate. Subsequently unbanded birds have been seen in new locations which suggests either more newly bred birds or that the juvenile birds are moving about the island.

Takahe breeding success – Mana Island

2019/2020 has been a very successful year for takahe breeding on Mana Island. A total of 9 chicks have been reared with a couple of the breeding pairs raising twins. In recent years there has been steady increase in the number of takahe in New Zealand. The official count of takahe in October 2019 was 418, reached after a record breeding season with ~65 juveniles produced. Over a six-year period the number of breeding pairs of takahe rose from 66 in 2013 to 130 in 2019. In 2018 the release of birds in the Kahurangi National Park marked an initiative to establish a new wild population. In October 2019 the population of takahe in Kahurangi National Park was 31.

Picture, one of this season's chicks with dull coloured beak and legs compared to the red beak and legs of its parents.



<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2019/takahe-population-flying-high/>



New Zealand Bird
Atlas
@NZBirdAtlas

The Wellington Region which includes our Wairarapa colleagues continues to make great progress in the New Zealand Bird Atlas project. However, Atlasing will be severely curtailed during the period of the coronavirus lockdown. There is still the opportunity for local checklists but it is essential that Atlases comply with coronavirus regulations. Stay safe within your bubble.



Wellington Atlas statistics to 28th of March 2020

5409 completed checklists
Grids with data 100 out of a total 105 squares
Total species observed 123
Atlases 157
Square with most checklists – BZ66, Wellington South 1030 checklists
Square with the most species – BU68 Kapiti / Paraparaumu 78 species

Fiordland's Breaksea Sound: 30 years after the rats

By: [Colin Miskelly](#) , 7th Jan 2020

Breaksea Island/Te Au Moana in Fiordland is an iconic site for New Zealand conservation. It was one of the first large islands to be cleared of rats, when a team led by Rowley Taylor and Bruce Thomas (of Landcare Research) eradicated Norway rats in 1988. This ambitious project followed the successful eradication of rats on much smaller (9 hectares) nearby Hawea Island in 1986.

But how has the wildlife on these islands responded to more than 30 years without rats? Vertebrates Curator Colin Miskelly reports on a recent field trip to find out

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2020/01/07/fiordlands-breaksea-sound-30-years-after-the-rats/>

Note, bird observations from this field trip have been entered into eBird Atlas scheme. Checklists with bellbird observations.

