

# **THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INC.**

## **ANNUAL REPORT ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR 2019**

It is my privilege to present this report on behalf of the Council to the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Birds New Zealand). Unfortunately the Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand which was to be held at Christchurch on 1 June 2020 had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 81<sup>st</sup> AGM of OSNZ will be held on 6 June 2021, and this will be the first of two annual reports (for 2019 and 2020) to be presented to members at the 81<sup>st</sup> AGM.

It has been an exciting year to be President of the Society. We have been focused on supporting the implementation of the NZ Bird Atlas Project, continuing to advance our Society strategy, continuing with development of Phase II of the Society's website, and dealing with the impact of COVID-19. This has included particular emphasis on development of systems to minimise risks to the health and safety of members during field work.

### **Deceased Members**

During the period of this report I have only been notified of the deaths of the following members. If members are aware of others, they should be brought to my attention.

Mike Graham  
Tony Simpson  
Russell Bruce St Paul

### **Council meetings**

During the Year Council met twice. Once in conjunction with the Conference and AGM at Wellington, and again in November in Christchurch. When we were in Wellington, Council and the Regional Representatives had a very successful meeting together, which focused on the imminent launch of the NZ Bird Atlas project.

### **Elections of Officers**

The Council terms of Mel Galbraith and Keith Woodley expired this year. Nominations were called for and both Keith and Mel were the only names received so they have been reappointed to Council for a further three years. I am pleased to have Mel and Keith on Council for a further term. Additionally, Lynne Anderson was nominated for the role of Secretary for the Society and was subsequently elected. Lynne is already bringing her experiences of other committee work to bear on how we operate as Council.

### **2019 Conference highlights**

It has been a year since we all came together in Wellington to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of Birds New Zealand. As President it was a real privilege to be present with the Society, fellows and you the members to recognise how far we have come as a Society over the last 80 years, and the massive contribution that we and our

predecessors have made to our understanding of the birds of New Zealand. It was also important to be able to sign a MOU with Young Birders NZ so as to bed-in the future members of the Society. It was timely also to be able to recognise the contribution that Andrew Crossland has made to the study of birds with the presentation of a Robert Falla Memorial Award, and the awarding Meritorious Service Awards on behalf of the Society to Chris Petyt, Derek Batcheler, Helen Taylor, Reg Cotter, and Jan Walker. Finally, we had a strong field for Notornis Student Award, New Author awards, and Student Talk, with awards to Johannes Fischer, Sarah Busbridge, and Clio Reid respectively.

## **Partners**

We continue to have strong partnerships with the George Mason Trust, T-Gear Charitable Trust and Goodness Kitchen. Each of these partnerships allows the Society to expand effort and to support research and society activities. The Partnership with the George Mason Trust allows for the David Medway Memorial Scholarship to be funded. The 2020 applicants were a strong field, and the Scientific Committee was impressed with the depth and quality of the applicants. The Society has also maintained a good working relationship with Pivotal Printing. In addition to producing our Journals and quarterly magazine *Birds New Zealand*, Pivotal Printing has taken over the mailing out of New Member packs and welcome letters.

## **Publications**

*Notornis* editor Craig Symes reports that submissions for the journal remain strong and that the role of Editor is running smoothly, with a sound working relationship established with Pivotal Print, Wellington. A major focus for 2019 was preparatory work for two special issues of *Notornis* to be published in 2020. This included a book-sized special issue (*Lost Gold: ornithology of the subantarctic Auckland Islands*) that was sent to printers in China in mid-December. This special issue will be discussed more fully in the 2020 annual report. However, I wish to acknowledge the hard work of editors Colin Miskelly and Craig Symes, and the team at Te Papa Press to produce this landmark publication and deliver it to the printers on time.

*Notornis* continues to be published on time; this is a significant priority for Council as it is necessary to ensure that the journal appeals to academic researchers. Recently, Clarivate have updated their Journal Impact factors for Science publishing and *Notornis* has received an Impact Factor of 0.463. This is a slight improvement over last year and indicates that *Notornis* is tracking in the right direction. At the same time *Notornis* needs you, the members, to support your journal by submitting reports and short notes to make it a success.

I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support of Jim Briskie who continues to maintain the on-line availability of *Notornis* papers.

Michael Szabo has continued to improve the quarterly *Birds New Zealand* magazine. Commercial advertising from nature tourism operators has continued. Michael has also continued to maintain our relationship with Solomon Tourism. Once travel resumes

post-COVID, we can expect further stories of the wonderful birds of the Solomon Islands.

### **Social Media**

The Birds New Zealand Facebook page continues to grow and now has over 6,000 followers. Our posts on this page regularly reach 20,000 or more people. In his Regional Representatives report Ian McLean notes the impact of Facebook on encouraging people in Auckland to join the Society. He notes that this is likely to be a result of increased communications, and increased advocacy of events. Ian has gone a further step with the Birds Auckland Facebook page which is growing a membership now in excess of 2500 people. Society activities are posted here, to increased exposure. Although the page is dominated by postings of pictures, there is increasing discussion regarding identification and behaviour questions.

The BirdsNZ twitter handle is @OSNZBirdsNZ. This is managed by Natalie Forsdick on behalf of Council and Natalie reports that we have over 2,000 followers on our Twitter account now. She and others have recently been busy sharing news following the paths of godwits that have migrated from NZ, tracked by the Global Flyway Network, the recent kakī population increase, and a clip from a film on Southern New Zealand dotterels.

### **Membership system**

After the resignation of Jill West last year, Council was pleased to be able to make a temporary appointment of Roger Sharp to the role, with a focus of working through the development of a new membership database. I am very pleased to be able to announce to members that Imogen Warren of Foxton Beach has been appointed to the position of membership secretary for the Society, to commence in July 2020. This is a very important role and I'm grateful that we have an enthusiastic Society member able to commit the time to support us in this role. Additionally, I wish to acknowledge the work by Roger Sharp, Ian Armitage and Ingrid Hutzler who have led the redevelopment of the Society's membership database, and its linkages to the Society's website. This work has been a big project to update our systems and to give us a modern system in which membership data is protected and where renewals are made easy for members.

Over the last year we have added a new "Honorary" membership category with no fee and full membership rights for the partners or spouses of deceased "Life" or "Fellow" members. Credit card payments facilities have been appreciated by members who have renewed their membership online.

### **Student Awards offered by Birds New Zealand**

As part of our ongoing strategy to make the Society relevant and appealing to early career researchers, Council has continued to refine its thinking about various ways to achieve this. Although we were unable to present student talk and poster awards at the cancelled 2020 Conference, we will do this next year. A new initiative which was intended to be announced at the 2020 Conference was a new "Fledgling Fund" that is intended to be built from member donations, to provide cash grants to encourage student members to actively participate in NZ Bird Conferences and the Australasian

Ornithological Conferences. Council wishes to also build a fund to enable grants to cover student registrations at these Conferences.

### **Scheme Reports**

A full set of reports from scheme convenors and editors has been received and some of these have been posted on the Society's website. I am grateful that our scheme convenors have taken the time to report on activities.

### **New Zealand Bird Atlas progress**

Mike Bell of Wildlife Management International Ltd reports that with the Atlas project now nearing the end of its first year, there has been great progress. Five hundred and eighty nine participants have contributed some 37,000 checklists, recording 237 species. At the end of the summer season 67% of all the squares in New Zealand had some data submitted. The resources on the Bird Atlas website particularly the Atlas effort map are giving in real time the information people need to be able to spread out and to cover squares which need surveying. The setting up of the Atlas project was a result of support from our partner Goodness Kitchen as well as a successful application to the Department of Conservation Community Conservation fund.

### **Birds New Zealand Research Fund**

This fund continues to be supported by the T-Gear Charitable Trust. Twelve projects were funded in the 2019 round; overviews of these projects are available here <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/birds-nz-research-fund/>. The 2020 funding round has been advertised in spite of uncertainty of the impact of COVID-19.

As you can see from the list of funded projects in 2019 and previous years, this funding has enabled the Society to support a significant amount of bird related research in New Zealand. We remain grateful for this partnership with T-Gear.

### **Banding Activity**

The Society's Banding permit is leading to projects delivering banding training and achievement of ornithological study objectives. John Stewart reports that projects in Otago and Wellington are up and running. A further project is being initiated in Whangarei. High quality banding projects are essential to the study of birds and so I would encourage all of you who are contemplating a banding project to discuss with your Regional Representative how to get it underway and to submit an application. John also reports that DOC is preparing a new edition of the NZ Banders' Manual.

### **Wader Report**

The Society coordinated and completed a winter wader count in mid-2019 and then a further count in February 2020. This special New Zealand-wide Bar-tailed Godwit count was part of an international effort to estimate more accurately the population of the *baueri* subspecies. Our work here complemented those efforts by researchers in Alaska who undertook an aerial survey of all godwits on the Alaskan coast prior to their trans-Pacific migration last year. The objective is to get an accurate number of the *baueri* godwits whilst they are in eastern Australia and New Zealand and prior to them

migrating north again. For both the normal winter and summer census Adrian Riegen reports that coverage is good but with some notable gaps that we need to address.

### **Records Appraisal Committee**

The committee continues to receive, process and report decisions on Unusual Bird Reports (UBR). Colin Miskelly reports that a total of 95 UBRs was received in 2019, and these were assessed between March 2019 and February 2020. Seventy-one (75%) of the 2019 UBRs were accepted by the committee. Two new species (collared petrel and rose-crowned fruit-dove) were added to the New Zealand list as a result of this work.

The Unusual Bird Reports (<http://rare.birds.org.nz/>) database was launched in 2016. All submissions and decisions dating back to the 1960s are searchable. The database includes hyperlinks to publications referring to individual UBRs, and to New Zealand Birds Online species pages. A paper reporting on the 221 RAC decisions from 2017-18 was published in the September 2019 issue of *Notornis*.

### **Beach Patrol Scheme**

Lloyd Esler reports that 2019 produced no significant wrecks and no particularly unusual species. He does, however, report a significant number of beach patrols and kilometres covered. Development work on a digital Beach Patrol database continues, primarily checking the integrity of individual records.

### **Nest Recording Scheme**

Roger Sharp reports that the nest recording scheme is still only lightly used. Similarly to Lloyd's comments, the number of submitted cards has decreased over recent years and in the case of the nest record scheme this is now a serious problem as we can no longer provide continuous records to show trends in bird nesting.

### **Scientific Committee**

SciComm has continued its industrious work with a focus on assessing applications for the Birds New Zealand Research Fund, and the David Medway Memorial Scholarship. Graeme Taylor (convenor) reports that the applications received were of a high quality and it was difficult to rank them. David Melville retired from this committee and I would like to acknowledge his contribution and the experience that he has shared during his tenure on the Society's Scientific Committee.

### **Birds New Zealand Library**

The library continues to regularly respond to requests for books and journal articles from Society members. The round-robin journal post-out is proceeding smoothly and member subscriptions remain static. Annual subscription costs have been maintained at \$5 per annum per journal. Additionally, the Library maintains hard-copy subscriptions from reciprocal societies. Also, the Librarian has password access to a number of e-journals. These can be shared with members on request and payment of a koha.

The library continues to be offered old avian and natural history books, largely from deceased members' collections. These are evaluated, and suitable volumes are added to the library collection.

The Auckland Museum continues to provide storage for the collection and library activities, and this makes the work of our librarian easier.

### **Financial matters**

Accompanying this report is a set of accounts for the 2019 year. They show on going pressure on the reserves of the Society as we increase the range and quality of services to members. Council was intending to bring a Notice of Motion to the AGM to address this ongoing pressure. The cancellation of the AGM has delayed this discussion. In the meantime we have received feedback on this Notice of Motion and Council will continue to debate the best way forward and to manage our ongoing costs.

### **Resignations**

In the last year Alan Tennyson and Gillian Vaughan have resigned as convenors of the Checklist Committee and the Moults scheme respectively. I acknowledge the contribution to the Society of both Alan and Gillian and wish them both well in the future.

### **Future Conferences**

Organising of the 2021 New Zealand Bird conference in Thames is underway and then in 2022 the society will be meeting in Christchurch.

### **Regional Representatives**

Regional Representatives continue to be the face of the Society throughout New Zealand. They have continued to deliver a wide range of activities and projects to promote the Society and engage with members. Their Annual reports provide a fascinating record of the depth of activities undertaken by members. At the same time however a number of Regional Representatives have indicated their intentions to stand down after long tenures. It is essential that all regions have an effective RR. Members are encouraged to do whatever they can to support their Regional Representative, and to consider if and when they would be ready and willing to take on this important role. Council recognises that the Society would not work without the ongoing work of the Regional Representatives, and so on behalf of Council; a big thank you to you all.

I also acknowledge the ongoing support and work of the Society's Council. They have all helped me in discharging the management and oversight of the Society's for our members over the years. In particular, Ian Armitage as Vice president has worked extremely hard on background research for the Society.

I also wish to acknowledge the ongoing hard work of the Society's Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler. Without Ingrid's hard work the Society would not be efficiently managed.

Bruce McKinlay

President

June 2020

(2018 3200 word seven pages)