



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

July 2020 Amokura 128

(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 October 2020

JULY

- 9** 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)

AUGUST

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

SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

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

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE	Anne McCracken	438-1145
SECRETARY	Heather O'Brian	437-0085
TREASURER	Bev Chitty	
REGIONAL RECORDER	Tony Beauchamp	436-2224
REGIONAL REPORTER	Vacant	
AMOKURA EDITOR	Hilton Ward	946-0074

Previous Issues of Amokura - <http://www.osnz.org.nz/regnews.htm>

Health and Safety – It is a request from the Birds New Zealand Council that:

- Any incidents that result in harm need to be notified to President and EO immediately, so they can be acted on.
- Don't hesitate to call 111 in incidents, even if they appear minor.
- Safety briefings need to be held on all field trips.

MARCH

We had our AGM at the March meeting. The only major change is that the position of Treasure was taken up by Bev Chitty after Kevin Hayes stood down. Thank you Kevin for your excellent contribution in that position over the past years.

The AGM section was followed by an outstanding slide show by Heather O'Brian of the water fowl at our favourite lake in Lake Drive, Tikipunga. It was very interesting to see the changes over the summer from nest building to fledging by the various birds.

APRIL – No meeting as a result of Covid19 Level 4

MAY – No meeting as a result of Covid19 Level 4

JUNE – Covid19 lockdown is over and we had our first meeting since March.

It was wonderful to get back together and hear all the lockdown birding stories. Life was very different for all in the quiet of no traffic for birds and humans. As I write this on June 21st with the return of the old norm it is like lockdown never happened.

12-03-2020: RR Report to Northland Branch AGM

The Northland Branch of OSNZ/Birds New Zealand continue to be held 7.30pm on the second Thursday monthly at the Alzheimers Society rooms, Tikipunga, Whangarei.

In 2019 we have maintained an average of 12 people attending meetings.

Topics and activities at our meetings included: Heather and Anne's photo shows of Queensland's Gold Coast Birds and Cape York Birds; two meetings about the NZ Bird Atlas project; John Ballinger's presentation of the Hen Harrier Project in Ireland, Dai Morgan's analysis of the Whangarei Urban Bird Survey, and his launch of Tiakina Whangarei pest control project; a 'combined' meeting with Bream Head Conservation Trust to hear Chris Gaskin's presentation on the status of Northland's seabirds, and a visit to observe and count species on the newly formed Lake Drive pond.

Members have been involved with various local projects: two stalls during conservation Week to promote the NZ Bird Atlas Project at Whangarei Farmers' Market with Dai's Tiakina Whangarei Launch and at Kiwi North's Trappers Workshop.

It has been encouraging to see the NZ Bird Atlas Effort Map colouring up Northland squares showing where our birders have been active recording bird species in this first year of the project. There is a plan to start systematically focusing on completing squares and recording in the squares not yet started.

We continue to be involved with the Bream Head Conservation Trust 5MBCounts, and the biannual Harbour surveys of shorebirds and the quarterly Ngunguru Shorebird counts, as well as participating in an extra Bar-tailed Godwit census early February 2020. Our thanks to Hilton, Tony and Janet for their commitment in organising teams for these important surveys.

We were saddened by Karen Miller's death after a long battle with cancer, and we miss her cheerful presence and knowledgeable input at our meetings. We also remember Logan Forest who for many years has arranged the Pouto Lakes surveys.

After many years our West and East Coast beach Patrols can no longer be sustained. We thank Janet and Prue's commitment to this project over many years.

We congratulate Hilton Ward for his editing of Amokura where we learn about other projects and observations individuals have been involved in. Hilton is always happy to receive any contributions of birding interest to fill our newsletter pages.

Lastly my thanks as RR to Heather for all her assistance and support as our Branch Secretary, and to Kevin for his expertise as our Treasurer.

News item from the Birds New Zealand Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler:

Here is a link to the latest News item: www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/national-policy-statement-for-indigenous-biodiversity

Note – the submission is also available on www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/ (under “Governance” and “Conservation Policy”).

Stories - Adventures – Yarns – Sightings

Covid19 LOCKDOWN – For so many bird lovers this lockdown for Covid19 was a lovely quiet time where birds reintroduced themselves to us.

Here is a copy of a lovely, lively email from Anne McCracken that she sent to friends during the early stages of the Covid19 lockdown.

“How’s it going in your bubble? Sadly the new Covid19 regs don’t allow me to visit your wetland at this time, but thankfully I do have a lot of birdlife around my place. I have a wee piwakawaka that often appears and scolds me when I go to my compost bin. There’s usually about 3 or 4 flying around, as well as many silvereyes, tui, kukupa doing a fly-over and, annoyingly, lots of spotted doves that have taken over my bird bath along with the sparrows. I have up to 10 mallards in ‘my’ ponds and it’s been amazing how they’ve so quickly gobbled up almost all the duck weed which had totally covered the ponds. There’s the occasional grey warbler singing or a kingfisher calling – often it seems before rain- and many blackbirds skulking under the shrubs or scratching out the bark onto the driveway. I love hearing pukeko calling at night so long as they don’t attack my plants. Haven’t heard any ruru calling lately though. There’s often a harrier cruising above the bush-line up on the hill. Yesterday a silvereye stunned itself outside my window and once it became more alert, I was intrigued to see it slowly do a full head rotation and then right up to the sky and down to the ground – it seemed to be checking that its head and neck were still functioning normally before resting awhile. I was glad when about 20 minutes later it flew away very strongly.”

Then later: “Just now as I was emptying my coffee dregs on my plants there’s a group of noisy 4 or 5 rosellas chattering and squabbling in my totara. Makes a change from the raucous mynas squawking on my neighbour’s roof.”

And another email from Anne:

ANZAC day: On my midday walk somewhere down by the stream a pukeko party is happening and they don’t want it to stop. Or somebody is being murdered. Passing by my totara the soft ‘whoo’ of a kukupa and down below on the pond the mallards are softly chugging about. Even to my semi-impaired hearing the birds seem quite vocal right now. I can hear a rosella’s call in the distance. Tui calls and silvereyes all around me. A goldfinch tinkling by alights on a lamp-post. Earlier I heard a greenfinch from the washing line. Up through the bush track a blackbird is alarming, and nearby the pink-pink of a chaffinch. And always, everywhere, the background soundscape of the ubiquitous spotted dove. Chup raho!

April 4th on a walk in Tongatu Lane on the Ngunguru Estuary Hilton and Melva spotted these Royal Spoonbills.



Wendy Ambury also saw the Royal Spoonbills on April 7th on the South side of Ngunguru Estuary with the comment *“Seven Royal Spoonbill have come back to Ngunguru River Estuary. Love these goofy birds!”*



On May 20th Scott Brooks also noted the following:

Just saw 7 Bar-tailed Godwits feeding at Pāpākā Mudflats which must be over-wintering here in Ngunguru. I've seen them the last 3 days and also during Level 3 when I went on the odd excursion from the house. This is the first time I've seen any over-wintering in Ngunguru before. I know they do it in many other locations in NZ but I've never seen here. Hilton have you or anyone else ever seen this before in Ngunguru? Also saw my first Ngunguru Bellbird this morning as well.

Hilton's comment: No not recorded in Ngunguru at this time as far as we know.



On March 12th Scott Brooks reported that the 3 Whimbrel are back in Ngunguru again!:) We've had the single local Whimbrel here throughout summer so great it's mates have turned back up (the other 2 were here briefly in January). Now it'll have some company for the long migration back to Asia in a couple of weeks.

White Fronted Terns

07-02-2020 Judi Gilbert spotted about 60 white-fronted terns, adults & juveniles, since end of January now frequent Te Maika spit. A little later in the month on the 15th 317 White Fronted Terns were seen on the Eastern distal end of Ngunguru Sandspit during the February shorebird census.

17th February 2020. Scott Brooks Had an epic pelagic day with John Kyngdon on his awesome boat out deep off the Tutukaka coast. Along for the journey was also Les Feasey, Jan and Annetta. A good 7-10 knot wind throughout the day, and the 23°C sea temperature, all aided in providing great viewing of a variety of stunning seabirds.



The highlights of the trip were:

- 1 White-naped Petrel (which visited 3 times and provided amazing views as it circled close the boat)
- 1 Wedge-tailed Shearwater (which came in close for great views)
- 4 Black-winged Petrels (which also came in close for great views)
- 1 Wilson's Storm Petrel

During the trip we saw 24 different seabird species - nearly 4,000 seabirds in total! Thanks John for a great, fun day out.

Here's the full trip results:

- 1 x Wandering Albatross
- 1 x Fairy Prion
- 15 x Cook's Petrel
- 1 x Pycroft's Petrel (at least)
- 65 x Black Petrel
- 4 x BLACK-WINGED PETREL
- 1 x WHITE-NAPED PETREL
- 2500+ Buller's Shearwater
- 45 x Fluttering Shearwater
- 22 x Flesh-footed Shearwater
- 1 x WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER
- 2 x Short-tailed Shearwater
- 7 x Little Shearwater
- 18 x NZ Storm Petrel
- 11 x White-faced Storm Petrel
- 1 x WILSON'S STORM PETREL
- 2 x Common Diving Petrel
- 1 x Little Blue Penguin
- 600 x Gannet
- 37 x Grey Noddy
- 600 x Red-billed Gull
- 2 x Black-backed Gull
- 54 x Pied Shag
- 1 x White-fronted Tern

Other marine life included:

1 x Sunfish

1 x big Blue Shark that spent a while checking everything out

1 x Fur Seal



White-naped petrel above



Black winged petrel above



Wandering Albatross and Blue Shark

Taurawhata Grey Faced Petrels

The monitored petrels have left the burrows for a month or two after mating. When they return it will be to lay the egg. Update as of 28th June. One pair have returned. The burrow seems to be 100% occupied so hopefully the egg has been laid.

Australasian Gannet – Startup Colony

It seem that the Gannets responded to lockdown also and decided not to visit. Soon young birds will be looking for a site for the future. We have our fingers crossed.

Bird Watching – By Janet Snell

A very nervous, shy White Faced Heron has been visiting our front lawn each day for the past few weeks since mid-March. It has also been great seeing a big group of up to 28 Californian Quail visiting the same area since early summer. They have decided to visit greener pastures so we haven't seen them for a while.

Sometimes the Heron flies in, lands on the perimeter fence, scans the area then flies down to the lawn or the paved parking area in front of the house and sedately walks along the pathway right next to the house on his way back to the lawn. He looks very superior as he struts past the full length of the windows with his head held high and beak facing the sky. I think he can sense us when we are sitting at the end of the dining room table close to the windows. We sit very still and watch him selecting food from the lawn. Sometimes his visits are short and sometimes they are long. He is very aware of our presence and if we move about he keeps his eye on us as he carefully and deliberately selects each juicy morsel. It is great to be able to observe him so close. With his keen, sharp eyes and long slightly down turned beak he is so well equipped for picking up insects or maybe, a tiny brown skink lying in the sun and unaware of the danger lurking near. His blue-grey plumage looked very sleek and clean and the overlay cape of feathers around his shoulders were quite visible but we didn't see him raise them out of aggression or courtship.

During the Covid19 lockdown he has been an almost daily visitor. We assume it is the same bird. Sadly we haven't seen him since mid may but we are keeping a watch in case he decides to visit again.

Sightings Sheet

date	Bird	Place	Number	Name
11-Feb-20	Australasian Harrier - Juveniles	12 Old Mill Ln, Ngunguru	2	Melva Ward
12-Feb-20	Female Tomtit	12 Old Mill Ln, Ngunguru	1	Melva & Hilton Ward
8-Feb-20	South Island Pied Oystercatcher	Whakapirau Waterfront	500+	Janet Snell & Anne McCracken
10-Mar-20	Female Tomtit	12 Old Mill Ln, Ngunguru	1	Melva& Hilton Ward
3-Jun-20	Dunnock	12 Old Mill Ln, Ngunguru	1	Melva& Hilton Ward
8-Mar-20	Godwit	East end of Haven Pl. Ngunguru	25	Janet Snell & Anne McCracken
11-Jun-20	Dunnock	12 Old Mill Ln, Ngunguru	1	Melva& Hilton Ward
11-Jun-20	South Island Pied OysterCatcher	McLeods Bay	120	Bec Chitty
5-Sep-20	Reef Heron	Waterfront opposite the Ngunguru Store	1	Janet Snell and Donna
6-Jun-20	South Island Pied OysterCatcher	Whakapirau waterfront	380	Janet Snell
5-Jun-20	White Faced Heron	1 Haven Pl. Backyard	1	Janet Snell

February Ngunguru Shorebird Count Results.

OSNZ REGION	Northland			Ngunguru		
YEAR	2020			Hilton Ward		
MONTH	November	Tide Height,	Time,	Weather		
CENSUS DATE	15-Feb-20	2.8m	1:00 PM			
	TIDE TIME >	13:24pm at Marsden Pt				
	LOCAL SITES >	Sandspit - NW	Sandspit - NE	Ngunguru Shore	Papaka Rd	Te Maika Spit
						Tongatu Road
	SITE TOTALS >	61	435	82	14	47
						44
SPECIES v TOTALS						
Banded Dotterel	17	17				
Bar-tailed Godwit	33		33			
New Zealand Dotterel	29	23	3		3	
Pied Stilt	12					12
Spur-winged Plover	8	2		4		2
Variable Oystercatcher	94	11	45		3	5
Whimbrel	1		1			30
OTHERS						
Australasian Harrier	1		1			
Australasian Pipit	2	2				
Black Shag	1			1		
Caspian Tern	1		1			
Common Myna	1			1		
Eurasian Blackbird	2			2		
European Greenfinch	12	2	8	2		
Gannet	3		3			
House Sparrow	14		1	8	2	3
Little Pied Shag	2			2		
New Zealand Fantail	1			1		
Pied Shag	4	3		1		
Sacred Kingfisher	1			1		
Silver Gull (Red Bill Gull)	98	1	11	43	9	34
Silveryeye	4			4		
South Black Backed Gull	15		9	5		1
Welcome swallow	9		2	6		1
White-faced Heron	1			1		
White-fronted Tern	317		317			
	683					

New Zealand Dotterels, Banded Dotterels & Variable Oystercatchers



Bar Tailed Godwits & White Fronted Terns



Bar Tailed Godwits, White Fronted Terns

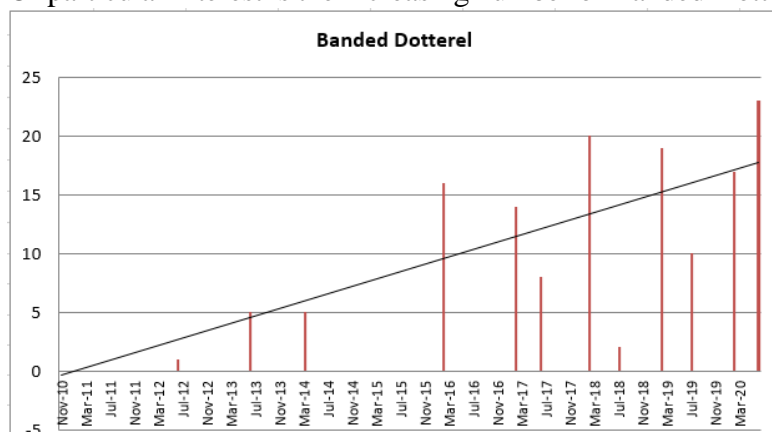


Bar Tailed Godwits & breaking waves



June Ngunguru Shorebird Count Results.

Of particular interest is the increasing number of Banded Dotterels recorded since 2010



OSNZ REGION	Northland			Ngunguru		
YEAR	2020			Hilton Ward		
MONTH	November	Tide Height, Time, Weather				
CENSUS DATE	13-Jun-20	2.3m				
	TIDE TIME >	13:19 Marsden Point				
	LOCAL SITES >	Sandspit - NW	Sandspit - NE	Ngunguru Shore	Papaka Rd	Te Maika Spit
	SITE TOTALS >	65	80	113	26	25
SPECIES v TOTALS						
Banded Dotterel	23	13	10			
New Zealand Dotterel	33	26	7			
Spur-winged Plover	8	5		3		
Variable Oystercatcher	73	14	52	6		1
Australasian Harrier	1			1		
Caspian Tern	2		2			
Chaffinch	4			4		
Common Myna	2				2	
Eurasian Blackbird	3			3		
European Greenfinch	1			1		
European Goldfinch	1	1				
Grey Warbler	1			1		
House Sparrow	60			30	15	15
Little Black Shag	1			1		
Little Pied Shag	1			1		
Mallard	6			6		
New Zealand Fantail	4			2	2	
Pied Shag	4	1	2	1		
Royal Spoonbill	7				7	
Sacred Kingfisher	3			3		
Silver Gull	36			29		7
Silveryeye	8			8		
Skylark	1	1				
Song Thrush	1					1
South Black Backed Gull	17	4	7	6		
Tui	7			7		
White-faced Heron	1					1