



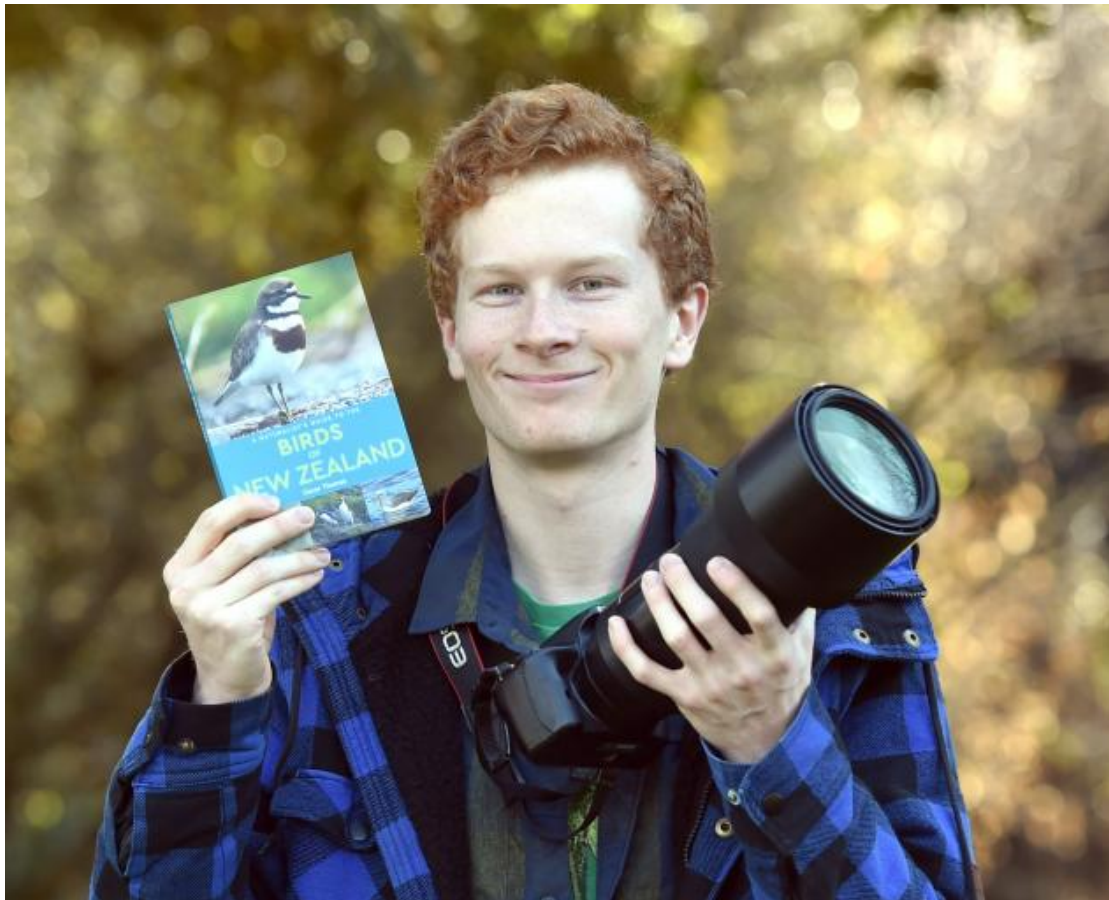
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## *Otago Region Newsletter 10 /2020 October 2020*

### **A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of New Zealand. Oscar Thomas**



University of Otago bachelor of science student Oscar Thomas with his first book A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of New Zealand. PHOTO: PETER MCINTOSH (ODT)

Huge congratulations to Oscar on the publication of his bird book. It is a great achievement to have photographed most of NZ's birds and being commissioned to put together this new guide. It should be available in bookshops or online, the University Book Shop has ordered copies.

This photographic identification guide to 238 bird species in New Zealand, including the most commonly seen, unique and endemic species, is perfect for resident and visitor alike. High-quality photographs from one of New Zealand's youngest nature photographers are accompanied by detailed species descriptions, which include nomenclature, size, distribution, habits and habitat. The user-friendly introduction covers climate, vegetation, biogeography and the key sites for viewing the listed species. Also included is an all-important checklist of all of the birds of New Zealand encompassing, for each species, its common and scientific name, and IUCN status.

More information at [www.oscarthomas.nz](http://www.oscarthomas.nz)

## Bird-snapping leads to field guide

Lying in a cold wet bog; freezing on the side of a mountain; holding his stomach while rolling on rough seas in a fishing boat — Oscar Thomas would do just about anything to get the perfect picture.

Now, the 20-year-old bird photographer has just landed his first international publishing deal with a London publisher.

Mr Thomas said his Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of New Zealand was a photographic identification guide to 238 bird species in New Zealand, which included the most commonly seen, unique and endemic species.

The University of Otago first-year bachelor of science student is one of New Zealand's youngest nature photographers, and has provided the high quality photographs which are accompanied by detailed species descriptions, nomenclature, size, distribution, habits, habitat and the key sites for viewing the listed species. ...

Part of an article that appeared in the ODT Monday, 31 August 2020

## Ornithological Snippets

**Large numbers of NZ Pigeon have been feeding in the elms on** Great King St N across from the lower Botanic Gardens. Petrina Duncan saw 69 on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep, while Abby Smith counted 63 the following day. The first **Shining Cuckoos** were reported on 26<sup>th</sup> Sep (just before the snow!), with birds at Waitati (Derek Onley & Oscar Thomas), and Kaikorai Valley (Maureen Howard). The next arrivals were in the second week of October, with most reports from the Dunedin area, but also one in the Catlins on 13<sup>th</sup>.

The August newsletter mentioned a pair of **Spur-winged Plover** possibly nesting in Fryatt Street. Alan Baker reports that they were indeed nesting and produced 2 chicks. Now a pair of

**Pied Oystercatcher** has followed suit. On 26<sup>th</sup> Sep they had 2 small chicks. The plover family was still there and a **Skylark** sang - a little piece of countryside in Dunedin's harbourside industrial area.

Nick Beckwith photographed 2 **Knot** at Warrington Beach on 20<sup>th</sup> Sep, with 3 there on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Slightly out of place was a **Bar-tailed Godwit** at Aquinas College on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep. Oscar Thomas noted that it was struggling in strong winds, & looped around the building. More expectedly, 380 were seen at Cabbage Point 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. Not quite Otago, but the compiler found 2 **Black-fronted Dotterel** in the space of 30 minutes, about 6km apart, on the Maitara River NW of Gore on 14<sup>th</sup> October – are we overlooking them here?

A possible **Crested Tern** was at the Catlins River Estuary on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct, but it could not be relocated. On 30<sup>th</sup> Sep at Taiaroa Head, Oscar Thomas counted 3000 **Sooty Shearwater** and 12 **Northern Giant Petrel**.

Maureen **Howard** watched a **NZ Falcon** taking a sparrow at Chisholm Park Golf Links on 19 Sep. Pete McClelland found a **Little Black Shag** at Andersons Lagoon on 20<sup>th</sup> Sep

During an early morning count in Balclutha on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct, the figures were nearly boosted by a **Starling**, which mimicked Yellowhammer, Pukeko and SIPO in the space of a couple of minutes; what was probably the same bird did a passable impersonation of a Grey Warbler the following morning

Please send any interesting reports to [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)

**Richard Schofield**

## eBird News

Now that I have been using the app for a few months, I finally feel in a position to make some observations on its use.

Although it is good at doing everything for you, there are times when it is prudent to override it. One is when measuring distance; the distance entered should only be the unique distance covered during the checklist. For example, if you do an out & back walk along the same route, then only the one-way distance should be recorded, even though the app will show the total distance. This can be amended by clicking the distance button before you submit, and manually keying in the unique distance. Do not stop the tracking while you're still travelling. For further information, see <https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48000950859-guide-to-ebird-protocols#anchorTraveling>

Zero counts are not recommended in eBird; it can safely be assumed that if no figure is entered that no birds of that species were recorded. Some observers put "0" to stress that an expected species was not detected, but I presume (from personal experience!) that most cases occur when a count is mistakenly entered for the wrong species. If this happens, using the backspace button will remove the count, rather than changing a count to a zero.

**Global Big Day October 17<sup>th</sup>** This was a rather low-key event this year, while we are concentrating on Atlas fieldwork, and many of us looking forward to the Labour weekend trip to Wanaka. For the record, 11 observers contributed 40 checklists (37 complete) with a total of 41 species. The highlight was probably a number of Shining Cuckoos found by Oscar Thomas around the Ross Creek area.

**Richard Schofield** [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)



## Otago Branch News

### Bird Counting Blitz in Town Belt

Sunday 1 November, meet at 9.00 am in Moana Pool Carpark.

The aim is to count at as many of the sites as we can and if some teams start from different sections of the Town Belt we can probably count each station at least twice. This is also a very good chance to practise 5 minute bird counting skills and bird identification by sound with those more experienced. We had a good response to the last Town Belt Count day from members of the public although the weather did not cooperate, so hopefully we will have some more eager new counters. Mary was out counting with a new recruit last Thursday and encountered other new counters in the Town Belt too.

### The Wanaka Atlas Team



BACK ROW: Richard Schofield Ivan Lin George Pickerell Bruce MacKinlay Maree Johnstone  
Rowena East FRONT ROW: Mary Thompson Sue Odlin Brian Luby Petrina Duncan  
MISSING: Dawn Palmer (Wanaka) Martine Darreau

## 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.

**At the meeting shared cups will be available to use but you are welcome, and perhaps encouraged, to bring your own mug for tea or coffee.**

**All planned events can proceed under Covid Level 1**

**Wed 28 October**                      **Susan Walker** from Landcare  
Insights for native bird conservation from the Bird Atlas projects

**Sun 1 November**                      **Town Belt Bird Counting Blitz**  
Meet at the Moana Pool carpark at 9 am. Contact Mary or Bruce for more info.

**Wed 25 November**                      **Indoor Meeting. "Birds through the lens"**  
Karthic will speak about filming wildlife and show his short-documentary films on conservation of endangered species - Yellow-eyed Penguins and Southern NZ Dotterels.  
*This will be followed by a celebratory end-of-year supper. Please bring along some festive food to share.*

**Sunday 29 November**                      **Summer Wader Count.** High tide at 16.09 of 1.9m.  
We need counters for harbours and estuaries around Dunedin area and Catlins. New counters most welcome. Please contact Maree Johnstone to be allocated to a team and survey area.  
[mareej@kinect.co.nz](mailto:mareej@kinect.co.nz)

Offers and suggestions for talks or topics for Indoor Meetings would really be appreciated, please contact Mary [birds.otago@birds.nz.org.nz](mailto:birds.otago@birds.nz.org.nz)

Please send all contributions for the October newsletter to: Sue Odlin  
[sodlin@gmail.com](mailto:sodlin@gmail.com)

***Many thanks to all who contributed.***

Final date for copy for next newsletter: **18 November**