



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

## **February 2021 Amokura 130**

(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 July 2021**

#### **FEBRUARY**

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

#### **MARCH**

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

#### **APRIL**

- 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)

#### **MAY**

- 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)

#### **JUNE**

- 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)

#### **REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**

#### **SECRETARY**

#### **TREASURER**

#### **REGIONAL RECORDER**

#### **REGIONAL REPORTER**

#### **AMOKURA EDITOR**

**Ilse Corkery**

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**Heather O'Brian**

**(09) 437-0085**

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**022 635 3193**

**Tony Beauchamp**

**(09) 436-2224**

**Vacant**

**Hilton Ward**

**(09) 946-0074**

**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.

## **FEBRUARY:**

Congratulations Ilse - And for those who have not seen the announcement in the Dec 2020 Birds NZ magazine, Ilse Corkery has stepped up to be Regional Representative for Northland from January 2021.

Originally from Ireland, Ilse has had years of birding experience in New Zealand and has much to bring to the RR role.

## **OCTOBER**

At our monthly meeting Ilse Corkery gave an interesting presentation about the Kokako recovery project. She spoke of the group management in relation to the restoration, translocations and where the 2000 odd pairs of Kokako are located today.

## **NOVEMBER**

Mal Galbraith enlightened us all with his presentation about the Black Back Gull.

Spoilt for Choice – foods of the black-backed gull (*Larus dominicanus*) in urban Auckland.

We learnt how the gulls changed their foraging habits over the years and became reliant on city dump sites for food instead of foraging at sea and the shore line and how the breeding sites and bird numbers are affected in relationship to these changing habits.

### **Abstract:**

Gulls are generally both marine and terrestrial feeders, and, consequently, their populations are likely to reflect changes in environmental quality at relatively small timescales compared to pelagic, migratory seabirds. The southern black-backed gull (*Larus dominicanus*) is an ideal species to investigate the long-term impacts of environmental changes in northern New Zealand as the species is a resident coastal seabird, a generalist marine and terrestrial feeder, and common in the Auckland region. In Auckland, the species showed steady population growth through the early 20th century as the city established and grew, followed by a decrease and stabilisation since the 1970s due to improved urban waste management. This pattern of population change is consistent with that of other gull species globally. We used stable isotope ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ,  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ ) analysis of feathers and sub-fossil bones to investigate long-term human impacts on black-backed gull diet. Feathers from within the Auckland region were sourced from specimens held in the Auckland Museum, collected between 1914 and 2012, and from a local breeding colony collected in 2017. Isotope analysis of sub-fossil bones gave information of the trophic status of the gulls prior to European colonisation. Time series values of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  and  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  from sub-fossil to modern bones indicate the diet of the black-backed gull has become progressively more enriched with carbon and nitrogen from terrestrial (anthropogenic) sources over time. The consequences of the species occupying a “far from natural niche” will be discussed.

## **DECEMBER**

What more can we say than thank you Anne McCracken for the wonderful setting for our Christmas get together. Your home and surrounds were perfect. With everyone having brought a plate of food to share there was a lovely meal as well.

## **Stories - Adventures – Yarns – Sightings**

### **Rattys Landing**

For 12 years I have been getting to know our neighbours. Some stay while others stop by for a while then move to another neighborhood. Well, that is how it appears.

In the early days Kukupa only ever flew over our part of the valley. For some reason two or three years back a pair attempted to build a nest up in our bush. Never saw anything further so perhaps it was not appropriate after all to build at Rattys landing. However, we now have regular sightings of Kukupa in our trees and bombing over the valley and close human neighbours properties. Maybe they did nest close by this year.

In the distance we heard Miromiro (Tomtit) and had a brief sighting of a male in the reserve on our boundary. 2013 Christmas day a male came to visit and sat in the Kanuka just off our deck. The occasional visit to my vegetable garden area, and the bird bath down in that area, but not what I would call resident. Now we probably have them visit two or three times a year. Well, what we see, but I do hear their calls close by more often than in the past. Very exciting to have them getting closer.

Dunnock has chosen to live permanently here and it would seem, had chicks here this year. Although not a native it is nice to have their cheery calls about the place such a pity they got the name "hedge sparrow".

They are nothing like a sparrow and have way more charm than those little bludgers.

Tauhou (Silvereye) stayed this last winter. There must have been enough bush food and then they got cast off oranges. Naturally they would stay around an extra source of food. In the early days we put containers of fat out in the winter and it did not get touched. This year it was devoured in hours. We are careful about feeding the birds as it is a pitiful sight, seeing them looking for food when we don't have any to put out so I try to make it a bit irregular. I don't know if that is a good idea. I feel so mean when I see them on the post looking for food.

Tui are not shy about shoving the little dudes out. They really have to be on their toes. Don't mind the vandal black birds getting a beat up but not the Tauhou.

The finches are enjoying the area and over the years the greenfinch has become a regular. Chaffinch has always been here and in the last two years goldfinch have arrived. There is lots of seed heads of puha for them. It is getting difficult to keep the grass down because there is so much to save for the birds.

The new slip at the eastern end of the house is providing a source of food for kingfisher family. We have not been quick enough with the monocular to see what they are getting, probably a skink of some sort that thinks it is a great warm spot in the afternoon sun. Not sure if Kingfisher will ever get the opportunity to build a nest in the bank as Tui live in the trees to one side and don't really like close neighbours.

The wetland has so many Mātātā (fernbirds) that they are regular visitors to my garden area. It's a bit of a privilege to be gardening with Mātātā.

We only ever see spotless crane and banded rail on the trail camera. We are ok with that :-)

Of course there are Piwakawaka, my little buddie birds, but they are a story all on their own.

Melva Ward

## **Taurawhata Grey Faced Petrels**

The camera monitored burrows both had chicks fledged during on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. During late November of the 30 known burrows there were 16 that were active. There were no predators causing concern so we expect that all 16 fledged. A record for Taurawhata since recording began in 2017. We look forward to some years in the future when these and others we have seen fledge mature and start returning to breed. That is somewhere between 4 and 10 years. We are on track.

The East burrow chick departed on December 21st at 8:51pm. It had 41 feed visits from parent birds over the 121 days since hatching. It fledged 26 days after first catching it on camera at the burrow entrance.

The West burrow chick departed on December 22nd at 4:26am. But as the monitoring started well after the egg hatched and only 73 days before fledging there is no useful data. The first monitored burrow was abandoned so the camera was move to this burrow #9.

The longest time between meals for the East burrow chick was 8 days and burrow #9 was 9 days. In the past we did record 17 days between meals and the chick still fledged. All this was seen on camera.

## **Australasian Gannet – Taurawhata Startup Colony**

2020 was our most interesting year at the startup colony. One male chose to make it home over the pairing up and mating period and only finally departed after November 22<sup>nd</sup>. It had scraped a hollow for a nest. On numerous occasions it was caught on a Trail camera offering seaweed to decoys and on a couple of occasions



attempted to mate with a decoy. Hopefully this bird finds a real mate next season and returns to Taurawhata.

Check out these videos on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/61ZHs19gtlc>

<https://youtu.be/TKhS958AX24>



## KIWI

Walk on the beach and what do I see on our Tutukaka Coast. Kiwi footprints. (Hilton)

## Old Mill Ln:

After the breeding season we seem to have more Mātātā than ever in our wetland. There have been many visitors to the boardwalk and also an increasing number of very large lenses on cameras as the wetland becomes better known. Nice to see. We have also been opening up a new track in the wetland along the drain. We were donated timber by some kind local folk and have built more boardwalk. The new track and boardwalk is called the Moiweka Track. This is the area where we see the Moiweka (Banded Rail) on Trail camera.









## The Petrel Station 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

Had another great day out at the 'Petrel Station' on the 23rd January 2021 on the latest Tutukaka Pelagic Seabird trip. Conditions were fine, with a small swell and light 5-10 knot winds throughout the day.

The highlights of the trip were:

- 26 Grey Ternlets
- 21 NZ Storm Petrels
- An Arctic Skua catching and flying off with a smaller seabird (likely a Fluttering Shearwater)
- A close-by Bryde's Whale

During the trip we saw 17 different seabird species, and over 9,000 seabirds in total. An awesome day out.

Cheers

Scott Brooks

Tutukaka 'Petrel Station' Pelagics organiser

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Here's the full trip results:

1 x White-capped Mollymawk  
8000+ x Buller's Shearwater  
30 x Cook's Petrel  
1 x Pycroft's Petrel (to be confirmed)  
50 x Black Petrel  
25 x Flesh-footed Shearwater  
100 x Fluttering Shearwater  
2 x Sooty Shearwater  
21 x New Zealand Storm-Petrel  
11 x White-faced Storm-Petrel  
4 x Common Diving-Petrel  
600 x Australasian Gannet  
1 x Arctic Skua  
26 x Grey Ternlet  
1 x White-fronted Tern  
250 x Silver Gull (Red-billed)  
15 x South Black Backed Gull 70 x Pied Shag  
Other marine life included:  
1 x Bryde's Whale

New Zealand and White  
Faced Storm Petrels



## The Petrel Station 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Had another great day out at the 'Petrel Station' yesterday (12th December) on the latest Tutukaka Pelagic Seabird trip. Conditions were great with steady 10-15 knot winds throughout the day.

The highlights of the trip were:

- 25+ NZ Storm Petrels
- 10 Grey Ternlets
- A massive 3+ metre shark

During the trip we saw 21 different seabird species, and over 8,000 seabirds in total. An awesome day out.

Cheers

Scott Brooks

Tutukaka 'Petrel Station' Pelagics organiser

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Here's the full trip results:

1,000+ x Fairy Prion  
100 x Cook's Petrel  
5 x Pycroft's Petrel (at least)  
60 x Black Petrel  
10 x Grey-faced Petrel  
6,000+ x Buller's Shearwater  
80 x Fluttering Shearwater  
15 x Flesh-footed Shearwater  
1 x Sooty Shearwater  
8 x Short-tailed Shearwater  
1 x Little Shearwater  
25 x New Zealand Storm  
Petrel  
19 x White-faced Storm Petrel  
50 x Common Diving Petrel  
1 x Little Blue Penguin  
10 x Grey Ternlet  
600+ Australasian Gannet  
300x Red-billed Gulls  
5 x Black-backed Gulls  
1 x Caspian Tern  
75 x Pied Shag  
Other marine life included:  
1 x Massive Shark

Grey Ternlet





## Heather O'Brian

I had a lovely time last weekend watching this male Tomtit collecting all manner of insects to feed a young fledging. I didn't manage to actually photograph the juv. being fed, just missed it each time. More practice required!! Amazed at how many different spiders were caught. Also managed to capture a few star shots.



Male Tomtit (North Island)





Juvenile Tomtit (North Island)



Male Tomtit and juvenile (North Island)





Male Tomtit (North Island) with spider



Black Shag in the Old Mill Lane wetland, Ngunguru. An occasional visitor to this wetland stream.  
Photo by Hilton.



## Sightings Sheet

date	Bird	Place	Number	Name
9-Jul-20	Kaka	71 Tatton Rd Maungatapere		Tery Toohill
13-Aug-20	Dunnocks. every day during July, August	12 Old Mill Lane	2	Melva Ward
28-Sep-20	Dunnocks singing territorial call	1 Old Mill Lane	1	Hilton Ward
26-Sep-20	Grey Warbler	12 Old Mill Lane	3 pairs	Hilton Ward
23-Sep-20	Mātātā (Fernbirds)	12 Old Mill Lane wetland	5	Hilton Ward
25-Sep-20	Shining Cuckoo (Courting calls)	12 Old Mill Lane	2	Hilton Ward

## Ngunguru Shorebird Count

Ruddy Turnstone over on the Ngunguru Sandspit this morning. First I've ever seen in Ngunguru, and looking through your excel it looks like they haven't been on any counts before. Scott Brooks.

This bird was not seen when we did the count.

The next Ngunguru Shorebird count is on February 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am



Photo by Scott Brooks

OSNZ REGION	Northland			Ngunguru		
YEAR	2020			Hilton Ward		
MONTH	November	Tide Height,	Time,	Weather		
CENSUS DATE	21-Nov-20	2.3m				
	TIDE TIME >	13:17 Marsden Point				
LOCAL SITES >		Sandspit - NW	Sandspit - NE	Ngunguru Shore	Papaka Rd	Te Maika Spit
						Tongatu Road
SITE TOTALS >		24	80	51	0	24
SPECIES v TOTALS						
Australasian Gannet	1		1			
Bar-tailed Godwit	30		30			
Caspian Tern	3		3			
Chaffinch	1			1		
Common Myna	2			2		
Eurasian Blackbird	5			5		
European Goldfinch	1	1				
European Greenfinch	2		2			
European Starling	4			4		
House Sparrow	10			10		
Little Penguin	1		1			
Mallard	1			1		
New Zealand Dotterel	11	4	7			
New Zealand Fantail	0					
Pied Shag	1			1		
Ruddy Turnstone	1		1			
Sacred Kingfisher	2		2			
Silver Gull	30		1	15		14
Silvereye	1			1		
Skylark	4	1	3			
Song Thrush	1			1		
South Black Backed Gull	4		3	1		
Spur-winged Plover	1			1		
Tui	4			4		
Ruddy Turnstone	1		1			
Variable Oystercatcher	42	14	18			10
Welcome swallow	14	4	6	4		
Whimbrel	1		1			