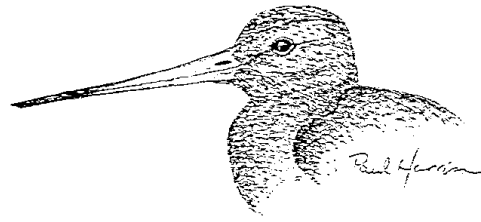


# KUAKA

Newsletter of  
South Auckland Branch  
Birds New Zealand  
Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

April 2021

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Tena koutou whanau, a little late again but here is your April newsletter (your editor has been on holiday). Trust you are all enjoying the rain we are having and that it isn't interrupting your birding too much.

**MONTHLY MEETING:** If you were unable to join us at the Papakura Croquet Clubrooms last week, here is a synopsis of what you missed

- ✚ Most of the godwits have now departed, although Phil mentioned seeing about 800 at Mangere recently. Birds remaining in NZ seem to be a mix of juveniles, 2-year-olds and adults. Tony mentioned that some of the juveniles banded in 2019 have been seen leaving.
- ✚ We now have 179 registrations for the National Conference in June.
- ✚ Wendy and Sue have made contact with Andrew from Predator Free Franklin. He showed us a range of hi-tech traps and some interesting heat-camera footage of prowling cats. Andrew will be able to arrange access to private lakes, bush reserves and the like for bird counts and atlasing. In return we will arrange some sessions (including beach patrol) with students from the Whiriwhiri school.

## SIGHTINGS included:

### A reef heron at Kawakawa Bay

There was some discussion as to whether there are fewer birds around now. The atlas shows that in our region, they have previously been sighted along the coast from Kawakawa Bay to Maraetai, at the top of Awhitu peninsula and around Ambury and Puketutu Island

Birds New Zealand: South Auckland Branch  
22 March at 12:12 · Facebook for Android · 📷

At Kawakawa Bay yesterday afternoon. Seen by Wendy, Sue, and Mike. Photo by Sue



- ✚ A long-tailed cuckoo being chased by tui in Seagrove Rd, Waiau Pa
- ✚ 20 dabchicks at Ambury
- ✚ 18 kereru at Mauku
- ✚ Young Cook's Petrel are crashing after being attracted to lights around Auckland
- ✚ A falcon in the Hunua Ranges
- ✚ 10-12 kokako seen and kaka heard around Lilburn Rd in the Hunua Ranges. About 100 pairs of kokako are now present in the Hunua Ranges area
- ✚ There has been a report of a big increase in tomtit numbers south of the Waikato River

## SPEAKER

James Roberts gave an interesting talk on the work that he and Hannah Clement did studying fairy terns over the summer. With a total NZ population of just under 40 birds, only 4 young fledged this year. The presentation prompted some lively discussion among members, especially the first report of an apparent male-male pairing.

James and Hannah made their observations at Pakiri, Waipu and particularly Mangawhai, and logged disturbances from pests, humans and other fairy terns at nests and foraging locations. They noted the following:

- When there are lots of other fairy terns around, they don't appear to react as much to each other as when there are fewer birds
- There was higher aggression to other bird species at Mangawhai than at Pakiri and Waipu
- Human disturbance was highest at Pakiri, but the fairy terns there showed less aggression in response

They also monitored feeding behaviour, and noted that:

- the only successful breeding pair at Mangawhai did more feeding at sea than the other pairs, although one of their 2 chicks still died
- the amount of food given to the chicks seemed to follow a similar pattern between the birds

However, they did feel that the impact of disturbance on the birds remains unclear, and were not sure what the number of dives indicated. Obviously more observations and research are required in the future.



Birds New Zealand 2 April at 08:23 · 🌐

This year-old female New Zealand Fairy Tern (RBYM) was photographed by Birds New Zealand Membership Secretary Imogen Warren in Foxton in December.

Fairy Tern Researcher Ian Southey reports that she was at Kaipara Harbour this week, where the remaining New Zealand Fairy Terns usually spend the winter.

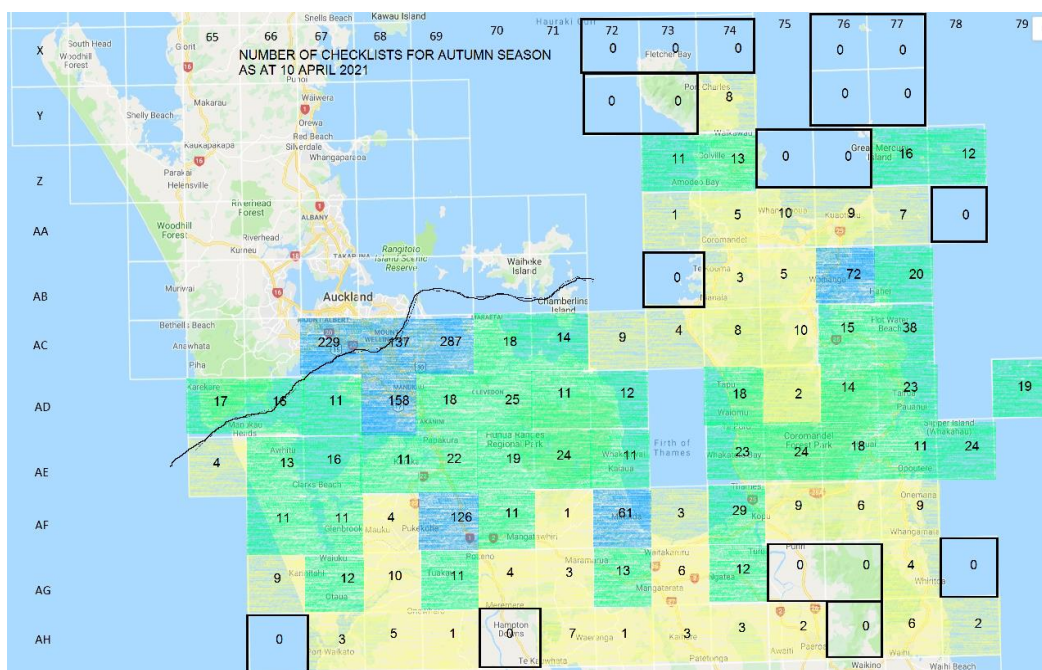
📷 Imogen Warren

**BEACH PATROLS:** There was no beach patrol in March; the next one is scheduled for April 29<sup>th</sup>.

**If anyone is interested in joining the Beach Patrol team please contact us.**

We go out rain-or-shine.

## ATLAS REPORT



Please note:

- the figures include autumn 2020 and 2021 checklists
- The yellow squares have had between 1 and 10 checklists submitted. The green squares have had 11 to 50 and the blue squares have had 51 or more

We are almost half way through autumn, and as you can see, good progress is being made in getting the number of checklists above 10 in many of the squares. Most of the mainland squares that previously had zero counts have also had some work done in them. No doubt this reflects the fact that we are able to move around more freely this year. Thanks to all of those involved.

I am currently trying to do counts in the wetland areas of the Waikato before duck shooting starts in May. Otherwise, I may not be at next month's meeting!

**The atlasing field trip planned for Easter did not go ahead; I am now planning to do this on: Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May**

There are 2 volunteers so far, but **please let me know if you are able to help**, so I can plan locations accordingly. It is likely to be around Hikutaia/Maratoto/Paeroa/Golden Cross area. My email is [suefro@xtra.co.nz](mailto:suefro@xtra.co.nz)

For those of you who do not load your checklists into EBird, if you do advise a sighting of an interesting or unusual bird, or do a count of all the birds you can identify at a particular location, please provide the following details so that we can add your observation to EBird:

Exact location of sighting, Date, Time, Species, Number of birds seen

And don't forget, with the end of daylight saving, you can now do your night counts earlier in the evening!

Happy atlasing! Sue

## PREDATOR FREE FRANKLIN

I mentioned above that Sue and I have been in discussion with Predator Free Franklin. You might be interested in this report from their website.

Karioitahi was largely cleared of natural habitat to make way for agriculture; fortunately, some pockets still exist, and replanting of unproductive areas is now taking place. These small pockets are very much capable of supporting our celebrated endemic species, along with our game birds and a few fallow deer.

One little gem is Lake Whatihua at Karioitahi. It was largely void of habitat until replanting started some 20 years ago. The lake is now surrounded by natives thanks to private landowners, along with Auckland Council. The lake could and should be an amazing hub for our game birds and native fauna, sadly though that has not been the case.

*[With the permission of one of the landowners, Sue, Michael and I had visited the lake in March and spent three hours doing bird counts. Very little on the lake (a family of swans, 1 mallard, 1 dabchick, pair of parries, and plenty of pukeko. Andrew and Predator Free Franklin were about to find out why]*

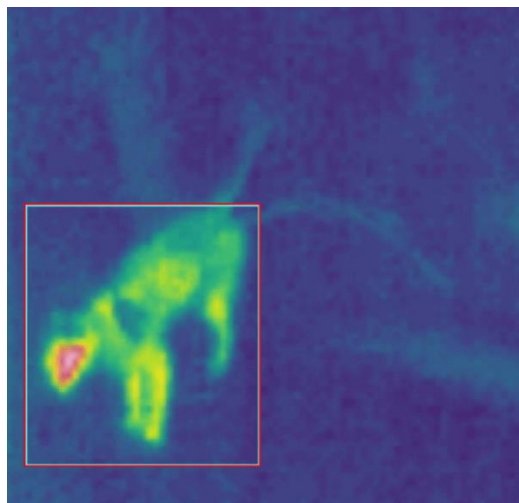
In April we visited the site to find out why. Armed with the very latest *Cacophony Thermal Imager\*\** we monitored a five-metre square of shoreline for four consecutive nights. In the middle of that square was a disarmed double ended cage trap with both mayonnaise and a fresh leg of hare. The intention was to gauge the predator numbers in the area and to assess interaction with the cage trap and lures.



We were prepared for bad news but what we filmed took us a little by surprise. Cats (12 visits), ferrets (2 visits), hedgehogs (1 visit), and many rats (42 visits). Mice were in there too but very few.

We repeated this test in a predator controlled Whiriwhiri bush block the following week. This is a block with one of the highest bird counts in the area.

Not surprisingly nothing was caught on film. We know pests still enter this Whiriwhiri block but not in numbers to get caught on camera, or put another way, not in numbers to find the nests.

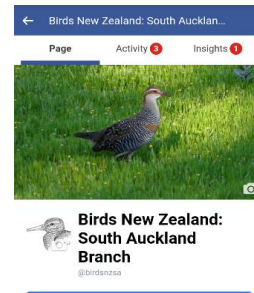


cat marking his territory caught on the thermal imager

*\*\* A [Cacophony Thermal Imager](#) is a camera that records everything that moves and uses artificial intelligence to analyse and report what it sees. Unlike trail cameras it does not miss a thing, even mice in the distance are logged*

**FROM OUR FACEBOOK PAGE:**

**If you have some good photos, information, or links that you believe would be suitable for our site send Wendy or David an email with the photo or link.**



Stephen Collins ▶ BIRDS OF AOTEAROA 28 March at 12:47 · Facebook for Android · 🌐

Illustrating the tiny white feathers that surround the eye of a Tauhou (Waxeye)



Te Korowai o Waiheke 31 March at 16:54 · 🌐

What New Zealand endemic bird do these eggs belong to? Hint: they are one of the cutest shorebirds and have the conservation status 'nationally vulnerable'.

Don't you just love the stance of these kiwi. In 1813 the British Museum published a description of the kiwi. Drawings by Richard and Elizabeth Nodder were made from the original specimen skin and it appears that they used a penguin as a model!!



**Ill never forget the  
look on the cashiers  
face, when she  
scanned the packet of  
bird seed,  
And I asked her how  
long does it take for  
the birds to grow once  
I plant them.**

**Happy birding!      Wendy and Sue**