

**THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INC.
ANNUAL REPORT ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR 2020**

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). 2020 was a year that I hope we never have to endure again. It has been terribly disruptive to families and friendships. In spite of this the Society is in good heart: the reports received from the regions and scheme convenors show much activity but also note the impact of the lockdown last autumn.

Deceased Members

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

Frank Austin
Ilan Charles Bell
Reg Cotter
John Douglas
Julie Fryer
Leslie Gowan
Anthea Goodwin
Efys Graham
William ("Bill") Greenwood
Gwyneth Norman
Connie Wright

Council Meetings

During 2020 Council met twice, both times by video conference call. I'm grateful to Mel Galbraith for organising the logistics of these. I'm also grateful to Council members for engaging and working hard at these meetings to ensure their success. From our meetings we signed off on an Annual report for 2019 and accounts for the year ended December 2019. These have both been posted on the website where members can review them. We have also progressed work on reviewing the Society's Strategy, and continuing to support the development and roll out of a new Membership database. Council also commissioned Michael Szabo to prepare a review of our Communication's, Membership and Fundraising strategies to ensure that they are fit for purpose into the future.

Elections

As reported last year, the terms of Mel Galbraith and Keith Woodley expired in 2020. They were duly re-nominated and re-elected. This year at the conclusion of the AGM at Thames the terms of office for President, Treasurer, Vice president and Natalie Forsdick will all expire. Nominations were called for and Bruce McKinlay, Paul Garner-Richards and Natalie Forsdick have all been re-elected to Council. As set out in the revised rules, the position of Vice President will now be elected from within Council, and so Ian Armitage re-joins the Council as a member.

Health and Safety

During the year we continued to develop systems and support to meet our obligations as a Society to people who participate in our activities. During the year two incidents were reported to me. They were of a minor nature and the reporting of them by the Trip Leader and recording of them by the Society Executive Officer were as expected.

Publications

In spite of everything 2020, was a spectacular year for *Notornis*. There were two special editions: *Lost Gold: Ornithology of the Subantarctic Auckland Islands* (Vol 67, Part 1) and *Wader Studies in New Zealand* (Vol 67, Part 4). The publication of Part 4 gave a total page count for this Volume of 781 pages; an impressive achievement. That this was possible was directly as result of the leadership of *Notornis* Editor Craig Symes, Assistant Editor Paul Sagar and co-editors Colin Miskelly and Keith Woodley. The edition of wader studies in New Zealand is an update of the 1999 edition of the same name (Vol 46, Part 1). The Society should rightly be proud of the continuity of internationally important citizen science that has enabled to this occur. High quality colour photographs are now the norm in *Notornis* to illustrate key points of the articles. Additionally we have continued to invest in improving page layouts to make the process easier for the editors and leading to a more professional layout.

Equally important is the work of Michael Szabo, Editor of the magazine *Birds New Zealand*. Each edition is highly attractive with large format photographs and updates of all our activities.

Our Editors present a professional and modern face of the Society to the community. I'm very grateful for their ongoing commitment.

They have been supported in this work by the Society's printers at Pivotal press in Wellington.

Partners

The Society maintain warm relationships with the T Gear Charitable Trust and Goodness Kitchen. These partners underpin the Society's work on the Atlas and the Birds New Zealand Research Fund. Additionally the ongoing relationship with the George Mason Charitable Trust enables the awarding of the David Medway Scholarship annually. The process of assessing these awards is a major part of the work for the Scientific Committee of the Society.

Heritage Expeditions and more recently Swarovski Optics have supported *Birds New Zealand* by taking full page ads in the magazine. During the year the Society renewed our Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. The revised MOU sets out in more detail how we wish to work together. A new MOU with Manaaki Whenua (Landcare Research) was signed which sets out the process for gaining access to the curated and groomed datasets from the previous Atlas projects. The previous two atlases remain a rich field for ongoing research and this arrangement for the future has established an enduring process to ensure that the datasets remain available to researchers.

Social Media

The Society presence on social media platforms remains strong. Both the Facebook page and Twitter carry news and posts on a range of material. We now have over 9330 followers. Michael Szabo who manages this account reports success in marking *World Albatross Day* in which our posts reached some 50 000 people. The highlight was a post in July 2020 of a picture of fantails huddled together which reached some 230 000 people; this is the most people that a single post on the Society's Facebook page has ever reached. Michael is also active on Facebook in posting notices about Society events. Equally active is the Birds Auckland Facebook page which Ian McLean reports is still growing and is prompting people to participate in Society Activities events and joining the Society.

Our Twitter followers have now grown to 2845, an increase of 845 from this time last year. We are now promoting every article published in *Notornis* via Twitter in the 2 weeks following publication. Pūkorokoro Miranda's godwit news is particularly well-received.

Membership System

Imogen Warren has had a successful year as Birds New Zealand Membership Secretary. The new membership system (MembershipWorks) has been running since July. While there have been a number of challenges around adapting the system to meet our needs, the ease of pulling data has

been beneficial to users within the organisation. Over the next year we will continue to expand the utility of the system to support Society Officers in their work. The new membership system enables members to update their details and manage their subscriptions online. Imogen noted that more members are using the automatic renewal option and that this ensures payments are made appropriately at renewal time. This reduces Imogen's workload and is a good feature of the new system.

Imogen reports an increase in membership with some 107 new members in 2020. As at 23 May 2021 the Society has 1236 paying members. Like the rest of New Zealand society Birds New Zealand has to recognise that cheque payments are now a thing of the past. We will be supporting members with other options for payment, as in the future the Society cannot accept cheque payments.

Over the past year Roger Sharp has performed an inestimable service in the Web support role. The technical support of the membership system has been a large amount of work during 2020. Included in this was the conversion of the OSNZ membership data base to the new platform, provision of training materials, and ongoing support to test features such as automatic renewal. Roger has been in contact with a significant number of members who have sought his help to resolve problems or unexpected issues. He has also worked to support Imogen Warren as she has become used to the role of membership secretary.

New Zealand Bird Atlas

The team at Wildlife Management International have carried on with their great work supporting the New Zealand Bird Atlas. During the lockdown Mike Bell and his team were very imaginative in setting up webinars to engage with Society members to keep the Atlas in the forefront of people's minds. As of December 2020, in excess of 124 000 checklists have been completed, with 87% of all squares having some data. Some 260 species have been observed in the Atlas project.

Scheme Reports

As in previous years our Scheme Convenors have produced a full set of reports which are posted on the Society's Website. I'm grateful to them for taking the time to reflect and report on their activities.

Beach patrol and Nest Recording

Both Lloyd Esler, as Convenor of the Beach Patrol, and Roger Sharp as Convenor of the Nest Recording Scheme report an ongoing decline in submissions of reports for these significant Society Schemes. In the case of the Beach Patrol Scheme, Lloyd comments that there were no significant wrecks reported in 2020. In the case of the Nest Recording scheme, Roger notes that the lack of submissions is now impacting on the ability to interpret trends in bird numbers and outcomes.

Moult scheme

Micah Scholer has taken over as Convenor for the Society's moult scheme. Micah has focused his efforts over the last year of digitising un-entered data to make it all a lot more accessible. He's now developing collaborative relationships with other researchers to start to analyse the data contained in this database. However Micah's ability to take this work into the future will be constrained if members do not continue to collect and submit data. If you do have additional moult records please make contact with Micah and make arrangements to submit these to the Society's database.

Records Appraisal

Colin Miskelly reports that a total of 116 Unusual Bird Reports was received in 2020, and assessed between March 2020 and February 2021. This is the second largest number of submissions received by the committee in a single year. Ninety-eight (84%) of these UBRs were accepted by the

committee. No new species were added to the New Zealand list. A paper reporting on the 210 RAC decisions from 2019-20 is in preparation.

Banding liaison

John Stewart reports that over the last year three new projects have been approved bringing the total to six projects. John reports that the new banding database (known as FALCON), among other things, allows banders to submit their data directly and to interrogate the database and generate reports. John advises that he has volunteered to assist with training local banders in the use of the program.

Checklist Committee

Colin Miskelly, Acting Convenor reports that the Committee is focused on preparing an update to the 2010 *Checklist of the birds of New Zealand*. Colin reports that an initiative to increase interest in the work of the Checklist Committee, and grow the pool of members with knowledge of how the committee works, through a mentor/trainee scheme has been successful with a total of 12 members taking up the offer. It is intended that the next version of the Checklist be published electronically on the Birds New Zealand/*Notornis* website. A brief for this has been prepared as part of a scoping document for redevelopment of the Society's publications webpages.

Scientific Committee

Graeme Taylor convenor of the Scientific Committee reports that the main activity during the past year was reviewing the BNZRF research proposals sent in during June 2020. Graeme comments that there were many excellent research proposals and it was difficult to rank these. The Committee also checked over summary reports returned from past recipients of the Birds NZ funding awards. Applications that were supported by the Scientific Committee included projects to look at: Seabird sensory systems and attraction to artificial light; breeding movements and winter dispersal of black-fronted terns; banded rail habitat use; diving petrel recruitment; kakapo and takahe genomics; kiwi monitoring methods; kokako phylogeography; and little penguin foraging.

Additionally scientific advice was provided on several Projects Assistance Fund applications, and the committee reviewed documents associated with The Pacific Island Bird Conservation and Research Fund, which the Society manages jointly with Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

Wader Report

The National Wader Count Census, which is completed every winter and summer, is a flagship project for the Society and continues to provide a consistent national picture of waders in New Zealand. The uses of the data collected by Society members throughout the country extends to China, Siberia and Alaska. Previous years' work have underpinned important science publications such as Adrian Riegen and Paul Sagar's *Distribution and numbers of waders in New Zealand 2005-2019*, and Rob Schuckard and colleagues' *Numbers of bar-tailed godwits in New Zealand and Australia during the austral summer of 2019-2020*. Both of these publications were included in the Wader Studies edition of *Notornis*. In his report Adrian identified issues with respect to coverage in northern New Zealand.

Submissions

As a result of the discussion and expectations set out by the 2019 AGM Council has made submissions of conservation matters of national significance where we hold data. Examples include a submission to the Ministry for the Environment process for a National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity. I'm aware that locally members made submissions on the South East Marine Protection Initiative and changes to dog bylaws in Nelson. If other submissions have been made on behalf of the Society, Council would greatly appreciate being sent a copy or summary.

Regional Representatives

I wish to acknowledge Les Feasey, Geoff de Lisle, Anne McCracken and Peter Frost who have over this last year stood down as their respective regions' representatives. Regional Representatives are the lifeblood of the Society at the Regional and Project level, and Peter, Geoff, and Les have shown great leadership in developing projects and organising speakers and activities. In the case of Les and Geoff they have each led the hosting of a highly successful Society Annual Conference and AGM. The annual reports that the Regional Representatives prepare to summarise the years activities are a fascinating summary of a range of projects and activities throughout New Zealand. Regional Representatives are an essential network for Council to understand the expectations of the membership and to ensure that matters are raised and debated with and by Council. The Society cannot function without their ongoing commitment and hard work. On behalf of Council thank you all.

Thank you

Yet again a large amount of the success of the Society is due to the efforts of the Society's Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler. Throughout 2020 Ingrid kept supporting Regional Representatives and Council with prompt and thoughtful responses to emails and queries. In particular Ingrid put a vast amount of work into designing, writing and formatting the content of the pages of the new BirdsNZ web site and as a 'sounding board' for some of ideas about how the membership side of the system should function.

I also acknowledge the ongoing support and work of Council. They have all contributed to supporting the work of Council and ensured that we have robust discussions and have quality decision as a result. I particularly wish to acknowledge Vice President Ian Armitage whose term will come to an end at the 2021 AGM. Ian has completed a large number of project in his time as Vice President and has ensured that the right material is available at the right time.

Thank you to you all.

Bruce McKinlay

President

May 2021