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Otago Region Newsletter 7 /2021

July 2021

Ornithological Snippets

An immature **Stewart Island (Otago) Shag** was obviously looking for geography lessons when it was found outside Kaitangata primary school on 8 July. 11 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were seen at the Catlins Lake on 27 June, and again on 8 July. A single **Cattle Egret** was located at Port Molyneux, near Kaka Point, on 4 July, and also on the following day. A **Reef Heron** at Quarantine Island on 17 July was possibly the bird seen at Warrington on the previous month's wader count. Jimmie Suttie reported seeing an adult **Erect-crested Penguin** in apparent good health on rocks south of Taieri Mouth on 19 July.

Some large **Song Thrush** flocks including 132 at Cardrona on 3 July, and 320 near Makarora on 11 July. **Blackbirds** also seem to have been present in good numbers recently. An empty egg, probably Song Thrush, was found at Balclutha Lawn Cemetery on 21 July. Finally, after an absence of almost 3 years, **Cirl Bunting** have been seen at Katiki Point, with 4 on 4 July, and 2 the following day.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com **Richard Schofield**

eBird News

New feature

Users of the eBird app on Android may have noticed an alert that warns you when you are approaching an Atlas grid square boundary. When you are within 100m of a boundary, a warning flashes up on the screen; it also notifies you when you have left the square. Even if the

device is in sleep mode, there is still a notification. Currently this feature is only available on Android, but hopefully it will be on IOS devices soon.

Motatapu Atlasing

We have been invited to visit Motatapu Station, near Wanaka, to provide coverage for the Atlas. This area is not normally accessible to the public, so this is a great opportunity to go off the beaten track and cover some new ground. I visited with Dawn Palmer & Ivan Lin last year, and it is a stunning area, with spectacular views and a few birds as well! The plan is to spend one weekend in each of the four seasons – we will have the use of a hut which sleeps 4. At this stage it would be good to know if anyone is keen to take part, and when we have dates set I will get in touch with those interested. Places will be available on a first come, first served basis, and a reasonable level of fitness will be required.

Field Trip

The next Atlas field trip will be on **Saturday 31 July** to the Hindon/Lee Stream area. Meet at 8.30am outside Bunnings, or 9.00am by 4 Square, Outram. Please contact me to confirm your interest.

Contact Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

BirdsNZ National News

Citizen Science challenge! Colour-flagged SIPOs

A collaborative study between the Department of Conservation, Manaaki Whenua/Landcare Research, and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand is focusing on the movements of South Island Pied Oystercatchers (SIPO) to identify nationwide flyways and stopover sites. We would like to put out a call for any sightings of SIPO (or other oystercatchers) wearing flags of various colours that have letters and numbers engraved on them.

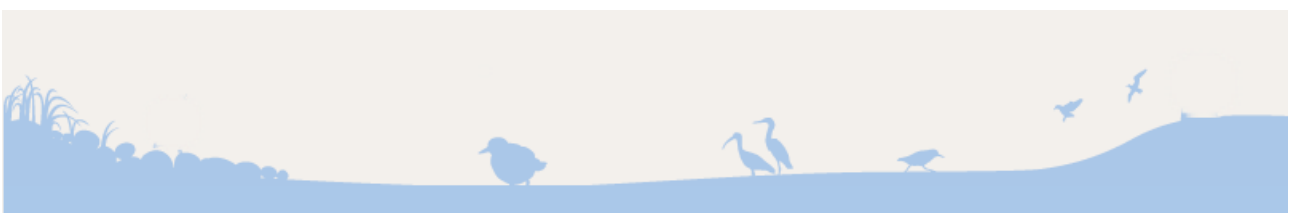
They have been colour-coded by the region where they were caught, and we are particularly interested in any birds that have moved between regions.

Colour codes for engraved flags on SIPO:

- RED flag: North Island
- BLUE flag: South Island
- GREEN flag: Rakaia
- ORANGE flag: Rangitata
- YELLOW flag: Nelson / Golden Bay

If the flag only has two letters or numbers, the bird was marked as a chick, and if there are three letters/numbers, then it was marked as an adult.

Bruce McKinlay



BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

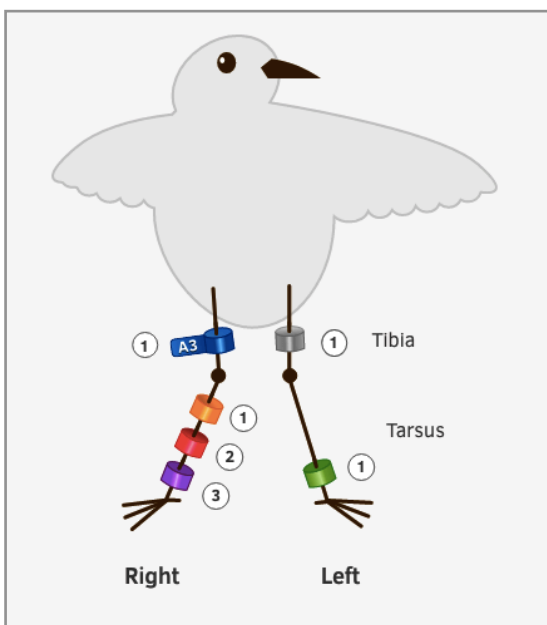
Flagged SIPOs



Good on Nick for being the first to spot one of the colour-flagged SIPOs that are part of the project to identify nationwide flyways and stopover sites.

This bird with a yellow flag was banded at Rabbit Island, Waimea Estuary, Nelson on 22 July 2020 and spotted by Nick on Warrington Beach, 7 July 2021.

Please check all SIPOs for coloured flags and photograph them if at all possible. Report your sightings on the DOC banding website.



DOC banding office is encouraging the reporting of resighted/recaptured/recovered marked birds via our public Sightings form:

<https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings>

(open this link in Chrome etc, NOT Internet explorer).

Example of a bird with bands
Numbers refer to band placement (configuration)

Lala Frazer

Lala recently received the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to conservation and the community.

She was a founding trustee of the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, and has continued with the trust particularly in the area of habitat.

In 2014 she edited and co-ordinated the publication of Otago Peninsula Birds A Pocket Guide.

Lala was named Wildlife Hero of the Dunedin Wildlife Festival in 2020.

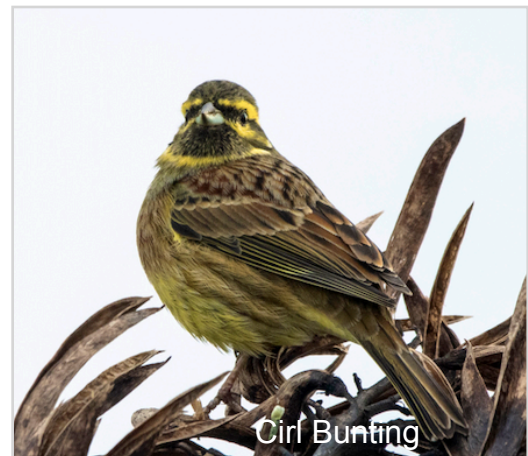


<https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/southern-queens-birthday-honours-2021>

Moeraki Pelagic ~ July 2021

The first Ezifish Moeraki Pelagic took place on a cool calm day, leaving the wharf just after 8am. Shags observed us from the old jetty as we rounded the point, and streams of Otago Shags escorted us out to the Otago Canyons. We spotted a trawler on the horizon swarming with seabirds and crossed its path, getting a glimpse of a Humpback Whale as it dove down, and attracting a selection of Buller's, Salvin's White-capped, and Southern Royal Albatrosses over to our vessel. After an hour chumming we passed over into the deeper blue water of the subtropical front, and saw a noticeable change in species composition with the addition of several passing Grey and Westland Petrels, 2 Antarctic Fulmars, and a lone Grey-backed Storm-Petrel. A diverse and successful day saw us headed back inshore by 4pm, with the day capped off by a pod of 5 Dusky Dolphins, and an Otago Shag in the harbour playing tug-of-war with a Seahorse on a piece of kelp! Afterwards we headed up the road and were treated to 10 hoiho/Yellow-eyed Penguins at Katiki Point Lighthouse in the fading light.

Day 2 saw similar conditions with less clouds, low winter sun, and a little more chop to the water. Birds took flight more readily and we quickly garnered a huge following of albatross, chugging offshore and stopping over the shelf to chum. Masses of birds surrounded the boat, fighting over bits of squid and fish thrown overboard, much to the delight of many photographers on board. Partway back to shore we noticed a large bird flying alongside the boat about 100m out that was nearly completely white - a rare white morph Southern Giant Petrel from Macquarie Island. The cherry on top of a fantastic weekend. A return trip to Katiki Pt yielded a small flock of Cirl Bunting amongst House Sparrows - the



first record for this location since 2018 - as well as another showing of 8 hoiho/Yellow-eyed Penguins. Keep a look out for advertisements of future Moeraki Pelagics, this was hopefully the first of many!

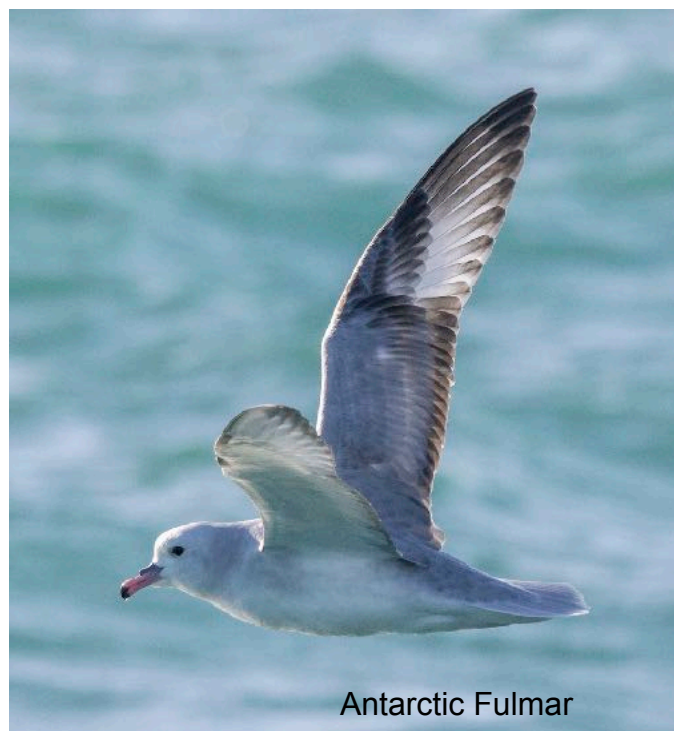
Day 1 Species estimates:

Little Penguin - 1
 Wandering Albatross sp. - 1
 Southern Royal Albatross - 40 (14)
 Northern Royal Albatross - 1
 Black-browed Albatross - 7 (2)
 White-capped Albatross - 150 (80)
 Salvin's Albatross - 6 (2)
 Buller's Albatross (Southern) - 200 (100)
 Southern Giant Petrel - 3 (1)
 Northern Giant Petrel - 25 (10)



Antarctic Fulmar - 2
 Cape Petrel - 200 (120)
 Fluttering Shearwater - 2 (1)
 Westland Petrel - 4 (1)
 Grey Petrel - 9 (2)
 Grey-backed Storm-Petrel - 1
 Fairy Prion - 4 (1)
 Prion sp. - 1
 Common Diving-Petrel - 1
 Black-fronted Tern - 5 (2)
 White-fronted Tern - 4 (2)

Red-billed Gull - 40 (10)
 Black-billed Gull - 10 (4)
 South Black-backed Gull - 50 (20)
 Otago Shag - 450 (400)
 Spotted Shag - 85 (75)
 Pied Shag - 10
 Little Pied Shag - 1
 Humpback Whale - 1
 Dusky Dolphin - 5
 New Zealand Fur Seal - 5 (2)
 Seahorse - 1



Day 2 Species estimates:

Little Penguin - 1
 Antipodean Albatross (Gibson's) - 1
 Southern Royal Albatross - 40 (14)
 Northern Royal Albatross - 3 (2)
 Black-browed Albatross - 7 (2)
 White-capped Albatross - 180 (80)



Salvin's Albatross - 12 (5)
 Buller's Albatross (Southern) - 160 (70)
 Southern Giant Petrel - 4 (2)
 Northern Giant Petrel - 35 (20)
 Antarctic Fulmar - 1
 Cape Petrel - 250 (185)
 Sooty Shearwater - 1
 Short-tailed Shearwater - 2 (1)
 Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater - 1
 Westland Petrel - 12 (4)
 Grey Petrel - 2 (1)
 Fairy Prion - 4 (1)
 Prion sp. - 1
 Black-fronted Tern - 4 (2)

White-fronted Tern - 13 (6)
 Red-billed Gull - 40 (10)
 Black-billed Gull - 10 (4)
 South Black-backed Gull - 50 (20)
 Otago Shag - 430 (400)
 Spotted Shag - 50 (40)
 Pied Shag - 4
 Little Pied Shag - 3
 Black Shag - 1
 New Zealand Fur Seal - 2 (1)

Outside brackets = day total sightings, inside brackets = high count at one time.



Oscar Thomas
 Writer and Photographer

Otago Winter Wader Count 20 June 2021

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour west	Harbour east	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Total 2021	Total 2020	Total 2019
SI Pied Oystercatcher	33	292	43	59	52	122	101	230	932	1370	1320
Variable Oystercatcher	20	42	2	5	56	10	9	3	147	160	278
Pied Stilt	33	31			48	9	46	77	244	152	309
Banded Dotterel	1	4	61				54	30	150	155	242
Spur-winged Plover	25	4	5	3		10	7	48	102	103	144
Bar-tailed Godwit		53	92			38	90	68	341	388	133

Many thanks to all those who contributed to this year's winter count. The weather was truly miserable; its only saving grace was the lack of wind.

Top sighting was a reef heron at Blueskin....much excitement! Have a look at Nick's photo.

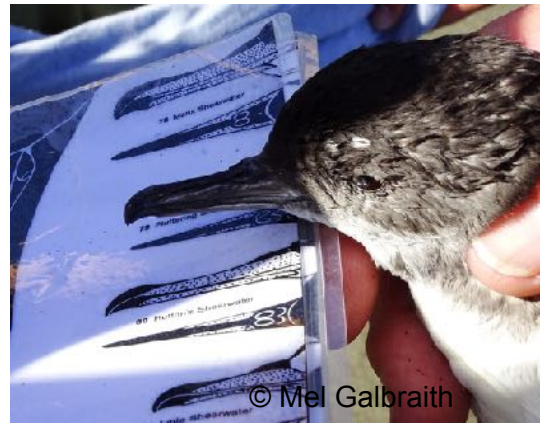


Seventeen pied shags (all sites) were counted compared with 18 (July'20) and 2 (June'19). Ivan and I saw two, appropriately, in Shag Inlet. No pied shags were recorded from summer counts from the past three years.

Maree Johnstone

Beach Patrol Scheme

New Zealand is an insular country having a long coastline at right angles to the prevailing winds. Surrounded by both sub-tropical and sub-Antarctic seas, New Zealand is the breeding centre for 78 seabird species and lies in the path of seabirds moving eastward in the non-breeding season (winter) from the southern Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Seabirds can be studied from ships but they are often impossible to accurately identify at sea, so the analysis of dead birds washed up on the world's coasts is one of the main ways of studying seabird movements throughout the year. New Zealand is geographically very well placed to contribute to such studies.



Why is beach patrolling so important – and what are ‘wrecks’?

The Birds New Zealand Beach Patrol Scheme started in 1951 (although some records date from 1943) and from 1961 until 2004 annual summaries published in *Notornis* have helped to establish the wide range of seabird species occurring in New Zealand waters, also their distribution and abundance. Preliminary reports were published in the *Southern Bird* magazine between 2007 and 2013. Regular beach patrolling provides a unique long-term record of change in species occurrence (now up to 72 years).

The objectives of the Beach Patrol Scheme are:

- To provide information on the species of seabirds washed up on New Zealand coasts, also location and numbers.
- To record variations in seabird mortality.
- To increase the chances of recovering banded birds.
- To increase the collection of birds in museums, especially of rarely found species.
- To provide specimens for scientific study.
- To provide opportunities for members to identify seabirds.

Infrequent or opportunistic patrols may result in specimens of rare birds being collected for museums and the occasional recovery of a banded bird, but regular patrols provide these benefits in greater degree and also gather information of great scientific value.

The Beach Patrol Scheme was raised at the recent Birds NZ Conference. The Committee is hoping that more members, and members of the public will become interested. For more information see <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/beachpatrolscheme/>



Tomahawk Winter Encounters

A fine June afternoon for Silvereyes foraging through the Coprosma in my backyard. Then along came a Falcon, flying slowly by very close at rooftop altitude. Probably a female, it flew on south, barely above roofs and fences and trees, to the old track.

That track lined with long grasses, shrubs and trees, and full of finches, is a good hunting ground for a Falcon. Spur-winged Plovers gathered on the grassy weed filled empty section started calling, but I didn't see any fly up. A Harrier circling overhead quickly descended and perched in the canopy of a tree. It stayed there, calling loudly long after the Falcon was gone. Or was it gone? The dark and cryptic barred small raptor had drifted barely above obstacles, small wing flaps and smooth course adjustments, following contours of roofs and trees. At anywhere, it would instantly be there. Silently flying just above houses, lawns, gardens, a car starts, another stops with door slams and voices and rustles of lifted groceries, someone steps outside onto their porch uttering a domestic frustration, radio music from an opened door... I've seen Falcon fly like this in the bush, but never before over houses and backyards, so it was a surreal moment. Was the perched Harrier watching the Falcon eat a Goldfinch or Redpoll on the scubby grass near the toitoi? Or if it was gone, to where? Too early to hunt evening murmurations of Starlings. So, maybe perch and watch the track edges for Goldfinches, or fly by cliffs over the sea looking for Rock Pigeons?

This became a year of falcons. In April, a Falcon pursued a swirling murmuration of about 100 Starlings very high over the sea. About 50 Starlings broke away from the formation, and flew surrounding the Falcon within their ball of turning specks. Starling murmurations also surround and follow Harriers, with the hawk trying to evade them, and Black-backed Gulls. The Starlings came over Tomahawk Lagoon, and then the Falcon took a long steep dive. I don't know the outcome. On an Atlas mission to Strath Taieri in June, Bruce and I saw two Falcons, one among schist tors and the other flew down on a farm and perched in a pine watching us. On the latest Atlas trip, Emma and I heard a Falcon calling from a tall pine as it was mobbed by magpies near Dunback.

Those Silvereyes in my lone Coprosma like to make friends when snow comes. Generally, I don't feed birds, because I don't want them dependent on people and it sets them up for ambushes by cats. However, when the forecast claims snow is coming and the sky and wind say that is true, Silvereyes are calling and busy rustling through that gnarly tree. So I quarter a few apples and impale these on dead branch spikes, where entangled twigs stop a cat climbing up, and out of leap range from the fence. On the second day of sub zero wind whistling though, I put fresh quarters on top of the emptied apple skins, while Silvereyes watched and called in the tree within arms reach.

While small birds in the backyard are normal anytime, the cold front brought a couple of big ones. I went out clutching apple quarters, and there were two Black Swans sheltering inside the high tin fence and grazing on grass. They had to land somewhere else and walk in with their aquatic compromised gait of primordial waddling and stomping big webbed feet. They stayed through the night, standing near the fence and tree, while the southwesterly whistling through the clothesline threw sleet on windows. A couple of free-range swans in your backyard are not recommended, they make a mess, but then so do we.

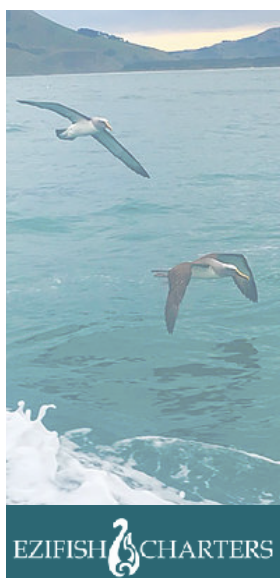
There are frequently 60 to 150 Scaup on Tomahawk Lagoons, with varied numbers and movements day and night. There can be 130 at a site one day, and the next day at the same

time there are 60 with more flying in from the south. I believe many of them are not full time residents at Tomahawk, they fly in from the south and depart that way at other times. They have a pattern of flying low from lower lagoon to upper lagoon at dusk and night. Late on calm nights Scaup can be heard calling and splashing inside the raupo channel.

Other night callers include two Little Owls, Pukeko, Spur-winged Plovers, Paradise Shelducks, Mallards, and Variable Oystercatchers. Shoveller calls are subtler from the raupo channel and upper lagoon, so it has to be an especially calm night to hear them by listening from the front door. Night flying Shoveller are identifiable by their silhouettes and distinctive wing beat. Shoveller like overwintering here, at times more than 200, and there are one or two pairs with ducklings every year. Marsh Crake are quietly busy foraging through the raupo, but can be heard sometimes on spring and summer nights.

Andrew Austin

Moeraki Pelagic ~ October 2021



Kia ora, after the success of our July double-header, two more full-day pelagic trips with Ezifish Charters are planned out of Moeraki, Otago to the offshore canyons for the Saturday October 16th, and Sunday October 17th 2021.

Naturally no guarantees on what we will see, but last time we had a stunning 7 species of albatross, dozens of Giant petrels, hundreds of Cape petrels plus star appearances from Antarctic Fulmar, Grey Petrel and Grey-backed Storm-Petrel, and a seahorse in the mouth of an Otago Shag! Now moving into the spring migration period, species such as Broad-billed Prion, South Polar Skua and more Storm-Petrels might be on the cards. Marine mammals including Hector's Dolphin, Long-finned Pilot Whales and Shepherd's Beaked Whales have also all been observed in the area.

We will aim to depart Moeraki each day at approximately 8am and return by 5pm, going on their 16.5m long, 5m wide fibreglass vessel "The Sirocco". You'll need to bring your own food, drink and other supplies for the trip, and a BBQ sausage sizzle lunch will also be provided. There are still spaces available on both the Saturday and Sunday trips, so if you are interested in reserving a spot please email your chosen day to oscarkokako@gmail.com - to confirm you will need to make a deposit of \$125 (which is only refundable to people who pull out if I can fill your spot before the trip takes place). The final trip cost will be sorted closer to the time and depend on the number of people on the day, but if we get a good response like fast time it'll stay the same as the initial deposit. If the trip is cancelled due to weather then the payment will be fully refunded. The call will be made by the skipper about 48hrs ahead of the trips.

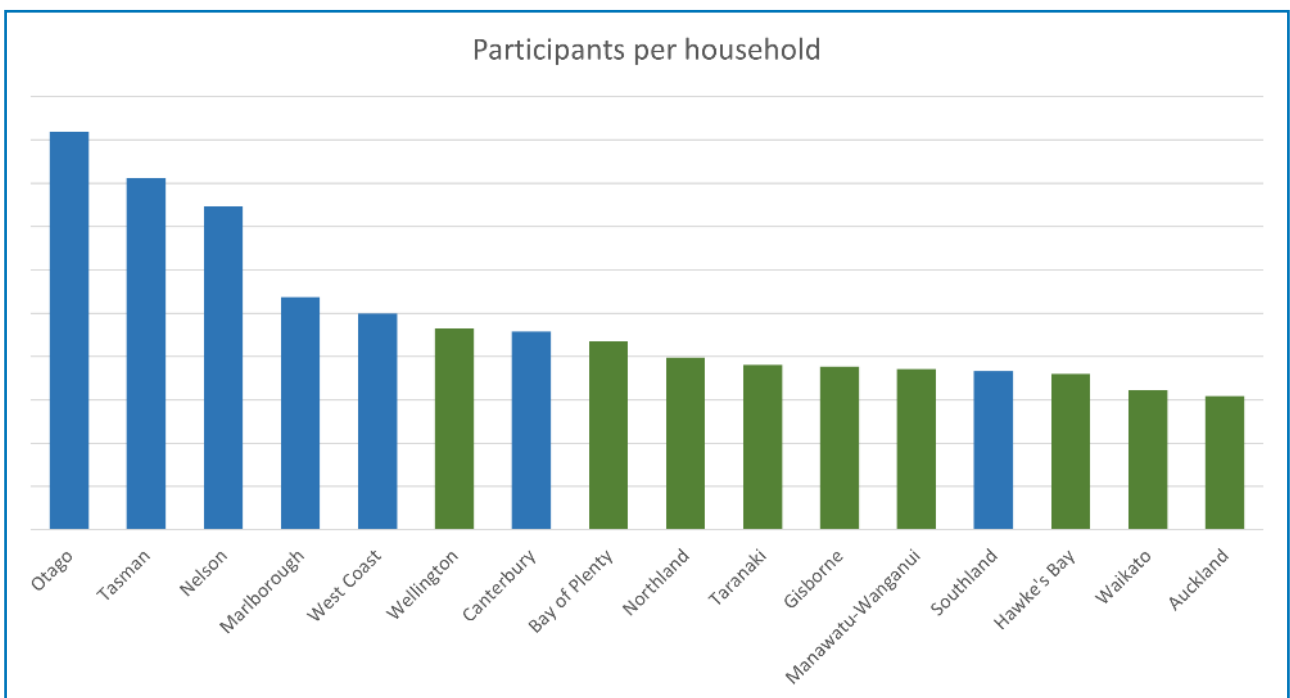
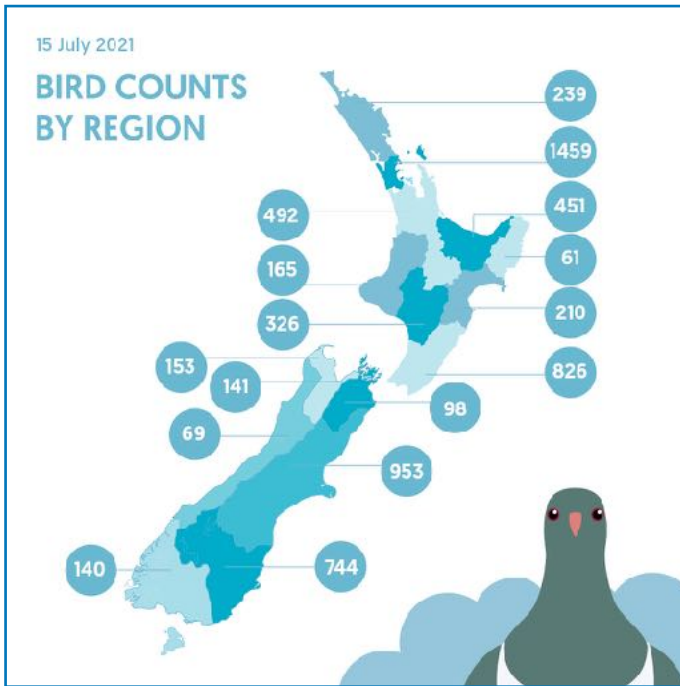
Moeraki Holiday Park is suitable accommodation option for individuals or small groups, it is an hour's drive north from Dunedin City. Please get in touch with Oscar Thomas at the email address above if you have any questions.

Writer and Photographer www.oscarthomas.nz

Who are the most passionate bird counters?



Once again Otago took prize place at the top of the tree with the highest number of surveys returned per household.





Should the Otago newsletter have a bird's name, and if so what should it be?

Wader Study Group Conference



The IWSG Annual Conference will be held ONLINE from the 8th until the 10th of October 2021.

Registration Dates 21/06/21 — 10/10/21
 Abstract Submission Dates 21/06/21 — 16/08/21
 Attendance Fees Members / Non-Members €20.00

For more information, please visit: [https://waderstudygroup.org/conferences/2021-virtual-conference/...](https://waderstudygroup.org/conferences/2021-virtual-conference/)

Only recently we had the hope to meet in person this year, but the ongoing uncertainties regarding the health emergency have made the decision for us: the IWSG annual conference 2021 will be held online.

The main format of the conference will be similar to the one last year: we will use the Zoom Webinar to host the meeting and ask presenters to submit pre-recorded talks for a smooth running of the conference. Upon agreement with the presenter, the talks will also be available for rewatching for a limited time after the conference. While a virtual conference cannot replace the social aspect of a face-to-face meeting, we intend to offer more possibilities for interactions this year. If you have any questions regarding our annual meetings, please contact us via conference@waderstudygroup.org

Programme for 2021

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held on the 4th Wed at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, Benham Building, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street.

- Wed 28 July Georgina Pickerell
The Robins of Mopanui.
- Sat 31 July Atlas field trip to the Hindon/Lee Stream area. Meet at 8.30am outside Bunnings, or 9.00am by 4 Square, Outram. Please contact Richard Schofield 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com
- Wed 25 August Graeme Loh Focus on Seabirds. Followed by AGM (agenda to follow)
- Sun 12 September **Dunedin Botanic Garden Guided Birdwatching Walk**, starting 10am. We will be guiding groups of 10 or so, helping members of the public to spot and identify birds. Contact: Suzanne Middleton smiddleton7@yahoo.co.nz ph 022 601 8579 if you can help.
- Wed 22 September Bruce McKinlay
What 5 years of Town Belt Bird Counts tell us, plus plans for the October and November surveys.
- 23-25 October **Weekend Atlas Field Trip**, Labour weekend based at Alexandra. We have booked accommodation for 8 people (twin share, \$45 each per night) and this will be our base at the Alexandra Holiday Park. You may wish to book other accommodation at the park or in town.
More info from Richard cluthaphotos@gmail.com
- Wed 27 October Rachel Hickcox.
Where hoiho go foraging at sea and why – results of research mapping and modelling hoiho presence and preferences.
- Wed 24 November **Members night..**

Suggestions of locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Mary birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz

Please send all contributions for the August newsletter to:
Sue Odlin sodlin@gmail.com

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