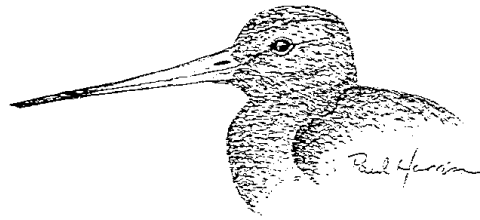


KUAKA

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

July 2021

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Tena koutou whanau here is the kawepurongo for this month.

MONTHLY MEETING: If you were unable to brave the cold and join the 20 members at the Papakura Croquet Clubrooms last week, here is a synopsis of what you missed.

SIGHTINGS included:

- ✚ 11 banded dotterel and 11 NZ Dotterel seen at Port Waikato by Tony H and David. Two of the NZ dots were carrying flags from Whatipu and one of the bandies had a flag from Kaikoura. It is the third season that this individual has been spotted at the Port and it is known to return to the Kaikoura region in the breeding season.
- ✚ Around 50 cattle egrets were spotted near Rangiriri recently and another 21 near Piako.
- ✚ Californian quail have been appearing in large groups in various places in our region.
- ✚ 2000 white-fronted terns were reported from Kopu.
- ✚ The bittern is still present at Miranda. Tim Lovegrove told us that some research was undertaken in the not-to-distant past to try to establish the presence of bittern in the Auckland City region (Bombay to Wellsford). Tim reported that only six individuals were found – 3 on Great Barrier and 3 up the Awhitu Peninsula!!



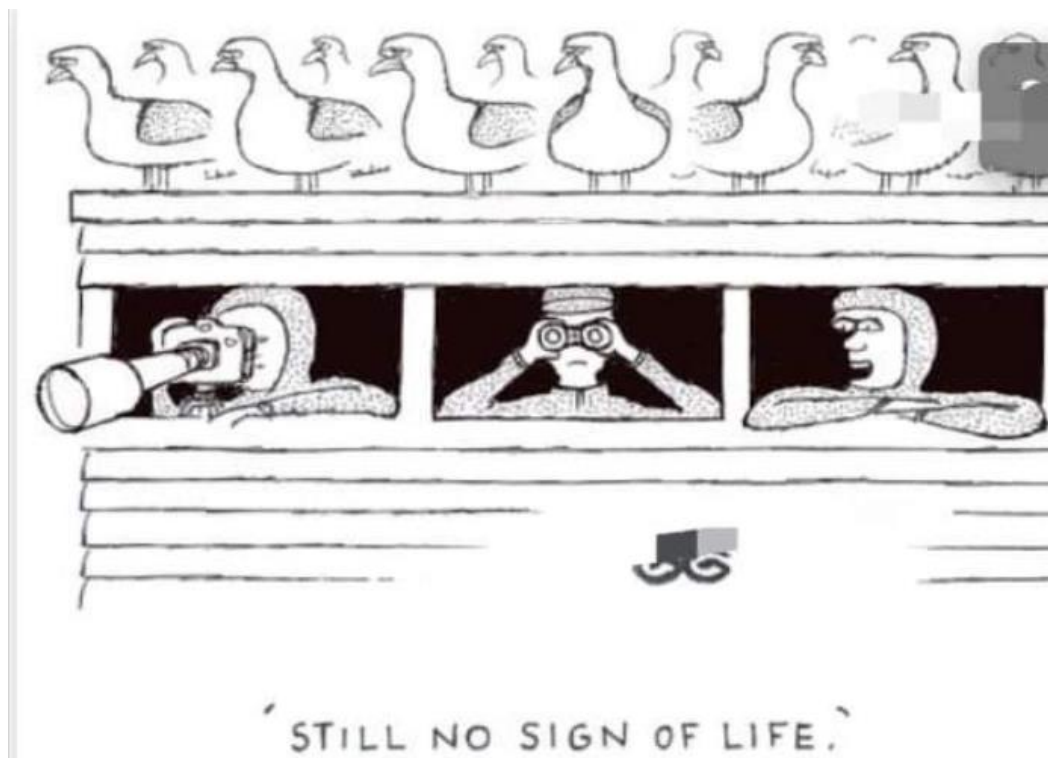
Sue's photo of the bittern at Miranda



There was some discussion regarding the presence of scaup in our region. The general consensus was that sighting, of what used to be an unusual bird for South Auckland, are increasing. We know that they are present in Western Springs; Gwen reported 45-50 at Mangere; they are on the Lighthouse Station Pond up Awhitu Peninsula; Sue and Wendy saw a large flock on the lake at Golden Cross mine site near Karangaheke; Ian reported that he has seen them in the Hunuas near a swampy section on one of the lakes (they are not there presently, the lakes are too low!).

Kereru were also discussed. Terry reported that he has several in his patch of bush; they are attracted by the dark purple taraire berries which they gorge on at this time of year. He watched one individual consume 28 berries in one sitting. The birds regurgitate the seeds which then develop a jelly-like coating and the seed then sprouts within a few days. Berries collected and stripped of the flesh, left to sprout never do – they need to go through the kereru stage before they will sprout.

Kereru commence courtship in June/July in our region and we can expect to find nests anytime from now.



SPEAKER Tim Lovegrove, the well-known Auckland Council ‘bird-nerd’, was our speaker tonight. The topic was tarapunga/red-billed gulls who are currently classified as At Risk/Declining. There has been a rapid rate of decline of the overall population primarily due to mammalian predators and the decreased abundance of krill, their primary food source.

Despite seeming to be in abundance because of their noisy antics and attraction to urban and inhabited environments, there are just 27,800 breeding pairs of red-billed gulls left nationwide, and the main offshore breeding colonies have suffered population plummets of 80% to 100% since the mid-1960s.

Tim outlined a project undertaken by Council in 2019. A 600 strong colony had established itself at an old boatyard on Wynyard Point, in Auckland Central. This site was earmarked as the location for the new SeaLink terminal as part of re-development of the waterfront; resulting in the loss of the breeding habitat.

There was one crucial question: could the birds be successfully enticed to move? Tim described red-billed gulls as notoriously itinerant and displaying plastic behaviour, making them fairly easy to work with as a species and more likely to adapt to a relocation.

In 2019 a new site was established some 150m north of the colony site; it was landscaped with driftwood and discarded nesting material from the old site and seeds from fennel and coastal vegetation were sown to help create the feeling of home. The new colony faces the water, is the same elevation and was made to look as similar as possible to their previous home. Then eight 3D printed red-billed gull decoys were set up across the site.

In August the first birds started to trickle back and happily joined their 3D printed companions. Their nesting activity started through September and by mid-January there were over 1,500 birds (adults, chicks & fledglings) – so it was a hugely successful relocation.

It was the largest mass relocation of a bird colony in NZ, and an important pilot as the country becomes increasingly urbanised, and coastal habitats are gobbled up for land development or by sea-level rise.

There were also white-fronted terns who nested at the old site but suitable habitat for them is yet to be re-established.



Spot the dummy

BEACH PATROL: The last beach patrol was in late June and we found: 1 white headed petrel, 2 red billed gulls that appeared to victims of fisherpersons, 1 diving petrel, 1 penguin, 1 huttons shearwater, and 1 fluttering shearwater. They looked a little worse for wear than the birds in these photos!!



White headed petrel



Diving petrel

The next beach patrol is scheduled for July 22.

Come join the Beach Patrol team for a pleasant walk up the beach, even just on a one-off basis

If you are interested, please contact us.

We go out rain-or-shine.

OSNZ NEST RECORD SCHEME You will find the full details on how to take part in this citizen-science project on the BIRDSNZ website.

The Scheme aims to provide comprehensive information on the breeding biology of NZ birds. The breeding information in the Scheme is used for research and management. Many papers and books have been written using data from the Scheme and so contributors can feel confident that their records are put to good use.

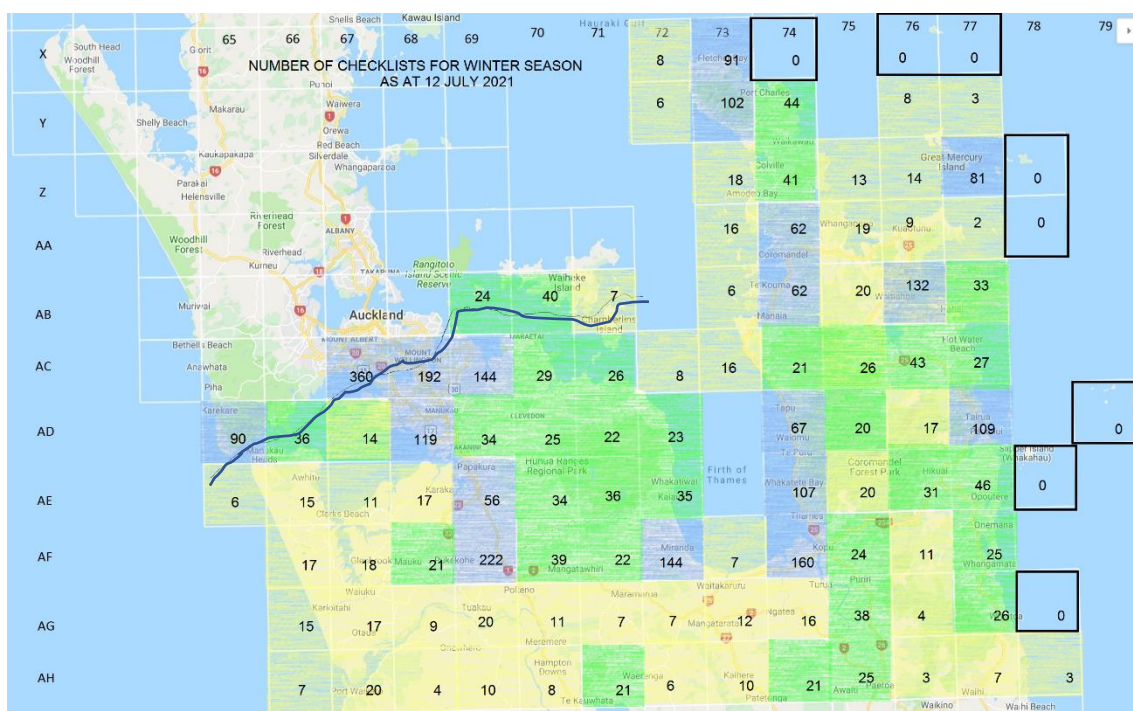
If possible, searches for nests should be made from the earliest time that birds are thought likely to be nesting right through the season until all species have stopped breeding; otherwise bias towards early spring and school holidays is likely to occur. Contributions from rural, forest and island habitats are very useful because most records are from around people's homes, generally in suburban surroundings.

Although cards are needed for all nests regardless of the number of visits, the most valuable information is from nests visited more than once. Even two observations on a nest have more than twice the value of a single one, even if the nest is totally destroyed the day after it was first found. It is not necessary to visit nests daily, especially if no change in contents is expected.

Give it a go, some species are starting breeding now such as spur-wing plover, kereru, blackbirds and harriers.

ATLAS REPORT

We are half way through our 3rd winter season for the atlas, and some good progress has been made since the start of June:



Please note:

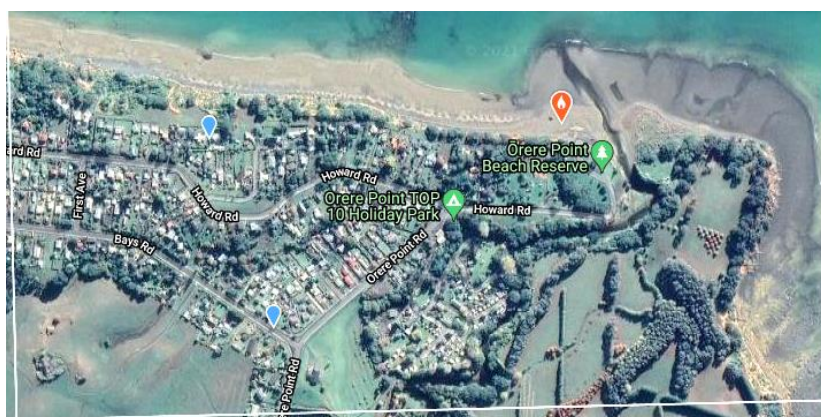
- the totals include winter 2019, 2020 and 2021 checklists
- **The yellow squares have had between 1 and 20 checklists submitted, so those are the ones to focus on.**
The green squares have had 21 to 50 and the blue squares 51 or more
- Blank squares are now confined to the islands, and a small headland. These all require boat access. We are hoping to organise a trip to one or more of the islands in the near future.

It was reported at conference that for the whole of NZ 88% of squares have had at least 1 count after 2 years of the atlas. For our own region 89% of squares have had a count for autumn and 90% for winter.

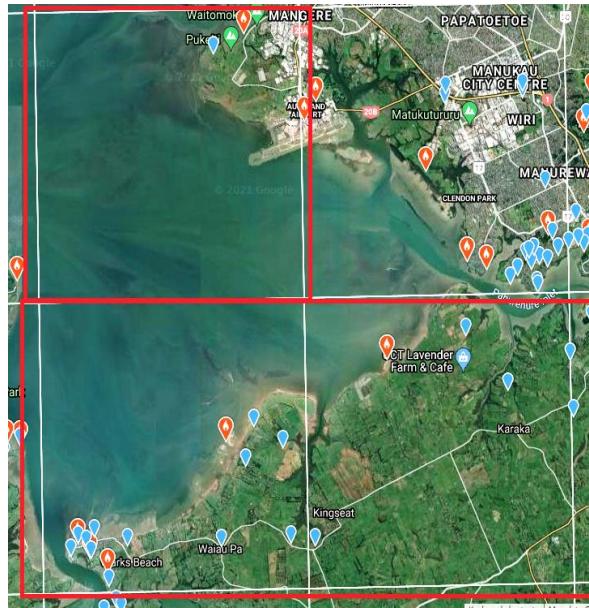
You will see that there are now quite a few more blue and green squares on the Coromandel Peninsula, reflecting the extra effort put in by Birds NZ members from around the country after the Thames conference.

The yellow squares are the ones that now need more attention. I have been trying to focus on these to get the counts above 20, but you will see that there are quite a few in the south of our region that need more effort. If you don't want to travel too far, the following squares are closer to home – refer the satellite maps below

AC72 – Orere Point



AD67 – west of the airport; AE67 – Clarks Beach and Waiau Pa; AE68 – Kingseat and Karaka



AF73 – small coastal strip near Waitakaruru – the bike trail runs along here



If you need more details or a topo' map of a particular square, let me know.

There is still a need to do night counts. This only needs to be a minimum of 5 minutes, and even if you see or hear no birds, it is still important to record this.

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 send me the following details:
Exact location of sighting, Date, Time, Species, Number of birds seen

Keep sending in your interesting or unusual sightings over the next month or so.

Happy birding! Sue





Through Predator Free Franklin we have made contact with Otatau School who have an enthusiastic group of students called the **Rat Rangers**. We hope to enlist their help with bird counts in the three atlas squares near the school. As an introduction, back in late June, Wendy gave a presentation to the Rat Rangers which touched on the Bird Atlas, migrating godwits, SIPO banding and flags, beach patrol, and the Garden Bird survey.

We are currently sorting out a date for the Rat Rangers to take part in the bird ID part of a beach patrol, and another date to do some atlas squares on farm ponds and bush areas in the district.



A reminder that Matuku Link are developing a database of boom onset with the goal of establishing whether there is a regional difference in onset of booming but over time may also increase awareness of matuku presence generally and add to knowledge of their site preferences.

When and where did you hear the first bittern of the upcoming season.

Email your first boom to matukulink@gmail.com

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.



Karamea Wild 10 July at 11:03 · Facebook for Android · 🌐

Kereru, in cute mode....



RNZ.CO.NZ

Rare New Zealand black-fronted tern seen in Australia for first time



BLOG.DOC.GOV.T.NZ

The hidden risk for the world's smartest bird

[LEARN MORE](#)



YOUTUBE.COM

Waitakere Grey Faced Petrel



SCIBLOGS.CO.NZ

Stoatally different! How the 'science of individuals' is changing how we see pests.



Wendy Goad 9 July at 17:28 · 🌐

Spends alot of time on our roof. Is very handsome; but take a close look at the feet!!





NEWSIDENTIST.COM

We may finally know how migrating birds sense Earth's magnetic field



LIVESCIENTE.COM

Tasmanian devils wipe out colony of little penguins in major conservation backfire



Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research 22 June at 19:02 · 🌐

[#DidYouKnow...](#)

Captain James Cook said of the bellbird
 "This wild melody was infinitely superior to any that we had heard of the same kind; it seemed to be like small bells most exquisitely tuned..."

.... [More](#)



NEWSIDENTIST.COM

Seagull eggs in the UK have been contaminated with plastic additives



Philip Eric Hammond ▶ **Birds Auckland** 18 June at 22:02 · Facebook for Android · 🌐

Bittern near Waimauku. Photo taken on my cellphone



Avian Conservation & Education Network 15 June at 16:58 · Facebook for Android · 🌐

Goodmorning world

Guira Cuckoos (*Guira guira*) in Brazil by Melissa Groo.

The kotuku seen by those of us who were at Miranda on Sunday for the wader census. Photo courtesy of Pūkoro Shoresbird Centre.



SCIBLOGS.CO.NZ

We discovered what's killing the world's rarest penguin – and it could help us make a vaccine



Marie-Louise Myburgh ▶ **Birds Auckland** 13 June at 09:06 · 🌐

Attacked on Maraetai's beach! Danger zone!

Happy birding!

Wendy and Sue