

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

June 2021

www.birdsnz.org.nz and <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/birding/#publications>



Greetings

Winter can be a challenging time for birds and birders. Yesterday in Upper Hutt we had snow and the silveryeyes were most grateful for some supplementary feed. In this newsletter there is a call for help with the East Harbour banded dotterel project. This is a great opportunity to participate in a fascinating project which will run for another five years. No prior experience is required to join this project. Note, there is still time to participate in the National Garden Bird survey which continues to the 4th of July.

Geoff de Lisle



Monthly Meetings

Wellington Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) hold monthly meetings on the first Monday of the month. The meetings are managed by a group of experienced professional ornithologists, led by Rod Hitchmough. Members are urged to contact osnzwell@gmail.com with suggestions for speakers. Meetings will continue the hybrid combination of Zoom and face to face meetings at the Te Papa Collections Building, 169 Tory Street. The Zoom technology provides the opportunity to have speakers from throughout New Zealand.

Monday 5th of July 2021, Nights on the Knights: Seabird research on the Poor Knights islands **Edin Whitehead, University of Auckland**

Zoom Meeting. Summary: We can learn a lot about the state of our oceans from seabirds - by tracking their movements and monitoring their health. Over the past four years, we've been working on a handful of species that call Te Moana-nui-o-Toi (the Hauraki Gulf) home, and most of our work has been on the Poor Knights islands studying rako (Buller's shearwaters) and titi wainui (Fairy prions). I'll share some of the results we've got so far as well as an insight into the nightlife on a seabird island, and the plans we're making for ongoing research and conservation of seabirds in the region.

Monday April 5th: Migration timing in a changing world: insights from New Zealand-wintering Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots, Phil Battley, Massey University

Studies dating back to 2008 using geolocator and GPS tracking devices have provided valuable insights into the migration of godwits and more recently knots.

Battley, PF et al. (2020)., Interacting Roles of Breeding Geography and Early-Life Settlement in Godwit Migration Timing. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*. 8 <https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/15885>

Monday May 3rd: Sexual differences in foraging behaviour put female brown skuas at risk of human-wildlife conflict. Hendrik Schultz.

Hendrik's talk was based on his doctoral studies on the brown skua on Rangatira (South East Island), Chatham Islands. He used GPS trackers to follow the foraging behaviour of male and female birds. The female skua

frequently visited Pitt island which is only 2 km from Rangatira. They were scavenging sheep carcasses which made a significant part of their diet. In contrast, male skua spent most of their time close to the Rangatira with the majority of their diet being burrow-nesting white-faced storm petrels. Culling of female skua has occurred on Pitt Island because they have been seen as a threat to livestock.

Schultz, H. et al.. (2021) Sex-specific foraging of an apex predator puts females at risk of human-wildlife conflict. J. Animal Ecology. April. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33844849/>

Regional Representative: **This position is currently vacant.** osnzwelly@gmail.com

Regional Recorder: Peter Hodge peter.hodge@gmail.com

Birds New Zealand Regional Roundup: Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929 osnzwelly@gmail.com

Wellington Harbour Survey: Geoff de Lisle, Stuart Nicholson

Mist netting – Matu Booth, manager@ngamanu.co.nz Nga Manu, Waikanae

Ross Pickard ross.pickard@hexagonsi.com Wellington

Winter Woolly Bird Count – June 12th

This event was organised by Sam Hughes from Wonky Stitches with help from Hutt City. The event was highly successful with kids of all ages searching for woolly birds. Donations went to the Wellington Harbour Little Penguin study.



How Many Birds are there in the World?

This question has recently been addressed in an article by Australian researchers (Corey et al., 2021). The short answer is that it is estimated that there are approximately **50 billion** birds in the world.

How did the researchers estimate the number of birds in the world given the deficiencies of existing data with only a few species' abundance well known and most poorly characterised. They used a statistical approach to estimate species-specific abundances. The initial steps were to model the relationship between relative abundance in eBird and the "true" density of a species in a given region. Weighted density estimates were determined for each species and together with a species range map an estimate was made of the global abundance.

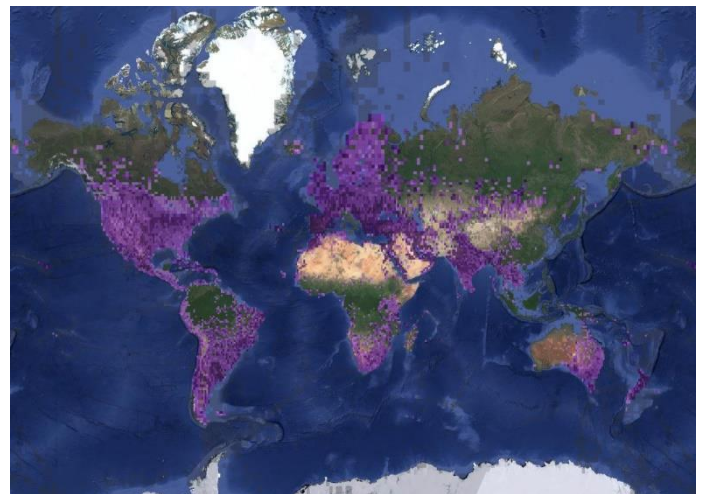
A finding of the study was that there are many rare species and relative few common species.

Significance

"For the fields of ecology, evolutionary biology, and conservation, abundance estimates of organisms are essential. Quantifying abundance, however, is difficult and time consuming. Using a data integration approach integrating expert-derived abundance estimates and global citizen science data, we estimate the global population of 9,700 bird species (~92% of all extant bird species). We conclude that there are many rare species, highlighting the need to continue to refine global population estimates for all taxa and the role that global citizen science data can play in this effort."

The 10 most common Birds in the world

1.	House sparrow	1.6 billion
2.	European starling	1.3 billion
3.	Ring-billed gull	1.2 billion
4.	Barn swallow	1.1 billion
5.	Glaucous gull	949 million
6.	Alder flycatcher	896 million
7.	Black-legged kittiwake	815 million
8.	Horned lark	771 million
9.	Sooty tern	711 million
10.	Savannah sparrow	599 million



Left, eBird map of the distribution of house sparrows, the world's most common bird.

Corey T. Callaghana, B, Shinichi Nakagawab, and William K. Cornwell (2021) PNAS May 25, 2021 118 (21) e2023170118; <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023170118>

Egyptian Vulture UK

Rare Bird Alert: Monday 14th of June 2021. "Everything else was blown out of the water when potentially Britain's first acceptable Egyptian vulture since 1868, toured the Isles of Scilly. It was found on St. Mary's at Peninnis Head in the morning then visited Tresco, before returning to St Mary's later in the day.

Tuesday 15th June, 2021. On the Isles of Scilly there was no sign of the Egyptian Vulture.

The identification of the species will be done by the British Birds Rarities Committee, and then passed to the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee to be verified or not as a true wild bird sighting.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cornwall-57483562> Egyptian vulture

East Harbour Banded Dotterel Project – the next five years.

The eastern shores of Wellington harbour from Eastbourne to Baring Head support a regionally significant population of banded dotterels / pohowera. They have been actively studied and managed since 2011 by MIRO, Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika, Birds New Zealand, the Friends of Baring Head Trust, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Hutt City Council. During this time the significant threats to banded dotterels have been identified, including human interference of nesting areas, and predation of eggs and chicks by hedgehogs and domestic and feral cats. Actions to mitigate against these threats include trapping and night shooting of avian predators, reducing the level of human interference by fencing and the use of signage, the placement of a rāhui, community education and advocacy. While nesting losses are still high in the East Harbour the banded dotterel hatching success has increased from 3 to 57% per year.



Recently, the management of East Harbour banded dotterels has been reviewed and a strategy developed for the next 5 years. The strategy will be a collaborative effort between the six groups of the agencies listed above. The vision of the strategy is to ensure:

That the Eastbourne – Wainuiomata Coastline continues to support a healthy, self-sustaining breeding population of pohowera / banded dotterels, for our future generations to encounter and enjoy.

To achieve this vision, the following three management objectives have been developed:

- 1. The mean annual hatching success of pohowera / banded dotterel nests along the Eastbourne – Wainuiomata coastline between 2021 and 2026 is $\geq 40\%$.***
- 2. The mean average fledgling rate of pohowera / banded dotterel chicks along the Eastbourne – Wainuiomata region between 2021 and 2026 coastline is 1 chick per breeding pair per year.***
- 3. That there is no net loss in the total area of pohowera / banded dotterels nesting habitat along the Eastbourne – Wainuiomata coastline between 2021 and 2026.***

The management actions proposed to address the vision have been detailed in the new strategy. MIRO, the Eastbourne conservation group will lead the monitoring and Wellington Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) will continue to play a major part in this aspect of the banded dotterel project. Banding and flagging of birds will continue and will be an important tool for monitoring.

Monitoring Objectives

- 1. To quantify the mean annual hatching success of pohowera / banded dotterel nests at the Robinson Bay, Lake Kohangapiripiri and Baring Head / Orua – pouanui nesting areas each year between 2021 and 2026.***
- 2. To quantify the mean annual fledgling rate of pohowera / banded dotterel chicks at the Robinson Bay, Lake Kohangapiripiri and Baring Head / Orua – pouanui nesting areas each year between 2021 and 2026.***
- 3. To monitor the local survival and movements of individually marked juvenile and adult pohowera / banded dotterels each year between 2021 and 2026.***

Help Wanted

The success of the East Harbour banded dotterel project depends on regular monitoring of the banded dotterel nesting areas, Eastbourne beach, Pencarrow Lakes and Baring Head. During the breeding season monitoring will be weekly / fortnightly and includes identifying breeding pairs, locating nests and chicks. Training in monitoring will be available if required. Please let me know if you can help and would like to be on the Banded dotterel email group. Geoff de Lisle osnzwelly@gmail.com

New Caledonia Revisited

PAP the Eastbourne banded dotterel has been observed back in New Caledonia. On the 22nd of April this year David Ugolini, President of the Societe Caledonienne d'Ornithologie reported that PAP was seen yesterday at Nakutakoin, near Nouméa, New Caledonia, the same place it was seen last year. This event received considerable publicity in New Caledonia and was featured on television news, including footage of Parker Jones from MIRO on a video call to David Ugolini. The Societe Caledonienne d'Ornithologie will continue to monitor Nakutakoin for banded dotterels over the next 5 years of the East Harbour project. A marina project planned for Nakutakoin has been delayed because of the current economic crisis.



Last breeding season PAP attempted to breed on the Eastbourne beach with his new partner PEY. Regular monitoring of banded dotterels has started on the East Harbour as the birds begin to return to their breeding areas. In 2020 PAP was last seen in New Caledonia on the 27th of August 2020 and arrived back in Eastbourne on the 1st of September.

The following link is the TV report from New Caledonia which was screened on the 25/5/2021

<https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/nouvellecaledonie/emissions/19h30>

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Is the genetic integrity of the world's rarest kiwi at risk from hybridisation?

By: [Lara Shepherd](#) ,On: 9 Jun 2021

The rowi is New Zealand's rarest kiwi with only about 600 individuals left in the wild in a single population at Ōkārīto. A number of suspected hybrids between rowi and little spotted kiwi have been found over the years.

This led the Department of Conservation to wonder whether the genetic integrity of rowi had been compromised by an influx of little spotted kiwi genes, and a recent collaboration between Te Papa and Kristina Ramstad (University of South Carolina Aiken), Hugh Robertson and Rogan Colbourne (Department of Conservation) examining the extent of this hybridisation is described here by Science Researcher Lara Shepherd and Curator Vertebrates Alan Tennyson.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2021/06/09/is-the-genetic-integrity-of-the-worlds-rarest-kiwi-at-risk-from-hybridisation/>

Shepherd LD, Tennyson AJD, Robertson HA, Colbourne RM, Ramstad KM. 2021. Hybridisation in kiwi (*Apteryx*; *Apterygidae*) required taxonomic revision for the Great Spotted Kiwi. *Avian Research* 12: 24.

What is the real scientific name for great spotted kiwi?

By: [Lara Shepherd](#), On: 27 May 2021

The name *Apteryx haastii* was applied to great spotted kiwi in 1872. However, a recent study by Researcher Lara Shepherd, Vertebrate Curator Alan Tennyson, and collaborators, has shown that *Apteryx haastii* is not what we thought it was.

We sequenced DNA from the two *Apteryx haastii* type specimens. Our DNA results, combined with analysis of their morphology, indicated that they were indeed hybrids between rowi and little spotted kiwi. This means that *Apteryx haastii* is not the correct scientific name for the birds that today are known as great spotted kiwi.

Therefore, another scientific name was needed to define what is now widely known as the great spotted kiwi. Consequently, we resurrected the name *Apteryx maxima*, which has not been used since 1893, for the spotted kiwi from the northwest South Island. Our genetic analysis confirmed that the [type specimen](#) of *Apteryx maxima*, which is held at Te Papa, is not a hybrid and is representative of the kiwi in this region.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2021/05/27/what-is-the-real-scientific-name-for-great-spotted-kiwi/>

The magic of the Kermadecs – extreme birding in subtropical seas

By: [Colin Miskelly](#), On: 19 Apr 20

A team of keen birders recently participated in an 11-day trip to the remote Kermadec Islands, about 800 km north-east of mainland New Zealand. Several of the species they encountered are rarely seen or photographed – in New Zealand or anywhere.

Trip organiser Scott Brooks has loaded more than 70 of his stunning images from the trip on to New Zealand Birds Online. Our Curator Vertebrates (and NZ Birds Online administrator) Colin Miskelly showcases the best of Scott's Kermadec bird images.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2021/04/19/the-magic-of-the-kermadecs-extreme-birding-in-subtropical-seas/>

Scott Brooks' blog on Birdingnz.net can be read on the following link.

<https://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=10871>

The 2021 NZ Garden Bird Survey will be held from **26 June to 4 July!**

This annual survey, run by Landcare Research and supported by Birds New Zealand, started in 2007 to study the distribution and population trends of our common garden birds. By participating you will help build a picture of how native and introduced birds are faring in our gardens, indicate which species may be in decline and guide future conservation efforts.

All instructions and an online survey form are available on <https://gardenbirdssurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz/>



Kapiti Island bird counts

Wellington branch in collaboration with DOC and landowners at Waiorua have recently started a 3-year block of counts on Kapiti Island. These continue a series of counts that started on the island in the 1970s and should reveal ongoing recovery of the bird population since the eradication of rats in 1996.

The count team is comprised of experienced counters from the last block of counts (undertaken about 15 years ago), with one-on-one training of new (and younger!) team members. The four trainee spaces per trip are offered to Waiorua landowners, Te Atiawa rangatahi, and DOC staff in the first instance (DOC are funding the boat trips and other incidental costs). However, two branch members have so far been able to participate in training opportunities, as explained in this recent article in Kapiti News:

Colin Miskelly

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kapiti-news/news/study-will-strengthen-kapiti-island-bird-population-data/O2RCJHS2PQ7GPJQDMGPY37CYZY/>

Bird Snippets

Wrybill, Lyall Bay, Wellington

Michael Szabo » Fri Mar 26, 2021 There was a Wrybill on the beach in Lyall Bay, Wellington, this morning. First reported by local resident Michelle Wilhlem, she was told by another local that it had been there for a few days. BirdingNZ.net

Link to photo: <https://scontent.fpmr1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/...e=60841027>

Wellington City biodiversity

SomesBirder » Mon Apr 19, 2021

There was an Eastern Great Egret on the beach at the northern end of Sorrento Bay in Eastbourne this evening; probably just a bit after 5:20pm. Approximately twenty minutes later I found it on the rocky shore just west of the beach. It was pretty mind-blowing to see the egret there, even if it isn't very far from the Hutt River Estuary. BirdingNZ.net

Black-fronted terns, Te Raekaihau Point, Wellington

Michael Szabo » Sat Apr 24, 2021 Saw 9 Black-fronted Terns with c100 White-fronted Terns on rocks off the point around midday today. Photos posted here with my eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S86208354> BirdingNZ.net

Black-fronted Tern, Petone wharf

Michael Szabo » Wed May 05, 2021

Found a Black-fronted Tern with c100 White-fronted Terns on Petone wharf on Monday morning. Also present were 2 Caspian Terns on the beach nearby, a large flock of Fluttering Shearwaters offshore, and a Spotted Shag at the end of the wharf. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity

Angus Fordham » Sun Jun 06, 2021

When I was out and about on Tuesday afternoon, (1 June 2021), on the corner of Great Harbour Way and then Shelly Bay Rd, close to where the fenced off wharf is. I briefly saw a Reef Heron. First it was in the shallow water near the rocky edge and then in flight, flying away. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity

Finn Davey » Wed Jun 09, 2021 8:45 pm

Just spent the day filming at Mt Vic, heard Kaka flying and squawking all day. It was great to hear so many in the city. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity

ledzep » Sun Jun 13, 2021

The Pateke in Zealandia have 4 chicks, quite active during the day at the moment on the little stream beside Te Mahanga track between the lower dam and upper dam. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity

ledzep » Tue Jun 22, 2021 9:21 am

At 5.30 pm, dusk on a wet and windy Wellington evening there were 3 Kaka's in the big tree on the corner of The Terrace and Bowen St, above the roadworks and traffic congestion. Directly opposite The Beehive in the centre of Wellington. BirdingNZ.net

Banded dotterel, Pauatahanui

Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle, 23rd June. A group of 23 banded dotterel observed at Ration Point, Pauatahanui. No bands or flags seen. Seen together with South Island pied oystercatchers.



Wandering albatross, Paraparaumu Beach

Helen and Tony Griffiths, 27th June. Found dead on Paraparaumu beach opposite Tahi Road.

Zero counts help to define areas where nocturnal birds, such as morepork, do not occur. The following table are the squares where more than 10 hours of nocturnal counts have been recorded.

Square	Location	Checklist	Diurnal hours	Nocturnal hours
BW66	Mana Island	40	26.97	12.88
BX69	Upper Hutt	311	52.13	14.87
BW67	Mana Island	608	154.46	34.37
BZ66	South Wgtn.	3319	1061.18	45.43

Note. Mana Island covers 2 squares. One of the Mana Island squares (BW66) includes seabird colonies that are frequently visited at night. Both Mana squares have rowi. BZ66 has the distinction of having the most checklists of any Wellington square and likely any square in New Zealand.

4-wheeled drive vehicle wanted

A couple of squares on the south west area of Wellington are only accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicle. If anybody with such a vehicle can help, would they please contact Geoff de Lisle osnzwelly@gmail.com. Wellington Birds New Zealand will pay petrol expenses.

New Zealand Bird Atlas

30 th June 2021	Wellington*	New Zealand
Atlasers	266	966
Total squares	105	3232
Squares with data	103 (98.1%)	2870 (88.8%)
Total Species	133	272
Total checklists	18795 179 checklists / square***	148,774 46 checklists / square

* Note the Wellington Atlas region includes both the Wellington and Wairarapa Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) If regions.

Wellington members are to be congratulated for their support of the New Zealand Bird Atlas. While major progress has been made there are still some significant gaps to be filled. The goal of the project for each square is to have checklists covering each of the major habitats in the four different seasons. We are currently in the winter month quartile. One of the major deficiencies are nocturnal counts where many squares have no nocturnal checklists. Note it is important to include those nocturnal counts where no birds are recorded.

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Annual Conference / AGM

The Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) annual conference was held over Queen's Birthday weekend with a record attendance of 220, including 20 Wellington members. Colin Miskelly, Ian Armitage and Johannes Fischer (Wellington members) presented papers. The Abstracts for the conference can be found at the following weblink

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-NZ-Bird-Conference-Programme.pdf> .

Congratulations to David Lawrie and Murray Williams, a Wellington member (pictured) who were made fellows of Birds New Zealand (OSNZ). Murray has had a long-time career

as a waterfowl biologist with the New Zealand Wildlife Service and the Department of Conservation before he joined Victoria University to teach restoration ecology. The resumes of the new fellows will be published elsewhere.



The **2022 New Zealand Bird Conference and 83rd Birds NZ AGM** will be held in Christchurch from 4-6 June! The 2020 conference was originally planned to be held in Christchurch but got cancelled due to the lockdown associated with the covid virus epidemic.

Picture (above): The new mural was outside the Civic Centre, Thames where the Conference / AGM was held. Photo, Dallas Bishop.



Fernbirds - Frethey Road, Turangi

During our road trip to the Birds New Zealand Conference we called in at Frethey Road which going north on Highway 1 is second on the left after crossing the Turangi River. The road runs down to Lake Taupo and is a known area for fernbirds. We found 3 fernbirds as well as 370 black swans on the lake. We did see a real pukeko in addition to the new mural on the toilet block. Unfortunately, no blue duck were found when we stopped at the Red Hutt pool on the Tongariro river. Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop.



Mana Island

The following are some recent observations made while carrying out volunteer duties for the Department of Conservation on Mana Island.

During our 10 day stay in May we found the remains of six pukeko. The likely cause of their demise was by avian predator by either one of the many resident harriers or perhaps the falcon present was responsible. A harrier was observed feeding on the remains of a pukeko carcass but it may have been an opportunist, cleaning up a falcon kill. .



Takahe on Mana Island are all individually marked with colour bands. Monitoring takahe is mostly done visually and by tracking birds carrying radio transmitters. Trail cameras can be a useful, additional monitoring tool, especially for “secretive” birds which are not carrying transmitters. These have been set up near takahe water troughs and on the tracks which are regularly used by takahe as a food source. The most commonly observed bird on the trail cameras were pukeko. Other birds captured by trail cameras were paradise shelduck, blackbird

and rowi (Okarito brown kiwi).



One of the interesting video clips from a trail camera was of a harrier on the ground, most probably looking for lizards. The pictured bird has a prominent white patch on the back of its head. This is a feature of juvenile

harriers which are dark brown and have a dark brown eye. Harriers become paler with successive moults.

Fernbirds were translocated to Mana Island in April 2019. All translocated birds were colour banded. By June 2021 fernbirds are commonly found throughout the island. The overwhelming majority of the fernbirds recently observed have not been banded, indicating that they were bred on the island.

Kereru are a rare visitor to Mana Island. During the last couple of months a kereru has been present, often feeding on kowhai outside House 3. Another rare visitor, morepork was present in May this year being heard by the houses, Forest Valley and on the top of the island. As the plantings mature it is expected that kereru and morepork will become permanent residents on Mana Island.



Photographs, Top two Dallas Bishop. Remaining photographs are screen grabs from trail camera videos.

Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop