

# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

## Wellington OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

September 2021

[www.birdsnz.org.nz](http://www.birdsnz.org.nz) and [www.notornis.org.nz](http://www.notornis.org.nz)



Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Nō Tiamana ōku tipuna.

Nō Hōrana ahau.

Kei te Whanganui-a-Tara taku kāika ināianeī.

Kō Te Ātiawa ratou, kō Taranaki Whānui, kō Ngāti Toa, te iwi mana whenua o kōra.

Kō Johannes tōku ingoa.

Kei te tino koa tōku ngākau.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Greetings, greetings greetings to you all.

My ancestors come from Germany.

I grew up in Holland.

I live in Wellington.

Te Ātiawa, Taranaki Whānui, and Ngāti Toa are the iwi over there.

My name is Johannes and I am very pleased to be here.

Therefore, greetings, greetings, greetings to you all.

Kia ora everyone, as mentioned above, I am Johannes, and I am your new Regional Representative! Recently, I have taken over from Geoff de Lisle, who so kindly still compiled this newsletter. I will try my best, I will work hard for you all, and by doing so I will attempt to fill the very large shoes Geoff has left me. I am looking forward to meeting you all and sharing a passion for birds with you. That passion, I most certainly have, and it has taken me from Europe, via Africa and Asia, to New Zealand, where I now work for DOC on seabirds, and Diving Petrels in particular. Most of my work is based in Murihiku, the far South, but recently, and to my delight, Diving Petrels have started to show up in Wellington as well. More on this later on in the newsletter. Hopefully, I can meet you all soon in person, or online (thanks to our great hybrid approach to meetings) during one of our great monthly meetings, but if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please always feel free to reach out. Once more, I am delighted to be your new RR and I am looking forward to serving all of you.

Ngā mihi,  
Johannes Fischer

### Greetings

The Covid-19 Level 3 and 4 has interrupted my birding activity, including the East Harbour banded dotterel project and the local penguin studies. While I am no longer the Wellington Regional Representative, I am continuing to compile the local newsletter and will produce 4 issues a year. No doubt the newsletter will continue to concentrate on local birding events and observations, many of which have been “cut and pasted” from the internet. Contributions to the newsletter are most welcome with the only limitation being that they have an avian theme.

### Geoff de Lisle

## Monthly Meetings

The Wellington Region will continue to hold monthly meetings regardless of whether or not we are under a Covid-19 lockdown. **Under Covid-level 2 we currently are unable to use the Te Papa Collections Building Meeting Room. ALL MEETINGS WILL BE ZOOM ONLY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.** When the Covid situation eases meetings will revert to 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 4<sup>th</sup> October Speaker: Lara Shepherd (Te Papa Tongarewa)**

#### **Prion evolution - new insights from DNA**

Prion species look very similar and have long confused ornithologists. Now DNA is helping answer some long-standing questions including the number of species and how they are related to one another.

You can join the meeting on **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 from 7.30 pm:**

- Online on Zoom via <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81774963623>

**The meeting will start at 7.45 pm.**

### **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September Speaker: Joakim Liman (Te Motu Kairangi and Predator Free Wellington)**

Joakim Liman in his talk described his leading role in the ecological restoration of Miramar Peninsula. Important aspects of the restoration project includes an extensive programme of planting native trees and plants and an associated removal of invasive weeds. Further information of this project can be found on the following website <https://www.temotukairangi.co.nz/>. Joakim has also had extensive involvement with Predator-Free Wellington (<https://www.pfw.org.nz/>). Miramar Peninsula is now approaching freedom of major pests, with rats currently only being present in a small number of isolated areas. The positive effects of the ecological restoration of Miramar Peninsula is now evident with increased numbers of native birds especially tui. Kereru are now nesting on the Peninsula. <https://www.facebook.com/TeMotuKairangi/>. The ecological restoration programme on the Miramar Peninsula faces some potential threats with proposed developments at Shelly Bay and Mount Crawford Prison.

### **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August: Integrated conservation of the Whenua Hou Diving Petrel**

#### **Johannes Fischer, Department of Conservation**

The Whenua Hou Diving Petrel is a critically endangered seabird, restricted to a single dune system in southern Aotearoa, in which a single colony of ~200 adults remain. By combining - analyses of at-sea distribution and behaviour, modelling of population dynamics, and studies of breeding biology, I facilitated the identification of suitable conservation strategies. Alan Tennyson, Te Papa, gave some preliminary insights into the latest genetic work that has been conducted to better understand this Nationally Critical taxon and its relationship to South Georgian and Common diving petrels. Johannes has finished his PhD studies but is continuing to work on the Whenua Hou Diving petrel. Details of Johannes's research can in found in a series of publications listed in the following link [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=10&q=Johannes+Fischer+petrel&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0,5](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=10&q=Johannes+Fischer+petrel&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5)

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

Edin's talk centred on her work on the Poor Knights Islands. She is currently working on her PhD studies on how seabirds act as environmental sentinels by looking at energy flows through the marine environment, and how this may change with a warming climate. Her focal species are pākaha/fluttering shearwaters, little shearwaters, and tītī wainui/fairy prions. The Poor Knights islands are predator-free and home to lizards, insects and birds, many of

which are very rare or extinct on the mainland. Edin is an award-winning photographer and her talk was most notable for her excellent photographs. Examples of her photographs can be found on her website <https://www.edinz.com/about/> and the book she published with Skye Wishart, “The Brilliance of Birds”.

- Whitehead, E. A., Adams, N., Baird, K., Bell, E. A., Borrelle, S. B., Dunphy, B. J., ... Russell, J. C. (2019). Threats to Seabirds of Northern Aotearoa New Zealand. Auckland, New Zealand: The Northern New Zealand Seabird Trust. [Related URL](#).  
URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/47737>  
Other University of Auckland co-authors: [Brendon Dunphy](#), [Todd Landers](#), [James Russell](#)
- Whitehead, E. A. (2018). *Age-related Physiological Change and Population Stress Variability in Grey-faced Petrels* The University of Auckland. ResearchSpace@Auckland.  
URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/37108>
- <https://www.penguin.co.nz/books/the-brilliance-of-birds-9780143772156>

## Species turnover in forest bird communities on Fiordland islands following predator eradications

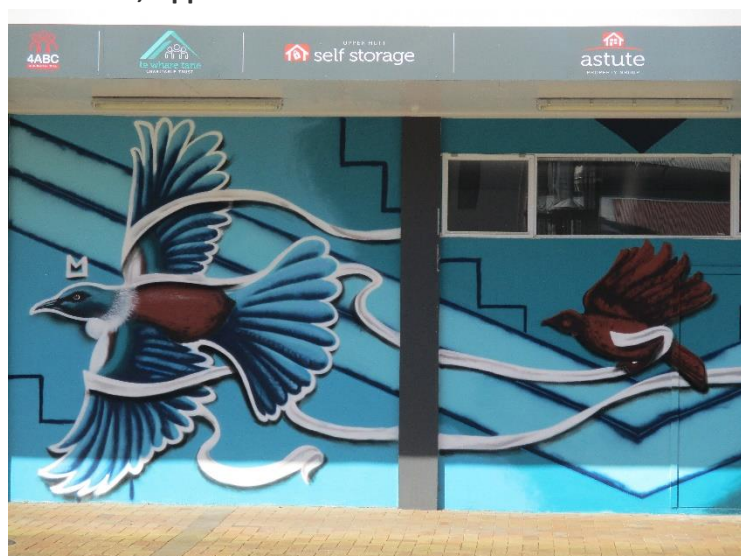
Colin M. Miskelly <sup>1</sup>Terry C. Greene <sup>2</sup>Pete G. McMurtrie <sup>3</sup>Kim Morrison <sup>4,5</sup>Graeme A. Taylor <sup>6</sup> Alan J.D. Tennyson <sup>1</sup>Bruce W. Thomas <sup>7,8</sup>

### Abstract:

Recent advances in the control of mammalian predators have begun to reveal interspecific competition as a key driver in the structure of New Zealand forest bird communities once predation pressure is reduced. We present evidence that, when at high densities, South Island robins (*Petroica australis*) may be responsible for declines in a suite of smaller native and introduced songbird species. Bird surveys undertaken on 47 islands in Breaksea Sound and Dusky Sound, Fiordland, during 1974 to 1986, were repeated on the same islands in 2016 or 2019. During the first block of surveys, Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) were present on two islands, and stoats (*Mustela erminea*) were known or presumed to regularly reach 43 of the remaining islands. The rats were eradicated in 1986 and 1988, and stoats have been controlled to zero density since 2001 on all 28 of the islands surveyed in Dusky Sound, and since 2008 on 12 of 19 islands surveyed in Breaksea Sound. Bird species that apparently benefited from pest mammal eradications included South Island robin (*Petroica australis*) and kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*), both of which are endemic. Species recorded less often after the eradications included tomtit (*Petroica macrocephala*), grey warbler (*Gerygone igata*), silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), and chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) – a mixture of endemic, native, and introduced species. We hypothesise that these five species have been outcompeted or displaced by the now widespread and abundant South Island robin, probably through aggressive interactions.

*New Zealand Journal of Ecology* (2021) **45(2)**: 3449 <https://newzealandecology.org/nzje/3449.pdf>

### Russell Street, Upper Hutt



## Common diving petrel – Miramar Peninsula

The following was posted on the **Te Motu Kairangi-Miramar Ecological Restoration** facebook page.

*We are stoked to have found a burrow of a common diving petrel (Pelecanoides urinatrix) on the peninsula! This could potentially be the first nesting attempt of this species on the Wellington mainland in the last 100 years! The burrow was made by a an apparently single male, that has been calling for a mate. Back in the day, these guys would have nested in huge numbers throughout the coastal forests around the peninsula together with other petrels, prions, and shearwaters. These birds would come crashing through the canopy at night and while wandering around to their underground burrows they would spread their rich guano around full of marine nutrients resulting in a lush forest. Therefore, the return of these seabirds is fantastic news for the future of the peninsula! We are currently keeping the location secret for the time being, so we can keep our wee single guy safe, as well as any potentially unfound burrows in the vicinity. These guys are extremely vulnerable to introduced predators, including rats, cats, stoats, and weasels. The return of diving petrels is a testament to the hard work that is being dedicated to the peninsula becoming a predator-free. The continued work of that and replanting the missing coastal forest is going to make a huge change for these guys! We will keep a close eye (but not too close) on this guy and hopefully he will find a mate soon!*

[Predator Free Wellington Predator Free Miramar Forest & Bird - Places for Penguins Miramar Peninsula](https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S93555740)  
<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S93555740> checklist includes a recording.

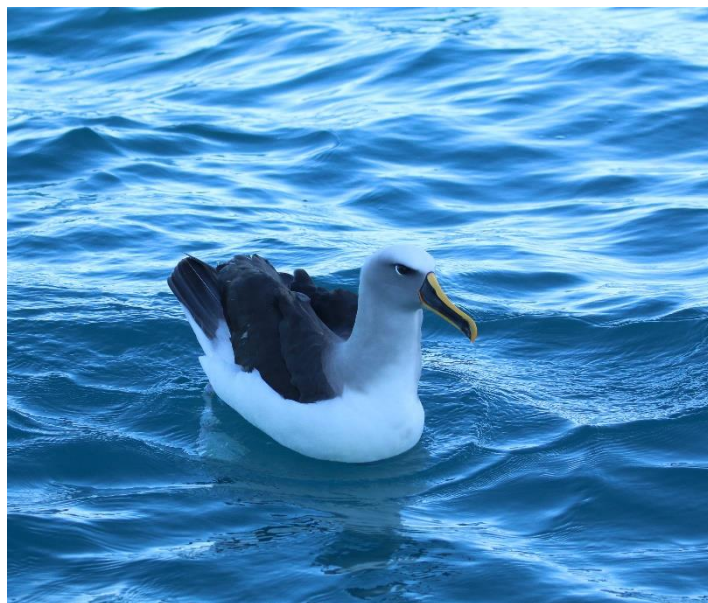
9<sup>th</sup> August 2021

## Cook Strait Pelagic trip – July 24

Wellington Birds New Zealand pelagic seabird trip to Cook Strait was blessed with a most acceptable winter's day including benign sea conditions (nobody was seasick). The number of birds was less than some of the previous trips and probably reflected many birds following hoki trawlers much further out in Cook Strait. However, we did see 6 different species of albatross / mollymawks, including a Buller's mollymawk (pictured). Thanks to Colin Miskelly sharing his eBird checklist, Michael Szabo for the organisation and Jono Delich, the skipper of the Seafarer 11.

eBird Checklist, 24<sup>th</sup> July, Cook Strait, 8.30am, 1 hour, 5 km

Red billed gull	5		
Black-backed gull	60		
Buller's mollymawk	1		
White-capped mollymawk	2		
Salvin's mollymawk	1	Norther giant petrel	1
Black-browed mollymawk	1	Cape petrel	2
Southern Royal albatross	1	Fairy prion	8
Northern Royal albatross	2	Fluttering shearwater	18





## Te Papa Blogs

### The final destination for well-travelled eggs

Isabell Milner, 21 June 2021

Over the course of many years, a tidy collection of bird eggs has made its way across the world. The collection's final resting place just so happens to

be here at Te Papa, where Natural History intern Isabella Milner has steadily worked through cataloguing it and packing the eggs away into their forever homes. Here she describes how eggs are identified despite having very little information to go on.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2021/06/21/the-final-destination-for-well-travelled-eggs/>

### Duck Tales: unveiling the ecology of the extinct Chatham Island duck

[Rodrigo Salvador](#) , 28 Jun 2021

Curators Rodrigo Salvador and Alan Tennyson, working with colleagues from GNS Science and the Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO-KNAW), used chemical analysis on the sub-fossil bones of this extinct duck to determine how it lived. Here they describe what they found.

Our research shows the importance that the marine environment played in the life of Chatham Island ducks.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2021/06/28/duck-tales-unveiling-the-ecology-of-the-extinct-chatham-island-duck/>

### Te Papa's DNA lab celebrates its fifth anniversary

[Lara Shepherd](#) , On: 24 Jun 2021

Our DNA lab, the only museum-based one in New Zealand, celebrated its fifth anniversary last year. Research Scientist Lara Shepherd summarises what we've learned so far.

The DNA lab is the only museum-based one in New Zealand. Since it opened we've steadily grown to have four permanent staff members who regularly use the lab, as well as several contractors. In addition to staff, 10 visiting researchers and students have also undertaken research in the lab.

DNA data produced in the lab has contributed to 60 scientific publications. In the last three years over a quarter of our science publications have included data generated in our DNA lab!

Most of our DNA research aims to identify specimens of plants and animals or to understand how species are related to one another. The DNA data has been used to describe 16 new species of plants and animals (three ferns, two liverworts, three land hoppers, seven orchids and one land snail). Some examples of the new species are shown below.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2021/06/24/te-papas-dna-lab-celebrates-its-fifth-anniversary/>

### The mystery of Augustus Hamilton's bird bone system

Melanie Ioane Warren, 31 Aug 2021

Melanie Ioane-Warren, one of our Natural History interns, talks about the important collection of bird bones gathered by the late Augustus Hamilton. Melanie is working on this bone collection together with Curators Alan Tennyson and Rodrigo Salvador, and GNS scientist Karyne Rogers. This year, one of Hamilton's fossil bird bone collections is the heart of a Natural History project. Nine large caramel-coloured boxes currently hold 1765 (and counting) bird bones that derive from endemic, introduced and extinct species. The most intriguing part is many of the bones have been marked with a number. It appears that Hamilton had a system in place. The big questions are 'what do these numbers mean and where exactly have these bones been collected from?'

Three of the ways we may be able to find answers include; studying Hamilton's journals, searching for clues by analysing other bird bones collected by Hamilton, and lastly, X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy measuring their chemical elemental composition.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2021/08/31/the-mystery-of-augustus-hamiltons-bird-bone-system/>

## Zealandia Australian Coot

A coot was recorded as an incidental finding by Ben Bell on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July.

Subsequent observations of coot were recorded on eBird but no additional records after the 29<sup>th</sup> of July.

The map (left) are the locations of coots recorded in the Atlas with closest record to Zealandia being over 50km away.

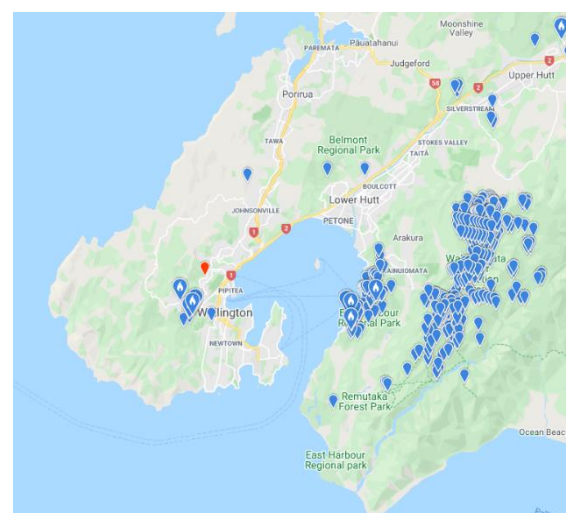
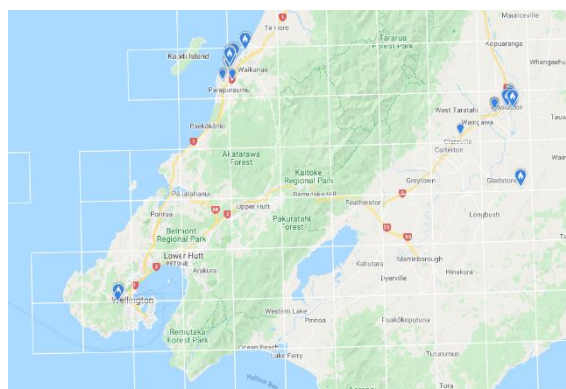
*“They appear to fly reluctantly from the water, pattering across the surface with a lot of splashing before finally taking off or settling in another area. However, they are strong fliers frequently covering large distances, usually at night. These flights and changes of location do not appear to be seasonal. Large flocks of coots may form after the breeding season.”* NZBirdsOnline

**Note**, Hugh Robertson observed a coot on the Wharf Pool, Te Papa on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 2018.

## Zealandia & beyond, rifleman/titipounamu

Rifleman (titipoumanu) were transferred to Zealandia in 2019. The last breeding season was highly successful with over 100 chicks fledged. In July this year a pair of rifleman from last year’s breeding season were observed on Wright’s Hill which is adjacent to Zealandia. This pair are likely to be setting up a territory to breed.

In August Brony Shephard, Zealandia volunteer and Te Ahūmairangi Hill Ecological Restoration coordinator, spotted a pair of rifleman at Te Ahumairangi (Tinakori) Hill. This is an exciting finding and is a reminder for members to keep an eye out for rifleman in Wellington beyond the sanctuary. The map (left) records the locations of rifleman which are widespread in the East Harbour regional park and the Remutaka Forest Park.



<https://www.visitzealandia.com/Whats-On/ArtMID/1150/ArticleID/349/Media-release-T%C4%ABtipounamnrifleman-pair-found-on-Te-Ah%C5%ABmairangi-Hill-for-the-first-time-in-100-years>

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Regional Recorder: Peter Hodge [peter.hodge@gmail.com](mailto:peter.hodge@gmail.com)

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

Mist netting – Matu Booth, [manager@ngamanu.co.nz](mailto:manager@ngamanu.co.nz) Nga Manu, Waikanae  
Ross Pickard [ross.pickard@hexagonsi.com](mailto:ross.pickard@hexagonsi.com) Wellington

## Starling Movements

Starlings are social birds which often feed in large flocks which will fly to evening roost sites.

A notable daily occurrence on Mana Island is the arrival at dusk of starlings from the mainland and their leaving the island at dawn the following morning. The largest number of birds doing this commute is during the winter. Unfortunately, there are no recent accurate counts of starlings moving between Mana Island and the mainland. Estimating the numbers of starlings is difficult with multiple flocks arriving / departing in low light conditions. The accompanying cropped picture (Dallas Bishop) was taken at dusk on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May this year. A total of 616 birds were present in the photograph, including the two flocks shown in the photograph. Flocks were arriving every few minutes over a period of half an hour. The total number of birds arriving was likely to have been in the order of 5-10,000.



Bob Brockie (1983) documented the roost and flightlines of starlings in the Wellington region. Major roosts of starlings in 1983 were Tokomapuna (Kapiti) Island, Gear "Island", Linden, Matiu / Somes Island, Wellington City and Mana Island. In 1983 Mana Island was still a farm and the ecological restoration programme did not start until the end of the 80s decade. The starlings were first reported to be roosting among the macrocarpa and boxthorn near the boatshed and houses. Over subsequent years, there has been an extensive re-vegetation programme and starlings currently roost in the same general area but occupy new plantings rather than the macrocarpa. M.J. Meads was reported to have estimated in 1971 that over a million birds flew in to Mana Island to roost in boxthorn at a point above the jetty. Smaller numbers (1327 & 2691) of starlings were recorded coming into Mana Island in November 1977 (Brockie, 1983).

[https://notornis.osnz.org.nz/system/files/Notornis\\_30\\_3.pdf](https://notornis.osnz.org.nz/system/files/Notornis_30_3.pdf)

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) roosts and flightlines near Wellington. R. E. Brockie Notornis, 30: (1983) 217-226.

## Starling Numbers in New Zealand

The common starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) was introduced into New Zealand in the early 1860s. There were multiple introductions throughout New Zealand by Acclimatisation Societies. In the Hawkes Bay four birds were recorded in 1875 and 11 years later numbered in hundreds of thousands. Starlings were considered to play an important role in the control of agricultural pests such as grass grub. There was a marked decrease in starling numbers associated with the use of DDT to control grass grub from 1948 to 1968. Following its ban DSIR commenced a research programme led by John Flux to investigate the use of starlings to control grass grub. Initial findings showed elevated levels of DDT in starlings found dead in nest boxes. Forty years later starlings still had high levels of DDT, greater than any of the other countries studied. Lessons from the 40 years of starlings at the nesting site in Belmont are the basis of a thought-provoking review article by the John and Meg Flux (2015).

Brockie and Duncan (2012) documented in Wellington a decline in starlings over a 37 year period, 1969 to 2006. They attributed the decline to a change in the landscape with a reduction in the area of extensive sheep grazing. Such areas have reverted to scrub, a habitat not favoured by starlings. A sudden decline in starling numbers was observed at the Belmont colony from 2005 to 2009 (Flux, 2010). The cause of this decline was not determined and more work was required to determine the contributions of such as predation, disease,

competition, and changes in land use or climate. Further evidence of a decline in starling numbers comes from the Garden Bird survey.

The annual Garden Bird survey has recorded a moderate decline in starling numbers (26% Nationally) from 2010 to 2020. This was the greatest decline of any bird species. A similar level of decline for starlings was observed when the Wellington results were analysed separately. The Garden Bird Survey bird documents numbers of birds from a selected range of habitats, principally house gardens. Important habitats used by starlings such as farmland, are poorly represented in the Garden Bird Survey. Consequently, the decrease in starling numbers recorded in the Garden Bird Survey may not reflect a decrease in starlings throughout New Zealand.

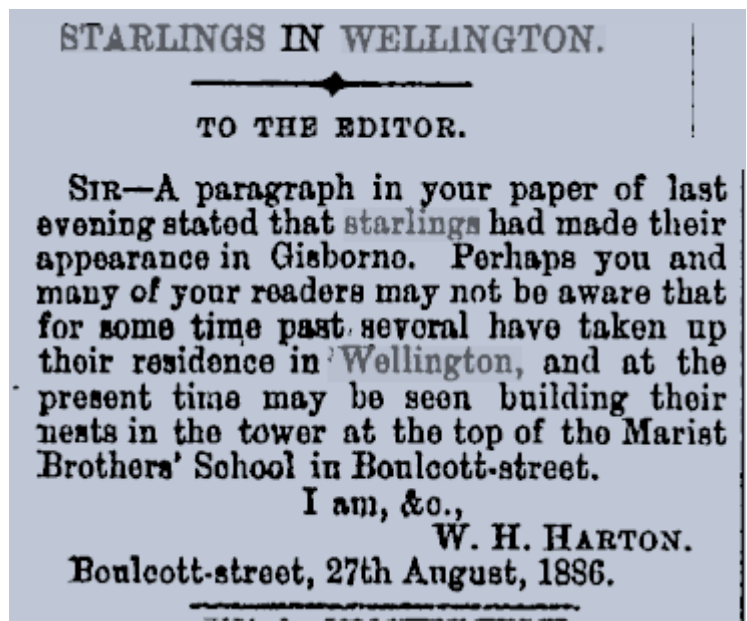
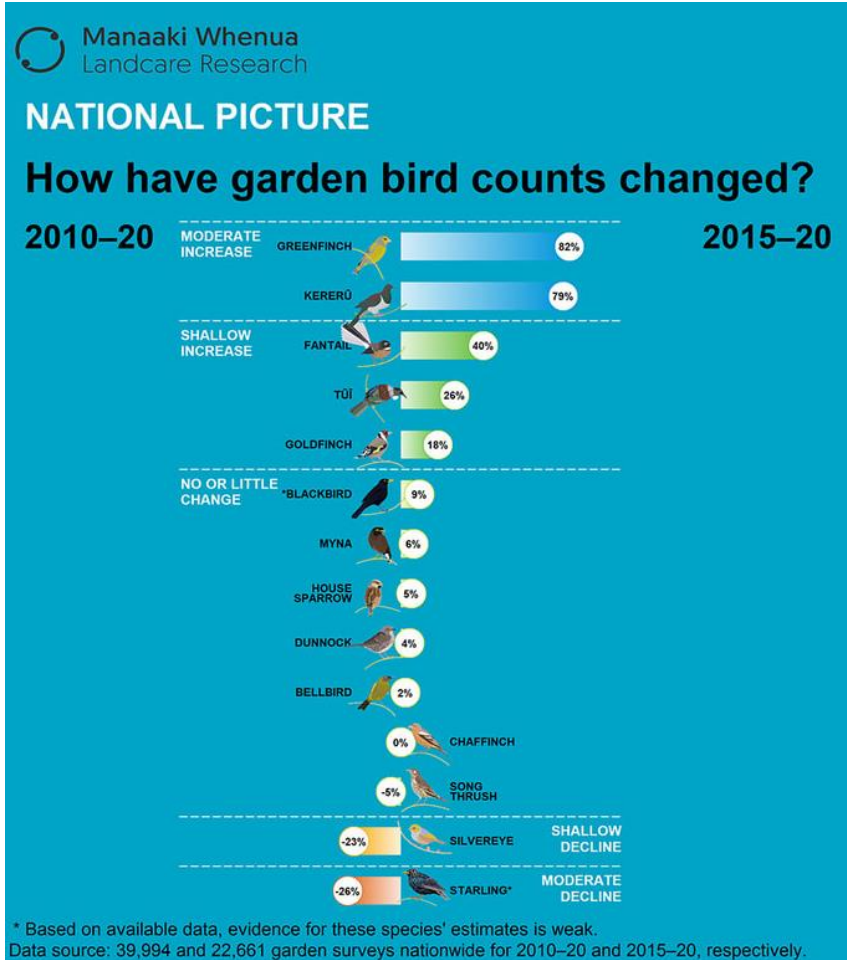
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds report a marked decline in the United Kingdom and Europe in the number of starlings which started in the 1980s. The starling has been red listed in the UK which reflects the major decline in bird numbers. The cause of the decline in starling numbers in the UK most probably reflects the reduced availability of soil invertebrates, possibly from dry summers and changes in land use.

<https://notornis.osnz.org.nz/system/files/Brockie%20%26%20Duncan%202012.pdf>

<https://notornis.osnz.org.nz/system/files/Flux%202010.pdf>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03014223.2015.1099549?needAccess=true>

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/starling/population-trends-conservation/>





## Starlings – eBird Highest Count

One of the functions in eBird is the listing of High Counts for various geographical regions. They can be found in eBird NZ (not eBird NZ Atlas), click on Explore and then enter the region of choice in Explore Region. This leads to a page of Sightings of the Region and includes an option of listing of High Counts. The High Count for starlings in New Zealand is 73,847 recorded by R.H.D. Stidolph on 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, 1944. The counts were taken from Stidolph's diaries and were entered into eBird by Joanna McVeagh and Nikki McArthur.

The following is the eBird entry, <https://ebird.org/newzealand/checklist/S70106254>

**22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1944. R.H.D. Stidolph with J. Cunningham. Historical,**

*Recorded by R.H.D. Stidolph in field notebooks stored in the Wairarapa Archives, Masterton Masterton, end of Gordon Street.*

*Starlings 73,847 – 4.10 to 5.15pm*

*Banded Dotterels 7*

The observation listed in eBird is also referred to in the book, **The Birds Around Us, R.H.D. Stidolph**

p36-37. *“On June 25 1944, Starling roost was located on the outskirts of Masterton, in high gorse at the end of Gordon Street. The birds were arriving from two directions, from either up or down the river as if they were using it as a guide. They first settled on poplars or willows, the latter being at times black with birds. There was a constant babble, like running water. Occasionally birds would fly up with a roar of wings wheel round and settle on the trees or the gorse. All gradually went down into the gorse, alighting at first of the tops of the bushes but rising now and again with a thunderous roar.*

*On July 15, a count of Starlings as they arrived at the roost gave a total of 59,000 but it could have been in excess of this number as the birds were flying low owing to a southerly. The biggest arrival was a flock estimated at about 17,500. Others were of 8,000, 5,000, 4000 and down to 20.*

*Another count of the Starlings on July 22 brought the tally to 73,000. They were much easier to count as they were flying high and diving down into the roost*

*On October 24 the roost had dwindled to about 6,900 birds, which arrived from 6.30 to 7.5pm. the largest flock being one of 600 birds but were many small parties of 50 to 100 and a number of birds arriving in twos. On June 23 the following year this roost was not in use, the birds flying over it from the west and continuing to the east.*

## Murmuration of starlings

*“a large group of birds, usually starlings, that all fly together and change direction together, or the act of birds doing this :”* **Cambridge Dictionary.** Named after the sound produced by multiple wingbeats. Most commonly seen when large numbers of starlings flock together prior to roosting. In Europe murmurations of starlings can occur with very large numbers of birds of 100,000 plus. Murmurations are thought to be an adaptation to prevent avian predation rather than a means to attract large numbers of birds to increase roost warmth.

Murmurations do occur in New Zealand with a good example from Nelson in May 2013.

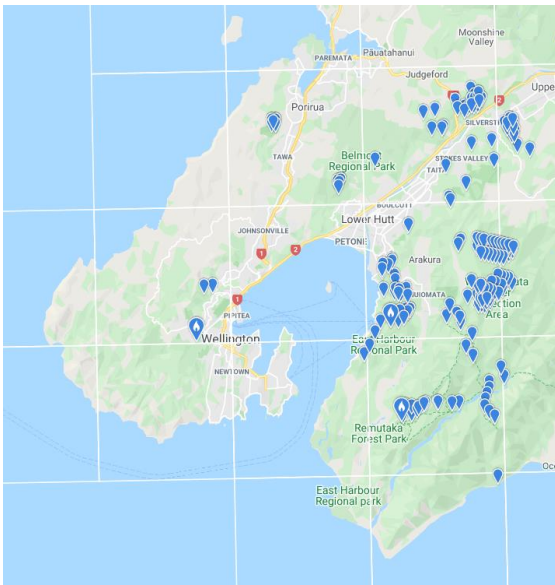
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jffNIFjt\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jffNIFjt_8) .

## Bird Snippets

### Tomtits Remutaka Summit

**ledzep** » Sun Jul 04, 2021

There aren't many Tomtits round Wellington, so please to hear and see them on the track between Remutaka summit and Pylon track. One calling about 200 m from the carpark at Remutaka Summit, and a nice male in the open at the junction with the Pylon track (3.5 km). Lovely Beech forest but otherwise very little bird life up there. BirdingNZ.net MAP, eBird Atlas locations of tomtits



### Remutaka Hill Road

**ledzep** » Sun Aug 01, 2021

Good number of Bellbird and Tomtit (photo from cellphone camera) on The Back Road between Remutaka incline and SH2 summit, and also heard a Whitehead on the main Incline trail not far from the Summit. On the large grassy area at Pharazyn reserve the Song Thrushes outnumber the Blackbirds. There were some Grey Ducks near the hide that looked about as Grey as you are likely to see round Wellington (dark bill, good supercilium, green speculum with some white feathers on the edge). No sign of the Coots that were there earlier in the year, and no sign of any Grey Teal though plenty of Shoveler around. BirdingNZ.net

### Falcon Carillon

**Colin Miskelly** » Wed Aug 11, 2021

The falcons have been using the carillon every fine day for the past fortnight. The attached image taken an hour ago by Te Papa photographer Jean-Claude Stahl



Picture, Jean-Claude Stahl

### Little penguin Wellington Harbour

**ledzep** » Wed Aug 11, 2021

A Little Blue Penguin in the water just off from Te Papa at lunchtime today. Quite active, and underwater most of the time popping up only briefly before diving again. BirdingNZ.net

### Antipodean albatross – Red Rocks

Michael Szabo reports, Wed Aug 11, 2021. Antipodean albatross at the quarry area at the entrance to Red Rocks.



Photo – submitted by Michael Szabo

### Miramar falcon

**Peter Hodge** » Wed Aug 18, 2021

I saw a falcon fly past our backyard in south Miramar this morning - I watched it for a couple of minutes as it chased after a large flock of rock pigeons, circled about, then heading towards the golf course. This is the second

time I've seen a falcon from our backyard in the last week or so. BirdingNZ.net

### Silver pheasant – Belmont

Lisa Fraser. August, 2021. A male silver pheasant visited Lisa's home on multiple occasions. No doubt a feral escapee.



### Wellington Carillon falcon

Colin Miskelly » Wed Sep 01, 2021

It has taken 15 days of lockdown (and several sightings of birds in flight from home), but a falcon is back on the carillon 'eternal flame' as I type.

It is such a calm, sunny day here in the capital that she is sunbathing, with her wings drooped. BirdingNZ.net

### Silver Pheasants

The **silver pheasant** (*Lophura nycthemera*) is a species of [pheasant](#) found in forests, mainly in mountains, of [mainland Southeast Asia](#), and eastern and southern [China](#), with [introduced](#) populations in [Hawaii](#) and various locations in the [US mainland](#) (Wikipedia).

There are no records of silver pheasants in New Zealand in eBird. They are available for sale in New Zealand for \$95 each from Stoney Oaks Wildlife Park, Taranaki.

### Golden Pheasants

The **golden pheasant** (*Chrysolophus pictus*), also known as the **Chinese pheasant**, and **rainbow pheasant**, is a [gamebird](#) of the order [Galliformes](#) (gallinaceous birds) and the family [Phasianidae](#) ([pheasants](#)) (Wikipedia).

It is native to forests in mountainous areas of western [China](#), but feral populations have been established in the multiple countries including the Americas and Europe. There are 10 records of golden pheasants in New Zealand in eBird, including a record from a mother and 4 chicks from Rangiwahia (Dec, 2019). There is one record from the Wellington region, a male in rural Upper Hutt in November 2014.



Photo – Geoff de Lisle

They are for sale in New Zealand from Woodlands Gamebirds for \$45 each.

### What birds should NOT be reported on

#### my eBird checklist?

eBird is intended for observations of wild, living birds. Please do not report dead or captive birds (e.g., do not include birds in a zoo exhibit or pheasants on a farm).

You may report any unrestrained bird you observe in the wild. However, please indicate suspected domestic or escaped birds whenever possible. Note that domestic, exotic, and escaped birds may be [marked "Rare" and/or unconfirmed](#) by our reviewers so these birds do not get confused for wild, naturally occurring species in our public database.

## East Harbour Banded Dotterel Survey

This breeding season banded dotterel are being monitored on the Eastbourne beach, Pencarrow Lakes and a new addition for the project, Baring Head. The Covid-19 Level 3 and Level 4 lockdowns prevented monitoring at Pencarrow Lakes and Baring Head but not at Eastbourne. The initial signs on the Eastbourne beach were most promising for a successful breeding season. PAP has returned from his second winter visit to New Caledonia and has established a nest with his mate from the previous season. Currently 7 nests have been found on the Eastbourne beach, including one nest with 6 eggs. However, very recently a domestic cat has been observed preying on a nest (see Facebook entry below). MIRO members have been very active in educating the local residents on the responsible care of cats and how to prevent them from preying on banded dotterel nests. The posting of the recent cat predation has led to a positive response from residents, including cat owners.

Currently 6 nests have been identified at Pencarrow Lakes and nesting has not yet been observed at Baring Head.

**24/9/2021** Chicks present at both Eastbourne and Lake Kohangapiripiri.

## MIRO Facebook, 18<sup>th</sup> September

*Help, we have pictures of a large tabby cat back on the Eastbourne foreshore at night time eating the banded dotterel eggs. Please, please, if you own a large tabby cat within 1km of the dotterel nesting area, please keep it inside at night. If you wish to confirm if it is your cat, we are happy to show you the pictures, no judgement on our part. There is no law about keeping cats in at night, but many Eastbourne residents would be appalled if they thought their cat was destroying an endangered species. Attached is a picture of a nest currently active at Eastbourne.*



## New Zealand Bird Atlas

Some recent key developments with the Atlas and eBird in New Zealand:

- Atlas challenges are now running on a monthly basis. These are a fantastic way for us to reward the hard working Atlas community with prizes donated by an increasing number of generous companies. These include Potton & Burton publishers who have donated several books already, including [Birdstories by Geoff Norman](#); Metalbird who have donated three metal sculptures, and our [current Atlas challenge prize](#); [Birds of the World](#), [Dead Rat](#) and hopefully more in the future. We regularly put out details about these on the Atlas eBird portal's [News page](#), as well as [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Let us know if

you prefer another medium for this news to be shared around.

- [Merlin Sound ID](#) is being developed for Aotearoa. We are working hard with the Merlin team in the US to work through the machine learning process using audio files of NZ species uploaded to the [Macaulay Library](#) via eBird checklists. There is a paucity of audio uploaded, but, through the recent Atlas challenge, we have seen a near 2000% increase(!) in audio being submitted to eBird in NZ. We are driven to keep promoting this to increase audio coverage for as many species as possible. We have a [priority list](#) at the moment to increase the number of recordings for these species, and this will continually be developed over time as we continue to teach the AI technology how to

identify different bird calls/songs. We're loving getting in to sound recording more (Pat and I have invested in [small external microphones](#) to record higher quality recordings) and we hope you feel motivated to try it out too. Finally if you have archived audio recordings, those are of immense value and please do get in touch for support uploading them to eBird.

- We are working with [Federated Farmers](#) to promote the Atlas project and hope to be able to possibly help with landowner engagement and access for Atlas surveys. More on that to come.
- We ran an Atlas Q&A session that was open to anyone during lockdown. This proved useful for a good handful of people who attended, and allowed us to run through some finer details with the group, some seasoned Atlasers as well as some new recruits. We're always happy to run these if there is the demand, so if you and your region wish to have us on hand for a Q&A or regional update, please get in touch, we are lining up another update session for Canterbury in the near future.
- Updated mapping files with Year 1 & 2 Atlas checklist points are available for all seasons [now on the Atlas portal](#). These can be imported into [Maps.Me](#) or Google Maps (or another mapping programme of your choice) to help with ascertaining where people have been within a square. They aren't perfect but are certainly another valuable tool in our mission of surveying grid squares thoroughly to detect all possible species.
- We recently were invited by the Predator Free New Zealand Trust to run a webinar on the Atlas.

Mark your calendars for [October Big Day](#) — **9th October 2021!** Big Days are a 24-hour opportunity to celebrate birds near and far and your Atlas checklists can still contribute to the day's effort.

You can [watch that here](#) if you missed it. We were grateful for the opportunity and hope we inspired many of the 170 participants to get involved.

- We are hoping to work with RNZ in the future to promote the Atlas as well as the Merlin Sound ID tool, however we are waiting for the tool to be released so this may be an early next year project. We have also reached out to DOC about their 'Sounds of Science' podcast and hope post lockdown we may hear more.
- We continue to work with the DOC Tier 1 team to upload their count data in to the portal, as well as advocate other agencies, regional councils and consultancies to be uploading count data too. If you know of others that you feel we should be contacting please don't hesitate to get in touch.
- The Atlas postcards and business cards have proven popular, please get in touch if you want some/more.
- October Big Day 2021 is coming up soon (9<sup>th</sup> October). All the details you need for that can be found [here](#).
- We continually update the portal with help articles etc. So if there is something you want us to cover more/better please just sing out. We have created a new '[How to Atlas](#)' page which we hope can be a good 'go-to' resource for new Atlas members.

Ngā mihi,

Dan and Pat  
National Atlas Team

