



MEDIA RELEASE

Unique book on subantarctic birds wins a prestigious Whitley Award

Lost Gold, the first ever book to examine the ornithology of the subantarctic Auckland Islands, has won the Science and Conservation category of the prestigious Whitley Awards for zoological literature.

Presented annually by the Royal Zoological Society of NSW, the Whitley Awards recognise the best publications that profile the unique wildlife of the Australasian region. Covid-19 prevented the awards, which celebrate their 50th anniversary this year, from being presented in-person and the announcement was made this week via the Society's website and social media.

Lost Gold: Ornithology of the subantarctic Auckland Islands, published in 2020 by Te Papa Press in collaboration with Birds New Zealand, is a special book-format issue of Birds New Zealand's journal *Notornis*. Edited by *Notornis* editor Craig Symes and ornithologist and Curator Vertebrates at Te Papa, Colin Miskelly, the book is devoted to the birds of Maukahuka/Motu Maha the Auckland Islands, the largest and biologically most diverse island group in the New Zealand subantarctic region.

Its 19 chapters, written by leading ornithologists, include the history of ornithological discovery; biogeography; the impacts of introduced mammals and people; and population, ecological and genetic studies of several of the endemic or otherwise notable birds of the island group including the Auckland Island snipe, white-headed petrel, and several albatross species.

Bruce McKinlay, President of *Birds New Zealand* says the Society was proud to commission *Lost Gold* as a part of its quarterly scientific journal *Notornis*. "It is a core role of the Society to produce quality ornithological science – the Whitley Award to *Lost Gold* is an acknowledgement of that commitment and is greatly appreciated by the Society."

Courtney Johnston, Tumu Whakarae Chief Executive of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, congratulated editors Colin Miskelly and Craig Symes, as well as all the ornithologists who contributed. "This unique book and research output is a great example of the work our curators do every day in partnership with other experts outside the museum," she says.

Co-editor Colin Miskelly says it is an enormous honour to have their work recognised by their many peers in the field of zoological study and literature across Australasia. “This was completely unexpected. The large team involved in researching and producing the book are thrilled to have their mahi honoured in this way.”

Another Te Papa Press title, *Whiti: Colossal Squid of the Deep*, written by Victoria Cleal and illustrated by Isobel Joy Te Aho-White, has won the Children’s Book category of the awards.

The Whitley Awards are named for Gilbert Whitley, an eminent ichthyologist and former Curator of Fishes at the Australian Museum. He authored over 500 publications describing a range of aquatic fauna from sharks to seahorses and was the editor of RZS publications for many years. Whitley Certificates of Commendation are awarded to outstanding publications in a range of categories including natural history, children’s books, magazines, field guides and technical works for professional zoologists. The overall Whitley Medal is regarded as Australia’s highest award for zoological publishing.

All the 2021 Whitley Award winners can be viewed here: <https://www.rzsnsw.org.au/grants-awards/previous-winners/2021-winners>

About *Lost Gold*’s editors:

Dr Colin Miskelly is an ornithologist with broad interests, including conservation ecology, biogeography, and the history of science. Employed as a curator of vertebrates at Te Papa since 2010, Colin previously worked as a scientist and manager for the New Zealand Department of Conservation. His research on snipe and seabirds first took him to the subantarctic region in 1982, and has led to an ongoing interest in these remote islands and their spectacular wildlife.

Dr Craig Symes has a broad ornithological interest, with a focus, until recently, on Afrotropical birds. As an Associate Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, much of his research focused on bird communities, bird movements and migrations, bird diets and community ecology, parrot biology and conservation, urban bird communities, and bird-plant mutualisms focused on pollination in the genus *Aloe*. He is currently a science teacher in Rotorua, New Zealand.

Lost Gold: Ornithology of the subantarctic Auckland Islands

Edited by Colin Miskelly and Craig Symes

Published by Te Papa Press

ISBN: 978-0-9951136-6-4 / 436 pages / Limpbound / RRP \$55

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