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BIRDS

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Te Kāhui Mātā Manu o Aotearoa



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Email: secretary@osnz.org.nz **Website:** www.osnz.org.nz

Editor: Michael Szabo, 6/238 The Esplanade, Island Bay, Wellington 6023.

Email: editorbirds@osnz.org.nz **Tel:** (04) 383 5784

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We welcome advertising enquiries. Free classified ads for members are at the editor's discretion. Articles or illustrations related to birds in New Zealand and the South Pacific region are welcome in electronic form, such as news about birds, members' activities, birding sites, identification, letters, reviews, or photographs. Copy deadlines are 10th Feb, May, Aug and 1st Nov. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of OSNZ (Inc) or the editor.

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COVER IMAGE

Long-tailed Cuckoo or Koekoeā, Arthurs Pass, South Island. Photo by Mike Ashbee www.mikeashbeephoto.com

India's dawn chorus

Join us for a fully escorted, small-group, bird-lovers and wildlife tour in north India. 20 days, departing 14 October 2019.

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Colour India

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09 422 0111 | 021 235 3932



1. Auckland RR Ian McLean and Rose Brooks welcoming the godwits/Trina Smith. 2. Otago survey team at Sinclair Wetlands with Otago RR Mary Thompson (centre in blue coat) and President Bruce McKinlay (left of Mary)/Warren Jowett. 3. Otago members scoping the birds at Lake Ellesmere/ Mary Thompson.

From the President's Desk

Kerry-Jayne Wilson Honoured

First some really good news. I'm sure that other Society members would have noticed that Kerry-Jayne Wilson of Charleston was the recipient of a New Zealand Honour as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit. National recognition for her many years of work on seabird conservation is richly deserved by Kerry-Jayne. She has also been a stalwart of the Society as a researcher and supporter of local research on the West Coast and Canterbury. Additionally, Kerry-Jayne provided leadership in the Society as a South Island Vice President for many years. Kerry-Jayne is currently providing national leadership in developing a research agenda and priority conservation for penguin species. Congratulations Kerry-Jayne: the award is richly deserved!

New Logo

I'm really pleased that our new logo has been launched and is now starting to roll-out on publications, documents and letters of the Society. Development of the new logo has been led by Helen Taylor on behalf of Council and I think the result is a strong representation of how we want to present the Society into the future. Thanks are also due to Society member Shaun Lee who designed the logo and put a lot of care into telling the story of the new logo and how it supported the strategic direction of the Society.

Website Update

Council has also been working to advance the Society's new website, which has a fresh layout and our new branding. We had hoped that it could be launched earlier but some things have taken longer than planned, so we are now looking at a launch date in late March. An email will be sent to members once it is launched. The initial phase will also act as a 'live test' period, allowing members to give feedback on any broken links or any other aspect that doesn't work. Hopefully any creases will have been ironed-out by then, but a period of 'user-testing' will help to alert us to any glitches that exist.

2019 NZ Birds Conference and 80th AGM

Online registration for the 2019 New Zealand Birds Conference and 80th Annual General Meeting is now live on the Society's website. I'm looking forward to catching up with you all at the Brentwood Hotel in Wellington on Queen's Birthday weekend (1-3 June). Please make sure that you book early to ensure that you can get onto your field trip of choice. In spite of the 7am start I think I'll be trying for a Cook Strait pelagic; what about you? Here's the link for registration and full details of the conference and field trips: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/civicrm/event/info?id=14&reset=1>

New Zealand Bird Atlas

On behalf of Council, Wildlife Management International (WMIL) have continued to work on the design of the New Zealand Bird Atlas, which will be formally launched at the 2019 Conference on June 1st. The project creates a strong legacy with the Society's previous two Atlas projects. An important output will be the ability to compare nationwide changes in bird distribution over 45 years. As you will have read in the latest edition of , the value of this was dramatically shown in Susan Walker and Adrian Monk's analysis of the first two Birds New Zealand Atlas datasets.

It is clear that when data is collected using the right methods, it is now possible to undertake powerful modelling and mapping which reports far more than simple bird distribution. Mike Bell and Nikki McArthur of WMIL recently prepared a report to Council on work completed so far. See page 6 of this edition for more details. If you are wanting to get on to mapping birds promptly after the 2019 Conference, a half-day field trip for members who want training on the methods will be available.

Constitutional Changes

You will find on page 4 of this edition a Notice of Motion relating to membership changes as discussed in my last report. These changes are part of ongoing work to ensure that the Society is fit to deliver for you, the membership, over the next decade. As we work through these you can expect more rule changes in the future.

Membership Renewals

The Society's Membership Secretary contacted me recently to say that 240 members have yet to pay their annual subscription renewal. This is a very unfortunate situation for the Society to find itself in, as 240 unpaid subscriptions is a significant amount of the Society's income for the year. Members in the 'grace' category have until May to pay their subscription. In the meantime, Council will be considering changes to policy and, if necessary, to the Society's rules to address this unfortunate situation. Options include shortening the 'grace' period; a late fee or a discount for prompt payment. Your views on these or other options are welcome and would help Council formulate something which is effective.

Summer Birdwatching

Finally, Dinah and I have just had two wonderful weeks of summer birdwatching in Abel Tasman National Park and driving the West Coast. The weather was good and the birdwatching a wonderful mix of forest and wetland habitats. It was a great start to 2019, with the Society's forthcoming New Zealand Bird Atlas project being an inspiration to once again get out and explore the myriad places where New Zealand birds are present.

2019 New Zealand Bird Conference and 80th AGM

The 2019 New Zealand Bird Conference and 80th AGM will be held in Wellington on Queen's Birthday weekend (1-3 June). All events and meals will be at the Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington. Online registration and full details are available at: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/civicrm/event/info?id=14&reset=1> or contact your Regional Representative:

<https://www.osnz.org.nz/contact-us/regional-representatives>

This 80th celebratory conference aims to continue the fine work of previous events in making this the premier New Zealand conference for the communication of new research findings on New Zealand birds and for providing opportunities for discussion and networking for professional ornithologists, students and others who are interested in birds and their habitats. We look forward to presenting keynote lectures on a diversity of topics, including Wellington birds, the Auckland Islands, old bones and ancient DNA, genetics and taxonomy, physiology and reproduction, and seabirds. A range of shorter talks will describe studies on a wide range of topics and we look forward to bringing together researchers and all who are interested to share their knowledge and findings to make this conference a dynamic, informative and memorable event.

Would you like to become a band 'wrapper'?

Coloured plastic wraparound leg bands are used on a variety of bird species for cohort or individual recognition. The Banding Office has tried to source these from overseas suppliers, but their high cost and poor-quality means that this is not a viable option. Instead, we stock sheets of coloured Darvic and Salbex plastic and cut these into strips to make the wraparound bands to order, rather than pre-making stocks of bands as in the past. There is only a handful of banders in New Zealand that currently assist in making wraparound bands for various projects, so we are seeking more band 'wrappers' to share the load of making several thousand wraparound bands per year. Training will be provided, and you will be contracted on an ad-hoc basis (paid per band) if you can demonstrate the required competency. The latest BirDBanD newsletter has a description of the process:

https://www.osnz.org.nz/Banding_Newsletter

If you are interested in becoming a band "wrapper", please contact the Banding Office: bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz

MICHELLE BRADSHAW

New members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: Brooke Hartigan (Northland); Xiaozhen Huo, Lyndsey Smith, Spencer McIntyre, Olga Brochner, Blake Forrester, Divya Shankar, Jacques de Sagte, M. Stone (Auckland); Ohara McLennan (South Auckland); Helen McGill (Taranaki); Saran Atley, John Stairmand (Hawke's Bay); Simone Higgie (Whanganui); Neill Haggarty (Manawatu); Anna Whitehead (Wairarapa); Andrea Tuohy, Laura West, Mark Campbell Wesling, Te Huia Macgregor, Emma McWhinnie (Wellington); Marj van Gessel (Nelson); Ruben Ruwhui, Joseph Ruwhui, Samantha Ray (Marlborough); Celia King, Tracy Melzer (Canterbury); Adrienne Mulqueen, Maureen Howard, Sarah Saunderson and Rachel Hickcox (Otago).

Donations

Birds New Zealand warmly thanks the following members for their generous donations: Ewan Fordyce, Michael Fitzgerald, Peter Howden, Lance Pickett, I Williams, J Sagar, P Asquith, SD Steadman, Bethany Gibbs, Bernard Card, Philip Palmer, GD Norman, John Troost, Jillian Hanna, Jack Davidson, William Cook, F Beggs, Mary McEwen, Matt Jones, Anthony Carey, Neil Andrews, Kevin Parker, Colin Lunt and Jan Roxburgh.

Notice of Motion for five Amendments to the Constitution of The Ornithological Society of NZ Inc.

In terms of Rule 17.1 of the Constitution, Notice of Motion is given to members that the Constitution of The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. be amended at the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held in Wellington in 2019. The following Notice of Motion is proposed to enable five recommendations to be debated and voted on at the Annual General Meeting. A full background paper has been published on the Society's website: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/Governance>

New Rule 5.2.6:

5.2.6 Honorary Member, may be awarded by Council to any member of the Society in its sole discretion on the resolution of not less than eight Councillors in recognition of an outstanding and specific physical contribution made to the Society that does not qualify for election as a Fellow. An Honorary Member shall be entitled to the full rights of Ordinary Membership without the obligation to pay a subscription.

New Rule 5.2.8:

5.2.8 Young Birders, is a membership category for young people linked to and supported by the Society through a Memorandum of Understanding with Young Birders New Zealand. Young Birders New Zealand aims to encourage the study of birds and their habitat use amongst young people and to support other activities that are consistent with the Objects of the Society. Members of Young Birders New Zealand will be non-financial members of the Society.

New Rules 8.7.1 and 8.7.2:

8.7.1 The positions of President, Secretary, Treasurer, plus seven other Councillors shall be elected from the membership of the Society following the calling for nominations by the Secretary.

8.7.2 The position of Vice-President shall be elected by Council from a member who has been elected as a Councillor. Election of the Vice-President shall be at the resolution of a majority of Councillors, excluding the nominees.

Amendment to rules 9.1 and 9.9:

9.1 Councillors shall be persons who are financial Members of the Society and shall be proposed, seconded and elected by Members by postal **or electronic ballot**, the result of which shall be announced at the Annual General Meeting.

9.9 The Secretary shall announce the names of the elected Councillors at the Annual General Meeting and move a motion requiring the ballot papers **including, where appropriate, the entire electronic records of ballots**, to be destroyed.

Amendment to rule 14.15:

14.15 Each region shall **elect, or appoint**, a regional Treasurer and such other regional officers, as the activities of the region require.

Ashley Cunningham

Ashley Cunningham, a Hawke's Bay member of OSNZ, passed away peacefully at his home at Bay View on 15th August 2018. Ash was a forestry colleague of mine for many years (from New Zealand Forest Service days), and a member of the Society for many years. I visited Ash in mid-July. Although physically very frail, he was quite clear in his mind and chatted about some historical birds and forests issues, and he mentioned that he continued to read papers in Notornis.

IAN ARMITAGE, VICE PRESIDENT



▲ Hawke's Bay Regional Representative Bernie Kelly introduces the course.

Hawke's Bay "Introduction to Bird Studies"

Hawke's Bay Regional Representative Bernie Kelly and I organised an "Introduction to Bird Studies" course in Napier in August and September. Our original intention was to get enough people to cover the cost of the venue but in a short time our expectations were far exceeded and we were pleasantly surprised at the positive response from 30 interested candidates - without having spent any funds on promotion.

We had sent a few posters to our local libraries (printed for us by DOC) and we approached a couple of local secondary schools, from which two potential Young Birders came along. It was especially pleasing that over six weeks, on any given evening, the attendance did not dip below 25 participants.

The course materials have been prepared by Sarah Jamieson for Birds New Zealand with funding from the T/Gear Trust and is sponsored by Goodness Kitchen. A Powerpoint presentation is available for members to use in their local areas; slides may be customised but the content and branding must remain unchanged. The topics covered in the course are: bird identification; breeding; basic avian biology; migration; winter; conservation; *eBird*; and Birds New Zealand.

In our sessions we also covered leucism and melanism; dimorphism and polymorphism; hybrids; classification and the scientific names of birds; and the threat classification system. We also expanded the migration part to include more about our godwits, flyways and threats. We also started each session with a bird identification quiz that we had put together ourselves.

The evaluation at the end came up with some good ideas and indicated that our two guest speakers were very popular: Pam Turner, who is a local member and very experienced bird rescue expert, and Sue Taylor, a very dedicated volunteer with the kiwi rescue programme 'Kiwi Crèche'.

The course ended with a field trip to Ahuriri Estuary where we were glad to see some Bar-tailed Godwits. We plan to run the course again later this year but will start earlier than last year so as not to clash with any school exams. We plan to more seriously target our local secondary schools.

Thanks to the local Department of Conservation office for printing our posters as part of Conservation Week, Fish and Game Hawke's Bay for the use of their venue, our two guest speakers Pam and Sue, Keith Woodley for the use of some of his migration slides, and Sav Saville for helping us with the field trip. We had the funds to provide printouts for everyone at each session and we also handed out Birds New Zealand membership brochures with encouragement for participants to join. We thoroughly recommend the course and encourage other regions to consider organising their own.

LYNNE ANDERSON

Benefits of Membership

You can join Birds New Zealand today for just over a dollar a week. The subscription fee of \$70 per year is very reasonable; for students it's just \$35 per year (see www.osnz.org.nz for more details). Members receive Birds New Zealand magazine, our quarterly colour magazine, and *Notornis*, our acclaimed quarterly colour scientific journal. To join us, please visit our website and fill out the online membership form: www.osnz.org.nz Or contact our Membership Secretary: membership@osnz.org.nz Or contact your nearest Regional Representative via: www.osnz.org.nz



▲ Dr Helen Taylor honoured with national award

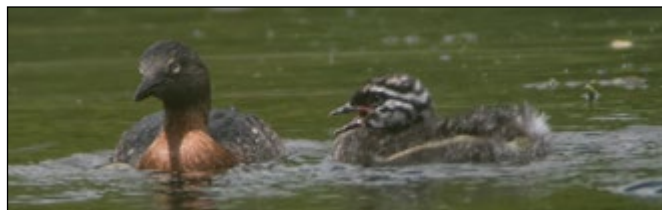
Dr Helen Taylor honoured with national award

University of Otago research fellow and Birds New Zealand Council member Dr Helen Taylor has been awarded the 2018 Callaghan Medal by the Royal Society Te Aparangi for her outstanding contribution to science communication and raising public awareness of science. She was presented with her award at the Royal Society in Wellington on 18th October. Her most recent project was an innovative and educational way to raise awareness of and funds for the conservation of the vulnerable Hihī or Stitchbird. She created a website called The Great Hihī Sperm Race where people could place 'bets' on which male Hihī would have the fastest swimming sperm out of 128 males from four different populations that she was conducting research on. Her project raised over \$11,000 for Hihī conservation, with 'bets' placed by people in 17 countries. Eleven people from NZ, Australia, Britain, Netherlands and the USA backed the winning male, and received prizes donated by sponsors.

2019 Membership Renewals

Members who have not yet paid their 2019 annual subscription are invited to renew before 30th April 2019. This can be done online at www.osnz.org.nz/join-society/existing-members

We depend on your subscription to continue our work to encourage and support the study and enjoyment of New Zealand birds. If you do not renew by 30th April, this issue will be the last one that you will be sent. If you are not sure if your 2019 subscription has been paid you can log-in to check your membership account via www.osnz.org.nz or contact our Membership Secretary: membership@osnz.org.nz



▲ NZ Dabchick and chick/Glenn Kincaid.

Easter 2019 Youth Camp

The Marlborough region will be hosting the 2019 Birds New Zealand Youth Camp, which will be held during Easter at Watson's Way Back-backers in Renwick, 15th-20th April. Marlborough Regional Representative Heather Davies says the plan is for a busy week that enables young people to gain hands-on birding skills within Marlborough's diverse ecosystems: "We will be visiting wetland, coastal, island and grassland habitats to see the variety of birds that live in Marlborough, and build skills in observing, recording, drawing and examining birds, along with learning about predator control, habitat restoration, and species reintroduction."

Any young people wishing to attend should contact: kristin.ruwhiu@hotmail.com



Marsh Crake/Matt Winter
wildnaturenewzealand.co.nz



Spotless Crake/Mike Ashbee



Banded Rail/Imogen Warren

New Zealand Bird Atlas to launch on 1st June

The New Zealand Bird Atlas is coming! This new project is a hugely exciting opportunity for Birds New Zealand members to contribute to a project which will have lasting implications for the conservation of New Zealand's birds. This project will provide the first detailed, national-scale assessment of the state of all of New Zealand's birds for over 20 years, so this will be a once-in-a-generation chance to be involved in a project which will help guide local and central government conservation policy for the next 20 years. If you want to help New Zealand's birds, this is your best chance!

The project has been moving rapidly over the past few months as the official launch date of 1st June fast approaches. To date most of the work has been behind the scenes. The most significant aspect has been the preparation of a detailed project plan. This will incorporate feedback received from Regional Representatives, Regional Recorders, and members in response to our request in December. We are very grateful to everyone who took the time to submit feedback; this input has led to some significant improvements and alterations to the project design and plan. The resulting plan will be delivered to Council in mid-March, and will be the guiding document for the life of the project. Once approved by Council it will be readily available to all members.

Running alongside this, our colleagues at the Cornell Lab for Ornithology in the USA have been working to customise the *eBird* portal for the Atlas project. This has included creating a new nationwide 10 x 10 km sampling grid to be used, and upgrading the technological 'engine room' which runs *eBird*. This work is progressing on schedule, and will be ready to go live by the launch date.

The Atlas project also now has a new website and social media pages. Please visit www.birdatlas.co.nz for associated links. The website will be updated regularly over the coming months and will provide a single site for

all Atlas related information, including detailed participant instructions. As we expect things to be moving quickly over the coming months, new content and updates will be regularly posted and we encourage members to keep visiting these sites to follow new developments.

A significant aspect of the Atlas will be the use of *eBird* as the recording platform. Although this won't be the sole recording option, with other web and paper-based options available, it is the preferred option. One of the main reasons for this is that it allows the most precise location and habitat data to be collected, and will allow participants to access real-time updates on the progress of the Atlas. To help members become more familiar with the *eBird* App, we have developed a range of tutorial videos which will be available via the website. These provide details on the use of the *eBird* App, and we strongly encourage members to spend the next few months become familiar with its use in the build-up to the launch. In fact, you can start uploading your bird observations right now, which will give the Atlas a running start!

Late last year, the Atlas project received a major financial boost when we successfully secured a significant grant from the Lotteries Heritage and Environment Fund. This will be used to fund the set-up of the project infrastructure and its maintenance throughout the life of the project. We continue to chase a number of other funding options, with this funding targeted at promoting and managing the project during its five-year data collection period.

One key piece of feedback that we received from members and RRs included concerns that Birds New Zealand regions with smaller memberships will struggle to survey all of the grid squares in their region. This is a challenge that the Atlas team identified very early on, and we are developing plans for solving this challenge in a number of ways. As members ourselves (both of us active in

one of our smaller regions, Marlborough), we completely understand the struggles of large geographic regions with smaller membership, and we will be here to help. A National Atlas Team has been formed, whose function will include providing ongoing support to all regions once the scheme has been launched.

This support will come in a range of forms, including: 1) actively encouraging larger, neighbouring regions to assist with covering adjacent areas; 2) organising and running Atlas 'blitz' weekends in which other members travel to a region to do Atlas 'blitzes'; and 3) engaging with other like-minded organisations to recruit Atlas participants from beyond the Birds New Zealand membership (for example, we've already had early and highly positive discussions with Forest and Bird and the QEII National Trust on this front). So, rest assured, smaller regions won't be left to struggle on alone!

The New Zealand Bird Atlas is an ambitious and ground-breaking project which has the potential to have a lasting, positive impact on bird conservation in New Zealand for decades to come. Ultimately however, its success will depend on members – both you and I – getting behind the project and participating. We've done our very best to make use of new technologies, including harnessing the power of *eBird*, mobile apps, and innovative data analysis techniques to make it as easy as possible for you to participate, and to contribute high-quality bird distribution data. We really hope you'll join us in this exciting new endeavour, and look forward to bumping into you 'in the field' sometime soon. Roll on June 1st!

MIKE BELL and NIKKI McARTHUR





Jo Carpenter with Weka.



Australasian Bittern/JP Mower.

Birds New Zealand Research Fund summaries

More results of research funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund in the most recent years is summarised over the following pages. Full details of all these projects are available online from the website: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/2018-BNZRF-Projects>

Weka as seed dispersers

My PhD research has found that Weka are potentially important seed dispersers because they consume over 26 species of native fruits and have a large bill that allows them to eat fruits that smaller birds cannot.

GPS tags were attached to 46 Weka at three South Island sites to obtain high-resolution movements over a two-week period. I inserted tiny microchips into Hinau and Miro seeds and then fed the tagged seeds to captive Weka. I scanned the birds at regular intervals to see if the microchipped seeds were still inside. These trials showed that Weka have the longest avian seed retention times ever recorded, with most seeds taking over a day to pass. Using Weka movement data and seed retention times, I estimated that Weka disperse 94-97% of seeds away from the parent canopy.

Weka dispersed Hinau seeds an average of 152 m away from parent canopies, and Miro seeds an average of 131 m away from parent canopies. Around 1% of seeds were dispersed over 1 km away from the source, with some reaching 2.3 km. These dispersal distances are greater than those calculated for Kereru, demonstrating that Weka are highly capable dispersers. The long seed retention times of Weka mean they probably perform vital long-distance dispersal events on occasion. This research would not have been possible without funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017.

JO CARPENTER, UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Hihi and habitat restoration

In April 2018, I took part in a translocation of Hihi from Tiritiri Matangi to Rotokare Scenic Reserve and Bushy Park Sanctuary. By tracking changes in individuals' diets, I found evidence that translocation has an immediate effect on shifting birds' diets. Individuals that remained on Tiritiri Matangi became more specialist in their diets; those that moved to the mainland became more generalist, matching the diets of resident birds. While specialisation may be a mechanism for avoiding competition in the dense Tiritiri population, birds at the less populated mainland sites may be able to converge on a shared set of preferred foods. This highlights how important it is to consider the environment birds are entering when trying to predict how they will behave after translocation.

Over the past year, I have had the pleasure of meeting and working alongside a number of OSNZ members. I am grateful for their support and for funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017, which made this fieldwork possible.

CAITLIN ANDREWS, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Australasian Bittern seasonal movements in Hawke's Bay

Funding from the last three rounds of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund has helped collect locational data on the seasonal movements of ten male Australasian Bitterns (Matuku) in Hawke's Bay. They were captured on Lake Whatumā (Waipukurau) during two breeding seasons (September–November, 2014 and 2015). Results so far have shown that male bitterns utilise a complex network of wetlands, mostly within a 15 km radius of their breeding site. Over 754 locational points have been collected. The number of fixes-per-bird varies, based on how long birds survived, duration of batteries, and how easy the bird was to re-find once missing. Currently fixes-per-bird averages >74.6 points per bird.

Results to date show that they have high site fidelity and predictable movement patterns driven by limited and variable resources. So far, individual marked birds have consistently returned to the same sites to breed and feed seasonally. Territory size differs seasonally. During the breeding season, average territory sizes on Lake Whatumā were 12.46 ha, within which males concentrate their booming within a 0.84 ha area. Once breeding is over, males leave the lake to roam across other wetlands in central Hawke's Bay. Survival of adult males is high. Four of the ten to date have survived beyond the battery-life of their transmitters. Two died: one from starvation, one from causes being investigated. Another went missing during duck hunting season. Three are still alive and being tracked.

DR EMMA M. WILLIAMS, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Web-based bird call analysis

Thanks to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017 we were able to review and optimise a website where volunteer 'citizen scientists' could identify bird calls. The website, hosted by Zooniverse, has undergone user review by 46 citizen scientists who reported the presence/absence of bird calls in 698 sections of audio. We have optimised the website based on the feedback provided. We also evaluated the ability of citizen scientists to classify the presence/absence of bird calls in audio. Their classifications overlapped in 94% with classifications provided by professional biologists. This level of agreement highlights that citizen scientists are well-suited to classify the presence/absence of bird calls. Further work is still required to evaluate whether citizen scientists can be as accurate as professionals at identifying species-specific bird calls.

VICTOR ANTON, JACOB WOODS & MARKUS LUCZAK-ROESCH



▣ Tawaki /Thomas Mattern.



▣ Hoiho with satellite tag. Photo by Mel Young.

Tawaki foraging and breeding ecology

In September–October 2018, we studied the foraging behaviour and breeding ecology of Tawaki at three sites simultaneously: Jackson Head/West Coast, Harrison Cove (Milford Sound/Piopiota), and Codfish Island/Whenua Hou. It was encouraging to observe that the Tawaki colony at Jackson Head showed signs of improvements after three less than average breeding seasons. Favourable foraging conditions meant that chick-rearing penguins did not travel as far as in the previous years and generally stayed within 40 km of their breeding colony. Most pairs managed to raise at least one chick to the crèching stage.

This contrasted with average breeding seasons in Fiordland and on Whenua Hou. Several nests that had been active in the previous seasons remained empty, resulting in a somewhat lower nest count at both locations. In Milford Sound, foraging behaviour indicated that the usually extremely favourable foraging conditions were compromised. Unlike in the previous seasons, when penguins found enough food for two chicks within a 3–4 km radius from their colony, several birds left the fjord to forage in the open ocean. And unlike in previous years, no pair managed to raise both chicks. On Whenua Hou, foraging ranges were comparable to the previous years with some birds foraging very close inshore and others travelling up to 30 km away. However, none of the 40 monitored nests managed to raise both chicks to the crèching stage.

We also recovered 33 GLS loggers fitted the previous year. Using light-data recorded by these devices, we will now be able to reconstruct the penguins' at-sea movements throughout their pre-moult and winter dispersal periods. In the coming months we will tackle the comprehensive analysis of 5-years of Tawaki tracking data. Most of these data would not have been possible to collect without the invaluable support of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund.

THOMAS MATTERN, TAWAKI PROJECT/UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Acoustic monitoring of bird calls

Passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) records natural soundscapes using automated field recording devices and diverse sound analysis. Acoustic indices that extract information from sound recordings makes PAM a good candidate for biodiversity monitoring. We sampled the soundscape at a fenced site with pest management and a site without. Acoustic indices were calculated over the sound recordings. The indices' measurements were then divided into 20 panels defined by specific time and frequency ranges. There were significant differences between the two sites, reflecting differences in environmental condition. These allowed us to identify the acoustic region where the soundscape differs most between sites: within the period 9 pm to 11:59 pm and different frequency ranges. It is possible the significant differences found are related to mammal activity. The next step will be to identify the sounds generating these differences and try to understand their ecological meaning.

IVAN BRAGA CAMPOS, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Hoiho go solo with solar

Mortality is higher for juvenile seabirds than adults because they lack foraging and predator avoidance experience, which must be learned, but size, body fat, and overlapping industrial activities can negatively influence survival. Little is known about what shapes Hoiho dispersal from the natal area. Less than c.19% of each cohort survive their first year, and less than c.12% survive to breed at least once, compared to c. 26% recorded from 1936 to 1952. My aims were to determine the initial dispersal and survival of juvenile Hoiho after fledging, and their spatial distribution in relation to industrial activities at sea. I also wanted to determine the performance of low-cost solar satellite tags in New Zealand waters, which may be fit-for-purpose for other seabird tracking studies.

Three Hoiho fledglings from Otago Peninsula and the Catlins were deployed with Seatag-tt satellite tags in February 2018. All dispersed north from their natal areas and travelled as far as Canterbury Bight, with two chicks spending most time between Kātiki Point and the Waitaki River mouth on the Otago coast. Once they fledged, transmissions were received from nine to 44 days, with the tags transmitting location data to Argos satellites almost every day, even in poor weather. Overall the Seatag-tt had a mean location accuracy of 52%. I conclude that it is a reasonably efficient satellite tag, and being cheaper, hydrodynamic, re-deployable, and lighter than all other commercial tags currently available for seabirds, would be suitable for future penguin foraging studies. Thanks to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017 for funding this research.

MELANIE J. YOUNG, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Post-fledging dispersal of mainland Hoiho

Very little is known about the parameters that shape Hoiho dispersal away from the natal area. Most sightings occur on the Canterbury Coast but juvenile Hoiho have been re-sighted as far north as Hawke's Bay. My aims for this study were to determine the initial dispersal and survival of juvenile Hoiho after fledging, and their spatial distribution in relation to industrial activities at sea. I also aim to determine the performance of low-cost solar satellite tags in New Zealand waters, which could be fit-for-purpose for other seabird tracking studies. My research to date has focused on tracking juvenile mainland Hoiho from their natal areas in 2017 and 2018, which has provided critical baseline data for conservation management of this species.

With a generous contribution from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, I have purchased six new generation Seatag-tt satellite tags to deploy on fledgling Hoiho, and will use the Argos satellite system to track post-fledging dispersal from coastal nesting sites in Otago and Southland in 2019. The advantages of using a solar-powered satellite tag include reduced unit mass and infinite reporting of the tag's position, making these devices reusable without refurbishment if they can be retrieved. Six chicks will be selected for the final satellite tag deployment in February 2019.

MELANIE J. YOUNG, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO



Eastern Rockhopper Penguin/Tony Whitehead.



Kakī photo by Liz Brown.

Population genomics of New Zealand crested penguins

This project evaluated genetic diversity within the three New Zealand endemic crested penguin species, compared genetic diversity between New Zealand and other Southern Ocean crested penguins, and explored the potential of New Zealand crested penguins to adapt to a warming climate. We obtained samples from >250 crested penguins spanning almost all species. We were unable to obtain genomic data for the Erect-crested Penguin as the samples had degraded since they were collected.

Genetic diversity within Fiordland Crested and within Snares Crested penguins is low, which suggests both species represent single panmictic units in which all individuals are potential partners. This reflects the ability of these species to swim vast distances and the lack of barriers to gene flow within the Southern Ocean – and is a positive finding in light of conservation concerns as no localities sampled are genetically isolated. Within Snares Crested Penguins, we found no evidence to suggest a second taxon inhabits the Western Chain. The Eastern Rockhopper Penguin also appears to be largely panmictic throughout the Southern Ocean, with possible historical isolation within New Zealand – possibly reflecting glaciation histories during the Last Glacial Maximum. We are now using this taxon to study adaptation to climate change, but have not yet finished the final analyses. This project is part of my PhD research. Funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017 enabled me to include Fiordland and Snares Crested Penguins in the genomic study.

TESS COLE, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Conservation of Whenua Hou Diving Petrel

My PhD project was aimed at preventing the recently-described Nationally Critical Whenua Hou Diving Petrel (WHDP) from sliding closer to extinction. It aimed to investigate their population size and sex ratio, breeding biology, and the effect of WHDP presence on small reptiles. Between September 2017 and January 2018, I caught 192 adult WHDPs. I used this dataset to analyse their population size with models which resulted in a population estimate of 222 adult birds. I also collected feather samples of all birds captured this season. These were used to genetically determine the sex of the birds. Results show a slight male-skewed adult (46% F : 54% M) and offspring sex ratio (45% F : 55% M). During the 2017/18 breeding season, I also created the first detailed breeding schedule for WHDP. While I aimed to use nest boxes, these were rejected by 80% of birds early in the season (thus not resulting in nest failure). This prevented me from collecting growth curve data. However, I used a burrowscope instead to assess WHDP breeding phenology in detail. All results will be published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented at conferences. I would like to thank the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017 for contributing significantly to my research project costs.

JOHANNES FISCHER, VICTORIA UNIV OF WELLINGTON

Evolutionary history of Australasian stilts

Kakī (Black Stilt) is a critically endangered wading species that is endemic to New Zealand. Numbers declined to a low of c.23 birds in 1981 following human impacts. Through intensive management by the Department of Conservation's Kakī Recovery Team, the wild population has increased to 132 adults. When Kakī numbers have been very low, they have interbred with Poaka, the New Zealand population of Pied Stilts. Poaka self-introduced from Australia and are now widespread across New Zealand. Hybridisation results in fertile hybrids with intermediate plumage, but hybrid offspring exhibit lower fitness than pure individuals. With the support of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017, I have produced the first whole mitochondrial genomes (mitogenomes) for a number of Kakī, Australian and New Zealand Pied Stilts, and hybrids. Combined with published mitogenomes for other species, these data will add to our understanding of the evolutionary history of the stilt complex and improve knowledge of the origins of New Zealand's avifauna.

Phylogenetic analyses confirm the split between Pied Stilts and Kakī. Preliminary dating of the divergence time between Poaka and Kakī shows a recent common ancestor that may have lived as recently as 500,000 years ago. Hybrid individuals group most closely with Pied Stilts, which suggests that hybridisation is mostly driven by male Kakī mating with female Poaka, with hybrids inheriting the maternal mitogenome. I am currently expanding the study by incorporating 28 historic stilt samples collected from Canterbury, Auckland, and Te Papa museums to narrow down the divergence time estimates.

NATALIE FORSDICK, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Does genetic rescue improve inbred South Island Robins?

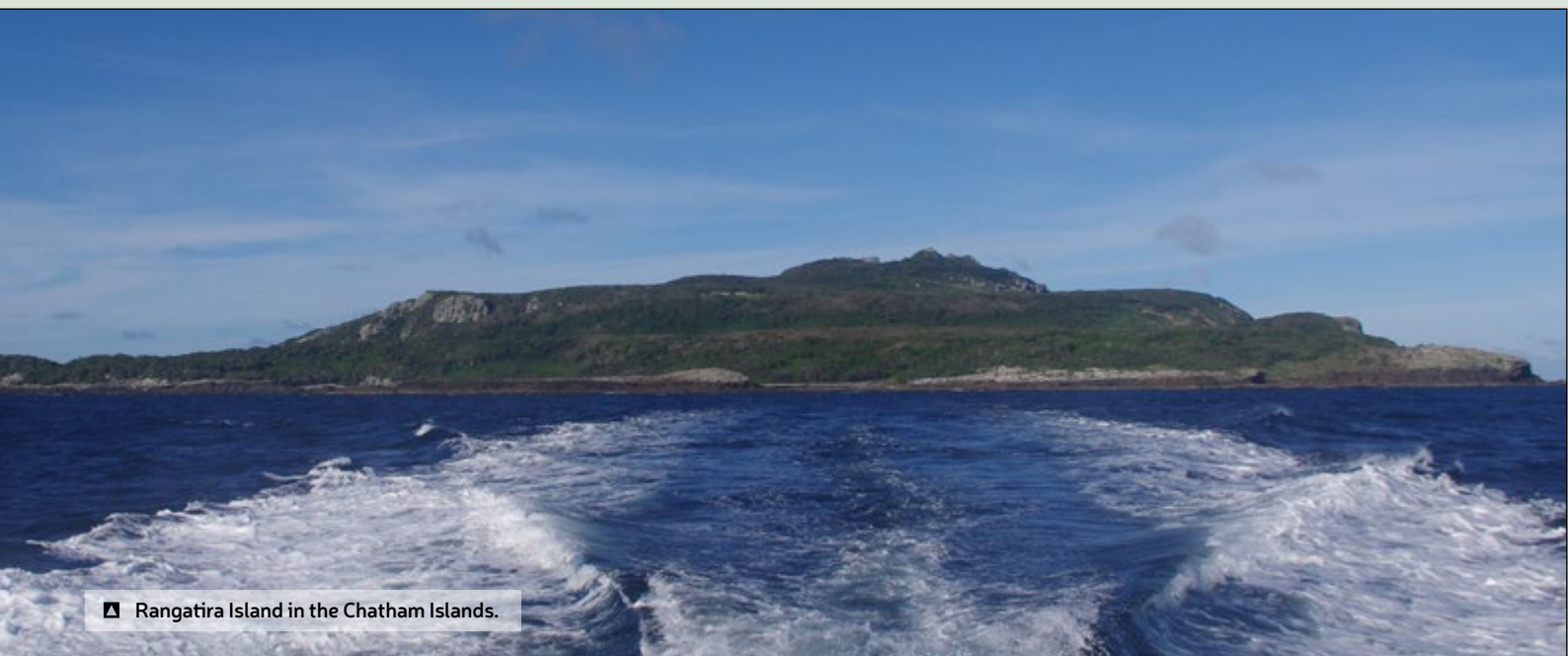
In 2017 and 2018, I collected audio recordings of the dawn chorus from male South Island Robins on islands in Queen Charlotte Sound. Both islands were subject to genetic rescue in 2008, and my goal was to determine if song structure was linked to a bird's cognitive capability, and in turn, to the level of genetic variation. I obtained audio recordings for 46 male robins from which I extracted information on repertoire size, syllable diversity and levels of song complexity. The second part of my project involved two experiments that measured a set of cognitive processes including attentional control, inhibitory control, and memory, and was able to test the problem-solving ability of 32 robins.

Whether a robin's level of genetic variation dictates its ability to sing a more elaborate dawn chorus or solve the food cache experiment more quickly is the next step in my project. DNA samples collected from each bird have been sent for lab analysis. The first of these show a wide range of levels of genetic variation among the birds I studied. How these relate to the results of my cognitive tests will become clear once the final DNA analyses are completed in late 2018.

ARCHIE MACFARLANE, UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY



▲ Adult male Chatham Island Snipe, Rangatira Island.



▲ Rangatira Island in the Chatham Islands.

Chatham Island Snipe – our littlest snipe

Article and Photographs by Colin Miskelly

The first Chatham Island Snipe known to science was collected by the Stewart Island-based naturalist Charles Traill in 1868. Traill followed his passion for seashell collecting all the way to rugged and remote Mangere Island, off the west coast of Pitt Island in the Chatham Islands. Back then, Mangere Island was yet to be cleared for farming, and the feral cats that extirpated most of the birdlife were yet to be introduced.

Traill forwarded the two snipe specimens that he collected to Dr James Hector at the recently opened Colonial Museum (Te Papa's founding institution, opened in late 1865). Hector in turn forwarded one of these snipes to the leading New Zealand ornithologist of the time, Walter Buller. Buller realised that the bird was much smaller than the only form of New Zealand Snipe then known, which had been found on the subantarctic Auckland Islands in 1840. It is the second smallest snipe species in the world (and the smallest in the southern hemisphere) and so Buller named it *Gallinago pusilla*, with *pusilla* meaning 'little'. [It was subsequently moved to the endemic genus *Coenocorypha* – meaning 'mud on top of the head', referring to the way these birds feed.]

Recovery from near extinction

Snipe became extinct on Mangere Island within three decades of Traill's discovery, and were apparently confined to Rangatira Island for the following 70 years or so. They very nearly vanished entirely. Naturalists Logan Bell and Elliot Dawson visited Rangatira on separate occasions during the 1950s (when it was still farmed) with both failing to record snipe. Just how close the snipe came to extinction was revealed by a genetic study published in 2010, which indicated that Chatham Island snipe had the least genetic diversity of any bird in the world. This information has been overlooked by conservation managers and researchers, who focus way more effort on the 'genetic peril' of the Black Robins of Rangatira than the snipe living alongside them.

The last of the farmstock were removed from Rangatira in 1961, and snipe soon recovered in numbers as the dense vegetation that they depend on recovered from grazing by sheep and cattle. By 1970 there were enough of them for the Wildlife Service [a predecessor to the Department of Conservation] to move 23 to Mangere Island, which they were in the process of



▲ Juvenile Chatham Island Snipe. The plumage has more grey tones than that of adults, and the bill base is smooth and purplish-grey.



▲ Chatham Island Snipe eggs in nest.



▲ Chatham Island Snipe chick.



▲ Chatham Island Snipe adult on nest.

restoring. These thrived on Mangere, and from there colonised nearby Little Mangere Island and Rabbit Island.

Snipe do not fly often, but are quite capable when they choose to. They are occasionally seen on the east coast of Pitt Island, a minimum two-kilometre flight from Rangatira (but they do not survive long in the presence of introduced cats and Weka). Snipe were first recorded on the Star Keys (18 kilometres north-east of Rangatira) in 1974. It is not known whether this was a recent colonisation, or whether this was a natural remnant population (they were not recorded during an earlier Wildlife Service survey).

By the time I first encountered Chatham Island Snipe on Rangatira in 1983, they were abundant though somewhat secretive dwellers of the forest remnants and surrounding *Muehlenbeckia* vinelands. I estimated about 10 birds per hectare in Woolshed Bush, and a total population of about 1,500 birds on the island. Snipe numbers have remained similar each time I have visited the island through to March 2018.

Hiding in holes in hollow trees

In the early 1890s, William Hawkins remarked that on Mangere Island "During the day [the snipe] hides in hollow trees", and in 1938 Charles Fleming was told that snipe nested beneath buttress roots of trees. These descriptions contradicted my own experiences in 1983-84, when I invariably found snipe roosting

or nesting under the endemic sedge *Carex chathamica* or under introduced blackberry or Yorkshire fog grass. But in 2018, the six nests found were a better fit with Hawkins' and Fleming's descriptions. As the forest canopy has continued to recover, the sedge has been shaded out, and the snipe living in the forest interior are again nesting in more open sites, making it easier to view details of their breeding behaviour.

Devoted parents

Most of the information known about *Coenocorypha* snipe breeding ecology is based on six breeding seasons of data that I collected on the Snares Islands Snipe between 1982 and 1987. Apart from a shorter incubation length (18-19 days), Chatham Island Snipe have a very similar breeding system to their larger cousins.

Male snipe courtship-feed their mate during the three weeks that it takes her to form the two very large eggs (each about 21% of her bodyweight). Nests are at ground level, usually in sites that provide some overhead protection from crash-landing seabirds. Incubation is shared equally by the sexes, and their urge to incubate becomes very strong as the eggs begin to hatch. The male of one pair that I observed during hatching was so reluctant to leave the nest when the female returned that they ended up sitting side-by-side, with the male brooding the first chick that had hatched, and the female incubating the remaining egg.



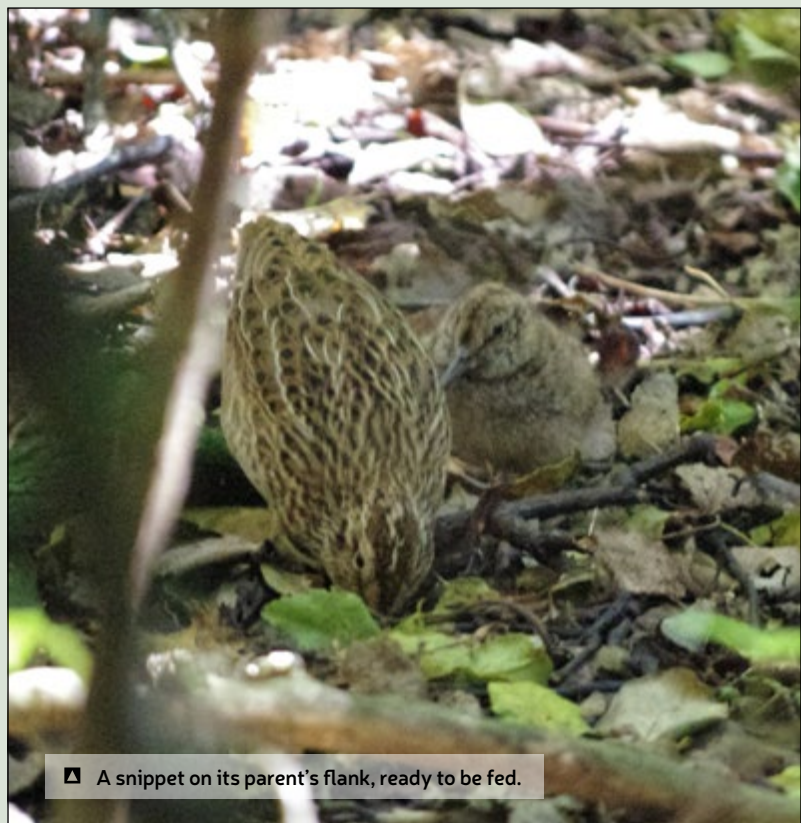
❏ A pair of Chatham Island snipe competing to look after their nest.



❏ Chatham Island Snipe adult presenting a food item to its snippet.



❏ Snipe sitting tight – "the perfect camouflage is only betrayed by its black shining eye." David Cemmick, 1985.



❏ A snippet on its parent's flank, ready to be fed.

Cute little fluff balls

Each adult cares for one of the chicks separately and independently, with the male caring for the first chick to leave the nest. Throughout the breeding season, most snipe are encountered as parent and chick pairs, until the young become independent soon after they lose the last of their down. Chicks have enormous legs and feet on hatching, and leave the nest within 12 hours of emerging from the egg.

The parents provide all the food for the chicks for the first two weeks, until the chicks' bills grow long enough for effective probing. Even then, parents continue to provide the bulk of the food taken by the chick through to independence, with the adults losing up to seven percent of their bodyweight while providing food for their chick.

Very young chicks are brooded by their parents, who pause occasionally during foraging to fluff out their breast feathers and allow the chick to climb under for a thermal recharge. When foraging recommences, the pair are inseparable, as if attached by a rubber band. The chick stumbles along behind the parent, which utters soft chirrups of encouragement if they become separated by more than half a metre.

Snipe feed by probing in the soil, and are very rapid and vigorous, with the bill thrusting down and back like a sewing machine needle. Chicks need to be alert to a feeding opportunity, as adults do not carry food to the chick, or even turn the head to present a food item. The chick needs to be at its parent's side, and wait for the cue of the parent ceasing probing. The food item (usually an insect larva, worm or hopper) is held in the bill tip



▲ A snippet following its parent.



▲ Chatham Snipe adult broods its chick.



▲ Colin Miskelly taking a blood sample. Photo by Alan Tennyson.

a centimetre or two above where it was extracted. If the chick takes more than a couple of seconds to grab the item, the parent will swallow it itself and resume probing.

Solo parenting together

I have never seen two snipe adults caring for the same chick, and have only once seen two chicks following the same adult. Three-egg nests have occasionally been recorded for both Chatham Island Snipe and Snares Island Snipe, and so I presume that these explain the rare instances of two chicks being seen with a single adult.

With the more intensively studied Snares Island Snipe, some adults that lost a chick (or if only one egg hatched) attempted to breed with a new mate while their original mate cared for the

surviving chick. But by the start of the next breeding season the original pair would be back together, regardless of whether their extramarital fling had produced chicks or not.

With many thanks to the Department of Conservation (DOC) for the opportunity to assist with Chatham threatened bird recovery programmes and to visit Rangatira Island Nature Reserve.

Colin Miskelly is Curator - Vertebrates at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and a Birds New Zealand Council member. He first visited Rangatira Island Nature Reserve in the Chatham Islands as an undergraduate student studying snipe in 1983. He returned to the island in March 2018 as a volunteer for DOC, and was delighted to renew acquaintance with one of his favourite birds.



This Oriental Cuckoo found near Upper Hutt (1/12) was taken into care. After recovering, it was released near Whanganui (10th January - see page 17).

▣ Oriental Cuckoo photo by Paul Gibson.



▣ Burrow camera footage of a Barn Owl pulling a Wedge-tailed Shearwater chick out of its burrow on Lehua Islet and killing it. Courtesy of A. Raine, Kauai Endangered Seabird Recovery Project.

Impact of introduced Barn Owls on Hawai’ian seabirds

The Barn Owl was introduced to the Hawai’ian Islands in the late 1950s as a biological control for introduced rats and has since become common throughout the main Hawai’ian Islands. We address the impact on Hawaiian seabirds by summarising the number of seabird depredations recorded in the database of the Kauai Endangered Seabird Recovery Project. Data were collected on Kauai and the neighbouring islets of Lehua and Moku’ae’ae between January 2011 and October 2018 as part of ongoing seabird survey work. 379 Barn Owl depredations were recorded of eight seabird species, the most common of which were Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Black Noddy, and Bulwer’s Petrel. Included were 21 depredations on Newell’s Shearwater and Hawaiian Petrel, species listed on the federal Endangered Species Act. Most Barn Owl depredations were on adult seabirds. The effectiveness of Barn Owl control was also evident, with their depredations on Lehua Islet decreasing significantly after dedicated control operations were initiated. Barn Owl control should be considered as an integral part of all Hawai’ian seabird management programs.

Raine, A.F., Vynne, M. & Driskill, S. 2019. *The impact of an introduced avian predator, the Barn Owl, on Hawaiian seabirds.* Marine Ornithology 47: 33-38. [Kauai Endangered Seabird Recovery Project (KESRP), Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU), University of Hawai’i and Division of Forestry and Wildlife, State of Hawai’i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Hawai’i, USA].



▣ This white Tui was photographed at Taputeranga Marae in Island Bay, Wellington, on 26th December by Natalie Gardner.

Global pattern of shorebird nest predation is disrupted by climate change

Shorebird nest predation has increased globally over the past 70 years and is consistent with climate-induced shifts in predator-prey relationships, says a new study published in *Science* in November 2018. The study notes that many biological patterns have a latitudinal component. “One long-recognized pattern is that predation rates are higher at lower latitudes. This may explain why many migratory birds travel thousands of miles from the tropics to the poles to breed.”

Looking at thousands of records, the study found that climate change seems to have altered this fundamental pattern: “In shorebirds, at least, predation rates on nests are now higher in the Arctic than in the tropics. ... Ongoing climate change is thought to disrupt trophic relationships, with consequences for complex interspecific interactions, yet the effects of climate change on species interactions are poorly understood, and such effects have not been documented at a global scale. Using a single database of 38,191 nests from 237 populations, we found that shorebirds have experienced a worldwide increase in nest predation over the past 70 years. Historically, there existed a latitudinal gradient in nest predation, with the highest rates in the tropics; however, this pattern has been recently reversed in the Northern Hemisphere, most notably in the Arctic. This increased nest predation is consistent with climate-induced shifts in predator-prey relationships.”

Global pattern of nest predation is disrupted by climate change in shorebirds, V. Kubelka, M. Šálek, P. Tomkovich, Z. Végvári, R.P. Freckleton, T. Székely (Charles Univ Prague; Univ of Bath; Czech Univ of Life Sciences Prague; Moscow MV Lomonosov State Univ; Univ of Debrecen; Hortobágy National Park Directorate; Univ of Sheffield; Sun Yat-sen Univ; Beijing Normal Univ). *Science* 09 Nov 2018: Vol. 362, Issue 6415.

Eyles’ Harrier & Haast’s Eagle study

A new genetic study has found that New Zealand’s extinct giant Eyles’ Harrier was most closely related to the Spotted Harrier of Australia rather than the Swamp Harrier, as previously thought, and confirms the relationship between New Zealand’s giant Haast’s Eagle and the Little Eagle of Australia. The study puts the divergence of Eyles’ Harrier from Spotted Harrier at 2.37 million-years-ago, and Haast’s Eagle from Little Eagle at 2.22 million-years-ago, and concludes that early Pleistocene climate and environmental changes were likely to have triggered the establishment of Australian raptors in New Zealand. Although Eyles’ Harrier was much lighter than Haast’s Eagle, it was still the largest known harrier species in the world. Haast’s Eagle was the largest known eagle species in the world.

Mitogenomic evidence of close relationships between New Zealand’s extinct giant raptors and small-sized Australian sister-taxa. [Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution](#), 10 February 2019 (online). M. Knapp, J.E. Thomas, J. Haile, S. Prost de Simon, Y.W. Ho, N. Dussex, S. Cameron-Christie, E. Thomas, O. Kardailsky, R. Barnett, M. Bunce, M. Thomas, P. Gilbert and R.P. Scofield. [Univ of Otago; Bangor Univ UK; Natural History Museum Denmark; Univ of Copenhagen; Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology Vienna; Univ of California; Univ of Sydney; Swedish Museum of Natural History; Curtin Univ Australia; Norwegian Univ of Science and Technology; and Canterbury Museum].



▣ Wareham's Penguin (*Eudyptes warehami*)/Sean Murtha

Extinct Chatham Islands crested penguin species

Two previously unknown Chatham Islands penguins have been identified in a new genetic study of penguin evolution. An international team of researchers led by Tess Cole, a PhD candidate at the University of Otago, studied prehistoric penguin bones from the southern hemisphere and found that many penguin species arose shortly after the geological formation of islands, such as the Chatham and Antipodes Islands.

They found that a unique crested penguin lived on the Chatham Islands until several centuries ago, which they name Wareham's Penguin (*Eudyptes warhami*). Based on a genetic comparison, this species diverged from its closest relative, the Erect-crested Penguin of the Antipodes Islands, between 1.1 and 2.5 million-years-ago (Mya). This corresponds to the emergence of the Chatham Islands from the sea circa 3 Mya. The species is named after John Wareham, a pioneering penguin researcher who was elected a Fellow of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand in 1998 and awarded a New Zealand Order of Merit for services to ornithology in the New Zealand Honours List, 2001.

The researchers also found a new dwarf subspecies of Yellow-eyed Penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes richdalei*) which had bones that were 10–20% smaller than the Yellow-eyed Penguin, closer in size to a Rockhopper Penguin according to co-author Dr Kieren Mitchell of the University of Adelaide.

Most extinct penguin species died out long before humans evolved, but they found that Wareham's Penguin probably became extinct shortly after humans arrived at the Chatham Islands in the 1400s and was probably hunted to extinction by the 1600s.

The researchers extracted DNA from subfossil bones found in sand dunes on the Chatham Islands. The study combined skeletal morphology with DNA evidence to understand how Wareham's Penguin evolved. Skeletal features provided the first clue – the existence of a lost species was hinted at by earlier comparisons of penguin bones collected from sand dunes on the Chatham Islands. In 1996, Alan Tennyson (a study co-author) and Phillip Millener examined penguin bones from these islands, and found that they did not match those of any living species. DNA evidence has now confirmed those suspicions.

Mitogenomes uncover extinct penguin taxa and reveal island formation as a key driver of speciation. T. L. Cole (University of Otago); D.T. Ksepka; K. J. Mitchell (University of Adelaide); A. J. D Tennyson (Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand); D. B. Thomas; H. Pan; G. Zhang; N. J. Rawlence (University of Otago); J. R. Wood (Landcare Research); P. Bover; J. L. Bouzat; A. Cooper (University of Adelaide); S. R. Fiddaman; T. Hart; G. Miller; P. G. Ryan; L. D. Shepherd (Te Papa); J. M. Wilmshurst; and J. M. Waters. *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, 05 February 2019.



▣ Kakapo with egg, Anchor Island. Photo by Brodie Philp/DOC

Bumper breeding season for Kākāpō

Kākāpō are having a bumper breeding season with 41 chicks produced so far during the current 2018-2019 season from a total of 203 eggs laid, with more eggs being laid after some female Kākāpō mated a second time. This is the most Kākāpō eggs laid during a single breeding season in the 28-year history of the Department of Conservation Kākāpō Recovery Programme.

The first chick hatched on 30th January but it will be six months before the new chicks can be counted as part of the total adult Kākāpō population, which currently stands at 147.

With birds starting to breed so early this season, DOC has started using a new strategy to encourage 'double clutching' - meaning the birds could nest twice in one season. This involves bringing in fertile eggs for incubation in captivity and hand-rearing the chick to encourage females to nest a second time.

Department of Conservation Kākāpō Operations Manager Deidre Vercoe told RNZ, "Unfortunately, fertility has been particularly poor this year, potentially due to the number of young males breeding for the first time. Less than half of these eggs will hatch into a Kākāpō chick, and not every hatched chick will make it to adulthood. However, we're still hoping for anywhere between 30 to 50 chicks. With a population of 147 adults, this will be a huge boost for this Taonga."

The Department of Conservation's Kākāpō Recovery Programme, working closely with Ngāi Tahu, is also working on innovative approaches to improve the birds' breeding success. An 'assisted breeding' programme involves semen collection, sperm analysis and artificial insemination. New 'Smart Eggs' are also being used. These are 3-D printed eggs that mimic the sounds of a real Kākāpō egg just prior to the chick hatching out, which helps Kākāpō mothers better prepare for the arrival of a chick, thereby improving the care that a chick gets in its critical first days. An international team of experts have joined the recovery programme team this season, with the aim of ensuring that rare Kākāpō genes are better represented within the population. Multiple matings, whether by assisted breeding or naturally, also increase the likelihood that a female Kākāpō will lay fertile eggs.

In early February the DOC team also used a small drone for the first time to fly Kākāpō semen across Whenua Hou Island so that it could be used to artificially inseminate a Kākāpō named Esperance. The drone's 9-minute flight across the island was much faster than the 90-minute walk would have taken.

With a boost to the Kākāpō population now expected, DOC needs to find space for so many new arrivals. "We have to find new homes that are predator-free, as Kākāpō have real trouble surviving in locations with introduced predators," Deidre Vercoe told RNZ. She said the mainland would be an option in future if the Kākāpō population continued to rise.

FAR NORTH

As I write, there are still nesting Australasian Gannets at Nine Pin and Buller's Shearwater at the Poor Knights Islands, but other species are starting to flock-up. Waitangi Day is over and the space outside the marae is available for NZ Dotterels and the visiting South Island Pied Oystercatchers. Reports so far indicate an increase in the numbers of NZ Dotterel thanks to the excellent conservation work being done out at Rawhiti.

Pelagic birding trips from Tutukaka and the Bay of Islands produced the 'usual suspects', including rafts of Buller's Shearwater, Fluttering Shearwater and Common Diving Petrel. One rarity was Black-winged Petrel, seen on 2 trips. Shorebird surveys included visits to Kowhai Beach, Walker Island, and Parengarenga. Kowhai Beach and Rangaunu Harbour numbers were up. Parengarenga numbers were up on last year, but that is not a good measure because of access issues that were not a problem this year. As usual, we stopped at Unahi Road to see the residual Royal Spoonbill flock. The surprise was a Cattle Egret flock that stayed well into January. There were reports of a flock of 19-22 Cattle Egrets in Piako, south of Miranda, in breeding plumage, and other scattered reports. They are usually gone by November. One wonders who will be the first to report nesting Cattle Egret in New Zealand. It seems inevitable.

CJ Ralph has been conducting Bay of Islands 5-minute bird count surveys since 2009, and other surveys including gull and gannet counts in the Bay for over 30 years. He conducted the surveys again this year with the help of local members and supporters, and were happy to report that almost all the survey routes were once again covered. A Conservation Day event in Paihia in December saw about 50 conservation groups and bird enthusiasts gather to display their wares and talk about their projects. The effect of these 'flax roots' conservation efforts can be seen and heard throughout the Far North where there is an obvious groundswell of interest that is having an effect on our bird life. - LES FEASEY

NORTHLAND

Hilton Ward reports that 13 Grey-faced Petrel chicks are thought to have fledged from the Taurawhata colony on the coast near Matapouri. According to the monitoring cameras there, 1 chick was fed 23 meals over 88 days and another had 50 meals over 93 days. This latter chick was recorded departing on 1/1. The other monitored chick fell off the pad at the burrow entrance on 23/12 and was not seen on camera again. Hilton also reports 3 Spotless Crane chicks were caught on camera with 2 adult birds at his wetland in Ngunguru.

Late last year several members assisted Dai Morgan with the Whangarei urban birds survey. The count data shows that the overall average numbers for the 5 most abundant species was 6.84 House Sparrow, 2.16 Silveryeye, 2.06 Blackbird, 1.11 Common Myna and 1.03 Tui. Dai reports that he has further analyses to complete on these data involving looking at how bird richness and abundance change over the urban/forest gradient. The Bream Head 5M bird count survey on the Te Whara-Peach Cove lines on 19/1 produced 3 Whitehead (incl 1 juv), 3 North Island Robin, 8

NZ Tomtit, 4 Kaka and 2 Bellbird, plus another Bellbird seen and heard in trees around Ocean's Beach car park.

Scott Brooks reports that the highlights from the 2 most recent pelagic trips from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands on 9/1 and 2/2 included sightings of Grey Ternlet, NZ Storm Petrel, Pycroft's Petrel, Cook's Petrel, Grey-faced Petrel, Little Shearwater, Antipodean Albatross (gibsoni) and large flocks of Buller's Shearwater. The January trip was notable for the first White-chinned Petrel recorded on these trips. The February trip also recorded 2 Black-winged Petrels. - ANNE McCRACKEN

AUCKLAND

The NZ Fairy Terns breeding within our region started out well, with 3 of the 5 potential pairs at Mangawhai breeding earlier than ever before (9/10, 11/10, 14/10). The previous earliest eggs were laid on 21/11/10. Unfortunately, no chicks fledged from the Mangawhai site this last season. One egg that was transferred to a solo pair at the Waipu estuary further north resulted in a fledgling. On the Mangawhai Summer Census Day (10/11), observers photographed 2 dismembered Northern NZ Dotterels and numerous Cat footprints, so it could be that predation was the major problem at that site this season as there were no adverse weather events. The only other NZ Fairy Tern chick to survive this season fledged from the single pair at the Pakiri River Mouth, making national productivity for NZ Fairy Tern akin to that of the 2002/2003 breeding season, which was the last time that only 2 chicks fledged in a season. Unfortunately, both females from the 2 breeding pairs at the Papakanui site on the west coast either died or disappeared, so there was no productivity there.

A regional first was the success of the Black-billed Gull colony on the Radio Masts Site on Watercare land at Mangere, with 160 chicks counted on 29/12 by Tony Habraken along with just over 200 adults. A White-winged Black Tern and 2 Sanderlings were seen at Papakanui Spit by John N on 29/12 and there was a Black-tailed Godwit there on 21/1. Despite being a very busy urban park, Western Springs is a great place for city birdwatching, with a pair of NZ Dabchick with 3 chicks being seen there by multiple observers during December and January. The family of dabchicks proved to be very popular with photographers and are likely the first pair to successfully breed there for more than 10 years. Several juvenile Little Black Shags were present at the Western Springs colony on 2/2 (seen by Noel Ward and Gwenda Pulham) as well as nestlings and a copulating pair.

Our Muriwai Beach Patrol on 15/12 found 20 birds of 11 species, with the more unusual birds being singleton Black-browed Albatross, White-chinned Petrel, Grey Petrel and Mottled Petrel. Our patrol on 9/2 found fewer birds with a total of 7 including singleton Caspian Tern, Australasian Gannet, Fairy Prion and Sooty Shearwater, and 3 Fluttering Shearwaters. The Auckland region took part in 2 public events with our displays over the summer. The first was the Seabird Seminar at the Maritime Museum on 1-2/12, where our NZ Fairy Tern 3D models made by Shaun

Lee proved popular. The second was World Wetlands Day at Matuku Link near Bethells Beach on 2/2 where a Matuku or Australasian Bittern was seen. Lastly, our annual Summer Picnic at Waitatarua Reserve in Remuera on 22/1 attracted 15 participants. A total of 27 species were recorded including a juvenile NZ Dabchick and a Brown Teal. At least 2 Spotless Crakes were heard, which is great for a wetland located so close to Auckland's CBD. - IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

After a busy wet Spring we eased back into a hot summer without any major projects on the go, but at our February meeting there was a chance to catch-up. Ted Kitching has been spending time on the Awhitu Peninsula lately looking at sea and shore birds. Variable Oystercatchers and especially NZ Dotterels have a poor breeding season with nests washed out by Spring tides. Southern Black-backed Gulls have done well, however, with about 30% more chicks fledging than last year and big numbers now appearing on roosts. The White-fronted Terns have been feeding at sea, roosting on the beach at Pokorua Gap at low tide and also commuting overland to fish the Manukau.

Tony Habraken has also been watching White-fronted Terns on the Firth of Thames and notes birds sitting on eggs on the foreshore at Tararu now. With the first fledged juveniles noted on census in November it has been a very long breeding season. He also noted a Common Tern at Tararu in early January. At Kidd's Shellbank, David Lawrie recorded 5,000 Red Knot, 4,000 Bar-tailed Godwit, 43 Pacific Golden Plover, 9 Asiatic Whimbrel, 2 Eastern Curlew, 2 Greater Sand Plover, 1 Grey Plover and 1 Great Knot on 26/1. The latter 3 species were seen again on 31/1 and 9/2. Wrybill began arriving in January with over 300 and 20+ Banded Dotterels on 9/2. The highpoint of the season at Miranda has been a Broad-billed Sandpiper, not always easy to find, and a Glossy Ibis has remained over summer along with up to 4 Cattle Egrets in breeding plumage. We also discussed Shining Cuckoos, with most hearing birds in the last week but they often seem to call for periods of a few days with silence between, maybe suggesting birds moving through. David Walter reported a flock of 8-10 at Wairamarama. - IAN SOUTHEY

WAIKATO

Our November meeting included a discussion led by John Innes and Neil Fitzgerald on the Hamilton 'halo' project. It has been so successful with Tui that it is hoped other native birds can be introduced to the urban and rural areas in and around Hamilton. The Spring census coastal harbours produced no real surprises, except 4 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers at Aotea Harbour. A Reef Heron was found at Whangamata Harbour and the number of nesting Red-billed Gulls was well down on the previous year.

Our region lost two members in November: Daphne Taylor and Chris Smuts-Kennedy. Chris was instrumental in developing the Maungatautari restoration plan. He also worked with many threatened species especially the Kakapo, with which he had a life-long affiliation.

The Coromandel NZ Dotterels again have



struggled, with some of the main breeding beaches producing fewer or even no chicks, but overall there should be close to 100 new chicks fledged. My own beach had over 25 nests from 7 pairs and ironically the only chicks fledged were 3 from the "Dogs off lead zone". An interesting wreck in November on Onemana Beach was a Southern Giant Petrel. There was a pair of Brown Teal resident on the Onemana Beach lakes that have been there all summer and 80+ Paradise Shelducks on the Treatment Ponds in various stages of moult.

At Maungatautari a recent survey put the number of North Island Kokako pairs there at 19, a 122% increase on the previous year. Visitors there are also likely to find that young Hihi, Kaka, Tui, Bellbirds, North Island Robins, North Island Saddlebacks and Kereru. Sadly, a Stoat killed 7 Grey-faced Petrel chicks that were close to fledging at Karioi Maunga. All the volunteers are devastated by this but relieved to hear of the Stoat's demise. Finally, a special visitor just off Manu Bay in January was a Northern Giant Petrel.

- KEN WEDGWOOD

TARANAKI

The weather was cloudy and cool for our October field trip to Lake Rotokare but that didn't worry the birds with 27 species recorded including Tieke, Hihi, North Island Robin, Whitehead, NZ Scaup, Fernbird and Black Shag, the latter gathered in their small colony at the other end of the lake. At the November meeting it was noted that Tony Green had received an award from Taranaki Regional Council for his volunteer environmental work. Tony is busy doing bird monitoring and feeding at Lake Rotokare and North Island Robin counts on Mount Taranaki among other projects.

At the December meeting the Cockerams reported on a recent North Island trip where they saw Kaka, Kakariki, Whitehead, breeding Australasian Gannets, Australasian Bittern booming, Weka, NZ Dabchick and at Mt Bruce, the White Kiwi and Takahe. The Fryers spent a week in Niue; birds were few apart from feral chooks, Purple-capped Fruit Dove and Pacific Imperial Pigeon. The highlight was the numerous Pacific Golden Plover seen along grassy areas; they were more confiding than the 5 (later 3) at Waiongana. On returning home, a pair of Red-necked Stint was seen at the Waiongana Lagoon for a few days.

We received a letter from the Rotokare Trust asking for our support for a transfer of Rifleman from Mount Taranaki to the Rotokare Reserve; after some discussion it was agreed to support the plan. Apart from the mountain, Rifleman are absent from the Taranaki region. The meeting ended with the annual cuppa, cakes and conversation. Our field trip to North Egmont starting at the bottom car park. Tui, Bellbird, NZ Tomtit and Shining Cuckoo among other species were seen and heard; a brief wander along the Ngatoro Track resulted in seeing Silvereye, NZ Tomtit, at least 4 Rifleman and a North Island Robin.

In mid-December I visited Ahuriri Estuary and Westshore Lagoon in Napier; it is a wonderful place and the relatively new 'scrapes' and their shallow ponds there were full of birds, including a Black-billed Gull colony, Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied Stilt,

Banded and Black-fronted Dotterel, and numerous waterfowl including Grey Teal and Australasian Shoveler. I also found a male Northern Shoveler in breeding plumage. As usual in January our annual 'Beach, Birds and BBQ' was held on a lovely day. For those of us who also wandered down to the beach and checked the high tide roost, we saw NZ Dotterel, Pacific Golden Plover, Banded Dotterel, Pied Stilt, Caspian Tern, Variable Oystercatcher and assorted birds in farm paddocks. Then we hurried back for a superb BBQ. Can you get 'Michelin Stars' for BBQing? - PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

Bad weather meant we had to switch a planned visit to the Blowhard Bush Reserve to Ahuriri Estuary in Napier in November. Seven of us enjoyed seeing the more than 200 Bar-tailed Godwits that we found resting at the scrapes during high tide, with 2 Red Knot among them. Birds at the Southern Marsh included 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Pectoral Sandpipers have also been recorded there since. A newly formed Black-billed Gull colony has been nesting at the scrapes, possibly originating from a colony in the Ngaruroro River that was lost due to high rainfall in the catchment. In December there were 165 adult gulls, a small number compared to South Island breeding sites but any breeding has to be a good thing for this critically endangered species. Since then a number of chicks have been produced and hopefully these will have fledged.

A newsletter from Helen Jonas on the Shore Plover breeding effort on Waikawa (Portland Island) reports: "Things are pumping. We have a definite 20 Shore Plover pairs now - which is just great! There are 10 nests on the go, another 3 look to be happening very soon, and there are 5 families with chicks. Three Shore Plover were seen doing their OE in November at Ahuriri, Clive and Westshore, all have come back home safely, and were seen on the island in our early December trip." Nine of us visited Boundary Stream Mainland Island in February where those who did the Tumanako loop walk saw a NZ Falcon. - IAN SMITH

WHANGANUI

2019 started with a sighting of an Eastern Curlew by Paul Gibson on the Whanganui River estuary on New Year's Day. He and I saw the bird again the next day, but a couple of other Birds New Zealand members unfortunately missed out. It was last reported by a member of the public at the end of that week. The bird did not associate with any of the other waders present on the estuary at the time: a few Bar-tailed Godwits, numerous Pied Stilts, and small migrating flocks of Wrybill and SIPO. As far as we know, this is the first record of this increasingly rare critically endangered species to be seen on the Whanganui Estuary. Its presence provided an opportunity to get news about the sighting into the local newspaper, along with a mention of Birds New Zealand, the threats being faced by waders along the East Asian Australasian Flyway, and the work being done by the Wader Study Group to monitor changes in wader populations countrywide.

Soon after this Paul Gibson was involved in another rare-bird event, the release of a first-year Oriental Cuckoo that had been

rescued from a cat near Upper Hutt on 1/12 and taken into the care of Dawne Morton at Whanganui-Manawat Bird Rescue Centre in Turakina before being released at Upokongaro near Whanganui on 10/1. Dawne arranged for Paul to oversee the release of this migratory vagrant from Asia that seldom reaches New Zealand.

A few keen birders arrived on the day to see the bird being released. It flew off, perching long enough for at least 1 reasonable photograph, before flying off to sit perched near the top of a tree. Its raptor-like appearance in flight set-off the local Chaffinches, which spent the next hour 'chinking' at the cuckoo's presence. Our visiting enthusiasts spent a happy hour observing it and debating the merits or otherwise of including it on their life lists. The cuckoo sat almost motionless, observing its surroundings, its barred underparts making it look much like a Shining Cuckoo. Those who attended the release donated around \$200 to the Bird Rescue Centre, much-needed funds for a hard-working but hard-pressed community organisation. Thank you. - PETER FROST

WELLINGTON

Changes in the bird populations in Wellington City are well illustrated by *eBird*, for example the spread of Kaka out of the Zealandia Ecosanctuary. Kaka were introduced there between 2002 and 2007 and have subsequently spread well beyond the fence, and are now breeding outside it. Colin Miskelly recently sent me a note regarding the sighting of a Kereru which just flew by his office window in upper Tory Street. Until relatively recently Kereru have been uncommon in the central city other than a small population centred on Otari-Wilton Bush Reserve and Ngaio Gorge. However, this was Colin's 6th Kereru sighting in the area between his office in Tory Street and his home in Mt Cook in the last 2 months.

The increase in Kereru in Wellington City is well illustrated by the *eBird* records and the series of 5-minute bird counts which were carried out at the Zealandia Ecosanctuary by Wellington OSNZ. Of particular interest is the spread of Kereru to the Miramar Peninsula. The cause of the increases of Kereru in the Wellington City environs is likely to be multifactorial. There has been a concentrated and sustained predator control effort within the city and surrounding bush areas. The spread of birds out of the ecosanctuary is also likely. In the first series of counts at the ecosanctuary (1995-98), Kereru were only recorded during 3 counts. It should be noted that only 10 rehabilitated birds were tagged and released in the ecosanctuary between 2002 and 2005.

The ecosanctuary now has a breeding population of Kereru which appear to have been established by unmarked birds from the small population of birds at the Otari-Wilton Bush Reserve and Ngaio Gorge. If this trend continues, they may soon be as conspicuous throughout the inner city as Tui and Kaka are already. - GEOFF DE LISLE

NELSON

Summer banding field trips have been fraught with weather problems. Part of the Caspian Tern colony on Bells Island was washed out

early in the season and with the resulting staggered nesting it was decided not to disturb the colony this year. Wash-outs also affected White-fronted Tern colonies on Motueka Sandspit, but nesting on the Boulder Bank was probably unscathed. Red-billed Gull colonies were noted on both Motueka Sandspit and the Boulder Bank. Black-billed Gulls nested on Motueka Sandspit with several banded birds spotted (from the Wairau River) and a couple of nests were found on the Boulder Bank, and another banded bird. In the Wai-iti and Waimea River catchments Black-fronted Terns again tried their luck. Unconfirmed sightings of juveniles were reported but there is more pressure on their nesting habitat from recreational public access issues.

There was good news from Golden Bay. A pair of NZ Dabchicks raised 2 young on Lake Killarney in the middle of Takaka township after several uneventful years. They were first seen as striped fluffy chicks riding on their parents' backs on 4/12 and remained with them until at least 10/1. Kea came down to the lower slopes of Pohara Beach in early December and were watched with delight feeding on flax flowers in a local garden. Back on the Tasman side of the hill, an organised wader banding field trip on Waimea Estuary in February was cancelled due to Rabbit Island being closed and access denied due to the extreme fire risk in our tinder-dry region. Earlier in the season, also on Rabbit Island, nesting Variable Oystercatchers were being watched closely as part of the long-term banding programme. Fifteen nests were found but only 4 young were reared from 11 nests. Few chicks were banded this year. Predation by Southern Black-backed Gulls and Cats is probably a cause for low survival rates. Good data has been obtained over 20 years or so.

During Spring, Bar-tailed Godwit numbers on Bells Island in Waimea Estuary doubled from winter numbers of c200 to c400 in mid-September with some flagged birds among them. Of interest is orange J4, recorded here 6 times, and sighted 8 times in South Korea on its northern migration journey. Numbers increased to c1,000 on 23/10 including 75 juveniles, the first seen among the adult arrivals. Also roosting with the godwits were c400 Red Knots, a single juvenile Red-necked Stint and a regularly reported Whimbrel. A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was seen on a previous visit. - GAIL D. QUAYLE

MARLBOROUGH

The Marlborough region will be hosting the next Youth Camp during Easter at Watson's Way Back-backers in Renwick, 15th-20th April. The plan is for a busy week that enables young people to gain hands-on birding skills within Marlborough's diverse ecosystems. We will be visiting wetland, coastal, island and grassland habitats to see the variety of birds that live in Marlborough, and build skills in observing, recording, drawing and examining birds, along with learning about predator control, habitat restoration, and species reintroduction. Any young people wishing to attend should contact: kristin.ruwhiu@hotmail.com

Over the summer months our region has been active with surveys and banding. In December, the Marlborough 'Young Birders' once again assisted in banding the Fluttering Shearwater chicks on Maud Island. During

the Kaikoura river surveys a large colony of 1,800 pairs of Black-billed Gulls was observed (Charwell River). Later observation identified a Black-billed Gull banded in 1995 at Marble Point (Waiiau River), 55 km away. This highlights the benefits of banding. It tells us both about bird movements, and at 23-years-old, reminds us just how long lived some bird species are. If we feed this information into population statistics, we can start to understand the long lag times between poor nesting success and observable population declines. We also saw birds with white, yellow and red bands at the mouth of the Kahutara River. These were hatched on the Wairau, Clarence and Buller rivers, so identifying them gives us information on dispersal.

We carried out our third survey of the south Marlborough coastline from the Ure River to Marfell's Beach. We found that VOC, Banded Dotterel and Pied Stilt nesting success is very low. We also found a number of Little Penguin beach wrecks, and so will need to work on understanding why this is occurring. Individually, people have encountered Fernbird on the Opawa River and the Royal Spoonbills present are readily seen feeding and nesting at the Wairau Lagoons. There have also been Bar-tailed Godwits at Havelock Estuary and Cape Campbell. - HEATHER DAVIES

CANTERBURY

It has been excellent to see so many local birders getting out and about so far this year, and submitting plenty of *eBird* lists. This is thanks in part to a 'Canterbury Big Year', devised by Andrew Crossland, which requires participants to share their sightings on *eBird*. Hopefully people continue to get out birding and making *eBird* lists as the year progresses. Lake Ellesmere has been a hotspot for people hoping to add migratory waders to their big year lists. An unusually large number of Pectoral Sandpipers are present at the lake with up to 6 seen at once. A Hudsonian Godwit, which was first seen last year, continues to be spotted, often around the Yarrs Bay and Wolfes Road Bay area. Another interesting sighting is that of 2 Gull-billed Terns, which have been seen recently around Wolfes Road and Embankment Road.

A Little Tern was spotted at the Ashley Estuary on 5/11, and the following day both a Little Tern and a Common Tern were seen there. Neither have been reported since, although a Little Tern was seen at the Hurunui River Mouth in late January. A Sanderling continues to be seen at the Ashley, but the Grey-tailed Tattler seen last year has not been found since December. A final sighting of note from that area was a Pomarine Skua, which was seen off Waikuku Beach in early January.

A few Canterbury birders have recently made visits to the Hawdon Valley and Hawdon Hut. High counts from different visits in January include 6 Yellowhead, 2 Kaka and 6 Kea, plus a Long-tailed Cuckoo at the Hawdon Shelter. A Great Spotted Kiwi was heard calling at night at the Hawdon Hut on a couple of occasions. - ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

Our Summer Wader Count recorded several rarities, with Richard Schofield finding a Wrybill and 2 tattlers at Catlins estuary, and 3 Wrybill at Warrington Beach, the first for

decades. The team that has been monitoring pairs of South Island Robins in bush outside Orokonui Ecosanctuary ended the season on a positive note with probable sightings of 2 fledglings, which would be the first from outside the ecosanctuary. This project will continue next season.

Janet Ledingham watched White-fronted Tern nest at Aramoana Mole on 21/12 and saw fledged young on 11/1. Nick Beckwith helped with trap installation at Rachel Hufton's project on the Wilkins River north branch that protects Kea and Rock Wren habitat there. Regular birding on his own patch included an "interesting afternoon at Warrington" on 19/12, spotting several banded and flagged Bar-tailed Godwits; Little, Pied, Spotted and Otago shags; Caspian Terns; a Ruddy Turnstone (rare here); and several VOC nests and chicks.

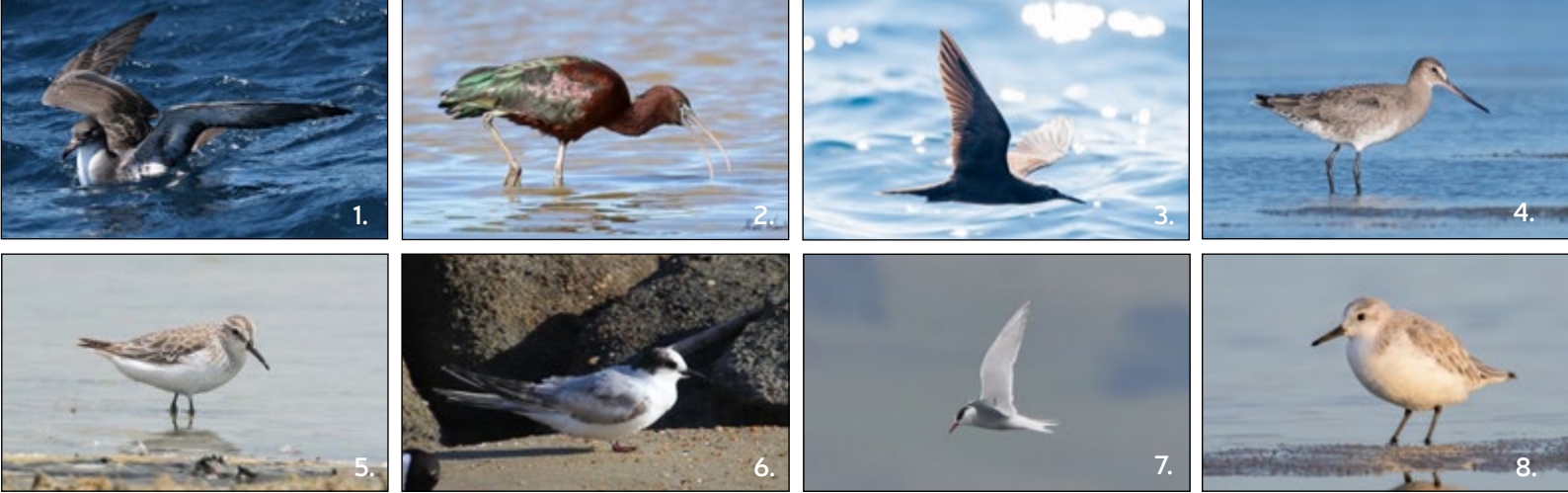
Sharon Roberts has already achieved her goal for the year, having spotted a Spotless Crake at the Mirror Lakes in Eglinton Valley: "Really thrilled to finally see this elusive bird... had to wait until 8pm for the tourist hordes to ease off but finally heard and saw the bird checking out the margins... and watched it for about an hour as it popped in and out of the flaxes." These brief reports from members highlight that we should not overlook what there is to see in our own backyards. - MARY THOMPSON

SOUTHLAND

The Southland Spring wader count recorded good numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits in all our count areas (possibly a first!). Our old friend the Eastern Curlew was again seen at Haldane Bay (the only curlew reported during our count). We also found a new nesting location there for Royal Spoonbill. We found one nest which contained a recently hatched chick and 2 eggs. The nest was probably not in the best location as it is easily accessible at low tide.

Good numbers of Pacific Golden Plover were in their usual location in the New River Estuary shellbanks plus a smaller flock at the head of Awarua Bay. I checked the Caspian Tern colony during the count and it looked as though their first nesting attempts had possibly been washed out during some very high tides as they were much further back on the shellbanks than usual. Re-nesting looked likely as some birds were displaying and others were copulating. This is the southernmost Caspian Tern colony in New Zealand and it usually numbers around 30 pairs, having remained stable for many years.

Flocks of up to 9 Chestnut-breasted Shelduck were seen at the Pleasure Bay/Tip Lagoon in Invercargill, but the male Northern Shoveler seen up to November seems to have vanished since then. There were several reports of a Marsh Sandpiper at the lagoon in early January associating with Pied Stilts, which stayed for a few days. Other interesting sightings were an Arctic Tern at Waipapa Point and unidentified petrel and shearwater species at Waituna Lagoon and Tiwai Bridge sandspit. Sharon Malva saw a Spotless Crake at Mirror Lakes on the Eglinton Valley road on 15/1; both crake species have been reported from this location. Pete McClelland spotted a Black-tailed Godwit at Sandy Pt near Daffodil Bay, and Lloyd Esler photographed a tattler near Tiwai Point. We now look forward to the summer wader count and taking part in the exciting new Bird Atlas Scheme. - PHIL RHODES



1. Pink-footed Shearwater off Stewart Island/Matt Jones. 2. Glossy Ibis/Matt Winter/wildnaturenewzealand.co.nz 3. Black Noddy at Chickens Islands/Edin Whitehead. 4. Hudsonian Godwit at Lake Ellesmere/Mike Ashbee 5. Broad-billed Sandpiper at Miranda/Matthias Dehling 6. Arctic Tern at Waipapa Point, Caitlins/Johannes Fischer 7. Antarctic Tern off Otago Peninsula/Steve Wood. 8. Sanderling at Lake Ellesmere/Matthias Dehling.

Bird News

Some of these sightings have not received official acceptance by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee (1st September 2018 to 1st March 2019).

New Zealand Dabchicks bred at Taylor Dam in Marlborough for the third breeding season in a row. A pair produced 3 chicks seen on 21/9. A second pair without chicks was seen there the same day. All 7 birds were reported again on 24/9. Two pairs were seen there again on 15-15/2, 1 of which had 2 new chicks. A pair also produced 2 chicks on Lake Killarney in Takaka (4/12-10/1). A **Hoary-headed Grebe** was seen at Lake Elterwater (29-30/11, 17/2), and the first Taranaki record of an **Australasian Little Grebe** came from Lake Mangamahoe in mid-January.

A **Cape Barren Goose** duo was seen at Kaitorete Spit in Canterbury on 6/1, followed by a singleton on 5/2. **Chestnut-breasted Shelducks** were seen at Pleasure Bay/Tip Lagoon (Invercargill) during Oct-Nov with a high count of 9 on 6/11. Singletons were seen at Miranda on 8/1 and Mangere on 10/1. The long-staying **Plumed Whistling Duck** duo at Anderson Park (Napier) were seen on 13/11 and 31/1. A **Chestnut Teal** was reported at Tip Lagoon on 8-9/10 and another on the Waikato River at Aka Aka on 26/10. Lone male **Northern Shoveler** were seen at Nelson WTP on 10/10, Kaitorete Spit (5/11), Tip Lagoon (17/11), and Westshore Lagoon scrapes in Napier (14/12). Two **Australian Wood Ducks** were at the Nile Road pond near Mapua (29/12, 3/1).

The Renwick **Black Kite** was seen during November and the record of a **Nankeen Kestrel** at Te Paki farm (Far North, 8/6) submitted to the Rarities Appraisal Committee was accepted.

Notable tubenose records at sea included a **Chatham Island Taiko** west of the Bounty Islands (19/10), 20 **Grey Petrels** off Main Chatham Island (7/10), a **Pink-footed Shearwater** off Stewart Island (23/1), a **Broad-billed Prion** off Otago Peninsula (2/10), and a report of a **Chatham Albatross** off Kaikoura (17/2). An unusual record was a **Little Penguin** on the Avon River by Christchurch Botanic Gardens on 28/12, some 8 km inland. Even more unusual was an **Erect-crested Penguin** photographed ashore at Cabo Domingo in Tierra del Fuego (Argentina) in January. Closer to home, another was seen at Mangere Island (Chatham Islands) on 16/2. A **Fiordland Crested Penguin** found alive on Blaketown beach (West Coast) on 26/1 succumbed the next day. Another was seen at Katikati Point (Otago) on 12/2.

A **Brown Booby** was at the Muriwai gannet colony on 10/1 and then 2 were seen at Young Nicks Head (Gisborne) gannet colony on 17/1. Another unusual record was a bronze morph **Fouveaux Shag** seen at Monro Beach near Lake Moeraki (West Coast) on 4/12. There were reports of singleton **Glossy Ibis** at Wairau Lagoons (30/11), Spider Lagoon in South Canterbury (8/1), near Miranda (Nov-Jan), Ahuriri Estuary in Napier (31/1, 1/1), and there were 3 at Kaitorete Spit on 5/11.

Interesting wader sightings included a **Grey Plover**, 2

Sanderlings and a **Greater Sand Plover** on Farewell Spit (30/11). A Sanderling duo was also seen at Papakanui Spit (South Kaipara, 29/12) and singletons were seen at Ashley Estuary (21/11-15/1) and Awarua Bay (Southland, 17/11). January 26th was a special day at Kidd's Shellbank (South Auckland) where David Lawrie recorded 5,000 **Red Knot**, 4,000 **Bar-tailed Godwit**, 43 **Pacific Golden Plover**, 9 **Asiatic Whimbrel**, 2 **Eastern Curlew**, 2 **Greater Sand Plover**, 1 **Grey Plover** and 1 **Great Knot** on 26/1. The latter 3 species were also seen on 31/1 and 9/2. A highlight at Miranda was a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** that stayed from 3/12 to 28/1.

Singleton Shore Plover were seen at Westshore Lagoon, Napier, (5-11/11) and the Clive River (18/11), and a pair was seen in Te Tauroa Bay (Gardiner Gap), Auckland (15/2). **Singleton Hudsonian Godwit** were seen at Hokitika (13/10), Porangahau (4/11), Little Waihi (15/12), Lake Ellesmere (13/1-16/2), Matahau Pt in the Bay of Plenty (27/1) and Whangamata in Coromandel on 19/2, and a **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Sandy Pt (Southland) on 3/2. A **Grey-tailed Tattler** was at Cabbage Point, Catlins River Estuary, on 2/12. Another found at Mangere on 31/12 was joined by a second bird on 5/1 and then seen alone again on 28/1. One was also seen at Miranda on 14/2.

Singleton Pomarine Skua were seen off Island Bay in Wellington (7/10), Ashley River mouth in Canterbury (7/1) and the Bay of Islands (1/2). A **Long-tailed Skua** was seen in Foveaux Strait on 16/2. A **Laughing Gull** was seen at Cape Kidnappers on 11/10 and a **Black Noddy** was seen off the Mokohinau Islands (Hauraki Gulf) on 3/12. There were also sightings of a **Black Noddy** at the Chickens Islands (4/12, 18/12). An **Antarctic Tern** was photographed at sea off Otago Peninsula (2/10) and an **Arctic Tern** at Waipapa Point, Caitlins, on (31/12).

Singleton Common Tern were seen at the Tukituki River mouth (10-11/11), Foxton Beach (14/11 to 23/1) and Waitangi near Napier (26/1). Duos of **Gull-billed Terns** were seen at Lake Ellesmere (1/12 to 24/1), Little Waihi (15/12), and near Tiwai bridge in Southland (16/12). Six **White-winged Black Terns** were reported from the mid-Waimakariri River on 3/11. Singletons were seen at Papakanui Spit (29/12), Miranda (14/1), and Southern Marsh in Napier on 20/12, which was joined by a second bird (3/1 to 14/2).

A white **Tui** was seen in Island Bay, Wellington, on 29/12 and there was a report of a possible **Needletail spp** over Foxton on 14/11. An **Oriental Cuckoo** was reported in Greytown on 14/10. Then on 1/12 an Oriental Cuckoo brought in by a cat in the Akatarawa Valley near Upper Hutt was taken into care. After recovering it was released near Whanganui on 10/1. A **Common Myna** was seen again near New Brighton Rd (Christchurch) in October and February.

Sources: eBird New Zealand, Unusual Bird Report Database, BirdingNZ Forum, Regional Roundup, and the *New Zealand Birders* Facebook group.

SOUTH PACIFIC BIRDING

DISCOVER BIRDERS' PARADISE BY EXPEDITION SHIP

Voyage into the South Pacific where exceptional birdwatching is joined by idyllic beaches, time-honoured cultures and the chance to spot rarely-seen species and endemic birdlife like the Solomon Sea Eagle, Vanikoro White-eye and Red Bird-of-paradise on remote islands. Expedition cruises to the South Pacific and further South into the Subantarctic Islands range from 8 – 19 days and are aboard the recently refurbished *Spirit of Enderby*. With only 50 passengers per expedition, they fill quickly.

INDONESIAN EXPLORER 30 SEP 2019

**** 5% DISCOUNT FOR BIRDS NEW ZEALAND MEMBERS ****

Discover paradise on a true expedition with acclaimed author, scientist and explorer Professor Tim Flannery through Indonesia's remote and unknown tropical islands. Home to 24 of BirdLife International's Endemic Bird Areas there's the chance to see several Bird-of-paradise species, Kofiau Paradise-kingfisher, Western Parotia and more on our voyage from Sorong to Madang.



MELANESIAN DISCOVERER 12 OCT 2019

Uncover the hidden gems of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. For birders this itinerary offers once-in-a-lifetime species on remote islands with many highlights including the Manus Friarbird, Mussau Monarch and the Paradise drongo. Endemic to the Solomon Islands, we will be on the lookout for the Roviana Rail and Solomon Sea Eagle. A specialised birding programme allows birders to maximise the opportunities available to them.

SECRETS OF MELANESIA 24 OCT 2019

Sail from Honiara to Port Vila visiting islands including Malaita, Santa Cruz, Vanikoro, Vanua Lava and Espirito Santo. Customised daily birding excursions led by our world-class birding expert ensure all birding opportunities are maximised. This is an excellent opportunity to see many of the region's difficult to see endemics including Malaita and Vanikoro White-Eye, Vanuatu Honeyeater plus many myzomelas, monarch species and more.

FORGOTTEN ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC 3 JAN 2020

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