



No. 15 September 2017

# *Birds New Zealand*



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



# Birds New Zealand



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**Email:** [secretary@osnz.org.nz](mailto:secretary@osnz.org.nz) **Website:** [www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)

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

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

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## COVER IMAGE

Front cover: **New Zealand Tomtit** or **Ngirungiru**, South Island.  
Photo by Mike Ashbee.

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▣ Birds New Zealand National President David Lawrie at the AGM. Photo by Les Feasey.



▣ Lake Manapouri field trip, 5th June 2017, (L-R): Jean Fleming, Jim Jolly, Rhys Buckingham, Eleanor Jolly, Bruce McKinlay, Gwyneth Ermitage and Marita Jowett. Photo by Warren Jowett.



▣ Te Anau Conference Organiser Neil Robertson (Southland RR). Photo by Les Feasey.

# President's Report

## Annual General Meeting Weekend

As I write this report it is more than two months since the Annual General Meeting and Conference Weekend that was held in Te Anau. However, I still have great memories of that weekend, meeting many of our Birds New Zealand members in wonderful surroundings.

My lasting memory is of the positive attitudes expressed by everybody and the great confidence that this gives me for the future of the Society. As set out elsewhere in this edition there are changes anticipated for the Society and we all need to approach these changes with a positive attitude, and be satisfied that we are all seeking the betterment of Birds New Zealand.

My thanks go to Neil Robertson and his team of helpers in Southland who ensured that the whole weekend flowed smoothly and outwardly without any hitches. This shows once again that a small region, even in a 'far flung' part of New Zealand, can arrange and hold a successful conference which is well attended by members.

We look forward to next year travelling to the other end of New Zealand to Paihia, and people should diary that weekend to enjoy the activities that Les Feasey is arranging in the Far North.

## Rebranding

As advised at the Annual General Meeting, the Council of the Society is commencing an exercise to rebrand and then subsequently upgrade the website. The suggestion of rebranding is not totally new, with several attempts in the past.

As I reflect back on my time on the Council, one of my first public activities was to defend the status quo against a suggestion that the Society should adopt a new name. A few years later when I was President, one of my first activities was to promote a change of name. The irony of this situation is not lost on me, but it is merely a reflection that the Society needs to evolve over time. The Council now believes that the time is right for a total rebrand to go with the name change to revitalise the Society and keep it relevant for the future. A fuller report relating to this process is contained on pages 14-15 of this magazine.

It should be noted, however, that the Council has decided that the publication, *Notornis*, will not have a name change, and nor will the *Notornis* symbol on the cover of that journal change. It is also not intended that the trading name of the Society, Birds New Zealand, will be changed.

## Youth Camp

Ian Southey is currently in the process of arranging a youth camp for banding training over Labour Weekend this year. This camp will be based at Pukorokoro - Miranda Shorebird Centre, starting on the Friday evening and running through until the Monday afternoon. At the time of writing, he already has the 12 young birders required and a waiting list of several others. This clearly indicates the interest in this type of activity and I am sure that Ian would appreciate any assistance if members are in that area, or want to see what is involved in organising this type of activity. The details are available on the Birds New Zealand website.

## Australasian Ornithological Conference 2017

This biannual event is being held in Geelong near Melbourne in early November 2017. A number of members are intending to attend and I would urge others to consider taking this opportunity. Full details are also contained on the Birds New Zealand website, or people can contact me if they need more information.

The Council decided to award two travelling scholarships for students attending and making presentations at this event. I can confirm that the successful applicants are Natalie Forsdick and Hendrik Schultz. One of the conditions of the award is that they need to provide an article for a future edition of this magazine.

## New Guidelines

The Council has recently endorsed two sets of guidelines following extensive consultation with Regional Representatives. These are "Code of Conduct for the Photography of Birds" and "Guidelines for the Management of Information". Both of these sets of guidelines are contained on the Society website and I would encourage members to study these as they are of relevance, particularly those for bird photography. As cameras get easier to utilise, it is tempting for photographers to unnecessarily impact on birds going about their normal business.

## Change of Officers

At the last conference weekend, a meeting of the scientific committee was held to undertake consideration of issues and also to elect a new chairman. The committee elected Graeme Taylor to be the chairperson and we look forward to the deliberations of this committee in the future. The Council also appointed Helen Taylor to the committee to provide input from a young researcher perspective.

As also notified at the Annual General Meeting, Gillian Vaughan has taken over the role of the moult scheme convenor and is looking to implement new ideas in the future.

## Birds New Zealand Research Fund

We have had 29 applications for funding from the Birds Zealand Research Fund and the scientific committee is currently considering those applications. There was some confusion because the Council broadened the criteria this year and this has had some unforeseen outcomes. The Council is considering options to enable all the worthwhile projects to be funded.

However, on the plus side, the Council is delighted at the interest that researchers are showing in this source of funding and we must acknowledge the support of the sponsors. The research that will be undertaken will help fill gaps in our knowledge of birds in New Zealand.

## eBird Training

Nikki McArthur has commenced a series of *eBird* training workshops throughout New Zealand. He recently held one in Otago which was very well supported. He has more planned in August/September (Hawkes Bay and Canterbury) and November (South Auckland, Northland, Far North) and I would urge people to check local newsletters to find out if there is one coming to your area. Nikki is an excellent presenter and will enable you to get much greater value out of the data entered.

DAVID LAWRIE, President

## Michael John Taylor (1936–2017)

Dr Michael Taylor was a leading figure for Auckland ornithology for over 40 years and many will remember him for his vast knowledge, careful and meticulous observations and records, and kind, friendly manner and generosity.

Born in 1936 in North Yorkshire (UK), he later moved to New Zealand where he served from 1966, until retirement in 1996, as a lecturer and associate professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Auckland. He was a dedicated member of the Ornithological Society and a regular presence at Auckland meetings and field trips for 45 years. He involved himself in long-term local OSNZ projects, including monitoring populations of Caspian Tern, censusing NZ Dabchicks at South Kaipara Lakes, and counting birds at Shakespear Regional Park. He succeeded Sylvia Reed to become another long-serving Auckland Regional Representative (1982–1991). In the field, he could always be relied upon to produce a small notebook and pencil and to record details of the birds seen – much to the relief of others in the party.

Michael had a special interest in the shags that nested in trees bordering the Orakei Basin, and the results of his many shag observations appeared in *Notornis*. He also built his own parabolic reflector and recorded bird calls. To help promote birdwatching, he led public bird walks at Cornwall Park from 2000. For several years he was OSNZ's voluntary archivist, organising the Society's papers deposited in the Auckland Museum Library. In 2014 Michael received the Society's Meritorious Service Award "for his decades of work ... in many different roles" and there is now a Michael Taylor Memorial Fund.

B.J. GILL

## Bird bander training opportunities

It is a requirement of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 that all persons marking birds must have proper training and follow written procedures. The Bird Bander's Manual produced by the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme (NZNBBS) describes the legal framework as well as the standards and details of "best practice" that are to be followed by every bander in New Zealand.

The NZNBBS Certification System ensures that banders (and mist-netters) are competent through assessing the breadth of their skills and experience, as well as the challenges of working with a particular group, while taking into account the endorsements provided by their trainers. The Banding Office does not have the capacity to carry out bander training; however, all efforts will be made to facilitate training where possible.

Bander training is predominantly gained through an accumulation of experience over time, gained under a Level 3 (expert) bander. However, there is still a need for focused banding courses. The Banding Office would like to partner with Birds New Zealand in this endeavour, especially since the recent Banding Workshop at the Conference in Te Anau has highlighted the immense interest within the Society for banding training opportunities.

The Banding Office has set aside a range of banding equipment specifically to be made available on loan for approved banding courses. This equipment (mist-nets, pliers, Pesola scales, bird bags, training bands) can be loaned to Level 3 banders who regularly train Level 2 and 1 banders. A growing "training flock" of bird puppets also enables banders to learn banding techniques using realistic 3-D printed legs. Banders who would like to make use of these opportunities are encouraged to register their interest with the Banding Officer (Michelle Bradshaw). If there is enough interest in a particular region or from a species group, the Banding Office will endeavour to facilitate a targeted training course.

MICHELLE BRADSHAW

## New *Notornis* & Conference Student Awards

The Society is offering four new annual Student Awards.

**NZ Bird Conference – Best Student Talk Award:** An annual award of \$100 is offered for the best oral presentation by a student member of Birds New Zealand at the New Zealand Bird Conference. Talks will be assessed on content (new and interesting information), context (why the work was done, and what was known previously), clarity of presentation – and keeping to time! To be eligible for the award, presenters must be current members of Birds New Zealand and be students, or within one year of graduating.

**NZ Bird Conference – Best Student Poster Award:** An annual award of \$100 is offered for the best poster by a student member of Birds New Zealand at the New Zealand Bird Conference. Posters will be assessed on content (new and interesting information), context (why the work was done, and what was known previously) and clarity of presentation (including good use of colour and images). To be eligible for the award, presenters must be current members of Birds New Zealand and be students, or within one year of graduating with their poster based on work undertaken while they were a student.

**Notornis – Student Award:** An annual award of \$500 is offered for the best *Notornis* publication where a student or recent graduate is the sole or lead author. Applicants must be current members of Birds New Zealand, and must state when submitting their manuscripts that they wish to apply for the award, and that they are currently enrolled in a New Zealand education institute or have graduated in the last 3 years. There is no restriction on the number of submissions that a student may make in the course of their studies, and the award is open to students of all ages. We seek well-researched and well-written papers that make a significant contribution to ornithology in the South Pacific region (including NZ and Antarctica).

**Notornis – New Author Award:** An annual award of \$300 is offered for the best *Notornis* publication where the sole or lead author has not previously published in *Notornis* or any other scientific journal. Applicants must be current members of Birds New Zealand, and must state when submitting their manuscripts that they are a first-time author and wish to apply for the award. The award can be applied for once only. We seek well-researched and well-written papers that make a significant contribution to ornithology in the South Pacific region (including New Zealand and Antarctica). Students are able to apply for both *Notornis* awards (if eligible) but one award only will be granted to any one manuscript.

## Falla Memorial Award, A.T. Edgar Junior Award and Meritorious Service Awards

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the OSNZ Secretary (22 Coronation Street, Napier 4110; secretary@osnz.org.nz) by 31st December 2017. Nominations should be made on the standard forms, which are available from Regional Representatives, or at: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/Forms>

## New members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: Elizabeth Light (Auckland), Neil Davies (Auckland), Jacqui Tizard (Auckland), Jennifer Dent (Canterbury), Rod Hay (Canterbury), Jane Gardiner (Hawke's Bay), Hunter Murray (Marlborough), Gillian Bishop (Nelson), Anna Mather (Nelson), Nick Beckwith (Otago), Helen Harrex (Otago), James Cordery (Otago), Anna Simmonds (Otago), Emma Kelman (Otago), Christine Quested (Otago), Jo Carpenter (Southland), James Stewart (Volcanic Plateau), Lisa Argilla (Wellington), Richard Grey (Wellington).

## Society Awards 2017

Three Meritorious Service Awards were announced for the following people to acknowledge their contributions to ornithology and the work of the Society at the 78th AGM held in Te Anau in June:

**Peter Frost** (in absentia presented to Mara Bell). Peter recently stepped down as Regional Representative for Wanganui where he worked hard to develop the region through running projects and took a national lead on projects such as the Red-billed Gull Census.

**Janet Snell** (in absentia presented to Anne McCracken). For her dedicated and longstanding stints as Regional Representative for the Far North and Northland, and participation in their many field projects.

**Bridget Batchelor** (Caxton Press) (in absentia presented to Jill West). Bridget provided reliable and efficient service printing and mailing the Society's journals over many years, including through the challenging circumstances of the Christchurch earthquakes.

Meritorious Awards can be awarded to anyone in recognition for their service to the Society and are not restricted to members only.

## 2018 Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2018. Renewal invoices will be emailed or posted in November 2017. If you have not already done so, please notify the Membership Secretary of your email address ([membership@osnz.org.nz](mailto:membership@osnz.org.nz)). And please endeavour to pay on, or close to, the due date because we depend on your subscription to continue our work to encourage and support the study and enjoyment of birds.



▣ Natalie Forsdick holding "Orbell", the Society's monstrosity!

## Birds New Zealand Conference Student Award

Natalie Forsdick was awarded the "Birds New Zealand Conference - Student Award" for the best student talk at the 2017 Conference held in Te Anau. Her presentation on "*Genetic diversity and population differentiation within and between island populations of Chatham Island black robins and tomtits*" was very well received. Well done, Natalie!

## The Gift of Birds

Are you looking for that perfect Christmas gift? You can gift someone a 2018 Birds New Zealand subscription for just over a dollar a week to help foster a lifetime of study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds. Please send an email to [eo@osnz.org.nz](mailto:eo@osnz.org.nz) and we will send you the gift voucher, or visit our website for more details: <http://www.osnz.org.nz/perfect-gift-voucher>

A promotional banner for the 5th Oceania Congress. The top section has a dark blue background with white text: "Society for Conservation Biology • 2-6 July 2018 • Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand Wellington, New Zealand". Below this is a photograph of several blue penguins on a sandy beach. Overlaid on the photo is the text "Conservation in a changing world" in a large, white, serif font. At the bottom, there are two logos: the Society for Conservation Biology Oceania logo on the left and the "CONSERVATION IN A CHANGING WORLD" logo on the right.

Society for Conservation Biology  
5th Oceania Congress • 2-6 July 2018 • Te Papa Tongarewa  
Museum of New Zealand  
Wellington, New Zealand

# Conservation in a *changing* world

Society for Conservation  
Biology Oceania

— CONSERVATION —  
IN A CHANGING WORLD



▣ 2017 AGM attendees, Te Anau. Photo by Les Feasey.

# Minutes of the 78th Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Held in Te Anau on 3rd June 2017 at 5.30pm

## Present

70+ members and friends.

## Apologies

Paul Cumming, Peter Frost, Robin List (will send deputy), Kirstin Ruwhiu, Barry Hartley, Paul Garner-Richards, Sue Bell, Biz Bell, Andrew Styche, Willie Cook, Chris Robertson, John and Stella Rowe, Stan Cooper, Nick Allen and Winston Cooper.

That the apologies be accepted. **Mel Galbraith/Ian Armitage.** Accepted

## Minutes of the 2016 AGM

That the minutes of the last AGM, having been circulated, be accepted as a true record of that meeting. **Colin Miskelly/Bruce McKinlay.** Accepted. No matters arising.

## Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was read by Bruce McKinlay. The law has changed with respect to the filing of accounts for charitable Societies. Accounts of 2015 were at the auditors last year but they hadn't been audited. Due to this delay, this year's accounts are still in the process of being audited. The audited accounts will be available on the Society's website. The accounts are now presented in a new format. The Society is in good financial shape but we need to continue to work on new sources of revenue. The Society received two large donations. Paul thanked fellow Council members.

See Treasurer's Report for more details once it is posted online. The Financial Statement had been circulated to the meeting. Recommended by the AGM that the Treasurer's report and unaudited financial statements presented be accepted and that Council get the accounts audited as soon as possible. **Bruce McKinlay /Sharon Alderson.** Accepted

Stuart Nicholson queried the administration cost for the Fruzio fund.

President replied that it covered the cost of the Executive Officer administering the fund.

The Council is focused on protecting the Society's balance and has worked with Birds New Zealand Editor Michael Szabo to find more competitive printing/mailing services.

Carol Davies queried how much the Society contributed to the Red-billed Gull survey in respect to Northland individuals on

the pension being expected to contribute relatively large sums (\$200) of their own to take part in the survey (contributions for transport to survey remote gull colonies such as at the Three Kings Islands). Bruce McKinlay for the Treasurer responded that the Society contributed \$4,000 to the Red-billed Gull survey. The President responded that the decision of the Council in making the grant available was that the Council weren't prepared to meet the full cost, and there was an expectation that some of the cost would be met locally.

Sandy Bartle suggested it would be a good idea to acknowledge who are making decisions on applications and it was noted that applications are managed by the science committee on behalf of the Council.

John Cockrem wondered, in light of proposed constitutional amendments, whether that presented an opportunity for the Society to move away from a calendar year, which might allow for the AGM to be held at a better time of the year?

## President's Report

The President firstly asked if members would stand for a moment and remember those from the Society who had died over the past year: Hugh Clifford, Jean Skinner, Meg Flux, Viv Rutherford, Jean Luke, Martin Day, Jim Wilson, Brian Bell, David Hallett and Roger Slack.

He reported that the move to three formal Council meetings per year is working well. This has allowed the Council to move from being reactive to proactive.

He introduced members to Council members, Denise Fastier, who replaces the outgoing Secretary Delia Small. He thanked Delia for her sterling efforts. Keith Woodley and Mel Galbraith were re-elected unopposed.

He introduced Jill West, the Membership Secretary, who requested that people fill in their forms carefully and try to remember to pay on time. He introduced the Editor of Birds New Zealand magazine, Michael Szabo, who reported that negotiations with a new printer are complete, the result being that both *Birds New Zealand* magazine and *Notornis* will now be published in full colour.

The President explained that the new *Notornis* Editor, Dr Leigh Bull, couldn't attend and that there is a need for more papers to be submitted. He asked that any members sitting on potentially publishable material consider submitting it for publication. The President then reported on all the Society activities over

the past year and updated members on Fruzio's sponsorship arrangement with the Society. Michael Glover of Fruzio told members he was proud to be involved with Birds New Zealand. The President explained how Fruzio have been working with Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler to try to increase membership. Sharon Alderson thanked members for their support with running youth camps and reported that participants are loving them and want more.

Trina Smith was thanked for taking over from Heather Rogers as Librarian.

Colin Miskelly reported that he is undertaking a 4-year update of the New Zealand Birds Online website. He also reported the Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) have approved 60 Unusual Bird Reports (UBR), and thanked all members of the RAC.

John Cockrem was thanked for taking on the University Liaison role.

Gillian Vaughan was thanked for taking over the Moulting Scheme from Dr Ben Bell.

Adrian Riegen thanked those involved with the National Wader Counts, which continue to provide a valuable source of data.

The President described the growing interest from younger people in becoming involved with the Society, in particular, the increasingly active Young Birders group. The Council are working with the Young Birders to develop a Memorandum of Understanding.

He explained the representative for the David Medway Scholarship (biennial \$5,000) has been so delighted with how it is going they have doubled the donation, and made it annual.

The President thanked Paul Garner-Richards for all his efforts keeping the Society's books in order and pointed out that the fact that the books aren't audited yet is no reflection on Paul - other societies are in the same position following changes in how societies are audited.

He emphasised how Regional Representatives (RR) are key in running the Society's regional activities. He noted the public are desperate for activities and these can only be organised through regions. It doesn't have to be RRs running all of it as there are others in the regions who could help with this. The President thanked all the RRs and acknowledged the vitally important role they play. The organisation couldn't operate without them. He also acknowledged Ingrid Hutzler as Executive Officer and the way that she manages to fulfil her role in 10 hours per week, which is a credit to her. He then asked for a round of applause. Finally, he thanked his fellow Council members and introduced those present: Bruce McKinlay (Vice President), Sharon Alderson, Ian Armitage, Helen Taylor, Colin Miskelly, Keith Woodley and Denise Fastier; and (absent) Paul Garner-Richards.

In particular, the President thanked Bruce and Ian.

From contacts with the wider community, it is clear the Society is seen in a good light.

That the meeting accept the President's report. **David Lawrie/Sandy Bartle.** Accepted

There was a query as to the number of financial members. The President responded that there were 965 financial members. He commented that the number has been stable for three years and that, while we haven't yet achieved our goal of growing the membership, interest in the Society is growing.

Carol Davies commented that some of the problem is one of communication.

The President responded, commenting that such concerns are noted and taken on board.

## Society Awards

The Vice-President acknowledged past Fellows of the Society and announced the current awards (See page 5).

## General Business

Les Feasey summarised proposed general arrangements for the 2018 conference, to be held in the Far North. The 2019

Conference, the Society's 80th, is to be held in Wellington.

Colin Miskelly described the new *Notornis* awards. In order to encourage papers, the Society is offering two awards per annum; (1) best first-time author \$300; and (2) best student paper \$500 (student to include all levels of education - primary, secondary, or tertiary).

David Melville queried how the papers in - will be judged.

**Action** Council to develop a process for awarding prizes.

Michelle Bradshaw (DOC Banding Office) outlined a proposed new database for banding records.

John Cockrem queried if the name change from OSNZ to Birds New Zealand had been put to an AGM? If so, that sets a precedent that any changes be presented to the AGM.

Helen Taylor responded that the process envisaged will be approaching several freelance designers for quotes and interest in rebranding. They will have to 'pitch' for our business. Council will identify the designer they are most happy with. Then their designs will be presented to the AGM. Helen appreciates that the current logo is linked to the history of the Society, but we also must look to the future.

Rob Shuckard queried whether there was already a brief for the designer?

Helen Taylor responded that the designer will be given context on who we are as a Society, how we want to be seen, and what we want to achieve. It's a branding package - website, fonts, etc. In terms of branding the *Notornis* 'logo' is not a logo - it's a beautiful picture. A logo is something simple and iconic. We are not Bird New Zealand we are Birds New Zealand. It undersells the Society to be represented by just one bird. The trading name will remain Birds New Zealand, the official name will remain the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

David Melville queried what the brief was for the designer of the original logo?

The President responded by saying that it wasn't originally intended to be a logo. How Tunncliffe's original painting came to be the OSNZ logo around 1950 is a mystery.

Glennis Glover said there lots of different types of logo and going in with a specific idea is limiting.

Michael Glover (Fruzio) commented that a branding exercise undertaken by a committee is bound to fail. He advises getting all the views that you can 'up front' and then leave it to a committee to try to get the best result, while taking all the views into account.

The President acknowledged the valid point made by Heather, who questioned whether the Society needs guidelines as to whose sponsorship is accepted, for example keeping to those whose activities do not impact on birds or their environment.

**Action** Council to develop guidelines for sponsorship

The next Birds New Zealand Conference will be held in Paihia in 2018. Far North Regional Representative Les Feasey invited members to attend.

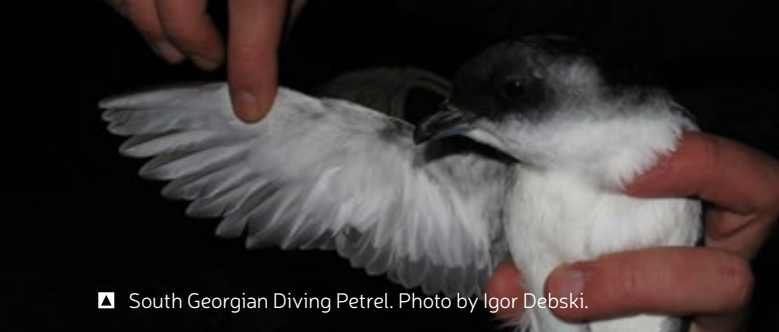
Ian Armitage talked about the Society 80th conference, which is to be held in Wellington in 2019. He noted the first formal meeting of the Society was in 1939, so the Wellington Branch are going to make an event of it and are hoping for a large conference.

Chris Thompson commented that everyone found Helen's presentation of the results of the membership survey very interesting and wondered if each region would like to talk about any ideas on improvements to send back to Helen. Helen responded that the results of the survey will be published in the September issue of *Birds New Zealand* magazine, and could be emailed to RRs if they want. Any ideas on how to improve membership, including anything that you are already doing that is getting results in your regions, please share so that we can distribute them to other regions.

**Action** RRs to discuss means to improve the Society's membership among their groups and any ideas fed back to Helen: helen.taylor@otago.ac.nz

The President thanked members for attending.

The meeting closed at 6.58pm



▲ South Georgian Diving Petrel. Photo by Igor Debski.



▲ Southern New Zealand Dotterel in the hand.

## NZ South Georgian Diving Petrel is an undescribed species

A new study, "Analyses of phenotypic differentiations among South Georgian diving petrel populations reveal an undescribed and highly endangered species from New Zealand", by Johannes Fischer, Igor Debski, Colin Miskelly, Charles Bost, Alan Tennyson, Jake Tessler, Rosalind Cole, Johanna Hiscock, Graeme Taylor and Heiko Wittmer of Victoria University of Wellington, Department of Conservation, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and CNRS-Université de la Rochelle has found that the New Zealand population of South Georgian Diving Petrel is an undescribed species. Their findings were presented at the Birds New Zealand Conference:

"Unresolved taxonomy of threatened species is problematic for conservation as the field relies on species being distinct taxonomic units. Differences in breeding habitat and results from a preliminary molecular analysis indicated that the New Zealand population of the South Georgian diving petrel (*Pelecanoides georgicus*) was a distinct, yet undescribed, species. We measured 11 biometric characters and scored eight plumage characters in 154 live birds and 73 study skins originating from most of the known populations of *P. georgicus*, to assess their taxonomic relationships. We analysed differences with principal component analyses (PCA), factorial ANOVAs, and Kruskal-Wallis rank sum tests. Results show that the New Zealand population differs from all other populations through: 1) longer wings, 2) longer outer tail feathers, 3) deeper bills, 4) longer heads, 5) longer tarsi, 6) limited collar extent, 7) greater extent of contrasting scapulars, 8) larger contrasting markings on the secondaries, 9) lighter ear coverts, 10) lighter collars, and 11) lighter flanks. Furthermore, we used a species delimitation test with quantitative phenotypic criteria to reveal that the New Zealand population of *P. georgicus* indeed merits species status. Due to severe historic range restrictions and very low number of remaining individuals (150 individuals limited to a single breeding colony on Codfish Island (Whenua Hou) the species warrants listing as Critically Endangered."

## Conservation status of New Zealand birds in 2016

A second complete audit of the conservation status of the 487 recognised taxa of birds recorded in New Zealand since first human contact was published in May by the Department of Conservation (Robertson, H.A.; Baird, K.; Dowding, J.E.; Elliott, G.P.; Hitchmough, R.A.; Miskelly, C.M.; McArthur, N.; O'Donnell, C.F.J.; Sagar, P.M.; Scofield, R.P.; Taylor, G.A. 2017: Conservation status of New Zealand birds, 2016. *NZ Threat Classification Series 19*).

Using the same ranking criteria, the assessments made were compared with those for the 473 taxa included in the first audit in 2012. Since then, 15 taxa have been added to the New Zealand checklist, six as a result of the acceptance of new distribution records, three as newly-described recently extinct species from the Chatham Islands, six as a result of taxonomic changes, and one species has been deleted from the checklist.

Of 77 threatened taxa classified in 2012, the status of 22 (29%) taxa improved, mainly due to successful conservation management, while five (6%) of them moved to a more threatened status. Eight other taxa, including three not assessed in 2012, were added to the threatened categories. Overall, 71 taxa were assessed as being threatened with extinction, six fewer than in 2012, and 23 rather than 25 taxa are now classified as being Nationally Critical.

## Saving the Southern New Zealand Dotterel

Department of Conservation (DOC) Southland staff and members of Birds New Zealand embarked on a mission to catch non-breeding Southern New Zealand Dotterels through canon netting in Awarua Bay in June. The marking of this species has become more urgent due to steep declines in recent years. Kevin Carter (DOC) presented the sobering details of the decline of this species at the 2017 Conference in Te Anau.

About 25 years ago the Southern New Zealand Dotterel was saved from the brink of extinction. Only 62 birds were left at that time, but after a successful feral cat control regime 290 birds were recorded in 2009. Problems have re-occurred and recent surveys showed that less than half of the 2009 population has now survived with 126 birds in 2016.

Two attempts were made in June and July to catch the subgroup of 40-50 non-breeding birds in Awarua Bay. In June, we were successful in catching circa 5% of the world population (eight birds). All individuals were colour-banded and screened for disease by Kate McInnes. For the second attempt, a change in atmospheric pressure turned the predicted tidal movement into a 'mini-tsunami' with an additional 30cm-50cm on top of the predicted tide. Just before the tide totally soaked our gear, the birds made flew off - but we will be back.

DAVID MELVILLE, ADRIAN RIEGEN AND ROB SCHUCKARD

## Birds of Niue

If you want to see a great variety of friendly multi-coloured birds, don't go to Niue. If you want to spend a week pottering around, thawing out after a New Zealand winter, paddling on the reef and ticking off a handful of new species, then try Niue. There's a weekly flight from Auckland, and accommodation and rental cars are cheap, but you have to like noisy roosters. In a week, you can visit all the bush tracks and sea tracks, explore the forest and the reefs, and get a feel for the culture. My Niue bird list after two September trips is small, but so is everyone's. The age of the island - around 700,000 years - plus 2,000 years of deforestation, hunting, cyclones and predation by rats and cats, have eliminated the sparse endemic species and left a wary community of pan-Pacific bird species.

I have now seen 16 of the 33 bird species recorded there. The most obvious birds are chickens in various stages of domestication, but be warned that their crowing starts at 1.58 am. Pacific Golden Plovers are frequent on grassy areas and I spotted a Spur-winged Plover and several Pukeko. Banded Rails zip across the road. High in the trees the Lupe or Pacific Imperial Pigeon, Polynesian Starlings, Polynesian Trillers and Crimson-crowned Fruit Doves feed on fruits or insects. White-rumped Swiftlets buzz around the coast and the odd Wandering Tattler feeds on the reef at low tide. I also saw a white-phase Reef Heron and a dark blue-phase one. Offshore and flying low over the forest I saw White-tailed Tropicbirds, White Terns, and the larger and darker Brown Noddies. A group of what were probably Great Frigatebirds wheeled around in the distance at dusk. The only known extant resident species I didn't see were the Barn Owl and the Blue-crowned Lory, the latter being very scarce there. Others on the list are vagrants or migrating waders in transit to or from New Zealand. I'm happy to talk to anyone contemplating a trip there.

LLOYD ESLER





▣ New Zealand Shore Plover, Rangatira Island. Photo by Oscar Thomas.

## Rangatira Shore Plover survey

Last year I visited the Chatham Islands for two weeks, the best two weeks of my life. The Department of Conservation (DOC) had kindly accepted me as a volunteer to survey the pre-breeding New Zealand Shore Plover flocks on Rangatira (South-East) Island. Being a critically endangered species, it is important to accurately count these birds regularly. After a few trial runs, DOC workers Tansy Bliss and Kelly Eaton, and I, completed a round trip of the 218-hectare island's coast in a mere seven hours. A respectable 152 of these shorebirds were observed, or nearly 25% of the total population.

Rangatira is also a haven for other threatened endemic bird species, including Black Robin, Chatham Island Snipe, and Pitt Island Shag. A highlight of staying overnight is the seabird 'rush' from dusk until dawn. Over three million seabirds breed on Rangatira, from the raucous Broad-billed Prion to the timid Grey-backed Storm Petrel, as well as the endangered Chatham Island Petrel.

OSCAR THOMAS (Young Birder)

## Extinct Kōhatu Shag described

New Zealand used to have four blue-eyed shag species, but one was hunted to extinction after human colonisation according to a new study published in *"Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution"* (Volume 115, October 2017) by Nic Rawlence, Charlotte Till, Luke Easton, Hamish Spencer, Rob Schuckard, David Melville, Paul Scofield, Alan Tennyson, Matt Rayner, Jonathan Waters, and Martyn Kennedy of the University of Otago, Arizona State University, Birds New Zealand, Auckland Museum, Canterbury Museum, and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

The study (*Speciation, range contraction and extinction in the endemic New Zealand King Shag complex*) names the newly recognised species Kōhatu Shag or *Leucocarbo septentrionalis* – Latin for "northern-most member of the genus".

"Although these distinctive [northern] populations were previously assigned to the King Shag (based on morphological similarities and geographic proximity to modern *Leucocarbo* populations), we herein describe them as a new species, the Kōhatu Shag (*Leucocarbo septentrionalis*). The extinction of this species further highlights the dramatic impacts Polynesians and introduced predators had on New Zealand's coastal and marine biodiversity."

Kōhatu Shag is thought to have been superficially similar to the other three species (King, Otago, Foveaux), but with a slimmer body, and shorter legs and wings than the King Shag.

The study also found that the endemic King Shag has occupied only a narrow portion of the northeastern South Island for at least the past 240 years, and that pre-human fossil and archaeological remains suggest a more widespread distribution of the other three *Leucocarbo* species on the mainland at the time of Polynesian settlement in the 1400s.

Using modern and ancient DNA, and morphometric and osteological analysis of modern King Shags and fossil *Leucocarbo* remains, the study assessed the pre-human distribution and taxonomic status of King Shag on the mainland, and the resultant conservation implications.

The study shows that the King Shag was formerly widespread around southern coasts of the North Island and northern parts of the South Island, but experienced population and lineage extinctions, and range contraction, probably after Polynesian arrival. This history parallels range contractions of other New Zealand seabirds.



▣ Mounted skeleton of *Cygnus sumnerensis*, or Pouwa. Photo by Jean-Claude Stahl, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

## Extinct New Zealand Black Swan described

New Zealand had a giant species of Black Swan that was hunted to extinction after humans arrived in the 1400s, with the last individual swans surviving on the Chatham Islands into the mid-1600s, according to a new study.

The study found that Australian Black Swans (*Cygnus atratus*) arrived in New Zealand between one and two million years ago. Once they colonised the North and South islands and the Chatham Islands they rapidly became bigger than the original Australian Black Swans, weighing up to 10kg compared with 6kg, developing elongated legs, becoming more terrestrial in habitat, and evolving towards flightlessness.

The new study (*Ancient DNA and morphometric analysis reveal extinction and replacement of New Zealand's unique black swans*), which describes the New Zealand species as *Cygnus sumnerensis*, or Pouwa, was published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* (Volume 284, Issue 1859, July 2017), by Nic Rawlence and colleagues of University of Otago, Dr Allan Tennyson of Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, and Dr Paul Scofield of Museum of Canterbury.

Using ancient DNA and bone samples from New Zealand and Australia the authors found that the New Zealand Black Swan (*C. sumnerensis*) was a separate species to the Australian Black Swan (*C. atratus*) that weighed more, and had a larger body, longer legs and proportionally shorter wings.

Once the New Zealand Black Swan or Pouwa became extinct, it was subsequently replaced by the Australian Black Swan, which was introduced to New Zealand from Australia in the 1860s, and is now found across New Zealand.

Dr Rawlence said the team's findings represent one of a growing number of examples of extinction and colonisation since the arrival of people in New Zealand.

"Our research shows that, in some cases, you cannot assume that closely related species are surrogates. The Pouwa's ecology might have been fundamentally different from that of the Australian Black Swan."



▣ Takahē Valley. Photo by Dave Allen/NIWA



▣ Takahē. Photo by Michael Szabo.



▣ Jason Van De Wetering photo by M. Szabo.



▣ Weighing-in photo by M. Szabo.

## In the footsteps of Geoffrey Orbell

One of four field trips offered after the Birds New Zealand Conference in Te Anau was to Takahē Valley in the Murchison Mountains where Geoffrey Orbell, Rex Watson, Joan Telfer, Ron Weston and Neil McCrostie rediscovered the South Island Takahē in 1948.

The 12 members that signed up for this field trip met in Te Anau at the helicopter pad at 9 am. By the time the helicopter dropped us near Lake Orbell the overnight cloud had cleared revealing a clear sunny sky. It had taken less than ten minutes to fly 12 km over Lake Te Anau and up into the narrow steep entrance to Takahē Valley.

The helicopter dropped us at the eastern end of the lake, 900 metres above sea level, in a tranquil winter landscape of frost encrusted Snow Tussocks, *Hebes*, and *Celmisias*.

A male New Zealand Scaup and a pair of Paradise Shelducks swam on the mirror lake, a New Zealand Falcon flew over the lake, and we heard Grey Warblers, New Zealand Tomtits and Brown Creepers calling in the nearby beech forest.

Accompanied by Department of Conservation (DOC) Takahē Rangers Jason and Maddy Van De Wetering, and DOC Burwood Takahē Centre Supervisor Nichollette Brown, we walked over to the vintage 1953 hut for a briefing about the 1948 rediscovery and current conservation

work in Takahē Valley. After boiling up some river water in the billy we had a warming cup of tea before setting out to tramp along the northern shoreline of the 1,400-metre-long lake in search of Takahē.

After fording the lake outlet, we reached the pale ground quartz 'gravel' that lines the shoreline and resembles sand, but we found that this 'gravel' had frozen as hard as concrete. Jason explained that it was in this 'gravel' that Geoffrey Orbell and his fellow searchers had first found Takahē footprints in 1948. He pointed out several Takahē footprints to us and described how Geoffrey Orbell had measured these footprints with his wooden pipe and scratched their length on the stem.

From here we continued along the lakeside to an area where the 'gravel' formed a small flat point, where Jason stopped to explain how Geoffrey Orbell had driven a stake into the gravel here and tied down one of the first Takahē that had been caught so that it would call and attract more Takahē. Looking at the 'gravel' here, we could also see the frozen footprints of New Zealand Pipits alongside those of Takahē.

When we reached the western end of the lake Jason played a recorded Takahē call, and a pair immediately replied from inside the nearby beech forest. After a few calls they came closer and stopped at the edge of the forest. The DOC rangers walked

into the forest here and we saw one of the Takahē flush into the nearby *Hebe* scrub and tussocks.

As the rangers pursued it, we glimpsed a flash of blue among the tussocks. Then Jason sprinted back into the forest after it. Shortly after this he walked out of the forest carrying the bird.

While the DOC rangers checked the Takahē's transmitter, the rest of us admired the bird's vivid colours: deep cobalt and turquoise blues like Paua shell, blending into pounamu greens; the huge Rata-red bill that extends up to the forehead as a frontal shield; and the robust pinkish-red legs and formidable feet.

When Jason released the Takahē it ran straight into the tussocks, which twitched and rustled as the bird ran further away. We heard more shrieking calls once it ran into the forest, and it is these Takahē calls that I will remember as the soundtrack of that day. That, and the memory of the way that the frost on the Snow Tussocks sparkled like diamonds in the bright sunlight.

It had been an exhilarating day, and it was a great privilege to walk in the footsteps of Geoffrey Orbell where he rediscovered the Takahē in this ancient secluded valley 69 years ago.

MICHAEL SZABO



▲ Spoon-billed Sandpiper photo by Chen Tengyi.



▲ Searching for shorebirds, Tiaozini mudflats. Photo by Hu Zhenhong.

# Shorebirds of the Yellow Sea coast

Article by Lynne Anderson

In late 2016, I joined an amazing birdwatching tour in China that included visits to key migratory shorebird sites along the Jiangsu intertidal mudflats of the Yellow Sea coastline. The 11-day tour was hosted by “The Spoon-billed Sandpiper in China (SBSC) (Shanghai) Environment Protection Technology Co. Ltd”, which is very competently and passionately headed by Jing Li.

Participants in the tour were incredibly well looked after, from the time we arrived until our departure, by our hosts and guides Jing Li, Zhang Lin, ‘Kiwi’ (Zhang Lun), and Cheng Tengyi. I was joined on the tour by five wonderful birding companions: Nigel and Simon from the UK, Andrew from Australia, and May from the USA. The tour guides were extremely knowledgeable, as were the two British birders. They were all very helpful and patient with someone like me, who is fairly new to birding.

The tour was a first for the company and it helped to raise funds for their cause of conserving habitat for all migratory birds that rely on the Yellow Sea coastline for their refuelling stops, before and after breeding in Siberia or Alaska. The dedicated SBSC team has helped to lobby government authorities for the protection of these habitats. According to the “Birding Shanghai” website, reclamation schemes have claimed about 70% of this vital intertidal zone, leading to a considerable decline in many shorebird species. The website also reports that the Chinese Government has signalled intent to protect some of the remaining mudflat zones along the Yellow Sea and Bohai Bay.

Fourteen of these sites are on the official “Tentative List” for nomination as UNESCO World Heritage Areas, identified as being absolutely vital to all shorebirds on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF). The EAAF is the largest migratory flyway for shorebirds in the world. It encompasses 22 countries (including New Zealand) and supports over 50 different species of migratory

birds. One of these species, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (more commonly known as the ‘Spoooner’), which is listed as Critically Endangered, has become the little hero of the cause, to the extent that this enthusiastic and committed NGO has named their organisation after this bird.

The tour started in Shanghai, with the first six days concentrating on coastal sites. Although kilometres of concrete retaining walls for land reclamation have been built along this coast, in some areas enough tidal mudflat has been left to allow shorebirds to gather and feed. Even though these walls are undoubtedly an anomaly, they do – ironically – provide for excellent viewing! We spent the first few days around the Rudong area, including Chongming Island. At Chongming, from the grandstand viewing on a wall, Jing Li spotted a ‘Spoooner’. However, it seemed to be one bird among thousands and was soon lost from view and not sighted again that day.

On the second day, at the Taiozini mudflat at Rudong, we hit ‘The Jackpot’. We had all donned our new water boots and trugged out onto the mud. Although there was no wall to view from, and we couldn’t get too near because the birds were quite flighty, we were still able to ‘scope up the prize – with an estimated 11 Spoon-billed Sandpipers seen that day by us all. This delightful little shorebird, unaware of its iconic status, goes about its daily business like a pint-sized clockwork toy bobbing its head and mechanically trotting along in fits and starts. Yet it was the last day we spent on the coast before heading inland that I found to be perhaps the most spectacular.

At the deltas of the Xin Zhang and Qing Kou rivers, the spectacle of thousands upon thousands of numerous different species of migratory shorebird has to be one of the natural wonders of the



▣ Oriental Pratincole photo by Woniu.



▣ Nordmann's Greenshank photo by Tang Zhenghua



▣ Little Curlew photo by Woniu.



▣ Grey-headed Lapwing photo supplied by Lynne Anderson.

world. Once again, we viewed them from a wall. This time we saw a hovering raptor put fear into the feeding birds. This presented us with the wonder of seeing the entire shorebird flock rising into the sky simultaneously. The moving black clouds that these birds cluster into perform wavering dances, which is a sight to behold as these clouds rhythmically change in shape and form. The spectacle of these waltzing antics in the sky has been performed for millennia, and the thought that this may one day be lost is just intolerable. These are everyone's birds: Australia's, New Zealand's, Asia's, the Pacific's, Siberia's and Alaska's.

The species that we saw on these mudflats and freshwater fish ponds included Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Nordmann's Greenshank, Little Curlew, Eastern Curlew, Eurasian Curlew, Black-faced Spoonbill, Oriental Pratincole, Oriental Plover, Great Knot, Saunder's Gull and Relict Gull.

The last six days of the tour were spent travelling inland to Nanjing, Huangshan and the Wu Yuan districts. These areas, especially the purple mountain of Huangshan, revealed sightings of many sought-after species, including Siberian Rubythroat, Blue-and-White Flycatcher, Pied Falconet, Red-billed Leiothrix, Chestnut-headed Warbler, Grey-sided Scimitar-babbler, Dusky Fulvetta, Greater Painted Snipe, and many more.

The other big highlight of the tour came on the last day when we sighted the Blue-crowned Laughing-thrush. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to see this species the previous day, we rose at 4.30 am and ventured to a different site: a small village where the bird nests in the school grounds. The school principal and students diligently protect the welfare of this Critically Endangered species by not allowing bird photographers onto the school grounds where the birds nest. A dull drizzly morning seemed to suit the birds well and several were seen at dawn in a small area outside the school grounds. However, these were not

the best conditions for taking photos.

Overall, we saw some 230 different bird species during the tour. It was a great tour - to be thoroughly recommended. The SBSC team are planning another tour which will start on 2nd November 2017, which will once again highlight the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and the many other species found in the area, including the majestic Red-crowned Crane.

If you are interested in joining this tour, please email: [jing.li@sbsinchina.com](mailto:jing.li@sbsinchina.com)

For more information about SBSC: [info@sbsinchina.com](mailto:info@sbsinchina.com)



▣ Great Knot photo by Phil Battley.

# Amazing Yellow Sea

Eastern China, from Yellow sea to  
Poyang Lake, November 2nd to 17th.



by Tiger Sun



by Luke Tang



by Hu

An experience of a lifetime  
to see Spoon-billed Sandpiper,  
Nordmann's Greenshank,  
Siberian Crane, Red-crowned Crane,  
Baer's Pochard, Reeve's Pheasant  
and more.

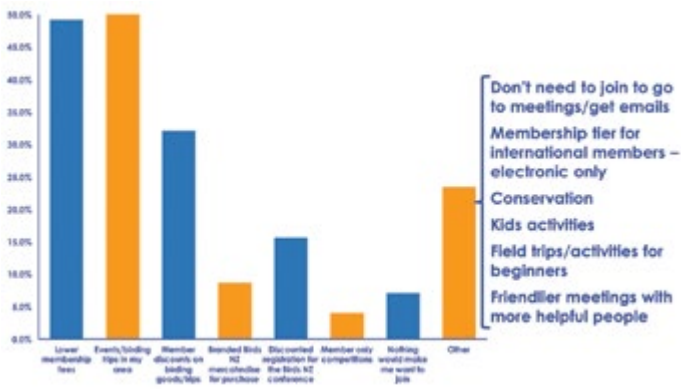
All our tour guides have supported  
Yellow Sea mudflats conservation  
since 2008.

Their rich field experience and  
strong local connection will ensure the trip  
makes a contribution to the community.

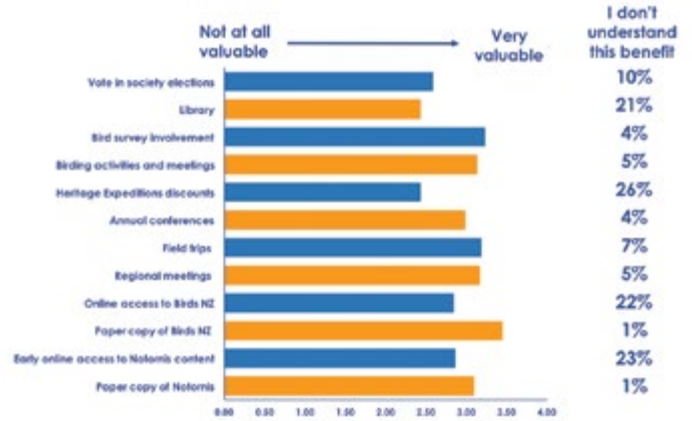
For more information:  
[info@sbsinchina.com](mailto:info@sbsinchina.com)



Designed by Guo



■ Non-members surveyed explain why they have chosen not to join Birds New Zealand.



■ Members surveyed rate how much they value existing membership benefits offered by Birds New Zealand.

# Survey suggests new approach needed to grow Birds New Zealand membership

In an increasingly competitive environment, Birds New Zealand is struggling to grow its membership. To ensure that we remain attractive to members and prospective members we recently conducted an online survey of members and non-members. The survey was advertised via the membership mailing list, as well as on the Birds New Zealand Facebook and Twitter channels. The results of this survey were presented by Council member Helen Taylor at the recent annual Conference and AGM held in June in Te Anau. Here is a brief overview.

We received 482 responses; 364 (76%) from members (roughly 38% of the current membership) and 118 (24%) from non-members. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of members and non-members who responded were over 40 years old (88% and 63% respectively).

Major obstacles to joining Birds New Zealand identified by non-members included the cost, and an inability to pay by credit card. Several non-members stated that they had tried attending their local meeting, found it unwelcoming and had not returned.

Non-members also expressed an appetite for more events and trips, and discounts on birding goods. Many didn't see the need to join, as access to several benefits like meetings don't require you to be a member. Again, several non-members felt they would be more likely to attend meetings if it was a friendlier atmosphere with more helpful people.

Members expressed a reasonable awareness and appreciation of the Society's membership benefits. For improvements, respondents were keen on discounts on birding goods and trips, and discounted conference registration. Members also expressed a desire for training on birding skills, a wider variety of field trips, and more volunteer opportunities.

Birds New Zealand faces stiff competition for members from other societies. The majority (62%) of respondents (both members and non-members) are members of other societies. Membership fees for other societies varied: 50% of respondents said their fees were similar, 8% said they were more expensive, and 42% said they were less.

The membership benefits for different societies varied widely and contain some good possible ideas for Birds New Zealand. Opinions regarding changing the Society's logo as part of a larger rebranding exercise were largely positive or neutral: 46% of respondents were in favour, 24% were neither for nor against, 19% understandably reserved judgment until they could see the new logo, and just 13% were opposed to the change. When only members are considered, these numbers remain almost identical (44%, 23%, 23%, and 15% respectively).

Change is coming as Birds New Zealand evolves. The results from our Council-run survey highlight some clear areas where Birds New Zealand needs to improve its offering to retain existing members and attract new ones. We are already working on an online credit card payment option to make it easier for people to join or to renew their membership. This new facility will be in place in time for the next round of membership renewals.

There is a clear appetite for birding activities, trips and courses, and we need to figure out how to roll out a more interactive offering to our members. That's something Council will be working on in tandem with the regional representatives over the coming months.

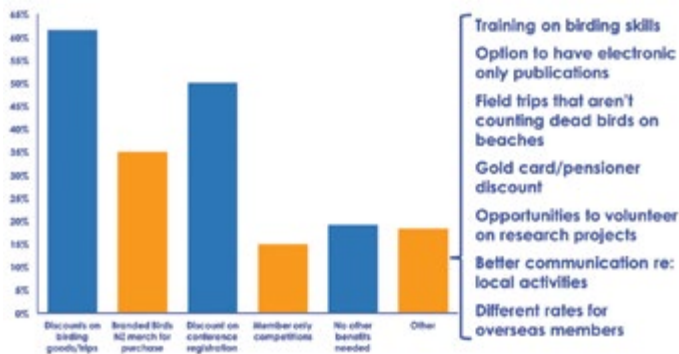
Most importantly, perhaps, is how we present ourselves as a Society; this is the core of our brand as a Society. The rebrand is part of that; it will modernise the look and feel of the website and the Society to make it more relevant. This is just one small fix though. The bigger thing that needs to change, according to the survey results, is how we present ourselves as people.

We must try to be more friendly and welcoming as a Society, and that starts in the regions. The more that people see us as a friendly welcoming bunch, the more likely they are to engage with us. When new people come to regional meetings, make an effort to welcome them and introduce yourself. Reassure novice birders and offer to show them the ropes. If you're out birding and someone asks you what you're up to, give them an idea what birding is all about and mention Birds New Zealand as a way into it. Some of us may feel like we're already being friendly, but according to our survey results, we need to do more.

As for the logo, it is going to change. But in the overall scheme of things this is a small change compared to being a more inviting group of people. Additionally, the Council will be working to establish a Te Reo Maori name for the Society for use in tandem with the English name.

The Council's aim is to have the rebrand, including the Te Reo name, ready to present at the next AGM in Paihia in June 2018. We will be providing updates and communication regarding this process in every issue of Birds New Zealand magazine from now until the AGM. If you have questions, concerns, or ideas about this process, please do not hesitate to contact a Council member. This is a very exciting time for the Society, but change can be challenging, and we want to ensure that all members feel they are involved and that their voices are heard.

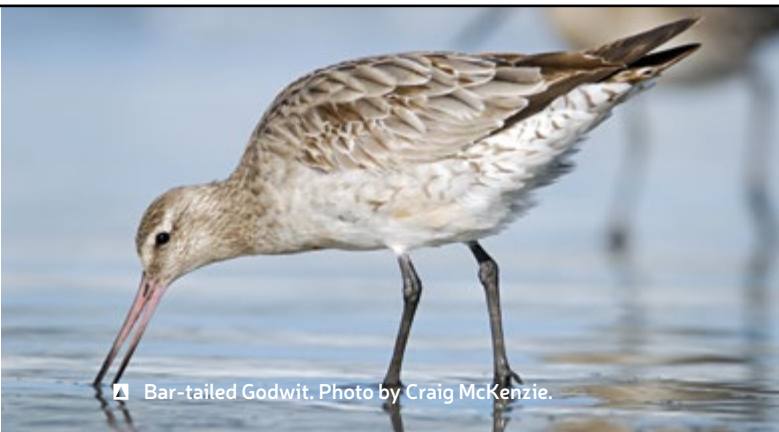
HELEN TAYLOR



Members' feedback on what additional membership benefits they would like the Society to offer.



Members state their opinions on changing the Birds New Zealand logo.



Bar-tailed Godwit. Photo by Craig McKenzie.

## 2017 David Medway Scholarship

The 2017 David Medway Scholarship has been awarded to Toby Ross to conduct the following Bar-tailed Godwit research project:

“My research will address three questions about the foraging behaviour of Bar-tailed Godwits after their arrival from the longest endurance flight known in birds (Alaska to New Zealand direct, >11, 500 km). The first is whether diet choice and energy intake change with time as birds recover from this flight. During flight godwits almost certainly experience massive reductions in the size of internal organs, including their gastrointestinal tract.

This may reduce their digestive capacity and influence their prey choice and intake rate, and by repeatedly studying the same individuals I aim to track any changes in their ‘recovery’ phase. The second question relates to the large degree of sexual dimorphism between males and females. Males have bill lengths from 70–90 mm, while females have bills of 90–130 mm. I will test whether this size difference leads to niche differentiation in terms of prey choice or habitat selection, and if these differences are consistent between individuals.

Lastly, I intend to compare foraging proficiency between adults and juveniles. Based on earlier observations, juveniles appear to forage differently to adults and may choose less profitable food. I intend to examine the extent to which they forage differently to adult birds.

I will do this work at the Manawatu River Estuary, where there is a population of individually-marked godwits. The birds will be filmed and the videos analysed to determine pacing and foraging rates, prey consumed, and size of the prey consumed. The relative biomass and energy content of each size of prey item will be determined by benthos sampling and lab analysis of the prey items.

Hopefully, at the end of this study, we will have unique insights into the impact of extreme long-distance flight on the subsequent ecology of godwits, and how consistently individuals differ from one another in their use of the estuary.”

TOBY ROSS

## New study sheds light on New Zealand’s penguins

A new study of Holocene biogeographic turnover events in the New Zealand region that sheds light on the history of New Zealand’s penguins has been published in the *Journal of Biogeography* (2017) by Jonathan Waters, Justin Maxwell and Nic Rawlence of the University of Otago, and Ceridwen Fraser of the Australian National University (Canberra).

The study analysed ancient DNA and radiocarbon data for New Zealand sea lions, and synthesised existing climatic, genetic and archaeological data, in order to look for evidence of synchronous megafaunal extinction and replacement events. The collated data included ancient DNA sequences from over 200 ancient sea lion and penguin specimens, along with 150 modern genetic samples.

The genetic analyses showed that, following human-driven extinction events, synchronous marine megafaunal replacement events occurred at around 1500 AD, coinciding with the Little Ice Age onset and an associated drastic human demographic decline in southern New Zealand.

The study says that a combination of climatic and human demographic shifts likely facilitated northward expansion of Subantarctic sea lion and penguin lineages, replacing sea lion and penguin lineages that were extirpated in mainland New Zealand: “Broadly, the interaction between human pressure and late Holocene climatic change may explain multiple biological turnover events in the Southern Hemisphere.”

The study concludes: “Biological turnover represents an increasingly recognized but poorly understood theme in both evolutionary and ecological literature. Here we show how human pressure and climate dynamics have interacted to drive rapid, synchronous biological extirpations and expansions. As the pace of anthropogenic climate change intensifies, ecological forecasts indicate that such phenomena might become increasingly common in the future.”

## New Librarian

The Society has a new librarian. Trina Smith has taken over the role from Heather Rogers. Trina is an active member of the Auckland Branch, working as newsletter Editor and assisting the Regional Rep with a range of administrative tasks and promotional activities. Her current research interests include vegetation diversity and soil characteristics associated with ground-nesting seabirds. She has been working as a technician for the past 18 years at Unitec in Auckland, originally in Plant Science, and more recently in the Landscape Architecture and Architecture disciplines.

## FAR NORTH

Over 90 entities are involved in the Kiwi Coast initiative to make a Kiwi corridor from Bream Head to Cape Reinga. Kiwi Coast has expanded its interest from Kiwi to Pateke and Australasian Bittern, and we may see reporting of these species from Kiwi Coast entities on *eBird* in future.

In another step forward for Project Island Song, 40 Red-crowned Kakariki were released on Moturua Island in the Bay of Islands in June. Since a visit to Urupukapuka Island will be one of the field trips for the 2018 Conference, this and other translocations are viewed with excitement.

The Far North Branch has responsibility for Shorebird Surveys in Parengarenga, Rangaunu and Kowhai Beach during the winter months. Since access to these sites is always difficult and sometimes uncertain, a discussion at our last monthly meeting centred around buying a drone to facilitate these surveys. Far North Members present enthusiastically endorsed this idea, and resolved to proceed, subject to OSNZ Protocols, Health & Safety, NZ laws, and Civil Aviation constraints. We also thought it would be a pretty cool conference workshop topic, and are moving towards that goal.

Our Parengarenga survey turned up the 'usual suspects', now in posted on *eBird*. Kowhai Beach was empty, except for the odd Variable Oystercatcher. Houhora Mudflats had 145 Black Swans, 103 Pied Stilts and 62 Royal Spoonbills. Unahi Road had 510 Royal Spoonbills and 16 Cattle Egrets, but that population has since expanded to an estimated 700 Royal Spoonbills with a count of 52 Cattle Egrets and 3 Little Egrets.

Severe weather constrained our Beach Patrols, but our team managed to get out last weekend. They count the live birds and beach-wrecked birds, and post the results on *eBird*. The reports included an astounding 1,429 Welcome Swallows. Other notable sightings included Australasian Bittern, Banded Rail and Spotless Crake along the Opua-Kawakawa Cycle/Walking Trail, and Australasian Bittern in Kaitaia. The Barn Owl population in the Kaitaia area continues to expand, with new nesting sites reported.

After 10+ years in the role, Detlef Davies has handed over the reins as Editor of *Apteryx*, our newsletter. Many thanks, Detlef, for all of your many hours of careful editing and valuable contributions. Peter Sharpe has now taken on the role. – LES FEASEY

## NORTHLAND

The North Kaipara shorebird census (24/6) was affected by rain and high tides, leading to a low/nil count at many sites. However, several members observed a flock of an estimated 4,000 Red-billed Gulls in paddocks next to SH1 near the One Tree

Point roundabout.

The 17/6 East Coast Harbour Census recorded 3,513 Red-billed Gull, 84 Banded Dotterel, 262 Bar-tailed Godwit, 16 Red Knot, 80 NZ Dotterel, 1,044 Pied Oystercatcher, 566 Pied Stilt, 47 Spur-winged Plover, 548 Variable Oystercatcher, 944 Southern Black-backed Gull, 13 Caspian Tern, 2 Little Black Shag, 3 Little Shag, 84 Pied Shag, 1 Reef Heron, 75 Royal Spoonbill, 68 White-faced Heron, 14 White-fronted Tern, and 74 Black Swan.

In July, 3 members joined Bream Head Conservation Trust members for 5MBCs on the head. They were keen to locate any of the 100 Whitehead translocated in May. There was evidence of some dispersal from the release site near the Peach Cove Track as far away as Busby Point and Mt Lion. Two Whitehead may have seen/heard on each of 3 days.

Regular 5MBC recorders reported a lower than expected winter tally of species. On the Ocean Beach Te Whara Peach Cove lines, 7 North Island Robin and 2 Kaka were counted, along with the more common Northland species. Mike and Jenny Butcher of BHCT recorded 3 Bellbirds, 14 NZ Tomtits and 2 North Island Robins on the ocean side of Mt Lion, although Bellbirds are usually seasonal visitors to Bream Head.

Cameras have shown a lot of activity at the Grey-faced Petrel colony at Taurawhata (Tutukaka Coast) where there seem to be 15 active burrows. The area is well trapped, so we are looking forward to eggs hatching in August. Dayna Davies and Hilton Ward visited there at night with a thermal viewer (30/7) and were excited to see birds on the ground in front of the burrows. After hatching, they intend to check the burrows with an endoscope. – ANNE McCRACKEN

## AUCKLAND

Wet winter weather often made birding difficult, affecting our annual Cornwall Park Guided Bird Walk (1/7). Being wet and windy, lower than expected numbers resulted; those who took part enjoyed the walk, recording a total of 18 species, including 7 Helmeted Guineafowl, 3 Kereru and numerous Ring-necked Pheasant.

Highlights of the Mangawhai Harbour wader census on 17/6 included 249 Variable Oystercatcher, 160 Banded Dotterel, 236 Northern NZ Dotterel, 13 Cattle Egret and 1 Australasian Bittern, while the swollen lake on the spit yielded 13 NZ Dabchicks. The South Kaipara census on 24/6 found 64 Northern NZ Dotterel, 294 Banded Dotterel, 602 Ruddy Turnstone, 271 Red Knot, 483 Bar Tailed Godwit, 1 Whimbrel, 21 Cattle Egret, 143 Royal Spoonbill, 252 Black-billed Gull and 13 New Zealand Fairy Tern.

A highlight from the Waitemata Harbour census on 25/6 was a flock of 53 Banded Dotterel on the short grass of Te Atatu

Pony Club next to a busy motorway! Despite the often-turbulent winter weather, our Muriwai beach patrols yielded small numbers of birds, although some very interesting finds were from Subantarctic latitudes. The June patrol included an Antarctic Prion and a Blue Petrel. Both birds were in very fresh condition and have been given to the Auckland Museum as specimens. The July patrol included a Buller's Albatross and a White-capped Albatross.

Royal Spoonbills have recently been observed nest building at Westerns Springs and were photographed by YanPing Sun on 16/7. It is possible that they may just be practicing nest building prior to moving south to breed. Any breeding at Western Springs would be significant, as the vast majority of Royal Spoonbills nest in the South Island. Normally, 12 Royal Spoonbills are present there roosting within a Pied Shag colony, so we are keeping an eye on this potential breeding at Western Springs.

– IAN MCLEAN

## WAIKATO

The Waikato Branch is alive and kicking. The group thanks Andrew Styche for his service as RR. Bruce Postill has now taken on the role. During the interregnum, harbour surveys of Kawhia, Aotea and Raglan continued. The latest (June) produced interesting results. These harbours continue to hold large wintering stocks of c. 5,000 SIPO, 283 Bar-tailed Godwits, 139 Royal Spoonbills, 912 Banded Dotterels and 27 Northern NZ Dotterels.

There were 10 hybrid Black x Pied Stilts at Raglan, Grey-Tailed Tattler at Kawhia and Southern Skua at Aotea. Thanks to DOC for valued assistance.

Coromandel Peninsula continues to be the main breeding area for Northern NZ Dotterel, with over 130 fledged. Reports of birds further south seem to indicate there is a lack of available breeding sites in that area. Over 40 Banded Dotterels were seen on Whangamata Harbour in June and a pair of Reef Herons at Purangi estuary in March. Brown Teal seem to be extending their range with 3 birds on small flood water lakes in Onemana over summer and early autumn. Predator control has been carried out on Pirongia Mountain as part of the North Island Kokako re-establishment scheme. On 3/7, 12 birds were released as part of a programme, which in future hopes to see at least 20 resident birds on the mountain. For those who want to look for them, there is an App available from [bit.ly/Kokako\\_App](http://bit.ly/Kokako_App)

At Maungatautiri Sanctuary, the last of 40 North Island Kokako have arrived and seem to have settled in. The June meeting enjoyed a presentation by 3 members about the Birds New Zealand Youth Camp in



Northland that they attended. The meeting was seen for the youth camps to continue.

In July, Kaitlin Morrison gave a talk on Whangamarino wetland, which has over a quarter of New Zealand's Australasian Bittern population, but where numbers are declining due to water quality/flood drainage schemes. – KEN WEDGWOOD

## TARANAKI

For the May field trip we headed to Lake Rotokare, hoping to see the newly released Hiihi and North Island Robin. Within the first 150 metres we saw Hiihi, Tieke, North Island Robin, Fernbird, Bellbird, Whitehead, NZ Tomtit and numerous NZ Fantail, Grey Warbler, Tui and a couple of Spotless Crane that were calling from the rushes – one of which was seen by a lucky member.

There were many small flocks of Silvereye and a flock of Whitehead. A large Black Shag on the lake was seen catching a large Rudd. Returning to the car park, members were amazed by what we had encountered. At the next indoor meeting one of our group reported that he visited Zealandia Ecosanctuary in Wellington soon after and, apart from Kaka, he saw more birds at Rotokare.

In North Taranaki, the Parininihi/Whitecliffs forest, where extensive predator control has been underway for some time, 20 North Island Kokako have recently been released. There have been two reports of Kaka in the province, one in the Hutawai, in the north, and one at Otakeho, in the south.

North Island Robins have also been recently released into Taranaki/Mt Egmont National Park; some were later re-sighted a long way from their release point, so trying to keep track of them will be an interesting exercise. Two winter outings into the National Park have found few birds; only 9 species were recorded along the Mangorei Track, and a Whitehead was heard calling just outside the boundary.

Eastern Rosellas have been seen from the Messengers' farm, inland to the Fryer's farmlet on the coast, and a White Heron is back at Waiongana, but was it the same bird that flew over the Messengers' house?

On his tour around the beaches, estuaries and oxidation ponds, Barry Hartley saw 6 NZ Dabchick at Opunake, 3 Pied Shag at Awakino and 20 Variable Oystercatcher and 182 Red-billed Gull, probably visiting from the South Island, at Sandy Bay. (Please note that Barry Hartley is the Taranaki RR and not Ron Lambert, as stated in the last issue. The editor apologises for this).

Dean Caskey sent in some photos of a leucistic Blackbird at Stratford, a Pomarine Skua was photographed off the coast, and windy south-easterlies had me watching albatross flying past. – PETER FRYER

## HAWKE'S BAY

A field trip to Mohi Bush was well attended, including a few welcome visitors. We had a pleasant morning there, although few of the less common native birds were seen. At a meeting held at the local Fish and Game office, local Society member Lynne Anderson gave a presentation on her recent visit to the Yellow Sea coast of China. Conservation efforts appear to be gaining momentum there, which is encouraging, and Lynne saw the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper (see pages 11-12).

Two Plumed Whistling Ducks continue at Anderson Park in Napier. Pied Shags have previously been an unusual sighting in the Hastings/Napier area, but appear to be occurring more regularly in the last year, with 2 seen at Ahuriri Estuary near Meeanee Quay in June. Reef Heron is an unusual visitor for the Napier/Hastings area, but one has been seen at Ahuriri regularly since October 2016, and recorded as recently as 8/7. In June-July, 6 Northern NZ Dotterels were seen at Ahuriri, 5 of which were well-coloured, and at the end of July, 5 or 6 birds were seen on the Tukituki River mouth shingle. Last year one pair was found with a nest in this latter area, so we are hopeful that breeding may be repeated.

This year very few wintering Black-fronted Terns were recorded before July. However, on 14/7 at least 80 were seen surface feeding between very heavy surf at the Tukituki River mouth, soon after stormy weather. Another 15-20 were seen shortly afterwards roosting at Waitangi. Finally, 1 NZ Falcon was seen on a few occasions recently at the Napier Botanical Gardens by Adam Clarke, who took some excellent photos and video of the bird feeding. Thanks to Wayne Twyde for this summary of recent sightings. – IAN SMITH

## WHANGANUI

A relatively warm, wet winter is slowly coming to an end. The few remaining islands of native bush are coming alive with the calls of Grey Warbler, Bellbird, Tui and North Island Robin. Small numbers of North Island Robins still survive unprotected in vegetated gullies and even pine plantations, but it is one of the more common in Bushy Park, where they are protected by a predator-exclusion fence. At the end of April, 40 robins (16 females, 24 males) were translocated from there to Lake Rotokare, South Taranaki, to bolster its small resident population.

Also at Bushy Park, Hiihi are becoming more conspicuous following their winter quiet period. Among these is the last surviving female from the March 2013 translocation of 44 juvenile Hiihi from Tiritiri Matangi Island, that has reappeared after spending 4 months living covertly in the forest's depths. Over the past 4 years,

she has fledged 33 chicks from a total of 44 eggs laid in 11 nesting attempts, 10 of which were successful. We are now following the survival and breeding success of her offspring, something that is only possible by having these birds individually colour-banded.

In early July, Adam Clarke reported at least 4 Nankeen Night-herons leaving their usual daytime roost near Kemp's Pole. Around the same time, Colin Ogle recorded Greenfinch singing, 10 weeks earlier than the median week of his records in 12 of the past 16 years, perhaps reflecting the mild winter. Phil Thomson reported up to 4 Redpoll, together with numerous Goldfinch, feeding on Pohutukawa seeds in Whanganui.

Kit Coleman saw a pair of Common Myna in Marton in March, following a single sighting there last year. Whanganui is still the easternmost edge of the species' established range in this region, where it is primarily an urban species. In contrast, further north and west it inhabits the countryside outside forested areas. To the east, its occurrence in towns like Turakina, Marton, Bulls and Sansom seems more ephemeral, with individuals or small groups appearing briefly, then vanishing. This suggests that this introduced species could spread by jump dispersal, with small groups, if they become established, multiplying and diffusing outwards into a new region. This may be happening in Foxton, where the small population seems to be persisting, with birds now spreading to Foxton Beach.

This pattern of dispersal contrasts with that of a species such as Eastern Rosella, which from 2006 onwards spread wave-like from the north into the coastal lowlands around Whanganui, arriving at numerous places along that front at much the same time.

Finally, the Australasian Bittern seen by Ormond Torr in March 2017 was recorded on Turakina Lagoon, Koitiata, not on the Whangaehu estuary as reported in the last issue. – PETER FROST

## WAIRARAPA

Global Big Day on 13/5 was cold and rainy, but a satisfying 63 species were counted by our members. Pukaha Mt Bruce was the dawn start point where we were delighted to see and hear North Island Kokako. By evening we had covered all points of the compass from Tararua Forest Park to the wild eastern coast and down to Onoke Spit (where 15 Black-fronted Terns were recorded) and numerous points in-between.

Another wet, wintry day in May did not deter those that headed to Western Lake Wairarapa after reports of large numbers of Black-billed Gulls feeding on inundated paddocks. A flock of 380 was counted, though no leg-bands were detected, despite

intensive searching. We had hoped to see the orange bands of some of our resident flock (around 200) that regularly over-winter at the lake after breeding on the Ruamahanga River near Masterton.

The weather was kinder for the June Lake Wairarapa Wader Survey. Highlights were a White Heron, large numbers of Banded and Black-fronted dotterels, and 260 NZ Dabchicks in a large flock.

Some of us joined Wellington members for a great pelagic trip into the Cook Strait which was a good opportunity to see several albatross, mollymawk and petrel species up close.

Not many Wairarapa members were able to make it to the Conference, so at our July meeting Paul Shortis gave an interesting report of that event and birding highlights from his journey south.

Our July field trip to Henley Lake recorded 26 species. We are watching the lake for Black-billed Gulls returning to their staging area there, before heading to the river to breed. Members will be monitoring this colony to try to get the best possible outcome for the coming breeding season.

The Caspian Tern colony at Onoke Spit is the only known nesting site in the lower North Island, but they are not doing well there, with only 22 birds counted last week. Branch members will be working to try to determine the reasons for this, and actively trapping introduced predators to try to increase nesting success. Six Northern NZ Dotterels are back at Riversdale Beach, with birds males in breeding plumage, so once again some of us will be doing our best to help these birds. – JOANNA MCVEAGH

## NELSON

A 'Baker's Dozen' of Nelson region members travelled to Te Anau for the conference – a good turnout from our 60 or so strong membership. Closer to Nelson, a Whimbrel has been seen regularly since December at Motueka and Waimea estuaries. Two Sanderlings in breeding colours on Farewell Spit were the highlight of the winter wader count in July, when almost 23,000 shorebirds were recorded, 89% endemic and the rest wintering migrants. No Cattle Egret have been reported in the region, but Waimea Estuary has hosted some wintering Wrybills.

Members enjoyed birding on Bells Island in Waimea Estuary in July, which included seeing Bar-tailed Godwits, Ruddy Turnstones, Banded Dotterels, Wrybills, Whimbrel, and a Little Tern. Thanks to Willie Cook, keeper of the gate key.

Two sightings of South Island Robin from Parapara and Pupū Springs, both areas where they have apparently been absent for years, were reported from earlier this year, and a Whio was reported from a farm pond at Motupipi, Takaka.

Wintering Royal Spoonbills have been

seen throughout Tasman Bay estuaries, including Motueka, Waimea, Nelson Haven and Delaware Bay inlet. Golden Bay has them too, but there is no confirmation of breeding yet. Marsh Crane can often be seen at low tide among rushes near the Kumeras, Motueka Sandspit, and in the Waimea Estuary near the cycle trail, moving through exotic plants there.

Disappointingly, the RAC turned down two local sightings of South Island Kokako, from 2016/2017, but, records of Australian Wood Duck (latest count 24), Glossy Ibis and Gull-billed Tern were accepted.

Feathers flew at our July meeting, as David Melville brought in some rather old and dusty wings for a session on moult, going through one of the 'Introduction to Ornithology' lectures.

'A Murmuration of Starlings' in name alone conjures up thoughts of autumnal mellowness, but the real deal can be spotted just off Rocks Road. On one June evening at about 5pm I marvelled at the sight of a whirling ebb and flow of birds as they rose up above, over and back-and-forth along Haulashore Island (Nelson Harbour), turning en-masse, sometimes splitting to go down either side, moving across over The Cut and back, sometimes in a dense cloud, and sometimes sparse. – GAIL D. QUAYLE

## CANTERBURY

During May and June, 3 Cattle Egret and 1 Glossy Ibis were in paddocks at Tulls Road, Waikuku. The Glossy Ibis moved to paddocks at Kaiapoi Pa Road, where it continues to be seen, along with the Black Stilt usually found at the Ashley Estuary, and up to 13 Cattle Egret have been seen on The Lake Road.

A White-winged Black Tern was seen at Bromley Oxidation Ponds in June and July, and at Lake Ellesmere a number of Gull-billed Terns were present, including 5 seen there during our annual Winter Wader Count.

The Kaikoura Albatross Encounter pelagic trips continue to produce interesting sightings. A Northern Buller's Albatross, an Antarctic Prion, and a Grey Petrel were seen on 11/5, and a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was seen a few days earlier.

Cirl Buntings have been seen on a handful on occasions in recent months. A very high count of 8 was recorded on a freshly sewn section in Leeston and 2 were seen in the Linwood Paddocks area during our ramble in July – probably not what members were expecting to find on a trip to Avon-Heathcote Estuary!

There have been reports of NZ Falcon in the area around Little River, Lake Forsyth and the eastern end of Lake Ellesmere, and in May, Australasian Bittern and Marsh Crane were seen at Travis Wetlands.

– ELEANOR GUNBY

## OTAGO

Many Otago Branch members enthusiastically set out on 13/5, eBird Global Big Day, to see how many bird species they could find. Sunny, mild weather added to the enjoyment. The Otago total was 76 species, the top region for NZ. Lei Zhu was top for the number of species seen in Otago and second for the whole of NZ; well-done Lei, who explored all the birding hot-spots on Otago Peninsula. He saw some good seabirds, 2 White Herons at Tomahawk, then he headed to Moeraki for Yellow-eyed Penguin and a bonus NZ Falcon, contributing to his total of 60. Rachel Hufton set out early from Makaroa and found a Morepork, Mohua, Rifleman and Kea, and Sam Scheibel spotted a Reef Heron at Aramoana.

Huge flocks of Black-billed Gulls have been turning up at Warrington Beach this April (and previous years, too); large flocks have also been reported at Hawksbury and Karitane since at least the early 1990s. The numbers involved, often in the thousands, are a fair percentage of the total NZ population, suggesting that coastal Otago is an important habitat in the non-breeding season. A large (2,000-3,000) roosting mixed flock of Red- and Black-billed gulls was seen in July at Balclutha.

Following the description of Otago Shag as a species separate from Foveaux Shag, a co-ordinated evening count to improve our knowledge of numbers was conducted one Saturday evening in June. A tally of between 3,000 and 4,000 Otago Shags was recorded, with 1,862 roosting on Sumpter Wharf at Oamaru. – MARY THOMPSON

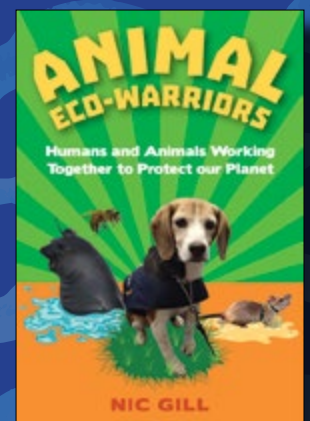
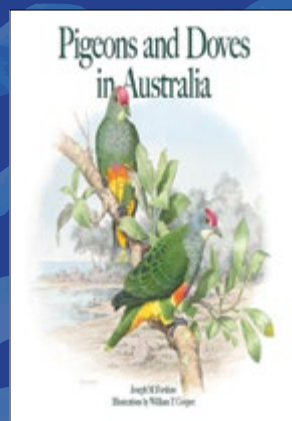
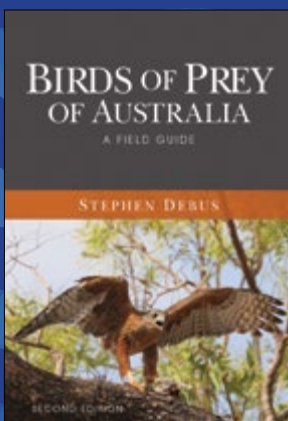
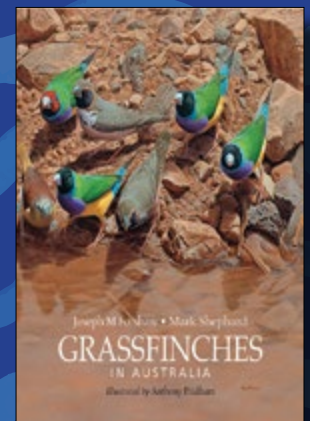
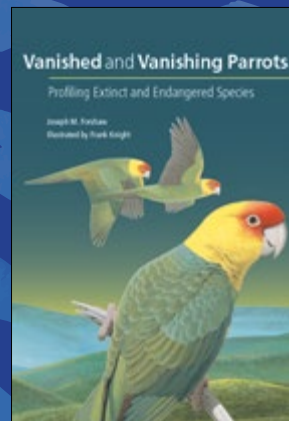
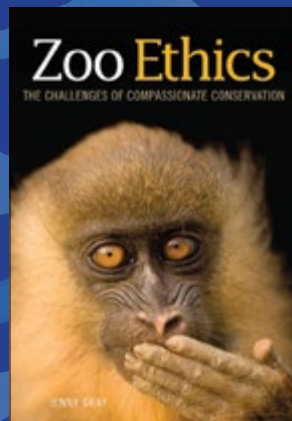
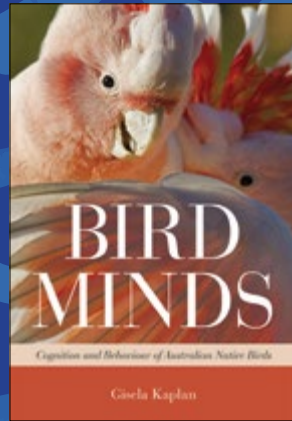
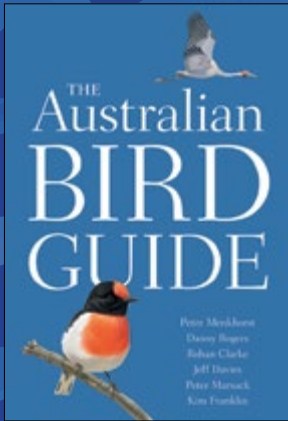
## SOUTHLAND

The Conference and AGM in Te Anau was a great success and it was nice to put faces to names of members that we had previously not met. The weather was fine and cold but this did not stop large numbers of members attending training sessions and field trips to some of Southland's best birding areas.

Dallas Bradley took a nice photo of a Morepork at Taiepa Road reserve in Otago. While the Little Owl is quite common in the area, it is good to see Morepork are also present. Highlights of our winter wader count were a Black Stilt at Riverton and a Wrybill at Awarua Bay. Other recent sightings included an Australasian Bittern seen by Lloyd Esler on the Bluff Highway; 2 Grey-tailed Tattlers at Bandy Pt, Awarua Bay; and a Marsh Crane that I saw at Pleasure Bay estuary lagoon.

The resident NZ Falcon posed for a photo in Queens Park in May and a Glossy Ibis washed up dead on Horsehoe Bay beach, Stewart Island. I also saw two Gull-billed Terns at Awarua Bay, which may be the same birds photographed by Glenda Rees at Bandy Pt back in April. – PHIL RHODES

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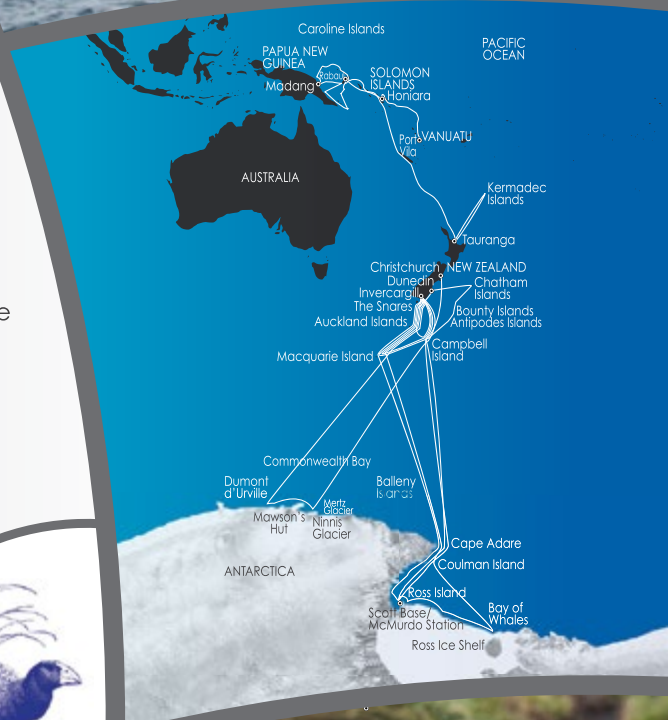


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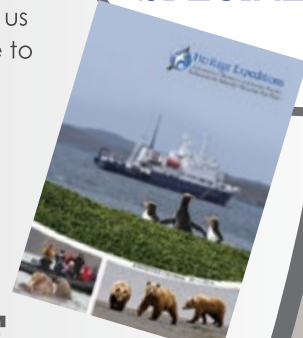
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