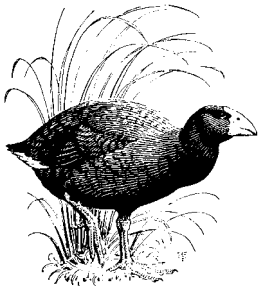


No. 7 September 2015

# *Birds New Zealand*



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



# Birds New Zealand

||||| NO. 7 SEPTEMBER 2015 |||||

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## QUOTE

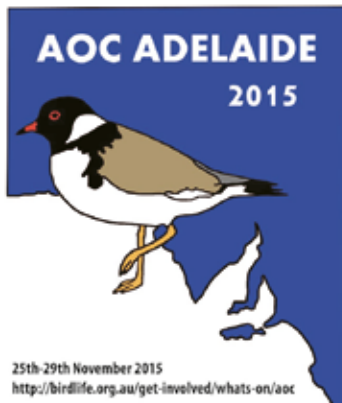
The partridge loves the fruitful fells,  
 The plover loves the mountains;  
 The woodcock haunts the lonely dells,  
 The soaring hern the fountains:  
 Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves,  
 The path of man to shun it;  
 The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,  
 The spreading thorn the linnet.

*Song Composed in August by  
 Robbie Burns (1759-1796)*

## COVER PHOTOS

Front cover: Bellbird.  
 Rear cover: Fantail on a flax stalk.  
 Both photos by  
 Rebecca Bowater FPSNZ AFIAP

### Australasian Ornithological Conference 2015



**Dates:**  
 Scientific Program- Wed 25<sup>th</sup> to Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015  
 Field Trips- Sat 28<sup>th</sup> and Sun 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015

**Venue:**  
 Flinders University Campus, Adelaide, South Australia

**Website:**  
<http://www.birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/aoc>

**Conference registration and abstract submission are now open!**

25th-29th November 2015  
<http://birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/aoc>

BirdLife Australia, in collaboration with Birds New Zealand, is committed to holding biennial conferences that provide a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between avian-based researchers and conservationists throughout the Australasian region. The conferences are held in a variety of venues to give attendees an opportunity to explore the diverse birdlife in the region. This year the AOC will be held in Adelaide, South Australia.

#### Confirmed plenary speakers:

Kate Buchanan  
 Martine Maron  
 Leo Joseph  
 Mike Webster  
 Trevor Worthy

#### Field trip options:

Lower Lakes & Murray River mouth region, Wetlands, Woodlands (Adelaide Hills)

**Local organising committee:** Dr. Todd McWhorter, Dr. Sonia Kleindorfer, Dr. David Paton

#### Sponsors:



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We welcome advertising enquiries. Free classified ads are available to members at the editor's discretion.

Articles for inclusion in *Birds New Zealand* are welcome in any form, though electronic is preferred. Material should be related to birds, birdwatchers, or ornithologists in the New Zealand and Pacific region, and can include news on birds, members, activities and bird study, literature/product reviews, letters to the editor, birdwatching sites, and identification. Illustrations are especially welcome, though they must be sharp. Copy deadlines are 10th February, May and August, and 1st November. The views expressed by the contributors to this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc.

# President's Report

## Annual General Meeting Weekend

The Blenheim Region organised a wonderful conference and Annual General Meeting weekend this year. The weather played a huge part but it was the warmth of the welcome from the local members that made the event so memorable.

The scientific papers were an interesting mix of topics that would have suited the full range of our membership. From the comments I heard everyone learnt something during the course of the weekend.

The workshops were far too brief but without extra days it is not possible to extend those timeframes.

The annual meeting gave an opportunity for people to fully debate the new strategy and while the long debate did not suit everybody it at least gave all those who wanted to contribute an opportunity.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Forest & Bird opens opportunities for our two organisations to work in closer collaboration. An example is that later this month I am leading a Kiwi Conservation Club outing bird watching into the Whangamarino Wetlands. I would encourage regions to investigate offering your services to local Forest & Bird branches, who are always looking for speakers and people to lead field trips.

## Jean Luke

During the conference Rosemary Heather handed to me a telescope that had been donated to the Society by long-time member Jean Luke, who lives just out of Wellington. Rosemary and Jean are often out birding together but Jean found that the telescope was becoming too cumbersome to operate.

She therefore decided to donate it to the Society to be used to provide an opportunity for young people to have access to a telescope during their formative years.

This is a wonderful donation and Council is still considering how to devise a mechanism to ensure that the wishes of Jean are met and the telescope is put to the best use. If anyone has suggestions please provide them to me so they can be considered.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Jean for this wonderful gift.

## Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau

The visitors bureau of Solomon Islands contacted the Society to offer a fully paid trip to the islands to publicise the opportunities for bird watching in that country. This offer came through Jim Briskie at the University of Canterbury, but the timeframe to accept and organise this trip was relatively short.

From an examination of the proposed itinerary it was decided that a young fit person would be the most appropriate to obtain the best value from this opportunity. It was therefore decided to offer this opportunity to a recently graduated MSc student from Canterbury University. His name is Archie MacFarlane and he lives on a farm in the North Island. Archie is a keen birder and is a student member of the Society. His task on his return to New Zealand is to write articles for *Birds New Zealand* and any other journals publicising the opportunities for bird watching in the Solomon Islands.

By the time you read this magazine Archie will already be in the islands and we look forward to his reports on his return.

## Sarah Jamieson

Sarah recently resigned her position on the Council of the Society and also her job at the DOC banding office in Wellington. Sarah and her partner Kyle have been very involved with the Society and birding activities in New Zealand since they came to this country from Canada several years



❑ Fellows of the Ornithological Society (left to right: Hugh Robertson, Christopher Robertson, Paul Sagar and Brian Bell) cutting a cake celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Society.

❑ Sign at the Maketu Estuary.



ago. However they have now found that the pull of family connections in Canada is too great to resist and they have returned home.

When Sarah joined Council she was younger than the majority of the balance of the Councillors and brought a whole new perspective to our discussions. She was also still a student at university at that time and that also gave us a greater insight into how we could encourage student membership. Sarah also produced the educational material that is now available for regions to borrow and utilise.

While we are sorry to lose someone with Sarah's enthusiasm and vitality we wish her all the best in her future life in Canada.

## Fruzio Sponsorship

The Society has recently entered into a sponsorship arrangement with FSL Foods, who specialise in sourcing, manufacturing, distributing and selling a range of food products mainly related around fruit. They are based in Nelson and have been in operation since 2003.

They have approached the Society to form a sponsorship deal that will provide opportunities to expand and develop our projects. There will be more information relating to this arrangement in the near future but I recently signed the agreement and the public launch will be on 5th October.

This is an exciting new venture for the Society and is an outcome from the work of our executive officer in establishing the relationship.

## Maketu and Pukehina Spits

During a recent holiday in Mt Maunganui I made arrangements with Sheelagh Leary to visit Maketu and Pukehina Spits. This was an opportunity to see the work that is being



undertaken by the management groups in that area led by Julian Fitter. Julian was busy planting trees on one of the restoration projects and was not able to join us as we visited Pukehina Spit, where there is an active Dotterel management area. During the day of my visit there were 16 New Zealand Dotterels on the spit, 11 of which were carrying bands, largely as a result of monitoring work following the Rena oil spill.

This was a really interesting day and the area is well worth a visit if you are ever in the vicinity.



Sheelagh Leary on Pukehina Spit.

**Australasian Ornithological Conference**

The 2015 Australasian Ornithological Conference will be held in Adelaide between 25th and 29th November. This is a biannual conference with the previous event being held in Auckland in 2013.

The conference is an opportunity for members to hear a wide range of presentations from both Australian and New Zealand bird researchers. It gives an opportunity to broaden your horizons beyond the New Zealand birds that are familiar. It is also an opportunity to broaden birding friendships with people who have similar interests.

Details of this event and access to the registration forms are available on the Birds New Zealand website and I encourage members to register for this event.

**Birds New Zealand Editor**

As has been previously publicised Nick Allen wishes to retire from the editors role at the end of this year. This is an opportunity for an interested member to put something back into our organisation and build on the wonderful foundation that Nick has laid over the past 12 years.

While I have a couple of people showing some interest there is no definite offer to take over this role. There is a possibility that we could split the role between two people if that was a suitable option. This is intended to be a voluntary position but Council will provide whatever assistance is possible to ensure that this role is as easy as possible.

Contact me if you have any interest in this position.

**Council Meeting**

At the June Council Meeting it was decided that the business of the organisation could not be handled in two face-to-face meetings in a year. It was therefore decided to hold meetings in October and February as well as the standard June meeting.

While this is an extra drain on Council members it is also a reflection on the increasing work load created by having such an active team. It will be seen from the reports on the number of activities that are being undertaken and the results of the various projects and partnerships that have been established that we are entering an exciting period in the Society's history.

If members have any issues that they would like raised at the October meeting send those suggestions to me as soon as possible. We are particularly keen to hear of ways that we can further involve the younger members and students into the Society.

Migratory waders are probably in the air returning to New Zealand as I write this report. It is time for me to go and start some serious birding over the summer.

DAVID LAWRIE, President

Photos by David Lawrie

**Donation**

*We thank the following member for his generous donation to the Society:*

Don Graham

**The Perfect Christmas Gift: a 2016 Birds New Zealand Subscription!**

Are you still looking for that perfect Christmas gift?

Buy someone a 2016 Birds New Zealand subscription and help foster the study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds!

Just send an email to [eo@osnz.org.nz](mailto:eo@osnz.org.nz) and we send you the gift voucher, or check our website for details: <http://osnz.org.nz>



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

Nominations are called for the above awards and should be with the Birds New Zealand Secretary (P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040) by 31st December 2015.

Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs, or the Secretary [secretary@osnz.org.nz](mailto:secretary@osnz.org.nz)

The Awards Committee will consider all nominations, and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting.

Further information on *Birds New Zealand* award procedures is available from your RR or the Secretary.



**Society Awards**

Hugh Robertson was awarded fellowship of the Society in recognition of his lifetime commitment to the study and understanding of the birds of New Zealand.

Derek Onley was awarded an Honorary Life Membership for his contribution to ornithology art, in particular the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*.

Julia White was awarded a Meritorious Services Award for her membership secretary role over the last four years.



**New Members**

*A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:*

- Mitchell Bartlett (Marlborough),
- Harry Boorman (Auckland), Claire Buttigieg (Canterbury), Lisabertha Clark (Wellington), Patrick Crowe (West Coast), George Curzon-Hobson (Wellington), Jane Demeter (Canterbury), Facultas AG Maudrich Abonnements, Johannes Fischer (Wellington), FSL Foods (Nelson), Katie Gibb (Manawatu), Karin Gouldstone (Auckland), Lyndall Hancock (Otago), Kelly Hayhurst (Auckland), Priscilla McAllum (Otago), Erin Pointon (Hawkes Bay), Denise Poyner (Auckland), Kayla Rench (Auckland), Craig Roberts (Wellington), Bronwen Shepherd (Wellington), Margaret Stanley (Auckland), John Weeber (Nelson).

# 10,000 eBird checklists submitted by Wellington and Wairarapa birders



When Wairarapa Birds New Zealand member Joanna McVeagh went birding at Riversdale Beach on the 16th March 2015, she had little idea that she was about to help the New Zealand eBird database to pass an important milestone.

Riversdale Beach, about 50km east of Masterton, has a small sandy estuary whose small size belies its ability to turn up a surprising diversity of waders. For Wairarapa-based birders, this is one of the most reliable sites to find species such as Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot, Pacific Golden Plover, Turnstone and Wrybill and at times has also turned up regional rarities such as Little Tern and Subantarctic Skua. Riversdale Beach's main claim to fame however, is that it is currently the southernmost location in the world that supports a breeding population of Northern New Zealand Dotterels.

When Joanna visited Riversdale on the 16th March, she was pleased to find a good selection of waders, including 26 Banded Dotterels, five Pied Stilts, one Wrybill, one Variable Oystercatcher and two New Zealand Dotterels. Later that evening after returning home, Joanna logged onto the New Zealand eBird website and entered a checklist of the birds she had seen that day. What she didn't realise at the time is that when she pressed the "submit" button on her checklist, she submitted the 10,000th complete eBird checklist for the Wellington/Wairarapa region.

Although Joanna had the great good fortune to be the person to hit the "submit" button for the 10,000th time, this milestone could not have been reached without the help of a core community of a dozen or so highly-committed Wellington-and Wairarapa-based "eBirders", assisted by visiting birders from elsewhere in New Zealand and overseas.

Together these eBirders have now recorded over 52,000 records of 171 bird species in the Wellington/Wairarapa region during the seven years that eBird has been available in New Zealand, and are currently contributing records at a rate of 1,000-5,000 records per month. By doing so, we are now well on the way towards creating the most detailed picture ever assembled of the distribution of birds in this part of the lower North Island.

As well being a valuable source of information for other birdwatchers, these eBird observations are also being used by local conservation managers and environmental policy makers to make better-informed decisions about the conservation of birds and their habitats in the Wellington/Wairarapa region. This means that whenever local birders submit their bird observations to eBird, they're not only indulging in a hobby (some might say "obsession"), but they're also making an indirect contribution to regional efforts to conserve our indigenous birds and their habitats.

One recent example of this is a project carried out by local Regional Council and Department of Conservation staff to identify coastal and freshwater sites in the Wellington/Wairarapa region that possess significant habitat values for indigenous birds. With a lot of local birdwatching effort concentrated along our coastline, this project drew heavily on available eBird data to identify sites that meet pre-determined criteria for being 'significant' habitats for indigenous birds. In the end, 52 "significant" sites were identified and subsequently listed in the region's new draft Natural Resources Plan, meaning that in time, each of these sites will receive a higher level of protection under the Resource Management Act.

So a huge thank you to those of you who take the time to record your bird observations in eBird. All bird observations are of value, and when you take the step to ensure they make their way into eBird you're not only improving our collective knowledge of the distribution of birds in New Zealand but you're also making a valuable contribution towards their conservation and management.

## How to enter the perfect eBird checklist

- Report all the species you see. When you indicate that your list includes all the species you saw, then researchers can also infer all the species you didn't see, and this "negative data" will be extremely helpful for future distribution modelling efforts.
- Record your effort. Your species list is just part of the information that researchers need. They also need to know how long you spent birding, how far you went and how many other birders were with you.
- Estimate numbers. Making even a rough count of how many birds you saw is more helpful than just checking off species. The help page on the eBird website has tips on how to estimate numbers.
- Break up your checklists. Entering a checklist for each stop on a birding tour makes the data more site-relevant. That's more valuable than entering one giant list for your entire day's outing.
- Enter your data in the field. A smartphone app such as BirdLog makes it all easier. It lets you skip a paper checklist and enter bird observations directly from the field while they are fresh in your mind, alerts you to take notes if you've seen something unusual, and automatically calculates your search effort. (Source: *Living Bird*, Winter 2015)

## Did you know?

The global eBird website is regularly updated with useful articles about all things eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>). Here is a selection of tips that you may find useful.

Interested in knowing more about how your bird observations fit into the wider context? eBird has a very useful Explore a Region page that allows you to get a quick overview of your local region, including a summary of recent birding activity and links to recent checklist submissions. Read more here: [http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/location\\_explorer/](http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/location_explorer/)

Want to customise your eBird profile and data entry pages, or to receive the eBird newsletter? Find out how to change your eBird preferences here: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/preferences/>

If you possess a smartphone or tablet, it's now possible to enter bird data into eBird directly from the field, using the BirdLog app. Find out more here: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/birdlog/>

Interested in finding new bird species to add to your list? The eBird Targets page allows you to create a list of birds you haven't seen in a particular area and provides information on how frequently they're reported by other eBirders. Links to distribution maps for each species allows you to research places to go to encounter these species. Read more here: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/targets/>

Keen on pelagic birding (birdwatching at sea)? If so, eBird has recently introduced a special protocol for entering bird checklists that are collected at sea. Read more here: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/pelagic-birding/>

NIKKI MCARTHUR

# A Strategy for Birds New Zealand – 2015 to 2024

In 2015 the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, now popularly known as Birds New Zealand, will celebrate its 75th anniversary. It is fitting therefore to help celebrate this moment in our history by setting out a revised strategy for the 2015 to 2024 period that will advance our Purpose, Aim and Objectives and for achieving improved public understanding and wider acceptance of the Society in the community.

This Strategy builds on a Strategic Plan adopted in 2005 and it provides a focus for the next 10 years that is appropriate to current circumstances.

**1. Statement of Purpose:** Encouraging the study and enjoyment of birds.

**2. Vision:** The Society will be recognised as the leading authority on birds in New Zealand. By 2024 the Society will have increased membership to 1,500, comprising a mix of professional, student, family, corporate and institutional members who share a common interest in the study and enjoyment of birds. The Society will continue to run long and short term science-based projects and training activities having both regional and national objectives that allow wide member participation as best suits their interests and circumstances and all contributing to greater ornithological knowledge and equally importantly to the enjoyment of birds and birding activities. Results of studies will continue to be published periodically, particularly in the Society's journal *Notornis*, complemented by regular communication amongst members on general bird watching activities. The Society will have investigated the benefits of and if appropriate will have become a Constituent Organisation of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

**3. Values:**

- Encouraging and assisting an enthusiastic amateur and professional membership that supports the study and enjoyment of birds.
- Applying rigorous scientific principles to all Birds New Zealand studies and projects.
- Safeguarding the welfare of birds in all Society activities.
- Demonstrating impartiality in the selection of studies and in the dissemination of information about birds.

**4. Aim and Objectives:**

**Aim:** To create a nationwide study group comprising individual members or groups co-operating on different aspects of ornithology as suits their interests or circumstances and all contributing to greater ornithological knowledge and to the enjoyment of birds.

**Objectives:**

1. Encourage, organise and promote the study of birds and their habitat use particularly within the New Zealand region.
2. Foster and support the wider knowledge and enjoyment of birds generally.
3. Promote the recording and wide circulation of the results of bird studies and observations.
4. Produce a journal and any other publication containing matters of ornithological interest.
5. Effect co-operation and exchange of information with other organisations having similar aims and objects.
6. Assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information from which sound management decisions can be derived.
7. Maintain a library of ornithological literature for the use of members and to promote a wider knowledge of birds.
8. Promote the archiving of observations, studies and records of birds particularly in the New Zealand region.
9. Carry out any other activity which is capable of being

conveniently carried out in connection with the above objects, or which directly or indirectly advances those objects or any of them.

**5. Prominent strengths of the Society:**

- An independent, trusted, science-based organisation having a reputation for impartiality and having amongst its members a diverse and comprehensive range of knowledge and experience in ornithology. Rigorous scientific standards are applied to all Society schemes and projects.
- The society has a nationwide network of skilled, knowledgeable and experienced volunteer observers.
- The Society is recognised and trusted by the wider community for reliable identification of birds and as an authoritative source of knowledge about birds and their habitats in New Zealand and the South Pacific region.
- The Society promotes both a scientific and general interest in birds and their habitats.
- The Society has a well-established record of useful studies on various aspects of ornithology.
- The Society has a range of well-established and respected 'tools' that support members for achieving its objectives, namely, New Zealand Birds Online, New Zealand eBird, *Notornis*, *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*, *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand* and it endorses the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*.
- The Society has its own financial resources and enjoys financial independence.

**6. Major Goals:**

- Increase awareness of the Purpose, Aim and Objectives of the Society through inspiring a scientific and a general interest in birds and their habitats.
- The Society will be recognised by the scientific community as the premier independent knowledge-base on ornithology in New Zealand and the South Pacific, in particular, for the reliable identification of birds.
- Increase membership of the Society to not less than 1,500 by December 2024, with a focus on gaining younger members, both professional and amateur.
- Review all Society projects and schemes and introduce new programmes on topics of national and regional importance that will engage the interest and participation of members, especially where the conservation significance of bird species and their habitats are poorly known.
- Review and revise Memorandums of Understanding and enter into new alliances with relevant organisations where these will advance the Purpose, Aim and Objectives of the Society.
- Investigate the benefits of and if appropriate apply to become a Constituent Organisation of the Royal Society of New Zealand.
- Continue to employ an Executive Officer and other staff when appropriate.

**7. Strategic Activities – 2015 to 2024:**

Increase awareness of the Purpose, Aim and Objectives of the Society:

- Publish a succinct article in the Society's magazine (*Birds New Zealand*, formerly *Southern Bird*) outlining this revised Strategy, including the recent adoption of the popular name of Birds New Zealand and a revised logo. This article should be the basis of a Press Release to be circulated to the news media and also placed on the Society's website and Facebook Page. Request interviews with editors/sub-editors on the major daily papers to explain the changes.
- Continue to promote the use of a revised Society logo in Birds New Zealand, on the Society's website, on letterheads,

business cards and other documents based on the easily recognisable 'Notornis' image.

- Utilise an active media strategy, especially the use of digital media, to increase community awareness of the Society, the Society's Purpose, Aim and Objectives and to promote the exchange of information about birds, including:
  - active use of the Society's website, the Society's popular journal (now renamed as *Birds New Zealand*) and the Facebook page,
  - further development of the functionality of the Society's website for the benefit of members, including a link to a blog where members can contribute stories, articles, notes or photographs.
  - regular use of the print media, national and regional newspapers, magazines, radio and TV, to promote broader community knowledge of birds and ornithology,
  - encouraging greater interest and appeal of the Society and encourage membership amongst school and university students and other young people through the circulation of an e-newsletter, publication of student profiles, strengthened university liaison, encouragement of student discussion groups at annual conferences and the documentation and publication of ornithological research undertaken in universities, and
- Continue to encourage the preparation and wide distribution of regional newsletters.
- Advise the Society's primary collaborators including the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, the Department of Conservation, museums, universities and like-minded societies of this revised Strategy aimed at achieving the Society's Aim and Objectives.

Encourage recognition of the Society by the scientific community as the premier independent knowledge-base on ornithology:

- Continue to publish original papers and short notes in *Notornis* by professional and amateur members on all aspects of field or laboratory studies on ornithology, reviews of ornithological literature, student research and reports of specialist ornithological events.
- The Society's scientific journal, *Notornis*, will not change in name, content or editorial style. Continue to apply high standards of scientific rigour, objectivity and independence in editorial matters.
- Council will investigate and report to the membership not later than the AGM in 2016 of the benefits of the Society becoming a Constituent Organisation of the Royal Society of New Zealand as a means of reinforcing our scientific links with science in New Zealand and to increase our profile in the New Zealand science community.
- Maintain and if appropriate enhance the role and scope of the Scientific Committee of the Society, including mentoring of non-professional members in conducting studies.
- Promote purposeful engagement with other organisations including Government policy-makers in order to help achieve the Society's ambition of gaining wide acceptance as the premier knowledge-base on ornithology and more generally about birds in New Zealand.
- Review all Society projects and schemes with a view towards redefining objectives, field observation, data collection and data analysis procedures, and reporting. Not later than December 2020 publish a scholarly scientific paper in *Notornis* of the knowledge gained and lessons learned from each scheme, and also publish a popular article in *Birds New Zealand*.
- Encourage and facilitate members, both professional and amateur, and students at schools and universities to contribute towards current or proposed regional and national studies on birds and their habitats and the publication of results in *Notornis*.
- Encourage research on 'niche' topics in ornithology that are not being studied by others.

Promote a general interest and knowledge in birds and their habitats:

- Increase membership of the Society to not less than 1,500 by December 2024, with a focus on gaining younger members, both professional and amateur.
- Establish a Membership Committee to consider ways and means of increasing the Society's membership, to develop a 'Welcome Pack' for issue to new members, to prepare appropriate material to be loaned to regions and to arrange for experienced members to travel to and assist with or manage specific events in regions that have limited ability to do this.
- Design and promote a range of field activities specifically for younger members that will provide memorable 'hands-on' practical experience and information about ornithology and birdwatching.
- Design and introduce new programmes on topics of national and regional importance that will engage the interest and participation of a wide cross-section of members, especially where the conservation significance of bird species and their habitats in New Zealand are poorly known.
- Continue to encourage members to contribute written articles, photographs or art for publication in *Birds New Zealand* that are of popular interest and will help expand the knowledge and enjoyment of birds in the community.
- Encourage members to make greater use of the various tools that are available for studies and the enjoyment of birds and their habitats, especially 'NZ eBird' and 'NZ Birds On-line', and to train members in their use.
- Arrange interesting and vibrant annual conferences comprising a mix of scientific and general interests which will be known as the New Zealand Bird Conference. Promote New Zealand Bird Conferences to the news media. [Note: Council will assume responsibility for arranging the core aspects of annual conferences, including registration and the scientific and workshop programmes, in order to relieve smaller regions of the burden of making all conference arrangements. Invite representatives of like-minded organisations to participate and also invite and meet the attendance costs of up to five local secondary school students (year 12 and 13)].
- Council will investigate the financial feasibility of supporting two or more student members of the Society to attend the annual New Zealand Bird Conference, and to attend international ornithology conferences.
- Continue to maintain a national library of published literature concerning ornithology and through the archiving of field and other records submitted by members and records acquired from other sources. Regularly circulate details of the library to members and encourage user interest in the library.

Relevance to conservation of birds and their habitats:

- In order to make *Birds New Zealand* more relevant to the wider community encourage members to assemble submissions to national or local governments in New Zealand or to international agencies on issues concerning the protection and conservation of birds and their habitats, or to promote the increased awareness of birds by the wider community utilising science-based information collected by Society members. [Note: Arrangements for making submissions should follow existing Manual procedures].
- Develop meaningful co-operative relationships with the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, the Department of Conservation and other organisations where appropriate. Review and as appropriate revise Memorandum of Understanding agreements with these organisations, or enter into new agreements if this approach will help achieve the Society's Aim and Objectives.
- Encourage regular collaboration between the regions of the Society and local branches of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand and other like-minded societies, through joint meetings, joint field trips and training activities in order to make birding activities more enjoyable and to increase dissemination of knowledge about birds.



Financial resources, independence and administration:

- Continue to secure adequate financial resources in order that the Society can maintain its financial independence.
- Council will review the publication of *Notornis* as a digital/online journal only ('no paper' version) not later than the AGM 2016. Any cost savings will be applied to revised subscription rates for the benefit of all members. [Note: One approach is for the *Notornis* index to be published in the magazine *Birds New Zealand* and for Regional Representatives or the Executive Officer to print and post copies of specific papers upon request if a member does not their own have printing facilities].
- Actively encourage contracts or other formal arrangements that are self-funding and can involve members for the sale of technical information about birds to national or local authorities, companies, consultants or other enquirers. [Note: Arrangements for the sale of information, including pricing, should follow existing Manual procedures].

- Encourage regular commercial advertising in *Birds New Zealand* as a means of expanding communication about the Society in the wider community and for raising revenue.
- Continue to welcome donations and bequests to the Society to facilitate the implementation of national or specific regional or individual projects, including research.
- Continue to employ an executive officer to service the interests of Council, its specialist officers and committees and Regional Representatives to achieve smooth and effective administration of the Society's affairs. Consider the employment of other staff where this will help achieve the Society's Aim and Objectives.

Amendments to this Strategy:

This Strategy may from time to time be reviewed and, if necessary, amended at an Annual General Meeting of the Society on the recommendation of Council.

## Project and Activities Committee Annual Report (March 2014-April 2015)

This year has been marked by two major initiatives: the Mana Island Field Camp for Teens, organised by Sharon Alderson; and the National Red-billed Gull Survey, organised by Peter Frost and Graeme Taylor.

### Mana Island Field Camp for Teens

The camp was held as planned from 7th to 11th April, during the schools' Easter holiday.

Eleven students took part, guided by eight mentors. The students came from a wide catchment area: Auckland (1), Palmerston North (4), Wellington (3), Christchurch (2) and Ashburton (1). Strong winds led to a last-minute change of plans, with the first two nights spent on Matiu/Somes Island before the students and mentors relocated to Mana Island on Day three.

Students were given a choice of activities, often enabling them to switch what they were doing during the day. This ensured variety, smaller working groups, and more 'hands-on' opportunities. The students' experience and skills varied considerably, most knowing little about birds at the start. As a result, some planned activities (e.g. five-minute bird counts) were dropped. The students concluded that *Birds New Zealand* should definitely run more camps (including over weekends and on day trips). They gained much from interacting with experienced adults, the range of activities undertaken, being able to access the islands, and sharing these experiences with their peers.

Thanks to all those who gave their time to mentoring and assisting the students during the field course, especially to Sharon Alderson who so ably organised the event, and to the Department of Conservation for allowing its reserves to be used for this course.

### National Red-billed Gull Survey

The idea of implementing a national survey to assess the current status of the Red-billed Gull had been mooted at a number of annual meetings of *Birds New Zealand's* regional representatives (e.g. Orewa in 2009, Lower Hutt in 2011). It was raised again at the meeting in Palmerston North (2014). Graeme Taylor provided a paper, through Council, setting out the rationale and framework for the survey.

A full version of this report is available on the *Birds New Zealand* website: <http://osnz.org.nz/studies-and-schemes/projects-activities-committee>.

## Records Appraisal Committee Annual Report for 2014

The RAC terms of reference state that members should serve no more than three times three consecutive years on the committee (i.e. nine consecutive years) other than in 'exceptional circumstances'. The terms of reference also seek to achieve staggered turnover of the committee. The current committee has been stable since late 2010. In an attempt to facilitate turnover, a request for nominations for new members was made in September 2014, via *Birds New Zealand* magazine and the web-forum *BirdingNZ.net*. No nominations were received. Council's advice is sought regarding whether to continue seeking new members, or to amend the terms of reference to remove or extend this limit on length of service.

A total of 82 UBRs was assessed in 2014. Sixty-six (80%) of these UBRs were accepted by the committee. Two new species were added to the New Zealand list: Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Dusky Woodswallow.

Two historical records were assessed during the year: the 1947 Clevedon crane (to determine whether it should be accepted as being a Brolga), and the 1983 Gisborne Black Falcon. The RAC terms of reference require a majority of four or more of the five members in order to overturn an historical decision. The 'unidentified crane' decision was upheld, and so neither Brolga nor Sarus Crane is yet recognised as occurring in New Zealand. The Black Falcon record was considered no longer acceptable, thereby removing Black Falcon from the New Zealand list.

I thank Biz and Brian Bell and my fellow panel members for their efficient support during 2014.

A full version of this report can be found on the *Birds New Zealand* website: <http://osnz.org.nz/rarebirds.htm>

COLIN MISKELLY, Convener

### New Site for Members

There's a new birdy place very near you, that you can call your own. There you can keep in touch with birdy news, birdy people, and meetings, and you are welcome to share your own activities, questions and images, getting instant responses and feedback. There are 1,075 bird-lovers there already, and more arrive daily. It's the 'Birds New Zealand' Facebook page, the official FB page of OSNZ Birds New Zealand.

Come over to the 'other' side where birders of all ages flock. Simply log into Facebook and then search for 'Birds New Zealand'.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, KATE STEEDS  
Page administrators



# Determining the Population Status of Black Petrel on Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island

Endemic to New Zealand, the Black Petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni*) is a globally vulnerable seabird that breeds on just two islands, Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island and Great Barrier Island (Aotea) in the Hauraki Gulf of northern New Zealand. Black Petrels are killed in long-line and trawl fisheries within the New Zealand exclusive economic zone and overseas, with birds being caught on both recreational and commercial vessels, particularly in northern New Zealand and the Hauraki Gulf. The Black Petrel is recognised as the seabird species most at risk from commercial fishing activities.

Along with a number of collaborators and able field assistants (many from Birds New Zealand) and funding support from Department of Conservation, Ministry for Primary Industries, Guardians of the Sea Charitable Trust and Birds New Zealand, I have had a successful season working with Black Petrels on Hauturu/Little Barrier Island as well as Great Barrier Island/Aotea.

With the assistance from the Hauturu DOC rangers Leigh Joyce and Richard Walle and their children Mahina and Liam, as well as volunteers and collaborators Paul Garner-Richards, Katherine Clements, Katie Clemens-Seely, Jacob Hore, Adam Clow, Neil Fitzgerald, Simon Stoddard, Will Whittington and Ian Flux we made four visits to Hauturu over the 2014/15 Black Petrel breeding season.

We searched for and located 90 out of the 97 historic Mike Imber Black Petrel study burrows on Hauturu. Only 27 of these burrows were being used by breeding Black Petrels. We found an additional 25 burrows along the main track bringing the number of study burrows now to 122. Of these,

50 were being used by breeding birds and another 18 were being used by non-breeding birds this season. There were 56 chicks present in either the study or random burrows across the island and all of these chicks were banded.

We also deployed 27 acoustic monitoring devices in different locations across Hauturu in December 2014. These devices were checked twice and recordings were retrieved in January and April 2015. These devices recorded Black Petrels calling along many of the ridgelines of the island. Now we have the long task of listening to over 4,200 hours of recordings to confirm locations and numbers of Black Petrels at each recording site.

In addition to random ground surveys by the team, Joanna Sim from DabChick New Zealand and her seabird detector dogs Rua and Maddi found Black Petrel burrows were generally over 500 m above sea level on Hauturu. Black Petrel chicks were found in all sorts of burrows; in the bases of trees, in rotten logs and in rock crevices as well as in the 'classic' burrows dug into the ground.

All of this information will be used to determine the current status and population trend of Black Petrels on Hauturu. This is the first year of a five-year project and I look forward to being able to update Birds New Zealand, DOC, MPI, Guardians of the Sea Charitable Trust and the wider scientific community as the project progresses.

ELIZABETH BELL

Wildlife Management International Ltd,  
PO Box 607, Blenheim 7240, biz@wml.co.nz



Above: Little Barrier Island. Photo by Elizabeth Bell.

Left: Acoustic recorder in place. Photo by Elizabeth Bell.

Right: Elizabeth Bell and chick. Photo by Paul Garner-Richards.

Lower left: Paul Garner-Richards on Little Barrier Island ladder. Photo by Elizabeth Bell.

Lower centre: Rua detecting Black Petrel. Photo by Elizabeth Bell.

Lower right: Will Whittington getting adult petrel. Photo by Elizabeth Bell.





# Monitoring Hutton's Shearwaters at the Kowhai River Colony

The Hutton's Shearwater is an endangered seabird that breeds only at altitudes between 1,200 and 1,800 m asl in the Seaward Kaikoura Range. Here the colonies are vulnerable to animal pests such as pigs and stoats, and to debris avalanches. Since 2005, the Department of Conservation (DOC) and then The Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust (HSCT) have undertaken translocations to establish an insurance colony, Te Rae o Atiu, on the Kaikoura Peninsula. The more we work with these birds the less we realise we know and that impinges on our ability to manage the Te Rae o Atiu colony. Observations of the behaviour of the shearwaters at Te Rae o Atiu are at variance with our perceptions from previous reports of work at the Kowhai colonies. For example, some translocated chicks wandered all over the Te Rae o Atiu site for several nights before fledging whereas chicks at the Kowhai River have not been seen at the burrow entrances strengthening wings or wandering around before fledging.

During 2012-13, we trialled using PIT tag readers on eight burrows to follow in and out movements of birds that had PIT tags implanted. The study site was about 80 m above the Shearwater Hut at an altitude of 1,240 m asl in the Kowhai River. What we did learn was that to get good records we needed to be certain which burrows had breeding birds, that tagging a bird seen entering a burrow is no guarantee that it is the occupier of that burrow, that Kea can pull out

reader antennae coils, and that solar panels on the readers can be covered in dirt by birds excavating burrows resulting in flat batteries. The Birds New Zealand Research Fund has made a grant to HSCT to extend the monitoring of birds in the Kowhai River catchment.

In November 2014 we set up for the new season. While it would have been ideal to tag adults before egg-laying, we needed to be sure we had breeding birds in the monitored study burrows. Therefore, we needed to find "arms-length" burrows with accessible nest chambers; not easy as most Hutton's Shearwater burrows are long and twisting, so useable ones from which we could extract adults and chicks for tagging are limited. Twenty-seven burrows were selected in which we PIT tagged and banded one adult on an egg during daytime, and set up the reader and coil assemblies. Despite searching during that night and the next, only two more birds were tagged and banded following changeovers. We had planned to be on site for four to five nights to get more mates, but impending bad weather meant curtailing the trip after two nights when strong overnight winds died down and before rain and snow arrived that afternoon.

In mid-January 2015 we visited the colony to download the readers and planned to get more of the mates to the already tagged birds. Burrows were checked for adults, chicks were weighed and the PIT readers downloaded. Of the 27 burrows, two still had an adult with an egg (very late), four had no eggs or chicks, and we got 24 records from the readers including both with two tagged birds. During the first night we checked the burrows for birds coming in to feed the chicks and managed to tag mates of eight of the original birds. Heavy rain/hail/snow on the second afternoon curtailed the trip as no further field work was possible because soil conditions



▲ PIT reader with solar panel covered by shearwater-excavated soil.

deteriorated and this meant we could damage burrows and possibly injure birds.

A day trip in mid-February was undertaken in conjunction with DOC who were carrying out burrowscoping to check on productivity. Twenty chicks were able to be PIT tagged, and were weighed and wing measurements taken as an index of growth. It was interesting to note that the average weight and wing length of these 20 chicks was not different to the seven at Te Rae o Atiu despite the adults having to climb an extra 1,200 m to get to the Kowhai River colony to feed chicks.

At the time of writing, now that all the chicks have left we are about to go back up into the colony to retrieve the reader assemblies and download the readers, and see whether these high altitude birds behave differently from those now breeding at sea level.

The information gained in the Kowhai River will give us a better understanding of the breeding activities of Hutton's shearwaters which will allow us to manage the Te Rae o Atiu colony better. The welcome grant from OSNZ helps make this essential work possible by covering helicopter and operational costs for the volunteers working in the Kowhai colony; the equipment had previously been funded by the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Systema Plastics and Reid Technology.

LINDSAY ROWE

All photos by Lindsay Rowe



▲ Hutton's Shearwater at entrance of PIT-monitored burrow.



▲ View of part of the monitored area of the Kowhai River shearwater colony.



# Birds New Zealand Research Fund Black-billed Gull Project Report



▣ Young BNZ member Hinewai Bell (Marlborough) is a regular helper at chick banding. Photo by Karen Lomax

This season, for the first time, full time work was carried out on Black-billed Gulls in the Marlborough and Nelson regions. The primary objectives were to resight as many previously-banded birds as possible, to monitor reproductive success, to take photos of the colonies from a helicopter to compare to ground counts, and to discover information about movements of birds during and after the breeding season. Raising awareness about the plight of the gulls through articles and presentations and by encouraging direct involvement in the project was also a priority.

Since 2011/12, a total of 1,596 Black-billed Gull chicks have been banded with an easily-readable Darvic colour band. This allows resights of individual birds from a distance, and has provided an excellent starting point from which to study known age birds. Of these banded birds, a total of 41% have been seen at least once since banding. Total resights from 2011/12 is 34%, 40% of the 2012/13 cohort, and 42% of birds from 2013/14. These sightings are raising some interesting questions about both adult and juvenile survival, which I am in the process of examining further.

A total of five colonies were monitored for productivity; one in the Nelson region and four in Marlborough. The one in the Nelson region failed due to flooding and, most likely, predation. Two in Marlborough also failed completely; one due to predation, and for the other the cause was unknown. The two colonies on the Wairau River did very well, emphasising the importance of that river to the gulls.

Aerial photographs were taken for four out of the five colonies. One colony was not done because most of the birds were Red-billed Gulls and it is too difficult to distinguish between the two species on a photograph. Ground counts were done at all colonies to compare to the aerial photograph counts, and the differences between the two counts varied from -22% to 12%. Variability could be due to a number of factors, such as time of day the photograph is taken, weather and light conditions, etc. I will be carrying out further research to fine tune this methodology of determining an accurate and representative correction factor.

Resighting of banded birds resulted in some fascinating information. The farthest ever recorded distance travelled for

a Black-billed Gull occurred when a two-year-old bird banded at the Clarence River was seen spending last winter at Miranda on the Firth of Thames, and was then seen again back at the Clarence the following spring. One of the most significant and ground-breaking findings was that birds did not necessarily breed on the same river on which they were born. A survey for colonies and banded birds was also done in the West Coast region during both the summer and winter. This resulted in some interesting findings about site fidelity and important wintering grounds. Movement between river catchments is hugely fascinating in that it ensures genetic diversity within populations and raises many questions regarding site and partner fidelity.

I use every opportunity I can get to educate the public and raise awareness. I presented at the New Zealand Bird Conference and at the Save the Wairau River Inc AGM. I was invited to give a talk at the Lions Club in Seddon, and I attended a couple of braided river workshops. Enquiries about sightings of banded gulls are a great educational opportunity on a national and international level. Bumper stickers on the cars of several Birds New Zealand members has also helped spread the word.

This project was in partnership with Save the Wairau River Inc, with funding from the Department of Conservation, Pub Charity, Lotteries Grant Board, Wildlife Management International Ltd, and the Birds New Zealand Research Fund. A big thank you goes out to all the volunteers who have been so dedicated to helping me with all aspects of this project. Without them, none of this would be possible!

For more information about the project, or how you can get involved, contact me at claudia "at" wml.co.nz

CLAUDIA MISCHLER



# National Red-billed Gull Survey, Phase II: October 2015-January 2016

The second phase of the national Red-billed Gull survey is due to start in October 2015. The aim is to establish the species' current distribution and size of its breeding population. This should allow us to set up a more systematic monitoring programme to determine what population changes, if any, are occurring. Largely anecdotal information, collected over the past couple of decades, suggests that the Red-billed Gull population has declined overall, notwithstanding an apparent regional increase in Otago. For this reason, and despite its seemingly large population, the species is now classified as Nationally Vulnerable, on account of an expected ongoing decline in numbers of 50-70%. Your participation in this important national survey will help us clarify the situation.

During the 2014/15 breeding season, members of Birds New Zealand, together with field staff from the Department of Conservation, carried out a scoping survey of Red-billed Gull colonies around the country. Our starting point was to check the 166 colony sites listed by Lou Gurr and Fred Kinsky in a paper published in *Notornis* in 1965. In the end, only 99 (60%) of these sites were resurveyed, just under half of which (47%) were still active. Most of the unsurveyed sites were on offshore islands, which are more difficult for members of the public to reach. Overall, active colonies were reported at 162 sites across mainland New Zealand with a further 19 in the Chatham Islands. Whether any of the 'new' sites were active in the past, but had been overlooked, or whether they reflect a shift in the locus of breeding is an open question at this stage.

Of the sites listed in 1965 that are still active today, just over 40% appeared to support fewer pairs than before, while 30% are marginally bigger. Interpreting these changes in colony size is complicated, however, because we only asked for order-of-magnitude estimates of the number of breeding pairs (although more precise figures were sometimes provided). It is also unclear if the estimates excluded or included the number of non-breeding birds at a colony. The same shortcoming almost certainly applied to the figures reported by Gurr and Kinsky (1965). This is one problem that we want to overcome in this year's survey by providing everyone with clear guidelines on what to count and how best to do it.

We are currently preparing these guidelines, along with a list of those sites that need checking. This includes those sites listed by Gurr and Kinsky but which were not checked last year. We hope to overcome the difficulties of accessing these sites to check on their current status and, if active, obtain reasonable estimates of the number of breeding pairs. If you would like to take part in this year's survey, please contact either Peter Frost (pghfrost@xtra.co.nz) or Graeme Taylor (gtaylor@doc.govt.nz).

PETER FROST, Convenor, Birds  
New Zealand Projects and Activities  
Committee, 87 Ikitara Road, Wanganui  
4500 (email: birds.wanganui@osnz.  
org.nz)

GRAEME TAYLOR  
Department of Conservation  
PO Box 10420  
Wellington 6143  
New Zealand  
Email: gtaylor@doc.govt.nz



## Marsh Crakes

These Marsh Crakes on the true right (southern) bank of the lower Opawa River, near Blenheim, were photographed from a canoe by Mr Kevin Andrews in March 2012. This may be the first image of two Marsh Crakes together taken in New Zealand. He saw two Marsh Crakes in the same area in March 2015, and a single bird a few kilometres upstream in February 2015 (image of the single bird). The riparian vegetation has since been cleared from the area where the two birds were photographed.

RICHARD HOLDAWAY

Photos: Marsh Crakes by Kevin Andrews



▲ Pauline in her element – Sea Week with school students. Photo by Don Cooper.

## Pauline Samways 1949-2015

Pauline passed away on 23rd August after a long and very courageous fight with cancer. A pre- and primary school teacher, Pauline was granted a Royal Society teaching fellowship in 2002 when she studied the ecology of Motueka Sandspit, with an emphasis on nesting Banded Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers. Her love of the Sandspit and its birds led her to work tirelessly to promote public education and awareness of the importance of the site for both breeding birds and as a high-tide roost for migrants, in particular the Bar-tailed Godwit. Motueka's Godwit Festivals, held in conjunction with the Motueka Arts Council, and 'Dog's Breakfast' events have resulted in greatly increased public awareness of and civic pride in the natural values of Motueka's coast. Pauline also organised Sea Week activities and 5-minute bird counts on Mt Arthur. Boundless enthusiasm and positivity pervaded everything she did – she will be sadly missed.

DAVID MELVILLE



# New Developments in the Beach Patrol Scheme

## How you can help with data entry into one of New Zealand's longest running citizen science projects

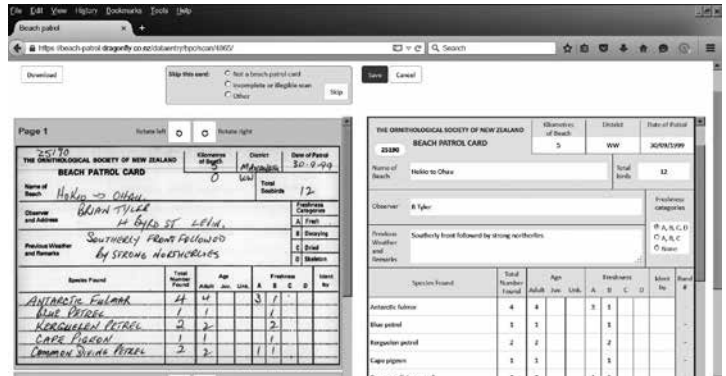
The Birds New Zealand Beach Patrol Scheme commenced in 1951 (although some records date from 1943) and for more than 60 years has aimed to systematically document the identity, location and numbers of seabirds found dead on New Zealand beaches. Regular beach patrols by members provide a unique long-term record and the data collected have helped to establish the occurrence and to some extent the distribution of more than 110 seabird species in New Zealand coastal waters. It has also provided information leading to an improved understanding of the seasonal movements, migration and causes of seabird deaths. However, the present Beach Patrol data management system has technical limitations which has contributed towards incomplete analysis and reporting since 2004.

The development of a new internet-based data management system commenced earlier this year that will overcome existing technical shortcomings and it is hoped will engage members in the beach records data entry effort. This approach will ensure that the database and data analysis is kept up to date. You can help to make this new system effective if you have the inclination, some time, and a computer at home that is connected to the internet.

Volunteer assistance from members is welcomed to help enter data from more than 25,000 scanned cards into an online database. This can be done anywhere as long as you have a computer and access to the internet. If you would like to help with data entry, please contact Ian Armitage, Project Coordinator ([ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz)), or ask your local Regional Representative for guidance.

A link has been established in the Beach Patrol Scheme page on our website <http://osnz.org.nz/beach-patrol-scheme> that directs interested members to a 'log-in' page to the secure Beach Patrol data entry website (<https://beach-patrol.dragonfly.co.nz/>). A password will be issued once a member registers their interest in wanting to help and a set of instructions will be provided. The registration and data entry process is straightforward and no training is needed: it's just a matter of following the instructions and working carefully.

Data entry is partly automated and involves transcribing data from scanned beach patrol records into a database entry form; a



scanned card appears on the left side of the screen and a database entry form is on the right, as shown in the image below.

After a little practice it will be easy to transcribe data from the card to the data input form. Once data for a card is transcribed and saved, a new card and a blank data entry form arrives on the computer screen automatically. There are no paper sheets or cards to handle; all scanned cards and the database entry forms are stored electronically.

You do not have to have any earlier beach patrol experience, although that would of course be helpful, just some time and an interest in contributing to this long-running citizen science project. Transcribing data carefully takes about one minute (more or less) for each card, and data entry shouldn't be tackled for long periods, just 20 to 30 minutes for each session is quite enough. Have a rest and come back later!

Several members are now actively contributing to data entry and are finding the process to be straightforward. The design and testing of a new internet-accessible database system commenced earlier this year under contract to Dragonfly Science Ltd in Wellington. The next step will be the design and testing of a data analysis and reporting system.

The aim is to complete the development of the new Beach Patrol data management system by 2018. The Society will then be in the rewarding position of being able to extract information that will enable scientists, both amateur and professional, to review population and locality trends of all birds that have been found dead on beaches over a 70-year period; something that has not been achieved before now.

## Far North Science Fair

For the second year running, Birds New Zealand (Far North) offered a prize to the Far North Science and Technology Fair student who produced the best bird-related project. The Fair was held in the Turner Center, Kerikeri on 26th August 2015 and prize-giving, attended by 150 students, relatives, teachers and sponsors was on Friday 28th August 2015.

This year the binoculars, donated by Hunting and Fishing Kerikeri, were won by Max Hart for his project "Blue Birds the Word". Max tested how colour affected the consumption of grain by birds. Natural colour won, and blue was the least consumed; an interesting result, as the Department of Conservation colours pest bait blue so birds don't eat it.

In his remarks at the prize-giving, Les Feasey, Birds New Zealand Regional Representative for the Far North, congratulated Max for his project. He also mentioned that the Far North region of Birds New Zealand, in addition to offering the Fair prize again next year, is offering a \$1,000 prize for the best article published in *Notornis*, the Society's quarterly Journal. Tools available to students to select projects are a web site [www.FarNorthBirds.org](http://www.FarNorthBirds.org) (under construction) and an app for iPhone and Android called eBird, where bird observations can be entered as part of bird population and movement studies.



▣ Birds New Zealand prizewinner Max Hart and his project.

The Top Energy Far North Science and Technology Fair continues to amaze and impress. The number of entries increased from 120 to 150 and the quality of projects continues to improve. This year's top prize was won by students Kiani Pou and Nathan Tarawa from Northland College, Kaikohe.



# The Ornithological Society of New Zealand : Fellowship Citation

## Dr Hugh Alexander Robertson

### Citation:

Hugh Robertson joined the Ornithological Society of New Zealand in 1970 and has been a Life Member for the past 15 years.

From an early stage of his life Hugh has had a strong interest in natural history and in birds in particular. It was this childhood interest that led him to study science at Massey University, graduating in zoology with First Class Honours in 1978. Hugh continued his university studies at Oxford University in the UK, graduating as a D. Phil in 1984.

Hugh has served the Society with dedication for many years and has shown a clear commitment to upholding its aims and objectives. He was a member of Council from 1986 to 1998, a Field Investigations Officer for most of the time he was on Council and was Convenor of the Nest Records Scheme between 1985 and 2001. Hugh greatly enjoyed these roles and took the lead in driving the field work for studies of many species of birds, and at the same time he inspired many members, especially younger people, to participate in field work. He has contributed to the Scientific Days at several annual conferences.

Hugh received the "Junior Member Award" in 1974 for his active role in all of the Society's schemes, particularly beach patrolling, and for his regular attendance at study courses and field trips including to the Chatham Islands. Hugh was awarded the "Sir Robert A Falla Memorial Award" in 1999 in recognition of his sustained service to the Society and for his valuable contribution to the study of birds in the New Zealand region. It is notable that Hugh was the first person in the Society to have received both the "Junior Member Award" and the "Sir Robert A Falla Memorial Award".

In recognition of Hugh's valuable and energetic contribution to the cause of conservation in New Zealand by a person under the age of 20 and for his studies of birds in the Manawatu Region through the Massey Bird Group he was awarded a unique honour of being the "Young Conservator of the Year" in 1977.

Hugh has broadly-based and strong conservation-oriented ornithological research interests and has applied his enthusiasm into a wide range of studies, particularly into field work and analysis to determine threats to bird populations and to devise cost-effective methods to recover populations from the immediate threat of extinction. Hugh has strong interests in the dynamics and genetics of small populations, age-related productivity and survival, ageing and longevity, and the effects of pest control operations on bird species. For many years Hugh has led research efforts to improve our knowledge of the ecology of kiwis and has made a significant contribution towards strengthening the basis of managing our iconic national bird.

Hugh's close involvement in various national study schemes led by the Society have included field observations for the "Atlases of Bird Distribution of New Zealand" in 1985, and also for the later survey between 1999 and 2004. He has contributed to various Wellington regional projects since 1981 including the Wellington Harbour Bird Survey and the Lake Wairarapa bird survey, and was recently a contributor to the New Zealand Birds Online Project.

It is Hugh's wide knowledge acquired through his passionate interest and active field study of birds that has enabled him to make a stand-out contribution to New Zealand ornithology as a co-author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*, first published in 1996 and now revised in 2015. Hugh worked closely with the late Barrie Heather in assembling the first edition and both editions have been superbly illustrated by Derek Onley. A companion book, *The Hand Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* by Hugh Robertson and Barrie Heather, was published in 1999. Both the Field Guide and the Hand Guide are flagship publications of the Society and are outstandingly



■ Hugh Robertson (right) accepting his fellowship from the President, David Lawrie

important to people from all walks of life both in New Zealand and overseas for the reliable identification of our birds.

Hugh has contributed his knowledge to various other publications including the *Handbook of the Birds of Europe the Middle East and North Africa; the birds of the Western Palearctic*, the *Readers Digest Complete Book of New Zealand Birds*, the *Encyclopaedia of Birds* and to the *Handbook of Australian and Birds and New Zealand Birds (HANZAB)*. Hugh has authored or co-authored more than 50 refereed scientific papers in *Notornis* and other journals that now form an enduring part of our knowledge of our birds.

In recognition of distinguished service to the Society for 40 years and through his extraordinary dedication and commitment to research and leadership in ornithology and in expanding our knowledge of birds in the New Zealand Region Council has resolved to elect Dr Hugh Alexander Robertson as a Fellow of Birds New Zealand/Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

### Birds New Zealand is seeking a new *Birds New Zealand* Editor

After 12 years at his computer the current editor needs more time to study and upskill as well as spend more time with his family. Therefore the Society is looking for someone to edit this magazine. The role for the current editor has been a rewarding one, corresponding with lots of great, like-minded people and getting a real buzz from seeing the fruits of his (and the contributors') labour in print. Workload varies from being fairly busy (two to three hours most days) in the three weeks or so before sending the completed manuscript to the printers to just ticking over most of the rest of the time (about a couple of hours per week).

Requirements include general word-processing and computer skills, broadband access to the internet, the ability to work to deadlines, some knowledge of birds and a reasonable grasp of English grammar.

For more details see  
<http://osnz.org.nz/Vacancy-Editor-Birds-New-Zealand>



# Minutes of the 76th Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Held in Blenheim on 30th May 2015 at 4pm

## Present

76 + members and friends

## Apologies

Gwenda Pulham, Peter Reese, Janet Ledingham, Gillian Clover, Della Bennet, Adrian Riegen, Nick Allen, Lloyd Esler, Murray Williams, Russell Thomas, Derek Onley, Michael Taylor.

"That the apologies be accepted" **Ruth Crockett/Biz Bell.**

## Minutes of the 2014 AGM

"That the minutes of the last AGM, having been circulated, be accepted as a true record of that meeting." **Ian Armitage/**

**Bruce Postill.** Accepted

There were no matters arising.

## Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was read by Paul Garner-Richards. The audited accounts and report from the auditor had been circulated to the meeting.

"Recommended by the AGM that the Treasurer's Report, accounts and Auditor's report be accepted." **Bruce McKinlay/Chris Robertson.** Accepted

"Recommended by the AGM that a full audit of accounts be carried out by Crowe Howarth." **Paul Garner-Richards/Mel Galbraith.** Accepted.

## 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. He then reported on the re-nomination of officers for Council noting that David Lawrie (President) Bruce McKinlay (Vice President), Paul Garner-Richards (Treasurer) and Ian Armitage have been appointed to Council for another three-year term and that no election was necessary.

The President reported on all society activities over the past year – as since published in full in *Birds New Zealand*. Scheme convenors who were present at the meeting spoke to their reports.

The President noted a special thanks to Jim Briskie (*Notornis* editor), Nick Allen (*Birds New Zealand* magazine editor) and Julia White (Membership secretary) for their efforts which had greatly contributed to the running a functional Society. Members were informed that both Nick Allen and Julia White are retiring from their roles creating two vacancies.

President also thanked Sarah Jamieson for the development of the ornithology educational programme and encouraged Regional Representatives to take up the opportunity for Sarah to visit their regions. Stefanie Groser's effort in attracting students, and Heather Roger's current effort in maintaining the OSNZ library in the Auckland Museum was also acknowledged. A special thanks was also made to Biz Bell for her role as Secretary for the Records Appraisal Committee.

The meeting recorded its thanks to all scheme convenors and to elected officers, and the continuing services of the executive officer.

"That the meeting accept the President's report"

**David Lawrie/Gillian Vaughan** Accepted.

## Birds New Zealand Strategy

Ian Armitage spoke to the *Birds New Zealand* strategy document that had been circulated to members. Ian commented that the strategy built on earlier document and now reflects changes that have happened over time. He stated that it is a 'living' document and therefore can be constantly revisited to

capture continued change. Members debated over some of the wording in the strategy. Various motions were put forward as stated below:

The following motions were put forward by Peter Frost and other members to make the following changes to the Strategy for *Birds New Zealand 2015-2024* document (changes/additions are in bold type below):

*Statement of purpose:* Encouraging the study, **use of** knowledge and enjoyment of birds.

*Vision:* **A vibrant and viable society that is recognised as the leading authority on New Zealand birds and which contributes to their conservation through enhancing knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of them.**

Section 4, objective 7–Maintain a library of ornithological literature **and other media** for the use of members and to promote a wider knowledge of birds

Section 5, bullet point 6–The Society has a range of well-established and respected 'tools' that support members for achieving its objectives **including** *Birds New Zealand* website, *New Zealand eBird*, *Notornis*, *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*, *Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand*, ***Birds New Zealand magazine*** and it endorses the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*.

Section 7, heading 3–Promote a general interest **in** and knowledge **of** birds and their habitats

Section 7, heading 4, bullet point–order to make **the Society** more relevant to the wider community encourage **the assembly of** submissions to national or local governments in New Zealand or to international agencies on issues concerning the protection and conservation of birds and their habitats, or to promote the increased awareness of birds by the wider community utilising science-based information collected by Society members. [Note: Arrangements for making submissions should follow existing Manual procedures].

## Memorandum of Understanding between Birds New Zealand and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand

Hone McGregor, the CEO of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, joined the President on stage and commented that one of the main purposes of the MOU was for each society to collaborate on activities that are of mutual interest. He noted the linkage of F&B's Kids Conservation Club with that of the *Birds New Zealand* teen camp run in April 2015.

The MOU was signed by each party; Hone McGregor (CEO, F&B) and David Lawrie (President, *Birds NZ*).

## Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand Book Launch

Hugh Robertson presented the new edition of the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* to the AGM and informed members of the additions and changes made to complete this edition. He thanked all contributors to the book, in particular Barrie Heather's work on the first edition and Derek Onley's art work for all editions. Rosemary Heather thanked Hugh for his outstanding voluntary contribution and the president expressed gratitude from the society to Hugh Robertson, Derek Onley and Rosemary Heather for their contribution over the years.

## Society Awards

Julia White was awarded a Meritorious Services Award for her membership secretary role over the last four years. Derek Onley was awarded an Honorary Life Membership for his contribution to ornithology art in particular the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. This was accepted by Mary Thompson

on behalf of Derek. Hugh Robertson was awarded Fellowship of the Society in recognition of his lifetime commitment to the study and understanding of the birds of New Zealand.

### General Business

Members requested an update on the society's relationship with the Garden Bird Survey. President noted that at this stage there is no official relationship and that he will report back to members on the future of the Society's role after discussions with the appropriate people has taken place.

The President informed members of an increase in subscription for international members to cover the increase in NZ Post costs as well as the PayPal fees incurred when paying subscriptions via credit card online. This increase will take place 12 months from when the notice of motion is published in *Birds New Zealand* magazine.

One member drew attention to the increased number of tourist operators that have a bird watching component incorporated into their tours. They suggested that the Society discuss the idea of drafting up a vetting procedure to ensure operators have the birds' interest at heart. Such a procedure could also promote the wider view of New Zealand birds around the world. The President responded by stating that initial talks in regards to drafting a procedure for vetting tourist operators will be discussed at the next Council meeting in October.

On behalf of Jean Luke (94 year old member), Rosemary Heather donated a telescope to be used by Birds New Zealand members, in particular younger members. A request for other appropriate uses of the telescope was put forward to members.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

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## OSNZ National Wader Census June-July 2014, November- December 2014 and January- February 2015

### Winter Census 2014

A total of 122,822 waders of 24 species were counted during the June-July 2014 wader census; up from 107,439 in June 2013. There was good national coverage with only Rangaunu in the Far North and Gisborne/Wairoa not counted. Numbers of Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits were considerably lower than in 2013, and about 17,000 more South Island Pied Oystercatchers were counted.

Rarities included two Eastern Curlews, two Great Knots, a Sanderling, a Marsh Sandpiper and a Terek Sandpiper.

### Summer Census 2014

A total of 130,964 waders of 28 species were counted in the November-December 2014 wader census, down from 141,761 in 2013. National coverage was again very good, with only Rangaunu, Gisborne/Wairoa and Manawatu not counted. The big difference was the godwit number, which has fluctuated widely over the past 10 years. The 2014 count was 74,667; down from 81,303 in 2013 and 77,103 in 2012, and a high of 101,459 in 2010. Considering the good coverage in 2014 this is a disturbing trend. Rangaunu regularly holds about 3,000 godwits but even adding that the number is still the lowest when good coverage has been achieved. The Red Knot count in 2014 was about 2,000 down on 2013 but a slight improvement on 2012. So Red Knot numbers are reasonably stable at the moment, but with diminishing suitable habitat in the Yellow Sea during northward migration this situation could change. The Nelson region count of Red Knot in November was 12,475, almost 25% higher than the same count in February 2015. The third most numerous Arctic wader species, the Turnstone, had a winter count up from 131 in 2013 to 362 in June 2014, but the summer count of 1,562 was almost 500 less than summer 2013. The February 2015



## Birds New Zealand Youth Camp 2016

Expressions of interest from young New Zealand birders wanting to develop their skills are being sought. This is a catered residential youth camp, sponsored by Birds New Zealand and supported locally by Birds Waikato.

It will be held over Anzac Weekend, Friday 22nd to Tuesday 26th April 2016, at the Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre on the Firth of Thames. This is a major shorebird location but is also near other significant birding locations, see [www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz](http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz)

There will be some instructional sessions but the camp will be primarily activity based. Sessions will be led by professional ornithologists and there will be opportunity to pick their brains on many issues.

The programme is in its early planning stages at the moment. Included will be:

- Cannon netting/banding
- Mist netting/passerine banding
- Scope use and wader identification
- Kokako and Weka experiences
- Wetland birds including Bittern

And much, much more!

The Shorebird Centre is a comfortable base with a pleasant lounge and in a wonderful location. It is an hour by road from Auckland Airport and a little longer from the centres of both Auckland and Hamilton. There will be a cost to participants but the course will be subsidised from a number of sources. We hope that local Birds New Zealand branches will financially assist any of their young members to attend. However you do not need to be a member to go on this course!

We anticipate about a dozen students on the course as accommodation is a limiting factor. The camp is for students year 10 and above. We plan to have age compatible group(s). It would be useful to express interest quite early on. Please ask your parent/guardian first. This will not commit you to attending but will help us both with advance planning and keeping you informed.

Please inform Andrew Styche, RR of Birds Waikato ([astyche@doc.govt.nz](mailto:astyche@doc.govt.nz)) of your interest and/or Ray and Ann Buckmaster ([weaves@clear.net.nz](mailto:weaves@clear.net.nz)).

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## Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January. Those members with email will receive a membership renewal form via that medium. Those members who do not have email (or those where the Membership Secretary has not been informed of an email address) will receive a renewal form as an insert with this posting of *Birds New Zealand* and *Notornis*. Please endeavour to pay close to the due date - the Society depends greatly on your subscription to continue the furtherance of its objectives in encouraging and supporting the study and enjoyment of birds in the New Zealand region.

Turnstone count in the Nelson region at 611 was 96 higher than the November 2014 count of 515.

Rarities this census included a Great Knot, two Wandering Tattlers, two Marsh Sandpipers and a Grey Plover.

A full version of this report, including tables of species counts, is available on the Birds New Zealand Website: <http://osnz.org.nz/national-wader-count>

ADRIAN RIEGEN

## FAR NORTH

In the March 2015 regional roundup, I mentioned that there were 23 organisations devoted to bird and habitat study and conservation in the Far North. A wider view of Northland from Whangarei to Hihii in the Mangonui area would include at least 59 organisations, all partners in the Kiwi Coast Project: [www.kiwicoast.org.nz](http://www.kiwicoast.org.nz). The Kiwi Coast project is part of a larger effort, Reconnecting Northland. <http://www.landcare.org.nz/Regional-Focus/Whangarei-Office/Reconnecting-Northland>.

The aim is to have a pest-free Northland. Sir Paul Callaghan's vision of a pest-free New Zealand moving from stronghold to stronghold might have jumped from Zealandia, but the attitude here is that we have a great chance to do something special. There were about 100 people at the Whangarei meeting: landowners, conservationists, trappers, rangers, ornithologists, and some research scientists. There were about 50 people at the Paihia meeting, held in Waitangi, and about 50 at the Bay Bush Action meeting for supporters of the Opua Forest at the same venue. Next month will see a similar meeting in Kaitiaki.

After the Whangarei meeting I was invited by Adam Willetts, the Head Ranger of Bream Head, to visit the site. Adam explained that Bellbirds had been plentiful along the Peach Cove track for a number of years, and speculated that the particularly dry summer of 2010 had caused a significant number of Bellbirds to decamp from the Hen and Chickens Islands and move to Bream Head, significantly increasing the population. Five-minute bird counts conducted by DOC from 1993 to 2006 indicated that more Bellbirds were being seen up to when the surveys were discontinued in 2006. It may be that we have the first natural population on the mainland north of Auckland in many years. I plan to add to the DOC data by doing surveys along the same routes in the near future. Wouldn't it be special if the Bellbird moved up the predator free Kiwi Coast to Paihia and the Bay of Islands in time for our 2018 AGM?

In the Oxford Journal *BioScience* (August 1, 2015 65 (8)) James C. Russell *et al* discuss a predator-free New Zealand. You can find it online. The vision is a predator-free New Zealand in 50 years. It's well worth the read.

In the Far North, the New Zealand Dotterel have put on their breeding cloaks, flocked up and dispersed to their nesting sites. Some are still undecided about the whole thing, and gather around the Waitangi Marae at high tide. Royal Spoonbills have congregated in large numbers, with over 500 at Unahi. On the same day Kevin Mathews and I counted the Royal Spoonbills we saw 33 Cattle Egrets, a Little Egret, a Reef Heron and many ubiquitous White-faced Herons.

As I mentioned in a previous roundup, Walker Island, one of the three Far North homes to the overwintering Arctic waders in Rangaunu Harbour, has been eroded, to the point that it is completely covered during a large high tide. We don't know where those birds are now roosting, in spite of our explorations: it's a large harbour. Our summer survey of Parengarenga also provided the same challenge, in spite of six of us tramping all over the Kokota Spit to try and find the waders. The most reliable site of all, Kowhai Beach, was empty, with just a few Variable Oystercatchers and Black-backed Gulls.



▲ Cattle Egrets in flight by Les Feasey.

Saddlebacks have been released on Urupukapuka Island, and Saddlebacks and Whitehead on Moturua Island. They will hopefully be well established in time for the 2018 AGM. I've been out there a couple of times to assist with a study by a NorthTec student on their habits. Project Island Song is going strong, and you can find it with a Google search if you want to visit the web site. – LES FEASEY

## NORTHLAND

Because of a lack of suitably active participants, beach patrols on the more exposed and lengthy west coast have been put on hold, but we continue to patrol the east coast between Ruakaka and Waipu.

At each of our regular meetings written observations and sightings create a lot of interest and debate. A few sightings, not in date order, range from a single Australasian Bittern which was seen during February at three different places in the Whangarei district to a New Zealand Dotterel at Auckland Airport on the tarmac alongside a plane which was being readied for take-off on 3rd June. On 11th February, a lone Kaka, which is an occasional visitor the Whangarei area, was seen at the northern suburb of Kamo, while on 25th January, an Eastern Curlew (for us, a rare visiting wader) was seen at One Tree Point in Marsden Bay. On 16th May a member saw a Spotless Crane near the Old Mill Lane wetland near Ngunguru. Two Brown Teal were seen at Percy's Landing on the Ngunguru Road on 12th March. This species is more usually seen further north on the east coast around the Helena Bay and Whananaki areas.

The New Zealand Dotterels continue to congregate at the end of Johnson Point Road near the Waipu River Mouth during the winter months; 35 birds were counted there on 23rd July.

– JANET SNELL

## TARANAKI

Leigh Honnor talked in June about the recent establishment of the Taranaki Biodiversity Accord and Trust. The aim is to gather together as many interested groups as possible under one umbrella to produce an information map showing all formally protected land and who is doing what to protect biodiversity e.g. pest control and monitoring of native flora and fauna. This will enable people to see who is doing what and where, so hopefully no doubling up will occur and people can have involvement in what others are planning to do. There are currently six trustees with another three to be added. The nineteen groups who signed the forum accord have formed the Trust. It is intending to increase membership and bring some corporate sponsors on board to fund future projects. Leigh intends to include sites visited regularly by Birds New Zealand members on the map. She also told us how the Taranaki Regional Council identify key native eco systems and work with landowners and interested parties to protect these areas.

June's field trip, held on a rather cold and bleak Sunday, saw four of us at a local disused oxidation ponds, the site of some interesting records in previous years but now overgrown and containing nothing of interest other than a large number of Harriers seen in the air around the ponds. We quickly moved on to visit a lake near the Waiwhakaiti River where there were the usual water birds, the most interesting being a group of 17 Black Shags on the rocks in the river, some in breeding plumage, some in eclipse and some juveniles.

Held in better weather, fine but still cold, July's field trip headed just south of New Plymouth to a local river and remnant bush area where a good variety of water and bush birds were seen including Grey Duck, Mallard, Tui, Fantail and New Zealand Pigeon. The bush area contains some lovely mature Totara and Matai but could do with some looking after. Then on to Lake Mangamahoe where

Dabchick, Scaup and Coot share the lake with Black Swan, dozens of Paradise Duck and, of course, numerous Canada Geese.

At July's indoor meeting Ron Lambert commented that there were a lot of Harriers around; those present wondered if there was a northward migration of overwintering South Island birds. Bill Messenger told us that Tui, New Zealand Pigeon and Eastern Rosella were regulars around their rural home and a Morepork was calling at 5.30am. Quite why Bill was up and about at that time is a mystery to us. At a more social hour Julie and I counted a covey of 45 Californian Quail on the lawn of the nearby naturalist club.

Helen Elder and Marie Mitchell returned from a trip to Adelaide and boating up the Murray River. They told the August meeting of their adventures. As with any trip to Australia the bird list was extensive: Australian Pelicans in their hundreds, some even wake surfing behind the boat, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Coot, two Peregrine Falcons, a Grey Falcon and Tawny Frogmouths were encountered along the way.

A Kaka has been hanging around Okato long enough for a local resident to get a good photo of it. Ron Lambert was at Te Henui Cemetery in New Plymouth doing some research and saw numerous Tui, fed on sugar water put out by a volunteer group who maintain the cemetery and surrounds. Barry Hartley was, as usual, roaming the province from south to north and back again with a sighting of two Australasian Bitterns at Mohakaiti, often seen in a paddock by the road, and the Black Stilt was back at Mokau. At Komene dune lake in the south he had to take a couple of photos in order to get an accurate count of 400 Canada Geese. At Sandy Bay there were 36 Pied Oystercatchers and 35 Banded Dotterels (none have been seen at Waiongana).

Beach patrols have yielded little other than two prions. – PETER FRYER

## HAWKE'S BAY

Several members visited the Waipatiki Reserve north of Napier in May. This reserve contains stands of Nikau palms, unusual in Hawke's Bay. A walk along steep trails produced a few Tui and Bellbirds, together with some demonstrative Fantails back at the road. Waipatiki Beach is scenic, but contained few birds at the time of our visit.

The winter wader census was held over the weekend of 12th to 14th June. New Zealand Dotterels continue their slow increase in the region, but numbers of Banded and Black-fronted Dotterels were low. These species disperse into grassland and paddocks, which are not necessarily included in the count areas, so it is difficult to know whether there is a real decline. Our RR Bernie Kelly subsequently counted 25 Black-fronted Dotterels in one location at the Waitangi River Mouth area, suggesting that the census counts were not representative for this species at least.

DOC released 20 Brown Teal in the Lake Opouahi predator-proofed reserve and local members have assisted with supplementary feeding and monitoring. Unfortunately these ducks tended to move away and survival rates have not been good. After 12 weeks only four ducks remain at the lake, with half of the remainder known to be dead, and the whereabouts/status of the other half unknown. An interesting side issue of this work



▲ The Lake Opouahi Blue Duck and its Mallard companion. Photo by Ian Smith.



has been the appearance of a Blue Duck on Lake Opouahi. This bird may have originated from the Mohaka River, which has a flourishing population of this species and is not far away as the Blue Duck flies. The duck has been present for two months and associates on the lake with Mallards, one male in particular.

An indoor meeting was held in July at which Emma Williams gave a status report on her Bittern monitoring project at Lake Hatuma in Waipukurau. Some very interesting findings, relating to seasonal dispersion and vocalisation patterns among other aspects, have come out of this work which will be fully reported by Emma in due course. - IAN SMITH

### WAIRARAPA

There was a surprisingly good turnout in June to discuss the conference feedback. The difference between the Society's vision for the future and the means of achieving it was teased out, with a general consensus that as a Society we need to avoid being precious in our statements when our most valuable actions may trip up our words. We continued our tradition of not having a field trip in June by going for a birding walk in Fensham Reserve instead.

In July local conservation educator Warren Field reflected on his years of work engaging youngsters with the bush and wetland environments. He has been very successful, but he, and we, face the shrinking "safety zone" that parents will turn their children loose in. I like many of my age had about a 5 km range over which the dog and I ranged, rabbiting, exploring creeks, hedges etc. Apparently that had shrunk to 500 metres by the 1980s and now it's about 50 metres or the nearest corner dairy. So that's why the dog (a different one) and I didn't have any starters for a trip through the Henley Lake wetland in the teeth of a freezing southerly! The birds weren't there either because of a periodic detention gang with petrol-powered weed-eaters. See what happens if you're not allowed to wander with a dog when young?

August's night meeting was indeed about birds of East Africa as previously mentioned, ably presented by our own Tony Simpson. The field trip to Western Lake (Wairarapa) is on hold until the weather radar gives us clearance for take-off. - ROBIN LIST

### WELLINGTON

While Great Barrier Island is the stronghold of Brown Teal, the Wellington Region has small breeding populations on Kapiti and Mana Islands and at Zealandia. Introductions of Brown Teal were made to Kapiti Island in 1968, 2000-2001, and to Mana Island and Zealandia in 2000 and 2001. Breeding continues at all three sites, yet exact numbers of birds are unknown.

During the last 18 months Katie Sheridan, a post graduate student from Queens College, New York, has been studying Brown Teal at Zealandia. In July she presented her findings at a Wellington OSNZ meeting. Through tracking birds with transmitters and the use of trail cameras she has been able to define the home ranges and roosting sites of Brown Teal in Zealandia. Some birds could be defined as "lake ducks" which had home ranges centred on a lake as well as roosting by a lake. In contrast, other birds could be defined as "forest ducks" which had home ranges that were centred in the forest and not a lake. Furthermore, these birds roosted in the forest rather than by a lake. This is an important finding with the implication that Zealandia can support many more Brown Teal by inhabiting both the lake and forest habitats. Determining the number of Brown Teal in Zealandia is not part of Katie's study but she estimates approximately 40 birds are currently present in the sanctuary.

Her findings should be taken into account when assessing the suitability of habitats for establishing new populations of Brown Teal as well

as carrying out surveys. For example, Kapiti Island has extensive forest habitat but limited pond and wetland areas. In retrospect, evidence for forest Brown Teal was found during the 1996 survey on Kapiti, when birds were found not only in the wetlands round Waiorua and Rangatira, but also in the area of the upper Taapiro Stream.

- GEOFF DE LISLE

### NELSON

July 2nd-6th saw Birds New Zealand members performing the winter shorebird survey, with a total of 20,000 counted between Nelson and Westhaven Inlet. Of these, about 14% were migratory shorebirds and 86% endemic shorebirds. Numbers appeared about average with the exception of Red Knots on Farewell Spit, whose numbers were down. Sanderling and Eastern Curlew were the less common species encountered.

Evening meetings have included a talk by Dave Butler on survey work he has performed in Tonga, particularly focused on identifying sites where the Tongan Megapode (*Megapodius pritchardii*), which hatches its eggs in geothermally warmed soil, is found.

Blue Ducks continue to be reported from Abel Tasman National Park, which could either be due to better reporting or use of eBird, or that the birds are spreading. In another Blue Duck report a Golden Bay member described seeing four Blue Ducks on a lake in Kahurangi, which prompted Maryann Ewers to follow up with an extraordinary account of Paradise Duck-Blue Duck interaction on lakes: "It's very interesting, but not unheard of, to find Blue Ducks on Lakes. We have seen "single" birds on two different lakes (Cristobel and Camp). In both instances they were single males, probably out looking for a mate. Funnily, we watched the one on Camp Lake trying to "talk up" a female paradise duck, but it's partner took offence and picked a fight with the Blue Duck. Amazing to watch. It took the Blue Duck by its neck and flew into the air with it, then dived down under the water! It then let it go and the poor Blue Duck continued its backwards and forwards motions, across the lake".

One of Nelson regions youngest members, Amber Calman, has been part of a group launching a new website 'New Zealand Fledglings' (<http://youngbirdersnz.wix.com/youngbirdersnz>) whose aim is "Ensuring that the brilliant art of birdwatching never disappears in New Zealand by reuniting young kiwis with nature". The group, who are all aged 11 to 15, intends to produce a bi-monthly online magazine. There is also a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/youngbirdersnz>.

- ROBIN TOY

### CANTERBURY

The main sighting of interest in Canterbury in the last three months has been that of a Hoary-headed Grebe, which was seen in mid-May at the Bromley Oxidation Ponds. A number of Cattle Egrets have returned to their regular spots in paddocks around Drain Road and surrounding areas near Lake Ellesmere; nice to see. There have been two recent reports of Cirl Buntings, one on Kennedys Bush Road in late May, and another two at the Woodend Motor Camp in June. A Tomtit and a Tui have both been seen in Victoria Park, both unusual species there in recent years, while another Tui was seen in North Loburn. Interesting sightings from Kaikoura include a white morph Southern Giant Petrel and an Antarctic Fulmar.

In an exciting possibility for North Canterbury, DOC, in consultation with Ngai Tahu and local organisations, is considering the re-introduction of Black Stilts into a 2,000 ha area around the lower Ashley River/Rakahuri and adjacent wetlands. If the proposal goes ahead 30-40 sub-adult stilts could be released annually for an initial three-year

period. If survival rates are good and breeding is attempted then further releases would likely follow.

Bev Alexander's mid-week rambles are as informative and enjoyable as ever. May's trip to the Pegasus Wetlands revealed 26 different species. Sadly we didn't manage to spot an Australasian Bittern, despite observing how well the environment would suit that species. Since then, however, a couple of our keen rambblers have seen one there. In June, nine members walked around Roto Kohatu Reserve and were treated to sightings of Australasian Crested Grebes, including a juvenile, and large flocks of Yellowhammers among other species. During the July trip, rambblers had the opportunity to visit the 'back room' of the museum and see many different bird specimens, including those that are now sadly extinct. Afterwards we looked around the museum's bird hall; a good place to observe the differences between similar species, since these birds don't fly away!

May's fieldtrip saw seven of us drive to Ashburton to visit Russell Langdon's Riverbridge Centre, where Russell gave us a tour of his aviaries and the wetland. While the Weka did not show itself, we did see many waterbirds including Mute Swans and Cape Barren Geese. June's trip was to Lake Ellesmere for the Winter Wader Count. Two Wrybills, five Gull-billed Terns, one Black-fronted Dotterel and two Red-necked Stints were the most interesting sightings. Hundreds of Banded Dotterels and Pied Stilts made up most of the birds counted. The following month we assisted with the Ashburton Lakes waterbird survey. Many lakes were totally frozen, and in others the birds huddled in the centre, making identification difficult. The total count was the lowest in many years, but at least the forecast snow held off until the count was completed. - ELEANOR GUNBY

### SOUTHLAND

The resident Otago Red-crowned Parakeet seems to have survived the Southland winter so far and has been reported visiting a few gardens and checking out the bird food tables. Lloyd Esler managed to get a good photo of the bird when it visited his garden. We are hoping there is more than one and that they may start breeding in the area. Back in May Neil Robertson reported eight Cattle Egrets from Doubtful Sound (Hall Arm) and thought this may be the beginning of an influx for the rest of Southland, but as in previous years numbers seem to be dropping. We have only had one report recently from Titiroa where Pete McClelland saw a single bird in a paddock with gulls.

Our recent winter wader count was held in the coldest weather I have ever experienced in all my years of counting. There were no real surprises but it was nice to see two Wrybill back at the head of Awarua bay.

Other bird sightings around Southland in the past months have included a very obliging Australasian Bittern that skulked by the roadside in Otago and took no notice of traffic as it hunted along the muddy ditches. Glenda Rees spotted a Grey-tailed Tattler at Bandy Point (Awarua Bay); she photographed one in the same location several years ago. Two Black Stilts showed up at the Riverston Estuary at almost the exact same date as we had three there last year. Matt Jones reported a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross and a White-headed Petrel from the Stewart Island ferry in Foveaux Strait.

Our local members, with Lloyd Esler as the instigator, are once again planning a Southland Bird Week. This time we are looking at November this year, which gives us more options of trips to see waders etc. November 7th has been chosen as the start date. - PHIL RHODES

# Bird News

*This feature contains news of sightings that have not received official acceptance by the Records Appraisal Committee of Birds New Zealand. Period covered: 1st March to 31st August 2015.*

The long-staying West Coast **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were reported from Kokatahi, with five there on private land in April. The two resident at Anderson Park, Taradale (Hawke's Bay) were reported on 12/7 and 17/8, although only one was seen for certain on the latter date. Another long-staying duck, the female **Chestnut-breasted Shelduck** was reported from the Watercare Canal, Mangere (Auckland) on 19/3. Also long-staying, but seldom seen, the Nelson **Australian Wood Ducks** were reported again in the Mapua area in early March. The Mangere area of the Manukau Harbour (Auckland) is a semi-regular site for **Brown Teal**, and singles were reported from there on 19/3 and 2/7. Others were at the more unusual sites of Boggy Pond (Lake Wairarapa, Wairarapa) in April and the small Korokoro Dam in Belmont Regional Park (Wellington) from 3/3 to 4/7. A drake **Australian White-eyed Duck** was hiding amongst the New Zealand Scaup on Blenheim Oxidation Ponds (Marlborough) on 12/4.

South Island records of **New Zealand Dabchicks** continue to increase and seem to be spreading southwards with four seen on a pond on Blind River Road, Seddon (Marlborough) in early March. Nearby Blenheim Oxidation Ponds held five on 24/5, with four there on 21/6. Well to the west one was on a Wharariki Farm Park dune lake (Golden Bay) on 6/4. The Bromley Oxidation Ponds in Christchurch (Canterbury) held a **Hoary-headed Grebe** from 19 to 22/5.

A small number of moulting penguins were reported this autumn: the remote Doughboy Bay (Stewart Island) held a moulting **King Penguin** in March, an **Erect-crested Penguin** was reported from Nugget Point (Otago) on 28/2 and one or two **Royal Penguins** (the second may have been a Macaroni Penguin) were on The Snares in late March.

Hope of an invasion of seabirds from the deep south followed the stranding of an **Antarctic Petrel** at Avalon (Wellington) on 27/5. It died at Wellington Zoo overnight, and the hope of other interesting sightings unfortunately came to nought. Unusually far inland a **White-headed Petrel** was picked up in Queenstown (Otago) in early June. After recuperation at the town's bird park it was released at the mouth of Milford Sound. From warmer climes an out of range **Providence Petrel** was seen on a Three Kings pelagic on 24/3. There seems to have been a minor eruption of **Brown Boobies**: an immature was reported from off Stewart Island in early March and another immature was at the Hokitika River Mouth (West Coast) on 27/3. The long-staying Muriwai (Auckland) individual was seen on several dates between 8/3 and 19/4. Presumably the same bird was seen feeding in the Kaipara Harbour entrance near Big Sand Island on 20/4.

The Mangawhai Harbour (Northland) held a (presumably returning) **Little Egret** on 18/3. The sole Hawke's Bay record was one at the Ahuriri Estuary in Napier on 4/5; the region's usually regular sites on the coast near Clive were devoid of the species. Lingering individuals were seen at Lake Forsyth (Canterbury), with one there on 23/3 and two on 19/5. On the Manukau Harbour singles were at Bottletop Bay, Karaka on 7/6, and the Ambury Park/Mangere Lagoon area between 1/7 and 3/8. The latter is presumably one of the three seen there in recent times. Other singles were at the Rangaunu Harbour (Far North), the Waipu Estuary (Northland) on 30/6 and Lake Wairarapa on 1/7. Single **Glossy Ibises** were reported from Seafeld Lagoon, Brooklands on 21/5 and 23/5, Bexley Wetland on 7/3 and Travis

## New Membership Secretary

Birds New Zealand has a new membership secretary. Many thanks to Jill West for taking on this important role for the Society, and to Julia White for all the hard work she put into the role over the past four years.

Jill can be contacted at membership@osnz.org.nz or P.O. Box 33523, Barrington, Christchurch 8244.



▲ Jill West

Wetland on 26/7. All of these sightings are in the Christchurch area and probably relate to the same regular wintering individual. Up to seven of the species were in the general area of the Wairau Lagoons, Blenheim (Marlborough) throughout.

The Renwick **Black Kite** wasn't reported in the past few months but as recompense Tainui, Dunedin was the location for a possible sighting of the species on 9/6. Rounding out the birds of prey, a possible **Nankeen Kestrel** was reported from Shelly Bay on the Miramar Peninsula (Wellington) on 24/5.

As per usual waders were not much of a feature in the colder months covered by this report. A **Japanese Snipe** was seen by a very few people on the Pegasus Wetlands (Canterbury) on 29/3. The Farewell Spit (Golden Bay) wader count in early July turned up a wintering **Sanderling**. Two **Wandering Tattlers** were seen at Spirits Bay (Far North) on 9/4. The previously reported **Grey-tailed Tattler** was seen again on the Ashley Estuary (Canterbury) on 7 and 31/3. Another was at the regular site of Awarua Bay (Southland) on 31/5. The two **Marsh Sandpipers** reported previously from the Pleasure Bay Lagoon (Invercargill Estuary, Southland) were seen again on 30/3. Another long-staying individual of this species was that reported from Miranda (South Auckland) on 10/5. A **Shore Plover** translocated to Motutapu Island in late January wandered the nearby Auckland mainland from February to 27/5, being seen at Cockle Bay, Whitford and Clifton Beach.

A light morph **Pomarine Skua** was seen off Point Kean, Kaikoura (Canterbury) on 11/4. Several **Long-tailed skuas** were seen from a Three Kings Pelagic on 24/3. This species seems to migrate regularly through the waters near these islands off the northern tip of the North Island. Another possible was in Queen Charlotte Sound (Marlborough) on 14/4. **Gull-billed Terns** remaining from the last influx were seen around Lakes Ellesmere and Forsyth (Canterbury), with one at Yarrs Bay on 6/4, one at Crescent Island in April, two on Lake Forsyth in April and five at Lower Selwyn Huts on 13/6. Continuing their minor invasion four **White-winged Black Terns** were seen at Maketu (Bay of Plenty) on 10/4. Another from outside their regular Canterbury range was in the area of the Nelson Oxidation Ponds (Nelson) from 8/6 to 6/7. Of the Northern Hemisphere visitors Aramoana (Otago) held an **Arctic Tern** on 23/4 and a **Common Tern** was at Ruawai (Northland) on 19/3, with another possible at Maketu on 9/4. Maketu also briefly hosted a **Crested Tern** on 29/3.

Leading a wider range of vagrant passerines than usual a possible **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** was reported from Marton (Whanganui) on 19/7. Red Beach, Orewa (Auckland) was the stage of a possible **Maggie-lark** sighting on 3/8, a bird that many tried to re-find, but without success. Two long-staying **Tree Martins** were on The Snares in late March. They were first seen in November/December last year. Another possibly this species was reported from Hector (West Coast) in April. An introduced species away from its more regular North Island haunt near Wellington, a **Cirl Bunting** was heard at Taradale (Hawke's Bay) on 13/5.

Sources: *Birding NZ, regional roundups.*



## ***Birds New Zealand***

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