

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

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

Response on behalf of Council

First of all, thank you for your letter Viola. It is good to have this feedback from Members. At the AGM I undertook on behalf of Council to review the current Conservation Policy based on feedback at the AGM. Council has a draft paper on this topic which we will consider at our meeting on 23rd November. This will then be circulated to Regional Representatives for comment before being revised for a further discussion at the AGM in Christchurch in 2020.

I do not think that either the current rules of the Society or the current policy prevents Society members from engaging in the conservation of birds or bird habitats. At the last AGM examples were given where members are engaged in presenting the result of surveys and Society projects to decision-makers to ensure that they are aware of the impacts of developments on shorebirds. Additionally, I think there is ample evidence that the work the Society is undertaking is clearly directed to the conservation of birds with quality data. The results of the two previous Atlas projects have been used to describe the issues that our birds face in comprehensive science reports completed by Susan Walker and colleagues from Landcare Research (*Thermal squeeze will exacerbate declines in New Zealand's endemic forest birds*).

The Society has in the past made public statements on topics that require it. For example, a Society Statement on the use of 1080 was published in Birds New Zealand #1 (March 2014). If there are others that need to be made please raise them with me.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT.

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COVER IMAGE

Morepork or Ruru. Photo by Mike Ashbee.

<https://www.mikeashbeephography.com/>

Letter to the Editor – Conservation

Birds New Zealand has a proud history of research, but times are changing and most New Zealand bird species are declining in numbers. It is time for ornithologists to more publicly support conservation, as scientists have on other issues such as climate change and freshwater pollution. The study and enjoyment of birds leads naturally to the wish to protect them. I suggest that Birds New Zealand's mission statement is altered to read, "to encourage the study, enjoyment and protection of birds." This statement gives more commitment than, 'use of knowledge'.

The argument arises that Birds New Zealand collaborates with Forest and Bird, which does advocacy work. 'We make the bullets and they fire them' I have heard. I totally approve of this collaboration, but Forest and Bird is a broad-based conservation organisation. It does not focus exclusively on birds, nor can they be expected to wade in on every issue affecting birds. Furthermore, two organisations advocating for the same thing is more powerful than one.

I am not suggesting Birds New Zealand get into radical actions. I understand that not all members will want to be involved with advocacy. Non-controversial issues on which Birds New Zealand could be vigorously advocating are: use of 1080; control of cats and limiting their number; vehicles off beaches. At the 2019 AGM, a motion was put that Birds New Zealand set up a Conservation Sub-committee. This is likely to re-emerge at the 2020 AGM. In the meantime, I suggest that Birds New Zealand surveys its members, including the NZ Young Birders. I have reached this conclusion after years of bird conferences in which the predominant message is one of birds in trouble.

DR VIOLA PALMER

From the President's Desk

Spring has well and truly arrived with records of Shining Cuckoos and trans-equatorial migrant waders appearing in the Society's newsletters and social media. These observations make up the story of the birds of New Zealand and should all be included in the New Zealand Bird Atlas, which is making great progress.

Council Meeting

Council met in late November and along with a full agenda continued its considerations of Constitutional matters as I outlined in my last column. As reported then we are seeking to bring to the 2020 AGM in Christchurch a Notice of Motion for a rule change to reflect in the formal name of the Society the decision to adopt an operating name (Birds New Zealand) and a name in Te Reo: "Te Kāhui Mātai o Aotearoa". Feedback from you all is invited on these proposed changes. In addition, Council considered the feedback from the 2019 AGM in Wellington with respect to the Conservation practise of the Society. It is pleasing to have the letter from Dr Viola Palmer in this edition of *Birds New Zealand* to help us in this discussion.

Membership system

As part of the overall website renewal project the Society's membership system is undergoing a substantial review and modernisation. I am extremely grateful for the attention to detail by Roger Sharp, Ian Armitage and Ingrid Hutzler along with our contractors Mark Creative to bring this to fruition. There is a risk that there could be an overlap with subscription renewals and if this is occurring then please have some patience while we work through all the technical issues.

Conference 2020

Sandra Wallace, Canterbury Regional Representative, advises that organising is well underway for the Conference, which will run from 30 May–1 June 2020. A venue at the Commodore Hotel has been confirmed and the development of the Scientific Programme is well underway with keynote speakers being shoulder-tapped. Field trips are part of the programme with Mike Bell and team designing and leading the 'atlasing' trip, as well as other options. Sandra reports that there will also be an extended atlasing trip to the West Coast after the conference proper, from 2–6 June. So, if this sounds like you, please mark the dates in your diary and sign-up for a winter trip to the West Coast to some of the more out of the way squares. I look forward to seeing you all there!

Newsletters

Before writing this column I always make sure I visit the Society's website and check out the latest Regional Newsletters. These are an amazing source of inspiration about what's going on around the regions and how active we are as a society in all parts of New Zealand. For those regions which don't have a regular or even irregular newsletter, please have a look at some examples on our website. There are lots of recent reports about atlas trips and tips on how to be better atlas recorders. I strongly recommend that you support your region's newsletter editor with copies of trip reports or interesting observations to help make this fascinating resource even better for all of us.

Notornis special editions

Two special editions of *Notornis* for publication in 2020 are being developed. For those who attended the Society Conference in Wellington in June you will have seen a taster of the Auckland Islands special edition - 'Lost Gold' - which is in the final stages of production for early next year. An update on wader studies in New Zealand is in production for later in 2020. These will both

be significant compilations of ornithological knowledge and in the case of the Auckland Islands, will be the first such publication on this largest archipelago in the New Zealand Subantarctic. My thanks to Colin Miskelly and Keith Woodley for working closely with *Notornis* editor Craig Symes to complete these projects.

Banding projects

A very important activity to support the study of birds is the banding of birds to allow for studies on dispersal, reproductive success and the acquisition of the basic biological parameters of the lives of birds to be completed. John Stewart of Auckland is the Society's Banding Liaison Officer and leads the consideration of applications for banding projects under the Society's Banding Authority, issued by the Department of Conservation. I'm always impressed that in conversations with Society members how quickly the comment comes up, "... if only we had banded them". Clearly there is a theoretical need for Society members to take their understanding of birds to the next level of detail that a banding study will provide. If this sounds like you, please start developing a project description that can form the basis of discussion with colleagues and with John and the Society's Scientific Committee.

Social media

This may or may not excite you but the Society's social media presence on Facebook and Twitter is growing thanks to the efforts of *Birds New Zealand* editor Michael Szabo and Council member Natalie Forsdick. Ingrid advised recently that the various posts that Michael Szabo has shared through the Birds New Zealand Facebook page from the New Zealand Bird Atlas project Facebook page reached over 20,000 people!

New Zealand Bird Atlas

I recently had a really rewarding day out with Society members filling in squares in Otago just north of Dunedin. After dividing up the squares and agreeing on where to meet for coffee later in the day, car loads of people headed off along dusty back roads. It was an opportunity to explore some areas which I had not seen for some years and test out my skills with obscure and unusual calls. Along the way there was the opportunity to be able to chat about basically anything that needed to be discussed. Although the chosen coffee shop was closed the party still had a really enjoyable day out and coloured up some gaps on the overall effort map (have a look here to see the national progress <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/effortmap>). Whether it's you, with your family or with like-minded friends there's nothing quite like a day out atlasing.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT

Marj Davis Scholarship

One scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of \$1,500. The scholarship is intended to provide financial support to a full-time Masters or PhD student conducting research in ornithology. Preference will be given to proposals for ornithological research expected to contribute to a greater knowledge of birds in the Canterbury/West Coast region. Applications open 14th February and close 31st March. The criteria and application form are available online: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/marj-davis-scholarship/>

Mike Graham 1946–2019

Mike Graham was a *Birds New Zealand* member from 1980 and served as the Auckland Regional Representative from 1992 to 1995. Until his recent battle with cancer he was an active member who helped with organising our annual Motutapu Island Bird Survey, assisted regularly with field trips, and was always willing to share his knowledge of birds with others.

New Zealand Bird Conference & AGM 2020

This will be held in Christchurch on Queen's Birthday weekend (30 May–1 June). All events and meals will be at the Commodore Airport Hotel: www.commodorehotel.co.nz

Registration details: www.birdsnz.org.nz

30 May 2019 (Saturday): Registration; Scientific Day One; Birds New Zealand AGM; Informal Dinner.

31 May 2019 (Sunday): Registration; Scientific Day Two; Conference Dinner.

1 June 2019 (Monday): Field Trips - Bird banding session (morning); Christchurch Earthquake Sites (all day); Canterbury Museum Bird Collection tour (morning); Atlasing (all day).

David Medway Scholarship

This scholarship is sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust and named in commemoration of David Medway. It is intended to provide financial support to a student studying full-time at post-graduate level on a topic relating to ornithology. One scholarship may be awarded each year with a maximum value of \$5,000. Applications open on **1st February 2020** and close on **30th March 2020**. Criteria, conditions and application form are available online: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/david-medway-scholarship/>

North Island Tīeke song dialects

One of the most intriguing features of songbirds is their formation of distinct, geographical song dialects – or cultures. Song learning from other birds of the same species is a crucial aspect of songbird ecology as song cultures can have important consequences on the survival and reproduction of individuals, and potentially contribute to speciation through their influence on mate choice. My research focuses on three populations: (1) Tāwharanui Regional Park, (2) Motuihe Island and (3) Shakespear Regional Park, which have different translocation histories. Central to this project will be obtaining high quality recordings of Tīeke songs within and across these three populations. Funds from the Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund have been integral to conducting the project.

KYLE SUTHERLAND

Fossil skull of extinct albatross found in Taranaki

Gerald Mayr of the Frankfurt Natural History Museum and Alan Tennyson of Te Papa have described the preserved skull of a new albatross species from the late Pliocene (3.0–3.4 million years ago) found in Taranaki by Alastair Johnson. *Aldiomedes angustirostris* has only 90% of the skull length of the smallest living albatross species and is the geologically youngest record of a small-sized albatross known to date. It had an unusually thin bill, which is not found in any living albatross species. The smaller size and some other features indicate it was not part of the crown group of living albatross species. The authors hypothesise that *A. angustirostris* was more fish-eating than living albatross species, which mainly feed on squid. "Usually, narrow beaks in seabirds are found in fish-eaters such as shearwaters, shags, razorbills, and some penguins (such as King Penguins). Based on this information, we think that the Taranaki albatross was mainly a fish-eater," says Alan Tennyson. "We can only speculate as to why small fish-eating kinds of albatrosses are no longer alive today but competition with a wide range of other seabirds in this size range, such as shags and gannets may be an answer."

2020 Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2020. Renewal invoices were emailed or posted in November 2019. If you have not already done so, please notify the Membership Secretary of your email address (membership@osnz.org.nz). Please pay on time because we depend on your subscription to continue our work to encourage and support the study and enjoyment of birds.

Christmas Gift

Are you looking for a Christmas gift to give? You can gift someone a 2020 Birds New Zealand subscription for just over a dollar a week to help foster a lifetime of study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds. Please send an email to eo@osnz.org.nz and we will send you the Gift Voucher, or visit our website for more details: <http://www.osnz.org.nz/perfect-gift-voucher>

Call for Nominations for Council

The three-year Council terms of Keith Woodley and Mel Galbraith, and the co-opted term of Lynne Anderson (Secretary) will expire at the next AGM (2020). Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again. Nominations will close with the Secretary on 1st February 2020. They must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include a brief C.V. of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council. Nomination forms are available here <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/manual/forms/> or from Lynne Anderson, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson: secretary@osnz.org.nz

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2020 Birds New Zealand Annual General Meeting will be held at the Commodore Hotel, 449 Memorial Ave, Christchurch, Saturday 30th May 2020.

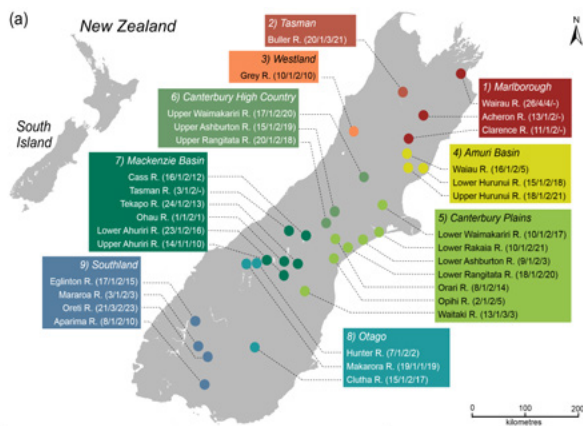
Calls for Notices of Motion

Notices of motion to be considered by the 2020 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 1st February 2020 in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society. Lynne Anderson, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson: secretary@osnz.org.nz

Tracking NZ Bar-tailed Godwits

New Zealand Bar-tailed Godwits migrate through the Yellow Sea to their breeding grounds in Alaska. The population is declining and the November 2018 national wader survey recorded the lowest total in over 35 years of counting (65,345). The Yellow Sea has been subject to extensive habitat loss through land claim (68% lost in past 50 years) and severe degradation. Despite China's 2018 announcement of a near-total ban on more reclamation, land claim continues in both North and South Korea, and remaining habitats are still being degraded, reducing the ability of the remaining intertidal areas to support shorebirds. Birds that rely on the Yellow Sea are exhibiting reduced survival rates and suffering significant population declines. This project, which is funded by the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, aims to identify staging areas used by NZ Bar-tailed Godwits in the Yellow Sea in response to habitat reduction and degradation. NZ Bar-tailed Godwits will be caught at multiple sites in NZ and fitted with satellite tags, and the results will be used to inform future management policies and activities within the Yellow Sea.

PHIL BATTLE & DAVID MELVILLE, GLOBAL FLYWAY NETWORK



▲ Black-fronted Tern colonies map/Anne Schlesselmann.

Black-fronted Tern study

Black-fronted Terns/Tarapirohe look striking in their breeding plumage, yet are relatively cryptic to monitor as they are highly mobile, have short legs that make individual identification tricky, and live in areas that are at times difficult to access and survey. Each Spring, they return from the coast to the braided rivers of the South Island to nest in colonies on gravel bars in the riverbed. Breeding colonies form in similar areas each year, but also shift from time-to-time given the dynamic nature of braided rivers. Within a season, colonies can also disappear due to flood, disturbance or predation events. The species is in serious trouble as populations are in range-wide decline.

As part of her PhD research, Anne Schlesselmann from the University of Otago wanted to understand how Black-fronted Tern breeding colonies are connected on local and larger scales to aid with the planning of conservation management actions. She used genetic tools to get an insight into the connections between breeding colonies. For the genetic analysis, a single small blood sample was required from breeding individuals. As part of his Masters in Wildlife Management at the University of Otago, Jamie Cooper teamed up with Anne to investigate the morphometric patterns throughout the breeding range. Living for three months out of a car, and with the help of Department of Conservation and Wildlife Management International staff, they sampled a total of 589 Black-fronted Tern adults and chicks from throughout the range.

Their results show that Black-fronted Terns can be considered a habitat-tracking metapopulation. While on large-scales, there was no genetic structure, fine-scale genetic structure existed as well as a morphological size cline – with southern adults being larger and heavier than northern adults. The lack of large-scale structure in the presence of fine-scale structure and a morphological size cline seem at first contradictory, but make sense when considering the dynamic environment that Black-fronted Terns nest in. Each habitat patch in a riverbed is ephemeral as floods change river channels or tall vegetation establishes. Black-fronted Terns need to locate optimal habitat each year. The size cline and fine-scale genetic structure indicate that Black-fronted Terns move between colonies on local scales rather than searching throughout the South Island. The mixing of individuals between colonies happens so frequently (as habitat patches become available and disappear), over time it leads to genetic homogeneity on large scales.

Braided rivers are globally rare but New Zealand has a disproportionate number. Understanding how Black-fronted Tern colonies are connected only makes sense when considering the highly dynamic environment they live in. The important outcomes of this research for conservation are that breeding habitat needs to be managed in catchments throughout the South Island and also currently unoccupied patches need to be protected through predator control and weed removal. It also highlights that regular natural disturbance of riverbeds in the form of floods is an integral part of the functioning of the Black-fronted Tern metapopulation. The paper is available free to view here: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ddi.12994>

ANNE SCHLESSELMANN, LANDCARE RESEARCH



▲ New Zealand Bird Atlas survey effort map, 30/10/19. Coloured squares contain Atlas data.

First summer for NZ Bird Atlas

It's full steam ahead for the New Zealand Bird Atlas, thanks to the ongoing support and dedication of the hundreds of Birds New Zealand members and birders throughout the country who have taken the time to get involved in this landmark project. By the end of October, a total of 19,235 checklists had been submitted by 448 participants from 1,616 grid squares, exactly half of the grid squares in the country!

We will soon have completed our first winter and spring seasons, and begun our first summer survey season. During our first winter season, we managed to accumulate a total of 11,249 bird checklists from around the country, describing the distribution of 168 bird species in 1,345 grid squares that were either completely, or partially, surveyed. This first winter has already provided an interesting glimpse of the bird species that the majority of us are likely to encounter day-to-day at that time of year. Blackbird was the most widespread species reported (966 of 1,345 squares), followed by NZ Fantail (955), Chaffinch (870), Australian Magpie (854), Starling (848), Australasian Harrier (839) and Grey Warbler (824).

The [Atlas effort map](#) on eBird provides us with a great summary of the spatial coverage achieved so far, and provides a fascinating insight into just how intrepid Birds New Zealand members are. Four 'atlasers' deserve an honourable mention for having already visited over 100 grid squares each since June: well done to Philip Crutchley, Russell Cannings, Bev Alexander and Nick Allen! Checklists have now been submitted from throughout mainland New Zealand, the Chatham Islands and many inshore islands, but none yet from any Subantarctic Islands or the Kermadec Islands. Do you know anyone going to any of these islands in the coming months? If so, please encourage them to collect and submit bird checklists to the Atlas while they're there.

Over the past few months, the National Atlas Team in Blenheim has been busy with a range of Atlas-related tasks, including responding to email and phone enquiries, and doing a lot of behind-the-scenes work keeping the Atlas infrastructure functioning smoothly. The team has also been out in their spare time, atlas-ing in Marlborough. Over the next few months we'll be carrying out summer fieldwork tasks in Northland, Auckland, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Marlborough, Canterbury and Chatham Islands, collecting Atlas checklists wherever we go. Hopefully we'll see you out there!

NIKKI McARTHUR, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL LTD



White-fronted Tern/Edin Whitehead

White-fronted Tern survey

There is now concern that the White-fronted Tern is disappearing from northern New Zealand. Recent surveys have highlighted the ephemeral nature of its breeding: here one year, gone the next, historical sites abandoned, new sites occupied. This makes it difficult to identify an overall population trend. To overcome this requires a new survey that is able to cover the possibility of these birds shifting their nest sites from season to season. As a first step towards identifying such a study in the Hauraki Gulf we intend to complete a survey of the whole region this coming season.

Colonies and roost sites will be located and all previous sites revisited within the wider Hauraki Gulf, with searches made by boat and from shore for any sign of new sites. *Birds New Zealand* members from Northland, Auckland and South Auckland branches will participate in these surveys. West Coast Muriwai will also be surveyed to provide a comparison of timing and breeding success between Hauraki Gulf and Tasman Sea. This survey has been funded by the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund.

CHRIS GASKIN, NOTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST

Monitoring Pakahā in the Hauraki Gulf

Pakahā or Fluttering Shearwater is a seemingly common seabird species in the Hauraki Gulf, but little is known about population trends or behaviours. Using lightweight GPS loggers funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019, I will track the foraging behaviours of adult Pakahā during chick-rearing to track foraging movements and identify potential 'hotspots'. This research aims to fill gaps in knowledge by combining physiological, demographic, and GPS tracking data. It forms the first stage of a three-year PhD study relating seabird health and breeding success to environmental fluctuations.

EDIN WHITEHEAD, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND, PhD

Banded Rail habitat use in mangrove habitats

Mangrove forests in New Zealand are expanding seawards, fuelled by anthropogenic increases in sediments and nutrients in estuaries. Consequently, large-scale mangrove removal has been carried out in an attempt to restore open tidal flats. However, little is known about how the expansion and potential removal of mangroves may affect the birds which use mangrove forests. My research project seeks to build on limited Banded Rail study to date and determine how they make use of mangrove habitats. To do so, I will assess their habitat use at two scales. Firstly, tracking Banded Rails using GPS loggers to determine their home-ranges sizes and estimate how they use different estuarine vegetation types. Secondly, by evaluating Banded Rail activity within localised patches of mangroves, using the presence of footprints to assess banded rail micro-habitat use and activity. The project is funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019.

JACQUES DE SAGTE, MASSEY UNIVERSITY



Hauraki Gulf Spotted Shag/Michael Szabo

Spotted Shag foraging biology

Spotted Shags or Pārekareka historically bred widely on the West and East coasts in the Auckland region. Over the last three decades the species has declined in the region and is now restricted to just one main breeding site in the Firth of Thames (Tarahiki Island off the east of Waiheke Island) with a population of circa 300 breeding pairs. Concerns for Auckland's Pārekareka population were eased by the knowledge that the species is still abundant in the South Island. However, recent research indicates that Hauraki Gulf Pārekareka are genetically distinct from those breeding elsewhere in NZ, adding urgency to preserving the population in the region in order maintain the species' genetic potential. As the birds predominately breed on predator-free Tarahiki Island, impacts in the marine environment are considered a likely primary cause of recent population declines. Unfortunately, there are currently no data detailing the at-sea foraging ecology of Hauraki Gulf Pārekareka, though such data are essential to assess potential marine threats.

This study, funded by the *Birds New Zealand* Research Fund 2019, will use recent advances in lightweight GPS tracking technology to study the movement ecology of Pārekareka in the Hauraki Gulf. Birds captured from Tarahiki Island will be fitted with solar-powered GPS loggers during the breeding season to collect long term (1 year +) data on distribution and habitat use. The study will be complemented by other funded research on diet and diving behaviour. Together, this research will provide an indication of potential at-sea impacts on Pārekareka in the Hauraki Gulf as well as data for informed conservation management strategies.

Dr MATT RAYNER, AUCKLAND MUSEUM

North Island Tieke song performance

The North Island Tieke or Saddleback is arguably NZ's most successfully translocated species but some of these have resulted in cultural bottlenecks with reduction of song variability. The aim of this study is to investigate how parasites affect song structure and singing performance in a translocated population of Tieke (Bushy Park Sanctuary) with a high *Plasmodium* seroprevalence (39%).

Funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019 has been essential to carry out field trips to catch, band, assess and blood sample Tieke. Thanks to these funds we are currently recording the songs from the birds previously captured, and will be able to perform the necessary genetic analyses to detect parasites in blood samples. The information generated by this study will contribute to understand the effects of translocation on the relationship between personality-parasites, personality-song, and song-parasites, which have been described as important for the survival and reproductive success. This study will contribute to understanding the effects of translocation on the relationship between personality-parasites, personality-song, and song-parasites, which are important for the survival and reproductive success of birds in general.

ISABEL CASTRO & CRISTABEL GODOY, MASSEY UNIVERSITY



▲ Rakiura Tokoeka/Emma Feenstra



▲ Tawaki pair/Thomas Mattern

Monitoring Rakiura Tokoeka

The aim of this project is to compare the effectiveness and efficiency of invasive and non-invasive methods for monitoring cryptic populations using Rakiura Tokoeka/Stewart Island Kiwi as a case study. Three non-invasive methods are being developed and trialled; trail cameras, acoustic recorders and scat mapping. The results will be compared with information gained from the invasive process of catching, handling and tracking using radio transmitters. Using funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, we put transmitters on 47 adult Rakiura Tokoeka. We are now monitoring those birds throughout the breeding season in order to attach transmitters on up to 20 chicks, which will provide new information on survival, breeding biology and dispersal. With additional funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019, we have burrow cameras monitoring nests for the emergence of chicks and we will be able to upgrade the transmitters when the chicks have grown into juveniles.

EMMA FEENSTRA, MASSEY UNIVERSITY PhD

North Island Brown Kiwi study

North Island Brown Kiwi is vulnerable to extinction in the wild. Ongoing conservation efforts include captive rearing, which has an increased chick survival rate. The stress of captivity and high density of chicks co-habiting puts them at risk of disease. *Coccidiosis*, deemed the most important disease in captive kiwi, is caused by protozoan *Eimeria spp.* that spreads through consumption of oocysts in faeces. Disease prevention methods are limited. A potential yet overlooked avenue is the gut microbiome, which has been recognised as a mediator and indicator of host health. This microbial community may contain key bacteria important for disease resistance. Recent poultry studies have found that combining probiotics with *coccidiosis* vaccines enhances protection from the parasite. Before practical solutions can be implemented, a survey of gut bacteria in wild, captive, healthy, and infected kiwi is necessary. We will carry this out with funds from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019.

MANPREET K. DHAMI, PRISCILLA A. SAN JUAN & ISABEL CASTRO

Diving Petrel diet on Codfish Island

The newly described Whenua Hou Diving Petrel (WHDP) is a small burrow-breeding seabird listed as nationally critical due to its low population size (circa 200 individuals) and extremely restricted breeding range (a single colony occupying 0.018 km² on Codfish Island). While predation from invasive mammals was the likely cause for historic declines, the reasons for a lack in population recovery of WHDP on pest-free Codfish Island remain unknown. As WHDP share their breeding ground with the more abundant Common Diving Petrel, there is the potential for interspecific competition for burrow sites threatening their persistence. Addressing this requires a detailed study of the two species. Ultimately, trophic characterisation is required to develop effective conservation strategies to support the WHDP population. I use blood and feather samples to determine the relative trophic positions of both petrel species. This research is funded by the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund.

GRACE TOCKER, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY, MSc

Automatic monitoring of Tawaki

The Fiordland Crested Penguin or Tawaki breeds in south-Westland, Fiordland and the Foveaux Strait region. Their preference for nesting in rock crevasses, dense vegetation, and even sea caves accessible at low tide, makes them difficult to survey and count. Some reports claim the species is undergoing dramatic declines while more recent surveys by the Tawaki Project and West Coast Penguin Trust suggest they may be considerably more numerous than previously thought. However, if this is due to a population increase or greater survey effort remains unclear. So, an alternative approach is required to assess population trends.

For the past four years, the Tawaki Project has been working with penguins from Harrison Cove in Milford Sound/Piopiotahi. During this period, 40 of the resident penguins have been marked with Passive Integrated Transponders. We assume that more than half of the breeding population is marked. As the project continues its research efforts at that site in the coming years, the population will continue to be marked. This, combined with the fact that most penguins access the breeding colonies via a single access track, provided a unique opportunity to establish a new monitoring approach that may be more suitable to assess population trends going forward.

In February 2019, using funds from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, we established an Automated Wildlife Monitoring System in Harrison Cove. This consists of a transponder gate through which the penguins pass on their commute between nest site and ocean. A set of light barriers activate an automatic transponder reader which identifies marked birds and records their movement direction and time in a locally deployed data logger. The system is powered by a solar panel and operates continuously throughout the year. Over time, the recorded data will provide information about survival rates of individual birds as well as recruitment of young birds into the local population. This will allow us to model population trends more accurately than any other ground-based survey.

Dr THOMAS MATTERN, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Rifleman dialects and vocal learning

Vocal learning is a rare trait and its origins remain unclear. NZ Wrens may help researchers answer this question. Their vocal learning abilities have never been studied and it is assumed that they are not vocal learners. However, they are closely related to the songbirds and parrots, both vocal learners. Their unique position in the avian evolutionary tree gives us the opportunity to answer a fundamental question about the evolution of vocal learning in birds: do NZ Wrens show any evidence of vocal learning? If so, it would change our understanding of when and why vocal learning evolved in birds. I am investigating vocal learning in Rifleman using bioacoustics and genetics to test whether translocated populations differ vocally from founder populations - do vocal dialects exist? Funds from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019 will be used to address the genetic part of my project - trying to understand how closely related separate populations are, using methods that are sensitive to small genetic changes and have high resolution.

INES MORAN, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND, PhD



▣ Kennedy Island in the New Georgia Group, Western Province.

Solomon Islands – Monarchs and Megapodes

Words by Mark Cocker. Photographs by David Tipling.

A place of tropical sun, aquamarine-blue sea, white-sand palm-fringed beaches and some of the friendliest people you will ever meet in your life – the Solomon Islands is the sort of South Pacific location that many of us dream of but often know little about.

That lack of awareness applies as much to birdwatchers as it does to anyone else, which is stranger still given that the Solomons is a dramatic archipelago of volcanos and coral-fringed atolls, many swathed in pristine rainforest that serves as a global hotspot for avian endemism. To this can be added one of the world's richest marine environments, some of the planet's highest levels of fish diversity, a wide range of resident whales and dolphins, as well as some of the finest and most important coral reefs on Earth.

The country comprises a chain of over 900 islands, which add up to 28,400 square-kilometres – roughly the size of the Waikato – and lies between 8-15° south of the Equator spread in a south-easterly arc across 1,500-km of ocean. The capital Honiara on the island of Guadalcanal is circa 1,800-km east of Papua New Guinea and 2,000-km north-east of Brisbane. Yet the Solomon Islands' isolation is also a part of the country's undoubted allure.

With wildlife tourism still only in its infancy the place makes a powerful appeal to those with an eye on the last birdwatching frontiers on our planet.

The obvious starting place for birdwatchers is the remarkable list of birds exclusive to the Solomons, to which can be added a secondary suite of birds that occur across the wider South Pacific region. There is a superb field guide in Guy Dutton's *Birds of Melanesia* (2011) that allows you to master all the technicalities and a valuable checklist prepared by Phil and Rowan Gregory of Sicklebill Safaris, one of few birdwatching companies to run tours to the country. The latter publication (2015) proposes a grand total of 102 endemic species, but suggests that this is likely to rise as the rapidly evolving taxonomy introduces more splits.

Just as the main human population is found on the six largest islands, so too are the birds. They are in rough clockwise order Choiseul, Santa Isobel, Malaita, Makira, Guadalcanal and New Georgia (this last is technically about 10 largely contiguous islands). Our visit focused on the last three and entailed a degree of internal travel back and forth to the main airport on the biggest island Guadalcanal.



▲ Yellow-bibbed Lory



▲ Oriole Whistler

I recall most vividly my first morning after our arrival. We had travelled to a tiny islet at the western edge of the New Georgia group for two nights in a rather well-named resort called Fatboys. The Pacific in this part of the tropics is largely free of surface swell and the sight of the sun's rising corona below a heaven of light-bathed cloud, all mirrored perfectly in the water's coppery surface, ranks among the most beautiful dawns I have ever seen. We soon realised that even without all the birds the Solomon Islands are a magnificent land and seascape.

A five-minute boat ride to my left was Gizo, an island pinprick with its own endemic, the endangered Gizo White-eye. Immediately ahead, and a journey of 15 minutes, was the imposing forest-cloaked volcano of Kolombangara, which is home to the equally range-restricted Kolombangara White-eye and Kolombangara Leaf Warbler. Almost as the sun rose, I could hear the repeated crooning notes of Island Imperial Pigeons and the higher, insatiable rubbery chatter from Coconut Lorikeets and Crimson Lories. Patrolling along the white-sand shoreline was an imposing Beach Kingfisher and just behind the cabin a pair of Melanesian Kingfishers hunted among the coconut groves.

These last five species are part of a suite that has adapted to the more heavily populated, coastal areas with their fields of crops, human settlements and relic patches of lowland forest. The birds favouring this habitat mix also include Stephan's Emerald Dove, Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove, Uniform and Glossy Swiftlets, Barred and White-bellied Cuckooshrikes and Metallic and

Singing Starlings, all of which recur on several islands. Another widespread beach dweller is Eastern Osprey, now separated from the rest of its global population as a distinct species. We could even watch these fabulous raptors plunge diving as we took breakfast on our hotel terrace in Honiara.

Given that island-hopping is often the order of the day, one spends a fair amount of time on open water and the seabirds were another delightful feature of the visit. Lesser Frigatebirds are common and patrol high overhead on the look-out for shoals of Skipjack and Yellow-finned Tuna. These large predatory species drive smaller fry to the sea surface and it is the relentless churn of the bait fish that can draw in big seabird flocks, not to mention schools of Common and Spinner Dolphins. Attendant birds included Brown Boobies, Great Crested, Common and Bridled Terns as well as Black and Brown Noddies. One large feeding frenzy near the capital had also lured in a Heinroth's Shearwater, a little known and rare *procellariid* that breeds only in Melanesia.

All the terns were in motley 'winter' plumages except for the locally breeding Black-naped Terns, which looked dazzling with their pristine white upperwing surfaces and tail streamers. A more unexpected product of our seawatching was the endemic Solomons Sea-Eagle. Yet the real excitement of the boat-trips lay in those tuna-driven feeding frenzies, with their sheer numbers of birds raining down relentlessly, and tuna sometimes so intent on the same prey that they rose clear of the water.



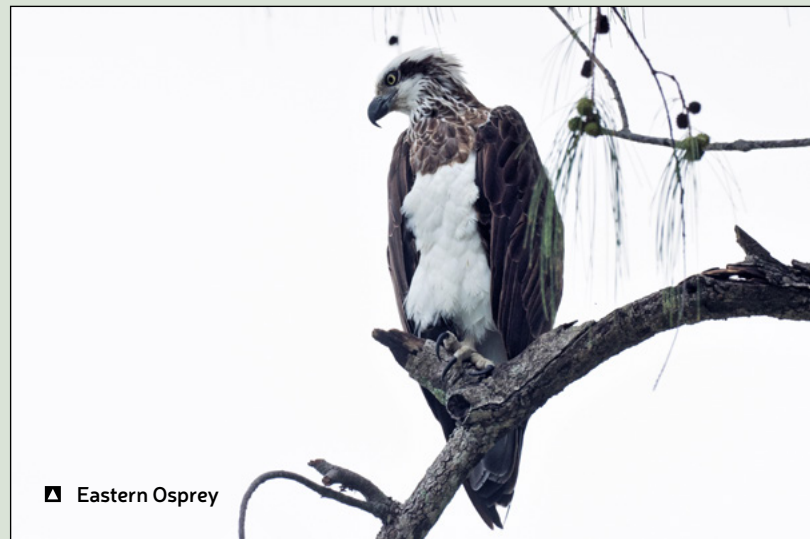
▲ Heinroth's Shearwater



▲ Black-naped Tern



▲ Cardinal Lory



▲ Eastern Osprey

These marine encounters were in sharp contrast to our rainforest excursions, in which most of the country's endemic birds are to be found. We often had to exchange coral sand and sunshine for emerald leaves and rain, and beachside leisure for arduous hill climbs. Yet the rewards were great and occasionally it was possible simply to drive to the top.

This was the case with Mt Austen on Guadalcanal, which is less than an hour's drive from downtown Honiara. Slash-and-burn agriculture has now reached right to the summit but from the clearings we obtained spectacular views over the spine of forest-covered mountains running down the core of this long island. There are also intact areas of high-quality forest on Mt Austen where we saw and heard the wonderful Blyth's Hornbill, whose wingbeats generated the powerful rhythmic chuffing of a steam train. It was also an excellent place to see Buff-headed Coucal, Solomon Cockatoo, Finsch's Pygmy Parrots and Steel-blue Flycatcher.

A key centre of activity for most visitors to the country is probably the one island with the highest level of endemism – Makira. While there is increased anxiety about rates of deforestation in parts of the archipelago, the native vegetation covers the vast majority of Makira and it is especially rich in wildlife. A prized location is the steep slopes around a tiny hill village in the Naara Valley, at the end of a challenging trek, which requires crossing the warm waters of the Rawo River no fewer than nine times. Yet the final destination is a glorious area of forest, where the morning atmosphere – blended of mist and ancient trees, of low-angled light and exotic dawn birdsong – was nothing short of magnificent.

Naara holds many of this island's key birds including the tiny and beautiful White-headed Fruit Dove, Mottled Flowerpecker, Sooty Myzomela, Makira Fantail, Long-tailed Triller, White-collared Monarch, Makira Honeyeater, Makira Starling and Makira Thrush. The last species combines all the tantalising shyness and unpredictability of its genus *Zoothera*, with the aura

of a little-known and highly restricted endemic. This thrush species has hardly even been photographed.

Another highly prized bird at the site was Melanesian Megapode, a chicken-like forest species that uses the elevated temperatures from subterranean volcanic activity or microbial heat generated in rotting vegetation to incubate its eggs. These are widely collected and much prized as food in the Solomon Islands, with possible consequences for the bird's survival. Yet it was common at Naara. Other highlights in the village were the evening roosts of Eclectus Parrots, the dawn passage of Moustached Treeswifts, the hunting excursions of Solomons Fish Eagle, as well as encounters with Pied Goshawk, Variable Dwarf Kingfisher, Spangled Drongo, Chestnut-bellied Monarch and Grey-throated White-eye.

The island that holds perhaps the most eagerly anticipated of Solomons birds is Santa Isabel. Like the Makira endemics these are attained only after a similarly arduous hill walk to a village called Tiratonga. Yet the site has become famous, especially for a trio of charismatic endemics – Fearful Owl, Solomons Frogmouth and Black-faced Pitta. Sadly, we were not able to include the island in our itinerary but, in a way, this gap in our experience typifies everyone's encounters with the archipelago. No single visit can truly encompass all that the country has to offer. The Solomon Islands are simply too rich, too diverse and too complex. One thing, however, is certain, everyone will leave this tropical country with the most wonderful set of memories.

Mark Cocker and David Tipling's visit was organised by the Solomon Islands Visitor Bureau: <https://www.visitsolomons.com.sb/>

Mark Cocker is an award-winning writer:

<http://www.markcocker.com/>

David Tipling is an award-winning photographer:

<https://davidtipling.com/>

This is a slightly abridged version of an article that first appeared in Birdwatch magazine in the UK.



▲ Melanesian Megapode



▲ Makira Starling



▲ Makira Thrush



▲ White-capped Monarch



▲ White-collared Monarch



▣ New Zealand Falcon. This is an example of being prepared to capture a bird in action. When I first saw the falcon perched on the Matagouri bush I spent some time taking still shots. After I was happy with the results, I knew it was going to eventually take flight, so I adjusted my setting to increase the shutter speed in order to freeze the movement of blast-off.

The Inspiration of Birds

Photographs
by Mike Ashbee

Mike Ashbee has very generously allowed us to publish his bird photographs in *Birds New Zealand* magazine since 2017. Here he answers questions about his bird photography.

Question: Why did you start photographing birds?

Answer: I started photographing birds as a tool to help identify the different birds that I saw when I lived in Edmonton in Alberta, Canada. I've been photographing birds for over 20 years now.

Q: What camera did you start with and what do you use now?

A: I started back in the days of 35mm film, with a Nikon F90 and a 70-300 mm kit lens. I switched to digital shortly thereafter and used a Nikon D70. Through the years I have upgraded several times and I now photograph birds with a Nikon D850 and a 500 mm prime lens.

Q: What was the best advice you received when starting?

A: Always keep the bird's welfare foremost in your mind, and never stress the subject that you are trying to photograph. We love these creatures and no shot is worth the risk of disturbing the bird. Always shoot in RAW format, even if you don't know how to process RAW format images (one day you will learn). JPEG images are compressed, so you will lose information, making it difficult to get the most out of your image during post-processing. Use the highest quality equipment that you can afford right now.

Q: What are your favourite New Zealand bird subjects and why?

A: I enjoy photographing bush birds the most as I find them to be very challenging subjects. I especially enjoy the curious nature of tomtits and robins, but birds like Brown Creeper or Yellowhead are also rewarding subjects to capture as they are very busy birds. Often the habitat of these birds makes for some technical challenges, including difficult exposures often requiring fill flash.

Q: Do you go out with certain shots in mind?

A: I definitely go out with targets in mind and often even have images imprinted in my mind that I want to create. Of course, if I come across something interesting that was 'unplanned' I will take the opportunity to shoot that too, and sometimes that can totally change the course of my shoot. A lot of successful nature photography is achieved by putting yourself in the right place at the right time and I have the ability to do this as a result of knowledge gained by observing birds and their seasonal behaviours over the years.

Q: Do you have any advice for bird photographers looking to improve?

A: I would say it is important to observe your subject and try to learn the behaviour of birds. Technical perfection and the right equipment won't get you 'the shot' – you will need to have an intimate knowledge of your subject first. Some technical tips that are important to remember would be to keep your subject at eye-level to avoid shooting down or up on a bird; to always keep the sun behind you; to use distant and uncluttered backgrounds to make the bird 'pop' in the frame; to include habitat; and to leave some room around the subject.

Q: Do you have tips for taking better shots of birds in flight?

A: Having a fast lens and a camera body with good auto-focus will help with taking photographs of birds in motion. I generally hand-hold for in-flight shots, and depending on the species I will keep my shutter speed between 1/1600th of a second and above. Again, putting in the time in the field observing bird behaviour will help you anticipate movement. Time in the field can teach us to recognise predictable bird behaviours, such as when a bird is looking to take flight or strike a prey item.

See more of Mike Ashbee's bird photography at: <https://www.mikeashbeephotography.com/>



▲ Rifleman. My favourite bird images include a sharp and well-lit subject, an interesting perch, and nice separation of the subject from a smooth background.



▲ NZ Tomtit. The best bird images combine interesting bird behaviour and technical perfection.



▲ Rock Wren. This image was shot on an overcast day with a little fill flash to add some 'pop' to the bird and put a specular highlight in the eye.



▣ White-capped Albatross. An example of the importance of eye-contact, which helps create a connection between bird and viewer.

▣ Wrybill. I found this bird in a sea of purple Maori musk, providing a nice contrast to the bird's grey plumage. Being at eye-level with the subject helped isolate the bird by creating a smooth background in the distance.



▣ Sacred Kingfisher. Photographed using a hide. I staked-out a location where I found this bird returning to the same perch. I considered lighting angle and time of day, then set up the hide accordingly in anticipation of this shot.





1. Birders find their place at Aka Aka (L-R): Ian Southey, Amber Calman (front), George Hobson, Bradley Shields, Genevieve Piton, Dayna Davies, Finn Davey, Joe Dillon, Emma Williams (front), Chelsea Ralls.



2. Ian Southey with Australasian Bittern. Photo by Emma Williams.



3. Making sure the tags are working before we release the bittern. Photo by Chelsea Ralls.

Aka Aka swampbird Youth Camp

I have participated in a number of the Birds New Zealand Youth Camps which are designed to encourage and educate Young Birders. It does take a bit of work and can get harder than it seems it should, but I enjoy the enthusiasm of the young participants, watching them find new birds and discover new aspects of birding. The participants seem to get their rewards too, finding friends and coming back. These Youth Camps are designed to introduce Young Birders to a range of experiences, but perhaps some of the older ones were ready for more of a challenge.

South Auckland began working around the lower Waikato River last year and discovered a wonderful wilderness of wetlands. There were good swamp birds such as Australasian Bittern, Spotless Crake and Fernbird, and access that ranged from easy to challenging. For this Youth Camp (5-10th Oct) we slept in tents, had them all help with the chores, and were joined by swamp bird scientist Emma Williams who was both educational and entertaining.

There were seven participants. They all seemed to like the water, mud and dense vegetation, and were keen to get into the thick of it. The pristine Kahikatea forest was laced with big tangles of Kiekie and threaded by a track that mostly required wading with random roots and mud patches. The Raupo was no better but at other times we could stroll along stop-banks. The Young Birders were already able to manage five-minute bird counts and the playback survey for crakes and Fernbirds, and a lot of checklists were submitted to the Atlas (see *eBird*).

We had planned a bittern survey but ended up locating a site where Emma could select a bird and set out a trap to catch it. This was easier said than done. A small team tramped through the dense vegetation carrying the cage trap and loud speaker in the morning and then, when it was checked in the afternoon, there was a bittern crouched in the cage trap. It was brought back to the stop bank, processed, fitted with a satellite tracker and released. Undaunted by its capture it turned to threaten us, gathered its dignity and stalked off into the swamp. Fantastic. We tried twice more but caught no others.

Local members helped and loaned gear but it was Chelsea Ralls who organised most of the logistics and made the camp work. John Charteris was a fantastic boatman while Stu and Kim Muir have not only cared for the river but were tremendous hosts making Te Papa eco-cottage available, arranging access and feeding us whitebait. We are grateful to the Society's President and Council for letting us proceed at fairly short notice. There seems to be a keen appetite for more project driven Youth Camps if anyone is willing to organise them.

IAN SOUTHEY

I was one of the lucky seven Young Birders that attended this awesome Youth Camp focused on monitoring and conservation of swamp birds:

Day 1: We arrived at Aka Aka where we camped on farmland overlooking the Waikato River. We met Stu the farmer who told us about his efforts to restore swamp habitat. After dinner, we all went to the swamp to listen for Australasian Bitterns and learn how to record them by taking compass bearings and counting how many booms each bird did.

Day 2: We did 5-minute bird counts in groups at several locations. My group met local skipper John who took us to Motutieke Island on the river. It was really cool to see the pristine Kahikatea swamp habitat. Species of note were Australasian Bittern, Spotless Crake and Fernbird.

Day 3: More bird counts in new areas. Emma Williams joined our group sharing her expertise on bitterns. That evening we returned to the swamp to try to find a bittern to catch by triangulating its booms.

Day 4: Emma, Genevieve and I waded into the swamp and set up the cage trap. We returned to check it a few hours later and found we had a bittern! We took it back out to the edge where we could safely handle it and everyone could have a good look. After taking measurements and fitting it with a radio transmitter we released it. As Ian put the bird down it puffed up its feathers and opened its beak in an aggressive threat display which was cool to watch - from a distance.

Day 5: The trap was reset in a similar location but we did not catch another bittern. George did some radio-tracking of the bittern caught the previous day and ended up coming close enough to check that it was okay. We also did more bird counts.

Day 6: We tried to catch another bittern before it rained, but the trap was empty.

Day 7: Our last day was spent cleaning and packing, and saying goodbye to everyone who made this thrilling camp possible.

Special thanks to Ian Southey for organising it and making sure we had a fun-filled itinerary; Chelsea Ralls for her organisation and the meals; Emma Williams for coming from Christchurch to share your knowledge of bitterns, and helping us catch one; Stu Muir for being such a great host and inspiring conservationist; and John Charteris for being our boat skipper. I'd also like to thank my fellow Young Birders: George Hobson, Joe Dillon, Finn Davey, Dayna Davies, Amber Calman and Genevieve Piton. Thanks for your constant enthusiasm and passion, and for caring about our endangered species.

BRADLEY SHIELDS

**AUCKLAND**

Our Spring surveys were blessed both with good weather and participants. For our Shakespear Regional Park Survey on 21/9 we had 15 participants who counted a record 2,713 birds, including 396 Tui, 112 Grey Warbler, 30 Whitehead, 8 North Island Saddleback, 5 Spotless Crake and 35 Northern NZ Dotterel.

Our Motutapu Island Survey on 6/10 had 11 participants, recording 11 NZ Shore Plover, 2 Reef Heron, 4 Banded Rail and 5 Spotless Crake. Of concern for the population of Pateke on the island, were 3 Mallard/Pateke hybrids seen at the Pumphouse Dam.

Our Pakiri Beach patrol on 13/10 found 28 birds from 12 species, including 8 Fluttering Shearwaters, 6 Common Diving Petrels, 1 Hutton's Shearwater, 3 Australian Magpies and 1 Kaka. A live bird count included 2 NZ Fairy Terns, 74 Northern NZ Dotterel and 61 VOCs. Birds found during our winter Muriwai Beach patrols mainly included various prions; however, our patrol on 2/11 found 31 birds of 14 species, including 10 Short-tailed Shearwater, 3 Sooty Shearwater, 1 White-headed Petrel, 1 Grey-faced Petrel and 1 White-chinned Petrel.

An Orakei Basin field trip to practice NZ Bird Atlas counts on 18/8 had 14 participants and recorded a breeding colony of 19 Pied Shags. A visit to Puketutu Island on 26/10 found 43 Royal Spoonbills, with 2 pure Grey Duck seen among 134 Mallards and hybrids. The Kia ora Kuaka event at Ambury on 22/9 included a talk on the shorebirds by David Lawrie followed by a guided bird walk with more than 90 members of the public taking part.

Fortunately, we had enough guides to cater for the high numbers. Birds New Zealand also operated a display stand at the Ambury Farm Park Day on 20/10. This was a large event with an estimated 30,000 people attending. We observed that the school aged children attending generally had a much better birding knowledge than their parents!

An unusual sighting was 2 Laughing Kookaburra seen perched at Tawharanui by Jeremy Painting on 15/9, while a more sinister report was one of a Kaka shot dead by vandals at Waiheke Island on 24/8. An interesting find was a Spotless Crake found dead on a suburban Mt Eden street on 23/8, many kilometres from the nearest wetland. The nearest population of Spotless Crakes is likely to be at Waiatarua Reserve in Remuera.
- IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

There's been good birding in South Auckland over the last few months. For much of the winter the flooded paddock at Piako and surrounds held some nice birds with up to 3 Far Eastern Curlews, 2 Black-tailed Godwits and 2 Hudsonian Godwits along with the long-staying Glossy Ibis and up to 18 Cattle Egrets. Unfortunately, no more reports of Fernbirds have been received from the area.

For the real twitchers this was soon eclipsed by a Black-faced Cuckooshrike reported from Wairamarama by David Walters on 8/7. A long-staying but elusive bird, it seems to still be around. Its identity was confirmed from a photograph taken by

a local while visiting birders have made a tremendous effort for just 1 sighting between them.

Fossicking birders have turned up some good records. Phil Hammond found a Brown Teal with a brood of 5 ducklings at Puhinui on 27/7 and David Lawrie led a group to the Tuakau waste water ponds on 28/7 and found 14 Black-fronted Dotterels, not a first record but a very high count here. Lately the Aka Aka Cattle Egrets have been elusive but 22 were found by Phil Hammond on 22/7 and they have stayed in the area. Phil also found a Chestnut-breasted Shelduck at Miranda on 25/9. Joe Dillon spotted a New Zealand Dotterel on a ploughed onion paddock at the Bombay cross roads on 5/10 - plenty of opportunity there for this species if they can make a success of that habitat.

From home we have been following the progress of 3 Pacific Golden Plovers fitted with satellite tags at Miranda. Two transmitters appear to have failed just before southward migration and the third suggests the bird is now enjoying a tropical sojourn in Kiribati. The first spring migrant reported was Shining Cuckoo heard near Awhitu by Ian and Anna McNaughton on 8/8 and, unusually for us, a Long-tailed Cuckoo was reported at Bombay on 17/10. We are always glad to see the waders back and while checking them out Tony Habraken and David Lawrie have spotted a couple of interesting strangers.

A Little Stint appeared at Karaka on 15/9 and was popular with birders until last seen there on 21/10. The other, by current consensus a Broad-billed Sandpiper, was found at Miranda on 26/10. It lacks the obvious split supercilium that we usually see in that species and the bill does not appear to be flattened, although similar in profile. These 2 overshadow brief visits by a possible Asian Dowitcher there on 17-18/10 found by Amanda Hunt and a Terek Sandpiper reported on 25/10.

A youth camp was held at Aka Aka in October, our beach patrols have continued unspectacularly, and most squares for the Atlas in our region have been visited at least once, the exceptions being far flung parts of the Coromandel Peninsula and some offshore islands. Our new regional recorder, Sue Frostick, is leading from the front ensuring that the region gets covered.
- IAN SOUTHEY

WAIKATO

Ray Buckmaster spoke to us about the birds of Vietnam at the August meeting. A field trip explaining the new Atlas and the skills needed to utilise it was a great success. In September Bruce Postill give a talk on the shorebird survey in North Korea. This was a chance to monitor the large flocks of birds from both sides of the border with China. There are still large areas because of military installations that are yet to be surveyed. It is hoped there will be another survey there in 2020.

In October Gerry Kessels talked to us about wind farms. The West Coast of the North Island is a prime site for their expansion. The move towards zero carbon emissions could result in many more on the West Coast by 2050. Two reports both indicate an insignificant loss of migrating birds due

to wind turbines with Wrybill being of most concern, but better management of their breeding sites could alleviate this.

The Karioi Maunga project is promoting 'Trap Aware Parties' in the Raglan Area. Thanks to Predator-Free NZ, traps are subsidised which makes owning one very affordable. If you feel this could be good for your backyard then contact www.predatorfreenz.org

On the bird front Russell Canning reports 2 Southern Fulmar off Ruapuke. Other live bird sightings include 3 each of Whimbrel and Far Eastern Curlew, a Marsh Sandpiper and even a Terek Sandpiper at the Robert Findley reserve at Te Aroha. Two Blue Petrels found beach cast.

On my beach at Onemana and beaches up and down the Coromandel the NZ Dotterels are busy nesting. Some chicks have already hatched. Tidal variants along with the wind move the beaches quite regularly so some nests that start off in good positions can end up being lost, despite valiant efforts by volunteers. This plus people and predators make life hard for this iconic endemic bird but they keep trying and over the years fledged birds have increased yearly to the point that they are expanding their range southwards.
- KEN WEDGWOOD

TARANAKI

As Spring arrives birds are becoming more vocal and conspicuous, and members had plenty of observations from their home territories. The Cockerams live close to Egmont National Park, where they heard and saw Bellbirds and a Long-tailed Cuckoo. In town there were the usual introduced finches along with Morepork, Tui, Blackbirds and Song Thrush. Royal Spoonbill were still around the coast with 13 at Mokau in August. Beach patrols turned up little apart from a giant petrel spp.

For September's field trip we headed down to South Taranaki to visit a couple of places we hadn't been to for some time. Nowell's Lakes just out of Hawera is close to the coast. There are 2 separate lakes, 1 has had a lot of planting around so bird life was good, introduced finches, NZ Fantail, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Grey Warbler and Silvereye; Skylark and Swamp Harrier over the paddocks; Welcome Swallow over both lakes.

The other lake is surrounded by paddocks but has a lot of flax, rushes and trees at one end so we saw Black Swan, Mallard, NZ Scaup, Australasian Shoveler, and Black Shag. We all got a good sighting of 2 (possibly 3) Australasian Bittern. At Hawera oxidation ponds waterfowl were plentiful: Black Swan from egg to adult, Grey Duck, Mallard, 7 Pied Stilt, 2 Canada Geese and the largest number of Grey Teal and Aus. Shoveler we have seen in Taranaki.

Early October and we returned to one of our favourite places, Pukeiti, on a fine warm spring morning. We split up and wandered the many paths; Tui and Bellbird were the most numerous and vocal. NZ Pigeon were flying to and fro, some display diving, Whitehead seen and heard, a male NZ Tomtit, NZ Fantail, Grey Warbler in full song, Silvereye darting from tree to tree, Chaffinch numerous, a few Goldfinch, Greenfinch and a



lucky few saw a NI Robin. All paths returned to the café; all-in-all a pleasant morning ramble. Finally repeat after me, "Atlasing is not a competition". – PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

The August field trip to Blowhard Bush was attended by 6 members. A group of 7 members visited the East Clive beachfront and Tukituki River mouth in September, and were rewarded with sightings of Royal Spoonbill, New Zealand and Banded Dotterels, and Pied Shag. Bernie Kelly has been running a predator trap line along the beachfront and estuary to protect nesting birds. Checking the traps on the walk back to the vehicles yielded 2 Weasels and a Norway Rat.

In October, 8 people went to Lake Opouahi and Boundary Stream Mainland Island. There had been reports of a Whio at Lake Opouahi, but sadly it did not put in an appearance during this trip. However, 11 NZ Dabchicks plus 3 juveniles, a pair of NZ Scaup, as well as a very friendly Fernbird and a couple of NI Robins made for a great visit. At Boundary Stream, we observed the translocation of 4 K k into the aviary, where they will be held for acclimatisation before release into the reserve.

We were treated to some quality time with a pair of Rifleman as they flitted about, courtesy of Ines Moran, a PhD student at the University of Auckland. Ines told us about her and fellow student Yen Loo's studies of them. Their short notes about Long-tailed Cuckoo predation of Rifleman and Grey Warbler aggressive behaviour towards Rifleman are in the June 2019 and September 2019 issues of *Notornis*.

The 'usual suspects' for Boundary Stream were also observed, including NI Robins, NZ Tomtits, Whiteheads and a North Island K kako feeding on leaves beside the track. Several people saw a Curlew Sandpiper at the Westshore 'scrapes' in Napier in September, and Denise spotted a Giant Petrel spp. off Perfume Point.

Margaret and Wayne Twytle report that White-fronted Terns are gathering at the Clive/Ngaruroro River mouth in quite big numbers (at least 400 on 30/10), with lots of courtship feeding observed, and circa 100 Black-billed Gulls. A small Black-billed Gull and White-fronted Tern colony also appears to have set up nesting on a small island within the Pandora Ponds area of Ahuriri Estuary. It would be a first to have 2 active colonies in the area, and also interesting to see how the birds fare in the latter location as public use of the area is very high over summer.
– THALIA SACHTLEBEN & BERNIE KELLY

WHANGANUI

Spring brought some unusual birds to Whanganui, and provided an opportunity to record some other notable species more widely across the region. Lynne Douglas, our steadfast finder-of-things-unusual, was at the North Mole of the mouth of the Whanganui River in a near-gale force wind on 22/10, photographing the stormy sea, when she saw an unusual tern sheltering with a small group of White-fronted Terns.

We quickly established that the bird was a first-year Crested Tern. Four of us, including

Lynne, managed to get excellent photographs to support the submission of an Unusual Bird Report. If validated, this would be only the 14th record of this species in New Zealand since it was first recorded in 1910.

A coastal species, Crested Tern occurs through much of the tropical and warm temperate regions of the Indian Ocean, from southern Africa to Australia and into the tropical western Pacific. Its nearest breeding colonies are along the south coast of Australia, including Tasmania. We suspect that it got caught up in a deep low-pressure system that tracked west to east along the southern Australian coast in early October, before ending up stalled over northern New Zealand a few days later.

At the same time as Lynne was watching the tern, Paul Gibson was photographing a Grey Plover a kilometre further upriver. Unlike the tern, which disappeared the following day, the plover stayed around for some days, allowing birders from as far as Auckland an opportunity to see and photograph it. This has also been submitted as a UBR.

Then, on 1/11, Ormond Torr photographed a Cape Petrel inside the Whanganui River estuary. All these records followed a period of sustained, often gale-force, westerly to north-westerly winds and intermittent southerlies.

Outside the excitement of these unusual birds, progress continues to be made with mapping bird distribution under the New Zealand Bird Atlas scheme. Of the 232 separate 10 km-square grids in the Manawatū-Whanganui atlas area, 123 fall within the Whanganui region. Of these, just over 46% have been visited at least once, with an average of 6 checklists and 18 species recorded in almost 2 hours observation per square. The big gaps are in the north of the region, including most of Whanganui National Park and along the currently closed Forgotten World Highway (SH43). Unsurprisingly, the best surveyed squares are in urban areas.

One interesting finding so far has been how widespread Whiteheads are in some interior regions, especially the Kaurapaoa and Kai Iwi catchments, where Whitehead were recorded calling at almost every site surveyed, including in growing and recently harvested pine plantations (provided there were remnants of native bush). A Long-tailed Cuckoo was induced to reveal itself at one of these sites. North Island Robin was only marginally less frequently recorded.
– PETER FROST

WAIARAPA

"A Miscellany of Wellington Birds" was the title of our September meeting's talk given by Geoff de Lisle, which covered current bird projects, recent translocations and issues facing birds in the Wellington region. October saw us taking a trip down the Zambezi River: a re-living of a 5-day canoe trip recently undertaken by local members Anna and Pete including close encounters with hippos, crocs, elephants and a fantastic selection of birds. The August field trip was a saunter around Fensham Reserve near Carterton. Nothing unusual, but all sightings were added to the Atlas.

September gave us a chance to visit

Taumata Lagoon near Greytown. This QE2 covenant features an old ox-bow of the Ruamahanga River and a fragment of original Kahikatea forest. There was a plethora of birds enjoying the locale and 25 species were dutifully added to the Atlas.

Another QE2 covenanted bush area in the Tararua foothills near Greytown was the focus of our October field trip. We climbed to the c400m. This was a chance to check out birds in a variety of habitats. We heard our first Shining Cuckoos of the year. Other sightings of note included the large influx of Black-billed Gull spending the winter on pasture near Lake Wairarapa. An extra 600 gulls (in addition to our resident population of some 200 birds) seem to spend the winters and we would be interested in knowing where they normally reside and breed.

Banded Dotterels are having a hard time breeding on our rivers this season with high flows destroying many nesting attempts. Far greater success is being had by the birds that have chosen to nest on stony and heavily grazed paddocks some 200m from the river.
– OLIVER DRUCE & JOANNA McVEAGH

WELLINGTON

The East Harbour Conservation Group (MIRO) is conducting its 4th season of a project on Banded Dotterels. Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) members are helping with the project through banding/flagging and monitoring. There are 2 study sites, 1 on the beach by the residential area of Eastbourne and the other at the outlet of 1 of the Pencarrow Lakes. The project's main focus is on monitoring the population, including nesting success.

Last season there were numerous nest failures on the Eastbourne beach which were eventually shown through trail-camera footage, to be due to predation by a cat. While there were early indications this season of successful breeding on the Eastbourne beach, subsequently 5 of the first 6 nests failed.

Trail camera footage again showed predation of a nest by a cat, almost certainly a domestic cat. Similar to last season, predation occurred at night. The poor nesting success on the Eastbourne beach is in marked contrast to the Pencarrow Lakes study site where chicks have been produced from all of the first 4 nests. At both sites, measures have been taken to protect nests, including predator control, fencing and signage. Unless measures can be taken on the Eastbourne beach to prevent predation by cats, including domestic cats, there is no future for Banded Dotterels at this site.

Birds New Zealand Young Birder George Hobson is Campaign Manager for the Banded Dotterel in the 2019 Bird of the Year vote run by Forest and Bird. He is hoping to attract enough votes to win this year.
– GEOFF DE LISLE

NELSON

Spring got away with a report of a Shining Cuckoo calling at Ruby Bay on 25 September, a similar date to previous years. Very few other reports came in. Migrant Bar-tailed Godwits in the Waimea Estuary were seen from early September with 350 counted on the shellbanks (7/9). Rob Schuckard reports numbers continued increasing through



September and October with juveniles among the later arrivals. On 31 October an estimated 2,600 Bar-tailed Godwits and 150 Red Knots were counted on the eastern end of Rabbit Island, with a Pacific Golden Plover amongst the latter.

On 19 October the rain cleared for a field trip headed by Willie Cook to Bells Island to view Arctic migrants beyond the Richmond water treatment ponds. Access is strictly controlled to this part of the Waimea Estuary and attendance was strong. Unfortunately, as 1 member commented, "there were more members than godwits!" A good high tide with the wind behind it had pushed the waders elsewhere with a non-negotiable channel between, but there was good viewing of the Caspian Tern colony. The highlight was a well-dressed Gull-billed Tern.

A Red-legged Partridge strutting across a property in Hope, close to Richmond township, surprised a member in mid-October. California Quail have again been seen around Atawhai. Weka established in built up areas, accepted or not, hardly get mentioned now, but quite often fall foul of roads and motorways. Our indoor evening meetings were well-attended with *eBird* Atlas discussions, members' presentations (often of trips out of New Zealand), and local bird news.
- GAIL D QUAYLE

CANTERBURY

Evening meetings continue to be the best attended of our regular events. Recently, we've received an update on the excellent work of the Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group and how it benefits the species that nest on the Ashley River, such as Black-billed Gull and Wrybill. We've also heard details about the Australasian Bittern project which the Department of Conservation is currently undertaking at Lake Ellesmere in order to learn more about this cryptic species so that it can more effectively be managed. In addition, we've seen the benefits of a good camera and how it can enhance our observations and enjoyment of birds.

Numbers attending our field trips have unfortunately been very low in recent months. In fact, 2 of our trips attracted only 2 people, 1 of which was the trip leader! At least these two productive birders managed to enter lists for 6 Atlas squares per trip, and had a good day out birding both times.

A few exciting vagrants are present in Canterbury at the moment. A Little Stint can be seen among the migratory waders at Lake Ellesmere. Being in alternate plumage, it is easily picked out from the Red-necked Stints. First seen at Kaitorete Spit, it has since been reported from the Embankment Road area. The other especially interesting vagrant is a Greater Sand Plover, which has been seen at the Ashley Estuary since mid-October. The Sanderling that has been present there since December 2018 also continues to be seen.

Other notable sightings are of species in areas they are not usually seen. One of these is a Black-billed Gull colony that has established on the foundations of a demolished building in central Christchurch. At least 130 nests were counted as of late October, and it will be interesting to see what happens to the colony. Down in south Canterbury, a single Fernbird

was first reported at Wainono Lake Road on 7/9 and was seen again twice that month. Either the range of this species has expanded into the area, or a relic population has been found. - ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

Otago members have been busy through Spring, although cold and wild weather presented challenging conditions. Otago's coverage in the NZ Bird Atlas continues to increase with 2 'atlasing' field trips visiting squares with different habitats (inland, coastal). Regional Coordinator Richard Schofield reported that for the first winter, 29% of Otago squares had some coverage. Spring coverage is already higher with 28% of squares having had counts submitted and a total number of 96 species for Otago.

Our Botanic Gardens bird guiding event held in September attracted 42 birdwatchers and we had 14 local members guiding. 22 species were recorded, 11 of which were native species and 11 introduced. The event also included the launch of the Dunedin Botanic Garden Wild Bird Guide written by Otago Regional Representative Mary Thompson.

A pelagic trip in August recorded 15 species, while Graeme Loh went 62km offshore and recorded 20 species, including 9 different albatross and 1 NZ Pipit 42km offshore. A few weeks later a newspaper reported a juvenile Buller's Mollymawk grounded at Roxburgh.

Local projects underway during Spring included the Dunedin Town Belt bird survey. Bruce McKinlay reports that in 2018, 431 counts were completed, bringing the total species list to 30. Robins Beyond Orokonui has Georgina Pickerell coordinating a team of volunteers on fortnightly visits. Things are off to a promising start with some adult South Island Robins having been banded and 4 nests found.

Interesting observations included a Whimbrel at Warrington, a Black-fronted Dotterel on the river near Balclutha, an Australasian Bittern on the upper Dart, and Australasian Crested Grebes at Lake Tuakitoto and Katiki Reservoir. A Pied Shag was recorded a long way inland at Lake Wanaka.

Timings seemed odd for some species. Royal Spoonbill were apparently slow to return, and Banded Dotterel and SIPO in the Manuherikia were not nesting when expected. The first Shining Cuckoo was not recorded until 6/10. Those working with Titi or Sooty Shearwater noticed a slower return to full numbers at local colonies, however an impressive count of Titi was reported with 150 - 170 birds flying past Taiaroa Head per minute. Indoor meetings took us from Central Dunedin to South Africa, the Subantarctic Crozet Islands and the Galapagos Islands.
- FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

SOUTHLAND

Our Spring weather has been more like winter for the past month or so, with gale force winds and heavy rain with cold temperatures frustrating many birding trips. Finally, this week we are getting temperatures in the mid-20s.

We hope to conduct our wader count this

weekend. Saturday looks okay but Sunday will bring in southerly winds and rain, so we need to cover as many sites as possible on Saturday. Once again, we struggle to get all our usual counters available for the dates selected, not that we have many to choose from.

The Atlas scheme seems to be gathering momentum with many squares being visited in both winter and spring. We still have the many islands off the coast to visit but this will have to wait until we can organise boats or helicopters. Sightings so far this year have included a New Zealand Falcon sighted in Otatara not far from the Oreti River Bridge on 1/9 and on Queens Drive close to Queens Park on 9/9. On 10/10 a juvenile Buller's Albatross dropped in to the council car park for a rest after gale force winds, it was in good health and the Department of Conservation picked up the wayward bird and it was released the next day off Tiwai Point.

Our regular visiting Marsh Sandpiper was seen again on 8/10, 13/10 and 18/10. It was once again at the north end of the lagoon associating with Pied Stilts. Matt Jones reported a Black-fronted Dotterel at Horseshoe Bay on Stewart Island on 10/10, possibly a first record of this species on the island. Finally, 1 of our Gull-billed Terns was spotted hawking along the New River Estuary adjacent to Stead Street, not far from the entrance to Invercargill airport.
- PHIL RHODES

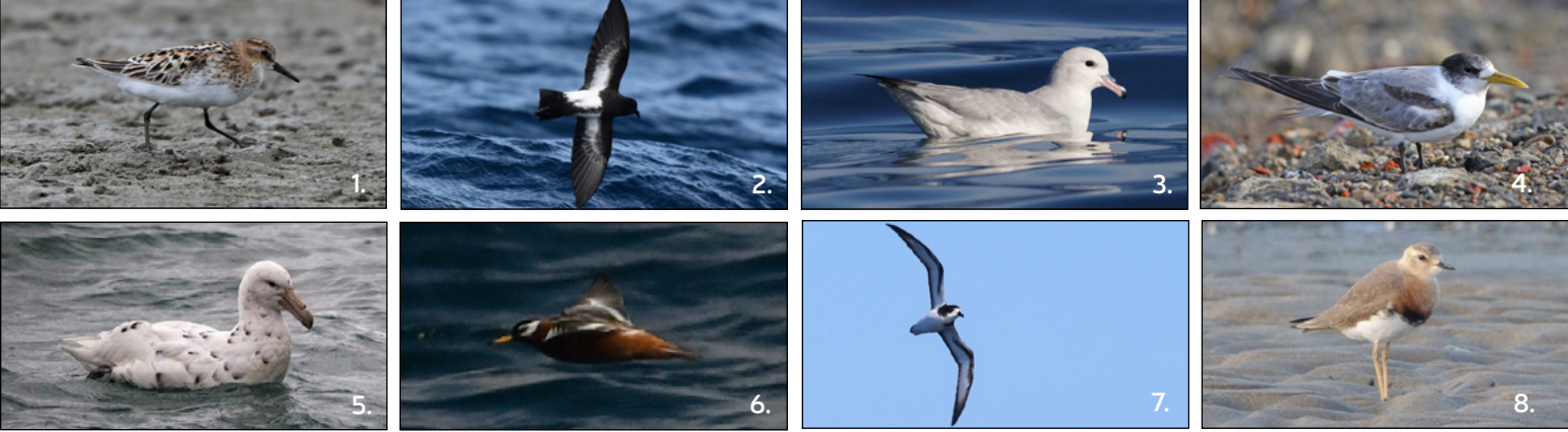
Banding data migration completed

We are pleased to announce the completion of the data migration of some 1.3 million records of bird bands from various disparate sources and formats into a staging database. Various data validation and error-checking processes enabled us to identify 'dirty data' and separate these from the 'clean data' that will ultimately be used to populate the final database.

The dirty data comprise records that violate formatting and business rules, for example: records of the same band placed on different birds; birds resighted before being banded; birds dying repeatedly; incorrect band sizes used; future-dated records etc. The next step is to scrutinise and 'scrub' the dirty data, and then contact banders to check their original records if possible.

Clean data so far includes 1,075,208 records of 287 taxa banded since 1938 and a further 173,371 resighting and 24,187 recovery records. Banding effort per year peaked in 1968, with 34,594 records of birds banded. The Silvereye tops the native bird species list at 113,105 birds banded and 23,229 resighting records. This is closely followed by the Red-billed Gull with 98,097 birds banded. We have also received a total of 78,878 records of bands currently held in stock by various banders, though we have reason to believe there are still more bands out there.

MICHELLE BRADSHAW



❑ 1. Little Stint at Kidds Beach/Steve Wood. 2. Black-bellied Storm Petrel off Poor Knights Islands/Bruce Wedderburn. 3. Antarctic Fulmar off Kaikoura/Donald Snook. 4. Gt Crested Tern at the Whanganui River mouth/Paul Gibson. 5. White morph Southern Giant Petrel off Aramoana/Nick Foster. 6. Grey Phalarope off Kaikoura/Richard Crossley. 7. Gould's Petrel off Three Kings Islands/Tim Barnard. 8. Oriental Dotterel at Tolaga Bay/rubecula (<https://inaturalist.nz/observations/22580600>)

Bird News

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

New Zealand Dabchick bred at Taylor Dam (Marlborough) for the 4th breeding season in a row, with a pair seen there with a chick on 16/10. Five **Hoary-headed Grebe** were seen on Lake Elterwater (1/9) suggesting there could be breeding again this season. A **Cape Barren Goose** pair bred at St. Anne's Lagoon (Canterbury) with sightings of a juvenile bird during Sept-Oct. A lone **Chestnut-breasted Shelduck** was at Miranda 20-28/9 and the 2 long-staying **Plumed Whistling Duck** were reported at Anderson Park (Taradale) on 27/3 and 2/5. There were 7 **Australian Wood Duck** by Ridgeview Road near Mapua on 12/3, 5 at Playhouse Theatre ponds near Mapua on 23/7 and 2/9, and 1 on 9/10. There were sightings of lone **Northern Shoveler** at Bromley oxidation ponds from 26/4 to 1/5, at Pegasus wetland in Woodend on 4/5, Kaitorete Spit on 16/6, Nelson WTP on 3/8, Te Aroha on 19/8, Lake Elterwater from 25/9 to 15/10, and Westmere Lake near Whanganui on 8/10. A **White-eyed Duck** was also seen at Blenheim WTP (5-29/4). There was a record of a **Nankeen Kestrel** at Peria (Northland) on 24/5, but the **Renwick Black Kite** has not been reported since 25/1.

A **Western Rockhopper Penguin** was seen at Victory Beach (Otago Peninsula) on 9/2, an **Erect-crested Penguin** on south-east Mangere Island (Chatham Islands) on 16/2, and a **Macaroni Penguin** on North East Island (Snares Islands) on 6/3. A **Royal Penguin** found on a beach south of Dunedin on 24/2 was taken into care but died shortly after. An unusual record was a **Fiordland Crested Penguin** with a **Yellow-eyed Penguin** and a **Little Penguin** near Oamaru on 21/10. The same penguin was taken into care a few days later with an infected dog bite. An unusual **Buller's Mollmawk** record was 1 seen flying over the river in the centre of Whanganui on 4/6. An **Antarctic Fulmar** was seen in Cook Strait on 23/5. There were further sightings of 1 at sea off Kaikoura in July, plus 1 on 2/8 and 1 on 14/9. Further north, 2 were seen at sea off Papanui Pt (Waikato) on 3/8.

A record of a **Collared Petrel** north of the Three Kings Islands (17/3) has been submitted to the Rarities Appraisal Committee with a decision pending. A very unusual record was a **Juan Fernandez Petrel** seen at sea north-west of Mana Island on 24/3, as was a record of 2 **Mottled Petrel** taken into care at Tasman Glacier on 14/5. Further north, 3 **Wilson's Storm Petrel** were seen east of the Poor Knights Islands on 20/4, and a **Grey-backed Storm Petrel** (2/8) and a **Grey Petrel** (14/9) were seen at sea off Kaikoura. Another Tutukaka pelagic trip recorded a **White-headed Petrel** and a **Black-bellied Storm Petrel** on 6/10 off the Poor Knights Islands, and lone **Short-tailed Shearwater** were seen off Matakaoa Point (Hicks Bay) on 17/4 and in Cook Strait on 23/5.

A Houhora pelagic trip to the Three Kings Islands (17-20/3) recorded 28 **White-naped Petrel**, 130+ **Black-winged Petrel**, 4 **Kermadec Petrel**, 1 **Gould's Petrel**, 1 **Kermadec Petrel**, 2 **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, 19 **Wedge-tailed Shearwater**, 4 **Long-tailed Skua**,

1 **Black Noddy** and 1 **White Tern**. A **Red-footed Booby** was seen in North Taranaki Bight on 10/5 and a **Brown Booby** was at the Muriwai gannet colony on 3/8. Sixteen **Glossy Ibis** were seen feeding at the end of Dillons Point Road near Blenheim on 23/9, rising to 27 on 7/10. Up to 7 **Marsh Crane** were seen at a wetland near Kaiapoi from 28/7 to 16/9 and a **Bobwhite Quail** was reported at Maui Street (Kaikoura) on 4/5.

The **Broad-billed Sandpiper** first seen at Miranda on 3/12/18 stayed until 21/4. An **Oriental Dotterel** was found in Tolaga Bay on 12/3, a **Great Knot** was at Whitford (East Auckland) from 12-23/3, and lone **Black-tailed Godwit** were seen on Whanganui River Estuary on 30/3 and Waimea Estuary (Nelson) on 13/4. A **Greenshank** was at Wairoa River mouth 3-22/4, and a **Great Knot** and 3 **Sanderling** on Farewell Spit on 8/7. A very rare sighting was a **Grey Phalarope** at sea off Kaikoura on 17/7. Up at Miranda, there were 3 **Far Eastern Curlew** on 24/8, 3 **Whimbrel** on 1/10, and a **Marsh Sandpiper** on 13/10. A **Marsh Sandpiper** and 5 **Red-necked Stint** were at Lake Ellesmere on 17/9, solo **Hudsonian Godwit** at Piako (6/4), Miranda (24/8) and Little Waihi (22/9), and a **Grey-tailed Tattler** at Pounaweia (Catlins River) on 29/9.

A possible **Cox's Sandpiper** and 2 **Greater Sand Plover** were reported at Kidds Beach (South Auckland) on 15/9 along with a **Little Stint** that stayed to 21/10. A second **Little Stint** was reported at Kaitorete Spit and Lake Ellesmere (Canterbury) from 12/10 to 24/10. A long-staying **Sanderling** was reported at Ashley Estuary (Canterbury) from 15/12/18 to 2/10. A **Marsh Sandpiper** was at Lake Ellesmere from 18/9 to 10/10, lone **Greater Sand Plovers** were at Waikanae Estuary (12/10) and Ashley Estuary (14/10), a **Marsh Sandpiper** was at Tip Lagoon (Invercargill) on 1/10. A **Terek Sandpiper** was reported at Miranda on 25/10 and then a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** (27/10). A **Black-fronted Dotterel** found on Horseshoe Beach near Oban (14/10) was probably a first record for Stewart Island. A **Grey Plover** found on the lower Whanganui River estuary (22-30/10) was probably a first record for the district.

A **Great Crested Tern** was recorded at the Whanganui River mouth (22-25/10). Three **White-winged Black Tern** were present at Bromley oxidation ponds (24-27/3), plus 2 at Southern Marsh by Ahuriri Estuary (Napier) on 12/4, 1 at Westshore Wildlife Reserve (Napier) on 2/5, 1 at the Kaituna River mouth on 28/4, 1 at Pukehina Spit (Bay of Plenty) on 24/4, and 1 at the Waimakariri River on 12/10. Two dead beach-cast **White Terns** were reported from Otaki on 11/6.

A **Black-faced Cuckooshrike** was reported at Nolan Road in Wairamarama (Waikato) on 8/7, then again on 13/9 and 7/10. There was an unconfirmed record of 2 **Fork-tailed Swift** at Mount Cargill (Dunedin) on 21/9 and the long-staying **Common Myna** was seen regularly in New Brighton (Christchurch) through the year to 4/10.

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



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