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Birds New Zealand



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Birds New Zealand **goodness KITCHEN**



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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.

||||||| NO. 20 DECEMBER 2018 |||||

- 3 From the President's Desk
- 4 80th Conference and AGM 2019
- 5 Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018
- 9 New Zealand Bird Atlas
- 10 Solomon Islands birdwatching
- 14 Back to the Future in Northland
- 15 New Birds New Zealand logo and website
- 16 Regional Roundup
- 19 Book Reviews

COVER IMAGE

Yellow-crowned Parakeet or Kakariki, Lake Rotopounamu, North Island. Photo by Mike Ashbee.

India's dawn chorus

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

India's diversity of habitat types and altitudes give it a rich bird life. It has over 1200 bird species including 70 raptors, 30 duck and geese species, and 8 stork varieties.

We visit 5 magnificent National Parks: in the Himalayas, the Ganges Plains and on the Deccan Plateau. In this season we will also see masses of migratory birds from north Asia. And wildlife, including tigers, is a bonus.



Colour India

Contact: colourindia.co.nz | elight@kiwilink.co.nz
09 422 0111 | 021 235 3932

From the President's Desk

Council Meeting

Council met in Christchurch in early October and worked through a full agenda. Of particular importance was the report that Council received from Nikki McArthur (Wildlife Management International Ltd) on his work on the National Bird Monitoring Scheme (see page 9). From a Council perspective good progress is being made on this new flagship project for the Society and we are confident that it will be able to be launched at the 2019 New Zealand Bird Conference in Wellington.

2019 Conference and AGM Wellington

Planning is well in hand for the Society's 2019 Conference and 80th Annual General Meeting which is being held at the Brentwood Hotel complex in Wellington. Bookings will open next month, so start making your plans and confirming bookings to get there for what will be a wonderful weekend to celebrate our Society. In order to fit everything in, conference organisers have had to drop workshops from the conference programme. Wellington Regional Representative Geoff de Lisle and Society Vice President Ian Armitage have worked hard to be able to offer reasonable registration rates, and are organising around five main themes each supported by a plenary 45-minute talk. The conference themes are at this stage: New Zealand Bird Atlas, Kakapo, Auckland Islands, Wellington birds, and pre-human extinct birds of New Zealand. Conference organisers are promoting posters as an equal alternative to oral presentations and there will be seven field trips covering full and half day options.

Notornis

Notornis editor Craig Symes advises that he has a full list of submissions for the forthcoming editions of the Society's journal, but as usual is encouraging authors to submit draft manuscripts to ensure future editions are filled with interesting new papers. Council has also decided to investigate in more detail members' expectations of *Notornis* into the future. In the New Year you can expect to receive an invitation to participate in a survey to find out in more depth what your expectations are of *Notornis* in future.

Society Awards

The Society has a number of well-established awards for members and non-members who have made a difference and deserve recognition. This is the time of year to be thinking about who among your peers, colleagues and friends has made a difference to your bird watching or to the Society's activities, and consider writing up the nomination. Criteria and background are posted online here: https://www.osnz.org.nz/sites/osnz.org.nz/files/Awards%20-%20Guidelines_1.pdf

Conservation Policy rewrite

As a result of the Notice of Motion passed at the last AGM asking

Council to review and reword the Society's Conservation Policy to make it more relevant to current needs, Council considered the following as a suggested draft:

'The Policy of the Society is to assist the conservation and management of birds by providing scientific evidence. Where it is appropriate, individuals and Regions can support bird conservation by participating in hearings, meetings, or other processes to explain scientific evidence and advocate for a given action based on that evidence. Resourcing of such activities is at the cost of the individuals and Regions involved.'

Council feels that this is within the Society's rules and responds to the issues raised at the last AGM. Feedback from Society members is requested to ensure that we have not missed any perspectives.

Constitutional issues

Council is proposing some changes to the Society's rules at the 2019 AGM. These are minor in nature and reflect more than anything the need to keep our rules as a Society up to date in a changing world and the changing expectations of members. Council thinks that the following matters need addressing:

- Electronic ballots: Council is investigating how to bring electronic voting into the Constitution so as to make future ballots more efficient and cost effective.
- Membership category to support Young Birders: Council is looking to update the membership categories to support the work we have been undertaking with the MOU with Young Birders NZ. The Young Birders Network already has a structure but they do want to associate with Birds New Zealand. Current Society membership categories don't accommodate this sort of relationship.
- Succession Planning and workloads: Council is considering whether to change the emphasis of the Council structure by disestablishing the role of Vice President as an elected role and making it a role appointed from within Council. This would be intended to ensure that we build experience within Council and develop a succession plan from within Council.

Feedback is welcome on these ideas and any others that Society members think Council should be addressing.

Otago Region members are in the middle of undertaking the second year of counts in the town belt and it was a pleasure to be out one Sunday morning recently, listening and recording the cacophony of Blackbirds, Silvereyes, Bellbirds and Redpolls (not that Redpolls are particularly cacophonous) in the mixed habitats of the city.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, President

Certificate of Membership

At some point, you may be required to provide evidence of your membership of Birds New Zealand. For example, when applying for permits to visit bird sanctuaries overseas. Please note that, as a current member of the Society, you can request an email version of a "Certificate of Membership" by contacting our Membership Secretary: membership@osnz.org.nz (or phone 03-9807111 or 0274527574).

David Medway Scholarship

This scholarship, named in commemoration of David Medway, is sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust and 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 2019** and close on **30th March 2019**. Criteria, conditions and application form are available online: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/David-Medway-Scholarship>



▲ Kaka photo by Judi Lapsley Miller.

80th New Zealand Bird Conference and AGM 2019

The 80th New Zealand Bird Conference and AGM 2019 will be held in Wellington during Queen's Birthday weekend (1-3 June). All events and meals will be at the Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington. Check www.osnz.org.nz for registration details, to be posted ASAP (possibly not until after this issue is published), or contact your regional representative: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/contact-us/regional-representatives>

31 May 2019 (Friday)

1600-1800 Registration

1 June 2019 (Saturday)

0800-0900 Registration

0900-1600 Scientific Day One

1615-1800 Birds NZ AGM

1930 Informal Dinner

2 June 2019 (Sunday)

0800-0830 Registration

0830-1730 Scientific Day Two

1930 Conference Dinner

3 June 2019 (Monday)

Field Trips

2019 Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2019. Renewal invoices will be emailed or posted in November 2018. 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.

The Gift of Birds

Are you looking for that perfect Christmas gift? You can gift someone a 2019 Birds New Zealand subscription for just over a dollar a week to help foster a lifetime of study and enjoyment of birds. Please send an email to Ingrid Hutzler (eo@osnz.org.nz) and she will send you a gift voucher, or visit our website for details: <http://www.osnz.org.nz/perfect-gift-voucher>

Over 10,000 seabirds caught since 2013

Nearly 10,500 protected seabirds of more than 70 species were reported caught in commercial fisheries in New Zealand waters over the past five years, according to figures released under the Official Information Act. The most commonly caught species reported were albatrosses, shearwaters and petrels. Circa 4,000 of all seabirds caught were recorded by observers, with the rest reported by commercial fishing operators. During the past year, observers were present on an average of 10% of fishing vessels. Set net trawlers had an observed rate of 2.7% and trawlers 19.5%. In response, Minister of Conservation Eugenie Sage has pledged a goal of zero 'bycatch'. Extending Marine Protected Areas also will help, she said, and there is a need for legislative change so that marine reserves can extend into New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (up to 370km out from the coast) rather than the current Territorial Sea boundary of 22km.

Call for Nominations for Council

The three-year Council terms of Colin Miskelly, Helen Taylor and Sharon Alderson will expire at the next AGM (2019). Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again for these positions. Nominations will close with the Secretary on 1 February 2019. Nomination papers 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 brief curriculum vitae of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council.

Denise Fastier, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2019 Annual General Meeting will be held at Brentwood Hotel and Conference Centre, 16-20 Kemp Street, Kilbirnie, Wellington on Saturday 1st June 2019.

Denise Fastier, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson.

Calls for Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2019 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 1 February 2019 and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

Denise Fastier, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson.

New members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: Julie Simpson, Terence Seagrave (Far North); Cathy Torvik (Northland); Emma Chan, Kimberly Telfor, Lena Orum, Louise Hall, Joseph Lencse, Julie Scott, Andrew Barron (Auckland); Ed Buckett (South Auckland); Katri Harmoinen, Sue Drummond, Neville Lowry (Bay of Plenty); Hinrich Voges (Waikato); Stephen McGill (Taranaki); Mary Gray, Anne Keown (Hawke's Bay); Sarah Coker (Manawatu); Virginia Cameron (Whanganui); Donny Bloxham, Steve Bloxham, Mark Todd, Julie Whitburn (Wellington); Bradley Shields, Paul Griffiths (Nelson); Manpreet Dhani, Jody Weir, Juzah Zammit-Ross, Eric Matteson, Herta Matteson, Annette Ching, Nancy Collis, John Davey (Canterbury); James Hunter, Kristina Smiley (Otago); Joachim Culican (Australia).

Bird Banding Symposium at AOC 2019

The Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) is hosted by BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand, and provides a regular forum for the exchange of information and ideas between researchers and conservationists in Australasia. The Australian Bird Study Association, in collaboration with the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme and the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme, will be hosting a Bird Banding Symposium at the AOC in Darwin in July 2019. As banding groups in the region strive to maximise the value of banding data, conversations between groups, individuals and regulators are increasingly important. Presentations will highlight how 'traditional' banding plays a vital role in modern research, providing examples of the integration of new techniques and the potential for collaboration. Long-term banding projects will be reviewed to help identify how we can ensure that as an Australasian banding community we continue to deliver high-value long-term banding studies. The Banding Office encourages banders who will attend the AOC to submit abstracts for the symposium by 4 December: <https://www.aocdarwin.com/abstract-submission>.

MICHELLE BRADSHAW



▲ Hōiho photo by Chris Muller.



▲ Tawaki families photo by Thomas Mattern.

Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018

The 2018 round for the Birds New Zealand Research Fund has attracted a large number of very high-quality applications. The selection panel has chosen 14 projects this year, which are summarised over this and the following pages. Full details of all these projects are also available online from the Birds New Zealand website: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/2018-BNZRF-Projects>

Foraging of subantarctic Hōiho

The Hōiho or Yellow-eyed Penguin is endemic to New Zealand and is ranked as 'Nationally Endangered' by the Department of Conservation. It has a distribution restricted to the southeast of the South Island, and subantarctic islands. There is minimal migration between the mainland and subantarctic islands, meaning these areas need to be considered as separate populations for conservation management. The subantarctic Hōiho population represents over 60% of the total population, and has been described as an "insurance population" for the species. Despite their importance there is little data on subantarctic Hōiho populations. The islands are isolated and the climate and terrain make fieldwork challenging, so research there is expensive. There is currently little information available on subantarctic Hōiho foraging and diet, and whether this may differ from mainland Hōiho.

Foraging is a key factor affecting breeding success and population viability, and can be an indicator of complex processes such as climate change, which can affect the location, distribution, availability, and quality of prey species. The importance of diet in seabird ecology and conservation means a comprehensive understanding of diet and foraging ecology is essential for predictions of possible decline. Diet quantity and quality have been implicated as possible factors contributing to the decline of Hōiho on the mainland. Some mainland Hōiho populations have recently undergone serious decline due to successive poor breeding seasons and ongoing higher than average adult mortality, hence the need for accurate data for the subantarctic.

Information from dive and GPS loggers attached to breeding subantarctic Hōiho will be used to determine foraging behaviour, including distances and depths travelled during foraging trips. Dive parameters will be used to identify whether penguins are conducting benthic or mesopelagic feeding, and compared with diet data indicating prey. Stable isotope analysis will be used to investigate diet, and is less invasive than most other methods. Better knowledge of subantarctic foraging data will allow improved estimation of the effort required to obtain food and provision chicks, and whether food availability or quality might be a limiting factor for successful breeding for these populations. This research, funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, will also help highlight any differences in foraging and breeding success between the subantarctic and mainland New Zealand, and whether there are any unique concerns for Hōiho in the isolated subantarctic areas.

CHRIS MULLER, PhD CANDIDATE, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Automated monitoring system for Tawaki

Until recently, the Tawaki or Fiordland Crested Penguin was one of the least known penguin species. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species estimates that the species' current population ranges between 5,500 and 7,000 mature individuals. Moreover, the population is thought to be in decline affording the species threat rankings of 'Vulnerable' (IUCN) and 'Nationally Vulnerable' (NZ). Yet, in recent years, a number of reports and publications indicate that there may be a lot more Tawaki than previously thought and that the population may in fact be increasing and even expanding its range. However, Tawaki often breed in inaccessible sea caves, labyrinthine cave passages under glacial moraines, and impenetrable rainforest, making traditional monitoring methods like nest counts highly unreliable.

Over the past five years, the Tawaki Project has established a population of Tawaki marked with subcutaneous transponders ("microchips") in Harrison Cove, Milford Sound/Piopiōtahi. With support from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, we will install an automated transponder reader gate which will automatically register all the comings and goings of the penguins without the need for nest checks. Over time, data gathered with this system will provide us with demographic information that allows reliable assessment of population trends. This study will serve as a pilot study to develop a network of automated monitoring systems across the species' breeding range.

THOMAS MATTERN, TAWAKI PROJECT/UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Where do New Zealand's penguins live?

Recently Dr Thomas Mattern and I reviewed what we know and don't know about New Zealand penguins, and recommended research and conservation priorities for all six species. This was funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund and the T-Gear Charitable Trust. As a next step, the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018 and the Phillip Island Conservation Fund are allowing me to complete a database of all known New Zealand penguin colonies.

I began with Little Penguins and now have 500 colony records for that species alone. Some are just a location with no further information. The best are counts at a precise location done on a known date. Why is this of value? It will provide a greatly improved account of the distribution and abundance of our penguins. It will also identify regions that have been well surveyed (Otago, Banks Peninsula, Buller) and those where survey is most urgent. I know of just one penguin colony in the Wairarapa; are penguins there rare or is the region poorly surveyed? By and large, the South Island is better surveyed than the North Island.

This database also identifies colonies where there is data on population trends, where regular monitoring is happening and where it is most needed. The data will be made available to bona fide penguin researchers and conservation workers. If you know of a penguin colony or if you are doing work on penguins that is not yet published please tell me. My email is: Kerryjayne1@hotmail.com

KERRY-JAYNE WILSON, WEST COAST PENGUIN TRUST



▲ Tui on flax photo by Mike Ashbee.

Tui pollination of flax

Global pollinator decline has been described as one of the worst biological tragedies in modern times, threatening pollination services and food production. Hidden components of the plant-pollinator interaction that could explain some of the discord in pollinator behaviour are the microbes that occupy floral nectar. Microbes can change nectar chemistry in ways that either promote or deter pollination, thereby shaping pollinator behaviour. Pollinators may therefore negatively interact with plants containing undesirable microbes. However, we understand little about how these microbes exert their influence on pollinator behaviour, especially in modified environments.

Tui play a critical role in the cross pollination of flax. The Tui-Flax partnership is an ideal system to question the importance of nectar microbes in exacerbating or mitigating the impact of environmental change on the plant-pollinator relationship. We will identify the unique microbial signatures of Tui pollination and quantify Tui visitation to flax within natural systems, using a combination of video and microbial profiling. At various paired sites we will observe Tui visitation and quantify the nectar microbial community. We will compare these data with flax nectar samples collected at sites in Auckland with different degrees of urbanisation, and collect samples from Tui bills and use video to quantify Tui visitation to flax. Our data will ascertain whether the Tui-Flax relationship has a characteristic floral microbiome and whether this is altered due to anthropogenic disturbances such as urbanisation.

MANPREET DHAMI, LANDCARE RESEARCH

Sugar-water feeders and native birds in urban gardens

Feeding birds in gardens is popular in New Zealand with more people providing sugar water to support native birds. However, little is known about how this may affect bird behaviour and health. I aim to investigate the potential risks of sugar-water feeding in urban areas. The main concerns are that inadequate feeder hygiene may lead to pathogen transmission, and that sugar-water feeders may lead to changes in social structure and behaviour. During my fieldwork in 2018-2019, I will compare native bird species that are frequent visitors to sugar-water feeders (Tui, Bellbird, Silvereye) in gardens in Auckland and Dunedin. The difference in latitude is likely to influence disease prevalence and bird welfare during winter. The presence of Bellbirds in Dunedin will increase our understanding of interactions among native species at garden feeders.

Thanks to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, I aim to explore different hygiene procedures for various types of feeders and the potential for pathogen transmission. I will also assess the welfare and body condition of visiting birds, and determine how feeders affect bird social behaviour, such as competition and hierarchies. To do this, I will be catching and marking individual birds for behavioural observations, and using micro-chip leg bands and microchip readers at feeders to record visitation. I anticipate being able to definitively say whether sugar-water feeding has negative effects on urban native birds, and whether additional hygiene procedures may be able to mitigate any negative effects.

DARIA ERASTOVA, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

▲ Kakapo, *Strigops habroptilus*, collected 8 July 1924, Goulard Downs, Nelson, New Zealand, Acquisition history unknown, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 Te Papa (OR.001365).



Avian feeding ecology

I will investigate if avian populations can rapidly respond to anthropogenic impacts via changes in feeding ecology and if such changes can explain failure or success of conservation actions. New Zealand birds are particularly interesting, because the translocations that some populations have gone through serve as a unique large-scale experiment across species. I will create two long-term datasets of feeding ecology and trophic niche across lineages of land-birds using stable isotope signatures of feathers; and morphology, including measurements and morphometrics, with a focus on bill shape (known to undergo rapid change in natural populations). I will investigate 11 endemic New Zealand bird species, divided in three groups of closely-related comparable taxa: Nestoridae & Strigopsidae (Kakapo, Kea, Kaka); Callaeidae & Notiomystidae (Hihi, NI & SI Kokako, NI & SI Saddleback, Huia); Meliphagidae (Tui, Bellbird).

These datasets will be built using museum specimens and will allow me to assess how rapidly species change their feeding ecology and related morphology. The data will then be used to investigate if the fate of these species (that varied from extinction to population expansions) can be explained by the breadth of their feeding niche, by rapid changes in morphological traits, and/or shifts in food sources. Feeding ecology could play an important role in the outcome of translocations, since a successful settlement depends on the birds' ability to either find similar food items or switch their diet. The latter option, however, may be unattainable for some species, resulting in poor adaptation and failure. Therefore, I expect that the outcomes of this study will be immediately applicable to current conservation work with some of the world's most threatened species.

BARBARA M. TOMOTANI, POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER, TE PAPA TONGAREWA MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND

Capacity of urban restored forests to support native birds

This research aims to identify which factors among local habitat variables, landscape characteristics, site age and predation, determine the ability of native forest birds to benefit from urban restoration. Birds and predators were monitored at 42 sites in Hamilton and New Plymouth. Sites represented three types of urban forest: unrestored, restored and remnant, and the non-urban forest remnant nearest to each city. Restored sites formed an age gradient of one to 73 years since initial planting. Preliminary results reveal a trend for native bird species richness to increase with the age of restored sites. The number of native forest bird species in Hamilton and New Plymouth is low. Bird communities appear to shift from being dominated by non-native finches during the early stages of restoration, to supporting a greater number of native bush birds as the sites mature. Our results reveal that parks dominated by native vegetation are valued for the opportunity they provide for observing nature and escaping the stresses of city life. Interviewees' appreciation of native nature did not result in increased plantings of native species in respondents' gardens. Our findings suggest we cannot rely on urban gardens to support native biodiversity in the short-term and emphasise the need for local authorities to invest more time and resources in urban restoration. We are grateful for the support of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018.

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT-HOGG, WAIKATO UNIVERSITY



▣ Northern Brown Kiwi chick photo by Farzin Sahebjam.



▣ Tokoeka chick photo Emma Feenstra.

Distribution of *Coccidia* in kiwi

The success of kiwi population management depends on raising chicks in captivity until they are large enough to defend against introduced mammal predators. However, captive facilities increase the density of very young kiwi, leading to increased transmission of *Coccidian* parasites in birds that have not developed any immune response to these single-celled invaders. Exposure to high numbers of this parasite can lead to significant disease and mortality. The main objective of my research is to characterise the species of *Coccidia* in kiwi. Recent studies demonstrate a high diversity of these parasites in Northern Brown Kiwi, but little is known about the species of *Coccidia* affecting the other four species of kiwi.

Thanks to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, I am addressing this issue by using new sequencing techniques to develop a rapid genetic test that will be able to identify each species of *Coccidia*. This test will be used to identify key species of *Coccidia* that cause severe disease in kiwi, enabling researchers, vets, and conservation managers to monitor and manage exposure. It will also be used to ensure wild populations are not exposed to new species of *Coccidia* that could cause significant disease in a naive kiwi host species.

SARAH COKER, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Post-release monitoring of Takahē

Thirty South Island Takahē or *Notornis* were reintroduced to the mainland in Kahurangi National Park by the Department of Conservation (DOC) in March and April 2018 in the hope that they would establish as the first free and independent population of Takahē outside of Fiordland in over 100 years. However, despite the apparent suitability of the release site, the successful establishment of the reintroduced population is far from assured. It is critically important that intensive post-release monitoring is used in Kahurangi, both to identify any issues in the released population that will require management intervention, and to gain greater understanding of Takahē habitat requirements and behaviour which will be important for informing the design of future mainland reintroductions.

My PhD has been designed to ensure the maximum learning potential is realised from the Kahurangi reintroduction. The released birds are being closely monitored using a combination of VHF-radio and GPS tags. So far, all 30 released birds have been fitted with VHF tags, but currently only 16 also have the GPS units that will allow much more fine-grained tracking data to be collected. Funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018 allows me to expand the use of GPS tracking by purchasing an additional six tags to be deployed on birds due for release in January 2019. The detailed tracking dataset that I aim to collect from these tags will be used to evaluate and refine a series of spatial models I will be developing to predict patterns in the establishment of the released Takahē population. These models will be used for informing Takahē conservation management into the future.

JAMES HUNTER, PhD CANDIDATE, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Monitoring Rakiura Tokoeka

The aim of this PhD project is to compare the effectiveness and efficiency of invasive and non-invasive methods for monitoring cryptic populations using Rakiura Tokoeka or Stewart Island Kiwi as a case study. All kiwi species are 'cryptic' because they are difficult to detect, making monitoring their populations challenging and subsequent decisions about their conservation management problematic. Currently, invasive and non-invasive methods are used to monitor cryptic populations. Invasive monitoring methods directly interfere with the animal, e.g. catching, handling and tracking, but non-invasive monitoring requires no contact, e.g. trail cameras. This project will explore these monitoring methods for kiwi with a goal of promoting the use of non-invasive methods where possible. Three non-invasive methods will be used; trail cameras, acoustic recorders and scat mapping. Results will be compared directly with information gained from the invasive process of catching, handling and tracking using radio transmitters. As part of our 'invasive' component and with funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018 we will attach transmitters to Rakiura Tokoeka chicks for the first time, providing new information on survival, breeding biology and dispersal. This project will supply valuable information that can be utilised within current monitoring methods to increase reliability of results, contribute valuable knowledge on the Rakiura population and provide guidelines for kiwi scat mapping, a new non-invasive methodology for kiwi monitoring.

EMMA FEENSTRA, MASSEY UNIVERSITY/
LANDCARE RESEARCH

Northern Brown Kiwi pair stability

Northern Brown Kiwi and other ratites have a variable mating system with some degree of extra-pair paternity, but the extent of these behaviours is unknown. The Northern Brown Kiwi egg is incubated by the male rather than the female; in this scenario it could be expected that once free from incubation the female could find other potential partners to increase her individual fitness by literally putting her eggs in more than one basket.

This unusual incubating system provides a unique opportunity to test the pair stability. By extracting DNA from the eggshell, which belongs entirely to the female, we can track the number of times a particular Kiwi female has laid eggs in a particular nest. By comparing different years, we can establish the potential number of partners of a particular male. As the embryo develops inside the egg, a membrane grows that contains the chick's DNA. We want to extract DNA from the eggshells and membranes of hatched eggs to assess parentage, the degree of relatedness between eggs in several clutches of the same male, and the individuals in a clutch. In this way we will explore the extra pair mating that can occur from both the male perspective and the female perspective. We thank the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018 for its support.

DAVID VIECO GALVEZ, MASSEY UNIVERSITY



▲ NZ Storm Petrel/Steve Wood

Conservation genetics of New Zealand Storm Petrel

The New Zealand Storm Petrel was first described from specimens obtained in the 1820s and was thought to be extinct for over a century until it was rediscovered in 2003 in the Hauraki Gulf. After ten years, researchers found a handful of individuals breeding on Hauturu-o-toi (Little Barrier Island). Many questions remain regarding their biology, ecology and conservation. Is this the only breed site, are there other colonies, and how many birds remain?

With funds from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018, we plan to answer these questions using modern genomic techniques. We will look at the genetic relatedness of individuals caught at sea and from the known breeders on Hauturu-o-toi. We will model their historical demography and compare these results to those obtained for the comparatively plentiful White-bellied Storm Petrel and Black-bellied Storm Petrel. Given the power of these genomic analyses to determine fine-scale historical demographic trends, population structure and mixing, we will be able to identify whether multiple populations exist, determine how many individuals remain, and see if there has been recent population recovery.

ANDREW VEALE, UNITEC

Roroa distribution in northwest Nelson

Roroa or Great Spotted Kiwi are declining at about 2% a year. A primary goal of the Kiwi Recovery Plan is to turn around this decline to a 2% per annum increase. Obtaining the reliable distribution data necessary for effective management is challenging for a cryptic nocturnal species that is mostly restricted to remote mountainous habitat. We have used acoustic recorders to map the current distribution and relative abundance of Roroa across 650,000-ha of northwest Nelson; compare current distribution with that determined 20-30 years ago; provide a baseline against which to assess future changes in distribution and population in northwest Nelson; and increase understanding and support for Roroa by involving conservation professionals and volunteers in deploying acoustic recorders.

The Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017 enabled us to deploy recorders in areas that have previously been inaccessible and fill crucial gaps in our understanding. Key findings from the study are that the northwest Nelson Roroa population comprises two discrete groups separated by a gap of some 30km; the core of the distribution with high Roroa call rates is smaller than previously thought; and Roroa range extends from subalpine scrub and tussock down, in many areas to the pasture/forest boundary which means that they are not restricted to more remote areas. The study was also supported by Kiwis for Kiwi, by several groups who have loaned recorders and by numerous individuals whose assistance and commitment in placing recorders through the back country is gratefully acknowledged.

SANDY AND ROBIN TOY



▲ Buller's Shearwater photo by Alan Tennyson.

Northland seabird surveys

To be able to assess the severity of threats to seabirds or the effectiveness of conservation measures requires periodic assessments of population size to understand whether populations are declining or increasing. In the northern North Island, despite the proximity of seabird colonies to New Zealand's largest city, there is a lack of up-to-date knowledge of population size for most species, or even the main colony sites of commonly observed breeding species. For example, Fluttering Shearwaters are extremely abundant in the northern North Island and are often seen in huge flocks at all times of the year, feeding in association with schools of fish, flying swiftly between foraging grounds, or in very large dense rafts on the sea surface. We know they breed on a good number of islands, but not where the main populations are located. Finding them is one of the goals of our surveys. We will also be recording other species with systematic searches (where possible) made on the smaller islands. The Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2018 grant, combined with some additional funding from the Department of Conservation, will allow us to investigate a number of islands, some large and some small.

CHRIS GASKIN, NORTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST

Buller's Shearwater population estimates

Thanks to funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2017 we have been able to survey Buller's Shearwaters on both Tawhiti Rahi and Aorangi in the Poor Knights Islands for the last two breeding seasons. While anecdotal evidence indicated that Buller's Shearwaters are numerous (with some estimates being in the millions of individuals), our results show a much lower population number of ~200,000 breeding pairs. We set up a reproducible technique for randomly surveying the islands for the numbers of breeding Buller's Shearwaters and their association with different environmental factors, such as plant associations, altitude, aspect of the breeding site, and canopy cover.

Our research also looked at breeding success, so we also collected information on how long the chick incubation period is and how many days parents stay away from their nests while foraging. The focus on Buller's Shearwater reproduction is another important aspect of their future conservation. For example, knowing how long adults are away from their nests foraging at sea indicates how readily available their prey source is when they are on the open ocean. Because of this, Buller's Shearwaters are exceptional indicators of the health of our ocean. We can use them as a proxy to better understand trends in the marine food web. While we have many more questions to answer about Buller's Shearwater and the health of our ocean, understanding this baseline information is a critical first step in marine conservation efforts.

MEGAN FRIESEN, NORTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST

New name for National Bird Monitoring Scheme

Exciting developments are underway as we prepare for the launch of Birds New Zealand's new flagship national bird monitoring scheme. We're proud to announce that the scheme has undergone a name change, and is now called the *New Zealand Bird Atlas*.

Over the past few months, Birds New Zealand has worked closely with Novo Advertising and Design to come up with a new name and brand for the scheme, something we consider essential to giving the scheme its own recognisable identity and public profile. The *New Zealand Bird Atlas* name creates a strong link to the legacy provided by Birds New Zealand's previous two Atlas projects. An important output from this new Atlas project will be the ability to compare bird occupancy estimates between each of the three Atlas project datasets, enabling us to describe nationwide changes in bird distribution over the past 45 years.

Novo Advertising and Design have come up with a distinctive logo for use alongside the new name, providing the scheme with a distinctive brand. The marque is reminiscent of a Kākāpō, or a Ruru which, like the Kiwi, are both sometimes referred to as Te Manu Huna a Tāne (the hidden bird of Tāne), due to their nocturnal habits. This is a nod to one of the aims of the *New Zealand Bird Atlas*, which is to reveal patterns and trends in bird distribution that are currently hidden to us.

The Kākāpō also provides a cautionary reminder of why we're undertaking this project - namely to collect the information we need to make better conservation decisions in the future, hopefully preventing more species from coming as close to extinction as the Kākāpō. And can anyone spot the sneaky *eBird* reference in the logo? The teardrop-shaped body of the bird is reminiscent of the *eBird* map markers that will be familiar to any regular *eBird* user.

Our colleagues at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have now begun work on a customised *eBird* website for the *New Zealand Bird Atlas*. Over the coming months we'll be working with Cornell to ensure the website is fit-for-purpose and ready for launch by June 2019. RRs have been sent an outline of the *New Zealand Bird Atlas* design and field methodology, and we're very interested in receiving any comments or feedback that any members may have on this.

Ultimately, this scheme's success will depend on the support and participation of Birds New Zealand members, and we'd like to do everything we can to make it as easy and enjoyable as possible for you to participate in. If you haven't yet had a chance to review the Atlas project design and would like to, please get in touch with your RR or email the project team via: Nikki@wmil.co.nz

NIKKI McARTHUR, MIKE BELL & HELEN TAYLOR

New extinct shearwater species described from Taranaki

A new study of fossils of the late Pliocene of coastal Taranaki has described a new shearwater species, Pom's Shearwater (*Ardenna davealleni*). The study, entitled *A new species of Pliocene shearwater from New Zealand*, was published in *Tuhinga* (29: 1–19, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 2018), by Alan Tennyson of Te Papa and Al Mannering of Christchurch.

The well-preserved fossil skeletons came from deposits estimated to be between 5.3 and 2.5 million-years-old. One of the fossils was collected at Ohawe Beach, south Taranaki, by Dave Allen in 2006, and a second specimen was found at Waihi Beach by Xavier Johnson in 2011, about 1km southeast of the first specimen, in similarly aged rocks. The species name honours Dave 'Pom' Allen, the collector and donor of the holotype, which represents the first pre-Pleistocene record of a new shearwater taxon from the western Pacific.

These fossil show that Pom's Shearwater was a gliding species as large as the largest species of living shearwater, Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris borealis*). Based on Pom's Shearwater having a femur of overall similar size to that of the gliding Cory's Shearwater, the authors estimate that it had a similar weight to Cory's Shearwater, which weighs 605–1060 g, has a body length of 45–56 cm, and a wingspan of 112–126 cm (similar to a Black Petrel's wingspan). In comparison, Buller's Shearwater weighs about 385–490 g, which is only half the weight of Cory's Shearwater (see image below).

Structurally, Pom's Shearwater is most similar to the much smaller Buller's Shearwater, which breeds only in New Zealand. It is possible that Pom's Shearwater is an ancestral form of Buller's Shearwater. Based on the behaviour of Buller's Shearwater and its close relatives, Pom's Shearwater was presumably more of a gliding species than a diving one. *Calonectris* shearwaters are considered to have separated from other shearwater clades circa 13.8 million-years-ago, and *Puffinus* and *Ardenna* to have diverged c.10.4 million years ago.

The finding of a Pliocene *Ardenna* shearwater in New Zealand (combined with a previous Californian Pliocene record of another *Ardenna* shearwater), well-differentiated from species of *Calonectris* and *Puffinus*, adds weight to the theory of an early divergence of the three shearwater genera. Today, New Zealand has the greatest diversity of breeding shearwater species in the world, and these new fossils add weight to other evidence that shearwaters have a long history in this region.

New banding liaison officer

I have been banding birds since making a day visit to the Copeland Bird Observatory near Belfast about 35 years ago and promptly becoming hooked. My wife Kay and I signed up as trainee ringers and enjoyed working on the island so much that we soon progressed to full ringing permits and qualified to take charge at the Observatory.

Over the years I have been involved in many projects focussing on a wide range of bird species, including Constant Effort Ringing at a large reedbed site; roost catching of hirundines, wintering thrushes and finches; colony work with terns, gulls and shearwaters; nest box studies; and, of course, banding migrants at the Copeland Bird Observatory. I also qualified as a member of the British Trust for Ornithology's Ringing Trainers Panel.

JOHN STEWART, BANDING LIAISON OFFICER



❑ Cory's Shearwater. Beach-wrecked specimen. Only New Zealand record. Specimen registration no. OR.000234; image no. MA_I295001. Foxton Beach, January 1934. Image © Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand. Sourced from the New Zealand Birds Online website.



▲ Solomons Frogmouth.



▲ Solomons Boobook.

Solomon Islands – Giant Frogmouths and Midget Flowerpeckers

Article by David Lawrie. Photographs by Lars Petersson.

I had the opportunity to visit the Solomon Islands in July as part of the desire of Tourism Solomons to promote ecotourism into the country. After transiting through Brisbane, I was met at Honiara International Airport by Brenden Mautoa, who was to be my guide for the trip. He settled me into the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel in Honiara and left me to rest in my air-conditioned room. The hotel is on the waterfront so a quick wander around the adjacent beach front snared an Eastern Osprey and a Great Crested Tern.

The next day it was arranged that I should be ready early for a flight to the island of Santa Isabel, but when we got to the airport we found that the plane had left early because they had changed the schedule. We rebooked the flight for the next morning and that gave time to return to the hotel and make other arrangements. Brenden also organised a guide, Gerry, who would take us to Mt Austen. This is an unusual trip because the car takes the road to the top of Mt Austen and the walking track

then follows a steep path down the other side through the forest. Some of the highlights seen on this track were Blyth's Hornbill, the endemic Solomons Cockatoo, Solomons Monarch and Midget Flowerpecker, and the endemic subspecies of Chestnut Button-quail.

By the time we climbed back up to the car I was drenched in sweat but that was good training for what was to come in the days ahead. The next morning, I continued my birding around the hotel, seeing Cardinal and Coconut Lorikeets before being picked up to head to the airport where I saw the endemic Solomons Sea Eagle while awaiting the arrival of our aircraft.

On this flight we flew to the airfield on Fera Island, a small uninhabited island just off Santa Isabel, and on arrival all the passengers disembark and climb into long motor boats for a 20-minute ride to Santa Isabel. After wading ashore, we met our guides for the next two days, Rodger and Gerrard. We left the shore at 1pm after they warned me that there was a relatively



▲ Midget Flowerpecker.



▲ Black-faced Pitta.

steep climb ahead. Well, the relatively steep climb was up a 700m high escarpment, which was steadily up with no flat bits or down slopes, and we eventually arrived at Tirotonga village at 4.30pm, setting a new record for the longest journey to the village. This foot track is the only access to the village, so all food and materials must be carried up manually. Needless to say, the villagers are much fitter than the ex-president of Birds New Zealand.

The slow pace gave us the opportunity to see White-bellied Cuckooshrike and the endemic White-billed Crow and Yellow-throated White-eye. After settling into the Maeholo Bird Watching Homestay we went on a track through the forest which was interesting in that even at 700m elevation it is all coral underfoot, clearly a raised seabed. This made for difficult walking, particularly as these tracks were along really steep-sided ridges with amazing drop-offs. It was on the edge of one of these where Gerrard is building an eco-lodge which will have spectacular views over a massive valley. On this walk we had great views of Eclectus Parrot and the endemic Ultramarine Kingfisher, and we heard but did not see the endemic Black-faced Pitta.

We then returned to the lodge for a wonderful meal cooked umu-style because there is no electricity in the village. After dark we traversed part way down the escarpment in search of Solomons Frogmouth, a large monotypic endemic species only recognised in 2007. Gerrard imitated their calls and after receiving responses from several birds, he eventually attracted

one to land at our feet where we had fleeting glimpses before it departed.

Following that excitement, we walked back to the lodge. It was 1am by the time I got to bed. Then we got up and hit the forest trails at 6am the next morning. This time we saw an endemic Solomons Boobook after it flushed from its roost hole. After making some repairs to my boots we started the journey back through the village and down the escarpment to the coastal village. On this leg of the journey we saw Pacific Baza, Long-tailed Myna, Claret-breasted Fruit Dove, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, Island Imperial Pigeon, and we heard the endemic Woodford's Rail calling.

On arriving at the coastal village, we settled into an accommodation house near the edge of the lagoon. While the others went to purchase some fresh fish to cook for dinner I was able to rest and continue birding from the veranda. Here I observed Lesser Frigatebird, Nankeen Night Heron, Willie Wagtail and the endemic Brown-winged Starling.

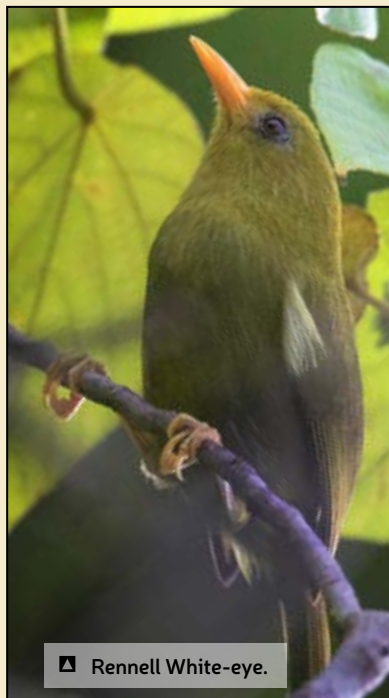
After dinner it was early to bed. The next morning was a relatively early start but outside the accommodation there were Finsch's Pygmy Parrots, Melanesian and Common Kingfishers, and Metallic and Singing Starlings. We caught the boat out to Fera Island to give us time to look around the area before the aircraft arrived. On the airstrip there were several Pacific Golden Plovers plus a Ruddy Turnstone and a Grey-tailed Tattler, these being the only shorebirds I saw on the whole journey. There were also several Beach Kingfishers. But before long the aircraft



▲ Woodford's Rail family.



▲ Bare-faced White-eye.



▲ Rennell White-eye.



▲ Yellow-throated White-eye.



▲ Barred Cuckooshrike/
Michael Szabo.

arrived and we were on our way back to Honiara.

After arriving in Honiara about mid-morning, I settled in at the hotel relatively early. We therefore arranged to visit the nearby Betikama Wetlands in the evening where we observed Pukeko, Little Pied Shag and White Heron before nightfall. A Solomons Sea Eagle pair bred in a large dead tree in the middle of the wetlands a few years ago and Woodford's Rail is also present.

The next morning, we had an early flight to the island of Rennell where the airstrip is on the highest point in the middle of a forest-covered island. There is a small village clustered around the airfield and we were staying at the Moreno Guesthouse situated near one end of the airstrip. We were the only people staying in the guesthouse which could accommodate a large number of people.

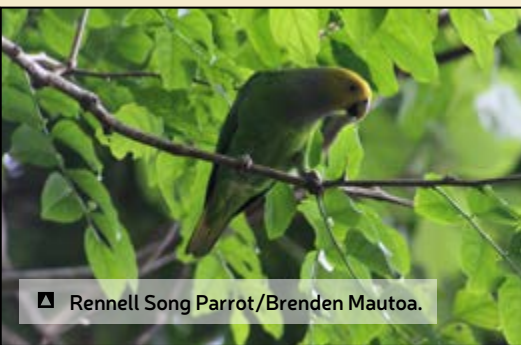
Once settled in we quickly found an old (level) logging track and wandered along seeing many of Rennell's endemic species. These included Rennell White-eye, Bare-Eyed White-Eye, Rennell Shrikebill, Rennell Fantail and Rennell Song Parrot, and the regional-endemic Fan-tailed Gerygone, Silver-capped Fruit Dove and Mackinlay's Cuckoo Dove.

After the successful day we headed back to the lodge for rice and tuna from a tin since the local shop had run out of food waiting for supplies to arrive from the next boat.

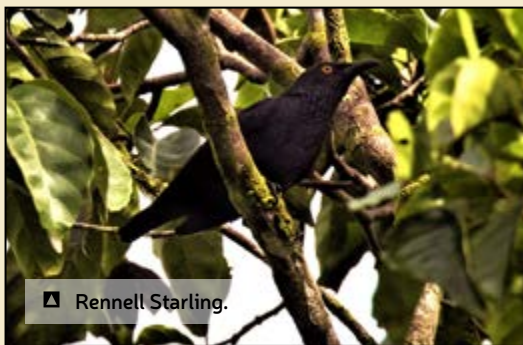
The next day we were a little more relaxed because we had seen most of our target species. As it was the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the creation of the province, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Rick Houenipwela was present and we went to the event to hear the speeches and watch a display by the police band. Following this we wandered along a different track toward the northern end of the island, locating Melanesian Flycatcher and Black-faced Cuckooshrike, the island-endemic Rennell Whistler and Rennell Starling, and the island-endemic subspecies of Island Thrush (*rennellianus*) and Barred Cuckooshrike (*gracilis*). With these on our list, we had seen all eight of Rennell's endemic bird species. We also heard a number of local Shining Bronze Cuckoos calling, which sound very similar to our Shining Cuckoos in New Zealand, but according to Brian Gill Rennell's endemic subspecies (*harterti*) does not migrate, it stays on this one island throughout the year. It was unusual for me to hear cuckoos calling in the middle of July.



▲ Rennell Shrikebill.



▲ Rennell Song Parrot/Brenden Mautoa.



▲ Rennell Starling.



▲ Australian Ibis (pygmaeus)/M Szabo.



▲ Rennell Whistler.



▲ Rennell Fantail.



▲ (L-R) Rodger, David Lawrie, Gerrard, Simon.

The next morning was scheduled to be my last day in the Solomon Islands because I was to fly back to Honiara and then onto Brisbane and back to New Zealand. However, when I looked out the window in the morning the island was covered in mist. The first flight of the morning was scheduled to be for the Prime Minister and his entourage but when we heard that plane fly over and not land we knew that I was in trouble. As Brenden tried to change my ticket back to New Zealand I sat on the deck and added Cardinal Myzomela, Brown Goshawk and Moustached Treeswift to our list. There were also numbers of Glossy and Uniform Swiftlets feeding overhead, several Pacific Kingfishers, and the dwarf *pygmaeus* subspecies of Australian Ibis walking around the lodge.

We eventually got on the second flight off the island but by then it was too late for a connecting flight to Brisbane so I had two extra days around Honiara. On the first of those days Brenden took me around the local Guadalcanal World War II memorials for the Americans and Japanese and to the museum. I also had the opportunity to observe (introduced) European Tree Sparrows. As the next day was a work day I went to the Tourism Solomons office and while they had their team meeting

I updated my eBird list so that I could give them a report before I left. During the seven days we had observed 75 bird species, 45 of which were new to me.

This shows how species-rich the Solomon Islands are, and while my trip was organised around birdwatching there are also wonderful beaches and scenic landscapes with friendly and welcoming people. I would therefore take the opportunity to thank Tourism Solomons for the opportunity and for hosting me, and Brenden for guiding me. I would thoroughly recommend the Solomon Islands for our members.

The Tourism Solomons website is:
<https://www.visitsolomons.com.sb/>

For more information on birdwatching options, please contact Brenden Mautoa: brenden.mautoa@sivb.com.sb

David Lawrie is the Immediate Past President of Birds New Zealand and a member of Council.

Lars Petersson's bird photography website is:
<http://www.larsfoto.se/en/>



■ Moho skull photo by Jennifer Carol, Auckland Museum.

Back to the Future in Northland

In the pouring rain, surrounded by flowing sand lava and cascading lahars, Fred Brook gingerly walks towards Matt Rayner and I. He's sliding across a steep sand dune, his hands carefully cupped before him. Whatever he is holding appears precious. It is; Fred has hit the jackpot. Through the rain, we get a glimpse of a powerful beak, possibly thousands of years old. Fred has found the ancient skull of a Moho, the extinct North Island Takahe (*Porphyrio mantelli*) that died out shortly after the arrival of Polynesians in Aotearoa. This fossilised taonga represents what we have come here to find. It is also providing a rare glimpse at what the tip of Northland could have been like then and may be like in the near future.

I'm standing on the otherworldly Herangi Hill at Motu i Pao/ Cape Maria van Dieman, atop the giant sand dunes that cover an ancient volcano. With Fred is his son, Euan; Matt, Curator of Land Vertebrates at Auckland Museum; and me. In the rain the exposed geology, poking through the sand, appears muted. A few days later, under bright sunshine, the blues, greens, browns, purples and yellows, of this weathering volcano make for a geological technicolour dream coat.

The top of Northland is a far cry from where I live in Dunedin. I was lucky enough to visit the Far North as part of a Ngāti Kuri and Auckland Museum-led 'bioblitz'. Our aim was to document the biodiversity within Ngāti Kuri's rohe and give this 'lost' knowledge back to the iwi, their kaumātua and tamariki. By finding and identifying some of the ghosts of biodiversity past, we could use the fossils of birds, reptiles and marine mammals in the region to show what had been. This rediscovered whakapapa could then inform the 'flight path' of Ngāti Kuri's goal of the ecological restoration of their end of Northland. I'd worked with Ngāti Kuri in the past when they named the extinct Kawau Kōhatu, the Kōhatu Shag. Being part of this bioblitz was a great way to see where some of the bird fossils came from, to give something back and, in a way, to say thank you for naming this uniquely Northland seabird.

Over the week, we saw some truly stunning parts of Northland, including what has to be New Zealand's best beach, Takapaukura/Tom Bowling Bay. Working in the dunes behind Takapaukura, on a picture-perfect day, just sitting on the surface of the sand, I found the tell-tale white outline I had been hoping for; a bleached thigh bone of a prehistoric New Zealand Sea Lion, a unique lineage very different from the Rāpoka/Hooker's Sea Lion found in southern New Zealand today. Scanning the immediate area, I realised I was looking at the skeleton of a pup, its tiny bones poking through the sand. I can see Wilma Blom, Curator of Marine Invertebrates at Auckland Museum, on the hunt for other fossil treasures, like the ancient jigsaw of a moa egg she found earlier. Carefully excavating each bone, I saw I had most of the pup's skeleton. This discovery is quite special; the name Ngāti Kuri is derived from the dog [Kuri]-like bark



■ Cape Maria van Dieman by Jennifer Carol.

that sea dogs, (Sea Lions and Kekeno/Fur Seals) made when their Polynesian tipuna arrived in Aotearoa.

In a week combing Northland's beaches, we discovered a lost world; a world markedly different from the one I'm currently experiencing. Then, forest came down nearly to the sea and covered the dunes. Sea Lions and Ihu Koropuku/Southern Elephant Seals bred on the beaches among the marauding New Zealand Ravens. Moa roamed the sand hills. The flightless Moho, Kiwi, and Kākāpō walked around the understory, while the calls of Kākā and Kākāriki were heard in the canopy. Northland was home to numerous seabirds including Kawau Kōhatu, Kuaka/Diving Petrel, Pakahā/Fluttering Shearwater and Kororā/Little Penguins. Tuatara were plentiful, sharing the seabird burrows.

And those species are only what we have identified so far. The taonga we found in collaboration with New Zealand museums will allow us to build a picture of pre-human Northland. Sadly, some species are globally extinct, like the Sea Lion, Moa, Raven and Moho, while others are locally extinct. If they survive elsewhere in New Zealand, they could potentially be reintroduced one day to Northland.

At our basecamp at Kapowairua, we kōrero with Ngāti Kuri, their kaumātua and tamariki. In our makeshift museum discovery centre, all around me, a variety of scientists including botanists, marine and freshwater biologists, entomologists, and museum communicators, also back from the field, shared their discoveries with avid listeners.

Personally, I was saddened at how much knowledge of the natural whakapapa has been lost with the passage of time, so it felt good to be able to give something back; my expertise and knowledge helping Ngāti Kuri to rediscover their past. The Sea Lion, Tuatara, Kiwi and Moho are a hit. The children in our audience may be the generation that sees Northland returned somewhat to its former natural glory. Eradicating introduced predators, and that other technicolour dream coat, the invasive South American Pampas, would be a good start.

On my last evening in Northland, I sat on the beach at Kapowairua/Spirits Bay. The beach swept in a long, uninterrupted arch northwest towards Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga. The sun set over the geologically folded landscape of hill country to the west. Dark rainclouds, remnants of the storm that washed out the road south, moved in front of me, creating a ghostly atmosphere, the hills drifting in and out of focus. It was as if the layers of time had been folded back, allowing me to look backwards so I could see a future.

Fred's Moho skull and the ghostly scene that evening are metaphors of why we were there and what we had accomplished: 'kia whakatomuri te haere whakamua [I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past]'. One day soon, Ngāti Kuri will be able to bring some of their lost taonga and ancestors home. I would love to be part of that exciting journey, Back to the Future.

Edited from the original Sciblog at: <https://sciblogs.co.nz/lost-worlds/>

NIC RAWLENCE, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO



BIRDS

NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

New brand and website for Birds New Zealand

It has been two years in the making and we're now excited to announce the launch of the new Birds New Zealand logo. We will also have a new website to launch by the end of this year. We appreciate that this is both exciting and, for some, controversial, so we wanted to introduce the new logo to members and explain some of the work behind it.

Our designer for this rebrand project has been Shaun Lee, a Birds New Zealand member and professional designer based in Auckland. Shaun gave a great presentation about the thought process behind the new logo at this year's annual conference. All regional representatives have a copy of Shaun's talk that you can request to view. In a nutshell, Shaun wanted to go beyond the traditional logos that many ornithological societies have, avoid the issues around choosing a single bird or group of birds to represent the Society, and demonstrate what the Society is all about.

The new logo features a figure actively engaged in birding, clearly indicating Birds New Zealand's objective of "fostering the study and enjoyment of birds" and positioning us differently from pure conservation organisations, such as Forest and Bird. The colour scheme that Shaun has selected is a nod to the iridescent plumage of the South Island Takahā which featured in the previous version of the logo and which will remain on the front cover of our journal *Notornis*.

The logo is designed to always be used in conjunction with the text "Birds New Zealand" and with our new Te Reo Māori name "Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa", which signifies the work Birds New Zealand does as a "flock" or collective of people who study birds. We are hopeful that this new branding will come to be recognised as a signifier of the great work the Society has always done and continues to do.

As the Birds New Zealand Council has reiterated throughout the rebrand process, we are very aware that the Society is much more than its branding and so changing the logo is not, in and of itself, a solution to reinvigorating the Society or attracting more members. To that end, we have also been working on a brand-new website for the Society that is designed to be attractive, easy-to-use, and that will act as a great showcase for all the work and activity going on within the Society.

This website will be launched during December, so look out for that! We also have exciting news on the new National Bird



BIRDS

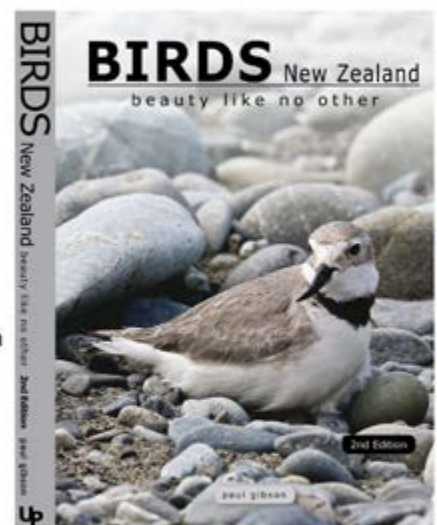
NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

Monitoring Scheme, which is getting a rebrand of its own (see page 9). If you would like to use the new logo for any reason, please contact your regional representative or the Society's Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler (eo@osnz.org.nz), who will be able to provide high resolution image files with a brand guideline document indicating how the logo should be used.

HELEN TAYLOR ON BEHALF OF BIRDS NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL

This **new edition** of BIRDS New Zealand, by Paul Gibson, is no ordinary book, comprising 320 pages of **absolute beauty**, where 300 birds are described. Included are 50 pages covering topics like migration, flyways, eggs, photography, optics and birding locations. **See it for yourself.**



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FAR NORTH

The "Welcome to the Birds" event at Pukorokoro-Miranda Shorebird Centre this year featured the Hauraki Gulf Mayor John Tregidga, who issued a plea to volunteers to continue the excellent work they were doing. Government bodies need all the help they can get to protect the magnificent Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, which continues to deteriorate. Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre is at the forefront of protection of shorebirds and sets a great example.

In the Far North at Parengarenga, we have seen a dramatic decline in the godwit population, from 4,500 birds 5 years ago to about 700 birds last summer. At the invitation of Ngati Kuri, I went with them at high tide to count the godwit population on 11/10 and we found no godwits roosting at any of the usual sites. On that date Miranda had 2,310 godwits, for comparison. A Ngati Kuri Trustee said there had been some birds on the mudflats (ID uncertain), so on 25/10 we did a bird count of the mudflats at low tide. We found about 700 godwits from Te Pau road end, and another 300-400 were reported on the Te Hapua side. Ngati Kuri and Te Aupouri, along with Te Kao school children, are participating in the shorebird survey on 17/11 so we can update the counts from then. Houhora counts have dropped from 3,000 (or better) to zero over the last 5 years. In fact, New Zealand counts have dropped from about 82,000 to 72,000 over the same period. Most of this drop is from these 2 Far North sites. So, back to you John Tregidga. How can those empowered to help do so? - LES FEASEY

AUCKLAND

This spring there was a number of field trips to locations that are seldom visited, resulting in some interesting sightings. On 1-2/8, Paul Asquith, Ian McLean and Trina Smith went to Great Barrier Island to hold a Seabird ID and Beach Patrol Workshop that was attended by 20 locals who now plan regular beach patrols. While there, 3 Australasian Bitterns were seen at a wetland near Claris and Spotless Crane heard. A Kaitoke beach patrol yielded no wrecked birds, but found 16 Northern NZ Dotterel and 4 Banded Dotterel. A Whatipu field trip (27/10) was attended by 16 participants. Birds seen included a colony of c. 250 White-fronted Terns, 1 Reef Heron, 4 Northern NZ Dotterels, 1 NZ Dabchick, Fernbirds and local rarities such as Redpoll, Dunnock and NZ Pipit. The massive wetland at Whatipu looks to be fantastic habitat for bitterns and crakes.

Members assisted with a number of public events at Ambury Park in September. The 'Hello to the Godwits' event on 16/9 included a godwit talk by our RR Ian McLean followed by a guided walk. Another guided walk on 29/9 found 2,000 SIPO, 900 Bar-tailed Godwit, 100 Red Knot, 50 Wrybill, 95 Royal Spoonbill and 11 Black-billed Gull.

Spring surveys included Shakespear Regional Park (22/9) which counted: 3 Spotless Crane, 4 Spotless Crane, 3 Red-crowned Kakariki, 158 Eastern Rosella, 305 Tui, 17 Whitehead and 8 NI Saddleback. No NI Robin were seen and a single Bellbird was seen after the survey finished. The 12th annual Motutapu Island Survey was held on 6-7/10 with 14 keen participants. Since pest

eradication, there has been a general upward trend for most species. Birds counted included: 93 Pateke, 12 Takahe, 23 Spotless Crane, 2 Reef Heron, 25 Shore Plover, 122 Bellbird, 136 NI Saddleback and 191 Red-crowned Kakariki.

Spring beach patrols of Muriwai Beach yielded very few birds, while the Pakiri Beach Patrol (14/10) found just 2 Fluttering Shearwater and a few gulls and gannets. In contrast, the live bird count at Pakiri included: 47 VOC, 79 Northern NZ Dotterel (74 adults, 5 chicks), 24 Caspian Tern and 1 NZ Fairy Tern. A video of an Australasian Bittern was recorded at Harbourview Reserve, Te Atatu by Dion Pou on 15/8. Phil Hammond recorded 2 Little Terns and 1 Whimbrel at Big Sand Island in Kaipara Harbour on 28/9. The Little Terns were developing into their breeding plumage. More than half of their bills were showing some yellow, indicating they were the austral subspecies from Australia and had overwintered in New Zealand. - IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

The winter was enlivened by about 2,000 Red Knots, a Great Knot, a Black-fronted Dotterel and a Shore Plover gathered roosting at Kidd's Shellbank keeping Tony Habraken busy hunting for bands and flags. Spring focussed on the lower Waikato River which is its own little world. A series of fortnightly duck counts has been underway since August. The focus is on Mallard and Grey Duck but other species add variety - Brown Teal seen twice and a male Chestnut Teal (26/10) being highlights. We also count birds to monitor predator control by Whakapuoko Landcare group. Some open swamp patches also support Fernbird, Spotless Crane and Australasian Bittern, and 1 record of Banded Rail. Evening counts for booming bitterns are more difficult with 2 of 3 counts cancelled due to bad weather. There seem to be small pockets with a high density of booming males but we also see bitterns in places where little or no booming is heard.

A stray Coot was found by Sue Frostick on ponds at Manurewa (7/7 and 3/8) and a NZ Falcon appeared at David Lawrie's house. A Glossy Ibis found near Waitakaruru by Phil Hammond (4/8) lured the twitchers who also reported Australasian Bittern and Fernbird in the area. A breached stopbank there showed that the Firth quickly reclaims the farmland and has proved to be an excellent roost with flocks of Wrybill and a Marsh Sandpiper among others. NZ Scaup may be increasing locally with high counts of 20 by Noel Knight at Puhinui (24/4) and 12 by Ken Bond at Airlie's Lagoon, Whitford (26/10). Tony Habraken reports waders are still returning with the normal range of species. Little Terns are now arriving with 1 at Kidd's on 13/10 and 8 on 27/10. There is a Pectoral Sandpiper at Miranda and there was a Black-tailed Godwit in full breeding plumage at Kidd's on 27/10. - IAN SOUTHEY

BAY OF PLENTY

Recent meetings have included talks on Korora (Little Penguin) by John Cockrem, Sonny Davis on the Birds New Zealand Youth Camp on Stewart Island, Oscar Thomas of his exciting NZ Shore Plover census and Chatham Island visit, and our RR Paul Cuming on bird calls in gardens and the neighbouring bush. Seeing an average of 45 people at these meetings has

been pleasing. The bird call talk was one of 7 in a series that Paul Cuming delivered touring the Bay of Plenty, including nipping up to Papakura to speak to the South Auckland Branch in September. Collectively, over 500 people were at these Bay of Plenty meetings, organised in conjunction with Envirohub, an umbrella framework for all things environmental here in Tauranga. Our Grey-faced Petrel colony on Mauao had higher than usual numbers of birds laying in the study burrows this year. Four chicks were banded this week by Oscar Thomas and I. This month sees our twice-a-year shorebird harbour counts in Tauranga, Maketu and Ohiwa, and members helping Forest and Bird with their 5 minute bird counts in the Kaimai Range, where remnant populations of Rifleman are coaxed out to make an appearance. An Australasian Bittern also boomed for Oscar Thomas and I recently in the Kaituna Wetlands, Maketu. - PAUL CUMING

WAIKATO

Elizabeth Elliot-Hogg gave a very interesting talk in August on "the capacity of restored urban forests to support native birds; ecological or social restoration?" which asked how to get native birds back into the urban environment. In September, Dr Emma Williams gave a talk on the Australasian Bittern. The status of this species recently changed from endangered to critical, due to habitat loss and a 'crash' of population in 2011. The monitoring of Australasian Bittern is usually by capture with the help of a Spotless Crane and then the fitting of a tracker. This is not at all easy but refinements in the process had resulted in the capture of a single bird that very day. The October meeting discussed the recent Pukorokoro Miranda "Meet the Birds" day.

The Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari has seen the first release of kiwi. A Western Brown Kiwi called Tahi was the first of up to 500 to be released. The Maunga can hold an estimated 600 pairs and at about half that number some will be transferred to other predator-controlled sites. Unusual sightings included a pair of NZ Falcon on Puketere Bridge in Hamilton City and a White-faced Heron nest in at Bremworth Park, Hamilton. On the Hauraki Plains, 21 Cattle Egrets and a Glossy Ibis were reported. In the Coromandel, NZ Dotterels have started breeding with the first nests found mid-August. However, not many chicks are on the ground due to predation of eggs and killing of chicks. - KEN WEDGEWOOD

HAWKE'S BAY

The number of migrant Black-fronted Terns at the Waitangi River mouth area increased from 4 on 20/4 to 41 on 21/5. On the latter date, 2 birds with flags were seen that were banded on the Upper Clarence River (Marlborough) in November 2016 and 2017 respectively. Our local wader census in late June did not record many overwintering shorebirds, but some good birds were found including an Australasian Bittern at upper Ahuriri, 2 NZ Scaup at Clive (where not previously recorded), and a Northern Shoveler at Porangahau. Thanks to the Wairarapa Branch members who helped out with that census. In July, 11 of us visited a site near the Tukituki River where fruit and flowers attracted hordes of Tui and



Silvereye, and a smattering of other native birds.

In August, 10 of us spent a beautiful morning at the Tukituki River where we saw a couple of gannets fishing along the river and two Spotted Shags were seen on the old sewage outfall structure, the first seen there for a couple of years for some. Ten of us enjoyed a pleasant trip to Lake Tutira in September. With Kowhai in bloom, we were treated to beautiful displays of Tui feeding on abundant nectar! The list of birds also included NZ Scaup and NZ Dabchick and a good range of other species.

The 6-week "Introduction to Ornithology" course run by RR Bernie Kelly and local member Lynne Anderson was very successful, with a full class of 29-30 people attending each Tuesday evening, and concluding with a field trip to Ahuriri Estuary. The course generated income which more than covered the costs and resulted in new members joining. Money received as part of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund helps cover transport costs for monitoring Australasian Bittern with transmitters attached at Lake Whatuma near Waipukurau. Ducks Unlimited also contribute. Bernie currently checks the 3 remaining birds every 2 weeks. At this time, there are 8-9 male bitterns booming on the lake. It will be good to continue monitoring Hawke's Bay bittern populations even when the funding dries up at the end of 2018. - **BERNIE KELLY & IAN SMITH**

TARANAKI

As winter turned to spring members became more active. Grey-faced Petrels were numerous and vocal at Rapanui in late August. The landowner also heard Fluttering Shearwater and Northern Brown Kiwi calling from bush down the road. The petrel colony is now so successful that birds are burrowing to the north and south of the predator proof fence. Extending the fence another 150 metres south at \$350 per metre will require serious fundraising. A Grey-faced Petrel was also heard over Oakura many kilometres southwest of the Rapanui colony.

Tui are also numerous and vocal around town. The Messengers visiting friends on the outskirts of New Plymouth counted 27 in flowering cherry trees; the residents have counted up to 50. Tony Green has been busy feeding Hihi at Lake Rotokare and trying to count NI Robin on Mt Taranaki, with both banded and unbanded birds seen.

Ian Dudding was the first to hear a Shining Cuckoo at home at 9.30am on 29/8. There was a reliable report of 3 Kaka in Pukekura Park. The Messengers touring South Waikato also saw Kaka at Pureora forest and heard NI Kokako at South Mapara. After returning home they walked the beach north of the Waitara River and came across a live Northern Giant Petrel on the beach; hopefully it managed to avoid the dogs, people and 4W bikes to return to sea. As usual in mid-September a scattering of migratory waders, mainly Bar-tailed Godwit, were seen around the coast but few if any Ruddy Turnstone. Pied Stilt have gone from their usual places to who knows where. And Royal Spoonbill are still around the Mokau River Estuary. A windy day at Waiongana saw albatross and gannets at sea, a couple of Pacific Golden Plover and a

Ruddy Turnstone along with 4 pair of VOCs on the beach, and 2 Royal Spoonbill showing breeding plumage roosting on a log in the lagoon. - **PETER FRYER**

WHANGANUI

The highlight of the past few months was an adult NZ Dotterel coming into breeding plumage photographed on the Whanganui Estuary by Paul Gibson in early October. It did not stay around and was observed flying off eastwards. Was it from the population near Waikanae, making an exploratory excursion north, or an eastward expansion of the small population in south Taranaki? We do not yet know. Another species that may be expanding its range regionally is Black-fronted Dotterel. The 3 birds first seen by Ormond Torr in mid-June on pools next to Whanganui Estuary stayed at least until late August. These sightings are a reminder that it is often at the extremes of a species' range that its population dynamics are most apparent.

The first Bar-tailed Godwits appeared on the estuary in mid-September. Over 5 days, Paul saw flocks of 5, 13 (plus a Red Knot) and 5 on the estuary, most apparently moving through (he observed 3 birds from the last group fly south). Whanganui Estuary seems to be a brief stopover point for these early arrivals. Only later do some settle to spend the summer here. Wrybill is another passage migrant, albeit just birds moving between the 2 islands. Paul saw a flock of 12 at the end of September, but they had moved on by the next day. A group of 5 were seen in late October.

Kākā is another species that occurs sporadically here in most years in late winter-early spring. This year was no exception, with 2 birds present in Fordell for some days in mid-September, and 1 bird recorded in Bason Botanic Garden, 10 km east of Whanganui. We presume that these are young birds or newly-formed pairs dispersing willingly or not from their natal areas ahead of the upcoming breeding season.

Spring has been marked here by an almost complete absence of Shining Cuckoo. They usually begin calling from late September. This year, apart from 1 report in late September, the first calls were only heard at the end of the first week of October, and there have been very few reports since then. Does this reflect poor reproduction and survival last year, when we experienced high temperatures and low rainfall, which could have affected the availability of canopy invertebrates, or did many birds get caught up in the succession of tropical cyclones that cut across their migration route to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea back in March? - **PETER FROST**

WAIRARAPA

The riverbed-nesting shorebirds of the Wairarapa was the topic for our June meeting, where presenter Nikki McArthur of Wildlife Management International Ltd informed and entertained us with his findings after an epic 200km walk, kayak and swim along the regions' rivers last summer. On our field trip to Pigeon Bush Reserve we were lucky to glimpse the resident NZ Falcon and a few Kereru. Some members helped with the Lake Wairarapa winter wader survey where highlights included an Australasian Bittern, a

White Heron and a Banded Dotterel from the Eastbourne group sporting a flag.

Under Treaty Settlements, the bed of Lake Wairarapa was recently returned to iwi. The resulting talk on proposals to consider raising the lake-level by possibly 1 metre (to try to improve water quality and increase some lake-edge wetland areas) has prompted us to raise our concerns as to the effect this would have on the extensive wader habitat along the lake's eastern shoreline. Lake levels are managed by the operation of barrage gates and any changes to agreed lake levels must give effect to the existing Water Conservation Order. This wader habitat is recognised nationally and internationally, with Ramsar status now imminent. We will keep a close eye on the situation, making sure the value and importance of this wader habitat is at the forefront of any discussions.

In July, some members travelled to Porangahau Estuary for the Hawke's Bay Branch winter wader survey and were lucky to discover a Northern Shoveller along with Fernbird, Wrybill, Red Knot and NZ Dotterel. Excellent views of Fernbirds were the highlight of our August trip to Pauatahanui Estuary.

In September our RR Oliver Druce gave a talk on, "Where do NZ birds come from and when did they get here?" The idea was to look at NZ's most famous birds. Oliver had made a 100-million-year timeline that stretched around the room with notable events marked off: the separation from Gondwana, the demise of the dinosaurs, the Miocene days of Lake Manuherikia, the rise of the Alps, the ice ages, and the arrival of Maori and then Europeans. We were given pictures of various birds (skillfully drawn by Janet Atkinson) and tasked with deciding where the correct place was on the timeline where they should be pegged, to represent when they first arrived in NZ. This led to discussion of many issues. The presentation got everyone thinking and we all agreed it was most informative and entertaining.

October's speaker was Sandy Bartle, former curator of seabirds at Te Papa. Sandy has visited many islands in both hemispheres, following the trail of seabirds and his many other interests. He spoke about his favourite bird islands, such as Little Barrier (Hauturu), Great Barrier (Aotea) and the Poor Knights, accompanied by a great slideshow including Tuatara and many seabirds. He finished with an eclectic mix of northern hemisphere islands, including remote islands off Scotland, Turkey and Corsica, all with a fascinating mix of human history and natural history. The Global Birding Day was our October trip and our combined tally was a creditable 71 species. Bird of the day was the NZ Falcon; seeing one is such a rare treat. - **OLIVER DRUCE & JOANNA MCVEAGH**

WELLINGTON

A Banded Rail was seen from a bird hide at Pauatahanui Reserve (28/6) and the report accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee. There have been 2 further sightings of Banded Rail there with the latest in October. These sightings raise some interesting questions, including where did it come from, how long have they been at Pauatahanui, and how many are present? The known

established populations of Banded Rail are in Marlborough/Golden Bay in the South Island and the northern half of the North Island. However, they are reported to be “good flyers” and travel at night. It is tempting to speculate that the Banded Rail is a recent introduction to the Reserve. This area is popular with photographers as it provides good opportunities to record from hides picturesque birds such as Royal Spoonbill.

Spotless Crake are also present in Pauatahanui Reserve. Prior to 2016 there is only 1 *eBird* record of this species at Pauatahanui, a dead bird found by the road in 2014. A 2016 survey for Spotless Crake by Shane Cotter revealed the presence of multiple birds in the reserve. There are no subsequent *eBird* records of the species at Pauatahanui but this is not so surprising given their cryptic nature. There are multiple observations of the species on Wellington’s west coast, including Taupo swamp, Waikanae Reserve, Nga Manu Reserve, Pharazyn Reserve and a single observation in 2017 on Kapiti Island. – *GEOFF DE LISLE*

CANTERBURY

Lake Ellesmere has reportedly been particularly dry for this time of year. Hopefully the recent rain will have created some shallow pools and muddy margins for birds. November’s wader count will give us a better idea of the condition of the lake and the number of birds around. However, sightings from the last 3 months have still turned up a variety of wader species. In mid-September, a Pacific Golden Plover, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and 3 Red-necked Stints were reported at Embankment Road. A Marsh Sandpiper was spotted at Jarvis Road in late August. It has been resighted a few times since then, including at Embankment Road in late October, along with 2 Pectoral Sandpipers and a Red-necked Stint. A final sighting of particular interest at the lake is that of 15 Pacific Golden Plovers at Jarvis Road.

Some interesting waders have also been seen at the Ashley Estuary. Two Lesser Knots were seen in September, and later that month, a Far-Eastern Curlew. Up the river, 2 Black-fronted Dotterels were seen in late October. Further south, Paul and Joy Sagar reported a Ruddy Turnstone at Timaru’s Washdyke Lagoon in mid-September, the first they have found there in 8 years. They also saw 2 Black-fronted Dotterels. On the West Coast, a Hudsonian Godwit was spotted in flight at the estuary in Hokitika in mid-October.

October’s field trip up the Otira Valley was well attended by 13 members. While it was chilly, overcast, and in places drizzly, all of us managed the walk and were rewarded by views of a pair of Rock Wren. After they disappeared from view, some of the party continued further up the track and spotted a Kea, while those who headed back down saw 3 NZ Tomtits. Our ramble that month took us to Hart’s Creek. Plenty of Pied Shags were nesting in trees in front of the hide. Apart from the usual waterfowl, we all enjoyed seeing 2 Mute Swans and a Kōtuku. On the walk back, we were pleasantly surprised to hear the booming of an Australasian Bittern. For the October *eBird* Big Day, Canterbury managed third place with a tally of 75 species. Plans are already

underway for a big effort next year.

– *ELEANOR GUNBY*

NELSON

The winter months have been anything but sluggish. Our branch has had a handful of new members join, and a handful of new or unusual bird sightings in the region. Only 1 NZ Dabchick has been recorded from Takaka’s Lake Killarney for most of the year but it was briefly joined by an Australasian Grebe in June. A single Cattle Egret has been reported, again from Golden Bay. A count of 24 Australian Wood Duck from recent anecdotal evidence, all from a single known haunt in coastal Tasman, corresponds with the same number from several different ponds last year. More could go unnoticed on the numerous other farm ponds in our region. Cirl Buntings have been reported on several occasions from Pohara, Golden Bay, the males glorious in the winter sun in late July. Nelson’s Wakapuaka WTP wetlands were the place to be in May and June. The first bird of interest was a Red-necked Phalarope in non-breeding plumage, then a month later, a conspicuous male Northern Shoveler in breeding dress, sat among Australasian Shoveler and other waterfowl for several days. Previously a NZ Dabchick was spotted.

A field trip to Bells Island shellbanks was enjoyed by a dozen members as was another outing joining the local ‘Battle for the Banded Rail’ group in their biennial count in the Waimea Estuary. On the Winter Wader Census about 22,000 birds have been counted of 13 species, including Wrybill, Red-necked Stint, Whimbrel, Far-eastern Curlew and NZ Dotterel. At Farewell Spit average numbers of SIPO were recorded but Tasman Bay, with 5,800, had the highest recorded number ever. Also, Banded Dotterel were the highest recorded number since 1996. Unusual records of Wrybill were recorded for this time of year. Normally most birds are seen during the August southward migration, but this winter the species was seen at the shellbank in the Waimea, Motueka Sandspit and Farewell Spit. More and more, flocks of VOCs are observed. This winter 85 were seen at the Totara Avenue Bar, 73 at Farewell Spit, 89 from Motueka Sandspit and 140 from the Waimea shellbank. A total of almost 200 Royal Spoonbill has been seen in the Top of South Island since 2000. And the highest recorded number of Little Black Shags (95) was seen on Motueka Sandspit.

– *GAIL D QUAYLE*

OTAGO

Members of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology visited Dunedin in August including Steve Kelling, head of the *eBird* team, and Jessie Barry, Program Manager for the Macaulay Library section of *eBird*, who looks after audio collections and the smart phone ID interface, Merlin. She reported that a Merlin App for NZ birds is in beta phase. There was an excellent turnout for their talk. Steve wowed us with the kinds of analyses that are now possible with *eBird* data, such as migration movements over time and space mapped from checklist data.

Our RR Mary Thompson gave tips on bird ID at the monthly lunchtime talk at Dunedin Botanic Garden and we followed-up with

guided birding walks at the weekend. Some 55 folks turned up and 8 members guided groups. We had very positive comments so these walks are to be a regular event in the Botanic Garden calendar. Our survey teams located at least 5 South Island Robin pairs in the regenerating bush areas on Mopanui adjacent to Orokonui Ecosanctuary. Several nesting attempts were monitored and so far, 1 nest has probably fledged 2 chicks, which would be the first breeding record outside the fence.

We participated in the *eBird* Big Day with 2 events that coincided: a pelagic trip and an overnight field trip to Sinclair Wetlands. The Otago region recorded 79 species, which included Marsh Crake, Australasian Bittern and Little Owl heard at the Sinclair Wetlands, and a good tally of seabirds on the pelagic trip. Royal Spoonbills were already nesting on Taiaroa Heads. Rachel Hufton got some nice central Otago high country species: Wrybill, Black-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gull, NZ Pipit and Banded Dotterel. We missed out on White Heron this time. Lei Zhu again had the highest species tally for an individual birder at 64 species in 1 day.

Throughout October and November members have been busy with 5-minute bird counts at 12 stations throughout the Town Belt. We aim to make this a long-term project and engage the public in this project too. The city council is supportive as it fits well with their environmental strategies, such as enhancing knowledge of biodiversity in the area. – *MARY THOMPSON*

SOUTHLAND

While my job dictates that I am quite often stuck behind a desk in my 3rd floor office, occasionally it has its advantages. My windows face out on to a churchyard that has some large Elms and I have good views of the birds coming and going. In August I saw an amorous male Kereru trying to impress his not so interested female companion. Five times he flew quite a distance away, did an amazing stall dive and flew back to her. Unfortunately, she seemed too busy preening most of the time to have noticed. They flew off together, so his efforts may not have been in vain.

The Kaka in Otatara has been seen several times and reports of its demise were premature as it was seen scattering a large flock of Kereru in Poplars. A report from the Pleasure Bay/Tip Lagoon of a female Chestnut Teal has been sent to the Records Appraisal Committee for review. This is possibly a 1st record for Southland. There are at least 3 Chestnut-breasted Shelduck at the lagoon and have been around for some time now. I took part in my first serious 24-hour Southland birding record attempt when 4 locals decided to have a crack at breaking it. You can read Matt Jones’ illustrated account here: <https://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=7979>. It was great fun, very tiring and I can recommend it to anyone interested in birding. We managed 78 species, breaking the previous record of 69. The most amazing sight was a skua attacking a poor Fairy Prion and sitting in front of us plucking and eating it. The fact that we saw more kiwi than harriers during the event left us baffled. We are now looking forward to the spring wader count and hopefully some interesting sightings. – *PHIL RHODES*

Reviews

BIRDS New Zealand Unique Pictorials RRP \$70

Whanganui photographer and author Paul Gibson has published a fully revised second edition of his book, "BIRDS New Zealand: beauty like no other".

This full colour 320-page A4 portrait format hardcover book is a treasure trove of his high-quality bird photography and fascinating information on New Zealand's bird species.

This new edition is 20 pages longer, has 100 new photos, another 20 species that are illustrated and described, 70 more species described briefly without a picture, and new additions to 'The Nature of Birds' section on vagrants, migration flyways, eggs and skeletal anatomy.

The double- and single-page bird images on pages 2-21 are especially impressive, as is the book's treatment of the many albatross, shag and wader species covered. Pride of place goes to the Wrybill, an image of which appears on the front cover (replacing the Royal Spoonbill on the cover of the first edition) and several others on pages 222-223. The illustrations of different plumage phases and life stages of some species are very useful, and the images of Paul Gibson 'in the field' offer a glimpse of the life of a birder.

'The Nature of Birds' section on pages 22-56 covers everything from the minutiae of feathers to the extinct birds of New Zealand. This section is followed by 210 bird species accounts illustrated with photographs on pages 57-303, and a final section comprising a summary of New Zealand birding sites, a glossary and an index on pages 303-320.

Some of the images in the book lose a little of their impact because of the way they have been 'faded-out' around the edges and a few are not as sharp as all the others, such as the female Rock Wren female on page 80 and a few of the smaller seabirds, but these are minor quibbles in the bigger picture. This is a superb book that will inspire future ornithologists.

The Hunters Random House NZ RRP \$50

This popular 240-page full colour 210 x 260 mm soft cover book by Debbie Stewart of Wingspan is a rapturous homage to New Zealand's raptors and owls, living and extinct.

It tells the stories of New Zealand's predatory bird species and describes the work of the Wingspan Charitable Trust through the National Bird of Prey Centre in Rotorua in an easy-to-read conversational style. Also included are sections on falconry, vagrant raptors, and the importance of predatory birds for Māori. There are 160 photographs, mainly of the birds and the author and others from Wingspan, and a beautiful Paul Martinson painting of Eyles' Harrier.

All of New Zealand's raptor and owl species are covered: New Zealand Falcon/Kārearea, Australasian Harrier/Kahu, Morepork/Ruru, Little Owl and Eastern Barn Owl. The extinct Haast's Eagle, Eyles' Harrier, New Zealand Owllet-nightjar and Laughing Owl also get their own summaries, but it is the New Zealand Falcon/Kārearea that is the star of the show.



Kākāpō : Potton & Burton RRP \$50

This extensively illustrated full colour 276-page 250 x 200 mm hard cover book is a fully revised second edition of the original book published in 2010, for which author Alison Balance won the 2011 Royal Society of New Zealand Science Book Prize.

This is a comprehensive account of the Kākāpō and efforts to save the species by the Department of Conservation's Kākāpō Recovery Programme team. The new edition contains an additional new 44-page section with a strong focus on the scientific, technical and veterinary advances made in relation to Kākāpō since 2009, that recounts the continuing success of the recovery programme over the past decade.

There is also a new 43-page section listing all 233 named Kākāpō that have been part of the recovery programme and its predecessors since their Kākāpō conservation work started in Fiordland in the late 1950s. Each of these birds has an endearing brief biographical note explaining how it got its name.

The 30 new colour photographs include a series showing the hatching of a Kākāpō chick, various technical illustrations of radio tracking operations and veterinary work, and one of an adult bird at the nest with its chick.

The book ends on a positive note by looking forward to what the future may hold for Kākāpō and describing how the stage is now set for the summer of 2019 to become the biggest Kākāpō breeding season on record, with 63 Kākāpō on Codfish Island/Whenua Hou, 42 on Anchor Island/Pukenui and 10 on Little Barrier Island/Hauturu. This award-winning book is essential reading for anyone interested in Kākāpō and the conservation of endangered species.



Seabirds beyond the Mountain Crest : Otago University Press : RRP \$45

This beautifully produced full colour 220-page 240 x 170 mm soft cover book is a compelling detailed account of the history, natural history and conservation of Hutton's Shearwater. Packed with 60-colour and black-and-white photos and illustrations, it tells the gripping story of this special threatened endemic New Zealand seabird that breeds only at two remote high-altitude sites in the Kaikoura Ranges.

The arc of the story spans the late-1800s to the Kaikoura earthquake of November 2016, and unravels one of New Zealand's greatest ornithological mysteries. Little wonder then that the book is peppered with the names of ornithologists who will be familiar to Birds New Zealand members, such as Frederick Hutton, Robert Falla, Geoff Harrow, Brian Bell, Greg Sherley, Colin Miskelly and Alan Tennyson.

Geoff Harrow's determination and persistence famously led to his discovery of the species' last remaining breeding grounds in the 1960s. Over five decades he continued to climb up to and visit the last remote breeding colonies to record the birds there, and to encourage the Wildlife Service and its successor, the Department of Conservation (DOC), to take steps to conserve the species.

One of the results of this was DOC assigning this book's author, Richard Cuthbert and others to work on the conservation of the species in the Kaikoura Ranges for three years and research their biology. They studied the species' behaviour and interactions, measuring and recording facts and figures, and building up a more detailed picture of why and how the species had managed to survive. Over that time, their important work and discoveries allowed them to uncover and understand the role of feral pigs in the destruction of Hutton's Shearwater colonies.

MICHAEL SZABO



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Explore Fiordland's remote and winding fiords on this tribute to Heritage Expeditions' early days of expedition cruising while contributing to New Zealand's most precious regions with this Department of Conservation partnership. As well as Doubtful Sound, Dusky Sound and Acheron Passage, we will also explore New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands.

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Explore the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands – Campbell, Auckland and the Snares. From soaring albatross to tiny endemic birdlife, the wildlife on these remote and rugged islands will captivate you.

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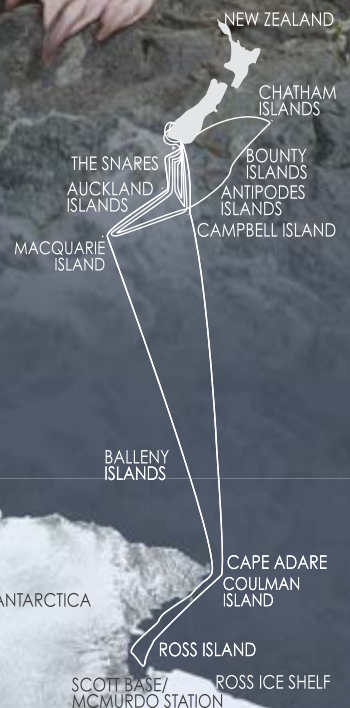


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Southern Royal Albatross © E Bell