

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

No.28 December 2020



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



PUBLISHERS

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040, New Zealand.

Email: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz Website: www.birdsnz.org.nz

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

Email: editor.birdsnz@birdsnz.org.nz Tel: (04) 383 5784

ISSN 2357-1586 (Print) ISSN 2357-1594 (Online)

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

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COVER IMAGE

Rifleman or Titipounamu. Photo by Mike Ashbee.

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

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OSCAR THOMAS
www.oscarthomas.nz



From the President's Desk

Here in Southern New Zealand spring has well and truly arrived with equinoxal winds, lengthening days, and the arrival of cuckoos and godwits. I hope that this finds you all busy with your projects and out in the field.

Health and Safety

I was recently advised of an incident on a Society Trip. A member slipped on a muddy track and suffered a minor cut. The Regional Representative concerned filed a report to myself and the Executive Officer and reported in full what had happened and the response. The reporting form also included appropriate commentary about how to improve practises in the future. I'm pleased to see that the systems we have in place worked in this instance and the members present responded promptly and supportively.

New Zealand Bird Atlas

At Labour Weekend the Otago Region organised a weekend based out of Wanaka to survey squares around Wanaka which needed coverage. Some 13 people from Dunedin, Queenstown and Balclutha joined in for various parts of the weekend and were dispersed by Richard Schofield to obscure locations from Wanaka through to the Lindis Valley. The companionable buzz of the day's events and sightings over dinner was really enjoyable and reinforced for me the bonds of ornithology. There is no shortage of squares to cover in each season across New Zealand and I find the landscapes and places that birds are found off the beaten track to be endlessly variable and interesting.

The Atlas Team have made the decision to consolidate all Atlas materials and background on the *eBird* atlas site and so you can find resources on where to head and read stories of others activities here, <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/home> There are a lot resources here with access to all parts of *eBird* and the other applications developed by Cornell to make our lives better. The ongoing generous support of "Goodness Kitchen" for the NZ Bird Atlas project is important to us and very much appreciated.

Vacancies

I'm pleased to be able to announce that Ilse Corkery has stepped up to be the Society's Regional Representative for Northland for 2021. As I've said many times the Regional Representative network is essential for the functioning of the Society and it is really good to have an enthusiastic member step up into this role in Whangarei. I acknowledge the hard work and leadership provided by Anne McCracken over the last years and wish Anne well in her next adventure.

Council is working to appoint Micah Scholer of Rotorua as Convenor for the Society's Moulting scheme. Moulting is an important area of bird study but the resources necessary for Society members to compile and add observations to the existing data set has languished in recent years. I'm optimistic that we can soon invite those members who have moulting observations to engage with the scheme convenor so that existing observations can be looked after and we can encourage members to collect new observations.

Birds New Zealand Fledging Fund

As part of continuing to make the Society relevant to younger Ornithologists Council has discussed and agreed to establish a Fledging Fund. The idea is to support Student Members of the Society to attend a New Zealand Bird Conference and to present a talk or a poster at the conference. The fund will be an endowment fund and will disburse funds for student members

from donations received. Originally Council wished to announce this initiative at the Christchurch Conference but this did not eventuate. However, we wish to promote this initiative in time for the 2021 Conference. If members wish to make a contribution to the fund so we can disburse grants for the 2021 Conference then please do so by contacting the Society's Executive Officer.

Relationships with organisations

Although these are covered in more detail in this edition of *Birds New Zealand*, I'm pleased to be able to report that we have entered into a renewed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society to set out in more detail how we wish to work together. We have also entered into a new MOU with Manaaki Whenua (Landcare Research) which sets out the process for gaining access to the curated and groomed datasets from the previous Atlas projects. The importance of this arrangement for the future was reinforced for me at a recent presentation by Dr Susan Walker reporting on the details of the data and showing some of the ecological models and predictions that she and her team is able to derive from the data sets. Susan repeatedly made the point that there is much more to be learnt from the two previous atlas schemes and so I'm pleased that we now have an enduring process to ensure that the datasets remain available to researchers. It will be an exciting day when the data from the current New Zealand Atlas scheme can be added to this data store for analysis!

Historical data

I've recently been given a notebook from previous members who lived on the Taieri Plains and who travelled widely though out the Southern South Island. The notebook contains a fascinating insight into the notable birds of this part of the country from the 1960's through to the 1980's. The challenge is how to extract these observations from the notebook and turn them into data. I'm making progress on this by starting to enter the observations into a spreadsheet which can then be added to the *eBird* data set. The amount of information contained in this notebook about species which were once present and breeding in Southern New Zealand such as cattle egret and black fronted dotterel, but which have now declined is substantial. It does remind me to remind members that we all have old notebooks lying around and it is much better if you take the lead for your notebooks rather than leaving them for someone else to extract the data.

2021 NZ Bird Conference

The 2021 New Zealand Bird Conference is scheduled to be held on the 5th, 6th & 7th June 2021 in Thames. I've received a recent update from David Lawrie and the organisation of the weekend is well underway. Catching up with the members is going to be a highlight for 2021 for me. Please make sure you note these dates in your diary and note that early bird registration ends on 1st March 2021.

The new membership system is working well and Imogen Warren is answering members' enquiries and maintaining records. Please make sure you renew your membership promptly when renewals are circulated in November.

Finally, I wish all of you and your families a safe and relaxing Christmas. It has been a stressful year and I hope that for all of you and your families that 2021 is a safe and prosperous year.

BRUCE MCKINLAY
PRESIDENT

2021 NZ Bird Conference & AGM

The 2021 NZ Bird Conference and 82nd Annual General Meeting of Birds New Zealand will be held on Queen's Birthday weekend at the War Memorial Civic Centre in Thames (5th June-7th June). It will comprise two days of scientific presentations plus five field trip options. The AGM will be Sunday afternoon, 6th June. Online registration and full details are available at:

www.birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference/ or contact your regional representative: www.birdsnz.org.nz/contact/ or email: conference@birdsnz.org.nz or write to NZ Bird Conference 2021, PO Box 177, Pukekohe 2340. The conference aims to continue the fine work of previous events in making this the premier NZ conference for the communication of new research findings about NZ birds and providing opportunities for discussion and networking for professional and amateur ornithologists, students, and others interested in birds. We will be presenting several keynote lectures and shorter talks on a wide range of topics, and look forward to bringing together all who are interested to share their knowledge and findings to make this conference a memorable event. All events, AGM, and meals will be at Thames War Memorial Civic Centre (200 Mary Street).

4th June 2021(Friday)

6.00 pm – 7.30 pm Early Registration

5th June 2021(Saturday)

8.00 am – 9.00 am Registration

9.00 am Scientific Day One; Drinks in Hall

7.00 pm Informal Dinner

6th June 2021 (Sunday)

8 am – 8.30 am Registration

8.30 am Scientific Day Two; Birds NZ AGM; Drinks.

7.30 pm Conference Dinner, awards and prizes

7th June 2021(Monday)

All day and part day Field Trips in the Coromandel Region.

Call for Nominations for Council

The three year Council terms of Bruce McKinlay (Chairman), Ian Armitage (Deputy Chairman), Paul Garner-Richards (Treasurer), and Natalie Forsdick will expire at the next AGM

(2021). Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again. Nominations will close with the Secretary on 1st February 2021. Nominations must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include a brief curriculum vitae of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council. Nomination forms are posted on the Society's website: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/manual/forms/> Lynne Anderson, Secretary, PO Box 834, Nelson: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2021 Annual General Meeting (for years ending December 2019 and December 2020) will be held at The Thames Memorial Civic Centre, 200 Mary Street, Thames on 5th June 2021. At this stage the 2021 Conference is planned to go ahead, however, attendees need to be aware that Covid restrictions may change at any time and at short notice. Lynne Anderson, Secretary, PO Box 834, Nelson: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Calls for Notices of Motion

Notices of any motion to be considered by the 2021 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 1st February 2021, be in writing, and be signed by the mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society. Lynne Anderson, Secretary, PO Box 834, Nelson: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

2021 Membership Renewals

Annual membership subscriptions are due on 1st January 2021. Renewal invoices will be emailed or posted in November 2020. If you have not already, please notify the Membership Secretary of your email address (membership@birdsnz.org.nz).

You can renew via the website, either by direct debit payment or using a credit card:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/login/#myaccount>

Please pay promptly because we depend on your subscription to continue our work encouraging and supporting the study and enjoyment of birds.

David Medway Scholarship

This scholarship is sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust and named in commemoration of David Medway. It is intended to provide financial support to a student studying full-time at post-graduate level on a topic relating to ornithology. One scholarship may be awarded each year with a maximum value of \$5,000. Applications open on 1st February 2021 and close on 30th March 2021. Criteria, conditions, and application form are available online:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/david-medway-scholarship/>

Marj Davis Scholarship

This scholarship was established in 2018 in commemoration of Marj Davis. One scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of \$1,500. It is intended to provide financial support to a full-time Masters or PhD student conducting research in ornithology. Eligible research projects must clearly be of benefit to ornithology in NZ and to NZ birds. Preference will be given to proposals for ornithological research that is expected to contribute to a greater knowledge of birds in the Canterbury/West Coast region. Applications open on 1st Feb 2021 and close on 30th March 2021. The criteria and application form are available online:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/marj-davis-scholarship/>

Pacific Islands Bird Conservation and Research Fund

This Fund was created in 2008 to support conservation management and research on bird species classed as endangered by BirdLife International and breeding on Pacific islands, excluding NZ. The Fund is administered by the J S Watson Trust through the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ and is a result of a working partnership between Birds New Zealand and Forest & Bird. As a general guide, a grant shall not exceed \$5,000. One or more grants may be awarded at any one time at the discretion of the J S Watson Trust. Applications open 1st February 2021 and should be emailed not later than 30th March 2021 to the Executive Officer of Birds New Zealand:

eo@birdsnz.org.nz

Criteria and further details are available online:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/pibcrf/>

Heritage Expeditions 2020-21

Heritage Expeditions have tours to Fiordland, Stewart Island, and The Snares in November, December, and January. See their website for all details: www.heritage-expeditions.com



▣ Snares Crested Penguins: E Bell.

MOU with Forest & Bird renewed

A Memorandum of Understanding between The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand was first arranged in 2002 to recognise that both societies have common interests concerning birds and the interests of both societies could be enhanced through maintaining a cooperative working relationship.

It continues to be recognised that the objectives of both societies could be better achieved through collaboration and through the provision and use of information that is complementary to the interests of both societies. Against this background Council agreed that the MOU should be extended for another five years. At Council's request Ian Armitage met with Forest & Bird Chief Executive Kevin Hague and developed recommended changes. The revised MOU was signed by Forest & Bird President Mark Hangar and myself in October 2020. Three amendments were agreed:

* In addition to the Society providing technical information to Forest & Bird it has been agreed that, on request, members will be available to explain the results of scientific studies and to recommend management arrangements and actions based on such studies.

* Forest & Bird have agreed to provide information to OSNZ about birds and their habitats that encourages the wider knowledge and enjoyment of birds and will promote co-operation between the societies.

* Both societies may collaborate on activities that are of mutual interest and where information sharing and technical cooperation will allow the comparative strengths of both societies to be applied. Examples are (a) cooperation with implementation of the NZ Bird Atlas Scheme, notably field surveys, and (b) cooperation regarding implementation of the Pacific Islands Bird Conservation and Research Fund through the JS Watson Trust. Full text of the amended 2020 MOU is here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/>

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT

Leaving a gift in your will

All funds received go into the Projects Assistance Fund, so you can be confident that your gift will have a real impact and our birds will have a voice now and into the future.

It is important to consult your solicitor, Guardian Trust, or Public Trust office for advice on drawing up your will. A general gift allows Birds New Zealand to direct funds where they are needed, but we are also very happy to discuss options if you would like to leave a gift in your will for a specific purpose. Here are the ways that you can support Birds New Zealand in your will:

* **Specific Legacy:** You may wish to leave a specific amount of money, shares, bonds, items, or a nominated gift to Birds New Zealand.

* **Residual Legacy:** You may wish to leave a gift of all or part of your net estate (what remains after all taxes, specific gifts to family and friends, and the cost of administering the estate have been paid). This type of legacy should be expressed as a percentage or share of your estate.

The Gift of Birds

Are you looking for a Christmas gift to give? You can gift someone a 2021 Birds New Zealand subscription for just over a dollar a week to help foster a lifetime of study, knowledge, and enjoyment of birds. Please send an email to eo@osnz.org.nz and we will send you the Gift Voucher, or visit our website for more details: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/you-can-help-buy-a-gift-voucher/>

Historic NZ Bird Atlas data access agreement with Landcare Research

In 2015, an electronic copy of bird distribution data collected and curated by the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Birds New Zealand) from 1969 to 1979 and from 1999 to 2004 was provided to Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research (MWLR) for the purpose of undertaking research on the data. As a result, a new dataset was created by MWLR which fitted occupancy models to data for 64 native bird species in each of the two respective Bird Atlases. MWLR has offered to retain the original electronic datasets provided to them by Birds New Zealand, and to supply access to these and the fitted estimates of local occupancy to researchers who apply to use the data.

The Society wishes this to work collaboratively with MWLR into the future to make the data available for research and to recognise the contribution that MWLR has made to augmenting the datasets. MWLR and Birds New Zealand wish to record the basis of this relationship.

The Society and Landcare Research agree as follows:

* MWLR will curate and prepare the data for online access.

* Birds New Zealand retains ownership of the original electronic datasets described above.

* MWLR will provide free access to researchers requesting the original electronic datasets and the fitted occupancy estimates derived from them.

* All digitised materials will be made available through the MWLR datastore website, which will be linked to Birds New Zealand as per below procedure.

Procedure for Birds New Zealand members to access the raw atlas data:

Ask for permission to access the Atlas data by [emailing eo@birdsnz.org.nz](mailto:eo@birdsnz.org.nz)

Go to <https://datastore.landcareresearch.co.nz/> and register as

a user. Once registered, send the permission form to Susan Walker (walkers@landcareresearch.co.nz) or Gretchen

Brownstein (brownsteing@landcareresearch.co.nz) and ask to be made a member of the Birds New Zealand collection. MWLR will send Birds New Zealand a link to the collection to allow access to all historic atlas data.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT, BIRDS NEW ZEALAND
CHRIS JONES, PORTFOLIO LEADER, LANDCARE RESEARCH

How long do NZ birds live for?

A recent paper by Bird *et al.* (2020) sought to provide updated estimates of generation length of the world's birds for use in IUCN Red List assessments. This highlighted data gaps in published literature for maximum longevity of New Zealand bird species, resulting in inaccurate calculations of generation length. Banding data provides the single most useful tool for obtaining maximum longevity records. The Banding Office is now leading the publication of NZ bird longevity records, using the FALCON bird banding database and will be in touch with data owners to discuss collaboration or encourage publication. We will also be seeking banding and recovery data that have not yet been submitted to the Banding Office that may reveal maximum longevities. If you have published, plan to publish, or may have longevity record data and would like to collaborate on this publication, please contact Imogen Foote: bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz. Publishing updated longevity records for New Zealand birds will aid in the conservation of these species by providing more accurate data for decisions in threat listing. The Banding Office is aiming for this publication to inform the next New Zealand Threat Classification System (NZTCS) threat assessment meeting for New Zealand birds (early 2021).

MICHELLE BRADSHAW, DOC BANDING OFFICER



▲ Terek Sandpiper: © William Betts 2017 birdlifephotography.org.au.

NZ Bird Atlas – Spring 2020

With spring 2020 well and truly underway Aotearoa's birds are out strutting their stuff! Pipīwharau/roa/Shining Cuckoos are back and singing from the treetops, and Bar-tailed Godwits/Kuaka are returning to the estuaries. There is an unmistakably energetic spring buzz in the air and the NZ Bird Atlas community has continued to ramp up its efforts across the country.

With the Atlas project in its second year now we can begin to compare effort between years and seasons. At the time of writing, we have seen an increase in spring Atlassing effort across the board. Last spring the Atlas community submitted over 12,800 checklists, and we currently have over 26,000 checklists for the collective spring effort. With a whole month of spring still left there is plenty time to increase this tally even more.

A total of 44% of all 3,232 grid squares received at least one complete checklist last spring, and that figure is now 60% as Atlassers have begun to venture into more squares beyond their home patch. Again, with another month left in the spring season we expect this figure to increase too. So far, 533 Atlassers have contributed to the collective spring effort, representing an increase from last year. This is something we are keen to see continue, so please do keep spreading the word about the Atlas; the more people we can all get involved, the better the coverage we will get and the better the Atlas dataset will be!

October Big Day

Big Days are a 24-hour opportunity to celebrate the birds both near you and around the world. Run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, they are an immense effort globally to document the world's birds. In addition, this year's October Big Day 2020 happened during the first Global Bird Weekend. The goal of Global Bird Weekend was to make October 17-18 the biggest ever birding weekend and support BirdLife International's appeal to end illegal bird trade.

One of Global Bird Weekend's aims was to have more than 25,000 people submit *eBird* checklists on 17 October. More than 31,000 birders from 167 countries around the world ventured out into backyards and beyond to enjoy birds for October Big Day. This global team, united by birds, found an astounding 7,064 species in one day, breaking the world record for the most species reported in a single day.

All Atlas checklists automatically contributed towards the global day effort so there was no need to change any settings. For the October 2019 Big Day, New Zealand gathered a total of 357 checklists and 141 species were noted. We knew we could really ramp up the effort for 2020 and the community didn't disappoint with 635 checklists being submitted and a total of 136 species observed. Well done to everyone who got involved, the next big day will be in May 2021 so we'll be looking to break our record again next year!



▲ David Lawrie and Rachel Hufton.

October Atlas Challenge

The Brilliance of Birds celebrates the zany, wondrous, and wild lives of many of Aotearoa's feathered friends. Written by Skye Wishart with photographs by Edin Whitehead, it is a fantastic book, revealing the incredible adaptations of some of New Zealand's most beloved endemics. Edin and Skye very kindly donated a signed copy of the book for one lucky Atlasser to win during our first Atlas challenge. During October we gave one lucky Atlasser from the community a chance to win this stunning book by simply submitting 31 or more complete checklists during October, that included counts for every species reported, and followed the best practices.

The number of individual birds observed is one of the most valuable aspects of *eBird* checklists. Reporting accurate counts helps researchers understand not just where birds are, but how many there are as well. This information is essential for tracking changes in bird populations over time and undertaking occupancy and relative abundance modelling.

The winner of the October Atlas Challenge is Mary Thompson in Otago. Her name was drawn randomly from the 68 Atlassers who submitted at least 31 eligible *eBird* checklists in October. Eligible checklists were those that were complete, included counts for every species reported (no X's!), and submitted to the NZ Bird Atlas portal. Mary submitted a total of 74 complete checklists in October, a fantastic effort, and her signed copy of *The Brilliance of Birds* is on its way to her in the post.

These challenges are something the Atlas team are keen to continue in future. Keep an eye out on our social media channels and the NZ Bird Atlas *eBird* Portal news page for more information!

NEW ZEALAND BIRD ATLAS TEAM (DAN, PAT, MIKE AND SAM)

The Happy Atlasser

– Interview with David Lawrie

The NZ Bird Atlas Team recently interviewed Past President David Lawrie about his enthusiasm for the project.

Q: How long you have been birding and what first got you interested?

I was born and raised at Clarks Beach on the southern shores of the Manukau Harbour south of Auckland. Our house was right on the beach so about once a year we used to get the tide come into the house and the mudflats of the Manukau Harbour were my playground. I guess it was this close association with the shore line and the birds that were our neighbours that started my interest and right from an early age I took great interest in the birds that surrounded me. That interest was reinforced one day in 1964 when Ross McKenzie, a past president of the Ornithological Society (OSNZ), discovered me wandering the paddocks with my binoculars and took me under his wing for several years until I could obtain my driving licence.

Q. How long have you been using eBird?

About 20 years ago I saw an advertisement for an American programme called Bird Base which was a data recording system and I used that to go through all my old notebooks and enter all my sightings. At that time only Hugh Clifford and I were using this system in New Zealand, but it provided a good mechanism for storing and retrieving sightings. However, the developers of that programme decided to stop supporting it in 2015 and offered a mechanism for transferring all data from Bird Base into eBird which had only recently started. While the process of transferring the data files was relatively easy I did need the assistance of Gillian Vaughan to complete the process. However, we discovered that the two programmes were not completely compatible and there were several hundred error messages that needed to be sorted! That process took a couple of years. In fact, there may still be some in the system that I have not yet found.

Since Brian Ellis gave a talk at our South Auckland OSNZ meeting in May 1989, I have kept a daily list of birds seen around my garden. Up until June 2011 this was only presence/absence, which I have not yet entered into eBird because of its limited value. However, since that date I have completed a list every day that I am home, and all these lists are entered into eBird. There have been some interesting trends of not only changes in populations but also in presence during the year. This would be a good study for someone younger than me!

Q. As the Past President of Birds New Zealand you advocated for the adoption of eBird as the database of choice. Are you happy with how eBird is now being utilised in NZ?

When OSNZ were considering the adoption of an online database, I was the president. At that time there were several options and each system had its advocates and the debate around which system to adopt was reasonably controversial. At the time I could see the benefits that would accrue by adopting eBird and I was a strong supporter. I believe that this gives a great opportunity for data to be shared and pooled and I believe that it is benefiting all bird watchers and researchers, both amateur and professional.

Q. You have recently uploaded a huge number of personal lists from your old notebooks. Is it something you would recommend others do?

As mentioned above my old data was already stored on an electronic database so that made the transferring relatively easy.

However, during that process, it was necessary to correct many hundred discrepancies and I found that the process of trawling through the old notebooks to make those corrections provided an opportunity to relive birding trips and sightings. While data in notebooks is a good record of your sightings, long term it is of no value if the notebooks are destroyed in the future. I would urge everyone to transfer data from notebooks into the electronic system. This can be undertaken a few records at a time and gives an opportunity to relive those journeys.

Q. Has eBird given new value to your personal records?

eBird gives the opportunity to easily recall data in a number of different ways. Recently the editor of the Pukorokoro Miranda Trust magazine wanted to know any sightings I had made of Terek Sandpipers in New Zealand and Miranda in particular. I was easily able to assemble the information to know that I had made 79 individual sightings of Terek Sandpipers and was able to provide the location, date, and numbers of birds seen. That would not have been easily possible if the data was still in my notebooks.

Q. Why do you think community science projects like the Atlas are so important?

The mapping scheme involved in the Atlas means that wherever you travel within NZ you can always provide new and interesting data. On recent holidays in the South Island I have travelled to the ends of roads that I would not normally have contemplated. Often these areas are very attractive scenically, but there is always bird data to be obtained that fills gaps in this system. It is this desire to visit new areas that I enjoy so much about the Atlas scheme and enthusiastically support this type of project.

The ability to allow amateur birders such as myself to contribute meaningful data that will have long-term benefits is very important. The scheme also encourages non-birders to take more interest in the common birds in their gardens. This is one of the reasons why Birds New Zealand members should endorse and actively participate in the scheme because it encourages you to always take notice of the birds that surround you wherever you are. You may have a particular interest in shorebirds and concentrate on them. However, with the Atlas project you are encouraged to take greater notice of birds in all habitats, and that increases your enjoyment and adds value to your observations.

I would therefore encourage all members to participate. If you don't have a computer, or do not want to learn those skills, I'm happy to enter data on your behalf as long as you can provide me with a list and relevant details.



David Lawrie (right) and Stuart Wood: Ingrid Hutzler.

Birds NZ Research Fund 2020

This important national research fund is managed by Birds New Zealand on behalf of T/GEAR Charitable Trust. We report on the 2020 projects to be funded over the next five pages. Full details are posted online at: www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/birds-nz-research-fund/

Tawaki breeding success and Stoats

In 2014, the West Coast Penguin Trust set out to establish which, if any, predators were contributing to the apparent decline of Tawaki/Fiordland Crested Penguins in South Westland using movement activated trail cameras at two colonies. During the first two seasons, Stoats were occasionally present and a couple of predations of chicks occurred. In the third season (2017), nearly all Tawaki eggs and chicks being monitored at the Jackson Head colony were predated by Stoats.

We concluded that the Stoat invasion had occurred as a result of a mast year in adjacent beech forest. A fourth study year was undertaken with an additional third site in an attempt to better understand the data. However, results were inconclusive, and the project was put on hold until both predator control and a mast year occurred. A significant mast event occurred in summer/autumn 2019 and the Department of Conservation's (DOC) advice is that high numbers of Stoats are more likely in the summer following a mast and leading into winter and spring.

1080 was applied aurally in an area including our third study site in spring 2019 and conditions are now ideal to test and develop our theory that Stoats are a significant threat to Tawaki when Stoat numbers are raised, generally in relation to mast events in forest adjacent to their breeding habitat.

With a community trapping project at the Jackson Head colony and no predator control at the third site we will evaluate predator control methods, establish breeding success in relation to predation events and the presence of Stoats, and determine if further study is warranted. We thank the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020 for providing a grant to help fund this project.

WEST COAST PENGUIN TRUST

Monitoring Kākāpō and Takahē using eDNA

Kākāpō and Takahē are both critically endangered flightless endemic species. The current habitat of both species is limited to managed predator-free territories that are near capacity, so the expansion of Kākāpō and Takahē to their original habitat will require detailed monitoring of their population development, reproduction success, and resilience thus far circumented by threats such as predation and anthropogenic impacts.

With the Kākāpō/Takahē Recovery Teams and Ngāi Tahu, we will leverage environmental DNA (eDNA) monitoring as a cost efficient, non-invasive, and scalable approach that will lead to real-time insights into the distribution and genetic diversity of both species. eDNA monitoring is a powerful approach to determine the presence of a species due to detection of its DNA in environmental samples such as water, soil, or faeces. To benchmark the sensitivity of this approach for Kākāpō and Takahē detection, we collected soil samples at various distances from Kākāpō hotspots on Whenua Hou last year and are going to collect Takahē-associated environmental samples this summer.

We will also probe different genomic approaches, which can give us insights into genetic diversity and therefore the fitness of these populations. We thank Birds New Zealand for a generous research grant that allows us to initiate this eDNA monitoring work.

LARA URBAN & THE KAKAPO/TAKAHE RECOVERY TEAMS



▲ South Island Kokako, watercolour by Paul Martinson (2003) from *Extinct Birds of New Zealand* ©Te Papa



▲ North Island Kokako: Johannes Keulemans.

Kokako genetics

During the past two years, our team has been studying basic morphometric data, bill shape, and stable isotopes (carbon and nitrogen from feathers) of all members of the NZ endemic family Callaeidae, the NZ Wattlebirds. Using specimens from natural history collections worldwide, we compiled a dataset spanning circa 130 years for North Island Kokako (*C. wilsoni*) and 80 years for South Island Kokako (*C. cinerea*).

Our preliminary results provided insights about microevolution and feeding ecology of those birds, showing differences between North Island and South Island kokako that could be due to a lower degree of genetic variability in the latter. A previous study hinted at reduced genetic variability in the latter, but was based on a restricted dataset. This would also have implications regarding the ancestral lineage of this pair of species.

With funding assistance from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020, I will conduct a population genetics study of kokako using an ancient DNA protocol to acquire DNA from historic museum specimens.

Natural history collections offer a glimpse at these species' past "natural" states and this study will provide data on the genetic variability of kokako, uncover geographically structured genetic signals, and elucidate their biogeographic history. The resulting genetic data will be added to our framework of geometric morphometrics and stable isotopes to produce a more comprehensive study on the ecology and microevolution of these species and their survival or extinction.

RODRIGO B. SALVADOR,
MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA



▲ NZ Storm Petrel with leg bands: Edin Whitehead.

New Zealand Storm Petrel genetics

With funding assistance from the 2020 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, we aim to catch New Zealand Storm Petrels (NZSP) in the Far North and East Northland in February-March 2021. We will target areas further north from the Hauraki Gulf where we have caught them previously and a considerable distance from their only known breeding location on Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island. NZSP have been recorded in these northern waters since 2005.

We will be collecting blood and feather samples from NZSP caught at sea along the shelf edge between North Cape and Bay of Islands. We will also head to Hauturu either immediately before or after the at-sea catching to collect samples from NZSP captured there. These new samples will contribute to a genomic study that has already extracted DNA from samples previously supplied by the NZSP Project team. Our goal is to investigate for the presence of genetic structure in the wider NZSP population of northern New Zealand indicating the presence of other breeding populations.

By catching NZSP in the Far North and Northland coast we are keen to move the genetics-based work along with some urgency. Dr. Lara Shepherd (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa) and Dr. Jamie Wood (Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research) will work with Dr. Bruce Robertson (University of Otago) who has previously extracted DNA from samples collected 2012- 2014. Ancient DNA from several subfossil storm petrel specimens will also be included in the genetics work.

We will be using a new net gun for catching birds at sea, a much-refined version of the early net guns used to capture storm petrels both here in New Zealand and overseas. The Department of Conservation (DOC) will publish a best practice manual on the use of the net guns for seabirds, a draft of which has been submitted for review.

Finding another breeding island will have major implications for the species' threat classification - ie, the threat level would be reduced if one or more populations are located. It would also allow us to assess its overall threat level, and, through collaboration with DOC and tangata whenua, develop a conservation management plan for the species.

CHRIS GASKIN (NORTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST)
& DR. MATT RAYNOR (AUCKLAND MUSEUM),
for NZ STORM PETREL WORKING GROUP.



▲ Little Penguin: Mike Ashbee.

GPS tracking of West Coast Kororā

The West Coast Penguin Trust has undertaken monitoring of Kororā/Little Penguin foraging in the central Buller region (2015-2017) using GPS trackers, and depth data for a small number of foraging trips during the 2019 season with the support of the NZ Penguin Initiative (NZPI).

With funding assistance from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020, our intention is to regularise the approach to collecting spatial foraging data annually. Ideally, this will cover the four key stages of the breeding season: incubation, chick rearing, pre and post moult. This will contribute to the understanding of the marine ecology of Kororā for the central Buller region.

It would be part of a wider programme coordinated by the NZPI and, in 2020, we will establish processes and protocols for the annual collection of data to ensure consistency in future years. We aim to analyse and report on findings, including reference to changes in sea conditions and environmental variables such as water depth, ocean currents and conditions, as well as any potential overlap with inshore fisheries operations/zones. The latter will enable us to have a dialogue with local fishing operators to discuss, develop, and target any necessary mitigation efforts.

WEST COAST PENGUIN TRUST

GPS tracking of Hauraki Gulf Kororā

Kororā/Little Penguins are inshore foragers that are resident in the Hauraki Gulf year-round. They are subject to any decline in marine ecosystem health and the local population appears to be decreasing.

This study aims to compare foraging patterns of penguins from two spatially segregated Kororā colonies in the wider Hauraki Gulf region: Te Motu-a-Ihenga/Motuihe Island in the inner Hauraki Gulf and Motu Muka/Lady Alice Island which is further offshore.

Funds provided from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020 will facilitate island visits to undertake tracking work. The research will determine whether spatial differences in foraging patterns are observed between the two colonies, indicating differences in marine resource availability. Tracking data will also provide a temporal comparison of the foraging locations used by Kororā from Motu Muka in 2020 vs. 2018: <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/48715>

Understanding the foraging patterns of Kororā over space and time is key to protecting them while at sea, and the results of this study will be used to inform at-sea conservation measures for Kororā in the wider Hauraki Gulf.

KERRY LUKIES, NORTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST



▲ Kerry Lukies with Kororā.
Photo by Spencer McIntyre.



▲ Sooty Shearwater: Les Feasey (NZ Birds Online).



▲ Flesh-footed Shearwater: Les Feasey/NZ Birds Online.

Are Sooty Shearwaters undertaking a range retraction within NZ?

The overall goal of this work is to improve the conservation of seabirds in New Zealand. As the seabird capital of the world, New Zealand is uniquely placed to begin documenting the effects of climate change on seabirds and develop effective responses. A common response by seabirds to a warming climate are range retractions to more amenable conditions.

With funding assistance from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020, I will undertake a pilot study comparing physiological stress of Sooty Shearwater/Tītī, adults and chicks from northern, central, and southern NZ. Even with predator control, bird survey data shows Sooty Shearwater numbers to be in decline at the northern boundaries of their distribution suggesting a range retraction to the south. This species is highly sensitive to temperature increases and anecdotal evidence suggests that warming seas throughout the waters of NZ (and beyond) may be driving this observed pattern of decline locally. The proposed study has two aims:

1. Compare foraging and stress levels of Sooty Shearwaters across their range. It is hypothesised that northern adults/chicks may exhibit differences in prey trophic level and higher stress hormone levels in their blood and feathers compared to their southern counterparts. *Conservation goal:* identify colonies where birds (particularly chicks) are exhibiting greater stress. Such baseline data can then be used to inform management responses.
2. Compare stress levels of Sooty Shearwaters with sympatric Flesh-footed Shearwaters, a warm water species, breeding at the same site. We hypothesise that the Flesh-footed Shearwaters/Toanui co-occurring at northern colonies are less stressed than Sooty Shearwaters and are better adapted to cope with warmer water conditions. Moreover, we expect this may explain why Flesh-footed Shearwater numbers are increasing in the north, as Sooty Shearwaters pull back to the southern edges of their range. *Conservation goal:* identify if Flesh-footed Shearwaters exhibit less chick and adult baseline stress levels, potentially explaining their increasing population sizes in northern colonies.

DR BRENDON DUNPHY, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND



▲ Stewart Island Tokoeka: Glenda Rees (NZ Birds Online).



▲ Rakiura Tokoeka chick photo: Emma Feenstra.

Monitoring Rakiura Tokoeka

There is limited evidence that the Stewart Island/Rakiura Tokoeka (*Apteryx australis lawryi*) population has been in decline. The aim of this PhD project is to help determine its population status. In the process of determining population variables, our project explores and compares the use of invasive and non-invasive monitoring methods with the aim of increasing the accuracy and reliability of non-invasive methods so they can be used with more confidence.

There are four sites on Rakiura where we have been comparing the use of VHF transmitter tracking and territory mapping with a grid of trail cameras and acoustic recorders. Additionally, we extended the use of transmitters in two of these locations throughout the 2019-2020 breeding season in order to conduct a novel investigation of chick survival. A comparison of monitoring methods is a useful tool for method selection, particularly in NZ where call counts and VHF telemetry are popular. The information gained builds on current estimates of the density, stability, and trajectory of the population. We have also discovered novel information on adult breeding behaviour and the survival, recruitment, and impact of invasive pests on chicks.

Support from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (2019 & 2020) has assisted in all stages of this project, the results of which will be compiled in 2021.

EMMA FEENSTRA, MASSEY UNIVERSITY
& LANDCARE RESEARCH



▲ Whenua Hou Diving Petrel at its sand dune burrow: Holly Brown.



▲ Whenua Hou Diving Petrel: Grace Tocker.

Quantifying Whenua Hou Diving Petrel recruitment

The critically endangered Whenua Hou Diving Petrel (WHDP) is one of the most threatened bird species on the planet. The WHDP was once widespread in southern Aotearoa, but following local extirpations due to invasive predators, only one colony (194-208 adults) remains in the dunes of predator-free Whenua Hou.

Threats inhibiting recovery of the WHDP have been identified: erosion of their breeding habitat, caused by storms and climate change. While these threats have been identified, the applicability of conservation actions, such as translocations, are yet to be assessed. Before the impact and success of such actions can be assessed, WHDP population dynamics need to be quantified. I have compiled historic WHDP data, but this data is of varying quality. As such, I have increased monitoring intensity.

Despite all of this, only 12 WHDPs banded as chicks have been recaptured as returning adults. These chicks have returned to the colony at ages 1-4 years. The low sample size on returning banded chicks has limited insights into juvenile survival, age-at-first-return, and subsequently (age dependent) recruitment into the adult WHDP population. A poor understanding of this key parameter results in a poor understanding of overall population dynamics and renders assessments of future conservation measures challenging.

In 2020/21, I aim to: 1) Quantify WHDP recruitment, 2) Improve existing population models, 3) Estimating impact and success of a WHDP translocation. In 2020/21, I will, together with local iwi members, travel to Whenua Hou during two field stints to I) recapture WHDPs that were banded as chicks and are returning as adults to estimate recruitment and age-at-first-return and II) recapture >50% of the banded adult population to further estimate adult survival.

The proposed field work will result in a drastic improvement of data quality, even with the intensive monitoring in previous years, as 2020/21 is the first season in which a very large portion (>70%) of WHDPs banded as chicks are expected to return as adults. Once further data on age-at-first-return and juvenile survival has been collected, I will expand the existing population models to include age-dependent recruitment. I will then use these expanded models to simulate the impact of "harvesting" WHDP chicks on the source colony (Whenua Hou), as well as the likelihood of success of a WHDP translocation (i.e., establishment of the recipient colony).

By contributing to various aspects of this study, the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020 will make a major contribution to ensuring the continued existence of this critically endangered endemic.

JOHANNES FISCHER, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY, Ph.D.

Foraging ecology of Whenua Hou Diving Petrel and Common Diving Petrel on Whenua Hou

The Whenua Hou Diving Petrel (WHDP) has been classified as 'Nationally Critical', with the entire population existing as a single colony of circa 200 individuals on the relatively small area of sand dunes of Codfish Island. My MSc thesis aimed to characterise various aspects of the foraging ecology of the WHDP, including intraspecific trophic dynamics, seasonal and annual variation in occupied isotopic niche, interspecific competition with the sympatric population of Common Diving Petrels (CDPs), and exposure to mercury in the marine environment through their diet.

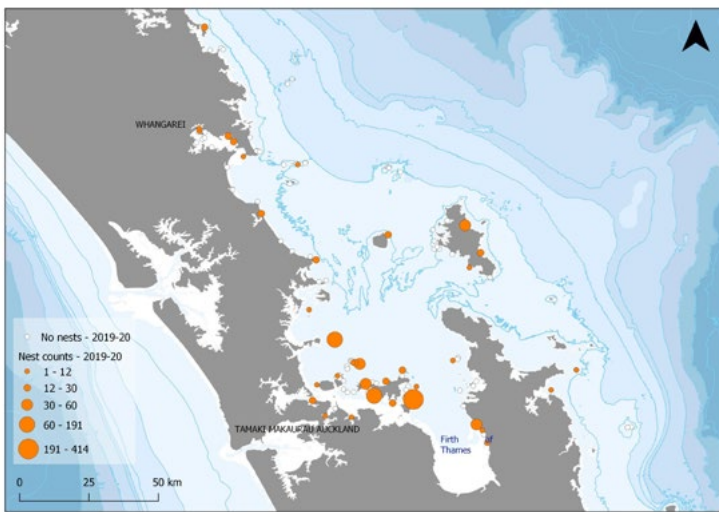
Trophic dynamics were investigated through stable isotope analysis of blood and feather samples collected from WHDPs and CDPs over a three-year sampling period (2017-2019). The same samples were used to analyse the mercury concentration absorbed from diet (blood) and accumulated over the long inter-moult period (feathers). A better understanding of the factors contributing to the slow population recovery of the WHDP, such as interspecific competition for prey and mercury contamination interfering with reproduction, will help inform future conservation management initiatives.

Results indicate WHDP foraging ecology varies among years and between sexes during the breeding season. Males appear to be targeting higher trophic level prey closer to the breeding colony than females, potentially causing detrimental strain on females and limiting their reproductive performance. Trophic plasticity across the years suggests the WHDPs may not be strongly impacted by changing prey availability with climate change. The overlap of the core trophic niches of WHDPs and CDPs does not exceed 10% during the breeding season, indicating trophic segregation between the two species when they share a breeding ground.

During the non-breeding season, there is up to 50% overlap between core trophic niches, however as the non-breeding migration of this population of CDPs is unknown, I cannot accurately assess the potential for interspecific competition during the non-breeding season. Mercury contamination was higher in WHDPs than CDPs, both in blood and feather tissue. Therefore, this could indicate a factor contributing to the limited population recovery of WHDPs since the pest eradication on Whenua Hou.

In summary, this research, thanks to the support of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019, has increased understanding on WHDP trophic dynamics and foraging ecology in relation to the sympatric CDPs on Whenua Hou. It has also highlighted the potential for increased mercury levels to interfere with successful reproduction in WHDPs.

GRACE TOCKER, SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES,
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON



Map of 2019/20 survey nest counts.

Hauraki Gulf White-fronted Terns

Tara or White-fronted Terns may be in dramatic decline within the Hauraki Gulf. The New Zealand population has fallen markedly over the last 40 years and is currently regarded as 'At Risk/Declining'. Tara frequently shift their breeding sites, making it difficult to identify population trends. To overcome this requires regular monitoring within a large enough study area to cover changes in nest sites from season to season. With this aim we have completed a baseline survey of Tara breeding across the Hauraki Gulf (excluding the southern Firth of Thames).

In total our 2019/20 survey identified 136 potential Tara breeding sites. Forty-five sites had Tara present with breeding observed at 39 sites; 17 of these were previously 'unknown'. A total of 2,250 Tara was recorded and 1,342 nests. The largest colonies were 650 birds with 414 nests at Scully's Reef Ponui Island, 200 birds with 191 nests recorded from Tiritiri Matangi, and 171 birds with 141 nests at Koi Island Waiheke. Three significant 'new' colonies of 50 nests or more were found at Oneroa Waiheke, Whangapoua Spit Aotea and Waikawau Coromandel.

The vast majority of the 39 breeding sites (28 of 72%) had less than 20 nests and only six areas had more than 50 nests. The 2019/20 breeding season for tara appears to have been prolonged with new nests observed into February. This extended season and perhaps a later start to breeding, coupled with the inconsistency with which this species chooses nesting sites, means that we are unlikely to have recorded all nests in our survey.

Southern Black-backed Gulls and/or Red-billed Gulls were present at 28 of the 39 Tara nesting sites. These species can clearly co-habit since the gulls had commenced nesting prior to Tara arriving, although the two largest colonies had no gulls present at the time of observation. Gulls provoked defensive behaviours from nesting Tara and were also observed stealing fish from terns.

To assist with future surveys, we identified seven site clusters within which terns are likely to breed in subsequent seasons. Historical survey records for sites in these clusters was analysed using 1996 as an approximate baseline. The 'expected' number of nests within the identified site clusters was considerably higher than what was recorded in 2019/20 and this trend is most notable in northern parts of the region. While this methodology is crude for a number of reasons, it suggests that the number of Tara nesting in the Hauraki Gulf may have declined dramatically in the past 25 years.

We are grateful to the volunteers and Birds New Zealand members who assisted this project, and funding from the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund. The Trust will fund a repeat survey in summer 2020/21.

CHRIS GASKIN & JAMES ROSS,
NORTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST



Jacques de Satge with study bird.



Mangrove 'gate' camera trap: Jacques de Satge.

Understanding Banded Rail habitat use in mangrove forests

NZ mangrove forests are expanding seawards, fuelled by anthropogenic increases in sediments and nutrients in estuaries. In response, large-scale mangrove removal has been carried out in parts of NZ in an attempt to restore open tidal flats. However, little is known about how this expansion and concomitant removal of mangroves might affect the Banded Rail or Moho Pererū.

Using a grant from the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, I spent the last year monitoring and tracking Moho Pererū. I gathered data on their footprints from 360 quadrats, trekking through 365,000 square-meters of mangrove habitat in the process. The data set shows that Moho Pererū footprints were found with far higher frequency within mangrove forests (67% of quadrats) than along their seaward edge (27%) or in adjacent mudflat habitats (1%). Looking at this footprint data, I am now exploring whether Moho Pererū might find certain patches of mangrove appealing given their vegetation density, structure and size, or the presence of prey items (e.g. mud crabs).

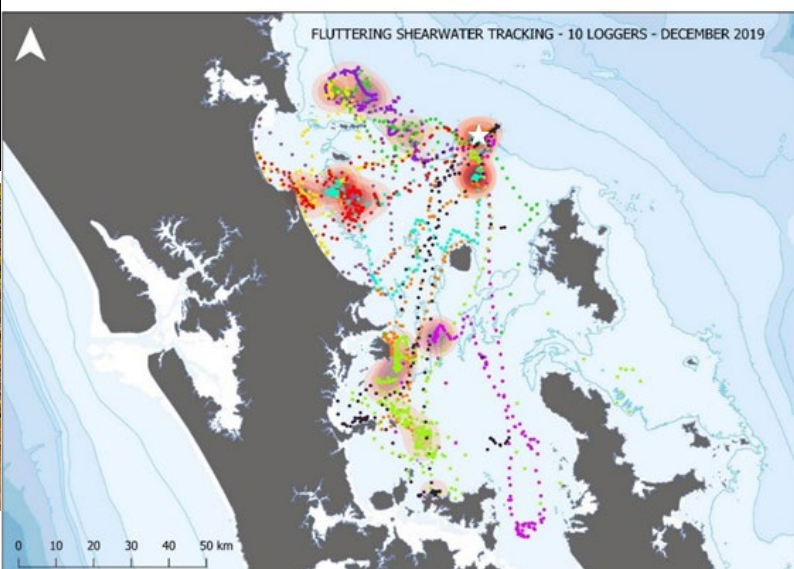
In early 2020, I teamed up with DOC to capture, GPS-tag, and track two Moho Pererū. This was a global first for the species, requiring custom-built trapping infrastructure and a made-to-fit GPS backpack system weighing less than six grams. Despite Covid-19 interrupting this work, I managed to collect valuable location data before a premature end to fieldwork. A first look at the movement data is intriguing; the two Moho Pererū roamed widely in mangrove habitat when foraging, while one individual chose to roost in mangrove stands overnight.

The next step will involve quantifying these behaviours statistically, and defining how and when birds use different habitat elements within their home ranges. Our success to date has been encouraging and the research team will undertake further tracking fieldwork in early 2021 when we hope to shed more light on the ecology of this elusive species in this habitat.

JACQUES DE SATGE, MASSEY UNIVERSITY



▲ Fluttering Shearwater: Alan Tennyson/NZ Birds Online.



▲ Foraging trips of ten Fluttering Shearwaters during the chick-rearing period in December 2019. Tracks are coloured by individual bird. Points are successful GPS fixes at 5-minute frequency. Colony site (Pokohinu) marked by white star.

Pakahā tracking in the Hauraki Gulf

Funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2019 allowed us to kick-start this project, which included a GPS tracking component. In December 2019 we successfully tracked ten Pakahā/Fluttering Shearwaters from Pokohinu (Burgess island) in the Mokohinau group.

The tracking took place during the chick-rearing period and captured foraging trips of between one and five days. Most birds returned to the colony nightly to feed their chick, which enabled us to capture two complete foraging trips from the same birds.

The map generated (see above) displays all foraging trips, coloured for the individual birds. While detailed analysis of these tracks is currently underway to profile how environmental variables such as sea surface temperature, productivity (chlorophyll-a) and bathymetry relate to foraging behaviours, these tracks indicate that Pakahā are commonly inshore foragers who frequent shallower waters to feed.

Rough 'hotspot' areas have been generated based on cumulative point density from all tracks (in red). These indicate areas of high activity around Bream Tail, north of the Marotere (Chickens) group, off Simpson's Rock, and in the inner Gulf around Kawau Island.

This project will span three breeding seasons, and the second field season of work has just begun. A repeat of this tracking will be done in December 2020 and 2021 to enable a multiyear comparison of foraging behaviours in relation to different environmental conditions.

EDIN WHITEHEAD, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND PH.D.



▲ North Island Little Shearwater, Motu Muka/Lady Alice Island: Edin Whitehead.



▲ North Island Little Shearwater, Pokohinu/Burgess Island: Graeme Taylor/NZ Birds Online.

Population and foraging behaviour of North Island Little Shearwater

Little is known about the behaviours of the North Island subspecies of Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis haurakiensis*) during the breeding season. Surveys of Taranga (Hen Island) and the Marotere (Chickens) island groups in 2018 indicated that their population size has increased substantially since the Kiore eradications in 1990s and 2011 (Taranga), offering the opportunity to build on prior work regarding their breeding biology.

Research priorities for North Island Little Shearwater includes foraging distribution, dietary data, and population dynamics. This project aims to address these knowledge gaps through an in-depth study of North Island Little Shearwaters breeding on Motu Muka (Lady Alice island).

The three aims of this project are (1) to determine foraging distributions and behaviours of chick-rearing adults using high resolution GPS tracking; (2) to monitor breeding success and validate observations of breeding timing using burrowscope surveys and trail cameras on study burrows; and (3) to identify important dietary components.

A grant from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020 will enable the purchase of GPS loggers and facilitate island visits throughout the breeding season to undertake tracking work and burrow-monitoring.

EDIN WHITEHEAD, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND



▲ NZ Fairy Tern/Tara iti pair: Darren Markin.

New Zealand Fairy Terns

There has been courting activity among the NZ Fairy Terns/ Tara iti at Waipu and Mangawhai recently, with birds starting to pair-up. The last breeding season produced seven chicks to fledging and I've been lucky to photograph all of them during September and October. It is good news that all of them survived their first winter and are looking fit and healthy. Hopefully there will be more breeding success this season.

DARREN MARKIN



▲ Pelagornithid in flight: Brian Choo.

Largest flying bird species?

Researchers in the US and China have identified the 50-million-year-old bone of a giant bony-toothed bird that lived in Antarctica which may have been the largest flying bird species ever to evolve, with a wingspan of five to six metres, about twice that of the largest living albatross species.

According to the new study, published in *Scientific Reports* in October, "They likely represent not only the largest flying birds of the Eocene period but also some of the largest flying birds that ever lived."

Lead author Peter Kloess, from the University of California, Berkeley, said: "Our fossil discovery, with its estimate of a 5-6-metre wingspan shows that birds evolved to a truly gigantic size relatively quickly after the extinction of the dinosaurs and ruled over the oceans for millions of years."

The bone, which includes several 'pseudoteeth', was discovered at Seymour Island, off the Antarctic Peninsula. Other fossils suggest that these birds - known as pelagornithids - quickly diversified into a range of sizes within six million years of their origin. By 50 million years ago, they ranged from the size of modern-day albatross to giants with wingspans twice as wide. Previous studies of pelagornithid fossils have calculated that the largest were near the size limit for how big a bird can become while retaining the power of flight.

They probably used their bony-toothed jaws to snatch fish and squid from the surface. Eocene Antarctica was much warmer than today and prehistoric marsupials and frogs lived there among ferns and conifer forest.



▲ Kea during the experiment: Jonathan Webb.

Kea can reason about probability

Kea make smart predictions when reasoning about uncertain events, behaving similarly to humans when faced with statistical reasoning tasks, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Auckland's School of Psychology published in *Nature Communications* in March 2020. PhD candidate Amalia Bastos and Associate Professor Alex Taylor carried out an experiment to test the ability of Kea in captivity to make predictions using statistical, physical, and social information in a similar way to a human.

"The results from the study are surprising as they mirror those from [human] infants and chimpanzees in similar tests," said Amalia Bastos. "They show Kea can look at the ratio of objects to make a prediction about uncertain events - what we call statistical inference. That Kea could then integrate different types of information into these predictions was really unexpected: this type of integration has been thought to require language. This is the first evidence that a bird can make true statistical inferences and integrate different types of information into their predictions of uncertain events."

"Our work suggests that aspects of this ability have likely evolved twice on our planet, in primates and birds," said Associate Professor Alex Taylor.

Study links plastic ingestion and dietary metals in seabirds

A new study has found a relationship between plastic debris ingested by seabirds and liver concentrations of mineral metals, with potential links to pollution and nutrition. The research published in *Scientific Reports* examined ingested plastic and 11 metals in two seabird species, and found significant relationships with concentrations of aluminum, manganese, iron, cobalt, copper and zinc in the livers of Slender-billed Prions.

Lead author Dr Lauren Roman of CSIRO and the University of Tasmania said the effects were small, but given that seabirds already experience multiple challenges on the high seas such as prey shortage and severe storms, plastic may compound the impact of other stressors such as fisheries activities and climate change: "While more study is needed to better understand the link between plastic in the gut and seabird nutrition, this is a concerning finding for millions of seabirds that do have plastic in their stomach. A bird that has a lot of plastic in its stomach may be in poorer condition and therefore less likely to survive the increased frequency of storms or food chain perturbations expected under a changing climate."



▲ Reg Cotter in the Chathams, 2008.

▲ New signage has been erected at the shorebird roost at Tahuna Torea Reserve in Glendowie, Auckland, by Auckland Council. The signage was designed by Birds New Zealand member Shaun Lee and includes the Birds New Zealand logo.

Making a donation

Birds New Zealand is working hard to ensure a better future for our birds, but to do so we need your help. Birds New Zealand is a registered charity (CC 41020) which means tax credits are available for donations made in New Zealand. You can donate in the following ways:

* Deposit funds into our bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00

* Make a credit card payment online: www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/you-can-help/make-a-donation/#/form/Donation

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www.birdsnz.org.nz

Or contact our Membership Secretary:

membership@birdsnz.org.nz

Or contact your nearest Regional Representative:

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New members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: Ayla Wiles (Northland); Sonja Lukaszewicz (Auckland); Mike Bryan (South Auckland); Susie Nyika, Amanda Hunt (BoP/Volcanic Plateau); Liam McAuliffe (Wellington); John Hughes (West Coast); Michael Sullivan Michael Ross, Kate Steel (Canterbury); Bridget Carter, Kev Carter, Joseph Bliss (Southland).

Reg Cotter obituary

It is with great sadness that I advise of the death of my father Reg Cotter, a stalwart of birding in the Wellington region, at his home in Wellington on 16 October 2020 after a short illness. The following is adapted from notes read out at the 2019 NZ Bird Conference in Wellington:

"An enthusiasm for birdwatching and bird studies by Reg Cotter and his strong commitment to field activities in the Wellington region since 1971 were well known to local members and members further afield. Reg was the Wellington Secretary of OSNZ for many years and was inspirational in the field work he led and encouraged others to follow. He was one of the original planners of the long-term Wellington harbour survey and was present on the 1st of January 1978 when the first two Chatham Island Taiko were captured, grabbing the second bird to land.

Reg was involved in the original 5-minute bird counts on Kapiti Island, Spotless Crake and Black-fronted Dotterel surveying, bird surveys of the Pencarrow Lakes and most recently his leadership in studies of the movements and breeding behaviour of Little Penguins on Mātū/Somes Island. Reg was passionate about offshore islands and seabirds in particular, returning to the Chatham Islands over 20 times on Taiko expeditions, assisting with bird studies on islands up north (Little and Great Barrier, Curvier, Red Mercury to name a few), likewise down south (Antipodes) or out east, many alongside Mike Imber or Graeme Taylor. At various times Reg also provided valuable field assistance to Richard Holdaway during fossil excavations.

Reg was the ultimate volunteer and encouraged many, many others to get involved in the field trips he organised. He was an avid beach patroller as well as avid bandler of Sooty Shearwaters, Southern Black-backed Gulls and Little Penguins and this gave him the opportunity to invite others along to enjoy his passion. He was a quiet achiever and his contribution to our knowledge on many bird topics is considerable yet is largely unknown. Reg co-authored four papers on seabirds published in *Notornis* between 1994 in 2013, and provided Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand with 73 bird specimens from 1972 to 2011 for its collections."

At the 2019 AGM, Reg's dedicated and significant contribution to the Society was acknowledged with a Meritorious Service Award.

SHANE COTTER

**FAR NORTH**

This month, very sadly, one of our most beloved members died. Anthea Goodwin was such a keen bird observer, if there were any outings she would always be involved: aerial surveys, pelagic trips, outings to count the godwits on Parengarenga, and more recently Atlas outings as part of our group and on her own. We all enjoyed her company and respected her expertise. She had so much knowledge and was an inspiration to us all, encouraging us to get out and look at the birds around us.

Anthea delighted in birds simply because they were birds. Lois Wagener told us, "On our last day birding with Anthea, I arrived at our meeting point to find her standing looking intently at a macrocarpa tree in which were a large number of Royal Spoonbills. I walked over to her and asked if she had counted the birds. 'No' she replied, 'I am just enjoying watching them.'" She was involved in many local projects, such as getting the local children at Mangonui School to install Little Penguin nest boxes around the coast.

We had an Atlas outing this month to the Opuia area, covering a wide range of habitats. It was so interesting for those of us who do not live there: coast, forest, farmland, and wetlands. We heard Fernbirds and Spotless Crake. Lois Wagener makes weekly visits to the Houhora Harbour wharf. Pied Shags frequently fish there. Over the last 5 weeks, Southern Black-backed Gulls have been pirating the shags by dive-bombing them when they surface with a fish, to force them to drop their prey.

A beach patrol was undertaken on 90 Mile Beach from Huketere up the beach for 40 kilometres. In contrast to other months, when hundreds of Southern Black-backed Gulls (SBBGs) and Red-billed Gulls (RBGs) are recorded, we only saw 224 SBBGs and 1 RBG. White-fronted Terns are usually seen in small flocks along the beach; this patrol yielded only 2, plus 15 SIPO at the Bluff. A lone Bar-tailed Godwit and 4 Lesser Knots were feeding intently higher up the beach just south of the Bluff, and we saw 3 NZ Dotterels. The search for storm-wrecks produced a dark morph giant petrel in good condition.

- ISABELLA GODBERT

NORTHLAND

In September we took the opportunity to watch on Zoom the Hibi Conservation Trust Science talks, which occurred at the same time as our usual meeting. At our October Branch meeting we were heartened by Ilse Corkery's presentation about the Kokako Recovery Team's work throughout the North Island. By 1999 the number of Kokako pairs was down to 330. About 30 years later in 2020, there are 25 populations - including 11 of original 17. All populations are managed (incl. on 3 islands); much of this work is carried out by community groups under guidance. All but 3 of the populations are increasing, with 13 'safe' having 20+ pairs. The recovery project has just hit a 2,000 pair milestone!

Scott Brooks reported the results of a recent pelagic trip from Tutukaka, which recorded 25 seabird species: "With great excitement, and after several cancellations over recent months due to COVID-19 or

bad weather, we finally got out again from Tutukaka past the Poor Knights Islands yesterday for a fantastic day out. The highlights of the trip were 2 Chatham Island Albatross, without a doubt the main attraction of the day. They were a pair and put on a great display of mutual preening courting behaviour. We also saw 2 Wilson's Storm Petrels and 23 NZ Storm Petrels. Over 17,000 seabirds were seen through the day, with some huge boil ups (one with over 8,000 seabirds) - what a spectacle! This was our 19th trip out and thanks to the 2 Chatham Island Albatross seen, we've now recorded a total of 40 different tube-nosed seabird species out there."

In Whangarei, there are 4 Australasian Little Grebe nests on the Lake Drive 'pond' with the most advanced producing a chick to fledging.

- ANNE McCRACKEN

AUCKLAND

A return to COVID-19 restrictions in Auckland during the month of September caused some cancellation to our programme. These included our September meeting, a Muriwai Beach Patrol, and the popular Kia Ora Kuaka event at Ambury Park. Once the restrictions were lifted, we appear to have returned to our regular events with extra enthusiasm, with more people attending field trips compared to the norm.

Our Muriwai Beach Patrol on 10/10 was attended by 11 participants. A total of 5 birds were found including 1 White-capped Albatross, 1 Hutton's Shearwater, 1 Fluttering Shearwater, 1 Antarctic Prion, and 1 Fairy Prion. Our Pakiri Beach Patrol on 25/10 was also well attended with 11 participants. A total of 54 birds of 12 species were found including 1 Cook's Petrel, 11 Common Diving Petrel, 13 Flesh-footed Shearwater, 16 Fluttering Shearwater, 1 Sooty Shearwater, 1 Little Shearwater, and 4 Fairy Prion. The find of 13 Flesh-footed Shearwaters was unusual. All birds were checked for signs of fisheries by-catch (fish hooks, injuries) but none was noted. A live bird count of the beach found 104 Variable Oystercatcher, 52 Northern NZ Dotterel, and an impressive 7 NZ Fairy Tern.

A total of 17 participants took part in our Shakespear Regional Park Survey on 19/10. A total of 2,278 birds of 52 species were counted, lower than the high number of 2,713 birds counted during the 2019 survey, but likely the result of moderate winds on the day causing many birds to seek cover. Species counted included 3 Banded Rail, 2 Spotless Crake, 468 Pukeko, 23 Kereru, 108 Eastern Rosella, 3 Red-crowned Kakariki, 12 NI Saddleback, 1 Fernbird, 96 Grey Warbler, 246 Tui, and 6 of the recently released Hibi/Stitchbird.

The annual Motutapu Island Survey in conjunction with the Motutapu Island Restoration Trust took place on the weekend of 3/4 October. A total of 57 species were counted by the 15 participants over 2 days of repeated transect counts. Of interest was the sighting of at least 6 obvious Mallard x Pateke (Brown Teal) hybrids seen on just 3 of the many wetlands on the island. These sightings continue a trend of observing hybrids during the 2019 survey and the Department of Conservation have been advised with the

hope that they will activate some control of both the hybrids and Mallards on the island.

- IAN McLEAN

WAIKATO

With the Waikato Branch being just south of the Auckland lockdown, our August speaker was unable to attend. Three films on shorebirds were shown instead. Once the Auckland lockdown was lifted, Past President David Lawrie gave an interesting talk on two island groups he had visited recently. The Snares and the Samoan groups provided a greatly enjoyed meeting with many bird photos of unfamiliar avian species.

Notable birds around the region have included Rooks just outside Hamilton and feral Carolina Wood Ducks also around the Hamilton region. Russell Cannings reported a Little Tern at Huntly's Tainui Bridge which is thought to be the first inland record (discounting Lake Ellesmere and Lake Wairarapa). He also reported that a recent pelagic trip that was restricted to coastal waters still produced 10 tubenose species including White-Capped Albatross and White-Faced Storm Petrel. A visit to Gannet Rock estimated at least 3,200 Gannets present.

Although strictly not in the Waikato region, the Coromandel area provides good habitat for the NZ Dotterel. At least 10 chicks are alive and well in October. An unconfirmed report of Eastern Barn Owls in the Onemana area is also worth noting.

- KEN WEDGEWOOD

TARANAKI

Dr Emily Roberts was our guest speaker at September's meeting; she has been studying the estimated 20 to 50 NZ Dotterel spread along Taranaki's coastline. Emily and other members of the "Dotterel Defenders" predator control group do temporary fencing of nest sites and public education resulting in a good breeding season this year with some impressive results. This work also helps other nesting shorebirds such as VOC.

Our field trip was to Nowell's Lake's on the coast out from Hawera, despite the weather being overcast and cold with occasional showers we amassed a good species list including two or three of the resident Australasian Bittern. Welcome Swallow were most numerous over the paddocks. Two of us also took the opportunity to knock off some atlas squares lacking data. A Fiordland Crested Penguin made a surprise visit to a beach close to New Plymouth city, unfortunately the rigours of the trip were too much and despite being cared for at Wildbase Wildlife hospital it succumbed. In a late election all incumbents were returned to their respective positions.

Ian Armitage and his wife timed a visit to New Plymouth to coincide with our October indoor meeting; he gave us a talk about his 2016 "In the wake of Scott and Shackleton" Antarctic trip with Heritage Expeditions and a couple of sub-Antarctic Islands visited on an earlier trip. It was all very interesting and most of us were rather envious. Thank you, Ian.

Steve Purdon our Atlas Co-ordinator gave us an update on atlasing. We are doing well along the main roads but need to put more effort into a few hard to reach places.



An outing along the Henui walkway, a popular walking/cycling/dog-walking trail along the Henui stream in New Plymouth with a mixture of native and introduced flora, turned up Common Myna, Tui, Eastern Rosella, and Kereru/NZ Pigeon. A warm morning's walk was enjoyed by all. Two of us put in a huge effort for Big Bird Day; starting at Waiongana before day break and ending at Whanganui at dark, then returning home after a 16-hour day. We missed some common species but made up for it with some we didn't expect to see. It was an exciting but exhausting day. Roll on next year.

- PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

An overcast and wintry day in August saw 7 hardy individuals brave the cold to visit Blowhard Bush, a little gem of a native bush patch in the Kaweka Forest Park. No doubt in part due to the weather conditions, things were fairly quiet, bird-wise, although we did see low numbers of most of the 'usual suspects', such as Whiteheads/Pōpokotea, NI Robins/Toutouwai, Kererū, NZ Tomtits/Miromiro, Tūi, Silvereyes/Tauhou, and NZ Fantails/Piwakawaka.

In September we got serious with our atlassing, and 13 members spent a weekend in Mahia visiting a number of different places and habitats in an effort to cover some grid squares. A visit to the beach across the road from the Holiday Park turned up a dead shy/white-capped mollymawk, as well as alive-and-well and nesting dotterels (both NZ and Banded). Other highlights of the trip included Fernbirds/Mātātā, Australasian Bitterns/Matuku Hūrepo, and a colony of approx. 355 White-fronted Terns/Tara.

Mid-October saw a group visit the Ahuriri Estuary and 'the Scrapes' to check out returning waders. Various species have been spotted quite regularly by keen-eyed members since mid-September, including a Whimbrel, >200 Bar-tailed Godwits/Kuaka—including a colour-banded one and 5 juveniles, 4 Red Knots/Huahou, 3 Wrybills/Ngutu pare, nesting Banded and NZ dotterels/Tūturiwhatu, 2 Pacific Golden Plovers, and 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Brent Stephenson and Sav Saville were lucky enough to hear a Spotless Crake/Pūweto in the rushes in the Southern Marsh on 15/10, and another 1 was detected at Muddy Creek near Clive on 28/10.

Bitterns have started booming and have been heard and/or seen at Maungawhio, Opoutama, and Lake Whatumā. A Kākā was seen to fly overhead in Napier, and an Arctic Skua was observed offshore from the Waitangi Estuary. Monitoring of the Cook's Petrels/Titi that were reintroduced to Boundary Stream Mainland Island in the Maungaharuru Range has turned up at least 8 returning birds so far this season. Another trip to the seabird site is planned for December to see if higher numbers might be spotted, so watch this space.

- THALIA SACHTLEBEN

MANAWATU

Our September meeting had an excellent turnout to hear Lorraine Cook talk about her work on Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles. Lorraine's talk didn't just focus on the fabulous

birds there (especially frigatebirds and boobies) but also gave a great overview of the geography and evolution of the atoll. We are looking forward to having Corey Mosen speak in December about the conservation work he's been involved in, including monitoring Kea with his dog Ajax.

We had a small but successful atlassing weekend inland in the Rangitikei district in September, with highlights including another inland SIPO, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and a pair of NZ Falcons. Our regional recorder, Kirsten Olsen, has also been leading monthly atlassing days targeting specific squares as well as organising birding tramps for one of the local tramping clubs to help develop atlassing skills. These trips have visited an oxidation pond, farmland, and native bush in the Tararua Range, with good records including NZ Falcons and Grey Ducks in the hills, a large number of Australasian Shovelers at the oxidation pond as well as nesting Black Shags, and a Spotless Crake in a remnant swamp by the lower Manawatu River.

We also assisted with the Manawatu Estuary Trust's welcome to the godwits event in October. Perhaps the most unexpected but atlas-worthy local record recently was a single SIPO flying low over Massey University one windy morning. A pair of SIPO was seen mating of the Manawatu River at Ashhurst recently, and Black-billed Gulls (which bred there successfully last season) were flying overhead. A NZ Falcon pair that bred at a golf course on the edge of Palmerston North has returned for another season (which not all golfers are thrilled about). Further afield, another record of North Island Brown Kiwi tracks has been reported in the eastern Ruahine Range.

- PHIL BATTLE

WELLINGTON

In the Wellington region a variety of species are being banded as part of projects which include different objectives, such as measuring the success of recent translocations, population monitoring, and the spread of species. They are being run by a range of different organisations and often involve Birds New Zealand members who also have an important role to play in recording banded birds while they are atlassing. A recent notable observation came from David Ugonlini and his colleagues at the Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie in New Caledonia of a Banded Dotterel, flagged and banded on Eastbourne beach as part of the East Harbour conservation group MIRO's project. In September 2019 PAP (flag letters) nested on Eastbourne beach but its chicks were predated. In February PAP was seen at one of the Pencarrow Lakes. The next sighting was on 9/7 in New Caledonia when it was sighted with 14 other Banded Dotterel. The last sighting in New Caledonia was on the 27/8 and PAP was back on the Eastbourne beach on 1/9.

Another notable sighting was of a banded Kaka on Kapiti Island which was reported in the latest DOC banding newsletter. The sighting was reported by the DOC Kapiti Ranger, Lee Barry who was able to read the band number L-26805. Ron Moorhouse banded the bird on 30/01/1989 making it the

oldest-known, wild Kaka at 31 years of age. This bird was banded as part of Ron's post graduate studies conducted between 1988 and 1992. L-26805 has been an occasional visitor to the veranda of the Red House on Kapiti and was recorded in January and March, 2018. Our Wellington Birds New Zealand October meeting, a hybrid Zoom / face to face meeting, featured Ron Moorhouse describing the Project Janszoon re-introduction of Kaka to the Abel Tasman National Park.

- GEOFF DE LISLE

NELSON

Spring has Sprung. Wintering birds have left our warm coastal areas with most having headed south to their breeding grounds. High tide roosts with black and white waders have thinned to non-breeders, but the rusty coloured migrants from the Far North are returning, some showing via their satellite tags truly remarkable quick journeys. Calls from the returning Shining Cuckoo were reported during the last week of September and more regularly during October. Mostly coming from the hilly fringes surrounding Nelson city.

Field work has begun on catching and marking Variable Oystercatchers in the Waimea and Motueka estuaries. This is part of a long term ongoing study. The tally this season as yet is not great!

Our winter 2020 shorebird census was delayed for a month due to logistic challenges for Farewell Spit. Rob Schuckard reports: "The census was completed over a 4 day period between 23-27 July. All went very well with good weather and good coverage. Number of birds was generally low. Such may reflect that SIPO and Banded Dotterels have already moved to breeding areas during the month of July prior to census. Of the 17,000 birds counted, 80% was endemic (and 80% of these endemics is Pied Oystercatcher) and the rest is migratory species that have stayed behind. The number of Bar-tailed Godwits is of great interest. It has been well reported that the 2019 season has been a very high recruitment year for the species. The numbers were in that context slightly disappointing. Only Tasman showed that highest number ever recorded, about 1,000 godwits. We have to go back 20 years, in 2000, when a similarly high number of about 900 was reached in Tasman Bay. Golden Bay had about 200 godwits (similar as 2017) and Farewell Spit had about 2,000 birds, close to average of last 10 years (maximum was 2,500 in 2015).

Golden Bay and Tasman Bay had about 5,000 shorebirds, Farewell Spit about 6,500. In total 10 shorebird species were recorded. Red-necked Stint and Wrybill were recorded as the non-regular birds from Farewell Spit. A flock of 90 Spur-winged Plovers was recorded from inland Collingwood. It seems a high number certainly when egg-laying is usually between June to November. Farewell Spit had 80% of all the migratory shorebirds from the census areas. SIPO at the spit had their lowest number recorded since 1996. Only 4,000 could be counted. All other species were recorded in average numbers".

- GAILD D QUAYLE



MARLBOROUGH

During the October school holidays, 11 of our local members enjoyed a week-long trip to Maud Island. An energetic group comprising mostly younger members had a fantastic week increasing the Fluttering Shearwater colony nest boxes from 60 to 117. This is a project which has been developing over the last few years upgrading the original colony established by Brian Bell 30 years ago. The third generation of Bells are now making the regular trips to Maud to work in the colony.

Our week involved maintenance of the established boxes, and the digging-in of the new ones. We had perfect weather with hot days for our week, so a highlight for most was the arrival of the ranger, Em, who back-packed out home-made iceblocks and cold drinks in a chilly bin for all of us.

Another highlight was to see the Little Blue Penguins coming in after dark down by the jetty. Some of them were aiming to spend the night socialising under the lodge. We had an active week, also walking up to the summit and around the island on the ring road. A trip to Maud Island is not compete without at least one walk out to the fort, passing weta motels and penguin nest boxes with chicks.

Elsewhere in the province, Glossy Ibis have been seen going back and forwards across Grovetown Lagoon, and 4 Crested Grebe are on Lake Elterwater at the moment. A local gem for our region is Taylor Dam. Since moving to town, Jack Taylor has made almost daily visits and has enjoyed seeing several pairs of Black Swans raising their brood. The cygnets are very friendly and will eat off his knee. There has been 2 NZ Dabchick resident for some time as well. There are over 50 Black Swans and the same number of Coots. On our last group outing we walked the Wedge Track which is off the Queen Charlotte Drive. A very pleasant wander through nice bush with lunch by the water, made for an enjoyable day out.

- KRISTEN RUWHIU

CANTERBURY

Lake Ellesmere looks set to be in for another good season, with a range of migratory waders being spotted along with the continuing Little Tern. The Wolfes Road bays appear to be a good spot for godwits at present, with counts of around 160 Bar-tailed Godwits, up to three Black-tailed Godwits, and a Hudsonian Godwit. Along with the godwits, around a dozen Lesser Knot and a Marsh Sandpiper have also spotted there.

Elsewhere on the lake, recent counts include 20 Pacific Golden Plovers, 39 Red-necked Stints and two Ruddy Turnstones around Jarvis Road, and a Pectoral Sandpiper at Embankment Road. Our annual summer wader count in November should provide a good chance to see how the birds are moving around and to see if anything else interesting turns up.

Up at the Ashley Estuary, a Greater Sand Plover was spotted in mid-September for a few days but unfortunately does not seem to have reported since. Similarly, a Glossy Ibis was picked up at Travis Wetlands for a few days in early October but does not seem to have stuck around. A more long-staying bird worth mentioning is the Common Myna

that was first seen in New Brighton in April of 2018. It is now over two years later, and presumably the same individual continues to be reported from the area on occasion by a local birder.

For September's field trip, ten members headed out to Washpen Falls. While they didn't see an especially high diversity of species, they picked up a few tomtits, plus plenty of bellbirds. The following month, a few local birders headed down to do some birding at the Rangitata River and some nearby areas around Mesopotamia. They saw a couple of Riflemen along with a variety of braided river birds, including Wrybill, Banded Dotterel and Black-fronted Terns. It was also a great chance to put in a few atlas checklists from an area that members may be less familiar with.

- ELEANOR GUNBY



■ Mary Thompson presents Oscar Thomas with a Tūturiwhatu cake.

Shag at Kakanui, 12 Northern Giant Petrel at Taiaroa Head and an Australasian Bittern in the Catlins. Dunedin City has been busy with nesting Spur-winged Plover and SIPO rearing two chicks each in the midst of the industrial harbour side area. Little Black Shags and Royal Spoonbills were seen at Anderson's Bay inlet, SI Robins at Ross Creek, Karearea and flocks of over 30 Kereru in town, and a lone grebe in the harbour. A single Starling kept our regional recorder busy in Balclutha by mimicking Yellowhammer, Pukeko and SIPO during a single Atlas count.

Local spring projects: Robins Beyond Orokonui is off to a good start with 6 nests found to date and the third season of the Dunedin Town belt 5-min bird counts started in October, following an interesting update from Bruce McKinlay at the preceding indoor meeting. The Botanic Gardens birdwatching walks were successful again with 41 people attending, recording 22 species.

The October meeting was timely with Susan Walker's "Insights on bird conservation from Atlas projects" from the previous two Atlas events. Oscar Thomas was congratulated on the publication of his new book "A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of New Zealand" and was gifted a marvellous Tūturiwhatu cake by Mary Thompson, our Regional Representative (photo above).

- FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

SOUTHLAND

A flock of over 14 Royal Spoonbill were reported from a small islet in Prices Inlet, Stewart Island on 28/7 by Sue Courtney and Matt Jones advised he had seen more in recent months. No doubt this species will start nesting on the island with so much suitable habitat available. An uncommon Australian Coot was seen by Lloyd Esler in Mataura on 27/7. Neil Robertson observed a Falcon vs Harrier altercation just over his house near Manapouri on 5/9, they would be a nice addition to the garden bird survey!

Marsh Crake are being seen more often now at the Tip Lagoon probably getting used to humans walking the track and no doubt breeding there.

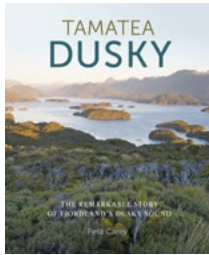
As our local membership seemed to be stagnating it was decided we needed some more young blood joining us on our wader counts and Atlas square counts. We decided to expand our small group of keen birders and organised a local birding email group and with Pete McClelland and Neil Robertson's assistance we organised our first outing to the head of Awarua Bay on 12/9 and we were delighted to have a group of 13 turn up on a fine but chilly day. We had students from our local institute of technology along with their tutors and some local interested (younger) DOC staff.

They were rewarded with amazing views of a Southern NZ Dotterel flock that during the course of the day moved closer to us much to the delight of the group. Other highlights were Red-necked Stint; Banded Dotterel; Greater Sand Plover and Sanderling. It was an excellent day and we encouraged the group to join Birding NZ and Birds New Zealand as we look to keep the momentum going with further trips, including our upcoming spring wader count.

- PHIL RHODES

Book Reviews

Tamatea Dusky Peta Carey Potton & Burton \$59.99 RRP



This is another beautifully produced large-format (290 x 240 mm) 256 page full colour hardcover from publisher Potton & Burton. Eloquently written by writer and TV documentary-maker Peta Carey, it recounts the history and conservation stories of Tamatea/Dusky Sound in the south-west corner of Fiordland National Park, including Resolution, Chalky, Breaksea, and Anchor islands. Over 200 photos, prints, and maps help bring these fascinating stories to life, including 45 photos and prints of New Zealand birds taken by Grant Maslowski and Jake Osbourne, or painted by Johan Foster.

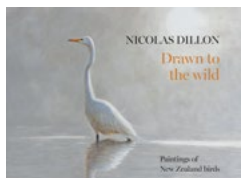
The book covers natural history, Maori and European settlement, and conservation history from 1891 to the present. There are memorable descriptions from the 1773 visit of HMS Resolution when Johann and Georg Forster classified 38 bird species there, nicely illustrated here with their Bush Wren and South Island Kokako paintings.

There's a chapter on Richard Henry's pioneering conservation endeavours, which included moving many hundreds of Kakapo and Tokoeka onto protected Resolution Island during 1894-1904. Other chapters tell other parts of the conservation stories of Kakapo, Tieke, Rock Wren, Tokoeka, and Little Spotted Kiwi.

The chapter on Kakapo covers recent developments, including how Coal Island and Five Fingers Peninsula are now being eyed as potential translocation sites for their expanding population. The chapter on seabirds has an eyewitness account of recent survey work done by Colin Miskelly, Graeme Taylor, and Alan Tennyson to document the return of various seabird species to many of the islands in Tamatea.

There's something for everyone here, especially those interested in the history of ornithology and bird conservation.

Drawn to the Wild Nicolas Dillon Potton & Burton \$59.99 RRP



This beautifully produced full colour 160-page (300 x 235 mm) hard cover book showcases 160 of New Zealand painter Nicolas Dillon's excellent bird sketches, watercolours, and oil paintings. The tern and wader studies that take up some 50 pages struck me as outstanding, but as I worked my way through the rest of the book, so were the grebes, rails, herons, falcons, cuckoos, and songbirds. I was sometimes reminded of Charles Tunnicliffe, whose Takahe painting appears on the cover of 'Notornis', sometimes of Lars Jonsson's luminous style, and sometimes Raymond Ching's vivid clarity.

An introductory section by the artist charts his interest in painting birds from a family copy of *Buller's Birds* and growing up in the Waihopai valley where he first got to know the local native birds, landscapes, and light, to family holidays in the Marlborough Sounds and parental encouragement of his early interest.

The contemporary works of Raymond Ching and Lars Jonsson caught his eye in his teenage years, and after winning the annual school art prize he travelled to sketch and paint in Australia and Europe. Early success in the prestigious *US Birds in Art* exhibition propelled him further along his chosen path.

Each artwork here is accompanied by a short entry recalling a special encounter with the bird, or the circumstances of its painting. These texts help make this a richly rewarding book to return to, for bird enthusiasts, artists, and all those interested in nature.

Birds of New Zealand Oscar Thomas John Beaufoy \$29.99 RRP



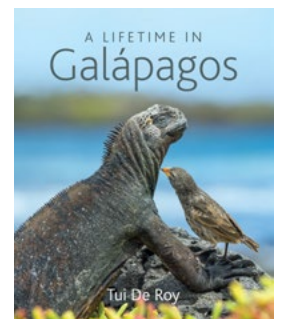
This compact (180 x 128 mm) full colour 176-page softcover photographic bird identification guide is an impressive achievement by first-time author Oscar Thomas. Many Birds New Zealand members will know him from the Auckland and Dunedin birdwatching communities, or his time as a volunteer guide on Tiritiri Matangi.

Previously his bird photography has been published in Liz Light's 'The Top 50 Birdwatching Sites in New Zealand'. This new book is also illustrated with Oscar's brilliant bird photography. It covers 238 species with 365 photos, including all the main species likely to be seen plus some notable rarities. The photos, largely taken by Oscar, are supplemented by 97 images taken by 26 other photographers. Some species are illustrated with two photos where relevant to show male and female plumages, or adult and juvenile plumages.

The brief species texts include the main identification features, distribution, habits, and habitat. There is a handy NZ checklist at the back that also lists conservation status. It follows current taxonomy and includes the latest NZ 'splits' such as Otago Shag and Foveaux Shag, recently split from Stewart Island Shag, and Whenua Hou Diving Petrel, recently split from South Georgia Diving Petrel.

The songbirds and waterfowl have good coverage and there is a generous selection of waders and seabirds. The compact size means it is ideal as both as a 'starter' book, and a pocket-sized alternative to the larger, heavier NZ bird identification volumes available.

Galapagos Tui de Roy David Bateman \$59.99 RRP



This exquisitely photographed full colour 240-page large format (292 x 235 mm) hard cover book is an intimate portrait of the birds and wildlife of the Galapagos Islands. It offers a "bird's eye view" of life on and around these iconic islands of the eastern Pacific where Darwin developed his theory of evolution through natural selection.

First and foremost, this is a book of breath-taking world-class nature photography. Structured into five main parts with various chapters in each, informative introductory texts help illuminate each one.

Some of the best images are those in which a bird – or iguana, or sea lion – is seen in its natural habitat looking out over a panoramic vista, or surrounded by other wildlife: a Nazca Booby on a ledge looking out across the surrounding sea; a garrulous flock of mockingbirds standing on a sandy beach; Galapagos Hawks gliding over a volcanic caldera; sea lions driving fish onto a beach where pelicans wait to snatch a share of the catch.

There are also many striking portraits of courtship, preening, chick rearing, and birds tussling over food or territory, which are all useful records of interesting behaviours.

Over her lifetime – so far – Tui de Roy has seemingly been able to document every aspect of the lives of the birds and wildlife of these iconic islands. The results occasionally include the gruesome, but are mostly sublime and always compelling.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR



GALAPAGOS OF THE SOUTH

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— MICHAEL HARRIS

Dec 2020 (FINAL BERTHS!), Nov & Dec 2021

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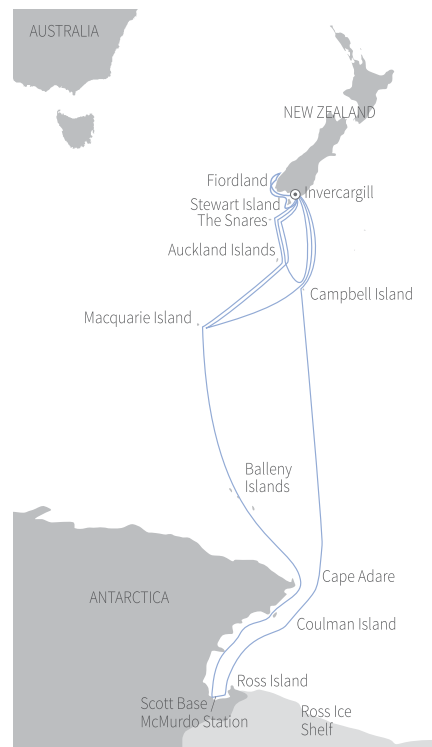
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“WE FEEL VERY PRIVILEGED TO HAVE VISITED PLACES MOST ONLY DREAM OF” — MERLE & TONY

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