

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

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

Pacific Islands Bird Conservation & 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, but excluding New Zealand. The Fund is administered by the JS Watson Trust through the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, and is a result of a working partnership between Birds New Zealand and Forest and Bird.

Funding may be applied to bird and habitat management activities or research that enhances the sustainability of endangered bird populations on Pacific islands, or to support the training of indigenous island residents at practical courses within New Zealand or in the Pacific in applicable management techniques. Interest is invited from scientists and others in New Zealand and the Pacific islands to support studies or training activities through this fund. Applications open on 1st February and close on 30th March in any year.

The first grant was awarded for the design of "A Conservation Action Plan for Two Endangered Seabirds - Phoenix Petrel and White-throated Storm-petrel, 2020-2025." Formerly widespread, both species now have a limited distribution. The breeding stronghold is in Kiribati where there were an estimated 10,000 pairs of Phoenix Petrel and a few hundred pairs of White-throated Storm-petrel in 2010-18. The plan is being drafted by Ray Pierce and others, and is nearing completion. Eligibility criteria and other details are posted online here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/pibcrf/>

IAN ARMITAGE, VICE PRESIDENT

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COVER IMAGE

Mohua or Yellowhead in South Island beech forest

Photo by Mike Ashbee: <https://www.mikeashbeephotography.com/>

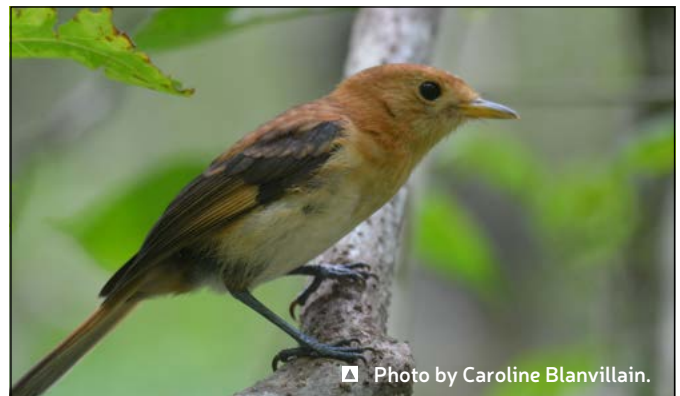


Photo by Caroline Blanvillain.

Saving the Tahiti Monarch

The critically endangered endemic Tahiti Monarch ('Ōmā-ma'o) was restricted to four valleys on Tahiti, with 19 birds in the accessible lower valleys, when conservation actions began in 1998. The first actions focused on rat control, probably saving the species from imminent extinction. However, the accessible population in the lower valley sites had only increased to 22 birds by 2012 (1% a year), part of a total population of just 40 birds. The introduced invasive Common Myna and Red-vented Bulbul were also identified as threats to breeding success. With the help of locals, 8,475 Common Mynas and 17,859 Red-vented Bulbuls were eliminated in seven years. A new study shows overall nest and fledging survival was increased by invasive bird control, reduced by heavy rain, but not substantially changed by increases in the level of rat control. The total Tahiti Monarch population increased from 40 adults in 2012 to 79 in 2018 (12% a year). The results illustrate the necessity of controlling several threats together in order to recover island birds with low productivity. Conservationists need to consider that several other island bird species with low productivity may need multi-invasive control to recover. Blanvillain, C. et al: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2020.125820>

From the President's Desk

As I write this, we continue to experience a significant dislocation to our lives as a nation and ornithologists as we respond to the impact of the pandemic created by COVID-19. The last ten weeks has been an ongoing set of examples of having to change arrangements and to implement new ways of communicating.

It was with a really heavy heart that I have had to cancel a programme of Society events which included the Youth Camp, the Conference, and the AGM. Like other societies it seems that for some of the activities of *Birds New Zealand* there will be a delay of up to a year. *Birds New Zealand* has increased direct informal communication with members and it has been a bit of fun producing a short message for you on things of interest while under the lockdown, but this does not replace the excitement of coming together as a Society and catching up with friends over a cup of tea.

2021 Conference and Annual General Meeting

At this stage we have confirmed that the 2021 New Zealand Bird Conference will be held at Thames. An organising committee under the interim leadership of our immediate past president David Lawrie has been established and a venue booked. An announcement of details will occur over the next few months. It is then our intention that we return to Christchurch for the 2022 New Zealand Bird Conference.

Council is still debating how and when to hold the 81st Annual General Meeting of the Society. Council wants to ensure that the AGM is open and inclusive, and that members are able to participate. This is important as there were two substantive Notices of Motion from Council which need full debate. In the meantime, Council will prepare an Annual Report which will be circulated to all members in the next month or so, along with a set of accounts for the year ending December 2019.

Regional Meetings

As we move back to a semblance of normality, Regions should be starting to meet again and to develop their programmes of talks and social activities. As this happens please pay attention to the guidance from the Government to ensure that we implement the expected standards and that we ensure that the risk of the virus spreading among members is minimised.

Australasian Ornithological Conference

Another victim to the pandemic is the Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) which was scheduled for Auckland next year. After considering the options the organising committee has recommended to *Birds Australia* and *Birds New Zealand* to defer the AOC until 7-9 February 2022. This is disappointing but part of our new reality of how we view travel and attending events. The World Seabird Conference, which was scheduled to be held in Hobart, Australia, in October 2020, has also been rescheduled. The organisers have successfully secured new dates for 4-8 October, 2021.

Lost Gold: Ornithology of the subantarctic Auckland Islands

You should by now have received a copy of *Lost Gold* in the post. If it has not yet arrived it won't be far away. The dispatch of the Society copies from Te Papa in May was postponed because of the lockdown. I'm very grateful to Claire Gibb of Te Papa for pushing for access to pick up *Lost Gold* from Te Papa and then addressing and arranging for the dispatch of copies from her house. Te Papa Press also organised a virtual launch of *Lost Gold*, which I was able to contribute to on behalf of the Society. Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmC3E48FRMs>

New Zealand Bird Atlas

Mike Bell and his team report on the Atlas project on page six in this edition of *Birds New Zealand*, but I just want to note that by

the end of the summer a total of 589 participants had contributed to it. At this time, a total of 37,558 checklists had been submitted. By the end of summer, 67.7% of grid squares had some data contributed. This is a great result and indicates that participants are able to target grid squares which have no data by using the live Atlas Effort Map function on the *eBird Atlas* website.

Of equal importance and assistance for atlasers is the release of a New Zealand edition of the Merlin App. This mobile phone app is designed to help observers identify New Zealand birds in the field (see page five). You can view it via this link (<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>). This app is widely used overseas and I know from personal experience that it is a very useful aid to supplement field guides. This is an invaluable resource for people who are new to birding or who want confidence in completing their Atlas checklists.

Heritage Expeditions 2020-21 Summer Season

Heritage Expeditions confirmed in May that they are actively working on plans for a resumption of their exploration voyages during the Southern Summer season and have announced a reduced, refundable US\$1,500 deposit for all new 2020-21 Southern Ocean reservations. More details are posted online here: <https://mailchi.mp/heritage-expeditions/heritage-expeditions-e-newsletter-3207782?e=2e375b6949>

That this column comes to you in a hard copy of *Birds New Zealand* is thanks in part to our publishers and printers Pivotal Press being able to deliver during the lockdown. It is also possible because our editors have maintained their commitment to getting articles and copy organised for the publication of both *Birds New Zealand* and *Notornis*: thank you all for your ongoing work.

Finally, birding locally has been a welcome relief during the lockdown. I've had the opportunity to make contributions to some grid squares for the Atlas which had not previously been covered and have seen some country which is not often visited. Unfortunately, being in my bubble I was not able to share the experience with others, but now that we are in Level 2, I'm looking forward to Atlasing with friends.

Bruce McKinlay
PRESIDENT

New Zealand's largest predator control programme a success
Kākā, Rock Wren, Kiwi, Kea, Mohua, Orange-fronted Parakeet, and Whio are among the endemic species that have benefitted from 'Tiakina Ngā Manu', the largest ever predator control programme undertaken in the history of the Department of Conservation (DOC), Minister of Conservation Eugenie Sage announced in April: "We have a biodiversity crisis around the world and in New Zealand which is why in 2018 the Government delivered the biggest boost to Department of Conservation funding in decades, worth \$81.28 million."

"This has enabled DOC to undertake its biggest ever predator control programme - 'Tiakina Ngā Manu' - over more than 800,000 hectares of conservation land to ensure our unique native forests and wildlife can thrive," she said. "Large flocks of Kākā with more than 30 juveniles in Fiordland's Eglinton valley show Kākā are thriving and their population is rebounding as a result of ongoing predator control. Monitoring has now shown an effective decline in the numbers of rats at more than three quarters of the sites."

In 2019, the Government invested a further \$16 million in *Predator Free 2050 Limited* to expand predator control work around the country, and a further \$3.5 million to fund development of new pest control technologies.

Leucistic Silvereye

Wellington bird photographer Holly Neill found and photographed this rare white and yellow leucistic Silvereye (Tauhou) in Wellington Botanic Garden during her daily 'lockdown' walk in April. You can see more of her photos of the bird via a blogpost on her website: <https://www.hollyneillphotography.com/>



Election of officers to Council

Three Birds New Zealand Council positions have been filled uncontested by the nominations of Mel Galbraith and Keith Woodley for a further three-year term and by the nomination of Lynne Anderson for an initial three-year term, all commencing from June 2020. Lynne Anderson will serve in the position of Secretary.

Beach Patrol Scheme 2019

2019 produced no significant beach wrecks and no particularly unusual species. No banded birds were noted on cards. The returns compared to the previous year show a sharp decline and represent a drop of about 50% in the number of kilometres and patrols done in about six years. Only five regions - Wellington West, Bay of Plenty, Auckland West, Auckland East and Southland - were averaging more than one beach patrol per month.

The figures as at 1 April 2020 are as follows:
Cards or forms returned: 160 (270 in 2018, 230 in 2017, 253 in 2016, 210 in 2015, 231 in 2014, 262 in 2013, 324 in 2012, and 352 in 2011).
Birds: 1,071 (3,069 in 2018, 1,315 in 2017, 1,483 in 2016, 1,325 in 2015, 1,388 in 2014, 4,851 in 2013, 1,924 in 2012, and 57,920 in 2011).
Kilometres: 710 (1,013 in 2018, 885.3 in 2017, 1,189 in 2016, 1,014 in 2015, 1,069 in 2014, 1,388 in 2013, 1,625 in 2012, and 1,846 in 2011).

LLOYD ESLER, BEACH PATROL SCHEME CONVENER

2020 Garden Bird Survey

The 2020 annual Garden Bird Survey will be the fourteenth, and Birds New Zealand members are once again being asked to join in. The survey is open to anyone who can identify the bird species in their garden. Just choose any day between 27th June to 5th July 2020 and spend an hour watching the birds in your garden. For each species, record the highest number you see or hear at any one time. The survey is led by Landcare Research and full survey instructions are available online: <https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/plants-animals-fungi/animals/birds/garden-bird-surveys/taking-part/how-to-take-part>

Editor sought for *Stilt* journal

Stilt is the scientific publication of the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) and disseminates the outcomes of amateur and professional research from the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. *Stilt* was traditionally published twice a year until recently, when a decision was made to reduce publication to once a year. We are now seeking a new editor for *Stilt* and would like to invite expressions of interest from people interested in taking on the role. The AWSG committee is exploring the possibility of appointing two people to the role. Please contact Birgita Hansen (AWSG Treasurer) for further information: b.hansen@federation.edu.au

Merlin bird identification app

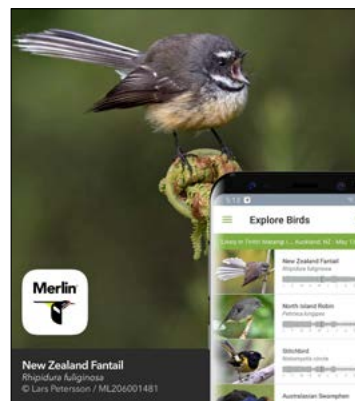
The New Zealand Bird Atlas team have recently been working with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Merlin team to develop a New Zealand bird pack for their Merlin ID App. We are excited to announce that the New Zealand pack is now ready and available to download for free! The App is available for Apple and Android devices.

Merlin is a fantastic bird identification app that will help you identify species through photos, audio and a photo identification tool. It is a great supplementary resource to New Zealand Birds Online and Heather & Robertson's *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*.

The New Zealand pack includes species accounts for 257 of the most likely bird species to be found in New Zealand, including our offshore islands. Each species account includes photos, sounds, a map, and identification text. Merlin is a uniquely powerful bird identification app because it also combines these species accounts with local *eBird* data. This allows users to filter the species based on their specific location and date, and sort species based on what is most likely. It is also directly linked to the *eBird* App and species accounts can be accessed directly from your *eBird* checklists to confirm your identification of a bird.

Your Atlas and *eBird* data helps to make this tool more accurate so please keep submitting complete *eBird* checklists, photos and audio to continually help improve the accuracy of this ID app.

Mike, Sam, Pat and Dan. *New Zealand Bird Atlas Team*



FALCON Bird Banding System

The FALCON system so far includes webpages to manage banders, projects, stock and - of course - banding data. We have been able to showcase some of the functionality to the Reference Group and have been incorporating feedback on an ongoing basis. By frequently updating our priorities based on this feedback we are ensuring that we spend the right amount of time and effort on the right tasks because we can't do everything we want within the time and budget allocated. This means we will be getting the best system we can when it goes live in mid-August. It won't have all the features you may want when it launches, but we aim for it to have the most important ones. We had planned to showcase progress at the June annual conference, but as that had to be cancelled we will now produce a video demonstration and make it available at the end of June.

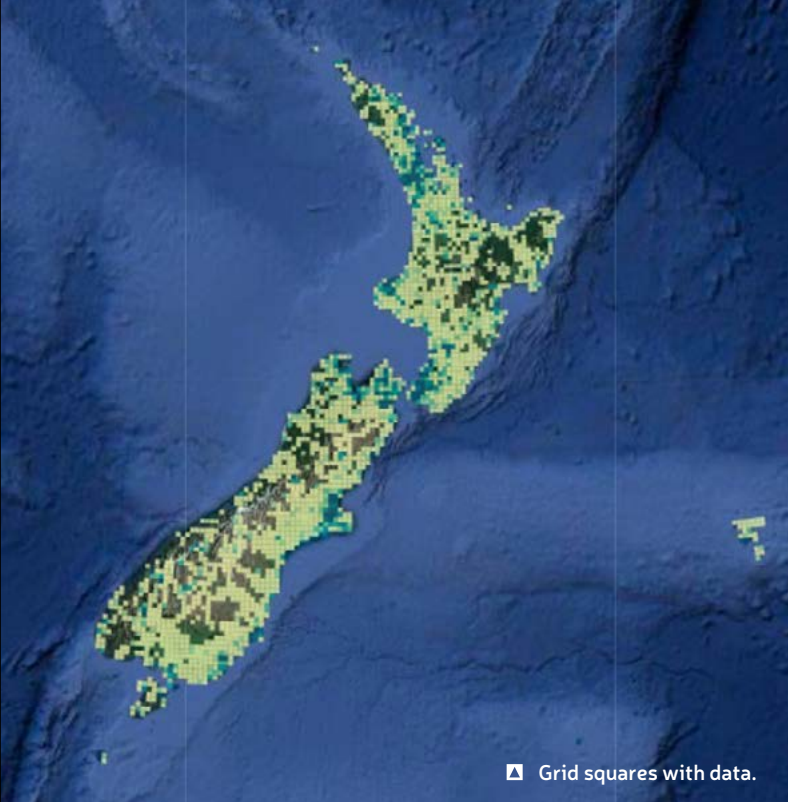
MICHELLE BRADSHAW

New members

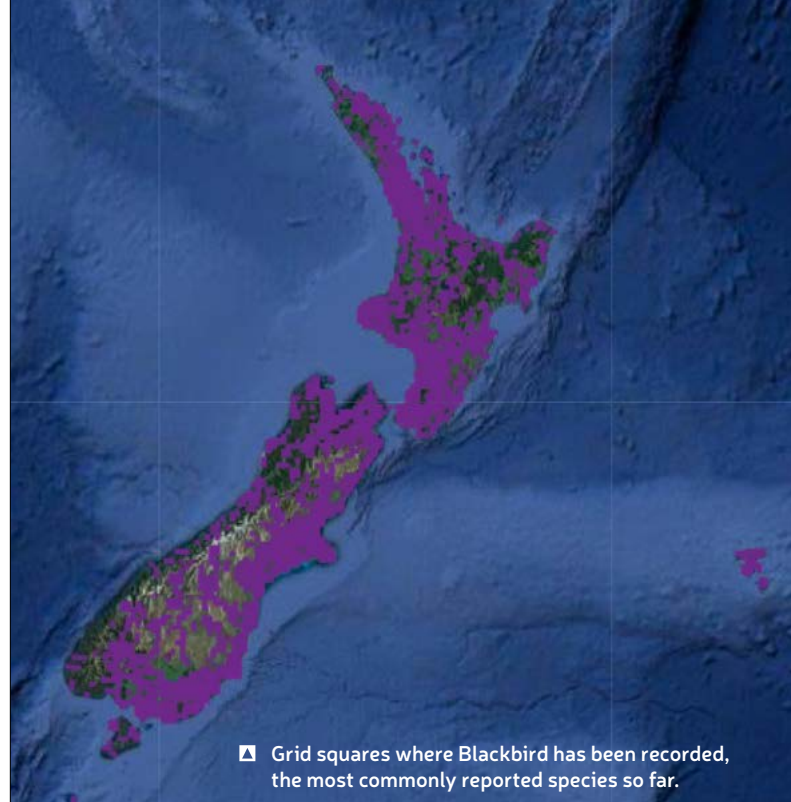
Birds New Zealand extends a warm welcome to the following new members: Andrew Bowker, Emma Holvast, Bonnie Lyon (Auckland); Philip Tate (South Auckland); Nathan Allan (BoP/Volcanic Plateau); Rob Wheeler (Taranaki); Cristabel Godoy, Courtney Tregurtha-Nairn (Manawatu); Igor Debski, Catherine Iorns, Brian Reeve (Wellington); Janet Newell (Nelson); Danielle Middleton, Warwick Allen, Scott Butcher (Canterbury); Dorothy Mowat, Richard Seed (Otago); Michael Criglington (Southland); Amy Tipton (Rest of World).

Donations

Birds New Zealand thanks the following members for their generous donations: Neil Andrews, Stephanie Borrelle, Wendy Hare, Jim Kirker, Gregory Moorcroft, Wayne Salmons, Amy Tipton, John Troost, Janet Vaughan, Lois Wagener.



▲ Grid squares with data.



▲ Grid squares where Blackbird has been recorded, the most commonly reported species so far.

New Zealand Bird Atlas reaches one-year landmark

By the time you read this, the first year of the New Zealand Bird Atlas will have passed and a landmark reached. What an amazing effort it has been so far. In the first year of Atlasing over 720 people have contributed more than 51,000 checklists and recorded 240 different species. In total, nearly 70% of the 3,232 grid squares contain at least one checklist. Despite the COVID-19 lockdown, atlasing has been able to continue, albeit at a much-reduced capacity from the safety of our homes and backyards.

Daily complete checklists of the birds seen or heard in our backyards during the lockdown continued to provide valuable data to the Atlas, just as they had been since the scheme started a year ago. We want to thank all Birds New Zealand members who have contributed so far and remind everyone that it is never too late to participate. We still have four years ahead of us and plenty of grid squares to survey!

The Atlas team wanted to use the time during lockdown to engage with the wider Atlas community and offer support. We hosted four live webinars during the lockdown that were free to participate in, via Zoom. They ran on every Friday for four weeks and we were impressed by the level of participation with nearly 100 people joining us online for the first webinar!

We covered the basics of the Atlas and *eBird*, including the smartphone app, and the Atlas portal. As the weeks under lockdown progressed, we went into more advanced information, including uploading photos and audio to your sightings, and giving our tips and tricks whilst answering participants questions live. From the feedback we have received, the webinars seem to have helped many of you and provided a good resource for both novice and experienced birders. Thank you to everyone who attended, asked great questions, and provided us with constructive feedback.

We are planning for the webinars to continue as a way to support and inform Atlas participants for the remainder of the scheme. All of the webinars are now available to watch online via YouTube. Even if you feel you are an absolute whizz at *eBird* and the Atlas, we'd highly recommend watching them all as we have had numerous experienced birders and *eBirders* say that it has helped them pick up a few new things. You can find these links on the NZ Bird Atlas *eBird* portal: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/about/webinars>

Two important goals were giving Atlasers more confidence

using the new technology via the *eBird* smartphone app and encouraging everyone to stick to the recommended guidelines. These 'golden rules' help increase data resolution over time and space, and will greatly improve the analysis. After all, the better the data going in, the better the quality of the output analysis to then better inform bird research and conservation. The key guidelines are:

1. Complete checklists (list all species you could identify by sight and sound without leaving any off).
2. Spending no less than 5 minutes, or more than an hour on one checklist (if you're out for a couple of hours cut them into hour segments).
3. For travelling checklists try to split them into roughly 1km segments.
4. Give accurate abundances (no X's - best estimates for large flocks are fine).
5. Submit to the Atlas portal either online or via the *eBird* app.

Please remember that the key aim for every Atlaser is to detect all possible species within each grid square over each of the four seasons.

As we become accustomed to life in Alert Level 2 lockdown and beyond, we can begin to start re-exploring and Atlasing beyond our backyard safely again. Our final webinar allowed us to give a timely introduction to the many "Explore" data functions on the Atlas portal, which can be used to aid Atlas trip planning. Additionally, we were able to get more birders ready for *eBird's* Global Big Day on 9th May.

Atlas participants not only contributed to the New Zealand Bird Atlas but also to a worldwide effort to map all the world's avifauna over a 24-hour period. More than 50,000 people contributed over 120,000 checklists globally, observing nearly 6,500 different species! New Zealand played a significant part in this global effort by contributing over 1,000 checklists and recording 123 different bird species. The Global Big Day is a biannual event occurring every May and October, and the most recent one was by far New Zealand's most impressive appearance so far. Well done to everyone who participated!

We look forward to hosting more of Atlas webinars, and hope that as many people as possible are able to watch the recordings to digest the valuable information within them. We also hope that they have sparked a greater awareness and passion for this inspiring project, and we can't wait to see Atlasers beginning to venture out further beyond their own backyards.

Mike, Sam, Pat and Dan. *New Zealand Bird Atlas Team*



▲ Mohua/Yellowhead photo by Mike Ashbee.

Mohua thriving in Landsborough Valley

The Mohua or Yellowhead is the most common native bird counted since predator control began in the Landsborough valley in South Westland, the most recent Department of Conservation (DOC) survey results show. Mohua numbers have increased more than 30-fold and overall, native bird numbers have doubled since monitoring began there in 1998.

DOC Principal Science Advisor Dr Colin O'Donnell says the long-term study charts the response of 13 native bird species following sustained predator control to suppress rats, stoats and possums: "Our most recent bird count data from spring 2018 shows seven native bird species are still increasing in numbers, four species remain stable, and two have declined. For the first time in 21 years, Mohua have become the most common bird counted, which is what they would have been in this valley prior to European settlement."

Numbers of Mohua, Tui, Bellbird, Brown Creeper, Rifleman, Grey Warbler and Kākāriki have all steadily increased since 1998. Mohua have gone from 14 birds in 1998 to 444 counted in the study area in November 2018. Kākā, NZ Tomtit, NZ Fantail and Kererū have remained stable and not declined as they would have been expected to without predator control. Only Silvereye and Long-tailed Cuckoo declined. For Silvereye this could be due to greater competition for nectar from the more aggressive Tui and Bellbird. Long-tailed Cuckoos migrate to the Pacific Islands each year after breeding in NZ ends and may be affected by conditions in the islands. They return to NZ to lay their eggs in Mohua and Brown Creeper nests in Spring.

Predator control began in the Landsborough Valley in 1994 after the impact of mammalian predators on bird numbers was observed. Since then, DOC has carried out valley-wide trapping and seven aerial-1080 operations timed to suppress increasing rodent levels, with the most recent two operations in 2016 and 2019.

NZ's sixth endemic bird family

The Mohua is one of three New Zealand species in the genus *Mohoua*. A 2013 genetic study of the NZ Mohoua by Zachary Aidala, Michael Anderson and others (*Phylogenetic relationships of the genus Mohoua, endemic hosts of New Zealand's obligate brood parasitic Long-tailed Cuckoo*, Journal of Ornithology) suggested that the three species (Yellowhead/Mohua, Whitehead/Popokatea, NZ Brown Creeper/Pipipi) should be classified as an endemic family, the *Mohouidae*.

This would make them the sixth surviving endemic New Zealand bird family, the other five being the *Acanthisittidae* (NZ Wrens), *Apterygidae* (NZ Kiwi), *Callaeidae* (NZ Wattlebirds), *Notiomystidae* (NZ Stitchbird) and *Strigopoidea* (NZ Parrots).

The Yellowhead/Mohua was named "Yellow headed flycatcher" in April 1773 during James Cook's second voyage to New Zealand. Later on, European colonists adopted the name "Bush Canary" because of its loud melodic song and bright yellow plumage resembling the domesticated yellow Atlantic Canary. The name Yellowhead comes from the Latin species name, *ochrecephala*.

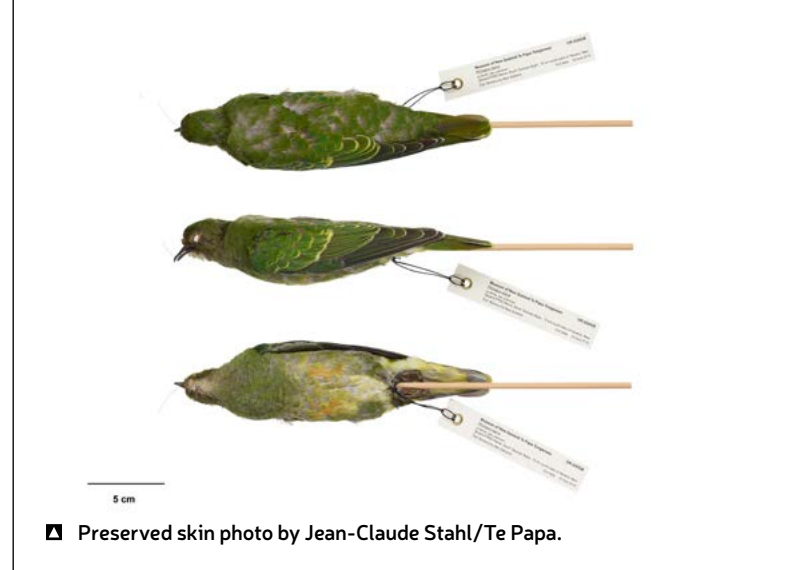
The Mohua was one of the most common bird species in South Island native forests, but numbers have been declining since the arrival in New Zealand of Ship Rats and Stoats. The Mohua's range has contracted more markedly since the 1970s and there are now circa 30 populations left in four distinct groups: east of the main divide; small scattered Fiordland populations; Southland/Otago hill-country populations; and on offshore Islands. The total Mohua population is estimated now at circa 5,000 birds.

The three *Mohoua* species are also linked by being the preferred host species of the migratory Long-tailed Cuckoo or Koekoē which breeds only in New Zealand.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR



▲ Rose-crowned Fruit-dove photo by Sonja Ross/NZ Birds Online.



▲ Preserved skin photo by Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa.

A new bird for New Zealand – Rose-crowned Fruit-dove

Australia is a major source of vagrant bird species in New Zealand. Recent examples of Australian species detected in New Zealand for the first time have included a Dusky Woodswallow (2014) and a Magpie-Lark (2008). Such vagrancy happens many times each year. Australian-sourced vagrant species currently in New Zealand include Chestnut-breasted Shelducks, Gull-billed Terns and White-throated Needle-tails, while Australian Wood Duck, Glossy Ibis and Eastern Barn Owl have recently established breeding populations in New Zealand. Looking further back into the mists of time, most New Zealand bird species have their nearest relatives in Australia, and would have reached New Zealand by flight.

A few New Zealand bird species routinely migrate across the Tasman Sea in large numbers, including Hutton's Shearwater, Australasian Gannet, Banded Dotterel, and White-fronted Tern. Several other species use Australia as a staging post en route to migration destinations in other lands (e.g. Lesser Knot, Shining Cuckoo), and so birds of many species cross the Tasman Sea in both directions in their thousands every year.

A few bird groups in the south-west Pacific are well-known for their ability to cross large ocean gaps and colonise new lands. Ecologists refer to these groups as 'supertramps' due to their high dispersal ability. One of the supertramp groups are fruit-doves of the genus *Ptilinopus*, with about 55 species spread from South-east Asia across Oceania. Three fruit-dove species occur in rainforests in eastern Australia, including the Rose-crowned Fruit-dove.

FPSO Rarua is a petroleum processing and storage vessel that remains anchored about 1.5 km from the wellhead platform in the Maari oil field, about halfway between Taranaki and Farewell Spit. During the third week of August 2019, the Rarua crew were hunkered down after a prolonged westerly storm that had prevented other vessels coming alongside for several weeks. About 9 pm on the night of 22 August, a crew member found a strange bird hiding in a corner of the process area. The bird was captured and placed in a box, and the decision was made to fly it to New Plymouth during a scheduled helicopter flight the next morning.

Once ashore, the bird was brought to the attention of Biosecurity New Zealand. Images of the bird in its box were shared and the bird was provisionally identified as a juvenile Rose-crowned Fruit-dove. Biosecurity New Zealand staff were advised of the significance of the find as a new record for NZ, that (as a natural vagrant) the bird was automatically protected under the Wildlife Act, and that many birdwatchers would be interested in the fate of the bird, particularly if it was released from care.

After much consideration, Biosecurity New Zealand decided that the bird posed an unmanageable risk to New Zealand, and it was put down that evening. The following information was

provided by Biosecurity New Zealand a few days later:

"Rest assured that this was not a decision we took lightly, a number of staff were involved on Friday to ensure the best result was made for biosecurity to protect New Zealand and also the bird. As the bird was brought to mainland New Zealand by helicopter, our main concern was with the biosecurity risk that it posed. Once we had established it was not an endangered species, the options of returning, treating or destroying the bird were carefully considered.

"There was a risk that the bird was carrying pests and/or diseases that we do not have in New Zealand which could pose a threat to our native wildlife. Biosecurity NZ does not have an Import Health Standard for live birds, which means we do not have a benchmark to undertake the tests required to clear the bird of any biosecurity risks. Designing this from scratch for the testing of one bird was not possible to do within a timeframe that avoided compromising the welfare of the bird, which was already deteriorating. For these reasons it was decided that the best option was for the bird to be euthanised."

From a biosecurity perspective, Biosecurity New Zealand considered that the bird had been imported. The Biosecurity Act 1993 defines New Zealand as referring to the land and the outer limits of the territorial sea (12 nautical miles = 22.2 km from the coast). In contrast, the Wildlife Act defines New Zealand (since 1996) as including the Exclusive Economic Zone (200 nautical miles = 370.4 km from the coast). FPSO Rarua is anchored about 73 km from the coast. While on the vessel, the dove was protected under the Wildlife Act. However, once it was placed on a helicopter and flown to the mainland it was considered as an importation, and so Biosecurity New Zealand had a responsibility to assess the biosecurity risk that it posed.

The specimen was donated to Te Papa, where it was prepared as a study skin. Images of the bird, along with a detailed description, and an analysis of diagnostic features compared to related species, were forwarded to the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) in late December. The RAC accepted the identification of the bird in March 2020. Birds New Zealand uses the same definition of New Zealand as the Wildlife Act. As the dove is considered to have reached New Zealand naturally, the RAC recommended that Rose-crowned Fruit-dove be added to the New Zealand checklist.

Two degrees of separation

One of the ironies in this case is that if the dove had flown two degrees either north or south of its chosen course, it could have flown a similar distance and made landfall in Taranaki or Golden Bay. In all likelihood it would have disappeared into the treetops, but just maybe it would have been noticed by an astonished birdwatcher or cat owner.

Colin Miskelly is Curator of Vertebrates at Te Papa and Convenor of Birds New Zealand's Records Appraisal Committee. This article was originally published on Te Papa's website on 8/4/20.



■ Great Knot with godwits. Photo by Phil Battley/NZ Birds Online.



■ Marsh Sandpiper feeding. Photo by Alan Tennyson/NZ Birds Online.

National Wader Census 2019

A total of 108,270 waders of 20 species were counted during June-July in the 2019 Winter Census, down from 112,725 waders of 20 species counted in June-July 2018. There was good national coverage with all regular sites counted except Parengarenga, Houhora and Rangaunu Harbours, the Coromandel, and Porangahau Estuary. The number of over-wintering Red Knot (1,020) was less than half the 2018 count (2,341) but more in line with recent years.

Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were also down again, continuing a worrying decline. The 2019 total of 4,864 was lower than the 2018 count of 5,216, which itself was the lowest winter count of Bar-tailed Godwits on record. Ruddy Turnstone numbers showed a significant increase over the past few years with 462 being counted. South Island Pied Oystercatchers were also down again with the 67,327 being the lowest total since 2013.

Wrybill numbers remain fairly stable with 4,420 counted this winter. Variable Oystercatchers passed 4,000 for the first time with 4,196. The increases were spread around the country and in the north of New Zealand they have benefitted particularly from the work of community groups, local councils, and the Department of Conservation protecting New Zealand Dotterel breeding sites, which are also favoured by Variable Oystercatcher. Uncommon winter waders recorded included: 1 Great Knot, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 3 Far Eastern Curlew, 3 Whimbrel, and 2 Greater Sand Plover.

In the 2019 Summer Census a total of 133,031 waders of 30 species were counted in November-December, almost 10,000 more than the November 2018 count of 123,922. National coverage was very good with all key sites surveyed and most Coromandel sites counted, which are not counted on a regular basis.

Red Knot numbers were disappointedly down after two good years in 2017 and 2018, with 26,775, which was the lowest count since 2009. Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were up for the first time since 2015 with 74,456, in part due to the very large number of juvenile godwits observed at almost all sites around the country. It will be interesting to see if the high number of juveniles is reflected in the June 2020 census. The number was also helped with 1,824 counted on the Coromandel this year. Parengarenga Harbour, which used to regularly hold 2,000-3,000 godwits, had only 255 in 2019.

Ruddy Turnstone numbers were up by almost 1,000 from 1,497 in 2018 to 2,468. Farewell Spit had 552, a significant increase on the usual number counted there. Red-necked Stint numbers were up again to 87 from a low of 24 in 2017 and 53 in 2018, but still well down on historic numbers.

This summer 224 Pacific Golden Plover were counted, compared to 220 in 2018, although the census does not tell the whole story, as once again the count of six on the Firth of Thames

was much lower than the usual 50+ seen around the Firth all summer. They do tend to roost in paddocks on some big tides so they could have been overlooked on census day as counts are usually conducted on large spring tides.

Two species that were regulars in small numbers until the 1990s - Terek Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper - have all but disappeared from New Zealand and only one of each were counted in November. The last time a Terek Sandpiper was seen during the census was 2013. Uncommon summer waders included: 3 Greater Sand Plover, 3 Sanderling, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 1 Great Knot, 1 Grey-tailed Tattler, 1 Marsh Sandpiper, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, and 1 Terek Sandpiper.

A special New Zealand-wide Bar-tailed Godwit count was conducted in February 2020 as part of an international effort to estimate more accurately the population of the eastern baueri subspecies. Researchers in Alaska undertook an aerial survey of all godwits on the Alaskan coast prior to their trans-Pacific migration last year.

Counters in Australia and New Zealand hope to get an accurate number of the baueri godwits whilst they are in eastern Australia and New Zealand, and prior to them migrating north again. Other waders were counted at the same time and full details of these counts will be written up separately.

National Waterbird Census 2019

When the two wader censuses are conducted each year most participants also count all waterbirds or water-related birds seen at the wader sites, and while this does not give any sense of the populations of these species, nevertheless the overall numbers may be of interest.

The number of Red-billed Gulls recorded in winter 2019 was 10,412 and in summer 2019 was 15,266. This was higher than the numbers recorded in winter 2018 (7,940) and summer 2018 (4,695).

The number of Black-billed Gulls recorded in winter 2019 was 995 and in summer 2019 was 2,698. This was in contrast to winter 2018 (3,432) and summer 2018 (1,662).

The number of Black-fronted Terns recorded in winter 2019 was 360 and in summer 2019 was 14. This was close to the numbers recorded in winter 2018 (346) and summer 2018 (13).

The number of White-fronted Terns recorded in winter 2019 (821) was close to the number recorded in winter 2018 (837), however, the number recorded in summer 2019 (7,557) was higher than in summer 2018 (3,694).

I wish to acknowledge the hundreds of people who take part in the censuses on a voluntary basis and the regional coordinators who ensure that so many sites are covered and that the count data is passed on to the national coordinator.

ADRIAN RIEGEN, NATIONAL WADER CENSUS COORDINATOR



Bar-tailed Godwit flock/by Les Feasey.



Each godwit was marked with a coloured dot during photo processing/Les Feasey.



Juvenile Bar-tailed Godwit with crab. Photo by Phil Battley.

Far North airborne census of godwits

The US Geological Service completed an aerial count of Bar-tailed Godwits (*baueri* subspecies) in August 2019 prior to birds leaving Alaska on their southern migration which provided an ideal opportunity to assess the total population by comparing the Alaskan count with the austral summer populations in New Zealand and eastern Australia. The *Great Godwit Census* took place between 8th and 14th February 2020 and all regions of Birds New Zealand with godwits participated. Northland poses particular challenges due to the large area of estuaries with potentially high populations of godwits, difficulties of access, and relatively few Birds New Zealand members. The most effective way to cover the Far North estuaries is by air.

The Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund granted the Far North Region funds to conduct a helicopter census of its main shorebird harbours on 14th February 2020. The weather was perfect, tide times ideal, and the helicopter was available from Salt Air, so it was all 'go'. After a brief stop at Kaitia to pick up Kevin Matthews, take the doors off for better photography, and strap ourselves in, we were off. The first photos were taken at Walker Island in Rangaunu Harbour at 11:44 am and the last at Parengarenga Harbour at 12:47 pm with a fly-by of the Kowhai Beach flock en route. Thirty-three photos were selected for analysis from over 1,000. Kevin Matthews uses a Microsoft PC and Paint as his analysis tools. They are quite different from the Apple Mac computers and Adobe Photoshop software that I use. For me, it was 1) load the photos into 'Lightroom'; 2) sort the photos and select the best ones; 3) load each of these individually into Photoshop Elements; 4) count the Bar-tailed Godwits by putting a dot on the legs of each bird, stop after 100 birds, change the colour of the dot, and count the next 100.

The Bar-tailed Godwit results were as follows: Rangaunu Harbour 2,646; Kowhai Beach 658; and Parengarenga Harbour 2,380. Results of the counts of other species are posted on *eBird*.

LES FEASEY, FAR NORTH REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Records Appraisal Committee 2019

A total of 95 Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) was received in 2019, which were assessed between March 2019 and February 2020. This was substantially fewer than the 123 UBRs received in 2018. Seventy-one (75%) of 2019 UBRs were accepted. Two new species (Collared Petrel, Rose-crowned Fruit-dove) were added to the NZ list. The searchable online database (<http://rare.birds.org.nz/>) and supporting systems continue to work well, providing almost immediate feedback on UBR submissions and decisions. A paper reporting on the 221 RAC decisions from 2017-18 was published in the September 2019 *Notornis*: Miskelly, C.M.; Crossland, A.C.; Saville, I.; Southey, I.; Tennyson, A.J.D.; Bell, E.A. 2019. *Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee 2017-2018*. *Notornis* 66: 150-163.

COLIN MISKELLY, RAC CONVENER

The Great Godwit Count 2020

In August 2019 the US Geological Service (USGS) in Alaska, led by Dan Ruthrauff, completed an aerial survey of post-breeding Bar-tailed Godwits (*baueri* subspecies), covering the entire Yukon-Kuskokwin Delta and Alaska Peninsula – the first such survey since 1997. This provided us with a unique opportunity to compare the Alaskan *baueri* subspecies aerial survey with non-breeding counts in the southern hemisphere to allow an update of the total population.

The continuing shortages of food at the major staging ground used by migrating Bar-tailed Godwits at Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve, Liaoning, in China is placing stress on the population and accurate information is urgently needed.

The Great Godwit Count took place in New Zealand during a prolonged high tide series between 8th and 14th February 2020 (a few counts were done outside this period for logistical reasons). Birds New Zealand members made a fantastic effort to carry out the census at so many sites, in some cases facing difficult conditions including vehicles getting bogged down and soaring temperatures.

Thanks to financial support from the Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund it was possible to conduct an aerial helicopter survey of Far North estuaries. A huge "Thank You" goes to the 182 counters who took part. A total of 81,549 Bar-tailed Godwits was counted; 71% on the North Island and 29% on the South Island. Across the country, 21 sites held more than 1,000 godwits. These sites in total support 75% of the national population.

Number crunching is continuing and we are liaising with counters in eastern Australia to try to come up with a total non-breeding population for the *baueri* Bar-tailed Godwit Alaskan-breeding population. Further details will appear in due course. It appears that 2019 may have been a good breeding season, judging from the number of juvenile Bar-tailed Godwits which arrived at a number of sites around New Zealand, and this may be reflected in the forthcoming June 2020 National Wader Census. In the meantime, you can see where some of these birds are by checking out the movements of satellite-tagged birds here online: http://behavioural-ecology.orn.mpg.de:3838/NZ2019_BTGO/

ROB SCHUCKARD & DAVID MELVILLE COUNT COORDINATORS

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▲ The ascent/Thomas Mattern.



Seabirds in the ‘snow’ – 2019 Bounty Islands expedition

Words by Thomas Mattern Photographs by Thomas Mattern, Paul Sagar & Bill Morris

“At daylight this Morning we discovered a parcel of Rocky Islands”, wrote Captain William Bligh, commanding HMS Bounty, on 19 September 1788. That was about six months before his untimely departure from that sailing vessel—an event that would go down in history as the ‘Mutiny on the Bounty’. Bligh continued:

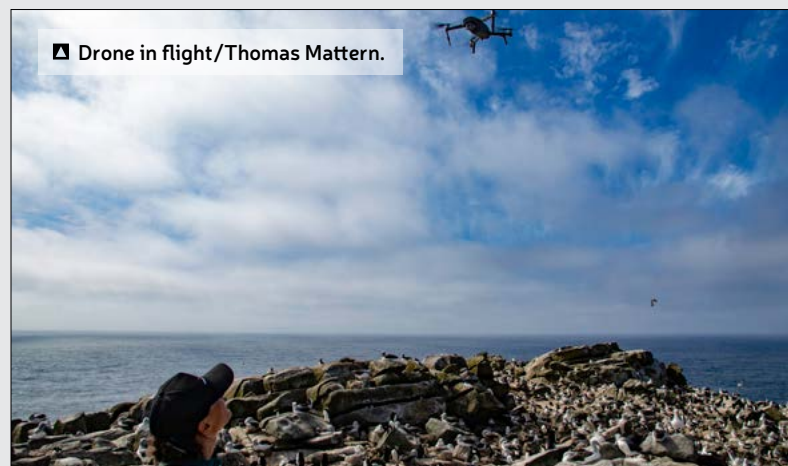
“No birds or any other thing except Rock Weed gave me an Idea of meeting with land. [...] On the Western Isles which are the largest I saw some Snow, but no Verdure on any part, and the whole appears nothing than Rocks.”



Approaching Proclamation Island/Thomas Mattern.



Drone in flight/Thomas Mattern.



Having studied the log book of a certain Captain Cook, who had passed through the region 15 years earlier, Bligh concluded that *“those Rocks lie without any Islands near them, and they serve to account also with Cook’s meeting with Seals and Pengwins [...] I doubt whether what I took for Snow was not patches of White Marble [...] but as it laid only in particular places in hollows I took it for Snow.”* He named these “Bounty Isles” after his ship which, in hindsight, was a fitting choice considering the rocky future that was ahead of both the vessel and its captain.

Two hundred and thirty-one years, one month and five days later, the expedition sailing vessel *Evohe* approached these same islands. The Bounty Islands form an archipelago of 18 named uninhabited islands and a few unnamed rock stacks, with a combined area of 135 hectares, located about 800 kilometres east

from Bluff. This is the smallest archipelago within the New Zealand Subantarctic Islands World Heritage Area.

From a distance, Bligh’s description of the islands was spot-on: a cluster of low-lying islets in the middle of an endless grey sea with patches of white shimmering in the mist. But Bligh’s observation that there were “no birds” seemed a bit strange. In contrast, we saw Salvin’s Mollymawks, Cape Petrels and White-chinned Petrels around the *Evohe* for most of the trip. Moreover, bird numbers increased as we drew closer to the archipelago. In fact, a cacophony of penguin and mollymawk calls drifted over to the *Evohe* even when we were still a few miles out.

Of course, undertaking an ornithological expedition to the Bounty Islands – the *Evohe*’s principal objective – would be rather pointless if Bligh had been right about the lack of birds.



However, the sealers, explorers and tourists that came after him brought back tales of “sloping rocks and heaped up boulders literally smothered in molly mawks and penguins [...] so thick as to almost completely obscure the rocks they perched upon.” (Otago Daily Times, 16 April 1888). This blanket of birds, reported one hundred years after Bligh’s visit, was probably closer to what we encountered on our own expedition: Erect-crested Penguins and Salvin’s Mollymawk, with a good number of Fulmar Prions sprinkled in, as well as a few of the endemic Bounty Island Shags occupying the fringes of this bird chaos.

Fulmar Prions are abundant on the Bounty Islands and breed in rock crevices little more than cracks in the granite. Their subterranean breeding habit seemingly makes it impossible to estimate how many of them there are. Bounty Island shags almost get lost in the shuffle of seabirds with just about 1,400 birds recorded during a 2013 survey. Other regulars are Southern Black-backed Gulls, Cape Petrels, Antarctic Terns and even the odd Arctic Tern.

Our expedition was here to research three of the main breeding species: Salvin’s Mollymawk, Erect-crested Penguin and Fulmar Prion. Together with Paige Green, a PhD student from the University of Tasmania, my job was to carry out a census of Erect-crested Penguin nests.

Kalinka Rexer-Huber, Graham Parker and Paul Sagar, were looking at Salvin’s Mollymawk. Their main objective was the retrieval of data loggers (fitted to the birds in the previous year) and the deployment of satellite transmitters.

Alan Tennyson from Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand was taking morphometric measurements of Fulmar Prions, one of the least known seabird species in New Zealand. This was part of his project reviewing the taxonomy and relationships of the three recognised subspecies of Fulmar Prion that breed at various New Zealand Subantarctic Islands. Bill Morris, writer and film-maker, joined our team to document one of the few scientific expeditions to Bounty Islands.

Ours was one of only a handful of such expeditions that had actually landed on the islands in the last 50 years and there is a good reason for that.

Landing on the Bounties is utterly terrifying

It starts with a lack of halfway easy-to-access spots to land. There are very few areas that aren’t dominated by vertical cliff walls towering 30-50 metres over the water. And sloping areas, that at

▲ Erect-crested Penguin braying/Thomas Mattern.



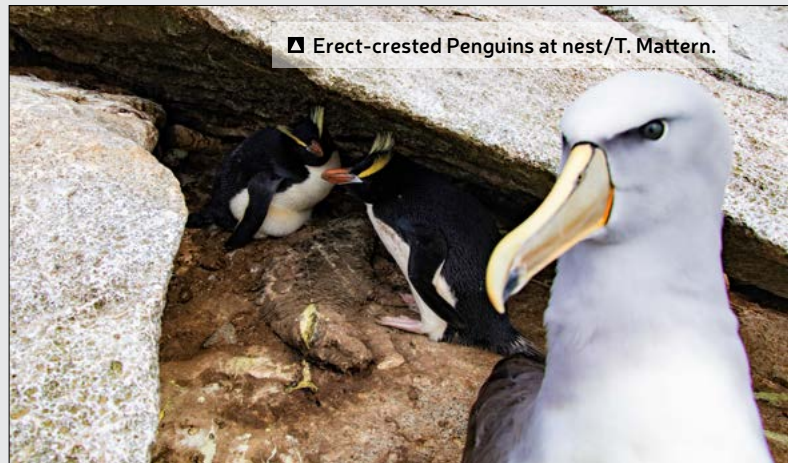
▲ Surveying penguins/Bill Morris.



▲ Penguin 'cave'/T. Mattern.



▲ Erect-crested Penguins at nest/T. Mattern.



first appear easier to land on, are crowded with New Zealand Fur Seals and troupes of Erect-crested Penguins running the pinniped gauntlet.

Of course, the Bounties, being exposed to the full brunt of the Roaring Forties, are generally surrounded by a substantial swell – even on the side of the islands not facing the wind. This swell, alone, is reason enough to avoid coming ashore on rock slopes as a wave can dump a dinghy at any moment, inconveniently, between upset fur seals.

Instead, the preferred method of making landfall requires jumping from a dinghy onto a narrow ledge under the cliffs, while the boat, riding the swell, mimics the vertical movements of an elevator. This is then followed by a breakneck climb up a sheer cliff to the top of the island. To make matters worse, one must also keep individual fur seals at bay with broom sticks, all the while clinging for dear life. Fur seals can occupy the tiniest of ledges leaving a frightened climber puzzling as to how they even got there. Traversing rock crevices containing the desiccated carcasses of unfortunate mollymawks only adds to the tension during the climb. Even reaching more even ground does not provide any relief because, by then, you have reached Bligh's fabled 'snow'.

The gigantic biomass of seabirds on the Bounty Islands

naturally produces an equally enormous amount of guano. However, being pelted by high winds that send salt spray over the islands' rocky topsides ensures that this guano does not build up in a significant layer as often observed on seabird islands.

Instead, guano is compressed into every crack and crinkle in the rock where it solidifies to a rock hard, marble-like deposit. This creates a smooth surface which takes on the properties of an ice rink as soon as it receives the slightest bit of moisture, be it a bit of drizzle, rain, or sea spray. Dancing on Vaseline describes, quite well, what movement on the Bounty Islands is like.

However, the sense of constant peril quickly dissipates once reaching the top. The sight of thousands of seabird nests established on the bare rock, the noise as if one has just entered a sold-out rugby stadium, and the unmistakable smell of guano, are quite literally breath-taking. Everywhere, the ground is moving. Penguins engage in preening their mates, fighting with neighbours, or just standing around asleep – bill tucked under one flipper.

Salvin's Mollymawks are perched on brown chimney-pot nests with perfectly smooth sides or glide through the air, majestically, in their hundreds over the island. Fulmar Prions flutter over the ground and come to rest on top of rocks in groups of up to 20 birds – in broad daylight, no less. Among this



▲ Bounty Shag pair on Proclamation Island. Photo by Paul Sagar.

feathered mass, individual fur seals look misplaced yet menacing at the same time, given their propensity to cannon-ball through the densely packed seabird nests.

Between the 24th and 29th October we landed and worked on Proclamation Island – a trapezoid wedge of granite. It's one of 15 islands that deserve to carry that description although there are quite a few more rock stacks, peeping out from the ocean, all across the archipelago. It is also the island where most of the ornithological work has been conducted in past decades, on account that it is the easiest to access and holds substantial populations of the major species inhabiting the Bounty Islands. The most dominant of these are the Erect-crested Penguins and Salvin's Mollymawk.

The Bounty Islands are home to about 75% of New Zealand's Salvin's Mollymawk population and around one third of the world's Erect-crested Penguins breed here. Both species are thought to be in decline, with Erect-crested Penguins currently ranked 'At risk (Declining)' and Salvin's Mollymawk considered 'Threatened (National Critical)'. Yet, as we gaze upon their densely packed nests on Proclamation Island, this seems hard to comprehend. There just seem to be so many of them.

Every suitable spot on the island appears to be occupied by either a penguin nest (generally built against ledges or

protruding rocks that can shelter its contents from the elements) or a mollymawk chimney-pot nest. Deeper rock crevices form narrow caves that can house a string of penguin nests with cave entrances often guarded by incubating mollymawks.

The nests are truly wondrous

Erect-crested Penguins are known for their rather spartan nest constructions. They often consist only of a stick, or bone, that acts as a wedge to keep eggs from rolling over the edge of the cliffs these birds breed on. More extravagant, if not outright morbid, nests are established in the decomposing carcasses of less fortunate seabirds or fur seal pups.

Just as fascinating are the Salvin's Mollymawk nests. Some of the brown stacks are nearly 30 centimetres tall and consist of a substantial amount of nesting material. At a first glance, these are typical mollymawk nests as they are found on most other Subantarctic Islands. However, looking around on the Bounty Islands it slowly dawns on the observer that something is different here.

There is no soil, mud, or vegetation that could be used for nest building. So, mollymawks must make use of other soft materials... that is, faeces and decaying matter originating from seabird and



▲ Fulmar Prion pair photo by Paul Sagar.



▲ Drone photo counts.



▲ L-R: Alan Tennyson, Thomas Mattern, Graham Parker, Paul Sagar, Kalinka Rexer-Huber, Paige Green/B. Morris.

fur seals. Consequently, integrated into many nests are bones, skulls and bills, fur seal whiskers - and plastic, especially bread bag tags.

But even though humanity apparently does everything it can to make life for our seabirds more difficult, at least the penguin population seems to be doing okay. Over the course of four days, Paige and I zigzagged over Proclamation Island, marking every penguin nest with a blue dab of raddle, and counting each one. At the end of our survey, we had marked nearly 2,900 active nests which is comparable to previous penguin surveys dating as far back as 1997.

While we did not have time to count all mollymawk nests, we did bring some technology that would allow us to count all birds even if we're no longer on the island. On two days, the wind conditions allowed us to fly a small camera drone and take aerial photographs of Proclamation as well as some of the adjacent islands.

The drone flew along programmed transects taking photos every few seconds that could then be stitched to a complete image of each island. The results are images with extremely high resolution that allow every bird on the island to be counted. Preliminary analysis of the drone imagery suggests that Salvin's Mollymawks slightly outnumber Erect-crested Penguins: on

Proclamation, Spider, Tunnel and Ranfurly Islands the counts are 12,000 mollymawks versus 10,500 penguins.

Even though we spent only a total of four days on Proclamation Island, we returned with several months' worth of data to analyse and even more burning questions to address.

Why is the Erect-crested Penguin population on the Bounty Islands apparently doing better than their Antipodes Islands counterpart? Is the decline of Salvin's Mollymawks continuing and how does that relate to their interactions with fishing fleets on the high seas? How many Fulmar Prions breed on the Bounty Islands? What are the impacts of New Zealand Fur Seals on the breeding outcomes of seabirds?

There certainly are more than enough questions to warrant further visits to the seabird wonderland that is the Bounty Island archipelago - one of the last truly wild places on Earth.

Thomas Mattern is Senior Scientist with the New Zealand Penguin Initiative (NZPI), the Oceania representative of the Global Penguin Society, and a Research Fellow at the University of Otago. He is co-leader of the Tawaki Project, which is studying Fiordland Crested Penguins/Tawaki (www.tawaki-project.org) and plans to expand its activities to include crested penguins at the Bounty and Antipodes Islands.



AUCKLAND

The past few months under COVID-19 Alert Level restrictions have been like no other. Much like all other regions, all of our activities and meetings planned for March, April and early May were either cancelled or postponed. In addition, the drought conditions and extreme fire risk resulted in our Muriwai Beach Patrols being cancelled and we are yet to actually have one this year.

Despite the challenges, some interesting sightings have been made. In addition, with more people being confined to home, there has been a surge of interest in bird life with membership of our Birds Auckland Facebook page increasing by over 300 people over 60 days. The interest in our birds from novices has had people seeing Grey Warblers for the first time, whilst others have realised that Kereru are visiting their gardens every day and are not just the occasional visitor. While some news media have reported an increase in bird life, that's not really the case, the birds have always been there, it's just that people have not noticed them.

During lockdown, a resident in Green Bay found three dead fledgling Cook's Petrels in his garden. They had been disorientated by bright street lights on a nearby clifftop whilst flying over the Auckland isthmus and had crash landed in his garden only to be killed by a local cat. This issue could be a rather unnoticed problem and we expect that many more birds are dying unseen. We are looking to increase awareness and collect data to find out the scale of mortality that will help in requesting the Auckland Council to seek a solution.

Interesting local sightings include a male Red-tailed Tropicbird/Amokura found at Bayswater on 27/3. The bird with its impressive red tail streamer and pink blush to its plumage was unable to fly and taken into care at Bird Rescue. Sadly, the bird was suffering from a spinal injury and did not make it. Two juvenile Brown Boobies were seen at the Muriwai Gannet colony by Michael Fitchett on 27/4 (photo on page 18). A most unusual sighting this far north, was a black morph NZ Fantail seen by Warren Nicholson at Maungakeikei Golf Course in Lynfield on 20/4.

An Eastern Barn Owl was reported at Green Bay in west Auckland on 29/4. If confirmed this would be the first sighting in the area since 1992 and would indicate that the Northland birds are spreading southwards.

While taking part in a cryptic bird monitoring survey at Orangahina in Te Atatu on 21/3 a Fork-tailed Swift was seen flying above the saltmarsh by Ian McLean and Denise Poyner (a UBR is pending). Less than 5 minutes later, an Australasian Bittern flushed (only the second record for the site), proving to those present at least, that good luck and timing while birding can actually happen!
- IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

It was a very long, very hot summer with nothing of special interest. It was like living in Australia but without their birds. If the state of our reservoirs wasn't enough, Terry Hatch reported finding baby Song Thrushes

dehydrated in the nest. Weather was settled here and we watched with envy as winds carried a stream of interesting Australian vagrants to more southern regions.

There have been the usual records of Kaka, especially at Pukekohe East. Ted Kitching reported a Little Whimbrel from Pokorua Gap and Ian McNaughton an Australasian Bittern from Lake Pokorua on Awhitu Peninsula in December.

The flooded paddock at Piako was a hotspot over the summer with up to two Hudsonian Godwits, a Black-tailed Godwit, 15 Whimbrel and three Far Eastern Curlews among the regulars over summer. Eighteen Cattle Egrets were reported up to 1/11, but one Hudsonian Godwit, one Black-tailed Godwit wintering in full breeding plumage along with three Whimbrels were reported from the flooded paddock at Piako by Russ Cannings on 2/5. Up the road at Miranda the star birds were two Broad-billed Sandpipers, one of particular interest as it lacked the characteristic crown stripes normally seen on this species. Also present was a Mongolian Dotterel, often twitched but seldom actually identified. We also had our first Terek Sandpiper for many years. Once regular this one was elusive, flitting between the Manukau, Whitford and Miranda.

And then there was lockdown. Local members were stimulated by a circular of interesting, unusual and just funny bird items culled from the internet by Wendy God and Sue Frostick. Emails that followed suggested that many of our local members were sitting with their noses pressed to the window like trapped teddy bears and making the most of their bubble walks. Stuart Chamberlin probably won with sightings of a New Zealand Falcon and a Little Egret from his home by Pahurehure Inlet, David Lawrie's unusual records were two sightings of Southern Black-backed Gulls, and the RR has nothing to boast about at all. Two records of black morph NZ Fantails were received from Patumahoe. Sue Frostick has thoroughly explored Manurewa finding much of interest and making sure her square is well covered. On the outskirts of Papakura, the first half decent rain during April brought back many of the Blackbirds and Song Thrushes that had been missing through the dry spell, presumably from the bush and orchards where they could still find food. The first thrush song was heard by David Lawrie on 29/4 and they are going well now. There has also been discussion about flocking in Silvereyes and a seasonal scarcity of Greenfinches. There's always something to pay attention to.

I think we're all keen to get out a bit more and will be celebrating the first day of Alert Level 2 with a beach patrol and the expectation that our normal activities will resume. There's plenty to do. - IAN SOUTHEY

WAIKATO

The first meeting this year was with Dr Janelle Ward, the species co-ordinator from Sanctuary Mountain (Maungatautari Mountain), who talked about past, present and future projects on the Maunga. Its size is immense, being twice the size of all other enclosed NZ ecosanctuaries combined. The meeting discussed both the existing species

and those that were subsequently released there. The Hihi population now is over 100 birds, Whiteheads are widespread, and the Long-tailed Cuckoo is also being heard. Birds likely to be relocated are male Kakapo in an experiment to see if they will accept the environment. Other species planned for re-location are Black Petrel and one of the remaining NZ Snipe species, as well as non-avian species.

Our AGM was brief. The evening was also used as an opportunity to plan birding sites for the Atlas project. Harbour surveys were conducted at Raglan, Aotea and Kawhia on the West Coast, and Whangamata, Opoutere and Tairua on the East Coast. These counts were combined with the National Bar-tailed Godwit survey. The godwit count for the 3 West Coast harbours was 4,457 with over 2,700 at Kawhia. Other sightings at these harbours were Whimbrel (4), Ruddy Turnstone (3), Black-tailed Godwit (1) and 6 Wrybill. New Zealand Dotterel numbered 6 including two juveniles.

East Coast harbours had a combined total of 217 Bar-tailed Godwits and 71 NZ Dotterels in a mob on the Pauanui side of the harbour. Whangamata also has a good number of breeding Red-billed Gulls with over 200 nesting on the harbour breakwater. A good sighting over the Christmas period at Opoutere was a male Fernbird singing by the side of the car park.

At the Karioi Maunga the Oi had a good season with 8 chicks fledging. This was despite a Ferret killing 4 adult males. Also being studied on the Maunga are native bees of which NZ has 18 species. They are key players in native plant pollination which helps preserve our hill forests where many seabirds breed. An interesting fact is that these bees don't sting and don't produce honey.
- KEN WEDGEWOOD

TARANAKI

There was a good turnout for the February indoor meeting, where the Messengers regaled us with a tale about their visit to Mt Pirongia. While they were having lunch at the Grey Road car park, they watched a pair of Kokako eating Mahoe berries; one bird dropped to the ground and attacked its reflection in the shiny paint work of a parked car.

Two other local members had visited the Chatham Islands. They had a disappointing fishing trip with only two albatross seen. Closer to home Ron Lambert saw 3 or 4 NZ Falcon at Aukapae, approximately 27 km west of Taumarunui, and a flock of circa 8 Shining Cuckoo near Inglewood. Barry Hartley, on his regular trip around the northern Taranaki river estuaries, counted 7 Pied Shag at Awakino.

The Field trip to South Waitaanga was as good as ever; NI Robin were numerous and vocal, and a nearby pond had a pair of NZ Dabchick had 2 fledglings for the second year running, plus a large flock of moulting Paradise Shelduck.

Tony Green was back doing NI Robin monitoring in Taranaki/Egmont National Park, the birds appear to be doing well; he recorded 59 individuals as well as Shining Cuckoo and Long-tailed Cuckoo, Morepork,



NZ Falcon and Rifleman.

Where else but Taranaki can you spend a morning part way up the mountain watching Rifleman, NZ Tomtit, Tui and 4 Blue Duck in their natural environment on a river.

The afternoon was spent touring the local oxidation ponds. At Inglewood there was a large flock of Paradise Shelduck, NZ Scaup, Mallard and 6 NZ Dabchick; at Stratford the ponds are much bigger so a greater variety of waterfowl and larger numbers of Grey Teal, Black Swans (2 with 5 fluffy grey cygnets), Paradise Shelduck, Australasian Shoveler and 18 NZ Dabchick which is the most we have ever seen in one place.

Beach patrols have turned up few birds: 3 Fluttering Shearwater, a couple of Australasian Gannet, and a Buller's Shearwater.

April was cancelled; I kept members updated with weekly ramblings from Waiongana and forwarding Birds New Zealand emails. At the end of the month a few of us had a good catch up via Zoom.

- PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

Before the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 lockdown changed everything, 8 of us, including a new member and a couple of new faces, had a lovely trip to Purerere and Aramoana in mid-March. We saw good numbers of White-fronted Terns (24 at Purerere and 43 at Aramoana), New Zealand Dotterels (23 at Aramoana), and Bar-tailed Godwits (63 at Aramoana), among others. We also spotted two Rooks at Purerere and one at Aramoana. These were duly reported to the Hawke's Bay Regional Council as a notifiable species, but the response received was that the Council "only take action on larger numbers of the birds".

Despite the lockdown, some interesting sightings have still been made by members. For example, RR Bernie Kelly spotted a Marsh Crake in the Clive wetlands in April, and an Australasian Bittern was seen at Haumoana estuary. At Ahuriri, Margaret and Wayne Twydale had regular sightings of up to 17 Pacific Golden Plovers, including two in full breeding plumage, and up to 8 Wrybills, and on 11/3 they saw a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in breeding plumage at the Scrapes.

Denise Fastier reported circa 40 White-fronted Terns and a Reef Heron at Perfume Point in April, and noted that the Little Penguins have become very vocal along the breakwater, perhaps pairing up ready for breeding?

Liz Lowe from Cape Sanctuary found a dead Northern Giant Petrel at Ocean Beach. It had a metal leg band that included contact details for the researcher at the University of Cape Town. The history of the bird was that it had been banded aged <6 months in January 2015 on Marion Island (South Africa), and was found 5 years 2 months 23 days (1,908 days) later by Liz, some 1,772 km east of its banding location. - THALIA SACHTLEBEN

WHANGANUI

Along with everyone else, our birding activities have been somewhat limited over the past couple of months, although there were some pre-lockdown highlights. On

25/3, Paul Gibson watched 'our' flagged male Bar-tailed Godwit, AJD, depart from the Whanganui Estuary for his northern breeding grounds in the company of several other godwits, thereby just beating the COVID-19 lockdown. AJD was first recorded on the Whanganui River estuary in late December 2008, having been banded and marked with a lettered flag on the Manawatū estuary in October 2008. Every year since, he has followed the same pattern of first returning to the Manawatū estuary, usually towards the end of September, staying there for 8-12 weeks, then moving on to Whanganui in early summer. There he stays before setting off for his Arctic breeding ground in the last week of March. Although he makes occasional short-duration excursions back to Foxton, and even in a couple of years has departed from there—perhaps when there are few or no other late-departing godwits locally—the Whanganui River estuary is his summer locus. We look forward to his return later this year, restrictions on international travel notwithstanding.

Other notable sightings included 3 or 4 Rooks in a harvested grain paddock near Marton, seen by Bill Fleury; an immature Black-fronted Tern photographed on the Whanganui Estuary in late February by Paul Gibson; 71 Royal Spoonbill photographed by Stephen Gibson in early April as they circled over Whanganui, presumably on migration north; and Pied Shag, now regularly recorded and photographed, both on the estuary and upstream towards Putiki. Pied Shag is one species that has spread into our region in recent years. Two observers reported melanistic NZ Fantail individuals from different suburbs, but we do not know if these birds came from Gordon Park, 3 km east of Whanganui, where black morph birds have previously been recorded. Several people reported Morepork calling in different suburbs across the town, almost always ones with stands of big trees or patches of thick bush. Morepork calling, especially the quieter 'cree' call, was particularly noticeable at night during the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 lockdown, when there was almost no traffic noise. On one night, Peter Frost heard a Nankeen Night-Heron call as it flew overhead from the Whanganui River towards the Kaitoke dune lakes. Kevin Mills, next to whose Kauarapaoa Rd property the best-known Nankeen Night-Heron roost is situated, reported seeing two adult herons at the roost in early April, as well as two juveniles, one in the Kauarapaoa Stream.

The lockdown presented an opportunity to document suburban bird communities in some detail. They are easily overlooked in favour of wilder and more remote places. An analysis of over 100 checklists made during the 4-week period of the Level 4 lockdown—involving 29 hours of observation and over 85 km walking around 280 ha of two adjacent suburbs—showed, not surprisingly, an avifauna dominated by Blackbirds and House Sparrows, both numerically and by frequency of occurrence. But Silvereye, the most prominent native species, was not far behind. Tūi, Bellbird and NZ Fantail were also regularly recorded (most walks were done in the late afternoon, when Tūi and Bellbird are

most vocal). NZ Fantails, at least in eastern suburbs of Whanganui, move in during late autumn, before dispersing elsewhere in the breeding season.

Obviously, this picture is influenced by social behaviour of the species, with those that flock (e.g., House Sparrow, European Starlings, Silvereye), or those that call loudly (Common Myna, Tūi, Bellbird), being more noticeable than solitary, more cryptic species. Nevertheless, such observations prompt questions about the habitat requirements of, and interactions (or lack of them) among introduced and native species. They also form an empirical base for monitoring long-term trends as the environment changes.

- PETER FROST

MANAWATU

Recent sightings in the Manawatū included valuable pre-lockdown records of Fernbirds at the eastern edge of the Ruahine Ranges and even above the treeline at Longview Hut. It was especially good to confirm both Fernbird and Spotless Crake are still present at Pukepuke Lagoon. Pukepuke is a coastal lagoon that was the site of considerable wetland bird research in the 1970s and 1980s but has had only intermittent visits in recent years. We have yet to survey properly for Marsh Crakes at the site, and surveying the coastal lagoons along the Rangitikei-Manawatu coast is a priority for the Atlas project. Another notable record along the coastal zone was a flock of 13 Glossy Ibis that visited a dairy farm north of Foxton township in March. This is likely the remaining birds from a flock of 15 seen at the Manawatū Estuary in April 2017, which means for the past 3 years this flock has been living unnoticed in our region.

The star bird of the autumn has to be an Eastern Barn Owl that was reported by an essential worker in Palmerston North during the COVID-19 lockdown. He had walked out of his workplace and seen a white owl fly out a tree by the footpath, circle around and return to the tree. A white Morepork, or something more suspicious? During discussions about the bird he realised that it might have been filmed by his workplace security camera, and the next time he was in there he found the footage and it clearly shows an Eastern Barn Owl flying out of the tree. An Unusual Bird Report has been filed for this bird, which might well be the first UBR ever supported by security camera evidence. - PHIL BATTLE

WAIRARAPA

Although birding trips during lockdown were curtailed, it opened up an opportunity to really get to know the birds in our gardens and neighbourhoods. We had the opportunity to become more aware of what species were present at this time of year and more about their habits: the diurnal changes, the feeding preferences and of course what was not around when we expected them to be. Birding from the kitchen window became the "new normal".

It was agreed that the Global Big Day for our group was a success. Most of us got out (locally of course!) and went atlasing, with the pleasing outcome of 30 eBird checklists being entered on the day encompassing 60 species.



The highlight had to be Anna's encounter with two NZ Falcons perched on a large fallen tree lodged in the middle of the Waiohine River. She was able to watch these birds for 30 minutes while one attempted to catch a fantail several times – without success.

We have now secured a regular column in the local Midweek newspaper. This was initiated by Anna Whitehead and is a monthly contribution called the 'Feather Report'.

The aim is to be interesting and informative to the general reader. It gives us a great opportunity to bring birds and local bird issues to public attention. Two issues, with photos, have already been published and several more are lined-up. The first article discussed some of our watery habitats, from Wairarapa Moana to the local sewerage ponds. The second was all about the NZ Bird Atlas project and the contributions being made by our locked-down members from their garden and local walks.
– JOANNA McVEAGH & OLIVER DRUCE

WELLINGTON

As I write this, we are patiently waiting to see whether we progress next week to Alert Level 2 in the lockdown process. Levels 3 and 4 have severely limited our birding activities with no monthly meetings or field work. Our *eBirding* has been limited to home or nearby. Our most surveyed square is Wellington City south which currently has 1,352 submitted checklists. Fortunately, the third transfer of Shore Plover to Mana Island took place in April during the Level 4 lockdown. The transfer during Level 4 was justified on "serious animal welfare risks". A total of 31 birds have been transferred to Mana Island this year. Unfortunately, many of the transferred Shore Plover have moved to the mainland. In the last few days, they have been sighted at Plimmerton and Waikanae Estuary. In June we are planning to hold our first virtual meeting using Zoom. This is exciting technology but a little daunting for those of us who still go birding with a notebook and pencil. – GEOFF DE LISLE

CANTERBURY

Over the past few months, it has been great to see so many Canterbury birders appreciating, observing and counting the birds in their gardens a bit more than we normally might. However, it's definitely nice to be able to get out and stretch our wings a bit further afield now.

On our only field trip so far this year, local members helped out with the annual all-bird count of Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere in February. Black Swan and Canada Goose counts were the highest ever recorded on this survey, while Paradise Shelduck numbers were also quite high. Pied Stilt numbers were quite low compared to previous surveys. Among the migrant waders, there were 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and 2 Curlew Sandpipers, but no Pectoral Sandpipers. A good number of over 300 Bar-tailed Godwits were counted, plus 1 Hudsonian Godwit.

We have also managed to have 2 rambles this year. The ramble to the Groyves in February turned up the usual variety of passerines and waterfowl, including some young Coots and NZ Scaup. The following

month, rambles headed to Lincoln Wetlands, where 4 Mute Swans were recorded.

A noteworthy recent sighting has been of 2 New Zealand Dabchicks at Pegasus Wetlands near Christchurch. While heading out to look for them, several birders have also enjoyed views of an Australasian Bittern flying overhead or stalking prey. Other interesting birds that have been seen at Pegasus recently include 2 Southern Crested Grebes and a White Heron/Kotuku. At Washdyke Lagoon, a count by a couple of local members turned up 2 Cape Barren Geese and 8 Black-fronted Dotterels among a good variety of other species. – ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

Many of us were involved in the Great Godwit count in February, with birds being counted throughout Otago as part of the national effort. A total of 1,581 Bar-tailed Godwits were counted on the region's estuaries, which was a significant decrease from the previous November's count.

Autumn got off to a promising start, with 6 members heading out in glorious weather on an atlasing field trip to the Clarks Junction area, finishing up at Sutton Salt Lake, where the NZ Pipits were very obliging. Our only indoor meeting of the year so far was devoted to discussing the progress of the Atlas so far, and making plans for the months ahead.

In common with other parts of the country, many locals have been 'yard listing', and coming up with some interesting reports as a result of more time spent at home. Some of the more notable records have been White Heron (on at least 2 garden lists), NZ Falcon, and Black-fronted Tern. Pre lockdown there were a number of records of Marsh Crane, from all corners of Otago, including possibly the first report from the Catlins. An Australasian Bittern was seen and photographed at Lake Tuakitoto in mid-February, the first at this former breeding site for quite a few years, and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo was reported from Haast Pass.

RR Mary Thompson and new local member Oscar Thomas featured in an Otago Daily Times video promoting the benefits of birding during the lockdown, *eBird* and the Atlas project. Franny Cunninghame, stuck in Ecuador, reported on the downside

of the pandemic as it affects the ability to do essential conservation work, from the perspective of her personal involvement in projects in Otago and the Galapagos Islands. Despite, or perhaps because of, the recent lockdown, Otago region's contribution to the *eBird* Global Big Day involved 29 participants seeing 66 species over 124 checklists. Although most activity was based around coastal areas, there were also reports from Queenstown, Lake Hayes, Alexandra and Lake Dunstan. – RICHARD SCHOFIELD

SOUTHLAND

Our summer wader survey in February had mixed results with the best count coming from an area we have not had access to for a number of years. Jocks Roost on the shores of the New River estuary was always a good place for waders in the 1970s and 80s, and with Pete McClelland's assistance we now have access back again. His count on 7/2 included 4 Whimbrel (the most we have had for many years) along with 2 Far Eastern Curlew and 5 Wrybill.

The Chestnut-breasted Shelducks were still in the Tip Lagoon in March with 5 reported on the Birding-NZ Forum (12/3). A Royal Penguin found on Codfish Island on 8/3 was taken into care as it was moulting but also sick. It was sent to a wildlife rehabilitation centre in Christchurch.

Four White-throated Needletails were seen on Stewart Island on 12/3. A number of them have been reported on the island over the past few years now. A large pre-migration flock of 69 Pacific Golden Plovers was seen in a muddy paddock near the Bluff Highway on 21/3. This is the largest flock seen here since 2017.

A Common Greenshank was photographed by Lloyd Blakie at the Riverton Jacobs River estuary on 1/5, once a regular visitor to Southland this is first bird reported since 1998.

With COVID-19 curtailing any visits to our usual birding haunts it was a matter of completing Atlas counts around gardens and neighbourhoods, and while it may have seemed a bit humdrum it was quite interesting getting to know the species that were around while many people were usually working. We had Tui and Bellbird in our suburb almost every day, something I would not have otherwise known. – PHIL RHODES



▲ Juvenile male Brown Booby at Muriwai in April. Photo by Warwick Allen.

Lost Gold: seabirds of the subantarctic Auckland Islands

Interview with Lost Gold editors Dr Colin Miskelly and Dr Craig Symes.

Q: The June 2020 special edition of *Notornis* is the first book focused on the birds of the Auckland Islands. When did Birds New Zealand decide that there was a need for this book, and why?

CM: The need for a comprehensive account on the birds of the Auckland Islands was first commented on in the 1955 book *New Zealand Birds* by W.R.B. Oliver. The leader of the wartime coastwatcher scientific programme (and later Director of the Dominion Museum) Sir Robert Falla intended to produce such an account, and he and Brian Bell of the Wildlife Service agreed to collaborate on a comprehensive account soon after the major 1972–73 expedition led by Bell. Falla died in 1979, and Bell apparently did not progress this before his own death in 2016. Falla's obituary noted his regret that the work had not been completed. Other ornithologists who had visited the Auckland Islands deferred to Falla and then Bell to produce the definitive account on the birds of the Auckland Islands. I became aware of this when arranging a permit to visit the islands in 1985. Following my participation in an extensive survey of smaller islands in the group in January 2018, I volunteered to lead the preparation of a special issue of *Notornis* focused on the birds of the Auckland Islands. This was supported by Birds New Zealand Council and the editor of *Notornis*. The timing of the special issue is specifically intended to provide a summary of the current status of the birds of the Auckland Islands before the planned eradication of feral cats, pigs and mice is commenced (and hopefully completed!) by the Department of Conservation.

Q: How special is the bird population of these islands?

CM: The Auckland Islands are the largest and biologically richest island group south of New Zealand, with eight endemic bird species or subspecies that are confined to the Auckland Islands. This, combined with their abundant seabird populations (including several albatross and penguin species) makes them a Mecca for bird-watchers.

Q: Are predator control initiatives making a real difference, or does much more need to be done?

CM & CS: Feral cattle, rabbits and mice were eradicated from Enderby Island in 1993. One of the chapters in the book documents the spectacular recovery of ground birds, particularly the endemic snipe, teal and dotterel, and also surface-nesting northern giant petrels, that has occurred since browsing mammals were removed. Two other chapters describe the devastating and ongoing impact that feral cats and pigs have had on the birds on the main Auckland Island. The Department of Conservation is planning to eradicate pigs, cats, and mice from Auckland Island, and this book provides a timely benchmark against which to measure future changes in the bird populations.

Q: It must be a privilege to get there.

CM: While a few ecotourism operators are permitted to land on two islands in the Auckland Island group, it is a tremendous privilege to visit the least modified islands in the group, or to stay overnight on any of the islands. Only nine naturalists have stayed overnight on Disappointment Island (the least-modified island), and six of them have contributed to this book.

Q: But not easy one assumes.

CM: Access to the Auckland Islands is difficult to arrange, both gaining permission and finding transport. Many researchers have hitched lifts on ecotourism vessels, and partly for this reason, nearly all visits since Second World War have been during the summer months.

Q: What is the lure of these islands to ornithologists?

CM: The Auckland Islands have a rich human history, including attempted settlement by Māori and Pakeha, remarkable shipwreck survival stories, and wartime coastwatchers. When combined with spectacular landscapes, some of the most gorgeous flowering plants in New Zealand, unwary albatrosses, rare penguins and a variety of endemic birds (including snipe, flightless teal, tomtit and banded dotterel), the Auckland Islands are on the bucket-list for birders from around the globe.

Q: Could you outline some of the surprising or significant research findings contained in this volume?

CS: The comprehensive nature of the issue in itself is a feat, including extensive use of previously unpublished bird records collected by Second World War coastwatchers. Chapters that stand out are those on the movements of white-headed petrels; use of modern genetic techniques and aerial photography in bird conservation; Colin Miskelly and Joanne Cooper's chapter that adds a new species to the New Zealand bird list; and a summary of mammal impacts, including stunning recent images of feral cats eating an albatross and a parakeet.

Q: Do you have a favourite Auckland Island bird species?

CS: I always have a soft spot for parrots – so for me it's the parakeets.

CM: The Auckland Island Rail was the bird I was most excited to see. It is unrelated to any other New Zealand bird, is found on only two islands that few people get a chance to visit, and even on those islands it stays hidden among the densest vegetation, and so very few people have ever seen it. But as I have been a snipe researcher since 1982, and since they are a group with rich and varied conservation and cultural histories, I would have to rate the endemic Auckland Island Snipe as my favourite.

Q: Finally, can you tell us about *Birds New Zealand* and the journal *Notornis*?

CS: The Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) was established in 1940 and its journal (renamed *Notornis* in 1950) was first published in 1943. Three of the foundation members (Robert Falla, Charles Fleming, and Graham Turbott) each spent a year on the Auckland Islands as WW2 coastwatchers between 1942 and 1944. *Notornis* is published quarterly and is the only scientific journal dedicated to the birds of New Zealand and the south-west Pacific. It is the main source of information published on New Zealand birds over the past 80 years. OSNZ adopted the brand name of *Birds New Zealand* in 2013.

Dr Colin Miskelly (below) is curator of vertebrates at Te Papa and a Council member of Birds New Zealand. Dr Craig Symes was previously an Associate Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He is currently a science teacher in Rotorua and editor of Notornis. This interview was first published on Te Papa's website.





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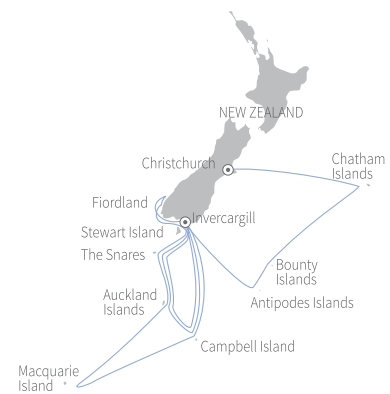


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